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Executive Summary

Ethnocentrism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and homophobia remain the crucial problems in the public sphere in Lithuania. The Lithuanian media still tend to perpetuate discrimination and hostility against ethnic and sexual minorities. Minority groups share relative invisibility and one-sided stereotypical representations. By not paying nearly enough attention to ethnic and sexual minorities in the everyday situations, the Lithuanian press and television participate in their marginalization.

This paper describes how the Lithuanian mass media represent ethnic and sexual minorities. It proposes policy-oriented recommendations on how to change popular media representations of ethnic and sexual groups. The proposed measures include:

- ✍ The establishment of a monitoring group that is to conduct a continued analysis of the portrayals of ethnic and sexual minorities in various media
- ✍ The promotion of a multicultural approach to program content and the avoidance of programs that present society in mono-cultural and mono-linguistic terms
- ✍ The formulation of more elaborate recommendations and guidelines for the coverage of ethnic and sexual minorities
- ✍ The organization of seminars and training courses for media professionals on the subject of tolerance and multiculturalism
- ✍ The enhancement of professional training of Lithuanian journalists, multicultural awareness and continuing on-the-job monitoring of professional practice.
- ✍ The organization of periodical publicity campaigns to expose media discrimination against ethnic and sexual minorities and to heighten the public awareness of media images that are insulting and demeaning to minorities

Ethnic and sexual minorities share relative invisibility and demeaning stereotypes in the Lithuanian mass media. Although the media can be an important means of combating aggressive nationalism, ethnocentrism and homophobia, the Lithuanian media still tend to perpetuate discrimination and hostility against minorities. The media generally plays insufficient attention to the problems encountered by ethnic and sexual minorities.

The question of visibility has always been crucial for ethnic and sexual minority groups since visibility and inclusion can translate their views and concerns into issues of public interest. By gaining publicity in the mainstream Lithuanian mass media they can gain access to the sites of public policy formation and agenda-setting.

In this paper, I will describe how the Lithuanian mass media represent ethnic and sexual minorities. There are differences as well as similarities in the ways these two minority groups are treated in the media. Therefore, I will propose two separate sets of policy-oriented recommendations on how to change popular media representations of ethnic and sexual groups.

Background

1. Legal Framework: Laws on Ethnic Minorities. Sexual Minorities in Lithuania

1.1 Ethnic Minorities in Lithuania

Ethnic minorities now account for about 20 percent of the population of Lithuania (around 746,000). Around 109 different nationalities and ethnicities live in Lithuania, including Russians, Poles, Belorussians, Ukrainians, Jews, Tatars, Latvians, Gypsies, Germans, Armenians, Uzbeks, Azerbaijanis, Georgians, Estonians, Karaites, Greeks and Hungarians. The data from the Statistical Yearbook of Lithuania (Vilnius 1989) show that Russians comprise 8.2%, Poles – 6.9%, Belorussians – 1.5%, Ukrainians – 1.0%, Jews – 0.1%.[1] The greatest number of non-Lithuanians lives in eastern and southeastern part of Lithuania and in the cities of Vilnius, Klaipeda and Visaginas.

To support the cultures of ethnic minorities, and to design and execute national policy towards them, the Department of National Minorities and Émigrés for the Government of the Republic of Lithuania was established in 1990. It monitors the implementation of legislation and international provisions affecting minorities and co-ordinates activities that concern them. The Department works in conjunction with

various foundations and ministries – particularly the Ministries of Education, Culture and the Interior – attempting to resolve the problems facing minorities.

The Department of National Minorities and Émigrés cooperates with the national communities and their organizations in Lithuania. The House of National Communities and the Council of National Communities function within the framework of the Department. By 2000, 19 different nationalities residing in Lithuania established their own non-governmental organizations. The most active national and ethnic minority organizations include the Russian Cultural Center, the Lithuanian Russian Community, the Union of Lithuanian Poles, the Jewish Community of Lithuania, and the Association of Lithuanian Roma. It should be mentioned that in 1998 the Roma Information Bureau was opened. It oversees social, cultural and educational issues of Roma people.[2]

While both the Department and minority organizations have attempted to improve the situation of ethnic minorities in Lithuania, they have failed to promote the wider participation of ethnic minorities in public life and to implement a coordinated and comprehensive policy dealing with mass media and minority groups. Policies specifically regarding the media laws and promoting an adequate minority representation in mass media have not been developed. The purpose of my policy paper is make public interest groups and governmental agencies think systematically about the strength and inadequacies of the Lithuanian mass media, its contexts, institutions as well as to find ways to influence media policies and practices.

