

# FOLKLORE LIFE IN MULTICULTURAL CITY OF KLAIPĖDA (1990–2015)

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**Abstract:** The fatal social disasters have taken place in the city of Klaipėda by the end of the Second World War. After 1945, very few local bilingual (Lithuanian and German speaking) people could be found in Klaipėda. Almost all of the survivors had moved to Germany to escape the Soviet occupation. Soviet authorities created favourable social conditions for skilled volunteers, who came to deserted city from other regions of Lithuania, and from all over the Soviet Union, to work in Klaipėda port and to restore the entire marine industry in the 1950s–1960s period. The Russian, Belorussian, German, Jewish, Ukrainian, Polish, Latvian, Tartar, Armenian, Azerbaijani, and other national minorities have become an integral part of the social and cultural life in contemporary Klaipėda. In the light of these historical facts, the goal of the article is to discuss the possibilities of the most representative national societies to maintain and promote their ethnic roots, traditions and the authentic folklore in the city at present times.

**Key words:** national cultures; Klaipėda; Russian folklore; *Veretyontse*; *Vechiora*; Maria Serebryakova

## Introduction

At the end of the Second World War in the Lithuanian city of Klaipėda, and throughout the whole Klaipėda region, the composition of the population changed significantly. The city, its history writing back in 1252 as a part of East Prussia, was completely destroyed and indigenous bilingual (speaking in Lithuanian, and German) residents that have remained here, now departed hurriedly to the West. The Soviet authorities created favourable social conditions for skilled volunteers, who came to deserted city from other regions of Lithuania, and from all over the Soviet Union to work in Klaipėda port and to restore the entire marine industry in the 1950s–1960s. Subsequently, since that time representatives of about 70 nations and nationalities worked shoulder-to-shoulder in Klaipėda. Many of them have stayed here for all their life.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, independent Lithuania opened state borders, and new waves of emigration and immigration appeared here. Multi-layered and multicultural societies were established and were officially registered as new national communities. City population became of about 250,000 inhabitants in the 1990s. Currently there are about 165,000 residents living in Klaipėda (the effects of emigration), and about 75–80% of them are modern

Lithuanian people. The remaining 25–30% of Klaipėda residents (this is roughly 30,000–35,000 persons)<sup>1</sup> are representatives of other national cultures<sup>2</sup>. More than 20,000 of them are Russian-speaking residents of our city.

Three Russian, three Ukrainian, and one of each: Belarusian, Polish, Azerbaijani, Latvian, German, Jewish, Tatar and Armenian communities respectively were founded here in the 1990s–2000s. Are they ready to communicate with each other? What about their national roots and preserving those for their children and grandchildren? Do they remember their native language, rituals, songs and verbal folklore, their traditional dances and instrumental music? So – what about their folklore life?

In addition, we would like to point out our position concerning some definitions here. The main one is *authenticity*. In Klaipėda case, we have a multicultural social structure, and it is connected with *ethnic identities*, defined by “others”, and *self-identities*, defined by persons “themselves”. Therefore, Russian-speaking contemporary Klaipėda residents might be by Lithuanian people be in general identified ethnically as *Russians*; however it is possible that they would choose to identify themselves as members of numerous other national or ethnic Slavic identities, such as Belarusians, Ukrainians, Poles, and even Russian-speaking Tatars in *self-identity* cases. We understand *self-identity* as subjective and definition prone to changes, depending on real historical, socio-cultural and political circumstances. Mixed *self-identity multicultural* families might pose real challenges in ethnic and national *authenticity* for next generation people here. Therefore, it is quite complicated case, and we are not deep way involved in such investigations primarily. In the other hand, we have to keep such objective reality in our mind all the time, including investigations, presented in our article.

