



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
30 March 2023

Original: English

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Lithuania*

1. The Committee considered the third periodic report of Lithuania¹ at its 16th and 18th meetings,² held on 22 and 23 February 2023, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 30th meeting, held on 3 March 2023.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission by the State party of the third periodic report and the supplementary information provided in the replies to the list of issues.³ The Committee appreciates the constructive dialogue that it held with the State party's delegation.

B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee welcomes the legislative, institutional and policy measures taken to increase the protection of economic, social and cultural rights in the State party, such as the Constitutional Court's ruling of 11 January 2019 recognizing gender identity and sexual orientation among the prohibited grounds for discrimination, the National Safety and Health at Work Action Plan for 2017–2021 and the National Energy and Climate Plan for 2021–2030.

C. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

Domestic application of the Covenant

4. The Committee notes with appreciation the examples provided by the State party of cases in which certain provisions of the Covenant have been invoked by or before and directly enforced by the courts. The Committee regrets, however, the lack of specialized training on the Covenant and the justiciability of the rights therein for judges, prosecutors, lawyers and law enforcement personnel and of awareness-raising activities for the relevant actors responsible for the implementation of the Covenant. The Committee also expresses concern regarding reports of discriminatory attitudes among some judges when delivering judgments (art. 2 (1)).

5. **The Committee recommends that the State party provide judges, prosecutors, lawyers and law enforcement personnel with regular specialized training on the provisions of the Covenant and on the justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights to ensure their independence and that the judges adjudicate without prejudice.**

* Adopted by the Committee at its seventy-third session (13 February–3 March 2023).

¹ E/C.12/LTU/3.

² E/C.12/2023/SR.16 and E/C.12/2023/SR.18.

³ E/C.12/LTU/RQ/3.W.



The Committee also recommends that the State party raise awareness among all relevant State actors responsible for the implementation of the Covenant and among the rights holders. The Committee draws the State party's attention to its general comment No. 9 (1998) on the domestic application of the Covenant.

National human rights institution

6. The Committee welcomes the accreditation to A status of the parliamentary ombudsmen's office, as well as the steady increase in its budgetary allocation, but is concerned that the office does not have an explicit mandate on economic, social and cultural rights. The Committee remains concerned that the office may still lack sufficient human, technical and financial resources to carry out its mandate effectively in relation to economic, social and cultural rights. The Committee regrets the lack of information about complaints of violations of economic, social and cultural rights received by the office, the resulting investigations and their outcome (art. 2 (1)).

7. The Committee recommends that the State party continue to take measures to address the observations and recommendations made in March 2017 by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. The Committee further recommends that the parliamentary ombudsmen's office be strengthened so it can discharge its mandate effectively and independently in full compliance with principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) and that the mandate include appropriate attention to economic, social and cultural rights.

National minorities

8. The Committee is concerned at the steady decline in the population of national minorities, notably the Polish, Russian and Belarussian minorities. The Committee remains concerned about reports of discrimination against and unequal treatment of national minorities and the lack of a legal framework for the protection of the rights of national minorities in the State party following the abrogation of the Law on National Minorities of 1989 in January 2010 (arts. 2 and 15).

9. The Committee recommends that the State party take urgent measures, in a time-bound manner, to address these concerns, expedite the process for adopting a new Law on National Minorities and that, in the interim, it take effective measures to fully protect the rights of all national minorities, including in relation to their language, religion, culture and identity. The Committee reiterates its general comment No. 3 (1990) on the nature of State parties' obligations.

Discrimination against Roma

10. The Committee welcomes the State party's progress through the implementation of various action plans and programmes to facilitate the access of Roma to economic, social and cultural rights. The Committee is, however, concerned about the lack of meaningful progress and the persistent stigmatization and social exclusion of, and discrimination against, Roma in the enjoyment of their rights under the Covenant, particularly in the areas of housing, health and employment. The Committee regrets that the Action Plan for Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society for 2022–2023⁴ does not address some of the most acute problems and does not allocate adequate and dedicated resources for its effective implementation. The Committee further regrets that a comprehensive law protecting minority rights has not yet been adopted (art. 2 (2)).

