Compendium
cultural policies & trends

SHORT PROFILE

LITHUANIA

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1. Facts and figures

Political system:	Parliamentary democracy
Population:	2 794 184 (2019)
GDP per capita in PPS Index (EU-27=100):	81 (2018)
General government expenditure (in % of GDP):	34.9 (2019)
Official language:	Lithuanian

2. Cultural policy system

Objectives

The current objectives of the Lithuanian cultural policy are declared in the *Lithuanian Cultural Policy Strategy for 2020-2030*, adopted by the Lithuanian Government in 2019. The four main objectives are to strengthen the cooperation between the state, municipal and non-governmental sectors and reduce cultural exclusion and inequalities; to stimulate creation and participation in culture; to develop critical thinking and societal citizenship; and to create a sustainable social and economic value of culture for national progress.

Main features

The legislation on cultural policy belongs to the Seimas (Lithuanian Parliament), the development of cultural policy is concentrated in the Ministry of Culture, and its decisions are implemented by several administrative bodies and three funding institutions. The Seimas is the national legislative body. Under its authority, the Committee on Culture deals with cultural development issues, questions of current interest and adopting decisions, and analysing culture-related

legislation. The Committee consults several advisory and expert bodies that are accountable to the Seimas and perform certain cultural policy implementation functions.

The Ministry of Culture has the duty to prepare draft laws and other legal acts; define concepts and development programmes, and coordinate their implementation; finance art and cultural organisations and important projects; coordinate the implementation of the protective system of copyright and related rights; coordinate the implementation of public policy in the field of public information; ensure the accounting and protection of cultural property; develop and implement transnational cultural programmes; and draft international treaties. In carrying out all these duties, the Ministry of Culture consults with 18 advisory councils.

The Ministry of Culture is in charge of the following areas of culture: memory institutions (heritage, libraries, museums, archives), performing arts (theatre companies, concert halls, orchestras, etc.), visual arts (galleries, arts centres), media and information (press, radio, television), creative and cultural industries (design, architecture, publishing), copyright and ethnic culture (cultural centres). The Ministry allocates funding to the state institutions working in these areas. In general, the Ministry of Culture distributes the biggest share of the culture budget through direct institutional and programme financing.

The implementation of cultural policy is shared among the Ministry of Culture and several authorities that are accountable to the Ministry or the Seimas. The most important cultural policy implementation bodies are the Press, Radio and Television Support Foundation, the Lithuanian Council for Culture, and the Lithuanian Film Centre. These three institutions were established to separate the functions of cultural policy development and implementation, and ensure that the Ministry of Culture — which previously was mostly engaged with the administration of the culture funding — undertakes a more active role in the development of cultural policy. However, the Ministry retained several cultural policy implementation functions after the establishment of these institutions and the latter have less financial and political decision-making powers than similar institutions in other countries. *(Also see the organigrams on pages 7-8)*

At the local level, cultural policy is developed and implemented by municipalities. In Lithuania, there are 60 municipalities (the local self-government). Lithuanian municipalities have a right to develop local cultural policy and many of them have departments or special staffs responsible for culture management, financing and maintenance of local cultural institutions and cultural heritage. Therefore, there are four kinds of cultural institutions in Lithuania: national (financed directly by the Government), state institutions (financed through the Ministry of Culture), municipal (maintained from the local authorities' budgets) and private. These kinds of institutions are present in all main areas of culture: museums, theatres, libraries, cultural centres, etcetera. *(Also see the table Public cultural expenditure by level of government on page 8)*

Background

1990-2000

Following the declaration of independence, the Lithuanian Government began to reform all areas of public policy, including the cultural policy system. In 1991, the Government established the Arts and Culture Council and some other expert councils and commissions that acted as advisory bodies. In 1996, the Government organised the Lithuanian Cultural Congress, which resulted in establishing the Press, Radio and Television Foundation and, two years later, the Culture and Sports Foundation. However, the budgets of these institutions were limited, and so was their role in the financing of culture. The Ministry of Culture remained the main actor in the cultural policy system.

