



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

GlocalEAST

Developing a new curriculum in Global Migration, Diaspora and Border

Studies in East-Central Europe

Project number: 2020-1-SK01-KA203-078263

GlocalEAST

National Report on Migration Policies and Dynamics - Lithuania

Date: March 2021

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Legal notice: This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. The content of this document does not necessarily reflect the view or legislation of the European Commission. This report reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for the contents and any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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INTRODUCTION

The scale of migration has been growing both in the world and in Lithuania¹ in last decade, which poses various challenges to state and international institutions, individuals and migrant communities. Safe, orderly, fair migration that meets the interests of sending and receiving countries, guarantees the dignity of migrants and fundamental human rights, requires responsibility and solidarity of those who are responsible for the international protection who are well versed in today's migration processes and understands how migration impacts on the modern world. Changes that help to shape the migration policy of state organizations, strengthen the qualified relationship of the state with the diaspora and migrants focusing on professional experts who are involved in the building process of migration and diaspora / diaspora culture, future community leaders.

International migration has evolved into a global social norm, one way or another affected many countries. The role of international migration becomes incontrovertibly important for the societies in different countries affects international relations of states and creates relationship to citizens and immigrant population. National policies are formed under the influence of migration that will inevitably have to deal with labor migrants or refugees and asylum seekers' questions. Recently, international migration gained permanent features of a social phenomenon, and migration-related issues considered most important for both the individual provinces, and internationally. As an active growth and transformation in migration processes and practices might be given an example in increase of the number of staff of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) from 1,100 employees (1998) to more than 15,000 (2020)².

Lithuania is one of the countries affected by large emigration flows, but in 2017–2019. According to the preliminary data of the Lithuanian Department of Statistics, 29,273 permanent residents of the Republic of Lithuania emigrated from Lithuania in 2019, i.e., 2,933 persons less than in the previous year (32,206 emigrated from Lithuania in 2018 and 47,925 in 2017). According to the preliminary data of the Lithuanian Department of Statistics, Lithuania's net international migration per 1,000 population was positive (3.8) in 2019. At the same time, the number of re-

¹ The Republic of Lithuania state position and data in the National Report are based on last version of “Lithuanian Migration Policy Guidelines” published in 29/02/2020.

² https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/about-iom/iom_snapshot_a4_en.pdf

emigrants increased (according to the preliminary data of the Lithuanian Department of Statistics. (re-emigrated) 20,412 citizens of the Republic of Lithuania (16,592 in 2018).

After the restoration of independence, transit migration flows through the Republic of Lithuania prevailed; After Lithuania became a member of the European Union (the EU) and later also a Schengen state, the immigration trends did not change substantially, but emigration increased. Due to emigration, when the working age population mainly goes to foreign countries, as well as due to the negative balance between deaths and births, the age structure of the Lithuanian population is changing, and Lithuanian society is aging. 1992–2019 the number of permanent residents in Lithuania decreased: 2,921,000 - at the beginning of 2015; 2,889,000 - at the beginning of 2016; at the beginning of the year 2017 - 2,848,000; at the beginning of 2018 - 2,809,000; at the beginning of 2019 - 2,794,200; at the beginning of 2020 - 2,794,300; at the beginning of 2021 - 2,795,200.

However, in 2019 the number of permanent residents stabilized, and according to the preliminary data of the Lithuanian Department of Statistics. At the beginning of the 2020, the number of permanent residents of Lithuania even increased (2,794,300). The change in this figure was due to positive net international migration (10,800 more people immigrated than emigrated) and negative natural change (10,700 more people died than were born). Since 2017 rapid growth of immigration to Lithuania is observed - the higher number of arrivals is determined by the growing economy and income of the population, favorable labor market situation of the Republic of Lithuania - improving job opportunities due to labor shortages, as well as changes in Lithuanian immigration policy.

