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

**COMMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF LITHUANIA
ON THE SECOND OPINION OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE
PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES
BY LITHUANIA**

(received on 20 October 2008)

1. The scope of application of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in Lithuania

After the Republic of Lithuania ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 2000, the harmonization of legislation of the Republic of Lithuania with the provisions of the Convention was started.

Currently, the Law on National Minorities, the Law on the State Language (see clause 10, 12), a draft law on the Names and Surnames (see clause 11) have been drafted and submitted to the Seimas. Also, a working group was formed by decree of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania which has to examine and to submit to the Government its proposals by 2 December 2008, and also, if necessary, to submit a draft legal act regarding the spelling of traditional place-names of national minorities.

By implementing the long-term development strategy of the state approved by resolution No. IX-1187 of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania of 12 November 2002 (Official Gazette, 2002, Nr.[113-5029](#)), also the provisions of chapter III, clause 4 "Culture", the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad implements the measures set out in the strategy for the development of the national minorities policy until the year 2015, approved by resolution No. 1132 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 17 October 2007 (Official Gazette, 2007, No. 112-4574) and in the program on the integration of Roma into the Lithuanian society for the years 2008-2010 approved by resolution No. 309 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 26 March 2008 (Official Gazette, 2008, No. 42-1555).

In these documents (the program and the strategy are attached thereto), the long-term goals for the integration of national minorities into the Lithuanian society and the measures for their implementations are laid down.

2. Population census

Currently, preparatory works for the first population and housing censuses in 2011 are carried out. The draft of the census sheet is prepared in compliance with the requirements of the Regulation (EC) No.763/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 July 2008 on population and housing censuses (OJ 2008 L 219, p.14), recommendations of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and Statistical Office of the European Communities on future population and housing censuses. We seek these census data were compared with the census data of 2001.

The draft of the census sheet and of the program is intended to be discussed with the users: executives of ministries and other public institutions, demographers, sociologists, representatives of national minorities, etc. The census sheet and the rules for supplementation thereof will be translated into English, Polish and Russian languages. Detailed information about these censuses will be announced on the website of the Lithuanian Department of Statistics. Every citizen of the Republic of Lithuania will be able to familiarize himself with the draft of the census sheet and submit her/his commentaries or suggestions.

We would like to draw attention to the fact that a mistake was made in question 39 of the European Council Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. At the time of census in 2001, 0.9 per cent residents of the Republic of Lithuania did not indicate their nationality (9 per cent is written in the text).

3. Anti-discrimination laws

With consideration to the fact that the Law on Equal Opportunities that had been adopted in 2003 did not transpose all provisions of the Council Directive 2004/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment of persons irrespective of their race or ethnic affiliation, also of the Council Directive 2004/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania adopted a law amending the Law on Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Lithuania.

The law was amended in the way as it is required by the directives mentioned above by incorporating new provisions on the shift of the burden of proof (art. 4), the prohibition to discriminate on the basis of membership or participation in organizations (article 9). On direction of a person being discriminated, associations or other legal entities may represent him/her in legal or administrative procedures in the manner set forth in the laws (paragraph 2 of article 12).

National Anti-discrimination programme for the years 2006–2008

By resolution No. 907 of 19 September 2006 (Official Gazette, 2006, No. 100-3872) the Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved a national anti-discrimination program for the years 2006-2008. The measures of the program are implemented by public institutions within the scope of their competence; a part of the measures are implemented in cooperation with non-governmental organizations. The budget of the program is 1.05 million litas (approximately 290 thousand euros).

By implementing the program, a sociological research into the status of women and men belonging to ethnic and national minorities in the labour market is carried out; also information about anti-discrimination measures and methods for the protection of violated human rights is disseminated. Employers, police officers and corresponding state institutions are trained to apply the international, EU and national legal acts prohibiting discrimination. Seeking to apply the international Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination in legal practice to a wider extent, training for judges and defence lawyers has been foreseen.

Currently, a draft of the national antidiscrimination program for the years 2009-2011 is being drafted.

Regarding changing the requirements set out in the Law on Equal Opportunities to be able to speak the official language when seeking employment

Based on data of the population and housing censuses of the Republic of Lithuania of 2001, the following indicators of proficiency in the official language were received: 144.9 thousand Polish (61.7 per cent), 144.7 thousand Russians (65.8 per cent), 23.1 thousand Byelorussians (53.9 per cent), and 13.1 thousand Ukrainians (58.3 per cent).

For persons who do not know the official language, free courses of the official language have been organized in Visaginas, Vilnius (the House of National Communities and Roma Community Centre), and Šalcininkai from 2008. Every year about 600 persons attend these courses in Visaginas, over 130 in Vilnius, and over 100 in Šalcininkai. Persons residing in other cities may learn the Lithuanian language using a distance method – the website <http://www.oneness.vu.lt/ru>. Also, possibilities have been established to attend paid courses of the official language in the Pedagogue Professional Development Centre in Vilnius.

For persons learning the Lithuanian language, necessary textbooks of the Lithuanian language have been prepared and published (Meilute Ramoniene, Loreta Vilkiene “Po truputi. Lietuviu kalbos vadovelis pradedantiesiems. Pratybu sasiuvinis” (Step by step. The Lithuanian language textbook for beginners. Exercise book); V. Stumbriene, A. Kaškeleviciene, 2004, “Ne dienos be lietuviu kalbos” (No single day without the Lithuanian language), etc.; whereas for the Roma national minority a special compact disc “An afternoon with the Lithuanian language” was issued in 2005 that is used during the courses of the Lithuanian language in the Roma Community Centre.

Taking into consideration the fact that the official language is taught at schools in the language known by the national minorities from the second form, mostly the courses are attended by senior age persons.

4. Law on Citizenship

On 22 July 2008, a Law amending the Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania was adopted and came into effect (Official Gazette, 2008, No. 83-3293) which provisions were coordinated with the explication of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania in the resolution of 13 November 2006 “On Compliance of the Provisions Regulating the Citizenship Relationships of the Republic of Lithuania with the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania”.

