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Table of contents

Abstract	3
Prof. Dr. Vincentas Dienys	
Theme 1: Benefits of VET	5
Rimantas Junevičius, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Boguslavas Gruževskis	
Theme 2: VET and employment-related mobility and migration	14
Dovilė Žvalionytė	
Theme 3: Effectiveness and quality assurance of VET and VET institutions	26
Inga Stravinskienė, Dr. Mindaugas Misiūnas	
Theme 4: Labour market groups at risk	38
Dr. Julija Moskvina	

Abstract

The main responsibility for VET policy development is delegated to the Ministry of Education and Science. Until 2008 the implementation of VET policy was divided between two ministries: the Ministry of Education and Science was responsible for initial VET while the Ministry of Social Security and Labour was responsible for continuing VET. Correspondingly two networks of training institutions existed. Vocational schools under the Ministry of Education and Science were mainly involved in initial VET, and labour market training centres under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour were implementing training of adults. In 2007 a new edition of the Law on VET was passed by the Parliament (Seimas) which provided for an increase of efficiency and support for lifelong learning by merging the two networks to create unanimous network of training providers under the Ministry of Education and Science. The process of merging is underway now.

The National VET Research Report includes reviews on research activities carried out in 2004-2009 and targeted at the analysis of vocational education and training (VET) and employment problems. The reviews cover four topics. Two of those (Benefits of VET; VET and employment-related mobility and migration) were proposed by the CEDEFOP. The other two topics (Effectiveness and quality assurance of VET and VET institutions; Labour market groups at risk) were selected after consultations with the members of CEDEFOP network of reference and expertise ReferNet Lithuania. The information provided reveals that the majority of research was carried out by 3 institutions: Institute of Labour and Social Research (*Darbo ir socialinių tyrimų institutas*), Public Policy and Management Institute (*Viešosios politikos ir vadybos institutas*) and Vytautas Magnus University (*Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas*). A part of the research was carried out on the request of Ministry of Social Security and Labour and Ministry of Education and Science or other state institutions. The majority of the research activities represent applied research and, as a rule, are regarded as reports for the contracting authority. The findings of the research are generally used for the VET and employment policy development, as well as for the improvement of VET provision. A substantial part of the research is initiated by universities. They frequently focus on more general scientific issues, their research findings are published in scientific journals or are used for preparing doctoral theses.

The term **labour market training** (*darbo rinkos mokymas*) is used in the reviews rather often. The term means training according to formal VET programmes, which are designed for training of the unemployed or employees wishing to improve their qualification or acquire a new one. The duration of the training according to those programmes (in case of full-time training) is less than one year.

The research in the field **Benefits of VET** is focused on the analysis of social, labour market and economical effects of vocational training as well as on the analysis of VET quality. The majority of researches that are included in the review are based on the observation of success of the unemployed that have attended VET courses. It is demonstrated that vocational training contributes to the reduction of unemployment and increase of employment of population; it influences positively changes in the social status and psychological condition of graduates and is economically beneficial. The main research methods include observation of trainees and graduates and sociological survey of graduates and their employers.

The main labour force migration studies are surveyed in the paper **VET and employment-related mobility and migration**. In Lithuania it is economic migration of the population that is dominating. Therefore the focus was placed on the analysis of labour force migration. The research tended to analyse the patterns of and the reasons for emigration, return migration and repeated migration of the Lithuanian population. Quite an important part of the research was devoted to the analysis of the migration of highly qualified workers, the so called “brains”. A few studies also analysed the issues of immigration from the third countries. The migration was usually considered together with employment issues, and there were no studies directly linking migration phenomenon with education and training.

Three groups of issues are highlighted in the review **Effectiveness and quality assurance of VET and VET institutions**. Firstly, investigations on *the effectiveness of VET at the system level* are analysed, one of the issue being the impact of national and international developments on VET system reform after 1990. Based on the findings of the research further directions for VET reform in Lithuania are foreseen and proposals for optimisation of VET providers’ network are made to improve the effectiveness of the system. Another section called *Effectiveness of VET providers*, covers research that examines issues of social and economic effectiveness of VET, and its content partly overlaps with that presented in the review “Benefits of VET”. Research focusing on VET prestige and curriculum development problems and emphasizing, first of all, the interaction of all subsectors of education and training system and the importance of conditions for lifelong learning is discussed in this section too. The research described in the section *Quality assurance of VET and VET providers* suggests that research activities are limited to the analysis of the situation of quality assurance in Lithuanian VET system.

The research under the theme **Labour market groups at risk** focuses on disabled, youth and elderly people. In addition, there are several research activities investigating the employment problems of persons with poor educational background and those belonging to national minorities. The main research method is sociological surveys. The research has demonstrated that insufficient vocational training or training which does not correspond to the labour market needs are the main reasons impeding successful employment of the above mentioned groups at risk. Only in the case of national minorities it has been found out that the main obstacles to employment are different, namely, insufficient knowledge of the official language and low territorial mobility. In the summary of the review it is indicated that research activities carried out up to the moment were irregular and allowed only to evaluate the risk groups’ employment state.

Theme 1. Benefits of VET

The report presents a review of vocational education and training research works from the perspectives of social effect, labour market effect, economic effect and quality of vocational education and training. Findings of the research demonstrate that vocational education and training effectively contributes to the reduction of unemployment and increase of employment, influences changes in the social status and psychological condition of graduates and carries economic benefits. In terms of quality, vocational education and training is also seen positively, but the authors of the research also identify some shortcomings, particularly in the area of practical training and adjustment of training programmes to the changing needs of the labour market.

Methodology developed to explore the benefits of vocation education and training is described in conclusions along with guidelines for future research.

1. National research questions and issues

The report presents a review of research works on the benefits of vocational education and training (VET), as carried out in Lithuania in 2004-2009 by the request of the Lithuanian Labour Exchange, the Lithuanian Labour Market Training Authority and the Ministry of Education and Science.

The research at issue was mainly aimed at the assessment of the effectiveness of implemented measures, mainly servicing for the political interests of the research customers with the view to justifying relevant costs/expenses and defining guidelines for policy development.

Most of the research was of an applied nature. The main topic covered the assessment of vocational training of the unemployed. In addition, the research analysed the situation of the employed at company level and groups of people who were more difficult to integrate into the labour market (disabled, rural, youth (16-24 year old persons)) and for whom an opportunity to find jobs meeting their needs was of particular importance.

By the criteria for assessing benefits the research included the following aspects of assessment:

- Assessment of social effect;
- Assessment of labour market effect;
- Assessment of economic effect;
- Assessment of training quality (assessment of the opinions of trainees, employers, trainers and representatives of public authorities).

The main research methods included:

- Observation of trainees (during training and thereafter);
- Sociological survey of graduates and their employers;

- Complex assessment of effectiveness of the use of financial resources;
- Assessment of the contents of training programmes;
- Analysis of foreign experience.

It should be noted that the aforementioned research was carried out under conditions of economic growth and increasing shortage of skilled labour force as was felt in Lithuania from the middle of 2006. To a certain extent, this could explain very high assessment results of effectiveness. However, the influence of the direct growth of economics upon the employability of graduates of vocational training was not considered in the research under survey.

2. Key research findings

Most of the research studies are complex ones, covering several criteria for the assessment of benefits. One of them is the assessment of *social effect*, which encompasses various aspects on macro and micro (person as an individual) levels.

On the macro level, the benefits of vocational training are manifested through increasing employment, shrinking unemployment, improving labour skills (resulting in better satisfaction of skilled labour demand) and increasing income of municipalities and State Social Insurance Fund, thus enabling better satisfaction of the needs of the most socially vulnerable groups of people. Increase in employment is accompanied by improving economic situation of people, reduced poverty and social exclusion, as more and more families receive regular income enabling satisfaction of their own and family needs, creating more opportunities for improvement and varied free time activities, improving psychological microclimate (in the family, community, with colleagues), and developing a feeling of safety and certainty of future.

Analyses of social effect on the micro level lead the authors of the research to a conclusion that labour market vocational training introduces changes in the social status of vocational training graduates (graduates are offered more prestigious and better paid jobs), higher qualifications provide them with a feeling of better social security, an increase of their self-confidence; they help to find more friends and acquaintances, while the acquired knowledge and skills encourage to invest more into self-improvement; people start looking at the future opportunities on the labour market with greater confidence (Andriušaitienė et al., 2005).

This is particularly important for the most socially vulnerable groups of people, including the disabled. According to the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, in 2007 there were 253,159 disabled individuals in Lithuania of which approx. 67.3% were working-age people. The findings of a research study on the active labour market policy measures for the disabled (Gruževskis et al., 2008) showed that involvement of the disabled into vocational training improved their psychological status, increased self-confidence and proved that disability was not the central impediment to employment, and could be successfully overcome by self-reliant people.

Summing up the findings of the research, we may state that labour market vocational training plays a very important function of increasing motivation for social integration and economic activity. However, the authors believe that social effectiveness is underrated in Lithuania, and that is a wrong approach. All social effects of labour market vocational training directly serve the promotion of employment motivation in unemployed people and thus might attain even

bigger benefits in the post-modern society than a mere direct impact on employment, because high employment motivation will enable more flexible adaptation to labour market needs in future and proper implementation of economic activity in different economic and work conditions.

One more criterion for assessing the benefits of vocational training is the assessment of *economic effectiveness*. In view of the objectives of the research, the effectiveness analysis was carried out by comparing the benefits (income) received as a result of training with the costs of vocational training implementation (funded by the state and Employment Fund).

The research revealed that investments into labour market vocational training constituted one of the most efficient fields of investment. In 2005, economic effectiveness of such investments was 45% per year (Andriušaitienė et al., 2005) and in 2006 – 49% (Bagdžiūnienė et al., 2006). In other words, investment of 1 Lt into labour market vocational training should bring 0.45-0.49 Lt revenue each next year to the budgets of the State and Social Insurance Fund, even if a placed unemployed individual is paid the minimal wage only. It means that labour market vocational training does not cause any loss to the budgets of the State and Social Insurance Fund but, on the contrary, brings additional revenue in the long run.

Assessment studies of the impact of vocational training on employment rate are apparently the best known and popular ones among research studies of such a type. The authors of the analyses of *labour market effect* note that vocational training provides with an opportunity to acquire a qualification for persons who did not have it beforehand, and to improve the qualifications or master new skills for persons whose qualifications are not in demand in the labour market and thus does not ensure employment. In addition, it is an effective measure in reducing both short-term and long-term unemployment. According to two different research studies, the respondents' post vocational training employment amounted to 45% (Andriušaitienė et al., 2004) or 70.4% (Bagdžiūnienė et al., 2006) in different years. The highest employability was among the graduates of hotel service (room maids) (76.8 %), bricklaying and plastering (76.4%), welding, power and gas cutting (74.7%) training programmes, while the lowest employability was among business managers (49.1%) and cooks and confectioners (50.0%). About three fourths of employed persons found jobs according to the qualifications acquired during vocational training. This leads to a conclusion that vocational training notably enhances job opportunities for unemployed people and particularly for those without vocational qualifications.

Application of the methods of sociological surveys in Lithuania enabled researchers to identify that vocational training had a positive impact on employment of both the respondents who were aware of their future employer before starting vocational training and of those who did not have any job offers before commencing the training. The effects of vocational training programmes on the employment of graduates depend on their profession and situation in the labour market. Therefore, the research findings reviewed in this report were often assessed by different professions. The research identified that vocational training has equally positive effects on employment in both women and men, but the choice of training programmes demonstrates some gender-specific alternatives.

Moreover, labour market vocational training helps to reduce unemployment in certain groups of people, such as disabled, rural and young individuals. It's worth noting however that the involvement of rural population into labour market vocational training programmes is insufficient. According to sociological surveys, rural respondents account for somewhat more than 7% in the overall structure of labour market trainees (Andriušaitienė et al., 2004). It is

the researchers' opinion that more active participation of rural people in labour market vocational training would not only increase their employment but would also create better conditions to search for jobs outside agriculture.

The research revealed an extremely high labour market effect on the involvement of young people without professional qualifications into vocational training. This group of trainees was open to information, rated theoretical and practical training highly and got employed soon (usually within a month after the training courses).

To summarise the research conducted in Lithuania, we can give quite a high rating to labour market effect. It was analysed from different perspectives: by gender, professions, place of residence, specific needs (disabled), etc. This enabled a better assessment of factors determining employment and working out recommendations for the organisation of vocational training. The authors of the research conclude that despite all the identified differences vocational training significantly enhances employment opportunities, particularly with regard to young people without professional qualifications and disabled individuals.

The research at issue paid quite a lot of attention to the assessment of the *quality of vocational training*. The research included sociological surveys with trainees and training graduates and well as their employers, analysis of the opinions of trainers and representatives of public authorities, survey of conformity of the content of training programmes to labour market needs, assessment of likely application of continuing vocational training development and distance learning.

