



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
24 June 2020

Original: English  
English, French and Spanish only

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## Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

### **Third periodic report submitted by Lithuania under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, due in 2019\* \*\***

[Date received: 6 May 2020]

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

\*\* The annex to the present report may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.

GE.20-08299(E)



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**Abbreviations**

AW	Average wage
CAO	Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Lithuania
CC	Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania
CHIF	Compulsory Health Insurance Fund
CiC	Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania
CCP	Code of Civil Procedure of the Republic of Lithuania
CRA	Communications Regulatory Authority
DNM	Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania
EU	European Union
EUF	European Union Structural Funds
ES	Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania
FCIS	Financial Crime Investigation Service under the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LC	Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania
LEOWM	Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Republic of Lithuania
LGL	National LGBT Rights Organisation Lithuanian Gay League
LOSH	Law on Safety and Health at Work of the Republic of Lithuania
LPADV	Law on Protection against Domestic Violence of the Republic of Lithuania
MA	Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania
MC	Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania
MCR	Minimum consumption rate
MEI	Ministry of the Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania
MFF	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania
MH	Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania
MJ	Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania
MESS	Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania
MMW	Minimal monthly wage
MSSL	Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania
OEOO	Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson
SAC	Specialised Assistance Centres
SAIS	Social Assistance Information System
SLI	State Labour Inspectorate under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour
SOO	Seimas Ombudsmen's Office of the Republic of Lithuania
SR&ED	Scientific research and experimental development

STI	State Tax Inspectorate under the Ministry of Finances of the Republic of Lithuania
SSI	State supported income
LFCRP	Law on the Fundamentals of Child Rights Protection of the Republic of Lithuania
SCRPAS	State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour

## I. Preface

1. Following the Article 17 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 (hereinafter – the Covenant), the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – the Government) submits the Third Periodic Report of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – the Report). The Report was prepared according to the Recommendations on specific contractual instruments to be provided by the Member State under Articles 16 and 17 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/2008/2) of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
2. The Report provides specific information, related to the implementation of Articles 1–15 of the Covenant in the law and practice, also information on the latest developments, related to the implementation of the rights, established by the Covenant, information on specific measures and progress achieved, including information on the actions taken in order to solve the issues, raised by the Committee in the final conclusions regarding the previous state report. The Report was prepared on the basis of the Concluding observations regarding the second periodic report of the Republic of Lithuania, adopted at the 52th session of the Committee on 24 June 2014 (E/C.12/LTU/CO/2).
3. The draft Report was submitted to the Council of the Non-governmental Organisations for information and feedback. The draft Report was also published in the national legislation information system, enabling the public to provide its feedback.

## II. Information regarding the implementation of the Covenant

4. The following is the specific information regarding the implementation of Articles 1–15 of the Covenant and the Concluding observations of the Committee (E/C.12/LTU/CO/2).

### Article 1

5. The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – the Constitution) establishes the human right to one's beliefs and the freedom to express them, also to search, receive and distribute information and ideas. The freedom of expressing one's ideas, receiving and distributing information cannot be limited in any other ways, except the law, if it is necessary in order to protect human health, honour and dignity, private life, morals or defend the constitutional order. The freedom of expressing one's ideas and distributing information is incompatible with criminal activities – incitement of hatred on grounds of nationality, race, religious or social background, also incitement to violence and discrimination, slander and disinformation. The Constitution also establishes the right for the citizens, belonging to national minorities, to cherish their language, culture and customs.

### Article 2

6. Person, whose constitutional rights or freedoms have been violated, has a right to address the court. The compensation for material and moral damage, caused to a person, is defined by the law. The Code of Civil Procedure of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – CCP), also establishes the principle of universal access to justice: all interested persons have a right to address the court according to the procedure, established by the law, in order to defend their violated or disputed rights or interests that are protected by the law. According to the Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – CiC), damage refers to the amount of the loss or damage of property sustained by a person and the expenses incurred (direct damages), as well as the incomes of which he/she has been deprived, i.e. the incomes he/she would have received if unlawful actions had not been committed.

7. The criminal offences, defined in the Articles 169–170<sup>1</sup> of the Criminal Code (hereinafter – CC), are subject to the strictest form of liability for any type of discrimination,

i.e. on the grounds of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, faith, beliefs or worldview. These criminal sanctions are sufficient in order to ensure an effective protection against discrimination or incitement to discrimination, violence or hatred, regardless of the age of the discriminated person.

8. The Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – CAO) defines the principles of the proceedings of administrative offences: the investigation of administrative offences and examination of cases of administrative offences are guided by the principles of the presumption of innocence, equality before the law, proportionality, just process, promptness, inability to degrade a person’s position due to his/her complaint (*non reformatio in peius*); it is forbidden to impose limitations or exceptions on the grounds of origin, nationality, race, gender, language, religious or political beliefs and other circumstances, which would result in an unequal application of the law to different individuals. The CAO also defines administrative liability for a violation of equal rights and opportunities for women and men.

### **National human rights institution**

9. The Seimas Ombudsmen’s Office of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – SOO) was accredited as the national human rights institution, which meets the A level Paris principles. The Law on the Seimas Ombudsmen’s Office of the Republic of Lithuania states that one of the goals of the Seimas Ombudsmen’s Office is to promote respect to human rights and freedoms by implementing the functions of the national human rights institution, and also establishes the functions of the national human rights institution. State and municipal institutions have duty to cooperate with the SOO in providing information to the institution on the situation of the human rights in Lithuania, initiating and implementing studies regarding the major issues of the human rights.

10. Seimas Ombudsmen investigate complaints regarding officials abusing their powers, bureaucracy or other violations of the human rights and freedoms in the field of public administration, and implement national torture prevention measures. Upon implementing the functions of the National human rights institution, the Seimas Ombudsmen and SOO officers follow the Action Programme of the National Human Rights Institution for the year 2018–2020.

### **Integrating the Roma people into the Lithuanian society**

11. In 2015 the Action Plan for the Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society 2015–2020 was adopted (hereinafter – Action Plan for the Integration of Roma). The Action Plan for the Integration of Roma is funded from the Lithuanian budget and the European Union Structural Funds (hereinafter – EUF). The Action Plan includes measures to promote the integration of the Roma people into the education system, increase the availability of health care services to Roma people, encouraging the employment of Roma people, seeking for empowerment of the Roma women, improving the living conditions of the Roma people and encouraging intercultural dialogue. The measures of the Action Plan for the Integration of Roma have been implemented by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (hereinafter – MESS), Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – MSSL), MI, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – MH), Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – DNM), Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson (EOO), Education Development Centre, Centre of Special Education and Psychology, Lithuanian Centre of Non-formal Youth Education, Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – ES), Roma Community Centre, Lithuanian municipalities. The Action Plan for the Integration of Roma has been coordinated with all non-governmental Roma organisations.

12. The Education Development Centre (as of 2019 the Education Development Centre has been reorganised into the National Agency for Education) has been implementing a qualifications improvement programme ‘Improving the Quality of Inclusive Education’ for schoolteachers, who teach Roma children, the DNM has been funding non-formal education for Roma children. The project ‘Working with the Roma – new employment opportunities and challenges’ focuses on the issue of Roma unemployment. The project has

been implemented by the public institution Roma Community Centre jointly with non-governmental Roma organisations. The project involves individual and group motivation, assessment of personal needs, development, support and recovery of social and working skills, social worker and lawyer consultations, sociocultural services, sports activities, development of general skills, communication and public speaking skills, intermediation and other support in finding and getting a job. About 270 Roma people participate in the project's activities every year. It is expected that at the end of the project, in 2016–2017, 40 % of the participants should find a job or acquire a profession.

13. The DNM has been implementing measures for increasing the openness of the Roma culture and public tolerance. The measures include annual traditional Roma events, promoting Roma language, customs, history and introducing the society to the unique culture of the Roma community. The promotion of intercultural dialogue includes organising exhibitions, annual awards for people, who have contributed to encouraging national tolerance and intercultural dialogue in public information measures.

14. In 2016–2018, the DNM conducted a project 'Local Roma platforms – the way towards cooperation with municipalities', the aim of which was to create a scheme of cooperation between the Roma communities and local municipalities to ensure the inclusion of local authorities in the process of Roma integration. The project activities included special training for experts, working with the Roma community: municipal administration employees, social workers, teachers and Roma women in order to encourage their inclusion into the public life; also the Roma youth and children.

15. Vilnius City Municipality approved Vilnius (Kirtimai) Roma Encampment Community Integration Programme for 2016–2019 (hereinafter – the Programme). The goals of the Programme are to encourage the integration of the Roma people into the education system, increase the availability of health care services, seek to reduce the social gap, improve the living conditions of the Roma people, increase the openness of the identity of the Roma culture, stop the drug abuse in Kirtimai and in the nearby territory. The Programme focuses a lot of attention on solving the issue of housing for the Roma people and school attendance. It also includes intensive work with social risk families, offering them social care services and developing social skills.

16. In 2018, the DNM implemented the project 'Inclusion of the representatives of national minorities into the labour market'. The implementation of this project included the search and systematisation of information on the issues of integration and monitoring of national minorities. It also included the development of the module for assessing the phenomenon of discrimination, as well as identification, choice and introduction of indices to defined equality and (or) discrimination.

### **Non-discrimination**

17. The Law on Equal Treatment of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – Law on Equal Treatment) establishes direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of gender, race, nationality, citizenship, language, origins, social status, belief, convictions or views, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin and religion. Educational establishments, other education providers, as well as research and education establishments must ensure equal conditions for persons when admitting to educational establishments, other education providers, as well as research and education establishments, teaching and educating according to programmes of formal and non-formal education implemented therein. The Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania also establishes the principle of equal opportunities – the education system is socially fair, it ensures the implementation of person's rights, it guarantees the access to education for any person.

18. The Law on Equal Treatment establishes the duty of the employer to implement the principle of equal treatment at work place and in the civil service, stating that when implementing the principle of equal treatment the employer must: apply uniform selection criteria and conditions when employing; provide equal working and civil service conditions and equal benefits; apply uniform criteria for assessing the work; apply uniform criteria for dismissal from work; pay equal pay for the same work or for work of equal value, etc. A

similar prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination of persons has been established in the Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – LC).

19. The monitoring of the implementation of the Law on Equal Treatment and the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – LEOWM) is conducted by the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson. Since 2017, the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson has been assigned with additional functions of implementing preventive and educational activities, as well as the dissemination of information on ensuring equal opportunities.

20. The Action Plan to Promote Non-discrimination for 2017–2019 (hereinafter – Action Plan to Promote Non-discrimination) contains measures aimed at ensuring the implementation of the principle of equality and non-discrimination with regards to LGBT people: organisation of seminars, meetings, participation of politicians in trainings on the issues of people belonging to the LGBT community and the protection of human rights. These measures have been implemented by the OEOO and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania. Upon implementing the Action Plan to Promote Non-discrimination, in 2018, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania hosted an international conference ‘Ensuring the Rights for Transgender People: Search for a Right Balance’.

21. The implementation of the Action Plan to Promote Non-discrimination involves a study of the situation of the LGBT community members in the society and the protection of their private life, and the analysis of the results. In 2019, two videos telling the experience of transgender persons living in Lithuania and aimed at increasing awareness were introduced. In 2018, on the occasion of the International Human Rights Day, the National Human Rights Forum hosted a discussion ‘Situation of transgender people in Lithuania: what happens after the change of personal documents?’.

22. Upon the implementation of the measure aimed at training police officers on hate crimes against the LGBT community, the Police Department trained officers within the framework of the programme ‘Police action in cases of hate crime’.

23. In 2017, the national courts developed jurisprudence regarding the change of personal identity documents for transgender persons. Following this progressive practice, personal identity documents, without the mandatory surgery requirement, have been changed for nearly 30 transgender persons. Based on the national court practice, material conditions to realise the right to acknowledgement of one’s gender identity are currently based on a psychiatric gender identity diagnosis and a subjective identification with a specific gender.

24. In order to provide transgender persons with the right to enjoy their right to the recognition of their gender identity under dignified conditions, when the legal recognition of gender identity is not associated with an irreversible gender reassignment surgery, in 2017, the working group, established by the MJ, prepared a draft Law on the Recognition of Gender Identity of the Republic of Lithuania and submitted it to the institutions concerned for coordination.

25. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – MFA) and the MJ organised inter-institutional meetings regarding the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and preparation for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review at the Human Rights Council, implementing the recommendations, received during the review. The MFA became the official patron of the Baltic Pride 2019 human rights conference.

