Development Cooperation in LITHUANIA
Country Study

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*Data included is from the end of September 2007

Glossary

BEF	Baltic Environmental Forum
CEA	Center for Equality Advancement
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CONCORD	European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DE/AR	Development education / Awareness raising
DEEEP	Development Education Exchange in Europe Project
HPI Baltic	The Baltic Charity Foundation Heifer Project International
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EuroNGOs	The European NGOs for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Population and Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GIP	Global Initiative on Psychiatry
GLEN	Global Education Network of Young Europeans
GNI	Gross National Income
JuBIC	United Center of Initiatives for Belarus
LFPSHA	Lithuanian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association
LTL	Lithuanian currency
MDC	Modern Didactics Centre
MDGs	(UN) Millennium Development Goals
MFA	Lithuanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs
NGDO	Non-Governmental Development Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NISC	NGO Information and Support Centre
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODACE	Official Development Assistance in Central Europe (CIDA)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSI	Open Society Institute
The Guidelines	Development Co-operation Policy Guidelines of the Republic of Lithuania for 2006-2010
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
YCAC	Youth Career & Advising Centre

Introduction

Lithuania has, over the past few years, experienced an increase in development cooperation activities but is at the same time facing numerous challenges as an emerging donor. The government has set up a policy framework, but is still in the process of establishing concrete procedures and struggling with limited administrative capacities. Among the non-governmental not-for-profit organisations (NGOs) there is more and more enthusiasm to work for the benefit of the developing world both through development cooperation projects and development education / awareness raising (DE/AR) activities in Lithuania but resources to do so and experiences to build on are still limited. NGOs are also increasingly interested in building networks and working jointly on development policy issues but little experience of common action and diverging priorities create challenges when translating those interests into practice.

1. Official Development Assistance

The first legal framework for Lithuanian development cooperation and humanitarian assistance was set in May 2003 when the government adopted a concept paper on Lithuania's development cooperation for 2003-2005. A few years later, in June 2006 the government approved the _Development Co-operation Policy Guidelines of the Republic of Lithuania for 2006-2010_[1] (the Guidelines). This document provides the framework for Lithuania's current development cooperation policy and outlines its mission, main objectives, principles and priorities as well as coordination, financial commitments and measures for ensuring effectiveness.

According to the Guidelines, Lithuania's development policy is based on Lithuania's domestic and foreign policy, EU external policy guidelines and the MDGs. It aims to follow the principles of partnership, ownership, solidarity, transparency, accountability, coordination, complementarity and coherence for development. The objectives of Lithuania's development cooperation include contributing to the implementation of MDGs, supporting progress in '_the area of democracy, security and stability in neighbouring regions; activating political, cultural, economic and social relations with the countries of the region_'; and strengthening '_Lithuania's role in shaping and implementing the policy of international organisations in the region and thus strengthening Lithuania's national security_.' The Guidelines also outline the interests Lithuania's participation in international development cooperation is based on. Those include global interests – contributing to international security, the fight against terrorism and international organised crime, promoting sustainable development of partner countries, improving health care and social security in the world; regional interests – supporting domestic policy reforms in partner countries (transferring experiences regarding democracy, the rule of law and human rights); national interests – strengthening Lithuania's trade and economic relations with partner countries, improving Lithuania's image and enhancing mutual understanding.

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[1] Government of the Republic of Lithuania, Resolution No 561 of 8 June 2006 on the Approval of the Development Co-operation Policy Guidelines of the Republic of Lithuania for 2006-2010

The MFA is responsible for elaborating and implementing Lithuania's development cooperation policy. Since early 2007 the focal point within the MFA is the Development Cooperation and Democracy Promotion Department, which consists of three divisions (Development Cooperation Policy and Planning; Democracy Promotion; Programmes and Projects Implementation) and employs 13 people. The plan is to employ more people (around 4-5) in the near future and to establish a Project Evaluation Division that would work closely with the Development Cooperation Policy and Planning Division. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for allocating financial contributions to the budgets of international financial institutions. Other public authorities may also implement development cooperation activities within their competences in coordination with the MFA. In order to include other ministries in development policy planning, a national commission for development cooperation that would consist of high-level representatives of all ministries and act as an advisory body to the MFA will be set up in the near future.

Lithuania's financial contribution to development cooperation increased tenfold between 2002 and 2004. This increase was largely due to Lithuania's accession to the EU in May 2004 as a certain amount of payments to the EU budget is allocated for financing EC development and humanitarian aid programmes. In 2004 Lithuania's ODA amounted to around €7,66 million (0,04% of GNI) and a further €5,4 million was contributed as official assistance (OA) according to the OECD DAC criteria.[2] In 2005, Lithuanian ODA was around €12,3 million (0,06% of GNI) and 2006 saw an increase to approximately €18,3 million (0,08% of GNI). Lithuania strives to increase its ODA to the level of 0,17% of GNI by 2010 in accordance with the European Council conclusions of 16-17 June 2005. According to those conclusions, Lithuania should strive to increase its ODA/GNI ratio to 0,33% by 2015.[3]

The majority (in 2004 and 2005 around 90%, in 2006 70%) of Lithuania's aid is channelled through multilateral agencies: through contributions to the EU budget (in 2005 around 85% and in 2006 around 60% of all ODA) as well as to international organisations and UN agencies like the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), the World Meteorological Organisation, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD).

