

## THE SITUATION AND PROSPECTS FOR YOUTH POLICY IN LITHUANIA IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY

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### **Abstract**

The aim of the article is to give a social portrait of Lithuanian youth in the context of youth policy, and to consider such unsettled segments as unemployment, emigration (migration), the attitude towards family, social participation in societal possibilities, and the strengthening of intergenerational solidarity. These problematic segments cause the social exclusion of young people, thus requiring an appropriate strategy for training professionals who work with young people and who can develop models for the positive (skilful) socialisation of young people. The article evaluates Lithuanian and European youth policy guidelines and success in solving problems, as well as the response to public expectations regarding participation in future life. It provides an analysis of existing feasibility studies that reveal the current situation, and insights into the question. The results obtained foster the formulation of a strategy for training social professionals focused on youth work. The article concentrates on a new European Union programme, the ‘European Solidarity Corps’, which aims to give young people opportunities to contribute to local and global problem-solving within the framework of personal and professional career design for youth. It has been prepared within the framework of the project ‘Social Professions for Youth Education in the Context of European Solidarity’\*, with the participation of Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish and Swedish universities that deliver programmes for training social professionals.

**KEY WORDS:** youth, youth policy, positive (smart) youth socialisation, work with young people, social professions, problematic segments of youth life (unemployment, emigration (migration), attitude towards family, opportunities for social participation of young people in society, strengthening intergenerational solidarity).

### **Anotacija**

Straipsnyje siekiama atskleisti Lietuvos jaunimo socialinį portretą jaunimo politikos aspektu, įvertinant tokius aspektus kaip nedarbas, emigracija (migracija), požiūris į šeimą, jaunimo socialinio dalyvavimo visuomenės gyvenime galimybės, solidarumo stiprinimas. Šie probleminiai segmentai lemia jaunimo socialinę atskirtį, tad būtina atitinkama strategija, rengiant socialinių profesijų specialistus, kurie dirba su jaunimu ir gali kurti jaunimo pozityvios (sumanios) socializacijos modelius. Remiantis Lietuvos ir Europos jaunimo politikos gairėmis, sprendžiant jaunimo problemas bei atliepiant jaunimo dalyvavimo ateities gyvenime lūkesčius, straipsnyje pristatome atliktų jaunimo galimybių studijų ir tyrimų, kurie atskleidžia esamą situaciją ir leidžia remtis tomis išvalgomis kuriant į darbą su jaunimu orientuotą socialinių profesijų specialistų rengimo strategiją, analizę. Pasitelkus Europos solidarumo korpusą, kaip naujos Europos Sąjungos programą, siekiama sudaryti jauniems žmonėms galimybes prisidėti prie vietinių bei globalių problemų sprendimo planuojant jaunimo asmeninę ir profesinę karjerą. Straipsnis parengtas kaip projekto „Socialinės jaunimo ugdymo profesijos Europos solidarumo kontekste“, kuriame dalyvauja Latvijos, Lietuvos, Lenkijos, Švedijos universitetai, rengiantys socialinių profesijų specialistus, dalis.

\* Project: Social Professions for Supporting Youth in a European Solidarity Context; Erasmus+KA203 - Strategic Partnerships for higher education (2019-1-PL01-KA203-065091).

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: jaunimas, jaunimo politika, jaunimo pozityvioji (sumanioji) socializacija, darbas su jaunimu, socialinės profesijos, jaunimo gyvenimo probleminiai segmentai (nedarbas, emigracija [migracija], požiūris į šeimą, jaunimo socialinio dalyvavimo visuomenės gyvenime galimybės, kartų solidarumo stiprinimas).

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## Introduction

The definition of youth as an age group is treated differently in different countries. In the Resolution of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on the Concept of State Youth Policy (27 June 1996, No I-1413, Vilnius), youth is defined as the 16 to 29-year-old group in society, which covers the period of the formation of the personality and the transition to independent living in society (General, Art. 1). The Basic Concepts of the Law on the Principles of Youth Policy of the Republic of Lithuania (2003-12-04, No IX-1871, Vilnius) broadens this age range (Art. 2-1), and states that a young person is a person between 14 and 29 years old. The age 14 to 29 is unchanged in the law that amends the Law on the Fundamentals of Youth Policy of the Republic of Lithuania (2018-05-31, No XIII-1224, Vilnius) (Art. 2-6). When evaluating this period of human development, we must recognise that it is a time when the identity of a young person is being developed. The search for identity involves a variety of external and internal factors that either disturb the balance in the process of the formation of the personality or strengthen it. Having provided the context of the concept of youth in Lithuania, we present the statistical construct and the characteristics of the main segments of youth as a demographic group.

According to preliminary data released by the Department of Statistics (Statistics Lithuania) on the official statistics portal, the population of Lithuania on 1 January 2020 was 2,794,300. That makes only 145 more people than a year ago. (<https://osp.stat.gov.lt/gyventojai1>). The population of Lithuania increased for the first time in 28 years. The last population growth was recorded in 1991. At first sight, the numbers look positive: 10,800 more people immigrated than emigrated. However, the natural generation replacement rate is negative: there were 10,700 more deaths than births.

At the beginning of the year 2019, young people made up 16.4% of the total population of Lithuania. Over the past five years, the number of young people has fallen by 15.6%, or 84,200 people.

Out of the population of 2,794,300, young people aged 14 to 29 make up just 495,946 (318,058 live in urban areas, and 177,888 live in rural areas). The decline in youth is particularly marked. Demographic processes have always been seen as

slow, professionals have been providing comparative studies in the context of decades. However, studies that cover recent years exhibit the demographic changes each year. At the beginning of the year 2017, there were 554,700 young people aged 14 to 29 in Lithuania. They accounted for one fifth (19.5%) of the country's population. Compared to the year 2016, the number of young people (aged 14 to 29) decreased by 26,500, or 4.6%. There were 16,000 more boys than girls. The highest numbers of young people were aged 24 and 25 (41,200 and 40,700 respectively), while young people aged 14 and 15 constituted the lowest number among young people (25,700 and 27,100 respectively). In 2015, the population of young people in Lithuania was 602,923 (398,197 in urban areas and 204,726 in rural areas). And although the birth rate, which gradually increased between 2005 and 2009, has stabilised in recent years, the natural generation replacement rate in Lithuania is still negative. The total birth index for the years 2018 and 2017 was 1.63 (it was 1.39 in 2000, 1.29 in 2005, 1.5 in 2010, and 1.70 in 2015). However, data on the increase in the population in Lithuania published at the beginning of 2020 do not give much cause for optimism.

