



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Seventh periodic report submitted by Lithuania under article 18 of the Convention, due in 2023^{*,**}

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

** The annexes to the present document may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



List of abbreviations

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| CC | Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania |
| CHIF | Compulsory Health Insurance Fund |
| Committee | United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women |
| Convention | United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women |
| CrC | Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania |
| DoNM | Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania |
| EmS | Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania |
| Government | Government of the Republic of Lithuania |
| PGO | Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Lithuania |
| LC | Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania |
| LoC | Law on Courts of the Republic of Lithuania |
| LEO | Law on Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Lithuania |
| LEOWM | Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Republic of Lithuania |
| LITEKO | Lithuanian Courts Information System |
| LPDV | Law on Protection against Domestic Violence of the Republic of Lithuania |
| LSGLA | Law on State-Guaranteed Legal Aid of the Republic of Lithuania |
| LSMSI | Law on Sickness and Maternity Social Insurance of the Republic of Lithuania |
| MoA | Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania |
| MoEI | Ministry of the Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania |
| MoESS | Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania |
| MoFA | Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania |
| MoH | Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania |
| MoI | Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania |
| MoJ | Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania |
| MoSSL | Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania |

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| NCA | National Courts Administration |
| NGO | non-governmental organisations |
| OEOO | Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson |
| PD | Police Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania |
| PHCI | Personal Health Care Institution |
| Recommendations to Lithuania | Concluding observations of the Committee on the Sixth Periodic Report of the Republic of Lithuania (CEDAW/C/LTU/CO/6 of 8 November 2019) |
| RL | Republic of Lithuania |
| SCAC | Specialised Comprehensive Assistance Centre |
| SDA | State Data Agency |
| Seimas | Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania |
| Seventh Report | Seventh Report on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in Lithuania |
| SGLAS | State-Guaranteed Legal Aid Service |
| SLI | State Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Lithuania under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour |
| Sodra | State Social Insurance Fund Board |
| YFHCS | Youth-friendly health care services |

I. Introduction

1. The Government of the Republic of Lithuania (the “Government”) submits the Seventh Report on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in Lithuania (the “Seventh Report”) in accordance with Article 18(1)(b) of the United Nations Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (the “Convention”). The information in the report covers the period from 2018 to 2022.¹

2. The Seventh Report was prepared on the basis of the materials provided by the ministries and other institutions by the Commission established by Order No A1-264 of 25 April 2023 of the Minister for Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, whose members are the representatives of the Ministry of the Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania (the MoEI), the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania (the MoSSL), the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania (the MoH), the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania (the MoESS), the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania (the MoJ), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania (the MoFA), the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania (the MoI), the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania (the MoA), the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Republic of Lithuania (the PGO), the State Data Agency (the SDA), the State Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Lithuania under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (the SLI), the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania (the EmS), the budget institution Vilnius City Social Services Centre and the Office of the Inspector of Journalists Ethics.

3. The Seventh Report was prepared, for the most part, taking into consideration the Committee’s concluding observations of 2019 on the Sixth Periodic Report of the Republic of Lithuania² (the “Recommendations to Lithuania”).

4. On 21 September 2023, the Seventh Report draft was considered by the Commission for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, which is composed of representatives of various ministries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as representatives of the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson (OEOO) and others invited to the meetings. In addition, the draft of this report was published on the website of the MoSSL for the familiarisation of all stakeholders.

II. Information under the articles of the Convention and recommendations to Lithuania

5. Concerning part 9 of the Recommendations. Two cases that relied on the Convention were examined between 2018 and 2022: 1) Ruling of 11 May 2022 of the Supreme Administrative Court of the Republic of Lithuania in administrative case No. eA-2444-815/2022; and 2) Ruling of 15 June 2022 of the Supreme Administrative Court of the Republic of Lithuania in administrative case No. eA-2787-781/2022. Depersonalised court procedural decisions are published in the Lithuanian Courts Information System (the LITEKO).

6. The courts of the Republic of Lithuania (the “RL”) process data on cases pending before the courts (cases already examined) in LITEKO. The classifiers of

¹ Since a number of activities are ongoing or planned, the report also contains references to 2023 or a later period.

² https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2FC%2FLTU%2F6&Lang=en.

cases approved by Resolution No. 13P-56-(7.1.2) of 29 April 2016 of the Council of Judges “On the approval of the classifiers of categories of criminal and civil cases and the categories of court procedural decisions in criminal and civil cases” and by Resolution No. 13P-102-(7.1.2) of 30 September 2016 of the Council of Judges “On the approval of the classifiers of categories of administrative and administrative offense cases and the categories of court procedural decisions in administrative and administrative offense cases” have no separate code to indicate cases and court decisions where the court relied on the Convention. For this reason, there are currently no technical capabilities to provide detailed data on the number of such cases in an automated manner.

7. The Convention and the Optional Protocol are publicly available on the websites of the MoSSL, the MoFA, the Lithuanian Women’s Lobby Organisation and the Register of Legal Acts.³ The Committee’s Recommendations to Lithuania and the general recommendations (the “Recommendations”) are published on the MoSSL website.⁴

8. On 11 June 2021, the Order No. A1-448 of the MoSSL “On the Approval of the 2021-2023 Action Plan implementing the Concluding Observations for Lithuania of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the Sixth Periodic Report on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women” was prepared.

9. The Lithuanian Human Rights Centre⁵ provides information on how to exercise one’s rights under the Convention. The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson (OEOO) published a report containing additional information submitted to the Committee in 2019.⁶

10. The National Courts Administration (NCA) organised training sessions aiming to enhance the competences of judges in the fields of human trafficking, violence against women, and the prohibition of discrimination that are related to the application of the Convention (Annex 1).

11. From 2021 to 2023, a total of 174 police officers improved their qualifications by participating in the training programme “Domestic violence”. The Police Department under the Ministry of the Interior (PD), in collaboration with partners, plans to train 1,500 officers under the Norwegian and European Economic Area Financial Mechanisms project “Improving the quality of the work of the justice chain and strengthening competencies to protect victims of domestic and gender-based violence”⁷.

12. From 2017 to 2019, the PGO implemented the project “Effective enforcement of victims’ rights”, aimed at improving the protection of victims’ rights in criminal proceedings by applying the EU Directive on the Victims of Crime. The project included a capacity building programme for officers and activities educating the victims and the public were carried out. In 2019, the PGO, in cooperation with the European Judicial Training Network, organised training “Judicial cooperation in criminal matters related to human trafficking and sexual exploitation: practical case modelling”. In 2018, the PGO in collaboration with the National Courts Administration organised international training “Prevention of sexual violence,

³ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.20416>.

⁴ <https://socmin.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys/moteru-ir-vyru-lygybe/lyciu-lygybe-ir-tarptautine-erdve/cedaw-atskaitomybes-mechanizmas?lang=lt>.

⁵ <https://manoteises.lt/enciklopedija/jt-moteru-diskriminacijos-panaikinimo-komitetas/>.

⁶ <https://www.lygybe.lt/lt/nepriklausomos-apzvalgos>.

⁷ <https://www.prokuraturos.lt/lt/teisingumo-grandines-darbo-kokybes-gerinimas-ir-kompetenciju-stiprinimas-siekiant-apsaugoti-smurto-seimoje-ir-del-lyties-aukas/7993>.

gender-based violence, and human trafficking. Combating these phenomena and responding to them in the context of asylum and migration.”

Article 1

13. The concept of discrimination in the Lithuanian law is defined by the Law on Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Lithuania (LEO) and the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Republic of Lithuania (LEOWM). The purpose of these laws is to ensure the implementation of the equal rights of women and men enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania and to prohibit any direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, or instructions to discriminate on the grounds of sex, race, nationality, citizenship, language, origin, social status, faith, convictions or views, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic background, religion. The provisions of these laws are harmonised with European Union (EU) legislation. In the field of labour relations, protection against discrimination is regulated by the Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania (LC). In accordance with this law, employers are obliged to implement the principles of equality between women and men and non-discrimination on other grounds. The Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania (CrC) prohibits discrimination, sexual harassment, and incitement to discrimination. Prohibition of discriminatory practices is also provided for in the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public of the Republic of Lithuania.

14. **Concerning part 11 of the Recommendations.** The scope of application of the LEO has been expanded (see Article 2). Other legal acts recommended by the Committee have not been adopted.

Article 2

15. The National Progress Plan was approved by Resolution No. 998 of 9 September 2020 of the Government “On the approval of the National Progress Plan for 2021-2030”⁸, which provides for the horizontal principle of “equal opportunities for all”. When implementing the tasks of the National Progress Plan and preparing national development programs, the needs of persons with disabilities, women and men, various age groups, national minorities, and other groups that may experience discrimination must be taken into account, and measures and indicators that implement the principle of equal opportunities have to be included. To strengthen the application of horizontal principles in the decision-making process, draft legal acts submitted by the Government must be evaluated by their developers with regard to sustainable development, innovation, and their impact on equal opportunities, to identify their potential impact on the implementation of horizontal principles.

16. The amendments to the LEO articles came into effect on 19 May 2022:⁹

- Article 4 introduces legal regulation regarding harassment, sexual harassment, and persecution which is applied when a person files a complaint about discrimination, participates in a discrimination case, or reports discrimination, testifies, or provides explanations regarding discrimination. The person complained against has the burden of proving that the principle of equal opportunities has not been violated;
- The amendment to Article 6 obliges educational establishments, other education providers and research and study institutions to ensure that they are free from

⁸ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/c1259440f7dd11eab72ddb4a109da1b5?jfwid=32wf90sn>.

⁹ Law No. XIV-1109 amending Articles 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 and the Annex of Law No. IX-1826 on Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Lithuania.

harassment, sexual harassment and instructions to discriminate on the grounds of sex, race, nationality, citizenship, language, origin, social status, faith, convictions or views, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin, religion;

- The amendment to Article 7 establishes the employer's obligation to implement equal opportunities at work and in the civil service. An employer must provide equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, ensure that job applicants, employees or civil servants are not subjected to harassment or sexual harassment in the workplace, and that no instructions to discriminate are given;
- The amendment to Article 8 obliges retailers, manufacturers or service providers to ensure that no instructions to discriminate are given on the basis of sex, race, nationality, citizenship, language, origin, social status, faith, convictions or views, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, religion;
- The amendment to Article 9 prohibits discrimination in organisations and associations when admitting persons into the organisations of employees and employers or other organisations (associations) whose members have a certain profession, participating in the activities of organisations (associations), including receiving the benefits provided by such organisations (associations).

17. On 28 June 2022, Article 2 of the LEO¹⁰ was amended, stipulating that the grounds for discrimination based on social status include a person's family status, thus preventing discrimination and enabling the OEEO to investigate complaints about such types of discrimination in all areas. Article 7 of the LEO was supplemented with paragraph 9, which states that the employer must take measures to prevent discrimination against that the employee or civil servant in the workplace based on factors such as taking paternity leave, parental leave, unpaid leave to nurse (take care of) a sick family member or a person living with the employee or civil servant or establishing flexible working hours. If an employee experiences discrimination when using these opportunities, he or she shall have the right to file a discrimination complaint with the OEEO.

18. As noted in the OEEO 2022 activity report,¹¹ these significant changes allowed the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson to initiate and conduct investigations into potential discrimination on a larger scale.

19. On 28 June 2022, a number of amendments to the LC articles were adopted.¹² As of 1 August 2022, amendments to Article 26 of the LC entered into force. The list of criteria for prohibiting discrimination has been expanded to include discrimination based on an employee's use or prior use of the rights provided in the LC. The amended article also specifies that an employer must implement the principles of equality between women and men and non-discrimination on other grounds.

20. The new version of the LC introduces significant changes related to psychological violence in the workplace. From 1 August 2022, the employer must declare information about the prevention of psychological violence in the workplace by means usually used in the workplace and take active measures to assist individuals who have experienced psychological violence in the workplace.

21. From 1 November 2022, amendments defining what constitutes mobbing, violence, and harassment, including violence and harassment based on sex, came into

¹⁰ Law No. XIV-1192 amending Articles 2, 7 and the Annex to Law No. IX-1826 on Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Lithuania.

¹¹ <https://www.lygybe.lt/lt/metines-ataskaitos>.

¹² Law No. XIV-1189 amending Articles 1, 2, 25, 26, 30, 36, 40, 44, 46, 51, 52, 55, 56, 57, 59, 72¹, 75, 79, 107, 113, 117, 126, 133, 134, 137, 138, 169, 171 and the Annex of the Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania.

effect. The employer, whose average number of employees is more than 50, after having completed the information and consultation procedures, must approve the policy for the prevention of violence and harassment, publish it by means usually used in the workplace and implement it.

22. In 2022, the MoSSL held a public consultation “Protection against discrimination – does legal protection work?”¹³. Based on public opinion, the MoSSL will make decisions regarding the need for amendments to the LEO and the LEOWM and will initiate the preparation of drafts for these laws if necessary.

