

VET specialists competencies development in the field of positive parenting teaching (POSITIVE)
Project ref. No. : 2015-1-LT01-KA202-013480

REPORT OF NATIONAL RESEARCH “YOUTH SEXUALITY AND THE REQUIREMENT OF SEXUAL EDUCATION AND INFORMATION ABOUT RESPONSIBLE PARTNERSHIP IN LITHUANIA”

Asta Jakonienė, Erika Strolienė/Zita Norkūnienė, Lina Gudaitienė, Ugnė Koršunovė
Trakai Assistance Authority/ My Family Academy
Trakai, Birutės st. 42 / Vilnius, Mindaugas st. 44, Paneriai st. 7, Lithuania

Introduction

This report provides information about statistical data related to the number of marriages, divorces and family issues such as violence in family, abandoned children, teen pregnancies. Access to information about sexuality and parenting subjects, also a social cultural context related to those issues are described. Teens' opinion and beneficiaries needs are represented.

1 Statistical data

1.1. Marriages, divorcers and children

Lithuania is a small country and has only 2,921 million people [16]. So, marriages and birth rates are very important to us. At the moment decision to marry is quite common among young couples. An average age of people who get married is 33 year for men and 30 year for women [16]. Nevertheless, Lithuania has a large amount of divorces.

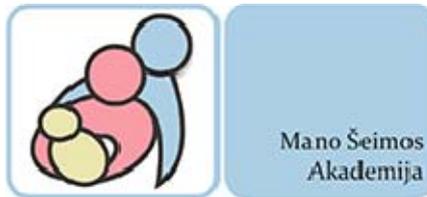
Table 1. The amount of marriages and divorces [16]

| Year | Number of marriages | Number of divorces |
|------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 2012 | 20 660 | 10 399 |
| 2013 | 20 469 | 9 974 |
| 2014 | 22 142 | 9 806 |

Each case of divorce means that 2 or more people (children usually are involved too) are in difficult psychological, social or/and financial situation because of separation and other problems. Some of them are looking for social or psychological help to solve their problems, but some of them are not.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



VET specialists competencies development in the field of positive parenting teaching (POSITIVE)
Project ref. No. : 2015-1-LT01-KA202-013480

Table 2. Divorced couples, having common children age from 0 to 17 [16]

| Year | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|
| Cities | 3 803 | 3 580 | 3 602 |
| Villages | 1 794 | 1 755 | 1 723 |

1.2. Emigration and children

Lithuania has a big problem of emigration. 36, 621 people left country in 2014 year [16]. In most cases one family member leaves and children stay with another parent or even with grandparents. This means that family is unstable; children do not have both parents together and do not get an effective care.

1.3. Violence in family

A lot of questions are important about family values and family support system in our days in Lithuania. Our society experienced terrible stories, when children became victims of violence or were killed. Children from lower social and economic status families are a vulnerable group. According to nonofficial nongovernmental organizations statistics every third woman become victim of violence in Lithuania [15]. There are lots of discussions and programs about prevention of violence against children, but it still exists.

1.4. Teenage mothers and children care institutions

74 teens got married in 2014 year [16]. 36 of them were from cities and 39 – from villages. 9 of them were men and 65 - women. 30,369 children were born in 2014 year in Lithuania [16]. Teenage mothers had 293 the first newborn baby that year [16]. About 100 abortions were done for teen girls in 2014 year [16].

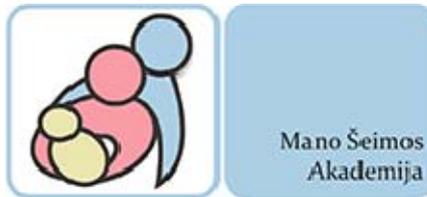
93 children care institutions existed at the end of 2014 year in Lithuania. 4086 children were in these institutions at the end of 2014 year [16]. Usually parents or relatives of these children are alive. This means that many parents are not able to take care of their kids.

There is only one care home for teenage mothers and their children were they have opportunity to live together, go to school and receive help from specialists, to learn living skills and so on [15].

Municipalities' social care centers take social and psychological care of social economical risk families. Parents have to visit groups of parenting skills learning, children have to visit social



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



VET specialists competencies development in the field of positive parenting teaching (POSITIVE)
Project ref. No. : 2015-1-LT01-KA202-013480

communication skills and so on. Lithuanian society is very interested in positive parenting. Good functioning families with good social economic status also want to have better parenting skills.

