

## SOCIAL DIMENSION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

### STRATEGIES

Social dimension represents an integral part of the strategic documents on higher education in Lithuania:

- *Law on Higher Education* (2000, last amended in 2008);
- *Strategic Provisions for Development of Education in Lithuania in 2003–2012*;
- *Lithuanian Higher Education System Development Plan for 2006-2010*;
- *National Programme for Higher Education Development* (2007).

It refers mainly to accessibility of higher education and promotion of life-long learning as well as social justice in education (measures to promote equal opportunities) in order to achieve the reduction of social exclusion and poverty in a broader scale.

#### ***Law on Higher Education***

Under the *Law on Higher Education* HEIs have a right “to establish their own procedure of studies” (art.9). At the same time “students shall be entitled: <...> to select a study programme, teaching staff (when that same subject is taught by several teaching staff members), or study according to individual study programmes”; “to discontinue and renew studies in accordance with the procedure established by the statute” (art.49).

*Law on Higher Education* also defines conditions of support provided to students (art.62) and administering of loans (art.63). According to the *Law* students of the first and second cycle may receive State loans to pay tuition fees, to cover living expenses and for part-studies under treaties and international agreements. Loans for tuition fees are available equally for all students, for the rest types of loans disadvantaged/disabled persons have a priority, i.e. persons from families which could get a financial support in line with the criteria of *Low on cash social assistance for low-income families (single residents)* orphans (at least without one of his/her parents) and disabled persons.

The period of loan repayment starts in 2 years after the completion of studies and shall be related to the monthly income of the persons to whom the loans have been granted; persons may be exempted from loan repayment upon their social situation.

Full-time students of the first, second and third cycle may receive grants and scholarships on a competitive basis according to the rules defined by the Government.

#### ***Strategic Provisions for Development of Education in Lithuania in 2003–2012***

*The Strategic Provisions for Development of Education in Lithuania* define the long-term goals for development of education, the means for achieving these goals, as well as establishes the key quantitative and qualitative outcomes.

Among measures of implementation of the *Provisions* in ensuring socially fair conditions there is mentioned special attention to the representatives of ethnic minorities, flexible and efficient system for supporting students (loans, scholarships, hostels) as well as expanded opportunities

for life-long learning (variations in learning time and speed, distance/part-time learning, transition to modular and accrual learning, relevant entry requirements, etc.).

### ***Lithuanian Higher Education System Development Plan for 2006-2010***

One of the objectives of the *Lithuanian Higher Education System Development Plan for 2006-2010* is of the support for students. Implementing of this plan includes these legal acts and their changes:

- 1) Two Government resolutions on *State Support for the Third Cycle Students* were adopted in the end of 2007. According to these resolutions national scholarships for the third cycle students increased up to 40 %.
- 2) The Government resolution on *Scholarships for the First, Second and Continuous Cycle Students of State HEIs* set up the increasing of *social* scholarships in 3 times in 2008.
- 3) The number of *Nominal Scholarships of the Presidents of the Republic of Lithuania* was increased from 6 to 30 in 2008.

### ***National Programme for Higher Education Development***

In the period of 2007-2013, EU Structural Funds in relation with higher education are managed according to the aims and objectives of the *National Programme for Higher Education Development* including the objective of increasing accessibility through the implementation of innovative forms of studies. Expected actions cover introducing of innovative methods and flexible learning paths to meet special needs of particular groups of labour market or socially sensitive groups. Developing and implementation of the system for recognition of non-formal prior learning is also included into actions under the *National Programme for Higher Education Development*.

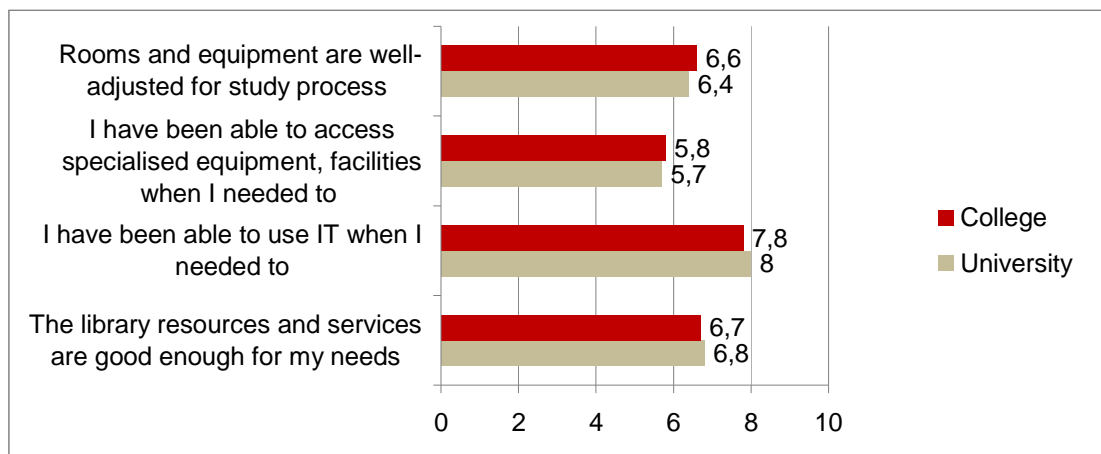
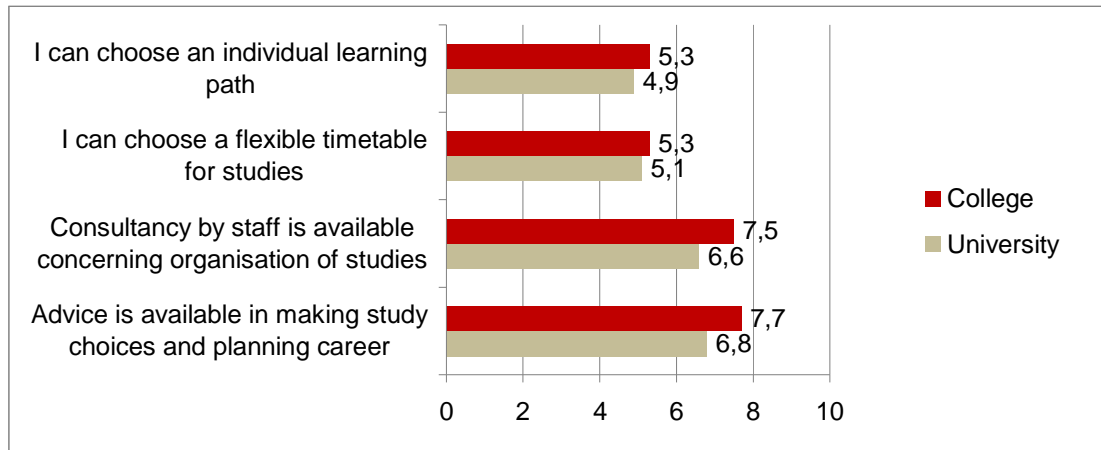
## CURRENT SITUATION

