

CZECH REPUBLIC

In January 2023, the second phase of the international project called The Development of Support System for Novice Teachers was concluded. This phase was based on a questionnaire survey and research summary developed during the first phase, which mapped the legislative status of novice teachers in the Czech Republic, their actual role and position in the educational system, the system weaknesses (from the novice teachers' point of view and beyond), and the steps which should be taken to make the system better and more efficient.

The output of the second phase comprises three detailed studies outlining individual aspects of a solution to this issue:

- Operative Level Intervention – doc. PhDr. Miluše Vítečková, Ph.D. (University of South Bohemia)
- Legislative Level Intervention – Mgr. Martin Kaplán (ČMOS PŠ)
- Path to the Future – PhDr. Jitka Plischke, Ph.D., PhDr. Jaroslava Ševčíková, Ph.D. (Palacký University Olomouc)

Although the individual studies addressed the topic from different points of view, they all concluded that the system is burdened by unmethodological and inconsistent educational policies, insufficiently justified interventions, short-term solutions to the problem, and steps resulting in the de-professionalisation of the teaching profession.

On the other hand, the steps that could help increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession, boost interest in its performance, and reduce the drop-out of (predominantly) novice teachers are, in addition to improving the salary aspect, the ones outlined under the recommendations below.

Recommendations:

- Defining the competence profile of a graduate (novice) teacher.
- Systemic support of mentor and guide teachers, including their financial evaluation, further professional development, and support.
- Detailed elaboration of the mentoring system, cooperation between teachers, and constructive feedback.
- Supporting further education and career growth.
- Promoting an open communicative environment in schools ("team spirit").
- Personnel support by the school headmaster.

In the vocational training of future teachers, in addition to professional and pedagogical knowledge and skills, soft skills, mechanisms for coping with difficult situations and stress, psychological hygiene, personal and social growth, ways of building professional identity and, last but not least, lifelong learning attitude should be developed. As associate professor Vítečková notes in her study: "... it is important to convince students that the teaching profession requires lifelong learning, as it is not possible to prepare for all situations encountered in practice. Rather, they shall develop such skills and abilities that will ensure their feeling of readiness – the state when the teacher is professionally anchored and does not see the situation at school as problems "causing breakdowns", but rather as challenges that lead to self-reflection, knowledge acquiring, and opportunities for personal growth."

As part of the second phase of the project, a round table was held where representatives of teachers, the Ministry of Education, pedagogical faculties, and non-governmental organizations involved in the educational sector discussed the areas with issues and those with potential for future improvements. In general, everyone agreed that a very important role is undoubtedly to be played by mentor teachers, who should have clearly defined qualification prerequisites, competences, and support for their further education and career growth. Incorporating this element into the educational system, however, requires a clear definition of rules, not only from the professional point of view, but also from the financial point of view.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The four teachers trade unions: LIZDA (Latvia), LESTU (Lithuania), ZNP (Poland), and ČMOS PŠ (the Czech Republic) have decided to jointly review and map the position of and the support system for novice teachers in their respective countries. Common activities started in 2021 within the Erasmus+ programme project **The Development of Support System for Novice Teachers**. Educational systems in all the countries listed above face the issues of a low number of "young" teachers and a low prestige of the teaching profession.



The next phase of the project comprises drafting an electronic handbook for novice teachers, which will be created by a team of career-wise young teachers, based on the first two phases of the project and also their own experience. The handbook will include chapters focused on:

- The rights and obligations of teachers, including real-life teaching practice examples
- Innovative teaching methods and opportunities for peer-to-peer cooperation among teachers
- Evaluation and self-reflection
- Tips for successful communication with students, their parents, and teacher colleagues
- Setting goals and working with goals in lesson planning
- Class management and effective teaching
- The role of artificial intelligence and digitization in teaching and their potential and risks
- Reasons for being a part of professional and trade union organizations
- Mentoring, its planning, course, and effective ways of providing feedback



The main handbook criteria comprise clarity, brevity, practical use, and links to useful resources and opportunities for further self-education. The handbook should also contain worksheets for readers to reflect on the given topic. The handbook should be ready by the end of 2023.

LATVIA

General information

In carrying out the second stage of the project, LIZDA focused on organization and implementation of the national level conference “Support to Novice Teachers in the Frame of Social Dialogue”. The conference was held on December 14, 2022, in Riga.

The conference was broadcast on the LIZDA Facebook home page. In the conference, representatives from LIZDA, Ministry of Education and Science, university of pedagogical programs, LIVA (Association of School Principles), LPS (Union of Latvian Local Governments), representatives from the council of heads of educational Institutions and the council of novice teachers shared their experience and future perspectives for support of novice teachers. Presentations in Latvian are available here.

Results from two surveys (Support to Novice Teachers, March – April 2022, n=814; Heads of Education institutions about Support to Novice Teachers, May, June 2022, n=209) managed by LIZDA were presented by the LIZDA president Inga Vanaga. The aim of the research - to find out how novice teachers feel when starting work in an educational institution and how support is organized for novice teachers at institutional level and state level, in order to draft recommendations for establishment of a support system for novice teachers.

