

## o. Introduction

- o.1. Lithuania [*Lietuva*] (LT) is the most southerly of the three Baltic States. Its territory covers little more than 65,000 km<sup>2</sup> of which a considerable part is woodland (30%). Most of Lithuania's population (67% of its 3.4 million inhabitants) resides in urban areas; 33% of the population live in the country. The five major cities are Vilnius (the capital), Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai and Panevėžys.



- o.2. Lithuania is a parliamentary republic headed by a president who is directly elected for a period of five years. The unicameral Lithuanian parliament (the [Seimas](#)) consists of 141 members. They are elected for four years. Lithuania is divided into 10 higher administrative units that are part of the State government (the counties Alytus, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Marijampolė, Panevėžys, Šiauliai, Tauragė, Telšiai, Utena and Vilnius) and 60 lower-level administrative units (or municipalities). One of the major tasks of the counties is to promote regional development. In recent years Lithuania has had a yearly average economic growth of 6%. The average standard of living in Lithuania is roughly 30% of the EU average and the average gross monthly salary is 1,222 Litas (354 EUR). One of the major problems in Lithuania is unemployment: although it is gradually decreasing in cities, it remains rather high in the country (approximately 12.4% in 2003 (data provided by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour)).

Field Code Changed

## 1. General aspects

- 1.1 Lithuania's history dates back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC when Baltic tribes settled on present-day Lithuanian territory.

Although the name Lithuania already appeared in written sources in 1009 AD, the emergence of the Lithuanian state dates back to 1240. At that time Grand Duke Mindaugas successfully led a rebellion against the German crusaders who were starting to settle in the Baltic regions and whose main goal it was to christianise the pagans. Because the Catholic Church denied political existence to pagan tribes Mindaugas accepted baptism and thus achieved peace. He received the title of King of the Holy Roman Empire on 6 June 1253. According to some historians the crowning of Mindaugas in 1253 can be seen as the starting date of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania that was to last until 1795. After the death of Mindaugas, Lithuania extended its territory from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea under Grand Dukes Algirdas and Kęstutis (1345-1377). Because of a worsening of general geopolitical circumstances Lithuania made an alliance with Poland in 1385 (Treaty of Krėva) and adopted Christianity a second time in 1387 to put a halt to ongoing attacks from the German crusaders. The bond with Poland was tightened in the late 15th century and in 1569 Poland and Lithuania united in a confederate state in Lublin. In the parliament of the Republic of Two Nations, the *Seimas*, Lithuania held one third of the seats. Lithuania experienced a flourishing of intellectual life. With the arrival of Jesuits a network of schools was created and Vilnius University was founded in 1579. Towards the 17th century the Republic of the Two Nations started feeling the consequences of the expansionist politics of the Swedes, the Russians, the Prussians and the Austrians. In 1772 Russia, Prussia and Austria partitioned Lithuania for a first time. In 1793 Lithuanian territory was reduced for the second time by Russia and Prussia. And in 1795 the Polish-Lithuanian state ceased to exist when Prussia, Russia and Austria divided it a third time. The greater part of Lithuania went to the Russian Empire. Lithuania only recovered its independence at the end of World War I. This did not last for long, though, since the Polish army annexed Vilnius and the territory surrounding it in 1920. In 1939 the Soviet Union helped to return Vilnius and part of its surrounding territory to Lithuania while the Germans annexed Klaipėda (Memel). In the same year the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact marked the end of the independent Lithuanian state. Annexation by the Soviet Union in 1939 was followed by German occupation from 1941 to 1944 and Soviet rule from 1944 until 1990. On 11 March 1990 Lithuania declared its independence.

- 1.2. Since its independence Lithuania has started a period of social and economic transition. On 17 September 1991 Lithuania joined the UN. Russian troops were finally withdrawn from Lithuanian territory on 31 August 1993. In March 2004 Lithuania joined NATO. On 1 May 2004 it became a full member of the EU.

## 2. Demographic data

- 2.1 According to the [population census of 2001](#) some 115 nationalities, also referred to as ethnicities in Lithuanian governmental discourse, are living in Lithuania. Apart from 83.5% Lithuanians who have a clear majority there are 6.7% Poles, 6.3% Russians, 1.2% Belarussians, 0.7% Ukrainians, 0.1% Jews and some other minorities such as Tatars, Karaims, Germans and Roma. The following table compares the figures for nationality/ethnicity from the 1989 census with those of the 2001 census.

