

SP-YOUNG

Discourse of Cross-Border Situation (Comparative Analysis)



SOCIAL PROFESSIONS
FOR SUPPORTING YOUTH IN A EUROPEAN
SOLIDARITY CONTEXT



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Discourse of Cross-Border Situation
(Comparative Analysis)

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Abstract

The current global economic situation represents particularly difficult labour market experience for young people. Many young people join the labour market without any education or training and they are lacking the fundamental skills needed to succeed on the job.

Young people have disadvantage in finding a job, especially those with low skills, without education and job experience. Those young people are often discriminated when they want to enter the labour market. Youth employment became a major challenge for governments in the all European Countries as well as employers. As it is known, youth unemployment promotes serious consequences not only for the young unemployed but also for the state economics.

The aim of the article is to reveal the social portrait of Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish and Swedish youth in the context of important topics such as unemployment, emigration (migration), attitude towards family, wellbeing, welfare and poverty, education and training, health and risk behaviour, as well as youth social integration into society and labour market. These problematic segments stimulate social exclusion of young people, thus requiring an appropriate strategy for training professionals who work with young people and who can develop models for positive and skillful socialization of young people.

Key words: youth, youth policy, employment, unemployment, emigration (migration), attitude towards family, opportunities for social participation of young people in society, strengthening intergenerational solidarity, education and training, health and risk behaviour, wellbeing, welfare and poverty.

Introduction

The urgency of the research. One of the European Union's (EU's) priorities of development is to promote youth employment. The national labour force surveys (Hoffman, 2011) show that since 2008 the youth unemployment rate has risen in all EU countries (Hughes, Borbējs-Pecec, 2012).

In the EU and the euro area, unemployment in general has been on the rise since 2008, which is due to the economic crisis which caused bankruptcy and financial trouble for many employers, and thus led to considerable job loss, less job offerings, and consequently, to a rise of the unemployment rate. Older workers are struggling to find new jobs despite their experience, and young graduates are struggling to find new jobs, because they have none. All in all, the number of unemployed persons worldwide is projected to rise, this is not down to the economic crisis alone, but also the industrial automation of processes previously performed by workers, as well as rising population figures (Statista, 2018).

Author Martincova (2012) consider, that the EU is facing a new challenge related to the so-called "lost generation" and solving the status of this generation in the global aspect. The role of youth is undeniable, and countries have to revise political positions related to the young generation, because the discontent of youth can become a major force for changing political regimes. If there are no attempts to solve the problem of youth unemployment, we might in future expect economic and political instability in the EU, as well as globally (Martincova, 2012).

Youth employment is one of the EU most pressing problems to deal with. In the current economic and financial crisis, the lack of job opportunities has affected young people more than any other group in society. Consequently, young people are faced with social problems, they cannot successfully integrate into the labour market to ensure their future stability and build their life in the future.

In this case, the authors would like to introduce readers to the youth employment and unemployment problem and social inclusion in Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden, by analysing various aspects of the labour market.

1. The theoretical basis of the study

Framework for theoretical analysis is based on project “Social Professions for Supporting Youth in European Solidary Context” (Nr. 2019-1-PL01-KA203-065091) partner organizations sociological reports:

- 1.** University of Warsaw and University of Białystok "Diagnosis of the Modern Generation of Poles" – dr. habil Krzysztof Sawicki, prof. dr. Danuta Lalak, dr. habil. Aneta Ostaszewska, dr. Emilia Żyłkiewicz-Płońska, dr. Katarzyna Rychlicka – Maraszek, dr Bartłomiej Skowroński,
- 2.** Research of Youth work in Lithuania, Klaipeda University – doc. dr Alona Rauckiene-Michaelsson, prof. dr. Elvyra Acienė, dr. Peje Michaelsson,
- 3.** Study of Young People in Latvia, Latvian Christian academy – prof., dr. Skaidrīte Gūtmane, lect., mag. Valters Dolacis,
- 4.** Situation of Perspectives of Youth Policy Implementation in Lithuania in the Context of European Solidarity, Klaipeda University – doc. dr Alona Rauckiene-Michaelsson, prof. dr. Elvyra Acienė, dr. Peje Michaelsson,
- 5.** Swedish Social Landscape in social work practice with vulnerable young population, Malmo University, Sweden, Capacity building through social pedagogy knowledge alliances and collaborative creativity, Malmo University, Sweden – prof. dr. Irena Dychawy Rosner, dr. Linda Lill, prof. Anders Jakobsson.

From the project partners theoretical investment, we can conclude that youth policies are cross-sectorial and cover domains such as access to education and labour market, welfare and social and economic rights, culture, life-long learning and non-formal education, housing, leisure time, criminal justice, health, lifestyle, mobility and many more. The vertical (age) and horizontal (socio-economical possibility and lifestyle) heterogeneity of young people implies that youth policies should be evidence based. In the youth sector this has been expressed as a “magic triangle” linking the research networks with relevant public authorities and civil society actors, representing young people and youth policy users and respondents. It is very much dependent on the country level how much time, efforts and finance has been invested in the development of proper youth policy of the country. While there are plenty of country specific youth programmes, still youth face more challenges and problems than ever in the history of mankind. Therefore employment, job,

income, uncertainty can keep young people from reaching other traditional markers of adulthood, leaving them discouraged and sometimes lonely. It can also have serious long-term effects on health, fertility, crime and eventually endanger social cohesion. The current situation shows that developments and implementations of youth policies and programs are heavily challenged both in terms of adequacy and in terms of efficiency. In light of the high principles which holds our societies together such as trust, solidarity, equal opportunities and high expectations regarding healthy youth activism and civic engagement it is important to speak on challenges of employment as the most important aspect for the successful social inclusion of young people into the labour market.

Several authors in their researches discuss about the inclusion of young people into the labour market and the associated social risks. In order to promote successful social inclusion of young people into the labour market, it is necessary to analyze the aspects that promote employment and pay attention to the analysis of the factors influencing youth unemployment.

In the analysis of theoretical basis of previous mentioned problem, the authors used the findings made by different researchers.

In the analysis of employment, the author used the findings made by Sileika, Rupsys, Grazevskis (2004), MacDonald, Mortimer, Furlong, Cartmel (2009), Standing (2011), Barbagelata, Keep (2012), Balan (2014), Berrington, Perelli-Harris, Trevena (2015) and other authors.

To examine the urgency of youth unemployment, the author used the deductions of Arulampalam (2001), Salvador, Leiner-Killinger (2008), Bell, Blanchflower (2009), Grinevica, Rivza (2015; 2016) and other authors.

Social inclusion and unemployment associations have been analyzed by such authors as Fares, Tiongson (2007), Biavaschi, Eichoorst, Giulietti, Kendzia, Muravyev, Pieters, Rodriguez- Planas, Schmidl, Zimmermann (2013), et al.

In many respects, the transition from school to work of young people is marked by certain constraints in the labour market - which involuntarily lead to an alternation of periods of employment and unemployment - and by the explicit attempt on the part of school leavers to move between jobs in order to benefit from occupational guidance, and look for their preferred occupation, personal and professional growth, to satisfy their desire to “shop around” and in search of the best match for themselves (Clark, Summers, 1982).

The **employment** of individuals has always been an urgent problem. In relation to the professional experience and education system several authors attribute the concept of employment.

Employment and an individual's professional life play a vital role in ensuring equal opportunities for all individuals and contribute to the participation of citizens in the economic, social and cultural life. However, many cases of discrimination are observed in the labour market (Grinevica, Rivza, 2015).

According to author Sileika, employment is an important part of social activities, providing the economic basis of the existence of the individual and the person's social status at the same time. The labour market is related to the rules, the elimination of differences between youth and adult employment, the rights, obligations and opportunities offered to young people in the labour market that do not differ from adult workers. Inclusion is seen as a success in building successful youth employment, which does not differ from the possibilities for adults. In other words, the opportunities offered to young people in the labour market are identical to adult opportunities and vice versa. A successful integration result is that the individual does not have a negative impact on the material situation and social life (Sileika et al., 2004).

Author Barbagelata consider that youth employment has always been a thorny issue, but nowadays it has acquired considerable relevance as it affects an increasing number of young people worldwide. At the time of addressing the problem of unemployment among youth, it is also pivotal to review traditional paths in education in order to supply adequate training. Whereas adequate education and training facilitate access to better positions on the part of young people under normal economic conditions, doubts are cast on the effectiveness of training programmes in times of crisis (Barbagelata, 2012).

Several general trends are evident in the research undertaken on young people's experience into the labour markets over the last few decades. Firstly, in line with other transitions such as housing and family formation (Berrington et al., 2015), youth employment has been characterised as increasingly 'precarious' (MacDonald, 2009; Standing, 2011), with significant challenges in finding sustainable employment.

Secondly, young people's transitions into the labour market are delayed, not only due to declining employment opportunities but also due to the mass expansion of higher education (Furlong & Cartmel, 2009).

Thirdly, it is argued that while young people have more choices than previous generations, they also have more personal responsibility for job seeking, skill development and career trajectories (Mortimer, 2009). As neoliberal contexts weaken the normative force of social structural positions and lifescritps produced through, inter alia, class, gender, ethnicity, religion, place and community, impetus is increasingly placed on young people themselves to individually scout for opportunities and tailor their own life trajectories (Price et al., 2011; Leonard et al., 2016).

Author Balan considers, that the current economic instability in the context of youth's prospects and opportunities in the labour market is uncertain (Balan, 2014). The transition from education to making money is becoming increasingly problematic (Keep, 2012). Increasingly diverse youth (including those who have had good school results) do not obtain education or undergo training and are not in employment, the labour supply is lower, including proper jobs (as opposed to unskilled temporary jobs), and the skills of youth are not very much demanded by employers (Global Trends for ..., 2010).

