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Youth Policy in Lithuania

Report by the International Team of Experts

2002

The Joint Council:

- held an exchange of views on the international review of the Lithuanian youth policy;
- took note of the report of the international team of experts [DJS/CMJ (2003) 3].

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Preface

The Council of Europe's youth sector produces international reviews on youth policy since 1997, when Finland was the first country to volunteer to this process. The procedure consists of a member country producing a national report for them and with the intention to launch a larger debate on youth policy in the country and, at the same time, to submit this report to an international team of experts of the Council of Europe. This team is normally composed of three youth researchers, one governmental expert and one NGO representative. The European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), an inter-governmental body, nominates the governmental expert and the Advisory Council (AC), a body of NGOs, nominates the NGO representative. Both CDEJ and the AC, together with a Programming Committee – a mixed government and NGO organ on parity basis and with a management function – form the well known CO-MANAGEMENT FEATURE of the Council of Europe, which in 2002 runs into its thirtieth year of existence and good and successful practice. The youth researchers will be invited by the secretariat in consultation with the bodies mentioned. One of them will be the 'Rapporteur General', but the international review is a group process and achievement.

Once the international review is produced, results, observations and recommendations will be presented to a joint public of member governments, international youth organisations and national youth committees for debate and follow up. Recently this practice has been modified and the international review may now be presented in the member countries to an interested public. In fact, the first such case is Vilnius – the Lithuanian report and review will be submitted for discussion to a Lithuanian audience on 21 November and then again, with its main conclusions, to the international public in January 2003.

What can the international review achieve?

First of all the international review is meant to be understood as advice to the countries subject to the review. What can be improved in youth policy? This may concern inter-ministerial co-operation, administrative support, legislation, research, the training of youth workers, status and recognition of NGOs, the civil society development, informal and non-formal education and educational reform, employment, health questions, youth practice and youth projects and a good many items dependent on the youth policy concepts in the country.

Good advice is not paternalistic; it is simply the 'eye of the others' that often can take a sharper look at things than people right in the middle of situations. It is also an opportunity for comparison – even if there is agreement that there is no one 'best model' of youth policy anywhere, there are indicators allowing European comparisons, which are useful to make. This kind of 'monitoring' by going through examples of good practice is a common practice in all fields of the Council of Europe's work and it often leads to recommendations and – in many cases – the creation of instruments in the interest of greater European unity. This approach is now strongly reinforced through the accession process to the European Union and its "youth chapter", the White Paper on Youth.

Next to advice and comparison there is an interest to slowly, through a learning process of producing several national reports and international reviews (Lithuania is the eighth review) learn as a European organisation, how to identify common strands of youth policy between the 48 countries, co-operating on this item within the Council of Europe – the signatory parties to the Cultural Convention. This includes Belarus, e.g., not a member country, but a member of the Convention. The forthcoming 6th European Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, 7 – 9 November, will show, how far the discussion has advanced. It is no secret that the economic, social and political differences between member countries are considerable, sometimes making the building of bridges towards greater unity very difficult. Each international review is another contribution to the increasing database on youth within the Council of Europe (cp.: Howard WILLIAMSON, “The international reviews on youth policy – a synthesis report”, Council of Europe, Strasbourg 2002).

Why a report on Lithuania?

One answer to this question is banal – because Lithuania volunteered to join this process. There may be other elements, more complex to analyse:

- Lithuania is the only member country in the Council of Europe, which has actually made the Co-management philosophy of the Council the basis of its youth policy construction. We find co-managed bodies at national, regional and local level and the involvement of young people is remarkable. Of course, co-management and co-decision demand always a mode of representation, the system cannot work without youth organisations and national youth committees. It also demands a training philosophy based on the spreading of multipliers, so that there is constant renewal and the system does not turn corporatist. For many, this has been a good idea for the Council of Europe, but they would not really think to use this concept for their own national reality. Lithuania did it and this is in many ways a very unique situation.
- Many Lithuanian youth leaders and youth workers have gone through the training offers of the Council of Europe and the youth programmes of the European Commission. They may not be many, but they know the European scene well and play an important role therein. This is not to be underestimated – even if the word ‘elite’ is a non-word in youth work circles, it is still very true that informed elites (in a strict sociological sense of the word) have shaped the youth policies in the new member countries in the nineties. Who is shaping it now and is there still such a strong European influence around?
- The Lithuanian authorities, namely the State Council for Youth Affairs, and LIJOT, the Lithuanian National Youth Council, have taken important international initiatives, the most recent one having been the holding of the Baltic Sea Youth Ministers’ Conference in Vilnius, June 2002. This conference dealt with the preparation of the young generation for the knowledge society and raised very important questions in terms of the existing educational provisions, labour market questions, youth and cultural exchanges, the use of new technologies and the future prospects of the young generation.

- LIJOT has also taken a very active role in promoting the White Paper process and they play an active role within the youth sector of the accession process.

This very particular constellation of a shared philosophy on co-management, the opportunity to co-operate in the area of capacity building, the Baltic Sea Co-operation and European commitments of both the authorities and the NGOs have made the international review team very curious to see, whether this European picture would hold against the national and local reality, whether there are new developments to be reported and whether, what is said in the national report will be congruent with the view of the team.

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

Peter Lauritzen
Council of Europe
Head of Department for Education, Training, Research and Documentation

Introduction

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

The members of the International team of experts appointed by the Council of Europe have not yet received an official statement on the national youth policy and the final version of the National Youth Report. Information in this report is based on statements made to us during the review process. This report represents views and interpretations of the team of experts invited by the Council of Europe to undertake this review and not necessarily the views of the Council of Europe.

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

Mr Patrick J. Breen, Republic of Ireland, CDEJ, Head of the Council of Europe team of experts
Mr Peter Lauritzen, Directorate of Youth and Sports of the Council of Europe
Dr Anthony Azzopardi, Researcher, University of Malta, Malta
Dr Jean-Charles Lagree, Researcher, France
Mads-Erik Shiønnemann, Advisory Council
Dr Lyudmila A. Nurse, Researcher, United Kingdom, Rapporteur

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the team of experts I would like to express our appreciation to the Council of Europe for their support in organising our Lithuanian visits. We also want to acknowledge assistance we received from various organisations and people in Lithuania who provided us with necessary information in relation to Lithuanian national youth policy and in particular: State Council for Youth Affairs (co-ordinator of our visits to Lithuania) as well as to: Vaida Jasiukaityte, Darius Bazaras, Snieguole Andruskaite, Algirdas Augustaitis (State Council of Youth Affairs).

Schedule of visits

Two visits to Lithuania were kindly offered and organised by the State Council of Youth Affairs during which members of the International team of experts spent about 10 days in Lithuania on two missions. Both visits reflected the priorities in youth policy in Lithuania and involved meetings with the representatives of all major organisations contributing to national/regional youth policy. The schedule of the meetings was very intense and, from all experts' point of view, successful.

The first visit took place from 5-9 December 2001. The second visit took place from June 18-23 July, 2002. The focus of the second visit was the introduction of the CoE team to local youth policy, practical youth work outside of the capital city: rural counties and second town in Lithuania-Kaunas. Detailed programmes of our visits are attached to the report in Appendix I.

List of acronyms

VJRT: <i>Valstybine Jaunimo Reikalu Taryba</i>	State Council for Youth Affairs-
LiJOT: <i>Lietuvos Jaunimo Organizacija Taryba</i>	Council of Lithuanian youth organisations-
<i>Seimas</i>	Lithuanian parliament
<i>Seimas Youth and Sport committee</i>	Parliamentary committee responsible for formulation of the State youth policy, proposals on its realisation

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Report on Youth Policy in Lithuania contributes to the Council of Europe reviews of the national youth policies of the countries emerging from different traditions and concepts in Youth policy. The Lithuanian report adds to the reviews undertaken in other accession countries of Eastern Europe: Romania and Estonia (2000) and to the reviews undertaken in Luxembourg, Sweden, the Netherlands, Spain, and Finland.

