



# **European Centre of Expertise (ECE) in the field of labour law, employment and labour market policy**

Labour Market Policy Thematic Review 2018: An in-depth analysis of the emigration of skilled labour

Lithuania



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## **1 Introduction: the demographic and labour market situation in Lithuania**

According to Statistics Lithuania (SL), at the beginning of 2016, the estimated resident population of Lithuania was 2.89 million, i.e. almost 33 000 (1.1 %) less than at the beginning of 2015. During 2005–15, the resident population in Lithuania fell by 466 600, or 13.9 %. SL estimates that in 2005–15, due to negative net international migration, the population declined by 334 900 (71.8 % of the total decline), and due to the natural decrease by 131 700 (28.2 % of the total decline) (SL, 2016).

In 2016, women accounted for a slightly higher share of Lithuania's resident population than men: females accounted for 54 % and males for 46 % of the total population. According to SL, in 2016, children under 14 years accounted for 14.7 %, 15 to 64 year-olds accounted for 66.3 % and those above 65 years made up 19.0 % of the population in Lithuania.

Based on SL data, in 2016, 30.4 % of the country's population had higher and/or post-secondary education and almost 34.6 % had special upper secondary/upper secondary/special lower secondary education.

According to SL, the employment rate among people aged from 15-64 has been steadily growing in Lithuania since 2010 and reached 69.4 % in 2016, showing an increase of 11.8 percentage points over the given period (2010-16). Similarly, the unemployment rate has been gradually falling since 2010 making up 8.1 % in 2016. The same trends are observed in job vacancies analysis: the number of job vacancies almost tripled in Lithuania from 2010-2016 (from 6 600 to 16 200).

The analysis of unemployment rates by sex in Lithuania in 2005-16 shows that men had higher unemployment rates than women for nearly the whole period under discussion. In 2016, the unemployment rate for men in Lithuania was 9.3 % and 6.8 % for women.

Lithuania is a country of outgoing migration and one of a few migrant-sending countries in the EU. Lithuania's population drop is approximately 30 000 people on average per year. According to data from SL, Lithuania's population has fallen by 845 000 since 1990, about 23 % of the country's population. 483 000 people migrated from Lithuania between 2005 and 2015 (SL, 2016). Lithuania is among the countries with the highest rate (7.2 %) of active, highly educated people of the total population having left within the past ten years (European Commission, 2016).

In the meantime, immigration in Lithuania remains low, and has only a symbolic compensatory effect. According to SL, 148 100 people migrated to Lithuania between 2005 and 2015. Negative net international migration during this period was 334 900 people. For the past decade, Lithuania has had the highest negative net migration in the EU. Such massive emigration has a negative impact on the economic and social development of the country and, in turn, spurs further migration from Lithuania.

The decreasing number and supplies of high-skilled workers reduce production development opportunities. Smaller regions, more remote from bigger cities, are seeing a particularly dramatic fall in supplies of skilled labour. Labour resources in such territories are shrinking as a result of two reasons: (1) internal migration (particularly due to active youth migration to bigger cities) and (2) external migration. Municipalities with predominant rural population structure experience the closing of comprehensive schools, shops (particularly at the border with Poland) and service companies.

Emigration of children (aged 0-15), increasing since 2010, plus declining birth rates render it necessary to reform the network of higher education institutions to reduce the

number of institutions and improve the quality of higher education (this was also influenced by the growing number of youth going abroad for tertiary education).

Despite the negative effects of emigration, Lithuania's economy showed a reasonably steady growth trend in 2016-17 accompanied by improving living standards, increasing employment and lower unemployment rates.

## **2 Emigration of skilled labour**

### **2.1 General trends of international migration**

During 2005-15, Lithuania witnessed the annual emigration of 44 000 permanent residents of the country. With considerably lower levels of immigration over this period, Lithuania lost 30 500 of its population on average per year. Accordingly, the crude emigration rate (per 1000 population) stood at 14.2 and the crude net international migration rate (per 1000 population) was -9.8 in 2005-15 (Table 1).

*Table 1. International migration in Lithuania in 2005-15*

	<b>Emigration</b>	<b>Immigration</b>	<b>Net international migration</b>	<b>Crude emigration rate (per 1000 population)</b>	<b>Crude immigration rate (per 1000 population)</b>	<b>Crude net international migration rate (per 1000 population)</b>
2005	57 885	6 789	-51 096	17.4	2	-15.4
2006	32 390	7 745	-24 645	9.9	2.4	-7.5
2007	30 383	8 609	-21 774	9.4	2.7	-6.7
2008	25 750	9 297	-16 453	8.1	2.9	-5.2
2009	38 500	6 487	-32 013	12.2	2.1	-10.1
2010	83 157	5 213	-77 944	26.9	1.7	-25.2
2011	53 863	15 685	-38 178	17.8	5.2	-12.6
2012	41 100	19 843	-21 257	13.7	6.6	-7.1
2013	38 818	22 011	-16 807	13.1	7.4	-5.7
2014	36 621	24 294	-12 327	12.5	8.3	-4.2
2015	44 533	22 130	-22 403	15.3	7.6	-7.7
<b>Average</b>	<b>43 909</b>	<b>13 464</b>	<b>-30 445</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>-9.8</b>

*Source: Statistics Lithuania*

The highest levels of emigration in Lithuania were seen in 2010-11. This was strongly underpinned by the introduction of new legislation. In particular, amendments to the Law on Health Insurance of the Republic of Lithuania were adopted, whereby all residents registered in Lithuania were required to pay compulsory state health insurance contributions. This requirement was also binding for emigrants who had previously not declared their departure. To avoid such payments, emigrants who had left the country several years previously but had not officially declared their departure hastened to do so in 2010. But even after Lithuania's economic recovery from the crisis, migration outflows remain very high in Lithuania.

