



fcnm

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE
FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE
PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

ACFC/SRV(2021)004

Fifth Report submitted by Lithuania

Pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework
Convention for the Protection of National Minorities –
received on 19 July 2021

THE FIFTH REPORT
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S FRAMEWORK
CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES
IN THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
SUBJECT TO ARTICLE 25 OF THE CONVENTION

2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION:

PART I – PRACTICAL MEASURES TAKEN AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL TO DISSEMINATE INFORMATION ON THE RESULTS OF THE FOURTH MONITORING PHASE AND THE CONVENTION

PART II – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

A. COMMITTEE OF MINISTER’S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

RECOMMENDATION 1

RECOMMENDATION 2

RECOMMENDATION 3

RECOMMENDATION 4

PART III – OTHER MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

B. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KEY ARTICLES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE’S FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

ARTICLE 1

ARTICLE 2

ARTICLE 3

ARTICLE 4

ARTICLE 5

ARTICLE 6

ARTICLE 7

ARTICLE 8

ARTICLE 9

ARTICLE 10

ARTICLE 11

ARTICLE 12

ARTICLE 13

ARTICLE 14

ARTICLE 15

ARTICLE 16

ARTICLE 17

ARTICLE 18

ARTICLE 19

INTRODUCTION:

The Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (hereinafter referred to as the "Convention"), adopted on 1 February 1995, is one of the main and most important international instruments establishing the protection of the rights and freedoms of persons belonging to national minorities.

The Republic of Lithuania, one of the first European states to sign the Convention on 1 February 1995, ratified it without reservation on 23 March 2000 and undertook to respect and protect human rights and freedoms, to create equal conditions for the self-expression and cultural equality of all persons belonging to national minorities. The Convention entered into force on 1 July 2000.

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the Advisory Committee of the Council of Europe on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (hereinafter referred to as the "Advisory Committee") shall monitor the implementation of the provisions of the Convention. The Advisory Committee shall be kept regularly informed of the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee. In accordance with Article 25(2) of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the Republic of Lithuania shall submit a report every five years. The fifth report will be submitted for the period of 2016-2021.

The information for the fifth report was provided by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, State Commission of the Lithuanian Language and the Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics.

The draft report was published on the website of the Department of National Minorities www.tmde.lt, and was presented to and coordinated with the National Communities Board. The report consists of three parts: 1) information on the results of the fourth monitoring phase; 2) information on the actions taken by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania following the recommendations of the Advisory Committee; and 3) information on the policy pursued by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, taking into account the articles of the Convention and the recommendations that were received.

PART I

PRACTICAL MEASURES TAKEN AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL TO DISSEMINATE INFORMATION ON THE RESULTS OF THE FOURTH MONITORING PHASE AND THE CONVENTION

Publication of the results of the fourth monitoring phase

The fourth report on the implementation of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in the Republic of Lithuania, in accordance with Article 25 of this Convention, was issued in Lithuanian and in English. Publications were distributed by the staff of the Department of National Minorities at events, meetings of various levels and types, and were distributed to foreign embassies, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Government of the Republic of Lithuania, Ministries of Culture, Social Security and Labour, Education, Science and Sport, Justice, Foreign Affairs and the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, Seimas Ombudsperson's Office, Office of the Inspector of Journalistic Ethics, State Commission of the Lithuanian Language, Police Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, and the Human Rights Monitoring Institute, as well as to the public institutions the House of National Communities, Kaunas Cultural Centre of Various Nations, Roma Community Centre, national minority organisations, municipalities of Alytus, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Marijampolė, Panevėžys, Šiauliai, Šilutė, Šalčininkai, Širvintos, Švenčionys, Traka, Visaginas, Ignalina, and Vilnius Cities and Districts, and to the non-governmental organisations of national minorities.

The website of the Department of National Minorities¹ publishes the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in November 1994, the fourth report of the Republic of Lithuania in Lithuanian and English, the fourth opinion of the Advisory Committee on Lithuania adopted on 30 May 2018, Thematic Commentary No. 4 "The scope of application of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities" of 27 May 2016, and Resolution CM/ResCMN(2019)4 on the implementation

¹Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania <https://tmde.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-srityys-1/tarptautinis-bendradarbiavimas/europos-tarybos-tautiniu-mazumu-apsaugos-pagrindu-konvencija-ir-jos-igyvendinimas>

of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Lithuania adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 March 2019 at the 1342nd Meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.

Continuous activities in disseminating the results of the fourth monitoring phase

The recommendations² set out in the fourth monitoring stage Resolution CM/ResCMN(2019)4 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in the Republic of Lithuania were included in all the priority activities of the Department of National Minorities. The recommendations have become the key guidelines for developing strategic and operational plans.

In organising its activities, the Department of National Minorities paid special attention to the implementation of the provisions of the recommendations. In Jašiūnai (Šalčininkai District), Klaipėda, Kėdainiai, Visaginas, Vilnius, Trakai and other Lithuanian cities, the Department of National Minorities organised seminars, conferences and training for the representatives of education, media, municipalities and non-governmental organisations, during which the thematic issues of the event were formulated, taking into account the recommendations of the fourth monitoring stage, e.g. the seminars “Peculiarities of Roma Children’s Education at School” (for school teachers, administration and municipal representatives) and “Education in a Multicultural Environment” (for teachers of Sunday Schools in Lithuanian ethnic communities) discussed bilingualism, the ability to adapt to the Lithuanian-speaking environment, working methods and teaching aids. The seminar “Objective media ≠ Interesting media?” organised in collaboration with the Lithuanian Journalists Union (for journalists writing about Lithuanian national minorities) discussed the stereotypes that have become entrenched not only in our society, but also in the media.

The practice of cooperation with Lithuanian national libraries launched by the Department of National Minorities in publicising the contribution of national minorities to Lithuanian culture and researching the historical and cultural heritage of national minorities has proved to be successful. In 2019 the Department of National Minorities signed an interinstitutional cooperation agreement with M. Mažvydas National Library. Joint public events were organised in accordance with this agreement and the recommendations. Together with Judaica Department of this Library, Jewish heritage was researched and a calendar dedicated to the Year of Gaon was published. The Department of National Minorities cooperated with other national libraries by jointly preparing projects presenting the

² Resolution CM/ResCMN(2019)4 on the implementation of the Framework Convention of the Protection of National Minorities by Lithuania <https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/resolution%20Lithuania.pdf>

national minorities and their activities. Together with the Wróblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, the Department of National Minorities organised a number of public events, including a scientific-practical seminar titled “Library: A Space Connecting Different Cultures”. The seminar aimed to discuss the contribution of various national minorities living in Lithuania to the Lithuanian culture, their legacy in the libraries of our country, and to share the current integration issues.

Information on the fourth report and the accompanying documents of the fourth monitoring stage is regularly published by the Public Institution House of National Communities, and the National Communities News magazine is published quarterly. It is distributed to national minority organisations free of charge.

On 5-9 March 2018, experts of the Advisory Committee visited Lithuania and met with the representatives of government and local self-government institutions of the Republic of Lithuania, non-governmental organisations and communities of national minorities, and the communities of national minority schools. The experts were interested in the implementation of the articles of the Convention and the situation of national minorities in various spheres of public life, especially with regards to social and political activities.

In 2019, the Department of National Minorities commissioned a study to assess the changes taking place in the Roma community in relation to the recommendations for the Roma minority – to effectively ensure equal access to education, housing, employment, health care and effective participation in public life, paying special attention to Roma women – and the implementation thereof.

On 17 November 2020, the Department of National Minorities organised a remote meeting to discuss the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee for the fourth monitoring phase. The meeting was attended by approximately 50 representatives of the state and municipalities, national communities, public organisations and the academic community. The meeting focused on the draft Law on National Minorities prepared by a working group convened by the Department of National Minorities and on the issues related to the integration of the Roma national minority. In addition, the Secretariat of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities made observations after the fourth report of the Republic of Lithuania in 2018.

The Convention, together with the thematic commentaries of the Advisory Committee on the Convention, is included in the two-part body of law Legal Regulations for National Minorities prepared by the Department of National Minorities and issued in 2020.

Contribution and participation in civil society

Involvement of national minorities and other non-governmental organisations in the monitoring and implementation of the Convention and their participation in the preparation of the fifth report

Together with the Department of National Minorities, the Human Rights Committee of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, and the abovementioned bodies implementing the Convention and participating in the report, the provisions of the Convention are implemented by the National Minorities Commission approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport and consisting of teachers working in schools and teaching or educating in national minority languages, school heads, researchers, representatives of municipal education departments, non-governmental organisations, associations and the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, which also takes part in preparing the report. Other participants include the working group of the Department of National Minorities responsible for the preparation of the draft of the Law on National Minorities, the Inter-Institutional Working Group monitoring the Action Plan for the Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society for 2015–2020, and the Adviser to the Prime Minister on National Minorities.

In February 2020, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania established a Government Commission on National Minorities in order to strengthen cooperation between all the ministries and responsible institutions in formulating and coordinating a state policy in the field of national minorities. The Commission responds to the Convention's recommendations by coordinating the policy of national minorities, addressing cultural, social security, education, economic and other legal issues, supporting the education of national minorities and preserving their heritage.

There has been a noticeable trend for the formation of a new generation of leaders who take an active part in Lithuania's political, social and economic life. They actively make suggestions on issues relevant to them and other national communities. Representatives of national minorities assumed the position of a public consultant or Adviser to the Prime Minister on National Minorities for several terms of the Government.

The President of the Republic of Lithuania and the Prime Minister consistently show interest in issues regarding national minorities. The President of the Republic of Lithuania organised meetings with representatives of the Polish national minority to discuss all relevant issues, especially with regard to Polish education.

Representatives of the national minorities consistently show an interest and actively participate in seminars, conferences, meetings and working groups organised by the Department of National Minorities. The representatives thereof frequently chair the meetings of working groups; for example, the working group on the drafting of the Law on National Minorities was chaired by a delegated representative of the European Human Rights Foundation of Polish nationality, who later became a member of the Seimas and the Minister of Justice for 2020-2024. Of the 23 members of the working group, 11 represent the Armenian, Russian, Tatar, German and Jewish national minorities.

The following advisory bodies follow the provisions of the Convention:

- The National Communities Board – a public advisory body under the Department of National Minorities, representing national minorities in matters of the coordination of the Lithuanian national minorities policy. When involving the representatives of national minorities in decision-making processes, the Council follows the principles of international law, Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, laws of the Republic of Lithuania, other legal acts and the regulations of the Council of National Communities;
- Klaipėda City National Minorities Board – a public advisory institution under the Klaipėda City Municipality Council;
- Visaginas Municipality National Minorities Board – a public advisory body to the Visaginas Municipality Council.

Both the Klaipėda and Visaginas National Minority Boards assist the municipalities in formulating the national minority policy, represent the interests of national minorities, act as consultants and experts in solving strategic and other issues concerning national communities, seek to promote the integration of national minorities and cultural development, and ensure the preservation of the national identity and the equal life of national minorities.

By operating in the fields of culture and education and providing services to interested parties, the public institutions established by the Department of National Minorities and the House of National Communities, Kaunas Cultural Centre of Various Nations, Roma Community Centre, and the Lithuanian Centre of Folklore and Ethnography of National Minorities help to preserve the cultural identity of Lithuanian national minorities by fully integrating them into the social life of the country.

In order to integrate the Roma community, the Department of National Minorities implemented the measures of the Action Plan for the Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society for 2015-2020. The key measures of the plan were formulated in accordance with the recommendations of the Council of Europe.

The ongoing project “Local Roma Platforms – the Path towards Cooperation with the Municipalities” was launched in 2016 (the project now has a website called “Roma Platform”³) and funded by the European Commission, which supports the implementation of the provisions of the Convention, ensures a harmonious dialogue, and strengthens cooperation between local Roma communities and the Lithuanian municipal institutions in which Roma communities are concentrated.

Action Plan for the Representation of the History of National Minorities in Lithuania for 2020-2022

By order of the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania, the concept of representing the history of national minorities in Lithuania was approved on 26 September 2019. Upon the approval of the concept, an action plan for the representation of the history of national minorities in Lithuania was adopted by the order of the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania of 16 March 2020. For more information, see Article 15.

Declaration on the Education of the Polish National Minority in the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian National Minority in the Republic of Poland

On 20 November 2019, the Ministers of Education of the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Poland signed the Declaration “On the Education of the Polish National Minority in the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian National Minority in the Republic of Poland”. This declaration establishes guidelines for improving the quality of education of the Polish national minority in Lithuania and the Lithuanian national minority in Poland. A commitment is declared by both parties to intensify cooperation in the field of education through the development and adaptation of textbooks, the provision of native-language textbooks to schools, the provision of funding for textbooks and additional teaching materials, as well as through organising in-service training for teachers, strengthening the support for schools, or otherwise improving the educational conditions for pupils and children with special educational needs, as well as the continuous monitoring of education,

³ Roma Platform <http://www.romuplatforma.lt/>

recording of results and the summarisation thereof. The document establishes an agreement between the two parties to cooperate in ensuring the proper use of terminology, correct language and comprehensible wording in the tasks of the maturity examinations.⁴

Representatives of the state institutions, ministries and the Polish education and non-governmental organisations meet regularly to discuss the issues concerning the Polish national minority, to hear proposals, and in accordance with those proposals, to formulate the education policy for national minorities.

The Macierz Szkolna Society actively cooperates with the general education and higher education institutions, ministries and state institutions, providing up-to-date information on the current situation in the field of education for the Polish national minority and submitting proposals. The society cooperates with the Academy of Education of Vytautas Magnus University, which provides information on the number of Polish-speaking teachers, the shortage thereof (especially in primary education), and the possible need for these teachers in the next five or ten years. The Society, together with the VMU Academy of Education and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, discussed the issue of improving the Polish textbooks for schools and made specific proposals.

The Department of National Minorities supported and partially financed the project initiated and coordinated by the Polish Discussion Club to develop the “Vilnius Region 2040” strategy. The development of the strategy (in 2018–2020) involved many organisations within the Lithuanian Polish community, including representatives of the Association of Polish Scientists of Lithuania, Polish Scouting Association in Lithuania, European Human Rights Foundation, Polish Business Forum Korona, Polish and Lithuanian Chambers of Commerce, the radio station Znad Wilii, daily newspaper Kurier Wileński, TVP Wilno, Lithuanian higher education institutions and Lithuanian scientists of Polish origin.

Among the most important goals mentioned in the strategy are the goals to increase the prestige of the Polish language in Lithuania by 2040, ensure high-quality teaching in Polish schools, create high-quality Polish-language media, develop a pluralistic Lithuanian-Polish civil society based on democratic principles and internal competition, and expand economic prosperity in the Vilnius Region.

⁴ Declaration “On the Education of the Polish National Minority in the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian National Minority in the Republic of Poland”
https://www.smm.lt/uploads/documents/naujienos_1/Deklaracija_del_lenku_tautines_mazumos_LR_20191120.pdf

The “Vilnius Region 2040” strategy, based on the analysis of scientific sources and the insights of Lithuanian and Polish experts,⁵ is the first document of its kind in Lithuania, covering all spheres of life of a certain national community (Lithuanian-Poles). The strategy was presented and discussed with the President of the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian parliamentary parties.

PART II – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

A. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

The first recommendation is to establish, in active consultation with the representatives of national minorities, a comprehensive legal framework for the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, while maintaining an open and comprehensive approach to the protection of national minorities.

Pursuant to the order sent by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania by Letter No. S2-1235 of 27 April 2018, the Department of National Minorities convened a meeting of expert working groups consisting of the Adviser to the Prime Minister, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Justice and the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language, Ministry of the Interior, researchers from Vytautas Magnus University and representatives of the Department of National Minorities. These experts examined the draft of the Law on National Minorities submitted by the Department of National Minorities and noted that the validity of the law was debatable in the absence of an unequivocal opinion or international practice regarding the definition of the term *national minority*. It was decided that, with regard to the new Law on National Minorities, it was important to define the purpose(s) of such a document and to discuss the draft law with various ethnic groups.

The Draft Law on National Minorities was discussed with national minority communities and other stakeholders. The Department of National Minorities organised presentations of the Draft Law on National Minorities to the National Minorities Board, the academic community and individual communities of national minorities in various regions of Lithuania.

⁵ Strategy for the Preservation and Development of the Polish Language and the Polish Community in Lithuania [Wileńszczyzna 2040 \(LT\).pdf \(lv.lt\)](#)

On 28 February 2019, the Department of National Minorities organised a discussion called “Discourse on the Identity of National Minorities” in Vilnius to discuss the concepts used in the information field for national minorities. Representatives of the Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania Science Centre, the Faculty of History of Vilnius University and other institutions took part in the event that was moderated by representatives of the VMU Faculty of Politics and Diplomacy and the Lithuanian Institute of History. The participants gave presentations on “Models of Regulation of Ethnic Relations in Europe”, “Concept and Use of the Ethnic (National) Minority in Lithuania (1989–2019): Legal Norm and Diversity of Social Practice”, “Lithuanian National Minorities as Hostages of Historical Policy”, and other topics. Dr Halina Kobeckaitė, the first Director General of the Department of Nationalities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, spoke about the formation of National Communities during the establishment of the independent Lithuania in 1988–1990.

Following the abovementioned discussion, the Department of National Minorities prepared a second draft law that included proposals from the National Communities Board, Lithuanian Poles, Karaites, Russians and other communities, as well as alternative provisions of the law.

On 18 April 2019, the Department of National Minorities organised a discussion with the concerned institutions and ethnic communities. The discussion was moderated by a member of the National Communities Board and Chairman of the Union of Polish Lawyers in Lithuania. Representatives of the European Foundation for Human Rights, as well as the Russian, Latvian, Armenian and other communities spoke on language use, education and the other provisions of the law.

On 19 September 2019, the Klaipėda Centre of National Cultures discussed the draft law, and on 18 October 2019, the Visaginas Culture Centre held a discussion on “Legislation in the Field of National Minorities. Experience and Need” with leaders and representatives of the non-governmental organisations of Visaginas ethnic communities. Representatives of 35 organisations of various ethnic communities of Visaginas, as well as members of the Visaginas Municipal Council, representatives of schools and kindergartens, and representatives of the Visaginas Education Support Service took part in the discussion. The discussion raised questions on the necessity to adopt the Law on National Minorities, teaching the state language and cooperation with the state and municipal institutions.

Pursuant to Order No. S2-1688 of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania of 17 June 2019 “On Consideration of the Draft Law on National Minorities”, the Department of National Minorities formed and approved a working group consisting of representatives of the institutions of

the Republic of Lithuania, non-governmental organisations, ethnic communities and lawyers, by Order No. IV-47 of 3 December 2019 of the Director “On the Approval of the Composition of the Working Group for Drafting the Law on National Minorities”⁶. A total of 24 experts participated in the working group. In July 2020, the Department of National Minorities and a working group submitted the prepared draft law to the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania.

In drafting the law, the working group sought to establish and guarantee the rights and obligations of persons belonging to national minorities, to ensure that the state undertakes to create the conditions for national minorities to maintain and nurture their customs, cultural and linguistic identity, and maintain the right to choose a nationality and participate in the activities of public organisations.

In order to introduce the legal framework for national minorities in force in Lithuania to as many people as possible, the Department of National Minorities published a two-part body of law Legal Regulation for National Minorities, which was introduced on 5 March 2021.

The body of law, the first⁷ and second parts⁸ of which can be found on the website of the Department of National Minorities, and which is distributed to state institutions, national minority organisations and municipalities, is valued for its detailed information on national minorities and is provided in Lithuanian.

The body of law creates conditions for a different level of valuable discussion on the topic of national minorities and the commitments made by the country. The publication serves as a practical tool for the representatives of national minorities in identifying and exercising their rights and legitimate expectations, as well as allowing for a systematic assessment of the existing legal regulations in this area.

The first part of the Body of Law consists of the Lithuanian legal acts, which more or less regulate the rights of national minorities and the obligations of the state. The abovementioned laws and by-laws affect the education, cultural life and political rights of national minorities.

The second part consists of the documents of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, translated into Lithuanian for the first time, on separate topics of national

⁶Law No. IV-47 of 3 December 2019 “On Approval of the Composition of the Working Group for the Preparation of the Draft Law on National Minorities”

<https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/%C4%AEsakymas%20d%C4%97%20darbo%20grup%C4%97s%20tautini%C5%B3%20ma%C5%BEum%C5%B3%20%C4%AFstatymo%20projektui%20rengti%20sud%C4%97ties%20patvirtinimo.pdf>

⁷Legal Regulation for National Minorities Part I

<https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/40323%20TMD%201%20dalis.pdf>

⁸ Legal Regulation for National Minorities Part II

<https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/47516%20TMD%202%20dalis.pdf>

minority rights that have a direct impact on the life of Lithuania's national minorities. Although these recommendations have been published for a long time, they have not been available in Lithuanian until now, which made it difficult for the representatives of Lithuanian national minorities to become acquainted with them.

The second recommendation is to take decisive information measures to reduce the negative stereotypes about the Roma among the population; provide special training for teachers, police officers and local administration staff; continue to effectively ensure equal access for the Roma to education, housing, employment, health care and effective participation in society; and pay special attention to Roma women.

Measures to address negative stereotypes

The activities of the Department of National Minorities are aimed at developing tolerance, respect, direct reduction of hate speech and its prevention, by introducing the public to the populations of other nationalities, informing about the contribution of national communities to the country's social and political life, and promoting cultural dialogue. The following activities have been carried out in the area of strengthening the response to hate crime and hate speech:

1. In response to hate speech, the Department of National Minorities monitors and responds promptly to any incitement to hatred, while closely monitoring the country's information space and public speeches. In the event of any manifestations of hatred, the Department of National Minorities expresses its position, condemning any attempt to incite national, racial or religious hatred in Lithuania.
2. Representatives of the Department of National Minorities participate in the working group for an effective response to hate crimes and hate speech in Lithuania. The responsible professionals regularly participate in the initiatives of institutions and non-governmental organisations aimed at reducing the spread of hate speech in the public sphere, raising public awareness of the manifestations of hate speech and helping the law enforcement authorities to respond and investigate such cases properly. The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania is responsible for the coordination of this working group.

3. Representatives of the Department of National Minorities participated in the 13th Session of the United Nations Forum on Minority Rights on “Hate Speech, Social Media and Minorities”, which emphasised the need for national strategies to combat hate speech and noted that in the digital age, with the unrestricted cross-border nature of hate speech, it is important to adopt international legislation that criminalises such language in all countries.

In order to promote social tolerance and defy stereotypes, on 15 February 2018, the Department of National Minorities presented the mobile exhibition “We Built Lithuania Together”, which tells the story of Lithuanian national communities and their contribution to the formation of the Lithuanian state, as well as the efforts in defending its freedom and independence. It focuses on the Roma culture and the Roma Holocaust. Archival photographs depicting the lives of Roma communities in the pre-war and post-war periods of the 20th century are presented and facts related to the Holocaust are published. In 2018, the exhibition visited 9 schools, 5 libraries and 5 cultural centres, and it was exhibited in the Seimas, Alytus City Municipality, Trakai District Municipality, Ignalina Region Museum, Nalšia Museum and elsewhere. In 2019, the exhibition was also shown in the Šiauliai Public Library, Vilnius, and Trakai Vokė schools.

The following exhibitions were opened at Vilnius Town Hall on 2 August 2017: “Polish Roma Traditions, Customs and History”, and a photo retrospective about the life of the Vilnius Roma community “Nomads of the Future”.

Ever since the restoration in 2015, the Department of National Minorities has paid close attention to the Roma Holocaust, promoting discussions on human rights and the Roma Holocaust, publishing information and methodological publications, organising training for education staff, Lithuanian Roma youth and human rights activists, and contributing to the initiatives of international and non-governmental organisations, as well as financing and participating in the commemoration of the Roma Holocaust Memorial Day (2 August) and International Romani Day (8 April) events. The Department of National Minorities works closely with the Roma Community Centre on the situation, history and traditions of the Roma.

The Department of National Minorities participated in discussions on the recognition of the Roma genocide. At the beginning of 2019, together with the Roma and other human rights non-governmental organisations, the Department of National Minorities addressed the Human Rights Committee of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania with a request to add International Roma Genocide Memorial Day to the list of public holidays of the Republic of Lithuania. By the decision of the Seimas of 27 June 2019, Roma Holocaust Memorial Day held on August 2 was added to the

list of public holidays. This decision is an important step in drawing the public's attention to the painful facts of Lithuanian history and the situation of the Lithuanian Roma, and contributing to the openness of Roma culture, the promotion of intercultural dialogue and the reduction of stereotypes. This day is significant for the entire Lithuanian Roma community.

In 2019, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania declared 2 August to be Lithuanian Roma Genocide Memorial Day. Lithuania has been commemorating this day since 2004, but it has only been universally recognised since 2019. This recognition is hoped to encourage the public to pay attention to the painful facts of Lithuanian history, contributing to the openness of Roma culture, intercultural dialogue and the reduction of stereotypes. The Paneriai Memorial commemorates the Roma victims every year. In 2020, the Lithuanian Roma ensemble Sare Roma organised a musical performance titled "Samudaripen. A Girl from the Wagon" to commemorate the Roma genocide. The musical was also performed in Panevėžys and Šiauliai.

In 2018 and 2019, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania held press conferences attended by representatives of the Roma community, the Department of National Minorities and members of the Seimas Committee on Human Rights. They discussed the situation of the Roma in Lithuania and Europe, and examined the problems of their integration into public life. The participants and guests had the chance to visit the "Momento homo est" exhibition in the Seimas, which presented the life of the Roma community.

In memory of the Roma genocide, 2018 saw an opening of an exhibition on the life of the Roma in Lithuania before 1940 called "Persecution of the Lithuanian Roma during the Nazi Occupation (1941–1944)" prepared by the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania. From 25 September to 30 October 2019, the exhibition also took place at the Youth Department of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.

In 2020, when Lithuania commemorated Roma Genocide Day, the Lithuanian National Television showed the documentary "Black Bird. Memory of the Roma Genocide", initiated by the Ministry of Culture.

To provide more information about the Roma national minority, the history of this nation and thus promote respect for this community, the Department of National Minorities regularly publishes information about the little-discussed Roma genocide on its website and on social media via its Facebook account. A lot of information can also be found on the website www.romuplatforma.lt, where the Library section contains electronic books on the Roma Holocaust, history and the Roma language.

The Department of National Minorities supports various media projects aimed at promoting intercultural dialogue, publicising good practices and informing the public about the national minorities in Lithuania. In 2019, the Department of National Minorities provided partial funding for the development of a two-part webcast episode “Memory of the Roma Genocide” produced by Dokumedija.

In 2017, the Department of National Minorities published and presented to the public a children’s book titled “I am Karolis” (Lith. “Esu Karolis”)⁹, where a Roma boy talks about life in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

In the same year, the Department of National Minorities presented a methodological tool on the Roma genocide, the “Right to Remember” (Lith. “Teisė prisiminti”)¹⁰, which was published in cooperation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. The aim of this methodological tool for youth is to disseminate information on the Roma genocide and to combat discrimination. The book is based on the principle of human rights education. It provides ideas for organising classes and memorial events, as well as information on the Roma genocide. The methodological tool is intended for employees in the education sector.

The Department of National Minorities has published a collection of texts titled “2016-2018” by the winners of the competition for academic works on the topic of national minorities, which also includes the article “Transnational Aspects of the Memory of the Roma Genocide”.

In 2020, the Department of National Minorities initiated, prepared and published the book “Forgotten Genocide. Lithuanian Roma during the Years of Nazi Occupation” (Lith. Užmirštas genocidas. Lietuvos romai nacių okupacijos metais)¹¹. This was the first publication to present historical documents and interdisciplinary research material with links to additional sources on the Roma genocide, aiming to draw attention to the lesser-known Holocaust victims in Lithuania, promote interest in the Roma genocide and preserve the memories of the victims.

The Department of National Minorities annually awards the prize “For the Promotion of Intercultural Dialogue”. It is awarded to journalists who have made the greatest contribution to national tolerance through intercultural dialogue in the media. Those nominated for the prize may include the authors of articles, radio, or television programmes promoting intercultural dialogue, or

⁹ N. Gancarz, „Esu Karolis“, <https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/Esu-Karolis-pdf.pdf>

¹⁰ E. Keen „Teisė prisiminti“ <https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/TEIS%C4%96-PRISIMINTI.pdf>

¹¹ V. Beinortiene et al “Užmirštas genocidas. Lietuvos romai nacių okupacijos metais” https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/romu%20genocidas_2020%2004%2005%20galutinis%20maketas.pdf

a group of authors who have published their work in the press or electronic media and announced it on radio or television. The establishment of the prize encouraged journalists, especially those working in the country's regional newspapers, to take an interest in national minorities, their lives and their contribution to public life. Among the winners of the award are the correspondents of the Alytus newspaper *Alytaus naujienos*, the Trakai District newspaper *Trakų žemė*, the daily newspapers *Lietuvos žinios* and *15 min*, the weekly newspaper *Savaitė*, the radio stations *Novoje radijo*, *Žinių radijas* and *LRT radijas*, journalists from *Aukštaitija TV* and *LRT TV*, and the online news portals *Etaplius* and *ru.delfi.lt*.

On 30 January 2020, for the first time, Lithuania saw an ethical media awards ceremony with *Black Mirror Statuettes*. These awards were presented on the basis of the media monitoring of the *Media4Change* programme run by the Department of National Minorities and the National Institute for Social Integration. Throughout 2019, as part of the movement for the highest standards in the media, analysts monitored media content about the most socially excluded groups in society, which they examined according to quantitative and qualitative criteria that met international standards.

In 2019, the Ministry of the Interior commissioned a qualitative study of hate crime in vulnerable communities as part of the “Strengthening the Response to Hate Crimes and Hate Speech in Lithuania” project, partly funded by the European Union’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014–2020)¹². The project partners were the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania (coordinator), Office of the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Lithuania and the Office of the Inspector of Journalistic Ethics. The project lasted for 25 months: from 3 September 2018 to 2 October 2020. The main activities of the project focused on three areas: 1) law enforcement institutions and the capacity building of courts; 2) building trust between public authorities and vulnerable communities; and 3) developing the ability to report hate speech.

