Background information

Lithuania was an independent grand duchy in the Middle Ages. In the 16th century, it united with Poland to form a commonwealth. During the partition of this commonwealth by Russia, Prussia and Austria in the 18th century, Lithuania was absorbed into the Russian empire. After the First World War, on 16 February 1918, the Lithuanian Council proclaimed the restoration of the Lithuanian state. The secret protocol of the Soviet–German frontier treaty in 1939 assigned the greater part of Lithuania to the Soviet sphere of influence and on 3 August 1940 Lithuania became a Soviet Socialist Republic of the USSR. On 11 March 1990, Lithuanian Supreme Soviet proclaimed independence. Lithuania is a member of the European Union, United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Partnership for Peace.

The Constitution divides state power among the legislative, executive and judicial branches. The president of the republic is the head of state. The legislative branch consists of a unicameral Parliament or Seimas. Courts are independent and subject only to the law.

The population of Lithuania is 3,699,660. Area in km² 65,000, giving it a population density of 57 persons per sq km. Lithuania is highly urbanized, with 68 percent of the population living in urban areas. As of 2002, 18% of Lithuania’s population was younger than 15 years. Almost half of this number was girls. Unlike most other republics of the former USSR, the country is not dominated by a single urban center. Vilnius, the capital, is the largest city, followed by Kaunas, an industrial and commercial center, and Klaipeda, an important seaport.
The religion is predominantly Roman Catholic (about 90% of the population) (Turner, 2000). Ethnically, 83.5% of the population are Lithuanians. Other important ethnic groups are Russians (6.3%), Poles (6.7%), Belarusians (1.5%), Ukrainians (1%), and Jews (0.1%) (Department of Statistics, 2001). However, statistical data shows a change in the last decade in the ethnic composition of the population. The percentage of Lithuanians has increased from 79.6% in 1989 to 83.5% in 2001; the percentage of Poles has decreased from 7.0% to 6.7%, Russians from 9.4% to 6.3%.

The official language is Lithuanian, but ethnic minorities have the right to use their language where they form a substantial part of the population. Lithuanian is an Indo–European language, apparently as archaic as Sanskrit in its grammatical forms. The Lithuanian language is among the oldest in Europe and belongs to the Baltic group of Indo–European languages. Lithuanian, among all the living Indo–European languages has been the most successful in preserving its ancient system of phonetics and most of its morphological features.

The continued decrease in inflation, the growth of GDP, the increased foreign investment, the relatively low and stable unemployment (9.8 percent at the end of 2003), favorable changes in the balance of payments and privatization reflect the transformation of the Lithuanian economy. The country's GDP growth was highest in Europe, at 8.9% in 2003. The fiscal deficit was 2.6% in 2003 and is set at 2.95% for 2004, thus below the EU's 3% benchmark (The Wall Street Journal, January 23, 2004). Gross domestic product (GDP) generated over 2004 grew by 6.6 per cent as compared with the previous year at constant prices of 2000 (Statistics Lithuania, 2005).

The growth was mostly attributable to energy production increasing by 24.8%, construction 17.1%, processing 14.1%, extracting 13%, trade 11.1%, and transportation and communications 6.8%. Privatization of the large, state–owned utilities, particularly in the energy sector, is nearing completion. Foreign government and business support have helped in the transition from the old command economy to a market economy (Department of Statistics, 2001; CIA World Factbook, 2003). (601)
Period of Adolescence

The adolescence is not easy period of human life, because young person is experiencing sudden body's changes, accompanied by mood changes and feeling of insecurity; he seeks to find out who is he and tries to adapt.

In accordance to the World Health Organization definition, the age of 10 is the beginning of adolescence. However, the age–based definition of adolescence, encompassing children from the age of 10 to 19, doesn't coincide with the length of compulsory education. Its duration aims at enabling children to study and learn before they take upon themselves responsibilities that define them as adults, especially through becoming financially self-sufficient and starting their own families. The process of biological, psychological, emotional and social maturation is thereby facilitated through institutionalized education. The ages of biological and social adulthood increasingly diverge and financial dependence on parents is prolonged. In Lithuania, also as in many other countries, the length of adolescence is increasing due to the longer periods of time being spent after the statutory school leaving age in training and further in higher education. If completion of education and training and entry to the labor market marks the transition from adolescence to adulthood, then this social adulthood is increasingly delayed for many young people.

There is no concise definition of young people as a social group, and consequently no systematic approach to tackle the problems they face (LHDR, 2001). Under Lithuanian law, all persons under the age of 18 are classified as minors. According to National youth policy document, “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” (Youth Policy in Lithuania, 2003, p. 15).

Today the meaning of the term youth is vague in Lithuania. Rites that once marked the change of childhood into adolescence or youth have disappeared. The custom of just living together without any formal marriage registration is spreading. On the other hand, the words such as senmergė (a spinster), senbernis (an old bachelor), or merga su vaiku (a girl with child) are still abusive, especially in the country. Though in the Soviet period a farewell party before wedding was about to vanish, today it is being revived. This is a result of influence of both local and West European traditions. During the
period of Soviet occupation an attempt to organise civil initiation rites was made. However the Soviet regime failed to create initiatory symbols (Saknys, 2004). It also failed to incorporate the feelings of social and chronological identification into a novice through the organisation of the following events: solemn acceptance to the Comsomol, First Passport festivity, seeing off of a boy to the Soviet Army, or the so-called “initiation” into the rank of young workers or collective farmers. High-school graduates’ party embodied the most complex initiatory ceremonies designed to mark social maturity of a youth. During the party a youth danced a waltz with his/her parents, went to welcome the rising sun in the morning, lit his/her candle from a common one, or engaged in fortune telling practices. (Saknys, 2004). After the 1988 the ceremony passed away. Most likely, it was related to undergoing political changes in Lithuania, e.g., to the movement for independence which started in 1988.

Works on traditional initiation rites in Lithuania, also as in the neighboring European countries are not numerous. In a great number of cultures, the beginning of girl’s physical and social maturation is linked with her first menstruation. Nations differing in the level of their cultural development emphasize this fact by initiation rites. At the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th century, Lithuanians marked the first menstrual period within the family. In most cases only mother and daughter participated in the rite. As in some other European countries, the mother having learned about her daughter’s first menstruation would slap the girl's face and utter a ritual formula: “bloom like a rose, be beautiful” or similar words. The ritual practice was intended to predestine the girl’s physiological development. It was believed that even the manner in which the act of slapping was performed could determine the duration of menstruation. The mystery of birth was intimated to the girl. It was believed that after this evidence of maturity the girl was fit for marriage (Saknys, 2004).

A recent qualitative study of menarche rituals (Chrisler, Zittel, 1998) found that celebrations in Lithuania, as in most of Europe are very rare. Women college students from Lithuania, the US, Malaysia, and Sudan were invited to write the story of their first menstruation in as much detail as memory allowed. Stories were received from 26 Lithuanians (18– to 19–year–old students), 27 Americans, 20 Malaysians, and 23 Sudanese. Not all of the women gave their
age at menarche. Of those who did, the mean age was 13.5 years for the Lithuanians, 12.5 years for the Americans, 12.9 years for the Malaysians, and 13.5 years for the Sudanese. Two Lithuanians mentioned some type of celebration at menarche. All were private celebrations; most involved a gesture from the mother or father to the daughter. The girls were generally pleased by the gesture, although those from fathers also commonly elicited embarrassment.

The participants also recalled changes in body image at the time of menarche. Typical changes were feeling older, feeling grown up, and feeling like a woman. Lithuanian women described themselves as happy (38.5%), scared (26.9%), or expressed no emotions in their narratives (23.0%). Other changes included having a new perception of life, beginning to think more about life, finding life to be more significant, feeling like a part of nature, feeling more valuable, feeling a sense of responsibility, feeling clever, knowing the "main secret," realizing that she can now become a mother, appreciating herself more, and believing that she had entered the world of women (Chrisler, Zittel, 1998).

