DIASPORA POLICY IN LITHUANIA: BUILDING BRIDGES AND NEW CONNECTIONS

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“How to Improve Intra-European Mobility and Circular Migration? Fostering Diaspora Engagement”

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GLOBAL LITHUANIA

... is it a magician’s hat for solving all questions associated with the diaspora?

... or a network of motivated people building a better Lithuania?

GLOBAL LITHUANIA framework = connecting with members of the global Lithuanian community through ideas and projects
LITHUANIANS IN THE WORLD

Total global Lithuanian population - 3,663 million

In Lithuania - 3,043 million

Abroad – 619,600

257,000 Lithuanians abroad have Lithuanian citizenship

Percentage of population living abroad by country:
- UK – 19,9 %
- Russia – 13,8 %
- Poland – 10,0 %
- Canada – 7,9 %
- Germany – 7,0 %
- Ireland – 6,4 %
- USA – 5,8 %
- Latvia – 5,6 %
- Norway – 3,8 %
- Ukraine – 3,2 %
- Belarus – 3,1 %
- Australia – 2,2 %
- Spain – 2,0 %
- Sweden – 1,4 %
- Denmark – 1,1 %
- Netherlands – 1,0 %

The largest percentage of seniors (over 75) live in Poland (77,3%)

The largest percentage of youth (under 14) live in:
- Ireland (20,7%)
- UK (18,6%)
- Sweden (17,9%)
- Canada (17,6%)
- Spain (17,3%)
- Norway (16%)
- Denmark (13,9%)
- Latvia (4,8%)

The lowest percentage of youth live in:
- Poland (1,5%)
- Russia (1,9%)
- Belarus (3,4%)

547,000 emigrated from Lithuania between 2001-2014. Of those:
- 45,8% emigrated to UK
- 8,4% to Ireland
- 7,9% to Germany
- 7,2% to Norway
- 3,5% to Russia
- 2,5% to Spain

* Based on 2014 population census data collected by Statistics Lithuania from national counterparts in other countries
EMIGRATION OF LITHUANIANS: Threat, challenge or opportunity?

EMIGRATION

• GLOBAL LITHUANIAN DIASPORA – 1,3 million (unofficial sources)

PUBLIC PERCEPTION

• In public discourse, emigration is often depicted as a threat. The international movement of people is not widely seen as an important feature of the global economy, which can generate “diaspora capital” for the benefit of Lithuania.

GOVERNMENT PERCEPTION

• Migration is a fact of life in today’s globalized world
• Emigration is a challenge, which can be transformed into an opportunity
• The diaspora is a national asset, which can be mobilized for mutual benefit

GLOBAL LITHUANIA

• The main idea of Global Lithuania – no matter where you reside, you can maintain close ties with Lithuania, foster your identity, contribute to Lithuania’s progress and promote Lithuania abroad
• The Global Lithuania programme is a policy instrument for engaging and working in partnership with the diaspora. It does not regulate domestic policies, such as migration processes or labor market issues. The programme’s main objective is to strengthen ties with the diaspora.
## LESSONS LEARNED

### Successful Lithuanian diaspora policy depends on:

- **Capacity to adapt the “Global Lithuania” programme** 2011-2019 and its inter-agency action plan through annual updates. As the designated programme coordinator, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs oversees programme implementation and reports on results to the Government and Parliament.

- **Implementation of the inter-agency plan by 13 institutions** (6 ministries, 7 subordinate agencies). While programme activities and goals are planned concurrently, each agency allocates its own funding for programme implementation from existing budgetary resources.

- **Coordination** among Government institutions for optimizing limited resources and ensuring effective implementation.

- **MFA engagement with public, private and NGO sector partners** to launch and implement initiatives, which strengthen State-diaspora ties.

- Support and involvement at the **political level** of Government.

