

## LABOUR INCOME AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN THE REGIONS OF LITHUANIA, LATVIA AND ESTONIA: DIFFERENCES AND CHANGE IN THE PERIOD 2004–2013

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### ABSTRACT

This article analyses the regional disparities of Baltic countries (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia). The investigation period (2004–2013) based on two very important moments for Baltic countries – accession to EU and the end of the EU funding period 2007–2013. It also analyses the change of socio-economic indicators such as the unemployment rate, the average gross wages and salaries and GDP per capita in regions of Baltic countries. The study aim was to determine regions where the unemployment rate is by 35 % higher than the national average and wages (salaries) are less than 75 % of the national average.

KEYWORDS: *regional economic activity, unemployment rate, labor income, regional planning.*

JEL CODES: R110, R230, R58, J31.

### Introduction

The EU enlarging has brought the development gaps within the EU countries. In order to reduce these gaps and prevent their increase, a regional development policy has been created (Scutariu 2014: 65). One of the objectives of regional policy in the European Union is to reduce regional disparities of living standards. Each state has set goals of regional policy. The aim of regional policy of Lithuania is the reducing of social and economic disparities between regions and among them, also the promotion of balanced and sustainable development throughout the national territory (Lietuvos regioninė politika 2015; Lietuvos 2007–2013 m. (...), 2012: 7). In case of Lithuania, regional policy has been implemented in accordance with the two fundamental principles: subsidiarity and concentration. It means that decisions must be taken at the level where they are most efficient, and resources should be concentrated in the target areas.

Similar objectives are also formulated in other Baltic countries – Latvia and Estonia. In Latvia the spatial development perspective is the reduction of regional disparities below average of EU countries (from 45.6 % to < 30.0 %) (Raugze, 2015). In Estonia the aim is to reduce regional GDP differences and to decrease (in all counties) the differences in employment rates between the counties to a minimum 50 % of the employment rate by 2015 (Estonia. Results (...): 2).

According to the Lithuanian strategic goal of regional policy until 2013, has been initiated, that in the Lithuanian counties:

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- the average standard of living (measured by the average annual income of residents) is not lower than 75 % of the national average;
- the unemployment rate is not more than 35 % higher than the national average.

As noted J. Kliimask (2007: 28), today the viability of different regions depends upon their capacity to define and develop their own specific features that could be of value in regional competition. Each region has specific natural and human resources also different development problems. In many cases, the growing inter-regional disparities are caused by rising urban-rural differences. Most of the rural areas are economically less developed than city regions (Baum, Weingarten 2004: 12).

The population mostly concentrated in urban areas. Population (especially youth and high qualified specialists) migrate to larger urban areas where there are preconditions for better self-realization. Major urban areas are the main national and international gateway to the economies of other regions and centers of knowledge, sources of growth and innovation (Eesti regionaalarengu (...), 2012: 6). As stated I. Mürk, during the crisis, since 2008 the metropolitan urban area had significantly faster increase of unemployment in absolute numbers. Rural area has been more stable in terms of fluctuations in number of jobs and unemployment rate (Mürk: 13).

Rural areas (especially remote) are characterized by a complex relationship between depopulation, weak entrepreneurship, skills shortage and social deprivation. Thus the remote rural areas where the low diversity of economic activity and the unavailability of jobs are major economic issues (Roose et al., 2010: 21). In regions with lower activity of business, also other indicators are lower than in regions with higher entrepreneurship activity (Gineite et al, 2011: 190). In sparsely populated areas, which are mostly concentrated in the border areas of the country, unemployment and lack of jobs are the most important problems. Increasingly, the main source of population income become a pension, unemployment benefit or other forms of social support. Wages and salaries of employees in local neighborhoods, cultural centers, libraries and others institutions after tax are only slightly higher than the unemployment benefits (Daugirdas et al, 2013: 122). Thus the interaction between urban and rural regions is necessary for avoid excessive domination of the major cities in country level.

**Problem.** During the first years of EU membership, the economy has grown rapidly in all three Baltic countries. However, the economic crisis has negatively affected the development of countries. As a result, the number of jobs fell, the unemployment rate rose, household income fell too. Therefore it became necessary to investigate the achievement of regional policy objectives in all counties of Lithuania. As the economic development of the Baltic countries before the EU membership was similar, a new challenge was to compare the changes of the regional situation in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. This problem inspires to create the purpose of research – to identify the differences and changes of labor income and unemployment rate in Lithuania counties, as well as in the regions of Latvia and Estonia during the period 2004–2013.

Tasks of the study:

- To compare regions of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia according to size of labor income and the unemployment rate (between countries and within countries).
- To determine the evolution of wages (salaries) and unemployment rate in regions of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in the period 2004–2013.

The object of research are the regions of the Baltic countries (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia).

The investigation period (2004–2013) based on two very important moments for Baltic countries – accession to EU and the end of the EU funding period 2007–2013. Thus, this study reveals changes in living standards since accession to the EU, which was also influenced by the EU Structural Funds.

