



Equal Opportunities in the workplace in Lithuanian Municipalities and Biggest Enterprises in Lithuania:

State-of-the-art and Gap
Analysis Overview

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Methodology

This study consists of two main research components, that is, desk research and original state-of-the-art analysis. The purpose of desk research is to summarise prior analyses and state-of-the-art on equal opportunities and diversity management in Lithuania as well as to overview national and international best practices of equal opportunities in public and private sectors. The purpose of state of the art is to understand how Lithuanian municipalities and largest business enterprises approach equal opportunities, what they prioritise and what measures for strengthening equal opportunities they adopt in their policies.

DESK RESEARCH

Desk research was conducted from 01 July to 31 August 2022. Throughout this period, an extensive overview of prior academic and non-academic studies and state-of-the-art analyses on equal opportunities and diversity management were carried out, followed by an analysis of national and international best practice examples from public and private sectors. Additionally, desk research entailed an overview of the existing legal framework in Lithuania, namely the Law on Equal Treatment of the Republic of Lithuania and the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Republic of Lithuania and national regulations for public/private sectors. The EU directives relevant for equal opportunities and diversity management were taken into consideration as well.

One of the main challenges of desk research was a general lack of academic and non-academic studies on equal opportunities and diversity management in municipal administrations. Particularly, empirical studies involving data collection and data analysis were identified as absent in the national context. This is related to the fact that equality and diversity in the workplace are still under-researched areas in the country and requires a continuous and comprehensive attempt by both scholars and non-governmental representatives. Results of the desk research are structured as follows: overview of academic and non-academic studies of equal opportunities and diversity management in Lithuania are followed by an overview of the national legal framework; finally, a brief section on selected national and international best practices is provided.

STATE-OF-THE-ART ANALYSIS

Generally, the state-of-the-art analysis took place from 01 June to 19 September 2022. It is important to emphasise that this study took into consideration only *publicly accessible* policies/documents and *other publicly* available information on municipal/business enterprises websites. The study took into account measures of all 60 Lithuanian municipalities as well as 20 largest enterprises established in Lithuania.¹ This choice was made because equality and diversity has largely become an integral part of public and private sector companies and organisations that are relevant to each worker and their wellbeing in terms of equal treatment, qualification improvement, discrimination reporting etc. To take full advantage of equal opportunities, measures need to be public, transparent and accessible. Thus, internal (publicly inaccessible) policies or other inaccessible information on equal opportunities and diversity management were excluded from the analysis.

First, a template for qualitative and quantitative analyses was prepared based on the research question. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses took into consideration several different questions related to equal opportunities and diversity management, largely with reference to the Law on Equal Treatment of the Republic of Lithuania, the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Republic of Lithuania and the tool of Equal Opportunities Ruler.² The template covered the questions such as whether measures on equal opportunities/diversity management are incorporated into a strategic development plan (*org. Strateginis plėtros planas*) and/or strategic action plan (*org. Strateginis veiklos planas*) or are included in a separate document (such as action plans on equal opportunities etc.), whether the documents were still in force at the time of analysis, whether the aims and expected results, local issues at stake and executors of measures were foreseen, whether monitoring is taking place, whether there is a discrimination reporting mechanism in place, among others.

Second, the data collection phase took place where publicly accessible strategic development and action plans, as well as other documents on equal opportunities/diversity management, were selected for further analysis. Since strategic development and actions plans are published online and most municipalities/enterprises also keep their separate documents on equal opportunities published, no issues were faced accessing them. In the case of enterprises, the amount of publicly accessible information was considerably lower. Nevertheless, most of the analysed enterprises agreed to provide and make publicly available additional information on the topic of equal opportunities. Information which was not publicly available at the time of analysis was considered to be out of the scope of this research. The research team also took into consideration information published on municipal/business websites.

1 The list of the 20 largest business enterprises is prepared annually by the magazine "Verslo žinios"; in this study, the list for 2022 is used. The list only includes companies that have submitted their financial statements to the Lithuanian State Enterprise Centre of Registers (SECR) by 31 May 2022. The companies are ranked according to the amount of income declared for 2021. There are no financial institutions, insurance companies or banks. It is the responsibility of the companies themselves to provide accurate and timely data.

2 Equal Opportunities Ruler. Available at: <https://www.lygybe.lt/en/equal-opportunities-ruler> Accessed 12 September 2022.

Third, the research team proceeded with data analysis in which, first, documents were screened to become familiarised with the general outline and then keywords were used to find relevant measures. These were *#lygybė* (en. *equality*), *#lygios galimybės* (en. *equal opportunities*), *#lyčių lygybė* (en. *gender equality*), *#diskriminacija* (en. *discrimination*) and others with varying endings of the words. After relevant measures were identified, qualitative and quantitative analysis followed. In case relevant information was found in the document and/or the website (e.g., if measures on equal opportunities are foreseen in the strategic development plan), it was marked as either yes (1) or no (0). Accordingly, a corresponding point was given for each municipality/enterprise (1, 0.5 or 0). For each question, municipalities and enterprises were awarded: 0 points, if no relevant information was found; 0.5 if information was partially relevant or fulfilled only part of the evaluation criteria of the question; and 1 point when the information fulfilled all evaluation criteria of the question and could be presented as a good example. Specific evaluation criteria for each question corresponding to the points 1, 0.5 and 0 can be found next to each of the questions in Annex 1 and Annex 2. A full list of quantitative analysis questions is provided as Annex 1 for municipalities and as Annex 2 for enterprises.

Fourth, initial policy analysis results were sent for verification to representatives of each of the 60 municipalities and 20 largest enterprises in Lithuania. It was aimed at verifying whether selected documents were correct, and no measure or other relevant information was overlooked. Representatives were contacted on 03 August 2022 with reminders sent on 11 August 2022.³ Each document containing the initial analysis was addressed to the director of municipal administration, one deputy director, the head of the personnel department and also sent via general email. In case of enterprises, the documents were sent to the heads of personnel departments, heads of communication and general mailboxes of the companies. Most representatives responded to requests and willingly added missing information and/or amended inaccuracies. The research team took this into account and reassessed the evaluation where necessary. As mentioned, documents that were not publicly accessible at the time of the analysis were not considered.

Results of the state of the art are structured as follows: first, analysis on the regulation of equal opportunities in municipalities and enterprises in Lithuania is provided; followed by an overview of how local issues are reflected and whether monitoring of measures is foreseen; then employee protection and discrimination reporting mechanisms are discussed in detail; and, finally, information is provided on what kind of data on equal opportunities is publicly available.

³ Communication with some representatives of municipalities and business enterprises continued over the month of August because some of the representatives were on leave and/or required more time for the information to be uploaded online.

I. State-of-the-art analysis in Lithuanian municipalities

A. REGULATION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The first section of the state-of-the-art analysis of Lithuanian municipalities aims to provide an overview of the regulatory and administrative framework for ensuring equal opportunities in each municipality. This section is based on the results of the following questions of the analysis template (see Annex 1, numeration of the questions below is the same as in Annex 1):

Q1. Does the municipality have a document for ensuring equal opportunities?

Q3. Does the municipality publish a plan for ensuring equal opportunities?

Q5. Are there any objectives set in the municipality's document/plan for ensuring equal opportunities?

Q6. Does the municipality's document/plan for ensuring equal opportunities provide for what kind of change is intended to be achieved through the measures?

Q7. Are there any measures set in the municipality's document/plan for ensuring equal opportunities that will be used to achieve the set goals?