The research disclosed that both graduates of vocational training and employers positively evaluated the quality of vocational training. More than two thirds of the training graduates indicated that practical training would fully suffice for performing their occupational activities; theoretical training was seen positively by 85% of the respondents (Andriušaitienė et al., 2006-2007). Likewise, most of the respondents saw training conditions as fully sufficient or sufficient. However, the researchers noted that in certain cases there was quite palpable mismatch between theoretical and practical training, when theoretical knowledge acquired during the training process was (or would be) not applicable in occupational activities due to insufficient practical training of the respondents.

According to most employers, graduates of labour market vocational training employed in their companies have sufficient practical knowledge in most cases. However, the rating of individual practical skills, capabilities and personal attributes demonstrated different opinions. According to the employers, graduates of vocational training employed in their companies particularly lacked technical knowledge and skills to maintain required work pace. As for personal attributes of the employed graduates, employers pointed out that employed graduates are less ambitious than other employees, less caring for professional achievement; they have rarer manifestations of independence, initiative, and lower creativity (Bagdžiūnienė et al., 2006).

Despite the fact that the respondents give a quite positive assessment of their practical training, deeper analysis shows some weak points: professional qualifications of graduate trainees do not always meet the needs of employers, and some practical skills are insufficient for successful anchoring in the labour market. On the other hand, the employers themselves do not actively participate in the process of improving labour market vocational training programmes and lack initiatives as to a more efficient organisation of practical training in their companies. Only 14% of the respondent employers, usually executives of larger

industrial enterprises, had detailed knowledge of vocational training programmes, and only one third of the respondents said they would like to take part in the development of practical skills training programmes. Researchers suggest solving this problem by launching information campaigns for employers about opportunities for vocational training; organising interactive seminars for employers about vocational training service providers, about in-company training courses and budget allocations for such training. The problem could also be solved by interactive communication between the stakeholders: the employers, the vocational educational institutions and representatives of the unemployed. Tripartite contracts should be signed for binding commitments on the employers' part, as that would make the job places more attractive, while the graduates would commit themselves for an obligatory period of time working for the companies (Socialinès politikos grupè, 2008).

In view of assessing the quality of practical training in vocational training programmes, the researchers highlight the following key advantages (Socialinès politikos grupè, 2008):

- Vocational training programmes are regularly updated taking into account employers' requirements and changes in the labour market;
- The duration of theoretical and practical training is quite well balanced in the *majority of training programmes*;
- Practical training is implemented in stages: in training institutions and real work environment (companies); the duration of practical training in the majority of the most demanded vocational training programmes is extended taking in account employers' requirements and accounts for more than 70% of the total duration of training; more time is allowed for practical training in companies compared to the training at school;
- Representatives of employers are members of examination board of the final qualification exams.

The authors mention the following aspects as disadvantages of vocational training programmes:

- There is no mechanism for assessing and updating vocational training programmes in order to *respond quickly to market changes and involve vocational training system participants of various levels; vocational training programmes are updated only on the initiative of top-level authorities*;
- The duration of practical training in real work environment *is insufficient for some professions*;
- There is no practical training supervisory mechanism and quality monitoring system in vocational education which would involve developers and promoters of labour market vocational training programmes, employer representatives, independent labour market professionals and education scientists;
- There is no established procedure, principles nor funding for holding qualification examinations in companies.

Basing on the research findings (Socialinès politikos grupè, 2008), the authors come up with recommendations that can help improve the benefits of vocational training for the unemployed, increase the effectiveness of vocational training programmes and the quality of

practical training. The recommendations suggest that training programmes should pay greater attention to practical skills and competencies characteristic to individual groups of professions, because employers expect, first of all, a set of appropriate practical skills and competences from their future employees.

With the view to improving practical skills of trainees, the researchers believe more attention should be paid to the development of new training programmes meeting labour market needs, modernisation of training methods and practical training base according to the labour market needs, adjustment of training programme contents, organisation of on-site practical training and employers' involvement into the organisation of practical training.

In order to increase the benefits of vocational training, researchers suggest extending the scope of involvement of the unemployed in labour market vocational programmes by raising motivation for professional development and employment in the unemployed. With the view to ongoing improvement of the quality of vocational training of unemployed participants of labour market vocational training, it is important to develop cooperation among labour exchange, training institutions, employers (business partners) and local authorities. Priority should be given to increasing intensity of labour market vocational training, but the duration of training courses can be adjusted depending on individual professions.

A methodological instrument for the analysis and planning of continuing vocational training was drawn up in relation to the assessment of the effectiveness of continuing vocational training development *as one of the elements improving the quality of vocational training*. The instrument was based on the research, which results showed that the socioeconomic environment in Lithuania is insufficiently positive to encourage the development of continuing vocational training. Employment relations, mutual employer-employee attitudes do not promote a more intensive development of continuing vocational training. To this effect, the authors of the research emphasise the necessity of complex efforts in the development of a market of relevant services by using various measures (including financial ones) to promote the development of continuing vocational training and to raise consciousness and awareness of training benefits in employers and employees (the research was carried out in the framework of Leonardo da Vinci programme project "Country specific thematic analysis of continuous vocational training on the basis of CVTS II and modelling of CVT-structures" (CVTS II revisited)). One of those services is applying distance learning to promote vocational training development. Research authors (Teresevičienė et al.) suggest that rapid development of information technologies and experience accumulated in the field of distance learning create conditions for the development of distance training: the developed network of Lithuanian distance learning authorities covers most of Lithuania; available resources (technological, measures and courses) create sound conditions for encouraging the development of distance vocational training. Thus the development of distance training could be one of the key elements enabling to improve the quality as well as benefits of VET.

3. Conclusions and implications for further research

In our opinion, the conducted research had a positive impact on the development of vocational education and training (VET) in Lithuania and contributed to more objective assessment of VET benefits. The stand often taken on the policy-formation level is that VET funding should be reduced, particularly with regard to unemployed and employed people, because it is expensive for the State and produces low economic and social effects.

On the contrary, the research findings suggest that VET benefits are very high in Lithuania. Of course, VET requires additional short-term financial subsidies, but the research obviously demonstrates that the funding of VET is not loss-bearing in the long run. According to the estimates, VET notably contributes to the employment of individuals. In their turn, employed people are expected to multiply a significant return of VET costs (through taxes and domestic consumption).

Besides the economic and employment effects (benefit), the research identified a very high social effect of VET in Lithuania, namely, improved self-confidence, increased employment or learning motivation, etc. In Lithuania, social effects of vocational training are hardly taken into account on the policy-formation level. Therefore, we can assume that the research has revealed a new dimension for the assessment of VET benefits.

In summary, we can say that the VET benefit research enabled the creation and testing of original research methodology in Lithuania based on overall methodology: employment effect, economic effect (rationality of the use of financial resources), social effect and assessment of the quality of training programmes. The research has proven that all the above-defined elements of assessing VET benefits should be assessed together as integral components jointly conditioning the overall assessment of benefits. The originality of the methodology is also reflected in that it allows the assessment of the same subject matter – VET benefits – from different points: the trainee, his/her employer and an administrative staff member (a representative of the institution implementing labour market policy). The assessment of trainees' opinion was refined during the research, as the trainees were interviewed not only during the training but also after completion of the training, in their first job place (in 1 or 3 months). It is important to note that in case of non-employment of the respondents, their assessment of VET benefits could have been somewhat lower than during the training, nevertheless it was always positive.

We believe it is of high importance that employers', as the main customer of the services, assessment is used to assess the benefits of VET. In this context, employers' interviews serve not only as a source of certain information, but also as a way of informing employers and involving them in the implementation of labour market policy (they are invited to take part in the presentation (or informed) of research findings and included in VET improvement groups).

The social effect, as identified and assessed by the researchers, is of great benefit and scientific value, particularly for the model of a welfare state, because this effect is underused for the assessment of implemented social security and labour market policy measures. Inadequate understanding of the social effect reduces opportunities for its better application in the development of VET and improving its constituent elements.

With the view to assessing the perspectives of VET benefit research in Lithuania, the impressive work done within the analysed period should be emphasised: VET was assessed from different aspects, the research was conducted by various institutions and covered different territories of the country; sociological surveys were carried out in all municipalities of Lithuania. The research methods were regularly improved by adding additional attributes or benefit-assessing institutions (e.g., employers, training organisers). We can assume that the unique experience in assessing VET benefits, as obtained in Lithuania with the help of the aforesaid research, may be useful to other countries as well.

With the view to future VET benefit research in Lithuania, it is reasonable:

1. To continue the development of the research contents:
 - (a) by improving the assessment of economic and labour market effect: to extend the duration of monitoring in longitudinal research, i.e., to assess the situation of training graduates after 12, 24 and 36 months. Such research would be highly beneficial under the conditions of economic slump;
 - (b) longitudinal research would be also very useful for the upgrading of the assessment of social effect. Such research would be applicable in the follow-up on the dynamics of the values of social effect variables and what changes determine these values;
 - (c) with the view to improving the assessment of training quality, more attention should be paid to the identification of correlation links between changes in the training organisation and assessment of training quality; such research might be highly beneficial for VET policy formation;
2. To develop comparative aspects of the research on an international scale. This could be achieved in two ways:
 - (a) through the participation of Lithuanian institutions in international VET benefit research involving assessments in different countries using the same methods;
 - (b) through initiating joint research using uniform methods in cooperation with foreign scientific institutions (or ministries/departments). In light of the research conducted in Lithuania, this way would be more acceptable, as it enables wider application of the experience of Lithuanian research;
3. To disseminate information on a wider scale in the EU and world communities on the research methods, instruments used and results achieved.

On the other hand, it is necessary to strengthen cooperation between VET policy building authorities and scientific establishments in Lithuania in order to ensure a higher degree of application of the results.

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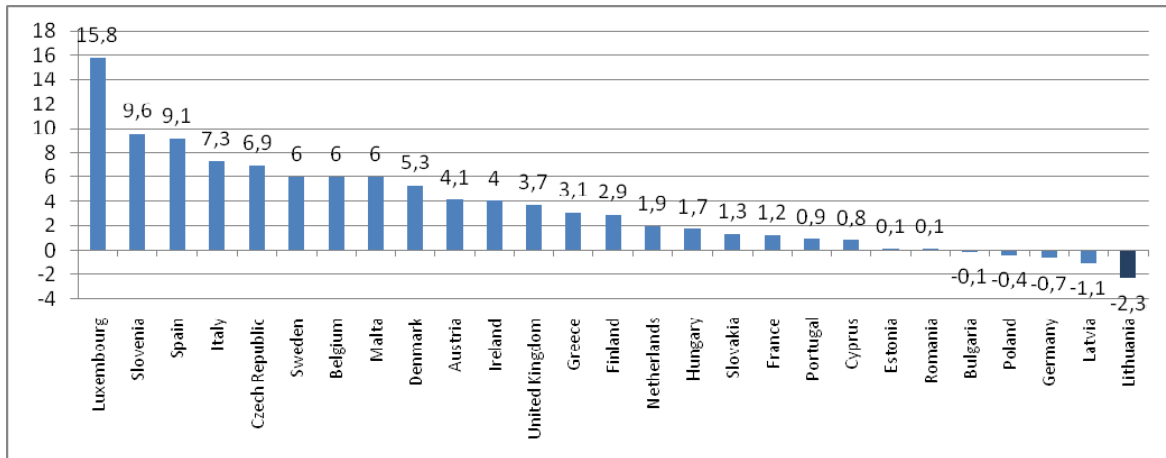
Theme 2: VET and employment-related mobility and migration

Intensive migration of the population over the recent five years has encouraged Lithuanian researchers to analyse the migration phenomenon in a number of studies. The studies mainly focused on policy building and aimed at identifying the reasons of migration, foreseeing possible implications to Lithuania and recommending measures to manage migration. In Lithuania, it is economic migration of the population that is dominating; therefore the main focus was placed on the analysis of the labour force migration. The studies tended to analyse the patterns of and the reasons for the emigration, return migration and the repeated migration of the Lithuanian population. Quite an important part of the studies was devoted to the analysis of the migration of highly qualified workers, the so called “brains”. Finally, a few studies also analysed the issues of immigration from the third countries. The purpose of the current paper is to survey the main labour force migration studies carried out in Lithuania in 2005–2009 and to present the key findings of these studies. The review outlines also certain findings from migration studies which are relevant to the development of VET in Lithuania.

