

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

Lithuania

COUNTRY: Lithuania

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH

Legal framework

Prior to 2020, there were very few initiatives to adopt or amend legislation that would significantly contribute to institutional change in mainstreaming gender equality in science and research.

The key law that explicitly identifies gender equality in public life is the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (*Lietuvos Respublikos moteru ir vyru lygiu galimybiu istatymas*, No. VIII-947 1 December 1998^[1]). It aims “to ensure the implementation of equal rights for women and men enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania and to prohibit any type of discrimination on grounds of sex, in particular by reference to marital or family status”. Article 5 defines the duties of educational institutions and higher education and research institutions to implement equal rights for women and men (1) when admitting to vocational training and higher education institutions (HEIs), improving qualifications, developing professional skills and providing practical work experience, (2) when awarding scholarships and granting loans for studies, and (3) when defining curricula and assessing knowledge. The Law sets out the conditions to identify the violation of equal treatment between women and men. It obliges educational institutions and higher education and research institutions to prevent sexual harassment of pupils, students and employees, and to protect them from adverse treatment, consequences or persecution as a result of a complaint or any legal proceeding concerning discrimination. Educational and research institutions must ensure that their curricula and textbooks do not promote discrimination against women and men.

The Law on Equal Treatment (*Lietuvos Respublikos lygių galimybių įstatymas*, No. IX-1826 18 November 2003^[2]) aims “to ensure the implementation of the provisions of Article 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania enshrining the equality of persons and prohibition against restrictions on human rights or extensions of privileges on grounds of sex, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, belief, convictions or views”. Other provisions require educational and research institutions to follow the principles of equal opportunities in education (as defined in the Law on Equal Opportunities). The prohibition of harassment and sexual harassment on the ground of gender (including other grounds as well) is also included.

The Law on Higher Education and Research^[3] (*Lietuvos respublikos mokslo ir studijų įstatymas*, No. XI-242 30 April 2009^[4]) proclaims that “the Lithuanian policy on higher education and research guarantees the quality of higher education and research, equal access to higher education for all citizens and favourable conditions for the best of them to conduct their research and to seek academic and creative development”. Article 3(4)^[5] highlights equal opportunities as one of 10 key principles of higher education and research. Article 4(2)^[8] states that academic ethics covers “equality and anti-discrimination of all persons” participating in research and study processes.

Since 2017, Article 26 of the Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania (*Darbo kodeksas*, No. XII-2603 14 September 2016^[7]) has obliged all employers to implement the principles of gender equality. More specifically, employers must apply equal criteria and conditions for recruitment, create equal working conditions (including opportunities for training, professional development, etc.), apply the same work assessment and layoff criteria, pay the same salaries for equal and equally valued work, and protect against sexual harassment, discrimination, victimisation, etc.

Policy framework

Article 4(7) of the Law of Strategic Management (*Strateginio valdymo įstatymas*, No. XIII-3096 25-06-2020^[8]) states that one of the seven principles of strategic management systems is gender equality. It requires that “gender mainstreaming in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases must be taken into account in the preparation and implementation of planning documents in order to prevent the creation of barriers or constraints that may have undesirable consequences for women or men”.

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*, Order No. 112 4 February 2015^[9]). The purpose of the programme is a “coherent, integrated, and systemic resolution of women’s and men’s equality issues in all areas and ensuring the implementation of provisions provided by the Law on Opportunities for Women and Men, considering EU and international commitments in the area of equality between women and men”. The programme encourages equal opportunities for women and men in employment and work, and strives for balance in women’s and men’s participation in decision-making and in top-leading positions. It also seeks to increase the efficiency of institutional mechanisms of women’s and men’s equality, and encourage the integration of gender in health security, culture, environment, defence, access to justice and international cooperation. Several sub-objectives address education and research: encourage young women and men to choose “non-traditional” study subjects and professions; encourage men to acquire higher education; and prevent stereotypical/sexist images of women and men in textbooks and other teaching materials. The “Action Plan for implementing the National Programme in 2018-2021” (*Valstybinės moterų ir vyrų lygių galimybių 2015–2021 metų programos įgyvendinimo veiksmų planas 2018–2021 metams*, Order No. A1-331 27 June 2018) focuses on secondary and professional education levels, e.g. development of the website for pupils’ career education (www.mukis.lt^[10]), training authors of textbooks to avoid stereotypes, etc. The Lithuanian Centre of Informal Youth Education^[11] and the Centre for Educational Development are charged with implementing these measures, but no budget has been allocated for the whole five-year period.