In its bilateral aid efforts Lithuania focuses on areas where it has a comparative advantage, in other words sharing its own reform experiences in transition to a democracy and market economy with countries that are willing to draw on that experience. Priority sectors include democracy, human rights, good governance and the rule of law; economic development; European integration processes; and administrative capacity-building. Geographically, Lithuania focuses first and

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[2] OA referred to assistance provided to countries in Part II of the OECD DAC list of aid recipients. However, Part II ceased to exist in 2005 when DAC reverted to a single list of ODA recipients. See more at https://www.oecd.org/document/55/0,3343,en_2649_34447_35832055_1_1_1_1,00.html

[3] Brussels European Council 16-17 June 2005, Presidency Conclusions, document available at http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/85349.pdf

foremost on Eastern Europe (Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine) and Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) but assistance is also provided to *'countries recovering from conflicts, such as the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Republic of Iraq'* (Guidelines). The Guidelines do not exclude other countries either: *'according to the priorities of the European Union, bilateral and trilateral assistance shall be provided, where possible, to the countries in other regions, in particular, to the poorest African states.'*

In 2006, Lithuania's bilateral development projects included the following: enhancing cooperation between Belarusian and Lithuanian media as well as writers, a study visit of youth affected by the Chernobyl catastrophe to Lithuania; training for Moldovan civil servants as well as assistance to the Moldovan Food Protection and Veterinary Control System and to the Moldovan Customs Service; sharing experiences in legal regulation of intellectual property with Ukraine and supporting the Ukrainian Customs in adopting the EU financial assistance programmes; strengthening gender equality as well as democratisation of local governance in Georgia; fighting corruption in Armenia and Azerbaijan; bringing Iraq's Correctional Service officials for trainings to Lithuania. In Afghanistan, where Lithuania leads the Province Reconstruction Team (PRT) for the Ghor province, training was provided for civil servants, the police and health service experts, and micro-hydro power station building projects were supported. 2006 also witnessed the first outreach to Africa: assistance was given to Mauritanian oceanologists.[4] Approval of the Mauritanian project is best explained by the interest of Lithuanian fishermen in the region.

Alongside bilateral and multilateral assistance Lithuania provides humanitarian aid to countries that have suffered from natural disasters or negative human activities. In 2005, for example, Lithuania allocated humanitarian aid to Pakistan, Georgia and South-East Asia; and in 2006 to Indonesia, Georgia and Lebanon. Decisions on whether and how to allocate humanitarian aid are made on a case-by-case basis, but a framework for providing humanitarian assistance with more specific criteria and rules is currently being prepared by the MFA.

1.1 Cooperation with NGOs

The Guidelines mention NGOs on three occasions. First: *'In implementing the national development co-operation policy, Lithuania shall support non-governmental organisations, facilitate the enhancement of their capacities and seek their active contribution to the realisation of development co-operation policy'* (point 12). The Guidelines also emphasise *'partnership'* with the recipient countries, the international donor community as well as *'with non-governmental organisations in Lithuania and abroad'* (point 15.1). Finally, to ensure the effectiveness of Lithuania's development cooperation policy it is, among other things, necessary to *'promote the co-operation of Lithuania's non-governmental organisations with counterpart non-governmental development co-operation organisations in donor and partner countries'* (point 30.11). This result is at least partly due to lobbying from the Lithuanian NGDO platform as the first draft of the Guidelines did not mention NGOs at all. Participation of both government and NGO representatives in international events such as the DE conference in Brussels in May 2005 and in Helsinki in July 2006, as well as the joint visit to Ireland in

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[4] For development cooperation projects in 2006 see http://www.urm.lt/index.php?-1107059346

September 2005 also contributed to the government spelling out the need for cooperation with NGOs.

Policy dialogue on development issues between the government and the NGOs has, however, experienced ups and downs. There has been contact over the years but mutually supportive cooperation as well as a tradition of genuine and transparent consulting of NGOs in policy planning has not emerged. Cooperation has, on the one hand, been hampered by the frequent change of staff within the MFA ODA departments, which has slowed down the gradual development of a partnership. On the other hand, NGOs feel that the government is in general not comfortable working with NGOs and prefers reputable partners like the UNDP. After all, NGOs might request financial support for their activities. Furthermore, some NGOs believe that the government does not yet have confidence in the capacity and expertise of NGOs regarding development issues. At the same time, placing responsibility for the current situation solely on the government would be faulty: rivalry and fierce competition for financial resources between NGOs as well as the involvement of NGOs that are inexperienced in international development on the board of the platform have not supported the nurturing of genuine policy dialogue either.

As for implementation, the government seems to prefer financing projects that are carried out by state institutions but some bilateral aid is channelled through NGOs. The MFA issues calls for proposals for development cooperation projects open for all *'Lithuanian natural or legal persons'* and NGOs can participate in those. For 2007, for example, there were calls for macro (150.000-300.000LTL) and micro (1.000-100.000LTL) development cooperation and democracy promotion projects as well as a separate call for projects to be implemented in the Ghor province of Afghanistan.[5] According to the MFA's preliminary calculations (as of September 2007) around 23% of bilateral aid was implemented by NGOs in 2007. Unfortunately, they were unable to publicise information on which NGOs' projects had received funding and what the exact sums were. Furthermore, the MFA has never financed any NGOs' projects that aim to raise the Lithuanian population's awareness of development issues (DE/AR projects). It is also worth adding that the government has been rather inactive regarding DE/AR overall. However, the Guidelines state that it is necessary to '*disseminate information in order to raise the awareness of the Lithuanian public about development co-operation'* and the MFA is currently preparing an action programme for DE/AR.

