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 Lietuvos sutrikusio intelekto žmonių globos  
bendrija  
VILTIS

The full text of this report is available at  
<http://www.eumap.org/reports/2005>.

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## “Why are people with intellectual disabilities in Lithuania not allowed to work?”

*Budapest and Vilnius, 07 December 2005.* In Lithuania, people with intellectual disabilities have no job opportunities at all. However, education opportunities for children with intellectual disabilities have improved dramatically in recent years.

These are the main findings of a new report monitoring access to education and employment for people with intellectual disabilities in Lithuania, produced by the EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program (EUMAP) of the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the Open Society Mental Health Initiative, in cooperation with the Lithuanian Welfare Society for People with Intellectual Disability, “Viltis”.

The OSI report released today is one of a series of 14 country reports prepared by the OSI. It presents an overview of the opportunities and challenges facing people with intellectual disabilities in accessing education and employment. Providing this group with real access to employment and to quality education would enable them to live and work in the community as equal citizens and secure a dignified life. Monitoring for the report on Lithuania was carried out during the period November 2003 – February 2005.

In Lithuania, legislation on the protection of the rights of people with disabilities has been significantly strengthened recently, with the transposition into national legislation of the provisions of the EU’s Race Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) and Employment Directive (2000/78/EC). Yet, despite these positive changes, job opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities in Lithuania have actually decreased in the last years, and are today practically non-existent. This, despite the fact that the overall unemployment rate in the country has steadily fallen.

Lithuanian law guarantees the right to employment for all persons. It also defines additional employment guarantees and a quota system for people with disabilities. In practice, however, these provisions are not effective enough in encouraging the employment of people with — specifically — intellectual disabilities, since only persons with determined “working capacity” can make use of them.

Because they are not given the chance to work, the overwhelming majority of people with intellectual disabilities in Lithuania are today fully reliant on State benefits. Yet the benefits they receive do not even cover their basic living costs.

Supported employment is internationally recognised as the best way for people with intellectual disabilities to access jobs. Supported employment services offer on-the-job assistance allowing people to work in the open labor market. However, there is no framework for supported

employment in Lithuania, and to date, there have been only few projects on supported employment for people with intellectual disabilities.

On the assumption that people with intellectual disabilities are unable to protect their own interests, the courts in Lithuania declare the vast majority of adults with intellectual disabilities legally incapable when they reach the age of 18. They are then placed under guardianship and lose all their civil and economic rights, including the right to work. Although existing legislation does provide for the possibility to only limit — rather than fully remove — an individual’s legal capacity, these provisions are not applied to persons with intellectual disabilities.

In contrast to the discouraging employment situation of people with intellectual disabilities in Lithuania, educational opportunities for children with intellectual disabilities have regularly improved over recent years. The number of children and young people with intellectual disabilities integrated into mainstream schools has been steadily increasing — approximately 8,000 pupils with intellectual disabilities attended mainstream schools in total. Young people with a mild level of intellectual disabilities now also have more possibilities to acquire professional vocational qualifications — although, as yet, none of the vocational training courses are adapted specifically for people with a more level of severe intellectual disabilities.

Nonetheless, according to Lithuanian experts, not all those children with intellectual disabilities who could be integrated are yet able to attend a mainstream school. The main barriers are the small number of available teachers with the necessary qualifications to assist with their integration, and the lack of transportation services, particularly in rural areas.

The OSI report also highlights the fact that, unfortunately, there is no available data on the numbers of children and young people with intellectual disabilities who do not receive any education or are educated outside the school system, at home.

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### **Note to editors**

This report is part of a series of 14 country monitoring reports monitoring “Access to Education and Employment for People with Intellectual Disabilities” throughout Europe. The reports were prepared by EUMAP, the EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program of the Open Society Institute, in cooperation with MHI, OSI’s Mental Health Initiative. All reports are available online at <http://www.eumap.org>. More information on the Open Society Institute is available at <http://www.soros.org>.

The report does not provide analysis of new legislation regulating the social integration of people with disabilities in all areas of life that entered into force on 1 July 2005.