




**International Conference**

**SOCIAL POLICY RESPONSES:  
FROM OLD ISSUES TO NEW  
CHALLENGES**

**Abstracts book**

**Vilnius University  
10 November 2023  
Lithuania**



The aim of the conference this year is to analyse the responses, impacts, challenges and opportunities of social policy in response to various global and personal crises. Every crisis, whether it be psychological, intrapersonal, societal, or global, has the potential to either weaken or strengthen the person, community or nation by providing new insights and opportunities. During a lifetime, one can face both normative and non-normative crises on personal, group, and community levels. Additionally, in the last couple of years, we experienced several global crises — firstly, the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns; then, the invasion of Ukraine and the outcomes of following economic restrictions. Crises are characterized by a variety of psychological, social, economic, and political outcomes for individuals, groups, and communities, which in turn offer new challenges, opportunities, and directions for social policy theory, practice, research, and education.

Discussing social problems and social policy with researchers, policymakers and practitioners develops social policy research and enhances the practice towards the more sustainable functioning of society. The conference is organised to consolidate the community of social policy academics and practitioners on an international scale and to provide a platform for the annual discussion of relevant social policy challenges, trends, developments and future scenarios.

# CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

## I International Social Policy Conference

# SOCIAL POLICY RESPONSES: FROM OLD ISSUES TO NEW CHALLENGES

## PROGRAMME

10 November 2023

### Faculty of Philosophy, Vilnius University

Venue: Aula Parva, Universiteto 3, Vilnius, Lithuania  
Faculty of Philosophy, Universiteto 9, Vilnius, Lithuania

- 09:00-09:30 Registration. Welcome coffee  
Venue: Aula Parva, Universiteto 3, Vilnius, Lithuania
- 09:30-10:00 OPENING. WELCOME SPEECHES: Aula Parva  
Moderator: Prof Dr Daiva Skučienė, Chair, Social Policy Department
- Mrs Monika Navickienė**, Minister of Social Security and Labour  
**Prof Dr Jonas Dagys**, Dean, Faculty of Philosophy
- 10:00-11:30 KEYNOTE SESSION: Aula Parva  
Moderator: Prof Dr Daiva Skučienė
- Prof Dr Stein Kuhnle**, Bergen University *The Welfare State: The Challenges of Sustainability*  
**Dr Francisco Simoes**, ISCTE, Lisbon *Social Inclusion in the Countryside: The Case of Rural Young People not in Employment, nor in Education or Training*
- 11:30-12:00 COFFEE BREAK: Aula Parva
- 12:00-14:00 Parallel Session I  
Venue: Faculty of Philosophy, Universiteto 9, Vilnius, Lithuania
- YOUTH POLICY CHALLENGES: Room 201  
Moderator: Assoc Prof Dr Rūta Brazienė
1. **Jolanta Grotowska-Leder**, Warsaw University of Life Sciences *Paths to Reaching Adulthood of Contemporary Polish Young Adults*
  2. **Maria-Carmen Pantea**, Babes-Bolyai University *The Reinforced Youth Guarantee. A Preliminary Review (2020-2023)*
  3. **Kinga Tóth, Eszter Szőnyi, Luca Koltai**, HÉTFA Research Institute *Evaluation of Initiatives Affecting 25+ NEETs in Nine Countries*
  4. **Suat Aksu**, Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences *Empowering Young Women in Rural Entrepreneurship: Policy Recommendations for Lithuania*

SOCIAL INEQUALITIES & DIVERSITY: Room 207  
Moderator: Assoc Prof Dr Jekaterina Navickė

1. **Jenny Chesters**, University of Melbourne *COVID-19 Pandemic and Social Inequalities in Australia*
2. **Oscar Vorobjovas-Pinta**, University of Tasmania *The Eurovision Song Contest: The Celebration of Queer Identity and Belonging*
3. **Rasa Pranskevičiūtė-Amoson**, Vilnius University; **Lina Novickytė**, Government Strategic Analysis Center *Equal Pay for Women and Men in Lithuania: Mission (Impossible)?*
4. **Valeria Virgili**, **Francesco Seghezzi**, **Stefania Negri**, Fondazione ADAPT *Social Dialogue in Defence of Vulnerable Groups during the Pandemic: Comparative Analysis in Italy and Spain during Covid-19*

DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES & SERVICES: Room 209  
Moderator: Assoc Prof Dr Eugenijus Dunajevs

1. **Violeta Vilkoitytė**, Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences *Beyond Social Investment: Active Ageing Profiles in Lithuania*
2. **Laimutė Žalimienė**, Vilnius University *The Transformation of Care Work: under the Pressure of Services Users, Employers and Social Policy*
3. **Agota Vaitkienė**, Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences; **Eugenijus Dunajevs**, Vilnius University *The Accessibility of Health Services in Lithuania*
4. **Līga Rasnača**, University of Latvia *Social Welfare Specialists between Global Challenges and Local Decisions*