At the beginning of 2013, 33,300 foreigners lived in Lithuania, i.e. 1.1 percent of the entire population. According to the data of the Population Register of the Republic of Lithuania and the Register of Foreigners, in 2017 there were 43,600 foreigners living in Lithuania (1.53% of the total population). - 49,400 (1.76%), 2018, at the beginning of 2019 - 58,000 (2.08%); at the beginning of 2020 - 70,081 (2.79%). At the beginning of 2019, 5,767 citizens of the EU Member States and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) member states lived in Lithuania; at the beginning of 2020 - 8 843. In 2019, majority of non-EU citizens in Lithuania were Ukrainians, Belarussians and Russians. In 2019, return migration to Lithuania was just over 50 percent, compared to 47 percent of immigration of non-EU citizens. Most foreigners came from Ukraine and Belarus.

Some years ago, in Lithuania, the challenges posed by migration were poorly reflected and emphasized at the level of state institutions. European Commission October 15, 2015 noted in its report that Lithuania was not making a sufficient contribution to resolving the refugee crisis facing the European Union by delegating an insufficient number of migration specialists.

Lithuanian migration research has not lost its popularity³ for more than a decade, and recently there has been a significant increase in various public opinion polls (emigrantas.lt survey, epilietis.lt survey, diversitygroup.lt survey, KTU European Institute survey, market research company Vilmorus survey and other). Migration does not lose the attention of the public, scientists or decision makers. On the other hand, such an interest in emigration creates the illusion that the problem is being discussed, analyzed, and understood. Unfortunately, despite the increasing number of surveys, in many cases the analysis remains fragmented and does not cover the complexity of the problem. Often the focus is on narrow objects⁴, limited to diagnosing⁵ the current situation or trying to explain the behavior of emigrants from the point of view of the rest of Lithuania⁶.

Globalization and economic integration, liberalization of service provision and population mobility are factors that will and will continue to influence changes in migration flows in the EU Member States and Lithuania.

February 29, 2020 changes of the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania "On the Approval of the Lithuanian Migration Policy Guidelines" (2014) approved the Lithuanian Migration Policy Guidelines.⁷ In both versions of documents in 2014 and in 2020 emphasize the

³Lietuvių emigracija: problema ir galimi sprendimo būdai. Vilnius: Pilietinės visuomenės institutas, 2005; Sipavičienė, Audra, Gaidys, Vladas, *Požiūris į emigraciją ir emigrantus: Lietuvos gyventojų ir užsienio lietuvių bendruomenių atstovų požiūrio į emigraciją tyrimas*. Vilnius: Tautinių mažumų ir išeivijos departamentas prie Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės, 2008; Sipavičienė, Audra, *Tarptautinė gyventojų migracija Lietuvoje: modelio kaita ir situacijos analizė*. Vilnius: Tarptautinė migracijos organizacija, 2006; Martinaitis, Žilvinas, Žvalionytė, Dovilė, „Emigracija iš Lietuvos: ką žinome, ko nežinome ir ką turėtumėme žinoti?“, *Politologija* 3, 47 (2007), 113–134; Kuzmickaitė, Daiva, „Teoriniai tarptautinės lietuvių migracijos diskursai“, *Oikos: lietuvių migracijos ir diasporos studijos*, 1 (2008), 24–32; Čiubrinskas, Vytis, (sud.) *Lietuviškas identitetas šiuolaikinės emigracijos kontekstuose*. Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, Socialinės antropologijos centras, 2011; Kumpikaitė, Vilmantė, Žičkutė, Ineta, „Emigracijai įtaką darančių veiksnių analizė“, *Economics and Management* 17, 2 (2012), 740–746.

⁴ Survey about Lithuanians abroad, September-October 2016,

https://urm.lt/uploads/default/documents/globali_lietuva/tyrimai/UL16_Ataskaita.pdf.

⁵ Results of Survey about emigration. Responses from 42 states. May-August 2016 m., http://epilietis.lrv.lt/uploads/epilietis/documents/files/Emigracija_Apklausos%20rezultatai.pdf.