2000-2010

In 2001, the Lithuanian Government approved a programme document titled *Provisions on Lithuanian Cultural Policy*. The document defined goals and objectives of cultural policy, but did not include any changes to the cultural policy implementation mechanism. The institutional system of cultural policy remained the same; the Ministry of Culture remained the main body of cultural policy development and implementation. Therefore, the following decade was marked by discontent of artists and cultural professionals with the existing centralised system of cultural policy and financing. In 2010, the Lithuanian Parliament adopted a strategic document, *Lithuanian Cultural Policy Change Guidelines*, that claimed the need to democratise the existing cultural policy model, by developing cultural self-regulation and establishing a council for the arts (besides the existing advisory body, the Arts and Culture Council).

2011-2020

To implement the *Guidelines,* the Government established the Lithuanian Film Centre in 2012 and the Lithuanian Council for Culture in 2013. The Lithuanian Film Centre is a budgetary institution under the Ministry of Culture that coordinates national film production and administers state funds for the development of the film industry. The Lithuanian Council for Culture is a budget-financed institution that finances culture and arts programmes; administers the Culture Foundation, distributes grants and other types of support to culture and arts professionals; and monitors the culture and art projects that are under implementation.

In 2018, the Ministry of Culture prepared a new strategy: *Lithuanian Cultural Policy Strategy for 2020–2030*, which updated and expanded some of the provisions set out in the *Guidelines*. It is the first comprehensive long-term cultural policy strategy since the restoration of the independence of Lithuania, based on empirical data, situation analysis and experts' evaluation. The Strategy was approved by the Government in 2019 (see chapter 1.1. of the country profile).

3. Current cultural affairs

Key developments

In 2012-2013, Lithuania reformed the cultural policy system, aiming towards horizontal decentralisation and democratisation. The key achievement of the reform was the establishment of the Lithuanian Council for Culture and the Film Centre. The two institutions have brought into cultural policy a new ethos of communication and management based on dialogue, openness and accountability to the public. Transferring the cultural policy implementation and funding functions to these new institutions, should have ensured that the Ministry of Culture undertakes a more active role of strategic cultural policy development. However, the Ministry continued several of its funding activities and did not activate the strategic policy making.

After much discussion in the public sphere about the Ministry's role in developing policies, the National Audit Office of Lithuania performed the audit *How the Ministry of Culture Forms Culture Policy and Organises and Manages Its Implementation* in 2017. This resulted in establishing the Unit of Monitoring and Data Analysis in the Lithuanian Council for Culture and reorganising the Ministry's structure in 2018. Since then, the Ministry of Culture has begun to activate the function of cultural policy development. It prepared important strategic documents — the *Lithuanian Cultural Policy Strategy 2030* (2018) and the *Law on Culture* (2019), which is currently under the consideration in the Seimas — and commissioned several important survey research and feasibility studies.

In 2020, the Ministry of Culture drew up and submitted for public consultation a draft amendment to the *Law on the Status of Artists and Artists' Organisations*, which aims to simplify the procedure for granting the status of an artist and an artists' organisation; unify the conditions for granting the status of an artist; and ensuring the monitoring of the activities of artists (see chapters 2.1. and 2.3. of the country profile).

Key themes

Cultural rights and ethics

In Lithuania, the official institution for supervising journalist ethics is the Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics. The limits of freedom of expression and other ethic issues of public communication also are supervised by the self-regulatory body of media, the Association of Ethics in the Provision of Information to the Public. The stakeholders of the Association are public information producers, disseminators, journalists and other participants of the media sector, which seek to foster principles of ethics in public information activities and raise public awareness for the evaluation processes and the use of public information.

