**Responses by the Republic of Lithuania to the questionnaire of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation**

1. **Please present examples of good or promising practices that highlight how transboundary cooperation can support the realization of human rights to water and sanitation.**

In Lithuania, Law on Equal Opportunities provides that all legal acts must set non-discriminatory provisions. The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania states that “All persons shall be equal before the law, the court, and other State institutions and officials. The rights of the human being may not be restricted, nor may he be granted any privileges on the ground of gender, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, belief, convictions, or views (Art. 29). Lithuania has no discrimination cases related to water; everyone is entitled to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible, and affordable water for personal and domestic use, there are no human rights violations in this regard.

1. **How has water cooperation (transboundary, subnational, local) helped overcome conflicts and limit the stress on water systems and water-related infrastructure?**

There are no significant conflicts over water or water stress issues to be solved. However, minor transboundary issues arise due to cases of surface water pollution. Lithuania has agreements of cooperation with 3 out of 4 of its neighbour countries (Latvia, Poland, Belarus). The agreements provide for sharing of information on the status of water bodies, encourage unified monitoring and planning systems, and provide the basis for cooperation on ongoing water pollution issues. Since 2014 when Russia started its aggression against Ukraine, there is no longer any cooperation with the aggressor state.

1. **Please provide examples of successful dialogue, mediation and collaboration in transboundary water management that incorporates a human rights perspective and promotes peace, including but not limited to:**
   1. **Cooperation frameworks: agreements and bodies for shared management and planning in transboundary basins, etc.**
   2. **Monitoring and management of shared resources.**
   3. **Collaborative consultation and decision-making processes.**
   4. **Tools and resources to facilitate equitable water governance and tools or resources for basin-wide water security.**
   5. **Strategies and measures to protect the right to health or prevent flood or drought risks, sharing information systems, early warning and flood management, and shared drought strategies.**

Lithuania has various types of cooperation agreements (protocol, agreements, transnational water commission, working groups). The closest cooperation exists with neighbouring EU member states – Poland and Latvia. Cooperation with Belarus is difficult and limited to a technical level, primarily due to Belarus’ engagement in Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. Likewise, cooperation with Russia is impossible for this reason. At the same time, even before the war, the cooperation with Russia and Belarus was complicated and limited due to lack of good faith and engagement from the Russian and Belarussian sides.

In 2012-2014, the project "Basin Management and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Nemunas Basin" was carried out. The adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins pilot project program was funded in accordance with the UN Water Convention to support the countries' efforts to implement the Convention and develop adaptation strategies and measures in transboundary areas. In addition, the project was implemented with the support of the international initiative "Environment and Security" (ENVSEC) and the United Nations Development Program, provided to the Republic of Belarus. Project participants were Belarus, the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation and Lithuania. The goal of the project was to lay the foundations for integrated cross-border cooperation in strengthening the capacity to adapt to climate change. The project encouraged the cooperation of the countries whose territories are in the Nemunas basin. In 2016–2018 the project "Adaptation of the Nemunas river basin to climate change", financed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, continued. The pilot basin of the Shchara River (the left tributary of the Nemunas in Belarus), located in the territory of Belarus, was chosen as the object of the project. The following activities were carried out for the Shchara river basin: characterization of water bodies, typology, identification of water bodies, identification of heavily altered and artificial water bodies, assessment of the effects of concentrated and diffuse pollution and hydromorphological changes, assessment of the condition of water bodies. Some activities were also carried out for the part of the Nemunas River located in the territory of Belarus. A further project for water cooperation was planned, but it was cancelled due to Russia’s war against Ukraine.

1. **What are some of the main challenges that right holders, civil society organizations and communities face in accessing and managing water resources in transboundary water ecosystems, and what strategies can effectively address these challenges?**

The main challenges in Lithuania involve difficulties with Russia and Belarus due to limited participation and representation of stakeholders in the decision-making, conflicting interests, lack of a broader monitoring network, insufficient infrastructure and financing, environmental degradation and climate change impact in these two countries.

In general, improved policy-making frameworks, timely and more efficient consultations with stakeholders, strengthening of the capacity of civil society organizations and communities, fostering negotiations and collaboration to address conflicting interests, equitable allocation mechanisms that consider the needs and rights of all stakeholders, imposition of ‘polluter pays’ principle, cooperation among riparian countries to attract investments for infrastructure development, innovative financing mechanisms, including public-private partnerships and international funding sources could help to solve these issues.

1. **What participation, access to information, and transparency measures could be promoted to involve rights holders, communities, civil society organizations and women in possible dynamics of dialogue, negotiation, and decision-making on transboundary ecosystems management?**

Information sharing platforms and forums, capacity building and training programs, as well as awareness raising could help to include more stakeholders in the decision-making processes. However, as Russia and its accomplice Belarus are waging war against Ukraine, Lithuania sees no possibility of cooperation with its non-EU neighbours.

1. **What measures are in place to prevent water pollution and avoid impacts on downstream communities and countries.**

Lithuania as a member of the EU is following the European Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC). According to it, the measures for water pollution prevention are based on the River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) for a 6-year period. The Water Sector Plan for 2022-2027, along with its Implementation Plan, outlines the objectives and measures suggested in the RBMP for effective implementation. The plan encompasses national measures aimed at addressing issues across the entire country, as well as specifically tailored measures for every risk water body, including transnational surface water bodies. So far, Lithuania indicated that all aquifers are in good status.

1. **How can public and private entities be held accountable for fulfilling their responsibilities in transboundary water management?**

In Lithuania, the Environmental Protection Department under the Ministry of Environment ensures compliance of public and private entities with environmental legislation and the Ministry of the Environment ensures that National legislation complies with EU requirements. On the transnational scale, agreements with other EU countries are encouraged by mutual responsibilities and common goals.

