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# The Activities of Youth Labour Centres in the Context of Unemployment Reduction in Lithuania

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The article looks into the activities of the Lithuanian Youth Labour Centre (YLC) in reducing youth unemployment in recent years. Research conducted by Klaipeda University Department of Social Work reveals that behaviour of a young person in the labour market depends on economic, demographic, political and cultural factors that are closely interrelated. The Youth Labour Centre provides services of counselling, information supply, mediation, empowerment and representation, which are social work functions. The consultants working at Youth Centres not only provide the necessary information on employment opportunities, they also extend a helping hand in addressing the social problems associated with unemployment. Then can one find the right way to solve a problem and identify the most appropriate way of managing a person's professional career.

**Key words:** expression of unemployment, youth unemployment, YLC operational activities.

## Introduction

Unemployment is one of key problems in macroeconomics. Many people who have lost their jobs become deprived of their regular income, suffers from low living standards and feel psychological discomfort. Therefore, the problem of unemployment is the subject of political and economic discussions. High unemployment is one of the major economic and social problems around the world in the 21st century. Unemployment is related to a complex of economic and social problems that directly and strongly affects both individuals and a country in general. In terms of economics unemployment means devastation of public resources and destruction of living conditions of the unemployed. Today one of the most important problems in the labour market relates to human resources, especially referring to young people who start their economically active life period. Although Lithuania pays great attention to the integration of

young people into the labour market, the shortage of young and skilled work force in the country becomes more and more evident, and youth unemployment issues are projected into social exclusion or emigration.

The behavior of a young person depends on many social, economic, demographic, political and cultural factors that are closely interrelated. Integration of young people into the labour market considers young people as one of the most problematic labour market groups and foresee strategies of solving the problem of their unemployment.

Depending on the unemployment reasons various unemployment types are distinguished: temporary, latent (hidden), long-term, short-term, structural, cyclical and voluntary unemployment. In the context of youth unemployment one of the most "dangerous" types of unemployment is structural unemployment.

Structural unemployment has a direct impact on youth unemployment. It refers to unemployment that occurs when the structure of labour demand is not in line with the structure of the labour supply (profession, qualification or territorial). As the structure of consumer goods and services and their production technologies change, the composition of the demand for the general labour force changes as well. Due to such changes, the demand for some professions decreases or disappears completely, while demand for others, including new professions, increases. Unemployment is due to the fact that the labour market responds slowly to these changes, the structure of the labour force does not correspond to the new structure of work.

Structural unemployment is caused by restrictions on the functioning of the market mechanism: application of minimum wage laws, trade union requirements for stable wages that reduce wage differentiation, introduction of the motivational wage systems, etc. Such measures confront labour market regulations and, as a result, part of the workforce (young people, women, unskilled senior employees) are laid off because the statutory minimum monthly salary is too high to pay for the functions performed.

### **Methodological youth unemployment interpretation**

The analysis of the unemployment causes within problematic labour market groups, including young people, is grounded on interpretation of the labour market theories. Based on the interpretation of labour market theories presented by R. Matiušaitytė (2005), D. Beržinskienė, (2009), S. Potelinė and Z. Tamašauskienė (2014) we have chosen theories of human capital, discrimination and segmentation to support the research results in this article. The author suggests that human capital reflects both the most important inborn and acquired skills and knowledge, and the ability of an individual to apply the knowledge acquired in work activities.

*The Theory of Human Capital.* In the context of this theory skilled workers are more valued, it is easier for them to find jobs, they are better paid. Obviously employers look for and value better those who have work experience. This impedes young people's access to employment, as they lack the skills and practice in finding a job. Young people have not accumulated specific human capital yet.

*Discrimination Theory.* Discriminatory behaviour on behalf of an employer related to the employment of young people may be expressed in lower remuneration as compared to senior employees with no experience. Young people can also be discriminated due to lack of information. Employers tend to employ people who operate the necessary information and appropriate qualifications in the field.

