



EUROPOS ŽMOGAUS TEISIŲ FONDAS
EUROPEJSKA FUNDACJA PRAW CZŁOWIEKA
EUROPEAN FOUNDATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИЙ ФОНД ПРАВ ЧЕЛОВЕКА

ALTERNATIVE REPORT

**Prepared for the Committee on the Elimination of
Racial Discrimination On the occasion of its review of
Lithuania's sixth to eighth periodic reports of States parties
under the International Convention on the Elimination of
All Forms of Racial Discrimination**



Vilnius, November 2015

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I. Introduction

1. The European Foundation of Human Rights (EFHR):

The European Foundation of Human Rights (EFHR) is an organization which has been actively operating in Lithuania since 2010. It was established in response to a striking increase in the number of human rights and national minority rights violations in Lithuania, observed after the country became a member of the European Union.

The main aims of the European Foundation of Human Rights are:

- 1) Conducting educational and research initiatives on human rights related issues;
- 2) Protecting the interests of socially marginalized groups, promoting gender equality and equality for national minorities;
- 3) Promoting human rights as the foundation of a proper functioning state and society;
- 4) Strengthening community-wide respect for dignity and human rights;
- 5) Promoting human rights protection;
- 6) Fostering innovative solutions in the areas of social life, especially in protecting the rights and freedoms of human beings and citizens;
- 7) Supporting the overall development of society, especially social activities, ICT, cultural, scientific and educational development of democracy;
- 8) Development and strengthening of attitudes aimed at making an active contribution to the development of civil society;
- 9) Promotion of cultural and economic approximation of the peoples of Europe;
- 10) Initiating, supporting and carrying out activities aimed at acquiring knowledge and skills to enable individuals to perform social and professional functions;
- 11) Supporting and offering guidance to citizens with a particular emphasis on free of charge legal assistance to individuals and legal entities.

In the five years since its founding EFHR has become the leading NGO working with national minority groups and human rights issues in Lithuania. The organization has published a number of reports over the years (footnote these) and, to celebrate the five year anniversary, organized a conference at Vilnius Municipality with attendees including Iryna Ulasiuk, Legal Adviser to the High Commissioner on National Minorities OSCE, Dr. Priit Jarve, Senior Non-Resident Research Associate of the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) and many other experts.

In 2011 EFHR submitted its first alternative report, prepared for the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on the occasion of its review of Lithuania's Fourth and Fifth Periodic Reports under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

(footnote - <http://en.efhr.eu/2011/03/30/alternative-report-prepared-for-the-committee-on-the-elimination-of-racial-discrimination/>)

2. Background

1) Since 9 December 1998 Lithuania has been bound by the mechanism of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (hereinafter – ICERD). It is worth mentioning that Lithuania decided not to make any declarations or reservations. However, Lithuania has not yet ratified Article 14 of the Convention. Therefore it has not recognized the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (hereinafter – Committee) to receive and consider communications from individuals or groups of individuals within its jurisdiction.

2) Lithuania submitted its initial report (CERD/C/369/Add.2) under Article 9 of the CERD in 2000. It was considered by the Committee at its 1497th and 1498th meetings (CERD/C/SR.1497 and 1498), on 5 and 6 March 2002, and at its 1520th meeting (CERD/C/SR.1520)/ On 21 March 2002, the Committee adopted the concluding observations (CERD/C/60/CO/8).

3) Lithuania submitted its second and third periodic reports (CERD/C/461/Add.2) under Article 9 of the ICERD in 2004. It was considered by the Committee at its 1733rd and 1734th meetings (CERD/C/SR.1733 and 1734), held on 21 and 22 February 2006. At its 1753rd meeting (CERD/C/SR.1753), held on 7 March 2006, the Committee adopted the concluding observations (CERD/C/LTU/CO/3).

4) Lithuania's fourth and fifth periodic report submitted in 2010 covers the period from 2004 – 2010.

5) Lithuania submitted the combined sixth, seventh and eighth periodic reports in 2014.

