

**Perkumienė Dalia**

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## PROVISION OF EQUAL RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES RELATING WITH LABOUR RELATIONS IN PUBLIC SECTOR

**Annotation.** Human rights are one of the most popular topics in modern global communities. Therefore, the adoption of the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Equal Opportunities and the establishment of the institution that governs the execution of this law is a significant legal step which permits to actually ensure the compliance of one of the most fundamental rights of the individual, i.e. non-discrimination on the basis of gender (Motery..., 2000).

The article aims to investigate whether equal rights and possibilities relating to labour relations are provided to the employees of Klaipėda district municipality.

**Keywords:** equal opportunities, violation of equal opportunities, employee, employer, discrimination, harassment, provision measures.

**Introduction.** Each employee should be aware of his/her rights and opportunities relating to labour relations and how these rights and opportunities are provided. Human rights are one of the most popular topics of modern global communities. Taking care of human rights becomes a priority of internal politics of democratic states.

Discrimination is a problem of the whole Europe. According to the data of the survey of the European Commission [2], about every sixth European has been personally discriminated. 64% of the Europeans fear that discrimination on the basis of age will increase due to economic decline at labour market.

**The paper aims** to investigate whether equal rights and opportunities relating to labour relations are provided to the employees of Klaipėda district municipality.

**Object of the research** – the provision of equal rights and opportunities relating with labour relations to the employees of Klaipėda district municipality.

### **The concept of the provision of equal opportunities relating to labour relations**

Equal opportunities in the international documents on human and citizen rights and the laws of the Republic of Lithuania is defined as the implementation of human rights regardless of age, sexual orientation, disability, race or ethnic origin, religion, convictions, or other bases laid down in other international contracts or laws of the Republic of Lithuania [1, page 45; 8, page 96–105; 5]. The concept of equal opportunities in the laws of the Republic of Lithuania ensures equal opportunities at labour market for both women and men.

Human rights are one of the most popular topics in modern global communities. Therefore, the adoption of the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Equal Opportunities and the establishment of the institution that governs the execution of this law is a significant legal step which permits to actually ensure the compliance of one of the most fundamental rights of the individual, i.e. non-discrimination on the basis of gender [3, page 85–91].

Discrimination on the basis of gender is understood as unequal treatment of male and female representatives. People are most often discriminated when they want to find a job, seek career, education, etc. It should be noted that exceptional conditions for working women related to maternity protection is not considered as discrimination. According to the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, special protection of women during pregnancy, childbirth and nursing is not considered as discrimination on the basis of gender. This is not a privilege or guaranteed protection of a new society member [1, page 87; 4, page 67–78.].

Discrimination on the basis of age is a special treatment to someone closely related with certain attitudes towards a person, i.e. age norms and age stereotypes [6, page 106–111; 9, page 36–42.]. The latter phenomenon, i.e. preconceived attitude towards a person on the basis of his/her age, is called *ageism* (with analogy with *racism* and *sexism*) in the Anglo-Saxon literature [7, page 28–31].

The 858<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has ascertained that achievements of Lithuania in ensuring equality for women and men are

very well evaluated among 45 European countries. Lithuania, the same as Sweden, is enlisted as good practice country having assessed the following criteria: acting national equality mechanisms, participation and collaboration of non-governmental organizations, enhancing gender equality policies, protection against compulsion, fight against women trafficking [7, page 28–31].

The institutions of the European Union are currently actively working in the field of fighting against discrimination and are seeking validation of equal opportunities in the EU countries. The website of the Employment and Social Affairs of the European Commission permits to get a complete picture on the scope of activities: the EU publishes newsletters, brochures, posters, statistics summaries on discrimination and the provision of equal opportunities, teaching material on non-discrimination issues, expert assessment reports on the achievements of fighting against discrimination in the member states, national reports on the formation of the base of anti-discrimination legal acts, various research reports, etc. [9, page 36–41].

**Questionnaire research of the employees of Klaipėda district municipality.** The research aimed to investigate how the employees of Klaipėda district municipality perceive the concept of equal opportunities relating to labour relations and to find out whether they are satisfied with the provision of equal opportunities at the workplace.

Having asked the opinion of employees whether the right to equal opportunities is violated at their workplace, 30.3% respondents said that they think that the right to equal opportunities is violated, 48.8% respondents said that the right to equal opportunities are not violated and 11.6% respondents do not know whether the right to equal opportunities is violated at their workplace or not, while 9.3% respondents had no opinion on this question.

The employees of Klaipėda district municipality have been asked where violation of equal opportunities occurs. Having processed the collected data, the following results were received: the right to equal opportunities on the basis of gender was violated for 13.9% employees of Klaipėda district municipality, the right to equal opportunities on the basis of age was violated for 25.6% employees, the right to equal opportunities on the basis of disability was violated for 6.9% employees, the right to equal opportunities on the basis of sexual orientation was violated for 2.3% employees and 4.6% employees said that equal opportunities were violated on the basis of race and ethnic origin, while answers regarding violations of equal opportunities on other basis have not been received. These results permit to suppose that the level of violation of equal rights on the basis of gender is rather high in Klaipėda district municipality.

Table 1 presents the opinion of respondents how equal opportunities should be provided at work.

Table 1

**Opinion of employees about the provision of equal opportunities at work**

Measures	Percent
Equal work load	20.9
Equal pay regardless of gender	44.1
Gender equality in labour relations	34.9
Equal opportunities for improvement and qualification raising	48.8
Promotion of job position regardless of gender, age and other factors	27.9
Other	1

The provision of equal opportunities relating to labour relations to the employees of Klaipėda district municipality is possible under the following circumstances: sufficient financial resources, sincere attempts of employees to perform his/her duties are good as possible, goodwill and awareness of the employees and the management of the centre in creation of safe, cosy working environment and optimal working conditions.

**Conclusions.** 1. Equality, being one of the fundamental principles of human rights, is governed by international contracts and legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania. Equality infringing activity, i.e. discrimination, is prohibited. Therefore, the conditions for the provision and implementation of equality are aimed.

2. The situation of equal opportunities relating to labour relations is similar in various countries, including Lithuania, i.e. unequal opportunities relating to labour relations is one of the biggest problems.

3. The results of the questionnaires permit to claim that the administration of Klaipėda district municipality pays too little attention to the provision of the information about the Law on Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Lithuania and amendments whereof to the employees of Klaipėda district municipality. Thus there are a lot of problems related to the provision of equal opportunities to the employees at work.

4. The provision of equal opportunities to the employees of Klaipėda district municipality is satisfactory: the Law on Equal Opportunities is not always followed, yet equal opportunities to a large extent depend on staff relationship, sympathies and antipathies.

5. In order to ensure equal opportunities, the following appropriate measures should be undertaken: organization of pedagogical and/or psychological seminars, consultations with lawyers, corporate trips, discussions, etc.

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