Answering each of those questions demonstrates whether — and to what extent — issues related to equal opportunities are tackled in the municipalities on the administrative level and whether the municipality has any intention to act or acknowledges the necessity to act in the sphere of equal opportunities. More specifically, questions 1 and 3 provide insight on whether the municipality has any documents related to or mentioning equal opportunities, while questions 5, 6 and 7 are aimed at evaluating the content of those documents.

EXISTING DOCUMENTS PUBLISHED BY MUNICIPALITIES

According to the data collected and presented in Annex 1, most municipalities have at least one official document dedicated to or at least mentioning equal opportunities. There are 4 main types of documents which have been identified: Municipal Strategic Development Plan (*org. Strateginis plėtros planas*), Municipal Strategic Action Plan (*org. Strateginis veiklos planas*), Municipal Equal Opportunities Policy and Procedures for its Implementation (*org. Lygių galimybių politikos įgyvendinimo tvarkos aprašas*), and Municipal Plan for Ensuring Equal Opportunities (*org. Lygių galimybių veiksmų planas*).

The number and type of the document varied among municipalities, some of them had equal opportunities mentioned in all 4 above-mentioned documents, while in some cases only one document was dedicated to equal opportunities. It is important to mention that the number of documents and their type do not reflect the quality and comprehensiveness of the content.

14 municipalities (more than every sixth Lithuanian municipality) have not published any documents related to equal opportunities in the municipality as a workplace. Out of all 60 municipalities, just 2 municipalities⁴ had outdated and no longer valid documents (plans for ensuring equal opportunities) at the time of the study. Only 5 municipalities⁵ out of 60 have published Municipal Plans for Ensuring Equal Opportunities, although those documents were not valid in Kaunas city and the Joniškis district municipalities and not in force in Šiauliai city municipality.

OBJECTIVES SET BY MUNICIPALITIES

Quite valuable insight into the attitude of municipal administrations towards the topic of equal opportunities is provided by analysis of Q5 — the objectives which are set out in the equal opportunities documents. This question demonstrates whether equal opportunities are an objective in itself or if it is considered to be just a tool or a legal requirement necessary for the achievement of other strategic objectives that are not directly linked to the topic of equality in the municipal administration as a workplace.

Out of 60 municipalities, 33 municipalities (see Annex 1, Q5, all municipalities which score 0.5 or 1 point) have set objectives, while 24 of these municipalities⁶ have set objectives directly or partly related to the aim of ensuring 'equal opportunities' (specific measures published by these municipalities are aimed at implementing the objective directly related to ensuring equal opportunities). The remaining 9 municipalities have set objectives which are unrelated to equal opportunities such as "Improving the efficiency and quality of municipal services", for example.

Out of 24 municipalities, in 17 municipalities,⁷ the objectives are not directly related to the measures envisaged, while the objectives of 7 municipalities⁸ have a direct link and are related to the measures envisaged. Those 7 municipalities were the only ones to score 1 point for Q5 regarding objectives, as indicated in Annex 1. For example, the municipality of

4 Joniškis d. municipality and Kaunas c. municipality

5 Akmenė d., Vilkaviškis d., Joniškis d., Kaunas c., Šiauliai c.

6 Anykščiai d., Klaipėda c., Mažeikiai d., Širvintos d., Šiauliai d., Šilutė d., Kėdainiai d., Radviliškis d., Kaunas d., Šakiai d., Telšiai d., Pakruojis d., Lazdijai d., Vilkaviškis d., Utena d., Šilalė d., Kupiškis d., Prienai d., Akmenė d., Pagėgiai d., Kalvarijos, Kaunas d., Birštonas d., Šiauliai c.

7 Anykščiai d., Klaipėda c., Širvintos d., Kėdainiai d., Radviliškis d., Kaunas d., Šakiai d., Telšiai d., Pakruojis d., Lazdijai d., Šilalė d., Kupiškis d., Prienai d., Pagėgiai d., Kalvarijos d., Birštonas d., Šiauliai c.

8 Mažeikiai d., Šiauliai d., Šilutė d., Vilkaviškis d., Utena d., Akmenė d., Kaunas c.

Mažeikių d. set the objective *“to ensure that equal criteria are applied to persons applying for vacant posts in the Administration and to the Administration’s employees working under employment contracts and to civil servants”* is followed by the measure *“to apply equal criteria for performance evaluation, recruitment and dismissal”*. In this case, there is a clear effort by the administration to make the equal opportunities policy consistent, since the objective is corresponding and implemented by a concrete measure.

It is possible to observe several recurring wordings of objectives among 17 municipalities whose objectives are related to equal opportunities but are too abstract or not linked to any specific measures. These wordings of objectives deserve additional attention, as they exemplify quite popular approaches to implementing equal opportunities by the municipal administrations — namely, a non-discriminatory or *negative* obligation approach and a *positive* obligation approach. Positive obligation in this case refers to an obligation of a municipality to act and implement concrete measures, while a negative obligation merely obliges a municipality to refrain from certain actions. Since a negative obligation of non-discrimination is set out in the national law which applies to all public institutions regardless of their internal policies,⁹ such an obligation in an internal policy document does not constitute any proactive stance of the municipality in ensuring equal opportunities or a willingness to improve the situation. For example, a group of 8 municipalities¹⁰ have set the same (identical) objective: *“to ensure that applicants for employment or existing employees are not treated less favourably if this is not related to the quality of the work performed or to any other qualities of the job”*. On one hand, such an objective indicates that discrimination is formally not tolerated at the workplace. On the other hand, it is not completely clear what exactly a “less favourable treatment” constitutes and how the municipal administration is going to achieve this objective and enforce prohibition of discrimination. Another group of 2 municipalities¹¹ have the set same (identical) objective: *“to ensure that the principle of equal opportunities and the prohibition to restrict the rights of employees or to grant them privileges on the grounds of sex, race, nationality, citizenship, language, origin, social status, religion, beliefs, convictions or attitudes, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, religion and other grounds are respected during the recruitment of civil servants and employees working under an employment contract and during the duration of the employment and service relationship and during their termination in the administration”*. This objective is substantially better, since it includes a list of grounds upon which discrimination is prohibited. Thus, it is more concrete but remains a negative obligation.

A good example can be found among the remaining 7 municipalities which have scored 1 point for their objectives. A group of 4 municipalities¹² have the same (identical) objective:

9 Law on Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Lithuania, 18 November 2003, No IX-1826. Valid consolidated version 1 August 2022. Available at: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.222522/asr> Accessed 12 September 2022.

10 Kėdainiai d., Kaunas d., Telšiai d., Kupiškis d., Pagėgiai d., Kalvarijos, Birštonas, Šiauliai c.

11 Klaipėda c., Anykščiai d.

12 Mažeikiai d., Šiauliai d., Šilutė d., Utena d.

“to ensure that the same criteria are applied to persons applying for vacant posts in the Administration as are applied to members of the staff of the Administration, contract staff and civil servants”. This exemplifies a positive approach towards ensuring equal opportunities as there is a concrete action described — an application of the same (identical) criteria. In practice, this means that those criteria will have to be set and published or communicated to the employees who will be able to refer to them and effectively defend themselves in cases of discrimination.

A separate mention is deserved by Vilkaviškis district municipality which has a whole set of rather concrete objectives stated in its Municipal Plan for Ensuring Equal Opportunities (*org. Lygių galimybių veiksmų planas*): “1. Ensure that workers (women and men) have equal opportunities to participate in social and economic life. 2. Put in place measures to create a safe working environment and prevent discrimination and harassment. 3. Promote respect for diversity, awareness of human rights and intolerance of discrimination based on gender, ethnic origin, religion, disability, age, or sexual orientation. 4. Strive to ensure equality between men and women and improve the quality of working conditions in the Vilkaviškis District Municipal Administration. 5. Raise public awareness of equal opportunities. 6. Support programmes of public institutions, associations and charitable foundations that contribute to the realisation of equal opportunities for women and men”.¹³ This example was followed by the Akmenė district municipality which has similar objectives with slightly different formulations in its Municipal Plan for Ensuring Equal Opportunities.