⁶ Survey of Institute of Europe, Kaunas University of Technology,

<http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/ekonomika/4/205925/apklausa-didziausia-itaka-emigracijai-turi-ekonominiai-motyvai>.

⁷ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/fdd7ab00899c11e39d2dc0b0e08d5f21/asr>

systemic problems of the implementation of migration policy. A holistic approach to solving complex problems did not appear in Lithuania. “Given the horizontal nature of migration issues, the main problems related to the institutional framework for the formulation and implementation of migration policy are the following: migration policy formulation falls within the competence of several ministries (there is no single responsible institution); and differences in positions, some of the same functions are performed by several institutions, whose competence to deal with certain migration policy issues (such as integration of foreigners), insufficient qualification of specialists, imperfect promotion system, disproportionate ratio of functions and human resources are not identified”. Thus, the main Lithuanian institutions shaping and implementing migration policy are linked to the program: Ministry of the Interior, Migration Department, Migration Services, State Border Guard Service, Aliens Registration Center, Refugee Reception Center, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Social Security and Labor, Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, and Ministry of Economy and Innovation.

Migration situation and its tendencies in Lithuania by areas which are on the scope of state institutions and NGO's: Emigration, Return migration, Immigration, Asylum as international protection, Integration of foreigners and Illegal migration.

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF MIGRATION POLICY FORMULATION

The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania⁸ is responsible for the state policy in the field of migration, organizes, coordinates and controls its implementation. The Ministry of the Interior prepares draft laws and other legal acts in the field of migration, coordinates the regulation of migration processes, analyzes and monitors migration processes, controls the implementation of state policy in the field of migration in institutions subordinate to the Ministry, coordinates implementation of state policy in the field of visas, coordinates and controls the implementation of the state policy in the field of control of the stay and residence of aliens in Lithuania in the institutions subordinated to the Ministry, etc.

Other institutions also participate in the formation of migration policy according to their competence:

⁸ <https://vrm.lrv.lt/en/>

The Ministry of Social Security and Labor is responsible for labor policy, employment of foreigners, work in Lithuania, provision of social guarantees and social integration policy for foreigners, administration of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund in Lithuania, return of political prisoners and deportees and their families to Lithuania and the implementation of social inclusion measures that are part of the social inclusion policy area;

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports is responsible for the development and improvement of the legal regulation of foreigners of Lithuanian origin and foreign Lithuanian education, studies, studies, work of foreign teachers and researchers in Lithuanian science and study institutions;

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for visa policy, as well as the policy of strengthening foreign Lithuanian relations with Lithuania;

The Ministry of Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania is responsible for formulating economic policy, analyzing the demand and supply of human resources in the labor market, preparing and managing the classification of professions, coordinating the recognition of professional qualifications acquired abroad in Lithuania, compiling and approving professions requiring high professional qualifications and is missing in the Republic of Lithuania, and carries out the procedures for equating the professional experience of foreigners with a higher education qualification.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MIGRATION POLICIES, PROCESSES AND PRACTICES IN LITHUANIA⁹ - GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

In 2018–2019 important changes in the migration process management system were implemented: the Migration Commission of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, formed by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania in 2018 was designated to coordinate inter-institutional cooperation in the field of migration in making decisions related to the management of the country's migration processes. 20 December 2018, with the adoption of amendments to the

⁹ Data about state institutions involved in the implementation of the Migration Policies, Processes and Practices in Lithuania is taken from 2020 February 29 version of the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On the Approval of the Lithuanian Migration Policy Guidelines” (2014)
<https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/fdd7ab00899c11e39d2dc0b0e08d5f21/asr>

Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners and other related laws, legal preconditions were created for the implementation of the reform of the migration management system.

