

ENACT

Enhancing the capacity of civil society organisations to support victims of anti-LGBTQI hate crimes

National Report

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National LGBTI Rights Organization LGL

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Enhancing the capacity of civil
society organisations to support
victims of anti-LGBTQI hate crimes



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Highlights

This report documents systemic failures in Lithuania's response to LGBTIQ+ hate crimes and discrimination based on comprehensive research conducted in 2024. Primary data collection included interviews with victims and professionals, alongside a significant focus group discussion with key institutional stakeholders. As one focus group participant from the Seimas Ombudsperson's Office observed: "The system itself lacks basic humanization; beyond security, one of the fundamental needs is to be seen and treated as a human being" (Focus Group Participant 3, 2024). This observation encapsulates the core challenges identified throughout the research.

- None of Lithuania's 23 victim support services specifically addresses LGBTIQ+ needs, with focus group revealing critical gaps in service provision.
- Systematic failure to provide victims with legally mandated information and support materials in appropriate languages.
- Complex bureaucratic procedures and poor inter-agency coordination create barriers to accessing support.
- Professional burnout and limited resources severely impact service quality.
- Limited specialized training and cultural competency among service providers.



Introduction

The research employs a rigorous mixed-methods approach to examine systemic responses to LGBTIQ+ hate crimes in Lithuania. Recent studies indicate concerning trends in hate crime reporting and victim support.¹ As highlighted by one focus group participant:

"People who have experienced hate crimes don't see law enforcement as a reliable partner" (Focus Group Participant, 2024).²

The ENACT project in Lithuania conducted comprehensive research between June–November 2024 to evaluate existing services for LGBTIQ+ hate crime survivors and analyse systemic responses. Through a multi-method approach, the research team gathered data from seven in-depth interviews with LGBTIQ+ hate crime survivors, six interviews with legal and support professionals, and one focus group comprising six female professionals representing key institutions. This primary data collection was supplemented by extensive document analysis of hate crime investigations and prosecutions, alongside a thorough assessment of victim support services.

The recruitment process employed multiple complementary strategies to ensure diverse participant representation. Initial outreach occurred through established LGBTIQ+ organizations and support services, supplemented by targeted social media engagement in LGBTIQ+ community groups. As the research progressed, snowball sampling through initial participants helped reach additional respondents. However, several significant challenges emerged during recruitment. Many survivors expressed hesitancy to discuss their traumatic experiences, while access to survivors outside major urban areas proved limited. Language barriers presented obstacles for non-Lithuanian speaking participants, and institutional gatekeeping appeared to complicate professional recruitment.

Carefully considered data collection methodology was implemented during research. Of the thirteen total interviews, eight were conducted in person and five

¹ Ministry of the Interior. (2024). Report on the Situation of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech in Lithuania in 2023.

² Focus group conducted with representatives from Seimas Ombudsperson's Office, Ministry of Interior, NGOs, and support services, 2024. Transcript on file



online, with an average duration of 57 minutes. The focus group was held in person and lasted 95 minutes. All sessions were audio recorded with participant consent, and professional interpreters facilitated communication with three non-Lithuanian speaking participants. Location selection prioritized participant privacy and comfort, with particular attention paid to creating safe spaces for sharing sensitive experiences.

Data analysis followed a rigorous thematic approach, employing iterative coding to identify key patterns and themes. The research team conducted regular cross-validation of emerging themes between researchers to ensure consistency and reliability. The analysis integrated insights from interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary evidence, with member checking used to verify interpretations with select participants. Regular team analysis meetings maintained consistency in approach and interpretation throughout the research process.

Ethical considerations remained paramount throughout the study. The research team obtained full ethical approval from [relevant body] before commencing data collection. Informed consent was secured in each participant's preferred language, with clear communication about the right to withdraw at any time. All participants received information about available support services, and data storage followed strict GDPR requirements. To protect participant identities, pseudonyms are used throughout the analysis and reporting.

The methodological framework included:

- 7 in-depth interviews with LGBTIQ+ hate crime victims
- 6 interviews with legal and support professionals
- Focus group with 6 female professionals representing key institutions, including victim support service, Seimas Ombudspersons' Office, The Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania.
- Document analysis encompassing 10 hate crime investigation case files from 2022–2024, accessed through three channels: public databases cases, direct provision by survivors and professional legal representatives. These documents included investigation protocols, court decisions, victim statements, and case dismissal orders.
- Assessment of victim support services



Interviews with survivors

	YEAR OF BIRTH	GENDER IDENTITY	SEXUAL ORIENTATION	TRANSNGENDER STATUS	INTERSEX STATUS
V1	1976	Male	Homosexual	No	No
V2	1982	Male	Homosexual	No	No
V3	1994	Male	Homosexual	No	No
V4	N/A	Non-Binary	Homosexual	Yes	No
V5	1995	Female	Bisexual	No	No
V6	2000	Female	Pansexual	No	No
V7	1988	Female	Lesbian	No	No

Interviews with professionals

	YEAR OF BIRTH	GENDER IDENTITY	HIGHEST FINISHED EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION	ROLE IN THE ORGANISATION
P1	1995	Female	ISCED 7	Lawyer
P2	N/A	Male	ISCED 7	Lawyer
P3	1983	Male	ISCED 7	Project Manager
P4	1985	Male	ISCED 7	Lawyer
P5	1990	Male	ISCED 7	Project Manager
P6	1995	Female	ISCED 6	Coordinator



