**Information provided by the Republic of Lithuania to Special Rapporteurs to questionnaire on decriminalization of poverty and homelessness**

1. *Laws or regulations that prohibit begging, eating, sleeping, or performing personal hygienic activities in all or certain public places (please kindly include the wording of these laws and regulations and specify whether they are effectively enforced).*

Prohibitions on begging, sleeping or living in public places are laid down in the rules of handling and cleanliness approved by local authorities. Liability for violation of these rules is provided for in the Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter- CAO) (Article 366). This administrative offence is punishable by a warning or a fine of between 20 and 140 euros. Repeated commission of the offence shall be punishable by a fine of between 140 and 600 euros.

1. *Laws or regulations that allow the detention or imprisonment of individuals who are unable to pay the fine imposed for petty offences.*

Both the CAO and The Criminal Code (hereinafter – CC) does not provide for imprisonment in cases where individuals are unable to pay the fine imposed for petty offences. The CAO does not have any additional liability for non-payment of administrative fines. The law governing the criminal law provides that unpaid fines may be commuted to other penalties. Paragraph 7 of Article 46 of the CC, which regulates fines for criminal offences, provides that if a person does not have the means to pay the fine imposed by the court, the court, following the rules set out in Article 65 of this Code, may, with the consent of the convicted person, replace this punishment with community service. Paragraph 8 of this article stipulates that if a person voluntarily avoids paying a fine and there are no opportunities to collect it, the court may replace the fine with a restriction of liberty.

1. *Information about attempts made or planned to decriminalize street vending, informal business activities, sex work, begging, eating, sleeping or performing personal hygienic activities in public places.*

According to the available information, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania are currently considering amendments to the CAO and the CC and, which aim to eliminate administrative liability for the provision of prostitution services, but provide for criminal liability for the purchase of prostitution services.[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. *Information concerning initiatives to change the response of law enforcement officials and of the criminal justice system from penalization, punishment or detention, towards facilitating social inclusion of persons living in poverty or experiencing homelessness.*
2. *Measures and services available at national, regional or municipal level to support people living in poverty and in situations of vulnerability from having to resort to begging, sleeping, washing, defecating or performing other hygienic activities in public places, because they lack access to employment, social assistance, adequate housing, public showers and toilets.*

**Social benefits.** According to the Law on Cash Social Assistance for Poor Residents of the Republic of Lithuania, families and single residents who are unable to obtain enough funds for living shall be entitled to social benefits. This support has been means-tested and can be used to meet basic needs. Municipalities may allocate social assistance (one-time, targeted, periodic, or conditional allowance) in cases not provided by the law, for example, a targeted allowance for obtaining documents if the person does not have (lost) personal identification documents or, in other cases, after assessing the individual situation of the person and the need for financial support. Poor people experiencing difficulties are also provided with food and basic hygiene products.

**Social services.** In Lithuania, social services are organized and provided to people experiencing homelessness. According to the Law on Social Services, municipalities are responsible for ensuring the provision of social services to the residents of their territories. The municipality organizes social services for individuals (families), establishes social service institutions, and controls the quality of the general social services and social care provided in its territory.

Every year, the municipality draws up and approves the Social Services Plan, which determines the extent and type of social services provided according to the needs of the population. People experiencing homelessness can apply to municipalities to provide social services. Such persons have the opportunity to receive both general social services (e.g., information, counseling, mediation, organization of meals, provision of essential clothing and footwear, and organization of personal hygiene services) and special social services. services (e.g., development, support, and/or restoration of social skills, psychosocial assistance, temporary accommodation, accommodation in hostels, etc.). Many of these services are provided by non-governmental organizations, in which municipalities cooperate to ensure the necessary social assistance to homeless persons.

Social service institutions can also initiate one of the preventive social services - the search for potential recipients of social services, that is, finding, establishing a relationship, supporting, and/or involving individuals who are experiencing various difficulties in the help process, offering the person to seek help in order to solve the difficulties they are experiencing. The service is provided in cooperation with various institutions, organizations, local communities, and other interested persons operating in the implementation of social work.