5. Data collection

The Lithuanian Labour Exchange provides services free of charge irrespective of the nationality of job seekers; therefore no data about nationality are compiled in their database. All job seekers may register with the labour exchange and receive all services necessary to them. The only national group that could be differentiated in this respect is Roma, since there are several specific programs intended exclusively for them. On 1 October 2006, 76 Roma nationality job seekers were registered in the labour exchange, of which 68 had an unemployed person’s status. In total, as of 1 October 2008, there were 95,488 job seekers, of which 65,4135 were unemployed persons. On 1 October 2007, 95 job seekers of the Roma nationality were registered, of which 52 had an unemployed person’s status; the total number of job seekers was 91,091, of which 58,987 were unemployed.

6. Assistance to culture and languages of national minorities

Budget allocations assigned to the cultural and educational projects of non-governmental organizations, and activities of the cultural centres of national minorities have been increased each year.

Amount of money allocated for funding cultural and educational projects (LTL) for the years 2004 – 2008.					
Non-governmental organizations of national minorities	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
	207 840.00	267 300.00	326 580.00	347 980.00	508 500.00

Amount of money allocated to the centres of national minorities for the years 2005 – 2008, in thousand litas				
	2005	2006	2007	2008
Public institution the House of National Communities	252.7	265	295	340.405
Public institution Kaunas Cultural Centre of Various Nations	99	120	136	190
Public institution Roma Community Centre	212	218	235	304.775
Visaginas Official Language Centre	200	200	200	275
Public institution Lithuanian Centre for Folklore and Ethnography of National Minorities	-	17.17	85	118.14
Public institution Visaginas Centre of National Cultures	-	31	32	15
Total sum	763,7	851.17	983	1 243.32

As compared with 2004, the amount allocated for non-governmental organizations of national minorities increased by nearly 60 per cent; support to the centres of national minorities increased by 39 per cent in 2008.

Amount of money intended for construction and reconstruction of the centres of national minorities during the years 2002 – 2008, in thousand litas							
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Public institution the House of National Communities	48	-	290	1 425	1 640	997,6	1 400
Public institution Kaunas Cultural Centre of Various Nations	348	442	-	-	-	-	-
Public institution Roma Community Centre	176	299,9	-	-	-	-	15,5
Public institution Visaginas Centre for National Cultures	-	-	-	-	-	-	250
Buildings of the Tatar community	-	-	-	-	-	980	-
Buildings of Caraites community	-	-	60	995.1	480	500	600
Total amount	572	741.9	350	2 420.1	2 120	2 477.6	2 265.5

Support to Saturday and Sunday schools

In 2003, the Department allocated to Saturday and Sunday schools LTL 19,400.00, in 2004 – LTL 55,100.00, in 2005 – LTL 48, 400.00, in 2006 – LTL 56,430.00, in 2007 – LTL 60,000, in 2008 – LTL 70,000. As compared to 2004, assistance to non-formal education increased by more than 70 per cent in 2008. The Ministry of Education and Science and municipalities also allocate financial assistance to Saturday and Sunday schools.

7. Tolerance and intercultural dialogue

In the strategy for the development of the national minorities policy until the year 2015 a goal is set – to ensure the harmony of national relationships. To achieve the goal two objectives were envisaged: to instil trust and mutual understanding between persons belonging to different national groups; to foster tolerance; to improve the policy for fighting against racism and national discrimination; to ensure the dissemination of information about the policy of the Lithuanian national minorities. Seeking to attain the goals, the following measures were envisaged: every year to give an award to media representatives for the dissemination of information about tolerance and creation of positive image of the national minorities; to organize non-formal education of different social and professional groups on national minority issues; to create cycles of educational films about national minorities; to inform society on the damage of racial and national intolerance and discrimination; to foster national tolerance through education, media, non-governmental organizations; to prepare a feasibility study on joining the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages; to prepare and to publish two information publications about organizations conducting monitoring in the field of national minorities, and on the activities thereof; to prepare and to publish booklets about national minorities

residing in Lithuania in their languages, and to distribute them via diplomatic missions of the Republic of Lithuania; to prepare and to publish informational material about the country's and international initiatives and the good experience how to preserve the diversity of languages; to prepare and to publish informational materials about the national minorities of Lithuania.

Seeking to foster tolerance, implementation of the following measures has been started:

1. 7 trainings for police officers on the protection of human rights and assurance of the non-discrimination principle; investigation of criminal acts associated with equality of persons; and culture and customs of the Roma national minority were organized. In total, 130 police officers from different Lithuanian cities attended the training.

Also, an 8 academic hour programme for the advancement of professional skills "Protection of human rights and the police officer's ethics" was delivered in the Lithuanian Centre for the Training of Police Officers.

In 2004, together with a non-governmental organization, the Human Rights Centre, 10 courses "Human rights in activities of the Police. Prohibition of discrimination" was organized in 2004.

2. Every year antidiscrimination seminars are organized for civil servants. In 2007, antidiscrimination seminars were organized for the civil servants of Alytus city municipality, Alytus district municipality, and Alytus County.

Also, the Lithuanian Public Administration Institute has prepared three training modules for civil servants which topics were associated with issues on the elimination of all kinds of discrimination: The practice of explication of the European Human Rights Convention and application thereof; women, men and management of the public administration system; application of the European Union and national legal acts prohibiting discrimination. Based on these modules training has been conducted from the year 2005.

The Training Centre of the Ministry of Justice organized seminars to judges and prosecutors, judge assistants, chairmen of courts, advisers to chairmen of court divisions, seeking to familiarize them with the protection of human rights and anti-discrimination standards: "The European Human Rights Convention as the general principals of the EU law. Relevant Aspects of the Application thereof"; "Application of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in Criminal Cases". Seeking to implement the principle of equal treatment of all persons irrespective of their race, ethnic affiliation, religion, age, sexual orientation and other grounds, the Training Centre, in cooperation with the European Academy of Law (ERA), organized participation of the Lithuanian judges in the seminars "Fight against discrimination" in Trier, Germany, on 5-6 and 26-27 November 2007. By implementing the national antidiscrimination program for the years 2006-2008, a three day training of 20 young defence lawyers on "The European Union antidiscrimination law: implementation of the directives on equal treatment of persons irrespective of their race or ethnic affiliation (2000/43/EC), and establishment of a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation (2000/78/EC)".