1. **How have effective responsibilities and priorities among the various types of uses and users been implemented to prevent water stress (because of water quality, quantity, and ecosystem health)? What are some of the good and promising practices and strategies to promote sustainable management of transboundary ecosystems, prioritize and secure the human rights to water and sanitation and/or prevent potential conflicts?**

Lithuania has no water stress issues.

1. **How have transboundary water issues, such as disputes over water allocation, water quality, infrastructure development and environmental impacts, contributed to violence, social unrest, conflicts, and/or displacement in your region or community?**

Lithuania has high-quality water services and can fully satisfy drinking water demand exclusively from groundwater. So far, there have been no conflicts due to water issues.

1. **How have insufficient water and sanitation services contributed to violence, social unrest, conflicts, and/or displacement in your region or community?**

Lithuania has no such issues.

1. **To what extent is climate change affecting water-related conflict in your transboundary river basin (interstate, sub-national, and local)?**

Lithuania has no such issues.

1. **How are local authorities included in the prevention, responses to crises and conflict resolution processes?**

Lithuania is a unitary state. Lithuania is divided into municipalities that are integral parts of Lithuania. According to the Law on Local Self-Government of Lithuania, “Municipality” means an administrative unit of the territory of the State, defined by law, the community of which has the right to self-governance guaranteed by the Constitution and implemented through a municipal council elected by the permanent residents of that administrative unit of the territory of the State and through an executive and other municipal institution as well as other institutions and establishments of a municipality, accountable to it for the direct implementation of laws, decisions of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania) and the municipal council. Municipalities have Emergency management plans, which include measures and actions to respond to emergencies. In Lithuania, all water supply companies are owned by municipalities.

1. **How are affected communities included in the prevention, responses to crises and conflict resolution processes?**

So far there have been no affected communities.

1. **What role have women been given in dealing with cross-border conflicts?**

So far there were no cross-border conflicts.

1. **What measures exist in contingency plans, whether during peace, conflict, or post- conflict scenarios, to ensure that priority is given to household water supply and water for domestic and personal use?**

Lithuania has approved the State Emergency Situations Plan, which states that one of the state emergencies may be ecological - environmental air and water pollution; soil contamination or other effects on it; pollution with nuclear and/or radioactive substances and petroleum products. The Plan identifies the responsible and supporting institutions for managing specific emergencies.

1. **Please present examples and/or good/promising practices of transboundary water management measures that support the realization of human rights to water and sanitation.**

Lithuania does not face challenges in the field of human rights to water and sanitation.

1. **How can a shift from a focus on water as a resource, which encourages competition for control and ownership, to an ecosystem management approach that involves collaboration and shared responsibility, be promoted in transboundary basins?**

Lithuanian national legislation ensures and regulates water availability and sanitation at high level.

1. **How are climate change agreements and transboundary water management agreements being interconnected to address the challenges of managing water resources in shared aquatic ecosystems?**

In Lithuania, most attention regarding water and climate change issues are drawn to flood prevention which are being integrated into The Water Sector Plan for 2022-2027, along with its Implementation Plan. Regarding transboundary waters currently there are no agreements regarding climate change.

1. **What are some of the most promising examples of collaborative efforts between governments (national and local), civil society organizations, communities, individuals and/or private sector in promoting sustainable water management, including pollution reduction and ecosystem protection, in the context of transboundary waters?**

Lithuanian and Latvian authorities are actively cooperating through ongoing projects, such as [NEXOGENESIS](https://nexogenesis.eu/case-study-2-lielupe-river-basin/), which is funded by the EU's Horizon 2020 program. It aims to support the development of policies that manage resources effectively. Lithuania is not part of the project management team but is included in the project through the transnational Lielupe Basin case study. Possible project outcomes are exploring the Nexus approach on the Lielupe River basin scale in Latvia and Lithuania; focusing on water, energy, food, ecosystems, land use and climate in the Nexus context; engaging stakeholders on a transnational level to pave the ground for the “river contracts”; system dynamics modelling to explore impacts of various policies in the Nexus related fields; application of machine learning and promotion to stakeholders. The result could help to facilitate ongoing cooperation to be more efficient and inclusive of various stakeholders.

Another project, [LIFE GOODWATER IP](https://goodwater.lv/en/about-project/), funded by the EU, also includes stakeholders from both Latvia and Lithuania aiming to reach the good status of Latvia's water bodies. The goal of the program is to improve the status of water bodies at risk in Latvia through full implementation of the measures laid down in the Daugava, Gauja, Lielupe and Venta RBMPs. Lielupe and Venta Basins are our shared basins and the project encourages knowledge sharing, cooperation and integration of stakeholders.

Lithuania has prepared its own LIFE SIP project application - Integrated water management in Lithuania (LIFE SIP Vanduo). If the application is accepted, the Project will aim to implement the National Water Sector Plan, ensuring the elimination or mitigation of significant impacts of prevailing pressures and contributing to achieving good status of surface and marine waters. To enhance the efficiency of water resource management, the Project would increase competencies and consolidate experts from environmental institutions, researchers, and NGOs. Methods of assessing the status of surface water bodies would be improved by collecting additional data and conducting scientifically based expertise. Tools and methodology for improvement of pressures and impacts analysis would be enhanced. Environmental objectives for all water bodies would be set based on the ecosystem services approach and cost-benefit analyses. The Project would develop, test and demonstrate measures to address all pressures deteriorating surface waters. The Project would ensure the transfer of the developed solutions to other risk water bodies throughout all four river basin districts (RBDs) of Lithuania by creating a legal framework in synergy with agricultural policy, initiating dialogue with the energy sector, by methodical guidance for replication, adopting experience for transboundary RBDs, international collaboration network and awareness raising.