CONCRETE CHANGES TO BE ACHIEVED BY MUNICIPALITIES

Apart from the existing documents and formally declared objectives, another important aspect to consider is whether municipalities envisage any particular change to be achieved in the sphere of equal opportunities and which measures are going to be implemented to achieve that change. In contrast to the previous parts of the analysis, where formal mentioning of “equal opportunities” and declaration of the intent to act would be sufficient, here we are looking for concrete changes which could be measured and observed relative to the current situation in the municipalities. One example of such a concrete change could be an increase in the percentage of women holding managerial positions by XX% in the municipality administration by the year YYYY. For this to be considered an “envisaged change” in the study, there had to be a numerical value of the change or another indicator and a deadline provided for in the official planning documents of the municipality. These requirements allow us to distinguish between an abstract attempt to improve the situation and a clear plan of improvement relative to the current situation which could be evaluated

¹³ Strategy and Action Plan for Equal Opportunities Policy 2021-2022 of Vilkaviškis District Municipality Administration (*org. Vilkaviškio rajono savivaldybės administracijos lygių galimybių politikos 2021–2022 m. strategija ir veiksmų planas*) Available at: <https://vilkaviskis.lt/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Lygiu-galimybiu-strategija-veiksmu-planas-1.pdf> Accessed 12 September 2022.

in future. Since the objectives, analysed before, are not legally binding and do not necessarily mean that they will be achieved, analysis of changes will provide more in-depth insight into how municipalities are identifying and dealing with issues related to ensuring equal opportunities in the workplace.

Out of 60 municipalities analysed, only 2 municipalities have specified changes which are going to be achieved by implementing measures to ensure equal opportunities. These were Akmenė d., and Vilkaviškis d. Both municipalities have been awarded only 0.5 for the changes (See Q6 in Annex 1). Akmenė d. municipality did include some expectation of results such as “created an opportunity for staff to work remotely” or “organised seminars and trainings on the topic of equal opportunities”; however, there were no quantitative indicators or descriptions of what is going to change substantially in the administration (for example, would there be fewer reports on violations of equal opportunities, or would the perception of staff on the state of equal opportunities at the administration improve, etc.). The case of Vilkaviškis d. municipality was similar, since the documents were mainly focused on the results such as published analysis of the situation, implemented policies and suggestions, organised seminars and trainings. These two examples demonstrate that it is important to distinguish between the **results** of implemented measures and a **substantial change** of the state of the art of equal opportunities at the municipalities. While there is a clear indication of what the two municipalities are going to implement and even expected outcomes of the implemented measures, it is not apparent to what extent those results effectively contribute to the general situation of ensuring equal opportunities at the municipalities.

MEASURES TO ENSURE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Interestingly, even though just 4 municipalities envisage any kind of change related to equal opportunities, a substantially bigger number are implementing or planning to implement specific measures. 44 municipalities have scored 0.5 or 1 for the question about the measures (see Q7 in Annex 1). Unfortunately, the majority — 43 municipalities — scored 0.5 and only 1 was awarded 1 point. The reason for that was that the measures in those majority cases were quite abstract and their positive effect on ensuring equal opportunities in municipalities was unclear.

Those abstract measures were usually a set of principles copied from the Law on Equal opportunities and added to the Municipal Equal Opportunities Policy and Procedures for its Implementation (*org. Lygių galimybių politikos įgyvendinimo tvarkos aprašas*). Such principles are usually quite general, for example, “*use uniform criteria for the evaluation of the performance of civil servants; use uniform criteria for dismissal from work and dismissal from the civil service; equal pay for equal work or work of equal value*”.¹⁴ Most

¹⁴ The full list of principles can be found in Article 7 of the Law on Equal Opportunities. Law on Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Lithuania, 18 November 2003, No IX-1826. Valid consolidated version 1 August 2022. Available at: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.222522/asr> Accessed 12 September 2022.

importantly, those principles are compulsory for all public institutions regardless of their internal regulations or degree of transposition of the principles to those regulations. For that reason, even though an explicit commitment to the principles of ensuring equality in the workplace is, of course, a positive thing, it is not clear what is the practical value of those principles as measures. They are supposed to be implemented in any case and do not require an additional action of the administration, but at the same time are quite general, which leads to the question about what is done to enforce those principles. In cases where this last question remained unanswered, this study awarded only 0.5 points for the principles being the only measures to ensure equal opportunity in the workplace.

A common trend among the municipalities was indicating trainings for municipal workers and staff on the topic of equal opportunities. Full point for trainings as a measure was only awarded in cases where there was clear information on when or how often trainings will happen and who is responsible for the organisation of the trainings. When there was only a possibility of organisation of trainings mentioned without any concrete plans, only 0.5 points were awarded.

Another quite important part missing in the measures which scored 0.5 points was **reference to the problem** or issue the measure is going to solve. It is quite adequate to expect that if there is a specific measure envisaged in the planning documents, there is also a clearly identified problem which this measure aims to solve. For example, if the municipality envisaged to organise trainings on equal opportunities, there is most likely a problem of lack of competence in the topic of equal opportunities among the municipal staff. Surprisingly, this was often not the case. Municipalities tend to envisage specific measures without any reference to existing issues or problems which are going to be solved. The purpose and effectiveness of such measures thus becomes rather questionable.

This disparity between the results on objectives, changes and measures indicates the willingness of municipalities to act in the sphere of equal opportunities, but at the same time a lack of understanding of what specifically could or should be achieved by such an action, equal opportunities are still mostly understood as a tool or a measure for broader and more abstract goals and not seen as an autonomous objective.

B. ANALYSIS AND MONITORING OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

WHAT THIS SECTION ENTAILS

The second section of the state-of-the-art analysis of Lithuanian municipalities aims to provide an overview of practical mechanisms of implementation of equal opportunities measures envisaged in the official documents of municipalities. In other words, this section will analyse **if and how** measures, objectives or changes mentioned in the documents

and analysed in the first section A are **implemented** and **if** there are any **monitoring mechanisms**. Additionally, this section will provide a brief overview of budgets allocated for measures to ensure equal opportunities in municipalities. This section is based on the results of the following questions of the analysis template (see Annex 1, numeration of the questions below is the same as in Annex 1):

Q2. Does the municipality publish a situation analysis on equal opportunities in the municipal administration?

Q4. Does the municipality's equal opportunities document/plan indicate what issues related to equal opportunities are intended to be solved?

Q8. Is there monitoring of measures set in the municipality's document/plan for ensuring equal opportunities?

ABILITY TO IDENTIFY CHALLENGES AND PROVIDE AN ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION

It is very important before proposing any kind of change or solution to identify precisely the issue that has to be solved. This is even more so when talking about equal opportunities that have a relatively wide definition and are not pointing to any specific challenges municipalities are facing. When the concept “*equal opportunities*” is mentioned in the official documents of municipalities it is usually not clear what they are referring specifically to. For instance, if the municipality faces challenges in the area of gender equality (e.g., workers are discriminated against based on their sex and receive different treatment and degree of flexibility when working hours are allocated) or if there is an issue with the protection of rights of LGBTQ+ workers, or if the municipality is not properly equipped for workers with disabilities. These are all quite different areas and may require a range of specific actions by the municipalities. Moreover, municipalities themselves differ substantially in the number of employed workers and civil servants, allocated budgets, available infrastructure and so on. Not every solution or measure to ensure equal opportunities is always necessary or the best for a particular municipality. For these reasons, a good approach to implementation of such measures would be first to conduct and publish a situation analysis in the municipality on the topic of equal opportunities and identify the **key challenges** (in other words, issues) which have to be addressed.