**Table 1: Nationalities/Ethnicities in Lithuania (the 1989 and the 2001 census)**

	1989		2001	
Total	3,674,802	100%	3,483,972	100%
Lithuanians	2,925,142	79.6%	2,907,293	83.45%

Poles	257,994	7.0%	234,989	6.74%
Russians	344,455	9.4%	219,789	6.31%
Belarussians	63,169	1.7%	42,866	1.23%
Ukrainians	44,789	1.2%	22,488	0.65%
Jews	12,314	0.3%	4,007	0.12%
Other/unknown	26,939	0.8	39,059	1.12%

The figures show that compared to 1989 the percentage of Lithuanians has increased in 2001 whereas the percentage of Poles, Russians, Belarussians, Ukrainians and Jews has decreased. Mainly Russians, Belarussians and Ukrainians, who had settled in Lithuania as temporary workers after World War II, moved back to their homelands after Lithuanian independence. Between 1990 and 2000 more than 270,000 people emigrated mainly because of industrial decline and lack of employment. Now the situation appears relatively stable. Still, mainly due to considerable emigration in the 1990s, the parliament recently revised the law on citizenship.

2.2 In its 1989 [Law on Citizenship](#) [*Pilietybės įstatymas*] Lithuania opted for a so-called 'zero version'. This means that any non-Lithuanian, irrespective of the duration of his or her stay in Lithuania, was granted Lithuanian citizenship. Subsequently, a majority of the population (including 90% of all the residents of different nationality) became Lithuanian citizens. In 1991 the Law on Citizenship was tightened. From 1991 onwards applicants for naturalisation must have resided ten years in the country. Furthermore they must have permanent employment (or another legal source of support) and they must pass an exam testing their knowledge of the Lithuanian language and the Lithuanian Constitution. This mainly caused problems for the Roma (⇒ Other languages in Lithuania). According to the 2001 census 99% of the people living in Lithuania are Lithuanian citizens, 0.4% are citizens of the Russian Federation, 0.2% are citizens of other countries, 0.3% have no citizenship and 0.1% did not indicate their citizenship. Until 2002 Lithuanian citizens automatically lost their citizenship once they became citizens of another country. But in the 1990s there was considerable emigration and it was thought that such a provision would practically prevent them from returning to Lithuania. The Law on Citizenship was therefore changed in 2002. Lithuanian citizens are now allowed to retain Lithuanian citizenship even after acquiring the citizenship of another country.

Field Code Changed

2.3 Scientific research in the 1990s has shown that about 80% of the Lithuanian population consider Lithuanian [*lietuvių kalbà*] to be their native language (mother tongue). Judging by the number of native speakers Russian [*rùsų kalbà*] is the second language in Lithuania. Approx. 96% of the Russians, about half of the Ukrainians, Belarussians and Germans, nearly one third of the Jews and Poles, and smaller percentages of other minorities declare Russian to be their mother tongue.

### 3. Language Policy

3.1 Art. 14 of the [Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania](#) [*Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucija*] (1988, ratified in 1992) declares Lithuanian to be the state language. Apart from this, the status of Lithuanian is secured by the [Law on the State Language](#) [*Valstybinės kalbos įstatymas*] (1995). As can be derived from Art. 37 of the Constitution and Art. 1 of the 1989 [Law on National \(Ethnic\) Minorities](#) [*Tautinių mažumų įstatymas*] the national minorities in Lithuania have the right to foster their language and are guaranteed that their language shall be respected. Furthermore Art. 45 of the Constitution emphasizes that national communities of

citizens shall be independent in managing affairs related to their culture, education, charity and mutual assistance and that the state shall provide support to national communities. Lithuanian legislation, however, does not contain any definition of the concept of a national community, national minority or a group of persons recognized to be a national minority.

