

# Franet National contribution to the Fundamental Rights Report 2024

LITHUANIA

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# 1. Impact of the cost-of-living crisis and rising poverty in the EU

## 1.1. Legal measures impacting on vulnerabilities of persons affected by the rising costs of living and energy.

Various legislative measures aimed at tackling poverty-related social issues have been adopted in 2023 while implementing, among others, National Progress Plan 2021–2030,<sup>1</sup> Lithuania’s Strategy for Progress.<sup>2</sup> Certain previously adopted legislative measures are also applicable in 2023.

Legislative measures applicable in respect of general population:

1) The indexation of pensions (old-age pension, pension allocated for widows (widowers), orphans, disability pension) and social benefits every year.<sup>3</sup> The basic amounts are used for calculating pensions and social benefits. These basic amounts are indexed every year by the indexation coefficient determined in the previous year. In 2023<sup>4</sup> pension indexation coefficient is 1,0902 (in 2022<sup>5</sup> – 1,0847), basic pension – 246,21 euros (in 2022 – 215,09 euros), basic widows (widowers) pension – 34,89 euros

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<sup>1</sup> Lithuania, the Government (2020), ‘The Resolution ‘On the Approval of National Progress Plan 2021–2030’ ([‘Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2020 m. rugsėjo 9 d. nutarimas “Dėl 2021–2030 metų Nacionalinio pažangos plano patvirtinimo”](#)’), No 998, 9 September 2020, last amendment No 797, 9 September 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2012), ‘The Resolution ‘On the Approval of Strategy for Progress ‘Lithuania’s Strategy for Progress ‘Lithuania 2030’ No. XI-2015’ ([‘Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo 2012 m. gegužės 15 d. nutarimas Nr. XI-2015 „Dėl Valstybės pažangos strategijos „Lietuvos pažangos strategija „Lietuva 2030“ patvirtinimo”](#)’), No XI-2015, 15 May 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (1994), ‘The Law on Social Security Pensions’ ([‘Lietuvos Respublikos socialinio draudimo pensijų įstatymas’](#)’), No I-549, 18 July 1994, last amendment No XIV-1968, 23 May 2023, Article 5, Article 7, Paragraphs 1, 7 of Article 8.

<sup>4</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2022), ‘The Law on Approval of Indicators of the State Social Fund Budget for the Year 2023’ ([‘Lietuvos Respublikos Valstybinio socialinio draudimo fondo biudžeto 2023 metų rodiklių patvirtinimo įstatymas’](#)’), No XIV-1531, 17 November 2022; Article 6.

<sup>5</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2021), ‘The Law on Approval of Indicators of the State Social Fund Budget for the Year 2022’ ([‘Lietuvos Respublikos Valstybinio socialinio draudimo fondo biudžeto 2022 metų rodiklių patvirtinimo įstatymas’](#)’), No XIV-749, 14 December 2021, last amendment No XIV-1058, 28 April 2022, Article 7.

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(in 2022 – 32 euros). In 2024<sup>6</sup> pension indexation coefficient is set to be 1,0957, basic pension – 269,77 euros, basic widows (widowers) pension – 38,23 euros.

Some social insurance pensions (old-age pension, pension of lost working capacity) are made up of a general part and an individual part. The individual part of the social pension depends on the pension contributions of the individual over the entire social insurance period. Since 1 January 2022, the individual part of social insurance pension is also indexed. This indexation is related to the risk of poverty for persons aged 65 and over. In 2023 the additional indexation coefficient of individual part of social security pensions is 1,0580 (in 2022 it was 1,0424; in 2024 it is set to be 1,02).

The average old-age pension in 2023 is 542 euros (in 2022 it was 482).<sup>7</sup> The average old-age pension is set to increase by 70 euros in 2024.<sup>8</sup>

2) The increase of the basic social assistance benefits.<sup>9</sup> The basic social allowances have been increased from 46 euros in 2022 to 49 euros in 2023; the basic social assistance pension – from 173 euros in 2022 to 184 euros in 2023; the state-supported income (SSI) – from 147 euros in 2022 to 157 euros in 2023. In 2024 these basic social assistance benefits are set to increase<sup>10</sup>: the basic social allowances to 55 euros; the basic social assistance pension to 197 euros; the SSI to 176 euros.

3) The increase of the minimum monthly salary (MMS). The MMS in 2022 was 730 euros, in 2023, it is 840 euros,<sup>11</sup> and in 2024 – 924 euros.<sup>12</sup>

4) The coverage of part of the rental fee.<sup>13</sup> The coverage is for those whose net annual income and assets value do not exceed the threshold established by the law (the

<sup>6</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2023), 'The Law on Approval of Indicators of the State Social Fund Budget for the Year 2024' (['Lietuvos Respublikos valstybės socialinių fondų biudžetų 2024 metų rodiklių patvirtinimo įstatymas'](#)), No XIV-2273, 21 November 2023, Article 6.

<sup>7</sup> Lithuania, The Ministry of Social Security and Labour (2022), '[Personal income in 2023: wages will rise, seniors will receive higher pensions and other benefits will increase](#)', press release, 22 November 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Lithuania, The Government of the Republic of Lithuania (2023), '[The Seimas approves the draft state budget for 2024](#)', press release, 5 December 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Lithuania, the Government (2022), 'The Resolution 'On the Approval of the Reference Rates for Social Assistance Benefits'' (['Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2014 m. lapkričio 5 d. nutarimas Nr. 1206 „Dėl socialinės paramos išmokų atskaitos rodiklių dydžių patvirtinimo“'](#)), No 1206 15 November 2014, last amendment No 946, 6 December 2023..

<sup>10</sup> Lithuania, Government (2014), 'The Resolution 'On the Approval of the Reference Rates for Social Assistance Benefits'' (['Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2014 m. lapkričio 5 d. nutarimas Nr. 1206 „Dėl socialinės paramos išmokų atskaitos rodiklių dydžių patvirtinimo“'](#)), No 1206, 15 November 2014, last amendment No 946, 6 December 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Lithuania, the Government (2022), 'The Resolution 'On the Minimum Remuneration Applicable in 2023' (['Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2022 m. spalio 7 d. nutarimas Nr. 1014 „Dėl 2023 metais taikomo minimaliojo darbo užmokesčio“'](#)), No 1014, 7 October 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Lithuania, the Government (2023), 'The Resolution 'On the Minimum Remuneration Applicable in 2024' (['Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2023 m. birželio 28 d. nutarimas Nr. 516 „Dėl 2024 metais taikomo minimaliojo darbo užmokesčio“'](#)), No 516, 28 June 2023.

<sup>13</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2014), 'The Law on Assistance for Purchasing or Renting the Housing' (['Lietuvos Respublikos paramos būstui įsigyti ar išsinuomoti įstatymas'](#)), No XII-1215, 9 October 2014, last amendment No XIV-949, 17 March 2022, Articles 10 and 11 (2).

threshold depends on the region where the person lives and the number of family members) and those who do not own a dwelling or a depreciation of the owned dwelling is 60 per cent or more, or living area per family member is 10 square meters or less (14 square meters when the family has disabled persons or persons with chronic severe disease). Since 22 March 2022, the rental fee coverage is also provided for foreigners who have been granted temporary protection in Lithuania.<sup>14</sup> Part of the rent is covered from the municipal budget. The compensation is calculated by multiplying the number of square meters of the housing and compensation rate per square meter, set by the Minister of Social Security and Labour.<sup>15</sup> The rates vary throughout the municipalities from 2,32 euros to 7,63 euros per square meter.<sup>16</sup> The rent compensation must be at least 50 per cent of the average market price.<sup>17</sup>

The Law on Assistance for Purchasing or Renting the Housing also foresees support for purchasing a dwelling. However, this measure has a lower impact on reducing the vulnerability of persons.

