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Problems of administrative regulation of the labour market of Lithuania in the context of regional (rural) employment policy

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Abstract

The article presents the analysis of application of measures of administrative regulation of the labour market of Lithuania, which have impact on employment, in the context of regional (rural) employment policy, introduces insights into the changes in the employment and labour market regulation policies in perspective of 2014-2020. The authors provide analytical evaluation of the employment tendency, features of administrative regulation of the labour market and the impact on the regional (rural) employment by means of promoting job creation and labour demand, integrating labour resources into the labour market and ensuring the integrity of the employment policy. The paper presents the analysis of the role of state institutions, which are responsible for the implementation of the labour market policy, in the process of implementation of the goals of employment policy, and problems of harmonization of administrative regulation activity of these institutions. Groups of certain countries, due to unequal social and economic conditions, use different mechanisms of application of active measures of the labour market policy; the implementation of measures of administrative regulation of the labour market of Lithuania has become one of the priorities of the activity of state institutions. The policy of administrative regulation of the labour market is implemented and controlled by several state institutions, i.e. ministries of the Republic of Lithuania, Labour Exchange of Lithuania, etc.; however, neither the mechanism of coordination of the activities of these institutions has been established yet, nor has the system of monitoring of the performance results been created, which complicates the objective evaluation of the level of achievement of goals and objectives. In the process of increasing the labour market flexibility and promoting the participation of labour force it is necessary to ensure the effective supervision of the actions foreseen in the programmes of the administrative regulation policy, via the application of a scientifically-grounded methodology, and at the same time to duly identify the unnecessary limitations and administrative barriers to the successful implementation of the foreseen measures.

Introduction

The implementation of the goals of the developed EU common labour market and employment policy is related to the application of appropriate measures, taking into account the problems of the labour market, and depends on the efforts of each of the EU member state. Thus it is necessary to analyse the labour market policy in Lithuania and evaluate its suitability for the solution of the country's labour market problems. Taking into account the priorities highlighted in the State development strategy ‘Lithuania 2030’ and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania programme of 2012-2016 (2012) the priorities of the Government activity related to the labour market processes are to increase employment, decrease unemployment, poverty and social exclusion, improve investment and business environment, education, and reform the higher education. During the last decade Lithuania, which sought to create the active, flexible and stable labour market policy corresponding the national interest, gradually becomes a participant of the implementation of the common European Employment Strategy, which promotes the integrity of the internal and external systems. The objective of the modern society is to effectively ensure employment, which by means of scientific researches would encourage to search for new, unique solutions, which in their turn would help match labour supply and demand, expand the corporate social responsibility and in the long run ensure the balanced development of the society (Gruževskis, 2011).

In order to create possibilities for qualitative employment and to ensure social security, it is necessary to introduce administrative regulation of the labour market. Due to the lack of conception and insufficient scientific research traditional ways of administrative regulation of the labour market processes do not ensure the efficient management of the labour market processes and make the implementation of the foreseen strategic goals to enhance employment more complicated, thus a question about the measures to ensure the monitoring of the labour market processes arises. The theoretical and practical examination of the state control function is insufficient.

The object of the research is the policy of administrative regulation of the labour market processes.

The aim of the research is to review and analyse the situation in the Lithuanian labour market and to discuss the applied measures of the policy of administrative regulation of the labour market processes and its effect on the enhancement of regional (rural) employment of the labour force.

Objectives:

1. To discuss the problems of the policy of administrative regulation of the labour market of Lithuania.
2. To evaluate the present control mechanisms of the Lithuanian labour market processes applied in the process of envisaging and implementing measures and activities to enhance regional (rural) employment.

The methods of the research are the systematised analysis of scientific literature and statistical data, comparison, generalization, and prediction; the analysis of strategic documents and legal acts of the European Union and Lithuania.

Results of the research

During the last two decades publications of the Lithuanian scholars have been particularly focussed on the analysis of the labour market policy as a strategic factor of economic policy. Specialists highlight that the efficient labour market policy provides favourable preconditions for the country to achieve competitive advantage. At the same time, the above mentioned publications analyse only certain measures of the labour market policy, such as the structure of the labour market, its composition, conditions of functioning, etc. We should note great contribution in the field of applied research made by the Labour and Social Research Institute into the research on the labour market analysis, drawing up proposals on issues of social policy formulation and implementation (Aktyvios darbo rinkos..., 2010).