23. The MoSSL continues to implement its activities aimed at competence building of target groups, implementing educational activities, strengthening the legal system for combating discrimination, as specified in the Action Plan for the Promotion of Non-Discrimination for 2021–2023,¹⁴ the Action Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2023–2025,¹⁵ and the Action Plan for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Assistance to Victims for 2022–2023.¹⁶

24. Reforms and other changes planned by the 18th Government in its programme will be financed by the state budget and 2021–2027 EU funds investment programme funds according to the National Progress Plan (NPP) development programs and measures thereof (Annex 2).

25. In 2023, the new period Action Plan for the Implementation of Equal Opportunities for 2024–2026 was approved. It consists of various public awareness activities focused on equal opportunities, the principle of non-discrimination, social integration, and education on these topics, as well as activities aimed at hate speech and hate crime prevention, research and reviews in the field of equal opportunities, improvement of legal regulation, and more. The new period Action Plan also focuses on ensuring the rights of LGBTI+ individuals and combating racism.

26. The new period Action Plan for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Assistance to Victims is planned to be approved in 2023. It outlines activities aimed at ensuring the legal system for the prevention of domestic violence and protection against such violence.

27. **Concerning part 13 of the Recommendations.** The right to access the court is enshrined in Article 30 of the RL Constitution. Anyone with a right or interest protected by law that has been violated or contested has the right to appeal to court. The jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania has repeatedly established the imperative arising from the principle of the constitutional rule of law and other provisions of the Constitution that a person who believes that his or her rights or freedoms are violated has an absolute right to an independent and impartial tribunal – an arbiter who would resolve the dispute. Failure to guarantee a person’s constitutional right to apply to the court would also disregard the universally recognised general principle of law *ubi ius, ibi remedium* – where there is a right (freedom), there must be a means of its protection. A legal situation in which a certain person’s right or freedom cannot be protected, including through the courts, even though the person himself or herself believes that the right or freedom has been

¹³ <https://epilietis.lrv.lt/lt/konsultacijos/apsauga-nuo-diskriminacijos-ar-teisine-apsauga-veikia>.

¹⁴ Order No. A1-1256 of 10 December 2020 of the Minister for Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania “On the approval of the Action Plan for the Promotion of Non-Discrimination for 2021-2023”.

¹⁵ Order No. A1-51 of 30 January 2023 of the Minister for Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania “On the approval of the Action Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2023-2025”.

¹⁶ Order No. A1-264 of 11 April 2022 of the Minister for Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania “On the approval of the Action Plan for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Assistance to Victims for 2022-2023”.

violated, is not possible under the Constitution, and is not tolerated by it (Decision of 8 August 2006 of the Constitutional Court).

28. To improve the exercise of individuals' right of access to court, efforts are continually made to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of court activities, to reduce and balance the workload of the courts, and to apply other measures that enhance public trust in the institutions of justice. The publicity of the courts is directly related to public trust in the institutions of justice; therefore, in Lithuania, the same level of publicity for remote court hearings as in the courtroom is ensured. Accessibility of justice systems may also be improved through the use of digital technologies. The statistics show that the use of video and teleconferencing for organising remote court sessions is constantly increasing.

29. Primary legal aid, in accordance with the provisions of the Law on State-Guaranteed Legal Aid of the Republic of Lithuania (LSGLA), is provided to all residents regardless of their financial situation. This aid includes the provision of legal information, legal advice, preparation of documents intended for state and municipal institutions, preparation of applications for divorce by mutual consent of both spouses, agreements on the legal consequences of divorce, applications for a court order, objections to a statement submitted by a creditor, applications for court permission to sell or mortgage real estate, applications for court permission to accept inheritance and applications for prior court permissions to enter into transactions related to the property of an person incapacitated or with limited capacity in a certain area.

30. Secondary legal aid (when a lawyer helps to prepare legal documents and represents or defends a person in pre-trial or judicial proceedings), in accordance with the provisions of the LSGLA, is provided taking into account the person's financial situation or not taking it into account, when such aid is needed for vulnerable groups of persons (Article 12 of the LSGLA). Regardless of a person's assets and income, secondary legal aid may be provided, among other things, to victims of domestic violence crimes, as well as to victims of criminal acts when they are committed to express hatred towards them based on age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, faith, or beliefs or convictions. It is also available to persons with severe disabilities or those recognised as having incapacity for work, persons who have reached the age of retirement, and persons with significant special needs as defined by the law, as well as the caregivers (guardians) of these persons.

31. Furthermore, in accordance with LSGLA,¹⁷ there is a possibility to provide secondary legal aid in exceptional cases, even if a person's assets and income exceed the prescribed limit. This is based on an assessment of the person's individual situation, taking into account his or her standard of living, financial situation, income earned, ability to effectively represent himself or herself, costs of lawyer's assistance, complexity of the case for which secondary legal aid is requested, and size of the property claims (interests) involved.

32. In Lithuania, comprehensive assistance is available, and every woman who has suffered abuse may receive both psychological assistance and legal aid when her rights established in the Convention are violated. When assistance is urgently needed, individuals may contact the general emergency number 112 for the police, emergency services, or the Specialised Comprehensive Assistance Centre (SCAC). People with hearing impairment may contact the General Assistance Centre and call emergency

¹⁷ Law No. XIV-2103 amending Articles 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 31, 32 and Annex to the Law No. VIII-1591 on State-Guaranteed Legal Aid of the Republic of Lithuania.

services. There is a network of 21 accredited SCACs in Lithuania. The Lithuanian Women's Rights Consolidation Association brings together 14 women's non-governmental organisations that perform the functions of SCAC and provide assistance to individuals affected by domestic violence. Information, consultation, mediation, and representation, as well as temporary accommodation, psychological and legal counselling, are provided by phone, email, SMS, and other electronic means, depending on the possibilities.¹⁸

33. The Law on Protection against Domestic Violence of the RL (LPDV) stipulates that police officers must immediately arrive and remove the perpetrator from the scene of the incident. Upon arriving at the scene or witnessing the incident themselves, police officers shall record information about the fact of domestic violence and initiate pre-trial investigation while taking measures to ensure the protection of the person who has experienced violence. The person who has experienced violence does not need to file a complaint. The LPDV stipulates that, upon receiving information about a violence incident from the police, the SCAC shall contact the affected person. This approach ensures that specialised and state-guaranteed assistance is accessible to a wide range of individuals. With the new version of LPDV coming into effect on 1 July 2023, the system for protecting against domestic violence has been improved. A preventative protection measure – a domestic violence protection warrant – may be applied for individuals posing risk of domestic violence. This warrant aims at protecting a person at risk of domestic violence, and obliges the adult person posing a risk of domestic violence to temporarily leave his or her residence if he or she cohabits with a person at risk of domestic violence. It also prohibits him or her from approaching, communicating, or seeking contact with the adult individuals and/or children residing with the at-risk person.

34. To strengthen inter-institutional cooperation, the MoSSL has established the Council for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection against Domestic Violence. It is composed of the Minister of MoSSL, representatives of NGOs, ministries and the Lithuanian Association of Municipalities. On 1 July 2023, a Commission for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, with at least 1/3 of its members representing NGOs, was established in each municipality. The MoSSL has developed algorithms at the local level aimed at assisting individuals at risk of domestic violence and/or individuals who have experienced domestic violence, and continually organises meetings with social partners and SCAC representatives.

35. The MoSSL, in collaboration with social partners, has developed a programme for changing violent behaviour in domestic environments for individuals posing a risk of domestic violence. Group consultations have been planned, and representatives of target groups may join them voluntarily. The algorithm for directing potential participants to the programme for changing violent behaviour in domestic environments has been developed. From 1 July 2023, the MoSSL finances NGO contributing to the stepping up the fight against sexual violence. It is planned to develop an algorithm and methodology for providing assistance to victims of sexual violence or those who are at risk of this violence and to develop the competencies of specialists in this field.

36. The State-Guaranteed Legal Aid Service (SGLAS) may offer legal means to protect women who have been wronged. Women requiring lawyer's assistance in preparing procedural documents, representing their interests in cases related to the use of violence or seeking recovery of damages awarded by the court – including compensation for necessary administrative enforcement costs – can apply to the SGLAS and its territorial units. Before applying to an institution for secondary legal

¹⁸ <https://www.specializuotospagalboscentras.lt/>; <https://www.facebook.com/Specializuotos-kepleksines-pagalbos-centras-104859274608294>.

aid services, there is an option to use the right to free primary legal aid, which includes providing legal information, legal consultations, preparing documents for state and municipal institutions, and assistance in filling out applications for secondary legal aid. Primary legal aid is provided in municipalities based on declared place of residence. The procedure for applying for legal services is not complicated. Women who have experienced violence must submit an application for services and a decision of pre-trial investigation officers recognising them as victims in criminal cases raised against perpetrators. Every year, over 100 victims of violence in such cases make use of State-guaranteed legal aid administered by the SGLAS.

37. There are NGOs operating in Lithuania that provide a wide range of comprehensive assistance to victims, and various projects of MoSSL and partners are being implemented (Annex 3), including assistance to Ukrainian women who have suffered from sexual violence.

38. Every natural or legal person has the right to submit a complaint to the OEOO within 3 months of the date of the alleged actions or from the date they became aware of them, if there has been a violation of equal opportunities, in accordance with the established procedure.¹⁹ As of 1 July 2019, a Commission for Monitoring the Rights of People with Disabilities has been established within OEOO to monitor the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.²⁰

39. One of the priorities of the Strategic Action Plan 2021-2023 of the OEOO is to raise awareness of sex-based domestic violence and to strengthen the community response to the phenomenon of domestic violence in the regions of Lithuania. The OEOO consistently conducts educational activities about violence against women and family violence, contributing to a part of the Government's programme aimed at reducing violence and strengthening social cohesion in society (Government Programme, Chapter I, Section 1). In 2021, the OEOO, in collaboration with partners, prepared a guide for all specialists working in the field of prevention and providing assistance in cases of domestic violence against women, as well as communication specialists who organise awareness-raising and public information campaigns. The OEOO, together with partners, implemented a 27-month BRIDGE project, which strengthened the response of local communities to sex-based domestic violence. When implementing the project, the algorithm for coordinated response to domestic violence was developed, activities involving school communities were carried out, public awareness in recognising and responding to domestic violence was increased. Detailed information on the scope of the OEOO's activities is provided in its annual reports.²¹ Lithuania allocates funding, if available, to an independent institution for equal opportunities to ensure its operation (see Annex 4).

Article 3

40. The National Programme for the Equality of Women and Men for 2015–2021 addressed issues of equality between women and men in all areas and ensured the implementation of the provisions of the LEOWM, taking into account EU and international commitments in the field of equality between women and men (see Annex 5). The Equal Opportunities Programme has not been extended due to the newly adopted Strategic Governance Law and its subordinate legislation, and issues on equality between women and men are being addressed horizontally. The MoSSL

¹⁹ <https://www.lygybe.lt/lt/skundu-tyrimas/skundu-pateikimas-ir-tyrimas/410>.

²⁰ Law amending Articles 1, 16 and 17 of the Law No. IX-1826 on Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Lithuania and supplementing it with Article 15-1.

²¹ <https://lygybe.lt/veiklos-sritys/metines-ataskaitos/>.

coordinates the implementation of the horizontal principle “equal opportunities for all” and the monitoring of progress. In the period 2021–2022, the MoSSL harmonised progress measures and strategic documents prepared by the ministries. Many of the activities in the progress measures are not yet underway or are in the early stages of implementation, so their impact on equal opportunities will be assessed in the future.

41. On 30 January 2023, the Minister for Social Security and Labour issued Order No. A1-53 “On the approval of the model job description of a local government administration employee responsible for shaping and implementing policies on equal opportunities, equality between women and men, and protection against domestic violence” and approved the model job description of a local government administration employee responsible for shaping and implementing policies on equal opportunities, equality between women and men, and protection against domestic violence.²² A pilot coordinator model has been developed (see Annex 2).

42. In 2022–2023, the competencies of the employees of municipal administrations responsible for shaping and implementing policies on equal opportunities, equality between women and men, and protection against domestic violence at the municipal level are consistently strengthened. Informational meetings, training sessions, conferences, knowledge sharing, and consultations have been conducted.

43. In 2022, the Quality standard for municipal administrations on the policies of equal opportunities, equality between women and men, domestic violence prevention and assistance was developed. To achieve systematic policy assessment and enhance the efficiency of activities, quality standard research was carried out in sixty municipalities, and a summary and general recommendations were provided.

44. **Concerning part 15 of the Recommendations.** On 23 June 2020, the new version of the Resolution of the Government “On the establishment of the Commission for equal opportunities for women and men”²³ entered into force. It provides that state institutions shall appoint to the commission persons (for example, deputy ministers) holding the office of a civil servant of political (personal) confidence. This amendment separates the monitoring and policy-making functions. The OEOO’s Equal Opportunities Integration Group implements OEOO’s strategic objectives aimed at mainstreaming equal opportunities and raising public awareness.