We follow research cases and definitions of *authenticity*, *multiculturalism* and *hybrid ethnic identities* (etc.), reflected in actual works by Reginald Byron (Byron, 2006), Darius Daukšas (Daukšas, 2006), Oleg Pachenkov (Pachenkov, 2006), Christian Giordano (Giordano, 2009), Laima Kalėdienė (Kalėdienė, 2010), Vida Savoniakaitė (Savoniakaitė, 2010), etc., and we do hope to contribute in tasks on clarifying such problem area.

<sup>1</sup> All these statistics are sufficiently subjective, since no official to disclose data are available, thus the given may not clearly reflect the level of migration (both emigration and immigration) in recent years.

<sup>2</sup> Author hereinafter avoids universally known definitions of “national *minorities*”, “cultural heritage of national (folk) *minorities*”, “community (society) of national (folk) *minorities*” (etc.) and prefers the definition of “national (folk) *culture*”. This way we do not give grounds for any discrimination and maintain a uniform culture of respect for the heritage of all nations, regardless to the number of their members.

### National societies in Klaipėda city

The origins and development of national cultures of modern Lithuanian Klaipėda city, thus far, have been unevenly discussed and investigated in scientific studies of recent time. However, it is worth noticing the publications, reflecting different aspects of the history and activities of national cultures, their communities and societies here, to see the light at the crossroad of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, and as far up until nowadays. We have to mention publications by L. Kraniauskas about national communities in Klaipėda and neighbouring Liepāja city, Latvia (Kraniauskas, Gedutis and Acus, 2000), on post-Soviet time problems for national communities in Klaipėda and the search for national identity (Kraniauskas, 2012), competition of ideologies and identities as sources of conflict in the city of Klaipėda in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Safronovas, 2011), about the history of multicultural cities of Klaipėda and Vilnius in the communication memory of ethnic groups (Šutinienė, 2011), on national self-determination trajectories in Klaipėda city social and national aspects during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup>–beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Sliužinskas, 2009), on the forms of regional identity and self-determination issues in Klaipėda Polish people experience (Sliužinskas, 2012a), motives and patterns in establishing communities and societies of national cultures in Klaipėda (Sliužinskas, 2013; 2014a). We have some articles on the cultural activities of Russian communities and societies (Orlovas, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c), and on the cooperation of national urban communities (Valevičius, 1997) here, etc.

It should outline the objective socio-cultural conditions, which reflect certain stages in the formation of societies and communities of national cultures within their specific regional residence.

It is common, that a community is socially and culturally active part of the whole national society. Not all members of the national society are united in their national self-determination, forms and levels of cultural activity, as a rule. Societies (especially – quite numerous and conscious ones) have mandatory and objective preconditions for the formation of community. They have to be the most active institutions, expressing a desire to actively preserve and continue the legacy of its national source background, including the native language, its history, beliefs and ancestral traditions. It is a natural process, which at particular times and for different objective and subjective reasons, may appear for communities in some groups.

These are the following objective conditions for the formation of national communities (in Klaipėda experience) and the stages of such a process:

1. The city must form sufficiently quantitative society of particular national culture representatives;

2. This group must show the most active members of the society who are interested in community to support the continuation of his speech, beliefs, traditional lifestyles, and to transmit to their descendants the knowledge of its history and cultural heritage of all. This group becomes as the core asset aspiring form of folk community;
3. This group must deliver the group of compatriots, from the body of previously passive people, and express the need to meet, to learn and to communicate with each other in their native language about the validity of their national culture;
4. If so, it is time to call for an open public meeting for the representatives of the society in which they create community. They have to elect the chairman of the community council. Other members of the community show personal commitment and actively participate in the activities of the newly created community;
5. By the general agreement of community establishing, these gradually formed concrete forms of community activity have to be agreed unanimously. For example: (a) general cultural activities, observing their national and traditional holidays, historical events, etc.; (b) specific clubs, groups, joint dialogue on mutually acceptable cultural needs; (c) public schools (Saturdays, Sundays, and/or summer schools), where children together with their parents and grandparents can learn about the history, beliefs and way of life of their people, improving reading and writing skills in their native language, etc.; (d) formation of amateur folk dance ensembles, music, choral singing, crafts, folklore groups, and active participation in their artistic activities; (e) the variety of forms of cultural activities that contribute to the preservation and continuation of the cultural heritage and national identity.

