

THE IMPACT OF THE EU MEMBERSHIP ON ETHNIC MINORITY PARTICIPATION. PARTIES OF LITHUANIAN ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS

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The article analyzes the European Union's influence on the political participation of ethnic minorities in first and second European elections held after Lithuania's accession to the EU in 2004 and 2009. The author provides a brief theoretical overview of the EU's influence on Member States regarding ethnic minority policy, representation of ethnic minorities and ethnic minority participation in the politics. Analysis of the programs and strategies to attract voters in European Parliament elections of political parties representing ethnic minorities finds that the European issues and European values hadn't significant effect (with exceptions in 2009) on electoral programs and patterns of political participation. However, Polish and Russian ethnic minority political parties in shaping the strategies of the coalition or joint electoral list in 2004 and 2009 EP elections were not directly intended to win seats in the EP, but testing these strategies for the upcoming parliamentary elections in 2004 and municipal council elections in 2011.

Keywords: Parties of Lithuanian ethnic minorities, Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania, Lithuanian Russian Union, Russian Alliance, political participation, Elections to European Parliament.

THE IMPACT OF EU MEMBERSHIP ON ETHNIC MINORITY REPRESENTATION: THE MAIN THEORETICAL APPROACHES

There are two main attitudes among political scientists regarding ethnic minority representation (individual and consociational) in politics

(although ethnic rhetoric is used by other parties)¹. Individual attitude is accepted by the liberal democratic model followers, who think that individual rights are more important than the group rights, thus they see ethnic parties as threats for political stability². The followers of consensual model³ believe that parties in general (also ethnic minorities parties) simplify the selection in election, organize the election campaigns, represent different interests, highlight issues to consider, select and prepare candidates to represent the government and perform many other important functions⁴. Yet, Pippa Norris argues that the main question should be whether including ethnic minority representatives in the parliament encourage more electoral support for political system, more trust into the government and perception of political efficacy and satisfaction with democracy of ethnic minority electorate⁵.

The possible impact of European Union (EU) on domestic policy-making and institution-building in member states regarding ethnic minority issues and ethnic minority representation in politics is widely analyzed in the context of Central European and Eastern European countries⁶. Few perspectives dominate when EU influence upon the member states' political arena and when its ideology regarding ethnic minority issues is being discussed. On one hand, it is argued that common EU level politics on human rights and ethnic minorities influences the situation of ethnic minorities in the candidate states, although control mechanism for implementation of national ethno-politics was lacking⁷. On the other hand, it is believed that representation of ethnic minorities by parties and candidates is not so effective unless they were able to form coalitions with the ruling parties. Also, contrary to basic EU principles, there were no opportunities for minorities to participate in accession negotiations process, as the primary negotiating partner is the government and "candidate government can hardly be expected to offer broad opportunities for the inclusion of minority representatives of NGOs in accession negotiations."⁸ It is argued that different policy requirements for countries joining the EU have shaped party competition and policy choices, but also noticeable is that "<...> frequently Europe's role has been more as a rhetorical toll with

which to brow beat political opponents or as a device to cloak policy prescriptions rather than as the major variable shaping politics.”⁹ For example, in their study written in 2001, Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak noticed that before the Baltic States joined the EU “<...> the issue of EU accession [became] part of the currency of political debate and discourse among the parties”¹⁰.

There are several theoretical approaches considering the influence of EU upon national political parties. First, stating that EU institutional structure limits abilities of parties and governing coalitions to initiate policy change. Therefore, the rhetoric of political parties as well as their ideologies and programs, changes, becoming more populistly oriented. Furthermore, it can also influence political process as such, since issues are considered not only at local but also at European level. As a result, ideological cleavages among right and left voters (based on centre-periphery, urban-rural divisions) diminish and parties converge to the center opening political arena for more radical parties¹¹. These changes can have impact especially on parties representing ethnic minorities as differently from mainstream parties they are smaller and regionally based¹²; on the ways in which parties attract voters support and mobilize the electorate (for example coalition or common list making). However, the political scientist Janusz Bugajskij who studied political parties in Eastern Europe noted, that the vote of ethnic minorities ignore the right-left principle, voting instead for leaders and representatives who, in their opinion, manage to bargain with the government or local government institutions in the name of ethnic community¹³.

