

LITHUANIAN

The Lithuanian language in education in Poland

2nd Edition

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European Research Centre on
Multilingualism and Language Learning



Regional Dossier series

The Lithuanian language
in education in Poland

2nd Edition

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Foreword

background

Regional and minority languages are languages that differ from the official state language. The Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning uses the following definition for these languages, as stated in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML):

Regional and minority languages are languages traditionally used within a given territory of a state by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state's population; they are different from the official language(s) of that state, and they include neither dialects of the official language(s) of the state nor the languages of migrants.

The Mercator European Research Centre aims to acquire, apply, and circulate knowledge about these regional and minority languages in education. An important means to achieve this goal is the Regional Dossier series: documents that provide the most essential features of the education system of regions with a lesser-used regional or minority language.

aim

The aim of the Regional Dossier series is to provide concise descriptions of minority languages in education, mainly in Europe but also in other parts of the world. Aspects that are addressed include features of the education system, recent educational policies, main actors, legal arrangements, and support structures, as well as quantitative aspects such as the number of schools, teachers, and pupils, and financial investments. Because of this fixed structure, the dossiers in the series are easy to compare.

target group

The dossiers serve several purposes and are relevant for policymakers, researchers, teachers, students, and journalists who wish to explore developments in minority language schooling in Europe. They can also serve as a first orientation towards further research, or function as a source of ideas for improving educational provisions.

link with Eurydice

The format of the Regional Dossiers follows the format of Eurydice – the information network on education in Europe – in order to link the regional descriptions with those of national

education systems. Eurydice provides information on the administration and structure of national education systems in the member states of the European Union.

contents

Every Regional Dossier begins with an introduction about the region in question, followed by six chapters that each deal with a specific level of the education system (e.g. primary education). Chapters 8 and 9 cover the main lines of research into education of the minority language under discussion, and the prospects for the minority language in general and in education in particular, respectively. Chapter 10 provides a summary of statistics. Lists of (legal) references and useful addresses regarding the minority language are given at the end of the dossier.



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Regional Dossier series

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Adam Mickiewicz University

Summary

Lithuanian and its status in education in Poland

The Constitution of the Republic of Poland contains two articles that pertain directly to minority rights, in which it is stated that Polish citizens belonging to national or ethnic minorities have the freedom to maintain and develop their own language and establish educational institutions. The 1991 Act on the Education System grants pupils the right to maintain their national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic identity, and gives them the right to education in their mother tongue, as well as education about its history and culture. Regarding pre-school education for the Lithuanian minority in Poland, there are three kindergartens. Three primary schools and one secondary school offer education in Lithuanian.

Lithuanian in educational research

For political reasons, educational and sociolinguistic research on minority/regional language communities showed little development between World War II and 1989. Since then, research has focused on the situation of schooling in Lithuanian; however, there have been no studies on Lithuanian as a medium of instruction or as a subject.

Prospects for Lithuanian in Poland

The prospects for the Lithuanian language among the Lithuanian minority in Poland are in general quite good as there are still a few primary and secondary schools left that teach in Lithuanian. However, intermarriage between Poles and Lithuanians is becoming increasingly common and this can be considered a certain threat. From one side, intermarriages indicate the assimilation of the minority, and from another, they indicate a threat of losing identity and with that, heritage, tradition, and language.

Regioninė Dosier Serija

Lietuvių kalba švietime Lenkijoje

2-asis leidimas

Jowita Niewulis-Grablunas

Piotr Grablunas

Adomo Mickevičiaus universitetas

Santrauka

Lietuvių kalba ir jos padėtis švietimo srityje Lenkijoje

Lenkijos Respublikos Konstitucijoje esama dviejų straipsnių, kurie yra tiesiogiai susiję su tautinių mažumų teisėmis. Čia teigiama, kad Lenkijos piliečiai, priklausantys tautinėms ar etninėms mažumoms, turi laisvę išlaikyti ir plėtoti savo kalbą bei steigti švietimo įstaigas. 1991 m. Švietimo sistemos įstatymas suteikia mokiniams teisę išlaikyti savo tautinę, etninę, religinę ir kalbinę tapatybę, teisę mokytis gimtąja kalba, bei mokytis apie jos istoriją ir kultūrą. Kalbant apie ikimokyklinį lietuvių tautinės mažumos ugdymą, Lenkijoje yra trys vaikų darželiai, trys pradinės ir viena vidurinė mokykla, kuriose edukacinis procesas vyksta lietuvių kalba.

Lietuvių kalba švietimo tyrimuose

Dėl politinių priežasčių edukaciniai ir sociolingvistiniai mažumų/regioninių kalbų bendruomenių tyrimai nuo Antrojo pasaulinio karo iki 1989 m. mažai vystėsi. Nuo to laiko moksliniai tyrimai buvo skirti mokymosi lietuvių kalba situacijai; tačiau lietuvių kalbos kaip mokymo priemonės ar dalyko studijų nebuvo.

Lietuvių kalbos perspektyvos Lenkijoje

Lietuvių kalbos perspektyvos tarp lietuvių tautinės mažumos Lenkijoje apskritai yra gana geros, nes dar liko kelios pradinės ir vidurinės mokyklos, kuriose mokoma lietuvių kalba. Tačiau mišrios vedybos tarp lenkų ir lietuvių tampa vis dažnesnės ir tai gali būti laikoma tam tikra grėsme. Iš vienos pusės mišrios santuokos rodo mažumos asimiliaciją, o iš kitos – grėsmę prarasti tapatybę, o kartu ir paveldą, tradicijas ir kalbą.

Język litewski w szkolnictwie w Polsce

2. wydanie

Jowita Niewulis-Grablunas

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Streszczenie

Język litewski i jego status w edukacji w Polsce

Konstytucja RP zawiera dwa artykuły odnoszące się bezpośrednio do praw mniejszości, w których stwierdza się, że obywatele polscy należący do mniejszości narodowych lub etnicznych mają swobodę zachowania i rozwoju własnego języka oraz tworzenia placówek oświatowych. Ustawa o systemie oświaty z 1991 r. zapewnia uczniom prawo do zachowania tożsamości narodowej, etnicznej, religijnej i językowej oraz prawo do nauki w języku ojczystym, a także nauki o jego historii i kulturze. Jeśli chodzi o wychowanie przedszkolne dla mniejszości litewskiej w Polsce funkcjonują trzy przedszkola. Naukę w języku litewskim prowadzą trzy szkoły podstawowe i jedna szkoła średnia.

Język litewski w badaniach edukacyjnych

Z powodów politycznych badania edukacyjne i socjolingwistyczne dotyczące mniejszości języków regionalnych wykazały niewielki postęp między II wojną światową a rokiem 1989. Od tego czasu badania koncentrowały się na sytuacji szkolnictwa w języku litewskim; nie przeprowadzono jednak badań nad językiem litewskim jako środkiem nauczania lub przedmiotem.

Perspektywy języka litewskiego w Polsce

Perspektywy dla języka litewskiego wśród mniejszości litewskiej w Polsce są generalnie dobre, ponieważ pozostało jeszcze kilka szkół podstawowych i średnich, w których proces dydaktyczny odbywa się w języku litewskim. Jednak małżeństwa mieszane między Polakami i Litwinami stają się coraz bardziej powszechne i można to uznać za pewne zagrożenie. Z jednej strony małżeństwa mieszane wskazują na asymilację mniejszości, z drugiej na groźbę utraty tożsamości, a wraz z nią dziedzictwa, tradycji i języka.



List of Abbreviations

CEN	Centrum Edukacji Nauczycieli (Teacher Education Centre)
GUS	Główny Urząd Statystyczny (Central Department of Statistics)
LOzLJN	Liceum Ogólnokształcące z Litewskim Językiem Nauczania im. 11-Marca w Puńsku/ Punsko Kovo 11-osios licėjus (Puńsk 11 March Lyceum (secondary school) with Teaching in the Lithuanian Language)
LRABR	Lietuvos Respublikos Ambasada Baltarusijos Respublikoje (Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in the Republic of Belarus)
LRALaR	Lietuvos Respublikos Ambasada Latvijos Respublikoje (Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in the Republic of Latvia)
LRALeR	Lietuvos Respublikos Ambasada Lenkijos Respublikoje (Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in the Republic of Poland)
OSP	Oficialiosios statistikos portalas – Lietuvos statistikos departamentas (Official Statistics Portal – Lithuanian Department of Statistics)
UMNEJR	Ustawa o mniejszościach narodowych i etnicznych oraz o języku regionalnym (The Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Languages)
VLE	Visuotinė Lietuvių Enciklopedija (Universal Lithuanian Encyclopedia)