1. National research questions and issues

The focus of the migration studies in Lithuania is mainly determined by the migration tendencies of the population. Since 1990 the emigration of the Lithuanian population has been- rather intensive. In terms of the scope of emigration Lithuania is among the first on the list of the EU member states (as shown in Figure 1). The *Statistics Lithuania* reports that over the period of 1990–2007 more than 470 thousand, i. e. 10-15 per cent, of the residents left the country at least once. The emigration wave reached its climax in 2004 when Lithuania accessed the European Union: more than 100 thousand people emigrated from Lithuania at that time. Later an increasing number of emigrants started coming back to Lithuania. Furthermore, the flow of immigrants from the third countries was growing gradually. Nevertheless, the people leaving Lithuania still outnumber those coming back. Therefore, the migration studies carried out over the recent five years focused on international mobility of the Lithuanian population (PVI, 2005; LLRI, 2006; SSC, 2006; TMO, Vilmorus, 2008; VPVI, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2008, 2009 and others). Only a few studies of the reference period analysed the problems of the immigration from the third countries (ETKC, 2007; VPVI, 2008).

Figure 1. Net migration per 1000 population in the EU Member states in 2008



Sources: Eurostat database, 22 September 2009.

In 2004–2009 the main subject of migration studies in Lithuania was labour force mobility. This subject was triggered by the economic profile of migration dominating in Lithuania. The key reasons for emigration of the Lithuanian population are of economic nature: unemployment, insufficient income. Emigrants look for better remuneration or better working conditions abroad. Moreover, the majority of the emigrants are young people of working age (20–34 years). The emigration takes away an important part of the labour force, therefore this phenomenon makes a huge impact on the labour market of Lithuania. The dynamics of the labour market over the recent years has prompted five main subjects of the studies on labour force migration:

- (a) *Labour force emigration from Lithuania.* In 2004–2008, the economic growth and emigration of labour force were the main reasons for lack of labour force in Lithuania: the supply of vacancies outnumbered the supply of workers. Therefore the studies analysing labour force migration concentrated on the emigration problem and on looking for solutions to decrease the flow of emigration and to encourage the emigrants to come back (PVI, 2005; VPVI, 2005; LLRI, 2006; SSC, 2006; VPVI, 2009).
- (b) *Migration of highly qualified workers.* The eminent lack of qualified workers in the labour market encouraged researchers to explore the issues of migration of highly qualified workers. Moreover, attention was drawn to the issues related to the emigration of extremely highly qualified people, so called “brains” (mostly scientists and researchers) (PVI, 2005; VPVI, 2006a; VPVI, 2006b; ULRC, 2008).
- (c) *Labour force immigration from the third countries.* The lack of labour force challenged researchers to consider a possible response in terms of compensating the lack of the local labour force by encouraged immigration of workers from the third countries. (ETKC, 2007; VPVI, 2008).
- (d) *Return migration of the labour force.* As the Lithuanian economy started to recover some of the emigrants came back. The above phenomenon called for studies on the patterns and potential of the return migration. (VPVI, 2009).

(e) *Repeated emigration of the labour force.* However, in the second half of 2008, a new economic recession with rapid growth of unemployment and salary reduction broke out. A “second wave of emigration” was feared. The studies, hence, paid attention to the issue of repeated emigration. (VPVI, 2009).

The labour force migration studies that are being carried out in Lithuania can be qualified as *statistical* or *analytical* by nature. Statistical studies aim at gathering as accurate statistics on migration processes as possible. The official statistics encompass both declared and non declared migration of the Lithuanian population. This data is being published annually in special publications of the *Statistics Lithuania* (SD, 2006, 2007, 2008). The official statistics is complemented by the data obtained from the surveys of other research (TMO, Vilmorus, 2008; VPVI, 2006a; VPVI, 2009). However, this data is not always representative and comparable.

Analytical studies concentrate on the analysis of tendencies and factors of migration (LLRI, 2006; PVI, 2005; SSC, 2006; TMO, Vilmorus, 2008; VPVI, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2008, 2009 and others). The analysis of migration tendencies is usually based on the results of statistical research as mentioned above. In addition to the efforts to assess the current situation as accurately as possible, the analysis of tendencies also draws certain projections on migration, taking into consideration the likely changes of migration factors. Almost all migration studies in Lithuania exploring migration factors are based on the neo-classical push-pull model. This model reads that the emigrants are made to leave by “push” factors (unfavourable conditions in the country of residence) and “pull” factors (good conditions in the country of destination). Labour force migration studies aim at the identification of the key push and pull factors for emigration and return migration as well as of the disincentives for migration.

In addition to the questions what is happening and why, the migration studies in Lithuania are looking for an answer to the question on what is to be done. As the migration problem which was called “the key non military threat to the security of Lithuania” by the Lithuanian Parliament was put on the political agenda, efforts were made to search for tools to manage the phenomenon. Therefore one of the main initiators for the migration studies became Lithuanian authorities: Government Office, Ministries of Social Security and Labour, Foreign Affairs, Education and Science, Economy, Department of Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad, etc. In the majority of cases the studies were committed to independent expert centres: Centre for Economic and Legal Consultations, Civil Society Institute, Lithuanian Free Market Institute, Public Policy and Management Institute, etc. The results of the studies have set the background for the Lithuanian migration policy and policy implementation instruments: Economic Migration Regulation Strategy, Long Term Strategy on the Relations with Diaspora, etc. Hence, policy oriented studies have dominated in the labour force migration research area.

To sum up studies on international labour force migration carried out in Lithuania over the period of 2005–2009, the main issues touched upon in these studies were emigration of the Lithuanian population including return and repeated migration (LLRI, 2006; PVI, 2005; VPVI, 2005, 2009). Special emphasis was put on the issue of migration of highly qualified workers (Jucevičienė et al., 2002; Kazlauskienė, 2006; Labanauskas, 2006; VPVI, 2006a and 2006b; ULRC, 2008). A few studies analysed labour force immigration from the third countries (ETKC, 2007; VPVI, 2008).

Research efforts were not limited to labour force migration studies during the reference five-year period. Illegal migration, trafficking in human beings, families of emigrants and

transnational families, relationship with the diaspora, etc. were also addressed. Hereinafter, the paper, taking into consideration the aim thereof, presents the findings of the major labour force migration studies undertaken in 2004–2009. It should be noted also that the initial intention of this review was to present inter alia the researches discussing the impact of migration on VET or vice versa. The detailed analysis has but revealed the absence of studies of such type in Lithuania. Therefore the review mentions only few findings from migration studies which are relevant to the development of VET in Lithuania.

2. Key research findings

2.1. Migration of the Lithuanian labour force

The studies of the Lithuanian labour force migration can be classified into three groups in terms of their nature:

- (a) studies identifying the impact of migration on Lithuania (2004–2005);
- (b) studies suggesting solutions for the migration management (2005–2007);
- (c) studies assessing migration regulation policy and proposing new solutions (2008–2009).

Identification of impact of migration on Lithuania

Approximately since 2004 intensive emigration of the Lithuanian population has been treated as a challenge or even a threat to the prosperity of the country. Three main areas of impact have been identified: *first*, a threat to civil society and intellectual potential of the nation, as the majority of emigrants are young active people who after having settled abroad quite often lose their ties with Lithuania; *second*, a negative impact upon the image and reputation of the country in the world because of the emigration of certain criminals; *third*, economic and social impact as a result of loss of specialists and reducing number of individuals of working age (SCI, 2005). It has been noticed that the lack of labour force may have negative impact on the attraction of foreign investments, may constrain overall economic growth and business development in certain areas (VPVI, 2005).

On the other hand, possible positive implications of emigration have been identified. These are, first of all, reduction of unemployment in Lithuania and money sent by the emigrants back to Lithuania. It was also highly expected that returning emigrants would bring know-how which would contribute to the building of prosperity of Lithuania in the future (VPVI, 2005). Finally, the possibility to employ Lithuanian communities abroad for lobbyist purposes for the benefit of Lithuania was seen as a positive aspect (PVI, 2005). To sum it up, it can be concluded that the studies undertaken in 2004–2005 have drawn a roadmap of the problems explored by migration studies in Lithuania. The main emphasis is given to the socio-economic impact made on Lithuania by emigration: negative in the current period, and potentially positive in future provided measures to promote return migration are implemented.

Finding solutions for the migration management

Taking into consideration the growing concern of the society about the scope of emigration Lithuanian Government resolved to make certain steps to regulate emigration. This has encouraged the studies of 2005–2007 to analyse reasons of migration and propose solutions for management of migration. The main options under consideration were: a) stopping migration or at least mitigation of implications thereof; b) promoting return migration.

The main reasons for intensive emigration of Lithuanians as defined in labour force migration studies were unemployment and significant difference between pay level in Lithuania and abroad. The researchers of the LLRI have concluded that the above emigration factors were complemented by large labour force demand in the Western Europe triggered by the economic growth and reduction of the number of local labour force, in particular due to the ageing of the society (LLRI, 2006). Taking into account the identified reasons for emigration the studies emphasised that the emigration level can only be reduced by a significant improvement of the level of living in Lithuania. Therefore it has been proposed to replace the political objective aimed at stopping emigration by any means with the objective to improve regulation of labour relations and to reform the education system (both vocational education and higher education) allowing people in Lithuania to receive higher income and obtain education which would have a higher demand in the labour market (LLRI, 2006). It has also been recommended to undertake measures to tackle continuous emigration and encourage the emigrants to maintain as close contacts with Lithuania as possible. It has been proposed, hence, to pursue changing the profile of migration towards short-term migration, thus encouraging the migrants to build families and bring up children in Lithuania, to develop investment programs and projects that would attract the capital of Lithuanians living abroad (SSC 2006).

The analysis of the potential of promoting return migration has identified two groups of key factors of return migration. The *first group* included social-cultural factors, such as difficulties of integration in a foreign country, homesickness for the home country, home, relatives, friends, patriotism, and desire to participate in the political and social life of Lithuania, a change of family or social status. The *second group* encompassed economic factors: prospects of salaries in Lithuania, prospects of work/ career in Lithuania, general economic and business environment of the country, economic, social and cultural infrastructure and quality of life in the country. Moreover, besides the specific difficulties that the returning migrants would face, systemic problems reducing motivation to go back were identified, such as a low status of vocational training system, insufficiently developed lifelong learning system, etc. On the other hand, the researchers have noticed a tendency that social-cultural factors may make some of the emigrants relinquish economic benefits of living abroad and return to Lithuania. Therefore the importance of close contacts with Lithuania of the emigrants living abroad has been emphasised (VPVI, 2005).

Migration researchers have also stated that the largest effect on emigrants' incentive to come back, as well as on reducing emigration would be made by the sustainable growth of the life quality in Lithuania. The authorities would also have to reform education (VET, labour market training and adult education, higher education systems), health care and other sectors for the benefit of all Lithuanians, emigrants included. The main areas where the authorities' actions would bring expected results in the short-term perspective are: providing returnees' access to public services as well as better dissemination of relevant information. Another package of recommendations concerned solutions of the problematic issues such as illegal work abroad, problems of employment in Lithuania, maintaining social guarantees after coming back, taxation of the money earned abroad, problems of children's sustainable education. On the other hand, it has been emphasised that returnee emigrants should not enjoy privileges with regard to those living in Lithuania (VPVI, 2005).

Assessment of migration regulation policy, search for new solutions

In 2007, taking into consideration recommendations of the researchers Lithuanian Government committed itself to following economic migration regulation policy promoting return of emigrants. In 2008–2009, a comprehensive assessment of measures implemented revealed that policy impact over the first two years of strategy implementation was not big. Only 10 percent of the returnees stated that their return had been induced by government's effort (information and/or support). On the other hand, as many as one third of the interviewed Lithuanians living abroad stated that proactive policy by the Government would increase their motivation to return. However, the emigrants consider that better economic and political situation of Lithuania and better work prospects would be a better incentive for their return, rather than a specific policy in the migration area (VPVI, 2009).

Referring to the data of the survey of Lithuanians living abroad, it may be stated that the main reason for Lithuanian emigration is insufficient income for an adequate standard of living rather than unemployment. Half of the emigrants stated that their emigration had been induced by insufficient level of income in spite of the fact that they did have a job in Lithuania; only 19 per cent had to leave after they had failed to find a job in Lithuania. Although almost half of the emigrated Lithuanians indicated that their job abroad was of lower qualification than that they would like to engage in, the average salary received by the majority is more than 1000 euro (in Lithuania the average netto monthly salary was less than 500 euro in the analysed period) (VPVI, 2009).

As the aim of migration regulation policy was to promote return migration of the Lithuanian individuals important emphasis was placed on the assessment of tendencies of and reasons for return migration. Sociological surveys have revealed that about 7-10 per cent of the Lithuanian individuals over 18 years of age had lived abroad and later returned to Lithuania (VPVI, 2009; TMO, 2008). The key decision making factors were of emotional and social nature, such as nostalgia for family members and relatives. Meanwhile, those living abroad emphasised that a significant impetus for their return would be given by a better economic situation and better prospects in the labour market of Lithuania. At least one third of the emigrants said that they intended to come back, however the majority was planning to return not earlier than in 2011 (VPVI, 2009).