26. In 2018, by the order of the Minister of Health, a working group was established, among other tasks, to review the legal acts, necessary for the implementation of the law regulating health checks. The working group also discussed measures to ensure that the vocational activity of candidates for judges, judges, attorneys, assistant attorneys, prosecutors and other persons would not be subject to a disproportionate prohibition to engage in certain professional activity or run a certain office, related to a gender identity.

27. In 2016, Lithuania supported the establishment of the mandate of a UN Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) and sponsored the UN Resolution of Human Rights of 2019 regarding the extension of the mandate.

28. In June 2017, Lithuania joined the international informal Equal Rights Coalition, defending the LGBTI rights all over the world and uniting nearly 40 countries of the world.

### **Article 3**

29. The perspective of equality between women and men in Lithuania has been integrated in all policy fields in Lithuania. The LEOWM determines the establishment of equal rights between women and men in all legislation drafted and adopted, also it ensures that state and municipal institutions include measures to ensure equal opportunities for women and men into their strategic planning documents and prevent the violation of equal rights between women and men in the provision of administrative and public services.

30. The purpose of the National Programme of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men is to ensure that the issues of equality between women and men are solved in a consistent, complex and systematic way. The goals of the National Programme of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2015–2021 (hereinafter – National Programme of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men) are to promote equal opportunities for women and men in the field of employment and labour, to seek for a balanced participation of women and men in decision-making and running the highest positions, to increase the efficiency of institutional mechanisms of equality between women and men, to promote the integration of gender aspect in numerous fields: education and science, culture, health care, environment, national defence, accessibility of justice. Municipalities, non-governmental organisations, social partners, university gender study centres and other organisations participate in the implementation of the programme.

#### **Reducing the pay gap between women and men**

31. The employer is obliged to implement the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination on other grounds and pay equal wages for the same work or work of equal value. An employer, whose average number of employees exceeds fifty, must adopt the measures to implement equal opportunity policy at work and principles for monitoring the implementation thereof, and publish it using the usual ways at the work place.

32. One of the tasks of the Programme of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men is to reduce the pay gap between women and men, which is implemented using various measures: carrying out studies of the pay gap, organising presentations on the issues of work payment system for social partners in the region, organising information seminars for target groups (social partners, the media, policy makers), income and pension gaps between women and men and their reasons, organising annual selection and awards of the Most Equal Work place, organising information campaigns on the pay, preparing and introducing a Practical Manual on Planning Gender Equality at Companies and Institutions for heads of private and state companies, organising trainings on planning gender equality at work for heads of state and private companies, conducting annual inspections, including wage audit, organising seminars on the issues of employment legal relations for the divisions of the State Labour Inspectorate under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (hereinafter – SLI).

33. In 2015–2017, the SLI conducted thematic inspections on the implementation of equal rights between women and men in the field of employment legal relations. In addition, educational, informative or training activities aimed at decreasing the pay gap between women and men and solving the issues of labour market segregation were carried out. Also, consultations regarding the LC application were held, information campaigns, competitions for the title of the most equal work place and most equal municipality were carried out.

34. In 2018, Lithuania joined the Equal Pay International Coalition and undertook the following actions to support the goal of achieving equal pay: collection of data and reporting on the employment and pay of men and women; monitoring and analysis on the national scale in order to reduce the pay gap between genders both in public and private sectors; promotion of public awareness and organisation of information campaigns on equal pay.



### **Promoting equal opportunities for women and men**

35. The possibilities to reconcile family and duties at work are provided in the LC. These provisions oblige the employer to take measures to help the employee to implement his/her family duties, consider employee requests, related to the implementation of family duties, and provide a reasonable response. Employee's behaviour and actions at work must receive appropriate reaction from the employer in order to ensure comprehensive and practical implementation of the work-life balance.

36. The MESS, seeking to encourage young women and men to choose studies and professions ignoring gender stereotypes, prepared recommendations for career development experts regarding pedagogical measures and didactic provisions for solving the issue of equal opportunities, also, in developing pupil's career competencies, organises information events for pupils promoting gender equality in choosing a profession. Textbook assessment criteria state that textbooks should not be biased in terms of gender, age, disability, abilities, social status, race, nationality, ethnic dependency, origin, language, religion, faith, sexual orientation, belief, convictions or views. Seeking to avoid discriminatory attitude in textbooks, assessors of textbook and educational materials attend trainings on recognising and understanding gender stereotypes.

### **Article 5**

37. Article 29 of the Constitution states that all persons are equal before the law, court and other state institutions or officers. A person's rights cannot be limited and he/she cannot be given privileges on the grounds of gender, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, faith, beliefs or attitudes. More detailed information on the implementation of the Articles 4–5 of the Convention is available in the pt. 40 (c) Common Core Document, based on the Harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including Guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6).

### **Article 6**

38. Constitution establishes the right of every person to choose a job or business, and the right to have proper, safe, and healthy conditions at work, as well as to receive fair pay for work and social security in the event of unemployment. Forced labour is prohibited. The LC also establishes that employment relations are regulated according to the principles of a legal definition, protection of legitimate expectations and full protection of labour rights, creating safe and health-friendly working conditions, stability of working relations, the freedom of choosing a job, just payment for work, equality of subjects of the labour law, irrespective of their gender, sexual orientation, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, faith, plans to have children, marital and family status, age, beliefs or convictions, belonging to political parties or associations, circumstances, unrelated to the job characteristics of the employees, freedom of association, free collective negotiations and the right to take collective action. The LC establishes the prohibition of unjust dismissal from work. Before making a decision to terminate the employment agreement, the employer must demand for the employee's written explanation. The dismissal must be proportionate to the infringement or to the infringements as a whole.

39. According to the Constitution, citizens have the right to participate in the governance of their state both directly and through their democratically elected representatives, as well as the right to enter on equal terms the Civil Service of the Republic of Lithuania. The resolution of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania, adopted in 2004, states that entering the Civil Service of the Republic Lithuania is a constitutional right of all citizens. Thus, the implementation of a citizen's right to enter the Civil Service under equal rights is related to the implementation of other human rights, *inter alia* rights, established in the articles of the Constitution. Civil Service relations must be regulated by the laws to the extent that they are related to the human rights and freedoms.

### **Social security**

40. The unemployed persons in Lithuania receive unemployment social insurance benefits. This payment is based on social insurance and not social support. Unemployment social insurance benefit is paid to persons, who have unemployment insurance, when the insured event occurs, i.e. upon loss of employment. Conditions for the right to an unemployment social insurance benefit, its application, calculation and payment procedure are regulated by the Law on Unemployment Social Insurance of the Republic of Lithuania. Seeking to increase the number of the insured with a right to the unemployment social insurance benefit, the entitlement to the unemployment social insurance payment is subject to a 12-month unemployment insurance record in the last 30 months before registering at the Employment Service (Appendices No. 5 and No. 6). Seeking to ensure adequate unemployment social insurance payments, a new formula for calculating unemployment social insurance payments, which consists of fixed and variable components, was introduced. The size of the unemployment social insurance payment is partially related to the minimum monthly wage (hereinafter – MMW). Since the unemployment social insurance payment replaces an ordinary salary, it is more expedient to relate it with the MMW than to the current year's insured income (Appendices No. 7 and No. 8). The unemployment social insurance benefit has a ceiling: it cannot be higher than 75 % of the net national average pay (hereinafter – AP) (as of 1 July 2019 – 58.18 %).

41. Since 2018 the new Law on Social Insurance Pensions came into force, which states that all social insurance pensions are indexed to a seven-year average wage sum growth: the average wage sum for the preceding three years, the indexing year and the three-year projected earnings. The indexing scheme, established by the law, resulted in social security pensions being indexed at around 7 % for two consecutive years.

42. In order to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion, since 2018 the State supported income (hereinafter – SSI) has been increased from EUR 102 to EUR 122, which is particularly relevant to persons at risk of poverty, receiving cash social assistance. In 2018, compared to 2017, the size of an average social benefit per month for one citizen increased by 23.51 % (from EUR 65.5 to EUR 80.9). The funds, allocated for social assistance increased as well, since the size of the SSI determines the size of social benefit, compensations for housing heating expenses, entitlement to free lunch for pupils and assistance in purchasing school supplies, entitlement to housing acquisition or rent assistance, etc.

43. The method for calculating the amount of minimum consumption needs (hereinafter – AMCN) was adopted in 2017. This method is used to calculate the amount of funds, needed to satisfy the minimum personal (family) needs for food and non-food goods. In 2018, the AMCN was EUR 251. As of 2019, social benefit report indices have been linked to the AMCN: the basic social benefit will not be smaller than 16 %, the social assistance pension base will not be smaller than 54 %, the target compensation base will not be smaller than 47 %, and the SSI will not be smaller than 50 % of the previous year's AMCN.

44. The MSSL has contributed to the preparation for the ratification of the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention No. 102 of the International Labour Organisation (hereinafter – ILO). The purpose of the ratification was discussed with national social partners and all responsible institutions. On 25–26 February 2019, ILO experts visited Lithuania, met with national experts and discussed the perspectives and practical aspects of implementing the Convention.

### **Increasing employment**

45. The period of 2015–2017 was positive for the Lithuanian labour market, showing increasing employment tendencies for all age groups both in terms of unemployment and wages (Appendix No. 9). Although labour force activity remains high, its growth resources are declining. The supply of vacant jobs and timely employment support for long-term unqualified, older and young unemployed, encouraged and helped them to enter the labour market.

46. The Programme for Increasing Employment in 2014–2020 (hereinafter – Employment Programme) was adopted in 2013, which is the basis for Interinstitutional

Action Plans, adopted every two years, defining the objectives, targets, measures, allocations, implementing bodies, evaluation criteria and their intended meaning.

47. The active labour market policy measures support the integration of the unemployed into the labour market. The priority is focused on those, who do not have any qualifications or are long-term employees in order to provide them with qualifications responding the labour market needs and develop competencies that meet the employer's requirements. Youth guarantee initiative and other youth employment promotion programmes are used to ensure a fast and sustainable transfer of the youth from the education system into the labour market and reduce youth unemployment. The improvement of employment and unemployment indices contributed to the improvement of individual situation of people, who have lost their jobs, by applying employment support measures, which enable to acquire or improve qualifications, helping them to get a job or create a job for themselves.

48. Seeking to encourage the employment of potential workforce and help solve unemployment issues, the Law on Employment of the Republic of Lithuania) offered new learning promotion measures – placement under an apprenticeship contract; internship; acknowledgement of competencies, acquired in non-formal education and self-education. It also provides more employment opportunities for citizens in remote regions by expanding the funding for the measures of mobility support. The Law on Employment expands the target group of vocational education participants by including employed persons, who are looking for another job and have registered at the ES. Employed persons are provided with an opportunity to combine work and studies and acquire a new qualification and/or competencies.

49. ES has been implementing Local employment initiative projects, the purpose of which is to focus the effort of local community and social partners on the improvement of the employment in individual regions and development of local social-economic infrastructure.

50. The measures 'Human Resources INVEST LT+' and 'Trainings for Foreign Investor Employees' help to facilitate the burden on foreign investors in funding employee training and create conditions for foreign investor employees to acquire specific competencies and adapt to the market changes. The measures 'Innotraining' and 'Innointernship' help to increase employees abilities to work with new technologies, creating opportunities to acquire new skills in foreign research and experimental development and innovation (hereinafter – RDI) centres, and apply them in Lithuanian companies.

51. In 2019–2021, the ES, together with six pilot municipalities, social service providers and non-governmental organisations have been implementing the Model of employment promotion and provision of motivation services for the unemployed persons, who receive social support (hereinafter – Model). The purpose of the Model is to facilitate the transition of long-term unemployed into the labour market, coordinating the employment promotion and motivation, as well as cash social assistance by integrating the long-term unemployed into the labour market and ensure the coordination of state and municipality institutions, agencies and organisations, offering employment promotion, motivation services and cash social assistance for the unemployed, as well as to encourage their cooperation (Appendix No. 13).

52. As of 2015, the ES, together with the Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, has been implementing the project 'Discover Yourself', targeting the young unemployed and inactive persons, who are not in education, employment or training (hereinafter – NEET).

### **Employment of people with disabilities**

53. The Law on Social Integration of the Disabled of the Republic of Lithuania ensures the rights and opportunities for people with disabilities, defines the system of social integration. The Law on Employment states that additional support in the labour market is provided to disabled persons of working age with the assessed 25 % capacity for work or grave disability; the unemployed, who are disabled persons of working age with the assessed 30 to 40 % capacity for work or medium disability; the unemployed, who are

disabled persons of working age with the assessed 45 to 55 % capacity for work or mild disability.

54. According to the data of 1 January 2019, the number of the disabled, employed in the open labour market was 47 206, compared to the number of 3 014, employed in the open labour market in 2018. The majority of the employed persons have a 45–55 % disability level. The period of 2014–2018 showed a significant increase in demand for vocational rehabilitation services (Appendix No. 14).

