



Piliėtinė visuomenė institutas / Civil Society Institute, Didžioji g. 5, LT-01128 Vilnius, Lietuva

## **THE MAIN INDICATORS OF THE CIVIC EMPOWERMENT INDEX OF LITHUANIAN SOCIETY 2015**

The results of the Civic Empowerment Index 2015 show that Lithuania has not found the remedy to strengthen its civil society yet. It was calculated that the mean value of the Civic Empowerment Index in 2015 was 33.4 points out of 100. This reveals the stagnation in the status of civic empowerment, as in 2014 the mean value of the Index was 34.0 points.

To begin with, last year could be characterised by further decline in society's civic activeness. Despite some successful one-off civic events, the majority of Lithuanians stated that they had not donated to charities or supported people and organisations in need in any other ways (in 2015, 44% of respondents donated to charity, which is 12% less than in 2014). There was also a decline in participation in environment cleaning activities (in 2015, 41% of respondents were involved in such activities, which is 9% less than in 2014) and local community activities (29%, which is 5% less than in 2014). A decline in participation in these three most popular civic activities had an impact on civic activeness in general. In 2015, as much as 34% of respondents did not participate in any of the 18 listed civic activities.

In addition to the decline in civic activeness, we can observe similar trends in potential civic activeness as well. In 2015 there was a further decline in determination to act in case a serious political issue arises in the country (in 2015, 6% of people were ready to take the lead in solving the issue, and additional 28% would join their activities, which is 5% less than in 2015, and 8% less compared to 2013). Compared to 2014, there was a slight drop in determination to act in case of an issue in local community (in 2015, 24% of people were ready to take the lead, and additional 44% were willing to join them, which is 5% less than in 2014).

On the other hand, higher civic activity risk assessment index could be observed in 2015, with the mean value reaching 24.3 points out of 100 and being higher than a year ago (mean value of the civic activity risk assessment index was 18.9 in 2014). Less respondents indicated that they feel threat when initiating or actively participating in civic activities. Threats include being suspected that their participation is based on egoistic incentives, losing a job, being publically harassed, slandered, considered as weirdo or even receiving death threats. However, these risks are seen as likely or very likely by 43-56% of respondents. It is likely that this change is related to a trend observed previous year, namely that those who engage in civic activities tend to perceive more risks in connection with civic activities. As civic activeness has declined this year, various risks are seen as less likely as well.



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## **HOW ORGANISED IS OUR SOCIETY?**

In addition to the main Civic Empowerment Index questionnaire, a few more questions, which were added in 2015, allowed to analyse in more detail people's participation in civic activities with respect to their membership in various kinds of organisations (potentially) aimed at civic action.

In order to know what part of people in Lithuania belong to civic organisations and gatherings, during the Civic Empowerment Index 2015 research we asked respondents about their membership in all kinds of organisations, including trade unions, charities, apartment communities, parish prayer groups, choruses and even school parents' committees. Study revealed that 22% of respondents participate in one organisation or gathering, 10% participate in a few, but as many as 68% do not participate in any. The majority (6%) of people indicated that they are members of local communities, whereas 4% belong to trade unions. Furthermore, 3% are members of garden communities, and another 3% participate in Caritas activities. Participation in the other gatherings was mentioned by no more than 2% of respondents.

Data revealed that civic empowerment of those who participate in at least one civic organisation, regardless of its nature, is higher than of those who do not. Civic empowerment score of those who participate in one organisations is 39 points; in two organisations – 49, in three or more – 56. Civic empowerment score of those who do not participate at all was less than 30 points.

## **WHAT COULD ENCOURAGE THE GROWTH OF THE CIVIC POWER?**

Civic Empowerment Index 2015 revealed that an extremely important factor in strengthening society's civic empowerment is personal invitation to contribute to civic activities. Data shows that those who invite and are invited to participate in civic activities tend to engage in them several or even dozens of times more often than those who neither invite, nor are invited by others.

Lithuanians, who are not surrounded by civically active people that are able to encourage them to become more active, engage in a very narrow range of civic activities. They include charity events, environment cleaning, activities of local community, sometimes reports of violations of the law to the state controlling bodies, signing of petitions and boycotts of products. Lithuanian people, belonging to civically active communities, participate in much more diverse civic activities. Moreover, their overall civic empowerment index is 19.1 points higher than index of people who do not receive any invitations or encouragement to contribute to civic activities (i.e. 48.2 and 29.1 points accordingly).

However, according to the poll data, during the last year as many as 7 out of 10 Lithuanians were not invited or somehow encouraged to participate in some kind of civic activities by their



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acquaintances or relatives. Only 26% of Lithuanians received this kind of invitation, and only 17% invited their acquaintances and relatives themselves.

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Since 2007, Civic Empowerment Index has been annually calculated by the Civil Society Institute, based on the methodology prepared by scientists Dr. Ainė Ramonaitė, Dr. Rūta Žiliukaitė and Dr. Mindaugas Degutis.

The research of the Civic Empowerment Index is based on representative public surveys. In November 2015, such survey was carried out by the public opinion and market research centre “Vilmorus”.

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*\* In 2015, Civic Empowerment Index research was carried out as part of the project “Conscious and Active Citizens’ Participation in Public Life”, which is financed by EEA Grants NGO Programme Lithuania. Project has been implemented by the Civil Society Institute from 2014-2016. In order to reduce economic and social disparities, the Kingdom of Norway, Republic of Iceland and Principality of Liechtenstein have established the European Economic Area Grants and Norway Grants. The funding from EEA Grants is available to 15 EU countries (12 newer EU member states and Greece, Spain, Portugal), whereas funding from Norway Grants is aimed at 12 newer EU member states. The second period of EEA Grants and Norway Grants funding spans from 2009-2014. During this period, the total funding for beneficiary countries was 1 milliard 79 million euros (84 million euros for Lithuania), aimed at implementing various projects in the countries. It is scheduled that the funding will be allocated until 2014, whereas the programme implementation period will last until mid-2016.*