Despite the activity of the two above-mentioned institutions, prominent cases of freedom of expression restrictions in 2005–2019 — monitored by the Lithuanian Human Rights Monitoring

Institute — demonstrated that the limits of freedom are understood quite narrow in Lithuania and more extreme forms of expression received disproportionate prohibitions and punishment-based responses from the authorities. Performers, designers, advertisers, and social actions initiators had to defend their freedom of expression in courts and these cases demonstrated that law enforcement authorities are not always able to distinguish permissible self-expression, criticism or black humour from hate speech, bullying or contempt (see chapter 2.2 of the country profile).

Cultural diversity

In Lithuania, cultural diversity (understood as equal respect for or acknowledgement of the contribution of different social groups to culture) issues are mainly present in the areas of gender, language and memory politics.

Unequal acknowledgement of the contribution of women and men to culture is manifested trough the underrepresentation of women in the pursuit of National Award for Culture and Arts. Lithuanian artists receive these awards for their long-term creative contribution to the Lithuanian culture and art. Despite the fact that a greater percentage of women are working in arts and culture, they are nominated for the awards far less often than men. Since 1990, women accounted for only 21% of all artists who received the National Awards (see chapter 2.5.5 of the country profile).

The main debate in the field of language policy has dealt with the "names spelling issue". The Lithuanian *Law on State Language* provides that personal names in official documents have to be written in the Lithuanian alphabet. The law is contested by the Polish minority group and the Lithuanian women married to foreigners, who are requesting their foreign names to be written in unchanged form. The alternative laws that suggested accepting additional letters were not adopted by the Parliament. The counter arguments imply that introducing non-Lithuanian characters would undermine the status of Lithuanian as the official language and can cause trouble in reading non-Lithuanian names (see chapter 2.5.4 of the country profile).

