

On the basis of survey data, one can trace an increasing social distance towards Roma throughout the last 10–15 years. By now, the Roma became the most disliked ethnic group in the country, and there is a range of indicators that their social exclusion has deepened. Media images of drug-trade and poverty from a ghettoized settlement in the outskirts of Vilnius became an icon associated with the Roma. Factor analysis reveals that Roma are associated by the majority with a set of “socially problematic” groups such as former criminals, drug-addicts, or alcoholics, and not with a set of other ethnic groups (no matter, liked or disliked ones). At the same time, both Roma and the society tend to expect that Roma will socially advance only through the narrow niches of musical or other craft occupations, without encouraging other channels of social mobility. Although socially mobile Roma tend to distance themselves both from negative images and from real contacts with people from a ghettoized settlement, they encounter prejudice anyway. Thus individual advancement, although suggested by majority, is in fact being hampered, and social mobility depends on change of a group status.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES OF ETHNIC MINORITIES AND IMMIGRANT GROUPS IN LITHUANIA

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The data of several sociological studies reveal both direct and indirect evidence of the problems that ethnic minority groups of Lithuania face in the labour market, and complement statistical data, including the data of official institutions such as the Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson. Though scarce, these data may in fact show persistent social differences (e.g., lower educational attainments, higher unemployment rates among non-Lithuanians, and mono-ethnic segments in the labour market).

Ethnically homogeneous social relations and formations, as well as their overlapping in the spheres of primary and secondary spheres, strengthen ethnic borders and limit individual integration. In addition, lower evaluation of one’s own social status and symbolic power, which is peculiar to members of the Lithuanian ethnic minorities, also reflects unequal social relations among the majority and minorities. These factors are determined by lower social resources of minority groups’ members.

The analysis of the positions of several governmental bodies and institutions confirms the dominant position of the majority ethnic group. Minorities are not effectively represented or employed in the governmental structures. Higher posts held by people of non-Lithuanian origin are rare cases. However, it is difficult to claim that ethnicity limits career opportunities in Lithuania. Other factors, such as the disproportionate impact of economic restructuring and the decline of traditional industries on the Russian minority (geographic concentration in urban areas plus the sectorial concentration of Russian workers in traditional industries) should be considered. The case of Russians and the Russian-speaking minority in Lithuania could be a good illustration and elaborated for the situation presented.

To generalize the research data, the following rifts in the labour market are more obvious among the ethnic minority members: a relatively higher concentration of minority groups in the lower levels of hierarchical positions (especially in the public sector), lower social mobility, and the higher probability of unemployment.