**Research methods.** The same indicators (unemployment rate, average gross monthly wage (salary), GDP per capita) were chosen to compare the development of regions in Baltic countries. Comparative analysis method is using to compare the socio-economic indicators of the Baltic countries and their regions. The diagrams illustrate the phenomena according to data submitted by Statistical Offices of Lithuania, Latvia and Lithuania. Systematic analysis method is applied to analyze socio-economic phenomena.

## 1. Differences of unemployment rate and its change in the Baltic countries

Employment rate in all three Baltic countries increased until 2008 and the employment rate did not differ significantly between countries as well (Ulničāns, 2011: 77). Due to the economic crisis, the number of employees began to decline, at first in Latvia.

We can distinguish two phases in the unemployment rate change: 2004–2007 and 2008–2013. *In the first phase*, the unemployment rate has grown rapidly due to the start of the economic downturn, and *in the second phase*, when the economy slowly recovered, the unemployment rate began to decline. In 2007, the unemployment rate was the lowest in all Baltic countries (in Lithuania – 4.3 %, in Latvia – 4.0 %, in Estonia – 4.6 %). At that time, the lowest difference of unemployment rate (standard deviation) between regions was established. However, if we compare the unemployment rate in 2004 and in 2013, we can notice some very interesting changes (Fig. 1).

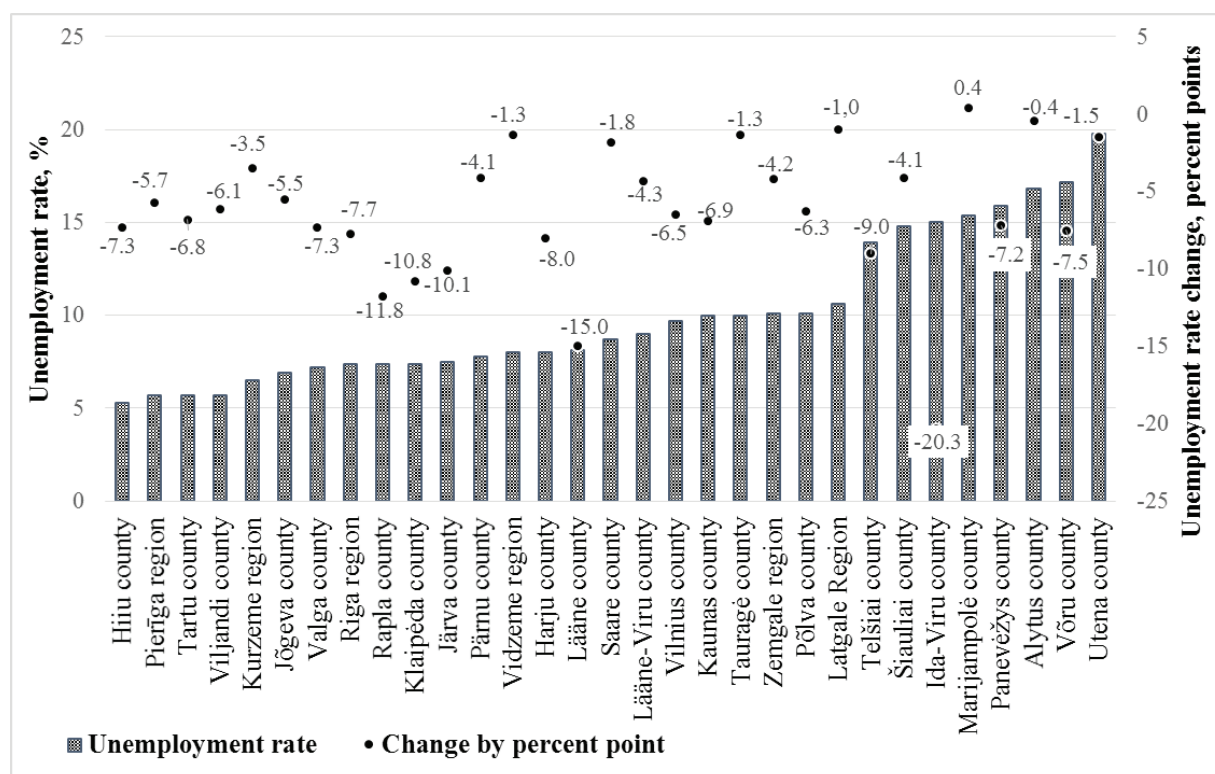


Fig. 1. Unemployment rate in 2013 (%) and change of unemployment rate (in percent points) in 2010–2013 in regions of Baltic countries

Sources: Eesti statistika, 2015; Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2015; Lietuvos statistikos departamentas, 2015

In 2013, the unemployment rate in many regions of Estonia was lower than in 2004, while Lithuania and Latvia average unemployment rate exceeded the 2004 indicators. Of course, in each country we can find very striking changes. In Lithuania case, the unemployment rate rose particularly in Utena, Alytus, Panevėžys, Marijampolė counties. Unemployment rate in Utena County was by 8 percentage points higher than the national average in 2013. This is not just a consequence of closing of Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant. There are no large industries in the municipalities (except Utena); there are lack not only jobs, but also business support, various smaller projects. However, the county has good prospects for the development of the tourism sector. During the crisis in Alytus County the company of textile industry was closed, jobs decreased in other companies, and new job creation in small and medium-sized enterprises does not compensate the loss of jobs. As a result, unemployment remains very high in this region (by 5 percentage points higher than the na-

tional average). Loss of jobs in Marijampolė County was associated with the closure of construction business enterprises, when the economic crisis began, but now the business is recovering slowly. Lack of investment, poor municipal investment opportunities leads slow economic growth and inadequate employment rate in Telšiai district; low value-added services and trade dominate, lack of modern and competitive industrial and business enterprises characterized this municipality (Telšių rajono savivaldybės (...), 2010: 31).