1.2 Legal provisions concerning ethnic minorities

It has been argued that media production is shaped by prevailing state policies and socio-political responses to ethnic minorities.[3] What laws and state initiatives shape the lives of ethnic minorities in Lithuania?

Lithuania has a general system for the protection of minorities: the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (articles 37 and 45) guarantees political, social and economic rights to its citizens regardless their ethnic background. Similarly, the Law on National Minorities in Lithuania ratified by the Lithuanian Parliament on November 23, 1989, guarantees “equal political, economic and social rights and freedoms to all its citizens regardless of ethnicity,” and recognizes and respects “their ethnic identity, the continuity of their culture and ... promote[s] ethnic consciousness and its self-expression.” Lithuania acknowledges the rights of national and ethnic minorities to education, native language, religion, and culture. They have the right to preserve, develop and express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identities.

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was ratified in February 2000 and enacted in July 2000.

Lithuania is a member of the UN, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and other international organizations. In 1995 the Lithuanian Parliament ratified the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and its protocols No. 4, 7, and 11.

Legal protection and full citizenship rights, however, offer ethnic minorities little guarantee of protection from intolerant and chauvinistic sentiments in the Lithuanian media. While laws play a crucial role as a means of implementing policy change, they are unable to contain the implicit and open forms of intolerance, racism and xenophobia.

1.3 Sexual Minorities in Lithuania

Before 1989, the words “gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender” were rarely heard in Lithuania. For a long time, homosexuality was a completely taboo subject, to be spoken about in only the most reluctant way.

The situation changed after Lithuania declared its independence from the Soviet Union in 1990. With the advent of a new press and television, the problem of homosexuality, and sexuality in general, came to be discussed publicly. From 1995 onwards coverage of sexual minorities in the mass media increased significantly due to a higher visibility of Lithuanian gay activists. But only from 1998 were sexual minorities covered more intensively, particularly in the Lithuanian press.[4] Sexual minorities, however, are virtually invisible on television. If visible, they are usually shown in comic stereotyped settings in sitcoms and comedy shows.

The first gay organization, the Lithuanian Gay League (LGL) was publicly registered in 1995. It remains the most important and active advocacy group for sexual minorities in Lithuania. The group publishes a newsletter entitled “LGL žinios” [LGL News] and runs a website and telephone hotline. Beside the

Lithuanian Gay League, currently, there exist two other gay and lesbian organizations, SAPPHO (Lithuanian Lesbian League) and KASLO (Movement for Sexual Equality of the Kaunas County), in Lithuania.

Independent Lithuania inherited the Soviet prejudice on homosexuality. Despite the existence of constitutional guarantees of equality and privacy, the infamous article of the Penal Code (122 BK) against consensual sex between adult men was repealed only in 1993. Lithuania was the last among the three Baltic countries to abolish penalties for homosexual acts. Only in the new Penal Code to be approved this year by the Lithuanian parliament sexual orientation may be included as a criterion for protection from discrimination (Articles 160 and 161).[5]

A substantial majority of Lithuanians hold very negative views of gays and lesbians. An opinion poll showed that in 1999 78.2% of Lithuanians did not tolerate homosexuality. Only 67.8 of respondents would want to live with homosexual neighbors, while 87.5% would rather live with drug-addicts.[6] It is one of the lowest levels of acceptance of homosexuals in Europe. After a virtual chat of the Lithuanian public with the founder of a gay club Men's Factory Aleksei Terentiev, there arose an intense discussion about Lithuanian gays. Responses of most writers revealed that the majority of the population did not tolerate gays. "People suggested that gays should move to the Moon." A Lithuanian daily Vakarų žinios (The Evening News) concluded that "Most Lithuanian Hate Gays." [7] In such homophobic atmosphere a policy process concerning sexual minorities and the media requires an active involvement of both minority organizations and journalists.

1.4 Media Legislation

The Lithuanian constitution guarantees freedom of expression and the right to disseminate information or ideas. The article 25 of the Constitution states that media freedom cannot be restricted "in any way other than as established by law, when it is necessary to safeguard the health, honor, dignity, private life or morals of a person, or to protect constitutional order." Restrictions on either print or broadcast media are prohibited unless the government determines that national security is threatened.

Besides the Constitution, the Media Law regulates the mass media in Lithuania. The Lithuanian Media Law (The Law on the Provision of Information to the Public) was ratified in 1996 and since then underwent several revisions. It provides for the freedom and independence of the press and broadcasting. This law includes two important articles: 1) Journalists have to observe the provisions of the Code of Ethics; and 2) The Office of the Inspector of Journalistic Ethics is to be set up.

