THE SOCIO-CULTURAL SITUATION OF THE LITHUANIANS IN POLAND AND THEIR IMPACT ON RELATIONS BETWEEN A RESIDENT COUNTRY AND LITHUANIA

According to 2002 census Lithuanian minority in Poland is represented by 5639 Polish citizens, concentrated mostly in the Podlaskie province (5097), in the communes of Puńsk (74.4% of population), Szypliszki, Krasnopol and Sejny. Compared to other minorities, Lithuanian community in Poland is very well organized. Lithuanians are associated in 10 socio-cultural organizations, which cooperate rather than compete against each other, even if their scope of activity is more or less similar.

The situation of Lituanian minority has a considerable and increasing importance in bilateral relations between their country of residence and their old homeland is quite significant. The impact of the Lithuanian minority on Polish-Lithuanian relations depends on a number of factors, which can be divided into two interdependent groups: 1) ‘internal’ factors, being results of the situation (activity) of the Lithuanian minority itself; 2) ‘external’ factors, being the function of principal variants of the three – sided relations: Lithuanian minority, Poland, Lithuania.

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