- Long-term efforts at winning the “hearts and minds” of the diaspora by encouraging participation and two-way communication.
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

MFA COORDINATES THE GLOBAL LITHUANIA PROGRAM

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SECURITY IR LABOUR

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

MINISTRY OF CULTURE

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

RESEARCH COUNCIL

LITHUANIAN NATIONAL RADIO AND TELEVISION

INVEST LITHUANIA

ENTERPRISE LITHUANIA

MINISTRY OF ECONOMY

STATE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

STATISTICS LITHUANIA

INFORMATION SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

CENTRAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS

PARTNERS:
• Diplomatic missions of the Republic of Lithuania
• Lithuanian communities abroad
• Non-governmental organizations (NGO) and partner institutions

TARGET AUDIENCES ABROAD:
• Professionals and entrepreneurs
• Lithuanian communities and organizations
• Youth

MFA ENCOURAGES DIVERSIFYING FUNDING SOURCES
**PROFESSIONALS**

### Select Government initiatives
- Annual **World Lithuanian Economic Forum** brings together leading international and local economic players across a range of industries
- Dissemination of information about Lithuania:
  - investment climate and trade opportunities (Invest Lithuania and Enterprise Lithuania)
  - tourism (Tourism Department)
  - cultural events (Ministry of Culture)
  - Lithuanian-language education and study opportunities (Ministry of Education)
  - foreign and diaspora affairs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
  - TV programs about Lithuanian community events and life abroad (National Radio and TV)
- working visits abroad and meetings with target audiences

### Government sponsored events and activities
- **Global Lithuanian Leaders** (LT Big Brother mentoring programme; professionals database)
- **Global Lithuania awards**
- **World Lithuanian News**, “Identity LT” programs on national television
- **City Alumni** – virtual platform for connecting Lithuanians abroad with their city or town of origin
- International **artists workshop** “Migrating birds”
- International **music festival** “Returns”
- International **film festival** segment “Lithuanians abroad”
- Internet platform for private initiative gone global and viral: **Annual singing of national anthem** worldwide on July 6 (Statehood Day)
- **Success stories** featured on TV, print and social media
- **Diaspora news** and **public announcements** about study, internship, scholarship and funding opportunities on the Facebook page **“Global Lithuania Network”**
LITHUANIAN DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS

Global Lithuania:

• Supports community life and activities abroad, particularly those that promote Lithuania, its culture and language, investment and trade, tourism, scientific and other cooperation

• 41 registered Lithuanian communities abroad are connected under an umbrella organization – the Lithuanian World Community

MFA funding is allocated annually for:

| ≈ 100 Lithuanian community projects | ≈ 100 events and activities planned by Lithuanian diplomatic missions in partnership with the diaspora | World Lithuanian events – song festivals, sport games, economic fora, academic conferences |

• An institutional framework was created to promote dialogue with the Lithuanian World Community at the parliamentary and governmental level. Representatives meet twice a year in mixed Commissions to facilitate consultation and, more importantly, participation.
22 Lithuanian Youth Association affiliates worldwide comprise the World Lithuanian Youth Association, which cooperates with the MFA and other government institutions.

**Support for Lithuanian-language education:**
- Close to 200 Lithuanian Saturday or Sunday schools with 8000 students operate abroad. Nine are fully accredited secondary schools;

**Internships and mentoring programs:**
- **“Create for Lithuania”** is a one-year work placement programme for young professionals. Launched by Invest Lithuania in partnership with the Lithuanian Government, it aims to integrate junior professionals from abroad in public sector jobs and to utilize their expertise (Ministry of Economy and “Invest Lithuania”).
- **“LT Big Brother”** – a global voluntary professional mentoring programme for Lithuanian students world-wide (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and GLL).
- **“Meeting of World Lithuanian Youth“** brings young people living abroad to Lithuania for an intensive programme of lectures and discussions about business, politics, science and culture. Keynote speeches are delivered by high-level government officials and leading national personalities. The meeting is attended by thousands, includes career and networking events, live concerts, workshops, sports tournaments and other activities.
- **The Study Exchange Fund**, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Foreign Affairs launches an annual internship competition for Lithuanian students, who are selected to work at Embassies, Lithuanian schools and community organizations abroad. Last year the MFA accepted 79 Lithuanian students (59 from abroad and 20 from Lithuania) for internships at Lithuanian embassies. 7 student interns were accepted at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- **Lithuanian International Student Services (LISS)** is a summer internship program in Lithuania for North American students of Lithuanian heritage.