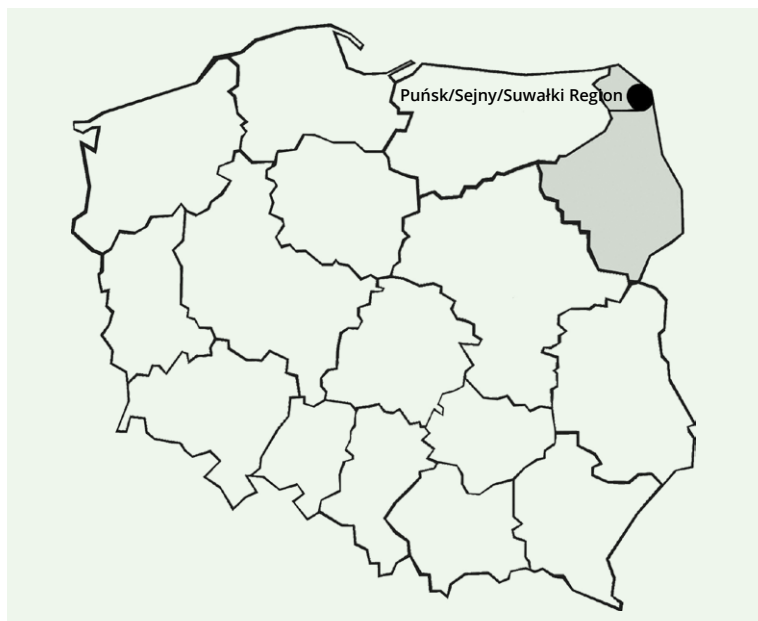
1 Introduction

language

Lithuanian (Lithuanian: *lietuvių kalba*) is a Baltic language that belongs to the Indo-European family, together with Latvian and the extinct Old Prussian and Yatvingian languages. Some (socio)linguists also distinguish between Latgalian, spoken as a regional language in eastern Latvia, and Samogitian/Zhemaitian in western Lithuania. The Lithuanian language is often regarded as one of the most archaic among living Indo-European languages.

Lithuanian is the official language of the Republic of Lithuania, which has a population of 2,810,000, of whom around 86.9% are Lithuanians (Visuotinė Lietuvių Enciklopedija [VLE], 2021a). Compact groups of Lithuanian-speaking minorities can also be found in Belarus (LRABR, 2020), Latvia (LRaLR, 2020), Poland, and other European countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and Ireland. A considerable number of Lithuanians also live in North America (e.g. in Chicago) and in Russia (OSP, 2015).

Figure 1 Map of Poland and the Puńsk/Sejny/Suwałki region.



Note. Adapted from pixabay.com/pl/vectors/polska-administracja-mapa-kraju-149792/ (November 28, 2020).

The Lithuanian-speaking minority in Poland is confined to the following three municipalities (Polish: *gminy*): Puńsk/Punskas (where possible, placenames are given in their Polish and (standard) Lithuanian forms) and Sejny/Seinai in the district (Polish: *powiat*) of Sejny/Seinai,

and Szypliszki/Šipliškės in the district of Suwałki/Suvalkai in the province of Podlasie (*województwo podlaskie*). Dispersed groups of Lithuanians also inhabit the neighbouring province of Warmia-Mazury and urban agglomerations throughout the country, for example in Warsaw, Wrocław, and Poznań. The Lithuanian minority in the Puńsk/Punskas-Sejny/Seinai-Suwałki/Suvalkai region compactly inhabits an area along the Polish-Lithuanian border of about 40 km in length and about 15 km wide. The area comprises around 60 villages.

Until the end of the 13th century, the region of Suwałki/Suvalkija was inhabited by the Baltic tribe of Yatvingians, who eventually found themselves conquered by the Order of Teutonic Knights. In the 15th century, after a long dispute between the Teutonic Order and the Great Duchy of Lithuania, the territory was colonised by growing numbers of settlers from Lithuania who mixed with descendants of the Yatvingians and the White Ruthenians (ancestors of Belarusians). In the mid-16th century, the area was also colonised from the south by Polish settlers from Mazuria. The linguistic structure of the region changed dramatically after the plague of 1710–1711, when many Lithuanian elements disappeared. Until today, the process of regression of the Lithuanian dialect(s) in the area has continued slowly but steadily (Marcinkiewicz, 1997; Birgiel, 2002; Niewulis-Grablunas, 2015; Niewulis-Grablunas, 2018; Mikulėnienė et al., 2016). In the years after World War I, the region of Puńsk/Punskas-Sejny/Seinai-Suwałki/Suvalkai changed hands between Germany (Province of East Prussia) and the newly independent states of Poland and Lithuania.

After World War II, the communist authorities of Poland fostered the idea of a mono-ethnic and monolingual state. The first legal minority organisations were only able to start their activities as late as 1956. This also applied to the Lithuanian minority in Poland. From 1956 to 1989, the only legal organisation was the so-called Lithuanian Socio-Cultural Society.

The territory where Lithuanian is spoken is traditionally and generally divided into areas related to two main dialectal groups, namely *Aukštaitian* (upland) and *Žemaitian* (lowlands; English: Samogitian). The Lithuanian dialect used in Poland belongs to the southern Aukštaitian subdialect (*pietų aukštaičių tarmė*, also called *Dzukian*; Niewulis-Grablunas, 2018, pp. 11–25), with a very small territory of the western Aukštaitian dialect within the northern confines.

population

The area inhabited by the Lithuanian minority in Poland within its present borders has not diminished significantly over the last decades. According to different sources, such as the *Universal Lithuanian Encyclopedia* (VLE, 2021b), the Republic of Lithuania nowadays estimates the total number of ethnic Lithuanians in Poland at 62,000, including 10,000 to 12,000 in the Puńsk/Punskas-Sejny/Seinai-Suwałki/Suvalkai region; however, it has been pointed out that this number could be lower (Marcinkiewicz, 1997). Other sources (LRALeR, 2016; Makowski, 1986; Stravinskienė, 2004; Wójcikowska, 2013; Żołędowski, 1990) say that minority population numbers are estimated at 12,000, with 80% living in the region of Puńsk/Punskas-Sejny/Seinai-Suwałki/Suvalkai. As stated in a study by Lithuanian dialectologists, carried out from 2014 to 2016, Lithuanians in Poland are compactly confined to 63 villages in the Puńsk/Punskas-Sejny/Seinai-Suwałki/Suvalkai region (Mikulėnienė et al., 2016, p. 97).

In the town of Puńsk/Punskas, which had 1,205 inhabitants in 2021 (Birgeliene, 2022), Lithuanians make up around 80% of the total population. In the town Sejny/Seinai (around 5,000 inhabitants), roughly 20% of the inhabitants are Lithuanian (VLE, 2021b).

The actual ethnic centre of the region is the town of Puńsk/Punskas, which hosts important institutions for local Lithuanian culture, such as the building complex of the bilingual primary and secondary schools, the House of Lithuanian Culture – formed by the Lithuanian Socio-Cultural Society in 1956 – as well as numerous choirs, bands, dance groups, and amateur theatres (“barn”). It is also in Puńsk/Punskas where the journal *Aušra* (“Aurora”) has been issued since 1960, entirely in Lithuanian, by the eponymous publishing house. In addition to hosting the Lithuanian Socio-Cultural Society (active since 1992 as Poland’s Association of Lithuanians), Puńsk/Punskas is the place of the Lithuanian St. Casimir’s Union (a Christian association) and the Union of Lithuanians in Poland – both re-established in 1992. Moreover, it is worth mentioning the local open-air museum and the museum of Lithuanian folklore, as well as the annual Lithuanian culture festival *Sąskrydis* (“gathering”) that occurs on the banks of the Gaładuś/Galadusys lake.

During the Polish population census of 2002, 5,800 people (0.02% of the total Polish population) declared that they identified most with the Lithuanian nationality, 91% of whom lived in the Province of Podlasie. Roughly the same number of people declared that they most often spoke Lithuanian or both Lithuanian and Polish at home (GUS, 2003). It is worth noting an exceptional correspondence between the figures given as answers to both questions; in the case of other minority groups, significant discrepancies between “nationality” and “home language” were recorded.

The 2011 population census (GUS, 2013) contained two questions, one dealing with “nationality” the other one dealing with “home language”. The latter included the following three subsections (GUS, 2011):

1. What is your nationality? (respondents could select the appropriate item from the 14 nationalities in the drop-down list or choose the category “other - enter what” and enter their own definition)
2. Do you also feel belonging to another nation or ethnic community? (there were only two possibilities from which to choose, namely “Yes” and “No, I don’t”. If a respondent chose YES, they could select the appropriate item from the drop-down list or choose the category “other – enter what” and enter their own definition)
3. Which language(s) do you speak most often at home?
 - a) Only Polish
 - b) Polish and another one (respondents could select the appropriate item from the drop-down list or choose the category “other – enter what” and enter their own definition)
 - c) Only a language other than Polish (Please specify which language)
 - d) (respondents could select the appropriate item from the drop-down list or choose the category “other – enter what” and enter their own definition)

A total of 5,599 people answered “Lithuanian” to the first question. In response to the second question, 2,264 people reported Lithuania/Lithuanian as another nation or ethnic community to which they felt that they belonged. Thus, 7,863 people declared that they had Lithuanian nationality.