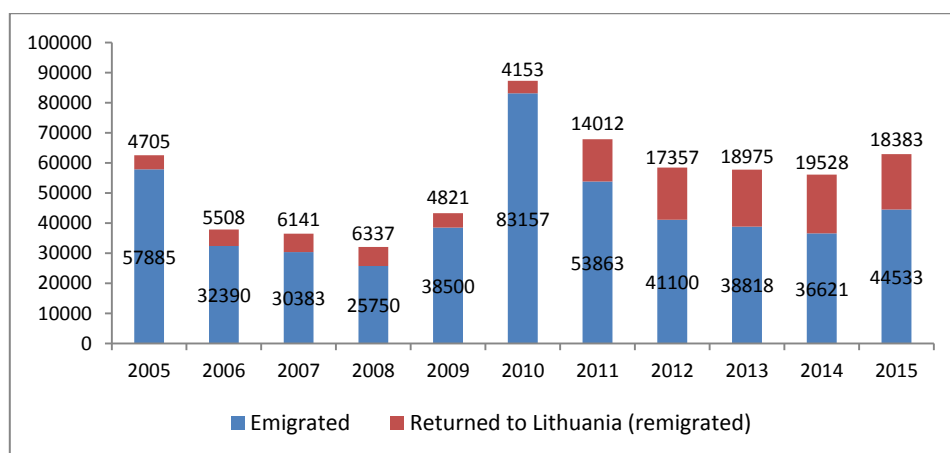
The main destination countries for migrants remained the UK, Ireland, Germany and Norway, i.e. countries with considerably higher average standards of living compared to Lithuania and with minimum wages significantly higher than the minimum wage in Lithuania. For example, the minimum monthly wage in Ireland, Germany and the UK

was around EUR 1 500 in 2016, roughly four times higher than the minimum monthly wage in Lithuania (EUR 380).

### Return migration in Lithuania

Generally, high migration outflows are balanced by returning migrants (re-migrants) and newly arriving immigrants. But this is not the case for Lithuania; re-migrants do not fully compensate for emigration although the number of returnees is growing (it increased approximately threefold compared with the period 2005–10) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Citizens of the Republic of Lithuania who returned (re-migrated) to Lithuania in 2005-15



Source: Statistics Lithuania

The situation does not change much even if migration inflows to Lithuania from other EU and non-EU countries are taken into account. In 2015, there were only 3 700 immigrants from other countries (Table 2). Most foreign nationals immigrate from Belarus, Russian Federation and Ukraine.

Table 2. Return migration and other inflows to Lithuania from EU and non-EU countries

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Immigration (total)	6 789	7 745	8 609	9 297	6 487	5 213	15 685	19 843	22 011	24 294	22 130
Return migration (remigration of Lithuanian citizens)	4 705	5 508	6 141	6 337	4 821	4 153	14 012	17 357	18 975	19 528	18 383
Immigration of other EU and non-EU citizens	2 084	2 237	2 468	2 960	1 666	1 060	1 673	2 486	3 036	4 766	3 747

Source: Statistics Lithuania

The number of people coming back to Lithuania has increased insignificantly almost every year since 2011, showing a more than three-fold increase compared to 2005. Yet, it is difficult to say whether such trends stem from migration policy pursued in Lithuania, the country's economic growth or aggravated economic situations in target migration countries (higher unemployment, tighter conditions for emigrants to receive social benefits, etc.), or if they are rather driven by personal reasons. Studies (Erentaitė et al., 2015; Žvalionytė, 2015) show that micro factors (events and changes in personal life or



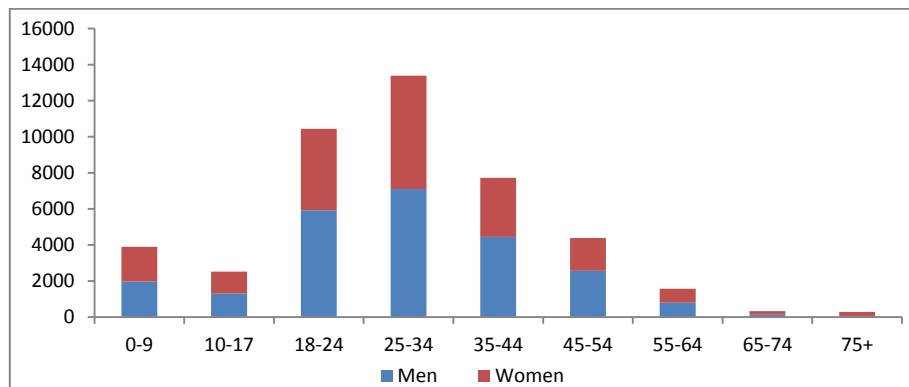
lives of close people, critical situations, etc.) play a key role in taking the specific decision to return to Lithuania. It is therefore difficult to answer the question of how permanently movers stay abroad. Equally, 'some of the participants of the study who faced the greatest difficulties in gaining foothold in Lithuania had already made unsuccessful attempts to return to Lithuania. Following a certain period of time, they were forced to repeatedly leave abroad after failing to find the desired employment or becoming disappointed with available opportunities in Lithuania. It can be said that this group lives as if in a vicious circle of forced migration, which could be broken by successful adaptation in Lithuania. However, successful adaptation does not take place, thus these migrants are drawn on yet another circle of forced migration' (Erentaitė et al., 2015).

According to experts, 'the increase in return migration recorded in 2011 should be evaluated with caution, for, rather than real returns, the data could reflect mere formal return declarations by emigrants seeking to (once again) benefit from the Lithuanian health care system' (Sipavičienė, Stankūnienė, 2013).

## 2.2 Characteristics of emigrants

**Gender.** SL data show a slight predominance of male migration from Lithuania over the past decade, but the relative proportion of male and female emigrants is similar. For example, in 2015, men accounted for 54.6 % and women for 45.4 % of the total number of emigrants (Figure 2).

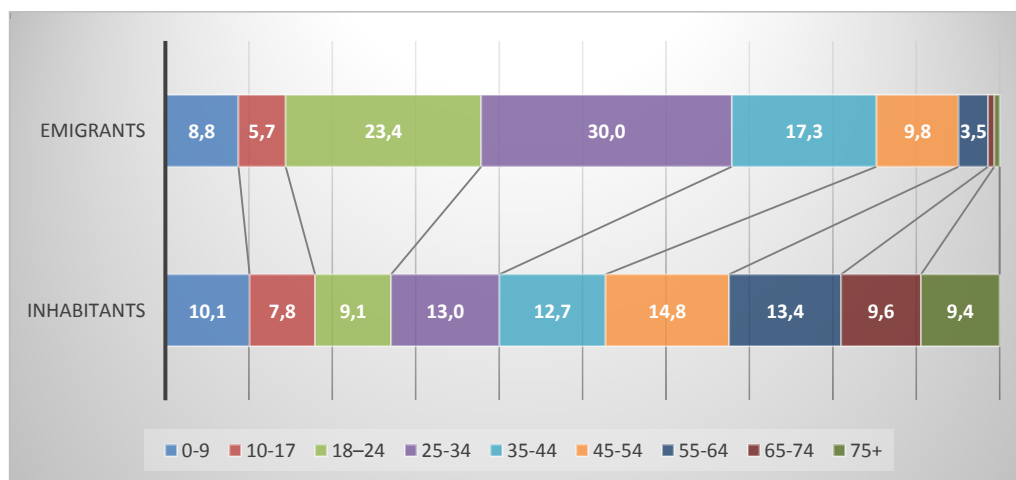
Figure 2. Emigrants by age group and gender in Lithuania in 2015



