



# Youth policy in Lithuania



Directorate of Youth and Sport  
Direction de la jeunesse et du sport



# Youth policy in Lithuania

Report by an international panel of experts  
appointed by the Council of Europe

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## Preface

The Council of Europe's youth sector has produced international reviews on youth policy ever since 1997, when Finland became the first country to volunteer in this process. The procedure consists of a member country producing a national report, which is intended to launch a wide-scale debate on youth policy in the country. This report is also submitted to an international team of experts of the Council of Europe. The team is normally composed of three youth researchers, one governmental expert and one non-governmental organisation (NGO) representative. The European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), an inter-governmental body, nominates the governmental expert, and the Advisory Council (AC), a body of NGOs, nominates the NGO representative. The CDEJ and the AC, together with the Programming Committee (a joint government and NGO body set up on parity basis with a management function) form the well-known co-management feature of the Council of Europe's youth sector. This is now into its thirtieth year of successful practice. The youth researchers are invited by the Secretariat in consultation with the above-mentioned bodies. One of the researchers is appointed rapporteur, but the international review is a group process and achievement.

Once the international review is produced, results, observations and recommendations are presented to member governments, international youth organisations and national youth committees for debate and follow up. This practice was recently altered, and the international review may now be presented in the member countries to a wider interested public. In fact, the first such case is Vilnius – the Lithuanian report and review was submitted for discussion to a Lithuanian audience on 21 November 2002 and then again, with its main conclusions, to an international audience in January 2003.

What can the international review achieve?

First of all the international review is meant to advise the countries subject to the review to determine what areas can be improved in youth policy. These may include inter-ministerial co-operation, administrative support, legislation, research, the training of youth workers, the status and recognition of NGOs, civil society development, informal and non-formal education and educational reform, employment, health issues, youth practice and projects, and a good many areas depending on the youth policy of the particular country.

Good advice is not paternalistic; however, outsiders can often be more objective about a situation than those who are closely involved. It is also an opportunity for comparison. Even if there is agreement that there is no one best model of youth policy anywhere, there are indicators allowing European comparisons, which are useful to make. This kind of monitoring by looking at different examples of good practice is commonplace in all fields of the Council of Europe's work. It often leads to recommendations and – in many cases – to the creation of instruments in the interest of greater European unity. This approach is now strongly reinforced through the accession process to the European Union and its youth chapter, the White Paper on Youth.

As well as providing advice and comparison, the reviews also encourage member countries, through a process of producing several national reports and international reviews (Lithuania is the eighth review), to identify common strands of youth policy between the forty-eight countries co-operating on this issue within the Council of Europe. This figure includes the signatory parties to the Cultural Convention, for example Belarus is not a member country, but is a signatory to the convention. The 6th European Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, from 7 to 9 November, showed how far the discussion has advanced. Clearly the economic, social and political differences between member countries are considerable, and this sometimes makes building bridges towards greater unity very difficult. Each international review is another contribution to the increasing database on youth within the Council of Europe.<sup>1</sup>

### Why a report on Lithuania?

One answer to this question is simple: because Lithuania volunteered to join this process. However there are also other, more complex, reasons:

Lithuania is the only member country of the Council of Europe to have actually made the co-management philosophy of the Council the basis of its youth policy. We can find co-managed bodies at national, regional and local level, and the involvement of young people is remarkable. Of course, co-management and co-decision-making always require a mode of representation, since the system cannot work without youth organisations and national youth committees. They also require a training philosophy based on the multiplication ethos to ensure that there is constant renewal and that the system does not turn into a corporatist one. Many people consider this has been a good idea for the Council of Europe, but they would not really be prepared to use this concept in their own national

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1. cp.: Howard Williamson, *Supporting young people in Europe: principles, policy and practice*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg 2002.



context. Lithuania did adopt this concept and therefore this is in many ways a unique situation.

Many Lithuanian youth leaders and youth workers have gone through the training offers of the Council of Europe and the youth programmes of the European Commission. They may not be many, but they know the European scene well and play an important role therein. This is not to be underestimated – even if the word “elite” is a non-word in youth work circles, it is still very true that informed elites (in an strict sociological sense of the word) have shaped the youth policies in the new member countries in the 1990s. Who is shaping such policies now and is the European influence still a very strong one?

The Lithuanian authorities, namely the State Council for Youth Affairs, and LiJOT, the Council of Lithuanian Youth Organisations, have taken several important international initiatives. Most recently, they held the Baltic Sea Youth Ministers' Conference in Vilnius in June 2002. This conference dealt with preparing the young generation for the information society and raised very important issues including existing educational provisions, labour market questions, youth and cultural exchanges, the use of new technologies and the future prospects of the young generation.

LiJOT has also taken a very active role in promoting the White Paper process and it plays an active role within the youth sector of the accession process.

There therefore exists a very unusual combination of a shared philosophy on co-management, the opportunity to co-operate in the area of capacity building, the Baltic Sea co-operation projects and European commitments from both the authorities and NGOs. This has meant that the international review team is very curious to see whether this European picture will hold against the national and local reality, whether there are new developments to be reported and whether what is said in the national report will be in line with the view of the team.

The aim of the exercise is not to agree on everything, neither to behave within a diplomatic code. It is rather to find out what can and should be done in the future through open, critical and constructive dialogue.

**Peter Lauritzen**  
Head of Department for Education,  
Training, Research and Communication  
Directorate of Youth and Sports of the Council of Europe



## **Introduction**

The State Council for Youth Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania (VJRT) invited the international team of experts to undertake this review and arranged two visits to the country, which were designed to enable us to understand the Lithuanian situation from different angles. These visits took place in December 2001 and June 2002.

The information in this report is based on statements made to the international team of experts during the review process. The report represents views and interpretations of the team of experts invited by the Council of Europe to undertake this review and not necessarily the views of the Council of Europe.

Lithuanian national youth policy was reviewed by a team of experts including:

Mr Patrick J. Breen, Republic of Ireland, European Steering Committee for Youth, head of the Council of Europe team of experts

Mr Mads-Erik Shiønnemann, Denmark, Advisory Council on Youth

Dr Lyudmila A. Nurse, United Kingdom, researcher, rapporteur

Dr Anthony Azzopardi, University of Malta, Malta, researcher

Dr Jean-Charles Lagree, France, researcher

Mr Peter Lauritzen, Directorate of Youth and Sports of the Council of Europe

## **Acknowledgements**

On behalf of the team of experts the authors would like to express their appreciation to the Council of Europe for its support in organising their Lithuanian visits. The authors also want to acknowledge the assistance they received from various organisations and people in Lithuania who provided them with necessary information in relation to Lithuanian national youth policy and in particular the State Council for Youth Affairs (which coordinated their visits to Lithuania) as well as Vaida Jasiukaityte, Darius Bazaras, Snieguole Andruskaite, and Algirdas Augustaitis (State Council for Youth Affairs).

## **Schedule of visits**

Two visits to Lithuania were kindly proposed and organised by the State Council for Youth Affairs during which members of the international team of

experts spent about ten days in Lithuania on two missions. Both visits reflected the priorities in youth policy in Lithuania and involved meetings with representatives of all the major organisations which contribute to national and regional youth policy. The schedule of the meetings was both very packed and, from all the experts' point of view, successful.

The first visit took place from 5 to 9 December 2001. The second visit took place from 18 June to 23 July 2002. The objective of the second visit was to introduce the Council of Europe team to local youth policy and to practical youth work outside the capital city in the rural counties and in Lithuania's second town, Kaunas. Detailed programmes of the visits are attached to the report in Appendix I.

### List of acronyms

VJRT: <i>Valstybine Jaunimo Reikalu Taryba</i>	State Council for Youth Affairs
LIJOT: <i>Lietuvos Jaunimo Organizaciju Taryba</i>	Council of Lithuanian Youth Organisations
<i>Seimas</i>	Lithuanian parliament
<i>Seimas</i> Youth and Sport committee	Parliamentary committee in charge of drawing up state youth policy and proposing how to implement it best

## 1. Summary of main findings and conclusions

The report on youth policy in Lithuania adds to the Council of Europe reviews of the national youth policies of countries with different traditions and ideas about youth policy. The Lithuanian report complements the reviews undertaken in two other eastern Europe accession countries: Romania and Estonia (2000), and to the reviews undertaken in Luxembourg, Sweden, the Netherlands, Spain and Finland.