Perspectives of the viability of the national communities depend on a number of objective and subjective assumptions. Personal activity of each community member and universally acceptable direction of the whole community activities depend on the state (regional, local) policy of encouraging (or prejudice) multilateral folk cultures activities. At various times, the activity peaks in some communities may alternate with its sharp downturns, revivals, etc.

In Lithuania, a number of customary positive and fully formed people's communities have travelled through all of the above mentioned stages of formation, and continue to maintain their national identity. Moreover, they have to be: (a) hard-working, (b) tolerant, (c) ease read rights to the analogue existence of other national communities, (d) leading their cultural and social life in a peaceful manner, (e) residing in Lithuania legally and in accordance with the state laws of their new country.

### Centre of National Cultures in Klaipėda city

Recognizing the reality of multicultural life in the modern city and wanting to better coordinate the activities of national communities, the Centre of National Cultures at Klaipėda city government was established on March 5<sup>th</sup> of 2012<sup>3</sup>. The ceremony of this institution opening was attended by Vytautas Grubliauskas, the Mayor of Klaipėda city, city council members, and representatives of self-government. Representatives of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Poland embassies in Lithuania came as honorary guests at the celebrations. According to the Mayor, Klaipėda has always been distinguished for a tolerant attitude to ethnic minorities living here: they always found a common language with people from different cultures.

The main aim of the Centre is to help members of the communities and national cultures societies to integrate into the cultural and social life of the city and overall Lithuania, to promote mutual understanding and respect for different national cultural traditions. In the Centre there are the practical conditions for mutual knowledge of national cultures, preservation of their identity, manifestations of their cultural heritage and amateur art. The Concert Hall of the Centre hosts cultural and business meetings, sessions of Saturday and Sunday national schools for people of different ages, scientific and practical conferences, master classes, and lectures. Furthermore, scheduled rehearsals of amateur bands, poetry and literature groups/classes, celebrations of anniversaries, calendar rites, conceptualize and create new forms of cultural life for all who wish for these popular city communities be welcome here as well. One condition is very important here – equality and mutual respect for all forms and manifestations of the cultural life of all known national cultures. And life at the Centre is in full swing from morning to evening, often seven days a week. The schedule of events here is usually made some 6–8 months in advance.

Ethno-cultural and folk life of the national cultures of the Klaipėda city is most clearly manifested through the city Centre of National Cultures presented above. The creation of such a Centre has been largely resolved and its modest yet comfortable rooms are considered as the premises for cultural activities of national cultures. However, Klaipėda Centre is in the self-subordination. The Centre intends to cooperate with the representatives of all ten or more national communities active in this port-city: Belarusians, Ukrainians, Russian, Poles, Germans, Jews, Latvians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Tatars, etc.

<sup>3</sup> For complete information on the activities of the Centre, including the formation of national communities, their activities, groups for folk tradition performances, concerts, meetings, art exhibitions, etc. check the official website online of the Klaipėda city Centre of National Cultures (Klaipėdos Tautinių Kultūrų Centras, 2018.).

### National communities in Klaipėda city

German and Jewish national communities respectfully have been officially registered in 1989 in Klaipėda, as the first ones.

Under its flag, German national community of Klaipėda gathered the descendants of local Germans, present here since the times of the Kingdom of Prussia, and other persons interested in native German culture. They opened the Residence of the community in 1996. German language courses, Christmas and Easter feasts celebrations, annual Days of German culture with film screenings, concerts, exhibitions, meetings, etc. take place here. These activities are usually interesting, and representatives of various other ethnic communities, including the Jewish one (!) are always welcome. Throughout the city the theatrical celebration of St. Martin is well-known event; the German students carrying homemade lanterns come together in the Old Town of Klaipėda, arranging some concert or play performance about St. Martin. Traditionally, here one can hear sounds of choral performances of German folk songs performed by the local German community choir and their guests from Germany. It ends with the annual holiday feast with treats and tastings of traditional German dishes.