Migration Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania¹⁰ (further - Migration Department) ensures the implementation of the EU principle of free movement of persons, visas, immigration, asylum, as well as other provisions of the legal status of aliens, resolution of issues of citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania, issuance of identity and citizenship documents;

Following the implementation of the migration management system reform from 1 July 2019:

The reorganized institution responsible for the implementation of migration policy - the Migration Department, which, together with 10 territorial subdivisions, is engaged in full coordination of immigration and asylum procedures, respectively - and the control of illegal migration; carries out citizenship and asylum procedures; issues personal documents to citizens of the Republic of Lithuania, documents confirming or granting the right to reside in Lithuania to aliens; make decisions on the return (expulsion) of aliens; has the power to enforce administrative proceedings for violations of legal provisions assigned to the area of the Migration Department;

The State border Guard Service at the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania¹¹ exercises state control over migration processes in the entire territory of the Republic of Lithuania; The State Border Guard Service temporarily accommodates aliens who have been detained illegally or who have entered Lithuania illegally, as well as asylum seekers, while their applications for asylum are being processed; The State Border Guard Service performs the initial actions of the asylum procedure, makes decisions regarding the obligation of aliens to leave and return and controls their execution, makes and enforces decisions regarding the expulsion of aliens from the Republic of Lithuania;

The State Border Guard Service have been expanded and capacity has been strengthened (30 statutory posts have been created in the structural units of the State Border Guard Service following the transfer of functions performed by the police in the field of illegal migration control); Migration divisions have been established in Vilnius, Varėna and Pagėgiai border teams, to which statutory civil servants of the structural subdivisions of the State Border Guard Service have been

¹⁰ <https://www.migracija.lt/>

¹¹ <http://www.pasienis.lt/lit/english>

transferred, whose functions are related to ensuring the prevention and control of illegal migration); The State Border Guard Service is responsible for the prevention and control of illegal migration throughout the territory of the Republic of Lithuania, temporary accommodation of detained aliens and asylum seekers; take decisions regarding the expulsion, return or obligation to leave aliens and control the implementation of these decisions; make decisions to prohibit (not prohibit) an alien from entering the Republic of Lithuania; performs inspections regarding the marriage concluded by an alien, registered partnership, adoption, fictitiousness of the established company;

The police continued to be responsible for maintaining public order, assessing the threat posed by foreigners to public order and society, and, together with the State Border Guard Service, for controlling the movement of Russian citizens from the Russian Federation to the Kaliningrad region and back through the Republic of Lithuania.

"Global Lithuania"¹² program under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has started its implementation in 2012. Its main idea: we are one Lithuanian nation and every motivated Lithuanian or person connecting himself with Lithuania is important and necessary for Lithuania, no matter where he works and lives, everyone can contribute to the progress of the state and society with their knowledge, ideas and experience. The program for 2012-2021 is implemented by 21 state institutions and bodies. The Inter-Institutional Action Plan (IBP) was approved, and the institutional framework was created.

Idea is not only to implement the planned measures in accordance with its competence, but also to mobilize state institutions to include projects related to the Lithuanian diaspora in their specialized sphere of activity. In order to mobilize the Lithuanian diaspora to strengthen the state and make its name famous, two directions of activity are envisaged:

Strengthening relations with professionals - specific persons who have achievements in the professional field, recognized in their country of residence and who can contribute to the creation of Lithuanian prosperity through very specific projects;

Supporting Lithuanian communities and organizations abroad, because only well-organized and structured initiatives guided by clear goals can bring together the diaspora and implement projects of national importance.

¹² <https://urm.lt/default/lt/globali-lietuva>

Vilnius Lithuanian House¹³

Vilnius Lithuanian House – is a school/center established by The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports to provide children of foreign Lithuanian and exiled descendants with high-quality primary, basic and secondary education, to create conditions to meet the needs of education and self-expression, and to develop students' competencies necessary for further education, professional career and independent living. To co-operate with Lithuanian communities abroad and teachers of foreign Lithuanian schools in the field of formal education: to improve the qualification of teachers, to provide methodological assistance and to create conditions for certification.

