

Lithuanian experience: Towards Accessible and Inclusive Early Childhood Education

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Bucharest, 7-8 April 2014



Lithuania in Europe



Lithuania today



Area	65,300 km²
Population	2,944,000
Capital	Vilnius (pop.: 526,356)
Coastline	90 km
Lowest point	Baltic Sea 0 m
Highest point	Aukštojas 294 m
Ethnic groups	Lithuanian 83.9% Polish 6.6% Russian 5.4% Belarusian 1.1% other 3.0%

Lithuania – Member of European Union (since 2004)



White Stork – our national bird



Babies born in Lithuania:

1992 – 54 400

2000 – 34 000

2005 – 29 500

2012 – 30 500

2013 – 30 900



ECEC in Lithuania

- **Pre-school education programs** – making available to a child meeting his/her cultural, social and cognitive needs and provided to children from a child's birth to 5/6 years of age.
- Pre-school Education Programs are created by each educational institution – **Criteria for Pre-school education Programs (2011)**.
- **Pre-school Education Programs** are provided by municipal (685), governmental (3) and private educational institutions (71)
- **Pre-primary Education program 5–7:** helps to prepare for successful school start

Key features of ECEC programs (1)

- **Description of Achievements of Pre-schoolers**‘ is expected to be approved in 2014. It aims to promote **quality** of pre-school and pre-primary education provision.
- In order to improve **a concordance between pre-school, pre-primary and primary education curricula** in 2014 Pre-primary Education Curriculum will be revised.
- **Requirements for pre-school and pre-primary education teachers:** university and non-university higher pedagogical education and a qualification of pre-school education teacher; every teacher to individualize, to differentiate educational content and methods
- **New legislation acts (2011): Regulations of Evaluating and Prescribing of Compulsory Pre-school and Pre-primary Education, 2012)**

Key features of ECEC programs (2)

Multi-sectoral, multi-layer coordination

- Regulations for coordinated provision educational support, social care services and medical care to children from their birth to 7 and their parents
- **Responsibilities** by MoED (policy developing – integrated approach which unites education and care) and municipalities (accessibility based on analyses of family needs)

Pre-school education financing

- **Financing** from January 1, 2011 „Back-pack“ for pre-school education has been introduced (4 hours per day)
- **User fees for public pre-school services differ** by family composition, family income or other criteria (most municipalities have lowered cost up to 50–80 % for families who receive social benefits)

The most effective measures for accessibility of ECEC

- ❑ **Liberalization of Hygiene norms**
 - ⇒ allowing to provide Pre-school Education Programs in various establishments (private houses, multistoried houses, multifunctional centres)
- ❑ **Methodology of financing of pre-school education has been revised (January 2011).**
 - ⇒ The financing model „money follows the child’s or „pupil’s basket“ has been introduced (the same sum of money for public, municipal and private pre-schools).
- ❑ **Discounts introduced by founders**
 - ⇒ every family has to be offered to use the pre-school services therefore the cost for attendance must be lowered up to 50 % if: (a child has only one parent, there are 3 or more children in a family, a child is raised by parents who are students, in a family on social benefits, etc (The Government Resolution (1995, 2012)
- ❑ **Creating multifunctional centres** throughout the country (EU SF and local authorities funding)
- ❑ **Establishing new groups** in general education schools that have less pupils every year
- ❑ **Guide material** for local authorities and **consulting**
- ❑ **“Yellow Bus” program** implemented (~850 children are brought to pre-primary programs)
- ❑ **The Pre-School and Pre-Primary Education Development Program for 2011–2013 (2011) and EU SF national level projects:** 3 components (new models, revised content and in-service training, inter-sectorial co-operation).

Outcomes of the Pre-School and Pre-Primary Education Development Program for 2011–2013 and EU SF national level projects

