



LITHUANIAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE 2022 RULE OF LAW REPORT

JANUARY 31

Lithuanian contribution to the Rule of Law Mechanism is compiled by the Ministry of Foreign affairs of Lithuania from the inputs made by:

- Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania;
- Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania;
- Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania;
- Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Lithuania;
- Office of the Seimas;
- Special Investigation Service of the Republic of Lithuania;
- National Courts Administration;
- Chief Official Ethics Commission;
- Public Procurement Office;
- Office of the Inspector of Journalistic Ethics;
- Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson;
- Ombudsmen's Office of the Seimas;
- Office of the Ombudsman for Children of the Republic of Lithuania;



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I. JUSTICE SYSTEM

A. Independence

1. Appointment and selection of judges, prosecutors and court presidents (incl. judicial review)

In 2021, the Selection Commission for Candidates for Judges carried out 35 selections, 256 candidates were assessed. Statistically, a smaller number of candidates have participated in the selection procedures compared to 2020 and 2019 (in 2020, 255 candidates were assessed (36 selection sessions); in 2019, 468 candidates were assessed (49 selection sessions)). However, it should be noted that in 2021 selections were made to the positions of judges and Chairmen, Deputy Chairmen and Chairmen of a Division of higher courts, which presupposes a smaller number of candidates, compared to the number of candidates to lower courts. The Judicial Council, as the highest institution of judicial self-government, responded promptly to the realities of organizing the selection procedures in the COVID-19 pandemic situation and took legal and technical measures to ensure the smooth running of selection procedures: the legal framework was changed establishing that selections can also be carried out remotely. All the necessary technical and organizational conditions are in place for this. Currently, selection procedures are carried out mostly in hybrid format.

According to the established legal regulation, a judge of the Supreme Court of Lithuania shall be appointed by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on the nomination of the President of the Republic. The Chairman of the Supreme Court shall be appointed by Seimas on the recommendation of the President of the Republic from among the judges appointed to the Court. The President of the Republic has the prerogative to initiate the procedures for the appointment of the Chairman of the Supreme Court and although this selection was announced on 10 September 2020, the selection has not yet been carried out. The situation regarding the long-term non-appointment of the Chairman of the Supreme Court is determined by the constitutional regulation. It stipulates that the Chairman of the Supreme Court is appointed only after the formation of the entire corps of judges of the Supreme Court (currently there are two vacant positions at the Supreme court, on March 1, 2022 another position will open. As of January 31, selection procedures for one vacant position are initiated). However, the discretion of the President of the Republic to announce selections to the office of the Chairman of the Court and to make a decision on their execution is also of great importance.

In 2021, the President of the Republic submitted a package of draft amendments to the Law on Courts to Seimas¹. These draft amendments to the Law on Courts seek to address key systemic regulatory issues, such as

1. Optimizing and speeding up the procedure for the selection of judges;
2. Balancing the workload and unifying the working conditions of judges and court employees in the regional administrative courts and therefore establishing the Lithuanian Regional Administrative Court instead of the two regional administrative courts;
3. Creating conditions for a wider range of persons to hold the office of judge of the regional administrative court.

One of the issues to be solved is the change of the model of selection of judges which lacks efficiency and creates obstacles to efficient work in courts. Simplification of the selection procedure, allowing for a faster pace, would help to solve the issues of the formation of the judiciary, including the lack of competition between candidates, which sometimes leads to application of lower selection standards for candidates. Under the current legal regulation, as well as under the proposed new legal regulation, the President of the Republic has an unrestricted discretion not to follow the proposal of the Selection Commission of Candidates to Judicial Office to appoint evaluated and the most suitable

¹ <https://www.lrp.lt/lt/prezidentas-teikia-viesai-konsultacijai-teismu-istatymo-ir-susijusiu-istatymu-pataisais/35761>



candidates for the respective position of judge and, without justifying his decision, to appoint a person to Judicial Office who is in a lower position in the list of the most suitable candidates compiled by the Selection Commission of Candidates to Judicial Office or even to appoint a person not recognized as the most suitable candidate. Meanwhile, the Judicial Council, participating in the formation of the corps of judges, may speak (advise) only on those candidates who have been selected and nominated for the position of a judge by the President of the Republic of Lithuania. In this case, according to the proposed provisions of the draft amendment to the Law on Courts, it is not clear what binding force the list of evaluated candidates to Judicial Office will have for the President of the Republic, and according to which principles judges will be selected from this list. In the Judicial Council's opinion, these provisions must be regulated at the level of law not only in terms of transparency of selections and legitimate expectations of candidates to Judicial Office, but also in terms of judicial independence, so that Lithuanian law, regulating the procedure for appointing a judge, would comply with the requirements of the European Union law. It is considered that the persistence of significant uncertainties at the Law on Courts related to the compilation of the list of evaluated candidates to Judicial Office provided in Article 55, paragraph 3, creates new preconditions not only for experts, assessing the transparency of state proceedings but also for public doubts that will affect the growth of mistrust in courts. The Judicial Council has submitted observations on the issues mentioned above to the Committee on Legal Affairs of the Seimas.

During 2021, the National Courts Administration together with the Norwegian Courts Administration prepared a Study on Judges' Selection and Evaluation. The Study includes analysis of current legal environment, best foreign and local practices in the field of selection of judges, as well as the processes of assessing personal competences, and their impact in the selection and evaluation process. Many discussions with various focus groups (judges, court presidents, attorneys, members of various judicial self-governing bodies, etc.) were carried out and recommendations for the improvement of current selection process were prepared. Following these recommendations, the required necessary legislation, as well as introduction of the assessment of personal competences in the process of selection and evaluation of judges (and candidates) was drafted and submitted for the approval of the Judicial Council. Improved selection and evaluation model will be used for all newly launched selection procedures, starting from 1 January 2022. National Courts Administration is working on another study aimed at strengthening the competencies in the effective management of judicial resources. It will consist of a model of competencies for the top and middle managers of the court, selection and evaluation criteria, methodology and a mechanism for the corruption prevention control. This will allow for more efficient management of court resources, improvement of court management processes, organization of court activities, selection of persons with the highest qualification and appropriate abilities as court leaders. Development of this model would enable the existing court managers to improve their qualifications and acquire the necessary managerial knowledge and skills. The Study is planned to be finished by the middle of 2022. Both studies are being prepared within the framework of the project "Improvement of Quality, Services and Infrastructure in Lithuanian courts" and financed by the 2014-2020 EEA and Norway Financial Mechanism Program "Justice and Home Affairs".

By the Decree of the President of the Republic of Lithuania dated 2021 January 14 No. 1K-490 with the approval of the Seimas the new Prosecutor General of the Republic of Lithuania Nida Grunskienė for the five year term of office was appointed. On 2021 February 4 by the Decrees of the President of the Republic of Lithuania the new Deputies Prosecutor General of the Republic of Lithuania Gintas Ivanauskas (Decree No. 1K-514) and Saulius Verseckas (Decree No. 1K-515) were appointed. The term of office of the Deputies Prosecutor General is linked with the term of office of the Prosecutor General.

2. Irremovability of judges; including transfers (incl. as part of judicial map reform), dismissal and retirement regime of judges, court presidents and prosecutors (incl. judicial review)

On 11 January 2022, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania adopted a draft amendment to Article 63 of the Law on Courts, providing for an amendment to the provisions of Article 63 of the Law on Courts, stipulating that under the circumstances referred to in Article 63(6) of the Law on Courts, judges of the Supreme Court of Lithuania could also be temporarily seconded to the Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania. It should be noted that according to the proposed legal regulation, the consent of the judge is not required when, for reasons of a temporary nature (sick leave of the judge, vacancy of the judge, increased workload at the court or other reasons), the Judicial Council establishes the need for the temporary transfer of the judge to another court, or to other chambers of the same court in which he/she was appointed, in order to ensure the proper operation of the court or of the chambers of the court. In the cases provided for in this paragraph, a judge may be temporarily transferred to another court of the same tier, or to another chamber of the same court of which he has been appointed, or to a court of the same tier of a different jurisdiction, a judge of the Regional Court may be transferred to the District Court, a judge of the Court of Appeal can be transferred to the Regional Court and the Supreme Administrative Court, a judge of the Supreme Administrative Court may be transferred to the Regional Administrative Court and the Court of Appeal, a judge of the Supreme Court can be transferred to the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Administrative Court. The transferred judge is paid his/her previous salary, the seniority of the judge of the court from which he or she is transferred is calculated, while retaining all the social guarantees for judges provided for by law. A judge may be transferred in accordance with the procedure laid down in this paragraph for a period not exceeding one year and not more frequently than once every three years. The drafting of the Law on Amendments to Article 63 of the Law on Courts of the Republic of Lithuania No. I-480 was prompted by the situation at the border between the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Belarus in 2021, which is related to the major increase in the number of foreigners crossing the border and the changes in the regulation of the legal status of foreigners initiated for the purpose of addressing the situation. This measure (transfer of judges) is, in principle, appropriate to respond effectively to a possible temporary increase in the number of cases related to the legal status of foreigners at the Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania. Given the challenging situation at the border between the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Belarus and the burden (including financial burden) carried by the State, it is of particular importance that these disputes be heard by the Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania within the time limits laid down in the legislation, i.e. appeals concerning the granting of asylum applications and other permits must be resolved within one month from the date of receipt of the appeal by the Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania, and appeals concerning detention or imposing measures alternative to detention shall be resolved within ten days from the date of receipt of the appeal at the Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania.

3. Promotion of judges and prosecutors (incl. judicial review)

No significant changes.

4. Allocation of cases in courts

A special working group composed of the Judicial Council and representatives of the courts, prepared by the Judicial Council, prepared a description of the rules for the allocation of cases to judges and the formation of judicial panel, approved by resolution No. 13P-123-(7.1.2) of the Judicial Council of 25 September 2015 (hereinafter referred to as the “Rules for the Allocation of Cases”),



the principal provisions of which were approved at the meeting of the Judicial Council of 30 October 2020.

In 2021, the draft Rules for the Allocation of Cases was coordinated with the Information Technology, Judicial Administration and Legislative Drafting and Evaluation Committees of the Judicial Council. Following a final agreement with the courts, the draft amendment to the rules on the allocation of cases is expected to be approved by 2022 3Q.

In 2021, intensive modernization works of the Case Allocation Module (hereinafter – the Module) of the Lithuanian Court Information System (hereinafter – LITEKO) were carried out in accordance with the Service Provision Agreement No.10.1.4-ESFA-V-922. “Provision of services for the development of the case allocation module of the Lithuanian court information system” signed with the supplier by the Administration on 30 April 2020, which is carried out during the implementation of project No. 10.1.4-ESFA-V-922-01-0002 “Enhancing the Efficiency of the Court Activities”, in accordance with the measure No. 10.1.4-ESFA-V-922 “Enhancing the Efficiency of the Justice System” of the 10th priority “Public administration that meets the needs of society and is progressive” of the Operational Programme for the European Union Funds Investments in 2014–2020. The total implementation of the Agreement reaches about 80%, the expected deadline for the completion of all modernisation works of LITEKO is 2022 Q3-Q4. When developing the functionalities of the Module, great attention is paid to ensuring an equal allocation of cases, providing for that the cases assigned to the judge, as well as the cases currently pending before the judge, their complexity must be assessed by simultaneously assessing the judge’s occupancy, the judge’s participation in the judicial panels, etc. It is envisaged that the engagement of a judge in other activities (e.g. participation in the activities of self-government institutions, performance of administrative functions, etc.) will be considered as one of the components in calculating the coefficient for the selection of a judge to hear a case. During the preparation of the draft Rules for the Allocation of Cases and the development of the Module functionalities, a review of case allocation groups and case weighting factors was commenced, solutions and opportunities for using the same data not only in the case allocation process, but also when calculating the judge’s (court’s) workload were looked for in 2021. There was also a discussion on the criteria for determining the optimal workload and its calculation in the committees of the Judicial Council in 2021, and ways and means were sought to ensure the workload of the district and regional courts. It should be noted that one of the strategic directions of the Judicial Council for 2021–2024 approved by resolution No. 13P-27-(7.1.2) of 26 February 2021 of the Judicial Council is increasing the efficiency of court activities. In the implementation of this direction, among other things, it is planned to look for measures to balance the workload of judges in order to equalize the workload and increase the conditions for the administration of justice. In addition to other internal and external administrative measures applied by the judicial administration for workload equalisation among district courts, on the initiative of the Judicial Council, following the resolution adopted at the sitting of 20 December 2021, the Ministry of Justice was approached with a proposal to implement the regulation established in Paragraph 2 of Article 432(1) of the Code of Civil Procedure of the Republic of Lithuania and to establish that cases on the basis of applications for the issuance of a court order which are filed by electronic means are heard by specific district courts, excluding the District Court of Vilnius City. The implementation of this measure would not only solve the problem of greater workload of the District Court of Vilnius City as compared to other district courts, which has existed for a number of years, but would also help to regulate the flow of cases for court orders at the level of all district courts. In letter No. 36P-114- (7.1.10.) of 13 September 2021, the Judicial Council submitted to the legislator proposals to supplement the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Code of Administrative Offences with provisions allowing the entity exercising administrative supervision of a court (presidents of regional courts or the president of the Lithuanian Court of Appeal) the right to allocate cases not yet assigned to a particular judge (judicial panel) by a ruling, selected randomly, for hearing to judges of another court. Such a right could be used by such entities when discerning the possibility of speeding up proceedings



