

Short Summary of PROFIT Results in Lithuania

1. General remarks

Social transformations occurring in political, economic and social life science 1990s have inspired many scientists and researchers to start analyzing social issues, such as: social inequality and exclusion, marginalization and polarization, social differentiation and deprivation etc. However, there is still little analysis done on the long-term inequality, including the patterns of inequality transmission in Lithuania. One who is discussing the issues of social stratification usually only briefly touches the risk caused by already existing or probable long-term inequality. More thorough research has been done in the general analysis of poverty, social exclusion, marginalization and social policy applied to overcome them. So, the researches done within PROFIT project created possibilities look deeper into the II of I phenomenon and discover new opportunities to overcome one at the national, local, organizational and individual levels.

2. Perception of inheritance of social inequality and poverty

The respondents agree that the poverty and social exclusion have an inheritance aspect. They acknowledge that family as one of the main social institutions is very important subject/actor influencing appearance and salvation of many social issues. Family and its characteristics make crucial impact on inequality inheritance, especially if we have in mind 'problem families' – families where such social practice as alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, perverted values, etc. are dominant. Parental status and dominant ethical attitudes determinate child's possibilities to reach higher social status in society than their parents have. Restrictions in the problem families basically are related with dominant value attitudes in the family, which do not develop child's perfection, intention to reach higher education and status; insufficient financial resources and genetics were also mentioned. The national politicians forecasted that social inequality from generation to generation would reduce in Lithuania. They related these improvements with economic

development in Lithuania after entering European Union, development of new technologies and reforms in state policy, special programs. A lot of focus-group respondents noticed that the evidence of the phenomenon was not so obvious in Jonava comparing present situation and the time 3-4 years ago, but they stressed that the new forms of very deep exclusion is emerged , such as rubbish heap people, begging children and etc.

3. Factors and processes generating Intergenerational Inheritance of Social Inequalities

The participants in the study named the factors for the transmission of social inequalities through generations. These factors can be divided into the following groups: political, economic, regional and psychological.

Politicians noted inadequate *state policy* as the dominant reason of inequality development. The gap between authority and man, and appeasement of own interests influence the formation of policy pointed to the property differentiation. The *dominant political parties* in the parliament is a very important factor, determining which political parties have strong influence on government formation, what kind of priorities and attitudes will be dominant in policy, since *essential posts in boards are given not considering the competence, but political dependence*. The lack of political volition enacting appropriate solutions was mentioned as one of factor suppressing reduction of social inequality.

Too standardized state policy is not flexible and sensitive to local problems. Respondents agree that *central and local authorities* have to cooperate and pay attentions to each other's limits of competence, and some of them single out that they miss effective and constructive cooperation. The respondents mentioned various reasons, which, according to them, create obstacles to effective cooperation between these two levels of state authorities: there is no equal dialogue between national government and local authorities. inadequate perception about limits of competence of both of these authorities towards each other; defectiveness of centralized tax system; absence of legislation and

authorities, responsible for cooperation; lack of human and financial resources to maintain cooperation and so on.

Most of respondents pointed out that the main reasons and processes, that motivate the transfer of social inequality from generation to generation lie *in peculiarities of post-communistic states development*, which 15 years almost have no new traditions. The present situation respondents named as sequences of 50 years of Soviet occupation, which formed public attitudes, people used not to feel personal responsibility in the family and work, so the Soviet way of thinking impedes different processes of progress in the state, economic development, and on the individual level – adaptability to changes, and that is stimulating development of social disjuncture.

One of the peculiarities of post-Soviet state development we can assign the *switch from planned to market economy*. It was mentioned, that privatization was implemented not on democratic way and this effected social differentiation as well as formation of social inequality.

One more reason for the reproduction of low social status mentioned by the respondents is a **specific geographic location**. Families living in *villages/small towns* have bare possibilities to integrate into society successfully. This is determined by high poverty level in these regions, village environment (accessibility of new technologies, general economic level of the region), worse education quality in rural schools and specific dominant valuables like alcohol dependence. Focus-group respondents noticed that Jonava and its district, being close to a big and relatively expensive city Kaunas, are attractive to people in risk groups, i.e. those with lower qualification, long-term unemployed etc. The respondents identified the formation of the phenomenon so called *poverty concentration* in literature sources. There is a settlement close to Jonava called Rukla¹ where the poverty concentration has been particularly marked. Favourable conditions to transmit poverty, faulty social practice and low status have been dominating in for quite some time.