Question 3c was answered with “Lithuanian language” by 3,597 respondents, and 1,706 respondents replied to question 3b that they used Lithuanian next to Polish (GUS, 2011, pp. 89–98).

language status

Lithuanian has always been recognised as a minority language in Poland, although during the communist era (i.e. until the 1990s), there was no legal act confirming this status by law. A bilateral treaty between the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania was signed in Vilnius on 13 January 1992 (Consular Convention between the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania, 1994). The treaty recognises the existence of the Lithuanian minority in Poland and the Polish minority in Lithuania, and obliged both states to protect their rights (including the right to education in the respective minority languages) on a mutual basis. The Constitution of the Republic of Poland (Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 1997) contains two articles (Arts. 27 and 35) that pertain directly to minority rights, in which it is stated that Polish citizens belonging to national or ethnic minorities have the freedom to maintain and develop their own language, maintain customs and traditions, develop their own culture, and establish educational and cultural institutions and organisations.

The Polish Language Act 1999 (Ustawa o języku polskim, 1999) provides the possibility to introduce a minority language as a supplementary administrative language in those areas “where minority languages could be used in bilingual place-names, in personal names and in local administration”. The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was signed by Poland in 1995 and ratified in 2000 (Konwencja ramowa Rady Europy o ochronie mniejszości narodowych, 1995). During the first monitoring visit by the Council of Europe, the monitoring delegation also visited the province capital of Białystok to become acquainted with the situation of the Lithuanian and Belarusian minorities. The government of the Republic of Poland signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 2003, which was ratified in 2009 (Europejska karta języków regionalnych lub mniejszościowych, 2003).

On 6 January 2005, the Sejm (lower house of the Polish Parliament) passed the final version of the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Languages (UMNEJR, 2005), adding the major amendments voted on later by the Senate, which granted the right to use a minority/regional language in those municipalities where at least 20% of the inhabitants (according to the 2002 and 2011 censuses) declared their affiliation to a minority. The UMNEJR officially recognises nine national minorities (Belarusian, Czech, Lithuanian, German, Armenian, Russian, Slovak, Ukrainian, and Jewish) and four ethnic minorities (Karaims, Lemks/Rusyns, Roma, and Tatars), and recognises Kashubian as a regional language.

Art. 1 of UMNEJR “(...) normalises the issues relating to the maintenance and development of cultural identity of national and ethnic minorities, as well as the maintenance and development of the regional language (...)”. In contradiction to the regulations regarding the introduction of a supplementary administrative language, Art 4. states that no-one shall be obligated to reveal information on their belonging to a minority, origin, minority language. Art. 5§2 of the UMNEJR (forbidding any steps aiming to shift the national or ethnic proportions in areas inhabited by minorities) is of particular importance for the Lithuanian minority in the context of their protests in the 1990s against the location of a large border-guard unit in Puńsk/Punskas. The country-wide campaign eventually resulted in a temporary abandonment of that plan by military authorities.

The UMNEJR (Art. 12) also provides a legal grounding to introduce additional place names in a minority/regional language, even if the number of inhabitants declaring minority nationality (or regional language) is less than 20% of that population. The motion of the municipality council must be consulted and supported in a referendum by at least 50% of the municipality’s inhabitants. According to Art. 15 of the UMNEJR, the costs of introducing the minority language and additional place names in this language shall be covered by the local municipality budget, while changing the information signs (e.g. of schools) shall be financed by the state budget.

The 1992 Act on Radio and TV Broadcasting (Ustawa o radiofonii i telewizji, 1992) contains a general obligation to meet the needs of national and ethnic minorities in the public media. There is one 7-minute news programme entirely in Lithuanian called *Lietuvių panorama* (“Lithuanian panorama”) that is broadcast every Sunday afternoon by the state TV-station in Białystok, subtitled in Polish. Radio programmes in Lithuanian are broadcast by Radio Białystok 5 on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays (30, 15, and 15 minutes, respectively). Furthermore, all television and main radio programmes from the Republic of Lithuania can be received in the Puńsk/Punskas-Sejny/Seinai-Suwałki/Suwałkai region.

status of language education

The following legal acts, decrees, and regulations are crucial to the status of education of and in minority/regional languages in Poland. The 1991 Act on the Education System of (Ustawa o systemie oświaty, 1991) grants pupils the right to maintain their national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic identity, and gives them the right to education in their mother tongue, as well as education about its history and culture.

The Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sports from 2002 (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu, 2002) substituted the previous one issued in 1992 and is perceived by minority organisations as more regressive. For example, the regulation no longer contains provisions for pre-school minority language education and makes mother tongue teaching in schools for minorities no longer compulsory. Additionally, many regulations contain the expression “country of origin”, which suggests that minority groups have an immigrant character. The previously mentioned Act also contains regulations regarding education (UMNEJR, 2005; see *language status*).

education system

A major reform of the education system in Poland was initiated in the school year 2016/17, which was set to be completed in the school year 2022/23. Before the reform, there was no early childhood education and care, but now there are crèches, nursery schools, kids' clubs, and nanny care for children aged 0–3 years. Pre-school or pre-primary education for 6-year-old children, which is obligatory, takes place in kindergartens, in pre-school classes at primary schools, or in pre-school centres. The new reform instituted an 8-year primary school (for school pupils aged 6/7 to 15 years), integrating the previous 6-year primary school (pupils aged 6/7 to 13 years) with 3 years of the pre-reform lower secondary school (students aged 13 to 16 years).

Secondary education has been transformed as well (previously for students aged 16 to 19/20 years, now for students aged 15 to 18/20 years) from a 3-year general upper secondary school into a 4-year secondary school. The 4-year technical upper secondary school has been remodeled into a 5-year technical school, and 3-year basic vocational schools converted into stage I sectoral vocational schools. New 2-year stage II sectoral vocational schools have also been established.

The schools (kindergarten, primary school, and secondary school) attended by the Lithuanian national minority do not differ too much from others in the country. The only difference is additional lessons in the Lithuanian language and history, culture, and geography of Lithuania.

The school education reform has no implications for the higher education system. After secondary school, there is an opportunity to continue education in the post-secondary non-tertiary schools or colleges of social work and higher education.

The higher education first-cycle programme leads to a bachelor's degree, generally taking 3 to 4 years for a bachelor's degree (*licencjat*) or 3.5 to 4 years for a degree in engineering. The second-cycle track leads to a master's degree (*magister*) and takes 1.5 to 2 years. There are long-cycle programmes (4.5 to 6 years) that also lead to a master's degree but only in selected areas (e.g. medicine or veterinary medicine). The third-cycle programme is known as doctoral studies (*studia doktoranckie*), which lasts from 2 to 4 years.

The Polish education system offers various general and vocational courses in non-school settings. Art and sports schools constitute a separate system, which is supervised by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage (Polish: *Minister Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego*). These schools are intended for children and youth with particular artistic or sport abilities. They are offered in the fields of both general and arts/sport education.

private and public

According to the previously mentioned 1991 Act on the Education System (Ustawa o systemie oświaty, 1991), Polish educational institutions can act as public and non-public institutions. There are two types of institutions among non-public schools, namely private schools and community or so-called “social schools”. Although they are often treated as one group for statistical purposes, they are considerably different. “Social school” is not a statutory term (the 1991 Act on the Education System neither defines nor uses this term); however, it is commonly used to denote a school run by a social organisation, most often an association that has no commercial purpose. The main difference between these two types of non-public schools is the founding body; in the case of private schools, they are usually natural (individual) or legal persons (legal entities, companies), and in the case of social schools, they are associations, foundations, social organisations, or religious associations, usually operating as non-profit institutions. Each non-public school in Poland is subject to the Ministry of National Education and must respect the official curriculum so that each child from a non-public school, if necessary, can go to a public school or vice versa.