2 Access to information

The use of contraception is low in Lithuania. The United Nations estimate that only 30 percent of 15 – 49 year old women use modern contraception. Vilnius Public Health Office research showed that about a half of respondents do not use any contraception. The use of contraceptives and the choice depends on young people attitudes and knowledge about it. There is a question of where adolescents get knowledge about contraception. Various studies show that pupils get the most knowledge from the internet and friends [3]. Vilnius Public Health Office study says that even 44 percent adolescents look for information online and almost 12 percent consult with friends. A small percentage of teens consult with their partner, the rest – consult with gynecologist. Another study provides similar data: the primary source of information about human sexuality for adolescents where friends (24 percent), school (20 percent) and internet (16 percent). The gynecologist or family doctor consult barely a tenth of all respondents [3]. This data is alarming because the internet and friends may not always give the appropriate information. Although, all Lithuania schools have integrated Preparation for family and sexuality program, only a quarter of the survey respondents said that the school has provided sufficient knowledge of sexual education, while another quarter that not enough. Thus, one can assume that sexual education in schools is not adapted to the needs of each adolescent [9].

In Lithuania there is a non-governmental organization responsible for public sexual health – Family Planning and Sexual Health Association. In their website www.tavogyvenimas.lt youth and others can find correct information about sexual issues.

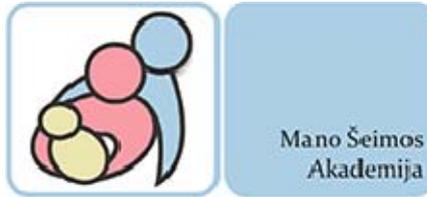
According to various studies the most popular means of contraception in Lithuania are condoms. It is easily accessible to adolescents – they can buy condoms in supermarkets, drugstores, book online with no age restrictions. Birth control pills are available only by medical prescription in the pharmacy. Teens under the age of 16 years can see a doctor only with one of the parents. So, a teenage girl until 16 years old in order to consult a gynecologist, first of all should tell parents. Emergency contraception in Lithuania is sold in pharmacies without a prescription. All contraceptives in Lithuania are fairly expensive [20].

Unplanned pregnancy termination in Lithuania is a legal of all age women. 14 – 16 years old girls can terminate pregnancy with parental consent. From the age of 16 years they can terminate pregnancy without their parent knowledge. Younger than 14 years old girl can't terminate an unwanted pregnancy without a court order.

Positive parenting teaching is a new area in Lithuania. Currently various courses of positive parenting are available for parents. Parents have an opportunity to attend free or paid courses of positive parenthood in most of the cities. In small towns this is not possible.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



VET specialists competencies development in the field of positive parenting teaching (POSITIVE)
Project ref. No. : 2015-1-LT01-KA202-013480

A review of situation in Lithuania showed that Lithuanian teenagers mostly get information from friends, internet and less from the school. Research shows that teenagers lack of qualitative information from doctors

3 Social cultural context

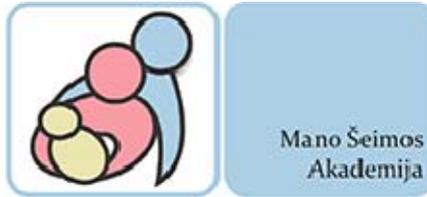
In Lithuania sexual education is a matter of debate. There is no unified system that helps to prepare young people for family and to ensure young people's health and well-being. Preparation for Family Life and Sexual Education Program in Lithuania (PFLSE) was approved in 2007 and launched in schools. However, this program, following a feasibility study, has been criticized first of all because it was implemented inconsistently and non-systematically [19]. The main barriers for good implementation of the program are formal approach to the program, lack of teachers' competence, failure to cooperate, a lack of methodological materials, a use of instruments episodically, and else. According to the survey report, at 18.3 percent of 487 schools, involved in the survey, PFLSE program is integrated into all subjects, at 49.5 percent of schools – in one or more subjects (usually religion, ethics, biology, world and I), at 48.5 percent - PFLSE program is linked to other programs (life skills, alcohol, tobacco and other psychoactive substance use prevention, prevention of violence and so on), 16.8 percent involve PFLSEP into various projects. It is important to note that most PFLSE program issues (60.6 percent) are discussed during class meetings and not all sexuality education program topics are covered.

The early and unsafe sexual behavior has consequences not only to the individual or his family, but also to society as a whole. Researches in Lithuania show that teen sexual behavior depends on friends and information from the mass media, culture, environment, parental attitudes and education, sexual violence, religiousness, employment [14; 11]. Parents of teenagers, according to researchers in Lithuania, understand the necessity of prevention of early sexual relationships and give a priority to sex education, but they are not familiar with sex education content and methods and are not willing to accept information about teenagers' sexual education [11].