2. NGOs and international development[6]

Whilst there is an umbrella organisation named the 'Lithuanian NGDO platform' in the country, Lithuania does not have any dedicated NGDOs, meaning NGOs that focus entirely on development cooperation with developing countries and/or on DE/AR. Furthermore, general awareness within NGOs of development aid is still

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[5] For information on the calls for proposals see http://www.urm.lt/index.php?421505746

[6] Providing a comprehensive overview of the Lithuanian 'NGDO' landscape is difficult at this stage: no mapping has been done, the Lithuanian NGDO Platform does not yet have information on its members and NGOs do not know much about each-other's activities – competition for financial resources has led to a lack in information-sharing. This section offers a general overview and examples but does not claim to cover all Lithuanian NGOs' development cooperation or DE/AR activities.

fairly low: development cooperation is often mistaken for general international cooperation, 'poverty' relates mostly to poverty in Lithuania and regarding 'development aid' the widespread understanding is that Lithuania is poor and needs financial support from 'rich' countries. At the same time, there are quite a few organisations that have, in addition to their main activities in Lithuania, been involved in cross-border cooperation and/or in sharing experiences and know-how (on civil society capacity-building, democracy promotion, health, youth, education etc) with developing countries (see sections 2.1 and 2.2). Lots of these activities, which mostly take the form of providing training and consultations as well as organising study visits, can be considered development cooperation although NGOs themselves often do not call it that. Furthermore, there are many NGOs that are not yet active in international development but are keen to get engaged in transferring their 'Lithuanian expertise' to developing countries and/or initiating DE/AR activities in the future. Consequently, there are calls for the newly created Lithuanian NGDO Platform to build opportunities for NGOs to start working abroad and to become active in DE/AR.

NGOs that already implement occasional development cooperation projects do so mostly right across the border in Russia (Kaliningrad) and Belarus as well as in other CIS countries like Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova. Focus is mostly on the CIS countries because the common Soviet experience and knowledge of Russian language provide a natural advantage for Lithuanian NGOs to work in the region. It has been estimated that around 50 Lithuanian NGOs have implemented projects with the CIS countries[7] but the exact information remains to be compiled and the exact nature of those projects to be analysed. No NGO appears to be working in Latin-America or Africa (apart from Humana, see next section).

Regarding funding opportunities for international development activities, the Open Society Institute's (OSI) East-East programme[8] is a valuable source. Some organisations also implement projects financed by the MFA. As for EU funds, some programmes are occasionally used, such as the Youth in Action Programme, but receiving funding from the NGO co-financing line has thus far proven difficult. Private funds do not really figure in development cooperation or DE/AR. Worth mentioning, however, is that since 2004 permanent residents of Lithuania can request having 2% of their income tax be transferred to organisations entitled to sponsorship under the Law on Charity and Sponsorship. This option is not yet widely exercised but could be explored further, although there are other potential beneficiaries than NGOs to it (e.g. schools, museums, hospitals).

2.1 Development cooperation

To highlight activities of the Lithuanian NGDO Platform members, the Lithuanian Welfare Society for People with Intellectual Disability VILTIS[9] ('viltis' means 'hope' in Lithuanian) has been active in sharing its expertise accumulated from working in Lithuania with other countries for several years. VILTIS methodologically analyses the lessons Lithuania has learned regarding the development of social services for people with mental disabilities and their families, and which lessons may benefit partner countries. The main focus has been on CIS countries but VILTIS' director

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[7] Interview with Julija Piksilingaite, Lithuanian coordinator of OSI East-East programme, 28 March 2007
[8] http://www.soros.org/initiatives/east
[9] http://www.viltis.lt

has also explored the needs of, for example, Cambodia and Vietnam. In terms of concrete activities, VILTIS is currently implementing two larger-scale projects in Belarus in cooperation with Caritas Linz (Austria): one project focuses on setting up a day-care centre for children with disabilities in Vitebsk and the other is a qualification programme for those working with disabled people in social centres. These projects come to an end in the near future but VILTIS is looking for opportunities to continue working on these initiatives. In 2003-2005, VILTIS implemented a project that supported developing the early intervention service in Kyiv. They have kept contact with their Ukrainian partners since finishing the project and are searching for ways to continue cooperation and developing social services in Ukraine. In addition to larger scale projects, VILTIS organises study visits for specialists from partner countries to Lithuania. Interested groups (both NGOs and public authorities) mostly approach VILTIS themselves and cover their own travel expenses; VILTIS assists with visas and designs programmes depending on the groups' needs. In the past, through such study visits delegations from, for example, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Russia have acquired additional experience and knowledge from Lithuania.