There were 31,556 schools in Poland in 2018, of which 25,518 were public (81%) and 6,038 non-public (19%; Kolanowska, 2018, p. 16). There are no private schools providing education in – or about – Lithuanian. The existing schools in the region are predominantly public or municipality-run.

bilingual education forms

Only a few schools in the Puńsk/Punskas-Sejny/Seinai-Suwałki/Suwałkai region provide bilingual education in Polish and Lithuanian. There are schools with Lithuanian as the language of instruction, where all subjects, except for Polish language & literature, history, and social science are taught in Lithuanian. At these schools, Lithuanian language & literature is taught on average for four or five classes per week, and Lithuanian history and geography is also part of the curriculum, each for about 1 hour per week. At other schools, Lithuanian is only taught as a subject, while Polish is the language of instruction for all other subjects. It is worth mentioning that the Polish Lithuanians are in fact the only minority group in the country with a fully bilingual school curriculum, from pre-school education up to university level.

administration

Pre-primary education is organised, supervised, and financed by the municipalities (Polish: *gmina*). Primary education is organised and financed by the municipalities with funding provided through the central education authority (Ministry of National Education). Secondary education is organised and financed by the district (Polish: *powiat*) with funding provided through the same central education authority. Higher educational institutions are autonomous but – with some exceptions – financed and supervised by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. Specialised universities in the fields of medicine and agriculture, as well

as academies focused on music, theatre, film, and fine arts, and military academies are supervised and financed by the Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Rural Development, National Heritage and Culture, and National Defence, respectively.

inspection

The control over the schools' governance (primary and secondary) is shared between several entities at the following different levels: national (Minister of Education and Science), regional (Head of the Regional Education Authorities and highest local government level; Polish: *kuratorium oświaty*), and local (intermediate local government level – powiat, lowest local government level – gmina), as well as institutional levels (school level — head of the school, teaching council, parents' council, and pupil/student self-government).

The basic legal acts that regulate the way in which inspections are conducted by school superintendents are the Act of 14 December 2016 on Education Law (Ustawa. Prawo oświatowe, 2017) and the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 25 August 2017 on Pedagogical Supervision (Obwieszczenie w sprawie rozporządzenia w sprawie nadzoru pedagogicznego, 2020).

Governance in higher education requires the involvement of the Minister of Education and Science and several educational bodies at the national level and single-person authority and collective bodies at the institutional level (Kolanowska, 2018, p. 19).

The responsibility for the initial institutional accreditation and the initial and periodic accreditation of programmes is shared between the Ministry of National Education and Science and the Polish Accreditation Committee (Polish: *Polska Komisja Akredytacyjna*; Kolanowska, 2018, p. 109).

support structure

There are a few main bodies that were created with the intention of maintaining the Lithuanian language in the education system in the Puńsk/Punskas-Sejny/Seinai-Suwałki/Suwałkai region.

The Association of Lithuanians in Poland (Polish/Lithuanian: *Stowarzyszenie Litwinów w Polsce/Lenkijos lietuvių draugija*) and the Lithuanian Community in Poland (Polish/Lithuanian: *Wspólnota Litwinów w Polsce/Lenkijos lietuvių bendruomenė*) take care of the cultural, social, and public affairs of Lithuanians in Poland, seek to develop relations with Lithuania, preserve national identity, organise historical events, anniversaries, and excursions for schoolchildren (students) to Lithuania, and patronise Lithuanian schools and Lithuanian classes in Polish schools.

The Bishop A. Baranauskas foundation “Lithuanian House” in Sejny (Polish/Lithuanian: Fundacja im. Biskupa Antanasa Baranauskasa „Dom Litewski w Sejnach”/ Vyskūpo Antano Baranausko fondas „Lietuvių Namai”) takes care of the maintenance of the Lithuanian “Žiburys” school and the Seinai “Lithuanian House” (Lithuanian: *Lietuvių namai*), and promotes the development of Lithuanian education and culture in Poland.

The Aušra Publishing House in Puńsk/Punskas published 292 books in Lithuanian between 1993 and 2020. This publishing house releases several press titles and magazines, in addition to publishing books and school handbooks, all of them in Lithuanian. These magazines are the following: *Aušra* (“aurora”); *Aušrelė* (“little aurora”), a children’s monthly; *Suvalkietis*, quarterly for the Lithuanians in Suwałki/Suvalkai; *Šaltinis* (“origin”), quarterly for the Lithuanians in Sejny/Seinai; *Dėmesio* (“attention”), published irregularly by the school youth of Puńsk/Punskas, usually twice a year; and *Terra Jatwezenorum* (“the land of Jotvingians”), published every year as a collection of articles about the history, culture, and language of Jotvingians (the tribe of Southern Balts) and Lithuanians of the Puńsk/Punskas-Sejny/Seinai-Suwałki/Suvalkai territory (B. Bobin, editor at Aušra Publishing House, personal communication, June 2020).

There is also the methodological Lithuanian language teaching consultant at the Teacher Training Centre in Suwałki/Suvalkai. The post is financed by the district of Sejny/Seinai and the municipality of Puńsk/Punskas. Moreover, teachers who teach Lithuanian language, history, culture, or geography have the opportunity to go to Lithuania for training organised by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania (Lithuanian: *Lietuvos Respublikos Švietimo, Mokslo ir Sporto Ministerija*).

2 Pre-school education

target group

There is early childhood education and care for children aged 3 years and younger, and kindergartens that are attended by children aged between 3 and 6 years. As of the school year 2003/04, pre-school education is only obligatory for 6-year-olds.

structure

Early childhood education and care is divided into two stages. Children aged 3 and younger are provided with care in childcare institutions such as crèches and playschools or by child-minders and nannies in other settings. For children aged 3 to 6 years, pre-school education is delivered in nursery schools, primary schools, and in alternative pre-school units and centres where reception classes can be attended.

The aims of pre-school education are defined in the national core curriculum (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej, 2017, poz. 356, 2017c), which all institutions providing pre-school education are required to follow. Pre-school education should develop children's talents, social and intellectual skills, emotional resilience, curiosity, activeness, and independence, and help to build a system of values and knowledge about the world. Pupils at this stage should be prepared to continue their education at primary school. Pre-school education also develops a sense of patriotism and belonging to a community.

The curriculum is approved by the head of a given learning centre, or, in the case of alternative pre-school settings, by the head of the educational unit that employs teachers.

legislation

Pre-school (kindergarten) education is organised according to the Act on Education Law of 2017 (Ustawa. Prawo oświatowe, 2017). The right to learn a language of a national, ethnic, or regional minority is based on the principles specified in the procedure in the 1991 Act on the Education System. This Act obliges public kindergartens to enable children to maintain a national, ethnic, and linguistic identity. The implementation of this task is regulated in the Act on Education Law of 2017.

The Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of 14 November 2007 (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej, 2007) specifies the education of children belonging to national and ethnic minorities. The decree defines the conditions that enable the formation and maintenance of national, ethnic, and linguistic identity.

language use

Lithuanian is used and taught in pre-school education in two kindergartens, run by the municipality of Puńsk/Punskas and Sejny/Seinai. In the school year 2019/20, the kindergarten in Puńsk/Punskas was attended by 107 children, divided into the following five groups: two Lithuanian-language groups of 5–6-year-olds (so-called “zerówka” – “zero classes”), two Lithuanian-language groups of 3–4-year-olds, and one Polish-language group of 3–6-year-olds. In other words, 85 children in the kindergarten in Puńsk/Punskas were offered Lithuanian-language pre-school instruction (A. Wołyniec, kindergarten headteacher in Puńsk/Punskas, personal communication, June 2020). The kindergarten in Sejny/Seinai was attended by 31 children, who were divided into the following two groups with Lithuanian as the language of instruction: one group of 5–6-year-olds (“zero classes”) and one group of 3–4-year-olds (A. Vaicekauskas, kindergarten headteacher in Sejny/Seinai, personal communication, June 2020). A new kindergarten was opened in Suwałki/Suvalkai during the summer of 2020. This kindergarten is financed by the government of the Republic of Lithuania, and was attended by 13 children in 2020 (children are not divided into groups; J. Malinowska-Wektor, kindergarten headteacher in Suwałki/Suvalkai, personal communication, September 2020). In the school year 2019/20, there was also one group of seven 4–6-year-old children in a school in Widugiery/Vidugiriai, but classes for this group were and remain combined with first grade schoolchildren (A. Samulewicz, school headteacher in Widugiery/Vidugiriai, personal communication, June 23, 2020).

teaching materials

Aušra Publishing House publishes an illustrated set of worksheets and exercise books every year for teaching the alphabet in Lithuanian to the “zero classes”. Other teaching materials are either Polish or brought in from the Republic of Lithuania and financed by Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania.

statistics

Regarding pre-school education for the Lithuanian minority in Poland, there were three kindergartens offering education to 151 children in 2020 (A. Samulewicz, school headteacher in Widugiery/Vidugiriai, personal communication, June 2020; A. Vaicekauskas, kindergarten headteacher in Sejny/Seinai, personal communication, June 2020; A. Wołyniec, kindergarten headteacher in Puńsk/Punskas, personal communication, June 2020; J. Malinowska-Wektor, kindergarten headteacher in Suwałki/Suvalkai, personal communication, September 2020)

3 Primary education

target group

Starting from the school year 2016/17, primary education (Polish: *szkoła podstawowa*) lasts 8 years in the Polish education system and is intended for children aged 6/7 to 15/16 years.

structure

Pupils in primary schools are grouped into an eight-class system respective to their age. Grades 1 through 3 are designed to ensure a smooth transition from early school education to subject-based education and are organised in an integrated manner. Education from grades 4 to 8 is based on subjects and elevating learning skills.