The report is the result of the work by the international team of experts appointed by the Council of Europe to review youth policy in Lithuania. Two visits to Lithuania were organised by the Lithuanian State Council for Youth Affairs during which members of the international team of experts spent about ten days in Lithuania. Both visits reflected the priorities in youth policy in Lithuania and involved meetings with representatives of all the major organisations contributing to national and regional youth policy. The report covers various aspects of youth policy in the country. These include:

- methodological issues of policy review;
- global policy and Lithuania's national youth policy;
- the economic situation of young people in Lithuania since independence;
- more detailed analysis of education, employment and unemployment, health and lifestyle, crime and justice, as well as youth culture and lifestyle;
- participation;
- an analysis of the institutional structure, for example NGOs being the main social actors in youth policy in Lithuania is included in the chapter: What shapes Lithuanian youth policy?
- achievements and other issues in youth policy in Lithuania. These are discussed in the concluding part of the report: Dilemma of youth policy development.

All the members of the international team of experts were impressed by how youth policy in Lithuania has developed since the country's independence. It is hoped that increasing economic development will enable the country to prosper and provide more funding for youth activities, with particular emphasis on a social inclusion policy for young people in rural areas. Members of the international team believe that their analysis and findings could be developed into policy recommendations after consultations with all

social actors involved in drawing up and implementing youth policies in Lithuania.

This summary highlights matters the authors believe require attention and does not refer to the many positive features of youth policy that the authors found during the missions.

### **1.1. General issues of youth policy**

Setting up the State Council for Youth Affairs in 1996 was a very significant development in youth policy in Lithuania. It has enabled a structured approach by both government and NGOs when facilitating youth work and shaping policy. The fact that this development took place soon after independence indicates that youth policy is considered a priority in Lithuania. Given the nature of youth work and its high element of volunteerism, the composition of the State Council for Youth Affairs strikes an appropriate balance between governmental organisations and the voluntary sector.

One of the key elements for a successful youth policy in Lithuania is ongoing co-operation between the State Council for Youth Affairs and other government departments involved in specific areas of youth matters. It is particularly important that this co-ordination between government departments takes place in a positive, constructive manner, and that each department plays its full role in meeting the varying needs of young people in Lithuania.

The international team of experts recommends that:

- there be closer co-operation concerning national youth policy between every organisation involved in shaping and implementing it;
- the State Council for Youth Affairs and the Council of Lithuanian Youth Organisations consider ways to represent the interests of young people who do not belong to any youth organisations;
- youth who do not belong to any youth organisations be given support to set up developmental projects;
- greater efforts be made to put non-formal and vocational education on a par with formal education, both in terms of quality and quantity and hence, that statutory youth and community work training programmes be firmly established;
- substantial support be given to launching support schemes for introducing entrepreneurship skills training early in schools, for example by making available initial grants for setting up co-operatives and by collaborating on a more solid basis with NGOs and the business community;
- civil society and communities be strengthened. Non-formal education structures can play a significant role here.

## **1.2. Youth participation**

Youth independence and participation are closely connected by their capacity for self-expression and decision-making. Decision-making training is vital for strengthening Lithuanian youth participation and therefore the authors propose that:

- decision-making training be considered as a priority and leading national and international NGOs be involved in designing such courses;
- teacher re-training be done through NGOs (a survey of teachers would help to identify the training needs);
- the status of non-formal education be raised and its network strengthened.

## **1.3. Youth in rural areas**

There is increasing disparity between urban and rural areas in terms of education and employment opportunities and living conditions. This drives young people from rural areas to the major cities (Vilnius and Kaunas) and abroad. Although future development of rural areas in Lithuania is a matter of a national economic development strategy, in the authors' view priority should be given to those policy measures which increase the opportunities for young people in these areas. Addressing this issue should be a key feature of national youth policy in Lithuania. This issue should be properly addressed at national and regional.

Action to resolve these issues should include:

- further priority support to LiJOT regional development programmes which involve dialogue between municipalities of small towns and villages;
- developing local initiatives in the rural areas, including job creation schemes;
- developing the business environment in rural areas and supporting self-employment and small business in rural areas to involve young people;
- organising rural youth exchanges within Lithuania and abroad, including exchanges between border villages;
- developing youth information centres where young people can find out about education, health, and social welfare, for example;
- given the relative lack of facilities for young people in some of the rural areas the authors visited, offering a special projects scheme for young people in those rural areas, specifically geared towards their expressed needs (this would represent a policy of positive discrimination towards these rural areas and, specifically, towards their youth population);

- reviewing the vocational education system in terms of offering training in marketable professions in the rural areas given new business developments.

#### **1.4. Emigration**

The economic emigration of Lithuanian young people to other European countries is a relatively new phenomenon and is already regarded by some national experts as a decisive threat to the economic and social development of the country. Again, in this matter, a holistic approach is needed; one which takes into consideration the incentives which might be provided to young people to return from other countries. This is not likely to happen until Lithuanian society becomes in a general sense as attractive as western European countries and the United States of America, including in areas such as political stability, good leadership, the rule of law, accountability, transparency and open government.

It is hoped that the progressive development of the economy allied with specific measures, programmes and services for young people will help to reverse this trend, which, even if successful, will take a long time. Accession to the European Union is of particular importance to Lithuania for these reasons. Some steps should, however, be considered urgently:

- a survey should be commissioned to help identify why young people consider leaving the country;
- on the basis of survey findings and other sources, policy measures should be developed at the national and regional levels to address emigration issues;
- more detailed information about working and living abroad, their legal rights and the dangers of illegal immigration should be given to young people who intend to emigrate;
- the opportunities provided by European programmes such as Socrates, Erasmus and Marie Curie should be used to strengthen links between European and Lithuanian universities, to encourage exchanges of visiting professors and students, to create research networks and to provide opportunities for Lithuanian students to access European degrees in Lithuania.



## 2. Methodological issues of the review

### 2.1. Methodology

The methodology of this review was designed to meet the requirements of the report and constraints of time and research methods available to the team. Therefore the process of preparing this report included a combination of desk research, including analysis of documents, publications, handouts; field work, including observation (visits to youth projects, meeting with representatives of different organisations), focus groups and informal interviews.

Youth activities in Lithuania were remarkably well documented and presented. They gave a coherent analysis of the background situation and defined the approach of each relevant organisation to it. Each ministry also provided well-prepared reports and made available all necessary information on issues raised. Although it was often stated that youth research in Lithuania died when Lithuania gained independence from the Soviet Union and former youth researchers moved into different, highly marketable areas of research, the quality of the data and analysis on youth related issues met international standards and presented a generally high culture of research and analysis. Using modern means of presenting and distributing information is a matter of routine in Lithuania. One part of the United Nations Development Report of 2001 was devoted to youth and was based on a series of surveys undertaken by a Lithuanian organisation. This suggests that youth research has now become a part of broader social research and, although it no longer exists as an institution, there are now better resources to present young people as a part of the changing Lithuania in a more holistic way. This is in striking contrast to the majority of eastern European countries where the pre-1989 institutions managed to continue and expand their empirical research and the results of their work are gradually becoming more visible.<sup>1</sup> The main obstacle to making a real impact on youth policy in the region is the low level of co-operation between researchers from the post-communist countries in the region and the lack of a regional database on youth issues which makes it harder for policy makers and NGOs to use the research. This suggests youth NGOs lack relevant skills.

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1. Kovacheva, Sijka (2000) *Sinking or swimming in the waves of transformation? Young people and social protection in central and eastern Europe. A study for the European Youth Forum*, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels.

As far as fieldwork is concerned, the authors were restricted due to time constraints and the wide spectrum of issues the authors had to cover. Most meetings gave us the opportunity to answer and clarify issues, but they could not strictly be described as interviews or focus groups. Therefore, elements of various methods have been combined and used in this policy review project.

The question and answer strand was dominant, though qualified by purpose and conceptual framing. Both formal and informal discussions were held throughout, while *tête-à-tête* also took place. It must also be pointed out that non-verbal and private discussions and differences of opinion among those making presentations were also observed. In all, the team did not find it difficult to gain information from most of the participants, and clarifications were readily offered. On several occasions experienced youth workers were asked to give their particular views. Direct questions such as “What are you expecting to find in our report?” were asked on more than one occasion.

