

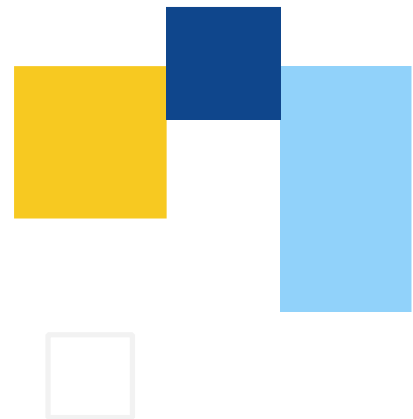


# Implementation progress evaluation of the Millennium Schools' Programme

SUMMARY OF THE FINAL EVALUATION REPORT  
7 February 2025

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Prepared by: Visionary Analytics  
Commissioned by: Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the  
Republic of Lithuania.



# Evaluation purpose, objectives and methodology

**The purpose of evaluation** - to assess the interim progress achieved by the "Millennium Schools" programme (MSP) and to provide recommendations for improving its further implementation, considering the evaluation results and identified risks related to the programme's success and execution.

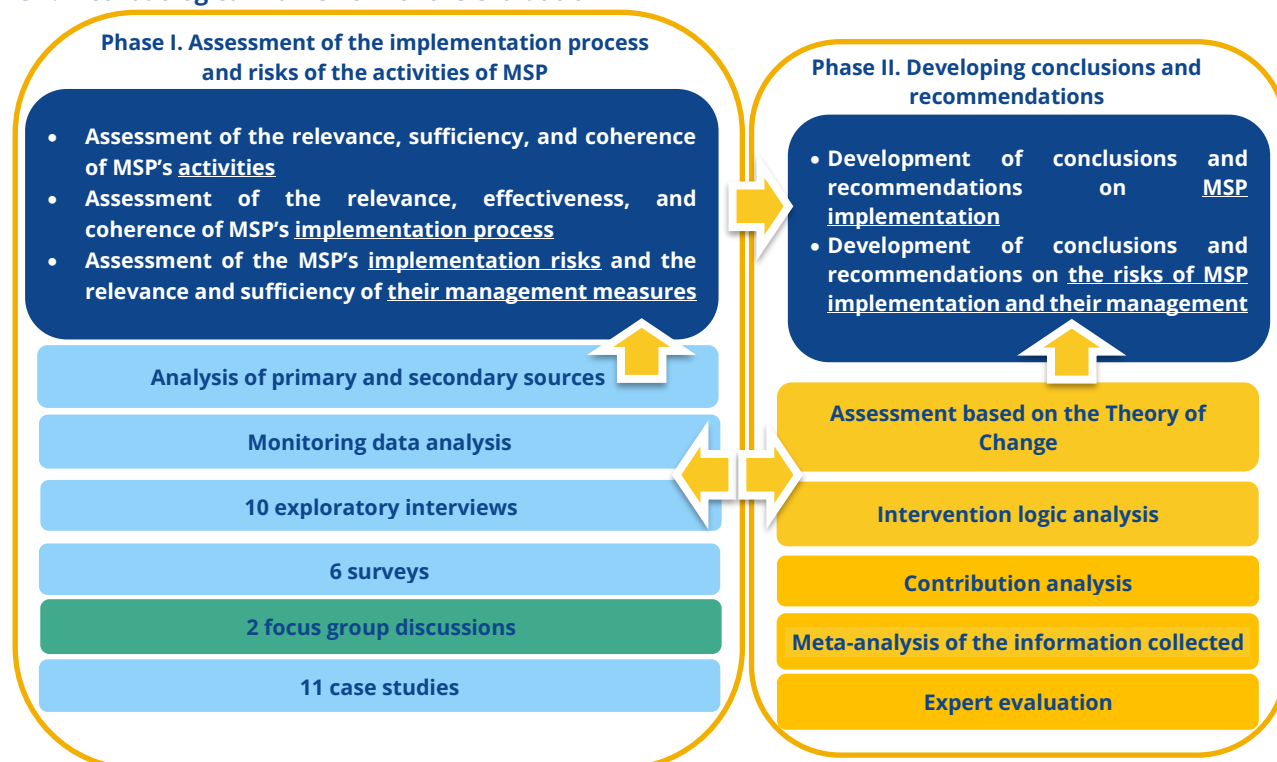
## Evaluation objectives:

1. To assess the **relevance, sufficiency, coherence**, and **effectiveness** of the MSP's activities in achieving its goals and objectives.
2. To evaluate the **implementation process** of the MSP's activities (challenges, opportunities) and the **associated risks**.
3. Based on the evaluation results, provide **conclusions and recommendations** regarding 1) the implementation of the programme (relevance, sufficiency, coherence, and effectiveness of its activities) and 2) risk management of the programme, considering the identified risks for ongoing and planned activities.