The National Advancement Plan 2021–2030 (*Nacionalinės pažangos planas 2021–2030*, Resolution No. 998 9 September 2020^[12]) establishes three horizontal principles. The third is the principle of equal opportunities for everyone: “equal rights and opportunities to use services, infrastructure, transport and other means, to participate in public life are ensured to all persons, irrespective of their gender”. It states that the demands of women and men and the principle of equal opportunities must be considered when implementing the Plan’s objectives and developing national programmes. The second horizontal aim is “to increase the social well-being and inclusion of the population, to strengthen health and to improve the demographic situation in Lithuania”. One of the objectives is the “creation of a suitable, stimulating, family-friendly environment that would allow proper fulfilment of family functions and at the same time more active and successful participation in the labour market, strengthen equal opportunities for women and men, promote birth rates, ensure and maintain emotional well-being of families and children and expand high-quality services available to all families raising children”. The first strategic aim seeks to increase educational involvement and efficiency, striving to meet the needs of the individual and society. Gender aspects are not included in the implementation objectives.

In an effort to reduce the gender pay gap in Lithuania, data on average wages, by gender, for employers with at least eight employees, four or more of whom are women or men, were made publicly available on the open data portal of the State Social Insurance Fund (SODRA)^[13] in May 2021. Information on the gender pay gap at universities is also available^[14].

The only policy document focused on research and innovation (R&I) institutions is “Recommendations to Ensure Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in Research and Higher Education Institutions” (*Rekomendacijos lygioms vyrų ir moterų galimybėms lietuvos mokslo ir studijų institucijose užtikrinti*, Order No. V-1265, 23 December 2014^[15]). The document assesses the gender equality status at research and HEIs and identifies key directions to implement gender equality principles. These include monitoring how gender balance is ensured in decision-making processes, how equality principles are followed in the distribution of resources, and how women and men are affected by institutional rules and practices. Recommendations include: improving the process for recruitment, career progression and appointment to decision-making bodies; establishing a work environment that reconciles family duties and professional work; developing gender equality plans (GEPs); ensuring financial mechanisms to support organisational sectors to implement gender equality initiatives; and projects on gender equality.

Other stimulatory initiatives

As of August 2021, Lithuania had no national-level initiatives to promote gender equality in research.

In 2009, the international association *BASNET Forumas*^[16] was established by Lithuanian physicists to continue the work of “FP6 project Baltic States Network: Women in Science and HT” (BASNET). The association’s activities have since focused on implementing gender equality in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Key actors

The Research Council of Lithuania^[17] provides information on the topic of gender equality (*Lyčių lygybė*) in Horizon Europe. It covers GEPs, integration of the gender aspect in R&I content, and gender balance in research teams.

Accountable to the Parliament of Lithuania (*Seimas*), the Office of the Ombudsperson for Equal Opportunities^[18] implements the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Law on Equal Opportunities. It investigates individuals’ complaints of violation of equal rights and equal treatment in the labour market, education and provision of goods and services. The Office provides extensive tools and training^[19] for implementing equal opportunities in organisations. It maintains the website “New Standards” (*Nauji standartai*^[20]), which encourages companies and organisations to commit to equal opportunities in the workplace.