The behaviour of a young person depends on many social, economic, demographic, political and cultural factors that are closely interrelated. In order to integrate young people into the labour market it is very important to consider young people as one of the most problematic labour market groups and foresee the strategies of solving the problem of their unemployment (Rauckiene-Michaelsson, Aciene, 2020).

The main reasons for the decline of youth employment:

- Social conditions of family (young parents, single parent, etc.);
- Social competencies of young people (low personal and professional growth);
- The level of education (low-skilled, not educated);
- Cultural differences (national or ethnic minorities);
- Health problems (chronic or mental health problems, disability);

- Social, economic and political conditions, created by the state and society;
- Geographical conditions and economic stability (young people in rural areas, availability of transport, etc.).

According to previous mentioned causes, the successful youth employment is closely linked to successful participation in society, as well as inclusion into the labour market.

Labour market analysis would be incomplete without research about **unemployment** problems. In the 1980s for the first time youth unemployment became a serious problem in industrialized countries, where labour markets developed rapidly. In 1982, such authors as Clark and Summers pointed out that the youth unemployment problem arose from a lack of jobs.

Today globalization and open economy lead to unemployment and emigration that cannot be completely prevented and stopped because their causes are manifold. In a market economy, the issue of full and continuous employment is a difficult one, as there is always temporary unemployment when people temporarily lose their jobs, change jobs, etc. Economic, social, political, geographical or other reasons may determine the decision to emigrate. It is noted that it is not only the economic situation of the country that greatly influences the growth of emigration. Social security and protection as well as the cooperation between individual countries also have great impact on the increase of emigration (Rauckiene–Michaelsson, Aciene, 2020).

Youth unemployment created particular concerns because individuals who have become unemployed in the first years of their employment can become detrimental to the society. Youth who are unable to find a job after education can be perceived as inefficient human capital with the possibility of deterioration in employment, which could contribute to an individual's social exclusion. At the same time, youth unemployment is problematic not only for the person being unemployed but also for the economy as a whole (Salvador, Leiner-Killinger, 2008).

Authors Dao and Loungani accent that unemployment leads to significant losses both for the unemployed and for society as a whole, the damage increases with the length of unemployment (Dao, Loungani, 2010).

Unemployment is considered as a broad macroeconomic problem that is associated with the job absorption, wasting of human resources, the

performance of labour market, the success of economic policy and even with the risk of inflationary pressures. Unemployment has itself the hidden potential become as significant and serious social problem of the society (Novak, Darmono, 2015).

Most studies on unemployment have focused on the young people's negative future expectations into the labour market after unemployment situation. Being unemployed at a young age might have a negative impact in the form of "scarring effect". Young people might be trapped in lower limits of labour market with lower qualification opportunities, lower wage level and with poor prospects for better jobs. This fact might in future lead to long-term unwillingness to find a job, even to a risk of social exclusion by the society (Novak, Darmono, 2015).

Bell and Blanchflower estimate the individual unemployment probability using data from the Eurobarometer surveys in 2006 and 2009. They find that the group of coefficients that have changed most in the last 3 years are those associated with age: the increase in probability of unemployment for youth aged 15–24 has been much greater than the impact of living in a particular country, and is also greater than the effect of different education level and gender. The adverse effects on lifetime earnings are most pronounced for unemployment spells experienced at youth, especially upon college graduation. And the high and increasing burden of unemployment on young people poses risks to social cohesion (Bell, Blanchflower, 2009).

As mentioned previously, unemployment is one of key problems in macroeconomics. Many people who have lost their jobs become deprived of their regular income, suffer 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 21st century economic and social problems in Europe and many countries of the world. Unemployment relates to a complex of economic and social problems that directly and strongly affect both individuals and a country. In terms of economics, unemployment is the devastation of public resources and the destruction of living conditions of unemployed people. Today one of the most important problems in the labour market relates to human resources, especially when we refer to young people who start their economically active life period.

Author Arulampalam (2001) emphasized the significant negative impact of unemployment on the early stages of working life and future employment opportunities for an individual.

The author has identified the negative aspects that may affect the chances of entering the labour market:

- There is no opportunity to accumulate work experience;
- The decline of general skills is promoted;
- Possible negative impact on profit opportunities in the future;
- The transition from unemployment to employment is hampered;
- Social losses from unemployment (Arulampalam, 2001).

According to the World Bank's Development Report (2013), there are highlighted the conditions that would encourage young people to find a job and not become unemployed. The report states that good work for young people is work that contributes to long-term investment by providing employment for a longer period of time. In order to ensure a reasonable level of education and promote economic productivity, two approaches can be used.

- Firstly, in order to be able to ensure the acquisition of academic education, closer to the needs of the private sector, the academic learning process must be oriented to the labour market needs by providing internship opportunities for employers within the curriculum, acquiring certain work experience. The government must be responsible for attracting funding for academic education and the successful implementation of its programs.

- Secondly, to promote employment by involving young people in EU projects, stimulating the creation of sustainable and formal jobs. Countries with high informal employment are hampering upward mobility and economic policy development. Economic progress policies should be designed to create more companies in the formal sector that offer formal jobs. This can be addressed through economic policy reforms, such as the abolition of bureaucratic business registration procedures, tax reforms to encourage investment in the private sector and the creation of a

formal start-up support system. In some countries, a system of fixed-term employment contracts is also often used, which provides access to the labour market and facilitates the possibility of finding a more stable job. This system can be maintained by providing employment protection barriers between fixed-term work and self-employment (The World Development Report ..., 2013).

The analysis of the authors discussed above emphasizes the important link between unemployment and education, which promotes future potential opportunities to successfully enter the labour market, as low levels of education contribute to the possibility of social exclusion and inclusion into the labour market in the future.

Depending on the reasons for unemployment, 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 (Rauckiene-Michaelsson, Aciene, 2020).

Summing up the views of various authors, youth unemployment is affected by social factors such as social inclusion and social exclusion, financial situation, level of education and career opportunities, work experience or lack of it and so on. Youth unemployment is closely linked to successful participation in society.

Causes of youth unemployment are divided into the following groups:

- Social, economic and political conditions (created by the state and society);
- Social conditions of family (low social skills, young parents, disadvantaged family, etc.);
- The effect of education (low-skilled, not educated);
- Cultural differences (national or ethnic minorities);
- Health problems (chronic or mental health problems, disability);
- Economic barriers, geographical conditions (young people in rural areas, availability of transport, etc.).

In the view of theoreticians, the most efficient method that encourages young people to find a job is as follows:

- Job search support provided by the family and acquaintances by recommending the young people to some institution or company;
- Self-employment or business start-ups;
- The involvement of youth in unemployment support programmes (Grinevica, 2016).

Youth **social inclusion** into the labour market is attributed to education and training, as well as work experience that are considered as “drivers” for young person to start their career. If positive first experience is formed in young people, it is easier for them to enter into the labour market (Grinevica, 2016).

For young people, non-inclusion into the labour market can pose significant social risks. Authors, Novak and Darmono, emphasizes that young people might be trapped in lower limits of the labour market with lower qualification opportunities, a lower wage level and with poor prospects for better jobs. This fact might in future lead to long-term unwillingness to find a job, even to a risk of social exclusion by the society (Novak, Darmono, 2015).

Also, author Barbagelata considers that adequate level of education and training promote access to better positions on the part of young people under normal economic conditions, doubts are cast on the effectiveness of training programmes in times of crisis (Barbagelata, 2012).

As well as authors, Blanchflower and Freeman, have found that despite a deteriorating situation in labour market for young people, only few riots have occurred (Blanchflower, Freeman, 2000).

Authors, Fares and Tiongson, are also discussing about the inability of young people to find a job what affects social exclusion, and in the case of long-term inability by young people to find a job, it has negative consequences for future working lives in terms of lower incomes or wages (Fares, Tiongson, 2007).

According to the World Development Report 2013, there are determined the main recommendations for youth successful inclusion into the labour market. As the first recommendation, the possibility to *bring academic education closer to the private sector* is mentioned. In countries with high shares of university graduates with major difficulties in finding adequate jobs a major option is to make academic training more labour market-oriented, incorporating internships with employers into academic curricula so that some experience with current work practices in the private sector can be acquired. Governments responsible for funding academic education can require public

universities to modify academic curricula accordingly (Biavaschi, et. al., 2013). Also, that kind of recommendation will be useful to realise in Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden, because then intellectual capital for entrepreneur interests will be built, and it will develop the employability and productivity of young people.

The second recommendation suggests *to stimulate the creation of formal and sustainable jobs*. In countries where high shares of informal employment form a major barrier to upward mobility and economic progress, policies should be designed to create more enterprises in the formal sector which offer formal jobs. This can be addressed by economic policy reforms such as the abolition of bureaucratic business registration procedures, tax reforms, stimulating investment in the private sector and creation of formal companies start-up support (Biavaschi, et al., 2013).

Summarizing the research done on the concept of youth social inclusion into the labour market our position on the effective inclusion are to improve the educational system for creating favourable preconditions enabling youth themselves to create jobs, thus preparing them for the modern business world and practices. Therefore, it requires maintaining the holistic approach to ensuring the implementation of all the above-mentioned factors and activities. These factors may well serve as a starting point to investigate the youth's employability.

2. Comparative Analysis of the cross-border situation of youth problems based on partnering countries' reports

2.1. Wellbeing, welfare and poverty

From researches on young people in Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden we can conclude, that all mentioned countries governments are implementing policies for wellbeing and welfare for young people`s chances for better life.

In **Sweden** the welfare policies greater focus on social citizenship and emphasis on the importance of paid employment was a starting point for investment in human capital with the ideology that Sweden should be able to compete with high competence provided through high quality in all school forms (from pre-school to higher education) (Dychawy Rosner, 2020).

