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Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage

[A Study of National Policies](#)

Lithuania

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Investing in children:

Breaking the cycle of disadvantage

A Study of National Policies

**ARUNAS POVILIUNAS
VILNIUS UNIVERSITY**

COUNTRY REPORT - LITHUANIA

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Executive Summary¹

The comparative data show the relative stagnation of child welfare policy in Lithuania. Progress between 2006 and 2010 for child well-being in Lithuania was minimal. The only dimension that pulled up the overall rank of well-being of Lithuanian children was education. According to dimensions for material well-being, behaviours and risks, and housing and environment, Lithuania still is in the troika of countries that are closing the ranks.

In 2003, the Seimas approved the Concept of the State Policy on Child Welfare. In 2005, the Government has accepted the Strategy of the State Policy of Child Welfare and Plan of Implementation Measures of the Strategy of the State Child Welfare Policy for 2005–2012. In 2012, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour approved The Programme of Child Welfare for 2013–2018 Years and a Plan of Implementation Measures for this Programme. The Concept, the Programme and its Implementation Plan resemble an integrated multi-dimensional strategy that tackles child welfare. The main advantage of this package of documents is the consistent child-centred approach of the Concept. The lack of political will to implement it in the full range is its main shortage.

The existence of a strong and constructive opposition is another advantage of the Lithuanian policy for child welfare. The last two ombudspersons for Child's Rights were very active and managed to embed the Ombudsperson as an independent and influential institution in charge of protecting children's rights. Another strong stakeholder is an informal coalition of independent human rights NGOs. Even if these stakeholders lack the resources and power to change the path of child's welfare policy in the short run, their influence is increasing.

The list of the policies to support parents' participation in the labour market is short. According to the Law on Support for Employment, the list of persons who are additionally supported in the labour market include parents or custodians who are raising a child under 8 years of age or a disabled child under 18 years of age. Employment support measures include general employment support services, active labour market policy measures and employment support programmes. Unfortunately, the Lithuanian Labour Exchange is not collecting information by the groups of persons who are additionally supported; therefore, there is no possibility to evaluate the effectiveness of the employment support policies for the different groups. In general, the role of the Active Labour Market Measures is increasing. The Law on Cash Social Assistance for Poor Residents does require the parents' participation in the labour market indirectly. The current amendments of the Law are directed towards stimulation of participation in the labour market and towards a decrease of dependence on social benefits. Experts' evaluations of the influence of these new amendments on children's welfare are for the moment contradictory.

The policies to provide adequate living standards for children include contributory and non-contributory benefits. Contributory benefits mainly protect the income of families during the first year after the birth of the children. The return to the labour market is complicated due to a high level of unemployment and a shortage of children care services. As contributory benefits are only paid by insured people, only two thirds of all families is eligible for contributory benefits. Due to the crisis, means-testing for the main non-contributory Child Benefit was introduced. After the introduction of means-

¹ Readers should note that the drafting of this report was completed in September 2013 thus it does not include an analysis of data or policy developments that became available after this date.

testing, the number of recipients of Child Benefit dropped from 550 thousands to 150 thousands.

The analysis of social justice in education “showed that there are disparities in opportunities of different social groups to participate at different educational levels in Lithuania which can be seen as socially unjust. At the pre-school level, the highest opportunities to participate are among children who belong to urban population, non-single-parent households, and households with no disabled members and those with no children less than one year of age. At the secondary education level more favourable conditions are among those who live in households where at least one member has higher education, urban population and in household with only one child”. (Žalimienė et al. 2011: 85, 86)

The informal coalition of independent human rights NGOs stresses the contradiction between the ideologically driven dominance of the biomedical component and neglect of psychosocial interventions. The coalition is insisting that in Lithuania predominates reductionist biomedical approach in managing complex societal problems. The coalition is insisting on the acceleration of the transition to the psychosocial approach in the field of social policy.

Analysis of different dimensions of Lithuanian child welfare policy confirms the statement that child was and remains in the periphery of social policy. The fragmented child social policy is lacking consistency and political support. The Programme of Child Welfare and Plan of Implementation Measures of the Programme for 2013-2018 do not include health, housing, education, children participation, and at-risk-of-poverty prevention issues. In order to move child policy from the periphery of social policy, it is necessary to develop more holistic and integrated national strategy. Therefore, “it is necessary to put efforts to strengthen children’s rights and opt for a child-centred approach /.../, to set clear evidence-based policy objectives /.../, to promote integrated and coordinated policymaking and delivery /.../, to develop children mainstreaming /.../.” (Frazer, Marlier 2012: 21, 22)

Another urgent area is deinstitutionalisation. It is not clear if the approved Guidelines for Deinstitutionalisation are the first signs of real change – or whether it will result in yet another unsuccessful attempt to overcome the legacy of the system. Only after these Guidelines will be transformed into political decisions, it would be reason to think that the situation is changing. For example, majority of childcare homes belong to municipalities that have their own interests and are independent enough to resist the process of deinstitutionalisation.

1. Assessment of Overall Approach and Governance²

“Since 1990, when independence of Lithuania was re-established, the country has undergone several stages of a complicated transition process, with a combination of achievements and failures during the process of reforming child protection and related services, such as health, education and social services, including services for children and families at risk. At the same time numerous innovations have been introduced in the field of family support and child protection services during the last 20 years, the first decade of transition (1990-2000) having been a most exciting and promising one.” (Human Rights Monitoring Institute et al. 2012: 2)

Comparative data show the relative stagnation of child welfare policy in Lithuania. This statement is based on a comparison of child well-being in 2006-2007 and 2012. In 2007 and 2013, UNICEF published reports about child well-being in rich countries UNICEF 2007 and UNICEF 2013). The first report (UNICEF 2007) analysed Lithuania only episodically and Lithuania was not included into summary ranks. Therefore, in the current report we refer to another source that employs the same methodological approach and includes Lithuania.

In 2009, Jonathan Bradshaw and Dominic Richardson published an article “An Index of Child Well-Being in Europe” (Bradshaw, Richardson 2009) that summarises the results of mainstreaming of child well-being indicators in EU social indicators and development of index of child well-being. This article together with other countries analyses the data from Lithuania. J. Bradshaw and D. Richardson have compared child well-being in 27 countries of the European Union and Norway and Iceland. The comparison is based on 43 indicators forming 19 components derived from administrative and survey data around 2006 and it has covered seven domains: health, subjective well-being, personal relationships, material resources, education, behaviour and risks, housing and the environment. The Table 1.1 presents the ranks of Lithuania according to different domains.

Table 1.1. The ranks of child well-being index of Lithuania in 2006

	Overall rank	Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5	Domain 6	Domain 7
		Health	Subjective	Relationships	Material	Risk	Education	Housing
LT 2006	28	22	27	25	25	28	24	24

Source: Bradshaw, Richardson 2009: 325

According to the data of 2006, in all dimensions except health Lithuania was among the countries that were closing the ranks. Accordingly the overall rank of Lithuania among 29 countries was close to the bottom.

Table 1.2. The ranks of child well-being index of Lithuania in 2012

	Overall well-being	Dimension 1	Dimension 2	Dimension 3	Dimension 4	Dimension 5
	Average rank (all 5 dimensions)	Material well-being	Health and safety	Education	Behaviours and risks	Housing and environment
Lithuania 2013	25.2	27	24	19	29	27

Source: UNICEF 2013: 2

² Readers should note that the drafting of this report was completed in September 2013 thus it does not include an analysis of data or policy developments that became available after this date.

The authors of the last report (UNICEF 2013) have modified their approach and from seven domains of child well-being they move to the five dimensions of child well-being: material well-being, health and safety, education, behaviours and risks, housing and environment. The report draws on data from 2009 and 2010 (UNICEF 2013: 44). Despite these modifications, comparison is still possible.

Table 1.2 informs us that the progress from 2006 to 2010 of child well-being in Lithuania was minimal. The only dimension that pulled up the overall rank of well-being a little bit for Lithuanian children was education (Table 1.2.). According to the dimensions of material well-being, behaviours and risks, and housing and environment Lithuania is in the troika of countries that is closing the ranks.

TÁRKI Social Research Institute and Applica (TÁRKI & Applica 2010) have made another comparison of child poverty and child well-being in European Union. Countries were clustered into four groups according to their performance in relation to the risk of child poverty and relating three key determinants of child poverty: labour-market exclusion, in-work poverty and impact of government transfers. The authors of the report have concluded that "Group C or the third group consists of Member States with below-average performance in all dimensions: Latvia and Lithuania. Lithuania performs particularly badly in terms of risk of poverty, mainly because of less-effective income support provided to families with children." (TÁRKI & Applica 2010: 16)

These comparisons demonstrate that child well-being in Lithuania at least on a relative level is not improving and signal that child well-being policy has not experienced any turning point yet.

1.1. Integrated Multi-Dimensional Strategy

The Seimas approved the Concept of the State Policy on Child Welfare (hereinafter – Concept) in 2003 (Seimas 2003). The Concept remains the main document issued by the legislative branch of government. In 2005, the Government has accepted the Strategy of the State Policy of Child Welfare (hereinafter – Strategy) and Plan of Implementation Measures of the Strategy of the State Child Welfare Policy for 2005–2012 (Government of the Republic of Lithuania 2005). In 2012, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour approved The Programme of Child Welfare for 2013-2018 and the Plan of Implementation Measures of the Programme. These two renewed documents were based on the Concept. This troika of documents – the Concept, the Programme and its Implementation Plan – is similar to an integrated multi-dimensional strategy that tackles child welfare.

The Concept treats the child welfare as a system of organised social services and institutions, developed to assist children to attain satisfactory standards of living, health and personal and social relations. According to the Concept, this system would permit children to develop their abilities and improve their quality of life with a view to the needs of their families and the community.

The Concept follows the principles of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereinafter – UNCRC) and includes three principles: protection of the child, provision of the child services and active participation of the child in organisation of his/her life.

According to the Concept, **protection** of the child means the right to grow up in his own family and receive professional assistance, the right to be protected from social and individual violence. **Provision** for the child means the right of a child to enjoy resources and services, distributing them between the child and adults; providing particular attention to a disabled child, a child having special needs, and a child who is in danger of experiencing poverty, parental violence and negligence or of becoming involved in criminal activity. **Participation** of the child means the right to act, express his own opinion and exert influence in decisions in the family and society, both

individually and collectively, by developing for the child a social space for his active participation.

The Concept identifies the main challenges of child welfare quite precisely. The approach of the Concept answers the principles of the UNCRC. The list of the problems is comprehensive. According to the national experts, the Concept is one of the best national documents in the field of social policy. Unfortunately, a Strategy of the Concept Framework of the State Policy on Child Welfare and its Implementation Action Plan 2004–2012 that were drafted later are not of the same quality. The Concept recognises its limitations and emphasises that due to insufficient funding at least part of the declared principles cannot be implemented.

The analysis of the child welfare of the Concept starts with the statement that Lithuanian laws are not harmonised with the UNCRC and there are no system of monitoring and data collection and assessment. Following the restoration of independence, Lithuania turned towards reducing State responsibility in the sphere of child provision. Families raising children constitute the poorest segment of society in Lithuania.

The policy on social assistance is based upon a political threshold of poverty; the minimum subsistence level does not meet the actual needs. The portion of universal support to the family is diminishing, with the State orienting itself towards provision of means-tested assistance. Following the closure of many kindergartens and crèches, the right of a child of working parents to pre-school care has become markedly limited.

According to the Concept, the amount of social services funding for the child and his family by individual municipalities is highly uneven. Many municipalities fail to create a network of social services for the child and his family, and only use the services of the fixed state agencies.

The Concept noticed that various institutions of foster care of the child belong to different departments, are under the jurisdiction of different administration levels and have no common system of funding. Decisions regarding foster care of the child are often based on the financial interests of the department and administrative units, rather than those of the child. The reforms of the changing of foster care of the child (settlement in a foster care home, foster family or adoption) have not effected a change in child welfare.