The Ministry of Social Security and Labour provides online information on equality between women and men (*Moterų ir vyrų lygybė*^[21]). It works to integrate the horizontal principle of equal opportunities for women and men into all areas of public policy and the proper implementation of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. As part of that work, it coordinates the Commission for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (*Moterų ir vyrų lygių galimybių komisija*^[22]) and the Equal Opportunities Network (*Lygių galimybių tinklas*^[23]).

INITIATIVES FOR GENDER EQUALITY BY RESEARCH PERFORMING ORGANISATIONS

In September 2015, five universities and two State-funded research centres published documents containing equal opportunities policies. More specifically, Klaipėda University implemented its Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy^[24] in 2017, while Kaunas University of Technology implemented its Equality and Diversity Policy^[25] (as part of its efforts towards Sustainable Development Goal 5^[26]) in 2018. The Vilnius Academy of Arts also implemented its Equal Opportunities Policy^[27] in 2018, in conjunction with academic ethics^[28] and sexual harassment prevention^[29]. At Vilnius University, similar initiatives began with the implementation of the strategic project Openness to Equality and Diversity^[30] in 2018. Among the State-funded research institutes, the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore adopted an Equal Opportunities Policy^[31] in 2017, while the Institute of Sociology of the Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences introduced its Equal Opportunities Policy^[32] in 2018.

All policy documents are written in “generic” Lithuanian and use only masculine grammatical forms^[33]. The exception is the Diversity and Equal Opportunities Strategy 2020-2025^[34] of Vilnius University, which is written in gender-sensitive language, using both feminine and masculine grammatical forms for students, employees, etc.

The term “gender” appears on lists of social categories in policy documents, alongside race, nationality, language, origin, social status, religion, belief or opinion, age, sexual orientation, disability and ethnicity. Unusually, the Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences (LCSS) also highlights striving for a balanced representation of women and men in its governing structures.

Most HEIs, research organisations and funding organisations in Lithuania are still developing their GEPs and implementation plans. Several, however, already have GEPs in place and report their achievements. The current “Plan of Measures for the Implementation of Equality at Vilnius Academy of Arts”^[35] was approved as part of its Equal Opportunities Policy in 2020. It addresses equal opportunities and diversity issues in leadership, inclusive culture, flexible working conditions, recruitment and career progression, equal pay and communication. Although gender equality is explicitly mentioned in the context of equal opportunities and equal pay (measure 5.1: to ensure gender balance among leading positions, and measure 5.2: to eliminate the gender pay gap), it is typically implicitly covered by all provisions on equal opportunities.

Vilnius University’s “Diversity and Equal Opportunities Strategy 2020-2025 implementation plan for 2020–2022”^[36] directly follows the objectives of the strategy. It sets out measures to:

Establish dignified, need-oriented and high-quality study and working conditions for people with disabilities;

Promote cultural diversity at the university and equal inclusion of foreign students and staff in the university's community;

Enable people experiencing social exclusion to pursue higher education at the university;

Develop ways to help members of the university's community to better balance study and/or work commitments with personal commitments;

Develop anti-discrimination measures and foster an organisational culture that values diversity and respects each member of the University's community.

Objective II will “strive for gender equality in individual areas of science and studies at the university through implementing GEPs with respect to students and staff and through pursuing gender balance in the university's governing bodies”. The implementation of this objective resulted in the “Vilnius University's Guidelines for Gender-sensitive Language”^[37] (*Vilniaus universiteto Lyčiai jautrios kalbos gairės*, 2021) and GEPs within five academic departments^[38]. As a partner in the Horizon 2020 project “Supporting and Implementing Plans for Gender Equality in Academia and Research” (SPEAR^[39]), Vilnius University is obliged to develop a general GEP for the entire university by the end of 2021.