Among the people who work, there are very few which risk income poverty. In Sweden, this level has remained unchanged at 4-5percent since early 1990s. Contract-regulated minimum salaries and a regulated labour market means that Sweden does not indicate working poor population. On the other hand, income poverty has increased dramatically among those of young population who are outside work or studies. According to official statistics, in 2016, 18 percent of children and young people in Sweden (aged 0-19) lived in households with low financial standards or with single mothers. Until the turn of the millennium, income poverty in this group was around 6-8 percent. This has subsequently quadrupled to 28 percent, and now almost every fourth person without job or studying is income poverty-stricken (SCB, 2018).

At the same time economic standards have generally increased with higher disposable income, the proportion of low economic standards has increased as well. The vast majority of households have been economically better off. Nonetheless, close to 1.4 million of the total population, live in households with low economic standards (SCB, 2018). Differences in income mean likewise that foreign-born people have a lower financial standard than people born in Sweden (Dychawy Rosner, 2020).

One of indicators from which we can analyse wellbeing and welfare of young people is emigration, because main reason for emigration is getting better standard of living.

Also, researcher Gerbenčiūte in 2012 stated, that especially young people in **Lithuania** are free to change their place of residence and global world provides opportunities for better education, better pay and more housing. We can confirm that with survey data from Latvia – 61% of those young people in Latvia who want to emigrate to another country, doing it for higher pay and better standard of living (Gerbenčiūte, 2012).

Statistics data on emigration in Lithuania shows, that highest emigration levels are in age group of 25–29 (Rauckiene–Michaelsson, Aciene, 2020), from which we can conclude, that in late age of twenties young people are most interested in increase their welfare and get better standard of living.

Migration (emigration) of young people goes in two directions: labour migration and education (study) migration. Given that young people are most actively involved in the emigration process, researchers are looking for reasons why emigration is so intense in Lithuania.

It has been indicated that the major cause for increase of emigration is unemployment, however, in recent years the number of unemployed has fallen, yet the number of emigrants has increased (Rauckiene–Michaelsson, Aciene, 2020).

Thus, youth emigration as one of the most important problems that could have negative consequences for the demographic changes in Lithuania, urgently calls to deal with the issues for the positioning of young people in Lithuanian society and the problematic search for their identity (Rauckiene–Michaelsson, Aciene, 2020).

However, for the state, this possibility of free movement of people may become very dangerous as demographic changes can affect many areas of the state, for example, economy, medicine, education, social system, etc. It has become common to talk about measures of how to reduce emigration. The influence of emigration is discussed by numerous politicians, scientists and other professionals who deal with this issue. However, as mentioned above, migration is not only a reality with negative sides. Migrants not only change their place of residence, they adapt themselves to different political, social and cultural environment which allows them to develop and gain certain skills, and eventually broaden their horizons. Authors, Sipavičiene and Stankūniene (2009), distinguished between two types of those who return back to Lithuania: people who return because of failure in another country and people who return

because they want to use accumulated knowledge in Lithuania. The latter group of people should be attracted by measures to encourage return migration, which would not only recover the “lost” demographics but would also contribute to a more rapid economic development of the country (Sipavičiene, Stankūniene, 2009).

From survey data on young people opinion on emigration in **Latvia** we can conclude, that wellbeing is in good level, because only 10% of young people strongly or very strongly want to move to another country for more than six months. Also, if we compare this data with 2009 surveys data, the desire for emigration is decreasing. For those, who wants to emigrate financial motivation is main reason to leave country (Study of young..., 2020). Comparing data with Lithuania, we can see opposite, because numbers show that in Lithuania emigration level is very high, especially among young people in age group 25–29 – 83,3% in 2016 (Rauckiene–Michaelsson, Aciene, 2020).

Poverty is one of the factors, what affects young people`s future options and chances for better education and future standard of living.

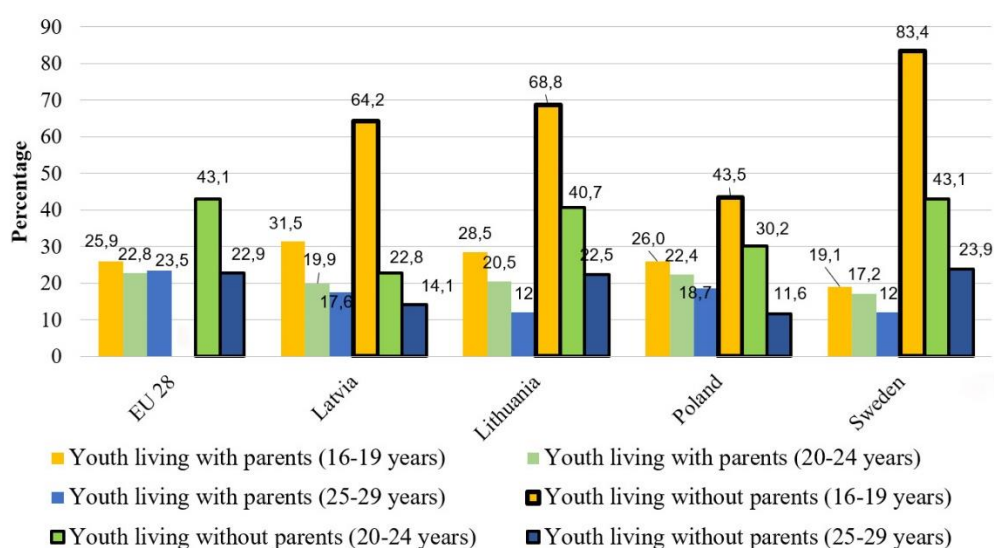
Polish researchers pay special attention to poverty analysis. From **Poland** statistics data in 2018 it was established that as many as 6% of children and adolescents below 18 years of age were living in extreme poverty. In same year survey show, that every fourth respondent (26%) considered their families financial resources as mediocre and every twentieth respondent (5%) as bad (Statistics Poland, 2018).

Studies show a rise in the percentage of young people who positively assess their families` financial situation, and a drop in those assessing them as mediocre or bad. Compared to 2016, in 2018 seven out of ten respondents (69%) described their families` financial resources as either good or very good (a rise by 5 percentage points), every fourth respondent (26%) considered them mediocre (a drop by 4 percentage points), while every twentieth respondent (5%) perceived it as bad (a drop by 1 percentage point) (Omyła–Rudzka, 2016, 2019).

Satisfaction with financial conditions among adolescents depends primarily on several factors, namely, parents` education, place of residence and adolescents` commitment to learning. Higher satisfaction with their financial situation characterizes adolescents whose parents received better

education, residing in large cities and students who obtain better grades at school (Omyła-Rudzka, 2016, 2019).

Improved financial situation of adolescents in Poland is primarily due to progressing fall in unemployment rates among their parents, the quantity of job offers and employment prospects, undertaking work abroad and increasingly higher professional activity of teenagers, which most often taken on the form of temporary work or summer break work.



Source: authors' compilation based on Eurostat, 2020.

Figure 1. **Young people's at-risk-of-poverty or exclusion rate living with/without parents (2018).**

From EU statistics about youth poverty we can conclude, that largest risk group of poverty in **Latvia, Lithuania, Poland** and **Sweden** are young people of age 16-19 years, who are not living with parents. For example, in Sweden 83,4% of young people, who are not living with their parents are exposed to poverty risk, in Lithuania it is 68,8%, Latvia – 64,2% and in Poland it is smallest – 43,5%. It could be explained, that very young people don't have much of job experience and for them it is harder to enter into labour market, so their income is depending on their parents or other family members, who can support them (see Figure 1).

According to Figure 1, young people in Poland in age group 25–29 years have smallest risk of poverty, it is only 11,6% compared to Latvia (14,1%), Lithuania (22,5%) and Sweden (23,9%).

If we compare overall data of age groups of young people, who live with and without parents, we can conclude that risk of poverty decreases as young people getting older. It could be explained with fact that, when youth are getting older, they receive more experience and knowledge and so their welfare is getting better.

2.2. Education and training

Education plays a direct role in determining a higher standard of living. That is main motivation, why young people tend to get education.

According to Malmö commission report from **Sweden** (Malmö Kommissionen, 2013) on determinants of health inequality in lifetime perspective points out structural factors such as income inequality and access to education as one of the most important of these determinants (Dychawy Rosner, 2020).

In 2017, around 90% of upper secondary learners received a leaving qualification (SI, 2019). The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools provides children (Skolverket, 2019), young people and adults with disabilities with the same opportunities for development and education that everyone in society is entitled to. A completed *högstadiet* is crucial for establishment on the labour market. However, far from all *högstadiet* students graduate with a degree. The young people themselves primarily indicate school fatigue as a reason why they did not complete their education. Of those who started in *högstadiet* in 2011, one in four girls and one in three boys did not graduate after five years (Kossack, 2017).

In Sweden, approximately 3 out of 10 of the 20-year olds do not graduate from high school (Kossack, 2017). This group has a great risk developing health problems in later life (OECD, 2018) and economic vulnerability (Bradley and Stephens, 2007). Not only in Sweden; across OECD countries people with this kind of educational outcome are less likely to participate in work force (Dychawy Rosner, 2020).

The older the pupils are, the more they feel stressed in school. Answering the question whether they feel stressed due to high demands on themselves, among pupils in high school, 62 percent of the girls and 19 percent of the boys said “yes” (SCB, 2015). Other studies have confirmed strong association between competing secondary education and family low socioeconomic position (Winding and Andersen, 2015). At the same time, poor social relations were more strongly associated with not completing a secondary education.

Young people’s education level depends on parents’ influence and education level. In **Latvia** survey data shows that if parent education level is higher, than much bigger chance, that their children will be tended to get good education too (Study of young..., 2020).