Main data

- In Latvia, the average age of teachers is 48 years (OECD average - 44 years); teachers in the age group over 50 years are 43% of the total number of teachers.
- Approximately 13% of Latvian teachers have 1-5 years of service. Although novice teachers who enter Latvian schools often leave quickly, i.e., only 6.5% of teachers have 6-10 years of service, and only 8% of teachers have 11-15 years of service.

Possible reasons: low competitiveness of the profession (prestige, remuneration), inadequate selection of students at the university, psychological unsuitability for the profession, insufficient support from school.

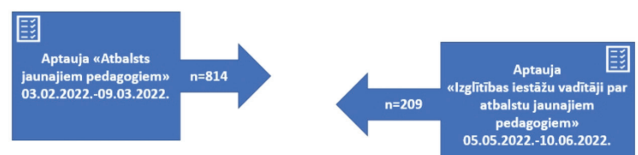
- In Latvia, 38% of teachers indicate that they would like to leave the profession in the next five years (25% on average in OECD countries). In addition, 26% of teachers in Latvia are aged 50 and under (14% on average in OECD countries). Leaving work has far-reaching consequences - it affects students' achievement, negatively affects the school's emotional climate and the quality of curriculum implementation and requires rapid financial and organizational solutions to replace missing teachers.

- The potential of professional cooperation is not sufficiently used - professional cooperation of teachers, which also means greater interdependence of teachers, helps to create innovative and effective learning. In Latvia, 12% of teachers report participation in professional co-operation at least once a month (OECD average - 21%) and 17% organize teaching in teams as often (OECD average - 28%).



Pētījuma mērķis

noskaidrot, kā jaunie pedagogi jūtas uzsākot darbu izglītības iestādē un kā tiek organizēts atbalsts uzsākot pedagoga darba gaitas, lai sagatavotu ieteikumus jauno pedagogu atbalsta sistēmas izveidei



Recommendations:

- Attraction of novice teachers, ensuring replacement of aging teachers by younger teachers.
- Strengthening the novice teachers' training and support system, provision of mentors (advisors) for purposeful support of novice teachers - to develop a teacher training system.
- Improvement of the teacher remuneration model - revision of the principles of remuneration. Ensure competitive remuneration.
- To ensure high-quality and regular professional development of teachers, methodological and consultative support by coordinating the involvement and cooperation of various parties.
- To create sustainable networks for the Exchange of professional experience and cooperation.

Opinion of trade union (LIZDA)

LIZDA is of the opinion that recommendations, planning, and good intentions regarding support for novice teachers are characteristic for all stakeholders of the education system. What has been missing for decades – implementation of good plans in practice. One of the main reasons is lack of all kinds of resources – human, financial, material etc. at all levels – institutional, municipal, and state level.

Conclusions, suggestions

- Cooperation, sharing of experience, development of new proposals for implementation of the support system and decreasing problems of novice teacher work will be intensively continued among all parties involved – LIZDA, Ministry of Education and Science, Council of the Novice Teachers (LIZDA), LIVA, Higher Education Institutions (with pedagogical programs), and others.
- Problems of novice teachers have been identified. A priority list has to be recommended in order to gradually solve the most intensive problems.
- More active participation on the part of novice teachers (LIZDA) is suggested in order to successfully organize and implement IO3 activity – training of trainers at novice teachers camp which will be organized in Riga, Latvia, in September 2023.

Proposed future activities/planning on the part of the Ministry of Education and Science, specifically, regarding pedagogical students:

- Scholarship which correlates with workload as a compensatory mechanism
- Supervision of the implementation of new pedagogy study programs
- Provision of study internships (practice) and increased supervision of internships (practice)
- Determine the principles of a balanced workload for the teacher
- Review career development opportunities for teachers
- Develop a new teachers' workload monitoring methodology (program)
- Evaluate the possibility of determining a one-time allowance for a new specialist to start work (municipalities)
- The status and requirements of the position of teacher/mentor have to be specified

LITHUANIA

The Lithuanian Education and Science Trade Union (LŠMPS), participating in various projects, seeks, together with its partners, to create as many value-added intellectual products as possible, which would contribute to the improvement of the working, economic and social conditions of education workers. For this reason, one of the projects in which we are currently participating together with our colleagues from Latvia, Poland, and the Czech Republic - "Developing a Support System for Novice Teachers (Help for Teachers)" - is of great importance to the LŠMPS.

One of the events of this project took place on 16 December 2022. The project took place in Vilnius on 16 December 2022, during which the detailed reports prepared by the participating countries were presented to the audience to give an overview of the situation of novice teachers on the labour market and what support mechanisms have been or are still in practice. The results of the surveys carried out to assess and identify the unifying issues faced by novice teachers in the working environment were also presented in more detail and used as a basis for developing a common position of the project partners in the development of a support system for novice teachers.



During the event, Audrius Jurgelevičius, Vice-Chairman of the LSMPS, while presenting the reports prepared by each country, invited the participants to first assess the existing support measures for novice teachers and their effectiveness.

