

**REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA**  
**LAW ON STRENGTHENING OF THE FAMILY**

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Vilnius

**PREAMBLE**

The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania,  
recognising that the basis of the family is the free decision of a man and a woman to assume family-specific moral and legal duties as well as the relationship between the next of kin;  
recognising that the rights and duties linking family members are inherent;  
agreeing with the provision of the Convention on the Rights of the Child that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding;  
respecting and observing the constitutional provision that the family is the basis of society and the State;  
emphasising that the complementarity between a man and a woman is the basis for the development of the family as a primary and natural society and the most favourable environment for the growth, development and education of a child;  
appreciating and respecting the decision of citizens to start a family or choose a different lifestyle;  
seeking to implement the provision regarding the comprehensive protection of motherhood, fatherhood and childhood,  
passes this Law.

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**GENERAL PROVISIONS**

**Article 1. Objective of the Law**

The objective of this Law shall be to create legal and organizational prerequisites for strengthening the family institution, to consolidate institutions ensuring the implementation of family policy, to define their main functions and to provide for the organisation of the strengthening of the family through the system of shaping and implementation of family policy.

## **Article 2. Definitions**

1. **‘Basic package of services for the family’** means a set of services for building and maintaining psychosocial and social skills, for child’s care and development, health, education and socio-cultural services that ensure the necessary assistance in strengthening the family’s ability to independently deal with the arising challenges and in enabling them to create a safe, healthy and sustainable environment for their families.

2. **‘An organisation working with families’** means a legal person one of the goals of which is to organise and carry out work with families.

3. **‘Family policy’** means determination and implementation of the principles and development directions of state management, its goals and tasks in order to create the necessary legal, social, economic, cultural and other conditions that strengthen the family, promote its stability and full functioning.

4. **‘Strengthening of the family’** means a targeted activity aimed at creating legal, social, economic, cultural and other conditions that encourage individuals to create, nurture and preserve a harmonious family as a primary and natural society and the most favourable environment for the growth, development and education of a child, ensuring vitality and historical survival of the State of Lithuania and its nation.

5. **‘Organisation of families’** means a public-benefit non-governmental organisation or a national umbrella non-governmental organisation whose primary objective is to represent families in protecting the legitimate interests of families and to create a family-friendly environment.

## **Article 3. Principles of implementation of the strengthening of the family**

The main principles of the implementation of the strengthening of the family shall be as follows:

1) subsidiarity – the full functioning of the family is primarily the responsibility of the family itself. If the family itself cannot ensure the full functioning of the family, the State shall provide it with assistance and support in a way that is the most effective;

2) expediency – assistance and support to the family are provided in a targeted manner, taking account of its needs and encouraging efforts of the family to act independently;

3) inviolability of private life – when implementing measures for strengthening the family and providing assistance and support to the family, it is ensured that the family will not be exposed to unlawful, unnecessary and disproportionate interference with its private life, and information about its private life will not be disclosed to third parties;

4) complementarity of paternity and maternity – when providing assistance and support to the family, account must be taken of the child's natural need to have the father/adoptive father and the mother/adoptive mother;

5) participation – family-related issues are dealt with in co-operation with families and in combination with representatives of organisations of families;

6) solidarity – the strengthening of the family is implemented and support and assistance to the family are provided by combining the efforts of the State and society and all their links;

7) complexity – assistance and support provided to the family cover all functions performed by the family that ensure the material, social and spiritual welfare of the family;

8) parents' rights to educate children according to their convictions – parents and guardians take care of the religious and moral education of children and foster children, choose the form of education of children and foster children according to their own convictions, provided that this is not in conflict with the legitimate interests of the child;

9) priority of the legitimate interests of the child – when making decisions or taking any actions related to support or assistance to the family, account is taken of the legitimate interests of the child.

#### **Article 4. General provisions of the strengthening of the family**

State and municipal institutions must, within their remit:

1) ensure the conditions for the full functioning of families through the implementation of procreative, educational and socialisation, social, spiritual, generational change, economic functions of the family;

2) ensure the conditions for responsible paternity and maternity, respect for life and human dignity at any stage of his life;

3) strengthen the positive attitude of society towards the family;

4) strengthen the assistance and support of the State to the family;

5) create a family-friendly environment that includes the areas of culture, education, ensuring the development and security of children, employment, creating a favourable living environment, social support and services, and health which directly or indirectly affect the family;

6) strengthen the deterrence and prevention of the destructive behaviour of the family members, i.e. alcohol abuse, drug use, violence, coercion;

7) guarantee support and assistance to families affected by the emergency situation due to the disabled family members, social exclusion or lack of social skills.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **AREAS OF AND MEASURES FOR STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY**

#### **Article 5. Areas of strengthening the family**

1. In order to reduce the emotional, social and financial loss to society caused by the demographic crisis and breaking-up of families, state and municipal institutions shall implement the strengthening of the family in the areas provided for in paragraph 2 of this Article through the involvement of organisations of families and organisations working with families.