The research 'A study on the map of the need of specialists and competences' conducted by BGI Consulting in 2010 upon request of the Ministry of Education and Science presents a conclusion that seventeen researches conducted in the period of 2006–2010, which were ordered by various state institutions, are too abstract and fragmentary, not oriented towards the needs of the society and conducted without proper coordination (BGI, 2010). On the request of the Ministry of social security and labour the research 'The development of social partnership' was conducted in 2012, its aim being to suggest an optimal institutional form of social dialogue by means of establishing quantitative and qualitative criteria of representation and selection of social partners. The research revealed that the state needs to take care of participation of social partners in the social dialogue with the aim to implement the main reforms of the labour relationship and labour market, by using the most advanced flexicurity principles for this purpose (Lazutka, 2012). Unfortunately, as the practice reveals, state institutions do not always put the necessary effort to implement appropriate researches and the goals and measures foreseen in the programme documents, due to which the conducted labour market regulation policy does not always resemble the intended results. State institutions comprehend this fact, as for example, the report of the Ministry of Education and Science of 2010 (2011) specifies that there is a prevailing lack of effective co-operation with other institutions and interest groups when solving complex issues; the subordinate institutions are characterised by the 'formal' approach to the tasks assigned. As a rule reports on the activity of state institutions, which evaluate the implementation of the measures of administrative regulation policy of the labour market, focus on the financing problems, evaluation of the economic and efficient use of funds; whereas the evaluation of the impact of these measures on the enhancement of employment of the labour force remains in the background (Ministry of Economy..., 2013, Ministry of Education..., 2013).

The analysis of scientific literature reveals that so far no answer has been provided on how to harmonize the activity of institutions which are responsible for the creation and implementation of the labour market strategy for it to be sufficient, which model of administrative regulation of the labour market would be considered efficient and how it should be developed with the aim of permanent adjustment (compliance, harmonization with the environment).

The European employment strategy 'Europe 2020' (2012) pays great attention to the establishment and application of active labour market policy that meets the country's social and economic conditions. In practice a variety of measures is used, thus the mechanism of application thereof is different among groups of countries. The reasons for such difference might lie in the different tax systems, social guarantees and legal regulation of the countries. To promote the harmonization of the EU Member States employment and labour market policy the Council has set up the Employment Committee with an advisory status, whose main task is to monitor the employment situation and employment policy directions in the Member States (Treaty on European..., 2004).

The implementation of measures of the administrative regulation policy of the labour market of Lithuania is one of the priorities of the state institutions activity, thus it is important to constantly analyse the efficiency of the applied measures and the impact thereof on the enhancement of employment. At the moment in Lithuania employment policy and strategy are formed by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (MSSL), implementation is assigned to the ministries of Economy, Education and Science, Agriculture, Energy, etc. together with institutions subordinate to them. Hence a system of control and accountability for the performance of horizontal character functions in Lithuania. Without ensuring efficient state control and monitoring, employment policy becomes a strategy of 'extinguishing the fire', which has a negative impact on the situation on the labour market. For instance, some scholars believe that during 2009-2012 there was a lack of state supported measures of active employment policy and real actions, constantly changing legal base provided unfavourable investment climate into the state economy, due to the lack of analysis of costs and benefits there was a delay in response to the existing and probable negative consequences in the labour market (Gražulis, Rakalovič, 2013). The authors believe that unemployment problems were aggravated by the lack of attention to the involvement of the inactive labour force into the labour market, problems of youth employment, integration of the re-emigrants, besides the measures of liberalisation of labour relations were poorly used, there was a lack of dialogue between social partners, the possibilities for life-long learning were not used.

The period of the economic crisis of 2008-2011 showed that the major concentration of Lithuanian companies and direct foreign investment in the biggest cities of the country and around had an impact on the disparities of regional employment. According to the data of the Department of Statistics of Lithuania (2013), in the less economically developed regions a large part of the population is employed in traditional rural areas of the economy - agriculture, forestry and fishery. This problem has been observed for many years, for example, back in 2005 Lithuanian agricultural employment rate was 14.1 per cent of total employment and 2.76 times higher than the respective EU rate (*Žmogiškųjų išteklių plėtros veiksnių programa 2007-2013 m.*, 2005). Thus, lack of non-traditional (alternative) rural economic development areas and a slow job creation process has to be regarded as the factor impeding the employment growth in rural areas. The consequences thereof are the part of the unemployed in the total labour force in rural areas being 1.3-1.8 times higher than in urban areas and still over the level of 2009 (Fig. 1). At the same time in the second half of 2012, the data of the Department of Statistics of Lithuania (2013) showed proliferation of the employed not only in urban but also in rural areas, which was caused by greater activity in the sector of open economy.

