



Migration profile:

Lithuania

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About EMN
European Migration Network (EMN) is a network of migration specialists from the European Commission, 26 EU Member States and Norway. It aims to collect, analyze and share up-to-date information in the areas of migration and asylum. IOM Vilnius Office represents the Government of Lithuania in the EMN.
www.emn.europa.eu
www.emn.lt

About IOM
International Organization for Migration was established in 1951, and is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year.
www.iom.int
www.iom.lt



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Lithuania is one of the few EU “sending countries” with an average of 30,000 people leaving the country every year.

A country of emigration

Lithuania is a country of emigration and one of the few EU “sending countries”. According to the Statistics Lithuania, 615,000 people have left the country since 1990¹. On average, 30,000 people emigrated every year.

The year 2010 saw an unprecedented increase in emigration statistics. The number of declared departures increased almost 4 times in comparison to 2009. Such a dramatic increase in the official departure statistics was mainly related to changes in the Health Insurance Law. It required all residents to pay for the national health insurance. Emigrants who left but did not declare their departure also need to make payments, unless they declare their emigration. In order to avoid payments, emigrants who had left but had not declared their departures rushed to declare it, including those who had emigrated prior to 2010. Consequently, the number of declared departures increased tremendously. Even if these changes have made migration statistics more reliable, it is important to note that not all migrants declare their departure from Lithuania.



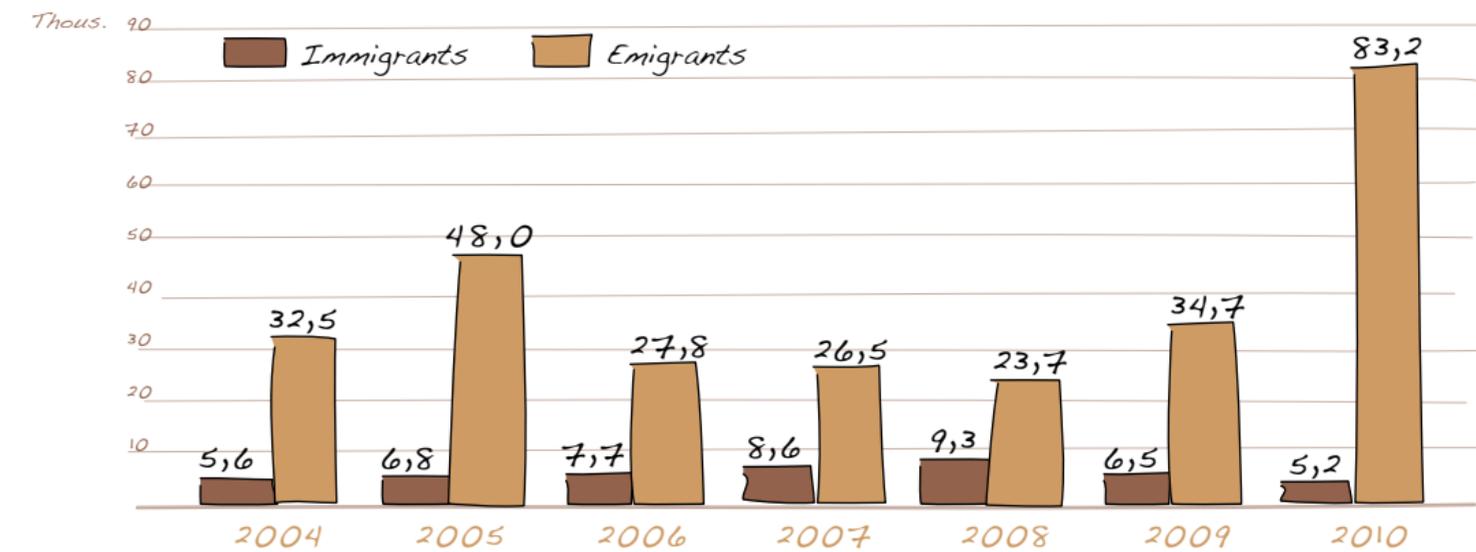
¹ Statistics Lithuania, 2011.

The most important factors explaining emigration trends in Lithuania are comparatively low wages and high rate of unemployment. However, a survey carried out by IOM Vilnius demonstrated that other socio-economic factors need also to be considered, such as the feeling of social insecurity, lack of justice, unsatisfactory treatment of employees by employers and better career opportunities abroad.

On the contrary, immigration to Lithuania is relatively low. During the last decade, approximately 6,500 people a year immigrated to Lithuania. About 80% of immigrants are returning Lithuanian residents.



International migration flows



Source: Statistics Lithuania, 2011.



85 % of emigrants had been unemployed for a year or longer before departure.



Emigration

Unemployment and wage differentials between Lithuania and destination countries are the main push and pull factors. Most emigrants leave Lithuania due to the lack of employment. For example, 85 percent of people who declared their departure in 2010 indicated that they had been unemployed for a year or longer prior to their leave. This push factor is reinforced by the pull factor – wages in emigrants' main destination countries which are two to three times higher in terms of purchasing power parity or up to six times in current prices if compared to wages in Lithuania². Other reasons for emigration include study and family reunification. Well established Lithuanian communities in the main destination countries also facilitate emigration.