5) The social housing rent.<sup>18</sup> The owner of the social housing can be a municipality, a natural or legal person.<sup>19</sup> A person is eligible for social housing if their net annual income and assets value does not exceed the threshold established by the law (the threshold depends on the region where the person lives and the number of family members) and if they do not own a dwelling or a depreciation of the owned dwelling is 60 per cent or more, or living area per family member is 10 square meters or less (14 square meters when the family has disabled persons or persons with chronic severe disease).<sup>20</sup> The municipality decides on the rental fee. The municipality can decide to reduce the rental

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<sup>14</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2014) 'The Law on Assistance for Purchasing or Renting the Housing' (['Lietuvos Respublikos paramos būstui įsigyti ar išsinuomoti įstatymas'](#)), No XII-1215, 9 October 2014, last amendment No XIV-949, 17 March 2022, Articles 1 (2)(4).

<sup>15</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2014) 'The Law on Assistance for Purchasing or Renting the Housing' (['Lietuvos Respublikos paramos būstui įsigyti ar išsinuomoti įstatymas'](#)), No XII-1215, 9 October 2014, last amendment No XIV-949, 17 March 2022, Articles 18.

<sup>16</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2022), 'The Order on Approval of the Basic Amounts for Municipalities for the Compensation of Part of the Rent or Leasehold for 2023' (['Lietuvos Respublikos socialinio apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2022 m. gruodžio 29 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-904 "Dėl bazinių būsto nuomos ar išperkamosios būsto nuomos mokesčio dalies kompensacijos dydžių savivaldybėms 2023 metams patvirtinimo"](#)), No A1-904, 29 December 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2014) 'The Law on Assistance for Purchasing or Renting the Housing' (['Lietuvos Respublikos paramos būstui įsigyti ar išsinuomoti įstatymas'](#)), No XII-1215, 9 October 2014, last amendment No XIV-949, 17 March 2022, Article 18.

<sup>18</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2014) 'The Law on Assistance for Purchasing or Renting the Housing' (['Lietuvos Respublikos paramos būstui įsigyti ar išsinuomoti įstatymas'](#)), No XII-1215, 9 October 2014, last amendment No XIV-949, 17 March 2022, Article 6 (2)(2).

<sup>19</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2014) 'The Law on Assistance for Purchasing or Renting the Housing' (['Lietuvos Respublikos paramos būstui įsigyti ar išsinuomoti įstatymas'](#)), No XII-1215, 9 October 2014, last amendment No XIV-949, 17 March 2022, Article 2 (10).

<sup>20</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2014) 'The Law on Assistance for Purchasing or Renting the Housing' (['Lietuvos Respublikos paramos būstui įsigyti ar išsinuomoti įstatymas'](#)), No XII-1215, 9 October 2014, last amendment No XIV-949, 17 March 2022, Articles 9 (1) and 11 (3).

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fee or exempt from the requirement to pay a rental fee when the monthly income of the person or per family member is 1,5 x SSI or less (in 2023 it is 235,5 euros).<sup>21</sup>

Contrary to what was established before, on 21 December 2021 the law has established the maximum period during which social housing must be provided to a person. Since 1 January 2024 the waiting period cannot exceed 5 years and since 1 January 2026 – 3 years.<sup>22</sup>

6) The provision of social support.<sup>23</sup> Social support can be social benefit (in cash and non-monetary forms (provision of food, clothing and other necessities, social cards, food vouchers, meals for children/adopted children in schools or day centres, treatment for addictive diseases for adults)) and compensation for the cost of heating of dwelling, drinking water and hot water. Following the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union,<sup>24</sup> this support can be given only if the value of the property owned by a person asking for social support does not exceed the limits set by the law. The value of the property was temporarily not assessed (from 1 July 2020 to 29 December 2021) for giving this support (it was meant to protect deprived persons from the negative effects of inflation and the sharp rise in energy prices).

Additional recent legislative measures applicable in respect of the following groups:

1) Measures to support single-parent families.<sup>25</sup> Since 1 January 2022, single-parent families may rent social housing without their inclusion in a waiting list. This right is given for those parents (guardians) that raise one or more children alone and do not own other housing. Each municipality sets the rules for renting social housing.

2) Measures to support persons with disabilities. The increase of the social assistance benefits for persons with disabilities in 2023<sup>26</sup>: the social assistance disability pensions for disabled children (depending on the level of disability) vary from 184 to 368 euros (in 2022 – from 173 to 346 euros), for adults who have lost the ability to work under 24

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<sup>21</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2014), 'The Law on Assistance for Purchasing or Renting the Housing' (['Lietuvos Respublikos paramos būstui įsigyti ar išsinuomoti įstatymas'](#)), No XII-1215, 9 October 2014, last amendment No XIV-949, 17 March 2022, Articles 21 (2).

<sup>22</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2020), 'The Law Amending Articles 2, 5, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18 and 29 of the Law on Assistance for Purchasing or Renting the Housing No. XII-1215' (['Lietuvos Respublikos paramos būstui įsigyti ar išsinuomoti įstatymo Nr. XII-1215 2, 5, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18 ir 29 straipsnių pakeitimo įstatymas'](#)), No XIII-2885, 7 May 2020, last amendment No XIV-810, 21 December 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2003) 'The Law on Monetary Social Assistance for Deprived Residents' (['Lietuvos Respublikos piniginės socialinės paramos nepasiturintiems gyventojams'](#)), No IX-1675, 1 July 2003, last amendment No XIV-2153, 12 September 2023, Articles 5 (1), 6, 7(1)(1), 11(1) and 22 (1).

<sup>24</sup> Lithuania, Government (2023), 'Explanatory note on the Draft Law Amending Article 11 of the Law No. XIII-2883 on Amending Articles 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 15, 17, 21 and 23 of the Law on Monetary Social Assistance for Deprived Residents No IX-1675' (['Lietuvos Respublikos piniginės socialinės paramos nepasiturintiems gyventojams įstatymo Nr. IX-1675 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 15, 17, 21 ir 23 straipsnių pakeitimo įstatymo Nr. XIII-2883 11 straipsnio pakeitimo įstatymo projekto aiškinamasis raštas'](#)), 31 June 2023.

<sup>25</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2014), 'The Law on Assistance for Purchasing or Renting the Housing' (['Lietuvos Respublikos paramos būstui įsigyti ar išsinuomoti įstatymas'](#)), No XII-1215, 9 October 2014, last amendment No XIV-949, 17 March 2022, Article 16 (8)(7).

<sup>26</sup> Lithuania, The Ministry of Social Security and Labour (2022), '[Personal income in 2023: wages will rise, seniors will receive higher pensions and other benefits will increase](#)', press release, 22 November 2022.

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years of age they vary from 184 to 414 euros (in 2022 – from 173 to 389,25 euros), for adults who have lost 60 percent or more of their working capacity under 24 years of age they are 184 euros (in 2022 – 173 euros). The social assistance benefits for persons with disabilities are set to increase in 2024<sup>27</sup>: the social assistance disability pensions for disabled children (depending on the level of disability) are set to vary from 197 to 394 euros, for adults who have lost the ability to work under 24 years of age they are set to vary from 197 to 443,25 euros, for adults who have lost 60 percent or more of their working capacity under 24 years of age they are set to vary from 197 to 394 euros. Social assistance retirement pensions for retirement pensioners without a minimum period of social insurance in 2023 are 184 euros (in 2022 – 173 euros)<sup>28</sup>, in 2024 they are set to be 197 euros<sup>29</sup>.

From 1 January 2024, state institutions are required to ensure that at least 5 percent of the staff (if there are at least 25 workers) are persons with disabilities (with disability level of 55 percent or more).<sup>30</sup>

Since of 1 April 2022, foreigners who have been granted asylum or temporary protection in the Republic of Lithuania may get social assistance disability pensions, social assistance retirement pensions and social assistance orphan's pensions.<sup>31</sup> And, since 3 March 2023, foreigners who have been granted temporary protection in the Republic of prognos

3) Measures to support single persons. Since 1 January 2022, single persons get benefit.<sup>32</sup> This benefit is one basic amount of the widow's (widower's) pension. The single person's benefit in 2023 is 34,98 euros<sup>33</sup> (in 2022<sup>34</sup> – 32 euros).

