

## CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING MENTAL HEALTH POLICY IN LITHUANIA

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**Introduction.** Lithuania has one of the highest rates of suicides in the world. It is well known that suicides are one of the most important issues in mental health. Before considering our study, we made hypothesis, that there must be a direct link between suicides rate and mental health policy implementation. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, we analyzed how mental health policy implementation was made since Lithuania's independency until nowadays (data until 2010). Our study consisted of three parts: interviews with mental health experts, analysis of the topics on mental health in both media and government and review of mental health policy implementation steps through 1990-2010.

**Aim.** To analyze the basic challenges of implementing mental health policy in Lithuania through the viewpoints of policy decision makers and mass media.

**Results.** The study revealed strong connection between the famous mental health tragedies in Lithuania - suicides of famous people, cases of homicides and governmental decisions in mental health policy. There is a lack of consistent mental health policy as well as fulfillment of mental health strategy, which was created and recreated during mentioned period for several times. The analysis of governments' transcripts revealed that there is no problematic discursion about the running of mental health care institutions as well as the analysis of their input and importance towards mental health system.

**Conclusions.** Mental health policy is unusual topic in both media and government. When it is, it does not necessary come to clear and strong changes in mental health law changes following appreciable variations in situation. However, at the light of European Union provided mental health policy, it is fully understandable that the harms in mental health policy could be minimized by investing to stigma decrease, disabled integration to society and de-institutionalization. The overcoming of these challenges are still in the future.