

National Report for Lithuania on Cooperation between Trade Unions and Universities

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Lithuanian Trade Unions

Lithuanian Trade Unions are governed by the Act adopted by the Lithuanian Republic Parliament in November 12, 1991 (updated 3 November 2003) and law No. IX-926 approved on 4 June 2002, which consolidated former individual laws: Lithuanian Republic Code of employment law, Employment law, Wage law, Collective agreements and contracts law, Collective dispute settlement law, The leave law, Labour litigation law and Public holidays law.

The Lithuanian Trade Union Act states:

- persons legally employed under an employment contract or other grounds set out in Lithuanian territory, are legally entitled to establish trade unions for the protection of these interests;
- Trade unions are voluntary and autonomous organisations representing and protecting professional labour, economic, social rights and interests of employees.

Currently, there are three top-level organisations of trade unions in Lithuania:

- 1) *The Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation (LTUC)* - <http://www.lpsk.lt/>;
- 2) *Lithuanian trade union „Solidarity“* - <http://www.lps.lt/>;
- 3) *Lithuanian Labor Federation (LLF)* - <http://www.ldf.lt/>.

Executives of these organisations are involved in the work of the Lithuanian Republic tripartite council (the employers' associations, trade unions and the Government), which meets from time to time though not regularly. The Council deals with issues of economic development of the Republic, employment and rewards system, and the possibilities of meeting social needs. The results of Council discussions are used in an advisory capacity by the Government.

The following is a brief overview of activities of the abovementioned trade union organisations.

Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation (LTUC).

Together with 26 branch organizations, it consists of about 100,000 members. It was established on 1 May 2002. The Lithuanian Confederation of Trade Unions is a non-governmental organization, independent of the Government and management institutions, employers and their organizations, social organizations and movements. LTUC is a member of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions ([ICFTU](#)), the European Trade Union Confederation ([ETUC](#)), and cooperates with the International Labor Organization ([ILO](#)).

LTUC's mission is to unite and protect trade unions and to influence Lithuanian authorities regarding labor and social issues.

LTUC functions:

- represents and protects the rights of trade union members;
- informs trade union members and the public about the objectives and activities of public information measures;
- actively participates in the tripartite interests of co-ordination and collaboration in addressing social, economic and labor issues, preparing qualified negotiator groups;
- participates in the Lithuanian Republic tripartite council, seeking favorable tripartite annual agreements for employees;
- actively participates in solving social and labor problems and conflicts;
- initiates bilateral collective agreements, promotes negotiations with employers' organizations;
- periodically holds conferences and seminars, conducts educational work for trade union members, employees;
- prepares special programmes, training courses for women and youth;
- publishes information publications and guidance material, which promote the trade union movement;
- promotes the foundation of regional establishments;
- promotes the activities of the Youth and Women Council.

Lithuanian trade union "Solidarity"

This trade union has about 35,000 members. It was established in 1989, validated by Lithuanian Republic Government on 26 February 1993. It includes 12 industrial trade union federations and territorial trade unions of 24 cities/regions, the Women's Council, the Youth Group. Also there is an established Workers support fund, meant to support the less-advantaged families of employees.

Lithuanian trade union "Solidarity" functions:

- provision of legal, economic, social consultations;
- negotiation with employers regarding collective agreements;
- representation of employees in courts concerning issues such as wages, return to work etc.;
- organisation of training, recreation, rehabilitation.

Lithuanian Labour Federation (LLF).

This is a Christian trade union, which was established in the congress held by representatives of the Lithuanian Christian Workers in Kaunas, on 27-28 September 1919. The goal of the union foundation was to become a centre of separate cultural and trade organizations of Lithuanian Christian workers. Members of the trade union represented the Federation in Lithuanian Parliaments, solved cultural, political and work issues. LLF activity continued until 1940. During the time of Soviet occupation, activities of the organisation were suspended. After the declaration of independence in 1991, the Lithuanian Labor Federation was restored and currently has approximately 20,000 members. Since 2006 LLF is a member of the International Trade Union Confederation ([ITUC](#)), and since 2002, a member of The European Trade Union Confederation ([ETUC](#)). The LLF Education Center was founded in 2001, and from 2002 is a member of The European Centre for Workers' Questions (EZA, <http://www.eza.org/>).