Sexuality issues in Lithuania are discussed with reference to sexual behavior approach [7], based on educational [18], medical [1; 2], sociological [17], gender studies [8] and theological [11; 13] positions. The concept of sexuality has different meanings, depending on the context where it is used [7]. Difficulties arise because there are little discussions about teen sexual identity - their daily experience of sexuality, how a particular person in a particular cultural-social environment experiences his/her own sexuality and how reflects this experience [7]. Teens are not taught to accept their sexuality and to deal with this. Thus, sexuality is formed in the family, but school, friends, the internet, the media provide the knowledge which change the students' concept of sexuality without helping teens to know their own sexual identity.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



VET specialists competencies development in the field of positive parenting teaching (POSITIVE)
Project ref. No. : 2015-1-LT01-KA202-013480

In Lithuanian families both boys and girls are raised in more or less the same way; also in schools boys' and girls' education is more or less neutral in terms of gender [14]. Teens form their gender identity, sexuality following the parents' (and sometimes grandparents') example [14]. So, it is important to understand parents' approach to parenting. Studies show, that every second Lithuanian parent use corporal punishment (53 percent of parents) [6]. This is an acute problem in our country. Parents using corporal punishment against children reported that they were punished by physical punishments in their childhood and they are convinced that this is an effective tool, and are against the law prohibiting corporal punishment of children [6].

Another increasing problem related to family welfare is the work-life balance problems affecting the family and depreciating its needs, such as good communication with the child, and maximizing the value of the work, orientation to results, product, and consumerism [5]. Often parents, who seek higher income, emigrate, and a child, who has lost at least one parent, loses identification, experiences the traumatic loss of a close emotional connection and experiences difficulties in socialization [4]. In the absence of positive, close relationships between parents and adolescents, the risk of early sexual intercourse increases [1]. Early sexual intercourses are often insecure and led to early unplanned pregnancies. Lithuanian society approach to teen pregnancy is more negative, conservative [12]; teens are exposed to early parenting difficulties to which they are not matured enough and not ready. Thus, uncontrolled sexual education in Lithuania is unfavorable to the child's well-being and it does not reduce teenager's pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases and is failing in ensuring health and welfare of the youth [2; 13; 10].

4 Teens opinion

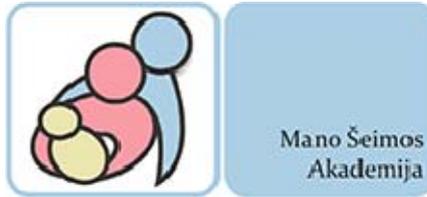
In order to find out teens opinion focus group research was conducted. Six participants took part in the research. Ages of participants: 16 – 19 years. Two boys and four girls participated in the discussion. Two researchers were involved: one was the main moderator and the other was observer who took notes about the participants' behavior, etc. Participants were pupils from VET and high schools. Semi-structured interview method was used. Hereinafter generalized results are presented.

All participants indicated that they had had lessons about the body maturation, sex life, and contraception. Usually it was during biology lessons. First such lesson was in the 6th grade. Girls indicated feelings of shame and rejection during this kind of lessons. All participants noted that they already knew about these topics and all these lessons were not necessary. (*"It's better to talk with your mother."*)

Teens agreed that it is better when some professional from outside the school comes to speak about topics concerning sex education (*"when a teacher you know very well starts to speak about these things – it is uncomfortable and you cannot accept it seriously."*).



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



VET specialists competencies development in the field of positive parenting teaching (POSITIVE)
Project ref. No. : 2015-1-LT01-KA202-013480

Participants indicated that it is more important to talk about psychological issues – about self-awareness; relationships with friends, parents; masculinity and femininity in general; their own body – *“how to accept your own body and how to accept the other’s body.”*

Teens agreed that although it seems that they have a good knowledge about contraception, in real life they meet with difficulties to get it (*“It is such a shame to buy a preservative at a shop...”*, *“I even don’t know how to get contraceptive pills. It is such a shame to ask for it a gynecologist. What if my mother finds out about it...”*). Also they shared that quite common attitude among their peers is that *“infections, pregnancies can happen to others, but not to me and if I have an unsafe sex once, it is o.k., nothing will happen...”* *“And it is a shame to ask a partner about contraception or to ask him/her to check on sexually transmitted infections.”*

Participants said what expectations have to their teachers. First of all, the teacher should be a good listener - *“Teachers usually do not appeal into what we think, what choices we make. They don’t care what is happening with us.”* *“It is very important that a teacher had a serious attitude towards youngster’s problem, difficulty”*. A teacher has to respect a pupil and not to be *“distant and “above.”* It is essential that proper information was on time, not too early, and not too late.

