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Lithuanian

The Lithuanian language in
education in Poland



* numerically small language communities

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Foreword

background

For several years now, Mercator-Education has made efforts to achieve one of its principal goals: to gather, store and distribute information on minority language education in European regions. Regional or minority languages are languages which differ from the official language of the state where they are spoken and which are traditionally used within a given territory by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the population. The success of this series of regional dossiers has shown a need for documents stating briefly the most essential features of the educational system of regions with an autochthonous lesser used language. With the establishment of regional dossiers we intend to meet this need.

aim

Regional dossiers aim at providing concise descriptive information and basic educational statistics about minority language education in a specific region of the European Union. This kind of information, such as features of the educational system, recent educational policies, division of responsibilities, main actors, legal arrangements, support structures and also quantitative information on the number of schools, teachers, pupils and financial investments, can serve several purposes.

target group

Policy makers, researchers, teachers, students and journalists may use the information provided to assess developments in European minority language schooling. They can also use a regional dossier as a first orientation towards further research or as a source of ideas for improving educational provision in their own region.

link with EURYDICE

In order to link these regional descriptions with those of national educational systems, it was decided to follow the format used by EURYDICE, the European education information network in the European Union. EURYDICE provides information on the administration and structure of education in member states of the European Union. The

information provided in the regional dossiers is focussed on language use at the various levels of education.

contents

The remainder of this dossier consists firstly of an introduction to the region being studied, followed by six sections which each deal with a specific level of the educational system. These brief descriptions contain factual information presented in a readily accessible way. Sections eight to ten cover research, prospects and summary statistics. For detailed information and political discussions about language use at the various levels of education, the reader is referred to other sources.

1

Introduction

language

Lithuanian (in Lithuanian *lietuvišką* or *lietuvių kalba*) is a Baltic language of the Indo-European family, together with Latvian and extinct Old Prussian and Yatvingian. Some (socio)linguists also distinguish 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 oldest living Indo-European languages.

Lithuanian is the official language in the Republic of Lithuania (with a population of 3,751,000 - of whom around 80% state Lithuanian as their mother tongue). Compact groups of Lithuanian-speaking minorities can also be found in Belarus,¹ Latvia and Poland. A considerable number of Lithuanians also live in North America (e.g. in Chicago) and in Russia.

The Lithuanian-speaking minority in Poland is confined to three municipalities (*gminy*): Puńsk/Punskas² and Sejny/Seinai in the county (*powiat*) of Sejny/Seinai, and Szypliszki/Šipliškės in the county 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, e.g. in Warsaw or Wrocław. Polish Lithuanians in the Sejny region (in Lithuanian also called *Suvalkija*) compactly inhabit 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 colonized by growing numbers of settlers from Lithuania who mixed up with the remnants of the Yatvingians and with the White Ruthenians (ancestors of Belarusians). In the mid-16th century, the area was also colonized from the south by Polish settlers from Mazuria. The linguistic structure of the region changed dramatically after the plague of 1710-1711, when a lot of Lithuanian elements disappeared. Since then, until today, the process of regression of the Lithuanian dialect(s) in the area has continued slowly but steadily (cf. Marcinkiewicz 1997: 1615, Birgiel 2002: 36-41). In the years after World War I, the region of Sejny/Seinai changed hands between Germany (Province of East Prussia) and the newly independent states of Poland and Lithuania.

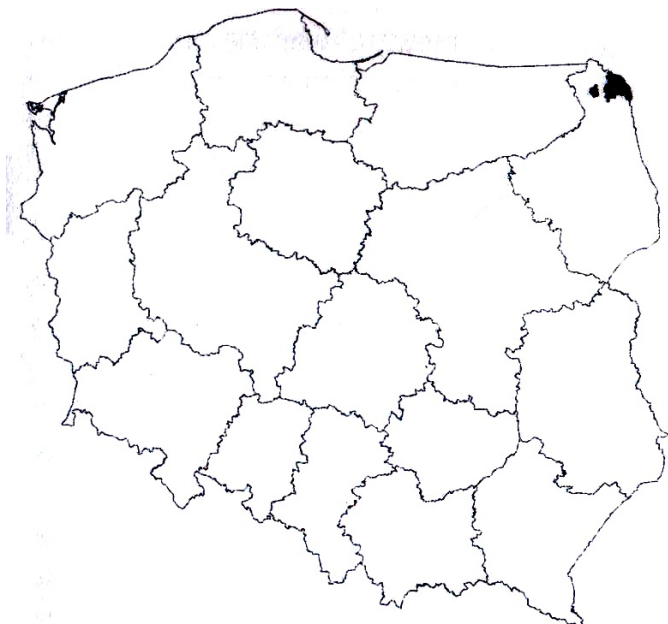
After World War II, the communist authorities of Poland fostered the idea of a mono-ethnic and monolingual state. The first legal minority organizations were only able to start their activities as late as in 1956, during the post-Stalinist thaw in relations. This also applied to the Lithuanian minority in Poland. During the entire period 1956-1989, the only legal organization (as was the case for most other minorities, excluding for instance the Germans) 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: *Aukštaitian* (upland) and *Žemaitian* (Samogitian, lowlands).³ The dialect spoken in Poland belongs to the

southern (Dzūkian) branch of the former (most of the Lithuanian-language area in Poland), with a small (almost declined) territory of the western Aukštaitian dialect (northern confines).

