

## **Speech and Language Therapy in Lithuania: National and International Contexts**

Speech And Language Therapy In Lithuania: National And International Contexts Daiva Kairiene<sup>2</sup>

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Introduction. Speech and language therapists (SLT) across Europe practise in different sectors and settings, according to the particular socio-economic circumstances and structures in their own country across the health and the education sector. Current speech and language therapy education in EU countries differs in curricular structure and also in degree level. SLT education has been evolving and continues to expand in size and range of models both within and across countries (NetQues, 2011).

Purpose - to overview the education, required competences, practice of speech and language therapists' (SLT) in Lithuania within the international practice context and to disclose professional interests, needs and challenges, distinguished by SLT's in the country.

Method. The education and practice of SLTs in the country is presented in the framework of documents, recommendations and study programmes' analysis at the national and European level. Professional interests, needs and challenges of SLT's are disclosed, using open-ended questionnaire of SLTs (N=100), working in education and health care field. Empirical data was analysed using qualitative content analysis method.

Results and conclusions. Analysis of the SLT profession legislation, SLT's education and professional practice in other European countries emphasizes the importance of an initial SLT education programmes, that enables those who successfully complete it to have achieved a series of competences that will allow them to practise effectively in their profession. The experiences of Lithuanian SLTs' show the need for the further dialogue among policy makers, professional association, academic communities and practitioners due to development of: the conception and structure of the SLTs' training model, qualification requirements and level of initial education, common documentation of practice, standards for the professional development and etc.