Healthcare system lacks clear priorities in providing services to children. Insufficient efforts have been made to enable a disabled child to lead a full and decent life, develop his abilities to actively participate in community activities. In striving to defend the interests of the child, society is lacking active cooperation between the State, community, non-governmental organisations and population.

The Concept highlights that the right of the child to participate is violated through the relations between the child and the adult, emphasising the child's subordinate role, parental responsibility by interpreting parental authority according to law and tolerating physical punishments. The opportunities for a child to express his opinion in the course of a legal and administrative examination are limited. The press often makes public the subtle details in the life of a child and his family, supplies photos and identity data, in violation of the protection of dignity and the requirements of the UNCRC. Unfortunately, the approach of the Concept has remained in the periphery of Lithuanian social policy process. In all three areas, **protection** of the child, **provision** for the child the necessary resources and services, and **participation** of the child, the Concept revealed the systematic problems.

Alternative report for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that was prepared by independent human rights NGOs does not demonstrate significant progress in the

area of children social policy. “Some “common denominators” can be found, explaining stagnation and regress in the field of child rights and human rights in general, which have been observed during last decade, and especially since the onset of crisis in 2008. First, human rights and child rights failed to appear on political agenda of the Parliament and the Government, except in a few notorious cases that red-flagged the anti-human rights tendencies. /.../. Furthermore, the last 4 years, since adoption by Seimas (Parliament) of the Family policy concept, have been marked by retrogressive tendencies in the area of human right, especially with regard to approaches to children and families representing vulnerable groups.” (Independent Human Rights NGOs 2012: 2)

The main advantage of this package of documents is the consistent child centred approach of the Concept. Despite the fact that the Concept was written 10 years ago the document is still relevant. However, without the proper list of the financially substantiated measures, the Concept has remained a declaration. In the field of measures, the progress is obvious. The list of measures and financial allocations of the Strategy and the Plan of 2004–2012 were lacking proper measures and adequate financial instruments to cope with the problems revealed in the Concept. The Strategy and the Plan of 2013–2018 are better articulated and financially founded. The Strategy and the Plan will be discussed below in the Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of the Report.

1.2. Involvement of Stakeholders and Children

1.2.1. Involvement of Stakeholders

Regardless all shortages in the field of child policy, the official Government has a strong and constructive opposition. The ombudsperson for Child’s Rights is an official, appointed by Seimas and entitled to monitor and control the protection of children’s rights and legitimate interests, to investigate the cases of violation of child’s rights and legitimate interests, also seek to improve the situation of child’s rights in Lithuania. The last two ombudspersons were active enough to embed the Ombudsperson for Child’s Rights as an independent and influential institution, which is protecting children’s rights.

Another strong stakeholder is informal coalition of independent human rights NGOs. This network includes Human Rights Monitoring Institute, Global Initiative on Psychiatry, SOS Children’s Villages Lithuania, Children Support Centre, Lithuanian Students’ Parliament, Child Line, Eurasian Harm Reduction Network, Lithuanian Welfare Society for Persons with Mental Disability “Viltis”, Coalition “I Can Live”, Family Planning and Sexual Health Association, and the Centre for Attachment Parenting. The key members of this informal coalition in autumn of 2005 has launched a monitoring report “Child’s Rights Monitoring in Residential Care and Education Institutions” that disclosed numerous violations of basic rights and freedoms of children living there as well as long-standing systemic problems of institutional care. In August 2012, this informal group have included more NGOs and submitted an Alternative report “Rights of the Child in Lithuania” to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. (Independent Human Rights NGOs 2012)

The Alternative report concludes that despite all the investments and achievements in health and the social care system in the first decade of re-established independence of Lithuania, today there is a strong lack of political will and adequate systematic solutions to implement properly the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Lithuania.

The main problematic areas are as follows:

- strong and rigid institutional child care system;
- ineffective family social support system that does not provide the necessary assistance and discriminate vulnerable children;
- lack of formal inter-institutional mechanisms that would ensure effective implementation of child care, child-friendly legal proceedings, necessary assistance to victims of violence or complex assistance to young people using drugs;
- lack of appropriate and available assistance for children with disabilities;
- lack of sexual education and confidential services for young people.

1.2.2. Participation of Children

Two organisations, the Lithuanian Parliament of School Students and National School Student Council, guarantee the representation of school students.

From 2000 Lithuanian school students every two years are electing **Lithuanian Parliament of School Students** (<http://www.lmp.lt/index.php>). According to the regulations of Lithuanian Parliament of School Students, every Lithuanian school student between the ages of 12-18 is entitled to vote and students between the ages of 15-17 had the right to be elected as members of Parliament. Due to the principle of the general elections, the Lithuanian Parliament of School Students is a unique institution. The Parliament is elected for two years. The election process began with each of the participating schools electing a candidate for Parliament. The candidates then conducted campaigns for election within their district. In the final round of elections, 95 members of Parliament are elected in 50 districts. Lithuanian Students Parliament runs seventh cadence already. Last elections took part in autumn of 2012 and over 300,000 students were electing their representatives.

The idea of Lithuanian Parliament of School Students is twofold: (a) organisation of the election and the active participation of students in the election campaign assist in developing social skills (learning by doing); (b) elected school students parliament is an institution that represents the interests of school students in decision-making processes.

In May of 1999, **the Lithuanian School Students' Union** (hereinafter – LMS) got its official status as a non-profit organisation (<http://www.moksleiviai.lt/>). LMS seeks to represent school students by participating in the elaboration education and youth policies and to become the umbrella organisation for Lithuanian school students. LMS is an active organisation and defending the rights of school students has initiated a number of documents, appeals and public letters (<http://www.moksleiviai.lt/component/content/article/619-pozicijos-rezoliucijos-ir-dokumentai>).

These organisations as well as a majority of less known organisations are organisations of youth leaders. There are no instruments and procedures in place on how to represent the interests of disadvantaged children and youth.

Therefore, it is necessary to put efforts to increase actual participation of children in the decisions that affect them.

1.3. Strengths, Weaknesses of the Overall Approach and Recommendations

The main **strengths** of the Overall Approach and Governance of children social policy are as follows:

Lithuanian social policy has the consistent on the level of principles child-centred approach that is documented in the Concept of the State Policy on Child Welfare.

The comparison of the Programmes of the Child Welfare demonstrates the relative progress on the level of implementation of the principles that are declared in the Concept.

In the field of child welfare policy the Government has comparatively strong stakeholders (the ombudsperson for Child's Rights and coalition of independent human rights NGOs) that occasionally monitor and criticise the actions of the Government.

The main **weaknesses** of the Overall Approach and Governance of children social policy are as follows:

The child welfare is not mainstreamed in the current welfare policy. The fragmented child social policy is lacking consistency and political leadership.

The child welfare policy does not have the system of permanent monitoring.

The Programme of Child Welfare and Plan of Implementation Measures of the Programme for 2013-2018 do not include health, housing, education, children participation, and at-risk-of-poverty prevention issues.

The organisations of children represent the interests of youth leaders. There are no instruments and procedures in place on how to represent the interests of disadvantaged children and youth.

Recommendations in the area of overall approach are as follows:

It is necessary to put efforts to set clear evidence-based policy objectives that answer the approach of the Concept and to mainstream the child welfare policy into the current social policy.

It is necessary to execute permanent monitoring of the implementation of legal acts, programmes and other measures as well as the results of the commitments taken by the state and to evaluate its efficiency. The permanent monitoring of child welfare policy should improve the measures, taking into account the changes in the area of child's rights in economic, social, cultural and other public life.

It is necessary to put efforts to ensure that child's opinion is heard and evaluated by competent professionals and to guarantee child's actual participation in decision making in all matters related to him.

2. Access to Adequate Resources

2.1. Policies to Support Parents' Participation in the Labour Market

The Law on Support of Employment and the Labour Code Policies support parents' participation in the labour market directly, Law on Cash Social Assistance for Poor Residents indirectly.

According to the Law on Support for Employment, the employment support system seeks to guarantee full employment of the population, aims to reduce their social exclusion and attempts to strengthen social cohesion. Employment support system is striving to maintain balance in the labour market and to increase employment opportunities for jobseekers of working age.

The groups of persons who are additionally supported in the labour market include disabled, persons who have completed vocational rehabilitation programmes, persons taking up their first employment according to the acquired speciality or occupation, the long-term unemployed, persons over 50 years of age, persons who have been released from places of imprisonment, persons addicted to drugs, psychotropic or other psychoactive substances, etc.

Among the persons additionally supported in the labour market, one group is directly related with children. Paragraph 8 of Article 4 states additionally that are supported pregnant women, at the choice of a family, a mother (adoptive mother) or a father (adoptive father), a guardian or a custodian who actually raises a child under 8 years of age or a disabled child under 18 years of age. It means that all these employment support measures could be applied for one of the parent of the child under 8 years of age or a disabled child under 18 years of age.

Employment support measures include **general employment support services**, **active labour market policy measures** and **employment support programmes**. **General employment support services** include provision of information, counselling, employment intermediation, planning of individual activities with a view of supporting the employment. Job seekers are guaranteed free of charge information and consultancy services and information about vacancies, free of charge labour exchange services for recruitment procedures, free of charge application of active labour market policy measures in cases of unemployment, and support for job creation. **Active labour market policy measures** include vocational training for the unemployed and of the employees who have been given a notice of dismissal, non-formal education of the unemployed and of the employees who have been given a notice of dismissal, supported employment³, support for job creation⁴, job rotation. **Employment support programmes** cover unemployment prevention, territorial employment support, promotion of territorial mobility of the population, aimed at integration of immigrants and national minorities into the labour market, and other programmes.

Unfortunately, there is no data about the integration into the labour market by the groups of persons who are additionally supported. According the Law on Support for Employment, the institution with the longest list of the competencies in the area of the support of employment is the Lithuanian Labour Exchange with its local labour exchange offices. The representative of Lithuanian Labour Exchanged has confirmed

³ The support for employment is organised for jobseekers willing to start their own business.

⁴ Support for job creation is provided to the employers who are creating new jobs or adapting the already existing workplaces to the disability of the unemployed person and employing unemployed persons under an open-ended contract of employment.

that the Lithuanian Labour Exchange is not collecting any information by the groups of persons who are additionally supported. It means that there is no possibility to evaluate effectiveness of the employment support policies by the different groups of additionally supported persons. Data that is more general indicates that the role of the Active Labour Market Measures is increasing.

The main national financial resource for financing activities that are similar activities of active inclusion is the Employment Fund. Table 2.1 and the Table 2.2 show the expenditure of the Employment Fund. The dynamics of the expenditure of the Unemployment benefits reflects the recovery of economy: the percentage of allocations for unemployment benefits is decreasing; the percentage for allocations for active labour market measures is increasing. It is worth mentioning that support for creation of job places exceeds supported employment by more than three times. In the case of support for the creation of job places, support is allocated for the employers. The only exception was in 2011 when the allocations for supported employment exceeded support for the creation of job places.

Table 2.1. Allocations of Employment Fund (in LTL thousands)

		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
	Spending	328542	351595	630920	496604	455109	421747
1	Active Labour Market Measures	136767	86415	11216	17282	37663	37719
1.1	Vocational training of unemployed	25196	22876	0	2	0	0
1.2	Supported employment	94988	49332	93	8688	20000	8824
1.3	Support for creation of job places	19921	12957	10626	8534	17663	28895
1.4	Territorial mobility of unemployed	0	0	3.4	56.9	0	0
2	Unemployment benefits	98448	152853	538461	399183	342658	276704
3	Maintenance of Lithuanian Labour Market Exchange	66447	77335	67347	46883	65777	68104
4	Other	26879	34992	13897	26255	9011	1500

Source: Ministry of Social Security and Labour
(<http://www.socmin.lt/index.php?734708260>)

Table 2.2. Expenditure of Employment Fund (in %)

		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1	Active Labour Market Measures	41.6	24.6	1.8	3.5	8.3	8.9
1.1	Vocational training of unemployed	7.7	6.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1.2	Supported employment	28.9	14.0	0.0	1.7	4.4	2.1
1.3	Support for creation of job places	6.1	3.7	1.7	1.7	3.9	6.9
1.4	Territorial mobility of unemployed	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2	Unemployment benefits	30.0	43.5	85.3	80.4	75.3	65.6
3	Maintenance of Lithuanian Labour Market Exchange	20.2	22.0	10.7	9.4	14.5	16.1
4	Other	8.2	10.0	2.2	5.3	2.0	0.4

Source: Ministry of Social Security and Labour
(<http://www.socmin.lt/index.php?734708260>)

The data from the Lithuanian Labour Exchange informs the number of persons referred to active labour market policy measures is gradually increasing. As far as unemployment is decreasing, the growth of the percentage of persons referred to active labour market policy measures becomes more tangible.

