

Newsletter about Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme No. 12



LITHUANIAN - SWISS
COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Modern technology in the courts – faster and more convenient court proceedings

Every year, several hundred thousand cases go through the Lithuanian courts, with more than a thousand unique cases every day. Some of them can drag on unavoidably, and these numbers place a heavy load on the legal system. In an effort to make case proceedings a quicker and more convenient process and to ensure the protection of the participants' rights, the National Court Administration implemented the "Creation an installation of a video transfer, recording and storage system in the courts."

The primary goal of the project, which was implemented in cooperation with the Prison Department and the Prosecutor General's office, was to create a system that would allow for the organisation of remote court proceedings and record and store these recordings. The project was worth 2,084,038.00 Swiss francs (about EUR 1,948,974.10). 85 percent of the funds came from the Lithuanian and Swiss Cooperation Programme and 15 percent came from the Government of the Republic of Lithuania's budget.



Project Manager's Photo

The Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme funds five areas:



Improving perinatal and neonatal healthcare
27 hospitals



Introduction of energy efficient technologies in to hospitals, including the modernisation of heating, water-supply, ventilation and air conditioning systems
24 hospitals



Fundamental research development
11 scientific projects
9 Institutional partnership projects and a Scholarship fund



Supporting the activities of Lithuanian NGOs by strengthening community organisations and their cooperation with local authorities
97 subprojects



Modernisation of the judicial system
1 project



Project Manager's Photo

According to Vaida Petravičienė, who is the head of the National Court Administration's Information Technology division and is the manager of this project, the idea for the project arose from the desire to solve court processing problems that delay court proceedings, help those who cannot participate in the proceedings, and reduce the cost of the proceedings.

Court proceedings often take a long time because the participants cannot make it to the court meetings. Now, if this happens, courts can organise remote meetings that can be held while the participants are anywhere in

Lithuania or even abroad. Remote court proceedings are also important for the ill and for people with disabilities, and sometimes, participating in court proceedings from home can be physically or psychologically safer.

This innovation will allow the project's partners and the Prison Department to operate more efficiently. According to Evaldas Gasparavičius, the head of the Prison Institution division, the implementation of the project connected the courts and prisons in a tighter network. "The main goal of the inclusion of prisons is the opportunity to avoid transporting people to the courts. Transport-

ing convicts from the correctional facility to the court, which might be at the other end of Lithuania, for example, is problematic – it's expensive and requires a separate court decision. Now, we will be able to solve these problems electronically without leaving the prison," said Gasparavičius. This will save the state's funds and time.

Over five years of the implementation of the project, a video conferencing system was created that the courts are using more and more frequently. The number of remote court proceedings grows every year, with 240 in 2015 and more than 400 in 2016.

Stationary video transmission, recording and storage equipment was installed at 18 Lithuanian courts, including the Supreme Court of Lithuania, the Court of Appeal of Lithuania, the Vilnius District Administrative Court, the Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania, and the Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai

and Panevėžys district courts. Video conference equipment has also been installed at 12 correctional facilities, interrogation cells and prosecutors' offices throughout Lithuania.

According to project manager Petravičienė, the opportunity to hold remote court proceedings helps not just people, but institutions as well. Cooperation between national law enforcement and legal institutions is improving, including between the police, prosecutors' offices, courts and correctional facilities. The number of requests for legal assistance is also growing.

There is no doubt that in the future, more and more court proceedings will be held remotely, which means a safer, more convenient and less expensive system for those who need it the most.



Project Manager's Photo



2006.02.27

the European Commission and the Swiss Confederation signed a Memorandum of Understanding.



2007.12.20

the Republic of Lithuania and the Swiss Confederation signed a bilateral Framework Agreement and created the Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme.



2017.06.14

All project agreements under the Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme were signed; funds were allocated to Lithuania and must be used by 14/06/17.

Maltese Youth Learn and Increase Awareness of Their Organisation



Project Manager's Photo

Young people who have chosen to be volunteers participated in training for almost two years and, through general activities, sought to improve their social activity network. Sub-Project "Strengthening Maltese Youth's Social Network Activities" implemented by Youth Organisations of the Order of Malta Relief Organisation, which began in 2013, connected about 400 young people who learned together, created action strategies and strengthened their friendship. According to the Sub-Project promoters, the training sessions of the project sought to expand the Maltese Youth activities and improve their quality. An organisational management model was created and approved, and thanks to the model several hundred young volunteers were trained. Not only did they strengthen the ranks of the Maltese Youth, they also increased awareness of the organisation and the quality of the services it provides.