## **Article 7**

### **Right to fair remuneration**

55. According to the provisions of the LC, the employer must apply equal screening criteria and conditions, create equal working conditions and opportunities for qualification improvement, vocational improvement, acquisition of new qualifications, practical work experience, enable people to enjoy equal benefits of using equal work assessment criteria and equal criteria for dismissal from work, and pay equal wages for the same work.

56. The Government approves the MMW and the MHW by the provision of the Tripartite Council taking into account the indices of the country's economic development and tendencies. Employee's monthly salary cannot be smaller than the established minimum monthly salary. The minimum pay is the lowest allowed pay for employees for unqualified work per one hour or the work time standard for the entire calendar month. The SLI and the State Tax Inspectorate under the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – STI) monitor and check, if the salary paid for unqualified employees is not lower than the minimum pay.

57. In 2017 the Tripartite Council, aiming to depoliticise the setting of a MMW, decided to propose that the ratio of the minimum pay and the average pay should not be smaller than 45 % or higher than 50 %, and that it should correspond to a quarter of the ratio of the EU states with the highest ratio between the average pay and the minimum pay, determined by the EU Statistics Council, based on the data of the last three years.

58. In 2017 the Law on Remuneration of Employees of State and Municipal Institutions was adopted, the purpose of which is to provide equal opportunities for employees of equal education, working in the budget sector under employment contracts, to receive an equal payment. The basic size of the salary for the upcoming fiscal year is defined in a collective agreement (Appendix No. 18).

59. Since July 2019, employers are obliged to indicate the size and (or) size interval of the offered basic (tariff) wage in their job advertisement. These changes should bring more transparency for employees, looking for a job.

### **Right to equal opportunities for being promoted**

60. According to the LC, an employer must take measures to increase his/her employees' qualifications, expertise, ability to adapt to changing business, professional and working conditions. Employers must provide their employees with conditions for learning, improving their qualifications and ensuring vocational improvement. Working part time or remotely should not become an obstacle for promotion, qualification improvements, also that it would not deprive the employees of other rights, considering the work experience, qualifications and other circumstances. The fact that a person works under a fixed-term employment contract does not relieve the employer from the duty to ensure training, qualification improvement, vocational improvement and career for such an employee. Employers are obliged to take appropriate measures to create conditions for the disabled to seek for career goals or learn.

61. The Law on Civil Service also establishes the right of civil servants to career taking into account their qualifications. The official constitutional jurisprudence states that the citizens' constitutional right to join the civil service equally presupposes the right of the

persons, accepted to the civil service, to a career in civil service. The principle of career is one of the major qualities, characteristic to the civil service of the Republic of Lithuania.

#### **Limitations on resting and working time, and paid leave**

62. The LC regulates working and resting time, as well as the minimum requirements for resting time. Appointing to work on a resting day is possible only with the employee's consent, except for cases of working according to aggregate working time accounting or in cases, defined in a collective agreement. Working time regime cannot violate the requirements for minimum resting time. The LC also regulates the paid leave, which may be annual, special, extended or additional. Employees must be provided with a paid leave of at least twenty working days (in cases of working five days a week) or at least twenty-four (in cases of working six days a week). Should the number of working days per week be smaller or differ, the employee must be provided with a paid leave, which takes at least four weeks. Working and collective agreements or the labour law norms may determine longer paid leave. The annual leave must be granted at least once a year.

63. The average working time, including the overtime, but not including working under separate contracts on additional work, in each seven-days period cannot be longer than forty-eight hours; the working time in one working day (shift), including the overtime and working under separate contracts on additional work, cannot be longer than twelve hours, not including the lunch break, and sixty hours in each seven-day period; work time regime standards also apply to night shift workers, pregnant women, also women, who have recently given birth, nursing women and persons, younger than eighteen years old, as it is established by the Law on Safety and Health at Work of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – LOSH). Working on public holidays must be remunerated with at least double usual work payment and working for overtime on public holidays must be remunerated with at least two and a half times of the usual payment of the employee. By a request of the employee, working time during the resting days, public holidays or overtime can be added to the annual paid leave.

#### **Respecting family obligations**

64. The LC provisions regarding working relations includes a principle of respecting family obligations. The employer must take measures to help the employees implement their family obligations. The employer must consider all employee requests, related to the implementation of family obligations, and give a motivated written response. Moreover, there are certain guarantees for employees to work remotely. Should the employer fail to prove that remote work would cause excessive costs due to the peculiarities or necessities of the work organisation, he/she must satisfy the employee's request to work remotely for at least one fifth of the entire time in case such request is made by a pregnant woman, a woman, who has recently given birth or is nursing, an employee, raising a child of up to three years and an employee, raising a child of up to fourteen years, or a disabled child of up to eighteen years as a single parent. Based on the choice of the family, the mother (stepmother), father (stepfather), grandmother, grandfather or other relatives, factually raising the child, also an employee, appointed as a carer of the child, can be granted with a child care leave until the child reaches three years old. The leave can be granted in full or in parts.

#### **Labour disputes resolution**

65. The rights, established by the LC and other laws, are defended at the institutions and courts that solve labour disputes. Labour disputes refer to disagreements between participants of employment relations, arising from employment or related legal relations. Depending on the object or subjects of the dispute, participating in the employment-related dispute, employment-related disputes are divided into: legal labour disputes (individual labour disputes regarding the law or collective labour disputes regarding the law); collective labour disputes regarding interests. Labour dispute commissions operate constantly under the territorial departments of the SLI. A participant of employment relations, who believes that another subject of the labour law has violated his/her rights regarding the labour law norms or failure to implement mutual agreements, or improper

implementation thereof, must address the labour dispute commission with a request to examine the labour dispute regarding the law in three months and, in case of illegal suspension or illegal dismissal from work and in cases of violating the collective agreement – in one month since the violation of his/her rights became known or was supposed to be known. In 2016, labour dispute commissions received 5 574 applications, in 2017 – 6 675 applications, in 2018 – 6 712 applications. The majority of the applications were related to work payments (Appendix No. 21).

### **Working conditions**

66. The employer must ensure the safety and health of employees at work in all work-related aspects. Upon implementing this duty, the employer must organise preventive measures (technical, medical, legal, organisational and others) to prevent accidents at work and occupational diseases by establishing the procedure of implementation and control of these measures, appointing authorised persons and giving them specific orders to implement preventive measures.

67. In order to improve safety and health at work in the country, the National Safety and Health at Work Action Plan for 2017–2021 was approved, which provides measures for improving the legal base of the safety and health at work, improving the prevention of work-related diseases, ensuring the competence of the SLI inspectors and occupational health care experts, and improving the process of checking the knowledge of employers and employees.

68. The new Description of the Procedure for Employment of Persons under Eighteen Years of Age, Organisation of Work and Vocational Training, Conditions of Employment of Children was adopted in 2017 in order to ensure full compliance of the national regulation with the Council Directive 94/33/EC on the protection of young people at work, the provisions of the 1996 European Social Charter (revised) and ILO Maritime Labour Convention.

69. The General Regulations for Occupational Risk Assessment were specified in 2017. Occupational risk assessment is updated or renewed upon making important changes, which may render previous assessment as unrealistic, or when an employee's health check shows that the occupational risk factor had a negative impact on the employee's health. In order to ensure healthy and safe working conditions, particularly for employees, who belong to sensitive risk groups, it was determined that an occupational risk assessment must be renewed or conducted new upon hiring a person under eighteen years of age, a disabled person, when an employee submits a note of pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding from a health care institution.

70. The major prerequisite of accident and occupational disease prevention is appropriate occupational risk assessment at companies. Upon determining an unacceptable occupational risk, working in such work places is prohibited. The SLI is constantly monitoring occupational risk assessment at companies, ensuring safety and health at work. Together with social partners, the SLI participates in the OiRA online interactive risk assessment project.

71. Seeking to encourage employers to actively implement preventive measures against accidents at work, a Methodology for Appointing Insurers for Social Insurance Tariff Groups Regarding Accidents at Work and Occupational Diseases establishes that insurers (employers), who must make payments for social insurance against accidents at work for their insured, are included into the social insurance tariff group regarding accidents at work according to the safety and health at work indices of their employees, namely: violations of safety and health at work legislation, determined by the SLI; the severity of accidents at work, the number of victims of severe and fatal accidents at work, and the number of the insured, who are victims of acute occupational diseases.

72. Upon detecting violations of labour laws and safety and health at work legislation, the SLI inspectors, must issue a demand to eliminate the violations. Labour inspectors have a right to require the employer's representative to stop the works by issuing the demand. An employer's representative or a person authorised by the employer may be subject to administrative liability by issuing a protocol of administrative offences.

73. As of 2013, the SLI established and introduced the Electronic Service System for Employers (ESSE), the purpose of which is to enable employers to report to SLI remotely. Upon implementing prevention of accidents at work, the SLI has organised the development of a short film *The Price of Work Safety Violations: Disability and Life*, as an additional work safety instruction and motivation measure and introduced and disseminated it to the society. Seeking to help employers organise staff trainings and consultations, the SLI has prepared methodological recommendations for load handling works and manuals of safe manual handling of loads for employee and employer and published them on the website. The SLI organises seminars, consultations for employers, safety and health at work specialists and employees every year.

## Article 8

74. The Republic of Lithuania ratified the ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (No. 87) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No. 98). Reports on the implementation of the ILO conventions are available at the MSSL website in English. The latest report under these conventions was submitted by Lithuania in 2017.

75. The Law on Trade Unions of the Republic of Lithuania establishes that trade unions are voluntary, autonomous and self-sustaining organisations, representing and defending employees' vocational trade, economic and social rights and interests. Natural persons with legal capacity have a right to establish and join trade unions on the state, field or territorial level and participate in their activities. An employer or his/her authorised representative cannot become a member of trade unions, operating in his/her company, institution or organisation. Trade unions operate freely and independently. State and municipality institutions and associations, employers, their authorised representatives, leaderships of companies, institutions or organisations, also administration, officers, political parties and other organisations are forbidden to interfere with the internal affairs of trade unions.

76. The LC establishes prerogative for trade unions to enter into collective agreements. A collective agreement may be signed at the national (interdisciplinary) territorial, branch (production, services, trade), employer's or work place level. Trade unions have a right to join various associations, which may be established only by free agreement of trade unions and by their initiative. The Government ensures this and other rights of trade unions, creating legal preconditions, also allocating funds according to certain programmes of social partnership developing measures.

77. Going on a strike is regulated by the LC. Trade unions or their organisations have a right to organise a strike, when the commission of the strike declares the collective labour dispute regarding interests is unresolved or if one of the parties leaves the negotiations, or if the employer fails to form a dispute commission during a preliminary discussion of the collective labour dispute regarding interests, when the intermediary makes a decision to declare the labour dispute regarding interests unresolved or only partially resolved, when the employer or his organisation fails to fulfil the resolution of the labour arbitration. Going on a strike is forbidden to emergency medical service employees and other employees, whose rights to go on a strike are limited by the law. Strikes are forbidden in areas of natural disasters, regions under mobilization, martial law or a state of emergency in accordance with established procedures until the outcome of the natural disaster is eliminated, demobilisation or until the martial law or state of emergency has been revoked. Employers and their organisations have a right to organise a lockout if trade unions or their organisations fail to comply with the agreement, adopted during intermediation or the decision of the labour arbitration in the collective labour dispute regarding interests in case or if the trade unions or their organisations go on a strike, which has been postponed or declared illegal by the court.

78. According to the Statistics Lithuania, there were no legal strikes in 2009–2011 and 2013. In 2014, there were 33 true strikes (participated by 693 persons) and 45 warning strikes (participated by 898 persons). In 2015, there were no true strikes and 296 warning strikes (participated by 7126 persons). In 2016, there were 242 true strikes (participated by

6 295 persons) and no warning strikes. In 2017, there were no true strikes and 1 warning strike (participated by 2 205 persons). In 2018, there were 149 true strikes (participated by 3 684 persons) and 47 warning strikes (participated by 814 persons).

79. The project ‘Model of Cooperation between Trade Unions and Employers in Developing Social Dialogue’, implemented in 2017–2020 and funded from the EUF, aims to promote social dialogue. The is to promote cooperation between trade unions and employers in developing a social dialogue and creating conditions to ensure the quality of the coordination of the interests of the social partners, ensuring the monitoring of the social dialogue in Lithuania and the assessment of its results on the national scale. The activities of the project will strengthen the representation of trade unions, encourage employers and workers to engage in social dialogue at their companies, increase their involvement into collective negotiations, which would inspire signing collective agreements. The project includes social dialogue promotion measures, a study and methods on creating a system of assessment of achievements in the field of developing social dialogue, trainings-discussions for institution and organisation representatives and social partners. The project should produce methodological measures for conducting collective negotiations.