The report is the result of the work of the International team of experts appointed by the Council of Europe to review youth policy in Lithuania. Two visits to Lithuania were organised by the Lithuanian State Council for Youth Affairs during which members of the International team of experts spent about 10 days in Lithuania. Both visits reflected the priorities in youth policy in Lithuania and involved meetings with the representatives of all major organisations contributing to the national/regional youth policy. The report covers various aspects of youth policy in the country:

- Methodological issues of policy review;
- Global policy and Lithuanian National Youth Policy;
- Economic situation of young people in Lithuania since independence;
- More detailed analysis of Education, Employment and Unemployment, Health and Lifestyles, Crime and Justice as well as Youth Culture and Lifestyles;
- Participation;
- Analysis of the institutional structure, NGOs as the main social actors in youth policy in Lithuania is in the Chapter ‘ What shapes Lithuanian youth policy’;
- Achievements and remaining issues in youth policy in Lithuania are discussed in the concluding part of the report ‘ Dilemmas of youth policy development’.

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

consultations with all social actors involved in the formulation and implementation of the youth policies in Lithuania.

This summary comments on matters we believe require attention and does not refer to the many positive features of Youth Policy that we found during the missions.

General issues of youth policy

The founding of the State Council for Youth Affairs in 1996 was a very significant development in youth policy in Lithuania. It enables a structured approach by Government/NGOs in facilitation of youth work and policy formulation. The fact that this development took place soon after independence indicates a certain degree of priority rating for youth policy in Lithuania. Given the nature of youth work and its high element of volunteerism, the composition of the State Council for Youth Affairs strikes an appropriate balance between the governmental organisations and the voluntary sector.

One of the key elements for a successful youth policy in Lithuania is a continuous co-operation between the State Council for Youth Affairs with other Government departments which are involved in a specific areas of youth affairs or matters. It is of particular importance that this co-ordination between Government departments takes place in a positive, constructive manner and that each department plays its full role in meeting the varying needs of young people in Lithuania.

The International team of experts considers that:

- There should be a stronger co-ordination in national youth policy of all organisations involved in forming and implementing it;
- The State Council for Youth Affairs and the Council of Lithuanian Youth Organisations should consider ways to represent the interests of youth who do not belong to any youth organisations;
- Youth who do not belong to any youth organisations should be given support for establishing developmental projects;
- Greater efforts should be made to put non-formal and vocational education on a par with formal education both in terms of quality and quantity; hence, also, the need to firmly establish statutory youth and community work training programmes;
- Substantial support should be given to launching schemes of support for the introduction of entrepreneurship skills training early in schools, for example by making available initial grants for the setting up of co-operatives and by collaborating on a more solid basis with NGOs and the business community.
- Strengthening civil society and communities. Non-formal education structures can play a significant role.

Youth participation

Youth independence and participation are closely connected with their ability for self-expression and decision making. Decision making training is vital for strengthening of the Lithuanian youth participation and therefore we propose that:

- Decision making training should be considered as one of the priorities and include leading national and international NGOs should be involved in the design of such courses
- Re-training of teachers should be done through NGOs. A survey of teachers would help to identify the training needs.

- The status of non-formal education should be raised and its network strengthened.

Youth in rural areas

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

Actions to resolve these issues should include:

- Further support of LIJOT “Programmes of regional development” which involves a dialogue between municipalities of small towns and villages should be given a priority.
- Development of local initiatives in the rural areas, including job creation schemes
- Development of business environment in the rural areas: support to self-employment and small business in rural areas with the involvement of young people
- Organisation of exchanges of rural youth within Lithuania and abroad, including exchanges between border villages
- Development of youth information centres where young people could find out about education, health, social welfare, etc.
- Given the relative lack of facilities for young people in some of the rural areas we visited, a special projects scheme for young people in those rural areas should be offered, specifically geared towards their expressed needs. This would represent a policy of positive discrimination towards these rural areas and, specifically, towards their youth population.
- Vocational education system should be reviewed in terms of offering training in marketable professions in the rural areas in view of new business development

Emigration

Economic emigration of young people of Lithuania to other European countries is a rather new phenomenon and is already regarded by some national experts as a decisive threat to the economic and social development of the country. Again, in this matter, an holistic approach is needed, which takes into consideration the incentives which might be provided to young people to return from other countries. This is not likely to happen until Lithuanian society becomes in a general sense as ‘attractive’ as Western European countries and the USA, including features such as political stability, good leadership, the rule of law, accountability, transparency, open government.

It is to be hoped that the progressive development of the economy allied with specific measures, programmes and services for young people, will help to reverse this trend, which, even if successful, will take a long time. Accession to the EU is of particular

importance to Lithuania for these reasons. Some steps should however be considered urgently:

- A survey should be commissioned to help identify reasons young people consider leaving the country
- On the basis of survey findings and other sources, develop policy measures at the national and regional levels matters to address emigration issues
- More detailed information about conditions of working and living abroad, their legal rights and dangers of illegal immigration should be given to young people who intend to emigrate
- Use the opportunities provided by the European programmes such as Socrates, Erasmus, Marie Curie, to strengthen links between European and Lithuanian Universities, encouraging exchange of visiting professors and students and creating research networks and by providing opportunities for the Lithuanian students in getting access to the European degrees in Lithuania

2. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES OF THE REVIEW

2.1 Methodology

The Methodology of this review was designed to meet the requirements of the report and constraints of time and research methods available to the team. Therefore the process of preparing this report included a combination of:

1. Desk research:
 - analysis of documents, publications, handouts
2. Field work:
 - Observation (visits to the youth projects, meeting with the representatives of different organisations)
 - Elements of focus groups
 - Informal interviews

Youth activities and activities of Youth organisations in Lithuania are remarkably well documented and presented. They present a consistent analysis of the background situation and define the approach of each relevant organisation to it. Each ministry also provided well-prepared reports and made available all necessary information on issues raised. Although as it was often commented upon that youth research in Lithuania died when Lithuania gained independence from the Soviet Union and former youth researchers moved into different, highly marketable, areas of research, the quality of the data and analysis on youth related issues meet international standards and present a generally high culture of research and analysis. Modern means of presentation and distribution of information are a matter of routine in Lithuania. The fact that one issue of the United Nations Development Report of 2001 was devoted to youth and is based on a series of surveys undertaken by a Lithuanian organisation may also suggest that the youth research has now become a part of broader social research and, although disappeared as an institution, now has better resources to present young people as a part of the changing Lithuania in a more holistic way. This is in striking contrast to the majority of Eastern European countries where the pre-89 institutions managed to continue and expand their empirical research and the results of their work are gradually becoming more visible

(Kovacheva, 2000, 26)¹. The main obstacle to making a real impact on youth policy in the region is a low level of co-operation between researchers from the post-communist countries in the region and the lack of a regional database on youth issues which makes it harder for policy makers and NGOs to use the research. This suggests youth NGOs lack relevant skills.

As far as field work is concerned, our opportunities were also constrained by timing and a spectrum of issues to cover. Most meetings allowed opportunity to answer and clarify issues, but could not strictly be described as interviews or focus groups. In other words, elements of different methods have been combined and used in this policy review project.