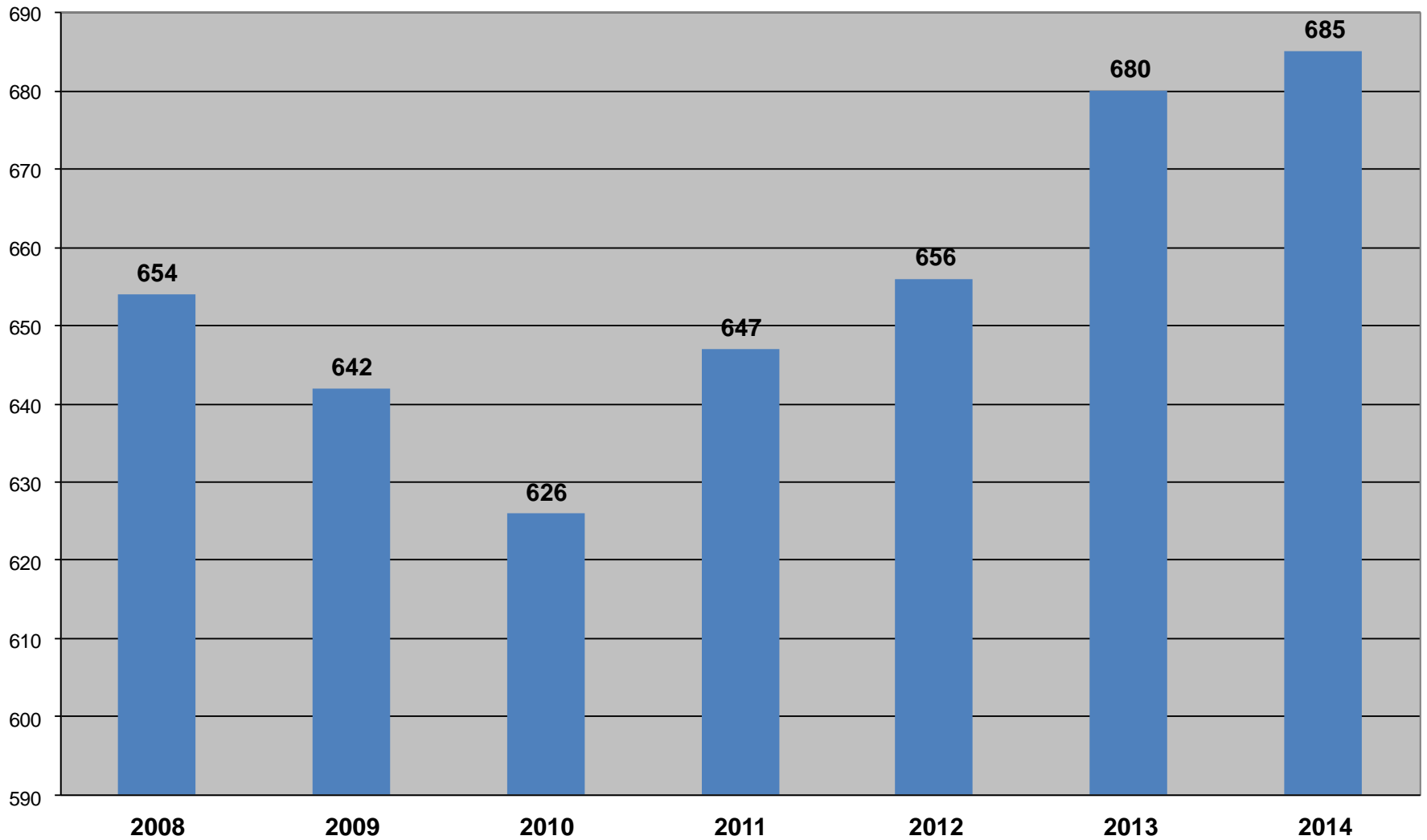
□ Pre-primary education programs

- **in cities:** increased by 0,63 %
- **in rural areas:** increased by 3,34 %
- Dynamics of enrollment of children into Pre-primary education program