*These programs are very popular among youth and are often a stepping stone to their relocation or reintegration in Lithuania.*
PROJECT ACTIVITIES

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs** engages diaspora groups, shares information about innovative and effective practices by the diaspora, funds projects proposed by Lithuanian organizations, embassies and NGOs that implement the Global Lithuania programme. Particular emphasis is placed on initiatives that promote Lithuanian identity and Lithuania abroad, and strengthen ties with diaspora professionals.

**Department of Physical Education and Sports** supports initiatives that promote team sports and participatory athletic events in communities abroad, also organizes the World Lithuanian Sports Games every four years.

**Ministry of Social Security and Labour** funds a project which offers psychological counseling to emigrants.

**The Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour** supports activities and events organized by Lithuanian youth organizations abroad.

**Ministry of Culture and the Lithuanian Culture Commission and Press, Radio and Television Support Fund** supports foreign Lithuanian non-commercial media and cultural projects, which promote Lithuanian culture abroad.

**Ministry of Economy and „Enterprise Lithuania“** support projects aimed at connecting diaspora professionals with Lithuania and each other, encouraging them to promote global opportunities for Lithuania.

**Ministry of Education and Science supports** Lithuanian-language Saturday and Sunday schools abroad through project funding, training and provision of educational materials. Also provides stipends for students of Lithuanian origin and awards recognizing the outstanding achievements of Lithuanian scientists and academics abroad.
SERVICES FOR RETURNING MIGRANTS
(provided outside the Global Lithuania programme)

• Lithuanian Migration Policy Guidelines – The Government of Lithuania approved guidelines and measures for encouraging emigrants to return and for attracting labor from abroad (coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior).

• “Backto.lt” – Private sector initiative that targets Lithuanian students living or studying abroad and encourages them to return to Lithuania to pursue careers and start businesses. Companies and banks sponsor career fairs, present job opportunities to prospective employees.

• "Living and working in Lithuania" - Social Security and Labour Ministry handbook with basic information about the job market, social security, health care, housing, education, other useful links.

• Website “Migration in Numbers” – a joint project of six Lithuanian institutions updates data about migration facts and trends.

• Migration Information Centre – a one-stop non-governmental source of information for returning Lithuanian migrants. To be launched in May 2015 (Ministry of the Interior).

Main Centre activities:

- Individual consultations will be available for returning Lithuanian migrants and their family members
- Internet website to provide links and other useful information about the re-integration process and procedures
- A network of governmental institutions, NGOs and business representatives will ensure quality services
MFA 2014 survey results

- Respondents were asked: *“What would motivate you to return to Lithuania?“*. 30% indicated they had no intention of returning. Others mentioned: 1) Country's economic growth (36%); 2) Better psychological climate in the country, greater tolerance, respect for the individual (34%); 3) Better wages (24%); 4) Respect in the workplace (22%).
- 72% of Lithuanians living abroad believe that no real communication obstacles exist with Lithuania
- 89% are interested in information about Lithuania
- 81% follow news and events in the media, mainly on the internet
- 89% are interested in events in Lithuania, but ¾ of respondents said they do not participate in public life
- 88% want to maintain their Lithuanian identity while living abroad
- 28% believe that conditions for maintaining national identity have improved, compared to 21.6% in 2012.

- MFA cooperates with diaspora experts in academia, who conduct studies under the Global Lithuania programme
- These findings and recommendations are presented annually at MFA press briefings and/or roundtable discussions
- The Department of Statistics collects data about Lithuanians abroad
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