



Srengthening Enagagement in Public Health Rearch

STEPS

Report on National Workshop in Lithuania

May 2010



STEPS Report on National Workshop in Lithuania

„Overview and Opportunities for Institutional Cooperation in Public Health Research. Recommendations for the Future“

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1. SHORT GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKSHOP

- **Introduction and management of the workshop**

The workshop was organised by I Can Live Coalition which established an organisational committee for organising the workshop. The committee consisted of 6 members: representatives of 3 civil society organisations (I Can Live Coalition, the Centre for Civil Initiatives and the Patients' Safety Fund), 2 representatives of the public sector (the Ministry of Health) and one researcher (Vilnius University). All these persons are particularly active in civil society organisations working in the public health area. The national topic was selected by a decision of the organisational committee having regard to what civil society organisations were active in the area of public health and met the STEPS project requirements. There are few such organisations but as many as several analyze the topic of drug dependency – i.e. our national topic, which was therefore selected.

The organisational committee invited participants to the workshop considering the activeness of institutions and organisation in the field of public health research and in



general in the area of public health. A special analysis was carried out of the lists of all main Lithuanian universities having faculties or centres working in the area of public health and the lists of non-governmental organisations available at the Ministry of Health and the Centre for Information and Support to Non-Governmental Organisations selecting those active and carrying out/capable of carrying out research work or be involved therein. We invited:

- 6 university researchers,
- Representatives of the Ministry of Health and governmental institutions related to public health.
- Representatives of organisations financing research.
- 19 civil society organisations.

Patients' organisations representing one disease were not invited because they actually carry out no research or advocacy work.

Before the workshop many institutions and organisations were given a questionnaire drafted on the basis of the questionnaire template proposed by the STEPS project. Some questionnaires were filled in writing but activities of most organisations were overviewed and questionnaires were filled in by calling each of these organisations by phone and asking about their experience in conducting or participating in public health research. Collected information helped to shape a preliminary outlook of the situation in Lithuania and to what extent organisations and institutions were involved in public health research.

Information on the STEPS project was posted on the website of the I Can Live Coalition and presented to members of the Coalition. Before the workshop a short message was distributed about the workshop. After the seminar a comprehensive press release was sent to media. One media representative was present during the seminar (she is also active in the public health field). The press release was posted on the website of the Ministry of Health (http://www.sam.lt/go.php/lit/Noredami_gerinti_visuomenes_sveikata_dau/1055/1/1) and published in the newsletter of the Drug Control Department under the Republic of Lithuania.

- **The title of the workshop:**
Overview and Opportunities for Institutional Cooperation in Public Health Research
- **The aim of the workshop:** to raise public awareness of public health research carried out in Lithuania, to promote cooperation of civil organizations, research and public institutions and to give proposals how to expand the research activities in the field of public health taking account of the needs of the public.
- **The date and venue:** 23 April 2010, Artis Hotel, Carmen Room, Liejyklos g. 11/23, Vilnius, Lithuania
- **Number of participants:** 23



- The title of presentations and names and short introduction of speakers
 - a) Presentation of the STEPS Project and Its Relevance and Terminology
Rima Vaitkienė, Deputy Head of the EU Affairs and International Relations Division of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania
 - b) Overview of Public Health Research: Experience and Opportunities
Marija Veniūtė, Vilnius University, MTVC VšĮ
 - c) Role of Various Civil Society Organisations in Public Health Research.
Jurgita Poškevičiūtė, I Can Live Coalition
 - d) Overview of Research on Psychoactive Substances and Related Public Health Problems.
Aušra Malinauskaitė, Vilnius Centre for Dependency Diseases, I Can Live Coalition

2. REPORT ON FOUR THEMES

Introduction

Object of Analysis

The objectives of the STEPS project implementation are to raise public awareness of public health research carried out in Lithuania, to promote cooperation of civil organizations, research and public institutions and to give proposals how to expand the research activities in the field of public health taking account of the needs of the public. The purpose of this analysis is *to describe research activities conducted in the area of public health in relation to three aspects:*

1. To describe the public health research system in Lithuania (legal basis, responsible institutions, funding and identification of priorities).
2. To overview opportunities for public health research in the European Research Area.
3. To review the involvement of civil society organisations in public health research.
4. To analyse research practices and opportunities within the topic selected. – research in the area of use of drugs and other psychoactive substances.

Methodology

The overview of all the four parts is based on the analysis of primary (expert surveys conducted and survey questionnaires collected from institutions and organisations) and secondary information sources available (legal acts, reports, web resources and other documents),

2.1. Public Health Research System in Lithuania

The evaluation of the scope of research carried out in Lithuania in the area of public health is faced with a conceptual question – what research is to be treated as *public health research*. This dual interpretation emerges from the fact that the classic concept of research defined in the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Higher Education and Researchⁱ is as follows:



- *Basic research* – experimental and/or theoretical operations which are carried out primarily to acquire new knowledge about the essence of phenomena and/or observed reality without aiming, at the time of research, to use the obtained results for a specific purpose.
- *Research and experimental (social, cultural) development* – a systematic creative activity of the study of the nature, human being, culture and society, and the use of the results of such activity.
- *Applied research* – the experimental and/or theoretical operations carried out for acquiring knowledge and primarily aimed at attaining specific practical objectives or at solving tasks.
- *Research and technological development* – a systematic creative activity of the study of the nature, human being, culture and society, and the practical use of the results of such activityⁱⁱ.

