




# LITHUANIA

**A TRADE UNION  
FOCUS ON THE SDGs**

#HLPF2020

**COVID-19:  
WORKERS DEMAND  
JOBS, INCOME AND  
SOCIAL  
PROTECTION**

## COVID-19: WORKERS NEED RESPONSES FOR RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

Lithuania introduced quarantine measures on 16 March 2020. The government's response plan included measures for wage support (guaranteed minimum wage for those who cannot work remotely and support for part-time workers, depending of their previous working time and salary), unemployment benefits for workers who have lost their jobs, and income support for non-standard workers (in particular in the cultural sector). In terms of sick leave, specific pay was set for employees who were infected while performing their duties, including healthcare professionals and caregivers; moreover, bonuses were granted to medical personnel working with infected patients. Also, a moratorium for up to six months was foreseen for mortgages and companies' payments.

According to LPSK Lithuania, in order to leave no one behind when facing the pandemic, the government should further enhance measures related to wage and income protection, paid sick leave and childcare support for frontline workers in health, food retail, pharmacies and other vital areas. Moreover, the government should better protect women experiencing domestic violence, strengthen the capacities of the social security system in general and resist pressure from employers demanding the suspension of some provisions of the Labour Code.

### ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

The Lithuanian government has integrated the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into key strategic planning documents, such as the National Strategy for Sustainable Development and the National Progress Strategy 'Lithuania 2030'. The official priorities stemming from the 2030 Agenda are SDGs 1, 5, 13 and 16. However, trade unions' partners alert that implementation remains a challenge, in particular due to changes in political leadership, as continuity and commitment to the implementation of the objectives set by previous governments are lacking.

The work on the 2030 Agenda is coordinated by the National Commission for Sustainable Development, which was established in 2000. While all ministries integrate the SDGs according to their area of competence, the Ministry of the Environment coordinates the overall process, and the Ministry of International Affairs is responsible for development cooperation.

Trade unions report that there is a need for a better structured process for informing and consulting social partners on the 2030 Agenda. While an e-consultation was launched on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, trade unions were not invited to negotiate concrete aspects. Nonetheless, even if not in the context of discussing the SDGs, trade unions continue providing input to discussions promoting the increase of wages (especially in the public sector), pensions, and broader and more adequate social protection, promoting equality and better access to the labour market.

The implementation of the SDGs is not on the agenda during tripartite dialogues, but relevant issues are discussed in the context of the dialogues.

#### TRANSPARENCY



Regular access to limited information

#### CONSULTATION



Informal or ad hoc consultation

#### SOCIAL DIALOGUE



Social partners contribute individually to government's SDG national plan



LIETUVOS  
PROFESINIŲ  
SAJUNGŲ  
KONFEDERACIJA



# IS THE (DECENT) WORK GETTING DONE?

Lithuanian trade unions highlight the need to improve performance on several key indicators to reach the goals set by the 2030 Agenda in their country.

Indicators on **target 1.1 (eradicate extreme poverty)** show that while only 1.3 per cent of the population was living below the international poverty line of \$1.9 a day, 22.9 per cent of the population was at risk of poverty in 2018 according to nationally defined thresholds. In addition, 8.5 per cent of workers were at risk of poverty in 2017. With regard to **target 1.3 (implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures)**, while 92.7 per cent of the population was effectively covered by at least one social protection cash transfer, only 25.9 per cent of unemployed people were receiving unemployment cash benefits in 2014. However, general government expenditures on essential areas were relatively high in 2018, representing 13.4 per cent of the budget for education, 17.4 per cent for healthcare and 35.4 per cent for social security.

There is a need for improvement to achieve progress on **target 5.4 (recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work), as women spend significantly more of their time (17.7 per cent)** on unpaid and care labour than men (9.3 per cent); this is especially the case for rural women (21 per cent). With regard to target **5.5 (ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life)** in 2018, there were 39.2 per cent of women in managerial positions.

There are multiple concerns about the targets set by **SDG 8 (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all)**. Regarding **target 8.3 (promote policies that support productive activities, decent job creation)**, the total share of low-paid work in the economy was 21.3 per cent in 2014, worse among women (24.1 per cent) than among men (18.1 per cent). In 2018, 9.5 per cent of employment was categorised as vulnerable. On **target 8.5 (achieve full and**

**productive employment and decent work for all)**, unemployment stood at 6.9 per cent for men and 5.4 per cent for women in 2018. Women's wages were on average 16.6 per cent lower than men's in the second quarter of 2019. NEET indicators for target **8.6 (reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training)** stood at 8.5 per cent for men and 7.6 per cent for women in 2018. With regard to **target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers)**, trade unions estimate that due to a recently signed national collective agreement covering the budgetary sector, collective bargaining agreement coverage is at around 40 per cent today. Eight violations of labour rights have been noted in 2019, six in law and two in practice.

Progress remains to be made for Lithuania to reach **target 10.4 (adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality)**, as the labour share of GDP (wages and social protection transfers) remains low, standing at 43.5 per cent in 2017. In addition, in 2015, wealth inequalities remained a challenge as the share of GDP that went to the top 10 per cent income earners was 28.6 per cent, while the share that went to the bottom 20 per cent was 6.1 per cent.

The development of an Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 indicates a first step to reach **target 13.2 (integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning)**. However, trade unions report that climate-related issues remain low on the political agenda.

With regard to **target 16.3 (promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all)**, trade unions report that since the entry into force of a new Labour Code in 2017, Labour Dispute Committees deal with disputes concerning the dismissal of workers, legality of removal from work, and non-pecuniary damages, all of which were previously settled by the courts. This administrative service is free of charge.

## TRADE UNION ASKS TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Trade unions call on the government of Lithuania to ensure urgent action to cope with the pandemic crisis in line with the SDGs, such as:

- Enhancing the financing of essential public services to respond adequately to the crisis and to be prepared for future crises. In this framework, trade unions stress the need for a real progressive tax system that ensures a fair distribution of the financial burden between labour and capital.
- Saving jobs by supporting companies that are committed to workers' rights and sustainability. Considering that in the current health crisis employers' organisations have unilaterally tried to push for changes of the Labour Code to hinder workers' rights, rather than looking for balanced solutions by collective bargaining, public support to business should only come with the commitment to protect workers' rights and the environment.
- Ensuring proper involvement of social partners in the design of solutions to the Covid-19 crisis and to the 2030 Agenda. One urgent discussion refers to the current economic structure, which is heavily based on low value-added sectors with low wages and a higher representation of migrant workers, generating a race to the bottom of working conditions for the overall working class. Given this situation, the Covid-19 recovery plan of the government needs to include the creation of stable quality jobs in sustainable high value-added sectors, as well as the investment to up-skilling and re-qualification of workers from vulnerable sectors.



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