

# Lithuania

Lithuania is a parliamentary representative democratic republic with a multi-party system. The country is a member of the EU, and NATO, ranks very highly on the UN Human Development Index 2014 and has one of the fastest growing economies in the EU.

Constitution and government	Education and children's rights	Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals	Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values
<u>There is systematic religious privilege</u> <u>Preferential treatment is given to a religion or religion in general</u> <u>State-funding of religious institutions or salaries, or discriminatory tax exemptions</u>	<u>There is state funding of at least some religious schools</u>		
			<u>No fundamental restrictions on freedom of expression or advocacy of humanist values</u>
		<u>Insufficient information or detail not included in this report</u>	

Legend

## Constitution and government

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as well as freedom of opinion and expression. These rights are generally respected in practice.

The constitution provides that a person's freedom to profess and propagate a religion may be limited only when necessary to protect health, safety, public order, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

The criminal code contains three provisions to protect religious freedom: It prohibits discrimination based on religion and provides for up to two years in prison for violations. The code penalizes interference with religious ceremonies of "traditional" religious groups by imprisonment or community service, and penalizes inciting religious hatred by imprisonment of up to three years.

### "Traditional" privilege

There is no state religion, but by law "traditional" religious groups enjoy benefits not available to others, including government funding, the right to teach religion in public schools, and the right to register marriages. The law allows all registered religious groups to own property for prayer houses,

homes, and other uses and permits construction of facilities necessary for their activities.

By law the government acknowledges as “traditional” only those religious groups able to trace their presence in the country back at least 300 years. Those groups receive an array of benefits and privileges not available to other religions and belief groups, including secular or non-religious groups. For example, only “traditional” religious groups may register marriages, establish joint private/public schools, provide religious instruction in public schools, and receive government funding.

## **Education and children’s rights**

The constitution establishes public educational institutions as secular. However, the law permits and funds religious instruction in public schools for traditional and other state-recognized religious groups. Parents may choose either religious instruction or secular ethics classes for their children. Schools decide which of the traditional religious groups will be represented in their curricula on the basis of requests from parents for children up to age 14, after which students present the requests themselves.

The number of wholly private religious schools is relatively small. There are 30 schools with ties to Catholic or Jewish groups, although students of different religious groups often attend these schools. All accredited private schools (religious and nonreligious) receive funding from the Ministry of Education and Science through a voucher system based on the number of pupils. This system covers only the program costs of school operation. Founders generally bear responsibility for covering capital outlays; however, the ministry funds capital costs of traditional religious private schools where there is an international agreement to do so. To date, the Catholic Church is the only religious group with such an international agreement. Under this concordat, the government funds both the capital and operating costs of private Roman Catholic schools.

## **Freedom of expression, advocacy of humanist values**

Freedom of expression and of the press is guaranteed by law and respected in practice.