



Lithuania

Tackling child poverty and promoting the social inclusion of children

A study of national policies

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Summary

In 2006, there were 718 800 children between 0 and 18 years old in Lithuania, which amounted to 21.1 % of all the residents. 30 500 children were born in 2005; 122 children more than in 2004, but 3 006 less than in 2000. The total fertility rate decreased from 1.55 in 1995 to 1.27 in 2005 (1.14 in urban areas; 1.60 in rural areas). During 2005 the number of children decreased by 27 500. Since 2000, the number of children has decreased by 25 400 on average every year. The number of extra-marital children keep growing. In 2005, compared with 1995, the share of extra-marital children increased from 12.8 to 28.4 %.

Due to economic migration, at least 20 000 children are growing up without one of the parents or even separately from both parents. Some of them are left without guardianship, i.e. without a legal representative. Almost 37 000 children were raised in so-called dysfunctional or at social risk families. In 2005, municipal services for children's rights protection have registered 16 400 such families in Lithuania. In 2005, more than 13 000 children (or 1.8 %) were deprived of parental care and were in foster care. The majority of them are living in childcare settings of the closed type. Even though in 2005, for the first time during the past decade, the absolute number of children in foster care has decreased, the ratio of the number of children in foster care and the total number of children has increased.

According to the international documents, the concept of the child is two-fold; a child is the subject of human rights and child is the object of human care. Lithuania has two strategic documents based on the multidimensional approach of UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child (hereinafter referred to as DRC) and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The 'Concept of State policy on child welfare' and the State policy strategy of child welfare' transcend the approach that is based only on childcare and handles child welfare in a multidimensional way. The concept and strategy ground ideology, describe infrastructures, reveal the significance of children participation in decision-making, and define interdepartmental networking.

These important documents are ignored by the National action plan on inclusion (NAP inclusion) process. The National report on strategies for social protection and social inclusion (NR SSPSI) 2006-08 for Lithuania is limited to the childcare approach that is mainly associated with 'material situation'. This approach ignores other important dimensions of the child wellbeing (subjective wellbeing, children's relationships, civic participation, risk and safety). As Eurochild experts have pointed out: 'A child rights' approach would ensure more positive outcomes for children across all policies and would ensure the rights of children and young people are heard. In that line Eurochild advocates a reinforcement of the coordination between relevant policies, so as to develop more effective cross-sectional strategies to prevent poverty and social exclusion'.

NAP inclusion discusses more dimensions of child wellbeing than NR SSPSI. NAP inclusion analyses the enhancement of social, economic, educational and legal opportunities of families; social, pedagogical, psychological and other assistance for children and youth in social exclusion via the enhancement of opportunities of those children and youth for socialisation, promotion of development of cultural and civil maturity, expansion of social skills; attempts to create an effective system for the integration of children of the full legal age and without parental care into the society, which will provide these young individuals with both material and individualised social and professional assistance, to develop their social skills.

But in its list of targets, NR SSPSI is more coherent and consistent than NAP inclusion. In the list of targets, NAP inclusion mentions topics such as reducing of institutionalisation of children deprived of parental care and their social integration; protection of children against violence, etc. The NR SSPSI is sustainable and develops a system of measures that could help children at social risk to escape social exclusion. The NR SSPSI discusses how to ensure accessibility to complex services (preschool education, day care, health and social services, family counselling, etc.) for all children in the place of residence of the family, giving particular attention to families in rural areas and preschool children. It also promotes 'Implement the national programme on children daycare centres' (started in 2002) aimed at encouraging the establishment of community based child daycare centres where favourable conditions could be created for children from social risk families in order to provide them with additional educational services and with the possibility to develop their social skills, as well as creating possibilities for parents to visit such centres for informal education. Finally, the NR SSPSI mentions the national 'Strategy on child welfare policy'.

The system of monitoring the policies of prevention and alleviation of child poverty and exclusion is evolving. The main actor in this field is the Controller for the protection of the rights of the child of the Republic of Lithuania. This is a key person in different activities and projects. Other actors monitoring activities are revealing new emerging developments in the network of monitoring of child poverty and exclusion:

- (a) networking in monitoring (National anti-poverty network);
- (b) fostering children and young people participation in the decision-making processes (Lithuanian Parliament of School Students);
- (c) national awareness raising and empowering of stakeholders ('National awareness-raising actions on social inclusion and social protection' — LaBAS);
- (d) inter-institutional cooperation on the local level (establishment of children's rights protection and monitoring mechanisms at local level in Lithuania).

Introduction

In case no reference is made to sources in the text, the viewpoints expressed are based on the author's calculations or understanding.

The aims of this report are (1) to describe the nature and extent, the main trends and the underlying causes of the problem of child poverty and exclusion in Lithuania; (2) to describe and assess the overall framework for coordinating and developing policies and then to identify and assess the main policies in place to both prevent and alleviate child poverty and social exclusion and to promote the wellbeing of children in Lithuania; (3) to describe and assess arrangements in place in Lithuania for monitoring the implementation and impact of policies to prevent and alleviate poverty and social exclusion amongst children and to promote the wellbeing of children.

The report also aims to evaluate the NR SSPSI 2006-08 for Lithuania and 'Tasks and measures in reducing poverty and social exclusion' in respect of measures that are planned for eliminating child poverty. It is necessary to mention in the very beginning of the report that the wellbeing of Lithuanian children is worse than the wellbeing of their contemporaries from majority of first 25 EU Member States (Bradshaw et al., 2006; Unicef, Innocenti Research Centre, 2007).

According to the data presented in the Table 1, at the beginning of 2006, 718 800 children under 18 years old, 21.1 % of the whole population of Lithuania. During 2005, the number of children decreased by 27 500. Since 2000 the number of children decreased by 25 400 on average every year. There were 30 500 children born in 2005; 122 more than in 2004, but 3 600 less than in 2000. The average number of children who were born alive to a woman during the reproductive period of her life (total fertility rate) reduced from 1.55 in 1995 to 1.27 in 2005 (1.14 in urban areas; 1.60 in rural areas).

Table 1. Number of children by age group

Age group	Children			Percentage of the total population		
	2000	2005	2006	2000	2005	2006
Total in thousands.	871.3	746.3	718.8	24.8	21.8	21.1
0-3	147.9	121.5	120.4	4.2	3.6	3.5
4-6	126.9	104.6	99.6	3.6	3.1	2.9
7-9	158.8	114.4	110.2	4.5	3.3	3.2
10-14	276.3	244.7	230.3	7.9	7.1	6.8
15-17	161.4	161.1	158.4	4.6	4.7	4.7

Source: Statistics Lithuania, 2006b, p. 6.

Numbers of extra-marital children are growing. In 2005, compared with 1995, the share of extra-marital children increased from 12.8 to 28.4 %. The majority of extra-marital children (about 65 %) are registered by mother's statement. The number of single parent families, consisting as a rule of a mother and children and in rare cases of a father and children, is growing.

Due to economic migrations, 20 000 children are growing up without one parent or even separately from both parents. Almost 37 000 children were raised in so-called dysfunctional families. In 2005, there were 16 400 such families in Lithuania.

According to the available statistical data, the traditional family is facing a crisis. Less people get married, divorces have become more frequent, more and more couples prefer extra-marital life, the fertility rate is on a downturn, and the number of extra-marital children keeps growing.

But this unfavourable situation is already comprehended and conceptualised by different players in the field of social policy. Child poverty and social exclusion are already in the focus of social policy. First of all, the priority of eliminating child poverty and enhancing assistance to families is among four priorities that were selected by the National Monitoring Group for the implementation of the plan against poverty and social exclusion. This group, that consists of more than 30 representatives from governmental and non-governmental institutions, has selected four priorities out of seven indicated in the 'Joint report on social protection and social inclusion' (2005) and has drafted the NR SSPSI. The Government has confirmed the NR SSPSI on 10 January 2007. These four priorities are as follows: (1) increase labour market participation; (2) improve access to quality services; (3) eliminate child poverty and enhance assistance to families; and (4) tackle disadvantages in education and training.

There are more active agents acting in the field of children wellbeing. A particular place among them is occupied by the Controller and the institution of the Controller for Protection of the Rights of the Child (CPRC). Special attention is deserved for the different NGOs which stimulate the Government and empower different interest groups.

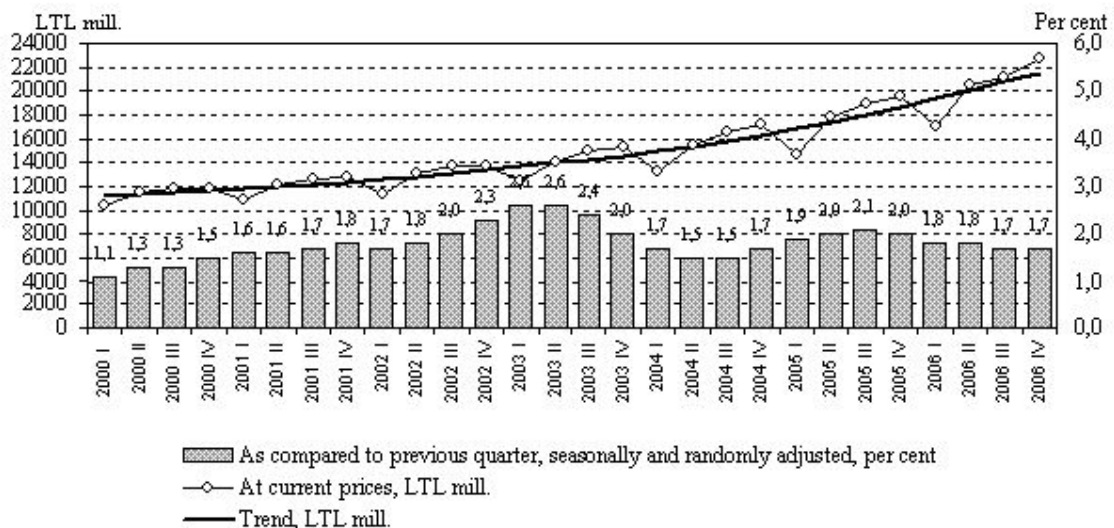
1. The situation, main trends and underlying causes of child poverty and exclusion

1.1. General situation

Despite the rapid and permanent GDP growth in the last years (Picture 1) Lithuania still belongs to the group of EU countries with the lowest GDP per head of population. In 2005 the GDP per head of population in purchasing power standard (PPS)¹ in Lithuania was around half the average of the first 25 EU Member States (52.1 %); and Lithuania together with Poland (49.9 %) and Latvia (47.1 %) were at the bottom of the first 25 EU Member States (Eurostat, 2007: 152).

Lithuania, according to expenditure on social protection² measured as a percentage of GDP (13.3 %) in 2004, was next-to-last in the list of the first 25 EU Member States. The average for the first 25 EU Member States is 27.2 % of GDP. The data confirm the permanent decrease of the relative expenditure for social protection measured as percentage of GDP. In 2000 the expenditure on social protection was 15.8 % of GDP, in 2001 14.7 %, in 2002 14.1 % and in 2003 13.6 %. But at the same time, and due to the growth of economy in absolute values, the amount of expenditure on social protection is increasing: in 2000 it was PPS 1 208.3, in 2001 PPS 1 234.4, in 2002 PPS 1 271.2 and in 2003 PPS 1 336 (Eurostat, 2007: 126). But despite this growth, in 2004 the expenditure on social protection per head of population in PPS amounted to 1 447.6 and was next-to-last among the first 25 EU Member States. The first 25 EU Member States' average was PPS 6 188.3 per head of population, i.e. exceeding the Lithuanian level of expenditure on social protection per capita by more than four times (Eurostat, 2007: 127).

Picture 1. Changes in Gross Domestic Product in Lithuania (EUR 1 = LTL 3.4528)



Source: Department of Statistics to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (Statistics Lithuania).

<http://www.stat.gov.lt/en/news/view/?id=1843>

- ¹ The PPS is an artificial currency that reflects differences in national price levels that are not taken into account by exchange rates. This unit allows meaningful volume comparisons of economic indicators between countries.
- ² Expenditure on social protection concerns: social benefits, which consist of transfers, in cash or in kind, to households and individuals to relieve them of the burden of a defined set of risks or needs; administration costs, which represent the costs charged to the scheme for its management and administration; other expenditure, which consists of miscellaneous expenditure by social protection schemes (payment of property income and other).

At the same time some data indicate that the power of social benefits to reduce poverty rate³ is decreasing. The at-risk-of-poverty rate before social transfers in 2000 was 23 % and in 2001 24 %. Social transfers cut down the at-risk-of-poverty rate down to 17 %. It means that in 2000 the effectiveness of social transfers in reducing the at-risk-of-poverty rate was 6 % and in 2001 7 %. But later the situation worsened. In 2005 the at-risk-of-poverty rate before social transfers was 26 % and social transfers reduced it to 21 %. With the result of 5 % of effectiveness of social transfers in reducing the at-risk-of-poverty rate, Lithuania together with Spain and Greece were at the bottom of the first 25 EU Member States.

Economic analyst Dr Raimundas Kuodis has demonstrated how the level of relative poverty is increasing in the situation of the economic growth (Kuodis, 2006). For example, the growth of pensions is behind the growth of GDP. At the same time, the rate of inflation of pensioners' consumption exceeds the rate of average inflation (Table 1).

Table 1. The size of pensions in the context of the economic growth

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Average pension (LTL)	311.9	306.5	317.2	340.5	371.6	420.3
Change per year (%)		-1.8	3.5	7.3	9.1	13.1
Change during 2001-05						35
Growth of GDP (%)	5.9	7.0	9.3	10.0	13.8	5.9
Change during 2001-05						55
Inflation (%)	0.9	1.3	0.3	-1.1	1.2	2.7
Inflation of pensioners' consumption (%)	0.8	1.9	0.2	-1.4	2.1	3.7

Source: Kuodis (2006).