The number of hours for specific subjects is specified in separate regulations. The curriculum extends to the following fields: religion or ethics; family education; national language as well as ethnic minority language, or regional language; history and culture of a national/ethnic minority or community; geography of the country with a national minority identified; sports activities; and classes/activities as part of psychological and educational support. A number of hours for additional classes/educational activities and sign language classes may be allocated by the body administering a given school (Kolanowska, 2018, pp. 37–40).

Each year, the board of teachers (Polish: *Rada Pedagogiczna*) decides on whether to introduce classes in Lithuanian in the next school year. The decision must be supported by a resolution of the school board. At least seven written applications from parents are required to open a class with instruction in Lithuanian. The state provides funding for the teaching of Lithuanian in such schools if its programme amounts to 3 hours of instruction. The subsidy rate for schools providing education in/of minority languages is 120% the rate for other schools. If the number of pupils in such a school does not exceed 42 pupils (as is the case with smaller Lithuanian schools), the rate increases to 150%. Funding for the first 4 months of language instruction must, however, be paid by the municipality. In some cases, this amount may also be paid by the Ministry of National Education at the start of the school year.

legislation

Primary education in Poland is overseen by the Ministry of National Education and Science, which stipulates compulsory attendance for all children as well as the right to education for all Polish citizens. Primary schools are supervised by the local municipalities, and the funds

are provided by the Ministry to provide an adequate environment of advancement and educational balance within the whole country.

The most important legislation regarding primary and secondary education are the previously named Act on the Education System of 2016 (Ustawa. Prawo oświatowe, 2017), the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Languages of 2005, and the Decree of the Ministry of National Education of 2007.

language use

The primary schools that provide education for children from the Lithuanian minority in the Puńsk/Punskas-Sejny/Seinai-Suwałki/Suwałkai region have two different structures. These are primary schools with Lithuanian as the main language of instruction, and primary schools with additional classes that are taught in Lithuanian.

Almost all subjects taught in primary education are delivered with Lithuanian as the main language of instruction, except Polish language, history (general), and social studies. For subjects such as integrated education and Lithuanian language & literature in grades 1–3, and Lithuanian language & literature, history and culture of Lithuania, and geography of Lithuania in grades 4–8, children have textbooks in Lithuanian. For other subjects such as chemistry, biology, maths, physics, and geography (all general), there are no textbooks in Lithuanian – only in Polish – but the language of instruction is Lithuanian. Another subject provided in Lithuanian is integrated education, also called early school education or elementary education, which combines educational and didactic goals, without distinguishing subjects and a traditional grading system (the highest grade in Polish schools is “6” and the lowest “1”).

Primary schools with additional classes teaching in Lithuanian have only three lessons per week. During these lessons, Lithuanian language, history, geography, and culture are taught. These classes contain students of different ages, so there are no ready-made educational materials. The teachers themselves determine the level, subject, and difficulty of these classes (T. Jonuszkaniš, teacher of the Lithuanian language in Suwałki/Suwałkai and Poćkuny/Packūnai, personal communication, June 2020).

The Lithuanian community in Warsaw runs a Saturday course on the culture and history of Lithuania for children of Lithuanian diasporic families living in the capital. These courses are attended by around 23 schoolchildren (I. Mažul, organiser of Saturday courses in Warsaw, personal communication, September 2021).

teaching materials

Books and exercise books in Lithuanian for the Lithuanian-language schools and classes are published by Aušra Publishing House in Puńsk/Punskas. Other subjects such as chem-

istry, biology, maths, physics, geography (general, not Lithuania), and Polish language and literature are published in the Polish language by Nowa Era (Warsaw) and Wydawnictwo Szkolne i Pedagogiczne (Warsaw); these schoolbooks and exercise books are also in Polish schools all over Poland.

The number of Lithuanian-language handbooks increased significantly after 1999 (earlier there were only a few textbooks for schoolchildren in grades 1–3); since then, the Ministry of National Education and Sports has approved 17 handbooks and workbooks for classes 1–3 (primary school), 14 handbooks for classes 4–8 (primary school), and 13 handbooks for teachers regarding integrated education, Lithuanian language & literature, history of Lithuania, and geography of Lithuania (including geography of the Puńsk/Punskas-Sejny/Seinai-Suwałki/Suvalkai region) for primary schools. Most of the teaching materials published are purchased by the Ministry of National Education and Sports and distributed among the schools providing education in and of the minority and regional language.

It is worth mentioning that, among all minority groups in Poland, children attending the Lithuanian-language schools and classes in Poland definitely have the widest range of handbooks at their disposal in their native language.

statistics

According to the website of the Republic of Poland, which includes information from the Ministry of Education and Science, more than 3 million pupils (385,000 pupils started first grade) attended primary school in the school year 2019/20 in Poland (Serwis Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej, 2020).

A total of 372 schoolchildren at the primary level attended classes with Lithuanian as the medium of instruction (including teaching of Lithuanian as the mother tongue) or additional teaching of Lithuanian. There are three primary schools with Lithuanian as the main language of instruction (in Puńsk/Punskas, Sejny/Seinai, and Widugiery/Vidugiriai) and four primary schools with added classes for teaching Lithuanian (three lessons per week; in Krasnowo/Krasnavas, Poćkuny/Packūnai, Suwałki/Suvalkai, and Sejny/Seinai). It is worth noting that since 1999, three Lithuanian primary schools have closed (in Nowiniki/Navinykai, Przystawańce/Pristavonys, and Wojtokiemie/Vaitakiemis). Other primary schools that offered Lithuanian language lessons shared the same fate (in Krasnogruda/Krasnogrūda, Ogrodniki/Aradnykai, Łumbie/Lumbiai, Klejwy/Klevai, and Romanowce/Ramoniškės).

The Bishop A. Baranauskas foundation (formerly the Seina foundation), run by the Community of Lithuanians in Poland, built a private school in Sejny/Seinai with financial assistance from the Republic of Lithuania. On 1 September 2005, this new private school opened its doors to 66 Lithuanian pupils from the Sejny/Seinai community. Some of the children attending this school came from the closed schools in Krasnogruda/Krasnogrūda and Ogrodniki/Aradnykai.

4 Secondary education

target group

Secondary education is not obligatory in Poland and is intended for pupils aged 15/16 to 18/19 years.

structure

As a result of the major reform of the education institution system in Poland in the school year 2016/17, secondary education has been transformed. The 3-year general upper secondary school was changed into a 4-year secondary school (*4-letnie liceum*), and the 4-year technical secondary school into a 5-year technical secondary school.

Curricula adopted by general secondary schools should be based on the national core curriculum and timetable outlines. The subjects taught at the basic level of general secondary school include the following: Polish language, modern foreign languages, culture studies, history, civic education, introduction to entrepreneurship, geography, biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, information technology, physical education, and safety education. At the advanced level, there are also classes in religion/ethics (students can choose which subject they prefer) and family life education. In secondary schools of national or ethnic minorities, there are also classes of national minority language / ethnic minority language / regional language, history and culture about a given minority, and geography of the country with whose cultural area a national minority identifies. In addition to the general secondary school, there are secondary schools of the following various profiles, which are also popular in Poland: mathematics and physics, mathematics and informatics, humanistic, biochemical, physical and IT, artistic, geographical, or journalistic.

The specificity of technical secondary education differs from general school education mainly because it functions as vocational education. For this reason, there are differences in the types of profiles. The most popular classes in technical skills are those that prepare for professions that are currently attractive in the labour market. According to research (Ourkids, 2021; Ministerstwo Edukacji i Nauki, 2021), the most important fields from this perspective at present are computer science, economics, and mathematics. This strongly influences the most popular training profiles in technical schools; at the time of writing, these were IT specialist, techniques economist, car mechanic, hospitality technician, and mechanical technician.

Graduates of general secondary schools and technical secondary schools may take the external upper secondary school leaving examination (Polish: *egzamin maturalny*) to obtain

the *Matura* certificate, which gives access to higher education. The secondary schools are organised and financed by the counties (and not by the municipalities) with funding provided by the Ministry of Education and Science.

The State provides funding for teaching Lithuanian in such schools if weekly classes amount to 3 hours. The subsidy rate for schools providing education in/of minority languages is 120% the rate for other schools. If the number of pupils in such a school does not exceed 42, the rate increases to 150%. This is not the case for the secondary school for the Lithuanian minority in Puńsk/Punskas. Funding for the first 4 months of language instruction must, however, be paid by the municipality. In some cases, this amount may also be paid by the Ministry of Education and Science at the start of the school year.

legislation

As is the case with the lower educational levels, secondary education in Poland falls under the authority and supervision of the Ministry of Education and Science. The most important regulations relevant to secondary education are the same as those that apply to primary schools (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej, 2017, poz. 356, 2017c).

