

SANITATION IN RURAL SCHOOLS OF LITHUANIA

People of Lithuania have entered 21st century, will join the EU very soon, has made advances in modern technologies but at the same time 471 rural schools with 22,5 thousand children lack adequate sanitation. They still use field toilets without any water, soap and paper. Such situation is not only humiliating and oppressing but also causes children diseases.

Campaign on school sanitation has been initiated by the weekly newspaper “Dialogas” and Lithuanian Water Partnership in 2003. Several meetings have been arranged with the vice-ministers of ministries of Health and Science & Education. Questionnaires on school sanitation have been sent to all municipalities and about 50 percent of municipalities have filled in the questionnaires.

The seminar with the topic “School sanitation in Lithuania” was organised and held on 15th of October in Vilnius.

30 participants from various districts of Lithuania attended the seminar: directors of schools, representatives from the municipalities and ministries. Participants of the seminar all seemed to be familiar with the problem but nobody have felt really responsible for solving it. Governmental representatives Mr. Dainius Numgaudis, Vice-minister of the Ministry of Science and Education and Mrs. Asta Aranauskiene, Head of Strategic Department, Ministry of Health presented the view of the ministries. Both of them have acknowledged the problem of inadequate school sanitation but accused the principle owners of schools – the municipalities for not taking appropriate measures.

Based on presentations and available information it was concluded that basic sanitation is bad in three types of schools:

1. Small rural schools that will be closed soon;
2. Schools that only need better management to solve the sanitation problems;
3. Schools that really need large investments to improve the situation.

Schools without proper toilets are mainly schools in rural areas constructed before 1965 where no space for toilets have been planned inside the buildings. Large investments are needed to construct the toilets, drill water supply well and build waste water treatment plant. Municipalities complain of not being able to carry such a financial burden as school toilets normally is only one issue in a bunch of rural problems.

It was agreed during the seminar to continue the awareness raising campaign and join forces searching for financial resources.

The letter has been drafted and sent to the Association of Municipalities, consisting of mayors of major Lithuanian cities and districts. The general picture of school sanitation has been described in the letter and detailed information on each municipality presented.