**Evaluation methodology.** The evaluation concept follows a **theory-based evaluation approach**, integrating the assessment of MSP's interventions into a unified system based on their **relevance, sufficiency, effectiveness**, and **coherence**. This approach builds on the **theory of change**, a flexible model that identifies causal relationships between various elements of public policy implementation, from allocated resources to expected impact. The evaluation tested the logic of MSP's interventions against **relevance, sufficiency, effectiveness**, and **coherence** criteria to assess whether the programme's structure and initial implementation results will likely allow achieving the desired impact.

The methodological framework of the evaluation and the main methods used for data collection and analysis are presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Methodological framework of the evaluation**



Source: Visionary Analytics, based on the technical specification of the evaluation

**Note:** Dark blue indicates evaluation objectives, light blue - data collection methods, green - participatory data collection methods, and yellow - data analysis methods.

Exploratory interview and survey respondent groups are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Exploratory interview and survey respondent groups**

Exploratory interview respondent groups	Survey respondent groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representatives of the <b>Lithuanian Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports (MESS)</b> responsible for MSP implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>MSP municipality coordinators participating in streams I and II</b> (including general coordinators and coordinators for specific school improvement areas)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representatives of the <b>European Social Fund Agency (ESFA)</b> responsible for MSP implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>School principals from schools participating in stream I and II of MSP</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representatives of the <b>Central Project Management Agency (CPMA)</b> responsible for MSP implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Principals of schools located in municipalities participating in stream I of MSP but not involved in the programme</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representatives of the <b>Association of Municipalities of Lithuania</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Social partners of municipalities participating in stream I of MSP</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representatives of the <b>Lithuanian Association of School Leaders</b></li> </ul>	

Source: Visionary Analytics

**During** evaluation, two focus group discussions brought together municipality coordinators and school representatives from municipalities participating in the first stream of MSP.

The analysis included illustrative examples - **case studies** highlighting challenges and best practices from various municipalities and schools participating in MSP.

## MSP overview

MSP, approved in 2022, aims to reduce student achievement gaps by 2030 by creating integrated, optimal, high-quality learning conditions in Lithuanian municipalities. Compared to other general education improvement programmes, MSP **stands out due to its scale and unconventional investment planning and implementation model**. Almost all Lithuanian municipalities (58 out of 60) and nearly one-third of all schools (270 out of 915) providing pre-primary and general education programmes are involved in the programme. MSP **emphasises a networking element** - ensuring that at least some non-participating schools can participate in specific programme activities and benefit from the infrastructure, equipment, and other outcomes developed during its implementation. In total €254.1 million were allocated for MSP's implementation, with 83% financed by the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) and 17% from the state budget.

The programme's **planning and implementation model is decentralised**. While MESS is the programme's governing body and its implementation is entrusted to ESFA, participating municipalities are given significant autonomy in planning and executing programme activities. When developing the programme, MESS defined the programme's goals and objectives, mandatory and optional indicators, and general investment directions. To achieve the primary goal of MSP, **five types of investments can be planned**, focusing on: 1) renovation and creation of infrastructure; 2) acquisition of equipment and teaching materials; 3) strengthening the competences of school leaders and teaching staff; 4) organisation of educational activities and programmes; 5) improving access to resources for network schools. Each type of investment can be planned in **four school improvement areas**: leadership in action, inclusive education, cultural education, and STEAM<sup>1</sup> education.

**Municipalities took the responsibility of planning specific activities** under MSP based on their own analysis of educational challenges in the municipality and implementation guidelines set by MESS. Activities planned within municipal progress plans (PP) had to be coordinated with ESFA. Despite this, municipalities **were free to select** participating schools, plan activities that best met their and the schools' needs and determine target values for all programme indicators as long as they aligned with the

<sup>1</sup> An acronym for five disciplines: Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics.

programme's criteria. **During the PP preparation phase, ESFA provided a consultative function** to ensure the quality of PP. Throughout the implementation phase, most responsibilities are also transferred to participating municipalities and schools, with periodic reporting to ESFA on the executed activities and achieved results. ESFA assists municipalities in addressing implementation challenges and managing anticipated risks, collects and integrates data provided by municipalities on programme implementation, and transmits this information to the programme's administrating institution - CPMA, as well as MESS, the Chancellery of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, and the Education and Science Committee of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania.