In addition to the study, an analysis of the cases of criminal liability for hate crimes and hate speech was carried out¹³, and recommendations for the criminal liability for hate crimes and hate

¹²Lithuanian version of the report on the qualitative research of communities vulnerable to hate crimes
<https://vrm.lrv.lt/uploads/vrm/documents/files/Pa%C5%BEid%C5%BEiam%C5%B3%20bendruomeni%C5%B3%20kokybinio%20tyrimo%20ataskaita.pdf>

¹³Lithuanian version of the analysis of the cases of criminal liability for hate crimes and hate speech
https://vrm.lrv.lt/uploads/vrm/documents/files/LT_versija/Viesasis_saugumas/Neapykantos_nusikaltimu_tyrimas_Ataskaita_2019.pdf

speech were prepared¹⁴. On the basis of these recommendations, the Office of the Prosecutor General prepared methodological recommendations for the Pre-trial Investigation into Hate Crimes and the Peculiarities of Inciting, Organising and Directing Hate Speech, which were approved by the Prosecutor General on 30 March 2020¹⁵, replacing the Methodological Guidelines for Organising and Conducting a Pre-trial Investigation into Criminal Offences Committed on Racial, Nationalist, Xenophobic, Homophobic or Other Discriminatory Grounds approved by the Prosecutor General in 2009.

To strengthen the links between law enforcement institutions and vulnerable communities, 5 roundtable discussions were held in major cities in January and February 2020. Local police officers and prosecutors sat down with representatives of the vulnerable communities and NGOs to discuss the needs and expectations of the vulnerable communities and victims of hate crime in relation to the work of law enforcement officers, including problems and opportunities for cooperation (41 police officers, 14 prosecutors, 60 representatives of the vulnerable communities and NGOs took part in the discussions). A practical guide for the law enforcement officers on “Cooperation with Hate Crime-Affected Communities” was prepared¹⁶.

Articles on the results of the qualitative study and the ongoing round table discussions were also prepared and published in a national daily newspaper and 4 regional dailies, as well as on their websites¹⁷.

The main objectives of this project were to ensure the effective criminalisation of hate crimes and hate speech; strengthen the understanding and knowledge of the competent authorities about the impact of hate crimes, hate speech on communities, and the needs and expectations of vulnerable communities; and addressing the non-reporting of hate crimes and hate speech, among other preventive measures.

¹⁴ Lithuanian version of the recommendations for the criminal liability for hate crimes and hate speech [https://vrm.lrv.lt/uploads/vrm/documents/files/Rekomendacijos%20d%C4%97I%20baud%C5%BEiamosios%20atsakomyb%C4%97s%20taikymo\(1\).pdf](https://vrm.lrv.lt/uploads/vrm/documents/files/Rekomendacijos%20d%C4%97I%20baud%C5%BEiamosios%20atsakomyb%C4%97s%20taikymo(1).pdf)

¹⁵ Lithuanian version of the methodological recommendations for the Pre-trial Investigation into Hate Crimes and the Peculiarities of Inciting, Organising and Directing Hate Speech https://www.prokuraturos.lt/data/public/uploads/2020/04/neapykantos_nusikaltimu_tyrimo_metodines_rekomendacijos.pdf

¹⁶ Guide on on “Cooperation with Hate Crime-Affected Communities” [https://vrm.lrv.lt/uploads/vrm/documents/files/Praktinis%20vadovas_LT\(1\).pdf](https://vrm.lrv.lt/uploads/vrm/documents/files/Praktinis%20vadovas_LT(1).pdf)

¹⁷ Lithuanian version of an article <https://sekunde.lt/leidinys/sekunde/neapykantos-incidentai-vis-dar-islieka-opi-problema/>

A qualitative study of hate crimes against five vulnerable communities (Jews, Roma, LGBT, Muslims and other races)¹⁸ in Lithuania assessed the nature of community vulnerability, the level of hatred latency and the impact on those communities, as well as the community protection needs. The results of the study can be used to develop policy recommendations for the competent public authorities.

This study will help increase the knowledge and understanding of the competent public authorities and bodies about the effects of racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance – in particular, hate crime and hate speech – and in better identifying the various forms of intolerance and discrimination. The results of the qualitative research can provide information useful in the development of recommendations and preventive measures for victims. Furthermore, the data provided in the report on the study can be used as training material for police officers, prosecutors and judges. The study is also expected to lead to the proper implementation of Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012, establishing the minimum standards for the rights, support and protection of the victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/TVR.¹⁹

The Office of the Inspector of Journalistic Ethics (hereinafter referred to as “Office of the Inspector”), implementing the “Strengthening the Response to Hate Crimes and Hate Speech in Lithuania” project from 1 September 2018 to 3 October 2020, and created and installed a banner²⁰ for its website to facilitate and encourage the reporting of hate speech on the Internet. An information campaign was carried out on the major Lithuanian Internet portals and in the regional media (both on the Internet portals and in the press), with the aim of helping people to recognise hate speech and report it to the competent authorities. Ten districts in the country held 10 seminars on “What is hate and how to fight it”, where the Office of the Inspector explained the relationship between hate speech and freedom of expression, the impact of hate speech on vulnerable communities, and the opportunities to defend against hate speech. The seminars were aimed at the social workers and social pedagogues of the municipalities and their subordinate institutions, as well as other people working with vulnerable social groups (a total of 326 persons participated in the seminars in Vilnius, Utena, Druskininkai, Kaunas, Marijampolė, Tauragė, Panevėžys, Šiauliai, Telšiai and Klaipėda).

¹⁸ Report on a qualitative study on hate crimes against vulnerable communities [REPORT ON THE QUALITATIVE STUDY ON HATE CRIMES AGAINST VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES \(lv.it\)](#)

¹⁹ Recommendations in Lithuanian <https://vrm.lrv.lt/uploads/vrm/documents/files/Rekomendacijos%20pagal%20tyrimo%20rezultatus.pdf>

²⁰ Banner <https://www.zeit.lt/lt/pranesk-apie-nesantaika/447>

The Office of the Inspector prepared 4 articles in Lithuanian, Russian and Polish, which were published on Internet media portals (www.delfi.lt, ru.delfi.lt, kurierwilenski.lt) and social media networks (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) titled: “Hate Speech: Danger to Everyone”²¹, “Topics on Sexual Orientation Often Lead to Hate Speech”²², “Hate Speech Against National Minorities: From Politics to Immigrants”²³, “Hate Speech Against Other Religions: Are We Angry Because We do not Understand?”²⁴. The Office of the Inspector also drafted 8 articles on hate speech, which were published in five regional newspapers.

In exercising its function of assessing the public information established by the Law on Public Information, the Office of the Inspector, on its own initiative or following complaints from victims, as well as civic activists or public organisations, examines cases of prejudice against individuals or groups of individuals on the basis of their gender, sexual orientation, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, religion, beliefs or views, in addition to the normalisation, stereotyping, justification, stigmatisation or discrimination in the media. The media are advised to avoid forming or maintaining unjustified negative attitudes towards these individuals or groups, thus protecting them from negative portrayals and negative attitudes towards them in the media, as well as promoting the equality and dignity of those belonging to these groups.

In April 2021, a new police unit – a virtual patrol – was launched to investigate and prevent possible cases of cybercrime. It is a pilot project that is so far being carried out by three officers who respond only to obvious cybercrimes committed, or planned to be committed in cyberspace, including cases of insulting or threatening another person. The officers do not censor these comments, and in cases where it is unclear how to deal with specific cases, they consult each other and make a collective decision. The patrols on social networks or news portals first publicly warn the potential violators, then send them a private message on Facebook and an e-mail from virtualus.patruelis@policija.lt.

Officer training

²¹ Article Hate Speech: Danger to Everyone in Russian <https://www.delfi.lt/ru/news/live/yazyk-vrazhdy-opasnost-dlya-kazhdogo.d?id=80358963>

²² Article Topics on Sexual Orientation Often Lead to Hate Speech in Russian <https://www.delfi.lt/ru/news/live/temy-o-seksualnoj-orientacii-vyzyvayut-vrazhdebnye-vyskazyvaniya.d?id=80994149>

²³ Article Hate Speech Against National Minorities: From Politics to Immigrants in Russian <https://www.delfi.lt/ru/news/live/yazyk-vrazhdy-po-otnosheniyu-k-nacionalnym-menshinstvam-ot-politiki-do-immigrantov.d?id=81940399>

²⁴ Article Hate Speech against Other Religions: Are We Angry Because We do not Understand? In Russian <https://www.delfi.lt/ru/news/live/yazyk-vrazhdy-v-otnoshenii-drugih-religij-my-zlimsya-potomu-chno-ne-ponimaem.d?id=82864005>

As part of the “Strengthening the Response to Hate Crimes and Hate Speech in Lithuania” project, the Ministry of the Interior organised 17 joint training sessions (2 days) for police officers, prosecutors and judges on the topics of “Impact of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech. Peculiarities of Communication with Victims” and “Recognising and Criminalising Hate Speech and Hate Crimes”. The training sessions took place in Vilnius, Panevėžys, Klaipėda, Šiauliai and Kaunas (132 police officers, 109 prosecutors and 76 judges participated).

The Communications Division of the Police Department has repeatedly drawn attention to the content of the information provided in the media and the appropriateness of providing sensitive information with regard to age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, religion, beliefs or views.

By Order No. 1V-162 of the Minister of the Interior of 24 February 2020, a working group was set up with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of the fight against hate crime and hate speech in Lithuania. This working group includes representatives from the Ministry of the Interior, Office of the Prosecutor General, Police Department, Department of National Minorities, Office of the Inspector of Journalistic Ethics, Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, Ministry of Social Security and Labour and 11 NGOs, including the Roma Community Centre. The main functions of the working group are to: consider the issue of increasing the effectiveness of the fight against hate crimes and hate speech and to make appropriate proposals; consider the relevant legislation and its drafts, as well as planning documents and their drafts; and initiate activities that will contribute to strengthening the capacity to recognise hate crimes and hate speech, reduce the latency of hate crimes, and will strengthen the relevant competencies of law enforcement institutions and other state institutions and bodies, as well as civil society organisations. The working group has approved the 2020-2022 Action Plan, which defines the main areas of its activity, tasks and measures. In 2020, 4 working group meetings took place.

The Qualification Improvement Programme “Actions of Officers in Cases of Hate Crimes and Activities in Preventing Hate Crimes” was approved by the Commissioner-General of Police by Order No. 5-V-817 of 31 October 2019. In the implementation of the “Promoting Effective Response to Hate Crimes and Hate Speech in Lithuania” project, funded by the European Union Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014–2020), the Lithuanian Human Rights Centre, Human Rights Monitoring Institute, European Human Rights Foundation and the Lithuanian Police School have prepared methodological material for the training of police officers and cadets, in accordance with the abovementioned in-service training programme. The in-service training programme and the

methodological material are designed to respond to the interests of all groups that are potentially vulnerable to hate crime and hate speech, without distinguishing between them on the basis of individual characteristics.

Information on the training sessions organised and planned for the police officers in 2017–2020 is provided in Annex 1.

Improving teacher competence

In 2017, while implementing the Action Plan for the Integration of the Roma into Lithuanian Society for 2015–2020, the Education Development Centre prepared a 28-hour professional development programme titled “Strengthening the Quality of Inclusive Education” for schools with Roma children.

One training cycle took place under this programme. The training was attended by 23 persons from 9 pre-school and general education institutions, with each institution including a representative of the administration, a student support specialist and a teacher (class teacher). The participants themselves planned and implemented changes in their schools and organised the following training courses: “Methods of working with cultural diversity in the classroom” (with a duration of 16 academic hours; 15 persons from general education schools educating children from Roma families participated); and teaching Lithuanian as a non-native language (implemented in cooperation with Jonava Municipality; duration 16 academic hours and 25 participants). Three general education schools (Anykščiai District, Vilkaviškis District and Šalčininkai District; 12 academic hours of consultations each) were provided with consultations, creating opportunities for targeted work with Roma families. Each school planned and implemented one measure to strengthen parental involvement. Practical recommendations were developed for the schools on how to strengthen their work with Roma families and improve the integration of Roma children in the educational process. A conference on Roma inclusion issues was also held titled “Improving the Inclusion of Roma Pupils”.

The seminar “Intercultural Learning and Social Inclusion” was organised for the employees of educational institutions at the Lithuanian Centre of Non-Formal Youth Education. The seminar was attended by general and non-formal education teachers, class teachers and other specialists who face difficulties in intercultural communication and cooperation, and who want to understand other cultures, as well as seek to involve representatives of different nations and ethnic groups (children and their parents) in the educational process.

The Department of National Minorities organised the seminars “History of the Roma National Minority: From its Origin in Europe to the Genocide of the 20th Century” in Marijampolė, Šalčininkai and Ukmergė Districts under the framework of the European Union-funded project “Local Roma Platforms – the Path towards Cooperation with the Municipalities”. The seminars were aimed at primary teachers, as well as teachers of history, geography and other disciplines who are interested in the history of national minorities. A lecturer at the Vilnius University of Applied Sciences, as well as a social anthropologist and a researcher of Roma culture gave a presentation on Roma history. The Director of the Genocide and Resistance Research Department of Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania also gave a presentation on the Roma genocide during World War II. About 130 teachers participated in the three seminars.

Equal education, work, housing, health care and active participation in social opportunities

To ensure the integration of the Roma national minority into Lithuanian society, the Department of National Minorities coordinated and implemented the Action Plan for the Integration of the Roma into Lithuanian Society for 2015-2020. Vilnius City Municipality previously implemented the Vilnius (Kirtimai) Community Integration into Society Programme for 2016–2019. The Public Institution Roma Society Centre and its partners the Lithuanian Gypsy Community “Čigonų laužas”, Lithuanian Roma Community, Roma Integration House, Roma Integration Centre and the Lithuanian Gypsy Community “Čigonų laužas” Šalčininkai District Branch implemented the European Union-funded project “Working with the Roma: New Job Opportunities and Challenges”. The implementation of the project employed social workers, mediators, music teachers, employment experts and a lawyer. Socially vulnerable Roma persons participated in activities aimed at social integration, with most of them receiving socio-cultural services.

The Department of National Minorities reviewed the implementation of the Roma integration policy in Lithuania and met with the project participants. The Employment Service discussed the long-term unemployment of the Roma and their integration into the labour market. A seminar for employers was also organised called “Ethnic and Religious Diversity: Strategies for Inclusion in Enterprises”.

Ensuring school attendance and extracurricular activities

Most Roma children attend schools in Vilnius City Municipality, as well as Jonava and Šalčininkai District Municipalities. Although the number of Roma children in general education

schools remains stable, it has been observed that in the 2019/2020 school year, the number of Roma students increased. In the 2016/2017 school year, 459 Roma students attended school, while the 2017/2018 school year saw the attendance of 431 Roma students, in the 2018/2019 school year 417 Roma students attended school, and in the 2019/2020 school year 437 Roma students attended school.

Vocational schools were attended by 20 Roma persons in 2018/2019, 22 persons in 2017/2018 and 29 persons in 2016/2017.

The attendance of Roma children in general education schools was ensured by the school social pedagogues and social workers from the Vilnius City Social Support Centre, who worked under the Vilnius (Kirtimai) Community Integration into Society Programme for 2016-2019. The Roma children were provided with individual and group consultations and extracurricular activities.

Vilnius City Municipality allocated targeted funds to Vilnius Naujininkai School and the Saulėtekis School-Multifunctional Centre, which organised the transportation of children from the Kirtimai Settlement to schools. In addition, students living in the city were reimbursed for public transport e-tickets.

The Department of National Minorities, by implementing the project “Local Roma Platforms – the Path towards Cooperation with the Municipalities”, funded the work of one teaching assistant at the Stanislovas Rapolionis High School in Eišiškės, Šalčininkai District, whose main task was to ensure the attendance of Roma children.

The Public Institution Roma Society Centre, Lithuanian Youth Falcon Union Daycare Centre “Padėk pritapti”, and the Panevėžys Children’s Daycare Centre organised various extracurricular activities for Roma children. About 100 children attend these daycare centres every year.

The Roma Community Centre held integration and socialisation classes for school-age children that included: Roma music and singing, Roma folk dances, physical education, fun counting, paper plastics, art therapy and art clubs, computer classes, citizenship and community skills training sessions for Roma children, trips to museums and theatres, and an introduction to public holidays and the activities of state and non-governmental institutions. Summer day camps and Christmas celebrations were organised for the children. The activities of the Roma Community Centre were also supported by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and Vilnius City Municipality.

The Vilnius branch of the Lithuanian Youth Falcon Union Daycare Centre “Padėk pritapti” is aimed at providing children of the Roma and Naujininkai (many Roma live here) communities with

the opportunity to develop, communicate and cooperate through non-formal education activities. The activities of the day centre are organised according to the essential problems faced by these children. They lack social skills, so a lot of attention is paid to the children's feelings, emotion management and the promotion of respect. There is also a noticeable lack of hygiene skills, so the children are taught the basics of a healthy lifestyle and personal body care. In search for interesting methods of self-knowledge and self-perception, the day centre staff chose the methodology of art as self-knowledge. By drawing in various techniques, the children have the opportunity to express the things they find important through art.

The day centre is annually attended by Lithuanian, Roma, Russian and Polish children, the main part of which is made up of Roma children. Such a multicultural environment makes it easier to bring children of different nationalities together in group sessions, during which the children seek dialogue, try to get to know each other, destroy existing stereotypes, and develop confidence in themselves and in others.

The activities of the day centre are focused not only on children but also on young people from 14 years of age, who are offered activities that expand the young people's opportunities, strengthen their self-esteem, self-knowledge and cooperation, and promote gender equality, tolerance and volunteering, while encouraging discussions on topics of interest to them.

In 2019, the day centre implemented several art projects, with one of them being "Draw Me a Path. An Illustrated Roma History". It is a comic based on the history of the Lithuanian Roma. The material for the comic was collected by children and young people, while the publication was partly funded by the Department of National Minorities. The author of the comic also relied on real-life images of Roma communities in other countries, articles about the Lithuanian Roma and stories told by the Roma children. The author was also inspired by Tony Gatlif, a Roma filmmaker, and his films. In 2020, the comic "Draw Me a Path", promoting tolerance of different cultures and customs, earned the day centre "Padėk pritapti" the Nations Dialogue Award. This is one of the nomination categories in the National Equality and Diversity Awards, and the so-called Oscars for Human Rights were awarded to the most distinguished individuals and organisations in this field in 2019.

The "Social Dialogue" project implemented with the directors of Apeiron Theatre teaches children to talk about themselves in the language of the theatre: using movement, sound, lighting and a stage. The video material created during the project was presented as a creative methodological tool for schools and educational institutions.

Panevėžys City Children's Daycare Centre actively cooperated with the Department of National Minorities in the implementation of the project called "Local Roma Platforms – the Path towards Cooperation with the Municipalities". The centre provided social, psychological and educational services to families at social risk and their children, and promoted the socialisation and integration of Roma children on a Christian basis. The centre carried out artistic, preventive, social skills and values development programmes, as well as physical education, art therapy, a family preparation programme for teenagers and education for boys.

In implementing the Integration of the Vilnius (Kirtimai) Roma Community into Society Programme for 2016–2019, in 2019, the Kirtimai Cultural Centre organised creative workshops that included lessons on sticker making, radio call signs and ceramics. The stickers created by the children were displayed in the Children's and Youth Literature Reading Room of the National Library, Vilnius County Adomas Mickevičius Public Library, MO Museum and the Arts Printing House, as well as in bookstores and cafes.

In 2018, the Lithuanian Centre of Non-Formal Youth Education implemented the educational project titled "Circle of Cultures" aimed at disseminating the multicultural Lithuanian heritage, developing national self-awareness and fostering tolerance. At the final event of the project, representatives of the Panevėžys Children's Daycare Centre performed their own composition based on Roma folk traditions, in which representatives of the Roma Community Centre performed. The educational project "Circle of Cultures", initiated by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, is organised and implemented by the Lithuanian Centre of Non-Formal Youth Education in cooperation with the Department of National Minorities, Roma Community Centre, Visaginas Cultural Centre, and the Ethnic Culture and Education Department.

Return to the education system: remote learning and schools for adults

The Roma who have left the education system can acquire further education in adult schools or remotely.

A remote learning counselling centre has been operating at the Roma Community Centre since 2007. This is a great opportunity for the Roma to acquire a primary or secondary education. In the 2017/2018 academic year, 17 Roma studied remotely (5 Roma studied remotely in the 2018/2019 academic year, while in the 2019/2020 academic year 7 Roma studied remotely).

A number of Roma attended schools for adult education: in Panevėžys, 12 Roma persons attended the Panevėžys Adult and Youth Training Centre, where primary, basic and secondary education can be acquired. Individuals of the Roma nationality could also acquire education at the Akmenė District Youth and Adult Education Centre, Alytus Adult and Youth School, Jonava Adult Education Centre, Kaunas Adult Education Centre, Kėdainiai Adult and Youth Education Centre and other institutions.

Integration into the labour market

The integration of the Roma into the labour market is being ensured both through the implementation of general measures run by the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and through the implementation of projects aimed at the integration of the Roma into the labour market. One of them is the “Working with the Roma: New Job Opportunities and Challenges” project that has been implemented since 2016. The results of the project show an increasing integration of the Roma people into the labour market.

During the implementation of this project, socially vulnerable Roma persons participated in social integration activities, seminars on gender equality issues (45 persons participated in gender equality training in Vilnius, Eišiškės and Šiauliai, while 14 women participated in various empowerment activities), and attended sports classes and music lessons. Some of the project participants acquired a profession, studied in general education institutions, concluded employment contracts, obtained individual activity certificates, or registered with the Employment Service.

Roma women were involved in training for baking the traditional Roma cake Savijako and selling it on the market, as well as attending jewellery making classes. In 2016-2019, 21 women acquired a specialty, with two of them working in the field of their acquired profession, 7 women received a mentoring service in the field of agriculture, 17 women attended driving courses, and 5 acquired a driving licence.

The Roma who took part in the activities aimed at social integration began their studies, acquired a profession, looked for a job, got a job corresponding to their specialty, and took up individual activities or paid employment. Roma persons attended the Lithuanian language and computer literacy courses and participated in the positive parenting camp. Youth talent development training also took place. Since then, some of the participants have successfully appeared on a music TV show.

In 2019, individual counselling, social problem-solving and mediation services were provided to 298 participants, including 163 women, all of whom were registered with the Employment Service. The project participants attended sports classes, Lithuanian language, English language, driving (B category and C-CE category) courses, computer literacy training, and participated in the youth talent training programme. Roma citizens participated in a mentoring program and employment-promoting vocational training and practical work skills training in the workplace, as well as in seminars for Roma youth and Roma leaders.

One of the success stories of the participation in the labour market is the Gypsy Lounge & Grill, a restaurant featuring the Roma culinary heritage that opened in Vilnius on 1 July 2020 and is owned by an active public figure, the leader of the Roma community, Išvan Kvik. The Roma people working there have also completed vocational training courses and mentoring programmes.

According to the Employment Service data, Roma people actively register with the service and use its services. The number of Roma persons receiving counselling and information services, employment through the implementation of active labour market measures and/or the provision of mediation employment services has increased. Measures to integrate the Roma into the labour market have led to a higher number of Roma in employment, training and apprenticeships. More detailed information on this is provided in Annex 2.

As the Ministry of Social Security and Labour implemented the measures of the Action Plan for Roma Integration into Lithuanian Society 2015-2020 to “Organise training and educational events for employers on equal opportunities and non-discrimination in the labour market (including training on the Roma culture and customs)” and to reduce discrimination against Roma, in 2019, the Customer Service Departments of the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania organised seminars for employers on the topic “Principles of Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination in the Labour Market”. 254 employers participated in the training. The seminars analysed cases of discrimination and examples of the following:

- Situations that create conditions for unequal opportunities and discrimination – methods to avoid similar situations;
- Legislation that ensures the implementation of equal rights – possibilities for its use;
- Recognition of inequalities between women and men, and sexual harassment – equality implementation principles and methods of the application thereof;
- Discrimination against people with disabilities, people of different races and faiths – ways to prevent this discrimination in companies;

- Applying the impact of key measures in enterprises to create an environment of equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

Housing

The most difficult housing situation in 2017 involved the Roma settlement in Kirtimai (Vilnius) due to illegally built houses. Since Vilnius City Municipality started to implement the integration of the Vilnius (Kirtimai) Roma community into society for the 2016-2019 programme in 2016, the number of Roma living in Kirtimai has started to decline: in 2017, the location housed 246 people living in 46 buildings (while ten years ago, the location housed almost 500 Roma). All families with five or more children were relocated from the settlement to the city. In 2019, the number of Roma in the Kirtimai Settlement decreased significantly. At the beginning of the year, 155 people lived in Kirtimai, while at the end of the year, about 50 people remained in 5 cottages. In 2020, the illegal settlement in Kirtimai no longer existed.

Table 1. Number of Roma living in the Kirtimai Settlement

2007	2017	2018	Beginning of 2019	End of 2019	2020
496 persons	246 persons	approximately 200 persons	155 persons	approximately 50 persons (7 cottages)	-

The problem of housing in Kirtimai is solved was two ways: by providing social housing to Roma families and by providing compensation for the rent. In 2017, 7 Roma families received social housing and 14 families received rent compensation benefits. In 2017, €5,669 was allocated for rent compensation. Social workers intensively provided social skills development and support services, motivated the Roma families to leave the settlement, and mediated in the issuance of documents. The social workers also provided social skills development and support services to the Roma families who interacted with neighbours on negative issues and anti-discrimination issues.

To speed up the process of the eviction of the Roma from the Kirtimai Settlement, it was decided to establish a new position in the municipal company Vilniaus Būstas for one year to assist the families living in Kirtimai in renting housing. This assistance has been available since February 2018.

Health

The Department of National Minorities implements measures under the Interinstitutional Action Plan for the Prevention of Drugs, Tobacco and Alcohol of the Republic of Lithuania. A general prevention measure for psychoactive substance use in the Vilnius Kirtimai Settlement was implemented by organising healthy lifestyle training.

On 11 October 2017, the Department of National Minorities organised training for the Roma and persons working with the Roma titled “General Drug Prevention Programme”. 20 people participated in the training course. In 2018, funding was allocated to the Panevėžys Children’s Daycare Centre’s psychoactive substance use prevention programme “Life without...”. During the implementation of the program, three meetings were organised with specialists working with addicts. Roma children and youth visited the “Aš Esu” community of addicts (in Vilnius) and met with a priest working there. In the community of addicts in Pauliai Village (Kaunas District), Roma children and youths were introduced to the crises experienced by the users of psychoactive substances. In addition, Panevėžys organised a meeting with the city’s athletes, who shared their experience on how to live without harmful habits.

The Department of National Minorities, in cooperation with the Panevėžys Children’s Daycare Centre, organised a training cycle aimed at the prevention of the use of psychoactive substances. The training cycle consisted of 2 meetings with individuals working with addicts. The meetings aimed to provide the skills needed for the following: establishing a healthy lifestyle, and developing the ability not to start using alcohol and drugs; to form critical thinking, and develop the ability to resist the influence of one’s environment; to help understand the consequences of harm; and to provide knowledge about the dangers of new psychoactive substances. The target group was Roma children and youths in the Aukštaitija Region. 30 people participated in the training.

An educational seminar on sexuality and the prevention of early marriages was also organised. The seminar consisted of 2 stages related to educational activities. The seminar aimed to help adolescents understand the physiological and psychological changes taking place, and to help them prepare for family life. The objectives of the seminar were to strengthen the students’ self-esteem; develop respect for one’s own and other people’s sexuality; become acquainted with the changes taking place in adolescence and to establish healthy relations with one’s own and the opposite sex; develop the ability to commit to another person and take responsibility for one’s choices; and to

help prepare for family life and parenthood. The seminar was attended by 15 Roma girls and 15 boys from the Aukštaitija Region.

In 2019, the Centre for Communicable Diseases and AIDS conducted a study of the vaccination coverage of Roma children in the Roma community. The study aimed to evaluate the vaccination of Roma children and refugees under 18 years of age who should be vaccinated against tuberculosis, hepatitis B, pneumococcal infection, measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio and *Haemophilus influenzae* type B. The study group consisted of 515 Roma enrolled in various personal health care facilities.

An analysis of the situation of the vaccination coverage of the Roma and refugees in European and global countries has shown that the vaccination coverage of the Roma in all countries is insufficient. After assessing the vaccination coverage of Roma children under 18 years of age who were (or were not) vaccinated against tuberculosis, hepatitis B, pneumococcal infection, measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, poliomyelitis and *Haemophilus influenzae* type B infections in Lithuania, it was established that in Lithuania, Roma children are insufficiently vaccinated, and the vaccination coverage is significantly lower than among all the children in the country.

The results of the study are presented in the publication “Analysis of the data of the study of vaccination volumes of the target group of children”, which can be found on the website of the Centre for Communicable Diseases and AIDS²⁵.

Participation in public life

On 6-9 November 2017, the Department of National Minorities, together with the Department of Youth of the Council of Europe, organised regional training for Roma youth in the three Baltic States on the topic of “Roma youth participation and the fight against anti-Gypsyism”. The training was attended by 25 participants, 15 of whom were from Lithuania. This training aimed to provide the participants with the necessary knowledge to prevent Romaphobia, to support the more active involvement of Roma youth, and to contribute to the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the Roma community at a local or national level.

²⁵ Centre for Communicable Diseases and AIDS, Analysis Of The Data Of The Study of Vaccination Volumes Of The Target Group Of Children, <http://skiepai.ulac.lt/upload/files/2019/05/06/skiepu-leidiny-5.pdf>

The project “Working with the Roma: New Job Opportunities and Challenges”, which has been running since 2016, focuses on women’s empowerment. An exhibition of Roma women’s embroidery work was organised, activities of the Women’s Club were carried out and training on gender equality was held. To encourage Roma women to become more involved in public activities and to seek opportunities for cooperation, the Baltic Roma Association was established, which unites women from Roma organisations in the three Baltic States. In 2018, 3 discussions were organised together with Roma mediators, to discuss the situation of the Roma in the municipalities where they work. A final seminar “Speak Freely – Basics of Public Speaking” was also organised to improve the qualifications of the mediators.