Source: Statistics Lithuania

**Age.** Importantly, most (approx. 70 %) emigrants (both male and female) are aged 18-44. Furthermore, the age structure among emigrants differs significantly from Lithuania's average. The groups of young and middle-aged adults (aged 18-24, 25-34 and, to an extent, 35-44) are considerably larger among emigrants while those of children and, particularly, older people are smaller (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Lithuanian inhabitants (at the beginning of 2016) and emigrants (in 2015) by age group, %

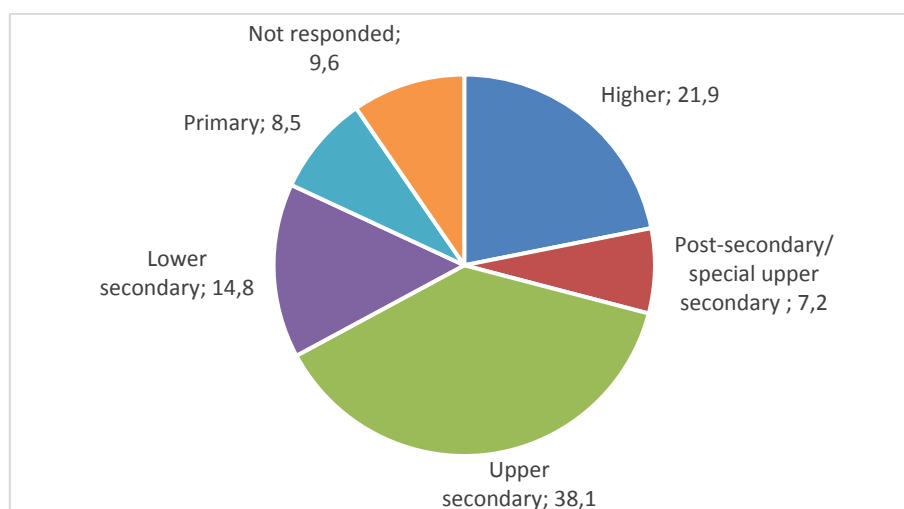


Source: Statistics Lithuania

**Education.** Unfortunately there are no fully reliable, representative studies/datasets in Lithuania on the educational level of emigrants. Information from different studies/datasets is inconclusive.

According to SL, approximately 30 % of non-return emigrants from Lithuania in 2011 had higher and/or post-secondary/special upper secondary education (this information is based on a combination of two different databases – on non-return emigration from Lithuania and Census 2011). In 2011, the share of emigrants with upper secondary education was 38.1 %. Emigrants with primary and lower secondary education accounted for approximately 23 % (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Non-return emigrants from Lithuania by education in 2011, %



Source: Statistics Lithuania

Although the different age structure and different classification of educational attainment of the moving and staying population in Lithuania does not enable a full comparison of educational data, from the information above, it can be assumed that the educational level of migrants is rather similar compared to the overall educational level of the Lithuanian population. Based on SL data, in 2016, 30.4 % of the country's population

had higher and/or post-secondary education and almost 34.6 % had special upper secondary/upper secondary/special lower secondary education.

Similar results were obtained from the research on the reasons for emigration of Lithuanian residents and its consequences for the Lithuanian economy (Rudžinskienė and Paulauskaitė, 2014) and information collected under the framework of the Global Lithuania Programme 2011-19 (for more details, see Chapter 'Findings of the "Global Lithuania" research'). According to the research 30.9 % of 18+ years old emigrants had higher and post-secondary education; according to the Programme, almost 32 % of Lithuanians living abroad, aged 15 and above, had higher or post-secondary education (SL, 2014).

Other sources, however, (Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė et. al., 2017) provide different information: approximately 64 % of emigrants have higher education and 15 % of them are masters of doctors of sciences. We can therefore presume that SL might have more comprehensive information compared to the research findings since in the latter case, researchers may not succeed in accessing emigrants with lower education in the destination country.

*Employment/unemployment.* Emigrants who had been employed prior to moving from the country were diversely distributed by the areas of economic activities. Yet, some economic areas dominate. Prior to leaving Lithuania, the largest proportion of emigrants (more than one-fifth, 21.9 %) had been employed in wholesale and retail trade and in motor vehicle repair; 18 % in manufacturing; 13.4 % in transport and storage; 8.8 % in accommodation and food service activities; and 6.4 % in administrative and support service activities (Table 3).

*Table 3. Emigrants by previous employment and economic activity of the workplace in 2015*

<b>Economic activity</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	95	1.5
Mining and quarrying	9	0.1
Manufacturing	1 162	18.0
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	25	0.4
Water supply; sewerage; waste management and remediation activities	27	0.4
Construction	525	8.1
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles	1 412	21.9
Transport and storage	868	13.4
Accommodation and food service activities	567	8.8
Information and communication	203	3.1
Financial and insurance activities	68	1.1
Real estate activities	80	1.2
Professional, scientific and technical activities	338	5.2
Administrative and support service activities	415	6.4

Public administration and defence, compulsory social security	110	1.7
Education	208	3.2
Human health and social work activities	178	2.8
Arts, entertainment and recreation	89	1.4
Other service activities	77	1.2
Employed (total)	6 456	100.0

*Source: Statistics Lithuania*

According to other sources (Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė V., Žičkutė I. (2017)), 24 % of emigrants prior to emigration were service employees, 22 % specialists, 7 % office employees, 6 % technicians and younger specialists, 6 % qualified workers and masters, and 5 % unskilled workers and managers. Comparing changes in status at work following emigration, 34 % of respondents gained a higher position, 37 % held a lower position and 29 % the same level.

According to different surveys (Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė V., Žičkutė I., 2017, Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė et. al., 2017), approximately 10 % of emigrants prior to emigration were unemployed (and a further 10 % were students)<sup>1</sup>. As most (up to 80 %) emigrants prior to emigration were employed, one could say that the main reason for emigration was not an absence of work, but low wages and poor working conditions in Lithuania.

