Dimensions of Social Integration of Ethnic Groups in the Contemporary Society of Lithuania

S U M M A R Y

Introduction

The established legal framework and formal premises of equal opportunities to all ethnic groups, even if crucial to the development of civil society, do not mean that all citizens are treated on an equal basis in all spheres. Ethnic processes remain a social challenge in Lithuania as some problems have not yet been overcome during the last decade: negative attitudes, concerns about ethnic purity, symbolic and actual cleavages in the labour market and the public sector, treatment in the mass media, etc.

As far as the mass media is concerned, the principles of being un/noticeable or in/visible are dominant in respect of ethnic minority groups: public discourse on the issues is either missing or one-way and does not include opinions of ethnic minorities, or ethnic groups are treated exclusively through negative characteristics ascribed to them, which leads to stigmatisation (especially in the case of the Roma/Gypsies and the Chechens). As the importance of the issue is usually determined by political matters, politicised ethnicity tends to encourage xenophobia by blocking the evolution of citizenship, which is essential for the growth of democratic institutions.

Cleavages in the socio-economic areas of society among different ethnic groups in Lithuania are not sharp; social research, however, indicates that social differences among ethnic groups do exist (e.g., educational attainments, higher unemployment rates among non-Lithuanians) and that mono-ethnic segments are observed in the labour market. The major problems faced by minorities in the public sector relate to the low levels of their participation in electoral and executive bodies. Political parties are instruments for the political participation of ethnic groups within the ethnic borders: parties of ethnic minorities become an instrument for the participation for minority groups, whereas the other parties are dominated by the majority ethnic group of Lithuania.

These tendencies confirm the significance of the issue, especially when considering future migration-related challenges. Also, the aspects discussed above lead to assumptions about the existing tendencies of overlapping of the ethnic recognition and the construction of resource distribution, which allows social differentiation in respect of ethnicity.

In the society of Lithuania, where one ethnic group comprises a significant majority, there are no distinct cultural or anthropological differences among ethnic groups and the competition between ethnic groups is weak, however certain ethnic social cleavages are observed, the question of how ethnicity structures social environment and how ethnic groups are ranged in the social space is raised. The analysis of ethnic relations should be based on multidimensional indicators and should combine various variables in order to disclose real aspects of ethnic differentiation.

In Lithuania, studies of ethnicity are based on traditions that are widely prevalent in Eastern Europe: focusing on studies of the ethnocultural identity and its content through the analysis of factors specific to minority groups. Studies of culture are dominant in ethnic minority surveys with less attention being paid to the issues of employment or social status. These studies maintain a distinction between cultural values of the majority and minorities, which explains social differences, i.e. they are based on the assumption that social or cultural attributes and attitudes of an ethnic minority determine its position in the social structure.

The research presented reflects another perspective that aims at carrying out a sociological analysis of the relations of ethnic groups on the basis of the breakdown of socio-structural positions, i.e. it is based on an assumption that a certain position held and analysed through the nature of social relations has an impact on the construction of ethnic identity, ethnic relations and organisation. The analysis of relatively equalised social positions of ethnic groups' members facilitates an assessment of the social significance of ethnicity.

The advantage of the concept of social integration lies in the analysis of networks of social relations, disposition of social resources and a broader social context, which extends the understanding of ethnic groups' participation in society. Also, the research includes attempts to analyse the ethnic structure of different social sectors (public, private and non-governmental).

The research presented is based on several premises that are examined and grounded in the study. Firstly, the formal equal opportunities (e.g. legal provisions that are universal to all citizens) do not ensure the development of society's equal ethnic structure. The content of social integration is determined by different distribution of ethnic groups' social and symbolic resources. Secondly, a monoethnic environment has a different impact on the expression of ethnicity: it suspends it in the public sector and intensifies in the private and non-governmental sectors. This determines the ethnic structure of society. Finally, social cleavages of ethnic groups are related to different processes and results of social integration as well as constructs of the ethnic identity.

The research presented aims at disclosing the content of social integration of ethnic groups of Lithuania. The study consists of an introduction, three parts and the conclusions. Also, annexes with empirical data are provided.

The first part of the study provides with a theoretical framework for the research. In this part, the concept of the social integration of ethnic groups is considered on the basis of instruments of the sociological theory and methodology and a model of the empirical research is elaborated.