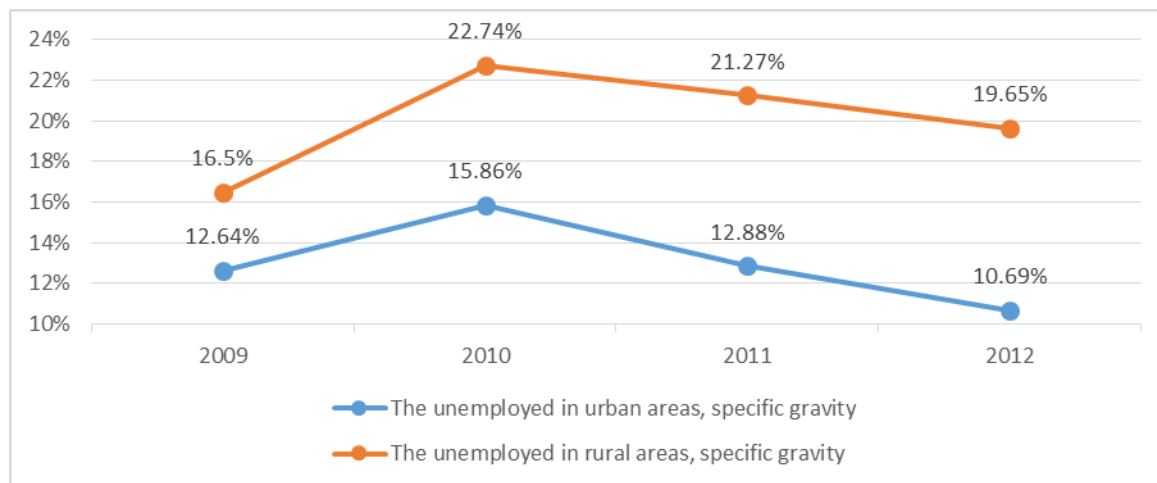


Figure 1. **Specific gravity of the unemployed (percentage of total labour force) in Lithuania in 2009-2012.** Prepared by the authors. Source: Department of Statistics of Lithuania (2013)

Permanent consequences of unemployment are the growing absolute poverty, the widening social exclusion (the commercialization of welfare), social frustration (distrust), degradation of human social development (Keršienė, 2011). E.g., when analysing consequences of unemployment, Jasaitis J. and Ratkevičienė V. (2011), specify that in rural areas the level of poverty is more than twice (30.7 per cent) higher than the city level (14.7 per cent), which, in turn, provokes low investment capacity of the rural population, poor purchasing power and professional training which does not meet the requirements of the labour market for the working age, and finally halts the development of areas of economic activities. For these reasons we agree with the suggestion of Andriušaitienė D. (2007), who in her dissertation described the regions of the country with the registered unemployment rate 1.5 times above the national average and the rural population in the total population of more than 60 per cent as depressive, because the quality of the labour force of such regions, as an economic factor, due to the long-term (registered and unregistered) unemployment effects (abundance of problems of low-skilled labour and social and psychological issues) does not meet the economy needs. When analysing the dynamics of the long-term unemployment on the labour market and social benefits of the active labour market measures Beržinskienė D. and Būdvytė-Gudienė A. (2010), Okunevičiūtė-Neverauskienė L., Moskvina J. (2010), note that with the increasing duration of unemployment the most painful consequences are considered to be not only the loss of skills and qualifications, but also the decreased job search activity and motivation to integrate into the labour market, which create additional barriers in the labour market to use the potential of the unemployed and the inactive labour force. On the other hand, the authors believe that the participation of the unemployed in the measures of the active labour market policy may reduce the period of overall unemployment to several months.

Due to slow economic recovery the rate of long-term unemployment in 2012 reached 6.5 per cent and exceeded the EU average by 1.4 times (4.6 per cent) (Department of Statistics..., 2013). Hence, the need to reduce long-term unemployment remains one of the main objectives of the Programme of employment enhancement. As we can see in Figure 2, according to the data of the Department of Statistics of Lithuania (2013), the rate of long-term unemployment (ratio between long-term unemployed and the labour force) is higher in rural areas than in urban areas and in 2012 amounted to 10.3 per cent., while in the urban areas - 5 per cent. In 2009 these rates were significantly lower and amounted to 2.6 per cent in urban areas and 4.6 per cent in rural areas.

