

STRENGTHS OF EMIGRATION FROM LITHUANIA: DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

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Abstract. The main aim of this paper is to show the strengths of emigration from Lithuania and highlight the drama of social and economic development of the country in this context. The article analyses the causes and consequences of emigration from Lithuania, its extent and structure, as well as problems – decrease in population number, illegal emigration, young people and women emigration, brain drain. The research shows that the fundamental reason of emigration is ineffective economic policy and the lack of self-realization opportunities in Lithuania.

Jel classification: J11.

Keywords: emigration, illegal emigration, brain drain, youth emigration, approach to emigration.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: emigracija, nelegali emigracija, proto nutekėjimas, jaunimo emigracija.

1. Introduction

After Lithuania had joined the EU and free migration of people became legal, the extent of emigration rate in the country particularly increased. This resulted from the opportunity to migrate freely and obvious differences in economic conditions between the developed European countries and Lithuania. It is not difficult to understand the willingness of people to earn more money and to live better, however this target cannot be absolute. The State has to create favorable conditions for its citizens to have appropriate income to live with dignity, to maintain their family in the territory of the country and not going abroad for this reason.

However, emigration especially increased during the 2008-2009 global economic crisis. In 2010, 83 thousand people left Lithuania, which was 4 times higher than the previous year. Based on evaluation of experts, during the 22 years of independence about 30% of population left Lithuania and that mainly concerned youth and qualified specialists. The shortage of jobs, low salary, disappointing opportunities of self-realisation and career, ineffective science and education system are the main reasons of emigration from Lithuania.

Emigration is a serious problem in Lithuania; however, Lithuanian institutions do not pay too much attention to the issue. So far Lithuania has no strategies or programmes implemented to reduce the amount of emigration and this problem in Lithuania has no adequate solution. The **purpose** of the article is to assess the threat of emigration problem in Lithuania, and its **task** is to show the main causes and consequences of emigration.

Several factors determine the relevance of this problem. Emigration has dangerous implications for the State. First of all, emigration fosters negative demographic phenomena: the absolute number of inhabitants is decreasing and that is a big problem for such a small country like Lithuania. The consequences of this are as follows: decrease in fertility and increased divorces as emigrants leave their families.

Second, with the increase of emigration limited budget resources are being used ineffectively. High-level specialists financed from the state budget and educated in high schools leave Lithuania for wealthier countries. This creates a paradoxical situation whereby Lithuania finances those wealthy countries with its own budgetary resources.

Third, employment is decreasing in Lithuania. Employees of different professions as well as potential employers able to create new jobs in Lithuania leave the country. The consequences of this are the increased budget deficit of the Lithuanian Insurance Fund "Sodra".

Fourth, one of the most severe consequences of emigration in Lithuania is diminishing intellectual potential of the country as the smartest youth and high-qualified specialists are leaving the country. In this case, Lithuania faces a real threat of falling behind the successfully developing states.

Emigration causes great danger to Lithuania. According to the forecasts of Eurostat and the United Nations (UN), Lithuania will no longer have 3 million inhabitants by 2035. This will inevitably impact the labour market: with decreasing supply of labour power and the number of working inhabitants, it will be harder to support healthcare and social security systems funded from tax money; the need for those services will increase as the society is getting older.

Therefore, the increasing scale of emigration creates dangerous demographic, economic and social consequences for Lithuania.

2. Social and economic consequences of emigration to Lithuania

According to the official data of the Department of Statistics, in 1990-2010 half a million of the Lithuanian inhabitants emigrated from Lithuania. However, experts say that this number is 1.5-2 times higher because the significant amount of emigration is

unofficial (Fig. 1). Research of **undeclared migration** conducted by the Department of Statistics shows that only every 2nd or -3rd inhabitant declares their departure when emigrating. The extent of emigration so far has not only been great but is still increasing. This rapid emigration, in quantitative terms of the process, has enormous impact on the changes of population number. **Decreasing population number** can be emphasized as one of the essential problems of emigration. Intensive migration processes greatly influence changes of ethnic structure of the inhabitants. Possibility of **de-nationalisation** is often identified as a problem. As far as partial migration is concerned, where one or both parents go to work abroad and the family remains in Lithuania, the social capital of Lithuania, the family, is weakened. The conception of family as a value and the sense of family stability weakens.