Nevertheless migration researchers have highlighted that an intensifying return migration does not necessarily mean that problems that had induced emigration of Lithuanians had been eliminated. The practice of multiple emigrations is rather popular among Lithuanian emigrants, where people leave, come back and leave again. In other words, the migration is circular. Almost 40 percent of the returnees have stated that they would like to emigrate again. The main reasons for their repeated emigration would be worsening economic situation (the survey was carried out in autumn 2008, at the threshold of economic recession in Lithuania), financial difficulties and dissatisfaction with work conditions (VPVI, 2009).

The migration studies undertaken in 2008–2009 reflected the tendency of shifting from purely economic to social emigration management aspects. It was emphasised that forthright encouragement for emigrants to come back should cease. It was recommended to strengthen contacts of the emigrants with Lithuania, highlight advantages of the cultural/ social life in Lithuania and avoid a distinction between emigrants and those who stayed in Lithuania (VPVI, 2009). Indeed, a survey of the approach of the people who have stayed in Lithuania towards emigrants has revealed that the majority of Lithuanian people look at the economic emigrants positively, as opposed to the dominant opinion.

The positive approach is mainly associated with the economic benefits that the emigrants bring to their families, relatives. To those remaining in Lithuania emigration is also associated with a better labour market situation. In general, the survey has shown that the perception of migration is closely related to the situation on the labour market. The absolute majority of Lithuanian individuals justify emigration of the unemployed; while a possible massive return is feared because of the anticipated growth of competition or loss of jobs. Nevertheless, the majority of Lithuanian people think that the return migration should be actively promoted (TMO, 2008).

2.2. Mobility of highly qualified workers of Lithuania

A substantial part of the analysis of the problems of emigration of Lithuanian individuals is given to the emigration of highly qualified workers, the so called “brains”. The first more comprehensive study of the subject *Brain drain phenomenon and its impact upon the intellectual capital of Lithuania* appeared back in 2002; it has highlighted that the majority of “brains” leave Lithuania because they associate their life abroad with the satisfaction of their personal needs, first of all economic ones, rather than because they attempt to avoid poverty. They pursue individual freedom, a favourite job and financial independence (Jucevičienė et al., 2002). Subsequent studies confirmed the huge impact of pull factors on the migration of “brains”. Emigrants’ survey has revealed that the higher the education is the more attractive prospects for working and professional career become feasible. While push factors, such as poor social-economic situation, are relatively less important to the “brains” (Kazlauskienė, Rinkevičius, 2006).

The studies directly relate “brain drain” to the problem of the loss of intellectual capital. It has been recommended to address the problem by investing into the development of quality jobs, first of all, to those with academic doctor degrees, and by focusing on social problems (Jucevičienė et al., 2002). On the other hand, the subsequent studies have drawn attention to the positive aspects of the “brain drain”: the know-how and education acquired. Therefore, it has been emphasised that it is not the intellectuals’ leaving that is a matter of concern to Lithuania; rather, it is the fact that those who have left never return (SCI, 2006).

In 2006–2008, the issue on how to regain the “brains”, and, most importantly, scientists and researchers, was comprehensively analysed. *First*, proposals were drawn for financial incentive system aimed at the attraction of the “brains” to Lithuania. It was proposed to offer targeted support to the scientific projects managed by the returnees or guest researchers, to underpin the short-term visits financially (VPVI, 2006a). *A subsequent* study on the emigration of the Lithuanian scientists and researchers carried out as part of the programme for regaining and attraction of the “brains” revealed that the key motives for leaving Lithuania are, first of all, enhancement of scientific skills and, secondly, disappointment with the situation of education and studies in Lithuania. The majority of the “brain drain” migrants are young and bright doctoral students and scientists. Therefore it has been noted that the most efficient measures to regain and attract the “brains” are indirect ones, aimed at the development of a friendly environment for science and image building of scientific institutions. Direct support has been assessed as an additional initiative to attract scientists (ULRC, 2008).

Special attention has also been paid to the emigration of highly qualified public sector workers. In 2006, it was estimated that up to 4 per cent of highly qualified public sector workers went abroad over the 2004–2006 period, while 7.5 per cent intended to leave in 2006–2009. Relatively the largest mobility was observed in education, health care and social

work sectors. Studies on emigration of public sector workers reconfirmed that the main reason to leave Lithuania is dissatisfaction with job conditions, first of all, a low salary and absence of correlation between the salary and work results, too big work load, demoralising procedures and bureaucracy (VPVI, 2006b).

Some studies analysed the impact of Lithuania's accession to the EU on the emigration of highly qualified workers. It has been concluded that the largest impetus to emigration was made by the recognition of qualifications (VPVI, 2006b). This opened the door towards better opportunities for qualified workers to get a legal job abroad which would satisfy their professional ambitions, it became easier to apply one's own knowledge after having settled abroad. The emigration of highly qualified specialists, in particular those of medicine sector, was hence impelled (Labanauskas, 2006).

2.3. Labour force immigration from the third countries

To respond to the growing need of labour force, immigration from the third countries became a potential response to the problem. Since a revision of regulations on immigration from the third countries could potentially have had a significant economic and social impact, several studies on labour force immigration were initiated. The overview of experience of other countries led to a conclusion that immigration helped to fill the gap of labour force in the periods of economic rise, while at the time of economic stagnation immigrants tended to cause additional social problems. Therefore, labour force immigration as a solution to shortage of labour force is efficient only in a short-term perspective. Consequently, it has been recommended to foster only temporary immigration or immigration of highly qualified workers, concentrating on other ways of addressing the problem, including reduction of the emigration and fostering return migration of Lithuanians (ETKC, 2007).

Recently, the need for immigration studies has been enhanced by the EU initiatives on building common immigration policy. As Lithuania is willing to take an active part in this process it is important to define its position with regard to EU proposals concerning immigration from the third countries. Therefore efforts have been made to identify Lithuania's interests in the area of labour force immigration from the third countries and to define the possible implications of the planned EU directives on seasonal workers, intra-corporate transferees and remunerated trainees to Lithuania. It has been concluded that in spite of the shortage of labour force, Lithuanian employers are using the opportunity to hire workers from abroad to a very limited extent. The main reasons for avoidance to employ people from the third countries are, mainly, sufficient supply of workers in Lithuania and too deep cultural, linguistic and social differences of the workers from other countries. A survey of employers has also revealed that immigration of some specific labour force, e.g. seasonal workers, intra-corporate transferees and remunerated trainees, has so far been of low relevance to Lithuania (VPVI, 2008).

It is worth mentioning that workers' immigration into Lithuania is directly related to the lack of professionals in some specific areas, i.e. the professionals may be invited only in cases when such specialists cannot be found in Lithuania. The majority of specialists who were in demand in 2004-2009 are presently trained in the vocational education system. Those are bricklayers, electricians, cooks, etc. The situation has demonstrated two sides: one, it reveals the high demand for vocational education; on the other hand, it shows lack of flexibility in satisfying the changing needs of labour market. Thus it may be suggested that the rigidity of vocational training system has become a prerequisite for workers' immigration from the third countries.

3. Conclusions and implications for further research

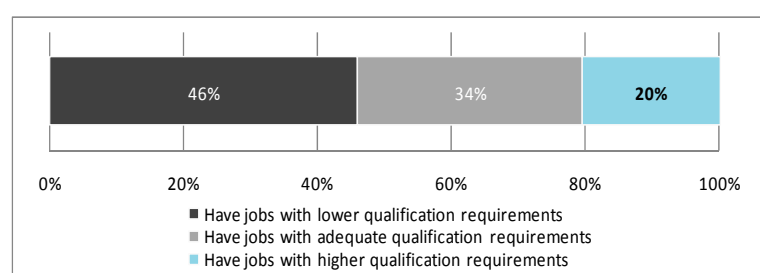
The Lithuanian labour force migration studies undertaken in 2004–2009 in the first place contributed to building Lithuania’s migration policy. However, they have also set an empirical and normative background for further migration studies. In terms of empirical data, the studies were helpful as they have summarised and systemised the available statistics. A number of sociological surveys were also carried out and different qualitative research approaches were applied as part of these studies. In the normative terms, the majority of the studies defined three objectives to be addressed: reduction of emigration, promotion of return migration and regulation of immigration from the third countries. An important role in implementing the above objectives was assigned to the national authorities. In addition to applying special measures with regard to migrants they have to ensure, which is most important, overall rise of life quality in Lithuania.

In spite of a rather intensive studying of migration in the recent years, blank spaces in the area of migration studies still exist. First of all, Lithuania lacks studies on implications of migration on a macro level. No answer has been so far found on how labour force migration affects the structure of the labour market, demand for qualifications in the market, education system, etc. It should also be noted that the dominating applied and policy building oriented studies have elicited lack of more fundamental academic research of the migration phenomenon. In the meanwhile, taking into account the exceptional intensity of emigration from Lithuania such research could help to verify or refute the hypothesis made in the theoretical works on migration. The sustainable demand for migration studies is also prompted by the 2008–2012 economic migration research scheme, approved by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. It provides for the analysis of the reasons for the emigration of Lithuanians, implications of free movement of labour force in the European Union on comprehensive schools, impact of migration on social-economic development of rural areas, the need for distance continuous vocational training of the Lithuanian people, etc., in 2010–2012.

One of the missing themes in the area of migration impact studies is exploration of the impact of migration on Lithuania’s vocational training system. So far, the interrelation of migration and vocational training has not been examined, even on very broad terms. Nevertheless, certain findings from migration studies are also relevant to the development of the vocational training system.

First, people with vocational education still find it difficult to successfully anchor in the labour market of Lithuania. About one fifth of Lithuanians living abroad had obtained vocational education; this number among the returnees reaches up to 30 per cent. Almost 30 per cent of them had left because they could not find a job in Lithuania, 67 per cent were made to emigrate because of too low income which was not sufficient for living. Ž. Martinaitis, D. Žvalionytė (2006) suggest that they are eradicated from the labour market by workers with higher education; from the point of view of labour market, there is a relative surplus of people with higher education. The above indicates that a more successful integration of the graduates of vocational training schools into the Lithuanian labour market,

Figure 2. Lithuanians with vocational education living abroad by the qualification required in their jobs in comparison to their personal qualification



Source: The survey of Lithuanian emigrants commissioned by the VPVI and carried out by “TNS Gallup“, 2008.

further improvement of the quality of vocational training services in Lithuania, improving the image of the system is necessary.

Second, a quite significant number of emigrants with vocational education are able to apply their own knowledge with notable success. Although half of them engage in jobs demanding lower qualification, one fifth of the emigrants with vocational education do climb qualification ladder, i. e. engage in jobs demanding higher qualifications (see Figure 2). Therefore, the possibility to emigrate and successfully apply professional skills abroad might raise the demand for vocational training services in Lithuania.

4. Abbreviations

DIP	Demokratinės politikos institutas (Institute of Democratic Politics)
EU	European Union
ETKC	Ekonominių ir teisinių konsultacijų centras (Centre for Economic and Legal Consultation)
LLRI	Lietuvos laisvosios rinkos institutas (Lithuanian Free Market Institute)
PVI	Pilietinės visuomenės institutas (Civil Society Institute)
SSC	Strateginių studijų centras (Centre for Strategic Studies)
SD	Statistikos departamentas prie LR Vyriausybės (Department of Statistics to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania)
TMID	Tautinių mažumų ir išeivijos departamentas prie LR Vyriausybės (Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad)
TMO	Tarptautinė migracijos organizacija (International Organization for Migration)
ULRC	Užsienio lietuvių rėmimo centras (Centre for Support of Lithuanians Abroad)
VPVI	Viešosios politikos ir vadybos institutas (Public Policy and Management Institute)

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Theme 3: Effectiveness and quality assurance of VET and VET institutions

The present report has been drafted as an overview of the research on the effectiveness and quality of vocational education and training on the system and the training provider level conducted in Lithuania during the past five years (2004 – 2009). The report also introduces the main thematic topics, summarised findings of the research, conclusions and a description of the impact of the research upon the further development of vocational education and training and follow-up research.

1. National research questions and issues

Vocational education and training is in a number of respects an inherent part of national welfare and by its very nature must be specifically responsive to the developments taking place both in Lithuania and in other countries of the world thus contributing to ensuring the country's competitiveness. Absolutely beyond any doubt vocational education and training (VET) is designed to meet the requirements of the labour market at the same time duly taking into consideration the needs of stakeholders. In the period 2004-2009 the subject within the focus of part of Lithuanian researchers was the quality assurance and effectiveness of vocational education and training and VET institutions.

The specific requirement to undertake research on the effectiveness and quality assurance of vocational education and training on the system and provider levels has been defined in the content of a number of European Union documents (e.g., the Lisbon Strategy, Copenhagen Declaration, Maastricht Communiqué, Bologna Process Documents), as well as the strategic documents on the Lithuanian education system, the improvement aspirations of VET institutions in order to become competitive not only on the national, but also on international level and be able to attract more students, etc. For example, the Lithuanian Education Strategy, the Single Programming Document designate the improvement of vocational education and training system as an area of priority importance, in respect whereof the Ministry of Education and Science initiated the national level project "Development and Implementation of the Common Quality Assurance System in Vocational Education and Training". The project was granted support from the structural funds of the European Union. The findings of the research on the state of quality assurance in vocational education and training conducted within the framework of the project are of specific importance.