The question and answer strand was dominant, though qualified by purpose and conceptual framing. Discussions, both formal and informal, were held throughout, while *'tête-a-têtes'* also occurred. It must also be pointed out that keen observation of non-verbals and 'private' discussions / differences of opinion among those making presentations were also utilised. In all, the team did not find difficulty in extracting information from most of the participants and clarifications were cordial. On a couple of occasions, experienced 'youth workers' were asked to give their particular views. Direct questions to the effect "What are you expecting to find in our report?" were asked on more than one occasion.

2.2 Sources of data and information

Prior to the two visits a number of *draft* documents – which would eventually form the basis of the National Report – were forwarded through electronic mail by the person responsible for the National Youth Policy Review within the State Council for Youth Affairs. Information about the Republic of Lithuania, in terms of location, population, history, language, State and Government, and Culture was sought from a number of websites. This was considered essential before engaging with a foreign *milieu* with the responsibility of commenting and deliberating on the understanding, development and implementation of a youth policy. Our team was provided with more documents aimed at increasing our acquaintance with the 'local' context, as well as with the opportunities for formal presentations, discussions, informal meetings and observations. Prepared and spontaneous replies to our innumerable queries were given in a very satisfactory manner. The total of eight days, constituting the two visit-periods, were characterised by a string of meetings from early morning to late afternoon or early evening.

The team is conscious of the dynamic nature of the review process. Therefore, its report may / will eventually be superseded by amendments and new developments in legislation and structures. The contents of reports, still in draft form at the second visit stage, may well not find their way to the final presentation stage.

2.3 Global policy and Lithuanian national youth policy

The concept of Lithuanian national youth policy could hardly be understood without a broader historic context and appreciation of the turbulent time of changes that happened in the country during the last decade. Emerging from the shadow of the

Soviet Union straight onto the global stage with the over-stretched resources of a relatively small country with a population of 3.491 million people¹, Lithuania was put in a position of needing to modernise all spheres of life at once. This process also coincided with major changes on the global stage and new European understanding of youth, life course, and youth policy.

Lithuania is situated at the eastern edge of the Baltic Sea and shares borders with Belarus, Latvia, Poland and Russia. It is almost a mono-ethnic country with 81.1% of the population Lithuanians, 8.5% Russians, 7% Poles and 1.5% Belorussians.² Its geographical position determined its historical development and its struggle for independence. First mentioned in the Western chronicles in 1009³ Lithuania went through the formation of the nation state, adoption of Christianity in 1387 and coalitions against the external enemies (Polish –Lithuanian victory over the Teutonic order in a battle of Zalgiris (Grunwald) and later formation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569), also known as a Union of Lublin to the country dependence on its large neighbour, Russia, which annexed Lithuania in the XVIII century. Lithuania regained its independence in 1918. In 1922 the first Lithuanian Constitution was adopted by the Constituent Seimas. But this short period of independence and nation state building was interrupted by annexation of the Republic of Lithuania by the Soviet Union as a result of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Forced into the Soviet Union, Lithuania shared the destiny of other independent states and a long time of political repression and unification until it regained its independence in March 1990. It is an academic question now what might have happened to Lithuania if its nation state development had not been interrupted by forceful integration into the Soviet Union, but what is clear that through the centuries of struggle for independence Lithuania maintained cultural and spiritual independence, internal resources and retained its integrity.

Only 12 years after regaining independence the country is again about to change, but this time through and because of the will of its people, by joining the European Union. The process of European integration is a big challenge for the state and people of Lithuania: a number of discussions among government officers, academics and the public have been initiated to discuss this issue. The minister for foreign affairs, as well as other leading members of the government, have encouraged contributions to the debate⁴. “However, while the reasons for this intensification in the debates on the future of Europe are understandable, observing this from an applicant country like Lithuania one might easily get a sense of talking different languages and a general lack of coherence and realism”⁵. Although the nature of this debate is around definitions of federalism and difference between various models: the one which is close to the US and the other to a German model, the question for Lithuania is which model will suit its national interests?

2.4 Nation building

Lithuania is a predominantly Roman Catholic country, in 2000, 56% of the population relate to the Roman Catholic Church, 26 % to the Orthodox and 18% to other denominations⁶. But the role of the leading Roman Catholic Church which was

¹ According to the preliminary population census 2001, Lithuanian Human development report 2001, p.105.

the cornerstone of the Lithuanian identity through the centuries and move for independence has been changed dramatically. From a political force during the initial years of independence it now remains a part of civil society institution and is not directly involved in formulation of policies. Unlike in neighbouring Poland (Roberts and Jung, 1995), the Roman Catholic Church in Lithuania is more about traditional ways of life and observing the rituals (christening and weddings), which is a part of the Lithuanian national culture, rather than a spiritual institution. Recent Lithuanian reports Social and Human development do not include information or analysis about the role of the Christian churches in lives of Lithuanians and young people in Lithuania.

National values are very important for young Lithuanians according to the UN Development Report, as well as their new national identity. This confirms the results of previous surveys conducted in the mid-1990s (Bodo von Borries, 1995) in 27 countries across Europe, in which the same questions about historical concept and political attitudes were asked.⁷ Lithuanians regard their country's history as very important (mean value 4.01) and importance of their country (mean value 3.82), but they also regard the importance of "European co-operation" with the maximum mean values, along with Poland and Ukraine.⁸ Lithuania, according to the report, also belongs to a group of countries with minima noted differences with respect to the European co-operation along with Belgium, Germany, Ukraine, South Tyrol, Estonia, Italy and Poland (difference < 0.50 points). "This is a very characteristic combination of Western (Central) European members of the European Union and some Eastern (Central) European candidates for membership. One of these groups has apparently internationalised the European everyday integration, while the other hopes for improvements by getting access to the European 'club'"⁹

Young people in Lithuania in general, according to the UNDR, have strong national identity, of whom 86% are proud of being Lithuanian citizens. Those from the rural areas are more inclined to associate themselves with a certain region, while as urban young people with a higher educational attainment more often than others think of themselves as Europeans, while as 10% describe themselves as citizens of the worlds¹⁰.

*Young people associate Europe with the future and cultural development.
Young people most often associate Lithuania with independence and unemployment.
UNDR, p24.*

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

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

established nations. The likely accession to the European Union is perceived as necessary to provide a prosperous future.

3. LITHUANIAN YOUTH: GENERAL SITUATION

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

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

Although some of the observations made by the authors of the reports are not new from the western youth research point of view as well as current youth research observation in other post-socialist, countries, they noticed a significant difference in opinions of the Lithuanian experts thus reflecting difference in approach to youth policy in Lithuanian society.

One of these differences derives from the fact that there is no concise definition of young people as a social group, and consequently no systematic approach to tackle the problems they face¹¹ (Lithuanian Human Development Report, 2001, p.20). According to National youth policy document (Draft Review of Lithuanian Youth Policy, 2001, p.3),

“Young people are a group of individuals aged between 16 and 29 who, during a period of transition to an independent life in society, form their own personalities”¹²

Attempts to define ‘youth’ in western literature have resulted in a mosaic of concepts ranging from age-specificity to status passages to life-trajectories (Hurrelmann & Engel, 1989; Coleman & Warren-Adamson, 1992; Fornas & Bolin, 1995; Garratt, Roche & Tucker, 1997; Wyn & White, 1997; Cohen & Ainley, 2000). Notwithstanding these attempts at categorisation, young people’s own life concepts seem to refuse rigid adaptation to any one category (du Bois-Reymond, 1998). Consequently, one comes up against a very mixed array of concepts of youth and, ultimately, state policies for youth have to grapple with a very dynamic and even unstable situation.