45. Lithuania has carried out an analysis and assessment of foreign experiences in budgeting based on equality between women and men. The possibilities of introducing budgeting based on equality between women and men in Lithuania at the state and local government level have been analysed from a scientific perspective and further evaluation of the implementation is being carried out.

Article 4

46. On 28 June 2022, the Seimas (Parliament) approved a package of amendments to the LC and the Law on Sickness and Maternity Social Insurance of the RL (LSMSI)²⁴. These amendments aim to implement the requirements of the directives of the European Parliament and the Council on transparent and predictable working

²² <https://e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/38a3c970a09611ed8df094f359a60216>.

²³ Resolution No. 645 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On amendments to the Resolution No. 266 of 7 March 2000 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On the establishment of the Commission for equal opportunities for women and men and approval of regulations thereof”.

²⁴ Law No. XIV-1190 amending Articles 1, 5, 11-1, 16, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24 of the Law No. IX-110 on Sickness and Maternity Social Insurance of the Republic of Lithuania and supplementing it with Annex.

conditions in the EU and the work-life balance between parents and carers, to create better conditions for parents to combine their work and family responsibilities and to encourage mothers to return to the labour market sooner after parental leave and fathers to spend more time on childcare. The amendments are relevant for a wide range of employees, from those expecting children to those raising children up to 8 years of age.

47. **Concerning part 17 of the Recommendation.** The Seimas Ombudspersons regularly monitor the situation of human rights and freedoms in the country and present them in their annual reports.²⁵ The Seimas Ombudsperson's mandate to obtain and provide competent opinions and recommendations on complaints made by women has not been extended. Lithuania allocates financial resources when possible to the Seimas Ombudspersons' Office to fulfil its mandate (see Annex 4).

48. **Concerning part 19 of the Recommendations.** The MoSSL implements progress measures (see Annex 2) to reduce stereotypes and discrimination. In cooperation with NGOs, women are encouraged to participate in political life and elections through project activities. Stereotypes related to sex in political activities are reduced through educational, information, analytical and advocacy activities. The Action plan for equal opportunities for women and men 2023–2025 was approved by Order No. A1-51 of 30 January 2023 of the Minister of MoSSL "On the Action plan for equal opportunities for women and men 2023-2025". The planned measures seek to increase equality between women and men in the labour market, reduce the pay gap between women and men, integrate the principle of equality between women and men into educational programs, promote a balance between work and personal life, encourage proportional participation of women and men in decision-making and holding top positions, promote individual responsibility for their health well-being, and improve the situation of vulnerable groups of women and girls in society. In 2020, the SLI developed materials for training "Implementation of equal opportunities for and non-discrimination between women and men in employment relations".

49. The principle of equal voting rights is enshrined in the Constitution and the Electoral Code of the RL, thus men and women participate in elections on equal terms. From 2020 to 2023, the number of women participating in political and public life has gradually increased. After the elections to Seimas in 2020, women dominate the leadership of political parties that formed the coalition government. Currently, in Lithuania, women hold the position of Prime Minister, Speaker of the Seimas, and six out of fourteen ministers are women (in the previous cabinet, there was only one woman). Lithuania surpasses the EU average by 9% in terms of the total number of female ministers. Female deputy ministers currently make up 45% of all deputy ministers. In the 2020 parliamentary elections, women elected to the parliament accounted for 27% of the total number of parliament members, and their representation in parliament has increased by over 5% compared to the previous Seimas (in 2016, 21.3% of parliament members were women, and by the third quarter of 2020, following the discontinuation of some Seimas members' mandates and the election of new persons, women accounted for 24.3% of parliament members). Since the municipal council elections in 2019 until the end of term in the beginning of 2023, the proportion of women members in municipal councils increased by slightly more than 2%, although the majority, 68.6%, of municipal council members were men. In the 2023 municipal council elections, men and women participated equally – a total of 47% were women, and 53% were men. In 20 out of 60 municipalities, more women ran as candidates than men. In municipal council elections, 33% of the elected members are women, while 67% are men. In 17 out of the 60 municipalities, at least

²⁵ <https://www.lrski.lt/en/veiklos-sritys/metines-seimo-kontrolieriu-veiklos-ataskaitos/>.

40% of the council members are women. In the 2023 mayoral elections, women made up 26% of all candidates, and among the elected mayors, 10% are women.

Article 5

50. On 1 November 2022, amendments to the LC came into effect, prohibiting violence and harassment at work, and establishing specific duties for employers to ensure the prevention of violence and harassment, creating an environment free of violence and harassment; the amendments also provide that violence or harassment may be a reason for termination of employment contract. The amended LC prohibits not only mobbing but also violence and harassment, including psychological violence and violence and harassment on the grounds of sex.

51. The Division for the Prevention of Psychological Violence at Work was established by the SLI on 3 January 2022. Employees of the Division not only handle complaints and reports related to psychological violence at work but also provide recommendations, consult employers and employees, and social partners on the application of legislation regulating psychological violence at work, prevention, and investigation.

52. The Action Plan for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Assistance to Victims for 2021 has been implemented to ensure the continuity of measures for domestic violence prevention and assistance to victims of domestic violence as well as inter-institutional cooperation (Annex 6).

53. The association Women's Information Centre together with its partners in 2019–2022 implemented the project “Domestic violence: prevention, protection, assistance, cooperation”, aiming to raise the public's intolerance of violence, promote the recognition of forms of violence, improve the professional competence of employees working in this field, thereby increasing the accessibility and quality of assistance to victims of domestic violence.

54. The MoSSL has prepared a Family Policy Strengthening and Development Programme for the years 2021-2030. The programme includes measures aimed at creating a suitable, supportive and friendly environment for families, enabling them to perform their functions effectively and participate more successfully in the labour market, enhancing equal opportunities for women and men, promoting childbirth, ensuring and supporting the emotional well-being of families and children, and developing high-quality services accessible to all families raising children.

55. To improve the quality and accessibility of social services, the MoSSL is implementing the project “Development, introduction, application, maintenance and supervision of standards for social services”. The Centre for the Professional Competence Development of Social Services Workers became operational. In July 2022, a new type of social services – preventive social services – was started. To prevent crises in families, complex services for family are provided and available in all municipalities. A mobile multidimensional family therapy programme is launched. Foster centres are in place in each municipality to search for foster carers, adoptive parents, standby carers, provide counselling and training for standby carers, etc. As of 1 January 2022, the amount of the foster care allowance has been increased and differentiated according to the child's age and needs.

56. To increase men's involvement in family life, non-transferable months of parental leave for mothers and fathers were introduced from 1 January 2023. Representation of family interests is strengthened, cooperation between state institutions, municipalities and NGOs on issues related to the development and implementation of family policy is promoted, and representation of interests of

families through the Municipal Family Councils, which have been established in 11 municipalities, is strengthened.

57. In 2022, amendments to the LC and the LSMSI were adopted to help reconcile work and family commitments and support the labour market participation of parents raising children, individuals with health issues, those nursing or caring for a family member or a person living with them. The procedure for granting parental leave and the amount of parental leave benefits has been amended, also non-transferable parental leave for women and men was introduced.

58. Prevention of the negative consequences of crisis situations in the family was carried out, family readiness courses have been organised, and assistance has been provided by a psychologist and/or a psychotherapist and/or social worker to the persons experiencing a crisis, and for their families, also for families/persons with children with various behavioural, emotional and developmental disorders, as well as children with disabilities. Self-help groups and parenting skills training were organised for families/individuals who are expecting a child.

59. To improve families' ability to successfully reconcile family and work responsibilities, the Law on Fundamentals of Protection of the Rights of the Child of the RL stipulates that, starting from 2023, hourly childcare rooms must be installed in state and municipal enterprises, institutions and organisations where at least 100 posts of civil servants and/or employees working on employment contracts have been approved, and where those civil servants and/or employees are working in the same or adjacent buildings.

60. **Concerning part 21 of the Recommendations.** In 2022, the MoESS adopted a package of general programmes in accordance with the Guidelines for the Updates of the General Programmes.²⁶ The programme developers were required to ensure equal representation of women and men in the content of the programmes and promote inclusive teaching practices. The OEEO representatives led two seminars on this topic for the programme developers, and the priorities for reducing sex related stereotypes were discussed with developers of general programmes in working groups. In collaboration with experts in equality between women and men, a General Life Skills Programme was prepared. In the updated general programmes, the fundamental principle of not segregating pupils by sex in technology classes has been maintained, contributing to the elimination of gender role stereotypes. Three consultations on issues of equality between women and men were held for textbook authors and educational resource developers between 2021 and 2023.

61. It is planned to submit comprehensive proposals to amend relevant legal acts in order to improve legal protection against discrimination and regulation of the activities of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson in the RL upon the adoption of proposals under consideration by the Council of the European Union for the Council Directive on standards for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment between persons irrespective of their racial or ethnic origin, equal treatment in the field of employment and occupation between people irrespective of their religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, equal treatment between women and men in matters of social security and in the access to and supply of goods and services, and deleting Article 13 of Directive 2000/43/EC and Article 12 of Directive 2004/113/EC, and proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on standards for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment and equal opportunities

²⁶ Order No. V-1541 of the Minister for Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania "On the amendment of Order No. V-1269 of 24 August 2022 of the Minister for Education, Science and Sport "On the approval of general programmes for pre-school, primary, basic, and secondary education".

between women and men in matters of employment and occupation, and deleting Article 20 of Directive 2006/54/EC and Article 11 of Directive 2010/41/EU.

62. There are plans to prepare materials and organise training for journalists and other professionals working directly with public information channels and content provided to the public, enhance their competence in equality between women and men issues and increase awareness. Particular attention will be paid to the ability to recognise and consciously avoid reinforcing unconsciously reflected stereotypes about sex related roles in the family and society, as well as informing about the reasons why they are harmful.

63. The legislator has granted the Journalists' Ethics Inspector the power to supervise the implementation of the provisions of the Law on Public Information and Law on the Protection of Minors against Detrimental Effect of Public Information. It also has supervisory authority powers in the field of personal data protection – when data is processed for journalistic, academic, artistic, or literary expression purposes... In carrying out his or her functions, the Journalists' Ethics Inspector from 2020 to 2023 has not identified any significant situations that could be considered as a problem of sex related stereotypes or discrimination against women in the media. The Office of Inspectorate will continue to collaborate with the OEEO to reduce potential manifestations of discrimination in the media.

64. In early 2023, a new parental leave allocation system came into effect, allowing all parents with children born after 1 January 2023 to take non-transferable parental leave. Two months are allocated to the mother and two months to the father. It is also possible to choose to receive parental benefit until the child turns 18 or 24 months.

65. The MoSSL, in collaboration with the OEEO, implemented the project "More balance"²⁷. The aim of this project is to help balance work and family life and encourage fathers to be involved in family life. During the project, parenting stories were shared, and a work-life balance formula was developed.

66. **Concerning part 23 of the Recommendations.** In June 2023, an international conference was held in the Seimas to draw attention of the society and politicians to the still-unratified Istanbul Convention and the need to ratify it. Participants were provided with additional arguments based on the good practices of Germany and other countries. Members of Seimas have supported an initiative to request the Constitutional Court to clarify whether the terms used in this convention are in line with the Constitution of Lithuania.

67. On 14 October 2021 Law No. XIV-576 changed the title of Chapter XX of the CrC, and supplemented the CrC with Article 148¹ establishing criminal liability for unlawful persecution of a person. Article 148¹(1) of the CrC states: "A person who systematically harasses another person against his or her expressed will without a lawful basis, if as a result the aggrieved person has been forced to change his or her place of residence or work or educational establishment or has otherwise had a negative impact on his or her social life or emotional state, commits a criminal act and shall be punished by community service or by a fine, or by restriction of liberty or by arrest." Article 148¹(2) of the CrC states: "A person shall only be liable for the offence provided for in paragraph 1 of this Article if there is a complaint by the victim or a statement by the victim's legal representative, or a request by the public prosecutor, or if the pre-trial investigation has been initiated following the discovery of elements of domestic violence."

68. On 22 April 2021, the Seimas adopted an amendment to the Law on Mediation in the RL (LM), which introduces an exception in Article 20(1)(1), exempting victims

²⁷ <https://daugiaubalanso.lt/>.

of domestic violence from the obligation to initiate mandatory mediation before going to court for dispute resolution. However, if in the resolution of family disputes, mandatory mediation is voluntarily sought by a person who has experienced domestic violence, this person has the right to apply for mandatory mediation in accordance with the procedure established by the LM and the parties to the dispute have the right to receive mediation services funded from the state budget (Article 20(2) of the LM). It should be noted that this amendment to the LM and its scope of application were thoroughly discussed in the Seimas with the participation of all interested institutions, as well as non-governmental organizations operating in the field of women's rights enforcement.