3. The Aim

The aim of this report is to provide the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination with additional information on the implementation of certain recommendations made by the Committee and to highlight the current debate on the rights of national minorities as well as the present-day level of protection in Lithuania. For a number of years EFHR has been involved with other organizations including European governmental agencies and NGOs. We have held numerous meetings with

representatives from various organizations², including OSCE contacts³ in order to share information and recommendations and to collaborate in order to better tackle difficult issues related to the violation of human rights in Lithuania.

² <http://en.efhr.eu/2013/07/15/the-efhr-meets-the-advisory-council-to-discuss-applying-of-the-framework-convention-for-the-protection-of-national-minorities/>

³ <http://en.efhr.eu/2014/10/13/meeting-with-osce-expert-on-national-minorities-in-the-efhr-residence/>

II. Implementation of Committee's Recommendations in the context of additional Issues of Concern

Paragraph 10

The Committee recommends that the State party provide the advisory bodies dealing with human rights, including the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, with appropriate human and financial resources in order to enable them to perform optimally.

On July 1st 2015, after a five year absence, the Department of National Minorities was reopened (between 2010 – 2015 the protection and promotion of minorities was provided by the Ministry of Culture). A representative of the Department claimed, during the recent conference held by EFHR on October 23th 2015,⁴ that the main aim at present is to focus on support for the cultures of national minorities. However, the overall objective of the department is to participate in the process of the implementation of policy regarding the rights of national minorities.⁵

Despite all assurances, government funds directed to institutions dealing with human rights or national minorities are still insufficient. For example, in 2015 the Department of National Minorities received 334, 222 Euros and the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman was granted 406 424 Euros.⁶

With regard to state support for cultural activities, EFHR would like to point out that the Ministry of Culture (which was up until June 2015 responsible for the promotion of national minority rights and cultures) only supported projects aimed at promoting the cultures of national minorities – and not projects related to the issue of minority rights. Legal entities working in a cultural field in Lithuania could receive partial financial support (up to 80%).⁷ In 2013, as well as in 2014, the Ministry of Culture provided 288, 000 LTL (83, 500 EUR), whereas in 2015 this sum was only 52, 000 EUR.⁸ EFHR believes that the decrease of financial support perfectly reflects the attitude of the Government regarding national minority issues.

In 2014, the Ministry of Culture of Lithuania announced a competition for partial public funding of cultural projects for organizations operating in the cultural sphere. The projects were also supposed to support the development of the culture of national minorities. Out of all submitted projects the Ministry selected 76, for which 288, 000 LT (83 478 EUR) was allocated from the state budget (in

⁴ <http://en.efhr.eu/2015/10/26/the-long-awaited-efhr-conference-has-finally-taken-place/>

⁵ <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/8a1396d0fd5311e488da8908dfa91cac>

⁶ <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/29cde2c0b68211e4bcec9ef1757ec710/vRCzBMTbvS>

⁷ Financial grants can be allocated for projects related to the promotion of the cultures of national minorities, both in Lithuania and abroad, support for minority groupchildren and youth activity and preservation of the cultural heritage of minorities. The projects might also relate to enhancement of national tolerance, supporting Saturday and Sunday schools of minorities, eradication of racism and discrimination, integration of the Roma community and fostering national identity.

⁸ <http://www.lrkm.lt/go.php/lit/Tautines-mazumos>

2013 the sum allocated was 288,000 or 83,478 EUR for 94 projects; in 2012 270,000 or 78,260 EUR for 100 projects). It must also be mentioned that between 2007 and 2013, the number of proposed projects, as well as the value of grants, has decreased twice (2007-218 projects; 2008-265; 2009-197).

Table 1: Grants for cultural projects of national minorities⁹

Year	Number of submitted projects	Value of submitted grants (LTL)	Value of submitted grants (EUR)	Number of granted projects	Funds for projects (LTL)	Funds for projects (EUR)
2007	323	2 345 670	679 991	218	577 150	167 289
2008	326	2 612 900	757 362	265	610 700	177 014
2009	340	2 453 150	711 058	197	550 000	159 420
2010	0	0	0	0	0	0
2011	152	1 736 590	503 359	99	270 000	78 260
2012	180	2 096 316	607 627	100	270 000	78 260
2013	180	2 310 675	669 760	94	288 000	83 478
2014	182	2 341 673	678 745	76	288 000	83 478
2015	143	1 784 409	517 220	57	52 000 EUR	52 000

In October 2015 the Department of National Minorities announced the results of its call for 31,000 EUR. Over 98 projects were submitted, of which 44 projects received financial support. This means that, on average, a project received just 700 EUR. There were projects co-financed with 350 EUR, although the luckiest applicants received 1500 EUR.¹⁰ There is no real need to explicitly state that it could be a challenge to finance many projects with such financial contributions as those mentioned.

