CONFERENCE
"STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE TRANCPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN
EDUCATION

LITHUANIA, VILNIUS
OCTOBER 2003

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

"THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF THE EDUCATION
IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

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EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT, LITHUANIA

INTRODUCTION

Lithuania has been engaged in a decade of educational reform as laid out in "The Concept of Education", 1992. However, the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), together with the representatives from the President Office and the Government, prepared a new strategy for the next decade. The Ministry of Education and Science reformed the Education Law and policy. "Guidelines of Education of Lithuania in 2002-2012" were prepared. The Seimas confirmed these two documents. They reflect the reforms of the past decade and the planned changes. These documents set new strategic trends in the development of education in the light of national goals: democratization of society, strengthening of the market economy and joining the European Union. The Lithuanian education reform has entered into a new stage, whose main priority is ensuring the quality of education.

During the last decade the legal framework for the educational reform was established, a new content of a secondary school was formed, the system of state maturity examinations was reorganized, preparation for schools audit and monitoring of status of education has been started, school libraries were modernized, and a strategy for computerization of education was formulated.

However, many important works that are necessary to ensure quality of education remained not fulfilled through the lack of financial investments and human resources. Insufficient attention was devoted to the strengthening of basic schools: teachers of these schools were not afforded sufficient opportunities for building their professional competencies, equipment in the classrooms and the buildings themselves are outdated, provision with modern teaching aids is poor.

In order to improve quality of education in basic schools of Lithuania the Ministry of Education and Science prepared the Education Improvement Project 2002 – 2005). The Government of the Republic of Lithuania, municipal funds and a World Bank loan funds the implementation of this project.

Goals, objectives and priorities of Education Improvement Project

Education Improvement Project **is aiming** to improve educational achievements of students attending grades 5-10 in basic schools.

The strategic **objectives** are:
2. to enhance quality of teaching and learning at basic schools;
3. to optimize utilization of education funds and resources.

Education Improvement Project is an integrated program focused on the following **priorities:**

1. Improved access to general education that meets individual and national development needs;
2. Constant improvement and guarantee of the quality of education;
3. Increasing efficiency – effectiveness of the education system;
4. Enhanced involvement and participation of the school community and the wider society in the process of school improvement.

The Education Improvement Project consists of **four integrated components**:

1. Improvement of teaching and learning conditions at basic schools

The purpose of this component is to develop teachers' professional competence and improve teaching/learning conditions by encouraging active learning of pupils and co-operation between teachers at school and between schools. We plan to achieve this goal by means of the following: 1) a long-term and integrated program of training for teachers, heads of schools and school teams involving municipality education sector officers; 2) the creation of a virtual learning environment at schools; 3) the provision of schools with new teaching aids; 4) preparation and publication of learning materials, periodical publications and video programs; 5) co-ordination, support and management of the processes of school improvement.

2. Creation of the system of education quality management

The main objective of this component is to create a system of education quality management, which is understood as the timely use of relevant information about the consequences of prior decisions, in order to improve our ability to raise system efficiency and student achievement.

3. Reduction of energy costs and improvement of learning conditions

By means of this component we seek to renew school buildings so that energy expenses may be reduced and learning conditions for pupils improved. A long-term objective of this component is to rationalize the application of the funds allocated to education by saving on heating expenses and using savings to improve the quality of education.

4. Optimization of the school network

By means of this component we seek to strengthen the economic capacity and skills of local governments to rationalize the school network in order to ensure accessibility to high quality pre-school and general education to children and adults. Rational management of the school network will help save budgetary funds allocated to education and guarantee the diversity of educational services taking into account social, economic, cultural and demographic changes. It will help reduce the number of vacant classrooms, especially in rural areas, as well as modernize the system of students' transportation.

Expected outcomes of the Education Improvement Project

The Education Improvement Project is aimed at improving educational achievements of students at basic schools. It has been foreseen in the project to carry out the assessment of achievements among students of IV, VI, VIII and X grades every second year in order to identify the percentage of students that meet the standard requirements in the Lithuanian language as their mother tong, mathematics, natural and social sciences. Throughout the project implementation period, the number of students that meet the standard requirements in the whole of Lithuania will annually increase by approximately 2-3%, while by the end of the project the said number of students will amount to 8-10%.

The Project is also aimed at decreasing the number of dropouts and increasing the number of students who will graduate from the basic school. It is expected that at the end of the Project the coefficient of basic school graduates will reach 0,9 (0,77 - year 2000)[1].