The second part deals with the ethnic structure of the public sector. It focuses on the premises of the formation of the main features of Lithuania's public sector that are based on the analysis of available secondary information sources, statistical data both on the national and international levels. In this part combined with other secondary sources, as well as data from previous studies, data of an international project, *Ethnic Structure, Inequality and Governance of the Public Sector* (UNRISD, 2002–2004), form a substantial part of empirical data.

The third part presents an original empirical study of the content of social integration of ethnic groups, which examines the characteristics of the ethnic structure of different sectors (public, private, non-governmental) in respect of employment. It provides the major source of quantitative data. This part includes a discussion on the research methodology, analysis and interpretation of the results with regard to the categories of the ethnic identity and established dimensions of social integration. The quantitative data collected are supplemented with the information of qualitative interviews with different experts.

In the concluding part of the study, results of the research are summarised and the final conclusions are presented.

Theoretical framework of the research of social integration

The research presented follows the social constructivist perspective that focuses on the situational and processional nature of ethnicity, the features of which are used as criteria for distinction in a specific context of social reality and social experience. Also, it maintains an active role of members of ethnic groups in defining their identities, collective knowledge and principles of solidarity (Conzen, Gerber 1992). The underlying component of the formation and definition of ethnic groups, as well as the research object includes interactions and relations of ethnic groups (majority–minority, among minorities), which can acquire forms of competition, cooperation or conflict. In the research, a structural concept of an ethnic group is applied, which defines the ethnic group in a relational conception and focuses on structural social relations rather than cultural differences (Young 2000).

On the level of sociological theory, the term *integration* is used to define developments that determine connections of related diverse agents into the social whole, system, community, or another unit. As a fundamental concept of the functionalist theory, in later theoretical developments, the concept was elaborated in the distinction between social integration and system integration (Habermas, Giddens, Lockwood).

The concept of integration has been widely criticized for its normative content, orientation towards political goals, as well as for unreasonable demands made to minority groups by the majority group; and its repressive nature (Young 2000, Blommaert, Verschueren 1996). However, in terms of analytical implications, a distinction should be made between the content and its value assessment. The research does not raise questions whether "to integrate or not", but it examines "how" the social integration of ethnic groups develops, what the main premises are, what the characteristics of social networks, institutional formations and attitudes of ethnic groups' members are in the concrete social environment.

When developing the integration theories to be applied to the contemporary multiethnic societies, more attempts are paid to avoiding reductionistic "objective" interpretations, i.e. if earlier the focus was on economic, political, or residential integration, at present cultural issues of difference, symbolic resources, and "cultural hierarchy", as well as mutual relations between individuals and different groups are taken into account in the discourse of integration (e.g. Gordon, Price, Esser, Smith, and others). The majority of contemporary researchers and theorists assume that integration is a social issue rather than an administrative, bureaucratic, or legal one (Kamali 1999). Quite recently, a growing group of researchers began examining labour market inequalities as a function of differentiated social capital, generally defined as ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures, or abilities of individuals to convert their resources (e.g. education) into social capital (McGuire 2000, Portes 2000, Smith 2000). The structural analysis of social misbalance covers the differentiation of social positions that distribute powerful symbolic resources.

The perspective of social integration includes analysis of differentiation of ethnic groups' actions and relations, and of quantitative and qualitative aspects of relational structures (civic and political participation, participation in social networks, involvement in economic, political, cultural life of society, representation at different levels of governance, participation in units and organisations of fellow citizen). Also, it includes an analysis of dominant models and factors of the inclusion into social relations and formations. If tendencies of participation in the socially regulated distribution of social resources and in strategic spheres of social life between the majority and minority groups are similar, to a certain extent they could be treated as an indicator of the level of integration (which means a qualitative balance of participation of minority groups in the systems of social interactions and relations within the majority society) (Diaz 1993).

On the theoretical level, the major factors of ethnic groups' position in the social structure are determined by formal equal opportunities and resources available at group members' disposal. According to Lin, a representative of the

socio-structural analysis, resources are accessible through direct and indirect social relations (Lin 2002), therefore, the nature of social networks, their heterogeneity and ability to convert the resources into social capital contribute to the content of social integration. The concept of social capital has broadened the field of research of social resources and focused on other aspects of social differentiation, cleavages, formation of organisations, differences of civic and political participation, while disclosing mechanisms of social power and domination.