In the counties of big cities (Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda) unemployment rate decreased rapidly. The biggest decline of unemployment rate was established in Klaipėda County. Proximity of these cities makes it possible to residents of the surrounding areas to work there, so the unemployment rate is decreasing in those counties.

In the labor market of Latvia are considerable regional differences in employment and unemployment – a high unemployment rate in regions distant from Riga, especially in Latgale (Latviete, Pilvere, 2010: 663). In Latgale region, the unemployment rate increased from 5.1 % (in 2007) till 18.0 % (in 2009). It was the highest unemployment rate in Latvia until 2013. Despite the fact that Daugavpils and Rezekne formed the regional logistics centers, Latgale is a great tourist attraction habitat, and metalworking and engineering companies operate in the manufacturing sector, Latgale is a region with lower economic growth rates (Ulnicāns, 2011: 78). In Latgale, predominate the high share of public services and public administration activities. In Latgale the share of long-term unemployed is high and the unemployed registering in labor exchange offices to receive social benefits. High unemployment rate remains in Zemgale region as well (10.1 %). Many inhabitants of Zemgale found suitable employment in Riga and they commute to the capital every day (Dreimane et al, 2003: 242). High soil fertility in Zemgale determines a large part of the agricultural activities in Latvia. In regions with high unemployment rate, the entrepreneurship is low.

Together with Riga region, Pierīga region is considered to be one of the most dynamic regions in terms of employment development in Latvia (Ulnicāns, 2011: 78). D. Pavlyuk considers the positive effect of the presence of the sea within regions of Latvia (Pavlyuk, 2011). It is also possible that Riga's inhabitants are actively seeking job. Riga is Latvian trade and transport center. Pierīgas region has a heavily developed industry; Riga International Airport is located here. In Pierīga region, the highest accommodation and food services are concentrated. Large number of jobs are created here, so the unemployment rate is the lowest in the country.

Despite the fact that Southern Estonia and Ida-Viru county have reported higher unemployment rates than the average since the beginning of the restoration of independence, counties of Southern Estonia have started to recover from this crisis more successfully and one can say that unemployment is becoming mostly an issue for Ida-Viru county (Rosenblad, 2011: 88). In Ida-Viru county high concentration of industrial companies with outdated equipment requires the upgrade. High unemployment is also associated with the restructuring of enterprises in the region. Meanwhile, the companies of service sector in Ida-Viru region are not numerous. In Ida-Viru County, a big share of non-Estonians population and the language barrier is somewhat restrictive employment opportunities. However, the labor force in the region is not mobile enough to move to other regions (Lauringson, 2011: 33). This refers to the local structural unemployment problem.

In Võru county unemployment is also relatively high. Since 2004 in Võru county unemployment rate rose by 7.8 percent point and in 2013 unemployment rates was higher than the Estonia average by 8.6 %. However, in 2014 the unemployment rate fell to 5.8 % in Võru County. This is result of created new jobs and innovation in the county. The creation of micro enterprises has helped bring on a quick reduction in unemployment. Also many of workers find the job in capital or another country, for example Estonian some people are working in Finland (Invest in Läänemaa, 2014).

Harju County brings most of the business activity, higher standard of living compared to other regions of Estonia and gives jobs to many people in Harju County. Tallinn, the capital and largest city of Estonia, constitutes about 71% of the Harju county's population (Mürk: 2). The education level of the workforce impact on employment. Harju and Tartu counties are ahead of other counties according to educational level. Concentration of attractive jobs in Tallinn and Tartu cities influences labor migration in these cities and their districts.

The economic crisis has led to unemployment rate growth in the Baltic countries and regions. Maximum

unemployment level was reached in 2010. However, the economy, recovering from the crisis, led to the creation of jobs. As a result, the unemployment rate began to decline. However, four regions stand out among the Baltic countries (Põlva County, Vidzeme, Latgale and Kurzeme region), where the unemployment rate in 2013 was even higher than in 2010.

