

Twenty five years later (1991-2016): between Soviet past and unclear European and Eurasian future

Subjective perception of refugees in Lithuania: imagined threat

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Budapest, Hungary

25-26 November 2016

Presentation is based on the results of research project „Subjective Security in Volatile Geopolitical Context: Traits, Factors and Individual Strategies“ (2015-2017), which was funded by a grant (No. GER-004/2015) from the Research Council of Lithuania.

Purpose of the presentation

To reveal:

- subjective perception of risk of flow of refugees to the country;
- attitudes towards threats caused by refugees;
- positive attitudes towards refugees;
- the attitudes on state policy to accept the refugees;
- strategies in face of refugees arrival;
- the difference of these attitudes among distinct groups of population, etc.;
- social distance from refugees.

The sources of empirical data

Presentation is based on data collected in 2016:

- representative survey of 1004 respondents in Lithuania (2016 February);
- 30 directed in-depth interviews. Informants were selected using principle of maximum diversity: interviews were done with men and women, urban and rural populations, with people of different educational backgrounds and ages.

Starting points

- During last 5 years Lithuanian population much more often think of their security in terms of external threats next to the internal threats, such as political, social and economical security.
- Mainly the changing geopolitical situation (rise of military and terrorist threats and refugees crisis) in the region has influenced the changes of individual perception.

Attitudes towards threats caused by refugees (1)

- 54 % think that refugees pose a threat to Lithuania;
- 29 % think that refugees will change the national composition of the Lithuanian, Lithuania will lose its culture and identity;
- 31 % think that the state will suffer financially because it will need to pay the benefits to the refugees;
- 15 % think that Christianity will be sacrificed;
- 16 % think that refugees will take away jobs from the local population

Attitudes towards threats caused by refugees (1)

- 35% think that it will be not safe going out to the street;
- 31% think that the number of crimes, for example, of thefts will increase;
- 27% think that women will no longer be able to feel safe in public places;
- 33% think that will increase the risk of terrorism.

Positive attitudes towards refugees

- Only 11 % think that upon arriving refugees Lithuania will become culturally more rich;
- 20% think that the arrival of refugees is beneficial to the economy.

The attitudes on state policy to accept the refugees

- Lithuania should not accept a single refugee (32%);
- Only Christians should be accepted (49%).
- Only educated and qualified should be accepted (47%);
- Only families or women with children should be accepted (46%);
- Only war refugees from Syria should be accepted (44%).

Strategies in face of refugees arrival

- Positive: would like to get acquainted (17%) and would try to help (13%).
- Ignoring: would pretend not notice them (45%)
- Negative: would not get where they are (28%), participate in protests against them (12%), would show dissatisfaction (6%), would take physical actions against them (2%).

Who would take part in protests against refugees?

- More men than women;
- Older (more than 35 years) than younger people;
- More less educated;
- More wealthy;
- More residents from villages and smaller towns than residents of big cities.

Social distance from refugees

- Refugees could become Lithuanian citizens (16%);
- Refugees would be your co-workers in the same workplace (26,6);
- Refugees will settle in your neighborhood (19%);
- Refugees become your friends (14%);
- Your daughter or son will marry a refugee (6%).