To continue with the health field, the Global Initiative on Psychiatry (GIP) focuses on reforming and humanising mental health care and its office in Vilnius (GIP Vilnius[10]) covers the Baltic States, Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. For many years, GIP Vilnius has been supporting the development of modern psychiatric services in Kaliningrad. In Ukraine, on the other hand, they have been inactive but are willing to get involved in the future. The political situation in Belarus creates obstacles to working on reforming mental health care there. Thus, GIP Vilnius implements smaller scale activities in Belarus: for example, in 2006 they started a project to develop vocational and occupational therapy in two Belarusian psycho-neurological institutions. GIP Vilnius reaches out to other CIS countries as well: in 2003-2005 they carried out a project to improve social and medical services for children with intellectual disabilities in Moldova through training the employees of relevant institutions, creating a network of NGOs and influencing the formation of social policy in the country. Additionally, GIP Vilnius has been involved for more than four years in developing child and adolescent mental health care in Central Asia and Southern Caucasus (particularly in Georgia). In 2003, GIP Tbilisi was set up to cover those regions but in the beginning most activities in the region were planned and implemented jointly by GIP Tbilisi and GIP Vilnius due to the latter's expertise in the area. GIP Tbilisi gradually took over more responsibilities and today GIP Vilnius' role in Southern Caucasus and Central Asia is more limited. It continues to provide consultations and training in the region.

Several Lithuanian NGOs that focus on the field of education are engaged in development cooperation. For example, the Lithuanian Association of Adult Education[11] promotes, together with its Estonian and Latvian counterparts, professionalisation of adult educators in Southern Caucasus. In 2005, a protocol for deepening cooperation in the field of adult education between Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Baltic States was signed by the adult education associations of the six countries. There have been mutual visits and in 2006, the Lithuanian Association of Adult Education participated as a trainer in the Southern

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[10] http://www.gip-vilnius.lt
[11] http://www.lssa.smm.lt

Caucasus summer academy of adult educators. Currently finances are being sought for concrete projects.

The Association 'New Connections'[12] is a coalition of educational NGOs that focuses on influencing national education development and social policy but is also engaged in international development issues. In autumn 2006 they launched a 2-year development cooperation project involving Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. The OSI-funded project '*Advocacy Skills for Parents' Knowledge and Influence on Education*' aims to develop parents' advocacy capacities regarding their children's education in above mentioned partner countries through helping them learn from relevant Lithuanian experiences (joint trainings and consultancy), sharing common issues and generating new ideas. The Association carries out most of the consulting and coordination from a distance and delivers funds for local activities.

The Modern Didactics Centre[13] (MDC, member of the NGDO platform through 'New Connections') focuses on new teaching methodologies and, as a former OSI programme, has a range of partners in most CIS countries. For several years, MDC's network of experts have been advising and consulting (as contract agents) partners in those countries about various topics related to teaching and learning methodologies (youth, social partnerships, municipalities, in-service training etc). Depending on the partners' needs, MDC both sends out experts and organises study visits to Lithuania. As an example of a larger-scale initiative, MDC recently finished a multi-year project on education against corruption involving Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kosovo, Romania, Russia and Ukraine. In the framework of this project, MDC prepared resource materials for partner countries, and supported and advised them in developing relevant school curricula and community programmes. MDC also organised a study visit for partners to get a first-hand introduction into Lithuania's activities regarding anti-corruption education and elaborate on insights related to anti-corruption.

The Youth Career & Advising Centre (YCAC, another member of Association 'New Connections') has some development cooperation experience as well. Together with MDC they have provided training for Kaliningrad educators on how to use modern teaching methods and how to serve as students' career consultants. In 2006, YCAC worked together with 'New Connections' on parents' education in Moldova. YCAC is also engaged in DE/AR (see section 2.2).

The Center for Equality Advancement[14] (CEA), an NGO that works in Lithuania in the field of human rights, awareness raising and prevention of discrimination on grounds of gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, has made attempts to share their experience with developing countries through bringing stakeholders from partner countries to CEA events in Lithuania and sending experts. In 2006, CEA sent an expert to Georgia to provide training on gender equality in the framework of a project implemented by ESTEP (see below), and to Kaliningrad to provide training on women leadership in the framework of a project implemented by the Swedish organisation Språngbrädan. In 2005, CEA brought 25 participants (civil servants, NGO activists, gender experts) from Southern Caucasus, Central Asia and Russia

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[12] http://www.naujosjungtys.lt
[13] http://www.vpu.lt/sdc/
[14] http://www.gap.lt

to a conference on innovative gender equality strategies and, in 2006, they similarly shared experiences regarding paternity leave with those countries (plus Mongolia). In 2007, they brought a group of Uzbek civil servants to Lithuania for a training session on migrant workers. CEA strives to maintain contact with those they invite to events in Lithuania, and advises them informally; strong organisational cooperation has developed in this manner, for example, with their Ukrainian and Georgian partners.

The Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania[15] (BEF Lithuania) facilitates and supports dialogue, policy implementation and raising awareness on environmental issues. Apart from the main activities in Lithuania, they are also active in strengthening the capacity of a Belarusian partner organisation on environmental issues and plan to widen this work to other organisations in Belarus. Together with BFE Russia they work on issues like chemicals, water management, NGOs and democracy in Russia. BEF Lithuania wants to engage in deeper cooperation with the Kaliningrad region and is interested, in the long run, in working with Africa. BEF Lithuania's main sectoral interests in development cooperation include biodiversity, NGOs and democracy.

The Baltic Charity Foundation Heifer Project International[16] (HPI Baltic) focuses on community development in the three Baltic States. At present, HPI Baltic does not implement any specific projects with developing countries but informal exchange and know-how sharing takes place with various CIS and Central Asian countries, as the organisation is well-connected to the region through the personal contacts of its director, who has worked with FAO and currently chairs the Central-East Europe working group of the European Association for Animal Production (EAAP). Additionally, HPI Baltic has a twinning relationship with Heifer Caucasus.

