

Submitted on 11 January 2019 by the **Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson**

74th Pre-Sessional Working Group
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Consideration of the Sixth Periodic Report of Lithuania

**Additional Information on the State Party's Submission
(CEDAW/C/LTU/6)**

Submitting Institution:



OFFICE OF THE EQUAL
OPPORTUNITIES OMBUDSPERSON

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QUESTIONS

1. What steps the State Party is planning on taking in order to ensure transparency in monitoring and coordinating the implementation of the National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men?
2. What steps the State Party is planning on taking in order to strengthen the level of involvement by the line ministries in the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Programme of Equal Opportunities of Women and Men?
3. What steps the State Party is planning on taking in order to address different forms of gender-based violence, especially psychological, economic and sexual violence against women, through its criminal justice system?
4. What steps the State Party is planning on taking with the aim of addressing the negative phenomenon of victim blaming, pertaining to gender-based and domestic violence?
5. What steps the State Party is planning on taking with the aim of ratifying the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson (hereinafter the Office) is a national equality body. The Office performs a quasi-judicial function by investigating individual complaints on alleged instances of discrimination on the grounds of, *inter alia*, gender under the *Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men*¹ and the *Law on Equal Treatment*.² In the Lithuanian legal system discrimination on the grounds of gender is prohibited in the fields of employment and occupation, provision of goods and services, education, membership in organizations (associations), social security, and all actions by public authorities. The Office also investigates into the instances of alleged harassment and sexual harassment in the fields of employment, occupation and education.³ Based on the new edition of the *Law on Equal Treatment*,⁴ which came into effect on 1 January 2017, the Office also performs preventive and educational activities and dissemination of equal opportunities (e.g. awareness raising campaigns). Therefore, the Office is a mixed-type institution, combining tribunal-type and promotional-type functions.
2. In the letter of 26 April 2017 the Rapporteur for Follow-up on Concluding Observations recommended the Lithuanian Government to provide, in its next periodic report, information on further actions taken to implement the recommendations made in paragraphs No. 15 (i.e. **national machinery for the advancement of women**) and No. 23 (i.e. **violence against**

¹ Lietuvos Respublikos moterų ir vyrų lygių galimybių įstatymas (Eng. "Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Republic of Lithuania"), No. VIII-947, 1 December 1998, <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.746227138BCB/FLcEVzJmSQ>.

² Lietuvos Respublikos lygių galimybių įstatymas (Eng. "Law on Equal Treatment of the Republic of Lithuania"), No. IX-1826, 18 November 2003, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.222522/ZomTdZpPUx>.

³ Harassment and sexual harassment in the field of provision of goods and services is not covered by the national legislation.

⁴ Lietuvos Respublikos lygių galimybių įstatymo Nr. IX-1826 pakeitimo įstatymas (Eng. "Law on Amending the Law on Equal Treatment of the Republic of Lithuania No. IX-1826"), No. XII-2768, 8 November 2016, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/196bcda2a74b11e68987e8320e9a5185?jfwid=i0s9d01kt>.

women, including domestic violence) of the concluding observations on the fifth periodic report.⁵ After familiarizing itself with the sixth periodic report by the Lithuanian Government on the implementation of the Convention (CEDAW/C/LTU/6),⁶ the Office would like to take an opportunity in providing additional information on the status of implementation of these recommendations. This submission is developed in the spirit of the para. 7 of the Statement by the Committee on its relationship with national human rights institutions.⁷

NATIONAL MACHINERY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

3. The *National Programme of Equal Opportunities of Women and Men 2015-2021*⁸ (hereinafter the Programme) and the *Action Plan for the Implementation of the Programme 2018-2021*⁹ (hereinafter the Action Plan) are the key public policy documents for mainstreaming gender equality in all areas of life. The Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (hereinafter the Commission), consisting of the representatives from line ministries, the Department of Statistics and non-governmental organizations, is tasked with monitoring and coordinating the implementation of the National Programme.¹⁰ On 12 December 2018 the Office officially published an independent review on the quality and effectiveness of the measures within the Action Plan.¹¹ The independent review revealed structural problems pertaining both to the **process of adopting the Action Plan** and the **quality of its measures**.

⁵ Follow-up Letter Sent to the State Party, No. DB/follow-up/Lithuania/66, 26 April 2017,

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/LTU/INT_CEDAW_FUL_LTU_27293_E.pdf.