The research conducted within the period under investigation in terms of its subject matter is divided into two principle fields: *effectiveness of vocational education and training and VET providers* and *the quality assurance of vocational education and training and activities of VET providers*. The results and findings of both areas of research are closely interconnected and designed to enhance the efficiency of vocational education and training as well as improvement of its quality.

(a) The research of the effectiveness of vocational education and training and VET providers normally targets to disclose to what extent the stakeholders of VET (e.g., students, employers, VET experts) are satisfied with the quality of VET and their views towards the effectiveness of vocational training services; in this respect research studies also includes the

analysis of other indicators reflecting VET effectiveness, such as the transition of VET graduates to work according to the qualifications acquired.

Within this field the researchers were focusing upon such issues as the assessment of the success of VET reform, the role of social partnership and its possibilities in the vocational training system, economic and social effectiveness of the labour market vocational training, effectiveness of training services delivered to the unemployed, application of distance learning for promotion of continuing vocational training, effectiveness of institutions providing vocational training services, improvement of vocational training curricula, etc.

The overview of this field of research is further divided into two parts: *Effectiveness of VET and Effectiveness of VET providers*. Effectiveness of VET is analysed on the system (national) level, and the effectiveness of activities of VET providers - on the institutional and training programme levels. This classification is conditional because in some cases the specific research topic may be ascribed to several thematic fields.

(b) Research in the area of *quality assurance of VET and VET providers* target the task to improve the quality of vocational training, i.e., selection of means and methods to ensure quality of vocational training. The research conducted in this thematic field in the period 2004-2009 covered a number of topics, including the quality assurance of vocational training on a system level, internal quality management on an institutional level, assessment of the quality of training programmes.

The research conducted in 2004-2009 was basically designed to assess the effectiveness and quality of the Lithuanian vocational training system and the activity of VET providers and to provide for recommendations for further development.

2. Key research findings

2.1. Effectiveness of VET and VET providers

2.1.1. Effectiveness of VET (system level)

Within the period surveyed in Lithuania significant attention was paid to the assessment of the effectiveness of the reforms in the VET system. In this respect important are the findings of researches conducted by O.Gurskienė (2004), R.Laužackas and E.Danilevičius (2005).

The research conducted by O.Gurskienė in 2004 showed that the reform of the Lithuanian vocational education and training system was to a large extent affected by the rapidly changing economic environment, the research based innovations, social policy, technological development, as well as the changing priorities in education in general. The VET system reform was specifically affected by the ongoing international processes, and in particular, those in the European Union. The areas that were given special focus within the framework of the reforms were the development of VET policy and the involvement of all stakeholders into the development of strategies and in the decision-making process (Gurskienė, 2004).

In 2005, Laužackas and Danilevičius analysed the main principles, processes and problems of the initial VET reform in Lithuania in 1990-2003. The findings and conclusions of the research provided significant evidence of insufficient systemic character and compatibility of the processes within the reform. The findings pointed out that the different areas of the reform have yielded very different results; there has been some significant inconsistency in following the fundamental principles and priorities defined within the reform. The research underlined

some negative factors such as the inherited centralised structure of management and insufficient experience in working under market economy conditions. The practical attainment of the objectives of the reform was impeded by the shortage of funding allocated for the implementation of the reform from State resources (Laužackas and Danilevičius, 2005).

The research distinguished the VET processes that were most successfully developed in Lithuania. They include: updating of training curricula, optimisation of VET providers network, involvement of social partners into planning, management and assessment, the use of possibilities provided by international programmes and experts, and the implementation of quality assurance systems in VET. The development and updating of training content was particularly evaluated as a success. On the national level the factors that specifically contributed to this success were the infrastructure put in place and the initiation of the development of VET standards (Gurskienė, 2004; Laužackas and Danilevičius, 2005).

The investigation carried out by Gurskienė (2004) proved that most beneficially the training content was affected by professional development possibilities made available to teachers, and a number of international projects (*Phare, Leonardo da Vinci, etc.*). Factors that affected the process to a lowest degree were experts from foreign countries and the activity of science and research institutions (e.g., respective divisions of universities).

The processes within the VET reform identified as most problematic and least successful were the formation of VET strategy and policy; training of vocational teachers, vocational guidance and counselling and the creation of the image of VET (Gurskienė, 2004; Laužackas and Danilevičius, 2005). The findings of the research conducted in 2005 constituted the basis for the proposal covering six principal areas of the improvement of VET in Lithuania: improvement of training programs; improvement of counselling services prior to selecting VET programmes; improvement of practical training; improvement and development of training forms; organisation of in-service training of employees; development of the forms of continuing training of employed population (Andriušaitienė and Šileika, 2005).

The Lithuanian VET system and its effectiveness in the period concerned were also assessed in the context of social partnership. The research conducted in 2002-2008 by L.Kaminskienė (2008) showed that within the VET system social partnership is most often related to the improvement of VET. The respondents identified as most important the following characteristics of social partnership: coordination of activities; search of compromises; cooperation and division of responsibilities with a view to attaining certain objectives relevant to all members of partnerships that are originally defined by common public goals and objectives, possibilities and available resources. The research revealed a significant shortage of effective social partnership (it has been concluded that it is relatively difficult to encourage social partners participation due to the dominance of public education institutions in VET system, and as a result representatives of VET institutions were identified as the most active in the partnership). It was suggested that the effectiveness of social partnership may be ensured by means of a relevant legal regulation of and support from the State to the partnership development. Furthermore, it was concluded that the effective impact of partnership upon the quality of VET is possible only if social partners are involved in all processes of VET.

The research conducted in 2005 by Ruškus (Ruškus et al., 2005) showed that the current relations between VET institutions and employers are in stagnation conditions, any motivation for cooperation is obscured by the difference in interests; there is insufficient

general understanding of importance of common results for all parties involved. The research showed that one party (employers) are generally seeking benefit exclusively for themselves and taking an egoistic psychosocial position. The research also allowed a conclusion that the complex procedures for validation of new training programmes prevent the introduction of new progressive programmes and hampers more flexible adaptation to the changes of labour force demand on the labour market. It has been noted that the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, mainly due to shortage of resources, fail to act as an intermediary between employers and vocational schools; thus, there is no single institution able to coordinate the entire process (Ruškus et al., 2005). The survey conducted by the Centre for Vocational Education and Research under the Vytautas Magnus University in cooperation with partners from France, Germany and the Netherlands (project LITVETNET under the *Leonardo da Vinci* programme) showed that any further development of regional social partnership in Lithuania urges search for original and complex solutions, and that the experience in developing regional social partnership in VET accumulated in France, Germany and the Netherlands could be helpful when developing policy and practice of partnerships in Lithuania (Regioninių..., 2009).

The results of the research conducted in 2005 by Dumčius in the area of labour market vocational training showed that VET in all counties of Lithuania is being assessed positively and the training content meets the national economy needs. Nevertheless, it was noticed that the knowledge of trainees of the labour market training centres nearly in all cases is assessed more positively by employers than their practical skills acquired in training. The research provided a basis for the conclusion on the necessity to invest into a restructured system, this being viewed as the only possible way to ensure efficiency of the investment. Furthermore, it has been noted that despite of an ongoing rather active coordination of the activities with the partners not all cooperation possibilities are properly exploited (Dumčius et al., 2005).

Any enhancement of the effectiveness of VET is inseparable from the issue of available resources. The shortage of the resources available has been noted in several researches briefed above. The issue of funding in VET system has been also extensively analysed in other researches conducted within the period surveyed. For instance, the research of the network of VET institutions showed a need for investment in nearly all institutions of VET, as a large share of the infrastructure used by most institutions is in deteriorated condition and stands as an obstacle in the provision of high quality training. The results of the research constituted the basis for identifying certain investment principles that would ensure an optimal utilisation of investment: *compliance with the needs of national economy* (the investment should target the areas that forecast the most notable growth of qualified employees); *investment into economically viable VET institutions* (economically viable institutions are better prepared to absorb the investment); *available resources* (it is necessary to ensure the balance between the available resources and investment); *geographic accessibility of VET for residents of regions* (a large part of the clients of the VET system consider it very important to be able to attend VET facilities close to their places of residence) (Pasirengimas optimaliai..., 2006).

The analysis of the scope of VET services conducted in 2006 showed that VET institutions are rather homogeneously distributed in the territory of Lithuania, but a supply of training programmes offered significantly vary by regions. The premises used by most labour market training centres are in very poor condition; the area of the premises (owned or leased) is insufficient considering the projected growth of training volumes. The training equipment used at most training centres is not updated regularly what prevents the provision of high quality training services (Andriušaitienė and Šileika, 2006).

Still, even the available resources are not in all cases used sufficiently effectively. This has been clearly demonstrated by the results of the research of continuing vocation training conducted in 2008 by Teresevičienė et al. The results allowed a conclusion that the rapid development of information technologies and the experience accumulated in the area of distant learning facilitate the development of distant learning, however, in respect to the continuing VET the available resources are used inefficiently and the progress in this area is rather slow (Teresevičienė et al., 2008).

VET is inseparable from the overall system of education. The research conducted in 2004 (Teresevičienė et al., 2004) clearly pointed out the need to incorporate general education, VET, tertiary education, formal, non-formal and informal learning into a single education system what eventually would facilitate the realisation of the idea of life-long learning.

2.1.2. Effectiveness of VET providers (institutional and curricula levels)

The research conducted in the period surveyed yielded the results that allow to assess the social and economic effectiveness of services provided by VET institutions. The findings of the research conducted in 2004 and 2005 by Andriušaitienė et al. showed that the labour market vocational training is an efficient measure not only from the economic viewpoint. Labour market vocational training performs also the function of enhancement of social integration and economic activity that, in the opinion of a number of researchers, has not been so far sufficiently appreciated when planning the further development of the labour market vocational training. The social benefit of the labour market vocational training has been highlighted on numerous occasions due to its effect on unemployment rate reduction, the positive changes in the economic situation of graduates, decrease in the number of beneficiaries of social support, the personal development of the graduates and improvement in quality of their life. It has been concluded that the labour market vocational training is an economically efficient and socially beneficial measure on the labour market, the national and the personal levels. It has been noted that it is necessary to further adjust the training content to the needs of the students and the labour market while implementing the principal objectives of the employment policy. To attain the objectives it is necessary to increase the funding for VET institutions (taking advantage of the possibilities offered by the European structural funds), to improve the procedure of organising public procurement for training of the unemployed as well as to further develop the individualisation of the training. It has been highlighted that the quality of the services provided should become the principal objective of the labour market vocational training (Andriušaitienė et al., 2004, Andriušaitienė et al., 2005).

In 2006-2007 the research was conducted the purpose whereof was to assess the social and economic effectiveness of VET as an active employment policy measure. Data were obtained by surveying VET graduates and employers of graduates (Andriušaitienė, *et al.*, 2007). The findings of the research allowed a conclusion that in general the level of preparedness of graduates was assessed positively. The research demonstrated that the overall level of employment among graduates from labour market training reached 64 percent. Groups of persons who have anchored in the labour market after the labour market vocational training (persons who have received notices of dismissal and young unemployed) assessed their theoretical and practical training most positively, while the assessment among the countryside and long-term unemployed was most negative. The research showed that the absolute majority of the labour market vocational training graduates (98 percent) who have received notice of dismissal maintained their jobs or were employed. This allows a conclusion that the labour market vocational training should be viewed as an effective preventive measure in an attempt to secure jobs for persons who have been notified of job termination. The

effectiveness of labour market training was also confirmed in the research of Bagdžiūnienė et al. ((Bagdžiūnienė et al., 2006).

Furthermore, the results of the research showed that the principal task for the labour market vocational training should be the enhancement of professional technical knowledge. This would allow to decrease the gap between theoretical and practical preparedness and would strengthen the link between the two elements of training. It was also discovered that quality of practical training considerably differs in individual regions. An important task with a view improving the quality of VET is the development of cooperation between the labour exchanges (employment agencies), training institutions, employers (business partners) and local authorities. This task requires an ongoing and systemic attention on the part of all the institutions and authorities concerned, as well as employers (Andriušaitienė et al., 2004).

In 2007, a research focusing on life-long learning and its effectiveness was conducted. The target group included trainees enrolled in adult training centres, students at labour market training centres seeking to acquire some professional qualification or requalification, and managers of training centres. The research revealed that the effectiveness of the labour market vocational training is affected, both in positive and negative sense, by subjective-personal factors the most important of which are the learning motivation, relation of learning with the plans for the future, psychological characteristics of a specific person, as well as a number of social factors related to peculiarities of the labour market – demand for a specific profession, remuneration and the formal and informal requirements for a specific profession established in the labour market (Šutinienė, et al., 2007).