One of the primary goals was to create a model of the development and management of the Mal-

tese Youth activities and help the Maltese Youth to have greater financial autonomy. This was successfully implemented during the Sub-Project: job positions were created, equipment was acquired, and a feasibility study was performed to attract sources of financing. This made the Maltese Youth activities more effective. The organisation learned to manage its budget while planning its activities, define financial directions, attract funds from supporters, organise fund-raising events, and prepare marketing tools.

A new central office was created using the funds of the Sub-Project. The primary goal of the office is to coordinate the activities of the Maltese Youth groups in Lithuania and to attract new volunteers. The newly created Maltese Youth strategy made it clear where the organisation is moving, what it wants to achieve, and how it can use its resources. A target group volunteering survey was performed that allowed for broader insights into the target group that the Maltese Youth work with and to create operational methods.

During the implementation of the Sub-Project,

there were many training sessions and qualification improvement courses organised, which gathered about 400 young participants. First aid instructors and Maltese Youth coordinators were trained, training sessions in various Lithuanian cities and towns were prepared for volunteers, and all of the equipment needed for the training was provided. 12 Maltese youth learned to provide first aid, 82 others participated in an educational cycle for volunteer coordinators, and 200 young volunteers participated in seminars, communicated with their colleagues from other cities and towns, and created a unified Maltese Youth community.

In addition to everything else, during the seminars and training, the Maltese Youth learned the basics of project organisation, leadership, conflict management, the art of negotiation, teamwork and lobbying/influencing skills training. The Maltese Youth training and qualification improvement seminars were held in Trakai, Kulautuva and Varėna district. There was an effort to gather as many volunteers from different parts of Lithuania, thus the training was held in different locations each time.

"I participated in all of the training coordinator training sessions because I am a member of the Maltese Youth central office. At those sessions, I gained new knowledge about project preparation, leadership and additional measures that can be used to strengthen social activities and work with youth. The topics on project management, volunteer management and conflict management were especially useful," said social business manager of the Order of Malta Relief Organisation Edvinas Regelskis.

The Maltese Youth is a socially responsible non-governmental organisation, the primary task of which is volunteer work and support for more at-risk groups. The Maltese Youth organisation, which established itself in Lithuania in 1993, now unites

about 500 volunteers from 31 Lithuanian cities and towns who perform volunteer work in hospices and children's day centres and care for lonely seniors.

The Maltese Youth social network is an organisation that consists of the head of the Maltese Youth, who is responsible for the activities and development of the entire organisation, and the Maltese Youth central office, where volunteers are divided by the type of the activities, and coordinate the actions of the Maltese Youth throughout Lithuania. The regional groups consist of youth from 15 to 24 years of age who are directly engaged in various social activities.

This Sub-Project was financed by the funds from the NGO Subsidy Plan under the Lithuanian and Swiss Cooperation Programme. A total of EUR 75,832.70 was provided, of which a certain portion was co-financing funds and another portion was private funds.



Project Manager's Photo

HIV and AIDS in Lithuania: Efforts to Dispel Myths



Project Manager's Photo

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is known by many as the plague of the 21st century, and more and more people in Lithuania are becoming infected. Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the last stage of the HIV infection. According to the data from the Centre for Communicable Diseases and AIDS (CCDA), 214 new HIV infection cases were registered in Lithuania in 2016, with 165 in men and 49 in women. As of 1 January 2017, a total of 2,749 people have been diagnosed with HIV infections, of whom 79.4% are men. 18% (196 people) of those infected were diagnosed with AIDS. However, the problem is not just the growing number

of infected people, but also how these people feel in our society. Those who are sick with AIDS are still forced to hide their illness. They automatically become rejected members of society, and nobody wants to form closer relationships with them or employ them. Even in the age of smart technologies, people still lack the information that could dispel the stereotypes and myths that have formed around this illness.