⁶ Sixth Periodic Report Submitted by Lithuania under Article 18 of the Convention, No. CEDAW/C/LTU/6, 20 August 2018,

<http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2fPPRiCAqhKb7yhsvxlFhYepfIYmW0eRMA3oVtaiHB9dZY0ZuBMXyypZEes0oRTg92BYS3GW5yaDvhu%2bHpe7p1lhFbQjriXjcYo2x4vLmij8IwK04RByfSZrd79x>.

⁷ Statement by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on its Relationship with National Human Rights Institutions, No. E/CN.6/2008/CRP.1, 2008,

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/Statements/StatementOnNHRIs.pdf>

⁸ Valstybinė moterų ir vyrų lygių galimybių 2015-2021 metų programa, patvirtinta Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2015 m. vasario 4 d. nutarimu Nr. 112 „Dėl valstybinės moterų ir vyrų lygių galimybių 2015–2021 metų programos patvirtinimo“ (Eng. “National Programme of Equal Opportunities of Women and Men 2015-2021, approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania No. 112 of 4 February 2015 “On the Approval of the National Programme of Equal Opportunities of Women and Men 2015-2021”), No. 112, 4 February 2015, <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/dc012450b1ca11e48296d11f563abfb0>.

⁹ Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2018 m. birželio 27 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-331 „Dėl Valstybinės moterų ir vyrų lygių galimybių 2015–2021 metų programos įgyvendinimo veiksmų plano 2018–2021 metams patvirtinimo“ (Eng. “Order by the Minister of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania No. A1-331 of 27 June 2018 “On the Approval of the Action Plan 2018-2021 for the Implementation of the National Programme of Equal Opportunities of Women and Men 2015-2021”), No. A1-331, 27 June 2018, <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/571f9fe079d711e8ae2bfd1913d66d57>.

¹⁰ Moterų ir vyrų lygių galimybių komisijos nuostatai, patvirtinti Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2000 m. kovo 7 d. nutarimu Nr. 266 „Dėl moterų ir vyrų lygių galimybių komisijos sudarymo ir jos nuostatų patvirtinimo“ (Eng. “Regulations of the Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania No. 266 of 7 March 2000 “On the Establishment of the Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and Approval of its Regulations”), No. 266, 7 March 2000, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.96766/EgrhsiqNQI>.

¹¹ The mandate by the Office to conduct independent reviews on issues pertaining to discrimination is established under the Article 17.2 of the Law on Equal Treatment. See: Lietuvos Respublikos lygių galimybių kontrolieriaus nepriklausomos apžvalgos apie Valstybinės moterų ir vyrų lygių galimybių 2015-2021 m. programos įgyvendinimo Veiksmų plano 2018-2021 m. priemonės ataskaita (Eng. “Report on the Independent Review by the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson of the Republic of Lithuania on Measures within the Action Plan 2018-2021 for the Implementation of the National Programme of Equal Opportunities of Women and Men 2015-2021”), No. (18)NA-1)-1, 12 December 2018, <http://lygybe.lt/data/public/uploads/2018/12/nepriklausoma-apzvalga-2018.pdf>.

4. The current Action Plan was adopted on 27 June 2018 by the Order of the Minister of the Social Security and Labor.¹² Despite the fact that the process was initiated on 9 August 2017 by the Gender Equality Unit,¹³ the deliberation process took almost 11 months to complete. The draft Action Plan was prepared mostly based on the submitted proposals by the line ministries and non-governmental organizations, and subsequently deliberated upon in the meetings of the Commission. The independent review by the Office revealed certain concerns regarding the transparency of the process due to the factual role of the Commission. Based on the current practice, the members of the Commission propose, approve, indirectly implement (through the represented institutions and organizations) and assess the impact of the implemented measures within the Action Plan. However, the existing legal acts exclusively define the Commission as the body of monitoring and supervision.¹⁴ When the monitoring body is directly involved in developing and implementing the Action Plan, its main function of impartial monitoring is being compromised. Therefore, it can be assumed that the current process of implementing the national policies on gender equality lacks transparency.
5. The independent review by the Office also revealed certain transparency-related concerns regarding the role of non-governmental organizations within the framework of the Commission in general and the procedure for submitting proposals on measures for the developed Action Plan in particular. It appears that non-governmental organizations working in the field of gender equality did not have an equal standing for submitting proposals, because only non-governmental organizations that are represented in the Commission were informed about the process. This tendency was further reinforced by the fact that the Ministry of Social Security and Labor did not invite non-governmental organizations working in the field of gender equality to submit their proposals through official written and (or) targeted invitation. Therefore, the factual functioning of the Commission resulted in the situation when the members of the Commission representing non-governmental organizations were able to deliberate upon the measures for the Action Plan proposed by themselves.
6. The lack of transparency is further illustrated by the practice of appointing representatives of non-governmental organizations as the members of the Commission. According to the current procedure, the members of the Commission representing line ministries are delegated by the corresponding ministers, while up to four representatives of non-governmental organizations working in the field of gender equality are delegated by non-governmental organizations themselves.¹⁵ The representatives of non-governmental organizations in the Commission are supposed to represent joint interests of all non-governmental organizations working in the field of gender issues. However, no national summits or forums of non-governmental organizations working in the field of gender issues are organized in Lithuania, where the delegates to the Commission could be democratically appointed. Therefore, the self-regulated process of appointment is characterized by the lack of transparency and democratic nature. Furthermore, the independent review by the Office revealed that certain representatives in the Commission represent non-governmental organizations that neither work in the field of gender equality nor are defined by gender-based membership.