Focus groups

	YEAR OF BIRTH	GENDER IDENTITY	HIGHEST FINISHED EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION	ROLE IN THE ORGANISATION
FG1	NA	Female	NA	Advisor
FG2	NA	Female	NA	Specialist
FG3	NA	Female	NA	Specialist
FG4	NA	Female	NA	Trainer
FG5	NA	Female	NA	Coordinator
FG6	NA	Female	NA	Advisor

1. Legal and political context on anti-LGBTI hate crimes

1.1. Context

Since decriminalizing same-sex relations in 1993, Lithuania has experienced three decades of gradual but uneven progress in LGBTIQ+ rights, marked by milestones from the first public coming out stories in 1995 to the record-breaking 20,000-person Lithuanian Pride in 2024.³

Lithuania's LGBTIQ+ rights landscape remains problematic, with a 24% score on ILGA-Europe's 2023 Rainbow Index.⁴ Key barriers include limited hate motive recognition by police, poor victim service coordination, lack of specialized LGBTIQ+ support, complex reporting deterrents, and limited language accessibility.⁵

³ Vabuolaitė, L. E. (2024, June 8). Lithuanian Pride parade attracts 20,000 participants – photos. LRT English. <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news/society/2024-06-08-lithuanian-pride-parade-attracts-20000-participants-photos>

⁴ ILGA-Europe. (2023). Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of LGBTI People in Europe and Central Asia

⁵ Lithuanian Gay League. (2024). Submission to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in the case Beizaras and Levickas v. Lithuania.



While some legal progress has been achieved – such as the 2005 Law on Equal Opportunities and the 2019 Constitutional Court ruling recognizing gender-neutral family concepts – implementation remains inconsistent and systemic challenges persist. Recent developments in 2023, including three same-sex families initiating strategic litigation for marriage recognition, highlight the ongoing struggle for full equality in Lithuanian society.

A historic breakthrough occurred on December 18, 2024, when the Constitutional Court of Lithuania ruled that Article 4(2)(16) of the Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information violates constitutional principles. The Court emphasized that while protecting minors through information restrictions is legitimate, such limitations cannot override other constitutionally protected values. The Court found that the law artificially narrowed the constitutional concept of family, unjustifiably restricted information dissemination and minors' right to information, and failed to ensure objective information about real social relationships. This ruling marks a significant shift from the law's controversial history since 2002, which had created a 'chilling effect' on LGBTIQ+ expression and required media about same-sex relationships to be labeled 'adult content'.⁶

Also, Data shows a rising proportion of hate crimes based on sexual orientation, from 11 out of 28 cases in 2019 to 58 out of 84 in 2022, despite declining prosecutions. Victim support professionals report police often misclassify these incidents. Gaps stem from insufficient training, lack of specialized units, inadequate services, and limited resources.⁷

Public opinion data reveals concerning trends regarding societal attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ individuals in Lithuania. According to a 2023 Eurobarometer survey, one-third of Lithuanians would feel uncomfortable if a colleague they interact with daily was gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (down from 37% in 2019).⁸ Almost half of respondents said they would be unhappy to see a

⁶ Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania. (2024, December 18). Ruling on the compliance of Article 4(2)(16) of the Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information with the Constitution (Case No. KT101-N15/2024)

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Eurobarometer. (2023). Eurobarometer survey conducted on April 13 – May 1, 2023. Interviewed 1,005 residents of Lithuania.



transgender person in the highest political position in Lithuania (down from 59% in 2019).⁹

However, the survey also showed increasing societal understanding of discrimination faced by LGBTIQ+ individuals, with significantly more people recognizing the prevalence of discrimination against transgender (from 36% to 46%) and intersex (from 28% to 40%) persons.¹⁰ A 2023 representative survey by "Baltijos tyrimai" found that 54% of respondents did not want to live next to homosexual persons, and 40% said they would not want to work with homosexual colleagues.¹¹

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has called on Lithuania to strengthen its protections against discrimination and violence targeting individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.¹² The Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson's 2023 report showed a slight decrease in complaints of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation compared to 2022.¹³

In November 2024, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) released specific recommendations for Lithuania, urging the establishment of a permanent LGBTIQ+ equality working group and improved implementation of existing protections. The Commission emphasized that the LGBTIQ+ community remains one of the most negatively perceived groups in Lithuanian society. The recommendations highlighted the need for a clearly defined LGBTIQ+ equality strategy and action plan, along with increased funding for implementation. ECRI also stressed the importance of fully implementing European Court of Human Rights decisions, particularly in cases concerning LGBTIQ+ rights, such as *Macatè v. Lithuania*.¹⁴

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Baltijos tyrimai. (2023). Representative survey of Lithuanian residents conducted on November 16 – 27, 2023. Interviewed 1,018 adult residents of Lithuania

¹² United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. (2023). Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Lithuania (E/C.12/LTU/CO/3). 30 March 2023.

¹³ Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson. (2024). 2023 Annual Report, 7 March 2024, No. BR-38, Vilnius.