11. The Committee recommends that the State party redouble its efforts for the social and economic integration of Roma, paying particular attention to Roma women and children. It recommends, in particular, that the State party strengthen its policy

⁴ See also "Civil society monitoring report on the quality of the national strategic framework for Roma equality, inclusion, and participation in Lithuania" (June 2022) prepared for the European Commission and available at <https://romacivilmonitoring.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/RCM2-2022-C4-Lithuania-FINAL-PUBLISHED.pdf>.

measures, including by adopting and implementing a comprehensive national Roma integration strategy, with a view to addressing the disparities and discrimination faced by Roma in accessing public services, employment, adequate housing, education and health care.

Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity

12. While noting the measures taken by the State party, including the Constitutional Court's ruling of 11 January 2019 recognizing gender identity and sexual orientation among the prohibited grounds for discrimination under article 29 of the Constitution, the Committee regrets the lack of tangible progress in combating the violence, stigmatization and discrimination experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity. It is further concerned that gender identity is yet to be recognized in national legislation. The Committee also regrets that, in the absence of the recognition of same-sex marriage, there exists no legal institution for those in a same-sex relationship (art. 2 (2)).

13. **Reiterating the recommendations made in its previous concluding observations⁵ the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Provide effective protection against all forms of discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity, which hinders the enjoyment by victims of their economic, social and cultural rights;**

(b) **Redouble its efforts to take specific, deliberate and targeted measures, including additional awareness-raising campaigns, to combat stigmatization and discrimination affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons;**

(c) **Take legislative measures to ensure the statutory recognition of gender identity as prohibited grounds for discrimination;**

(d) **Develop a legal institution, such as registered partnership or civil union, that provides protection equivalent to marriage to those in same-sex relationships.**

Asylum-seekers and migrants

14. While noting the challenges faced owing to the influx of asylum-seekers and migrants, the Committee remains concerned by:

(a) Reported incidents of the continued expulsion of asylum-seekers and migrants by the State party without reviewing their individual situations, including the practice of pushback operations, whereby asylum-seekers and migrants, including children and persons in vulnerable situations, have been left near the border in dire conditions, without access to asylum procedures or emergency assistance, such as the provision of food, water and shelter;

(b) The reports of limited access to adequate food, basic goods and services, health-care services and information, as well as a lack of privacy and restrictions on freedom of movement for asylum-seekers, refugees and undocumented migrants in accommodation sites, which have negative impacts on their psychological health (arts. 2, 10 and 12).

15. **The Committee recommends the State party:**

(a) **Ensure that, by taking legislative and other measures, including the amendment to the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens, that all asylum-seekers, including those arriving in an irregular manner and in times of emergency, have access to information on asylum procedures and to legal aid, and have the right to apply for asylum and be assessed on an individual base, without discrimination;**

(b) **Recall that detention is only applied as a measure of last resort for asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants, following an individual assessment of its reasonableness, necessity and proportionality, and an examination of the alternatives;**

⁵ [E/C.12/LTU/CO/2](#).

(c) **Take measures to ensure that undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers in accommodation sites have access to adequate food, clothes, other essential non-food items, health care, including psychosocial services, and information on asylum procedures and legal aid in a language that they understand;**

(d) **Take into account recommendations made in 2021 by the Committee against Torture⁶ in this regard.**

Climate change

16. While noting the adoption of the climate protection policy and the creation of a sectoral decarbonization working group, as well as the substantial reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in most economic sectors since 2015, the Committee is concerned that the State party may not meet its nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement or its targets for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, in particular because of the projected gas emissions caused by transport, agriculture and “other emissions” sectors including services and buildings (art. 2 (1)).