In cooperation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and the Roma Community Centre, the Department of National Minorities organised training for Lithuanian Roma youth on the Roma genocide and human rights. The training aimed to strengthen the capabilities of Roma youth and human rights activists, and to encourage them to organise informal educational activities for Lithuanian youth about the Roma genocide, in accordance with the methodological tool “Right to Remember”. During the training, the participants learned about the genocide of the Roma in Lithuania, held extensive discussions on human rights and how to protect them, and prepared proposals to the Youth Department under the Ministry of Health and Labour on the newly developed Youth Strategy 2020-2028.

The Department of National Minorities, together with the Roma Community Centre, organised training for Roma leaders to discover and educate young community leaders, providing them with the knowledge to act more effectively as mediators between the Roma community and the larger society. The training was exceptional because the discussions were conducted in the Romani language, and the first two days of the training featured lectures by Saimir Mile from the French association *La Voix des Roms* (The Voice of Roma).

At the discussion festival “Exactly!”, The Department of National Minorities initiated the discussion “Presumption of Innocence. Does it apply to Nationality?” The participants, including Roma people, discussed whether the media behaves ethically when emphasising the nationality of suspects, how this message reaches the media, whether nationality should be indicated in court judgments and other procedural documents, and how this affects stereotyping in our society.

The “Remember You Are a Human” exhibition opened at the Kaunas Cultural Centre of Various Nations. The exhibition featured photos of e and their families visiting the Panevėžys Children's Day Centre. The exhibition aimed to promote intercultural dialogue, without which it is

impossible to create a harmonious society. A nun, who is the Head of the Panevėžys Children's Day Centre and the initiator of the exhibition, mentioned that the aim was to present the Roma as working and nurturing common human values.

The Ministry of Social Security and Labour launched the social campaign "Lygink rūbus, ne žmones"²⁶ which was aimed at drawing the attention of the public and employers to people experiencing social exclusion in the labour market, and to remind them that professional competencies and skills are more important than one's personal past. A video clip was created for this purpose.²⁷ One of the target groups of this social campaign was the Roma. The Internet portal www.15min.lt published articles about working Roma and the difficulties they face in integrating into the labour market.

The Department of National Minorities organised the seminar "Negative Attitudes Towards the Roma: Steps Towards Change". The seminar included discussions on the negative attitudes towards the Roma in society and the changes in these attitudes, manifestations of hatred and the experience of Roma people, and the formation of the image of the Roma in the media. Examples of Roma community activities to create a positive image of the Roma community were presented. The seminar was organised as part of the "Local Roma Platforms – the Path towards Cooperation with the Municipalities (Part III)" project.

Cultural activities

The Department of National Minorities annually supports traditional Roma events that foster the Roma language, customs and history, and that introduce the public to the distinctive culture of the Roma community. Roma Days, Roma Holocaust Memorial and Roma Language Day events are held annually.

In 2017, three projects were funded with a total budget of €10,100: World Roma Day (implemented by the Lithuanian Roma Community Association); "I Know Who I Am" (Roma Integration Centre); and "Historical Assumptions and Modern Forms of Expression in Roma Integration and Fostering of Identity" (an ongoing project implemented by the Panevėžys Children's Daycare Centre). Socio-cultural Roma events were funded by the project titled "Working with the Roma: New Job Opportunities and Challenges".

²⁶ Social campaign "Lygink rūbus, ne žmones" <https://www.facebook.com/lyginkrubusnezmones/>

²⁷ A video clip <http://bit.ly/LyginkRubusNeZmones>

In 2018, 5 projects were financed: “100 Years of Independence through my lens” (implemented by the Vilnius City Branch of the Lithuanian Youth Falcon Union “Padėk pritapti”); “Fostering and Dissemination of Roma Culture and Traditions” (implemented by the Panevėžys Children’s Daycare Centre); Samudaripen (implemented by Lithuanian Roma communities); World Roma Day (implemented by Sare Roma); and “Tamburinas” Roma Music Festival (implemented by the Roma Integration Centre). A total of €10,000 was allocated to these projects.

In 2019, 3 projects were funded: World Roma Day (implemented by the association Lithuanian Roma Community); “Tamburinas” Roma Music Festival (implemented by the Roma Integration Centre); and “I Tell a Tale” (implemented by the Vilnius City Branch of the Lithuanian Youth Falcon Union "Padėk pritapti"). A total of €7,800 was allocated during this year.

In 2020, 3 projects were funded: “World Roma Day Gypsy Fest 2020” (implemented by the association Lithuanian Roma Community); “Tambourine” Roma Music Festival (implemented by the Roma Integration Centre); and Rom Hop (implemented by the Vilnius City Branch of the Lithuanian Youth Falcon Union "Padėk pritapti"). A total of €14,500 was allocated for the implementation.

In 2021, 5 projects were funded: “Promoting Roma Entrepreneurship: Online Commerce” (implemented by the Baltic Roma Association); a series of events dedicated to the memory of the Roma victims of the Holocaust (implemented by the Lithuanian Roma community); “World Roma Day Gypsy Fest 2021” (implemented by the Lithuanian Roma community); “Digital Audio and Video Archive of the Lithuanian Roma Dialect” (implemented by the Lithuanian Youth Falcon Union); and the “Tamburinas” Roma Music Festival (implemented by the Roma Integration Centre). A total of €25,000 was allocated for these projects.

Vilnius City Municipality also supports events promoting Roma culture at the Kirtimai Culture Centre. In 2017, 6 free events took place at the Kirtimai Culture Centre: 2 concerts, 1 Christmas party with a performance and 3 creative workshops. During the two-part concert “Dialogues of Cultures”, the audience was introduced to the exceptional Roma musical culture, and the Roma community was introduced to Lithuanian music. During the creative workshops, children living in a Roma settlement created puppets and theatrical scenes. There was also a Christmas celebration. In 2018, 3 projects were supported with a budget of €6,300.

Empowerment of Roma women

The Department of National Minorities has established Roma platforms in five Lithuanian municipalities with the largest Roma communities to implement the project “Local Roma Platforms – the Path towards Cooperation with the Municipalities”. Roma women worked as the platform coordinators in Šalčininkai District, Kybartai and Panevėžys.

On 26-27 February 2018, a seminar for Roma women titled “Roma Women as Community Leaders: Exchange of Good Practices and Ideas for the Future” was held in Anykščiai. During the seminar, the participants discussed international Roma initiatives (European Institute of Roma Culture, international women's organisations and conferences), promotion of Roma women's entrepreneurship (ideas for activities under the “Working with the Roma” project), and the situation of Roma women in Lithuania (early marriage and health indicators, as well as the situation in prisons).

Furthermore, in 2018, the “Positive Parenthood Camp” was organised. Of the 30 participants, 20 were women. Training courses were organized on baking traditional a Roma cake and selling it on the market, which were attended by 12 participants, as well as jewellery making activities.

The Public Institution Roma Society Centre, together with its partners, implemented measures for Roma women within the framework of the European Union-funded project “Working with the Roma: New Job Opportunities and Challenges”. This project, which has been running since 2016, is focused on women's empowerment. In 2016-2017, 45 people participated in gender equality training and 14 women were involved in various empowerment activities.

“We are Community Superheroes” project

In 2019, the Day Centre of the Lithuanian Youth Falcon Union “Padėk pritapti” implemented the project “We are Community Superheroes”. The project, funded by Vilnius City Municipality, was aimed at empowering young Roma and other socially excluded girls.

20 project participants – young Roma and other socially excluded girls from Vilnius – participated in 30 educational sessions and one final event at the Kirtimai Culture Centre. During the project, the participants were involved in artistic, cultural and professional activities, acquired communication and cooperation, planning, financial literacy, career planning and aesthetic sense skills, and contributed to the creation of new artistic values and social activities of the Naujininkai community. During the project, the participants learned to write a CV and cover letter, how to participate in a job interview, were introduced to various professions, and gained the knowledge

needed to provide beauty and aesthetic services. The acquired competencies should promote and increase the opportunities and competitiveness of the Roma and other socially excluded girls in the labour market. The project increased the supply of extracurricular cultural and social employment for the Roma and the socially excluded adolescents, girls and young mothers living in Naujininkai (and beyond). The girls were able to engage in cultural and social activities, expand their competencies, gain new knowledge, meet new people, and strengthen their competitiveness in the labour market.

The third recommendation is to harmonise the legal framework for the use of minority languages in communications with administrative authorities, in private signs and topographical indications, and for the spelling of names in official documents, within Articles 10 and 11 of the Framework Convention

Use of the national minorities' languages in communication with the authorities

Following a certain procedure and according to the needs, institutions, services and municipalities of the Republic of Lithuania, applications are accepted in a language other than the state language.

The right to appeal to the authorities in a national minority or other non-state language is guaranteed by the Law on Public Administration and the Regulations for the Consideration of Applications and Complaints and the Servicing of Persons in Public Administration Entities (approved by a government decree). Pursuant to Paragraph 15 of the Regulations for the Consideration of Applications and Complaints and the Servicing of Persons in Public Administration Entities, the head of an institution has the right to determine the languages other than the state language in which written applications may be accepted. Information and services in Polish and Russian are provided on the websites of Vilnius City, Šalčininkai, Švenčionys and Vilnius District Municipalities, as well as on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and on the Police Electronic Services system www.epolicija.lt. The Law on Courts has also established that the right of persons who do not know the state language to participate in legal proceedings shall be guaranteed through an interpreter (Article 8).

Article 7(4) “State and Municipal Institutions and Bodies Transactions with Legal and Natural Persons” of the Draft Law on the State Language (09.07.2008 Reg. No. XP-1320 (2))

provides that the “Employees of state and municipal institutions and establishments may, of their own volition, orally communicate with natural persons in a language acceptable to both parties”.

Private signs and topographical indications in the language of a national minority

Article 11(3) of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities deals with traditional names, i.e. the protection of the cultural heritage of national minorities: “In areas traditionally inhabited by substantial numbers of persons belonging to a national minority, the Parties shall endeavour, within the framework of their legal system, including, where appropriate, the agreements with other States, and taking into account their specific conditions, to display traditional local names, street names and other topographical indications intended for the public also in the minority language when there is a sufficient demand for such indications”.

Street and institution names are elements of management and administration, not a matter of cultural heritage; therefore, such names should be provided only in the state language.

As of 2016, Vilnius City Municipality has been carrying out a campaign calling on citizens to be more tolerant and open, and to show respect for people of different nationalities based in the traditions of the city, which has long been famous for the coexistence of different cultures. In the course of the campaign, some streets in Vilnius saw decorative signs in the languages of national minorities placed next to the official street names in the state language. Among the bilingual streets in Vilnius are Iceland, Karaim, Latvia, Moldova, Russia, Tatar, Warsaw, German and Jew Streets, as well as Washington Square. However, the decorative, uniquely-designed signs with street names translated into a foreign language are not equated with the official street names.

Spelling of names in minority languages in official documents

The current Law on the State Language of the Republic of Lithuania does not regulate the spelling of names and surnames; however, Article 15 thereof stipulates that the genders, which are prescribed by laws, of personal names of the citizens of the Republic of Lithuania shall be used in the Republic of Lithuania. The spelling of personal names in documents is not included in the areas regulated by the Law on the State Language, as it has been agreed in the state that this issue must be regulated by a separate law. At present, the names and surnames of Lithuanian citizens are spelled in the personal documents in accordance with Article 6(6) of the Law on the Civil Status Acts Registration of the Republic of Lithuania. (*Civil Status Acts shall be spelled in Lithuanian*). Persons

who enter into a marriage with an alien and choose to take their spouse's surname, as well as the children of such persons, are granted the right to spell the changed surname in the original language (if the characters are in Latin) by a court decision. The original spelling of the names, using non-Lithuanian Latin characters, is still under discussion.

It should be noted that the coalition agreement of 9 November 2020 signed by the ruling majority the Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats, Freedom Party and the Liberal Movement – providing for the coalition, agreements and the works of the Seimas and the government for 2020–2024, and the list of issues relevant to the individual coalition partners thereto, includes an article on amendments to the law, legalising the spelling of personal names on the main page of documents in all letters of the Latin alphabet.

The fourth recommendation is to ensure that students in minority schools are not discriminated against in education reforms, through an evidence-based rather than time-bound policy of transitional measures and an advisory role for teachers of national minority languages; formulate and implement a conceptual approach to bilingual or multilingual education in schools and pre-school education institutions, to help the children of national minorities integrate into the environment in which the Lithuanian language is used, and vice versa; consider including assessments of national minority language examinations in the calculation of the final grade, which is important for admission to university.

The Department of National Minorities annually analyses schools and the maturity level of the mother tongue in state language examinations for ethnic minority students. The Department also publishes analytical publications on individual (Polish, Russian, Roma, Tatar) national minorities, their situation, activities and education. It is hoped that such information will help shape the national minority policies in all areas, including education. Based on the collected data, the Department of National Minorities initiates round table discussions and conferences to assess student achievements, discuss possible teaching methods and makes suggestions for progress. Teachers, researchers and representatives of non-governmental organisations operating in the field of education at Lithuanian national minority schools are invited to these events.

In analysing the results of the state language examinations of ethnic minority students and the problems of the integration of children and youths which concern the representatives of national communities and education specialists, the Department of National Minorities organises meetings

with professionals in various fields. In particular, the Department organised several conferences and round table discussions.

In 2020, the Department of National Minorities initiated the conference “Aspects of Integration of Children and Youths of National Minorities in the Context of Student Achievements”, to present the results and discuss the maturity exam results of students in national minority schools and their enrolment into higher education. After analysing the conference material, the Department of National Minorities concluded that additional measures are needed for teaching national minority students the state language and expanding the competence of teachers in this regard.

The Department of National Minorities, which focuses on the achievements of students in national minority schools and perspectives for improving the qualification of teachers, in response to the assumptions made at the conference and the conclusions of previous conferences and discussions, has started cooperating with Vytautas Magnus University. The following pilot modules were ordered: 1) additional measures for the improvement and deepening of the Lithuanian language knowledge and skills of 12th-grade students enrolled in national minority schools in south-eastern Lithuania, according to the general education programme; 2) programmes for the improvement of pedagogical intercultural and linguistic competences in the fields of knowledge on Lithuanian culture and the Lithuanian language (48 academic hours); and the preparation and implementation of Polish language and literature for teachers of grades 1–12 in the national minority schools in south-eastern Lithuania. The pilot modules, which are to be continued, were prepared and tested by Vytautas Magnus University.

Together with the Institute of the Lithuanian Language, the Department of National Minorities has developed a training tool for Russian-speaking people living in Lithuania. It is based on the exceptional work of a researcher who is a specialist in an intensive foreign language teaching methodology. Prof. Sergejus Temčinas’ teaching method allows for learning the basics of the Lithuanian language in a very short time, before further deepening the knowledge of the Lithuanian language independently.

In 2019, Kazimieras Simonavičius University, together with the Department of National Minorities, organised the national literacy competition “Linguist of the Future” for Grade 11–12 students of Lithuanian, national minority and foreign schools in Lithuania. The aim of the competition was to stimulate interest in the prospects of modern language in the 21st century, its increased role in society, language technologies and digital resources. It was also aimed at developing a modern and independent approach to language, strengthening the value concept of language and linguistic

awareness, developing the perception of language as a source of creativity, developing creative thinking and language expression skills, and raising the prestige of the Lithuanian and Lithuanian national minority languages.

Minority language teachers are given a strong advisory role

2019 and 2020 saw the beginning of an updating process for the content of the general education curricula. Suggestions were made to supplement the curriculum with topics reflecting the history, culture and lives of national minorities in Lithuania. The updating of general education curricula includes teachers working in schools carrying out the educational process in national minority languages.

In 2020, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport formed the Commission for National Minorities. The regulations of the commission were approved by the Order of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of 9 November 2017 “On the Approval of the Regulations of the Commission for National Minority Education” No. V-1761²⁸. Article 6(2) of the Regulations provides that, where necessary, the Commission for National Minorities shall provide an opinion and conclusions on its own initiative, or if the Minister of Education, Science and Sports, or other institutions apply to it, on matters of national minority education.

The functions of the Commission are to monitor the implementation of the Declaration “On the Education of the Polish National Minority in the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian National Minority in the Republic of Poland” signed in Vilnius in 2020 and in Warsaw in 2019 (for more information on the declaration, see Part I).

Under the adopted Declarations on the Implementation Plan of the Polish National Minority in the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian National Minority in the Republic of Poland, the Lithuanian commission discussed the introduction of state and school maturity examinations in Polish as a mother tongue, as well as the possibility of equating the results of the state and school maturity exams with the results of other state and school maturity exams when entering Lithuanian higher education institutions, providing Polish schools with textbooks on the Polish mother tongue and other subjects, including those purchased in Poland, and finding ways to increase the number of qualified pre-school, pre-primary and basic education teachers and educational support specialists (speech

²⁸ Order “On the Approval of the Regulations of the Commission for National Minority Education” No. V-1761
<https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/fc72c1d225f011eb8c97e01ffe050e1c?jfwid=4t02bu2en>

therapists and special pedagogues) required for Polish minority schools. Other topics discussed were the possibilities of attending a Polish language group or groups carrying out activities in Polish for the children of Polish nationality attending schools where the education is provided in Lithuanian. Additionally, the teaching of the Lithuanian language for 5 hours a week in kindergartens and primary education classes was discussed.

Development of bilingual or multilingual education in schools and pre-school institutions

In the development of bilingual education, September 2020 was the publication date for 1,000 copies of the methodological tool for teachers “Second Language at an Early Age” (the first edition was published in 2014). This methodological tool has been distributed to schools teaching in national minority languages which, according to the Education Management Information System, employed 551 pre-school and pre-primary teachers in the 2020–2021 school year. In-service training programmes have also been prepared, and it is planned that in the first half of 2020 in-service training events will be implemented in 7 municipalities for the teachers of national minority languages in pre-school and pre-primary education institutions.

In 2020, the National Agency for Education organised in-service training programmes for Lithuanian language and literature teachers, i.e. two-day three-groups remote seminars titled “Improvement of Essay Evaluation Competences”. A remote training programme for Lithuanian language experts, “Lithuanian Hive 2020”, was also implemented according to the following modules: Lithuanian Language Teaching Methodology (50 academic hours), Literature Teaching Methodology (50 academic hours), Essay Teaching and Assessment (50 academic hours) and Reading Skills Development (50 academic hours). The seminars were attended by teachers of ethnic minority students, as there is a constant need to improve the methodological knowledge of the Lithuanian language among ethnic minority teachers.

In cooperation with the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe, a seminar for teachers working in a bilingual environment is planned to take place in mid-October 2021.

To strengthen bilingual education, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport prepared and submitted to the Seimas a draft amendment to Article 30 of the Law on Education by a resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. The draft amendment proposes to legalise and ensure that the pre-school education institutions of national minorities provide at least 5 hours per week of education in the Lithuanian language, as of 1 September 2021, in order to provide the children of

national minorities with better knowledge of the Lithuanian language and improve their skills. It is also proposed the number of weekly hours devoted to educating pre-primary children in Lithuanian should be increased to at least 5 hours per week.

Inclusion of the national minority language examination grade in the final assessment

In 2017, the Department of National Minorities, having analysed the provisions enshrined in the Law on Higher Education of the Republic of Lithuania and taking into account the additional criteria established by Order No. V-718 of 29 August 2016 “On the Approval of the Description of the Procedure for Compiling the Order of the Best Secondary Education Programme Graduates in 2018”, and noting the relevance of the issue to all schools where the teaching process is conducted in the languages of national minorities (Belarusian, Polish, Russian and German), asked the Minister of Education, Science and Sport to consider including the grades of the maturity examinations in the national minority mother tongues (Belarusian, Polish, Russian German) as an additional criterion.

The letter stated that the aims of the national minorities’ mother tongue subject are not only to achieve linguistic competence, but it also include very important aspects; namely historical, aesthetic, philosophical-social and instrumental. The subject responds to the rights of the persons belonging to national minorities to preserve their ethnocultural identity and to the peculiarities of the content and process of national minorities education. Furthermore, the grade achieved in the mother tongue school level maturity exam would allow for measuring the abilities and achievements of the entrants and would be treated as an advantage when studying in Lithuanian higher education institutions, as good language skills expand the opportunities to directly use science and popular science literature, and to read and study various texts and sources in their original language as well as the translations thereof.

In 2020, the issue was again raised at a meeting of the Commission for National Minorities, which returned to its consideration. In the context of the updated general curricula, various examination models are being considered, including taking into account the grade achieved in the national minority language examinations for university admission.

The Department of National Minorities has applied to the higher education institutions with a proposal to award an additional point to the students entering higher education institutions for proficiency in the national minorities’ mother tongue.

PART III – IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION ARTICLES

B. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION BY ARTICLES

ARTICLE 1

The protection of national minorities and the rights and freedoms of persons belonging to those minorities forms an integral part of the international protection of human rights, and as such falls within the scope of international cooperation.

The Republic of Lithuania is continuing its cooperation with international organisations active in the field of human rights protection – the United Nations, European Union, Council of Europe (including the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). In 2016-2021, the Republic of Lithuania submitted reports in accordance with the following United Nations and Council of Europe human rights treaties ratified by the Republic of Lithuania:

1. United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
2. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
3. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
4. International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance;
5. Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
6. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
7. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
8. Convention on the Rights of the Child;
9. European Social Charter;
10. European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;

11. Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse;
12. Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings;
13. Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Whereas the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for organising reports and information under the 1965 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Government Resolution No. 1540 of 18 December 2001, consolidated version from 02.07.2019), we can additionally confirm that in 2017 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted the fourth periodic report under the ICCPR. In 2018, the United Nations Human Rights Committee welcomed the Lithuanian Action Plan for the Promotion of Non-Discrimination for 2017-2019 and its implementation, the establishment of the Department of National Minorities in 2015, and the Action Plan for the Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society for 2015-2020. The Human Rights Committee recommended strengthening Lithuania's efforts to combat intolerance, stereotypes, discrimination and incitement to hatred against vulnerable persons and minority groups, including the Roma, Jews, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

In 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted a joint ninth and tenth periodic report under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. In 2019, Lithuania was evaluated by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which noted the positive Lithuanian legal and institutional measures for the implementation of the Convention, especially in the areas of the elimination of intolerance and discrimination, Roma integration, anti-trafficking, law enforcement training and anti-hate crime. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination made recommendations that Lithuania should intensify its efforts in the following areas: ensuring adequate funding for the Seimas Ombudsman's Office and the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, Roma integration and education, strengthening dialogue with the civil society, combating hate crime, integration of migrants and other areas.

The bodies monitoring these treaties welcomed the progress in the implementation of human rights agreements, while expert recommendations and opinions were received.

To properly implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recommendations and to promote dialogue with the civil society, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs involved other responsible ministries, the Department of National Minorities, non-governmental organisations and independent human rights institutions active in the relevant areas to take part in the discussion process.

On 22 February 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in summarising the information provided by the Lithuanian authorities, provided answers in English to a questionnaire for the delegations of the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion for a study on the political participation of national minority youth in the Council of Europe Member States, aiming to review the situation in the member states of the Council of Europe, identify trends and good practices, as well as recognizing the obstacles and challenges (e.g., legal, educational) related to the political participation of young people of national minorities.

ARTICLE 2

The provisions of this framework Convention shall be applied in good faith, in a spirit of understanding and tolerance, and in conformity with the principles of good neighbourliness, friendly relations and cooperation between states.

In 2017–2021, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania ratified the following international treaties:

1. 2018

- 1.1. Council of Europe Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production (revised), which entered into force in the Republic of Lithuania on 1 January 2019;
- 1.2. Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, which entered into force in the Republic of Lithuania on 1 January 2019;

2. 2019

- 2.1. Protocol amending the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to the Automatic Processing of Personal Data, which has been provisionally applied in the Republic of Lithuania as of 1 April 2020;
- 2.2. Council of Europe Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events, which entered into force in the Republic of Lithuania on 1 April 2021;

3. 2020

3.1. Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism, which entered into force in the Republic of Lithuania on 1 August 2020;

4. 2021

4.1. Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents, which entered into force in the Republic of Lithuania on 1 December 2020.

In 2017, the Department of National Minorities and the Plenipotentiary for Religions and Nationalities of the Republic of Belarus signed an agreement on cooperation in the field of the national minority policy.

ARTICLE 3

1. Every person belonging to a national minority shall have the right to freely choose to be treated, or not to be treated as such, and no disadvantage shall result from this choice or from the exercising of the rights which are connected to that choice.

Additional recommendation: ensure that the 2021 census provides a solid basis for minority rights policy-making, guaranteeing the right to a free and voluntary choice of identity, the possibility to declare an affiliation to more than one ethnic group, and the collection of data on one's first and second languages.

According to the data of the last population and housing census, which took place in 2011, 154 nationalities were living in Lithuania. One in three residents of the country indicated that they spoke two foreign languages. The population belonged to 59 different religious communities.

The population and housing census of 2021 will be conducted differently: on the basis of administrative data, using the data from nineteen major state registers and information systems (Centre of Registers, Real Estate, Pupil and Student Registers, SODRA, STI, E-Health, Employment Service and other information systems).

As the 2021 census is based on administrative data, in response to the user needs and in order to maintain continuity and comparability of the indicators, a statistical survey of the nationality, mother tongue and religion of the population is being carried out to collect this information. Statistics

Lithuania launched the survey on 15 January 2021. A representative of the Department of National Minorities was invited to the working group preparing the survey methodologies. In preparation for the survey, specialists from Statistics Lithuania participated in a discussion with the Polish Discussion Club, where they presented the forthcoming census and the statistical survey on the nationality, mother tongue and religion of the population. They also consulted demographers. As a result, the choice of the method of the study, the wording of the questions, and other aspects of the study were agreed upon.

At present, the nationality of a large part of the population is indicated in the Population Register, but it should be noted that until 1992, the nationality of a child was not indicated on their birth certificates. Indicating the nationality in the passport of a citizen of the Republic of Lithuania was also not an option. Due to these circumstances, the representatives of national minorities feared that the data in the registers would not reflect the real number of persons belonging to national minorities. Taking into account the request of the representatives of some ethnic communities, Statistic Lithuania included a question on nationality in the survey, as there are residents who would like to indicate a nationality other than that entered in the Population Register. The survey asked the residents to answer questions about their nationality, mother tongue, other spoken languages and religion.

Residents of Lithuania were invited to log in to <https://surasymas.stat.gov.lt> and take part in the online survey from 15 January to 28 February 2021. Logging in was only possible by entering exact personal data (personal identification code and the number of a valid document) or through the Electronic Government Gateway. Statistical survey questionnaires with four questions were provided to the population in Lithuanian, Polish, Russian and English.

To ensure the quality and representativeness of the results of the statistical survey, after the end of the online survey, about 40 thousand residents who did not participate in the online survey were selected from the population register. They were selected using stratified simple random sampling and were interviewed by interviewers. The probability sample list consisted of residents aged 16 and over who did not participate in the online survey; in addition, parents, adoptive parents or guardians participated on behalf of their children by logging in using the child's data.

The survey data on the nationality, mother tongue and religion of the population will be presented together with the results of the 2021 population and housing census. After the collection of statistics and the application of mathematical models, information on the nationality, mother tongue, proficiency in languages other than the mother tongue and religion will be prepared and published.

The obtained results will be compared with the data in the 2011 census and population register, and will be published together with the census results.

The Department of National Minorities is interested in this study, and is awaiting the results of the census to assess whether the expectations regarding such a method of collecting statistics will be justified in terms of Lithuanian national minorities. The probability of the need for a new methodology has not been ruled out.

As an alternative to these official investigations, the Association of Poles in Lithuania initiated the “Public Census of the Vilnius Region”. According to the Association of Poles in Lithuania, this census is being conducted in order to show the composition of Lithuanian society by nationality as accurately as possible. The collected material will allow a comparison between the data of the official survey and the survey conducted by the Association of Poles in Lithuania. The census will be conducted in accordance with the applicable personal data protection legislation, and all data will be stored by the Association of Poles in Lithuania for at least 25 years. There are three possible ways to fill in questionnaires: filling in a paper questionnaire, filling in a questionnaire online, or by using electronic measures or a phone and signing it. If a person chooses the contact method, the enumerators must comply with all sanitary requirements in force during the pandemic and must provide special certificates.

2. Persons belonging to national minorities may exercise the rights and enjoy the freedoms following from the principles enshrined in the present framework Convention individually, as well as in a community with others.

Currently, the Draft Law on National Minorities prepared by the working group established by the Department of National Minorities has been taken over by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania, which will complete the drafting and will submit it to the Seimas. More on the Draft Law on National Minorities is provided in Part II, the First Recommendation.

ARTICLE 4

1. The Parties undertake to guarantee to persons belonging to national minorities the right of equality before the law and of the equal protection of the law. In this respect, any discrimination based on belonging to a national minority shall be prohibited.

Additional recommendation: ensure that the responsibilities of the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, Office of the Seimas Ombudsman and the Office of the Ombudsman for the Protection of the Rights of the Child are supported by adequate resources, including funds to strengthen their image and raise awareness among the persons belonging to national minorities.

In 2020, the Equal Opportunities Programme conducted by the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson's Office (hereinafter referred to as the "Ombudsperson's Office") was allocated €438 thousand from the state budget (this amount was €426 thousand in 2019, €507 thousand in 2018, €390.3 thousand in 2017²⁹ and €453 thousand in 2016).

In 2020, according to the Equal Opportunities Programme, the Ombudsperson's Office used 99.9% of the state budget funds. The ongoing project activities used an additional €305.5 thousand received from programmes directly financed by the European Commission and €235.6 thousand received from the investments of European Union funds.

The national funding of the project "Everyone Talks about It: Work-Life Balance Becomes a Reality" used €90 thousand from the state budget funds received from the Ministry of Social Security and Labour to implement the Measures of the Interinstitutional Action Plan 2020-2022 of the Demography, Migration and Integration Strategy 2018-2030. In 2020, the Ombudsperson's Office received €9 thousand in support, of which €5 thousand was used for the preparation of the National Equality and Diversity Awards.