At the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th century, the second-type rite was the first bread baking, related to physical and social maturation of an individual. Bread being baked and a special small loaf of bread being ready, the mother invited all family members and her next-door female neighbor and distribute the bread baked by her daughter among them. The goal of ritual practices that followed was to notify the community about the daughter's readiness to get married. Somewhat simpler rites were practiced in the interwar period. (Saknys, 2004).

All above mentioned rites constituted a complex system in the past. Celebration of achievement of the state of physiological, social and sacral maturity by means of introducing ritually the girl to a gradually widening social circle, used to build up most favorable conditions for her to realize her new status psychologically.

At the present time, analysis of the timing of leaving the parental home, using median age as an indicator, shows, that Lithuania, also as Nordic countries and the UK belongs to early home–leaving group. In Lithuania, about 40% or more men and 50% or more women have left home before the age of 20 (Billari, Philipov, & Baizán, 2001). The predominant pattern of home leaving is via marriage. Emerging of adulthood can be seen also by shifts in different age
groups on the basis of choices that the young adults are making, such as those regarding cohabitation and marriage. Instead of entering marriage and parenthood in their very early twenties, most people now postpone these transitions until at least mid-twenties. As noted by Lesthaeghe, Moors (2000), the common feature of Eastern European fertility patterns is that the highest fertility is still in the age group 20–24. This is, of course, connected to earlier ages at marriage.

According to Sobotka (2003) in 1985 the modal age of Lithuanian women at first birth was 22 years, and up to 60% of first births took place among women aged 19–23. However, mean age of women at birth of first child in 2000 still was 23 years, what means that there is no dramatic rise in the typical ages of entering marriage and parenthood.

Overall, the period of “emerging adulthood” in Lithuania appears to take place at earlier ages if to compare to most of the Western countries, and in particularly, if to compare to United States (Arnett, 2004).

Beliefs

Traditionally, Lithuania has been a Roman Catholic country. Although severely affected by Soviet repression, the Roman Catholic Church remains the dominant and the most influential denomination. Most Roman Catholics in Lithuania were either Lithuanians or Poles, and the Orthodox and Old Believer adherents were predominantly Russians. This division has not changed, although currently it is no longer possible to assume religious affiliation on the basis of ethnic identity. However, Lithuania in the past has had two small but active Protestant denominations, the Evangelical Reformed (Calvinist) and the Evangelical Lutheran. The younger Protestant denominations are even smaller but are intensely active. The Calvinist and Evangelical Lutheran groups are very small— an estimated 15,000 Calvinists and 35,000 Lutherans. In addition, Orthodox Christianity as well as Judaism has roots at least as old as those of Roman Catholicism.

In 1991 a Western poll found that 69 % of respondents in Lithuania identified themselves as Roman Catholics (in 1939 the percentage was 85), 4% identified themselves as Orthodox, and 1% professed Evangelical Christian beliefs. New in this self-identification was a large category— 25%— who did not
profess any religion. Foreign missionary groups, including Baptists, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah's Witnesses, operate in the country, and their activities are not restricted. There are generally amicable relations between the various religious communities, although members of religious minorities occasionally are subject to acts of intolerance, such as insults.

Generally, Lithuanian society is secularized, although, as in many post-communist countries, younger people are searching for some sort of spiritual fulfilment. According to the Constitution, state and local teaching and education establishments are secular. At the request of parents, schools can offer classes in religious instructions. In practice, parents can choose classes in religious instruction or classes in ethics for nonreligious education. The constitution of 1992 guarantees "freedom of thought, religion, and conscience" to all and "recognizes traditional churches and religious organizations of Lithuania." Other religious organizations have to pass a test to ensure that their teachings do not "contradict the law and morality." All recognized churches are guaranteed the rights of legal persons and can govern themselves without state interference. Religious marriage registration is legally valid, as in the United States. The Government is obliged by law to finance religious instruction (of traditional confessions only) in state schools, and to fund fully schools of traditional religious groups and schools co-founded with traditional religious groups. In addition, the Government may, and often does, support schools run by nontraditional religious groups, who have the right to establish private schools and receive partial state funding.

The absolute majority of society still belongs to traditional religions. The emergence of nontraditional religiosity in Lithuania was with big delay in comparison with Western countries. So the first period of de-sovietization was also the period of the establishing of numerous new religious communities, mostly joined by young people. The first reaction of society was very positive. The variety of religious communities was treated as the significant mark of democracy. Though the positive attitude has disappeared during couple years. One reason was the wave of anticultic rumours which followed new movements. Another reason – general change in the conception of the role of religion in society. On the other hand, the role of non-tradition religious groups in the
current society is very small. They cover less than 0.5% population and usually are socially and politically passive.

The individualism is (Hofstede, 1980) a focus on rights above duties, a concern for oneself and immediate family, an emphasis on personal autonomy and self-fulfillment, and the basing of one’s identity on one’s personal accomplishments. Schwartz (1990) defined individualistic societies as fundamentally contractual, consisting of narrow primary groups and negotiated social relations, with specific obligations and expectations focusing on achieving status. These definitions all conceptualize individualism as a worldview that centralizes the personal—personal goals, personal uniqueness, and personal control—and peripheralizes the social. 20th century revealed the division of the world into two big camps – the West and the East, in one of which the priority was given to individualism and in the other to collectivism. The collectivism of the totalitarian period left a deep imprint in the minds of the people of Lithuania. However, meta-analyses of the studies on Individualism and Collectivism, conducted by Oyserman, Coon, Kemmelmeier (2002), revealed that Lithuanians tends more toward individualism and less to collectivism. (726)

Gender

Lithuania has strong tradition of catholic patriarchality (Trinkuniene, Trinkunas, 1999). Though value orientations, and gender role expectations of the Lithuanian population have been changing and modernizing in the recent decade, they still remain patriarchal in their nature. In addition, Lithuanian people had experience of soviet ideology of “gender equality” which aimed at increasing labor force and securing patriarchal gender structure (Aidis, 1999). It was natural for women double or even triple load of work at home, in economical sector, and as social activist. Even secondary school was strongly oriented to teach “proper” gender roles in Lithuania during Soviet period. There were compulsory classes on cooking, sewing, knitting, etc. for a girls and joinery, electrification, etc. for boys at school. It is natural that women who were socialized in such system feel rather comfortable performing almost all domestic work after a full–day working hours in professional field. Women’s family models may be directly related to their children’s families also
Gender differences are apparent in satisfaction with one’s body. The body’s proportions change with puberty, and the percentage of fat increases as a result of biological processes. For girls, entering puberty is thus first of all related to a loss: unlike boys, who grow closer to the physical ideal of the adult male with puberty (e.g. through muscle growth), girls distance themselves from the ideal of female beauty. This process is noteworthy not only because a high level of dissatisfaction with one’s body corresponds to a feeling of low self-worth, but also because the measures taken by girls have effects on their health. Restrictive eating behavior and frequent dieting is in many cases the entry point for eating disorders, in particular anorexia and bulimia. The increase in this type of disease must be seen as an ominous development (Hickman, et al., 2000).

The findings from the HBSC study (Hickman, et al., 2000) show that not only are girls substantially more dissatisfied with their own bodies, they also follow a diet more frequently. These differences are apparent as early as 11 years of age in Lithuania, as in all other the countries surveyed, but they assume dramatic dimensions by the age of 15 years. While boys’ satisfaction with their bodies hardly changes in this period – the findings even tend to show that boys become more satisfied with their bodies as they grow older – girls’ feelings towards their bodies grow worse. Not only do they want to change their weight, but they also state more often than boys that they are on the whole so unsatisfied with their bodies that they would really like to change something. Obviously, this dissatisfaction with one’s body feeds on an ideal of beauty that is fixated on slenderness, an ideal that is equally applicable in all European countries (Hickman, et al., 2000).