3. In 2007, seeking to foster the tolerance of media representatives to national minorities, the Department established a nomination to journalists “For National Tolerance”. In 2007, the nomination was awarded to the journalist of the Lithuanian National Radio and Television Virginijus Savukynas.

Seeking to draw attention of the public to the lack of pluralism in the Lithuanian media, in 2007 seminars “The improvement of media pluralism, civil society and the image of national minorities in Lithuania”, and “Media pluralism and assurance of equal opportunities in Lithuania” were arranged to the representatives of regional media. The seminar was attended by 20 representatives of the regional media from Klaipeda, Ukmerge, Širvintos, Mažeikiai, Kretinga, Kupiškis District and other Lithuanian cities.

4. In 2006, at the order of the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad, an educational movie about the Jewish national minority “Pages of the history of Litvaks” was created. With approval of the Ministry of Education and Science, this movie will be demonstrated in the general education schools. Currently, a movie about the Belarusian national minority is being created.

5. The Department continually organizes different events: “A week against racial discrimination”; a contest of the Lithuanian schoolchildren (within the age group of 8-16 years) “I am drawing a multinational Lithuania”; a schoolchildren’s contest of compositions “My friend Roma”. It also publishes articles about the culture of Roma and assurance of their rights in the press. In 2006, the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad supported by allocating 7 thousand litas a cycle of programs intended for the development of public tolerance. The cycle was broadcasted during the radio station Znad Wilii. Four articles about the policy of harmony in national relationships were prepared during the years 2006-2007. Articles were published in the daily Lietuvos Žinios, weeklies Veidas and Ekstra. Since 2008, a cycle of radio programs “National minorities in Europe” broadcasted via the radio station Znad Wilii has been supported. In 2008, an informational booklet on national minorities has been published.

Upon declaring the year 2008 to be the year of European cultures and dialogue by decision of the European Parliament and of the Council, the following initiatives associated with the development of public tolerance with respect to other nations of the national program are under implementation or have already been implemented:

1. The objective of the project “We are all different, yet we are all like” is to establish favourable conditions for intercultural cooperation to the maximum extent, what could help take a new look at the problems of national minorities, their cultural self-awareness, and the changing identity. The project is focused on the social integration of national minorities and invokes signs, idioms, premonitions, and preconceptions, stereotypes that artificially form their identity as the measures most actively fostering a dialogue, provoking or positioning.

2. The project “Let us change together!” was started in March by an international youth forum “Let us change together!” held in Vilnius, where the participants were provided with the possibility to hear presentations on what a dialogue of cultures is, how it is fostered on the European level, and how the European youth and youth organizations become involved in the fostering of the dialogue.

3. The cinema laboratory “Immigrants in Panevežys” for the youth of the Upper Lithuania is a constituent part of the project “The cinema dialogue” intended for the European cultural dialogue for the year 2008. The goal of this project is to foster youth activeness and intercultural cooperation among the youth of Lithuania and other European countries. During the project the youth became familiarized with immigrants residing and working in Panevežys, and tried to find out their problems, impressions, and experiences gained.

4. “The days of Yiddish culture” is a constituent part of the summer courses of Yiddish in Vilnius. The goal of this program is the restoration of the Yiddish language and culture, continuation of traditions, preservation of the Lithuanian Yiddish cultural heritage, and general introduction of the whole Lithuania to students from abroad by means of previously planned, specific cultural and scientific events and meetings with different people.

5. The project “Lithuania – a country of cultural meetings” starts by emphasizing the heritage of national ethnic and confessional minorities in the present territory of Lithuania, this way seeking to establish an active dialogue among Lithuanians (as a national majority) and ethnic, confessional and national minorities. The main expression of the project is a website www.fenomenai.lt. Here, different age schoolchildren are encouraged to write, draw, shoot films, and make pictures of relevant objects (phenomena) of the historical heritage, also to participate in different contests, take interest in and communicate on historical topics.

6. The conference “Ratio of the cultural dialogue in Lithuania and Europe: experiences, practices, and perspectives” was aimed at distinguishing the cultural dialogue as an important element assuring a harmonious mutual coexistence in Europe and in the world by developing an active and conscious public spirit and successful integration of different social groups into the European community. To this effect, policy shapers and implementers, also scientists, representatives of educational and cultural institutions, non-governmental organizations, and the media were invited to share their good experience in developing the cultural dialogue in Lithuania and in the common European space.

Program for the integration of Roma into the Lithuanian society for the years 2008 - 2010

A goal was raised in the program on Roma integration into the Lithuanian society for the years 2008-2010 to foster public tolerance to Roma and trust in them. To achieve the goal, the following task has been set - to inform society about the situation of the national Roma minority. Seeking to implement this goal, the following measures have been planned: to organize seminars, conferences, discussions on fight against xenophobia, racial discrimination, development of tolerance; to prepare and to include the materials about the history of Lithuanian Roma, their ethnic culture into the curricula of general education schools and textbooks; to prepare a cycle of articles about Roma culture, customs and safeguarding of their rights for the press; to prepare radio programs on national diversity issues for teachers and journalists; to organize training on assuring the principle of the protection of human rights and non-discrimination, equality of criminal acts associated with equality of a person, investigation issues for police officers; to prepare and to publish informational publications about Roma; to carry out a sociological survey “The profiles of Lithuanian tolerance”.

Competence of the inspector of the journalism ethics agency

Seeking to fight against information with harmful content about different social groups on the internet, since the end of 2006 a division for public information monitoring and analysis has been operating in the journalism ethics agency, which one of the tasks is to carry out monitoring of the content of information announced on the internet.

At the end of 2006, due to comments of different readers announced on the news site at www.delfi.lt, the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian Chief Crime Investigation Board appealed to the journalist ethics inspector. Having assessed commentary, the journalism ethics inspector took a decision on 9 February 2007 to the effect that discrimination on the basis of nationality is instigated in the commentaries on publications "A. Dailide who had been sentenced for crimes to Jews was saved by senility" (at www.delfi.lt, 27/03/2006), and "Fines of several thousands to Murza and his comrades in arms" (at www.delfi.lt, 10/11/2006) since the Jews are distinguished as a group of people on the nationality basis against whom coercion is instigated. Due to the violations determined the inspector issued a warning to the chief editor of the website www.delfi.lt.