With its large-scale and decentralised implementation model, **MSP is expected to significantly improve Lithuanian general education system** by addressing the needs of participating schools and municipalities. However, the **programme's scope and complexity also present challenges and risks.**

## Evaluation results

**Evaluating MSP's relevance.** The evaluation confirmed that the **primary goal and objectives of MSP align with Lithuania's education context.** The programme's **objectives are also in line with its central goal.** However, the **programme does not explicitly state a significant additional goal** - promoting school network restructuring. This goal is evident in the participation requirements for municipalities and the selection of mandatory programme indicators and was confirmed in exploratory interviews. The lack of explicit reference to this goal in the programme **weakens the relevance of the programme's key indicators.**

**Only two<sup>2</sup> of four mandatory indicators partially reflect the programme's goals and objectives.** These indicators assess overall student achievement but focus solely on Lithuanian language and mathematics achievements without addressing achievement disparities between municipalities and schools. Additionally, the Basic Education Achievement Test (BEAT) indicators apply only to 10th-grade students, making them unsuitable for some participating schools. The **remaining two** mandatory programme indicators<sup>3</sup> relate to an unspecified goal (to promote the school network restructuring) and, therefore, **have no connection with either the main goal of the programme or its objectives.**

The programme's **project funding conditions include a more relevant indicator** for measuring its main goal: "Student achievement gaps between schools located in the territories of municipalities participating in the project." This indicator compares Lithuanian language and mathematics BEAT results between schools within a municipality. However, this indicator is **misclassified as an output instead of an outcome indicator**, even though it inherently measures results. It also **assesses disparities only within municipalities, not between them**, and **contains a description error** that could lead to misinterpretation.

**Only four of 13 optional indicators align with MSP's goals and objectives.** Most optional indicators measure changes that do not directly result from the programme's implementation.

**The school improvement areas in MSP are partially suitable.** Their alignment with the programme's main goal is generally well-founded, except for the area of inclusive education. However, the connection between school improvement areas and the programme's objectives is often abstract.

When evaluating the relevance of MSP's activities at the municipal (PP) level, the same shortcomings appear as at the national level. **PP often highlight education challenges but fail to define related goals, objectives, and activities**, even while selecting relevant indicators. As a result, **municipalities**

<sup>2</sup> "The proportion of students who achieved at least the basic level of Lithuanian language learning achievement during the Basic Education Achievement Test (BEAT) (pct.)" and "The proportion of students who achieved at least the basic level of mathematics learning achievement during the Basic Education Achievement Test (BEAT) (pct.)."

<sup>3</sup> "The proportion of 1-8 grade sets in general education schools that are combined (pct.)" and "The number of students per conditional teacher position in general education schools."

**set target indicators without linking them to specific activities, or they choose activities that cannot impact the selected indicators' achievement.**

Despite these shortcomings, municipal coordinators and school representatives participating in MSP **rate the alignment of activities with their educational needs and challenges quite positively**, giving on average 8.58 and 8.53 points out of 10, respectively. The most common reasons for lower alignment include changed needs since the development of the PP and overly centralised or low-quality PP preparation.

**Evaluating MSP's sufficiency.** Although MSP **covers only a portion of the country's municipalities and less than one-third of schools**, its goals, objectives, and indicator targets are set at the national or municipal level. As a result, **MSP interventions alone are insufficient**. Achieving the programme's goals, objectives, and indicator targets **requires additional contributions from municipalities and schools**.

The scope of MSP's activities was generally assessed as **sufficient** by participating municipalities and schools for addressing their educational **challenges and needs**. This aspect was **evaluated** by 8.17 points out of 10. However, some municipalities and schools perceive the scope of the programme as too extensive to ensure high-quality implementation.