69. The MoJ, in collaboration with the Government Strategic Analysis Centre (STRATA), conducted an ex-post evaluation of the impact of the legal regulation of mandatory mediation in family disputes (the "ex-post evaluation") in 2022. The ex-post evaluation report contains recommendations for the improvement of the legal regulation, monitoring, and implementation of mandatory mediation in family disputes. During the ex-post evaluation, no issues were identified regarding the application of the exception from the obligation to initiate mandatory mediation before going to court for dispute resolution for individuals who have experienced domestic violence, as stipulated in Article 20(1)(1) of the Law on Mediation. However, recommendation No. 11 in the ex-post evaluation report suggests monitoring of the operation of this provision of the Law on Mediation. The MoJ plans to implement this recommendation and, in collaboration with relevant institutions, is seeking for the most effective ways to do so.

70. Seeking to improve the qualifications of mediators, in 2020, the MoJ initiated specialised mediator training "Mediation in family disputes in the presence of elements of domestic violence." Sixty participants working with mandatory mediation in family disputes were trained. Furthermore, Section VII "Specifics of mediation in different categories of disputes" of the programme containing the Qualification Exam for Mediators includes the requirement for individuals to have knowledge on topics such as "Specifics of family mediation", "Characteristics of family disputes: psychological vulnerability of parties to the dispute, wide spectrum of emotions, need to preserve relationships", "Impact of domestic violence on mediation" and other topics related to family disputes.

71. The current legal regulations in the RL do not prioritise the application of the restorative justice institute when conducting criminal proceedings in cases of domestic violence. On the contrary, Article 38 of the CrC establishes the basis for release from criminal liability – release from criminal liability when the offender and the victim reconcile, and it applies only when all the conditions specified in this article are fulfilled.

72. Release from criminal liability on the basis of Article 38 of the CrC is possible only if the offender: 1) confesses to committing a criminal act, and 2) voluntarily compensates for or eliminates the damage caused to a natural or legal person, or agrees to compensate or eliminate this damage, and 3) reconciles with the victim or the representative of a legal person or a state institution, and 4) there is a basis for believing that he or she will not commit new criminal acts. This basis for release from criminal liability may not be applied to a dangerous recidivist or to a person who has previously been released from criminal liability as reconciled with the victim, if less than four years have passed from the day of reconciliation until the commission of a new act (CrC Article 38(2)).

73. Furthermore, the Lithuanian judicial practice recognises that the circumstance that the victim has forgiven the accused and reconciled with him or her does not imply an imperative for the court to apply the provisions of Article 38 of the CrC and release

him or her from criminal liability (Resolution of the Criminal Division of the Supreme Court of Lithuania of 15 December 2020 in criminal case No. 2K-273-788/2020). Considering this, it should be assumed that the entirety of conditions and limitations established for release from criminal liability when the offender and the victim reconcile is sufficient to ensure that release on this basis is granted only to a person who is worthy of the court's trust, with the conviction that such a person will not commit new criminal acts in the future, in other words, when all the circumstances established in the specific case indicate that it is not appropriate to apply the strictest repressive measure – criminal liability – to such a person.

74. According to Article 109 of the Constitution, justice in RL is administered solely by the courts. Judges and courts, in administering justice, are independent. When adjudicating cases, judges follow only the law. Paragraphs 2-4 of Article 3 of the Law on Courts also stipulate that judges, in administering justice, shall act impartially and obey only the law. Furthermore, judges, in administering justice, shall be independent from the parties involved in the proceedings, court administration, other judges, state authorities, officials, and other individuals. Judges may not be subjected to any political, economic, psychological, social pressure, or any other unlawful influence that might affect their decisions. No one shall have the right to demand that a judge gives an account for a specific decision made in a particular case. Any interference by other institutions or individuals in the work of a judge or court shall be prohibited and incurs the responsibility established by the law. In exercising his or her constitutional duty to administer justice and make reasoned and motivated decisions, the judge shall hear cases independently, at his or her own discretion, resolve all issues related to the case, guided by the law, based on a comprehensive and objective assessment of facts, his or her knowledge, internal conviction, and ethical requirements. The legality and validity of the procedural actions and decisions made by the judge may only be reviewed through the appeal process, i.e., by challenging them to a higher-instance court in accordance with the procedures and deadlines established by procedural laws. Given what has been outlined, a judge may not be instructed on how strictly the criminal law should be applied, and may not be obliged to “effectively prosecute and punish” individuals, and so on. Matters related to the application of criminal law, the imposition of penalties, and other issues are decided based on the specific circumstances of each case, and this falls within the realm of judicial activity where no individuals or institutions have the right to interfere. Accordingly, it should be considered that the implementation of the discussed provision depends on the will of the legislator to establish the relevant legal regulation in legal acts which a judge applies when examining a specific case and makes procedural decisions in line with that legal regulation.

75. On 15 March 2022, the Seimas adopted a new version of LPDV No. XI-1425, which came into force on 1 July 2023 (see Article 2). A violence protection warrant for a period of 15 days will be issued by a police officer following a receipt of a report regarding possible domestic violence and identification of the risk of domestic violence by a risk assessment. Police officers will control the compliance with the obligations of the violence protection warrant. A person posing a risk of domestic violence who fails to comply with the obligations of a violence protection warrant imposed on him/her will be held liable in accordance with the procedure established in Article 489 “Violation of the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence of the Republic of Lithuania” (the amendments also entered into force on 1 July 2023) of the Code of Administrative Offences of the RL. Administrative liability has been established for non-compliance with the obligations imposed by the violence protection warrant. In such case a person will receive a fine ranging from EUR 80 to 320, and a repeat offender will receive a fine ranging from EUR 300 to 780. These offences may also be punishable by an administrative measure – an obligation to take part in programmes/courses on alcohol and drug addiction prevention, early

intervention, health care, resocialisation, improving communication with children, changing violent behaviour or other.

76. Specialised assistance centres received funding to assist women affected by violence which was allocated as follows: in 2018 – EUR 873 811, in 2019 – EUR 1 500 000, in 2020 – EUR 1 489 100, in 2021 – EUR 1 530 000, in 2022 – EUR 1 588 257 (additional funds due to COVID), in 2023 – EUR 1 530 000, in 2024 – EUR 1 530 000.

Article 6

77. Every year, the MoSSL provides state funds to NGOs projects for the provision of social assistance to persons who have been and may have been victims of human trafficking. In 2022–2023, the MoSSL allocated EUR 300 000 for financing the project of the National Association against Human Trafficking (NAHT), which provides free social assistance to victims of human trafficking.

78. According to the NAHT data, in 2022, assistance was provided to 235 individuals (122 men and 113 women), including 104 victims of human trafficking and 131 individuals who could have suffered from human trafficking.

79. On 14 January 2021, the Seimas adopted Law No. XIV-169 on Assistance to Victims of Criminal Offenses of the RL (Law on Victims), which regulates the provision of assistance to victims of criminal offences. The Law on Victims aims to ensure that all victims of crime, i.e. natural persons who have suffered physical, pecuniary and/or non-pecuniary damage as a direct result of a criminal offence, as well as a family member or members of a natural person, who has died as a result of a criminal offence, who have suffered harm due to the death of that person, including victims of human trafficking and terrorism (“victims”), receive appropriate information, advice and/or services (“assistance”). Assistance is provided to all victims without distinguishing the types of crimes they have been subjected to, free of charge regardless of whether or not the victim or his or her legal representative has submitted a complaint, application, or report on criminal offence to a competent state or municipal institution. Since the enactment of the Law on Victims, legal acts have been prepared and approved, establishing the procedure for accreditation of assistance services, provisions on the organisation and provision of accredited assistance, the financing mechanism, and the principles of cooperation between first-contact institutions and assistance services. The accreditation of assistance institutions willing to provide accredited assistance has been carried out.

80. According to data as of 2023, assistance is provided by 25 accredited assistance services. State budget appropriations of EUR 500 000 were allocated each year during 2021-2023. In 2023, each assistance service received EUR 20 000. In 2022, assistance services registered 3 088 victims of crime, 2 968 of whom agreed to and received assistance. Among the 2 968 assistance recipients, 1 787 were women, 1 058 were men and 123 were children. Among the 2 968 assistance recipients, 144 were disabled individuals, and 323 individuals chose to remain anonymous.

81. In 2021, as part of the preventive measure “Awareness on combating human trafficking” the PD implemented 658 measures with the participation of 23 195 residents. In 2021, all 10 counties hosted events “Human trafficking” in the major city squares to educate the public about the various forms of human trafficking. The Public Police Board of the PD prepared an interactive preventive material “Human trafficking”.

82. **Concerning part 25 of the Recommendations.** Lithuania is making efforts to strengthen the training of law enforcement officials, officers, border guards, social

workers, psychologists, child protection and childcare specialists on all topics of human trafficking, especially women and girls, from a sex related perspective. This is also being done at the municipal level (see Annex 7).

83. When necessary, procedure for amending the legislation regulating the identification of victims is initiated, and Recommendations on the identification of victims of human trafficking, pre-trial investigation, and inter-institutional cooperation, approved by Order No. I 327/1V 1015/A1-758 of 17 December 2015 of the PG of the RL, the Minister of MoI, and the Minister of MoSSL “On the approval of Recommendations on the identification of victims of human trafficking, pre-trial investigation and inter-institutional cooperation” are clarified.

84. To ensure early identification of victims and their referral for assistance, the Lithuanian Police closely collaborates with the NAHT, Missing Persons’ Families Support Centre, Caritas Lithuania, Centre against Human Trafficking and Exploitation, municipal institutions, Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service, the EmS, and other organisations.

85. The identification of victims of human trafficking is also carried out by virtual patrol, whose main task is to prevent criminal offenses or administrative violations in the online space. Upon noticing a suspicious online advertisement, post, or identifying a violation of the law related to human trafficking, the information is immediately documented and forwarded to the appropriate police department.

86. In 2022, Lithuania experienced an influx of Ukrainian citizens fleeing Russia’s aggression, with most of these persons belonging to highly vulnerable groups (women, children, and unaccompanied minors). In 2022, three meetings of the Human Trafficking Coordination Commission were organised, during which situation monitoring and prevention control were carried out. In line with Order No. 5-V-362 of 1 April 2022 of the Commissioner General of the Lithuanian Police “On establishment of a Working group for the coordination of police activities to protect refugees from Ukraine from becoming victims of human trafficking” a Working group for the coordination of police activities to protect refugees from Ukraine from becoming victims of human trafficking was formed. Additionally, a plan of measures was approved based on Order No. 5-V-399 of 12 April 2022 of the Commissioner General of the Lithuanian Police “On the approval of the plan of measures of the Working group for coordination of police activities to protect refugees from Ukraine from becoming victims of human trafficking”.

87. Community officials organised 1 420 meetings involving 45 197 attendees (on average, 15 065 individuals per year, with 473 meetings/events organised). Preventative information related to human trafficking issues is shared on Facebook social network in the profiles administered by community officials.

88. In 2022, Lithuanian police community officials participated in an action dedicated to the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN) EU Anti-Trafficking Day. For this action, EUCPN prepared visual materials specifically for Lithuania in Lithuanian, Russian, English, and Ukrainian, as well as informational text for general use throughout the European Union. Community officials shared this material on their social network profiles and used it in events.

89. The MoI, aiming to better inform the public about the threats of human trafficking, initiates the broadcasting of informational campaigns annually on the most popular national television and radio station, or in public transport. In 2021, the MoI prepared and distributed around 45 000 memo aids intended for specialists to identify human trafficking victims. In 2022, preventive human trafficking information and educational measures were organised in municipalities.

90. The National Education Agency, implementing ESF-funded project No. 09.2.2-ESFA-V-707-02-0001 “Improvement of qualifications for educators and education support specialists” enhances the qualifications of educators and education support specialists in the fields of human trafficking and bullying and violence prevention. Methodological material on the prevention of human trafficking was developed in 2022. 116 human trafficking counsellors have been trained in municipalities; their list is publicly available on the website of the National Education Agency. The education portal²⁸ and the MoESS website²⁹ provide information, guidance and methodological tools on violence prevention.

91. Data relating to profiting from the prostitution of another person and prostitution and the gratuitous use of prostitution services are presented in Annex 8. Information about court decisions made in the first-instance courts of the RL from 2018 to 2022 is presented in Annex 9.

Article 7

92. Lithuania’s equality between women and men policy is showing a positive trend. In the World Economic Forum’s “Global Gender Gap Report 2023” Lithuania ranks 6th in Europe and 9th in the world in the field of equality between women and men. We are leading in the EU and have the smallest gap in women and men employment – 10.8%. The results in the Women’s Power domain are mentioned in the “Global Gender Gap 2023” report and have influenced the change in Lithuania’s position, but they will not begin the rising trend on their own if no action is planned to achieve that goal. Therefore, in 2022, targeted funding was allocated to an NGO project aimed at promoting women’s engagement and participation in political life and elections, as well as reducing stereotypes related to women’s participation in political activities.

93. The MoSSL allocates funds for NGO project to implement measures promoting equal opportunities for women and men in 2023, aimed at encouraging women to engage and participate in political life and elections and reducing stereotypes related to sex in political activities. It is expected that the activities will contribute to improving the Gender Equality Index in the domain of power by the EIGE.