In Lithuania, the relative at risk of poverty gap⁴ in 2005 was 28 %. Lithuania, according to this indicator which shows the extent of poverty, was next-to-last among the first 25 EU Member States. Lithuania occupies the same place according to inequality of income distribution. In Lithuania the ratio of top quintile with the lowest quintile in 2005 was 6.9, whereas in the first 25 EU Member States this ratio was 4.9. The data also demonstrates that the ratio of income distribution is increasing. In Lithuania the ratio of top quintile with the lowest quintile in 2000 was 5.0, and 4.9 in 2001. It indicates the growth of social inequality.

³ In Lithuanian statistics, the poverty rate is measured in different ways. Most popular indicators of measuring poverty are relative poverty rate and at-risk-of-poverty rate. Relative poverty rate is the share of individuals whose consumption expenditure is less than 50 % of the average consumption expenditure. Consumption expenditure is calculated for an equivalent consumer applying traditional scale of OECD, where weight 1 is ascribed to the first household member and weight 0.7 to every subsequent adult, and weight 0.5 to every child aged under 14 years old. Pursuant to the internationally compatible Eurostat methodology, at-risk-of-poverty rate in the EU countries is estimated as 60 % of the median disposable income. Statistics for Lithuania also use this methodology, based on the Household Budget Survey (HBS) data, to estimate the relative poverty indicators. In the report, the titles of indicators are used in the following way — relative poverty rate in a case of less than 50 % of the average consumption expenditure; and at-risk-of-poverty rate in a case of 60 % of the median disposable income.

⁴ The relative at-risk-of-poverty gap is calculated as the difference between the median equivalised total net income of persons below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold and the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, expressed as a percentage of the at-risk-of-poverty threshold (cut-off point: 60 % of median equivalised income).

1.2. Poverty of children

The data presented above witness that potential of the social protection system lag behind the economic growth. Therefore, the context of the whole system of social protection is not favourable for eliminating poverty, especially of those groups who suffer from poverty most. The relative poverty rates among different social groups that are grouped by different dimensions (living place, education, socioeconomic group of household head, sex of household head, type of household, number of children in the household and children's age) are represented in Table 2.

Table 2. Relative poverty level of social groups structured by different classifications, %

	2004	2005
By living place		
Households in five largest cities	8.8	7.7
Households in other towns	14.8	14.8
Households in rural areas	25.7	29.5
By education		
Higher education		4.1
Less than primary and primary education		38.9
By socio-economic group of household head		
Employees	11.6	12.0
Self-employed, employers	6.9	9.2
Self-employed in agriculture	30.1	21.6
Pensioners	24.5	28.6
Others	36.3	35.8
By sex of household head		
Male	14.6	15.3
Female	18.1	19.3
By type of household		
Single person	17.2	20.2
Single adult with children under 18	23.0	17.6
Couple with children under 18	12.2	14.0
Other households with children under 18	23.4	22.8
Couple without children	10.8	12.1
Other households without children under 18	17.5	17.7
By number of children in the household		
All households with children under 18	16.8	17.2
Households with one child	11.2	11.9
Households with two children	17.1	17.4
Households with three and more children	36.6	36.5
By children age		
Under 1 year	17.0	11.7
1-2 years	16.4	20.5
3-5 years	21.1	22.1
6-8 years	18.1	17.8
9-12 years	16.9	18.2
13-15 years	15.9	17.6

Source: Statistics Lithuania (2006).

The factors that are influencing the higher poverty rate are as follows: life in rural areas and working in the agricultural sector of the economy or living in rural areas, low level of education, and number of children in the household. Larger families have a higher risk of poverty than smaller ones. Obviously in the context of poorly targeted social assistance policy for families and

children, the poverty level among families with small children, single-parent families and large families is significantly higher in comparison to other families.

The NR SSPSI adds to this group families with disabled children; parents who are disabled themselves; personal unstable relations between parents; parents are hardly socially motivated to change their way of living; have neither skills or motivation of parenting; and are addicted to alcohol or other drugs. The capacities of children in such families are less developed, and they have fewer possibilities to develop their capabilities and talents, or receive additional training or healthcare services necessary to facilitate their skills. Therefore some of them have problems at school (learning motivation, behavioural problems, and schooling).

The assessment of relative poverty rate among children according to their age revealed that the largest number of children in poverty was found in the three to five-year-old age group. It can be explained by the fact that State support to families is bigger for children from birth until three years of age. Later, families with children aged three to six years are granted the universal lump-sum benefit (child benefit of LTL 50 per month) which was introduced in 2004, as well as social benefit to ensure minimal family income and receive reimbursement of part of the heating and water costs.

Therefore, at-risk-of-poverty rate among children is higher than among other age groups and Lithuanian children are the social group with the highest at-risk-of-poverty rate (Table 3).

Table 3. At-risk-of-poverty rate in Lithuania after social transfers, by age group (%)

	2000	2001	2005
Less than 16 years	18	20	27.3
Between 16 and 24 years	18	21	22.5
Between 25 and 49 years	17	17	19.0
Between 50 and 64 years	15	15	17.9
65 years and over	14	12	17.0

Source: Eurostat.

The distribution of households without children among deciles is more favourable than for households with children. Half of the households with three children and more belong to the first and second deciles.

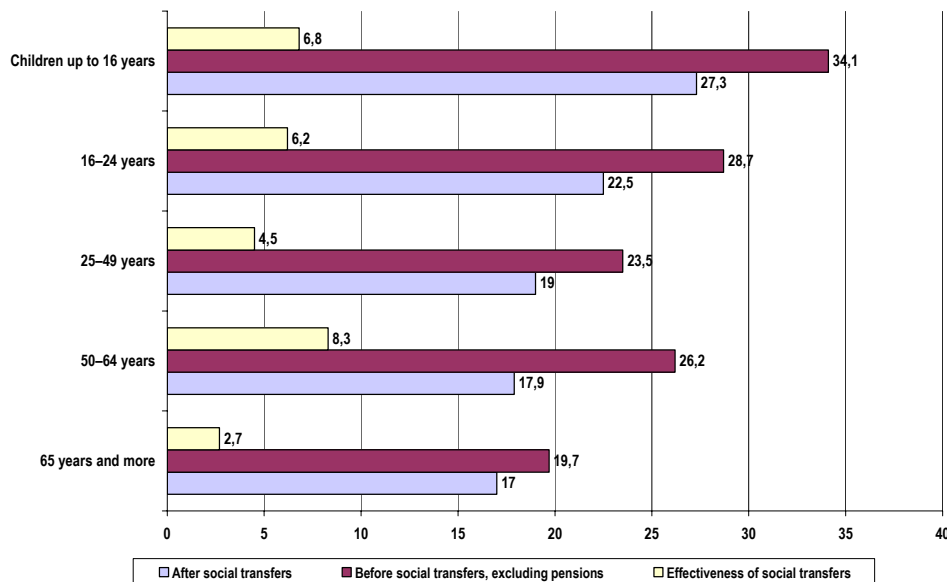
Table 4. Households by number of children in deciles, 2005, %

	All households	Of which in deciles									
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
Households with children aged under 18	100	10.7	11.5	11.6	10.7	10.4	10.7	10.0	9.2	8.8	6.3
1	100	6.7	8.4	9.5	10.1	11.8	11.4	11.5	11.0	11.1	8.6
2	100	12.1	14.4	13.6	12.1	9.5	10.9	9.3	7.8	6.6	3.7
3 and more	100	31.3	20.4	18.3	9.5	4.9	5.7	3.5	2.6	1.9	2.0
Households without children	100	6.5	6.6	7.5	8.8	9.3	9.1	10.7	11.7	12.9	16.9

Source: Statistics Lithuania, 2006b, p. 16.

The difference between at-risk-of-poverty level before and after social transfers could be treated as an indirect indicator of the effectiveness of social policy. The poverty level by age group before and after social transfers and the difference between at-risk-of-poverty level before and after social transfers are presented in the Picture 2. The data demonstrate that in the unfavourable context of the effectiveness of social transfers to decrease the at-risk-of-poverty rate (the average difference between the at-risk-of-poverty level before and after social transfers is 5 %) the group of children up to 16 years old (difference: 8.3 %) comes after the age group 50-64 years (difference: 6.8 %) and is the second most effective in relation to the different age groups' social policy. But comparison with the other EU Member States reduces this optimism substantially. In 2005, Lithuanian children up to 16 years old with the rate of 27.3 % at-risk-of-poverty level after social transfers, together with Polish children (29 %), were at the bottom of the list of the first 25 EU Member States.

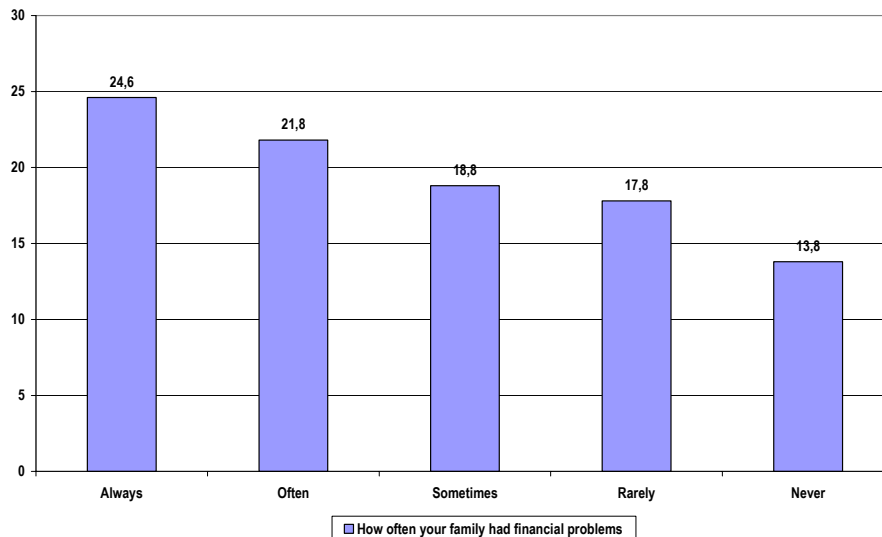
Picture 2. At-risk-of-poverty-rate in Lithuania, according to age, 2005 (%)



Source: Statistics Lithuania, 2006.

Picture 3 clearly demonstrates the phenomenon of poverty trap. The poverty experienced in childhood and adolescence is a poverty risk factor. The at-risk-of-poverty rate for adults who always experienced poverty in their childhood is almost twice as high as of those who never experienced the poverty in their youth. The message for social policy is rather simple — to help the children escape the poverty trap — but the concrete mechanisms how to push the children from poverty trap seem to be complicated.

Picture 3. At-risk-of-poverty rate of the 25 to 64-year-old age group according to their experience of financial trouble in childhood and adolescence (Answers to the question: How often did your family have financial problems in your childhood and adolescence?)



Source: Šemeta, 2007.

Special attention is also deserved for the study of children wellbeing accomplished by Jonathan Bradshaw, Petra Hoelscher and Dominic Richardson (Bradshaw et al., 2006) and the UN Children's Fund (Unicef), Innocenti Research Centre report, *Child Poverty in Perspective — An Overview of Child Wellbeing in Rich Countries: A Comprehensive Assessment of the Lives and Wellbeing of Children and Adolescents in the Economically Advanced Nations* (Unicef, Innocenti Research Centre, 2007).

Jonathan Bradshaw and his colleagues stressed the lack of indicators on children wellbeing and elaborated the comprehensive child wellbeing index from which 627 initial indicators relevant to child wellbeing employing 51 variables or indicators, summarised into 23 domains, and these 23 domains are summarised into eight clusters and into an overall child wellbeing index (Bradshaw et al., 2006, p. 139). This exhaustive child wellbeing index is a response to the lack of relevant quantifiable indicators of child wellbeing in the list of Laekens' indicators. Hopefully the activities of J. Bradshaw, P. Hoelscher et al. will assist in strengthening and structuring children's social policy.

The approach of J. Bradshaw and his colleagues indirectly supports the review of the national reports on strategies for social protection and social inclusion made by Eurochild experts (Eurochild, 2007). One of the key policy messages formulated by the Eurochild experts is following: 'Eurochild calls on Member States and the EU to translate this commitment into concrete quantifiable targets to reduce the number of children living in income poverty, with a requirement to report on incremental progress towards this goal' (Eurochild, 2007, p. 3). Since in the part of the NR SSPI on elimination of child poverty and enhancement of assistance to families is the obvious lack of quantifiable indicators, this message is very important for the Lithuanian policy-makers in the field of child wellbeing.

Eurochild experts assert that the 'Lithuanian State educational strategy' for the years 2003-12 described in the NR SSPI lacks the quantifiable approach. According to Eurochild experts, 'the

implementation of the strategy should be questioned since expected results and indicators of measurement are not defined in the strategy. The formulation of the measures sounds rather as objectives. The budget is not indicated as well' (Eurochild, 2007, p. 65).

According to the calculations of J. Bradshaw and his colleagues, the index of child wellbeing in Lithuania is the worst from the first 25 EU Member States. In the majority of child wellbeing clusters (material situation, housing, subjective wellbeing, education, children's relationships, civic participation, risk and safety) with the only exception of the health cluster, Lithuanian children are at the bottom or in the last position on the list of the first 25 EU Member States (Bradshaw et al., 2006). The Innocenti Research Centre report partially confirms the conclusion made by J. Bradshaw and his colleagues — where the data is available, the wellbeing of Lithuanian children, except for health, is far below the average of reported countries, first of all in the dimensions of 'Behaviours and risks' and 'Subjective wellbeing' (Unicef, Innocenti Research Centre, 2007, p. 27-39).

1.3. Children of the families in social risk group

Some families fall within the numbers of families in the social risk group. Sometimes this group of families is called 'dysfunctional families' (Ministry of Social Security and Labour — MSSL), 2007, pp. 91-92). Until 2002 this group of families was labelled 'asocial families'.