4) Measures to support families with children. Families with children may get<sup>35</sup>:

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<sup>27</sup> Lithuania, The Ministry of Social Security and Labour (2023), '[Higher social benefits from the beginning of the next year](#)', press release, 6 December 2023.

<sup>28</sup> Lithuania, The Ministry of Social Security and Labour (2022), '[Personal income in 2023: wages will rise, seniors will receive higher pensions and other benefits will increase](#)', press release, 22 November 2022.

<sup>29</sup> Lithuania, The Ministry of Social Security and Labour (2023), '[Higher social benefits from the beginning of the next year](#)', press release, 6 December 2023.

<sup>30</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2022), 'The Law Amending the Law on Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities No. I-2044' ('[Lietuvos Respublikos neįgaliųjų socialinės integracijos įstatymo Nr. I-2044 pakeitimo įstatymas](#)'), No XIV-1722, 20 December 2022 (comes into force on 1 January 2024), Article 10 (2)(4).

<sup>31</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (1994) 'The Law on Social Assistance Pensions' ('[Lietuvos Respublikos šalpos pensijų įstatymas](#)'), No I-675, 29 November 1994, last amendment No XIV-1957, 11 May 2023, Article 1 (3)(4).

<sup>32</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2021), 'The Law on Single Person's Benefit' ('[Lietuvos Respublikos vienišo asmens išmokos įstatymas](#)'), No XIV-352, 27 May 2021, last amendment No XIV-679, 23 November 2021, Article 3.

<sup>33</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2022), 'The Law on Approval of Indicators of the State Social Fund Budget for the Year 2023' ('[Lietuvos Respublikos Valstybinio socialinio draudimo fondo biudžeto 2023 metų rodiklių patvirtinimo įstatymas](#)'), No XIV-1531, 17 November 2022, Article 6.

<sup>34</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2021), 'The Law on Approval of Indicators of the State Social Fund Budget for the Year 2022' ('[Lietuvos Respublikos Valstybinio socialinio draudimo fondo biudžeto 2022 metų rodiklių patvirtinimo įstatymas](#)'), No XIV-749, 14 December 2021, last amendment No XIV-1058, 28 April 2022, Article 7.

<sup>35</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (1994), 'The Law on Child Benefits' ('[Lietuvos Respublikos išmokų vaikams įstatymas](#)'), No I-621, 3 November 1994, last amendment No XIV-1842, 28 March 2023, Article 1, 5, 6, 7, 10.

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- One-time benefit for a child (11 units of basic social allowances). It is paid at the birth of a child. In 2023 one-time benefit for a child is 539 euros (in 2022 – 506 euros).
- Child benefit (1,75 units of basic social allowances). It is generally paid until child is 18 years old. Additional benefit may be paid for low-income families, families who raise 3 or more children or a child with a disability. In 2023 a child benefit is 85,75 euros (in 2022 – 80,5 euros).
- Benefit in the case of simultaneous birth of more than one child (4 units of basic social allowances if twins are born, additional 4 units of basic social allowances – for every other child). It is paid until the children are 2 years old. In 2023 benefit in the case of the simultaneous birth of more than one child is 196 euros (in 2022 – 184 euros).
- One-time benefit for a pregnant woman who is not entitled to maternity benefit (6,43 units of basic social allowances). In 2023 this benefit is 315,07 euros (in 2022 – 295,78 euros).

Since 23 March 2022, foreigners who have been granted asylum or temporary protection may also get these benefits.

Pupils may get:<sup>36</sup>

- Free meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner, meals at summer holiday camps organised by schools). The school must provide a free lunch for pupils enrolled in pre-primary education and for pupils in a first and second grade of primary education. Other pupils may get free meals depending on the family income per person.
- Financial support for buying school supplies. The right to this support depends on family income per person. This financial support is 2 sizes of basic social allowances per pupil per calendar year. In 2023 it is 98 euros<sup>37</sup> (in 2022 – 92).

In 2023 51,5 million euros (in 2022 – 43,6 million euros) from the state budget are dedicated for social assistance for pupils (44,7 million euros for free meal and 4,9 million euros for purchasing school supplies).<sup>38</sup>

5) Measures to support unemployed persons. Since 1 July 2022, the status of a person preparing for labour market may be granted. Persons who lack social skills and (or) motivation to work, as well as those who must look after and (or) nurse family member, but are not granted a status of unemployed person, may get it. It guarantees individual

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<sup>36</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2006), 'The Law on Social Assistance for Pupils' ([Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės paramos mokiniams įstatymas](#)), No X-686 13 June 2006, last amendment No XIV-1843, 28 March 2023, Articles 3, 5(3), and 8 (1).

<sup>37</sup> Lithuania, Government (2014), 'The Resolution 'On the Approval of the Reference Rates for Social Assistance Benefits'' ([Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2014 m. lapkričio 5 d. nutarimas Nr. 1206 „Dėl socialinės paramos išmoky atskaitos rodiklių dydžių patvirtinimo“](#)), No 1206, 15 November 2014, last amendment No 946, 6 December 2023.

<sup>38</sup> Lithuania, The Ministry of Social Security and Labour (2023), '[Relevant for those with school-age children: free school meals and support for school supplies](#)', press release, 19 July 2023.

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approach to their employment (special employment programmes and an individual employment planning).<sup>39</sup>

Unemployed person gets unemployment benefit. It consists of fixed and variable parts. Fixed part of unemployment benefit is 23,27 percent of minimum monthly salary (in 2023 – 195,49 euros, in 2022 – 169,87 euros). Variable part from the first to the third months is 38,79 percent of average monthly insurable income of the insured person, from the fourth to the sixth – 31,03 percent, from the seventh to the ninth – 23,27 percent.<sup>40</sup>

The Ministry of Social Security and Labour provided the Evaluation of the Situation of the Poverty and Inequality in 2023 in the light of, among other, the existing taxes and benefits system.<sup>41</sup>

## 1.2. Policy measures impacting on vulnerabilities of persons affected by the rising costs of living and energy.

To reduce income inequality<sup>42</sup> the study on the adequacy of the minimum income system was done in 2022.<sup>43</sup> It analysed how to set the size of minimum monthly salary. It was financed from the funds<sup>44</sup> of the Plan for Economic Recovery and Resilience

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<sup>39</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2016), 'The Law on Employment' (['Lietuvos Respublikos užimtumo įstatymas'](#)), No XII-2470, 21 June 2016, last amendment No XIV-2084, 33 June 2023, Articles 31 and 48 (2)(11).

<sup>40</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2003), 'The Law on Unemployment Social Insurance' (['Lietuvos Respublikos nedarbo socialinio draudimo įstatymas'](#)), No IX-1904, 16 December 2003, last amendment No XIV-2072, 15 June 2023, Articles 7 (2) and 8.

<sup>41</sup> Lithuania, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (2023), 'The Prognosis of Poverty and Inequality 2023' (['Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerija 'Skurdo ir nelygybės prognozės 2023 m.''](#)).

<sup>42</sup> Lithuania, Government (2021), 'The Resolution 'On the Approval of the Development Programme for Reducing Income Inequality of the Manager of the Development Programme 2021–2030 the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania' (['Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2021 m. lapkričio 10 d. nutarimas Nr. 392 'Dėl 2021–2030 metų plėtros programos valdytojos Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos pajamų nelygybės mažinimo plėtros programos patvirtinimo'](#)), No. 932, 10 November 2021.

<sup>43</sup> VšĮ 'European Institute of Health and Sustainable Development', Study on the Adequacy of the Minimum Income System (['Minimalių pajamų sistemos adekvatumo studija'](#)), 19 December 2022.