¹² *Supra* 9.

¹³ In 2018 the Gender Equality Unit of the Ministry of Social Security and Labor was merged with the Equal Opportunities Unit and reformed into the Equal Opportunities and Gender Equality Unit. This merger took place within the larger-scale structural reform in the Ministry by introducing ten Senior Advisers to supervise the priority areas in the field of social security and labor. Unfortunately, there is no Senior Adviser specifically managing the file of gender equality. For more information on the new structure of the Ministry, please see: <https://socmin.lrv.lt/lt/struktura-ir-kontaktai>.

¹⁴ *Supra* 10.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

7. The independent review by the Office revealed that the majority of the proposed measures within the Action Plan could be described as fragmented and abstract. For example, one of the objectives of the Action Plan is “to reduce sectoral and professional segregation in the labor market on the grounds of gender”. In total five measures are proposed for achieving this objective. Two of them focus on organizing international conferences, one – on raising awareness among employers on equal opportunities, one – on formulating recommendations for teachers on ensuring equal opportunities within the classes of technology in secondary education and one – on supporting initiatives for reducing segregation. It is apparent that the proposed measures lack concrete, non-accidental and strategically tailored ideas, which could result in factually reduced segregation. For example, it would be highly relevant to develop measure for attracting women into the STEM sector¹⁶ and men into the EWR sector,¹⁷ as these sectors are defined by gender segregation. However, no concrete measures were tailored to address this specific problem.
8. The planned impact of the majority of measures is neither ambitious nor significant. The proposed measures usually are not sufficient for implementing the identified objectives, as their limited volume is not capable of changing the current situation in a preferred direction. For example, one of the objectives of the Action Plan is “to promote motivation and capacities by women to participate in decision making, to create environment conducive for women careers”. In total 11 measures are proposed for achieving this objective, including events for entrepreneurship and leadership by women (Nos. 4.2-4.5, 4.7), research on situational analysis (No. 4.1), structural change on gender balance in community groups (No. 4.6), guidelines (No. 4.7) and group of measures for supporting “initiatives” on work and life balance (No. 4.8), participation of disabled women and girls in public life (No. 4.9) and involvement of men in activities on gender equality (No. 4.10). Despite the fact that there are multiple events foreseen within the framework of these measures, it is sought to attract only 200 participants in total, thus casting a reasonable doubt on the volume and effectiveness of the proposed measures. Furthermore, the Action Plan foresees the implementation of multiple “initiatives”, i.e. activities which are not specified in the Action Plan itself. In essence it means that the actual contents of these “initiatives” will depend on submitted proposals by interested stakeholders. In practice these measures could result in short-term projects, which lack sustainability and do not contribute to the strategic redress of gender inequalities.
9. The line ministries, which are responsible for implementing the measures in the Action Plan, are not involved in the process of developing and implementing the Action Partner as equal partners. Three objectives of the Action Plan, namely “to promote higher education among men”, “to conduct awareness raising on reproductive health” and “to conduct awareness raising among rural women on legal remedies, including legal aid”, are not accompanied by any concrete measures, because the Ministry of Science and Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice did not propose them. The same ministries, accompanied by the Ministry of Culture, do not foresee any trainings on gender equality for their staff, despite the fact that their functions touch upon the core aspects of inequalities between women and men. It is noteworthy that the measure No. 5.1 of the Action Plan foresees “adopting amendments to the Regulations of the Commission, aiming at strengthening the status and mandate of the Commission.” Despite the fact that this measure directly corresponds with the recommendation made in **paragraph 15** of the concluding observations on the fifth periodic report back in 2014,¹⁸ this measure had not been implemented as of 1 January 2019.