The issues of cultural diversity in memory politics provoke the most fervent public discussions. In cases where these issues are related to the policy of art in public spaces, e.g. the establishment of new public historical monuments or dealing with the monuments from the Soviet period, debates have been ongoing for decades and even reach the courts. The longest ongoing public debate concerns the monument in the largest square of Vilnius (the Lukiškės Square). Almost thirty years after removing the statue of Lenin from the square and three competitions for a new monument later, the square still remains without a monument. This case has shown great disagreement between citizens and experts as well as between art experts from different schools in questions of the aesthetic form of public art, and the need to elaborate the transparent and fair procedure for the democratic solution of "value-laden" issues of culture policy (see chapter 2.9. of the country profile).
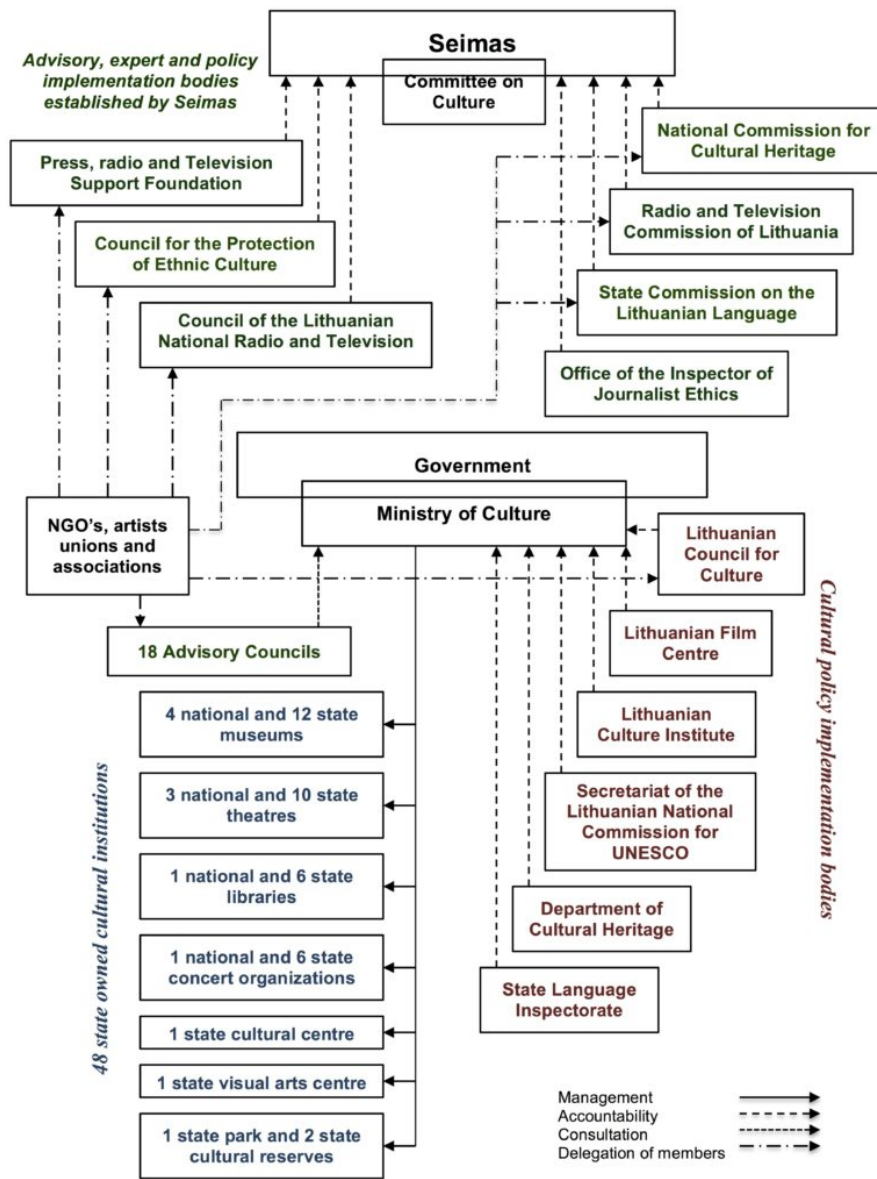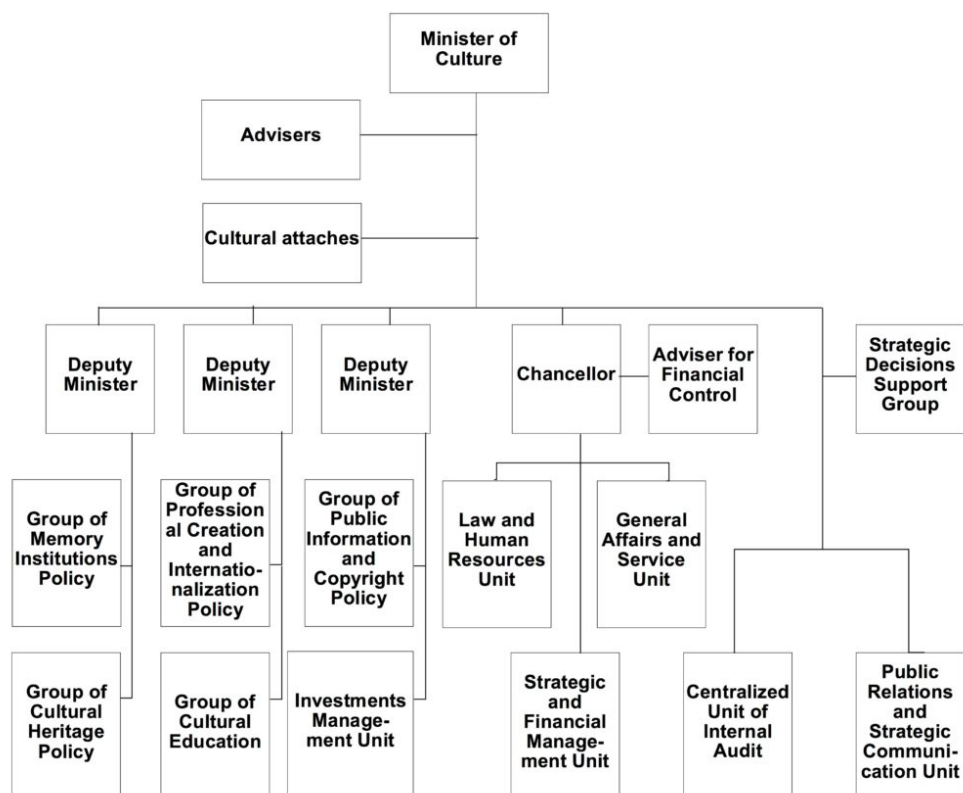
Culture and social inclusion