In 2020, the Ombudsperson's Office carried out educational and preventive activities, as well as implementing various projects focused on equal opportunities. These projects are usually

²⁹In 2017, €150 thousand was allocated for the implementation of the state investment project (hereinafter the "SIP") "Major repair and adaptation of premises in Vilnius, Gedimino pr. 60, for the needs of the service". After evaluating the estimate of the technical project for major repairs of the premises located at Gedimino pr. 60, Vilnius, and upon the possibility for the Ombudsperson's Office to temporarily manage and use the state-owned administrative premises located at Gedimino pr. 11., Vilnius, free of charge until 31 December 2020, in accordance with the loan agreement, it was decided to discontinue the implementation of the SIP (2.33% of the funds allocated to the SIP were used).

funded through the Ombudsperson's Office's efforts to attract other sources of funding, such as European Union programmes to promote human rights in the Member States, other international programmes and funds, and support from Lithuania's private sector, e.g. by holding the National Equality and Diversity Awards.

The state contributes to the financing of these projects by ensuring the necessary contribution of national funding – 20% of the total EU funding. Applications prepared by experts from the Ombudsperson's Office for attracting international funding and the support won on the basis of these applications allows the Ombudsperson's Office's educational and preventive activities to be carried out more widely and with a better quality: to develop high-quality products, organise training, prepare methodological materials, articles and publications on equal opportunities topics, organise information and awareness-raising campaigns, conduct events, conduct public research, etc. The educational and preventive activities organised on this principle inevitably lack flexibility in the choice of the project topics, issues and areas. Thus, the independence and freedom to act in accordance with national priorities and needs would be ensured by targeted national funding for the Ombudsperson's Office's educational and preventive activities on an annual basis. This would make the Ombudsperson's Office independent of the international donors and their priorities. However, targeted national funding for educational activities and the dissemination of equal opportunities from the state budget has not been provided so far.

The Office of the Seimas Ombudsmen is a state budget institution financed from the state budget. The maximum number of positions of the civil servants and employees of this institution working under employment contracts and receiving salaries from the state budget and state monetary funds are approved by the Board of the Seimas. The amount of remuneration and the conditions for paying the remuneration to the Seimas Ombudsmen is established by the Law on Remuneration of State Politicians and State Officials³⁰.

The Office of the Ombudsman for the Protection of the Rights of the Child is an independent state institution financed from the state budget. By a decision of the Seimas or the government, the institution is allocated additional state budget funds for the purpose of financing individual state programmes.

The Law on the Remuneration of State Politicians and State Officials, Labour Code and other legal acts establish the amount of remuneration and the conditions for the remuneration of civil

³⁰ Law on the Remuneration of State Politicians and State Officials, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.407880?jfwid=q86m1vvgc>

servants in the Office of the Ombudsman for the Protection of the Rights of the Child, responsible for supervising and controlling the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of the child.

Law on Equal Treatment of the Republic of Lithuania

In 2019, the Draft Law Amending the Law on Equal Treatment No. IX-1826 (recast) No. XIIIIP-3512 was registered in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. This draft law proposes, among other things, that new forms of discrimination are defined, to establish adequate protection against secondary victimisation, and to expand the rights of the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson (it is proposed to grant the right to propose to the Seimas to apply to the Constitutional Court and the right to protect the public interest).

Action Plan for the Promotion of Non-Discrimination 2017-2020

The main strategic document aimed at achieving the goals of equal opportunities and non-discrimination policy in the period 2017-2020 was the Action Plan for the Promotion of Non-Discrimination 2017-2020, approved by the Order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of 15 May 2017 “On the Approval of the Action Plan for the Promotion of Non-Discrimination 2017-2019” (hereinafter referred to as the “Action Plan”)³¹.

The action plan to promote non-discrimination is aimed at developing respect for human beings, ensuring the implementation of legislation establishing the principles and provisions of non-discrimination and equal opportunities, raising public legal awareness about gender, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, religion, belief or opinion, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, religion and other identities, to inform the public about the measures being taken to promote equal opportunities and non-discrimination, and to strengthen inter-institutional cooperation in the field of the promotion of equal opportunities and non-discrimination. The implementation of the action plan includes the organisation of training and educational events on integration into society and ensuring equal opportunities, among other activities.

In implementing the measures of the Action Plan to strengthen the education of children from national minorities and migrant families, in 2019 the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson organised 4 forums titled “Roads to the success of each student: how to effectively

³¹ Order on the Approval of the Action Plan for the Promotion of Non-Discrimination 2017-2019 in Lithuanian <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/Oe515fe03b3c11e79f4996496b137f39?jfwid=96t6tbrwj>

overcome the integration of students who have come or returned from other countries and teach the Lithuanian language”, aimed at the chairmen of municipal pre-school, pre-primary and primary school institutions, chairmen of Lithuanian language experts methodological groups and methodological groups of educational institutions, and teachers working with children returning or arriving in Lithuania.

By order of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, in 2017-2019, public transport in Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda and Šiauliai broadcasted a social advertisement to raise the public awareness of equal opportunities and non-discrimination issues.

To reduce discrimination on the grounds provided for in the Law on Equal Treatment and to ensure the prevention of discrimination in the labour market, in 2019, the Department of National Minorities implemented the project “Inclusion of Representatives of National Minorities in the Labour Market”. Members of the project organised the events “Dissemination of good practices in non-discrimination in the labour market through integration ambassadors”.

The Department of National Minorities has prepared and published a selection of texts created by the winners of the competition for academic research on national minorities, initiated by the Department of National Minorities as part of its activities to promote intercultural cognition and give meaning to the cultural heritage of national minorities and immigrants. The research confirmed that the subject matter of national minorities is extremely diverse, unique and broad: from history and political science to law, communication and art. This cultural diversity encourages young people to continue their activities in the fields of research and policy for national minorities, and to work in non-governmental organisations. The Department of National Minorities notes that such a competition contributes to the strengthening of the idea of a multicultural, tolerant and open state, as well as to a better knowledge and understanding of our historical heritage. In 2019, the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania presented the works of the winners of the academic research competition on the topic of national minorities.

As part of the Action Plan measure to “Provide training for young people and those working with young people on the promotion of non-discrimination and respect for human beings, without prejudice to the right of parents to bring up their children in accordance with their convictions”, the Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour organised the annual training course “Developing anti-discrimination, tolerance and respect for others” aimed at helping young people to master and develop non-discriminatory and respectful communication methods, to develop benevolent behaviour, improve the ability to resist prejudices, learn to choose appropriate

communication phrases, recognise the causes of bullying, and to combat the consequences thereof in their living, learning or work environment.

Every year, employers have improved their competencies in the “Principles of Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination in the Labour Market” seminars.

The Action Plan reports for 2019 and 2020 are available on the website of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour³².

The Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the action plan and its implementation measures. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Department of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Police Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, Department of the Affairs of the Disabled under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Department of National Minorities, Department of National Minorities and the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson are contributing to the implementation of the Action Plan.

2. The Parties shall undertake to adopt, where necessary, adequate measures in order to promote, in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life, full and effective equality between the persons belonging to a national minority and those belonging to the majority. In this respect, they shall take due account of the specific conditions of the persons belonging to national minorities.

By Resolution No. 330 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 24 March 2010 “On the Management Areas Assigned to Ministers”, the coordination of the policy for national minorities was assigned to the Ministry of Culture.

Resolution No. 208 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 10 March 2020 clarified the regulations of the Ministry of Culture, according to which the Ministry formulates the state policy in the field of national minorities and organises, coordinates and controls the

³² The Action Plan reports of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour in Lithuanian [Nediskriminavimo skatinimo veiksmų planas | Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerija \(lrv.lt\)](#)

implementation thereof³³. The Department of National Minorities takes part in forming the state policy in the field of national minorities and implements that policy.

Given that the protection of the rights of national minorities covers not only cultural but also social security, education, foreign affairs, home affairs, national defence and human rights, and in order to make substantial progress in the protection of national minority rights, it was decided to strengthen inter-ministerial cooperation in coordinating the state policy in relation to national minorities. By Resolution No. 171 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 26 February 2020, the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania was formed³⁴. For more information, see Part I, Contribution and participation of the civil society.

To reduce the social and economic disparities between Lithuanian regions, alleviate development disparities in the regions, and promote balanced and sustainable development throughout the country, the National Regional Policy is being implemented; the priorities of the policy until 2020 are set out in the National Progress Programme for 2014-2020 approved by Resolution No. 1482 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 28 November 2012³⁵. On 15 December 2017, the National Regional Development Council approved the White Paper on the Sustainable Development of the Lithuanian Regional Policy³⁶. In addition to the objective formulated in the White Paper “To create quality living conditions throughout Lithuania”, actions are being taken to improve the accessibility of cultural services and the level of involvement of the population, promote cultural and creative activities and the dissemination of information about traditional ethnic communities, and create a regional funding model for cultural projects; in addition, social, civic and cultural heritage awareness actions have been initiated, the intangible cultural heritage (ethnic culture) has been fostered, and community inclusion projects have been implemented.

Project “Working with the Roma: New Job Opportunities and Challenges”

³³ the regulations of the Ministry of Culture in Lithuanian

<https://lrkm.lrv.lt/uploads/lrkm/documents/files/naujos%20redakcijos%20KM%20nuostatai.pdf>

³⁴ Resolution No. 171 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/dc1b64d05c8511eaac56f6e40072e018?positionInSearchResults=0&searchModelUUID=9d9f78b4-f4a9-42fd-9597-84487627a146>

³⁵ Resolution No. 1482 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 28 November 2012 on the National Progress Programme for 2014-2020 in Lithuanian <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.31A566B1512D/asr>

³⁶ White paper on Lithuanian Regional Policy

[https://vrm.lrv.lt/uploads/vrm/documents/files/ENG_versija/Lithuanian%20Regional%20Policy%20\(White%20Paper\).pdf](https://vrm.lrv.lt/uploads/vrm/documents/files/ENG_versija/Lithuanian%20Regional%20Policy%20(White%20Paper).pdf)

This project is implementing the measures of the Action Plan for the Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society for 2015-2020, approved by Order No. IV-48 of the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania of 29 January 2015 “On the Approval of the Action Plan for Roma Integration into Lithuanian Society for 2015-2020”, financed by Priority 8 “Increasing Social Inclusion and Combating Poverty” of the Operational Programme for the European Union Funds (hereinafter referred to as the “EUF”) Investments.

The project aims to help Roma people integrate into the labour market and society, thus avoiding their social exclusion.

The following activities were funded: individual and group motivation sessions, assessment of personal needs, development, maintenance and restoration of social and work skills; socio-cultural services; vocational guidance, information and counselling; developing general skills (e.g. digital literacy, languages and entrepreneurship); vocational training; development of practical work skills in the workplace, mediation or other assistance before and upon employment.

The project promoter is the Public Institution Roma Community Centre. Project partners are: Lithuanian Gypsy Community “Čigonų Laužas”, Lithuanian Roma Community, Roma Integration House, Roma Integration Centre, and the Lithuanian Gypsy Community “Čigonų Laužas” Šalčininkai District Branch.

The results were as follows: 306 Roma people took part in the project activities, of which 19% started looking for a job, studying or working, including in self-employment. 306 Roma people received socio-cultural services.

The project results in 2016-2017 were: 220 socially vulnerable persons participated in social integration activities; 129 Roma received socio-cultural services (sports activities in Eišiškės and Vilnius, seminars on gender equality in Vilnius, Eišiškės and Šiauliai (45 Roma participated), and music lessons); 48 project participants submitted employment contracts, individual activity certificates or registered with the Labour Exchange; 7 participants sought to acquire education in general education schools; and 3 studied a specialty subject. The project employed social workers, mediators, music teachers, employment experts and a lawyer.

The project results in 2018 were: 266 socially vulnerable Roma participated in the EUF activities for social inclusion; 131 Roma received socio-cultural services; 78 socially vulnerable people started looking for a job, studying or working, including in self-employment after participating in the EUF activities for social inclusion; 40 persons participated in general skills development classes: they attended Lithuanian language training (5 in Vilnius, 10 in Eišiškės, 15 in Panevėžys and

Ukmergė) and computer literacy courses (1 in Vilnius, 9 in Panevėžys); 7 of the project participants acquired a profession, where 5 of them got a job corresponding to their specialty subject; and 30 people participated in the positive parenting camp. Youth talent development training also took place. 5 of the training participants successfully appeared on a TV show. The project had a total of 20 employees: 2 social workers, 1 employment specialist, 3 mediators, 1 music coach, 1 Lithuanian language teacher, 1 sports coach, 1 women's club manager in Vilnius as well as 1 social worker, 2 mediators, 1 Lithuanian language teacher, 1 sports coach, 1 music coach in Eišiškės (Šalčininkai District); 1 psychologist, 1 employment specialist and 1 mediator in Panevėžys; and 1 mediator/music coach in Šiauliai.

In 2019, 163 women participated in the programme, with most of them receiving social and socio-cultural services. All were registered with the Employment Service. Since the launch of the project, 21 women have acquired a specialty qualification or are currently studying, while 2 of them are working in accordance with the acquired profession, 7 women have received mentoring services in agriculture, 17 women have attended driving courses and 5 have received a driving licence.

Other measures for the integration of Roma into Lithuanian society provided for in the 2015-2020 Action Plan

This project is implementing the measures of the Action Plan for the Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society for 2015-2020, approved by Order No. The Action Plan for the Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society for 2015-2020, approved by Order No. IV-48 of the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania of 29 January 2015 "On the Approval of the Action Plan for Roma Integration into Lithuanian Society for 2015-2020" also provides for measures undertaken by the Ministry of Security and Labour.

The Employment Service provided counselling services to increase the Roma's motivation to find employment or study, to offer advice on changing jobs, to help them choose a profession, or to plan their career according to their personal characteristics and the labour market needs. In 2018, counselling services were provided to 325 persons; in 2019 to 441 persons; and in 2020 to 89 persons.

The Employment Service also provided counselling services to Roma people looking for a job or seeking to acquire the qualifications or competencies in demand on the labour market. In 2018, 325 persons used these services; in 2019 this was 441 persons; and in 2020 the service was used by 89 persons.

During the implementation of the “Promoting Roma Employment” measure to implement active labour market measures (hereinafter “ALMP”) and/or providing employment mediation services, employment was provided to 84 persons.

During 2018, the Employment Service provided employment services to 8 persons under the ALMP. Of them, one acquired work skills, 5 were employed with subsidies, 2 Roma participated in an apprenticeship programme.

In 2019, 89 persons were provided with employment through the implementation of the ALMP and/or the provision of employment mediation services (75 people in 2020). During the implementation of the active labour market measures, 2 persons participated in the vocational training measures, 2 persons were employed with subsidies, 4 signed fixed-term employment contracts and 8 persons acquired business certificates.

Vilnius (Kirtimai) Roma Settlement Integration into Society Programme for 2016-2019

During the abovementioned period, about a third of the Lithuanian Roma lived in Vilnius. Children and youths in the Kirtimai settlement made up a very large share, comprising almost half of the community.

Decision No. 1-410 of the Vilnius City Municipal Council of 19 April 2016 approved the Vilnius (Kirtimai) Roma Settlement Integration into Society Programme for 2016-2019 (hereinafter the “Programme”). This is the second integration programme to be implemented at the municipal level to solve the long-term problems of the Kirtimai Settlement: to reduce social exclusion, promote integration into the education system, stop the spread of drug addiction in the Vilnius Roma settlement and adjacent territories, increase the resistance of the Roma people to addictive diseases, increase the openness of the Roma culture, improve living conditions, and ensure the effectiveness, efficiency and continuity of integration measures.

The programme established measures for the implementation of these objectives, planned results, targeted funding and appointed the institutions to be responsible for the implementation of these measures.

Since the beginning of the programme in May 2016, the implementation of the measures has started: a list of families wishing to leave the Kirtimai Settlement has been compiled and is updated annually; information and mediation services were provided to some Roma families in order to facilitate communication with the authorities; cash social support and/or child benefit was granted;

Roma families were provided with housing; social workers obliged the Roma families (individuals) who received social housing to fulfil their obligations, e.g. to pay their social housing rent and utilities on time, ensure proper childcare and attendance at educational institutions, and be integrated into the labour market; Roma children were awakened and accompanied to educational institutions to increase their activity in attending pre-school, pre-primary and general education institutions; and cooperation was established with the social pedagogues working at educational institutions. Personal assistants and social workers of the Vilnius City Social Support Centre were responsible for the implementation of these measures.

The municipal company “Vilniaus miesto būstas” rented housing to 23 Roma persons and families, while all 23 Roma persons and families were partially reimbursed for the rent. Applications from the Roma for inclusion in the list of persons and families entitled to housing assistance and applications for a partial reimbursement for rent are being accepted on a regular basis.

The social workers mediated and provided services to 2 Roma families to reduce the exclusion and discrimination of the Roma and resolve the emerging conflicts with their neighbours. It has been observed that the Roma are gradually changing their lifestyles, trying to improve their living conditions and adapt to the larger society. Social workers and personal assistants mediated with Roma families in finding support for furniture, household appliances, clothing and other items. Four Roma families received one-off support for the purchase of furniture and household appliances, while one family received a baby layette, and 21 children from Roma families participated in the Children’s Dreams project. Social workers mediated on behalf of Roma families to apply for social benefits, child benefits and compensation for heating, drinking and hot water. In 2019, three Roma families were granted targeted benefits for the purchase of basic furniture, household appliances and other items, while one family’s debt to utility providers was covered. Two Roma families living in housing without amenities are still being provided with personal hygiene and care services.

Social workers also mediated in submitting annual income declarations for the tax year and for repairs, and in processing documents for receiving cash social assistance and other social benefits. Roma families were motivated to pay their social housing and utility taxes on time. The problems relating to the Roma’s indebtedness were resolved in cooperation with bailiffs. Private apartment landlords were contacted to help the Roma move off the settlement by renting housing and exercising their right to compensation for part of the rent.

Social workers cooperated with the employees of health care institutions in providing health care to the members of families at social risk (accompanied them to doctor appointments, mediated

in determining disabilities, accompanied families to appointments in Vilnius Pedagogical-Psychological Service for identifying special educational needs, etc.). It should be further noted that the social workers mediated with potential employers regarding the employment of Roma persons (social workers reviewed job advertisements on the Internet, helped individuals prepare for job interviews, accompanied the Roma to job interviews, and agreed with the employer on the employment).

The Vilnius Branch of the Republican Centre for Addictive Disorders and Vilnius City Municipality Outpatient Mental Health Clinics ran a methadone substitution treatment programme. It was aimed at ensuring the resistance of the Roma people to addiction disorders.

On 14 October 2019, Vilnius City Municipality and the Lithuanian Roma Community signed a cooperation agreement on the integration of members of the Roma community into the society in Vilnius.

The Vilnius City Municipality Youth Department annually organises activities on working with youth on the streets. Informal methods of social work have developed the social and communication skills of street youth: experiential hikes taught young people about working in a team, communication and cooperation; while functional consultations (board games, discussions or debates on various topics) aimed to provide information and encourage critical thinking about choices. A total of 83 young people participated in these activities.

The Youth Department also funds Youth Programmes; for example, in 2019, it funded the Lithuanian Youth Falcon Union, which works with Roma youth, especially girls. Through educational, artistic and professional skill-development methods, the Roma and other disadvantaged adolescents and young mothers were encouraged to take an active part in social and cultural life and to acquire the competencies needed for successful entry into the labour market. 29 educational sessions on gender stereotypes, career guidance and entrepreneurship were organised with the participation of 50 Roma people.

In 2019, constant contact was maintained with two families that were not provided with social care services living in the Vilnius (Kirtimai) Roma Settlement on the education of 5 school-age children, who went to the educational institution on their own or were accompanied by their parents. The aim of the regular communication between parents and the educational staff was to ensure the children's attendance at educational institutions. These children were provided with a Vilnius City Card (electronic public transport ticket). The personal assistants working at the Family

Support Department went to wake up the children raised by these families at social risk a total of 60 times.

Under this programme, Vilnius City Municipality provided partial funding for the implementation of Roma cultural projects. The events funded were Gypsy Fest and International Romani Day.

In summary, the situation of Roma individuals and families in Vilnius is gradually improving: residents have left the Vilnius (Kirtimai) Roma Settlement, their living conditions are improving, Roma children are being provided with education, and Roma individuals and families are being provided with health care and monetary social assistance.

3. The measures adopted in accordance with Paragraph 2 shall not be considered to be an act of discrimination.

Following the adoption of the Law on Strategic Management of the Republic of Lithuania, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania Resolution No. 998 of 9 September 2020 “On the Approval of the National Progress Plan for 2021–2030” approved the National Progress Plan for 2021-2030. This strategic document enshrines the horizontal principle of “equal opportunities for all”, which will have to be ensured in the preparation of lower-level strategic documents such as development programmes.

The National Progress Plan states that “The application of the horizontal principle of equal opportunities for all ensures that all persons, regardless of their sex, nationality, racial or ethnic origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, views or opinion, disability, health status, social status, age or sexual orientation, shall be provided with equal rights and access to services, infrastructure, transport and other means to participate in public life. The needs of the disabled, women and men, different age groups, national minorities and other groups at risk of discrimination shall be taken into account in the implementation of the Plan’s progress objectives and in the preparation of national development programmes, and measures and indicators implementing the principle of equal opportunities shall be provided.

To implement further measures in the field of equal opportunities, Order No. A1-1256 of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of 10 December 2020 “On the Approval of the Action Plan for Promoting Non-Discrimination 2021–2023” approved the new Action Plan for Promoting Non-

Discrimination, which will also contribute to reducing discrimination against the members of national minorities.

Action Plan for Roma Integration into Lithuanian Society for 2015-2020

In launching the project “Local Roma Platforms – the Path towards Cooperation with the Municipalities” in 2016, the Department of National Minorities commissioned a feasibility study on the cooperation between Roma communities and the municipalities, on the basis of which the activities of Roma mediators and municipal working groups were planned.

Objectives of the feasibility study included: 1) to review data on the situation of the Roma in Lithuania in five municipalities: Vilnius City, Šalčininkai District, Šiauliai City, Panevėžys and Marijampolė Cities; 2) to analyse the main problems faced by the Roma in each municipality; 3) to discuss measures in the fields of education, employment, housing, health care and others, that the municipalities could implement.³⁷

The main goal of the “Local Roma Platforms – the Path towards Cooperation with the Municipalities” project was to encourage the municipalities to pay attention to the problems faced by local Roma communities and to take active actions to improve the situation of the Roma in Lithuania. Most of the problems faced by the Roma people concern access to public services in the areas of housing, education, health and employment. The aim is for the municipalities to take into account and assess the needs of the local Roma community when planning and providing general education, social and health services, thus strengthening the efficiency of the services provided and expanding their accessibility.

The data from the conducted research showed that the Roma situation differs in different municipalities of Lithuania: Roma education, health indicators, quality of housing and participation in the labour market all differ. However, there are also noticeable positive changes taking place, albeit minor ones. The example of Ukmergė District Municipality confirmed that the effective implementation of out-of-school youth accounting and active measures for returning students to the education system have enabled the municipality to achieve positive results in improving the educational attainment, not only of the majority of children but also of Roma students. The availability of social housing and the efficient provision of social services in Klaipėda created

³⁷ Department for National Minorities Analyses and Feasibility Studies in Lithuanian [Tyrimai ir analizės | Tautinių mažumų departamentas prie Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės \(lrv.lt\)](#)

conditions for a large number of Roma people to live in a safe, good-quality environment. The available data on the participation of Roma students in education showed that in Marijampolė, a significant number of students were studying not only in primary but also in upper grades (Grades 8-10). Although the risk of early school leaving remains relevant, it is important to acknowledge that there have been positive developments in the education system. It should also be noted that events aimed at getting to know the local Roma community (including concerts, articles in the local media and a presentation of the Roma history in Lithuania) have greatly contributed to reducing negative societal attitudes towards the Roma and improving mutual knowledge.

Situation of Roma Persons

To collect the necessary data, in 2019 the Department of National Minorities commissioned the survey “Situation of Roma Persons 2020”, according to the criteria for assessing the progress (result) of Roma integration provided for in Annex 3 of the Action Plan for Roma Integration into Lithuanian Society 2015-2020. This survey is a follow-up to the 2015 survey of the Roma people.

The survey was conducted from 27 January to 13 March 2020 in eighteen areas of Lithuania located in eight districts. 102 households were surveyed (compared to 110 in 2015), and in most cases, the surveyed were all persons living in households. A total of 431 Roma persons were surveyed (521 in 2015), of whom 45% were men and 55% women. The reliability of the collected data was assessed by considering the Roma persons who participated in the 2011 census (2,115 persons) and the general group of Roma persons. An error of 4.2% is expected when interpreting the survey data.

Data from the 2020 Roma survey show that, compared to 2015, the situation of the Roma has improved in the areas of education, housing and health, and no more significant changes were recorded in the at-risk-of-poverty rates. Positive changes in the employment indicators were recorded among young people (20-29 years old) in separate residential areas: over the five years, the share of young working Roma and the number of working Roma has increased in Vilnius. Although the financial situation of the Roma households has improved slightly over the last five years, the vast majority (96%) of the Roma still live below the at-risk-of-poverty line and 61% live in households experiencing severe material deprivation.

Important changes were recorded in the field of education. Compared to 2015, more Roma children are attending pre-school and pre-primary education institutions, a more even distribution of Roma students by classes in general education schools was recorded, and the number of students over 16 years of age is increasing. It is important to note that although the overall sample of education

recorded slightly lower education rates than in 2015, the education rates increased in the youngest age groups of Roma (10-19 and 20-29 years). In the youngest group (10-19 years), the share of Roma children who have not completed primary education or are still in primary school has decreased over the last five years (from 36% in 2015 to 28% in 2020). In the youth group (20-29 years), the number of illiterate persons and those without primary education decreased (from 11 to 4%) and the number of persons with basic (from 22 to 30%) and secondary education (from 8 to 18 %) increased. It should be noted that only a small share of Roma children participate in non-formal education: about 24% of Roma children attend daycare centres or after-school groups.

Over the last five years, the subjective assessment of one's health in the Roma group slightly improved. The overall assessment of the health status of children under 15 and adults of working age (16-44 years) slightly improved: the number of respondents who said that their health was good or very good increased, while the number of those who assessed their health condition as average decreased. However, during the same period, there was an increase in the number of older Roma (45 years and older) who rated their health as poor and very poor. Compared to the indicators of the entire population of Lithuania, there are more people among the Roma who negatively assess their health, especially in the working-age and older age groups. Both groups – the Roma and the entire Lithuanian population – have a statistically significant relationship between age and health assessment: the older the study participants, the more likely they are to rate their health as poor or very poor. However, among the total adult population of Lithuania, this indicator is higher than in the Roma group, which means that there are other factors, not related to age and natural aging, which are determining why the Roma rate their health as worse.

In the field of employment, positive changes were recorded only in individual groups, and the overall employment rates of the Roma did not change much: similarly to 2015, 11.4% of the respondents indicated that they are currently employed or self-employed. Significant changes were recorded in the age group of young people (20-29 years). In 2020, the active labour market participants working in this age group accounted for 42% of the population (20% in other age groups). Compared to 2015, the share of employed people among young people increased by 13% in 2020. The survey data shows that the employment rates may be influenced by the factor of the place of residence: in seven of the eighteen municipalities, no working Roma were recorded. Meanwhile, 56% (9 out of 16) of the active labour market participants worked in Vilnius, 4 out of 5 active labour market participants worked in Jonava District, and 3 out of 4 active labour market participants worked in Ukmergė District. The survey data also showed that over the last five years, the share of working Roma in Vilnius has increased significantly and the number of unemployed has decreased.

The employment rate of women has not changed over the past five years, remaining at 9%. However, a positive development is an increase in the share of Roma currently over 15 years of age in education (from 11% to 16%). In 2020, the share of adult Roma who participated in labour exchange training and adult education activities also decreased.

Roma housing conditions have improved, with a decrease in the number of people with problems in housing (from 72% to 55%), an increase in the share of people able to heat their homes sufficiently (from 48% to 75%), and a slight increase in the housing area of Roma households. Despite positive developments compared to the country as a whole, Roma housing is still of a lower quality. An analysis of the data on the financial and material deprivation indicators of families showed several minor changes. Compared to 2015, there has been a decrease in the number of Roma households that have failed to pay utility bills two or more times due to a lack of money (from 58% to 34%) and the share of those who can afford to heat their homes sufficiently increased. Other changes in the material deprivation rate were less significant. An analysis of the financial situation of households revealed that, although in absolute terms Roma incomes have risen over the past five years (from an average of €78 to €147 per person), they still lag far behind the overall national indicators.

National minorities in Lithuania

In 2017, the Department of National Minorities commissioned a study³⁸ on national minorities in Lithuania, which analysed the situation of national minorities in Lithuania over the past three years, i.e. its regulation, regulatory changes, representation of national minority interests and the problems faced by national minorities. Particular attention was paid to the situation of education as an important part of the national minority policy, as the integration of persons belonging to national minorities into the social life and the labour market largely depends on education, as well as to the country's Russian-speaking public space and media. However, the analysis of the situation was not limited to Lithuania: to assess the problem of defining a national minority, international legal regulations were reviewed at the beginning, and the practices of foreign countries in regulating their relations with national minorities were compared.

The study paid particular attention to South-Eastern Lithuania, which is home to many different national minorities and faces social and economic problems. The specifics of this region

³⁸ Lithuanian version of the Study on National minorities in Lithuania
https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/Tautines%20mazumos%20Lietuvoje_papildyta%20studija.pdf

were discussed and the situation of the last three years was analysed, while emphasising the most important facts and statistics.

After the analysis, the strategic goals and directions (tasks) for the government and municipalities for 2018-2027 were formulated. The implementation of these goals would contribute to solving the issues relevant to regions inhabited by national minorities, accelerate the social and economic development of these regions, and ensure better integration of national minorities into Lithuanian social, political, economic and cultural life, while preserving their identity.³⁹ Regarding the policy of Lithuanian national minorities for the next decade, five strategic goals have been formulated: 1) to improve the national minorities' information space and to strengthen the national minorities' media; 2) to improve the representation of the interests of national minorities; 3) to increase the social and economic development of the South-Eastern Lithuanian region; 4) to strengthen the competitiveness of the South-Eastern Lithuanian region by paying more attention to education and culture; and 5) to strengthen the community spirit in the region of South-Eastern Lithuania. Although these goals are set specifically for the region of South-Eastern Lithuania to reduce regional exclusion, they also apply to the whole of Lithuania.

