

## LITHUANIA

**3. Rural Development** (Government focal point Ms. Jurgita Stakėnienė, Director of Rural Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Gedimino Av. 19, LT-01103 Vilnius, Lithuania, Fax: +370 5 239 1212, Phone: +370 5 239 1020, Email: [JurgitaS@zum.lt](mailto:JurgitaS@zum.lt) ).

At the beginning of 2007, Rural Development Programme for Lithuania for the period 2007-2013 has been prepared. The Programme has been prepared following the National Strategy Plan for the period 2007-2013 and is aiming at the implementation of the strategy.

One third of Lithuania's population lives in rural areas and about half of the population employed in rural areas is engaged in agriculture (48 %). It must be considered, that the number of directly employed in agriculture would go down and thus will contribute to the growth of unemployment in rural areas. Redundant people should have possibilities and suitable conditions to develop new traditions in agricultural production and to engage in new business activities. The second largest employer in rural areas is service sector – it employs 21 % of the total rural working population. The rest part of rural population is engaged in industry and construction and other services such as education, health care and social work and other activities. The number of small and medium enterprises (SME) in rural areas is increasing.

In the areas less suitable for agriculture, rural tourism is being developed and this is regarded as one of the main alternative businesses in rural areas: demand for rural tourism services is though higher than the supply.

The Long-Range Programme for Survival of Ethnographic Villages of Lithuania was prepared by the Council in Charge of Ethnical Culture jointly with the Ministry of Culture and approved by Resolution No 1171 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on 16 September 2003. The objective of this Programme is creation of the environment favourable for many-sided economical and social development of ethnographic villages by using for increase of rural enterprise and satisfaction of needs of rural communities survived heritage of ethnical culture as well as local traditions. The Programme was implemented during 2003 – 2006. It is aimed at creation of favourable administrative, legal, informational, social, and economic conditions for improvement of life, development of business, nurturance of culture, enhancement of closer relations of territorial and branch administration, management, science, business, education, and culture in villages.