Functions of the LLF:

- to seek equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market and to eliminate gender stereotypes (integration of work and family life; promotion of balanced agency, training and public education on sexual equality, tolerance and awareness issues, elimination of stereotypes concerning older and young women, social risk and other groups, which suffer from discrimination in the labour market);
- education (training for working women, training for women who need reskilling after maternity leave and time off for childcare; using various training and employment schemes for elderly women to prolong their participation in the labour market;

- promotion of women's participation in trade union activities; training of women as union leaders);
- to ensure health and safety at work (reduction of stress and work-related psychological risk);
- cooperation with Lithuanian and foreign organizations.

In 2007 the Lithuanian high school trade union association (LHSTUA) was established. The Association is formed of 12 high schools and 1 college: Klaipeda University; **Kaunas University of Technology**; Kaunas University of Medicine; University of Šiauliai; Lithuanian Veterinary Academy; Vilniaus Gediminas Technical University; Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theater; Vytautas Magnus University; Vilnius University; Vilnius Pedagogical University; Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education; Mykolas Romeris University; Kaunas College.

Before the establishment of the Association (and since 1990), there was a trade union founded by employees working in the Lithuanian education system. However, it split up and high schools formed the LHSTUA. LHSTUA is the only organisation that represents the particular interests of its members, i.e. Lithuanian high school employees, in the Parliament, governmental institutions, trade unions and other organizations. It protects and meets the other public interests of the Association members.

LHSTUA functions:

- to improve working conditions and ensure employees' social securities;
- to make suggestions for improving the Law of Higher Education and studies to conform to the legislation and the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania;
- to seek trade unions representation of the interests of employees in all governmental institutions in equal rights with employers and government representatives;
- to seek for trade unions' representation in all management structures of a university;
- one of the goals is to tie the salary of employees to an average monthly wage and for it to be in conformance with performed work.

LHSTUA currently consists of 1,000 members. So far LHSTUA is not a member of any Lithuanian trade union assembly. LHSTUA web site: www.lampss.lt

Lifelong Learning (LLL) in Lithuania

In 2003, SEIMAS (*the Parliament*) of the Republic of Lithuania revised its legislation on Education in the Republic, the provisions of which conform to the main objectives of the Lisbon strategy in the field of education. The legislation guarantees to provide everyone with lifelong learning (LLL) opportunities in an education system that is flexible, coherent and transparent, delivered in a variety of modes and institutions.

On 4 July, 2003, SEIMAS published its blueprint for the reform of education provision in Lithuania, *The Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012*. The provisions aim at creating a framework for the development of a LLL programme, i.e. a continuous process of education provision, ensuring that such provision is available for everybody.

In August 2004 the Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved the Single Programming Document 2004-2006 according to which the following activities were supported with funding:

- LLL infrastructure development with an emphasis on reducing regional differences and increasing service provision;
- development of LLL modes of delivery including the use of online delivery formats;
- adjustments to the delivery of LLL programmes to accommodate the needs of disabled students.

In March 2004, the Ministers of Education & Science and Social Security & Labour approved the LLL strategy. One of the objectives proposed in the strategy is to develop higher integration

between the provision of general education, special education, vocational training and higher education to make the entire education system more coherent and effective. Higher Education institutions (HEIs) play an important role in Continuing Education (CE) and training. Many students attend evening courses and participate in distance-learning programmes or non-formal courses organised by HEIs and the development of a knowledge-based society will increase the demand for CE in institutions.

Hitherto, university-based CE provision has not offered a coherent pathway to individuals wishing to retrain, upgrade their qualifications or undertake further studies to support their professional development. It might also in future provide a coherent pathway to gain a degree, if the student has been undertaking a school-based programme of higher or advanced vocational education.

In January 2005, the Lithuanian Government approved “The National Programme for the Implementation of the Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012” (the Programme). The Programme outlines the strategic objectives of Lithuania’s process of education reform as well as the means and resources for its implementation by 2008. The framework of the Lisbon agreement is also included.