*Segmentation theory.* This theory is based on a line model. With pursue to maximize profits employers place job applicants as if they were queueing a line. Jobs are broken down by productivity, and employees are divided by qualification. This means that each employee is attributed with a definite role. The less training an applicant employee needs and the better his skills conform to the requirements necessary to perform the duties the better position he takes in the waiting line. Young people are just starting their work, so they do not have enough experience. Being at the end of the waiting line, young people have fewer opportunities to be accepted for better paid work or even be employed (Matiušaitytė, 1997).

S. Jakstiene and D. Berzinskiene (2011) state that segmented labour market is divided into separate parts or segments that are characterized by special features describing each separate segment. S. Cote and T. Healy (2001) state that the most vulnerable are 18-25-year-olds who enter the labour market after university graduation. Young people of this age are particularly vulnerable to macroeconomic change. On the other hand, young people under the age of 17 and over 25 are much more resistant. Thus, the identified labour market theories envisage that young people are classified into one of the most vulnerable groups in the labour market, they have difficulties in adapting to the labour market because of the lack of sufficient human capital and opportunities to improve their skills and competencies as well as pursue personal ambitions.

### **Statistical Construct**

Youth Unemployment Rate in Lithuania averaged 21.81 percent from 1998 until 2018, reaching an all-time high of 36.20 percent in February of 2010 and a record low of 7.60 percent in June of 2007.

Youth Unemployment Rate in Lithuania increased to 14 percent in March from 13.60 percent in February of 2018.

### **Research problem**

It is often difficult for young people to find themselves in the labour market, to foresee trends of market development and choose a profession that will be the basis of their future professional career. Although Lithuania has been establishing new job places and unemployment has considerably decreased the problems of youth unemployment in the labour market are obvious and still the subject of discussions. While working with young people and helping to solve their problems related to employment and professional achievements we have identified psychological, communicative, social and other problems. Therefore, issues on problems that young people encounter and difficulties in finding jobs are raised and discussed.

### **Practical problem of the research**

Lithuanian and foreign researchers analyze causes of youth unemployment. The right choice of the profession is seen as one of the possible solutions to youth unemployment problems. However, there is often a lack of information in the context of a job search. The aim of the present research is to look into the activities of the Klaipėda YLC, where counsellors provide vocational information services, and offer job search

tools that help young people to successfully integrate into the labour market. The counsellors of the Centre also carry out functions of social workers, because they not only provide the necessary information, but also consult on communication issues, seek solutions to social problems young people encounter.

### **General characteristics of the Youth Labour Centre**

The YLC is a state institution and a division of the Labour Exchange that helps young people to find themselves in the social environment, enables them to faster integrate into the labour market, solve employment issues independently and in close cooperation with youth organizations as well as other social partners who are willing and able to increase the employment of young people. It is an open and flexible institution that focuses on non-traditional operation methods; its activities are grounded on the principle of direct communication, autonomy fostering, access to information and relevance, informal cooperation that centres on responsibility and trust.

The counsellors of YLC deliver the following professional services:

- provide information for young people under the age of 29 on the key issues of labour market;
- help to find the right job or vocational training institution faster;
- provide open source information, recruitment mediation, counselling and professional guidance services;
- pursue to improve social and job adaptation of young people.

The activities that are carried out at YLC in cooperation with social partners include:

- organization of events for young people and the delivery of these events;
- sightseeing tours to companies;
- career fairs;
- organization of training seminars and conferences and their delivery;
- participation in the activities of councils and committees that deal with youth employment issues;
- project development and implementation;
- promotion and publicity of volunteering, provision of volunteering placements;
- consultations in the preparation of information materials or methodical publications;
- dissemination of good practice.

### **Klaipeda Youth Centre**

Quite a few young people aged 16 to 29 apply for the Labour Exchange in Klaipeda. Half of them have not had any vocational training, they lack job search skills or work experience. One of the most common causes affecting youth unemployment is the lack of knowledge on how and where to find information related to the situation in the labour market and the choice of profession. This determines the success of finding a job and the establishment in the labour market. In 2002 a new division of Labour Exchange – the Youth Labour Centre – was opened in Klaipeda.

It conditioned the expansion of services provided for young people.