## **2.2. Sources of data and information**

Prior to the two visits a number of draft documents – which would eventually form the basis of the national report – were forwarded by electronic mail by the person in charge of the national youth policy review within the State Council for Youth Affairs. Information about the Republic of Lithuania, in terms of location, population, history, language, state, government, and culture was obtained from a number of websites. This was considered essential before engaging with a foreign team with the responsibility of commenting and deliberating on the understanding, development and implementation of a youth policy. The team was provided with more documents in order to increase the authors’ understanding of the local context, as well as the opportunities the authors would have for formal presentations, discussions, informal meetings and observations. Both prepared and spontaneous replies to the authors’ innumerable queries were given in a very satisfactory manner. The total of eight days, which made up the two visit periods, were characterised by a string of meetings from early morning to late afternoon or early evening.

## **2.3. Global policy and Lithuanian national youth policy**

The concept of a Lithuanian national youth policy cannot be understood without appreciating the broader historical context and the turbulent changes that have taken place in the country over the last decade. Emerging from the shadow of the Soviet Union straight onto the global stage, with the over-stretched resources of a relatively small country with a population

of 3 491 000 people,<sup>1</sup> Lithuania was propelled into a position of needing to modernise all spheres of life at once. This process also coincided with major changes on the global stage and the emergence of a new European understanding of youth, life course, and youth policy.

Lithuania is situated at the eastern edge of the Baltic Sea and has borders with Belarus, Latvia, Poland and the Russian Federation. It is almost a mono-ethnic country with 81.1% of the population Lithuanians, 8.5% Russians, 7% Poles and 1.5% Belarusians.<sup>2</sup> Its geographical position determined its historical development and its struggle for independence. First mentioned in the western chronicles in 1009,<sup>3</sup> Lithuania was a nation state, adopted Christianity in 1387 and held coalitions against the external enemies (for example the Polish – Lithuanian victory over the Teutonic order at the Battle of Zalgiris (Grunwald)). Then the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569) was set up, which was also known as the Union of Lublin. Lithuania was annexed by her large neighbour Russia in the eighteenth century. Lithuania regained its independence in 1918. In 1922 the first Lithuanian Constitution was adopted by the Constituent Seimas. However, this short period of independence and nation-state building was interrupted by the annexation of the Republic of Lithuania by the Soviet Union as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Forced into becoming part of the Soviet Union, Lithuania shared the destiny of other independent states, and underwent a long period of political repression and unification until it regained its independence in March 1990. It is an academic question now what might have happened to Lithuania if its nation state development had not been interrupted by being forcibly integrated into the Soviet Union. However, what is clear is that through the centuries of struggle for independence Lithuania maintained its cultural and spiritual independence, protected its internal resources and retained its integrity.

Only twelve years after regaining independence the country is again about to change – but this time through and because of the will of its people – by joining the European Union. The process of European integration is a big challenge for the state and people of Lithuania: a number of discussions among government officers, academics and the public have been initiated to discuss this issue. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, as well as other leading members of the government, has encouraged contributions to the debate.<sup>4</sup>

1. According to the preliminary population census 2001, Lithuanian Human Development Report, 2001, p. 105.

2. "Education in Lithuania. 2000-2002", *Lithuania factsheet*. Source of statistics: Lietuvo statistikos metraštis 2002 Statistical Yearbook of Lithuania 2002., p. 1.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 2."

4. Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, "Whither the European Union? in *Lithuania in the World*, Vol. 9, No. 5, 2001, pp. 4-8.

“However, while the reasons for this intensification in the debates on the future of Europe are understandable, observing this from an applicant country like Lithuania, one might easily get a sense of talking different languages and a general lack of coherence and realism”.<sup>1</sup> Although the nature of this debate is around definitions of federalism and the difference between various models (the US and the German models), the question for Lithuania is which model will best suit its national interests?

## 2.4. Nation building

Lithuania is a predominantly Roman Catholic country. In 2000, 79% of the population adhered to the Roman Catholic Church, 4.1% to the Orthodox and 2% to other denominations.<sup>2</sup> However, the leading role of the Roman Catholic Church which was the cornerstone of Lithuanian identity throughout the centuries and which was behind the move for independence has changed dramatically. From being a political force during the initial years of independence, it is now just a civil society institution and is not directly involved in drawing up policies. Unlike in neighbouring Poland,<sup>3</sup> the Roman Catholic Church in Lithuania is more about maintaining traditional ways of life and observing rituals such as christenings and weddings which are a part of the Lithuanian national culture, than about being a spiritual institution. Recent Lithuanian reports on social and human development do not include information or analysis about the role of the Christian churches in the lives of Lithuanians including young people in Lithuania.

National values, as well as their new national identity, are very important for young Lithuanians, according to the UN Development Report. This confirms the results of previous surveys conducted in the mid-1990s in twenty-seven countries across Europe in which the same questions about historical ideas and political attitudes were asked.<sup>5</sup> Lithuanians regard their country's history as very important (mean value 4.01) as well as their country itself (mean value 3.82), but they also consider European co-operation as very important, gaining the maximum mean values along with Poland and Ukraine.<sup>1</sup> Lithuania, according to the report, also belongs to a group of countries and regions with minima noted differences with respect to European co-operation, along with Belgium, Germany, Ukraine, South Tyrol, Estonia, Italy

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

2. *The Economist Pocket Europe in Figures (2002). Facts and figures about the forty-eight countries that make up Europe today.* Fourth Edition, *The Economist* in association with Profile Books Limited, p. 165.

3. Roberts and Jung, 1995.

4. Bodo von Borries, 1999, “Cross-cultural comparison of students' concept of Europe” in *Intercultural reconstruction. European Yearbook on Youth Policy and Research.* Vol. 2/1999, CYRCE, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, New York, pp. 33-50.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

and Poland (difference <0.5 points). "This is a very characteristic combination of western (central) European members of the European Union and some eastern (central) European candidates for membership. One of these groups has apparently internationalised European everyday integration, while the other hopes for improvements by getting access to the European 'club'".<sup>1</sup>

Young people in Lithuania in general, according to the UNDR, have a strong national identity. 86% are proud to be Lithuanian citizens. Those from the rural areas are more inclined to associate themselves with a certain region, whereas urban young people with a higher educational attainment more often think of themselves as Europeans, and 10% describe themselves as citizens of the world.<sup>2</sup>

"Young people associate Europe with the future and cultural development. Young people most often associate Lithuania with independence and unemployment».

Meetings of the international team of experts with Lithuanian young people gave an impression that the latter are generally optimistic regarding the sustainability of Lithuania as an independent democracy. Among politically active young Lithuanians there appears to be strong support for Nato, motivated by what Nato can do for Lithuania. However, there does not seem to be any widespread fear that foreign forces will actually threaten Lithuanian independence.

Active young people appear committed to develop and gain respect for Lithuania as a nation. On the other hand it seems that many do not trust Lithuania to provide sufficient possibilities for them or the living-conditions they desire for their futures. Lithuania is seen as a nation that is "catching up" with more developed and well-established nations. The likely accession to the European Union is perceived as necessary to provide a prosperous future.

1. *ibid.*, p. 37.

2. *Lithuanian Human Development Report*, 2001, United Nations Development Programme, Social Policy Unit, Vilnius, 2001.



### 3. Lithuanian youth: general situation

According to one of the authors of the Human United Nations Lithuanian Development Report, 2001:

“Young people of Lithuania feel themselves in a jungle. They express their opinion that they are not cared for, they are paid for a similar work 40% less than adults. Therefore suicidal rate among young people is the highest in the world”.  
(sic)

Although some of the observations made by the authors of the reports are not new either from the point of view of western youth research or current youth research in other post-socialist countries, they did notice a significant difference in opinions from the Lithuanian experts, which reflected the different approach to youth policy in Lithuanian society.

One such difference derives from the fact that there is no concise definition of young people as a social group, and consequently no systematic approach to tackle the problems they face.<sup>1</sup> According to the national youth policy document,

“Young people are a group of individuals aged between 16 and 29 who, during a period of transition to an independent life in society, form their own personalities”.<sup>2</sup>

Attempts to define youth in western literature have resulted in a mosaic of concepts ranging from age-specificity to status passages to life-trajectories.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding these attempts at categorisation, young people’s own life concepts seem to refuse rigid adaptation to any one category.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, one comes up against a very mixed array of concepts of youth and, ultimately, state policies for youth have to grapple with a very dynamic and even unstable situation.

One solution that is commonly sought, both for legal and social reasons, is to classify youth as age-specific. The dangers associated with such a solution

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1. *Lithuanian Human Development Report*, 2001. United Nations Development Programme, Social Policy Unit, Vilnius, 2001, p. 20.