The Lithuanian Media Law also outlines the commitment of the media to public service, defined in terms of not discriminating between different sections of the population, covering public issues and providing opportunity for the presentation of contrasting points of view. As the law states, the media "shall respect the freedom of speech, creativity, conscience and diversity of opinion" and "help develop democracy and openness of society." [8]

In 1997, Lithuania ratified the Convention of the European Council on Television Without Borders. The 1995 resolution of the Parliament stated that journalists had to follow the main ethical principles in accordance with Resolution No. 1003 of the European Council Parliamentary Assembly. The provisions of this resolution have formed a base for the Lithuanian Code of Ethics for Journalists and Publishers. The Code of Ethics is a fundamental element in the system of self-regulation of Lithuanian journalism.

The most important agencies of media self-regulation in Lithuania are the Ethics Commission, the Radio and Television Commission, the Council of Lithuanian National Radio and Television and the Foundation for the Support of Press, Radio and Television. The members of these organizations are appointed by the media industry and various public non-political organizations.

Government laws and regulations affect all aspects of media production. Best known are the legal regulations on the content of media. The Lithuanian media law prohibits the dissemination of pornographic materials. The dissemination of publications of erotic or violent content is restricted by the decree of the Government. If the need arises, the Ethics Commission of Journalists and Publishers could decide whether the medium in question is pornographic, erotic or propagating violence. The media law also prohibits the distribution of information that "incite[s] war, national, racial and religious enmity." [9]

The Lithuanian Code of Ethics for Journalists and Publishers states that "the journalist shall not humiliate or mock the individual's family name, race, nationality, religious convictions, age, sex or physical deficiencies even if such individual has committed a crime." [10]

Neither the above organizations, nor the legal provisions concerning the mass media guarantee compliance. The Lithuanian media practitioners do not always understand their responsibility for their work. The difference between normative laws and the everyday reality of the mass media is obvious. It is fair to argue that although the doctrine of social responsibility assumes independent power for the mass media, the press and broadcasts serve the interests of the powerful far more than those of the powerless. The mass media are a battleground between powerful political and commercial interests. Often political and commercial alliances are made to control media outlets and intervene in the formation of public knowledge. Although the Lithuanian media are not subject to any political censorship, they are highly competitive and politicized.[11]

Furthermore, neither the Lithuanian media law, nor the Code of Ethics for Journalists and Publishers includes any provisions or guidelines detailing the status of disadvantaged minority groups. Minorities are the only protected group in the Lithuanian media legislation. My research proves that such detailed guidelines for the coverage of ethnic and sexual minorities are necessary and should be developed.

Media, Representation and the Public Sphere

Among numerous newspapers and magazines (around 300 titles), two Lithuanian dailies Lietuvos rytas (The Morning of Lithuania) and Respublika (The Republic) dominate the national scene. Two tabloid dailies Lietuvos žinios (Lithuanian News) and Vakaro žinios (The Evening News) also boast a wide readership (due in part to their low price). All these newspapers are privately owned and operated.

The private commercial TV stations TV3, LNK and BTV operate three out of four national TV networks in Lithuania. Lithuania has one public broadcaster – the Lithuanian Radio and Television Company (LRT) financed from the state budget, license fee and advertising. Management of LRT is accountable to the Parliament via the board selected by public organizations and state institutions.

Lithuania is becoming an increasingly media-dependant society. Consumers of the mass media comprise a large part of the Lithuanian population. The latest polls conducted in 2001 show that Lithuanian citizens rely on the mass media as their most significant source of information. Indeed, 61.5 % of the Lithuanian public trusts the Lithuanian mass media, 'the fourth estate of the realm', more than any other institution except the Church (68.3 % of Lithuanians trust the Church most).[12] The mass media are in this context particularly significant, because they provide a common stock of information and culture.

The mass media exert an immense influence on the defining, structuring, and delimiting of public discourse and in forming and influencing public knowledge. Articulating, developing and disseminating the ideas of ethnicity and sexuality, the mass media help to shape attitudes about ethnic and sexual minorities. As Charles Husband suggested, the power of the media "to promote and sustain ideologies of domination and subordination through their representation of ethnic [and sexual] identities, and through the construction of the definition of the situation within which ethnic [and sexual] diversity in society should be understood" is immense.[13]

The question of representation is a critical arena of contestation and struggle over the monopoly of the power to impose a certain vision of a social world and to establish meaning and consensus about meaning.[14] Hence, non-recognition or misrecognition of a certain group can be "a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being." [15] This means that misrecognition or non-recognition of ethnic and sexual minorities in the mass media is a discursive form of racism, homophobia and victimization. Non-representation in the mediated 'reality' of our mass culture maintains the powerless status of groups that do not possess significant material or political power bases. As Geneva Smitherman-Donaldson and Teun A. van Dijk pointed out, it is through discourse that dominant groups and institutions discriminate against minority groups.[16] Many forms of contemporary racism, sexism and homophobia are discursive: "they are expressed, enacted and confirmed by text and talk" far removed from the open violence. They, however, may be just as effective to marginalize and exclude minorities.[17]