17. **The Committee recommends that the State party enhance its efforts to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change on economic, social and cultural rights, including by taking measures to achieve its nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement and for the implementation of its transition to a net zero greenhouse gas emissions economy by 2050. The Committee refers the State party to its statement on climate change and the Covenant, adopted in 2018.⁷**

Business and human rights

18. The Committee is concerned about the lack of information on the regulatory framework in place to ensure that business entities respect rights under the Covenant and apply human rights due diligence throughout their operations. The Committee regrets the insufficiency of the information provided as to the specific measures taken to ensure that business entities address the adverse impact of their operations on the environment.

19. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt measures to ensure the accountability of business entities based in or managed from the State party’s territory for abuses of economic, social and cultural rights as a result of their activities, and to provide adequate remedies to victims;**

(b) **Collect information on claims filed by victims of abuses of economic, social or cultural rights committed by business entities;**

(c) **Take note of general comment No. 24 (2017) on State obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the context of business activities.**

Extraterritorial obligations

20. The Committee remains concerned by recent measures taken by the State party that have prevented transportation of potash from Belarus destined for third countries in Africa and Latin America, leading to a shortage of fertilizer and adversely affecting food security in those countries (art. 2 (1)).

21. **The Committee recommends that the State party review the recent measures that have had an adverse effect on the price of fertilizer and on food security in third countries.**

Poverty and inequality

22. The Committee takes note of the measures taken to address income inequalities faced by those in marginalized situations, and between rural and urban populations, including the

⁶ CAT/C/LTU/CO/4, para. 12.

⁷ E/C.12/2018/1.

increase in the minimum wage and in the social assistance base payment for persons with disabilities and older persons. It remains concerned, however, by the lack of information regarding the sustainable impact of the current measures in place (arts. 2 and 11).

23. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Take immediate measures to alleviate the negative social and economic impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on livelihoods and protect people from poverty as a result of loss of income caused by the COVID-19 pandemic;**

(b) **Take effective measures to guarantee targeted support for groups who are disproportionately affected by poverty, in particular children, single-parent families, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants and Roma;**

(c) **Take effective measures to reduce income inequality among the population, including by reforming the tax and social security systems;**

(d) **Take into consideration the Committee's statement on poverty and the Covenant,⁸ adopted in 2001.**

Access to COVID-19 vaccines and drugs

24. The Committee welcomes the efforts of the State party to provide vaccines on a bilateral basis and through multilateral mechanisms since the beginning of 2020 but the Committee notes that the State party has not played an active role in advocating for universal, equitable and affordable access to COVID-19 vaccines and drugs in regional and international organizations of which it is a member (arts. 2 and 12).

25. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen its efforts to facilitate universal and equitable access to COVID-19 testing, treatment and immunization;**

(b) **Make every effort to exercise its leverage in regional and international organizations of which it is a member to advocate for universal, equitable and affordable access to COVID-19 vaccines and drugs, including through the possibility of supporting the proposals made at the World Trade Organization of establishing a temporary waiver for some intellectual property rights for vaccines at least for as long as the pandemic continues;**

(c) **Take note in particular of paragraph 82 of the Committee's general comment No. 25 (2020) on science and economic, social and cultural rights, and to the Committee's statements on the COVID-19 pandemic and economic, social and cultural rights, and on universal and equitable access to vaccines for COVID-19.**

Official development assistance

26. The Committee regrets that the State party's level of official development assistance (0.13 per cent in 2021) falls below the internationally agreed commitment of 0.7 per cent of gross national income and the 0.33 per cent committed to at the European Union level (art. 2 (1)).

27. **The Committee recommends that the State party increase its efforts in international cooperation, including by meeting the internationally agreed target for development assistance of 0.7 per cent of gross national income.**

Corruption

28. The Committee notes the measures taken by the State party to address corruption. It is concerned, however, about reports that corruption is still persistent in the public procurement sectors, particularly in the health sector, and by the increase in the size of the shadow economy, which may negatively affect the realization of economic, social and

⁸ E/C.12/2001/10.

cultural rights. The Committee regrets the lack of information on the sentences passed on those found to be involved in corruption (art. 2 (1)).

