

# Gender Equality in Academia and Research

## Lithuania

### PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH

#### Legal framework

In Lithuania there were limited initiatives for adopting or amending legislation that would significantly contribute to the institutional change in mainstreaming gender equality in science and research.

The key law that explicitly identifies gender equality in education is the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (Lietuvos Respublikos moterų ir vyrų lygių galimybių įstatymas, 1998). The article 4 defines the duties of educational establishment and institutions of science and studies to implement equal rights for women and men in admission process, award grants and loans for studies, selection of the curricula and assessment of knowledge. In addition, the law sets out the conditions to identify the violation of equal treatment between women and men. The law also protects pupils, students and employees in the educational institutions from harassment and sexual harassment.

The Law on Equal Opportunities (Lietuvos Respublikos lygių galimybių įstatymas, 2003) defines discrimination on various grounds, including gender. Other provisions of the law set the duties for education and research institutions to follow the principles of equal opportunities in education. The prohibition of harassment and sexual harassment on the ground of gender (including other grounds as well) is also included.

The Law on Science and Studies (Lietuvos respublikos mokslo ir studijų įstatymas, 2009) establishes equal rights for each citizen of Lithuania to obtain university degree and for the best students to do research and improve their qualification.

#### Policy framework

In 2010, the Government of Lithuania (LR Vyriausybė) adopted the National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2010-2014 ([Valstybinė moterų ir vyrų lygių galimybių programa 2010-2014](#)). It sets two main objectives in the area of education. These cover the monitoring of application of principles of equal opportunities for women and men in educational and research institutions and encouraging women to get the highest educational degrees in science and men to get university education. In the Action Plan for 2010-2014 three measures were defined to reach the above mentioned goals. First, the Plan stipulates the integration of the subject of equal opportunities for women and men in the calls for projects. No budget was allocated to this measure. The other measure included the organisation of trainings which would facilitate changing the discriminatory attitudes about women and men in the educational system. There were allocated 15.000 LT (4348 EUR) for the period of 5 years (2010-2014). The responsible body for both measures was the Ministry of Education and Science. Finally, the drafting of recommendations for educational and science institutions to ensure equal opportunities for women and men was planned. Structural funds were allocated to ensure the implementation of this measure through the project “Gender Equality in Science”.

In 2015, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania adopted the National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2015-2021 ([Valstybinė moterų ir vyrų lygių galimybių programa, 2015-2021](#)). It addresses the issues of unequal choices of women and men in their careers: women usually choose the “traditional” occupations and less prefer natural sciences (except medicine), physics and technologies. The government adopted the Action Plan for 2015-2017 which includes measures to encourage men to obtain university education and promote gender balance in various levels of studies. Finally, there is a recommendation to revise content of textbooks and other educational materials from gender biased towards more balanced representation of women and men. The Ministry of Education and Science is in charge of implementing these measures. No budget was allocated for these measures for the whole five-year period.

By the end of 2014, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania (LR Švietimo ir mokslo ministerija) adopted the Recommendations to Ensure Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the Research and Studies Institutions. The Recommendations identify the key directions for these institutions to implement gender equality principles. These include the monitoring of how gendered balance is ensured in decision-making processes, how equality principles are followed in the distribution of resources and how women and men in an institution are affected by institutional rules and practices. The Recommendations suggest improving the process for recruitment, career progression and appointments to decision-making bodies, setting up the social environment for the reconciliation of family duties and professional work, developing gender equality plans, ensuring financial mechanisms to support institutional sectors to implement gender equality initiatives, and supporting the projects on gender equality.

### **Other stimulatory initiatives**

Until October 2015, no stimulatory initiatives to promote gender in research have been set up in Lithuania.

### **Key actors**

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Equal Opportunities implements the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Law on Equal Opportunities. It investigates the individuals' complaints on violation of the equal rights and equal treatment in the labour market, education and provision of goods and services. It is accountable to the Parliament of Lithuania (Seimas).

## **INITIATIVES FOR GENDER EQUALITY BY RESEARCH PERFORMING ORGANISATIONS**

A recent study that analysed how gender equality was mainstreamed in the system of science and studies in public universities. The statutes of 14 public universities were examined for this purpose. The research shows that almost all universities, except War Academy of the General Jonas Zemaitis, do enshrine general principle of equal opportunities as provided in the Law on Science and Studies. However, no specific focus on gender equality principles could be found in the statutes of all universities.<sup>[1]</sup>

Though all universities enshrine general principles of equal opportunities in the statutes, in 2008, the Siauliai University set inner working rules allowing flexible working hours' arrangements for employees with children under 10 years old, or in charge of caring a sick/disabled person or continuing studies in college or university. The individual schedules for an employee could be arranged with the permission of the Rector.<sup>[2]</sup>

In 2013 and 2014, the University of Siauliai initiated the [award on the best implementation of gender equality in a department or institute](#). The criteria for granting this award consist of two main aspects: gender balanced representation across the faculty/institute's staff and the existence of policies supporting gender equality in a faculty/department. [In 2013, the Department of Technologies and Natural Sciences was awarded](#). In 2014, Siauliai University library together with the Students' Agency of the Department of Technologies and Natural Sciences received the award.