The issue of representation is closely related to the concept of the public sphere through which much of the study of mass media and democracy has been framed. Peter Dahlgren has pointed out that the dimension of representation in the public sphere "points to such basic questions as what should be selected for portrayal and how should it be presented." [18] In other words, what should or should not be portrayed or represented about ethnic and sexual minorities in the Lithuanian mass media? Which and how many representations of these minorities should be permitted in the Lithuanian mass media?

What is at stake here is the struggle over the public sphere, “where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, so as to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs.”[19] Thus, the problem of representations of minorities central to a consideration of the mass media as both an ongoing problem and possibility for democracy points to the problems of the public sphere and citizenship in the Lithuanian society.

Sexual and Ethnic Minorities in the Lithuanian Mass Media

The problems of xenophobia, racism and homophobia in the Lithuanian mass media remain severe. An international seminar in 1999 in Vilnius entitled “Promotion of Tolerance in Central and Eastern Europe” concluded that the Lithuanian mass media depict ethnic minorities in terms of a restricted repertoire of stereotypical representations. Similar conclusion was reached by the participants of a seminar “Ethnic Groups in a Democratic Society: Public Discourse, the Marginalized and Conspicuous in Contemporary Lithuania” which took place in January, 2002.[20]

My research conducted in 2001 corroborates the above views. It is suffice to mention the Lithuanian daily *Lietuvos Aidas* (The Echo of Lithuania) which published two strongly anti-Semitic articles on October 19, 2000. The articles emphasized the Jewish roots of Karl Marx and accused Jews of creating Communism. The daily questioned the need to prosecute war criminals who participated in Holocaust. *Lietuvos Aidas* also called for an international tribunal to investigate the “crimes against humanity committed by Jews” during the Soviet period.[21] Homophobic comments occur frequently in the Lithuanian press and television.

Despite the mentioned seminars and incidents of open anti-Semitism, xenophobia and homophobia in the Lithuanian mass media, the production, circulation and consumption of media representations of ethnic and sexual minorities have been inadequately analyzed in Lithuania. There have been very few studies on Lithuanian media portrayals of ethnic minorities over the last ten years.[22] Moreover, research on the portrayals of sexual minorities in mass media is non-existent in Lithuania. The construction and functioning of the representations of homosexuals in the mass media have not been subjected to intensive academic scrutiny.

My research and policy recommendations intend to fill this gap. In my research, I analyzed a total of 119 news stories and reports about homosexuality and homosexuals in four mainstream Lithuanian dailies *Lietuvos Rytas* (the biggest mainstream daily), *Respublika* (the second biggest newspaper), *Lietuvos žinios* (tabloid) and *Vakaro žinios* (the most popular tabloid) during the period of January 1, 2000- June, 2001. *Vakaro žinios*, a tabloid immensely popular in Lithuania, carried 44 stories and articles, *Lietuvos rytas* was not far behind (38 articles), *Respublika* published 21 news report and article, and *Lietuvos žinios*, 16. I also sampled a continuous week of television coverage of ethnic and sexual minorities. During the sampled week (November 26- December 2), gays were featured only in an evening magazine devoted to crimes “*Procesas. X sektorius*” (The Process. X Sector), a talk show *Prašau žodžio* (Let’s Talk) and comedy shows “*Tegyvuoja karalius!*” (Long Live the King) and “*Šapro šou*” (Šapro show).

In the case of ethnic minorities, I examined the representations of four ethnic groups, Russians, Poles, Roma people and Jews, living in Lithuania[23], by the largest Lithuanian daily *Lietuvos rytas* from November 27, 2000, to May 9, 2001.[24] *Lietuvos Rytas* carried a total of 88 news stories and articles that mentioned Lithuanian Russians, Poles, Jews and Roma people. Most stories touched upon the subject of Jews and the Holocaust in Lithuania (37), Lithuanian Russians attracted 22 reports, Poles, 10, and Romani, 18.[25] During the sampled week, there was no mention of Lithuanian Russians, Poles, Jews and Romani in the primetime news. Only one story related to a Jewish criminal was broadcast in the newsmagazine “*Sroves*” (Trends), and the comedy show “*ZbTV*” featured the main character of the Polish origin named Zbigniewas.