The problem of the decline in the number of young people has to be seen as the consequence of an inadequate youth policy.

An audit of the situation of young people in 2016 (see [www.vkontrole.lt](http://www.vkontrole.lt)) drew attention to the fact that insufficient attention is paid to the implementation of youth policy in Lithuania. This applies to all areas of youth policy.

The key findings of the Public Audit on Strategic Planning for Youth Policy (12 September 2016 # VA-P-10-4-11) (page 6) reveal a lack of integrity in youth problem solving strategy:

- In the process of drafting youth policy in Lithuania, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour seeks to integrate the main objectives of the European Union Youth Strategy. However, it does not align the national policy with the progress and development of Lithuania. It is emphasised that youth is one of the most important factors for future stability. Yet the shortcomings of mutual integrity of policy-making documents do not create conditions for young people to make a significant contribution to changes and development in the state (section 1.1, pp. 10-12).
- The Ministry of Social Security and Labour does not sufficiently ensure objective monitoring of the social situation of young people, or the development of evidence-based public policy. It underestimates the funding opportunities for youth activities, with programme evaluation criteria not being ambitiously planned, and the quantitative indicators envisaged not reflecting the objective changes in the situation of young people (subparagraphs 1.3, 1.4, p.13-16).

- The criteria for identifying and addressing the problems of young people of all ages are inadequate, as youth policy strategies employ different definitions of the age of youth outlined in youth policy strategic documents (subsection 1.2, p. 12-13).
- The Ministry of Social Security and Labour should focus its policy on the needs of different groups of young people. However, for example, in 2016, 83% of funds were targeted towards young people who were unemployed, were not studying and did not participate in any training. This group of young people comprised just 6.3% of all youth groups. However, youth unemployment has been decreasing and is currently above the EU average (section 2, p. 13-24).
- Not all municipalities in Lithuania provided conditions for the proper implementation of youth policy (section 2.1, p. 19-22).
- The Department of Youth Affairs has not contributed significantly to the implementation of youth policy (section 2.1, p. 19-22).

## **1. The discourse of youth policy in the context of social problems**

Youth policy has been developed in Lithuania for more than 20 years. Lithuania has a legal framework and an institutional framework on the formulation and implementation of youth policy. The principles, areas, organisation and management of youth policy have been established. Programmes to promote initiatives by young people and youth organisations are being implemented to create conditions for young people to participate actively in an open and democratic society. In addition, relations between non-governmental youth organisations and state and municipal institutions are being strengthened, and support from EU structural funds and programmes is provided. Youth policy can be described as a set of systems and tools aimed at facilitating the personal maturity and successful integration of a young person into society. According to Article 4 of the Law on the Fundamentals of Youth Policy of the Republic of Lithuania (Žin., 2003, No 119-5406; 2005, No 144-5238), ‘*youth policy* is a targeted action that addresses youth issues, and aims to facilitate the development of a young person’s personality and the integration of young people into society, as well as activities aimed at society’s understanding and tolerance of young people and in their groups.’

Today, youth policy is being developed in two main directions: *ensuring the interests of young people* in different areas of public policy, education and science, culture, sport, work and employment, housing, health, etc, and *the development of youth work as a specific youth policy area*, non-formal youth education and self-education aimed at enabling young people to learn from experience and experi-

ment (volunteering, autonomy, self-management). Youth activities ‘reach’ young people in their spare time when they are ‘out of family’, ‘out of class/lectures’ and ‘out of work’. The area employs professionals who work with young people, educate youth leaders, focus on youth initiatives, and develop and conduct civic, cultural and social projects. NGOs working with young people, local and religious communities, and informal youth groups are among independently working and decision-making institutions. Non-formal youth education can (and should) be provided by government-established non-formal education and cultural institutions, such as multi-functional centres, open youth centres, sports centres, and cultural centres in district offices.

Youth policy in Lithuania is implemented in accordance with the following principles:

- **Parity and subsidiarity.** This means that state and municipal authorities and bodies, as well as youth organisations, are equally represented and decisions are made at the level where they are most effective;

- **Participation and information.** This means that state and municipal institutions and bodies inform young people on issues that are of relevance to them and in a form that is acceptable and appropriate; besides, youth-related issues are addressed through youth participation;

- **Self-governance, autonomy and volunteering.** This means that young people have freedom to choose their activity area, formulate their goals, participate actively in it, and are responsible for the results achieved; they set the means, form, responsibilities and evaluation of the settled objectives;

- **Interdepartmental coordination, communication and cooperation.** This means that state and municipal authorities and institutions communicate and cooperate with each other in youth-related matters, and Lithuanian youth organisations communicate and cooperate with Lithuanian and foreign youth organisations, as well as other natural and legal persons.

Extensive research in these key areas has been conducted both in the major Lithuanian cities of Vilnius (2012-2013), Kaunas (2019), Klaipėda (2015) and the regions (60 municipalities in 2016). The findings correlate with the findings of the audit conducted in 2016, and confirm that youth policy is an integral part of social policy. The most important institution implementing social policy in Lithuania is the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The mission of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour is to implement effective labour and social protection policies, in order to create quality employment opportunities and ensure social security, family well-being and social cohesion in society. However, the problem of the social exclusion of young people should be addressed at several levels, both among young people themselves (in families) and at municipal and national levels.

The Department of Youth Affairs has implemented a project within the framework of the implementation of the EU project Development of an Integrated Youth Policy (<https://jrd.lt/jaunimo-politika/jrd-projektai/es-integruotas-jaunimo-politikos-projektas>). What is an integrated youth policy?

Youth policy is integrated when interdepartmental and intersectoral cooperation is in place, a common database on young people and institutions is formed and functioning, the priorities of different institutions are aligned, and human and material resources that address youth issues are mobilised. All 60 Lithuanian municipalities have been surveyed according to the same methodology. Three key youth problems have been highlighted: youth unemployment, migration and employment. These problems correlate with the attitude of young people towards the family, as well as affecting the health of young people.

