DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE: JOINING THE WORLD OF WORK
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INTRODUCTION: NATIONAL BACKGROUND

I. Briefly about the project.

Lithuanian development partnership “Strengthening Youth Motivation for Employment (DP “SYME”)” has been designed to develop new methods of disadvantaged youth (16-25 years old) social integration through integration into the labour market. In the course of the project these methods have been tested in city and rural environments. Geographically the DP encompasses the capital of Lithuania, Vilnius and Lithuania’s southern county of Alytus. (See Figure 1 for Lithuanian counties, Alytus is marked dark blue).

![Figure 1. Lithuania's 10 counties.](image)

EQUAL DP “SYME” was created by 24 partners uniting different actors directly involved in the implementation of youth education & employment policies. The partners’ organisations represent a wide variety of organisations on various levels – starting from Alytus county administration, municipalities, regional state employment offices, academic and research bodies, a number of NGOs and the tiny Eičiūnai village community.

II. Socio-economic background.

Recent main-trends in the country’s economy were – on one hand - stabilization of the economy, strong growth and decreasing unemployment, while on the other - alarmingly high emigration rates.

II.1. Short introduction to the economy.

Since 1999, the Lithuanian economy has stabilised and its gross domestic product (GDP) has grown an average of 7% annually. GDP in 2006, calculated by production approach went up by 7.4% from 2005. The growth of GDP in Lithuania in recent years was one of the biggest in the EU. The most decisive impact on the growth of GDP in 2006 was made by activities of enterprises engaged in manufacturing, construction, transport, financial mediation, and real estate. More value added was generated by the said enterprises in 2006 (approximately 11%) than in 2005, while in enterprises of other economic activities it was only 4% more. About 50% of gross value added fell per enterprises of manufacturing, construction, financial intermediation and real estate.

Also, the structure of the sector share in GDP moved from the industry-led towards the service-led. In 2005 the Lithuanian service sector’s share in gross value added was 60% while industry’s was 26.7%, construction sector – 7.6% and agriculture sector – 5.7%. Accordingly employment share in services rose to 56% of the population in 2005, 29.9 % in industry and 14.1% in agriculture. The latest trends show that employment in industry rose by 8% in the last two years, followed by a further increase in the services sector of 2%, while employment in agriculture decreased by 4%.

However, the proportion of GDP per capita is considerably small. Lithuania is markedly behind the EU states according to the proportion of GDP per inhabitant: GDP per inhabitant in Lithuania makes 46% of the EU-25 average - about 44% of the EU-15 average. There are significant regional differences in GDP per capita at current prices – if in Vilnius 144% in comparison with average of country, in such counties as Alytus, Mariampole, Taurage it does not exceed 70% (accordingly – 70%, 64%, 52%)2. Besides, the living standard is also higher in Vilnius than other counties: the average disposable income per capita per month in Vilnius – LTL 680, and in Alytus – LTL 516EUR (in Vilnius – 197, and in Alytus – 150). The unemployment rate was also lower in 2004 in the Alytus county (16%) than in the Vilnius county (11%)3. Therefore, the economic situation in the Alytus county is less favourable in comparison with the Vilnius county.

The development of Vilnius’ county is mainly caused by the rapid development of Vilnius city, as capital of Lithuania. This development is characterised by higher investments and the promotion of lines in the productive and service sector demanding both intensive know-how and technology. These specialisations bring along a rising demand for highly qualified employees which is reflected in the bigger share of Vilnius inhabitants with higher educational degrees by national comparison: if in 2005 in Vilnius the share of inhabitants with high education comprised 18.7%, in Alytus it was 12.4%4.

II.2. System of Education
II.2.1. System of educational training (incl. vocational training).

The Lithuanian formal education system encompasses obligatory primary and lower secondary schools. Further non-obligatory formal education comprises upper secondary school or vocational schools, followed by tertiary education at Colleges or Universities. (See Figure 2 on page 5). As it stands today, a person without basic (meaning lower secondary) education has limited choices to receive formal qualifications – youth schools and some vocational schools. Besides, there are only a small, and definitely insufficient, number of such educational institutions in Lithuania.

Non-formal education for adults (from 18 year olds with some exceptions foreseen for 16 year olds) in Lithuania is regulated by a separate law (The Law of Non-formal Education of Adults, 1998), while non formal education for children is regulated by the Education Law (the last edition, 2003) and is widely perceived more as an extra-curricular activity. Despite the fact, that in the newest Conception of non-formal education for children (2005) it is declared that this kind of education also provides professional competences and must help to solve the problems of integration into the labour market, there is still no recognized mechanism for gathering competences via non-formal education. The certificates of non formal vocational qualification are recognized neither by the educational system, nor by employers. Moreover, in Lithuania there is still no widespread practice of offering training perspectives in work places.

Vocational non-formal courses for youth and adults are mostly provided by non-governmental and private organisations, of which there are over 500 registered, however, they are mostly located in the bigger cities. As a rule, these organizations experience tremendous shortages of financing, as in many cases they depend on projects and

5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
donations, and there is no developed mechanism of financing from state and municipality budgets. Thus the work of many non-governmental organizations is quite fragmented and always under threat of disrupted succession. The fact that the state does not provide financial support is rooted in some statements of law, where the principle of financing of the formal educational institution based on the “pupil’s expense basket” does not follow the youngster into non-formal education.

The largest state institution that provides non-formal vocational education is the Labour Exchange Office. Its affiliated offices offer vocational non-formal training courses for the young unemployed or those willing to re-qualify, however there are only a few training programmes which are attractive to youngsters. Besides, most of these require a person to have at least a lower secondary education certificate. Therefore there are three basic obstacles for more accessible vocational education:

1) there is no recognition’ mechanism for gathering competences via non-formal education;
2) there is no developed mechanism for financing of non-formal education from state and municipality budgets;
3) there are a limited number of attractive vocational training programs for young people.

Non-formal education and formal education are non-transferable, meaning that there are no validation mechanisms foreseen to assess and compare the knowledge attained from non-formal and formal education. Therefore, non-formal education, as it is nowadays in Lithuania, does not improve the possibilities for youth to continue with further formal education and requires essential improvements both in law level and practice level.

Thus, although one may choose to finish studies at the lower secondary education stage, this could seriously hamper his/her future possibilities for education and consequently employment. The most difficult situation is with early school leavers without lower secondary education – they face limited formal and even non-formal possibilities to gain vocational and other skills needed for successful employment. Needless to say that a person with a low level of education will have difficulty in finding a job in economical circumstances characterized by a lack of highly qualified workers.

7 In Lithuanian formal education schools are financed through “pupil’s expense basket”, meaning that per each pupil school is paid a certain amount.
II.2.2. Statistics on educational achievement.

Main tendencies in educational attainment in Lithuanian differ – the positive ones include – an increasing number of people in tertiary education and a decreasing number of early school leavers not in further education, while negative ones comprise a growing share of people with low qualifications.