In another study, headed by Lissau, (2004), the researchers relied on a measure known as body mass index (BMI) to gauge obesity. Researchers calculated BMI by dividing the children’s weight in kilograms by the square of his or her height in meters. They analyzed data from 29 242 boys and girls aged 13 to 15 years from Lithuania, and also from other European countries and the United States. Children from the United States were the most likely to be overweight. After the U.S., Greece had the next highest proportion of overweight 15-year-old boys, at 10.8 %, followed by Israel, at 6.8 %. For 15-year-old girls, Portugal had the next highest proportion of overweight, at 6.7 %,
followed by Denmark, at 6.5%. Of all the countries that took part in the study, Lithuania had the lowest proportion of overweight, at 1.8% in 13-year-old boys, 2.6% in 13-year-old girls, .08% in 15-year-old boys, and 2.1% in 15-year-old girls. Lowest proportion of overweight could be probably because Lithuania has fewer fast-food restaurants and its teens have less money to buy snacks and fast food. Lithuanian adolescents are less likely than those in other countries to eat fast food, snacks and sugary sodas, e.g., they mostly keep to traditional dietary habits. Besides, they are less likely to be driven to school and other activities, contributing to a more active lifestyle. However, other possible factors, such as mass media influence can play an important role. For example, role models such as movie stars, or models from fashion shows are often adored and imitated by adolescent girls.

In a WHO study Health and Health Behavior of Young People (Currie, et al., 2000), adolescents aged 11, 13 and 15 years were asked how often and how many hours a week they took part in vigorous intensity activity outside school hours. The total number interviewed was 123,227 in 29 European countries, plus USA, Canada and the Russian Federation. Overall, students who reported exercising at least twice a week in 1997/1998 were most prevalent in Northern Ireland, Austria, Scotland and Estonia, and in the 15-year-old group also in Germany and the Czech Republic. The most inactive students were from Greenland, Latvia, Lithuania and Hungary. For example, the proportion of girls exercising vigorously is approximately half that of boys among 15-year-olds in Greenland, Lithuania and Greece (Hickman et al., 2000). (861)

The Self

"Identity" is a keyword of contemporary society and a central focus of social psychological theorizing and research. At earlier Soviet times, identity was not so much an issue; because the society was more stable, identity was to a great extent assigned, rather than selected or adopted. In current times, however, the concept of identity carries the full weight of the need for a sense of who one is, together with an often overwhelming pace of change in surrounding social contexts. Study carried out by Antiniene (1999) revealed that statuses of national identity of young Lithuanians were mostly determined by
environmental factors, such as homogeneous or heterogeneous family in a national aspect, the living place, and the language.

On the basis of the data of the Young people survey in 1997, young people mainly identified themselves as citizens of the Republic of Lithuania (Eidukiene, 2000). The majority of them (76%) reported that they were proud for being citizens of Lithuania. There were no significant differences in answers by age, sex, education, marital status and place of residence. Opposite opinion was mainly characteristic to young people 16–18 years old who reside in urban areas. In young people’s opinion, Lithuanians should be proud of sport achievements, independence and diligence. In another study 82 Lithuanian–American/Canadian adolescents responded in writing to questions regarding their Lithuanian and American ethnic consciousness and identity (Norvilas, 1999). The adolescents saw themselves as both Lithuanian and American. Their Lithuanian identity was based on three external components: descent (ancestry), ethnic involvement, and language, and the internal feeling of pride and satisfaction and sense of belonging and purpose. They regarded their Lithuanian identities as essential aspects of their personality, without which they would have felt empty and different. Their American identity consisted of awareness of birthright, social involvement, and emotional ties. The relationship between the two identities was a dynamic one, each coming to the force or receding as a result of context: e.g., an adolescent might feel more Lithuanian amongst fellow Lithuanians. Interestingly enough, there was little evidence of conflict between the two identities. The main complaint the participants expressed was that at times they felt overextended, that there was too much to do. (364)

Family

Changes in the lifestyles of the parents’ generation in most industrialized countries result in changes to family structures. The rate of marriages in Lithuania has decreased from 9.8 marriages per 1000 population in 1990 to 4.9 in 2003. However, the divorce rate also decreased, from 3.4 per 1000 population in 1990 to 3.1 in 2003.

Families are relatively small in Lithuania – the average household size was 2.74 in 1997. The proportion of households made up of a single person in
2001 was 21.1% of women and 28.2 percent of men, of a single adult and children under 18 years was 4%, of couples without children –19%, and of couples with children under 18 years – 25% (Department of Statistics, 2001).

Communication difficulties for Lithuanian adolescents become more frequent during puberty. Communicating with fathers was more difficult then mothers in all countries, 52% of 15–year–olds indicating it was difficult or very difficult to talk with their fathers (Currie, et al., 2000). Difficulty in parental communication was strongly associated with difficulties in talking with other siblings, with feeling less happy (girls), with smoking and with drinking alcohol more often (13– and 15–year–old girls). Family problems, negative moods and the influence of the peer group are seen as strong predictors of the use of tobacco and alcohol (King, et al., 1996).

While involvement in a peer group seems to improve communication skills in the youngest group, it is associated with increased risk behavior among older groups. For 15–year–olds the amount of time spent with friends is a decisive predictor for smoking and the experience of drunkenness (King, et al., 1996).

Because adolescents naturally experiment with new behaviors to gain peer acceptance, Lithuanian teens may be confronted by their parents. Some of the family systems are so strict that they become paralyzed when changes occur: unable to create new rules to solve new conflicts, they continue to rely on what had worked in the past, but no longer functions. On the other hand, a family system that is too permissive confronts change in such an anarchic way that the result is once again dysfunctional.

In the HBSC survey (King, et al., 1996) the item “My parents are willing to come to school to talk to teachers” was used as an indicator of parents’ involvement with their child’s school. There were dramatic differences in the proportion of students who answered always to this item from country to country. Denmark and Israel ranked highest for all age groups and Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia lowest. This pattern appears to reflect different expectations across cultures regarding parent involvement in the life of school rather than the level of parental concern about the school progress of children. Lithuania, also as Switzerland was a little below the average at all age levels to the responses to the question “If I have problems at school, my parents are ready to help me”. Students in Lithuania were more likely than most
others to feel parents’ expectations were too high, e.g. that parents expect too much from them at school.

Adolescence can be a tumultuous time. Moreover, the country is still in a period of transition, and the set of values most parents are familiar with are being challenged. This creates conflicts in communication between generations which are far more complicated than those in the west. Typical sources of conflicts are related to leisure activities and to substance abuse. Many adolescents differ with their parents about child-rearing and argue frequently with their parents. Even so, many would seek their parents' advice on serious matters, although there is considerable variation in their comfort level with discussing sexual matters. Teenagers’ sexual activity is commonly perceived as big problem, also pregnancies in adolescence.  (620)

Friends and Peers/Youth

In adolescence the educational role of the family decreases. In search of individual adult identity, young people tend to orient themselves towards peer groups. In most cases this also means orientation towards adolescent subcultures. Risk behavior, such as alcohol and tobacco consumption, is part of social interaction within these peer groups. While experimentation with such behavior can be considered a regular developmental task, group pressure may cause their maintenance, which impairs health. In striving towards personal autonomy, young people tend to increase their contacts outside the family in a group of others of similar age. This is seen as a decisive process for the development of one’s own personality.

The acceptance of adolescents by their peers is a fundamental component of their school development, and it also has far-reaching consequences for many areas of their life. The 1997/98 WHO study covering 28 countries revealed the scope of bullying among schoolchildren and the impact of bullying on health and well-being. During this investigation, information about youth's health-related behaviors, including bullying, was gathered from some 113,000 students between the ages of 12 and 16 years. On average, 19% of the boys and 16% of the girls replied that they had been victims of bullying more than once or twice. The scope of bullying appears to vary greatly from country to country – in Lithuania the figures were 40% for the boys and 39% for
the girls, while for example in Sweden they were 6% and 5%. (Currie C. et al., (eds.) 2000).