Bearing in mind current priorities of employment support programme it could be presumed that the majority of resources would be allocated for the youth

employment. During the interview, the official from the Lithuanian Labour Exchanged confirmed this presumption.

Table 2.3. The dynamics of the persons placed into job by Labour Exchange and referred to ALMP measures

	Jul-09	Jul-10	Jul-11	Jul-12	Jul-13
In persons					
Registered unemployed	209911	330589	229185	208362	178949
Placed into job by Labour Exchange	12555	16046	17087	15246	16754
Referred to ALMP measures	6222	5610	5351	6514	7241
In %					
Placed into job by Labour Exchange	5.98	4.85	7.46	7.32	9.36
Referred to ALMP measures	2.96	1.70	2.33	3.13	4.05

Source: Lithuanian Labour Exchange
(<http://www.ldb.lt/Informacija/DarboRinka/Puslapiai/Situacijos.aspx>)

The Labour Code includes number of norms that defend the participation of employees with children in labour market.

An employment contract with persons under eighteen years of age and employees raising children under fourteen years of age may be terminated only in exclusive cases where the retention of an employee would substantially violate the interests of the employer. (Art. 129) Employment contracts with employees raising a child (or children) under three years of age may not be terminated without any fault on the part of the employee concerned. (Art. 132) In the event of reduction in the number of employees for economic or technological reasons or due to structural reorganisations at the workplace, the right of priority to retain the job shall be enjoyed by the persons, who are alone raising children (or adopted children) under sixteen years of age. (Art. 135)

An employee raising a child under three years of age, as well as an employee who is raising a child under fourteen years of age or a disabled child under eighteen years of age on her or her own has a possibility to set part-time daily working time or part-time weekly working time (Art. 146), to resign from overtime work (Art. 154), to refuse to work at night (Art. 155), etc.

An employee raising a child under three years of age, as well as an employee who is on her or her own raising a child under fourteen years of age or a disabled child under eighteen years of age has a priority to choose a shift and time of annual leave. The minimum annual 35-calendar-day leave is granted to employees less than eighteen years of age and employees who are alone raising a child under fourteen years of age or a disabled child under eighteen years of age. (Art. 166)

An employer shall ensure the right of employees to return to the same or an equivalent job (position) after maternal leave on conditions, which are no less favourable to them, including the wage, as well as to benefit from any improvement in conditions, including the wage, to which they would have been entitled during their absence. Men shall be entitled to paternity leave – for the period from the date of the birth of a child until the child is one month old. (Art. 179)

Parental leave until the child reaches three years of age is granted, at the choice of the family, to the mother (adoptive mother), father (adoptive father), grandmother, grandfather or any other relative who is actually raising the child, also to the employee who has been recognised the guardian of the child. The leave may be taken as a single period or be distributed in portions. Employees entitled to this leave may take it in turn. (Art. 180)

Employees raising a disabled child under eighteen years of age or two children under twelve years of age shall be granted an additional rest day per month (or have their weekly working time shortened by two hours), and employees raising three or more children under twelve years of age shall be entitled to two additional rest days per month (or have their weekly working time shortened by four hours accordingly) and paid their average wage. (Art. 214)

As was already mentioned, the **Law on Cash Social Assistance for Poor Residents** regulates parents' participation in the labour market indirectly. The current provisions of the Law are directed towards stimulation of participation in labour market and towards a decrease of dependence on social benefits.

Stimulation of the participation in labour market enforces the regulation that persons additionally are able to receive social benefits even when they leave social assistance and return to employment. Additionally, social assistance benefits are equal to 50% of the average of previously paid social benefits and will be paid for six months even if a family (persons living together) has no right to get social benefit after employment.

Nevertheless, some experts claim, that additional social assistance benefits could have negative implications for the labour market and could reduce employers' incentives to increase wages. (Gruzevskis, Blaziene 2012: 5) The professional community of social workers as well as representatives of social NGOs consider that this additional social assistance benefit is a less significant innovation of the Law on Cash Social Assistance for Poor Residents.

Other amendments of the Law⁵ intend to reduce the dependence on social benefits. According to the draft, the social assistance benefits will be reduced in the following succession (Table 2.4):

Social Benefit (except social benefit paid for child (children), also adult child (children) who study according to the general education curriculum and within the period from the day of completion of the general education curriculum until 1st September of the same year) is reduced to those beneficiaries who are entitled to social benefit for a long time:

- 1) 20% reduction – if Social benefit is paid 12-24 months;
- 2) 30% reduction if it is paid 24-36 months;
- 3) 40% reduction if it is paid 36-48 months;
- 4) 50% reduction if it is paid 48-60 months.

Social benefit is not paid for a period of 24 months if person was entitled to social benefit more than 60 months (except social benefit paid for child (children), also adult child (children) who study according to the general education curriculum and within the period from the day of completion of the general education curriculum until 1st September of the same year).

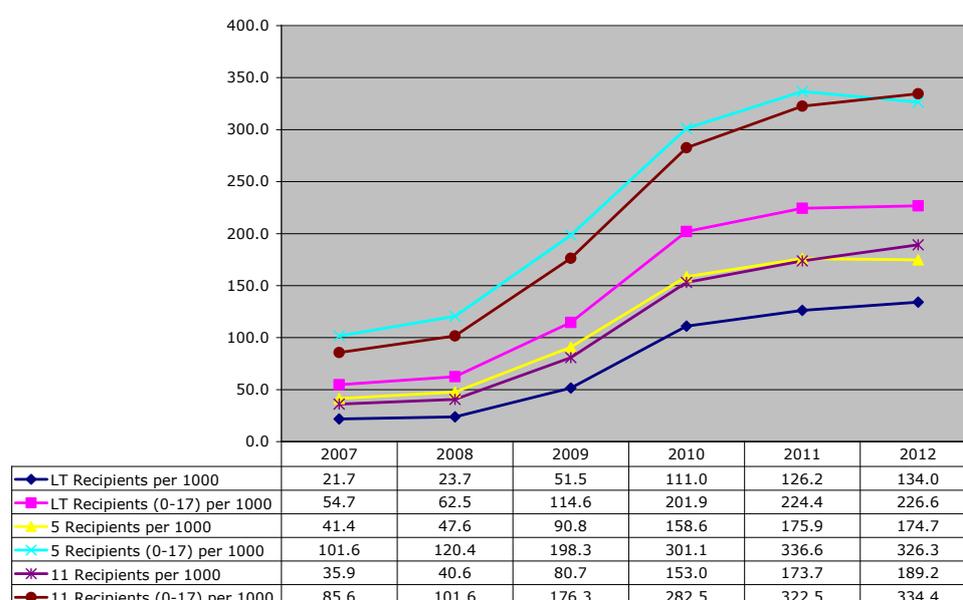
However, a gradual reduction of social benefits not only pushes the social beneficiaries to take paid jobs when the level of unemployment rate in Lithuania still is about 13%. According to experts, this reduction will weaken household consumption especially in families with dependent children. (Gruzevskis, Blaziene 2012: 5)

⁵ LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS PINIGINĖS SOCIALINĖS PARAMOS NEPASITURINTIEMS GYVENTOJAMS ĮSTATYMO 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17, 21, 23, 24 STRAIPSNIŲ PAKEITIMO IR PAPILDYMO ĮSTATYMAS
http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=449277

Table 2.4. Comparison of the reduction of the social assistance benefit (SAB) of the Law on Cash Social Assistance for Poor Residents of 1 December 2011 and the Law of 13 May 2013

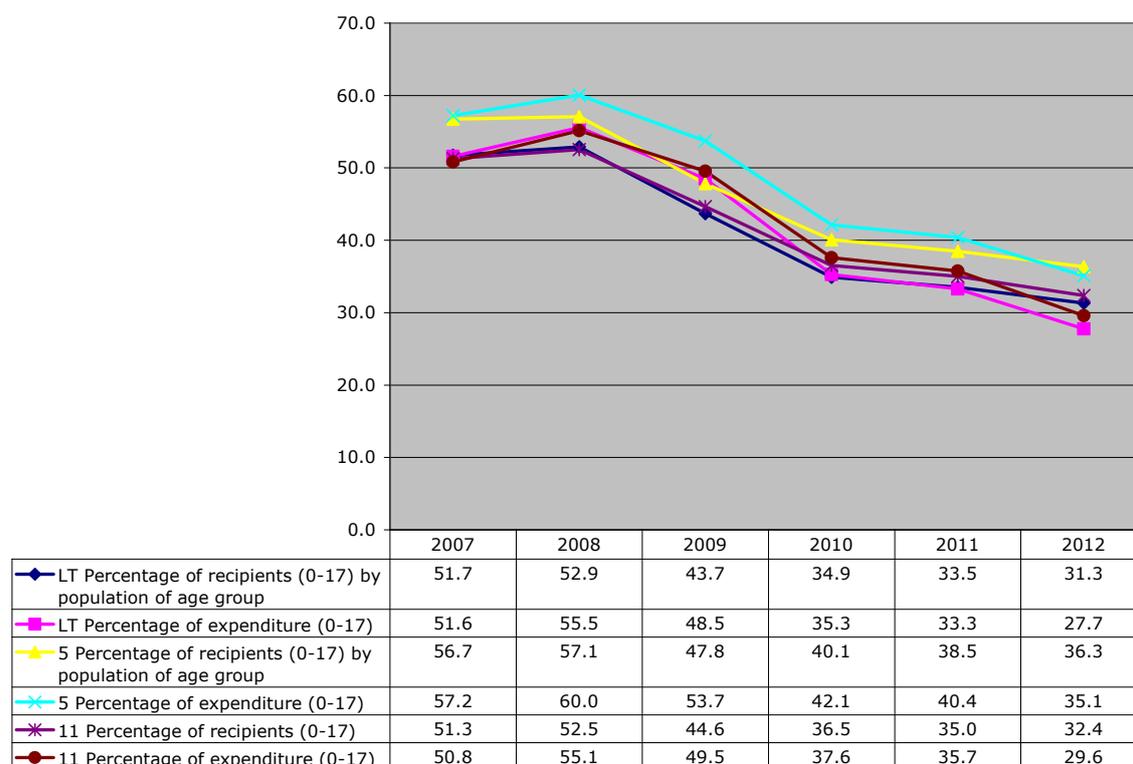
	Number of months of receiving the SAB	
Reduction of social assistance benefit	Law of 1 December 2011	Law of 13 May 2013
20%	36-48 months	12-24 months
30%	48-60 months	24-60 months
40%	more than 60 months the amount of the social benefits for the persons living together, raising a child (or adopted child) or children (or adopted children), is reduced by 40 percent; the social benefits for the single person and for the persons living together, who do not raise children (or adopted children) is not granted.	36-48 months
50%		48-60 months
only 50% of SAB for children		more than 60 months the amount of the social benefits for the persons living together, raising a child (or adopted child) or children (or adopted children), is reduced by 50 percent; the social benefits for the single person and for the persons living together, who do not raise children (or adopted children) is not granted.