14:00-15:00 LUNCH: 2nd floor lobby, Faculty of Philosophy

15:00-17:00 Parallel Session II

FAMILY POLICY DEVELOPMENT: Room 201  
Moderator: Assoc Prof Dr Lina Šumskaitė

1. **Ilona Tamutienė**, Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences *Challenges in Continuity of Care for Postpartum Women and Children: Insights from a Study in Lithuania*
2. **Vilma Ražauskienė**, Lithuanian Centre for Social Research *'Traditionalizing' Effect of Parenthood: a Longitudinal Qualitative Case Study of Lithuania*
3. **Maria Letizia Bosoni**, **Sara Mazzucchelli**, **Matteo Moscatelli**, **Elisabetta Carrà**, Catholic University of Milan *The Family Impact Analysis: A Model for the Assessment of family policies. Application in the Italian Context*
4. **Vera Komarova**, **Anita Sondore**, **Edmunds Cizo**, **Anita Kokarevica**, Daugavpils University, Rīga Stradiņš University *Is it Possible to Increase Fertility in Latvia in the near Future?*
5. **Ilona Tamutienė**, **Vaida Auglytė** Vytautas Magnus University *Exploring the State's Role in Ensuring Equal Start Opportunities during the first 1,000 Days of a Child's Life*

## SOCIAL POLICY & WELFARE: Room 207

Moderator: Tautvydas Vencius

1. **Päivi Helena Mäntyneva**, Humak University of Applied Sciences, University of Helsinki *Exploring Theories of Social Policy Change in the Context of COVID-19: A Comparative Study*
2. **Bogusława Urbaniak**, University of Lodz, Committee on Labour and Social Policy of the Polish Academy of Sciences *Development of the Social Economy in the Łódz Region in Poland*
3. **Besnik Fetahu**, University of Prishtina *The Impact of Kosovo Government Subsidies on Improving Living Conditions: A Correlative Analysis*
4. **Ana Luisa Martinho**, Polytechnic University of Porto *Challenges and Dilemmas Faced by Labour Market Integration to Support Providers in Portugal*
5. **Ulrich Brandt, Dagmar Zanker, Dina Frommert** German Federal Pension Insurance *Financial Crisis, Confidence in Financial Markets and Participation in Private Pension Plans in Germany*

## MIGRATION & CHALLENGES FOR WELFARE STATES: Room 209

Moderator: Ulijona Kaklauskaitė

1. **Dmytro Mamaiev**, Lithuanian Centre for Social Research *Labour Migration from Ukraine to EU: How Full-Scale War Impacted on the Flows of Ukrainian Citizens Abroad*
2. **Andrii Gorbachyk**, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine *The Impact of the Factor of Forced Internal Migration on the Assessments and Expectations of Ukrainian Citizens in the Condition of War*
3. **Aysegul Ilgaz**, Akdeniz University *Perceptions of Older Immigrants about Health Care in the host countries*
4. **Agata Gluchovska**, Lithuanian Antipoverty Organizations Network *The Role of NGOs in Lithuania in Providing Assistance to War Refugees from Ukraine*

17:00-17:30

CONCLUSIONS. CLOSING REMARKS: Room 201

Moderator: Prof Dr Daiva Skučienė

## Keynote speakers



### **Prof Dr Stein Kuhnle**, Bergen University

Stein Kuhnle is Professor Emeritus at the University of Bergen, Norway, where he was Professor of Comparative Politics (1982-2017). He is also Professor Emeritus at the Hertie School in Berlin, where he was Professor of comparative social policy (2006-2013). He is an Honorary Professor at Fudan University, Nanjing University, Sun Yat-sen University in China and the University of Southern Denmark. He has published extensively on comparative welfare state development. Most recent books are *Challenges to the Welfare state: Family and Pension Policies in the Baltic and Nordic Countries* (2021, co-edited with J. Aidukaite and S. E. O. Hort); *Globalizing Welfare: An Evolving Asia-European Dialogue* (2019, co-edited with P. Selle and S. E. O. Hort); *Ageing Welfare and Social Policy: China and the Nordic*

*Countries in Comparative Perspective* (2019, 2022 (Chinese edition), co-edited with Jing, T., Pan, Y., and Chen, S.). Selected previous publications: *Normative Foundations of the Welfare State: The Nordic Experience* (2005, co-edited with N. Kildal); *Survival of the European Welfare State* (2000, ed.). He has given lectures in 35 countries and has been a Visiting Professor/Scholar at universities in China, Japan, Australia, the UK, Germany, Italy, and the USA.