**Evaluating MSP's coherence.** An analysis of PP planned activities indicates that **most activities are coherent**. 63% of municipal coordinators and 72.7% of school representatives participating in the programme confirm this assessment. **Coherence** tends to be **weaker** in **municipalities** where PP planning **did not incorporate an integrated approach or synergies between activities planned by individual schools were lacking**. Ensuring sufficient coherence of MSP's activities is challenging for municipalities and schools due to a lack of knowledge and experience. These difficulties were particularly evident when planning STEAM infrastructure and the training needed for its use. Without a clear understanding of future infrastructure needs and its capacity, municipalities struggled to determine the competences required for its use. Additionally, delays in the implementation of programme's activities disrupt the alignment established during the PP planning phase, forcing changes in execution order or the cancellation of certain activities.

**Evaluating the smoothness of PP preparation.** During the PP preparation process, **municipalities most often collaborated with external providers** (38%) or **handled the process independently** (35%). In only 8% of cases was PP preparation fully outsourced to external providers. External providers primarily developed investment projects, while some also managed the PP preparation process and drafted the PP text.

Nearly all municipalities **included schools participating in MSP in PP preparation**. However, in about 3% of cases, municipalities only presented schools with the finalised PP. **The extent of school involvement varied** - some schools actively participated in all stages of PP preparation, from situation analysis to activity planning, while the involvement of others was limited to providing information. On average, municipal coordinators rated the level of school involvement in PP preparation at 8.62 points out of 10. Representatives of schools participating in MSP believe that **municipalities fairly well considered their expressed needs** during the PP preparation stage, rating this aspect at 8.55 points out of 10.

**Approximately 40% of municipalities also involved other organisations in PP preparation, such as social partners** with whom they planned to collaborate during the implementation of MSP.

**ESFA consultants provided consultations to municipalities throughout the PP preparation process.** Municipal coordinators rated the usefulness of these consultations at 8.52 points out of 10. Despite certain limitations in PP preparation, 61% of municipal coordinators stated that they had sufficient freedom to plan activities according to their needs.

Overall, municipal coordinators and school representatives **assessed PP preparation as relatively smooth**, rating it at 7.94 and 7.67 points out of 10, respectively.

The **main challenges** in PP preparation were:

- **Inappropriate timing of the stream I PP preparation** (during exam and holiday periods), making school community involvement difficult.
- **Time constraints** led to a rushed process that required a significant workload and overtime.
- **Unclear, changing, and excessive PP preparation requirements**, necessitating frequent revisions and modifications.
- **Prolonged PP approval process.**
- **Lack of effective leadership in the PP preparation process** in some municipalities.
- **Overly centralised PP preparation process** in some municipalities.
- **Insufficient municipal funding** to meet all school needs, leading to competition among schools.
- **Exclusion of some MSP coordinators from PP preparation.**
- **External consultants did not always contribute effectively.**
- Participants had **differing interpretations of the definitions of school improvement areas** within MSP.

The PP preparation process achieved the best results when competent municipal specialists or external consultants led the effort, broad and regularly meeting working groups were established, a structured planning approach was followed, sufficient time was allocated for the discussions, and decisions were based on well-reasoned arguments, presented to everyone involved.

**Evaluating MSP implementation structure.** Most municipal coordinators (79%) and representatives of participating schools (82%) **positively evaluate the decentralised model of MSP implementation.** This model is considered to better align with the specific needs of municipalities and schools while fostering accountability, efficiency, and faster decision-making. However, **designating ESFA as the project implementer** instead of individual municipalities **creates challenges** due to the lengthy communication and information transmission chain between municipalities carrying out activities and CPMA administering the programme. An alternative approach could involve municipalities implementing MSP and reporting directly to CPMA. ESFA could conduct a supplementary project, continuing to provide content-related consultations to municipalities in PP preparation and implementation. However, in such approach, ESFA may lack sufficient influence to encourage municipalities to use consultations and consider the provided recommendations. Additionally, participating municipalities would have fewer opportunities to exchange experiences, making it harder to maintain consistent quality standards of programme implementation and administration.

**The management of MSP varies across municipalities.** The most common model involves **all coordinators employed in schools** (40%) or a **mixed approach where some coordinators work in municipalities and others in schools** (37%). Only 8% of municipalities employ all coordinators by themselves. In some cases, municipalities have transferred coordination responsibilities to external providers. Most representatives of schools participating in MSP consider the municipal programme administration structure appropriate (59%) or partially appropriate (34%).