Association Pozityvus Gyvenimas (Positive Life) has decided to solve problems involving the lack of information about and intolerance towards people suffering from HIV. With funds from the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Fund of the Lithuanian

and Swiss Cooperation Programme, the Association implemented Sub-Project "Institutional Capacity Development and Strengthening of Local Municipalities for NGOs Working with HIV / AIDS". This Sub-Project received EUR 54,000.

According to Chairman of Association Pozityvus Gyvenimas Arūnas Kepežinskas, the belief among some parts of society that only degenerate people suffer from HIV and AIDS prevents them from seeing the real causes and accept these people without certain preconceptions. Because of this, the primary goal of the Sub-Project was to strengthen the institutional capacities of the Association, which would help more efficiently defend the interests of people in Lithuania infected by HIV or suffering from AIDS. One of the most important goals of the Sub-Project was to expand the knowledge of people living in Lithuania about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases and to reduce intolerance towards those suffering from these illnesses.

Association Pozityvus Gyvenimas is a non-governmental organisation that unites

people infected with HIV and suffering from AIDS as well as those around them. The Association was created to perform HIV preventative and educational actions and to orient itself not just towards the infected, but towards those around them as well.

During the implementation of the Sub-Project, training sessions and lectures for the members of the Association and for the employees of state and medical institutions were organised. Several hundred people from all over Lithuania participated in the training sessions and lectures in Klaipėda. A. Kepežinskas pointed out that discrimination against people suffering from AIDS exists not just in society, but in public institutions as well, especially in medical institutions. "These people receive very little attention. In some hospitals, AIDS and HIV specialists work for just a couple of hours a day, and there are also cases in which medical workers are afraid of performing medical tests due to infection risks. Therefore, they must be educated," said the Chairman of Association Pozityvus Gyvenimas.



Project Manager's Photo

One of the primary initiatives of the completed Sub-Project was the effort to create and develop a dialogue between non-governmental organisations and state institutions. The members of the Association organised a conference to strengthen cooperation between non-governmental organisations and local municipalities, and this showed that, by working in unison with municipal institutions, non-governmental organisations can more efficiently fight the spread of HIV and AIDS and the discrimination against patients in Lithuania. According to A. Kepežinskas, they began providing free HIV / AIDS tests together with municipalities. Most importantly, municipal representatives' attention was finally turned to this issue. They also created the dialogue for continued cooperation on preventative programmes.

Social campaigns were organised for the broader public. In the summer of 2013, for example, a Celebration of Tolerance was held in Klaipėda with about 300 participants from throughout Lithuania. Using informative displays and pamphlets, people learned about sexually transmitted diseases, their prevention, and how to live

a fulfilling life with these illnesses. As this educational project was carried out, it was very important to spread the information to as wide an audience as possible. To achieve this goal, articles and press releases were published with more information about HIV and AIDS that helped dispel certain myths and unfounded fears.

In her evaluation of the current situation in Lithuania, Head of the HIV/AIDS Division of the Centre for Communicable Diseases and AIDS Irma Čaplinskienė said that the public's tolerance for people infected with HIV has increased over the last twenty years, but their opinion of drug abusers, who comprise about 60% of those infected with HIV in Lithuania, remains almost completely unchanged: "I think that it is this risk group that needs help from NGOs providing social services and that this could become one of the goals for a new project to implement. Though public education and communication on this topic is a complicated process, NGOs could significantly contribute to the integration of the infected into society." According to I. Čaplinskienė, the greatest victory in recent years was the stronger partnerships



Project Manager's Photo

between the state, private and NGO sectors when it comes to HIV prevention.

For his part, Chairman of Association Pozityvus Gyvenimas A. Kepežinskas rejoiced himself over the Sub-Project results and said that the primary goals were achieved: "During the implementation of this Sub-Project, we managed to strengthen the material assets of the Association and update its website and the competences of the members of the Association were upgraded.

However, the most important thing is that we strengthened our cooperation with municipalities and government representatives in solving problems faced by people suffering from AIDS or infected with HIV and their isolation from society." Along with financial and moral support from municipalities, this Association has become much stronger in its educational activities, administration of free HIV and AIDS tests, and in the implementation of new projects encouraging society not to look away from people who have these illnesses.