8. Fight against discrimination, adversity and violence against national minorities

Data of the General Prosecutor's Office on pre-trial investigations initiated based on articles 169 and 170 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania.

	2003 May – December ¹	2004	2005	2006	2007
CC 169 art.	0	0	0	0	3
CC 170 art.	4	5	2	20	36

¹from 1 May 2003, the new edition Criminal Code came into effect.

In October 2004, on the initiative of Vilnius municipality and Vilnius Chief Police Commissariat, a police surveillance post was set up in the Roma settlement in Kirtimai. It was set up with an aim to ensure the safety of people residing in this territory and its vicinities, since due to criminal acts associated with the disposal of narcotic or psychotropic substances committed in the territory of the Roma settlement, 91 pre-trial investigation was commenced in 2004, 78 – in 2005, 83 – in 2006, 17 - in 2007.

Currently, the police do not use this post any more. A decision regarding further use of the hut wherein a police surveillance post was installed should be taken by Vilnius municipality (it is planned to be moved to another territory of the city, or a ward providing medical or social services is planned to be installed therein).

Find about the training of police officers in chapter 7.

9. Possibilities to use the mass media

In the Republic of Lithuania, persons belonging to national minorities are provided with the possibilities to receive information in the minority languages: radio and television programs are broadcasted, newspapers are published, and internet-informational sites are operating.

Every day, at 4.30-5.00 p.m., the first Lithuanian radio program broadcasts an informational (news) program in the Russian language. An one hour program “Unison” on the culture of different national minorities, their history, and customs intended to the public at large is broadcasted every day during the “Classics” program of the Lithuanian radio.

In 2008, at 3.00-3.30 p.m. the following programs were broadcasted:

For different national communities – on Mondays (in different languages);
 Programs for Byelorussians –on Tuesdays and Saturdays (in Belarusian language);
 Programs for Jews on 1st and 3rd Thursday (in Yiddish Russian and Lithuanian);
 Programs for Ukrainians – on 2nd and 4th Fridays (in Ukrainian);
 Every day at 4.30-5.00 p.m., half an hour program in Polish is broadcasted.

As compared to the years 2006-2007, the time of broadcasting these programs changed and currently they are broadcasted at a more convenient time. During 2006-2007, the programs mentioned were broadcasted at 2.00 p.m. - 3.00 p.m.

The broadcasting of programs via the first Lithuanian television channel has not changed; they are broadcasted on Saturdays at 10.30 a.m.– 12.00 a.m.

Programs intended for national minorities accounted for 0.7 per cent of the total television programs during the years 2006-2007. Yet, the history of national minorities, their customs and integration issues (e.g. good examples of the integration of Roma into the labour market during the program “The personal code”) have been also introduced during other cultural programs that account for 2.8 per cent of the total programs, as well as in TV journals and publicist programs, that account for 10.9 per of the total number of programs, and in the public and educational programs that constitute 8.4 per cent of the total number of programs.

With the increase in the public need to use the internet media, a part of the printed publications have gone bankrupt, yet a possibility to daily receive information in the Russian language on the internet at <http://ru.delfi.lt/> (the biggest and most popular internet daily in the Baltic countries) has emerged. Besides, such internet dailies as <http://www.kurier.lt/>; <http://www.kurierwilenski.lt/>, <http://www.znadwili.lt/>, etc. are operating.

The Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad supports the projects intended for the preparation of articles and their announcement on the national minority newspapers. By 2008, a cycle of articles was supported in the daily intended for the Belarusian national minority; however, since no application or project was submitted to the Department by the community for 2008, the newspaper is no longer published.

Newspaper for Roma

In 2004, after starting the implementation of the EQUAL project “The development and testing of a mechanism for the integration of Roma into the labour market” it was decided to publish a newspaper for Roma The Romano Drom (The Road of Roma). The newspaper was published once per month in the Lithuanian language; whereas a summary was provided in the Russian language. After completion of the project at the end of 2007, the publication of the newspaper Romano Cacipen (The truth of Roma)

for Roma was started by the Roma Community Centre. The newspaper is published once per month in the Lithuanian language, whereas a summary is provided in the Russian language. The Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad supports the publication of this newspaper.

10. Usage of the national minority languages in the relationships with administrative authorities

A provision is set forth in paragraph 2 of article 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania to the effect that “human rights may not be restricted or privileges granted (...) on the grounds of nationality and language”. This means that the administrative authority may not make obstacles for the implementation of person’s rights only because he/she does not know the official language. The enforced Law on the Official Language and a draft Law on the Official Language of the new edition raises the only one requirement for the administrative authorities – to ensure the service of citizens in the official language. This provision should not be understood in a narrowing sense or be interpreted as prohibiting an officer of administrative authorities or a party concerned to discuss matters in a non-official language, since otherwise article 29 of the Constitution would be violated.

Also, a provision is set forth in article 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania to the effect that “all public institutions serve for people”. Seeking to implement this article of the Constitution, the Law on Public Administration was adopted in 1999. The Law on Public Administration does not limit the language of appeal (submission of a request to the state institution) of any persons, including those belonging to national minorities; it also foresees that an interpreter may be invited to an administrative procedure. This means that public institutions must examine requests that have been filed in the non-official language.

It should be noted that in the territories (Vilnius district, Šalčininkai district, Visaginas), wherein the representatives of national minorities constitute the majority of residents, a representative of administrative authorities communicated with visitors not only in the national language, but also in Polish and Russian, therefore statements on the restriction of the right of national minorities to use the national language in relationships with administrative authorities are not grounded.

Based on the standards of legal acts set forth above, and on practice on the usage of national minority languages, the right to use the national minority language in the relationships with administrative authorities is ensured in the Republic of Lithuania.

11. Spelling of the names and surnames of national minorities

The draft of the Law on the Spelling of Names and Surnames of the Republic of Lithuania has been registered with the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. The draft law suggests foreseeing the spelling of personal names not only in the Lithuanian, but also in other characters based on the Latin alphabet, using non-Lithuanian characters. By foreseeing a possibility to spell personal names in other characters of the Latin alphabet, an issue regarding the spelling of names and surnames of non-Lithuanian origin of the persons residing in the Republic of Lithuania will be resolved.

