

Lithuania has ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and other international instruments that are designed to prevent the introduction of legislation restricting the rights of national minorities.

However, the actions of Lithuanian authorities are aimed at restricting the rights of the non-Lithuanian population and its forced assimilation. This has a significant impact on reducing the number of not only Russian and Polish, but also Ukrainian, Belorussian, Jewish and other nationalities.

Lithuania, despite its membership in the EU has not ratified the "European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages." However, it should be noted that Article 11 of the Framework Convention provides an opportunity in areas traditionally inhabited by substantial numbers of persons belonging to a national minority, to write the names of the streets in the language of the national minority as well. At the same time Article 17 of the Law on the State Language states that all public inscriptions in Lithuanian Republic should be carried out in the state language. Contrary to Article 11 of the Law on International Treaties, which states that if a ratified international treaty of the Republic of Lithuania establishes other rules than those set by the laws of Lithuania, the provisions of the international treaty of the Republic of Lithuania overrule other legal acts which should be ignored.

Grossly ignored are the requirements of national minorities to write their names in the official documents in accordance with the rules of the native language. Despite the European legislation in Lithuania it is prohibited to use minority languages (along with the state language) in the writing of geographical names, even in localities where the minority representatives make up more than 80% of the population.

For example in 2008 the Administrative Court banned the inscriptions in Russian and Polish, established in the areas of compact settlement of ethnic minorities (Vilnius and Šalčininkai regions), which also contradicts the Article 11.3 of the Framework Convention. In 2010, there were several cases of administrative punishment in the form of fines for the public use of the Polish language, along with the state, by local

government officials and entrepreneurs, which also contradicts the Article 10 of the Framework Convention.

The country has terminated the Law on National Minorities, and the Seimas has not extended it, as had been done previously. After the abolition of the Law "On National Minorities" (from 11.23.1989) in 2009, which is contrary to the Framework Convention which forbids to degrade the legal status of national minorities, the new law has not yet been adopted. In 2009, the Government abolished the Department of Immigration and National Minorities, and its functions were transferred to a Department of Lithuanian Ministry of Culture.

Significantly diminished the number of opportunities for the national minorities to obtain information in their native language. Over the past 20 years the circulation of Russian-language print media decreased by 80%, the duration of television programs in Russian on the public television channels – by 70%.

However, this is not the only evidence of purposeful limitation of rights and forced assimilation of national minorities. The new wording of the Education Act does not correspond to a number of regulations and documents of the OSCE, in its adoption were not taken into account the opinions of Russian and Polish communities that had collected more than 60 000 signatures against it prior to the voting in the Seimas. Thus, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe from 21.11.1990 says that the OSCE member States undertake to improve the situation of minorities (and not worsen it), and the document of the Copenhagen Conference on the Human Dimension of the OSCE (29.06.1990) in Art. 33 with the purpose of such protection, they "take measures after due consultations, including contacts with organizations or associations of such minorities". In addition, it should be noted that in its comments on the adoption of amendments to the Education Act, the representatives of the authorities of Lithuania referred to the statistics that does not relate directly to the students of schools of national minorities.

The new edition of the Law "On Education", which came into effect on 1 September 2011 does not define the concept of "national minority schools".

Accordingly, the schools with Russian and other languages of education are subject to the same standards of equipping the classes, as are Lithuanian schools. The law fundamentally worsens the situation of minority schools in Lithuania. If the previous version of the law contained a provision on the right to secondary education (from 1 to 12 class) in the mother tongue, the new edition indicates that ALL topics relating to the history and geography of Lithuania, surrounding world and basics of civics to be taught in Lithuanian.

The transition to teaching subjects in the national language degrades the quality of education and the effectiveness of the educational process in schools of national minorities. After all, the right of national communities to teach children in their native language, accepted as the norm in the modern world, intends to make it easier for children to study, to make the understanding of complex educational material more accessible and comfortable and preserve the national identity. We already see a frightening trend, when the parents of pupils, faced with these educational "experiments" are beginning to send their children to Lithuanian schools. Therefore the end of schools with Russian and probably Polish language of education is foredoomed. In the near future they will simply cease to exist due to lack of students.

Multiple studies have shown that learning in a language other than native, especially at an early age puts children and adolescents under a severe stress. The need to understand and explore large amounts of educational information in a non-native language greatly hinders cognitive and intellectual abilities of the students, and causes a psychological shock. Instead of making the learning process fun and interesting, we'll have to expose our children to the moral and psychological torture.

In accordance with the old version of the law, in the schools of national minorities all subjects except the Lithuanian language and literature could be taught in their own language .

The new law stipulates that a minimum of four hours of Lithuanian language per week should study the children in kindergartens, and in 2013 a nationwide equal exam on the state language was introduced for the graduates of both the Lithuanian schools and schools of national minorities. At the beginning of 2011-2012 academic year Russian schools faced the lack of a mechanism of implementation of new programs, and the acute shortage of methodological literature and textbooks for minority schools.

In accordance with the approved plans of the local authorities to optimize educational institutions further reduction of the number of Russian schools is expected.

The inflow of young Russian-speaking professionals among the teaching staff continues to decrease (as universities of Lithuania do not train subject-teachers for Russian schools, except Russianists). On top of this, the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Lithuania tightened the knowledge of the state language requirements for subject teachers.

It should be noted that through the efforts of the Russian-speaking and Polish communities an acquiescence in the terms of implementation of the Act has been achieved. So, for the schools of national minorities a transition period with softer evaluation criteria was introduced. In addition, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania set up a working group on minority schools in which to discuss critical issues. However, these measures are still insufficient.

It's time to call the ongoing process by its true name: it is a deliberate assimilation and linguocide! First, Russian and Polish population is forbidden to write their names in accordance with their national traditions and grammatical rules. We have been deprived of real opportunities to teach children their native history and culture in schools, funded among other through our taxes. Now our right to teach our offspring in their native language at all will be limited. What's next? Will we be forbidden to write our names on the gravestones? Lithuanian state

calls this process an integration, but as a result of such "integration" the minorities are losing their historical memory, self-esignation and culture, and are forced either to assimilate or take a subordinate, oppressed position that can only be seen as ethnocide. Still there is an encouraging thought that is in recent years the younger generation of ethnic minorities shows an increased interest and is ready to defend their rights.