2. *Draft review of Lithuanian youth policy*, 2001, p. 3.

3. Hurrelmann and Engel, 1989; Coleman and Warren-Adamson, 1992; Fornas and Bolin, 1995; Garratt, Roche and Tucker, 1997; Wyn and White, 1997; Cohen and Ainley, 2000.

4. du Bois-Reymond, 1998.

are many, the principal ones being those of subtle exclusion<sup>1</sup>, and limited access. Although age is a biological datum, it is still conceived as a legal passport to educational progress, to enfranchisement, to marriage and to differential treatment within the justice system, for example.

It is an even more complicated issue in the eastern European context where in the communist countries young people were given the mission of building a "brave new world".<sup>2</sup> Throughout the region the one-party regimes made deliberate efforts to mould young people into ideal builders of communism. In exchange for their loyalty to party politics, they were made the main beneficiaries of a generous social policy securing free education, leisure and health care, guaranteed job placement and job security until retirement. This system of social protection for the young made them totally dependent on the authoritarian state in all their life-course transitions. Although participation rates in the formal youth organisations varied in different countries, it was the age limits for membership in the Komsomol that defined the status of young persons aged 15 to 28.<sup>3</sup>

In recent years this issue of youth definition was again on the agenda of European youth research and policy due to the preparation of the white paper on youth. The EU Conference in Lisbon in 2001 which discussed this issue, among others, concluded that existing approaches to the definition of youth are based on demographic or activity-related characteristics, the first is the more formal definition of young people as a particular age group within a society, while the second is activity-related, has no strict age limitation and defines youth as a sub-group; part of its own sub-system which shares similar types of activities, lifestyles, and cultures attributed to young people (patchwork approach). The transition from youth to adulthood can be identified in a similar way: based on the life-course concept (academic approach) or on the specific channelling of youth into adulthood through support and assistance (social policy approach).<sup>4</sup> For transition societies like

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1. Azzopardi, 2002.

2. Wallace and Kovacheva, 1998.

3. Kovacheva, 2000.

4. In the course of the discussion two main models or patterns of transition were identified and specified: the knowledge-oriented transitional model (pattern) or the skills-oriented transitional model (pattern). These were developed on the basis of the specific ways young people move into adulthood in different countries and specified through three dimensions:

- geographical (north, south Europe and Ireland);
- dominance of free choice or control over young people's transition into adult life;
- dominance of particular social actors in the process of transition:
  - young people themselves,
  - agencies, institutions which represent young peoples' needs (youth associations, youth researchers).

*(continued next page)*



Lithuania, which are still in a process of defining their youth policy, the activity-related definition of youth (or patchwork approach) is probably most appropriate. However, the authors would prefer to stick to the social policy approach in the further analysis into the transition of young people in Lithuania into adulthood.

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*(continued)*

- those who facilitate young peoples' transition into adulthood (national governments, social services providers)

Two additional dimensions were considered as very important:

- multi-cultural, (which describes the post-nation-state nature of youth transitions)
- gender

A further third model or pattern was considered to describe the transition to adulthood of disadvantaged young people, so called drop-outs from mainstream youth. This was to be used as a basis for social policy addressing the needs of this group of young people to bring them back into mainstream society. Therefore, it was emphasised that the two models of transition are complimentary, and not mutually exclusive, and they reflect the trajectory of the development of European economies which is not linear, but more of a zigzag (forwards and backwards) development.



## 4. Economic situation

### 4.1. Poverty and inequality

Few, if any, young Lithuanians are satisfied with the present economic situation in Lithuania. There seems to be a widespread belief that the economy will improve over time. Some are optimistic that they will have a chance to benefit, but many fear that the development will be too slow and others feel that they will not benefit personally from any such development (social exclusion).

For many young people the economic situation means they wish to leave the country. This is counterproductive both to the economy and to national confidence. An even worse consequence is the risk of alienation, in the sense that young people are discouraged from getting constructively involved in society and the economy.

These are fundamental issues for youth policy to address. Lithuania's youth policy should be specifically targeted at encouraging young people to believe that constructive involvement can lead to satisfactory or even better lives.

There is a tendency to think that young people's economic hardship and inequality is to do with the current situation, but this is not true. Deprivation among young people, and in particular young migrants in the big cities of the Soviet Union, who moved from the rural areas to continue their education, has been well catalogued by Lithuanian and Russian sociologists.<sup>1</sup> The fact that the openness of post-communist societies has given us more information about the losers and victims of new capitalism does not diminish the fact that even under communism there was a huge proportion of losers as well, but with the only difference that the information about them was hidden.

### 4.2. Youth independence and emigration

Lithuania's demographic profile highlights the fact that it is one of the European countries with the slowest population growth (the annual population growth from 1990 to 1998 was -0.14%, which according to the estimate will slightly increase from 1998 to 2005 to -0.47, but still with a

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1. Koklyagina, L., 1992, "Soviet urban youth: sociological view", in *Soviet social change in the mirror of glasnost* (ed. by J. Riordan), Macmillan Publisher, London.

negative natural population growth and negative migration at -1.106 in 2001).<sup>1</sup> This demographic decline is accompanied by an increase in the population, and young people in particular, migrating abroad

While the system of education is being restructured, the emigration of young people is increasing. Lithuania keeps losing people to other countries. Very often these are the most capable people. Many of them become illegal immigrants in western Europe and elsewhere and consequently their skills and abilities are not fully used there either. There are no strategies to tackle this matter and almost no research base is available to make proper estimates of the scale of the problem. Young Lithuanians consider the United Kingdom as their favoured destination.

Freedom of movement and free choice in employment are the major achievements of the post-communist countries of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Evolving labour markets have created intense migration in Lithuania (as in all countries in the region), not only within a country, but also abroad. An early enthusiastic wave of well-educated and skilled young people were supported by their families who saw emigration as an opportunity for their children in the climate of declining living conditions and business opportunities in Lithuania. As a household survey revealed:

According to the opinion of 69% of heads of households under 30 years old their standards of living decreased. Young people prevailed among those who went abroad to seek employment; 21% of young respondents said that they were ready to leave for permanent residence abroad, and an additional 50% said they would agree to a temporary stay abroad.<sup>2</sup>

Migration of young people to major cities is not a new phenomenon in Lithuania and was previously caused by the difference in living conditions and life styles between urban and rural communities as well as by allocation of the schools and higher education institutions in towns and major towns.<sup>3</sup> The centralised education system during the Soviet period created wide-scale migration of young people in towns. This migration is ongoing, and if it is to continue the rural population may age significantly. Previously young people tended to settle in towns after graduating, because migration abroad was almost impossible under Soviet rule. Freedom of movement linked with the decline of industries and mass unemployment has added a new dimension to the educational migration patterns. The economic emigration of young people to other European countries is a new phenomenon and is already regarded by some national experts as a real threat to the economic

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1. UNDR, p. 105; *The Economist, Pocket Europe in Figures*, pp. 28-42.

2. *Lithuanian Human Development Report*, pp. 30-31.

3. Matulionis, 1989.

and social development of the country. Again, here, a holistic approach is needed, one which takes into consideration the conditions which should be ensured to encourage young people to return from other countries. This is not likely to happen until Lithuanian society becomes in a general sense more attractive than western Europe and the United States.