There is no research in **Lithuania** that communicates the role of schools in informing young people, especially school graduates, about how they approach higher education and the labour market in their future careers. However, interviews with first-year students reveal that their knowledge of Youth Guarantee Initiatives (to help them get a job within 4 months), open youth centers, youth work centers is very fragmented. Volunteering skills are also very poor. In training social work professionals, it is necessary to convey methodologies that reveal effective methods for work with young people as well as highlight the importance of an integrated youth policy. According Sakalauskienė and Celešienė (2015), the main principle and main tool for reaching goals in the field of youth policy is youth work. Youth work covers a broad scope of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature by, with, and for young people. Increasingly, such activities also include sport and services for young people. Youth work is based on non-formal and informal learning processes, and has a unique role as a provider of non-formal learning opportunities to all young people. Youth worker is a very important figure in youth work (youth worker in Lithuania is seen as a specialist who implements public policy rather than a representative of a certain profession). One of the main tasks of the project “Social Professions for Youth Education in the Context of European Solidarity” is to find practical strategies for combining theoretical and political guidelines for youth policy implementation in programs of training of social professions professionals.

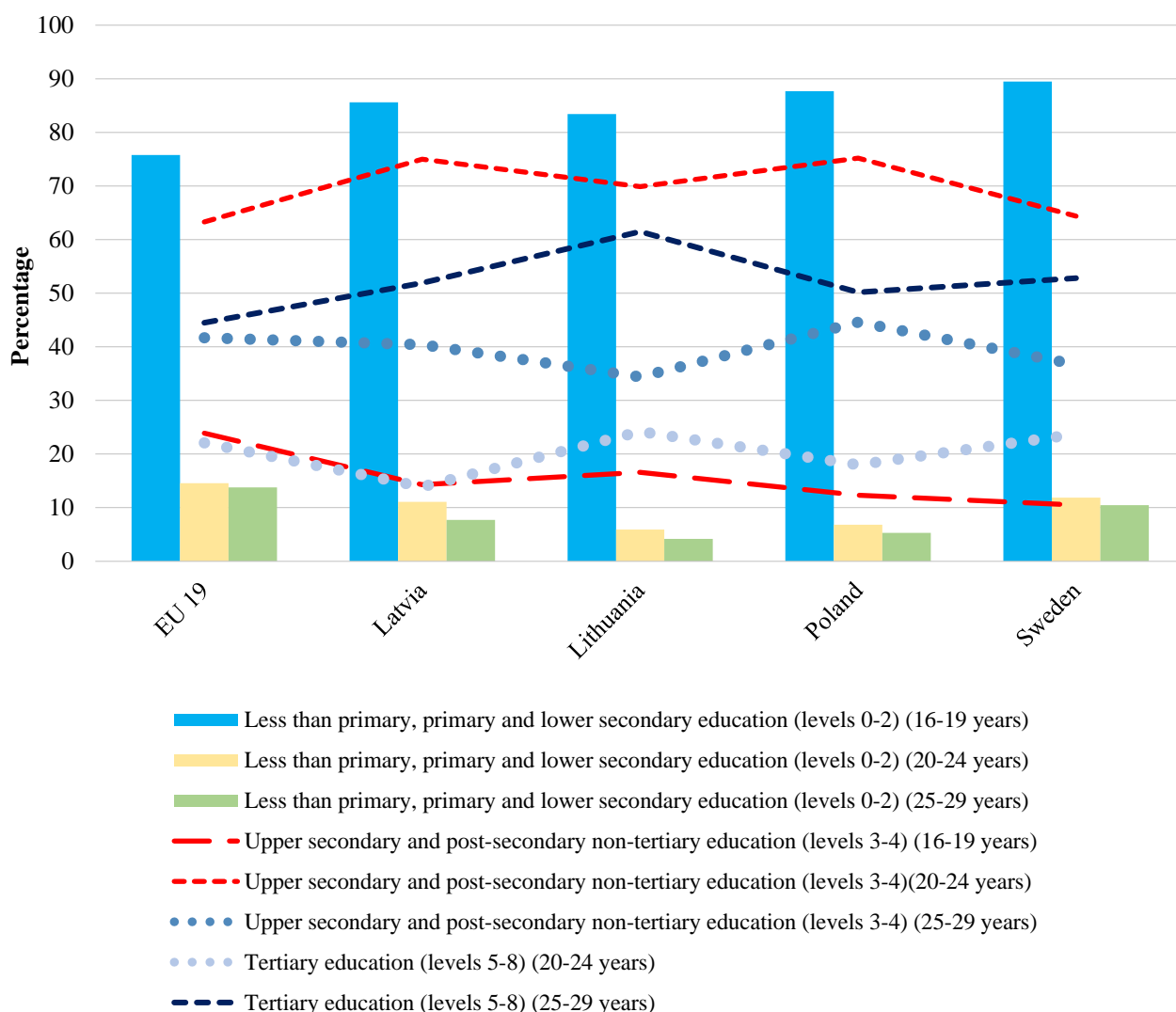
Statistics data about young people in age group 20–24 reveals that in **Poland** dropout rate (the youth outside the education and training system) is

5,4%. If compared to EU statistics, it's significantly smaller, than in EU – 11,1% (Diagnosis of the modern..., 2020).

Despite the still existing differences between rural and urban areas, when it comes to equality of educational opportunities – as shown by Wilkin & Nurzyńska – educational distance has been notably reduced. In the years 2012–2013, the percentage of residents of rural areas who received at least secondary-school education (38%) was for the first time higher than the percentage of those who received only primary school education (28–31%). When it comes to studying adolescents of the biggest cities and in villages 93% and 96.7% of people receive education, respectively (Wilkin, Nurzyńska, 2016). Inequalities can be generated by spatial organization of education. As shown by, among others, the 2019 GUS data, the majority of primary schools, but most of all lower secondary schools, are located in cities. The net enrolment rate for lower-secondary schools in the 2018/2019 school year was 101.4% in cities and 61.9% in rural areas, which consequently increases the occurrence of adolescents commuting from rural areas to lower-secondary schools in cities (GUS, 2019).

From EU statistics about youth poverty we can conclude, that the largest risk group with education less than primary, primary and lower secondary (levels 0–2) in **Latvia, Lithuania, Poland** and **Sweden** are young people of age 16–19 years. For example, in EU 19 average young people with less than primary, primary and lower secondary education are 75,8%. Comparing the level of education, in Sweden has the highest number of young people with low education of 16–19 age – 89,5%, the second highest is in Poland – 87,7%, but in Latvia – 85,6% and in Lithuania 83,4%. It is believed that a large proportion of young people in this age group have a low level of education because many young people have not completed their studies yet.

According to Figure 2, young people in Lithuania in age group 25–29 years have smallest indicator in education level group – youth with less than primary, primary and lower secondary education, it is 4,2%, compared to other countries where it is higher – in Poland – 5,3%, in Latvia– 7,7% and in Sweden 10,5%.



Source: authors' compilation based on Eurostat, 2020.

Figure 2. **Young people by educational attainment level, sex and age (2019).**

By analyzing statistical data from Figure 2, it must be concluded that the youth with upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3-4) are in age group 20-24, for example, in Sweden – 64,6%, in Lithuania – 69,9%, in Latvia – 75% and in Poland – 75,2%.

According to Figure 2, there is also a relatively high proportion of young people in the 25-29 age group with education level – upper secondary and post- secondary non-tertiary education, for example, the smallest 34,4% are in

Lithuania, 36,7% in Sweden, 40,4% in Latvia and 44,6% in Poland. Based on the analyzed data it can be also concluded that there is a large proportion of young people in the age group of 25-29 who do not start higher education studies.

By analyzing young people in age group 25-29 with tertiary education (levels 5-8), the highest proportion are in Lithuania – 61,5%, in Sweden – 52,8%, in Latvia – 51,9% and smallest proportion in Poland – 50,2%. It must be concluded that about half of the young people in the age group of 25-29 years have tertiary education.

2.3. Employment and entrepreneurship

A cohort study in Norway identified three main barriers to education or employment: motivation, the sense of lack of achievement and unrealistic expectations about working life (Osborg Ose and Jensen, 2017). Further, internet-based survey among 586 persons aged 18-29, revealed other barriers, such as health problems (60%), low education (55%), lack of work experience (41%), low self-esteem (36%) and feeling depressed (35%) (ibid). The nature of the problems of poor health and social inequality problems were correspondingly in Sweden reported by other researchers (Lorentzen et al., 2014; Sellström, Bremberg and O’Campo, 2010; Åhs and Westerling, 2006).