Such research is conducted by governmental and non-governmental research and other institutions considered as scientific establishments. This report mainly analyses namely this kind of research.

Meanwhile, another niche where public health research is carried out is commissioned research procured by means of the unpublicised negotiated procedure set out in the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Public Procurementⁱⁱⁱ. It is unknown what the nature of this research is, what its quality is and what place it occupies on the market of public health research because these are contractual relations between the customer and the service provider. In order to find out what public health research is carried out this way, the analysis of such commissioned studies and implementation thereof is necessary.

1. Legal Basis for Public Health Research

The main legal source in Lithuania is the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania which sets the limits for research in Lithuania – no scientific or medical research may be conducted on a person without them knowing and providing free informed consent.

One of the key legal instruments regulating research in Lithuania is the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Higher Education and Research^{ivv} (hereinafter referred to as the LoHER). The LoHER discusses state regulation of higher education and research (more on scientific establishments – in Section 1.2) and quality assurance (both internal and external) of research (and education) conducted thereby, with the exception of non-governmental research institutes which are assessed externally only at the initiative and cost of those institutes proper (Article 43 of the LoHER). It is important to emphasise that the LoHER obliges both governmental and non-governmental science and education institutions *to publicise the outcomes of research conducted* (Art. 45). The Law also discusses the issues of funding of research and education (see more in Section 1.3).

The National Public Healthcare Strategy for 2006-2013 approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as the GoRL) sets out that public health research is one of the ways to implement the objectives of the Public Health Strategy and thus achieve the goals defined therein (paragraphs 20.1 and 20.9 of the Strategy)^{vi}. The Plan



of the Strategy Implementation Measures for 2009-2013 approved in 2009 by the GoRL provides for the performance of the certain research.

In the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Public Health Care, the research is also provided for as a way to improve public health quality. The Law on Public Health Care also sets out that public health care must be based on research justification (Art. 3) and provides that the performance of research is one of the means to ensure public health^{vii} – this provision essentially creates prerequisites for developing public health research.

2. Responsible Institutions

In Lithuania the public health research policy is shaped by the Parliament and implemented by the Government, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Health, the Research Council of Lithuania (RCL) and other institutions.

The RCL is an advisory body on research issues to policy shapers and implementers and is also involved in implementing research programmes and programmed funding of research in the context of competitions and in organising the assessment of scientific developments in Lithuania (Art. 13 of the LoHER)^{viii}.

The RCL has a separate unit – the Research Fund which implements the programmed funding of research projects in the context of competitions.

Institutions conducting research:

- higher educational institutions (universities and colleges);
- research institutions (governmental and non-governmental).

A governmental research institute may be established if there is a need for certain long-term research and (social or cultural) development important for the evolution of the state, the economy or the society. The incorporator of a governmental research institute is the Government.

A non-governmental research institute may be established by natural or legal entities, except for governmental and municipal institutions. The management of non-governmental research institutes is regulated in the incorporating documents thereof.

In Lithuania public health research is mainly carried out by governmental institutions. Involvement of the private and non-governmental sector in this area of research is very low. The country has a number of NGOs carrying out public health research. Public health research is mainly conducted in research institutes or academic establishments. Funding of public health research in this case is conditioned by the status of the institution – academic establishments have research staff carrying out research and teaching staff whose work partially concerns research.

The main universities carrying out public health research are currently Vilnius University, Kaunas Medical University and Klaipėda University. A research institution carrying out public health research and financed by the state budget is, for instance, the Hygiene Institute under the Minister of Health of the Republic of Lithuania.



In Lithuania partnerships between science and business and commercialisation of research are promoted by creating Science and Technology Parks^{ix} and Integrated Centres for Science, Education and Business (Valleys)^x.

3. Opportunities for Involvement of the Non-Governmental Sector in Public Health Research

The concept of the science and education system defined in the LoHER is narrow and only covers institutions (research and educational institutions) whose main activity is research and (social or cultural) experimental development (Art. 4(14)). This provision leaves many private institutions and enterprises with a significant (but not the main) share of research and (social or cultural) development including in the area of public health out of the scope of the research and education system.

Accordingly implemented the research (and education) system policy determines systemic errors in this sector, for example:

- a small number of scholars and other researchers in the non-governmental sector carrying out public health research;
- low business investments into public health research;
- poor competitiveness in carrying out public health research leads to the inadequate quality of research and limited applicability of research findings;

The current situation in its turn constrains the development of public health research and makes Lithuania little attractive for partners in foreign research institutions.

In Lithuania establishments and enterprises with a different legal status are hindered from involvement in public health research by discriminatory provisions creating favourable conditions for research for governmental research institutions while the research and professional experience and competence of institutions become less valuable than their legal status.

Summary: The Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Higher Education and Research enables both governmental and non-governmental institutions to participate in research activities. However, due to the funding policy, if research is conducted by a governmental entity (e.g. a state higher educational institution or a governmental research institute) incorporated (or partially owned) by the state or a municipality, such a research entity is entitled to receive funding from the state budget. At the same time, if the entity is non-governmental, it undoubtedly also participates in competition programmes for research but it must have its own means, look for resources with private business entities, contact international organisations, etc.

