

Lithuania

About

The general principle of equal opportunity and equal treatment is enshrined in Article 29 of the 1992 [Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania](#). Efforts to promote gender mainstreaming have been formalised in important policy documents, such as the national programmes on equal opportunities for women and men and subsequent action plans for the implementation of those programmes.

The Adoption of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action (BPfA) stimulated the creation of gender equality institutional mechanisms in Lithuania. The first attempt to implement gender mainstreaming was the Lithuanian Women's Advancement Programme, approved by the government in 1996.

The process of accession to the European Union (EU) played a crucial role in fostering gender equality and gender mainstreaming in Lithuania's national policy and body of legislation. All public documents were then required to meet EU standards, including an approach to gender mainstreaming. The concept was first addressed in 1999, when Lithuania entered negotiations to accede to the EU. Gender mainstreaming has been actively promoted since 2012. Two National Programmes on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2010-2014 and 2015-2021) have since been approved, together with their associated implementation plans (National Programmes on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Implementation Plan 2015-2017 and 2018-2021).

Legislative and policy framework

The [Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men](#) (1998) and the [Law on Equal Treatment](#) (2005) provide for consistent and systematic implementation of programmes, measures and projects and are aimed at fostering de facto gender equality.

The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men forbids any discrimination – whether direct or indirect – on the ground of sex, including sexual harassment. An independent Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson was appointed and its Office was established in 1999. [The Law on Equal Treatment](#) (2005) has been reformed several times (2001 (twice), 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2016) and is now fully in line with the EU acquis and other international instruments. The Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson is responsible for the supervision and implementation of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1998) and the [Law on Equal Treatment](#) (2005).

As a result of recommendations from various professionals and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), several improvements were made to the [Law on Equal Treatment](#) (2005) and the [Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men](#) (1998) in 2016. The amendments to the Law on Equal Treatment (2005) include, firstly, a prohibition to give any priority to either gender (except in cases foreseen by the law) in job advertisements for civil service recruitment. Secondly, potential employers are forbidden to ask jobseekers for any information on their family status, age (except in cases foreseen by law), private life, family formation and attitudes towards family planning. Thirdly, equal opportunities must be ensured for women and men in purchasing goods and services, including less favourable treatment of women because of pregnancy, childbirth and nursing (except in cases foreseen by law).

Since 2012, Lithuania has compiled several key strategic documents: the National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2010–2014 (adopted in 2014); the [National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2015–2021](#) (approved in 2015); and the National Programme Implementation Plans for 2015-2017 and 2018-2021 (approved in 2018), respectively, which set out concrete actions, implementation deadlines, responsible institutions, state budget allocations needed for each step, and evaluation criteria.

The purpose of the National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2015–2021 (Valstybinė moterų ir vyrų lygių galimybių programa 2015–2021) is to ensure a consistent, sophisticated and systematic approach to gender equality issues in all fields, as well as the implementation of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1998), in compliance with EU and international obligations in the field of gender equality. The National Programme pursues four main priorities:

- 1 Equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market;
- 2 Gender balance in decision-making;
- 3 Gender mainstreaming (especially in culture, education and science, national defence and international obligations);
- 4 Increased management effectiveness.

Gender equality activities are in the priority areas of employment, science and education, healthcare, environmental protection, national defence, decision-making, EU and international cooperation and the development of mechanisms and methods to implement equal opportunities for women and men. The National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2015–2021 aims to promote the integration of the gender equality principle in the following fields: education and science, healthcare, culture, national defence and international cooperation.

In 2014, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, in its concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Lithuania on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), in particular on the institutional mechanisms on gender mainstreaming, expressed concerns 'at the limited effectiveness and lack of visibility of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Equal Opportunities, the low number of complaints of sex- and gender-based discrimination dealt with (only 14 % of all complaints) and the absence of disaggregated data on the regional distribution and outcome of such complaints' [1].

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Structures

Government responsibilities

The Ministry of Social Security and Labour (Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerija) is responsible for gender equality policy and gender mainstreaming, as well as implementation, monitoring and follow-up of the central strategies and measures. The Ministry coordinates gender equality issues and gender mainstreaming, particularly ensuring equal opportunities for women and men in the areas of employment and social protection. Ministerial responsibility for gender equality is not established by law.

Since 2006, gender equality issues are dealt with by a separate gender equality department in the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The Department of Equal Opportunities, Equality between Women and Men (formerly the Equality between Women and Men Division) is an internal structure of the Ministry at intermediate level. It is responsible for designing, coordinating, implementing and overseeing government policy on gender equality, as well as EU and international cooperation on gender equality matters. The Department also serves as secretariat for the Inter-Institutional Commission on Equal Opportunities for women and men.