**The aim** of the research is to reveal the expression of social work functions at the Klaipėda YLC that focuses on the reduction of youth unemployment and describe the content of the Centre employees' activities in assessing the social, economic and cultural issues within the context of young job seekers.

**Research methods:** scientific literature analysis (theories on human capital, discrimination and segmentation); qualitative analysis – semi-structured interview. Interview blocks: respondents' demographic data, 3 main categories and subcategories that unveil the expression of the YLC activities.

Category 1: YLC customer image (subcategories: age, education, motivation).

Category 2: Situation of young people in the labour market (subcategories: employment experiences, measures that ease youth employment, employment disturbances).

Category 3: Expression of social work functions at the YLC (subcategories: client expectations expressed to a specialist of the YLC, functions performed at the YLC, social worker at the YLC).

**Research respondents.** Six YLC employees who, possibly, perform the functions of social workers participated in the survey.

**Research ethics.** The principles of confidentiality and volunteering have been maintained, interviews were anonymous, and respondents were informed that the data would be used for scientific purposes only and presented in a form of the general overview. Participation in interviews was organized on voluntary basis, respondents were requested to give their oral consent to participate in the study. The key interview requirements have been followed: before the start of an interview respondents were acquainted with the purpose and importance of the research.

## Presentation of the research data

Table 1.

Name	Age	Important information
	28	
	30	Duration work in the Youth Labour Center is 5 years, higher education, Social Work
J3	26	Duration work in the Youth Labour Center is 2 years, higher education, Management
J4	41	Duration work in the Youth Labour Center is 10 years, higher education, Mg in Public Administration
J5	25	Duration work in the Youth Labour Center is <u>1 year</u> , higher education, Public Relations
J6	29	Duration work in the Youth Labour Center is 5 years, higher education, Political Sciences

The data presented in Table 1 shows that four respondents are university graduates in the field of Social Sciences and only one respondent has gained a university degree in the field of Social Work. Respondents' age is 26 to 41, they have been working at YLC for at least two years. Assumption can be made that young YLC specialists

can understand social problems of young people easier and therefore they can more effectively address the problems of youth unemployment.

Firstly, the qualitative study had to identify the group that a YLC specialist was working with. YLC customer image (subcategories: age, education, motivation).

**Category:** Portrait of a client of YLC.

**Subcategories:** age, education, motivation, experience looking for a job.

**Age:** "...ranges from school pupils to students..."; "...from 14 to 29..."; "...16 to 29 years of age..."; "...the youngest person is 12 years old ...".

**Education:** "... no education, only the primary school..."; "...only secondary school, do not want anything..."; "...primary school, five classes ..."; "...five classes and a high qualification..."; "...basic secondary, vocational qualification..."; "...higher education and no experience";

"... situation today: unqualified 47.6% (secondary, primary education) - no profession, no qualifications. With a professional qualification – 35.7%. Higher education: University education, College education – 16.7% “;

"...to register at the Labour Exchange is possible for students and... we have 12 years olds... "; "...no experience or work experience in their specialty ...with university education...”.

**Motivation:** "...ready for work and know what they want..."; "...looking for a job, want to create, want social guarantees, social insurance..."; "...there are those who want to test all the programs that are available in the Labour Exchange..."; "...the motivation is quite diverse – however, the majority of Klaipeda citizens(who apply for the YLC section) have motivation to work or study..."; "...not ready, but have work experience..."; "...in summer, the registration of students with no work experience becomes more intensive, they themselves are actively looking for work..."; "...the motivation depends on what they want..."; "...responding to what they want, looking for work..."; "...others come to help..."; "...people come for health insurance..."; "...on compulsory health insurance..."; "...very often they do not even know that there is an LLE job search webpage..."; "...without any educational background, inexperienced..."; "...we want to find work for him, create a CV and do everything..."; "...they want us to do everything for them..."; "...the hardest is to work with unmotivated, unprepared people..."; "...there are more qualified but unmotivated as others..."; "...mostly there are those who do not know what they want and often they are unmotivated..."; "...I cannot compare, because they are, ...five others more willing to work..."; "...after three months persistence disappears, after six months – there is no motivation left..."