- 3.2 The Law on the State Language (1995) specifies the status of the Lithuanian language in public life (in state institutions, in court, in official events, in education and culture, on signs and information). It leaves room for other non-specified languages in translations and guarantees ethnic minorities the right to use their own language in education, cultural events, and on radio and television (Art 13). The rights for minorities are drawn up in the Law on National (Ethnic) Minorities (1989, amended in 1991). According to Art 4 of the Law on National (Ethnic) Minorities the language of that national minority (local language) shall be used in local bodies and organisations alongside the official language in administrative-territorial units with a concentrated national minority. Art. 5 states that information signs in administrative-territorial units referred to in Art. 4 of the Law can also use the language of the national minority (local language) in addition to the Lithuanian language. The status of the Lithuanian language is monitored by the State Lithuanian Language Commission [*Valstybinė lietuvių kalbos komisija*] and the State Language Inspectorate [*Valstybinė kalbos inspekcija*]. National minorities receive support from a number of institutions. In 1989, the year in which the Law on National (Ethnic) Minorities was adopted, the government also established the Department of Nationalities and Lithuanians Living Abroad. This department formulates and puts into practice the government's policy on national minorities. It also conducts surveys on national minorities and informs the public about them. The Department maintains a House of National Communities in Vilnius in which minority groups can organise cultural, social and educational activities. It also offers free legal consultations once a week. Similar centres can be found in Kaunas, Alytus, Visaginas and Kirtimai (the latter is the public centre of the Roma community). In 2003 the Lithuanian government established the regulations of the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad. On the basis of these regulations the Board of the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad was formed, of which the head of the Council of National Communities is a member. The Council of National Communities was founded in 1995 under the authority of the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad. This Council coordinates the activities of national minority communities, maintains and tries to improve inter-ethnic relations in Lithuania and oversees participation in the implementation of state-minority policy. It is currently composed of representatives of 20 national communities (including the Roma). The seats in the Council are allocated according to the size of the minority: minority communities of 100,000 members or more are given three seats (this is the case for Poles and Russians), communities of 10,000 – 100,000 are given 2 seats (this is the case for Belarussians and Ukrainians) and communities with less than 10,000 members are given 1 seat (this is, among others, the case for Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Estonians, Georgians, Germans, Greeks, Hungarians, Jews, Karaims, Latvians, Roma, Romanians and Tatars). In 2003, under the authority of the President, the Council of National Communities was established. Its members are the head of the Council for National Communities and the head of the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad. The analysis of acts of law, the regulation of the national legal system and the drafting of policy proposals concerning the preservation of national identity are the main tasks of this council.
- 3.3 The main educational issues in Lithuania are regulated by the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. In 1992 the Lithuanian government approved the General

Concept of Education [*Lietuvos švietimo koncepcija*] in Lithuania. On 2 July 1998 several essential amendments were added to the 1991 [Law on Education](#) [*Švietimo įstatymas*]: the introduction of basic 10-year education, admission of schoolchildren from the age of 14 to vocational schools, etc. A draft law of the amendment was discussed in 2001. On 17 June 2003 a draft of the Law on the Amendment of the Law on Education [*Švietimo įstatymo pakeitimo įstatymas*] was published. Further legal documents dealing with educational matters in Lithuania are the Law on Science and Studies [*Mokslo ir studijų įstatymas*] (1991) on institutions of science and higher education, the Law on Vocational Education and Training [*Profesinio mokymo įstatymas*] (1997), the Law on special education [*Specialiojo ugdymo įstatymas*] (1998), the Law on Informal Adult Education [*Neformaliojo suaugusiųjų švietimo įstatymas*] (1998), and the [Law on Higher Education](#) [*Aukštojo mokslo įstatymas*] (2000).

Field Code Changed

- 3.4 National minorities are granted the right to hold lessons in their mother tongue. Art 2 of the Law on National (Ethnic) Minorities gives people the right to have schooling in their own language. Art. 30.2 of the Law on the Amendment of the Law on Education states that general education and non-formal education schools must provide teaching in the language of the ethnic minority and foster the ethnic minority's culture. Furthermore, it states that in these schools the teaching process must be conducted or certain subjects must be taught in the language of the ethnic minority and that the subject of the Lithuanian state language must be a constituent part of the curriculum. The main provisions describing the place of schools for national minorities in the educational system of Lithuania are laid down in the Provisions for Integrating Schools for National Minorities into the Educational System of the Republic of Lithuania [*Tautinių mažumų mokyklų integravimosi į Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo sistemą nuostatos*], i.e. Decision No 76 of 22 December 1992 of the Collegium of the Ministry of Culture and Education.
- 3.5 In the year 2000 the total number of schools in Lithuania was 2,031. In 74 schools the language of instruction was Polish, in 68 it was Russian, in 26 Russian and Polish, in 23 Lithuanian and Russian, in 11 Lithuanian and Polish, in 10 Lithuanian, Russian and Polish, in 1 Belarusian, in 1 Russian and Belarusian and in 1 in Lithuanian and English. The following table, based on data taken from the Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review (Motuzas 2001), shows the number of pupils attending schools with Lithuanian, Polish and Russian as language of instruction from 1990/91 until 2000/01.