in cases where due to the different flow of cases in individual courts, the workloads of judges and courts differ significantly. In view of the objectives pursued (to address the unequal workload and the related length of court proceedings and the lack of human resources in the courts), the legal framework proposes certain safeguards to ensure the rights of persons involved in court proceedings and the status and independence of judges, i.e. to envisage that upon finding by a president of a higher court, on the basis of objective data, a significant difference in workload, the judges of the other court could be allocated a group of randomly selected cases (not individual cases) not yet assigned to individual judges and, in the first instance, cases regarding criminal and administrative offenses dealt with by written procedure could be assigned to another court. It should be noted that in principle the analogous provisions are set out in the current Code of Civil Procedure, in practice they are applied and assessed as an effective means of regulating workloads.

5. Independence (including composition and nomination and dismissal of its members), and powers of the body tasked with safeguarding the independence of the judiciary (e.g. Council for the Judiciary)

The Judicial Council has become one of the independent participants of the state strategic management system, established on 25 June 2020 in the new Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Strategic Management No. XIII- XIII-3096 (entered into force on 1 January 2021). On 25 June 2020, a Law No. XIII-3133, amending Articles No. I-480 120, 124 and 128 of the Lithuanian Law on Courts, was adopted and established the following functions of the Judicial Council: in accordance with its competence, the Judicial Council submits proposals to the Government regarding the establishment of strategic goals and progress tasks in the National Progress Plan and regarding the inclusion of measures in the national development programs. Article 128 of the Law on Courts has also been supplemented with provisions stipulating that the National Courts Administration is the manager of appropriations for measures of national development programs implementing the National Progress Plan and their implementation projects appointed to courts (entered into force on 1 January 2021).

A discussion “Society, Media, Courts: Do We Speak a Common Language?” took place on 29 March 2021. During the event the concepts of trust in the judge hearing the case and the reliability of the judiciary, as well as the problems of mutual trust between the judiciary and the impact of corruption indicators on the reputation of the judiciary, have been discussed. It has also been said that confidence-building is not just a problem for the courts, and that initiatives to interpret the administration of justice are inseparable from the legal education initiatives in the field of legislation. A discussion “Judicial independence: reality and ambition” took place on 7 October 2021, with the participation of representatives of the judiciary, legislature, executive and academic community. During the event, issues of an independent judiciary, such as the basis of the rule of law, cooperation between the judiciary and other authorities, and professional standards of judicial conduct have been discussed. In order to ensure this constitutional value, a dialogue with representatives of other state authorities is constantly maintained. Both of these events were broadcast live by Lithuanian courts on their YouTube channel, and were viewed by more than a thousand visitors to the YouTube platform.

After the Judicial Council condemned Russia’s decision to bring charges against the Vilnius Regional Court judges who issued a ruling in the so-called “13 January case” on 27 March 2019, and appealed to the Lithuanian and European institutions, and the highest representatives of the government to take effective measures to ensure the physical safety of judges involved in proceedings, the Judicial Council in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania, the Prosecutor General’s Office, the State Security Department of Lithuania takes measures to protect judges involved in proceedings. On 25 January 2021, a remote meeting was held where the Vice-President of the European

Commission Vera Jourova along with representatives of the Lithuanian Judicial Council and the European Commission Representation in Lithuania sat down to discuss the January 13 case, the circumstances of its proceedings, and the situation of judges who had been investigating this case. During this meeting, Lithuania received official support from one of the most important EU institutions. Moreover, on 18 March 2021, a joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs, Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committees was held at the European Parliament, where Lithuanian Minister of Justice, Chairman of the Judicial Council and Prosecutor General expressed their views on the persecution of Lithuanian judges and prosecutors investigating the January 13 case. During this meeting, members of the European Parliament stated that persecution of Lithuanian judges and prosecutors investigating the January 13 case is a politically motivated attack by Russia on the independence of Lithuanian judges.

In 2019, Special Investigation Service of the Republic of Lithuania conducted a corruption risk analysis in the areas of allocation of cases to judges, formation of judicial panels and selection panels in the Supreme Court of Lithuania, and on 31 July 2019 presented the Conclusion on Corruption Risk Analysis in the Areas of Judicial Activities (hereinafter – the Conclusion) with the recommendations to the National Courts Administration, Lithuanian courts and the Judicial Council. In 2021, the Judicial Council and the National Courts Administration actively implemented the recommendations, and on 6 January 2022 informed the Special Investigation Service about the progress of their implementation. It should be noted that the recommendations provided in the Conclusion are related to the improvement of the legal regulation and technical measures for the allocation of cases to judges and their implementation takes time. Therefore, the implementation of the recommendations will be continued in 2022. In addition to that, the National Courts Administration has prepared drafts of the Lithuanian Judicial Corruption Prevention Program and Plan of Measures for its Implementation. The initial versions of the drafts have been submitted to the courts and the Special Investigation Service of the Republic of Lithuania for comments. According to the comments received, the improved drafts will be submitted to the committees of the Judicial Council and the public for comments, and after that – to the Judicial Council for consideration. It is also planned to establish, with the approval of the Judicial Council, a central entity responsible for the development of an anti-corruption environment throughout the judiciary and implementation of the Lithuanian Judicial Corruption Prevention Program. The Chief Official Ethics Commission is preparing in coordination with the Judicial Council the draft Guidelines on the Management of Conflicts of Interest for Judges and Assistant Judges. The measures stated in the Interinstitutional Action Plan for 2020-2022 according to the Implementation of National Anti-Corruption Program for 2015–2025 are being implemented.

6. Accountability of judges and prosecutors, including disciplinary regime and bodies and ethical rules, judicial immunity and criminal/civil (where applicable) liability of judges (incl. judicial review)

1. Activities of the Judicial Court of Honour

In 2021, the Judicial Court of Honour made one decision for violating a judge's discipline and began to form the principles of conduct of judges as public figures in social networks and public space. A judge in a public space must be subject to stricter standards of conduct than those who do not hold such office. When writing or speaking in public, the judge must assess the meaning of his or her words and the possible influence on the authority of the judiciary and the guarantees of impartiality in general. The Judicial Court of Honour believes that public discussion of court issues is possible and should not be restricted. In the decision of the Judicial Court of Honour it is stated, that the European Court of Human Rights has emphasized in a number of cases that the courts do not operate in a vacuum, so the public needs to be aware of the problems within the judiciary.

2. Activities of the Judicial Ethics and Discipline Commission

The Judicial Ethics and Discipline Commission, in addition to its main function of handling complaints about possible breaches of judicial ethics, actively disseminates a culture of judicial ethics by giving lectures to newly appointed judges, as well as sharing practical ethical experience on the National Transparency Academy platform. Decisions on possible violation of a judge's ethics address issues related to the judge's independence and impartiality, the judge's legal language culture and its expression, the implementation of the principle of publicity of the court's decision, the Chairman's of the Court actions in organizing court work and personal data protection.

7. Remuneration/bonuses/rewards for judges and prosecutors, including changes (significant increase or decrease over the past year), transparency on the system and access to the information

By Law No. XIV-509 of 13 July 2021, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania amended the Law on the Remuneration of Judges and introduced the possibility of paying bonuses to judges of ordinary and specialised courts for increased workload when there is an increase in workload due to unforeseen reasons as a result of significant increase in the number of cases received per month. For the implementation of these provisions, a Description of the Procedure for Granting and Paying Bonuses for Increased Workload to Judges of Ordinary Courts and Judges of Specialized Courts has been approved by Resolution No. 13P-98-(7.1.2) of the Judicial Council of 23 July 2021. The payment of bonuses for increased workload, which has increased due to unforeseen reasons as a result of significant increase in the number of cases in a certain category received per month, has helped to ensure adequate remuneration of judges for their work, when the number of cases in courts regarding illegal migration at the state border of the Republic of Lithuania has significantly increased.

On 25 November 2021, the Seimas passed the Law No. XIV-708 on the Remuneration of Judges of the Republic of Lithuania amending the Law No. X-1771, which recasts the entire law and changes its title to the "Law on Payment for Work of Judges of the Republic of Lithuania". Amendments to the law have regulated the procedure for remunerating judges for on-call time and work on rest periods and public holidays, providing for the remuneration of division chairmen and judges substituting for the president of the court, and introducing new provisions regarding the payment of bonuses for increased workload when there is an increase in the amount of work in performing functions of another judge of the same ordinary or specialised court (or the same courthouse) (in the temporary absence of a judge of the same ordinary or specialised court in an ordinary or specialised court (or in the same courthouse). Provisions have also been maintained for increased workload bonuses due to an increase in the volume of work due to unforeseen reasons as a result of significant increase in the number of cases in a given category received per month. The procedure for the implementation of the given provisions of the law was detailed upon the adoption of Resolution No. 13P-155-(7.1.2) of the Judicial Council of 20 December 2021 approving the description of the procedure for the payment for work and on-call time on rest periods and public holidays and substitution, granting and payment of bonuses for increased workload to judges of ordinary and specialised courts.

8. Independence/autonomy of the prosecution service

No significant changes.

9. Independence of the Bar (chamber/association of lawyers) and of lawyers

No significant changes. Advocates form an independent part of the legal system (Art. 3, part 1 of The Law on the Bar of the Republic of Lithuania). Lithuanian Bar is a self-governing body and is financed from contributions paid by advocates and from other sources (Art. 56, part 1 and 5 of The Law on the Bar of the Republic of Lithuania).

10. Significant developments capable of affecting the perception that the general public has of the independence of the judiciary

In 2021, the Judicial Council approved Communication Strategy of Lithuanian Courts and Plan of Measures for its Implementation for 2021-2024. In this strategy there are aspects that overlap with the strategic directions of the Judicial Council in order to ensure integrity and efficiency of the activities of the entire judiciary and the Judicial Council. The document includes not only means and activities of external communications, but also puts more focus on measures of internal communication suggesting a number of new means of achieving its objectives, and establishes several new means of achieving the goals. During the implementation of the Communication Strategy, the following objectives are set:

- to increase public trust in Lithuanian courts as an institution administering justice;
- to develop coordinated, measured communication in the judicial system, to implement common communication measures;
- to strengthen internal communication and organizational culture in the courts.

The objectives of the Communication Strategy are set to be achieved by using proven measures (e. g. participation in TV and radio programs, organization of legal advice and other successful events, etc.) and entirely new measures (e. g. it is planned to establish a Public Relations Competence Centre for the Judiciary).