¹⁴ Ambrazaitytė, K. (2024, November 24). Lietuvai – rekomendacijos įkurti LGBT lygybės darbo grupę, skatinti romų įtrauktį [Lithuania receives recommendations to establish LGBT



Recent institutional oversight has highlighted ongoing challenges in protecting LGBTIQ+ individuals' right to peaceful assembly. In April 2024, the Seimas Ombudsperson concluded an investigation into police conduct during an LGBTIQ+ community protest in September 2023, finding that law enforcement failed to adequately protect participants' right to peaceful assembly. The investigation revealed that police officers showed insufficient response to provocateurs' actions, which ultimately led to the protest's termination. The Ombudsperson emphasized that the state has a particular duty to protect vulnerable groups' assembly rights, especially when they are addressing discriminatory practices. This case exemplifies the systemic challenges in institutional responses to LGBTIQ+ rights protection, particularly given that recent sociological research shows 54% of Lithuanians would not want to live near homosexual persons.¹⁵

Analysis of hate crime data reveals a significant shift in reporting patterns. In 2023, official records show 16 registered crimes under Article 170 of the Criminal Code ('Incitement against any national, racial, ethnic, religious or other group of people') related to incitement on grounds of sexual orientation, marking a 72% decrease from 58 cases in 2022 (Ministry of the Interior, 2024).¹⁶ This substantial decline in registered cases warrants careful interpretation, as it may reflect either changes in incident occurrence or variations in reporting behavior. Interviews with victim support professionals suggest that reporting barriers, including fear of secondary victimization and lack of trust in law enforcement, may contribute to underreporting rather than representing a genuine reduction in hate crimes.

NGO efforts to monitor and report on hate incidents have also faced challenges. The alternative reporting platform "Pranešk" operated by the Lithuanian Center for Human Rights received 32 reports of hate crimes and hate speech in 2023, down from 181 in 2021 and 74 in 2022, with the majority related to sexual orientation.¹⁷

equality working group and promote Roma inclusion]. Etaplius.

<https://www.etaplius.lt/lietuvai-rekomendacijos-ikurti-lgbt-lygybes-darbo-grupe-skatinti-romu-itraukti>

¹⁵ Seimas Ombudsperson's Office. (2024, April 3). Investigation report: Police failed to ensure LGBT community's right to peaceful assembly (Report No. NŽTI-2024/03).

<https://www.lrski.lt/naujienos/seimo-kontroliere-policija-neuztkrino-lgbt-bendruomenes-teises-i-taiku-susirinkima/>

¹⁶ Ministry of the Interior. (2024). Report on the Situation of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech in Lithuania in 2023.

¹⁷ Lithuanian Center for Human Rights. (2023)



Recent incidents further illustrate the challenges in hate crime prosecution and prevention. A notable case from early 2024 involved the repeated burning of LGBTIQ+ flags near the Parliament building by a self-proclaimed activist.¹⁸ The subsequent €15 fine imposed for these actions highlighted significant gaps between legal frameworks and their practical implementation. Despite Lithuanian law providing for liability for inciting hatred and discrimination based on sexual orientation, the minimal penalty and previous dropped investigations in similar cases demonstrate concerning patterns in law enforcement responses. This case exemplifies how inadequate sanctions may not only fail to deter hate-motivated actions but potentially normalize such behaviour.

The focus group revealed significant gaps in victim support services. As one participant from the Ministry of Interior emphasized:

"Unfortunately, as we discussed with the Ministry of Social Security and Labor, there are simply no financial possibilities to support such services in the near future" (Focus Group Participant 5, 2024).¹⁹

Analysis of 2024 survey data from Lithuanian law enforcement institutions, encompassing 4,575 police officers (69% response rate) and 316 prosecutors (73% response rate), provides crucial insights into institutional perspectives on hate-motivated incidents. Both police officers and prosecutors overwhelmingly identify LGBTIQ+ individuals as the group most vulnerable to hate incidents, with this assessment reaching 73% among prosecutors.²⁰ However, attitudinal data from the same research reveals concerning patterns within law enforcement itself, where a significant portion of officers and prosecutors express either neutral or supportive stances toward discriminatory comments. This dichotomy between recognizing LGBTIQ+ people as primary targets of hate incidents while simultaneously showing ambivalent attitudes toward discriminatory behavior suggests a complex institutional environment that may impact the effective handling of such cases. The research methodology, utilizing CAWI (Computer

¹⁸ Antanaitytė, M. (2024, September 8). Pocket change fines for anti-LGBTI hate crime: Lithuania's hate crime dilemma. LGL News. <https://www.lgl.lt/en/?p=24563>

¹⁹ Focus group transcript, Ministry of Interior Representative, 2024.

²⁰ Vileikienė, E. (2024). Policijos pareigūnų ir prokurorų asmeninių nuostatų dėl neapykantos nusikaltimų ir neapykantos kalbos 2024 m. tyrimo rezultatai [Research results on police officers' and prosecutors' personal attitudes towards hate crimes and hate speech in 2024]. Working Group on Effective Response to Hate Crimes and Hate Speech in Lithuania.



Assisted Web Interviewing) and conducted over several months in 2024, provides a robust picture of institutional perspectives, with the high response rates lending particular credibility to these findings.

1.2. Legal framework

International and Constitutional Framework

Lithuania's legal obligations regarding LGBTIQ+ rights stem from multiple sources of international and domestic law. The Constitutional Court has emphasized that the constitutional order is based on human rights and freedoms as the highest value. While Article 29 of the Constitution does not explicitly list sexual orientation or gender identity among protected grounds, the Constitutional Court has clarified that the list of human rights and freedoms in the Constitution is not exhaustive.

Key international obligations include:

- EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (Article 21 explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation)
- European Convention on Human Rights (Article 14 contains general prohibition of discrimination)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Current Legal Situation

Hate crimes and hate speech pose a significant threat to the fundamental principles of democratic society, including equality, dignity, and individuality of persons. These biased offenses send a message that certain communities and their members, distinguished by a protected characteristic (age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, race, color, nationality, language, origin, ethnic origin, social status, religion, beliefs, or views) are not equal members of society.