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[1] This coefficient shows, which part of the students who enter the first grade manage to get basic education. "Education in Lithuania – 2000", page.54.
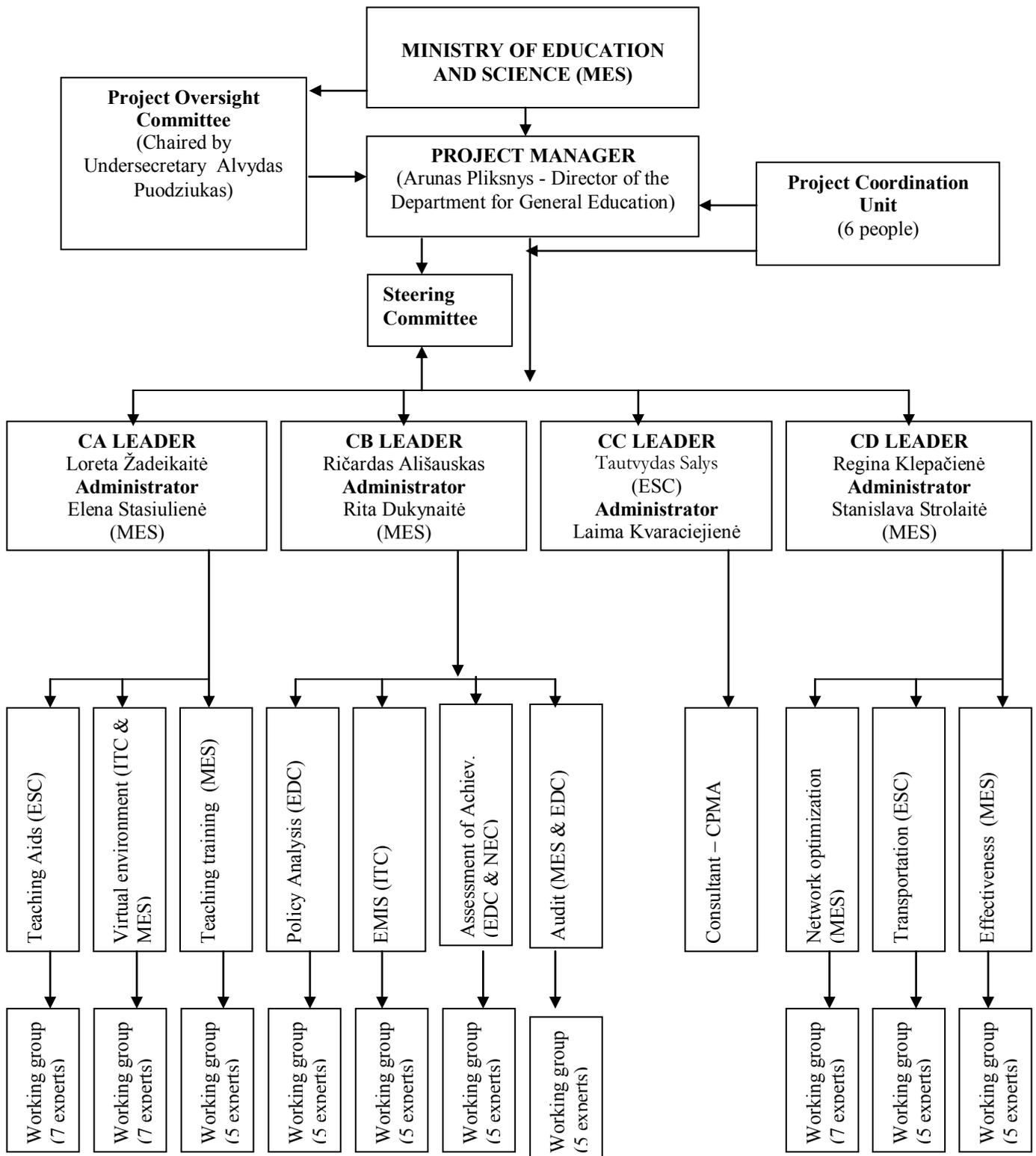
Implementation of the Education Improvement Project

The Education Improvement project is implemented **by MES and the education institutions affiliated with it**: Education Development Center, Education Supply Center, Information Technology Center, Center for Professional Development of Teachers. **Education divisions of county and municipal administrations, regional teachers' education centers, higher schools, non-governmental education organizations and other partners** are involved in the implementation.

1. The overall management responsibility for the project is held by **Project Manager** who is a Director of the Department of General Education with the following responsibilities: (i) to ensure the integration of project actions with MES policies and regular activities; (ii) to appoint MES staff to the working groups, with clear definition of roles and responsibilities; (iii) to monitor the performance of this staff. The Project Manager has direct authority over all staff involved in project activities.

2. **Project Oversight Committee** (POC) is appointed by the Minister with the Undersecretary as its chairperson and the PCU Director as an ex-officio member and Secretary. The POC is composed of one member each representing the following groups: the Seimas, Ministry of Finance, municipality authorities, Association of basic school principals, University of Teacher Training, Teacher labor union, education media. The POC meet twice a year and they are responsible for 1) reviewing the performance of the project teams; 2) facilitating problem solving that the project teams may encounter; and 3) reporting the concerns of their constituents and the publics enlarge about the project implementation.