Since the early 90’s, the number of early school leavers has been on the increase. According to United Nations’ research, in 1992 81.2% of 18 years-olds graduated from secondary education, while in 1993 the percentage was only 43.3%. In 2001 the situation improved and the percentage of 18 years-olds who graduated from secondary education rose to 69.7% and in 2005 this indicator reached 77%\(^8\). Hence, in certain periods between 1993 and 2001 up to one third of 18 years-olds did not accomplish upper secondary education. Data on how many of them continued with post-secondary education is absent.

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\(^8\) Education 2005, Department of Statistics.
In 2001, 93% of 18 years-olds had at least lower secondary education (meaning that 7% of the population accomplished primary education or less). In 2004, 25.4% of early school leavers (with lower secondary education) were in further vocational education (level ISCED 3), whilst the data on the rest of the early school leavers is not available.

The percentage of 18-24 years-olds with lower secondary education that are not in further education or training (see the table below) is decreasing and in 2005 it constituted 9.2%. Generally, the number of such drop-outs are higher among the boys, however statistics show that each year the difference is changing quite substantially. In 2001 it was 9.1%, and the next year only 1.7%, while in 2005 the difference constituted 4.2%.

Table 1. Early school leavers not in further education or training (% of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU-25</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>16.2</td>
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<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT f</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT m</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Eurostat.

However, comparing general education attainment among different age groups it can be seen that the numbers of low skilled people are rising – if in a group of 25-35 years olds 13.2% had primary or lower secondary education, then in a similar group of 35-44 years olds only 4.2% had a low educational attainment. Though the percentage of young men with a low educational attainment was higher, low educational attainment numbers among the female population were growing faster than among the male population. From 1998 to 2005 for males it doubled for males from almost 7% to almost 15%, while for females over the same period the number tripled from 3-4% to 10-11%. (see the table below)

Table 2. Persons with low educational attainment (% of people with primary or lower secondary education in different age groups of population).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
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<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td><strong>13.2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td><strong>4.7</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
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<td>45-54</td>
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<td>12.4</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td><strong>8.0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td><strong>28.5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Governmental Department of Statistics of Lithuania, Inhabitants’ Employment Survey.
Most likely these tendencies were triggered by the transition from planned to market economy, low salaries in Lithuania as compared to Western European countries and increased mobility and opportunities to find more lucrative jobs abroad. A belief that it is better to go and work at a farm or factory abroad, than study or develop your career in Lithuania is quite common.

Yet it is important to note the effects emigration might have on the educational attainment of today’s children and youth. As recent studies of emigration suggest it is quite usual for parents when emigrating to leave their children in their relatives or grandparents care, who are often incapable of coping with “abandoned” youths. Consequently, an increasing number of truancy cases of these youths have been reported.

II.3. Youth unemployment.

Generally, a decrease in unemployment is being observed in Lithuania. In only 2005 the total unemployment in Lithuania fell from 10.2% to 7.2%; respectively the unemployment of those aged between 15 and 24 fell from 20% to 12.8%. However, youth unemployment remains almost twice as high as the general unemployment.

The unemployment rate among males and females in Lithuania is not significant: in 2005 the unemployment rate among males was 8.2%, among females – 8.3%\(^\text{10}\). More significantly, the unemployment rate is different among people with different educational attainment: in 2005 the unemployment rate of the total population aged 25 to 59 with pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education comprised 16.1%, with upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education – 9.1%, and with tertiary education – 3.8%\(^\text{11}\). Thus, there is a higher percentage of unemployment among people with a lower educational attainment.

Unemployment among youth with a low educational attainment is almost twice as high as unemployment among youth with higher education. Unemployment among youth with a low education attainment contrary to unemployment of youth with a higher education is on the increase – from 21.2% (youth with secondary education) and 27.8% (youth with primary education) in 2002 to 25.1% and 32.2% respectively in 2003. This was amid the general tendency in the other age groups with a low educational attainment of decreasing unemployment.

### Table 3. Unemployment rate according to age and education level (annual average %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Total:</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary education</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary education</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary, lower secondary education</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 15-24:</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary education</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary education</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary, lower secondary education</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 25-49:</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary education</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary education</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary, lower secondary education</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 50-64:</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary education</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>13.4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary education</td>
<td>6.0</td>
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<td>6.6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary, lower secondary education</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Lithuanian NAP 2004-2006.

\(^{10}\) Source: Eurostat.

\(^{11}\) Source: Eurostat.
Long-term unemployment (12 months and more) in 2005 compared to 2001 decreased almost twice and was 4.3%. Long-term unemployment among the female population is decreasing slower than among the male population. From 2001 – 2005 it halved among men from 10.8% to 5.5%, while among women the change was less - from 7.7% to 6.2%. (see the table below)

Table 4. Long-term unemployment rate (in % of active population).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU-25</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT f</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
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<td>LT m</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>9.4</td>
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<td>7.6</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>LT t</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Eurostat

Similar trends are seen among people that have been unemployed for over 24 months (see the table below). Though the long-term unemployment rate has decreased almost twice since 2001, it still remains high compared to the average in the EU-25. In this group gender data differences are minor 1-2%. Generally there are fewer women in this group.

Table 5. Very long-term unemployment rate (in % of active population).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU-25</td>
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<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT f</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
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<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT m</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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<td>4.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>LT t</td>
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<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Eurostat

These tendencies could be partially attributed to improving employment opportunities as well as very high population emigration rates. Between 1990 and 2005, more that 334, 000 people (approximately 10% of the whole population), emigrated from Lithuania. According to official emigration statistics (emigrants, who declared departure), in 2005, 156, 000 people emigrated\(^{12}\) and the netmigration comprised -2.6, which was the largest in the EU\(^{13}\). As a result of emigration Lithuania loses the young and most active part of its population: 20% of emigrants in 2005 were constituted of 25-29 year olds, 16,3% - 20-24, 12,9% - 30-34, 8,8% - 35-39, while only 2,9% - 60 and over\(^{14}\).

However, recently estimated numbers of unofficial emigrants are significantly higher: in addition to 156, 000 officially emigrated people, there were 244, 000 of those who did not declare their departure in 2005. In general, between 2001 and 2005, 0-14 year olds comprised 11.5% of unofficial emigrants, and 15-24 year olds – 26.2%\(^{15}\). Therefore, every year Lithuania loses a significant part of the young generation, which supplements the labour force in various countries of the EU.

In addition, Lithuania is starting to experience a shortage of labour force, especially highly skilled blue-collar workers. Business response to high emigration rates in the labour force varies – in some sectors (like construction or logistics) salaries started to rise thus reducing emigration; while other cases indicated that businesses would prefer to import workers from third countries, rather than improve working conditions or try to attract the remainder of the unemployed population.