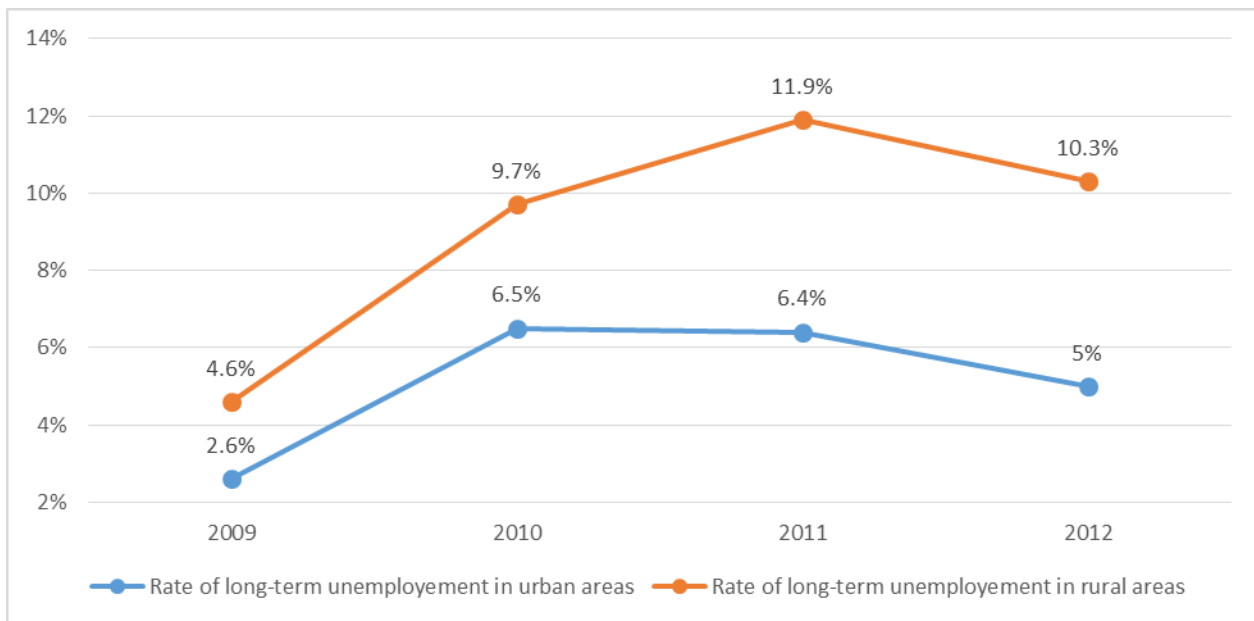


Figure 2. The rate of long-term unemployment (per cent) in Lithuania in 2009-2012.

Prepared by the authors. Source: Department of Statistics of Lithuania (2013)

When analysing issues of the development of the labour market in regions of Lithuania Skurdenienė I. and Šeškauskaitė D. (2010), found that when improving quality of life of local residents, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of human resource development and attracting investment. For this purpose, the author proposed that the country's labour market policy should provide for the economic diversification of rural areas, relating it to the development of economic, social, political, cultural and environmental change.

According to specialists, when solving the problem of poverty, an important role should be given to the government-level decisions (social sensitivity, transparency and sustainability), education, and training (with the primary objective of effective complex integration and life-long learning) (Keršienė, 2011), as this is the only way to create the effective labour market policy and be able to seek competitive advantage in the international arena.

A working group created by the Ministry of social security and labour of the Republic of Lithuania, which was composed of representatives from state institutions and business, scientists and social partners, upon the request of the Government draw up a draft programme of the enhancement of employment in 2014-2020 (LR teisės aktų projektai..., 2013), which, taking into consideration the problems created by the economic crisis of 2008-2011, provides for the new approach to the labour market policy and practice. The draft programme distinguishes directions of the enhancement of employment: promoting business development and creation of new jobs, increasing the compliance of workforce skills with the market needs, maximum use of the potential of labour resources and ensuring integrity of the employment policy (LR teisės aktų projektai..., 2013). A particular focus of the program is on promoting job creation in areas with high unemployment with the aim to attract local and foreign investment. Thus in rural areas up to 2016 the number of active small and medium companies is expected to increase to 15.8 per cent (in 2012 it was 15.1 per cent), while the rate of employment in the age group of 15-64 year-olds – to 56.5 per cent. With the aim to implement the goals envisaged in the programme of the enhancement of employment and to apply the principles of advances flexicurity defines by the European Commission (i.e. neither economic efficiency, nor social justice should suffer), it is intended to gradually reform the labour market (flexible and secure agreements between the employer and the employee, life-long learning strategies, active labour market policy and up-to-date social security systems), ensuring the balance between flexibility and employment guarantees of labour relations by (Komisijos komunikatas Europos parlamentui, tarybai, Europos ekonomikos ir socialinių reikalų komitetui ir regionų komitetui, 2007). The implementation of these principles requires with special emphasis on the necessity of collective agreements and work organization; adaptability and employability of employees, particularly those who are the most vulnerable; sufficient level of income and other social guarantees, which encourage employment and make the labour market mobility easier. It is clear that social and economic conditions, cultural environment, and institutional structure of the EU Member States are different, thus in the process of implementation of flexicurity principles each country, depending on local conditions, as well as financial ones, should provide implementation mechanisms of flexicurity principles meeting specific conditions.