Focusing on closer rhetorical analysis of images of ethnic and sexual minorities, I examined how the Lithuanian press and TV understand, define and deal with ethnic and sexual differences. What beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, norms and values underlie the media rhetoric? What major topics are associated with each particular ethnic group and sexual minorities? What is omitted and what is published in the stories about ethnic and sexual groups and their relationships?

The Lithuanian press and television do not present a uniform conception of the issue of ethnic and sexual minorities. My research demonstrated that there is a lack of in-depth reporting on ethnic and sexual groups in the Lithuanian mass media. Minority groups share relative invisibility and one-sided stereotypical representations. Representations, though primarily discursive, have real material consequences and

correlates. It can be argued that by not paying nearly enough attention to ethnic and sexual minorities in the everyday situations, the Lithuanian mass media participate in their marginalization.

1. Sexual Minorities

Sexual minorities remain a difficult topic and an extremely sensitive issue since it deals with societal values, norms and sexuality. Therefore, homosexuality is frequently described as a scandal, and homosexuals are still portrayed as an underworld unfamiliar to mass population.

Gays and lesbians are described as outcasts and perverts in society. Homosexuality is still strongly associated with sexual promiscuity and deviance. Although there is little violently abusive terminology in Lithuanian newspapers, the trend is to ridicule and diminish homosexuals.

An analysis of a sample of evening news programs broadcast on LRT (Lithuanian Public Television), and three commercial networks LNK, TV-3 and BTV from 26 November to 1 December 2001, revealed that gay issues were nearly invisible. Gay views were not presented. TV entertainment programs emphasized the comic and ridiculous sides of gay characters. This consistent reflection of stereotyped representations of gays and lesbians was further reinforced by the virtual absence of alternative role models to counteract the stereotype.

The Lithuanian press and TV have been very slow to validate news about gay issues. The media generally played insufficient attention to the problems and discrimination suffered by sexual minorities. Serious representations of homosexuals as minorities were infrequent. Gay events and opinions covered in the papers and on television were overwhelmingly trivialized.

It is symptomatic that when asked whether the Lithuanian mass media adequately, objectively, and comprehensively cover the life of Lithuanian and foreign gays and lesbians, 84% of respondents who identified themselves as gay or bisexual responded negatively.[26]

2. Ethnic minorities

According to my analysis, the low numbers and visibility of Romani, Poles, Russians and Jews in the press and on television are also at issue. Close reading of the most popular daily and TV programs reveals undercurrent xenophobia in a large part of news reports and broadcasts. The “bad news” focus is overwhelming: most newspaper reports and TV broadcasts focus on some minority member who committed a crime. Much less attention is paid to stories about minorities experiencing problems, prejudice, racism or unemployment.

Roma people merit the worst representations as the least socially integrated, criminal and exotic group. The press frequently refers to the Roma minority as criminal, deviant, socially insecure, inscrutable, and manipulative. In the police reports published in the newspaper *Lietuvos rytas*, the ethnicity of Roma is always emphasized.

Russians receive mixed coverage. On the one hand, they are shown as active participants in Lithuanian political life. On the other hand, their political behavior is described as threatening and serving the interests of foreign powers. As in the case of the Roma, news reports about crimes stress the Russian nationality of criminals. *Lietuvos Rytas* proves Teun A. van Dijk’s contention that in the press ethnic minorities are “systematically associated with conflict, crime, intolerance and [unreliability]” (as we saw in the case of Roma people and Russians).[27]

The representations of the Polish minority in the press focus on the extremely politicized problem of education. From these representations, Poles emerge as a self-conscious national minority that requires special status and rights.

Jews receive the most multi-sided coverage in the biggest Lithuanian daily: coverage of Jewish-related issues ranges from detailed descriptions of anti-Semitism in Lithuanian society to news about Jewish celebrations and cultural events, from Holocaust commemorations to the trials of war criminals. However, Jews remain relatively invisible on the Lithuanian television.

3. Conclusion

It can be argued that the Lithuanian mass media describe ethnicity and homosexuality as problematic and not as a positive quality of a multicultural society. Constituting a presumed threat to the “natural” social order, these groups are inherently problematic and controversial for the Lithuanian mass media. Minority members are rarely consulted on the problems concerning them. The media pay insufficient attention to the problems and discrimination suffered by ethnic and sexual minorities. The evidence gathered in my research on ethnic and sexual minorities indicates that media images tend to define these groups within the narrow confines of stereotypical representations. Insufficiently counteracted by alternative portrayals that reflect the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society, the stereotypes legitimize and justify racism, xenophobia and homophobia.