\(^{13}\) Source: Eurostat.
II.4. Poverty of young persons and children.

The main poverty risk groups are children or youth living with single parents in families relying on social benefits, families with more than 3 children, families that earn their living from farming or state care home leavers.

In 2005, 17% of households in Lithuania were within the risk of poverty. The highest relative poverty was in rural areas (29.5%), the lowest – in big cities (7.7%). Also, the highest relative poverty was in families where the head of the household had a low educational level – 38.9%. For youth poverty it is also significant that in households with more than one child the relative poverty is higher: in households with 2 children – 17.4%, with 3 or more children – 36.5%\(^\text{16}\).

Meanwhile, youth upon leaving the state care institutions are left with two choices – continuing further education during which they would receive a monthly state scholarship of LTL 500 (EUR 145) with free student dormitory accommodation – or discontinuing education in which case they would receive a lump sum of LTL 6000 (EUR 1739) on which they would have to rely before finding employment.

However, it is important to note that poverty is significant, though not the sole reason for social exclusion which is often a consequence of a number of socio-economic and cultural factors. It is not absolutely necessary that a person living in poverty should experience social exclusion. Nevertheless, it can significantly increase such risks, if the person also lives in a poor neighbourhood with a lack of infrastructure, in minority clusters isolated from the wider society or if they lack social skills etc.

II.5. Relevant policies.

II.5.1. Institutions responsible for Social, Youth and Employment Policies.

Table 6. Institutions responsible for Social, Youth and Employment Policies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Relevant policy field</th>
<th>Main responsibilities &amp; functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ministerial level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Social affairs and Labour</td>
<td>Employment promotion policy, labour market policy, social insurance policy, social integration policy, family and children policy, youth policy.</td>
<td>Formation of social and employment policy, regulation of labour relations, responsibility for guaranteed payments and compensations, social insurance and assistance benefits, employment initiatives, social undertaking, development of human resources, recognition of qualifications, social service, support for victims, assistance to social risk groups, protection of children's rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>General education policy, vocational training policy, life-long learning policy, studies, science and technologies policy.</td>
<td>Formation and implementation of formal and non-formal education policy, coordination of the activity of educational and science institutions, organization and promotion of scientific activity, responsibility for investments for education and science, implementation of vocational training policy, standards and programmes, assistance to social risk groups, protection of children rights, responsibility for early-school leaving prevention programmes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Other National Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Policy Areas</th>
<th>Functions and Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lithuanian Labour Exchange</td>
<td>Employment promotion policy, labour market policy, social insurance policy, social integration policy, youth policy.</td>
<td>Implementation of state employment guarantees on labour market, provide assistance for job seekers in finding work, provide employers with necessary skilled labour force, involve registered job seekers in population employment programs (vocational training and retraining, organisation of own business, placement into public works and works financed from the Employment Fund, establishment of new jobs, activities of job clubs) and payment of unemployment benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuanian Child Rights Protection Control Agency (by the Parliament)</td>
<td>Children's Rights</td>
<td>Responsibility for protection of children's rights, supervision and control of state and municipalities, other juridical and physical persons activities that might produce threat to rights violation, protection of children' interests, representation of child interest in court, suggestion of ward imposition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmental Department of Youth Affairs</td>
<td>Youth policy</td>
<td>Implementation of Lithuanian youth policy, strengthening youth motivation and possibilities to obtain education, to gain employment, to participate actively in civic life. Promotion of youth socialization and non-formal education and implementation of drug prevention programmes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Municipal level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Policy Areas</th>
<th>Functions and Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County administration</td>
<td>Education and social policy</td>
<td>Responsibility for functioning and financing of educational and state care institutions, registration of school pupils, participation together with Labour Exchange offices in solving unemployment problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipalities</td>
<td>Education and social policy, youth policy</td>
<td>Organization of general education, social assistance and social support, organization of non-formal training and extra-curricular activities, vocational education, organization of employment and seasonal works, administration and payment of social benefits, implementation of youth policy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II.5.2. Political declarations regarding the target group problems.

Relevant political declarations are expressed in main Lithuanian strategic documents and various laws and conceptions. Relevant strategic documents:

1. National Lisbon Strategy Implementation Programme 2005-2008 in the area of employment emphasises the aim to promote employment and investment in human capital. This priority integrates measures of employment, education and social security in order to decrease the structural unemployment by higher investments in human capital. The essence of the policy is to develop legal assumptions for a more flexible organisation of labour relations, a more acceptable response to unavoidable market changes and facilitation of employees adapting to changes while ensuring their social and job security. In this programme special attention is paid to the improvement of the employment situation for young people by promotion of employment for job-seekers, enhancing attractiveness of work and restructuring a lifelong learning system after compulsory education. However this programme still has limitations caused by other Lithuanian legal documents: some measures are still directed only at young people in compulsory education up to 16 years old, while those between 16 and 18 years old have little options for improvement of the situation of disadvantaged youth.

2. Lithuanian National Action Plan (NAP) against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2004-2006 puts forward the following goals to pay particular attention to, and improve opportunities for the education of children of families in poverty or/and in social exclusion, to provide adequate social services to the families with children in the social risk group, and to increase involvement of the NGOs in the discussion of the social problems and in decision making and social services provision. The target group of disadvantaged youth is present under various groups which are vulnerable to social exclusion, but it is not explicitly distinguished or separately identified in any of them. Many foreseen measures, in a way match the needs of our target group, however many measures are fragmented, and the integrated policy is not emphasized. Besides, the document was rather bulky, multidimensional and difficult to span.

3. Lithuanian NAP for Inclusion 2006-2008 tries to improve the prioritization of essential targets: to enhance participation of the population in the labour market; streamline social protection systems; eliminate limitations in the system of education and training; eradicate poverty of children and expand assistance to families; ensure adequate living conditions for children and other people; improve possibilities to receive quality services. The employment measures are mainly oriented towards active measures (not only unemployment benefits) and development of alternative activities in rural areas. The improvement of social services is directed at non-institutional social services and the reduction of regional disparities. In order to eliminate child poverty there are proposed integrated measures for children and families as well as state care institutions. In the area of educational and vocational policy particular attention is paid towards combining the development of human resources and the security of social assistance to needy young people. It also emphasises preventative measures against non-attendance of school.

There are numerous other documents related to employment, education and social policy, among which more recent: The Law of Youth Policy Basics (2003), Conception of non-formal education of children (2005), Socialization Programme for Children and Youth (2004), Guideline for retrieval of children to schools (2005), The Law of Social Services (2006), etc. All these laws, conceptions and programmes are formulated according to the most progressive EU policy requirements, but the implementation of them in Lithuanian reality faced tremendous obstacles of bureaucratic inertia, rudiments of centralised decision making, absence of social partnership tradition, and low incentive for non-governmental organizations to play a more active role in solving employment, education and social security problems.

