**Information by the Government of Lithuania in response to the call for inputs of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities**

The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania guarantees (Article 29), that “All persons shall be equal before the law, courts, and other state institutions and officials.” And “Human rights may not be restricted; no one may be granted any privileges on the grounds of gender, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, belief, convictions, or views.”

Law on Equal Treatment of the Republic of Lithuania prohibits discrimination on the ground of race, nationality, language, origin, social status, belief, ethnic origin or religion. The Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson investigates individual complaints, carries out investigations on his/hers own initiative; performs independent researches/ surveys related to discrimination, provides conclusions and recommendations on any issue related to discrimination; carries out preventive and educational activity, secures equal opportunities mainstreaming.

Draft Law on National Minorities of the Republic of Lithuania is being prepared that will aim at regulating and enhancing the rights of national minorities, including the right to influence public decisions affecting persons belonging to national minorities, and related obligations of the State. The Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania is planning to submit the draft Law on National Minorities to other institutions and stakeholders, and to the Government for consideration.

The Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania is the authority responsible for the implementation of the national minorities’ policy. It disseminates information about national minorities in Lithuania through media. The Department of National Minorities provides financial assistance to national minorities’ non-governmental organizations, which carry out diverse activities including events introducing the Lithuanian society with their culture, language, traditions, and history.

In 2017, the Department of National Minorities commissioned a study on Ethnic minorities in Lithuania that analysed the situation of national minorities in Lithuania with a particular focus on Southeast region of Lithuania with highest share of residents belonging to national minorities. Based on the findings, the strategy 2018-2027 for policy on ethnic minorities was developed.

Every year the Youth Affairs Department under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania organises trainings for youth and for people working with young people on the topic of “Education on anti-discrimination, tolerance and respect for others”. These trainings aim to teach anti-discriminatory and respectful communication, help to learn how to reject prejudices and to foster amicable relationships with people belonging tonational minorities. For example, 30 thousand euros were allocated for 2020 year from state budget of Lithuania for the programme, which one of the aims was to provide funding for activities aimed at young people belonging tonational minorities.

In 2020, the Youth Affairs Department cooperated with NGOs and British Council in Lithuania organising the training for young people called “Stronger in Diversity”. 40 young people participated in this training; the activities covered such topics as youth participation in politics, finding their role in society, learning about national minorities in Lithuania.

In 2020, the Commission for the Education of National Minorities was established. The role of the Commission is to provide opinion, recommendations regarding national minorities’ education in Lithuania.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania often consults with Lithuanian School Student Union and Lithuanian National Union of Students on issues relevant to them in education. Youth belonging to national minorities participates in the activities of both mentioned organizations.

Article 4 (2) of the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania stipulates that the education content shall be developed and systematically updated for the implementation of the following education objectives – to develop an educated, mature personality, which can be characterized by focus on values based on national awareness and openness to the world’s humanistic culture, modern competences and a commitment to lifelong learning, readiness and motivation to contribute to the country’s sustainable development and development of a democratic society.

Democratic citizenship and human rights education are included in the national curriculum which, in general, covers such aspects as active citizenship, participation, responsibility, equal opportunities, etc. Citizenship education covers all areas of formal (citizenship education and related civic aspects are integrated into content of other subjects (1-12 grades)) and non-formal (i.e., life of the school community and self-governance) education related activities.

Our national (general) curriculum is currently being redesigned. The goal is to ensure inclusive, high quality education and lifelong learning for all geared towards sustainable development. The renewal of national curriculum takes into account both global and regional recommendations and frameworks (UNESCO’s 2030 Agenda, EU agenda, OECD and CoE guidelines), there is a strong focus on both human rights and democratic citizenship.

The majority of Lithuanian education institutions participate in various international programmes (e.g., Erasmus+, Nordplus). Considerable part of international projects is related to global citizenship education, education for sustainable development, human rights topics. Participation in international activities not only enhances intercultural understanding, increases tolerance for other cultures, but also provides opportunities to learn from one another, increases education quality by sharing best practices and acting together as well as promotes active participation in general.