12. Topographic signs

Seeking to ensure the right of national minorities to spell the traditional names and to make other topographic entries in the languages of national minorities, a new edition of the draft Law on the Official Language has been prepared. The draft law sets forth (paragraph 2 of article 1) that “the law does not regulate the right of persons belonging to national minorities, ethnic groups, religious communities or associations to publicly use their native language in the manner set out in other laws, nor the right of individual persons, including the right to learn foreign languages and to freely use them without infringing upon the rights of other persons”. The wording of paragraph 2 of article 14 of the draft law reads as follows “unofficial place names may be presented in public records in the manner prescribed by an institution authorized by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania” provides with the possibility to publicly display both, the onomastic heritage of the national minorities, and of the dialects of the Lithuanian language.

A working group was formed by decree of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania that has to examine and to submit to the Government suggestions, and, if necessary, also a draft legal act regarding the spelling of traditional place-names in the languages of national minorities by 2 December 2008.

13. Education and intercultural dialogue

Public education helps to fight against stereotypes, to foster tolerance and mutual understanding. The issues of the protection of human rights, tolerance are included both, into the teacher training programs, and general education programs.

Much attention to the valuables of democratic society, tolerance, and human rights is devoted in the lessons of history, basics of the public spirit, ethics, religion, geography and other disciplines. At the level of basic education (in 5-10 forms), the topic of human rights and tolerance is included into ethics and religion, basics of the public spirit, history, and geography. The integrated course on the development of public spirit contains a provision: “To recognize the distinction of every culture, to tolerantly accept and assess the diversity of cultures, to respect another, to tolerate different valuables and attitudes”.

A methodological and teaching material for teachers and pupils has been published: “Integrative lessons on human rights training” (electronic publishing, 2005);

“Atraskime humanitarine teise. Vadovelis VII–XII klasei“ (2004 metai). (Let us discover the humanitarian law. A textbook for 7th-12th forms” (2004). In 1999-2000 a three-part publication of the UNESCO “Tolerance – the Beginning of Peace” was translated into Lithuanian and published in 1999–2000. The parts of this publication are intended for teachers of primary and secondary schools and the instructors of teachers. These books contain the recommendations for teachers, the examples of methods, most necessary information and documents necessary for training tolerance: The Universal Human Rights Declaration, Children’s Rights Declaration, overview of the Children’s Rights Convention.

In 2007, the Ministry of Education and Science, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, procured 50 schools with a textbook “The Law to Everybody” (1,000 copies). The textbook contains topics associated with the fostering of tolerance, human rights training and associated topics.

For intercultural training, a website was devoted wherein materials about national/ethnic minorities residing in Lithuania was displayed at <http://www.daugiakalbemokykla.sm.lt>. On this website teachers can find necessary materials when preparing for integrating the multicultural training subjects during lessons on different disciplines.

Education about the Holocaust

The Holocaust is discussed in different aspects during the lessons of history, literature, ethics, and religion.

Classes on the Holocaust are held for 12, 16 and 18 year old pupils. The topic of the Holocaust is discussed 3 times in the course of history, since the instruction of history is divided into three concentres (3 circles) in Lithuania:

The first concentre - 5th form pupils are familiarized with the most important topics of history of Lithuania, which also include the Nazis occupation and the Holocaust.

The second concentre covers 7th- 10th forms. In it, classes on WW2 history are held in 10th form. This time pupils discuss the Holocaust much more extensively and deeply than in 5th form. They also examine documents on the Holocaust, testimony of the participants of historical events.

The third concentre covers 11th-12th forms, and the topic of the Holocaust is discussed in 12th form.

The topics on the Holocaust are included into the state graduation examinations. The Holocaust is a constituent part of a broader topic "World War II". Such a decision was taken with consideration to the fact that pupils will better perceive the processes of the past, if they are conveyed in a broader historical context, or in a context of other disciplines. During the classes on religion, Judaism and the life of the Lithuanian Jewish community is introduced quite extensively.

During the classes of literature it is examined how the catastrophe of Jews is presented in literature. The Holocaust is also taught in classes of literature in 8th, 9th forms, whereas in 12th form there is a separate big topic "Literature of Lithuanian Jews and literature on the Holocaust".

In addition, apart from obligatory programs, approximately 30 per cent of schools actively participate in different projects associated with the Holocaust topic, e.g. write compositions, carry out project works, collect materials about the Holocaust, the way it too place in their residential location, visit and arrange cemeteries of Jews or memorable places.

In after-school activities, the majority of schools participating in education on the Holocaust devote 34 hours per year for this activity.

Also, an International Commission for Assessing the Crimes Committed by Nazis and Soviet Occupation Regimes (hereinafter – the International Commission) operate actively. A program on education about the crimes of totalitarian regimes, the prevention crimes against humanity, and the development of tolerance (hereinafter – the programme for the development of tolerance) has been under implementation since 2002 which is

aimed at developing a mature and responsible civil society, fostering tolerance and respect for human rights. According to the program for the development of tolerance, the schools cooperating with the International Commission started the establishment of tolerance training centres. Based on data of September 2007, 46 tolerance training centres operated in Lithuania. While implementing the programme for the development of tolerance, seminars for teachers are organized, short-term and long-term projects for general education schools are announced, and teachers are encouraged to implement them. Efforts are put to involve into the program for the development of tolerance not only the teachers of history, but also of other disciplines (ethics and religion, languages, art).

Textbooks for national minority schools

All textbooks in the native Polish and Russian languages for 1st-12th forms have been published in Lithuania; for some forms, alternative textbooks of the native language are already being published (this process is not finite; textbooks are updated or changed into alternative).

The textbooks of other disciplines taught at schools are translated from the Lithuanian language. From 2000, the schools order textbooks by themselves, whereas the publishing houses publish them according to the orders of school communities. The schools acquire textbooks using the funds that are allocated to the pupil's basket. From 2007-2008, more by 20 per cent funds are allocated as compared with the schools where the Lithuanian language is used for instruction (during previous years, the amount of funds was bigger only by 10 per cent).