Out of 60 analysed municipalities, only 22 publish a situation analysis or at least some elements of it. Out of these 22 municipalities, only 5 have scored 1 point for question 2 of Annex 1.¹⁵ It means that those municipalities have published a comprehensive situation analysis on the topic of the state of equal opportunities at the administrations of those municipalities,

¹⁵ Mažeikiai d., Joniškis d., Šiauliai d., Vilkaviškis d., Akmenė d.

provided detailed statistics and identified key challenges. Vilkaviškio d. municipality should be taken as the best example of such situation analysis as it provides detailed and nuanced information about the representation of men and women in different positions of the administration, separate statistics about employees holding managerial positions or being in charge of working groups and commissions, the level of education of employees and use of parental leave among men and women working in the administration.¹⁶ This analysis is integrated into the Equal Opportunities Strategy and Action Plan of Vilkaviškio d. municipality, which demonstrates the connection between the main trends and specific issues identified by the municipality administration and actions which the administration is planning to take to improve the situation. The remaining 17 municipalities that scored 0.5 out of 1 point for their situation analysis (see Q2 in Annex 1) provided some information on the state of equal opportunities, for example, statistics, but mostly failed to provide any analytical input or identify any specific challenges.

IDENTIFYING ISSUES RELATED TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Even though about one-fifth of Lithuanian municipalities have published a situation analysis or some element of it, just 6 municipalities¹⁷ have identified specific issues related to equal opportunities which they intended to solve (see Q4 in Annex 1). Most of these municipalities had published a situation analysis described previously. There was one exception, namely Radviliškis d. municipality which has identified some challenges related to equal opportunities without any prior situation analysis. It is important to mention, however, that this municipality did not score a full point for the identified challenges. Radviliškis d. municipality formulated those challenges quite broadly and did not explain the relevance of these challenges to the municipality administration. In the strategic development plan of Radviliškis d. municipality “*gender inequality*” was identified as an issue by providing the Lithuanian national context.¹⁸ But there was no information on whether gender inequality is an issue specifically in Radviliškis d. municipality administration and how it manifests itself. The remaining 5 municipalities have scored a full point for Q4 and described concrete issues they are going to solve. For example, Vilkaviškis d. municipality indicates as an issue the fact that among municipal workers only women benefit from the right to parental leave (data on the use of the right to parental leave in the municipal administration is provided). According to the municipality, this issue is related to gender stereotypes which have to be eradicated in

16 Strategy and Action Plan for Equal Opportunities Policy 2021-2022 of Vilkaviškis District Municipality Administration (org. Vilkaviškio rajono savivaldybės administracijos lygių galimybių politikos 2021–2022 m. strategija ir veiksmų planas) Available at: <https://vilkaviskis.lt/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Lygiu-galimybiu-strategija-veiksmu-planas-1.pdf> Accessed 12 September 2022.

17 Mažeikiai d., Joniškis d., Šiauliai d., Akmenė d., Radviliškis d., Vilkaviškis d.

18 Radviliškis District Municipality Strategic Development Plan 2021-2030 (org. Radviliškio rajono savivaldybės 2021–2030 metų strateginis plėtros planas) Available at: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/797ffe4198a111eb998483d0ae-31615c?positionInSearchResults=0&searchModelUUID=9f855f71-7868-49af-b9cb-a2ca8ba09c85> Accessed 12 September 2022.

the administration. Mažeikiai d. municipality, based on their situation analysis and employee questionnaire, identified issues related to staff awareness of what is discrimination based on gender, nationality and sexual orientation and the lack of a proper reporting channel.¹⁹ Overall, the analysis of the results of Q4 demonstrates that municipalities in Lithuania generally fail to identify challenges related to equal opportunities, even in cases where data on this topic is gathered and situation analysis is published. This may indicate a possible lack of competence by municipal staff and administrations in the sphere of equal opportunities or the existence of rooted and culturally-embedded attitudes which prevent municipal staff and administrations from identifying and analysing equality-related issues. Municipalities also tend to confuse issues and data related to equal opportunities or gender equality among the residents of the municipality and issues related to municipal administration as a workplace. The terms “*gender equality*” and “*equal opportunities*” are often used interchangeably in the official documents, resulting in a disproportional focus and gender-related topics while other aspects such as making the workplace accessible to people with disabilities, fighting discrimination based on race, ethnicity or age are usually not addressed.

MONITORING OF IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES MEASURES

The situation is slightly better in the case of monitoring the implementation of specific measures, plans or other documents ensuring equal opportunities. 22 out of 60 municipalities have some kind of monitoring mechanism or procedures described in the official documents (see Q8 in Annex 1). Nevertheless, when analysed in the context of measures (results of Q7 in Annex 1), it becomes clear that roughly only every second municipality which plans to implement any kind of measures to ensure equal opportunities envisages monitoring of this implementation. However, from the qualitative perspective, the picture is worse. Out of 22 municipalities, only 1 scored 1 point.²⁰ Akmenė d. municipality has indicated how often the monitoring is conducted and which department or person is responsible. The remaining 21 municipalities have formally mentioned the existence of monitoring but failed to provide information about its frequency or responsible department/person or both.

BUDGET ALLOCATED FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Lastly, some insight into the practical commitment of municipal administrations to ensuring equal opportunities at work is provided by a brief overview of municipal budgets which was not part of the research questionnaire but became possible due to a thorough analysis

¹⁹ Mažeikiai District Municipality Administration. Equal Opportunities Ruler Report (org. Mažeikių rajono savivaldybės administracija. Lygių galimybių liniuotės rezultatų ataskaita) Available at: <https://www.mazeikiai.lt/media/31520/lg-liniuote-mazeikiu-raj-sav-20220413.pdf> Accessed 12 September 2022.

²⁰ Akmenė d.

of municipal strategic planning documents. Since the following analysis is based only on strategic planning documents, it only indicates the financial intentions of municipalities to fund measures related to equal opportunities but does not necessarily reflect factual spending and resources used for ensuring equal opportunities.

Almost all of the 60 municipalities analysed do not envisage a budget for equal opportunities or related measures. In most cases, the municipality's budget allocation documents only include the title of the funding programme which may include a wide range of funded measures that are not indicated separately. Since the titles are usually abstract and it is unclear what a programme entails, it is impossible to determine whether it includes measures to ensure equal opportunities (e.g., "Programme for the municipality's activities, the performance of its main functions, the formulation of its strategy and the implementation of its priorities"). In the remaining cases, the planning documents foresee funding of 0 EUR for equal opportunities. Only several municipalities have planned and published budgets allocated specifically for ensuring equal opportunities. In the Kėdainiai d. municipality, EUR 11,400 was allocated to equal opportunities and anti-corruption measures in 2021, and EUR 23,000 is planned both for 2022 and 2023. However, in this case, it is not possible to determine which part of these funds was allocated to equal opportunities and which to anti-corruption measures. Anykščiai d. municipality has a budget section for the "implementation of the principle of equal opportunities for women and men" by organising seminars and lectures (in 2022 - EUR 0, in 2023 - EUR 501, and 2024 - EUR 502); however, the values of the indicator for the number of seminars/lectures and the percentage of women's/men's participants in the trainings in all the years of implementation of the plan are 0, which makes it unclear how the allocated budget will be spent. The budget for the implementation of equal opportunities measures is also foreseen in the budget of the Strategic Development Plan 2016-2025 of Trakai municipality (EUR 100 000). The Strategic Development Plan of Visaginas municipality foresees that EUR 50 000 will be allocated for the period 2016-2022 to address the problems of equality between women and men and equal opportunities in all areas. In Šiauliai c. municipality, EUR 10 000 has been allocated for the implementation of the measure in the 2022-2024 action plan (2022, measure: "Ensuring dissemination of information on equal opportunities"). In total, this makes just 5 municipalities out of 60 that have explicitly allocated budgets for equal opportunities measures in the planning documents.