In 2016, the Department of National Minorities published the address book of all national minority associations operating in Lithuania, which also includes the contact information of the Department of National Minorities and cultural centres. In the same year, a concise information publication on national minorities "Who's Who in Lithuania" was published, followed by the publication of "National Communities in Lithuania" in 2018. This publication provides updated information on the national communities living in Lithuania, their cultural and educational activities, and the official statistical indicators of the country. The publication also presents the main areas of activity and functions of the state institution representing the interests of national minorities – the Department of National Minorities. Separate publications on Polish, Russian and Roma national minorities have also been published in Lithuanian, Russian, Polish and English. In 2019, a selection of the texts by the winners of the Academic Works on National Minorities competition was published, while 2020 saw the publication of the book "Forgotten Genocide: Lithuanian Roma during the Nazi occupation". At the end of the 2015-2019 term of the Council of National Communities, the Department of National Minorities prepared and published the book "Lithuania I Love". Interviews with the members of the Council of National Communities were used for preparing the introductory texts. The texts identified geographical locations and introduced personalities, described the

³⁹ S. Klimanskas et al, Lithuanian version of the Study on National Minorities in Lithuania [SIMONAS KLIMANSKIS \(Irv.lt\)](#)

relationships with Lithuania and the stories of coming to Lithuania, told stories about the life of the national community in Lithuania, and presented heritage-related locations in Lithuania singled out by the members of national communities. All the texts include portrait photos.

ARTICLE 5

1. The Parties undertake to promote the conditions necessary for the persons belonging to national minorities to maintain and develop their culture, and to preserve the essential elements of their identity, namely their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage.

Additional recommendation: review the system of support for national minority cultures so that national minority organisations can apply for multi-annual projects and, if necessary, receive long-term basic funding; ensure the legal status and budget of the Vilnius House of National Communities and Kaunas Multicultural Centre, as well as permanent basic funding for the salaries and services of their employees.

The programme⁴⁰ of the Seventeenth Government of the Republic of Lithuania (2016-2020) provided for the promotion of the cultural self-expression of national minorities to ensure adequate material and human resources for national minority schools and to prepare and implement a programme for the preservation of the cultural heritage of national minorities. By promoting knowledge of their cultural heritage, the Government undertook to develop national self-awareness and strengthen the ties with local cultural communities.

The system of support for the activities of associations and non-governmental organisations is being implemented in accordance with the applicable legal acts.

The Law on the Budget Structure stipulates that appropriation managers may distribute appropriations to other entities, but only for the budget year, i.e. for the 12-month budget period starting on 1 January and ending on 31 December.

⁴⁰ Lithuanian version of the programme of the Seventeenth Government of the Republic of Lithuania [XIII-82 Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės programos \(lrs.lt\)](#)

Currently, the state budget funds allocated to the centres are intended for the implementation of projects, i.e., the centres participate in tenders for the project activities announced by the Department of National Minorities and other institutions, including the municipalities. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the centres found it difficult to secure their activities and pay the salaries; thus, additional funding was provided to cover the losses caused by the pandemic. Other solutions are also being sought to ensure the continuity of the centres' activities.

Financing Cultural Centres of National Minorities in 2016-2021

Taking into account the recommendations, in 2017-2019 the Department of National Minorities improved the description of the procedure for co-financing the projects of cultural centres of national minorities⁴¹ from the state budget, and approved the recommendations on which institutions should be considered national minorities' centres. There are currently 10 centres that are receiving funding as cultural centres of national minorities.

For the convenience of the cultural centres of national minorities and non-governmental organisations of national minorities, the Department of National Minorities has developed and implemented an Electronic Application and Report Management System. The centres and organisations can fill in and submit applications for the projects to be implemented online, monitor the status of their applications, find out the decisions of the Application Review Commission and see the list of funded projects.

In their activities, the cultural centres of national minorities take into account the social and cultural needs of the persons belonging to national minorities, provide an opportunity to participate in the activities of the centre, and respect the cultural, linguistic and religious identity of all persons belonging to national minorities. They create appropriate conditions for the expression, preservation and development of that uniqueness, establish a dialogue based on mutual understanding and promote cooperation with a view to making diversity a source and factor in the enrichment of each society. They also provide mediation services, to ensure effective protection of the rights and freedoms of national minorities and the persons belonging to national minorities, in accordance with the norms of the applicable law.

⁴¹Cultural centres of national minorities are public legal entities or their subdivisions (except for educational institutions and charity and support funds), actively working and providing cultural fostering, dissemination and social integration services to persons belonging to national minorities, as well as providing premises and activities, in accordance with the activity recommendations approved by Order No. JV-48 of 22 November 2017 of the Director of the Department of National Minorities.

In promoting the integration and participation of national minorities in public life, providing opportunities to learn the state language, participating in educational, cultural and social skills strengthening activities, ensuring the coherence of ethnic relations, and building trust and mutual understanding among the persons belonging to different ethnic groups, the centres: 1) implement measures aimed at preserving the identity of national minorities and fostering their culture, ensuring the social integration of national minorities and the non-formal education of children and adults, and promoting intercultural dialogue; and 2) provide methodological assistance and information to the non-governmental organisations of national minorities, implement anti-discrimination and human rights protection measures, organise events presenting the culture and traditions of national minorities, collect and systematically disseminate statistical, historical and demographic material about Lithuanian national minorities, organise and carry out project activities, and carry out other activities that do not contradict the legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania and the objectives of the centres.

The cultural centres of national minorities take care of the employment of children and youth, artistic education, organise activities involving various art groups and other groups, support the commemoration of various calendar holidays, popularise the ethnic culture and support amateur art, meet other cultural and socio-cultural needs of the community, and take care of the national minority culture.

The Department of National Minorities is the founder and main financial sponsor of the Public Institution House of National Communities, Public Institution Kaunas Cultural Centre of Various Nations, Public Institution Roma Community Centre, and the Public Institution Folklore and Ethnography Centre of the Lithuanian National Minorities. In the first quarter of 2016-2021, these centres were allocated €1,233,154 for their activities.

In 2018, a separate competition for the activities of the cultural and integration centres of national minorities was announced. Applications for this competition could be submitted by the cultural and integration centres of national minorities registered in the Republic of Lithuania, in accordance with the procedure established by law, the activities of which comply with the recommendations for the cultural and integration centres of national minorities approved by the Director of the Department of National Minorities. 17 applications were submitted to the tender for the project activities of the cultural and integration centres of national minorities, the total amount of which was more than €30 thousand, while over €83 thousand was requested from the Department. 13 projects were financed, and the cultural centres of national minorities were allocated €231

thousand from the state budget, thus providing an opportunity for national minority non-governmental organisations, non-formal education schools, national art collectives, performers and authors to organise their activities.

In 2017, 4 cultural centres of national minorities were funded: House of National Communities, Kaunas Cultural Centre of Various Nations, Folklore and Ethnography Centre of the Lithuanian National Minorities and the Roma Community Centre. To implement the priorities of the activities in 2017 to involve children and youth of national minorities in the public life of the country, the cultural centres implemented measures to encourage children and youth to participate in various integration and identity preservation processes. More than 300 events were organised in the abovementioned cultural centres (Kaunas Cultural Centre of Various Nations organised up to 100 events; Folklore and Ethnography Centre of the Lithuanian National Minorities organised 67 events; House of National Communities organised over 100 events; and the Roma Community Centre organised 40 events). To ensure the activities of 4 national minority cultural centres, the Department provided an opportunity for national minority non-governmental organisations, non-formal education schools, national art groups, performers and authors to organise their activities in the centres.

In 2016, 4 cultural centres of national minorities were funded: House of National Communities, Kaunas Cultural Centre of Various Nations, Folklore and Ethnography Centre of the Lithuanian National Minorities and the Roma Community Centre. To implement the priorities of the activities in 2016 to involve children and youth belonging to national minorities in the public life of the country, the cultural centres implemented measures to encourage children and youth to participate in various integration and identity preservation processes. More than 116 events were organised in the abovementioned cultural centres (Kaunas Cultural Centre of Various Nations held up to 39 events; Folklore and Ethnography Centre of the Lithuanian National Minorities held 7 events; House of National Communities held over 59 events; and the Roma Community Centre held 11 events).

For information on the financing of the cultural centres of national minorities in 2016-2021, see Annex 3.

2. Without prejudice to the measures taken in pursuance of their general integration policy, the Parties shall refrain from policies or practices aimed at the assimilation of persons belonging to national minorities against their will and shall protect these persons from any action aimed at such assimilation.

The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, taking into account the fact that 2020 was the 300th anniversary of the birth of the Lithuanian rabbi, leader of the Litvak Misnagdim and the most prominent representative of Litvak culture, Elijah Ben Solomon Zalman, the Vilna Gaon, declared 2020 as the year of the Vilna Gaon and Lithuanian Jewish History by Resolution No. XIII-1142⁴² of 10 May 2018. The adopted document emphasises that Lithuanian Jews are an integral part of Lithuanian society, and acknowledges the contribution of the Jewish national minority to the creation of the Lithuanian statehood, history, culture and scientific development.

In 2019, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania prepared an extensive programme covering 70 different activities, which, unfortunately, was not fully implemented due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions on events and movement imposed by the government. Some of the projects were carried out remotely, after being transferred to the digital space. A badge and commemorative medal of the Year of the Vilna Gaon and Lithuanian Jewish History was created, while a commemoration-concert for the 120th anniversary of the birth of Chiune Sugihara was organised in Vilnius, and a documentary film “Diplomats for Life: Chiune Sugihara, Kaunas” was released. The documentary film “The Miracle of the Gaon” was also created, while television and radio programmes were broadcast on the Lithuanian National Radio and Television, a documentary exhibition “Shenot Eliyahu/Elijah’s Years: The impact of Vilna Gaon on Lithuanian Jewish Culture” was presented, and an international interdisciplinary exhibition of contemporary art dedicated to the commemoration of Vilna Gaon and Lithuanian Jewish History was organised with the use of an innovative exhibition based on 3D technologies (holograms), which aroused great public interest and was exhibited on Vilnius City outdoor stands and in a 3D format on online platforms. The publication “Passport: Lithuanian Identity” examining the life stories of Lithuanian Jews (Litvaks) was also published. In 2020, the Ministry of Culture allocated about €14,000 in partial funding to the Vilna Gaon and Lithuanian Jewish History Programme.

The Department of National Minorities, in cooperation with the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, prepared and published a calendar for 2020 dedicated to the year of Vilna Gaon and Lithuanian Jewish History titled “The Glory of Elijah”. The calendar presents information in both Lithuanian and English⁴³.

⁴² Lithuanian version of Resolution No. XIII-1142 on the 2020 year of Vilna Gaon and Lithuanian Jewish History <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/a2551c20584311e89f00961ca6c2310f>

⁴³ Calendar The Glory of Elijah https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/43991%20Gaonas%20kalendorius_spaudai%20perziurai.pdf

Throughout the year, discussions, exhibitions and book presentations, as well as other cultural events were organised to commemorate this date. A mobile exhibition in Lithuanian titled “One Age of Seven.Lietuva.Lita.Lite” was presented to Lithuanian communities. The exhibition was presented in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Klaipėda Centre of National Cultures and other spaces in Lithuanian cities. The Department of National Minorities commissioned the production of a feature film about the history of Lithuanian Jews and the significance of Litvaks in the world. The film reflects the large Jewish community of the early 20th century and interwar period, showing its importance for the social and political life of Lithuanian society, its contribution to Lithuania’s independence, the international role of the Jewish community and its relations with foreign Jewish communities. The film revealed the contribution of the Litvaks to culture, art and the creation of Israel, in addition to the circumstances of life in Lithuania and abroad. In addition to the film, the book “History of the Vilna Gaon” was published. A discussion titled “Lithuanian Jewish History: Modern Directions” took place to commemorate the year of Vilna Gaon and Lithuanian Jewish History.

From 31 August 2020, LRT TV started broadcasting the documentary series “Zachor. Remember” (*zachor* – Hebrew for remember), dedicated to the memory of the Litvaks who lived in Lithuania during the interwar period. The hosts of the show travelled around various Lithuanian cities and towns, or shtetls, where many Lithuanian Jewish communities lived during the interwar period, and searched for stories about the missing Jewish world. The creators of the show introduced viewers to the life of the interwar Litvaks and their unique, rich culture by retelling the memories of the surviving people and their stories, conveying the Jewish humour, music, traditions and philosophy of life. The show featured famous Kaunas Jews, researchers of Jewish culture, guides and people of a unique destiny who survived the concentration camps and returned to their native land.

To commemorate the 700th anniversary of Lithuanian Tatar history and culture, and to encourage Lithuanian society to take an interest in the state’s past, history and culture, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania declared 2021 to be the Year of Lithuanian Tatar History and Culture by Resolution No. XIII-2471⁴⁴ of 10 October 2019. The Lithuanian Government approved a Tatar History and Culture Commemoration Plan for 2021⁴⁵, which provides for over 40 various types of cultural, educational, cognitive, commemorative, publicity and publishing activities.

⁴⁴ Lithuanian version of Resolution No. XIII-2471 the 2021 Year of Lithuanian Tatar History and Culture <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/6e4f5380ef5211e99681cd81dcdca52c>

⁴⁵ Lithuanian version of the order on Tatar History and Culture Commemoration Plan for 2021 <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/0e098da412c011ebbedbd456d2fb030d?jfwid=i3h7wj6js>

Together with the Lithuanian Tatar community, the Department of National Minorities prepared a logo commemorating the Year of Lithuanian Tatar History and Culture, which will be used in marketing information related to the commemoration events and activities.

The implementation of the plan will involve commemorations and conferences, alongside various cultural, educational, cognitive, publishing and publicity events, as well as ongoing projects aimed at presenting the history and culture of the Lithuanian Tatars to the domestic and foreign society. Cultural events will take place in the diplomatic missions, municipalities, museums, libraries and archives of the Republic of Lithuania. The Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania will hold a grand celebration commemorating the Year of Lithuanian Tatar History and Culture, and Vilnius University will hold an international scientific conference.

It is planned the cycles of lectures, excursions, cultural events and an international Tatar culture festival will be organised, as well as preparing the exhibition “Lithuanian Tatars in Archival Documents” and the virtual guide “Tatar Road”.

An English version of Prof. Tamara Bairašauskaitė’s book about the most prominent Lithuanian Tatars “History of Lithuanian Tatars” and other publications will be published. LRT programmes and the portal www.lrt.lt will disseminate information about the events commemorating the Year of Lithuanian Tatar History and Culture.

The activities to commemorate the Tatars will include marking the destroyed old Lithuanian Tatar cemeteries, a commemoration of the Tatar Gate of the Kaunas city defensive wall, and the addition of material on the history, culture and cultural heritage of the Lithuanian Tatars to the virtual Lithuanian Tatar History Museum.

The Lithuanian Tatar ethno-confessional community with its unique origin, customs and way of life, came to Lithuania from Crimea in the 14th century. The Tatar settlements were located at the border of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and to this day have remained as unique ethnic Tatar cultural centres. Having no mother tongue, the Lithuanian Tatars used the languages of the locals, namely Belarusian, Polish and Russian. The Lithuanian Tatars maintained strong community ties, supporting their ethnic and religious identity, traditions and customs. In 1988, the Lithuanian Tatar Cultural Society was established, uniting the Tatar Cultural Associations of Vilnius, Kaunas, Alytus, Nemėžis, the Village of Forty Tatars and Švenčionys. The society was founded to organise the Tatar social movement, to rebuild and repair its houses of worship. Currently, there are about 20 Tatar organisations in Lithuania. In 1996, the Union of Lithuanian Tatar Communities was founded. The Union of Lithuanian Tatar Communities maintains contact with the Lithuanian state institutions and

local self-government institutions, and cooperates with international Tatar organisations and foreign Tatar communities in carrying out its activities that include the dissemination of information about the Lithuanian Tatars, the organisation of scientific conferences on Oriental-Tatar issues, and the organisation of various measures to foster national self-awareness and the national culture. In 2009, the Vytautas the Great Monument Construction Foundation was established, which is engaged in the work of perpetuating the historical memory and preserving the nation's heritage. The Tatar Cultural Centre, the House of Tatar Communities and the Tatar communities of the Vilnius Region – Nemėžis, Vilnius and the Village of Forty Tatars – are active in nurturing the Tatar cultural and spiritual heritage. With the growing interest in the Tatar culture in Lithuania, Vilnius University established the Centre of Oriental Studies in 1992. Various events are regularly organised to mark the anniversaries of the settlement of the Tatars and Karaites in Lithuania, as well as their contribution to the creation of the Lithuanian state, its history and culture.

Taking into account the fact that 2022 marks the 625th anniversary of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Vytautas inviting the Karaites to settle in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, by Resolution No. XIV-148 of 23 December 2020, 2022 was declared to be the Year of the Lithuanian Karaites⁴⁶, and the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania initiated a commemoration programme.

The Karaites are a small national minority that has been able to preserve its language and customs, its original written heritage and its religion. The basis of the Karaite national identity is the native Karaite language, which still functions in everyday life and in religious rites. Based on the small number of users of this language, the Karaim language is classified as an endangered or extinct language in the global classification. The Karaite religion, which has become a part of the ethnocultural identity, is recognised in Lithuania as one of the existing religions both traditionally and historically. The Lithuanian Karaite religious community, which operates in Vilnius, is one of the 9 traditional religious communities recognised by the state. It was granted legal status in 1992, as the successor of the Karaite religious community that had existed in Lithuania since the 14th century.

Over the centuries, the life of the Karaite community was concentrated in Trakai, which remains the administrative and spiritual centre of Lithuanian Karaites – the Mecca of the Karaites. The first international Karaite convention was held there in 1989, with the participation of over 500 Karaites from Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Ukraine. With the beginning of Lithuania's National

⁴⁶ Lithuanian version of the Order of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on the 2022 Year of the Lithuanian Karaites <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/d06d21c049ea11ebb394e1efb98d3e67?positionInSearchResults=3&searchModelUUID=ace80af6-2600-4ee2-a8ae-93f84430059b>

Revival, in 1988, the Karaites were one of the first to form a public organisation – the Lithuanian Karaite Cultural Community – which still actively carries out activities aimed at fostering the ethnic and cultural identity of the Karaites. The Karaite children’s and youth dance ensembles Sanduhač (Nightingale) and Birlik (Unity) help the young generation of Lithuanian Karaites to maintain direct contact with their native heritage, alongside a folklore ensemble and a Sunday School. The Trakai Museum has a Karaite ethnographic exposition, which exhibits Karaite household items, work tools and historical documents.

In 2020, the House of National Communities, in compliance with the agreement signed with the Department of National Minorities, prepared and issued a set of interactive postcards “*≠ KuriameKartu*” with integrated QR codes, which can be scanned with a smart device to learn more about the national minority portrayed on the postcard, its contribution to the Restoration of the Independence of Lithuania and its current activities. The visual and textual material on the postcards tells about the participation of the representatives of Lithuanian national communities in the activities of the Liberation and Independence Movement and the Baltic Way, the establishment of the Lithuanian International Coordinating Association, which has become the national minorities support centre for the restoration of Lithuanian statehood and its activities, the adoption of the Law on National Minorities of the Republic of Lithuania and the establishment of the Department of National Minorities in 1989, as well as the signatories of the Act of Independence of 11 March 1990 and the representatives of national minorities who were awarded medals on 13 January, and the opening of the House of National Communities in 1991. This information will likely help to form the image of Lithuania as a multi-ethnic state that fosters its multinational experience.

ARTICLE 6

1. The Parties shall encourage a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue and shall take effective measures to promote mutual respect and understanding and cooperation among all persons living on their territory, irrespective of those person’s ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity, in particular in the fields of education, culture and the media.

The recommendation is to combat stereotypes about the persons belonging to national minorities in political discourse and the society in general, as well as to better identify cases of possible

discrimination and ethnic hostility, and to impose sanctions; ensure that information on the ethnic affiliation of the potential perpetrators is not disclosed in the media, unless absolutely necessary.

The Standing Awards Commission, established by the Department of National Minorities, twice a year (on the occasion of Lithuania's National Communities Day and the International Day for Tolerance) considers applications or recommendations from the Chairman of the Council of National Minorities, national minority NGOs, public institutions, cultural centres and public authorities to award individuals for their contribution to fostering the national culture and promoting tolerance with three-degree awards⁴⁷, commemorative gifts and letters of honour, as established by the Department of National Minorities.

The Department of National Minorities annually awards the prize "For the Promotion of Intercultural Dialogue" to journalists whose activities contribute to the promotion of national tolerance and intercultural dialogue.

We Created Lithuania Together

In 2018, the Department of National Minorities presented a travelling exhibition in Lithuanian, Russian and English dedicated to Lithuanian national communities and their contribution to the creation of the Lithuanian state by defending its freedom and independence. The exhibition is exhibited in Lithuanian schools, libraries, exhibition halls and other public places. In addition, see the second recommendation.

The Department of National Minorities invited the public to a virtual introduction to Lithuania's national communities. The information website "We Created Lithuania Together" invites residents to embark on a journey through the paths of Lithuanian history, culture and heritage, and to get acquainted with the lives of national communities, their values and their contribution to the development of the Lithuanian state. In addition, a film of the same name⁴⁸ was produced. It discusses the Lithuanian national minorities, their daily activities and one of the first institutions in Eastern Europe dedicated to the policy of national minorities – the Department of National Minorities.

⁴⁷ Department for National Minorities. Awards <https://tmde.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys-1/departamento-apdovanojimai>

⁴⁸ Film We Created Lithuania Together in Lithuanian <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rejCP34Xqk>

“Discover the National Minorities of Lithuania”

The website⁴⁹ created by the Department of National Minorities provides information on the history of the emergence of Lithuanian national minorities, the activities of public organisations, major celebrations and culinary heritage. The website also publishes the material from the exhibition “We Created Lithuania Together”. It features an interactive game called “Discover National Minorities”, which not only introduces the national minorities who have been living in Lithuania for a long time, but also allows users to create their own content about Lithuanian national minorities: visitors to the website are invited to upload photos that reflect the life, culture, heritage and traditions of Lithuanian national minorities, and to present prominent people.

“Culture and Freedom Unite Us” Exhibition

The Centre of National Cultures of Klaipėda City Municipality has prepared a travelling exhibition of fifteen stands, presenting the history of the Klaipėda City national communities, activities, traditional events and the national costumes of fourteen nations living in the port city. The exhibition aims to acquaint visitors with the Klaipėda national communities. Therefore, the exhibition stands contain information about the activities of the communities and their contribution to the development of Lithuanian and Klaipėda culture.

“Lithuania Through the Eyes of Artists from Different Nations”

On the occasion of the Day of Restoration of Lithuania’s Independence, the Centre of National Cultures of Klaipėda City Municipality prepared an exhibition of works by artists of various nationalities living in Lithuania. The topic of the works was “Lithuania”.

“Culture Circle”

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport takes action to promote mutual respect, understanding and cooperation between all individuals. The types of events can be divided into Lithuanian and local events. The educational project “Culture Circle”, which has been taking place throughout Lithuania since 2015, is implemented by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport together with the Department of National Minorities, the Public Institution Roma Community Centre

⁴⁹ Website Discover the National Minorities of Lithuania [Lietuvą kuriame kartu \(kuriame-kartu.lt\)](https://www.kuriame-kartu.lt)

and the Culture Centre in Visaginas. The project aims to acquaint young people with the national minorities living in Lithuania, foster the national self-awareness and national tolerance of national minority students, and foster the multicultural heritage of Lithuania. In 2017, more than 200 students from various Lithuanian educational institutions and a group from the Kaliningrad Region participated in the educational project.

In 2018, 150 students participated in the project. The event was attended by the artist collective “Rodničiok” of the Visaginas Culture Centre and the Roma Community Centre, while students from the Kruonis Gymnasium introduced the Orthodox diaspora in Kruonis, Pociūnėliai Primary School presented Polish national clothes made by the students themselves, and the students of the Naujasis Daugėliškis told about the Ukrainian culture by showing a video of Ukrainian baptism traditions. Representatives of the Panevėžys Children’s Daycare Centre also performed their composition about Roma traditions.

In 2019, about 250 students from various educational institutions and cities – Radviliškis, Vilnius, Kaunas, Panevėžys and others – participated in the abovementioned project.

Local events that promote tolerance and dialogue between cultures are also organised by general education institutions, taking into account the traditions that have developed in school communities, the ethnic composition of the schools and the cultural environment.

Cooperation projects between schools teaching in the state and/or national minority language, cultural centres of national minorities and state institutions are important in order to develop the skills needed for intercultural cooperation and to promote children’s and young people’s interest in the cultural heritage of the nations in Lithuania. For example, at the initiative of the Department of National Minorities, the “We are Together” project is being implemented in Vilnius, Trakai, Šalčininkai and Švenčionys Districts, Vilnius, Visaginas and Klaipėda. The project aims to promote cooperation between students from schools of different cultures and to strengthen the integration of national minorities. Part of the project implementation includes student camps, discussions, sightseeing and educational tours around Lithuania.

The Kaunas Cultural Centre of Various Nations regularly supports the following traditional events: the Festival of National Communities “Garden of Cultures”, Poetry Festival “Pakrova”, Polish Folklore Festival “Złota jesień Polskiej piosenki” and the folk art festival “With an Open Heart”.

The “Garden of Cultures” Festival organised in 2019 was a cultural event for the country’s national minorities, which stood out due to its scope and format as it was organised in an open public

space. It was attended by about 100 ensembles of ethnic minority communities, creators and artists fostering culinary heritage and traditional crafts.

The traditional Bread Festival, which takes place in the House of National Communities every year, is gaining more and more interest. Representatives of national communities present their national pastries – bread and confectionery – talk about bread-related customs and traditions, and perform national songs and dances related to bread.

Children and school students are happy to take part in the republican festival “Christmas Meetings” organised by the House of National Communities in Russian as the language of national minority institutions. Children’s groups from kindergartens and schools in Lithuanian cities, as well as Russian folk instrumental and folklore ensembles, come to the festival. This event aims to enrich the spiritual world of the younger generation, and to stimulate interest in the traditions and customs of their nation. Vocal and instrumental ensembles, as well as young solo artists perform Christmas carols, songs and dances.

2. The Parties undertake to take appropriate measures to protect persons who may be subject to threats or acts of discrimination, hostility or violence as a result of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity.

The Republic of Lithuania has continued to enforce the Law on Equal Treatment, Articles 169-171 of the Criminal Code, and other legal acts prohibiting discrimination and the incitement to hatred of persons belonging to national minorities (for more information about the aforesaid legal acts, see Article 6(II) of Report III).

Anti-bullying projects

The Olweus programme is being run in schools to reduce bullying and other antisocial behaviours. The goal of this programme is to teach all school staff to recognise and detect bullying, and to respond appropriately. The programme aims to: reduce bullying among students in schools; prevent the emergence of new cases of bullying; and strive for better student relationships at school.

The implementation of the Olweus bullying prevention programme in Lithuania started in 2008. The 2020-2021 Olewus programme is currently running in 131 schools.

Investigation of crimes under Articles 169-170 of the Criminal Code

Pre-trial investigation authorities, the Office of the Prosecutor General and the courts investigate and examine cases of offences under Article 169 “Discrimination on the Grounds of Nationality, Race, Sex, Descent, Religion or Belonging to Other Groups” and Article 170 “Incitement against Any National, Racial, Ethnic, Religious or Other Groups of Persons” of the Criminal Code⁵⁰. In 2017, the abovementioned articles of the Criminal Code were amended to include liability for discrimination, as well as incitement on the grounds of age and disability.

Details of the offences under Articles 169 and 170 of the Criminal Code are provided in Annex 4.

According to the Human Rights Monitoring Institute, many pre-trial investigations into incitement to hatred are terminated due to a lack of evidence that the act is indicative of a crime or misdemeanour, or investigations are terminated due to a failure to identify the perpetrator. The 2020 Activity Report of the Ombudsmen of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania notes that investigations into incitement to hatred are often not initiated, as investigators predict that the outcome of the case will not be successful, and the investigation of such cases would be a “waste of resources”. To improve the pre-trial investigations into hate crimes and hate speech, the Office of the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Lithuania has prepared methodological recommendations on the peculiarities of conducting, organising and directing a pre-trial investigation on hate crimes and hate speech. These recommendations contain concepts and legal regulations, general peculiarities of initiating, conducting and organising pre-trial investigations of hate crimes and incitement to hatred, and the peculiarities of pre-trial investigations of some criminal acts on personal equality and freedom of conscience. The recommendations focus on the case law of the European Court of Human Rights.

Training of target groups (officer training)

⁵⁰Statistical data on the crimes established in Article 170 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania registered and transferred to court https://www.ird.lt/lt/reports/view_item_datasource?id=8730&datasource=51752

On the training against hate crimes and hate speech for officers and cadets.

Order No. 5-V-718 of 21 August 2017 approved the in-service training programme “Actions of Officers in Cases of Hate Crimes”. During the implementation of the plans for the professional development of the employees of police institutions in the Lithuanian Police School in 2017 and 2018, 37 police officers received training under this programme. In 2019, the in-service training programme “Actions of Officers in Cases of Hate Crimes and Activities in Preventing Hate Crimes” was updated. In 2020, 99 police officers and 119 police cadets received training under the in-service training programme in question.

Other programmes (such as the Justice Programme 2014-2020 (JUST) Project No. JUST/2015/SPOB/AG/VICT “Initial Response to Victims of Crime”) and training are providing officers with knowledge about the victims of crime, their rights and the communication skills peculiarities.

In 2020, 144 police officers were trained under the topic “Basics of Human Rights Protection and Police Activity” in the Introductory Training Course Programme for Police Officers, which takes 4 academic hours. The training content includes the sub-theme of hate crimes. 120 police cadets trained under the Modular Vocational Training Programme for Police Officers, in which 6 academic hours are devoted to the topics of “Concept, Signs, Forms and Legal Regulation of Hate Crimes” and “Distinguishing Hate Crimes from Other Crimes”.