Figure 2.1. Comparison of Social Assistance benefits paid for children and all age groups (per thousand of population)



Source: Lithuanian Statistics, SPIS

Figure 2.2. Dynamics of Social Assistance benefits paid for children (0-17) (in %)



Source: Lithuanian Statistics, SPIS

The amount of social assistance benefits during the past years has been increasing (Figure 2.1.). Our calculations show that the structure of social assistance beneficiaries is changing. The percentage of children in the whole structure of social assistance benefits is decreasing (Figure 2.2.) Among the recipients of social assistance, there is an increase in the percentage of the families with fewer children. This change reflects the influence of the economic crisis and the growth of unemployment. The Figure 2.2 demonstrates that the influence of the experiment of the decentralisation of the payment of social assistance benefits in five municipalities was minimal.

2.2. Strengths, Weaknesses of the Policies Supporting Parents' Participation in Labour Market and Recommendations

The main **strengths** of the policies to support parents' participation in the labour market are as follows:

There are legal instruments that support parents' participation in the labour market. These instruments include Law on Support for Employment, the Labour Code and Law on Cash Social Assistance for Poor Residents.

According to the Law on Support of Employment, employment support measures include general employment support services, active labour market policy measures and employment support programmes. The measures of the employment support could be applied for one of the parents who actually raise a child under 8 years of age or a disabled child under 18 years of age at the choice of the family.

According to the Law on Cash Social Assistance for Poor Residents, the persons are able to receive social benefits for half a year after return to employment. This

measure stimulates the participation in labour market and increases the income of the family, consequently the welfare of the children.

The main **weaknesses** of the policies to support parents' participation in the labour market are as follows:

The Lithuanian Labour Exchange is not collecting information by the groups of persons, which are additionally supported in labour market. There is no possibility to evaluate effectiveness of the employment support policies by the different groups of additionally supported persons.

The amendments of the Law on Cash Social Assistance for Poor Residents intended to reduce the dependence on social benefits could weaken household consumption especially in families with dependent children.

The amount of social assistance benefit was set in 2008 and was not reviewed afterwards. It means that due to inflation during the past five years the purchasing power of social assistance benefit was decreasing.

Recommendations in the area of the policies to support parents' participation in the labour market are as follows:

We recommend that the Lithuanian Labour Exchange analyse the data by the groups of persons who are additionally supported in the labour market. The Lithuanian Labour Exchange has the possibility to collect administrative data about the groups of the additionally supported persons.

2.3. Policies to Provide Adequate Living Standards

In Lithuania as well as in other countries family and children benefits include contributory and non-contributory benefits. Non-contributory benefits could be either categorical or mean-tested. Two laws regulate the assistance for children, the Law on Benefits for Children⁶ and the Law on Social Assistance for Pupils⁷.

The purpose of **the Law on Benefits for Children** is to establish the types of benefits for children, their amounts, the categories of persons entitled to benefits, the conditions and procedure for granting and payment of such benefits and financing thereof. The types of benefits regulated by the Law include: a lump-sum child benefit; a child benefit; a benefit for a child of a serviceman in mandatory service; a guardianship (curatorship) benefit; a lump-sum settlement benefit; a lump-sum benefit for a pregnant woman; a targeted guardianship (curatorship) benefit supplement. From 2007, the benefits established by this Law are paid from the funds of the state budget. The procedure for distributing, transferring, adjusting, using, accounting for and controlling the state budget funds allocated for administering benefits is established by the Minister of Social Security and Labour.

Table 2.5 and Table 2.7 demonstrate that according to the number of recipients and the amount of expenditure the main non-contributory benefits are child benefit and birth grant.

Due to the economic crisis, in 2009 Children's Benefits were transformed from categorical to income-tested benefits. Before 2009, the income testing was not applied and child benefits was paid: until 2004 for every child up to 3 years of age, from 2005 2004 up to 6-7 years old, from 2006 up to 9 years old, from 2007 up to 8-12 years

⁶ Law on Benefits for Children
http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=419820

⁷ Law on Social Assistance for Pupils
http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=420175&p_query=&p_tr2=2

old and from 2008 up to 18 years old. Since March 1, 2009, entitlement to the benefit became income-tested for families that raise one or two children aged 3-18 or 21 if in full-time education. Starting from 1 January 2010 both eligibility criteria and the income test were tightened according to the Temporary Law on Recalculation and Payment of Social Benefits⁸.

Table 2.5. Number of non-contributory family benefits' recipients

Category of state benefit	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Child benefit	323 041	320 581	350 658	562 273	495 331	152 036	117 322	107 127
Birth grant	29 524	29 758	30 089	34 697	34 196	34 039	32 850	31 820
Guardianship (curatorship) benefit	11 331	11 731	12 465	12 421	12 430	12 502	12 428	12 121
Pregnancy grant	8 146	7 475	6 665	5 657	6 608	8 222	8 571	8 199
Lump sum settlement benefit	2244	3087	2561	1975	2790	2568	2815	2956
Benefit to conscripts' child ^a	22	15	12	11	2	6	4	6

Lithuanian Statistics (<http://db1.stat.gov.lt/statbank/default.asp?w=1440>)

Restrictions became permanent and since the 1 January 2012 and current regulations are as follows.

According to the Law, a pregnant unemployed woman who, under the Law on Sickness and Maternity Social Insurance, is not entitled to receive maternity benefit, is granted a lump-sum benefit of two Basic Social Benefit (LTL 260) 70 calendar days before the delivery. Every child born receives a lump-sum benefit of 11 Basic Social Benefit (LTL 1,430). Every adopted child, irrespective of the payment of the benefit for the child born, receives a lump-sum benefit of 11 Basic Social Benefit (LTL 1,430).

Every child raised in a family or placed under guardianship in a family and who is between 0 and 2 years old, receives a monthly benefit of 0.75 Basic Social Benefit (LTL 97.5), if the monthly income per family member is less than 1.5 times the amount of the State Supported Income (LTL 525).

Every child raised in a family or placed under guardianship in a family and who is between 2 and 7 years old (or between 2 and 18 years old in a families raising and/or fostering three or more children), receives a monthly benefit of 0.40 Basic Social Benefit (LTL 52), if the monthly income per family member is less than 1.5 times the amount of the State Supported Income (LTL 525).

Every child of the soldier of the compulsory initial military service receives, during the father's service, a monthly benefit of 1.5 Basic Social Benefit (LTL 195).

A child, placed under guardianship in a family, social family or childcare institution, during the foster care period receives a monthly guardianship (curatorship) benefit of 4 Basic Social Benefits (LTL 520). Per each child, placed under guardianship in a social family, is paid a monthly objective addition of guardianship (curatorship) benefit of 4 Basic Social Benefit (LTL 520) for ensuring social family activities. If a child in foster care is supported (receives free lodging and meals) in the dormitory of the general

⁸ http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=440765

education school or vocational school, he receives a monthly benefit of 2 Basic Social Benefit (LTL 260).

Upon expiry of the foster care due to majority, emancipation or marriage, an individual receives a lump-sum benefit of 75 Basic Social Benefit (LTL 9,750) to acquire or accommodate housing. Receives a monthly foster care benefit of 4 Basic Social Benefits (LTL 520) if the individual continues uninterrupted education at the general education school, vocational or high school as a full-time student (including the period of academic leave), notwithstanding if he works or not, as well as in the cases when both parents (the only parent (foster parent)) of individual are dead. The benefit is paid to such individual until he is 24. If an individual is supported (receives free lodging and meal) in the dormitory of the general education school or vocational school, he receives a monthly benefit of 2 Basic Social Benefit (LTL 260).

The influence of the gradual tightening of the requirements of mean testing for Child Benefit to the number of recipients of the Child Benefit and to the amount of expenditure reflected in the Table 2.5, Table 2.7 and Figure 2.3). From the introduction of mean testing in 2009 until 2012, the number of recipients of Child Benefit has decreased from 495 thousands to 107 thousands, more than 4 times. At the same time, the amount and the number of recipients of Social assistance benefit are permanently increasing (see above).

Table 2.6. At-risk-of-poverty rate of children (0–17 years), in per cent

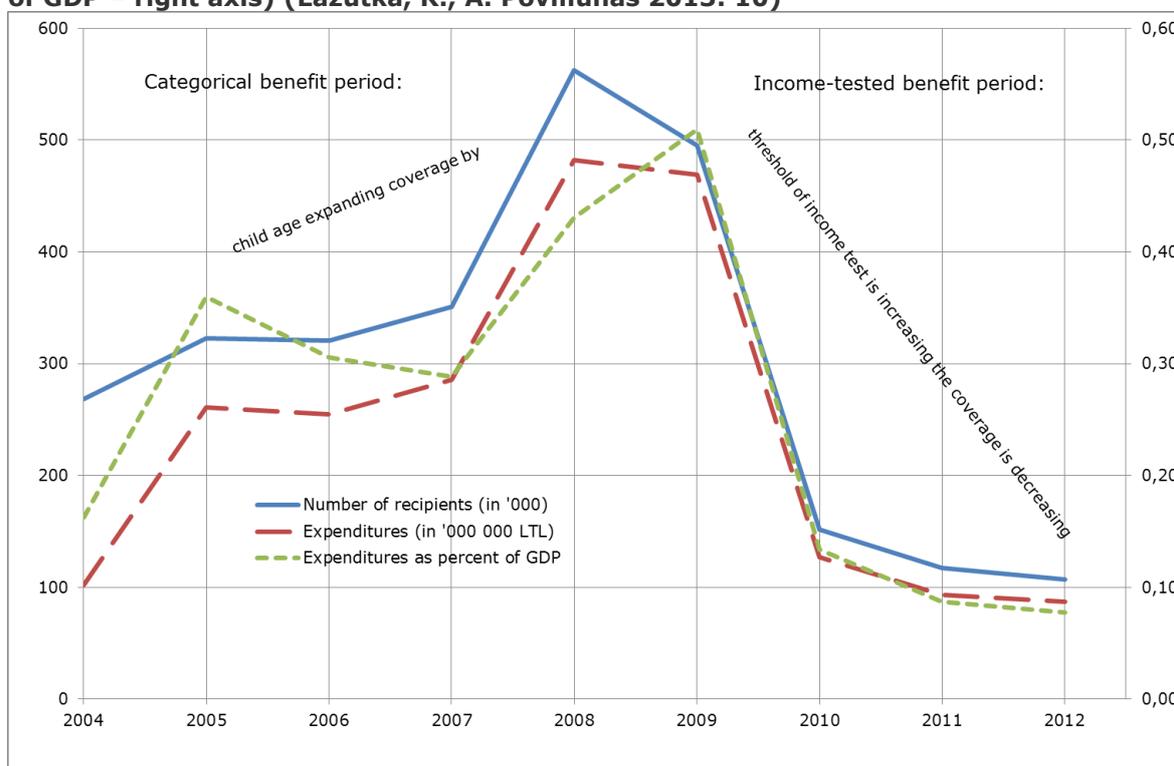
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
	Period of categorical child benefit				Period of income-tested child benefit			
At-risk-of-poverty rate	27.2	25.1	22.1	22.8	23.7	23.3	24.3	20.8
At-risk-of-poverty rate before social transfers, excluding pensions	33.9	32.4	29.2	32.5	37.3	43.6	40.5	35.3

Source: Lithuanian Statistics: (<http://db1.stat.gov.lt/statbank/default.asp?w=1440>)

As far as child benefits are very low (LTL 52 or EUR 15.1) and child benefits do not play significant role in reducing at-risk-of-poverty rate, the impact of these changes to the income of families was comparatively small. After the introduction of income testing for the child benefits at-risk-of-poverty rate of children (0–17 years) has been increased by one percentage point from 22.8% in 2008 to 23.7% in 2009 (Table 2.6.).

The role of contributory benefits for families is much more important and public expenditures on contributory benefits are several times higher than expenditures on non-contributory family and children benefits (Table 2.7.). The amount of maternity (paternity) benefit depends on chosen receipt duration of the benefit. If the insured person chooses to receive the benefit until the child turns 1 year old, the amount of the benefit is 100% of the beneficiary's reimbursed remuneration. If the person chooses to receive the benefit until the child turns 2 years old – the benefit until the child turns 1 year old is 70% and 40% of the beneficiary's reimbursed remuneration until the child turns 2 years old. The amount of a maternity (paternity) benefit for the period of three months after the granting of a childcare leave upon coming into affect of the court's decision on the adoption of a child shall make up 70% of the beneficiary's reimbursed remuneration.