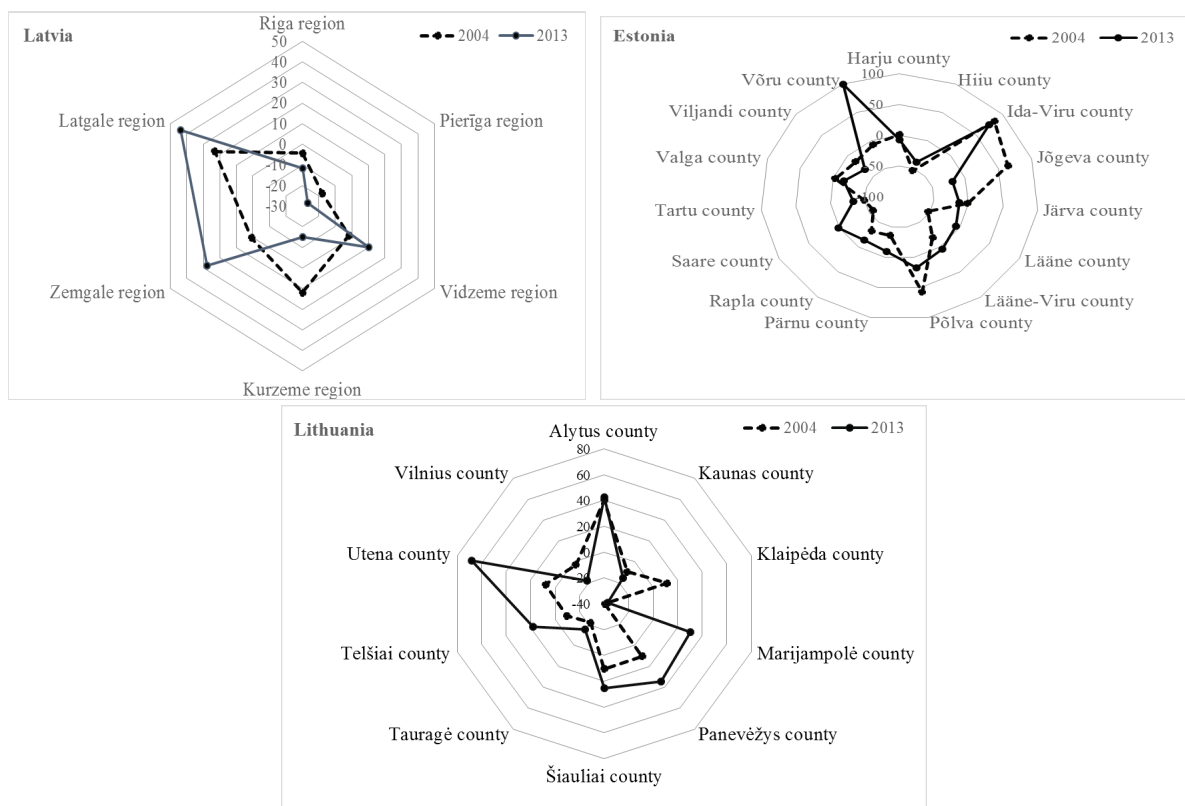


Fig. 2. The share of unemployment rate of the regions of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania compared to the national average in 2004 and 2013, %

Sources: Eesti statistika, 2015; Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2015; Lietuvos statistikos departamentas, 2015

Thus, the economic crisis has made adjustments to the level of unemployment in some regions. In 2013, the unemployment rate by 35 % higher than the national average was in Ida-Viru and Võru counties (Estonia), Latgale region (Latvia), Utena and Alytus counties (Lithuania) (Fig. 2). Even the financial support of the European Union did not help to reduce the high unemployment rate in these regions, because they need special attention of government.

## 2. Wages and salaries. Differences and change in the regions of Baltic countries

Wages and salaries in the region depend on the structure of economic activity, as well as qualifications, supply and demand of labor force and even on standard of living. For example, the size of wage in the financial and insurance sector is more than three times higher than in the activities of accommodation and catering services in Lithuania. Change of unemployment is an important factor in the evolution of wages (salaries) (Vetlov, Virbickas, 2006: 12). This statement was confirmed by the calculations. The negative correlation between the unemployment rate and the average monthly wage (salary) was set ( $R = -0.61$  as  $p < 0,05$ ). Differences of average of gross wages and salaries between the regions of the Baltic countries reach by 2.18 times (in Latgale region – 490 Euros and in Harju County – 1069 Euros) in 2013. Particularly in Baltic countries is quite big gap in average labor income between hinterland and metropolitan area. For example, in Estonia high wage and salary gap remains between Harju County and other counties, as in other counties wages and

salaries less than the national average. The monthly labor income of employed in Harju county was on average 1069 Euros, but in Võru county which is located proximately 250 km from metropolis, average monthly gross wage (salary) was 740 Euros in 2013 (Mürk: 12; Eesti Statistika, 2015).

Wages and salaries in the period 2004–2013 increased significantly. All Baltic regions can be divide into five groups according to increasing of wages and salaries (Table 1).

Table 1. The change of average monthly gross wages (salaries) in regions (counties) of Baltic countries in 2004–2013, times (currency – Euro)

< 1.89	1.90–1.99	2.00–2.09	2.10–2.19	2.20 <
Utena county 1.69	Vilnius county 1.91	Viljandi county 2.00	Hiiu county 2.12	Ida-Viru county 2.26
Telšiai county 1.73	Klaipėda county 1.93	Pärnu county 2.00	Valga county 2.14	Kurzeme region 2.29
Panevėžys county 1.89	Šiauliai county 1.94	Rapla county 2.01	Tartu county 2.14	Vidzeme region 2.32
	Harju county 1.94	Marijampolė county 2.01	Põlva county 2.04	Zemgale region 2.41
	Järva county 1.95	Kaunas county 2.03	Võru county 2.14	Riga region (Riga) 2.41
	Saare county 1.96	Jõgeva county 2.03	Lääne county 2.17	Pierīga region 2.44
	Alytus county 1.97	Tauragė county 2.04	Latgale region 2.18	
			Lääne-Viru county 2.19	

