

How Covid-19 is affecting Lithuania

Lithuania is taking drastic measures to ensure the health and safety of their country due to the Covid-19 virus. Lithuania sits on the Baltic Sea and borders Belarus, Latvia, Poland, and Russia. Lithuania has a population of around 3 million and has been hit by the Coronavirus pandemic hard.

Lithuania is in a strict nationwide quarantine. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Lithuania has 1,398 reported cases of Covid-19 and 38 confirmed deaths. WHO expects the number of cases to continue to rise in coming weeks. To ensure the stop of the spread the Parliament, called Seimas, have been discussing adopting a bill that allows the government to track the locations of residents to ensure people are following stay at home orders.

With this bill, people would be fined and possibly jailed for not following stay at home orders. The government intends to enlist the help of cellphone providers to carry this motion out.

The government also voted to extend the current jail time imposed for people who know they have the virus and do not take proper precautions. The government believes public safety is paramount to privacy during this time.

However, in a country that continually struggles with poverty, homelessness, and mental health officials worry these measures will cause distrust and fear. In 2017, the National Network of Poverty Reduction estimated 22.9 percent of Lithuania lived in poverty and this number has likely increased but the government is averse to releasing numbers. Lithuanian's are "self-sufficient and show resistance to being helped," noted Alex Tello, a recent missionary. This attitude and pride contribute to the continued poverty.

Lithuania harshly judges people who are homeless and ill, and many people view them as "incapable," Tello notes. Opposers to the government's plan note the ability to track people's locations and whereabouts during this Covid-19 pandemic would only cause heightened disdain for the vulnerable populations.

These vulnerable populations include the homeless and the impoverished because they are unable to properly social distance and seek adequate care they need. While there has been precautions for those returning to Lithuania from foreign countries, little has been done to address the homelessness issue.

Despite the government's intended harsh measures Lithuanian's from all backgrounds are coming together during this time. Many large companies are donating to a fund to rehabilitate the economy and sustain the safety of the country's people. However, the country's problems with homelessness and poverty will remain long after the effects of Covid-19.

Sources

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Transcript:

Caso: Explain your experiences on your recent mission trip to Lithuania?

Tello: Sure, In Lithuania, I worked at a homeless shelter. We would cook and serve the homeless meals and also clean up the kitchen and the cafeteria. I've worked with many homeless people before in Texas so I was not expecting anything to be too different. The homeless in America are very open to conversation and being helped for the most part whereas The people came off as very cold in Lithuania which I later learned was not a sign of rudeness but of pride. Lithuanian culture is very self-sufficient and the homeless are seen as being incapable to provide for themselves which makes most Lithuanians not want to help them. I was surprised by their resistance to be helped, but it's definitely a cultural thing. This is one example of poverty being treated very differently by the locals than in the US. Although this was a difference, the need I'd still there whether they decide to be appreciative or not it's up to us to continue to serve the less fortunate and do it without needing recognition or affirmation, but rather to do it through the kindness of our hearts to take care of Gods children.