¹⁶ Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

¹⁷ Education, Welfare and Health (EWH).

¹⁸ Concluding Observations on the Fifth Periodic Report of Lithuania, No. CEDAW/C/LTU/CO/5, 24 July 2014, <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6OkG1d%2fPPRiCAqhKb7yhsvxlfhYepfIYmW0>

10. The Office is aware of the fact that the Ministry of Social Security and Labor updated the *Action Plan for the Implementation of the Programme 2018-2021* on January 4th, 2019.¹⁹ In order to inform this process, the Office had submitted its independent review on the quality and effectiveness of the measures within the current Action Plan for the consideration of the Ministry of Social Security and Labor in December, 2018.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

11. Gender-based violence is a widespread phenomenon in Lithuania. In 2017 almost 48'000 reports were registered regarding domestic violence, while 4 out of 5 victims were women.²⁰ However, gender aspect is not comprehensively mainstreamed in the national legal framework on domestic violence. The preventive measures of both the *Law on Protection against Domestic Violence* (hereinafter the Law)²¹ and the National Programme on Protection against Domestic Violence and Victim Support 2014-2020 (hereinafter the Programme on Domestic Violence)²² are missing the focused approach to tackle domestic violence as a consequence of gender-based discrimination. This way the State Party may not be in the full compliance with the obligation under the Article 5(a) of the Convention, namely “to work towards the modification of social and cultural patterns of individual conduct in order to eliminate prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.”
12. Quantitative and qualitative data collected during the study by the Human Rights Monitoring Institute has shown systemic gaps, socially constructed barriers and a lack of comprehensive support services for victims of domestic violence when they seek help.²³ The study revealed that women face **victim blaming** from the majority of professionals when they talk about experienced violence. The same tendencies were noticed during the trainings for police

[eRMA3oVtFpVnhvVGN%2fu2GT3aOrqeUj5G1U2sZHvrIBvKKM%2fQOdsL%2bHyQ2OCyRnp9wezXUpvut%2bhoEQJV57MHLILjEOIT3](https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/aba30e70103211e9a5eaf2cd290f1944), p. 4.

¹⁹ Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2019 m. sausio 4 d. įsakymas Nr. A1-9 „Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro 2018 m. birželio 27 d. įsakymo Nr. A1-331 „Dėl Valstybinės moterų ir vyrų lygių galimybių 2015–2021 metų programos įgyvendinimo veiksmų plano 2018–2021 metams patvirtinimo“ pakeitimo“ (Eng. “Order by the Minister of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania No. A1-9 of 4 January 2019 “On the Amendment of the Order by the Minister of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania No. A1-331 of 27 June 2018 “On the Approval of the Action Plan 2018-2021 for the Implementation of the National Programme of Equal Opportunities of Women and Men 2015-2021””), No. A1-69, 4 January 2019,

<https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/aba30e70103211e9a5eaf2cd290f1944>.

²⁰ Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, “Statistiniai duomenys apie smurtą artimoje aplinkoje ir smurtą prieš moteris“ (Eng. “Statistical Data on Domestic Violence and Violence against Women”), 24 January 2018, http://www.lygybe.lt/data/public/uploads/2018/07/smurto-statistika_2018-01-24.pdf.

²¹ Lietuvos Respublikos apsaugos nuo smurto artimoje aplinkoje įstatymas (Eng. “Law on Protection against Domestic Violence of the Republic of Lithuania”), No. XI-1425, 26 May 2011,

<https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.400334/WaFyQaEEys>.

²² Valstybinė smurto artimoje aplinkoje prevencijos ir pagalbos teikimo nukentėjusiems asmenims 2014–2020 metų programa, patvirtinta Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2014 m. gegužės 28 d. nutarimu Nr. 485 „Dėl Valstybinės smurto artimoje aplinkoje prevencijos ir pagalbos teikimo nukentėjusiems asmenims 2014–2020 metų programos patvirtinimo“ (Eng. “National Programme on Protection against Domestic Violence and Victim Support 2014-2020, approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania No. 485 of 28 May 2014 “On the Adoption of the National Programme on Protection against Domestic Violence and Victim Support 2014-2020””, No. 485, 26 May 2014,

<https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/0ef33c60ea2811e38557d238694e3fc9>.