On other activities in strengthening the response to hate crimes and hate speech.

From 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2021, the Lithuanian Police School implemented the project “Increasing the Effective Response to Hate Crimes and the Hate Speech in Lithuania” (hereinafter the “Project”), together with the following Project partners: Lithuanian Human Rights Centre, Human Rights Monitoring Institute and European Foundation of Human Rights. The project is funded by the European Union’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020).

In 2020, the in-service training programme “Actions of Officers in Cases of Hate Crime and Activities in Preventing Hate Crime” was updated. The material for remote learning has been uploaded to the virtual learning environment of the Lithuanian Police School.

On 10 December 2020, the international conference “#AllOfUs: Towards an Effective Response to Hate Crimes and Hate Speech in Lithuania” was held in the format of the National Forum on Human Rights. The Deputy Police Commissioner General read a report entitled “Police Vision in

Solving the Problem of Hate Crimes”, while representatives of the Police Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, Lithuanian Criminal Police Bureau, Lithuanian Police School and the Kaunas County Police Headquarters took part in discussions.

Investigation of offences under Articles 169-170(1) of the Criminal Code

The legal regulation in force in Lithuania, related to hate crimes and hate speech, complies with the requirements of both international legal documents and the legal regulations in force in the countries of the European Union.

Chapter XXV of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter the “CC of the Republic of Lithuania”) “Crimes and Misdemeanours against a Person’s Equal Rights and Freedom of Conscience” provides for liability in the following crimes: Article 169 “Discrimination on Grounds of Nationality, Race, Sex, Descent, Religion or Belonging to Other Groups”; Article 170 “Incitement against Any National, Racial, Ethnic, Religious or Other Group of Persons”; Article 170(1) “Creating and Operating a Group of Accomplices or an Organised Group or Organization Aimed at Discriminating Against a Group of Persons”; Article 170(2) “Public Condonation of International Crimes, Crimes Committed by the USSR or Nazi Germany against the Republic of Lithuania or the Inhabitants Thereof, Denial or Gross Trivialisation of the Crimes”; and Article 171 “Disturbance of Religious Ceremonies or Religious Celebrations”. Article 312(2) provides for liability in the desecration of a grave or other place of public respect on racial, national, or religious grounds. Although cases of the desecration of graves occur, they are mostly acts of hooliganism or are aimed at gaining property. For example, crosses are broken and valuable grave elements are stolen with the aim of selling them.

The summarised data for 2015-2020 is presented in Annex 5.

The purpose of the Law on Equal Treatment of the Republic of Lithuania, establishing the legal bases and powers of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as the “Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson”) and the Office, is to ensure the implementation of the provisions of Article 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania establishing the equality of persons and prohibiting the restriction of human rights or granting privileges on the grounds of gender, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, belief, convictions or views.

The Law on Equal Treatment applies only to the activities of established entities and relevant social relations, i.e.:

- State and municipal institutions (Article 5 of the Law on Equal Treatment);
- Educational institutions and other education providers (Article 6 of the Law on Equal Treatment);
- Employers (Article 7 of the Law on Equal Treatment);
- Providers of goods and services, as well as producers and distributors of advertising (Article 8 of the Law on Equal Treatment);
- Organisations of employees or employers, or other organisations/associations whose members carry out a particular profession (Article 9 of the Law on Equal Treatment). Pursuant to these regulations, the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson supervises the provision of equal treatment only in the listed areas.

In 2016, the Office initiated 32 investigations, received 28 inquiries and provided 17 telephone consultations.

In 2017, the Office initiated 28 investigations. This amounted to 10% of all investigations conducted by the Office. The Office received 15 requests and 14 inquiries on the Facebook social network. In 2017, the applicants, applying on the grounds of nationality, emphasised the following aspects: 1) opportunities for students studying in national minority schools to take the Lithuanian language and literature maturity examination under equal conditions and to enter higher education institutions; and 2) restrictions on Lithuanian students to receive appropriate education system services in Vilnius District. The latter issues remained relevant in 2021.

In 2018, the Office received 20 complaints (9% of all complaints received by the Office), 31 requests and 15 inquiries through the Office's account on the Facebook social network, and provided 34 telephone consultations. All the investigations into possible discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, citizenship, language, origin and ethnicity conducted in 2018 were terminated when actions (omission) violating equal opportunities were terminated, either when it was established that they did not fall within the competence of the Ombudsperson or when the complaints were declared unfounded as the violations referred to therein were not confirmed.

In 2019, the Office received 20 complaints of possible discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, citizenship, language, origin and ethnicity. One investigation was initiated by the Ombudsperson, 29 written inquiries were received, 20 inquiries were received through the Office's Facebook account, and 77 telephone consultations were provided. In 2019, the three major groups of

applicants were: 1) those referring to discrimination on the grounds of nationality and language but emphasising the aspect of language as a means of communication between persons of a certain nationality performing a communicative function; 2) those only emphasising the grounds of nationality (belonging to a particular nation by ethnic origin); and 3) those indicating the grounds of nationality and citizenship, linking the nationality to a certain territory (state).

In 2020, the Office received 18 complaints about possible discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, citizenship, language, origin and ethnicity (i.e. grounds that are highly interlinked and often dealt with inseparably from nationality, and 9 on the grounds of nationality), 48 written inquiries, 20 inquiries via the Office's Facebook account, and provided 47 telephone consultations. In 2020, as in previous years, the dominant complaints were of discrimination on the grounds of nationality, language and citizenship. When applying to the Office for possible discrimination on the grounds of nationality, the applicants also felt discriminated against on the grounds of origin or ethnicity (multiple discrimination). The Office received 11 complaints of discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief, and provided 5 telephone consultations. In the case of discrimination on grounds of language, the grounds of nationality was indicated only in cases where the person felt discriminated against because of restrictions imposed on the aspect of the mother tongue. Unlike in 2019, in the complaints on discrimination on the grounds of nationality (not by citizens of the Republic of Lithuania), the applicants did not check the origin and ethnicity boxes simultaneously when filling in the complaint form.

Most of the complaints on the grounds of nationality were related to an employment relationship. This means that the employees, mostly members of national minorities, associated the deterioration of their situation with their nationality. The evidentiary process is very complex when investigating complaints related to nationality. In conducting the investigations into possible discrimination on the grounds listed above, it is necessary to determine whether a particular characteristic (ground) has led to a deterioration in that person's situation, i.e. to determine whether that characteristic has resulted in a person (the applicant) being placed in a worse position than another person who did not have that characteristic. When investigating the complaints, the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson contacts the respondent about the submission of information and provides a full assessment of all the evidence gathered before making a decision. In cases where the information is insufficient, the applicant and the respondent are contacted again.

Representatives of the Office provide information to applicants not only by e-mail, but also by telephone and via the Office's Facebook account. Applicants often ask what evidence needs to be

provided when submitting a complaint about possible discrimination on the grounds of nationality, as well as how (in what way) to collect it.

In 2020, as in 2019, a sensitive issue was possible discrimination against the Roma related to the relocation of Roma from the settlement of Kirtimai. Representatives of the Office provided information by telephone. Roma persons, as well as representatives of other national minorities, received consultations on all the legal questions they had.

The Office is ready to provide consultations to the representatives of national minorities in their mother tongue (Russian, Polish).

Further information on the Office's activities is provided in the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson's Activity Report for 2020, which was published on the Office's website on 15 March 2021⁵¹:

In addition, see the second recommendation.

ARTICLE 7

The Parties shall ensure respect for the right of every person belonging to a national minority to freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, freedom of expression, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Article 26 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania provides that each human being shall have the right to freely choose any religion or belief and, either alone or with others, in private or in public, to profess his religion, to perform religious practices, and to practice and teach his belief. No one may compel another person or shall be compelled to choose or profess any religion or belief. The freedom of thought, conscience and religion shall not be restricted. The freedom of a human being to profess and spread his religion or belief may not be limited otherwise than by law and only when this is necessary to guarantee the security of society, the public order, the health and morals of the people as well as other basic rights and freedoms of the person. Article 36 of the Constitution establishes that citizens may not be prohibited or hindered from assembling unarmed in peaceful meetings. This right may not be limited otherwise than by law, and only when it is necessary to protect

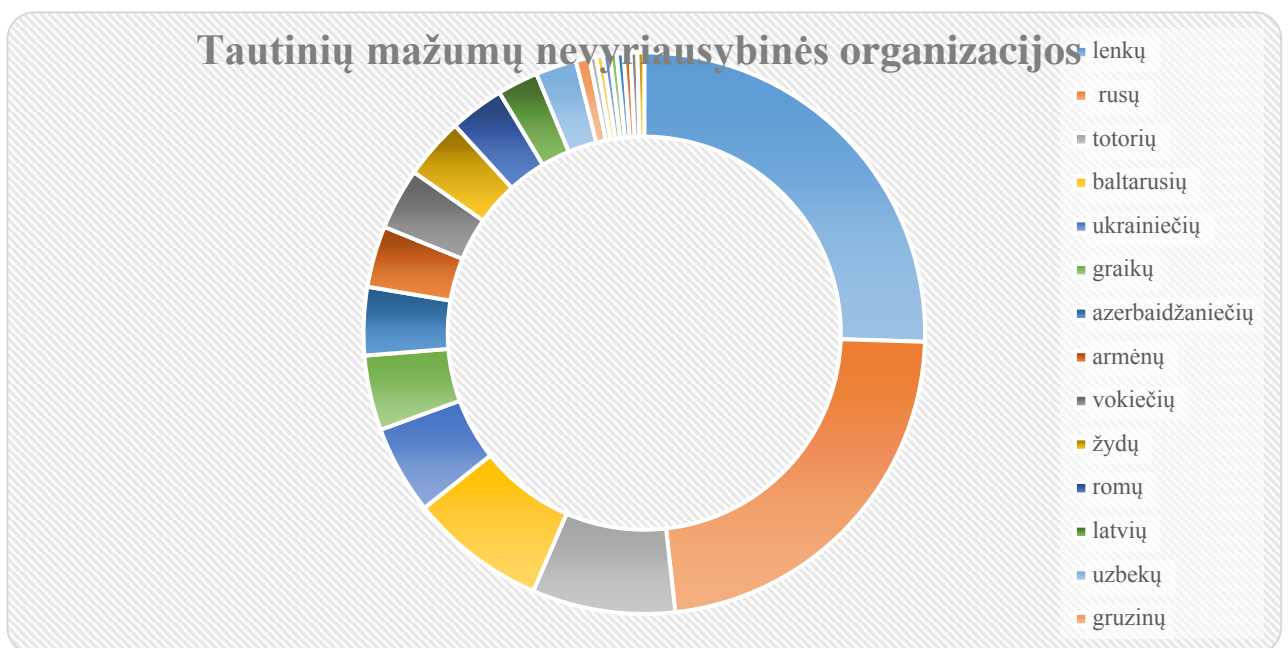
⁵¹Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson <https://lygybe.lt/lt/veikla/metines-ataskaitos/405>

the security of the state or society, public order, people's health or morals, or the rights and freedoms of other persons.

The procedure established by Lithuanian law, which grants national minorities the right to establish public and cultural organisations, has not changed since the last reporting period. On 14 February 2004, a new Law on Associations of the Republic of Lithuania entered into force, regulating the establishment, management, activities, peculiarities of reorganisation and termination (reorganisation and liquidation) of legal entities with the legal form of an association. Associations and public organisations, or subdivisions of public organisations registered prior to the law entering into force, are considered legal persons whose legal form is an association without the need for separate re-registration. It should be noted that non-governmental public organisations may also be established by non-Lithuanian citizens.

About 250 national minority non-governmental organisations work and perform cultural activities in the field of functions implemented by the Department of National Minorities: Polish – 65 organisations, Russian – 58, Tatar – 21, Belarusian – 20, Ukrainian - 13, Greek – 11, Azerbaijani – 10, Armenian, German and Jews – 9 each, Roma – 8, Latvians and Uzbeks – 6 each, Georgians – 2, Bulgarian, Chechen, Estonian, Karaite, Kazakh, Lebanese, Romanian and Hungarian – 1 organisation each.

Fig. 1. Non-governmental organisations of national minorities



ARTICLE 8

The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to manifest his or her religion or belief and to establish religious institutions, organisations and associations.

In 2019, Lithuania had 1,312 registered religious communities, associations or other religious organisations included in the Register of Legal Entities, including 1,121 traditional religious organisations and 198 non-traditional religious organisations. These religious communities or societies can be relatively divided into 37 religious denominations (Lithuania has 9 traditional religious denominations, but Jews can be further divided into Hasids and Mitnagdims). Presented below is a breakdown of these religious denominations, according to the major religious traditions to which they belong.

In 2021, Lithuania will be conducting a general population and housing census. It is being carried out throughout the year, exclusively electronically on the basis of administrative sources, and its preliminary results are expected to be published at the end of the year. To ensure that the census also reflects the distribution of the population by religion, in January and February 2021 the population was given the opportunity to participate in a statistical survey on their nationality, mother tongue and religion conducted by the Lithuanian Department of Statistics under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. The website <https://surasymas.stat.gov.lt/> has been developed specially for this purpose. The residents could log in to the survey questionnaire by entering their exact personal data (personal identification code and the number of a valid document) or via the Electronic Government Gateway. To ensure the quality and representativeness of the results of the statistical survey, when the online survey ended, approximately 40 thousand residents who did not participate in the online survey will be selected from the population register. They will be selected on the basis of the demographic data (gender, age, family composition and place of residence) of the participants in the electronic survey. The selected population will then be interviewed by interviewers from Statistics Lithuania.

Detailed information on the religious organisations and the number thereof in 2016-2019 and on the funding for religious communities in 2017-2020 is provided in Annex 6.

ARTICLE 9

1. The Parties undertake to recognise that the right to freedom of expression of every person belonging to a national minority includes the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas in the minority language, without interference by public authorities and regardless of frontiers. The Parties shall ensure, within the framework of their legal systems, that persons belonging to a national minority are not discriminated against in their access to the media.

Additional recommendation: stabilise the support provided by the Lithuanian Press, Radio and Television Support Foundation to the media of national minorities by providing, among other things, a separate funding line for national minority media.

The Department of National Minorities has repeatedly expressed its opinion and aspirations for the inclusion, as a priority, of national minorities in various programmes financed by the state budget, and has made relevant proposals, including the introduction of a separate funding line for the media of national minorities, as well as allocating funding to the Lithuanian Press, Radio and Television Support Foundation. The Press, Radio and Television Support Foundation has not raised any objection. A separate programme for projects of public information providers in the languages of national minorities (communities) was provided for in the draft amendment to the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public⁵², which aims to update the model of media support. However, due to proposals to change the management of the fund, the draft law was rejected on 5 January 2021 by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. An update of the media support model is also provided for in the XVIII plan for the implementation of the provisions of the programme by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania⁵³.

The Department of National Minorities provides co-financing for projects in the category of dissemination of the cultures of national minorities in the media. Projects implementing initiatives aimed at increasing the information literacy and resilience of national minority media and non-

⁵²Draft law No. XIII P-3649(2) amending Articles 2, 27, 28, and 45 of the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public No. I-1418 <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAP/562de21031e911ea8f0dfdc2b5879561?positionInSearchResults=3&searchModelUID=f650ddc8-5b3c-472b-b11d-da1469417a29>

⁵³Resolution No. 155 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 22 March 2021 "On the Approval of the Plan for the Implementation of the Provisions of the Eighteenth Programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania" (see Government Programme Initiative No. 2.7.3) in Lithuanian <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/bef7d43286fe11eb998483d0ae31615c?jfwid=72zogvklp>

governmental organisations were allocated €25,000 in 2018, €30,000 in 2019, €30,000 in 2020 and €60,000 in 2021. In this category, the tender funds have been increased annually. Among the funded projects are the radio show “People of Vilnius”, the publication of the Belarusian newspaper RUN in Vilnius, a cycle of ten radio shows “Vilniaus Babilonas”, an information show for Lithuania’s Russian-speaking audience and support for the sacred heritage of Lithuanian national communities.

On 9 May 2018, 6 Polish TV channels were officially retransmitted through the Lithuanian digital terrestrial television networks in Southeast Lithuania: TVP Wilno, TVP Info, TVP Polonia, TVP Historia, Nuta TV and Power TV. These channels are available in Vilnius City, Vilnius, Švenčionys and Šalčininkai Districts, as well as in parts of Ignalina, Anykščiai, Molėtai, Ukmergė, Jonava, Širvintos, Vievis, Kaišiadorys, Elektrėnai, Trakai, Varėna and Alytus Districts.

In the same year, Vilnius Television Tower officially launched the retransmission of the programme of the television channel Current Time (*Nastojasčje Vremia*) in Russian, comprising news and opinions on fact-based information. It is a US-sponsored Russian-language Free European Radio/Freedom Radio (RFE/RL) channel that has been broadcasting since February 2017. Until 2018, this channel was only available to cable TV holders, but now Current Time is broadcast on terrestrial TV and is available free of charge to anyone. This channel is also available to the residents of Lithuania’s neighbouring countries living within the 50 km border section. Satellite TV offers 17 free-of-charge programmes in Russian.

3. The Parties shall not hinder the creation and the use of printed media by persons belonging to national minorities. In the legal framework of sound radio and television broadcasting, they shall ensure, as far as possible, and taking into account the provisions of Paragraph 1, that persons belonging to national minorities are granted the possibility of creating and using their own media.

According to the data of the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, the nation publishes newspapers in two foreign languages: 3 newspapers in Polish and 13 in Russian. Magazines are published in 14 different languages, including bilingual publications. More detailed information is provided in Annex 7.

The programme “Vilnius Album” broadcast on the LRT Television Plus channel tells viewers about the lives of Polish, Belarusian, Russian and Jewish national minorities. In 2019, the

same republican channel broadcasted a 20-minutes show “Misija: Vilnija” about the Polish national minority living in south-eastern Lithuania, portraying its life and presenting the location.

The LRT Television Plus channel broadcasts a show in Belarusian titled “Crossroads of Cultures. Vilnius Notebook”. The programmes touches on topics relevant to the Belarusian national community, recalls their history, and presents culture, crafts and social activities. The Polish-language programme “What’s up, Neighbour?” is created for Polish speakers. It discusses current issues, while paying more attention to the Polish national minority. The Lithuanian show “Crossroads of Cultures. Menora” is dedicated to the Jewish ethnic community, “Crossroads of Cultures. Trembita” is designed for the Ukrainian ethnical community, and the Russian show “Crossroads of Cultures. Russian Street” attracts a large audience, but does not necessarily include native Russian speakers. The LRT television channel also broadcasts the news programme Russian DW News.

Radio listeners can listen to a 30-minute information programme in Russian on LRT radio every day. LRT Classics broadcasts the following shows for national minorities: “Santara. Show about Lithuanian Jews” in Russian, “Santara. Show in Belarusian”, “Santara. Show in Russian,” “Santara. Show in Ukrainian” and “Santara. Show in Polish”.

2021 saw the launching of “Polski meet”. This is the first webcast to be dedicated to the Polish-speaking audience living in Lithuania. New episodes of the webcast will be released every other Thursday, while the webcast will also be broadcast on Saturdays on the LRT Classics programme and on the show “Santara. Show in Polish”.

In response to the events in neighbouring Belarus, in 2021 the Russian language webcast “CoMeta (Comet) The Close Revolution/CoMeta. Близкая революция“ was launched. This show invites Belarusians who have arrived in the country and work in Lithuania, as well as Belarusians of Lithuanian nationality, to discuss their everyday lives, including the situation in the country and in neighbouring Belarus.

The country has the following public radio stations: Russian Radio Znad Wilii, which broadcasts its programmes in Polish daily from 7 AM to midnight, started broadcasting ZW Fun online radio on 17 February 2016 (zw.lt/zwfun/) for young people. It is available on the website www.zw.lt or by downloading the Android app. The private radio station Radio Wilno broadcasts its programmes daily from 7 AM to midnight.

4. In the framework of their legal systems, the Parties shall adopt adequate measures in order to facilitate access to the media for persons belonging to national minorities and in order to promote tolerance and permit cultural pluralism.

The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania and the laws regulating the field of public information create preconditions for the unrestricted dissemination of information and ideas, linking the realisation of freedom of expression with duties and responsibilities, establishing basic professional media standards and a self-management system, and providing state support not only for cultural and educational projects but also for other areas related to public information, such as book publishing and film production.

Order No. IV-91 of the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania of 19 February 2019 adopted the strategic directions for the Public Information Policy for 2019-2022⁵⁴. One of the directions is aimed at promoting the dissemination and availability of high-quality, analytical, reliable and professionally compliant public information, regardless of the means and measures of the information transmission, responding to the cultural, social, economic and other needs of the population, and reducing the informational exclusion of the most socially vulnerable groups and ethnic communities.

As there is a small supply of alternative sources of information in the languages of the larger ethnic communities living in Lithuania, information exclusion is forming on certain topical issues of public life, especially in relation to the Lithuanian-speaking part of the Lithuanian audience. This exclusion is twofold, as there is no deeper monitoring of the content in the media of ethnic communities.

In response to the current situation, the following objectives have been formulated:

- To promote the diversity of media content and the availability of services;
- To promote the vitality of the regional media in Lithuania;
- To ensure the availability of public information services for socially excluded groups and the representatives of ethnic communities.

The goals and objectives set out in the directions are being implemented by the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Media Council of the Ministry of Culture (hereinafter

⁵⁴Strategic directions for the Public Information Policy 2019-2022 in Lithuanian [strategic directions for public information policy.pdf \(unesco.org\)](https://unesco.org/publications/strategic-directions-for-public-information-policy.pdf)

referred to as the “Media Council”), Lithuanian National Radio and Television, Department of National Minorities and the Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics

ARTICLE 10

1. The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use, freely and without interference, his or her minority language, in private and in public, orally and in writing.

Language is one of the most important features of the identity of national minorities. The possibility for free and unrestricted use of the mother tongue in writing and orally is especially relevant in the territories of the state that are widely populated by national minorities.

Article 14 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania enshrines the Lithuanian language as the state language (it shall be the only one used in Lithuania’s public life, but persons belonging to a private national minority may use any spoken or written language acceptable to them). Furthermore, Article 37 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania enshrines the provision that “citizens belonging to ethnic communities shall have the right to foster their language, culture and customs”.

Following the Fourth Report, the Law on the State Language of the Republic of Lithuania, adopted in 1995, which does not regulate the language of the informal communication and events of religious communities and the persons belonging to national communities, is still in force in Lithuania (see Article 10(II)(1d) of the Fourth Report).

Article 1(2) of the Draft Law on the State Language of the Republic of Lithuania submitted to the Seimas provides the following: “The law does not regulate the right of persons belonging to national minorities or ethnic groups and their communities to foster their mother tongue established by other laws, as well as the languages of religious communities”.

The provisions of Article 10(1) of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities concerning the right to use one’s minority language freely and without restriction, privately and publicly, orally and in writing, have been transferred to the Draft Law on National

Minorities prepared by the working group formed by Order No. ĮV-47 of 3 December 2019 of the Director of the Department of National Minorities.

2. In the areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if those persons so request and where such a request corresponds to a real need, the Parties shall endeavour to ensure, as far as possible, the conditions which would make it possible to use the minority language in relations between those persons and the administrative authorities.

Pursuant to Article 6 of the Law on the State Language of the Republic of Lithuania, the heads, servants and officials of state and municipal institutions, establishments and services, as well as other services and institutions, shall speak in the state language according to the language proficiency categories established by the government. Article 7 of this law states that “Heads of state and municipal institutions, establishments and organisations, communications, transport, health and social security, police and law enforcement services, trade and other public service institutions shall ensure that the population is served in the state language”. The requirements of both articles apply without exception to all the persons mentioned, including the persons belonging to national minorities. It should be noted that all Lithuanian citizens have the opportunity to enjoy cultural and political rights and opportunities. This is in line with the principle of the equality of persons enshrined in Article 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, according to which human rights may not be restricted and privileges may not be granted on the grounds of sex, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, religion, beliefs or views.

Clause 12 of the Regulations provides that an oral request may be submitted by a person in a language understood by the requesting person or his or her representative and the civil servant serving him or her. If a person or his/her representative does not speak the official language and there is no civil servant in the institution who understands the language in which the person or his/her representative applies, a person who is able to translate the request into the official language (interpreter) must be present. Such an interpreter shall be invited by the person applying to the institution on his/her own initiative, unless the institution decides otherwise.

Clause 13.1 of the Regulations stipulates that a person’s written application must be written in the state language, or have a translation into the state language (approved in accordance with the procedure established by the Law on Notaries of the Republic of Lithuania); however, a translation

of the application into the state language is not required in the cases specified in Clause 15 and 16 of the Regulations.

Clause 15 of the Regulations provides that, taking into account the functions performed by the institution and the competence of the civil servants of this institution, the head of the institution has the right to determine other languages in which written requests may be accepted. In accordance with Clause 16 of the Regulations, the written applications of persons submitted in a non-state language and in languages other than those specified in Clause 15 of the Regulations may be accepted at the institution when a foreign state institution or international organisation applies to the institution in writing. See also Recommendation 3 “Private signs, topographical indications in the language of a national minority”.

The Draft Law on National Minorities provides that, in a municipality where the national minority makes up at least a certain percentage (the exact percentage is still under discussion) of the total population of the municipality, a person has the right to address orally or in writing (by submitting a request) in the language of that national minority to the subjects of the self-government public administration located in the territory of that municipality and (or) he subdivisions thereof. The provision aims to ensure the right to address the self-governing public administration entities in the language of a national minority, regardless of whether the head of the public administration entity has established other languages in which requests may be accepted.

3. The Parties undertake to guarantee the right of every person belonging to a national minority to be informed promptly, in a language which he or she understands, of the reasons for his or her arrest, and of the nature and cause of any accusation against him or her, and to defend himself or herself in this language, with the free assistance of an interpreter, if necessary.

Lithuania has not amended the legal regulation guaranteeing the right of access to the services of an interpreter for persons who do not speak the state language in legal proceedings, administrative court proceedings, violations of administrative law, criminal and civil proceedings since the last report. Each detained or arrested person must be informed immediately in a language that he or she understands of the reason for his or her detention or arrest (Article 8(2) of the Law on Courts guarantees that persons who do not speak the official language shall have the right to participate in court proceedings through an interpreter).

According to the data of the police personnel subsystem, in 2020, at the level of the police system, 34 out of 38 established translator positions were filled. It should also be noted that, based on the 2020 data, the police in Lithuania signed 31 agreements with translation agencies. It should be noted that in police offices, a translation service is provided to (and from) many languages, including English, German, Russian, Polish, Uzbek, Latvian, etc., if required.

ARTICLE 11

1. The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use his or her surname (patronym) and first names in the minority language and the right to the official recognition of them, according to the modalities provided for in their legal system.

In 2017, two draft laws on the writing of names and surnames in the Republic of Lithuania were registered in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania: Draft Law XIIP-535, which provides that at the request of a citizen of the Republic of Lithuania, his/her name and surname shall be written in the Latin alphabet if the name and surname are written in the source document, and the source document proves that the person or his/her ancestors had the citizenship of another foreign country by direct lineage or by entering into a marriage with a foreigner and choosing his/her surname; as well as the alternative Draft Law XIIP-471, which provides that the name and surname of a person of non-Lithuanian nationality shall be written in Lithuanian characters in the personal documents issued by the Republic of Lithuania. Currently, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania is planning to return to the abovementioned draft laws on the writing of names and surnames in the documents of the Republic of Lithuania.

The Draft Law on National Minorities also includes an article providing for the right of a person belonging to a national minority to write his/her name and surname in the language of the national minority using the letters of the Latin alphabet in identity documents and civil status acts. The draft law also provides that the implementation of these provisions should be regulated by the other laws of the Republic of Lithuania.

The lack of legal regulation is partly compensated by the case law. Most cases concerning the original spelling of names and surnames are initiated by Lithuanian citizens who have changed their name or surname abroad. They are usually seeking that these foreign names and surnames be

recognised in Lithuania and included not only in the civil status acts, but also recorded in their identity documents. Meanwhile, in the case of 2019 regarding the right to the original form of a name, the first representative of a national minority (Polish nationality) was allowed to write her name in the original language: “Malgorzata”.

Given the legal uncertainty and cases of citizens experiencing serious administrative, professional and personal inconvenience due to the spelling of their names in the official documents of the Republic of Lithuania, although the Constitutional Court and the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language have recommended legislative action, at the beginning of 2020, the members of the Social Democratic Party of the Seimas registered a draft law on the writing of names and surnames in documents, which is aimed at ensuring a more effective legal protection of names and surnames as the main identifiers of a person, as well as the right to a common family surname. Another aim is to create the legal preconditions for writing non-Lithuanian names and surnames of the citizens of the Republic of Lithuania and foreigners in non-Lithuanian Latin characters in official documents.

The draft law establishes the principle that names and surnames shall be written in Lithuanian characters, while the surnames of aliens, if they are Latin-based, shall be transcribed in Latin-based characters, and if they are written in non-Latin-based characters, they shall be transcribed into Lithuanian.

This draft law would allow representatives of Lithuanian national minorities to submit requests to rewrite their names in Latin characters, based on the rules of the language of that national minority.

The draft law provides for a category of aliens, which includes foreign citizens and stateless persons. As a person’s name and surname are a sign of that person’s identity, the names and surnames of foreign nationals whose original document source is written in Latin characters would be written down letter by letter to identify the documents and civil status documents. For the time being, foreigners and their spouses who want their original names in their passports and identity cards must defend this position in court every time; so far, the courts have ruled in their favour.

2. The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to display in his or her minority language signs, inscriptions and other information of a private nature visible to the public.

The legal framework for private information inscriptions has not changed. In addition, see Recommendation 3 “Private signs and topographical indications in the language of a national minority”.

3. In the areas traditionally inhabited by substantial numbers of persons belonging to a national minority, the Parties shall endeavour, in the framework of their legal system, including, where appropriate, agreements with the other states, and taking into account their specific conditions, to display traditional local names, street names and other topographical indications intended for the public also in the minority language when there is sufficient demand for such indications.