### **The Welfare State: The Challenges of Sustainability**

It is nothing new that ‘the welfare state’ faces serious challenges. Ever since the 1970s, Western welfare states have by many researchers been regarded as being in crisis, but despite many policy adjustments and important variations among Western welfare states, the overall scope of the welfare state, as measured by social expenditure per capita, has by and large increased. At the same time, we can observe a globalisation of social policy and the emergence of a more active social role of the state in many parts of the world during recent decades. But new challenges due to a variety of new security issues and new dimensions of uncertainty have appeared, not least following the unanticipated Russian large-scale invasion of and war on Ukraine and concomitant international political developments. Political unease about the future of the welfare state and scope of social policies in different parts of the world has escalated. Welfare political priorities must compete with increased priorities for defence, cyber security, and issues related to energy, climate, food, and the environment. Motivations for state responsibility for citizen welfare and well-being – as well as for the type and scope of responsibility – vary. The fate of the welfare state and social policies is clearly a question of political and normative commitment to what kind of socially active state is desired. What are the economic, political, and moral dimensions of welfare state sustainability?



**Dr Francisco Simoes**, ISCTE, Lisbon

Francisco Simoes is a PhD in Psychology at the University of Coimbra. He is an assistant researcher and a full member of the Center for Social Research and Intervention at the University Institute of Lisbon. He is also the Chair of the COST Action Rural NEET Youth Network funded by the European Commission and a member of the Coordination Group of the EU Rural Pact. Currently, he is the Principal Investigator of the project Track-In funded by the EEA & Norway Grants. His research focuses on psychosocial aspects of adolescents' social development and well-being, social support, youth mentoring, youth mobilities, or rural

NEETs profile. He has authored and co-authored more than 60 international peer-reviewed papers and reports on these research topics.

### **Social Inclusion in the Countryside: The Case of Rural Young People not in Employment, nor in Education or Training**

Young people Not in Employment, nor in Education or Training (NEET) is a controversial social category and has been widely criticized for being mostly a statistical tool combining young people with very different educational, social, or economic backgrounds under the same label. However, for the past 15 years, NEETs shares have been disproportionately higher in rural parts of the European country, compared to (sub)urban areas, particularly in Southern and Eastern countries. This trend is relevant as it adds to several structural inequalities that are widening the gap between more affluent, urban areas and less affluent, mostly rural territories of the European continent. Recent research efforts driven by initiatives such as the Rural NEET Youth Network have finally started to profile rural NEETs in the context of the school-to-work transition. My presentation details the main individual features of rural NEETs. Following that, I will discuss the current challenges and opportunities shaping rural labour markets which can ultimately shape rural younger generations pathways to the labour force, with many of them stemming from the twin transition. I will conclude by listing a series of research initiatives and policy recommendations that can contribute to strengthening the social inclusion of rural young people in general, including rural NEETs.

## **Parallel Session I**

### **Youth Policy Challenges**

**Paths to Reaching Adulthood of Contemporary Polish Young Adults. Jolanta Grotowska-Leder, Warsaw University of Life Sciences, jolanta\_grotowska\_leder@sggw.edu.pl**

Achieving adulthood is an essential stage in life. Since the modern age, reaching adulthood has not lasted long, and biographies were predictable and stabilised social order. The transition from a modern to a post-modern society has changed the patterns of entering adulthood due to individualisation, demographic tendencies and changes in the labour market. The aim of the paper is the transition into adulthood of young Poles, with attention on their educational and work experiences. The analysis also deals with Polish public policies for achieving adulthood of young adults. The investigation frameworks are several theoretical perspectives, including concepts of the life course, the institutionalisation of the life course, reaching adulthood as a new stage of life. The study is based on the qualitative research conducted in the project “Public policies for completed adulthood. The case of Poland”, funded by the Polish National Science Centre, carried out between 2015 and 2020 at the University of Lodz. The results of the research shows that Polish people at the stage of entering adulthood faced obstacles that made it difficult for them to achieve independence. Four transition paths to adulthood were distinguished and described. They document the divers experiences of young Poles in the phase of life and that the process of achieving adulthood is influenced by various systemic factors and individual opportunities and choices.

**The Reinforced Youth Guarantee. A Preliminary Review (2020-2023). Maria-Carmen Pantea, Babes-Bolyai University, pantea@policy.hu**

The Reinforced Youth Guarantee (RYG) is a commitment by all Member States to ensure that young people between 15 and 29 years old receive a good quality offer of employment, education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education. The Youth Guarantee was initiated in 2014 and reinforced in 2020 with several elements of novelty. The presentation explores the role of the RYG in supporting youth employability. It is based on desk research and 17 semi-structured interviews with policy stakeholders, including representatives of the EU social partners, members of the Public Employment Service network, national RYG coordinators, experts and academics from 12 countries. The presentation highlights several examples of practice and main implementation challenges as of 2023. It emphasises the importance of the RYG as a youth-dedicated initiative and argues that the problems leading youth people in NEET situations are not only economical, but also social. The presentation discusses the role of more regional/ local approaches, the capacity of the public employment services to deliver interventions with hard-to-reach young people and tentative implications for youth work as a sector. The research was carried out on behalf of Eurofound.