29. **The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to combat corruption and related impunity and ensure the effective implementation of anti-corruption laws, including by investigating and prosecuting corruption effectively. It further recommends that the State party continue to enhance the investigative capacity and independent functioning of the Special Investigation Service and the public prosecutors.**

Equal rights of men and women

30. While recognizing the State party's continuing efforts with regard to addressing inequality between men and women, the Committee is concerned by the slow overall progress towards the achievement of full equality. The Committee is particularly concerned that limited representation of women in leadership positions across different social and economic institutions, increased poverty among women and girls and the unequal distribution of unpaid domestic and care responsibilities between women and men are significant barriers to equality. It is also concerned about the persistence of stereotypes regarding women and their role in society and the family. The Committee regrets the lack of information on the progress made in overcoming occupational gender segregation and increasing opportunities for women in disadvantaged and marginalized situations, including for their participation in skilled, full-time and well-paid employment, as also highlighted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women⁹ (art. 3).

31. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Review and amend all existing laws, regulations, norms and practices that are discriminatory against women and develop policies and programmes, including temporary special measures, to achieve substantive gender equality in all areas of economic, social and cultural rights;**

(b) **Take comprehensive measures to eliminate strong gender-role stereotypes, including through media campaigns and consultation with opinion leaders, and through awareness-raising among the general public on the equal sharing of rights and responsibilities between men and women in the family and in society.**

Gender pay gap

32. While noting the State party's efforts, which include the National Programme of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2015–2021 and the ongoing reforms in the Department of Statistics, the Committee regrets that the gender pay gap remains significant, reaching 12 per cent in 2021 and is reportedly highest in certain sectors, such as insurance, finance, health care and social work. The Committee regrets that the State party has not undertaken a comprehensive impact assessment of the measures taken to decrease the gender pay gap (art. 3).

33. **Reiterating the recommendations made in its previous concluding observations,¹⁰ the Committee recommends that the State party;**

(a) **Redouble its efforts to close the gender pay gap, by addressing the vertical and horizontal gender-based segregation in the labour market, reviewing its social and tax policies and addressing the factors that discourage women from continuing their careers or taking up full-time employment;**

(b) **Take further measures to promote women's access to high-level positions in the public and private sectors, including by adopting and implementing temporary special measures, and address obstacles to their career advancement, including by providing sufficient opportunities to reconcile work and family obligations;**

⁹ CEDAW/C/LTU/CO/6, paras. 36–37.

¹⁰ E/C.12/LTU/CO/2, para. 9.

(c) **Periodically review the level of the gender pay gap between men and women within organizations in the public and private sectors, including in high-level administrative and political posts, and the impact of laws and policies, in consultation with workers and employers, with a view to updating standards in the light of practice.**

Right to work

34. While welcoming the steady decrease in unemployment rates recorded in recent years, as well as the adoption of a new Labour Code, the Committee is concerned by the reports that some groups, in particular Roma, persons with disabilities, women with children, young people, persons 50 years old and above and migrants, continue to face difficulties in accessing work and have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Committee regrets the lack of statistics on the impact of the measures taken to overcome the main challenges encountered (art. 6).

35. **Reiterating the recommendations already made in its previous concluding observations,¹¹ the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Improve the levels of employment of persons with disabilities, including by establishing incentives and special measures, and integrate workers with disabilities into the mainstream labour market;**

(b) **Intensify its efforts to support Roma, persons with disabilities, women with children, young people, persons 50 years of age and older and migrants, in gaining access to employment, including by implementing targeted positive measures, facilitating their access to technical and vocational training opportunities and collecting data on their situation;**

(c) **Strengthen its national system of technical and vocational education and training to ensure that qualifications and skills are aligned with the needs of the labour market;**

(d) **Continue to take positive measures to assist the groups most affected by unemployment, in particular young people, women with children, and persons with disabilities;**

(e) **Take into account the Committee's general comment No. 18 (2005) on the right to work.**

Working conditions

36. The Committee notes the measures taken, including the National Safety and Health at Work Action Plan for 2017–2021 but regrets the continuing lack of comprehensive data relating to the occupational safety and health situation, including the number of labour inspections carried out, complaints brought by workers and sanctions imposed on employers for failing to provide the conditions necessary to ensure safety and health. The Committee regrets the lack of information about the impact of legislative measures taken to address the prevalence of violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, in the workplace (art. 7).

37. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Improve its data collection relating to occupational safety and health;**

(b) **Prevent and mitigate the risk of occupational accidents and diseases;**

(c) **Strengthen the capacity of the Labour Inspectorate to monitor working conditions, including by increasing its financial and human resources;**

(d) **Establish an occupational health and safety insurance scheme.**

Sexual harassment in the workplace

38. While welcoming the inclusion of provisions on sexual and moral harassment in the Labour Code, the Committee remains concerned about the effectiveness of the new

¹¹ E/C.12/LTU/CO/2, paras. 11–12.

provisions in practice owing to the reported prevalence of sexual violence and harassment that women in particular encounter at work (art. 7).

39. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure that the laws against sexual harassment, including under the Labour Code, are enforced effectively and adopt preventive and protective measures to combat sexual harassment in the workplace, including awareness-raising campaigns, a monitoring system and ongoing training;**

(b) **Ensure that reports of sexual harassment are duly investigated and prosecuted, that perpetrators are appropriately punished and that victims have access to appropriate redress, including compensation.**

Migrant workers

40. While the Committee takes note of recent legislative improvements, it is concerned about reports of exploitation and abuse of migrant workers by employers. The Committee regrets the lack of sufficient information concerning the implementation and enforcement of the measures taken to address the issue (art. 7).

41. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Take measures to ensure the effective enforcement of legislation that protects migrant workers, including through the imposition of deterrent penalties for employers who violate the legislation;**

(b) **Ensure that such employers are sanctioned effectively;**

(c) **Implement effective mechanisms to monitor compliance with labour laws protecting migrant workers.**

Trade union rights

42. The Committee remains concerned that, owing to the restrictive definition of a strike as stipulated under section 244 (1) of the Labour Code, the right to strike may not be exercised to search for solutions to problems posed by major social and economic policy trends. The Committee regrets the lack of information as to how the right to form and join trade unions, the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike can be exercised in practice freely and without reprisals by migrant workers (art. 8).

43. **The Committee recommends that the State party review its Labour Code with a view to ensuring the right to strike in accordance with international standards.**

Right to social security

44. While noting the measures taken by municipalities and the central Government to strengthen working-age benefits, the Committee is concerned at the reports that the social support provided and the level of social assistance pension for old age remains low, at less than 30 per cent of the minimum wage. The Committee also regrets the lack of information on the measures taken to provide social security coverage to workers in the informal economy (art. 9).

45. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Reform its social protection system, with a view to alleviating inequalities and eliminating discriminatory effects of the system on disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups, including by unifying or harmonizing different social security benefits at the local level and ensuring that an equitable and sufficient level of public funding is allocated to the social protection system;**

(b) **Expand the coverage of social security benefits, in particular to the self-employed and to workers in the agricultural sector and the informal sector, and increase the level of those benefits in order to provide workers and their families with a decent living;**

- (c) **Ensure that employers register their employees with the social protection system and pay their contributions;**
- (d) **Ensure that the pension benefits for persons with disabilities adequately covers both basic income security and disability-related costs;**
- (e) **Take into account the Committee's general comment No. 19 (2007) on the right to social security.**

Protection of the family and children

46. While welcoming the progress made in the area of childcare services, the Committee is concerned that these measures are insufficient for addressing the sharing of parental responsibilities and childcare options. The Committee is further concerned that women more often assume the role of household carer and face the issue of balancing their professional and personal lives, including having difficulties re-entering the labour market after maternity leave (art. 10).

47. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

- (a) **Expand the availability of adequate high-quality childcare facilities and services, and increase the availability of flexible working arrangements;**
- (b) **Take comprehensive measures to eliminate gender role stereotypes, including through media campaigns and opinion leaders, and through awareness-raising among the general public on the equal sharing of rights and responsibilities between men and women in the family and in society.**

Domestic violence

48. The Committee is concerned that domestic violence in the State party, mostly against women, is still pervasive, despite its criminalization in the Penal Code and the relevant legislation empowering the authorities with necessary means. The Committee is also concerned by the scarcity of reporting of domestic violence to the competent authorities (art. 10).