C. EMPLOYEE PROTECTION AND DISCRIMINATION REPORTING

WHAT THIS SECTION ENTAILS

The third section of the state-of-the-art analysis of Lithuanian municipalities aims to provide an overview of existing reporting channels and protection mechanisms for employees who have experienced discrimination in the workplace and/or wish to report it. The research for this section was mainly focused on the presentation of such reporting channels. It was analysed whether there is enough information on the website of the municipality and whether it is clear and understandable enough for a person whose rights were violated to use it. Special attention was given to what happens after a report was submitted, comprehensiveness of information about further stages of an investigation, protection of persons who submitted reports, confidentiality and other aspects. This section is based on the results of the following questions of the analysis template (see Annex 1, numeration of the questions below is the same as in Annex 1):

Q9. Does the municipality publish a reporting channel that municipal employees can use if they experience discrimination at work or during job interviews?

Q10. Is there a designated employee or department in the municipality responsible for the implementation of equal opportunities?

REPORTING CHANNEL FOR CASES OF DISCRIMINATION AT WORK OR DURING JOB INTERVIEWS

This section will discuss to what extent Lithuanian municipalities have established discrimination reporting channels for their municipal administration employees and whether information on how to report discrimination cases is accessible. As can be seen in Annex 1, each municipality was evaluated and given points based on what information about the channel was provided. In case there is an anonymous reporting channel in the municipality dedicated to reporting violations of equal opportunities, the municipality was given 1 point; in case there is a reporting channel, but there is no information about its anonymity or it is unclear whether it is in use, it was given 0.5 points; in case there is no anonymous reporting channel or there is no information on it, the municipality was given 0 points.

As can be seen in Annex 1, the large majority of Lithuanian municipalities (53 in total) do indeed have a reporting channel, although it is not always specific to the violation of equal opportunities. In most of the cases, the description of the reporting channel did not mention or refer in any way to equal opportunities or discrimination. This raises reasonable doubts as to whether workers who have experienced discrimination and other violations of equal opportunities in the workplace will be able to use these reporting channels and decide to do

so. A particularly common case among municipalities which scored 0.5 points for reporting channels was to provide information or dedicate a separate section on the website about the protection of whistle-blowers. Under the Law on the Protection of Whistle-blowers (no. XIII-804) of the Lithuanian Republic all information concerning: “a threat to public security or health, life or health of an individual; environmental hazards; an impediment to or unlawful interference with investigations by law enforcement entities or the administration of justice by courts; financing of illegal activities; illegal or non-transparent use of public funds or assets; unlawfully acquired assets; concealment of the effects of a committed breach, obstruction of quantification of the effects; other breaches” can be reported.²¹ The reporting person is granted a status of a “Whistle-blower” and additional legal protection which is outlined in the law. Typically, information on the protection of whistle-blowers would be posted on the municipality’s website under the heading “Protection of Whistle-blowers” (*org. Pranešėjų apsauga*). It is stated that the confidentiality of the whistle-blower is assured upon the report. However, violations of the principles of equal opportunities in the context of work relations and cases of discrimination are not explicitly mentioned in the law or websites of municipalities.²² Therefore, it is not clear to a person searching for a reporting channel if “Whistle-blower protection” is applicable in cases of discrimination and whether it is safe for them to use this particular reporting channel.

It was also a common practice among municipalities which scored 0.5 for a reporting channel to have a separate article in Municipal Equal Opportunities Policy and Procedures for its Implementation (*org. Lygių galimybių politikos įgyvendinimo tvarkos aprašas*) document. The article would essentially state that any employee or person who has experienced discrimination at work or during the interview has the right to report the incident to the director of administration. Such an article was of course recognized as an indication of the existence of a reporting channel. However, the article provided no information in regards to the functioning of the channel, namely, how the person is supposed to deliver the report (via email, in writing or by phone). There was no contact information or any other details about what would follow the submission of the report. The absence of this information makes such a reporting channel practically unusable.

As can be seen in Annex 1, only 4 out of 60 municipalities scored 1 point and provided information on specific equal opportunities and discrimination-oriented reporting channels that are publicly available. A good example can be found in the Akmenė d. municipality. The website of this municipality has a separate section called the “Policy of Equal Opportunities” where, in addition to other measures such as a special Equal Opportunities Plan for 2022-

²¹ Republic of Lithuania Law on the Protection of Whistleblowers, 28 November 2017, No XIII-804. Valid consolidated version 15 February 2022. Available at: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/267de1c2a9b911eb98ccba226c8a14d7?jfwid=upva3wpme> Accessed 12 September 2022.

²² A member of the research team has reached out to Prosecutor General's Office, which has confirmed that the Whistle-blower Protection law does indeed apply in cases of equal opportunities violations or discrimination in the workplace in municipal administrations.

2023, information on discrimination reporting is provided. “Employees of the Akmenė District Municipality Administration who have experienced discrimination at work or during job <...> have the right to contact the Director of Administration directly, or to report discrimination through the Administration’s internal channel for providing information about violations pranesimas@akmene.lt”. It is clearly stated that this channel is intended for persons who are or were related to the municipal Administration by service or employment or contractual relationship and that the reporter is assured confidentiality unless there is a case of exception established by law.

A separate commentary has to be provided regarding the Kaunas c. municipality which scored 0.5 points for the reporting channel. One of the measures in the municipality’s Equality Plan is related to the establishment of a reporting channel in the form of a physical box. Two relevant measures are “To install an anonymous reporting box on the first floor of the municipality” as well as to “Establish a commission that will evaluate written complaints and reports and forward them to the responsible persons”. Both had to be fulfilled by 01 July 2020. The expected result of these measures, as provided in the plan, is an “Opportunity for employees to report cases of discrimination, sexual harassment and other harassment at work”. While the information was scarce on the (un)successful implementation of these measures, the full point could not be awarded.

Overall, the number of Lithuanian municipalities which have a specific discrimination reporting channel either in the form of an email, or phone number or physical form is astonishingly small. In most cases, such information is relatively hard to find; it is unclear or simply insufficient for the person to be able to use it. Even though most of the Lithuanian municipalities provide information about the general whistle-blower protection channels required by the national law, it does not substantially improve the situation because violations of equal opportunities, discrimination at work and other relevant violations and breaches are not mentioned in this law explicitly. It means the employee protection system against discrimination at work is not fully developed in municipalities yet, and it requires an effort by municipal decision-makers to ensure that such channels are in place; they are easily accessible for everyone, confidential and employees are aware of them.

DESIGNATED EMPLOYEE OR DEPARTMENT IN THE MUNICIPALITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

This part of the section will look in detail at whether there is a designated employee(s) or department(s) in the municipalities for the implementation of equal opportunities and how this information is presented publicly. The analysis showed that there are a variety of ways municipalities deal with this issue. In case there is a designated employee or department/team in the municipality, and it is clearly stated publicly, 1 point was given to the municipality;

in case there is such an employee or department/team in the municipality, but they are responsible only for part of the activities related to ensuring equal opportunities or the information is not clear enough – 0.5 points were awarded; if there is no such specific position in the municipality, the municipality was given no points.