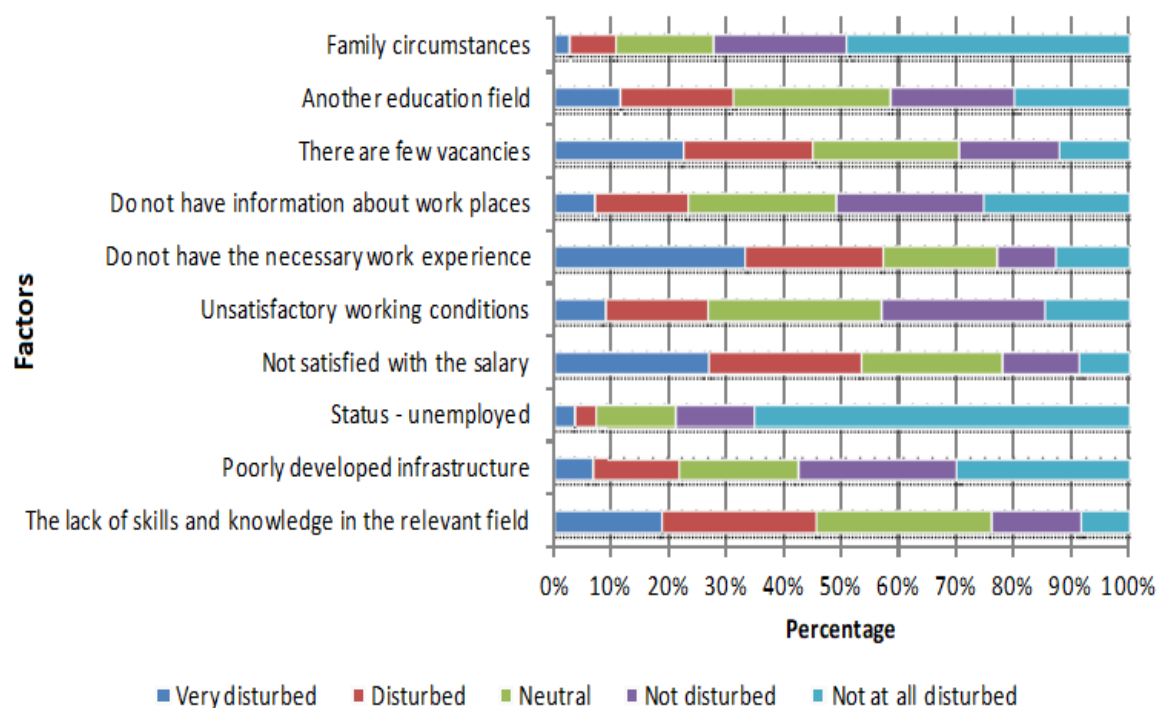
According to **Swedish** national statistics, within four years after high school (pre-degree studies), persons who have majored in vocational programs have integrated with the labour market to the greatest extent: 39 percent of the boys and 26 percent of the girls (more girls than boys continuing their education directly after high school). Furthermore, a comparison of employed persons occupations seven years after high school shows that women to a greater extent than men had an occupation that required both basic and in-depth higher education qualifications (SCB, 2019).

The higher the level of education, the more important the direct contact with employer for obtaining employment. This characteristic trait of the **Polish** labour market, namely, obtaining employment using “informal connections” (Sławewski, 2010) indicates the significant role of network capital in seeking employment and mobility, particularly on local labour markets. According to GUS studies, in Poland, 94.3% of the working youth aged 25-29 years did not have

to change their place of residence to undertake employment. In cases where young people changed their place of residence, greater mobility was manifested by men (about 60%) and residents of urban areas (70%). A change of the place of residence has taken place primarily within the area of Poland (71.2%). Nearly half of the individuals who changed their place of residence had higher education (GUS, 2017). This allows one to conclude that the tendency to mobility, which may significantly affect increased competitiveness on the labour market, is manifested primarily by young people of a higher status who are more oriented on development.

Employment is very important factor to youth, because it determines young people`s regular income and effects standard of living. Unemployment is one of macroeconomics main problems in any country and it`s taking big role in determining peoples economic and psychological discomfort. As a result of such discomfort it`s affects people decisions, for example, emigration as it`s mentioned earlier.

In order to identify the most important factors affecting youth employment in **Latvia**, author Grinevica made the survey (2016), by asking the youth (n=764) to assess the extent to which different exogenous factors without reference to youth have prevented from or hindered finding a job.



Source: Grinevica, 2016.

Figure 3. **Distribution of the answers of youth (n = 764) to the question “Please rate, how significant are the following exogenous factors that hindered you from finding a job before?” (%)**.

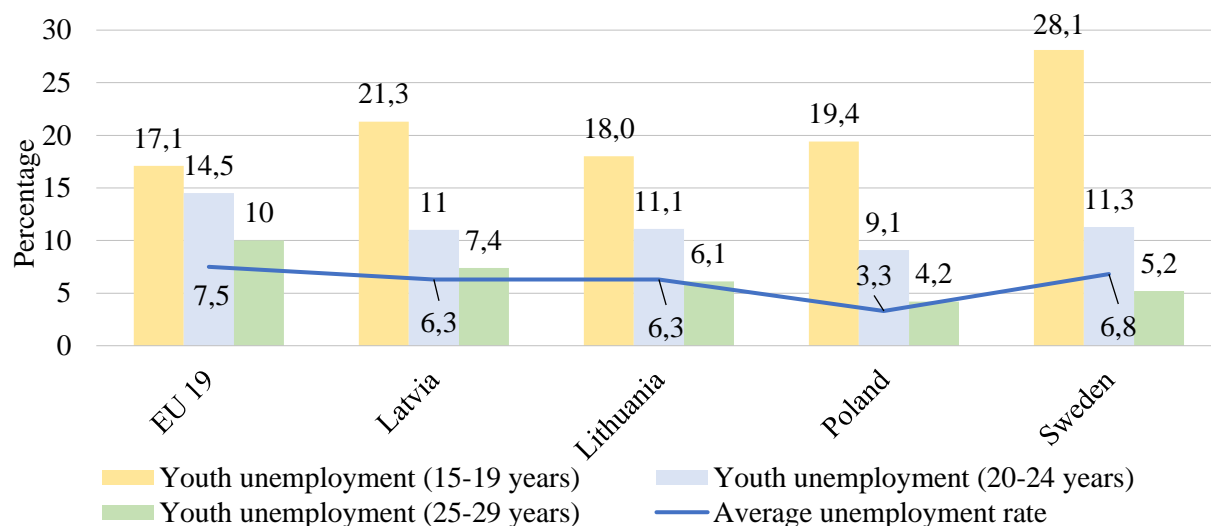
The obtained results of the survey of youth were analyzed and interpreted in different aspects- factors in relation to the youth’s place of residence in Latvian cities and youth educational attainment.

As shown in Figure 3, 65% of the youth who participated in the survey were not hindered from seeking a job, and 49% of the youth mentioned that their family circumstances were not a factor that prevented them from finding a job.

The factors that disturbed the youth the most in their search of work were as follows: dissatisfaction with the offered salary (very prevented - 27%, prevented - 27%), the lack of necessary work experience (very prevented - 33%, prevented - 25%) and a small number of free jobs (very prevented - 22%, prevented - 22%).

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 is becoming more and more evident, youth unemployment issues project into social exclusion or emigration (Rauckiene-Michaelsson, Aciene, 2020).



Source: authors' compilation based on Eurostat, 2020.

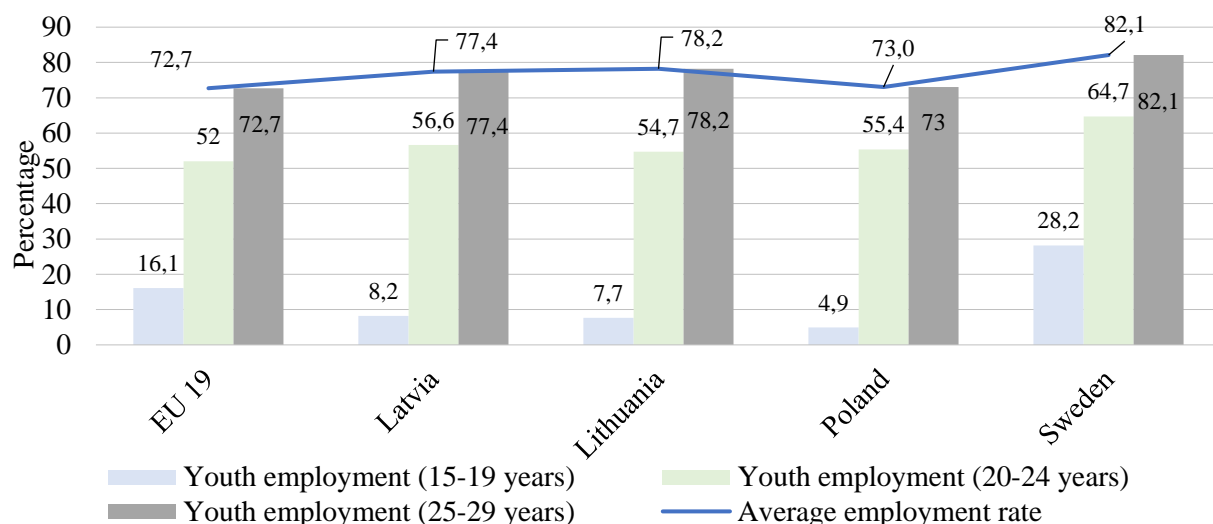
Figure 4. **Youth (aged 15–29) unemployment rates and average unemployment rate in Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden in 2019.**

As shown in Figure 4, in 2019 comparing with other mentioned states Sweden has the highest unemployment of young people in age groups 15–19 (28,1%) and 20–24 (11,3%) and unemployment in age group 25–29 it is only 1 percent higher than in Poland (4,2%). It must be pointed out, that in all mentioned countries average unemployment rate is lower than EU average and also in age groups 20–24 and 25–29 unemployment rates are lower than average in EU. But if we analyse youth Unemployment rate for age groups 15–19 years than in mentioned countries they are higher than average in EU.

If we compare youth unemployment data in all mentioned countries, we can conclude, that unemployment rates are dropping as young people is getting older. It is similar with data about youth poverty mentioned earlier.

It is often difficult for young people to find themselves in the labour market, foresee the trends of market development and choose a profession that will be the basis of their professional career in the future. 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 being raised and discussed (Rauckiene-Michaelsson, Aciene, 2020).



Source: authors' compilation based on Eurostat, 2020.

Figure 5. **Youth (aged 15-29) employment rates and average employment rate in Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden in 2019 (%)**.

As seen in figure x average employment rates in mentioned countries are higher than average employment rate in EU. Also, youth employment rates of young people in age groups 20-24 and 25-29 in mentioned countries are higher than average youth employment rate in EU of same age groups. For example, in Sweden youth employment rate in age group 25-29 years is almost 10% higher than in EU (EU – 72,7%, Sweden – 82,1%). In Figure 5 is also shown that young people employment rate in age group 15-19 years in Latvia, Lithuania and Poland are lower, than in EU, but for same age group in Sweden it is significantly higher than in EU.