B. Quality of justice

11. Accessibility of courts (e.g. court/legal fees, legal aid, language)

As it was stated in the Lithuanian input for the 2021 Rule of Law Report, a project aiming at ensuring good quality of state – guaranteed legal aid is indicated as a priority in the Programme of the 18th Government of the Republic of Lithuania, approved by the Parliament on 11 December 2020² (§198-199). According to the plan for implementing the provisions of the Programme, a feasibility study assessing the efficiency and quality of the state-guaranteed legal aid system in Lithuania is being carried out by The Government Strategic Analysis Center (STRATA) (the results are expected to be delivered in Q1 2022). The study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the state-guaranteed legal aid system, evaluate strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the existing system and provide recommendations and guidelines for possible means that could be taken to increase the effectiveness and quality of the services provided.

12. Resources of the judiciary (human/financial/materia)

Despite restrictions regarding COVID-19 pandemic various activities relating to volunteering in courts were implemented. To secure sustainable development and expansion of those services the National Courts Administration recruited coordinator for all volunteering related activities. Furthermore, analysis of the current situation was carried out and the most appropriate and effective measures for the future development were identified. Following recommendation in the analysis

² Resolution of the Seimas No. XIV-72 of 11 December 2020:
<https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/ed22bb703bc311eb8d9fe110e148c770> .



visual identity (logos, posters, etc.) and attributes for volunteers (bags, flasks, etc.) were designed and procured. Aiming to increase the quality of services provided, as well as to decrease employee turnover and increase motivation, training programs for volunteers and their mentors (specially assigned court employees for supervision) were prepared and 10 mentors as well as 24 volunteers were trained.

In order to promote volunteering in the Lithuanian courts, the activities of the Volunteer Service were expanded. From the end of 2021, volunteers can be met in the following courts: District Court of Vilnius City, Šiauliai Regional Court, District Court of Šiauliai, District Court of Klaipėda, Panevėžys Regional Court, District Court of Panevėžys, District Court of Kaunas, Vilnius Regional Administrative Court (if there is a need), The Supreme Court of Lithuania (if there is a need), Vilnius Regional Court (if there is a need), District Court of Marijampolė, Chamber of Marijampolė, District Court of Telšiai, Chamber of Mažeikiai, Kaunas Regional Court.

A conference “Challenges for the Selection of Judges and Volunteering in the Courts” took place on 14 June 2021. During this event, judges and current, as well as former, volunteers shared their experiences. In October 2021, volunteer mentors raised their qualifications in the training of court volunteer mentors. Introductory Volunteer Training was held for new volunteers. In November 2021, Volunteer Competence Improvement Training was held. In order to increase the awareness of the Volunteer Service, and to spread the word about the provision of volunteer services to the court visitors, the logo of the Volunteer Service of the courts and other signs of visual identity of the Volunteer Service have been created, court volunteers have been provided with distinctive attributes. In 2021, 40 volunteers provided assistance to more than 350 court visitors. Although in 2021, due to the situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic, volunteers had fewer opportunities to provide assistance to court visitors.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2021, 16.4 thousand euros were allocated from the State budget for the reserve of personal protective equipment and other costs related to the control of COVID-19 for which the basic necessary personal protective equipment and disinfectants have been purchased for the courts: 400,000 units of disposable face masks, 34,000 pairs of disposable gloves, 2,000 pieces of disposable overalls, 1,200 litres of hand sanitizer, 1,200 litres of disinfectant for surface disinfection. Also, in 2021, the State allocated 565 thousand euros target funds for additional measures for the control of COVID-19 in order to purchase laptops and video conferencing equipment for courts. 209 laptops, 111 controlled cameras, 17 sets of mobile video conferencing equipment, 4 conferencing equipment licenses, conference equipment processors, 3 sets of stationary video conferencing equipment, 2 video conferencing recording devices, Children’s interrogation equipment (video camera, wireless headphone system) in District Court of Marijampolė, Chamber of Šakiai were purchased using these funds. Moreover, in 2021, the State allocated additional 54 thousand euros target funds for the reserve of personal protective equipment and other costs related to the control of COVID-19 (additional measures to control COVID-19) for which personal protective equipment and disinfectants have been purchased for the courts: 40,000 respirators, 300,000 disposable face masks, 3,000 protective face shields, 100,000 pairs of disposable gloves, 900 litres of hand sanitizer, 1,200 litres of disinfectant for surface disinfection. In addition to that, 238 web cameras and 33 TV sets with their holders for the courtrooms were purchased using these funds.

13. Training of justice professionals (including judges, prosecutors, lawyers, court staff)

Throughout 2021, the National Courts Administration has provided 65 seminars for judges and court staff. Due to the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic that were still in place, and because of the possibility to involve more participants, 46 training events were implemented online and only 19 face-to-face. All together 3451 representatives of courts were trained: 1552 judges, 1919 court staff and 20 representatives of the National Courts Administration. In order to improve the management of human resources, training on certain topics like strengthening leadership

competencies, promoting teamwork, good microclimate and organizational culture in the team, were organized. In 2021 training “Leadership in the courts: an effective day-to-day management practice”, “Professional leadership”, “Critical conversations, their management” were organized for court presidents and chancellors.

The Prosecutor’s office allocated 40 000 Euro for training and education in 2021. The prosecutors and personnel of the Prosecutor’s Office participated in 254 training events. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic part of the trainings were organized in remote or in hybrid way.

14. Digitalisation (e.g. use of digital technology, particularly electronic communication tools, within the justice system and with court users, including resilience of justice systems in COVID-19 pandemic)

1. Changes in the legal framework governing the use of video conferencing technologies in criminal cases and court proceedings

Law No. XIV-270 on amending the Code of Criminal Procedure with Article 8² entered into force on 1 June 2021 and established (legitimized) the wider use of information technology in criminal proceedings. According to amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure, in exceptional cases where it is not possible to ensure the handling of cases in accordance with the ordinary procedure established in this Code, pre-trial investigation actions, court proceedings and participation in court hearings can be ensured by using electronic communication technologies (via video conferencing).

The Judicial Council also discussed in the meeting of 29 November 2021 the issue of draft laws submitted by the Minister of Justice for approval by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania which amend the provisions of the Description of the Procedure for the Use of Video Conferencing Technology in Criminal Cases and the Description of the Procedure for the Use of Video Conferencing and Teleconferencing in Civil and Administrative Cases. The draft laws were prepared in co-operation with the representatives of the Judicial Council and the National Courts Administration in order to fully implement the provision of Article 117 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania that cases are heard in public in all courts as well as the provision of paragraph 1 of Article 7 of the Law on Courts that cases are heard in public in the courts, except in cases prescribed by law. The draft laws set out the ways in which the publicity of the court hearing is ensured when the court hearing takes place using video conferencing and/or teleconferencing technologies.

By resolution No. 13P-162-(7.1.2.) of the Judicial Council of 20 December 2021 the Resolution No. 13P-46-(7.1.2) of the Judicial Council of 25 May 2018 “On Approval of the Description of the Procedure for the Use of Technical Means during the Announcement of a Judgment” was amended by supplementing it with the provisions detailing the rules on publicity in court proceedings; also, regulations related to ensuring the publicity of court proceedings were established: the procedure for submitting and examining a request to a court by a person willing to observe a public remote court hearing was established, the essential aspects of practical implementation were defined (by supplementing them, inter alia, with more modern solutions), which may be relevant for the uniform organisation of the court activities, enabling individuals to observe public hearings at a distance, and for informing the public.

On 27 August 2021, the Judicial Council approved recommendations for the organisation of remote court hearings. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide useful, practical advice to courts and litigants on how remote litigation should be conducted and how to participate in it. The recommendations are based on a summary of existing legal frameworks, case law (including international case law) and the guidelines of the European Commission on Effective Justice on videoconferencing in court proceedings of 30 June 2021. The recommendations define the main

principles for the organisation of remote court hearings and principles of personal participation, the conference (audio-visual) equipment recommended to be used was indicated, important aspects of the preparation of the court and the parties to the proceedings for the hearing were highlighted, as well as the most relevant issues in the course of hearing and other relevant information was established to ensure the smooth running of court hearings.

2. Changes in the legal framework governing the use of video conferencing technologies in the Judicial Council activities

Since 2021, meetings of the Judicial Council have been broadcasted to the judiciary and, since 1 January 2022 – to the public. Legal acts governing live broadcasts of the Judicial Council meetings and handling of video recordings of meetings have entered into force (the Judicial Council’s Resolution of 26 March 2021, No. 13P-35-(7.1.2) “On the Amendment of the Judicial Council’s Resolution No. 13P-30-(7.1.2) of 24 February 2017” and the Order of the Director of the National Court Administration of 30 March 2021, No. 6P-49- (1.1.) “On the Approval of the Description of the Procedure for Broadcasting the Meetings of the Judicial Council”). Difficulties in using remote means are partly related to the insufficient amount of computer equipment and licenses available to the courts, as well as to the inability of those involved in the proceedings to attend court hearings remotely (e.g. due to the lack of skills). In 2021, additional number of computers were purchased for courts; juvenile interview equipment was updated / new purchases were made. Also, in 2021, purchases were completed allowing a significant expansion of video conferencing equipment. However, efforts are still needed to upgrade the computer equipment in courts.

In 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the activities of judicial self-government institutions were carried out remotely. The table below provides a summary of the remote meetings that took place:

Number of meetings	Judicial Council	Permanent Commission for the Assessment of Activities of Judges	Commission for the Assessment of Candidates to Judicial Office	Examination Commission of Candidates to Judicial Office	Judicial Court of Honour	Judicial Ethics and Discipline Commission	Judicial Mediation Commission	Judicial System Awards Commission
Total	23	15	35	16	5	10	6	1
Remote	13	14	21	5	5	9	6	1
Hybrid	4	-	11	5	-	-	-	-

In 2019, a new IT state investment project “Ensuring the speed and security of the court information system and modernisation and development of electronic court services” was prepared and coordinated with the Information Society Development Committee and from 2020 onward was included in the Public Investment Program. The aim of this project is to complete the last stages of the LITEKO modernisation and to fully complete the modernisation of the LITEKO in 2021, as well as to improve the functionalities of the LITEKO public electronic services subsystem.

In 2021, the implementation of the project “Increasing the Efficiency of Judicial Activities”, financed by the investment funds of the European Union, was continued. The aim of the project is to increase the efficiency of court activities, to develop models for advanced management of court resources and case allocation, to update case data management processes and transfer them into the electronic space. Results of modernisation of the LITEKO II in 2021: LITEKO II non-process document management module was developed and put into use in all courts of Lithuania and the National Courts Administration; LITEKO II for the process document management, case distribution module, and the statistical subsystem have been developed (it is planned that LITEKO II modernization will be completed by 31 December 2022).

The Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania on 22 April 2021 adopted Law No. XIV-270, which made it possible to ensure the smooth running of criminal proceedings even during quarantine, providing for the possibility of organizing the relevant pre-trial investigation and criminal trial remotely.

In the Programme of the 18th Government of the Republic of Lithuania, which was approved by the Parliament on 11 December 2020, it is foreseen to further modernise the work of the courts (§ 194-195). In order to achieve this goal, in particular to ensure the possibility to observe public court hearings online, the Ministry of Justice has prepared the amendments to the orders of the Minister of Justice regulating the use of video and tele conferences for organising distant court hearings in civil, administrative and criminal cases. The draft orders provide for the measures to ensure the publicity of the court hearing when the court hearing is held using video and tele conferences. The draft orders are being coordinated with stakeholders and expected to be adopted soon.

15. Use of assessment tools and standards (e.g. ICT systems for case management, court statistics and their transparency, monitoring, evaluation, surveys among court users or legal professionals)

No significant changes

16. Geographical distribution and number of courts/jurisdictions (“judicial map”) and their specialisation, in particular specific courts or chambers within courts to deal with fraud and corruption cases.

The initiatives to optimize the operation of courts in 2021 were continued to a slightly different extent proposals for the reform of administrative courts in cooperation with the courts and the National Courts Administration. The President of the Republic of Lithuania submitted to the Seimas for consideration amendments to the Law on Courts of the Republic of Lithuania, the Law on Administrative Proceedings of the Republic of Lithuania, the Law on Establishment of Administrative Courts of the Republic of Lithuania and other related laws which, inter alia, propose to reorganise the system of regional administrative courts by merging the Vilnius Regional Administrative Court with the Regional Administrative Court of Regions (by establishing one joint Lithuanian Regional Administrative Court). The initiated amendments aim to address the continuation of the judicial reform launched in 2018, one of the main objectives of which was to equalise the workload and conditions of judges and court staff, to create the premises for a wider specialisation of judges and to increase the expeditiousness of court proceedings. Draft amendments to the laws were discussed in the Seimas committees in 2021 and deliberations continue in 2022.