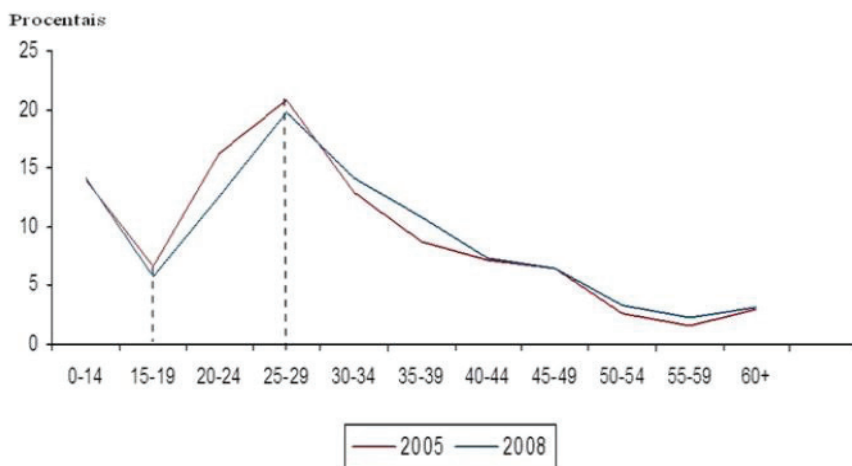
The authors of the article pay special attention to the links between these problems, because the strategy to solve a problem is possible only after dealing with the previous problem that is linked to it.

## 2. Emigration

One of the key problems that has a great impact on the decline of the population and, most importantly, of young and economically active people, is emigration. Recent emigration from Lithuania has become a matter of national importance. The process is followed by a number of negative consequences: the population is shrinking and ageing, the shortage of certain professionals is increasing, and there is a rapid brain drain. Figures provided by the Lithuanian Department of Statistics confirm this statement. They say that in the period from 1990 to 2020, emigration from Lithuania reached 1,029,138 people. Realising that migration volumes have already exceeded one million, it can be said that the resolution adopted by the government 'On the Approval of the Intergovernmental Action Plan for the Implementation of the 2018-2030 Demographic, Migration and Integration Policy Strategy 2018-2030' will not change the situation soon. Extensive research on the phenomenon of emigration started in 2004 as soon as Lithuania became a member of the European Union.

The research conducted by A. Puronaitė (2012) presents a graph of the first years of emigration. The graph shows that youth emigration from Lithuania has been extensive.

In her research, Gerbenčiūtė (2012) states that people, and especially young people who live in independent Lithuania, are free to change their place of residence. The global world provides opportunities for better education, better pay, and more housing. However, for the state, this possibility for the free movement of people



*Fig 1.* Emigrants by age group  
 Source: Department of Statistics of Lithuania, 2009

may become very dangerous, as demographic changes can affect many areas of the state, such as the economy, medicine, education, the social system, etc. It has become common to talk about measures to reduce emigration. The influence of emigration is discussed by numerous politicians, scientists and other professionals who deal with the issue. However, as is mentioned above, migration is not only a reality with negative sides. Migrants not only change their place of residence, they adapt to different political, social and cultural environments, which allows them to develop and gain certain skills, and eventually broaden their horizons. Sipavičienė et al. (2009) distinguished two types of those who return to Lithuania: people who return because of failure in another country, and people who return because they want to use their acquired knowledge in Lithuania. The latter group of people should be attracted by measures to encourage return migration, which would not only recover the ‘lost’ demographics, but would also contribute to the more rapid economic development of the country.

The country also experiences internal migration. The last few years have seen a trend to migrate from urban to rural areas. If we compare migration from rural to urban areas (24,420 in 2018) and from urban to rural areas (28,098 in 2018), we will see that there are 4,000 more people who migrate from urban to rural areas. However, this tendency may also hide the fact that the population is moving away from rural areas to urban suburbs, which are treated as rural areas. The total number of migrants to cities is larger than those migrating to rural areas by 9,700. Demographic changes and emigration have a direct impact on education.

The network of educational institutions should be reviewed, as it does not currently conform to the lower number of pupils and students. Steps are being taken to rejuvenate the teacher-educator sector, and at the same time to adapt it to the needs of the network.

The migration (emigration) of young people goes in two directions: labour migration, and education (study) migration. Given that young people are most actively involved in the emigration process, researchers are looking for reasons why emigration is so high in Lithuania.

It has been suggested that the main cause of the increase in emigration is unemployment; however, in recent years the number of unemployed has fallen, and yet the number of emigrants has increased. A total of 51.1% of emigrants are young people. Youth unemployment has been decreasing. In 2016, the unemployment rate for young people aged 20 to 24 was 14.1%, and for young people aged 25 to 29 it was 7.2%. (in 2015, the unemployment rate was 15.5% and 9.8% respectively). In 2016, the employment rate among young people aged 20 to 24 increased, and accounted for 50.7%. The employment rate among young people aged 25 to 29 was 83.3%. (In 2015, the employment rates were 49.7% and 80.7% respectively.)

A total of 20,900 young people emigrated from Lithuania in 2016 (in 2015 the emigration of young people was 19,300). In 2016, as in previous years, young people made up the majority of expatriates (41.6% in 2016, and 43.2% in 2015). In the same year, 5,600 young Lithuanian citizens (aged 14 to 29) returned (re-immigrated) to Lithuania. (In 2015, the number was 6,800.)

Thus, as one of the most important problems with negative consequences for demographic change in Lithuania, youth emigration urgently calls for the issues of the positioning of young people in Lithuanian society and the problematic search for their identity to be dealt with.

### **3. The connection between unemployment, emigration and youth policies**

Today, globalisation and the open economy lead to unemployment and emigration, which cannot be completely prevented and stopped because their causes are manifold. In a market economy, the issue of full and continuous employment is a difficult one, as there is always temporary unemployment when people temporarily lose their jobs, change jobs, etc. Economic, social, political, geographical and other reasons may determine the decision to emigrate. It is notable that it is not only the economic situation of the country that greatly influences the growth of emigration. Social security and protection, as well as cooperation between individual countries, also have a great impact on the increase in emigration.