One solution that is commonly sought, both for legal and social reasons, is to classify youth as age-specific. The dangers associated with such a solution are many, the principle ones being those of ‘subtle exclusion’ (Azzopardi, 2002) and ‘limited access’. Although age is a biological datum, it is still conceived as a legal passport to educational progress, to enfranchisement, to marriage and to differential treatment within the justice system, for example.

It is an even more complicated issue in the Eastern European context where in the communist countries, young people were given the mission of building a “brave new world” (Wallace and Kovacheva, 1998). Throughout the region the one-party regimes made deliberate efforts to mould young people into ideal “builders of communism” in exchange for their loyalty to party politics, they were made the main beneficiaries of a generous social policy securing free education, leisure and health

care, guaranteed job placement and job security until retirement. This system of social protection for the young made them totally dependent on the authoritarian state in all their life-course transitions. Although participation rates in the formal youth organisations varied in different countries, it was the age limits for membership in the Komsomol that defined the status of young persons aged 15-28 (Kovacheva, 2000).

In recent years this issue of youth definition was again on the agenda of the European Youth research and policy due to the preparation of the White paper on Youth. The EU Conference in Lisbon in 2001 which discussed this issue among others concluded that existing approaches to the definition of youth are based on demographic or activity-related characteristics, the first is the more formal definition of young people as a particular age group within a society, while the second is activity-related, has no strict age limitation and defines youth as sub-group, part of its own sub-system which shares similar types of activities, life styles, cultures attributed to young people (patch approach). Transition from youth to adulthood, can be identified in a similar way: based on the life-course concept (academic approach) or on the specific channelling of youth into adulthood through support and assistance (social policy approach)¹³. For transitional societies, like Lithuania, which are still in a process of defining their youth policy concept, the activity-related definition of youth (or patch-work approach) is probably more accurate. As well as we would prefer to stick to the social policy approach in our further analysis of transition of young people in Lithuania into adulthood.

4. ECONOMIC SITUATION

4.1 *Poverty, inequality*

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

For many the economic situation leads to a wish to leave the country. This is counterproductive to the economy as well as to the national confidence. An even worse consequence is the risk of alienation, in the sense that young people are discouraged from involving themselves constructively in society and the economy. These are fundamental issues for youth policy to address. The youth policy should aim very concretely at encouraging young people to believe that constructive involvement can lead to satisfactory, or even better, lives.

There is a trend to think that the economic hardship of young people and inequality of life is something to do with the current situation, which is not true. Young people's miserable life, and in particular young migrants in the big cities of the USSR, who moved from the rural areas to continue their education is very well studied in that time by Lithuanian and Russian sociologists (Matthews, 1982; Matulionis, 1989, Koklyagina, 1992)^{14/15}. The fact that the openness of the post-communist societies gives us more information about the "losers" and victims of new capitalism does not diminish the fact that even under communism there was a huge proportion of losers as well, but with the only difference that the information about them was hidden.

4.2 *Youth independence and emigration.*

Demographic profile of the country highlights that Lithuania belongs to the European countries with a slowest growth of population (with the annual population growth in 1990-1998 -0.14% , which according to the estimate will slightly increase in 1998-2005 to -0.47 , but still with a negative natural growth of population and a negative migration saldo at $-1,106$ in 2001)². This demographic decline is accompanied by an increase in outer migration of the population, and young people in particular.

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

Freedom of movement and free choice in employment are the major achievements of the post-state countries of Eastern Europe and ex-Soviet Union countries. Evolving labour markets created an intense migration in Lithuania, as happened in all countries in the region not only within a country, but also abroad. An early enthusiasm of well educated and skilled young people was supported by the families as a new opportunity for their children in the situation of declining living conditions and business opportunities in Lithuania. As a household survey revealed:

According to the opinion of 69% of heads of households under 30 years old their standards of living decreased. Young people prevailed among those who went abroad to seek employment; 21.% of young respondents said that they were ready to leave for permanent residence abroad, and an additional 50% said they would agree to a temporary stay abroad¹⁶

Migration of young people to major cities is not a new phenomenon for Lithuania and was previously caused by the difference in living conditions and life styles between urban and rural communities as well as by allocation of the schools and higher education institutions in towns and major towns (Matulionis, 1989). Centralised system of education of the Soviet period created an enormous migration streams of young people in towns which seems to change very little, but without any changes might cause much worse effect on the ageing of the rural population of Lithuania. Previously young people were to settle in towns after graduation, because out of country migration was almost impossible under Soviet rule. Freedom of movement in association with the decline of industries, and mass unemployment added a new dimension to the educational migration patterns-emigration. Economic emigration of young people to other European countries is rather a new phenomenon and is already regarded by some national experts as a decisive threat for the economic and social development of the country. Again, in this matter, an holistic approach is needed, one which takes into consideration the conditions which should be provided

² UNDR, p.105; The Economist. Pocket Europe in Figures, p.28-42.

to young people to return from other countries. This is not likely to happen until Lithuanian society becomes in a general sense more 'attractive' than the Western European countries and the US.

4.3 *Identities: new, old, changing*

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

“ ...the destruction of civil society after decades of systematic negation of its existence. Reduced to networks of primary identity and individual survival, Russian people and people of ex-Soviet societies, will have to muddle through the reconstruction of their collective identity, in the midst of a world where the flows of power and money are trying to render piecemeal the emerging economies and social institutions before they come into being, in order to swallow them in their global networks. Nowhere is the ongoing struggle between global economics flows and cultural identity more important than in the wasteland created by the collapse of Soviet statism on the historical edge of the information society”¹⁷

Although towards the end of the Soviet Union nationalistic mobilisation in Lithuania as well as massive democratic demonstrations in Russia itself in the spring of 1991 showed the existence of an active, politically conscious segment of the urban population lurching to overcome the Soviet state (Castells, 2002, p. 66), when the obvious enemy (Soviet communism) disintegrated, when the material difficulties of the transition led to the deterioration of daily life, and when the grey reality of the meagre heritage gained after decades of daily struggle settled in the minds of the ex-Soviet people, the absence of collective project, beyond the fact of being “ex”, spread political confusion, and fostered wild competition in a race for individual survival throughout society (Castells, 2002; Machonin, 1995).

It was clear during our meetings with different representatives of youth organisations that they are struggling to identify their new identities through revival of earlier types of youth organisations, which were banned during the Soviet period (Scouts, Christian Youth organisations) and are borrowing ideas and structures from western European youth NGOs, very often with little understanding of their original objectives (ex German type NGOs in Kaunas area), because they do not reflect the development of civil society in Lithuania and have yet to receive support at the grassroots and therefore are not viable or sustainable. In Lithuania this process of building up a new identity yet again tends to go from top to bottom of the society and very often does not reach this very bottom, grassroots at all, or the new social differentiation has already gone so far that “ feelings of social security and of social justification are diminishing among the population” (Machonin, 1995, p13-14), that it now threatens formation of new identities. This might be one of the explanations why voluntary work in communities is appealing to a small faction of young people.

Another explanation was offered at the meeting of the Group of Experts of the “Round table” in Kaunas. Lithuania is still lacking a structure for individual interventions and expression of views. Youth NGOs are underdeveloped. There are no developed channels for free discussion of what can be done. Christian youth

organisations which played an important role in democratisation of the Lithuanian society towards the end of the Soviet rule are now in decline and at the level of communities, only Christian movement is supported as an NGO, but not the parish councils. At the level of LiJOT there are no new ideas and very little knowledge on how to lobby for them. Although there is a certain optimism than in 10 years time this situation would be changed for better, but does it mean in social terms that yet another generation of young Lithuanians would go “socially missing” or emigrate.

