

Research into needs of students from the Vilnius District Municipality: Who was Nemtsov and why Lithuanians are in the minority?

[M media.efhr.eu/2017/01/13/research-needs-students-vilnius-district-municipality-nemtsov-lithuanians-minority/](http://media.efhr.eu/2017/01/13/research-needs-students-vilnius-district-municipality-nemtsov-lithuanians-minority/)

Establishment of cultural education programme for students, stronger focus on non-formal education, more favourable environment in schools to make learning process more effective, but also – cessation of promises concerning the issue of original spelling of names or double nomenclature and equal budget for both Lithuanian and national minority schools in the Vilnius region – these are the conclusions of the project „Analysis and evaluation of cultural needs of students in South-Eastern Lithuania”. Kazimieras Garšva, the founder of the anti-Polish organisation Vilnija is one of the executors.

The project was organized by a non-governmental organization – a non-profit organization called Lietuvos kultūros politikos institutas (Lithuanian Cultural Policy Institute). Its director, who is at the same time the leader of the project is Doctor Arvydas Matulionis. The research was carried out in schools in the Vilnius, Šalčininkai and Švenčionys Districts.

11 junior high schools had been surveyed in the Vilnius District (6 Lithuanian, 3 Polish, 1 Lithuanian-Polish, 1 Polish-Russian), 6 in the Šalčininkai District (2 Lithuanian, 3 Polish, 1 Russian), 4 in the Švenčionys District (3 Lithuanian, 1 Polish). The surveys consisted of 104 questions and were prepared for 9th to 12th grade students – 1214 students have taken part.

In Poland – Mickiewicz, in Russia – Putin

According to the authors of the survey, it was including questions concerning the most important historical events in Lithuania, well-known Lithuanian, Polish, Russian and Belarusian activists, who were important for the history of Lithuanian culture. The participants were asked if they know Jonas Basanavičius, Barbara Radziwiłł, Vincas Kudirka, Lech Wałęsa, Svetlana Alexievich or Boris Nemtsov. The students also had to mention persons important for Lithuanian culture in their opinion. The names that were mentioned the most often were Gediminas, Mindaugas, Vytautas. A few of the students mentioned Algirdas Brazauskas, Dalia Grybauskaitė, Vytautas Landsbergis and others. In the Polish history the people regarded as the most important were Adam Mickiewicz, Jagiełło and Piłsudski. In the Russian history Vladimir Putin and Peter the Great. Surveyed students also had to answer the question of who was the founder of the Vilnius city, when was it founded and they had to mention the events important for the Lithuanian history. The answers were, among others, singing of the Act of Independence in 1990, entering NATO and the Christianization of Lithuania.

In addition to the quality research the authors organized interviews with 42 directors of the schools, parents and cultural workers. The project was financed for Lithuanian council for culture that gave 5 thousands Euro for the research and private sponsors.

They would like to get to know Lithuania



Fot. Dorota Skoczyk

According to the authors of the research, the aim was to analyse the cultural needs of students from the Vilnius District and observe the scale of the question of isolation of the region from the rest of Lithuania.

“The research has shown that the problem of isolation is present and it is the result of outdated beliefs of some teachers. What do students say? They would like to get to know Lithuania, its nature and its culture. Only a half of the surveyed students have seen the sea, 16 % have gone to the concert hall. Altogether, we should sit at the same table and try to think how we could help children to know Lithuania better” – said the leader of the project Arvydas Matulionis during the presentation of the research in the Lithuanian Academy of Science.

“When it comes to the Vilnius District, we cannot talk about Polish, Russian or Lithuanian schools. Regardless the language of instruction there are children of different nationalities in every school. All of them have the same problems” – pointed out Matulionis.

According to the authors of the research, the contemporary education system forms members of society of consumption with limited functions, who lose their bond with the motherland, their history and culture. They underline that the school should not only teach knowledge, but also culture, morality, progress and social harmony.

The Manor House is not working effectively?

In the conclusions of the survey we read that situation, activity and possibilities of Vilnius schools depend from the economic and social development of the region and for the meantime the State does not have a clear idea concerning that question. The researchers say that 84,4 mln euros from the European Union budget allocated for restoration of travel objects were not used objectively – for example no one has thought about the activity of the restored Manor House.