Figure 2.3. The changes of number of recipients of the Child benefit and expenditure on it (number of recipients and expenditures in LTL – left axis, expenditure in per cent of GDP – right axis) (Lazutka, R., A. Poviliunas 2013: 10)



Lithuanian Statistics (<http://db1.stat.gov.lt/statbank/default.asp?w=1440>)

There are no data on poverty of beneficiaries of contributory benefits. However, because of high rates of contributory benefits, those families that are eligible for maternity/paternity benefit in case of pregnancy and childbirth are protected. Nevertheless, there are at least two problems.

Firstly, contributory benefits mainly protect the income of families during the first two years after the birth of the children. The return to the labour market complicates high level of unemployment and shortage of children care services.

Secondly, as far as contributory benefits are paid for the insured people, only two thirds of families are eligible for contributory benefits (Table 2.8.). The Birth Grant is paid for every family with a newborn, maternity grant is paid only for insured patients. The difference between the number of recipients of Birth Grant and number of recipients of State Social Insurance maternity (pregnancy and childbirth) benefit is increasing.

Table 2.7. Expenditure on non-contributory and contributory family benefits, in LTL '000 000

Benefits	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Non-contributory family benefits								
Child benefit	261	255	286	482	469	127	93	87
Birth grant	29	30	31	36	47	49	47	45
Guardianship (curatorship) benefit	62	63	70	68	68	69	69	65
Pregnancy grant	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2
Grant for housing	7	9	10	9	15	14	13	11
Benefit to a conscripts' child	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
State Social Insurance benefits								
State Social Insurance maternity/paternity benefit until child reaches the age of 1 year	135681	164179	277701	493557	701656	567218	442551	336018
State Social Insurance maternity/paternity benefit from 1 year of the age until child reaches 2 year of the age	278443	496218	598716	467916	353597
State Social Insurance maternity (pregnancy and childbirth) benefit	75164	99324	140239	217081	258698	197824	159622	159095
State Social Insurance paternity benefit (until child reaches the age of 1 month)	...	5 497	19162	31799	34145	27959	26646	28379

Source: Lithuanian Statistics (<http://db1.stat.gov.lt/statbank/default.asp?w=1440>)

Table 2.8. Number of persons entitled to non-contributory and contributory birth benefits, in '000

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Birth grant	29	29	30	34	34	34	33	32
State Social Insurance maternity (pregnancy and childbirth) benefit	21	21	26	27	30	24	20	19
The difference	8	8	4	7	4	10	13	13

Source: Lithuanian Statistics (<http://db1.stat.gov.lt/statbank/default.asp?w=1440>)

According to **the Law on Social Assistance for Pupils**, social support is provided for children from low-income families studying at general education schools, vocational schools, pre-school education establishments and other establishments designed to educate children. There are two types of social support for pupils: free meals for pupils and provision of pupils with pupil's supplies prior to the beginning of a new school year.

Schoolchildren, depending a family's (persons living together) income, have the right to free meals, if monthly income per family (persons living together) member is lower than the amount of 1.5 State-Supported Income (LTL 525); provision with pupil's

supplies, if monthly income per family (persons living together) member is less than the amount of 1.5 State-Supported Income (LTL 525).

Taking into account the living conditions of families (persons living together), pupils may be provided free meals also in other cases specified by a municipality which takes a decision on the allocation of social assistance to pupils.

In 2009, the Institution of the Ombudsperson for Children's Rights made an analysis of information on free meals for children, which revealed that in the Lithuanian education institutions there was not ensured a reasonable and proportionate meal plan and due nutritional discipline. Not all municipalities were properly prepared to feed a large number of children, to organise free meals for children appropriately and timely, to ensure the supply of hot food for children and create opportunities to provide hot meals for children buying food.

The price of sets of pupil's supplies (including purchase value added tax) – 120 per cent of the amount of Basic Social Benefit (LTL 156) per pupil during a calendar year. Sets of pupil's supplies for pupils from at social risk families are formed for each pupil according to his individual needs, taking account of the number of pupils in a family and the pupil's supplies already available to them.

Families with children have **special tax allowances**. The flat rate equals 15% in Lithuania for personal income tax. Tax allowances are an amount subtracted from pre-tax income. Basic and additional allowances are applied monthly and are taken into account for withholding tax. Since January 1, 2009, the applicable monthly basic allowance is calculated in accordance with the following formula:

*The monthly general allowance = 470 - 0.2 * (monthly employment-related income - 800)*

This basic tax allowance is applied for each resident. For residents, raising children under 18 years old or older, if enrolled in full-time secondary education and not emancipated, an additional personal income tax allowance (for each child) is applied. The additional monthly allowance is equal to LTL 100 for the first child, LTL 200 for the second and each subsequent child.

Additional tax allowances have no significant impact on income of families with children. It is only LTL 15 (LTL 100*0.15) for first and LTL 30 (LTL 200*0.15) for each subsequent child (2.2% of at-risk-of-poverty threshold for single person, which was equal LTL 691 in 2011).

No social benefits schemes and allowances of personal income taxes analysed above differ depending on the municipality. These schemes are designed and financed on the national level. Municipalities do not have special schemes for family income and children support, with exception of emergency *ad hoc* benefits to individuals and families in case of fire, sudden hard illness, disability, etc.

2.4. Strengths, Weaknesses of the Policies Providing Adequate Living Standards and Recommendations

The main **strengths** of the policies to provide adequate living standards are as follows:

Lithuania has generous contributory maternity/paternity benefits.

The list of the family benefits is quite comprehensive.

Families with children have special tax allowances.

The main **weaknesses** of the policies to provide adequate living standards are as follows:

Contributory benefits mainly protect the income of families during the first two years after the birth of the children. The return to the labour market complicates high level of unemployment and shortage of children care services.

The difference between the number of recipients of Birth Grant and number of recipients of State Social Insurance maternity (pregnancy and childbirth) benefit indicates that percentage of parents who does not received contributory benefits is increasing.

Due to the economic crisis, in 2009 Child Benefit was transformed from categorical to income-tested benefit. The Child Benefit is still income-tested.

Despite quite comprehensive list of family benefits the at-risk-of-poverty rate among "large households and single parent households are, with rates of over 45 percent, extremely high. This is despite the state's recognition of these household categories as major poverty reduction targets (e.g. National Report of Lithuania on Social Protection and Social Inclusion Strategies 2008–2010, Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, 2008). This poor result contrasts with most other EU countries, where at least one of these population groups has a better income position." (Salanauskaite, Verbist 2013: 316)

The study of L. Salanauskaite and G. Verbist does "not reveal any significant design features that would reduce child poverty among single parent families in Lithuania." (Salanauskaite, Verbist 2013: 328)

Additional tax allowances have no significant impact on income of families with children. It is only LTL 15 (LTL 100*0.15) for first and LTL 30 (LTL 200*0.15) for each subsequent child (2.2% of at-risk-of-poverty threshold for single person, which was equal LTL 691 in 2011).

Some **Recommendations** could be based on the study of L. Salanauskaite and G. Verbist (Salanauskaite, Verbist 2013):

"Only an increase in size [of family support] is able to reduce the prevalence of poverty among single parent families in Lithuania." (Salanauskaite, Verbist 2013: 328)

This "study confirms that the best poverty score is not necessarily achieved by the most extensive means-tested systems. On the other hand, 'pure' universal systems are found to be the least poverty effective. A mix of means-tested and categorical benefits that are sensitive to the characteristics of poor families can act as a highly effective tool for poverty reduction." (Salanauskaite, Verbist 2013: 328)

It means that in Lithuania child support policy needs more targeted and well-balanced approach, which rests on evidence-based methodology.

It is necessary to increase the system of childcare services especially in rural areas.

3. Access to Affordable Quality Services

3.1. Education System's Capacity to Break the Cycle of Disadvantage

In 2010, a group of researchers have accomplished a study of social justice in education and have published a book. (Žalimienė et al. 2011) This research was based on data from household surveys. Due to the economic crisis, Statistics Lithuania ceased the household surveys; therefore there is no possibility to renew the indicators. However, the system of vouchers in Lithuanian secondary education was introduced in 2001 and this system still exists. Therefore, the conclusions of the only research how education is reproducing social structure are not outdated. The analysis of the social justice indicators⁹ showed no major changes in terms of social justice in the Lithuanian educational system in the period of 2007-2008. The analysis showed that there are disparities in opportunities of different groups to participate at different educational levels that could be treated as unjust.

3.1.1. Pre-school Education and Care

In Lithuania, pre-school education is provided according to the pre-school programme to children from birth to 6 years of age. Institutional pre-school education is not compulsory and is provided at the request of parents (guardians). In individual cases, for example, in the case of children from socially at-risk families, etc. this education may be compulsory. Pre-school education is provided by state and private nursery-kindergartens, kindergartens, and kindergarten-schools.

Pre-primary education lasts one year. It is provided for 6-year-old children (in exceptional cases – 5-year-old children) and is free of charge, and universally available, but not compulsory. Pre-primary education groups are set up in kindergartens or schools. In more remote rural communities, such groups can be set up at multifunctional community centres or children may be taken on a school bus free of charge to the nearest school where any such group is set up.

Pre-primary education groups are attended by more than 92 per cent of 6 year age children. The earlier age of pre-primary education is under discussion. The experts propose to start pre-primary education from 4-year-old. However, the decision is not accepted yet. There is an-ongoing discussion at The Parliament (Seimas) of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ministry of Education and Science levels about possibilities to make an attendance of pre-primary education programme compulsory in order to ensure that all children have similar possibilities to be prepared for a compulsory school start when they are 7.

Today only in individual cases, for example, in the case of children from socially at-risk families, etc. this education may be compulsory.

The authors of the above-mentioned research concluded, that “at the pre-school level the highest opportunities to participate are among children who belong to urban population, non-single-parent households, and households with no disabled members and those with no children less than one year of age.” (Žalimienė et al. 2011: 85)

The main factors of nonattendance of preschool institutions are living in rural areas, a broken family, and household poverty. These factors limit the possibilities of children

⁹ The researchers have used the following indicators of social justice. The group of indicators on principles of social justice include equal opportunities, accessibility, choice, compensation; indicators of individual level of education involve levels of ISCED, informal education of children; the group of functional indicators include context, process, outcomes and subsequences; etc. (see: Žalimienė et al. 2011: 85)

to participate in preschool education and these children experience systematic social injustice. The index of social justice of preschool education in 2007 was 62.6, in 2008 – 78.9. It means that before crisis the situation in preschool education was improving. (Žalimienė et al. 2011: 67-69)

Some preliminary statements could be based on the conclusions of the referred to research. The researchers have concluded that indicators of increasing social injustice include the decline of the preschool institutions in rural areas and the increase of the number of children per special needs pedagogues.

The data of Statistics Lithuania shows that enrolment in pre-primary education is gradually increasing both in rural and in urban areas, but the difference in urban and rural areas is still very high (Table 3.1). The number of special needs pedagogues in rural areas is increasing.

3.1. Enrolment in pre-primary education at the end of the year by age, place of residence and year

		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1–2	Urban and rural areas	28.1	25.4	24	22.6	27.4	31.4
	Urban areas	36.7	34.9	32.8	34.1	35.4	40.3
	Rural areas	7.2	6.7	5.9	7.5	8.4	9.7
3–6	Urban and rural areas	76.1	79.2	78.7	79.3	80.2	82
	Urban areas	83.3	84.1	84.3	82.8	82.4	81.4
	Rural areas	28.8	34	32.6	35.6	35.6	38.3
1–6 years old and more	Urban and rural areas	59.8	61	59.7	60.2	61.5	64.4
	Urban areas	81	80.8	78.7	76.6	77.3	80.1
	Rural areas	22	25.2	23.9	26	26.5	28.8

Source: Lithuanian Statistics

The interviewed experts claim that the growth of the number of special pedagogues in rural areas indicates the increasing recognition of the children with the needs in rural areas.