Bourdieu, who was the first to present a systematic analysis of social capital, as well as other authors analysing these issues, applies the concept of social capital in an instrumental way, i.e. by first of all indicating the benefits that individuals, groups or other social agents gain from their participation in the social sphere and from construction of social resources. According to Bourdieu, in everyday life, individuals have at their disposal economic, cultural, social and symbolic resources (which are defined as relevant types of capital, including money and property, habitus, social networks, power and prestige, respectively, Bourdieu 1986, 2003). The significance of social capital is exposed by its unequal distribution.

In terms of links between ethnicity and social capital, usually the concepts of reciprocity, limited solidarity, trust, responsibility and obligations with both positive and negative outcomes are considered (Portes 1998, Portes & Sensenbrenner 1993). The studies deal with immigrants' networks, small-scale enterprises that employ members of a specific ethnic group, encouragement of relations within certain ethnic groups, premises for ethnic or racial conflicts. Among immigrant groups, ethnicity becomes an advantageous source for adaptation and is practised as certain resources that ensure material and social needs. This perspective could be also applied to minority groups.

Portes pays attention to the development of ethnic segments in the labour market that subsequently develop into certain physical spaces, which in its own turn leads to ethnic segregation (Portes 1998). As an outcome, ethnic relations within one group, otherwise defined as monoethnic ties, could be so limiting that members of the group have no opportunities to participate in other social networks and have very limited access to other social resources that are outside the group.

Empirical study of the ethnic structure of the public, private and non-governmental sectors

The public sector, as the basis of the functioning of the state, defines and institutionalises main regulations that structure social interactions in different social spheres. Therefore, its structure in respect of different social characteristics is an important indicator social integration. The public sector could be considered ineffective if it fails to develop mechanisms for ensuring equal opportunities of social participation for certain social groups. A qualitative study car-

ried out in the framework of the international project *Ethnic Structure, Inequality and Governance of the Public Sector* (UNRISD, 2002–2004) disclosed lower levels of ethnic minority groups' participation in the public sector, including both elective positions and the bureaucracy (Kasatkina, Beresnevičiūtė 2004).

The ethnic structure of the Lithuanian public sector is analysed in the framework of a unipolar structure, in which one ethnic group accounts for an overwhelming majority of the population. Theoretically, in the unipolar setting, ethnic minority groups pose less threat to the dominant ethnic group, therefore, the latter may encourage interethnic cooperation and in some cases active political participation of minorities, as competition is likely to be less ethnically polarised. If minority groups are integrated into the public sector, they also are less vulnerable to the quantitative superiority of the dominant ethnic group (Bangura 2004).

The analysis of several governmental bodies and institutions confirms the dominant position of the majority ethnic group and minorities cannot be considered to have achieved effective representation in national parliamentary or governmental structures. Higher posts held by non-Lithuanians (e.g., ministers, vice-ministers, and heads of departments) are rare cases and could be treated as exceptions rather than a common rule. Also, those who do achieve higher positions, allegedly choose not to identify themselves openly with other nationalities. The processes of assimilation and symbolic domination of the majority's nationality is expressed through pressures for ethnicity other than the nominal one to become invisible in the public sphere. This could be viewed as internalisation of the dominant rules and a price necessary to pay to be included in the public sphere. However, it is difficult to claim that ethnicity limits career opportunities.

Relations between society's ethnic structure and inequality are complicated. Despite public claims that the public sector is not discriminatory, ethnic groups are ranged differently due to various factors, including the following: the society's ethnic structure, ethnic groups' dynamics, existing social and economic cleavages and their overlapping with ethnic lines, subjective consideration and assessment of the current situation and, finally, mechanisms for the governance of possible cleavages.

To carry out a proper analysis of the public sector, the latter should be compared with the ethnic structures of other sectors. The development of private and non-governmental sectors is related to radical economic, political and social changes of the last decade. The research data identify the overlapping of the social sphere and ethnic segments in the private sector (nearly 50% of Russians and Poles work in an ethnically monoethnic environment) (Kasatkina, Leončikas 2003). Even not thorough enough, the research of the non-governmental sector discloses the monoethnic nature of organisations that promote activities on the grounds of interests and needs (mainly cultural) of a separate ethnic group. Despite the high number of ethnic non-governmental organisations, the numbers of their members are relatively low. This questions the public effectiveness of the organisations, their role within ethnic communities and public at large.

