

ДЕМОКРАТИЧНІ ІНСТИТУТИ ТА ПРОЦЕСИ

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CHARACTERISTICS OF ADVOCACY IN LITHUANIA. RESULTS OF EXPERT INTERVIEWS

The article reflects upon advocacy characteristics in Lithuania, that is consolidated democracy and the country with 'free' freedom status. Among advocacy characteristics, the author focused on the following five: massiveness, focus on interests/ rights/ values, purpose, targets and agents, level of advocacy implementation. Descriptive characteristics of advocacy are presented in the article based on the quality interviews conducted with Lithuanian and international experts.

Keywords: *advocacy, civil society, Lithuania, advocacy characteristics.*

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ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКИ АДВОКАЦІЇ В ЛИТВІ. РЕЗУЛЬТАТИ ЕКСПЕРТНИХ ІНТЕРВ'Ю

Розглядаються характеристики адвокації в Литві, що є консолідованою демократією та державою зі статусом свободи «вільна країна». Автор фокусується на таких характеристиках: масовість, заснованість адвокації на захисті прав та свобод, захисті інтересів та/ або просуванні ідей, цілі адвокації, мішені та агенти, рівень втілення адвокаційних дій. Описові характеристики адвокації представлені в статті на основі якісних інтерв'ю, проведених з литовськими та міжнародними експертами.

Ключові слова: *адвокація, громадянське суспільство, Литва, характеристики адвокації.*

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ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКИ АДВОКАЦИИ В ЛИТВЕ. РЕЗУЛЬТАТЫ ЭКСПЕРТНЫХ ИНТЕРВЬЮ

Рассматриваются характеристики адвокации в Литве, которая является консолидированной демократией и государством со статусом свободы «свободная страна». Автор фокусируется на таких характеристиках: массовость, основанность адвокации на защите прав и свобод, защите интересов и/ или продвижении идей, цели адвокации, мишени и агенты адвокации, уровень внедрения адвокационных действий. Описательные характеристики адвокации представлены в статье на основе качественных интервью, проведенных с литовскими и международными экспертами.

Ключевые слова: *адвокация, гражданское общество, Литва, характеристики адвокации.*

Deriving upon developments and conclusions presented in the recently published article «Characteristics of advocacy in current Belarus. Results of experts' interviews» [1] the current article reflects upon advocacy characteristics in Lithuania.

Lithuania enjoys implementation of political freedoms and civil liberties to the full (civil liberties = 1; political freedoms = 1; aggregate score of freedom = 91 out of 100, where 100 is the most free) [2]. The democracy regime in Lithuania is defined as a consolidated democracy [3]. There are signs of further consolidation of democratic system in Lithuania. According to the latest report, Lithuania has a score of 2.32 on the scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is 'purely democratic'.

Methodology

As it has been explained in the article «Characteristics of advocacy in current Belarus. Results of experts' interviews» [1], a series of expert interviews was conducted. Nine experts with solid knowledge and experience in advocacy became participants of interviews. Every interview conducted, targeted certain country. Characteristics of advocacy in Lithuania were outlined in the interviews with the following experts:

Dr. Vytis Jurkonis, a Professor of Vilnius National University, expert on Lithuanian Foreign Policy, Project Director at the Freedom House, Lithuania,

Dr. Nerijus Maliukevičius, a Professor of Vilnius National University, expert on Politics and Media;

Ms. Anna Gerasimova, Director of Belorussian Human Rights House, Vilnius, Lithuania;

Mr. Florian Irminger, Head of Advocacy, Human Rights House Network.

The languages of interviews included English, Russian, Ukrainian, and was selected by the interviewees.

The interview questions were framed in the questionnaire and were established as follows:

1. How massive is advocacy in Lithuania?
2. Is advocacy in Lithuania based on promotion of interests, protection of rights and freedoms, on promotion of new ideas?
3. What is the purpose of advocacy in Lithuania?
4. What are the targets and agents of advocacy in Lithuania?
5. What is the level of advocacy implementation in Lithuania (local, national, international)?

How massive is advocacy in Lithuania?

Experts described advocacy in Lithuania as a 'narrow field' assuming a narrow circle of

initiatives. They described advocacy as not massive. Every expert stated that the concept of advocacy is not well understood, so every expert referred to ambiguity of advocacy while determining its massiveness, agents, targets and other characteristics. Dr. Nerijus Maliukevičius commented that 'lobbying and promotion of corporate interests are often masked in Lithuania as advocacy'. He interpreted advocacy as a movement that should 'envisage creation of positive legal or political environment'.

In experts' opinion, advocacy is moderately massive in Lithuania. Lithuania is the country of checks and balances. Protests is a very last resort for civil society to show its dissatisfaction. Occasionally there are solidarity actions (moderately massive). Polish political body in Lithuania for example, can assemble group of teachers, students and parents but more for political reasons rather than for the genuine ambition to change anything, making it a political act.

