



Pioneering policies and practices tackling educational inequalities in Europe

Deliverable No. 6.5

Evidence-based co-authored and open-access report of most promising pioneering policies and practices

Call:	H2020-SC6-Transformations-2020
Topic:	TRANSFORMATIONS-22-2020: Enhancing access and uptake of education to reverse inequalities
Funding Scheme:	Research & Innovation Action (RIA)
Grant Agreement no.:	101004392
Project Title:	Pioneering policies and practices tackling educational inequalities in Europe
Contractual Submission Date:	31/12/2023
Actual Submission Date:	18/12/2023
Responsible partner:	Lithuania



Millennium Schools' Programme [5]

Country	Lithuania
Authors of the table	<i>Siarova, H. & Dunajeva, K.</i>
Name of the policy / practice	Millennium Schools' Programme [5]
Short description and the main characteristics of the policy / practice	The aim of the Programme is “to create integral, optimal and high standard conditions for learning and elimination of achievement gap in every municipality of Lithuania”. Among the areas of school performance improvement “inclusive education” is one of the 4 areas (in addition to “leadership in action”, “cultural education” and “STEM education”. It was approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of Lithuania in 2022. The Programme builds on the Concept of a Good School. The Concept was mainly concerned with better meeting the needs of a heterogeneous student body and the demands of the contemporary world through developing overarching principles to guide the development of education in the country (e.g., humanistic values, inclusivity and student-oriented educational approaches)
Target group of the policy / practice:	Schools, teachers and students are targeted: The objective of the program is to reorganize and improve school infrastructure and ensure equal access to education for Lithuanian children, regardless of where they live, and socio-economic background. The programme provides support for a wide range of school activities (with no further specification), teachers’ training and infrastructure development while setting the conditions for municipalities seeking support.
Educational stage or transition phase of the policy / practice	Lithuanian schools can participate in the Programme (with some requirements and exceptions, such as private educational establishments)
Level of implementation	The Programme is implemented at the level of municipalities: “Municipalities together with the educational community must prepare three years' progress plans aimed at improving the quality of education and strengthening of inclusion”
MILC dimensions	The Programme is sensitive to intersectionality to some extent; the reasons for inequalities of educational attainment are discussed in separation, with a few mentions of intersecting factors (e.g., living in a rural area and low SES). The Programme is reflective of life course approach and considers multiple levels of education. For example, there is a recognition that students from lower SES may perform worse in their education, hence “Social and economic differences also affect possibilities to acquire higher education, when admission is based on pupils' achievements...”

Key dimensions of the identification procedure			
CONDITIONS: Foundational premise level	<i>Comprehensive</i>	Educational equality is indeed understood as a complex set of factors, involving school infrastructure, professional growth of the school community, quality of education and other factors	High
	<i>Coherent</i>	It is coherent as education is embedded in overall growth of the students and the culture/practices of inclusivity within the school and community	High
	<i>Continuous</i>	There is criticism regarding how continuous, systematic and sustainable the Programme is, considering that not all schools can participate. There is a stipulation that only “a municipality with at least 1,000 students in pre-school and general education programs can apply, of which some schools are selected.	Medium
ELEMENTS: Structural level	<i>Contextual</i>	The Programme recognizes that inequalities exist, although equal education is often described in general terms, i.e., equality for all: “activities actively contribute to sustainable development and/or the implementation of horizontal principles of equal opportunities for all and children with various educational needs.	Medium
	<i>Relational</i>	The Programme stipulates that each municipality participating in the Program has to perform „an analysis of the current state and changes in the education system and prepare a Progress Plan – there are no further details regarding how reflexive this process is.	Low
TOOLS: Action level	<i>Autonomous</i>	The Progress Plan details how the principles of the Programme are applied; no autonomy is described in the Programme.	Low
	<i>Reflexive</i>	Municipalities applying for the Program develop their own Progress Plan, which ideally should be reflexive of various needs and circumstances, while considering the goals of the Programme as well.	Medium
Evidence backing the policy / practice		The project has recently begun and is ongoing, there are no evaluations yet. The implementation of the first stage of the Programme began on February 1, 2022 and will end on June 30, 2026. The beginning of the implementation of stage II of the Programme will be adjusted, considering the results of the implementation of stage I.	

Brief concluding analysis of policy / practice in the context	Even though there are no evaluations of this recent project, there is indication of positive change in terms of improving inclusive education. For example, the Lithuanian Ministry of Education, Science and Sports referenced the European Commission in suggesting that the Programme of Millennium Schools can “reduce achievement gaps, exclusion of rural area and cities, unequal opportunities to pursue quality education”. A country-report of Lithuania by the European Commission claimed the Programme “may help to provide equal opportunities for all children irrespective of their living place and to improve overall academic achievements.” The Programme was also mentioned as contributing to the “integration of special needs students into mainstream schools.” One criticism that has emerged is the scope of the Programme, as “only quarter of the country’s schools will participate in it”.
--	---