80. According to the Statistics Lithuania, trade union density in 2018 was 7.13 %, in 2017 it was 7.72 %, in 2016 – 7.66 %, in 2015 – 7.85 %, in 2014 – 8.12 %.

## **Article 9**

### **Social insurance**

81. Social insurance includes all measures, taken by the state or private institutions in order to facilitate the burden of certain risk factors or needs, falling on domestic households and persons, if this protection has not been determined by inter-personal or personal transactions. Risk factors or needs that may be subject to social security include being sick and health care, disability, old age, widowhood, family and children, unemployment; housing and other unattributed social seclusion.

82. The financial sustainability of social insurance payments is one of the key issues in solving further social insurance development issues. 2013–2015 marked the development of a new and more sustainable social model of Lithuania, which includes increasing employment, improving the regulation of working relations and the sustainability of social insurance, and also promotes positive changes in the state social insurance and pension system. State costs on social payments and services are gradually increased every year (Appendix No. 26).

83. As of 2017, the scope of the insured has been expanded, i.e. persons, who receive bonuses or remuneration for activity in monitoring councils or boards, loan committees, also heads of small partnerships are now also subject to social pension insurance. Self-employed persons are subject to social insurance, which covers sickness, while those, who work with business certificates are now subject to social insurance for full pension, calculating social insurance contributions from the MMW.

84. As from 2017, all persons, receiving revenue from copyright, sports or artist agreements, are subject to mandatory social insurance of all types (except for accidents at work and unemployment social insurance), calculated from all revenue received. Social insurance contributions for persons, who have a status of a creator of art, are calculated from all royalties. Such a decision has been adopted in order to ensure greater social insurance guarantees.

85. Since 2018, the Law on State Social Insurance has established the ‘floor’ for social insurance payments for hired persons. It has been established that social insurance contributions for persons working part time would be calculated and paid from the amount that is equal or larger than the minimum wage. These contributions may be calculated from an amount that is smaller than the minimum wage, if, in the appropriate month, the person has been insured with another insurer or received a social insurance pension, disability or retirement pension for persons with 0–55 % working capacity, or who receive maternity,



paternity or child care payments, insured with pension social insurance by the state or if the said person is not older than 24 years.

86. In order to increase the competitiveness of the Lithuanian labour market and decrease the informal economy, the taxation system has been reformed as from 2019: some of the social insurance and healthcare insurance contributions, paid by employers, have been transferred on the insured, employed persons have been subject to social insurance contribution ‘ceiling’, while the general part of the pension is funded from the state budget. The social insurance contribution tariffs paid by the insurer and the insured, have been established by the Law on the Validation of Indicators for the State Social Insurance Fund Budget for 2019 of the Republic of Lithuania (Appendixes No. 27 and No. 28).

#### **Unemployment social insurance**

87. According to the Law on Unemployment Social Insurance, the right to unemployment insurance benefit is entitled to persons, who have registered with the ES, are subject to unemployment social insurance and have the status of an unemployed person, have not received suitable job or active labour market policy measures from the ES, and who have at least one year unemployment social insurance record during the last 2.5 years. If an unemployed person does not have the necessary unemployment insurance record, he/she will be able to receive an unemployment benefit upon completing the compulsory military service or alternative military service, or if he/she has been released from regular compulsory military service, which provided him/her with introductory military training. In such case the unemployed person must register to the ES in six months since the release from the compulsory military service or alternative military service. Unemployment social insurance benefit is paid for nine months at least once per month (Appendix No. 7).

#### **Social insurance against accidents at work and occupational diseases**

88. The reform of the social insurance against accidents at work and occupational diseases, which came into force as of 2017, was focused not only on including new categories of the insured into the system, but also introduced new social insurance contributions for accidents at work, which are calculated based on the amount, related to the net AMW, instead of the amount of the insured income of the current year, annually approved by the Government.

#### **Maternity social insurance**

89. The right to maternity benefits for the period of pregnancy and giving birth is given to a person, who has been covered by maternity social insurance before the day of the insured event, provided that during that period social security contributions have been paid on the amount of income not less than the amount of the MMW. The payment for women who gave birth on the 30<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy and later, covers the period of 126 calendar days. In cases of complicated birth or in case of more than one new-born, there is an additional payment covering the period of 14 calendar days. The size of the maternity benefit equals to 77.58 % of the receiver’s earnings. The compensatory earnings cannot exceed the social insurance payment base of the calendar year, for the period during which the compensatory earnings are calculated. The size of a social benefit is approved by the Government. As of 2017, the maximum compensatory earnings does not apply to calculating maternity benefits, the so-called ‘ceiling’ is no longer applied, thus compensating 100 % of the earnings. This monthly benefit cannot be smaller than 20 % of the national AMW (see Appendix No. 32).

90. The entitlement to paternity benefit belongs to the parent, who has maternity social insurance, who is on statutory parental leave, unless the insured is equated to a person on parental leave and has at least 12 months of social insurance record in the last 24 months of the maternity social insurance record before the first day of the parent leave. The paternity benefit is equal to 77.58 % of the compensatory earnings. This monthly payment cannot be smaller than 6 basic social payments. If, during the period of paternity benefit payment, the insured person derives earnings, on the basis of which maternity social insurance contributions are calculated, or any revenue from occupational activity, implemented during the said period, or receives sickness or occupational rehabilitation payments,

payments for sickness or an accident at work, or occupational disease, paid in accordance to the Law on Accidents at Work and Occupational Diseases, and their size is smaller than the paternity benefit, the parent will receive the difference between the size of the paternity benefit and the revenue and (or) payments, received in the said month (Appendix No. 33).

91. Employees can take pregnancy and childbirth leave – 70 calendar days before the childbirth and 56 calendar days after the childbirth. Should the employee refuse to take the pregnancy and childbirth leave, the employer must provide with 14 days leave immediately after childbirth, regardless of the employee's request. Based on the choice of the family, the mother (stepmother), father (stepfather), grandmother, grandfather or other family member, factually raising the child, also an employee, appointed as a carer of the child, can be granted with a child care leave until the child reaches three years old. The leave can be taken in full or in parts.

### **Child care benefits**

92. The entitlement to a child care benefit is granted to one of the parents (foster parents) or carers, or one of the grandparents, who has maternity social insurance and has taken a parental leave as prescribed by the law, except for the first year of the child, when the child care leave is terminated due to returning to work or service, or during the second year of the child, also in cases when the insured person is equated to a person on parental leave, and cases, when a person's employment contract has been terminated or when a person has been dismissed from service and has at least 12 months of maternity social insurance record in the last 24 months. Child care benefits are paid during parental leave from the end of pregnancy and childbirth leave until the child is one or two years old. The size of the child care benefit until the child is one year old, is 77.58 % of the compensatory earnings. If the insured chooses to receive child care payments until the child is two years old, the size of this payment until the child is one year old is 54.31 %, while until the child is two years old – 31.03 % of the compensatory revenue. The child care monthly payment cannot be smaller than 6 basic social payments. If the insured person has or adopts two or more children, the child care benefit is increased according to the number of the children born or adopted, or placed in foster care at the same time, but the total amount of these benefits cannot be larger than 77.58 % of the compensatory earnings of the benefit. The maximum compensatory earnings on the basis of which the child care benefits are calculated cannot exceed two AMW (Appendices No. 34 and No. 35).

### **Sickness benefit**

93. Insured persons, who became temporarily incapacitated due to sickness or trauma, or insured persons, dismissed from work due to an outbreak of communicable diseases or epidemics, or insured persons, who are treated at health care institutions, offering orthopaedic and (or) prosthetic services, receive a sickness benefit for the first two calendar days of sickness, coinciding with the employees work schedule, paid by the employer, except for persons who do not have an employment or service relationship, and who do not receive the sickness payment for the first two days of temporary incapacity. The sickness benefit, paid by the employer cannot be smaller than 62.06 % and larger than 100 % of the average pay of the receiver of the benefit. The sickness benefit, paid from the State Social Insurance Fund, is 62.06 % of the compensatory earnings of the receiver of the benefit. The sickness benefit of a person, who is taking care of a sick family member or a child, is paid from the first day from the State Social Insurance Fund and equals to 65.94 % of the compensatory earnings. The sickness benefit in case of temporary incapacity for the procurement of tissue cells or organs for the purpose of donation, equals to 77.58 % of the compensatory earnings of the receiver of the benefit and is covered from the State Social Insurance Fund. Monthly sickness benefit, paid from the State Social Insurance Fund, cannot be smaller than 11.64 % of the average monthly salary, applicable in the quarter preceding the previous quarter until the month of establishing temporary incapacity.

94. As of 2017, the sickness benefit for a child of up to 7 years old can be received not only by those, who take care of him/her in the hospital, but also at medical rehabilitation institutions and sanatoriums. The number of the employed who receive sickness benefits due to sickness or when taking care of a sick family member has increased, because now

sickness social insurance applies to farmers and their partners, family members, self-employed persons, except for persons with business certificates, owners of private enterprises, true members of small partnerships and economic partnerships, professional troops in the military service of the national defence, also volunteer troops and other troops in active reserve (see Appendix No. 36).

### **Social insurance pensions and savings**

95. All persons, who meet the minimum social insurance record requirements (15 years for retirement pension, pension for the loss of working capacity), have a right to get an appropriate social insurance pension, granted in case of retirement or loss of working capacity. Widowers and widows are also entitled to a widower's/widow's pension together with the retirement or incapacity pension, orphans are entitled to orphan's pensions (until they reach 18 years of age, as long as they are studying or as long as they have the status of a disabled person). Pensions are indexed in accordance with the law.

96. Participation in the pension accumulation system is voluntary, but those who do start participating in this system, remain there until their retirement. Persons under the age of retirement, who have insured incomes may start to accumulate part of the state social insurance contributions in private funds. As of 2019, persons intending to save for their retirement can transfer 3 % from their salary, while the state would contribute 1.5 % of the national average salary. Employees until 40 years of age and all current participants of the system are included into the system with a possibility to withdraw. Additional payments are subject to the personal income tax relief. If the contributions for an employee's future are made by the employer, the employer can use the additional contributions for the corporate profit tax relief. The activity of the pension funds and the payments are monitored by the Bank of Lithuania.

97. Since 2012, retirement age for men has been gradually increased by two months and for women – by four months per year until it reaches the retirement age of 65 for both men and women by 2026, as established by the Law of State Social Insurance Pensions.

### **Widower's/widow's and orphan's pensions**

98. Widower's/widow's and orphan's pensions are granted for the spouse and children (foster children) of a deceased person, who had pension social insurance, if the deceased person had the necessary pension social insurance record to be eligible for the retirement pension or a pension for the loss of working capacity (disability). Widower's/widow's pensions are granted to all persons of retirement age, if the deceased had at least a minimum record, necessary for the application of the appropriate type of a pension. Widower's/widow's pensions are also granted to persons, who, on the day of the death of the spouse, have been recognised as disabled or partially disabled, or if they have been recognised as disabled or partially disabled while staying at home to take care of the deceased person's children (adopted children), who are disabled, until they reach 18 years of age, also the children (adopted children) of the deceased with 75–100 per cent loss of working capacity, if these children (adopted children) were recognised as disabled before they turned 18 years of age.

99. Orphan's pensions are granted to the children and adopted children (under 18 years old) of the deceased, also to older ones under 24 years of age, if they were recognised as incapacitated or partially incapacitated, also those, who were recognised as incapacitated or partially incapacitated over 24 years of age due to a disease or trauma, which emerged under 24 years of age (but no later than until 26 years of age) and remain incapacitated or partially incapacitated for the entire time since the recognition of the disability. The size of an orphan's pension equals to 50 % of the general and individual parts of the pension, which used to be received or could have been received by the deceased. Orphans, who have lost both of their parents (adoptive parents), are entitled to orphan's pensions for each of the deceased parent (adoptive parent).

### **Social assistance payments**

100. Social assistance payments (social assistance for the disabled, pensioners or orphans) are granted and paid according to the Law on Social Assistance Benefits of the Republic of Lithuania. The purpose of social assistance payments is to ensure minimum income for persons, who have not acquired any rights in the social insurance system or who receive very small social insurance pensions. Entitlement to social assistance payments is granted to disabled children and persons, recognized as incapacitated or partially incapacitated, or who have lost 45 % and more of their working capacity. Social assistance retirement pensions are granted for persons, who have reached retirement age. Social assistance pensions are granted to children and adopted children (under 18 years old) of the deceased, also to older ones, recognised as disabled before 24 years of age, also pupils and full-time students, but no longer than 24 years of age. Social assistance pension amounts are related to the social assistance pension base, the size of which is approved by the Government (in 2019 – EUR 132), and, depending on the type of social assistance and the category of the receivers, ranges from 0.75 to 2.25 of the social assistance base size. Social assistance pensions are granted and paid to persons, who are not entitled to larger or the same size social insurance pensions or other periodical pension-type payments.