Paragraph 11

The Committee encourages the State party to adopt a law on national minorities as soon as possible, giving effect to the relevant provisions of the Convention, in particular those of Article 4.

Since 2010 there has been no law on national minorities in Lithuania. Moreover, members of the Lithuanian political elite, from all parties, do not seem to understand the urgent need to adopt a law on national minorities. Surprisingly, political leaders openly claim that „right now the law [on

⁹ The document included an e-mail sent by the Ministry of Culture to EFHR in July 2014 (*Annex V*)

¹⁰

<http://lrkm.lrv.lt/uploads/lrkm/documents/files/Tautiniu%20mažumu%20departamento%20jsakymas%20del%20lešų%20kultūro%20projektams%20skatinantiems%20tautiniu%20mažumu%20kultūry%20plėtote.pdf>

national minorities] is not a priority"¹¹. The previously existing National Minority Law expired in Lithuania in 2010 and, despite criticism from many international organizations, has not, thus far, been restored. The discussion regarding draft legislation to protect national minorities has been repeatedly moved from one parliamentary session to another. In the meantime, discussion and disagreement between different political parties continues.

Five draft laws¹² have been registered in the Seimas but none of them have been signed. The legislation on the problem of the rights of minorities should have been discussed in the Seimas during the spring session¹³ but even now, in November 2015, it has still not been discussed and the issues are yet to be resolved.¹⁴

Paragraph 12

The Committee also requests further information on the impact of training courses and campaigns on the elimination of racial discrimination.

It is important to note that since 2011, when the Special Division of the Prosecutor's Office dealing with hate crimes was closed, there has been no institution specializing in dealing with hate crimes. EFHR would like to stress that complaints involving hate speech against minorities are often ignored by public authorities, and for this reason official statistics on hate crimes do not provide an accurate picture of the situation. To state the point simply, many cases are never reported due to refusals and the attitudes of authorities. Hate crimes are investigated only on the basis of a written request from the victims themselves, and most of these victims often lack trust in the authorities and are afraid of further victimization because of the prevailing atmosphere in the relevant government agencies. Official statistics indicate that 278 hate crimes were reported in 2012, while 156 cases were reported in 2013 and 102 claims in 2014.¹⁵ The drop in the number of hate crimes does not mean that fewer such crimes were committed in Lithuania. In reality, the sense of futility experienced by victims when complaining or trying to combat hate crimes has been exacerbated by the legal system in Lithuania itself since the „principle of ultima ratio“ was introduced in 2012 by the Supreme Court. The court ruled that cases related to hate crimes can only be presented as a last resort. As a consequence, between 3 August 2011 and 30 June 2015 EFHR submitted more than 450 complaints to prosecuting officers regarding hate speech crimes.

¹¹ <http://media.efhr.eu/2014/09/04/loreta-grauziniene-the-law-on-national-minorities-is-not-only-for-the-poles/>

¹² http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.rezult_l?p_nr=&p_nuo=&p_iki=&p_org=&p_drus=2&p_kalb_id=1&p_title=tautini%F8%20ma%FEum%F8&p_text=&p_pub=&p_met=&p_lnr=&p_denr=&p_es=0&p_tid=&p_tkid=&p_t=0&p_tr1=2&p_tr2=2&p_gal=&p_rus=1

¹³ http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=1014788

¹⁴ http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=1079181

¹⁵ <https://www.hrmi.lt/uploaded/Apzvalgos/Hate%20Crimes%20Victims%20Rights%20Study%20EN%202013.pdf> ,p.13

In addition, EFHR has been monitoring the Internet since the Foundation's establishment. As a result of this, the Prosecutor's office received over 450 complaints concerning comments inciting hatred. In this field, EFHR is the most active non-governmental organization. However, the Prosecutor's office do not express much interest in this matter. Their reluctance to investigate such cases appearing on the Internet is clear. Applications are examined and cases are passed to courts only after prosecutors are sued for their actions. It should be noted that courts are inclined to treat crimes committed on the Internet leniently. Although the Penal Code provides for a sentence of up to three years imprisonment as a punishment for such crimes, defendants usually only receive a small fine. The highest fine imposed on an offender on the basis of a EFHR application was 3900LT, despite the Penal Code allowing a fine for an amount of up to 19.000 Euro¹⁶.