The development of school curricula is the responsibility of the individual school. The programmes must, however, be approved by Ministry of Education and Science for school use. A working team consisting of teachers selected by the minority community with the participation of a Lithuanian language teacher prepares and develops the programme for the Lithuanian secondary school Liceum Ogólnokształcące z Litewskim Językiem Nauczania im. 11-Marca w Puńsku/Punsko Kovo 11-osios licėjus in Puńsk/Punskas (LOzLJN). The curricula must obtain a positive opinion in terms of content correctness, methodological usefulness, and compliance with the educational tasks included in the core curriculum.

Students receive a school certificate at the end of each school year. The school leaving certificate does not include results of the *Matura* exam. Those who have passed the *Matura* exam receive a *Matura* certificate with results of both the written and oral parts of the exam, issued by a Regional Examination Board.

language use

In the secondary school LOzLJN, all subjects – except Polish language & literature, history, geography, and foreign languages – are taught in Lithuanian. Lithuanian language & literature is taught for four classes per week. The curriculum in such schools also includes courses in regional studies and the history of Lithuania (1 hour per week).

Since 2005, graduates of schools with the language of instruction of national minorities may take the *Matura* exam in Polish or in the language of the national minority. Those who decide to sit their *Matura* exam in their native language receive the same exam sheets as

other students, translated into their native language. This does not apply to the Polish, and history and geography of Poland exam, which must be passed in Polish. In the school year 2019/20, Lithuanian was chosen as “mother tongue” examination subject by 20 pupils (A. Nevulis, secondary school headteacher in Puńsk/Punskas, personal communication, June 2020).

teaching materials

There are hardly any materials for the secondary level teaching of Lithuanian in Poland, except for teaching programmes for Lithuanian language & culture, the history of Lithuania, and the geography of Lithuania.

The only textbooks that are written in Lithuanian are those for Lithuanian language & literature, which were written in the last century and brought from Lithuania. This situation arose due to the fact that there is only one teacher able to write four textbooks (for each grade) for Lithuanian language & literature. The same applies to other subjects – there are not enough teachers to translate or write textbooks in Lithuanian. Students at this school use textbooks written in Polish – they have the same textbooks and follow the same curriculum as other secondary schools in Poland. Moreover, since 2005, there has been the possibility to pass the Matura exam in all subjects in the Lithuanian language. Previously, apart from the Lithuanian language and foreign languages, the Matura exam was held in Polish, hence the possible lack of interest or need for textbooks for all subjects in Lithuanian.

statistics

In the school year 2020/21, over 1.5 million pupils attended secondary schools (Serwis Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej, 2020). In 2019/20, there were around 1,776 public and 558 non-public general secondary schools and 1,676 public and 211 non-public technical secondary schools for youth in Poland (GUS, 2020).

At one particular school in Punskas/Puńsk (LOzLJN), a total of 89 pupils at the secondary level attended classes with Lithuanian as the medium of instruction, including teaching Lithuanian as the mother tongue (A. Nevulis, secondary school headteacher in Punskas/Puńsk, personal communication, June 2020). At only one general secondary school in Seinai/Sejny (Zespół Szkół Ogólnokształcących w Sejnach), 16 pupils were taught Lithuanian as an additional subject (A. Małkiński, secondary school headteacher in Seinai/Sejny, personal communication, June 2020). It is also worth noting that there is a school in Suwałki (1 Zespół Międzyszkolny przy Szkole Podstawowej nr 7 w Suwałkach) where 8 pupils followed additional Lithuanian language classes (T. Jonuszkaniš, Lithuanian language teacher at schools in Suvalkai/Suwałki and Poćkunų/Packūnai, personal communication, June 2020).

5 Vocational education

target group

Vocational education, as an alternative to secondary education, is not obligatory in Poland and is intended for pupils aged 15 to 20 years.

There are no vocational schools for adults in Poland with classes in the Lithuanian language, nor does it seem that there would be any need for such programmes. Most people belonging to the Lithuanian minority in Poland already followed primary or secondary education in their mother tongue and did not pursue further education, as the main source of income for the inhabitants in that region is agriculture.

structure

There are two stages of vocational school in Poland. The first is a 3-year stage I sectoral vocational school for students aged 15 to 18 years, which has been in place since the school year 2017/18. The second one is a 2-year stage II sectoral vocational school for students aged 19 to 20 years, which started in the school year 2020/21.

A stage I sectoral vocational school leads to vocational qualifications and provides access to a stage II sectoral vocational school, and to grade II of the general secondary school for adults. In a stage I sectoral vocational school, almost 60% of the entire education time is spent on practice. Students complete their first professional skills during internships with employers, as well as at school workshops and practical training centres. Students acquire general knowledge to the basic level throughout this period, which lasts a year in secondary school, and two years in technical school. This knowledge can be supplemented later in general secondary school for adults (starting from the second year). However, the most important thing is qualification. The student confirms each qualification with a separate examination, after passing which they receive a qualification certificate. After passing all the qualifications distinguished in a given profession and, of course, after graduating from school, they also receive a vocational diploma. A stage II sectoral vocational school provides training for occupations corresponding to those for which students are trained in a stage I sectoral vocational school. This enables students to obtain vocational qualifications at the level of technician and to take the Matura exam (Kolanowska, 2018, pp. 55–56).

Five-year technical secondary schools for students aged 15 to 20 years, which started in the school year 2019/20, lead to vocational qualifications and to the Matura certificate, providing access to higher education. Qualification exams are also taken in technical secondary school. Two or three qualifications are standard for most of the 92 available

professions. In this case, the apprenticeship takes place mainly with the employer, and the training lasts 4 years.

legislation

Vocational education falls under the system of secondary education and is subject to the same rules and regulations with which primary education complies (see *Primary education*). Regulations of the Minister of National Education lay down detailed arrangements in these areas and establish, in particular, core curricula for general and vocational education, and outline timetables for public schools (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej, 2017, poz. 356, 2017c).

language use

There are no vocational schools in Poland with classes in the Lithuanian language. All vocational schools have Polish as the language of instruction, except in foreign language classes.

teaching materials

Vocational school curricula are based on the national core curricula and timetable outlines. Teachers of individual subjects have the right to freely choose the teaching methods and materials they wish to use, which are, however, partly determined by the size of the class and the number of teaching aids (e.g. the number of computers or other teaching aids).

statistics

At the time of writing this dossier, there were no vocational schools in Poland delivering classes in the Lithuanian language.

6 Higher education

structure

Universities (Polish: *uniwersytet*), academies (*akademia*), and higher education (*wyższa szkoła*) are usually attended by students aged 18/20 to 23/25 years (but there is no age limit in Poland) and generally offer a two-degree study curriculum, consisting of a 3-year bachelor's (*licencjat*) degree programme, followed by a 2-year master's (*magister*) degree programme. Postgraduate education in Poland consists of a 2–4-year PhD programme (*studia doktoranckie*) or a 1 to 2-year postgraduate course (*studia podyplomowe*).

legislation

Higher education institutions are autonomous, but financed and supervised mostly by the Ministry of National Education and Science. This does not apply to specialised universities of medicine and agriculture, academies of music, theatre and film, and fine arts, and military academies, all of which are supervised and financed by the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, Culture, and Defence, respectively. The main law for higher education is the Act of 27 July 2005 on Higher Education (*Ustawa. Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym, 2005*).

language use

Due to its rural character, there are no universities in the region inhabited by the Polish Lithuanians. The closest state universities are located in Białystok and Olsztyn; numerous graduates from the secondary school in Puńsk/Punskas also study at universities in the Republic of Lithuania (in Vilnius, Kaunas, or Klaipėda).

The Lithuanian language is taught at the following four universities in Poland: Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, the University of Warsaw, the University of Wrocław, and Jagiellonian University in Kraków. The universities in Poznań and Warsaw offer a 3-year bachelor's (*licencjat*) and a 2-year master's (*magister*) programme; in Poznań, it is offered within Lithuanian studies (Polish: *lituanistyka*) and in regional philologies, and in Warsaw within Baltic studies (Polish: *bałtystyka*) together with Latvian. The University of Wrocław offers a course on Lithuanian language and culture (every year and it lasts 2 years), and Jagiellonian University in Kraków gives Lithuanian language courses almost every year and they last three semesters. None of these universities offer pedagogical studies for teachers of the Lithuanian language.

teacher training

The national standards for initial teacher training programmes, which are currently in place, were laid down in 2019 in a regulation by the minister responsible for higher education and science in consultation with the minister responsible for school education (Rozporządzenie Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego, 2019).

There are degree and non-degree postgraduate programmes for the initial training of teachers. The degree programme leads to a bachelor's degree (*licencjat* or *inżynier*) or to a master's degree (*magister*). Non-degree postgraduate programmes lead to a certificate of completion of a non-degree postgraduate programme.