2. State and municipal institutions shall:

1) in the area of education and culture – take measures to help a family to prepare children and young people for independent living, to create a functional and harmonious family, to develop mature, moral, independent, responsible personalities able to co-operate and develop their own and community life;

2) in the area of ensuring material security – in order to enable families to receive sufficient income, develop flexible forms of employment that help to reconcile professional interests with family responsibilities, create favourable conditions for family business, design a favourable fiscal and social security framework for families with three or more children, provide support for families who have adopted one or more children and for families whose income is not sufficient to cover their subsistence needs;

3) in the area of housing and family-friendly living environment – with the aim of encouraging young people to start a family and raise children, lay down conditions for families entitled to housing support to receive compensation for part of a home-rental payment or a housing credit, create a family-friendly living environment;

4) in the area of social assistance and family services – ensure opportunities for families to receive necessary assistance in strengthening the family's ability to independently deal with the arising challenges and in enabling them to create a safe, healthy and sustainable environment for their families. The state and municipal institutions shall create conditions for adult family members caring for disabled children and elderly family members to combine family and work commitments. They shall help victims of violence and ensure the prevention of violence and coercion;

5) in the area of family health – strengthen the health of family members by implementing a family-friendly health policy, encouraging family members to actively promote family health. The state and municipal institutions shall take measures to help family members to undergo treatment for alcoholism, drug addiction and other addictions;

6) in the area of strengthening of the security of a child in the family and parental responsibility for the implementation of the rights and legitimate interests of the child – create favourable conditions for children to grow in the family by providing appropriate support and assistance to families and children.

#### **Article 6. Measures for strengthening the family**

1. With a view to implementing the areas of strengthening the family, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter: the ‘Government’) shall develop a long-term programme for strengthening the family, which provides for measures that ensure the following possibilities:

1) for families to receive the necessary comprehensive assistance with a view to strengthening the family’s ability to independently solve their social problems, motivation to create a safe, healthy and sustainable environment for their family. Particular attention shall be paid to families with disabled children or children with special needs – such families shall be guaranteed inter-institutional support and assistance for raising children and the necessary services for looking after family members with disabilities;

2) for families experiencing social difficulties and single parents to receive comprehensive assistance as close as possible to their place of residence in order to enable family members to overcome the social difficulties, to combine family and work commitments, to consciously assume responsibility for their decisions and the development of their own lives. The services shall be provided attempting not to take over the tasks from the families or perform their functions;

3) to strengthen the health of the family members, with particular attention to the prevention of harmful habits;

4) to develop positive public attitudes towards the family as the basis of society and the State, to foster family values, to promote them through the mass media, during events or by any other means;

5) to enable spouses to use mediation services in resolving disputes concerning children or divorce;

6) to train professional marriage counsellors;

7) to carry out continuous monitoring and evaluation of the shaping and implementation of family policy.

2. The Government shall determine a basic package of services for the family the availability of which is guaranteed by all municipalities in their territories.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **SHAPING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF FAMILY POLICY**

#### **Article 7. Institutions, bodies and organisations shaping and implementing family policy**

1. The strengthening of the family shall be organised and implemented through an institutional framework for shaping and implementing family policy:

- 1) the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter: the ‘Seimas’);
- 2) the National Family Council;
- 3) the Government, ministries and other state institutions;
- 4) the Family Policy Commission;
- 5) municipal institutions and bodies;
- 6) municipal family councils.

2. Ensuring the implementation of family policy, the institutions specified in paragraph 1 of this Article must co-operate with each other.

3. Non-governmental organisations shall participate in the implementation of family policy by representing families, providing services to them or participating in the creation of family-friendly environment.

4. State and municipal institutions and bodies shall encourage and promote activities of non-governmental organisations, including traditional religious communities and associations of Lithuania, in the area of strengthening of the family.

#### **Article 8. Remit of the Seimas in the field of family policy**

The Seimas:

- 1) shall define strategic family policy guidelines, consider and submit proposals regarding the shaping of family policy, adopt laws and other legal acts regulating family policy, exercise parliamentary scrutiny of the implementation thereof;
- 2) shall form the National Family Council and approve its regulations;
- 3) may apply to the National Family Council for assessment of the effect of envisaged legal regulation on the family or the monitoring of legal regulation established in legal acts.

#### **Article 9. National Family Council**

1. The National Family Council shall be an advisory body for the assessment of the shaping and implementation of family policy that functions on a voluntary basis and consists of representatives of municipal family councils, higher education and research institutions,

organisations of families and organisations working with families. If necessary, the National Family Council may invite representatives of other institutions, non-governmental organisations as well as independent experts to attend its meetings.

2. The National Family Council shall participate in shaping family policy and defining strategic family policy guidelines and family strengthening priorities, liaise with Lithuanian families, organisations of families and organisations working with families, analyse their expectations, provide conclusions and proposals to the Seimas and the Government on the implementation of family policy.

3. The National Family Council shall prepare and, annually but not later than 1 May, present a report on the family status and the situation of the shaping and implementation of family policy at the plenary sitting of the Seimas.