In view of the recent resurgence of activities by neo-Nazi groups (including a march held in February 2012), the Committee requests further information on any prosecutions or convictions based on Law No. XI-330 of 9 July 2009 criminalizing activities of groups and organizations which promote racial hatred and discrimination.

EFHR must highlight that marches of a xenophobic nature regularly take place on Lithuanian Independence Day (11 March) in Vilnius and other cities. In 2008, participants of the march in Vilnius were heard chanting freely and enthusiastically „Lithuania is beautiful without Russians” and „Juden raus”¹⁷. Unfortunately, judges have treated such shocking cases with little more than a shrug of their shoulders. On 28 January 2009 the Second District Court of the City of Vilnius acquitted one of the participants of a public march where similar slogans were shouted, indicating he had only shouted „Lithuania for Lithuanians”¹⁸. In 2011, more participants joined the march, screaming „for Lithuania, the nation and the race”¹⁹.

On 11 March 2013, a march took place once again on Gediminas Avenue, the main artery of Vilnius' centre, with participants again chanting „Lithuania for Lithuanians” and wearing symbols of Nazism such as the swastika. EFHR lodged a formal complaint and pointed out that the march had not been authorized²⁰. However, the complaint was rejected by the court on the basis that an NGO could only be involved in a complaint if it represented an individual victim. As a consequence, EFHR could not

¹⁶ <http://en.efhr.eu/2015/01/30/efhr-encourages-law-enforcement-bodies-to-change-their-attitude-towards-crimes-committed-on-the-internet/>

¹⁷ <http://tv.lrytas.lt/?id=12052542121204207405&sk=3>

¹⁸ <http://alfa.lt/straipsnis/10256908/teismas-isteisino-skina-kaltinta-skandavus-grazi-lietuva-be-rusu>

¹⁹ <http://www.lithuaniantribune.com/5891/regarding-the-condemnation-of-the-march-of-extreme-right-and-the-spread-of-hatred-in-public-20115891>

²⁰ <http://www.lithuaniantribune.com/31066/vilnius-authorities-vindicated-about-nationalist-march-court-ruling-201331066/>

appeal the decision and the organizers²¹ of the neo-Nazi march went unpunished. Perhaps even more disturbing is the fact that in 2013 Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of Lithuania, was quoted as saying „you say nationalists, I would call them patriotic youth“²². EFHR believes that this statement is an expression of total disregard and expresses a lack of respect towards those members of society whose ethnicity is non-Lithuanian.

In relation to the xenophobic events previously described, Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius has also stated that „we should not be afraid of marches“. He has also been quoted as saying that such events „cannot be banned“ because it would result in even more hostility²³. However, EFHR believes that in order to resist growing manifestations of anti-Semitism, racism and xenophobia in Lithuania, it is imperative for public institutions and the highest State officials to clearly distance themselves from this march and punish xenophobic behaviour.

Paragraph 14

The Committee recommends that the State party make full use of general recommendation No. 31 (2005) on the prevention of racial discrimination in the administration and functioning of the criminal justice system, including by developing appropriate education programmes for both law enforcement officers and minority groups.