4. Funding of Public Health Research

Funding sources for public health research are the following:

1. state budget:
 - 1.1. funds are allocated to research and educational institutions to carry out research;
 - 1.2. funds are allocated under national research programmes and national complex programmes;



- 1.3. funds are allocated under other competition programmes for research.
2. funds of private entities:
 - 4.1. aid received under the Law on Charity and Sponsorship;
 - 4.2. other funds of private natural or legal entities;
 - 4.3. funds gained by the research entity proper from research activities.
3. funds from international and foreign organisations and foundations.

Funding mechanisms:

1. competition funding (granted under competition programmes, projects, etc. with a view to ensuring competitiveness of the research sector and the highest competition).
2. non-competition funding (research is financed from the funds allocated to a research institution (higher education institutions, etc.) for research activities).

One of the examples of competition-based funding mechanisms for public health research is national research and complex programmes. National research programmes and national complex programmes are intended to tackle public health problems important for the state and the society.

Currently, under the RCL initiative there is one national research programme related to the area of public health – the Programme on Chronic Non-Infectious Diseases. The programme identifies the following priority areas: cardiovascular diseases, malignant tumours, diabetes mellitus, neurodegenerative diseases, allergies, mental and behavioural disorders.

According to the Lithuanian National Research Programme *Social Challenges for National Security* approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, public health research is planned on the following general topics:

- Factors of negative evolution of mortality of the Lithuanian population and reasons for socioeconomic differentiation (implementation period – 2010-2011);
- Impact of dependencies on public health and mortality changes in Lithuania (implementation period – 2010-2011);
- Unhealthy and health-damaging behaviour and its impact on population mortality (implementation period – 2012-2013) (*call for expression of interest is planned for Quarter 4 of 2011*).

The above research studies are conducted under Measure 1.2 into Mortality and Public Health Status Research (Impact Factors and Possible Consequences) of Objective 1 Research into the Country's Demographic Development of the National Programme *Social Challenges for National Security*. Applications for the first call for expression of interest were accepted until 13 April 2010. The second call for expression of interest is scheduled for the last quarter of 2010.

At present, the Faculty of Medicine of Vilnius University and Kaunas Medical University together are drafting a national complex medical programme but it does not particularly focus on public health research.



Public health research in Lithuania is seen as marginal between biomedicine, health and social humanitarian studies. Moreover, no capital investments are needed for its implementation, which is why it hardly ever is included in research programmes.

Another example of competition-based financing of public health research is draft programmes commissioned by ministries and financed from the State Research and Education Fund (now – the Research Fund, a part of the RCL).

Pursuant to the provisions of the LoHER, teachers and academic staff as well as other researchers may receive state aid for research training and support for taking part in scientific conferences abroad.

According to the Lithuanian statistics, financing of research and development in the field of health (exclusive of the business sector) was growing in 2005-2008 but only slightly (in 2005 – LTL 50 million, in 2008 – LTL 55.4 million)^{xi}.

A very significant share of public health research conducted in Lithuania is dependent on the funding from international sources within the framework of various projects.

5. Prioritising

Priorities in science as well as in public health research depend on political decisions. As mentioned previously, the science policy in Lithuania is shaped by the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania and implemented by executive authorities (the Government, ministries or authorised institutions).

Identification of priorities in public health research is a complicated process. Normally, responsible institutions create a (working) group of experts representing various research institutions which then identifies priority areas. At the state level, research and development priorities are planned for, assessed and proposed to the authorities by the RCL. In this case the RCL has the right to involve national and foreign experts.

One must point out that public health researchers are not prominent in lobbying activities when defining state-funded research priorities. Hence, it would be true to say that up to now public health research is on the outskirts of research activities.

2.2. The Role of Different Civil Society, Especially the Citizen Organizations, in Contributing to Public Health Research

Objective – to carry out an overview of how civil society organisations are involved in research work in the field of public health and how they cooperate with other institutions/organisations interested in public health research.

NGOs active in the field of public health can be conditionally divided into the following groups:

- Self-support groups. Conduct no research, scarcely participate therein.



- Associations/societies of medical professionals. Probably conduct no research. There are many of them, at least 170.
- Patients' organisations representing a specific disease/group of diseases. Probably conduct no research, except for some of them covering a certain group of diseases. There are many of them, at least 150.
- Health promoting organisations. Conduct no research, do not participate therein.
- NGOs providing services. Study groups to which services are provided but these are mainly surveys.
- NGOs active in the fields of human rights, advocacy and policy-shaping. Sometimes carry out studies with some elements of research, participate in research.
- NGOs active in the area of social matters with certain vulnerable groups. Participate in research but do not link their activities with public health although this link actually exists.

Examples of research conducted by NGOs:

In 2004-2009 the institution Global Initiative in Psychiatry initiated the following research:

- Public Mental Healthcare Services in Lithuania (2004-2005);
- Evaluation of Customers' Stigmatisation (2006);
- Image of the Disabled in Lithuania – A View from Scandinavia (2008-2009);
- Research into Public Opinion of Integration of Persons with Mental Disorders into the Labour Market (2006-2008);
- Employment of Persons with Serious Mental Diseases in Lithuania: Economic Considerations (2006);
- Comprehensive Evaluation of Skills and Work Results of the Disabled (2007);
- Employers' Opinion of Integration of Persons with Mental Disorders into the Labour Market (2008)

In 2004-2009 I Can Live Coalition carried out the following research:

- Accessibility of Healthcare Services to Drug Users and Those Trying to Quit (together with the organisation Mutual Initiatives of Drug Users, 2004)
- Social Tolerance Study (together with the National Health Council, 2005)
- Healthcare, Social and Education Services for Drug Users in Four Municipalities (2005)
- Accessibility of Services for People Living with HIV/AIDS and Drug Users in Lithuania (2004)
- Local Primary and Secondary HIV Prevention Among the Previously Imprisoned (Alytus and Klaipėda, 2009)

Research by the Centre for Civil Initiatives:

- Patients' Rights: Case Study and Possible Solutions (2001), together with the Bioethics Society, the Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights and the Lithuanian Bioethics Committee in implementing the project Patients' Rights in Lithuania: Case Study and Public Awareness Raising
- Analysis of the Exercise of a Person's Right to Privacy and Implementation of the Confidentiality Principle in the Healthcare System (2004) in implementing the project Efficient Assurance of the Patients' Right to Privacy



The funding sources of research/projects are varied but in fact these are solely foreign funds: foreign foundations (e.g. the Open Society Fund Lithuania while it was still operational), international organisations (UNDP, UNODC), embassies of foreign countries, the Nordic Council of Ministers Information Office in Lithuania, various EU financing mechanisms.

Capacity and environment challenges:

- There are not many NGOs capable of conducting research on their own because it is difficult to keep permanent staff able to perform such work. However, NGOs often commission studies.
- Funding sources are very limited and rather oriented towards provision of services or implementation of more “tangible” projects (e.g. sports matches, workshops) than research work and state-of-play analysis.
- Often, there is no access to other research in the field needed because there is a lack of contact with the academic community, no opportunities to access databases as the public availability of research is inadequate.
- Public health is still difficult to understand and priorities are often set to social matters or medical issues.
- NGOs are not considered capable of conducting quality research or formulating tasks for commissioned works.
- They do not participate in the shaping/planning of public health research policy due to the lack of capacity and knowability.

2.3. Overview of Research on Psychoactive Substances and Related Problems in Lithuania

Analysis Summary

Objective – to carry out an overview of how civil society organisations are involved in research work in the field of use of psychoactive substances and related problems.

The overview introduces very basic features and aspects of research on use of psychoactive substances and related problems in Lithuania in 2004-2009.

Studies were searched for in the Internet and in databases (EBSCO and).

Research analysis aspects:

Research conducted in Lithuania can conditionally be divided into the following general groups:

1. Representative research into the spread of use of drugs and psychotropic substances in Lithuania or a specific settlement.
2. Non-representative research into the spread of use of drugs and psychotropic substances in Lithuania or a specific settlement.
3. Representative research into the view of the Lithuanian population towards use and advertising of drugs and psychoactive substances.



4. Opinion of certain groups (employers, pharmacists, etc.) of persons dependent on psychoactive substances from a selected viewpoint (social services, integration into the labour market, etc.).
5. Research into quality and efficiency of services provided by Lithuanian healthcare institutions to persons dependent on psychoactive substances.
6. Research related to behaviour and biological observations of intravenous drug users.
7. Research analysing the spread of psychoactive substances and the nature of related problems in socially excluded groups (persons previously imprisoned; children from care homes; in detention institutions; delinquent adolescents, etc.)

Prevailing Researchers

Most studies are carried out and collected by the Drug Control Department (DCD) under the GoRL (www.nkd.lt). The DCD conducts and collects information about research into the following: **research on the prevalence of use of psychoactive substances and incidence of contagious diseases related to drug use in Lithuania.**

The DCD plays an important role in coordinating and implementing the Lithuanian Drug Control and Drug Use Prevention Policy and in conducting **research into the prevalence of use of psychoactive substances and incidence of contagious diseases related to drug use.** In cooperation with the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction and national institutions, the DCD annually issues an information publication – Annual Report. The publication offers an overview of the key events related to the shaping and implementation of the Drug Control and Drug Use Prevention Policy during a specific year. For example, in the Annual Report 2009 one of the main aspects emphasised is a representative study on the prevalence of use of psychoactive substances in the general population in 2008 which allows evaluating the situation and changes in the country and comparing Lithuania with other EU Member States. Several representative studies of the intensity of alcohol advertising and the population's opinion of alcohol advertising (jointly with the Biomedical Research Institute of Kaunas Medical University, Rait UAB and TNS Gallup) were carried out by the State Mental Health Centre (www.vpsc.lt), a state-funded institution subordinate to the Ministry of Health. Other institutions/organisations or individuals also conduct research covering smaller populations or carrying out qualitative analysis of selected groups.

Research Funding

Research is financed from various sources: the Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Lithuania; various funds and programmes of the EU; the state budget; the National Drug Control and Drug Use Prevention Programmes for 2004-2008; the World Health Organisation, ESPAD; the Open Society Fund Lithuania; the Drug Control Department under the GoRL and others.