### 4.3. Identities: new, old and changing

One of the most enduring legacies of the Soviet period, to which the authors heard references from different people during the authors' meetings in Lithuania, is, according to Manuel Castells :

“ ...the destruction of civil society after decades of systematic negation of its existence. Reduced to networks of primary identity and individual survival, Russian people and people of ex-Soviet societies will have to muddle through the reconstruction of their collective identity, in the midst of a world where the flows of power and money are trying to render piecemeal the emerging economies and social institutions before they come into being, in order to swallow them in their global networks. Nowhere is the ongoing struggle between global economics flows and cultural identity more important than in the wasteland created by the collapse of Soviet statism on the historical edge of the information society”<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of the Soviet Union nationalistic mobilisation in Lithuania, as well as massive democracy demonstrations in Russia itself in the spring of 1991, showed the existence of an active, politically conscious segment of the urban population which was attempting to overcome the Soviet state.<sup>2</sup> However, when the obvious enemy (Soviet communism) had disintegrated, when the material difficulties of the transition had led to the deterioration of daily life, and when the grey reality of the meagre heritage gained after decades of daily struggle had settled in the minds of the ex-Soviet people, the absence of a collective project, beyond the fact of being “ex”, spread political confusion, and fostered wild competition in a race for individual survival throughout society.<sup>3</sup>

It was clear during the authors' meetings with different representatives of youth organisations that these are struggling to determine their new identities through revival of earlier types of youth organisations, which were banned during the Soviet period, (such as the Scouts, and Christian youth organisations), and are borrowing ideas and structures from western

1. Castells, Manuel (2000) *End of millennium: the information age: economy, society and culture*. Second edition, p. 67.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

3. Castells, 2002; Machonin, 1995.

European youth NGOs, very often with little understanding of their original objectives (for example ex-German-type NGOs in Kaunas area). This is because they do not reflect the development of civil society in Lithuania, have yet to receive support at the grassroots and therefore are not viable or sustainable. In Lithuania this process of building up a new identity yet again tends to go from the top to the bottom of society. Very often it either does not reach the grassroots at all, or the new social differentiation has already gone so far that "feelings of social security and of social justification are diminishing among the population",<sup>1</sup> such that it now threatens the formation of new identities. This might be one of the reasons why voluntary work in communities is appealing to just a small faction of young people.

Another explanation was offered at the meeting of the group of experts of the round table in Kaunas. Lithuania is still lacking a structure for individual interventions and expressions of opinions. Youth NGOs are underdeveloped. There are no developed channels for free discussion of what can be done. Christian youth organisations, which played an important role in democratising Lithuanian society towards the end of Soviet rule, are now in decline and at the community level, only Christian movements are supported as NGOs, but not parish councils. At the level of LIJOT there are no new ideas and very little knowledge as to how to lobby for them. Although there is a degree of optimism that in ten years' time this situation will have changed for the better, does it mean in social terms that yet another generation of young Lithuanians will be socially excluded or have emigrated?

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1. Machonin, 1995, pp. 13-14

## 5. Education

School remains the main place of socialisation for young people in Lithuania. It is an institution that has a very strong capacity to affect the lives of young people, although some of the traditional educational institutions such as pre-school childcare have collapsed, and summer leisure facilities are not available any more. The process of community building has been restarted, but has yet to build up its capacity. This has overlapped with the increase in Internet communication which has changed the definition of community, at least in urban areas in Lithuania, where more than 70% of young people live.<sup>1</sup>

Educational reform in Lithuania, which commenced in 1988, has undergone several reviews and amendments since that time. In 1991 a Law on Education was passed and then amended in 1998, which laid down a conceptual outline for further reform and created a legal basis for reorganising the education system.<sup>2</sup> The year 1999 marked a second stage in education reform. In order to focus on problem areas in education, it was decided to draw up a further outline for reform, which would lay out a long-term education development strategy for 2001 to 2011. The draft law on this is still in the process of being debated publicly.<sup>3</sup> The authors of the Lithuania Human Development Report consider the main problem in education is the increasing number of drop-outs. At the primary school level there is no way of controlling this and educational statistics do not cover people above 16 years of age, which is the official top age of compulsory schooling in Lithuania. Although the first years of independence saw a dramatic decline in educational values, they have started gaining ground again, but the main problem young people face now in Lithuania is a lack of resources rather than motivation to continue education. Teaching staff are among the lowest paid professionals and a lack of resources limits their re-training.

There are three categories of education in Lithuania to which the authors can find references in documents both from the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and from LIJOT: formal, non-formal and informal.

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1. *Under Umbrella, Autumn-Winter 2000*, Council of Lithuanian Youth Organisations, Lithuania, 2000, p. 4.

2. Draft review of the Lithuanian Youth Policy, p. 22.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

### **5.1. Formal**

Since 1991 the system of education has been in constant change. The Ministry of Education is considering draft laws on education, non-formal education and vocational education as well as university level education. Protecting the rights of young people in terms of equal access to education and ensuring social support for them are the main priorities defined by the ministry. This is organised through a school bus arrangement in rural areas called the Yellow Bus scheme.

The system of vocational education has undergone dramatic changes over the last decade and some vocational schools are now subordinated to the local authorities, and no longer form part of industrial enterprises.

The Lithuanian formal education system falls far short of European standards and is not equipped to meet the aspirations of Lithuanians. Restoring the formal education system will be a lengthy process, primarily due to a lack of finance. Youth policy should advocate further general investment in the formal education system, but other more targeted measures are also needed.

A key element is the personal qualifications of teachers, who for the most part are not educated to modern standards. The educational community on every level needs to develop strong international links. One specific initiative should be long-term exchanges of young teachers.

There is a need to set up democratic structures involving children from a very young age in the education system. This can be done with little financial resources. It is always important to bring children up with a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society, but in the current situation training in democracy should serve a more specific purpose. When young people cannot automatically count on a top-quality education, it is important to empower them to take responsibility for their own development.

### **5.2. Non-formal**

The status of non-formal education in Lithuania is not defined by any special law or legal regulation, and according to the comments of the LIJOT board members even the official approach of the government to non-formal education is not yet clear. Representatives of LIJOT believe that the situation makes it difficult to promote non-formal education in Lithuania. Non-formal education is mainly the domain of NGOs. Although non-formal education does not provide any formal certificates, which in Lithuanian terms means that it is not recognised in the same way as other types of education, the



Ministry of Education supports some programmes of non-formal education, such as summer holiday programmes, drug prevention programmes and crime prevention programmes.

There is also no clear distinction between non-formal and supplementary education, which is a hangover from the Soviet period (student's houses). There is adult non-formal education for those who are over 18 years old. It was recently adjusted to the needs of over 16s. Very often non-formal education remains very spontaneous and is reduced to e-mail networks.

### **5.3. Informal**

Informal education, essentially lifelong learning, incorporates any learning that takes place throughout any stage of one's life. A new status for informal education is suggested in the draft education reform document, which aims to provide individuals with opportunities for lifelong learning in the information environment which includes libraries, museums and the media. Personal achievements gained through informal education can be recognised as part of formal education programmes or qualifications.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Draft Lithuanian national report, 2001, p. 37.



## 6. Employment

The issue of youth employment is analysed regularly by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The ministry produces reports every year which include employment, unemployment and labour market analysis. The ministry also covers such areas as social assistance (to families and children), social benefits, social services, social work, social insurance and pensions. Young people aged from 16 to 25 make up 20.5% of the economically active population in Lithuania, but at the same time they comprise 25% of all unemployed. There are some differences in the definition of unemployment used by the International Labour Organisation whose classification is used by the Labour Force Survey and the Department of Statistics and Lithuanian Labour Exchanges which is mentioned in the *Lithuanian Human Development Report*.<sup>1</sup> This is worth mentioning when it comes to the comparison of different sources of information on employment and unemployment. Lithuanian policy underwent changes in the area of employment over the last decade and it now corresponds with the national employment action plans of the EU members states. These plans are specified in the Republic of Lithuania's programme for increasing employment for 2001 to 2004, which was approved by the Lithuanian Government in May 2001. Structural reforms, as well as a process of privatisation, have affected the number of available jobs in Lithuania and have led to a significant rise in unemployment. Therefore the main objectives of the employment policy are to improve job creation as well as encourage new employment initiatives. Supporting self-employment is considered one of the most important means of job creation,<sup>2</sup> and the major obstacles to this are the regional disparities and the situation in rural areas, which suffer most from growing unemployment and the lack of business infrastructure (such as transport, communication and energy supply). There is also a lack of money for new businesses, which the programme refers to as lack of state support.

Enhancing the employability of young people is one of the crucial issues highlighted in the programme. The number of young unemployed in Lithuania (young people under 25 years old) is higher than among other

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1. *Lithuanian Human Development Report*, 2001, p. 41.

2. *Programme of the Republic of Lithuania for Increasing Employment for 2001 to 2004*, p. 5 (approved by Resolution No. 529 of 8 May 2001 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania), Vilnius.

demographic groups (15.3%), and the number of young unemployed in rural areas accounted for 40%.

Measures to tackle youth unemployment are, at the time of the review, covered by initiatives from the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and the employment centre. This is a part of the labour exchange, and is similar to labour clubs which are also types of employment centres. The employment club in Vilnius, for example, works with young people under 25 years of age and provides information on available vacancies. They have about 200 people coming to the centre every day and about two-thirds of these young people are interested in what vacancies are available. At the same time secondary schools (36% of unemployed young people are secondary school graduates) are not involved in this process.