For acquiring general education textbooks for the pupils of national minorities, the following amount of funds was allocated per pupil from the pupil's basket: in 2003 - LTL 23.10, in 2004 - LTL 34.65, in 2006 - LTL 52.37, in 2007 - LTL 61.96, and in 2008- LTL 83.40. A school for Byelorussians is the only one in the country, and the textbooks for it are not published (they are obtained from Belarus), yet the Ministry of Education and Science orders additional teaching aids and the preparation of manuscripts.

The growth of the pupil's basket during the years 2004-2008

Funds for education for a specific school are calculated by adapting the coefficients fixed for the actual number of pupils.

For a long time, the pupils of national minority schools (during the last year the term – schools where instruction is conducted in the language of a national minority - has been increasingly used), the pupil's basket was increased by 10 per cent. In 2007, the amount of funds for mixed schools (schools wherein both, the Lithuanian language and a national minority language is used for instruction) was increased up to 20 per cent. Since 2008, for all schools wherein instruction is conducted in the language of a national minority the fixed coefficient was increased by 20 per cent.

From 1 January 2004, the pupil's basket was LTL 1553 (for national minorities + 10 per cent LTL - 1708), from 1 May 2004, the pupil's basket was LTL 1703 (for national minorities + 10 per cent - LTL 1873), from 1 January 2005, the pupil's basket was LTL 1728 (for national minorities + 10 per cent - LTL 1901), from 1 September 2005, the pupil's basket was LTL 1824 (for national minorities + 10 per cent - LTL 2006), from 1 January 2006, the pupil's basket was LTL 1942 (for national minorities + 10 per cent - LTL 2136), from 1 January 2007, the pupil's basket was LTL 2333 (for national minorities + 10 per cent - LTL 2566; whereas for mixed schools + 20 per cent LTL 2799), from 1 January 2008, the pupil's basket was LTL 2684 (for national minorities + 20 per

cent - LTL 3220), from 1 September 2008, the pupil's basket will be LTL 3059 (for national minorities + 20 per cent - LTL 3671). As compared with the schools where instruction is conducted in the Lithuanian language, the bag of pupils attending schools where instruction is conducted in the language of a national minority will be bigger by 20 per cent.

Education of Roma

Pupils of the Roma nationality mostly attend Lithuanian schools. Information collected by the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad from the education divisions of municipalities in 2008 demonstrated that during recent years Roma became more involved in the educational process: during the academic year of 2007/2008, 531 Roma pupils attended schools in Lithuania, as compared to only 276 in 1996/1997.

Education of Roma is a priority task of the program for the integration of Roma into the Lithuanian society for the years 2008-2010. The program foresees 10 measures aimed at fostering the involvement of Roma into the public education system: to organize additional pre-school, before school and other non-formal education; to prepare teaching materials and methodological recommendations for training pre-school, before school and school age Roma children; to fund projects fostering the involvement of Roma children and the youth into non-formal training of non-governmental organizations by holding competitions; to organize seminars for the advancement of professional skills for teachers working with Roma children; to award scholarships for socially supportable Roma attending vocational and higher education schools; to organize courses of the official language; to organize computer literacy courses; to establish a job position for regular assistants to teachers at schools attended by Roma children who do not know the official language or are with medium, great or very great special learning needs, etc.

The implementation of these measures is responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad. Municipalities of the Republic of Lithuania wherein persons of Roma nationality reside are suggested to contribute to the organization of additional pre-school, before school and other informal education of Roma.

In the Roma Community Centre operating in the Vilnius settlement of Kirtimai, pre-school and before school training classes are held every day. There children are served free meals; also additional training of children is organized: the circles of art, dance, and singing are operating. Teenagers and adults are offered computer literacy classes (they are provided with the possibility to use the internet services free of charge), as well as the official language courses. Besides, special methodologies, language teaching aids facilitating the mastery of the official language have been prepared.

Based on data of Vilnius city municipality, in 2005, 117 Roma children attended Vilnius schools. Seeking to establish favourable conditions for Roma children to attend general education schools according to their age and the level of education (according to general, adapted, or modified programs), additional measures are employed. Funds have been allocated from the budget of Vilnius city municipality for procuring all Roma children with textbooks. Pupils from socially supportable families are served free meals at schools. Language therapists, psychologists, social pedagogues working at schools provide necessary assistance to Roma children. Roma children are included into after-school activities (at schools, sports schools, and pupils' health centres). Job positions for a

regular social pedagogues with Roma children are set up. Job positions for a social pedagogue have already been established in Sauletekis secondary school (67 Roma children), Senamiestis (23 Roma children) and Naujininkai (16 Roma children) secondary schools of the city of Vilnius (based on data of the year 2005). Social pedagogues cooperate with specialists of the Roma Community Centre. A common seminar “The learning needs of Roma pupils, problems and the search of solutions” was organized. Experience of foreign countries in work with Roma children is used. Information is continually furnished to Roma parents about their administrative responsibility for non-attendance of their children.

14. Learning in the national minority languages or of national minority languages

At general education schools a sufficient number of classes is allocated for national minorities to study the native language (Belarusian, Polish, Russian) in the language of a national minority (nearly the same number of classes as for studying the native Lithuanian language at schools where teaching is conducted in the Lithuanian language). The minimum number of weekly classes:

- In 1 - 4 forms – 27 lessons ,
- 5 - 10 forms – 29 lessons,
- 11-12 forms – 7 lessons.

The school may use the number of classes distributed at its discretion and assign an additional number of classes for teaching the native language.

From the year 2003, children of national minorities were provided with a possibility to learn their native language not only at schools, wherein this language is used for teaching, but also at all general education schools wherein this language may be taught as a separate discipline.

By Order No. ISAK-1630 of 1 August 2006, a specification of recommendations for the organization of learning the national minority language at general education schools was approved on which basis it is possible to organize the teaching of a native language for pupils for which the language of instruction used at school is not their native language.

With consideration to the plan of actions for increasing the diversity and implementing multilingualism as well as the recommendations of experts of the European Council on the establishment of conditions for developing multilingualism, the Ministry of Education and Science fosters the teaching of neighbouring state languages (Latvian, Polish, etc.) by using the possibilities to teach pupils a language as an obligatory discipline, as an elective discipline, or integrate the teaching of a language into non-formal education of children set out in the general education plans for the academic years 2008-2009.