The aforementioned taken into consideration, the relative equalisation of social positions in these three sectors makes an assessment of the social significance of ethnicity possible.

While defining the empirical model for the research of the content of the social integration, the theoretical concept is analysed through the following four dimensions: economic, social, communicative and symbolic, which reflect different aspects of ethnic groups' social relations. The choice of the dimensions is based on the context of Lithuania, where these aspects of ethnic relations lack consistent research.

While constructing a project of empirical research, an intermethodological perspective is applied; ideas and studies of different authors are combined. The pattern includes a modified model of Diaz's social integration study, distinction of types of social capital (Bourdieu) that are defined through the concept of social resources (Lin), and empirical variables of several studies related to ethnic groups' social networks (Smith, McGuire), voluntary organisations (Soysal, Anderson, van Deth), other formations (Kamali, Portes, Chau & Yu).

The table below presents an operacionalised pattern for the research of the content of social integration of ethnic groups.

Empirical perspective of social integration

Dimensions of integration	Analytical level	Indicators	Empirical variables
Economic	Social structural level	• Social mobility • Distribution or concentration in different sectors • Subjective assessment	• Educational attainment • Qualification • Position held • Average income • Employment sector
Social	Interaction level (inter-group)	• Level of social participation • Relational preferences • Social capital	• Participation in organisations, groups • Forms and channels of participation • Trust and distance, trends attitudes • Social relations (character, structure)
Communicative	Interaction level (inter-group)	• Communicative competence • Linguistic fragmentation • Character of social relations	• Language knowledge and usage in different social contexts • Media usage
Symbolic	Social, personal (latent balance between ethnic groups)	• Perception of power, prestige • Social visibility • Level of expectations	• Subjective assessment of position held • Perception of individual influence • Personal satisfaction

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The questionnaire originally prepared for the empirical research includes 35 questions (over 150 variables). In total, 547 face-to-face interviews were carried out with respondents, working at different institutions and companies. The survey results in a margin of error of plus or minus 4,2% at a 95 per cent level of confidence. Purposive stratified disproportional multistage random sampling was applied. Stratified disproportional sampling was applied while selecting: (a) an institution/organisation from two strata – the public sector and the private sector (private companies and non-governmental organisations) in five ethnically diverse geographical locations: Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šalčininkai, Vilnius and Visaginas; (b) a respondent by his/her position held (relatively defined as chief heads, managers or specialists and service staff). Also, the ethnicity of respondents was monitored to select in equal parts Lithuanians and non-Lithuanians (Polish, Russians, other), though respondents selected randomly.

Categories of ethnic identity

In order to define the ethnic identity of a respondent, an interval scale was applied. It provided a respondent with an opportunity to ascribe himself/herself to a certain ethnic group or groups (Belarussians, Jews, Karaites, Lithuanians, Polish, Russians, Tatars, and others) according to the intensity of their identification by choosing relevant item(s) ranging from "no identification" to "strong identification".

Taken into consideration that an individual identity can express itself in different components (self-identification with one or several ethnic groups) and with different intensity, the usage of the scale is based on several theoretical assumptions. First, the ethnic identity is not easily recognizable due to its socially constructed nature. Having both subjective and objective criteria for identification, the ethnic identity is only one among other identities, together comprising an open and flexible social construct, and is influenced by a great variety of factors. Second, migration, mixed marriages and other social processes make groups less homogeneous and have an impact on different ethnic constructs. For example, a child from a mixed family has more opportunities to develop his/her ethnic identity: to choose a certain part of his/her mixed origin to identify with or not, to construct a mixed formation or an absolutely new one, etc. Such categories are not recorded in statistics (Crowley 2001). According to Banton, the usage of a "mixed" ethnic or racial identity category as if assumes the existence of a "pure" ethnic identity (Banton 2000:185). However, the empirical reality provides for a certain variety of ethnic identities, including more homogeneous or less conflict ones.