Across age groups, students in Lithuania were more likely than most others to report being left alone at least once or twice during the school term. Moreover, across age groups students in Lithuania were more likely to have been bullied. Boys were more likely to have been bullied than girls. The proportion of Lithuanian students who have been bullied increased by age 13, but dropped substantially by age 15. Boys were more likely than girls to bully others: even 71 percent of boys at age 13 and 73 percent at age 15 indicated that they had taken part in bullying others during the school term (Currie C. et al., (eds.) 2000).

Significant part of young people’s life is sport and music. Lithuania has an outstanding sports record. The national basketball team is among the leading teams in the world: in 1997 the women's team won the European Championship in Budapest and the men's teams brought home several Olympic medals. Over 300 Olympic, Lithuanian participants have won 28 gold, 19 Silver and 54 bronze medals. This is due to the fact that there are many sport clubs in Lithuania, both private and supported by government. For example, former famous basketball players, Arvydas Sabonis and Sarunas Marciulionis, opened the basketball sport schools for children and adolescents, where they are trained not only in sports, but also in computer literacy and English.

Until the fall of the former USSR, until the breakdown of informational blockade in late 1980s and early 1990s, when Lithuania became the independent state again, almost nobody in the country heard anything about acid house, rave, techno, or similar features of contemporary Western youth culture. Such youth groups as metallists, punks, hippies, existed, however, they reached the country much later than it became known in Western Europe (Sliavaite, 2004). However, after 1991 everything began to move very fast. In 1995 a special radio youth programme "Duziai" ("Strokes"), devoted to electronical music. In fact, there happened to be such big "flood" of "ravers", that nowadays Lithuanian techno music devotees even seem to be looking for another word instead of "raver", which sometimes rise rather negative connotations. The definition encountered most often is that "rave is a movement, which unites the fans of techno music" in spontaneous and disorderly parties centered around the music. However, this period has passed,
and nowadays there are fewer "ravers" to be seen in the cities streets, but more organized events, performances, radio and TV programs, energetic DJs, more information, etc. At least for Lithuanian ravers, the knowledge of Western and Lithuanian techno music, seems to be very serious criterion for their identity with this youth movement. The study of rave culture in Lithuania points directly to the general processes in the society – to the changing orientations of the youth, to the images of "the West", to the cultural and economic stratification of the society (Sliavaite, 2004). (721)

Love and Sexuality

The sexual activity becomes common occurrence among adolescents, however, negative social attitude toward adolescents' sexuality is prevalent in the society.

In accordance with the data of the survey “Family and fertility in Lithuania” (Klimas, Baublyte, 1997) people start experiencing first sexual intercourse at a very young age. Even 14% of people born in 1975–1977 reported that they had started sexual relations at the age of 13–15. Being 18–19 years old, 40% of young people of this cohort had already experienced sexual intercourse (38.1% of women and 41.7% of men). 2001/02 survey of the Health Behavior in School-aged Children (HBSC) revealed that the mean age at first sexual intercourse in Lithuania was 13.5 years (Ross, et al., 2004). Data indicated that the percentage of 15–year-old girls who reported having had sexual intercourse is 10.8% in Lithuania, 14.1% in Latvia and 15.8% in Estonia, that is much lower than that in Nordic European countries (Lazdane, 2004). The percentage of 15–year-old Lithuanian boys who reported having had sexual intercourse was 26.4%.

During the last years use of contraception increased among young people. In 1995, a big number of younger people used contraceptive means already during the first sexual intercourse (Klimas, Baublyte, 1997). Most popular means of birth control is the condom (21.8% – in Latvia, 26.4% – in Lithuania, 25.3% – in Sweden and 23% in Finland).

A study, performed in 1998 in an urban area indicated that birth control pills and/or condoms were used by 57% of 13 – 19 years old teenagers. Survey accomplished in 2001 in both urban and rural areas pointed that during the last
sexual intercourse condoms and birth control pills were used by 79.5 % of 13 – 19 year old youth. Oral contraceptives were used by 10.3 % adolescents from urban area and by 11.4 % – from rural area (Jaruseviciene, 1998).

Trend data on adolescent birthrates were compiled for 46 countries over the period 1970–1995 (Singh, Darroch, 2000). The level of adolescent pregnancy varies across the countries, from a very low rate in the Netherlands (12 pregnancies per 1,000 adolescents per year), when in Lithuania the rate was quite high (36.7 per 1,000 adolescents, aged 15–19, per year). Increased use of contraception was related with twice reduced adolescents’ fertility rate within 6 years (1259 births for adolescents less than 18 years in 1996, 615 – in 2002). Number of induced abortions was even more dramatically decreased (2196 induced abortion for adolescents less than 19 years old in 1997, 863 – in 2002). Approximately 7.2% of all abortions in 1998 were performed on women under the age of 19, and 0.02% for women under 14 years of age (Singh, Darroch, 2000).

Adolescents, like adults, must go to a primary health care provider for pregnancy tests and a referral to a hospital for an abortion. In case of abortion for minors under 16 years, written consent of parents or legal guardians is mandatory, for 16 – 18 years old minors – desirable. If pregnancy is involved under 14 years, abortion can be performed according to the verdict of the court. Abortions per 1000 live births age under 20 years, in 2002 varied from 309 in Lithuania to 3834 in Sweden (Lazdane, 2004).

Although the minimum age of consent for men and women to marry is 18, the draft Civil Code would allow a court to reduce the minimum age by three years on the basis of a person’s request. Also, in cases of pregnancy, courts may allow a person younger than 15 to get married. In 1996, 4% of all marriages had a bride aged 17 or younger.

Median age at first marriage in 2003 for Lithuanian women was 24.3, for men – 26.4, when in 1990 it was 22.4, and 24.2 accordingly (Statistics Lithuania, 2005). In recent years, more people have started living together without being married. There is a trend toward “living together” (domestic partnership) among 17 to 20 year olds and at older ages. While direct statistical evidence of the trend is not available, estimates can be made based on data concerning extra marital births and marriage trends. Cohabitation is in essence a new phenomenon in Lithuania, where ethno–cultural and religious values
always put strong emphasis on traditional family relations. However, market reforms which have caused both increased insecurity and a new sense of personal responsibility for the future, have also become conducive to alternative forms of household. Research data does show that each succeeding generation is reacting more favorably to consensual unions of family formation strategy. In 1997, 28% of 20–29 year old men and 33% of women of the same age believed that society regards cohabitation in an unfavorable light. Among the older generations stricter attitudes prevail. 35% of 40–49 year old men and 41% of women believe that this type of partnership is frowned upon by society. (HDR, 1997).

Cohabitation is prevalent among the youngest men and women of marriageable age. Survey (HDR, 1997) data show that 15% of men and 16% of women born in 1971 had already lived with a partner by the age of 24. Only 8% of men and 6% of women born in 1951 had had experience of cohabitation by the same age. It should also be noted that the spread of cohabitation only partially compensates for the number of postponed marriages. Children from divorced families are two times more likely to cohabit when they reach marriageable age (20% compared to 10% of those who grew up with both parents). It is therefore obvious that not only recent social and economic conditions, but also the increased instability of marriages in Lithuania over the past few decades, has had quite a significant effect on the spread of cohabitation (HDR, 1997).