The Lithuanian Kolping Society[17] worked with some CIS countries on youth policy development in 1995-1997; those contacts are largely lost but the Lithuanian Kolping Society is currently exploring ways to get involved in Africa or Latin-America through local Kolping Families there. Furtheron, Lithuanian Kolping Society is very much engaged in DE/AR (see section 2.2).

Humana People to People Baltic[18] sells second hand clothes and uses the proceeds from this activity to support Humana People to People projects around the world. For example in 2005 it supported (via the Federation Humana People to People) projects of several organisations in Angola (children, education), Zambia (children), Namibia (environment, education), Zimbabwe (children, education, health) and India (education, community development) with an approximate total amount of €880.000. In 2006, Humana People to People Baltic supported projects in the same countries with a total amount of €773.388.

European Social, Legal and Economic Projects ESTEP[19] provides technical assistance to CIS countries. They have, for example, given technical assistance to Georgian and Ukrainian public authorities in order to facilitate their

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[15] http://www.bef.lt

[16] http://www.heifer.lt

[17] http://www.kolping.lt

[18] http://www.humana.lt

[19] http://www.estep.lt

implementation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements and Action Plans of the European Neighbourhood Policy. In 2006, ESTEP implemented an MFA-funded project to strengthen the capacity of the self-government of Ajara (autonomous region in Georgia) on equal gender opportunities. However, it is important to mention that ESTEP is more a consultancy company than an NGO.

As for non platform members, the Institute of Democratic Politics[20] has been active in building the capacity of NGOs (particularly youth) in various CIS countries. In 2005, they promoted exchange between youth organisations from the Baltics, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus through common training on project management in Vilnius. They have also been trying to contribute to democratic development in the Southern Caucasus: after working on strengthening youth NGOs from Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia through exchange with Lithuania in 2003, they continued to transfer Baltic experiences in developing the organizing capacity of young people and promoting youth engagement in policy-making to the Southern Caucasus countries in 2005. The Institute of Democratic Politics has also been active regarding Belarus. For example in 2004 they combined rehabilitation and democracy promotion: youths from Chernobyl affected areas in Belarus were brought to Lithuania to offer them an opportunity to see ways youth can work to improve their situation as well as to empower them to defend their rights. Between 2005 and 2007 the institute arranged various seminars and trainings for Belarusian youth and opposition leaders as well as organised conferences on Belarusian issues in Lithuania.

Similarly, concerning Belarus, the National Development Institute[21] supported in 2005 and 2006 the development of democracy and public spirit in Belarus through transferring best practices, skills and experiences of youth leaders in Lithuania to their counterparts in Belarus. They prepared a draft methodology of efficient NGO management based on Lithuanian experiences and worked on adapting that to the needs of Belarusian NGOs. That particular project finished by 2006 but cooperation with Belarusian NGOs continues through consultations, visits and information exchange, and funds are being sought for further projects.

The United Center of Initiatives for Belarus[22] (JuBIC) brings together Lithuanian students who are concerned about building democracy and strengthening civil society in Belarus. In 2005 they launched the EuroBelarus programme to stimulate cooperation between the societies of Belarus and its European neighbours as well as to attract the attention of officials, NGOs, academic institutions and citizens in Lithuania and other European countries on the situation and problems in Belarus. JuBIC's activities reached a peak around the Belarusian presidential elections in March 2006. Currently, they are deliberating on whether and how to continue their activities and JuBIC's members are actively involved in the activities of other NGOs working with Belarus (e.g. the Institute of Democratic Politics).

On a different note, the Lithuanian Librarians' Association and the Lithuanian Research Libraries Consortium[23] have also worked with post-Soviet countries. In 2001-2003 the Lithuanian Librarians' Association exchanged their experiences of

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[20] http://www.dpi.lt

[21] http://www.npi.lt

[22] http://www.jubic.org

[23] http://www.lmba.lt

using regional public libraries as community service centres with Azerbaijan, Georgia and Mongolia and presently significant professional support is given to Kaliningrad and Belarus. The Lithuanian Research Libraries Consortium is a member of eIFL.net[24] – an NGO that supports and advocates the wide availability of electronic resources for library users in transitional and developing countries. Through eIFL.net the Research Libraries Consortium has participated in providing training on using electronic resources in libraries to countries like Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Occasionally, they also arrange study visits to Lithuania to give interested counterparts know-how on electronic resources as well as on librarian consortium building. In 2004, a Georgian-Azerbaijani delegation visited Lithuania and preparations are currently being made to host an Armenian group.

2.2 Development education / Awareness raising (DE/AR)

Many Lithuanian NGOs are enthusiastic about the idea of raising the Lithuanian public's awareness about development issues but NGOs, as a sector, have not yet managed to establish themselves as strong actors for DE/AR. This is partly due to a lack of public funding for NGOs' DE/AR activities: the MFA has thus far seen UNDP Lithuania[25] as the main partner for raising public awareness. In 2004, the MFA and UNDP signed the programme '*Strengthening Lithuania's national capacities for development cooperation*' that would contain a public awareness raising component as well as assistance and support for the MFA. For example, between April and June 2006 UNDP Lithuania implemented an intensive campaign '*Time to Help Others*' aimed at communicating the status of the country as a new donor and mobilising political support for development cooperation among the Lithuanian public. Well-known personalities were engaged as advocates of the campaign ideas, relevant spots were played on national TV and radio, publications were prepared for school children, youth debates were organised on Lithuania as a donor country and a large-scale outdoor concert was held.