3.2. The number of special pedagogues in pre-primary education

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Urban areas	148	203	195	205	92
Rural areas	3	16	12	14	87

Source: Lithuanian Statistics

3.1.2. Primary and Secondary Education

At the secondary level of education, conditions that are more favourable are among those who live in households where at least one member has higher education, urban population and in a household with only one child. (Žalimienė et al. 2011)

The system of education lacks the capacity and measures to break the cycle of disadvantage. Ombudsperson for Children’s Rights reveals the following shortages (The Ombudsperson for Children’s Rights of the Republic of Lithuania 2012: 23-25):

1. Legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania establish the compulsory education for children under 16 years, so the children of this age having no motivation to study further and encountering problems do not receive appropriate help and support.

2. Registration of children of school age is not properly regulated (there are no general requirements to identify the dropouts, unclear division of responsibilities and functions, coordination and inter-institutional cooperation). There are no reliable and effective mechanisms to collect accurate data on the number of dropout from 7 to 16 years. Data on dropouts above the age of 16 is not collected at all.
3. Some children do not attend school due to social and/or psychological reasons, thus the services intended to ensure school attendance not always have an effect because of lack on information exchange, inadequate cooperation between institutions, narrow range of measures applied for the child and his family, lack of systematic cooperation of school and the parents of children drop-outs.
4. According to Lithuanian legislation, the primary and secondary education is free of charge. However, in practice free education concept is not always implemented to the full. The National Audit Office, after the research on funds allocated to the improvement of school conditions (in 2008) made evaluation and found that a students were not provided with free textbooks in all municipalities. In part of municipalities, the parents or foster-parents buy the textbooks.
5. According to the data from the Statistics Department, the number of children in special schools is decreasing, thus the number of students with special educational needs in general education schools is increasing (students with special educational needs compose about 11 per cent of students in general education schools). The children in general education have better possibilities for social integration. Unfortunately, students with special educational needs are not always provided with high quality education services due to the lack of individual help or a negative attitude from the school's social environment.
6. The process of education for children that are placed or sentenced is not organised properly – number of lessons does not match the number of hours set by the laws; the classes are united regardless of legal requirements.
7. Disregard to the provision implemented in the Lithuanian laws, prohibiting discrimination on grounds of nationality, race and origin, sometimes discrimination against Roma children is revealed by organising their education in one classroom separately from other children, thus making their integration into society more difficult.
8. Bullying and violence among schoolchildren is still a problem. Preventive and intervention measures established in the National programme on the prevention of child abuse and assistance for children are not sufficiently effective.

The representative of the Ministry of Education and Science commenting the statements of the Ombudsperson for Children's Rights has formulated the following arguments:

Concerning the statements 1 and 2, the representative of the Ministry claims that the group consisting of the number of parliamentarians and the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science has initiated the monitoring of the adolescents of the 16-18 years of age. This group also initiated the registration of the dropouts above age of 16.

Concerning the statement 4, the representative of the Ministry informs about on-going debate about the need of multidisciplinary and collaborative services for the dropouts and potential dropouts.

Concerning the statement 7, the representative of the Ministry informs that segregation of Roma children mention in the report of Ombudsperson was the single case, which has not repeated later.

Concerning the statement 8, the representative of the Ministry informs about implementation of anti bullying campaigns in all levels of secondary education. All schools have an opportunity to implement OLWEUS programme. Currently more than 30 per cent of schools are participating in this programme. According the latest data, a level of bullying and violence among students is decreasing. For example, during last 4 years this level has decreased from 30.3 per cent in 2008 to 18.6 per cent in 2012.

Unfortunately, none of the contra arguments formulated by the representative of the Ministry of Education and Science as the critic of the statements of Ombudsperson for Children's Rights was documented.

3.1.3. Integration of the Children with Special Educational Needs

The majority of pupils with special educational needs are educated at general education schools together with their peers through inclusive education. General education, vocational education and training, and other programmes are adapted to pupils with special educational needs. These pupils may complete education programmes within a shorter or longer time than that prescribed. Pupils with extensive special educational needs can study at designated general education schools up to 21 years of age.

Lithuania has chosen the way of promotion of integrated education, but the possibility of specialised schools was not excluded. The chosen system should ensure the freedom of choice and diversity of educational institutions. Although the integration of disabled children to regular schools is more intensive because of state policy and implemented measures, but to this day integration is more mechanical than educational.

Due to the lack of assistance specialists for a child (teachers' assistance, etc.), the child may be enabled to receive high quality integrated education, necessary assistance and services; he may be separated (in a sense isolated) from other pupils during lessons. Similar reasons may influence parents' decision to choose child's education via home schooling. Parents of the children with behaviour and emotions disorders or with other behaviour problems are often persuaded to consider child's education at home. Lack of skilled professionals is especially felt in rural areas.

According Ombudsperson for Children's Rights, main reasons of failure of the integration might be as follows (The Ombudsperson for Children's Rights of the Republic of Lithuania 2012: 20-21): schools of general education system are not prepared to accept disabled children; there is lack of special education teachers and other professionals; teachers lack competence; lack of education tools; still exist a negative attitude of teachers to children with mental disabilities; negative and intimidating assessments of integrations process by representatives of special schools; schools community, the disabled children themselves and their parents are not properly prepared for the integration process. The parents should be provided with a possibility to choose the form of education (e.g. between general education school and special classes in general education school) and the relevant information and assistance must be provided.

3.1.4. Recommendations in the Area of Education

It is necessary to improve the access to support and services for family and a child develop social, educational, health and other services for children living at risk families. Particular attention should be given to the creation of services and support infrastructure and its expansion into the rural areas. It is necessary to increase the percentage of the children in pre-primary education especially in rural areas. It would increase the mobility of the parents and consequently their chances to enter the labour market.

It is important to continue implementation of violence and bullying prevention, and introduce mental health promotion programmes in schools and kindergartens on the national scale.

3.2. The Responsiveness of Health Systems to the Needs of Disadvantaged Children

The informal coalition of independent human rights NGOs stresses the contradiction between the ideologically driven dominance of the biomedical component and neglect of psychosocial interventions. The coalition is insisting that in Lithuania reductionist biomedical approach predominates in managing complex societal problems. "Governments were reluctant to move to modern public health approach and to invest in modern psychosocial technologies, while the reimbursement of new biomedical technologies (such as the new generation of antidepressant and other psychotropic medications, or new technologies in genetics and perinatology) was quickly accepted as a first priority. Just to mention as an example, developmental paediatrics does not exist as a subfield of paediatrics, and there is no such course for medical students in universities training future medical doctors. As monitored by NGOs since 2007, investments in biomedical technologies (medications) in the field of mental health care from obligatory health insurance fund (both for adults and children) exceeded investment in psychosocial interventions more than 200 times. This huge disproportion was recognised and highlighted as a serious concern in the State Mental Health Strategy, approved by the Seimas (Lithuanian Parliament) in 2007. However, during the later years no measures have been undertaken to address this systemic problem, and the development of psychosocial interventions for children and adults remains a low priority for the Ministry of Health and for the government." (Independent Human Rights NGOs 2012: 16-17)

In her Comment for the Report of the Republic of Lithuania on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in Lithuania in 2004 – 2008 Ombudsperson for Children's Rights confirms such insights. "Also in this area remain many gaps and disparities, indefiniteness of responsibility for long-term systematic support for the child and family. Specialist observe that so far the infrastructure of mental health services for infants and young children is not designed and systematically implemented on country level, and psychiatric assistance for adolescents meets only minimal standards, lacks flexibility, cooperation of education, health care and social care sectors. Form and content of services does not meet needs and subculture of adolescents. There are no specialised programmes for adolescents. Lack of specialised psychosocial rehabilitation centres is a significant gap providing long term assistance for children / adolescents and their families." (The Ombudsperson for Children's Rights of the Republic of Lithuania 2012: 22).

For example, on 28 June 2007 the Law on Minimum and Medium Supervision of the Child was adopted (entered into force on 1 January 2008, new version came into force on 1 January 2011), which aims to create assistance system for child having behaviour problems. Provisions of the Law, especially on child's minimum supervision (assistance for child in his place of residence, not separating a child from the parents) are not fully implemented in practise, because infrastructure which is needed for assistance, occupation for child is not created, there is a lack of specialists, funding and etc.

3.3. Adequate Housing and Living Environment

Institution of the Ombudsperson for Children's Rights in 2005 and 2008 performed an investigation on problems of rent of social housing (The Ombudsperson for Children's Rights of the Republic of Lithuania 2012: 24-25). The studies have shown that the number of persons included in the list for social housing for rent is constantly growing.

State commitments to provide the social housing for the most vulnerable people are not adequately performed, because the politics performed are not consistent, municipalities do not pay enough attention to the accounting (and accountability) of social housing, legality and validity of the use of social housing and the control mechanisms are unclear, legal regulation is incomplete, etc.

Persons, whose custody finishes when they reach age of maturity, or because of emancipation or marriage, get a one-time allowance for housing (LTL 9,750). Real housing prices are far higher than the payment, so there is no real chance to acquire the housing for children from care institutions.

Living conditions of vulnerable groups of children (Roma, social risk, poor families, children, etc.) may endanger the child's life, health, and safety. For this reason, a particular attention from state and local governments is needed on this issue. The Lithuanian National Roma Integration Strategy ignores the housing and healthcare issues.

Decisions to reconstruct and renovate childcare facilities are critically evaluated as buildings are adapted for large numbers of children. The care institutions do not intend to reorganise their activities in accordance with principles of a family environment.

3.4. Recommendations in the Areas of Health and Housing

Lithuania is leading country in the EU according total suicide rate and in the age group 15-19. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen efforts aimed at suicide prevention among children and youth. In order to increase the prevention it is necessary to support hot call consultations "Youth Line".

It is necessary to develop child mental health services, as recommended by WHO and approved by Seimas in Mental Health Strategy (2007), including mental health promotion, prevention of mental health disorders in primary health care, schools, communities and child-friendly outpatient and inpatient child mental health services.

It is necessary to support adequately the young people whose custody finishes when they reach age of maturity.

3.5. Urgent Policy Improvements Required

3.5.1. The First Case: The Need for Holistic and Integrated Strategy

Analysis of different dimensions of Lithuanian child welfare policy confirms the statement that child was and remains in the periphery of social policy. Regardless of the coherent on the level of the principles, ten years old Concept the current child social policy remains fragmented. Child social policy issues are spread among other social policy areas and are not enough coordinated. For example, the Programme of Child Welfare and Plan of Implementation Measures of the Programme for 2013-2018 do not include health, housing, education, children participation, at-risk-of-poverty prevention issues.

3.5.2. Recommendation

In order to move child policy from the periphery of social policy, it is necessary to develop more holistic and integrated national strategy. Therefore, "it is necessary to put efforts to strengthen children's rights and opt for a child centred approach /.../, to set clear evidence-based policy objectives /.../, to promote integrated and coordinated policymaking and delivery /.../, to develop children mainstreaming /.../." (Frazer, Marlier 2012: 21, 22)

3.5.3. The Second Case: Deinstitutionalisation

In Lithuania, there are three forms of guardianship established: in a family, social family and institution. The aim of the State is to place as fewer children deprived of parental care in childcare institutions as possible.