Unemployment is one of the key problems in macroeconomics. Many people who have lost their jobs are deprived of a regular income, suffer from low standards of living, and feel psychological discomfort. Therefore, the problem of unemployment is the subject of political and economic discussions. High unemployment is one of the main 21st-century economic and social problems in Europe and many countries around the world. Unemployment relates to a complex of economic and social problems that directly and strongly affect both individuals and a country. In terms of economics, unemployment is the devastation of public resources and the destruction of the living conditions of unemployed people. Today, one of the most important problems in the labour market relates to human resources, especially when we refer to young people who start the economically active period of their lives. Although Lithuania pays great attention to the integration of young people into the labour market, the shortage of a young and skilled workforce in the country is becoming more and more evident, and youth unemployment issues project into social exclusion and emigration.

The behaviour of a young person depends on many social, economic, demographic, political and cultural factors that are closely related. In order to integrate young people into the labour market, it is very important to consider young people as one of the most problematic labour market groups, and to plan strategies for solving the problem of their unemployment.

Depending on the reasons for unemployment, various types of unemployment can be distinguished: temporary, latent, hidden, long-term, short-term, structural, cyclical and voluntary unemployment. In the context of youth unemployment, one of the most 'dangerous' types of unemployment is structural unemployment.

*Methodological youth unemployment interpretation.* The analysis of the causes of unemployment within problematic labour market groups, including young people, is based on the interpretation of labour market theories. Based on the interpretation of labour market theories presented by R. Matiušaitytė (2002), we are able to state that theories of human capital, discrimination and segmentation have a great influence on the social exclusion of young people.

*The Theory of Human Capital.* In the context of this theory, skilled workers are more valued, it is easier for them to find jobs, and they are better paid. It is obvious that employers look for and value more those who have work experience. This impedes access by young people into employment, as they lack skills and practice in finding a job. Young people have not yet accumulated specific human capital.

*Discrimination Theory.* Discriminatory behaviour by an employer in relation to the employment of young people may be expressed in lower remuneration as compared to senior employees with no experience. Young people can also be discriminated against by employers due to a lack of information. Employers tend to

employ people who have the necessary information and appropriate qualifications in the field.

*Segmentation Theory.* This theory is based on a line model. With the aim of maximising profits, employers place job applicants as if they were in a queue. Jobs are broken down by productivity, and employees are divided by qualification. This means that each employee is attributed a definite role. The less training an applicant needs and the better his skills conform to the requirements necessary to perform the duties, the better the position he takes in the queue. Young people are just starting work, so they do not have much experience. Being at the end of the line, young people have fewer opportunities to be accepted for better-paid work, or even to be employed, so they choose emigration.

**Statistical construct.** The youth unemployment rate in Lithuania averaged 21.81% between 1998 and 2018, reaching an all-time high of 36.20% in February 2010, and a record low of 7.60% in June 2007. The youth unemployment rate in Lithuania increased from 13.60% in February to 14% in March 2018.

A total of 5.4% of young people in Lithuania were unemployed on 1 November 2019. Registered youth unemployment is almost one and a half times lower than the total registered unemployment of the country (7.9%). In 2019, the highest rate of unemployed young people among the population of the same age group was recorded in January (5.9%), with the lowest unemployment rate recorded in May (4.9%). Over the last two years, registered youth unemployment has been rising, with the lowest (3.7%) being in June 2017.

Statistical indicators for 2019 signal the following key trends in Lithuania:

- Sources of potential labour supply are shrinking, as the population of young people has fallen by 15.6% in the last five years.
- In Lithuania 5.4% of young people are unemployed. The Visaginas municipality, for example, has the lowest number of young people, and they have difficulties in finding jobs. On the other hand, the Skuodas municipality boasts the highest rate of employment among young people.
- 64% of unemployed young people find jobs. Rietavas and Pakruojis municipalities are places where young people do not seem to encounter difficulties in finding a job.
- Unemployed young people often have skills that are useful to the labour market: 78% have proficiency in English, 72% have IT skills, 57% have a driving license.
- It is more difficult to find a job for young people who have only a secondary education or are unqualified. The number of such unemployed young people has increased over the last five years.

- The priority of young people in the labour market is to find employment on the basis of a permanent contract. One in two young people is employed in the service sector, and one in seven is employed in industry.
- Young people are usually employed in low-skilled or unskilled jobs. Due to the lack of career prospects and the failure to acquire new skills, and because of the robotisation and digitisation of many jobs, young people may encounter difficulties in finding jobs in the future.

It is often difficult for young people to perform on the labour market, foresee trends in the development of the market, and choose a profession that will form the basis of their career in the future. Although Lithuania has been establishing new job places, and unemployment has considerably decreased, the problems of youth unemployment in the labour market are obvious and are still the subject of discussion. While working with young people and helping to solve problems relating to employment and professional achievements, we have identified psychological, communicative, social and other problems. Therefore, issues of problems that young people encounter and difficulties in finding jobs are being raised and discussed.

Unemployment and youth policy issues in the context of European solidarity. Unemployment problems among young people are frequently just stated or substantiated on various theories. They do not focus on solution processes.

In our project, we raise questions about how to help young people prepare for the labour market, and we often forget the context of European solidarity and youth policy approaches. Lithuania has adopted all the necessary documents for the positive implementation of youth policy (mentioned at the beginning of the article), which correlate with European youth policy strategies.

In 2015, the European Commission (EC) published a study with recommendations on quality youth work (see: [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/reports/quality-youth-work\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/reports/quality-youth-work_en.pdf)).

European documents address youth unemployment issues, and present them both as a strategy and as a methodology. The documents focus on young people: thus, the participating countries refer to European documents that deal with youth matters.

Following the 2008 crisis, the problem of youth unemployment has become particularly acute in all European countries.

In 2012, the Proposal for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on the Establishment of a Youth Guarantee / \* COM / 2012/0729 final - 2012/0351 (NLE) \* / was considered, and it has acquired concrete outlines in all European countries. In Lithuania, the Youth Guarantee Recommendation Strategy is an ideological

and practical guide for many youth institutions, especially open youth centres and youth work centres.

We present the context of the Youth Guarantee as set out in the above-mentioned Council of Europe document on the establishment of a Youth Guarantee (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52012PC0729>).