It should be noted that the Judicial Council constantly evaluates the efficiency of the judicial system and, within the limits of its competence, makes proposals on possible measures to optimise the courts. In addition, it should be noted that one of the measures for the implementation of the strategic direction 2021-2024 “Increasing the efficiency of the judiciary” approved by the Resolution No. 13P-27(7.1.2) of the Judicial Council of 26 February 2021 includes the analysis of proposals for the optimisation of the court network and proposals for the improvement of the organisational/administrative activities of the courts.

C. Efficiency of the justice system

17. Length of proceedings

In the Programme of the 18th Government of the Republic of Lithuania (§ 194-195) it is foreseen to continue and take new legislative actions in order to make court procedures more effective, to transfer the functions that are not intrinsic to the judiciary to other institutions. In order to achieve this goal, the Ministry of Justice has prepared draft laws (amendments to the Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania, to the Code of Civil Procedure of the Republic of Lithuania, to other related laws), aiming at transferring the functions that are not intrinsic to the judiciary to other institutions (e. g. notaries, bailiffs). It is expected that transfer of certain functions to other institutions than courts will reduce the workload of courts and will provide an opportunity for persons to resolve certain issues quicker (e.g., it is suggested to abolish the requirement of court permits to transfer real estate when individuals have minor children). The draft laws are being coordinated with the judiciary and other stakeholders and will be submitted to the Government for consideration.

Aiming to decrease duration of court proceedings and increase their quality, a separate study dedicated to the improvement of court proceedings was launched in 2021 (will be implemented by the end of 2022). The study shall:

- analyse current situation of proceedings in courts of all instances (done in 2021);
- conduct a survey of target groups and parties concerned (done in 2021);
- monitor proceedings in courts of all instances and analyse best practices of foreign countries and international courts;
- prepare methodological recommendations on the quality of the conduct of court proceedings and draft necessary legislation, required for the implementation of the recommendations of the study.

The Study is being prepared within the framework of the project “Improvement of Quality, Services and Infrastructure in Lithuanian courts” and financed by the 2014-2020 EEA and Norway Financial Mechanism Program “Justice and Home Affairs”.

Other – please specify

In the event of the hybrid attack by the Belarusian regime that caused the migrant crisis in the Republic of Lithuania in 2021, representatives of the Judicial Council and the National Courts Administration actively participated both in the legislative processes initiated with the management of this crisis and in the organisation of inter-institutional meetings to find optimal means of work organisation. Despite the increase in the number of cases before the courts, the organisation of the judiciary has been sufficiently smooth in dealing with migrants’ requests/complaints and other issues related to the crisis of illegal migration. For example, the District Court of Vilnius Region, District Court of Utena and District Court of Alytus took into account the hybrid attack from Belarus, where illegal migration was instrumentalized for political purposes at the border between the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Belarus in 2021, which significantly increased the number of the proposals for detention or application of other alternative measures received by the District Court of Vilnius Region since June 2021. Furthermore, the amendments to the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Legal Status of Foreigners entered into force on 1 January 2022 and established the rule of alternative jurisdiction in cases concerning the legal status of foreigners assessing the predictable increase in this category of cases in the District Court of Vilnius Region in January-February 2022. In order to ensure the smooth judicial activities in hearing such cases, it has been decided to temporarily harmonize the allocation of the flow of cases to these courts in the cases of the state of war and the state of emergency, as well as in the extreme situation due to the increase in the number of foreigners crossing the border. In such a situation in the country, it was agreed that the District Court of Utena and the District Court of Alytus would temporarily hear cases concerning the legal status of foreigners residing in the Medininkai Foreigners Registration Centre according to the established timetable for hearing such cases – two days a week by the District Court of Alytus, three days – by the District Court of Utena. Cases concerning the legal status of foreigners residing in the



Pabradė Foreigners Registration Centre are heard by the District Court of Vilnius Region in accordance with the timetable approved by the court.

On the occasion of International Human Rights Day, Lithuanian courts invited representatives of other authorities to discuss the migrant crisis and emerging challenges. Judges, representatives of the Seimas, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the State Border Guard Service, the Migration Department and other institutions took part in the discussion organised on the initiative of the Lithuanian Judicial Council.

Sub-paragraph 8.3.4 of the plan for the implementation of the provisions of the program of the eighteenth Government of the Republic of Lithuania, approved on 10 March 2021 by Resolution No. 155 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania provides for the action “To adopt a Government decision on enhancing the efficiency of judicial proceedings by reviewing the functions of courts non pertaining to dispute resolution, assessing the possibilities of developing pre-trial dispute resolution in independent collegial institutions, legal and practical possibilities to transfer these functions to other entities authorised by the state”. The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania has registered draft amendments to the Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania and other laws (registration No. XIIP-5059 - XIIP-5065), which aim to relinquish certain functions not typical of courts. The Ministry of Justice, after conducting an additional assessment of non-judicial functions of the courts (i.e. functions not typical of courts), submitted additional proposals for the waiver of certain non-judicial functions, regarding the expediency of which the Judicial Council delivered its opinion in its letter No. 36P-116- (7.1. 10.) on 14 September 2021.

A discussion “How to Protect a Child” took place on 1 June 2021, with the participation of representatives of Lithuanian and Norwegian judiciary, police, prosecutor’s office, Lithuanian legislature and executive, international organizations. On the International Children’s Day, questions related to what can be done about children who have experienced violence in their immediate environment and been involved in legal proceedings were discussed.

The Judicial Council, in response to the debate in the national media on the assessment of the individual’s right to privacy and the public’s right to know in case-law, as well as realizing the need to reconcile freedom of expression and information, including journalistic, with the right to the protection of personal data, organized a discussion “Privacy Limits in the Context of the General Data Protection Regulation”. The discussion took place on 2 December 2021, with the participation of European Data Protection Supervisor, representatives of the judiciary, media, academic community, legislature and executive, institutions formulating and implementing personal data protection policy in the Republic of Lithuania. During the discussion problematic aspects of the application of the General Data Protection Regulation in practice have been discussed, i.e. the provision of personal information to the media representatives, the collection and publication of such information, limits of public person’s right to privacy, the competence of supervisory authorities and courts to protect potentially violated data subjects’ rights. This event was broadcast live by Lithuanian courts on their YouTube channel.

In 2021, the National Courts Administration organized an essay competition “Let’s Behave Correctly!”. 16-19-year-old schoolchildren were invited to send critical essays on the topic of justice. The winners were chosen from 35 participants by a commission of three members of the judiciary. The authors of the most interesting essays were awarded on 15 December 2021, during the commemoration of the Lithuanian Court Day.

In 2021, topics relevant to the judicial system were proposed for the radio program “Radio Case”; regular proposition of topics / articles / broadcasts with comments from court representatives. Information about the activities of the courts reached the public through radio programs, the most popular news portals, comments sections, etc. On 25 October 2021, in order to strengthen legal education of the public, Lithuanian courts hosted a free legal advice day titled “You ask - we answer”. Also, in 2021, Lithuanian courts participated in the Open House and Culture Night events.

II. ANTI-CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK

Where previous specific reports, published in the framework of the review under the UN Convention against Corruption, of GRECO, and of the OECD address the issues below, please make a reference to the points you wish to bring to the Commission's attention in these documents, indicating any relevant updates, changes or measures introduced that have occurred since these documents were published.

A. The institutional framework capacity to fight against corruption (prevention and investigation / prosecution)

- 18. List any changes as regards relevant authorities (e.g. national agencies, bodies) in charge of prevention detection, investigation and prosecution of corruption and the resources allocated to each of these authorities (the human, financial, legal, and technical resources as relevant), including the cooperation among domestic authorities. Indicate any relevant measure taken to effectively and timely cooperate with OLAF and EPPO (where applicable).**

Resources

According to the Special Investigations Service of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter - STT) statistical data of 31 December 2021, 273 officers and employees work in the STT. The largest permissible number of positions of officers and employees is determined by the Board of the Seimas.

According to Article 14 of the Law on the Special Investigation Service of the Republic of Lithuania, the STT is financed from the state budget of Lithuania. For the year of 2022, it was allocated 14.581 million Euros of state budget funding of which 638 000 Euros for the recruitment of officers to 20 new positions. The STT may have other funds to ensure criminal intelligence activities. Moreover, to fulfil the tasks and functions established by this Law, the STT has the right, in accordance with the procedure established by law, to receive support from foreign institutions and establishments, international organizations and other lawful sources of funds (such as project funding activities).

Main structural changes

Asset Recovery Division (ARD) within the STT was established on 1 November 2020. ARD seeks to further strengthen and concentrate in one hands activities related to allocating, freezing and returning of property obtained through corruption-related crimes, also taking into account and implementing the Law on Civil Confiscation of Property.

ARD focuses on criminal intelligence activities, large datasets (Big Data) analysis and international cooperation between law enforcement agencies. The main goals of ARD are:

- Traces the asset;
- Initiate the asset recovery procedure;
- Where necessary, identify and solve the challenges related to the AR procedure;
- Develop new methods, tools and practice to improve AR mechanism.

The main target groups are civil servants, officials, decision makers and other persons with administrative powers.

National cooperation

In a year of 2021, the STT by signing cooperation agreements further strengthened cooperation with these national authorities:

- Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania;
- Public Limited Liability Company “Lithuanian Railways”;
- Public institution “Money Laundering Prevention Competence Center”;
- Association “Investors Forum”³.

Participation in the EU-funded activities

The STT continues to be an active participant in the EU-funded projects both in terms of improving its own capacities and in terms of sharing its best practices with other counterparts within and outside the EU. Several projects are currently underway however, implementation period of some of them was extended due to Covid-19 pandemic:

- Project to support the review of Lithuanian National Anti-Corruption Strategy is implemented by the OECD in the framework of the Technical Support Instrument by the European Commission. Its main donor and counterpart is Lithuanian STT.
- Project “Enhancing the analytical capacity of law enforcement authorities to detect and prevent fraud and corruption affecting the financial interests of the EU” under the OLAF-Hercule III program (No. 878557).⁴ The project started in 1 January 2020 and will last until 1 September 2022 (the date may change due to COVID-19).
- Project “Strengthening multidisciplinary and regional approach in fighting corruption and fraud affecting EU financial interests in the Baltic region” (No. 101014631).⁵ The project started in 1 January 2021 and will last until 1 March 2023 (the date may change due to COVID-19).
- A new proposal for the OLAF funding project „Strengthening capacities of the STT to investigate corruption-related crimes“ was submitted in 2021. The evaluation process will be finished in April 2022.
- EU Twinning Project “Support the Jordanian Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission in the Fields of Integrity and Corruption Prevention”.
- EU Twinning Project “*Support to the reform of the criminal asset recovery and management system in Azerbaijan*”. The implementation of the project will start on 1st of February 2022.

Other international cooperation

The STT continues to be an active partner in international cooperation. The STT has strengthened its cooperation with the Commission for Anti-Corruption and Illegal Assets Forfeiture of the Republic of Bulgaria and a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed on 20 of May 2021.⁶ In order to enhance the cooperation of Baltic anti-corruption agencies the a new trilateral Cooperation agreement was signed between STT, Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau of Latvia and Central Anti-Corruption Bureau of Poland, which replaced previous bilateral agreements. On behalf of the European Partners against Corruption and the European contact-point network against corruption (EPAC/EACN), the STT has organised EPAC/EACN Annual Professional Conference and General Assembly on 1-2 December 2021 in Vilnius. About 120 participants from 54 institutions and 30 different countries (Lithuania, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain, Austria, Sweden,

³ This information is not publicly available

⁴ <https://www.stt.lt/en/news/7481/stt-starts-a-new-project-funded-by-olaf:2830>

⁵ https://www.stt.lt/en/news/7481/_2021-2/cooperation-of-the-baltic-countries-in-the-fight-against-corruption-and-fraud-is-being-strengthened:3055

⁶ https://www.stt.lt/data/public/uploads/2021/06/d1_pasirasytas-susitarimas-nr.-8-94-su-bulgarijos-institucija.pdf

Denmark, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Ukraine, etc.) took part in the event. The Director of STT was elected EPAC/EACN President for a two-year term. The STT also became a member of the UN Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities (Globe Network).