Vilnius University's Faculty of Communication (FC^[40]), Faculty of Economics and Business Administration (FEBA^[41]), Faculty of Philosophy (FPh^[42]), Institute of International Relations and Political Sciences (IIRPS^[43]) and Business School (BS^[44]) have all established GEPS. They all address gender equality issues by: integrating gender equality principles in organisational documents; training all community members; communication activities focused on awareness-raising; and monitoring GEP implementation. Specific measures in the GEPs vary. For example, the GEP of the IIRPS^[45] includes regular communication of its official position on gender equality internally and externally, and the organisation of expert events to explore equality and/or women's leadership topics. The GEPs of FC^[46] and FPh^[47] focus on the development and dissemination of guidelines on integrating gender in research and studies, and gender equality principles in general communication. The GEP of FEBA^[48] includes several measures addressing gender equality issues among students.

The Marine Research Institute^[49], together with the Klaipėda University's Faculty of Marine Technology and Natural Sciences^[50], implemented the GEP 2018-2023^[51]. That GEP was developed within the framework of the Horizon 2020 project Baltic Gender^[52] in 2018. The document is based on a thorough current state analysis and covers career advancement, work and family, and long-term sustainability of the GEP. It includes 12 targets (e.g. 1.1. Enhance career advancement and leadership) and 18 actions to achieve those targets (e.g. 1.1.1. Training to raise awareness of gender issues at all levels).

In June 2021, Vytautas Magnus University approved its GEP 2021-2025^[53], also developed within the SPEAR^[54] framework. The document defines six broad gender equality objectives and lists the planned activities to achieve those objectives.

RELEVANT EXAMPLES OF PRACTICES

Elimination of the gender pay gap at Vilnius Academy of Arts

In April 2021, the State Social Insurance Fund Board (SODRA) under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour^[55] analysed data from the Vilnius Academy of Arts. It found that, on average, women earned slightly less than their male colleagues (the gender pay gap amounted to 2 %). This result reflects the implementation of the “Plan of Measures for the Implementation of Equality at the Vilnius Academy of Arts”^[56]. In 2019, the Rector began to address salary-based inequalities as part of efforts to embed the principles of fairness and social justice by ensuring equal pay for equal work. At organisational level, study programmes receive different funding, leading to salary variation by department. For example, a lector (the lowest position) in one department could earn as much as a professor (the highest position) in another department, i.e. the salary was not related to the position, but, rather, to the department. In addition, there is strong segregation of women and men by field, and, correspondingly, by department. Women are overrepresented both in the lowest positions and in departments with the lowest salaries. The initiative thus sought to address the gender pay gap and – to some extent - women's and men's different status.

The elimination of the gender pay gap is one measure of the “Plan of Measures for the Implementation of Equality at Vilnius Academy of Arts”^[57]. It directly correlates with other measures, such as equal opportunities and inclusion in recruitment and career advancement procedures, gender balance in leading positions, support for employees who have taken parental leave or have not worked for a long time, etc.

Equality Committee at Kaunas University of Technology

The Equality Committee at Kaunas University of Technology is a permanent committee formed by Rector's Order in 2018. It is responsible for implementing the University's Policy on Equality and Diversity^[58]. The Committee acts as an independent and impartial agency in cases of discrimination, harassment, violation of equality and persecution. Its main tasks are: (1) examination of reports (complaints) from university staff and students on violation of equal opportunities or persecution; (2) coordination of the implementation of the Equality and Diversity Policy; (3) provision of guidance to managers, employees and students on issues related to equality; and (4) prevention of the violation of equality. In general, the Committee focuses on two broad areas. The first is examining complaints about violation of equal opportunities (e.g. mobbing, discrimination, harassment, including gender equality-related issues). The second is advising administrative and other staff on the application of the principle of equal opportunities and diversity (including gender equality), and its implementation in various processes, procedures and regulations (e.g. review/development of documents).

GEP at Vilnius University

At Vilnius University, gender equality is one constituent of the general Equal Opportunities Policy^[59]. The University's GEP is one of the measures in the "Implementation Plan for the period 2020–2022"^[60] for its "Diversity and Equal Opportunities Strategy 2020–2025"^[61]. The GEP is also part of the University's commitments under the EU-funded SPEAR project.