Also, one can notice the incompatibility between these new policy documents and earlier passed laws: the registration of schoolchildren is prescribed only for pupils in compulsory education up to 16 years old, all early-school leaving prevention measures are also directed at pupils up to 16 years old, non-formal vocational education is not recognized, there is a limited possibility to prepare more attractive vocational training programmes as they need to be validated in the Ministry of Education, etc. All these incompatibilities cause the absence of reliable statistical data or qualitative information about disadvantaged youth from 16 to 25 years old, misrecognitions on the political stage of their problems and consequently the lack of effective policy measures. It is common that the majority of progressive political declarations regarding improvement of the situation of disadvantaged youth remain only declarations or even worse - very often the problems of disadvantaged youth are misunderstood.
III. Target groups

The target group in the context of our project is understood in 2 ways: firstly the broad target group – all disadvantaged youth of Lithuania and secondly – the immediate target group – 100 disadvantaged youngsters selected to participate in the project.

The target group of SYME is youth that are in social exclusion or in immediate danger of social exclusion. They could most often be described as youngsters lacking basic skills and motivation for further education or employment. They have difficulties in navigating social support and other public support systems. They are the young people who are not in education, training or employment and not registered as unemployed – a group at particular risk that is often referred to as “status zero”.17

III.1. Target group’s statistics.

Statistically the broad target group should be most visible in truancy figures. However, there are no accurate statistics about drop-outs and truancy in Lithuania for two main reasons – truancy is not included in non-attendance statistics and schools are not interested in reporting such cases.

Since 1997 new rules on the collection of school attendance records have been in place, however, they do not include truancy statistics which actually constitute two thirds18 of all non-attendance cases. First data on non-attendance was revealed in 2001 following the first population census, where it was reported 5256 children were not attending school. In 2005 according to the Lithuanian Ministry of Education data there were 631 drop-outs19. However, the discrepancies among data provided by various institutions are very high – in 2005 Children’s Rights Protection Control Agency reported 2294 non-attendance cases.

Moreover, during our project one important tendency has been noted – the schools are not interested in reporting truancy cases in fear of decreased financing, as schools are financed according to the number of children in attendance. Therefore, they try to convince potential drop-outs to formally stay in school for the sake of their diploma rather than dropping out, basically distorting data on real truancy and the drop-out problem scale.

Considering the phenomenon of “abandoned” children briefly described in part II.3, the figure of truants and drop-outs will increase together with the continuing economic emigration in the near future.

The other source of statistical data on our target groups is unemployment figures. However, many of them might not be present in the official statistics because of the definition of “unemployed” and also by the fact that our target group members often fail to register at the labour exchange offices due to a lack of social skills.

Finally, according to experts’ estimations approximately 5% of school age youth (often regardless of their social background) are incapable or experience significant difficulties of learning in traditional formal education settings. They nevertheless, prove to be capable of achieving excellent learning results in a less formal or more vocationally-oriented environment. In other words, they by their nature they are more inclined to learn via practice rather than by reading. Some of them are among the truancy and drop-out cases, and the remainder constitutes the group at increased risk of dropping-out, while a non-flexible Lithuanian formal education system does not offer these youth other possibilities of a recognised school education.

III.2. Statistics on immediate project’s target group

The direct target group of our project is 100 socially excluded (disadvantaged, unqualified and unemployed) 16 – 25 years olds in the capital city Vilnius (36.3%) and the southern province of Lithuania (Alytus County, 63.7%) who took part in social activities and training courses provided during our project. The majority of our target group is males 61.2%, accordingly females – 38.8%. Some of them have criminal past, and/or have abused alcohol or drugs.

Education attainment: 20% of our target group has no education, 43.8% - accomplished primary, 28.8% - lower secondary, 6.2% – upper secondary and 1.2% – vocational education. As a rule there is a higher proportion of the male population among those who have the lowest educational attainment. Though most of them are in secondary education, 32.6% are not in any education or training.

Family circumstances and income: most of our target group members come from social risk family background, some had been abused. The majority of them - 68.8% live with a family, 17.5% are under state care; 6.3% are in school dormitories; 6.3% live on their own. More than one fifth of our target group members have no income and almost 40% of them survive on EUR 29-145 a month. 11.3% of our target group earn money themselves, 35% rely on parents, and 16.4% rely on various social benefits/allowances.

IV. Why are new measures/methods/tools necessary?

In the above sections the discussed issues such as the increasingly low educational attainment share in youth and lack of transition mechanisms to the labour market from the lower secondary education, destine an increasing number of young persons to experience difficulties in finding promising employment. Moreover, if such a young person comes from a disadvantaged environment, he or she after leaving school with most likely end-up unemployed with bleak chances of further education and a threat of deepening social exclusion. However, considering at the moment there isn’t sufficient data about our target group and the problem’s scale, one can hardly expect to gain the policy makers’ attention. Therefore, it is important firstly to develop the means and methods for collecting information on our target group.

Also, according to the labour law a person that does not actively seek employment is not even considered to be unemployed and very little help for such a person is available. This also indicates that the problems of the disadvantaged youth are misunderstood.

In the future, continuous growth of the Lithuanian economy may be hampered by the lack of a qualified blue-collar labour force. Some sectors of the economy like construction and catering may start experiencing sharp declines in the required labour force. Our target group would often be capable of accomplishing the necessary education for these qualifications in a less formal environment. Therefore, it would be beneficial for the whole economy to improve the social integration possibilities for disadvantaged youth group.

However, a lack of alternative roots other than formal education or low paid employment for our target group is now imminent, with higher numbers of the population in social risk groups such as disadvantaged youth and adults about to experience social exclusion in the near future. The situation might be altered by simply allowing more inter-changeability between non-formal and formal education, by combining vocational and school education or creating non-formal education validation centres, i.e. by creating several roots from education to further education and the labour market. Therefore, it is important to identify which methods of education/training and work will be effective for our target group.

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20 Statistics is based on the immediate target group research and is counted on the basis of the answers of 80 questionnaires filled by our TG members in the course of the initial research stage.
PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

I. DP “Strengthening Youth Motivation for Employment”

The main aim of the project – the diminishing the social exclusion of the TG by using social partnership as a tool and improving the measures of public policy.


The analysis in the previous part shows that the number of people with a low educational attainment is increasing and is likely to grow further in the future. Nevertheless, unemployment among the low educational attainment group dropped recently due to high rates of emigration and, consequently, there was a sharp decline of labour supply in the market. However, while labour market changes provide a temporary solution, the success rates of such rapid labour market inclusion are not yet clear. The majority of early school leavers upon leaving school are not ready to enter the labour market as most of them lack basic social and vocational skills. Therefore, if measures for the smoother transition from education to the labour market are not introduced, it is likely that the TG will increase rapidly again, once the labour supply recovers. Thus, even though unemployment is on the decline, the need to find a solution for the TG difficulties remains of utmost importance. Furthermore, while the final goal is the integration of disadvantaged youth into the labour market, we particularly aim to draw attention to the necessity of social integration as a much broader method of youth inclusion which would empower them to look for solutions themselves even when unemployed.