The Jewish community of Klaipėda consists primarily of Russian-speaking persons who retained their Jewish roots and who, during the Soviet years, have migrated to here from various regions of the former USSR. The Jewish community continues its traditions of the major religious and cultural upbringing, such as Sunday school for children, and a Centre for religious education of adults, the *kolel* and the *hesed* clubs for elderly people, and the *gesher* for young people. They celebrate all the traditional Jewish calendar and religious holidays altogether. The notable amateur Jewish folklore groups have not been established here yet, but some members of the community constantly encourage the brilliant interpretations of Jewish music on the stage.

The Klaipėda branch of the Union of Poles in Lithuania writes its history since 1999. Klaipėda Poles hold regular meetings with the compatriots involved in various creative projects. Much attention is paid to the cultural education of the members of this community in Saturday – Sunday Polish school that has been working for 15 years now. The creation of amateur Polish folklore collective remains as a step within the long-term plan of community activities.

The less active, so far, is only recently formally registered Latvian community in Klaipėda. It is hoped that they will express more visible permanent cultural and educational activities in the near future.

Klaipėda city Armenian community *Van* was established in 2004. They periodically organize concerts, musical evenings, and exhibitions of photos and thumbnails of applied art, dedicated to the public holidays, and religious and historical dates of Armenia, including the Day of the Armenian genocide.

Armenian Sunday School got opened and has been working since 2005, while Armenian Folk Dance Ensemble *Van* started their activities as of 2012.

Azerbaijani community in Klaipėda called *Azeris*, had been formed gradually, and the real beginning of their activities can be considered as of 2010. They hold regular meetings of Klaipėda Azerbaijani people, and have activities such as conferences, exhibitions, seminars, discussions, hiking, etc. They invited all of the city's national communities to take part at Azerbaijan traditional spring holiday *Novruz Bayram* in 2013 the first time. The origins of such pre-Muslim feast stretch back to antiquity. The video presentation about the main traditions of this feast, Azerbaijani folk songs performances, and national dances with traditional-way dancing girls takes place here. All the guests are treated by extraordinary Azerbaijani sweets. Traditional night time jumping through the fireplace performance, wishing prosperity to each other, is cordially greeted by everybody here. Azerbaijani Saturday – Sunday school in Klaipėda was opened in year of 2013, and the community works on idea of establishing Azerbaijani traditional music amateur teams in the near future.

Klaipėda Tatar community called *Nur* was founded in 2004. Their activities are concentrated on organizing creative meetings, parties, lectures, festivals, concerts, and exhibitions. Klaipėda Tatars organize annual days of traditional Tatar culture. They successfully held the Tatars World Congress in the Centre of National Cultures of Klaipėda in 2012. Since 2006 they organise annual traditional Tatar national feast *Sabantui* presenting popular talents in the arts, traditional sport games, rituals, and the *Kuresh* – the unique Tatar traditional competitions of fighters. All the participants and the spectators too, treat themselves to traditional Tatar dishes during the festival. Tatar folk songs ensemble *Leisyan* is successfully engaged in continuing their national folk music traditions.

All national communities in Klaipėda mentioned above also have their traditional music or folklore ensembles.

The Belarusian community *Krynica* was founded in 2001. The main activities of city Belarusians may be illustrated by the exhibition of folk applied art *Two peoples, two cultures, two personalities*, traditional Belarusian dressing parade *Linen flax*, *Evening Time* feast, traditional folk festivals *Spring of Homeland*, *Kupala*, *Dozhinki*, and annual international Belarusian music festival *Voices of the Dnieper*. The Days of Belarusian culture with video movies, meetings of community people, Belarusian arts and crafts, and photography exhibitions traditionally involve great number of prominent cultural figures from native Republic of Belarus. Belarusian Saturday – Sunday school *Krynichka* has been open here since 2004. The elaborated Belarusian folk song ensemble *Kupalinka* performs on stage in various cities of Lithuania and Latvia since 2004 (Figure 1), and children vocal ensemble *Verasok*, as of year 2012, also performs Belarusian songs.