## **Evaluation of Initiatives Affecting 25+ NEETs in Nine Countries. Kinga Tóth, Eszter Szőnyi, Luca Koltai, HÉTFA Research Institute, koltai.luca8@gmail.com**

Policy evaluation is a key tool for understanding, developing and modernising policies, including social and youth policies. Our paper is based on the overall evidence gathered during the course of the Lost Millennials project (the project is funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment) and in particular on the nine evaluation reports conducted by the project partners. The evaluations focused on different initiatives in nine different countries in relation to 25+ NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

Evaluation, which is the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy, can play an important role in supporting better policy with changing practical experiences and insights. The nine evaluations we examined have a significant added value for European social and youth policy.

In order to summarise the findings, statements that can be generalised have been identified, with particular emphasis on providing input for policy and practice recommendations. For example, some common themes were identified: the most vulnerable are hard to reach by formal programmes; filling a gap between other programmes increases relevance and coherence; there is a possible tension between reaching the target group and achieving indicators; gender is not considered in most of the initiatives evaluated; service provision should be complex and individualised; cooperation between implementers to carry out evaluations is a challenge.

## **Empowering Young Women in Rural Entrepreneurship: Policy Recommendations for Lithuania. Suat Aksu, Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, suat.aksu@lcss.lt**

Lithuania has a friendly climate for women's enterprise, and women have good chances of actively participating in economic development (Rugina, 2019). However, in the stages of the entrepreneurial process, women face many challenges. Talent may be discouraged, isolation and distance to markets may limit business opportunities especially for rural areas and opportunities to build business expertise may be insufficient or difficult to implement (Bastida, 2021). Also, women in rural areas face challenges due to family life obligations, which limit their possibilities to seek professional careers and business development (Gedvilienė & Tūtlys, 2016). In this regard, the study aimed to understand the needs and challenges faced by Lithuanian young women. The research data was collected through eight focus group interviews with 40 Lithuanian women (aged between 18 to 30 years old) and five youth workers involved in moderating the focus group sessions. The study advocates for the creation of policies that create supportive environments, bridging the digital gap, and promote gender mainstreaming, ultimately enhancing the role of women in the rural areas and demonstrating a progressive landscape for women entrepreneurship in Lithuania.

This research has been conducted under the implementation of the EU funded project Young Women Green Entrepreneurs (YOUWEEN) (Number: 2020-2-PL01-KA205-082849).

## **Social Inequalities & Diversity**

**COVID-19 Pandemic and Social Inequalities in Australia. Jenny Chesters**, University of Melbourne, jenny.chesters@unimelb.edu.au

In March 2020, The Australian Government closed the national border and shutdown educational institutions and the majority of workplaces due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. To examine how the restrictions associated with the pandemic impacted on the working lives of young Australians during the 2020 lockdowns, I draw on data generated from semi-structured interviews conducted with 40 participants from the Life Patterns project [aged 32 years]. The interviews were conducted in September and October 2020, after the initial national lockdown but during the second lockdown in the state of Victoria. A thematic analysis of the interview data reveals how one's occupation determined the impact of the pandemic. During the lockdowns, some participants, such as those in the hospitality sector, were stood down whereas other participants either worked from home (eg. professionals and white collar workers) or continued working as usual after being classified as essential workers (eg. nurses and doctors). The lockdowns associated with the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing inequalities related to occupation and employment status and gave rise to a new form of inequality related to geographic location. After the lockdowns, some young people had depleted their savings whereas others had been able to build on their existing wealth.

**The Eurovision Song Contest: The Celebration of Queer Identity and Belonging. Oscar Vorobjovas-Pinta**, University of Tasmania, Oscar.Pinta@utas.edu.au

Srce veliko kakor svet [A heart as big as the world]

Nasmeh in iskrica v očeh [A smile and a sparkle in his eyes]

In beseda, ki poznaš jo tudi ti [And a word you know too]

These were the opening lyrics of the Slovenian entry 'Sestre' (English: 'Sisters') in the 2002 Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) (Eurovision World, 2002). I do not speak Slovenian, yet as a 14-year-old teenager growing up in post-Soviet Lithuania, I was mesmerised by the Slovenian drag trio. There was a sense of pride and confusion, and the beginning of questioning my (sexual) identity. From this moment on, the ESC became part of my identity-building. I was not alone, but soon I came to realise that the ESC is a celebration of queer identities – the 'gay Olympics' (Baker, 2017).

ESC, first held in 1956, is an annual international song competition that has become a major cultural event in Europe, Australia and beyond. While the contest has traditionally been associated with heteronormative expressions of identity, in recent years there has been an increasing representation of queer performers and performances at the contest. The ESC is a platform that enables queer politics not only through gay and trans visibility and camp aesthetics but also through its transnational fan cultures (Baker, 2017). As such, it enables queer folk to experience a sense of belonging and a feeling of community. This has synergies with Maffesoli's (1996) notion of neo-tribalism, whereby people from different walks of life come together for a shared purpose, passion, or emotion (Vorobjovas-Pinta, 2018). Academic literature has explored the notion of queer politics and the ESC (e.g., Baker, 2019; Hartal & Sasson-Levy, 2022; Lemish, 2004); yet there is limited research on what effect ESC has on queer identity-building.

