



**OPENING DOORS
FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN**

WWW.OPENDINGDOORS.EU

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

LITHUANIA



2018 COUNTRY FACT SHEET

In 2014, Lithuania adopted a seven-year Action Plan for the transition from institutional care to family- and community-based services for people with disabilities and children deprived of parental care. A comprehensive reform of the child protection system is currently being implemented within its framework. Initiated by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour under the slogan “Family – for children, community-based services – for persons with disabilities”, the institutional care reform (also known as Reformation or Pertvarka) has a clear focus on prevention of children and people with disabilities entering institutional care. After the first phase of the reform which focused on the restructuring as well as increasing availability and accessibility of services, the reform entered a second phase in mid-2018, focusing on the development of regional infrastructure for family- and community-based services. Consequently, the Lithuanian government has established the Child Protection and Adoption Department under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, integrating regional child protection agencies under its umbrella. Thanks to the centralisation, the government has also created a case management service to identify the child protection issues and address them in an efficient way.

The majority of children enter alternative care in Lithuania due to potential harm caused by child abuse and neglect (1,894 out of 2,524 cases in 2018). Since the introduction of a new child protection system, 524 children entered care in June 2018 and 569 in August 2018.

The number of institutions for children have decreased from 96 in 2017 to 90 in 2018, while the number of institutions for children with disabilities remain the same (four). At the same time, the number of children in these institutions has significantly decreased: >>

KEY RECOMMENDATION TO THE EU



THE EU SHOULD PROMOTE AND INVEST IN EARLY PREVENTION AND FAMILY STRENGTHENING SERVICES IN ORDER TO AVOID THE FAMILY BREAKDOWN

During the current funding period, €76 million of structural funds have been allocated for the transition from institutional to community-based care in Lithuania. Out of €76 million, €38 million have been allocated for the development, piloting and implementation of the new social services; the remaining amount is used towards the development of infrastructure. Most recently, €14 million have been allocated to the municipalities across Lithuania to strengthen the role of small group homes and day care centers for children.

Despite strong commitment and active engagement of the Lithuanian government in deinstitutionalisation reform which makes feasible progress nationwide, the lack of continuity measures in the projects planning presents a challenge to developing a well-functioning and sustainable network of services in some regions.

>> from 460 in 2016 to 165 in 2017. Children under the age of 3 are placed directly in professional foster care. This form of alternative care has been finally recognised by Lithuanian legislation in March 2018. According to the new law, each municipality in Lithuania has now the duty to develop a network of care centres responsible for recruitment, training and support of professional foster carers. In addition, small group home projects are piloted nationwide and have proved so far to be an effective measure to organised care provision.

KEY RECOMMENDATION TO THE MEMBER STATE



TAKE ACTION TO DEVELOP THE NETWORK OF PROFESSIONAL FOSTER CARE FOR CHILDREN IN LONG TERM CARE, THE LEAVING CARE SYSTEM TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE AND AN EFFECTIVE FAMILY-ORIENTED SYSTEM OF PREVENTION SERVICES IN LITHUANIA

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LITHUANIAN GOVERNMENT:

- **THE NETWORK OF PROFESSIONAL FOSTER CARE FOR CHILDREN IN LONG TERM CARE SHOULD BE DEVELOPED AND POLICIES/LEGAL FRAMEWORK TO REGULATE THIS AREA CONFIRMED. FOSTER CARE SHOULD BE CATEGORIZED ACCORDING TO INDIVIDUAL NEEDS OF THE CHILD AND SPECIFIC ISSUES CHILDREN FACE (SEXUAL ABUSE, SUBSTANCE MISUSE, DISABILITIES, ETC)**
- **THE LEAVING CARE SYSTEM TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE SHOULD BE DEVELOPED AND RECOGNIZED BY THE LAW**
- **AN EFFECTIVE FAMILY-ORIENTED PREVENTION SERVICES SHOULD BE ELABORATED AND DEVELOPED IN LITHUANIA**

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EU:

- **THE EU SHOULD PROMOTE AND INVEST IN EARLY PREVENTION AND FAMILY STRENGTHENING SERVICES IN ORDER TO AVOID THE FAMILY BREAKDOWN**
- **THE EU SHOULD PROMOTE AND INVEST IN COMPREHENSIVE DEINSTITUTIONALISATION STRATEGIES WHICH ENSURE A FULL RANGE OF QUALITY CARE OPTIONS FOR CHILDREN WITHOUT PARENTAL CARE**
- **THE EU SHOULD PROMOTE AND INVEST IN A STRATEGY TO SUPPORT YOUNG CARE LEAVERS WHEN THEY LEAVE OR AGE OUT OF CARE**



SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES LITHUANIA

OPENING DOORS NATIONAL COORDINATOR IN LITHUANIA

SOS Children's Villages Lithuania is a member of the international association SOS Children's Villages International. In 1991 SOS Children's Villages first started to work in Lithuania to respond to the needs of children without or at risk of losing parental care. Currently the organization is providing a wide spectrum of social services for children in families at risk, day care centers, different types of care: family based care, community based care, professional foster care, youth care. To find out more visit www.sos-vaikukaimai.lt

The Opening Doors for Europe's Children campaign supports national efforts to develop child protection systems that strengthen families and ensure high-quality family and community-based alternative care for children, by leveraging EU funding and policy and building capacity in civil society.

It is a partnership between 5 international organisations and civil society across 16 European countries. For more information go to www.openingdoors.eu