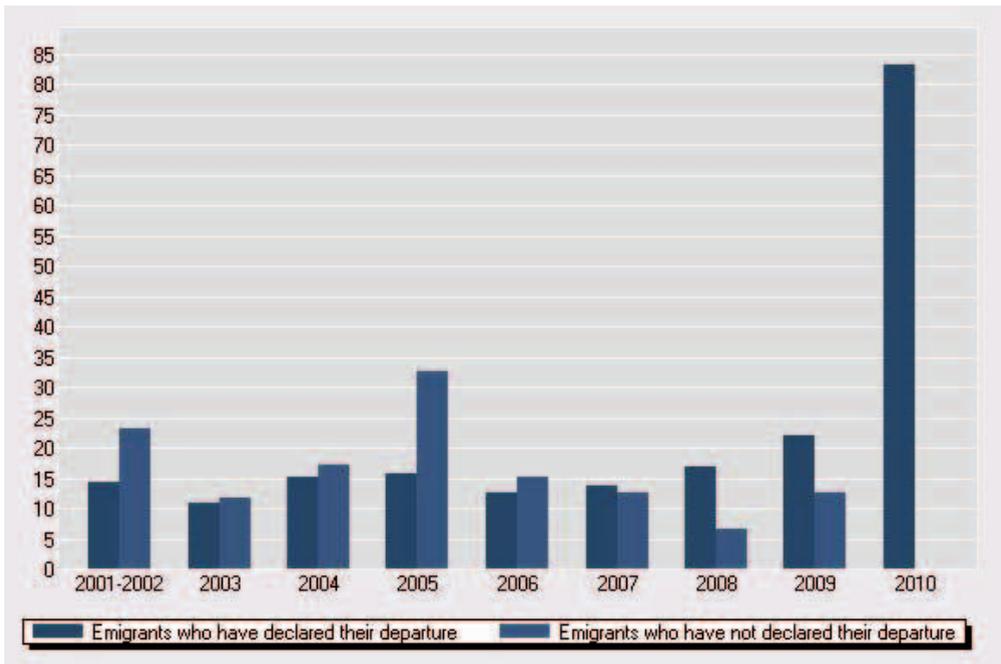


Fig 1. Declared and undeclared emigration rate in Lithuania (thousands)

Source: prepared in accordance with the Department of Statistics under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2012

Illegal migration also causes many problems. Two major categories of such problems are the flow of illegal migrants to/through Lithuania and illegal migration of Lithuanians to other countries. When the extent of illegal migration is large, **women trafficking** tends to increase. On the other hand, women trafficking is encouraged by material deficiency, unemployment, flaws of the social support system and lack of knowledge about this problem. Unless the mindset of people about migration and economic conditions in the country changes, it is likely that women trafficking will remain a prevalent problem in Lithuania in the near future.

One more major problem is **the loss of young people**. This fact might have very severe consequences in the near future because it will change the demographic structure of the society, i.e. only geriatric people will stay, birth rate and family development will diminish, also labour power will decrease and it will be necessary to compensate it by importing people from the Third World countries.

While liberalisation processes of the international labour market are in progress, Lithuania encounters not only emigration but also a very relevant “**brain drain**” problem. It is about specialists of various fields unable to find work environment where they could self-actualise, therefore they leave the country; the Lithuanian intellectual capital diminishes accordingly. General standard of living and resolution of socio-economic problems of the country depend particularly on the effective use of that the most productive part of the society. After creating a well-planned national strategy, educated Lithuanian scientists in the West could and should become one of the driving forces of restoring and developing the Lithuanian science. The reason of brain drain is not only the general economic lag of Lithuania. Brain drain is also encouraged by the flaws of the Lithuanian science and education systems, their severe and long-lasting problems. Analyses conducted by the World Bank show that Lithuania is among the countries with the least science production and innovations, even compared to Central and Eastern European countries. One of the most important factors leading to brain drain is the position of the Lithuanian Government towards education. Investments in education are ineffective. According to the data of Eurostat, financing of one student expressed in terms of purchasing power standards in Lithuania is 8 times lower than in Sweden, and 5 times lower than in Germany. According to this data, Lithuania leads against Latvia and Bulgaria, is relatively at the same level as Poland, and is lagging far behind from the Czech Republic and Estonia. The financing condition of students is poor, however, in recent years financing has increased. In this regard we among the EU leaders. However, study quality depends on education level. Education financing in Lithuania increases very insignificantly. Considering this data we can conclude that governmental financing is not sufficient and Lithuania has a flawed system of distributing money for studies. Another important factor leading to brain drain is low level of education and international acknowledgement. According to various researches, the best college/university seniors are not satisfied with the quality of education of Lithuania.

