

# LITHUANIA

## **Poles**

Activity: 1991-2001

## **General notes**

NA

## **Movement start and end dates**

- We code the movement as of 1991 since that year corresponds to Lithuania's first year of independence. We do, however, indicate that this movement was active (start date: 1989) and nonviolent prior to independence (see Lithuanian Poles under Russia). Lithuanian Polish mobilization for territorial self-determination continued after Lithuania's independence in 1991 (Akcja Wyborcza Polakow Na Litwie; MAR; MRGI; Sato 2009). However, the claim for territorial autonomy gradually ended after the attempt to establish a Polish National Territorial Region was declared unconstitutional by the Lithuanian government in 1991, and claims made today are short of territorial autonomy (language rights mainly) (Janušauskienė 2016: 584). Following the 10-year rule, we code the end date in 2001. [start date: 1989; end date: 2001]

## **Dominant claim**

- The movement made claims for autonomy (MAR; Senn 1997). [1991-2001: autonomy claim]

## **Independence claims**

NA

## **Irredentist claims**

NA

## **Claimed territory**

- The Lithuanian Poles have called for autonomy of the Vilnius and Soleczniki districts, which are dominated by the Lithuanian Poles and declared themselves autonomous national districts in 1989 (Senn 1997). These districts are located within Vilnius county in present-day Lithuania. We code this claim using data from Open Map (<https://shapes.openmap.lt/>) for polygon definition, which offers a better approximation than GADM in this case.

## **Sovereignty declarations**

NA

## **Separatist armed conflict**

- We found no reports of separatist violence, hence a NVIOLSD classification. [NVIOLSD]

## **Historical context**

- In 1988 contested elections were introduced throughout the Union, which can be seen as a measure of decentralization (prior to this, officials were de-facto centrally appointed). However, local choice of leaders had limited consequences for the Lithuanian Poles as they do not control an autonomous entity; the Lithuanian districts where they dominate have very little decision rights. Thus, we do not code a concession.
- In 1988 (1989 according to Sato 2009: 145, but he seems mistaken), Lithuania adopted a new language law. Lithuania's law is considerably stricter compared to the ones adopted by the other two Baltic Republics, with a timeline that demanded a demonstrated competence in Lithuanian within two years by all public officials (later prolonged to five years), together with several measures aiming to install Lithuanian as the sole official state language (Hogan-Brun et al. 2008: 515-516, 519). There were no exceptions for dominantly Polish districts (Sato 2009: 145). The new language law led to the emergence of the Polish movement (Sato 2009). [1988: cultural rights restriction]

## **Concessions and restrictions**

- After the failed August coup against Gorbachev in 1991, Polish groups were accused of backing the coup. Local governments in Polish-dominated districts are suspended and central rule is imposed upon them (MAR). We do not code this as local councils have very limited powers in Lithuania.
- The citizenship law that Lithuania has adopted following independence is more inclusive when compared to its Baltic neighbors. However, aspects related to the granting of citizenship are considered part of the access dimension, and not coded as autonomy/minority rights concessions or restrictions.
- Following independence, national legislation was put in place aiming for the protection of minority languages and cultures. The 1992 constitution and the 1995 language law grant minority communities the freedom to establish their own educational, cultural and religious institutions. The 1995 law allows for the usage of minority languages in communication with the local governments in areas where national minorities are compactly settled. The Law also allows for minorities to use their native language in education, culture and the mass media. In addition, in 1994 Lithuania signed a bilateral treaty with Poland on the protection of the Polish minority in Lithuania (Hogan-Brun et al. 2005: 351-352; Minority Rights Group International; Andrlik 2009). As a result, Lithuania has become one of the few European countries where a national minority can receive an education in their language at all levels (from kindergarden to university). That said, the Lithuanian government takes a more conservative stance on the use of Polish at the official level. The names in official documents or street signs can only be written in accordance with Lithuanian orthography (Janušauskienė 2021: 141-2). Since the 1994 treaty and the 1995 law appear merely to have further specified the 1992 constitutional provisions, we code a single cultural rights concession in 1992. [1992: cultural rights concession]
- Moreover, in 1992 the Lithuanian decides to restore the local councils in Vilnius and Soleczniki, which were abolished due to their alleged support of the August coup. Local elections are held in November, but needed to be repeated (in February) due to low turnout (MAR). We do not code this as local councils have very limited powers in Lithuania.
- Lithuania's administrative system was left essentially unchanged after the restoration of independence in 1991 until 1995, when a one-tier system was introduced. Regional governments became part of the central government, and regional governors were now appointed by the central government (Saparniene & Lazauskiene 2012: 390). However, we do not code this as a restriction

since it is, first and foremost, an administrative reform and does not appear to have changed the autonomy status (municipalities were strengthened, at the same time).

### **Regional autonomy**

- Regional sub-units in Lithuania have very limited powers. Hence the Lithuanian Poles are not considered autonomous. [no autonomy]

### **De facto independence**

NA

### **Major territorial changes**

- Lithuania attained independence in 1991, implying a host change. [1991: host change (new)]

### **EPR2SDM**

<i>Movement</i>	Poles
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Poles
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	36802000

### **Power access**

- We follow EPR. [powerless]

### **Group size**

- We follow EPR. [1991-2000: 0.07; 2001: 0.066]

### **Regional concentration**

- According to MAR, the Lithuanian Poles' regional base is in the Vilnius and the Soleczniki districts, though less than 50% of all Lithuanian Poles reside there (see gc7 in phase I-IV release). The 2011 census provides corroborating evidence. According to the 2011 census, Poles make up a majority in the Vilnius district (52.07%) as well as in the adjacent Soleczniki district (78%). However, less than 40% of Lithuania's approx. 200,000 Poles reside in the two districts. In no other district is there a Polish majority. Note: almost half of all Poles in Lithuania resides in the city of Vilnius (which is not the same as Vilnius district), but they form but 17% of the local population. Data from the 2001 census leads to the same conclusion, and so does data from the Soviet 1989 census. [not concentrated]

### **Kin**

- EPR notes numerically significant kin (Poles) in Poland, Belarus, and Russia. [kin in neighboring country]

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