Regardless of growing policy scope of the EU and legislative power of the European Parliament (EP)¹⁴, the public opinion towards the EP elections was not changed. Political scientists often consider, EP elections, as “second-order” elections¹⁵. The concept of “second-order” elections was introduced by political scientists after the first EP elections held in 1979¹⁶. The main differences between national and European elections are: lower turnout for EU elections; bad performance of national governing parties and success of smaller parties¹⁷.

While election to EP “as a second order” election does not affect

the parties at the national level, but it could be one of the main factor in changing the parties political force and thus affecting the subsequent election¹⁸.

Some authors while talking about the European integration influence on the national party systems of the member states of the EU, uses the concept of *Europeanization*¹⁹.

Thus, the concept *Europeanization* here is used with the various meanings that have been used in different theoretical debates on the impact of Europe in the process of European integration <...> to explain many different processes, including the internalizing of European values and policy paradigms at the domestic level; *de jure* transfer of sovereignty to the EU level; a process by which domestic policy areas become increasingly subject to European policy making; and the emergence and development at the European level of distinct structures.”²⁰

The ensuing sections analyses how all these issues concerning ethnic minorities during Lithuanian EU integration process were reflected in political arena and how political parties that represented ethnic minorities reflected these attitudes in shaping the party programs for EP elections, the ways in which ethnic political parties mobilize their electorate during the EP elections.

THE INFLUENCE OF EU ON THE ETHNIC MINORITIES' PARTIES PROGRAMS FOR THE FIRST AND SECOND EP ELECTIONS IN LITHUANIA

Are the ethnic minority representatives implementing their political programs for the EP elections? Do they use a possibility to influence the policies that were related to ethnic minority issues at the level of the EU but that they could not implement on the national level?

Lithuanian political scientists²¹ thought that “[a]fter the EU Referendum, the election for the EP was the next occasion in which it was possible to use campaigning to increase knowledge of the EU and enhance the interest of voters in European matters.” But when they talked about the EP elections in Lithuania, they noticed that

“the opportunity was lost. Parties once again simplified the issue and adjusted to the political culture of society.”²²

There is a tendency, not only in Lithuania but also in most Eastern European countries, for domestic issues to be the most important for both the voters and the parties that participated in the European parliamentary elections. Data from European Elections 2004²³ and Barometer of 2008²⁴ shows that the issues concerning employment, agriculture, and the domestic issues of specific countries were the main factors for decision how to vote. On the other hand, the authors who analysed the 2009 EP elections presume that “[t]he current political situation in Lithuania has been strongly influenced by the result of the presidential elections which took place in May 2009. The new president is an outgoing European Commissioner for Financial programming and Budget <...>. She does not belong to any political party and claims to be pragmatic, rather than ideologically oriented.”²⁵

Nevertheless, Latvia is a good example of domestic issues becoming “Europeanized” in 2004 EP elections programme. For instance, the questions of education reform and minority rights “<...> with respect to the role of Latvian Russians and citizenship, is clearly an example where a Latvian problem has become more “Europeanized” through the efforts of For Human Rights in a United Latvia [essentially a party of ethnic Russians, author’s comment] to make this a special issue at the EU level, all the more likely now that For Human Rights in United Latvia has a representative in the European Parliament.”²⁶

It could be argued that the election programme of the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* for the EP elections in 2009, differently from the programmes of other parties designed for EP elections, was very detailed and strongly “Europeanized”. After the programme analysis, we note that as in the case of Latvia in 2004 – the problems relevant to the Polish minority were taken into consideration but they were “Europeanized”. In general it can be noted that in the EP elections campaign of 2009 several themes have been dominated in relation to the Lithuania’s European policy: energy security and questions related to the construction of the Nuclear Power Plant and development of the new cooperation agreements on energy with the other EU Member