² *Macroeconomic overview, SEB 2011.*

Destinations

In 2010, the United Kingdom and Ireland were the main destination countries for Lithuanian emigrants. Approximately, 50 percent of emigrants moved to the UK and 15 percent to Ireland. Norway (5.8%), Germany (4.6%) and Spain (4.3%) were other popular destinations. However, countries that attract highest numbers of migrants from Lithuania have been changing over time. Prior to the accession to the EU it was the Russian Federation, Commonwealth of Independent States, and the United States of America that attracted highest numbers of migrants from Lithuania. Migration patterns may also change in the near future as Germany and Austria opened their labor markets for the Lithuanian nationals (as well as nationals of other 7 accession countries) in May 2011.



Lithuanian emigrants by country of destination, 2010

- UK 49,2 %
- Ireland 15,7 %
- Norway 5,8 %
- Germany 4,6 %
- Spain 4,3 %

Source: IOM Vilnius with information from the Statistics Lithuania, 2010.



Emigrant profile

Lithuanian emigration is led by predominantly young, single and educated individuals. The 2010 data shows that 55 percent of emigrants were 20 to 35 years old, 52 percent were women, 50 percent had special upper secondary education and 25 percent completed higher and professional education.

Family emigration is also on the rise, too. Until recently, migrant parents preferred to leave their children with extended family members while they were abroad but this trend is changing now – more parents take their children along with them as they leave. Such emigration when all family members leave the country highly reduces the chances of return migration in the future.

Lithuanian emigrant profile in 2010 was that of a young single and educated woman/man most likely heading to the UK.



Immigration

Immigration to Lithuania is low and has been decreasing since the 2008 financial crisis. In fact, from 2008 to 2010 immigration decreased almost twice – from 9.3 thousand to 5.2 thousand. The majority of immigrants to Lithuania are, in fact, Lithuanian citizens. For example, 8 out of 10 immigrants were Lithuanian citizens in 2010. The majority of them returned from the UK (27.6%), followed by Ireland (11.6%) and the Russian Federation (7.8%).

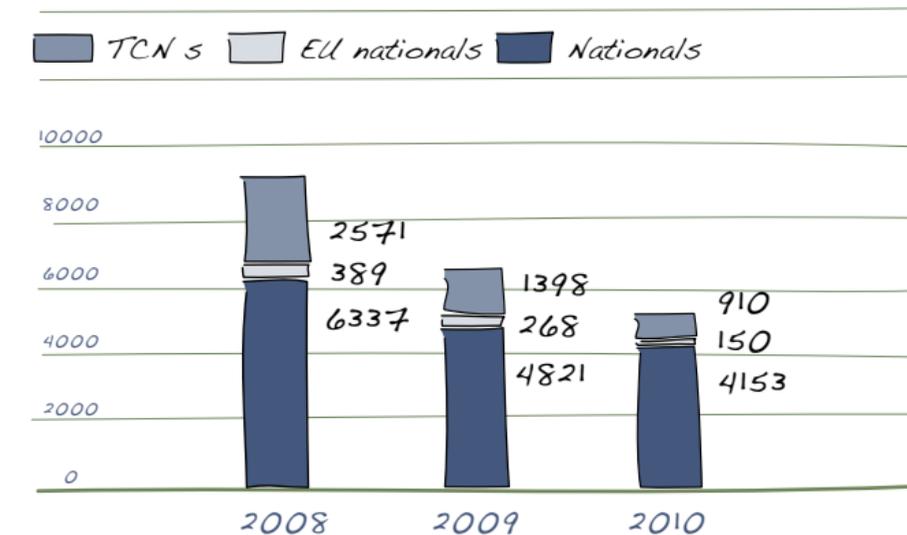
The immigration of foreigners (both EU nationals and third country nationals) is low and has been decreasing in the last 3 years. In 2010, the majority of third country nationals arrived for the purpose of family reunification, work or study. Main countries of origin were the Russian Federation, Belarus, and Ukraine.

Lithuania has a rather small population of foreign residents. Around 30,000 aliens lived in Lithuania (either temporarily or permanently) at the beginning of 2011, which constituted 1.1 percent of the Lithuanian population. This is the smallest number in the EU after Bulgaria, Poland and Romania, where foreigners make up less than 1 percent of the total populations.

The majority of immigrants are, in fact, returning Lithuanian citizens.



Immigration by nationality



Source: Statistics Lithuania, 2011.



Third country nationals are allowed to take only those positions for which no national or EU workers can be found.



Labor migration

Work is one of the purposes for which foreigners arrive to Lithuania. In 2008, 50 percent of all valid temporary residence permits were issued for the purpose of work. However, the number of labor migrants dramatically decreased in 2009 and 2010 due to the economic slowdown, when the majority of jobs available for third country nationals were eliminated. In 2010, only 1,808 work permits were issued to third country nationals (four times less than in 2008)³.