Independent Lithuania inherited Soviet legislation on homosexuality and the taboo surrounding it. Lithuania was last among the three Baltic countries to abolish severe penalties for consensual homosexual acts. European research on human values from 1991 reveals that Lithuanian citizens have the lowest rate of acceptance of homosexuality in Europe. According to statistics from the European Values Study, in 2001 Lithuania scored 2.0 out of 10 points on a scale measuring tolerance toward gays and lesbians. This number barely increased from the 1.9 points Lithuania scored in 1992, and is much lower than that of Western European countries such as the Netherlands, which often scores around 8 points. A substantial majority of Lithuanians hold negative views of gays and lesbians. An opinion poll showed that in 1999 78.2% of Lithuanians did not tolerate homosexuality. Only 67.8 of respondents would want to live with homosexual neighbors, while 87.5% would rather live with drug-addicts. It
is one of the lowest levels of acceptance of homosexuals in Europe (Baltijos tyrimai, 2001).

The attitudes toward homosexuality in Lithuania are a hold-over from Soviet times. Homosexuality used to be considered a crime in the Soviet Union and was punishable by imprisonment. For people who grew up with that sort of mentality, it could be very difficult for them to change their opinions. Education and information about homosexuality in schools is very limited. Though negative images may well be promoted, more usually it is by their omission from curricula that homosexuals are invalidated. (1190)

Health Risk Behavior

Owing to its geographical location, Lithuania has become a transit country for drug trafficking from eastern to western European countries. Drug addiction in Lithuania is a serious social problem. New brands of drugs and psychotropic agents have been introduced into the black market. The most popular drug was marijuana, although such drugs as amphetamines, crack, ecstasy, heroin and LSD were used as well. Cannabis is the most frequently experimented illicit drug among schoolchildren, aged 15–16 in Lithuania, with 11.9% having used cannabis at least once during their lifetime (ESPAD, 1999). Lifetime use of ecstasy was reported by 4.4%, followed by smoking heroin (4.1%).

In 2001, health care institutions have reported 0.1% (N=5) of adolescents up to 14 years, 11.3% (N=461) – young people from 15 to 19 years, 28% (N=1142) – from 20 to 24 years, 37% (N=1513) – from 25 to 34 years dependent on drugs. Only 23.6% (N=966) of drug users were older than 35. International survey ESPAD’99 carried out simultaneously in 250 schools, revealed that narcotic or psychotropic substances have been used among 15–16 year old schoolchildren in all the educational institutions. Only one country-side located school had not reported a single case of the drug use. However, both nicotine smoking and alcohol consuming schoolchildren of 9 or 10 grade (16–17 year-old) were found in every school, and their nicotine/alcohol using experience reached from 5 to 10 years (Davidaviciene, 1999).

The most popular is “weed”, sedatives and tranquilizers or inhalants (glue). Marihuana (“weed”, cannabis) use in some schools amounts to 28.9–
33.0%. Even 7–8% of boarding-school children sniff glue. Glue sniffing is also common in other institutions, especially in those located in a country-side. Other schools indicated only 2–5% of schoolchildren to be involved into glue sniffing, majority of them are boys. The girls appear to be more often the users of sedatives and tranquilizers (up to 9%). Number of the schoolchildren, who combine alcohol with pills, is on increase (even up to 12%, mostly girls). Some of the schools insisted having some consistent drug users (Davidaviciene, 1999).

The HBSC survey’s findings (Currie et al., 2000) show that experience with smoking is as frequent as that with alcohol consumption, at least so far as experimenting is concerned. In Lithuania, 10% of adolescents aged 15 years state that they smoked cigarettes once a week or more. Clearly distinguishable gender differences are to be seen, with markedly higher prevalence of regular smoking among boys. For example, at age of 15th, amongst 15 year-old girls, 6% of Lithuanian girls state that they smoke, when the proportion of regular smokers aged 15 and above in Lithuania was about 30%.

The proportions of adolescents who regularly drink each week show clear difference between the countries (Settertobulte, et al., 2001). The rates are highest in the United Kingdom, Belgium, Denmark, Austria and Greece, whereas only relatively few 15–year-olds drink regularly in Poland, Estonia, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Greenland, Lithuania and Finland. The legal limitations on the age at which alcoholic beverages can be purchased and consumed by the public in Lithuania is age of 18 years. Moreover, Lithuania is one of a few countries where there are clear bans on sales in publicly accessible places (Settertobulte, et al., 2001).

The number of HIV cases has been steadily increasing since the first HIV case was reported in 1989. The estimated number of people living with HIV/AIDS in Lithuania is 2500. The majority of HIV positive people are younger than 30. However, up today, children and adolescents younger then 15 years old were not diagnosed as having been infected by HIV. The injecting drug use is closely linked to various communicable diseases, among which HIV/AIDS is of the main concern. In 2000, for adult population, the newly identified HIV cases in intravenous drug users made 72.6% of the total, and in 2001 – even 77.8%. At the time of diagnosis, HIV positive drug users were at an average 28 years old. According to the data of the Lithuanian AIDS Centre (9th August 2002),
605 people live with HIV in the country. AIDS was diagnosed in 53 cases, of them 3 died of AIDS. 469 of HIV positive patients or 64% of all HIV carriers have contracted the virus through intravenous drug use. Based on this data, it is possible to predict that adolescents–drug users are in high risk for HIV/AIDS.

Poverty, social disintegration and crime are seen as major factors for high mortality, especially among men, in eastern European countries. The high death rates due to injuries for young men are often associated with excessive alcohol consumption and increasing social violence and, in eastern European countries, with increasing stress related to changing social and economic conditions (Kolip, Schmidt, 1999).

Compared with all other groups, mortality rates in adolescence are extremely low. However, higher than average mortality rates for boys and girls can also be seen in Lithuania than in many other European countries. In the age group 15–24 years, to which all the following figures concerning mortality refer, age sex specific death rates increase dramatically. In the Russian Federation, 334 per 100 000 boys and 95 per 100 000 girls die every year, but higher than average mortality rates for boys and girls can also be seen in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In various (mainly eastern European) countries, death rates for boys are nearly four times higher than those for girls. Gender differences are also very marked in Austria, Finland and Greece (Kolip, Schmidt, 1999).

On comparing the mortality rate of boys to that of girls in Lithuania, it is apparent that mortality among boys is substantially higher than that in girls. The mortality rate of 15–19 year–olds remained to be at the same level up to 1997, while over the recent two years it has been remarkably smaller (Kalediene, 1999). The mortality rate of men outnumbers that one of women – by 2.3 times among those aged 15–19 years, and almost by 4 times among those aged 20–24 years. The majority of deaths (81%) of 15–19 year–olds account for deaths caused by outside reasons, in particular road accidents (38%) and suicides (28%) rather than diseases.

Lithuania, among other Eastern European countries, has the highest suicide rates in the world. While the mid 1980's experienced a sharp decline in suicidality, the year of 1991 began a new increase in suicide rates, reaching an estimated 44.7 per 100,000 persons in the year of 2002. There are also huge differences between the genders for all age groups. The ratio of male to female rates was 4.5 to 6.1 in the years of 1990 to 2002 (Gailiene, 2004). In 2004,
81.7 out of every 100,000 men commit suicide compared with 11.5 women; corresponding figures in Kazakhstan are 58.8 and 9.1, and in Latvia 48.8 and 10.4 (Suicide prevention, 2005).

The suicide rate in the age group 15–24 increased between 1990 and 1997 (from 11 to 30 per 100,000). In 1998, thoughts of committing suicide were reported by 11.5% 15–19 year-old of girls and 8% of boys. Equivalent figures in 1994 were 9% for 15–19 year-old girls and 7% for boys (Kalediene, 1999). In the age group 15–19 years suicide rates per 100,000 population in 1998–1999 (two years average) for males was 28.5, for females – 10.3 (Pelkunen & Marttunen 2003; available from WHO 3/5/2003).