This presentation (and indeed the research project itself) will be guided by my lived experience in the form of autoethnography and will be supported by interviews with queer-identifying Eurovision fans. This presentation will frame the queer identity-building through a neo-tribalism lens.

**Equal Pay for Women and Men in Lithuania: Mission (Im)possible? Rasa Pranskevičiūtė-Amoson**, Vilnius University, rpranskeviciute.amoson@gmail.com **Lina Novickytė**, lina.novickyte@gmail.com

In the European Union, for each worked hour women in average earn 13 percent less than men (Lithuanian Statistics Department 2022). Gender pay gap reflects certain inequalities between women and men in the labor market: horizontal and vertical segregation, a higher share of women than men in atypical and unstable jobs, the double burden of paid and unpaid work, family burdens mostly borne by women, and other stereotypes.

The paper presents the results from the research in 2022, which studied the gender pay gap reduction measures applied (or proposed to be applied) in the business sector in Lithuania. During the COVID-19 pandemic, applied widespread adoption of more flexible working arrangements, such as remote work, childcare subsidies (e.g., Australia, South Korea, Norway), changes in social norms regarding fathers' involvement in a childcare and housework have resulted in that gender pay gap was decreasing in individual countries. Therefore, social policy changes that include greater public investment in a quality childcare, education and support, and other out-of-school-hours services; extending parental leave for fathers and encouraging them to use it; ensuring equal opportunities for women and men to obtain and use remote work opportunities and prohibiting the provision of possible penalties (e.g., career opportunities, salary increases, etc.), targeting persons using this form of work contributes to the reduction of the pay gap. In this case, an active state-business-society partnership is necessary, which enables the implementation of a coherent and effective gender equality policy.

**Social Dialogue in Defence of Vulnerable Groups during the Pandemic: Comparative Analysis in Italy and Spain during COVID-19. Valeria Virgili, Francesco Seghezzi, Stefania Negri**, Fondazione ADAPT, valeria.virgili@adapt.it

This research paper examines the legal and collective bargaining framework for vulnerable groups in the labor markets of Italy and Spain during the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to identify and understand specific vulnerable groups affected by the pandemic's consequences in both countries, along with their characteristics within and outside the labor markets. The paper explores public policies and social dialogue measures, emphasizing the role of social dialogue in implementation. The study uses a mixed-method approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative methods, including 20 in-depth interviews. Key findings reveal similar vulnerable group categories but differences in the role of social partners. Italy's social dialogue primarily involved trade unions and employers' organizations in consultation, with a dominant government role. In contrast, Spain utilized tripartite dialogue, involving trade unions, employers' organizations, and the government, resulting in collaborative efforts and 14 tripartite agreements during the pandemic. While offering insights into Italy and Spain's governance framework for vulnerable groups during the pandemic, this research's findings may not universally apply due to unique contexts. Additionally, the study may not capture longer-term policy effects. Nonetheless, its comparative approach and diverse research methods enrich its depth and comprehensiveness, emphasizing its objective of extracting practical lessons for crisis management through enhanced social dialogue.

## **Demographic Challenges & Services**

**Beyond Social Investment: Active Ageing Profiles in Lithuania.** Violeta Vilkoitytė, Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, violeta.vilkoityte@gmail.com

In recent years welfare states have adopted elements of the social investment paradigm. It is a comprehensive approach to social policy, that emphasizes investing in human capital, providing individuals with the resources and skills to promote social safety over the lifetime. Even though social investment spans a life course, in current literature there is still a void of empirical evidence to explain how social investment affects older individuals, particularly at the individual level.

On account of this, the purpose is to discuss the results of social investment in the old age. The research is grounded on the active aging model which is based on the Health, Lifelong Learning, Participation and Security pillars, and secondary data analysis of the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (wave 8). Data analysis was conducted by applying Principal Component Analysis and Cluster Analysis. As a result, following the active aging model, older adults were classified into four active aging profiles (low activity; moderate activity; balanced activity; high activity). The first two profiles are characterized by high average age, low lifelong learning level, low work activity, a large share of social benefits in income, and small social network, last two profiles are characterized by better conditions.