The Programme includes a number of statistical projections based on current participation rates in Lithuanian Higher Education (HE) and which correspond with European Union indicators, as follows:

Indicator	European Union		Lithuania		
	present situation	2010	present situation	2007	2012
The percentage of population aged 18-24 with basic or lower education, presently not attending any institution	15.9 % (2004)	10%	9.5% (2004)	12%	9%
The percentage of women with higher education in mathematics, natural sciences or technologies aged 20-29	6.8% (2001)	-	10.6% (2001)	12%	13.5%
The percentage of population aged 22 with secondary education	78.7% (2002)	85%	79.3% (2003)	85%	90%
The percentage of pupils achieving up to I level according to research by the International Pupils Assessment Programme of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development	17.2% (2002)	20%	-	25%	20%
The percentage of population aged 25-64 at least 4 weeks into their study programmes (at the level of life-long learning)	9.4% (2004)	12.5%	6.5% (2004)	8.5 %	15%

University-based Continuing Education (CE) does not adhere to one organisational model. Some universities have established centres for continuing education through their central administration whereas others have faculty-based provision.

The quality of the academic provision is assured through the regulation of programme structure and content, external audit and through the process of accreditation. The external organisation responsible for the evaluation of HE programmes of study is the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education.

Universities have internal systems for assuring the quality of their study programmes and for analytical purposes: programmes of study and individual modules are reviewed annually. These processes are undertaken according to the procedures set out in individual universities’ internal documentation which follow government guidance.

Cooperation between Trade Unions and Universities

Although Trade unions specify the promotion of education and the necessity of education programme development as one of their goals and tasks, and implement different means of education, any systemic collaboration between trade unions and universities regarding work-based lifelong learning issues is very seldom observed. However, the necessity for this kind of cooperation and simultaneous increase in the social responsibilities of companies is more and more emphasized. Therefore seminars showing the benefit of LLL and the need to promote it are organized.

In order to achieve successful collaboration between trade unions and universities, first of all it is important not just to get into contact but to be able to maintain a sustained and constructive interconnection between the two groups, starting from discussions on possible work-based LLL programmes, assessment system issues etc.

An example of the successful cooperation between trade unions and a university is the project, launched by trade union "Solidarity" on 1 March 2005 and finalised on 30 May 2008. The aim of the project was to train trade union members to work under conditions of the so called "new economy", promoting social dialogue and preventing unemployment. To reach the goal, the trade union signed a partnership agreement with Vilnius University and Mykolas Romeris University. Also, a sample contract for cooperation between trade unions and educational institutions (in this case a university) was made an outcome of the project.

For planning and implementation of certain cooperative methods between trade unions and universities, experience of other countries should be taken into consideration, their practice and models of cooperation should be analysed and possibilities to implement analogous schemes of activities should be evaluated. For example a meeting was held by the trade union "Solidarity" and a representative of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions on 21 August 2008. At the meeting, it was stated that the Confederation's Budapest department and International trade union confederation could develop an education project for Lithuanian trade unions.

Moreover, different trade unions in cooperation with universities already organise similar training (such as improvement of computer skills, learning of foreign languages etc.). So sharing the good experience between the trade unions (and/or along with the universities) could be promoted.

For creation of a constructive cooperation between trade unions and universities on issues of lifelong learning, integrated collaboration between the two groups and institutions participating in European events and organised to promote LLL should be reached as well. For example, collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Education Exchanges Support Foundation (Euroguidance). These institutions are active participants in projects, launched to create a network of European LLL-based vocational guidance policies. This is especially the case with the Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation which already participates in various tripartite Lithuanian Republic councils (including vocational training council), dealing with work and training issues.

Also a comprehensive information system containing issues of cooperation between trade unions and universities could be created, constantly updated and well promoted.

Therefore, especially when there is minimal evidence of work-based LLL, carried out as a result of cooperation between Lithuanian trade unions and Universities, it is necessary not only to create mutual relations between the two groups, but also to take into account experience of other countries, evaluate and use all offered possibilities to maintain and develop this cooperation.