Over the latest several years the number of crimes committed by children has undergone a small decrease. In 1998, 3322 children were disclosed as having committed crimes, and it made up 13% of all lawbreakers (in 1995 – 15%). Thefts made up two thirds of juvenile crimes. Every fourth–fifth crime was attributed to violent crimes. The majority (94%) of criminals were boys. Crimes most often are committed by young people 16–17 years of age (in 1998 they formed 68%). Every second teenager was neither enrolled nor employed when committing a crime. Referring to this, we ought to bear in mind that in conformity to Lithuanian criminal laws, only persons who have become 16 years old before breaking the law might be charged with commitment of a crime. However, for some crimes persons are held liable from the age of 14. These are murder, malicious injury which had an adverse effect on health, rape, malicious hooliganism, possession of drugs, firearms, ammunition or explosives, theft, robbery, malicious destruction of or damage to property under aggravating circumstances, and malicious actions which may cause a train accident.

Rather strict punishment is being exercised by courts and applied to delinquent children. Although penalties inflicted for children have become more lenient, they have remained to be similar to those imposed for adults. Juvenile criminals are imprisoned in the colony–pre–trial establishment for juveniles. Alternatives to punishment are defined as compulsory measures of correctional influence which are applied by the court discharging juvenile criminals, in case they have committed a minor crime and have done it for the first time, admitted their guilt and reimbursed damages. One of such measures is sending children to the special correctional care homes. Presently in Lithuania there are 4 institutions of such kind. At the beginning of 1999 the number of children aged
6–17 years in them was 249. Children who regularly commit administrative offenses, violate school regime and are vagrants might be accepted to the special correctional care homes not only following court decision but also by request of institutions of interior affairs, services protecting the rights of the child, school director and parents.

All law violations committed by children tend to have common tendencies of juvenile delinquency. In 1998 the number of children taken to the police equaled to 13.1 thous., which is 14% more than in 1995. Every sixth child was under 14 years of age, every third was 14–15 years of age and every second – 16–17 years of age. The majority (90%) of law breakers were boys. Every fourth child was neither employed nor enrolled. Out of all children taken to the police, 68% of them had both parents, 30% – one of parents and 2% had no parents.

During the survey in 1997, young people (16–29 years of age) reported that the main reason for committing crimes was their way of life, e.g., poverty, unemployment, early drop-out from schools, and similar. Young people considered family quarrels to be the most insignificant reason for juvenile delinquency (1719).

Education

Youth literacy rate (ages 15–24), both sexes, is 100%. The average level of education, however, gradually drops for those older than forty. Large numbers of students attend special schools and schools of higher education. In 2003, Lithuania had 378 students per 10,000 population in universities, 117 in colleges, and other 164 in vocational and professional colleges. Enrolment rates compared favorably with those in Western Europe.

Since 1978 secondary education has been compulsory. Classes are taught in Lithuanian, however, separate schools exist with Russian or Polish as the language of instruction. Children between age of 7 and 15 must attend school. The first level is pre–primary education. Primary school, taught by a classroom teacher is divided into four years. The second level, or basic school was divided into five years, with subject teachers. Since 1999–2000 academic year a shift to a ten–year compulsory secondary education, called lower secondary education, has been made. At age 15 or 16, students graduate to secondary school (called
upper secondary education) when they may choose to attend a gymnasium or college type school (3 years), vocational school or professional college (1–3 years). Vocational schools and professional colleges give specialized training for a profession. Some secondary schools concentrate on music or art. Schools offer physical education, which is compulsory, at least twice a week. Health education is taught sporadically, sometimes by classroom teachers, and sometimes by biology teachers. Students from the secondary schools or gymnasium must pass examinations for the school-leaving certificate (matriculation examinations).

Presently the percentage of those seeking lower secondary education is 96% of all young people aged 7–15 years. Due to various reasons, a part of children do not finish compulsory ten–year education. Non–attendance reasons are living in antisocial family, low family income, teenagers’ labor, vagrancy. In academic year 1997/98 about 5,000 school children left full–time comprehensive schools. More than a half of drop–outs (51%) were schoolchildren studying at 5th–9th grades, 741 of whom were 16 years old. Besides, 1.7 thous. (5%) of those who finished schools did not have a possibility to seek further education, since after having failed exams they received only a certificate signifying that they had completed the secondary education course.

Lithuania, as some other countries, such as Belgium or France, hold back students judged to have been unsuccessful in completing the work of a grade. The proportion of Lithuanian students who repeat a grade ranges between 1 and 2 percent for each year with the higher figure applying to students 11, 12, and 13 years of age (King, et al., 1996).

At the time–being teenagers who lack motivation for education are exposed with two possibilities to acquire a certificate of completion of lower secondary education – either to study in a youth school (corresponds to lower secondary level, pre–vocational programs) or first grade vocational school (corresponds to lower secondary level, vocational programs). In addition to general education program, youth schools teach pre–vocational work preparation and additional education lessons. Such schools are becoming more popular, the number of students in them has increased by eight times as compared to 1993. Young people who have not finished compulsory basic education have a possibility to learn a simple profession in the first grade vocational schools or Training Center of Labor Exchange.
Lithuania requires students to make program- or school-related decisions in the tenth year of school; the year these decisions are made corresponds to the last required year of school attendance. Students are given opportunities to select courses at different levels of difficulty at grade 10. Their course-selection decisions are often related to the requirements of the university or institute or college students are going to apply after graduation from secondary school. In Lithuania, once a decision is made to enter a particular course or to select courses at different levels, it is rather difficult to change, certainly to change back to a more advanced level. External standardized tests are used differently across systems; for example, some school systems rely much more heavily than others on the results of such tests to guide school or program decisions, or to determine which students are eligible to enter post-secondary educational institutions.

Over the latest years more and more young people realize the importance of high qualified professional work in the environment of complicated market economy. Each year more schoolchildren who finish lower secondary schools continue studying in upper secondary schools: in 1992 – 56%, in 1995 – 65%, in 1998 – 70%. Schoolchildren entering vocational schools prefer third stage of the latter schools (in 1992 – 39%, in 1998 – 74%), after which they acquire both a profession and upper secondary education. Accordingly, there is a drop in the number of enrolled in the second stage of vocational school after which only a profession is acquired (in 1992 – 61%, while in 1998 – 26%).

Girls tend to seek more better education in comparison with boys. While in 1–10 grade of basic school the number of boys is bigger by 12,000 as compared with girls (95 girls per 100 boys), beginning by the upper secondary level, the number of girls is vividly prevailing: in 9–12 grade the proportion of boys to girls is 100 to 135, in college type schools – 188 and higher schools – 137, respectively. Boys are more inclined to become workers. In turn, the number of girls in vocational schools is declining: in 1994 there were 75 girls per 100 boys, while in 1998 – 65 girls. The major part of girls prefer to finish education career after acquiring the diploma of higher education. Overall, women’s level of education is higher than that of men, and the educational gap between men and women is growing. In 2001, women accounted for 59% of the total number of University graduates with Bachelor’s degree and 60% of those awarded Master’s degree.
As far as boys are concerned, they are apt to seek a higher degree: in 1998 the number of boys postgraduates who acquired Doctor’s Degree was 93, while the number of girls – 78. Regional analysis of the country shows that the share of young people who have finished upper secondary school and seek further education at the same year is different according to certain regions and towns, and it fluctuates from 62% to 98%. This is caused by different economic and social development, employment and unemployment rate characteristic to regions and uneven location of educational establishments. Young people who do not continue studies mainly come from towns and regions situated far away and the South – East Lithuania regions where ethnic minorities predominate.

The need for special education programs for low ability students is recognized in Lithuania. Legislation has been passed in Lithuania that allows children with disabilities to go to mainstream schools. Students are commonly provided with special programs in the early years of elementary school and then tend to move into vocational programs that typically terminate at age 16. Often, youths with disabilities are taught work skills. The new ideas for the care of children with disabilities were nurtured by contact with state of the art social work practice and training from Sweden and other countries. Several fledgling nongovernmental organizations, particularly “Viltis” (Hope), an organization of parents of children with disabilities, championed these reforms and lobbied for legislation granting equal rights to people with disabilities. For example, Education centers for children with disabilities are implementing project to integrate children and adolescents with disabilities to ordinary education. Before these projects began, many of the severely disabled children in the region resided in their own homes, received no education or training, and had very little social contact. They were at risk of being placed in long-term institutions because of the strain on their parents. These four schools now provide daily, individualized education classes to almost 100 children. Vans pick up the children from their homes, take them to school, and return them home at the end of the day. Seven of the children in these centers had been living in large, long-term residential institutions for the severely disabled but are now living at home.

