

STATEMENT
UPR Pre-session on REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
Held online, 7th December 2021
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Representing the Coalition of Human Rights Organisations,
Tolerant Youth Association and Vsi Ante Litteram

1- Presentation of the Organisations

This statement is delivered on behalf of 3 Lithuanian organisations:

- 1) Coalition of Human Rights Organisations, which is a public body established by several sectoral and general non-governmental human rights organisations;
- 2) Tolerant Youth Association, a NGO which deals with human rights in general and in particular focuses on LGBT+ issues;
- 3) Public organisation Ante Litteram, an NGO which is dedicated to the fields of human rights, culture and education in general.

2- National consultations for the drafting of the national report

National consultations for the drafting of the national report are coordinated by the Ministry of Justice of Lithuania, however the dissemination of information about such meetings is very limited, formal and insufficient. More publicity should be given to such consultations, to ensure the possibility of participation for all concerned stakeholders.

3- Plan of the Statement

This statement addresses the following issues: (1) rights of women (2) rights of minorities.

4- Statement

(1) Rights of women

After the Second Cycle of UPR, Lithuania received over 20 recommendations concerning rights and equality of women. Six countries urged Lithuania to ratify Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention), alas, the Convention has not been ratified so far, and other recommendations have also not been fully or adequately implemented.

Regardless of some positive developments, such as accreditation of national human rights institution or some legislative attempts to improve the protection of the rights of women, Lithuania has not made much progress in the field of gender equality. According to the Gender Equality Index, among 27 EU countries Lithuania ranks 22nd. The scope of domestic violence has not reduced in Lithuania. To this day Lithuania has not adopted any law on reproductive health. There is also no law on abortion, which is formally not prohibited, but such a legal gap is very detrimental to the welfare of women.

The currently developing migration crisis demonstrated the inability of the state to ensure the adequate protection of vulnerable people with special needs, such as pregnant women and young girls.

Key recommendations regarding the rights of women:

- (i) Ratify Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence;
- (ii) Adopted a comprehensive law on reproductive health, which would also include the abortion issues.

(2) Rights of minorities

After the Second Cycle of UPR, Lithuania received over 40 recommendations concerning rights and integration of minorities.

There have been numerous action plans, programmes and strategies adopted in Lithuania, with the aim of better integration of national and other minorities, yet they do not fully reflect the needs of minority groups and are implemented too formally. To this date, Lithuania has no law on national minorities.

Regarding the integration of migrants, the current migration crisis at the national border demonstrated that there is a strong xenophobic tendency among Lithuanian state institutions and general society. Latest report of the Ombudsperson revealed that refugees, asylum seekers and other people who crossed the border are detained in inadequate conditions, which are degrading and incompatible with human dignity. In particular, vulnerable groups of migrants, such as those who identify themselves as LGBT+ people, do not receive adequate attention from the state, and their vulnerability is often ignored and disregarded.

Protection of LGBT+ individuals in Lithuania remains highly compromised. Same-sex couples do not receive any legal recognition in Lithuania. There is still no law on gender recognition adopted, thus violating the decision of the European Court of Human Rights against Lithuania. Topic of LGBT+ is not included in national education programmes. Lithuania is one of the three European countries, which still have a law directed against dissemination of information about LGBT+ people among minors. In addition to that, the European Court of Human Rights in the case *Beizaras and Levickas v. Lithuania* criticised Lithuanian national institutions for the failure to properly investigate hate-crimes.

Ethnic, religious and other minorities, including LGBT+ people, still face many instances of discrimination. Lithuania has not yet signed nor ratified the 12th Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which establishes the general prohibition of discrimination.

Key recommendations regarding the rights of minorities:

- (i) Ratify the 12th Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which establishes the general prohibition of discrimination;
- (ii) Include the topic of LGBT+ into mandatory national programmes of education;
- (iii) Adopt a law on national minorities;
- (iv) Adopt a law which would legally recognise same-sex couples as family units.