Survey shows, that most valued criteria among young people in Latvia when looking for a job is income/salary, which is relevant for greater expectations of the standard of living. In the wake of the transition, money has been affirmed as the universal key to achievement of life opportunities and a criterion of success. In the same time small part of young people in Latvia wants to start private business – 3%. Most part of them have no plan to start business

yet – 57%, and only 3% had already started their own business (Study of young..., 2020).

2.4. Labour market situation.

Young people took on in particular issues such as: opportunities and barriers in the labour market (comparison of individual EU states), the transition from education to the labour market, the difficulties young people face in their first job and the role of trade unions in increasing chances of youth in the labour market.

Young people have fewer and fewer chances for stable employment, especially those at risk (with worse qualifications, disabled, women raising children).

Lack of work increasing problems in obtaining stable employment are delaying the process of entering adult life and a longer stay in the education system (we have more and better-educated youth, but we observe the phenomenon of depreciation of diplomas and deterioration of the situation of low-skilled young people). The phenomenon of taking up professional and family roles later in the life is more frequent.

We found out that despite the difficult situation on the labour market young people should be more active and think positive, they should look for solutions themselves and work together to solve their problems. They must engage in life-long learning, think critically and be active players in a civic society. Lack of critical thinking makes young people slaves of economy, this is the fact they are not aware of.

Formal education is very important for young job seekers, it provides analytical skills and teaches abstract thinking, but does not give the required labour market experience. The quality of formal education is extremely important. The importance of informal education which helps young people develop their language, social and intercultural skills cannot be ignored. Informal education perfectly complements formal education, so young people should be encouraged to take it up as well.

It has to be also taken into account that the labour market is not a constant phenomenon and the world of work is constantly changing. Not only should young people be trained for profession such as those already in

existence, but also for professions that will change in the future. And more and more they will have to learn to create their own jobs rather than wait until someone gives them that job.

2.5. Family

According to the **Polish** 2018 HBSC studies, 39.4% of young people declared a high level of support received from their family, while 38.3% reported it to be low. Regarding a peer group, a high level of support was declared by only 14.1% of the teenagers (a drop in 9 percentage points compared to 2014). A low level of support from peers was reported by two-thirds of the respondents. In the years 2014-2018, the percentage of adolescents who considered peer support to be low increased from 47.1% up to 66.6% (Małkowska-Szcutnik, 2015, Zawadzka & Korzycka, 2018). In summary, when it comes to the obtained study results regarding social support, one can notice a drop in the meaning of a peer group in young people's lives on the one hand and an increase in the authority of closest family members on the other hand.

Quality of life of young people, satisfaction linked to self-realization in society is also related to family life. Statistically the average duration of marriage in **Lithuania** is thirteen years. More than half of divorced families are with children. Every second married couple in our country is divorced. Among the countries of the EU are Lithuanian record-holders (Divorces. Crude divorce...., 2020).

Klaipėda University researchers E. Aciene and R. Čepienė in 2010 conducted the international project „Attitudes of Young People Towards Family” and carried out a detailed study of how young people value the Family Institute (Rauckiene-Michaelsson, Aciene, 2020).

It is emphasized that society attitude towards family institution is becoming more modern, but at the same time ambivalent tendencies have been recognized. Some people especially the representatives of elder generation seek to save the traditional family, but younger generation choose the forms of living together which might be defined as the description of modern family: living together without marriage, partnership at a distance rejecting common housekeeping, giving birth to illegitimate children, etc. (Rauckiene-Michaelsson, Aciene, 2020).

Social-economic and other factors make a seriously deep influence on youth's marital behaviour. Young people who have not started or have just started individual life have to make decision in what way they will transform the cycle "family-job-leisure". There are presumptions that under conditions of market economics the attitude towards family values changes totally. The sequence of priorities changes as well. At first young people want to find a working place, to make a career, obtain worldly goods (Rauckiene-Michaelsson, Aciene, 2020).

One of most common free time activities for **Latvian** youth is spending time with the family. 61% very often and 26% often spends free time spending it with the family. Survey shows, that most of people in Latvia have trust in the family. 10% have trust in family, and 86% of all have complete trust in family. Most of young people in Latvia are single (61%), 16% live together with their partner, 13% are married and 9% are in relationship without living together.

If we look at young peoples' opinion about their future family, then we see, that in 2018 70% expected that they will get married and have their own family, 15% will be in partnership and only 2% will stay without partner (Study of young..., 2020).

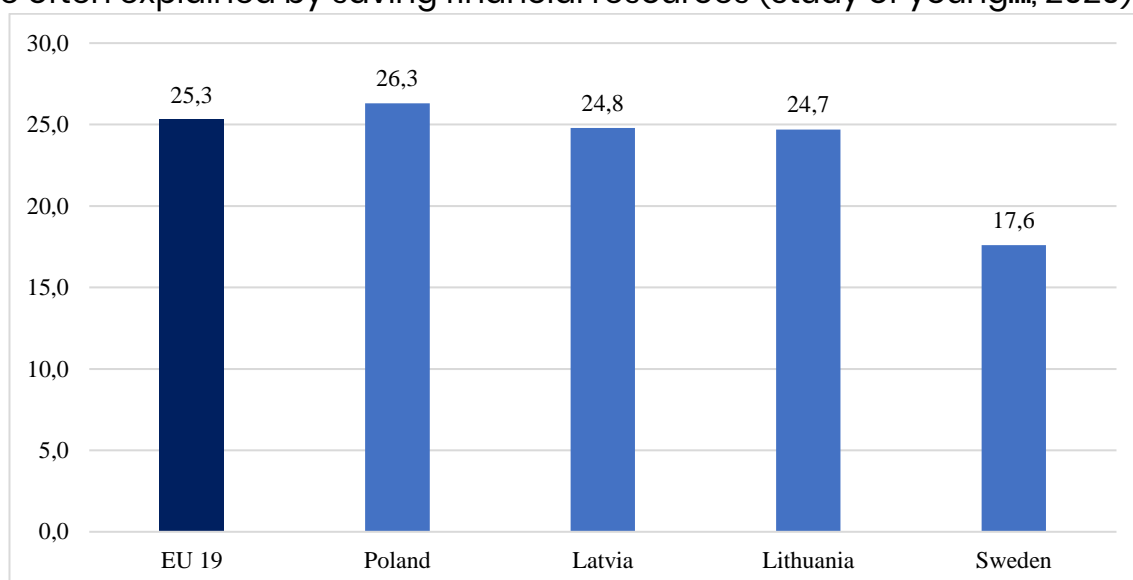
In **Lithuania**, research allowed to identify how young people tend to evaluate their genetic family: parents' interrelations, distribution of roles, satisfaction of their own relations with their parents, period of time parents devoted to their upbringing, parents' role in solving very important life questions, etc. According to statistic data analysis we tried to estimate if the evaluation of parents' interrelations makes influence on the satisfaction of relations between parents and children, and deliberate decision to choose parents' family as the model of their future family.

Family values which were followed by respondents' genetic families are still being reflected by young people. The attitude towards genetic families is mainly positive, which provides hope that lots of traditional family features will be passed onto future family basis (Rauckiene-Michaelsson, Aciene, 2020).

Summarizing the youth approach toward family, we want to point out that youth considers family as a value (Rauckiene-Michaelsson, Aciene, 2020).

2.6. Housing and environment

Most young people in **Latvia** lives in parents or other family members houses until they have enough personal income to move on to their own home or apartment. Only very few of them live in their own home (3% were acquired by their parents, 3% by themselves, 7% paid by themselves – rented). The reason for this situation is material, so living with parents or other family members is more often explained by saving financial resources (Study of young..., 2020).



Source: authors' compilation based on Eurostat, 2020.

Figure 6. **Estimated average age of young people leaving the parental household (age) (2019).**

In figure 6 is shown estimated average age of young people leaving the parental household and starting living separately. We can conclude, that in Poland young people leave home one year later than average age in EU, in Latvia and Lithuania young people leave parental homes approximately at same age as in EU, but in Sweden it is 17,6 years old average age when young people start live separately.

According to previously mentioned statistical data, young people from Sweden are more independent and start living independently of their parents sooner than young people from Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

2.7. Health and risk behaviour

Problematic behaviour is a term that has been broadly promoted by Richard and Shirley Jessor (Jessor & Jessor, 1977) in the theory of problematic behaviour formulated in the 1970s. According to the authors, the “problematic” dimension of a young person’s behaviour is determined by his/ her lack of respect for customs characteristic of requirements people at the same age are expected to meet; breaking norms and values adopted as typical of adolescents (Diagnosis of the modern..., 2020).

Researchers of Health Promoting Universities (HPU), Klaipeda University conducted a representative study of **Lithuanian** youth (n=1030), the response rate – 67.9 % (Misevičienė, Špečkauskienė, Rauckienė-Michaelsson, 2017).

The survey of the Lithuanian HPU students shows, that their lifestyle is not healthy and has not improved in the period of last twenty years. Two thirds of different study programmes students are physically inactive, every sixth of students has overweight, every fifth has been smoking every day during last three months, every third student and every second student from social sciences study programmes was using strong alcohol beverages 2–3 times per month. All students are thinking, that they use too much alcohol (Rauckiene-Michaelsson, Aciene, 2020).

Latvian youth is mostly healthy (excellent 54%, very good 29%, good 15%, average 1%). Excellent health is more typical in small towns, than in the capital. According to the research results, young people – daily smokers present 29%, time to time smokers – 16%, daily drinkers – 1%, few times a week – 12%, weekend drinkers – 17%, rarely use marijuana – 6%, weekend marijuana users – 1% (Study of young..., 2020).