The empirical data disclosed three ethnic identity categories that were applied in further data analysis. The first category, "Lithuanians", comprises 47 per cent and includes respondents that have ascribed themselves only to one

ethnic group – Lithuanians. A "Mixed ethnic category" comprises 40 per cent and includes respondents who have ascribed themselves to several ethnic groups (including the majority group), despite of the level intensity of their identification with a specific group. "Non-Lithuanians", the third ethnic category, account for 10 per cent of the sample and includes all respondents of other nationalities (other than Lithuanians), including both who choose only one (e.g., Polish, Russian) and several ethnic groups, except Lithuanians. 3 per cent of the respondents do not identify themselves with any ethnic group.

The main empirical conclusions were reached through the data analysis by the ethnic identity categories, different sectors and dimensions of social integration.

Generalisations of empirical data

The results of the research, including both the empirical survey and theoretical studies, could be generalised into the following main conclusions on the content of social integration of ethnic groups of Lithuania:

- The analysis of the dimensions of social integration discloses cleavages among ethnic groups' social and economic resources that are characterised by ethnically homogenous social relations and formations, their overlapping in the spheres of primary (at home) and secondary (place of work, voluntary activities) relations, weaker positions in the labour market and lower assessment of own symbolic capital.
- The three sectors analysed – public, private and non-governmental – are characterised by unipolar ethnic structures of different trends: the ethnically homogenous private and non-governmental sectors (formed on the basis of a specific group) and homogenising public sector that emphasises the nominal ethnicity.
- The ethnic processes and social relations of ethnic groups reveal a relatively high social significance of ethnicity which expresses itself through ethnic identity categories that could be analysed as integrational strategies.
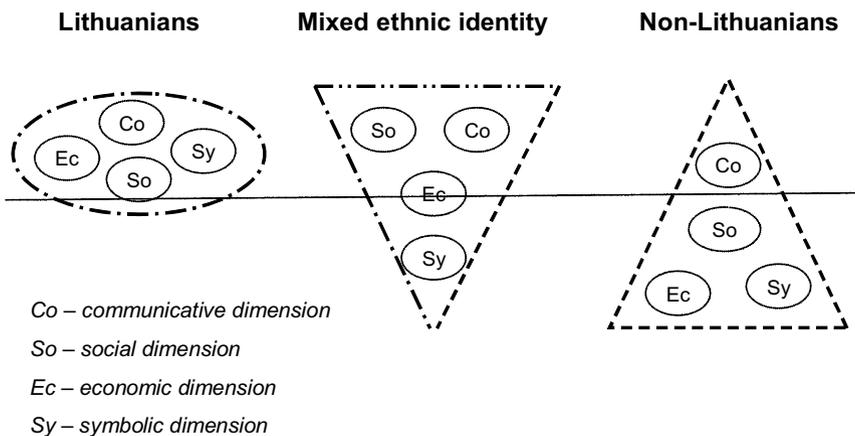
While comparing the four dimensions of social integration, the slightest differences among ethnic categories are observed with regard to variables of the communicative dimension. The flexible usage of languages in different social contexts, sources of information on Lithuania's news and trust in them, along with other indicators, represent the level of ethnic minority groups' loyalty and adaptation, as well as their positive attitudes towards integration into the public sphere.

More significant differences are observed in respect of the results on the social dimension of social integration as trends of overlapping of monoethnic social relations are identified. According to the data research, half of ethnic minority

groups' members work in a monoethnic environment and a similar part communicate with their co-workers and employers in minority languages (especially in the private and non-governmental sectors). Voluntary activities are mainly based on "ethnic networks". In the context of ethnically defined participation, ethnicity (ethnic origin or identity) becomes an important factor of social reality, around which main social networks are formed. This also reflects group impact as opposition to more successful individual integration and may restrict other channels of participation. In this case, social integration becomes ethnically defined (limited).

The most obvious differences among ethnic categories are observed while analysing indicators of economic dimension. Cleavages in the labour market and social participation are different among ethnic groups, but are more obvious among ethnic minorities' members: they are more concentrated in lower positions; they are less socially mobile and the probability of unemployment is higher in their case. In addition, lower evaluation of their social status achieved is more peculiar to members of ethnic minorities.