States as well as with Russia; development of the common EU strategy, aimed to fight economic crisis; participation in the Euro-zone and promotion of the image of Lithuania as an important partner to the other EU Member States. All these problems were mentioned in the context of the domestic issues²⁷. The electoral declaration of the candidates of the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* opens with the statement that only when you identify and comprehend the problems of local people, you can aim at the EP to adopt decisions that would correspond to the expectations and interests of the voters; this is the way to transpose the local problems onto the European level and to reveal how they correspond to the European principles and how these problems can be solved through the elected Member of the EP. For example, how it could be possible to solve the question of land restitution for the Polish people living in Vilnius region via the EP? “Being in Brussels and Strasbourg, we will be able to demand that Lithuania would comply with the European Conventions that were signed and ratified by the state of Lithuania”²⁸. It is also noted that there would be an attempt to provide legal aid for the inhabitants of Vilnius and Vilnius region in the process of land restitution, as well as for the ex-owners, by submitting the complaints to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Promises are made in the programme to cooperate with the political parties (especially with the European regional parties), aiming to increase the standards of Lithuanian Polish, Russian and other national minorities’ rights protection up to the European level, consistently implementing provision regarding the use of the Polish language as the local language alongside the national Lithuanian language in the public life of Vilnius region (the same provision is valid for Russian national minority in those territories where this minority is densely populated)²⁹. It needs to be noted, that the elected candidate V. Tomaszewkis has fulfilled his promises fully and without any delays in the meeting with the European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso as he raised the question concerning the violated rights of the Polish minority in Lithuania regarding the removal of bilingual signs with street names and thus, encouraging the other Polish EP Members to take interest in the violations of Polish minority rights in

Lithuania³⁰. Another important thing is that the elected leader of the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* V. Tomaszewski has joined the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) in the European Parliament, formed in July 2009 by the British Conservative party leader, David Cameron, and Polish party “Law and Justice”, where its main leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski was renowned for his xenophobic and intolerant declarations³¹. Despite that representatives of other ethnic minorities participated in the common list under the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* wing (mainly Russian), the questions addressed in the programme concerned Polish minority, excluding 2 problems; one was the provision regarding the use of minorities language and another question was related with the work of Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant until the end of its exploitation which in essence concerns Russian ethnic minority living in Visaginas. Declared position is affirmed by the political commentators who claim that “despite that the 2009 campaign seemed to be more programme-based and less populist than that of 2004.”³²

In Lithuania the program of the coalition “*Together We are Strong!*” between the major ethnic parties reflected domestic issues being important to the major ethnic minorities in Lithuania. It is interesting to mention that the platforms of major Russian and Polish ethnic minority parties have always had a different ideological orientation³³. Also, the Polish minority political party, *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania*, as opposed to the minority political party of Russians, *The Union of Russians of Lithuania*, had a regional identification³⁴. So, the question arises what main issues connected these two major parties into the coalition and whether these issues were “Europeanised”. Mr. V. Tomaszewski, the leader of the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania*, publicly declared that the main incentive to create such a coalition before the EP elections in 2004, from the major Russian and Polish parties, though they belongs to different groups in the Seimas, was the issues concerning ethnic minorities. The platform of the Coalition between the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* and *Lithuanian Russian Union* “*Together We are Strong!*” as the *Common list of ethnic minorities and Lithuanian communities No 8* failed to reflect the issues

concerning both the Russian and Poles ethnic minority and reflected the issues more closely related to the concerns of the Polish minority about Lithuanian integration into the EU. The both programs were more concerned about issues in the region of Vilnius (the use of the Polish language in the public sphere, the restitution of land in region of Vilnius). The only actual issue of the Russian minority listed in the programs concerned the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant.

PATTERNS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE FIRST AND SECOND EP ELECTIONS

In 2009 as in the EP elections in 2004, ethnic minorities' parties participated in a coalition. To be precise, the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* participated in the elections after forming a *Common list of ethnic minorities and Lithuanian communities No 8 (Tautinių mažumų ir lietuvių bendrijų sąrašas Nr. 8)*³⁵. It is important to mention, that differently to the coalition formed in 2004, in 2009 the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* participated in the elections with a common list formed not with the members of the political party *Lithuanian Russian Union*, but with the representatives of another Lithuanian Russian political organisation (that is not much active in national and municipal elections³⁶) – political party *Russian Alliance*. Participation of the common list in the EP elections was especially successful – the list received 8 percent of all the votes and obtained 1 mandate in the EP for the leader of the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* Mr. Valdemar Tomaszewski. It is important to mention, that only this party during the EP elections in 2009 managed to obtain more than a half of all the votes in two constituencies (Šalčininkai region and Vilnius region – the districts where the Polish minority population has the highest concentration). According to the data of the Central Electoral Commission, the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* received 80 percent of votes in Šalčininkai region and 71 percent in Vilnius region³⁷. Some of the political commentators³⁸ believed that such an exceptional result was due to the implementation of the old and tested methods, i.e. working actively and sometimes even aggressively with

the voters during the meetings. It was noted that the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* managed to mobilize the Polish minority and to prove the importance of the EP elections; it also revealed the strong organisational structure of the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania*³⁹. On the other hand, some political scientists⁴⁰ identified this success as a phenomenon that raises the questions about the integration of the Polish national minority into Lithuanian society.