Lithuania's legal framework criminalizes both:



1. Hate crimes – defined as criminal acts motivated by bias, prejudice, and/or hostility against a person or group based on a protected characteristic. These can be criminalized either as:
 - A qualifying element of the crime, or
 - An aggravating circumstance
2. Hate speech – understood as any expression that incites, promotes, or justifies violence, hatred, or discrimination against a person or group due to their actual or perceived characteristics.

Recent Trends and Statistics

Data from the Uniform Crime Register shows significant trends:

- Overall offenses under Article 170 decreased from 82 (2021) to 44 (2023).
- Cases motivated by bias against sexual orientation remained significant:
 - 24 out of 51 cases in 2020.
 - 16 out of 44 cases in 2023.
- Cases reaching courts declined from 35 (2022) to 17 (2023).
- Only 15 cases were adjudicated in 2023.

Hate crimes and hate speech pose a significant threat to the fundamental principles of a democratic society, including the equality, dignity, and individuality of persons.²¹ These biased offenses send a message that certain communities and their members, distinguished by a protected characteristic (age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, race, color, nationality, language, origin, ethnic origin, social status, religion, beliefs, or views). Addressing these hate-motivated crimes and expressions is crucial to upholding democratic values and maintaining social cohesion.

Lithuania's legal framework criminalizes both hate crimes and hate speech (Incitement to hatred).²² The Constitutional Court's December 2024 ruling further strengthened legal protections by invalidating discriminatory provisions in the Law

²¹ Lithuanian Prosecutor General. (2023). Order No. I-164 on the Approval of the Methodological Recommendations for the Pre-Trial Investigation of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech.

²² Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania, Articles 170 and 60(1)(12)



on the Protection of Minors. The Court emphasized that information about various family models and interpersonal relationships cannot be automatically deemed inappropriate for minors, and that current restrictions were incompatible with the state's constitutional duty to ensure harmonious and comprehensive child development. This decision aligns with the earlier European Court of Human Rights ruling in *Macatė v. Lithuania*, which found that restricting children's access to information depicting same-sex relationships as equal to heterosexual relationships violated the European Convention on Human Rights.²³

Within Lithuanian legal system, hate crimes are defined as criminal acts motivated by bias, prejudice, and/or hostility against a person or group based on a protected characteristic. These offenses can be criminalized either as a qualifying element of the crime or as an aggravating circumstance. In contrast, hate speech is understood as any expression (verbal, visual, etc.) that incites, promotes, or justifies violence, hatred, or discrimination against a person or group due to their actual or perceived characteristics. The response to hate speech must balance the competing fundamental values of equality and freedom of expression, as enshrined in the Constitution. The Constitutional Court has repeatedly stated that the constitutional order of the Republic of Lithuania is based on the priority of human and citizen rights and freedoms as the highest value.²⁴

Data from the Uniform Crime Register shows that the number of registered hate crimes and hate speech offenses has fluctuated in recent years. While the overall number of offenses recorded under Article 170 of the Criminal Code (incitement against any national, racial, ethnic, religious or other group of people) decreased from 82 in 2021 to 44 in 2023, the proportion of these crimes motivated by bias against sexual orientation (from 24 out of 51 cases in 2020 to 16 out of 44 in 2023) and nationality (from 15 cases in 2022 to 16 in 2023) remained significant (Ministry of the Interior, 2024). However, the number of these cases reaching the courts has also declined, from 35 in 2022 to 17 in 2023, with only 15 cases adjudicated in 2023 (Courts of Lithuania, 2023). This trend raises concerns about the effective investigation and prosecution of hate crimes and hate speech in Lithuania.

LGL monitors hate speech situation although these efforts lack sustainable funding.

²³ Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania. (2024, December 18). Ruling on the compliance of Article 4(2)(16) of the Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information with the Constitution (Case No. KT101-N15/2024).

²⁴ Constitutional Court ruling of 23 November 1999



Despite some positive developments in the regulatory framework, including the Prosecutor General's 2023 methodological recommendations – which introduced comprehensive changes to hate crime investigation procedures including mandatory bias indicator checklists, victim-centered investigation protocols, specialized interviewing guidelines, and enhanced criteria for hate motive recognition – concerns persist about effective implementation of the legal framework. Analyses of court decisions and NGO reports suggest that law enforcement and judicial authorities continue to apply systemic and dangerousness criteria when evaluating hate speech cases, rather than following the new victim-centred approach outlined in the recommendations. This approach has resulted in a high bar for establishing criminal liability, even in cases where the content clearly incites violence or discrimination against protected groups. Moreover, resource constraints have impacted the ability of NGOs and state institutions, such as the Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics, to effectively monitor and report on hate speech incidents, potentially contributing to the decline in registered offenses (Ministry of the Interior, 2024).

To address these challenges, several initiatives have been undertaken. The updated methodological recommendations issued by the Prosecutor General in 2023 aim to provide a broader understanding of bias motivation and strengthen victim protection measures (Lithuanian Prosecutor General, 2023). Additionally, training programs for police officers, cadets, and judges on hate crimes and hate speech have been expanded, though concerns remain about the lack of similar efforts for prosecutors (Ministry of the Interior, 2024; National Courts Administration, 2023). The Ministry of the Interior has also maintained a working group to promote an effective response to hate crimes and hate speech, which includes representatives from law enforcement, NGOs, and oversight institutions (Ministry of the Interior, 2023). This platform allows for ongoing dialogue and the development of legislative proposals to improve the legal framework.

While Lithuania has a comprehensive legal framework to address hate crimes and hate speech, the effective implementation of these measures remains a significant challenge. The decline in registered offenses and the persistent issues identified in law enforcement and judicial practices suggest the need for continued efforts to strengthen the response, improve training and resources, and foster collaboration between state institutions and civil society organizations. Addressing these systemic challenges is crucial to upholding the principles of equality and non-discrimination in Lithuanian society.