Third country nationals are allowed to take only those jobs for which no national or EU workers can be found. An employer must advertise the vacancy for at least 1 month before a work permit can be issued to a third country national worker. Most work permits in Lithuania are issued to long distance drivers, cooks and construction workers.

³ *Lithuanian Labour Exchange.*

Lithuania can be described as a country with a rather restrictive labor immigration policy. Workers from third countries are considered to be only a temporary solution and therefore are not allowed to stay after their contract is finished or terminated. They cannot change their employer or look for work while in the country.

However, in the last years, arrival procedures have been simplified. For example, in 2011, admission rules were changed in order to allow for a faster arrival of all labor migrants under the national D visas. Before, only the one whose profession was included into the Shortage List could arrive in a facilitated procedure. Furthermore, transposition of EU Directives has led to facilitation of immigration procedures for certain groups of third country nationals (i.e. students, researchers, and highly skilled workers). In particular, family reunification was simplified for highly skilled workers, e.g. university lecturers and owners of businesses, who now can bring their family members along with them immediately, and not after 2 years of residence.





Integration

Lithuania has not yet developed a coherent integration programme for foreigners.



So far, Lithuania has not yet developed a coherent integration programme for foreigners (except those under international protection). Available integration measures are project-based and temporary. The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) which ranks 31 countries according to their integration policies positioned Lithuania in the 27th place in 2010⁴.

⁴ *Migrant integration policy index III (www.mipex.eu).*

Illegal immigration and human trafficking

Lithuania controls almost 1000 km of the external EU border. Therefore, irregular migration to the country is not solely a Lithuanian matter but also the European one. Irregular migration in Lithuania is relatively low even after the accession to the EU and the Schengen, although it is higher than in other Baltic States.

In 2010, 1,347 migrants were found to be illegally present in Lithuania and had to leave the country. Their main countries of origin were the Russian Federation (440), Belarus (379) and Ukraine (128)⁵. Irregular migrants are either expelled or can choose to return voluntarily. In total, 55 foreign nationals returned with the assistance provided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) through the *Assisted voluntary return* program in 2010.

Concerning human trafficking, the Lithuanian government is currently implementing the third *Programme for the Prevention and Control of Trafficking in Human Beings 2009-2012*. While financial support for agencies and civil society organizations combating trafficking has been limited, the government remains committed to addressing the issue of human trafficking.

⁵ Lithuanian Migration Department, "Migration Yearbook 2010".





Lithuania grants two forms of international protection: refugee status and subsidiary protection.



Asylum

The number of asylum seekers in Lithuania is relatively small in comparison to other EU countries but continues to increase. In 2008 Lithuania received 210 asylum applications while in 2010 the number increased to 373 applications. Lithuania grants two forms of international protection: refugee status and subsidiary protection. The number of people granted refugee status is rather low: only 96 persons were granted refugee status in the last 10 years. The number of people granted subsidiary protection is more numerous and fluctuates year after year. In the last decade it peaked at 485 in 2003 and dipped to 100 in 2010.

Migration, media and public opinion

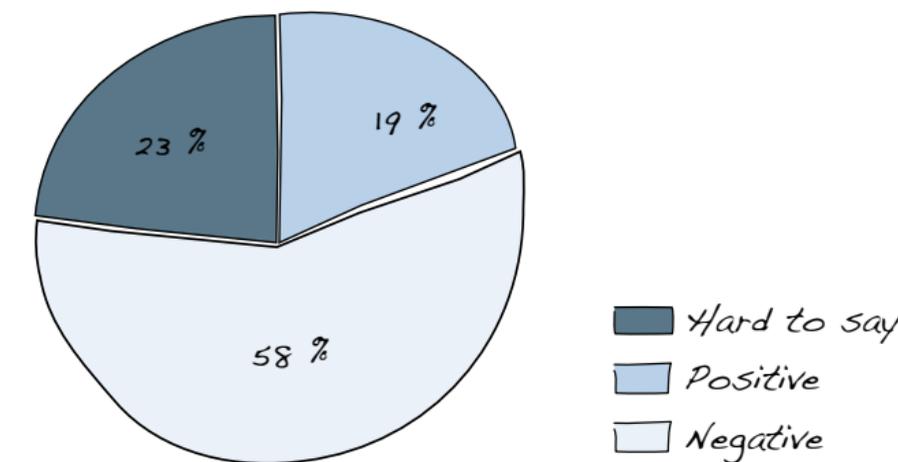
Migration is a polemic topic in Lithuania and it receives frequent media coverage. The fact that young people leave the country has been politicized and perceived negatively by the public. Additionally, the idea that the economic and political situation “forces” Lithuanians to leave the country is widespread.

Immigration is perceived negatively as well. According to a survey carried out by IOM and the European Migration Network (EMN) in 2010, 58 percent of all Lithuanian residents think that immigration of third country nationals is a negative phenomenon, especially for the labour market. However, the young and educated people view immigration more positively and think that it could bring economic benefits to the country.



Lithuanian citizens' attitude towards immigration

Do you think immigration to Lithuania is a positive or negative phenomenon?



Source: Survey "Lithuanian attitudes towards immigration and immigrants, 2010", commissioned by IOM Vilnius.