Table 3.1. Number of childcare institutions and number of children under guardianship (wardship) in childcare institutions at the end of the year

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Infants' homes	institutions	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	children	416	391	372	336	339	362	327
Secondary, special schools and centres for special training	institutions	50	44	45	43	39	37	30
	children	4278	3717	3574	3202	2166	1753	1315
Care homes for children and disabled youth (boarding school)	institutions	4	4	4	4	4	5	4
	children	733	724	711	701	713	709	677
Children Socialisation Centres (special correction care homes)	institutions	4	4	4	4	7	6	6
	children	120	127	92	112	181	163	124
State (county) child care homes	institutions	33	33	33	32	7	7	7
	children	2 772	2 643	2 554	2 267	464	441	407
Municipality child care homes	institutions	21	23	23	32	60	58	57
	children	942	1023	993	1176	2860	2698	2600
Non-governmental child care homes	institutions	14	15	15	20	17	18	18
	children	404	445	453	543	486	555	566
Families (family care homes)	institutions	36	35	37	37	39	47	48
	children	277	258	276	279	302	373	408
Temporary child care homes	institutions	13	13	13	0	0	0	0
	children	313	308	316	0	0	0	0
Care groups in pre-school education institutions	institutions	24	19	21	19	19	14	4
	children	236	192	204	211	138	0	0
In total	institutions	204	195	200	196	197	197	179
	children	10491	9856	9545	8827	7649	7054	6424

Source: Lithuanian Statistics

The main long-term care changes are connected with county administration reform. The data in Table 3.1 demonstrate that after the liquidation of County Governor administrations the number of county (state) child care institutions decreased from 33 in 2006 to 7 in 2012 (-26). Accordingly, the number of children in state (county) childcare homes has decreased from 2,772 in 2006 to 407 in 2011 (Table 3.1.). In the majority of cases these childcare homes moves under the administration of municipalities. The number of municipality child care homes increased from 23 in 2007 and 2008 to 57 in 2011 (+24) (Table 3.1), i.e. mainly in the same amount as the number of the decrease of state (county) child care homes. The shift from county or state administration to the municipality administration could be considered as increasing decentralisation of the system of children care.

Our calculations based on the data of Lithuanian Statistics demonstrate that per cent of children cared in institutions remains is gradually decreasing (Table 3.2). However, the decrease of the percent of children in childcare institutions does not mean that children with special needs are receiving adequate social services. This issue needs further analysis.

Table 3.2. The number and the percentage of children in care institutions

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of children in care institutions	10399	10688	10491	9856	9545	8827	7649	7054	6424
Per cent of the children in care institutions	1.43	1.54	1.57	1.53	1.53	1.46	1.33	1.27	1.18

Source: Lithuanian Statistics

Therefore, important issue of children care is its deinstitutionalisation. More intensive struggle for deinstitutionalisation began in autumn of 2005, when group of NGOs¹⁰ launched a monitoring report “Child’s Rights Monitoring in Residential Care and Education Institutions”. (Globali iniciatyva psichiatrijoje et al. 2006)

An expert team visited 20 facilities throughout the country. Research revealed that life in the institutional environment interferes with successful socialisation, which is the ultimate goal of upbringing. On the contrary, dependence on institutionalised care develops and children lose the skills they had before their placement. Experts state that this is due not only to individual faults of the staff of institutions, but also mostly to long-standing system problems. The outdated institutional care model is an excellent breeding ground for all types of violations and reform must be considered immediately.

Independent experts in their well-known report have stressed that the point of view to the institutional care must be ultimately changed and its mission should be formulated according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the course of the immediate reform, big residential care homes should be replaced by family care or at least small family-type care homes that would ensure adequate socialisation and would prepare children for independent life within society. (See: Global Initiative on Psychiatry and others 2005)

In 2012, the extended coalition published the alternative report “Rights of the Child in Lithuania” for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on the third and fourth periodic reports by the Government of Lithuania report. (Independent Human Rights NGOs 2012) Members of coalition have concluded that the government did not make any progress in the childcare system. “With an unjustifiable delay, the reorganisation of the residential care system was underway. The Plan on Reorganisation of Child Care Facilities Network, approved on 11 October 2007 by the order of Labour and Social Welfare Minister, foresaw that beginning with 2010 the number of places in each of the facilities will not exceed 60 persons, and the work in the institutions will be organised in accordance with the principles of foster families. It is anticipated that by 2015 the number of children in each foster family will not exceed eight. According to the 2009 data of the Statistics Department, only a small minority of children live in small family-type foster homes, while the vast majority still live in large residential care institutions. According to the Social Welfare and Labour Ministry, in 2010, 25 public care institutions were larger than 60 places.” (Independent Human Rights NGOs 2012: 10)

¹⁰ This group included the Global Initiative on Psychiatry, Association of Phone Psychological Support Services, Lithuanian Welfare Society for Persons with Mental Disability „Viltis”, Centre for Child Support, Child’s Rights Ombudsman’s Office and Human Rights Monitoring Institute.

In 2011, the Ombudsman for Child Rights launched an inquiry into the situation of infant homes as medical institutions, raising the issue of high costs of care of children in these institutions and the status of protection of their rights. In July 2011, the President of Lithuania initiated a roundtable conference on the issues of services for vulnerable groups of the population. This conference opened the public debate on serious gaps in the provision of services, including services for children at risk and children with disabilities. The alarming fact of huge investments, including EU funds, still feeding ineffective residential institutions for children and adults, has been raised¹¹.

The Guidelines for Deinstitutionalisation have been approved by the order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour¹². Although more than half of the children placed under guardianship are raised in families of foster parents, a majority of them are linked by blood ties. Nevertheless, during the accounting year a greater part of children deprived of parental care still were placed in a childcare institution.

The guidelines provide for the trends of transition from institutional social care to the services of assistance to a child and family in the community until 2030. According to the Guidelines, deinstitutionalisation aims at forming consistent and coordinated system assistance and services, which would create possibilities for each child disabled or deprived of parental care to receive individual personalised services and required assistance, to be involved in community life and participate in it without experiencing social exclusion. The Guidelines declare the possibility for each disabled or deprived of parental care child to grow in safe environment which would be advantageous for his development in his biological family and where there is no his biological family – in a family of guardians, in special cases, under the conditions which would be as close to family conditions as possible.

The Guidelines promise to create a programme of such deinstitutionalisation and the plan for implementation thereof until the end of 2013. Experts in different areas, non-governmental organisations working in the areas of child rights and the rights of persons with disabilities shall be included in the interdepartmental working group.

However, it is not clear at this stage whether these are the first signs of real change – or whether it will result in yet another unsuccessful attempt to overcome the legacy of the system, which is so skilfully resisting change despite huge evidence of its ineffectiveness and harm. There is no doubt that urgent political decisions are needed to re-start the process of de-institutionalisation in general and in particular, to stop placement of young children in institutional care in Lithuania. Only after these Guidelines will be transformed into political decisions, it would be reason to think that the situation is changing. The majority of childcare homes belong to municipalities that have their own interests and are independent enough to resist the process of deinstitutionalisation.

3.5.4. Recommendations in the Area of Deinstitutionalisation

It is necessary to speed up the process of deinstitutionalisation and to ensure that every stage of the care is individualised and financially independent from the state, and that decisions could be made taken into account the best interests of a child, his needs, status and other circumstances. It is necessary to start implementing The Guidelines for Deinstitutionalisation.

¹¹ <http://psichikosveikata.wordpress.com/2011/04/07/apie-tikruosius-prioritetus/>

¹² Order No A1-517 of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania of 16 November 2012 “On the Guidelines for Deinstitutionalisation of the Social Care Homes of Disabled Children Deprived of Parental Care and Adult Disabled Persons” (Official Gazette Valstybės žinios, 2012, No 135-6912).

In the first place, it is necessary to address the issue of institutionalisation of young children and develop alternative services to eliminate fully institutional placement of children under age 0-3.

It is necessary to take effective measures to promote alternative care in families (family members or qualified and prepared caregivers) for children deprived from parental care.

It is necessary to put efforts to ensure child's relationship with parents (when a child is for some reasons separated from his parents or one of them), to maintain and to strengthen them, if it meets the best interests of a child.

4. Addressing Child Poverty and Social Exclusion in the European Semester

The National Reform Programme reflects the Programme of Children Welfare for 2013-2018 and the measures of implementation that appended it. Plan and Measures of 2013-2018 differs from the Programme and Measures of 2005-2012 by the financial allocations. At least on the document level, Plan and Measures of 2013-2018 are more substantially supported.

In the implementation of the Strategy for Reorganisation of Child Care System, child day-care centres were funded in 2012 where non-stationary day-care services were provided for children and their family members. LTL 7.3 million was allocated for this purpose from the state budget in 2012; in the period of 2013-2018 LTL 84 million are planned.

In 2012, funding was further provided to children's day centres, which provide outpatient day-care services to children and their family members. A tender for projects on the provision of guardian (caregiver) and foster parent search, preparation, selection, consulting and assistance to them was organised and 25 projects were funded in 2012. In 2012, 315 families seeking to become a child's guardian (caregiver) or wishing to adopt children participated in the training under the guardian (caregiver) and foster parent-training programme PRIDE. In addition, assistance was provided to families who take care of or have adopted children, such assistance was provided to 521 guardian (caregiver) or foster parent. Currently, 56 PRIDE programme trainers in Lithuania train future guardians (caregivers). A tender for projects of institutions and organisations providing complex services to a child and a mother (father) in a crisis was organised in 2012; 21 projects were funded.

In order to ensure a child's right to grow in a family and reduce the number of children cared for in child care institutions, a tender for the projects of search, preparation, selection, consultation and provision of assistance to guardians (foster parents) was organised in 2012; 25 projects were funded, LTL 570,000 was allocated for the implementation thereof. In 2012, 315 families willing to become guardians (foster parents) of children or wishing to adopt children took part in trainings for preparation of guardians (foster parents) and adoptive parents under the PRIDE programme. In addition, assistance was provided to families already caring for children or having adopted them; such assistance was granted to 521 guardians (foster parent) in 2012. (NRP 2013: 64-65) In the period of 2013-2018 LTL 7 million are planned for these activities.

It is planned to continue the development of services for families in 2013 by including nongovernmental organisations and encouraging communities to be more active: non-stationary social day-care services for children and families, childcare in families will be developed, future guardians (foster parents) of children will be prepared, comprehensive services for child victims of violence will be provided. Non-governmental organisations will be funded when implementing the Children Welfare Programme for 2013-2018.

Funding in a way of tender for non-governmental organisations working in the area of the protection of children's rights is planned to be allocated in 2013. The implementation of the European Economic Area Financial Support Programme aimed at children and youth at risk is planned for in 2013. The development of activities of children day centres and open youth centres is planned through the use of the funds of the European Economic Area Financial Support. A centre for the provision of specialised services for child victims of violence or sexual abuse, and their family members is planned to be established in 2013.

Non-governmental organisations working in the field of family welfare will be financed when implementing the National Demographic (Population) Strategy. 22 projects are planned to be funded in 2013.

One of the key tasks for 2013 is to prepare the action plan for the reduction of social exclusion for 2014–2020 with a special focus on children and youth. The aim is to put all the efforts for the action plan to be based on an all-inclusive analysis of social issues as well as the associations with various policy trends (employment, education and science, health care, culture, regional policy, etc.). Significant attention will be devoted to making social partners and the non-governmental sector more active not only in the preparation of an action plan, but also when implementing and assuming or sharing the responsibility for the fulfilment of target objectives. New ways of promoting participation in solving issues of poverty and social exclusion will be searched for by cooperation, with a particular focus on social innovations at the local level in the implementation of the policy for reducing poverty and social exclusion.

The principle “money follows student” was implemented in all education sectors. The percentage of children aged 1-6, who attend pre-school and pre-primary education institutions, increased. The ideas of inclusive education were further implemented: only 1.2% of students with special educational needs are educated in special institutions or classes. The computer literacy and entrepreneurship skills of students and of the whole society were improved, while the level of students’ civic knowledge remained almost the same.

The aim is to reduce the share of 18-24 year-old early school leavers to no more than 9% in Lithuania. The share of individuals leaving the education system early was 8.7% in 2009, 8.1% in 2010 and 7.2% in 2011. Large gaps remain between urban and rural areas (4.6% and 12.2% respectively in 2011). The main causes for such increasing regional differences are considered to be inadequate school network, underdeveloped infrastructure of educational support, and insufficient qualifications and competences of teachers.