#### Findings of the 'Global Lithuania' research

Another data source for the analysis of the characteristics of emigrants is specific research conducted by SL within the framework of the Creation of the Global Lithuania Programme 2011-19 aimed at getting Lithuanians living abroad involved in their home country. In accordance with one programme measure, national statistics agencies were requested to provide information of population censuses 2005–14 concerning permanent residents of their respective countries who were citizens of the Republic of Lithuania and/or were born in Lithuania and/or had Lithuanian nationality and/or whose native language is Lithuanian.

According to the data from the censuses 2005-14 carried out by the national statistics agencies, the total global Lithuanian population was 3.66 million, of which almost 620 000 or nearly 17 % were living abroad. Approximately 20 % of Lithuanians lived in the UK, about 14 % of them were in the Russian Federation and roughly 10 % lived in Poland. Most Lithuanians living abroad (71.4 %) were working age (15-64 years) (SL, 2014).

The national statistics agencies provided information about education levels of 373 500 Lithuanians living abroad, aged 15 and above. According to the statistical figures, 46 % of Lithuanians living abroad had lower secondary or upper secondary education and almost 32 % had higher or post-secondary education. About 50 % of Lithuanians living in Belarus, Ukraine and the UK, about 30 % of Lithuanians living in Sweden and the

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<sup>1</sup> Here we have to mention one more figure published by SL (Demographic, 2015): according to the data in 2015, most male and female working-age emigrants (81 % and 84.7 % respectively) prior to declaration of departure were not employed in Lithuania for one year and longer. It might be explained by the fact that emigrants usually declare their departure only after some time spent in the destination country and therefore they do not appear in the Lithuanian labour market for year or longer prior to declaration.

Russian Federation and around 25 % of those living in Norway had higher or post-secondary education (SL, 2014).

The national statistics agencies also provided information about the occupations of 164 200 Lithuanians permanently living abroad (accounting for 29.6 % of the total number of Lithuanians aged 15 and above living abroad). The research showed that 20.0 % of Lithuanians living abroad were employed as managers, professionals, technicians and associate professionals, 18.9 % of them were domestic workers and service and sales workers, 33.0 % of them were skilled agriculture, forestry and fishery workers, craft and related trades workers, plant and machine operators and assemblers, and 28.1 % were elementary (unskilled) workers. In this context, Poland stood out for every second Lithuanian holding jobs as managers, professionals, technicians or associate professionals, and Belarus and Latvia had every third Lithuanian holding a job in this group. The UK and Spain stood out for the biggest proportion of Lithuanians aged 15 and above in elementary jobs (every third Lithuanian was an elementary worker) (SL, 2014).

These numbers include only those emigrants who have been reached by the Global Lithuania poll of foreign Lithuanians. Presumably, therefore, people with lower skills, holding jobs requiring lower level of qualifications are generally more difficult to reach and are less interested in staying in contact with their countrymen abroad.

#### Emigration of highly skilled employees

Although official statistics are not available, there is increasingly more widespread public information about emigration of highly skilled employees. Emphasis is particularly focused on accelerating emigration of medical personnel and researchers. According to unofficial data<sup>2</sup>, about 3 % of medical people left Lithuania in 2011 and 75 % of the medical personnel interviewed reported considering it. In 2013, therefore, efforts were made to introduce measures whereby countries benefitting from Lithuanian medical emigrants would compensate Lithuania for their training costs<sup>3</sup>. However, these measures have not become law in Lithuania. According to the Ministry of Health, in 2010, certificates required for employment abroad were issued to 279 physicians and 211 nurses. This is more than twice the corresponding figure for 2007 for both physicians and nurses (Tajūnaitė et al., 2012).

The situation with researchers, although less analysed, is similar. According to the Institute for Social Innovations<sup>4</sup>, research and study institutions in Lithuania have lost at least 750 researchers since the country's independence (in 1990). Young and promising doctoral candidates, researchers and scientists account for the majority of brain drain.

### **2.3 Reasons for emigration**

Research studies show that economic reasons are the main drivers of migration from Lithuania. According to Sipavičienė and Stankūnienė (2011), the main economic reasons for Lithuanians to move abroad are 'better employment opportunities, higher salaries (three to four times higher, even when purchasing power is considered) and better social security benefits. During the crisis [(2009)], in addition to macro-economic

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<sup>2</sup> Internet: <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/sveikatos-apsaugos-ministerijai-neramu-gydytoju-emigracija-jau-perkope-gresminga-3-proc-riba-56-177912>

<sup>3</sup> Internet: <http://www.delfi.lt/sveikata/sveikatos-naujienos/mediku-emigracija-norima-stabdyti-is-vakaru-valstybiu-reikalaujant-kompensacijos-uz-juos.d?id=60673151>

<sup>4</sup> Internet: <http://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/10359050/misija-darbas-lietuva-stabdo-gabiu-mokslininku-emigracija>

factors, new push factors emerged at the micro-economic level, such as the inability to pay back bank loans and other financial commitments (even when employed in Lithuania), mass bankruptcy of small and medium businesses, etc.'. 'In addition to economic reasons, other reasons, such as social insecurity, social injustice, unsatisfactory treatment by employers or family-related reasons (e.g., family reunion) also contribute to increasing migration outflows' (Ibid). A well-developed network of Lithuanian communities in target countries also encourages emigration (Sipavičienė and Stankūnienė, 2011; TMO, 2011).

Basing on a survey of Lithuanian return migrants, conducted in 2014 and including 804 respondents, the main reasons for migrating from Lithuania included low wages (52.2 %) and the inability to find a job in Lithuania (24.3 %). Other reasons, including leaving for educational purposes or family related reasons were far less frequent (Table 4). About 7.2 % of the respondents reported having left for educational purposes and 3.9 % of them wanted to test their abilities (Žvalionytė, 2014).

*Table 4. Survey of emigrants by reason for leaving (respondents were asked to indicate a single answer)*

Reason for emigration	% of respondents
Wanted to earn more; Lithuanian salaries are unsatisfactory	52.2
Could not find work in Lithuania, needed a source of income	24.3
For educational purposes (to carry out research/for an internship, etc.)	7.2
Wanted to try their abilities, experience new things	3.9
Due to family related reasons	4.6
Inability to pay back bank loans and other financial commitments	3.2
Sought better working conditions	2.2
Disappointed with perspectives in Lithuania	0.7
Other reasons	1.7
Total	100.0

*Source: Žvalionytė, 2014*

There were similar findings for emigrants of Lithuanian nationality aged 18+. A survey of 140 respondents showed that economic motives were the main reason to emigrate, i.e. relatively low wages, high unemployment levels, poor economic situation in Lithuania. This was the primary reason for emigration reported by 57.6 % of the respondent emigrants. Other reasons for leaving the country mentioned by the rest of the respondents included social insecurity and social injustice (9.7 %), political environment in Lithuania (7.9 %), better career opportunities abroad (6.2 %), family related reasons (10.2 %), and other reasons (inappropriate treatment by employers, acquiring new work and life experiences, learning new languages, getting to know new cultures and countries (8.4 %)) (Rudžinskienė and Paulauskaitė, 2014).