### **Social support**

101. The Lithuanian social support system consists of two parts: cash social assistance (cash social assistance for poor residents (social benefit, compensations for heating costs or drinking and hot water), child benefit, social support for pupils, etc.) and social services, i.e. support in various non-monetary forms and care payments in order to restore person's ability to take care of oneself and integrate into the society (at-home care, catering, hot food delivery, provision of essential items, care home for the elderly and the disabled, etc.).

102. State family and child support system consists of two main components: payments made despite the family assets and income (universal payments) and support for poor residents provided upon considering their assets and income. Efficient cash social support is one of the major actions, necessary to protect the most sensitive groups of the society, mitigating the outcome of poverty and social exclusion, helping families to raise children, at the same time avoiding persons' long-term dependency on social support. Cash social assistance costs in 2018 increased by 115.7 %, compared to 2017 (from EUR 168.10 million to EUR 362.55 million). One of the major purposes of cash social assistance for the poor is to help satisfy the basic needs of the people with insufficient revenue and limited capability of taking care of themselves due to objective reasons that they cannot control.

103. A person is entitled to a social benefit if the value of his/her assets, owned under the right of ownership, does not exceed the value standard, and anyone over the 18 years of age who lives together, a person who lives alone or a child from 16 to 18 years of age meet at least one of the conditions for receiving cash social assistance, while the revenue for one adult person is smaller than the SSI (EUR 122). The amount of social benefit for one entitled resident equals to 100 % of the difference between the SSI of one resident and the average monthly personal income of one resident.

### **Article 10**

104. Article 38 of the Constitution states that a marriage is concluded upon the free mutual consent of man and woman and the rights of spouses are equal. The CiC provisions define the general principles of the legal regulation of family relations and govern the grounds and procedures for entering into marriage, validity and dissolution of marriage, property and non-property personal rights of spouses, filiation, mutual rights and responsibilities between children, parents as well as other family members, the basic provisions on adoption, guardianship, curatorship and on the procedures for registering Acts of Civil Status. Legal regulation of family relationships is based on the principles of monogamy, voluntary marriage, equality of spouses, priority of protecting and safeguarding the rights and interests of children, upbringing of children in the family, comprehensive protection of motherhood and other principles of the legal regulation of civil relationships.

Any threat, coercion, deceit or any other lack of free will provides the grounds on which the marriage can be declared null and void.

### **Social services for families**

105. Lithuania is implementing a family policy, which aims to prepare and implement measures in order to ensure that a family is an autonomous, responsible, strong, stable, active and independent institution, able to perform its functions independently. Lithuania faces similar demographic issues as the majority of the European states – decreasing birth rates, ageing society, decreasing numbers of marriages and increasing numbers of divorces, increasing numbers of children, raised by single parents and the decreasing numbers of the population overall. The family policy is developed and implemented with the goal of considering the above-mentioned challenges, implementing legal and organisational measures for developing a family-friendly environment, encouraging positive demographic tendencies and reducing domestic violence. Social workers, working with families, provide social support for families in order to maintain and restore families' autonomy in implementing various functions, necessary in the public and private life.

106. Complex Family Services Action Plan for 2016–2020 (hereinafter – Complex Family Services Action Plan), aims to create conditions for families to receive complex services to ensure the accessibility of these services as close to the families' place of residence as possible in order to enable them to overcome crises and balance family and work responsibilities. Families can benefit from positive parenting trainings, psychosocial support, family skills development and sociocultural services, mediation, child care and transportation services. Municipalities and their partners organise and provide complex services for families and personal assistance services for persons with physical and (or) complex disability in their municipalities.

107. The basic social services are provided to a person (family), whose abilities to take an individual care of the personal (family) life and participate in social life can be developed or compensated by means of individual services, provided without continuous specialists' assistance. The basic social services are provided at social service institutions, person's place of living and other places, where the provision of social services is organised.

### **Protection of the rights of the child**

108. The Law on Fundamentals of Protection of the Rights of the Child of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – LFPRC) establishes cultural, social, economic and civil rights of children and their protection. Since 2018, child neglect was declared as one of the forms of violence; a more precise definition of the reaction to possible violations of the rights of the child was established; case management, the purpose of which is to render a more efficient comprehensive support for children and families was established; mobile specialists' teams, which provide intensive intervention for families in crisis, were introduced. In 2017 corporal punishment for children in all environments (including family environment) was banned. A corporal punishment refers to disciplining a child, when a physical action is used to elicit physical pain, even mild, or physical torture, or demeaning his/her honour and (or) dignity.

109. In order to establish a continuously functioning system for the protection of the rights of the child, which would ensure development and application of a uniform practice all over the state when protecting and defending children and their rightful interests, timely response to violations of the rights of a child, operative decisions as well as centralised management and coordination of the child rights protection system are being adopted. The function of the protection of the rights of the child has been transferred to the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (hereinafter – SCRPA).

110. As of 1 September 2017, a position of an inter-institutional cooperation coordinator has been introduced to all municipalities. The purpose of the activities of this specialist is to ensure that all issues, related to the well-being of the child and his/her family, are solved on time and in cooperation between different institutions and agencies.

111. The state guarantees legal and social protection for children, who have lost their parental care. Reducing dependency on institutional care is one of Lithuania's priorities. For this purpose, the Action Plan for the Transition from Institutional Care to Family and Community Services for Children with Disabilities and Children left without Parental Care has been approved and implemented, the purpose of which is to plan consistent and coordinated action, promoting the transition from institutional care to family- and community-based services for the disabled adults with mental disabilities, children and youth with mental disabilities and children without parental care, including infants, as well as for their families and the development of the support system for families and foster families (Appendix No. 37).

112. A project 'Creating conditions for a sustainable transition from institutional care to family- and community-based services in Lithuania' has been launched as of 2017. Professional foster carers take care of children until they can return to their biological families and, in case of failure to solve the difficulties, arising in the biological family, they are provided with a family of permanent foster parents or adoptive parents. The status of a professional foster care is also established by the law.

113. In order to make child care at children care institutions as a last measure and to meet the best interests of the child, in 2017 the new CiC provisions were introduced, stating that temporary care (custody) of a child may not exceed twelve months, while children under three years of age can be taken into custody at a child care institution only in exceptional cases and it may not exceed three months.

114. In 2018, the adaptation of housing and living environment for children with severe disabilities was implemented according to the Description of the procedure for increasing social security of families with children with severe disabilities by adapting their housing and living environment. This measure was implemented in 47 municipalities by adapting 201 houses. The major works, implemented according to this measure, include adapting the interior for the child's special needs, adapting the access to the housing and providing sensory aids.

115. It should be noted that Lithuania ratified the ILO Convention on Night Work of Young Persons (Non-Industrial Occupations), (No. 79) (the report was submitted in 2017) and the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, (No. 182) (the report was submitted in 2018). Lithuania's 5th–6th Joint Periodic Report on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was also submitted in 2020.

#### **Preventing violence against children**

116. Children, who are victims of violence or victims of indirect domestic violence (witnesses) and their family members receive comprehensive services through the projects, funded by the MSSL. Their purpose is to provide efficient assistance for children, who have possibly become victims of psychological, physical violence, sexual abuse and neglect, and their families.

117. Various measures are developed in order to inform and encourage the society to refrain from violence, including corporal punishment, against children, with a special focus on the development of positive parenting skills. The NGOs project 'Parent Line', which offers phone consultations on the issues of positive parenting is funded from the State budget. The major part of the consultations involved psychological support and information for parents, related to child upbringing, child development and upbringing difficulties, also information on methods of positive parenting, other non-violent upbringing measures.

118. The development of appropriate parenting skills, also the application of non-violent discipline is also funded via the projects implemented by the NGOs, working in the field of family well-being.

#### **Preventing and fighting against domestic violence**

119. Domestic violence, regardless of its type, is recognised as a criminal offence. For the purposes of defending persons from domestic violence, the Law on Protection Against Domestic Violence of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – LPADV) has been adopted.

The LPADV establishes procedural guarantees for victims of domestic violence. Upon receiving a report about domestic violence and when there is not enough data for a pre-trial investigation, temporary measures to protect the victim of domestic violence can be applied: obligation for the perpetrator to temporarily leave the place of residence, if the perpetrator lives with the victim of violence, or an obligation for the perpetrator to refrain from approaching, communicating or seeking contact with the victim.

120. Lithuania is implementing the Action Plan 2017–2020 for the State Domestic Violence Prevention and Assistance to Victims Programme for 2014–2020 (hereinafter – Action Plan for Domestic Violence Prevention and Assistance to Victims). The purpose of the measures implemented is to educate the society on preventing domestic violence, teaching to recognise signs of violence, develop intolerance to all types of violence, improving professional competences of employees of state and municipal institutions and other persons, working in the field of domestic violence prevention and support to victims of domestic violence, also create and implement domestic violence prevention measures. The project ‘Domestic Violence: Prevention, Protection, Support and Cooperation’, implemented by the Women’s Information Centre Association, seeks to raise public intolerance to violence, promote the recognition of various forms of violence, improve the professional competence of the employees, working in this field, at the same time increasing the accessibility and quality of support for victims of violence. The project involves activities targeting prevention of domestic violence, trainings for experts, offering comprehensive support for victims of domestic violence, implementing domestic violence prevention and working in the field of protection against domestic violence, also supervisions for experts, providing support for victims of domestic violence, seminars for journalists on the specifics of informing the public on the topic of domestic violence, studies and surveys.

121. Victims of domestic violence are entitled to guaranteed legal aid from the state, which includes initial legal aid, secondary legal aid and state-guaranteed non-judicial mediation. Primary legal aid is available free of charge for all persons. Since 2019, when the amendments to the Law on State-guaranteed Legal Aid came into force, the scope of secondary legal aid for victims of domestic violence has been expanded. This type of aid is provided regardless of the assets owned or revenue throughout the full scope of the criminal proceedings and in civil matters. State-guaranteed non-judicial mediation for victims of domestic violence is also available in civil cases, since the victim is entitled to secondary legal aid.

122. Victims of domestic violence can address to specialised assistance centres (hereinafter – SAC), which cover the entire country. Information on victims of domestic violence is also reported to the SAC by the police. The SAC offer specialised comprehensive support (consultations, legal aid) and, if needed, they may cooperate with other institutions, e.g. police, health care institutions or institutions, offering legal aid. In 2018, the SAC provided help for 12.3 thousand persons (10.3 thousand women, 1.9 thousand men and more than 400 children, including 501 disabled persons). In 2019, the SAC received EUR 1.5 million funding (in 2018 – EUR 750 thousand). Increasing funding will help to increase the scope and quality of the provided help.

123. The MH prepared the Criteria for Recognizing Domestic Violence against Adults and Recommendations for Action on Suspected Domestic Violence Against Adults for employees of health care institutions, as well as the Criteria for Recognizing Sexual Violence Against a Female Victim and Examination Methodology for a Female Victim of Sexual Violence. The purpose of the Methodological Recommendations for Diagnosing Violence against Children is to provide knowledge and topical information for all experts, working at personal health care institutions, on recognising and diagnosing violence against children, providing the necessary help for the child and the family and, in case of a need, to report about improper behaviour involving the child to the institutions defending his/her rights.

#### **Fight against human trafficking**

124. The Action Plan for Fighting Human Trafficking for 2017–2019 aims to strengthen the coordination of fighting human trafficking, improving human trafficking prevention and

pre-trial investigations, also strengthening the support system for victims of human trafficking or persons at high risk of becoming victims of human trafficking and increasing the competencies and abilities of state institutions and employees, who may have to communicate with victims of human trafficking. In addition, in Lithuania there is the Institutional Commission for Coordinating the Fight against Human Trafficking, the purpose of which is to plan the measures and actions for fighting human trafficking.

125. The National Rapporteur on Fighting Human Trafficking Issues of the Republic of Lithuania was appointed in 2017; he/she collects information, analyses and assesses the tendencies of human trafficking, including buying or selling children, and the results of fighting human trafficking, including buying or selling children, prepares proposals regarding Lithuania's further course of action in fighting human trafficking and crimes of buying and selling children, and submits them to the Minister of the Interior and to the Commission for Coordinating the Fight against Human Trafficking.