The symbolic dimension is the one that most explicitly reveals ethnic groups' security and self-assessment, which could be defined as a "minority syndrome". An internalised minority perception discloses asymmetric social relations between the majority and minorities. Explicitly negative self-appreciation, lower power comprehended, more vulnerable social standing and ethnically homogenous social environment may result in higher ethnic distinction, group closure and provide with possible rudiments for marginalisation.

Co – communicative dimension

So – social dimension

Ec – economic dimension

Sy – symbolic dimension

The dimensions of social integration are ranged top down according to the slightest differences among the dimensions, while comparing the three defined categories of ethnic identity, i.e. the highest cleavages are observed on the lower levels of the charts.

CHART 1: *Social integration of ethnic identity categories: qualitative interpretation of empirical results*

A schematic illustration based on the qualitative interpretation of the research data provided above presents generalised models of social integration of ethnic identity categories and reveals relative relations and differences of the dimensions of social integration. On the theoretical level of social integration, a more elaborated consideration of a mixed ethnic category should be important. This category discloses both identity constructs of contemporary society and the content of ethnicity as the symbolic margins of each category are flexible, shifting and determined by the specific social context. On the one hand, it is a category of ethnic minority groups; on the other hand, it is the majority's category, despite the weight of its components. Also, the mixed category attests social significance of a nominal ethnicity in the context of a unipolar social structure. Different locations of the dimensions of social integration among the ethnic categories, along with the existing vertical aspect of social cleavages, emphasize horizontal aspects of social integration, i.e. intergroup social inequality, and pay attention to the layers of social differences.

Conclusions of the research

Ethnicity, as a subject of the research, comprises factual and process formations, wide opportunities for theoretical explanation and variety of empirical constructs. Adoption of a concrete, defined and elaborate model for theoretical and empirical analysis of the content of ethnic groups' social integration has justified itself. On the one hand, the type of synthetic theory that the research represents partly limits opportunities for the research and interpretation, however, on the other hand, it is open and discloses perspectives for the constructive analysis of ethnicity.

The analysis of the theoretical and empirical studies discussed and the results of the research carried out identify the following main factors to the successive social integration of Lithuania's ethnic groups: individual resources, more or less active participation in the ethnically diverse networks of social relation, participation in different social sectors, social position held and its symbolic assessment, positive attitudes of the majority and minorities, and a favourable social context.

The further challenge remains the construction and development of empirically valid and reliable indicators and other research instruments for the studies of ethnicity, especially while taking into account the unipolar ethnic structure of the Lithuanian society, in which ethnicity is both invisible and easily recognisable, as well as taking into account the trends of the development of multiethnic contemporary societies that tend to increase ethnic and religious variety. The analysis of the case of the ethnic structure of the public sector, as one of the indicators of social integration, indicates that despite the publicly declared non-discriminatory policy, ethnic groups are ranged unevenly in the structure of the public sector.

The research brings into the consideration one of the essential meanings of integration: the ethnic groups' integration could be achieved through the implementation of secondary actions and measures earmarked for other purposes (e.g. implementation of complex measures that ensure equal opportunities to all citizens, without singling out any specific group. Therefore, integration should be analysed as an outcome of certain measures or actions rather than an objective of policy.

The empirical research data confirm the existence of uneven social and economic resources of ethnic groups due to the cleavages in the labour market: a relatively higher concentration of minority groups in lower levels of hierarchical positions, lower social mobility and higher unemployment rates. Ethnically homogeneous social relations and formations, as well as their overlapping in the spheres of primary and secondary spheres, strengthen the ethnic borders and limit an individual integration. In addition, lower assessment of one's own social status and symbolic power, which is peculiar to members of ethnic minorities, also reflects unequal social relations among the majority and minorities and discloses an internalised self-conception of a minority. These factors are determined by lower social resources of minority groups' members.

The measurement of social resources enables the researcher to assess indirectly the state of equality of formally defined opportunities and social treatment of ethnic groups. So far, the aforementioned unequal distribution of economic and social resources among ethnic groups questions the equality of opportunities and treatment.

The detailed analysis and comparison of the ethnic structure of the three sectors (public, private and non-governmental) based on different indicators (e.g. ethnic composition, language usage, formal and informal social relations, distribution of positions) discloses ethnically distinguished social participation.