The National Gymnasium for Foreign Lithuanians and Children of Exiled Descendants is an educational and cultural center of Lithuanian communities abroad, providing quality education, developing general and subject competencies necessary for further life, providing comprehensive assistance to foreign Lithuanian communities and schools in the field of education and culture. Vilnius Lithuanian House also provides support for parents to find schools network in Lithuania working with returning/incoming children¹⁴.

The Refugee Reception Center¹⁵ provides social services, accommodation and integration support to aliens granted asylum in the Republic of Lithuania, aliens transferred to the territory of the Republic of Lithuania in cooperation with other EU Member States, third countries, EU institutions or international organizations, unaccompanied minor foreigners;

The Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania implements the employment support policy, issues work permits to foreigners;

The State Labor Inspectorate of the Republic of Lithuania under the Ministry of Social Security and Labor carries out the control of illegal work, coordinates the activities of the institutions carrying out the control of illegal work;

The Board of the State Social Insurance Fund under the Ministry of Social Security and Labor collects information provided by employers on employed foreigners.

Lithuanian Labour Exchange (LLE) is an executive agency under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. LLE is responsible for the provision of labour market services to jobseekers and

¹³ <http://www.lietuviunamai.vilnius.lm.lt/>

¹⁴ http://www.lietuviunamai.vilnius.lm.lt/index_files/mokyklu_lt_tinklas.pdf

¹⁵ <http://www.rppc.lt/3732/activity/activity-fields/general-information-about-centre.html>

employers and the implementation of active labour market policy measures. Registration at LLE is one of the prerequisites to be eligible for unemployment and social benefits. Currently the Lithuanian Labour Exchange and its 10 local labour exchange offices and branches in municipalities around Lithuania implement state employment guarantees on the national and local levels. Its main two clients are employers and jobseekers. LLE offers support for jobseekers who want to find a job more quickly, giving them the opportunity to acquire the necessary skill to compete and succeed in the labour market, and help employers to find qualified labour force. It offers the Lithuania's largest database of job vacancies and jobseekers, which is updated constantly, and it publishes monthly situation review and quarterly labour market trends reports. **Statistics Lithuania** coordinates official statistics and implements the general state policy on statistical methodology and organization; prepares and publishes statistical information on international migration of the population (flows and directions of emigration and immigration (foreigners and citizens of the Republic of Lithuania)), demographic characteristics of migrants.

READINESS OF HEI GRADUATES FOR WORK IN THE FIELD OF MIGRATION AND MIGRANT INTEGRATION

Lithuania's situation is quite paradoxical - even though it is one of the leading EU countries in terms of emigration, despite the fact that emigration is declared as one of the main problems in the country and at least several migration strategies have been prepared, the problem is structured quite centralized and dominated by professional politicians (usually from the ruling parties) and only rarely involving professionals working in the field. However, as the discourse is rather local, this does not pose a problem, as the solution to fundamental problems is partly manageable for politicians even without specialized knowledge, so the need for migration professionals is not perceived. So far, it is not possible to answer the question unambiguously, because the participation of migration specialists in the field of migration policy in Lithuania is too rare.

Recently, due to the geopolitical situation in the region (Ukraine-Russia conflict, long-term protests in Belarus), as well as the introduction of immigrant quotas by countries in the EU, an

increase in immigration has been felt in Lithuania. As migration flows take on more diverse trajectories and configurations, there is likely to be a need for migration professionals. Accordingly, it is likely to arise the need of such as knowledge of the history and culture of different nations, knowledge of different social security systems, good knowledge of national and international law (especially in the field of human rights), basics of integration and social cohesion models and skills such as strategic planning, project based organization, excellent communication and presentation skills, basics of community organization, languages and knowledge of assistance for personality development.