126. In 2015, the Recommendations for Identifying Human Trafficking Victims, Pre-trial Investigation and Inter-institutional Cooperation were approved, which also include provisions regarding buying or selling children, concepts of related crimes, conducting such investigations and collecting the proof, the system of directing the victims to support, responsibilities, types of support, etc. Non-governmental organisations, offering support for victims of human trafficking have signed a cooperation declaration, approving the above-mentioned recommendations and have undertaken to follow them.

127. As of 2018, the SLI initiated the establishment of Joint Operation Centres in Vilnius and Klaipėda regions, which consist of representatives of the STI, Police Department under the Ministry of the Interior, FCIS, SLI, State Social Insurance Fund Board under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Migration Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania and other services. The major investigation areas of the Joint Operation Centres are human trafficking for the purposes of forced labour and illegal employment of foreigners, undeclared work, untaxed wages and other tax violations, related to employment relations. In 2018, the analysis was focused on the following risky areas of economic activity: constructions, transport, cargo handling, agriculture, trade, services and forestry. Information, received from various sources regarding specific economic entities has been analysed as well. In 2018, the Government established new Joint Operation Centres in Kaunas, Šiauliai and Panevėžys districts and the operations of these centres are also expanded by the participation and competence of other institutions.

128. Every year the SLI organises trainings at territorial departments, where inspectors are introduced to tendencies of illegal work of foreigners and possible human trafficking for forced labour, also the issues of victims identification. In 2018, the Prosecutor General's Office hosted trainings on human trafficking, attended by pre-trial investigation officers, attorneys and SLI inspectors. The training was focused on fighting illegal employment of foreigners, human trafficking and better identification of victims of human trafficking and provision of necessary help.

129. The implementation of the Interinstitutional Action Plan of the Public Security Development Programme for 2015–2025 involves providing assistance to persons, who became or could possibly become victims of human trafficking. This support is provided by funding projects of non-governmental organisations, working in the field of human trafficking prevention (see Appendix No. 38).

130. Upon implementation of the EUF project 'Improving Qualifications of Teachers and Educational Assistance Specialists', training programme for human trafficking prevention consultants was prepared. The purpose of the training is to provide knowledge on the scale and forms of human trafficking, methods of organising prevention at schools, forms of assistance to the victims, also to discuss the practice of foreign countries.



## Article 11

### Right to accommodation

131. In 2015 Municipal Social Housing Fund Development Action Plan for 2015–2020 was approved, which aims to increase housing opportunities for persons and families that are entitled to rent social housing according to the Law on Support for the Acquisition or Rental of Housing of the Republic of Lithuania. It is expected that upon the implementation of the Action Plan, the municipal social housing fund will be increased by 1 150 social housing, while the availability of social housing for persons and families, entitled to rent social housing should increase by 3.8 % accordingly. The funds, allocated for the implementation of the Action Plan constitute EUR 58 742 975. In 2016–2018 the municipal social housing fund was expanded by 801 social houses.

132. The major issue of housing for the Roma in Lithuania is the illegal settlement of Kirtimai in Vilnius. In 2016, Vilnius City Municipality approved Vilnius (Kirtimai) Roma Encampment Community Integration Programme for 2016–2019. One of the goals of the Programme is to improve the living conditions for the Roma. In 2016–2017, social housing was provided to all families with five and more children. In order to accelerate the process of evicting the Roma from the settlement of Kirtimai, in 2018 it was decided to establish an office, which would assist the families, living in Kirtimai, to rent housing. Currently this office is working with Roma families, who have received bailiff orders to demolish illegal buildings, to ensure that they have a place to live in. The Roma families that have been evicted from the settlement of Kirtimai also receive assistance from social workers, who provide them with social skills development and support services.

133. In 2019, housing adaptation for the disabled was allocated EUR 1.5 million. These funds will enable 350 disabled persons to improve their living conditions and adapt their housings. Housing may be adapted for the disabled when the disabled person has a special need for permanent care, uses any type of a wheelchair, other measures for movement. The contribution from the budget funds for adapting housing for the disabled has been increased, but it cannot constitute more than 60 % of all works of the housing adaptation.

### Reducing poverty

134. Indices of absolute poverty are calculated by the Statistics Lithuania and the MSSL. The line of absolute poverty is the amount, necessary to satisfy the minimum consumption needs, calculated according to the personal (family) MCR calculation method. In 2018, the level of risk of poverty (the share of persons, whose equivalent cash disposable income is below the poverty risk line) was 22.9 % and did not change, compared to 2017. In 2018, about 645 thousand people lived below the poverty line. The share of city residents, whose disposable income was below the poverty risk line, was 18.8 % (13.8 % in the five largest cities and 27 % in others), in rural areas – 31.3 %. In 2018, the poverty risk line was EUR 345 per month for one person and EUR 724 for a family, consisting of two adults and two children of up to 14 years old. Due to the increase of the residents' disposable income, the poverty risk line increased by 12.4 %, compared to 2017. The increase has been determined by the increase of the poverty risk line, resulting from increasing employment revenue and a relatively smaller growth of retirement pensions. Social security costs for a family and children during the income assessment period increased by 14.6 %, while the average net salary – 9.2 % (Appendix No. 41). Working for MMW did not protect against the risk of poverty: upon subtracting the income tax and social security contributions from the MMW, the remaining disposable income without other sources of income, is below the poverty risk line. Based on the household composition, the greatest risk of poverty falls on persons, who live in households, consisting of a single adult with children (the level of the risk of poverty is 46.8 %) and single adults (50.7 %). The number of employed people living below the poverty risk line was 8.1 %, unemployed – 62.3 %, persons in retirement – 41.7 % (Appendix No. 42). The difference between the poverty risk line before social payments and after shows the influence social benefits have for reducing the risk of poverty.

135. Efficient cash social assistance is one of the major actions, necessary to protect the most sensitive groups of the society, mitigating the outcome of poverty and social exclusion,

helping families to raise children, at the same time avoiding persons' long-term dependency on social assistance (Appendix No. 46). Amendments to the Law on Cash Social Assistance for Poor Residents of the Republic of Lithuania, which came into force in 2018 and increased state supported income from EUR 102 to EUR 122 influenced employed low-income families with children. In 2018, compared to 2017, the size of an average social benefit per month increased by 23.51 % (from EUR 65.5 to 80.9). As of 2019, the term of the additional social benefit share upon getting employment is extended from 6 to 12 months. This increases the motivation of the cash social assistance receivers to integrate into the labour market, encouraging them to live of their employment income rather than benefits.

136. Since 2018, the payment of a 'universal' child benefit has been approved for all children since the day they are born until they are 18 and older, if they are studying according to a general education programme, but no longer than until they are 21. Child benefit equals to 0.79 of the basic social benefit (hereinafter – BSB) per month. The purpose of this measure is to reduce children's poverty, inequality of income and offer financial support for all families, raising children. An additional child benefit is granted and paid to low-income families, raising and (or) fostering one or two children, and families, raising and (or) fostering three or more children, regardless of the family's income. In 2018, the number of child benefit recipients per month increased by about 310.93 % compared to 2017 (from 119.72 thousand children to 491.97 thousand children). It is expected that upon approving the payment of the 'universal' child benefit, at risk- of-poverty rate among children in the age group from birth to 17 years old, should be reduced by about 2.7 %. In order to continue supporting families, raising children, with financial incentives, since 2019 amendments to the Law on Benefits for Children of the Republic of Lithuania have been introduced, which increased the size of the 'universal' child benefit from 0.79 BSB to 1.32 BSB per month, and to 1.84 BSB for disabled children. A uniform additional child benefit size was established as well amounting to 0.53 BSB per month.

137. In 2019 amendments to the Law on Social Assistance for Pupils of the Republic of Lithuania came into force, which increased the amounts of funds, allocated to social assistance for pupils. The amounts of funds for acquiring daily products for free meals will increase by about 25 % (from 7.7 BSB to 9.7 BSB), while the amount of funds, needed for school supplies – by 33 % (from 1.5 BSB to 2 BSB).

138. Lithuania has adopted a unified social support information system (hereinafter – SSIS), the purpose of which is to accumulate information on available social support (social benefit and compensations, social assistance for pupils, social services, activities in the field of protecting children's rights etc.). This enables to implement social support monitoring and analyse this information according to municipalities (individual regions), types of support and receivers of support, also provide public electronic services, related to social support.

### **Right to food**

139. In order to promote healthy lifestyle and strengthen prevention of chronic non-communicable diseases, Lithuania has developed public health bureau network in all municipalities. In 2019, the funding for the public health bureaus was significantly increased in order to strengthen their activity. Upon the implementation of the recommendations of the World Health Organisation, Lithuania started limiting trans fats in all foods and, as of 2014, has adopted the 'Keyhole' symbol, marking health-friendly food products, enabling to offer healthier products for the market.

140. All Lithuanian municipalities adopted and continue to develop the Programme for Health Improvement of Persons at Risk of Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes. Agreements with the largest Lithuanian companies regarding improving the ingredients of food products were signed, aiming to reduce the amount of sugar and salt by 10 % in the products, produced by these companies by 2020.

141. Lithuania has been also implementing a School Fruit, Vegetables and Milk Scheme, the major goal of which is to increase the share of fruits, vegetables, milk and dairy products in children's nutrition. In 2016 Adapted Catering Recommendations were adopted

in order to ensure that persons with certain health impairment get the nutrients that meet their needs. A database of exemplary health foods has been compiled and published online. Education institutions are implementing a food choice system, which will help children choose more health-friendly foods, thus also reducing food waste. Healthy nutrition training for all food processing employees has been introduced as well. A representative monitoring of the factual nutrition of adult residents takes place every five years.

### **Improving the methods of food production, storage and distribution**

142. One of the major tools of agricultural policy, which promotes sustainable, efficient, effective and environmental-friendly methods of agriculture is the ‘greening’ scheme for direct support. ‘Greening’, which has been implemented in Lithuania since 2015, is one of direct payment schemes, the purpose of which is to ensure that farmers’ daily activities benefit the environment and climate. 30 % of the direct payments are related to ecology and help to ensure that all farmers engage in activity that benefits the environment and climate: protect the carbon in the soil and grassland habitats, related to permanent pasture, ensure water and habitat protection in certain locations, recognised as important from environmental perspective, and improve the resistance of the soil and ecosystems by applying crop diversification practices.

143. As of 2007, Lithuania introduced the national quality system for agriculture and food products. Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – MA) contributes to promote brand and forming the system of supplying the products to the market. This system helps to produce products, the quality of which exceeds the EU and national product safety, animal and plant health, animal welfare and environmental requirements and (or) which are characterised by special qualities due to the use of certain methods of farming or production.

### **Right to water**

144. The Law on Drinking Water of the Republic of Lithuania establishes the right of the citizens to consume healthy and clean drinking water and get information about its safety and quality. According to the law, municipalities must organise the supply of drinking water and removal of wastewater. The public supply of drinkable water must ensure a continuous supply of that water.

145. About 2.5 million of Lithuanian residents get their drinking water from centralised water supply network. About 700 thousand residents get their water individually, from dug wells. Drinking water suppliers are responsible for the safety and quality of publicly supplied drinking water up to the inlets to the internal drinking water supply network, which belongs to the consumers, and carry out scheduled monitoring of drinking water. Consumers are responsible for the safety and quality of the drinking water in the internal water supply network, which belongs to the consumers. Consumers, who get their water individually, must protect the water sources from contamination and take care of the water safety and quality in their individual households. Municipal institutions must ensure that the consumers are supplied with the needed amount of drinking water or that they have the necessary conditions to do that individually.

146. According to the Law on Cash Social Assistance for Poor Residents, in order to be eligible for a drinking water compensation, a single resident or a child from 16 to 18 years old must meet at least one of the conditions, needed to receive cash social assistance. The compensation is granted for the share of the costs of drinking water that are not higher than the standard, exceeding 2 % of the income of the co-residents or a single resident.

## **Article 12**

147. The Ministry of Health carries out health structural reform for 2017–2020 focused on the following six areas: reduction of co-payment for pharmaceuticals; creating new incentives for healthy living; expansion of team of a general practitioner, development of out-patient health care services; optimisation of hospitals, quality of services, prestige of

medical professionals; development of nursing care services. State Public Health Promotion Fund is established by the Law on Health System of the Republic of Lithuania.