The University of Siauliai is part of a consortium of an EU-funded structural change project (INTEGER). Several initiatives have been set up under this project. Within this project, an online tool for institutionalising gender equality was developed. The Model of Institutional Transformational Change is related to social innovation by capacity building: developing adequate knowledge, incentives and institutional infrastructure, so that the university can tackle the different problems of increasing the participation of women. This model is built on an integrative gender equality approach. The latter is based on the understanding of equal opportunities as an equal share of assets which is conceptualised as an equal share of paid work, money, decision-making power, knowledge and time. Following this model, a gender equality plan (T-GAP) was developed. The plan clearly describes the implementation process of the plan. It also identifies the key actors responsible for its implementation, along with their role in the process. The plan includes measures to support career progression for female researchers, as well as to provide conditions for reconciling work and personal life. The internal and external monitoring and evaluation of T-GAP has been ensured. Both quantitative (e.g. the representation of women in various academic ranks, in recruitment and promotion pools) and qualitative (e.g. process of change in organizational culture, experiences of academic climate, work culture) indicators are foreseen for evaluating the progress towards gender equality.

During the last University Council elections of Siauliai University, a step-by step guide to achieve a more balanced representation of women in the Council was developed. The main strategic activities focused on identifying the active candidates, supporting them and lobbying/advocating for women candidates to be elected to the main decision body of the University. As a result, the number of women to the Council significantly increased from 0 % in 2011 to 36.3% in 2014.<sup>[3]</sup>

This university developed a scheme for supporting the researchers' careers after maternity/paternity by providing them financial support for preparing their dissertation and defence, as well as other activities to improve their professional career.<sup>[4]</sup> Support was provided to both women and men, particularly for those men who took parental leave more than once. Nevertheless, more women benefitted from this support.

Finally, Siauliai University also set up a childcare centre which is open for the university community and library visitors to leave their children for short-time under the supervision of professional staff. This measure supports parents to actively engage in professional activities as they can attend public lectures or other public events, work in the library or lecture, hold exams, attend staff meetings, etc.

[1] Žalėniene, p.372-377.

[2] Sidlauskienė V. (2012) Norminių teisės aktų dėl moterų ir vyrų lygybės nuostatų moksle ir studijose analizė (Analysis of legal acts on equality of women and men in science and studies), *Lyčių studijos ir tyrimai*, 2012, 10:71-103; p. 24

[3] Pépin A. Et al. 2014, p. 33

[4] Pépin A. Et al. 2014, p. 34

## RELEVANT EXAMPLES OF PRACTICES

### Council Election Tactics and Strategy Plan

The EU-funded structural change project INTEGER has taken on a pioneering role at Siauliai University (SU) and in Lithuania as a whole in promoting institutional transformation in higher education institution. Within this project, the SU Council Election Tactics and Strategy Plan were developed in order to encourage a gender-balanced representation of the Council.

A step-by-step guide was thought through to support female candidates. It included the following aspects: communication with the highest management staff at SU through formal meetings; consultation with the university lawyer about the possible ways of making women's representation in the Council's election; participation in the preparation of the election regulations; search for women candidates from SU representatives according to criteria such as loyalty to the university and commitment to implement gender equality at the university.

The design of individual election campaign to each of the candidates was an important step in the elections: different strategies were undertaken to highlight their talents and professional capacities to work in the Council. Each woman candidate's strategy was discussed with the communications and marketing director of SU. Female candidates were promoted through a campaign in the city and national media, a videoconference in the *etaplus* (local newspaper) was organised, interviews with the candidates were posted on the university's webpage and disseminated through a local TV station. The campaign tactics were based on positioning female candidates according to their active scientific work (at national and international level), academic (professional) activity and family balance, personal qualities, highlighting the units they had managed, etc.

The election process was monitored during the whole election campaign.

As a result of this initiatives, the number of women to the Council significantly increased from 0 % in 2011 to 36.3 % in 2014.

### **Supporting the researchers' careers after maternity/paternity**

Within the framework of INTEGER, an EU-funded structural change project), Siauliai University developed a scheme for supporting the researchers' careers after maternity/paternity by providing them financial support for preparing their dissertation and defence, as well as other activities to improve their professional career.<sup>[5]</sup> Support was provided to both women and men, particularly for those men who took parental leave more than once. Nevertheless, more women benefitted from this support.

An important step by Siauliai University was undertaken to lobby for the change in formal requirements for attestation of professional scientists. Alteration of Minimal Position Qualifying Requirements for research and HE Institution Research was approved in Seimas on 29 January 2014. The time period of pregnancy, birth and childcare leave can be excluded from the regulated timeframe in which the minimal qualifying requirements should be met.

SU also set up a childcare centre which is open for the university community and library visitors to leave their children for short-time under the supervision of professional staff. This measure supports parents to actively engage in professional activities as they can attend public lectures or other public events, work in the library or lecture, hold exams, attend staff meetings, etc.

[5] Pépin A. Et al. 2014, p. 34