Dissemination of information to different stakeholders interested in VET was identified as a very important aspect. For instance, it has been proposed to introduce the results of the research to persons in charge of the organisation of VET, also to invite such persons to a discussion on the enhancement of effectiveness of VET (Bagdžiūnienė, et al., 2006). The findings of the research suggested that any information on the non-formal adult education should be presented in a form able to attract the interest and attention of employers. Such information could be presented in the form of leaflets, posters and electronic online notices promoting interest in the employee professional development options (Teresevičienė et al., 2004).

In 2007 a research was conducted with an aim to assess the organisation of practical training for the unemployed according to the most popular training programmes offered in training institutions or on the job (in offices, enterprises) as well as to identify the compliance of practical training with the needs of labour market (Socialinės politikos grupė, 2008). Although the research clearly identified some significant advantages of a number of most demanded programmes (vocational training programmes are regularly updated taking into account employers' requirements and changes in the labour market; the duration of theoretical and practical training is quite well balanced in the majority of training programmes, etc.), its findings pointed to a number of shortcomings: absence of a mechanism for assessing and updating vocational training programmes in order to respond quickly to market changes and involve VET system participants of various levels; no practical training supervisory mechanism and quality monitoring system in VET which would involve developers and promoters of labour market vocational training programmes, employer representatives, independent labour market professionals and education scientists, the vocational training process is insufficiently assessed, etc. As stated by employers, graduates of vocational training programmes wishing to be employed in enterprises most often lack *experience*

(opinion of 92 percent of employers), *practical skills* (90 percent) and *professional preparedness* (75 percent) (Socialinės politikos grupė, 2008).

Although employers expressed their reserved views towards practical skills of vocational training graduates, they do not actively participate in the process of improving labour market vocational training programmes and lack initiatives as to a more efficient organisation of practical training in their companies. On the other hand it has been noted that representatives of the labour exchanges and VET providers could expand and elaborate information dissemination about the possibilities to organise any in-company practical training. It is important to ensure that the price for the procurement of vocational training services is determined on the basis of quality rather than the decisive criterion being the lowest price (Socialinės politikos grupė, 2008).

Another research aimed at evaluating the quality of teaching/learning services (including knowledge assessment and qualification development) provided for the enterprise employees – specialists in safety and health at work (Blažienė et al., 2008). The findings of the research allowed an assumption that the knowledge acquired in the course of training are not sufficient to enable a specialist in the field to effectively fulfil his duties and independently perform according to the relevant instructions. (Blažienė et al., 2008).

The effectiveness of VET providers should be also related to the success of graduates in finding jobs. The results of a research conducted in 2004 (Baranauskas et al., 2004) showed that the success in studying and later on getting a job may be related to the performance of students entering VET institution, their learning motivation and social position. The research also noted the absence of generalised data on the students of VET institutions. Therefore it has been recommended to investigate the characteristics of students entering VET institutions and their motives in choosing this career path. Another issue considered absolutely necessary is the monitoring of employability of graduates. The data of such observation could be used in monitoring and regulating the student flows; such monitoring needs to cover and involve all VET levels and all areas of activities, it must be public and continuous. Also, on the basis of the research it has been recommended to provide favourable conditions for researches and surveys of individual sectors of economy, while involving into the process the efforts of the State and social partners (Baranauskas et al., 2004). The latter insight of the researchers has been complemented by the findings of another research (Teresevičienė et al., 2004) that revealed the importance of encouraging different labour market research that could facilitate the identification of main shortcomings of enterprises performance and assessment of the situation in the context of non-formal and informal learning of employees.

2.2. Quality assurance of VET and VET providers

In 2005-2008, within the framework of the national level project “Development and Implementation of Common Quality Assurance System in Vocational Education and Training” Baranauskas et al. completed a study on quality assurance in VET system in Lithuania and other countries. The authors conducted two investigations aimed at assessing the state of quality assurance in vocational education and training in Lithuania (the first investigation included a survey of all vocational schools of Lithuania, while the second one was based on interviewing representatives of VET institutions in Lithuania providing continuing training, including labour market training centres and non-public VET institutions). It was concluded that an internal quality assurance system has been recognised as necessary by VET institutions of all types (vocational schools, labour market training centres and non-public training providers), and that most of institutions actually use some

individual elements of the quality cycle; however, the process is not sufficiently formalised. The evaluation and review have been identified as the weakest elements of the quality assurance cycle. Not a single VET institution was found with a complete internal quality assurance system in place. It has been noted that the problem to a large extent stems from the shortage of specialists that thoroughly understand the issues related to quality assurance in VET institutions. Nevertheless, some individual areas in the Lithuanian system of education have already accumulated considerable experience in developing internal quality assurance systems (for example, internal audit system in general education secondary schools, quality assurance of studies in colleges); it has been suggested that such experience could be taken advantage of in developing the quality assurance system in the Lithuanian VET institutions (Baranauskas et al., 2006).

It has been highlighted that the activities of VET providers are being supervised by a number of institutions and authorities which, however, focus on the assessment of compliance of a VET provider with the requirements of the relevant legislation. The results of the research showed that efforts are being made to collect a number of various data representing the quality of training on the level of VET providers; however, there due to absence of unanimous methodology for the collection of such data they can be hardly used to facilitate the assessment of training quality on the system level. The results also highlighted the possibility of implementation of unanimous training quality assurance principles in initial and continuing training sectors. The research also proved the importance of obligating all public providers of vocation training services to implement the internal quality assurance system while allowing individual institutions to choose a quality management model at their discretion (Baranauskas et al., 2006).

The insights produced as a result of the latter research were confirmed by another one that was carried out to analyse the internal quality management systems in 76 Lithuanian VET institutions (Saulėnas et al., 2007). The research produced evidence that the majority of VET institutions in Lithuania in general are willing and determined to ensure quality in VET; such institutions have put in place mechanisms for monitoring the most important areas of activities, and employ self-analysis tools. Nevertheless, it has been noted that some VET institutions fail to properly perceive the purpose of quality management systems, the involvement of teachers in the quality management of institutions and decision-making process is to be assessed as insufficient, both teachers and managers have only minimal knowledge on quality management; there is a tangible reluctance among community members to involve into discussions and make their views known; there is a shortage of information on quality management, or the specific training facilities in the Lithuanian language; the results of the research also proved that a number of VET institutions have put in place working groups for the implementation of quality assurance systems, but such groups are not sufficiently active, and tend to focus upon an expedient solution of any pending problems rather than prevention of the same (Saulėnas et al., 2007).

A more detailed research on quality assurance has been conducted in colleges that grant the professional bachelor's degree. The research in colleges of Lithuania conducted in 2002-2008 by Misiūnas showed that the quality performance on an institutional level requires professional managerial training and a clear political direction. The quality management and the quality management system must be recognised and supported by the community of an institution. The clear-cut, accurate and targeted political and managerial dimension of objectives of a higher education institution based on a positive consensus with the majority of community members and implemented through a properly planned and an institution-specific

quality management system will ensure successful development of quality culture in the institution (Misiūnas, 2008).

When generalising the results of research conducted in the course of several years in colleges the researcher Žibenienė noted that the main factors contributing to the development of a quality management system of study programmes are the national and international policy, quality management system, competence of assessors, and the study programme models. It has been noted that the realisation of the above factors contributed to and facilitated the rapid establishment of the college sector in Lithuania (Žibelienė, 2006).

Specific cases of the implementation of quality management systems in Lithuanian colleges were analysed. The college itself is bearing the main responsibility for the quality of studies. The management of an institution is to fulfil an important task – to develop, implement and regularly update and improve the internal quality assurance system. The quality management system is not able to resolve all problems of an institution; however, it is helpful in detecting any reasons for problems arising, and facilitates efforts in eliminating such problems and seeking ways for improvement. It has been noted that the main driving forces urging institutions to implement internal quality assurance systems are competition, sense of responsibility and accountability. Any barriers preventing an effective operation of a quality assurance system most often lie in the internal culture of the institution. For instance, upon implementation of the ISO quality management system the higher education institution acquires an effective quality management tool that is easily understandable by inspecting authorities, as well as by local and foreign partners (Misiūnas, 2007, Senčila and Skiparienė, 2007).

3. Conclusions and implications for further research

It is reasonable to conclude that the research results presented in the present review are significant for the further improvement of the effectiveness and quality of VET because each research resulted usually not only in the identification of strengths and weaknesses but the theoretical and practical recommendations were suggested.

The context of the research is also an important factor as the surveys were based on the national as well as international documents, and the international experience. The findings of the research constitute a valuable tool that will help to define the directions for further enhancement of the effectiveness and improvement of quality of VET. Still, the findings also highlighted the absence of integrated (covering vocational guidance, the initial and continuing VET) approach in the assessment of the VET effectiveness on the national level, i.e., there is a lack of data helping to disclose the effectiveness of the VET system in its entirety and the ability of the VET system to contribute to the enhancement of national competitiveness. Furthermore, the development of the VET policy is inseparable from the education system as such. Therefore, any research of the effectiveness of VET within the context of the entire education system (in relation to the general education, or tertiary education, etc.) would be of particular relevance.

The research activities conducted in 2005-2008 in the context of implementation of the national project “Development and Implementation of Common Quality Assurance System in Vocational Education and Training” are specifically important in respect of the development of VET quality assurance policy on the national level. The results and findings of the research constituted the basis for the concept of the quality assurance system both for the initial and continuing education and training and for the guidelines for the development of the internal

quality management systems in VET institutions. However, most research exercises have been focusing upon the formal quality assurance aspects. The research exercises on the effectiveness of VET performance and quality culture on a provider level are rather scarce, and those conducted covered the college sector only.

To an extent any research is impeded by the absence of a permanently operational system for monitoring of VET which, as a result, leaves the researches without reliable statistical data. Usually research is limited to information from a single source, such as, for instance, the data provided by the Lithuanian Labour Exchange on employment according to the speciality acquired and the forecast of specialist demand.

Still there is tangible shortage of any ongoing research revealing to what extent the research findings have been taken into account, and whether the VET system actually derived any benefit from the research. In other words, there is no sufficient information or evidence as to what extent the findings of the research have been implemented. This makes apparent the need for further research with a view to ensuring the continuity of the research, and identifying more efficient and effective methods for increasing effectiveness and quality assurance of VET and VET providers.

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Theme 4: Labour market groups at risk

The review of the research on labour market groups at risk covers research conducted in the period between 2004 and 2009. It includes applied research carried out at the request of public authorities or other concerned authorities, as well as doctoral dissertations. Mostly, the research focused on such labour market groups at risk as disabled persons, youth and elderly people. Ethnic minority groups, prisoners and other persons encountering social problems received less interest. The review revealed that special research on the situation of groups at risk in the labour market is a valuable source of information, since there is lack of information on the national level. A further analysis of issues related to the integration of labour market groups at risk and instruments for reintegration of these groups into labour market would be of great importance.

1. National research questions and issues

In Lithuania, the problems and opportunities of people at risk in the labour market have been explored quite intensively. The increasing amount of research of the situation of different risk groups in the labour market is supposed to have been indirectly conditioned by Lithuania's commitment assumed upon its accession to the EU to contribute to the implementation of EU employment strategy objectives. Assessment studies of projects or other social initiatives account for quite a big portion of the conducted research. The accession to the EU brought about opportunities for the development of human resources with ESF support, and a number of local and international initiatives have been implemented as a result. EQUAL initiative in Lithuania deserves a special mention to this effect. After the EU accession, Lithuanian Labour Exchange, the main authority implementing labour market policy, also started using ESF funds more actively for the integration of job searchers into the labour market, for the support of social enterprises, the development of vocational rehabilitation of the disabled and for active labour market policy measures, etc. Complex effectiveness research of the activities in progress, as conducted by independent experts has become a part of project implementation monitoring. In addition, research projects are also initiated by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, which is active in the planning and assessment of changes in social security and employment policy.

The research on the problems of risk groups' situation in the labour market can be conditionally divided into two areas. First, the analysis of the objectives and tasks of surveys conducted during the period at issue suggests that many of those are aimed at assessing the outcomes and/or effectiveness of implemented projects or other social initiatives. In most cases, complex assessment is sought to identify not only economic, but also social benefits of the implemented activities. Likewise, a person from the analysed target group is considered to be the principal beneficiary (i.e. the benefits of each particular project participant are assessed). This individual-level orientation determines the selection of research methods.

The second area of the research is aimed at the analysis of the situation of individual target groups in the labour market. It is directed at identifying their specific needs in relation to labour market integration and disclosing a set of problems promoting or impeding employment (e.g., identification of values relating to working life, analysis of employment motivation, basic requirements raised for employment, etc.). Among the above-mentioned

research directions special mention should be given to the surveys aimed at the analysis of manifestations of discrimination of risk groups in the labour market.