The description of social risk or dysfunctional families is very similar to the description of the asocial family. In 2002, the Department of Statistics described 'asocial families' as 'families, that are registered by the municipal agencies for the protection of children's' rights for excessive drinking, drug or other toxic material abuse, unmoral behaviour, lifestyle that is unacceptable for society, bad care of their children, neglecting their health and inability to guarantee the harmonious and well-rounded development of their children' (Statistics Lithuania, 2002).

In the *Social Report, 2005-06*⁵ the following reasons for adding families to the registries of dysfunctional families are mentioned: alcohol abuse, gambling, lack of parenting skills, abuse of children by parents, improper use of family benefits provided by the State, restriction of the parents' authority for an unlimited period, and others. These reasons could be treated as indicators of dysfunctional family. Many of them are the same as in the definition of an asocial family that was used until 2002, i.e. alcohol abuse and lack of parenting skills. Moreover, the comparative data of different years is presented in a way that allows the direct path-dependency between asocial family and dysfunctional family or family at social risk to be traced. In the statistics, the same families were labelled as asocial families until 2002 and they became either dysfunctional families, or families in social risk, from 2003.

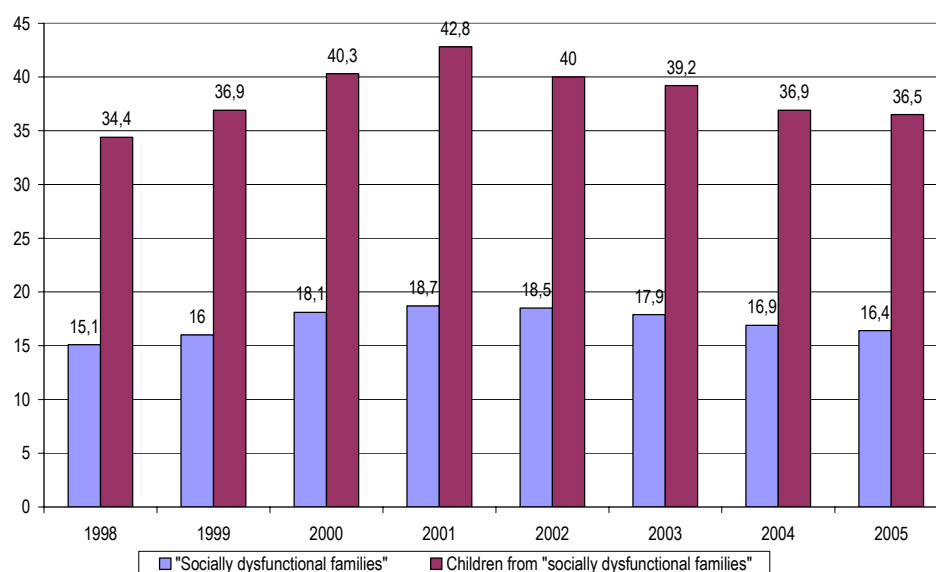
Picture 4 demonstrates the dynamics of the families at social risk and children in them. In 2005 there were 16 400 such families in Lithuania (in 2004, 16 900). Almost 37 000 children were raised in such families (i.e. 4.4 % of all children residing in Lithuania). The decrease in the number of families at social risk and their children should be interpreted carefully. The CPRC of the Republic of Lithuania, in the summary of the public policy research which was initiated by it and in the interview with the author of this report, stresses that the decrease of families at social risk must be interpreted in relation to the increase in children who were deprived of parental care (see: Vaiko teisių apsaugos kontrolieriaus įstaiga, 2007c). When children are deprived of parental

⁵ Ministry of Social Security and Labour, The Social Report 2005-2006, 2007.

care, the family and consequently its children are taken off the registries of families at social risk and of children of the families at social risk. Therefore the situation is less favourable.

Social benefits are paid and other measures of support applied to such families in order to mitigate the situation. From 1 January 2006 the Government, in the smallest administrative units of self governance — borough jurisdictions (*seniunijos*) — has established an additional 556 workplaces for social workers to work with families at social risk. Until now, the majority of these vacancies have been occupied, unfortunately not always by the specialists with the necessary competence.

Picture 4. Families at social risk or dysfunctional families and children in them, in thousands



Source: Statistics Lithuania, regional database.

http://db.std.lt/RDB_EN/Dialog/statfile1.asp

Table 5. Number of socially dysfunctional families and children raised in these families by reason in 2005

Reason	Number of families	Number of children in these families					
		Total	0-3 years old	4-6 years old	7-9 years old	10-14 years old	15-17 years old
Alcohol abuse	9 943	23 008	2 873	3 689	4 173	6 967	5 306
Gambling	3	6				2	4
Lack of parental skills	3 122	7 392	1 329	1 375	1 332	2 055	1 301
Abuse of children by parents	761	1 266	1 19	192	272	358	325
Improper use of family benefits provided by the State	537	1 291	1 26	253	281	385	246
Restriction of the parents' authority for an unlimited period	283	468	153	105	65	91	54
Other	1 712	3 104	354	497	561	916	776
Total	16 361	36 535	4 954	6 111	6 684	10 774	8 012

Source: MSSL, 2007, p. 92.

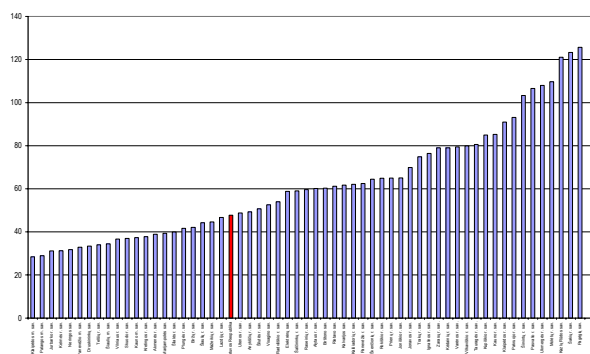
As already mentioned, alcohol abuse and bad parenting remain one of the main reasons for the entry of families into the register of socially dysfunctional families (Table 5). Based on data supplied by municipal Services of Children's Rights Protection, in 2005, two thirds of all the families entered into the registry of socially dysfunctional families (6 304 families out of 9 943), as a result of alcohol abuse, were living in the countryside.

The numbers of families at social risk or dysfunctional families and their children are indicators of administrative behaviour, i.e. the numbers of families at social risk and their children are accumulated from municipal Services of Children's Rights Protection. The diagrams in Pictures 5 and 6 demonstrate impressive differences in the administrative behaviour of the municipal Services of Children's Rights Protection. These diagrams present data on how many families at social risk and their children per 10 000 of population were registered in the different municipalities. The difference ranges from 28 to 128 per 10 000 in the case of families at social risk (Picture 5), and from 31 to 310 per 10 000 in the case of children of families at social risk (Picture 6).

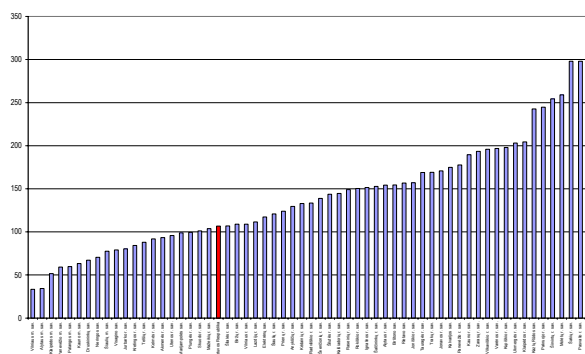
Worth noting is the fact that sometimes the number of families at social risk and number of their children in neighbouring municipalities differ several times. For example, the municipal Services of Children's Rights Protection in the Jurbarkas municipality has registered 31 families at social risk and 80 children of families at social risk per 10 000 of population while in the neighbourhood municipal Services of Children's Rights Protection of the Šakiai municipality, 123 families at social risk and 298 children of families at social risk per 10 000 of population were registered.

This difference could be interpreted as an indicator of the presence of hidden local social policy. It means that despite the attempts to introduce common indicators of dysfunctional social families or families at social risk, these indicators at local level are interpreted differently.

Picture 5. Families at social risk in different municipalities ⁶, per 10 000 of population



Picture 6. Children in families at social risk in different municipalities, per 10 000 of population



Source: Statistics Lithuania, regional database.
http://db.std.lt/RDB_EN/Dialog/statfile1.asp

The differences in treating families at social risk demonstrate the failure of centralised administrative measures to elaborate a common approach to social policy at the local level of municipalities. These differences that exist despite the centralised social policy could encourage the introduction of elements of the open method of coordination on the national level.

⁶ A municipality is a territorial administrative unit administered by the bodies of self-government elected by the community pursuant to the Law of self-government of the Republic of Lithuania and other respective laws.

1.4. Children without parental care

According to the data of Statistics Lithuania, in 2006 there were 718 800 children between 0 and 18 years of age in Lithuania, which amounted to 21.1 % of all the residents. In 2005, 13 300 (or 1.8 %) of children were deprived of parental care and were in foster care. The majority of them were living in secondary, special schools and centres for special training (5 200); in county childcare homes (2 800); and in municipal childcare homes (approximately 1 000) (Table 6).

In Lithuania, guardianship (care) is established for about 3 000 of children per year. According to the data of municipal Children Rights Protection Offices, 3 209 children were placed under guardianship in 2005, and 3 267 in 2004. Even though the absolute number of children in foster care decreased over the years, the ratio of children in foster care and the total number of children increased 0.1 % (in 2004, 775 200/3 267; in 2005, 746 200/3 209).

Table 6. Childcare institutions and children in them

	2000	2004	2005
Infant homes	5	5	5
infants in them	425	464	427
Secondary, special schools and centres for special training	70	63	50
number of residents	5 286	3 214	4 460
number of orphans and children without parental care in them	1394	784	771
Special correction care homes	4	4	4
children in them	218	124	111
Care homes for disabled children and youth (residential care homes)	5	4	4
children in them	866	711	735
County childcare homes	31	32	33
children in them	2 772	2 763	2 732
Municipal childcare homes	20	22	20
children in them	754	1 003	950
Non-governmental childcare homes	14	12	14
children in them	361	385	422
Families (foster care homes)	49	40	37
foster children in them	391	309	279
Temporary childcare homes	17	17	14
children in them	310	409	327
Childcare groups at preschool establishments	30	24	23
children in them	323	256	245

Source: Statistics Lithuania, 2006b, p. 26.

Most children taken into childcare institutions are from families at social risk (see above) due to improper childcare, poverty, and abuse of or unused parental power (in most cases children from 0 to 3 and from 10 to 17 years of age). In 21 % of cases it was children in the age group of 0 to 3 years, 76 % of which were accommodated in childcare institutions (nursing homes). In the age group of 10 to 17 years old the number of children under recognised guardianship accounted for 47 %, 43 % of them accommodated in childcare institutions. The Controller for Protection of the Rights of the Child has pointed out the negative influence, since the custody of the child costs from EUR 309 per month in municipal childcare institutions to EUR 407 per month in county childcare institutions but referring of children to childcare institutions does not solve the problem that causes restriction of parental rights or loss of parental care. This statement will be discussed more comprehensively below.

In 2005, more attention was paid to issues related to the institutional childcare system. Having supplemented the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 6 February 2003 on the assignment of children's rights protection to the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and on the identification of the authority of other Ministries, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour has been assigned the methodical governance of childcare institutions, Ministry of Education and Science (MES) — the methodical governance of special boarding schools, effective as of 1 January 2005. Also, the adoption of the Order of the Minister of Education and Science on the reorganisation of boarding schools provided that as of 1 July 2005 these educational institutions could no longer perform social functions or provide foster care for children. This order has been coordinated with the Minister of Social Security and Labour and it has been agreed that coordinated solutions on the identification of new guardians for the children who were placed in the specialised educational institutions should be revised by 31 August 2007 (Ministry of Social Security and Labour, 2007, p. 94).

Table 6 demonstrates a gentle shift in the trend of referring children deprived of parental care to different childcare institutions in 2004 and in 2005. The number of children referred to foster families is increasing slightly and the number of children referred to the different childcare institutions, except the county childcare institutions, is slightly decreasing. But it is unlikely that this slight shift in the trend could be considered as a turn of the tide towards deinstitutionalisation.

Table 7. Distribution of children by providers of childcare in 2004-05

Childcare provider	2004	2005
Foster families	1 368	1 383
Foster family homes	25	31
Infant homes	295	245
County childcare institutions	599	687
Childcare institutions for disabled children	19	19
Boarding schools of general education	40	15
Special boarding schools	64	41
Municipal childcare institutions	397	345
Municipal childcare groups	301	292
Non-governmental childcare institutions	159	160
Total	3 267	3 209

Source: MSSSL, 2007, p. 95.

The Controller for Protection of the Rights of the Child has pointed out that the reorganisation of boarding schools (that were a part of the system of education institutions) into children guardianship homes and the change of their subordination, revealed not only positive aspects, but also shortcomings of guardianship (care) of the child. It should be noted that the regulations on institutions' activities with the changed status developed during the process of the reorganisation were not coordinated with the provisions of the norms of the Civil Code on a regulation of guardianship (care) of the child. Because of this, the problem of double guardianship (care) of the child came to light. There were cases, when children left without guardianship of their parents and living at a boarding school, guardianship of the family was established as well. After the change of the status of the institution, i.e. reorganisation of the boarding school into children guardianship home, the children became wards of the family and the children care institution simultaneously, i.e. two forms of guardianship (care) of the child were applied at the same time (institution of the Controller for the Protection of the Rights of the Child of the Republic of Lithuania, 2003, pp. 14-15).

As already mentioned, the majority of children are living in secondary, special schools and centres for special training, in county childcare homes, and in municipal childcare homes. Last year a group of non-governmental organisation published a report on the situation of children and personnel in childcare institutions (Globali iniciatyva psichiatrijoje, Lietuvos telefoninių psichologinės pagalbos tarnybų asociacija, Lietuvos Respublikos vaiko teisių apsaugos kontrolieriaus įstaiga, Lietuvos sutrikusio intelekto žmonių globos bendrija „Viltis“, Paramos vaikams centras, Žmogaus teisių stebėjimo institutas, 2006). The team of the established experts included representatives of the following organisations: Global Initiative on Psychiatry, Lithuanian Help Telephone Association, the institution of the Controller for the Protection of the Rights of the Child of the Republic of Lithuania, Lithuanian Welfare Society for Persons with Mental Disability 'Viltis', Children Support Centre, and the Human Rights Monitoring Institute.