4. The National Family Council shall, upon request of the Seimas or on its own initiative, assess the effect of envisaged legal regulation on the family or perform the monitoring of legal regulation established in legal acts.

#### **Article 10. Remit of the Government in the field of family policy**

The Government shall:

1) ensure the implementation of family policy, co-ordinate the activities of ministries and government agencies in the implementation of laws and other legal acts regulating family policy, take into account the conclusions and proposals of the National Family Council when performing the said functions;

2) define family strengthening priorities in strategic planning documents;

3) submit draft legal acts regulating family policy to the Seimas;

4) approve a long-term state programme for strengthening the family financed from state and municipal budgets and international programmes;

5) set up the Family Policy Commission and approve its regulations.

#### **Article 11. Family Policy Commission**

1. In order to ensure co-operation and co-ordination of the activities of state and municipal institutions that form family policy, the Family Policy Commission shall be set up. If necessary, the Family Policy Commission may invite representatives of the National Family Council, other institutions, non-governmental organisations and independent experts to attend its meetings.

2. The Family Policy Commission shall be composed of representatives authorised by ministries and other state institutions as well as representatives of the Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania.

3. The Family Policy Commission shall discuss drafts of the most important legal acts related to family policy, its shaping and implementation, and make recommendations to institutions, bodies and organisations that shape and implement family policy; the activities of the Family Policy Commission shall be based on the conclusions and proposals of the National Family Council on the implementation of family policy.

4. The Family Policy Commission shall prepare and present to the Government an annual review of the shaping and implementation of family policy.

**Article 12. Remit of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour in the field of family policy**

1. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour shall be responsible for the implementation of family policy.

2. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour shall:

- 1) shape family policy, organise, co-ordinate and control the implementation thereof;
- 2) provide for programmes for strengthening the family and their implementing measures in strategic planning documents;
- 3) encourage and support the activities of organisations of families and organisations working with families in accordance with the procedure laid down by legal acts;
- 4) gather, systematise, analyse, assess and publish information on family policy issues.

**Article 13. General remit of ministries and other state institutions in the field of family policy**

1. Other ministries shall:

- 1) participate in shaping family policy in the fields of management assigned to them;
- 2) provide for programmes for strengthening the family and their implementing measures in strategic planning documents in their respective fields of activity;
- 3) gather, systematise, analyse and publish information on issues of the implementation of family policy in their respective fields of activity.

2. Other state institutions shall participate in shaping family policy by implementing general family strengthening provisions according to their respective areas of responsibility.



#### **Article 14. Remit of municipalities in the field of family policy**

1. The municipal council:
  - 1) shall define family strengthening priorities in the municipality;
  - 2) shall set up family committees or commissions;
  - 3) may form a municipal family council;
  - 4) shall provide for programmes and measures for strengthening the family in the municipality's strategic development plan and/or the municipality's strategic plan of activities;
  - 5) shall perform functions of family strengthening policy;
  - 6) shall encourage and support the activities of family organisations and organisations working with families.
2. Executive bodies of municipalities:
  - 1) gather, systematise, analyse and publish information on family situation in the appropriate municipality;
  - 2) perform other functions related to the strengthening of the family at municipal level.

#### **Article 15. Municipal family councils**

1. A municipality may set up an advisory body functioning on a voluntary basis – a municipal family council. The municipal family council shall be set up for the term of office of the municipal council. At least half of the members of the municipal family council shall be representatives of organisations of families and organisations working with families, while the remaining members of the said council shall be representatives of municipal institutions and bodies. The composition and regulations of the municipal family council shall be approved by the municipal council.
2. The municipal family council shall help to implement the municipal functions of strengthening the family and strengthen co-operation between municipal institutions or bodies and organisations of families and organisations working with families. The municipal family council shall analyse, monitor and assess the preparation and implementation of municipal legal acts affecting the situation of families in the municipality, submit proposals to the municipal council regarding the defining of municipal priorities concerning the strengthening of the family in the municipality and solving of the issues of relevance to families, and make proposals to municipal institutions and bodies regarding the improvement of the implementation of family strengthening actions in the municipality.
3. Families may unite into local family councils functioning on a voluntary basis in wards and elderships. Local family councils shall discuss issues of concern for families of a respective

locality, initiate activities relating to strengthening the family and make proposals to wardens, elders and municipal family councils.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINAL PROVISIONS**

#### **Article 16. Entry into force and implementation of the Law**

1. This Law, except for Article 6 and paragraphs 3 and 4 of this Article, shall enter into force on 1 March 2018.

2. Article 6 of this Law shall enter into force on 1 September 2018.

3. The Government shall adopt legal acts implementing this Law by 28 February 2018.

4. The Government shall, by 31 August 2018, approve a long-term programme for strengthening the family as specified in Article 6(1) of this Law and establish the basic package of services for the family referred to in Article 6(2) of this Law.

5. When drafting and implementing legal acts in the field of family policy, the Seimas and the Government shall act in compliance with the principles of implementation of the strengthening of the family as laid down in this Law as well as the general provisions of the strengthening of the family.

*I promulgate this Law passed by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania.*

President of the Republic

Dalia Grybauskaitė