94. The Action Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2023–2025 was approved by Order No. A1-51 of 30 January 2023 of the Minister of MoSSL “On the approval of the Action Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2023–2025”. The plan includes measures to increase equality between women and men in positions of power and improve the statistical data related to equality between women and men in power positions.

95. There are no quotas for women participating in political party activities in Lithuania, but some political parties apply candidate quotas in parliamentary and municipal council elections. Women belonging to national minorities actively participate in both parties representing national minorities and other political parties. In the Government Cabinet of 2020 to 2024, a woman of Polish descent holds the position of Minister for Justice. In the elections to municipal councils held in 2023, women belonging to national minorities secured positions in 5 out of 60 municipal councils. 3 women belonging to national minorities were elected to the Vilnius City council, 9 – to Vilnius district council, 8 – to Šalčininkai district council, 4 – to Trakai district council, and 3 – to Visaginas city council.

96. As part of the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, training sessions for employees of the MoFA on topics related to women’s

²⁸ <https://www.emokykla.lt>.

²⁹ <https://smsm.lrv.lt>.

rights, equality between women and men, and integration of sex related aspects were organised. Information on the distribution of leading positions by sex within the MoFA and diplomatic missions in 2022 is provided in Annex 10.

Article 8

97. On 22 June 2020, the MoFA issued Order No. V-146, approving the second National Action Plan “Women, peace, and security” for 2020-2024. Its aim is to strengthen women’s participation in building international peace, increase their engagement in security and democracy processes at the national and international levels. The goal is to increase public awareness in the field of equal opportunities for women and men, particularly in the areas of Resolution No. 1325 of the UN Security Council, so that expert training becomes a common practice and institutions implementing the plan collaborate more closely not only with each other but also with NGOs, academic institutions, and civil society representatives. Lithuania commits to gather information and encourage women’s participation in civil international and EU missions or operations, in election observation missions organised by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and in international institutions. Lithuania also commits to educating and consulting potential peace mediators, increasing the knowledge of state institution employees on the prevention of violence, sexual exploitation, and gender-based violence, complaint investigation mechanisms and, where possible, establishing gender advisor positions in the Ministry of National Defence and other institutions within the national defence system. Additionally, Lithuania commits to supporting and participating in international initiatives, helping NGOs develop competencies, and disseminate information on equality between women and men and other related issues.

Article 9

98. Amendments have been made to Article 15 of the Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania (LC)³⁰, which provides that a child of stateless persons legally residing (permanently or temporarily) in the RL acquires citizenship of the RL at birth regardless of whether he or she was born within the territory of the RL or abroad, if he or she did not acquire citizenship of another state at birth. This provision also applies in cases where one of the child’s parents is a stateless person lawfully residing (permanently or temporarily) in the RL, while the other parent is unknown. The citizenship of the RL of children is recorded in the document confirming the child’s birth registration. The above-mentioned law also supplements Article 18 of the LC, which provides for the acquisition of the citizenship of the RL by naturalisation. It allows the possibility of acquiring the citizenship of the RL for a person without citizenship under the age of 18 who was born in the territory of the RL, provided that the person has permanently lawfully resided in the RL for the past 5 years, has not acquired the citizenship of another state, and, at the time of applying for the citizenship of the RL and receiving a decision on granting the citizenship of the RL, has the right to reside in Lithuania. For a person without citizenship under the age of 18, there are no requirements to pass a state language examination, pass an examination on the fundamentals of the Constitution of the RL, and have a legal source of income. The right to the citizenship of the RL is equally guaranteed by the LC for all individuals, regardless of sex.

³⁰ Law No. XIV-64 amending Articles 2, 7, 12, 15, 16, 18, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 33, 37, 40, 41, 41¹, and 42 of Law No. XI-1196 on Citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania, and supplementing it with Article 21.

Article 10

99. A description of the procedure regulating vocational guidance framework was approved by Resolution No. 847 of 24 August 2022 of the Government “On the approval of the Description of the procedure for providing vocational guidance”. It stipulates that vocational guidance services are provided to every pupil from the first grade onwards, including information related to stereotypes of occupational choices. Vocational guidance services are provided by professional career specialists, for whom mandatory requirements for their competencies have been established by the Minister of MoESS.

100. Research and study institutions, when preparing and implementing plans on equality between women and men that are mandatory for participation in the EU research and innovation programme “European Horizon”, actively contribute to encouraging women to take on top academic positions. This is important also within the meaning of the provisions of Article 26 of the LC concerning equality between women and men and non-discrimination of employees on other grounds. According to the statistical data of the Education Management Information System for the years 2021-2022, women accounted for 47% of all top administrative managers (excluding economic), and 41% of all top academic staff in research and study institutions. The MoESS has enabled research and study institutions to receive additional funding for activities related to the preparation and implementation of plans on equality between women and men. Starting from 9 March 2023, the continuous measure “Support for Activities Aimed at Implementing European Research Area Priorities to Achieve Institutional Changes” under the Economic Recovery and Resilience Fund “Next Generation Lithuania” is being implemented.

101. According to Article 14(7) of the Law on Education of the RL³¹ which will enter into force on 1 September 2024, general education schools will not be able to refuse to admit a pupil solely on the grounds of his or her special educational needs. Although at present most pupils with special educational needs already study in mainstream general education schools/classes, until now, it was up to schools to decide whether to admit such pupils, arguing that the school was unprepared or unsuitable, and suggesting the choice of a special school. Special schools continue their activities and educate only those children with significant and very significant special educational needs. Parents are granted the right to decide where, in their opinion, their child’s educational needs are best met.

102. Under the progress measure “To Implement inclusive education”³², activities have been planned to increase the accessibility of educational support. Investment of EUR 150.875 million has been planned for the years 2023-2029 to strengthen schools in the field of inclusive education.

103. Contributing to goal four “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning” of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to NDP’s equal opportunities for all cross-cutting principle, all the activities planned under measure “Teacher First”³³ contribute to the achievement of all indicators of target one of goal four of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

³¹ Law No. XIV-1726 amending Articles 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 23, 29, 36, 38, 39, 41, 43, 44, 46, 49, 52, 53, 56, 57, 58, 59, 62, 63, 64, 67, 69, 70 of Law No. I-1489 on Education of the Republic of Lithuania and supplementing the Law with Article 56-4.

³² Order No. V-241 of the Minister for Education, Science and Sport of the RL “On the approval of the description of the progress measure No. 12-003-03-02-01 “To implement inclusive education” of the Education Development Programme of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania, Manager of the Development Programme 2021-2030”.

³³ <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/848078f06eed11edbc04912defe897d1>.

104. Ensuring educational support for all learners in terms of the inclusivity principle is actively addressed at the municipal and school levels. In every school, there are child welfare commissions responsible for creating a safe and favourable learning environment for each child, oriented towards personal success, well-being, maturity, and fulfilling functions related to a child's welfare.

105. According to the data from the Vilnius City Social Services Centre, through the case management approach, work has been carried out with 86 Roma families in Vilnius, where 194 children grow up (108 boys and 86 girls). Of these, 103 children (58 boys and 45 girls) attend general education schools. Among the 194 children in these families, 16 are disabled Roma children (11 boys and 5 girls). Information regarding the number of pupils with disabilities and pupils of Roma origin in general education institutions is provided in Annex 11.

106. In 2017, the goal of the higher education reform was to ensure the quality of studies, restructure financing for studies and science, and focus the potential of higher education institutions. This reform has not had an impact on the fulfilment of women's labour market needs. Evaluating this would be irrelevant, as there is insufficient data available.

Article 11

107. The situation of women in the labour market from 2018 to 2022:

- The employment rate for women increased from 71.6% in 2018 to 73.6% in 2022;
- The gap from the overall employment rate of the country decreased from 0.8% to 0.2% (Annex 12);
- The women's unemployment rate, which increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, returned to the 2019 level and stands at 5.5%, with the difference from the overall unemployment rate decreasing to 0.4% (Annex 12).

108. The Government took steps to address long-term unemployment by implementing a reform of the national employment system. This ensures higher quality services for employers and job seekers, while employed individuals have more opportunities to enhance their skills, learn, and acquire qualifications that create high added value. Professional comprehensive assistance based on a special employment model is already provided in 45 municipalities.

109. To increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities and create conditions for them to remain in the labour market, and implement the Government Programme Implementation Plan's (GPIP) action No. 03-02-08 "Aiming for more active participation of persons with disabilities in the open labour market, prepare and adopt the draft Law amending the Law on Employment related to the provision of labour market services and the application of active labour market policy measures for disabled", in 2022, Lithuania passed amendments to the Law on Employment of the Republic of Lithuania the Law on Social Enterprises of the Republic of Lithuania, and the Law on the Social Integration of the Disabled of the Republic of Lithuania. All the necessary services and measures for persons with disabilities are laid down in the Law on Employment of the Republic of Lithuania, thus creating equal opportunities for persons with disabilities to work in the open labour market. Preventive measures ensuring that persons who develop disabilities for various reasons can remain in the labour market due to job accommodations tailored to them are also specified.

110. Currently, Lithuania has legal regulations in place to ensure wage fairness for women and men:

- The LC provides that in a job advertisement, employers must provide information about the amount and/or range of the proposed basic (tariff) wage (hourly pay or monthly salary, or the fixed portion of salary) except in cases provided for by law;
- An employer, who has an average number of employees over twenty, must provide employee representatives with annually updated depersonalised information about average wages by occupation groups and sex of all employees, except those in managerial positions, if there are more than two employees in that occupation group;
- The remuneration system must be prepared so as to avoid any discrimination on sex and other grounds during its application. Men and women shall get an equal pay for same or equivalent work;
- In implementing the principles of equality between women and men and non-discrimination on other grounds, an employer, regardless of sex, must: a) pay equal wage for the same and equal value work; b) not give instructions to discriminate, take measures to ensure that an employee does not experience harassment, sexual harassment at the workplace, is not persecuted, and is protected from hostile behaviour or adverse consequences if he or she makes a complaint about discrimination or participates in a discrimination case;
- An employee who believes that his or her rights to fair remuneration for work have been violated has the right to appeal to labour dispute commissions. If an employee applies to the labour dispute settlement body for an individual dispute regarding the law, the employer must prove certain circumstances relevant to the resolution of the dispute and provide evidence, if he has them or they are more readily available to him. When investigating the cases of equality between women and men and non-discrimination on other grounds related to labour relations, the employer has the duty to prove that there was no discrimination.

111. The implementation of the LC and other labour laws within the scope of competence established by legal acts is monitored and violations are prevented by the SLI and other institutions. Sodra publishes the average wages of women and men in the country” companies. Sodra’s open data³⁴ provides information on the average earnings of men and women in a company, firm or organisation. As of 1 April 2021, amendments to the Law on State Social Insurance have entered into force, allowing Sodra to publish sex-differentiated wages of companies: Article 15(3)(6) of the Law on State Social Insurance stipulates that the policyholder’s public data also include the average of income estimated by policyholder, whose number of insured persons is at least 8, and of which more than 3 are women and more than 3 are men, for insured persons who are women, on which social security contributions are to be calculated, and for insured persons who are men, on which social security contributions are to be calculated.

112. The SLI has been conducting targeted inspections for four consecutive years to determine if the pay gap between women and men in certain companies is not a consequence of labour law violations. In 2020 and 2021, 20 targeted inspections in financial companies and 20 targeted inspections in insurance companies with the largest pay gap between women and men were carried out. In 2022, 30 companies with the highest pay gap between women and men, according to data provided by

³⁴ <https://atvira.sodra.lt/imones/paieska/index.html#>.

Sodra, were inspected. Information about inspections conducted by the SLI to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market is provided in Annex 13.

113. The SLI did not find signs of direct discrimination in terms of significant pay gaps between women and men after conducting these inspections. It was determined that pay differences exist for the benefit of both men and women, and these differences are due to objective reasons, such as employee qualifications, education, professional experience, specific skills and behaviour, workload and quality of work, sophistication and complexity of tasks and work tools and methods, accountability, company performance, and employee contributions to achieving these results, among other objective circumstances.

114. **Concerning part 37 of the Recommendations.** According to the SDA, the pay gap between women and men in Lithuania has been consistently decreasing, and the number of working women is similar to that of men (see Annex 14). It is noted that the pay gap between women and men in Lithuania has been lower or equal to the EU average since 2018, and this gap continues to decrease annually. Despite all efforts, the wage gap between women and men remains a problem. For example, according to data from 2021, the wage gap was around 11.1-12%, meaning that, on average, men's wages are more than 11% higher than women's.

115. During the implementation of the project "Promotion of Corporate Social Responsibility", Methodological recommendations for the development of the remuneration system were prepared on behalf of the MoSSL in May 2022. Training sessions were organised for 30 employees of the SLI regarding the application of the recommendations and inspections in companies and public institutions for compliance of remuneration systems with the LC requirements.

116. Since 2016, the Department of National Minorities under the Government (DoNM) has been implementing the project "Lithuanian Roma platform – going local". One of the goals is the empowerment of Roma women. Each year, training sessions are organised to motivate Roma women to actively participate in public life. In 2022-2023, women's empowerment events were aimed at integrating Roma women into the labour market.