**Experience looking for a job:** “Ways of finding a job are very diverse: through Labour Exchange (specifically YLC), adds on the internet, private employment agencies, friends, acquaintances, parents, etc.”

“...newspapers are considered to be obsolete. Very few people try to find jobs reading ads in newspapers...”; “...today young people are aware of all portals in the media. Very often they search foreign portals as well...”; “...today everything is on the internet...”;

“...absolute majority haven’t worked in their specialty area (unless they have graduated from a vocational school and now study at a university)...”;

It can be stated that young people of different age apply the YLC, thus a wide range of services is being required. Professionals working in the YLC have to ensure high-quality service to all clients, be able to meet their expectations, see the level of their motivation and offer the optimal solution that suits each person applying for YLC. Thus, the motivation of the applying young people is very diverse, it ranges from motivated young people who can attractively present themselves to employers, have job experience and good communication skills to non-motivated young people unable to manage information on the labour market, without ambitions to pursue future goals and who prefer waiting for others do everything for them. It is very difficult to work with unmotivated young people because they do not know what they want, their expectations are low. They are mostly interested in social guarantees, they try to exploit the social assistance policy gaps, and it is hard to motivate them to work for a minimum salary, they are only interested in unemployment benefits. While assisting an unmotivated young person a YLC professional can only perform social control functions.

These results confirm attitude to the problem which are mentioned in J. Moskvina and L. Okunevičiūtė-Neveauskienė (2008) theoretical and practical insights.

**Category:** The situation of young people in the labour market.

**Subcategories:** measures that ease youth employment, job disturbances, labour migration.

**Measures that ease youth employment:** "...those who have a job experience apply very rarely..."; "...they usually have relatives, acquaintances or friends who employ them or give them recommendations ... an employer always prefers to take an employee with job experience..."; "...various social contacts..."; "...positive recommendations from former employers, etc. ...";

"...personal features..."; "...knowledge of personal advantages, ability to present themselves..." Those with good communication skills are not afraid to speak, they take risks, are brave, inquisitive, with initiative...";

"...volunteering experience..."; "...YLC offers volunteering activities for those who are willing and try to integrate in the labour market..."; motivation to gain job competencies and skills..."; "...profession on the demand in the labour market..."; "professional consultations for young people..."; "...solving youth social problems...". "...dissemination of information and opinion formation about opportunities..."; "...the measures proposed by Labour Exchange..."; "...projects. Very much contribute. Projects are specifically targeted, selection is conducted by specialists and on demand..."; "... training, recruitment through compensation, subsidy programs..."; "...it is necessary to acquire the first working experience while being a school or university student, then it will be much easier to find a job after graduation from a vocational or higher education institution ...".

**Employment disturbances:** "...social environment, we have applicants, who have been living on social allowances for several generations..."; "...they do not want to work and prefer to live on unemployment allowances and benefits..."; "...persons of groups at risk, their lifestyle..."; "...unemployed friends..."; "...the circumvention of laws..."; "...risk cases ...alcohol addiction or...";

"...inadequate youth expectations for their employers..."; "...Absence of the ability to assess their opportunities..."; "...young people attach to their place of residence

and do not want to move; "...expect high salaries... "; "...young people sometimes have inadequate expectations towards the employer - they want a big salary, however they do not have work experience or qualifications and competencies required..."; "...inadequate employer's attitude towards young people..."; "...salaries are small..."; "...Perhaps inflexible employers ..."; "...the employer will give priority to a person with job experience..."; "...employers pose unrealistic requirements for young people..."; "... inexperienced and unmotivated ..."; "... lack of autonomy, initiative..."; "diplomas are irrelevant, practical skills are of great importance..."; "...knowledge is required, specific knowledge for that particular job...";

"...complex factors - first and foremost the incompatibility of the existing profession with labour market needs..."; "...ack of job search skills.

**Job migration:** "...more people wishing to leave..."

"...majority of young people go to work abroad through employment agencies ..."

"...there are rare cases when we are contacted to check whether the employment agency is reliable..."; "...young people turn directly to EURES (European Employment Services)."

"...the purpose is to apply for a job abroad. Apply. The answer is provided immediately. The website of Labour Exchange of Lithuania provides EURES information. Open job vacancies abroad are listed..."