In 2001, the government established an Inter-Institutional Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, composed of representatives of every ministry, together with the Lithuanian Department of Statistics, women's centres (the Women's Information Centre, Women's Forum, etc.), trade unions, social partners, other institutions and NGOs. The Commission is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the [National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2015–2021](#), although different ministries may be responsible for the implementation of several concrete measures of the Programme. It also manages the implementation of the principle of equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the activities of state institutions and enterprises.

The Commission meets quarterly to discuss amendments to the law and the implementation of the relevant action plans. Municipalities, women's organisations, gender studies centres, social partners and other relevant bodies are encouraged to cooperate in the implementation of the National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2015–2021. The Programme incorporates suggestions made by NGOs, social partners and gender study centres to make sure that gender equality problems are tackled consistently and systematically and that gender gaps are reduced.

Every year, progress on the implementation of the National Programme is reported to the government, while an independent external comparative assessment of the overall impact of the National Programme is carried out every five years.

Independent gender equality body

The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson (Lygių galimybių kontrolieriaus tarnyba) was established by the [Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men](#) (1998). The Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson is an independent body that deals with all grounds of discrimination such as gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, race, ethnic origin, nationality, language, social status, belief or religion, convictions or views, and citizenship.

Parliamentary bodies

There is a Human Rights Committee of the Seimas (parliament) of the Republic of Lithuania.

Regional structures

To ensure gender equality at local level, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour organised seminars to support the municipalities to integrate the gender aspect in their programmes. It provided specific measures to be applied at local level to promote gender equality, noting their advantages and the added value of gender equality for the communities. The third goal of the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Woman and Men 2015-2021 - 'Effectiveness of institutional mechanisms' - includes assistance for municipalities with actions to ensure equal opportunities for women and men.

Similarly, the [Office of the Ombudsperson](#) is running a project called 'Municipalities' Success Code – Gender Equality', which started in December 2016 and is to end in December 2019. One of the projects within the Municipalities' Success Code, the [Social Innovation Fund](#), arranged seminars on 'Municipalities' steps towards equality between women and men, which were attended by 150 representatives from municipalities and NGOs.

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Methods and tools

Note: the methods and tools listed under this section were the focus of EIGE's 2018-2019 assessment. If certain methods and tools are not mentioned in this section, this does not necessarily mean that they are not used at all by Lithuania.

The National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2015-2021 notes that one of the main factors in ineffective gender equality implementation is the lack of gender impact assessment of decisions. In fact, the Programme states that 'draft laws and other decisions are not evaluated in terms of impact on the situation of women and men'.

Article 3, part 1 of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2015) states that: 'state and municipal institutions must ensure, within their competence, that all legal acts that they draft and adopt must ensure equal rights of women and men. They must also draw up and implement programmes and measures aimed at ensuring equal opportunities for women and men and, in the manner prescribed by laws, must support the programmes of public establishments, associations and charitable foundations which assist in implementing equal opportunities for women and men. [2]'

Training and awareness-raising

Training and awareness-raising campaigns were organised regularly during the last three years by different NGOs dealing with gender equality issues. The [National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2015–2021](#) budgets for training and awareness-raising campaigns. Within the framework of the programme, several institutions organised training for civil servants, diplomats, officers and judges to enhance their ability to work in the field of gender equality. Another training period is envisioned in the [National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Implementation Plan](#) covering the years 2018–2021.

Gender statistics

There is no specific unit responsible for promoting the production of sex-disaggregated data within the national statistical body - the [Lithuanian Department of Statistics](#) - nor is there any legal obligation to collect sex-disaggregated statistics. Instead of a specific gender unit, the Demographic and Migration Statistics division is tasked with producing and disseminating sex-disaggregated statistics. The group is active in both data gathering and data analysis.

Until 2017, the Demographic and Migration Statistics division produced an annual report on the situation of women and men ('Women and Men in Lithuania' (Moterys ir vyrai Lietuvoje). The most recent report was published in 2017, in both Lithuanian and English. It presented data disaggregated by sex, as well as discussing some of the gender equality indicators. The report covered the following areas: population and family, childcare, education and science, use of information technology, labour market, health, social protection, recreation and tourism, violence, crime, living standards, power and decision-making, and statistical data of the EU Member States.

Gender equality statistics are published on the [Official Statistics Portal](#), including the Database of Indicators and thematic tables ('Gender Statistics Indicators'). In 2016, the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson requested the publication of more detailed gender statistics at territorial level. Following an analysis by specialists of Department of Statistics, more detailed gender statistics, by municipality and county, have been published on the Official Statistics Portal since 2017.

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Good practices

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Endnotes

[1] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2014). [Concluding observations. CEDAW/C/LTU/CO/5](#), p.3.

[2] Part 2, [National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2015-2021](#) (2015).