The GEP was developed at the end of 2019, following an analysis of the University's gender (equality) status. That analysis formed part of the "Analysis of Diversity and Equal Opportunities in Vilnius University 2018–2019"^[62] and was strongly supported by the Rector's Office and the heads of several organisational units. At the beginning of 2020, a working group was established, composed of representatives from nine academic departments (the Faculties of Economics and Business Administration, Philosophy, Communication, Physics and History, Kaunas Faculty, Institute of International Relations and Political Sciences, Business School and Life Sciences Centre) and the Vilnius Library^[63]. The working group was tasked with developing 10 pilot GEPs in those departments. Development began with an analysis of available data on the status of gender equality in each participating department, identifying issues to be tackled in the GEP. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic slowing all activities, by May 2021, five GEPs were approved by the Councils of the Faculties of Economics and Business Administration, Philosophy and Communication, the Institute of International Relations and Political Sciences and the Business School. Some positive effects are already visible. For example, even without the formal requirement for gender-equal representation in elections for faculty councils, members of the community began to consider the importance of equal representation of women and men among candidates.

The GEP for Vilnius University reflects the experience gained during the development and initial steps of implementing GEPs in the departments. It covers gender equality issues such as gender balance in leadership, staff recruitment and career progression, including work life-balance issues, equal pay issues, research and studies, as well as institutional communication. The SPEAR project team develops the GEP and is actively involved in discussions of GEP measures with representatives of the main administrative departments. The Vilnius University GEP should be approved by the Senate at the end of 2021.

Footnotes

[1] <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/3486ee123cfa11eabd71c05e8...>, last amended in 2017.

[2] <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/77e54a933db211eabd71c05e8...> amended for 1 July 2019-31 December 2021.

[3] <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/548a2a30ead611e59b76f36d7...>, published English version was amended in 2015.

[4] Last amended for 1 July-30 November 2021.

[5] Added in the Lithuanian version amended for 1 July-30 November 2021; the principle is not mentioned in the English version amended in 2015.

[6] Added in the Lithuanian version amended for 1 July-30 November 2021; academic ethics is not defined in the English version amended in 2015.

[7] Last amended for 1 August-31 October 2021.

[8] <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/90386d20bab711ea9a12d0dad...>

[9] <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/dc012450b1ca11e48296d11f563abfb0>

[10] <http://www.mukis.lt/lt/pradzia.html>

[11] <https://www.lmnc.lt/en/>

[12] <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/c1259440f7dd11eab72ddb4a1...>

[13] <https://atvira.sodra.lt/imones/paieska/index.html>

[14] <https://genbudget.act-on-gender.eu/Blog/data-women%E2%80%99s-and-men%E2%...>

[15] <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/7141ebc0907011e48028e9b85...>

[16] <https://www.basnetforumas.eu/>

[17] <https://www.lmt.lt/en>

[18] <https://www.lygybe.lt/en/>

[19] <https://www.lygybe.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys>

[20] <https://www.lygybesplanai.lt/apie-mus/>

[21] <https://socmin.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys/moteru-ir-vyru-lygybe>

[22] <https://socmin.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys/moteru-ir-vyru-lygybe/moteru-ir-...>

[23] <https://socmin.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys/socialine-integracija/lygios-gal...>

[24] <https://www.ku.lt/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2017-12-21-Nr.-1-027-KU-dar...>

[25] <https://en.ktu.edu/university/sustainability/#EQUALITY-AND-DIVERSITY>

[26] <https://en.ktu.edu/university/sustainability/gender-equality/#KTU-tasks-...>

[27] [https://www.vda.lt/uploads/documents/files/ivairus/Lygiu%20galimybiu%20i...\(1\).pdf](https://www.vda.lt/uploads/documents/files/ivairus/Lygiu%20galimybiu%20i...(1).pdf)

[28] <https://www.vda.lt/lt/apie-vda/etika>

[29] [https://www.vda.lt/uploads/documents/files/ivairus/Lygiu%20galimybiu%20i...\(1\).pdf](https://www.vda.lt/uploads/documents/files/ivairus/Lygiu%20galimybiu%20i...(1).pdf)

[30] https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Veiklos_dokumentai/Strateginis_veiklos_plan...