5. EDUCATION

School remains the main place of socialisation for young people in Lithuania, an institution that has a very strong capacity to affect lives of young people, although some of the traditional educational institutions such as pre-school child care have collapsed, and summer leisure facilities are not available any more. The process of community building has been restarted, but has yet to build up its capacity. This overlapped with the rise of Internet communication which changed the definition of community, at least in the urban parts of Lithuania, where more than 70 %¹⁸ of young people live.

Educational reform in Lithuania, which commenced in 1988, has undergone several reviews and amendments since that time. In 1991 a Law on Education was passed and then amended in 1998, thus setting a conceptual outline of the reform and creating a legal basis for reorganisation of the education system¹⁹. The year 1999 marked a second stage in education reform focused on problem areas in education with a further reform outline to be set up for a long-term education development strategy for 2001-2011, the draft law on this is still in a process of public debate²⁰. From the authors of the Lithuania Human Development Report point of view the main educational problem is an increasing number of drop-outs. At the level of primary school there is no way of controlling this and educational statistics do not cover people older than 16 years old, which is the official top age of compulsory schooling in Lithuania. Although the first years of independence saw a dramatic decline in educational values, they have started gaining weight again, but the main problem young people face now in Lithuania is a lack of resources rather than motivation to continue education. Teaching staff are among the lowest paid professionals and lack of resources limits their re-training.

There are three defined categories of education in Lithuanian to which we can find references in both documents of the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and LiJOT:

1. Formal
2. Non-formal
3. Informal

5.1 *Formal*

Since 1991 the system of education is in constant change. The Ministry of Education is taking into consideration draft laws on education, non-formal education and vocational education as well as University level education. Protection of rights of young people in terms of the equal access to education and ensuring social support are the main priorities defined by Ministry. This is organised through a school buses

arrangement in rural areas “yellow buses” scheme, providing loans for 16-19 years olds.

The system of vocational education has undergone dramatic changes during the last decade and some of the vocational schools are now subordinated to the local authorities, thus being taken from the system of industrial enterprises.

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

A key element is the personal qualifications of teachers, who for the most part, are not educated to modern education levels. The educational community at all levels needs to develop strong international links. One concrete initiative should be long-term mutual exchanges of young teachers.

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

5.2 *Non-formal*

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

- Summer holiday programme
- Drug prevention programme
- Crime prevention programme

There is also no clear distinction between the non-formal and supplementary education, which survived from the Soviet period. Supplementary education survived from the Soviet period (student’s houses). There is an adult non-formal education for those who are older than 18 years old. It was recently adjusted to the needs of 16+ years old.

Very often non-formal education remains very spontaneous and is reduced to e-mail networks.

5.3 *Informal education*

Informal education, though basically “lifelong” learning, incorporates any learning that takes place any time any place throughout one’s life. A new status of informal education is considered in the draft education reform document, which aims to provide individuals with the opportunities for life long learning in the informational environment which includes libraries, museums, media. Personal achievements gained through informal education can be recognised as part of formal education programme or qualification.³

6. EMPLOYMENT

The issue of youth employment is analysed regularly by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The Ministry produces Social reports every year which include employment, unemployment and labour market analysis. The ministry also covers such areas as social assistance (family and children), social benefits, social services, social work, social insurance and pensions. Young people aged between 16-25 form 20. 5% of economically active population in Lithuania, but at the same time they comprise 25% of all unemployed. There are some differences in the definition of unemployment between the ILO which classification is used by the LFS by the Department of Statistics and Lithuanian Labour Exchanges which is mentioned in the Lithuanian Human Development Report,⁴ and which is worth mentioning when it comes to the comparison of different sources of information on employment and unemployment. Lithuanian policy underwent changes, in the area of employment, during the last decade and it now corresponds with the national employment action plans of the EU members states. These actions are specified in the Programme of the Republic of Lithuania for increasing employment for 2001-2004 years approved by the Lithuanian government in May 2001. Structural reforms as well as a process of privatisation affected the number of available jobs in Lithuania and led to the significant rise of unemployment. Therefore the main objectives of the employment policy are to improve a system of job creation as well as encouragement of new employment initiatives. Support of self-employment is considered as one of the important channels for of job creation²¹ the major obstacles are in regional disparities and rural areas which suffer mostly from growing unemployment and lack of business infrastructure (transport, communication, energy supply). There is also a lack of money for new businesses, which the programme refers to as the lack of support from the state.

Enhancing the employability of young people is one of the crucial issues in the programme. As the number of young unemployed in Lithuania (young people under 25 years old) is higher than among other demographic groups 15,3%, while as the number of young unemployed in the rural areas accounted for 40% (p.24).

³ Draft Lithuanian National report,p37.

⁴ Lithuanian Human Development Report, 2001, p.41.

Measures to tackle youth unemployment are, at the time of the review, covered by initiatives of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and employment centre which is a part of the Labour exchange, (similar to labour clubs – sort of Employment centres. The Employment club in Vilnius for example works with young people under 25 years old and provides information on available vacancies. They have about 200 people coming to the centre every day and about 2/3 of these young people are interested in available vacancies. At the same time secondary schools (36% of unemployed young people are secondary school graduates) are not involved in this process.

6.1 Unemployment

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

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

It is also recognised that the reason vocational education and training does not attract young people is because it is still aimed at very narrow range of skills that the labour market has ceased to demand. VET should be reformed to reflect skills demanded for work in the private sector or as self-employment. VET is also far too long and formal so that young people prefer to embark on a fast track training, through the labour market vocational centres, and get work (page25). Therefore recognition of knowledge-based rather than skills-based training is yet to be developed in practical terms.

Unemployment benefits are paid according to an unemployed individual's state social insurance record and reasons for loss of work. Unemployed individuals who worked and who paid mandatory social insurance contributions for a longer time are entitled to a larger amount of unemployment benefit. In case of young people with no previous work experience the amount of benefit in 2000 would not be less than the State support approved by the Government (135 Litas per month). This is subject to the individuals meeting certain requirements, such as having registered with labour exchanges as a job seeker, accepting an offer to work which corresponds to their professional skills and state of health, or an offer for vocational training. (Labour Policy, Social report, 2000,p.43; LHDR, p.41).

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

7. HEALTH AND LIFESTYLES

Despite the fact that the public health achievements of the socialist era have been undermined in the majority of Central and eastern European countries and the fact that not enough is being spent on public health measures to confront the growing threat of HIV/AIDS and Drug-resistant tuberculosis, Lithuania remains among the countries which is spending significant public resources without getting the benefits of quality health care, and according to a World Bank Report ²², ranks 3rd after Germany and Croatia for the percentage of GDP spent on health.²³. The health system is undergoing changes in Lithuania at present in a course of health care reform, which includes design of a new concept of public health. The Public Health Division is part of the Ministry of Health. It is responsible for:

- Health regulation in educational institutions
- Health education in schools
- Health and Safety regulation and monitoring of its implementation
- Drug prevention programme
- Mental Health
- Alcohol/Tobacco control programmes

There are 38 public health centres in the country.

There is an AIDS centre in Lithuania, whose representative we met at the Ministry of Health. The AIDS Centre arranges initiatives through mass media/press/show business. About 250 lecturers are organised every year with the involvement of 62 municipalities in these programmes. The AIDS centre co-ordinates its activities through the PHC. It also established some links with the police in order to identify young children at risk. It also studied the change in the population's attitude towards HIV in a monitoring study, run in association with the Ministry of Health.

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

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

Alcohol/tobacco control programmes

Although there is an official minimum age for alcohol consumption in Lithuania (18 years old), it is very difficult to control, because alcohol is mainly consumed outside families. Another problem which was addressed by the Ministry to the Council of Europe is that fruit juices in Lithuania are more expensive than vodka.

Family planning system.