The main objectives of the DP SYME comprise:

- Developing a methodology enabling integration of the TG into the labour market or the formal education system. This includes development of a network of organisations capable of reaching the TG; vocational–social development training courses; preparing youth inclusion/employment policy recommendations.
- Testing this methodology in the city of Vilnius and the Alytus region and harmonising it with state regulations. This includes testing/comparing success rates of state organisations and NGOs to reach the disadvantaged youth as well as testing the newly developed training courses within geographically different TG groups.
- Ensuring availability of methodology to interested parties. This includes developing the final element of the methodology – recommendations for the social work practitioners and policy makers based on the analysis of test results as well as mainstreaming.

Other objectives of the project focus on the necessary environment for the created methodology development:

- Start a dialogue and develop a social partnership among state institutions and NGOs working with social exclusion of young disadvantaged people.
- Empower non-governmental sector working with disadvantaged young people.
- Involve policy makers in this area of the project and in this way contribute to achieving national and EU targets as set out in various agendas.

I.2. Strategies.

The main project idea of the DP SYME lies in its strategy:

Provide disadvantaged youth with greater opportunities for integration into the labour market and/or education through:

1. Gathering of a profound know-how on social youth exclusion;
2. Offering greater variety of paths towards the labour market and
3. Creating a solid social partnership network of public, NGO and private sector organisations active in the field.
The main strategic steps include:

- **Gathering of a profound know-how on social youth exclusion.** This encompasses research of structural, administrational and biographical factors that may influence the social exclusion of youth. The research also bears a positivistic approach, i.e. looking at the social inclusion opportunities and aiming to identify things to be changed in order to assure it. Thus it includes several researches:
  1. study of the policy papers, laws and administration structures involved in the creation and implementation of the youth policies related to our target group;
  2. the qualitative research on the immediate and broader target group of the project;
  3. research on the social partnership among the main actors in the field (youth occupational centres, various NGOs, state care institutions, labour exchanges, schools, municipalities etc); and
  4. transnational research comparing the methods of working with similar target groups in foreign countries. Based on the findings of the research the recommendations addressing policy makers and social workers for promoting social youth inclusion are to be prepared.
- **Offering a greater variety of paths towards the labour market.** It includes developing, testing and assuring availability of the methodology for the target group's social integration. The methodology would offer a model of alternative roads\(^\text{21}\) from school to the labour market and alternative training activities\(^\text{22}\) for the target group which proved to be successful during our project.
- **Creating a solid social partnership network of public, NGO and private sectors organisations active in the field.** On the basis of the social partnership research findings, and through the joint training and meeting programme for project partners from a variety of institutions, the network for social inclusion issues for youth would be developed. It would assure a more profound common understanding of the problems that the target group faces as well as better communication among the social partners, a lack of which often creates difficulties in itself for the successful social integration of youth.

### 1.3. Project structure

Due to the inherent lack of social partnership culture and policy coordination among different policy fields in Lithuania, our project chose a traditional management model for the project with one main administrator (a leading partner) and a very large group of partners (24 in total) from different sectors (NGOs, municipal administrations, rural communities, child care institutions, education/training providers, employment policy institutions etc.)

Partners were assigned particular tasks (within their competences) in the project: non-formal education schools/trainers providing non-formal vocational, economic and other education; social work NGOs providing social and personal skills training; labour exchange offices helping to search for apprenticeship positions; public administration institutions providing policy advice, infrastructural support etc.

One of the main aims of this partnership and task division is to actually create and promote the links between the main social partners in the youth social inclusion policy field during the project and also to promote and facilitate the development of a common understanding of the complexity of the problems that the disadvantaged youth faces. The ultimate goal is to develop a model/system of social guidance that would be feasible by combining diverse know-how and the expertise of the project partners.

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\(^{21}\) Such alternative roads as providing non-formal vocational education by NGOs’ or establising of the transitional Youth Homes from state care leavers, etc.

\(^{22}\) Such alternative training activities as strengthening of a set of the motivational, social, learning skills alongside with vocational training.

The main innovation of the project lies in a unique mix of activities used in work with the target group, which includes courses on basic skills:

- **Vocational skills** such as gaining a driving license, foreign language course, computer literacy course.
- **Socialisation skills** – through group activities, activation and motivation sessions through art therapy; and individual psychological counselling.
- **Employment skills & market knowledge** – personal career guidance as well as courses on market economy and entrepreneurship basics.

Several methods developed especially for disadvantaged youth were used during activities with the target group, namely:

1. **TG motivation through mutual trust and personal relationship development.** Social workers develop a personal relationship, which has a strong bounding effect, increases youth motivation and improves successful integration chances. The social worker engages in such relationships with several young people on individual bases – tries to find out their particular difficulties, and discusses what other help is needed. Then he/she provides a “linking agent” for communicating with other support workers such as psychologists, career advisers, employment officers and others. Thus, the social worker is the person who stays with the youngster throughout the training and helps him/her to find employment. This approach proved to be the most successful in work with disadvantaged youth, as it helped motivate the youth to stay and accomplish their training and also provided them with the individual attention that many of them were lacking. The shortcomings of this method lie in the high demands put on the social worker. His/her role resembles parenting. It requires a long-term commitment as well as psychological readiness to deal with a wide variety of arising problems – such as asocial behaviour, addictions, crime etc.

2. **Education through work.** This method implies providing vocational education through practice rather than through “desk education”. The education is organised through various practical tasks – initially from small practical works and finally with the real jobs done under tutoring by the teacher. An example of real work done by our TG members undertaking training in woodcraft is the renovation of the wooden decoration features and picture frames in the St. Peter’s & St. Paul’s churches in Vilnius. This training is organised in small groups of 2-6 students working with one teacher – the smaller the group the better the attendance, and the better the learning results. This method is particularly suitable for youth that need a less formal and more practical environment for learning. The main advantages of this method are – being able to do “real work” motivates youth to learn; practice done during the training boosts the youth self-esteem and it can also be included in the CV; close contact with the teacher promotes learning of the working culture and relationship building at work, and teaches them to handle work responsibilities. The shortcomings of this method are – the education is expensive; often it is difficult to find contractors for the work which is used in training and finally, this education is not recognised as vocational education.