As provided in Annex 1, almost half of the researched Lithuanian municipalities (29 in total) do indeed claim to have a designated person/department who is fully or at least in part responsible for ensuring equal opportunities on a municipal level, and half of them do not hold such a position. However, the in-depth analysis demonstrated that ensuring equal opportunities is often assigned only as one of the responsibilities of the employee, indicating the peripheral role of equality and diversity principles. For example, Pasvalys d. municipality has assigned the role of “coordinating the implementation of measures of equal opportunities in the municipality” to an employee who is also responsible for numerous other roles, unrelated to equality and diversity management. A similar situation is observed when a whole department is made responsible for organising “the preparation, approval and implementation of measures aimed at ensuring equal opportunities regardless of gender, race, nationality, citizenship, language, origin, social status, faith, beliefs or views, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, religion”, as is the case Prienai d. municipality’s, Department of Social Support (*org. Socialinės paramos skyrius*).

Overall, the situation where appointees for ensuring principles of equal opportunities were also responsible for other types of activities was largely observed throughout municipalities. However, publicly available information was scarce on whether these persons/departments were fully or partly responsible for these activities (e.g., for monitoring). Formulations provided on websites or persons’ job descriptions were rather incomplete and of a general nature. It is therefore recommended to provide clearer descriptions of responsibilities in ensuring equal opportunities as well as to make sure that employees appointed with this task do prioritise it and possess adequate knowledge of equality and diversity management.

D. OPEN DATA ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The last section of the analysis is dedicated to an overview of the availability of data published by Lithuanian municipalities on the topic of equal opportunities and non-discrimination. There is no formal requirement for municipalities to publish such information; however, its existence demonstrates some degree of commitment of the municipality to ensure equal opportunities as well as a proactive stance in tracking the situation and identifying challenges. Since publishing statistical data does not necessarily imply any further action in ensuring equal opportunities, no points were awarded for these questions but only indicating words “yes” in cases when information is publicly available and “no” when information is unavailable or not published. This section is based on the results of the following questions

of the analysis template (see Annex 1, numeration of the questions below is the same as in Annex 1):

Q11. Does the municipality publish the number of women working in the institution?

Q12. Does the municipality publish the number of men working in the institution?

Q13. Does the municipality publish the percentages of women and men holding managerial positions in the institution?

Q14. Does the municipality publish the number of men on parental leave?

Q15. Does the municipality publish the number of women on parental leave?

Q16. Does the municipality publish information on whether there is a children's room or childcare facilities for employees in the institution?

Q17. Does the municipality publish information on whether there is an employee or department appointed in the institution, responsible for the implementation of gender equality or equal opportunities?

Q18. Does the municipality publish the number of men and women working in the institution by age?

Q11 and Q12 are arguably the most relevant to the research as they could be important indicators of structural issues in ensuring equal opportunities in municipal administrations. Significant gender disparities among the staff of the municipality may indicate systemic biases in the selection and employment processes or the existence of unequal working conditions which make certain positions more favourable for a specific gender. It is important to note that the number of working men and women is in no way a determining factor of whether the municipality administration is experiencing issues in ensuring equal opportunities. It is, however, an important first step when trying to analyse and evaluate the situation overall. For that reason, it is regrettable that only 28 out of 60 municipalities publish such aggregated data. It is, however, not always clear why municipalities choose not to provide such information. In most cases, it is likely to be simple administrative inaction. In one case, the municipality has contested the necessity of such information. The municipality claimed that it is possible to count the number of men and women working in the administration by looking into the contact section of employees and their names. Such remarks may indicate a lack of understanding of the relevance of aggregated data or an unwillingness to tackle the issues related to gender equality in the administration. On a more positive note, it should be mentioned that among those municipalities that publish information about the number of men and women, the majority also differentiate it by age, meaning that it is possible to see how many men and women in different age groups work in the administration. This was the case in 19 municipalities (see Q18 in Annex 1).

Q13 may point even to more serious equality-related issues since it provides information on gender balance among the managerial or leadership roles in the administration. An even lower number of municipalities publish this kind of information. Only 22 out of 60 Lithuanian municipalities publish the number of men and women occupying managerial positions. Q15 and Q16 may seem of limited relevance but in fact, they could indicate the existence of gender stereotypes in the workplace. Most of the Lithuanian municipalities chose not to publish aggregated data about their staff on parental leave. But among 17 municipalities which publish such information, there was not reported a single man on parental leave. Publishing such information is crucial as it allows to formulate other important questions, such as why men in municipalities tend not to use their right to parental leave. This could be due to the particular attitude of the colleagues at the workplace or certain views of the management which results in men being hesitant to use their right to parental leave. Whatever the reason is, it should be addressed, since the right to parental leave is universal. Without publishing information and statistics on the use of this right, it is simply unlikely that potential issues will be identified and addressed properly.

Just 3 municipalities publish information on the availability of kindergarten or children's rooms in the municipal administration. As in previous cases, publishing such information is not required by law but could be quite important for prospective workers with families. The results in Q17 about the designated person or department responsible for the equal opportunities are fully correlating with Q10 analysed in the previous section and thus do not require additional commentary.

IMPACT AND CHANGE

The most promising part of the research and information gathered is the progress that was observed during the months of collecting data. Since the collection of data was comprised of several stages and included close cooperation with municipalities (a detailed description of this process can be found in the methodology section), the research team kept track of changes (e.g., new information, documents or data published on websites of municipalities) which took place after the first information about the ongoing research was communicated to the municipalities.

Speaking generally, it is possible to conclude that the communication of the research team was effective. Out of 60 municipalities, 41 have responded and confirmed the information of the collected data or provided additional documents or data. It means that Lithuanian municipalities were largely aware of the research and understood its relevance.²¹ municipalities have responded proactively to the communication of the research team and have updated their websites with new information and documents. This ranged from publishing more detailed statistics to creating separate "equal opportunities" sections on the websites and

publishing all relevant documents which the research team or interested people could not access online before. It is a particularly positive fact which means that, although there is a lot of space for improvement in ensuring equal opportunities, municipalities do recognize the importance of this topic and are willing to take appropriate measures to improve the situation. A special mention is deserved by Akmenė District Municipality which has taken into account the comments provided in the preliminary evaluation sheets and during the implementation of the study has drafted and adopted a new document – Municipal Plans for Ensuring Equal Opportunities.²³

²³ Akmenė District Municipality Administration Equal Opportunities Action Plan 2022-2023 (org. Akmenės rajono savivaldybės administracijos lygių galimybių 2022-2023 metų veiksmų planas) Available at: https://www.akmene.lt/data/public/uploads/2022/09/lygiu_galimybiu_veiksmu_planas_a-429_2022-09-19.pdf Accessed 12 September 2022.

II. Analysis of the 20 biggest enterprises working in Lithuania

Analysis of equal opportunities policies of the 20 biggest enterprises working in Lithuania was conducted by adopting the questionnaire for municipalities to be suitable for private sector, less focused on documentation but rather on publicly declared commitment and actions of the enterprises, as well as evaluating the availability of statistical data on the topic of diversity among employees (see Annex 2). Similarly, as in the questionnaire for municipalities, for each question enterprises were awarded: 0 points if no relevant information was found, 0.5 if information was partially relevant or fulfilled only part of the evaluation criteria of the question, and 1 point when information fulfilled all evaluation criteria of the question and could be presented as a good example. Specific evaluation criteria for each question corresponding to the points 1, 0.5 and 0 can be found next to each of the questions in Annex 2. The analysis of the equal opportunities policies among enterprises is structured in to 4 sections: regulation and stance on equal opportunities, analysis and monitoring of equal opportunities, employee protection and discrimination reporting, open data on equal opportunities.