After summarising the problems of emigration (decrease in population, deformation of age structure, lack of labour power, possibility of de-nationalisation, consequences of social migration, especially for family, children, brain drain, human trafficking, illegal migration) encountered by Lithuania it can be stated that the problem of emigration is associated with socio-economic situation in Lithuania and this problem should be solved at national level.

3. The extent and structure of international migration in Lithuania in 1990-2011 and reasons

Emigration is almost twice as great as immigration. According to the Eurostat data, Lithuania is the first in the European Union according to the extent of emigration (Table 1).

Table 1. International migration of population (1990-2009).

	Immigrated	Emigrated	Net migration
1990	14744	23592	-8848
1991	11828	22503	-10675
1992	6640	31972	-25332
1993	2850	26840	-23990
1994	1664	25859	-24195
1995	2020	25688	-23668
1996	3025	26394	-23369
1997	2536	24957	-22421
1998	2706	24828	-22122
1999	2679	23418	-20739
2000	1510	21816	-20306
2001	4694	7253	-2559
2002	5110	7086	-1976
2003	4728	11032	-6304
2004	5553	15165	-9612
2005	6789	15571	-8782
2006	7745	12602	-4857
2007	8609	13853	-5244
2008	9297	17015	-7718
2009	6487	21970	-15483

Source: prepared in line with the data of the Department of Statistics under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2012

Emigrants leave for work mostly to the **USA, Germany, Poland, Ireland, Great Britain, Denmark, and Sweden**. From 2004, the members of **European Union** became the most attractive to emigrants: United Kingdom (33%), Ireland (16%), Germany (8%), Spain (4%), Denmark (3%) (Fig. 2). Lithuanians emigrate to the United States of America (11% of emigrants), Russian Federation (7%), Belarus (5%).

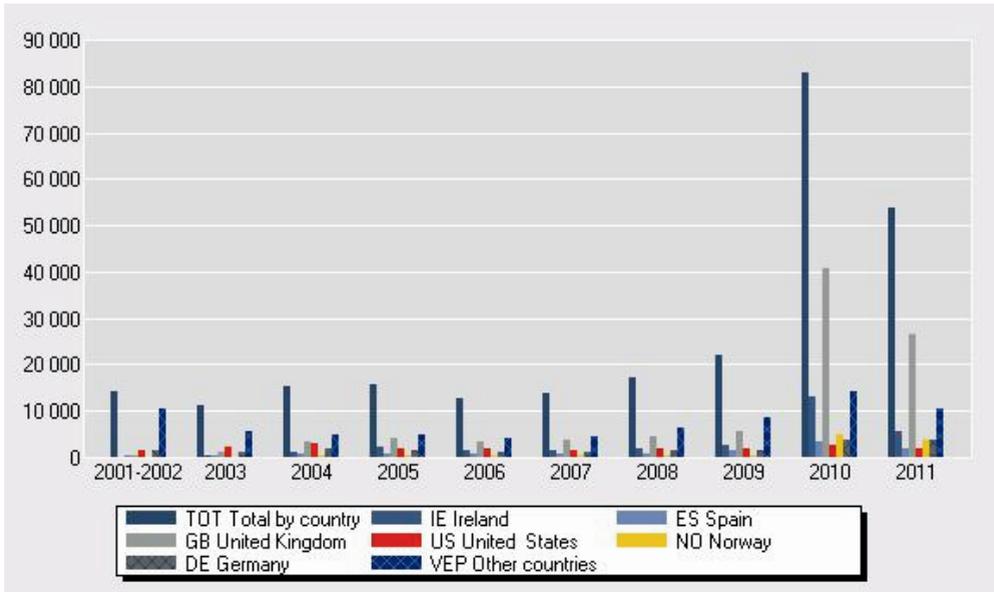


Fig 2. Emigrants who have declared their departure according to their future residence (individuals)