The critical report reveals limitations in childcare settings of the institutional type and formulates recommendations for childcare. I would like to claim that the analytical part of the report is more substantial than recommendations. The authors of the report claim that the existing system of childcare institutions is built according to the 'philosophy of social exclusion', i.e. the solution to the child's problems is based on the principle of isolation of the child from society. Sometimes even the location of childcare institutions contribute to the children's exclusion from society.

In childcare institutions of the closed type, the children's dependence from the system is growing, the development of the child's autonomy is hindered. Long years spent in the closed type settings causes the failures of the socialisation. This model of the assistance for a child and their family does not answer the contemporary principles of childcare: integration, deinstitutionalisation and the best interests of the child. Sometimes the interest of the institution as a close setting prevail. According to the principle of the best interests of the child, the placement of the child under institutional care ought to be the last resort. But in reality it is one of the main measures to 'solve' the problem.

Experts claim that the placement of a child into childcare institutions is result of inadequate and inefficient social work with the child and his family. The preventive work with families at social risk is uneven (see above). Integrated aid for families at social risk is more of an exception than a rule. The experts point out cases when children with developmental problems of a social type end up in childcare institutions for disabled children. Placement of the disabled in closed type childcare institutions interrupts the development of the tolerance.

Sometimes the motivation of childcare institution personnel is weak. Experts insist that the lack of motivation is the consequence of the defects in the system. There is no follow-up in the assistance for the child and there is a big chance that the child will return after some time. On the other hand, sometimes childcare institution personnel lack qualifications and limit their activities to everyday routine. Experts noticed the lack of interinstitutional cooperation and attempts to escape responsibility in more complicated cases.

The experts recommend a change in approach, taking into consideration the main provisions of the UNConvention on the Rights of the Child: a child should be separated from the family only in accordance with the principle of best interests of the child. Childcare institutions ought to socialise the child for an autonomous life. The number of children referred to the foster families should increase at the expense of the children referred to the childcare institutions of the closed type. The experts propose to introduce the 'voucher of services'. The experts believe that this financial instrument, together with the financing programme, could assist in reforming childcare institutions.

This report and the 'Human rights monitoring in closed mental health care institutions'⁷ report by the same team of experts have added significantly to the discussion about the approach, policy and administration of childcare institutions.

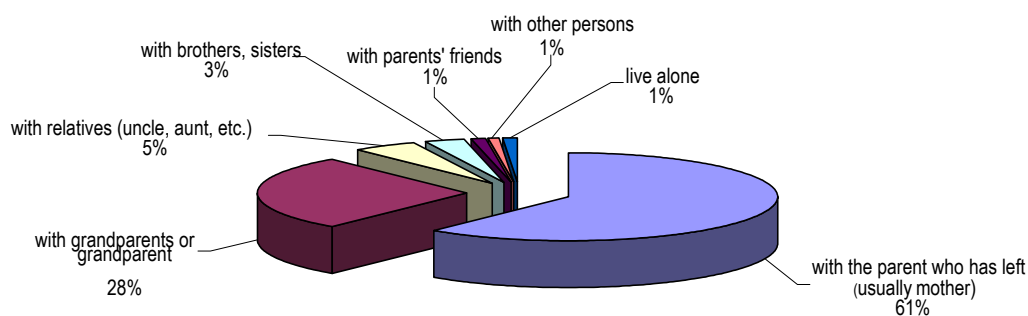
1.5. Children of economic emigrants

There is one more group of children that faces a particular risk. This group consists of children of economic migrants. Sometimes families of a similar life style in the post-modern sociological discourse are labelled as 'living apart together' (LAT)⁸ families, but I consider the case of economic migrants to be different, since this way of life is forced by economic problems.

The institution of the Controller for the Protection of the Rights of the Child of the Republic of Lithuania made an attempt to investigate the problem of children of economic emigrants. The institution of the CPRC has disseminated the questionnaires to all Lithuanian schools and preschool institutions. Despite the fact that from a methodological point of view this research deserves critique, the profile of the problem has become clearer.

There is reason to suppose that at least 20 000 of children (2.8 %) are living with one of their parents, with relatives, the friends of their parents or even alone (Picture 7). There are some slight differences between school and preschool children but carers are practically the same, with the only exception that preschool children are not living alone.

Picture 7. Persons who take care of the children when parents (or one of them) left to go abroad (data from the schools)



Source: Vaiko teisių apsaugos kontrolieriaus įstaiga, 2007d, p. 4.

But even in the cases when children are living with temporary caregivers, the legal institute of guardianship (care) of the child in some cases is not established and children are left without guardianship, i.e. without a legal representative. In some cases, when the provisional

⁷ Human Rights Monitoring Institute, *Global Initiative On Psychiatry*, Lithuanian Welfare Society For Persons With Mental Disability, Viltis, Vilnius Centre For Psychological And Social Rehabilitation, 2005.

⁸ LAT — a situation in which a couple live in separate residences while maintaining an intimate relationship; a person in such a relationship.

guardianship is established, parents abuse the situation that is not legally defined in proper way. In the case of provisional guardianship, an allowance amounting to four minimal living standards is paid to the child.

According to the Controller for the Protection of the Rights of the Child, such a settlement of the problem provides preconditions for an unreasonable use of national funds and opportunities for the parents (able to maintain their children) to avoid maintenance of their children. It should also be stated that the said phenomenon violates the rights of children and contradicts their interests, because a negative image of the parents is formed and a distorted, non-conforming to the reality perception of the family situation is intruded upon the children.

The Controller for the Protection of the Rights of the Child maintains that in order to settle the above-mentioned problem, the institution of guardianship (care) of a child should be regulated in legal acts as soon as possible. (institution of the Controller for the Protection of the Rights of the Child of the Republic of Lithuania, 2003, p. 14).

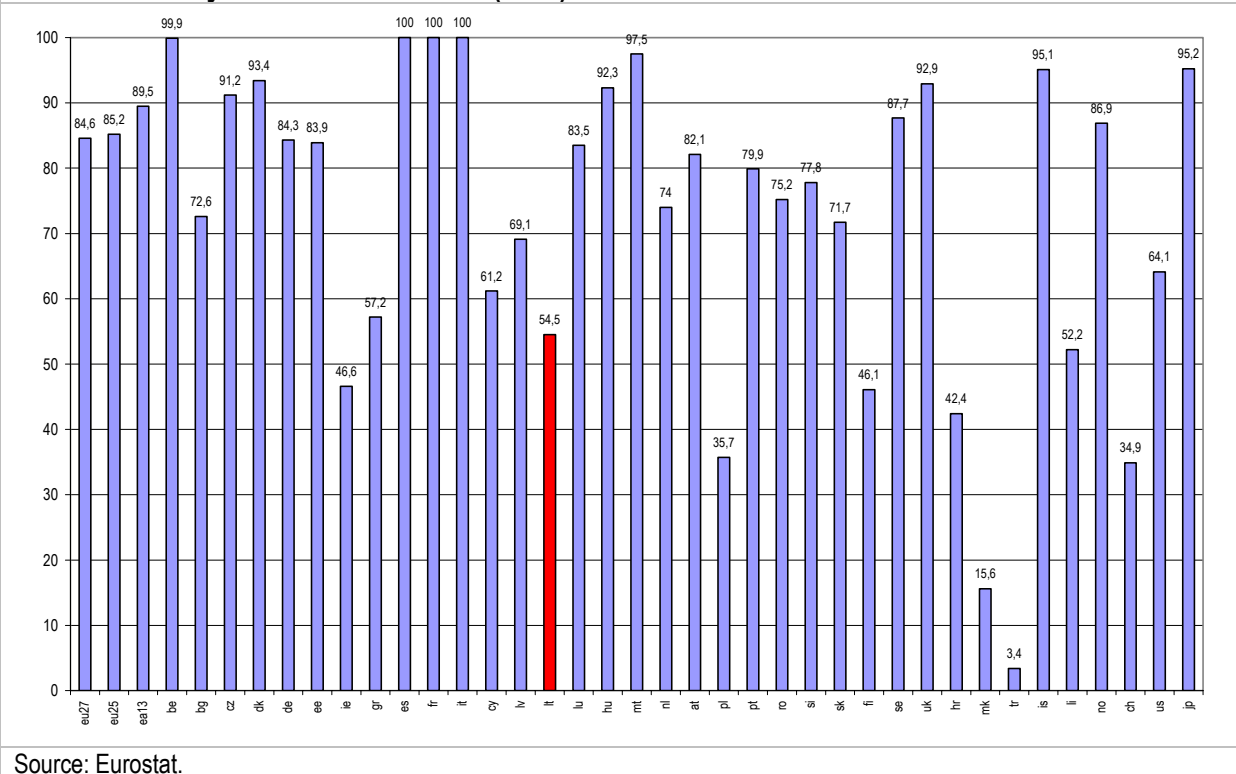
More than a third of children (36 %) reported negative changes in their own behaviour when their parent (parents) left to go abroad. First of all, they mention decrease in the responsibility for the teaching results, missing classes, problems with making lessons. Teachers confirmed these self-reported changes: the decrease in motivation for learning, problems with school attendance, undisciplined behaviour, etc. (Dobryninas et al., 2004).

There are no statistics about children who are left without formal guardianship. Also there are no statistics on how many children receive provisional guardianship allowance when the fact of parents emigration is belied. The investigation pointed out the lack of interinstitutional cooperation. Different institutions (schools, municipal Children Rights Protection Offices) do not share information about children left without legally established provisional guardianship. Interinstitutional cooperation is necessary in order to establish proper services (psychological, social assistance, additional activities after school) for such children. It is necessary to inform parents who are leaving to go abroad what is necessary to do in order to guarantee the rights of their children properly. To summarise, the case of emigrants' children is not yet properly expressed in legal, social, or educational contexts.

1.6. Education system

Reduction of regional disparities was, and remains among the topical issues in Lithuania, including the development of educational services (first of all in preschool and pre-primary education) for children from families in social exclusion and social risk groups. For example, Picture 8 demonstrates that in Lithuania the level of preschool and pre-primary education is comparatively low. Only half of four-year-olds are attending education institutions. Low levels of attendance of preschool education hinder the possibilities of the educational system to decrease differences of societal origin before entering primary school.

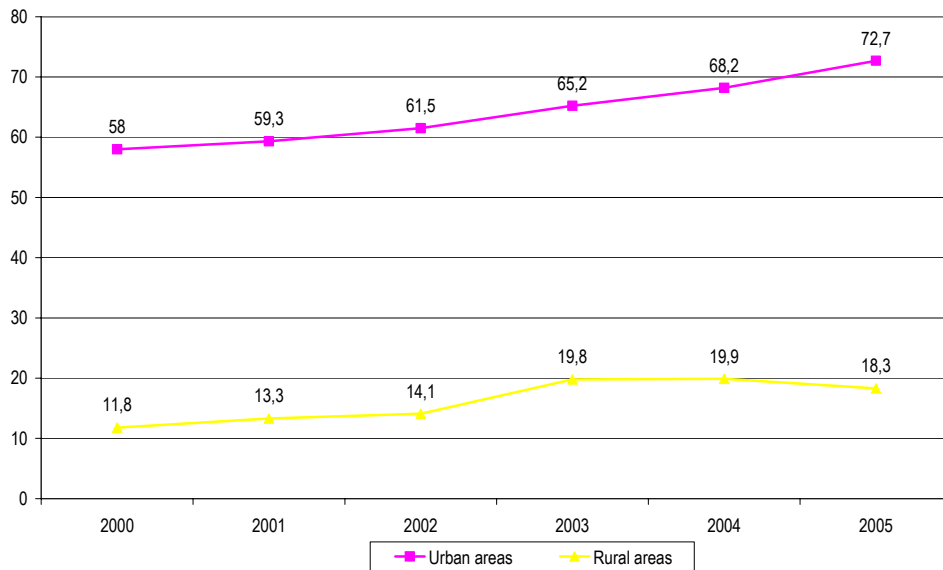
Picture 8. Four-year-olds in education (2004)



Picture 9 demonstrates that less than 20 % of rural children are enrolled in preschool institutions. Based on data supplied by municipal Services of Children's Rights Protection, in 2005, two thirds of all families entered into the registry of socially dysfunctional families (6 304 families out of 9 943) as a result of alcohol abuse, were living in rural areas. It is an indirect indicator that rural children are living in worse conditions comparing to urban children. Rural children have fewer possibilities to compensate the difficulties in their development.

The overall analysis of the situation in implementing universal pre-primary education revealed the problems of pre-primary education providers. Although in 2004 the number of groups in pre-primary education increased by almost two times in comparison to 2000, such groups are only being intensively established within preschool educational establishments (in 2005 there were 1 186 such groups), and in secondary schools (999 groups in 2005). The network of private providers of pre-primary education is practically not developed at all. Forms of pre-primary education oriented towards the specific needs of a child and the family are not available. Pre-primary education groups are not available either in some rural areas, or the accessibility of such services is reduced by the absence of transportation services. About 3 to 4 % of children join such pre-primary education groups too late, at nearly seven years old.

Picture 9. Enrolment in preschool establishments at the end of year, compared to the total number of children of a certain age, %



Source: Vaiko teisių apsaugos kontrolieriaus įstaiga, 2007a, p. 7.

Education of the population aged 15 and older is high enough. In the first quarter of 2006, as many as 900 000 or one third of the population of this age had secondary education with a profession or without, or acquired profession after graduation from the general school, 563 000 (19.8 %) had higher or professional college education attained, and 544 000 persons of the said age (19.1 %) had secondary vocational education or any other education attained after secondary school.