High and increasing youth unemployment has dramatic consequences for our economies, our societies and young people themselves.

The youth unemployment rate across the EU has reached a high level of 22.7% (third quarter 2012), twice as high as the adult rate [1], and the prospects do not show any reversing trend. Around 5.5 million young people are unemployed, and more than 7.5 million young people under 25 years old are currently not in employment, education or training (NEETs).

But beyond the immediate effects of the crisis, even at lower rates, youth unemployment and inactivity are expensive and damaging to society. They are expensive today in terms of the benefits being paid out, and in terms of foregone earnings and taxes; but they are also expensive in the future as they lead to a number of ‘scarring’ effects, with long-lasting negative impacts on future income levels, future risks of unemployment, health status, well-being and pension reserves. Europe cannot afford to waste its talent and its future.

The need to take action and support young people in their transition from school to employment had already been identified prior to the crisis. In 2005, the Council agreed, in the context of the Employment Policy Guidelines (2005-2008), that policies should ensure that ‘every unemployed person is offered a new start before reaching six months of unemployment in the case of young people’. In 2008, the Council reduced the time period to ‘no more than four months’ for young people leaving school.

As by 2010, the implementation of this measure across the EU had not yet taken place, both the European Parliament (EP) and the European Youth Forum were strongly advocating for Youth Guarantees to be set up at an EU level.

Within the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy and its ‘Youth on the Move’ flagship initiative, the Commission called in particular upon member states to ensure that all young people are in a job, further education or activation measures within four months of leaving school, and to provide this as a ‘Youth Guarantee’.

The years 2011 and 2012 saw repeated calls for this, in particular from the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Youth Forum, but without much success on the ground.

In the Employment Package of April 2012, the Commission announced that it would propose a Council recommendation on Youth Guarantees by the end of the year.

On 29 June 2012, the European Council urged member states to step up efforts to increase youth employment, with ‘the objective that within a few months of leaving school, young people receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or a traineeship’. It further concluded that these measures can be supported by the European Social Fund (ESF), and that member states should use the possibilities of financing temporary recruitment subsidies from the Fund.

In the 2013 Annual Growth Survey [2], the Commission stressed that member states should secure school-to-work transitions for young people, and develop and implement Youth Guarantee schemes whereby every young person under 25 receives an offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. Such schemes can be co-financed by the European Social Fund.

The Commission is proposing a proposal for a Council Recommendation to ensure that young people receive a quality offer of employment, further education or training within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. This proposal also sets out how a Youth Guarantee scheme should be set up. The proposal lists guidelines on the basis of six axes: establishing strong partnerships with all stakeholders, ensuring early intervention and activation to avoid young people becoming NEETs, taking supportive measures that will enable labour integration, making full use of EU funding to that end, assessing and continuously improving the Youth Guarantee schemes, and implementing the schemes rapidly. The proposal also outlines how the Commission will support member states’ actions: the EU funding framework, the exchange of good practices among member states, monitoring of member states’ actions within the European Semester exercise, and supporting awareness-raising activities.

The proposal is accompanied by a Staff Working Document (SWD), which goes into more detail about what constitutes a Youth Guarantee, addresses questions about the costs and benefits of such schemes, and describes one by one the ingredients necessary to make the Youth Guarantee a success. Furthermore, in an annex, the SWD presents policies supporting youth employment already in place in the 27 member states and Croatia, reflecting the various starting points of these countries towards setting up fully fledged Youth Guarantee schemes.

The Youth Guarantee Initiative has been implemented in Lithuania since 2014. The aim of the Youth Guarantee service is to activate young people in the shortest possible time, either by keeping in touch with the labour market or by providing them with further education. The aim is to reduce youth unemployment by helping young people to find a job after graduation, and to improve the situation of young people who are neither in employment nor in education. In Lithuania, young pe-

ople aged 15 to 29 can benefit from the Youth Guarantee service regardless of whether the person is employed or unemployed, or registered or unregistered with the Employment Service.

*The Youth Guarantee service aims to ensure that young people aged 15 to 29 within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed are offered a quality job offer, an offer to continue their studies, or an internship. Support for young people is tailored to their specific aptitudes and opportunities in the labour market.*

What institutions are responsible for the provision of the Youth Guarantee service in Lithuania? The implementation of youth guarantees in Lithuania is coordinated by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania.

Targeted Youth Guarantee projects are implemented and services are provided by the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (hereinafter Employment Service), Youth Employment Centres (YEC), EURES Offices, the Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (hereinafter Department of Youth Affairs) and their Youth Guarantee Partners, which is a network of youth organisations in municipalities, open youth centres and spaces at municipalities. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania, the Ministry of Economics and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania, and their subordinate institutions, contribute to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee service.

The Employment Service and the vocational integration of people with disabilities. Case management is used to provide services for people with disabilities. The employment service provides personalised advice based on the customer's needs, motivation and skills. A new initiative is related to case managers who advise people with disabilities, and also deal with the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market. Case managers are best placed to help clients with employment, as they are aware of the specifics in particular areas, and therefore can address a variety of concerns in integration into the labour market. People with disabilities suffer greater discrimination in the labour market and social exclusion, they have more social and psychological problems, and therefore require different forms of assistance when they are being integrated into the labour market. Specialised services for people with disabilities have been launched in the country's main cities. This target group is assisted and supported by specialists with specific knowledge, whose main task is to help the client overcome the barriers that surround him, and develop his skills and competencies to successfully apply them in the labour market. In 2018, jobseekers with disabilities across the country were advised by 47 case managers (four of whom had disabilities themselves). The number of consultants working exclusively with jobseekers with disabilities

and the long-term unemployed is expected to increase to one case manager in each client counselling unit (52 case managers in total).