The Lithuanian system produced schools that were satisfying for students at all grade level. However, the decline in the proportion of students who liked school a lot from the 11 year olds to the 15 year olds was quite pronounced. In
the HBSC survey (King, et al., 1996) students in grade 5, 7 and 9 were asked what their teachers think of their work to school. At age of 11th, 59% of Lithuanian girls and 37% of boys indicated their school work as good or very good. At age of 13th 55% of Lithuanian girls and 32% of boys indicated their school work as good or very good. At age of 15th, 53% of Lithuanian girls and 33% of boys indicated their school work as good or very good.

The HBSC survey measured students' satisfaction with school by three items; “I like school”, “School is a nice place to be”, and “Going to school is boring”. In Lithuania, more girls than boys answered that they like school a lot. The decline in the proportion of students who liked school a lot from the 11 year olds to the 15 year olds was quite pronounced, e.g., at 11 years of age, 51 percent of girls and 34 percent of boys answered that they like school a lot, when at 13 years of age – 37 percent and 24 percent, and at 15 years of age – 28 and 19 percent of girls and boys, accordingly. However, students’ liking of school tends to decrease with age across all countries.

In the HBSC survey (King, et al., 1996) teacher support was measured by four items: “Teachers show an interest in me as a person”, “Teachers give help when needed”, “Teachers encourage me to express my views” and “Teachers treat students fairly”. Students who strongly agreed or agreed that their teachers are interested in them as persons was 52% for 11-year old girls and 49% boys. In the older age group, at age of 15, only 27% of girls and 35% of boys agreed that their teachers are interested in them as persons. (1698).

Media

Children are perceptive to novelties, and they receive news from movies, TV, video cassettes, CDs, magazines, websites and chat rooms. By age 15, Lithuanian students ranked in the highest third of countries in frequent television watching. Watching television for four hours or more per day ranges from 46% for boys and 41% for 15-year old girls. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003).

Child or teenager is surrounded by lots of various messages about what is “good” about such substances as alcohol, tobacco or drugs. TV characters live in wealth and splendor off drug money; hero of favorite movie star in his latest film is smoking cigar all the time. “Messages” related to drugs, alcohol,
cigarettes can reach teenagers absolutely unexpectedly – from advertising published in the magazine, song played in a supermarket, saying of movie hero. These “messages” usually do not promote “the use” of drugs or alcohol directly, but they are reinforcing impression that use is "normal" thing.

Advertising for alcoholic beverages and tobacco advertising has an effect on young people's behavior. The orientation of advertising messages towards an adolescent lifestyle, appears to partly responsible for the increasing consumption that is being seen and for the differences in rates of consumption between girls and boys. Strict advertising restrictions are accompanied by a change in drinking habits in many countries, where regular alcohol consumption is falling. In Lithuania, the advertising of alcoholic beverages is banned. Lithuania have passed almost total bans on advertising, the only exceptions still being the sponsoring of sport and cultural events. However, this effect can only expected in conjunction with other legal measures to protect adolescents, such as restrictions on sales, age limitations and price increases. (281)

Work

The legal protection against child labour is described in Labour law. The legal age for work is 16 years with parent's permission and 18 years for all. This protection can be legally enforced. Labour inspection is responsible for control.

Employment rate by young people (ages 15 – 19) is decreasing, from 13 percent in 1998, to 4 percent in 2003. However, this decrease of employed young people is in the line to improvement across the years in Lithuanian economy, what gives an opportunity for young people to spend more years in education. Expected years in education (Statistics Lithuania, 2005) at ages 7–18 in 1996 was 11.3, and at ages 7–24, it was 12.7, when in 2003 – 11.9 and 14.7, accordingly.

However, the level of unemployment among young people was always higher than the national average. Young people aged between 15–19 in 2003 comprised 45.2% of all unemployed (Statistics Lithuania, 2005), when 21.8 percent of 20–24 years old were unemployed in 2003, when total unemployment rate was 12.4 percent. 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 highest level of unemployment is registered in rural areas, in addition to which some unemployed go unregistered (15.3% in urban areas, while the number of young unemployed in the rural areas accounted for 40%). Serious employment discrepancies within the country cause intensive internal migration of the labour force and emigration.

The reason of higher unemployment rate in young people as compared to other groups of jobless people is a comparatively low level of their general and vocational education on a background of the changing economic social factors and decrease in work demand. Territorial employment offices report a significant share (about 42%) of young jobless people without any vocational qualification. In a field of further activities two trends to be outlined: firstly, even higher number of young people after basic school continue their education in secondary schools or seek for higher or university education. Considerable portion of them have also a job while studying, and gain working experience as well as find an employer.

There are some measures taken by Ministry of Social Security and Labour to tackle youth unemployment. 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 theses young people are interested in available vacancies.

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%). (460)

Politics

Citizens of Lithuania were mostly interested in public affairs and keen to participate in elections during the first years after the re-establishment of independence in 1990. Presently, the society might be defined as a less political one. Young peoples’ political activity underwent serious changes also. According to the data of the young people survey in 1997, 36% of people aged 18–19 years (while in 1992 –11%) and 20% of people aged 20–29 years were not interested in politics at all. According to the LHDR 2001, 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). Fifty percent of young people aged 15-19 could not identify a political preference based on some ideological directions (in comparison with 30% among older people) which is not very much different from western European countries (LHDR, 2001).

In accordance to Lithuanian Human Development report, young Lithuanians feel themselves poorly integrated into society. They often feel ignored or unprepared to compete in the labor market. However they do not show great deal of interest in overcoming their social alienation (LHDR, 2001). During the soviet years the main public youth organization was the Komsomol organization. Members were expected to be politically conscious, vigilant, and loyal to the communist cause. Membership privileges included better opportunities for higher education and preferential consideration for career advancement. Joining the political–ideological mass organizations Komsomol or Communist Party was important adaptation strategy and as this was price for relative security, e.g., its membership was voluntary only partially.

After the re-establishment of independence, the Komsomol ceased its activity. The national liberation movement initiated intensive political participation of the society. Such organizations of young people and children as “Scouts”, “Ateitininkai”, student corporation “Neo–Lithuania”, which used to function till 1940, were re-established. Scouting first came to Lithuania in 1909, as part of Tsarist Russia. However, in 1940, the Soviet occupation of Lithuania resulted in Scouting being banned. In the years to 1945, an exile Scouting movement started in the camps for displaced persons. Many of these people moved to the USA and Australia. The organization was able to continue its work abroad. In accordance to 1997 data, the Scouting movement has two main centers in Lithuania – in Vilnius and Kaunas – and its membership is around 4000 people.

The most organized young people are school pupils, who are involved in school sport clubs, music clubs, that are the most popular among the school children. One of most active youth organization is Lithuanian School Student Union (LMS). LMS has already arranged two large international conferences: “Scandi–Baltic Project Conference” and “Baltic Contract Conference”. The Lithuanian School Student Union is an organisation warranting the school student’s right to express his/her opinion, and improve education by
influencing the education authorities. Pupils' interests are presented in school councils – self-governing bodies. But 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 Policy in Lithuania, 2003). Out of the total number of young participants in the activity of various organizations in 1997, 55% of young people reported that they were active members of certain organization, 27% – were formal members without taking part in the activity of the organization. Only one fourth of young people were aware about the existence of institutions which represent youth rights and assist in solving problems of young people. Women and higher school graduates younger than 24 years coming from bigger cities possessed the biggest amount of information (Youth Policy in Lithuania, 2003).