There is family planning (sex education) at schools starting from age 14. Teenage pregnancies are not tolerated in Lithuania and the Ministry expressed its concern over the teenage (under 18) abortion rate which stood as 4, 7% per 100 abortions in this age group in 1996. There are 5 Family planning centres in Lithuania where young women

and men can get the necessary counselling. On health issues the Ministry of Health cooperates with the Ministry of Education.

Drug addiction

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

8. CRIME AND JUSTICE

The Ministry of Justice is not directly involved in youth policy at the national or regional levels. All issues of child protection are regulated by the Civil Court. Juvenile judges and prosecutors are already trained and are in place. The official age of legal responsibility in Lithuania is 16. New legislation which will be effective from July 2003 reduces the age of criminal responsibility to 14. The main issues are:

- Protection of children from harmful information
- Registration of NGOs

According to the criminal statistics 2/3 of all crime is committed by young people of 14-29 years of age, but at the same time juvenile courts and family courts do not exist in Lithuania.

Community work for young offenders is underdeveloped in Lithuania. The study about the probation system has just started. Both systems: probation/bail exists in Lithuania, but they are significantly underdeveloped. While in detention young offenders offered opportunity to carry on with their studies, only 50% accept it.

9. YOUTH CULTURES/SPORT/LEISURE

At governmental level the ministry of culture is involved in youth affairs as far as they relate to Culture. This means mainly that the Ministry provides support for young people in such areas as:

- Stipends (35% of scholarships for young artists)
- Legal support
- Competition: ethnographic programmes, supported by NGOs
- Youth Fund

But at the same time the support is limited only to those with certain qualifications and only high quality projects receive this support. Some scholarships are designed for young performers, some are designed for students. But they are clearly designed to support professional artists or art students. Lithuania has old traditions in classical

music as well as in traditional singing and dancing. There is a special curriculum in Lithuanian schools on traditional culture. National Song Festivals and folk dance festivals are very popular not only in the villages, but also in the cities.

10. PARTICIPATION

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

Therefore, the authors of the Lithuanian Human Development report suggest a targeted approach with respect to different groups of young people and taking into account their indifference employing more non-traditional (with the exception of mass media) ways of disseminating legal, social and other information to help them to find their own place in a changing Lithuanian society. More attention should be paid to young people who neither study nor work. They are the most vulnerable to social exclusion and are the most difficult to reach. At the same time young people who study are the most active, both from a political point of view and in the labour market. They should therefore be encouraged to take part in decision-making process involving issues relating to themselves, and even more in addressing global social problems. (LHDR, 2001, p.26)

Youth participation is one of the priority issues on the agenda of Lithuanian youth NGOs. According to Evaldas Birgiolis, LIJOT Board member, there are about 7000 NGOs in Lithuania and 1/5 or 1/6 of them are youth NGOs. In other words about 13% of Lithuanian youth has one or another organisational affiliation²⁴ However these figures should be interpreted carefully, because not all citizens are members of NGOs and there is no limit on the participation to one NGO per person. The most organised young people are school pupils, who are involved in school sport clubs, music clubs, that are the most popular among the school children. Pupils' interests are presented in school councils - self-governing bodies. But at the same time it was noted at the meeting with LIJOT Board members who quoted the results of the research on democratisation of Lithuanian school undertaken by the Civil Initiative Centre, “less than 1/5 of school students take part in school self-government (17%) and of those who take part: 3% do this through the school council, 5% through the pupils' council, 1% are school presidents, 6% through some non-governmental organisations and the rest (83%) prefer to solve their problems or worries at the individual level rather than through institutions available within schools.

Youth participation at local level is even worse and is totally dependent on the mercy of the local municipalities and in reality this support is so limited that it cannot have any impact on youth participation. The remaining question is what prevents young people forming an NGO? Certainly, money is not required – they can form a group in a local playground, or pub. The most obvious channel of participation which is available to young people at local level, which members of the International delegation were able to trace during our limited time in the country, is through educational institutions, but our observation had also shown that a lack of “participative pedagogy” - directly in schools and indirectly in families/ organisations as a basic requirement for potential effective participation, is something which should be on the priority agenda in Lithuanian youth policy.

This situation is also described in the Lithuanian Human Development Report (2001),

“..up to now politicians have usually limited their actions to declarations and the establishment of new structures. However, the level of activity and participation of young people themselves in addressing their problems is insufficient” (LHDR, 2001 p.20). Young peoples’ political activity underwent serious changes since independence was gained. According to the LHDR 2001: in 1999, 12% of young Lithuanians expressed their view that politics plays an important role in their life (compared with 7% of Estonians and 10% of Latvians), but the authors of the report conclude that it is more difficult for young people than older people to define their political preferences. Fifty per cent of young people aged 15-19 could not identify a political preference based on some ideological directions (in comparison with 30% among older people (LHDR,2001, p.21), which is not very much different from western European countries, but the worrying fact which was observed by the members of the International team of experts is that the rate of young people’s participation remains very low. Among 41 NGOs which form LIJOT according to their titles only 20 organisations are focused on youth issues, even if the membership is not high.

“The majority of young people, in particular those who live in rural areas or who are not enrolled in educational institutions, do not participate in these NGOs” (LHDR, 2002, p21)

Some of the youth organisations like Scouts were re-established after independence. In 1997 it has two main centres in Lithuania – in Vilnius and Kaunas - and its membership is 4000 people. At the meeting of representatives of LIJOT with the International team of experts it was conceded that youth policy issues do not have a strong position in Lithuania.

Non-formal youth groups in Griskabudis, Girenai and Luksiai villages spoke, both publicly and informally on an individual basis, of their “nil” influence on youth policy, “lack of interest in youth project funding” and lack of participation. Yet, the activities performed and services available, basically through individual teachers’ and youth leaders’ initiatives, were seen to be of a highly commendable nature. The “Bells” general school, the “Varpas” basketball club and the Guitarists Club are typical examples of a youth service that inspires creativity and autonomy. Much, however, can be done for the improvement of the environment in which these groups perform.

The same can be said about the Kaunas Union of Youth NGOs which, though proactive and participatory in vision, is “not involved in decision making”. AIESEC and Actia Catholica Patria, though of different orientation, are both taken up with their particular interests and, respectively, satisfied with the recognition they receive from university students and the voluntary social work they perform.

It would not be fair to say that the solution to a participatory approach is unknown or underdeveloped. A training course in progress in the Kulautuva youth centre was a good example of how effective and efficient professionally trained youth leaders can be. The accreditation of participants’ attendance and pleasant surroundings are only

two attributes of non-formal education. The question which all members of the team were trying to resolve is why such courses do not make a great impact on participation.

11. WHAT SHAPES LITHUANIAN YOUTH POLICY

The importance of a sound youth policy is widely recognised by the Government in Lithuania. The Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and effectively a Youth Minister thinks that the Lithuanian youth policy model is unique. Several laws were adopted by the government to regulate youth issues and the State Council for Youth affairs was established. A new stage in youth regulation will be laws to regulate implementation of youth policies.

Due to the dramatic changes in the Lithuanian society after it regained independence in 1991, Lithuanian youth policy has to be shaped almost from scratch due to:

1. Due to the changes in social and economic organisation of the Lithuanian society
2. Shift towards the market economy
3. Building of the nation state and reconsidering youth policy including the institutions which support it

Major principles of the Lithuanian national youth policy were specified in a resolution of the Lithuanian parliament of 1996, which set up its guidelines.

At the legislative level, a Committee for Youth and Sport Affairs of the Lithuanian Parliament consists of representatives of various political parties. A State Council is created to co-ordinate youth policy at the executive level. At the regional level youth policy is the responsibility of Vice-Mayors who are normally responsible for youth affairs, so the local authorities still play the role of policy co-ordinators with some elements of youth policy involved. Regional policy is co-ordinated through the “round tables”.