Instead of presenting a wide-ranging reflection of Lithuanian society, the Lithuanian TV and press communicate dominant ethno-nationalist and heterosexist values of Lithuanian society. A greater range of ethnic news and characters and of cultural and ethnic viewpoints is lacking. The media reports on ethnic and sexual issues are presented in either patronizing or biased way and full of inaccurate information. In a society concerned with social justice the media need to engage more fully with ethnic, cultural and sexual diversity. More differentiated and accurate portrayals of ethnic and sexual minority communities and their lives are necessary.

Possibilities for Improvement

The media play a large part in the formation of positive and negative images and self-images of minorities. According to B. S. Greenberg, “Researchers have found that communication about minorities is value laden and that audiences internalize these values in a number of ways.[28]The mass media shape the public’s conceptions of reality and influence the Lithuanian public’s understanding of ethnic issues and can influence the direction of public policies related to ethnic minorities. The Lithuanian media help focus our attention on specific problems and public policy issues, that is, set the public agenda. Therefore it is important to challenge and change a dominant regime of representation in the Lithuanian mass media.

How can the quality and depth of coverage of ethnic and sexual minority issues be improved? What are the ways of designing an effective “politics of representation” in the Lithuanian mass media? What conclusions can be drawn from the available evidence and finally, what research and policy implications ensue from the collected information?

This section of my paper presents the points of how to develop and execute an effective strategy for attaining more and better media coverage for the sexual and ethnic minorities.

Efforts to improve the media coverage of ethnic and sexual minorities need to be understood in the larger context of the practices of the mass media and professional codes that guide the standards of Lithuanian journalism. Therefore, it is necessary to raise the awareness both of the majority and of the minority population of all aspects related to racism, xenophobia and homophobia in the Lithuanian mass media. We need to improve information to the general public about ethnic and sexual minorities so as to preempt the social reproduction of negative stereotypes and myths. This should be done through research, education, and publicity campaigns in the media. I propose two different sets of recommendations for ethnic and sexual minorities, although some recommendations overlap and can be used for both minorities. In designing policy strategies for these two minorities, I emphasize the role of different agents and organizations essential in implementation of policy recommendations.

Ethnic Minorities

With respect to two areas -- research and policy development -- I propose the following measures.

1.establish a monitoring group in Lithuania

Since the Lithuanian mass media industry’s awareness of minority issues is fairly limited, a monitoring group consisting of media scholars and professionals on media and intolerance has to be established. This group is to examine the media and propose measures against the dissemination of racist and intolerant views in the media. It is to conduct a continued analysis of the portrayals of ethnic minorities in various media. This research will serve academics, advocates, and the media industry as an assessment tool that measures progress on the representations of diversity over time. It can benefit the cause of responsible

media representation of ethnicity and can raise awareness among media professionals and the public as to what they are being shown and what they are not shown. Monitoring mechanisms can be expensive so they should be introduced at most rudimentary level.

2. develop recommendations and guidelines for the coverage of ethnic minorities

This monitoring group will suggest a number of more concrete provisions to be included in the media law to combat the expression and dissemination of racist and intolerant opinions in the media. It will also develop **guidelines for the coverage of ethnic minorities addressing**

a) individual journalists and educators;

b) media industry;

c) governmental and non-governmental bodies such as the Department of National Minorities and Émigrés for the Government of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ethics Commission of Journalists and Publishers

d) and minority organizations.

Such guidelines would commit the media to promoting equitable, accurate, and sensitive portrayals of minorities.

I propose preliminary recommendations to all of these areas.

Recommendations for individual journalists:

1. seek to frame news stories within the configuration of a diverse society
2. include ethnic minorities in news stories
3. deepen public understanding of difference by covering ethnic minorities
4. depict minority communities and individuals in a balanced and comprehensive manner and in ways that reflect the perspectives and points of view of these communities and individuals
5. refrain from using biased language or physical descriptions of ethnic minorities
6. treat individual behavior without linking it to a person's ethnic origin.

Recommendations for the Lithuanian Media Industry:

The Lithuanian press and TV should reconsider their professional practices:

1. make treatment of ethnic minorities an issue subject
2. recognize that the Lithuanian mass media have a civic commitment to oppose racism, xenophobia and intolerance
3. promote multicultural approach to program content and avoid programs that present society in mono-cultural and mono-linguistic terms
4. encourage more ethnic minority journalists participate in the mainstream mass media; they should be made writers and commentators expressing their views publicly
5. eliminate excuses for xenophobic and racist language and portrayals in the press and on TV.