Around 40% of participating municipalities and 47% of schools face challenges related to financial resources, human resources, time, and competences required for effective programme administration, particularly in relation to public procurement. School principals, who often lack the necessary expertise, especially in infrastructure investment, frequently need to prepare public procurement technical specifications. No funding is available for external consultants in this area.

**Evaluating MSP's implementation process.** Overall, municipal coordinators and school representatives participating in **MSP rate its implementation favourably**, with scores of 7.75 and 7.72 out of 10 respectively.

However, 55% of municipal coordinators and 85% of school representatives **face challenges when implementing the programme. The main challenges include:**

- **Complex public procurement implementation** due to a lack of expertise, prolonged implementation timelines, and a shortage of service providers.

- Reporting on programme's activities creates a **high administrative burden** due to frequent requests for redundant or repetitive information not required by the primary funding source (RRF) and constant changes in reporting requirements.
- **Delays and rushed implementation** due to prolonged approval of PP documents, delays in signing joint activity agreements, public procurement challenges, and lengthy approval timelines for payment requests, activity reports, and PP modifications.
- **Funding shortages** caused by inflation and rising costs for specific goods and services (e.g., training) required by all municipalities participating in the programme.
- **Low quality of goods and services** due to increased prices and a lack of suppliers, forcing municipalities and schools to select lower-quality options. Additionally, ensuring the quality of some infrastructure investments is challenging due to limited expertise.
- **Overly intensive activity schedules** caused by the programme's large scale and relatively short implementation period, leading to increased workloads and disruptions to the educational process.

Municipalities allocate additional funds, scale down activities, hire consultants, adjust activity sequences, and offer extra incentives to staff managing programme implementation to overcome these challenges. Schools and municipalities collaborate with ESFA, social partners, service providers, and other municipalities and engage municipality and school communities in developing solutions. To resolve administrative challenges, ESFA maintains continuous communication and cooperation with CPMA.

**Evaluating MSP's effectiveness.** Although the first evaluation of MSP progress indicators will happen only in 2025, **trends from 2022–2024 suggest** that the programme **will likely achieve** national targets measuring **Lithuanian language and mathematics BEAT results**. However, targets related to **the proportion of combined classes** and **the number of students per teacher's full-time equivalent position are unlikely to be met**. Given current trends, it is likely that **out of the 13 optional indicators, 10<sup>4</sup> will reach their targets by 2025, two<sup>5</sup> will fall short**, and the achievement of one<sup>6</sup> indicator could not be assessed during this evaluation.

**MSP implementation only partially impacts** achieving these indicators due to weak coherence with programme's goals, objectives, and activities. Nevertheless, a consistent improvement in many mandatory and optional indicators is evident, although, as of this report's preparation<sup>7</sup>, stream I municipalities have implemented only 24.4% and stream II municipalities only 7.7% of planned activities. The complete integration of infrastructure, equipment, and teacher competences requires time, meaning that the programme's more significant impact on selected indicators will likely become evident only in the second evaluation in 2030.

According to municipal coordinators, 79.9% of stream I and 69.1% of stream II municipalities expect to achieve the programme's mandatory indicator targets by June 30, 2025, and April 30, 2026, respectively. For optional indicators, 89.1% of stream I municipalities and 73.7% of stream II municipalities anticipate meeting their targets within the designated timeframe.

Most school leaders participating in MSP (74.1% from stream I and 77% from stream II municipalities) expect to complete planned activities on time. However, they acknowledge risks related to delays in

<sup>4</sup> "Share of employees with more than 2 years of teaching experience (%); "Share of children aged 3–5 participating in the preschool and pre-primary education process (%); "Share of students with special educational needs educated in integrated general-purpose schools (%); "Share of sets of classes in general education schools with fewer than eight students (%); "Share of newly formed sets of general-purpose 1st classes in general education schools with no more than 24 students (%); "Share of students receiving educational assistance (%); "Share of graduates who have passed three or more state matriculation exams (%); "Share of students participating in non-formal education activities (%); "Number of educational assistance specialists per 100 students".

<sup>5</sup> "Ratio of teachers under 50 years of age to teachers aged 50 and over (number)" and "Share of educational institutions without a permanent head for more than 12 months out of the total number of educational institutions (%)".

<sup>6</sup> "Share of positions per pedagogical employee (units)".

<sup>7</sup> Based on ESFA data for November 2024.

infrastructure upgrades and procurement of equipment and materials. Delays in implementing "hard" activities are also likely to hinder the progress of "soft" activities.