**Support for housing.** Under the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Support for Housing Acquisition or Rental low-income persons and families who do not own a dwelling or if they do, it is more than 60% worn-out, or the floor space per person is too small to be entitled to social housing. For persons and families to whom social housing units have been leased, the municipal administration shall plan and organize social services to promote the socio-economic activity and autonomy of these persons and families in accordance with their needs and capabilities. Apart from this, the municipal administration shall, in accordance with the procedure laid down by the municipal council, check the condition of a leased social housing unit, data on the payment of public utility charges, as well as whether this housing unit is used for its intended purpose and whether the other terms and conditions stipulated in its rental agreement are complied with. The provision of social assistance should prevent loss of social housing.

**Political measures.** The Government of Lithuania puts further effort into creating a systematic model of coordinated prevention of homelessness, its reduction, and the provision of services to the homeless. Recently, Lithuania completed the implementation of the OECD project "Creation of an Individualized Service Provision System for Vulnerable Groups of Society". Created with the help of the ESF funds of the new period, models of individualized service provision will be implemented for the groups most at risk of homelessness (persons released from places of imprisonment, young people leaving care institutions). This project emphasizes the importance of individualized and complex services for vulnerable groups in Lithuania. The results show that individuals who find it difficult to integrate into society and the labour market need individualized help to meet the needs of individuals, as this helps to reduce the risks of poverty, social exclusion, crime, homelessness, and other risks. It is emphasized that the assistance provided must be related not only to employment and housing finding services but also to the restoration of relations with family members, assistance in processing various documents, legal assistance, health care, and transportation. It is also stated that the solution to these problems must be timely, for example, starting much earlier before the release of the person from the place of imprisonment, before the person becomes homeless, etc. The results of the project show that the main challenges in the field of assistance to socially vulnerable groups are related to the lack of human resources and insufficient cooperation between organizations, which makes it difficult to involve specialists from different sectors in the provision of services (OECD, 2023).

On 26 June 2023, the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania approved amendments to the description "Regarding the 2021-2030 Development Program Manager of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, the Social Mobilization Development Program Progress Measure No. 09 003-02-02-09 "Develop social integration measures for the most vulnerable groups". This will create prerequisites for investing in social inclusion activities of socially vulnerable persons experiencing social risk (segregation) (persons released from places of imprisonment and experiencing homelessness) and increasing opportunities to participate in the labour market. Activities planned to be financed include social integration; activities that promote the restoration and increase of a person's social independence and work capacity, professional competence and capacity to participate in the labour market (e.g. assessment of a person's social and other service needs, individual and group motivation, information, consultation, mediation, representation, psychosocial assistance, sociocultural services ( including cultural education and the promotion of creativity), development and support of social skills, vocational guidance and counseling, development of general abilities, development of professional skills, assistance in and after employment); accompanying service - a set of interconnected services aimed at helping individuals to adapt to the social environment, to obtain the necessary information and access to the social support system, to restore and/or strengthen relationships with close relatives and/or cohabitants, to develop their abilities to solve emerging social and other problems, to recover the skills required for work and/or to acquire them, i.e. i.e. to fully facilitate the social integration of individuals; coordinated support for the homeless (including testing alternative accommodation); forming the opinion of society, employers, specialists; strengthening the abilities of service-providing and administrative staff; networking initiatives of organizations working in the field of integration of convicts, homeless and other socially vulnerable persons experiencing social risk (segregation); monitoring, assessments, research.

Almost 5 million EUR is provided for the implementation of the activity "Expand Coordinated Interventional Assistance to the Homeless" in 2021-2027.

1. https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAP/35ed1860fa4c11e985ccb0561410d874?positionInSearchResults=0&searchModelUUID=09a90c60-9953-40a7-aa41-3a24aa1f4ac0 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)