In opinion of Dr. Vytis Jurkonis, massive boycotts and protests are happening mainly in countries where the system of checks and balances is not functioning well. In 2009, when Lithuanian authorities wanted to change the tax system and aimed at implementing the politics of savings, it was the last time when Lithuanians protested massively and aggressively (windows of the Parliament were smashed by protestants, tear gas was used against protestants).

Currently advocacy is happening rather peacefully. In 2015 there was a campaign called «Darom» ('Let's Do It') [4] aimed at cleaning local territories. Society in Lithuania was galvanized through web, local communities mapped territories for cleaning. Although the initiative did not promote any political or economic interests, it tackled important social interest/ idea – 'it is good when it is clean'. The campaign did not envisage any aggressive actions and was non-political.

In opinion of Dr. Nerijus Maliukevičius, the Soviet times changed Lithuanian society. Communities lost their abilities to self-organise and protect their interests. Lithuanians were 'traumatized' by the apathy developed in Soviet times. Because of this, in his opinion, advocacy in Lithuania is not that active.

The place of interests, values, rights in advocacy in Lithuania

There are a number of advocacy campaigns run in Vilnius that aimed at promotion of interests. The local community of Vilnius (Vilnius is in UNESCO heritage), appealed to

local authorities that in one of the districts of Vilnius, the building was too high comparing to other buildings, so it was against the UNESCO requirements. In many cities Lithuanians get together to improve the local infrastructure: pedestrian walking areas and cycling routes were created, that are in local's interests.

In opinion of Anna Gerasimova, in Lithuania, LGBT issues and interests are on the agenda thanks to the efforts of advocacy groups. As experts consider, advocacy in the conditions of consolidated democracy in Lithuania, is values-based, and Lithuanians no longer take democracy and human rights for granted.

In September 2015, there were some political acts undertaken by the minority schools (Russian and Polish schools) in Lithuania [5]. Polish community has three-four issues: bi-lingual topographic signs, last names in the passport, and education (frozen agenda). Since local authorities do not contribute to improving socio-economic agenda in the region, Polish and Russian minorities tend to raise the issue of education. Often such advocacy movements are happening when the window of opportunity opens - in September when the academic life starts, or before elections. The main issue as described by Vytis Jurkonis, with Polish community is not 'lithuanization', but 'russification'. When it comes to the protest of education establishments, Lithuania is the best country for Polish minorities in terms of education, because Polish students can study in Lithuania in Polish from the kindergarten through the university. Lithuanian authorities do not react much to the requests made by Polish minorities, so protests are becoming more politicized.

Cities like Klaipeda (the port) and Vilnius (the capital), Visaginas (the city established in 1975 around the nuclear plant) are populated with Russian minorities that are well integrated and speak Lithuanian language. Lithuanian is less spread among Polish minorities compared to Russian minorities. In order to actively advocate for their interests, Polish minorities have established a political party based on ethnicity, as an agent of advocacy actions.

Advocacy targets and agents in Lithuania

In some instances, the target for advocacy in Lithuania was defined as 'environment' (e.g. legal, social environment). For example, the advocacy initiative 'White gloves' (in Lithuanian - 'Baltosios pirštinės') aimed at changing the environment of election, making them more transparent [6]. «The White Gloves» initiative is a politically - non-related project that monitors national elections in Lithuania

and reports all unlawful practices to law enforcement agencies. «The White Gloves» employ a number of tools and initiatives to support Lithuanian civil society to fight political corruption.

There are initiatives that aim at improving legal environment. For instance, when tax exemption was taken away for printing media in Lithuania, then journalists protested. This mainly concerned interests of journalist society and made journalists the agents of change (media becomes advocacy agent when it wants to ally with other groups to promote the change).

In other circumstances journalists act as targets or 'instruments' of advocacy (advocacy is conducted with help of or through media). The following example demonstrates when media is involved in advocacy as an 'instrument' of change. There was a discussion in Lithuania (where the level of suicides is quite high) on how to eliminate factors effecting the suicides. Media was involved in advocacy campaign as 'advocacy' instrument: while describing suicide-related info, media agencies always give hotline numbers, so everyone effected may receive some help confidentially.

Big labour unions in Lithuania still have experience from the times of Soviet Union, they know how to consolidate efforts. Groups protecting LGBT, gender issues, according to information from interviews, take upon Western experience, and learn how to use advocacy instruments. In many instances LGBT groups were described by interviewees as pioneers of advocacy actions. As reported during interviews, NGOs in Lithuania are often misinterpreted by society as the only advocacy agents.

Under conditions of pluralistic Lithuanian society and consolidated democracy, advocacy targets may be many: authorities, media or society at large. According to Anna Gerasimova, the agents of advocacy in Lithuania are people and organisations which interests and rights are violated (active advocacy) [7], so individuals and organisations in need are capable of protecting their rights and interest themselves without creating broader alliances.

Purpose of advocacy in Lithuania

Because of difference in regimes between Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania, priorities for and changes driven by advocacy in Lithuania, are somehow different. In opposite to 'regime' countries (Belarus) and to transitioning countries (Ukraine) there is no special goal in Lithuania (consolidated democracy) to change

the regime or the policy of the state. Sometimes there are protests that are run like political movements, but these movements do not aim at regime changing. They rather mask inefficiency of some political parties that mainly represent ethnical minorities in Lithuania (based on interviews' results).