National bodies in charge of corruption prevention

The new Law on the Prevention of Corruption⁷ came into force on 1 January 2022. The new Law provides definitions, aims, task and principles; system of measures to create an anti-corruption environment; entities that shall be responsible for creating an anti-corruption environment, their functions, duties and operational guarantees. Among other important aspects, the Law is based on the principle of subsidiarity. It means that the public or private sector entities are primarily responsible for managing corruption risks. A ministry or another independent institution to which the public sector entity is subordinate, accountable or assigned and (or) the STT interfere and propose measures to create an environment resistant to corruption or implement them in so far to the extent necessary to effectively manage corruption risks in this entity (article 4 part. 6)

19. Safeguards for the functional independence of the authorities tasked with the prevention and detection of corruption.

No significant changes

20. Information on the implementation of measures foreseen in the strategic anti-corruption framework (if applicable). If available, please provide relevant objectives and indicators.

National Anti-Corruption Programme for 2015-2025⁸ (hereinafter – the Programme) is the current anti-corruption strategy in Lithuania. On 4 November 2020, the Government of Lithuania approved the Action Plan for 2020-2022⁹ (hereinafter – the Action Plan), which provides measures that needs to be implemented to achieve the goals and objectives of the Programme. Pursuant to paragraph 51 of the Programme, once a year, but not later than 1 February of the following year, all institutions responsible for implementation of the Programme shall submit information to the STT on the progress in and effectiveness of implementation of the Programme, as well as the data supporting it. According to this information, STT will monitor the results of implementation of the Programme and its Action Plan. Gathering of information for year 2021 is currently underway.

On 15 December 2021, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania endorsed the Draft National Anti-corruption Agenda for the period of 2022-2033 (hereinafter – the Agenda)¹⁰. The next stage is the adoption of the Agenda by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. Once adopted, the Agenda will replace the current Programme. The strategic objective of the Agenda is to create an anti-corruption environment in the public and private sectors. According to the draft Agenda, this objective will be pursued by acting in three directions:

1) Forming anti-corruption attitudes and developing anti-corruption competencies (for example, raising anti-corruption awareness of the society; strengthening anti-corruption role of the media; etc.);

⁸ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/e42b7360100211e5b0d3e1beb7dd5516?jfwid=-fxdp8swm>

⁹ https://www.stt.lt/data/public/uploads/2021/04/tvp-2020-2022_eng.pdf

¹⁰ https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/e62017c0619f11ecb2fe9975f8a9e52e?positionInSearchResults=2&searchModelUU_ID=c23b80b7-4bb3-474e-b099-a23cb43373ce



2) Seeking sustainable, resilient to illegal influence decisions, and providing high-quality public and administrative services (for example, improving the legislative process; improving the availability and quality of public and administrative services; etc.);

3) Seeking effective control of corruption and impartial, objective administration of justice by ensuring the rule of law (for example, ensuring resilience to corruption in the judiciary and justice system; improving the effectiveness of the criminal prosecution; etc.). The strategic objective is planned to be achieved in three stages by implementing four-year Action plans: Action plan for 2022-2025, Action plan for 2026-2029 and Action plan for 2030-2033. As mentioned, in development of the new Agenda and its Action plans Lithuania is receiving technical support from the European Commission and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) under the project “Effective design and implementation of the national anticorruption strategy” in order to design, develop and implement reforms related to Lithuania’s national anti-corruption strategy. STT is a national authority that requested technical support and will benefit from this project.

B. Prevention

21. Measures to enhance integrity in the public sector and their application (including as regards incompatibility rules, revolving doors, codes of conduct, ethics training). Please provide figures on their application.

No significant changes

22. General transparency of public decision-making (e.g. public access to information, including possible obstacles related to the classification of information, transparency authorities where they exist, and framework rules on lobbying including the transparency of lobbying, asset disclosure rules, gifts and transparency of political party financing)

No significant changes

23. Rules and measures to prevent conflict of interests in the public sector. Please specify the scope of their application (e.g. categories of officials concerned)

No significant changes

24. Measures in place to ensure whistleblower protection and encourage reporting of corruption.

In 2021, there were 73 decisions regarding the status of a whistleblower made. 43 persons were recognized as whistle-blowers, and 30 persons were not. Six persons have applied several times. The reporting person can apply for legal aid and he will be granted with secondary legal assistance guaranteed by the state, regardless of the established threshold of assets and income to obtain legal aid. In 2021, secondary legal assistance guaranteed by the state to the persons having the status of whistleblower was provided in 5 cases to 4 persons. The information contained in the reports was investigated by divisions of Prosecution Service or other competent authorities (ministries etc.): there were 10 pre-trial investigations started; on 25 occasions it was refused to start a pre-trial investigation; there were 8 internal audits and investigations carried out which revealed no breaches; there was 1 internal audit and investigation carried out which revealed certain breaches. The most common kinds of violations of law include the unofficial accounting in private companies, abuse of official powers,

forgery of documents, misappropriation of property, misconduct in public office, bribery, corruption in public procurement procedures, crimes against environment, violations of labour laws etc.

Hotline

Based on the Directive 2019/1937 on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law, a “Hotline for Whistleblowers” was established at the prosecution service in August 2020. Every working day, from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., having dialed the telephone number specified on the website of the prosecution service, persons can be advised by competent employees on how the report form needs to be completed and what documents and information need to be provided. The said hotline may also be used by the persons who already have the status of whistleblower, but adverse actions have been taken against them or they wish to receive secondary legal assistance guaranteed by the state. 218 consultations have been provided to natural persons and legal entities in 2021.

On 16 December 2021, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania has approved an amendment to the Law on the Protection of Whistleblowers. The changes to the existing legal regulation have been made taking into account the requirements of the Directive (EU) 2019/1937:

1. Expanded the list of infringements falling within the scope of the law and includes breaches affecting the EU's financial interests; breaches related to the internal market, including breaches of EU competition and State aid rules, breaches of corporate tax rules, etc.

2. The possibility is established for the person providing information on the infringement to contact the competent authority directly in the light of the facts (i.e., not necessarily to use an internal reporting channel)

3. The protection of the confidentiality of individuals is strengthened by providing that information to persons not participating in an investigation may not be provided and that identity disclosure is limited to what is necessary and proportionate in the course of the investigation.

4. A prohibition on adverse effects is imposed not only on the persons who have provided information on the infringement, on family members, but also on relatives, colleagues working for the institution or in another legal person with subordination links with the institution, where the family member, relative, colleague of the person who provided information on the infringement the provision of information on the infringement may have negative consequences.

5. It is established that the competent entity, having received the information through an internal channel or a competent authority, is required to inform the person of the receipt of the information, to provide "feedback", to transmit the information according to its competence (time limits are set short – e.g., informing the person that the information has been received, provided for immediately but not more than within 2 working days).

6. The possibility for the competent authority to take a decision on the withdrawal of the status of notifier shall be established (at the request of the notifier or if it is found that false information has been intentionally provided).

Online consultations

In order to ensure the maximum standards for the protection of whistleblowers in Lithuania the Prosecutor General's Office organized online public consultation with business and public sector bodies, responsible for implementing the requirements of the Law on the Protection of Whistleblowers. In 2021, 11 consultations have been organized.

Trainings

Prosecutor General's Office representatives organize free training for companies (private and public bodies). Duration of training – three academic hours. During the training, the institute for the



protection of whistleblowers is introduced and practical aspects are discussed (e.g. how the breach can be reported, how to complete the report correctly, how the prosecutor decides on the status of the rapporteur, what kind of promotion and aid measures are applied for whistleblowers). 18 trainings were organized in 2021.

In the light of the effective human rights and protection of the public interest, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on 28 November 2017 adopted the Law on the Protection of Whistleblowers of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter - the Law on the Protection of Whistleblowers), which entered into force on 1 January 2019. This law established and legally regulated the institute for the protection of whistleblowers, the emergence and application of which has undoubtedly led to the disclosure of information on illegal and unethical activities and the more effective protection of the public interest in both the public and private sectors. It is prohibited to take any measures adversely affecting a person who has provided information on a breach from provision of this information, where these measures are taken because of the provision of such information: dismissal, demotion or change of location of work, intimidation, harassment, discrimination, threat of abuse, restriction of career opportunities, reduction in wages, change in working hours, doubts as to the person's competence, communication of negative information about the person to third parties, withdrawal of the right to work with information comprising a state secret or an official secret, as well as application of any other measures adversely affecting him, etc. Prohibition from adversely affecting a person who has provided information on a breach apply to the employer and to other employees of the institution. It is prohibited to adversely affect the family members of a person who has provided information on a breach, working at an institution or at any other legal person related to the institution by subordination, where a family member of the person who has provided information on the breach may suffer negative consequences as a result of the provision of information on the breach. If a person who has provided information on a breach has been adversely affected, his employer must, in case of a dispute, prove that the person who has provided information on the breach has suffered negative consequences not as a result of his submitting the report or providing information on the breach.

In Lithuania, the following financial assistance measures are applied to whistleblowers:

1. Remuneration of Whistleblowers for valuable information
2. Compensation to Whistleblowers for adverse actions or potential consequences suffered as a result of submission of the report
3. Free legal aid

Free legal aid for whistleblowers is guaranteed regardless of the amount of assets and income. Free legal aid is provided by the State Free Legal Aid Service, which is an institution under the Ministry of Justice. The person must submit an application and a document confirming the granting of the status of whistleblower.

Remuneration to whistleblowers may be granted in the event of presence of all of the following conditions:

1. the person who has submitted an application for remuneration is recognized as a whistleblower;
2. information provided by a whistleblower is valuable;
3. information provided by a whistleblower:
 - has contributed to prevention or substantial reduction of the potential property damage,
 - or has allowed obtaining or saving the funds for the state or municipal budget, institution or other natural or legal persons,
 - or has contributed to prevention, termination or investigation of a criminal offence;



4. a whistleblower has not been remunerated in any other form for the information about such infringement or infringements related to it.

When assessing the conditions the following circumstances shall be taken into account:

1. importance of the information in the process of establishing the infringement, i.e. whether it is considered to be of exceptional importance which has in principle led to the disclosure of the infringement;

2. completeness of the information, whether the information provided by a whistleblower has contributed to disclosure of the scheme of commission of the infringement and identification of the majority of persons involved in the commission of the infringement, and prevention of infringements of a similar nature.

2.1. The amount of remuneration is determined in accordance with the principles of reasonableness and proportionality by taking into account the completeness, value (importance, usefulness, impact, etc.) and other relevant circumstances of the information provided.

2.2. In practice, about 10 percent of the damage is paid, if the damage can be determined.

Compensation may be granted in the event of presence of all of the following conditions:

1. the person who has submitted an application for compensation is recognized as a whistleblower;

2. the costs of adverse actions or potential consequences have not been covered by other persons and have not been covered from the state budget, municipal budgets or the budgets of the State Social Insurance Fund or by competent authorities of foreign states;

3. the whistleblower has not received the remuneration for the valuable information about infringements.

In 2021, two whistleblowers have been paid the compensation – EUR 1800 and EUR 1900 and by the Prosecutor General's decision, one whistle-blower has been granted remuneration for the provision of valuable information – EUR 5000.

25. List the sectors with high-risks of corruption in your Member State and list the relevant measures taken/envisaged for monitoring and preventing corruption and conflict of interest in these sectors. (e.g. public procurement, healthcare, citizen investor schemes, risk or cases of corruption linked to the disbursement of EU funds, other).