Successes

Here are the main studies conducted during the recent years concerning use of psychoactive substances and related problems:

1. In Lithuania there is representative research carried out as an important means to understand methods and trends of drug use, the spread of risky behaviour, etc. Studies



- also provide useful contextual information about use methods, sociological and demographic features of drug users and an understanding of risk and availability.
2. As pointed out in the DCD's Annual Report 2009, a study on the prevalence of use of psychoactive substances in the general population of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as the Study) was carried out for the second time in 2008. Like in the first study (2004), the main goals were to collect and assess standardised data about the prevalence of use of psychoactive substances in the general population by gender and age groups; to evaluate behavioural models of Lithuanian residents and their views on the use of tobacco, alcoholic beverages and drugs and psychotropic substances and to evaluate the link between social and demographic features of respondents and the use of tobacco, alcoholic beverages and drugs and psychotropic substances. The research method is a representative survey of Lithuanian residents of 15 to 64 years of age. In order to ensure international comparability of the research data, the population survey was carried out in accordance with methodological recommendations of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and using the standardised European model questionnaire of the EMCDDA. To ensure better understanding of which groups are most vulnerable and what motivates these groups, the questionnaire was supplemented with questions on respondents' social and demographic indicators, socioeconomic data, behavioural patterns and views.
 3. In March through May 2008, with a view to evaluating the availability of drugs and psychotropic substances and the prevalence of use and use patterns thereof among Lithuanian club-goers, the DCD conducted a survey of club-goers in Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai and Panevėžys. 545 questionnaires were self-filled.
 4. Another significant study is the ESPAD 2007 Study of Alcohol and Other Drugs. The main purpose of the ESPAD is to collect comparable data about the use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs among school students of 15-16 years of age in a number of European countries. The assessment and comparison of the study findings show not only the prevalence of use and use patterns of alcohol, tobacco and drugs but also help to identify their change trends since 1995, to compare them with the data of other European countries involved in the study and to propose recommendations on improvements to the prevention policy.
 5. The evaluation of the prevalence of problematic drug use in Lithuania was carried out just once, in 2007, when implementing a regional United Nations project *HIV/AIDS Prevention and Monitoring Among Intravenous Drug Users and Convicted Persons in Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia*.
 8. Studies aimed at revealing the opinion of certain groups (employers, pharmacists, etc.) of persons dependent on psychoactive substances from a selected viewpoint (social services, integration into the labour market, etc.) are also significant and help to identify the opinions of the public and to draft recommendations on how to tackle problems caused by psychoactive substances.
 9. Analysis carried out to establish the ways, methods and opportunities of providing medical, psychological and social rehabilitation services to children using psychoactive substances in the country is important in order to improve the services provided and to ensure better accessibility thereof.
 10. Representative research on the attitudes of the Lithuanian population towards use and advertising of drugs and psychoactive substances is also conducted. Studies are carried



out by competent public opinion and market research centres with vast experience in organising representative research of large populations.

11. In Lithuania research is also carried out analysing the prevalence of psychoactive substances and the nature of related problems in socially excluded groups (persons previously imprisoned; children from care homes; in detention institutions; delinquent adolescents, etc.).
12. Cooperation with other institutions/organisations in carrying out public health research is sufficient. Institutions/organisations mention a wide range of organisations/institutions and experts cooperated with. The benefits of cooperation include joint research, exchange of specialists and consultations/recommendations and organisation of joint conferences. Cooperation makes it possible to ensure the quality and a broader scope of activities.

Challenges

1. Various studies conducted every year (e.g. evaluation of risky behaviour among intravenous drug users) are conducted by various service providers (e.g. in Vilnius, in Klaipėda, etc.) using different research tools (different questionnaires, selection methods, etc.), which makes it impossible to compare data and obtain more credible data.

2.4. European Dimensions: Opportunities for Public Health Research in the European Research Area

On 23-24 March 2000 the Lisbon Council approved the Lisbon Strategy setting out a strategic goal – to make the knowledge economy of the European Union the most dynamic and competitive economic in the world within 10 years ensuring that education, research and innovations would be the crucial means to achieve this strategic goal. Given the strategic value of research and with a view to helping research institutions to communicate more efficiently and improve coordination of their activities across Europe, the idea of creating the common European Research Area (ERA) was approved.

The main financial instrument supporting research and development activities in the European Union is Framework Programmes (FP). These programmes in the European Union help to finance research in practically all areas of science.

On 18 December 2006 the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research and technological development (2007-2013) (FP7) was approved^{xii}. The programme is financed by the EU. The total budget of the Programme is 53.272 billion euros. The key goal of the Programme is to contribute to the transformation of the EU into the leading area of research in the world^{xiii}. To that end, the FP7 must be clearly oriented towards promotion of and investment into the cutting-edge global research, in particular competence-based research. One of the principles underlying the implementation of the Programme is that the Programme supports research meeting the priorities, i.e. the key directions of the EU policies. In this respect, healthcare is ranked at the top, along with environment, energy and other areas.



In the FP7 Cooperation Programme^{xiv} healthcare is one of the key topics both in terms of focus placed thereon and in terms of funding (the health topic is given 6.1 billion euros). The purpose of this topic is to improve the health status of European citizens, to increase competitiveness of health-related European industries and business companies and to promote innovative capacity to tackle public health problems, including the fight against new epidemics. The focus is placed on applied research (application of the key findings in clinical practices including scientific reaffirmation of experimental results), development and approval of new treatment methods, health boosting and prevention methods including children's health, promotion of healthy ageing, diagnostic measures and medical technologies as well as sustainable and efficient healthcare systems.

Analysis of the research activities in the field of healthcare under the FP7 gives some grounds to state that public health research is given rather significant attention, which means that legal and financial prerequisites for research in this area are in place.

It must be pointed out that the FP7 promotes intergovernmental cooperation, which is why a lion's share of funds is allocated for joint research. Furthermore, in the field of healthcare involvement of small and medium enterprises is promoted (hopefully at least 15% (900 million euros) of all the funds earmarked for healthcare (6.1 billion euros) will go to small and medium enterprises^{xv}).