11.1 Committee for Youth and Sports Affairs (Parliamentary Committee)

The main objectives of the Committee for Youth and Sports Affairs (Parliamentary Committee) (Mr Masiulis, Chair of Committee for Youth and Sport Affairs of the Lithuanian Parliament) are to:

- Set up a legal framework
- Create a network of partners

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

Youth policy at the Legislative level is organised and co-ordinated by the Parliamentary Commission and its work is based in the following areas:

- Compulsory military service
- Awareness of civic society
- NGOs
- Disadvantaged young people
- EU enlargement
- Employment/unemployment
- Housing
- Youth minorities
- Lithuanian youth abroad
- Regional youth policy (youth municipalities work)
- Knowledge society

The main legal document “The National Youth Policy Concept” was adopted by the Lithuanian Parliament in 1996, but according to comments of the current members of the Parliamentary committee it already requires revision. There is also a draft of Law on youth, which is under discussion. From the Parliamentary committee point of view the priority issues are the following:

- Regional aspect of youth policy
- Youth issues at the level of municipalities

Regulation is required with respect to Youth NGO activity, which is prohibited at present, but the general view about it has changed already.

Another issue to be considered is voluntary work. There is some positive movement in respect of housing problems both for youth people and senior citizens. They are also involved in discussion of the second draft of the legislation on military service. Credits for students are another issue under discussion. Depending on the issue they work with different ministries.

The Department of Sports and the National Olympic Committee consider the issues of sport.

Another priority in youth policy is tax exemption

There is a general consensus on youth affairs, which is currently led by the Liberal party.

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

There is a difference in understanding of what youth problems are. For example the representative of the Social Democratic Party thinks that youth unemployment is a major issue. They also have a different view in relation to the higher education fees. The Liberal democrats’ opinion is that a certain contribution should be made by the students but it should be differentiated, while the SD insists on a free of charge education approach.

There is also one representative from Plocas (single mandate constituency) which has the highest level of unemployment 4,700 unemployed, 70% of who are young people and only 5 of them have higher education diplomas.

11.2 *State Council for Youth Affairs*

State Council for Youth Affairs consists of: members who are representatives of the Ministries (50% of its members) and another 50% who are representatives of NGOs. The Chair of the Council is a representative of the ministry, while as her/his deputy chair is a representative of an NGO. Its main functions, according to the State council for Youth affairs, are :

1. Political
2. Executive (implementation of the decisions of the council)
3. Administrative – as it acts as a state institution.

The council is also involved in financing of youth projects, setting up guidelines in youth policy and designing projects of the year.

The directions of its activities cover:

1. Inter-ministerial co-ordination in a form of providing recommendations to the ministries
2. Support of Youth NGOs
3. International work. Implementation of International obligations
4. Participation in drafting youth legislation

Representatives of the State Council for Youth Affairs believe that state intervention is an important part of youth policy, because the Lithuanian state is very young. The State Council for Youth Affairs supports regional initiatives, but has very little resources to do so. Previous governments were mainly concerned about support to businesses, whilst as the current government pays more attention to supporting social issues.

Some of the new initiatives of the government are:

- Youth employment centres (in Vilnius and other centres)
- The new initiative is to put NGOs on a competitive basis, so they could be government's partners in youth policy .

In municipality Sakiai, which is located in the western part of Lithuania and bordering Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation, which was described as an economically depressed area but the Municipal Office is fully aware of the situation. It has a strong centralised system for allocating funds and for providing “activities young people like”. One of its main objectives is to urge financial investment from central government in proportion to that made with large urban areas like Vilnius and Kaunas.

In the case of Kaunas, a university town, an air of optimism prevails among members of the Kaunas Youth Affairs Council in terms of representation, of their vision of Kaunas city and of project evaluation processes. Yet representatives also spoke of “no co-ordination between the Youth Affairs Council and the Municipality”, “non-existent regional policy”, “lack of infrastructures for sports activities” and “difficulty in influencing the National Youth Policy”.

Youth policy is trans-sectoral in Lithuania. The Deputy minister for social Affairs and Labour is effectively a Youth Minister. Her deputy is Chair of LiJOT-Council of Non-Governmental youth organisations.

11.3 Non-Governmental Organisations

At the national level, Council of Lithuanian Youth Organisations (LiJOT) which was founded in 1992 and has 44 member organisations (national NGOs) serves as an umbrella organisation for youth NGOs across the country: national, regional, etc.

The main activities of LiJOT are:

- Developing knowledge society
- European activities
- Youth initiatives

Among the priorities of the year 2002 are:

1. Youth participation
2. Youth co-operation development
3. Consultancy for youth organisations

Main activities organised:

1997-1998 Development of youth work

1998-1999 Baltic Youth Forum Secretariat

1998- hosted the European Youth Forum meeting

1999 – 2002 Participation in the Baltic Sea youth

Youth Information “Under Umbrella” monthly and it has its Website www.LiJOT.lt

LiJOT works on various levels:

International

National

Regional (Municipal) work in co-operation with Regional youth councils “Round tables”

Regional youth councils for youth affairs:

Co-operation of 40 on a district level

Co-operation inside the counties

LiJOT contributes to the development of co-ordination in the municipalities

International activities

Between 1993-1997 LiJOT was a member of CENYC, now a member of the European Youth Forum, Baltic Youth Forum, World Lithuanian Youth Union.

It is also involved in bilateral co-operation with Norway, Poland and between the Youth Councils: with Belarus, Flemish Youth Council, Luxembourg, Youth Council of Georgia, Swedish Youth Council, Regional Youth Council of Schleswig - Holstein.

Lithuanian Students Union. In 1991 students took an active part in the movement for independence. Although their main activities are now centred around less political issues like: quality of studies, social problems in Lithuania, students dormitories, tuition fees, it recently took part in the protest against a closure of the Students Union of Belarus. There are 13 state Universities in Lithuania + 2 private universities.

National Students Union

In 1998 it had 100 members. On the international level they work in the Baltic Union of Youth

Unions of NGOs “Round table”

The main objectives are:

1. Obtaining and sharing information
2. Training (counselling function)
3. Advocating in municipality
4. Renting-lending
5. Providing social and psychological help

They hold two programmes

Working skills of young people

A lot of organisational issues limit their opportunity to work with young people and attract new members.

Foreign NGOs in Lithuania

Thirty per cent of their funding comes from the Lithuanian Government and 70% from international donors

11.4 Dilemma of youth policy development

One of the greatest achievements of Lithuanian youth policy so far is the concept of ‘co-management and co-decision’, which is a corner principle of the State concept of Youth Policy. Before the team came to Lithuania it was difficult to imagine that co-management could actually be efficient; expectations were that it was either only functioning on paper, or that the youth participation was in fact not broadly based. During visits, however, members of the International team were able to see co-management structures at national and regional levels. There is a good understanding of the benefits of co-management among young people and among many decision-makers but the concept works less well in rural areas.

Lithuanian youth organisations have a co-operative approach to the state and the political system. This is probably both natural and desirable in a society that needs to stand together to achieve development progress. Youth organisations and especially LiJOT are working extremely well as non-formal educators, communicators of possibilities and providers of confidence and networks. However, this consensus should not reduce constructive criticism which in a broader sense strengthens civil society.

