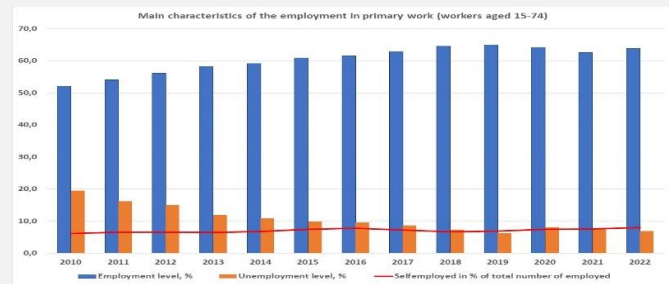


Social Dialogue in Defence of Vulnerable Groups in Post-COVID-19 Labour Markets (VS/2021/0196)

Latvia

COVID-19 labour market developments

- From 2010 to 2019 employment rate in Latvia was steadily increasing and unemployment rate – decreasing.
- In 2020 the first signs of the impact of COVID-19 pandemics appeared – the employment rate decreased and unemployment rate increased, the share of self-employed slightly increased.
- The labour market quickly recovered and 2022, employment and unemployment rates reached the level of 2019. The share of self-employment increased.



COVID-19 and vulnerable groups

- Traditional vulnerable groups (women, workers in pre-pension age, people with disability).
- Workers in essential sectors (health care, education, social care institutions, graduates who try to enter labour market, creative workers).
- Workers in suspended sectors (beauty industry tourism, hotels, public catering, culture, sports, recreation).
- Workers in sectors where economic activity decreased due to anti-COVID-19 epidemiological restrictions (public transport, personal services, industry).
- Low skilled and low paid workers (in context of the state support).
- Refugees from Ukraine
- Workers who are not trade union members.

Social dialogue in defence of vulnerable groups

- Industrial relations are characterised by low trade union density (11.6% (in 2018)) and low collective bargaining coverage (adjusted bargaining coverage rate (% of employees with the right to bargain) – 27.1% (in 2018)).
- At national level employers' and employees are represented by single organisations - employers by the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, LDDK; employees by the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, LBAS.
- The official social dialogue platform is National Tripartite Cooperation Council, NTSP, and its ten thematic sub-councils, all organised according to tripartite principle.
- Social partners defend primarily their members, and, in emergency cases, also other vulnerable groups.
- The most active in the protection of workers were trade unions of education of science sector and health sector.
- Employers' organizations opposed measures that in general worsened the working and living conditions of population.

Policy relevance

- The social partners were not involved and the official social dialogue infrastructure was not used in the preparatory phase of anti-COVID-19 policy and measures as quick decisions had to be made.
- In the implementation phase social partners made corrections and improvements and were heard.
- Due to their objections, improvements were made even in the newly adopted regulatory framework.
- The government organised for consultation large working groups, thus reducing role of social partners.
- Social partners increased their impact by joining in coalitions with largest cooperation partners – business, science and local government organisations.
- Involvement of social partners in implementation of anti-COVID-19 policies and measures positively impacted their legitimacy and functioning of social dialogue structures.

Further information

Project details: <https://www.helsinki.fi/en/projects/social-dialogue-defence-vulnerable-groups/about>, contact: Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, LCSS (Raita Karnite, email: Raita@epc.lv)



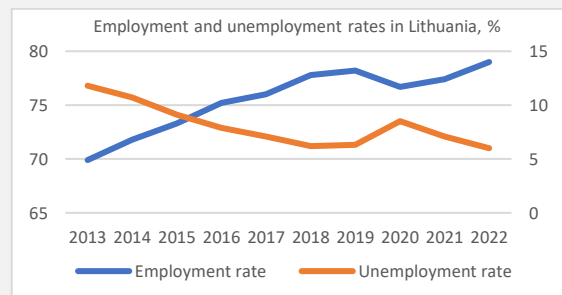
Social Dialogue in Defence of Vulnerable Groups in Post-COVID-19 Labour Markets (VS/2021/0196)



Lithuania

COVID-19 labour market developments

- During the decade before the COVID-19 pandemic, employment rate in Lithuania was steadily increasing, while unemployment rate – decreasing.
- With the onset of the pandemic, the aforementioned indicators reversed their development directions, but the overall impact of the pandemic on the labour market was not severe.
- In 2020-2021, both employment and unemployment rates actually returned to the pre-pandemic levels, with the situation being even better in 2022 comparing with the pre-pandemic year of 2019.



COVID-19 and vulnerable groups

- Traditional vulnerable groups: disabled, elderly, pre-pension age, non-qualified youth, lonely parents, persons with addictions, homeless, ex-prisoners.
- Some groups, suffered due to some specific reasons: low education, low skills and low-wages, workers in non-standard/precarious jobs (low income tied to low social support and protection), non-union members (lower social protection)
- Groups hit hardest by the pandemics:
 - ✓ workers in essential and suspended sectors – health care, tourism, hotels and restaurants, retail trade and delivery services, social workers, teachers
 - ✓ single parents,
 - ✓ young and elderly workers,
 - ✓ persons with disabilities.

Social dialogue in defence of vulnerable groups

- Industrial relations in Lithuania are characterised by low trade union density (8,5% in 2022) and collective bargaining coverage, usually not exceeding 8%.
- It should be noted however, that in recent years the situation in Lithuania has changed quite significantly due to several collective agreements signed mainly in the public sector, which have increased the coverage of collective bargaining up to almost 25%, while the situation in the private sector has remained essentially unchanged.
- The main national social dialogue institution – the Tripartite Council of the Republic of Lithuania – plays rather significant role in protecting low wage earners by setting an adequate minimum wage and considering all main labour market-related regulations.
- During the pandemic social partners concentrated their activities on the nation-wide measures focusing on jobs and income retention. Vulnerable groups in the labour market were not specifically addressed, but nevertheless were covered by these more general measures.

Policy relevance

- In the wake of the pandemic traditional social dialogue structures were not used for taking Covid-19 related decisions. The main reason – the need to make an extremely rapid (often – ‘over-night’) decisions.
- Representatives of unions and employer organisations were invited as a full-members into the Advisory Council of Independent Experts only at the end of 2020.
- However, during the whole period of the pandemic social partners actively proposed Covid-19 related measures and rather significantly (especially – the sectoral ones) influenced design and implementation of the measures.
- The pandemic and the need of fast adaptation to rapidly changing situation made no negative effect on the traditional social dialogue structures.

Further information

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