In addition to publishing books and school handbooks⁴ (cf. below) in Lithuanian, the publishing house *Aušra* in Puńsk/Punskas releases several press titles, all of them in Lithuanian:

- *Aušra* ["aurora"] – since 1960 on a quarterly basis, later monthly, and since 1992 bi-weekly, 1000 copies (cf. www.ausra.pl)
- *Aušrelė* ["small aurora"] – children's monthly, 600 copies (<http://www.punskas.pl/pl/p1/ausrele.htm>)
- *Pasaulio Lietuvis* ["world's Lithuanian"] – monthly/bi-monthly for the Lithuanian community worldwide, 1300-1400 copies
- *Suvalkietis* – quarterly for the Lithuanians in Suwaki/Suwalkai, 500 copies (<http://www.punskas.pl/pl/p1/suvalkietis.htm>)
- *Dėmesio* – published irregularly by the school youth of Puńsk/Punskas (<http://www.punskas.pl/pl/p1/demesio.htm>)



population

The area inhabited by Lithuanians in Poland within its present borders has not diminished significantly over the last decades.

Lithuanian organizations in Poland estimate the minority's population numbers at some twelve thousand, with 80% living in the region of Sejny/Seinai as described above.

In 1931, the Lithuanian minority in Poland (in its pre-War boundaries) numbered 83,000 people. During World War II, almost half of the native Lithuanians were forced to leave for the Republic of Lithuania (which was soon to become the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic) in two waves: 1940 and 1944-1948. Not all of them returned. After the War, the Lithuanian population in Poland was estimated as follows, according to various sources:⁵

- 1959 – 5,000 ⁶
- 1962 – 10,000 ⁷
- 1971 – 9,000-15,000 ⁸

- 1978 – 12,000 ⁹
- 1979 – 15,000 ¹⁰
- 1983 – 12,000 ¹¹

Specialists from the Republic of Lithuania estimate the total number of ethnic Lithuanians in Poland at 30,000, including 9,000 to 15,000 in the compact area within the Sejny/Seinai region (cf. Marcinkiewicz 1997: 1615). According to Garšva (1989: 33), Lithuanians are compactly confined to 45 villages in the region, constituting the following shares of the population:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| - 90-100% | - in 18 villages, |
| - 80-90% | - in 5 villages, |
| - 70-80% | - in 6 villages, |
| - 60-70% | - in 4 villages, |
| - 40-50% | - in 3 villages, |
| - 15-30% | - in 2 villages, |
| - 5-15% | - in one village, |
| - less than 5% | - in 2 villages. |

In the town of Puńsk/Punskas (approximately 1,000 inhabitants), Lithuanians make up some 80% of the population and in Sejny/Seinai (around 5,000 inhabitants) some 20% of the population.

About 80% of the Polish Lithuanians in the compact region live in rural areas and are involved in farming. In comparison with the general level of agriculture in eastern and north-eastern Poland, the region inhabited by the Lithuanian minority stands out from the neighbouring districts, which have for example been abandoned during the last decades or which had state-owned farms until the 1990s and where high rates of unemployment are recorded now.

The actual ethnic centre of the region is the town of Puńsk/Punskas with important institutions for local Lithuanian culture such as the bilingual complex of primary and secondary schools, the House of Lithuanian Culture – seat of the Lithuanian Socio-Cultural Society – all founded in 1956, as well as numerous choirs, bands, dance ensembles

and amateur (“barn”) theatres. It is also in Puńsk/Punskas where the journal *Aušra* (“Aurora”) has been issued since 1960, entirely in Lithuanian by the publishing house of that same name.

In addition to hosting the Lithuanian Socio-Cultural Society already mentioned (active since 1992 as Poland’s Lithuanians Association), Puńsk/Punskas is the seat of the Lithuanian St. Casimir’s Union (a Christian association) and the Union of Lithuanians in Poland – both re-established in 1992. Also worth mentioning are the local open-air museum and the museum of Lithuanian folklore, as well as the annual Lithuanian culture festival *Sąskrydis* (“gathering”) on the border lake of Gaładuś/Galadusys.

The population census of 2002 contained two questions dealing with the questions of “nationality” and “home language”:

1. “*Which nationality do you most identify with?*”
2. “*Which language(s) do you speak most often at home?*”

A total of **5,863** people answered “Lithuanian” to the first question, including **5,639** citizens of Poland, 5,156 (91.43%) of whom reside in the Province of Podlasie, i.e. in its north-eastern confines. 132 people live in the province of Mazovia (predominantly in Warsaw); 102 in Varmia-Mazuria; 83 in Pomerania (Gdańsk); 82 in Western Pomerania (Szczecin), and 62 in Lower Silesia (Wrocław).

Answers to the second question, given by **5,838** respondents including **5,696** Polish citizens,¹² included “Lithuanian”, “Lithuanian and Polish” or “Polish and Lithuanian” (no distinct data were published). It is worth noticing 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.

As Lithuanians are traditionally very much affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church, developments concerning the

parallel position of Lithuanian and Polish in the religious life of local parishes have been of extreme consequence, in spite of sometimes serious conflict concerning the proportion of Lithuanian-language and Polish-language masses. In almost all the local churches (in Puńsk/Punskas, Sejny/Seinai, Smolany/Smalėnai, Żegary/Ągariai) there are now ceremonies held separately in both languages.

language status

Lithuanian has always been recognized *de facto* as a minority language in Poland, although during the communist era (i.e. until the 1990s), there was no legal act confirming this status *de iure*.