In Lithuania, the issue of social inclusion and cohesion is mainly related in cultural policy to the equal opportunities of different social groups and inhabitants of different regions to participate in cultural life, i.e. cultural participation is considered to be an important factor of social inclusion and cohesion. According to the survey *Population Participation in Culture and Satisfaction with Cultural Services* (2017), the inhabitants of villages and small towns are less involved in cultural activities. The share of culturally active people who used more than seven types of cultural services at least once a year was 14.6 per cent in rural areas, compared to 30.6 per cent in cities.

The *Lithuanian Cultural Policy Strategy for 2020-2030* has focused two of its main objectives on encouraging cultural participation and providing equal accessibility of culture. Along the same line, the Lithuanian Council for Culture created the model of the support of Even Cultural Development. Approved in 2018, the model resulted in establishing ten Regional Councils for Culture. The Regional Councils decide independently on funding and implementation of cultural and artistic projects, and involve local communities, creators and municipalities in decision-making processes. Another supportive initiative for regional cultures and equal cultural accessibility is offered through two contests: the Lithuanian Capital of Culture (since 2008) and the Minor Lithuanian Capital of Culture (since 2015, for smaller villages) (see chapter 2.6. of the country profile).

ANNEX

I. *Organigrams*

Seimas — Committee on Culture

Advisory, expert and policy implementation bodies established by Seimas
- Press, radio and Television Support Foundation
- Council for the Protection of Ethnic Culture
- Council of the Lithuanian National Radio and Television

National Commission for Cultural Heritage
Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania
State Commission on the Lithuanian Language
Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics

NGO's, artists unions and associations

Government — Ministry of Culture

Lithuanian Council for Culture
Lithuanian Film Centre
Lithuanian Culture Institute
Secretariat of the Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO
Department of Cultural Heritage
State Language Inspectorate

Cultural policy implementation bodies

18 Advisory Councils

48 state owned cultural institutions
- 4 national and 12 state museums
- 3 national and 10 state theatres
- 1 national and 6 state libraries
- 1 national and 6 state concert organizations
- 1 state cultural centre
- 1 state visual arts centre
- 1 state park and 2 state cultural reserves

Management
Accountability
Consultation
Delegation of members

Minister of Culture

Advisers

Cultural attaches

Deputy Minister | Deputy Minister | Deputy Minister | Chancellor | Adviser for Financial Control | Strategic Decisions Support Group

Group of Memory Institutions Policy | Group of Professional Creation and Internationalization Policy | Group of Public Information and Copyright Policy | Law and Human Resources Unit | General Affairs and Service Unit

Group of Cultural Heritage Policy | Group of Cultural Education | Investments Management Unit | Strategic and Financial Management Unit | Centralized Unit of Internal Audit | Public Relations and Strategic Communication Unit

II. *Governmental expenditure on culture*

Public cultural expenditure by level of government, 2017

	Total expenditure (EUR)	% share of total
State (central, federal)	243 200 000	54%
Regional (provincial, Länder, etc.)	-	-
Local (municipal, incl. counties)	205 800 000	46%
TOTAL	**449 000 000**	**100%**

Source: Lithuanian Department of Statistics, 2017