## 6.1. Unemployment

The level of unemployment among young people reached 18.8% (total 12.0%) on 1 November 2001. On average, every fourth person registered with the labour exchange is under 29 years old. The level of unemployment among young people has always been higher than the national average. According to the Labour Force Survey, actual levels are twice as high as the registered level. UNDR, p. 42

The highest level of unemployment is registered in rural areas, in addition to which some unemployed people remain unregistered. Serious employment discrepancies within the country cause intensive internal migration of the labour force, and emigration. According to the Programme of the Republic of Lithuania for Increasing Employment for 2001 to 2004, only 3 to 4% of young unemployed under the age of 25 are those who have university degrees, whilst the majority of unemployed young people are those who do not have any vocational education and professional skills. The document therefore proposes that the solutions include: (a) the reform of vocational education and training and (b) persuading young people to acquire vocational education and training prior to entering the labour market or applying for social benefits.

It is also recognised that the reason vocational education and training (VET) does not attract young people is because it is still aimed at a very narrow range of skills that the labour market has ceased to demand. VET should be reformed to reflect the skills required for work in the private sector or as a self-employed person. VET is also far too long and formal, meaning young people prefer to embark on fast-track training through the labour market

vocational centres, and then get work.<sup>1</sup> Therefore recognition of knowledge-based rather than skills-based training is yet to be developed in practical terms.

Unemployment benefits are paid according to an unemployed individual's state social insurance record and reasons for loss of work. Unemployed individuals who worked and who paid mandatory social insurance contributions for a longer time than others are entitled to a larger amount of unemployment benefit. In the case of young people with no previous work experience the amount of benefit in 2000 was not less than the state support approved by the government (135 Litas per month). This is subject to the individuals meeting certain requirements, such as having registered with labour exchanges as a job seeker, accepting an offer of work which corresponds with their professional skills and state of health, or an offer of vocational training.<sup>2</sup>

Women's unemployment is relatively high. According to the Labour Force Survey, female unemployment in 2000 was 13.3% (compared to 17.3% male). The breakdown was: 29.5% (aged 14 to 19); 26.0% (aged 20 to 24) and 10.2% (aged 25 to 29).

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1. *Labour policy, social report, 2000*, p. 43, LHDR, p. 41.



## 7. Health and lifestyle

The public health achievements of the socialist era have been undone in the majority of central and eastern European countries and not enough is being spent on public health measures to confront the growing threat of HIV/Aids and drug-resistant tuberculosis. In this context Lithuania is spending significant public resources without getting the benefits of quality health care, and according to a World Bank Report,<sup>1</sup> ranks third after Germany and Croatia in the area of the percentage of GDP spent on health. The health system in Lithuania is undergoing changes at present through a series of health care reforms, which include developing a new concept of public health. The Public Health Division (PHD) is part of the Ministry of Health. It is responsible for:

- health regulation in educational institutions;
- health education in schools;
- health and safety regulation and monitoring of its implementation;
- drug prevention programmes;
- mental health;
- alcohol and tobacco control programmes.

There are thirty-eight public health centres in the country.

There is an Aids centre in Lithuania, whose representative the authors met at the Ministry of Health. The Aids centre organises initiatives using mass media, the press and show business. About 250 lectures are organised every year involving sixty-two municipalities in these programmes. The Aids centre co-ordinates its activities through the PHD. It has also established some links with the police in order to identify young children at risk. It has studied the change in the population's attitude towards HIV in a monitoring study, run in association with the Ministry of Health.

Special attention is paid to teenage pregnancies, which are in the focus of the minors project, and the ministry is tackling the problem of sexual abuse in shelters for young people.

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1. *Transition. The first ten years: analysis and lessons for eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union*, The World Bank, Washington, D.C.

### **7.1. Mental health problems**

Mental health centres are very new in Lithuania and according to the Ministry of Health are not yet very successful, but they are considered as the first step in tackling the problem.

### **7.2. Alcohol and tobacco control programmes**

Although there is an official minimum age for alcohol consumption in Lithuania (18 years old), it is very difficult to control, because alcohol is mainly consumed outside the family environment. Another problem that the ministry raised with the Council of Europe is that fact that fruit juices in Lithuania are more expensive than vodka.

### **7.3. Family planning**

There is family planning (sex education) at schools starting from age 14. The ministry expressed its concern over the teenage abortion rate (under 18). There are five family planning centres in Lithuania where young women and men can be provided with necessary counselling. The Ministry of Health co-operates on health issues with the Ministry of Education.

### **7.4. Drug addiction**

Drug addiction is a growing problem in Lithuania. The average age of drug abusers is 26 years old. There are some projects in place which tackle the problem of drug abuse, such as buses which go from place to place providing free access for anybody who needs help. One of the problems is that people who do not have the right documents do not have any access to health facilities. People belonging to this category include Roma gypsies, illegal immigrants, former prisoners, and street sex workers. The ministry also expressed concern over the sex trafficking business in Lithuania, which is underestimated according to their observation. The ministry does not consider the issue is given sufficient attention.



## **8. Crime and justice**

The Ministry of Justice is not directly involved in youth policy at the national or regional levels. All issues of child protection are regulated by the Civil Court. Juvenile judges and prosecutors have already been trained and are now in place. The official age of legal responsibility in Lithuania is 16. New legislation that will come into effect in July 2003 reduces the age of criminal responsibility to 14. The main issues are: protection of children from harmful information, and the registration of NGOs.

According to the crime statistics, two-thirds of all crime is committed by young people from 14 to 29 years of age, but at the same time juvenile courts and family courts do not exist in Lithuania.

Community work for young offenders is underdeveloped in Lithuania. A study on the probation system has just got underway. Both the probation and bail systems exist in Lithuania, but they are significantly underdeveloped. While in detention only 50% of those young offenders given the opportunity to carry on with their studies take this up.



## **9. Youth culture, sport and leisure**

At governmental level the Ministry of Culture is involved in all youth matters relating to culture. This means mainly that the ministry provides support for young people in such areas as: grants (providing 35% of all scholarships for young artists); legal support; competitions and programmes supported by NGOs and youth funds

Nevertheless this support is limited to those with certain qualifications, and only high quality projects receive this support. Some scholarships are designed for young performers; some are designed for students. They are, however, clearly designed to support professional artists or art students. Lithuania has longstanding traditions in classical music as well as in traditional singing and dancing. There is a special curriculum in Lithuanian schools promoting traditional culture. National song festivals and folk dance festivals are very popular not only in the villages, but also in the cities.



## 10. Participation

“Young Lithuanians feel themselves poorly integrated into society. They often feel ignored or unprepared to compete in the labour market. However they do not show great deal of interest in overcoming their social alienation”. (LHDR, 2001, p. 26)

Therefore, the authors of the Lithuanian Human Development Report suggest a targeted approach with respect to different groups of young people. Given their indifference, apart from the mass media, more non-traditional ways of disseminating legal, social and other information should be used to help young people find their niche in Lithuania's changing society. More attention should be paid to young people who neither study nor work. They are the most vulnerable to social exclusion and are the most difficult to reach. At the same time, young people who study are the most active, both from a political point of view and in the labour market. They should therefore be encouraged to take part in the decision-making process on issues relating to themselves, and even more so in addressing global social problems.<sup>1</sup>

Youth participation is one of the priorities of Lithuanian youth NGOs. According to Evaldas Birgiolis, LIJOT board member, there are about 7 000 NGOs in Lithuania and between one-fifth and one-sixth of them are youth NGOs. In other words about 13% of Lithuanian youth is affiliated to one or more organisation.<sup>2</sup> However these figures should be interpreted carefully, because not all citizens are members of NGOs and people may participate in more than one NGO. The most organised young people are school pupils, who are involved in school sport and music clubs, which are the most popular among school children. Pupils' interests are represented in school councils, which are self-governing bodies. Nevertheless during a meeting, LIJOT board members quoted results of the research on the democratisation of Lithuanian schools undertaken by the Civil Initiative Centre. It noted that “less than one-fifth of school students take part in school self-government (17%) and of those who take part 3% do this through the school council, 5% through the pupils' council, 1% are school presidents, 6% work through various non-governmental organisations and the rest (83%) prefer to solve

1. LHDR, 2001, p. 26.

2. *Youth participation in Lithuania*. Handout provided by LIJOT, December 2001.

their problems or worries at the individual level rather than through institutions available within schools.”