during the last three years was not stable: 2011 – 27 025 children (96,8 %), 2012 – 24 899 children (89,83 %), 2013 – 25 428 children (92,03 %)

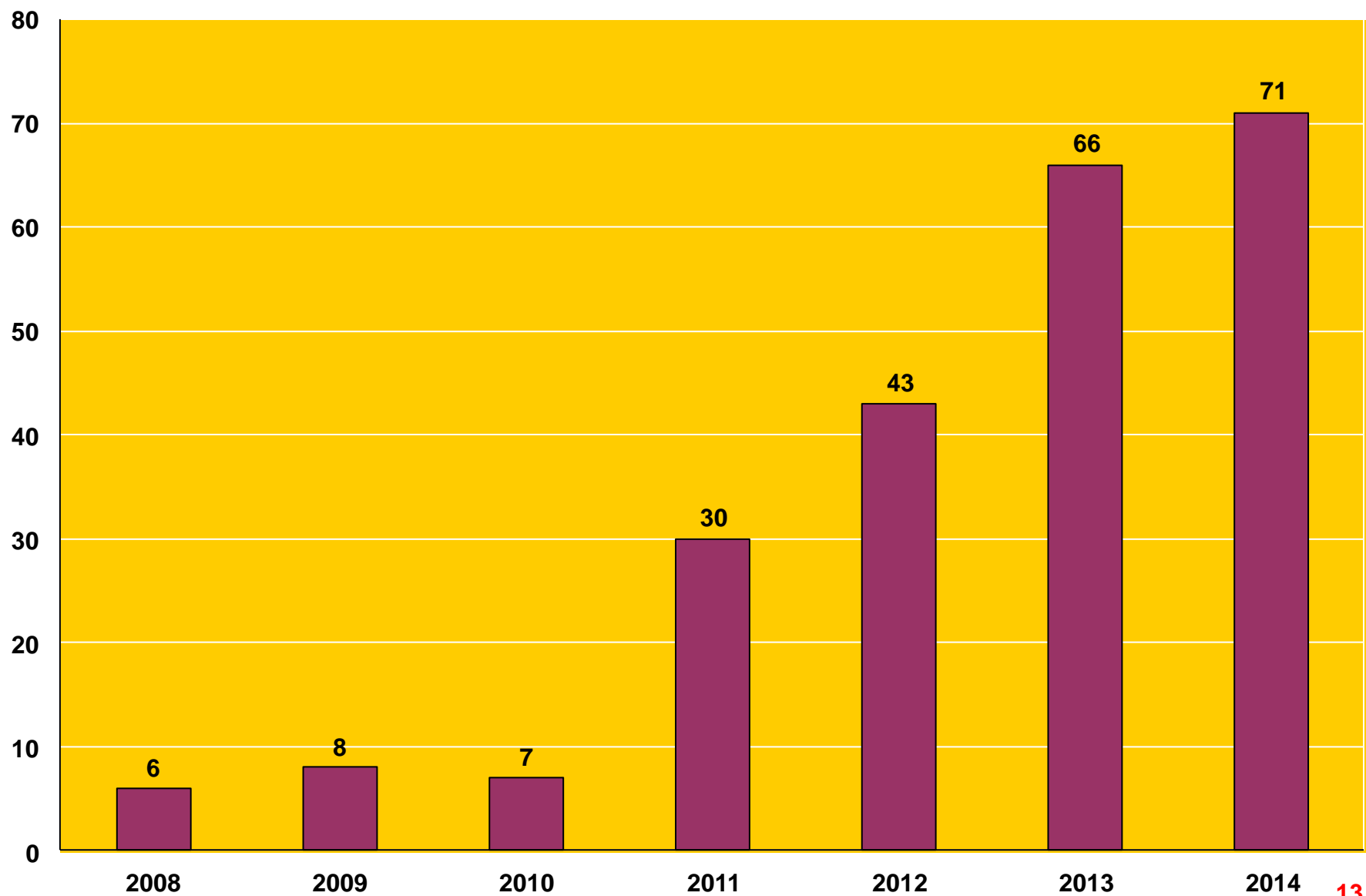
□ Pre-school education programs:

- a number of children increased up to 15 000 (from 77 454 up to 92 313)
 - A number of 4 years of age children involved into Pre-school education in 2013 was 87,12 % , and 5 years children – 92,06 %.
 - **in cities:** increased by 6,44 %
 - **in rural areas:** increased by 13,4 %
- **A number of private institutions** in 2010–2013 increased from 7 to 66. A number of children attending them increased up to 2000. The most rapid change was in the cities.

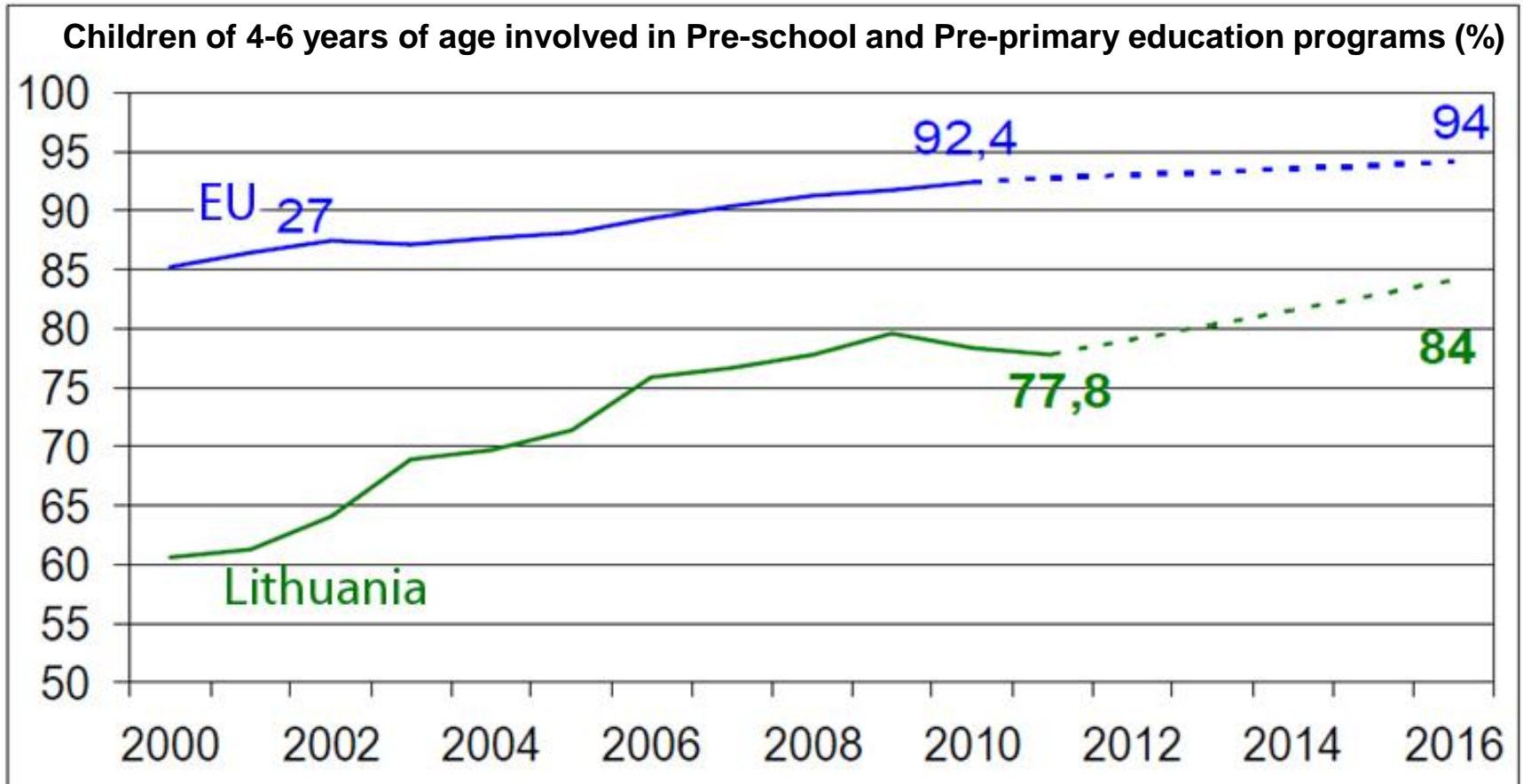
Number of pre-schools in Lithuania



Number of private pre-schools in Lithuania



Accessibility of Pre-school education in Lithuania and EU



A number of renovated kindergartens

Source of financing for renovation	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
National projects implemented by Ministry of Education and Science (EU SF)	0	89	23	6	138	256
Government of Lithuania	0	0	4	0	0	4
Projects implemented by Ministry of Economy (EU SF)	19	77	3	0	0	99
Total number of renovated institutions	19	166	30	6	138	359

Issues to be solved:

- **Lack of accessibility** of pre-school education
 - in rural areas (villages): low rate of inhabitants, **there is no/ lack of educational institutions**, high expenses for transportation, emigration etc.
 - in big cities: there is a **lack of places** in kindergartens
- **Lack of accessibility** for families having children from 0 till 3 to **choose pre-school education in nursery/kindergarten**
- **Lack of specialised groups for children with SEN** and specialists to provide education support
- Discussion **compulsory Prie-primary education** to be implemented

Factors causing low pre-school/pre-primary enrollment

- There is a high level of unemployment in rural areas, low family incomes
- **Restricted financial possibilities** of local authorities
- **Low awareness** of families, local authorities and policy decision makers regarding benefits of attendance of pre-school/pre-primary education programs Specialised data bases of children of pre-school and pre-primary school age started to be created but they need further improvement
- **There is no system of monitoring and evaluation of quality** of Pre-school Education and Pre-primary education programs
- **Unfavorable teacher conditions:** low prestige of profession, long working hours, low salary (lower than a salary of primary grades teachers), more than 50 % of teachers in ECEC are older than 50



TAUTINĖ
MOKYKLĀ

„Every person is a primary autonomous value.“

“The person matures through the culture.”

“Concrete i.e. national culture is the foundation of the education system.”

Concept of National School,
1988

Towards inclusion: improving legislation (1)

- **The Education Reform Act (1991)** consolidated democratic principles of education in the country. This document had a strong impact on a fate of children with severe mental disabilities: they have been allowed to learn in educational settings – became “**educatable**”.
- **The Law on Integration of the disabled (1991)**
The disabled can not be discriminated against, they have the right to work, study and train, regardless of the cause, character and degree of their disability.
Employment quota for disabled.
- **Lithuania’s first post-communist Constitution (1992)** affirms the determination of the Lithuanian nation to strive for open, just and harmonious society.
- **The Act of Special Educational Provision for Children with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Educational Institutions (1993)** is the first basis in legislation for integrated education of children with SEN.
- **Financing model:** Pre-schooler’s with SEN “back-pack” is bigger 33 % (from 2011), in Pre-primary programmes a child with SEN gets such “back-pack” from 2004.