A bilateral treaty was signed in Vilnius on January 13, 1992 between the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania.¹³ The treaty recognized 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 1997 Constitution of the Republic of Poland contains two articles that pertain directly to minority rights:

“Art.27

Polish shall be the official language of the Republic of Poland. This provision shall not infringe upon national minority rights resulting from ratified international agreements.

(...)

Art.35

1. The Republic of Poland shall ensure Polish citizens belonging to national or ethnic minorities the freedom to maintain and develop their own language, to maintain customs and traditions, and to develop their own culture.

2. National and ethnic minorities shall have the right to establish educational and cultural institutions and organizations designed to protect their religious identity, as well as to participate in the resolution of matters connected with their cultural identity”.

The 1999 *Law on the Polish Language* provides for the possibility to introduce a minority language as auxiliary in those areas with a “considerable share of non-Polish population, 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. The first monitoring visit and report concerning its implementation was conducted in April 2003.¹⁴ At that occasion, the monitoring group also visited the province capital of Białystok to get acquainted with the situation of, for instance, Lithuanian and Belarusian minorities.

In 2003, the government of the Republic of Poland signed the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. The process of its ratification, now possible thanks to the adopted *Law on national and ethnic minorities and the regional language*, is expected to start soon, provided the present parliamentary term is not interrupted before the autumn of 2005.

On January 6, 2005, the Sejm (lower house of the Polish Parliament) passed the final version of the *Law on national and ethnic minorities and the regional language*, adding the major amendments voted on by the Senate, which granted the right to use a minority/regional language as auxiliary in those municipalities (*gminy*) where at least 20% of the inhabitants (according to the last census) declared their affiliation to a minority.¹⁵ The *Law* officially recognizes 9 national minorities: Belarusian, Czech, **Lithuanian**, German, Armenian, Russian, Slovak, Ukrainian, Jewish; 4 ethnic minorities: Karaims, Lemks,¹⁶ Roma and Tatars, and finally Kashubian as the regional language.¹⁷

According to Art.1, the *Law* “(...) normalizes 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

(...)”. Art.4 forbids, somewhat in contradiction to the regulations concerning the introduction of an auxiliary language, “(...) to oblige anybody to reveal their (...) minority language (...)”.

Art.5§2 of the *Law* (forbidding any steps aiming at change of 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/ Punkskas. The country-wide campaign eventually resulted in a temporary abandonment of that plan by military authorities.

Chapter 2 deals with the questions of (official/auxiliary) usage of minority languages. The *Law* and the results of the 2002 census provide for the introduction of Lithuanian as auxiliary language in a single municipality (*gmina*) of Puńsk/Punkskas, where the Lithuanians constitute up to 80% of the population.

Art. 12 also provides an opportunity for the introduction of additional place-names in a minority/regional language, even if the number of inhabitants declaring minority nationality (or regional language) amounts to less than 20% of the population. In such a case, the proper 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, the costs of introducing the auxiliary language and additional names in the auxiliary language shall be covered by the local municipality budget, while the information signs – which will have to be changed upon the introduction of the auxiliary language – shall be financed by the state budget.

The 1992 *Law on radio and TV broadcasting* contains a general obligation to meet the needs of national and ethnic minorities in the public media. There is one TV-programme entirely in Lithuanian: *Lietuvių panorama* (“Lithuanian

panorama”) - the 7-minute news 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). Actually, all television and main radio programmes from the Republic of Lithuania can be received in the Sejny/Seinai 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 *Law on the system of education* of 1991, which grants pupils the right to maintain their national, ethnic, religious and linguistic identity, and in particular to be given classes in/on their mother tongue, as well as their history and culture.
- The *Decree of the Minister of National Education and Sports on conditions and methods for enabling pupils belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups to maintain their national, ethnic identity* of 2002. The decree substituted the previous one issued in 1992 and is perceived by minority organizations as comparatively more regressive: for example, there are no more provisions for pre-school education of/in minority languages; teaching of the mother tongue in schools for minorities is no longer compulsory, and many regulations contain the expression “country of origin”, something which suggests that minority groups are of immigrant character.
- Regulations concerning education are also included in Chapter 3 of the above-mentioned *Law on national and ethnic minorities and the regional language* which refers entirely to the 1991 *Law on the system of education* of 1991.
- In December 2001, a pioneering project was launched by the Interdepartmental Group for National Minorities and the Ministry for National Education and Sports called the *Strategy for development of the education of the Lithuanian minority in Poland*.¹⁸ It is the first and so far the only document of this type (apart from a comprehensive

governmental project concerning the Roma in Poland). It comprehensively addresses all the current issues and problems of the Lithuanian education system in Poland. The local education activists, however, complain that it is absolutely not respected by or binding for the provincial education authorities (Podlaskan Board of Education in Białystok – *Podlaskie Kuratorium Oświaty w Białymstoku*).

education system

The present system of education in Poland has been in effect since 1999, when the most significant education reform in the country's recent history took place. School attendance is compulsory between the ages of 6 to 15-16.