"...the EURES advisor mediates in helping to handle the documents required abroad: writing CV or cover letter in English..."

"...since January 1st there have not been any young people that would be interested ..."

"...people find jobs themselves..."

"...official data are not published, we do not know how much this service has been used..."

**For summary** it can be stated that young people need to start their professional career competences already at school. The difficulties encountered by young people in finding a job or solving unemployment problems should first be addressed during the stage of career planning (Dudzevičiūtė, Čekanauskas, 2014). According to Lauzackas (2005), effective general education not only helps to solve youth unemployment problems, but also is the basis for the development of human capital. Higher general education provides students with greater vocational education opportunities, broader learning perspectives, and leads to the acquisition of general qualifications. Cultural and social value of a person, the social career and recognition associates with the level of general education that a person acquires.

Thus, personal qualities include self-recognition, the ability to present oneself to others, the knowledge of personal strengths and weaknesses. J. Moskvina and L. Okunevičiūtė-Neverauskienė specifies (2008) that social skills and competencies are most often acquired in the immediate environment. Satisfying the need for self-realization and performing daily routine functions a person feels full-fledged.

It is very difficult to stop labour migration processes in the face of structural unemployment. Migration issues are handled by the EURES (European Employment Services) office. EURES is a collaborative network with the purpose to ensure the free movement of employees within the European Union (hereinafter: the EU),



the European Economic Area (EEA), and Switzerland. The network is coordinated by the European Commission. The EURES employs more than 850 EURES advisers throughout Europe, and their number is growing steadily. EURES advisers are highly qualified professionals who provide information and provide advice to employers that are interested in the European labour market. They also offer basic EURES services to jobseekers. The consultants have access to a variety of information tools, including a database containing information on living and working conditions in all Member States, i.e. information on labour markets, housing conditions, education, living costs, social legislation, tax system, learning opportunities, recognition of qualifications. <https://www.ldb.lt/eures/apie/Puslapiai/default> (seen: 2018.05.12)

**Category:** The expression of social work functions in the Youth Labour Centre.

**Subcategories:** clients' expectations expressed to the Centre's specialist, the functions performed at the Youth Labour Centre, the social worker at the YLC.

**Clients' expectations expressed to the Centre's specialists:** "...apply for help..."; "...expect to get a job or gain qualification..."; "...Information about job vacancies...";

"...hope to find seasonal work for the summer..."; "...learn about the most demanding professions in the labour market, seek information on opportunities for vocational training..."

"...want everything to be done for them..."; "...create a CV..."; "...find a job for them..."; "...do everything to find a job..."

### **Functions performed at the Youth Labour Centre**

"...everybody comes up with the problem of unemployment..."; "...social services are not provided..."; "...Identification of a social problem takes place on a regular basis...";

"...sometimes, when necessary, I call employers and we discuss terms and conditions...", and then a person has to work under different conditions.

"...employers do not pay salaries, we call them and try to clear up situations. We also have an unofficial list of unreliable employers, so we will no longer offer others to work there..."; "...sometimes we represent a client..."

"...customer counselling is on a regular basis..."; "...at best, I only give advice, give information..."

"...We perform the functions of a psychologist, a listener, a co-worker, a counselor, a teacher...";

"...I like to be involved in vocational counselling at schools." ...help in writing cover letters..."; "...together we write client's CV..."

"...we organize events at the Labour Exchange..."; "...direct young people to projects..."; "...they must register with us if they need to go to a health care institution. We inform that a person has to provide a certificate that proves incapacity for work."

"...we collaborate with the probation service, we know that such a client will stand..."; "...we have contacts with social workers and usually know that a person is from a risk group..."; "...introduce all the services, and then ask how we could help..."; "...I think that sometimes these people are more than just added to the list..."; "...you provide the same package of services with no difference to the background situation that a client comes from..."

### **Social worker at the YLC**

"...my knowledge about social workers is very limited, I know that they work with people at social risk..."; "...we are not trained how to deal with people at risk..."; "... we meet people who have served imprisonment sentences and we do not know what to expect and how to talk to them..."