Youth participation at local level is even worse. It is totally dependent on the local municipalities and in reality this support is so limited that it cannot have any impact on youth participation. A further question is what prevents young people forming an NGO? Money is not required – they can form a group in a local playground or a pub. The most obvious channel of participation available to young people at local level is through educational institutions. Members of the international delegation noted this during the authors' limited time in the country. However, the authors also observed that a lack of participative pedagogy directly in schools and indirectly in families and organisations as a basic requirement for potential effective participation is something which should be a priority in Lithuanian youth policy.

This situation is also described in the Lithuanian Human Development Report (2001), which states “... up to now politicians have usually limited their actions to declarations and the establishment of new structures. However, the level of activity and participation of young people themselves in addressing their problems is insufficient”.<sup>1</sup> Young peoples' political activity has undergone serious changes since independence. According to the 2001 LHDR, in 1999, 12% of young Lithuanians expressed their view that politics plays an important role in their life (compared with 7% of Estonians and 10% of Latvians), but the authors of the report conclude that it is more difficult for young people than older people to define their political preferences. 50% of young people aged 15 to 19 were unable to identify a political preference based on ideological convictions (compared with 30% of older people),<sup>2</sup> which is not all that different from western European countries, but the worrying fact that the members of the international team of experts noted is that the rate of young people's participation remains very low. Out of the forty-one NGOs which make up LiJOT, only twenty organisations are focused on youth issues (going by their names), and their membership is not high.

“The majority of young people, in particular those who live in rural areas or who are not enrolled in educational institutions, do not participate in these NGOs”.  
(LHDR, 2002, p. 21)

Some youth organisations such as the Scouts were reinstated after independence. In 1997 the Scouts had two main centres in Lithuania – in Vilnius and Kaunas – and a membership of 4 000.

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1. LHDR, 2001, p. 20.

2. LHDR, 2001, p. 21.

Representatives of non-formal youth groups in the villages of Griskabudis, Girenai and Luksiai spoke both publicly, and informally in one to one conversations, of their lack of influence on youth policy, of a lack of interest in youth project funding and a lack of participation. Yet the activities carried out and services available, mainly through initiatives by individual teachers and youth leaders, appeared highly commendable. The Bells general school, the Varpas basketball club and the guitarists club are typical examples of a youth service that inspires creativity and autonomy. Much, however, is still to be done to improve the environment in which these groups function.

The same can be said about the Kaunas Union of Youth NGOs, which, though proactive and participatory in vision, is not involved in decision-making. AIESEC and Actia Catholica Patria, though of different orientations, both have their particular interests and are satisfied with the recognition they receive from university students and with the voluntary social work they carry out.

It would not be fair to say that the concept of the participatory approach is unknown or underdeveloped in Lithuania. A training course in progress in the Kulautuva youth centre was a good example of how effective professionally trained youth leaders can be. The accreditation of participants' attendance and the pleasant surroundings are but two benefits of non-formal education. The question that all members of the team were trying to answer is why such courses do not have a significant impact on participation.





## **11. What shapes Lithuanian youth policy?**

The importance of a sound youth policy is widely recognised by the Lithuanian Government. The Deputy Minister for Labour and Social Protection (effectively the Youth Minister) thinks that the Lithuanian youth policy model is unique. The deputy minister cited the fact that several laws have been adopted by the government to regulate youth issues and the State Council for Youth affairs has been established. New legislation to regulate the implementation of youth policies will form a new stage in youth policy.

The dramatic changes in Lithuanian society since independence in 1991 have meant that Lithuanian youth policy has had to be shaped almost from scratch. This is in particular due to: changes in the social and economic organisation of Lithuanian society, the shift towards a market economy, and the need to build the nation state and rethink youth policy, including the institutions which support it.

The major principles of the Lithuanian national youth policy were specified in a resolution of the Lithuanian Parliament in 1996.

At the legislative level, the Committee for Youth and Sport Affairs of the Lithuanian Parliament is made up of representatives of various political parties. The State Council was set up to co-ordinate youth policy at the executive level. At regional level vice-mayors are in charge of youth policy. Local authorities therefore still play the role of policy co-ordinators, incorporating some elements of youth policy. Regional policy is co-ordinated through round tables.

### **11.1. Committee for Youth and Sports Affairs (parliamentary committee)**

The main objectives of the Committee for Youth and Sports Affairs (parliamentary committee) headed by Mr Masiulis, Chair of the Committee for Youth and Sport Affairs of the Lithuanian Parliament, are to set up a legal framework and create a network of partners.

The main problem for this youth policy organisation is continuity, because, for example, when the parliament changes, the youth agenda also changes. At the time when the group of international experts visited the parliament, 100 of its deputies were newly elected.

Youth policy at the legislative level is organised and co-ordinated by the parliamentary commission and its work focuses on the following areas:

- compulsory military service;
- awareness of civil society;
- NGOs;
- disadvantaged young people;
- EU enlargement;
- employment and unemployment;
- housing;
- youth minorities;
- Lithuanian youth abroad;
- regional youth policy (youth municipalities work);
- the knowledge society.

The main legal document, The National Youth Policy Concept, was adopted by the Lithuanian Parliament in 1996, but according to comments of the current members of the parliamentary committee it already requires revision. There is also a draft law on youth, which is under discussion. The parliamentary committee considers the following as priority issues:

- regional aspect of youth policy,
- youth issues at the level of municipalities.

Regulation is required with respect to youth NGO activity, which is prohibited at present, but the general view about it has already changed. Another issue to be considered is voluntary work.

There is some positive movement in respect of housing problems both for young people and senior citizens. There is also a discussion on the second draft of the legislation on military service. Student grants are another issue under discussion. Different ministries work with different NGOs depending on the issue under discussion. The Department of Sports and the National Olympic Committee consider sports issues.

Another priority in youth policy is tax exemption.

It is the Liberal Party which is leading the thinking on youth affairs.

Their main approach is that young people should solve their problems themselves and the political parties should set up the framework for it.

However, there are differences of opinion as to what are the major youth problems. For example the Social Democratic Party representative considered that youth unemployment was a major issue. The Social Democrats

(SD) disagree about higher education fees. The Liberal Democrats' opinion is that a contribution should be made by the students but it should be differentiated, while the SD insist on a free education approach.

One member of the committee is from Plocas (a single mandate constituency) which has the highest level of unemployment, with 4 700 unemployed, 70% of whom are young people and only five of whom have higher education diplomas.

### **11.2. State Council for Youth Affairs**

The State Council for Youth Affairs is made up of members who are representatives of the ministries (50% of its members) and another 50% who are NGOs representatives. The chair of the council is a ministry representative, whereas her/his deputy chair is an NGO representative. Its main functions are: political, executive (implementation of the decisions of the council); and administrative – as it acts as a state institution.

The Council is also involved in financing youth projects, setting up guidelines in youth policy and designing projects.

Its activities cover: inter-ministerial co-ordination by providing recommendations to the ministries; support of youth NGOs, international work and implementation of international obligations and participation in drafting youth legislation.

The representatives of the State Council for Youth Affairs believe that state intervention is an important part of youth policy, because the Lithuanian state is very young.

The State Council for Youth Affairs supports regional initiatives, but has very little resources to do so. Previous governments mainly focused on supporting businesses, but the current government pays more attention to supporting social initiatives.

Some of the new government initiatives are: youth employment centres (in Vilnius and other centres) and making NGOs competitive, so they can partner the government in youth policy.

A target area for example is Sakiai municipality, which is in western Lithuania and borders the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation. The municipality is an economically depressed area, and the municipal office is fully aware of the situation. It has a strong centralised system for allocating funds and for providing activities young people enjoy. One of its main objectives is to encourage financial investment from central government in proportion to that granted to large urban areas like Vilnius and Kaunas.

In the case of Kaunas, a university town, an air of optimism prevails among members of the Kaunas youth affairs council in terms of representation, of their vision of Kaunas city and of project evaluation processes. Yet representatives also spoke of “no co-ordination between the youth affairs council and the municipality”, a “non-existent regional policy”, a “lack of infra-structures for sports activities” and the “difficulty in influencing the national youth policy”.

Youth policy is trans-sectoral in Lithuania. The Deputy Minister for Social Affairs and Labour's deputy is chair of LiJOT-Council of Non-Governmental Youth Organisations.