²³ Human Rights Monitoring Institute, „Intymaus partnerio smurtavimo apraiškos Lietuvoje – moterų perspektyva“ (Eng. “Violence by Intimate Partner in Lithuania – Women’s Perspective”), 2018, https://hrmi.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Intymaus-partnerio-smurtavimo-aprai%C5%A1kos_%C5%BDTSI.pdf.

officers, judges, prosecutors, health care professionals, social workers and child rights protection officers, conducted by the above-mentioned non-governmental organization.²⁴ The majority of training participants expressed victim blaming attitudes towards women who experience domestic violence and were lacking sensitivity to gender aspect in the solutions of domestic violence problem.

13. Similar attitudes are prevalent among the members of the general public as well. In 2017 the Office carried out a representative survey which highlighted that the majority of Lithuanians associate domestic violence mainly with physical violence (72 %).²⁵ Only a smaller part of respondents, when asked about different forms of domestic violence, named psychological (emotional) (25 %) or sexual violence (6 %). Almost nobody mentioned economic violence (<1 %). The same survey exposed the prevalence of victim blaming attitudes within the society. 85 % of respondents agreed with a statement that “a woman can always terminate a relationship with a violent partner”. 51 % of respondents agreed with a statement that “women knew in what relationship they were getting into”. 53 % said that “women themselves provoke violence” and 27 % even stated that “women like when they are getting abused”.²⁶
14. According to the *Special Eurobarometer 449* on gender-based violence (2016), a part of the Lithuanian population (22 %) agrees with the statement that domestic violence is a private matter and should be handled within the family (EU average – 15 %).²⁷ 17 % of respondents said that domestic violence against women is unacceptable, but should not always be punished by law (EU – 12 %). The results of the same survey revealed that people tend to unequally justify different forms of gender-based violence. For instance, only 57 % of respondents agree that sexual violence is wrong and should be against the law (EU – 86%). Economic violence is considered to be against the law by 58 % of Lithuanians (EU – 78 %).²⁸ These results clearly indicate that there is a lack of awareness on **different forms of gender-based violence** in the Lithuanian society.
15. The similar tendencies are illustrated through the capacity of the criminal justice system in recognizing and addressing different forms of gender-based violence. According to the official statistics, out of all victims of domestic violence in 2017, 6.9 % suffered from psychological violence, 2,4 % from economic violence and only 0,3 % from sexual violence.²⁹ These numbers should be contrasted with the results of the survey by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) (2014), indicating that 24 % of all women in Lithuania suffered from physical and (or) sexual violence³⁰ and 51 % from psychological violence by their current or previous partners.³¹ Taken the extremely low numbers of recorded instances of psychological, economic and sexual violence into account, it can be concluded that the

²⁴ These trainings were conducted within the framework of the projects funded by the European Commission, namely “Common Action for Society Without Violence” (PROGRESS, No. JUST/2012/PROG/AG/4723/VAW, 2013-2015) and “Stop Violence Against Women: From (A)wareness to (Z)ero Victims Blaming” (REC, No. JUST/2016/RGEN/AG/VAWA/9946, 2017-2019) by the Office and the partner non-governmental organizations.

²⁵ Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, „Lietuvos gyventojų tyrimas apie lygias galimybes“ (Eng. “Representative Survey on Equal Opportunities”), 2017, http://www.lygybe.lt/data/public/uploads/2018/01/lietuvos-gyventoju-pozivuris-i-smurta-artimoje-aplinkoje_2017.pdf.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer 449, Report (Gender-based Violence)*, 2016, <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/75837>.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Supra* 20.

³⁰ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, “Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. Main results”, 2014, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14_en.pdf, p. 28.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

Lithuanian criminal justice system has very little capacity on identifying and preventing different forms of gender-based violence.