<sup>44</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2022), 'The Order 'On the Approval of the Description of the Progress Measure No. 09-002-02-01-04 'Improving the Minimum Income Protection System' of the Development Programme for Reducing Income Inequality of the Manager of the Development Programme 2021–2030 the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania' (['Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2022 m. balandžio 1 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-238 "Dėl 2021–2030 metų plėtros programos valdytojos Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos pajamų nelygybės mažinimo plėtros programos pažangos priemonės Nr. 09-002-02-01-04 „Tobulinti minimalių pajamų apsaugos sistemą“ aprašo patvirtinimo'](#)), No. A1-238, 1 April 2022.

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'New Generation Lithuania'<sup>45</sup> (400 000 euros) and the state budget (84 000 euros). In addition, the Review of Poverty and Social Exclusion 2023<sup>46</sup> was prepared by the Lithuanian National Anti-Poverty Network. It was partly financed by the European Anti-Poverty Network.

#### Measures for the most financially deprived persons.

Carrying out the projects (under the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived) to support the most deprived persons.

The project 'Assistance with food and hygiene products II' of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived is carried out (by giving food products six times per year and essential goods (laundry ingredients, hygiene products) at least two times per year). Persons whose average monthly income does not exceed 1,5 SSI per month (in 2023 – 235,5 euros (in 2022 – 220,5 euros)), as well as foreigners who have left Ukraine as a result of the Russian Federation's military actions in Ukraine (their income does not matter) can ask for it<sup>47</sup>. Project lasts from 2021 to 2023 (total funds – 38 000 000 euros).<sup>48</sup> In 2023 15 484 000 euros are dedicated for that.<sup>49</sup>

From 1 January 2024, support to the most deprived will be carried out under the Programme to Reduce Material Deprivation (2021–2027)<sup>50</sup>. The most deprived will be, among others, given social cards for buying needed food and other products in the chosen supermarket. Right to have social card belongs to persons whose average monthly income is less than 235,50 euros per person<sup>51</sup>. The funds for the Programme

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<sup>45</sup> European Union, Council of the European Union (2021), [COUNCIL IMPLEMENTING DECISION on the approval of the assessment of the recovery and resilience plan for Lithuania](#) (Ekonomikos gaivinimo ir atsparumo didinimo planas „Naujos kartos Lietuva“), No 10477/21, 20 July 2021.

<sup>46</sup> Lithuania, the Lithuanian National Anti-Poverty Network (2023), Review of Poverty and Social Exclusion 2023 (['Nacionalinis skurdo mažinimo organizacijų tinklas 'Skurdas ir socialinė atskirtis 2023''](#)).

<sup>47</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2023), 'The Order 'On the Approval' of the Description No 5 of the Terms and Conditions for the Financing of Projects Under the European Fund for the Most Deprived Persons' (['Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2020 m. balandžio 10 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-307 „Dėl Europos pagalbos labiausiai skurstantiems asmenims fondo projektų finansavimo sąlygų aprašo Nr. 5 patvirtinimo“](#)), No A1-307, 10 April 2020, last amendment No A1-379, 8 June 2023.

<sup>48</sup> The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, ['Information on Assistance with food and hygiene products II'](#).

<sup>49</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2023), 'The Order 'On the Approval' of the Annual Activity Plan of the Year 2023 of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour' (['Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2023 m. balandžio 20 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-260 „Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministrų tijos 2023 metų veiklos plano patvirtinimo“](#)), No A1-260, 20 April 2023.

<sup>50</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour, 'The Order 'On the Approval of the Description of the Progress Measure No. 09-002-02-01-16 'Reducing material deprivation for the most deprived' of the Development Programme for Reducing Income Inequality of the Manager of the Development Programme 2021–2030 the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania' (['Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2023 m. birželio 7 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-370 "Dėl 2021–2030 metų plėtros programos valdytojos Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos pajamų nelygybės mažinimo plėtros programos pažangos priemonės Nr. 09-002-02-01-16 „Mažinti materialinį nepriteklių labiausiai skurstantiems asmenims“ aprašo patvirtinimo“](#)), No. A1-370, 7 June 2023.

<sup>51</sup> Lithuania, The Ministry of Social Security and Labour (2023), ['Deprived Persons With Social Cards Will Decide Themselves What Food Products to Purchase'](#), press release, 16 November 2023.

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come from the state budget, the Programme for Reducing Material Deprivation, the Plan for Economic Recovery and Resilience 'New Generation Lithuania' (total funds – 88 386 460 euros)<sup>52</sup>.

Measures for persons with disabilities. The Plan for the Participation of Persons with Disabilities 2024–2026<sup>53</sup> foresees services for disabled children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (as set out by the Child Guarantee System), help for children and adults with disabilities, the elderly in their homes.

Actions in 2023:

- Investing in development of a system of social integration for persons with disabilities. 10 939 000 euros from the state budget are dedicated for that.<sup>54</sup>
- Carrying out community-based services for persons with disabilities and their families, creating a better system for assessing their individual needs (14 262 000 euros from the state budget). Organisation of personal assistance in municipalities for persons with disabilities (8 000 000 euros from the state budget). Coverage of the part of the tuition fee for persons with disabilities studying in higher education, giving the information about financial aid measures (507 000 euros from the state budget).<sup>56</sup>

In addition, increasing jobseekers' access to qualifications and competences in line with labour market needs, including the promotion of the employment of persons with disabilities.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, '[Information on Projects under Programme for Reducing Material Deprivation](#)'.

<sup>53</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2023), 'The Order 'On the Approval of the Action Plan for the Participation of Persons with Disabilities 2024–2026'' ('[Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2023 m. rugsėjo 25 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-622 "Dėl Asmens su negalia dalyvumo užtikrinimo 2024–2026 metų veiksmų plano patvirtinimo"](#)'), No. A1-622, 25 September 2023 (comes into force 1 January 2024).

<sup>54</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2023), 'The Order on Approval of the Strategic Action Plan 2023–2025 of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour' ('[Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2023 m. sausio 24 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-32 "Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos 2023–2025 metų strateginio veiklos plano patvirtinimo"](#)'), No A1-32, 24 January 2023.

<sup>55</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2023), 'The Order 'On the Approval' of the Annual Activity Plan of the Year 2023 of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour' ('[Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2023 m. balandžio 20 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-260 „Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos 2023 metų veiklos plano patvirtinimo“](#)'), No A1-260, 20 April 2023.

<sup>56</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2022), 'The Order 'On the Approval of Action Plan for the Social Integration of People with Disabilities 2021–2023'' ('[Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2020 m. rugsėjo 8 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-817 "Dėl Neįgalųjų socialinės integracijos 2021–2023 metų veiksmų plano patvirtinimo"](#)'), No. A1-817, 8 September 2020, last amendment No A1-892, 28 December 2022.

<sup>57</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2023), 'The Order 'On the Approval' of the Annual Activity Plan of the Year 2023 of the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour' ('[Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2023 m. kovo 27 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-194 „Dėl Užimtumo tarnybos prie Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos 2023 metų veiklos plano patvirtinimo“](#)'), No A1-194, 27 March 2023.

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Measures for families with children. Action Plan for the Implementation of the Child Guarantee System in Lithuania 2023-2030<sup>58</sup> and Action Plan of Child's Welfare 2022–2026<sup>59</sup> foresee coverage of transport costs, costs of educational supplies and meals for children at pre-school and pre-primary education (at risk of social exclusion, poverty, or social risks), funding of children's social day care in all municipalities.

Actions in 2023.<sup>6061</sup>

- Making social services for families in crisis better and more accessible (training of social services' employees, creating complex service centre for families, providing complex services for families in municipalities). 10 067 000 euros from the state budget are dedicated for that.
- Investing in family and child welfare (including funding of children's social day care in municipalities). 10 401 000 euros from the state budget are dedicated for that.
- Funding Family Card for large families and families caring for a person with disabilities. 40 000 euros from the state budget are dedicated for that.

Measures for increasing employment. Action Plan for Increasing Social Inclusion 2020–2023<sup>62</sup> foresees employment of persons at social risk, persons experiencing social exclusion, socially vulnerable persons and persons granted temporary protection in the Republic of Lithuania as a result of military aggression by the Russian Federation.