"...no, we do not..." "...there are no social workers at Labour Exchange..." "...we do not have a social worker at our institution..."; "...I do not even know ..."

"...I do not think that I can perform the functions of a social worker. I am an advisor...". I do not know, social worker, maybe not... "; "...no, I consider myself an advisor to young people assisting them in job seeking..."; "...coordinators of the project "Discover Yourself" under the Department of Youth Affairs perform some functions of a social workers..."; "...yes ...probably, I think that all those who work here should be either social workers or psychologists..."; "...yes, I think that this should be the work of a social worker or a psychologist..."; "...my colleague has got a degree in social work, and when it comes to such competences, I always address her..."

In that context possible to find correlation with O. Merfeldaitė and J. Dilytė, J. (2016) attitude to competences of social workers (consultants in Youth centers) on the problem of their real possibilities to solve youth problems. According R. Bartoş (2015) we always have to keep in the mind the complexity of the social worker profession. Implementation of statements of the Description of the Activities of Youth Workers (2013) asks to improve NGO influence on Youth integration in the Labour market, to evaluate the Needs of socially vulnerable young People in order to integrate them into the labor market.

### **Discussion**

With reference to theories of human capital, discrimination and segmentation, young people are classified as one of the most vulnerable groups of the labour market experiencing difficulties in the integration into the labour market due to relatively low human capital, insufficient opportunities to obtain the appropriate education and the desired profession, lack of practical experience to start a professional career due to the absence of the relevant skills. The behaviour of young people in the labour market depends on very closely interrelated economic, demographic, political and cultural factors. The analysis of youth unemployment factors helps to reveal the key problems. Employment difficulties are linked to structural unemployment and the social environment. The present research shows that one of the key factors that puts limitations on the integration of a young person into the labour market is lack of a demanding profession, lack of motivation, and absence of professional career planning skills (Nolas, 2014).

The analysis of reduction of youth unemployment and addressing the challenges of youth integration into the labour market unveils the significant role of a social worker. The study shows that social work functions, e.g. counselling, information provision, mediation, empowerment, representation, are partially realized at the ylc. A social worker's intervention and effective help can ease the process of planning a professional career for young people. When faced with difficulties in choosing a profession or having acquired an inadequate profession, young members of the society do

not satisfy their interests and needs, and therefore experience difficulties while trying to integrate into the labour market (Lisauskienė, 2016). The targeted social worker's intervention would help to solve the problems of youth employment and integration into the labour market. It is also important to help young people tackle their social and psychological problems in the context of unemployment. Training of social workers are process which always based for challenges (Valutis et al., 2012).

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## Jauniešu nodarbinātības centru aktivitātes bezdarba mazināšanā Lietuvā

### *Kopsavilkums*

Raksts sniedz ieskatu Lietuvas Jauniešu nodarbinātības centra aktivitātēs ar mērķi samazināt pēdējos gados pieaugušo jauniešu bezdarbu. Pētījums, ko veicis Klaipēdas Universitātes Sociālā darba departaments, atklāj, ka jauniešu uzvedība darba tirgū ir atkarīga no ekonomiskajiem, demogrāfiskajiem, politiskajiem un kultūras faktoriem, kas ir savā starpā cieši saistīti. Lietuvas Jauniešu nodarbinātības centrs sniedz padomdošanas, informācijas nodrošināšanas, mediācijas, iedrošinājuma un pārstāvniecības pakalpojumus, kas ir sociālā darba funkcijas. Konsultanti, kas strādā Lietuvas Jauniešu nodarbinātības centrā, ne vien sniedz nepieciešamos informāciju par nodarbinātības iespējām, bet arī pastiepj palīdzīgu roku, risinot ar bezdarbu saistītās sociālās problēmas. Tā iespējams atrast pareizo konkrētās sociālās problēmas risinājumu un identificēt atbilstošāko veidu, kā veidot un attīstīt klienta profesionālo karjeru.

**Atslēgas vārdi:** bezdarba rādītāji, jauniešu bezdarbs, Lietuvas Jauniešu nodarbinātības centru aktivitātes.



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