Measures implemented include:

- As from 2011 to the end of 2012, 21 non-state pre-primary education institutions were established under the Pre-primary and Pre-school Education Development Programme for 2011-2013. Almost 6,000 parents raising preschool children were provided with a possibility to educate them in state, municipal or non-state institutions in accordance with the pre-school education programmes. According to the data of 10 December 2012, there were 87,872 children studying under the pre-school education programme. The accessibility of pre-school education grew significantly in rural areas, to 19.58% (it was 6.22% in urban areas). LTL 7.08 million was allocated from the EU SF project “Development of Pre-Primary and Pre-School Education” in 2012. During the 1st – 3rd quarters of 2012, 4,333 pre-school education baskets were funded under the methodology of the student’s basket. It is expected that high-quality education of pre-schoolers will make it easier for children to go over to the formal education;
- During the implementation of the measures of Special Education Development Programme for 2009–2013, the following projects funded from the EU structural funds were continued to be implemented in 2012: “Preparation of Special Teaching Aids, Phase II”, “Development of Education Forms of Children with Special Education Needs, Phase II”, “Reorganisation of Special Schools, Establishment of Methodological Centres”, “Development of Quality and Efficiency of Student Assistance, Phase II”;

- During the implementation of the National Youth Policy Development for 2011–2019, a working group prepared the guidelines for improvement of children’s education in minority languages in 2012; also, following the provisions of children’s education in minority languages and guidelines for improvement of children’s education in minority languages, an action plan was implemented;
- During the implementation of the National Education Strategy for 2003–2012, school autonomy development models and projects were prepared in 2012 (2 publications were published: “A model for leadership development in schools” and “Instruments and Methodology for Longitudinal Research of Educational Leadership Expression”), the implementation of the formal studies programme “Educational leadership” was started, 15 municipal and school leadership models were prepared.

5. Mobilising relevant EU financial instruments

In implementation of the Priority 1 “High Quality Employment and Social Inclusion” of the Operational Programme for the Development of Human Resources for 2007–2013 administered by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, the following tasks were sought:

1. to improve adaptability of workers and enterprises to the needs of the market,
2. to promote employment and participation of people in the labour market,
3. to enhance social inclusion.

According to the Table 1, the children in the projects for European Social Fund are represented in three target groups: children growing in the families at social risk, disabled children and children deprived of parental care.

Table 5.1. Projects by target groups as on 1 May 2013

Target group	Number of projects	Amount allocated from the EU funds, LTL million
Adults with disabilities	35	114.79
Families at social risk	31	37.83
Elderly persons	9	12.31
Disabled children	6	10.27
Adults at social risk	11	14.2
Children deprived of parental care	16	29.62
Institutions providing mixed social services	79	133.97
Employers and jobseekers and persons seeking for professional career	1	73.19

Source: Social Report 2012-2013

The analysis of the search in the portal of EU support confirms that the child social policy is fragmented. The supported projects deal with very different issues: children trafficking, TV show, reconstruction of the premises, and Master degree programme for the social workers acting in multicultural settings, etc. Two explanations are possible – either the search system of the portal is inadequate, or EU support for Lithuanian children is lacking strategic priorities and coherent approach.

Table 5.2. Projects including children from the portal www.esparama.lt (EU support)

Title and Years of Implementation	Organisation	Amount LTL	Short description
Elaboration and Implementation of the Tools Preventing Children's Trafficking 2013-2015	Organisation Save the Children Lithuania	408,010	The authors of the Project claim that children's trafficking in Lithuania is important problem. The Project aims to elaborate the prevention tools and to decrease the level of trafficking. The objectives of the Project include: (1) information of the general public and interest groups, (2) accomplishment of the interdisciplinary supervisions.
Preparation and Implementation of Joint Degree Master Programme "Social work with children and youth" 2012-2015	Mykolas Romeris University	782,085	To elaborate and implement international joint degree master programme "Social work with children and youth". The distinctive feature of the programme that graduates will be study how to work with the children and youth in different multicultural settings.
Lithuanian Children of the Millennium 2011-2014	Organisation First Coffee	1,992,400	TV show that includes quizzes of students of different age.
Children from Lakštingalų Street 2011-2013	Vilnius Centre for Special Education "Aidas"	288,633	The project includes the provision of special pedagogic services for the children with special needs.
The Development of the Infrastructure of Family Home 2011-2013	Lithuanian Agency "SOS Children" Panevėžys Division	1,058,821	The project includes reconstruction of the premises for the provision of special social services for the social risk families.
Care of Children when Parents are Working: Integration into the Labour Market the Representatives of Families at Social Risk and Provision of Care Facilities for their Children in Rural Areas 2009-2012	United Nation Development Programme	1,662,877	The project includes the provision of children care facilities for so-called families at social risk. On 31 December 2012, 10,389 social risk families raising 21,303 underage children were included in the register of social risk families with children of the municipalities of the Republic of Lithuania. In 2012, 1,766 social risk families with 3,140 children were included in the register. The project is based on the assumption that safe care of the children will facilitate the return to the labour market.

Source: <http://www.esparama.lt/>

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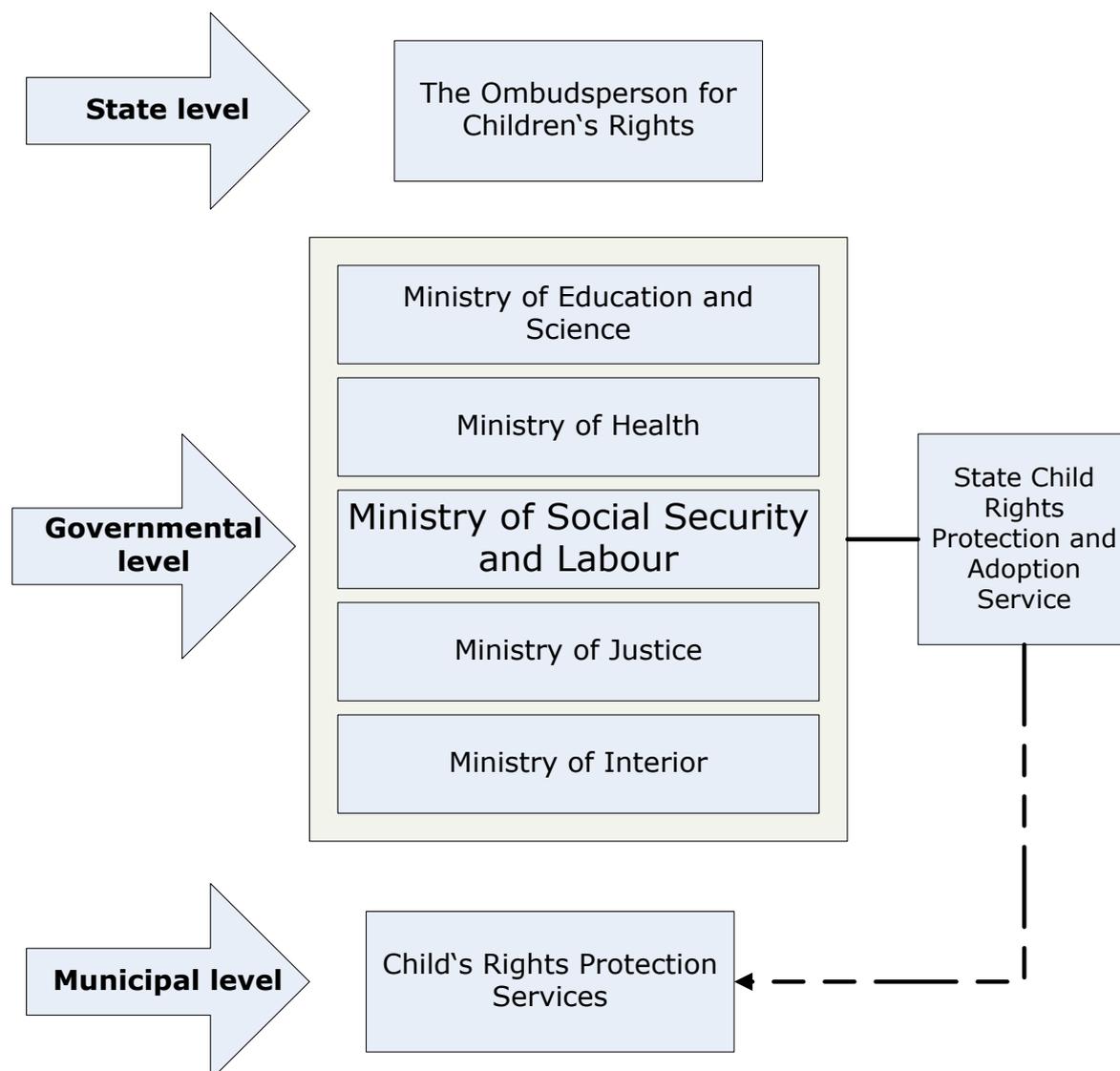
Appendix 1. Legal Regulations on Children Rights Issues

1. Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (1992)
2. Law on Fundamentals of Protection of the Rights of the Child (1994)
3. Civil Code (2000)
4. Law on Youth Policy Framework (2003)
5. Law on Protection Against Domestic Violence (2011)
6. Law on Children’s Maintenance Fund (2006)
7. Law on Benefits for Children (1994)
8. Law on Social Assistance for Pupils (2006)
9. Law on Social Families (2010)
10. Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information (2002)
11. Concepts, strategies and national programmes for implementation and protection of children’s rights, etc.
 - a. The Concept of the Reform of Child’s Rights Protection System (adopted by the Resolution of Seimas 2012);
 - b. The Strategy of Reorganisation of Child Guardianship (Curatorship) System and Plan of Measures of It’s Implementation 2007-2012 (adopted by Resolution of Government);
 - c. The National Programme on the Prevention of Violence Against Children and Help to Children 2011-2015 (approved by Order of the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour);
 - d. The Juvenile Justice Programme 2009-2013 (approved by Resolution of Government);
 - e. The Programme Concerning Children’s Returning To Schools (approved by Order of the Minister of Education and Science, 2010)
 - f. The Programme of Child Welfare for 2013-2018 Years
 - g. Plan of Implementation Measures of the Programme of Child Welfare for 2013-2018 Years

ETC.

Source: Ombudsperson for Children’s Rights of the Republic of Lithuania 2012b

Appendix 2. The Main Institutions for Protection of Rights of the Child



Source: Ombudsman for Children's Rights of the Republic of Lithuania 2012b

Appendix 3. Co-Operation on the Protection of Rights of the Child



Ministry of Social Security and Labour	The Ombudsperson for Children's Rights	Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania
Ministry of Education and Science	Lithuanian Parliament of Student	Association of Directors of Child Foster Homes
Ministry of Health	Confederation of NGO's of Children	Association of Heads of Child Rights Protection Services
Ministry of Interior	NGO Save the Children	Association of Chiefs of Local Authorities in Lithuania
Ministry of Justice	State Child's Rights Protection and Adoption Service	National Assembly of Active Mothers

Source: Ombudsperson for Children's Rights of the Republic of Lithuania 2012b

Appendix 4. Municipal Institutions and Protection of Rights of the Child

Protection of rights of the child shall be guaranteed by the appropriate

- Municipal board
- Municipal executive institutions,
- Protection of rights of the child institutions (services),
- Police inspectors in charge of minors' (youth) affairs,
- Schools
- Other institutions, which prepare and implement measures for protection of rights of the child, and prevention of violations of children's rights.

Corresponding laws and other legal acts shall establish the activity and competence of these institutions.

Child's Welfare Commissions of Municipalities Administration

Representatives of structural units of the administration of municipality, police, prosecutor office, social services, educational, health and other institutions, that participate in prevention activities

Child's Welfare Commissions of Schools

School director, deputy director for education, specialist for educational assistance, health care specialist, form masters, teachers, parents, representatives of community, etc.

Councils for Protection of Rights of the Child of Municipal Communities

(representatives of municipal institutions, institutions of the protection of the rights of the child, police, educational, childcare establishments, children (youth) organizations, schoolchildren councils, public organizations, religious communities, etc.)

Source: Ombudsperson for Children's Rights of the Republic of Lithuania 2012b