Figure 1. Klaipėda Belarusian folk songs ensemble *Kupalinka*. (Sliužinskas, 2012b)

Local Ukrainian people are welcome to take part in three national communities in Klaipėda. The first one – Ukrainian culture and education centre *Rodyna* was founded in 2002. The centre takes care of Ukrainian Saturday – Sunday school, founded back in 1992. They also arrange for Ukrainian traditional calendar feasts, exhibitions, creative activities, Ukrainian writers and poetry works reading competitions, etc. The second one is the Association of Baltic Ukrainians Klaipėda branch. It was registered here in 2010, joining two previous Ukrainian communities – *Gromada*, and *Troyanda*. The main activities of the Association are organizing celebrations of the historical Ukraine dates, meetings with prominent figures of Ukrainian culture, exhibitions, literary – musical evenings *Ukrainian Calendar*’ quizzes, debates, excursions, etc. In addition, the Ukrainian folk song ensemble *Prosvit*, acting since 2003 in Klaipėda, may be called the third Ukrainian community here.

Russian national communities are the most represented ones in our city, and all of them call themselves *societies*. The Society of Russian Culture *Otechestvo* in Klaipėda started its activities in the early Lithuania independent times, ever since 1991. The main cultural life ideas promoted and provided by this society are the traditional children folk art festival *Russian Wreath*, annual feasts *Winter Carousel*, multi-year project *The Orthodox Church in Lithuania, Save the Homeless from Death, Youth Against War*, the popular films presentations, etc. Another Russian society *Lada* continues in similar directions of educational and artistic activities since 2001 in Klaipėda. The basic forms of its activity are organizing and providing music concerts, recitals, fine art exhibitions, meetings, lectures, etc. Well-known are their gatherings of folk art (needlework) leisure, free-time providing club *Zhar-Ptitsa*, amateur theatre *Otrada*, projects *First-Graders Christening*, fashion competition for young ladies *Snow Maiden*, calendar feast *The Christmas Wreath*, youth meetings *Give me a chance*, etc. The Russian youth vocal group *Lad* was founded here in 2012. The biannual international folk music



festival *Native origins* is held by Russian society *Lada* in collaboration with the Centre of National Cultures in Klaipėda since 2012.

### **Authentic folk music groups at national communities in contemporary Klaipėda**

Do we know any authentic (primary, not elaborated) folk music groups at national societies and communities in contemporary Klaipėda? Yes, but we have just two examples of Russian folk singing traditions promoted this way – the children folklore studio *Veretyontse*, and the Association of Russian folklore *Vechyora*, both of them lead by Maria Serebryakova, teacher in local Russian secondary school.

Children folklore studio *Veretyontse*, at Klaipėda city basic school *Payurio*, has been active for last twelve years<sup>4</sup>. Their main task is to keep the younger generations aware of the old Russian culture, national traditions, and spiritual national heritage. *Veretyontse* give Christmas, Shrovetide and Easter folklore festivals for children and students each year. In addition, the studio has been participating in various festivals and events of Klaipėda. Parents, teachers, and children of Klaipėda Russian schools are the most active participants of *Veretyontse* folklore studio.



Figure 2. Klaipėda Russian folklore studio *Veretyontse*. (Sliužinskas, 2014b)

<sup>4</sup> The main and primary source of updated information about the activities of Klaipėda city Russian folklore ensembles *Veretyontse* and *Vechyora* is their internet site (Klaipėdos miesto folkloro asociacija "Vėchiora", 2013). Video recordings of their last programmes are uploaded on several web pages (Детское творческое объединение Литвы МУЗА, 2011; Tatyana Chernova, 2013; Sergey Pyatnitsa, 2013).