At present, there are 3 projects directly related to public health being implemented under the FP7 but no representatives of Lithuania are involved:

- A project on health promotion and disease prevention to tackle obesity problems (TEMPEST – *Temptations to Eat Moderated by Personal and Environmental Self-regulation Tools*);
- A project on application of the findings of clinical tests in clinical practices related to new methods of treatment of vascular diseases (EIS – *Development of a European Implementation Score for measuring implementation of research into healthcare practice using vascular disease*);
- A project on healthcare system quality, efficacy and solidarity related to the study on mobility of health professionals (MohProf – *Mobility of Health Professionals*).^{xvi}

Research institutions of Lithuania are involved in 6 projects under the FP7:

- 2007 – a project of the Eurasia Harm Reduction Network (Access to Opioid Medication in Europe);
- 2007 – a KMU project (HEALTH PROfessional Mobility in THE European Union Study);
- 2007 – a KMU project (European Urban Health Indicators Part Two: Using indicators to inform policy);
- 2007 – a KTU project of the Lithuanian Innovation Centre (Empowering Biomedical and Bioengineering SMEs to promote participation in FP7 projects);



- 2007 – a Vilnius University project (Evaluation of Legislation and Related Guidelines on the Procurement, Storage and Transfer of Human Tissues and Cells in the European Union – an Evidence-Based Impact Analysis);
- 2009 – a KMU project (Quality and costs of primary care in Europe).

As practically none of the above projects is related to public health research, these projects are not analysed here.

European Structural Funds

Public health research has not been directly funded from the EU SF. Still, research institutions participated in the EU SF projects and received support for infrastructure modernisation projects (in renovating research facilities) and for professional development of researchers working in those institutions.

The EU SF support is included in the funding of the National Medical Complex Programme but as mentioned before, this Programme does not pay special attention to public health research.

3. SUMMARY OF GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

- Organisations/institutions in Lithuania carry out various research initiatives related to public health but public availability and dissemination of research results is very limited. Research descriptions sometimes fail to provide specific methodological grounds for research, its representativeness and validity. It is not treated as a full-fledged research area among others when decisions on research priorities and funding are made.
- In Lithuania public health research is mainly carried out by governmental institutions. Involvement of the private and non-governmental sector in this area of research is very low. The country has a number of NGOs carrying out public health research. NGOs are not considered capable of research. However possible cooperation of governmental institutions and NGOs is welcomed. The benefit of cooperation lies in the performance of joint research, common definition of the research objective and priorities together discussing the most relevant areas, access to research objects difficult to reach for various reasons, e.g. the socially excluded. In practice NGOs have very limited possibilities get state funding for public health (or other) research.
- Conditions for receiving funding for research are not favourable. Organisations/institutions have mentioned that funding in Lithuania is received through tenders of projects and public procurement procedures. The biggest problem for NGOs is the situation of unfair play with governmental institutions, corruption and vague selection criteria and assessment. Another problem identified is the problem of co-funding European projects as in other EU countries organisations can obtain the co-funding means from certain funds.
- In the field of drug use there are research activities carried out, since this area is covered by the Drug Control Department, considered as an inter-sectoral institution the under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. However, there is a lack of research on assessment of specific treatment methods and/or efficiency of organising



the provision of care. As research methodologies vary between institutions and between time periods, results are difficult to compare.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a need for better coordination of public health research in the country because it is often the case that several institutions conduct research into the same matter. Potential coordinating institution – the Research Council of Lithuania or the National Health Board under the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania.
- To draw attention of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania to the need for public health research and specific research topics in order to avoid overlapping of research and to promote continuity of research conducted previously (useful for the monitoring of dynamics and changes).
- Dissemination of the results of public health research needs to be promoted. Much research is only available in specialised databases or journals.
- NGOs should conduct research together with research institutes, which would guarantee objectivity and professionalism. NGOs should try to publicise their research in reviewed journals as this is one of the ways to prove the research validity.
- NGOs have more opportunities to carry out research together with governmental research institutions where such research is conducted not with state funds but, for instance, using EU funds.
- It is purposeful to seek that EU-funded research would be subject to the mandatory requirement to involve civil society organisations. The Council of Lithuanian Patients' Organisations is active in pursuing this.
- In the area of research into the use of drugs and psychotropic substances and related research, it is necessary to abandon some low-value studies, e.g. identification of reasons for alcohol use because they deliver no new information;
- To separate research from surveys and case studies;
- To assess research quality and researchers' qualification;
- To promote cooperation with NGOs in conducting public health research (to make contact with the group researched, to form a broader view of the problem, etc.). NGOs may also be partners helping to organise research (e.g. with due training, helping to collect data). NGOs can successfully publicise research conducted;
- The workshop participants recommend disseminating the workshop conclusions and recommendations to decision-makers to pursue that public health research would become a full-fledged area of research given due attention. Specifically in the name of the STEPS workshop participants, to contact the National Health Board suggesting that it should ask the Research Council of Lithuania to appoint a coordinator of public health research which could be the National Health Board proper, the institution accountable to the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania (www.lrs.lt).