Source: prepared in accordance with the Department of Statistics to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2012

Women form the largest number of emigrants. From 2003, women make the greater part of emigrants in statistical structure, and emigrate more than men (in 2003, there were 53% of emigrated women and 47% of emigrated men; later on women emigration out-weighted men emigration by 3-6%) (Fig. 3). Experts from Scandinavia claim that emigration is the problem of implementation of equal opportunities for both genders, which must be solved appropriately. According to the data provided by the Department of Statistics, a statistical profile of women can be drawn. Women are more educated than men; they put more emphasis on professional and inner development rather than on achieving material, high status-oriented career. However, women encounter some problems in Lithuania. First, it is more difficult for women to pursue their professional career. Second, a young educated woman in Lithuania has little chances to create a well-rounded family: to find an equally worth partner. In most cases, women's value systems highly exceed men's systems. Women in Lithuania are more educated, advanced, intellectual and more intelligent than men; they put more emphasis on development of themselves as personalities. Often, an average Lithuanian male falls short of female expectations and is not competitive enough to be their partner. This fact is supported by divorce statistics in Lithuania (according to the data of the Department of Statistics, in 2010 there were 10 thousand of divorce cases registered or 736 more than in 2009; every hundred marriages had 54 divorces or 9 more than in 2009) and a comparatively large share of single women (around 20%) in Lithuania. This

kind of situation pushes women to look for better chances to have their expectations met beyond the boundaries of Lithuania.

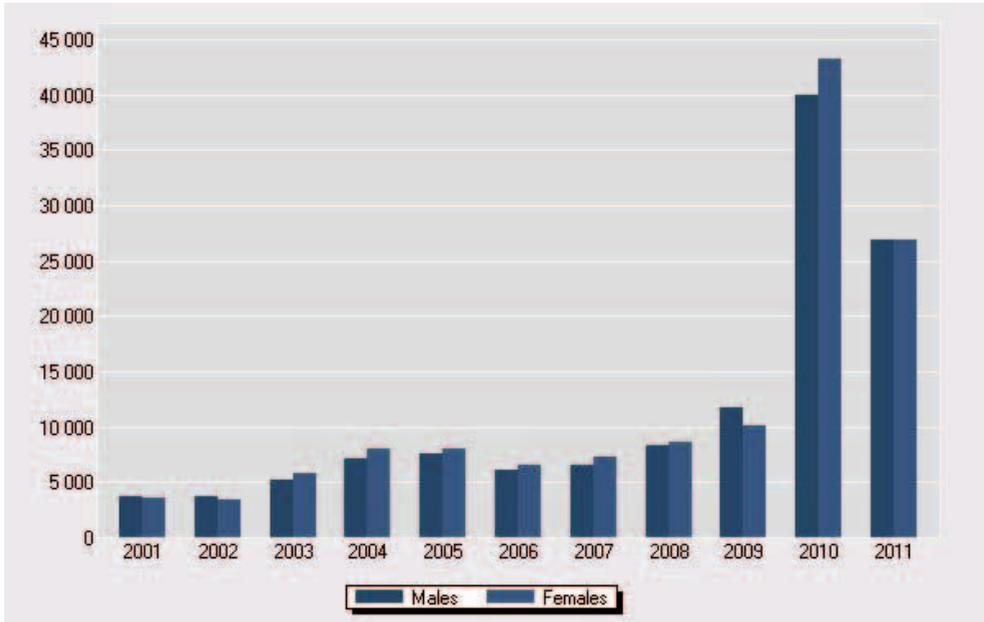


Fig. 3. The number of emigrants who declared their departure from Lithuania by gender (individuals)