Researchers exploring the problems of vulnerable groups in the labour market usually identify the following target groups: women, youth, older people and long-term unemployed people (Matiušaitytė, 2001), as well as specific groups of the unemployed such as older unemployed, disabled persons, people without basic education (Gruževskis et al., 2006b). Analysis of the research conducted in 2004-2009 suggests that groups of socially vulnerable people most often monitored in the labour market are as follows:

- (a) disabled,
- (b) youth,
- (c) older people,
- (d) other groups (ethnic minorities, convicted persons, etc.).

Some surveys are aimed at developing planned documents in various spheres of social policy. In this context we can mention a survey carried out in 2007 “Evaluation of the Demand for Transport Services for Disabled Individuals and Creation of the Framework for the Program of Provision of Transport Services for Disabled” (Bikmanienė et al., 2007b). The research was commissioned by the Department for the Affairs of Disabled under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and the findings of this research were used in drafting the program for the provision of transport services to disabled persons. One more example is a research carried out in 2008, “Effectiveness of the Implemented Complex Model of Reintegration of Convicted Persons and Development Opportunities” (Biveinytė et al., 2008), the findings of which the Ministry of Justice used for the development and implementation of social reintegration policy for the convicted (The Draft Strategy for Resocialisation of Ex-Prisoners into the Society was prepared). To a certain extent, this explains very high results of effectiveness assessments.

2. Key research findings

2.1. The disabled

On 1 July 2005 a new Law on Social Integration of the Disabled came into effect in Lithuania introducing many novelties and changes in the concept of disability, evaluation criteria, disability establishment procedure as well as system of social security guarantees to the disabled. A 2 year transition period from the old (invalidity, Lith.: *invalidumas*) system to a “new” system (of disability and establishment of a degree of capacity for work), as foreseen in the above-mentioned law, expired on 1 July 2007. An analysis of changes that have taken place during the reform of disability establishment and assignment of disability allowances (Žalimienė et al., 2007) leads to a conclusion that the reform laid down the basic principles for formulating real policy for the integration of the disabled, which is characteristic to many other EU countries, too. The reform implicates that Lithuania is expanding support to disabled persons. In addition to pensions, this support covers vocational rehabilitation, assisted job search, supported employment, adaptation of workplaces and provision of technical assistance items, etc. These are the trends of a well-substantiated reform, as satisfaction of the needs of disabled persons does not confine to financial guarantees and pensions only.

Rejection of the term “invalidity” in Lithuanian social law is very important in light of reducing stigmatism and discrimination vis-à-vis the disabled. However, entrenching such terms as “incapacity for work”, “lost working capacity” can have a negative impact on the integration of disabled persons into the labour market. The question is how the disabled can be equally treated in the labour market if they “have lost their working capacity”. As integration of the disabled into the labour market greatly depends not only on the person’s functionality and capacity for work, but on stereotypes as well, it is important to refine the terms and applied rhetoric.

The analysis of the labour market of the disabled from the supply perspectives (Skučienė and Šumskaitė, 2005) leads to the identification of the following facts: working-aged disabled persons account for slightly more than a half of the total number of the disabled; persons with severe disabilities make some 10% of the total number of the disabled; two thirds of the disabled are urban residents; rural unemployment of the disabled is higher; most of working-age disabled persons are unskilled, one fourth of them have no vocational training and one tenth – no education at all (conclusions are based on the 2001 population census data and 2004 data of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Statistics Lithuania and Lithuanian Labour Exchange).

A complicated situation of the disabled is also highlighted by a later research. An enquiry into the situation of people with employment difficulties in labour market and measures to improve their employability (Gruževskis et al., 2006b) suggests that as few as some 15% (28 to 29 thousand) of the disabled participate in the labour market, of which some 5% have the status of unemployed. According to the Labour Exchange data, it is incomparably more difficult for disabled persons to get employed: disabled individuals who find jobs account for as few as 2% of the total employed registered unemployed individuals.

The rates of participation of the disabled in vocational training and reskilling programmes do not reflect high activity. Compared to disabled men disabled women more actively participate in vocational training and reskilling programmes (around two thirds of participants in training are women). In addition, women participation has remained quite stable for a number of years, while men demonstrate varying rates. Women are also more active in visiting day centres (DC), as compared to men, though the number of both genders in DC activities has been growing.

Though being on quite a low level, social services that are likely to contribute to better employability of the disabled (provision of compensatory techniques, translations into sign language, adaptation of housing and environment) are constantly growing. Supplies of the aforementioned services to rural disabled people are lower in comparison to the urban disabled.

According to the disabled people themselves (Skučienė and Šumskaitė, 2005), the main obstacles preventing them from participation in the labour market are as follows: physical health, employers’ negative attitude towards disabled people, and low wages. In addition, disabled people are dissatisfied with insufficient attention paid by the labour exchange to the issue of employment of the disabled, limited mobility of the disabled and environment which is not adjusted to the disabled. The findings of interviews with disabled people suggest that the following measures would contribute to ensuring better participation of the disabled in the labour market: application of more flexible labour organisation forms, provision of more opportunities for upgrading of skills. A problem of workplace adjustments is faced by every tenth disabled individual interviewed. Likewise, there are impediments to business

development of the disabled: insufficient information on business start-up; low level vocational training among disabled people; insufficient professional knowledge to start a business; insufficient start-up capital; other obstacles.

Activities of social enterprises are underdeveloped in Lithuania. Žalimienė and Bagdonas recommend the following trends of the development of social enterprises: wider involvement of other social groups (as a rule, only disabled people are employed in social enterprises; likewise, low involvement of mentally disabled people is observed); activities of social enterprises should be developed not only in large cities, but also in other regions of the country; it is reasonable to expand the types of corporate activities; it is necessary to ensure economic stability of social enterprises (Žalimienė and Bagdonas, 2007).

In the context of analysis of ALMP measures, disabled people constitute one of the regularly monitored groups. Other groups under observation are persons taking up their first employment according to the acquired speciality or occupation, long term unemployed, persons over 50 years of age who are capable of work, pregnant women, persons raising a child under 8 years of age or a disabled child under 18 years of age, persons at risk (victims of human trafficking) etc. A survey conducted in 2007 suggested that despite reserved optimism in employment opportunities, the disabled target group demonstrated the best post-ALMP employment results compared to all other vulnerable groups participating in these measures (Okunevičiūtė-Neveauskienė et al., 2007a).

More serious disability and resultant lower capacity for work (0-40%) still represent a critical obstacle to labour market integration of the disabled. Disabled people with higher-degree capacity for work (40-55%) find it easier to anchor in the labour market. Based on survey findings (Okunevičiūtė-Neveauskienė et al., 2008a), persons with lower-degree capacity for work are much more passive in the measures offered by the labour market. However, for those who decide to participate, the ALMP measures help retaining contacts with the labour market and society. Involvement of project participants in the measure definitely improves their psychological state and increases their self-confidence. The survey demonstrated that employers, who participated in the measures, notably improved their attitude towards disabled employees; the previously sceptic opinion of employers as to employment of the disabled started disappearing. This fact proves that projects of such a nature contribute to anti-discriminatory approach vis-à-vis disabled people. Application of flexible forms of employment in offering the project participants part-time employment is also an important condition for successful employment policy of the disabled.

The above-described research results could be supplemented with the following insights into the issues of labour market integration of the disabled. The research aimed at individual groups of the disabled (by the type of disability), as conducted in Lithuania:

A research in integration of people with hearing disabilities into the labour market (Bikmanienė et al., 2007a) suggests that the prevailing difficulties in the labour market faced by people with hearing impairments are communication-related problems. Insufficiently adequate training and workplaces not adapted to the deaf also constitute important obstacles to labour market integration of the deaf.

The employers are critical, and usually negative, about labour market integration opportunities for people with mental disabilities. This implies that fear and lack of self-confidence enhance the stigma and discrimination of people with mental disabilities. The reasons of unemployment, as identified during the research, are similar (negative attitudes of

the society, insufficient support from the State and public authorities, absence of mediators, etc.) (Veniūtė, 2007).

As mentioned before, anchoring of the disabled in the labour market is badly impeded by their insufficient education and vocational training. A research carried out by the Lithuanian Student Union (LSU), “Students with Disabilities at Lithuanian Universities” (LSU, 2009) shows a prevailing trend of improvement in the situation of students with disabilities at universities, but the pace of such improvement could be faster. This year, the number of disabled students was growing slower in Lithuania as compared to the last year; Lithuanian universities remain undiscovered by foreign students with disabilities; insufficient funds are identified as the main obstacle to improving conditions for the disabled.

2.2. Youth

Youth problems and needs in relation to labour market integration appear to be best explored. An extensive study of assessment of the consequences of unemployment in Lithuanian youth was carried out by Dr. L. Okunevičiūtė-Neveauskienė in her doctoral dissertation *Assessment of the Socioeconomic Consequences of Youth Unemployment and Reduction Thereof* (Okunevičiūtė-Neveauskienė, 2006). Special research by the author, as well as research conducted with direct involvement of the author was used for a systematic overall analysis of the problems of youth unemployment in Lithuania. The doctoral dissertation substantiated the existence of a close connection between the overall employment level and employment in the youth age group. The research demonstrated that youth employment was falling in a line with decreasing overall employment in 1997–2005. However, a more detailed analysis of statistical data revealed that changes in the labour market had very different impact on different demographic groups – decrease in employment *manifested most significantly* in people attributed to the youth age group.

The doctoral dissertation assessed economic costs of youth situation in the labour market, as measured in non-generated GDP. Huge non-gained potential benefit shows that potential opportunities to reduce unemployment were underused in the national economy. Although decreasing unemployment among the youth should imply higher youth employment, a part of young people who left the Lithuanian labour market during the period at issue have joined the group of economically inactive people instead of joining the group of the employed. In addition, estimates suggest that economic loss caused by decreasing employment was also influenced by increasing *youth emigration*. In 1997–2005, the share of non-gained GDP as a result of the migration of the Lithuanian population increased from 3.5% to 7.1%, including the increase in the youth group from 4.0% to 9.1%. Therefore, migration with predominance of younger individuals is an important factor slowing down economic growth in Lithuania. The findings of the research allow for an analysis of broader social consequences of unemployment: 68.6% of the respondents pointed out youth crime to be a consequence of living conditions and as many as 72.8% supported the opinion that employment is the main factor reducing youth crimes.

The research conducted within the framework of the doctoral dissertation suggests that youth unemployment is a result of inefficient education, vocational training (in its broad sense), social security, labour market and economic policies as a whole. The paper argues that ensuring systematic and complex decisions is the most important factor in tackling youth unemployment problems in terms of both improving labour potential building and youth employment measures. A flexible complex youth unemployment prevention and minimisation

system should start at comprehensive schools and end up with a variety of tax privileges for employers placing young people from relevant groups.

The conclusions above are also supported and supplemented by other research carried out in the country. Sociological survey of the youth situation, as conducted in 2005, revealed quite complicated situation of youth in the Lithuanian labour market. 36% of the respondents were employed during the survey; most of unemployed young people said they were studying. Most of the employed said they were satisfied with the job; most of the respondents were employed on a full-time basis. The respondents were employed in jobs that both match and do not match their professional qualifications (36% and 39% respectively). 22% of the employed respondents didn't have any qualifications at all. Most of the respondents said they work under employment contracts and 10% indicated having their own business (Spinter tyrimai, 2005).

Exploring into particularly employment-vulnerable youth groups aged 15-29 (convicted without the sentence of imprisonment; persons treated at addiction rehabilitation centres; young dropouts), much attention is paid to vocational training and practical work experience of the respondents, as these factors play an important role in the situation of individuals in the labour market (Okunevičiūtė-Neveauskienė and Moskvina, 2008). The survey disclosed that most of the respondents did not have vocational training and as many as 44% of them did not have secondary education. Despite poor education, the majority of the respondents declared having at least some experience of self-employment or work under employment contracts.

Inadequate vocational training, dissatisfaction with offered wages and insufficient work experience are primary factors determining unfavourable situation of youth in the labour market. Better competitive opportunities of youth in the labour market are guaranteed by higher-level education (Okunevičiūtė-Neveauskienė and Moskvina, 2008; Okunevičiūtė-Neveauskienė et al., 2007b).

Findings of the analysis of the characteristics and problems of unemployed youth target groups in relation to labour market integration (Okunevičiūtė-Neveauskienė and Moskvina, 2008) once again reiterate a determining role of vocational training and work experience in employment efforts. However, there are many other subjective factors impeding the start-up or resuming of employment. These include the lack of general competences and social skills, addictions, tendency to deviant behaviour, insufficient awareness of labour market opportunities. It is supposed that under favourable conditions in the labour market the elimination and prevention of the mentioned obstacles through combined efforts of labour market authorities and social partners (non-governmental sector first of all) will effectively contribute to better economic activity of young individuals.