Recommendations for the Department of National Minorities and Émigrés for the Government of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ethics Commission of Journalists and Publishers:

1. establish the active networking of the Department of National Minorities, and the Ethics Commission of Journalists and Publishers, minority organizations and NGOs to put minority perspectives on the mainstream media's agenda
2. formulate more elaborate media guidelines for improved treatment of ethnic minorities
3. co-ordinate research on the effectiveness of existing legislation on intolerance and hate speech
4. enforce more vigorously the legislation prohibiting incitement of intolerance and racism in the media
5. organize, in cooperation with minority organizations and NGOs, seminars and training courses for media professionals on the subject of tolerance and multiculturalism

Recommendations for Minority Organizations:

1. try to keep media attention focused on your problems and issues
2. target the press and TV:
 - ✍ Write letters to publishers of newspapers and TV executives about anti-ethnic media rhetoric
 - ✍ counteract the repeated verbal and visual bashing the media inflict on minorities by organizing a letter writing campaign to protest anti-minority characterizations

- ✍ in your letters, make specific references to news stories and programs that had appeared in the press or on TV
 - ✍ encourage the press and telemedia to combat racism and xenophobia through comprehensive coverage of minority issues
 - ✍ collect examples of good reporting and coverage and publicize them (issue reports publicizing positive achievements and newsworthy articles and broadcasts; award prizes to distinguished examples of media coverage of this area)
 - ✍ encourage reporting that is more informed
3. organize discussions with journalists and meetings with reporters.

Sexual minorities

In an intolerant and homophobic atmosphere in Lithuania, outing still puts a stigma on a person. Only a small part of homosexual population in the country have acknowledged their sexual orientation publicly. Therefore in designing policies to improve media representations of sexual minorities, the sexual minority organizations should play the leading role. Since information on media content with regard to sexual minorities is severely lacking, the Lithuanian sexual minority organizations should monitor periodically the Lithuanian media for portrayals of gays and lesbians. Secondly, these organizations should express more often their dissatisfaction with stereotyped portrayals of sexual minorities as perpetuated by the Lithuanian mass media. Actions should be taken against media stereotypes. A successful strategy to counteract invisibility and demeaning stereotypes of gays and lesbians include: 1) the implementation of the policy of inclusion that recognizes people of differing sexual and gender identities; 2) the implementation of policies that prohibit the use of homophobic and heterosexist remarks, whether verbal, written or made otherwise.

More specific policy measures cover recommendations for sexual minority organizations, the Lithuanian Journalist Association, the Commission of Ethics, and Media and Communication Programs at the University of Vilnius and Vytautas Magnus University.

Recommendations for sexual minority advocacy organizations:

- a) look to media content to see how sexual minorities are portrayed and how their identities and their experiences are defined for them
- b) organize periodically publicity campaigns to expose media discrimination against sexual minorities and to heighten the public awareness of media images that are insulting and demeaning to sexual minorities;
- c) make your advocacy consistent and continuous. The public should be constantly aware of the problem. Complaints about minority stereotypes should be registered with journalists, editors, national television station managers, news directors and producers.
- d) organize action on the part of gays and lesbians to protest against their stereotyped portrayals in mass media. Letter writing and telephone efforts should be a part of advocacy.
- e) challenge individual journalists for their work.

The Lithuanian Journalist Association, the Commission of Ethics, Media and Communication Programs should:

- (a) introduce cultural awareness training for journalists and managers of media organizations that specifically addresses gay and lesbian issues;
- (b) develop mass media materials that portray sexual minorities in a constructive and multi-faceted manner and in a wide variety of roles;
- (c) participate in preparation of codes of practice with regard to sexual minority groups;
- (d) adopt measures to eliminate sexual stereotypes in the spoken, written and visual discourse;
- (e) make media professionals aware of the need for balanced portrayals of sexual minority groups;
- (f) include study of the representations of sexual minorities in the mass media in the curricula of communication schools and media programs;
- (g) enhance professional training, multicultural awareness and continuing on-the-job monitoring of professional practice.

Concluding Remarks

To redress the current media practices towards ethnic and sexual minorities, we need to develop, implement and enforce the above policies and continually document, through critical research, the relationship between minorities and mass media. To become more socially responsible, the Lithuanian press and TV has to construct a sustained strategy to achieve change. Changing the directions of the mass media requires a serious commitment by all the players, i. e. individual journalists, media industry, the Commission of Ethics for Journalists and Publishers, the Department of National Minorities and Émigrés and minority organizations.

To fight the exclusion and symbolic disadvantage of minorities, we need to promote a politics of recognition that allows space for representational diversity and encourages more complex and sophisticated representations of minority communities. There is therefore a strong educational and moral case for including the neglected or distorted experiences of ethnic and sexual minorities into the media narratives of a multi-cultural citizenship.