Native languages of national minorities and the official Lithuanian language Testing of academic performance in basic education and graduation examinations

When completing a basic education program at Lithuanian general education schools, the testing of academic performance in basic education: in Lithuanian and mathematics is performed. At schools where instruction is carried out in the languages of national minorities apart from the disciplines listed above, also the testing of knowledge in

their native languages (Belarusian, Polish, Russian, and German) is carried out. The tasks for this testing are prepared by the National Examination Centre.

Based on the valid procedure of graduation examinations, by completing a general education program, in order to receive a certificate, pupils must pass three examinations: one mandatory examination in the Lithuanian language and two examinations selected at their choice. The list of graduation examinations also includes an examination in native languages (Polish, Russian, and Belarusian); therefore every desiring pupil may take it.

After approving the plan of measures for the improvement for academic performance in basic education and graduation examinations for the years 2008-2012 (approved by Order No. ISAK-1568 of the Minister of Education and Science of 30 May 2008), the testing of academic performance in basic education and school graduation examinations in native languages are planned to be organized in the future. The plans of measures foresee that from 2012 an examination in the Lithuanian language will be conducted according to the general education program (instead of the former examinations in the Lithuanian (native) and the Lithuanian (official) language). The program will be one, yet different assessment may be applied to pupils who graduated from schools where instruction is conducted in the national minority language. Measures are foreseen to facilitate the introduction of such an examination.

Regarding closure of the Department of the Russian language and literature of Vilnius University

The Department of Slavonic languages is open at Vilnius University, wherein possibilities are provided to study the Russian language and literature. Also, the Centre of Polonistics is operating where students willing to study the Polish language and literature are accepted.

A sufficient amount of specialists for teaching native languages at national minority schools are prepared in Lithuania. Russian, Polish language specialists qualified to work at national minority schools are prepared at Vilnius University and Vilnius Pedagogical University. Also, specialists in the Belarus language are trained at Vilnius Pedagogical University.

For the teachers of native languages, as well as for the teachers of all other disciplines, a possibility to improve qualification in different professional skills advancement programs is provided.

15. Teaching of the official language

Number of classes in the Lithuanian language at general education schools using a national language as language of instruction.

The following number of classes was fixed in the general education plans of 2007–2008:

In 1–2 forms, 5 hours of classes of the Lithuanian language per week,

In 3–4 forms, 7 hours of classes of the Lithuanian language per week,

In 5–6 forms, 6 hours of classes of the Lithuanian language per week,

In 7–8 forms, 6 hours of classes of the Lithuanian language per week,

In 9–10 forms, 8 hours of classes of the Lithuanian language per week,

In 11–12 forms, 8 hours of classes of the Lithuanian language per week.

Information about the official language courses for adults is provided in clause No.

3.

16. Participation in the decision-making processes

The Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad and other public institutions also consult on issues important to national minorities with the Council of National Communities.

The Council may on its initiative prepare and submit proposals regarding the improvement of laws and to support constructive initiatives and conceptions of national minority organizations, as well as contribute to the coordination of general activities in this field.

The Council of National Minorities independently organizes its activities that do not depend on the Department National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad.

17. Institutions responsible for the integration of national minorities

Taking into consideration the fact that the protection of national minority rights is a part of the protection of international human rights, institutions operating in Lithuania are responsible both, for the protection of rights of national minorities, and the protection of persons belonging to national minorities in the general context of the protection of human rights.

The Department National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad assign 30 per cent of its budget allocations for the cherishment of culture and traditions of national minorities.

The projects of national minorities are also supported by the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Culture Support Fund, the Press, Radio and Television Support Fund, and municipalities. The Ministry of Culture allocated 41 thousand litas for the projects of national minorities in 2007, the municipalities – over 400 thousand litas; the Press, Radio and Television Support Fund - 84 thousand litas. In addition, the Ministry of Education and Science together with municipalities assign budget allocations for the maintenance of national minority schools.

In 2004–2007, Vilnius city municipality continued the provision of social support (different social services and benefits) to the members of Roma community. One-off benefits for covering loss caused by fire were allocated for Roma (for 6 families - 8,930 litas), for the acquisition of teaching aids (for 159 families – 32,780 litas). The Roma community was supported with clothing, footwear, home appliances (for 13 644 litas), also costs associated with obtaining identity documents were reimbursed.

Taking into consideration the fact that support to national minorities is provided in Lithuania by different institutions within the scope of their competence, whereas Lithuanians living abroad are only supported by the Department National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad, the bigger part of the Department's budget is allocated to the needs of Lithuanians living abroad.

18. Participation in the economic and social life

Seeking to find out the situation of women and men belonging to national minorities on the labour market, and the situation of the Roma national minority, scientific sociological surveys are conducted at the order of the Department National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad.

Identity documents of Roma nationality persons

Based on data of the Migration Department as of 1 March 2007, 2,275 identity documents were issued to persons belonging to the national Roma community. Of which: 748 new model passports, 779 identity cards, 650 old model passports, 94 permanent residence permits and 4 temporary residence permits. Based on data of the Migration Department and of the Ministry of the Interior, an absolute majority of Roma residing in Lithuania have identity documents.

The Department National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad at the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, taking into consideration statements of the Roma community that a part of them do not have identity documents, included a measure – to organize the arrangement of identity documents of socially supportable Roma into the program for the integration of Roma into the Lithuanian society for the years 2008-2010, and foresaw funding for this measure. It is expected that Roma who do not have identity documents and willing to obtain them will be able to get them in 2009.

Currently, Roma may consult regarding the validity of identity documents with a lawyer working at the Roma Community Centre.

Health care of Roma nationality persons

Pursuant to the Law on Health Care System of the Republic of Lithuania (Official Gazette, 1994, No. 63-1231; 1998, No. 112-3099) and the Law on Health Insurance of the Republic of Lithuania (Official Gazette, 1996, 55-1287; 2002, No. 123-5512), Roma who are citizens of the Republic of Lithuania have equal rights to health care in the same way as other citizens of the Republic of Lithuania permanently residing in Lithuania. In the field of fitness activity, the measures intended for the whole national system, including Roma, are applied.