Source: prepared in accordance with the data of the Department of Statistics under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2012

Young people (aged 15 to 29) make up 40.8% of all emigrants. For the most part, young employable people leave: every other migrant is 20 to 34 years old and this tendency remains stable from 2001. In 2008, one fifth of all emigrants were inhabitants aged 25-29, 13% were 20-24, 14% – 30-34; in 2007, 18, 13 and 14% respectively. During the last two years every second emigrant was 20 to 34. In 2010, 22.3% of emigrants were aged 25 to 29, 18.2% were aged 20 to 24, 14.4 percent were aged 30 to 34. In 2010, people from 35 to 54 made up one fourth of all emigrants; in 2009 – one third. Geriatric people (aged 60 and more) made 2.6—0.9% of all emigrants in 2009-2010 (Fig. 4).

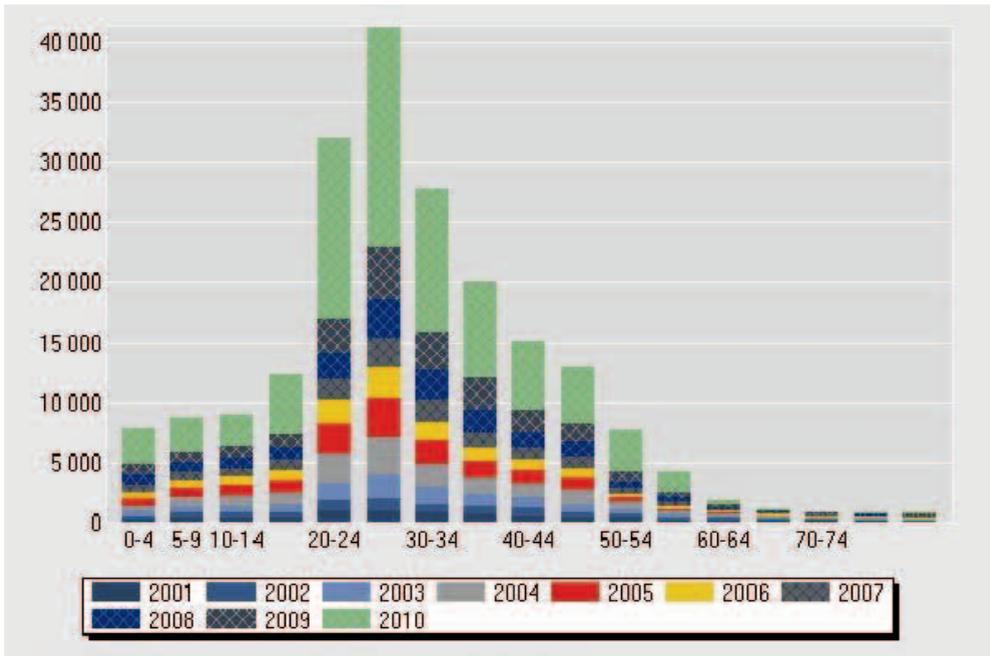


Fig. 4. The number of emigrants who declared their departure from Lithuania by age groups (individuals)

Source: prepared in accordance with the data of the Department of Statistics under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2012

In summary, it can be noted that it remains stable that more **women** migrate from Lithuania than men. It is also obvious that emigration causes Lithuania lose many **young employable people**. 77% of emigrants are aged from 15 to 44. Among the Lithuanian population, people in that age range make only 43%. In future, the decrease of the young due to emigration will cause serious demographic problems because continuously decreasing number of employed people must support the increasing number of the unemployed. Inverse ratio is evident while comparing the number of geriatric emigrants with the population of Lithuania. People aged 65 and more make up only 1% of emigrants; whereas they make almost 18% of the Lithuanian population.

The results of implementation of economic policy in Lithuania is the main reason for labour power leaving the country. Research shows that most emigrants refer to low income in Lithuania, difficult life conditions, the lack of workplaces, miserable opportunities for self-realisation as primary reasons for emigration.