As for NGOs, the Lithuanian Kolping Society actively promotes DE/AR. They have been the Lithuanian partner for the GLEN[26] project since 2005. Through GLEN young Lithuanians, like other young Europeans have the opportunity to learn about international development issues through direct exposure to the developing world: young people are sent out with their German tandem partners for 3 months to community projects in developing countries where they get first-hand experience of development cooperation and cultural exchange. To date, 14 Lithuanians have worked through GLEN in developing countries (with financial support from TRIALOG[27]). In 2007, for example, four young people went out to work on waste water management in Ethiopia, on community empowerment through environmental education in South Africa, on museum administration and exhibition design in Georgia and on participatory governance in Georgia. Participants to the GLEN project are expected to leverage their personal experiences from developing countries for DE/AR activities in Lithuania but this expectation is difficult to materialise in reality, as those youths tend to migrate

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[24] http://www.eifl.net

[25] http://www.undp.lt

[26] http://www.glen-europe.org

[27] TRIALOG is an EU-funded project to raise awareness of development issues in the enlarged EU. See more at http://www.trialog.or.at

abroad. However, as a minimum the Lithuanian Kolping Society asks for presentation material from them to be used in Kolping's own DE/AR activities. As for the latter, in summer 2006 the Lithuanian Kolping Society organised a youth exchange seminar on global education for young people involved in NGOs and youth work. The aim of the seminar was to stimulate global thinking, discussions on development issues, global responsibilities of the enlarged EU and ways of raising awareness; in the framework of the exchange a survey was also conducted on the awareness of a group young people from the Lithuanian capital and a small village on international development issues. In 2007, Kolping started organising weekend seminars on DE/AR for the general public and the Lithuanian NGDO Platform members.

The Social Ethics Institute[28] represented Lithuania in the Aid Watch working group of CONCORD[29] last year and prepared the analysis of Lithuania's ODA for the group's publication.[30] The Social Ethics Institute has also organised a youth conference on migration and is working on a project regarding the Muslim community in Lithuania linking immigration, xenophobia and development issues. Furthermore, in 2007, they implemented together with the Youth Career & Advising Centre the in-service teacher training programme 'Education for Global Solidarity' to improve teachers' understanding of how to introduce international development themes into school curricula. This first-ever DE programme for Lithuanian teachers consisted of a series of teacher training events in various Lithuanian municipalities and set aside significant time for independent study and practical application where the teachers prepared relevant materials to be used in their own classes. For several years, YCAC has been involved in the OSI-initiated 'Gender Empowering Education' project that includes almost all CIS and some other post-Soviet countries and focuses on the inclusion of gender-related topics in schools. The project focuses on gender issues but has a DE dimension as well: training programs for Lithuanian teachers include materials on gender issues in the CIS countries. YCAC is planning further DE/AR activities and is looking for ways to translate various DE materials into Lithuanian. They are also active participants to DEEEP[31] summer schools and represent Lithuania in the Development Education Forum (DEF, one of the working groups of CONCORD). The Modern Didactics Centre and the Association 'New Connections' do not yet possess any specific DE/AR experience but actively participate in relevant European meetings in order to learn more about DE/AR and get involved in the future.

The Lithuanian Consumer Institute[32] has done some DE/AR work focusing on human rights concerns. In 2007, they implemented a Presidency Fund[33] financed project that started with conducting a survey on NGOs' knowledge on

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[28] http://www.sei.lt

[29] CONCORD is the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development. See more at http://www.concordeurope.org

[30] See the Lithuanian page (p.37) in CONCORD (2007) 'Hold the Applause! EU Governments risk breaking aid promises', http://www.concordeurope.org/Public/Page.php?ID=3042

[31] DEEEP is a project initiated by the Development Education Forum of CONCORD that aims to strengthen the capacities of NGDOs to raise awareness, educate and mobilise the European public for world-wide poverty eradication and social inclusion. See more at http://www.deeep.org

[32] http://www.vartotojai.lt/

[33] The Presidency Fund was created in 2005 to promote the engagement of NGOs and other civil society actors from EU new member states in EU Development Policy debates. The fund was first established with the support of Irish and Dutch governments, both of which held EU's Presidency in 2004 when ten new member states acceded to the EU. (http://www.presidencyfund.org)

development cooperation (MDGs, national and EU development policies). The survey covered around 50 NGOs active in human rights and the results demonstrated that awareness among NGOs is indeed low. The Consumer Institute uses the results for planning their own activities but the survey outcomes were also shared with various stakeholders (NGOs, parliamentarians, press releases to the media). As for concrete public awareness raising activities, in August 2007, the institute started organising radio debates bringing NGOs and parliamentarians together to discuss development issues (first in general on development and then more specifically on human rights related aspects). A seminar for NGOs as well as civil servants was held in September 2007. The Lithuanian Consumer Institute is seeking funding for further DE/AR activities.