Universities educate teachers of all levels of education – from pre-school through to primary, post-primary (post-primary schools include: a four-year general secondary school, a five-year technical secondary school, a three-year stage I sectoral vocational school, a three-year special job-training school, a two-year stage II sectoral vocational school, and a post-secondary school where the education lasts for a maximum of 2.5 years; GUS, n.d.-a), and post-secondary schools (an educational institution based on the curriculum of post-primary school, enabling persons with general secondary education to obtain a diploma confirming vocational qualifications or qualifications in a given occupation upon passing the vocational examination; GUS, n.d.-b).

As part of degree programmes in individual fields of study, students may choose a teacher specialisation-track; thus, they can complete professional teacher training (and acquire a teaching/pedagogical qualification) as part of their degree programme, parallel to the subject-specific training. Students can choose from the following specialisations: teachers of general education subjects for primary and post-primary schools; pre-school education and early school education teachers; teachers and tutors for educational and childcare establishments; career guidance and counselling services and other specialised institutions providing support to children and youth; and school libraries and educational resources centres. For those who have not chosen the teaching specialisation, but decide to choose the teaching profession after graduating from higher education, there is an opportunity to train for this profession by following a postgraduate programme at a university. This path is part of the consecutive model of teacher education

■ *pre-school training*

Those students who want to become teachers in pre-school education choose pedagogical studies (teaching specialisation) with the path for pre-school education and early school education at universities. Those who already have a diploma of higher education, but not a pedagogical one, can train for this profession by following a postgraduate programme at a university.

■ *primary and secondary training*

Students wishing to teach at primary school in the future must choose the path for teachers of general education subjects for primary and post-primary schools. Those who already have a diploma of higher education, but not a pedagogical one, can train for this profession by following a postgraduate programme at a university.

■ *in-service training*

The Teacher Training Centre at the Teacher Education Centre in Suwałki has an accreditation granted by the Podlasie Superintendent of Education. This centre organises and conducts support for the development of schools and institutions, and creates networks of cooperation and self-education for teachers and principals of schools and institutions. The Teacher Education Centre in Suwałki also organises and conducts in-service training for teachers in schools, conferences, courses, workshops, seminars, consultations, lessons, and educational classes. Moreover, it inspires and supports pedagogical innovation, supports teachers in didactic and educational work, and inspires and enables knowledge sharing. There is also a Lithuanian Language Teacher Methodological Advisor at the Teacher Training Centre in Suwałki whose activities comprise the organisation and planning of the work of Lithuanian language teachers, implementation of programme content from the Lithuanian language, cooperation with organisations of the Lithuanian national minority, and cooperation with the Central Examination Board in Warsaw. This includes participation in the working group of the Matura exam in national minority languages and establishing the concept of the new secondary Matura exam in 2023 (CEN, [n.d.](#)).

It should be emphasised that there are no specialised institutions in Poland that prepare future teachers to teach subjects in Lithuanian. The requirements for teachers considered qualified to tutor subjects in minority languages are regulated by § 14 of the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 1 August 2017 on the detailed qualifications required of teachers (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej, [2017b](#)). Pursuant to the regulation, a person can teach provided that they have the credentials required to hold the teaching position and know the language of a specific national, ethnic minority or a regional language in which the classes are being taught. A teacher's knowledge of and skills in the language are confirmed by a higher education diploma in the field of philology within the specialisation of a given language, a graduation diploma from the Teachers College of Foreign Languages in a given language, or a language certificate of a given language or attestation issued by a social organisation of a national or ethnic minority as well as the community using a regional language. In the case of the Lithuanian minority in Poland, studies in the field of Lithuanian philology are offered by two universities, namely Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań and the University of Warsaw. The opportunity to upskill professional development for teachers conducting classes in the Lithuanian language in Poland is often promoted by the Lithuanian government and organised in Lithuania, but, unfortunately, many of these courses are not recognised by the Polish authorities (Wójcikowska, [2013](#)).

statistics

The number of candidates for philological studies associated with the Lithuanian language in Poznań, Warsaw, Wrocław, and Kraków varies every year. At Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, enrolment in Lithuanian philology takes place every 2 years and is limited to a maximum of 20 students, from which, on average, only two to four continue their bachelor's degree. In Warsaw, recruitment rounds occur yearly with an enrolment limit of 25, from which a different number of students proceeds every year. Students at Warsaw and Poznań Universities reach B2 level in the Lithuanian language by the end of their bachelor's degree. Wrocław as one university with a major in Lithuanian language and culture allows all its students (bachelor's and master's students from any field of study) every year to attend this programme, limiting enrolment to 15–20 seats, from which around 15 people pursue it further. These students reach up to A2 level in the Lithuanian language.

7 Adult education

Adult education is a vastly diversified sector in terms of target groups and providers. It has laid its foundation on the experience of people, and defines and provides services adapted to adults' needs and the job market. Various public and non-public institutions both within and outside the formal education system offer adult education, without forming an integrated sector (Kolanowska, 2018, p. 112).

structure and language courses

There are three terms relating to adult education and training in Poland. The first is Continuing Education (Polish: *kształcenie ustawiczne*), defined in the Act on Education Law (Ustawa. Prawo oświatowe, 2019), which is understood as education/training in schools for adults, stage II sectoral vocational schools and post-secondary schools, and as acquisition of new and supplementary knowledge, skills, and vocational/professional qualifications in non-school settings by individuals who have completed full-time compulsory education. This kind of education is potentially targeted at the adult population (over the age of 18). The second is Adult Education (Polish: *edukacja dorosłych*) used as an equivalent for adult education and training (Polish: *kształcenie i szkolenia dorosłych*), which extends far beyond the fields of school education and higher education or traditional training courses leading to qualifications. The third is Adult Learning, which is understood as learning at the adult life stage, a stage of lifelong learning in various forms and settings (formal, non-formal, and informal). In other words, adult education covers the completion of primary and secondary school by adults, as well as the acquisition of the qualifications and skills for professional and personal goals. Adult education transpires in two forms, namely in-class schooling and practical training, or so-called "hands on training", which are both delivered in educational institution settings, training and vocational training centres, and as part of postgraduate studies at universities. There is also a separate training system for the unemployed and certain categories of job seekers, which is part of a workflow and opportunity development (Eurydice, 2020).

language use

The language of instruction in schools and universities for adults is Polish, except in foreign language classes. There are no schools for adults in Poland with classes in Lithuanian.

statistics

At the time of writing this dossier, there were no Lithuanian minority language courses for adults in Poland.

8 Educational research

For political reasons, educational and sociolinguistic research on minority/regional language communities showed little development between World War II and 1989. Questions related to ethnicity and minorities were included in population censuses between the 1930s and the early 2000s.

Since 1989, research on the situation of the Lithuanian minority in Poland, including sociolinguistic and educational studies, has been conducted at the Universities of Poznań, Warsaw, and Kraków, as well as by numerous specialists from the Republic of Lithuania. Most of the studies have focused on the linguistic description of the Lithuanian vernaculars spoken in the Sejny/Seinai region (Hasiuk, 1978), bilingualism and diglossia among Polish Lithuanians (Birgiel, 2002; Marcinkiewicz, 1997; Mikulėnienė et al., 2016; Niewulis-Grablunas, 2015, 2018), the general situation of the minority (Stravinskienė, 2004; Wicherkiewicz, 2001), and the situation of Lithuanian schooling in Poland (Černelienė, 2008; Żołędowski, 1990). The following Polish scholarly journals devoted to Baltic linguistics are also worth mentioning *Acta Balto-Slavica*, *Linguistica Baltica*, *Linguistic and Oriental Studies*, *Perspectives of Baltic Philology in Poznań*, and *Baltica Varsoviensia*. There has been no research on the teaching of the Lithuanian minority language as a subject nor into Lithuanian as a medium of instruction in Poland.

9 Prospects

The prospects for the Lithuanian language among the Lithuanian minority in Poland are in general quite good since there are still a few primary and secondary schools left teaching in Lithuanian. However, intermarriage between Poles and Lithuanians is becoming increasingly common and this can be considered a certain threat. From one side, intermarriages indicate the assimilation of the minority, and from the other, they indicate a threat of losing identity and with that, heritage, tradition, and language.

A serious problem among Lithuanian youth that should also be pointed out is the outflow from rural border areas because of a lack of jobs. On a positive note, ongoing support from Lithuania for native students encourages travel, yet the lack of employment opportunities in the Puńsk/Punskas-Sejny/Seinai-Suwałki/Suwałkai region is a significant downside to returning home. Globalisation and integration processes do not always bring positive changes – the Lithuanian minority in Poland is slowly diminishing. Every year, after graduating secondary school, young people decide to continue their education in Poland (Białystok, Warszawa, Toruń, Wrocław, and Poznań) or in Lithuania (Vilnius, Kaunas, and Klaipėda), and usually stay there to work and start families. Many young people emigrate to Canada, Germany, England, Ireland, or to other western European countries. It is therefore immensely important to sustain interest and support links with the Republic of Lithuania. Despite challenges and not always favourable conditions, the Lithuanian minority in Poland, in regions such as Puńsk/Punskas-Sejny/Seinai-Suwałki/Suwałkai, is one of the most emancipated minority communities in Poland, with the linguistic factor playing a crucial role in maintaining their ethnic and cultural identity.