The integration of people with disabilities into the labour market. On 1 January 2019, there were 47,200 people with disabilities employed in the labour market in Lithuania. Compared to 1 January 2018, this was 3,000 more employed people with disabilities in the labour market. Among them, the largest group (27,400) consisted of people with 45% to 55% working capacity. In 2018, 13,200 people with disabilities were registered with the Employment Service. A total of 5,600 of them found a job, 5,200 people with disabilities started work on the open labour market, and 423 people with disabilities were employed in social work enterprises. A total of 3,300 people with disabilities received support for growth and employment. Among them, 1,600 people received employment subsidies; 791 people obtained qualifications or competencies in the areas of accountancy, floristry, company work organisation, forklift truck driving, electronic business, social worker assistant, nursing assistant, shop assistant or chef. A total of 1,100 people with disabilities were self-employed. A total of 81 new jobs were created for people with disabilities in 2018. A total of 268 people with disabilities participated in municipal employment development programmes. A higher employment efficiency of people with disabilities was recorded in 2018: over 56.1% of disabled people were permanently employed. In the years 2015 to 2018, professional rehabilitation was funded by the European Union and the state budget. The need for funds for the Professional Rehabilitation Programme has been increasing every year. Since 2014, funding for the programme has almost doubled. (<https://www.jaunimogarantijos.lt/lt/statistika/jaunimo-situacija-darbo-rinkoje/101>)

By 2020, the coordinator position was established in 28 EU countries.

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An integral part of youth work policy is the EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS [https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/mission\\_en](https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/mission_en)

The European Union is built on solidarity, a shared value which is strongly felt throughout European society. Solidarity defines the European project, and provides the necessary unity to cope with current and future crises by taking a strong

moral position. Solidarity provides a clear compass to guide European youth in their aspirations for a better Union.

Young people need easily accessible opportunities to engage in solidarity activities, which could enable them to express their commitment to the benefit of communities while acquiring useful experience, skills and competencies for their personal, educational, social, civic and professional development, thereby improving their employability.

The European Solidarity Corps brings together young people to build a more inclusive society, supporting vulnerable people and responding to societal challenges. It offers an inspiring and empowering experience for young people who want to help, learn and develop, and provides a single entry point for such solidarity activities throughout the Union.

It opens up more and better opportunities, covering a broad range of areas, such as the integration of migrants, environmental challenges, prevention of natural disasters, education and youth activities. It also supports national and local actors in their efforts to cope with different societal challenges and crises.

The European Solidarity Corps also aims to complement the efforts made by member states to support young people and ease their school-to-work transition under the Youth Guarantee by providing them with additional opportunities to make a start in the labour market in the form of traineeships or jobs within their respective member state or across borders.

The activities of the European Solidarity Corps support the objectives of the newly adopted EU Youth Strategy for 2019-2027, which encourages young people to become active citizens, agents of solidarity and positive change for communities across Europe, inspired by EU values and the European identity.

#### **4. Youth, family and solidarity of generations**

The quality of life of young people, satisfaction linked to self-realisation in society, is also related to family life. Statistically, the average duration of a marriage in Lithuania is 13 years. More than half of divorced families have children. Every second married couple in the country is divorced. Among the countries of the European Union, the Lithuanians are record-holders\*

Statistical construct: in 2018, 19,700 couples aged between 15 and 29 were married in Lithuania. Age distribution: 15 to 19 years, 75; 20 to 24 years, 1,711; 25 to 29 years, 7,761. The average of age of young married women is 28 years, and of young married men 30.3 years.

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\* <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize?hash=9e3abc01-5873-4514-9b26-9ec1d742908f#/>



In 2018, 8,640 couples aged 15 to 29 were divorced in Lithuania. Age distribution: 15 to 19 years, 2; 20 to 24 years, 145; 25 to 29 years, 771. Two main reasons are mentioned: material status, lack of family life skills.

The changes in the traditional family basis, and its tendencies to become more modern, are analysed and discussed from different aspects by sociologists, psychologists, teachers and others in their work. It is evident that there is no unambiguous definition, either in everyday life or in the academic field, of what 'family' is (Nave-Herz, 2003; Juozeliūnienė, 2003).

A lot of research that analyses family transformation problems has recently been carried out in Lithuania.

The Klaipėda University researchers E. Acienė and R. Čepienė conducted the international project 'Attitudes of Young People Towards Family' in 2010, and carried out a detailed study of how young people value the institution of the family. The idea of an empirical study was proposed by colleagues from Oldenburg University (Germany), and they initiated this international project. Theoretical assumptions for the research were formulated on the basis of the work of the well-known German family researchers F. W. Busch, W-D. Scholz (2002) and R. Nave-Herz (2003), and approved during international seminars with researchers from Spain, Poland and South Korea.

It is emphasised that society's attitude towards the institution of the family is becoming more modern, but at the same time ambivalent tendencies have been recognised. Some people, especially members of the older generation, seek to preserve the traditional family, but the younger generation choose forms of living together that might be defined as a description of the modern family: living together without marrying, partnership from a distance without sharing a common home, giving birth to children outside marriage, etc.

Many authors relate factors in the modernisation of the family institution to changes in the socio-economic environment that occurred in the 1990s and are still continuing. They are: the shake-up of the economy, the transition to market forces, the decline in the standard of living and differentiation between levels of society, unemployment, salaries that do not provide satisfactory living conditions, the wave of economic emigration, etc. These phenomena had a negative influence on demographic development in Lithuania, and caused matrimonial and procreatic changes of behaviour (Stankūnienė et al., 2003; 2011). It is emphasised that the state has not yet been able to create an effective and consistent social policy which could influence effectively demographic tendencies connected with the family.

Socio-economic and other factors have a very deep influence on the marital behaviour of youth. Young people who have not started or have just started an independent life have to decide how they will transform the 'family-job-leisure' cycle.

There are assumptions that the attitude towards family values changes totally under the conditions of the market economy. The order of priorities changes as well. At first, young people want to find work, start a career, and acquire material goods. We face the depth of individualisation as well. Difficult adaptation under competitive conditions makes young people reconsider the character of interpersonal relations. They start treating their partner very rationally, at times even in a consumer-oriented way. The possibility of getting financial, practical and social help is not very high, due to the older generation's long participation in the labour market and due to objective historical factors. At the same time, it should be mentioned that socio-economic factors influence the behaviour of youth not separately but together with socio-psychological factors: with the approach to values, attitudes to different phenomena, images and ideals in systems of needs, etc. The nature of the psychological phenomena is usually related to micro-surrounding features that influence a young person directly. The most important among these features are genetic (parental) features.

When solving tasks in family policy strategic planning and the creation of preparations for family programmes, it is important to evaluate all the factors that have an influence on family transformations. This encouraged us to analyse the problem of generational solidarity, which has not been analysed enough.