The Draft Law on National Minorities stipulates that, in a municipality where the national minority makes up at least a certain percentage (the exact percentage is still under discussion) of the total population of the municipality, the traditional names of residential areas, streets and topographical signs, by a decision of the representative institution of the relevant municipality, may be written in the language of that national minority in addition to the state language. The list of traditional place names shall be compiled by an institution authorised by the government. The procedure for granting and writing names in the language of a national minority shall be established by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, or an institution authorised by it. In addition, see Recommendation 3 “Private signs and topographical indications in the language of a national minority”.

ARTICLE 12

1. The Parties shall, where appropriate, take measures in the fields of education and research to foster knowledge of the culture, history, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority.

2. In this context, the Parties shall, inter alia, provide adequate opportunities for teacher training and access to textbooks, and shall facilitate contacts among students and teachers of different communities.

3. The Parties undertake to promote equal opportunities for access to education at all levels for persons belonging to national minorities.

Additional recommendations: ensure that the education system deepens the majority's knowledge of the culture, history, languages and religions of national minorities; take immediate action to ensure that methodological teaching materials and teacher training programmes provide objective information on the Roma; guarantee adequate and long-term funding for the structures and staff, such as social workers and mediators, needed to achieve equal educational opportunities for Roma children, starting at the pre-school level.

The Government of the Republic of Lithuania has included measures related to the education of national minorities in its programme. The government seeks to ensure the conditions for national minorities to learn their mother tongue by using textbooks and digital resources in line with the updated curriculum, as well as to strengthen the competencies of mother tongue teachers. In 2016, the Department of National Minorities convened a working group of scientists, researchers and representatives of various Lithuanian higher education institutions – the Academic Council – which consists of 20 members from Lithuanian and foreign higher education institutions and research institutes.

The Academic Council is a collegial advisory body of the Department of National Minorities, consisting of delegated representatives of Lithuanian higher education institutions, as well as scientists, researchers and experts working in the field of national minorities, and other specialists included in the council by order of the Director of the Department of National Minorities. The Council was established in order to strengthen cooperation with the Lithuanian academic community, hoping for insights, advice and active participation in discussing issues and in making important decisions in the field of national minorities.

The Academic Council:

- Advises the Department of National Minorities on the preparation of studies, research, feasibility studies and analyses related to the formation and implementation of the national minority policy, analyses the conclusions and recommendations thereof, and makes suggestions on the implementation of the recommendations;

- Submits proposals regarding the forms and means of cooperation between the Department of National Minorities and the Lithuanian research and study institutions;
- Encourages the students of higher education institutions to take an interest in Lithuanian national minorities and to choose topics related to national minorities for their research in various fields of study;
- Submits proposals regarding the organisation of competitions for the students of higher education institutions where the topics of the competition works are announced by the Department of National Minorities;
- Evaluates the final theses of the students of higher education institutions submitted for the competitions announced by the Department of National Minorities.

Aiming to encourage the students of higher education institutions to take an interest in Lithuanian national minorities and to choose topics related to national minorities in various fields of study, the Department of National Minorities annually announces a competition for Lithuanian national minorities and awards incentive prizes for the best Bachelor's thesis, best Master's thesis, best Doctoral dissertation and the best Doctoral student's published scientific article on national minorities. The Department also announces a preferred topic for the year.

In 2019, the Department of National Minorities published a selection of the works by the winners of the Academic Works on the Topic of National Minorities in 2016-2018.

During the whole period of organising the competition, about 50 works were received from Lithuanian and foreign higher education institutions. These were comprised of final (Bachelor's and Master's degree) theses, articles by Doctoral students and dissertations on topics important for sociology, history, linguistics, pedagogy and communication sciences, while raising interesting questions and addressing current issues. The article "Transnational aspects of the memory of the Roma genocide" was included in this collection.

The Lithuanian Institute of History researches Lithuanian national minorities (Jews, Poles) in the context of long-term research programmes and individual research projects. During the implementation of the long-term (2017-2021) research programme "Delayed Nation Formation: The Case of Lithuanians?", in 2019–2020, research on the interwar Lithuanian Jewish political and legal heritage, Jewish national thought and migration history was conducted⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ Conventions, quotas, refugees: European Jews in 1938–1945, Vilnius; Kaunas, 2020, <<https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12259/126248>

The political and social situation of the Lithuanian Polish community in 1944-1989 was also examined⁵⁶, with a special focus on the history of migration⁵⁷. The researchers conducted individual research on Jewish history, while examining the contribution of Jews to the creation and strengthening of the Lithuanian state in 1918-1940, as well as the problems regarding the historical memory of the Lithuanian Jewish community⁵⁸ and the Holocaust⁵⁹. Research on the history of Lithuanian national minorities is also carried out by young researchers from the Lithuanian Institute of History.

Scientific activities have also delved into the problems of the Lithuanian Polish community⁶⁰, and related dissertations are being prepared. One of them is titled “Models of Lithuanian Polish Cultural Memory: Historical Perspective and Current Realities”. This dissertation focuses on the culture of the Lithuanian Polish memory, its significance and its dissemination in contemporary Lithuania. It seeks to identify strategies for the creation of Polish collective identities, historical narratives and their relationship with the memory cultures created by the Lithuanian majority. Various research results have appeared in the form of monographs and articles in academic publications in Lithuanian, English and Polish. These were also presented at international and national scientific conferences, seminars, public lectures, creative workshops and discussions organised with scientific colleagues from regional science, education and culture institutions.

The Institute of Lithuanian Language and Literature researched Russian, Belarusian, Jewish, Polish, Karaite, Tatar and other national minorities. The results of these studies are reflected in published monographs and scientific articles. Annex 8 provides a list of the books, articles and scientific publications published during the reporting period.

It should be noted that the articles and other information about the history of national minorities and their heritage were also published in major Lithuanian dailies, the regional press and on national Internet portals.

⁵⁶ Migracija: Rytų ir Pietryčių Lietuva 1944–1989 metais, Vilnius, 2020, <https://www.istorija.lt/naujienos/v.stravinskienes-monografijos-migracija-rytu-ir-pietryciu-lietuva-1944-1989-metais-pristatymas/714> ; https://www.istorija.lt/data/public/uploads/2021/05/lii-metine-ataskaita_20210317.pdf

⁵⁷ Między ojcowizną a ojczyzną. Przymusowa migracja Polaków z Wilna do Polski w latach 1944–1947, Pamięć kresów – kresy w pamięci, Katowice-Gliwice-Warszawa, 2019, <https://www.istorija.lt/mokslo-skyriai/xx-amziaus-istorijos/vitalija-stravinskiene/134>

⁵⁸ J. Skurdauskienė, H. Vitkus, Žemaitijos žydų kultūros paveldo atspindžiai, Klaipėda, 2019, <https://www.zdm.lt/naujienos-naujienos-archyvas/knygos-zemaitijos-zydu-kulturos-paveldo-atspindziai-pristatymas>

⁵⁹ Genealogical Writing and Memory of the Holocaust in Lithuania, East European Jewish Affairs, <https://www.istorija.lt/mokslo-skyriai/xx-amziaus-istorijos/violeta-davoliute/697>

⁶⁰ Lenkų švietimas Rytų ir Pietryčių Lietuvoje XX a. 7-9-ajį dešimtmetį, Istorija, 2020, t. 118, Nr. 2, https://www.vdu.lt/cris/bitstream/20.500.12259/110549/1/ISSN2029-7181_2020_V_118.N_2.PG_93-111.pdf

ARTICLE 13

1. *Within the framework of their education systems, the Parties shall recognise that persons belonging to a national minority have the right to set up and to manage their own private educational and training establishments.*
2. *The exercising of this right shall not entail any financial obligation for the Parties.*

The Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania No. I-1489 of 1991 provides that Lithuania allows for two forms of schools: state schools, owned or co-owned by the state; and non-state schools which are owned by private persons. The law provides that persons may establish not only formal but also non-formal education institutions and that the state and municipalities shall create the conditions for the establishment and operation of non-state schools. An example of such an educational institution could be the Marina Mižigurskaja private gymnasium. This school admits students whose native language is Russian, Polish or Lithuanian.

Vilnius French School (*Ecole Française de Vilnius*) is the first private school, founded in 1992, where the education is conducted in French. In 2020, the French Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Education approved the quality of the lyceum classroom curricula. All the programmes, from pre-school to twelfth grade, meet the criteria for French national education and confirm the quality of the school's education. In 2020, more than 530 students from 3 to 18 years of age studied for the *Baccalauréat* exams at the Vilnius International French Lyceum.

The International American School in Vilnius, founded in 1993, is the first international school in Vilnius to be part of a worldwide network of schools. The school aims to create the conditions for the children of diplomats, businessmen and families permanently living in Lithuania to study in English. according to a formal education programme which ensures the continuity of the curriculum when moving from one country to another. Another successful English-language school is The British School of Vilnius, which is part of The Schools Trust, a UK-registered non-profit organisation. The teaching is based on the UK curriculum.

ARTICLE 14

1. The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to learn his or her minority language.

Article 30(2) of the Law provides that schools of general education and non-formal education shall create the conditions for students belonging to national minorities to foster their national, ethnic and linguistic identity, and to learn their mother tongue, history and culture. The right of Lithuania's national minorities to learn their minority language is being exercised in two ways: formally, by establishing state and non-state educational institutions; and informally, when educational institutions are established by natural and/or legal persons to nurture their religion, culture and customs.

In general education and non-formal education schools, the regulations (statutes) (respecting the requests of the parents (guardians, curators) and learners) provide for teaching in a national minority language and fostering of the national minority's culture, and the teaching process is conducted or certain subjects are taught in the national minority language. At such schools, the subject of the Lithuanian language is a constituent part of the curriculum and the time allotted for teaching Lithuanian is not less than the time allotted for teaching the native language. These general education and non-formal education schools enable students belonging to national minorities to foster their national, ethnic and linguistic identity, as well as to learn their mother tongue, history and culture in cases when, due to the large distribution in the territory of Lithuania or due to the small number of members of national communities, teaching in the language of a national minority or the teaching of certain subjects in the language of a national minority may not be legalised.

Sunday Schools

To preserve their customs, culture and traditions, national minorities establish non-formal education institutions which, taking into account the needs of the representatives of national minorities, teach their language and customs, and nurture the traditions of the cultural nation by passing them on to the younger generation. An example of such an informal institution could be the Kaunas Armenian Society's Sunday School.

Lithuania has 42 non-formal education institutions where the educational process takes place in the mother tongues of national minorities; namely, Sunday Schools of national minorities. These schools educate about 1,000 children and young people of all ages, who are given the opportunity to

preserve and nurture their ethnolinguistic vitality, traditions and national identity, as the Sunday Schools provide opportunities for the national minorities to learn their mother tongue, while teaching about their history, national culture and traditions, and heritage. Participation in the implementation of non-formal education measures for national minorities is one of the functions of the Department of National Minorities. 16 Lithuanian national minorities currently operate Sunday schools: Armenians (2), Azerbaijanis (1), Belarusians (3), Estonians (1), Greeks (1), Karaites (1), Kazakhs (1), Latvians (1), Poles (8), Roma (1), Russians (6), Tatars (4), Ukrainians (3), Uzbeks (1) Germans (4) and Jews (4).

The Department of National Minorities annually organises competitions for cultural dissemination projects aimed at promoting and strengthening non-formal education activities for the children and youth of national minorities. 20-25 applications for minority Sunday Schools are submitted each year. In 2016, as the department saved funds, an additional tender was announced to support the non-formal education activities of national minorities. In 2016-2021, a total of €176,200 was allocated to co-finance such projects from the state budget. The Sunday Schools used these funds to purchase teaching aids, computers and other digital equipment to improve the teaching activities, as well as purchasing national clothes and national musical instruments, and organising various national holiday events. The schools also had the opportunity to carry out various cognitive activities: going on school trips, collaborating and sharing experiences, participating in joint projects, learning handicrafts and crafts that reflect the national traditions, and so on.

To motivate the children and youth of national minorities to learn their mother tongue and nurture the culture of their nation, and to promote integration processes, the Department of National Minorities organises republican festivals for the children and youth of national minorities. These republican festivals take place over a period of two days. Each event begins with a parade of the participating groups dressed in their national clothes and paraphernalia on the central streets of the city. During the events, the children and youth of Lithuanian national minorities have the opportunity to meet each other, communicate, participate in various educational activities, go on excursions, and get to know Lithuania and each other better. Republican festivals were organised in Visaginas in 2016, in Klaipeda in 2017 and in Trakai in 2018. 250-300 children and youths of national minorities from all over Lithuania took part in the festivals every time.

To raise the qualification of teachers, the Department of National Minorities annually organises seminars for the teachers of Lithuanian national minority Sunday Schools, where qualified teachers from Vilnius University, Vytautas Magnus University and the staff of the Education

Improvement Department of the Agency for Education, together with the Sunday School teachers, develop innovative teaching methodologies, curricula and action plans, while examining such relevant topics as motivational success factors, education in a multicultural environment, online teaching tools and active working methods. Furthermore, such seminars present opportunities for teachers to raise their qualifications and to acquire the qualification of a teacher, as well as providing information on the partial financing for non-formal education activities from the state budget. During these seminars, the teachers of Sunday Schools of various nationalities share good practices in fostering national self-awareness, developing tolerance, methods of organising education, opportunities to apply traditional crafts in the process of modern education, and other relevant topics and innovations. Every year, about 30 teachers of national minority Sunday Schools from various regions of Lithuania participate in these seminars.

A list of the Saturday (Sunday) Schools is provided in Annex 9.

2. In areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if there is sufficient demand, the Parties shall endeavour to ensure, as far as possible and within the framework of their education system, that the persons belonging to those minorities have adequate opportunities for being taught the minority language and for receiving instructions in this language.

The educational system of the Republic of Lithuania consists of formal education (primary, basic, secondary education, formal vocational training and higher education), non-formal education (pre-school, pre-primary and other non-formal education of children (including supplementary education), and adult education, self-education and educational assistance (vocational guidance, educational information, psychological, social pedagogical, special pedagogical and special assistance, school health care, counselling, teacher training and other forms of assistance). General education consists of primary, basic and secondary education. The most numerous Lithuanian national minorities participating in general education are Polish and Russian-speaking students.

The number of schools teaching in minority languages is provided in Annex 10.

The formal education of Polish, Russian, German and Belarusian students is regulated by the general curriculum. The general curriculum is designed to regulate the education curriculum in primary, basic and secondary education. The Primary and Basic Education General Curriculum No.

ISAK-2433 approved by the Order of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of 26 August 2008 provides for the teaching of national minorities (Polish, Russian, German, Belarusian) in their mother tongues.

The distribution of general education students by the teaching language in the country is provided in Annex 11.

Part VI of the General Secondary Education Curriculum No. V-269, approved by the Order of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of 21 February 2011 (the purpose of which is to define the content of secondary education in order to achieve the highest quality of the educational content: compliance of the educational content with the changing needs of the society; coherence between the levels and areas of education; accessibility and efficiency of the educational content in the entire education system of the country; consistency of curriculum changes) establishes the provisions of the mother tongue programmes of national minority students, as well as the implementation and scope of the content thereof. They regulate the teaching of Polish, Russian and Belarusian languages at the secondary level. When learning a mother tongue, students have the option of choosing general or advanced mother-tongue courses.

The general course provides students with the opportunity to acquire general linguistic, literary and cultural education, and to develop basic language skills.

The advanced course provides more detailed basics of the subject. The content of this course is broader and deeper: students read and interpret more fictional and non-fictional texts, the texts are more complex, and the students analyse them in more diverse aspects. The students engage in more diverse oral and written language development activities, and complete projects on language or literature research, which requires independence, creativity and knowledge of a broader cultural context. The course provides the prerequisites for the preparation for further studies in philology and other humanities.

In 2020-2021, Lithuania had Russian, Polish, Belarusian and mixed educational institutions. In 2019-2020, general education schools for national minorities in Lithuania operated in 9 municipalities: Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai and Visaginas Cities, Šalčininkai, Švenčionys, Trakai and Vilnius Districts.

These municipalities have a total of 102 general education minority schools operating, of which:

- 10 teach in Lithuanian and Russian;

- 5 teach in Lithuanian and Polish;
- 7 teach in Russian and Polish;
- 5 teach in Lithuanian, Russian and Polish;
- 27 teach in Russian;
- 47 teach in Polish;
- 1 teaches in Belarusian.

According to the data from 2019-2020, a total of 31,306 students (29,988 in Grades 1-12 and 1,318 in pre-school) studied in general education schools for national minorities, of which:

- 15,489 students were learning in Russian (15,031 students in urban areas and 458 students in rural areas)

Table 2. Number of students in general education schools teaching in Russian

Grades	Total number of students learning in Russian	Number of students learning in Russian in urban areas	Number of students learning in Russian in rural areas
Pre-school	503	463	40
Grades 1-4	5,776	5,571	205
Grades 5-8	5,317	5,185	132
Grades 9-10	2,212	2,146	66
Grades 11-12	1,664	1,649	15
Social skills groups	17	17	

- 11,870 students were learning in Polish (7,054 students in urban areas and 4 816 students in rural areas)

Table 3. Number of students in general education schools teaching in Polish

Grades	Total number of students learning in Polish	Number of students learning in Polish in urban areas	Number of students learning in Polish in rural areas

Pre-school	693	361	332
Grades 1-4	4,006	2,390	1,616
Grades 5-8	3,788	2,340	1,448
Grades 9-10	1,813	1,056	757
Grades 11-12	1,570	907	663

- 225 students were learning in Belarusian (225 students in urban areas, no students in rural areas)

Table 4. Number of students in general education schools teaching in Belarusian

Grades	Total number of students learning in Belarusian	Number of students learning in Belarusian in urban areas	Number of students learning in Belarusian in rural areas
Pre-school	7	7	0
Grades 1-4	76	76	0
Grades 5-8	74	74	0
Grades 9-10	35	35	0
Grades 11-12	33	33	0

The general curriculum of the schools belonging to national minorities (currently under amendment) continues to include the teaching of the Polish, German, Russian and Belarusian mother tongues.

Higher education is also addressing the need for national minorities to learn in their mother tongue. The Faculty of Economics and Informatics of the University of Białystok has been operating in Vilnius since 2007. It was established by the joint decision of Lithuania and Poland. The branch receives part of the required funds from the budget of the Republic of Lithuania (state scholarship,

social scholarship from the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, and credits). The branch accepts about 150-200 students annually. Graduates wishing to study economics, computer science or European studies may apply for this university branch. It is the only Polish university that has a faculty abroad that educates students in Polish. In this way, the Polish national minority is guaranteed the opportunity to acquire knowledge and qualifications in their mother tongue, both in general education institutions and at university.

There is also a European Humanities University in Lithuania, where studies are conducted in Russian and Belarusian, and to a lesser extent in English and German. As the university focuses on internationalisation, the aim is to expand the list of courses on offer and to include new study programmes taught in English.

Taking into account the diversity of the institutions providing education in the languages of national minorities, from general education institutions to higher education institutions, it can be concluded that Lithuanian national minorities have the opportunity to acquire education in their mother tongues and to develop national self-awareness and knowledge of their culture.

The Polish Studies Centre of the Department of Baltic Linguistics of the Vilnius University Faculty of Philology is the only educational and scientific institution that offers an option to study the Polish language to anyone who wishes, regardless of the level of their language proficiency and nationality. Both persons who have graduated from schools teaching in Polish, and graduates of Lithuanian and Russian schools for whom Polish is not their mother tongue study at the centre. This is ensured by the flexibility of the study programme, which allows students who do not speak Polish at all to study the Polish language, as the basic subjects of philology are taught in Lithuanian, as well as to students of all philological study programmes, and the teaching of special education subjects in the first and second courses is differentiated.

As of 1 January 2019, Vytautas Magnus University Academy of Education established a non-academic unit: the Polish Language and Culture Centre. On 30 May 2019, the centre was officially opened in Vilnius. The centre offers students an opportunity to not only study Polish language and literature, but to also organise research projects and seminars, thus promoting the interaction of the cultures and languages of both countries. Students can choose to study English and Other Foreign Languages, Pre-school and Pre-primary Pedagogy, Lithuanian Language and Literature, Pedagogy of Primary Education and Early Foreign Language Teaching.

3. Paragraph 2 of this article shall be implemented without prejudice to the learning of the official language or the teaching in this language.

In implementing the provisions of this article, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania organised 4 seminars on the topic: “How to ensure the overall integration of students who have come to Lithuania or returned from other countries at school: the importance of teamwork”. Vilnius, Visaginas (where majority of the population is Russian-speaking) and Šalčininkai (where majority of the population is Polish-speaking) organised 3 methodological days on the “Development of students’ literacy skills: creative workshops with teacher practitioners” for basic education teachers of Lithuanian language and literature.

In implementing the provision of Sub-clause 48.2 of the Guidelines for the State Language Policy for 2018-2022, approved by Resolution No. XIII-1318 of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania of 27 June 2018 “On the Guidelines for the State Language Policy for 2018-2022”, to “create conditions (legal and financial) and strengthen Lithuanian language teaching in national minority schools by implementing pre-school, pre-primary and general education programmes”, in 2018 the Education Development Centre organised 7 trainings–consultations for pre-school and pre-primary education teachers title “Education in Lithuanian in National Minority Schools”. The seminars were attended by 140 pre-school and pre-primary educators.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, in implementing the provision of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania programme “Creating equal educational conditions, adapting educational programmes to meet different educational needs, and ensuring equal opportunities and accessibility for different social groups”, organises a forum cycle “Each Student’s Path to Success”. The first forum titled “National Student Achievement Evaluation: Current Situation and Opportunities”, which took place on 28 February 2019, discussed the results of a national student achievement evaluation in the schools teaching in the national minority language and the possibilities for improving their quality. The second forum titled “Learning the Lithuanian Language from an Early Age”, which took place on 19 April 2019, focused on sharing the existing good practices and discussing how to successfully organise Lithuanian language education in the minority schools with pre-school and pre-primary education programmes.

In 2020, Russian language teachers received training on the following topics: “Contemporary Russian Children’s Literature at School” and “New Ways to Explore Text in Russian Lessons”; while Polish teachers attended training on the topic of “ICT Tools for Assessment and Self-

Assessment”. Teachers of the national minorities’ mother tongue (Polish, Belarusian and Russian) also participated in seminars on the topic “Remote Learning Experiences and Teacher Cooperation”.

Training on “Improvement of Essay Assessment Competencies” was organised for the high school teachers of Lithuanian language and literature working in schools providing education in the language of a national minority and in schools providing education in the Lithuanian language in a multilingual environment. The following remote learning courses were also carried out for Lithuanian language professionals in the virtual learning environment MOODLE: “Beehive of Lithuanian Language Professionals” and “Methodology for Developing Pupils’ Reading Competences”; while a conference of teachers in Lithuanian and foreign schools titled “New Reading of Soviet and Emigrant Literature and Culture” took place.

Video material for virtual consultations on the topic of “Preparation for Distance Learning” was prepared for teachers of the mother tongues of national minorities (Polish, Belarusian and Russian). They were also provided with presentations on the following topics: “For Schools Transitioning to Distance Learning”, “Russian Language Video”, “Polish Language Video”, “For Teachers of Native Languages of National Minorities (Belarusian, Russian)” and video material on “Reflections on Remote Learning in Polish”.

ARTICLE 15

The Parties shall create the conditions necessary for the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life, and in public affairs, in particular those affecting them.

To increase the participation of national minority organisations in social and cultural life, the Department of National Minorities annually conducts training on the preparation of applications, activities and financial reports for the heads of national minority organisations and the persons responsible for implementing cultural projects, inviting them to come to the Department of National Minorities or by visiting the representatives of national minorities in various cities or districts of Lithuania. Following the proposals of the organisations, and in order to simplify the submission of applications, in 2020 the Department of National Minorities introduced an electronic system of applications, contracts and reports, where the applicant organisations can find all information

concerning the financing of the project activities. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, training on using the electronic system was carried out remotely.

To substantiate the need to represent the history of national minorities in Lithuania, present the history of Lithuanian national minorities as a culturally, confessionally and linguistically important and relevant part of an integrated, dynamic Lithuanian identity, and to create the conditions for its effective presentation to the public, while also implementing the XVII Priority Work of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the Concept of Representation of the History of National Minorities in Lithuania (hereinafter the “Concept”) was prepared and approved by Order No. ĮV-610 of the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania of 26 September 2019⁶¹. The Concept establishes the key objectives, which are as follows: to encourage the society to create and participate by presenting the history, culture, language and traditions of Lithuanian national minorities; to strengthen the diversity of cultural expressions at national, regional and local levels; to form a critical mindset of a civically-responsible and intercultural society; and to strengthen and develop inter-institutional and public-private cooperation.

The Concept is based on the historically established values of sustainable multi-ethnic coexistence and the civic state, as well as on the history of national minorities as an integral part of the historical story of Lithuania, in line with the Constitution and the Convention, which enshrines the fundamental rights of persons belonging to national minorities: the right to foster one’s culture and language, and to profess one’s faith; as well as the right to use the media and to contact the media.

In implementing the provisions of the Concept, the Action Plan for the Representation of the History of National Minorities in Lithuania for 2020-2022 was prepared and approved by Order No. ĮV-189 of the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania of 16 March 2020. The Action Plan envisages 35 activities, in the implementation of which the state, municipal institutions and non-governmental organisations of national minorities will participate.⁶²

Participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural activities

⁶¹ Lithuanian version of the Order on the Concept of Representation of the History of National Minorities in Lithuania <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/e23beaf2e09411e9a85be81119c7a8fa/asr>

⁶² Lithuanian version of the Order on the Action Plan for the Representation of the History of National Minorities in Lithuania for 2020-2022 <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/7bce3de2688e11eaa38ed97835ec4df6?jfwid=1v5692gvz>

Participation in the celebration of public holidays, historical dates and anniversaries of important Lithuanian personalities

The Ministry of Culture, taking into account the provisions of Article 15 of the EC Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, seeks to ensure that all residents of the Republic of Lithuania, regardless of their nationality, religion, or social status, will have the opportunity to participate in cultural activities, including public holidays, (Restoration of the State Day (16 February), Day of Restoration of Independence of Lithuania (11 March), Statehood Day (King of Lithuanian Mindaugas Coronation Day and the National Anthem Day) (6 July), public holidays, dates of significance to Lithuania and commemorations of the anniversaries of important personalities.

The Ministry of Culture promotes cooperation with public sector institutions, the civil society and non-governmental organisations. To encourage the participation of national minorities (especially children and youths) living in the South-Eastern Lithuania region in cultural activities that contribute to citizenship education, intercultural dialogue and the promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions, in 2019-2020 the Ministry of Culture allocated partial funding of €10,500 to Šalčininkai District to commemorate public holidays.

To strengthen the citizens' respect for the state and preserve the historical and cultural memory, the Ministry of Culture coordinates and implements programmes to commemorate the anniversaries of important personalities and significant historical events or phenomena.

Public Holidays

The state seeks to ensure the commemoration of cultural-historical events and dates significant for national minorities. The Law on Public Holidays of the Republic of Lithuania⁶³ includes the following dates: 21 May – Day of Lithuanian National Communities; 2 August – Roma Holocaust Memorial Day; September 23 – Memorial Day for the Genocide of Lithuanian Jews; 16 November – International Day for Tolerance; and 10 December – International Human Rights Day.

⁶³ Lithuanian version on the Law on Public Holidays of the Republic of Lithuania <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.41597/asr>

On 21 May, in commemoration of the Day of National Communities, the Department of National Minorities organised a solemn event at Vilnius City Hall to honour the representatives of Lithuanian national communities. In addition, on the International Day for Tolerance (19 November), the Department of National Minorities organised a solemn event under the auspices of the Prime Minister at the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, awarding and honouring those who contributed most to building the civil society, fostering national cultures and promoting intercultural dialogue.

To commemorate the Lithuanian Jewish Genocide Remembrance Day, Paneriai Memorial holds an annual ceremony honouring the victims. Lithuanian National Television also broadcasts the event or prepares reports. The ceremony is traditionally attended by representatives of the government, the diplomatic corps residing in Lithuania, students of Lithuanian schools, members of the Lithuanian Jewish community and representatives of the public. The event is organised by state institutions together with the Lithuanian Jewish community, the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania and Lithuanian schools. In 2019, Lithuania paid special attention to the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the destruction of the Kaunas Ghetto. In addition, see the second recommendation.

Song Festival

Lithuania's cultural and national multi-layeredness is a distinctive feature of our nation, which the country sought to be revealed to the world by commemorating the centenary of the restoration of the Lithuanian state in 2018. Local communities, national minorities living in Lithuania and Lithuanians around the world were heavily involved in the biggest commemoration event – the Song Festival “In the Name of...”, while 17 Lithuanian national minority groups took part in the celebration programmes, performing their repertoire in Lithuanian. On the Folklore Day “The Land of Great People”, 360 folklore ensembles, including folklore groups of national minorities, played music, danced and sang. For the first time in the history of the independent Lithuania, the Department of National Minorities and the Lithuanian World Community organised an event called “One Hundred Faces of Lithuania – Let's Connect Lithuania”. The event, which was specially dedicated to Lithuanians around the world and national minorities living in Lithuania, took place in Vilnius Town Hall Square. During the event, the square had a pavilion town where 30 Lithuanian communities from different countries of the world and more than 25 Lithuanian national minorities could introduce themselves.

“Lithuanian Capital of Culture” and “Small Capitals of Culture” projects

The Ministry of Culture, in promoting the cultural activity and creativity of the population of Lithuanian regions, the development of culture and art, creative initiatives and access to culture, annually allocates partial funding to the measure “Lithuanian Capital of Culture” (€100,000 as of 2020). Funding priorities are given to projects that promote the development of various artistic and cultural activities; projects that reinforce local identities and images, continue the cultural traditions of the city and region if a significant innovation is proposed in the project year; and projects involving different cultural groups (including the persons belonging to national minorities).