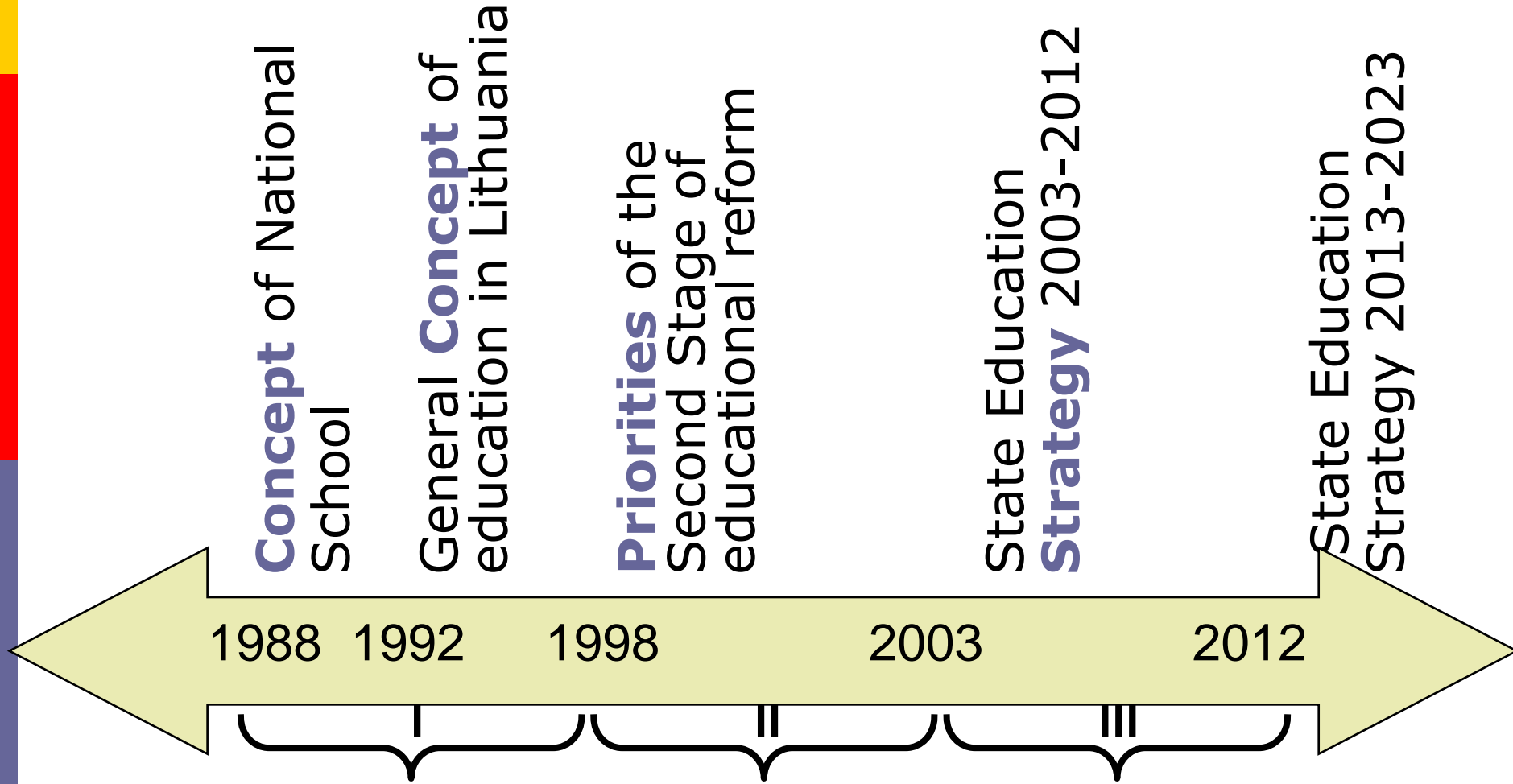
Towards inclusion: improving legislation (2)

- **The same law** on Education for everyone: the main statements of the Law on Special Education (1998) were integrated into the Law on Education (2011)
- **Art. 2 Definition of SEN** was changed:
„Special educational needs – a need for assistance and services in education process that occurs due to being exceptionally gifted, having congenital or acquired disorders or disadvantages in person’s environment“
- **Art. 14 “Education of pupils with SEN”**.
“**School Commission for Child Welfare** assess and evaluates pupil’s SEN (the first level), local PPS.”

Towards inclusion: improving legislation (3)

- ❑ Children with SEN have to be taught according to the same Pre-school or Pre-primary education curriculum taking in to account their individual SEN (Regulations from 2011)
- ❑ All educational institutions and education providers have to accept pupils with SEN. Upon the consent of parents (or guardians of the child) he/she can be taught at mainstream group, class, attend a general education school, vocational school or in any (region) or municipal school for pupils with SEN. PPS recommends the school. (Governmental regulations, 2007, 2011)
- ❑ Municipality takes care of accessibility of education for persons with SEN (Law on Education 2011).
- ❑ Art. 34 Accessibility is insured by adapting school environment, providing psychological, special pedagogical, special assistance, social pedagogical support, providing technical assistive devices, special educational material and in other ways.
- ❑ In accordance with a certain legislation a child who needs an intensive specialised support and a day regimen is allowed to start to attend the primary education programme at school one year later on – not being seven years old (Regulations from 2005).

History of educational reform in Lithuania



<p>1992 Concept</p>	<p>The universal access to education.</p> <p>Changing vocabulary and legislation. Integration of children with special education needs into mainstream groups/classes.</p>
<p>1998 Priorities</p>	<p>Improvement of socio-pedagogical conditions for learning.</p> <p>Establishment of staff for educational support in schools and kindergartens and recognition of pupils with SEN.</p>
<p>2003 Strategy</p>	<p>Accessible system of continuing education that guarantees life-long learning and social justice in education.</p> <p>Establishment of a wide network of pedagogical psychological services.</p>