The participation of ethnic minority parties in the elections for the EP in 2004 was different than their participation in previous national elections. A coalition between the major Polish and Russian political parties was formed. It was the first time that ethnic minorities chose such a tactic for participation in an election. The Russian political party gained the mandates in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania (Parliament) only in 2000 in coalition with the leftist parliamentary parties. The major Polish political party, on the contrary, always (in elections of Parliament in 2000 and 2004 – 2 mandates, and in 2008 – 3 mandates) manages to get the seats in the Parliament alone in the districts where the Polish minority population has the highest concentration. The results of the *Coalition between the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania and Lithuanian Russian Union “Together We are Strong!”* (*Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcijos ir Lietuvos rusų sąjungos koalicija “Kartu mes jėga!”*) were surprisingly high in comparison to previous (held before the EP elections in 2004) parliamentary elections⁴¹, when the major Polish and Russian ethnic minority parties participated separately. While we are speaking about the high results of the *Coalition between the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania and Lithuanian Russian Union “Together We are Strong!”* it should be mentioned that the first European parliamentary election was held simultaneously with the first round of the presidential elections and could have influenced the turnout for the EU elections.

Also, according to H. Schmitt, low participation in second order elections “<...> does not of itself indicate a lack of legitimacy <...>” “<...> it is merely a result of the characteristic lack of politicisation and electoral mobilisation.”⁴² It could be that this strategy of ethnic minority parties influences the electoral mobilization of the ethnic

minorities. This could prove that there was a regional dimension of the results: The southeastern part of Lithuania mostly voted for the *Coalition between the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania and Lithuanian Russian Union* “*Together We are Strong!*” i.e. in the regions where the Polish ethnic minority lives⁴³. The *Coalition between the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania and Lithuanian Russian Union* “*Together We are Strong!*” was less but still successful in towns where Russians mostly live (this is unusual in comparison to previous elections)⁴⁴.

The *Coalition between the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania and Lithuanian Russian Union* “*Together We are Strong!*” gained 5.71 % percent of votes, passing the 5 % threshold for coalitions, but failed to get any seats in the EP because it did not reach the quota of 80,000 votes.

Although the opinions of Russians and Poles were largely eurosceptic⁴⁵, the coalition between the major ethnic parties in 2004 and *Common list of ethnic minorities and Lithuanian communities* in 2009 was successful in the European parliamentary elections. This could explain why relatively high levels of popular Euroscepticism do not always influence the dynamics of the party system, which “<...> may create the incentives for consensual behaviour (in order to form coalitions) so that Euroscepticism is thereby minimized in the parties in favour of a consensus around European integration. This tendency is exacerbated by the fact that European integration is a ‘second-order issue’ so that parties may adopt positions on it without jeopardizing their core identity or electoral appeal.”⁴⁶

SHIFTING FOCUS IN ELECTIONEERING FOR THE EP: ISSUES OF RUSSIANS AND POLISH GROUPS

It is also important to mention the “Russian factor” in the first EP elections. “As Pettai notes, Russia continues to speak in the name of ethnic Russians in the Baltic countries and to adopt a confrontational attitude towards these countries, even though the local Russians themselves do not share Moscow’s agenda”⁴⁷. As mentioned by Donald L. Horowitz, the ethnic parties could “<...> derive from two sources:

the internal imperatives of the ethnic group as a community and the external imperatives of the ethnic group, in relation to others, as the incipient whole community.”⁴⁸