5 Beneficiaries needs

In order to find out beneficiaries needs focus group research was conducted. 3 teachers from VET schools, 3 teachers from high schools and 3 psychologists participated in research. Two researchers were involved: one was the main moderator and the other was observer who took notes about the participants’ behavior, etc.

5.1. Challenges of beneficiaries

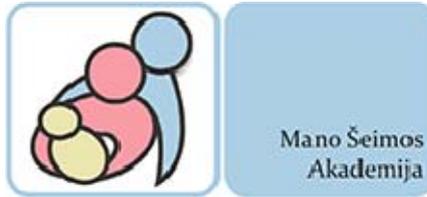
Teachers from high schools said the main problem is no time for individual communication with students. There are difficulties when students have to choose studies after high school, because they don’t know which profession is the best for them. VET school teachers emphasized that school attendance is the main problem in their schools. Students of VET schools usually are people who have practical way of thinking and are not used to put more efforts at school. They came from secondary schools, where they felt devaluated. They have low learning motivation, especially young men. A part of students cannot accept responsibility for their own life. When they meet difficulties on their way, they choose to give up. Students from VET schools have low self-esteem. Many of them have a high level of anxiety and traumatic experience in parent’s families. Lack of family support is common for these people. Some of them are orphans. Among VET schools students a non-planned pregnancy is quite frequent.

5.2. Needs of beneficiaries

Teachers mentioned that they need more time for communication with students, more knowledge, about some topics of youth period of life, about methods of problem solving with teenagers. They



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



VET specialists competencies development in the field of positive parenting teaching (POSITIVE)
Project ref. No. : 2015-1-LT01-KA202-013480

want to change negative attitude to VET schools students. Teachers want to learn more effective and attractive methods of teaching students.

5.3. Topics for positive parenting, prevention of early non-planned pregnancy for high and VET schools students

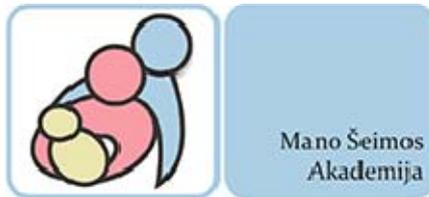
Teachers noticed that teenagers need more practice on identification of feelings, emotions and acceptance of them. Expression of emotions and talking about feelings is especially relevant in youth period. Some teenagers are very good on solving their everyday problems and conflicts; some of them are giving up and need to train these skills. We can see that teenagers don't like to look for help of specialists. Teachers mentioned that in youth period is important to understand that feelings of loneliness are natural. Also they mentioned topics about friendship, healthy and not healthy relationships, falling in love and love, psychological differences and similarities of women and men, femininity and masculinity, what is sexuality and family life dynamics.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Lithuania has lots of social and family problems – divorces, violence in family environment, violence against women and children, lack of respect to child in family and at school.
2. There is a lack of appropriate information and well-coordinated teaching or consulting on issues of sexuality for adolescents in Lithuania. Studies show that Lithuanian adolescents mainly get information from the internet and friends, which is often not correct information.
3. The sexual education in Lithuania is not consistent and systematic. The main barriers are formal approach to the Preparation for Family Life and Sexual Education Program, the lack of teachers' competences, failure to cooperate, adherence to personal values and attitudes, a lack of methodological materials, a use of instruments episodically.
4. Teenagers express that a broader view towards teens' life and their issues is needed at schools and that they need a safe environment where they could discuss and be moderated by an authority figure on their issues, which include sexual education, contraception, relationship problems, self-awareness, etc.
5. Teachers and specialists mentioned that lessons of communication skills, sexual education, self –awareness are necessary for students. There is a need for such lessons every month. Teachers think that a special course or a project has to be prepared and teachers themselves need special preparation in order to give such lessons.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



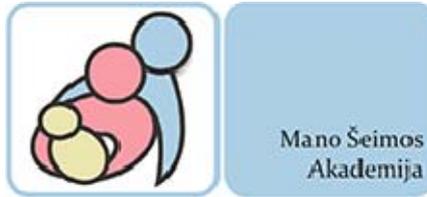
VET specialists competencies development in the field of positive parenting teaching (POSITIVE)
Project ref. No. : 2015-1-LT01-KA202-013480