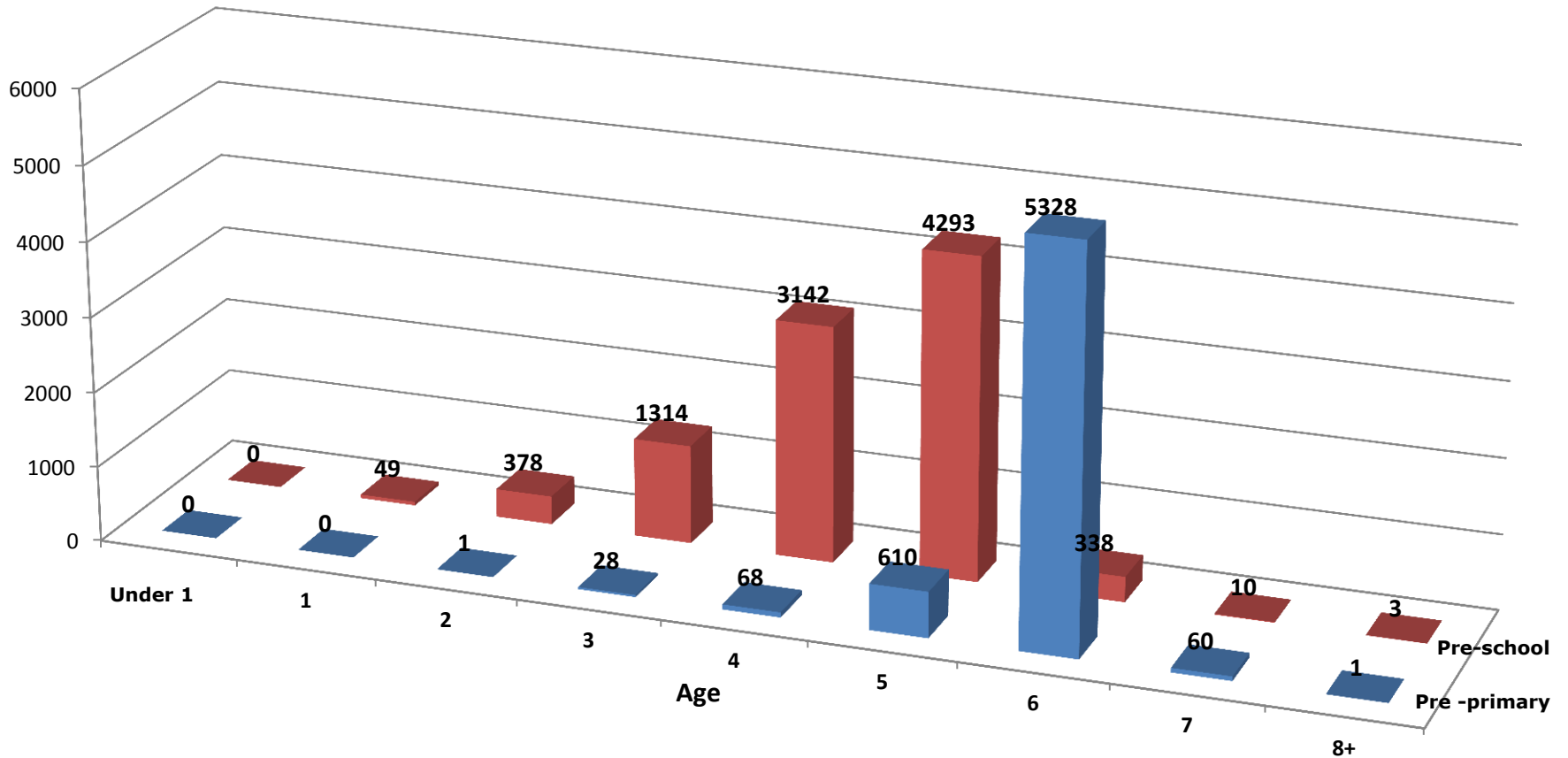
Changing paradigm and vocabulary

- Defectology
 - Corrective education
- } Special education,
education of pupils
with SEN
-
- Handicapped
 - Uneducable
- } Pupil with SEN

