

## **Reply of Lithuania to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on realizing the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution 32/20**

### **1. What are the concrete steps your Government or organization has taken to ensure the realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl?**

In the *Article 41 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania* it is stated that education shall be compulsory for persons under the age of 16. Education at state and municipal schools of general education, vocational schools, and schools of further education shall be free of charge. Higher education shall be accessible to everyone according to individual abilities. Citizens who are good at their studies shall be guaranteed education at state schools of higher education free of charge.

*Article 5 of the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania* (hereinafter – the Law) states that the educational system shall be based on equal opportunities. The Law established that the educational 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. *Article 24* of the Law establishes that each citizen of the Republic of Lithuania, each alien who has the right of permanent or temporary residence in the Republic of Lithuania, shall have the right to study, attain an education level and a qualification. The State shall take measures that in Lithuania each child studies according to pre-primary, primary, basic, secondary education curricula. The State shall guarantee each citizen of the Republic of Lithuania and each alien who has the right of permanent or temporary residence in the Republic of Lithuania 1) pre-primary, primary, basic and secondary education; 2) access to higher education study programmes or vocational training programmes that result in the acquisition of the first qualification.

*Article 4 of the Law on Vocational Education of the Republic of Lithuania* (hereinafter – the Law) establishes that the vocational education system shall be based on the principle of equal opportunities. The Law establishes that the vocational education system is socially just, it ensures equality of persons without prejudice to their gender, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, belief, convictions or attitudes; it guarantees to every person the acquisition of a primary qualification and creates conditions to improve the acquired qualification or to acquire a new one.

*The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men* (hereinafter – the Law) prohibits harassment, sexual harassment, or any form of discrimination (direct or indirect) on the basis of sex. The provisions of this Law are applicable in the areas of employment, education and

science, the supply of goods and services and social security. The Law establishes mandatory actions for employers, institutions of education and science, authorities responsible for the protection of consumer rights and social security systems in order to ensure equal opportunities for women and men. *Article 4* of the *Law* describes the duty of educational establishments and research and higher education institutions:

- to ensure equal conditions for women and men when admitting to vocational training establishments and schools of higher education, improving the qualification, developing professional skills and providing practical work experience;
- to ensure equal conditions for women and men when awarding scholarships and granting loans for studies;
- to ensure equal conditions for women and men when curricula are selected for them and selected by them;
- to ensure equal conditions for women and men when assessing the knowledge;
- to take measures to prevent sexual harassment of pupils, students and employees of educational establishments and research and higher education institutions;
- to take measures to ensure that pupils, students or employees of educational establishments and research and higher education institutions who testify or provide explanations would be protected from hostile treatment, adverse consequences and any other type of persecution as a reaction to the complaint or another legal procedure concerning discrimination.
- Educational and research establishments must, within their competence, ensure that curricula and textbooks do not propagate discrimination against women and men.

*Article 7* of the *Law* establishes the grounds on which educational establishments and research and higher education institutions shall be recognised as violating equal rights for women and men, if, on the grounds of a person's sex, different requirements and conditions are applied when admitting for training or studies, preparing the curricula and study programmes, assessing the knowledge, improving the qualification, developing professional skills or providing practical work experience; different opportunities are provided for choosing the subjects; pupils, students or employees, representatives of pupils, students or employees and pupils, students or employees who testify or provide explanations in relation to the complaint or another legal procedure concerning discrimination are persecuted.

In 2015 the Fourth *National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2015–2021* was approved. The *Action Plan for Implementation 2015–2017 of the National Programme* was approved by Order No. A1-199 of 13 April 2015 of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania. The National Programme and the Action Plan, apart from the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Republic of Lithuania, are the main operative documents on national level aiming at ensuring gender equality.

*The National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2015–2021* is intended to consistently, comprehensively, systematically and universally promote gender equality and eliminate differences in the status of women and men in all areas. There four main goals of the National Programme are:

- 1) To promote equal opportunities for women and men in the field of employment and occupation.
- 2) Balanced involvement of women and men in decision-making and holding the top posts.
- 3) To improve effectiveness of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of gender equality.
- 4) To promote integration of the gender aspect.

In the *Action Plan of the Implementation of the National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2015–2017* in the fields of education and science following objectives have been foreseen: encouraging young women and men to choose studies, professions other than “traditionally feminine and masculine”; promoting non-discriminatory attitude to women and men in textbooks and other teaching materials. Implementation of the Action Plan is coordinated by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The progress of implementation of different Action Plan measures is discussed and information on the outcomes is presented at the meetings of the Commission on a yearly basis. Responsible institutions inform the Commission and society about planned events as well as about the implementation of certain measures by publishing information on their websites, Information portal for women, through electronic network of women's organisations, etc.

**2. Which measures would your Government or organization propose and implement in order to eliminate gender disparities in education by 2030, taking into account goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as other relevant SDGs?**

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania is responsible for the coordination of gender equality on the national level. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor is striving that gender dimension would be included into all national strategies regarding education and science, seeking to eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls and women (SDG goal No. 5 “Gender Equality”).

**4. In the view of your Government, what are the obstacles and barriers faced by girls in particular in effectively accessing education?**

According to the Statistics Department of the Republic of Lithuania,

- In 2015, 93 % of women and 89 % of men aged 20-24 had concluded *upper secondary or tertiary education*.
- At the beginning of the 2015-2016 academic year, there were 515 thousand students enrolled in educational institutions, out of which female students accounted for 50.4 % were (259.8 thousand) and male students accounted for 49.6 % (255.2 thousand).
- In the beginning of the 2015-2016 academic year, among all students enrolled in *vocational schools*, women accounted for 42 %, men – for 58 %.
- In the beginning of the 2015-2016 academic year, in *higher education* women accounted for 57 %, men – for 43 % students.

Despite the fact that there are more female students than male enrolled in higher education institutions, female university graduates tend to face obstacles in advancing their career and earning a higher income because of gender stereotypes. Aiming to encourage employers to take actions in the field of gender equality and to draw publics' attention to the existing gender equality issues in the business sector, following goals are foreseen in the *Action Plan of the*

*Implementation of the National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2015–2017:*

- To establish clauses in legal acts, placing obligation on employers to provide employees with an opportunity to receive information on company's wage systems;
- To establish clauses in legal acts placing obligation on employers to publish information on the average wages of employees by gender at least once a year, taking into consideration the European Commission's recommendations (2014) to strengthen the principle of equal pay for women and men through increased transparency;
- To establish clauses in legal acts placing obligation on employers to inform employees, employees' representatives and trade unions about the level of wages at least once a year, taking into consideration the European Commission's recommendations (2014) to strengthen the principle of equal pay for women and men through increased transparency;
- To prepare a training program on gender equality policy at work for private and state employers;
- To prepare the procedure and criteria for selecting the Most Equal Employer;
- To create and sustain a Network of the Most Equal Employers;
- To organize educational events for social partners and companies striving for social responsibility and gender equality;
- To organize trainings for journalists, trade unions, business companies on gender equality;
- To organize a conference on economic empowerment of women and the importance of gender balance in business;
- To promote female leadership in society and business by organizing female leadership information campaigns.