In Lithuania alone, 8 measures have been applied or are still being applied to attract and retain young teachers, e.g., targeted scholarships, various programmes such as "Choose to Teach!", "I Will Be a Teacher in Vilnius" or "Keep Going!". Participants at the event were mainly engaged in the discussion on the trade unions' proposals for attracting and retaining young teachers in the education system. The discussions concluded that competitive salaries are one of the main factors that lead to the retention of early career teachers. Other important factors include the provision of an adapted and equipped working environment and the attitude of colleagues towards the young professional with regards to support and dissemination of experience.

We will share our observations from the discussion at the event with the other project partners, and together, we will look for common denominators, develop proposals for a unified support mechanism for novice teachers, and raise this problematic issue with education policymakers; otherwise, the Lithuanian, Latvian, Polish and Czech education systems will inevitably be faced with a massive teacher shortage in the future.

Recommendations:

- Improve existing teacher databases to enable them to forecast the demand for teachers in specific municipalities and schools each year.
- The state must ensure that all measures to attract teachers to schools are adequately funded.
- Coordinate at national level all initiatives to attract teachers to schools.
- LESTU to prepare proposals for a collective agreement on measures to attract teachers to schools in the Lithuanian education and science sector.
- Establish a competitive salary for novice teachers.

POLAND

In carrying out the second stage of the project, we focused on preparing a document describing the support system for novice teachers. Operational and legislative issues, as well as a rationale that considers social expectations for teachers now and in the future, were included in it. This extensive Development of a framework for a support system for novice teachers also included a scenario for consultation seminars.

The purpose of the consultation was to discuss the solutions proposed in the document and discuss the concept of an e-book for novice teachers and training for future mentors. Within the framework of the consultations, two meetings were held in Warsaw (19/01/2023) and in the Silesian voivodeship (Chorzow, 01/02/2023), which has the largest population and, therefore, most teachers. Both consultation seminars were attended by 28 people representing young teachers, managers of educational institutions (colleges, in-service teacher training centres and

functionaries of the ZNP. During the lively 3-hour discussions, the participants discussed the abovementioned issues. Below are the most important conclusions.

In connection with the change in the regulations on professional promotion, which have been introduced since September 2022, the participants analysed the legal provisions on teacher participation in the promotion process, including the role of the mentor and school management, and reviewed the opinion of the PMS on this issue, and discussed the differences between the role of mentor and

internship supervisor (a function found in the previously existing promotion model). The issue of the criteria for evaluating a teacher's performance (in the second and final - fourth - years of internship), including the participation and role of the school management and mentor, turned out to be very important. Another important issue raised by the participants in the consultations was the rules for selecting and assigning the mentor's role and the mentor's duties to the novice teacher. Participants made the following recommendations:

Recommendations:

- The need to supplement the mentor regulations with clear criteria for the manner of selecting a mentor, defining the required competencies and tasks of the mentor and the conditions of his/her work (reducing the number of teaching hours, increasing the salary).
- Development of sample bilateral contracts regulating the relationship of novice teacher-mentor or tripartite novice teacher-mentor-school management.

Consultation seminar Chorzów



Consultation seminar Warsaw

With regard to the novice teacher-mentor e-book, consultation participants created a list of issues that it should include:

- Educational law in its broadest sense, regulations adopted at the school level (school statutes, regulations)
- Competencies of a novice teacher, the ability to self-evaluate and plan their own work
- the role of the teacher in the face of modern challenges and the importance of belonging to professional organisations – trade unions

Participants stressed that the e-book should not be overloaded, should be user-friendly, and should contain tasks for self-assessment and references to interesting materials for deepening knowledge (recommended bibliography/online internet sources).

Much time was devoted to mentor training. The advantages of online (accessibility) and onsite mentor training (opportunity to exchange experiences and solve case studies) were discussed. It was considered that the form of hybrid training would be optimal in the future in Polish conditions, resulting from the change in the regulations on the professional promotion of teachers.

It was considered that the e-book for novice teacher should be included in the training of mentors as one of the basic tools for future mentoring. In training mentors, attention should be paid to such skills as:

- Planning the professional development of the novice teacher
- Soft skills (listening, communicating, giving feedback)
- Knowledge of mentoring techniques and methods
- The ability to build a friendly, supportive atmosphere for novice teacher in the workplace

Consultation seminar Warsaw



An additional effect of the consultation seminars was the generation of a lot of interest in the project. The leadership of the ZNP decided to widely promote the results of the project. Meanwhile, the e-book will be one of the key elements of a new action aimed at novice and young teachers from September 2023, whose working title is ZNP 4.0 - FROM THE BEGINNING WITH YOU!

More information:

1. Latvian Educational and Scientific Workers' Trade Union, LIZDA: About us - LIZDA
2. Lithuanian Education and Science Trade Union, LESTU: LŠMPS – LIETUVOS ŠVIETIMO IR MOKSLO PROFESINĖ SAJUNGA (svietimoprofsajunga.lt)
3. Czech and Moravian Trade Union of Workers in Education, ČMOS PŠ: Home page | ČMOS PŠ (skolskeodbory.cz)
4. Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego, ZNP: ZNP - Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego: ZNP



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