**The Transformation of Care Work: under the Pressure of Services Users, Employers and Social Policy.** Laimutė Žalimienė, Vilnius University, laima.zalimiene@fsf.vu.lt

Care work became more and more needed in the aging society. However, the working conditions, occupational welfare of social and care workers often remain in the periphery of social policy or organisational improvements. Workers in personal social services become under the pressure of the new developments in the sector. Social policy instruments, such as cash for care (vouchers, individual budgets etc.) means more power for services users to control their lives. However, it is important to highlight that these instruments also mean more power for services users to control the workers they hired to provide services. Neoliberal social policy supports the marketization of care sector. Maximization of effectiveness of care services means increasing of workload, incentives to provide more services for the some money. Personal social services organizations become hybrid organisations or seeks become business organizations (e.g. J. Harris, 2003), implementing principles of fast food restaurant (McDonaldization, G. Ritzer, 1993), supporting de professionalization. These establishes less power for professionals, less attractiveness of employment in the sector. The goal of the presentation is to discuss tendencies of transformation of nowadays work in personal social services in the context of occupational well-being, and by invoking social policy, critical theory and labor process theory approaches.

**The Accessibility of Health Services in Lithuania.** Agota Vaitkienė, Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, agota.vaitkiene@lcss.lt Eugenijus Dunajevus, Vilnius University, eugenijus.dunajevus@fsf.vu.lt

The accessibility of health services plays a critical role in the outcomes of the health system. There are differences in the accessibility of health services between municipalities in Lithuania. The main gatekeeper for health services is a general practitioner who provides primary medical care and makes referrals for secondary or tertiary-level treatment. There are supply and demand factors affecting access to the services of general practitioners (Barr, N., 1996; Feldstein, P.J., 2012). The goal of the study is to examine the demand factors for access to the services of general practitioners. To find out the demand factors that determine access to the services of general practitioners, a hypothesized model of demand factors was constructed. The model is based on J. Elster's (2009) action theory and the theory of bounded rationality. In order to test the hypothesized model, Population health statistical survey data was employed. The data was collected by the State Data Agency in 2019. The methods of quantitative data analysis were employed in order to reveal the demand factors for access to the services of general practitioners.

**Social Welfare Specialists between Global Challenges and Local Decisions.**  
Liga Rasnača, University of Latvia, liga.rasnaca@lu.lv

During the last five years, both EU and Latvian social welfare specialists have faced at least two new global challenges. One is the COVID-19 pandemic and the other is full-scale war in Europe. Social welfare specialists (social workers, social caregivers, etc.) face various individual or local crises in their daily work. However, new global challenges require changing work organization, methods and especially social interaction with service recipients. The purpose of the article is to study the changes in social workers' social interaction with service users other social welfare specialists due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Empirical research is based on qualitative methodology using in-depth interviews with social welfare specialists and analysis of secondary data sources. The preliminary results allow to highlight the problems of implementing digital communication and difficulties in overcoming communication barriers in the use of languages. Communication difficulties and the use of digital tools affect different groups of service users in different ways. The organization of work and daily demands in social welfare organizations do not always allow social workers the flexibility to change the way of social interaction.

## **Parallel Session II**

### **Family Policy Development**

**Challenges in Continuity of Care for Postpartum Women and Children: Insights from a Study in Lithuania.** Ilona Tamutienė, Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, ilona.tamutiene@vdu.lt

Continuity of care for postpartum women and their children is crucial for their optimal health and well-being during this critical phase of life. The health and social sectors play pivotal roles in creating a supportive environment, especially for vulnerable women and children. However, research on continuity of care in Lithuania is lacking. The study aims to uncover the related issues and is based on 23 qualitative interviews with mothers and specialists. The research data revealed problems with continuity of care, including interrupted maternal healthcare, lack of home visits, challenges in integrating social and healthcare sector support, limited accessibility to relevant information, and communication gaps. It emphasizes the importance of incorporating management, informational, and relational aspects for effective continuity of care. For postpartum vulnerable women and their children, healthcare home visits should be supplemented with social support for housing and nutrition, addressing their specific needs. Overall, ensuring continuity of care remains a critical area for improvement in postpartum health and social care.

**Traditionalizing' Effect of Parenthood: a Longitudinal Qualitative Case Study of Lithuania.** Vilma Ražauskienė, Lithuanian Centre for Social Research, vilma.razauskiene@lcss.lt

Gender Equality Index of European Union overall has increased only by 0,6 per cent since 2019. One of the possible explanations of why the gap between women and men remains high, especially in the field of childcare, is that the gender roles and stereotypes on women's participation in the labour market is having 'a negative influence'. Parental leave policies have to be understood as having the potential to both change the position of mothers in their employment patterns and to involve fathers in childcare. Parental leave, with a non-transferable leave for fathers as its hallmark, is a new welfare-state contribution in Lithuania. Such approach to parental leave has been documented to be effective for promoting gender equal parenting practices in caring and employment. Studies have not, however, explored enough the resistance by women themselves against the non-transferable leave for their partners. This issue was investigated by means of longitudinal data of interviews with women during their pregnancy with their first child and a few months after the childbirth. The results of this novel intake to understanding the views of women show 'traditionalizing' effect. 'Are their ways to mitigating this effect?' is the question of the presentation.