The results of the research show that emigration extent will not diminish in the nearest future; the state must put much effort to prevent many Lithuanian inhabitants from leaving, as they are now ready to leave and only wait for a good opportunity to do so. We start believing that labour power is pushed from Lithuania due to the results of economic policy of the state. Unemployment, small salary, low quality standard of

living and lowered expectations due to the perspectives of the country are the main reasons that prompt employable Lithuanian people to emigrate; they show that economic policy of the state is oriented towards decreasing budget deficit at any cost and not towards the improvement of quality of life of its people. With the intention to reduce emigration, the government needs to refrain from creating sophisticated prevention programmes and immediately undertake the necessary work: improve the quality of the public sector, purge business environment from redundant regulation, use the experience of other countries to implement effective programmes for attracting international investment, be zero-tolerant to the passiveness of officials and encourage them to proactively provide services to the inhabitants and businesses.

High study price in Lithuania pushes youth from the Lithuanian universities.

According to the results of researches, the main reason encouraging young people go and study abroad is lower tuition fee of foreign universities, higher quality and better chances to get employed after studies (in 2011, the Lithuania Union of Student Representations (LSAS) conducted a research on the intentions of higher education school seniors in Lithuania to pursue second degree education). It is interesting, as in particular the tuition fee is one of the major incentives affecting the Lithuanian young people's preference to go and study abroad. For example, education is free in Denmark; 25% of the Lithuanian seniors choose Denmark. The Lithuanian students in England usually take out a loan for educational purposes on extremely favourable acquisition and repayment terms (the repayment period is 25 years), 24% of seniors intend to leave for England. Moreover, an opportunity to find a job and to support oneself is much greater abroad; therefore, a youngster from Klaipėda might find studying in Vilnius more expensive and difficult than in England even though one receives government financing.

As much as 44% of students intending to study abroad do not intend to come back to Lithuania and plan to remain living abroad. Although people studying abroad are not officially emigrants, a clear tendency is that students who graduate abroad initially seek to find a job compatible with their qualification in Western European countries or the USA and do not plan to come back to Lithuania. Therefore, Lithuania retrieves only a small part of its "drained brains", which could be a serious push for our economy, which lacks productivity and innovations. After analysing the results of the research on the intentions of higher education school seniors in Lithuania, we can conclude that high study price in Lithuania pushes young people from Lithuanian universities. The results of this survey are a clear indication to the state, showing that, first, reforms of higher education highly contributed to the fact that due to high price it is almost impossible to study in Lithuania, more and more students choose to study abroad. Second, the Lithuanian youth does not see opportunities to realise their potential here after graduating from the Lithuanian universities. Obviously, unless the current tendencies and tuitions change in the Lithuanian higher education schools, Lithuania will persist losing a part of its educated youth; and considering the tragic demographic situation of Lithuania and its prognoses mentioned above, it seems that instead of encouraging the youth to realise their potential and drive the future of the state in Lithuania, it will push

this “potential of the state” out of Lithuania. It is necessary to take appropriate measures immediately in order to encourage young people create their future in Lithuania and finally implement sound phrases which declare the importance of education.

Self-realisation opportunities are lacking in Lithuania. According to the common view in Lithuania, emigration is first influenced by economic factors: differences in salaries, quality of life in Lithuania, compared to foreign countries. However, we might note that economic motivators are often overrated. One of the main reasons for emigration is that young people are not able to realise their professional potential, firstly because of vague professional career model in Lithuania. Of course, the keys to success and a good career in the EU are education and professionalism, underestimated in Lithuania. In Lithuania, career and material status does not depend on the level of education or qualification. Second, an educated young man or woman cannot meet their professional expectations in Lithuania: find an interesting job where they could grow and develop their personality. According to the survey conducted in 2011 by the public opinion and market research company “Sprinter tyrimai”, about 15.6% of respondents mentioned that they were not satisfied with the socio-political processes in Lithuania, they lacked respect and tolerance for people. People with higher education aged 26 to 35, living in big cities and earning higher income want to emigrate more often because of better career prospects abroad and negative socio-political processes in Lithuania. That is why smart youth tending towards professional development (especially researchers, scientists) leave Lithuania. They cannot find an appropriate niche for themselves, lacking professional, spiritual, intellectual and creative environment. The main reason for emigration of young people from Lithuania is inability to realise their potential, become a personality and the lack of opportunities to self-actualise in Lithuania.