The updated "Methodological Recommendations for Pre-Trial Investigation of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech" was issued by the Prosecutor General of Lithuania on



July 26, 2023.²⁵ It outlines the country's legal framework and procedural guidelines for investigating bias-motivated offenses.

The document provides definitions of hate crimes and hate speech, and details the criteria for recognizing bias motivations during investigations. It covers procedures for initiating cases, gathering evidence, and prosecuting these offenses, as well as measures to support and protect hate crime/speech victims.

The recommendations emphasize the need for effective and unbiased investigations, and outline investigative tactics for uncovering bias motives. The document also addresses challenges related to hate speech in the digital realm, including guidelines for digital evidence collection and international cooperation.

The methodological recommendations aim to equip law enforcement and prosecutors in Lithuania with a comprehensive approach to addressing hate crimes and hate speech, though research suggests implementation often falls short.

²⁵ Lithuanian Prosecutor General. (2023). Neapykantos nusikaltimų ir neapykantos kalbos ikiteisminio tyrimo metodinės rekomendacijos [Methodological Recommendations for Pre-Trial Investigation of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech]. Vilnius, Lithuania.



2. Findings

2.1. Survivors of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes and discrimination

Focus group and interview data reveal systematic barriers faced by survivors of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes and discrimination. Participants described multiple failed attempts to receive an adequate police response, with officers often dismissing their reports or failing to provide basic information materials. Language barriers posed significant challenges for non-Lithuanian speakers seeking to navigate reporting procedures and access support services. Many participants experienced secondary victimization during the reporting process, with authorities exhibiting insensitive or prejudiced attitudes. Overall, survivors exhibited limited awareness of their rights and the available remedies, further exacerbated by language accessibility issues. Participants emphasized critical needs, including accessible information in multiple languages, psychological and emotional support, protection from secondary victimization, clear communication about case progress, and culturally sensitive service provision. The survivors' expectations centered on having the hate motives recognized, receiving respectful treatment from authorities, undergoing a thorough investigation process, preventing future incidents, and accessing a safe and supportive environment.

Research findings suggest that persistent exposure to hostility has forced the LGBTIQ+ community to adopt a concerning coping mechanism: the involuntary acceptance of discrimination as an inevitable part of daily life. One focus group participant noted:

"The LGBTQ+ community has greatly normalized experiencing hate crimes and hate speech... it seems that if you're a queer person, you'll just naturally encounter some hatred" (Focus Group Participant 3, 2024).²⁶

²⁶ Focus group transcript, NGO Representative, 2024



This externally imposed normalization of harassment and violence represents not a voluntary acceptance, but rather a survival strategy developed in response to sustained societal hostility and inadequate institutional protection.

2.1.1. Experiences

Focus group and interview data reveal that survivors of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes faced multiple failed attempts to report incidents to the police. Participants described a lack of information materials provided by authorities concerning existing victim support measures and mechanisms.

Language barriers were a significant challenge for non-Lithuanian speakers seeking to navigate the reporting process and access support services. Many survivors reported experiencing secondary victimization during the reporting process, with authorities exhibiting dismissive attitudes.

Interview data with legal professionals revealed significant systemic challenges. As one legal professional emphasized:

"The system doesn't just fail to protect – often it makes things worse. Without structural change, we cannot effectively protect these vulnerable individuals" (Professional Interview 3, 2024).²⁷

The interviews revealed concerning patterns of institutional insensitivity toward LGBTIQ+ victims in court proceedings, particularly regarding the disclosure of personal information. Legal professionals reported instances where judges publicly questioned victims about intimate details of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and personal relationships without implementing appropriate privacy measures. As one attorney emphasized:

"Judges shouldn't ask such questions in an open court where media might be present... first they should consider making it a closed hearing since we'll be discussing sensitive personal data" (Professional Interview 1, 2024).²⁸

Such practices not only risk retraumatizing victims but also potentially expose them to further discrimination and privacy violations. Professionals noted that these inappropriate questioning practices often include inquiries about coming

²⁷ Interview with legal professional specializing in hate crime, 2024.

²⁸ Interview with legal professional, 2024.



out experiences, intimate relationships, and gender expression that could be addressed in closed sessions or through written testimony.

The impacts of hate crimes are severe and long-lasting. As another survivor described:

"I'm on antidepressants now. I'm afraid to leave the apartment...You're constantly living in fear, even in your own home" (Victim Interview 2, 2024).²⁹

Victims report facing secondary victimization during reporting processes, with authorities often dismissive or displaying prejudiced attitudes. One victim explained that after being pepper sprayed in a homophobic attack,

"when I called the police, they're like 'sorry, we're busy...it's not too bad, just stay inside'" (Victim Interview 3, 2024).³⁰

Even when cases are reported, follow-up is often lacking. As one victim described:

"I sent several emails asking from [the police], from the investigator themselves just to explain what's going on and what's being done. I got nothing...The only answer they got was like 'it's still active,' nothing more" (Victim Interview 2, 2024).³¹

These findings demonstrate that Lithuania's institutional response to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes reveals fundamental deficiencies at both structural and cultural levels. The complex intersection of procedural barriers, institutional insensitivity, and inadequate support mechanisms generates a self-reinforcing cycle of systemic failure that perpetuates harm at multiple levels. This multifaceted institutional dysfunction manifests in three critical ways: first, it systematically undermines victims' access to justice through bureaucratic and linguistic obstacles; second, it erodes trust in legal institutions through patterns of secondary victimization; and third, it creates a documented pattern of underreporting that masks the true scale of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes in official statistics.