Given that most NGOs in Lithuania operate locally, and their main areas of activity are focused on local problems (for example, most common to respond to essential needs), there is a need for greater differentiation of activities. There is a lack of a broader and deeper discourse, in which the competence of the participants (and at the same time its shortcomings) could be revealed and more specialized activities could crystallize. With the growth of the ranks of professional migration experts, the diversity of NGO activities is likely to increase, for example, responding not only to Lithuanian, but also regional, and perhaps global migration problems. In other words, the problem of demand is dialectical, i.e., on the one hand, the dominant situation does not allow to crystallize a specific need, on the other hand, with the growth of the ranks of the specialists occupying different niches of activity it would be possible to form and specify the need for further competencies.

For over 30 years, Lithuania has been recognized as an immigrant sending country with approximately more than 700 thousand emigrants since 1990. The country faced uncontrolled and chaotic emigration flows, followed by post-soviet mentality leftovers, where emigrants were equalled as traitors and Lithuanian diaspora (DP generation) was already recognized as “other”. This gradually reflected on and in some cases formed huge gaps in Lithuanian migration and diaspora policy and HE system as well. Lithuanians almost do not include Lithuanian contemporary migration processes and diaspora history to their national narratives. This forms a huge gap in Lithuanian primary and secondary education as well as HE system. Transition of Lithuania from sending to receiving country has not yet been recognized efficiently.

CONCLUSION

The HE system in Lithuania provides a partial education in this field. The main emphasis is on migration policy, global, and transnational migration processes, asylum policies, ethnic relations and borderland issues.

The systemic approach to contemporary migration is non-existent but we can see an effort to introduce to

- migration as a part of global processes: migration theories, policies and processes of transnational mobility
- and processes of ethnic relations in Lithuania.

Coming from the space where Lithuanian migration is not controlled and appreciated for its benefits, the things that can be controlled, studied and taught on a large scale were global migration processes, EU migration policies and comparatively small but important immigration and asylum processes. For a long period of time this led to ignorance of return migration strategies and policies and diaspora studies.

Therefore, it is one of the reasons why there are no consistent migration programmes only separate courses, on earlier mentioned areas. It can be named as one of the reasons why efforts to build such consistent programme on migration and diaspora studies at VMU failed. The programme lived for several years and was prepared for another round but did not receive necessary interest among students.

The other reason why migration studies in Lithuanian HE system are not consistent (and why VMU migration programme failed) is previously mentioned gaps in states migration and diaspora policy which did not encourage creation of a constant need for migration specialists, for return migration offices and other necessary infrastructure. This gap is compensated by NGOs.

One could assume that consistent migration study programme in Lithuania is not seen as pragmatic so the need to study migration for no pragmatic, but humanitarian and scholarly reasons is covered by PhD students, university research centres and NGOs.

The migration study programme in Lithuania could include contemporary migrants' experiences, history and sociology of diaspora, anthropology of migration; could outline applied aspects of

return migration, returning children integration into secondary school system which are not well developed in Lithuanian HE system today.

Some good trends in Lithuania appeared for various reasons - both because of advocacy NGOs and because Lithuania has signed a refugee resettlement agreement - all these processes have initiated decisions that are considered good practice in the region. These include subsidized jobs, equal social and economic rights for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, and the adoption of refugee integration action plan.

The overall readiness (knowledge and competences) of university graduates for work in the field of migration in Lithuania is basic and currently doesn't meet NGO's needs. Desired skills would be a deeper understanding of the history of Lithuanian emigration and emigration processes, knowledge of Lithuanian diaspora history, Lithuanian migration and transnational mobility, intercultural communication skills, knowledge on Lithuanian heritage schools' situation and needs. Skills related to migrants' rights, the fight against trafficking of human beings, gender equality and the reduction of inequalities are seen very valuable for the graduates of HEI. Skills developed to implement refugee integration plan at local, regional and national level would be helpful transforming migration system in Lithuania. Field of legal migration and integration on intercultural competences, specific topics in legal, psychological, domestic violence, security and data protection issues should be also involved in HE system.

We see the need for understanding cultural differences, Lithuanian diaspora, diversity of the migration process and respect for an individual in migration curriculum in Lithuania.