Sources: Eesti statistika, 2015; Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2015; Lietuvos statistikos departamentas, 2015

The slowest wage growth was in Lithuania, especially in Utena, Telšiai and Panevėžys counties (up to 1.89 times). The average of wages and salaries of the population, even in major Lithuanian cities grew more slowly than in many Estonian and Latvian regions. The highest increasing of earnings in the period 2004–2013 was in Tauragė County (2.04 times), where wages up to now remain the lowest. In Estonia the slowest wage growth was in Harju County (1.94 times); this is a capital county, where residents receive the highest wages in the entire Baltic region. Especially rapidly improved living standards in the regions of Latvia: in five regions wages and salaries rose more than by 2.2 times. Only one Estonian Ida-Viru county has reached such wage increase. Latvia's regions with fastest growing of labor income are located near the capital city. Although wages and salaries grew rapidly in Latvia, but Latvia was the only one country where the differences of wages and salaries between regions in the period 2004–2013 increased (coefficient of variation increased from 13.3 % to 14.3 %). Meanwhile, in Estonia and Lithuania wage (salary) differences between counties decreased in the period 2004–2013 (Estonia's coefficient of variation decreased from 14.7 % to 12.3 %, Lithuania' – from 12.1 % to 10.1 %).

The change of regions' positions within the data line shows the uneven changes of wages and salaries in the period 2004–2013. The top ten regions with the lowest salary values represented five regions of Latvia and five counties of Lithuania in 2004 (Fig. 3).

In 2013, their position has changed. In the top ten of the lowest labor income remained three regions of Latvia, but number of Lithuania counties have increased. In 2013, the minimum wage received Latgale region's inhabitants, as well as in 2004. Meanwhile, due to the rapid growth in labor income, Riga region position increased by 14 positions and now by size of wages and salaries Riga region ranks third after Harju and Tartu counties. In Vilnius county labor income increased by 1.91 times, but in the overall context Vilnius County dropped by 11 positions below.

In 2013, Lithuania and Estonia did not have counties, where wages are less than 75 % of the national average, while in 2004 such counties of Estonia were: Ida-Viru, Põlva, Võru and Valga. In Lithuania, earnings were less than 75 % of the national average only in Tauragė County in 2004. Of course, in some administrative units of lower-level in 2013 wages did not reach the 75 % threshold (Radviliškis, Zarasai, Šalčininkai districts, Šiauliai and Palanga cities and Kalvarija municipality). These are mainly border municipalities where there is no developed industrial activity, agricultural activities predominate, or services are available only in season).