49. **The Committee recommends that the State party review its legislation to combat domestic violence effectively and intensify its efforts with a view to:**

- (a) **Encouraging the reporting of domestic violence;**
- (b) **Ensuring that all reported cases of domestic violence are promptly and thoroughly investigated and perpetrators are punished;**
- (c) **Raising awareness among law enforcement officials and relevant professionals regarding the criminal nature of domestic violence, as well as among the public at large, including through a campaign of zero tolerance that makes such violence unacceptable;**
- (d) **Providing survivors of domestic violence with all the necessary legal, medical, financial and psychological support;**
- (e) **Raising public awareness of the seriousness and criminal nature of domestic violence.**

Right to adequate housing

50. While noting the measures taken by the State party to reduce the level of unmet needs for social housing, the Committee is concerned about the challenges continuously faced by disadvantaged individuals and groups in accessing housing. The Committee is further concerned about the lack of information regarding Roma people from the now destroyed Kirtimai Roma Settlement and their current housing and living conditions. The Committee regrets the lack of information as to the steps taken to improve the housing situation of persons granted asylum or subsidiary protection status (art. 11).

51. **Reiterating the recommendations made in its previous concluding observations,¹² the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Redouble its efforts to ensure that its national housing policy prioritizes the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups who lack access to adequate housing and basic facilities and amenities, and to allocate sufficient resources for the effective implementation of the policy;**

(b) **Increase the availability of adequate and affordable housing, in particular by expanding the supply of social housing and the provision of housing subsidies;**

(c) **Address the root causes of homelessness and pursue long-term solutions for homeless individuals, taking into account the Committee's general comment No. 4 (1991) on the right to adequate housing, general comment No. 15 (2002) on the right to water, and its statement on the right to sanitation .¹³**

Health care

52. While noting the increase in availability and accessibility of primary health care, the Committee is concerned about reports that some social groups, such as older persons and the less educated, tend to report a relatively higher level of unmet needs, and that disparities exist between the urban and rural population in terms of accessibility to emergency services. The Committee regrets the lack of information on the impact of the 2017–2020 structural reform of the health-care system and the State party's Health Strategy for 2014–2025 on the provision of accessible and affordable health care (art. 12).

53. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Increase the level of budget allocated to the health-care sector and ensure that it is not affected by any austerity measures taken by the State party owing to the COVID-19 pandemic;**

(b) **Expand the scope and coverage and improve the quality of health-care services provided under national health insurance, with a view to eliminating the socioeconomic disparities in access to health-care services;**

(c) **Ensure that primary health care is provided to all persons living in the country.**

Persons who use drugs

54. The Committee regrets the lack of information on the effectiveness of the measures taken to improve the availability, accessibility and quality of harm reduction programmes and specialized health-care services, both in the community and in prisons. The Committee further regrets that the State party has not yet decriminalized the possession of drugs for personal consumption, which prevents persons who use drugs from gaining access to the necessary treatment or harm reduction programmes for fear of criminalization (art. 12).

55. **The Committee recommends that the State party decriminalize drug possession for personal consumption and review its drug policy and legislation to bring them into line with international human rights norms and best practices. It also recommends that the State party improve the availability, accessibility and quality of harm reduction programmes and make specialized health-care services available to persons who use drugs.**

Mental health

56. While welcoming the measures taken to improve mental health services, the Committee is concerned about the persistent stigmatization of poor mental health which prevents individuals from seeking assistance and treatment. The Committee is further concerned by the low budget allocated to mental health compared to total government health

¹² E/C.12/LTU/CO/2, para. 17.

¹³ E/C.12/2010/1.

spending. The Committee regrets the lack of information on the specific measures taken to prohibit the involuntary hospitalization and non-consensual treatment of, and intrusive medical or surgical procedures for, persons with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities (art. 12).