148. The updated Lithuanian Health Strategy for 2014–2025 seeks to make the Lithuanian residents healthier and live longer, improve the residents' health and reduce health disparities by 2025. The four goals of the Health Strategy are as follows: creation of a safer social environment, reduction of health disparities and social exclusion; creation of a health-friendly physical working and living environment; shaping healthy lifestyle and its culture; achievement of a quality and effective health care, focused on the needs of the residents. The main target index is to increase the average lifespan to 77.5 years by 2025. It is also planned to reduce the average lifespan difference between men and women by increasing men's average lifespan from 11.06 to 8 years. It is aimed to reduce the mortality rate due to suicide, also mortality due to malignancies and diseases of the circulatory system, and the use of narcotic and psychotropic substances and to reduce the share of residents, who claim to be suffering from noise, increase the number of family physicians per 10 thousand residents and reduce tobacco consumption. The Health Strategy also establishes assessment criteria to monitor if the goals are achieved (Appendix No. 47).

149. The compulsory health insurance guarantees that the insured will receive the necessary health care services, compensated from the Mandatory Health Insurance Fund (hereinafter – MHIF) budget, only upon acquiring the status of being insured with the compulsory health insurance. An insured person receives not only the emergency medical care, but also all personal health care services, established by the law. If a permanent resident of Lithuania has no compulsory health insurance, he/she must pay for the medical services (except for the emergency medical care) himself/herself.

150. In 2019 National Immunoprophylaxis Programme for 2019–2023 (hereinafter – National Immunoprophylaxis Programme) was updated, the purpose of which is to protect the citizens of Lithuania from communicable diseases and complications, control communicable diseases by vaccinations – maintaining at least 90 % of children's vaccination volumes in the entire country and each municipality. The major goals of the National Immunoprophylaxis Programme are to control and reduce the incidence, the risk of outbreaks, also to eliminate and eradicate the communicable diseases that can be controlled by vaccination; to ensure the safety, efficiency and availability of vaccination. While implementing the statutory scheduled vaccinations and vaccination against communicable diseases for children and adults, favourable epidemic situation in relation to preventable communicable diseases must be ensured. Strengthening of the epidemiological surveillance of vaccine-controlled communicable diseases and monitoring of the vaccination coverage is also ensured, which reduces the risk of communicable diseases and their complications among the vulnerable groups of population.

151. In 2017, new-born mortality was reduced by 38.8 %, 85 new-borns died (54 fewer than in 2016). The new-born mortality index in 2017 reached 2.9 dead new-borns per 1000 alive new-borns (the index in 2013 was 3.7/1000). The primary causes of new-born death in 2017 were prenatal diseases (34.1 %) and innate development disorders (32.9 %).

152. In 2017 the Medicines Policy Guidelines for 2017–2027 were approved, which established the goal for medicines policy development – to ensure a better access to medicines and rational use of the state budget and funds of the residents. For this purpose, it is planned to improve the access to medicines with added therapeutic benefits for residents, suffering from severe diseases, to implement provisions on rational use of medicines and medicines' price reduction measures.

### **Mental health**

153. The implementation of the Lithuanian mental health care reform included reducing the number of inpatient psychiatric beds and establishing municipal mental health centres. In 2017, in Lithuania there were 113 mental health centres employing expert teams: psychiatrists, children's and adolescent psychiatrists, medical psychologists, social workers and mental health nurses. Providing mental health outpatient assistance on the primary level enables to make psychiatric assistance more easily available to the residents and improves its quality.

154. Since the application of the team approach to providing mental health services, they became more comprehensive, focusing more attention on patient activities, rehabilitation and working with patients' families, rather than merely medication treatment.

155. Psychiatric day centres offer medical and psychosocial services aimed at strengthening the physical and psychosocial skills of the persons with mental disabilities, promoting independence, daily life, communication, domestic, work-related and social skills. The services at the psychiatric day centres are provided by expert teams consisting of a doctor psychiatrist, a doctor psychotherapist, a medical psychologist, a mental health nurse and a social worker.

156. The development of mental health care services included the establishment of 5 differentiated comprehensive psychiatric care centres for the family and the child in the major cities, offering children and their families comprehensive specialised early rehabilitation for child development disorders and children's psychiatry services. In order to diagnose child development disorders early, the compulsory requirements and procedure for preventive screening of children's health and psychomotor development in early childhood were introduced.

157. In 2019 the new Law on Mental Health Care of the Republic of Lithuania was adopted. The law establishes a comprehensive (team-based) model for providing personal mental health care services, a priority of non-medical treatment and offering closer assistance without disrupting a person's daily routine, which is particularly important for persons with mental and behavioural disorders in order to enable them to feel safe and take care of themselves. In order to strengthen the protection of human rights through increased transparency and objectivity in the process of involuntary hospitalization of people with mental and behavioural disorders, the Description of Involuntary Hospitalization and Involuntary Treatment of Patients with Mental and Behavioural Disorders is detailing the procedures for involuntary hospitalization and involuntary treatment, and the conditions under which involuntary hospitalization or involuntary treatment is possible, patient information and consent procedures, and other relevant aspects. The Description specifies the procedures and forms to be used for involuntary hospitalization and involuntary treatment and establishes the procedure for monitoring.

158. In 2015, a Suicide Prevention Bureau was established at the State Mental Health Centre in order to coordinate suicide prevention and strengthen inter-institutional cooperation. The Bureau's major activities include the implementation of suicide prevention policy, systemic help for those, who are intending to commit or tried to commit attempted suicide, coordinating support for persons, who have lost their family members, providing methodological assistance and organising information campaigns. The new amendment to the Code of Ethics in Providing Information to the Public of Lithuania establishes a clear definition of the principles of information on suicide. In 2014 the drafting of the suicide prevention programme for schools was initiated, and methodological materials for this programme were prepared in 2018, Crisis Management Recommendations for Schools were adopted.

159. The website of the Children's Helpline at [www.pagalbavaikams.lt](http://www.pagalbavaikams.lt) offers useful information on physical violence, sexual violence, bullying, alcohol and drug abuse, pregnancy, problems at home, parent divorce, human trafficking, suicide and self-harm. The website provides a description of each of the problems and the major characteristics and ways for the child to attempt to solve the issue on his/her own. There is a possibility of direct consultation online or by e-mail.

160. As of 2008, considering high levels of bullying among children, the MESS started supporting the implementation of globally-acknowledged prevention programmes at Lithuanian schools. The purpose of developing a prevention programme at schools is to include all pre-school education institutions in the country, implementing pre-school education programmes, general education programmes and vocational education institutions. The Recommendations for Violence Prevention at Schools contain specific steps of creating a safe educational environment, an algorithm of reaction to violence and bullying, also the school's role in making specific agreements regarding pupils' behavioural standards, the school staff's responsibility for reacting to bullying, a list of specific steps of

developing a positive microclimate at school, also advice on consistent development of pupils' emotional competencies through social activities, and active involvement of parents.

### **Health care**

161. The public health care sector in Lithuania experienced major change in 2019. New governance, financing and delivery models have been proposed and adopted. The network of public health institutions in municipalities was developed. Public Health Bureaus provide public health services to all municipalities. The main functions of the bureaus are public health promotion, monitoring of public health and child health care in school setting.

162. In 2018 the State Drug, Tobacco and Alcohol Control and Consumption Prevention Programme for 2018–2020 was approved. The major goal of the long-term strategic document is to use balanced measures to seek for a safer and healthier country, aiming to help avoid or reduce the damage done by alcohol, tobacco and drug consumption, also provide opportunities to take care of personal, family or community health, social and economic well-being. This strategic document establishes provisions for the implementation of a contextual and balanced long-term drug, tobacco and alcohol control and consumption prevention policy that is based on science-based and factual data. The programme includes the following areas that are equally important and complement each other: reducing the demand, reducing the supply, reducing the damage and monitoring.

163. In order to increase the availability of personal health care services for people with addictions, addiction treatment facilities have been reorganised by merging five regional addiction treatment centres into the National Addiction Treatment Centre. In order to reduce the number of deaths due to opioid overdose, 2018 marked the adoption of the Procedure for Providing Opioid Antagonist (Naloxone) to Target Groups via Low-threshold Services. The development of community services created legal preconditions for providing dependence treatment which includes consulting services for persons, engaged in risky and harmful alcohol consumption.

164. As of 2018, based on the Procedure for Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Immunodeficiency Virus Disease, the availability of HIV infection treatment has been increased: antiretroviral therapy is administered to all individuals with HIV. As of 2017, the availability of fast HIV testing at low-threshold services for drug users has been increased.

165. Procedure for Imposing the Obligation to Participate in Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, Early Intervention and Health Care Programmes (courses) regulates the implementation and scope of alcohol and drug abuse prevention, early intervention and health care programmes (courses) for persons, subject to an administrative sanction – an obligation to participate in the said programmes, applied by an institution (officer) conducting judicial or extrajudicial proceedings regarding an administrative offence.

166. In 2017 the Procedure for Early Alcohol Consumption Risk Assessment and Assistance to Alcohol Users was approved. Upon the implementation of the provisions of the said procedure, primary health care institutions started providing early alcohol consumption risk assessment services.

### **Information on abortions**

167. All schools, providing general education, must implement the general programme of health, sex and family education. This programme contains topics on sexual and reproductive health education, based on the pupils' age. The programme has been implemented with the help of public health care experts and parents. There are methodological measures of sex and reproductive health education for primary school teachers and teachers who work with teenagers. The programme of health, sex and family education has been implemented according to the principles of personalisation, respect for people, gender equality and discretion.

## Article 13

168. Education at state and municipal schools of general education, vocational schools and higher education institutions is free of charge. Higher education must be accessible to everyone according to individual abilities. Citizens who are good at their studies shall be guaranteed education at state higher education institutions free of charge. Each alien who has the right of permanent or temporary residence in the Republic of Lithuania, has the right to study, attain an education level and a qualification. The State takes measures that each child studies according to pre-primary, primary, basic and secondary education curricula. The State guarantees each citizen and each alien, who has the right of permanent or temporary residence in the Republic of Lithuania, pre-primary, primary, basic and secondary education, access to higher education study programmes or vocational training programmes that result in the acquisition of the first qualification.

169. One of the principles, established in the Law on Education, is equal opportunities – the education system is socially fair, it ensures the implementation of person's rights, it guarantees the access to education for any person, the attainment of a general education level and a primary qualification, and creates conditions to improve the acquired qualification or gain a new qualification. The Law on Vocational Education establishes the principles of vocational education system, one of which is the principle of equal opportunities – the vocational education system is socially fair, it ensures equality among persons, regardless of their gender, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, faith, beliefs or attitudes; it guarantees the first qualification for each person, also creating conditions to improve the qualifications already attained or acquire a new one.

170. Non-formal adult education is available to all persons that are not younger than 18 years old. The Law on Non-formal Adult Education and Continuous Learning regulates the system of non-formal education for adults, establishing the framework for its organization, operation and management. The purpose of the law is to provide a legal guarantee for the participants, implementers and social partners of non-formal adult education, helping them to implement the inherent right to develop one's personality throughout life, to guarantee a possibility to acquire knowledge and skills, needed for a citizen of a democratic society and an expert of a certain field, also to contribute to creative and meaningful leisure.

171. Adults that have not acquired basic or secondary education, or have not completed it in full, can do so at adult education institutions. Learning can take place in class or remotely, there is also a possibility to complete the programme part-time. Flexible forms of learning enable adult persons to learn, whenever they find it convenient and in the scope that is needed, and also to develop lifelong learning preferences.

### **Reducing the educational gap**

172. In order to improve learning achievements in general and also take a comprehensive approach at solving the issue of educational gap, several comprehensive measures are being implemented, ranging from encouraging children in rural areas to participate in early childhood education or increasing the length of a school year, to ensuring additional learning assistance, improving infrastructure, updating the school curricula, teacher training, allocating target funds and improving the microclimate and involvement. Multifunctional centres have been established in many Lithuanian rural areas in order to create more places for early childhood education and make early educational services available to the largest number of children in rural areas as possible. Families, living in rural areas, are provided with special public transportation. The improvement of learning infrastructure involves increasing the access to education and purchasing the yellow school buses, which help children in rural areas get to higher-quality schools in regional centres and cities. A special website provides parents with information on the importance of early childhood education, encouraging them to bring their children to early childhood education institutions and hereby ensuring their better learning achievements in the future. In order to ensure high-quality education services for everyone, also to improve learning achievements, pre-primary education became compulsory.

173. The introduction of ‘quality basket’ as targeted funding for schools is aimed at improving learning achievements of pupils by helping municipalities to create conditions for improving the quality of education, improving the responsibility and accountability of general education schools, rated as achieving schools, by allocating funding for the improvement of activity and the dissemination of good practices, reducing general education quality differences between municipalities.