What is the final goal of advocacy? To change the system? To motivate civil society? Campaigns on suicides, campaigns against taxes, campaigns on traffic accidents were scheduled to mainly motivate the society, to draw the attention to the social problem and to make the society the agent of change. For example, the latter campaign (on traffic accidents) had a number of elements (e.g. drunk driving, speeding up, buckling up) and made an effect in society and motivated it to pay special attention to the level of safety on the road.

In expert's view, there is lack of will from the side of civil society to implement advocacy. On individual level people in Lithuania may decide to move to another country rather than changing the situation their own country - Lithuania.

Level of advocacy implementation in Lithuania

Lithuania used to be very vocal in Eastern partnership, but no examples of international advocacy (advocacy on international level) were found during interviews with experts. Local advocacy is considered more typical for Lithuania. According to Mr. Florian Irminger, 'Lithuanian advocacy targets are mainly domestic' and not international.

There is a consolidated approach in politics of Lithuania that promote interests and positions. This makes national advocacy minor (and often unnecessary). Availability of this approach contributes to more effective policy advocacy and policy implementation. Events organised by ethnic minorities, gender and LGBT organisations, are visible and sound at the national level. In the latest years, NGOs registered in Lithuania, faced the problem of taxation in case they provide services to individuals outside Lithuania (e.g. Belorussian organisations registered in Lithuania and providing services to Belorussian citizens). Representatives of NGOs actively advocate for promotion of legislation that may help to turn Lithuania into donor country by eliminating taxation of international technical aid.

In non-free Belarus in contrary to Lithuania, the bottom-up pressure is non-existent, it is almost illegal to advocate as there is no freedom of assembly or association). Speaking of advocacy in Belarus, international advocacy is more effective (top-down approach) vs national

advocacy (bottom-up approach). The majority of advocacy targets in Belarus are outside the country. In opinion of Florian Irminger, it is 'a particularity of very oppressive regimes is that the international advocacy becomes top-down rather than from the grass roots'.

As commented by Mr. Florian Irminger, in consolidated democracy, society has the opportunity to have the open debate on any changes in the national system. People do not have to go on strikes, take part in the demonstrations, because their view is taken into account without obstacles from the side of the state, so there is no special need for national advocacy.

Conclusions

Based on the information obtained within expert interviews, the article analyzes characteristics of advocacy in democratic and 'free' Lithuania: massiveness, focus on interests/ rights/ values, purpose, targets and agents, level of advocacy implementation.

The following conclusions can be drawn:

1) Advocacy in Lithuania is neither massive nor aggressive. Under conditions of pluralistic and democratic society, different interests are put on the agenda and the society takes part in decision making process, so it does not have to protect its interests massively.

2) Advocacy in Lithuania as it was reported during interviews, is mainly interests-based, however in some cases interests are interpreted as values. Protection of interests is politicized in Lithuania by ethnical minorities groups.

3) Agents of advocacy in Lithuania are many. Under conditions of consolidated democracy, they do not need to create broader alliances with other groups, so advocacy is often represented by single group of stakeholders. As advocacy targets, interviewees defined legal and social environment, authorities and civil society. The latter target is needed when the goal of advocacy is to make civil society the agent of change.

4) Unlike in authoritarian or transitioning regimes, advocacy in Lithuania is not aimed at changing the regime or policy of the state. As it was shown in interviews, attempts of ethnical groups to change the policy, are rather masking some inefficiency of political parties they belong to. Often advocacy aims at changing the attitude of society on the needs and interests.

5) The consolidated approach that exists in Lithuanian politics makes national advocacy

unnecessary and non-relevant. Advocacy campaigns are implemented at the local level and mainly concern narrow local issues. Within interviews, experts did not report any cases of international advocacy which shows that the majority of advocacy targets are domestic, and not international.

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СУЧАСНІ ТЕНДЕНЦІЇ ТА ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ РОЗВИТКУ МІСЦЕВОГО САМОВРЯДУВАННЯ В ПОЛЬЩІ: ОЦІНКА ЕКСПЕРТІВ (Частина 2)

Розглянуто сучасний стан місцевого самоврядування Польщі через 25 років після проведення гмінної реформи. Проаналізовано рівень автономності та самостійності місцевого самоврядування Польщі. Встановлено, як і в якій мірі відбувається фінансування адміністративно-територіальних одиниць місцевого самоврядування Польщі. Визначені основні форми громадської участі на локальному рівні в Польщі. Дано відповідь на питання, чи потребує місцеве самоврядування Польщі подальших змін? Дослідження проведено на основі глибинних інтерв'ю з провідними польськими експертами у сфері місцевого самоврядування.

Ключові слова: *місцеве самоврядування, Польща, адміністративно- територіальний устрій, гміна, повіт, воєводство, незалежність територіальних одиниць, громадська участь, фінансування місцевого самоврядування, зміни в місцевому самоврядуванні.*