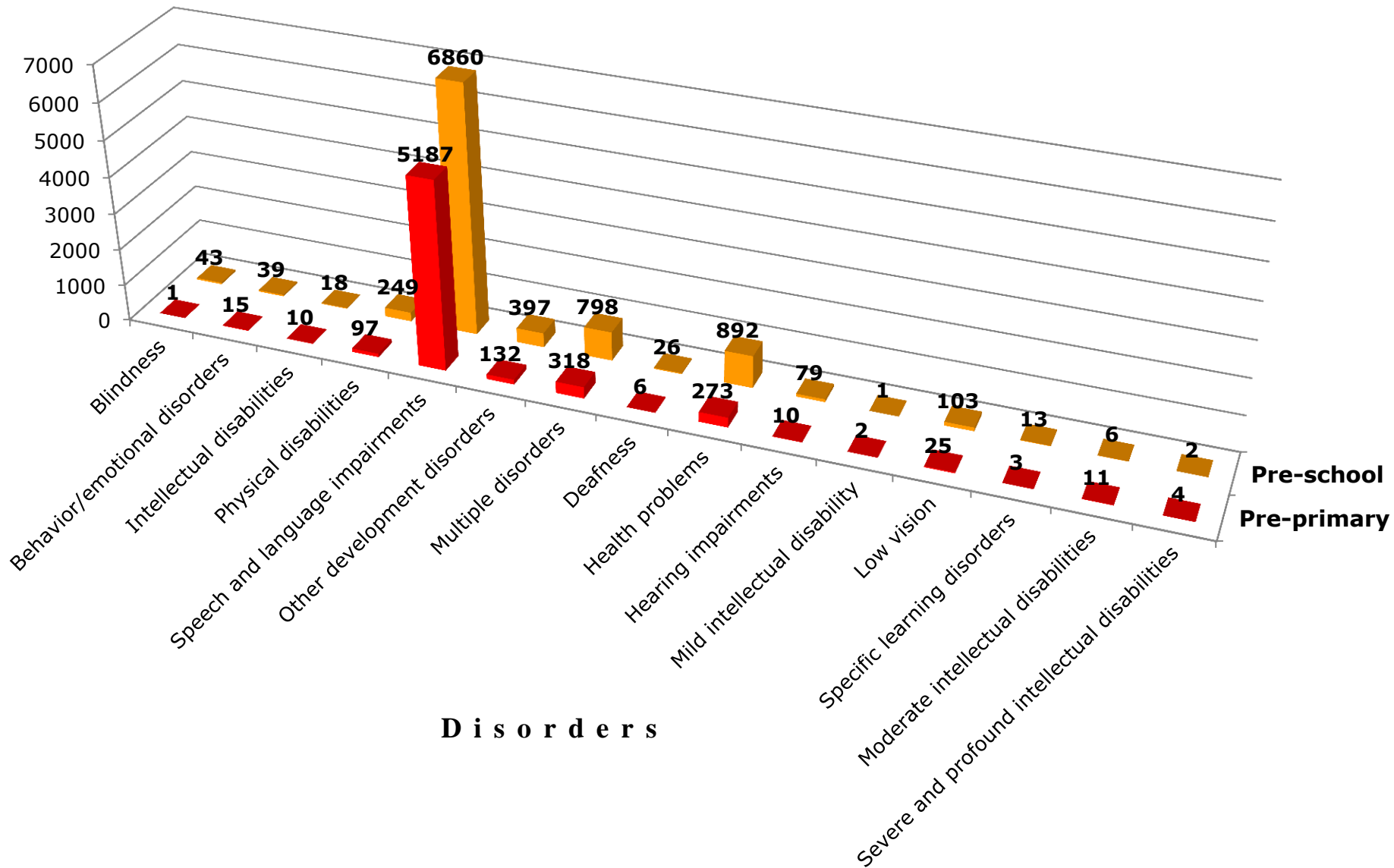
Children with SEN in pre-school and pre-primary programs

- 13 % of children involved into Pre-school and Pre-primary education programs have SEN
- 78 % of children involved into Pre-school programs – are 4–5 years of age
- 72 % of children involved into Pre-school programs
- 85 % involved into Pre-primary education programs – have SEN due to language and other communication disorders. The second reason for SEN – somatic and neurological disorders

Children with SEN in Pre-school and Pre-primary education (2013)



Children with SEN (2013)



A right to attend an adapted Pre-school and Pre-primary Education Programme

- ❑ **With native language of instruction:** according to requirements of parents a part of Pre-school education program can be provided in Lithuanian language
- ❑ **Not less than 4 hours** in Pre-primary education have to be provided in Lithuanian language of instruction
- ❑ Content, methods, materials **should meet individual child's needs (and SEN)**