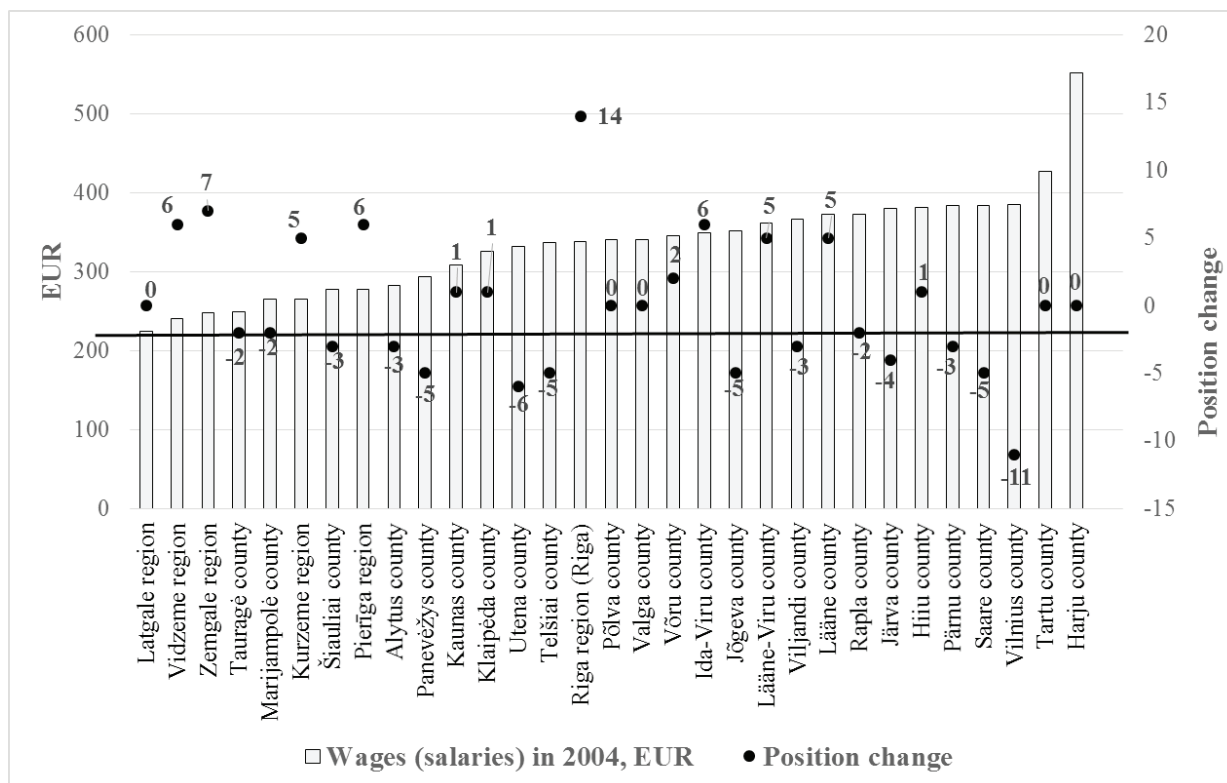


Fig. 3. Average gross monthly wages (salaries) (EUR) in 2004 and position change of regions by gross monthly wages (salaries) (%) in 2004–2013

Sources: Eesti statistika, 2015; Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2015; Lietuvos statistikos departamentas, 2015

Two regions in Latvia have: Vidzeme and Latgale, where wages and salaries were below the 75 % of national average in 2013. However, at the level of lower rank administrative units the wages and salaries accounted for just 50 % of the national average (Rucava, Varakļāni, Alūksne, Dundaga counties). This shows very large spatial differences between administrative units.

Of course, in each country remains a large gap between regions in terms of the amount of earnings. In Estonia, only in one Harju county average gross monthly wage (salary) exceeds the country average by 12.6 %. Meanwhile, the of wages and salaries in Jõgeva, Järva, Põlva, Rapla, Saare, Valga, Viljandi and Võru counties were below the Estonian average by more than a fifth. Labor income in all regions of Latvia were lower than in capital region, and Latgale region labor income was 37.4 % lower than the national average. In Lithuania, also only one Capital County by the labor income exceeded the average (13.4 %) in 2013. Thus, capital regions of all Baltic countries stand out from the other regions in terms of population earnings. This leads to population migration to the capital cities and their regions. As a result, the population growth recorded in these regions.

Thus, the economic crisis did not allow, that in all regions of Baltic countries wages and salaries would be less than 75 % of the national average, and unemployment rate would be higher than 35 % of the national average (Table 2).

Therefore, there are six regions of the Baltic countries with the lowest values of wages (salaries) and the highest values of unemployment rate. These regions want to receive special attention from governments in implementing regional policy.

*Table 2.* Regions with the lowest values of wages (salaries) and the highest values of unemployment rate in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 2013.

Characteristics	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Wages and salaries are less than 75 % of the national average	–	Latgale region Vidzeme region	–
The unemployment rate is higher than 35 % of the national average	Võru county Ida-Viru county	Latgale region	Alytus county Utena county

*Sources:* Eesti statistika, 2015; Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2015; Lietuvos statistikos departamentas, 2015

Of course, each region has smaller administrative units with higher or lower values of economic and social indicators. Therefore, it is necessary concentrate into the problems of smaller territorial units, in order to distinguish their specific problems.

## 2. Regional GDP change in Baltic countries

Unemployment rate and labor incomes are the reflection of economic development in the state. Thus, change of economic indicators such as GDP, should be closely associated with the change in unemployment and wages. Moreover, D. Pavlyuk discovered a strong spatial relationship between employment rates in the districts of Latvia (Pavlyuk, 2011). However, while the economy grew in the Baltic countries at the end of the economic crisis, the decline of unemployment has been slow.

This means that the growth has been too slow to achieve the pre-crisis levels. Meanwhile, rising wages show a strong relationship between GDP and labor income.

The GDP per capita gap between regions of the Baltic countries exceeds three times (Fig. 4). The capital regions generate the largest share of GDP. The ten regions with lowest GDP per capita are almost equally divided: 3 regions of Latvia, 3 regions of Lithuania and 4 regions of Estonia. However, differences between regions remains very high (coefficient of variation in Latvia was more than 47 %, in Lithuania and Estonia respectively 31 % and 33 % in 2012).

However, since 2004 the coefficient of variation of GDP grew only in Lithuania, in other countries it declined. GDP in all regions of the Baltic States grew, though at different speeds. In many regions where GDP per capita is relatively low, this indicator has grown intensively.

GDP per capita increased by more than 125 % in Latgale and Zemgale regions and Tauragė county.

Although GDP in these regions increased, but many socio-economic indicators there generally remains the worst. As well as GDP per capita has grown rapidly in Pierīgas region. GDP per capita growth in Vilnius and Harju counties were not so fast.

In summary, we can state that support to target regions within each country is a very important tool. However, only the financial allocation is not sufficient for regional economic recovery. Government support and incentives for business creation are necessary, taking into account the specifics of each region.