117. In 2016–2023, the MoSSL, through the European Social Fund Agency, funded a project dedicated to the integration of the Roma into the labour market "Let's work together with the Roma – new job opportunities and challenges". The project has received funding of EUR 1 000 000. Project result is as follows: out of 341 project participants, 152 were women, and 55 of them found employment.

118. The Vilnius City Municipality financed the social business of the Lithuanian Roma Community, the "Gypsy Lounge & Grill" restaurant, from 2020 to 2022. A total of 10 Roma were trained to work in catering establishments and the rent of the restaurant premises was reimbursed. More than half of the project participants were women. The DoNM contributed to this social business by funding training in the production of traditional Roma dishes for 10 Roma women. In 2020–2023, the Vilnius City Municipality financed a project for the employment and empowerment of young Roma women in Vilnius "We are community superheroes". In 2020–2022, the Vilnius City Municipality financed a project of the Child and Youth Day Care Centre "Our Little Houses", where 20 Roma girls and women participated in a self-help group.

119. In Lithuania, the labour market is open and accessible to both women and men. Active labour market policies have been implemented to improve the integration opportunities for women of pensionable age and those in disadvantaged situations (see Annex 15). The SLI measures to reduce professional segregation are provided in Annex 16.

120. It was women, including those of retirement age and those in disadvantaged situations, that received most information and counselling services. The average number of counselling services provided was 51 000, and the average number of information services provided was 30 000. Women constituted 48.6% of the recipients of counselling services and 46.7% of the recipients of information services. Among women who received information or counselling services, every third woman (36.1%) was over 50 years old, two out of five (39.4%) lived in rural areas, and 8.6% had disabilities.

Article 12

121. The basic model of public health care services provision was approved by Order No. V-363 of 24 March 2023 of the Minister of MoH, which creates equal conditions in the regions for all groups of the population, mostly vulnerable and socially excluded persons, to receive the necessary and quality public health care services in a timely manner.

122. As part of the 2014-2021 European Economic Area Financial Mechanism programme “Health” the YFHCS are provided in 24 municipalities. Assistance is provided according to the case management principle by 29 YFHCS coordinators; the www.sveikatostinklas.lt portal has been up and running. Eight algorithms have been updated, and the “green corridor” principle has been in operation.

123. A model for providing early intervention services through family visits has been created and introduced. Twelve pilot projects are being implemented, and services are provided in 16 municipalities, with 325 families being visited.

124. In 2023, activities have been carried out according to the Plan for basic public health care services of public health care functions of the State (delegated by the State to municipalities) for 2023, approved by the Protocol of 12 January 2023 of the MoH of the Commission for the supervision of the performance of State (delegated by the State to municipalities) public health care functions.³⁵

125. Lithuania has the following five early diagnosis programmes financed from the budget of the Compulsory Health Insurance Fund (CHIF): for cervical cancer, breast cancer, colorectal cancer, prostate cancer, and cardiovascular diseases. The cardiovascular disease prevention programme is available for men and women between the ages of 40 and 60 (inclusive). The cervical cancer prevention programme is for women between the ages of 25 and 59 (inclusive). For women aged 25–34 (inclusive), a cervical cytological smear is performed once every 3 years, and for women aged 35–59 (inclusive), a high-risk human papilloma virus (HR HPV) test and a cervical cytological smear in liquid media (if the HR HPV test is positive) are performed once every 5 years. The breast cancer prevention programme allows women between the ages of 50 and 69 (inclusive) to get checked once every 2 years. The colorectal cancer prevention programme allows men and women between the ages of 50 and 74 (inclusive) to get checked once every 2 years.

126. Starting from 1 August 2023, a new service, i.e., patient transportation, is being provided in some Lithuanian municipalities. In the initial phase of patient transportation, services will be offered to patients who need haemodialysis or transplantation. Later in the autumn, the service will be extended to elderly patients and persons with disabilities who cannot independently travel to or from healthcare facilities and are socially vulnerable.

³⁵ <https://sam.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys/visuomenes-sveikatos-prieziura/visuomenes-sveikatos-prieziura-savivaldybese>.

127. A reform of mental health care services is being carried out aimed at increasing the coverage of community and outpatient services, improving the quality and accessibility of services, and strengthening patient-centred care in the provision of mental health care services.

128. **Concerning part 39 of the Recommendations.** Starting from 1 September 2023, the Life Skills Programme is being implemented, ensuring basic and consistent education and training in social and emotional competencies regarding sexual and reproductive health matters. The Life Skills Programme covers both primary and basic education curricula. In 2023, a budget of EUR 2 034 thousand is allocated for the implementation of the programme.

129. In every school, Child Welfare Commissions are in operation. They are responsible for ensuring a safe and supportive educational environment that is focused on a child's success, well-being, and maturity, as well as perform the functions related to a child's welfare. One of the Commission's functions is to organise the implementation of prevention and health strengthening programmes in school.

130. The purpose of the sexual assault prevention programme "Protect and respect me" is to increase the competence and ability of school community members to recognise pupils who have experienced sexual assault, encourage teachers, specialists, and other school staff, as well as police and child rights protection services workers and parents to collaborate in protecting pupils from sexual assault and sexual exploitation.

131. In Lithuania, reproductive health services are integrated into the health care system. All persons who are insured under the Compulsory Health Insurance and are entitled to personal health care services, the costs of which are covered from the CHIF budget, if these services meet the service provision requirements approved by the Minister of MoH and are provided by a health care institution that has concluded an agreement with the territorial health insurance fund for the provision of such services, are provided with all the necessary services.

132. Personal health care services are provided in accordance with the requirements for the provision of relevant services approved by order of the Minister of MoH. Referrals to specialised personal health care services are issued by the family doctor. When seeking essential aid services, a referral from a doctor is not necessary. The services that are classified as essential aid services are set out in the Description of the procedure and scope of the provision of essential medical aid, approved by Order No. V-208 of 8 April 2004 of the Minister of MoH "On the approval of the Description of the procedure and scope of the provision of essential medical aid".

133. Services for pregnant women, expectant mothers, and newborns are provided in accordance with the Description of the procedure for the health care of pregnant women, expectant mothers, and newborns, approved by Order No. V-900 of 23 September 2013 of the Minister of MoH "On the approval of the Description of the procedure for the health care of pregnant women, expectant mothers, and newborns". In 2022, the institutions providing these services have been obligated to inform patients discharged from the hospital (verbally and in writing) about the signs of postpartum depression and about personal health care institutions (PHCI) where services for patients experiencing symptoms of postpartum depression are provided. The fact that information was provided to the patient is noted in the form E003 "Hospital Discharge Summary" which is submitted to the Electronic health services and collaboration infrastructure information system in accordance with the Description of the procedure for the use of the Electronic health services and collaboration infrastructure information system approved by Order No. V-657 of 26 May 2015 of the Minister of MoH "On the approval of the Procedure for the use of the Electronic health services and collaboration infrastructure information system".

134. Order No. V-595 of 19 March 2021 of the Minister of MoH “On amendments to Order No. 49 of 28 January 2000 of the Minister for Health of the Republic of Lithuania “On approval of the list of compensated medicinal products”, provides that the contraceptive Levonorgestrel is prescribed and reimbursed for girls aged 15 to 17 years in accordance with the procedure laid down by the Minister of MoH, and for girls aged 18 to 20, Levonorgestrel is prescribed and reimbursed at 100% if they consult a gynaecologist for contraception.

135. The procedure for prescribing intrauterine contraceptive devices is laid down by Order No. V-700 of 5 April 2022 of the Minister of MoH “On the amendment to Order No. V-527 of 9 September 2003 of the Minister for Health of the Republic of Lithuania “On the requirements for the provision of ambulatory obstetrics and gynaecology personal health care services” (effective from 1 July 2022).

136. The Law on Assisted Reproduction of the RL, as amended and effective from 1 July 2022, provides that the storage of embryos initiated on or after 1 July 2022, will be covered from the state budget for a period of two years. Until the specified date, the storage of embryos was paid by the spouses. It has also been established that if the partners do not express their will in writing by 1 January 2023 regarding the term of storage of the embryo/s whose storage in the germ cell bank began before the entry into force of the amendment law, both partners shall be deemed to have agreed on the use of the embryos for donation, and the storage of the embryo (embryos) on the basis and in accordance with the procedure established by the Minister for Health shall be continued from the state budget but not longer than for ten years from the beginning of the storage of the embryo/s in the germ cell bank.

137. Recast Description of the procedure for the organisation and provision of abortion services was approved by Order V-1348 of 12 August 2022 of the Minister of MoH “On Order No. 50 of 28 January 1994 of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania “On the procedure for carrying out termination of pregnancy surgery”. Its provisions will come into effect on 1 January 2023. This recast version also introduces another method for the termination of pregnancy – medication abortion. The document establishes the requirements for health care institutions providing abortion services, the health care specialists providing these services, and the organisation, provision, and reimbursement of these services. It sets quality requirements for abortion services when provided at the patient’s request (in absence of medical indications): medication abortion can be provided to a patient with up to 9 weeks of pregnancy (8 weeks and 6 days), and surgical abortion can be provided up to 12 weeks of pregnancy (11 weeks and 6 days). The document also outlines requirements for the organisation of services, patient information, and post-procedure monitoring when services are provided for medical indications. Only services related to abortion due to medical indications are reimbursed from the CHIF budget. In the case of providing medication abortion services, an obstetrician-gynaecologist evaluates the patient’s health condition, diseases, and conditions that may affect the patient’s health or life during pregnancy, checks for any contraindications to abortion, and provides a prescription for the medication. The health care professional also provides information on how and when to take the medication, potential side effects, what to do in case of adverse reactions, and other important information for the safe use of the medication.

138. Order V-1607 of 27 October 2022 of the Minister of MoH “On the approval of the Description of the procedure for the organisation of the service of caesarean section surgery at the request of a pregnant woman” approves the Description of the procedure for the organisation of the service of caesarean section surgery at the request of a pregnant woman, the provisions of which will come into force on 1 January 2023. The Description lays down the procedure for organising caesarean section at the request of a pregnant woman, and the requirements for the PHCI

institution and health professionals providing the service. The caesarean section surgery at the request of a pregnant woman is a planned personal health care service, consisting of the consultation of the patient and the provision of information related to the organisation of this service, conclusion of a service contract; decision-making by a multidisciplinary team providing the service; performing the caesarean section surgery when the decision specified in point 20.2.1 of the Description is made; postoperative care for patients who have undergone surgery, and the provision of personal health care services due to postoperative complications. The budget of the Compulsory Health Insurance Fund covers only the services of caesarean section surgery provided for medical indications.

139. The Description of the provision of personal health care services to female survivors of possible sexual violence was approved by Order No. V-1765 of 30 July 2021 of the Minister of MoH “On the approval of the Description of the provision of personal health care services to female survivors of possible sexual violence” the provisions of which entered into force on 1 January 2022. The Description was prepared to establish requirements for PHCI, personal health care specialists providing personal health care services to female patients who may have experienced sexual violence, the premises and medical devices of these PHCI, as well as the procedure for organising and providing these services. In order to ensure the provision of quality personal health care services to female patients who have been subjected to sexual violence, it has been established in the Description that the PHCI providing services to female patients who have been subjected to sexual violence will provide comprehensive assistance to female patients who may have been subjected to sexual violence on a continuous basis (24/7). A health care specialist who suspects that a female patient has experienced sexual violence must, following Order No. 55/42/16 of 28 January 2002 of the Minister of MoH, the Minister of MoI, and the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Lithuania, “On the provision of information about persons with bodily injuries that may be related to the crime” (Order No. 55/42/16), inform the police about it.

140. The right of the patient to complain about the quality of personal health care services and to apply for compensation for damage to health is enshrined in the Law on Patient Rights and Compensation for Damage to Health of the Republic of Lithuania.¹⁵⁰ In accordance with Article 6(5) of the Law on Health Insurance, the essential medical aid and essential services for foreigners who have illegally crossed the border of the RL are funded from the state budget in line with Order No. V-976 of 7 May 2022 of the Minister of MoH “On approval of the Description of the procedure and scope of provision of essential personal health care services”. These services also encompass maternal health care services during pregnancy and childbirth, including prenatal care. Essential health care services are services that, if not provided, could lead to a deterioration of the patient’s state of health to the extent that he or she would require emergency medical care services, the indications for which are specified in the Description of the procedure and scope of provision of essential medical aid, approved by Order No. V-208 of 8 April 2004 of the Minister for Health “On the approval of the Description of the procedure and scope of provision of essential medical aid”. The need for essential services is decided on the basis of the patient’s medical condition. These personal health care services cannot be classified as essential services:

- Medical rehabilitation and sanatorium treatment services, except for initial medical rehabilitation services, provided due to diseases and health disorders specified in the Description of the procedure for payment for medical rehabilitation and anti-recurrent sanatorium treatment and psychosocial rehabilitation services, approved by Order No. V-2818 of 10 December 2011 of the Minister of MoH “On the approval of the Description of the procedure for

payment for medical rehabilitation and anti-recurrent sanatorium treatment and psychosocial rehabilitation services”, sub-paragraph 2.2.1;

- Services under early disease detection programmes;
- Preventive health check-up services, except for the health checkups of children and pregnant women;
- Dental prosthetic services;
- Assisted reproduction services;
- Services for the treatment of addiction-related disorders.