CONCLUSIONS

- Organisations/institutions in Lithuania carry out various research related to public health but the specific methodological grounds, representativeness and validity of research are not always given. Public availability and dissemination of research are limited.
- There is a lack of research oriented towards assessment of efficiency of organization of the provision of healthcare services.
- There is a lack of funding for public health research.
- Civil society organisations find it difficult to compete with governmental institutions for limited funds. Probably, competition with governmental institutions is not based on fair play, is not transparent and corrupt decisions may be taken.
- Civil society organisations in Lithuania face yet another problem of co-funding European projects as in other EU countries civil society organisations can obtain the co-funding means from individual funds.
- To inform the public and decision-makers about STEPS to pursue that public health research would become a significant and full-fledged area of research given due attention.

5. ATTACHMENTS

Agenda of the workshop

10.00-12:30 Part I. Introduction and topic presentation.

1. Presentation of the project and its relevance and terminology
Rima Vaitkienė, Deputy Head of the EU Affairs and International Relations Division of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania
Virginija Ambrazevičienė, Head of the Health Policy Division of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania
2. Overview of Public Health Research: Experience and Opportunities. European Dimension.
Marija Veniūtė, Vilnius University, MTVC VšĮ

11.30-11.50 Coffee break

3. Role of Various Civil Society Organisations in Public Health Research.
Jurgita Poškevičiūtė, I Can Live Coalition
4. Overview of Research on Psychoactive Substances and Related Public Health Problems.
Aušra Malinauskaitė, Vilnius Centre for Dependency Diseases, I Can Live Coalition

12.30-13.15 Questions and answers.

Moderated by Erika Matuizaitė, I Can Live Coalition

13.15-14.00 Lunch



14.00-15.30 Part II. Group work and drafting of recommendations.

1. Experience and Opportunities in Public Health Research.
Marija Veniūtė, Vilnius University, MTVC VŠĮ
2. Role of Various Civil Society Organisations in Public Health Research.
Jurgita Poškevičiūtė, I Can Live Coalition
3. Overview of Dependency Studies.
Aušra Malinauskaitė, Vilnius Centre for Dependency Diseases, I Can Live Coalition

15.30-16:30 Part III. Presentation and discussion of group work outcomes.

16:30-17.00 Part IV. Evaluation of the workshop (in writing or verbally)

List of participants

No.	Name, last name	Organization, position
1	Jurgita Vladickine	Kaunas University of Medicine, lecturer
2	Marija Veniute	Vilnius University, public institution MTVC
3	Rima Vaitkiene	Ministry of Health, Head of Department
4	Ausra Malinauskaite	I Can Live Coalition, Vilnius Center for Addictive Disorders
5	Laima Bulotaite	Vilnius University, Department of General Psychology
6	Rimantas Stukas	Vilnius University Department of Medicine
7	Laura Narkauskaite	Institute of Higene
8	Liuba Murauskiene	Public institution MTVC
9	Loreta Stoniene	UNODC project coordinator
10	Rolanda Valinteliene	Higienos institutas
11	Audrius Sceponauskas	Ministry of Health, Head of department
12	Loreta Asokliene	SAM VSD, VSSS.
13	Nijole Gostautaite-Midthun	„Psychiatry news“
14	Jurgis Andriuska	NGO „Pozitive Life“
15	Vida Augustiniene	Lithuanian Council of Patient Organizations
16	Jurgita Poskeviciute	I Can Live Coalition
17	Erika Matuizaite	Center of Civic Initiatives
18	Audrone Astrauskiene	Drug Control Department under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania
19	Virginija Ambrazeviciene	Ministry of Health
20	Iona Veckiene	Secretariat of the National Council on Health
21	Lina Ignataviciute	National Mental Health Center



22	Vytautas Gasperas	Drug Control Department under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania
23	Svetlana Kuslsis	Asociation of women living with HIV/AIDS

List of Steering Committee

1. Jurgita Poskeviciute
2. Erika Matuizaite
3. Ausra Malinauskaite
4. Rima Vaitkene
5. Virginija Ambrazeviciene
6. Marija Veniute

Summary of the evaluation

10 evaluation forms filled out.

1. Was the workshop topic important and relevant? Why?

Participants indicated that the topic is relevant and important and is discussed internationally but not in Lithuania. It broadened the understanding of what is happening in this field in Lithuania. Many indicated that they participated at an event on public health research for the first time in Lithuania. It was the first time that CSOs discussed with researchers on this topic.

2. Was the chosen topic of research on Psychoactive Substances and Related Public Health Problems important and relevant? Why?

Yes, it is important and relevant. It is one of the most relevant fields for NGO work and influence. This project could draw the attention of government to this problem because the attention is not adequate and knowledge insufficient. Work on this topic also proves that NGOs and researchers can cooperate.

3. Where the presentations useful? Why?

Very interesting, useful and informative, especially because information sources were indicated. Well prepared, lots of new information. They demonstrated attitudes towards research. Good presentors who know their field.

4. Will the workshop contribute to cooperation between NGOs and researchers? Why?

Possibly yes. At least now it is clearer whom to address if we want to participate in research. Researchers understood the benefit of cooperation with NGOs. Areas where researchers can cooperate with NGOs were clearly indicated. It is possible that individual contacts will be established only. However, there is a lack of coordinating institution.

5. Where working groups during the seminar productive? Why?



Very productive because lots of interesting ideas were given, everyone had a chance to speak out. It added to the presentations. In one group, there would have been more time. Another indicated that some points were already discussed in the general discussion.