The education system in Poland is structured as follows:

- I. Kindergarten (*przedszkole*) – ages 3-4 to 6-7
- II. Primary school (*szkoła podstawowa*) - ages 6-7 to 12-13
- III. Lower secondary school (*gimnazjum*) – ages 12-13 to 15-16
- IV. Upper secondary school of general education (*liceum*) – ages 15-16 to 18-19
 - or:
 - Vocational/technical secondary school (*technikum* or *liceum techniczne*) – ages 15-16 to 19-20
 - or:
 - Specialized secondary school (*liceum profilowane*; – ages 15-16 to 18-19
 - or:
 - Basic vocational school (*zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa*) – additional 2 years after *gimnazjum* [to be abolished soon]
- V. University (*uniwersytet, akademia, wyższa szkoła*) – ages 18-20 to 23-25 universities commonly introduce two-degree study curricula: a 3-year Bachelor's (licencjat) degree programme, followed by a 2-year Master's (*magister*) degree programme
 - or:
 - Post-secondary school (*szkoła policealna*) – ages 18-19 to 20-21

VI. Postgraduate education: 4-year Ph.D. programme (*studia doktoranckie*) or a 1 to 2-year special graduate programme (*studia podyplomowe*).

private and public education

In general, according to the *Law on the system of education*, Polish educational institutions can act as public institutions, “social” institutions, i.e. founded by municipalities or foundations or private establishments. At this time, there are no private schools providing education in/of Lithuanian. The existing schools in the region are predominantly public or municipality-run.

bilingual education forms

All schools in the Sejny/Seinai region provide bilingual education in Polish and Lithuanian. However, the proportions of classes given in both languages may vary according to school type:

- schools with Lithuanian as the language of instruction – where all subjects, except for Polish language & literature, history, geography and foreign languages, are lectured in Lithuanian, and Lithuanian language & literature is taught for four classes a week. The curriculum in such schools also includes courses in the history and geography of Lithuania (one hour a week)
- schools with additional teaching of Lithuanian – where all subjects are taught in Polish, and Lithuanian is taught as a subject – three hours a week.

It is worth mentioning that the Polish Lithuanians are actually the only minority group in the country who have developed and are provided with a fully bilingual school curriculum: from pre-school education up to university level.

administration

The pre-primary level of education (nursery and kindergarten) is not obligatory. It is organized, supervised and financed by the municipalities (*gmina*). Compulsory primary and lower secondary education is organized and financed by the municipalities with funding provided through the central education authorities (Ministry of National Education and Sports). Upper secondary education

is organized and financed by the counties (*powiat*) with funding provided through the same central education authorities. Higher educational institutions are autonomous but – with some exceptions – financed and supervised by the Ministry of National Education and Sports and the Ministry of Science and Information Technology. Specialized universities of medicine and agriculture, as well as academies of music, theatre & film and fine arts, and military academies are supervised and financed by the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, Culture, and Defence, respectively.

inspections

Lower and upper secondary schools are supervised and monitored mainly by the provincial Boards of Education (*kuratorium oświaty*).

support structure

The main bodies created and intended to maintain the Lithuanian language in the education system in the region are:

- The Foundation for Supporting the Lithuanian Culture and Education *Seina* in Sejny/Seinai. The Foundation is run by the Community of Lithuanians in Poland, organizing, coordinating and supporting the schooling system for the Lithuanian minority in the region, subsidizing and funding teaching aids and excursions for school pupils.
- The Lithuanian language-teaching methodic consultant at the Teachers' Training Centre in Suwałki/Suwałkai. The post is financed by the country of Sejny/Seinai and the community of Puńsk/Punskas.

2

Pre-school education

target group

This level of education is not compulsory in Poland. As far as education in/of minority education is concerned, the 2002 *Decree of the Minister of National Education and Sports on conditions and methods for enabling pupils belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups to maintain their national, ethnic identity*, contrary to its 1992 counterpart/predecessor, the decree does not mention the pre-school level of education at all. In general, this level is intended for

children between 3 and 5 years of age. There are public kindergartens run by municipalities; there are so-called “social” kindergartens run by associations, and there are private ones. Education for 6-year-olds has been compulsory since 2004. At present, only 33% of 3 to 5-year-olds attends pre-schools, and in the rural areas this figure amounts to 13%. The main reason is the financial strains that are put on municipalities and parents: it is the latter who are personally responsible for transporting their children to and from kindergarten and who are obliged to pay the costs of children’s board and day care, partially or totally.

structure

Since 2003-2004, the Ministry of National Education and Sports has decreed that all 6-year-olds must be included in the system of compulsory education. Therefore, the municipalities should have established so-called “zero classes” (*zerówka*), either in primary schools or in kindergartens. Eventually, all the “zero classes” are to be taken over by kindergartens.

legislation

Pre-school (kindergarten) education is organized according to the 1999 Appendix *Framework statute of public kindergartens* to the *Decree of the Minister of Education on changes in the framework statutes of public 6-year primary schools and public lower secondary schools*.

language use

Lithuanian is used/taught in pre-school education in just one kindergarten, run by the municipality of Puńsk/ Punkskas. In 2004, the kindergarten was attended by 66 children, divided into three groups: 2 groups of 6-year-olds (“zero classes”); a Lithuanian-language and a Polish-language one (the former has 21 children), and one Lithuanian-language group for 3 to 5-year-olds with 25 children. In other words, 46 children in the kindergarten of Puńsk/Punkskas are offered Lithuanian-language pre-school instruction.

teaching materials

Aušra Publishing House has recently published an illustrated set for teaching the alphabet in Lithuanian addressed for the “zero classes”. Other teaching materials are either Polish or brought in from the Republic of Lithuania. The

Ministry of Education has also approved two handbooks for the “zero classes” published by the *Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne*.¹⁹

statistics

Lithuanian in pre-school education

Year	Kindergarten	Children
2004	1	46

3 Primary Education

target group

In the Polish education system, primary education is followed directly by lower secondary school education. Primary education is intended for children aged 6 to 12-13. Lower secondary education includes children aged 12-13 to 15-16. Both levels are compulsory.