Description of the current situation is based on available statistics and also on the results of 2 surveys: *Social-Economic Situation of Students in Lithuania* (2007) and *Students' Opinion on the Improvement of Quality in Higher Education* (2008). In addition, a special questionnaire was sent to the Association of Lithuanian Student Representation (LSAS).

Number of students, estimated for 1000 of the population is slightly increasing: 58 – in 2005, 59 – in 2006, and 61– in 2007. Students-teachers ratio is comparatively stable in Lithuania since 2004/05: it is about 15 both in universities and colleges.

## Learning environment

Within the survey on *Quality in Higher Education* there were components of Academic support and management as well as Infrastructure. The results are presented below (evaluation was carried out in scoring scale of from 0 to 10)



## Social-economic conditions

According to the results of the *Social-Economic Situation of Students in Lithuania*, 47.7% of the sample group defined their material/financial conditions as satisfactory or fully satisfactory; 9.5% of the sample group applied for loans.

The amount of loans provided by Lithuanian State Studies and Science Foundation is increasing for living expenses and studies abroad, but slightly decreasing for tuition fees (it should be noticed that loans for tuition fees are available for all students).

The *Social-Economic Situation of Students in Lithuania* survey shows that 51.3% of respondents live in student hostels, 32.5% share apartments with parents or relatives, 16.2%

rent or live in his/her own apartments; 69.9% of total are satisfied by living conditions, 11.5 are not satisfied. Particularly, among students living in hostels 57.3% are satisfied and 18.3% are not satisfied. However, only 26.5% of the sample group agree or mostly agree that living conditions in hostels ensure social welfare for students' families.

At the same time statistics shows that there are not enough places in student hostels. Situation is different in the case of universities and university colleges: almost all (97%) of applications by college students got positive answers, but only 75% of applicants can live in hostels in the case of universities.

Percentage of College student's in student hostels (according the demand)

2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
<b>99,4%</b>	<b>98,0%</b>	<b>97,1%</b>

Percentage of University student's in student hostels (according the demand)

2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
<b>80,2%</b>	<b>76,0%</b>	<b>75,2%</b>

In 2006/2007 there were 38.2% of part-time extramural and 6.0% of part-time evening students of total number of students; in 2007/2008 there are 40.0% of part-time extramural and 6.1% of part-time evening students of total number of students.

### **Socially sensitive groups**

Except of measures defined by the *Law on Higher Education* at the institutional level HEIs also have some exemptions for disadvantaged/disabled persons in relation with admission to HEI. For example, in the case of equal scorings a priority is given to candidates who are orphans or coming from foster home or disabled persons. There is no admission fee to these candidates.

The *Association of Lithuanian Student Representation (LSAS)* identified some problems which were not reflected in the above mentioned surveys: buildings, particularly old ones, and infrastructure of HEIs are not adjusted to disabled students; the lack of comprehensive and up-to-date database about social situation of students leads to complicated procedures in applying for social scholarships and allowances; Lithuanian State Studies and Science Foundation provides loans for tuition fee only, but not to cover a full price of studies if any.

## **PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS IN DECISION-MAKING**

Students participation in the governance of HEI is defined by the *Law on Higher Education* (art. 51). Principles of formation of a students' representation and its activity shall be established in the Statute of the higher education establishment. According to the article 52, the students' representation shall have the right to obtain information and explanations from relevant bodies of the HEI as well as to take part in decision-making on all issues related with students. Students' representations may join associations or other confederations (art. 53). Students' representations shall submit proposals to the *Seimas* (Parliament) and the Government.

By the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science, the *Forum for Quality in Higher Education* was established in October 2007 involving representatives of HEIs, associations of students and employers as well as governmental institutions which are responsible for the development and implementation of higher education policy. Representatives of these 4 parties, particularly students, are members of the Council of the *Forum*. It should be noticed that students initiated/participated in variety of discussions concerning the higher education reform in the period of 2007-2008 as well as carried out related surveys.

As it was presented in the first part of the National report, students are a part of various procedures of quality assurance (QA) both at the national and institutional levels, i.e. in governance of national agencies for QA, as full members in external review teams, as part of the decision making process for external reviews, in the consultation process during external reviews (e.g. arrangements for external reviewers to consult with students) as well as in internal quality assurance in the HEI.