



## SWISS CONTRIBUTION MAKES CHILDBIRTH SAFER IN LITHUANIA

On the International Children's Day, there will be a special celebration for the **Kaunas Republican Hospital Obstetrics and Gynecological Clinic's Christian Maternity Home**. It will mark the completion of the Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme's project, whose funds have made this maternity home more welcoming, warmer and cozier. The end of the project also symbolically coincided with the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christian Maternity Home.

“Since 1926, when the famous pre-war gynecologist Isaac Levitan founded his private hospital to provide obstetric and gynecological care, about 100,000 babies have been born here. In some families, giving birth at this maternity home has become a tradition handed down from generation to generation. Women have said that their mothers, grandmothers and even great-grandmothers gave birth here,” said Virgilijus Rudzinskas, the head of the Obstetrics and Gynecological Clinic.

Though much has changed over the 90 years and Lithuania's medicine meets all European standards, the mission of obstetricians' and gynecologists' work remain the same: to protect peoples' lives from the very beginning and create the best possible conditions for childbirth. The support of the Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme has helped doctors pursue this goal.

“We are very fortunate to be participating in this programme, because we have received and will continue to receive modern medical equipment worth €350,000 – ultrasounds, maternity beds, infant resuscitation beds, fetal surveillance monitors and infant incubators. In other words, everything we need to help mothers feel comfortable and have safe labor and delivery. We've also used the programme's funding to insulate the clinic's roof, install a modern ventilation system, and change the heating and electrical systems. The everyday conditions for our workers and patients have improved significantly,” said Mr. Rudzinskas, reflecting on the benefits of the support being provided.

Twenty-seven hospitals throughout Lithuania providing perinatal and neonatal health care services have been participating in the Lithuanian- Swiss Cooperation Programme's since 2012. A total of 53.6 million Swiss francs (ca. €48.7 million) has been allocated and used for the implementation of projects. The Swiss people gave Lithuania €41.4 million in a referendum vote, and Lithuania contributed €7.3 million from the national budget.

Deputy Minister of Health Valentin Gavrillov noted that the greatest benefit of this bilateral partnership has been manifested in improving newborn and infant survival rates. “The Swiss support is especially important because it will allow us to provide every mother and infant with high-quality modern services regardless of where they live – in the capital city or in smaller towns. We hope that the improving healthcare services for infants, pregnant women and women in labor will encourage families to have more children. I personally have had the opportunity to witness dramatic changes at Vilnius' hospitals between 2004 and now. All three of my children were born here. The conditions have been improving with every year as has the quality of care,” the deputy minister said.

The primary goal of the programme has been to improve perinatal and neonatal health care services. Under the Lithuanian-Swiss Cooperation Programme, building infrastructure will be made more power efficient at 24 Lithuanian hospitals. The changes include replacement of windows and exterior doors, wall and roof insulation, new heating, ventilation and power supply systems, new medical gas supply systems, solar collectors and photovoltaic power systems. This will make the hospitals warmer, airier and cozier for both patients and staff. Twenty-seven Lithuanian hospitals have been provided with the latest modern medical equipment, and that has already raised our obstetrics to a higher level.



The hospitals were presented with a total of 87 pieces of medical equipment worth more than €15.8 million. Medical staff says the equipment can be used to perform unique surgeries. For example, at the beginning of the year, a girl was born at the Kaunas Clinics whose blood had been transfused five times while she was still in her mother's womb with the help of an ultrasound device. The hospitals will continue receiving the latest medical equipment that is the envy of neighboring countries' medical staff until the end of this year.

Thanks to the Programme, hospital specialists have also been presented with excellent opportunities to improve their qualifications. Last year, more than 2,000 medical staff participated in trainings where they improved their knowledge in conflict resolution and patient interaction, infant resuscitation, obstetric aid, and other fields. Another 1,500 personnel are to attend training this year.

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- <http://www.delfi.lt/sveikata/sveikatos-naujienos/sveicaru-milijonai-padeda-lietuvos-kudikiams-gimti-saugiau.d?id=71428848>
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