57. Reiterating the recommendations made in its previous concluding observations,¹⁴ the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Increase its efforts to identify and address effectively the root causes of the prevalence of, as well as the increase in, mental health issues;

(b) Ensure the transition from the placement of persons requiring mental health-care services in psychiatric institutions to a comprehensive, integrated, interdisciplinary system of community-based mental health services;

(c) Take measures to remove remaining forms of discrimination and stigmatization;

(d) Ensure that overall levels of funding dedicated to mental health-care services are sufficient to meet the needs of the population.

Right to education

58. Despite the recent reforms carried out by the State party, the Committee is concerned that a significant gap continues to exist in the educational achievements between students from rural and urban areas. The Committee is concerned about the reports that the low educational attainment and high dropout rates of Roma children and their placement in special schools continue to persist. The Committee regrets the lack of statistical data on school enrolment, dropout and irregular attendance rates in primary, secondary and tertiary education and on educational achievement and results, disaggregated by age, sex, ethnic origin, national origin, disability and socioeconomic status (arts. 2, 13 and 14).

59. The Committee is also concerned by the absence of any specific measures in teaching national minorities their mother tongue as a separate subject in preschool and secondary education.

60. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Take targeted measures to improve school enrolment and completion rates among Roma children, children with disabilities and students living in rural areas;

(b) Fully implement the inclusive education system, incorporate inclusive education in academic training programmes and curricula for teaching staff, and allocate funds earmarked for the implementation of inclusive education;

(c) Ensure that all asylum-seeking children have access to the school system for primary and secondary education regardless of their status;

(d) Make up for the learning opportunities lost owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular by disadvantaged and marginalized children, and prevent further disruption of education;

(e) Take steps urgently to ensure that national minorities are taught their mother tongue as a separate subject in preschool and secondary school.

Cultural rights

61. While noting the various measures taken by the State party to protect cultural rights, including the Action Plan for the Representation of the History of National Minorities in Lithuania, the Committee is concerned about the challenges faced by disadvantaged and marginalized groups, as well as by national minorities, in accessing culture and the benefits of scientific research (art. 15).

¹⁴ E/C.12/LTU/CO/2, para. 20.

62. The Committee recommends that the State party increase efforts to make culture accessible and available for all, ensuring that national minorities and disadvantaged and marginalized groups have affordable access to culture and enjoy the benefit of scientific progress.

D. Other recommendations

63. The Committee encourages the State party to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

64. The Committee recommends that the State party accede to the core human rights instruments to which it is not yet a party, including the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

65. The Committee recommends that the State party take fully into account its obligations under the Covenant and ensure the full enjoyment of the rights enshrined therein in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level, including in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals would be significantly facilitated by the State party establishing independent mechanisms to monitor progress and treating beneficiaries of public programmes as rights holders who can claim entitlements. Moreover, the Committee recommends that the State party support the global commitment of the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals. Implementing the Goals on the basis of the principles of participation, accountability and non-discrimination would ensure that no one is left behind. In this regard, the Committee draws the State party's attention to its statement on the pledge to leave no one behind.¹⁵

66. The Committee requests that the State party disseminate the present concluding observations widely at all levels of society, in particular among local municipalities, parliamentarians, public officials and judicial authorities, and that it inform the Committee in its next periodic report about the steps taken to implement them. The Committee emphasizes the crucial role that parliament plays in implementing the present concluding observations and encourages the State party to ensure its involvement in future reporting and follow-up procedures. The Committee also encourages the State party to continue engaging the parliamentary ombudsmen's office non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society in the process of discussion at the national level prior to the submission of its next periodic report.

67. In accordance with the procedure on follow-up to concluding observations adopted by the Committee, the State party is requested to provide, within 24 months of the adoption of the present concluding observations, information on the implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 9 (national minorities), 17 (climate change) and 51 (right to adequate housing) above.

68. The Committee requests the State party to submit its fourth periodic report in accordance with article 16 of the Covenant by 31 March 2028, unless otherwise notified as a result of a change in the review cycle. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the word limit for the report is 21,200 words.

¹⁵ E/C.12/2019/1.