1. In 2020, the STT has carried out an analytical study and identified corruption risks in relation to ensuring transparency and accountability in public procurement procedures, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic imposed risks. In 2021, the following weaknesses were identified:
 - The extent of public procurement by means of open negotiations suggests that this method of organizing procurement was not chosen only in unavoidable and particularly urgent cases.
 - The lack of transparency in procurement during the emergency situation is reflected in the lack of publicity of procurement contracts.
 - In times of emergency, a lack of transparency in procurement prevents the efficient use of public funds.
 - Suppliers who win high-value public procurement contracts, who are first-time tenderers, and have a very small workforce and/or who do not normally engage in activities related to the supply or use of security equipment, or to the transport of persons or goods, are an indication of the risk that public funds may be used irrationally (possibly over-priced, potentially low-quality purchases).

In order to strengthen standards of transparency and accountability, the STT have made the following proposals to the Committee on National Security and Defense, Anticorruption Commission

of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, Office of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania and the Office of the Committee on Audit:

- Opening and regularly updating systematic data on all public procurement contracts and the phases of public procurement.
- Speeding up the publication of contracts negotiated by undisclosed negotiation on grounds of urgency.
- Supplementing published data on procurement contracts with indicators indicating anti-corruption-sensitive purchases (e.g. type of purchase).
- Introduce provisions to prevent abusive suppliers from participating in future public procurement tenders.
- Ensuring effective control of conflicts of public and private interests in public procurement.
- Enabling the prices at which the contracting authority procures goods, services and works to be compared with their prices on the market, and making the results of this comparison available to the public.

In 2021, the observations have been taken into account and the Office of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania will aim to abolish declarations of impartiality, facilitate the use of undisclosed negotiations and dynamic procurement systems, introduce more flexibility in the use of simplified open tendering, supplement the conditions for termination of a contract, increase the number of entities that can initiate a transaction review for compliance with national security interests. The Ministry of Economy and Innovation is currently working on amendments to the law on procurement to simplify the conduct of public procurement.

2. In December 2021, another analytical study¹¹ was also carried out to identify corruption risks related to the use of borrowed funds and public budget funds for the fight against COVID-19 and its aftermath¹². The study also assessed financial support instruments for business retention and economic stimulus, and the use of the funds:
 - Financial aid was being granted to companies that do not fully meet the objectives of the measure.
 - The lack of an objective and transparent process for assessing applicants for funding, the lack of publicly available information on the people involved in funding decisions and the order in which applications are processed.
 - The funds received may have been misused for purposes other than the preservation of enterprises.
 - The SME Competitiveness Facility was used by companies that may have used the funding for their own business activities.

The STT Analytical Anti-Corruption Intelligence Unit provided information to the Ministry of Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania, Lithuanian Business Support Agency, Competition Council of the Republic of Lithuania. Taking into account the risks identified, the following was proposed¹³:

¹¹ <https://www.stt.lt/naujienos/7464/finansiniu-priemoniu-planavimo-priemimo-ir-igyvendinimo-metu-nepakankamai-uztikrinamas-skaidrumas-ir-viesumas:3290>

¹² <https://www.stt.lt/naujienos/7464/finansiniu-priemoniu-planavimo-priemimo-ir-igyvendinimo-metu-nepakankamai-uztikrinamas-skaidrumas-ir-viesumas:3290>

¹³ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAK/e6bb98b2598111ecacfd0d54306d0ca27?positionInSearchResults=0&searchModelUID=4d38cde3-13f7-41e6-a726-e23bfe160899>

- Avoiding conflicts of public and private interests when planning measures, setting the conditions for their implementation and awarding funding.
 - Preparing detailed descriptions of the conditions for the implementation of the measures, setting out the conditions for the implementation of the measures in a clear, unambiguous manner, setting out sufficient criteria for the beneficiaries of the measures, and selecting the right provisions on which to calculate the level of funding.
 - The descriptions of the measures should include provisions to ensure that eligible applicants are those who submit their financial statements and tax returns on time and pay their taxes.
 - Requiring companies to publish on their website information on the amount and use of State aid received.
3. In December 2021, the STT conducted an analytical study analyzing the first phase vaccination process. The following risks related to the lack of traceability and accounting of vaccines and the abuse of position were identified:
- Incorrect vaccine doses, inconsistent recording of the vaccine serial number, more than one record of one vaccinated person, cases not being signed by health care specialist.
 - Data on COVID-19 vaccine defects or damage were not recorded or collected.
 - Vaccination of relatives of health care institutions employees, former long-term employees, top managers of health care institutions (non-priority group members).
 - The information on the identified risks from the Analytical anti-corruption intelligence was submitted to the main republican hospitals, clinics and the Ministry of Health of The Republic of Lithuania. The observations have been taken into account and resulted in increased transparency and improved corruption risk management:
 - Improvement of monitoring of vaccination process (development of E.Health to simplify filling in the form, centralized recording of COVID-19 vaccine loss).
 - Liability of individuals vaccinated in breach of the priorities (disciplinary measures at work, resignation from the office).

26. Measures taken to assess and address corruption risks in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please see answer to the question 25. Additionally, on 14 May 2021, STT, on behalf of the EPAC/EACN, which is a network of European anti-corruption and police oversight bodies, organized a webinar "COVID-19 vaccination and managing corruption risks". More than 70 experts from law enforcement, corruption prevention and healthcare sectors from various European countries (Spain, Portugal, Romania, Poland, Moldova, Finland, Czech, Cyprus, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Austria etc.) attended the online event. The webinar was dedicated to discuss potential corruption risks in vaccination process, as well as other measures in response to COVID-19, and the tools to address these risks.

27. Any other relevant measures to prevent corruption in public and private sector

The National Agenda on Corruption Prevention for 2022-2033, which has been approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (it has yet to be approved by the Seimas), is currently being prepared. The Agenda will replace the current national anti-corruption programme of the Republic of Lithuania for 2015-2025, ensure its continuity and create preconditions for achieving qualitative change and progress in anti-corruption policy. The national agenda is a document setting out objectives, progress targets, monitoring and impact indicators in the field of corruption

prevention. It is a long-term planning document at strategic level of 12 years, which aims to implement fundamental changes in reducing corruption, consistently and comprehensively shaping a corruption-resistant environment in the state. No specific actions or measures are planned on the Agenda. Planning documents at programming level (four-year Agenda plans) will be prepared for the implementation of the agenda and will include specific measures, funds for the implementation of measures, responsible authorities and relevant evaluation indicators.

Currently, the following are also valid: National Anti-Corruption Programme of the Republic of Lithuania for the years 2015-2025 and Interinstitutional Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Programme 2015-2025 of the Republic of Lithuania 2020-2022.

Integrity Academy, which is an initiative of the Lithuanian President and is coordinated by the STT, continued its activities successfully. Currently, the Integrity Academy unites 37 participants and 19 mentors. During 2021, there have been 14 events of sharing best anti-corruption practices and of methodological assistance organized under umbrella of this initiative. More than 3300 participants attended the events.

On occasion of the 9th of December 2021 (International Anti-Corruption Day), at the event to commemorate the first anniversary of the establishment of the Integrity Academy, the most active organisations and mentors of this Initiative were awarded.¹⁴

WTO staff took part in EPAC/EACN webinar "COVID-19 vaccination and managing corruption risks", organized by the Special Investigation Service of the Republic of Lithuania.

A new Law on Public Procurement was adopted by the Parliament, that entail significant aspects, such as certification of public procurement professionals, wider application of centralization mechanisms, decreasing regulation for below the thresholds (low value) procurement, etc.¹⁵

C. Repressive measures

28. Criminalisation, including the level of sanctions available by law, of corruption and related offences including foreign bribery.

No significant changes.

29. Data on investigation and application of sanctions for corruption offences⁹, including for legal persons and high level and complex corruption cases) and their transparency, including as regards to the implementation of EU funds.

In 2021, in the period since January until November 502 corruption-related criminal offences (bribery, bribery of an intermediary, graft, abuse of office) were registered. It should be noted that this figure did not include data about corruption-related offences registered in December 2021, whereas these data have not been generated yet at the time of answering the questionnaire. On the other hand, comparing data of 2020 with already available data of 2021 it is obvious that the number of corruption-related offences recorded in 2021 increased by 3 percent.

Data of the number of the persons convicted for committing of corruption-related offences also have not been generated at the moment of answering the questionnaire. It means that the data about convictions in the corruption-related criminal cases passed in 2021 have not been finally summarised yet. This data will only be available at the end of January or at the beginning of February 2021.

In 2020, Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Lithuania didn't prepare a summary about punishments in corruption-related criminal cases offered by prosecutors and imposed by courts. On the hand, taking into account data of previous summaries, also legal regulation regulating the

¹⁴ <https://skaidrumoakademija.lt/en/the-most-active-organisations-and-mentors-of-the-integrity-academy-were-awarded/>

¹⁵ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/048b4b1225a211ec99bbe1b08701c7f8?jfwid=-9faifktbg>

amount of fines (valid since 6 October 2017), a reasonable conclusion can be drawn that types and amounts of punishments offered by prosecutors and imposed by courts have not changed significantly since previous periods. This means that, as before, the fines imposed are linked to a minimum or even lower level of this penalty.

In this respect, it should be noted that according to the current legal regulation of Article 47 of the Civil Code, which provides for particularly high fines for the persons punished with this punishment, it is more convenient to replace this type of punishment with another one. This means that a person fined by an extremely large amount and having not sufficient resources to enforce it can take active steps that he/she would be imposed another type of punishment. If there are reasonable data on the person's inability to pay the fine, the fine imposed to the person on the ground of Article 47 (7) of the Civil Code may be replaced by public works, and if the fine is avoided and there are no grounds for its recovery, it may be replaced by a restriction of liberty (Article 47 (Para. 8) of the Civil Code).

It should be noted that summary on the cases of bribery, trading in influence and abuse of office, in which persons were acquitted by final court decisions or criminal proceedings against them were terminated under Article 382 (Clause 2) of the CCP was prepared by Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Lithuania on 23 December 2021. During the preparation of this summary it was determined that in the period since January 1, 2019 until December 1, 2021 in compare with the previous assessment period (since January 1, 2017 until November 1, 2018) the number of corruption-related criminal cases, where acquittals were passed, decreased twice.

When discussing corruption-related criminal cases, in which high-ranking politicians had been prosecuted, it is necessary to mention the case related to a member of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania already indicated in the answer to the questionnaire in 2020.

The previous reply indicated that in December, 2020, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania granted a permission to prosecute a member of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. During that time the pre-trial investigation in the said criminal case was completed and brought to court with the indictment.

The pre-trial investigation was completed by Organised Crime and Corruption Investigation Division of Panevėžys Regional Prosecutor's Office on 19 February, 2021 and brought to Court with the indictment in which the procedural status of the accused was granted to Panevėžys city Mayor. The latter was accused of promising and agreeing to accept a bribe through another person, at the same time promising to influence the civil servants of the companies managed by Panevėžys City Municipality and persons equivalent to them, who have the authority to decide on granting support to the beneficiaries that they would act lawfully in the exercise of their powers. He was also accused of abusing of his official position by interfering in the activities of his subordinates and thus violating the legislation governing his activities. Thus he possibly committed criminal offences provided for in Article 226 (Clause 2) and Article 228 (Clause 2) of the Criminal Code.

In the criminal cases of corruption-related offences, which are investigated by the STT:

- 246 persons (237 natural persons and 9 legal persons) were served with a notice of suspicion (became suspects) in 2021 (during the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021);
- 376 persons who became suspects in 2021 and before (363 - natural persons, 13 – legal persons) were being investigated for corruption offences as suspects in 2021;
- 22 persons (20 - natural persons, 2 – legal persons) were convicted for corruption offences by a final court decision in 2021;
- 9 persons (9 - natural persons, 0 – legal persons) were acquitted for corruption offences by a final court decision in 2021.
- 6 high level and complex corruption cases were being investigated in 2021.
- 3 criminal cases in connection to EU Funds were being investigated in 2021.
- Court decisions (sanctions) in 2021 expressed in percentage:
 - Fine – 55 %



- Custodial sentence - 32 % (all of it with suspension of the punishment)
- Fine and Custodial sentence with suspension of the punishment - 5 %
- Other type of sanction - 9 %

The most common sanction for corruption related crimes is a fine (55 % of total sanctions imposed by courts in 2021).