Association of Russian folklore *Vechyora* was established on April 22<sup>nd</sup> of 2011 on the basis of *Veretyontse* folklore studio, and it has the status of humanitarian organisation. *Vechyora* includes the Russian folklore adult singing staff as well. Both teams collaborate with other folk ensembles in Lithuania and in Russia, primarily such as Slavic traditional music school in Vilnius, Russian folk ensemble *Bylina* in Visaginas (the city in East Lithuania), Russian folklore centre *Istoky* in Podolsk (Russia), Russian authentic folklore studio *Ilyinskaya Pyatnitsa* in Riga (Latvia). *Veretyontse*, for several years now, co-operates with city Orthodox churches, and takes part at concerts organization together with *Vechyora* adult participants. Since 2012, *Vechyora* association includes teachers of various Russian city schools, and other creative people. Thus, they currently have three age groups – the children, the whole family, and the adults. In the course of the short period from being established the *Vechyora*’ people became laureates of the International Folklore Festivals *Tradition, Roots* (2012), *Successors of Traditions, Pokrovsky Bells* (2013). As of 2010, they continuously take part in the international creative summer school *Tradition*.

Both groups, *Veretyontse* and *Vechyora*, are lately turning to the studying, understanding, and interpreting Russian regional folklore of Pskov region and its Belarusian borderland. This also applies to their traditional stage clothes and song repertoire, and they delivered regional Russian calendar rites, children and shepherds games, and the local Russian traditional instrumental music.

Ms Maria Serebryakova, *Veretyontse* and *Vechyora* leader told us the following about their recent activities and their capacities:

“We are very glad for Klaipėda municipality support of our folklore promotion projects. That’s great! But we have real problems, the same for all ethnic culture enthusiasts – Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, etc. people. This problem is finding financial funds for the implementation of our artistic and creative projects. The fact is that the children involved in traditional culture, feel discriminated and sometimes cut off and left in a background, when it comes to the prevailing, modern stage, popular culture. Modern scenic landmarks displace negation of the importance and priority ranking of the living folk tradition. Therefore, for the development of folk movement, both in Lithuania and abroad, what we need is a program supporting such creative meetings, master classes, festivals ethnographic orientation, etc. (...) Necessary changes have to be made in respect to project costs applicable. Currently, transport expenditure payment allows only for the ones within the Lithuania. It is a huge financial challenge for us to invite Russian folk groups from Russia, Latvia, Estonia, and the ethnographers alike, to communicate with like-minded people here and share experiences. The same state of play applies to the possibilities to arrange folklore expeditions or for ourselves to take part at festivals and meetings with artists in our native Russia.” (Serebryakova, 2016)

### **Ethno-cultural life, folklore activities, and social context**

Under the definition of term *ethno-cultural life*, we refer to the specifics and the features of the cultural life of ethnic groups, which are distant from their homeland. We mean not only the activities of pure authentic folklore and native ethnographic ensembles, but also other forms of amateur performances that are reflecting the cultural heritage of the people, such as solo singing in native language in vocal ensembles, choir music pieces, stage performances of native folk dances, traditional and more or less transformed native instrumental music, folk instruments, native traditional clothing, etc. Therefore, the term encompasses one whole of social life expressing the national identity; together will all possible types of native ethnic roots cultivations and native way-of-living forms.

As we see, just Russian *Veretyontse* and *Vechyora* are set to stay as the pure South part of Pskov region authentic folklore collectors, investigators and propagators in Klaipėda. The way they act is also somewhat artificial, because their participants are people of Russian identity but with their roots from many other regions of Russia. However, nobody can propose them on how to provide their activities some better way.