3. **Flexible education method.** This method implies adjusting the training not only to the level of knowledge of the TG, but also to their learning skills and patterns. This means the teacher firstly assesses his/her students’ knowledge and capacities to learn in different techniques, and then adjusts the course of training to suit them. Active involvement in this education is of the utmost importance, and therefore, the student to teacher ratio should not be high – the smaller the class, the better the results is likely to be. The teacher should then permit flexibility for each student to follow his/her own pace of learning, allowing students to reach the same knowledge level in different time frames. This method for youth with different learning patterns who suffer low self-esteem enables learning without stigmatisation. The shortcomings of this method are somewhat similar to the previous methods’ – the education is expensive, the teacher needs special preparation to work with the audience; it requires a long-term commitment from the teacher; and finally, education gained using this method (even if it often leads to equal knowledge and skills to that of formally taught courses) is not formally recognised.
4. Complex approach method. This method derives from the observation that vocational education on its own does not guarantee successful integration into the labour market and society. Moreover, it highlights the fundamental importance of social and learning skills for successful vocational education attainment. It implies starting the re-integration programme for disadvantaged youth with - (1) motivational activities such as trustful and friendly personal relationships with the social work department and group team building; (2) empowerment activities – such as social skills - communication, team interaction, conflict resolution, self-presentation and other training; (3) parallel to social skills training—vocational education and career guidance are introduced. The psychologist's assistance is provided throughout the process depending on the needs. Thus, this method allows not only a gain of skills and knowledge, but also aims to solve primary problems that restrict the youth's possibilities. This method should be used in combination with the previously described methods for the best results. The shortcomings of this method are the same as the methods described above and in addition – if they were to be applied by the state institutions it would require very close cooperation among involved organisations (such as social workers, employment offices, police, psychological assistance agencies etc.) to coordinate their activities.

5. Collective work and group learning. This method is mainly aimed at developing strong community skills and increasing youth motivation to stay in the re-integration programmes. It has been noticed by experts that disadvantaged youth often lack the abilities to live in the wider society. Very often they are segregated into small groups with similar backgrounds from close locations which cannot offer solutions for the problems they face. Therefore, this method implies the creation of a different community with different rules that are set by the youth, but with the assistance of social workers in order to create a different community experience and offer alternative patterns and positive experiences for communal/group interaction. The group formation usually happens at the beginning of the school year and it creates a class for non-formal vocational education. In many cases youth also cohabit in the schools’ dormitory, cook the food and clean their rooms together. In the long term, belonging to such a group, developing new friendships and sharing experiences among the group members helps motivate them to continue their education. It also allows them to lay the basis for more successful societal interaction, and to work on communicational skills. The shortcomings of this method are - it requires the long-term commitment and continuous active involvement of the social worker in group dynamics, and it is expensive.

6. Art therapy method. This method was developed in the US in the mid 20th century. It uses a mix of psychological, psychiatric and art methods (painting, dancing, drama) in a therapy that helps to activate the individual. It helps to foster the inner dialogue and psychological balance of the individual and also creates more open and benevolent communications within the group. The most important element of this therapy is the person, his/her creations (art) and the therapist (acting as an interpreter). In the course of our project this method was applied at the beginning—during the formation of the participant youth group—and in the course of the project in order to help the individual face his/her difficulties. This method is easy to adjust to a particular group of people; it is fun and not invasive, therefore, it is often accepted very positively by the target group; and the person himself/herself is the main communication agent, meaning he/she can find solutions for himself/herself, which as an experience is very empowering. The shortcomings of this method are – if applied on a larger scale, there would be a lack of therapists capable of working with this particular method; also, the costs of this method are high (it requires highly qualified experts).

The foremost important aspect of all the above listed and described methods is their approach to the youth, which is about paying individual attention to a person with a particular biography without identifying him/her with the problems he/she faces. Therefore, a common threat for all methods, if implemented in the public sector, is the active public procurement regulation placing the highest weight on the price rather than quality of the services procured. An example of the effects of such an approach from our project is the course for a driving license. The providers for these classes were chosen according to the best price offered rather than their capacity to work with our TG. Consequently, even though training for a driving license was one of the courses most desired by the TG, most of them did not accomplish it and dropped-out from the course as the teachers perceived their work very formally and did not adapt to the TG learning patterns and pace.
II. Good practices
II.1. Introduction to activities (short outline).

Briefly, the DP SYME project national activities could be divided into 3 categories:

1. **Research programme**: research of policy and administrative environment, qualitative target group research; interview programme with experts in the field; social partnership research; and transnational comparative study of methods for working with target group.

2. **Creating and testing the methodology for social integration**: includes developing and testing a mix of activities that prove to be successful for TG integration. These activities include methods (discussed in the above-chapter) applied in social skills, professional competence, work practice, occupational activities, etc.

3. **Staff qualification improvement programme**: foreseen 12 national training seminars and 7 transnational seminars/study-visits for the project staff from all partner organisations in the course of two and a half years are planned.

II.2. The best practices.

In the course of the DP SYME projects the 3 best practices which proved to be very successful and constitute the necessary structure for our TG were identified, namely - Craft Centre of Vilnius Archdiocese Steward's Office, Eičiūnai Youth Centre and Youth Home at All Saints Parish. Below follows a detailed description of their practices. All three identified cases of the best practices were established on the particular needs of the TG and were running prior to the formation of DP SYME. All together they constitute the structures and activities that fill the lack of transitional establishments in the state run support structures for the youth experiencing social exclusion difficulties.

**Case 1: Craft Centre of Vilnius Archdiocese Steward’s Office**

The Craft Centre of the Vilnius Archdiocese Steward's Office was established in 2001 on the initiative of the Vilnius metropolitan of the Catholic Church. This craft centre is oriented towards youth living in poor social conditions. Its main aim is to provide informal vocational training, leisure time and employment organization for young people living in poverty or social risk families with restricted social opportunities.

**Why it was necessary:**

In the formal educational system there are few attempts made to provide help for gifted youngsters from poor and insecure environments. Usually these youngsters are socially uncared for, prone to delinquent behaviour and have already learned socially unacceptable forms of behaviour which they find necessary for survival (open aggression, petty theft, etc.). Besides they have no developed learning, conflict and hard situation resolution, responsibility and future planning skills. As a rule these young people leave school early without basic knowledge or without social or vocational skills. Due to this they have restricted possibilities for successful integration into the labour market and society. Therefore the craft centre is aimed at providing a secure environment, in which these youngsters can disclose and show their talents, spend leisure time meaningfully and develop social and vocational skills.
Practice in brief:
The Craft Centre of the Vilnius Archdiocese Steward’s Office is meant to integrate youngsters into society through empowerment by craft learning, psychological and material support, and diverse development of their personalities by increasing their sociability.

Key principles of the practice:
1. To create the conditions for developing vocational skills through craft learning. Only teachers with pedagogical status have the right to teach youngsters. One teacher is responsible for only 2-3 apprentices.
2. To organize meaningful leisure time through informal learning (sessions on sports, theatre, music and social skills; visits - excursions, movies, theatre or meetings with interesting people; intensive experience camps). These activities stimulate self-expression, the need to participate in cultural activities, and to change their norms of behaviour and negative attitude towards the world.
3. To provide psychological, social and material support. Every youngster has his/her individual support and personal development program. In addition, attention is paid to the creation of a youngsters’ community where they can learn how to live together, to solve problems together, and to cooperate.
4. Evangelization of youth.