30. Potential obstacles to investigation and prosecution as well as to the effectiveness of sanctions of high-level and complex corruption cases (e.g. political immunity regulation, procedural rules, statute of limitations, pardoning)

No significant changes.

31. Information on effectiveness of administrative measures and sanctions, in particular recovery measures and administrative sanctions on both public and private offenders.

Not available.

Other – please specify

III. MEDIA FREEDOM AND PLURALISM

A. Media authorities and bodies

32. Measures taken to ensure the independence, enforcement powers and adequacy of resources of media regulatory authorities and bodies

No significant changes.

33. Conditions and procedures for the appointment and dismissal of the head / members of the collegiate body of media regulatory authorities and bodies

No significant changes.

34. Existence and functions of media councils or other self-regulatory bodies

Following the public discussions about the effectiveness and impartiality of the Public Information Ethics Commission, the composition of the Public Information Ethics Association and the extent to which the functioning of media self-regulation bodies should be prescribed by law, the Seimas on 19 May 2021 established a working group which was tasked to review the current institutional framework and suggest legislative improvements (the working group has a mandate until 30 June 2022¹⁶).

B. Transparency of media ownership and safeguards against government or political interference

35. Measures taken to ensure the fair and transparent allocation of state advertising (including any rules regulating the matter)

From 2022, public bodies on their websites will have to provide a link to the “VIRISIS” (the Information System of Producers and Disseminators of Public Information) (paragraph 22.10. of the general requirements for the websites and mobile applications of state and municipal institutions and bodies¹⁷). The “VIRISIS”, as mentioned in the previous report, will disclose data on media owners and amounts of funds obtained from the public bodies.

36. Safeguards against state / political interference, in particular:

No significant changes.

- safeguards to ensure editorial independence of media (private and public)

No significant changes.

- specific safeguards for the independence of governing bodies of public service media governance (e.g. related to appointment, dismissal) and safeguards for their operational independence (e.g. related to reporting obligations)

No significant changes.

¹⁶ <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/77339600b94a11eb8c24980b2b0e0fef/asr>

¹⁷ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.209540/mksLiXdIjP>



- procedures for the concession/renewal/termination of operating licenses

No significant changes.

- information on specific legal provisions for companies in the media sector (other than licensing), including as regards company operation, capital entry requirements and corporate governance

The audiovisual media and radio sector has a stricter regulatory framework than other media sectors. Companies, in addition to licensing, have to pay fees to the Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission (LRTC) and an annual fee for broadcasting and re-broadcasting of radio and/or television programs which is transferred to the Public Information Ethics Commission. Companies have indicated that annual fees are too high and asked to lower them. Since the procedure for fixing the amount of the annual fee is regulated by the order of the Ministry of Culture, the LRTC proposed amendments that would allow lowering annual fees for certain media service providers. The Ministry of Culture has evaluated the proposals and plans to make necessary amendments in the 1st quarter of 2022.

37. Transparency of media ownership and public availability of media ownership information, including on media concentration (including any rules regulating the matter)

The launch of the “VIRSIS” was postponed to 2022 due to various errors in the system. It is foreseen to fix the errors until the end of February 2022.

C. Framework for journalists' protection

38. Rules and practices guaranteeing journalist's independence and safety

39. Law enforcement capacity, including during protests and demonstrations, to ensure journalists' safety and to investigate attacks on journalists

40. Access to information and public documents (incl. procedures, costs/fees, timeframes, administrative/judicial review of decisions, execution of decisions by public authorities)

After European Commission issued recommendation C/2021/6650 on ensuring the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists and other media professionals in the European Union, the Ministry of Culture has decided to establish a working group to coordinate its implementation. Public institutions (including law enforcement authorities) and associations of journalists have delegated their experts. This working group will decide on priorities and create an action plan.

On 6 October 2021, the Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania issued its decision in which he upheld the decision of the Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics (inspector in its decision found that one media service provider violated personal data protection rules (GDPR) in the publication). This led to massive public discussions regarding the definition of the public person, protests by the media, renewal of the proceedings in the court and then to the legislative change to the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public – on 23 December 2021, the Seimas broadened the definition of the public person¹⁸.

¹⁸ <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/a6bd7210697b11eca9ac839120d251c4>



41. Lawsuits (incl. SLAPPs - strategic litigation against public participation) and convictions against journalists (incl. defamation cases) and measures taken to safeguard against abusive lawsuits

In spring of 2021, the Parliament of Lithuania took the initiative and established the working group to specifically tackle the problem of abusive litigation, also known as Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation (SLAPP). The following draft laws have been prepared:

1. The amendment to the Code of Civil Procedure provides a new possibility of early dismissal of the claim if a court establishes that this claim may be categorized as SLAPP;
2. The amendment to the Criminal Code revises the criminal liability for defamation, in order to strengthen the protection of journalists and other disseminators of public information from unjustified prosecution.

These draft laws are still under consideration in the Parliament.

Other – please specify

IV. OTHER INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES RELATED TO CHECKS AND BALANCES

A. The process for preparing and enacting laws

42. Framework, policy and use of impact assessments, stakeholders'/public consultations (particularly consultation of judiciary and other relevant stakeholders on judicial reforms), and transparency and quality of the legislative process

The Plan for the Implementation of the Provisions of the Programme of the 18th Government of the Republic of Lithuania¹⁹ (§ 8.1.1 and 8.1.7) includes a plan to analyse the practice of legal regulation and application of legislation, to identify the shortcomings of the legislative process performed by the institutions, to develop methodological recommendations for the institutions, ensuring the quality and sustainability of legislation, to prepare recommendations for the codification of existing legislation and provide a roadmap for its implementation. The quality of legislation and laws is indicated as a priority in the Programme of the 18th Government of the Republic of Lithuania (§ 190-191). In order to achieve the better quality of legal act projects the amendments of Recommendations for drafting legislation were made. Seeking to determine the scope of the existing legal regulation, the positive and negative consequences of the legal regulation, to identify other changes of the legal regulation the Methodology for ex post evaluation of the impact of existing legislation²⁰ was adopted.

43. Rules and use of fast-track procedures and emergency procedures (for example, the percentage of decisions adopted through emergency/urgent procedure compared to the total number of adopted decisions)

No significant changes regarding the rules of fast-track and emergency procedures. Number of legal acts adopted as a matter of urgency and special urgency in 2021:

Legislation adopted (total number)	Legislation adopted with urgency (total number, percentage from total number)	Legislation adopted with special urgency (total number, percentage from total number)	Total legislation adopted with urgency and special urgency
741	99 (13.36 %)	15 (2.33 %)	114 (15.38%)

44. Regime for constitutional review of laws

No significant changes

45. COVID-19: provide update on significant developments with regard to emergency regimes in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

Emergency regimes in 2021:

1. From November 7 2021 until July 1 2021, quarantine was announced throughout the territory of the Republic of Lithuania and the quarantine regime was approved (Resolution

¹⁹ Plan for the Implementation of the Provisions of the Programme of the 18th Government of the Republic of Lithuania <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/d698ded086fe11eb9fecb5ecd3bd711c>

²⁰ Methodology for ex post evaluation of the impact of existing legislation <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/7a73e670b15311eba871a26c1fc3fbc1>

No. 1226 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 4 November 2020 “On the Announcement of Quarantine in the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania”).

Measures from 01/01/2021 to 30/06/2021:

Very strict requirements were imposed as soon as the quarantine was declared, and these have been relaxed over time.

- Restrictions were imposed on border crossings.
- In public places, mandatory to stay in groups of no more than by a fixed number of persons, excluding family members, keep a distance of at least 2 meters between persons or groups of persons, avoid direct physical contact, and observe personal hygiene requirements.
- No more than fixed number of persons, excluding family members and ritual service providers, may attend a funeral.
- Persons over 6 years of age were required to wear nose and mouth protection (face masks, respirators or other devices) in public places (exceptions).
- Restricted travel on urban and suburban regular passenger transport routes - only seating within one metre was allowed.
- In state and municipal institutions, bodies, and companies managed by the state and municipalities, work shall be organised and customers shall be served remotely or partially remotely, except where it is necessary to carry out the relevant functions at the workplace. It is recommended that the private sector work in the same form of work organisation as the public sector.
- Shops, supermarkets, markets and other public places of sale and service outlets had to provide a sales area of 10 m² per visitor or serve no more than one person at a time, and other requirements were established.
- Requirements for accommodation services - then a quarantine has been declared: no more than 2 persons per room, excluding family members.
- Public catering establishments, restaurants, cafes, bars, nightclubs and other places of entertainment, were banned, except for the takeaway food.
- The activities of health centers providing recreational services, as well as cultural, leisure, entertainment and sports establishments were prohibited.
- Kindergartens and primary classes remained open, in line with security requirements, and education in primary and secondary schools is provided at a distance, or a combination of distance and non-distance learning, except in special schools.
- Limited number of people at one table at catering facilities before 13 September 2021.

Additional measures:

- Early detection of cases: priority of testing of symptomatic people, compulsory preventive testing of certain professions, recommended testing at schools
- Quarantine and isolation requirements for close contacts, cases and travelers
- Vaccination of the population

The main instructions for residents were: to stay at home, limit contacts, wear face masks everywhere and all the time, postpone family holidays. If they are chronically ill or elderly, discuss the possibility of distance working with employer. If this is not possible, the employer should organise work in such a way as to minimise contact with other people. Residents were also advised to visit public places as little as possible and to ask relatives, friends or neighbours to provide food and other necessities.

2. From 26 February 2020 to date, a state-level state of emergency has been declared throughout the country due to the threat of the spread of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) (Government of the Republic of Lithuania Resolution No. 152 of 26 February 2020 “On the Declaration of a State-Level Emergency”).

Measures from 01/07/2021 to 31/12/2021:

- Border crossing restrictions for third nationals
- Non-essential shops, catering, tourist accommodations, cultural, leisure and sports facilities, and restaurants and bars are open.
- Certificates of opportunity (certificates of vaccination, recovery or a negative test result) are required for entry since 13 September, 2021.
- Facemasks and respirators must be worn at all indoor venues for people over 6 years of age. Respirators are compulsory at sport, cultural, other events (since 17 January).
- Rules for social distancing should be respected.
- There are currently no restrictions on the number of people who can gather at outdoor events. Occupancy to 75% of seats at indoor events was used until 13 September 2021.
- Recommended periodical testing at schools.
- Limited number of children at the after-class activities.
- Recommended distance work where possible.

Additional measures:

- Early detection of cases: priority of testing of symptomatic people, compulsory preventive testing of certain professions, recommended testing at schools.
- Quarantine and isolation requirements for close contacts, cases and travelers.
- Vaccination of the population.

Vaccination in Lithuania:

All the Lithuanian citizens (5-years-old and older) may be vaccinated in Lithuania against Covid-19, regardless of their place or country of residence, as well as other persons, who:

- are entitled to personal health care services paid from the Compulsory Health Insurance Fund or from the State budget;
- citizens of the Member States of the European Union and the European Free Trade Association and their family members, who have come to live in Lithuania for the period exceeding 3 months in 6 months, and who have been granted the right to reside in Lithuania;
- foreign citizens and persons without citizenship, to whom the Lithuanian residence permit has been issued;
- persons, to whom the national visa has been issued;
- persons accredited and residing in Lithuania;
- other persons who have to be vaccinated by the Government’s resolution.

Lithuania’s strategy towards management of COVID-19 pandemic

With regards to the management of COVID-19 pandemic, Lithuania’s Government chose a strategy to keep businesses, activities and public life open, however, only persons who can present a valid National Certificate are able to receive contact services. According to the Government resolution “On the declaration of a state of emergency”, as of 13 of September, all contact services and economic activities shall be carried out and events organized (except for the established exceptions) only for persons who meet the criteria set by the National Certificate.