### **11.3. Non-governmental organisations**

At the national level, the Council of Lithuanian Youth Organisations (LiJOT) which was founded in 1992 and has forty-four member organisations (national NGOs) serves as an umbrella organisation for youth NGOs across the country.

The main activities of LiJOT are developing the information society, European activities and youth initiatives.

Priorities for 2002 included:

- youth participation;
- youth co-operation development;
- consultancy for youth organisations.

Main activities:

- 1997 to 1998 Development of youth work;
- 1998 to 1999 Baltic Youth Forum secretariat;
- 1998 hosted the European Youth Forum meeting;
- 1999 to 2002 participation in the Baltic Sea youth.

LiJOT produces a monthly brochure with information on youth entitled Under Umbrella and it has its own website: [www.LiJOT.lt](http://www.LiJOT.lt)

LiJOT works on the international, national and regional levels (municipal work takes place in co-operation with regional youth councils through round tables).

There are also forty regional youth councils for youth affairs which co-operate both on a district level and between counties.

LiJOT helps to develop co-ordination within the municipalities.

### *International activities*

Between 1993 and 1997 LiJOT was a member of CENYC (Council of European National Youth Councils, which has now been merged with other European umbrella organisations into the European Youth Forum). It is now a member of the European Youth Forum, the Baltic Youth Forum and the World Lithuanian Youth Union.

It is also involved in bilateral co-operation with Norway and Poland and co-operation between youth councils such as the one in Belarus, the Flemish Youth Council, the youth council in Luxembourg, the Youth Council of Georgia, the Swedish Youth Council and the Regional Youth Council of Schleswig-Holstein.

### *Lithuanian Students Union*

In 1991 students played an active part in the move for independence. Although its main activities are now centred on less political issues like the quality of studies, social problems in Lithuania, students dormitories and tuition fees, the Lithuanian Students Union recently took part in the protest against the closure of the Students Union of Belarus. There are thirteen state universities in Lithuania and two private universities.

### *National Students Union*

This had 100 members in 1998. On the international level they work as one of the round table group which is part of the Baltic Union of Youth Unions of NGOs.

Its main objectives are:

- obtaining and sharing information;
- training (counselling function);
- advocacy work in the municipalities;
- providing loans;
- providing social and psychological help.

It organises two programmes designed to develop employment skills among young people, but a great deal of organisational issues limit their scope for working with young people and attracting new members.

### *Foreign NGOs in Lithuania*

30% of funding for foreign NGOs comes from the Lithuanian Government and 70% from international donors.

#### 11.4. Dilemma of youth policy development

One of the greatest achievements in Lithuanian youth policy so far has been the concept of 'co-management and co-decision-making', which is a cornerstone of the state concept on youth policy. Before the team visited Lithuania it was difficult to imagine that co-management could actually be efficient; expectations were that it was either only functioning on paper, or that youth participation was in fact not broadly based. During visits, however, members of the international team were able to see for themselves co-management structures functioning at the national and regional level. There is a good understanding of the benefits of co-management among many young people and decision-makers, but the concept works less well in rural areas.

Lithuanian youth organisations have a co-operative approach to the state and the political system. This is probably both natural and desirable in a society that needs to stand together to achieve progress. Youth organisations and especially LIJOT are working extremely well as non-formal educators, to communicate opportunities, to build confidence and develop networks. However, despite this consensus there should still be constructive criticism, since this strengthens civil society.

Nevertheless, wherever members of the team went, and irrespective of whom the authors met, be they representatives of governmental bodies, local authorities or youth organisations, the difficulties in building new youth policies because of the legacy of communism was a recurring theme. The striking contrast between the communist system and the one Lithuania has today seems to lie in what can be described as the balance of citizens-state relationship,<sup>1</sup> which is only now becoming fully clear. People were subject to social paternalism, due to the state's position as elementary welfare provider. Performance was low, while social security protection was high. The connection between security and submission was both structurally and psychologically important; it created a specific kind of relationship between the state and the citizens, which were not solely negative.<sup>2</sup>

Despite radical democratic reforms in Lithuania, "the state still has the responsibility for the successful development of the economic micro-structure, this though it still controls banks and their investment funds. On

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1. Mayer, 1995.

2. Mayer, G., 1995, "Socialismus v krvi. Transformace očima psychologie", Literární noviny. Přítomnost 2.11 (Socialism in the blood. Transformation through the eyes of psychology) in: Pavel Machonin (1995) *Social structure of communist societies "Après la lutte"*. Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague. Paper presented at the first workshop: Social structures in transformation. Patterns and paths (ESF-Scientific Network): Social transformations in central and eastern Europe, Ladenburg, Germany.

the other hand, it does not intervene – even indirectly – to a sufficient extent in this sphere which, in many ways, has remained on the technological level inherited from the communist times. The non-decentralised state authority is not satisfactorily controlled by democratically elected regional bodies and other kind of civil activities. The situation of the democratic opposition does not yet correspond to the standards of advanced pluralist democratic countries.”<sup>1</sup> And “yet underdeveloped effective private decision-making and the careful social policy of the government has led to some conservation of egalitarianism, both within the former state-owned enterprises and in the relation of the entrepreneurial sphere to the budget sphere.”<sup>2</sup>

It is not the aim of this commentary to draw up a list of the activities, plans and strategies of the individual ministries in Lithuania. The evidence collected from the review team’s meetings and discussions corroborate the fact that most of the key domains and issues of a youth policy are on the governments’ agenda in Lithuania – albeit in a fragmented manner. That is, each body, council and organisation replicates the objectives, principles and strands of the state’s youth policy. Proposals, programmes and support are supervised, and analysed by the VJRT, which in turn prepares and puts forward proposals to the government. Through the process of representation, young people’s projects, expectations and problems are placed on the table for consideration. Financial constraints and lack of legislation often lead to a lack of regulation and co-ordination of youth affairs.<sup>3</sup> Lobbying and patronage sometimes help to make in-roads for approval and action.

Thus the view can be taken that youth policy in Lithuania is on the road to successful development. Co-operation and co-management seem to dominate the philosophy behind the management process being adopted by the authorities. The road to be taken, however, is not without its dangers and problems. This is a situation in which most countries find themselves.

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

2. (Machonin, 1995) *ibid.*, p. 13.

3. LiJOT, 22 June 2002.





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## **Appendix**

### **Programme of the first visit from 5 to 9 December 2001**

*5 December (Wednesday)*

Meeting with youth and sports commission of the Lithuanian Parliament. Role of the commission. Perspectives on the situation and future prospects, parliamentary control of youth policy. Council of Lithuanian youth organisations (LijOT)

*6 December (Thursday)*

Meeting at the Ministry of Culture

Meeting at the Ministry of Health

Meeting at the Ministry of Justice

Meeting with the secretariat of the State Council for Youth Affairs

*7 December (Friday)*

Meeting at the Ministry of Education and Science

Meeting at the Ministry of Social Security and Labour

Meeting with the representatives of the Interior Ministry

### **Programme of the second visit from 19 to 21 June 2002**

*19 June (Wednesday)*

Visit to Sakiai municipality (rural)

Meeting with representatives of Sakiai district municipality

Visit to Varpas bell general school, at which three youth NGO's are located: Varpas basketball club; Bang music club; peers psychological aid centre; meeting with the representatives of NGOs and non-formal youth groups from Sakiai town

Visit to the children and youth centre

Meeting with Criskabudis non-formal youth group

Visit to youth art studio and theatre of avant-garde fashion

Meeting with Girenai village non-formal youth group combined with a visit to the Zanavykai land museum; and visit with members of guitarists' club

Meeting with representatives of rainbow youth school club from Luksiai village

Visit to Valiuliu village where the sport field is built as part of the EU youth programme, meeting with local people around the basketball pitch

*20 June (Thursday)*

Visit to Kaunas municipality (urban)

Meeting with members of Kaunas youth committee at the Kaunas municipality building

Meeting with representatives of Kaunas Union of Youth Organisations including the round table umbrella of Kaunas youth organisations

Visit to the Actia Catholica Patria youth organisation

Meeting with AISEC-Kaunas members

*21 June (Friday)*

Meeting with experts and researchers who contributed to the United Nations Human Development 2001 report on young people in Lithuania: Dr Rasa Aliskauskiene, Dr Irina Volosciuk, Dr Margarita Starkeviciute, Albertas Sleky

Visit to the national development institute

Meeting with members

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The international review process was established to fulfil three distinct objectives:

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- to contribute to a learning process in relation to the development and implementation of youth policy.



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