**The Family Impact Analysis: A Model for the Assessment of family policies. Application in the Italian Context.** **Maria Letizia Bosoni, Sara Mazzucchelli, Matteo Moscatelli, Elisabetta Carrà**, Catholic University of Milan, marialetizia.bosoni@unicatt.it

There is an increasing international debate around the opportunity to assume a family perspective in policy and practices, in particular concerning the impact of policies on family well-being. In line with this perspective, the Family Impact Analysis is a process of assessment, design and implementation of policies and practices that allows to trigger a virtuous and circular dialogue between policymakers, professionals and researchers, with the aim of devising interventions that are able to positively "impact" on the different living conditions and well-being of families. This contribution will present the Family Impact Lens, a model firstly developed in the US, that is based originally on five evidence-based principles (Bogenschneider et al., 2012; Belletti, Bramanti, & Carrà, 2018). Moreover, some applications of the US model in the Italian context will be presented and discussed with reference to the method used and results: a Participatory Action Research led by the Catholic University of Milan to improve the Family Centres (FC) in Lombardy Region (Italy) and an analysis of the Italian leave policies. This research enabled the creation of an ad hoc version, the FamLens, based on six principles, which is continually updated and applied across various contexts.

**Is it Possible to Increase Fertility in Latvia in the near Future?** **Vera Komarova, Anita Sondore, Edmunds Cizo, Anita Kokarevica**, Daugavpils University, Rīga Stradiņš University, vera.komarova@du.lv

The article is aimed to study the medium-term fertility trend in Latvia answering the following research question: is it possible in the near future to increase fertility in Latvia, as it is planned in the "Strategy for the Reproduction of the Nation FAMILY – LATVIA – 203 (2050)"? The authors analyzed the total fertility rate in Latvia for the period of 1970–2022. The novelty of this interdisciplinary study is the use of mathematical analysis to investigate demographic trends and also the methodological use of the theory of economic cycles to identify demographic fertility cycles and their phases in Latvia, to predict fertility rates in Latvia for the near future. Furthermore, the analysis of data from sociological surveys helped the authors to understand the main reason for the decline in fertility in Latvia. This reason is value changes in society, in which the child is no longer at the center of the value system of men and especially women in Latvia. It can be expected that the decline in fertility in Latvia will continue for several more years before the bottom of the next demographic fertility cycle is reached and there will be an upturn in a linearly declining fertility trend.

**Exploring the State's Role Ensuring Equal Start Opportunities during the First 1,000 Days of a Child's Life.** Ilona Tamutienė, Vytautas Magnus University, ilona.tamutiene@vdu.lt, Vaida Auglytė, Vytautas Magnus University, vaida.auglyte@vdu.lt

Nurturing care of pregnant women and women who raising children under  $\leq 2$  years of age is extremely important. The first 1,000 days of a child's life are the most important developmental stage in an individual's life and can shape a child's future. During this period, an infant undergoes a unique developmental stage, which is conspicuous by high plasticity, and young infants are known to be particularly vulnerable to the effects of stress and trauma. The early childhood development is actively supported by the international community (World Health Organization, the Group of Twenty, United Nations Children's Fund, European Union), which also emphasises that investment in this field is still insufficient. We conducted a qualitative investigation using semi-structured interviews to explore the difficulties experienced by pregnant women and women who raising under  $\leq 2$  years of age, as well as how they assess the support provided to them. According to the study's findings, mothers raising children under  $\leq 2$  years of age face issues with the health care system, housing policies, benefits, safety from violence, etc. Based on the results of this study, we suggest some recommendations to reduce these multiple problems.



## **Social Policy & Welfare**

**Exploring Theories of Social Policy Change in the Context of COVID-19: a Comparative Study.** Päivi Helena Mäntyneva, Humak University of Applied Sciences, University of Helsinki, paivi.mantyneva@helsinki.fi

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges to the capacity of developed welfare states to meet emerging needs. In its initial year, the pandemic prompted the introduction of a wave of new social policy programs and modifications to existing ones. This study empirically investigates the applicability of various theoretical frameworks in elucidating the dynamics of social policy change during this crisis.

Central to our inquiry is the examination of theories pertaining to persistence and change. Drawing on established frameworks including welfare regime theory, path dependence theory, and social change theories, as well as incorporating contemporary perspectives such as capability theory, our analysis employs Hegelian dialectics as a methodological framework. We aim to discern what these approaches explain and which of these theoretical paradigms best accounts for the observed shifts in social policy dynamics.

The paper builds upon previously our published studies that have focused on the dynamics of persistence and change, mitigation and prevention, divergence and convergence, continuity and irruption, inclusion, and marginalization in social policies implemented in response to the pandemic.