The research further suggests that these institutional failures have broader societal implications, as they effectively normalize discrimination against LGBTIQ+ individuals within the justice system itself. This normalization occurs through both

²⁹ Victim interview, 2024

³⁰ Victim Interview, 2024

³¹ Victim Interview, 2024



active mechanisms – such as inappropriate questioning in court proceedings – and passive ones, including the systematic failure to provide adequate victim support services. These findings point to the urgent need for comprehensive reform that addresses not only procedural frameworks but also fundamentally transforms institutional culture. Such reform must prioritize three key areas: implementation of victim-centered approaches, development of comprehensive cultural competency training for legal professionals, and establishment of robust accountability mechanisms to ensure institutional compliance with victim protection standards.

2.1.2. Knowledge

Survivors exhibited limited awareness of their rights and available support services. They also had poor understanding of reporting procedures, confusion about legal remedies, and uncertainty regarding evidence requirements. Language barriers significantly restricted their access to relevant information.

Survivors faced multiple systemic barriers in their attempts to report anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes. Many described failed efforts to receive adequate police responses, with authorities often dismissing their reports or failing to provide basic information materials. Non-Lithuanian speakers encountered significant language barriers when navigating the reporting process and accessing support services. Participants frequently experienced secondary victimization, with insensitive or prejudiced attitudes from responding authorities.

Overall, survivors demonstrated limited knowledge of their rights and the available remedies. This lack of awareness was exacerbated by language accessibility issues, further hindering their ability to seek help and pursue justice. Key gaps included poor understanding of reporting procedures, confusion about legal options, and uncertainty about evidence requirements.

2.1.3. Needs

Based on the focus group and interview data, survivors of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes require several key support services and resources. Firstly, they need accessible information materials provided in multiple languages to overcome language barriers and ensure equitable access to critical details. Psychological and emotional support is also a vital necessity, as many survivors experience trauma and require specialized counselling and therapeutic interventions.



Protection from secondary victimization is another critical need, as participants reported facing dismissive attitudes and insensitive treatment from authorities during the reporting process. Clear and consistent communication about the status and progress of their cases is also essential to maintain survivor trust and engagement with the justice system.

Lastly, survivors emphasized the importance of receiving services from providers who exhibit cultural sensitivity and competence regarding LGBTIQ+ identities and experiences. This cultural humility and understanding are necessary to create a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment for survivors seeking assistance.

In summary, the key needs identified by survivors include multilingual informational resources, psychological support, protection from revictimization, transparent communication, and culturally sensitive service delivery. Addressing these areas of need is crucial to enhancing access to justice and supporting the well-being of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crime survivors.

2.1.4. Expectations

Survivors of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes articulated several key expectations from the authorities and justice system. Foremost, they expected the hate-motivated nature of the crimes to be recognized and acknowledged. Survivors emphasized the importance of receiving respectful and sensitive treatment from responding officers and investigators.

Additionally, survivors anticipated a thorough and comprehensive investigative process that would hold perpetrators accountable. They expressed the expectation that such hate-based incidents would be prevented from recurring in the future through effective law enforcement interventions.

Survivors anticipated thorough investigations that would take their complaints seriously, rather than dismissal. As one survivor recounted dealing with police:

"They constantly try to make up reasons not to answer me. I don't know if it's because of my sexuality, my language, or what" (Victim Interview 2)³²

Ultimately, survivors desired to be supported within a safe and affirming environment that validated their experiences and prioritized their well-being. This encompassed expectations around trauma-informed service provision,

³² Victim interview, 2024



empathetic communication, and protective measures to ensure their ongoing security.

In summary, the primary expectations of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crime survivors centered on the recognition of bias motivations, respectful treatment by authorities, rigorous investigative efforts, prevention of repeat victimization, and the establishment of a supportive ecosystem that addressed their multifaceted needs and concerns.

2.2. Professionals working with survivors of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes

Interviews with support professionals revealed they faced significant systemic challenges. Limited resources and high caseloads hindered their ability to adequately serve all survivors. Providers also described poor inter-agency coordination and complex bureaucratic procedures that impeded their efforts. Language accessibility issues, particularly for non-Lithuanian speakers, posed additional barriers. Professionals further expressed concerns about professional burnout due to the demands of this work.

2.2.1. Experiences

Professionals working with anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crime survivors cited several critical knowledge gaps. They emphasized the need for specialized training in LGBTIQ+ identities, experiences, and best practices for providing culturally competent support. Providers also noted insufficient procedural guidance, indicating a lack of clear, standardized protocols for responding to and documenting these incidents. Additionally, professionals expressed a poor understanding of the unique needs and vulnerabilities of hate crime victims, hindering their ability to offer tailored, trauma-informed care.

2.2.2. Knowledge

Professionals working with anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crime survivors cited significant knowledge gaps. They emphasized the critical need for specialized training on LGBTIQ+ identities, experiences, and best practices for providing culturally competent support. Providers also noted insufficient procedural guidance, indicating a lack of clear, standardized protocols for responding to and documenting these incidents.



Furthermore, professionals expressed a poor understanding of the unique needs and vulnerabilities of hate crime victims. This hindered their ability to offer tailored, trauma-informed care that effectively addressed survivors' multifaceted concerns and supported their healing and recovery.

2.2.3. Needs

2.2.3.1. Training Needs

Professionals identified key training priorities, including LGBTIQ+ cultural competency, trauma-informed approaches, solutions for language accessibility, strategies for improved inter-agency coordination, and burnout prevention.