Although the survey findings suggest that Lithuanians more often emigrate to earn more money abroad and thereby improve their financial wellbeing rather than to acquire new skills or new experiences abroad, it is worth mentioning the migration of school graduates to study abroad, something that has intensified over the past decade. An

increasing number of the best Lithuanian school graduates opt for universities abroad and often decide to stay in those countries. Unfortunately, SL, MES or other institutions do not gather data about emigrating school graduates; the only source here is figures from surveys. In 2010, the Lithuanian Union of Student Representations (LUSR) conducted a survey that revealed that roughly every sixth school graduate planned to choose to study abroad.<sup>5</sup> But not all of them put their intentions into practice. According to LUSR's representatives, up to 10 % of school graduates left to study abroad in 2012.

According to SL, in 2014-15 there were 3 254 university students and 803 college students studying abroad (approx. 2.9 % of the total number of students). From these, 13.5 % of university students and 1.1 % of college students left to study abroad on their own initiative. The rest were studying under EU and other international exchange programmes.

Some researchers also note that recently, supply of employees with higher university education in Lithuania outweighs demand. This misbalance in the labour market where professionals with tertiary education cannot find jobs to suit their qualification encourages their emigration. Highly skilled professionals failing to get appropriate jobs pushes lower skilled employees out of their jobs. This, in turn, results in unemployment of lower skilled workers and contributes to their emigration (Urbonavičienė, Tvaronavičienė, 2008).

In summary, the key push factors to emigrate from Lithuania appear to be low wages, unfavourable economic situation in the country, social injustice and inappropriate treatment by employers, whereas pull factors include higher salaries, better social security benefits, better employment opportunities and labour relations in target countries for migration.

### **3 Emigration of skilled labour and its impact on domestic economies beyond the labour market**

Research shows that emigration (particularly of highly skilled labour) has a negative impact on the GDP per capita – the increase of brain circulation reduces GDP per capita (Kasnauskiene and Budvytyte, 2013). This is because emigration leads to lower labour input and consequently lower aggregate GDP. Holland et al. (2011) estimate that in Lithuania in 2009, the loss of the labour force reduced potential output by 3.35 % (Holland et al., 2011). According to Kasnauskienė and Šiaudvytis (2010), in 2008, losses from emigration in Lithuania accounted for 0.43 % of GDP.

According to the IMF, 'migration shaved off 0.6–0.9 percentage points of annual growth rates in some countries', including Lithuania, between 1999 and 2014 and 'about two-thirds of these losses can be ascribed to the direct impact of emigration on the labour supply, with the rest from skill deterioration' (IMF, 2016).

The impact of emigration on the sustainability of social security systems has been little analysed in Lithuania. It can only be mentioned that a correlation coefficient of  $r = -0.567$  obtained from the number of emigrants and the number of recipients of social benefits shows a negative correlation of medium effect between these numbers. This implies that as the number of emigrants is growing, the number of recipients of social benefits is shrinking (Damulienė, 2013).

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<sup>5</sup>Internet: <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/svietimas/abiturientai-zvelgia-i-uzsieni-233-99912>



Remittances have a fundamental impact on the country's economy. According to Holland et al. (2011) '[s]ending countries tend to benefit from remittances, which are sent back by workers to their families and boost private consumption, and this may partially offset the loss of productive capacity and potentially a decline in average productivity in the short run'.

Lithuania is among the top six recipients of personal remittances in the EU. According to the Bank of Lithuania, income from employment and personal remittances from abroad was EUR 1237.7 million or 3.3 % of GDP in 2015. Employment income and personal remittances from abroad doubled from EUR 602.1 million in 2005 to EUR 1237.7 million in 2015 (Table 5).

*Table 5. Compensation of employees and personal transfers from abroad, 2005–15, EUR million*

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Compensation of employees	181.2	196.3	186.7	204.2	180.3	285.2	253.5	144.5	169.5	117.8	108.0
Personal transfers from abroad	420.9	591.4	853.4	866.9	700.5	980.9	1148.7	1030.4	1378.7	1471	1129.7
Total	602.1	787.7	1040.1	1071.1	880.8	1266.1	1402.2	1174.9	1548.2	1588.8	1237.7

*Source: Bank of Lithuania*

The results of statistical analysis show that there are statistically significant relationships between remittances and labour market indicators, and remittances and economic development. There are strong and positive relationships between workers' remittance and GDP (0.92), and employee compensation and GDP (0.72). Furthermore, bigger flows of remittances have an impact on reduction of unemployment (Kasnauskiene and Stumbryte, 2012).

With the shrinking labour force, Lithuania has witnessed a steady increase in wages since 2011. Employers stress that growing wages increase the price for their goods and services and, in turn, reduce employers' competitiveness. However, there are increasing voices speaking to positive effects of average wage growth on the country's economy by encouraging employers to pay more attention to the effectiveness of the use of labour resources and modernisation of production.

According to Mantas Katinas, General Director of Invest Lithuania, the shortage of skilled labour increasingly restricts investing opportunities in the country. For example, even today, Lithuania would not be able to sustain an IT department of a large company, because it would struggle to supply sufficient staff. Labour shortages, albeit for different reasons, are apparent in different economic sectors: trade, industry, construction, healthcare, transport, etc. It is specifically uncertainty over labour supply that entices investors away from Lithuania to other countries.<sup>6</sup>

Emigration is reducing the overall population of the country and, in turn, leads to a decline in the number of consumers and buyers. Even several shopping centres abandoned Lithuania in recent years. As mentioned, small towns and rural areas are most affected by a shrinking retail network.

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<sup>6</sup> Internet: <http://www.delfi.lt/verslas/verslas/permainos-su-darbuotojais-lietuva-artejaprie-liepto-galo.d?id=67259954>



A drop in the number of children and youth contributed to the optimisation of the network of general and higher education institutions. Rural areas have been closing small comprehensive schools for several years; an increasing number of children are taken to school by special buses. In 2017, entrants to Lithuanian higher education institutions were by some 20 % less compared to 2016; some universities (Šiauliai University, Klaipėda University, University of Educational Sciences) admitted less than 50 % of new entrants compared to 2016.