The work of schools and teachers is – according to the authors of the analysis – is disrupted by all of the novelties and experiments that pervert the sense of the teaching. That, altogether with low qualified teachers and lack of responsibility of the schools is the reason of really low results of the exams of high school graduates from South-Eastern Lithuania.

After studies in Poland they are defending the interest of a different country

In the conclusions of the quality research, apart from the remarks concerning the organisation of the teachers' work, the discipline at school, we could also find the comments concerning the role of Poland.

“The neighbouring state of Poland wants to maintain an intensive and constant cooperation with the local governments of Vilnius, Šalčininkai and Švenčionys Districts, particularly with schools. Poland gives financial support only for Polish schools in that regions. It helps to renovate the buildings, to tidy the pitches, to build the stadiums, to provide sports equipment. Polish schools receive school utensils, books and textbooks. Polish theatres and other national institutions organize lots of projects, invite Polish students to the theatre spectacles and other artistic events, they organize trips to teach about the culture and historical heritage and pay for them. Teachers of both countries visit each others. After graduating school with Polish language of instruction in Lithuania, the students get into Polish universities without any contest and they are supported financially during their studies. The specialists with Polish diplomas rarely come back to Lithuania and even if they do, they are defending the interest of a different country” – we can read in the research's conclusions.

Decisions favourable only for Poles

“Under the pretext of educational goals, the aversion to Lithuania is widely encouraged” – the authors say. They add that “different Polish organizations have an impact on regional educational issues, for example European Foundation of Human Rights” and they accuse Lithuania of violating human rights on the international level.

In the conclusions of the quality research we read also that a lot of conflicts in mentioned regions is caused by the

fact that Lithuanian educational institutions are subordinate to Ministry of National Education and the Polish ones are managed by local governments. The directors and the teachers from Lithuanian and Russian schools complain allegedly that district courts where Poles are in majority are more favourable for inhabitants of Polish nationality.

The authors of the study notice that the state should assure the possibility of abroad trips, excursions to other cities, visiting museums, theatres and concerts for all the students, regardless their nationality. They propose also that Russian students could at least once a year go to Russia, for example to Hermitage Museum, and Belarusian to Belarus.

When you play a part of the harmed one, the older brother appears

The final propositions of the project are quite varied. The authors want to create a long-term strategy of development of South-Eastern Lithuania and they want to pay attention especially to the culture. They appeal to the government for creation of cultural educational programme in schools, favourable conditions for students to go for trips abroad, to visit museum and theatres. They want the cultural institutions in capital city to cooperate with schools in the Vilnius, Šalčininkai and Švenčionys Districts. The researches want also standardize the budget designated for all schools, regardless of the language of instruction, because, as they say, Lithuanians are in minority there and they do have worse situation. At one point, they propose an action that has nothing to do with the subject of the research.

“Lithuanian politicians should stop making promises concerning the names of the cities in South-Eastern Lithuania and spelling of the names of the Lithuanian citizens with Polish nationality to the neighbouring country. The promises are impossible to keep, because it would be a major violation of the Constitution of Republic of Lithuania and the law concerning national language. According to the authors of the project, the fact that students from Lithuanian schools are not familiar with linguistic works about the origin of surnames and names of the cities in the Vilnius District.

“The question of the spelling forces us to take a closer look at Lithuanian national language. Such inaccuracies in the language are a kind of a violation of the law about the national language. If we let it, what do we need the national language for?” – said the researchers during the presentation of the project.

“Lithuania is a motherland of Lithuanians, Poles, Belarusians, Crimean Karaites and Jews that have been living here for centuries. Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania wants to pick a quarrel – all researches prove that. And when you play a role of a harmed one, an older brother appears, you can get support. Politics interferes with solving cultural problems in the region” – said Kazimieras Garšva.

One of the final propositions of the project concerns the financial support for the neighbouring countries and how to dispense it. The researchers say that one of the Lithuanian funds should be responsible for that. The best idea would be to create a Charity Fund of South-Eastern Lithuania.

Source: <http://zw.lt/wilno-wilenszczyzna/badanie-potrzeb-kulturowych-uczniow-wilenszczyzny-kim-byl-niemcow-i-dlaczego-litwini-sa-mniejszoscia/>

Tłumaczenie by Joanna Jastrzębska w ramach praktyk w Europejskiej Fundacji Praw Człowieka, www.efhr.eu.
Translated by Joanna Jastrzębska within the framework of a traineeship programme of the European Foundation of Human Rights, www.efhr.eu.