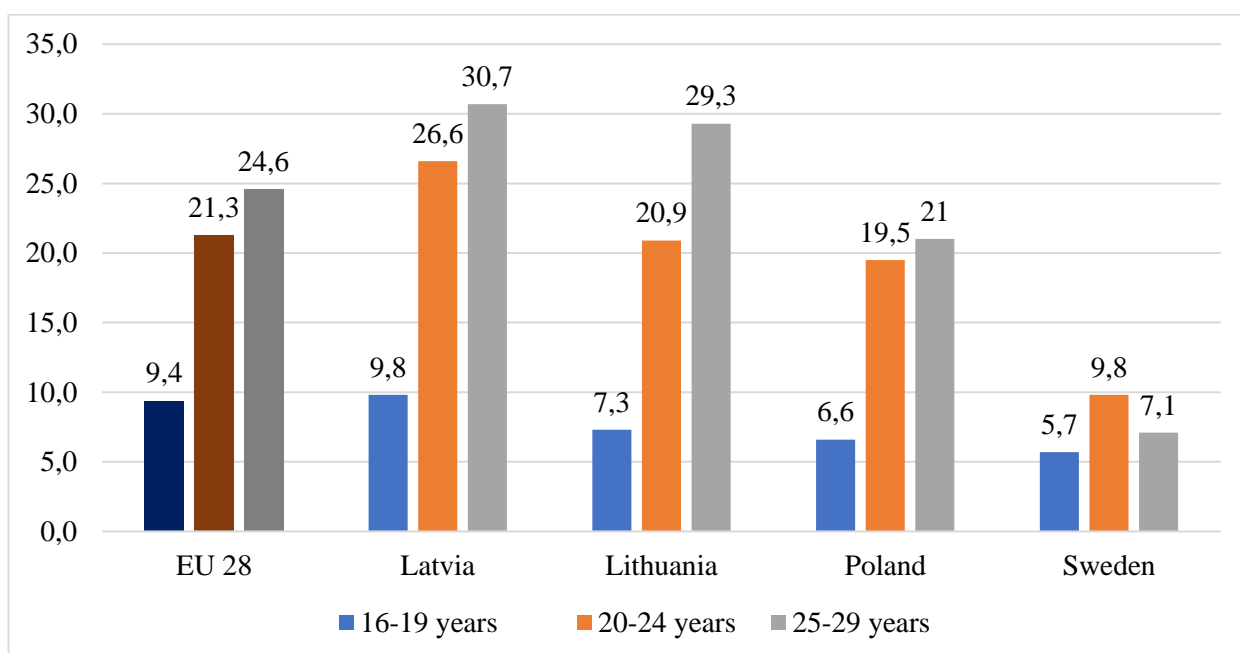
In **Poland**, several studies have been conducted on the health of young people and addictive effects on health.

The study results (2016) revealed that about 22% of students assessed their own mental health negatively, reporting at least 14 days of low mood over the preceding 30 days. This rate was slightly higher (by 3%) compared to the 2012 results. A negative self-assessment of one’s own mental health was far more often reported by girls (30%) than by boys (14%) (Bobrowski, 2017). Some individual depressive symptoms became more common. A notable rise was recorded in the incidence of frequently experienced sullenness over the

previous 7 days, both among girls and boys. There was also a considerable rise in the incidence of experiencing sadness often, yet only among boys. Based on a study (Bobrowski, 2017), high risk of depression pertained to 10.3% of the surveyed students, with a very highly diversified risk depending on sex (17.7% among girls and only 3.2% among boys) (Diagnosis of the modern..., 2020).

In survey studies conducted by ESPAD (Sierostawski, 2015), a cross-national Polish weighted sample comprised 3526 third-grade lower secondary school students and 2770 second-grade upper secondary school students. The commonness of smoking tobacco was examined into timeframes, namely, over a given respondent's lifetime and during the last 30 days prior to the study. Study results revealed that over lifetime, smoking experiences characterized as many as 56.2% of third-grade lower secondary school students and 71.5% of second-grade upper secondary school students. In turn, during the last 30 years prior to the study, as many as 26.4% of 15-year-olds and 16-year-olds, as well as 41.7% 17-year-olds and 18-year-olds engaged in smoking.

In studies carried out by the National Office for Counteracting Substance Dependence in 2016, as many as 21% of the surveyed students declared to be smoking regularly. In turn, the percentage of those who smoke only in specific situations, which increased from 16% in 2008 to 21% in 2013, it was hampered in 2016 – at that time, 20% of the students declared to be smoking in specific situations only. In 2016, non-smoking adolescents were most often attending upper-secondary schools (65%), whereas the lowest percentage of non-smokers was noted for students of vocational schools (Malczewski, 2016).



Source: authors' compilation based on Eurostat, 2014.

Figure 7. **Daily smokers of cigarettes by age - % (2014).**

Figure 7 shows young people daily smoking habits comparing Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden to EU average. In figure 7 we can see, that Latvia has more smokers in all age groups than average in EU and more than in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. Sweden compared with other countries and EU has smallest numbers of daily smokers. It must be noted, that in Sweden daily smoking young people in age group 20-24 is bigger, than in age group 16-19 years, but in age group 25-29 daily smokers are less than in age group of 25-29 years.

Unlike other countries, Poland have made analysis on many different other risk factors for young people, such as alcohol, drugs, and other

According to the ESPAD survey results conducted at schools (Sierostawski, 2015), as many as 83.8% of third-grade lower-secondary school students and 95.8% of second-grade upper-secondary school students engaged in attempts to drink alcohol. Over the last 12 months prior to the study, as many as 71.7% of younger students and 92.7% of older students were consuming any alcohol beverages. According to the conclusions drawn by the author of the report (Sierostawski, 2015), a high percentage of alcohol consumers among third-grade lower-secondary school students (mainly 15- and 16-year-olds) should be an issue of concern, both in the context of public health and legal

norms. In 2016, over the month preceding the study, 72% of the students have drunk beer at least once, 63% – vodka or/and other spirits, while 41% of the students – wine. Compared to 2013, a drop in the percentage of students consuming vodka occurred (by 5%), yet the percentage of those who consumed wine increased (by 6%). According to research (Malczewski, 2016), as many as 44% of students got drunk at least once during the month preceding the study. The percentage of study participants who happened to get drunk at least three times was 8%. Boys admitted to binge drinking more often (46%) than girls (42%). In 2016, binge drinking was declared by students of vocational schools (52%, and in 2013 – 59%), public general secondary schools – 46% of the respondents, technical secondary school – 40% (during the month preceding the study). Also, differentiation depending on a student's status is noted. What is more, students who do worse at school (who obtain grades such as a D, an E, – 49%) engage in binge drinking more often than students who get better grades (a C – 41%, a B and an A – 33%) (Malczewski, 2016).

Based on the European Drug Report published in 2019 (the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2019) one may conclude that in all age groups the most commonly used drug is cannabis. Usually, it is smoked, and in Europe it is commonly mixed with tobacco. The model for using cannabis varies – from occasional to regular use and addiction. It is estimated that 91.2 million of adults in the European Union (aged between 15 and 64 years), that is, 27.4% of that age group, experimented with cannabis at some point of life, and 17.5 million of which (adolescents aged from 15 to 34 years), constituting 14.4% of this age group, used cannabis in the previous year.

In the last year, the percentage of cannabis use in the age group between 15 and 24 years of age among EU citizens reached 18% individuals (10.1 million), whereas over the last month it was estimated at 9.3% (5.2 million) (the European Drug Report, 2019).

Results of the ESPAD school survey (Sierostawski, 2015) revealed that among lower secondary school students, the most commonly used are marijuana and hashish (25.0%), while the second most commonly used are over-the-counter sedatives and hypnotic medications (17.0%). In turn, the third most commonly used are inhalants (11.2%), the fourth most commonly used are analgesics taken to intoxicate oneself (7.4%), the fifth is LSD or other hallucinogens (5.5%), while the sixth is amphetamine (5.3%). Among upper-

secondary school students, the most commonly taken drug are also marihuana and hashish (43.0%), the second most commonly taken are over-the-counter sedatives and hypnotics (17.9%), the third one is inhalants (7.6%), the fourth one is amphetamine (7.1%), while two least commonly used are analgesics taken to intoxicate oneself (6.7%) and LSD or other hallucinogens (5.2%) (Sierostawski, 2015).

Studies conducted in 2016 (Malczewski, 2016) showed that the percentage of students who were offered to purchase drugs was 36% (this percentage was identical as that of 2008).

As Malczewski notices (Malczewski, 2016), in the years 1992-2003, the number of students using drugs over the last year increased systematically (from 5% to 24%), yet in 2008, the percentage of individual declaring contact with drugs decreased to 15%, in 2013 a small rise up to 18% was noted, while in 2016 this percentage was 17%.

The substances that according to the declarations made were most often taken by students were marihuana and hashish. In 2016, as many as 42% of the respondents admitted to have been taking it “at any point of life” (a slight rise by 2 percentage points compared to 2013) (Malczewski, 2016). Taking amphetamine was declared by 3% of the respondents, whereas the percentage of the respondents who have taken ecstasy was estimated at 4%. In turn, the percentage of respondents who have experimented with legal highs was estimated at 3.5% (Malczewski, 2016).

As many as 10.3% of lower secondary school students and 12.6% upper secondary school students admit to have taken ‘legal highs’ at least once in their life. Survey studies in ESPAD schools also showed that the percentages of current users are by far lower: 6.9% of third-grade students of lower secondary schools, 6.0% of second-grade students of upper secondary schools. In turn, during the last 30 days these substances were taken by only slightly over 4.3% of lower secondary school students and 3.0% of upper secondary school students. Using legal highs’ is quite diverse depending on the sex of a given study participant. The percentages of users are about twice as high among boys than among girls (Sierostawski, 2015).