¹ Rukla was a military campus of the Soviet army where were located about 15.000 Soviet soldiers. After the Soviet army left Lithuania a lot of empty houses were left by the officers. Rukla is still used as a military campus where Lithuanian military corps are located. However, most army personnel comes to Rukla because of work. They usually live in Jonava with better developed social, cultural, economic infrastructure or other big cities. Rukla is mostly inhabited by social benefit receivers.

Low qualification, unemployment and poverty were mentioned as very important factors. It would be too artificial to characterize these reasons as separate ones, because they are interrelated. Low qualification determines long-term unemployment and finally falls into complex poverty: economic, social, value, psychological etc. All these conditions mentioned above make influence on twisted values application in family life and education of their children.

Family as one of the main social institutions is very important subject/actor influencing appearance and salvation of many social issues. Family and its characteristics make crucial impact on inequality inheritance, especially if we have in mind ‘problem families’ – families where such social practice as alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, perverted values, etc. are dominant. Families with slender income or unemployed families with limited financial resources and inadequate traditions and attitudes form restricted child’s aspirations.

4. Family role inheriting poverty and social inequality

The respondent’s parental family financial and psychological atmosphere in the have had a direct impact on their achievements in education, labour market and social status.

In most cases, if the family isn’t asocial, the parents having no higher education supported and motivated their children to learn. They indoctrinated their children with worth of education as a way to better life. In most cases, parents opposed the children’s wish to choose vocational school, which was based on a desire, “*to quicker finish the vocational school and go to work*” and, on the influence of friends. Respondents emphasized, that if parents had allowed – they wouldn’t have quit secondary school. Parents helped not only during school-time, but also during studentship. Lots of respondents had to move to other city for studies. In such time material support from parents was very important, however, not always sufficient.

In-depth interview respondents, who grew up in asocial (alcoholics) families or boarding-schools haven’t felt family support. Even though at the beginning they learned quite good, later they lost their motivation, were playing truants or left the school. Problems in family directed them towards the “*trial*”, not towards the learning, self-

expressing and seeking for better results. Bad financial situation at parental home caused that the respondents left secondary school early and continued their education at vocational school. They were referring to their studentship at vocational school as their first earnings.

Analyzing the life living of respondents, who had family support and motivation to learn, it showed up, that their life turned a little bit more successful, comparing to respondents, who grew in asocial families or boarding-schools. The aspiration of education and objectives of life of the first group of respondents are higher, social relations are more successful, and they see the future more optimistic. Respondents, who originated in low status family and experienced difficulties in their childhood, were often mentioning such problems in their parental family as: alcoholism, divorce, unemployment, housing and food problems, poor relationships among family members as well. They were up against it such as lack of individual aspirations, low education, insufficient income, ineffective state support and general economic situation in the country. However, the role of family seems to be one of the most important factors.

5. Education role overcoming II of I

The vast majority of respondents agreed that educational policy plays a crucial role in overcoming II of I. However, most of respondents indicated that Lithuanian government pays too little attention to educational problems and does not regard education as a priority in overcoming social differentiation, II of I and other social problems.

Almost all respondents' critically evaluated *educational reform* and educational policy aimed at decreasing II of I. The fact that educational system was reformed by replicating *Western model* which does not suit to local traditions and conditions were also criticized by respondents. *Restructurization* of schools in Lithuania provided with a better choice of different schools, including gymnasiums, secondary schools, colleges, etc. On the other hand, this caused many problems mentioned by most of the respondents. Closure of rural schools had dramatic consequences on the community development, since this meant the loss of meeting place, cultural center. In addition, in some remote areas, there is a problem of school transportation, which leaves rural children without a possibility to reach a school. Even such relatively positive examples of the reform as

newly *established gymnasiums*, which provide with quality education, also have shortages, as they are barely accessible for those children who are from disadvantaged groups, including poor families and/or rural areas, etc. *Profiled education* enabling students to focus on one subject area also restrains children's possibilities to change their minds in the course of their studies and focus on a different subject area. Respondents were concerned that such a situation causes problems of non-attendance, dropouts and increases social exclusion and HofI.

Very often *school* was mentioned *as supporter of social inequality*. In-depth interview respondents' experience at school is closely linked with family situation. Some of them didn't feel discrimination neither from teachers, nor from schoolmates. Sometimes parents were able to let children go on an excursion or attend various extra-curricular activities. Some respondents themselves or encouraged by their family members never spoke with teachers and schoolmates about the real situation in the family trying to make an impression of average living family. This shows that respondents did not have trust in school and teachers. However, sometimes, even knowing hard family situation of a learner, school never tried to deal with such situation. In some schools classes were formed according to parental status that creates the feeling of exclusion for the children from poorer families. Another segment of respondents, who lived in asocial families or boarding-schools, faced with negative classmates' and especially teachers' attitude towards them. It showed up, that children were ranked according their parents status. Respondents pointed, that teachers disliked children whose parents were alcoholics and never disguised that. Often such children felt unfair or too low graded if compared with classmates, they also had less possibility to experience success in the learning process. Respondents, who grew in asocial families or families with cold relationship with parents, reacted extremely sensitively to negative behavior and, at the same time, very receptively to humanity and warmth of teachers. Negative behavior of teachers influenced de-motivation and increased of nonattendance. Strong personality, regularity, humanity of teacher had major educational influence, was a resource of motivation for learner and stimulated major interest in subject. Unfortunately, only a very few teachers were mentioned and only in solitary instances.

Almost every respondent strongly emphasized *regional differences* in Lithuanian educational system. It is assumed that urban schools have better teachers, are better equipped and provide with better quality education than rural ones. IT is strongly related with the poorer rural family situation. Families living in rural areas usually cannot afford buying all teaching materials necessary for their children, providing them with extra classes for fee or support them during their further studies. All the factors construct different start positions for young people later on in the labour market.

Inconsistency between study programmes and reality was also mentioned when discussing *higher education policy* in Lithuania. Majority of respondents indicated that there is a lack of measures for equalizing opportunities of young people on this level. The

Politicians and experts also pointed out lack of adult education. It is problematic when those who need knowledge in business development, political science, accountancy etc. cannot afford it because of financial reasons.

Proposals:

It is crucial to improve efficacy of educational policy, first of all by setting *long-term goals* and implementing the measures seeking concrete results. In order to equalize the opportunities for all, an individual regardless of their social status, income, etc. should be of value for the state, its clerks and society.

It is important to extend the functions of schools and pay more attention to *extracurricular activities*. Schools should provide children with a possibility to spend their free time, do sports, prepare their homework, and have dinner and even overnight, if necessary. Improvement of teachers' qualifications is also one of the suggestions, as they shouldn't be only teachers; they also have to be educators.

Vocational education and training policy needs more attention, in order to encourage more young people to study at vocational schools and provide them with better chances in the labour market. Since vocational schools have had a bad image since the Soviet times, it was suggested to reorganize these schools into technological gymnasiums. Also, it is crucial to analyze the demand of certain vocations in labour market, so that graduates would be able to integrate into labour market.

It is important to equalize the opportunities to acquire *higher education* for young people from underrepresented groups, i.e. children from poor families, rural areas, also disabled. Universities may have different missions. Some of them may be elite schools, others specializing in reducing social inequality provide education for socially disadvantaged people.

6. Labour market role overcoming II of I

Labor market institutions were named as having low influence on successful entrance to labor market. Most of the respondents argued that people with lower education, less trained have less chances to enter labour market. However, the problem is that there are no adaptation programmes for socially disadvantaged groups, which would allow certain groups of people to integrate into society.

Most respondents criticized the current labour market policy as inappropriate and incorrect because of growing hidden unemployment, lack of working people, increasing protectionism and low wages. Despite national employment policy and implementation system, the system does not correspond to the needs of different social groups, including people living in rural areas and working in agricultural sector, lonely mothers, national minorities, etc.

Another problem with the labour market policy measures is that they are available only for those who are registered by the Labour Exchange. However, those who are not officially registered as unemployed and usually belong to the groups of social risk; they do not have the same rights and guarantees. One part of Labor Exchange applicants from the in-depth interview respondents group applied for help in finding a job and were disappointed about the lack of expedience and attention to clients, passivity of these kinds of institutions. Most of the applicants were not satisfied with the service, provided by Labor Exchange and were looking for a job themselves. The respondents were disappointed and used to reject employment proposals because of “*low salary*”, “*health status inadequate to work requirements*”, “*inconvenient or inconsistent timetable*”, etc.

Proposals:

Most respondents emphasized the importance of *coordination* between educational system and labour market. Very serious problem is that colleges and universities do not provide their students with professional skills, focusing mainly on theoretical knowledge, which is a big problem when graduates are willing to enter the labour market.

More control and coordination is needed between labour market and educational policies in order to reach compliance between supply and demand in the labour market.

There should be possibilities created for young people to assess their personality, opportunities, needs and skills, what kind of work they could and would like to do.

New models of cooperation between social partners should be developed, aiming at *sustainable development of labour market*. Local government should also be encouraged in trying to solve unemployment issue. Universities and other institutions of higher education should be more involved in retraining programmes, especially for people with higher education, but lacking certain skills and knowledge.

7. Role of Social welfare overcoming II of I

There are 17 thousand problematic families raising 39 thousand children in Lithuania. Current welfare policy has not been effective by providing social benefits to these families, because they do not motivate individuals to look for solutions by themselves. Most respondents argued that social welfare system does not solve major problems. Existing measures are only partially effective, focused on the consequences, but not the causes. Existing social support system is oriented towards financial allowances, compensations and free social services rather than active measures of social support. Such social policy stimulates the passiveness of allowance users, people who receive social benefits, often do not make any attempt to change the situation, to look for the job by them.

One of the major problems, which make the whole system inefficient, is categorical social benefit, which depends on certain characteristics and multiplies social differentiation. Stigmatization is a serious problem, particularly among school children

who try to avoid social benefits, including alimentation for free of charge because of the stigma. This causes problems of non-attendance and dropouts.

National planning and distribution of funding for social affairs is inappropriate. Since it is the national government which decides not only about the amount of funding, but also the categories or the purposes of spending, this way of funding does not meet the local needs. Such a situation also reduces municipality independence and restrains possibilities to manage regional problems. Therefore, a closer and more open dialogue between the state and local authorities is needed.

Social policy measures were criticized because of the lack of coordination among each other, one-sidedness and short-term effect that enlarge social exclusion and promote passiveness among the people for whom the measures are applied. No assessment mechanisms and supervision measures between policy decisions and implementation reduce its effectiveness and expediency.

When talking about the main factors of social inequality, most of the conference participants emphasized the role of family. Accordingly, strengthening of family support system should be among the priorities of the national and local social policy. However, present situation shows that there is no clear family policy in Lithuania. It is important to create a complex social support system for a family as a whole, rather than for individual members.

Insufficient human resources in the field of social work were emphasized by the locals. This is a serious obstacle taking into consideration that new forms of social services and reforms of the existing social support system is necessary to improve the situation. Low salaries for teachers at all the levels of educational institutions, as well as social service providers leads to the increasing insufficiency of human resources in the areas. Therefore, funding strategies have to be revised at the national level.

The whole social welfare system has not been adequate. Minimum standard of living estimated by the government does not reflect the reality. Although the level of social welfare depends on the financial opportunities of the state, it is also important what kind of priorities the government sets.

Proposals:

In order to improve the efficiency of welfare policy, the number of categorical benefits should be reduced, including alimantation at school, which causes stigmatization and social differentiation. Since almost 70 percent of rural pupils are receivers of this particular benefit, there should not be made any differentiation at all, so that all schoolchildren in rural areas would be able to receive alimantation for free

Quality of social services should be improved and more individual approach applied in social work. The *direct social work with risk families should be implemented*. Being the social actors, which playing the determinative role in personality formation in every human being life, risk families are most vulnerable to create favourable conditions to transmit the values and habits causing the inequalities. It means there should be created *a complex social support system for a family as a whole*, not only its separate members.

Consolidation of *community role* is necessary talking about the preventive measures in order to combat social problems like Ilofl, to empower individuals to better adapt to changing situation, to encourage them to take care of themselves and their children. NGOs, Church should also play more active role in providing social services.

Implementation of the *holistic approach*, i.e. collaboration between all institutions is necessary in order to reduce Ilofl. Social workers, education and health professionals have to work together after a thorough analysis of the situation.

The *assessment mechanisms* and supervision measures between policy decisions and implementation should be applied on purpose of efficiency and expedience of their.

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