The role of the education system in the reproduction of social poverty and social exclusion is one of the axioms of the social sciences. It means that without a purposeful educational policy, the education system is embedding existing social inequality. Those drafting educational reform, at least in its initial stages, do not seriously consider this reproductive potential of the educational system. The list of priorities of those times or sometimes ignorance, assisted in the emerging of rather sophisticated educational institution networks (privileged lyceums versus first grades of vocational training institutions; etc.) that facilitated the reproduction of social capital and consequently the unequal possibilities of professional careers (Dobryninas et al., 2000, pp. 140-144). It is necessary to consider this hidden function of the educational system particularly when dealing with social exclusion, moreover as in Lithuania the educational system in principle is public. For example, in 2004-05 the number of students in general schools was 563 100 and only 0.4 % of them were studying in non-public or private schools.

Another ostensive manifestation of this hidden function of the educational system is the contraposition of vocational and general education. For example, vocational schools are still facing difficulties to overcome their stigma and sometimes societal role inherited from the past⁹.

⁹ The Hungarian education sociologist Tamas Kozma has depicted this stigma in following way: 'The present state of their economies demonstrates that vocational training of that type contributed to the survival of the State-owned, heavily subsidised, energy consuming industry. It provided these industries with an oversupply of young, technically under trained; educationally counter selected, socially dependent labour force. It is a labour force which prefers job security to private ownership, economic ventures, and high technology. Vocational training of that type also served as a social segregation of those who were 'sentenced to physical work' even if

The percentage of dropouts in vocational schools is the highest. The level of unemployment is higher in groups with a different kind of vocational education (vocational upper secondary, vocational lower secondary, vocational qualifications without completion of lower secondary, etc.) and only in the past few years has the decrease in unemployment equated with the possibilities to find jobs of those groups with a different level and type of education. Despite these changes in the first quarter of 2006, the biggest part or half of the unemployed (51 000) had vocational education of different levels and only 7.9 % (8 000) of the unemployed had higher education.

1.7. Trafficking in children

In 2007 the Centre of Social Analysis and Consultation investigated the phenomenon of trafficking in children (*Socialinės analizės ir konsultacijų centras, 2007*). The aim of the research was to gather data for the rehabilitation programme of the victims of trafficking in children. But the research points out that there is no need for such a separate programme. At the same time, the research demonstrates that in order to escape moral panic, it is necessary to have an adequate picture of the situation of children at social risk and the relevant priorities.

During the period 1999 to 2006 in Lithuania, law enforcement agencies identified 47 minors who have been trafficked — on an average, six cases over the year. However, these are only a small proportion compared with the general context of all minors' victims of sexual abuse and exploitation. During the same period, 1 205 minors were identified as victims of sexual abuse; among them 4 % are children victims of human trafficking mentioned above. Therefore the rehabilitation programme for child victims of human trafficking is supposed to include minors who suffered sexual abuse, because of the greater numbers of victims of sexual abuse.

Data obtained in research and opinions generated by experts would suggest that the possibilities of rehabilitation and accessibility to assistance are relevant to the present demand of such an aid. The EU and Lithuanian experts' approaches to the problem of rehabilitation of victims of child trafficking are not substantially different and are even very often identical. Available programmes meet the contemporary requirements, they are complex, integrated and already serve the purpose of dealing with the organisational problems concerning the control of this phenomenon (which respondents consider to be very up-to-date) the recurrence of which in newly developed specialised programme is very probable, therefore the preparation of specialised programme of rehabilitation for trafficked children could be seen as inexpedient.

The purpose of the rehabilitation programme for trafficked children is coherent with other programmes for victims of sexual abuse (optimally using the network of governmental institutions and nongovernmental organisations, which give assistance to trafficked minors) and should be oriented to help them recover from physical and psychological harm and assist minors in softening the consequences of psychological traumas suffered, by developing and providing educational social skills and to help avoid social exclusion — addressing social behaviour and child's ability to interact with other people and society in general. Phases included in the process of rehabilitation are: reaching victims and intervention, rehabilitation and reintegration or resocialisation.

they did not want to do so. It also helped ruin the traditional middle classes in countries where they did not want to cooperate with the new leaderships, as in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Croatia. The former administration selected 45-55 % of an age cohort for vocational training following their general school studies' (Kozma, 1990).

1.8. Case study: child wellbeing and institutional interests

On 15 May 2007 Human Rights Monitoring Institute (HRMI) launched the fourth annual overview of human rights in Lithuania. The Human Rights Overview 2006 states that Lithuanians do not feel secure, hesitate to speak their mind, feel a lack of justice, and do not trust State institutions. Analysis has shown that these fears are not groundless.

According to the experts of HRMI, the key problems of children rights in 2006 included violence against children in families and State institutions; inaccessibility to psychological assistance, failure to guarantee the education and development of children with disabilities, and problems of foster care and adoption (Žmogaus teisių stebėjimo institutas, 2007, p. 40).

In order to reveal the complexity of problems associated with implementing the principle of child wellbeing, the case of the education and development of children with disabilities in special education institutions will be analysed.

According to the Law on Special Education, the purpose of special education institutions is as follows: (1) to educate persons with severe and profound special educational needs, which have been identified by pedagogical psychological services and who are unable to attend general education institutions; (2) to assist a person with severe and profound special educational needs in order to prepare for being instructed and trained at a general education institution; (3) to provide methodical assistance to teachers in general education institutions and parents (or a child's guardians) educating persons with special needs (Law on special education, Article 17). The Law on special education clearly states that special education institutions are designed for educating persons with severe and profound special education needs that ought to be identified by pedagogical psychological services.

But the analysis of the special education institutions accomplished by the Institution of the Controller for the Protection of the Rights of the Child of the Republic of Lithuania has revealed that in Lithuania, 44 % of the pupils in special education institutions have small (18 %) and moderate (26 %) disorders (Vaiko teisių apsaugos kontrolieriaus įstaiga, 2007f). These percentages are taken from the files of pedagogical psychological services that are officially appointed to identify the level of disorder.

Favourable constellation of the institutional interests allows special education institutions to go beyond the law in collecting their pupils. Of course this constellation of institutional interests has nothing to do with the principle of the best interests of the child. A case study of one special education institution demonstrates that institutionalisation is supported by different interest groups (administration of the special education institution, administration and the representatives of the parents of the ordinary educational institution, sometimes administration of education at a municipality level, sometimes even even by the parents of the child, etc.).

For example in one special education institution there are 57 pupils and 37 of them have small and moderate disorders, i.e. according to the Law on Special Education they must be educated in ordinary secondary school. The founder of special education institutions is county administration and special education institutions are financed not by local municipalities but directly by county administration, i.e. national Government. In the region analysed, the voucher for special education institutions equals LTL 18 000, when at the same time the voucher for secondary schools financed by municipality of the same region ranges from LTL 2 000 to LTL 5 000. Special education institutions are interested in having more pupils whereas ordinary educational institutions want to get rid of the so-called problematic students. Therefore nobody resists the

relocation of a pupil to a special education institution of the closed type. It is obvious that in this case, the institutional interests prevail over the principle of the best interests of the child.

The HRMI expert, Dainius Pūras, who has been recently elected one of the nine new members of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, has claimed that when dealing with children in close type institutions 'We are facing dubious stance of the State — to protect rights of vulnerable groups or rights of the institutions. Despite the efforts of HRMI and other NGOs to change the vicious system, which allow permanent violations of human rights, the system gains new investments. If we are not able to change the system let's make the effective mechanism of monitoring that could decrease human rights violations in close type institutions and enable most vulnerable groups — children and mentally disabled — to protect themselves'.

2. Policy framework for prevention and alleviation of child poverty and exclusion

2.1. Principles and clusters of child wellbeing

The Declaration of the Rights of the Child ('DRC and the Convention on the Rights of the Child ('UNCRC first of all treat the child as a subject of comprehensive care of mankind. But Articles 12-16 of the UNCRC defend the rights of the child as an active participant. The UNCRC provides the legal and conceptual framework which emphasises children's rights as citizens and recognises their capabilities to enact change in their own lives. 'Children can be considered in the present — as human beings — rather than only in a future perspective as a human becoming' (Skivenes, Strandbu, 2006, p. 13). Therefore the concept of the child is twofold; child is the subject of human rights and child is the object of human care. 'The UNCRC points to the double role of children as being citizens with right entitlements and at the same time as being dependant on their families' (Bradshaw et al., 2007, p. 135).

'Young children are highly dependent on a nurturing and loving environment and adequate economic and physical resources. Older children increasingly develop their own strategies to deal with the demands in their environment as they become more independent from their family by interacting with other social systems (e.g. school, peers)' (Bradshaw et al., 2007, p. 135). Since the 1990s, the concept of a child perspective has received increasing attention in child conceptualisation, political programmes, and practical pedagogical activities associated with children. According to Article 4 of the UNCRC, States must recognise children as legal subjects, and implement systems that are appropriate to their needs and competencies so they can be participants in their own life (see: Skivenes, Strandbu, 2006; Verhellen, 1993; Poviliunas, 2000).

J. Bradshaw and his colleagues summarised a normative framework based on the UNCRC for the understanding of children's wellbeing into four general principles how to conceptualise child wellbeing (Bradshaw et al., 2007, pp. 134-135).

1. Non-discrimination (art. 2) points to the need to capture the life situations and wellbeing of excluded groups of children like children with disabilities, children in institutions or refugee children and to disaggregate available data for age, gender, ethnic, geographic and economic background.

2. The principle of the best interests of the child (art. 3) implies a child focus in all that is done with and for children and thus strengthens children's role as citizens in their own right. As a result in data on child wellbeing the unit of analysis should be the child.
3. The complexity of children's lives is reflected in the principle of survival and development (art. 6). The UNCRC promotes a holistic view of the child, giving equal weight to children's civic, political, social, economic and cultural rights, highlighting that they are interrelated, universal and indivisible. Concepts of child wellbeing accordingly need to be multi-dimensional and ecological.
4. The principle of respect for the view of the child (art. 12) finally acknowledges children's right to be heard and to have their view taken into account in matters that affect them.

J. Bradshaw and his colleagues distinguish eight different clusters of child wellbeing (Bradshaw et al., 2006, p. 137):

'The conditions children find at home and in their neighbourhood have a strong impact on their development and wellbeing. Particularly their economic situation influences children's wellbeing and well-being in many dimensions. The cluster (1) "material situation" therefore gives information on child income poverty, deprivation and workless families while the cluster (2) "housing" captures children's living conditions and housing problems.

Children play an active role in creating their own wellbeing. Thus children's personal resources — their (3) "health" and (4) "subjective wellbeing" — are simultaneously the most basic outcomes and the very basis of achieving wellbeing. As children get older, school becomes another major factor in children's life. (5) Education is our fifth cluster, relevant for children's wellbeing today but also decisive for their future life chances. The domains here are educational attainment, participation in childcare and post-compulsory education and employment outcomes, while children's subjective wellbeing at school is included in the subjective wellbeing cluster.

The family situation and the quality of relationships within the family are crucial for children's wellbeing as are peer relationships. These are captured in the cluster (6) "children's relationships".

A different aspect of children's interaction with their environment is captured in the cluster (7) "civic participation", giving insight in children's commitment to civic activities and political interest.

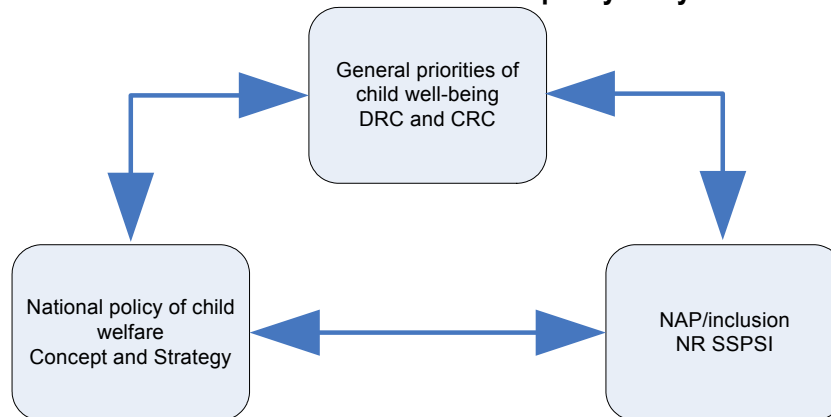
The cluster (8) "Risk and safety" finally captures conditions and behaviour that sets children and young people at risk. While data on young people's risk behaviour is widely available there are considerable gaps regarding comparative data on child protection so that we could only include the domains "child mortality" and "experiences of violence" within the peer group.'

The general principles and clusters of child wellbeing compose a good analytical framework for the analysis of public policy in the field of child wellbeing. The approach that is embodied by these principles and clusters transcends borders of institutions and different interest groups, gives the overall framework of child wellbeing and requires inter-institutional and multi-dimensional perspective. The approach demonstrates the complexity and holistic character of the child wellbeing phenomena. For example the approach of child wellbeing and its conceptual framework transcends the system of social benefits that could offer one department (for example, Ministry of Social Security and Labour) in order to prevent at risk of poverty rate among the children. Principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, survival and development, and respect for the view of the child could be guaranteed only in close cooperation with the different institutions.

2.2. The process of NAP inclusion and the 'National policy of child welfare'

The process of NAP inclusion is reconstructed in accordance with the 'National policy of child welfare'. It means that the NAP inclusion process is evaluated from the perspective of priorities and development of the national policy of child welfare and general priorities of child wellbeing. Picture 10 presents the framework of the analysis of the child welfare policy.

Picture 10. Framework of the child welfare policy analysis



The analysed national documents were issued in the following order:

1. The concept of State policy on child welfare (20 May 2003).
2. The NAP inclusion 2004-06 (2004).
3. The State policy strategy of child welfare (17 February 2005).
4. NR SSPSI 2006-08 for Lithuania (2006).

It is necessary to emphasise that the State policy strategy of child welfare was approved after the preparation of NAP inclusion 2004-06 and before NR SSPSI 2006-08 for Lithuania.