Actions in 2023:

- Developing skills, qualifications, and competences of job-seekers (to meet the needs of the labour market), promoting employment of people with disabilities, older people,

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<sup>58</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Education, Science and Sport (2023), 'The Order 'On the Approval of Action Plan for the Implementation of the Child Guarantee System in Lithuania 2023-2030'' (['Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro, Lietuvos Respublikos sveikatos apsaugos ministro, Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo, mokslo ir sporto ministro 2023 m. birželio 13 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-388 "Dėl Vaiko garantijų sistemos įgyvendinimo 2023–2030 metais Lietuvoje veiksmų plano patvirtinimo"](#)), No A1-388, 13 June 2023.

<sup>59</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2023), 'The Order 'On the Approval of the Action Plan of Child's Welfare 2022–2026'' (['Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2022 m. sausio 24 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-52 „Dėl Vaiko gerovės 2022–2026 metų veiksmų plano patvirtinimo“](#)), No A1-52, 24 January 2022, last amendment No A1-554, 21 August 2023.

<sup>60</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2023), 'The Order on Approval of the Strategic Action Plan 2023–2025 of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour' (['Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2023 m. sausio 24 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-32 "Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos 2023–2025 metų strateginio veiklos plano patvirtinimo"](#)), No A1-32, 24 January 2023.

<sup>61</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2023), 'The Order 'On the Approval' of the Annual Activity Plan of the Year 2023 of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour' (['Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2023 m. balandžio 20 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-260 „ Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos 2023 metų veiklos plano patvirtinimo“](#)), No A1-260, 20 April 2023.

<sup>62</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2023), 'The Order 'On the Approval of the Action Plan for Increasing Social Coverage 2020–2023'' (['Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2019 m. gruodžio 20 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-791 „Dėl Socialinės aprėpties didinimo 2020–2023 metų veiksmų plano patvirtinimo“](#)), No. A1-791, 20 December 2019, last amendment No A1-413, 15 June 2022.

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other people with vulnerabilities. 56 975 000 euros from the state budget are dedicated for that<sup>63,64</sup>.

The Employment Service carries out the Project 'Destination – Future'<sup>65</sup> to give high value-added skills and competences to unemployed and employed people (during the period of 2022–2026, the total funds are 106 049 647,07 euros).

– Drafting of legal acts to ensure that unemployed people meet the needs of labour market and supervision of how the financed projects are carried out. 24 850 000 euros from the state budget are dedicated for that<sup>66</sup>.

– Carrying out the projects (under the European Social Fund) to ensure that unemployed people meet the needs of labour market (carried out by the Employment Service). These projects are: 'Become – Building Your Future Prospects'<sup>67</sup> (helps registered unemployed people, including the unskilled and the disabled), 'Take the Opportunity'<sup>68</sup> (helps people aged over 54), 'Be Entrepreneurial'<sup>69</sup> (helps unemployed by supporting creation of working positions), 'The New Beginning'<sup>70</sup> (helps unemployed people to adapt to a changing labour market because of COVID-19 pandemic).

Measures for ethnic minorities. Action Plan for the Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society 2022–2023<sup>71</sup> foresees consultations of Roma on social, employment services, other social security means, Roma entrepreneurship promotion measures. In 2023, 50 000 euros from the state budget are dedicated for Roma integration into labour market and their active participation in social life.

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<sup>63</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2023), 'The Order on Approval of the Strategic Action Plan 2023–2025 of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour' (['Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2023 m. sausio 24 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-32 "Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos 2023–2025 metų strateginio veiklos plano patvirtinimo"](#)), No A1-32, 24 January 2023.

<sup>64</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2023), 'The Order 'On the Approval' of the Annual Activity Plan of the Year 2023 of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour' (['Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2023 m. balandžio 20 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-260 „ Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos 2023 metų veiklos plano patvirtinimo“](#)), No A1-260, 20 April 2023.

<sup>65</sup> Lithuania, the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, [Information on the Project 'Kryptis – ateitis' \('Destination – Future'\)](#).

<sup>66</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2023), 'The Order on Approval of the Strategic Action Plan 2023–2025 of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour' (['Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2023 m. sausio 24 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-32 "Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos 2023–2025 metų strateginio veiklos plano patvirtinimo"](#)), No A1-32, 24 January 2023.

<sup>67</sup> Lithuania, the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, [Information on the Project 'Tapk – Tavo ateities perspektyvų kūrimas' \('Become – Building Your Future Prospects'\)](#).

<sup>68</sup> Lithuania, the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, [Information on the Project 'Pasinaudok galimybe' \('Take the Opportunity'\)](#).

<sup>69</sup> Lithuania, the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, [Information on the Project 'Būk verslus' \('Be Entrepreneurial'\)](#).

<sup>70</sup> Lithuania, the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, [Information on the Project 'Nauja pradžia' \('The New Beginning'\)](#).

<sup>71</sup> Lithuania, Department of National Minorities under the Government of Lithuania (*Tautinių mažumų departamentas prie Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės*), 'Action Plan for the Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society 2022–2023' (['Romų integracijos į Lietuvos visuomenę 2022–2023 veiksmų planas'](#)), 1 July 2022.

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VšĮ ‘Romų visuomenės centras’ carries out Project ‘Let’s Work Together with Roma – New Job Opportunities and Challenges’<sup>72</sup> to provide labour market integration services. After-school activities and summer camps for Roma children are also organised<sup>73</sup>.

Measures in respect of foreigners.<sup>7475</sup> Institutional social care for unaccompanied minors arriving from a foreign country affected by a humanitarian crisis, foreign minors, or children without parental care in municipalities. In 2023, 260 000 euros from the state budget are dedicated for the municipalities to organise the institutional care.

**Table 1 – Promising practice**

Promising practice	
Title (original language)	‘Jaunimo socialinių kompetencijų didinimas’
Title (EN)	‘Enhancing Social Competences of the Youth’
Organisation (original language)	Užimtumo tarnyba prie Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos
Organisation (EN)	Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour
Government / Civil society	Government
Funding body	ESF and co-funded by state budget
Reference (incl. URL, where available)	<a href="https://uzt.lt/es-investicijos/igyvendinti-projektai/jaunimo-socialiniu-kompetenciju-didinimas/154">https://uzt.lt/es-investicijos/igyvendinti-projektai/jaunimo-socialiniu-kompetenciju-didinimas/154</a>

<sup>72</sup> European Union investments, [Information on the Project ‘Dirbkime kartu su romais - naujos darbo galimybės ir iššūkiai’ \(‘Let’s Work Together with Roma - New Job Opportunities and Challenges’\)](#).

<sup>73</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Education, Science and Sport (2023), ‘The Order ‘On the Approval of Action Plan for the Implementation of the Child Guarantee System in Lithuania 2023-2030’ (‘[Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro, Lietuvos Respublikos sveikatos apsaugos ministro, Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo, mokslo ir sporto ministro 2023 m. birželio 13 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-388 “Dėl Vaiko garantijų sistemos įgyvendinimo 2023–2030 metais Lietuvoje veiksmų plano patvirtinimo”](#))’, No A1-388, 13 June 2023.

<sup>74</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2023), ‘The Order on Approval of the Strategic Action Plan 2023–2025 of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour’ (‘[Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2023 m. sausio 24 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-32 “Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos 2023–2025 metų strateginio veiklos plano patvirtinimo”](#))’, No A1-32, 24 January 2023.

<sup>75</sup> Lithuania, the Minister of Social Security and Labour (2023), ‘The Order ‘On the Approval’ of the Annual Activity Plan of the Year 2023 of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour’ (‘[Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2023 m. balandžio 20 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-260 „ Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos 2023 metų veiklos plano patvirtinimo”](#))’, No A1-260, 20 April 2023.



