



QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS February / March 2012

- *Partner: Foundation For Society*
- *Target group: Young people outside scholar system over 16 years – youngsters living in orphanage houses*

1. Analysis of local context concerning labor market and social policies

Regarding young people outside scholar system over 16 years, then young people in Latvia are facing different problems; most of them are defined in Youth Policy Guidelines for 2009.-2018., adopted in government on 2009. As stressed out in this Paper, **employment rate** in Youth Field is the lowest in Europe, there is **low level of participation level**, and health issues are critical and becoming even worse every year. Regarding deviant behavior, high level of administrative, civil, criminal violation and crime that remain in similar level, needs to be empathized. What is important, that the age of criminals is decreasing. So the subject of youngsters exposed to social inclusion is rather significant.

In order to ensure comprehensive development, social inclusion, improvement of quality of life and resolution of youth problems, specific youth policy in Latvia has been developed and implemented.

Youth Law that has been adopted in Latvian Parliament on 1st of January 2009, that aims to improve the quality of young people lives aged between 13 and 25. Young people in this age contains 18,66% (436 296 people) of Latvian population back in 2009 and 17,89% (402 186 people) in 2010.

According to Statistics (Central Statistical Bureau, 2011), every 5th youngster in Latvia doesn't feel satisfied with his/her own life, they rate their life as the worst possible. Meanwhile, youngsters with high income level in their families value their lives more positive. The most negative attitude towards their lives has the youngsters at the age 20-25, because the unemployment rate is the highest then, and youngsters are facing the dissonance between their expectations and reality.

Many young people make decisions in their early years that can affect not only their personal welfare, but also their societies as a whole. Some students fail to complete school and may become marginalized, unemployed, or otherwise underprivileged instead of becoming productive members of society.



Insufficient education is one of the major contributors to poverty and social exclusion. The two groups in Latvia's population that face the gravest risk of being excluded from the labour market are school dropouts and former prisoners.

In recent years, the number of illiterate persons has increased in Latvia; there are a considerable number of people who have not acquired sufficient general and vocational education. Among those aged 20–29 years, as compared with the older segment of the population, the proportion of people who have only elementary education has increased (CSB,2002). The proportion of people who are illiterate, have not attended school at all, and who have only experienced the first stage of basic education (four grades) has also increased.

The poor level of education has an impact on employment opportunities. More than 14 percent of the young people aged 15–24 are unemployed (LM, 2010). The level of education of an individual is the determining factor in their further involvement in lifelong education.

The education process is also influenced by external factors such as the place of residence, and the relative level of the family's welfare.

Indicators reflecting levels of income and unemployment differ significantly across the regions of Latvia. The material welfare of the family is directly related to the accessibility of education, which is linked to the ability of the family to invest financial resources in education.

People with insufficient education are characterized by poor awareness of social safety net guarantees, limited access to the state-provided support measures to increase their competitive advantages, or low activity in participating in these activities, low professional skills or their absence, and low trust in the government and local authorities. Thus, **insufficient education is directly linked to other social problems, and to improve the situation, solutions must be complex and comprehensive.**

Building a knowledge-based society, in which every member has lifelong education opportunities, is a significant task for Latvia's policymakers. The plan is to tackle the problem of insufficient education by providing opportunities for mastering basic skills in all subjects to everyone under the age of 18, increasing the accessibility of general education.

This includes the implementation of programs of pedagogical adjustment for those with a low level of education, and expanding programs for vocational education. The reform of general education is being continued in Latvia. Education reform envisages moving away from the past focus on cramming vast amounts of information and adopting a modern approach that emphasizes information-processing skills, knowledge and skills useful for practical life, and inclusion of modern subjects in the curriculum. It also features the integration and alignment of subject content to achieve "un-cluttering" by decreasing inconsistencies and duplication. Alongside the development of general education, goals for vocational education have been set. These include goals for promoting adult education, creating opportunities for acquiring additional qualifications, and preparing a skilled labour force for the development of the economy.



The most noteworthy practical achievements of recent years are the introduction of programs of pedagogical adjustment, which aim to improve education opportunities in closed institutions and the accessibility of vocational education, including the activities implemented by the State Employment Agency. This has allowed for extended opportunities for acquiring new qualifications and upgrading existing ones for various groups at social risk.

The education system in Latvia is regulated by the Education Law; the implementation of the education process is determined also by the General Education Law and Vocational Education Law.

The Law on Education states that the education system also includes special education, which means education for individuals with special needs and health challenges, or general/vocational education adjusted to such people. The law calls for special programs of pedagogical adjustment and social adjustment. Pedagogical adjustment programs are education programs for individuals within the age group who need to receive compulsory education and need to improve their knowledge on basic education curriculum subjects. Social adjustment programs are education programs suitable for individuals within the age group who need to receive compulsory education and who experience social behaviour challenges.

Regarding labour relations regulatory legislation in Latvia, then Labour Law (adapted on 2001) Law on Unemployed Persons and Persons Searching job (adapted on 2002) are the basic laws regulation this subject.

At the present moment young people as the labour force are of high demand in the labour market. It can be explained by both the topical shortage of the labour force in the country in general, and by the features and skills characteristic for young persons and attractive to entrepreneurs. **At the same time there is more demand for the employees who have obtained a certain profession**, have obtained certain work and life experience. It should be noted that employers are more tolerant to the lack of theoretical and practical skills which can be trained when working, however, the **weak psychological preparation for the work** and daily work life as well as the lack of motivation are the obstacles that the entrepreneurs cannot fight against. Therefore, in **general it can be concluded that the young unemployed persons do not comply with the labour market demand.**

2. Beneficiaries' knowledge about labor market opportunities

Youngsters from orphanages, that are main target group of this project, are well informed about their labor market opportunities. Supportive staff provides not only information about their opportunities, but even help to find the job – provides information from job agencies, prints job ads, helps to arrange the job interviews.

Nowadays, when most of the job ads are posted on the internet in different sites, there is no problem to find different job offers. The real problem is that youngsters overestimate their opportunities, their job expectations are not based on their real skills, experience and knowledge.



3. Language skills and qualifications of beneficiaries

Most of youngsters living in orphanage houses are native speakers – Latvians. Those youngsters who represent Russians, know National language – Latvian – very well. They can communicate easily. Most of them can speak other language, most of them English. Approximately 50% of youngsters know English very well and can communicate easily, other 50% can understand English, but it is harder to communicate.

4. Level of social and working inclusion of beneficiaries

Most of youngsters living in orphanage houses are a little bit behind handed - youngsters which are 18, act like they are 15 years old. They lack knowledge and understanding of life daily situations as youngsters living in families. Youngsters, living in orphanage houses, which are 18 years old, when they have to leave their orphanage home, most of them still attend secondary school. They graduate secondary school at the age of 21, not 18 years old, as youngsters living in families. Most of them are not ready to look for the job or start to work when they leave orphanage house. Many of them stay in Youth Houses, which are institutions for orphans who've become 18 years old.

Some of them are looking forward to start their own, independent life and are waiting desperately till they become 18 and leave the orphanage house. Unfortunately they are very inexperienced and without guidance and support can't manage many daily situations easily. The image of life without daily supervision and guidance of the consultants and social workers in orphanage houses, is so strong, that they think that only problem of their lives is to get rid of supervision. Meanwhile, they think that supervision of their daily actions is something that is peculiar only in orphanage houses. They don't understand that youngsters living in families with their parents are supervised as well. And no one youngster receive total, absolute freedom, when no parent wants to know where one is planning to stay for a night, when one will be back at home etc.

As mentioned above, most of youngsters living in orphanage houses underestimate their work opportunities. They want to receive salary that is way beyond their qualification. They want a highly paid and easy job, without supervision and control. They are not responsible. If the job is hard, they drop it easily. They act irresponsibly, for instance, not arriving on the next day and not leaving a note or call for an employer. For instance, if there is a rainy day, they decide not to go to the work, if the work needs to be done with some effort, that there are challenges that needs to be faced, they are not ready for that and they choose the easiest way out – they just drop it without notice.

5. Life quality level of beneficiaries as well as their professional satisfaction

Youngsters living in orphanage houses do not appreciate that the living conditions of their lives, opportunities, entertainment options and opportunities of professional development are rather high. Many youngsters living in families with less income are more socially and economically excluded than the youngsters living in orphanage houses. Still, as they have suffered badly



before they have arrived in orphanage house (most of them abused from the members of their family) and many experienced insecurity during their lives in orphanage houses (change of staff, change of orphanage house etc.), they cannot overcome the feeling that there is something very important lacking in their lives, they fell incomplete, abused and that they are entitled to get more without giving back.

So even there are objective indicators that the life quality of the beneficiaries is more than satisfactory, they feel opposite. And regarding information posted above about professional opportunities, beneficiaries do not feel professional satisfaction, because they feel that professional opportunities are not equal for they needs.

6. Level of beneficiaries' satisfaction of community services: strengths and weaknesses identified

As pointed out above, youngsters living in orphanage houses mostly do not appreciate support and supervision they've received. Even they receive individual approach – every youngster at the age of 18 has his personal social worker, often relationships between the social worker and the beneficiary is very formal, because youngster finds this supervision shameful. On the other hand, social workers in Latvia are overloaded and financially underestimated, so there are many situations when individual approach to youngster is not provided. Regarding rights on the living area that municipality have to ensure when youngster becomes 18 years old and decides to live independently, apartments and living areas provided are in very bad condition, so this community service can't be considered as positive. Meanwhile, many social workers who worked with youngster at the orphanage house still maintain the relationships with youngsters and provide help and advice if needed.

Regarding higher education, there are some scholarships that orphans can receive in order to cover the tuition fee and daily expenses, because higher education in Latvia is paid education. Still, the knowledge and many times motivation of orphans is not so high to take this opportunity. Again, the supportive staff from Youth Houses and Orphanage houses, as well as different foundations and associations that works to help those people, provide mentoring and assistantship for motivated youngsters willing to get higher education.

7. Level of beneficiary's awareness concerning their social and political empowerment

Every youngster, when he or she becomes 17,5 years old, receive full pack of information about the social services and opportunities they have. This is required by law. They have a choice – to stay and live in Youth House or start their own independent life. If they choose the other option, they receive funding for the daily expenses (still it is not enough to make a living) and a living area, ensured by the municipality. This other issue is a great problem for many youngsters leaving the orphanage house – to find a proper living space, because the apartments and living areas that municipality provides are in very bad condition. The amount of money they can provide for the rent is not enough as well. So, if the youngster is not able or willing to find a job,

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this is the risk for youngsters to become in social unfavorable situation – involve in crime or prostitution.