In 2003 the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania has approved the concept of State policy on child welfare (hereinafter referred to as the 'concept') (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, 2003). The concept is a key policy paper that frames the approach to child welfare¹⁰. This document is well-balanced and conceptually well-grounded. Different dimensions of the policy of child welfare (protection of the child, provision for the child, and participation of the child) are taken into account and they are consistently elaborated.

The goal of the concept is to reach a political understanding regarding the values and provisions governing child welfare and to foresee the guidelines of implementation of child welfare. Welfare is understood as 'a system of organised social services and institutions, developed to assist individuals and groups to attain satisfactory standards of living, health and personal and social relations, which would permit them to develop all their abilities and improve their quality of life

¹⁰ It is strange when Lithuanian officials answering the Indicators sub—group of the Social protection committee (ISG) Task Force on child poverty and child well-being questionnaire do not mention *Concept of State policy on child welfare* and *State policy strategy of child welfare* and have stated that 'Lithuania has not specific strategy to combat child poverty and social exclusion, but has specific policies to combat child poverty in place as part of a wider strategy'.

with a view to the needs of their families and the community'. The concept elaborates the following dimensions of the child welfare policy:

- protection of the child means the right to grow up in their own family and receive professional assistance, also the right to be protected from social and individual violence;
- provision for the child means the right of a child to resources and services, distributing them between the child and adults; providing particular attention to a disabled child, a child having special needs, and a child who is in danger of experiencing poverty, parental violence and negligence or of becoming involved in criminal activity;
- participation of the child means the right to act, express their own opinion and exert influence in decisions in the family and society, both individually and collectively, by developing for the child a social space for his active participation.

The concept is critical in its evaluations of the existing situation. The concept states that the laws of Lithuania are not yet totally harmonised with the UNCRC, there are no systems for monitoring, data collection and assessment, which would reflect all the spheres of the implementation of the UNCRC. Parts of the laws, which have been passed, cannot be implemented, since insufficient funding is being allocated, and the minimum income of every person is not guaranteed. Following the restoration of independence, Lithuania turned towards reducing State responsibility in the sphere of child provision. Families raising children constitute the poorest segment of society in Lithuania. The policy on social assistance is based upon a political threshold of poverty, the minimum subsistence level which does not meet the actual needs. A safe dwelling, which meets the requirements of hygiene, is frequently not guaranteed for a child in the family, while the State housing assistance programme is more supportive of prosperous, rather than poor families. Following the closure of many kindergartens and crèches, the right of a child of working parents to preschool care has become markedly limited. In providing these services, a child's preparedness for school, rather than assistance to the family, harmonising work with the parents' duties is being emphasised.

According to the concept within the sphere of child protection, the actions of the State are limited to saving the child by taking it from the family, without offering the family anything. The right of the child to be raised by its family is violated without acknowledging the socioeconomic causes, but by placing the blame on the family instead. The families in which children are being raised under conditions of risk, are termed as 'asocial' and experience social exclusion. Various child foster care institutions belong to different departments and are under the jurisdiction of different administration levels and have no common system of funding. Decisions regarding foster care of the child are often adopted based on the financial interests of the department and administrative units, rather than those of the child.

The concept points out that the unstable social and economic environment and lack of primary prevention services for families who are raising children or reductions in financial support to them, bring about a widespread lack of care and neglect of children and violence against children. Clearly, in this situation there is a lack of services for families and children in crisis situations, and the quality of the existing services is insufficient. New threats and new types of dependency are constantly arising for children. Neither the services nor the legal systems are capable of reacting to these threats in an adequate and timely fashion. Owing to this, new social problems are proliferating at a quick rate. The amount of social services funding for the child and its family by individual municipalities is highly uneven. Many municipalities fail to create a network of social services for the child and its family, and only use the services of the fixed State agencies.

The concept lacks an infrastructure of planned and legally anchored social and rehabilitation services in child protection. State institutions that protect and defend the child from violence are operating inefficiently, often forcing the child to experience repeated violence while undergoing the protection process. A child is questioned on multiple occasions, often in the presence of the abusers. The operations of these institutions are not coordinated, they lack funds, professional knowledge and material and human resources. In striving to defend the interests of the child, society is lacking active cooperation between the State, community, non-governmental organisations and population.

The reforms of child foster care (settlement in a foster care home, foster family or adoption) have not effected a change in child welfare, since attention was focused towards the increase of non-differentiated benefit, but not towards the development of the services, which organise the care of the child in the family and provision of social services. At the end of 2001, 40 % of the children who had lost parental guardianship were still living in various foster care institutions. Very few children are being adopted in Lithuania. Adoption is halted by the search for adoptive parents and the lack of social services for the future adoptive parents and the family who has adopted. Exaggerated secrecy in adoption laws violates the right of the child to know the truth about itself, and stops active popularisation of adoption in the country.

Insufficient efforts have been made to enable a disabled child to lead a full and decent life and to develop his abilities to actively participate in community activities. The right of the child to participate is violated through the relations between the child and the adult, emphasising the child's subordinate role, parental responsibility by interpreting parental authority according to law and tolerating physical punishments. The opportunities for a child to express its opinion in the course of a legal and administrative examination are limited.

According to the concept, its implementation is attained in inter-departmental activities (various institutions and departments ought to coordinate their activities by creating and implementing a general strategy of child welfare); services sphere (network of necessary services ought to be created); State statistics (comparative statistics on children, assisting in determining problems, which are decided through political factors with a view to the age, gender and regional differences of the child, ought to be collected and compiled); child welfare research and monitoring sphere; system of child welfare institutions; planning of human resources; planning of financial resources. The concept states the need for a country central institution of the child, which in solving the problems of the child and family, would not only implement monitoring of the child welfare, analyse, coordinate the actions of various departments in this sphere and render methodological assistance to specialists, but would also have actual possibilities to influence the situation within the entire country.

In 2005, the Government of Lithuania approved the 'State policy strategy of child welfare' (hereinafter referred to as the 'strategy') (Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė, 2005a). This strategy together with the measures of implementation of the strategy (Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė, 2005b) describes the further developments of the State policy of child welfare. The strategy identifies the following priorities of the child welfare policy: to increase parents' responsibility for the implementation of child rights; to strengthen the cooperation and coordination between different institutions (State, municipalities, NGOs, etc.); to improve the system of child welfare institutions; to create the network of social services for families and children; to decrease the risks for the children's health; to protect children from different forms of violence and exploitation; to monitor the state of child welfare; to improve the qualifications of specialists working in the fields of child welfare.

The strategy distinguishes the following principles of its implementation: the principle of prioritisation of the interests of the child; the principle of non-discrimination; the principle of accordance of national law with the international agreements; the principle of guarantees of child participation; the principle of sharing responsibility of child welfare between the family and State; and the principle of participation and cooperation of all stakeholders.

The strategy in its evaluation of the stance of the child welfare is less critical than the concept. If concept practices the elements of critical theory and reveals power relations and perverse institutional interests, the strategy attempts to present a more balanced approach. The approach of the strategy could be depicted in the following way: first of all, reveal the positive developments and then discuss shortages in the field of child welfare.

The following dimensions of the situation are analysed: the improvement of the legal basis; validation of different international conventions and documents; the recent developments of family; means of guaranteeing of employment and equal opportunities; tax deductions for parents; the measures for reducing poverty; inter-departmental and inter-institutional cooperation; cooperation between the State and municipalities' institutions; housing; social services; families at social risk; support for families; integration of children with disabilities; education; children's health service; participation of children in societal life; students' self-governance; violence against children; exploitation of children. This multi-dimensional analysis is summarised by the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis of factors and processes of child welfare.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>New laws are drafted in accordance with UNCRC.</p> <p>Lithuania has joined and implements main international conventions and protocols in the field of child welfare.</p> <p>Coherent legal basis that regulates family relations, protection of child rights, and equal opportunities.</p> <p>The new legal documents in the field of protection of the child rights are drafted by inter-departmental groups.</p> <p>In legal documents the requirements are embedded to exchange information between the institutions.</p> <p>Established the institution responsible for the protection of child rights.</p> <p>On the level of municipalities, the community councils of the protection of the children rights are functioning.</p> <p>The NGOs as social partners are participating in the activities of the protection of the children rights.</p> <p>The infrastructure of social, educational, health services for the families is under development.</p> <p>The system of adoption is improving.</p> <p>The favourable conditions for housing credits for families are under development.</p> <p>The system of social benefits for the families with children is under development.</p> <p>The system of vouchers for school children is introduced.</p> <p>The system of infant care is strengthening.</p> <p>The measures preventing violence against children and system of assistance for the victims of violence are under development.</p> <p>The system of children employment is well elaborated.</p> <p>The list of statistical indicators about children is confirmed and comparative information is in the process of collection.</p>	<p>There are inconsistencies in the legal basis of the protection of children's rights.</p> <p>There is no central institution at State level that could coordinate inter-departmental activities and activities of the different levels of governance (ministries, municipalities, etc.).</p> <p>There is lack of cooperation between State and municipalities institutions on the one side and NGOs and local communities on the other.</p> <p>The infrastructure of social, educational, health services for the families is not developed enough.</p> <p>There is an asymmetry between genders in family and societal roles and responsibilities. In the case of divorces, fathers often do not take responsibility for the maintenance and education of their children.</p> <p>There is no system of non-judicial conciliation for families.</p> <p>There is a lack of social housing; social housing in the State budget is under-resourced.</p> <p>Parents are sometimes not ready to accomplish their parental duties, and to provide proper care for their children.</p> <p>The price of social, educational, health services are permanently increasing, low income families are not able to provide adequate care for their children especially when they have special needs.</p> <p>There is no system of selection and education of foster families.</p> <p>The problems of drop-outs remain unsolved.</p> <p>The system of youth sexual education is not developed, and the prevention of risk sexual behaviour is</p>

<p>The qualifications of specialists working in the field of the protection of child rights are developed. The competencies of the municipal Services of Children's Rights Protection are permanently improved.</p>	<p>insufficient. Comparatively high rates of children's deaths are caused by external factors and accidents. The statistical databases lacks the systematic data concerning all children groups and in line with all the areas of the UNCRC. There is no comprehensive research on child welfare. The lack of human resources and qualifications does not ensure consistent and proper collaboration in developing legislation, programmes, and in their implementation. Insufficient subsidies for children's rights protection system.</p>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>The adoption of international experience as to implementation of UNCRC provisions. The implementation of all child rights and legitimate interests established in the UNCRC. The improvement of the inter-departmental collaboration system. The active participation of NGO and local communities to ensure the protection of child rights. The progressive involvement of parents and parental organisations in the process of children's education. The development of flexible employment forms enabling parents to harmonise work and family duties. Increasing the employment and income of parents. Increasing the number of persons properly trained for foster parenting and adoption. Development of practical skills of children to participate in societal and community life. Active participation of children and youth in society life and in making decisions which influence their life. To decrease morbidity among children. Provision of due assistance to child victims of violence and families in need of help. The gathering and accumulation of comparative statistical data on children. Participation of experts in making decisions concerning child's welfare in the family and society, taking into account children's expressed considerations. Involvement of experts in development of child welfare.</p>	<p>The deficiency of inter-departmental collaboration could determine inconsistency of legislation and emerging collisions. The ineffectiveness of the protection of children's rights system could increase children's social exclusion. Family instability could increase the number of one-parent families, families at social risk, or the number of children in poverty and without parental care. Due to low income and increasing housing costs, the threat that families will lose their homes. If not improved, the childcare system could cause improper socialisation. Shortcomings in foster parenting could cause the increase of childcare institutionalisation. Ambivalent approach to sexual education and reproductive health could increase the level of pregnancy among adolescents. The disregard of reproductive health and family planning problems could worsen the situation in this field. The lack of specialists and experts working in the children's welfare system, as well as shortage of their qualifications do not ensure a proper level of services for children and families. The lack of regard for specialist qualifications could cause disharmonies between national and international legislation.</p>

The SWOT analysis is followed by the vision:

1. The main problems of child welfare are eliminated, the main priorities and objectives of the 'State policy strategy on child welfare' are accomplished, the conditions for children to grow up in their families are guaranteed, all children have possibility to receive the support and services they need. The elaboration and accomplishment of the State policy on child welfare are coordinated by the State and municipalities, the close inter-departmental collaboration and participation of children and youth themselves are guaranteed, the network of services for children and families is created and improving, the comparative statistical data about children is collected, the system of a in-house training service for specialists working with children is improving, and the budgetary subsidies for child welfare are increasing.

2. Due attention is given to the prevention of social exclusion, poverty and disabilities, and to housing problems. The safe and suitable development environment for children is developed, and children are preserved from all forms of violence and exploitation. The social services system is developed in accordance with children's and families' needs. The childcare system is reorganised in order to create an education system of foster parents and adoption specialists; and the childcare system moves from institutionalisation towards foster care homes (families). All the conditions for children's participation in societal life are created, where children's views are respected and taken into account.

It is necessary to stress that despite the answer of Lithuanian officials to the questionnaire of ISG Task Force on child poverty and child wellbeing, Lithuania does not have a specific strategy to combat child poverty and social exclusion¹¹, Lithuania has two strategic documents that are based on the multi-dimensional approach of UNCRC. The concept and the strategy transcend the approach that is based only on childcare and handle child welfare in a multi-dimensional way. The concept and strategy ground ideology describe the infrastructure, reveal the significance of children's participation in decision-making, and define inter-departmental networking. Unfortunately both documents of the NAP inclusion process ignore the concept and the strategy.