Youth is a common target group in research aimed at assessing the need for labour force. A particular emphasis is placed on a detailed analysis of employers' requirements raised for the competences of present and future employees. Personal attributes play an important role for employers when admitting young individuals without vocational training (Šileika et al., 2005). A survey of employers' attitudes conducted in 2007 (Rosinaitė et al., 2007) also reveals the importance of general competences for labour market integration. According to the employers, general competences are one of the most important factors determining successful employment.

The above-described surveys (Šileika et al., 2005; Rosinaitė et al., 2007; Okunevičiūtė-Neveauskienė et al., 2007b) demonstrate that inadequate vocational training is the main

obstacle to participation in the labour market faced by young individuals. A share of children and youth absent from the education system is not shrinking. Lithuanian prevention policy against early dropouts is aimed at children under 16, as this age is related to the compulsory learning age limit. There is quite a number of State interventions foreseen to tackle the problems of early dropout from the education system. However, these interventions are not consistently integrated into a system. The reasons of early dropout are complex and relate to individual situations of a person. Therefore, for the prevention policy to be effective it is not enough to apply measures relating to the improvement of education service delivery only; it is necessary to combine them with other policies such as social, employment, crime prevention and other policies (Institute of Public Policy and Management, 2007).

2.3. Older people

The first research on the transitioning from employment to retirement was conducted by the Statistics Lithuania in the 2nd quarter 2006 (Ambrozaitienė, 2007) and covered interviews with people from 50 to 69 years of age. 2.3 thousand individuals aged 50 to 69 were interviewed during the survey. Most of the respondents (53%) were not able to say what age they plan to retire. Every third employed individual planned to retire at the age of 60–64. About 10% (34 thousand) of employees planned to work until they reached 65 or as long as possible; most of them were males (60%). The survey helped to obtain information on the willingness of employed and unemployed people of this age to continue working. More than a half of individuals of the above-mentioned age would continue employment, if working conditions were better. Some 70% of the respondents would continue employment, if there were opportunities to improve their qualifications. 52% of them would continue employment, if more flexible working hours were offered and 51% would stay longer in employment, if work and health care conditions were improved.

Data of the survey of the Statistics Lithuania shows quite high employment motivation of older people. This motivation could be even more enhanced by better vocational training opportunities (qualification improvement opportunities), wider range of available atypical forms of employment and workplace adjustments to the changed physical capabilities of ageing people.

The situation looks different in the case of ageing people registered with the labour exchange. The analysis of the situation in labour market of people with employment difficulties and measures to improve their employability (Gruževskis et al., 2006b) suggests that current older unemployed people registered with the labour exchange do not constitute a big reserve likely to supplement the labour market later (at pension age). The analysis was based on a sociological survey of unemployed people aged over 55 registered with the labour exchange. It was observed that it is quite difficult for unemployed people over 55 to engage in active occupational activities. The analysis of distribution of the respondents by vocational training showed that as many as 47% of the respondents had had no professional qualifications and 53% of them had acquired vocational training. With changing industrial conditions and new technologies, earlier acquired education diplomas are devalued and there is strong urge to acquire new professions or qualifications. It is therefore necessary to develop continuing learning opportunities for older people, to promote vocational and territorial mobility, and to assist in acquiring new and marketable qualifications or professions.

Older people registered with the labour exchange seem to represent a stratum of the least-endowed people in Lithuania. They have poor qualifications and therefore are often offered very low wages by employers. In addition, approximately every second older individual get

registered with the territorial labour exchange for reasons other than job search. This is a fact of great concern. Vocational training/reskilling motivation of these people is low too. The research data demonstrate that employment of older people is also restricted by unadjusted workplaces, frequent non-compliance with occupational safety and health requirements, insufficient application of flexible forms of labour organisation. Therefore, a special emphasis should be placed on the role of social partnerships in the delivery of employment services to people over 55 (Gruževskis et al., 2006b).

We can conclude that motivation of ageing customers of the labour exchange is poor – many of them look forward to finishing their occupational career as soon as possible and do not plan to continue participation in the labour market at pension age. In order to enhance labour market integration of older people, it is important to create opportunities for retired individuals to continue employment without any interruption, as later their employment motivation declines (Gruževskis et al., 2006b). This conclusion is indirectly supported by the findings of the survey on the needs of older Lithuanian residents in the fields of employment, education and culture (Gruževskis et al., 2006a) suggesting that 89% of the respondents are unemployed. It is worth noting that most of the interviewed unemployed individuals at pension age were satisfied about it (61%) and only 14% of them said they were not satisfied about being unemployed. The respondents' answers lead to a presumption that there are a small number of seniors (~15%) potentially ready to return to the labour market. Thus employment motivation is quite low in ageing people. Education and training services are relevant for older people (the survey covered 2,000 people aged 60+), but they are hardly interested in labour market integration opportunities (Gruževskis et al., 2006a).

Older people also represent one of the least post-ALMP (active labour market policy) employed groups of people. As we can see from the evaluation of the effectiveness of active labour market policy measures (Okunevičiūtė-Neveauskienė et al., 2007a), lower employment after Lithuanian Labour Exchange ALMP measures (supported employment, aided creation of jobs), as compared to individuals over 50, is seen only among the long-term unemployed. It is worth noting that the mentioned two attributes of support for employment are characteristic at the same time for a big portion of ALMP participants, and this aggravates the process of labour market integration for them even more. The survey also demonstrates that older people significantly underrate their opportunities in the labour market (Okunevičiūtė-Neveauskienė et al., 2007a).

The motivation of older people could be enhanced by such means as development of specific skills (foreign languages, IT literacy), generic skills (culture and arts, psychology, healthy life style, social sciences and humanities, information search), integration into social activities, enhancement of self-esteem, information about social participation opportunities and about the activities of non-governmental organisations (Gruževskis et al., 2006b).

2.4. Other vulnerable groups in the labour market

The number of persons without basic education has been dropping down in Lithuania since 2001. However, such persons exceeded 220 thousand in 2005 (Gruževskis et al., 2006b). The analysis of the situation of people with employment difficulties and measures to improve their employability revealed that persons without vocational education had faced difficulties in the labour market even under favourable economic conditions in the country. Unemployment among persons without basic education is nearly twice as high in comparison to university and college graduates. Such a difference keeps prevailing despite constant decrease of unemployment in all groups of education. Persons without any basic education are seen in

somewhat more favourable situation as compared to better educated people at pre-retirement age. In this group of age, people without basic education start competing with secondary or specialised-secondary education graduates. This competition proves the necessity for continuing training and lifelong learning.

Employment fluctuation rates among women without basic education show much greater predictability compared to employment rates among men with similar education: employment level among women has remained quite stable over several years now, showing some 12–13% fluctuation, while fluctuation in male employment level was 28–30%. Unemployment rates suggest that young people (aged 15-24) without basic education are found to be in the most complicated situation in the labour market: their unemployment rate is twice as high compared to unemployment rates among pre-retired individuals; about one fifth of young people without basic education remain outside labour market despite their job search efforts and preparedness to work (Gruževskis et al., 2006b).

A survey on the situation of women and men belonging to ethnic minority groups in the labour market was conducted in 2008. The survey disclosed that 20.3% of non-Lithuanian nationals residing in Lithuania allegedly have experienced discrimination on the ground of nationality in the field of labour market or education and vocational training. According to the survey data, discrimination on the grounds of nationality in the labour market or training institutions was declared by 23.1% of Russians, 19.7% of Poles and 29.5% of representatives of other nationalities. When seeking employment or professional career discrimination was most often experienced by non-Lithuanian nationals. Most often the respondents alleged having experienced problems in the labour market in relation to insufficient knowledge of the Lithuanian language (42%), negative employers' attitude towards their nationality (10.8%), manifestations of discrimination on the ground of nationality in the labour market in general (8.5%), and non-recognition of documents confirming their qualifications in Lithuania (6.8%) (Okunevičiūtė-Neveauskienė et al., 2008b).

A research paper regarding the opportunities of integration into the labour market for national minorities' representatives (Okunevičiūtė-Neveauskienė et al., 2006) disclosed a need for complex approach to unemployment problems of the group at issue. Despite the structural character of unemployment causes in the main group of people covered by the research (non-Lithuanian nationals residing in Lithuania), the conducted surveys revealed certain non-Lithuanian-specific problems aggravating integration of such people into the labour market. In this context, the first mention should be given to insufficient knowledge of the Lithuanian language and quite strong ties with the place of residence (low territorial mobility).

A research study on the identification of training benefits for convicted persons (Bikmanienė et al., 2004) revealed that major problems faced by ex-convicts in social and labour market integration include low motivation, low education, lack of social activity, low professional competence and experience, dissatisfaction with household and family environment, negative employers' attitude, etc.

3. Conclusions and implications for further research

As it can be seen from the brief review of the research, the problems relating to the situation and labour market opportunities of risk groups are quite narrow in scope, but the observed dynamics tends to cover broader and broader employment policy spheres, thus creating a firm basis for further research. It should also be mentioned that the majority of the research was carried out when implementing the provisions of strategic documents (for instance, the

National Lisbon Programme, The Strategy for The Development of National Minorities till 2015, National Strategy for Overcoming Population Aging Outcomes, Strategy for the Development of Youth Opportunities and etc.). The conducted research obviously demonstrates a complex character of problems faced by persons in risk groups in the labour market. However, these aspects of research are seen just as a start of broad scientific analysis aimed at identification of processes and character of impacts that the economic situation, social-cultural environment, developed social security, education and training traditions, degree of society's tolerance, peculiarities of place of residence, degree of community relation, society's understanding of social solidarity, etc. have on the behaviour, way of thinking, opportunities and understanding of persons attributed to labour market risk groups.

The studies should be continued in the area of development of mechanisms/technologies used to combat stereotypes in the field of labour market reintegration of particularly vulnerable individuals. The research disclosed lack of institutional cooperation, thus opening wide opportunities for scientific analysis in the areas of management and public policy. There are grounds to suppose that supraindividual factors have considerably bigger effects on the labour market situation of risk groups than it is currently believed.

Territorial differences are often neglected (with the exception of a few instances of research). Likewise, the needs of risk groups in the context of integration into the labour market are insufficiently highlighted (e.g., by the nature of disability, level of education, place of residence, etc.).

Results of various measures used for the evaluation of social projects constitute an important source of qualitative information, but it is necessary to create a reliable and expeditious monitoring system for persons in risk groups with the view to more objective nationwide evaluation of the situation. For example, for the analysis of the trends of dynamics of labour market situation of the disabled, it is important to rely on statistical data. However, relevant information on the situation of this risk group is badly missing. It is worth noting that evaluation of the labour market situation, as provided by the Statistics Lithuania in the 2006 review of social integration of the disabled on 27 July 2007, is confined to the Labour Exchange data only. There are no other sources of information as to unemployment of disabled people, while employment data is not available at all. In such a situation, every special research dealing with the problems of labour market integration of the disabled is a source of valuable information.

It is worth noting that, in a rapidly changing social and economic space, there is bad shortage of expeditious information describing nationwide labour market situation of persons in all risk groups (not only that of the disabled). Data of the Lithuanian Labour Exchange seems to be the only source of easier accessible information, but such data does not reflect the realistic situation in the country, because only a small part of persons from risk groups get registered with the Labour Exchange. Availability of information on the labour market situation of persons of different nationalities is particularly problematic, as such data is not collected.

There is one more problem relating to accessibility to information on the monitoring, analysis and forecasts of labour market situation of vulnerable groups. Insufficient data impedes application of advanced research and analysis methods, such as econometric analysis, simulation methods, etc., in order to identify negative changes faster, to respond to the situation, foresee likely consequences on the mechanisms of social security, vocational training and other systems.

As it was mentioned above, a significant number of research studies mainly focused on the labour market situation, needs and reintegration opportunities of an individual (as a representative of an individual target group). Such an orientation prevailing in the conducted research conditions the choice of research methods, so the variety of applied methods is quite limited. In most cases researchers prefer questionnaire survey methods. Another method, interviews, is used less often, mainly in order to find out expert opinions and evaluations. Actually research cannot do without application of secondary data analysis methods (analysis of literature, statistical data, regulatory documents, departmental information, etc.). The latter methods are used to define the context of implemented activities, to prove the relevance of analysed problems, to identify social integration gaps in vulnerable groups.

Despite sufficiently well analysed reasons of unemployment of different groups vulnerable in the labour market, there is lack of more in-depth information to enable the development of more effective unemployment prevention mechanisms. While admitting that vocational training is of exceptional importance for the situation and employment prospects for people facing difficulties in the labour market, researchers underemphasise the process of vocational training itself. Likewise, it is worth noting that monitoring of the participation of vulnerable groups in education and training is actually absent at all. Scarce and fragmentary data suggest poor participation of disabled, older people and other persons in risk groups in the process of lifelong learning. However, research studies disclosing complex reasons of such a situation are limited in number.

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