Article 13

141. Maternity benefit is paid to a mother covered by maternity social insurance, who, while working, paid contributions and has accumulated a pregnancy and maternity social insurance period of no less than 12 months in the last 24 months before the start of her first pregnancy and maternity leave and who was granted a pregnancy and maternity leave. A doctor issues the certificate for pregnancy and maternity leave no earlier than at the end of the 30th week of pregnancy. If a woman did not accumulate the required maternity social insurance period because she was on childcare leave with another child, in such a case, the period is calculated from the 24-month period before the child turns 2 years old. Therefore, maternity benefit will still apply. The amount of maternity benefits is 77.58% of the wage before taxes. The minimum maternity benefit may not be less than EUR 392 (before taxes), but there is no maximum limit, and the specific benefit amount depends on the individual previous income from work.

142. Paternity benefit is payable to a father or adoptive father covered by maternity social insurance who has paid contributions while working and who, before the first day of paternity leave, has accumulated a maternity social insurance period of at least 6 months during the last 24 months, provided that he is granted paternity leave of 30 calendar days after the birth of the child, which can be divided into no more than two parts. Paid leave may be taken until the child reaches one year of age. If the father did not accumulate the required social insurance period due to being on childcare leave with another child, in such a case, the period is calculated from the 24-month period before the child turns 2 years old. Therefore, parental benefit will still apply. The amount of parental benefits is 77.58% of the wage before taxes. The minimum parental benefit may not be less than EUR 392 (before taxes). The maximum compensated income for parental benefits may not exceed 2 times the national average monthly wage valid for the quarter preceding the day the right to benefit arises.

143. Parents can choose whether they want to look after their child and receive the childcare benefit until the child reaches 18 months or until the child reaches 24 months of age. Of these, the child can be cared for by each of the child's parents (adoptive parents, guardians) for 2 non-transferable months (a total of 4 months – two for the mother, two for the father), and the remaining time the child can be cared for and paid to both the mother and the father, or adoptive parents and guardians, and one of the grandparents who meet the conditions. If the child is raised by only one parent, he or she is entitled to 2 months non-transferable childcare leave and has the right to receive a childcare benefit for an additional 2-month period of childcare leave. For single parents, the benefit will be paid for the last two months. While grandparents cannot use the non-transferable childcare months allocated to the mother and father, they can take care of their grandchild and receive the childcare benefit for the remaining time if they meet the specified conditions.

144. A one-time payment of EUR 539 is made for every child born in Lithuania. This payment also applies when adopting a child. Every child in Lithuania receives a monthly benefit of EUR 85.75 per child, also known as “child money”. This benefit is provided until the child reaches the age of 18. The benefit can be paid for a longer period, up to the age of 23, if the child is studying according to the general education programme, including those attending vocational training institutions where the curriculum includes a general education programme. An additional benefit of EUR 50.47 is paid with the child benefit for all children from big or low-income families, as well as for all children with disabilities. This additional benefit may be paid until the child reaches the age of 18 or, at the latest, until the age of 23, but only if he or she is studying according to the general education programme, including those in vocational training institutions where the curriculum includes a general education programme.

145. Families raising children may not only receive various monetary benefits but can also make use of services aimed at strengthening families. The access to family preparation and parenting skills development, psychosocial support, family mediation, children’s daytime social care, and other services in a municipality are ensured by the local government. The basic family services package consists of 14 services, including open work with youth, family preparation and parenting skills development, children’s daytime social care, pre-school education, the development of cultural and informational competencies as well as literacy, non-formal children’s education, free primary legal aid, primary ambulatory personal health care, psychosocial support, family mediation, educational assistance, early rehabilitation for children with developmental disorders, and information and counselling.

146. Since July 2022, a new type of social service – preventive social services – has emerged. These services are provided to individuals (families, communities) with the aim of strengthening their ability to take care of their lives independently, participate in public life, improve knowledge, and develop skills to prevent potential social problems and social risks in the future.

147. The number of women’s networks, whose goal is to encourage women to pursue careers in business, have significantly increased, and there are currently more than 10 women’s business organisations operating in Lithuania. Public enterprise “Innovation Agency” organised 214 events to promote entrepreneurship (including women’s entrepreneurship) from 2020 to 2023, with the participation of 2 780 attendees, of which 77.9% were women. In 2022, the public enterprise “Innovation Agency” initiated the entrepreneurship skills programme “Start from 50+” where individuals aged 50 and over were invited to participate in a training programme aimed at acquiring or improving essential business development and management skills. The Contact Centre of the public enterprise “Innovation Agency” provides one stop shop-based consultations on business start-up, establishment, and tax matters (approximately 3 000 consultations per year). Also, all individuals are invited to use the digital tools, spreadsheets and wizards available on the Innovation Agency’s website and to participate in the mentoring programmes.

148. **Concerning part 41 of the Recommendations.** A parent (adoptive parent) that chooses to care for a child up to three years of age and has no income or an income below the minimum monthly wage is provided with unemployment, pension, and health insurance through state funds. This ensures access to free health care services and unemployment and pension benefits. A person caring for a person with disabilities who has a special need for permanent nursing or a special need for permanent care (assistance) and who has no income, or this income is lower than the minimum monthly wage is provided with unemployment, pension and health insurance through state funds. This ensures access to free health care services and unemployment and pension benefits.

149. Employees with family responsibilities have the right to take advantage of certain additional guarantees, and employer must take measures to assist employee in fulfilling their family responsibilities. The LC regulates the right to unpaid time off for family purposes, part-time work, remote work, flexible and individual working time arrangements, a variety of employment contracts such as a job-sharing contract. Employees raising a child under the age of 14 or a child with a disability under the age of 18 alone are granted 25 working days of annual leave (if working 5 days per week).

150. Employer must satisfy a request for annual leave of women before pregnancy and maternity leave or after them, of fathers during the pregnancy and maternity leave of the child's mother, before or after paternity leave, of employees caring for sick family members and disabled individuals. The possibility of granting unpaid leave for taking care not only of a sick family member but also of a person living together with the employee is established.

151. Parents (fathers) are granted 30 calendar days of parental leave after the child's birth, which can be divided into no more than two parts. This leave is granted at any time from the child's birth until the child reaches the age of one year.

152. Employees raising one child under 12 years of age are granted one additional day-off every three months (or working time is shortened by eight hours every three months). Employees raising a child with disability under 18 years of age or two children under 12 years of age are granted one additional day-off every month (or working time is shortened by two hours per week). Employees raising three or more children under 12 years of age or raising two children under 12 years of age, one of whom has a disability, are granted two days every month (or working time is shortened by four hours per week) and their average wage. At the request of employees working shifts of more than eight working hours, this additional rest period may be added up over several months until an additional day-off, which shall be granted no later than the last month to be added up, is accumulated.

153. Unpaid free time is granted during the working day (shift) at the employee's request and with the consent of the employer for personal needs of the employee. An employer must provide unpaid free time to an employee if the employee's request is related to urgent family reasons due to illness or an accident when the employee must participate directly. The parties may agree to transfer work hours to another workday (shift) without violating the requirements for maximum working time and minimum rest time. For the aforementioned employees, there is the possibility to agree on part-time work, but most importantly, the employee is given the opportunity to return to full-time work. An employer must satisfy the request mentioned above if the employee's request, based on a conclusion of the health institution, is justified by the employee's health condition, disability, or the necessity to care for a family member or a person living together with him or her. An employer must also satisfy the request of a pregnant woman, woman that has recently given birth or breastfeeding mother, employee raising a child under 8 years of age, and employee raising a child alone under 14 years of age or a child with disabilities under 18 years of age.

154. If the employer fails to prove that due to production necessity or work organisation peculiarities, this would incur excessive costs, the employer must satisfy the employee's request to work remotely when requested by pregnant woman, employee that has recently given birth or breastfeeding, employee raising a child under 8 years of age, and employee raising a child alone under 14 years of age or a child with disabilities under 18 years of age. Furthermore, when an employee submits a request based on a conclusion from a health care institution regarding his or her health condition or the necessity to care for a family member or a person living together with him or her, the employer must allow them to work remotely. These

employees have the right to demand to work the full work time remotely, and the previous restriction on the duration, which was a quarter of the work time, no longer applies.

155. The employer must allow a pregnant woman, employee that has recently given birth or breastfeeding, employee raising a child under 8 years of age, and employee raising a child alone under 14 years of age or a child with disabilities under 18 years of age, as well as an employee who submits a request based on a conclusion from a health care institution regarding his or her health condition or the necessity to care for a family member or a person living together with him or her, to work under the preferred work schedule (provided it does not cause excessive costs for the employer due to production necessity or work organisation peculiarities).

156. As of the beginning of 2023, employees of budgetary institutions (state and municipal institutions supported from the state or municipal budget, the budget of the State Social Insurance Fund or other funds established by the state, state and municipal enterprises, public institutions owned by the state or municipality, and the Bank of Lithuania) who have children under 3 years of age have the right to a reduced working time of 32 hours per week. This legal regulation aims to encourage employees to return to work earlier, without losing their qualifications and connection with the workplace, while at the same time allowing effective care for a young child.

157. In 2022–2023, there were 715 pre-school education institutions in the country (621 in urban areas, 94 in rural areas), and 426 general education schools had pre-school and pre-primary education groups. 125 200 children were educated in pre-school education establishments and 10 500 children were educated in pre-school and pre-primary education groups in general education schools. Overall, 82.7% of children aged 1–6 years participated in pre-school and pre-primary education. 26.5 thousand children aged 1–2 years, or 54% of children of this age, attended pre-school education institutions. 106 children under one year of age attended nurseries (58 children in 2021).

158. Starting from 2025, universal pre-school education for children from the age of 2 will be implemented in Lithuania. It will not be mandatory, but municipalities will not be able to deny access to parents if they want to secure a place for their children in pre-school. According to the data of the MoESS, municipalities across Lithuania plan to construct 19 new pre-school education institutions within the next three years.

159. In old age, persons may receive early retirement, old-age social insurance pensions, single person's benefit, survivor's pensions, lost working capacity pensions, and other pensions, as well as to access social services. In 2021, amendments to the Law on Social Insurance Pensions were adopted, which ensure a faster increase in social insurance pensions. The average old-age pension increased from EUR 482 to 542 starting from 2023. The average old-age pension with a qualifying insurance period increased from EUR 513 to 575 in 2023, i.e., by more than 12%. Since the beginning of 2023, the basic amounts of social benefits have been increasing, along with cash social assistance for deprived persons, social assistance pensions paid to persons with disabilities, orphans or seniors who have not accumulated a minimum social insurance period, targeted compensations for the disabled with special needs. Compared to 2021, in the beginning of 2023 these have increased by a quarter (23%), and social assistance pensions have increased by almost a third (30%).

160. Social services are provided to individuals or families who lack the ability to independently care for their personal or family life and participate in community life. The need for social services is determined on an individual basis. First, a comprehensive assessment is made, taking into account the person's age, functional impairments, disabilities, social situation, everyday life skills, risks, and other circumstances. Additionally, the conclusions of other institutions (such as of health

care specialist) about a person's condition and problems are considered. The type of social services, financed from municipal budget funds or special targeted grants from the state budget a senior citizen needs and is willing to receive, shall be determined by the social workers appointed by the municipality. All types of social services and their content are defined in the Social Services Catalogue.

161. The 2023–2027 Strategic Plan for Agriculture and Rural Development includes objective 8: promoting employment, growth, equality between women and men, including women's participation in farming activities, social inclusion, and local development in rural areas, including circular bioeconomy and sustainable forestry. Five interventions directly related to the implementation of this goal are presented in Annex 17.

162. The Lithuanian Rural Development Programme for 2014-2020, which ran until 2022, included the following interventions aimed at promoting equal opportunities for women and men:

- Activity “Support for investments intended for the creation and development of economic activities” within the activity area “Support for investments intended for the creation and development of non-agricultural activities” and activity area “Support for the initiation of economic activities in rural areas” under the programme facility “Farm and Business Development”;
- Programme facility “LEADER programme”, which aims to contribute to the implementation of cross-cutting goal 3 of the EU rural development policy, i.e. to ensure balanced territorial development of the rural economy and communities, create jobs and maintain them, through the implementation of local projects.

163. **Concerning part 43 of the Recommendations.** In 2022, the Department for the Affairs of the Disabled, implementing paragraph 4.2.1 of the Action Plan for the Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities for 2021-2023,³⁶ funded 12 projects to support the activities of associations of persons with disabilities. During the implementation of these projects, legal counselling, information, consultation, mediation, and representation services were provided. Additionally, 33 training sessions and various other measures aimed at combating violence against persons with disabilities, raising awareness about exploitation and violence recognition, prevention and elimination were carried out, involving 742 persons, including 338 persons with disabilities. In 2022, EUR 67 000 were allocated for the implementation of this activity.