6. What could be the follow up action after this workshop?

It would be useful to receive further information and the copies of presentations. Recommendations on the financing of research should be presented to the Council of Science and the Ministry of Health. The discussion should be continued further and information exchanged further. Seminar report should be prepared. The results of the discussion should be publicized – to the Council of Science, NGOs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education.

ⁱ Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Higher Education and Research of 30 April 2009, No. XI-242, *Official Gazette*, 2009, 54-2140, Art. 4.

ⁱⁱ Lietuvos statistikos metraštis 2009, Vilnius 2009; p. 252.

ⁱⁱⁱ Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Public Procurement approved on 11 February 2010, Order No. [XI-678](#), *Official Gazette*, 2010, No. 25-1174., Art. 73(1).

^{iv} Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania of 25 October 1992 (*Official Gazette*, 1992, No. 33-1014), Art. 23.

^v Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Higher Education and Research approved by the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania on 30 April 2009, No. XI-242, *Official Gazette*, 2009, 54-2140.

^{vi} National Public Healthcare Strategy for 2006-2013 approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on 27 July 2001 by Resolution No. 941 (new wording of Resolution No. 600 of 19 June 2006), *Official Gazette*, 2006, No. 70-2574.

^{vii} Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Public Healthcare approved on 24 May 2007 by Order No. [X-1150](#), *Official Gazette*, 2007, No. 64-2455 (2007-06-09).

^{viii} Pursuant to the RCL regulations, the RCL:

- drafts, evaluates and submits proposals to the authorities concerning research priorities and coordinates implementation thereof;
- evaluates research conducted in Lithuania;
- drafts and implements national research programmes;
- participates in drafting and implementing EU support programmes;
- provides financial support to research carried out at the initiative of the RCL or researchers;
- supports researchers' activities.

^{ix} In Lithuania there are 10 active science and technology parks:

- [Saulėtekis Valley Science and Technology Park](#)
- [Science and Technology Park](#)
- [KTU Regional Science and Technology Park](#)
- [Kaunas Hi-Tech and IT Park](#)
- [Šiaurės Miestelis Technology Park](#)
- [Klaipėda Science and Technology Park](#)
- [Visoriai IT Park](#)
- [Agricultural Science and Technology Park of the Lithuanian University of Agriculture](#)
- [Technopolis Science and Technology Park](#)
- [Panevėžys Science and Technology Park](#)

All science and technology parks in Lithuania are located in the best developed economic centres of the country with numerous qualified human resources. These parks are established near higher education institutions and research centres forming rapidly developing science, education and business centres – valleys.

^x Valleys are created to concentrate the business potential for research, education and knowledge. Lithuanian long-term strategic documents emphasise the need for closer interaction between science, education and



business. The development of integrated science, education and business centres is to create international hubs of science, education and knowledge economy in Lithuania, to accelerate the development of the knowledge society and strengthen long-term grounds for Lithuania's economic competitiveness.

Lithuania has five valley development programmes approved: a valley for the development of the Lithuanian marine sector, Nemunas, Santaka, Santara and Saulėtekis.

Santara Valley in Vilnius is to cover the following research areas: biotechnology; innovative medical technologies, molecular medicine and biopharmacy; ecosystems and sustainable development; information and communications technology. Valley initiators: Vilnius University, Vilnius Gediminas University of Technology, Institute of Biochemistry, Institute of Biotechnology, Institute of Mathematics and Information, VU Hospital Santariškės Clinic; Fermentas UAB, Sicor Biotech UAB, Teltonika UAB, Association of Pharmaceutical Companies.

One of the main projects is the Joint Centre for Life Sciences (the agreement on the project Creation of the Joint Centre for Life Sciences was signed on 2 April 2010). A modern complex of open-access research and training laboratories equipped with state-of-the-art facilities the country's researchers will study the human genome searching for new methods of diagnosing and treating cancer and other serious diseases, developing the application of biotechnology in environment protection, manufacturing processes and other areas. This centre is one of the most important integrated science, education and business valley projects. The Joint Centre for Life Sciences financed by the European Union Structural Funds and the state budget is developed by Vilnius University together with partners – Vilnius Gediminas University of Technology, Institutes of Biotechnology and Biochemistry and Vilnius University Institute of Oncology. The total project value is LTL 125.4 million, of which about LTL 106 million will come from the EU funds, and the rest – from the state budget (http://www.mokslas.lt/lt/mokslo_ir_studiju_sistemas_per/naujienos/vilniuje_kuriamas_jungtinis_gy/).

^{xi} Lietuvos statistikos metraštis 2009, Vilnius 2009; p. 256-257.

^{xii} **Decision No. 1982/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013).**

^{xiii} In general, the European Framework Programme (FP) is the largest research and development programme and the main funding instrument for the EU research. The FP is a continuous research and development programme. The purpose of the FP7 is to unite the European Research Area created by the FP6 and thus give a new momentum to the implementation of the EU goals under the Lisbon Strategy. Lithuania has taken part in the Framework Programmes since the Fifth Framework Programme (1999-2002) (as an associated member) and in the FP6 Lithuania started to participate in all Programme activities and receive funding.

^{xiv} The FP7 consists of 4 main specific programmes: COOPERATION, IDEAS, PEOPLE and CAPACITY and 2 additional specific programmes: EURATOM and the Joint Research Centre.

^{xv} **EU-funded health research actively seeks SME participation:**

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/health/sme_en.html.

^{xvi} Source: http://ec.europa.eu/research/health/ongoing-fp7-public-health_en.html.