#### **4 Emigration of skilled labour and its impact on labour market conditions**

Researchers universally agree that emigration of skilled labour is a negative phenomenon exerting strongly negative consequences on the labour market (Stulgienė and Daunorienė, 2009; Kasnauskienė and Stumbrytė, 2012; Damulienė, 2013; Sipavičienė and Stankūnienė, 2011; Medaiskis and Gruževskis, 2004):

- Deformations of the age structure and labour structure in population/employees
- Shortage of skilled labour
- Incremental costs of training/reskilling of employees
- Increasing income differentiation and social strain.

##### *Deformations of the age structure and labour structure in population/employees*

Probably the most marked effects that have indirect negative implications for the labour market are demographic changes. According to the European Migration Network (EMN), almost 73 % of emigrants from Lithuania are aged between 15 and 44 years. This age group only makes up about 39 % of the entire Lithuanian population. Long-term, as the number of young people decreases due to emigration, it causes serious demographic problems –falling birth rate, lack of workforce, declining working-age population and ageing of both total and working-age population. A shrinking proportion of working people have to support a growing number of unemployed<sup>7</sup>.

Emigration of this young group of potential workers impacts labour market conditions in Lithuania. Research shows (Lengvinienė and Rutkienė, 2016) that older employees face more difficulties in adapting to changing working conditions, demonstrate lower labour productivity, are less well equipped to cope with new technologies and innovations, have mismatched skills and work methods to meet the changing needs of the labour market, etc.

Losses are even higher for emigration of young and skilled employees. Medaiskis and Gruzevskis (2004) note that 'relatively higher emigration of skilled labour can destroy the settled labour force structure; therefore, the unemployment of unskilled persons will increase; at the same time, the volume of production of GDP can decrease; and some strain in the labour market of unskilled labour will occur'.

Deformations in the structure of labour force may boost structural unemployment with a growing number of unskilled unemployed people who are not able to access jobs requiring high qualifications.

##### *Shortage of skilled labour*

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<sup>7</sup>Internet: <http://123.emn.lt/en/#chart-8-desc>

Vacancies previously filled by emigrated skilled professionals may remain empty because of the lack of such skilled professionals (Medaiskis and Gruzevskis, 2004). As mentioned above, there are no reliable data for identifying occupations with the highest levels of labour migration from Lithuania. Information provided by SL covers only some 16.6 % of the total number of emigrants who had been employed prior to leaving the country. According to this information, the most affected sectors by emigration are wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles; manufacturing; transport and storage; accommodation and food service activities; administrative and support service activities (Table 3).

Due to high emigration and differences in wages in Lithuania and other EU countries, it is becoming difficult for employers to find suitably high-skilled professionals, particularly in technical occupations. According to employers' representatives<sup>8</sup>, there is a critical shortage of employees in enterprises generating high added value. There is also a serious lack of IT professionals. According to the data provided by the Lithuanian Labour Exchange (LLE), nearly 32 000 job vacancies were registered in Lithuanian labour exchange offices at the beginning of July 2017. However, only about 19 000 unemployed job-seekers (representing almost half the number of job vacancies) applied to labour exchange offices in July.

In 2017, the Ministry of the Economy (ME) published a list of professions for which there is the highest/unmet need. Most are professions requiring high qualifications, including production organisation engineers, printing technologists, equipment maintenance engineers, sewing technicians, production engineers, aviation engineers, mechanical engineers, and design engineers. ME expects that this list will help fill some of the job vacancies with foreign workers. The list will serve as guidance for issuing temporary residence permits to foreigners planning to take jobs requiring high professional qualifications. It should be noted, however, that labour immigration in Lithuania is low and mainly concentrated in a few economic sectors (services and industry). This is somewhat determined by the conditions imposed on Lithuanian employers for hiring third-country nationals to fill labour shortages, insufficiently flexible and lengthy procedures of obtaining work permits and temporary residence permits.

A survey of the opinions and expectations of top-level Lithuanian executives conducted by the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists (LCI) revealed that nearly 70 % of executives witness shortages of skilled or unskilled labour. According to LS, at the end of 1Q 2017, there were 20 700 job vacancies in Lithuania. This rises by 27 % year-on-year<sup>9</sup>. The highest vacancy rates in 1Q 2017 were recorded in industry (4 000 or 19.3 % of the total number of job vacancies).

Although the Government's approved list of the 27 professions most applicable to foreign professionals is helping the situation and industrial companies are recruiting employees from Belarus or Ukraine, the LCI believes the list should be extended. According to industrialists, conditions for recruiting unskilled third-country nationals in Lithuania should also be simplified taking into account the growing problem of labour shortages, particularly in the regions. The survey conducted by the LCI shows that employers are facing difficulties in recruiting drivers, IT professionals and qualified operators of equipment/applications, essential to the modernisation of production

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<sup>8</sup>Internet: <https://www.15min.lt/verslas/naujiena/karjera/geidziamiausiu-darbuotoju-lietuvoje-top-27-ko-iesko-ir-ko-nereikia-666-752370>

<sup>9</sup> Internet: <http://lzinios.lt/lzinios/Ekonomika/darbuotoju-trukumas-stabdo-modernizavima-ir-pletra/245087>

processes. More than 70 % of respondents reported currently facing a problem of both skilled and unskilled labour shortages. In the near future, labour shortages will remain a serious problem for anticipated development of companies. Advancing competition and wage growth force companies to invest into production modernisation. According to the LCI, industries are increasingly investing to modernise their production.

As for high skilled labour emigration and jobs particularly affected by emigration, medical personnel merit particular attention. Even though there are no formal surveys, in practice, smaller regions of the country already face a shortage of professionals in this area. According to Eurofound (2013), Lithuania is one of the countries where the issue of migration of professionals working 'in anaesthesiology, intensive care and emergency medicine is high on the agenda. It is not necessarily the volume of professionals leaving that should be examined, but rather the seriousness of repercussions this phenomenon could have on these countries' health systems. Migration could aggravate already existing distortions in the regional distribution of health personnel'. The study also states that 'the number of medical professionals leaving Lithuania could increase due to the ease of moving around within the EU and because those who have already left become part of a migration network that facilitates information and opportunities for those planning to leave' (Ibid).