Professional interviews also revealed critical gaps in training and institutional knowledge. As one attorney with extensive experience noted:

"Sometimes with new cases, I have to basically give a lecture to investigators to help them understand what we're even dealing with. Even when the hate motive is obvious, I have to explain the basics" (Professional Interview 3, 2024).³³

2.2.3.2. Other Needs

Professionals emphasized the need for sustainable funding mechanisms to support their work. They also cited the importance of accessible professional support systems, improved coordination tools, language support services, and resource sharing platforms. These resources would help address the systemic challenges and knowledge gaps they faced when assisting survivors of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes.

Focus group participants and interviewed professionals highlighted several key resource gaps. According to one legal professional:

"It would be beneficial to have counselors or advisors who victims could talk to about life in general, about the context of the process – not just the process itself, but its context. About how this lawyer appears in their life, how much moral energy this costs them" (Professional Interview 1, 2024).³⁴

2.2.4. Expectations

³³ Interview with legal professional, 2024

³⁴ Interview with legal professional, strategic litigation experience, 2024.



Professionals emphasized the need for systemic change while maintaining realistic expectations within current constraints. As noted in the focus group:

"With the current political attitudes and incoming political attitudes, it's very difficult to talk about changes in trust towards law enforcement specifically from the LGBTQ+ community representatives" (Focus Group Participant 5, 2024).³⁵

Professionals working with anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crime survivors articulated a complex set of interconnected expectations for systemic improvement. Their vision encompasses multiple institutional dimensions and reflects both immediate operational needs and long-term structural changes. Primary expectations centered on five key areas of institutional development.

First, professionals emphasized the critical need for enhanced institutional coordination mechanisms. This includes the development of standardized protocols for information sharing, establishment of clear referral pathways between agencies, and creation of integrated case management systems. These coordination improvements would address current fragmentation in service delivery and reduce the burden on victims navigating multiple institutions.

Second, the research revealed consistent emphasis on sustainable funding solutions. Professionals articulated the need for both immediate resource allocation and long-term financing frameworks to ensure service stability. This includes dedicated funding streams for specialized LGBTIQ+ support services, resources for professional development, and sustainable funding for language accessibility services.

Third, professionals identified expanded professional development opportunities as crucial for systemic improvement. This expectation encompasses specialized training programs in LGBTIQ+ cultural competency, trauma-informed approaches, and hate crime investigation techniques. Additionally, professionals emphasized the need for ongoing supervision and support structures to prevent burnout and maintain service quality.

Fourth, expectations regarding victim support resources reflected a comprehensive understanding of survivors' needs. Professionals emphasized the importance of developing integrated support services that address both immediate crisis intervention and long-term recovery needs. This includes expectations for enhanced psychological support services, improved legal advocacy resources, and comprehensive language accessibility solutions.

³⁵ Focus group transcript, Ministry of Interior representative, 2024.



Fifth, professionals articulated specific expectations for enhanced communication systems, both within and between institutions. These expectations encompassed improved case tracking mechanisms, transparent information sharing protocols, and streamlined reporting systems. Such improvements would facilitate more effective case management while reducing secondary victimization through repeated information requests.

These layered expectations reflect professionals' deep understanding of current systemic inadequacies while demonstrating their commitment to comprehensive institutional reform. The findings suggest that meeting these expectations requires a coordinated approach to institutional development, combining immediate operational improvements with strategic long-term planning. This analysis further indicates that successful implementation demands sustained political commitment, adequate resource allocation, and systematic monitoring of outcomes.

3. Overall evaluation: SWOT analysis

The systematic evaluation of Lithuania's institutional response to LGBTIQ+ hate crimes reveals profound systemic gaps and institutional failures in victim protection and support mechanisms. The analysis demonstrates a stark disconnect between formal legal frameworks and practical implementation, with the complete absence of specialized LGBTIQ+ victim support services representing the most fundamental gap. None of Lithuania's 23 victim support services specifically addresses LGBTIQ+ needs, creating substantial barriers for hate crime victims seeking assistance and justice.

The current system **maintains certain basic frameworks, though these are notably limited in both scope and effectiveness.** The legal foundation for hate crime protection, while inadequately implemented, does provide basic pathways for pursuing justice through both criminal and administrative procedures. Several successful prosecution precedents have established helpful jurisprudence, particularly regarding the recognition of bias motives. The December 2024 Constitutional Court ruling strengthening protections against discrimination represents a significant evolution in the legal framework, potentially opening new



avenues for addressing hate-motivated crimes. Additionally, some NGOs working on LGBTIQ+ rights have developed considerable expertise in documenting hate crimes and supporting victims, though they operate with severe resource constraints and lack sustainable institutional support.

However, the system faces **severe structural limitations that fundamentally undermine its effectiveness**. Beyond the complete absence of specialized support services, general victim support providers demonstrate insufficient understanding of LGBTIQ+ experiences and needs. This knowledge gap frequently results in secondary victimization, as evidenced by interview data revealing consistent patterns of discrimination and misunderstanding when survivors attempt to access support. The system's limited language capabilities create additional barriers for non-Lithuanian speakers, effectively excluding significant portions of the population from accessing even basic assistance. Complex bureaucratic procedures and poor inter-agency coordination further complicate survivors' attempts to navigate the system, while inadequate privacy protections create risks of exposure and additional harm.