In the 2004/2005 school year, more than 2.7 million pupils attended primary schools and almost 1.7 million attended lower secondary schools. In other words, a total of almost 4.4 million pupils are subject to these two compulsory levels of education.

structure

The primary and lower secondary schools providing education for children from the Lithuanian minority in the Sejny/Seinai region have different structures. There are:

- four primary schools with Lithuanian as the language of instruction: two with all class levels (0-6) – in Nowiniki/Navinykai and Widugiery/Vidugiriai - and two with classes 0-3 – in Przystawańce/Pristavonys and Wojtokiemie/Vaitakiemis;
- three primary schools with classes with Lithuanian as the language of instruction: in Puńsk/Punskas, Krasnowo/Krasnava and Krasnogruda/Krasnagrūda;
- three primary schools with classes with additional teaching of Lithuanian: in Klejwy/Klevai, Ogrodniki/Aradnykai and Sejny/Seinai;

- one primary inter-school group with additional teaching of Lithuanian in Suwałki/Suwałkai;
- two lower secondary schools with classes with Lithuanian as the language of instruction: in Puńsk/Punskas and Sejny/Seinai;
- one lower secondary school with additional teaching of Lithuanian in Sejny/Seinai;
- one lower secondary inter-school group with additional teaching of Lithuanian in Suwałki/Suwałkai.

The Lithuanian community in Warsaw runs a Saturday language course for children of diaspora Lithuanian families living in the capital. The courses are attended by a dozen or so schoolchildren.

It is worth mentioning that the schools in Nowiniki/Navinykai, Przystawańce/Pristavonys, Wojtokiemie/Vaitakiemis, Krasnowo/Krasnava, Krasnogruda/Krasnagrûda, Klejwy/Klevai and Ogrodniki/Aradnykai are located in small, old, even neglected buildings.²⁰ Only the schools in Widugierzy/Vidugiriai, Puńsk/Punskas and Sejny/Seinai are housed in somewhat more modern and suitable buildings.

Because of high operating costs, the municipality of Sejny/Seinai intends to close down the smaller schools, e.g. in Krasnogruda/Krasnagrûda, Klejwy/Klevai and Ogrodniki/Aradnykai. The Foundation *Seina*, run by the Community of Lithuanians in Poland, has built a private school in Sejny/Seinai with the financial assistance from the Republic of Lithuania. As of September 2005 it is to house a primary school and a lower secondary school for children from the closed smaller schools.²¹ Lithuanian is to be the language of instruction.

As in all schools providing classes in a minority/regional language, it is the School Board of Teachers that takes the decision to introduce classes in Lithuanian in the next school year. The decision must be supported by a resolution of the School Board. 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 weekly programme amounts to three hours of classes. The subsidy rate for school 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 (as is the case with smaller Lithuanian schools), the rate increases to 150%. Funding for the first four months of language instruction, however, must be paid by the municipality. In some cases, this amount may also be paid by the Ministry of National Education and Sports at the start of the school year. The teaching programmes for primary and lower secondary schools providing Lithuanian education were accepted by the Ministry of National Education and Sports in 2002- 2004.

legislation

Primary and lower secondary school education in Poland falls within the jurisdiction and supervision of the Ministry of National Education and Sports. It is compulsory for all children. The primary and lower secondary schools are established and financed by municipalities with funding provided by the Ministry. The most important laws relevant to primary, lower and upper secondary education (all three levels are generally dealt with together) are the 1991 *Law on the system of education*; the 1999 *Law on regulations introducing the reform of the schooling system*, with major amendments made in 2000, and – with special respect to schools providing education in/of minority/regional languages – the 2002 *Decree of the Minister of National Education and Sports on conditions and methods for enabling pupils belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups to maintain their national, ethnic identity*.

language use

The respective subjects taught entirely through the medium of Lithuanian are:

- “Integrated education” in classes 1-3 (primary school)
- “Lithuanian language & literature” – in classes 4-6 (primary school)
- “Lithuanian language & literature” – in lower secondary schools

- “History of Lithuania” – in primary (classes 4-6) and lower secondary schools
- “Geography of Lithuania” – in primary (classes 4-6) and lower secondary schools (including geography of the Sejny/Puńsk region)

Other subjects are taught in Lithuanian and/or Polish.

teaching materials

Teaching materials for the Lithuanian-language schools and classes are published by *Aušra* Publishing House in Puńsk/Punskas and the *Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne*.

Publication of Lithuanian-language handbooks has increased significantly after 1999. The Ministry of National Education and Sports has approved the handbooks for the following levels of education:

- 18 handbooks for classes 1-3 (primary school) – for integrated education, language teaching, primers, mathematics, technical skills;
- 4 handbooks for classes 4-6 (primary school) – for Lithuanian language & literature and nature & geography (geography of Lithuania and the Sejny-Puńsk region);
- 9 handbooks for lower secondary schools – for Lithuanian language & literature and geography (geography of Lithuania and the Sejny-Puńsk region), as well as special Polish-Lithuanian school dictionaries of terms in chemistry, physics, mathematics and geography, since the schools use the Polish-language handbooks for teaching those subjects.
- 5 handbooks for teachers (teaching programmes) – for integrated education, Lithuanian language & literature for primary and lower secondary schools, history of Lithuania and geography of Lithuania (including geography of the Sejny/Puńsk region) for primary and lower secondary schools.

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

language, comparable only the range of teaching materials of the German minority.