#### *Increasing income differentiation and social strain*

The shortage of skilled work and the relative surplus of unskilled work also create income differentiation and higher social pressure (Medaiskis and Gruzevskis, 2004). The lack of highly skilled professionals in certain occupations makes employers increase wages to maintain or attract employees. As a result, a significant gap develops between the earnings of high-skilled and low-skilled workers. This increases the level of income inequality and has negative impact on the social climate in the country.

But labour emigration does also have positive implications. Emigration may have a beneficial effect on unemployment and wages. According to Kasnauskienė and Šiaudvytis (2010), emigration reduces labour supply that, in turn, increases wages. Thus, the resident labour force wins as their income increases. On the other hand, emigration is detrimental to capital owners who must hire the remaining labour force for higher pay. In this way, emigration redistributes income where the remaining labour force gains income lost by capital owners. According to authors' calculations, in 2010 wages could have increased from 0.8 % up to almost 1 % annually as a result of emigration (Kasnauskienė and Šiaudvytis, 2010).

Kasnauskiene and Vebraite (2014) studied the impact of migration on Lithuania's economy. 'Using a system of variables of net migration, gross domestic product, wage and unemployment rate', they developed a 'structural vector error correction model' which was used in their investigation. The analysis revealed that 'negative net migration has positive impact on real wages in Lithuania'. According to the authors, 'A1 standard deviation increase in net migration increases real wages by 0.2152 standard deviations after one year since migration, 0.2156 standard deviations – after two years, 0.2158 standard deviations – after three, after five and after seven years. Thus, emigration may improve the real wages of those who remain in the source country' (Ibid).

Similar findings were recorded by Damulienė (2013) in her analysis of migration effects on Lithuania's economy. She states that there is a strong positive linear correlation ( $r = 0.842$ ) between the number of emigrants and average monthly gross wage. This supports the assumption that an increase in the number of emigrants leads to an increase in average wages in the source country. According to the author, such a situation is due to employers' unwillingness to lose highly qualified employees and

decreasing supply of skilled labour which is determined by migration of the working-age population from the country (Damulienė, 2013).

To sum up, the impact of emigration of skilled labour on Lithuania's economy and labour market is both negative and positive. The prevailing public opinion (and among employers) is that existing migration outflows reduce the economic potential and domestic consumption of the country and also reduce its attractiveness for investors. On the other hand, emigration is a push factor for improving living standards (due to wage increases), decreasing unemployment and more effective use of labour resources and production modernisation.

Despite increasing emphasis from employers on labour shortages, the country's economic indicators kept improving in 2016-17: GDP growth was 2-3 % per year, gross wage growth in 2Q 2017 was 8.7 % and net wage growth was 9.7 % year-on-year, financial investments into fixed tangible assets are not falling (EUR 1.4 billion in 2Q 2017), the number of tourists is growing, industrial production is growing (in the first half 2017, industrial production amounted to EUR 11.46 billion showing a 6.1 % increase year-on-year), etc.

## **5 Actions undertaken by Member States to address the outflows of skilled labour**

Although the issue of migration is currently high on the agenda, more active consideration of labour migration issues only began in 2006 as a result of a huge increase in migration outflows from Lithuania, a labour shortage generated by intense emigration of Lithuanian residents, and the country's economic growth. In response, the Economic Migration Regulation Strategy was approved by Resolution No 416 of the GRL of 25 April 2007 and the Plan of the Implementation of Economic Migration Regulation Strategy Measures for 2007–08 was elaborated. The Strategy outlined the priorities of Lithuanian migration policy, underlining return migration and reducing emigration. It set two main objectives: striving to meet the needs of the Lithuanian labour market and encouraging the return of economic migrants. To meet the latter objectives, the following two tasks were set: (1) keeping close contacts with economic migrants from Lithuania living abroad and cooperating with Lithuanian organisations; (2) ensuring effective institutional cooperation in the area of economic migration. But according to experts, 'the Economic Migration Regulation Strategy was formulated under conditions of rapid economic growth and intense emigration. Many objectives that were set up in the Strategy were relevant only for 2007 and 2008. Consequently, after 2008, when global economic changes emerged, there was not any action plan accompanying the Strategy' (Žibas, 2015).

The second attempt to tackle high emigration flows was the Lithuanian Migration Policy Guidelines (LMPG) approved by Order No 29 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on 22 January 2014. The aims of the LMPG were to establish the key objectives, principles and direction of migration policies in Lithuania that would ensure the management of migration flows to meet national needs, particularly where it relates to addressing the long-term structural and qualification needs of the labour market.

The LMPG outlines the following main objectives of Lithuanian migration policy: 1) to achieve a gradual reduction of mass emigration and increase return migration; 2) to ensure a policy for attracting workers that corresponds to the needs of the country; 3) to facilitate integration of foreigners and thus capitalise on benefits offered by immigration; 4) to improve the management of migration processes by implementing migration control measures; 5) to have close and targeted involvement with the EU immigration policy-making process.

The Guidelines also emphasise that the measures implemented by the state should first be directed towards the elimination of root social and economic causes of emigration, particularly youth unemployment, and the necessity to create conditions to align information and practical assistance with the issues around the return to Lithuania by adopting a 'one-stop-shop' principle.

In addition to this legislation, several other initiatives were implemented in the country to address the reduction of migration outflows and encourage remigration. For example, the Creation of the Global Lithuania Programme 2011-19 aimed at getting Lithuanians living abroad involved in national life was approved by Resolution No 389 of the GRL of 30 March 2011. The main objectives of the Programme include: (1) to encourage Lithuanians living abroad to maintain their identity in an international setting and to help protect their rights; (2) to encourage Lithuanians living abroad to get involved in Lithuania's political, economic, scientific, cultural and sporting life; (3) to strengthen ties between the diaspora and Lithuania thus encouraging return to Lithuania; (4) to create a communication space connecting resident Lithuanians and those living abroad; (5) to encourage the Lithuanian diaspora to contribute to disseminating information of Lithuania worldwide. The 'Global Lithuania' programme was implemented via an inter-agency action plan and updated annually.

At the beginning of 2015, the Migration Information Center (MIC) 'I Choose Lithuania' was established at the IOM Vilnius Office. Employees of the MIC 'I Choose Lithuania' **provide one-stop shop consultations to Lithuanian migrants who are returning, those considering returning and anyone wishing to move to Lithuania. Consultancy assistance is offered regarding** employment, education, healthcare, foreign family member integration and other questions related to a return to Lithuania.