It seems that the circumstances related to the depopulation of the Puńsk/Punskas-Sejny/Seinai-Suwałki/Suwałkai region could improve with the stronger involvement of the local government in, among others, the promotion of the whole region, strengthening the key industries such as agritourism, the production of regional products, and fostering cultural events. Such initiatives would greatly improve the economic health of the whole region, and create more jobs, opportunities, and prospects that would encourage young people to stay in the area. In addition, region-oriented undertakings would allow the local residents (native population) to preserve their heritage.

10 Summary of statistics

Table 1 Minority language provision in primary and secondary education in the Puńsk/Punskas-Sejny/Seinai-Suwałki/Suwałkai region (school year 2019/20).

		Schools	Pupils
Primary education	Lithuanian as instruction language (classes 1–8)	3	295
	Lithuanian as additional subject (3 lessons per week)	4	77
Secondary education	Lithuanian as instruction language	1	89
	Lithuanian as additional subject	2	24

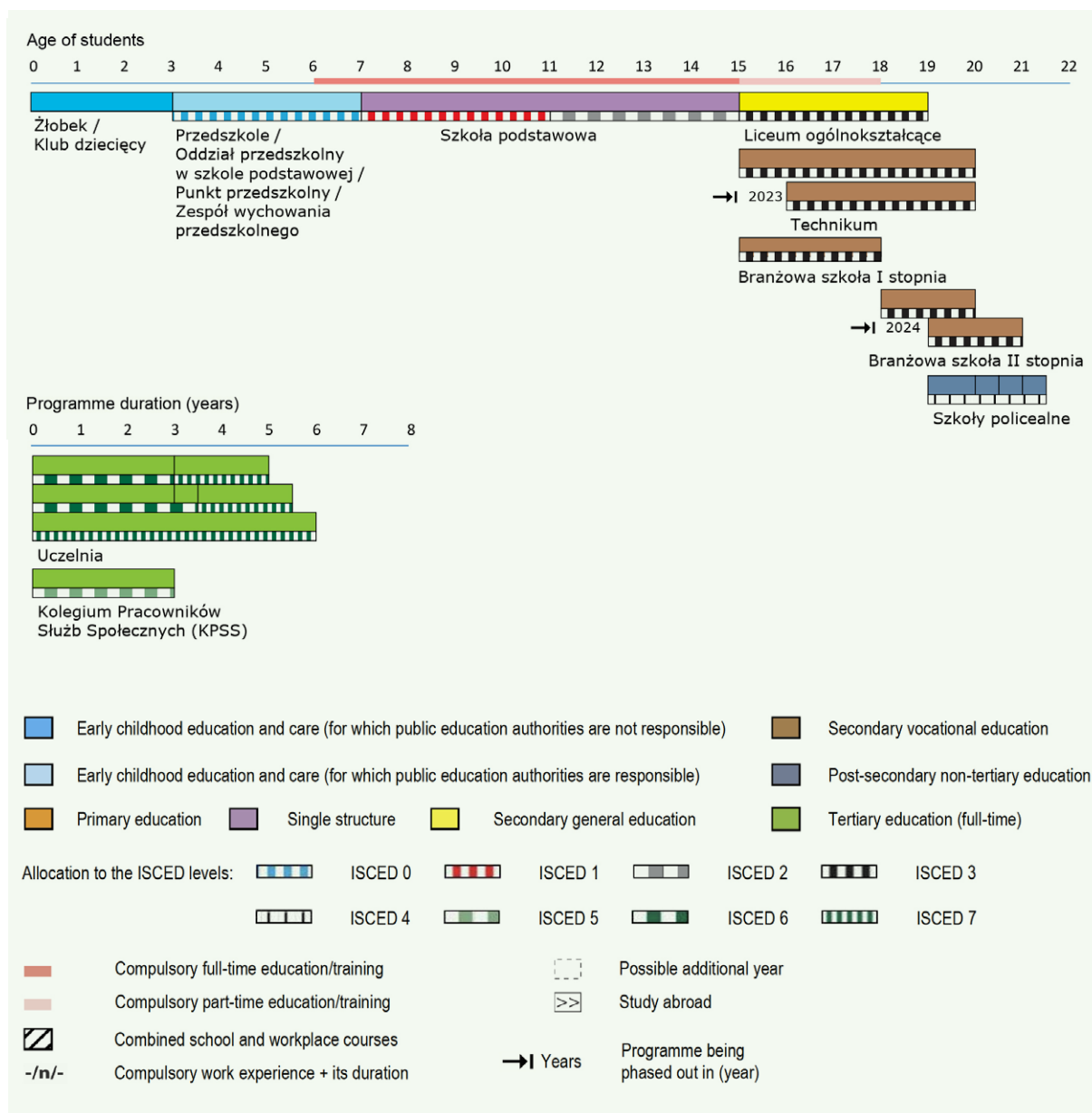
Note. Data for primary education from J. Wydra, primary school headteacher in Puńsk/Punskas, personal communication, June 2020; A. Vaicekauskas, primary school headteacher in Sejny/Seinai, personal communication, June 2020; D. Kosa, Lithuanian language teacher in Karsnowo/Krasnavas, personal communication, June 2020; T. Jonuszkanis, Lithuanian language teacher in Suwałki/Suwałkai and Poćkuny/Packūnai, personal communication, June 2020; A. Samulewicz, primary school headteacher in Widugiery/Widugiriai, personal communication, June 2020; Kuratorium Oświaty w Białymstoku (KOB; Head of Regional Education in Białystok), personal communication, June 2020. Data for secondary education from A. Nevulis, personal communication, June 2020; T. Jonuszkanis, personal communication, June 2020; A. Małkiński, personal communication, June 2020.

Table 2 Overview of results about the Lithuanian minority in Poland from the 2011 National Census of Population and Housing.

Question	Answer	Number
1. What is your nationality?	Lithuanian	5,599
2. Do you also feel belonging to another nation or ethnic community?	Yes, Lithuanian	2,264
		Total: 7,863
3. Which language(s) do you speak most often at home?		
a) Only Polish		
b) Polish and another one	Lithuanian	1,706
c) Only a language other than Polish	Only Lithuanian	3,597
		Total: 5,303

Note. Data from GUS (2013).

Education system in Poland



- Note.**
1. Major changes at different education levels gradually take place between 1 September 2017 and the school year 2022/23 (Act of 14 December 2016 'Law on School Education' and an Act 'Legislation introducing the Act – Law on School Education').
 2. A pre-reform programme for graduates of phased out *gymnasia* still operates in 4-year *technikum* up to the year 2022/23.
 3. In 2022/23 the 2-year *branżowa szkoła II stopnia* (secondary school) offers a new programme to graduates of *branżowa szkoła I stopnia*.
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Figures

Map of Poland and the Puńsk/ Sejny/ Suwałki Region. Adapted from <https://pixabay.com/pl/vectors/polska-administracja-mapa-kraju-149792/>

Further reading

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previous editions

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Contact information of the authors of Regional Dossiers can be found in the Mercator Database of Experts (www.mercator-research.eu).



Other websites on minority languages

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www.mercator-network.eu

General site of the Mercator European Network of Language Diversity Centres. It gives information about the network and leads you to the homepages of the network partners.

European Commission

www.ec.europa.eu/languages

The website of the European Commission gives information about the EU's support for language diversity.

Council of Europe

www.conventions.coe.int

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) and *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (1995). European Treaty Series 148 and 157, Strasbourg.

Eurydice

www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice

Eurydice is the information network on education in Europe. The site provides information on all European education systems and education policies.

European Parliament Committee – supporting analyses database

www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/home

In this database, you will find research papers produced by the European Parliament's research service. A study for the CULT Committee, conducted by the Mercator European Research Centre, was published in 2017: *Minority Languages and Education: Best Practices and Pitfalls*.

NPLD

www.npld.eu

The Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) is a European-wide network working in the field of language policy & planning for Constitutional, Regional and Small-State Languages (CRSS) across Europe.

FUEN

www.fuen.org

The Federal Union of European Nationalities is the umbrella organisation of the autochthonous, national minorities/ethnic groups in Europe and represents the interests of European minorities at the regional, national, and European levels.

ELEN

www.elen.ngo

The European Language Equality Network (ELEN) is a non-governmental organisation that has as its goal the promotion and protection of European lesser-used (i.e. regional, minority, endangered, indigenous, co-official, and smaller national) languages, to work towards linguistic equality for these languages, and multilingualism, under the broader framework of human rights, and to be a voice for the speakers of these languages at all levels.



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