2.3. NAP inclusion and NR SSPSI on child poverty and wellbeing

The child-specific policy objectives and priorities of the NAP inclusion 2004-06 are as follows:

- (a) reducing the relative poverty rate of the poorest population groups by 5-10 percentage points via the application of effective assistance and greater access to social security, education, professional training labour market measures by 2010;
- (b) enhancement of social security, labour market, education and other social integration measures for the most vulnerable population groups: problem families, orphans and children without parental care;
- (c) enhancement of social, economic, educational and legal opportunities of families and their responsibility for the upbringing of children;
- (d) ensuring the possibility for children to grow up safely in their family and developing assistance services for families and community services to the extent that these comprise the major share of the total structure of services for families and children;
- (e) ensuring social, pedagogical, psychological and other assistance for children and youths in social exclusion via the enhancement of opportunities of those children and youths for socialisation, promotion of development of cultural and civil maturity, expansion of social skills;

¹¹ Lithuania does not have a specific strategy to combat child poverty and social exclusion, but has specific policies to combat child poverty as part of a wider strategy. In the Lithuanian poverty reduction strategy, one of the strategic goals was support to target groups living in extreme poverty. Children without parental care, children from large families, children from single-parent families, children from unemployed families are considered to be most vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion.

(f) admitting that the institutional care of children cannot be avoided in full, to strive to ensure that the established childcare institutions offer the children the conditions which are oriented to the family model, are favourable for the socialisation of those children and enable them to prepare for independent life in a community;

(g) creation of an effective system for the integration of children of full legal age and without parental care into society, which will provide these young individuals with both material and individualised social and professional assistance, as well as develop their social skills.

The targets of the NAP inclusion include:

(a) reduction of institutionalisation of children deprived of parental care and their social integration;

(b) protection of children against violence;

(c) expanding the healthcare and preventive measures for children and youths;

(d) development of a system of education services, education assistance offered by preschooling establishments, secondary schools, to eliminate hindrances for the participation of children in social exclusion in the education system;

(e) ensuring the acquisition of high-quality elementary education by 95 % of Lithuania's children, secondary education by 95 % of those who finish elementary school and possess professional skills in demand on the labour market, higher education for 60 % of Lithuania's youth;

(f) the adaption of the learning environment, technical provision of education and schooling institutions for the needs of disabled children and children from families eligible for social support, to ensure the provision with modern information technologies.

The concrete policy measures include:

In order to create, for children deprived of parental care and children under the risk of separation from family, conditions of life closest to normal and ensure for them equal opportunities to integrate into society and avoid social exclusion, it is necessary to:

- finalise and implement the strategy for reorganising the childcare system. The strategy should lay down the foundations for the development of a social services' system for children without parental care, which would ensure improvement of community childcare system and its promotion in preference to the development of residential childcare system;
- draw up long-term projects for returning children to their biological families;
- set up in local communities (municipalities) different child activity and social assistance institutions for children and families (children's clubs, day centres, child crisis centres);
- provide targeted assistance for children raised in childcare institutions, by foster parents and in foster families to start independent life by developing their social skills; draw up a programme for their social and professional integration;

- draw up and implement a system of training and upgrading foster parents' qualifications to ensure proper care for children in families and foster families.

To improve the economic conditions of life for families with many children and thus alleviate their poverty; to pay childcare benefits for every child raised in the family.

To arrange that, in order to ensure targeted use of benefits in socially vulnerable families, following evaluation of the situation in the families and the needs of their children, assistance in forms alternative to monetary support is organised under a procedure approved by the municipal council.

To ensure assistance for delinquent children, it is necessary to:

- draw and implement in local communities (municipalities) projects for the re-socialisation of minors returning from special education and foster homes and custodial institutions;
- organise camps for psychological and pedagogical rehabilitation of children and young people within the risk group as well as free-time activities for children and young people;
- to increase the areas and scale of working with delinquent children and teenagers and their families;
- provide educational and psychological assistance services to delinquent children and teenagers.

To pool the efforts of all parties concerned and step up their abilities, it is necessary to:

- hold, on a regular basis, training sessions for specialists from different institutions working with families and socially excluded children and young people, including the issues of gender equality, and upgrade their qualifications; ensure the dissemination of good practices among them;
- encourage municipalities and the social partners to solve the problems faced by socially excluded children and young people;
- develop cooperation among the institutions concerned, encourage them to disseminate and gather information on children who have suffered sexual abuse and other forms of violence.

Then child poverty was selected as the priority in the NR SSPSI 2006-08 for Lithuania. The targets of the NR SSPSI are:

- (a) surmounting the poverty among children and social exclusion by introducing measures directly targeted at children experiencing poverty and social exclusion, as well as preventive measures directly oriented towards children;
- (b) supporting the families by implementing preventive measures in order to prevent them in getting into the group of social risk families, as well as to provide support for families to get out of this risk group.

The concrete policy measures

Ensure accessibility of complex services (preschool education, day care, health and social services, family counselling, etc.) to all children in the place of residence of the family, giving particular attention to families in rural areas and preschool children. Draft the national programme for complex assistance to parents before and after child-birth until the start of school. The programme will be elaborated following the national 'Strategy on child welfare policy'.

Implement the 'National programme on children day care centres' (started in 2002) aimed at encouraging the establishment of community-based child day care centres where favourable conditions could be created for children from social risk families, in order to provide them with additional educational services and the possibility to develop their social skills, as well as creating possibilities for parents to visit such centres for informal education. Special attention is given to the establishment and development of such centres in rural areas.

Priority in allocating funding for the implementation of the initiatives of young persons or youth organisations will be given to the initiatives coming from socially vulnerable young people or projects aimed at dealing with their problems.

Implement the 'National 2005-08 programme on support to orphaned and abandoned children and their integration into the society', where major attention is given to preparing children who are living at childcare institutions for an independent life afterwards, and creating living conditions for these children with regards to their needs.

Elaborate the 'Strategy for restructurisation of institutional childcare' and action plans to implement this, giving a priority of childcare in the families of guardians and introducing measures for the restructuring of the institutional childcare system aimed at decentralising services for children. It is related to the revision of the State institutional childcare system and development of social services to families and children at municipal level, targeted towards better work with social risk families bringing up children.

Provide children from low-income families with school kits before the start of school year.

Provide children from low-income families with free meals at school. Increase the amount allocated from the State budget for free meals at school per student. Organise free meals at schools for children from low-income families during summer holidays in day camps at schools.

Gradually move forward to introducing child benefits for each child under 18 years of age or older as long as they study full-time in comprehensive schools.

Family support measures

Ensure that all individuals who have not enough means for subsistence and as a result of objective reasons, cannot raise their income on their own efforts are entitled to receive assistance for meeting their minimal needs avoiding the encouragement of sidestepping from work by such assistance; increase remuneration for heating costs; grant entitlement to receive social assistance in cash for a larger number of persons in need.

Empower municipalities, at their own discretion, to use up to 2 % of the allocated State budget means for social assistance to support needy inhabitants.

Ensure that State benefits granted to support children from social risk families have been used to meet their needs. Regulate legally the forms and methods of disbursement of the benefits in kind to social risk families receiving social assistance in cash.

Prepare and approve amendments to the by-laws of the Republic of Lithuania Law on social assistance in cash to low income families (single persons).

Draft and submit to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania the three-year 'Programme on the development of the social housing fund'.

Prepare the draft Law concerning the revision and amendments of the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the State support in the acquisition of accommodation or renting a lodging, and renovating multi-storied dwelling houses, introducing compensation of a certain part of rent to low-income individuals (families), who are renting lodging in the private sector and are entitled to social housing privileges.

Reduce domestic violence against women in a systematic and complex way. Elaborate the 'National strategy on the reduction of domestic violence against women' and the plan for the implementation of measures thereof, and initiate the implementation of the plan from the beginning of 2007.

Increase social insurance benefits which could increase income or social guarantees of parents bringing up children and also the State support to surviving children:

- increase the amounts of benefits to parents bringing up children under one year of age (percentage applied for calculating such amounts). The increase of benefits would encourage men to take paternity leave and look after their children at home, creating opportunities for women, who became mothers, to continue their working career reconciling in an appropriate way, work and child-raising duties;
- increase the percentage applied in calculating State social insurance orphanage pensions;
- increase guarantees to pensions of parents out of work for bringing up children under three years of age by providing insurance on the State budget means to one of the parents or guardians and paying social insurance contributions on pensions calculated from the minimal monthly wage;
- support families by expanding the scope of recipients entitled to social insurance benefits in the case of the death of the insured person as a result of an accident at work or an occupational disease.

Support the most needy families and individuals by providing food from intervention recourses.

2.4. Evaluation of the 'National child welfare policy'

Lithuania has two strategic documents that are based on the multi-dimensional approach of the DRC and UNCRC. The concept of State policy on child welfare and the State policy strategy of child welfare transcends the approach that is based only on childcare and handles child welfare in a multi-dimensional way. The concept and strategy ground ideology describe infrastructure, reveal the significance of child participation in decision-making, and define inter-departmental networking. Both the concept and the strategy treat child not only as the subject of human care but also as human beings with their own rights.

Unfortunately the approach is ignored by the NAP inclusion process. The NAP inclusion process is represented by the NAP inclusion and the NR SSPSI. The comparison of these two documents could be summarised in the following conclusions.

In the list of priorities, the NAP inclusion discusses more dimensions of child wellbeing than NR SSPSI. NAP inclusion analyses the enhancement of social, economic, educational and legal opportunities of families; social, pedagogical, psychological and other assistance for children and youths in social exclusion via the enhancement of opportunities of those children and youths for socialisation, promotion of development of cultural and civil maturity, expansion of social skills; attempts to create an effective system for the integration of children of full legal age and without parental care into society, which will provide these young individuals with both material and individualised social and professional assistance, as well as develop their social skills. The targets of NR SSPSI are more towards the material dimensions of child wellbeing: to introduce measures directly targeted at children experiencing poverty and social exclusion, as well as preventive measures directly oriented towards children; to support families by implementing preventive measures in order to prevent them in getting into the group of social risk families, as well as to provide support for families to get out of this risk group.

But in the list of targets, NR SSPSI is more coherent and consistent than NAP inclusion. In the list of targets NAP inclusion mentions such topics as reducing institutionalisation of children deprived of parental care and their social integration; protection of children against violence, etc. NR SSPSI develops a system of measures that could help children at social risk to escape social exclusion. NR SSPSI discusses how to ensure accessibility of complex services (preschool education, day care, health and social services, family counselling, etc.) to all children in the place of residence of the family. The document particular attention gives to the families in rural areas and preschool children. It is also promotes implementation of the 'National programme on children day care centres' (started in 2002) aimed at encouraging the establishment of community-based child day care centres where favourable conditions could be created for children from social risk families in order to provide them with additional educational services and possibility to develop their social skills, as well as creating possibilities for parents to visit such centres for informal education; as mentioned in the national 'Strategy on child welfare policy'.

The approach of the Lithuanian NR SSPSI is most similar to the approach of the MSSL. If compared with the social report of the Ministry and the NR SSPSI, a similar tactic in treating children wellbeing could be revealed. Both documents analyse child poverty and mention measures of social policy that aim to decrease the at-risk-of-poverty rate.

In the social report of 2005-06 of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour there are two chapters directly dedicated to child wellbeing. Chapter 4.1 of the social report, *Social assistance for families and children*, focuses on the changes which occurred in 2005, in relation to the provision of social assistance to families with children and social assistance in cash for low-

income residents taking into consideration their income and property. It also provides statistics on the assistance concerned and on its recipients. This chapter is very similar to the second key task of the NR SSPSI.

The social report of 2005-06 also devote chapter 4.2 on childcare. This chapter presents the key reasons why families raising children are included in the municipal register of socially dysfunctional families and why children are placed into care, overviews the tendencies of child placement into care, informs about the tendencies of violence against children, discusses key issues related to domestic and inter-country adoption, and presents the most important issues related to youth policy.

Therefore 'the care approach' of the NR SSPSI is encoded or programmed by the activities of the dominant member of the team that was drafting the document. The authors of the NR SSPSI assert, 'Lithuania, as many other European countries, understands that it is important to eliminate poverty among children, which imposes long-term and irreversible consequences on the children and the society, and to achieve that children growing in poor families were not 'trapped' into poverty and were provided with as much as possible accessible opportunities to step out of the poverty 'trap' to a higher social level.' (NR SSPSI, p. 14)

The NR SSPSI is limited to the childcare approach that first of all is associated with 'material situation'. This approach ignores other important dimensions of child wellbeing (subjective wellbeing, education, children's relationships, civic participation, risk and safety). As Eurochild experts have pointed out: 'A child rights' approach would ensure more positive outcomes for children across all policies and would ensure the rights of children and young people are heard. In that line Eurochild advocates a reinforcement of the coordination between relevant policies, so as to develop more effective cross-sectional strategies to prevent poverty and social exclusion' (Eurochild, 2007, p. 3). The role of UNCRC was stressed by P. Hoelscher (Hoelscher, 2004). As it was already mentioned, the UNCRC approach gives:

- (a) a background for elimination and prevention of child poverty and social exclusion;
- (b) elaborates the framework for child participation in decision-making processes.

The Eurochild experts also pay their attention to the lack of a children's rights-based approach in the NR SSPSI. 'Although in overall strategic approach there is a statement that social policy shall be revised in order to ensure unconditionally the essential rights of children and young persons for versatile life and quality of education (p. 6) the rest of the document does not discuss children's issues against the UNCRC. There is a risk that implementation of the strategy will not observe the best interest of the child.

This disregard for the child's best interest is evident in the way boarding schools have been reorganised. No assessment of the individual child's needs has been done. As a result of reorganisation, boarding schools have been re-labelled as hostels. Children without parental care live in a hostel during the week and travel to a childcare institution at the weekend. This is explained by the fact that the hostels do not provide care, despite the fact that they provide child-only accommodation' (Eurochild, 2007, p. 64).

The analysis of policy papers and the answers to the ISG Task Force on child poverty and child wellbeing questionnaire demonstrates that child wellbeing is conceptualised in the discourse of social exclusion and poverty. Therefore the child wellbeing approach and children policy measures are concentrated towards improvement of children's 'material situation', 'housing',

'education' and 'health', i.e. traditionally more tangible dimensions of child wellbeing policy. This 'care-centred' approach ignores the following principles deduced from the UNCRC: the principle of the best interests of the child and the principle of respect for the view of the child.