The mechanisms of social acquisition determine that a large part of the experience obtained in a genetic family, consciously or subconsciously, is brought to the future family image, and later to the behaviour in the family. According to M. Bowen (1984), the model of relations in the genetic family gives the possibility to predict the model of relations which a young person will apply in his family relations, and even pass on to the next generation. Negative or positive experiences, the system of values and range of feelings that have been taken from the genetic family become guidelines for interpersonal relations of spouses, the upbringing of children, structures of roles, etc. This is a direct presumption to implement generational solidarity.

Our research has allowed us to identify how young people tend to evaluate their genetic family: relations between parents, distribution of roles, satisfaction with their own relations with their parents, the period of time parents devoted to their upbringing, the parents' role in solving very important life questions, etc. According to an analysis of the statistical data, we tried to estimate if the evaluation of relations between parents has an influence on the satisfactoriness of relations between parents and children, and the deliberate decision to choose the parents' family as the model for their future family.

Family values that were held by respondents' genetic families are still reflected by young people. The attitude towards genetic families is mainly positive, which

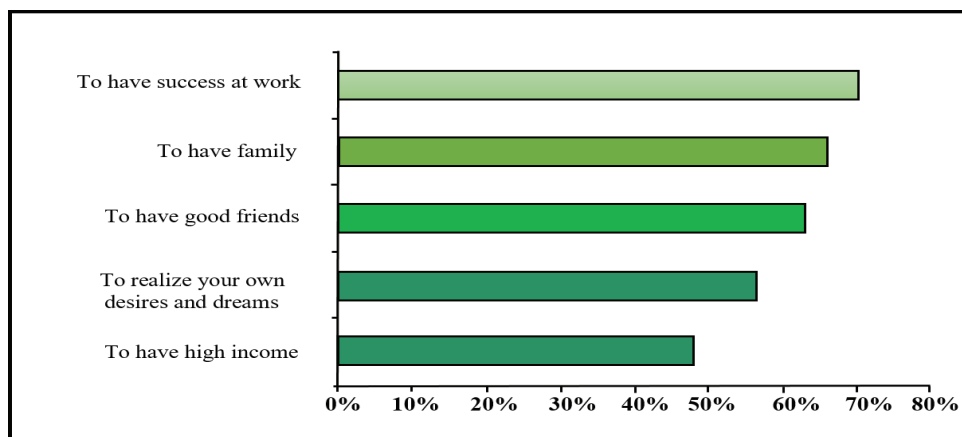
provides the hope that lots of traditional family features will be passed on to the future family basis.

That is why empirical research that analyses the family image is meaningful and valuable not only from an academic point of view but from a practical one as well. The state and society have to know in which direction the institution of the family will develop, what the prospects for its development are, what influence social policy has on demographic policy, and how important the expanded family model is for the survival of the traditional family. Consideration of the dimensional content of solidarity of generations allows for modelling strategies for family social work and improving family social policy.

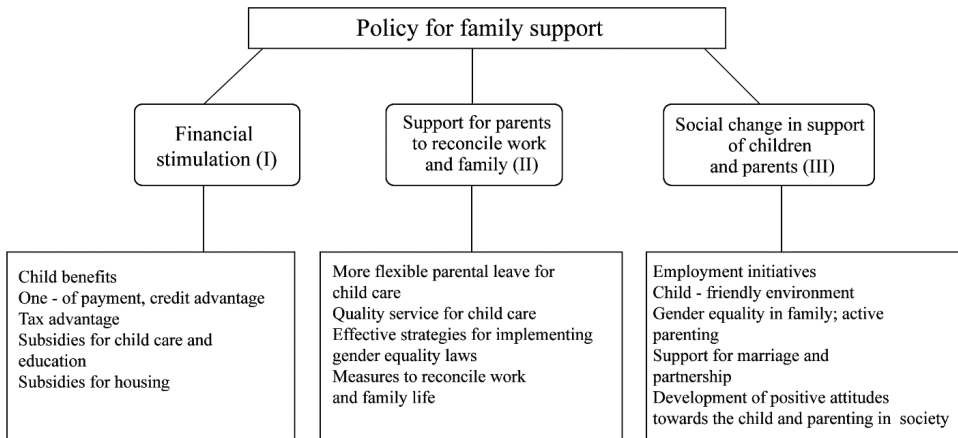
Summing up the approach of youth towards the family, we want to point out that youth consider family to be a value. Research using the methodology of the aforementioned project was carried out several more times in different regions of Lithuania (MA thesis). And while young people first and foremost try to establish themselves in the workplace, and pursue their careers and their well-being, 65.5% of young people say that it is of great importance to have one's own family.

Attitudes to the family change in the context of various processes emerging in the development of postmodern society. Maslauskaitė (2005) identifies these reasons in a very broad globalisation discourse (the 'unfriendly' environment of the market economy, the role of women in the labour market, aspects of consumer culture in family communication, the devalued meaning of the institution of marriage, issues of birth, divorce and cohabitation, etc) and looks for ways to stabilise transformations in family life through family support policies.

According to McDonald (2002) and Heitlinger (1991) (in Maslauskaitė, 2005, p. 69), family support policies should consist of three key components:



Picture 1. The most important things for youth.



*Fig. 2. Model of family policy support measures*  
(from: McDonald, 2002, Heitlinger, 1991 in Maslauskaitė, 2005)

- financial stability;
- support for parents in reconciling work and family;
- cultural and social measures to support children and motherhood/parenting (see Fig. 2).

The model reveals that youth policy correlates closely with social policies aimed at providing families with financial, economic, and at the same time, psychological security.

Notwithstanding all the reasons for family transformation, the question ‘how young people imagine life in 25 years’ is answered by young people as follows: good relationships with their children, a family with children, a private house, agreement with parents, and married status. Thus, it can be noted that young people relate their long-term plans to children and family life. This can be seen as a perspective on the survival of the family, its continuity, and presumably, intergenerational solidarity in all its dimensions. It can also help to develop the values of young people (the motivation to learn, work, have a family, participate in society).