Unfortunately, training sessions concerning human rights are a rarity in Lithuania. According to the Ministry of Justice, only 27 such training days took place in Lithuania between 2004 and 2012. The latest research shows that there is a need for more such trainings among Lithuanians.²⁴ The Lithuanian Government claims that in order to foster tolerance and intercultural dialogue, a new professional development module („Protection of human rights and freedoms“) was introduced for police officers in the second half of 2014 and that topics covered subjects such as basic human rights and freedoms, forms of discrimination etc. The training course about the module would be launched in the second half of 2014. EFHR finds it regrettable that it must inform that these claims are simply not true. EFHR was advised in an email from the Lithuanian Police School (*Lietuvos policijos mokykla*) on 27 January 2015 that the training – which is presented as an important element to educate law enforcement officers on human rights - was never introduced. The Lithuanian Police

²¹<http://www.15min.lt/en/article/in-lithuania/several-thousand-people-took-part-in-unsanctioned-nationalist-independence-day-march-in-central-vilnius-525-314963>

²²<http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/dgrybauskaite-jus-sakote-nacionalistai-o-as-juos-pavadinciau-tautiniu-jaunimu.d?id=60850015>

²³<http://www.lithuaniantribune.com/31513/we-should-not-be-afraid-of-marches-bans-lead-to-opposition-pm-says-201331513/>

²⁴<http://en.efhr.eu/2014/05/22/the-results-of-research-on-the-human-rights-confirm-efhr-view/>

School could not provide information on whether the training would be introduced at some point in the future.

Paragraph 18

The Committee encourages the State party to increase popular awareness of the work of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman and on legal remedies available.

The Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsman (*Lygių galimybių kontrolieriaus tarnyba*)²⁵ still only receives a few cases regarding discrimination as representatives of national minorities do not feel confident of their chances to obtain redress.

In 2014, the Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsman examined 279 cases related to discrimination: 35% (88 investigations) related to discrimination on the basis of gender, 25% (63 investigations) to social situation, 12% (30 cases) to age, 10% (25 cases) to disability, while 7% (18 cases) of the cases were related to religion and beliefs. EFHR notes that only 3% (8 cases) of claims were related to discrimination on the basis of nationality, 3% (7 cases) on basis of language and 1% (2 cases) to ethnicity²⁶.

The percentage of cases launched on the basis of discrimination on ethnicity and nationality was the same in 2014 as in 2013. EFHR agrees with the 2012-2013 Shadow Report of the Centre for Human Rights (entitled „*Racism and related discriminatory practices in employment in Lithuania*“) ²⁷ and the concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Lithuania prepared by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women²⁸ which argue that this low percentage can be explained by a lack of knowledge or a lack of trust toward this institution. The Government, as well as the Lithuanian courts, consider that the Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsman „has a right, not an obligation, to hear administrative cases” and „refusal to hear an administrative case may not be treated as failure to exercise his competence”^{29, 30}.

²⁵ <http://www.lygybe.lt>

²⁶ <http://www.lygybe.lt/lt/naujienos/archive/p10/skelbiami-2014-m.-k6hq.html>

²⁷ http://www.efhr.eu/download/rozne/ENAR_SHADOW_REPORT_2012-2013_EN.PDF

²⁸ <http://www.efhr.eu/download/Concluding%20observations%20on%20the%20fifth%20periodic%20report%20of%20Lithuania.pdf>

²⁹ Case A-662-665-10, 2010-04-19, The Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania <http://eteismai.lt/byla/73202923993426/A-662-665-10?word=2008%20m.%20lapkri%20C4%8Dio%207%20d.%20parei%20C5%A1k%20C4%97jas%20skundu%20kreip%20C4%97si%20C4%AF%20atsakov%20C4%85%20kuriuo%2020pra%20C5%A1%20C4%97%20vadovaujantis%20Lygi%20C5%B3%20galimybi%20C5%B3%20C4%AFstatymo%2014%20straipsniai>

³⁰ <http://en.efhr.eu/download/Analysis-of-the-Comments-of-the-Republic-of-Lithuania-to-the-Third-Opinion-of-the-Council-of-Europe-on-the-Third-State-Report-by-Lithuania.pdf>

Table 2: Cases examined by the Ombudsman on discrimination³¹

	2014	2013
Gender	88 (35%)	37 (14%)
Social situation	63 (25%)	143 (53%)
Age	30 (12%)	24 (9%)
Disability	25 (10%)	32 (12%)
Religion	18 (7%)	5 (2%)
Nationality	8 (3%)	10 (4%)
Language	7 (3%)	1% ³²
Ethnicity	2 (1%)	No information

Paragraph 22

The Committee encourages the State party to consider ratifying those human rights treaties which it has not yet ratified, in particular treaties the provisions of which have a direct bearing on the subject of racial discrimination, such as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990) and the Convention against Discrimination in Education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (1960).