Youngsters from the target group are navigated to the Craft centre by other social organizations, correctional institutions, parents or members of the Craft centre community. Admission to the centre is aided by the social worker and psychologist of the centre – they perform the evaluation of the individual's psychological and social characteristics. The duration of the craft (construction, cooking, and needlecraft) course is one year. Near the end of this period the practice for apprentices is organized in appropriate places – construction companies, garment companies, coffee-bars, restaurants, etc. At the end of the course the apprentice must produce some article or perform some other task. The jury evaluates the quality of the work and if it is good, the apprentice receives a certificate of craft acquisition. In consideration of individual requirements, this period of learning can be prolonged one more year, as sometimes one year is not enough to prepare the youngster for independent life. After completing the learning process, youngsters themselves, or with the help of personnel from the Craft centre find placements. Upon completion of the course individuals are allowed to maintain contact with the Craft centre – to visit, to have work or psychological consultations, to participate in camps’ activities, etc. It is important that the young person feels that he/she is not left alone again, but has someone to ask for help or just to communicate with.

Success factors:
- Personal contact with youngsters.
- Individual approach – the learning and support is individualized according to the requirements of every youngster.
- Work in groups, experience of community.

Case 2: Youth Home at All Saints Parish
Youth Home at All Saints Parish
The Youth Home was established in 2002 by the All Saints Parish which is accessible to all Vilnius city state child care institution leavers as a transitional establishment providing support for the ones not yet ready for self-contained life. The capacity of the Home is 6 young people living together in a 4 bedroom apartment in a block house with the assistance of 2 social workers.

Why it was necessary:
The necessity of such a practise arose from, on the one hand, inadequate preparation of children for independent life at the state care institutions, and, on the other, practical lack of post-state-care assistance on leaving. Usually the youth leave state care institutions at the age of 16-17 after which they are left to cope by themselves with their lives, while youth leave their families and start completely independent lives at the age of 20-25. Moreover, the state child care institutions environment and applied methods do not foster the necessary skills in youth for an independent life-style. It is common that children live under strict rules and, they are discouraged from taking decisions for themselves - instead they are told what to do and when to do it. Most of the decisions about their lives are taken on
their behalf by the state care institution, while initiative and opinion is rather prohibited. Usually they live within
their institution community, separated from the wider society and are served all their basic needs. Thus, conse-
quently they end-up with no neighbourhood experience and lack the most basic skills such as cooking, cleaning,
shopping, planning personal finance, navigating social systems etc. Very often their failures in the past are attrib-
uted to their “bad genes”, which result in their low self-esteem, low trust in others and inability to build plans or aims
for their future. Thus, upon leaving state care institutions they are not only left to cope on their own without the
necessary skills and with nowhere to return to, but they also aren’t motivated to take care of their lives.

Although there is no strong statistical evidence on the consequences of such situations as there was no study
conducted on the further lives of the state care home leavers, the homeless accommodation institutions in Vilnius
report that 40% of their target group are ex-state care home leavers. Also, according to “Caritas” a substantial
number of young single mothers with difficulties are also ex-state care home leavers.

Practice in brief:
The Youth Home practice is about teaching the state care institution leavers to live a self-sufficient life through
creating the necessary environment to develop the lacking skills and to accumulate vital community/societal ex-
perience. However, considering the status of their target group (especially if a young person spends a long time in
a big state institution) the activities start from motivating the youngster, through to building a close and friendly
relationship with him/her.

The main principles of the practice are:
1. Free will. The youth come to the Home off their own free will.
2. Independence. Social workers do not stay overnight with the youth – they are obliged to learn to wake up
and show up at work or school on time on their own; they are also obliged to plan their leisure time them-

selves and cook, clean and plan their budget.
3. Self-rule. The youth at the Home live in a small community where they have to decide among themselves
what is acceptable and what is not.

At the initial stage social workers establish contact with the state care institution in order to identify the youth
who are willing to join the Youth Home and also in order to gather as much information as possible about their
biography and circumstances so as to understand each young person’s case. Then the selection process starts first by
meeting the youngsters and having an initial conversation with them in state care institutions. Selection is carried
out during the interview with a selection committee on the basis of the following criteria – age (at least 17,5 years
old), minimum 2-3 years of state care home experience; a willingness to try Youth Home, a willingness to solve
conflicts, and good personal hygiene. Youth Home does not accept young people with suicidal tendencies, depres-
sion, hyper-sexuality, serious psychological problems or delinquent behaviour. Then, the selected youth start their
one month trial period, after which a one month contract is signed. Finally, the individual continuous work with a
young person starts. The youngster with the help of a social worker prepares an individual preparation for the self-
contained life plan, which is revised every 3 months and which includes all main aspects of the youth’s life – financial
planning, healthy eating habits, health check-ups, taking care of living space, orientation in the city as well as social
support structures, work/studies, social skills, networking and self-analysis and also practicing citizens rights and
duties. The plan is implemented through weekly planning with the help of a social worker.

The main method applied in work with the youth is through fostering the analytical reflectivity towards their
own life, and their expectations, aims and needs, which is often very new for state care leavers.

The social workers’ role in this practice is to be the advisers or assistants. They do not stay 24 hours with the
youth, do not do tasks on their behalf; never tell them what to do and never offer ready solutions. However, work
with the youth requires consistency, regularity and planning from the social workers.

Success factors:
- Mutual trust built through development of a friendly relationship.
- Work in small groups – 2-3 young people per social worker enables him/her to pay individual attention to
  the particular needs of each of them.
- Positivistic/encouraging approach towards youth capacities.
• Flexibility – individual plans are truly individual and are developed around the needs of the particular young person and he/she leaves only when ready.
• Open doors policy or post / support after leaving Youth Home. For the first 6 months the social worker pays visits to his new home when required. Alternatively the young person is welcome to pop-in to Youth Home or even come back if necessary.
• Ongoing training of social workers, which allow them to learn new approaches, methods and continuously improve their work with the youth.

Case 3: Eičiūnai Youth Centre

Eičiūnai Youth Centre was established in a tiny rural community of 400 inhabitants, in order to help the youth find purposeful occupations in their spare time as well as to improve their social, organisational and other skills through non-formal education. The Youth Centre was established in 2001 and is run by volunteers.

Why it was necessary:
It has been noticed that the youth in this community, upon leaving secondary school, are often left with no occupation, and a lack of interest and motivation to seek work. This is most likely influenced by the quiet country lifestyle, where the majority of the population are farmers; and also by a lack of socialisation and an alternative to school education opportunities. The rural environment is often not stimulating enough for a young person. It has also been based on an observation that rural youth tend to suffer low self-esteem and low motivation.
Recent studies suggest that social life in rural areas is declining for a variety of reasons. These include optimisation of social and educational infrastructures, lower incomes of the population living on farming (the vast majority of farms in Lithuania are small self-sufficient family farms), increasing cases of alcohol addiction, poverty (relying on social benefits) etc.