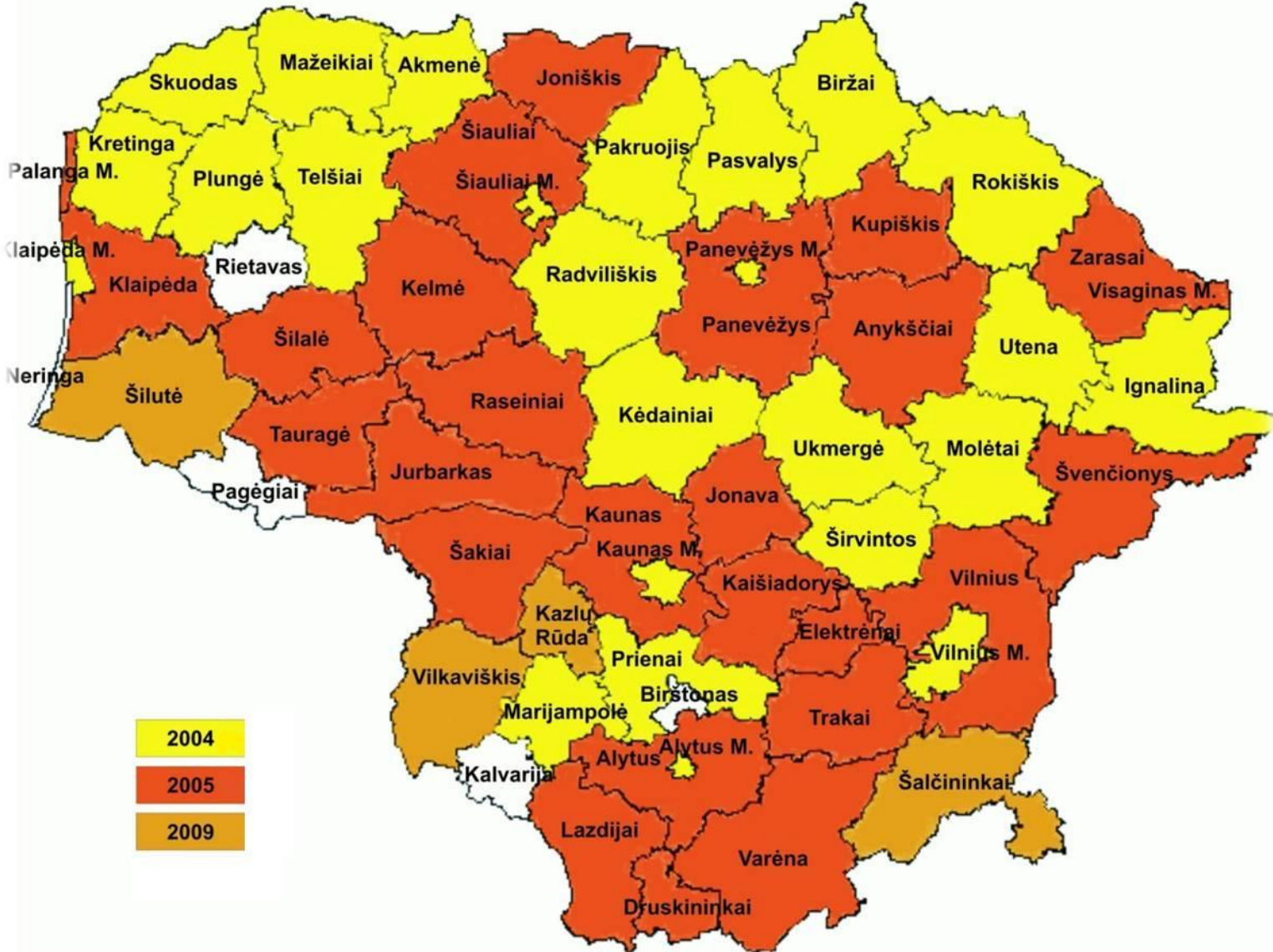


The most effective measures for inclusion in ECEC

- **Creating and improving the system of provision** of special pedagogical and psychological support: 3-level Model of Special Pedagogical and Psychological Support (2004)

- **Projects** prepared for EU SF and MoED funding: Implementation of national programme „School development programme plus“ for the period of 2007–2013 (EU SF and MoED)
 - Renovating of PPSs, modernizing of premises Preparation of Special educational material, providing assessment tools, education material etc.: in 2004–2013 investment – 22,4 mln Lt)
 - Reorganization of 4 special schools into resource centres
 - Developing educational possibilities for SEN students
 - Improving PPSs possibilities to assess and evaluate small childrens' educational needs (providing necessary tools for psychological and pedagogical assessment)

Developing a network of PPSs throughout the country (2004–2009)

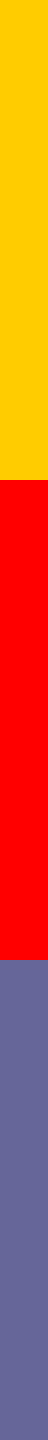


Issues to be solved

- ❑ Pre-school education teachers and pre-primary education pedagogues do **not have enough** of necessary knowledge and skills to detect, understand individual child's needs and to individualise education content and methods. Such situations might take place even in accordance with recommendations of specialists from School Child Welfare Commissions, PPSs.
- ❑ **A lack of specialists** (psychologists, special needs education teachers, speech therapists...) at institutions that implement pre-school/pre-primary education programmes, and particularly in rural areas where there is a highest number of disadvantaged or children at risk.
- ❑ **“Back-pack money”** (about 33 percent more) for a child with SEN are not sufficient and there is no **accountability by a school what exactly support has been provided** for a particular child with SEN.
- ❑ **Education environment** (premises, content, methods, materials) for children with SEN is not sufficient , particularly for those with severe and profound SEN, language and other.
- ❑ **School Child Welfare Commissions** in pre-schools are not active and competent enough, **collaboration, co-operation** and working in teams still is a problem.

Measures to address the issues

- ❑ **To modernise Initial Teacher Education** in accordance with Teacher for inclusive education profile
- ❑ **To further develop the In-service Teacher Training system** so that teachers can have an access to a bigger variety of programs regarding inclusive education
- ❑ **To improve a cooperation** with other ministries and stakeholders to insure equity, equality and availability of ECEC
- ❑ **To strengthen responsibility** of local authorities for accessibility and quality of support and inclusion
- ❑ **To ensure continuity** after early intervention provided for very short period by medical care units/teams (from birth to 3 (ECI is competence of The Ministry of Health) and education institutions (e.g. specialised education centres)
- ❑ **To improve the financing system** and accountability of schools



**“If you want walk fast – go
alone, but if you want to
go far – go with your
friends”**