References

- [1] Bumbulienė Z., Alisauskas J., Sepetienė A., Vilkevičienė R. (2012). Lytinės jaunu moterų elgsenos itaka didelės rizikos ZPV ir *C.TRACHOMATIS* užsikretimui. *Medicinos teorija ir praktika*, 18(1): 18-25.
- [2] Denafaitė G., Obolevičiūtė L., Kemeklienė G., Vaitkienė D. (2010). Lietuvos moksleivių žinios ir jų požiūris į šeimos planavimą bei kontracepciją ir jų lytinė elgsena. *Lietuvos akušerija ir ginekologija*, 13(1): 7-13;
- [3] Defanaitė G., Obolevičiūtė L., Kemeklienė G., Vaitkienė V. (2011). Jaunimo problemų, susijusių su lytiniu gyvenimu, tyrimas. *Lietuvos akušerija ir ginekologija*, XIV, Nr. 1;
- [4] Gumuliauskienė A., Butvilas T., Butvilienė J. (2008). Tėvų emigraciją patyrusių vaikų globos ir socialinės gerovės užtikrinimas: ekspertų požiūris. *Jaunųjų mokslininkų darbai*, Nr.4(20): 145-150.
- [5] Jančaitytė R. (2006). Palankios šeimai politikos įgyvendinimas Lietuvoje: problemos ir galimybės. *Socialinis darbas*, Nr. 5(1): 30-37.
- [6] Jusienė R. (2006). Fizinį bausmių taikymas šeimoje ugdant vaikus: tėvų požiūris ir galimos priežastys. *Socialinis darbas*, Nr.5(1): 63-71.
- [7] Kajokiene I., Zukauskienė R. (2011). Paauglių seksualumo patyrimas: teorine analize. *Socialinis darbas*, Nr. 10(2): 353-364.
- [8] Kajokiene I. (2013). Paauglių mergaičių seksualinio subjektyvumo analizė. *Psichologija*, Nr.47: 61-75.
- [9] Milaknytė A., Juzelskytė I., Bumbulienė Ž., Drąsutienė S. G.(2014). Paauglių požiūris į seksualumą. *Sveikatos mokslai*, 24 tomas, Nr. 4: 5 – 10
- [10] Obelenienė B., Pukelis K. (2004). Lytinis svietimas Lietuvoje ir pasauline reprodukcinė ideologija. *SOTER*, 13(41): 109-125.
- [11] Obelenienė B. (2008). Lytinio ugdymo ir lytiškumo ugdymo prioritetai: tėvų nuomone. *SOTER*, 26(54): 103-121.
- [12] Public opinion survey on sex education issues. <http://www.spinter.lt/site/lt/vidinis/menu/top/9/home/publish/NjAxOzk7OzA=> (Viewed: 2016-01-28).
- [13] Pukelis K.(2007). Trojos arklys, vardu lytinis švietimas, arba liga mirčiai. *Soter*, Nr.21(49): 63-79.
- [14] Purvaneckienė G.(2011). Lytiškumo formavimasis ir kultūrinė aplinka: mokinių požiūris. *ACTA PAEDAGOGICA VILNENSIA*, Nr. 26: 22-34.
- [15] <http://www.SOS03.lt>
- [16] Statistics Lithuania, <http://www.stat.gov.lt>
- [17] Umbrasiene N., Narkauskaite L. (2010). Psichosocialiniai veiksniai, lemiantys vaiku rizikinga elgesį. *Visuomenės sveikata*, 3(50): 24-29.
- [18] Ustilaitė S. (2001). Paauglių lytiškumo raiška ir jos psichopedagoginės korekcijos prielaidos. Daktaro disertacija. Vilnius, VPU.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



VET specialists competencies development in the field of positive parenting teaching (POSITIVE)
Project ref. No. : 2015-1-LT01-KA202-013480

- [19]Ustilaitė S., Proškuvienė R., Juškelienė V., Kalinkevičienė A. (2008). *Rengimo šeimai ir lytiškumo ugdymo programos įgyvendinimo galimybės. Tyrimo ataskaita*. Vilniaus pedagoginio universiteto tyrimų grupė LR ŠMM užsakymu, Vilnius.
- [20]Žyvatkauskaitė A. (2009). Ar kontraceptinės priemonės prieinamos Lietuvos jaunimui? Lietuvos bendrosios praktikos gydytojas. XIII, nr. 6-8.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union