A. REGULATION AND STANCE ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The first section of the state-of-the-art analysis of the biggest 20 enterprises working in Lithuania aims to provide an overview of how the enterprises regulate ensuring equal opportunities at the workplace and assess whether there is a declared commitment for this goal. This section is based on the results of the following questions of the analysis template (see Annex 2, numeration of the questions below is same as in Annex 2):

Q1. Is there a position published on a website of the enterprise that it commits to the principles of equal opportunities at work?

Q2. Does the enterprise publish the document on how it ensures equal opportunities internally?

Q4. Are there any objectives set in the document for ensuring equal opportunities?

Q5. Does the enterprise's document/plan for ensuring equal opportunities provide for what kind of change is to be achieved through the measures?

Q6. Are there any measures set in the enterprise's document/plan for ensuring equal opportunities that will be used to achieve the set goals?

16 out of 20 biggest enterprises working in Lithuania publicly declare commitment to ensuring equal opportunities (see Q1 in Annex 2) which suggests that equal opportunities are already perceived as an integral part of corporate social responsibility.

However, when it comes to concrete actions and measures, there is room for improvement. Lack of publicly available information on how enterprises ensure equal opportunities at work was a key challenge for the research. The average evaluation of enterprises according to the Annex 2 is slightly higher than 4 points out of 13 possible. It is important to note that the enterprises are not legally required to publish information regarding equal opportunities thus the low average score indicates lack of public information but does not necessarily reflect the real situation.²⁴ Nevertheless, the lack of publicity regarding the implemented measures and diversity management at the biggest enterprises working in Lithuania sets an example that might discourage the private sector from addressing equal opportunities in a public and transparent manner. It is regrettable that only 9 enterprises publish documents including descriptions of concrete initiatives aimed at ensuring equal opportunities (see Q2 in Annex 2). 5 more enterprises publish documents outlining the basic principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunities at work but do not envisage concrete actions or enforcement measures of such principles. 6 of the biggest enterprises working in Lithuania do not have any public document which would have “equal opportunities” mentioned in any context.

Similarly, as municipalities, Lithuanian enterprises struggle to define what ensuring equal opportunities means in practice and, therefore, rarely set specific measurable objectives. Only 3 enterprises have set such objectives and scored 1 point (see Q4 in Annex 2). For example, AB Telia Lietuva has set the following objectives/priorities: “100% – equal opportunities and friendly to life; 50/50 – equal gender representation at all job levels; 0% – no gender pay gap and zero discrimination and harassment.” Although it is questionable to what extent the meaning of the first objective is clear and measurable, the remaining two make it very clear what the company aims to achieve. UAB Ignitis²⁵ has set objectives such as “5% improvement in the gender balance in engineering and IT positions and 5% increase in the gender balance in managerial positions by increasing the balance of applicants for these positions”. Similarly, these objectives are specific and measurable, therefore, achievable. This was not the case for the remaining 9 enterprises which scored 0.5 for Q4. Their objectives were either too abstract or unmeasurable and thus did not substantially differ from a general declaration of commitment to the principle of equal opportunities which had already been assessed in

24 According to Article 26(6) of the Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania, “An employer with an average number of employees of more than fifty shall adopt and publish, in the usual manner in the workplace, measures for the implementation of the equal opportunities policy and for the supervision of the implementation of the enforcement of the equal opportunities policy.” In this case, “in the usual manner in the workplace” includes internal means of communication with employees, such as the enterprise’s intranet. Therefore, although all of the 20 enterprises analysed are subject to the obligation to publish information on the measures implemented, it does not necessarily have to be made publicly available on their websites.

25 Here and later on, everything that is stated about UAB Ignitis applies to AB ESO as well since these two companies are owned and managed by the same parent company AB Ignitis Group.

Q1. 8 of the biggest enterprises working in Lithuania do not publish any objectives related to ensuring or promoting equal opportunities at work. Ability to set concrete objectives appeared to be closely linked to the ability to envisage concrete changes (see Q5 in Annex 2). The only enterprises which envisage a concrete change are the same ones which have set the concrete objectives and scored 1 point in Q4.

Just half of the biggest enterprises working in Lithuania provide public information about implemented measures ensuring equal opportunities (see Q6 in Annex 2). Unfortunately, out of these enterprises, no one scored 1 point. The main requirement to score the full point in Q6 was that “there are specific measures set in the document and it is clear as to what issue is intended to be tackled”. It was observed that this requirement was often not fulfilled due to the following reasons:

- 1) It was not clear which specific issue a given measure is going to tackle. For example, a number of enterprises indicated that they conduct an annual anonymous survey where employees can express their opinion and point out issues related to ensuring equal opportunities. There was no information of how the results of such surveys will be used and how it will contribute to any kind of improvement in ensuring equal opportunities.
- 2) The measures indicated by enterprises were too abstract. This was the case when enterprises confused implementing measures with principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunities. As it was previously pointed out, declaration of principles is an indicator of commitment but not of concrete actions or implementing measures.
- 3) Measures were concrete and tackling specific issues but not targeting employees of the enterprise: in other words, measures were of an external nature. This was the case of several enterprises which indicated participation in the project “Women Go Tech” (a mentoring program in Lithuania dedicated to helping women start and accelerate their careers in IT and engineering) as a measure. This is an undoubtedly meaningful initiative that breaks down gender stereotypes in society but does not have a direct impact on the employees of the participating enterprise since all the mentees in this project are external. Therefore, such measures are simply out of the scope of this research. Specific measures ensuring equal opportunities thus remain the weakest point of enterprises working in Lithuania. It is the only case where there was no “good example” and no enterprise was awarded with 1 point.

B. ANALYSIS AND MONITORING OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The second section of the analysis aims to assess whether the biggest enterprises working in Lithuania do conduct and publish any internal research or situation analysis of equal opportunities and if there are monitoring mechanisms ensuring quality and regularity of

implemented measures. Since there is no legal obligation for enterprises to publish such information, the following assessment is indicative of transparency in communicating about equal opportunities but does not necessarily reflect the complete state of affairs at the enterprises. This section is based on the results of the following questions of the analysis template (see Annex 2, numeration of the questions below is same the as in Annex 2):

Q3. Does the enterprise publish an internal situation analysis of equal opportunities?

Q7. Is there a regular monitoring of measures set in the enterprise's document/plan for ensuring equal opportunities?

The 7 biggest enterprises working in Lithuania set a positive example for the Lithuanian private sector by choosing to openly communicate about and provide information on the current state of equal opportunities in the workplace. Such information was usually a part of the enterprise's annual/bi-annual/quarterly report and included into the "corporate responsibility" section. The information provided, however, was usually focused mainly on statistical data and/or positive achievements. 6 out of 7 enterprises thus scored 0.5, see Q3 in Annex 2. Part of the firms published just employee statistics such as the number of men and women occupying different positions in the enterprises, another part of the enterprises elaborated on the positive dynamics and increasing diversity among the employees. What was missing, however, is the information about the challenges the enterprises were facing and areas where there was a need for improvement. For example, AB Telia (which was the only firm to score 1 point in Q3) has published an article where it has indicated "unconscious bias" as the main challenge when ensuring equal opportunities.²⁶ Such information is crucial for the design of targeted and effective measures ensuring equal opportunities at specific enterprises. Communicating publicly about the challenges or at least areas of improvement is also arguably the highest standard of transparency and corporate responsibility for an enterprise.