The results of studies by Ostaszewski et al. revealed that when it comes to psychoactive substance use, the risk factors are: exposition to risky behaviour among peers; individual tendency to undertake risk for fun (a need

for excitement); somatic and mental ailments, as well as risky sexual behaviour, whereas the protective factors are: parental supervision of spare time and social relations of a young person growing up and good results at school (Ostaszewski, Biechowska, Pisarska, & Sowińska, 2017).

The problem of risk factors and protective factors in the context of psychoactive substances was also undertaken by Malczewski (2016). The factor that protects adolescents against experimenting with drugs is participating in religious practices. Contact with drugs was declared by 22% students whose parents worked abroad over the previous 12 months and 17% of those whose parents did not work abroad over the previous year (Malczewski, 2016). The highest percentage of individuals taking 'legal highs' was recorded at a vocational school (6%) and in cities of over 500 thousand residents (6%). The respondents who assessed their conditions as bad (9%) have a greater probability of taking 'legal highs' than individuals who have "good" conditions (3%). Likewise, among highly religious individuals the percentage of those taking 'legal highs' is lower (3%) than among non-believers (7%). Another factor that protects one against beer consumption is engagement in religious practices among adolescents, whereas the risk factor here is financial situation of the respondents' families (Malczewski, 2016).

The mental condition of children and adolescents is also evidenced by the number of suicide attempts that remains high in Poland. In 2015, it reached the highest level in years – 481 attempts, including 12 taken by children up to 12 years old. In 2016, this rate was slightly lower – 475 attempts. Moreover, in 2015, suicide was the second most common cause of death among children and adolescents in the age group 10–19 years, with every fifth death case in this group taking place as a result of a suicide. Suicidal attempts resulting in death were taken four times more often by boys (Szredzińska, 2017).

3. SWOT Analysis

In order to assess the competitiveness of youth in the labour market, a SWOT (S-strengths, W- weaknesses, O- opportunities, T- threats) analysis was done to summarize the information acquired in the research.

The SWOT analysis included strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats that affected youth's successful integration into the labour market of Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden, based on the research studies.

Table 1

SWOT analysis for youth's competitiveness in the labour market of Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote the development of jobs that can be combined with studies; • Promoting the availability of competitive education; • Provide the opportunity to attend courses and seminars, which would provide an opportunity to study new, previously unexplored areas; • Redistribution of budget places according to the sectors necessary for the development of the national economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of job offers in certain specialties; • Lack of skills and knowledge needed to get good job positions; • Uncompetitive remuneration for young people for both low-skilled and skilled work; • Ineffective implementation of youth unemployment reduction policy, which does not produce results in the long run, the implemented tools are aimed at "curing" the short-term problem, such statement is also provided by industry experts; • Inefficient integration into the labour market can promote young peoples' inclusion in the social risk group, promoting the increase of the level of risk of the poverty;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risky behaviour, such as, lack of healthy activities (sports), smoking, alcohol and drug use, gambling and other activities that are considered personally degrading.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The young person must think about his/ her own growth, ensuring a future life; • Young people need to point out your strengths and individual values when looking for a job; • Already work in advance with children from disadvantaged families, providing internships, giving the opportunity to earn a salary or additional bonuses, for example, free meals, dormitories, etc.; • Closer cooperation between educational institutions and entrepreneurs should be established, by providing more internships; • Youth ability to learn and improve the language required for daily work duties (e.g. Russian, English, etc.); • Expansion of leisure opportunities by universities in cooperation with youth organizations, mutual promotion of these activities and promotion of young people's interest; • Changes in the education system - Evaluation of the quality of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability of the young person to integrate into society, which can contribute to the development of various addictions, e.g. alcoholism, drug addiction, lewdness, crime, etc.; • Decrease of family welfare, because parents have to support several family members; • Low minimum wage level; • Decrease in birth rate - educated young people who receive inadequate remuneration may decide not to live family life, because the maintenance of the new born requires additional investments that the young person will not be able to afford; • Effect of the shadow economy on young people's integration into the labour market.

study programs, making study programs more practical;

- Expand the types of professions to be acquired in different sectors, promoting the acquisition of the necessary professions;
- Production promotion;
- Tax reduction for entrepreneurs who employ young people and government employment programs for young people integration in labour market;
- Improving the competitiveness of employment promotion measures by involving more young people and providing more competitive wages;
- Attitude of state institutions towards young people as individuals, effective involvement of human capital in the labour market;
- Fighting against dishonest employers by promoting a more effective exchange of information between employees and employers in order to provide experience on company attitudes, wages, etc.;
- Promotion of municipal support by promoting the business development of the local region, providing the opportunity to rent premises with discounts, promoting non-formal education activities in local schools - entrepreneurship training.

Source: Research results

Based on the previous research studies, the SWOT analysis was performed to further assess the factors influencing youth's competitiveness in the labour market, i.e. the factors that hinder unemployed youth from becoming employed persons due to dependent or independent factors; as a result, their inclusion into the labour market is complex and long lasting.

In order to determine the most significant SWOT factors affecting youth unemployment, pairwise analysis was employed.

The influencing factors were grouped using pairwise analysis and divided into criteria groups (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) (see Table 1).

4. Strategic guidelines for the project development

We consider that innovative analysis of the situation of young people in European Union needs to be based not so much on attention to destructive areas of young people's lives, but on labour market and education. Outlining the situation of young people in these areas we can equip students of social professions with the sense of purpose regarding competences they need to shape lives of young people and contribute to solidarity values, and acting for the benefit of society.

Along with employment and situation of labour market of young people we have to look upon civic participation. For this reason, we have to take in notice that the future ready specialists for work with young people will need both broad and specialized knowledge on possibilities to give young people a chance for work and better training in Europe.

The education system often doesn't respond to the needs of labour market. It should be made more and more open for needs of employers. Apprenticeships and learning through working in work places are essential, this largely solves the problem of complete lack of experience of people seeking their first job. Moreover, internships must be made mandatory in every form of education.

The Council of Europe synthesis report emphasizes that **“creating an age-friendly labour market is crucial for Europe. The step between education and employment can be a hard one, and young people need support to be guided in the right direction.**

Investing a new economy. New funding and supportive policies are needed to create alternative businesses where young people can fit better and play a bigger role.” (European Youth Forum, The Future of Work and Youth, 2019.)

Conclusions

- According to the research results, the youth unemployment is a serious macroeconomic problem. Youth unemployment affects not only a young people social exclusion from society but also increases economic costs and decrease revenues for state. That is the main reason why youth employment strategies and policies must be one of the priorities of every countries social policy.
- One of the foundations of a good youth employment policy is to improve the education system and adapt it to the requirements of the modern economy labour market requirements.
- It is important to take actions on reducing the risk of youth poverty in any country. Reducing the risk of youth poverty, it is important to understand that this is not a short-term but a long-term benefit for the development of each society and economy as a whole.
- The risk of youth poverty is higher in families where young people are raised only by one parent, so national social protection policies must be focused on serious measures to preserve families and strengthen family values.
- Based on the survey data, it can be concluded that the influence of parents on young peoples' future is important, for example, if parents have a high level of education, then their children are more likely be tended to have good education too.
- Youth employment has a very strong impact on young people's well-being, as their income and living standards depend on employment and job market.
- Research today indicates that young people's attitudes towards family values are positive, as young people see the family model as a value to them.
- The most important risk factors that could reduce the quality of life and future opportunities of young people are smoking, alcohol and other intoxicants and low level of physical activity.
- Due to **Covid crisis** we have to foresee risks which would affect young employees: Youth Active Labor Market Polices have had to be suspended – as public employment offices close, the Youth Guarantee as many

other youth employment promotion tools have become suddenly ineffective. Young people in training have seen their classes or traineeships interrupted. From the other hand, coronavirus give strength to new forms of tele-work and distance learning, but doubts are that they will not reach young people in isolated areas, rural areas, and islands. Work is social process, and training too. Online trainings will cause permanent damage to the skills and employability of young people. Some forms of precarious employment, such as home delivery services, cashiers, even nurses are quickly becoming acknowledged by young people. Young employment risks quickly returning to post-crisis levels in 2008–2013 with rates of up to 50% youth unemployment in some European countries. If we cumulate 2008 recession and the impending recession, if national and European policy responses are not determined and not targeted, for those who were born in the early 1990–ies, who are turning 30 now, there are good reasons to start thinking about a lost generation... Policy measures to react to Corona virus have focused on two fronts: to improve health care systems, to face the health care challenges posed by the **Covid crisis** and to mobilize resources to support those who are losing their employment. But those who already had no job and who will now face increased obstacles to access the labour market should not be forgotten. To a large extent they are young people: it is the future of European societies which is at stake. Unemployed youth also need our project.

- Young people need to be equipped with a set of key competences, including literacy, numeracy and digital competence. Critical thinking, creativity and ability to work as part of a team are equally important to build sustainable careers and to become active citizens. Education and training play a crucial role in enabling young people to develop these competences and to provide conditions for the best possible start in life. The European Skills Agenda pursues real paradigm shift in skills, especially after **Covid crisis** by putting digital strategies into practice and ensuring social fairness, putting into practice the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights: access to education, training and life-long learning for everybody in the EU. **Covid crisis** has clearly shown that digital skills are not just an asset for career progress. They are essential



to work, to study, to access services. It has also made clear that there is wide digital skills gap in Europe. And because millions of young people in the EU have lost their jobs, young people need to be upskilled to keep their job in a new work environment. **In this context following the European Digital Strategy, the new Industrial and Small, and Medium Enterprise Strategy, and Recovery Plan for Europe which was adopted by the Commission in July 1, 2020, has to be taken in notice in next steps of the project.**

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