#### **Data collection mechanism**

174. The Centre of Information Technologies in Education (as of 2019 the Centre of Information Technologies in Education has been reorganised into the National Agency for Education) administers the Student Register, which contains all pupils, participating in pre-school, general and vocational education, and also the Information System of Uneducated Children and Pupils Not Attending School (NEMIS), which contains data on children under 18 years old, who are not attending school and have not acquired basic or secondary education, provides regular statistics on uneducated children and pupils that are not attending school, identifies the reasons, why children do not learn or skip school. The search of children is carried out seeking to return them to schools, motivating them to return to school and acquire education and/or qualification. Schools and municipalities must process the data received and provide these pupils with opportunities to return to the education system or, in case of being unable to do so, to clarify the reasons for their drop-out, such as going abroad.

#### **Ensuring the right to education for national minorities**

175. The protection of national minorities is ensured according to the international and national law. Lithuania has ratified the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, taking necessary measures to ensure comprehensive and efficient promotion of equality among persons belonging to national minorities and the majority in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life.

176. Lithuania creates conditions for the representatives of national minorities enabling them to be taught at general education institutions in their mother tongue and learn their mother tongue, use their native language when participating in children’s non-formal education. Representatives of national minorities can study in their mother tongue from pre-school to university level (Appendix No. 48).

177. Following the principle of equal opportunities the same assessments of learning achievements are carried out in relation to pupils attending schools of all languages of instruction. The Lithuanian language and literature matura examination has been introduced to all pupils as of 2013, including an introduction of the criteria-based assessment for state matura examinations, which replaced the previously used normative assessment of pupils achievements. The tasks of the matura examinations, except for foreign languages (English, French, Russian, German) and native languages (Belarusian, Polish, Russian, German) are provided in the Lithuanian language.

178. DNM, seeking to strengthen non-formal education for children and youth of national minorities, allocates the annual funding for Sunday schools, the major function of which is national, cultural education and teaching native language to youth and children. Upon providing national minorities with non-formal education, the DNM organises conferences and seminars for Sunday school teachers of the Lithuanian ethnic communities, to discuss such topics as the content, working methods, teaching measures and methods, also bilingualism at Sunday schools.

#### **Integrating Roma people into the education system**

179. The Action Plan for Integrating the Roma People into the Lithuanian Society for 2015-2020 features the goal and tasks, related, among others, to the integration of the Roma people into the education system, including various measures, such as cooperation with non-governmental organisations on the issues of the Roma integration to strengthen the educational work with Roma families raising pre-school children in different municipalities and incentives to actively use the right to pre-school institutional education for children; to



organise pre-school education for the Roma children at the Roma Community Centre; to support initiatives aimed at reducing the drop out of the Roma children from the education system, to increase the involvement of pupils with special educational needs, to create a safe school.

180. The attendance of the Roma children at general education schools is ensured by social workers. The Vilnius City Municipality Administration took additional measures implemented as part of the Programme for Integrating Vilnius (Kirtimai) Roma Encampment Community into the Society for 2016–2019 – social workers from Vilnius City Social Support Centre wake up and accompany the children, who need the assistance in getting ready for school, to the education institutions by hired transport, the Municipality Administration also organises transport for the Roma children from Kirtimai settlement to schools, pupils living in the city receive compensations for the electronic public transportation tickets.

181. Upon the implementation of the project ‘Local Roma Platforms – Moving Towards Cooperation with Municipalities’, in 2017–2018, the DNM funded the work of the assistant teachers, whose major function was to ensure the attendance of the Roma children. The Roma people, who have dropped out of the education system, can complete their education at adult schools and remotely. Roma Community Centre has a consulting office for remote education.

#### **Regarding the ratification of UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education**

182. The majority of the statements in the UNESCO Convention are not relevant anymore and do not meet a more advanced legal regulation, currently in force in Lithuania, compared to that, which is established in the Convention, adopted in 1960. The EU and the Council of Europe legislation raise higher standards, related to the implementation of the human rights and the principle of non-discrimination in education. Both the Lithuanian legal base and the existing international obligations currently ensure an adequate implementation of these rights and the principle of non-discrimination in education.

### **Article 15**

#### **The right to participate in cultural life**

183. Personal cultural rights are established in the Constitution, focusing a lot of attention on the protection of cultural rights of persons belonging to ethnic communities. Citizens belonging to ethnic communities have the right to foster their language, culture, and customs. State supports culture and science, and takes care of the protection of Lithuanian historical, artistic, and other cultural monuments, as well as other culturally valuable objects. The law protects and defends the spiritual and material interests of an author that are related to scientific, technical, cultural, and artistic work.

184. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – MC) prepared a draft Law on the Cultural Policy Framework of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – Draft Law), the purpose of which is to create a horizontal mechanism for the legal regulation of culture, which employs legal measures to establish the state’s obligations relating to culture, aiming to ensure the constitutional rights of the Lithuanian citizens to the access to culture. The Draft Law defines the general principles of the cultural policy, such as the freedom of creativity and information, equality, cooperation, coherence, etc. Seeking to encourage the participation of non-governmental organisations in the public policy, the Draft Law highlights the role of non-governmental organisations in shaping and implementation of the cultural policy.

185. State and municipal institutions create conditions for the residents of the country to use culture related services and participate in cultural life. The regional culture is determined by coordinated action of culture management, funding, information accumulation and distribution in district and municipal institutions. One of the goals,

established in the Lithuanian Cultural Policy Guidelines is to increase the availability of culture all over Lithuania.

186. Lithuanian state policy on ethnic culture is regulated by the Law on the Fundamentals of the State Protection of Ethnic Culture, establishing the fundamentals of the state protection of the Lithuanian ethnic culture, protection and continuity, the means and conditions for its development and enrichment. The Action Plan for the Development of Ethnic Culture for 2015–2018 aims is to invigorate the development of ethnic culture in regions, providing an opportunity for the residents to cherish the customs of their region. In 2018 regional councils for culture were established – expert groups, operating in ten Lithuanian districts and acting as expert consultants on art and culture.

187. The Law on Cultural Centres of the Republic of Lithuania regulates the establishment, reorganisation, elimination, management, activities, classification, funding of cultural centres and other related issues. There are more than 176 cultural centres, operating in various regions of Lithuania. These sources of culture are very important in seeking to create conditions for the development of professional and amateur art, as well as creative expression of the citizens.

188. As of 2018, the MC, together with the MESS, has been implementing the measure ‘Cultural Passport’, dedicated for developing culture habits of all Lithuanian pupils and broadening their cultural experience by providing high-quality services of culture and art.

#### **Scientific advancement and its practical application**

189. Upon the implementation of the Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania, the Government has reorganised the network of State scientific research institutions. The Research Council of Lithuania is the main institution, which finances scientific research and announces calls for applications for various national, international and EUF investment measures for funding scientific research and scientific activities that are important for the researchers’ careers and distribution of the results achieved.

190. The purpose of the State Lithuanistic Research and Distribution Programme for 2016–2024 is to use the method of tender funding to coordinate and integrate the major Lithuanistic scientific research and its distribution in Lithuania and abroad, implement the Lithuanistic scientific research priority, strengthen the input of the Lithuanistic studies and build a scientific basis for the development of the Lithuanian civic and cultural self-awareness, as well as protection of the Lithuanistic heritage.

191. Investments into RDI activities, dissemination of innovation and strengthening of innovation skills at companies are the basis for a successful growth of the Lithuanian economy and increase of its competitiveness. According to preliminary data, in 2017, RDI activities received EUR 371.7 million. The RDI costs, compared to 2016, increased by EUR 44.1 million. According to preliminary gross domestic product (GDP) data, Lithuania’s general costs on RDI activities constituted 0.89 % GDP.

192. Seeking to encourage investments into RDI activities, Lithuania has been implementing the Programme on the Implementation of the Priority Areas of Research and (Socio-Cultural) Development and Innovation (Smart Specialisation) and their Priorities, which identifies the country’s RDI development priorities, representing the strength and greatest potential of the national economy and science. The measures of the Programme for the Implementation of Smart Specialisation Priority are focused on applied research, needed for innovative products, services or processes, experimental development, clustering, promotion and distribution of innovation, increasing the internationalisation of enterprises, attracting direct foreign investments and increasing the demand for innovation. Lithuanian strategy for smart specialisation lists RDI priorities: energy and sustainable environment; agro-innovation and food technology; health technology and biotechnology; inclusive and creative society; new production processes, materials and technology; smart, clean, linked transport, information and communication technology.

193. Seeking to encourage the country’s companies to invest into RDI activities, needed for the development of innovative products, services or processes, boosting the development of companies and establishment of new innovative enterprises, MEI and

MESS have been implementing the measure 'Intellect. Joint Business-Science Projects'. This measure encourages science and research institutions to take up RDI activities together with business companies. The measure 'InoConnect' has been implemented to encourage companies to take part in international projects, which would help building business connections and find foreign partners.

### **Protection of copyright**

194. The MC implements state policy in the field of copyright and related rights and coordinates the protection of these rights. The main goal in this field is a system for protecting copyright and related rights, which meets international and regional state obligations, enabling a proper balance between the owners of the copyright and the users: ensuring the protection of interests of authors and creating conditions for them to receive a fair revenue for their creative results, thus encouraging creativity and at the same time enabling the society to use the copyrighted objects under certain conditions and guaranteeing the availability of the copyrighted content in cases that are important for the society, promoting cultural development and advancement. The protection of copyright and related rights is of high importance to the protection of collective management of these rights, implemented by non-profit organisations, established on the basis of the membership of copyright and related right holders.

### **Ensuring cultural and information services for persons with disabilities**

195. Libraries in Lithuania have been focusing on the integration of people with disabilities and expanding the range of cultural and information services. The national project 'Towards Library Progress', implemented in 2008–2013 and dedicated to the computerisation of public libraries in the country, has contributed to the integration of the people with disabilities and the development of cultural and information services. During this project, libraries have been supplied with special equipment and software for people with disabilities, library staff has been trained on servicing this specific group of customers. During the project, library websites have been adapted for the needs of the special groups of the society. Seeking to create better access conditions for the disabled to museums, it was established that persons with disabilities or reduced working capacity and persons accompanying them can visit permanent museum expositions free of charge.

196. The Law on the National Radio and Television of the Republic of Lithuania ensures the accessibility of persons with visual and hearing impairment to the content of the national broadcaster. National broadcaster undertakes to keep increasing the volumes of content, adapted for the disabled every year.

### **Access to the internet**

197. Public computer and internet access, digital proficiency and inclusion improvement services for the residents are most actively provided by the public library network, which currently consists of 5 980 computerised work places for residents in 1 243 public libraries all over the country. Residents are consulted and trained in digital proficiency trainings, organised at public libraries every year.

198. In 2018, Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania and MC started implementing the project 'Encouraging Smart Use of the Internet with Upgraded Infrastructure for Public Internet Access', the purpose of which is to develop and update the infrastructure of publicly available computers and internet access at public libraries, creating conditions for the residents to participate at digital competence development, local digital content development and other digital information initiatives.

199. In the field of electronic communications, rural broadband network RAIN development projects were successfully implemented. The basic broadband communication infrastructure enabled to ensure a possibility for 99 % residents of Lithuania to get an access to the broadband communication and use the internet.

**Lithuania's official support for development**

200. In 2018, Lithuania's official support for development amounted to 0.11 % of the total national revenue (in 2017 – 0.13 %). Lithuania's bilateral support for other countries constituted EUR 10.12 million of the total official support for development (19.25 % of the total support), multilateral support – EUR 42.42 million (80.7 % of the total OSD). The support for humanitarian aid constituted EUR 3.85 million of the total official support for development, EUR 2 279 622 for the refugees in Turkey via the EU support measure for the refugees; EUR 1 069 711 for the refugees in Lithuania; EUR 503 000 – contributions to international organisations, funds, support for the victims of military conflicts and humanitarian crises. Lithuania's priority geographic directions for development cooperation include Eastern European region, migration origin and transit countries. The greater share of the bilateral support is allocated to Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova – EU Eastern Partnership countries. In 2017, compared to 2016, the official support for development in terms of value has increased (being EUR 51.6 million in 2016), but the ratio between the official support for development and total national revenue has decreased due to the growth in the general national revenue.

**Regarding the signing and ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

201. As it was indicated in Lithuania's Universal Periodic Review, Lithuania has taken commitments under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and, according to this Covenant, must take all measures to implement the rights, established by the Covenant. Currently there are no plans to take up new international obligations, which could narrow the state legal options in the distribution of state resources as a result of quasi-judicial decisions by international institutions.

**Regarding the ratification of the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families**

202. According to the national and EU law, also UN human rights treaties that are legally binding on Lithuania, migrant workers and their family members are guaranteed with certain rights, but currently there are no plans to expand these rights in a way that is required according to the Convention, particularly as far as it is related to the wide and unconditional application of the principle of equal treatment in such fields as education, housing, social services and health care services. National legal measures, bilateral agreements and applicable EU legislation can properly ensure the rights of migrants and third parties.

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