[1] From Vida Beresnevičute, "The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Ethnic and Religious Tolerance in Lithuania," in Julianna Matrai, ed., *The Role Of Civil Society in Promoting Ethnic and Religious Tolerance in Central, South Eastern and Eastern Europe* (Stiftung Fur Liberale Politic: Harald P. Klein, 1999), p. 42-45.

[2] Viktorija Jonikova, "Cigonai Lietuvoje," in www.sociumas.lt, November 2000.

[3] See A. Jakubowicz, H. Goodall, J. Martin, ed., *Racism, Ethnicity and the Media* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1994).

[4] Viktorija Janova, "Seksualines mažumos Lietuvos visuomenėje" [Sexual Minorities in the Lithuanian Society], www.sociumas.lt, September 2000.

[5] See Eduardas Platovas, "Advocacy for Gays and Lesbians in Lithuania," *LGL Žinios*, no. 7/8 (2000), p. 17.

[6] "Baltijos tyrimai," January 8, 2001. *LGL žinios*, 2001, no. 1 (9): 7.

[7] "'Dauguma lietuviu nekencia geju'" [Most Lithuanian Hate Gays] *Vakaro žinios*, May 26, 2001.

[8] The law was taken from the official site of the Lithuanian Parliament:www.lrs.lt.

[9]www.lrs.lt.

[10] The Code of Ethics for Lithuanian Journalists and Publishers, available at <http://www.vii.org/monroe/issue30-31/baltic.html>.

[11] The constant strife between the biggest Lithuanian dailies *Lietuvos rytas* (The Morning of Lithuania) and *Respublika* (The Republic) is case in point.

[12] From the Vilmorus poll conducted on November 8-12, 2001. *Lietuvos rytas*, November 17, 2001. A similar Vilmorus poll conducted in March, 2001, demonstrated that the mass media was the most trusted institution in Lithuania. See "'Vilmorus' visuomenės nuomos tyrimas: kam palankus šalies žmones?" (The Vilmorus Public Opinion Poll: Who and What is Favored by People of the Country?), *Lietuvos rytas*, March 17, 2001.

[13] Charles Husband, "General Introduction: Ethnicity and Media Democratization within the Nation-State," in *A Richer Vision: The Development of Ethnic Minority Media in Western Democracies* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1994), p. 1.

[14] Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, John B. Thompson, ed. and intr., Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson, trans. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1991), p. 221

[15] Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and 'The Politics of Recognition'* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992), p. 25.

[16] Geneva Smitherman-Donaldson and Teun A. van Dijk, "Introduction: Words that Hurt," in Geneva Smitherman-Donaldson and Teun A. van Dijk, ed., *Discourse and Discrimination* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1988), p. 7.

[17] Teun A. van Dijk, "New(s) Racism: A Discourse Analytical Approach," in Simon Cottle, ed., *Ethnic Minorities and the Media* (Philadelphia: Open UP, 2000), p. 34.

[18] Peter Dahlgren, *Television and the Public Sphere: Citizenship, Democracy and the Media* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

[19] Nancy Fraser, op. cit., p. 15.

[20] This seminar was organized by the Center for Public Policy Strategies (CPPS).

[21] See Howard Jarvis, "World Press Freedom Review. Lithuania, 2000. International Press Institute," available at www.freemedia.at/wpfr/lithuani.htm. Also see Audrone Nugaraite, "Lithuania: Press Overview," available at <http://www.ijnnet.org>.

[22] Only the Department of National Minorities and Émigrés conducts yearly overviews of ethnic minorities in the media. Those overviews usually consist of several pages of random description and statistics. No content or discourse analysis is presented.

[23] According to Lithuanian sociologists Natalija Kasatkina and Tadas Leoncikas, Russians are the biggest and socially heterogeneous minority. Poles are the second biggest minority, but less socially heterogeneous. Jews, described as a non-territorial minority, present a diaspora. The Roma minority is also a non-territorial minority, which keeps a prominent cultural distance and is characterized by limited social mobility. See Natalija Kasatkina, Tadas Leoncikas, *Lietuvos etniniu grupiu adaptacijos kontekstas ir eiga* (Vilnius: Eugrimas, 2000), p. 10-20.

[24] Lietuvos rytas boasts of a circulation of a 150 000 copies daily. The audience share of Lietuvos rytas was 60% in 1998.

[25] It should be emphasized, at the outset, that in my study I will not discuss articles and news reports on international relationships between Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Israel. My focus is ethnic minorities living in Lithuania and their coverage in the biggest Lithuanian daily.

[26] Information taken from www.gay.lt, 2001.

[27] Teun A. van Dijk, *Racism and the Press* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 246.

[28] B. S. Greenberg, "Minorities and the Mass Media," in J. Bryant & D. Zillman, ed., *Perspectives on Media Effects* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986), p. 165-188.