But such phenomena as children's subjective wellbeing, children's relationships, civic participation, risk and safety (bullying, aggression) escape the attention both of the NAP inclusion and NR SSPSI.

For example, levels of bullying (at least twice a month) range from 1 to 50 % across all countries and regions and age/gender groups. The survey's averages show bullying to be higher among boys than girls and to increase slightly between 11 and 15 years of age.

Levels of bullying remain consistent across age groups in certain countries. For example, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Malta, Scotland, Slovenia, Sweden and Wales have consistently low levels, while Austria, Greenland and Lithuania have consistently high levels. Levels of being bullied show similar patterns, although the gender difference is smaller World Health Organization (WHO). In Lithuania, according to the data of 2005, the level of bullying among children reaches 70 %. It means that 7 children out of 10 experience bullying in schools from their contemporaries. It is the highest rate of bullying among children in Europe.

Levels of physical fighting also show cross-national variation and marked gender differences, with very low levels of fighting among girls. The highest levels of fighting at 13 and 15 years are consistently reported in Estonia and Lithuania; while consistently low levels at all ages are reported in Finland and Germany (WHO).

There is one more group of children which remain out of focus in the NR SSPSI. This group are the children of emigrants. Sometimes they are left alone, sometimes with relatives. This rather big group of children that mature in specific circumstances deserve special attention.

3. The system of monitoring the policies of prevention and alleviation of child poverty and exclusion

The system of monitoring the policies of prevention and alleviation of child poverty and exclusion is evolving. The main actor in this field is the Controller for the Protection of the Rights of the Child of the Republic of Lithuania. She is a key person of the network of the system of monitoring. Other actors will be discussed in order to reveal new emerging developments in the system of monitoring of child poverty and exclusion:

- (a) networking in monitoring (National anti-poverty network);
- (b) fostering children and young people's participation in the decision-making processes (Lithuanian Parliament of School Students);
- (c) national awareness raising and empowering of stakeholders (LaBAS);
- (d) inter-institutional cooperation on the local level (establishment of children's rights protection and monitoring mechanisms at local level in Lithuania).

3.1. Monitoring Group for monitoring the implementation of the NR SSPSI

The Ministry of Social Security and Labour is responsible for the development of the NR SSPSI of Lithuania, and is also at present in charge of coordinating activities in reducing poverty. This Ministry has also been nominated to supervise the implementation of the NR SSPSI. For this purpose, the Supervisory Commission for the implementation of the NAP inclusion, functioning at the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, is substituted by the monitoring group for monitoring the implementation of the NR SSPSI. The monitoring group is represented by the Government, municipalities, Ombudsman of equal opportunities office, social partners and NGOs.

Independent experts and scientists are also being invited to participate in the work of this monitoring group. The main task of this group will be to carry out on a continuous basis the control over the implementation progress of the defined measures in the NR SSPSI, to discuss running issues and tasks, update measures and other related matters, involving wider activities at a municipal and regional level. At the same time the 'plan of measures' is being elaborated as the annex to the NR SSPSI, defining the responsible administrators, necessary means, implementation terms and conditions and short descriptions of the expected outcomes, and will serve as the main working document for the activities of the monitoring group in 2006-08.

3.2. The controller for the protection of the rights of the child of the Republic of Lithuania

The Law on the Controller for the Protection of the Rights of the Child of the Republic of Lithuania was prepared and adopted by the Seimas on 25 May 2000. The main purpose of this law is to establish legal prerequisites, ensuring the realisation of the principles set forth in the UNCRC and other legal acts related to the protection of the rights of the child, as well as control the observance of the aforesaid principles in Lithuania, control activities of the State, municipalities, non-governmental institutions and organisations, and private persons that could violate the rights and rightful interests of the child.

The Law on the Controller for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (<http://vaikams.lrs.lt/law.htm>) precisely defines the principles of the activities, legal basis, competence, rights and duties of the CPRC, as well as the legal status of the institution of the Controller for the Protection of the Rights of the Child. This institution is an independent (accountable only to the Seimas) State institution for the supervision and control of the protection of the rights of the child and is maintained from the State budget.

The main powers of the CPRC include:

- 1) examination of the complaints by natural and legal persons against the rights, actions or omission of State and municipal institutions or organisations and their officers, non-governmental institutions as well as other natural and legal persons, enterprises, having no rights of the legal person, due to which the rights of the child or legal interests are violated or may be violated, and adopt one of the decisions, foreseen in Article 25 of this law;
- 2) controlling how the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, conventions ratified by the Seimas, laws of the Republic of Lithuania and other legal acts, regulating the protection of the rights of the child and his lawful interests, are implemented;

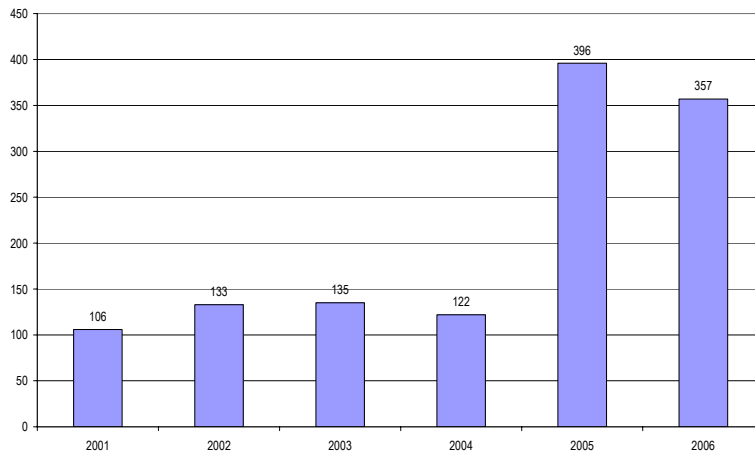
- 3) supervision and control of the activities of institutions, related to the protection of the rights of the child and his legal interests due to which the rights of the child or his lawful interests are or may be violated;
- 4) proposals to the Seimas and the Government on how to improve the protection of the rights of the child and his legal interests established by the laws of the Republic of Lithuania and other legal acts;
- 5) provision of the information to the public about the protection of the rights of the child and his legal interests in the Republic of Lithuania.

The main rights of the Controller for Protection of the Rights of the Child include:

- 1) obtain information about violations, not indicated in the complaints, on its own initiative, start their examination or transfer them for examination to other competent State institutions;
- 2) get acquainted with the cases investigated in the court, which are related to the violation of the rights of the child or his legal interests;
- 3) enter, without hindrance, State and municipality institutions or organisations, non-governmental State establishments and acquaint with their activities;
- 4) demand and receive information, explanations, protocols and other documents from the State and municipality institutions or organisations, non-governmental institutions as well as other natural and legal persons, enterprises without the status of a legal person, relate to the protection of the rights of the child and his legal interests, which are necessary for exercising powers specified by this law;
- 5) submit proposals to the President, the Seimas, and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the amendments to the valid legal acts and the adoption of new legal acts, as well as the formation and implementation of the policy related to the protection of the rights of the child and his legal interests;
- 6) take part in the meetings of the Seimas and the Government when issues concerning the protection of the rights of the child and his legal interests are discussed and express their opinion;
- 7) take part in the meetings of the commissions or other institutions established by the President, the Seimas, and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, related to the protection of the rights of the child and his legal interests.

The Controller for Protection of the Rights of the Child is quite active (<http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter/vaikai?kalbld=2&winName=normal&sakld=5335>). She is initiating different studies, formulates the proposals for different governmental agencies, and participates in governmental and non-governmental work groups. Worth mentioning are her studies and reports on the children of emigrants, on social workers for families at social risk, on preschool and pre-primary education, she has also participated in the group that has analysed the situation of the children and personnel in the childcare institutions (see above).

Picture 11. Written complaints delivered to the Controller for Protection of the Rights of the Child



Source: Vaiko teisių apsaugos kontrolieriaus įstaiga, 2007f, p. 8.

The increase of the complaints delivered to the Controller for Protection of the Rights of the Child demonstrates that people trust the Controller and are better at recognising the violations of the rights of the child (Picture 11).

3.3. National anti-poverty network

The National anti-poverty network (www.skurdas.lt) was established in 2006. It comprises more than 300 organisations that are working mostly in the field of social care. On 7 October, 2006, during the European Anti-poverty Network (EAPN) general assembly in Toledo, Spain, the Lithuanian National Anti-poverty Network became a member of the EAPN. The representative of the National Anti-poverty Network is participating in the NAP inclusion monitoring group. The National Anti-poverty Network has formulated proposals for the NR SSPSI that were accepted by the NAP inclusion monitoring group.

It seems that the National Anti-poverty Network is still lacking a clear strategy.

3.4. Lithuanian Parliament of School Students

Lithuanian Students Association, Lithuanian Students Union, Students Parliament of Panevezys region, Lithuanian Association of Leisure Time Organisers for Youth and Children and the Centre for Civic Initiatives have initiated the elections of the Lithuanian Parliament of School Students (<http://www.lmp.lt/index.php>). Partners of the project are the Ministry of Education and Science, the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, the Central Electoral Committee and the Lithuanian group of the European Association of Student Lawyers (ELSA-Lithuania).

The idea of Lithuanian Parliament of School Students is twofold:

- (a) organisation of the election and the active participation of students in the election campaign and assist in developing social skills (learning by doing);

(b) the elected school students' Parliament is the institution that represents the interests of school students in decision-making processes (Deveikis et al., 2006).

Students between the ages of 12-18 were entitled to vote and students between the ages of 15-17 had the right to be elected as members of Parliament. The Parliament is elected for two years. Over 670 schools took place in the first elections. The election process began with each of the participating schools electing a candidate for Parliament. The candidates then conducted campaigns for election within their district. In the final round of elections, 95 members of Parliament were elected from 50 districts. The Lithuanian Parliament of School Students is running its fourth cadence already. Last elections took part in autumn of 2006 and over 400 000 students participated in the elections.

The students' Parliament passes resolutions, other documents, comments on laws, organises projects for other students. Parliament members are invited to various workshops in different institutions and organisations.

The Lithuanian Parliament of School Students is an organisation that could assist children and young people to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

3.5. Different projects

The LaBAS project

The proposal intends to raise awareness in Lithuania about the NR SSPSI and mobilise relevant stakeholders to ensure due process of the development and effective implementation of the NR SSPSI effort. The project has two target groups: the general public and grass roots social policy actors, such as local government, community leaders, regional and local newspapers and TV stations, non-governmental organisations and those directly experiencing poverty and social exclusion (<http://www.skurdas.lt/labas/index.php?id=1>).

During the implementation of the project in five selected regions of Lithuania (Jurbarkas, Alytus, Panevėžys, Kaunas, Mažeikiai), work groups of relevant stakeholders were established there with the purpose of developing of mechanisms which would ensure more active participation by local social policy actors in decision-making processes, related to the implementation of the NAP inclusion . These five cases will be used as examples to raise awareness about the potential of the NAP among social policy actors country-wide and the general population of Lithuania.

It is expected that the implementation of the project will contribute to empowerment at grass-roots level social policy actors and those who directly experience poverty and social exclusion; enable two-way communication between policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders; and strengthen links among national and regional agencies dealing with various areas of social policy.

As a result, the NR SSPSI will gain acceptance as a social policy orchestrating tool, political parties will integrate the NR SSPSI into their political platforms, and current expenditures on social policy will be used more effectively. The other line of action in the project, targeted at the population in general, is aimed at creating a more favourable environment for implementation of the NR SSPSI at national, regional and local levels.

It is expected that raising the population's awareness about the EU's social inclusion and protection processes using national media campaigns and social advertising will help mobilise

efforts by relevant stakeholders to reduce poverty and social exclusion across the country; in addition, it will help destigmatise vulnerable and excluded groups and promote tolerance towards them.

Since child poverty and social exclusion are one of the priorities of the NR SSPSI, this project will not only stimulate the discussions on child poverty, but also will formulate measures on how to enhance child wellbeing.

The project 'Establishment of children's rights protection and monitoring mechanisms on the local level in Lithuania' (2004-07)

Poor inter-agency cooperation, insufficient competence base and lack of children's rights monitoring and protection mechanisms on the local level is the target of the project 'Establishment of children's rights protection and monitoring mechanisms on the local level in Lithuania' (<http://www.nhc.nl/proj/lithuania.php>).

To advance the system of children's rights monitoring and protection in Lithuania, the Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC) has started a project in Lithuania, regarding the establishment of children's rights protection and monitoring councils at the local level, together with the Netherlands Child Protection Board (NCPB), the Lithuanian Community Change Centre (CCC), the Association of Seniunai and Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The project is supported by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MATRA pre-accession programme. The project has started on the 1 December 2004 and will end in 30 November 2007. There are 18 *seniunijas* (borough jurisdictions) participating in the project.

With the help of the Lithuanian Seniunai Association, municipalities of various types and 18 *seniunijas* (borough jurisdictions) were identified to establish experimental models for each type. Every council was authorised by municipal authority. At community conferences, prospective future council members and other members of the local community were acquainted with the model operational framework for a council, and a local map of child-protection related problems and resources were drawn. Stakeholders in this project are, among others, *elderlies*, parents, teachers, medical doctors, social workers, psychologists, police and representatives of children's NGOs. In each *seniunija* council members were selected in consultation with the local administration, social workers and NGOs.

On the local map of problems and resources defining the unique situation of the respective *seniunija*, the council's activities and referral system was built, so that they function within the broadest possible network of organisations that provide help to a child in need.

Members of the 18 councils, volunteers and project support group representatives underwent a comprehensive training programme within the framework of the programme, preparing them to make qualified decisions regarding issues of children's rights and intervene effectively. The training has an important aim of 'training the trainers', i.e. building up Lithuanian trainers' competence.

The final evaluation at the end of the project will result in recommendations for the existing and future councils. If necessary, the plan of action will be adjusted in order to improve the way councils monitor the living conditions and situations of children in those communities, particularly at-risk children, and ensure appropriate action to protect children's wellbeing and rights.

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