The Lithuanian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association[34] (LFPSHA) is a member of EuroNGOs[35] – a European network of NGOs that cooperate in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights, population and development. In June 2006, LFPSHA hosted the EuroNGOs annual membership meeting and conference in Lithuania under the title 'Advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Internationally: What Role for the Enlarged EU.' LFPSHA is a rather new member of EuroNGOs and does not yet have much international experience but they are keen to start working more intensively on raising Lithuanian public's awareness on sexual and reproductive health and rights issues in developing countries. This has proven difficult for a small organisation in Catholic Lithuania.

The Lithuanian NGDO platform has worked on increasing its members' awareness of international development cooperation but has not yet reached the wider public apart from the conference 'EU Enlargement: Lithuania's Role in EU International Development Policy' aimed at a larger audience that was organised together with the Vytaytas Magnus University in June 2004. The platform has prepared DE/AR projects and made attempts to receive funding from the MFA, but to date these attempts have failed.

3. The Lithuanian NGDO platform

The Lithuanian NGDO Platform is an umbrella organisation of Lithuanian NGOs that are active or interested in development cooperation and/or raising public awareness about development issues.

3.1 Background

First steps towards establishing the Lithuanian NGDO platform were made in 2003 when the Kaunas NGO Support Centre took the initiative to start coordinating the informal working group of 'Lithuanian NGOs (working) Abroad' that attempted to facilitate discussions between NGOs and relevant stakeholders (MFA) about development cooperation. In the same year, members of the group participated in TRIALOG events and contacts were created with the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA)[36] ODACE programme. Concrete initiatives to set

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[34] http://www.buksveika.lt
[35] http://www.eurongos.org
[36] http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca

up a nation-wide platform based on the informal working group followed in 2004 with the support of TRIALOG and ODACE. Discussions about identifying needs and objectives for an NGDO platform were extended from Kaunas to other regions. At a stakeholder meeting on 15 October 2004, a mandate was given to the group to work towards obtaining a legal status, and by the following spring the group had grown to around 15 organisations. They were very different in terms of their experience, capacity and fields of activity (gender, environment, social issues, education, youth), but the group remained informal, with organisations joining and leaving depending on the priorities and interests of their leaders.

Over the past few years, this informal platform has served as an information-sharing and capacity-building mechanism for interested NGOs. The platform has acted as a bridge between TRIALOG and Lithuanian NGOs and facilitated the participation of Lithuanian NGO activists in TRIALOG-funded training and other European events. A few training sessions have also been organised in Lithuania. In addition, the platform has made continuous efforts to engage in policy dialogue with the MFA regarding establishing transparent ODA mechanisms, ensuring Lithuania reaches its commitment to increase ODA to 0,17% of GNI by 2010, enhancing the focus on DE/AR and raising possibilities for NGOs to apply for funding to implement development-related initiatives. Furthermore, the platform has lobbied the MFA to include references to a partnership with NGOs in the Guidelines (not only in implementing stages but also in policy planning) as well as sectoral priorities that the Lithuanian NGOs have expertise and are already active in, e.g. education, support for Chernobyl victims, modernising psychiatric services, human rights and civil society capacity-building. Besides, the platform has made efforts to increase the engagement of parliamentarians in debates on development issues. Through occasional participation in CONCORD working groups[37] (for example the Working Group on Enlargement and the Development Education Forum) Lithuanian NGOs' interests have been also represented in the European arena and some work has been done on EU development policies.

The problematic point was that the platform could not establish itself properly, neither among participating NGOs nor, consequently, in the eyes of other stakeholders. The platform did not manage to consolidate membership and this hindered agreement on a clear strategy and progress towards legal registration. Newcomers needed basic information, while the existing organisations became frustrated that time at meetings was constantly spent on sharing basic information and that concrete initiatives did not emerge in terms of working structures, longer term strategies or financial sustainability. Since the end of 2005, the platform has been receiving valuable support in terms of mentoring on strategic planning from the Irish platform Dochas[38] in coordination with TRIALOG. However, in the beginning this support could not be fully absorbed, as by that time a parallel platform initiative had emerged: in the end of 2005, the Vilnius-based NGO Information and Support Centre[39] (NISC) learned of development cooperation and started efforts to build a parallel platform in the framework of their overall goal to support creating various sectoral NGO networks. Although NISC did not appear to be genuinely interested in development cooperation as such, it had a

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[37] As a non-CONCORD member the Lithuanian NGDO Platform could (and still can) participate in CONCORD activities with financial support from TRIALOG.

[38] http://www.dochas.ie

[39] http://www.nisc.lt

favourable basis for creating a platform: good connections to NGOs (especially in Vilnius) and good relations with the MFA for which the Kaunas-based network had become problematic due to their uncomfortable criticism about Lithuania's ODA. However, the fact that this initiative was parallel to (instead of in cooperation with) the informal platform, caused confusion and frustration. Both groups, for example, simultaneously submitted project proposals for platform development to the Presidency Fund, which inevitably led to both of them being rejected, as the idea is to have one platform per country. Crucial funds for building a platform were lost. Two parallel initiatives were confusing for participating NGOs as well, and the credibility of both initiatives was damaged.

After increasing frustrations the two 'camps' came together in autumn 2006 and formed an initiative group of four organisations (NISC, Social Ethics Institute, YCAC and MDC) to work towards a common, country-wide platform. Over the next few months the group discussed core principles, draft statutes, membership criteria and prepared for the platform creation conference.