[31] http://www.lti.lt/failai/LLTI_Lygiu%20galimybiu%20politika_jos%20igyven...

[32] <https://www.lstc.lt/veikla-reglamentuojantys-dokumentai/>

[33] For peculiarities of grammatical gender in Lithuanian compared to English, see Gudzinevičiūtė, O.L. and Roikienė, D., "Lithuanian SUBSTANTIVA COMMUNIA and their translation into English", *Filologija*, Vol. 17, 2012, pp. 56-66, <https://gs.elaba.lt/object/elaba:6101687/>

[34] <https://www.vu.lt/en/about-vu/equal-opportunities#strategy-for-the-perio...>

[35] [https://www.vda.lt/uploads/documents/files/Intranetas/Lygyb%C4%97s%20igy...\(1\).pdf](https://www.vda.lt/uploads/documents/files/Intranetas/Lygyb%C4%97s%20igy...(1).pdf)

[36] <https://www.vu.lt/en/about-vu/equal-opportunities#implementation-plan-fo...>

[37] https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Apie_VU/VU_lyciai_jautrios_kalbos_gaires.pdf

[38] <https://www.vu.lt/apiemus/lygios-galimybes#spear-projektas-vu>

[39] <https://gender-spear.eu/>

[40] <https://www.kf.vu.lt/en/>

[41] <https://www.evaf.vu.lt/en/>

[42] <https://www.fsf.vu.lt/en/>

[43] <https://www.tspmi.vu.lt/en/>

[44] <https://www.vm.vu.lt/en/>

[45] https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Apie_VU/VU_Tarptautini%C5%B3_santyki%C5%B3_...

[46] https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Apie_VU/VU_Komunikacijos_fakulteto_LLP.pdf

[47] https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Apie_VU/VU_Filosofijos_fakulteto_LLP.pdf

[48] https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Apie_VU/VU_Ekonomikos_ir_verslo_administrav...

[49] <http://apc.ku.lt/en/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Gender-Equality-Action-Pl...>

[50] <https://www.ku.lt/jtgmf/en/>

[51] <http://apc.ku.lt/en/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Gender-Equality-Action-Pl...>

[52] <https://www.baltic-gender.eu/home>

[53] <https://www.vdu.lt/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Vytauto-Didziojo-universit...>

[54] <https://gender-spear.eu/>

[55] <https://www.sodra.lt/en/>

[56] [https://www.vda.lt/uploads/documents/files/Intranetas/Lygyb%c4%97s%20igy...\(1\).pdf](https://www.vda.lt/uploads/documents/files/Intranetas/Lygyb%c4%97s%20igy...(1).pdf)

[57] [https://www.vda.lt/uploads/documents/files/Intranetas/Lygyb%c4%97s%20igy...\(1\).pdf](https://www.vda.lt/uploads/documents/files/Intranetas/Lygyb%c4%97s%20igy...(1).pdf)

[58] <https://en.ktu.edu/university/sustainability/#EQUALITY-AND-DIVERSITY>

[59] <https://www.vu.lt/en/about-vu/equal-opportunities>

[60] <https://www.vu.lt/en/about-vu/equal-opportunities#implementation-plan-fo...>

[61] <https://www.vu.lt/en/about-vu/equal-opportunities#strategy-for-the-perio...>

[62] <https://www.vu.lt/en/about-vu/equal-opportunities#analysis-of-diversity-...>

[63] <https://biblioteka.vu.lt/en/>