## 5. The health of youth in the context of European health policy

On the basis of the European New Health Policy document ‘Health 2020’, Lithuania prepared the Lithuanian Health Strategy 2014-2025. It was drafted taking into account not only the aforementioned European Health Policy document, but

also the ‘Lithuanian Progress Strategy Lithuania 2030’, approved by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Resolution No XI-2015 (Žin., 2012, No 61-3050). The main goal of the Lithuanian Health Strategy 2025 is to improve the health of the Lithuanian people and reduce health inequalities. Four strategic goals have been identified for the implementation of this strategy:

- 1) to establish a safer social environment;
- 2) to establish a healthy work and living environment;
- 3) to foster a healthy lifestyle and life culture by reducing the consumption and availability of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, promoting healthy eating habits, and developing optimal physical activity habits;
- 4) to ensure better and more efficient healthcare that is focused on the needs of the population through the sustainability and quality of the health system.

Thus, the objectives and targets are directly linked to the provisions of European health policy, and the implementation of the health strategy based on the guiding principle of Health 2020 - Health in All Policies. The health strategy also focuses on student health, but unfortunately there is no particular focus on school students. A greater focus on the health of young people, including students, is put in the National Public Health Programme (Approval of the National Public Health Care Development Programme 2016-2023, 2015)\*\*.

The origins of the Health Promotion at Universities movement in Europe can be found around 1989. Lithuania has always been actively involved in the development of health promotion policy (HPP), and has paid much attention to the health of young people. On 3 June 2015, the rectors of three Lithuanian universities, the A. Stulginskis University, the Lithuania Health Sciences University, and Klaipėda University, signed an agreement on the establishment of the HPU policy in Lithuania. The provisions of the action programme were aligned with international provisions (Okanagan Charter). The HPU Board of Directors approved the policies of the programme, with a focus on research into health promotion activities, and the integration of the results into national and international study cooperation.

Researchers from Health Promoting Universities, including Klaipėda University, conducted a representative study.

The survey covered first and fourth-year students from three HPUs. A total of 1,516 questionnaires were distributed: 1,030 came back, the response rate was 67.9%. The results of the study were presented in ‘Health 2020 Policy Development: Youth Health’ by Misevičienė, Špečkauskienė, Rauckienė-Michaelsson (2017, pp. 51-60).

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\*\* <<https://e-tar.lt/portal/en/legalAct/4d3dc740a3c411e58fd1fc0b9bba68a7>>

The survey of Lithuanian HPU students shows that their lifestyle is not healthy and has not improved in the last 20 years. Two thirds of students on different study programmes are physically inactive, every sixth student is overweight, every fifth has smoked every day in the last three months, and every third student and every second student from social sciences courses used strong alcoholic beverages two or three times a month. All students think that they consume too much alcohol. More than half the students of biomedicine and every fourth from other courses studied health-related subjects, and every second from biomedicine courses and every third from technology and social sciences courses was interested in having a health education course.

According to Misevičienė, Špečkauskienė, Rauckienė-Michaelsson (2017, p. 60), these conclusions can be confirmed. The WHO health policy for Europe 'Health 2020' became a stimulus for many countries, including Lithuania, to renew their national health policies, and it is a guide to take action. WHO health promotion movements are active both in Europe and in Lithuania. The first survey data of students' health and lifestyle within the Health Promoting Universities network in Lithuania sets physical activity promotion activities and alcohol intolerance policy, as well as the consolidation of healthy nutrition foundations, as priority actions.

## **Discussion**

Strategies of how to solve problems relating to young people are associated with the implementation of youth policies both nationally and internationally in the context of European solidarity. The analysis of municipality reports from Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda, the biggest Lithuanian cities, as well as from 60 regional municipalities, and an assessment of the main problems (emigration, demographic change, family transformation, unemployment and health problems), suggest that Lithuanian and European Union youth policy documents allow us to design a model of youth policy strategies which at the management level could address more effectively the youth problems that have a direct impact on the future functioning of the state. At the theoretical level, an analysis of the youth policy design process and implementation in the context of social construction allows for a focus on processes, social interactions and process meanings, and the use of scientific knowledge. The process includes both an academic approach to the formulation and implementation of youth policy and the stand expressed by public policy developers, practitioners and other researchers.

In the political context, the Law on the Amendment of the Law on the Fundamentals of Youth Policy of the Republic of Lithuania (2018-05-31, No XIII-1224,

Vilnius) directly envisages the legitimisation of the European Youth Guarantee Platform. Article 3 of this document, entitled ‘Entities that Develop and Implement Youth Policy’, defines the management structure to carry out functions that directly implement youth policy: the municipality youth coordinator, the public institution International Youth Cooperation Agency, the Council of Lithuanian Youth Organisations and the councils of municipal youth organisations, the World Lithuanian Youth Union, the Youth Council, Open Youth centres and Open Youth areas.

Changes in youth policy-making and implementation in Lithuania are related to new ways of governance in Europe: the application of an open method of coordination management in EU youth policy-making and implementation; support from EU Structural Funds and other EU programmes for the development of youth policy in Lithuania, promoting inter-institutional cooperation and changing governance processes; and the involvement of non-governmental organisations in the formulation and implementation of youth policy in Lithuania, which play an important role in shaping the political agenda and informally coordinating the activities of different institutions.

There is no research in Lithuania that communicates the role of schools in informing young people, especially school leavers, about how to approach higher education and the labour market in their future careers. However, interviews with first-year students reveal that their knowledge of Youth Guarantee initiatives (to help them get a job within four months), open youth centres, and youth work centres is very fragmented. Volunteering skills are also very poor. In training social work professionals, it is necessary to convey methodologies that reveal effective methods for working with young people, as well as to highlight the importance of an integrated youth policy. According to Sakalauskienė and Celešienė (2015, p. 23), ‘the main principle and main tool for reaching goals in the field of youth policy is youth work. Youth work covers a broad range of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature, by, with, and for young people. Increasingly, such activities also include sport and services for young people. Youth work is based on non-formal and informal learning processes, and has a unique role as a provider of non-formal learning opportunities to all young people. The youth worker is a very important figure in youth work (the youth worker in Lithuania is seen as a specialist who implements public policy rather than a member of a certain profession).’

One of the main tasks of the project ‘Social Professions for Youth Education in the Context of European Solidarity’ is to find practical strategies for combining theoretical and political guidelines for the implementation of youth policy in training programmes for professionals in social professions.

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