Russia’s efforts before and after the Baltic countries joined the EU, bringing to the attention of EU institutions that the rights of Russian ethnic minority are violated in the Baltic republics⁴⁹ (especially in Latvia and Estonia), makes the issues about the condition of the Russian minority in the Baltic states very actual in the context of the EU’s minority rights policy. Thus, this actuality gives the Russian minority in each of the Baltic states the chance to mobilize and make their demands more “Europeanised” at the international level. The “Russian factor” played a successful role trying to create a Russian party at the EU⁵⁰. The leaders of the political organizations of the Russian minorities supposed that such a body could become a political tool influencing both the politics of the EU and the internal affairs of the state in realizing the interests of the Russian population (equal social and economic rights and common European citizenship in the future). It could be mentioned, that “Russian factor” was still important in the EP elections in Latvia in 2009. For example, the candidate, raised by Latvian party supported mainly by Russians and other non-Latvian ethnic minorities, *For Human Right in United Latvia*, was elected to the EP.⁵¹ Still, the “Russian factor” in Lithuania was not so significant in creating the coalition between the major Russian and Polish ethnic minority parties. However, the stereotypes dominating public opinion about the different integration of Polish and Russian minorities into Lithuanian society challenge controversial comments about the political participation of Polish and Russian ethnic minorities and about the main reasons for making the coalition among the major ethnic parties. Lithuanian political scientists noted that the coalition at the domestic level among the major ethnic minorities’ parties in Lithuania that was made before the first elections for the European Parliament could be partly influenced by provocations coming from the Russian Federation. According to Lithuanian political scientist Antanas Kulaukas, by creating such a coalition, the ethnic minority parties were trying to play the “Russian minority card,” because Russian minority

issues are very sensitive in the Baltic states. According to him, the Polish minority was eliminated in this context, but if they were thinking in the old (staid) way [the way of thinking inherited from the Soviet period, author's comment], then such a coalition was natural and explicable⁵². Lithuanian political scientist Vytautas Radžvilas argues that probably they were trying to create a tool for influencing domestic and foreign politics, but if they had been successful, the situation would have been regrettable because the leader of *Lithuanian Russian Union* had already revealed his intention to represent the interests of the Russian Federation in the international institution⁵³. Explaining why the interests of Polish and Russian minorities coincide, the political scientist notes that Lithuanian Poles became similar to Lithuanian Russians during the Soviet period and their way of thinking also became similar⁵⁴. We need to highlight that these comments were presented before the election of 2004; therefore, many of them were not relevant for the EP elections in 2009. It could be argued that in these elections the “Russian factor” was not so relevant in Lithuania; this relevance was embedded in the Polish national “factor”. Due to visibility of Polish issues, such as allegedly restricted rights provided in the ratified Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the lack of the implementation of these rights in Lithuanian legislation (i.e. use of Polish language in territories densely populated by Polish⁵⁵ and spelling of Polish surnames in the official documents⁵⁶). These topics important to the Polish minority who resides in Lithuania were reflected in the EP election campaign of the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* election in 2009. The argument that the “Russian factor” is not relevant is drawn from the fact that the political party *Lithuanian Russian Union* did not even participate in the EP elections this time and the only question relevant to the Russian minority that was reflected into the programme of the common list was the postponement of the shutdown of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant. On the other hand – the non-participation of the political party *Lithuanian Russian Union*, that celebrated 15 years anniversary of its activities, can reveal the failures of its political actions (low voters’ support in the Parliament and municipal elections, departure of some members from the

party, inconsistency in political ideology (coalition with conservatives in the Council of Vilnius municipality)⁵⁷ and the failure of the public initiatives organised by the party (for example, a publicly criticised initiative to build a monument for a person representing Russian culture or Russian cultural phenomenon that also included a proposal for the monument of *matryoshka* doll)⁵⁸.

Lithuanian political scientists note that not only the electorate, but also the political elite regarded the EP elections in 2004 more unimportant than national elections: “<...> the Lithuanian political elite did not really consider the elections to the EP carefully or simply regarded them as a test before the national parliamentary elections in October. It was very difficult to notice any fresh ideas or the construction of serious party programme concentrating on European issues. The European ideas included in the electoral programmes were rather bureaucratic, conformist, and opportunistic, without any trace of political vision.”⁵⁹ The “<...> style of campaigning was like studying the situation before forthcoming parliamentary elections”⁶⁰. The attitudes and the programs of ethnic minority parties could be the example for this. First, the platform of the *Coalition's between the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania and Lithuanian Russian Union* “*Together We are Strong!*” reflected the domestic issues of ethnic minorities, which were similar to the issues that predominated in the platforms of previous national elections. Second, the mass media campaign was not designed to present the political role of the *Coalition between the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania and Lithuanian Russian Union* “*Together We are Strong!*” in the EP or debate the functions of the EU, specifically the EP, regarding the ethnic minority policies. Also, this coalition was not competent enough to represent the social needs of ethnic minorities, leading to the failure of this political strategy in the parliamentary elections of 2004. In the elections to the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania in 2004, the members of the major Russian party were included on the list of *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania*, the major Polish party. According to electoral laws, this strategy was not considered as the formation of a coalition and the parties had to overcome only 5 percent threshold of votes. This threshold was passed

by the coalition in the elections to the EP. Otherwise, the electoral threshold for a coalition in the parliamentary election in Lithuania stands at 7 percent. Unlike *The Union of the Russians of Lithuania*, the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* has a stable electorate in the districts where the Polish minority population is mostly concentrated. For this reason, the members of the Russian party were included on the list of the Polish party and not vice versa. The results of the parliamentary elections in 2004 show both the reasons why they failed at the elections and the different efficiency of ethnic parties' participation in Lithuanian politics at a national level.

Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania gained only two seats in the Lithuanian parliament in 2004 (in 2008 they gained three seats), both in single-mandate districts. It however gained almost 4 percent of votes in proportional voting (the highest percentage of votes in Parliament elections it had gained in 2008 – almost 5)⁶¹. The failure of the members of *The Union of the Russians of Lithuania* in 2004 and 2008 Parliamentary elections shows the crisis in the structure and resources of the party and its incapability to create an ideology for the party.

Despite that as it was already mentioned earlier, in 2009 EP elections, the election declaration of the candidates of the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* was “Europeanized”, nonetheless, the participation in the elections with the common list together with the Members of the political party *Russian Alliance* was a test before the upcoming municipality elections of 27th February 2011 that were important for the Polish minority (as the Polish minority different to the Russian minority resides in a more concentrated manner). Both political parties - *Russian Alliance* and the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* participate in the municipal elections in 2011 by presenting separate lists of candidates as well as by proposing their candidates in the formed Coalition of the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* and *Russian Alliance* – “*The Bloc of Valdemar Tomaszevski*”. In general it could be noted that the political party *Russian Alliance* unlike *Lithuanian Russian Union* is a regional party, which has its electorate in the town of Klaipėda. For example, this party and its leader Tamara Lochankina wins places in the town of Klaipėda and participated in the work of

the city Council similar to the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* which has its electorate in Vilnius, Vilnius region, Šalčininkai, etc. and in the other regions densely populated by the Polish minority. It is important to note here that the leader of the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* V. Tomaševski was satisfied that the party has increased its sphere of influence in four regions during the municipal elections in 2001, namely, the regions of Druskininkai, Visaginas, Molėtai and Zarasai⁶².

Increase in the sphere of influence in certain regions could be the main purpose explaining why the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* when was forming the coalition in the 2011 municipal election chose *Russian Alliance* and not *Lithuanian Russian Union*. It could be argued that this strategy proved to be the right one as during the EP elections in 2009 in Klaipėda the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* received 9,27 percent of the Lithuanian voters (respectively in 2004 it was 7,37 percent of all the voters). Therefore, the strategy used in the EP elections was tested rather successfully.

Another factor, which could explain the results that the ethnic parties received in the elections, is to consider whether national minorities voted for the parties of ethnic minorities and the representatives of ethnic minorities.

CONCLUSIONS

Analyzing the programs and the patterns of ethnic minority parties' participation in first and second EP elections few conclusions could be drawn: the EU issues have influence on parties electoral program in 2009, which comparing to the program of 2004 was more "Europeanized" and less populist; it also have influence on parties political strategies and consensual behaviour in forming the coalition in 2004 and common list in 2009 of major Polish and Russian parties, although these parties representing major minorities in Lithuania have always had a different ideological orientation.

Comparing the programs and patterns of ethnic minority parties' participation in EP and national elections we could claim that:

participation of these parties in the EP elections was not considered as important as the participation in the national ones; the consensual behaviour between minority, but not between minority and majority parties, tested the efficiency of such the coalitions in the “second-order” elections. It can be stated that the coalition and platform of the major Russian and Polish ethnic minority parties made before the first elections for the EP and the *Common list of ethnic minorities and Lithuanian communities No 8* of major Polish political party and political party *Russian Alliance* made before the second elections for the EP was incapable of reflecting the social needs of ethnic minorities. It reflected the expectations of the Polish ethnic minority rather than those of the Russian ethnic minority. The participation of these parties in the first and second EP elections was however not considered by the parties as important as their participation in the national elections. The coalition and common list formed before elections to the EP was not directly oriented to win the seats in that body but seemed to be testing whether such a strategy would work and whether they could get the seats in the forthcoming Lithuanian parliamentary elections in 2004 and Local Government Councils elections in 2011. The theory of “second-order” elections, according to the factor, that EP elections has lower turnout, than national elections, is therefore relevant.