Promising practice	
Indicate the start date of the promising practice and the finishing date if it has ceased to exist	27 May 2019 – 30 April 2022
Type of initiative	State
Main target group	Young people aged 16-29, who do not work, study or participate in training and who are registered with the Employment Service.
Indicate level of implementation: Local/Regional/National	National
Brief description (max. 1000 chars)	Service packages for persons aged 16-29 who are registered at the Employment Service, and who do not work, do not study and do not participate in training, were created. These service packages were aimed at involving young people in active social life and reducing the level of youth unemployment.
Highlight any element of the actions that is transferable (max. 500 chars)	Working skills, occupational interests, and personality traits were identified, and self-assessment debriefing meetings were organised. The assistance to the target group in this respect included consultations of lawyers and psychologists, as well as meetings on online image building organised by a career counsellor.
Give reasons why you consider the practice as sustainable (as opposed to 'one off activities')	The practice is, primarily, aimed at one of the groups which is at the core of labour market. Thus, their unemployment could lead to considerable problems in the employment sphere. The measures contributed to creation of conditions for the employment of the targeted group. In some cases they also helped to prevent poverty risk at an early stage of its formation.
Give reasons why you consider the practice as having concrete measurable impact	Measure itself involves activities (analysis of occupational interests and personality traits, consultations of lawyers and psychologists, consultations on online image building organised by a career counsellor) that have a considerable impact on the target group itself, as well as the contemporary labour market in general.

Promising practice	
Give reasons why you consider the practice as transferable to other settings and/or Member States?	Taking into account the relevance of the target group, as well as the relevance of measures taken (taking into account of the specificity of target group within the labour market), the practice is transferable in respect of its relevance while adapting to the current needs in labour market.
Explain, if applicable, how the practice involves beneficiaries and stakeholders in the design, planning, evaluation, review assessment and implementation of the practice	The measures applied (various relevant consultations, debriefing meetings for self-assessment, etc.) allow to adapt practice to the needs of beneficiaries, as well as stakeholders.
Explain, if applicable, how the practice provides for review and assessment	The practice was reviewed and assessed by monitoring the number of participants and the number of their inclusion into labour market in general (work, educational activities, etc.).

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## 2. Threats to democratic values - Protecting civic space, strengthening meaningful participation and the rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression

### 2.1. Major threats to democracy as reflected in national legal and political developments and the discourse at national level.

It is noticeable that the quality of democracy is decreasing in various countries, and population dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy and disappointment in the ability of the democratic system to ensure public policy outcomes is growing. Common threats to democracy include erosion of press freedom, attack on political opposition, manipulation of electoral processes, weakening of the rule of law, and restrictions on civil liberties. However, due to the emerging geopolitical situation (war in Ukraine, terrorist attack in Israel, strengthening of the authoritarian regime in Belarus), the tendency of consolidation and unity in the society is being observed in Lithuania in 2023. Also, the relative stability in the political environment (almost no changes in the composition of the Government, no election at local and national levels in 2023) determines the lack of some possible challenges for democracy in Lithuania.

#### **Table 2 – Challenges**

*Based on a scan of legislative and policy and other developments and the public discourse please identify **three major challenges** to democracy emerged in the course of 2023.*

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Challenges	Justification/explanation: description of issue at stake and its overall relevance compared to other challenges to democracy and the civic space. Please provide examples and references.
<p>Legal and administrative constraints, harassment, intimidation, and reprisals against civil society organisations, human rights defenders (including SLAPPs - strategic lawsuits against public participation)</p>	<p>Administrative constraints, such as complex and lengthy permit processes, can hinder the organisation of peaceful assemblies. Delays or denials in obtaining permits can restrict the exercise of the right to assemble peacefully. Disproportionate use of law enforcement measures, like excessive use of force, arrests, or surveillance, can violate the rights of individuals participating in peaceful protests. When not justified by legitimate security concerns, these actions undermine the fundamental principles of democracy and human rights. Such disproportionate measures can create a chilling effect, deterring individuals from expressing their opinions or participating in peaceful demonstrations.</p> <p>In 2023 the investigation conducted at the initiative of the Seimas Ombudsperson into the possibility of actions (inaction) of police officers violating the right of peaceful protesters to freedom of expression was conducted. The basis of the Seimas Ombudsperson investigation was the information distributed on the social network Facebook (including a video) about how police officers on 4 January 2023, near the Embassy of Republic of Georgia in the Republic of Lithuania, where a peaceful meeting was held, organised to express concern about the extremely poor health condition of the former president of Republic of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili, who is serving a prison sentence, and calling on the Government of Republic of Georgia to provide him with the opportunity to receive health care services abroad, after the protesters dispersed, they collected and took away their belongings left by the embassy wall posters with #SAVE MISHA, motivating that it is garbage.<sup>76</sup></p> <p>The Seimas Ombudsperson was concerned by the fact that the police officers collected and removed the items (posters) left at the Republic of Georgia representative office, expressing the protesters' position on an issue that attracted the attention of the international community and the public, considering them as garbage.</p>

<sup>76</sup> Lithuania, Seimas Ombudsperson (2023), [Seimo kontrolieriaus iniciatyva atlikto tyrimo dėl policijos pareigūnų veiksmų \(neveikimo\) galimai pažeidžiant taikių protestuotojų teisę į saviraiškos laisvę pažyma](#) (Decision on the investigation conducted at the initiative of the Seimas Ombudsperson regarding actions (inaction) of police officers on alleged violation of the right to freedom of expression of peaceful protesters), No 4D-2023/1-82, 28 March 2023.

	<p>The Ombudsman notes that the posters were left at the Republic of Georgia representative office in order to express the position and concerns regarding specific decisions of the Republic of Georgia state government. So, the place of their inheritance was not accidental. The Seimas Controller (Ombudsman) observes that leaving posters or other items at the representative offices of foreign countries, thus expressing a position (protest, support) regarding the policy of a foreign country or specific decisions of the government of a foreign country, events taking place in that country, etc., is a common practice. Such actions should be considered as one of the ways of implementing the freedom of expression, and the corresponding objects as means of implementing the freedom of expression, which are used to express certain ideas.</p>
<p>Lack of media freedom a/o media pluralism; disinformation (incl. online)</p>	<p>Lack of media freedom is usually a major challenge for democracy. Media freedom is high on the agenda of the new European Commission, appointed in 2019. Europe was shaken by a series of serious abuses, including murder, carried out against journalists.</p> <p>According to the “Reporters Without Borders” index<sup>77</sup>, media freedom in Lithuania is increasing, Lithuania from 28<sup>th</sup> position rose up to 9<sup>th</sup> in 2022, and in October 2023, it took 7<sup>th</sup> position due to the law that gives journalists additional rights to access registered data free of charge, as well as additional protection from legal prosecution (Law on Amendments to the Public Information Law<sup>78</sup>). In general, Lithuania's situation regarding the right to receive and disseminate information is relatively good. There are cases when, according to the General Data Protection Regulation of the European Union, there are restrictions on access to publicly important information, but in some cases, by court decision, such restrictions are lifted (those cases were not examined in 2023). Lithuania should continue to work to improve the accessibility of official documents, which is sometimes restricted based on a misinterpretation of the data protection regulation. Lithuania's Law on Amendments to the Public Information Law was amended in response to incitement to hatred, violence and propaganda related to Russia's war in Ukraine in 2022. For this reason, radio and television programs that belong to or are located in the territories of Russia and Belarus were banned. Regarding these</p>

<sup>77</sup> [Reporters Without Borders](#) (2023) Index. 2023.

<sup>78</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2006), [Visuomenės informavimo įstatymo pakeitimo įstatymas](#) (The Law Amending the Public Information Law), No X-752, 11 June 2006.

changes, the Civil Liberties Union for Europe Report “*Liberties Media Freedom Report 2023*”<sup>79</sup> indicated that Several EU member states, such as Croatia, Estonia, France, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania and Sweden, have set in place new initiatives to fight disinformation. However, the measures taken are not always appropriate as they do not strike the right balance between combating the spread of false information online and upholding citizens’ right to freedom of expression”.