3. The Project Manager established a **Project Steering Committee** that is composed of the Project Manager, PCU members, leaders of four components and the Head of Public Relation Sector of MES. It guides project implementation and regularly monitors its progress. It is also responsible for Project Communications Strategy and its implementation. The Steering Committee meets once a week for co-ordination purposes and twice a year (with the participation of Undersecretary and State Secretary of the Ministry) 1) to approve progress reports presented by PCU and component managers; 2) to revise and approve changes in components' activity plans; 3) to design and monitor the public information plan of the project; and 4) to steer project implementation activities.

4. The direct responsibility for implementation of project activities under each and every component is clearly assigned to the different MES line units. The components have their leaders and administrators appointed. **The leader** of the Component leads the overall implementation of the component; evaluate the achieved progress and implementation of the goal of the component; co-operate with MES departments, education departments of the founders, other stakeholders; inform the public about the progress of the component. **The administrators** of the component coordinate and monitor the implementation of the activities under the component; assess the progress made during the implementation of the project and the implementation of objectives; coordinate the development of annual implementation plans and budgets; co-operate with MES departments, education departments of the founders, other interest groups; ensure the provision of information concerning the progress of the project to the public; prepare reports to the PCU about the overall implementation of the component.

5. Every component has sub-components and the **coordinators for sub-components** are also appointed. The subcomponent coordinators are the officers of the MES or education institutions affiliated with the MES such as: Information Technology Center, Education Development Center, and Education Supply Center.

6. The **Working Groups** are responsible for performing sub-component activities. In relation to Consultant's contracts they have to ensure that the work assigned to the different Consulting firms and individuals participating in the project yield the expected outcomes. The members of the Working Groups of each sub-component report directly and are accountable to the coordinator of sub-component.

7. **Reporting.** The coordinators of sub-components, in their own turn, report and are accountable to the administrators of the respective component, who has the responsibility to coordinate among the coordinators of the sub-components in each component. Every administrators of the component reports and is accountable to the leader of the component. They, in their own turn, are accountable to the Project Manager. Such coordination has the main purpose to ensure that the Working Groups accomplish their duties effectively, on time and according to project implementation targets.

8. **Central project management agency (CPMA)** is being contracted to administer Component C, as described in PIP Component C.

9. Coordination mechanisms
   a. **PCU - Components**. The Project Coordination Unit (PCU) is responsible for the overall project coordination, including compilation of the annual activities' plans, the preparation of the annual project budgets, submission of required monitoring reports, and procurement and contract administration. Once a week the PCU meets the Project Director and the leaders of the components. The PCU administrator is the secretary of the Implementation Boards of every component. The PCU holds regular meetings with the component administrators. The purpose of the meetings is to exchange information, experience and concerns, and to facilitate the work of the WGs.

   b. **Among components**. Project activity plans (submitted to the PCU once a year) and Performance reports (submitted to the PCU four times a year) are shared by all components. Through them the WG members are informed about the activities of other components and are able to contribute to each other's success in solving project challenges. One or two members of certain WGs are members of WGs of other sub-components.

   c. **Counties and municipalities**. Agreements with Mayors of 60 municipalities and Head administrators of three counties wer signed outlining the mutual responsibilities of all parties to the implementation process. Relevant reports and documentation are shared with the participating parties.

   d. **Schools.** The coordination with school population is accomplished by the PCU and the WGs through school principals.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE (MES)

Project Oversight Committee (Chaired by Undersecretary Alvydas Puodziukas)

PROJECT MANAGER (Arunas Pliksnys - Director of the Department for General Education)

Project Coordination Unit (6 people)

Steering Committee

CA LEADER Loreta Žadeikaitė **Administrator** Elena Stasiulienė (MES)

CB LEADER Ričardas Ališauskas **Administrator** Rita Dukynaitė (MES)

CC LEADER Tautvydas Salys (ESC) **Administrator** Laima Kvaraciejienė

CD LEADER Regina Klepačienė **Administrator** Stanislava Strolaitė (MES)

Teaching Aids (ESC)

Virtual environment (ITC & MES)

Teaching training (MES)

Policy Analysis (EDC)

EMIS (ITC)

Assessment of Achiev. (EDC & NEC)

Audit (MES & EDC)

Consultant – CPMA

Network optimization (MES)

Transportation (ESC)

Effectiveness (MES)

Working group (7 experts)

Working group (7 experts)

Working group (5 experts)

Working group (5 experts)

Working group (5 experts)

Working group (5 experts)

Working group (5 experts)

Working group (7 experts)

Working group (5 experts)

Working group (5 experts)

ESC – Education Supply Center
ITC – Information Technology Center
EDC – Education Development Center
NEC – National Examination Center