As of this report's preparation, ESFA estimates that **out of 93 stream I schools** in the programme, **74 expect to complete** planned activities on time, **16 already require an extension** for activity implementation, and **3 face a high risk of failing** to meet the planned timeframe.

**Already achieved MSP results.** Although not all MSP activities are implemented yet, some positive and negative results of the programme implementation are already visible, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. MSP results**

Positive	Negative
<b>Changes in school attitudes</b> (new educational concepts, experience sharing, more integrated lessons)	<b>Teacher and school administration fatigue</b>
<b>Strengthening of teacher competences</b> (improved assessment of individual progress, social-emotional education skills, leadership and management abilities, use of new methods and tools)	<b>Disruptions to the educational process</b>
<b>Expansion of infrastructure and teaching/learning resources</b> (laboratories, robotics and multimedia centres, outdoor classrooms, adaptation of environments for students with special needs)	<b>Increased competition among schools</b>
<b>Positive changes in school communities</b> (higher student motivation, improved school climate, better academic performance)	
<b>Expansion of networking</b> (mentorship networks, regular meetings of school leaders, open lessons, inter-school events, collaboration with social partners)	

Source: Visionary Analytics, based on surveys and focus group discussions

**Evaluation of networking in the context of MSP.** The most active networking occurs within municipalities among schools participating in MSP. 58.7% of stream I and 48.4% of stream II schools engage in networking with other schools in their municipality that also participate in MSP. Networking with schools from other municipalities is less intensive. Only 36.5% of stream I and 11.6% of stream II schools participating in the programme have joint activities with MSP schools from different municipalities. The contribution of MSP to the expansion of networking among participating schools was rated at 7.6 out of 10 points by school representatives.

77.1% of stream I and 34.4% of stream II MSP schools have implemented activities with **schools not taking part in the programme**. The programme's contribution to expanding this type of networking was rated at 7.75 out of 10 by participating school representatives.

Schools that **do not participate** in MSP but engage in networking **assessed their involvement as moderately intensive**. A total of 20.7% participated in the programme's activities 1-2 times, 44.8% participated 3-5 times, and 34.5% engaged six or more times during the implementation period up to the time of the survey. Participants rated the usefulness of these activities at 8 out of 10. Only 25.4% of non-participating schools used the programme's results, mainly methodological materials. This usage remained limited, with results applied only 1-2 times during the programme's implementation period up to the time of the survey. The usefulness of these results, like participation in activities, was rated 8 out of 10 by non-participating schools. Schools that were **previously cooperating** with participating schools **were more active in networking**.

65.5% of stream I and 33.7% of stream II schools implemented networking activities with **social partners**. **Most social partners had already collaborated** with schools **before the MSP began**, and only 3.3% initiated cooperation exclusively through the programme. 61.6% of respondents noted an intensification of collaboration. However, **MP strengthened existing relationships rather than fostering new partnerships**.

**Evaluating sustainability of MSP results.** A plan to maintain the infrastructure and equipment developed during the implementation of MSP and to ensure the continuity of acquired competences **exists in 61.6% of stream I and 46.4% of stream II municipalities**. The plan includes periodically updating the equipment, sharing it through networking, and financing continuity activities using



municipal and school funds. Stream II municipalities seem to face more uncertainty about sustaining the results.

**79.3% of stream I and 83.3% of stream II schools** participating in MSP have a plan for maintaining the infrastructure, equipment, tools, and competences developed or renewed during the programme. The educational process will incorporate the infrastructure, equipment, and competences, with some school coordinators retaining their positions and activities continuing through networking and disseminating best practices. Schools are already integrating the programme's activities into their strategic plans and allocating additional funding, though some activities will no longer continue.

As the implementation of the MSP nears completion, **ESFA plans to provide each municipality with tailored recommendations** for ensuring the continuity of the programme's results and acquired competences.

#### **Future risks in the implementation of MSP:**

- **Probable delays in implementing activities and meeting progress indicators** that could lead to lost RRF funding and force municipalities to cover costs from their budgets.
- **Changes in national policy** – with the start of the 19th Government's term and the approval of its programme, political priorities may shift, potentially leading to changes in the implementation of MSP.
- **Insufficient networking** – although networking is proceeding relatively smoothly, stream II municipalities and schools are engaging in networking only to a limited extent. If networking does not expand as the programme continues, its impact may be lower than expected.
- **Risk of failing to ensure the sustainability of achieved programme results.**
- **Stream II municipalities will continue facing the same challenges** faced by stream I municipalities and schools implementing the programme.