Geographic disparities in service accessibility represent another critical weakness, with rural survivors facing particular challenges in accessing support. The urban concentration of available services, combined with limited transportation options and local stigma, creates significant barriers for those outside major cities. Furthermore, poor integration of data collection and sharing systems between agencies impedes effective coordination and makes it difficult to track cases or identify systemic patterns. This fragmentation not only affects individual cases but also hampers efforts to develop evidence-based policy responses.

External analysis reveals **several potential opportunities** for system enhancement, though these remain largely unrealized. Available EU funding mechanisms for capacity building could potentially support the development of crucial services, particularly given the European Commission's 2024–2027 funding cycle priorities regarding hate crime prevention and victim support. International best practice models offer proven approaches for establishing specialized support services that could be adapted to the Lithuanian context, while advancing technology creates possibilities for better service coordination and data management. Growing public awareness of LGBTIQ+ issues, particularly among younger generations, may facilitate greater political support for necessary



reforms, as evidenced by increasing participation in Pride events and growing media coverage.

However, **significant external threats pose challenges to system improvement.** Political instability creates uncertainty about reform sustainability, while funding concerns threaten even existing general victim support services. Rising anti-LGBTIQ+ sentiment in some segments of society poses risks to both survivors and potential service providers, potentially deterring victims from seeking help and complicating service development. Resource competition between different victim support services often impedes cooperation and comprehensive care delivery, as highlighted by ministry representatives acknowledging the absence of financial possibilities for supporting specialized services in the near future.

These conditions create **several critical vulnerabilities requiring urgent attention.** The absence of specialized services means that many LGBTIQ+ hate crime survivors receive no support at all, potentially leading to reduced reporting rates that mask the true extent of hate crimes. This underreporting creates a dangerous cycle where decreased statistical visibility leads to reduced resource allocation, further weakening response capabilities. The lack of sustainable funding mechanisms threatens any potential development of specialized support services, while inadequate data collection systems make it difficult to demonstrate the urgent need for such services through empirical evidence.

The complex interplay between these systemic weaknesses and external challenges suggests that meaningful improvement will require fundamental structural reforms rather than incremental changes. Current institutional responses remain inadequate to address the scope and severity of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, while the absence of specialized support services represents a critical gap in victim protection. The success of any reforms will depend on sustained political commitment, adequate resource allocation, and systematic monitoring of outcomes to ensure effective implementation. This analysis reveals that addressing these systemic deficiencies requires a comprehensive approach that combines immediate operational improvements with strategic long-term planning, supported by sustainable funding mechanisms and robust evaluation frameworks



4. Recommendations

Based on the comprehensive analysis of Lithuania's current institutional response to LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, this research identifies several critical areas requiring systematic intervention. The findings demonstrate urgent need for structural reform, particularly given the complete absence of specialized LGBTIQ+ victim support services within the existing network of 23 victim support providers. These recommendations emerge directly from documented systemic failures and build upon insights gained through extensive interviews with survivors, professionals, and institutional stakeholders.

The development of specialized LGBTIQ+ victim support services emerges as the most urgent priority, given the complete absence of such services in the current system. As evidenced by survivor interviews and focus group data, the lack of specialized support creates significant barriers to justice and recovery for LGBTIQ+ hate crime victims. The research reveals consistent patterns of secondary victimization within general support services, highlighting the critical need for providers specifically trained in LGBTIQ+ experiences and needs. This development should begin with pilot programs in major urban centers, incorporating trauma-informed approaches and cultural competency standards developed in consultation with LGBTIQ+ communities. These specialized services must address both immediate crisis intervention needs and longer-term recovery support, with particular attention to privacy protection and survivor safety.

Language accessibility represents another fundamental barrier requiring immediate attention. Interview data reveals that non-Lithuanian speaking victims face severe challenges at every stage of the reporting and support process, often receiving no meaningful assistance at all. This systematic exclusion of linguistic minorities requires comprehensive reform of information provision and service delivery. Professional interpretation services must be integrated throughout the reporting and support process, while all victim information materials require translation into relevant languages identified through demographic analysis. As one focus group participant emphasized,

"Without addressing language barriers, we effectively deny access to justice for significant portions of our community" (Focus Group Participant 3, 2024).



The research demonstrates **critical need for standardized institutional response protocols across all agencies engaging with LGBTIQ+ hate crime victims.** Current fragmentation of response procedures leads to inconsistent service quality and frequent re-traumatization of survivors. These protocols must address every stage of institutional engagement, from initial police response through investigation procedures and ongoing victim support. Particular attention must focus on inter-agency coordination given documented failures in information sharing and case management. The protocols should establish clear guidelines for recognizing bias indicators, protecting victim privacy, and ensuring appropriate referrals to support services.

Sustainable funding mechanisms emerge as a crucial prerequisite for effective system reform. Current funding instability severely undermines service consistency and institutional memory, as evidenced by high staff turnover rates and program or project discontinuity. The research reveals that existing victim support services operate under severe resource constraints, limiting their ability to develop specialized expertise or maintain consistent service quality. Long-term funding frameworks must address both immediate operational needs and strategic capacity building, including resources for staff training, professional supervision, and burnout prevention programs. Without such sustainable funding, any attempts at system improvement risk falling into the documented pattern of short-lived initiatives failing to create lasting change.

The analysis reveals **urgent need for improved data collection** and case tracking systems. Current fragmentation of data collection creates significant gaps in understanding patterns of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes and evaluating institutional responses. Comprehensive data management systems must track cases from initial reporting through final resolution, enabling both individual case monitoring and systematic pattern analysis. This data infrastructure should facilitate information sharing between agencies while maintaining robust privacy protections. As demonstrated through professional interviews, the absence of reliable data significantly hampers both strategic planning and resource allocation decisions.



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