Lithuania ratified neither the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages nor Protocol No 12 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Paragraph 28

The Committee recommends that the State party's reports be made readily available and accessible to the public at the time of their submission, and that the observations of the Committee with respect to these reports are similarly publicized in the official and other commonly used languages, as appropriate.

On the website of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs,³³ information regarding state reports and the concluding observations of the Committee on the reports submitted by Lithuania³⁴ are published

³¹<http://www.lygybe.lt/lt/metines-tarybos-ataskaitos.html?backlink=%252FIt%252Fpaieska%252Fresults%252Fp0.html>

³² The report does not provide information about the exact number of cases.

only in the English language (in section „Konvencija dėl visų formų rasinės diskriminacijos panaikinimo (CERD)“) without any translations in Lithuanian or the languages of national minorities. Moreover, the website has not been updated since 14th of February 2014. Therefore, it is impossible for most to become fully acquainted with the latest state reports.

III. Information relating to the articles of the Convention

The right to vote and to stand for election and the right to take part in the activities of political parties

Prior to 2006 the Lithuanian Government had some informative materials translated and made available in minority languages during the referendum on whether or not to join the European Union. This was obviously done at the time with the belief, validated by referendum results, that some minorities were more likely to participate in this referendum if they were reached and informed of the event in their own language. As soon as the referendum was completed, and Lithuanians including minorities overwhelmingly voted to join the EU, a group of leading Lithuanian politicians moved to prevent any further use of national minority languages that might facilitate the ‘effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in... public affairs’ by asking the Constitutional Court to ban the translation and use of electoral materials in minority languages on the basis of them being a threat to the official status of the Lithuanian language. The Court ruled in favour of this request.³⁵

The 2012 OSCE Report on Lithuania³⁶ criticized the Government for the lack of electoral materials in minority languages during the 2012 campaign for parliamentary elections. In 2014, the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania (*Vyriausioji rinkimų komisija*) promised to implement recommendations regarding the translation of informational materials in national minority languages in the 2016 elections.³⁷ However, it should be pointed out that official information during the 2015 spring local elections was, once again, only available in the State language³⁸.

³³ www.urm.lt

³⁴ <https://www.urm.lt/default/lt/uzsienio-politika/uzsienio-politikos-prioritetai/zmogaus-teises/zmogaus-teisiu-konvencijos-ir-pranesimu-rengimas>

³⁵ Judgement of 10 May 2006 No. 25/03 (Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucinio Teismo nutarimas dėl LR Vyriausios rinkimų komisijos įstatymo 3 straipsnio 6 dalies (2003 m. balandžio 10 d. redakcija) atitikties Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucijai). The Constitutional Court also commented that citizens who were not ‘fully integrated’, i.e. were not fluent in the official language, did not need to be treated the same as citizens who were in matters of national consultations. See Elżbieta Kuzborska, *Legal Situation of National Minorities in Lithuania in the Context of International and Supranational Protection Standards*, Vilnius, 2012.

³⁶ <http://www.osce.org/odihr/98586>

³⁷ <http://www.vrk.lt/naujienos/-/content/10180/1/esbo-vrk-pristate-2012-m-seimo-rinkimu-rekomendaciju-igyvendinima>

³⁸ <http://www.vrk.lt/informaciniai-leidiniai-2015sav>

IV. Conclusions/Recommendations

Since the last report in 2011 it has been noticed that the authorities in Lithuania have taken some steps to improve the quality of protection for national minorities. In particular, EFHR finds the renewal of the Department of National Minorities a positive and useful step. However, the department should be focused on lobbying for real legislative changes in the policy for the protection of the rights of national minorities.

In conclusion, it must be stressed that the Lithuanian Authorities are still not inclined toward improving the situation regarding national minorities in this country. Public grants for organizations supporting national minorities and promoting human rights are completely insufficient. Further, the lack of ratification of the meaningful international treaties, such as the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages or Protocol No 12 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, no explicit reaction to the acts of discrimination such as the marches of xenophobic nature as well as problems with hate crimes investigations lead to connivance with unequal and disrespectful treatment of national minorities.

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