Most of the teaching material published is bought/paid by the Ministry of National Education and Sports and distributed among the schools providing education in/of the minority/regional language.

statistics

A total of **606** schoolchildren at primary and lower secondary levels were given classes with Lithuanian as the medium of instruction (including teaching of Lithuanian as the mother tongue) or additional teaching of Lithuanian at **15** schools. The tables below show the numbers of children in individual types of schools in the region densely populated with the Lithuanian minority.

Primary schools offering Lithuanian classes in 2004/2005

Type of school	Number of schools	Number of children
Primary with Lithuanian language of instruction, classes 0-6	2	76
Primary with Lithuanian language of instruction, classes 0-3	2	15
Primary with classes with Lithuanian language of instruction	3	228
Primary with additional teaching of Lithuanian	3	75
Inter-school group	1	16

**Lower secondary schools offering Lithuanian classes in
2004/2005**

Type of school	Number of schools	Number of children
Lower secondary classes with Lithuanian language of instruction	2	179
Lower secondary with additional teaching of Lithuanian	1	8
Inter-school group	1	9

4 Secondary Education

target group

Secondary education (understood here as upper secondary schools of general education) is not obligatory in Poland and is intended for pupils aged 15-16 to 18-19. In 2004/ 2005, more than 919,000 pupils attended upper secondary schools (of general education, technical and specialized schools taken together)

structure

The regulations for schools/classes providing education in Lithuanian are generally the same as in the case of primary lower secondary level. 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 with secondary schools for the Lithuanian minority. Funding for the first four months of language instruction, however, must be paid by the municipality. In some cases, this amount may also be paid by the Ministry of National Education and Sports at the start of the school year.

The teaching programmes for schools providing Lithuanian education were accepted by the Ministry of National Education and Sports in 2002-2004.

The only upper secondary school providing education in Lithuanian is the Secondary School Complex in Puńsk/

Punkskas, housing two educational institutions: an upper secondary school of general education and a specialized upper secondary school. The School Complex is an extremely important centre of local and regional education, culture and social life, famous for its high level of education far beyond the area inhabited by the Polish Lithuanians. The existing school buildings do not have enough room for the present and future numbers of pupils and teaching staff. Therefore, imminent extension of the school complex is of the utmost importance. The school and municipality authorities are eagerly looking for the finances required to accomplish that project, at regional, provincial and national levels.

legislation

As is the case with the lower educational levels, upper secondary education in Poland falls under the authority and supervision of the Ministry of National Education and Sports. The upper secondary schools, however, are organized and financed by the counties (and not by the municipalities) with funding provided by the Ministry. The most important laws relevant to upper secondary education are the same as those that apply to primary and lower secondary schools, since all three levels are generally dealt with together.

language use

In two upper secondary schools in Puńsk/Punkskas, all subjects – except Polish language & literature, history, geography and foreign languages – are lectured bilingually in Lithuanian and Polish. Lithuanian language & literature is taught 4 classes a week. The curriculum in such schools also includes courses in regional studies and history of Lithuania (one hour a week).

Since 2005, it has been possible to choose a minority language as one of the subjects included in the secondary school final examinations (*matura*). Lithuanian has been chosen as “mother tongue” subject of examination by 41 pupils.²²

teaching materials

There are hardly any materials for the upper secondary level

teaching of Lithuanian in Poland, except for teaching programmes for Lithuanian language & culture, history of Lithuania and geography of Lithuania. Since 1999, *Aušra* Publishing House in Puńsk/Punskas and the *Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne* have focused on publication of teaching materials for primary and lower secondary schools. The former institution intends to publish at least ten handbooks for upper secondary schools in the years 2005-2006 – for Lithuanian literature, regional education, Lithuanian grammar and history of Lithuania, as well as special Polish-Lithuanian school dictionaries, such as those used in lower secondary schools (cf. above).

statistics

A total of **186** pupils at the upper secondary levels were given classes with Lithuanian as medium of instruction (including teaching of Lithuanian as the mother tongue) at 2 schools.

Upper secondary schools offering Lithuanian classes in 2004/2005

Type of school	Number of schools	Number of children
Upper secondary school of general education with classes with Lithuanian language of instruction	1	130
Upper secondary specialized school with classes with Lithuanian language of instruction	1	56

5

Vocational Education

target group

Vocational education falls under the system of upper secondary education, as an alternative to upper secondary schools of general education. It is not obligatory in Poland and is intended for pupils aged 15 or 16 to 18-19 (exclusively from ages 16 to 19 in the future).

structure

There are no provisions for teaching in Lithuanian in vocational education in Poland. However, the upper secondary specialized school with classes with Lithuanian as the

language of instruction in Puńsk/Punskas (mentioned in the previous chapter) combines in its curriculum elements of general and vocational education, with a focus on economy and administration.

legislation

Vocational education in Poland falls into the category of upper secondary education and the regulations for the two types of schools are all the same.

language use

At the upper secondary specialized school in Puńsk/Punskas, Lithuanian is the language of instruction (including teaching of Lithuanian as the mother tongue) for 56 pupils.

statistics

Vocational schools offering Lithuanian classes in 2004/2005

Type of school	Number of schools	Number of children
Upper secondary specialized school elements of general and vocational education with classes with Lithuanian language of instruction	1	56

6

Higher Education

structure

The institutions of higher education are autonomous, but financed and supervised mostly by the Ministry of National Education and Sports and the Ministry of Science and Information Technology. This does not apply to specialized universities of medicine and agriculture, academies of music, theatre and film, fine arts, and military academies, all of which are supervised and financed by the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, Culture and Defence, respectively.