All other national artistic groups in Klaipėda have the same main problematic – more or less complicated or even broken cultural ties with their homeland. Primarily, I here refer to Klaipėda German community choir, Armenian Folk Dance Ensemble *Van*, Tatar folk songs ensemble *Leisyan*, Belarusian elaborated folk song ensemble *Kupalinka*, Ukrainian folk song ensemble *Prosvit*. Yes, they all act in their native language and in their own ethnic context. The problem is that they are born in Lithuania, and their parents or grandparents homeland is in a fact not native for them. They are Lithuanian (or Russian) speaking people in general, and they are already acculturated into Lithuanian social and cultural life contexts with all its achievements and problems. So, it is impossible to speak about particular local or at least regional repertoire from their homeland.

Another problem is the decrease in motivation and interest to take part at any ethno-cultural projects at present times. Employed people do not have enough of a free time for concert programmes practice, nor the time for concert tours outside Klaipėda and abroad. Furthermore, all of them have the financial challenges to cover the costs of such activities.

The third problem is the lack of professionally educated heads of national art (singing, dancing, instrumental music playing, etc.) groups. In some cases the same persons might lead our Russian, Ukrainian or Belarusian folk singing groups. There is no other way to continue their artistic activities, and usually the repertoire is taken from some easy known popular layer of national music. There is also no idea to look for some deliberately chosen local or regional folklore sources.



Figure 3. Klaipėda Tatar folk songs ensemble *Leisyan* (Sliužinskas, 2012c)

The fourth challenge is the native repertoire problem. For national culture, it is important that the people feel the necessity to sing their own folk songs. On the other hand, the repertoire of the groups is not formed from sources of the ancient pure folklore songs from some local regions here. The repertoire of such performing groups consists of older pop- songs from Soviet times only in their language. Furthermore, there is no way to refresh and deepen the repertoire because there is no contact with professional ethnomusicologists and folklorists. They do not have any professional literature on ancient folk songs, and the group members show no interest for it. They have never heard any authentic folk songs texts and melodies from some deep past, and they are not ready to accept such primary folklore layers. The main criteria for the acceptable repertoire there are for them well-known melodies that are familiar to them from the school (early Soviet) times.

The fifth problem is the lack of interest of the young. Ms Alifa Sadiyeva, head of Klaipėda Tatar folk songs ensemble *Leisyan* expressed this problem the following way:

“We are uncertain of our future. We are aged people mostly – in age from 50 to 70 years. Sometimes we become tired, but have no new singers, no youth. Some of our singers don’t have enough health and strength to stay on the scene, or to travel somewhere. Sure, it would be very nice if our children and grandchildren would join us, but – you know – they have other interests. A number of our Tatar young generation people are in emigration in England, other Western countries, as many other Klaipėda youngsters, and they come back to visit their parents just in the time of some family or calendar feasts. They see their future in Europe, and nobody knows about their Tatar origin continuity. And in many cases their families are mixed, and also their children are born far away from us... They speak English, they want to be employed in the West, and they are very far

away culturally from us at present... But we are optimists. We still come together to sing, and if we are invited to sing even one of our Tatar songs, we come and sing.” (Sadiyeva, 2015)

This is quite serious problem for a number of Klaipėda national cultures artistic groups. And it is connected with general problem with young generation national self-identity determinations. Many youngsters have multinational families and they usually use to forget their national language, motherland roots, and traditions. In some cases they feel themselves as simply Russian- or Lithuanian-speaking people, in other cases – as cosmopolitans. Another factor not to preserve national identity there are local free emigration possibilities. Staying in Lithuania as citizens of EU they are free to travel and to look for legal employment in the West or North European countries, and English (not Russian) language is used primarily for them in such cases. And the great part of them is not interested in their national culture heritage sources for mentioned above reasons.