The historic, multinational city of Trakai was declared to be the Lithuanian Capital of Culture in 2020. The project “Trakai – the Cradle of Statehood: A Multinational Capital of Culture” aimed to improve the image of Trakai City in Lithuania and abroad by bringing people of different ages, nationalities and cultures together for a common cultural goal, as well as developing cultural cooperation with foreign countries to the extent permitted by the pandemic situation. Organised events, festivals, concerts, educational events and exhibitions increased the awareness of Trakai City’s culture, history and creativity, and attracted greater interest from tourists. Representatives of Lithuanian and Trakai City and District rural youths and other community members were involved in the activities. This made the activities more accessible to the people in the region and to socially excluded groups. In public spaces in Trakai, more than 50 various events were held, which included local residents, artists, representatives of various sectors of activity and city guests. The city hosted 30% more events for young people than in previous years, and more than 20% of all the events were designed for the representatives of ethnic communities and visitors.

The Ministry of Culture supports and funds the initiative to support Small Lithuanian Capitals of Culture, ten of which are elected every year. As of 2018, the Lithuanian Council for Culture annually allocates €50 thousand for their most important projects. Participants in the Small Capitals of Culture project pay great attention to the presentation of the Small Capital of Culture events, activities that strengthen the local identity and image, strengthen partnership networks in the community, create new cultural traditions and revive and nurture old ones, as well as commemorating community anniversaries. In many Small Capitals, the efforts of local enthusiasts, cultural workers and volunteers create memorable cultural events for the local community, as well as for the representatives of national minorities, while increasing the availability and dissemination of professional art and creating new cultural tourism initiatives.

Cultural Passport education programme

The cultural education of children and youth makes a significant contribution to raising the public awareness of national minorities. Measures such as the Cultural Passport, which the Ministry of Culture together has been implementing with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania since 2018, aims to develop students' cultural knowledge and experience habits, and to promote students' cultural awareness by ensuring the accessibility of cultural and artistic services to all Lithuanian students. The involvement of national minority NGOs and cultural institutions in the implementation of the Cultural Passport was encouraged to acquaint the public of the country with the history of Lithuanian national minorities, their exceptional cultural heritage and the traditions of national minorities. This principle ensures that participation in the Cultural Passport is open to all cultural and artistic institutions, creators and artists of the country who can provide high-quality cultural and artistic services that meet the established criteria, regardless of their legal status, field of art and their place of residence. However, there are certain restrictions established in Clause 5 of the Cultural Passport selection description⁶⁴.

In implementing the provisions of the Concept and the Action Plan for the Representation of the History of National Minorities in Lithuania for 2020-2022, the set of Cultural Passport services has been supplemented with cultural education services designed to instruct the public about the unique history, cultural heritage and traditions of Lithuanian national minorities. National minority NGOs, cultural and artistic institutions, creators and artists were encouraged to participate more actively in expanding the range of Cultural Passport services by offering activities aimed at getting to know national minorities. As of March 2021, the Cultural Passport programme offers 37 cultural education services in the field of multiculturalism.⁶⁵

Information on 2016-2020 cultural and artistic projects related to national minorities

Every year, the Department partially finances projects for the development of national minority cultures, which promote the self-expression of national minorities by presenting their culture, traditions and heritage. Projects run by national minority organisations are characterised by a wide variety, including song festivals, cultural days, conferences and seminars, lectures, study tours, children's and adult's day-camps and week-camps, festivals, exhibitions, museum visits and

⁶⁴Cultural Passport in Lithuanian [JV-1000/V-1055 Dėl Kultūros paso paslaugų atrankos ir finansavimo tvarkos aprašo patvirtinimo \(e-tar.lt\)](#)

⁶⁵ The Cultural Passport programme in Lithuanian <https://kulturospasas.emokykla.lt/renginiai?cat=105>

publishing activities. The children and youth of various national minorities often participate in these projects: they carry out creative-educational projects, participate in lectures by researchers, attend discussions about national identity, festivals, song festivals, and present their work to the community. Such activities promote the intercultural dialogue necessary for children and young people of different nationalities. Musical, educational and cultural events that are very important and meaningful for national minority communities are being held. They introduce the general public to the culture of the national minorities and at the same time help the communities nurture their identity.

The Department of National Minorities finances dissemination projects for the development of culture in four areas. The first priority is the traditional culture of national minorities, its presentation, preservation and dissemination. Funded projects include traditional cultural festivals that have existed for decades, such as: “Sing with Us”, “Znad Issy”, “Dźwięcz, Polska Pieśni!”, “Music Unites Us” and the International Literature Festival of Russian Writers “Baltic Gamajūnas”. There is also a traditional Kupalle festival, innovative exhibitions, book publishing, conferences, and other cultural and educational activities.

The seminar “Development and Dissemination of Intercultural Competences in South-Eastern Lithuania” was organised, where the participants shared good practices in coordinating cultural activities of the Trakai District culture, national minority communities and local communities, as well as organising a lecture on the possibilities of the cultural sector to attract funds from European funds and on the influence of the cultural environment on the formation of national identity. The participants in the seminar were introduced to the cultural heritage of the Užutrakis Manor homestead and participated in the educational programme “Presentation of cultural activities and traditions of the Georgian community”.

The second priority is aimed at the dissemination of the national minorities’ culture and cultural cooperation in South-Eastern Lithuania and focuses on children, youth and cultural cooperation in Lithuanian schools. Among others, schools and organisations implemented the following projects: “Expression of Russian and Belarusian culture and traditions through dance, song and national costume”, “We are different, we are Lithuania”, “Our homeland, our home” and “Treasures of Homeland Folklore”. Schools that have applied for funding for this priority project participated in a solemn event “I Am Lithuania” organised by the Department of National Minorities, where the schools of South-Eastern Lithuania and other regions of the country that implemented the projects presented performances on the topic of the implemented inter-ethnic youth cooperation project.

The third priority, the activities of national minority Saturday and Sunday Schools, aims to promote the activities of national minority Sunday Schools and the linguistic and cultural diversity of national minorities. In addition to the usual activities of Sunday Schools, a seminar for the cultural workers of Lithuanian national communities titled “Traditions and crafts of the calendar year in cultures of various nations” was organised, which was attended by 22 cultural workers from Kaunas, Klaipėda, Varėna, Vilnius and Visaginas. During the seminar, the participants were introduced to the features of Lithuanian ethnic culture and reflections of national minority traditions in Lithuania, as well as learning about Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Greek and Georgian bread-baking customs and traditions, symbols of Slavic sacred art and took part in creative workshops. There was also a seminar for the cultural workers of Lithuanian national communities and other events.

The fourth priority, the dissemination of the culture of national minorities in the media, aims to finance the publication of articles in the press and on the Internet, radio and television shows, and other activities that will help to disseminate information about national minorities. For example, funding was allocated to the project “Lithuanian Cultural Heritage: a Common Treasure of all Nations”, the project of the Lithuanian Union of Journalists “Lithuania: Intertwined Nations”, the cycle of ten radio shows “Living History. House of Prayer”, publishing of the Belarusian newspaper RUN in Vilnius by Centre for Democracy for Belarus, the development of the portal hazetarun.info, and many other projects.

Table 5. Number of projects of national minority organisations and funding provided by the Department of National Minorities

Year	Number of funded projects	Funds allocated to the projects
2016	166	€200,000
2017	182	€261,000
2018	175	€270,000
2019	177	€277,000
2020	190	€326,000
2021	184	€360,000
Total	1,074	€1,694,000

The Department of National Minorities seeks to ensure the possibility for representatives of national minorities and their non-governmental organisations to carry out activities for the

preservation of their national identity, language, culture, folklore, cultural heritage and history, and to actively participate in public life. This goal is achieved by the cultural centres of national minorities operating in Lithuania which, by implementing various measures, promote cooperation, understanding and tolerance towards national minorities. In 2019, the Department of National Minorities allocated €195 thousand (partial funding) for nine projects of the Kaunas Cultural Centre of Various Nations, Klaipėda City Municipal National Cultural Centre, Folklore and Ethnography Centre of the Lithuanian National Minorities, House of National Communities and the Visaginas Cultural Centre. The allocated funds were used for the non-formal education of children and adults, Lithuanian language courses, development of intercultural dialogue, fostering the national identity of national communities and the cultural-educational activities of national communities. Another €64,000 was allocated to two programmes of the Public Institution Roma Community Centre implementing the socio-cultural integration of the Roma. Compared to the previous year, funding for the activities of the cultural centre increased by €28 thousand. In 2019, 120,000 visitors visited the cultural centres of national minorities. See Article 5.

In 2016-2020, the Lithuanian Council for Culture funded 108 projects initiated by national minority organisations and 12 projects initiated by other organisations related to the topic of national minorities. A total of 120 projects related to national minorities were financed in 2016-2020, while the amount of the Culture Support Fund allocated to them was €97,152 (see Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6. Number of projects and funding allocated to national minority organisations

Year	Number of funded projects	Funds allocated to the projects
2016	22	€42,663
2017	23	€53,800
2018	19	€26,760
2019	16	€45,500
2020	28	€20,310
Total	108	€89,033

Table 7. Information on projects of other organisations carrying out activities related to national minorities

Number of funded projects (2016-2020)	Funds allocated to the projects
12	€108,119

Museums and libraries

In the context of the modern knowledge society, museums and libraries have a special place as exclusive spaces for teaching and learning, because their educational activities contribute to the formation of each nation's identity, perception of cultural identity and giving meaning to the historical memory.

Libraries, especially in the regions, have become not only cultural hubs but also community life centres, offering a wide variety of services and leisure opportunities. They cooperate with national minority NGOs in implementing joint cultural, educational events, projects and other activities. In relation to this, they organise cultural minority afternoons, book presentations, conferences and ethnographic activities. The Strategic Directions for Library Development for 2016-2022 approved by the Order No. 344 of the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania of 29 April 2016 "On the Approval of the Strategic Directions for Library Development for 2016-2022" incorporated the policy perspective of national minority rights into the values guided by the library sector in pursuit of the strategic development goal of: "free access for all members of society, regardless of gender, social status, sexual orientation, disability, racial and ethnic origin, religion or belief, to use library information resources and services, regardless of the location and space."

In 2016, Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania (hereinafter the "National Library") established the Judaica Research Centre of the Documentary Heritage Research Department. The Centre's activities include the management and acquisition of Jewish documentary heritage, information on the history of the Jewish culture and ways of presenting the highlights of its current activities. Since 2015, the National Library and the Lithuanian Central State Archives (hereinafter the "Central Archive") have been implementing the international YIVO Vilnius project, which aims to restore the content of the collections of the pre-war YIVO Institute and other Vilnius Jewish institutions, ensuring their survival and public access. Since 2016, the Ministry of Culture has been allocating funds to the National Library and the Central Archive for digitisation activities in relation to the YIVO archive. In 2020, €10 thousand was allocated.

In 2020, the National Library actively contributed to the implementation of measures for commemorating the year of the Vilna Gaon and Lithuanian Jewish History approved by Resolution No. 786 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 24 June 2019: the National Library prepared a documentary exhibition "Shenot Eliyahu / Elijah's Years: The Impact of Vilnius Gaon on Lithuanian Jewish Culture" and opened it to the public on 20 October; it is planned that the material of the international conference "Lithuanian Jewish Writers and Intellectuals of the 18th-20th Centuries" will be published (the conference was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic); and an

educational programme on the intellectual legacy of the Vilna Gaon and the history of the Vilnius Chronicle (Pink) was prepared, consisting of a series of 7 lectures entitled “Foundations of the Lithuanian Jewish Worldview”. Some of the lectures took place in the auditorium (90 participants), while some were filmed and broadcast on the library’s YouTube channel (receiving more than 1,500 views).

In 2019, the Lithuanian Library for the Blind (hereinafter the “LLB”) signed a cooperation agreement with the *Książnica Podlaska* Library in Poland on the exchange of special format publications. On the basis of this cooperation, LLB users had the opportunity to receive audiobooks in Polish and have access to them by connecting to the virtual library ELVIS. These books are especially popular among consumers: the first 16 books were listened to over 180 times in just a few months. As a result of the cooperation, about 20 special format publications in Polish are offered to visually impaired users every year.

Museums usually focus on all sections of society when planning their activities, including, where possible, persons belonging to national minorities. During the reporting period, 7 museums organised various events, educational activities and expositions introducing the Lithuanian society to the history, life and customs of the Jews and Karaite nations. The histories of other national minorities (Polish, Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, etc.) are represented in an integrated way via the permanent expositions of museums or educational programmes, as far as the main goals of the museum and the profile of the collections allow.

Museums pay close attention to the perpetuation and actualisation of the Jewish cultural heritage and history. Every year, the Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History organises thematic educational sessions on the history of Lithuanian Jews and their culture, material and spiritual heritage, and the Holocaust. Among the most important and educational activities are the following: “Rescued Lithuanian Jewish Child Tells about the Shoah”, “The Throne of King Solomon” and “Jewish Holidays”. The museum’s exclusive educational programme is “Little Sundays” for children from 3 years of age, their parents and grandparents. In 2019, the museum hosted the exhibition “Brazilian Modernist from Vilnius: The Return of Lasar Segall”, Yehoshua Kovarsky’s exhibition “Taming Chaos”, and presented a mobile exhibition and catalogue titled “Saving One Life Saves the Whole World”.

In November 2017, the Samuel Bak Museum was opened at the Tolerance Centre of the Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History, which exhibits dozens of paintings by the world-famous artist Samuel Bak that the artist donated to Lithuania.

To present the achievements of the Litvaks to the general public, a new branch of the Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History is to be established – the Lithuanian Jewish Culture Museum (with the working title “Litvak Culture and Art Centre”) – the main goal of which is to reveal in an attractive and modern way the unique phenomena of Lithuanian Jewish education, culture and art, as well as the contribution of emigrants of Jewish origin from Lithuanian cities and towns to the progress of world culture and science. The Litvak Museum of Culture and Identity will be located in a historical building (Pylimo g. 4), where the Jewish gymnasium Tarbut operated during the interwar period. The building is currently being renovated.

The Kaunas IX Fort Museum has prepared an educational programme titled “Holocaust in Lithuania”, which consists of the educational classes “Jewish Culture and Achievements”, “Punishment No Mercy”, “Saving one life saves the whole world” and “Escaping Fort IX”. The Kaunas Fort IX Museum also published a collection of historical articles in Lithuanian and English titled “The Holocaust in the Nazi-Occupied Eastern and Western European Countries: Research and Memory”, which was presented at events held in Klaipėda, Panevėžys, Vilnius, Kėdainiai, Alytus and Kaunas.

In 2017, the Kaunas IX Fort Museum also hosted events on the theme of the Holocaust, the events of “Summer – an evening with the museum” with a special thematic tour on the theme of the Holocaust, and screenings of the feature films “Steps at Night”, “Gitel” and “Vilnius Ghetto”.

Šiauliai Aušra Museum prepared an educational session titled “Chaim Frenkel and Frenkel Heritage in Šiauliai” about the heritage of the Frenkel family, one of the most famous Jewish families in Šiauliai, including their living environment, and their contribution to the cultural, social and economic life, and development of the city. Another particularly attractive educational activity at the museum is “Secrets of Kosher Food”, in which Jewish cuisine is presented to both children and adults. During the educational session, the participants are introduced to the peculiarities of kosher food and the specifics of cooking, as well as being served traditional Jewish dishes.

The Samogitian Museum “Alka” organises the educational sessions “Traces of the Jewish Nation in Telšiai”, where students can learn about the Jewish community living in Telšiai and their customs. The museum’s excursion “There Were Others Here” introduces the heritage of the Telšiai Jews, the Holocaust and those who helped the Jews. The museum has a permanent exposition titled “Telšiai. Turgaus Street No. 21. Abel Bay Colonial Goods Store” (a reconstruction of a real store). The museum organised the following exhibitions: “Exhibition of Reproductions of Nikolai Rerich’s Paintings” (2018); the virtual exhibition “Life of the Telšiai Jewish Community”

(www.parodos.emuziejai.lt, www.muzejusalka.lt) (2020); implemented the project “Telšiai Memory Book. City Jews’ Life ”(2020); organised the education programme on Jewish culinary heritage “Telšiai bagels” (2020); and still implements the educational programme “Forgotten but not Abandoned” (the programme introduces visitors to the life of the Jewish community in Telšiai), and others.

To commemorate the year of Vilna Gaon and Lithuanian Jewish history in 2020, the Maironis Lithuanian Literature Museum organised the scientific conference “After all, memory is our common roof” and the exhibition “Once upon a time there was Isaak...”.

One of the divisions of the Trakai History Museum is the exposition of the S. Šapšalas Karaite Nation Museum, where visitors are introduced to the history, life and customs of the Karaite Nation. This museum is the only reflection of the knowledge about this nation, which moved from Crimea to Lithuania 600 years ago.

In 2017, the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania implemented an educational project with educational classes for students of the Vilnius Region (mostly schools teaching in Polish) and “Puelli Magni Ducatus Lituaniae (Children of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania)”. In 2019, during the educational activities of the exhibition “Lublin – the City of the Lithuanian-Polish Union”, the Lublin Castle Museum prepared an exercise book for schools teaching in Polish to consolidate and deepen their knowledge. Also, in 2017-2020 it organised events dedicated to the actualisation of the culture and heritage of national minorities including the festive concert “Lithuanian Orthodox Metropolis - 700!” (2017), a concert on the occasion of Georgia Day (2018), the event “Under the umbrella of the Lithuanian language and culture” (2018), a concert of the Khachaturian Trio (Armenia) (2020) and a conference on historical traumas titled “Unhealed Wounds of the Past: Consequences and Ways to Overcome” (2020).

In 2017-2020, the Lithuanian Theatre, Music and Cinema Museum organised the 5-part exhibition “Stage Aristocrats and Rebels. Lithuanian Theatre Art in 1920-1940”. Two parts were designed to reveal the multiculturalism of Lithuania at that time. There was also an exhibition dedicated to the life and work of the poet and playwright Yanka Kupala titled “One star burns out, two new ones appear”. In 2018, the museum participated in the international exhibition “Dobužinskis Lithuania”, organised an exhibition dedicated to the 70th anniversary of Ilja Bereznickas “It would be sad if it were not fun”, and collaborated in organising the exhibition at the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum. It also organised an exhibition dedicated to the 200th anniversary of the birth of the

composer Stanislavas Moniuška “Stanislavas Moniuška – 18 years of love and work in Vilnius” (2019) and prepared the virtual format of this exhibition (2019), among other activities.

The M. Žilinskas Art Gallery of the National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum organises educational sessions for students of all ages titled “Fun according to the Greeks”, where they can become acquainted not only with exhibits of the ancient period, but also with the works of art of later centuries.

In 2018, the Lithuanian Education History Museum prepared a virtual exhibition from the cycle “Historical Memory Retrospective: Alexander Tyminski – the founder of the Kaunas Russian High School”, in cooperation with the Tatar community of Kaunas County and the religious community of Kaunas Old Believers, while also implementing the project “They Created Lithuania”.

The Ethnographic Open-Air Museum of Lithuania has the largest collection of real estate objects related to Jewish culture in Lithuania (11 in total). These include 7 residential trade houses from Tabariškės, Telšiai, Šiaulėnai, Kaunas, Kėdainiai, Musninkai and Žeimelis, a teahouse from Šeduva (about 30% of all town houses), and a multifunctional building – a barn from Žiežmariai. There is also a St. Florian sculpture and the public well. The archives of the museum house architectural drawings of the Dubingiai synagogue, a residential house with a porte-cochère in Kėdainiai, a multi-apartment residential house in Joniškėlis, a residential trade house in Turgeliai town and a residential trade house. The archive also houses research-descriptive materials about the Jewish way of life and everyday life. 2017 saw the publication of a book about the museum town “Reflection of Lithuanian Towns. Museum Town”, which pays a lot of attention to the Jewish heritage. On 30 August 2020, an event dedicated to the year of Vilna Gaon and Lithuanian Jewish history was organised, the programme of which included conversations about the Jewish lifestyle and customs, with a walk around the museum town titled “Reflections of Judaica”. In 2020, in cooperation with the Kaišiadorys Regional Museum, the joint exhibition “Jews in Lithuanian Towns” (“Jews of Kaišiadorys Region”) was organised. Part of it will continue in 2021. 2020 also saw cooperation with the Litvak community, which submitted an application to participate in the European Routes of Jewish Heritage and developed an educational route for Jewish heritage in Lithuania (the main organiser is the European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage (AEPJ)).

In 2017-2020, the A. Pushkin Literary Museum organised a series of events in Russian “We Read Pushkin” and “We Read for Children”, a series of events titled “Literary Living Room” (including meetings with poets and translators, poetry readings and presentation of books in various

languages), as well as the series of events “Musical Living Room” and the Lithuanian students’ artistic self-expression competition “My Alexander Pushkin”. Entries for this competition are accepted in Lithuanian, Russian, Polish, Belarusian and English. In cooperation with the A. Mickiewicz Museum of the Vilnius University Library, the staff of the A. Pushkin Literary Museum participated in the cycle of events “Literary Wednesdays” organised by the Adam Mickiewicz Museum in 2017-2020. The museum regularly hosts concerts for lovers of Russian romance. In 2020, the account “Help for Teachers” was created on the museum’s website puskinas.lt, where tests, infographics, crossword puzzles, presentations, etc., are published. The museum’s account on the Facebook social network created a hashtag #PushkinForTeachers, which helps teachers find tasks for students, tests, etc.

All the activities of state and municipal museums related to the dissemination of the culture and history of national minorities are funded by submitting project applications to the targeted programme.

ARTICLE 16

The Parties shall refrain from measures which alter the proportions of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities and are aimed at restricting the rights and freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present framework Convention.

During the period since the 4th Report, the Lithuanian authorities have not taken any measures that would restrict the rights and freedoms arising from the principles of this Framework Convention.

Before each election to the Seimas, the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania, in accordance with Article 10 of the Law on Elections to the Seimas, and taking into account the submissions of the Directors of Municipal Administrations of the Republic of Lithuania regarding the division of municipal territories into constituencies according to the number of voters in the constituency and the administrative division of the territory, approves the boundaries of the constituencies of the Republic of Lithuania.

Due to uneven demographic processes and changes in the number of voters, the 2016 Seimas elections already required substantial changes: to establish new constituencies in Vilnius, and to

abolish or merge some of the existing ones. The proposal to increase the 20% deviation from the number of voters in individual constituencies, allowed by the Law on Seimas Elections, to 30% contradicted the principle of equal elections: as a result, the largest constituency in terms of the number of voters would elect one member of the Seimas to represent almost twice as many voters. Therefore, the Central Electoral Commission approved new single-member constituencies so that the number of voters in them would not exceed 10% deviation from the average number of voters in all constituencies. In the 2016 Seimas elections, 71 constituencies were approved, while in 2020 70 constituencies were approved.

There were two Russian political parties in Lithuania: the Lithuanian Russian Union and the political party Russian Alliance. In the 2015 municipal council elections, 20 Russian politicians were elected. In the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania for the 2016-2020 term, one member of the political party Russian Alliance worked in the faction of the Lithuanian Polish Election Campaign–Union of Christian Families. In the 2019 municipal elections, the political party Russian Alliance formed a coalition of the Union of Christian Families with the Polish Election Campaign. In the election, the coalition won 54 mandates. Representatives of the Russian nationality worked in Vilnius City Municipality, Vilnius District Municipality and Visaginas Municipality. In addition, members of the public election committee Titov and Justice won 2 mandates in Klaipėda City Municipality.

The Polish national minority is also actively involved in political life. There is one political party in Lithuania, founded in 1994: the Lithuanian Polish Election Campaign–Union of Christian Families (hereinafter referred to as the “LPEC–UCF”). In 2016-2020, 8 members of the Seimas (5.6% of all members) worked in the LPEC–UCF faction. In the elections to the Seimas for 2020-2024, no candidate nominated by the LPEC–UCF received a mandate in a multi-member constituency. However, three candidates were elected in single-member constituencies.

In the municipal elections, the LPEC–UCF party received the greatest support in South-Eastern Lithuania. In Šalčininkai District 21 out of 25, while in Vilnius District 21 out of 31 mandates of the municipal council belong to the LPEC–UCF (see Table 8).

Table 8. LPEC–UCF in local elections

Municipality and the total number of mandates	2015 *	2019
Klaipėda City	4	2 **
Šalčininkai District	21	19

Širvintai District	1	-
Švenčionys District	5	4 ***
Trakai District	4	4 ****
Vilnius City	10	6
Vilnius District	21	18 *****
Visaginas City	3	3 *****

* A coalition between Polish Election Campaigns and the Russian Alliance Valdemar Tomaševski Block took part in the 2015 elections.

** The Public Election Committee Titov and Justice received 2 mandates. Candidates of the Russian Alliance political party did not win any votes.

*** A coalition between the Polish Election Campaigns and the Russian Alliance–Union of Christian Families.

*** A coalition between the Polish Election Campaigns and the Russian Alliance–Union of Christian Families.

**** A coalition between Polish Election Campaigns and the Russian Alliance–Union of Christian Families.

***** A coalition between the Polish Election Campaigns and the Russian Alliance–Union of Christian Families.

In recent years, there has been a tendency to more actively involve public figures, researchers and specialists of various national minorities in public and political activities. Lithuanian traditional political parties are especially active in this field, in which, by inviting the representatives of national minorities to their ranks, they seek to represent voters of all nationalities and strengthen the party's participation in elections, self-government and the Seimas. The increasing number of representatives of national minorities in traditional political parties has led to a decrease in the ranks of national minority parties; for example, in 2020–2024, 4 self-nominated candidates and 10 representatives of traditional political parties were elected to the Seimas.

1. The Parties undertake not to interfere with the right of persons belonging to national minorities to establish and maintain free and peaceful contacts across frontiers with persons lawfully staying in other states, in particular those with whom they share an ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity, or a common cultural heritage.

The information has not changed. See the IV Report of the Republic of Lithuania⁶⁶. Citizens of the Republic of Lithuania, regardless of their nationality, can move freely within the EU.

2. The Parties undertake not to interfere with the right of persons belonging to national minorities to participate in the activities of non-governmental organisations, both at the national and international levels.

The information has not changed. See the IV Report of the Republic of Lithuania.

Recommendation: encourage municipalities to develop appropriate consultation mechanisms that will enable the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities, as well as small communities, in decision-making processes.

The Department of National Minorities annually collects data on the support provided by Lithuanian municipalities and institutions, and the projects implemented in the field of national minorities. The information obtained is analysed, summarised and provided to policymakers. Furthermore, the commission approved by the order of the Director of the Department of National Minorities, on the basis of the information provided, annually proposes awarding one municipality or institution for special attention to its ethnic communities, contributing to projects perpetuating the culture, heritage and memory of national minorities, and promoting mutual knowledge and intercultural dialogue.

In 2020, the awards for the creation of the Jurbarkas Synagogue Square Memorial and the adaptation of urban spaces to commemorate the culture of national minorities were given to Jurbarkas District Municipality. In 2019, the award for paying special attention to the culture and heritage of

⁶⁶ Forth report of the Republic of Lithuania
https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/4th_SR_Lithuania_en.docx.pdf

Lithuanian national minorities was given to Šilutė District Municipality and its mayor. In 2018, the award and a letter of thanks for paying special attention to the culture of national minorities – in this case, preservation of the Jewish cultural heritage and memory – were given to Kretinga District Municipality and Kretinga District Mayor. In 2017, letters of thanks were given to Kaunas City and Utena District Municipalities for their support to national communities in preserving and nurturing the national identity, promoting a cultural dialogue among Lithuanian residents of various nationalities, and paying special attention to perpetuating the heritage of national communities.

The Department of National Minorities closely cooperated with Šalčininkai District, Švenčionys District, Trakai District, Vilnius City and District, Kybartai, Klaipėda, Visaginas, Ignalina, Šiauliai Cities and other municipalities in accommodating national minorities or implementing the EU-funded project “Local Roma Platforms – the Path towards Cooperation with the Municipalities”. This project aims to promote cooperation between the Roma communities and local municipalities, while ensuring mutual dialogue in addressing issues of social inclusion, education, health care and culture relevant to the Roma minority.

ARTICLE 18

1. The Parties shall endeavour to conclude, where necessary, bilateral and multilateral agreements with other states, in particular neighbouring states, in order to ensure the protection of persons belonging to the national minorities concerned.

To ensure effective protection of the rights of national minorities, the Republic of Lithuania adheres to the principles of good neighbourliness, friendly relations and cooperation between states, based on the spirit of mutual understanding and tolerance, and honestly implements its international obligations.

Lithuania has signed approximately 50 bilateral cultural cooperation agreements, as well as interdepartmental agreements in the fields of culture and art with various countries throughout the world.

These include bilateral agreements with all neighbouring countries, which identify the cultural and religious inclusion of persons belonging to national minorities as one of the areas of cooperation. The following international documents were in force in 2016-2020: 1) Agreement

between the Government of the Republic of Lithuania and the Government of the Republic of Poland on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education and Science; 2) Cooperation Agreement between the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation; 3) Agreement between the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Belarus on Cooperation in the Field of Culture; 4) Agreement between the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ministry of Culture and Art of Ukraine on Cooperation and the Interdepartmental Cooperation Programme for 2016-2020, which was renewed on 18 March 2021; and 5) Tripartite Cooperation Programme in the Field of Culture between the Ministries of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Estonia and the Republic of Latvia for 2019-2022.

Pursuant to these international documents, it is planned to support and develop the national culture of the signatory countries in each other's country.

2. Where relevant, the Parties shall take measures to encourage transfrontier cooperation.

The Department of National Minorities intends to sign inter-institutional cooperation agreements with the Republics of Moldova and Georgia in the framework of the development of the Eastern Partnership programme and its activities. In addition, see Article 2.

ARTICLE 19

The Parties undertake to respect and implement the principles enshrined in the present framework Convention making, where necessary, only those limitations, restrictions or derogations which are provided for in the international legal instruments, in particular the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, insofar as they are relevant to the rights and freedoms flowing from the aforesaid principles.

The Lithuanian legal framework shall be created in accordance with the principle of the rule of law. The adoption of legal acts shall take the international obligations of the Republic of Lithuania in the field of human rights, the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights and the recommendations of international organisations to the Republic of Lithuania into account.