In 2023 based on migration crisis at the Lithuanian-Belarusian border “State Border and its Protection Law<sup>80</sup> No. VIII-1666 Draft Law on Amendment of Articles 1, 2, 4, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 23, 26 and Supplementing the Law with Article 23(1) and a new Chapter IX”<sup>81</sup> was discussed among civil society and media representatives in response to strict media restrictions on the right to enter the border with Belarus in Lithuania. At the same time, the largest Lithuanian media outlets signed a joint letter urging the authorities to allow access to the border. Due to the excessive restrictions that lasted for several months, the Lithuanian media could neither counter the propaganda of Belarus and Russia nor verify the information provided by the authorities and thus properly inform our society and the international community about the migration crisis and threats to Lithuania.

At the same time, hundreds of non-governmental organisations and academics publicly appealed to Lithuanian politicians, asking them not to adopt amendments to the Law on the State Border and its Protection, which aim to legalise the rejection of migrants during emergency situations. This appeal was supported by more than 300 non-governmental organisations, including the Coalition of Human Rights Organizations, which unites 9 human rights organisations in Lithuania, and the European Council for Refugees and Exiles, which unites more than 100 organisations across Europe<sup>82</sup>. The migration group of the organisation "Global Lithuanian Leaders", the humanitarian

<sup>79</sup> Liberties [Media Freedom Report](#) (2023) April 24, 2023

<sup>80</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2006), [Visuomenės informavimo įstatymo pakeitimo įstatymas](#) (The Law Amending the Public Information Law), No X-752, 11 June 2006.

<sup>81</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2000), State Border and its Protection Law ([Lietuvos Respublikos valstybės sienos ir jos apsaugos įstatymas](#)) No VIII-1666, 9 May 2000, last amendment No XIV-1891, 25 April 2023; Draft Law on the Amendment of Articles 1, 2, 4, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 23, 26 and Supplementing the Law with Article 23(1) and a new Chapter IX of the State Border and its Protection Law ([Valstybės sienos ir jos apsaugos įstatymo Nr. VIII-1666 1, 2, 4, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 23, 26 straipsnių pakeitimo ir įstatymo papildymo 23\(1\) straipsniu ir nauju IX skyriumi įstatymo projektas](#)).

<sup>82</sup> Delfi (2023), Lietuvos žurnalistų sąjunga: migrantų „atstūmimo“ politika – grėsmė žmogaus teisėms ir spaudos laisvei (Union of Lithuanian Journalists: the policy of "rejection" of migrants is a threat to human rights and freedom of the press), 20 April 2023.

	<p>aid organisation "Boarder Group" and the Lithuanian Center for Human Rights initiated the appeal.</p> <p>25 April 2023 Lithuanian Parliament Seimas adopted amendments to the Law on the State Border and the Guard Thereof whereby it was agreed to provide for the possibility of turning away irregular migrants who have violated the procedure for crossing the state border in times of a state-level emergency or state of emergency. The turning away of irregular migrants will only be possible in the border area up to five kilometres inland from the border.</p>
Foreign interference	<p>External foreign threats to democracy are particularly strongly manifested in the context of cyber security as a hybrid threat. The need for cyber security is increasing all over the world. In Lithuania, the frequency of cyber attacks is observed every year. In 2022, a total of 42,988 criminal acts were registered in the country's police institutions, of which 5,309 criminal acts, or 12 per cent, were committed in cyberspace. There was an increase of 2,775 cases or 52 per cent of criminal acts in cyberspace, compared to 2021 and 2022. According to the police, the same trend will be observed in 2023.<sup>83</sup></p> <p>The Ministry of National Defence, the National Cyber Security Centre and the Key State Telecommunications Centre implemented a project financed by the European Union's structural funds, during which new and updated cybersecurity technical equipment was purchased. With the help of the purchased equipment, the Secure Network was modernised, the cyber security of state information resources was increased, and the prevention of detection of cyber threats was improved. The secure network is used by state and municipal institutions, state enterprises and public institutions included in the list of users of the Secure Network approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. 7.5 million was allocated for the implementation of the project. EUR of EU funds.<sup>84</sup></p> <p>However, in 2023 quite a large number of different cyberattacks against different sites related to civil organisations (healthcare institutions), municipal government, and state institutions were performed (according to the data of the National Cyber Security Centre). Starting from 2022 and continuing in 2023, Lithuanian defence and foreign policy topics were exploited.</p>

<sup>83</sup> Lithuania, Ministry of National Defence and The National Coordination Center (2022) National Cybernetic Security Conditions Report 2022 ([Nacionalinė kibernetinio saugumo būklės ataskaita 2022](#)).

<sup>84</sup> Lithuania, National Cyber Security Centre (2022), [Key Trends and Statistics of the National Cyber Security Status of Lithuania](#) 2022.

	<p>For propaganda purposes of the Kremlin and Belarusian regimes.</p> <p>In October 2023, a huge organised cyber-attack against civic society was performed. The attacks aimed to disrupt the work of the special services and cause panic in society. In a few days, the police received more than 2,500 e-mails, threatening mainly to blow up civilian objects (kindergartens, schools, health care institutions). Within a few days, the Lithuanian police implemented algorithms for managing such situations (new recommendations are given to municipalities, the essence of which is not to stop operations, not to call the emergency phone number, but to consult with the responsible officers), allowed the normalisation of police activities again<sup>85</sup>. The police of Lithuania identified that the e-mails were sent from IP addresses outside Lithuania, mainly from Russia and Belarus.</p>
<p>Disproportionate use of law enforcement measures (surveillance, police violence, unlawful arrest etc.)</p>	<p>2023-04-17 Seimas adopted amendments to the Law on the State Border and the Guard Thereof,<sup>86</sup> whereby it was agreed to provide for the possibility of turning away irregular migrants who have violated the procedure for crossing the state border in times of a state-level emergency or state of emergency. Another Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the legal status of foreigners,<sup>87</sup> Article 140 (8) foresees, that “Foreigners who entered the territory of the Republic of Lithuania by illegally crossing the state border of the Republic of Lithuania and are not asylum seekers, as well as foreigners for whom a decision was made not to grant asylum until the final decision on the return or deportation of the foreigner is executed or the foreigner's registration certificate is issued, the State Border Guard Service by decision, the State Border Guard Service temporarily accommodates them in the accommodation places specified in this part, without giving them the right to move freely in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania”.</p> <p>In this regard, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania in 2023 June 7 in the resolution No. KT53-A-N6/2023<sup>88</sup> clarified that the principle of the legality of arrest of a person enshrined in Article 20, Part 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania means that a person must not be</p>

<sup>85</sup> Lithuania, Police (2023), New police recommendations: after receiving a threatening message, do not stop the activity, but consult with the officers ([Naujos policijos rekomendacijos: gavus grasinantį pranešimą, nenutraukti veiklos, o konsultuotis su pareigūnais](#)) 17 October 2023.

<sup>86</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2000), State Border and its Protection Law ([Lietuvos Respublikos valstybės sienos ir jos apsaugos įstatymas](#)) No VIII-1666, 9 May 2000, last amendment No XIV-1891, 25 April 2023.

<sup>87</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (2004), [Įstatymas dėl užsieniečių teisinės padėties](#) (Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners), No IX-2206, 29 April 2004.

<sup>88</sup> Lithuania, Constitutional Court (2023), [Nutarimas dėl Lietuvos Respublikos įstatymo „Dėl užsieniečių teisinės padėties“ nuostatų atitikties Lietuvos Respublikos konstitucijai](#) (Resolution on the compliance of the provisions of the Law of the Republic of Lithuania "On the Legal Status of Foreigners" with the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, No KT53-A-N6/2023, 7 June 2023.

deprived of his liberty other than on such grounds and according to such procedures as established by law.