There is one problem more, really aggravating one that affects singing people of Klaipėda national cultures. Listening for some time to their performing groups’ concerts it is easy to become aware of the rather large scale of more or less acceptable musical hearing level among the group members. The same applies to the musical tempo and rhythm feeling, and that is something what is very important for singers. Sometimes they are simply excited and overwhelmed with opportunity to perform and present themselves on stage, and not so concentrated on listening and following the main melody line. It happens easily for them to start singing with faster tempo and not pay attention for personal losing the ensemble singing idea. It seems to be the case that some of them, especially more senior people, do not hear the voice of neighbouring partners on the stage at all. Consequently, the ensemble singing is quite often getting lost in such cases. However – it is very important to admit – they never stop singing in such cases, and do not seem to be bothered much with such problems. It is acceptable for them to start the melody all together, and to finish it not as an ensemble, but more in an individual way...

What about evaluation of their artistic level? I think this question is not the most important one in this case. The main goal and the main achievement is that the people can come together and to simply sing something in their own language. Moreover, this way it is important for them to self-declare their pure national identity. For some time in their first years, they usually did not have any artistic activities on the stage. They just used to come together at some private apartments, to communicate to each other, and to sing something. Moreover, nobody of them has any musical education.

I think it is important to emphasize the positive side of their attitude to follow the clear or not so clear ensemble singing. The main idea is **to sing** together and to keep positive personal contacts without each other without any remarks of losing ensemble singing to somebody. At one hand, from ethno- musicological point of view, such social position might be understood as a negative one, but on the other hand, from the social-anthropology point-of-view as positive one – a factor of positive social communion in the group.

### **National identity problems in everyday social life**

The real family and cultural connections for all national cultures Klaipėda people are lost as a rule, with some possible exceptions. They were born, or at least they spent their childhood right here, in Lithuania, and they clearly have Lithuanian style of living experience in Klaipėda. They keep their own national identity in a clear way, but the real living environment in their ancestral homelands is unknown to them. National feelings are very important for them, but they are something as an echo, set far away from their national world outlook.

The fact is that the globalization does not help us to preserve and to hold over our native folklore and ethnic roots, especially for the representatives of national cultures. The same applies to the Klaipėda case.

We have real likelihoods for national cultures to cultivate and to hold over their own ethnic and traditional roots in Klaipėda city. We have the place – Centre of National Cultures –to come together, to arrange for all possible cultural events, to invite other national societies, and to be invited. In addition, just the people from actual national minorities decide in what level to use those opportunities. Of course, as everywhere else we have an itching problem of globalization influences, and youth generation losing the national roots. Open state borders and great emigration waves do not help either to stay “strong way” at the real national self-identity manifestations. Mixed nationality young families also often lose their individual cultural and language identities. They use to say for example – I am from Ukraine, and my wife is from Belarus. We speak Russian all the time here in Klaipėda for many years. And our children name themselves as Russians because of language.

### **Conclusions**

Study data concerning *national societies* and updated methodological background of formation of *national communities* in city of Klaipėda presented in this article give us real picture of *multicultural life* here at present. The activities of Centre of National Cultures do bring possibilities to start artistic presentations of authentic folk music groups at national communities. We find free and rich ethno-cultural



life, national folklore cultivation and activities of preserving and continuing it as the main contribution to save *authenticity* (both *ethnic identity* and *self-identity*) for all national representatives of multicultural Klaipėda people.

As the main conclusions, it should be noted that there is the fundamental and mutual goodwill in the creation of favourable conditions for the continuation of ethnic and cultural traditions of national communities and societies as much as possible from both the municipal government of Klaipėda, and from the citizens themselves, representatives of various nations and nationalities.

Hope remains that the folk groups will continue to consistently pursue their artistic and pedagogical activities as an example of the continuation and passing the heritage of ancestral national ethnic culture to future generations, for the benefit of their national compatriots and for other people communities in the city of Klaipėda.

We believe that in the context of growing global cosmopolitanism and universally known manifestations of the separation from native national roots it is especially important to show examples of tolerance, mutual respect, and knowledge and to continue nursing a variety of forms of cultural heritage of national cultures. This is the only way to a peaceful coexistence of everyone and a way to avoid any conflicts on a national basis. We believe that this policy of cultural life in the city of Klaipėda in Lithuania will remain unchanged in future times.

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