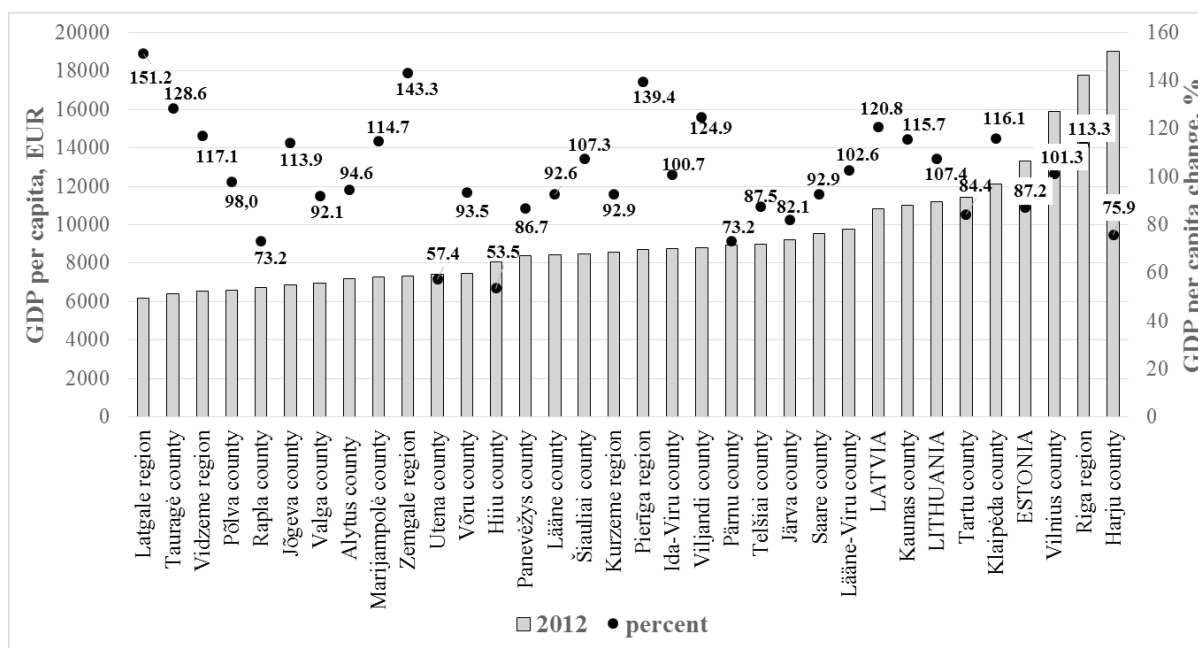


Fig. 4. GDP per capita (EUR) and GDP per capita change (%) in regions of Baltic countries in 2004–2012

Sources: Eesti statistika, 2015; Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2015; Lietuvos statistikos departamentas, 2015

## Conclusions

The economic crisis has made adjustments to the level of unemployment in some regions. In 2013, the average unemployment rate in Lithuania and Latvia exceeded the 2004 indicators, but unemployment rate in many regions of Estonia was lower than in 2004. Latvia was the only one country where the differences of wages and salaries between regions in the period 2004–2013 increased.

There are six regions of the Baltic countries with the lowest values of wages (salaries) and the highest values of unemployment rate. In 2013, the unemployment rate by 35 % higher than the national average was in Ida-Viru and Võru counties (Estonia), Latgale region (Latvia), Utena and Alytus counties (Lithuania). Lithuania and Estonia did not have counties, where wages are less than 75 % of the national average. In Latvia, two regions have: Vidzeme and Latgale, where wages and salaries were below the 75 % of national average in 2013. Thus, the government support and incentives for business creation are necessary in these regions, taking into account the specifics, resources and geographical position of each region.

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## **GYVENTOJŲ DARBO PAJAMOS IR NEDARBO LYGIS LIETUVOS, LATVIJOS BEI ESTIJOS REGIONUOSE: SKIRTUMAI IR KAITA 2004–2013 M.**

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### Santrauka

Vienas iš Europos Sąjungos regioninės politikos tikslų – mažinti gyvenimo lygio regioninius skirtumus. Kiekviena valstybė yra nusistačiusi ir savus regioninės politikos tikslus. Regioninės politikos tikslas Lietuvoje yra socialinių ir ekonominių skirtumų tarp regionų ir pačiuose regionuose mažinimas, tolygios ir tvarios plėtros visoje valstybės teritorijoje skatinimas. Panašius tikslus yra nusistačiusios ir kitos Baltijos valstybės – Latvija ir Estija. Lietuvos regioninės politikos iki 2013 m. strateginis tikslas – pasiekti, kad Lietuvos apskrityse: 1) vidutinis gyvenimo standartas (išmatuotas, atsižvelgiant į vidutines metines gyventojų darbo pajamas) nebūtų žemesnis nei 75 % šalies vidurkio; 2) nedarbo lygis nebūtų 35 % aukštesnis už vidutinį šalies nedarbo lygį.

Pirmaisiais narystės ES metais visose valstybėse ekonomika augo sparčiai. Tačiau 2008 m. pabaigoje prasidėjusi ekonominė krizė neigiamai paveikė ekonominę raidą. Dėl to darbo vietų skaičius sumažėjo, nedarbo lygis išaugo, o gyventojų pajamos krito. Kadangi Baltijos valstybių ekonominė raida iki narystės ES buvo panaši, vienas svarbiausių šio tyrimo uždavinių – palyginti, kaip pasikeitė nedarbo lygis ir gyventojų darbo pajamos Lietuvos, Latvijos ir Estijos regionuose nuo 2004 iki 2013 m.