However, wherever members of the International team of experts went and almost everybody we met: representatives of governmental bodies, local authorities, youth organisations relate all the difficulties in building new youth policies to the legacy of Communism. The striking difference in opinions seems to lie in what can be described as a balance of citizens-state relationship (Mayer, 1995) which is only now becoming fully clear. Described as “social paternalism” - the political and ideological non-certifiability of people was connected with the state’s care of elementary welfare. Performance was low, while the extent of social security high. The connection

between care and non-certifiability, between security and submission was both structurally and psychologically important; it created a specific kind of relationship between the state and the citizens, which were not solely negative”²⁵

Despite radical democratic reforms in Lithuania, “the state still has the responsibility for the successful development of the economic microstructure, this though it still controls banks and their investment funds. On the other hand, it does not intervene - even indirectly - to a sufficient extent in this sphere which, in many ways, has remained on the technological level inherited from the communist times. The non-decentralised state authority is not satisfactorily controlled by democratically elected regional bodies and other kind of civil activities. The situation of the democratic opposition does not yet correspond to the standards of advanced pluralist democratic countries”²⁶ And “yet underdeveloped effective private decision making and the careful social policy of the government has led to some conservation of egalitarianism, both within the former state-owned enterprises and in the relation of the entrepreneurial sphere to the budget sphere (Machonin, 1995).”²⁷

It is not the aim of this commentary to draw up a list of the activities, plans and strategies of individual ministries in Lithuania. The evidence collected from the review team’s meetings and discussions corroborates the fact that most of the key domains and issues of a youth policy are on the agenda of the state corporate of Lithuania – although in a fragmented manner. That is, each body, council and organisation replicates the objectives, principles and strands of the state policy of youth. Proposals, programmes and needed support are supervised, and analysed by the VJRT which in turn prepares and puts forward proposals to the government. Through the process of representation, young people’s projects, expectations and problems are placed ‘on the table’ for consideration. Financial constraints and lack of legislation often lead to ‘lack of regulation and co-ordination of youth affairs’ (LiJOT, 22.06.02). Lobbying and patronage sometimes help to make in-roads for approval and action.

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

Endnotes:

¹Kovacheva, Siyka (2000) Sinking or Swimming in the Waves of Transformation? Young People and social protection in Central and Eastern Europe. A Study for the European Youth Forum , Commission of the European Communities, Brussels.

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

³ Ibid., p2

⁴ Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, Whither the European Union? In :Lithuania in the World, Vol.9,No5, 2001, p.4-8

⁵ Ibid. p5

⁶ The Economist Pocket Europe in Figures (2002). Facts and Figures about the 48 countries that make up Europe today. Fourth Edition, The Economist in Association with Profile Books Limited, p.165.

⁷ Bodo von Borries (1999) Cross-Cultural Comparison of Students' Concept of Europe. In: Intercultural Reconstruction. European Yearbook on Youth Policy and Research. Vol.2/1999, CYRCE, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, New York, pp.33-50.

⁸ Ibid. p36.

⁹ Ibid. p.37

¹⁰ Lithuanian Human Development Report, 2001 .United Nations development Programme. Social Policy Unit, Vilnius, 2001, p.24

¹¹ Lithuanian Human Development Report, 2001 .United Nations development Programme. Social Policy Unit, Vilnius, 2001

¹² Draft Review of Lithuanian Youth Policy, 2001, p.3

¹³ In the course of the discussion two main models or patterns of transition were identified and specified: **Knowledge oriented** transitional model (pattern) or **Skills oriented** transitional model (pattern). These were elaborated on the basis of the specific ways young people move into adulthood in different countries and specified through three dimensions:

Geographical (North, South Europe and Ireland)

Dominance of free choice or control over the young people transition into adult life

Dominance of particular social actors in the process of transition:

Young people themselves

Agencies, institutions which represent young peoples' needs (Youth associations, youth researchers)

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

And two additional dimensions were considered as very important:

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

5. gender

A further third model or pattern was considered to describe transition to adulthood of disadvantaged young people, so called drop-outs from main stream youth which should be used as a basis for social policy addressing the needs of this group of young people aiming to bring them back into mainstream. Therefore, it was emphasised that two identified models of transition are complimentary, not mutually exclusive and they reflect the trajectory of the development of European economies which is not linear, but more of a zigzag (forwards and backwards) development (Nurse, 2000)¹³

^{14 15} Koklyagina,L.(1992) Soviet Urban Youth: Sociological View in: Soviet Social Change in the Mirror of Glasnost (ed. by J.Riordan), Macmillan Publisher, London.

¹⁶ Lithuanian Human Development Report, p.30-31

¹⁷ Castells, Manuel (2000) End of Millenium: The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. Second edition, p. 67.

¹⁸ Under Umbrella. Autumn-Winter 2000, Council of Lithuanian Youth Organisations, Lithuania, 2000, p.4.

¹⁹ Draft Review of the Lithuanian Youth Policy,p.22

²⁰ Ibid., p22

²¹ Programme of the Republic of Lithuania for Increasing Employment for 2001-2004, p.5 (Approved by Resolution No529 of 8 May 2001of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania), Vilnius.

²² Transition. The First Ten Years Analysis and Lessons for Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, The World Bank, Washington, D.C.

²³ Transition. The First Ten Years Analysis and Lessons for Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, The World Bank, Washington, D.C.

²⁴ Youth participation in Lithuania. Handout, provided by LIJOT, December 2001

²⁵ Mayer, G. 1995 Socialismus v krvi. Transformace Očima Psychologie. Literární noviny. Přizítomnost 2.11 (Socialism in blood. Transformation Through the Eyes of Psychology) in: Pavel Machonin (1995) Social Structure of Communist Societies 'Après La Lutte'. Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague. Paper presented at the 1st Workshop: Social Structures in transformation. Patterns and Paths (ESF-Scientific Network: Social Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe, Ladenburg, Germany

²⁶ *ibid.*, p13

²⁷ *ibid.* p. 13

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APPENDIX I**Programme of the first visit: 5-9 December 2001****5 December (Wednesday)**

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

6 December (Thursday)

Meeting at the Ministry of culture
Meeting at the Ministry of Health
Meeting at the Ministry of Justice
Meeting with the Secretariat of State Council for Youth Affairs

7 December (Friday)

Meeting at the Ministry of Education and Science
Meeting at the Ministry of Social Security and Labour
Meeting with the representatives of the Interior Ministry

Programme of the second visit: 19-21 June 2002**19th of June (Wednesday)**

Visit to Sakiai municipality (rural)
Meeting with representatives of Sakiai district municipality
Visit to "Varpas" /"bell"/ general school, at which 3 youth NGO's are located: basketball club "Varpas"; Music club "Bang"; peers psychological aid centre; A meeting with the representatives of NGO's and non-formal youth groups of Sakiai town.
Visit to the centre for children and youth
Meeting with non-formal youth group of Griskabudis.
Visit to youth art studio and theatre of avant-garde fashion
Meeting with non-formal youth group of Girenai village
trooped together by the Zanavykai land museum; and members of Guitarists club
Meeting with representatives of youth school club "rainbow" of Luksiai village
Visit to Valiuliu village where the sport field is built in the frame of EU "Youth" programme, meeting with local people around the basketball pitch

20th of June (Thursday)

Visit to Kaunas municipality (urban)
Meeting with members of Kaunas youth committee at the Kaunas Municipality
Meeting with representatives of Kaunas Union of Youth Organisations "The round table" /umbrella of Kaunas youth organisations
Visit to the youth organisation "Actia Catholica Patria"
Meeting with AISEC-Kaunas members

21st of June (Friday)

Meeting with experts and researchers who contributed to prepare the United Nations Human Development 2001 report on young people in Lithuania:

Dr Rasa Aliskauskiene, Dr Irina Volosciuk, Dr Margarita Starkeviciute, Albertas Sleky

Visit to the National development institute. Meeting with members.