

LITHUANIA

NATIONAL POLICY BRIEF

The objective of this policy brief is to present the current situation and progress made in family support on behalf of the children's rights in Lithuania towards achieving quality standards using the quality assurance protocol for family support services implemented by the 19 countries participating in the COST Innovators Grant IG18123, QA[4]EuroFam. The aim is to provide key messages on current strengths as well as recommendations to key audiences, bringing relevant views and appraisals from the group of interdisciplinary experts, representatives of various sectors in the field at national level.



National Working Group

Consensual responses were provided by members of Lithuanian National Working Group made up of 2 researchers and 3 coordinators of services and social entities at national, regional and local levels in social, education, health, and justice sectors.

1. Contextualization and characterization of family support in Lithuania



Family policy in Lithuania aims to create favourable conditions for families to encourage a higher birth rate, strengthen relationships, increase family stability, and reduce domestic violence. There is a legitimate basic package of services for families in Lithuania, which includes educational, health, social, legal, mobility, and socio-cultural services. The twelve (fourteen from 01.07.2024) essential services can be provided for family members according to their life stage. For the victims of domestic violence, there are special aid centers, services providers in municipalities, and social services providers for the persons who need care. There are programs for the changing behaviour of abusers in Lithuania.

Q Definition and understanding of family support: Family support is a purposeful activity aimed at creating legal, social, economic, cultural and other conditions that encourage individuals to create, nurture and preserve a harmonious family, as the primary and natural community and the most favourable environment for the growth, development and education of the child, ensuring the state and nation of Lithuania vitality and historical survival.

The family support system in Lithuania is mainly child-centered and consists of various services for children and their families, including child protection, child well-being, and parenting support.

Q Family support services in context: The state support system for families and children consists of two main parts: benefits paid from social insurance and social assistance (means-tested) and services. Services are provided based on the needs of the child and the family. So, it might be health care, education, or social services. The municipalities mainly provide family support services, partly through the national government, such as social support, education, or healthcare. Municipalities provide social services for families themselves or buy these services from NGOs.

Q Political perspective on family support: The Ministry of Social Security and Labour plays a leading role in shaping and implementing family policies.

The National Family Council under the Parliament of Lithuania (2020) composed of representatives of family councils within municipalities, alongside with NGOs and researchers. The Council is an advisory and expert institution that contributes to the formation of policies for the family, observes and evaluates the performance of various means and instruments in favour of the family, and encourages collaboration between national-level institutions and family councils in regions.

The Commission on Family Policy under the Government of Lithuania, which aims to coordinate the ministries and other state institutions on issues related to family affairs and well-being.

2. Key messages from the National Strengths and Recommendations Report



Families and Children

STRENGTHS

1. Multidimensional Family Therapy Program (MDFT) program contributes to the creation of healthy relationships between the child and his parents or other legal representatives, strengthening the ability of the parents or other legal representatives. The basic package of services for the family is a set of educational, health, social, legal, mobility, socio-cultural services provided to the family.

The Complex Family Services provides services to families such as psychological counseling, parenting education groups, mediation in case of divorce.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To improve the accessibility of special aid for families with children with disability and special needs. Ensure that services are provided more in line with the family's (with children with disabilities and special needs) needs. Solve the lack of qualified staff in regions able work with children with special needs.



Professionals

STRENGTHS

1. Professionals are highly qualified. There are requirements for the family support provider position to be a graduate of higher education. Staff are required to participate permanent in training in Lithuania.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure that services are provided more in line with the family's (with children with disabilities and special needs) needs. Professional have to inform families about the importance of services to their children.



Policymakers

STRENGTHS

1. Special attention on the political level was devoted to the child's well-being in Lithuania last year. It was adopted the Family Strengthening Law in 2017.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To improve the accessibility of special aid for families with children with disability and special needs. Solve the lack of qualified staff in regions able to work with these children.. Ensure more favorable work conditions, less workload, shorter working hours, additional rest days for specialists working with families, also ensure transportation of families with children to service provision places, take action to inform families about the importance of services to their children, and provide the higher cost of services in the regions due to the transportation. Ensure the sustainability of funding services provision at all levels of government.



Academics

STRENGTHS

1. Academics analyze various aspects of family and child welfare and well-being. The academics are included in expert work or different work groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Organize the training for professionals with the necessary qualification, the training for organization leaders to improve management and administration, also decision-makers to organize services on national or regional levels.

3. Insights and lessons learned regarding the quality of family support

1 A National Working Group in Lithuania shifted attention to the services provision for families with children with disability and special needs. The accessibility of such services isn't sufficient in Lithuania, especially in regions. The reasons are family stigma, a lack of understanding of the importance of services, and a lack of professionals.

2 The National Working Group of Lithuania also recognized Multidimensional Family Therapy, the Basic Package of Family Services, and the project of Complex Family Services as the main strengths of family support in Lithuania.

3 The National Working Group identified a few areas of improvement: the training is necessary for professionals providing services; it is also important to train organization leaders to improve management and administration, as well as decision-makers to organize services on national or regional levels. It is necessary to create mechanisms in order to enhance the collaboration between various levels.

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