Regionų ekonominio išvystymo lygis priklauso nuo gebėjimo plėtoti specifines, tik jam būdingas veiklas, kurios sudaro sąlygas konkuruoti su kitais regionais. Kiekviename regione sutelkti tam tikri gamtos ir žmogiškieji išteklių, čia kyla skirtingos problemos – netolygi ekonominė raida, nevienodas nedarbo lygis, darbo užmokesčio dydžio skirtumai.

Galima skirti du nedarbo lygio kaitos etapus: 2004–2007 m. ir 2008–2013 m. Pirmajame etape nedarbo lygis sparčiai augo dėl prasidėjusio ekonominio sunkmečio, antrajame etape, po truputį ekonomikai atsigauvant, nedarbo lygis pradėjo mažėti. Daugeliui Lietuvos, Latvijos ir Estijos regionų, kuriuose nustatytas didžiausias nedarbo lygis, būdingos panašios problemos: investicijų stoka, menkos savivaldybės investicinės galimybės, dominuoja mažą pridėtinę vertę kuriančios paslaugos ir prekyba, modernių ir konkurencingų pramonės bei verslo įmonių trūkumas, aukštos kvalifikacijos ir išsilavinusios darbo jėgos stoka (Telšių rajono savivaldybės (...) 2010: 31). Lietuvoje nedarbo lygis ypač išaugo Utenos, Marijampolės, Telšių, Panevėžio apskrityse, Latvijoje – Latgale ir Zemgale regionuose, Estijoje – Võru apskrityje.

2013 m. nustatytas ir pats žemiausias nedarbo lygio tarp regionų skirtumas (standartinis nuokrypis). 2013 m. Estijoje nedarbo lygis daugelyje regionų buvo mažesnis nei 2004 m., tuo tarpu Lietuvoje ir Latvijoje vidutinis nedarbo lygis viršijo 2004 m. rodiklius. Atsigaunanti po krizės ekonomika paskatino kurti darbo vietas. Dėl to nedarbo lygis pradėjo mažėti. Tarp Baltijos valstybių išsiskiria keturi regionai (Põlva apskritis Estijoje, Vidzeme, Latgale ir Kurzeme regionai Latvijoje), kuriuose nedarbo lygis 2013 m. buvo net didesnis nei 2010 m.

2013 m. vidutinio mėnesinio darbo užmokesčio dydis bruto tarp Baltijos valstybių regionų skyrėsi 2,18 karto (Latgale regione darbo užmokestis buvo 490 eurų, Harju apskrityje – 1069 eurų). Lėčiausiai darbo užmokestis augo Lietuvoje, ypač Utenos, Telšių ir Panevėžio apskrityse (iki 1,89 karto). Net ir didžiųjų Lietuvos miestų gyventojų darbo užmokestis augo lėčiau nei daugelio Estijos ir Latvijos regionų. Estijoje lėčiausiai darbo užmokestis augo Harju apskrityje (1,94 karto). Tai sostinės apskritis, kurios gyventojai gauna aukščiausią darbo užmokestį visame Baltijos regione. Ypač sparčiai gyvenimo lygis kilo Latvijos regionuose (net penkiuose regionuose darbo užmokestis išaugo daugiau kaip 2,2 karto). Latvijoje sparčiausiai augo gyventojų pajamos prie sostinės esančiuose regionuose. Nors ir Latvijoje darbo užmokestis augo sparčiai, tačiau Latvija buvo vienintelė valstybė, kurioje darbo užmokesčio skirtumai tarp regionų 2004–

2013 m. padidėjo. Visų trijų valstybių sostinių regionai labai išsiskiria iš kitų regionų pagal gyventojų darbo užmokesčio dydį, kuris yra aukštesnis už šalies vidurkį. Tuo tarpu kituose regionuose darbo užmokesčio dydis nesiekia vidutinio.

Gyventojų verslumas, investicijų gausa, aukšta darbuotojų kvalifikacija skatina spartesnę ekonomikos augimą sostinėse. Todėl didžiausia dalis BVP sukuriama kaip tik sostinių regionuose. Daugelyje regionų, kuriuose BVP vienam gyventojui santykinai žemas, šis rodiklis augo sparčiausiai.

Baltijos valstybėse yra šeši regionai, kuriuose vidutinis darbo užmokestis 2013 m. buvo žemesnis nei 75 % šalies vidurkio (Latgale ir Vidzeme regionai), o nedarbo lygis – daugiau kaip 35 % didesnis už vidutinį šalies nedarbo lygį (Võru ir Ida-Viru apskritys Estijoje, Latgale regionas Latvijoje, Alytaus ir Utenos apskritys Lietuvoje).

Apibendrinant galima teigti, kad parama tiksliniams regionams kiekvienoje valstybėje yra labai svarbi priemonė. Tačiau vien finansinių lėšų skyrimo nepakanka, norint, kad atsigautų regionų ekonomika. Būtina vyriausybės parama ir lengvatos verslo steigimo lengvatos, atsižvelgiant į kiekvieno regiono specifiką.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: *regionų ekonominė veikla, nedarbo lygis, darbo pajamos, regioninis planavimas.*

JEL KLASIFIKACIJA: R110, R230, R58, J31.