It is difficult to judge the effectiveness of migration policy pursued in Lithuania, since there is only very scarce evidence to measure it. The number of Lithuanian re-migrants has significantly increased since 2011; in 2015, return migration was four times higher than in 2010. Immigration growth is also helped by immigration of other EU and non-EU citizens, also demonstrating a slow upward trend. A further contributing factor could be third-country national immigration policy which is now being relaxed (e.g., Law on the Legal Status of Aliens No IX-2206 was amended in 2016 facilitating access to residence permits and employment in Lithuania for third-country nationals).

However, according to Eurofound (2012), 'even if return migration is high on the agenda in all countries with a high outflow of workers, and there seems to be a consensus that there should be some measures in place to attract them back, there is a general scepticism among the public (as voiced in the media) around the effectiveness of the measures, since they cannot compensate for those strong underlying factors that led to the outflow. For example, even in Lithuania, where its Global Lithuania Strategy addresses the issue of return migration, the emphasis is on maintaining cultural and other ties with emigrants rather than on concrete measures to attract them back'.

The ineffectiveness of policy measures is also illustrated by surveys conducted in Lithuania. For example, according to Žvalionytė (2014), figures from the survey of Lithuanian re-migrants show that as few as 5.8 % of migrants decided to return to Lithuania as a result of Lithuanian policy promoting return migration. According to the author, current Lithuanian migration policy is based on the assumption that the main obstacle to return migration is demotivation to return and problems related to the process of return. Therefore, all efforts now concentrate on measures facilitating ties with Lithuania and/or making the return process easier for those who decide to re-migrate. Such policy, however, is ineffectual because it gives little consideration to

factors facilitating emigration. Moreover, there is a persistent negative value judgement of return migration in Lithuania, showing the population's attitude towards re-migration. More than half of Lithuanian employers and almost half of Lithuanian residents support the statement that returnees to Lithuania are usually those who fail abroad (Žvalionytė, 2014). Such attitude may have not significant influence on remigration levels, but it complicates the implementation of the policy measures in the country.

## **6 Conclusions**

Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Lithuanian residents have been active participants of migration processes characteristic to people in Europe. Out-migration from Lithuania intensified after the country regained its independence in 1990. Another wave of emigration began in 2004-05 with Lithuania's accession to the EU, but the number of emigrants steadily declined between 2006 and 2008 due to the country's economic growth.

In 2009, following the economic crisis, migration outflows began to rapidly increase and grew until 2011. Emigration then began to fall slowly, accompanied by increasing remigration. But in 2015, despite steadily growing economic indicators, increasing average wage and falling unemployment (and the rising number of job vacancies), the number of emigrants began to grow again. This trend continued in 2016 and figures for the first half of 2017 strongly indicate migration outflows are even higher in 2017 than in 2016.

Currently, there is a dominance of economic migrants among migrants from Lithuania. Low wages appear the most frequently mentioned push factor to leave Lithuania. According to different surveys, migrants from Lithuania say the main reasons are economic: 'better employment opportunities, higher salaries (three to four times higher, even when purchasing power is taken into account) and better social security [system]. In the context of the crisis [(2009)], in addition to macro-economic factors, new push factors emerged at the micro-economic level, such as the inability to pay back bank loans and other financial commitments (even with a job in Lithuania), mass bankruptcy of small and medium businesses, etc.' (Sipavičienė and Stankūnienė (2011)). Further, '[i]n addition to economic reasons, other reasons, such as social insecurity, social injustice, unsatisfactory treatment by employers or family-related reasons (e.g., family reunion) also contribute to increasing migration outflows' (Ibid). A well-developed network of Lithuanian communities in target countries also encourages emigration (emigration risks are lower when every family has emigrants who help new migrants to integrate into new surroundings at the initial stage of immigration). The number of youth leaving to study abroad has increased since 2010-11. More than 50 % remain in the labour market of the country of study following graduation.

The analysis conducted by the LCI shows that almost 70 % of company executives witness shortages of skilled or unskilled labour. According to the LLE, about 50 % of employers face shortages of skilled labour. To retain employees, employers rapidly increase wages and try to attract immigrants from third countries (usually, from Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation). The shortage of skilled labour increasingly restricts investment opportunities in the country. For different reasons, labour shortages are apparent in various economic sectors: trade, industry, construction, IT, finance, healthcare, transport, etc. It is namely uncertainty about labour supply that sometimes entices investors from Lithuania to Poland or other central and eastern European countries.

Emigration of population, particularly the out-migration of active youth (under-30), reduces domestic consumption and has negative implications for the trade sector, the personal services sector, education, etc.

In summary, the prevailing opinion within Lithuanian society (and among employers) is that continuing out-migration has a strong negative impact on the country's economy, reduces the economic potential and domestic consumption of the country (due to overall depopulation) and also reduces the country's attractiveness to investors. On the other hand, emigration positively impacts the country's development by promoting higher living standards (due to wage increases) and higher domestic consumption (due to remittances from abroad), declining unemployment and contributes to the more effective use of labour resources and production modernisation. Specifically, the need to prioritise production modernisation and increased productivity is often regarded as a positive impact of ongoing emigration. Another positive trend is that about 60 % of emigrants foresee the possibility of returning to Lithuania in the future. Therefore, one could say that the country has huge labour resources in case of economic recovery (particularly if the average wage grows).

In our opinion, comparing positive and negative effects of emigration the negative effects dominate. Anticipated 'free movement of labour' does not appear to be a characteristic of Lithuania. People are more frequently leaving the country permanently; Lithuanian Sunday schools face declining popularity, while Lithuanian citizens ever more successfully integrate into foreign labour markets. Low wages and high costs of living reduce the attractiveness of the Lithuanian labour market for national labour resources. As a result, about 50 % of pupils in upper years, who have not yet graduated and acquired a profession, are already planning to start their career path via emigration.

Also important is that the growth in the number of out-migrants in 2015 illustrated a misalignment of economic and social development mechanisms in the country. Macroeconomic indicators which kept growing since 2011 have failed to ensure the attractiveness of the labour market and, by 2015, Lithuania was ranked first in terms of income inequality in the EU. Intensive out-migration mainly depletes rural territories and small towns. The number of young scientists is declining, while universities and research centres struggle to attract enough doctoral students. All this indicates that the national economy requires fundamental reform ranging from general education programmes, through improvement of banking activities, to stronger social dialogue in businesses and all levels of state administration. In our opinion, some of the country's worst problems are correctly assessed by Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs), but considering the brain drain issue, we would advocate that CSRs emphasise the need to focus on increasing the salaries of highly qualified employees (physicians, scientists).

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