**Table 2: Number of Pupils According to Language of Instruction**

school year	Number of pupils according to language of instruction			Total number of pupils
	Lithuanian	Polish	Russian	
1990/91	409,295	11,407	76,038	501,740
1991/92	414,119	12,611	72,762	499,692
1992/93	415,971	13,881	67,506	497,359
1993/94	422,216	15,312	58,743	496,384
1994/95	434,469	16,631	57,655	508,887
1995/96	46,336	17,898	55,237	519,659
1996/97	459,799	19,212	52,315	531,480
1997/98	475,253	20,263	49,347	545,042
1998/99	490,589	21,038	46,325	558,160
1999/00	508,373	21,826	44,058	574,486
2000/01	522,569	22,303	41,162	586,294

According to information provided by the [Eurydice network](#), there were 138 secondary schools with one language of instruction, which was not Lithuanian, and 63 schools with several languages of instruction in 2002-2003. According to data from the Ministry of Education and Science, the number of schools where the language of instruction is not Lithuanian increased to 202 in 2003-2004. These schools include 58 schools with Russian as the language of instruction, 83 schools with Polish as the language of instruction and one school with Belorussian as the language of instruction. The mixed schools included 17 Lithuanian-Russian, 14 Lithuanian-Polish, 18 Russian-Polish, 8 Lithuanian-Russian-Polish, 2 Jewish and 1 German school. Apart from the schools of national minorities that are financed according to the same principles and criteria as Lithuanian schools there are also private schools for national minorities. Certain national minorities have established Sunday Schools. Since 2001 Lithuania has 38 Sunday Schools: 11 of them are Polish, 4 Ukrainian, 3 Armenian, 3 Tartar, 3 German, 3 Jewish, 2 Belorussian, 2 Latvian, 2 Russian, 1 Greek, 1 Karait, 1 Estonian, 1 Roma and 1 Romanian. In these schools children improve the knowledge of the minority language and learn about the history, religion and culture of the minority they belong to. The Lithuanian Government has introduced a system of student vouchers that cover some of the money needed to buy textbooks, teaching aids and other educational needs. Government funds are increased by 10% per pupil of an ethnic minority school.

- 3.6 Art. 2 of the 1989 Law on National (Ethnic) Minorities guarantees national minorities the right to freely express their thoughts and to receive information in their mother tongue. This is related to the possibility of Lithuania's national minorities to have mass media in their mother tongue. As far as radio and television broadcasting is concerned the principles to be followed are laid down in the Law on the National Radio and Television [*Lietuvos nacionalinio radijo ir televizijos įstatymas*] (1996, amended in 2000). Art. 4 of this law stipulates that the national broadcaster must ensure a variety of topics and genres in its programmes and must direct them towards the various strata of society and people of different ages, various nationalities and convictions. Efforts are made by the Lithuanian authorities to increase the number of programmes for national minorities on radio and television in order to present more material and information on ethnic, linguistic, religious and other groups living in Lithuania.
- 3.7 Art. 8 of the Lithuanian Law on the State Language states that legal proceedings in the Republic of Lithuania shall be conducted in the state language. Participants in the legal proceedings, who do not know the state language, shall be provided with the services of an interpreter free of charge.
- 3.8 According to Art. 4 of the Law on National (Ethnic) Minorities the language of national minorities (local language) shall be used in local bodies and organisations alongside the official language in administrative-territorial units with a concentrated national minority.

#### 4. The European dimension

- 4.1 Lithuania signed the [Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities](#) (FCPNM) on 1 February 1995. The convention was ratified on 23 March 2000 and entered into force on 1 July 2000. Lithuania has not yet signed the [European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages](#) (ECRML).

Field Code Changed

- 4.2 Lithuania has signed bilateral treaties with the countries its national minorities belong to. A list of agreements and cooperation is provided for by the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#).