164. In accordance with the Law on the Rights of Patients and Compensation of the Damage to their Health of the RL, no treatment or medical procedures shall be carried out without the freely given prior and informed consent of all persons, including women with disabilities. Cases in which personal health care services are provided to patients without their consent are strictly regulated by laws and not related to a person's disability but rather their medical condition.

165. Health care services for patients aged 16 and above shall be provided only with their consent, except in cases of essential medical assistance when the patient cannot express their will. When health care must be provided to the patient aged 16 and above who cannot be considered capable of reasonably assessing his or her own interests, and the patient's representatives are unavailable, or they have refused to act as representatives, or if there are no possibilities of contacting them as quickly as

³⁶ Order No. A1-817 of 8 September 2020 of the Minister for Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania “On the approval of the Action plan for the social integration of persons with disabilities for 2021-2023”.

necessary or obtaining their information-based consent in a timely manner, the decision regarding the health care to be provided to the patient and its scope, as well as the choice of alternatives, is made by the attending physician, and, where appropriate, by the physicians' consilium, acting exclusively in the patient's interests.

166. For patient under 16, health care services are provided only with the consent of his or her representatives, except in cases of essential medical assistance. When representatives are not available or there is no possibility of contacting them as quickly as necessary or obtaining their consent in a timely manner, the decision regarding the scope of health care to be provided to the patient, and the choice of alternatives, is made by the attending physician and, where appropriate, by the physicians' consilium, acting exclusively in the patient's interests. If parents avoid performing their functions as representatives under the law, and no temporary custody or guardianship has been established for the patient under 16, or when the minor patient's parents (adoptive parents) do not agree with each other regarding the scope of health care, decisions regarding the scope of health care to be provided, and the choice of alternatives, are made by the attending physician and, where appropriate, by the physicians' consilium, acting exclusively in the patient's interests.

167. According to the Law on Mental Health Care of the RL, a patient with mental and behavioural disorders who refuses hospitalisation may be involuntarily hospitalised for no longer than 3 working days, only if, based on the patient's behaviour and/or other objective data, it can reasonably be concluded that there is a real threat that he or she may pose significant harm to his or her or others' health, life, and/or property (hereinafter "threat"). When a person is involuntarily hospitalised, a psychiatrist must immediately seek the written consent of the patient for specific medications or measures (methods) to treat him or her. If a patient with mental and behavioural disorders is delivered to a mental health care institution providing inpatient mental health care services by a decision of an ambulance service specialist, the decision regarding involuntary hospitalisation is taken by the psychiatrist or a child/adolescent psychiatrist of the medical institution to which the patient with mental and behavioural disorders has been delivered. When a person is involuntarily hospitalised, a psychiatrist must immediately seek the written consent of the patient for specific medications or measures (methods) to treat him or her. If the patient cannot be considered capable of reasonably assessing his or her interests and, therefore, it is not possible to obtain the patient's consent for treatment, and when there is a threat, he or she may be involuntarily treated according to the procedure established by the Minister for Health for no longer than 3 working days. Involuntary hospitalisation and involuntary treatment for more than 3 working days are decided by court. It should be noted that the indications for involuntary hospitalisation and treatment are determined by the risk factor resulting from the medical condition and not by the presence of disability.

168. In 2022, the Department for the Affairs of the Disabled under the MoSSL prepared a publication "What Should We Know About Sexuality?"³⁷. The aim of this publication is to introduce the concept of science-based, equality of partners focused sexuality education in plain language, with the goal of promoting independence of a person when making healthier and safer decisions. The publication is intended for adults who may have difficulty reading regular text, such as those with reading difficulties, intellectual disabilities, migrants, and others.

169. On 1 January 2016, a reform of the institute of legal capacity was implemented. The core principles of this reform are based on the principles of respect for human rights and freedoms and ensure that restrictions on person's legal capacity must be

³⁷ <https://www.ndt.lt/tolerancijos-ivairovei-pagarbos-partneriu-lygiavertiskumo-derme-leidinyje-katuretume-zinoti-apie-lytiskuma/>.

minimised to a minimum, measures restricting person's legal capacity, when necessary, must be as individualised as possible, tailored to the specific situation of the person, and fully justified. If there is any doubt as to the expediency or reasonableness of the limitation of legal capacity, all doubts must be assessed in favour of the person claimed to be recognised as incapacitated in a particular area. Person's legal capacity may only be restricted by court order. The CC provides for the legal institutes of 1) decision-making assistance and 2) advance directives.

170. The MoJ, when implementing action 3.2.3 "By ensuring the provision of assistance to persons with disabilities when implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to organise public consultations with society regarding the potentially most effective measures to abandon the institute of full legal incapacity, and prepare draft amendments to the CC and other related legislation", specified in Implementation Plan for the Programme of the Eighteenth Government of the RL, approved by Resolution No. 155 of the Government of 10 March 2021, organised the above-mentioned public consultations between April and May 2023. During these consultations, discussions were held on which legal measures would be most effective in ensuring that persons with mental or behavioural disorders have full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Alternatives for restricting the legal capacity of persons with disabilities were discussed, possible legal changes that would reduce the legal necessity to resort to court regarding the restriction of person's legal capacity were considered, problems that arise for specific target groups due to the current legal regulations in this area were discussed, and the possibility of a new guardianship model was deliberated. The MoJ is assessing the aspects and proposals for the most effective measures and necessary changes in legal regulations discussed during public consultations.

171. From 2020 to 2023, the decision-making assistance service was provided to 510 working-age persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities. This service was received by persons whose legal capacity is restricted and, preventively, by persons whose legal capacity is not restricted. Legal capacity was restored to 2 women.

172. Starting from 2024, the MoSSL, in collaboration with the Department for the Affairs of the Disabled, is planning to expand the provision of decision-making assistance services in all municipalities across the country. These services aim to ensure the legal capacity of persons with mental and/or intellectual disabilities and to prevent the restriction of legal capacity.

Article 14

173. The Law on Regional Development provides for the goal of the regional policy: reducing social and economic disparities between regions and within regions and promoting equitable and sustainable development across the entire national territory.

174. Investing in towns and villages aims to comprehensively renew their community and public infrastructure, utilise their social, cultural, and natural potential for maintaining sustainable development of living environment and vitality. By the end of 2022, 51 projects had been implemented under the measure "Renovation of Rural Residential Areas" administered by the MoI with a disbursement of EUR 38.39 million of EU and state budget support. In total, EUR 48.10 million in has been disbursed from EU and state budget under the measure.

175. By implementing the community-initiated local development method⁶⁶⁹ projects have been financed to reduce social exclusion of community members, increase employment, and promote community entrepreneurship. An amount of EUR

22.09 million from EU and state budget funds has been allocated for the implementation of these projects. By the end of 2022, 541 projects have been completed, and disbursements totalling EUR 14.33 million from EU and state budget funds have been made.

176. The 2023–2027 Strategic Plan for Agriculture and Rural Development of Lithuania aims at sustainable development of the Lithuanian agricultural and food sector by increasing the added value and competitiveness of the sector, supporting the income of promising farms (in particular, small and medium-sized ones), generational change, and creating a vibrant rural area attractive for farming and business.

177. The state contributes by allocating special purpose grants from the state budget to municipal budgets to provide social care for people with severe disabilities. Since 2019, the MoSSL has transferred seven social care institutions to municipalities: four childcare homes, two elderly care homes, and one for adults with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities. The development or modernisation of infrastructure of institutions providing social services for the elderly is planned by implementing one of the action of the regional progress measure “Reducing territorial disparities in the well-being of vulnerable groups”, funded in the framework of the Programme for the EU Funds’ Investments 2021–2027. By 2030, all municipalities must plan and implement alternative and various community services to ensure the independent living of persons with disabilities and their families within the community.

Article 15

178. Amendments to the CC and other related laws have been adopted, providing that certain non-contentious issues are transferred to notaries to be resolved. This includes divorce by mutual agreement when the spouses do not have minor children, permission to change a marriage contract, and permission to enter into real estate family property transactions, among others. Additionally, these amendments eliminate redundant notary actions in areas relevant to the public, including the mandatory notary forms of consent of another spouse for adopting a child, the possibility of recognising paternity without notarial confirmation by submitting a declaration for the recognition of paternity directly to civil registry institutions, And possibility of deregistration of a mortgage in all cases without notarial confirmation, and more.

Article 16

179. **Concerning Part 45 of the Recommendations.** In accordance with the Constitutional Court’s interpretation laid down in its ruling of 11 January 2019, the Constitution protects and safeguards family forms other than marriage, and the constitutional concept of a family, among other things, is sex neutral. Therefore, the rights of individuals who have chosen non-traditional family relationship forms are currently protected in Lithuania in a certain way.

180. In order to take actions and regulate these family relationship forms and specify the protective measures applied to these forms, it is necessary to consider that the establishment of family relationships in legal regulation requires the will of the legislature taking into account that, according to the Constitution’s definition of the content of human rights and freedoms and the establishment of guarantees for their implementation, legal regulation related to them can only be determined by law (Constitutional Court’s ruling of 11 May 2007).The Seimas is currently debating a package of draft amendments to the draft Law on Civil Union of the RL and its

accompanying legislation, registered by a group of members of the Seimas on 16 May 2022 (the last discussion on this package took place on 23 May 2023).

181. According to Article 3.7(1) of the CC, marriage is a voluntary agreement between a man and a woman to establish a legal family relationship executed in accordance with the procedure provided for by law. Marriage shall be contracted by a man and a woman of their own free will; any threat, coercion, deceit or any other lack of free will shall provide a basis for declaring the marriage null and void (Article 3.13 of the CC).

182. In accordance with Article 3.14(1) of the CC, marriage may be contracted by persons who by or on the date of contracting a marriage have attained the age of 18. This is a general rule. Pursuant to Article 3.14(2) and (3) of the CC, at the request of a person who intends to marry before the age of 18, the court may, in a summary procedure, reduce for him or her the legal age of consent to marriage, but by no more than two years. In case of pregnancy, the court may allow a person to marry before the age of 16.

183. Article 3.14(4) of the CC provides that while deciding on the reduction of a person's legal age of consent to marriage, the court must hear the opinion of the minor person's parents or guardians or curators and take into account his or her mental or psychological condition, financial situation and other important reasons that require the reduction of the person's legal age of consent to marriage. Pregnancy shall provide an important ground for the reduction of the person's legal age of consent to marriage.

184. According to Article 3.14 (5) of the CC, in the process of deciding on the reduction of the legal age of consent to marriage, the state institution for the protection of the child's rights must present its opinion on the advisability of the reduction of the person's legal age of consent to marriage and whether such a reduction is in the interests of the minor concerned.

185. While the provisions of the CC allow for the reduction of a person's legal age of consent to marriage by court order in exceptional cases, these norms grant the court the discretion to decide whether the reduction of the legal age of consent to marriage is in the best interests of the minor, and only in the presence of important reasons recognised by the court can the legal age of consent to marriage be reduced. Additionally, the combination of the conditions for marriage as established by the CC and other specified provisions create the conditions for safeguarding the interests of a minor.

186. Furthermore, according to statistical information on the Lithuanian courts' website,³⁸ in 2022, 18 cases of reducing the legal age of consent to marriage were examined in the courts, in 2021, there were 26 cases, and in 2020, there were 20 cases of reducing the legal age of consent to marriage. Therefore, there are no grounds to claim that the existing legal regulation disproportionately affects minor marriages, and the proposed measure in point 45(b) of the recommendation is disproportionate, considering the very low number of cases where the issue of reducing the legal age of consent to marriage is being decided in court. In the opinion of the MoJ, it is not practicable to change the legal regulation as established by the CC in the manner proposed in point 45(b) of the recommendation.

187. **Concerning Part 47 of the Recommendations.** The section dedicated to equality between women and men, which includes sex-related indicators on demographics, education, participation in the labour market, economic power, health and healthcare services, violence, and other areas, is included in the Official Statistics

³⁸ <https://www.teismai.lt/lt/visuomenei-ir-ziniasklaidai/statistika/106>.

Portal and is continuously updated.³⁹ Data by sex, age and location (city/village) in various areas continuously published according to the approved Official Statistics Calendar⁴⁰ in the [Official Statistics Portal](#) is significantly complemented with more detailed statistical information from the 2021 Population and Housing Census, published in the Open Data Files⁴¹ of the [Official Statistics Portal](#). Statistical information may be compiled by sex, age and other socio-economic characteristics in grids of different sizes (100, 250, 500 m and 1 km).

³⁹ <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/lyciu-lygybe>.

⁴⁰ <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/kalendoriai>.

⁴¹ <https://open-data-ls-osp-sdg.hub.arcgis.com/pages/4b9752f5dae745a4a9e4f3f789a938b0>.