There are no universities in the region inhabited by the Polish Lithuanians (because of its mainly rural character). 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.

language use

Lithuanian is taught at two universities in Poland: Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and the University of Warsaw. Both universities offer a full 5-year M.A. (major) curriculum: in Poznań in Lithuanian studies (*lituanistyka*) and in Warsaw in Baltic studies (*bałtystyka*; together with Latvian). Every academic year, some 10 candidates enroll for Lithuanian studies at both universities.

teacher training

All the teachers of Lithuanian in the aforementioned primary and secondary schools have M.A. degrees in Lithuanian studies, either from Polish or Lithuanian universities. There are altogether 34 teachers of Lithuanian who work in all the schools in the region of Sejny/Seinai, Puńsk/Punskas and Suwałki/Suvalkai, many of them combining part-time jobs in various (particularly small) schools.

7

Adult Education

There are no forms of Lithuanian education for adults in Poland. People with an interest take part in various courses of Lithuanian at the universities in the Republic of Lithuania, or at the Universities in Poznań and Warsaw – either the full 5-year M.A. (major) curriculum (with most of the courses taught in Lithuanian) or language courses for interested students.

8

Educational Research

For political reasons, educational and sociolinguistic research of 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 years of the new millennium.

After 1989, research on the situation of the Lithuanian minority in Poland, including sociolinguistic and educational studies, has been carried out at the Universities of Poznań, Warsaw and Cracow, 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 (cf. Hasiuk 1978), bilingualism and diglossia among Polish Lithuanians (cf. Marcinkiewicz 1997, Birgiel 2002), the general situation of the minority (cf. Pietruszkiewicz 1995, Wicherkiewicz 2001, Stravinskienė 2004) and the situation of Lithuanian schooling in Poland (cf. Żołędowski 1990). Worth mentioning are the Polish scholarly journals devoted to the Baltic linguistics: *Acta Balto-Slavica*, *Linguistica Baltica*, *Linguistic and Oriental Studies from Poznań*, *Baltica Varsoviensia*.

9

Prospects

The general maintenance prospects among Polish Lithuanians are good – these people constitute one of the most emancipated minority communities (together with the Kashubs and the Germans), with the linguistic factor playing a crucial role in maintaining their ethnic and cultural identity. Of additional importance is the economic situation in the compact region inhabited by that group – in comparison with other underdeveloped regions in northeastern Poland, the agricultural economy in the Sejny/ Puńsk region is on quite a high level. Contacts with the neighbouring Republic of Lithuania have intensified recently and are increasingly flourishing on many levels.

The Lithuanian education system in Poland is compact and quite stable. The number of children attending the existing schools is stable, even when the coming demographic decrease is taken into consideration.

It is worth mentioning, however, that most of the Lithuanian schools require substantial financial support in order to

refurbish, develop and extend the existing school system/buildings.

10 Summary Statistics

Lithuanian in pre-school education

Year	Kindergarten	Children
2004	1	46

Primary schools offering Lithuanian classes in 2004/2005

Type of school	Number of schools	Number of children
Primary with Lithuanian language of instruction, classes 0-6	2	76
Primary with Lithuanian language of instruction, classes 0-3	2	15
Primary with classes with Lithuanian language of instruction	3	228
Primary with additional teaching of Lithuanian	3	75
Inter-school group	1	16

Lower secondary schools offering Lithuanian classes in 2004/2005

Type of school	Number of schools	Number of children
Lower secondary classes with Lithuanian language of instruction	2	179
Lower secondary with additional teaching of Lithuanian	1	8
Inter-school group	1	9

Upper secondary schools offering Lithuanian classes in 2004/2005

Type of school	Number of schools	Number of children
Upper secondary school of general education with classes with Lithuanian language of instruction	1	130
Upper secondary specialized school with classes with Lithuanian language of instruction	1	56

Vocational schools offering Lithuanian classes in 2004/2005

Type of school	Number of schools	Number of children
Upper secondary specialized school elements of general and vocational education with classes with Lithuanian language of instruction	1	56