However, the flawed practice continues, in 2023-10-16 the Seimas Ombudsperson noted the inappropriate performance of the officers of the State Border Guard Service and the Migration Department in restricting the freedom of foreigners for an unreasonable and disproportionately long time and in unjustifiably refusing to accept asylum requests. The Ombudsman noted that situations where foreigners detained at border stations, including minors, are not immediately provided with information about the reasons for de facto detention, are not given the opportunity to contact their relatives, and in individual cases - with a lawyer, are not compatible with respect for human rights. Transparent procedures, adequate information, and ensuring translation are the minimum standards that must be met, even in the context of complex geopolitical challenges<sup>89</sup>. The Seimas Ombudsperson also noted that many of the mentioned problems have already been noted in the previous reports and certificates of the Seimas Ombudsperson, which is why she is concerned that they still remain relevant<sup>90</sup>.

## 2.2. Legislative and policy measures having an impact on the freedom of assembly/association/expression of civil society actors.

Lithuania, as a member of the European Union, upholds fundamental rights, including freedom of assembly and expression. The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania

<sup>89</sup> Lithuania, Seimas Ombudsperson (2023), [Seimo kontrolierė reiškia susirūpinimą dėl pažeidžiamų užsieniečių situacijos pasienyje](#) (The Seimas Ombudsperson expresses concern about the situation of vulnerable foreigners at the border), 31 August 2023.

<sup>90</sup> Lithuania, Seimas Ombudsperson (2023), Decision Regarding X complaint against the Migration Department to the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania and the ministry of interior of the republic of Lithuania ([Pažyma dėl X skundo prieš migracijos departamentą prie Lietuvos Respublikos vidaus reikalų ministerijos ir Lietuvos respublikos vidaus reikalų ministeriją](#)), No 4D-2023/1-701, 12 October 2023.



guarantees these rights. However, specific legislation and policies may shape the exercise of these freedoms.

**Constitutional Protection.** The Lithuanian Constitution protects freedom of assembly and expression as fundamental rights, providing a legal framework for civic society actors (Article 36 of the Constitution<sup>91</sup>).

Speaking in detail about this fundamental right of citizens, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania already on 7 January 2000<sup>92</sup> has clarified in the resolution that constitutional consolidation of freedom of assembly means that it is treated as one of the fundamental human freedoms and values in a democratic society and is inseparable a sign of a democratic order. This freedom is significant for the open, a condition for the realisation of the aspiration of a fair, harmonious civil society and the rule of law. Freedom of assembly is the subjective right of citizens to participate in peaceful assembly and freely express their opinions and views, which ensures the expression of the civic activity of the personality in society and the state. In addition, in the aforementioned ruling, the Constitutional Court noted that the Constitution is an integral act (Part 1 of Article 6 of the Constitution), therefore freedom of assembly should not be treated only as an inherent value of democracy but also as an important guarantee that it will be full-fledged various constitutional rights and freedoms are implemented: the right of citizens to participate in governance their country (Part 1 of Article 33 of the Constitution), their right to criticise state institutions or the work of officials (paragraph 2 of Article 33 of the Constitution), the right of a person to have his own beliefs and express them freely (Article 25, paragraph 1 of the Constitution), his right to search, to receive and disseminate information and ideas (Article 25, Part 2 of the Constitution), the right of citizens to freely join associations, political parties or associations (Article 35 of the Constitution part) etc.

**Legal Framework.** Lithuania has laws regulating public gatherings and demonstrations, such as the Law on Meetings<sup>93</sup>. These laws set out procedures for obtaining permits and ensure the peaceful nature of such events. There is no norm in Lithuanian legislation that specifically stipulates that a peaceful assembly requires permission from the state

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<sup>91</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (1992) Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucija (Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania), Lietuvos aidas, 1992-11-10, Nr. 220-0.

<sup>92</sup> Lithuania, Constitutional Court (2000), Nutarimas "Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos susirinkimų įstatymo 6 straipsnio 2 dalies atitikimo Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucijai" (Resolution On the right of municipalities to set permanent places for meetings of citizens, No 11/99, 7 January 2000.)

<sup>93</sup> Lithuania, Seimas (1993) Law on Meetings (Lietuvos Respublikos susirinkimų įstatymas. Valstybės žinios, 1993-12-15, Nr. 69-1291), No I-317, 2 December, 1993. Latest amendment No XIV-1775, 23 December, 2022.

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or municipal authorities. The closest entity to this is the Institute of the Law on Meetings, "harmonisation of the notice of organised meeting".

**Media Freedom.** Media plays a crucial role in expression. Lithuania typically supports media freedom, but laws regulating media and potential changes can influence the scope of expression.

**Monitoring and Advocacy.** Independent bodies, NGOs, and human rights organisations often play a role in monitoring the implementation of these rights and advocating for any necessary changes.

**Table 3 – Case law**

Case law	
Deciding body (in original language)	Lietuvos Vyriausiasis administracinis teismas
Deciding body (in English)	Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania
Case number (also European Case Law Identifier <a href="#">ECLI</a> , where applicable)	Decision in administrative case No. eA-1141-463/2023
Parties	R.G. vs Vilnius Municipality administration (appeal of Vilnius Municipality administration)
Decision date	2023 July 5
Web link to the decision (if available)	<a href="https://liteko.teismai.lt/viesasprendimupaieska/tekstas.aspx?id=14135a4b-5f55-45b5-8dee-9b62df8e329b">https://liteko.teismai.lt/viesasprendimupaieska/tekstas.aspx?id=14135a4b-5f55-45b5-8dee-9b62df8e329b</a>
Which fundamental freedoms of (peaceful assembly,	Right to peaceful assembly

Case law	
<p>association and/or expression) were referred to in the case?</p>	
<p>Key facts of the case (max. 250 words)</p>	<p>R.G., on June 25, 2021, applied to the Vilnius City Municipality Administration, informing them about plans to organise a meeting on September 10, 2021. Director of Administration, by order No. 30-1773/21 of 2 July, gave permission to march to the meeting and allowed from 10 a.m. for the participants to pick up at Cathedral Square, 10:30 a.m. walk from Cathedral Square along Gediminas Avenue to the part of Independence Square in front of the Lithuanian National Library Martynas Mažvydas, and there from 11:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. was to be a meeting. Later, on July 2, the order was recognised as having lost its validity and the right to hold a meeting no longer existed, with the municipality citing the fact that new circumstances allegedly became known: lack of space, the need for special transport to travel on the streets, the need to ensure the unrestricted operation of the library.</p> <p>In this way, the freedom of assembly enshrined in the Constitution (Article 36) was restricted, as well as the principles of supremacy of the law, completeness, non-abuse of power, objectivity and proportionality.</p> <p>The arguments for the amendment of the Order were based on the previous meeting in the same place organised by the same persons (though they neglected their contribution to riots) on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 2021, which finished with riots and collision with Police forces. In addition, a letter from the Library was received regarding the disruption of its work during the August 10<sup>th</sup> meeting; The opinion of the General Commissioner of the Lithuanian Police in the public space and the opinion of police representatives on August 31<sup>st</sup> due to the fact that mass events near the Seimas are not possible; newly received from State Security Department information about possible threats to state and public security and public order; assessment that there is not enough space in Independence Square, it cannot accommodate the planned number of participants.</p>

Case law	
The key legal question raised by the Court	Whether in the case under consideration, there are circumstances that can be treated as a danger to the security of the state or society, public order, human health, or morals as a whole created the conditions to restrict the applicant's right to freedom of assembly.
Result of the case in terms of factual outcome, and in terms of assessment of the legal question raised	<p>Assessing whether the limitation of freedom of assembly complies with the principle of proportionality and is sufficiently factually justified, the court noted that the Order of the director of administration of the municipality does not state what significant negative consequences the meeting would cause for the work of the Library, based solely on complaints about the behaviour of the participants of the previous meetings. During the meeting, the applicant agreed that measures could be taken to allow people to enter the Library, he admitted that a mistake was made in the case of the previous meeting. According to the court, the norm of Article 9, Paragraph 1, Point 3 of the Law on Meetings does not allow the termination of a meeting that has not yet started. The Order of the Director of the Administration of Vilnius Municipality, therefore, was unlawful.</p> <p>However, no changes in any level of legal regulation were made.</p>