Non-formal youth groups are in Griskabudis, Girenai and Luksiai villages. Yet, the activities performed and services available, basically through individual teachers' and youth leaders' initiatives, were seen to be of a highly commendable nature. There are 22 youth groups participating in social work, educational work and first-aid training. About 350 youth volunteers take care of handicapped children at home and in state institutions, train their contemporaries to render first aid, participate in international summer camps, seminars, arrange summer camps for street children, provide leadership training courses and participate in the 'choose your life' project (Youth Policy in Lithuania, 2003).

"We the People...Project Citizen" is civics education program Developed by the Center for Civic Education (Calabasas, USA) that seeks to engage middle school students in their communities by giving instruction on how to participate effectively in a civil society. The teaching materials suggest project based civic education in primary schools. In 1997 the materials were translated into Lithuanian and adapted for use in 7–10th grades in Lithuania. Since 2000 Russian and Polish schools in Lithuania joined the project. Students not only learn about the political process, but also researched problems in their neighborhoods and develop ideas about how to solve them. A quasi-experimental evaluation was conducted with a total of 102 classrooms and
1,412 students (Vontz, Metcalf, and Patrick, 2001). The classrooms were located in three different political units: Indiana (275 treatment students and 267 comparison students), Latvia (139 treatment students and 126 comparison students) and Lithuania (295 treatment students and 407 comparison students). A pre-test/post-test design was used, with students filling out the Civics Development Inventory, which contained questions on civic knowledge, skills and dispositions. The findings were consistent across the three units, independent of the country in which it was used. More specifically, the treatment group had significantly higher scores on civic knowledge, self-perceptions of civic skills, and propensity to participate in civic and political life. (950)

Unique Issues

In recent years, the number of missing persons registered by the Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior has increased from 796 in 1995 to 1,313 in 2000 (in total, over the more then 10 years). These figures include not only the victims of trafficking but also persons who have left the country of their own accord to try their luck abroad without informing their families.

In the past few years the number has stabilized at about 400 registered persons a year, most of whom are young women and underage. Most of the missing persons are minor girls. It is believed that many have been forced to work abroad as prostitutes and have had their travel documents confiscated by their traffickers. In 2000 m. there were missed 301 women up to 30 years old. 297 were found, 52 are still in search (Perkauskiene, 2001).

One of the reasons that individuals fell victim to trafficking was the high unemployment rate of up to 20% in some regions. It led to bleak future prospects among young people in terms of establishing themselves in society, maintaining themselves financially, forming a family and raising children. According to a survey carried out by the public institution Vilmorus, in 2001, 98% of young people between 15 and 24 years of age and 93% percent of 25–34 year-olds would consider working temporarily in Western Europe.

Lithuania does not have a department or service responsible solely for dealing with cases of missing children. Responsible for the cases of missing children is Search section of felony investigation department within police...
department. Every disappearance of a child is being reported at the national level. If there is any information that the child could be taken abroad, the police is taking decision to report his disappearance at the international level. There is a central police data base for reporting cases of missing persons in general, missing children included.

Families in Lithuania are facing many social, economical and psychological issues that significantly affect the development of their children. During tremendous changes in social and economical life today a lot of families experiences enormous pressures. Urban street children are among the world's most stigmatized children, often excluded from basic human services because of poverty, gender, disability, ethnicity or lack of family affiliation.

The number of orphans or children who's parents don’t take care of them enlarged on the last decade because of political, economical and social changes in the country. Examination of parent care deprivation reasons demonstrates that only one child out of every 10 looses parent care due to death of the latter. 90% of such parent care deprived children have one or both parents .In 1996 parent care deprived children accounted for 8,7% of the newly born and 6,5% of the adult youth. In recent years the number increase of parent care deprived children is caused by behavior of parents (delinquent families, alcoholism, imprisonment of parents, etc.) and long-term illness of parents. As of end 1999 Lithuania counted 14,1 thousand orphans and waif children, of whom 54% were taken care of in families, 3% in foster-families and 43% in different child care institutions. Guardianship coming into force (July 1998), more and more children who have lost parental care are placed under guardianship of families or foster-families.

Some of children, who because of different reasons lost parent care, are placed to temporary care homes, foster families or other institutions. But some of them became so-called street children. Bulotaite (2000) conducted a study at temporary children care home and day care centers for street children, the age of the participants was from 11 till 19. Adolescent’s answers to the question about reasons of appearing on the street were almost the same in all age groups: alcoholism and complicated financial situation in the family. Some of the children mentioned, that parents force them to steal, beg or to search for a living. Another reason was related to bad relations, conflicts with parents, some of the adolescents mentioned “seeking for freedom”. Children from day care
centers mentioned, that on the street they could smoke, drink or use drugs: “Sometimes the parents are quite good, but you want something more... maybe new experience... such us drugs”. Children from all institutions mentioned that they are quite familiar with alcohol and that some of their friends are using drugs.

Adolescents avoided talking about living on the street. They very often stressed that now they are in the institution (care home) or most of the time they are spending in day center. Reminding living in the street, from one side they mentioned freedom, independence, from another – dangers: " You can avoid the school, smoke, and drink or use drugs. But sometimes you “haven’t place for sleeping”, “you want to eat”, “you feel cold””. Elderly children mentioned that they have “problems with police”. “If not the care home, I would be in prison...” Children mentioned that care home, day center changed their life. The best example of children’s opinion about care home is the answer of one boy “If I had known earlier about those care homes, long ago I would be here!”

In the study, commissioned by the World Bank, team from the Department of Social Work at Stockholm University conducted an exploratory study in ten countries in Central and Eastern Europe—Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania and the Slovak Republic. Researchers had contacts with forty-eight organizations working with street children, and in-depth interviews with 51 children of different ages. The study indicates that street children were not qualitatively different from other children in socially vulnerable situations. Many street children had, or are currently having, a very difficult adolescence, both socially and emotionally. Risk factors that made their development difficult and cause social problems in their adult years, are dysfunctional families, abandonment, and many others (Penton, 2000). Their families have often had extensive problems. It is not unusual that the relationship with one or both parents has been permanently broken. It has sometimes happened in a very dramatic way via death, suicide, violent divorces, long prison sentences, or simply that the child was abandoned for some reason that the child does not know. Many of the children speak of their parents’ substance abuse problems as something that affected their daily lives, with catastrophic consequences. The most common reasons behind their existence on the street were problems within the
family, and especially the parents' abuse of alcohol. One apparent central aspect of the children’s life situation is that they have been abandoned. Sometimes the abandonment is lasting, but more often it occurs for shorter or longer periods. The separation has frequently been unpredictable and incomprehensible, and they have hardly ever had any opportunity for either preparation or emotional processing of what has happened. It is, however, important to point out that most of the children interviewed appear to be constructive and surprisingly well-integrated people (Penton, 2000).

Results of the study of Sexual behavior of street children in Lithuania (Davidaviciene, 2002) is showing that absolute majority of children experienced sexual harassment. The number of girls was much bigger than boys. Among the victims of sexual abuse researchers find 13.4% of boys and 21.6% of girls. Boys usually experience it only once, while girls experience it repeatedly. Boys start practising sex earlier than girls. Some of the street children had their first sexual relationship as early as at the age of 10 or 11. The greatest part of the respondents began their sexual life at the age of 12–14. 81.0% of street children used drugs. Some of them are injecting drug users. In recent years an increase in the number of injecting drug users among street children was noted. Research carried out in 2000 among street children revealed that about 80% of the young people interviewed had used drugs at least once, while about 1/5 of them injected illegal drugs. Both girls and boys knew about the possible consequences of their sexual risk behavior and drug use. However, only minor part of them used contraceptives. Two thirds of boys and almost half of the girls do not think about possible pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases and the danger of HIV/AIDS. (1363)

References:


