



**SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND WHY IT MATTERS FOR THE
ECONOMIC AND DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT OF
EUROPE AND ITS CITIZENS: POST-COMMUNIST
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE IN COMPARATIVE
PERSPECTIVE**

**DELIVERABLE 2
DESK RESEARCH**

LITHUANIA

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Introduction.

In year 1940 Lithuania was incorporated into the Soviet Union and became one of the Soviet Socialist Republics. Independence of the country was lost and the country was a part of the Soviet Union till the year 1990, when Lithuania declared its independence again. Restoration of Lithuanian independence made very extreme changes in the fields of politics and economy. Transition from soviet system with centralised economy to democratic society with market economy created new opportunities, but also new problems. The process of the transformation is making influence on the changes of the values, attitudes, beliefs and goals of Lithuanian residents. This work reviews the main trends of social inequality in post-Communist period in Lithuania.

Section 1. "*Objective*" indicators of social inequality

GDP per capita index (Data from Table1).

The analysis of the wealth and income trends in Lithuania we start with the GDP per capita index. The data reflects the dynamics of the GDP per capita in the period of 1996-2005. All along this period (1996 - 2005) the GDP per capita was growing, except the period 1998-1999.

In the year 1996 the GDP per capita in Lithuania was 9090 LT. In the period 1996-1998 it has grown from 9090 LT to 12594 LT. In the period 1998-1999 it has decreased 203 LT (from 12594 LT in year 1998 to 12391 LT in year 1999). The one of the main reasons for temporary decline in economics was closely related to the financial crisis in Russia, the country which at that period remained one of the most important economic partners for Lithuania,

During the period 1999-2005 the GDP per capita was increasing every year, and in the year 2005 has reached the maximum of all the analyzed period (1996-2005).

Income and wealth indexes (Data from Table1).

Analyzing the indexes of income and wealth, first of all we take a look at the index of unemployment rate. During the period of 1997-2005 (lack the data of the year 1996) the change of the unemployment rate in Lithuania was uneven. In the period 1997 - 1998 the unemployment rate has decreased 0,9% (from 14.1% in year 1997 to 13.2% in year 1998).

In the period 1998 - 2001 the unemployment rate was increasing every year and in the year 2001 has reached the maximum of all the analyzed period (1997-2005) - 17.4%. As we

can see from the data, during the period 1998-2001 the unemployment rate has increased 4.2% (from 13.2% in year 1998 to 17.4% in year 2001).

In the period 2001-2005 the unemployment rate was decreasing every year and in the year 2005 has reached the minimum of all the analyzed period (1997-2005) - 8.3%. So during the period 2001-2005 the unemployment rate has decreased 9.1% (from 17.4% in year 2001 to 8.3% in year 2005). The factors, influencing the decline in the unemployment rate, among others, were the steady development of Lithuanian economy and, after the joining EU, high numbers of emigration – first of all, to UK and Ireland.

According to the data, all along the period (1996-2005) the average monthly gross earnings was increasing: from 618.2LT per month in year 1996 to 1276.2 LT in year 2005. During this period the average monthly gross earnings has increased twice (2.06 times). The increment of the average monthly net earnings during the period 1996-2005 was slower, comparing to the increment of the average monthly gross earnings - the average monthly net earnings during this period has increased 1.96 times (from 466.7 LT per month in year 1996 to 916.7 LT per month in year 2005).

According to the data, all along the period (1996-2005) the average old-age pension was increasing (from 192.43LT in year 1996 to 420.29LT in year 2005). During this period the old-age pension has increased 2.18 times.

Poverty level index (Data from Chart 1).

Analyzing the data, we can see that during the period 1996-2005 the change of the poverty level was uneven. In the year 1996 the poverty level was the highest in all the period 1996-2005 (18%). In the period 1996-1999 the poverty level has decreased from 18% in year 1996 to 15.8% in year 1999 (2.2%).

In the period 1999-2002 the poverty level has increased from 15.8% in year 1999 to 16.6% in year 2002 (0.8%). In year 2002-2003 we can see the decline of the poverty level (0.7%).

During the period 2003-2005 the poverty level has increased again: from 15.9% in year 2003 to 16.9% in year 2005 (1%). Among other factors, declining unemployment, emigration and the development of national economy played an important role in reducing the poverty and growing earnings. Alongside the growing economy, the wave of emigration created the unique situation during the independence years: in the urban areas, especially the capital Vilnius, some areas of industry like transport, construction and other are experience the shortage of the workforce and thus is forced to raise the wages.

Life expectancy rate (Data from Table2).

The analysis of the population health characteristics in Lithuania we start with the life expectancy index. According to the data, we can see that during the period 1990-2005 life expectancy has slightly decreased: from 71.46 years in year 1990 to 71.32 years in year 2005. In year 2005, the difference of life expectancy of male/female in Lithuania was 12.06 years (life expectancy of male - 65.36 years old, female - 77.42 years old). In year 1990 this difference was 9.83 years (life expectancy of male - 66.44 years old, female - 76.27 years old).

Morbidity rates (Data from Table3, Table 4, and Table 5).

According to the data, during the period 1995-2005 the total number of physicians, hospitals and beds in hospitals has decreased. It has increased the total number of dentists. According to the data, the morbidity rate for the malignant neoplasm during the period 1995-2004 has increased: in year 1995 it were 47035 cases of malignant neoplasm in the country, while in year 2004 - already 66309.

During the period 1995-2004 the morbidity rate for active tuberculosis has decreased: from 9294 cases in year 1995 to 8449 in year 2004.

According to the data on HIV/AIDS morbidity, in the period of 1988-1999 there were registered 201 HIV cases and 29 AIDS cases. The number of notified HIV cases during the period 2000-2002 was increasing (from 65 cases in year 2000 to 397 cases in year 2002). In year 2002 the number of HIV cases was the highest during the whole period 1988-2005 (397). In year 2003 the number of notified HIV cases has decreased (it were registered 110 cases), but in year 2004 it has increased again (135). In year 2005 (beginning of July) there were registered 76 HIV cases in Lithuania.

In the period 1995-2004 the morbidity rate for alcoholic psychosis has slightly increased from 1994 cases in year 1995 to 2790 cases in year 2004. While the morbidity with chronic alcoholism during the period 1995-2004 has slightly decreased: from 72371 cases in year 1995 to 60852 in year 2004.

According to the data, there was a sharp increase of the morbidity with narcomania and toxicomania during the period 1995-2004: in the year 1995 there were 1708 cases of this disease, while in year 2004 - already 5011 registered cases.

Mortality by cause of death (Data from Table 6, Table 7).

According to the data, the morbidity level during the period 2000-2005 has increased: from 38919 decedents in year 2000 to 43737 decedents in year 2005.

As we can see from the data, the most frequent causes of death are diseases of the circulatory system. During the period 2000-2005 the number of deaths, caused by the diseases of circulatory system, has increased: from 20931 in year 2000 to 23808 in year 2005.

The second most frequent cause of death remains malignant neoplasm. During the period 2000-2005 the number of deaths, caused by the malignant neoplasm, has slightly increased: from 7723 in year 2000 to 8044 in year 2005.

The third most frequent cause of death in Lithuania is external causes of mortality. During the period 2000-2005 the number of deaths, caused by the external causes, has increased: from 5102 in year 2000 to 5523 in year 2005. The most frequent external cause of death remains suicide - in year 2005 it were committed 1317 suicides in Lithuania. But if we look at the period 2000-2005 the number of suicides was decreasing all along the period: from 1631 in year 2000 to 1317 in year 2005.

Table 1. Main indexes of economic and social development (years 1996-2005)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Unemployment rate, %	...	14,1	13,2	14,6	16,4	17,4	13,8	12,4	11,4	8,3
Average monthly gross earnings, Lt	618,2	778,1	929,8	987,4	970,8	982,3	1013,9	1072,6	1149,3	1276,2
Average monthly net earnings, Lt	466,7	576,6	683,7	722,4	692,2	699,4	728,4	786,4	835,5	916,7
Average old-age pension, Lt	192,43	242,62	287,82	310,16	312,54	317,61	323,05	340,50	371,55	420,29
GDP per capita, Lt	9090	11188	12594	12391	13052	13956	14981	16445	18217	20854

Source: Department of Statistics, Republic of Lithuania, [www..std.lt](http://www.std.lt), updated 2006.10.19

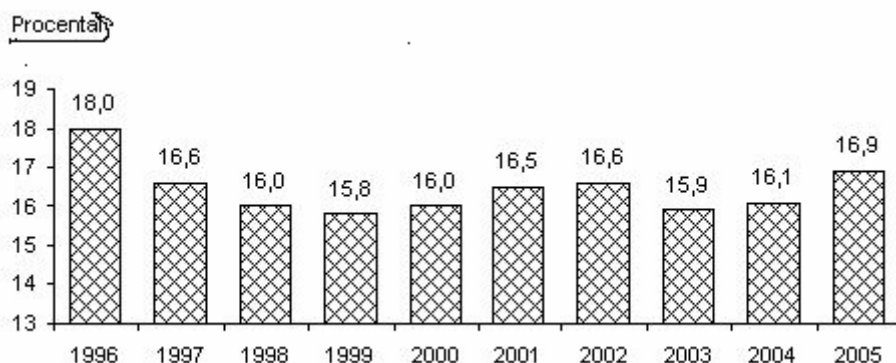
Table 2. Life expectancy at birth (years 1990-2005)

Year

	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total	71,4 6	69,0 8	70,2 6	71,0 8	71,3 9	71,7 6	72,1 9	71,7 8	71,9 1	72,1 9	72,0 6	71,3 2
Males	66,4 4	63,2 7	64,6 4	65,4 8	66,0 0	66,3 6	66,7 7	65,9 5	66,2 1	66,4 8	66,3 6	65,3 6
Females	76,2 7	75,0 6	75,8 9	76,6 4	76,6 6	77,0 1	77,4 5	77,5 8	77,5 8	77,8 5	77,7 5	77,4 2

Source: Departments of Statistics, [www..std.lt](http://www.std.lt), updated 2006.07.18

Chart 1. The dynamics of the poverty level (years 1996-2005).



Source: Departments of Statistics, Republic of Lithuania, [www..std.lt](http://www.std.lt), updated 2006.09..07

Table 3. Morbidity rates (years 1995-2005)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Physicians	14737	14763	14757	14622	14578	14034	14031	13856	13682	13397	13650
Dentists	1742	1709	2153	2259	2306	2446	2490	2309	2372	2272	2453
Hospitals	195	197	187	187	186	187	189	188	191	181	173
Beds in hospitals	4026	23918	23644	23561	23471	23414	23415	23210	23103	22999	22897
Per 10.000 population											
physicians	40.8	41.1	41.4	41.3	41.5	40.2	40.4	40.0	39.7	39.1	40,1
dentists	4.8	4.8	6.0	6.4	6.6	7.0	7.2	6.7	6.9	6.6	7,2
hospital beds	111.4	109.2	102.3	100.7	98.8	97.9	92.4	89.6	87.0	84.6	81,5
New cases of malignant naoplasms	11723	12287	12882	13502	13888	14039	14060	14483	15103	15945	...
Per 100.000 population	323.0	341.2	360.3	380.4	394.1	401.2	403.9	417.5	437.2	464.1	...
Total number of people sick with malignant naoplasms	47035	49027	51626	54242	57436	60351	62160	62880	63541	66309	...
Per 100.000 population	1301.	1366.	1449.	1533.	1635.4	1730.7	1788.5	1816.0	1844.	1935.	...
Newly registered patients by active tuberculosis	2123	2365	2789	2826	2558	2330	2225	2097	2247	2027	...
Per 100.000 population	58.5	65.7	78.0	79.6	72.6	66.6	63.9	60.4	65.1	59.0	...
Total number of people sick with active tuberculosis	9294	9934	10689	11401	11774	10729	9670	9347	8827	8449	...
Per 100.000 population	257.1	276.9	300.1	322.4	335.2	307.7	278.2	269.9	256.2	246.7	...

• Data provided by Health Information center.

• Source: Department of Statistics, Republic of Lithuania, [www..std.lt](http://www.std.lt), updated 2005.08.31

Table 4. HIV and AIDS (years 1988-2005)

	1988-1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005 (at the beginning of July)
Notified cases of HIV	201	65	72	397	110	135	76
Notified cases of AIDS	29	7	10	9	8	21	5
Died from AIDS	10	7	2	4	4	8	3

Data provided by Lithuanian AIDS Center

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Lithuania, 2005.

Table 5. Recorded number of alcohol and drugs addicted patients (years 1995-2004)

Total number of sick with:	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Alcoholic psychosis	1994	2065	2129	2250	2412	2790
Chronic alcoholism	72371	63905	63752	63489	61930	60852
Narcomania and toxicomania	1708	3521	4087	4405	4689	5011

Data provided by Lithuanian State Mental Health Center

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Lithuania, 2005.

Table 6. Deaths by age group and cause of death, 2005.

Cause of death (ICD-10)	Code	Tota	0-14	15-44	Age group 45-64	65+	unknown
All causes		43737	375	3840	10431	29090	1
Certain infec-tious and parasitic diseases	A00-B99	511	11	125	245	130	-
of which:							
intestinal infectious diseases	AQ00-A09	3	1	-	1	1	-
respiratory tuberculosis	A15-A16	271	1	68	150	52	-
septicaemia	A40-A41	78	2	14	27	35	-
human immunodeficien-cy virus (HIV) disease	B20-B24	3	-	3	-	-	-
Malignant neoplasms	C00-C97	8044	18	347	2394	5285	-
of which:							
stomach	C16	768	-	31	208	529	-
colon	C18	497	-	17	109	371	-
rectum	C19-C21	430	-	12	88	330	-
trachea, bronchus and lung	C33-C34	1375	-	16	472	887	-
breast	C50	588	-	29	217	342	-
cervix uteri	C53	215	-	40	83	92	-
prostate	C61	477	-	-	53	424	-
leukaemia	C91-95	264	8	21	51	184	-
colon							
Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases	E00-E88	377	1	34	99	243	-
of which:							
diabetes mellitus	E10-E14	336	-	25	83	228	-
Mental and behavioural disorders	F01-F99	68	-	14	18	36	-
of which:							
mental and behavioural disorders due to use of alco-hol	F10	23	-	6	12	5	-
mental and behavioural di-sorders due to psy--choactive substance use	F11-F19	6	-	5	1	-	-
Diseases of the circulato-ry system	I00-I99	23808	8	534	3753	19513	-
of which:							
chronic rheumatic heart diseases	I05-I09	150	-	7	63	80	-
hypertensive diseases	I10-I13	416	-	9	138	269	-
acute and subsequent myocardial infarction	I21-I22	1388	-	32	275	1081	-
other ischaemic heart diseases	I20,I24-I25	13649	-	180	1847	11622	-
cerebrovascular diseases	I60-I69	5405	-	88	644	4673	-
atherosclerosis	I70	987	-	1	64	922	-
Diseases of the respiratory system	J00-J98	1733	20	132	435	1146	-
of which:							
influenza	J10-J11	3	1	1	-	1	-
pneumonia	J12-J18	660	12	94	227	327	-
chronic bronchitis and asthma	J41-J46	956	1	15	164	776	-

Diseases of the digestive system	K00-K92	1884	2	263	817	802	-
of which:							
gastric, duodenal and peptic ulcer	K25-K27	222	-	11	64	147	-
diseases of appendix	K35-K38	10	-	1	2	7	-
alcoholic liver disease	K70	546	-	142	322	82	-
fibrosis and cirrhosis of liver	K74	364	-	54	203	107	-
Diseases of genitourinary system	N00-N98	310	-	10	53	247	-
of which:							
hyperplasia of prostate	N40	27	-	-	5	22	-
Pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium	O00-O99	4	-	4	-	-	-
of which:							
abortion	O03-O08	-	-	-	-	-	-
Diseases of the perinatal period	P05-P96	80	80	-	-	-	-
Congenital anomalies	Q00-Q99	130	82	18	22	8	-
Symptoms and ill-defined conditions	R00-R53, R55-R99	505	25	175	147	158	-
Senility	R54	43	-	-	-	43	-
External causes of mortality	V01-Y89	5523	112	2067	2251	1092	1
of which:							
transport accidents	V01-V99	884	38	466	238	142	-
falls	W00-W19	503	2	99	213	189	-
accidental drowning and submersion	W65-W74	389	27	160	144	58	-
accidental poisoning by and exposure to alcohol	X45	448	1	148	245	54	-
intentional self-harm	X60-X84	1317	3	568	512	234	-
assault	X85-Y09	314	4	140	129	41	-
All other diseases		754	24	127	216	387	-

Source: Department of Statistics, Republic of Lithuania, www..std.lt, updated 2005.03.17

Table 7. Deaths by cause of death (years 2000-2004).

Death causes (ICD-10)	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Certain infections and parasitic diseases	490	464	474	479	451
Malignant neoplasms	7723	7796	7870	7839	7959
Diseases of the circulatory system	20931	21869	22331	22295	22531
Diseases of the respiratory system	1560	1473	1613	1635	1630
Diseases of the digestive system	1273	1436	1510	1609	1632
External causes of mortality:	5102	5498	5280	5241	5077
transport accidents	769	847	828	852	863
accidental poisoning by alcohol	344	426	418	436	431
accidental drowning	362	454	410	358	307
suicides	1631	1535	1551	1455	1381
homicides, assault	345	356	248	332	293
TOTAL	38919	40399	41072	40990	41340

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Lithuania, 2005.

Section 2. Causes and correlates of social inequality

Talking about social inequality causes in Lithuania, we should take into account such factors as gender, socio-economic activity status, number of members in the household and region.

According to the data (Table 1) we can see, that gender makes influence on the social inequality: female have higher probability to be socially excluded or to have poorer living conditions than male. In the year 2000 the male unemployment rate was higher than female unemployment rate (male unemployment rate - 18,8%, female - 13.9%), in the period 2004-2005 the unemployment rate among male and female is about the same (in year 2004 - 11,8% (female) and 11% (male); in year 2005 - 8.3% (female) and 8.2% (male)).

Although the unemployment rate is about the same among female and male, the labor force activity rate and employment rate is higher among male (Table 1). According to the data (Table 2), male have higher average monthly gross earnings (in year 2005 - 1230 LT (female) and 1493 LT (male)). All along the period (2000-2005) the gap among the average monthly gross earnings was increasing: in year 2000 the difference between male/female average monthly gross earnings was 214 LT, while in year 2005 - already 263 LT.

According to the data (Table 2), the gap between male/female average monthly gross earnings is bigger in public sector than in private sector (in year 2000 the difference of male/female average monthly gross earnings in public sector was 292 LT, in year 2005 - 364 LT; in year 2000 the difference of male/female average monthly gross earnings in private sector was 169 LT, in year 2005 - 253 LT).

According to the data on the average disposable income by type of household (Table 3), we can see that the households with the female household heads have lower average disposable income. No matter what is the type of household (single person household, couple with children or without children, single parent with child/children, etc.), households with female household heads have lower disposable income than households with male household heads.

According to the data on poverty level by the gender of the household head (Table 4), the higher poverty level is in the households with the female household head (in year 2005 the poverty level in the female household head was 19.3%, male household head - 15.3%).

According to the data (Table 5), the poverty level in the rural area is higher than the poverty level of the country (in year 2005 the poverty level of the country was 16.9%, while in rural area it was 29.5%, in towns - 14.8%, in the 5 biggest cities of Lithuania - 7.7%). During the period 2004-2005 the poverty level in rural area has increased 3.8%, in the biggest cities it has decreased 1.1%, and in the towns it was no change. Taking into account the data of the poverty level in different regions of Lithuania, we can see that social inequality level depends upon the region (rural area, town, and city) of the country; and it is highest in the rural area of Lithuania.

According to the data on the socio-economic status of the household head (Table 6), the highest poverty level is the households of the farmers, pensioners and the persons who are not employees/workers or self-employed (classified as "other"). The lowest poverty rate is in the households where the household head is self-employed (in year 2005 - 9.2%). Among the employees/workers the poverty rate in year 2005 was 12%; it is lower than the poverty rate of the country (16.9%). Taking into account the data of the poverty level in different household types, we can see that social inequality level depends upon the socio-economic status of the household head.

According to the data on the number of household members (Table 7), the highest poverty level is among the households with 3 and more children under 18 years old (in the year 2005 the poverty rate among such families was 36.5%). Households with 3 and more children feel higher social inequality than the households with 1 or 2 children under 18 years old.

Table 1. Labor force activity rate, employment rate, unemployment rate (years 2000-2005)

Aged 15–64, %

	2000		2004		2005	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Labor force activity rate	67,1	74,2	65,6	72,7	64,9	72,0
Employment rate	57,5	60,1	57,8	64,6	59,4	66,0
Unemployment rate ¹	13,9	18,8	11,8	11,0	8,3	8,2

¹ It is calculated for population aged 15 years and older.

Source: Departments of Statistics, [www..std.lt](http://www.std.lt), updated 2006.09.08

Table 2. Average monthly gross earnings by economic sector¹

LTL

	Whole economy		Public sector		Private sector	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
2000	956	1170	980	1272	918	1087
2001	962	1181	989	1288	925	1109
2002	1010	1244	1018	1360	998	1174
2003	1050	1297	1065	1416	1029	1228
2004	1110	1366	1154	1523	1057	1290
2005	1230	1493	1290	1654	1168	1421

¹Individual enterprises are excluded.**Source: Departments of Statistics, www..std.lt, updated 2006.09.29****Table 3. Average disposable income by type of household, 2005**

Per capita per month, LTL

Household type	Household head	
	Women	Men
Single person	693,1	710,6
Single person with children under 18	446,3	465,6
Couple without children	717,2	742,0
Couple with children under 18	507,3	530,2
Other households with children	408,1	478,8
Other households without children	555,4	639,2

Household budget survey data.

Source: Departments of Statistics, www..std.lt, updated 2006.09.08**Table 4. Poverty level, according on the gender of the household head(years 2004-2005) , %**

	2004	2005
Household head		
Male	14,6	15,3
Female	18,1	19,3

Household budget survey data.

Source: Departments of Statistics, www..std.lt, updated 2006.09.07**Table 5. Poverty level in the city area, town area and in the rural area (years 2004-2005) , %**

	2004	2005
All households	16,1	16,9
Towns, cities	11,3	10,6
5 biggest cities in Lithuania	8,8	7,7
Other cities, towns	14,8	14,8
Rural area	25,7	29,5

Household budget survey data.

Source: Departments of Statistics, www..std.lt, updated 2006.09.07

Table 6. Poverty level by the socio-economic status of the household head (years 2004-2005) , %

	2004	2005
The socio-economic status of the household head		
Employees, workers	11,6	12,0
Self-employed	6,9	9,2
Farmers	30,1	21,6
Pensioners	24,5	28,6
Other	36,3	35,8

Household budget survey data.

Source: Departments of Statistics, [www..std.lt](http://www.std.lt), updated 2006.09.07

Table 7. Poverty level by the number of household members (years 2004-2005) , %

	2004	2005
All households with the children under 18 years old	16,8	17,2
Households with 1 child	11,2	11,9
Households with 2 children	17,1	17,4
Households with 3 and more children	36,6	36,5

Household budget survey data.

Source: Departments of Statistics, [www..std.lt](http://www.std.lt), updated 2006.09.07

Section 3. Social inequality and national political culture

Talking about the political culture of Lithuanian society, we should take into account two aspects: the participation of the citizens in the elections, participation in the activities of public organizations and municipal bodies and the level of the confidence in political institutions that also reflects the political culture of the country. Talking about the relationship between the political culture and social inequality phenomena, the availability of the information, the means to participate actively in the activities of NGO's and other public bodies as well as parties' messages addressing the issue should be mentioned.

Participation in the elections (Table 1).

During the peaceful revolution in Lithuania in the period 1989-1991 the political activity of the citizens was very high - over one million of Lithuanian residents participated in the meetings and demonstrations. In this period, all groups in Lithuanian society, regardless the age, education, type of settlement or income level were actively engaged in the political process.

At the same time, mass media, first of all press, became the very important mediators between the political elites and mass public. The confidence in media increased enormously, and circulation of main national newspapers reached the highest levels (reportedly 0,5 mln.. copies daily for a population of 3,5 mln.). In this period, periodicals were comparatively cheap and affordable for the majority of the citizens.

As we can see from the data (Table 1), level of the participation in the elections was the highest in the period 1990-1993, after Lithuania has declared its independence again. In the election of Lithuanian Parliament in 1990, 71,72% of the citizens participated in the national election of Seimas (Lithuanian Parliament), in year 1992 already three quarters (75,29%) of Lithuanian citizens have participated in the national election of Seimas.

According to the data, the highest participation in the elections rate (during the independence period) was in year 1993 (elections of the President). In the elections of the President in year 1998 also participated a solid number of the citizens (73,6%).

Post-election surveys, conducted in this period showed, that majority of the representatives of all social groups took part in the elections. The slightly lower rate of participation was noticed among the higher educated, better of urban residents, however, the differences in the participation rates were minor.

Six years after the revolution, the level of the political participation has decreased a lot. Since the year 1995 the participation level in the municipal and parliamentary elections has declined. The lowest level of participation was in year 1997 in the municipal elections, when only 39,9% of the citizens participated.

As we can see from the data, the average participation level in the national elections is lowest in the municipal elections (51,52%) and highest in the parliamentary elections (64,64%) and presidential elections (64.12%).

Post-election surveys in 2000 and 2004 found out, that the major decrease in the electoral activity was observed among urban residents, young people and better off. Rural dwellers, people on lower incomes and especially elder still were quite active participating in the elections. This phenomenon can be explained partly by the legacy from the old system, when participation in elections was obligatory (thus many elder people consider it 'duty'), the appeal of both social-democratic parties and conservative parties to the older electorate (with the different messages – either promising social care and re-distribution of state budgetary resources as parties on the left spectrum of political arena did, or stressing national and independence agenda by parties on the right) and by growing standard of living, when younger, more economically active and more financially independent middle-aged urban voters were losing interest in politics and turning to own business.

Participation in the public and voluntary organizations (Table 2, Chart 1, Chart 2).

Lithuanian residents are not very active in participating in the public and voluntary organizations. According to the data of the year 1997 (Table 2), roughly 90% of the Lithuanian residents did not belong to any voluntary organizations. The informal non-institutionalized get-together opportunities are more popular than membership in formal organizations. As we can see from the data, Lithuanian residents usually are active or inactive members of religious organizations; labor unions; art, music or educational organizations and sports organizations. This might be result from experiences with obligatory membership in labor unions and political organizations under the preceding Soviet regime. The reason of low level of the participation also can be caused low level of familiarity with the new organizations that were founded after the year 1990 (R.Alisauskiene, "Civic society and democratic orientations").

In year 2004 the survey "Youth participation in the activities of public organizations and municipalities" was conducted .600 respondents aged 16-24 years were interviewed about the participation in the public organizations and municipal bodies. As we can see from the

data (Chart 1, Chart 2), three quarters (74,4%) of the young people do not participate in the activity of any public organization. 25% of respondents (16-24 years old) said they participate in the activities of some public organization. According to the survey, young people most often participate in the activity of self-government of the education institution; 44.5% of those, who said they are the members of the public organization, participate in the activity of self-government of the education institution. One fifth of the respondents, who belong to any public organization, said they are members of leisure time association (20,1%).

Among such factors as lack of awareness and interest in participation in institutionalized public and voluntary organizations, the bureaucracy and complicated requirement for the registration of such organizations can be mentioned. Thus many people prefer non-institutionalized forms of activities, based on interests and hobby. However, the survey data shows that there are no significant differences in the activities of various social groups – just the types of leisure activities differ among the gender groups, by age, urban and rural residents.

Confidence in the political institutions (Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, Table 6).

Talking about confidence in Lithuanian institutions, since the year 1990, the mass media and the Church are the institutions with the highest confidence levels in Lithuania (more than 50% of respondents trust these institutions, regardless of their political orientation). After the presidential elections in year 1997, this situation has changed in favor of the president. Surveys conducted during the last decade indicated that Lithuanian residents are more prone to trust institutions with a symbolic role rather than legislative and executive institutions (R.Alisauskiene, "Civic society and democratic orientations").

Talking about political institutions and confidence in these institutions, we can compare confidence level in presidential institution, municipalities, Government and Parliament. According to the data of Lithuanian National Surveys (1996-2006) (Table 3, Table 4, Table 5 and Table 6), we can see that among four mentioned political institutions, in year 2006 (June) the highest confidence levels belong to the presidential institution and municipalities.

As we can see from the data (Table 3), in the period of 1996-1999 confidence in presidential institution has been growing very fast; in year 1996 (January) only 23% of Lithuanian residents trusted presidential institution, while in year 1999, June this figure was already 71%. In the period 1999, June - 2000, January confidence in presidential institution has declined from 71% to 50%. This figure remained about the same till the year 2004,

January, when confidence in presidential institution was only 24%; such low level of confidence in presidential institution was caused by the tough situation in Lithuanian political world and tension among President and Parliament. The President R.Paksas was impeached and on the 6th of April, year 2004 was eliminated from the position of the President. On the 13th of June 2004 there was held new election of the President. In the period 2004, January - 2005, January trust in presidential institution has increased more than twice: from 24% in 2004, January to 53% in 2005, January; and till the year 2006, June it remains about the same. There are no significant differences in the opinions of different social groups.

According to the data (Table 4), there were no sharp changes in the confidence in municipalities in the period 1996-2006. The lowest trust level in municipalities was in June, 1996 (29%). In January 1997 it has reached 34%. The figure has been increasing slowly and in year 2003, January it has reached 45%. In the period of 2003, January - 2006, June there were no changes in the confidence level in municipalities among Lithuanian residents. From the data of the surveys we can see that there is rather stable evaluation of the municipalities' activity in the period of 1996-2006, especially in the period of 2003-2006. In general, rural dwellers, people on lower incomes and less educated tend to have more confidence in the municipalities.

Talking about the confidence level in Lithuanian Government (Table 5), the lowest confidence level in this political institution during the period of 1996-2006 was in year 1996, January (16%). In the period 1996, January - 1998, January trust in Government has increased three times: from 18% in 1996, January to 49% in 1998, January. In the period of 1998, January to the 2000, January the figure has declined again (from 49% to 19%). In the period of 2000, January to the 2004, June the trust in Lithuanian Government has been increasing slowly (in June, 2004 it has reached 41%), but in period of 2004, June - 2006, June it has again dropped from 41% to 24%. In general, civil servants and people on average incomes are more in favor with the government, than other groups in society. The level of confidence also depends on the political affiliation – elder people tend to trust government (in spite of the period when left-wing or right-wing parties were governing) more than middle-aged or younger people.

According to the data (Table 6), Lithuanian Parliament (Seimas) is the political institution that Lithuanian residents trust the least of four under discussion. In year 1996, January the confidence in the Parliament was 18% and till the year 1998, January it has increased twice (from 18% to 36%). The figure 36% in year 1998, January was the highest confidence level in Parliament during the period 1996-2006. Since 1998, January till 2000,

January trust in Lithuanian Parliament has dropped more than twice (from 36% in 1998, January to 14% in 2000, January). During a period 2000, January - 2006, January the confidence in Parliament has increased again, but it has not reached more than 23% (2001, January). Although the sharp changes of the confidence level were only in the period 1996-2000, Lithuanian Parliament remains the least trusted institution among the citizens of Lithuania. Talking about various social groups, all of them show similar level of discontent with Parliament, in spite of the political affiliation.

From the surveys data, we can see that that lowest confidence level in all discussed political institutions was in the period of 1996-1997. It means that years 1996-1997 in the period of 1996-2006 were the most critical, talking about political culture of Lithuania. In the years 1996-1997 Lithuanian residents expressed very low confidence in political institutions. The low level of participation in the elections of municipalities in 1997 also indicates the low level of political interest of Lithuanian citizens. People were alienated from the political process and this alienation reflected in the fact that the majority of citizens took a position of a bystanders.

Since the years 1997-1998 we can see that trust level in all discussed political institutions began to grow. The biggest variations in trust level are seen in confidence in presidential institution and Government; while the confidence level in municipalities and Parliament did not vary very much during the period of 1996-2006.

Among the other factors, the availability of the information (increasing prices of print media first of all) was playing an important role in decreasing level of confidence in the political institutions. And, even with dropping circulation numbers, print media played an important role in stimulating the negative attitudes towards the political institutions - the content analysis of press, done by the students of Vilnius University during that period reveals, that the critical and negative content dealing with the Parliament activities, significantly outnumbered the positive one.

Table 1. Participation in the national elections (years 1990-2004)

Year	Municipal elections (%)	Parliamentary elections (%)	Presidential elections (%)
1990	64,8	71,72	
1991			
1992		75,29	
1993			78,6
1994			
1995	44,8		
1996		52,92	
1997	39,9		
1998			73,6
1999			
2000	54,2	58,63	
2001			
2002	53,9		53,9
2004			50,4
<i>Average (1990-2004)</i>	51,52	64,64	64,12

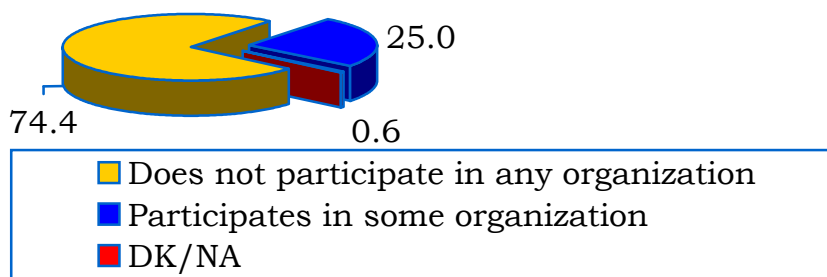
Source: Report "Must participation in the elections be obligatory?", <http://www.pec.lt/doc/lt/balsavimas.doc>

Table 2. Membership in voluntary organizations (1997)

Organization	Active member (%)	Inactive member (%)	Not a member (%)	DK/NA (%)
Political party	1,1	2,1	96,6	0,2
Labor union	1,1	6,8	91,9	0,2
Professional organization	1,2	2,3	96,2	0,3
Religious organization	3,5	10,3	86,2	0,0
Environmental organization	0,4	1,8	97,5	0,3
Charitable organization	0,6	1,8	97,4	0,2
Art, music or educational organization	3	3,9	92,9	0,3
Sport and recreation organization	2,8	4,3	92,8	0,2
Other voluntary organization	0,4	0,7	91	7,9

Source: R. Alisauskienė, "Civic society and democratic orientations" / Democracy and Political Culture in Eastern Europe, 2006.

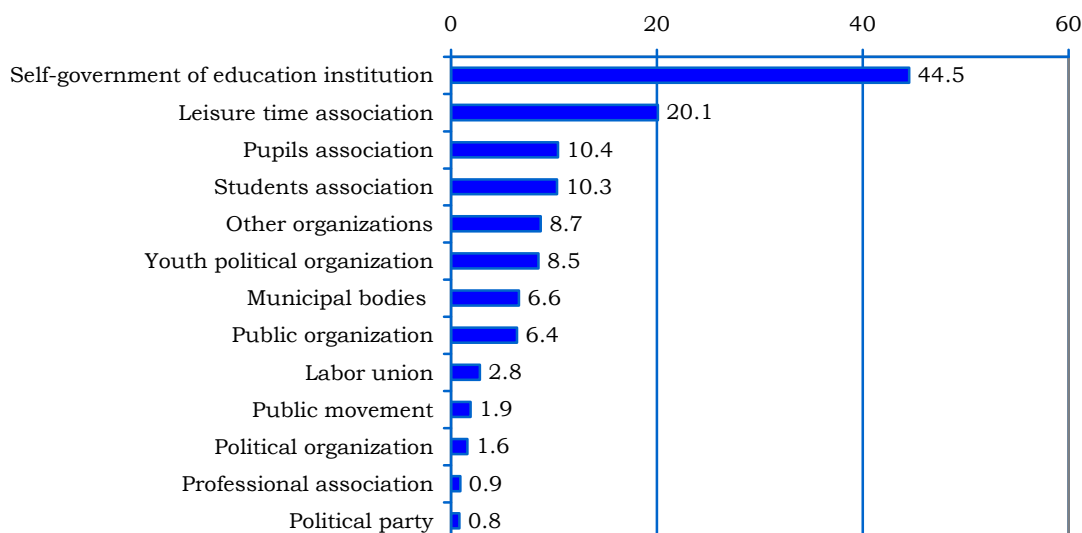
Chart 1. Participation in the public organizations (N=600, 16-24 years old respondents)



Source: Report "Youth participation in the activities of public organizations and municipalities ", 2004

http://www.smm.lt/svietimo_bukle/docs/jaun_dalyvav_veikloje_ataskaita_2004.doc

Chart 2. Participation in the public organizations (16-24 years old respondents, % of those who are the members of any public organization)



Source: Report "Youth participation in the activities of public organizations and municipalities ", 2004

http://www.smm.lt/svietimo_bukle/docs/jaun_dalyvav_veikloje_ataskaita_2004.doc

Table 3. Confidence in political institutions: *Presidential institution* (1996-2006)

	Trust	Do not trust	DK/NA
1996, January	23%	55%	22%
1996, June	25%	51%	24%
1997, January	29%	42%	29%
1997, June	39%	37%	24%
1998, January	56%	23%	21%
1998, June	63%	18%	19%
1999 January	68%	19%	13%
1999 June	71%	19%	10%
2000 January	50%	39%	11%
2000 June	49%	38%	13%
2001 January	55%	31%	14%
2001 June	44%	40%	16%
2002 January	53%	31%	16%
2002 June	56%	33%	11%
2003 January	55%	31%	14%
2003 June	48%	37%	15%
2004 January	24%	67%	9%
2004 June	30%	51%	19%
2005 January	53%	33%	14%
2005 June	56%	31%	13%
2006 January	52%	34%	14%
2006 June	48%	41%	11%

Source: 'Baltic Surveys Ltd.', Lithuanian National Surveys (1996-2006).

Table 3. Confidence in political institutions: *Municipalities* (1996-2006)

	Trust	Do not trust	DK/NA
1996, January	33%	50%	17%
1996, June	29%	52%	19%
1997, January	34%	49%	17%
1997, June	35%	49%	16%
1998, January	44%	42%	14%
1998, June	36%	50%	14%
1999 January	40%	45%	15%
1999 June	40%	47%	13%
2000 January	34%	57%	9%
2000 June	38%	50%	12%
2001 January	38%	50%	12%
2001 June	38%	49%	13%
2002 January	38%	50%	12%
2002 June	41%	49%	10%
2003 January	45%	47%	8%
2003 June	45%	46%	9%
2004 January	46%	42%	12%
2004 June	45%	44%	11%
2005 January	44%	45%	11%
2005 June	45%	40%	15%
2006 January	46%	43%	11%
2006 June	45%	46%	9%

Source: 'Baltic Surveys Ltd.', Lithuanian National Surveys (1996-2006).

Table 3. Confidence in political institutions: Government (1996-2006)

	Trust	Do not trust	DK/NA
1996, January	16%	77%	7%
1996, June	22%	67%	11%
1997, January	38%	43%	19%
1997, June	34%	57%	9%
1998, January	49%	41%	10%
1998, June	40%	49%	11%
1999 January	36%	56%	8%
1999 June	46%	43%	11%
2000 January	19%	76%	5%
2000 June	21%	72%	7%
2001 January	29%	61%	10%
2001 June	22%	68%	10%
2002 January	32%	60%	8%
2002 June	28%	66%	6%
2003 January	31%	62%	6%
2003 June	34%	61%	5%
2004 January	34%	59%	7%
2004 June	41%	50%	9%
2005 January	34%	58%	8%
2005 June	29%	63%	8%
2006 January	28%	65%	7%
2006 June	24%	70%	6%

Source: 'Baltic Surveys Ltd.', Lithuanian National Surveys (1996-2006).

Table 3. Confidence in political institutions: *Parliament* (1996-2006)

	Trust	Do not trust	DK/NA
1996, January	18%	74%	8%
1996, June	19%	72%	9%
1997, January	33%	50%	17%
1997, June	28%	63%	9%
1998, January	36%	53%	11%
1998, June	29%	61%	10%
1999 January	29%	63%	8%
1999 June	24%	69%	7%
2000 January	14%	82%	4%
2000 June	17%	78%	5%
2001 January	23%	69%	8%
2001 June	18%	74%	8%
2002 January	21%	72%	7%
2002 June	21%	75%	4%
2003 January	22%	73%	5%
2003 June	21%	74%	5%
2004 January	18%	76%	6%
2004 June	22%	70%	8%
2005 January	21%	72%	7%
2005 June	19%	75%	6%
2006 January	19%	74%	7%
2006 June	18%	78%	4%

Source: 'Baltic Surveys Ltd.', Lithuanian National Surveys (1996-2006).

Section 4. Social inequality and the national party system

Making a review of the main Lithuanian parties (Lithuanian Social-democratic party, Tevynes Sajunga (party of Lithuanian Conservatives), Liberal and Centre union and New Union (party of Lithuanian Socio-liberals)), we can see that all these parties put emphasis on the freedom of the person and the country, justice, development of economics and knowledge society, protection of human rights. The programs of the parties indicate the demand of solving the problem of social exclusion and social inequality. Some of the parties refer to the particular actions and means for diminishing social inequality, other ones just report it is important to solve such problems, but do not indicate any special means how it should be done.

Lithuanian Social-democratic party in its program stresses the necessity of justice and the equality of opportunities:

"The main task of the economic and social politics of social-democrats is making equal opportunities for applying the capacities of the individuals (...). Social equality requires the elimination of the discrimination, helping the person when he/she has physical, mental or social difficulties. Equality means the value of all the persons and it is the main condition of the persons' self-expression. (...) In the world of nowadays, when globalisation processes are widespread, equality among people, nations, and different races, ethnical and religious groups becomes one of the most important things; only it can guarantee the stable development of the world. Equal opportunities must be guaranteed for the male and female, in order to eliminate the discrimination of female that is still strong in some societies." (Party program)

The program of the Lithuanian Social-democratic party also refers to special actions of reducing social inequality. The program indicates the necessity of raising social benefits and pensions, moving towards the elimination of the poverty in the country:

"The solving of economic problems should be related with the social guarantees, so we will raise the social benefits. We will keep on implementing the poverty minimising means. (...)

The program of the party says it should be paid special attention to the persons who are excluded from labour market and to the disabled people:

"We will stimulate the establishment of the private pension funds and will raise the pensions for the persons who are excluded from the labour market earlier than they should

be. (...) We will pay special attention to the rehabilitation of the disabled people, the adaptation of the public conditions in order such people could have equal opportunities with the healthy people. (Party program)

Lithuanian Social-democratic party in its program indicates the necessity of reducing social inequality and social exclusion; there are also indicated directions how to reach these objectives.

Tevynes Sajunga (party of Lithuanian Conservatives) in its program stresses the necessity of traditional conservative values: creating strong civil society, strong state with strong economics. The program of the party refers to the conception "behaviour poverty", which is determined as *"the phenomenon, when the demand of studying, working and having a normal family is decreasing, and this decrement is stimulated by the unwise social politics of the country"*. (Party program)

Party of Lithuanian Conservatives puts the emphasis not on the social inequality and economic poverty, but stresses the behaviour poverty. According to the program of the party:

"(...) the behaviour poverty determines the economic poverty (but not vice versa). The divorcing families, the weak social ties of the communities and society are the indicators of behaviour poverty. The behaviour poverty is stimulated by the unwise social politics, which does not create a moral motivation for combating the behaviour poverty, - on the contrary, it rises the motivation to stay not social, to bear and raise children not in the family, not look for the permanent job." (Party program)

The program of the Lithuanian Conservatives party pays much attention at the social problems, but practically does not indicate the actions how these problems could be solved. The phenomenon of social inequality is discussed generally and mostly theoretically, referring to the current problems, but not offering any special actions for the solving these problems.

Liberal and Centre union in its program says the main priorities are the security of the person and his / her property, the protection of human rights and freedom; opportunities for equal health care system, reducing the unemployment, integration of the rural area and social unity. According to the program of the coalition, social assistance of the government should be pointed at the most vulnerable social groups:

"The Union thinks that social assistance should reach those people, who mostly need it. It is necessary to implement the program of disabled people integration. Much attention must be paid for the protection of the child rights. The emphasis should be put not on the

social benefits for the problematic families, but on the effective social services that would be directly given to those children". (Party program)

On the one hand the coalition refers to the social assistance for the mostly socially vulnerable groups, on the other hand, the program stresses that the person should be involved in the creation of his live and wellbeing:

"The Government must establish the system of social guarantees, which would help people overcome temporal psychological and professional difficulties, compensate the physical disabilities and give them real opportunities for participation in the building the future society. (...) The coalition supports the three-cycled pension system reform, which puts emphasis on accumulative assurance. This pension system would allow the residents involve themselves in the creation of their future". (Party program)

Liberal and Centre union in its program indicates the directions of diminishing social inequality. The program refers to two ways of solving social problems: social assistance should reach the most vulnerable social groups, but people also should contribute creating their future and wellbeing.

New Union (party of Lithuanian Socio-liberals) in its program puts the emphasis on the morality, freedom, justice, security and unity. The program of the union does not refer much to the social inequality, it is just mentioned that it is necessary to establish the effective complex social security system and involve citizens into the solving of their problems and creation of their wellbeing:

"It is necessary to create the effective complex social security system, which could guaranty the normal life for the people which cannot participate in the labour market (...) It is necessary to stimulate the participation of the citizens in the solving of the social problems, making social problems public" (Party program)

The main players of the nowadays Lithuanian political life (main political parties) in their programs pay attention at the social inequality and social exclusion. Some parties more often refer to the direct actions of solving social inequality, other parties talk about social problems more on the theoretical level, but their programs lack practical plans for combating social exclusion. Generally speaking, Lithuanian political parties offer two ways of solving the social problems: one way is to establish an effective system of social assistance and social benefits, another way - involving citizens into the solving of their problems, making them active players of the process of minimising social inequality. In 2007, the coalition of governing parties, lead by Social democrats started discussing the introduction of the

progressive taxation system. At the same time, the income tax was reduced for all income groups since July 1, 2006 and further reduction must be introduced by January 1, 2008. The pensions, benefits, minimum wage were also increased lately. Governing parties claim that such reforms of the taxation system would help to increase standard of living and reduce poverty

Section 5. Mechanisms for amelioration of social inequality

Taking about the mechanisms of the social inequality amelioration, this is the main objective of the Lithuanian Government. In the Programme of the Government (for the years 2006-2008), social exclusion is mentioned among the main problems of the country:

“Social exclusion and the lack of confidence in the political system of the country, which is influenced by social exclusion and social inequality, are the main problems in nowadays Lithuania”.

In order to keep the growth of Lithuanian economics and to reduce the social exclusion, *“it is necessary to keep on implementation of the Lisbon strategy”*. According to the Government Programme¹, it is important *“that financial resources of the country would be dedicated to the reducing the social exclusion”*.

As we can see from this Programme, Lithuanian Government sees social inequality as the important problem that needs to be solved:

“The priorities of economic growth and fiscal politics will be linked closely with the objectives of strengthening social cohesion (...).The priorities, when solving social problems, will be the strengthening of the wellbeing of the citizens, strengthening of the family institute, reducing of the poverty and social exclusion, increase of the qualitative employment. In order to reach these goals, Lithuanian Government is going to increase the financing of the social protection, education, science and health protection systems. Also the Government is going to use the financial means as effectively as it is possible, in order to satisfy the main social demands and eliminate the causes of the social exclusion”.

The main goals of the Employment, Social prevention and Family policy in Government Programme are the following:

1. The increase of the salary (to increase the average monthly earnings and the minimal monthly earnings),
2. The increase of the pensions and social benefits (to develop the system of social insurance; to raise the old-age pension and the social benefits),

3. Stimulation of the social dialog, cooperation among such social partners as trade unions, employers' associations and NGO's.
4. Policy of the old-age people (to stimulate the pensioners to stay in the labor market, to provide them opportunities to study; to implement the system of "learning all life"; to protect the persons who get retired when they have 3-5 years left till the old-age pension).
5. Protection of the disabled people (to supply such people with the proper assistance and necessary social services, to adapt the accommodation better for such the people, to make opportunities for disabled people to find proper jobs).
6. Social assistance for the large families (children from the socially supported families should get special benefits for preparation for the school and free nutrition at schools).
7. Social assistance for the parents with small children (to strengthen the system of maternity and parental system, to develop the system which would allow the parents, who were gone out of labor market, come back into it more easily).
8. Social accommodation system (to support the process of social accommodation that is organized by the municipalities).

So we can see that current Lithuanian Government pays much attention at the phenomenon of the social inequality and refers to various means for combating social inequality and social exclusion in the country.

Before Soviet Union has occupied Lithuania, several Non-governmental organizations existed, while from the year 1940 they all were closed. The new period in the history of Non-governmental organizations began in year 1991, when Lithuania has declared its independence again. Many non-governmental and non-profit organisations were established; now there are lots of such organizations working in Lithuania.

These are the main non-governmental organizations, which are orientated towards minimizing social inequality:

1. Protecting the rights of women ("The center of equal rights development", "The center of gender studies", "Women information center", "The women crises center of the Kaunas county", etc.).
2. Protecting the rights of children ("Child protection service", "SOS children village", "The center of the safe child", "Save the children", etc.).

¹ The Government Programme for the years 2006-2008 (refers to all references of the chapter).

3. Protecting the rights of physically and mentally disabled people ("The confederation of disabled people", "Guboja" (the association of disabled peoples' art), "The global incentive in psychiatry" (movement for the rights of mentally disabled people).
4. Organizations of the people with various diseases ("Positive life" (the association of people having AIDS/HIV), "The association of weak-eyed and blind people", "The fond for he children having cancer", "13 and Ko" (the center of the people who have got mental problems).
5. Ethnic minorities associations (organizations and associations of people of various ethnical groups and nations).
6. Old-aged people and youth organizations ("Gabija" (the association of old-aged people, "Organization of Lithuanian Scouts").
7. Self-help organizations of the people having problems with alcohol, drugs and other addiction diseases ("The confederation of the people who gave addiction diseases", several communities for the rehabilitation of drug addictive persons, "The association of anonymous alcoholics", "The association of anonymous overeaters").
8. Protection of the sexual minorities ("The association of homosexuals' rights protection).

Such Non-governmental organizations associate people that have various social problems. Through the activity of these organizations and associations people are involved into the communication with other people and have a possibility actively solve their problems, fight for their rights. Such organizations also protect the rights of the people who cannot protect themselves (children, disabled people). Such Non-governmental organizations organize various events and reports in order to attract attention of the society and the policy makers. In this way Non-governmental organizations make big job reducing social inequality. The Catholic Church in Lithuania does not have political power, but it also contributes to the reducing of social exclusion in the country. Through the activity of the Church there are established the centers of social assistance and the charity funds. These organizations help disadvantaged people with food, clothes, social services, etc.

Now the most active trade unions in Lithuania are "The Confederation of Trade Unions", "Labor Federation" and "Trade Union "Solidarumas". Although the activity of trade unions in Lithuania was not very significant during the years of independence, but recently they initiate various projects on the raising of the minimal and average monthly earnings.

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