The public sector is characterised by lower levels of ethnic minority groups' participation as the ethnic majority dominates in it. This, on the one hand, homogenises the environment, suspends the ethnicity and turns it into the nominal and at the same time invisible category. On the other hand, the development of ethnically delineated formations is observed in the private and non-governmental sectors. The monoethnic environment of the private companies and voluntary organisations (as well as overlapping social networks) retains the ethnic borders, strengthen the ethnic dimension of social relations, in the context of which ethnicity becomes an important social resource.

Lower participation of ethnic minority groups, concentration in the lower hierarchical positions of the public sector also reflects the lower integrational nature of this sector in respect of ethnicity. Meanwhile, the private and non-governmental sectors provide ethnic groups with more favourable conditions for the career trajectories. The research results disclose certain discrepancies between the present channels of the social participation of ethnic groups and

their desirable social status as they express stronger intentions to be hired at public sector institutions. Members of ethnic minority groups tend to relate employment in the public sector as channels of social prestige, power and recognition more intensively than the majority group.

The private sector is distinct in the following aspects. It is flexible to a certain extent, open to even distribution of positions as lower concentrations at different levels are observed. However, this sector maintains ethnically homogeneous patterns and strengthens the ethnic identity, which is used as social capital. Monoethnic business companies, as means of adaptation to immigrant groups, are quite spread in foreign countries. Monoethnic work relations not only consolidate ethnic networks and strengthen ethnic distinctions, but also determine clientele relations instead of an equivalent partnership in the social structure.

The non-governmental sector is characterised by strong ethnic homogeneity: voluntary organisations and associations are found on the basis of a specific ethnic group and become support channels for the group members. Ethnically defined contacts and activity, mainly orientated towards the development of cultural characteristics and identity, as well as low cooperation with other organisations, create closed formations.

Also, the monoethnic structure of the non-governmental sector reveals the social processes and mechanisms of the construction of ethnicity, as the minority groups follow the dominant participation models and operate according to available resources and opportunities. It constructs public sphere that is ethnically defined, too. As well, low participation skills and ethnic formations of limited impact strengthen and reflect social vulnerability of ethnic minority groups, which could lead to marginality.

The comparison of the dimensions of the content of social integration and the empirically defined ethnic identity categories confirms the peculiarities of the constructs of the contemporary identity and reveals the social significance of ethnicity, as the ethnic identity could be analysed as an integrational strategy. Ethnic identity categories (especially the mixed one) emphasize the importance of the nominal ethnicity in the context of the unipolar ethnic structure, which is dominated by one ethnic group. The qualitative interpretation of the distribution of the dimensions of social integration among the ethnic categories focuses on to the horizontal aspects of social inequality and uneven intergroup social relations.

While comparing three ethnic identity categories – Lithuanians, Mixed ethnic identity and Non-Lithuanians, several aspects should be considered. All three categories are more heterogeneous than homogenous in respect of different indicators, however, the Lithuanians are characterised by the highest indicators of social integration and dispersions, though this does not mean an ideal social integration, but rather emphasizes the variety of aspects of the content of social integration.

The respondents of the mixed category are distinct in their stronger purposeful integrational strategy related to a certain positive ("success") trajectory. In some cases, the indicators of this category are similar to those of the Lithuanians, but mainly they are dispersed between Lithuanians and Non-Lithuanians. The lowest indicators of social integration are most typical to the Non-Lithuanians as the aspects of exclusion are observed both in economic and social spheres and demonstrated by the symbolic aspects of social relations.

The trends of uneven distribution of social resources by ethnic lines represent differentiated social relations of ethnic groups and could be further considered in the context of discrimination. In Lithuania and other democratic societies, the concept of discrimination is changing and tends to be based on symbolic differences and aspects of social interactions, as the manifestations of discrimination become less formal and uninstitutionalised in their forms. On the other hand, the discourse dominated by the majority maintains a relatively strong distinction between public and private spheres, which is related to weak recognition of ethnic differences as a public interest. This, partly, encourages the development of monoethnic formations (voluntary organisations, private companies) and thus limits the development of a favourable context for social integration.

Examples of manifestations of direct or indirect discrimination and ethnic hatred tend still to be ascribed to private interests and treated as having no real impact on social cohesion. Studies of the private sphere or immediate social reality that reflects interactions and relations free from formal norms and that could be treated as an indicator of sensitivity to social integration remain the future challenge both in the framework of theoretical considerations and empirical research.