

Civic Empowerment Index 2013

In 2013, Civil Society Institute conducted the research of the Lithuanian society's civic empowerment for the 6th time. It showed that although the level of the Lithuanian society's civic empowerment is still low, it is slightly increasing. In addition to society as a whole, civic empowerment of the public sector was investigated too. Last year closer attention was paid to civic empowerment of civil servants and officials, whereas civic empowerment of teachers, the youth and pupils was analysed in 2008-2009, 2010 and 2012 respectively. The results of the research reveal that civic empowerment of civil servants and officials is greater than society's but lower than teachers and students'.

Lithuanian Society's Civic Empowerment Index was 36.0 out of 100 points in 2013. The civic empowerment of our society is still low, but it is slowly increasing if compared to the Index of previous years, especially 2007 and 2008, when the first research of the Civic Empowerment Index was conducted.

The greatest changes in the Civic Empowerment Index can be determined by changing patterns of the Lithuanian citizens' engagement in civic activities. Last year considerably greater part of the population donated money or various items to charity, or supported persons in any other way (in 2012 – 48%, 2013 – 55%). In other spheres the activeness of the population has grown only in a range of statistical error if has grown at all. Charity (mentioned above), participation in voluntary works to clean the surrounding areas (51%) and involvement in local community activities (37%) are still prevailing civic activities. Less often citizens participate in a political party's activity, contact politicians, notify state institutions of law violations, and participate in strike campaigns and demonstrations.

Last year's data reveals more positive society's view towards its own civic influence. The index of civic empowerment conception, consisting of three indicators (how people assess their own influence in adopting decisions that have an effect on the life of the whole society or of particular groups in society; how they assess the influence of other ordinary people in this field; and how they assess the influence of public organisations and movements), has increased from 45.0 out of 100 points in 2012 to 52.1 points in 2013.

However, last year's survey also shows some negative trends in the civic empowerment changes. For instance, more respondents than before believe that is likely that people who initiate or actively participate in civic campaigns can lose their jobs, can be considered weird by other people, can be publicly attacked and slandered, suspected that they act for selfish purposes, or receive threats.

Lithuanian Public Sectors' Civic Empowerment Index: 2013

Lithuanian public sector's civic empowerment is greater than the whole society's. According to the survey, the Civic Empowerment Index of the public sector workers is 44.7 out of 100 points (the Index of society as a whole – 36.0). However, previous surveys of the teachers and pupils' Civic Empowerment Index show that their civic empowerment is even greater (teachers' Civic Empowerment Index was 47.8 in 2009, pupils' Index – 47.6 in 2012). Even though the most popular civic activities among Lithuanian public sector workers are the same as those of society as a whole, their activeness is significantly greater (donating to charity (82 % of the public sector workers stated that they have done this over the last 12 months), participating in voluntary works to clean the surrounding areas (66%) and involvement in local

community activities (44%) are the most popular civic activities). Public sector workers also considerably more often send information of civic and political nature by electronic mail, sign the petitions (27% of the public sector workers do this, whereas only 7% of the population), purchase products from a specific company or country because of ethical or moral motives (over the last 12 months 28% of the public sector workers have done this, whereas only 9% of society as a whole), more often meet with journalists or write and speak in the media, notify state institutions of law violations, participate in the activities of public organisations and movements.

Public sector workers and officials more often than society as a whole are determined to personally participate in resolving problems that might arise in the country. In case of a serious political, economic or local community problem, 49%, 60% or 87% of public institution employees, respectively, would participate in civic activities. Public sector workers are particularly determined to resolve local issues – 2 out of 5 would organise civic activities themselves in order to resolve a local issue (in comparison, 3 out of 10 respondents of society as a whole would do that).

When evaluating ability of different groups to make decisions, affecting society or its separate groups, public sector workers slightly more than the rest of society value their own personal empowerment (3.3 and 3.1 point out of 10 respectively). They also more than society tend to empower local government institutions, members of the Seimas, businesspersons, the media, public organisations and communities, but they tend to evaluate the influence of the national and local government officials more pessimistically than society.

However, the civic activity risk assessment indexes of the public sector workers and society as a whole differ very slightly (society's index is 20.1 points, whereas public sector's index – 21.4 points). 6 out of 10 public sector officials agree that people who initiate or actively participate in civic campaigns can lose their jobs, can be publicly attacked and slandered or considered weird by other people.

When looking at different dimensions of the Civic Empowerment Index, it can be seen that the most significant differences between the public sector employees and society exist with regards to their activeness (the values of the civic activeness indexes differ by 21.3 points on average) and potential civic activeness (the potential civic activeness indexes differ by 9.4 points on average). In contrast, their views toward civic influence and civic activity risks differ rather slightly.

When comparing public sector officials and teachers, it can be noticed that teachers are more civically active (both actually and potentially) than public sector employees and their index of conception of civic influence is also slightly higher. On the other hand, teachers more often envisage social risks related to the participation in public activities.

Since 2007 the Civic Empowerment Index has been calculated by the Civil Society Institute according to the methodology prepared by Professor Ainė Ramonaitė, Dr Rūta Žiliukaitė and Dr Mindaugas Degutis. The research has been conducted for the 6th time.

The Civic Empowerment Index is calculated on the basis of data obtained from the survey of a representative sample of the country's population. It was conducted by public opinion and market research centre 'Vilmorus' in December 2013 and January – March 2014.

Research was funded by the European Union Social Fund and the state budget of the Republic of Lithuania according to the European Commission's Operational Programme for the Development of Human Resources.