**Information provided by the Republic of Lithuania to the UN Independent Expert’s on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity thematic report on the dynamics between sexual orientation, gender identity, and armed conflicts**

Lithuania is one of the 42 member states of the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC) dedicated to the protection of the rights of LGBTI persons. Member States provide leadership by actively engaging in thematic groups and commit to working closely with LGBTI civil society organisations who meet regularly as part of thematic group. In the event of unprovoked and unlawful Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine, Lithuania strongly supports ERC initiative to protect internally displaced LGBTI persons in Ukraine and those who fled the country. Lithuania engages in ERC initiatives to take extra efforts protecting LGBTI persons from acts of stigmatization, harassment and violence due to their vulnerability in armed conflicts all over the world. Thematic groups are gathered periodically focusing on a people-centered approach to understand LGBTI refugees and displaced persons needs as well as learning from people with lived experienced in armed conflicts.

Legislation governing military service, such as the Republic of Lithuania Law on the Organisation of the National Defence System and Military Service, the Statute of Military Service, the Statute of Military Discipline of the Lithuanian Armed Forces, the Military Code of Ethics, as well as legislation regulating industrial relations of employees and public servants, such as the Republic of Lithuania Law on the Civil Service, the Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania, the Internal Rules and Regulations of the Ministry National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, the Concept of the National Defence System HR Policy, embed the principle of equal treatment and highlight that relations are to be based on respect, equality, tolerance and discretion. Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania prohibits all grounds of discrimination including sexual orientation. Lithuania is a state party to major human rights treaties. A lot of attention is given to progress on the implementation of the recommendations addressed to Lithuania during the Universal Periodic Review and other United Nations human rights protection mechanisms.

Homosexual, bisexual and transgender people are admitted to service with the Lithuanian Armed Forces. There are equal requirements and criteria that women and men (military and civilians) have to meet to be employed or admitted to military service (physical fitness test requirements are adapted to men and women), to qualify for professional improvement, qualification training and retraining opportunities, to gain practical job experience, as well as to benefit from exemptions, or when assessed for professional achievements, being dismissed from the position or service, when rotated to a different service location (exemptions apply to expecting service members and to service members whose partners are expecting), being assigned a pay grade (bonuses and remunerations military service members are eligible for depend on their duties (e.g., bonuses for additional responsibility) or functions (e.g., service in barracks regimen, paradrops, explosive ordnance disposal tasks, etc.). Service exemptions apply to women in a period of time after giving birth and over the nursing period, such as, exemptions from duty assignments at their own request, etc.

In the event of violations of the code of ethics, discipline or other legal regulations, military and civilian personnel can address their higher chain of command, Inspectorate General of the Ministry of National Defence (hereinafter – MoD), Lithuanian Armed Forces Military Police, as well as other public law enforcement institutions. The Inspectorate General is directly subordinate to the Minister of National Defence, one of its functions is protection of military personnel rights, investigate complaints presented by military service members (as well as assessment of cases presented anonymously). The Inspectorate General maintains a hotline, visits military units, hold meetings with conscripts of the Continuous Mandatory Initial Military Service and their superiors, carry out anonymous polls among Continuous Mandatory Initial Military Service conscripts, etc.

Military psychologists carry out activities concerning implementation of equal opportunities on a yearly basis. The corresponding activity in 2021 covered: lectures preventing psychological violence in the workplace (bullying, mobbing), published and circulated informational publications ‘Zero Violence Tolerance at the National Defence System’, ‘Sexual Violence against Women in Military Conflicts’ among military and civilian personnel. Informational publication ‘Signs of Workplace Psychological Violence and Mobbing’ is being developed currently. Courses about mobbing prevention are organized annually. For instance, the event in 2022 came under a title ‘What is Mobbing: Perception, Reasons, Consequences, Intervention’.