The same number of enterprises (although, different ones), 7 out of 20, provide public information about monitoring mechanisms (see Q7 in Annex 2). It means that those enterprises track the progress or effectiveness of the implemented measures ensuring equal opportunities. It is worth noting that the quality or regularity of the monitoring in most cases could not be assessed due to lack of information. When it was impossible to determine how frequently monitoring takes place, who is responsible for it or if monitoring results were not published, only 0.5 points were awarded. The two good examples were UAB Ignitis and AB ESO which have indicated that monitoring is carried out and published quarterly in the interim reports, as well as in the annual reports (the reports are publicly available online).

²⁶ Telia Lietuva, Diversity at work is about thinking, not just gender or nationality (org. įvairové darbe yra mąstymas, ne tik lytis ar tautybė). Retrieved 18 September 2022, from https://www.vz.lt/tvarus-verslas/2021/12/29/telia-ivairove-darbe-yra-masty-mas-ne-tik-lytis-ar-tautybe?fbclid=IwAR2LO6iikm8DP15aUQDuiay4JXy9ZXgsuF8vLoQdtKUeBP1L5uuhtcsM_g

C. EMPLOYEE PROTECTION AND DISCRIMINATION REPORTING

The third section of the analysis aims to assess whether the biggest enterprises working in Lithuania do create and support a means of reporting cases of discrimination or other breaches of principles ensuring equal opportunities. The means of reporting in the scope of this research is understood as a confidential reporting channel and a designated employee or department which could effectively resolve reported incidents and take preventive actions. The existence of a proper reporting channel and a responsible person/department is usually even more important in the private sector than in a public one, since there are usually no legally binding standards of conduct set for the corporate officials, as it is the case with the public posts. This section is based on the results of the following questions of the analysis template (see Annex 2, numeration of the questions below is the same as in Annex 2):

Q8. Is there a reporting channel that employees can use if they experience discrimination at work or during job interviews?

Q9. Is there a designated employee or department responsible for the implementation of equal opportunities?

Currently 11 out of 20 analysed enterprises provide publicly available information about reporting channels (see Q8 in Annex 2). Since 7 out of these 11 enterprises have scored 1 point for the reporting channel, we can see that there is a common understanding in the private sector that an effective reporting channel has to guarantee confidentiality and be easily available for everyone. Ideally, the reporting channel should be made publicly available online. However, 9 of analysed enterprises do not publish such information which may result in people outside of the enterprises (for example, job applicants) being less willing or even unable to report cases of discrimination that may have occurred during the application process. A considerably smaller number of enterprises, 6 out of 20 (see Q9 in Annex 2), publish information about a designated department or an employee responsible for ensuring equal opportunities at the enterprises. Although this question is not particularly indicative of the true state of equal opportunities at work, it may point out potential difficulties in communication on related topics inside and outside the enterprises. If there is no information about a designated employee or a department, it is simply unclear where the questions, inquiries, reports or complaints about equal opportunities should be directed.

D. OPEN DATA ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The last section of the analysis provides an overview on which data is currently made public by the 20 biggest enterprises working in Lithuania. Unlike with municipalities, the choice to publish such information was considered to be an indicator of transparency and thus awarded with points. This section is based on the results of the following questions of the

analysis template (see Annex 2, numeration of the questions below is same the as in Annex 2):

Q10. Does the enterprise publish the number of men and women it employs?

Q11. Does the enterprise publish the percentages of women and men holding managerial positions?

Q12. Does the enterprise publish the number of women and men on parental leave?

Q13. Is there any other data related to promoting diversity in the organisation published on the website of the enterprise?

Out of 20 analysed enterprises 5 publish the number of men and women it employs (see Q10 in Annex 2). A similar number of enterprises, 6, publish the percentages of women and men holding managerial positions (see Q11 in Annex 2). 4 enterprises published information on both Q10 and Q11, while 1 enterprise published only information about managerial positions, and 2 enterprises published only the number of employees. Just 1 enterprise has published the number of women and men on parental leave (see Q12 in Annex 2), and 5 enterprises published other data related to diversity in the organisation (see Q13 in Annex 2). The other data usually included the number of employees by ethnicity or educational background. 13 out of 20 enterprises did not publish any information or statistics related to equal opportunities about their employees.

It should be mentioned that the research had generally a positive effect on the availability of the information regarding equal opportunities in the biggest enterprises working in Lithuania. Out of 20 enterprises, 12 have contacted the research team and provided additional information.²⁷ 4 out of these 12 enterprises even started publishing additional documents:

1. Telia Lietuva has started publishing its “Equal Opportunities Policy”.

2. SBA Home published an article “Equal Opportunities Situation in SBA Home” which included the number of men and women employed in the company, the percentage of men and women in management positions, the number of women and men on parental leave, the age distribution of employees and the number of foreign nationals working in the company. Information on the department responsible for equal opportunities and a reporting channel was also added.

3. LTG Cargo started publishing an Equal Opportunities Policy document. It included measures to ensure equal opportunities, information about the reporting channel, department responsible for implementing equal opportunities and monitoring of the Equal Opportunities Policy document.

4. NEO Group has made the document “Equal Opportunities Policy of NEO GROUP UAB and the procedure for its implementation” publicly available.

²⁷ Rimi Lietuva, Telia Lietuva, SBA Home, LTG Cargo, Ignitis, ESO, Thermo Fisher Scientific Baltics, Lidl Lietuva, Viada LT, Maxima LT, NEO GROUP, Circle K Lietuva.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

The research has identified several main difficulties of municipalities and enterprises in communicating and publishing their equal opportunities policies. Among the municipalities, the main point of improvement should be a situation analysis and the ability to set concrete and measurable objectives. Those two steps are integral parts of an effective policy design and should be carried out before envisaging concrete measures. First, issues the municipal administration is facing in regard to ensuring equal opportunities should be identified followed by definition of concrete objectives and the changes the municipality aims to achieve. Setting specific measures to ensure equal opportunities should be a third step, and its quality largely depends on the first two steps. Providing publicly available situation analysis and defining changes to be brought about was also a major difficulty for the 20 biggest enterprises working in Lithuania. Additional attention should be given to the reporting channel both by municipalities and enterprises. Even though in most cases there is publicly available information about a reporting channel, it is often unclear whether it is confidential and whether it could be used to report cases of discrimination or breaches of principles equal opportunities at work. The following recommendations were proposed based on the results of the research.

3.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MUNICIPALITIES:

1. Carry out an analysis of the equal opportunities situation and publicise the results of the analysis, including equal opportunities challenges and issues relevant to the workplace. 2 out of 3 municipalities do not publish any information on the equal opportunities situation within their own municipalities, and only 1 out of 10 presents equal opportunities challenges in the workplace.
2. Clearly identify and publish what change is being sought in the field of equal opportunities. Only 2 municipalities in Lithuania are currently announcing a change. Only 1 in 3 municipalities has an objective directly related to equal opportunities, and only 1 in 10 has an objective linked to the published measures.
3. Ensure safe reporting of equal opportunities violations in the workplace and provide clear information about confidentiality and purpose of any reporting channel in use. 9 out of 10 municipalities in Lithuania announce the possibility to report, but only 1 out of 10 indicate the extent to which these channels are safe and appropriate.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENTERPRISES:

1. Conduct an internal analysis of equal opportunities issues relevant to the workplace and publish the results. 2 out of the 3 largest companies do not publish any information on the equal opportunities' situation and only 1 in 20 disclose equal opportunities challenges in the workplace.
2. Publish what change is being made in the area of employee diversity and inclusion. Only 15% of the largest Lithuanian companies announce the change they want to bring about, but none indicate exactly how they will achieve it.
3. Ensure safe and confidential reporting of equal opportunities violations in the workplace. Although 11 out of 20 companies currently have a reporting channel, only one in three companies report on its security and purpose.

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