Not only the electorate, but also the political elite regarded the first EU elections as less important than national elections. Both the attitudes and the programs of ethnic minority parties could be an example of that. The coalition “*Together We are Strong!*” reflected that the domestic issues of the ethnic minorities were similar to those that predominated in the programs for previous national elections.

However, despite the mentioned general tendencies, it has to be noted that the participation of the ethnic minorities in the second EP elections was different to the participation in the first one.

Firstly, major Polish ethnic minority party formed the *Common list of ethnic minorities and Lithuanian communities No 8* with the members of Russian ethnic minority regional political party *Russian Alliance*. Secondly, despite the election declaration of the *Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania* was still reflecting the social needs, mostly

relevant to the Polish ethnic minority and was similar to those that predominated in the programmes of previous national elections, these topics acquired European features at the same time (they were brought up on the European level; methods and measures were proposed on how to solve these problems if the members of this list would become the Members of the EP). The “Europeanization” of these issues had an impact on the political behaviour of ethnic minorities.

The relative success of the coalition in the first EP elections and the Common list great success for the second EP elections show the actuality of the issues of ethnic minorities and the will of the ethnic minorities to participate in politics both at national and international levels. But participation in the EU elections revealed the problems of differences that are evident at the national level between the political competence of the Polish and Russian ethnic minority parties. The both Russian party’s programs (*Lithuanian Russian Union* and political party *Russian Alliance*) failed to reflect the interests of the Russian community in the first and second EP elections, while the Polish party strengthened its role in the first and the second EU elections. Also, the failure of the members of *Lithuanian Russian Union* in the Parliamentary elections in 2004 and 2008 evidences a crisis in the structure and resources of the party and the incapability to create an ideology for the party. The results of previous elections reflect the low activity of the Russian population in the social-political life of the country. The comparatively high participation of the Polish minority in the former parliament and municipality elections shows how both the leaders of the parties and the ethnic minority identify themselves with the territory they live in.

For a more general conclusion, it can be said not only that the policies of the ethnic minority parties fail to be Europeanized, but also that the influence of the EU is not seen in the Lithuanian political arena in general. What is remarkable that the major ethnic minority parties in the first and second EP elections haven’t hold any coalition with the majority’s parties.

The EU encourages consensual behaviour between majority and minority parties in accordance with its norms of interethnic

coexistence. This encouragement could be the main (potential) factor that could influence the political actors of the accessing countries in facilitating an agreement creating joint governance. However, this factor did not work in Lithuania and the interests of the ethnopolitical actors in making a coalition failed to coincide.

ENDNOTES

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SANTRAUKA

EUROPOS SĄJUNGOS ĮTAKA ŠALIŲ NARIŲ ETNINIŲ MAŽUMŲ POLITINIAM DALYVAVIMUI: LIETUVOS ETNINIŲ MAŽUMŲ PARTIJOS RINKIMUOSE Į EUROPOS PARLAMENTĄ

Raktiniai žodžiai: Lietuvos etninių mažumų politinės partijos, „Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija“, „Lietuvos rusų sąjunga“, politinė partija „Rusų aljansas“, politinis dalyvavimas, rinkimai į Europos parlamentą

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama Europos Sąjungos (ES) įtaka etninių mažumų politiniam dalyvavimui pirmuosiuose ir antruosiuose Europos Parlamento (EP) rinkimuose, įvykusiųose Lietuvoje 2004 ir 2009 metais. Pateikta trumpa teorinė apžvalga apie ES įtaką etninei politikai, etninių mažumų atstovavimui ir politiniam dalyvavimui šalyse narėse. Analizuojant etninės mažumos atstovaujančių partijų programas ir strategijas, skirtas rinkėjams į EP rinkimus pritraukti, prieita prie išvados: Europos problemos ir vertybės neturėjo ryškesnės įtakos (su išimtimis 2009 metais) etninių mažumų partijų rinkiminėms programoms ir politinio dalyvavimo modeliams (strategijoms). Vis dėlto, lenkų ir rusų etninių mažumų politinių partijų strategijomis formuojant koaliciją arba bendrą rinkimų sąrašą, 2004 ir 2009 metų EP rinkimais nebuvo tiesiogiai siekiama laimėti vietų Europos Parlamente – norėta šias strategijas išbandyti prieš 2004 metų Seimo ir 2011 metų Savivaldybių tarybų rinkimus.