3.2 State of play

The Lithuanian NGDO Platform creation conference took place in Vilnius on March 29, 2007. 17 organisations whose applications had been approved came together to discuss the mission of the new platform, the draft statutes, membership criteria, fees, and the number of board members. They also took the decision to start the registration process. Over summer two further organisations applied and as of September 2007 the Lithuanian NGDO Platform is an umbrella organisation of 19 organisations, but is not yet legally registered. The goals of the platform have been defined as follows: sustaining an open, civic and democratic society; strengthening the institutional capacities of NGDOs and developing their cooperation with aid recipient countries; actively participating in the implementation of development cooperation policy of Lithuania; uniting Lithuanian NGDOs and participating in international networks; initiating and coordinating representation of NGDOs; encouraging an exchange of experience and information; cooperating with state institutions; and promoting development education and awareness raising.

Platform members (see annex on p.18) present a mixture: some organisations were involved in the informal platform and some were not; some of them are already working in development cooperation or DE/AR and some are not yet; some have comprehensive knowledge of development cooperation, some have little idea of what it is about. The motivation that prompted members to join the platform varies too: whilst some have the clear aim to work through the platform on particular development cooperation matters and/or to increase their capacity to engage in international development (e.g. to increase their knowledge on EU development policy or how to become active in Sub-Saharan Africa or other least developed regions), some see the platform as an opportunity to work together with other NGOs (regardless of the topic), and quite a few recognise the need to be a member of a strong coalition of NGOs in order to be able to be a partner for the MFA. The members present a rich mixture also in terms of their main competencies: from children's rights, health, disability, education, democracy, gender issues and geopolitics to social ethics promotion, community development, environmental protection and civil society capacity-building. It is

also worth noting that some of the platform members are consultancy companies rather than NGOs.

Participants in the creation conference decided the platform should have 9 board members and those were then elected. During subsequent meetings Judita Akromiene, the director of House of Europe[40] (an NGO that at the time had no experience of development cooperation or DE/AR) was elected as chair of the board and Julius Norvila, the director of the Social Ethics Institute and the long-term leader of the informal platform as director. However, the director resigned in July 2007 and House of Europe, the organisation of the chairwoman of the board, took over the administrative coordination of the platform, too. This is a temporary solution until a more suitable coordination mechanism can be found.

As for platform activities, after the creation conference, emphasis was put on solving the legal and technical matters related to registration, agreeing an action plan and introducing the platform to stakeholders. However, as of September 2007 the legal registration process had still not been started and although a draft plan of action has been prepared, it has not yet been formally agreed. According to the draft action plan in the near future emphasis will be put on strengthening information sharing mechanisms (regular news, website), capacity-building of member NGOs and establishing a cooperation framework with the MFA.

3.3 Challenges

Making the decision to form just one nation-wide platform is a crucial step forward, but a lot of work lies ahead in getting the platform fully functional on global development issues. Several challenges first need to be overcome. On one hand, Lithuanian NGOs do not have a history of working in networks and therefore will require confidence building and time in order to learn about jointly identifying areas for common action, and sharing responsibilities as well as benefits arising from joint activities. On the other hand, it is a complex context for Lithuanian NGOs in general: many are struggling for survival as the donors that have been supporting them are pulling out due to Lithuania's accession to the EU in May 2004. This has lead to fierce competition for funding and a search for potential new activities in order to survive. Altogether, the small extent of collaboration between NGOs in the past and fierce competition today account for a lot of mistrust, misunderstandings and internal struggles that make it difficult to get the platform functioning. Furthermore, whilst some platform members have strong international development experience, others are totally inexperienced in the field and have very little understanding of development cooperation aims and practices. On one hand, the mix of members, in terms of varying interests as well as knowledge and understanding of development cooperation, provides a rich base to build on but on the other hand, this complicates agreement on common activities. However, the presence of strong organisations in the platform and great enthusiasm for networking regarding international development issues support the platform in meeting the challenges.

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[40] http://www.eurohouse.lt

Annex: Lithuanian NGDO Platform Members*

1. Association 'New Connections', www.naujosjungtys.lt

2. Baltic Charity Foundation Heifer Project International, www.heifer.lt

3. Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania, www.bef.lt

4. Centre for Civic Initiatives, www.pic.lt

5. Center for Equality Advancement, www.gap.lt

6. Centre of Geopolitical Studies, www.geopolitika.lt

7. Eastern Europe Studies Centre, www.eesc.lt

8. Economic Research Centre, www.erc.lt

9. European Social, Legal and Economic Projects ESTEP, www.estep.lt

10. Global Initiative on Psychiatry, Vilnius, www.gip-vilnius.lt

11. House of Europe, www.eurohouse.lt

12. Humana People to People Baltic, www.humana.lt

13. Lithuanian Association of Adult Education, www.lssa.smm.lt

14. Lithuanian Kolping Society, www.kolping.lt

15. Lithuanian Welfare Society for People with Intellectual Disability VILTIS, www.viltis.lt

16. Save the Children Lithuania, www.gelbekitvaikus.lt

17. Social Ethics Institute, www.sei.lt

18. Vilnius NGO Information and Support Centre, www.nisc.lt

19. Women's Issues Information Centre, www.lygus.lt

*As of September 2007; the underlined organisations are represented in the board.

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