Therefore, the reasons for emigration from Lithuania are not so much economical as social and in particular it is the lack of opportunities to self-actualise. With an intention to promote return to the country, it is necessary to have a complex emigration reduction strategy, change the ideology of the market and turn it into a socio-political priority, implement systematic reforms in science and education, in healthcare and culture, promote employers to base their activity more on socially responsible business principles.

4. Conclusions

1. Intensive emigration flow from Lithuania creates many problems for the state and directly affects its socio-economic status. The most important problems caused by emigration are the decrease of the absolute population number, deformation of age structure, lack of labour power, possibility of de-nationalisation, human trafficking, and illegal migration; therefore, this problem must be solved at national level.

2. Rapid emigration flow in Lithuania overtly reflects the severe problem of emigration. Emigrants are mostly young employable people; it shows that young and educated people with high qualification and scientists leave Lithuania. Therefore, flows of emigrants from Lithuania can be categorised into two main groups: emigration of labour power and the brain drain. The decision of the first group to emigrate is influenced by the results of economic policy of the state, therefore it is necessary to change economic and social policy in order to essentially reduce the flow of emigration. Emigration incentives for young people are affected by high study prices in Lithuania; the Lithuanian youth sees no opportunities to realise its potential after graduating in Lithuania. It is necessary to take appropriate measures immediately in order to promote young people create their future in Lithuania and finally implement the programmes declaring the importance of education in Lithuania. Recently, Lithuania started experiencing “brain drain,” extremely negatively impacting the development of science in Lithuania and the general national progress. It is necessary to emphasise that despite general acceptance that science is the driving force of contemporary economics of knowledge, science is still not a priority in Lithuania.
3. In recent years it became apparent that emigrants are mostly women. Experts from the Scandinavian countries assert that emigration is the problem of implementation of equal opportunities for both genders, which must be solved appropriately. According to the statistical profile of women in Lithuania, created according to the data of the Department of Statistics, women are more educated in Lithuania; they put more emphasis on professional and inner development rather than on achieving material, high status-oriented career. However, women encounter some problems in Lithuania. First, it is more difficult for women to pursue their professional career. Second, a young educated woman in Lithuania has little chances to create a well-rounded family: to find an equally worth partner. These results support the assumption that the lack of opportunities for self-actualisation in Lithuania is an important reason of emigration.
4. With the intention to reduce the extent of emigration, long-term state policy should be directed towards the improvement of the quality of human resources, creating a beneficial business environment, and ensuring stable macroeconomics. The complex emigration reduction strategy needs to include the following measures: revival of agriculture and production, which will help creating more jobs and increase income for the national budget; promotion of economic development and increase of occupation, reduction of taxes, elimination of corruption, formation of clear professional career model, reformation of higher education, healthcare and demographical policy.

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EMIGRACIJA IŠ LIETUVOS: DEMOGRAFINĖS, SOCIALINĖS IR EKONOMINĖS PASEKMĖS

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Santrauka. Šio straipsnio tikslas – parodyti emigracijos iš Lietuvos problemos grėsmes ir Lietuvos socialinės ir ekonominės plėtros dramą. Straipsnyje nagrinėjamos emigracijos priežastys ir pasekmės, analizuojami emigracijos mastai ir struktūra, problemos, kylančios ekonomikoje emigracijos kontekste, nelegali emigracija, protų nutekėjimas, akcentuojamas emigracijos feministinis aspektas. Ekspertų vertinimu per 22 nepriklausomybės metus Lietuvą paliko apie 30 proc. žmonių, iš jų ypač daug jaunimo ir kvalifikuotų specialistų. Lietuvos gyventojus skatina išvykti darbo vietų trūkumas, mažas darbo užmokestis, netenkinančios profesinės karjeros bei savirealizacijos galimybės bei neefektyvi ekonominė politika.

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