Pursuant to article 6 of the Law on Health Insurance of the Republic of Lithuania (Official Gazette, 1996, No. 55-1287; 2002, No. 123-5512), persons covered by the mandatory national insurance are not distinguished by nationality, race or gender.

Based on article 49 of the Law on Health Care of the Republic of Lithuania (Official Gazette, 1994, No. 63-1231; 1998, No. 112-3099), the right to health care guaranteed by the state is granted to citizens of the Republic of Lithuania and other states, as well as to stateless persons who permanently reside in Lithuania. The emergency medical aid is provided at the Lithuanian national health system institutions free of charge to all permanent residents irrespective of the fact whether they are covered by the mandatory health insurance, also irrespective of the number of a patient's visits at a medical indications during a calendar year, or residential place, i.e. if necessary, the mandatory (the first and emergency) medical aid is provided for all insured persons at health care institutions.

For Roma of the city of Vilnius who reside in the settlement of Kirtimai, personal health care services are provided in the same way as for all residents of the Republic of Lithuania pursuant to the aforementioned legal acts, and their health care is within responsibility of Vilnius city municipality. Roma who are covered by health insurance, freely select a general practice physician or a local physician, or specialized medical care, where they are provided health care services paid by a territorial patient fund. Based on article 6 of the Law on Health Insurance, mothers of many children, also children under 18, persons recognized as disabled, and persons registered with the labour exchange, are

insured with the public funds, and the services of their health care is paid by a territorial patient fund. Those who do not have health insurance are only provided the emergency aid. The majority of Roma are treated at the public institution Naujininkai out-patient clinic, which territory of service includes the settlement of Kirtimai. In this out-patient clinic Roma are provided out-patient primary and secondary personal health care services. Physicians communicate with Roma patients in the Lithuanian and Russian languages. If necessary, Roma may be sent to in-patient health care institutions according to the general procedure.

The costs of nursing and hospice services for Vilnius city residents not covered by mandatory health insurance (including Roma) when the in-patient treatment term payable by a territorial patient fund has expired, are paid by the Health and Social Care Department pursuant to Order No. 371 of the Council of Vilnius city municipality of 18 July 2001 “On approval of the procedure of services provided in nursing homes and hospices, and out-patient personal health care institutions for persons not covered by the mandatory health insurance for whom the in-patient treatment term payable by a territorial patient funds, has expired” and decision No. 1-567 of 17 November 2004 of the Council of Vilnius city municipality of 17 November 2004 “On amendments to the Council decision No. 371 of 18/07/2001”.

Seeking to solve issues associated with health care of Roma, the following measures were set out in the program for the integration of Roma into the Lithuanian society for the years 2008-2010: to prepare and to implement a project for training on the healthy lifestyle; to organize events promoting healthy lifestyle in the places of compact habitation and study of Roma; to organize a cycle of lectures for Roma girls and women on sanitation and hygiene issues; to organize medical examination of Roma not covered by the mandatory health insurance (within the competence of the family doctor), and to submit generalized results thereof.

Housing for Roma

In 2009, plans are made to make an analysis of the legal registration of accommodation and the quality of living environment of Roma, also, to prepare a feasibility study on the acquisition of housing by Roma and the improvement of quality thereof. It is hoped that after making a feasibility study it will be possible to take specific actions (also by municipalities) solving the issue of housing of Roma.

So far, the problem of housing of Roma is solved by providing them with a social accommodation for Roma. Social accommodation for Roma as well as for all citizens of the Republic of Lithuania pretending to it, is provided based on the Law on State Support for the Acquisition or Lease of Housing, and the Upgrading Blocks of Flats that is implemented by executive institutions of municipalities.

Also, Vilnius city municipality takes care of the territory of the settlement of Kirtimai: disposes garbage free of charge; allocates funds for the acquisition of solid fuel. To procure Roma with solid fuel, in 2004- 9,625 litas (for 76 families), in 2005- 9, 875 litas (for 79 families), in 2006 – 10,000 litas (for 92 families), and in 2007 – 21, 200 litas (for 101 family) were allocated.

Court order regarding Roma homes demolished in 2004

On 18 December 2007, Vilnius county administrative court took a decision on which basis the applicants (20 persons of Roma nationality) were awarded LTL 100,000 as indemnification for non-property damage for the homes demolished in the Kirtimai camping ground in 2004.

19. Restitution of property and territorial distribution of national minorities

After reestablishment of Lithuania's independence, a land reform was started in Lithuania that continues up till now. The implementation of the land reform carried out on the basis of property restitution was started upon adoption by the Supreme Council of several laws defining the framework of the land reform in July 1991. These laws provided for the relocation of land, or the restitution of land in equivalent kind, what also remained in subsequent laws.

The relocation of land or the restitution of land in equivalent kind means that it is possible to relocate a land plot of equal value from pool of free land, therefore, the land plots owned by devisees of the land held in their patrimony may be occupied by migrants only in the case if the responsible institutions which implemented the reform applied the requirements of laws in the wrong way.

Currently, the land reform is being finalized. 8,730 requests to reinstate the ownership rights were submitted in Vilnius County. For 2,288 citizens the ownership rights have already been reinstated; as to 7,832 requests, decisions have already been taking to reinstate the ownership rights.

A major part of the land of local residents has been sold, since with the improvement of economic situation, a need to build private homes emerged. This need especially grew in the capital of Vilnius and its vicinities. Therefore, an increasing number of different nationality persons settle down in Vilnius district. Thus, the national situation of residents is gradually changing. The reasons of these changes are economic.

Attention should be drawn to the fact that the total plenitude of national minorities in Vilnius and its vicinities has not reduced during the last year.

20. The right of national minorities to maintain relationships with nationals residing abroad.

Based on the Regulation (EC) No.1931/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006, laying down rules on local border traffic at the external land borders of the Member States and amending the provisions of the Schengen Convention (OL 2006 L 405, p. 1), currently negotiations with the Republic of Belarus and Russian Federation regarding bilateral agreements on the establishment of local traffic through the state border are conducted. Upon entry into effect of these arrangements, citizens residing in the Republic of Lithuania in the frontier territory of the Republic of Lithuania – Belarusian, Russians and other nationality persons – will be provided with facilitated conditions to access territories of the Republic of Belarus or the Russian Federation, and this way maintain cultural social and other relationships with their nationals.