## Recommendations

Based on gathered information, the evaluation provides **two types of recommendations**:

- **Recommendations for** improving MSP implementation.
- **Strategic suggestions** for planning and implementing similar programmes and projects in the future.

Table 3 presents the key recommendations for enhancing MSP implementation.

**Table 3. Recommendations for improving the implementation of MSP**

Recommendations for improving the implementation of MSP
<b>MESS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommend that CPMA and ESFA <b>review the reporting forms for completed MSP activities and the data being collected and eliminate excessive requirements.</b></li> <li>• Organise <b>consultations for representatives from municipalities and schools participating in MSP</b>: 1) with ESFA and CPMA <b>regarding the implementation of public procurement</b>; 2) with STEAM experts who can provide consultations <b>on the relevance of infrastructure investments in the STEAM sector.</b></li> <li>• Recommend that <b>municipalities participating in MSP consider allocating additional funding from the municipal budget</b> to engage competent external experts for preparing high-quality public procurement technical specifications for infrastructure investments.</li> <li>• <b>Recommend that CPMA increase the human resources allocated to the programme administration.</b></li> <li>• Develop an <b>individual risk management strategy for each municipality</b> facing a high risk of failing to implement planned activities on time.</li> <li>• <b>Ensure the sustainability of the results achieved during the implementation</b> of MSP by periodically evaluating how these results are used after the end of the programme and <b>consider the possibility of regularly allocating additional funds to municipalities for maintaining these results.</b></li> <li>• Recommend that municipalities and schools participating in MSP, that <b>do not have sustainability plans for the programme's results, develop such plans and allocate resources for their implementation.</b></li> <li>• To ensure the achievement of MSP indicator values in the 2029–2030 academic year, continuously monitor their changes. <b>If negative trends are observed, consider financing additional measures</b> to help achieve the MSP's goals by 2030.</li> <li>• <b>Modify the calculation methodology for the indicator</b> "Reduced student achievement gap among schools within the municipality."</li> </ul>
<b>ESFA</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enable municipalities to communicate directly with CPMA staff</b> responsible for administering MSP regarding administrative matters <b>more frequently</b>, not only when reporting on implemented activities but also during the planning stage.</li> <li>• Based on the experiences of municipalities and schools in the stream I of MSP, <b>provide recommendations to stream II municipalities on various programme administration aspects</b> (e.g., the most effective administration models, division of responsibilities, and implementation of recurring PP activities).</li> <li>• <b>Continue regular meetings of municipalities participating in MSP and encourage regular meetings of school leaders involved in the programme</b>, ensuring that representatives from both stream I and II participate and exchange experiences.</li> <li>• Review, <b>shorten, and simplify the PP modification process.</b></li> </ul>

Source: Visionary Analytics

The main strategic proposals are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Strategic proposals**

Strategic proposals
MESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Implement similar programmes</b> using a <b>decentralised model</b> and consider <b>designating municipalities as project implementers</b>.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assess the resources and competences available within municipalities</b> realistically and <b>plan additional support</b> measures for programme or project administration.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Clearly define</b> all programme or project <b>objectives and establish</b> explicitly <b>related tasks and indicators</b>.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Allocate a prolonged implementation period</b> for large-scale programmes or projects, <b>including a pilot phase and sufficient time between stages</b> to incorporate lessons learned.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Thoroughly prepare</b> for administrative processes in advance, including regulations, forms, resource planning, and well-thought-out timelines for <b>activity planning and execution</b>.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ensure that reporting requirements for completed programme or project activities are not excessive</b> (i.e., no more data is required than mandated by the funding source regulations).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Carefully select the planning and implementation period for programme or project activities:</b> when involving schools, it is recommended to avoid planning or intensive implementation during the spring-summer period.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When planning similar programmes or projects, <b>consider the possibility of classifying the engagement of external experts for preparing public procurement technical specifications</b> (e.g., for infrastructure investments) <b>as direct programme/project costs</b>. Additionally, <b>develop guidelines or recommendations for the more efficient implementation of similar/repetitive investments across different municipalities</b> (e.g., STEAM laboratories).</li> </ul>

Source: Visionary Analytics