Practice in brief:
The Youth Centre is about empowering young people in rural areas - about offering them alternative and stimulating occupations through non-formal education courses in order to foster and enrich their practical working skills as well as their social and vocational competences.

Key principles of the practice:
1. All children and youth are gifted, creative and pro-active.
2. The teacher is a mature friend of the youth, but not a decision maker. The decisions are made together.
3. The teacher, when identifying the necessary education, needs to base it on the ideas and needs of the youth.
4. All ideas developed by the youth are smart.
5. In all activities one needs to seek the impossible in order to reach maximum results.

The work with the youth in the Centre is based on a variety of locally developed ingenious approaches and practices that aim to motivate, involve and educate the rural youth.

At the initial stage volunteers try to gather a team of the youth that live dispersedly in very small villages in the area. This includes paying visits to the youth families, often convincing parents to let their children join the activities. Once the youth team has been identified, social workers usually motivate the youth by appealing to the young person's kindness and asking for his/her assistance with the activities, and in this way solicits a belief in his/her own capabilities. Also, if the young person lives far from the Centre, responsibility should be taken to drive him/her to the practices and back home for the length of his/her involvement. Once the group is gathered activities are planned together and necessary training and preparations foreseen.

Usually the team is encouraged to choose activities in which none has competences, i.e. pose the challenge. Then volunteers try to find available education options as long as they comply with the main principle of learning of the Youth Centre – learning through practice, i.e. developing the competences in certain activities by actually doing it. As a rule the activity is for the volunteers themselves in order to assure a mutually equal position between the
teacher and the youth. This approach allows the division of the responsibilities between the youth and the teacher, so as everyone feels equally important for the success of the activities.

The following example regards the project on the local youth newspaper – none of the volunteers or youngsters had experience in writing articles or editing newspapers, many of them did not even know how to use a computer. Though the initial objective was to teach the youth computer skills, the education itself ceased to become the objective, but became the means of accomplishing it. Such an approach not only makes the learning process more exciting and acquired skills more applicable, it also creates a favourable environment for focusing on values and social skills development. In addition, it allows the building of team work competences as well as ownership of the achieved results. When implementing the project all equipment (car, computers, camera etc.) of the Youth Centre is made available as and when required.

The volunteer’s an agent identifying needed competences as well as stimulating to create the job that would help to learn those competences. Volunteers is also a central figure, who motivates youth, tries to solve logistical obstacles for youth participation; and a facilitator, who fosters values in youth such as – responsibility, pro-activity and creativity. It is also required that volunteer have the knowledge of socialisation methods and skills necessary for conflict mediation.

**Success factors:**
- Strong belief and trust in youth capacities.
- Motivating youth to learn by giving them responsibilities and duties.
- Flexibility and open-mindedness. Volunteer primarily focuses on the youth ideas, and then identifies learning opportunities in each of them.
- Individual approach – not allowing personal circumstances to become an obstacle for participation (such as driving to pick up each person for the activities if necessary).
II.3. Challenges.

For each of the cases described above, the listed challenges and impedimental factors can be highlighted:

**Case 1: Challenges and threats:**
- The unwillingness of the government to accept informal learning as an alternative way of learning.
- The lack of human and financial resources.
- The lack of understanding that work with early school leavers is more expensive than work with motivated youth.
- The negative experiences of youngsters before the Craft Centre that leads to low motivation for them to participate in new activities.
- Personal psychological and social problems of youngsters (mental diseases, addictions).
- The requirement to formalize the process of informal learning.
- The requirement to achieve results in a short time.

**Case 2: Challenges and threats:**
- Youth characteristics determined by the experience at the state care homes such as emotional immaturity, lack of motivation for independent life, tendency to shift responsibility for everything that happens to them to the social worker; incapacity to perceive himself/herself as a personality; lack of social competence; lack of daily/housekeeping skills, tendency to self-exclude from society due to existing negative prejudices about the state care home leavers etc.
- Meeting the 3 sets of expectations: youngsters, social workers and the institution’s from which the youngster came. Young persons bring with them not only their own expectations, but also the expectations of their state care institutions which have to be coordinated with the social worker’s expectations.
- Lack of a single institution responsible for state care home leavers and continuously changing and complex administration bureaucracy, which makes it difficult for the social worker to collect necessary information on a person’s case.
- Outside groups (like former state care home youth) have strong influences on the young person’s behaviour and choices, which often is negative and cannot be influenced by a social worker.
- Cannot accept all willing young people due to limited financial capacities. The State does not financially support the above described practice which is usually financed through various EU programmes or foreign support funds.

**Case 3: Challenges and threats:**
- Lack of financing. There are no state programmes offering support for such initiatives, therefore, activities often rely on sponsorships that are difficult to achieve in rural areas, where businesses usually are small and few. Another resource is the EU programmes.
- Limited number of charismatic volunteers in rural areas capable and willing to dedicate their time to such activities.
- Often it is required to motivate both the young person as well as convince his/her parents of the benefits of such activities. The parents negative approach can often pose conflicting obstacles for the young person’s participation. Often parents simply fear that their children will get too involved with the activities and will not be willing to help them on the farm.

Though there are a number of very environment specific challenges such as a lack of charismatic teachers in rural areas or a particular restricted environment of the state care institutions, there are also a number of common challenges, namely: lack of finances for new initiatives and ideas in their environments, which, first of all is embedded by the formalistic approach of the finance providing structures and the lack of a social partnership practice as on the national administration levels. Moreover, in most of the cases the problems that our target group face are not fully understood at the decision making level. These common factors create quite an unfriendly environment for the best practices described in the previous part and, if not changed in the long term, might seriously impede further development of such initiatives.
RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Recommendations for field workers and multipliers.

- Vocational training for the “status zero” youth is not effective without personal and social skills development.
- Vocational training programmes should be adjusted to the pattern and pace of learning of the individuals.
- Developing of trust based relationship between the trainer/teacher/social worker and a youngster is the core of the successful reintegration process.

II. Recommendations for strategic partners and policy makers.

- Educational system must include formal option for youth with practical learning patterns.
- There is a necessity to facilitate and officially recognise non-formal vocational learning, which is more flexible, attractive and hence effective for disadvantaged youth.
- It is necessary to develop a system/model of social guidance for disadvantaged youth in order to make sure that it moves from a “status zero”, i.e. gains the status in a social/educational policy context.
- Developed social guidance system/model should be based on the principles of close co-operation and social partnership among responsible institutions.
- The principle of a “single contact person” must be incorporated into the policy for disadvantaged youth, which would help them to pass from the educational system to employment.
- Non-governmental organizations must be more fostered to take part in solving disadvantaged youth problems.
REFERENCES

DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE: JOINING THE WORLD OF WORK