16. In order to address these negative tendencies, since 2017 the Office has been implementing the project “Stop Violence Against Women: From (A)wareness to (Z)ero Victims Blaming” (see para. 64 of the sixth periodic report by Lithuania).³² The project aims to develop targeted information and implement practical empowerment actions, education activities and awareness-raising measures to increase understanding of different forms of violence against women by general public and specialists working in the field in order to combat victim blaming and, ultimately, contribute to promoting zero tolerance to violence against women.³³ The project is co-funded by the Justice Programme of the European Union (80 %) and the budgetary funding (20 %).
17. Within the framework of the above-mentioned project, the Office has implemented two large-scale awareness raising campaigns on different forms of gender-based violence and phenomenon of victim blaming. The first campaign “This is (also) Violence” was implemented in January 2018 and sought to raise public awareness on psychological, economic and sexual forms of domestic violence.³⁴ The second campaign “Support Survivors” was implemented in October 2018 and focused on challenging people and institutions surrounding victims of violence (i.e. friends, mothers, police officers, child rights protection staff, judges, and priests), who engage in victim blaming practices.³⁵ Despite the fact that the main headlines of the second awareness raising campaign were based on direct quotes by domestic violence survivors within the framework of the qualitative research,³⁶ the campaign has caused certain degree of political backlash. On 9 October 2018 three MPs requested the Office and the national broadcaster to terminate the awareness raising campaign prematurely, because it allegedly undermined trust in public institutions and offended feelings of religious people.³⁷ On 23 October 2013 14 MPs delivered a set of questions regarding the awareness raising campaign in question to the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson and requested the incumbent to respond to these questions publicly before the Parliament.³⁸ The hearing took place on 13 November 2018. More than 50 non-governmental organizations, including victim support service providers, expressed support for the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson and the awareness raising campaign “Support Survivors” as disclosing the actual prevalence of underlying negative phenomenon of victim blaming.³⁹
18. As of 1 January 2019, Lithuania has not ratified the **Council of Europe’s Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence** (hereinafter the Convention).⁴⁰ Despite the fact that the ratification of this important international document would enable not only to comprehensively mainstream the aspect of gender, but

³² *Supra* 6.

³³ For the more detailed description of the project activities, see: <http://www.visureikalas.lt/en/about-project>.

³⁴ The campaign materials can be seen here: <http://www.visureikalas.lt/en/campaign-this-is-also-violence>.

³⁵ The campaign materials can be seen here: <http://www.visureikalas.lt/en/campaign-support-survivors>.

³⁶ *Supra* 23.

³⁷ Members of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, „Dėl įžeidžiančios ir klaidinančios socialinės reklamos kampanijos“ (Eng. “On Offensive and Misleading Social Advertising Campaign”), 9 October 2018.

³⁸ Members of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, „Dėl įžeidžiančios ir klaidinančios socialinės reklamos kampanijos“ (Eng. “On Offensive and Misleading Social Advertising Campaign”), 23 October 2018.

³⁹ „Dėl LR Lygių galimybių kontrolieriaus tarnybos vykdytos kampanijos „Palaikyk““ (Eng. “On the Social Campaign “Support” by the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson of the Republic of Lithuania”), 13 November 2018, <http://manoteises.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/D%C4%971-LR-Lygi%C5%B3-galimybi%C5%B3-kontrolieriaus-tarnybos-vykdytos-kampanijos-%E2%80%9EPalaikyk%E2%80%9C.pdf>.

⁴⁰ The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, No. 210, 11 May 2011, <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168008482e>.

also to encourage recognition of different forms of gender-based (i.e. psychological, economic and sexual) violence within the framework of the national criminal justice system, the political debate is still pending. On 12 March 2018 76 MPs signed a declaration opposing the ratification of the Convention.⁴¹ On 15 March 2018 the Parliament refused to include the question on considering the ratification of the Convention in the Parliament's agenda for the spring session.⁴² On 12 June 2018 the President of the Republic of Lithuania registered the draft proposal to ratify the Convention before the Parliament.⁴³ However, the draft proposal has not been considered by the Parliament yet.

⁴¹ Declaration by the Members of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania „Dėl Stambulo konvencijos ratifikavimo“ (Eng. “On Ratification of the Istanbul Convention”), 12 March 2018, <http://alkas.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/deklaracija.pdf>.

⁴² Draft Resolution by the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania „Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo IV (pavasario) sesijos darbų programos“ (Eng. “On the Agenda of the IV (Spring) Session of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania”), No. XIIIIP-1758(2), 15 March 2018, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAP/82397160281f11e883caab1e5c7c4854>. The voting results can be seen here: https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=15275&p_k=1&p_a=sale_bals&p_bals_id=-28649.

⁴³ Įstatymo „Dėl Europos tarybos konvencijos dėl smurto prieš moteris ir smurto artimoje aplinkoje prevencijos ir kovos su juo ratifikavimo“ projektas (Eng. “Draft Law on Ratification of the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence”), No. XIIIIP-2315, 12 June 2018, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAP/7a5b5ec06e4411e89bb0cb50d0500eab?positionInSearchResults=1&searchModelUUID=16e06f5f-2078-41c7-9805-ed4316740c09>.