National Certificate is not required only for the following activities:

- sales in shops and marketplaces whose main activity is the sale of food, veterinary goods, animal feed, pharmaceuticals, optical goods and orthopaedic devices, plants, seeds, and fertilisers that have a separate entrance from the outside, and whose sales area (i. e. the area of sales halls for customer service and display of goods, including fitting rooms; the area of administrative premises, warehouses, auxiliary premises, workshops, staircases, corridors, and sanitary facilities is not included in the sales area) does not exceed 1 500 square metres; or those located in a shopping centre whose total sales area (i. e. the area of sales halls and other sales outlets (such as kiosks) for customer service and display of goods, including fitting rooms; the area of administrative premises, warehouses, and auxiliary premises, workshops, staircases, corridors, and sanitary facilities is not included in the sales area, nor the area of shops in the supermarket with a separate entrance from the outside when there is no access to the supermarket) does not exceed 1 500 square metres;
- distance selling (online or by other means of communication), and when goods are delivered to natural and legal persons or picked up at pick-up points (sales or other non-distance selling activities are not allowed at pick-up points);
- ordering of minor repair services, when contact between the service recipient and the service provider lasts no longer than 15 minutes;
- funeral services and funeral product shops;
- visiting museum expositions and exhibitions;
- library (book pick-up and return) and book pick-up services;
- personal health care services (in accordance with the requirements set by the Minister of Health, including those on testing);
- social services;
- psychological assistance and psychotherapy services;
- visiting terminally ill persons, minors under 14 years of age, and pregnant women in personal health care or residential institutions;
- veterinary services;
- passenger transport services;
- paid passenger transport by taxi or private pre-booked car services;
- provision of legal services (notaries, bailiffs, mandatory mediation, lawyers providing legal services under a lawyer-client agreement, and lawyers providing secondary legal aid) and court activities;
- activities related to the protection of the rights of the child;
- services provided by state and municipal institutions, agencies, as well as state- and municipality- controlled enterprises that due to their specifics cannot be provided remotely (the list of services is approved by the head of the institution, agency, or enterprise);
- comprehensive family support services provided in accordance with the Action Plan for Comprehensive Family Support Services 2016-2023 approved by the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania;
- provision of technical assistance at the Technical Assistance Centre for the Disabled under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and at the relevant municipal agencies;
- provision of personal assistance to people with disabilities, when the need is determined by municipality-appointed social workers;
- assistance to people who have experienced domestic violence;
- assistance to victims of human trafficking;
- activities related to reception of irregular migrants;

- open-air services, sales and economic activities, commercial and non-commercial cultural, entertainment, sporting events, celebrations, fairs, festivals, and other organised gatherings of people in a public place for a certain pre-established period of time, with a maximum of 500 participants;
- financial services where the payment and delivery of pensions or other social benefits is provided, other essential financial and compulsory insurance services where the contact between the service recipient and the service provider lasts no more than 15 minutes, and electronic communications services required to gain access to electronic services;
- pre-school, pre-primary, primary, basic, secondary education, initial vocational training, non-formal education of children, and educational assistance.

Protective face masks

Facemask wearing indoors is mandatory regardless of whether the activities are carried out with or without the National Certificate. Reasonable and proportionate exemptions (e.g., when eating, singing, exercising, etc.) are provided through decisions of the Commander of Operations. To control the fast spread of the coronavirus variant Omicron, it will be required from 17 January 2022 that all spectators and participants over the age of 6 and the staff serving an event wear at least FFP2 respirators tightly fitting to the face and covering the mouth and nose.

- **judicial review (including constitutional review) of emergency regimes and measures in the context of COVID-19 pandemic**
- **oversight (incl. ex-post reporting/investigation) by Parliament of emergency regimes and measures in the context of COVID-19 pandemic**

Last year, on 25 November, the Constitutional Court accepted the petition by 36 Members of the Parliament with a request to examine the compliance of the National Certificate with the Lithuania's Constitution. It is expected that Constitutional Court will provide its decision by February.

B. Independent authorities

- 46. Independence, resources, capacity and powers of national human rights institutions ('NHRIs'), of ombudsman institutions if different from NHRIs, of equality bodies if different from NHRIs and of supreme audit institutions.**
- 47. Statistics/reports concerning the follow-up of recommendations by National Human Rights Institutions, ombudsman institutions, equality bodies and supreme audit institutions in the past two years.**

Office of the Inspector of Journalistic Ethics

The Inspector of Journalistic Ethics is an independent oversight authority. The main function of the Inspector of Journalistic Ethics is to investigate the complaints of the interested parties regarding the violation of their honor and dignity in the mass media, the right to protection of private life. Currently, in addition to the Inspector (Head) of Journalistic Ethics, the Office of the Inspector of Journalistic Ethics has 16 employees, of which 13 are civil servants and 3 are employees. The activities of the Inspector of Journalistic Ethics and the Office are financed from the state budget. The budget shall indicate the funds allocated to these activities on a separate line.

State budget appropriations intended to ensure the performance of all functions of the Office:

	2020	2021	2022
Budget (thousands, €)	369	462	587
Of which for wages (thousands, €)	319	394	461

Office of the Ombudsman for Children of the Republic of Lithuania

The Ombudsman for the Protection of the Rights of the Child is one of the independent human rights institutions established by the decision of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania in accordance with Article 73 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has recommended strengthening support for the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, including adequate human and financial resources to enable it to carry out its mandate effectively and monitor the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child²¹. This and similar recommendations on strengthening and supporting the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, including adequate provision of financial and human resources in the 2nd cycle of the Universal Periodic Review of the United Nations Human Rights Council, have not been properly implemented.

The decisions of the Ombudsman for the Protection of the Rights of the Child are of a recommendatory nature. All natural and legal persons to whom the decision is addressed must examine it and inform the Ombudsman for the Protection of the Rights of the Child about the results of the examination and the execution of the decision. Decisions can provide not only recommendations relevant to a specific (individual) situation, but also the need for systematic changes in the implementation of complex measures. The enforcement rate of the Ombudsman for Children is high.

Ombudsmen's Office of the Seimas

The independence of the Office of the Seimas Ombudsmen of the Republic of Lithuania is regulated by Item 2 of Article 4 of the Law on the Seimas Ombudsmen of the Republic of Lithuania, which provides that the Seimas Ombudsmen shall be guided by the following principles: “freedom of activity and independence. The Seimas ombudsmen are independent of other institutions, the rights and duties of each Seimas ombudsman are equal, each of them acts independently in accordance with its competence;”

It should be noted that the institution does not always receive as much funding, as it is needed to ensure that all its functions would be carried out with maximum efficiency. The human resources in the institution are also limited: there is a lack of specialists to perform certain activities. At present, the institution has 35 employees, although the maximum number of positions approved by the Seimas Board is 50.

Attention should be paid to the parliamentary initiatives aimed at limiting the independence of the Seimas ombudsmen by setting deadlines for the examination of complaints. Until now, the independence of the Seimas ombudsmen in investigating complaints has been ensured, among other things, by the possibility established in the Law on the Seimas Ombudsmen to choose the methods and means of examining a specific complaint. In doing so, the aim is not only to carry out a thorough and complete investigation into all the circumstances of the complaint, but also to identify the causes of the infringements and to take action to remedy them. If the maximum term for the examination of a complaint is established in the law, these possibilities of the Seimas ombudsmen will be limited.

Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson

²¹ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC/C/LTU/CO/3-4&Lang=En

The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman is the only national equality body in Lithuania. The Office is headed by the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman of the Republic of Lithuania in accordance with the principles of legality, impartiality and justice.

Since 1 July 2019, a new function has been designated to the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson – to monitor the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. To date, no additional human or financial resources have been allocated to the Office to carry out these activities.

No statistical information is collected regarding the implementation of the Equal Opportunities Ombudspersons. Cases of non-compliance with the recommendations made by the Ombudsperson are extremely rare.

C. Accessibility and judicial review of administrative decisions

48. Transparency of administrative decisions and sanctions (incl. their publication and rules on collection of related data)

No significant changes

49. Judicial review of administrative decisions: - short description of the general regime (in particular competent court, scope, suspensive effect, interim measures, and any applicable specific rules or derogations from the general regime of judicial review).

No significant changes

50. Follow-up by the public administration and State institutions to final (national/supranational) court decisions, as well as available remedies in case of non-implementation

Execution of the national court decisions. The execution of the judgments of the national courts (funds awarded from the State) is performed by the Ministry of Justice. Compensation awarded by the court must be paid within 3 months from the application for payment. The mechanism is effective. Other court orders are executed by state authorities according to their competence. Non-executed court decisions can be transferred to bailiffs.

Execution of the ECHR decisions. The execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights as well as of the views of the UN committees is coordinated by the Agent of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania before the European Court of Human Rights. The obligation to implement the respective decisions of the international tribunals is based on the respect of the international undertakings of the State. The Government Agent regularly presents the state of execution before the Committee of Legal Affairs of the Parliament, in particular highlighting the cases where legislative measures are required for the proper implementation. The Government Agent also annually presents the activity report, including about the execution status, before the Government, underlying the problematic issues which could result in the adoption of the Governmental decisions obligating the relevant authorities to take the necessary execution measures.

D. The enabling framework for civil society

51. Measures regarding the framework for civil society organisations (e.g. access to funding, legal framework incl. registration rules, measures related to dialogue between

authorities and civil society, participation of civil society in policy development, measures capable of affecting the public perception of civil society organisations, etc.)

52. Rules and practices guaranteeing the effective operation of civil society organisations and rights defenders

In June 2021, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour established a division responsible for the development of NGOs. New division's main purpose is to ensure an enabling environment for NGOs.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, in year 2020 Ministry of Social Security and Labour allocated 2 million EUR in subsidies to those NGOs, which provided social services during quarantine. 520 NGOs were granted subsidies ranging from 500 to 10 000 EUR. Subsidies enabled NGOs to purchase necessary personal protection measures (masks, disinfectants, etc.), train and organize volunteers, establish remote work places for service provision and pay salaries and bonuses to workers who had to work longer hours or work under dangerous circumstances, especially regarding COVID-19. In 2021, Ministry of Social Security and Labour allocated additional 3.5 million EUR in subsidies to those NGOs, which provided social services during quarantine. 498 NGOs were granted subsidies in range from 500 to 20 000 EUR. The COVID-19 pandemic bolstered the coordination and collaboration between state institutions and NGOs and NGOs themselves. Such coordination measures were used: round table discussions to identify main challenges together with NGOs, recommendations on how to organize volunteer activities during extreme situations (with best national and international practices), stressing the importance of collaboration between government and civil society organizations. Additionally, reacting to increased need for volunteers working in social care and health care systems, Ministry of Social Security and Labour allocated 600 thousand EUR in subsidies to NGOs that coordinate volunteers in these fields. More than 1000 volunteers participated in activities based on this program, which enabled NGOs to cover volunteers expenses for training and activities. Ministry of Social Security and Labour created additional online training program for volunteers to ensure their preparedness to work with COVID-19 security requirements and to adequately recognize and respond to mental health related issues.

The new Law on NGO development, which was adopted in December 2019 and took effect on 1 March 2020, stipulates that information on legal entities, which are NGOs, shall be collected in the Register of Legal Entities and made publicly available. The new law provides a possibility for non-profit organizations to register as NGOs at the Register of Legal Entities. The procedure is notification based and does not require authorization. It is free of charge. New measure provide clarity to institutions and the society whether particular legal entity complies with definition of NGO stated in the Law. It is also a base for future developments regarding collecting data on NGOs, which is necessary in order to carry out informed policymaking. Such open data also improves trust in NGOs in the society as more information becomes available to the public.

E. Initiatives to foster a rule of law culture

53. Measures to foster a rule of law culture (e.g. debates in national parliaments on the rule of law, public information campaigns on rule of law issues, etc.)

The ongoing Conference on the future of Europe provided a platform to directly engage with citizens in Lithuania on a variety of EU related topics in 2021, one of them being the rule of law. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania took part in the Conference and organized several events/discussions where state officials touched upon many important topics for the future of Europe, including the rule of law. Few examples:



- September 3, Viceminister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Arnoldas Pranckevičius and Minister of State for European Affairs of France Mr. Clément Beaune discussed the future of Europe with students from Lithuanian universities, including the importance of rule of law;
- October 28, Viceminister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Arnoldas Pranckevičius and Minister of State for European Affairs for Ireland Mr. Thomas Byrne discussed the significance of the rule of law for the future of Europe during an open for public event.

Other – please specify