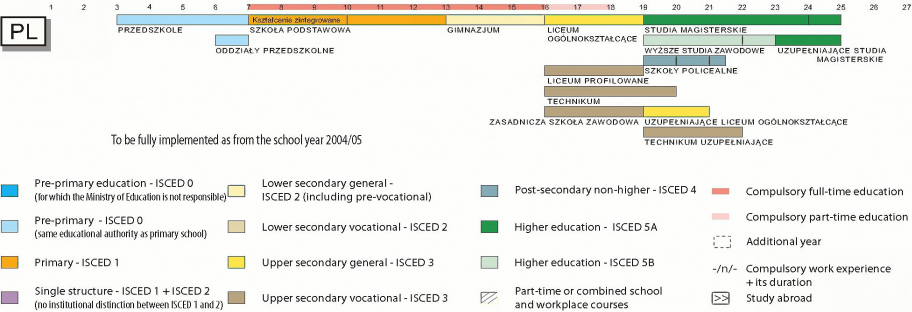
Endnotes

1. cf. <http://amb.urm.lt/baltarusija/ambtopmenuitems.php?TopMenuID=936&SiteID=74 &LangID=2>
2. Where possible, the place-names are given in their Polish and (standard) Lithuanian forms.
3. □emaitian / Samogitian is now struggling for the status of regional language in Lithuania (cf. <http://samogitia.mch.mii.lt/kalba.en.htm>)
4. In 1992-2003, *Aušra* Publishing House published 68 books in Lithuanian (or in Lithuanian and Polish), including 13 school handbooks/dictionaries, in 2003-2004 – 23 books, including 13 school handbooks. The plans for 2005-2006 include 20 school handbooks.
5. Šatava, Leoš 1994. *Národnostní menšiny v Evropě. Encyklopedická příručka*. Praha.
6. Bruk, S. I. (ed.) 1962. *Chislennost' i rasseleniye narodov mira*. Moskva.
7. Straka, M. (ed.) 1970. *Handbuch der europäischen Volksgruppen*. Wien.
8. Byczkowski, J. 1976. *Mniejszości narodowe w Europie 1945-1974*. Opole.
Haarman, H. 1973. *Soziologie der kleinen Sprachen Europas*. Band I *Dokumentation*. Hamburg.
9. Bruk, S.I. 1981. *Naseleniye mira. Etnodemograficheskiy spravochnik*. Moskva.
10. Kloss, H. & G.D.McConell (eds) 1984. *Linguistic Composition of the Nations of the World. Vol. 5 Europe and the USSR*. Québec.
11. Bruk, S.I. 1986. *Naseleniye mira. Etnodemograficheskiy spravochnik*. Moskva.
12. The Census included a total of 38,230,080 inhabitants of the country, 37,529,751 of whom were Polish citizens, 492,176 of whom reported a non-Polish language as one of the languages used most often at home and 46,559 of whom reported a non-Polish language as the only language used at home; cf. http://sp.stat.gov.pl/spis/ludnosc/tab_wynik.xls
13. cf. <http://www.zbiordokumentow.pl/1992/1/4.html>
14. (cf. [http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/Minorities/1._GENERAL_PRESENTATION/1._News/News\(2003\)011.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/Minorities/1._GENERAL_PRESENTATION/1._News/News(2003)011.asp))
15. According to the results of the 2002 census, there are 51 municipalities where at least 20% of inhabitants belong to a national/ethnic minority or speak the regional language: 12 Belarusian, 28 German, 10 Kashubian, and 1 Lithuanian.
16. Lemks are also known as Rusyns or (Carpatho-)Ruthenians (cf. one of the next dossiers in the series: *The Ukrainian and Ruthenian Languages in Education in Poland*).
17. cf. http://www.mswia.gov.pl/eng_mn_narod_1_list.html
18. cf. http://www.mswia.gov.pl/pdf/mn_strategia.pdf
19. Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne S.A. ["School and educational publishing house"; stock joint Co. since 2004, before state-owned]
20. cf. <http://www.punkas.pl/mokyklos/punk-m.html>.
21. On September 1st, 2005, the new private school has opened its doors to 66 Lithuanian pupils from Sejny/Seinai community. Some of the children attending this school are from the recently closed schools in Krasnogruda/Krasnagruda and Ogrodnyki/Aradnykai.
22. Respective figures for other minority languages: 269 pupils have chosen Belarusian, 121 – Ukrainian, 17 – Slovak, and 16 pupils (for the first time in history) have chosen Kashubian as their "native regional language".

Educational system in Poland

(Eurydice)

Organisation of the education system in Poland, 2003/04



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Useful Addresses

Community of Lithuanians in Poland

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ul. Mickiewicza 23, PL-16-515 Puńsk/Punskas
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Aušra Publishing House

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wydawnictwo@punskas.pl

Association of Lithuanian Youth in Poland

Stowarzyszenie Młodzieży Litewskiej w Polsce / *Lenkijos lietuvių jaunimo sąjungos*

ul. Mickiewicza 23, PL-16-515 Puńsk/Punskas
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Complex of Lithuanian Schools in Puńsk/Punskas

Zespół Szkół Ogólnokształcących / *Punsko bendrojo lavinimo mokyklų kompleksas*

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zsopunsk@poczta.onet.pl

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On-line Sources

<http://www.ausra.pl> (official website of the *Aušra*
bi-weekly)

<http://www.punskas.pl>

<http://www.punsk.com.pl>

<http://www.punsk.com.pl/licejus>

<http://www.lithuaniangenealogy.org/organizations/#Poland>

<http://www.lietuva.lt/index.php?Lang=5&ItemId=29641>

http://www.mswia.gov.pl/pdf/mn_strategia.pdf (*Strategy for
development of the education of the Lithuanian minority
in Poland*, in Polish)

Other websites on minority languages

Mercator

www.mercator-central.org

General site of the Mercator-project. It will lead you to the three specialized centres:

Mercator-Education

www.mercator-education.org

Homepage of Mercator-Education: European Network for regional or minority languages and education. The site contains the series of regional dossiers, a database with organisations and bibliography and many rated links to minority languages.

Mercator-Media

www.aber.ac.uk/~merc/

Homepage of Mercator-Media. It provides information on media and minority languages in the EU.

Mercator-Legislation

www.ciemen.org/mercator

Homepage of Mercator-Legislation. It provides information on minority languages and legislation in the EU.

European Union

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/langmin.html>

At the website of the European Union an explanation is given of its support for regional or minority languages.

Council of Europe

<http://conventions.coe.int/>

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

Eurydice

www.eurydice.org

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

EBLUL

www.eblul.org/

Homepage of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages. This site provides general information on lesser used languages as well as on projects, publications and events.

Eurolang

www.eurolang.net

Eurolang provides coverage of the concerns felt in the minority language regions in the European Union. Eurolang is EBLUL's news service.