Project Manager's Photo



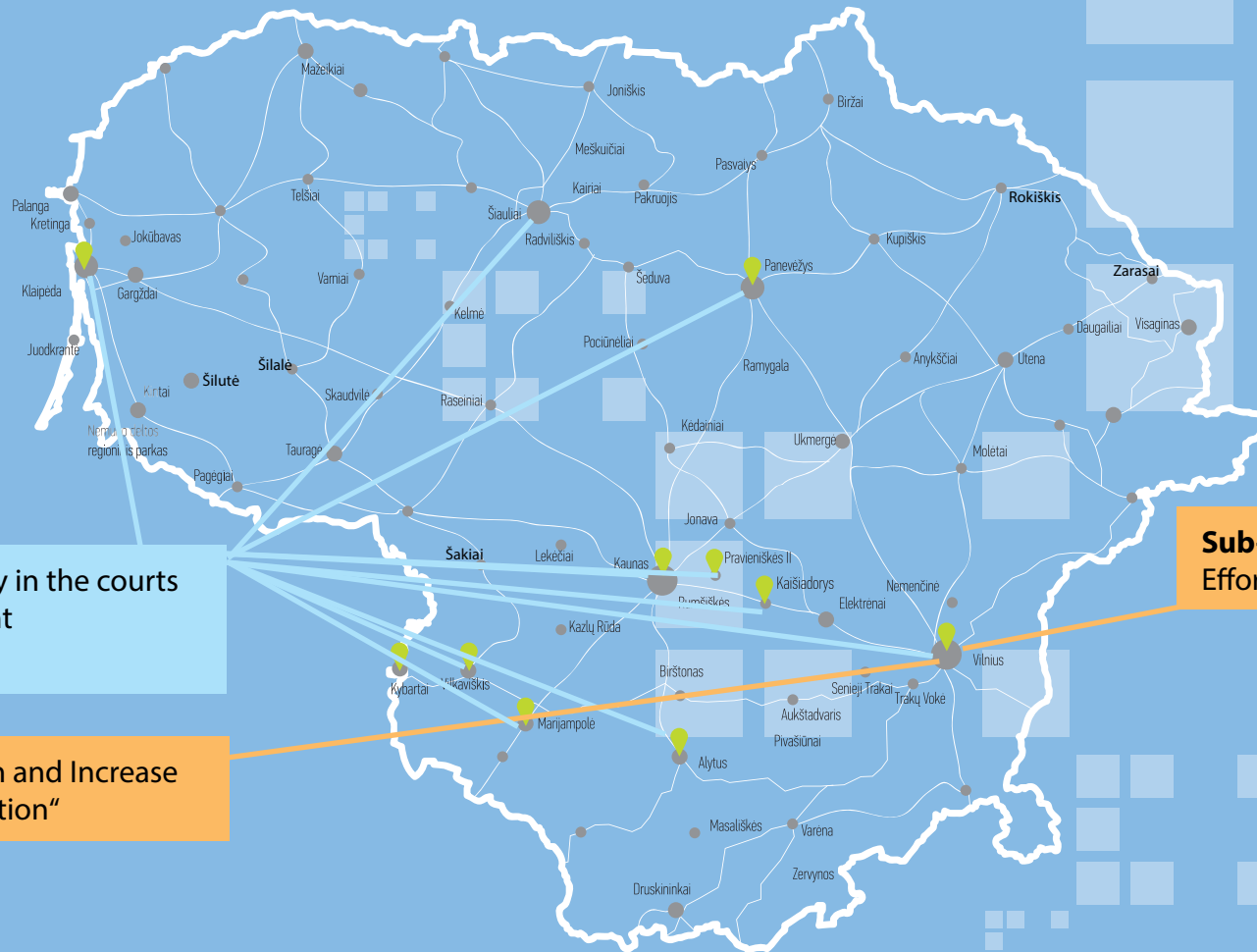
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Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme project map



Project „Modern technology in the courts – faster and more convenient court proceedings“

Project „Maltese Youth Learn and Increase Awareness of Their Organisation“

Sub-Project „HIV and AIDS in Lithuania: Efforts to Dispel Myths“



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Swiss contribution - for real and targeted works