The programme of the enhancement of employment for the first time sought to link the integrity of employment policy to the efficiency of administrative regulation of the labour market; for this purpose drawing up a methodology of evaluating the effect of development programmes in terms of job creation, promotion of self-employment and employment, with the aim to apply it from 2014 onwards. At the same time, according to some specialists, the programme may be treated only as a first step to improving administrative regulation of the labour market processes, (Ruželė, 2013), because one of the problems which have not been resolved yet is lack of the coordination mechanism of state institutions which implement the oversight of the labour market. Besides, scientific research devoted to the impact

of the legal regulation of the labour market on the direct foreign investment come to the conclusion that one could not claim that such relation exists (Ruplienė, 2012). As we can see, we should take this circumstance into consideration when forming the labour policy of Lithuania and drawing up employment programmes. Hence, we believe that in order to increase the labour market flexibility and promote labour force participation, we need a science-based methodology which would help organize and coordinate the inter-agency monitoring the implementation of various programs, timely identify the unnecessary restrictions and administrative obstacles to the successful implementation of the envisaged measures. Only the effective control and monitoring of the implementation of measures carried out by inter-institutional programmes, provide the necessary preconditions for the achievement of the objectives of the programme of the enhancement of employment.

It is noted in scientific publications that one of the causes of weaknesses in having a clear control (supervision) system is the absence of research on the modelling of mechanisms of administrative regulation and control in the labour market processes of Lithuania. We believe that drawbacks of the control (supervision) system are to be regarded as the greatest weakness of the employment policy of Lithuania, thus the opinion of Streikutė A. and Šnapštienė R. (2006), that there is no clear answer of what influence of the state on the labour market is purposeful, is debatable; moreover, the authors discuss the regulation of the labour market from a broad theoretical perspective and analysing only the direction of the development of the approach to the labour market regulation.

Finally, we can observe that in Lithuania administrative regulation of the labour market has so far been implemented by the effort of various institutions, the integral system being not created yet. The control system of a horizontal character (where several institutions are responsible for the implementation of a particular measure of administrative regulation of the labour market, the evaluation criteria are different, the control terms are not harmonised) actually impedes rather than ensures the evaluation of the achievement of goals and objectives and the comparison of the planned parameters with the actual ones.

Conclusions

1. Scientific publication of Lithuanian scholars focus heavily on the analysis of the labour market policy as a strategic factor of economic policy. In their works specialists emphasise that the efficient labour market policy provides good conditions for the country to achieve competitive advantage. Meanwhile, the above-mentioned publications analyse only certain measures of the labour market policy and so far there has been no answer how to harmonize the activity of institutions which are responsible for the creation and implementation of the labour market strategy, for it to be sufficient, which model of administrative regulation of the labour market would be evaluated as efficient and how it should be developed.
2. Lithuania, seeking to create active, flexible and stable labour market policy, which would comply with the national interest, gradually becomes a participant of the implementation of the common European Employment Strategy, which encourages the integrity of the internal and external systems. Due to unequal social and economic conditions groups of certain countries use different mechanisms of application of active measures of the labour market policy; meanwhile the implementation of measures of administrative regulation of the labour market of Lithuania has become one of the priorities of the activity of state institutions.
3. The policy of administrative regulation of the labour market is implemented and controlled by several state institutions, i.e. ministries of the Republic of Lithuania, Labour Exchange of Lithuania, etc.; however, neither the mechanism of coordination of the activities of these institutions has been established yet, nor has the system of monitoring of the performance results been created, which make the objective evaluation of the level of achievement of goals and objectives more complicated.
4. The draft programme of the enhancement of employment of 2014 -2020 for the first time sought to link the integrity of employment policy to the efficiency of administrative regulation of the labour market. In order to increase the labour market flexibility and promote labour force participation, it is necessary to apply a science-based methodology, to ensure the monitoring of the implementation of the measures provided for in various programs, and to timely identify the unnecessary restrictions and administrative obstacles to the successful implementation of the envisaged measures.

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