The synthesis of these sub-studies prompts a critical reevaluation of the challenges faced and the potential solutions required to establish a new equilibrium in social policy paradigms amidst the ongoing uncertainties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Development of the Social Economy in the Łódz Region in Poland.** Bogusława Urbaniak, University of Lodz, Committee on Labour and Social Policy of the Polish Academy of Sciences, boguslawa.urbaniak@uni.lodz.pl

Activities, oriented towards the support of vulnerable groups and local development existed in Poland before the WWII. They were limited during the communist period. With the transition to the market economy and the building of civil society, we observe a great deal of interest in the emergence of various forms of social economy entities. A number of strategic documents have been issued emphasising the promotion of the social economy in Poland. We may assume that with the development of civil society, the number of social economy start-ups in large and small towns as well as in rural areas have been increasing. A good example is the development of social enterprises (in the form of foundations, social cooperatives, non-profit companies and associations) in the Lodz region. The number of social economy entities operating in this form increased by 38.5% in one year (September 2023). Some of them offered help to the refugees from Ukraine. The aim of the presentation is to show the diversity of forms of activity of social enterprises, barriers to their development. For this purpose, the results of research conducted by the Regional Centre for Social Policy in Łódź will be used.

**The Impact of Kosovo Government Subsidies on Improving Living Conditions: A Correlative Analysis.** **Besnik Fetahu**, University of Prishtina, besnik.fetahu@uni-pr.edu

In a period of two years, the Government of Kosovo has taken an important initiative to help its citizens through a series of subsidies. These subsidies, divided into different forms such as aid for electricity, efficient equipment, home insulation, and various monetary supplements, are focused on improving the living conditions and well-being of citizens. This approach of the government has been criticized and called a left-wing policy because it does not provide development and the subsidies given are not regenerated. This study aims to analyze and evaluate the impact of these measures on the living conditions of the population. Using a correlational analysis and the Pearson Correlation tool, this research will find out if there is a positive relationship between aid provided and perceived improvements in living conditions. Beyond that, the study will serve as a basis for understanding how effective these policies are and whether they are on track to achieve their goals. The results of this study will be valuable not only for politicians and decision-makers but also for citizens and civil society in general.

**Challenges and Dilemmas Faced by Labour Market Integration to Support Providers in Portugal.** **Ana Luisa Martinho**, Polytechnic University of Porto, anamartinho@iscap.ipp.pt

This research delves into the challenges and dilemmas faced by both professionals and people in vulnerable situations in the process of social and professional integration. This research adopts a qualitative approach to investigate the social and professional integration of vulnerable individuals within the context of social economy organizations in Portugal. Grounded in a theoretical framework that underscores the persistent rates of labour exclusion among specific social groups and the fragmented social policies in Portugal, the study aims to understand the structural framework and practices in this field.

The study employs nine in-depth case studies within Portuguese Social Economy Organizations a multifaceted methodological design. The findings illuminate the complex challenges faced by professionals supporting vulnerable individuals, including the non-linearity and multifaceted nature of the integration process, resource inadequacies, the need for specialized training and guidance, and a labour market unaligned with the needs and abilities of the clients. The study underscores the necessity for a more holistic, supportive, and inclusive approach to address the intricate dynamics of social and professional integration for vulnerable populations.

**Financial Crisis, Confidence in Financial Markets and Participation in Private Pension Plans in Germany. Ulrich Brandt, Dagmar Zanker, Dina Frommert** German Federal Pension Insurance, dagmar.zanker@drv-bund.de

The financial crisis of 2008/2009 has not only left its mark on the value of retirement savings, but also on savings and investment behaviour. It has led to a loss of confidence in financial markets and its main protagonists. However, trust is a key mechanism for savings and investment decisions. We illustrate the loss of trust by looking at the number of pension plans purchased in the years following the financial crisis.

The paper is based on data of the study on “Life courses and old-age provisions” (LeA, “Lebensverläufe und Altersvorsorge”). The data was gathered in 2016 and provides information on the life histories of people living in Germany who were born between 1957 and 1976, as well as on pension entitlements in all three pillars of the German pension system. The analysis concentrates on so-called Riester pension plans, the most dynamic private pension scheme in Germany. We estimate a panel fixed-effects logit model to examine whether the financial crisis had an impact on the participation in Riester pension plans. Results show that instead of a shock effect relating to the crisis years, we see a negative linear effect following the crisis.

## **Migration and Challenges for Welfare State**

**Labour Migration from Ukraine to EU: How Full-Scale War Impacted on the Flows of Ukrainian Citizens Abroad.** Dmytro Mamaiev, Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, dmytro.mamaiev@lstc.lt

The issue of labor migration in Ukraine is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. And, when Ukraine finds itself in terms of post COVID-19 and ongoing war of aggression realities, situation with labor migrants and regulation of their stay abroad deteriorates significantly since it is impossible, at least, to estimate the number of people who fled Ukraine because of war and who left for working reasons.

Nowadays, the external labor migration of Ukrainians is a natural reaction of the population to negative changes in the socio-economic life of society, under the conditions of underdevelopment, deformation of the internal labor market and increasing inequality.

Despite the pandemic, majority of labor migrants did not return to Ukraine but continued to stay and look for a better fate abroad.

However, Russian full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine entangled and challenged several aspects, including, primarily, emigration of Ukrainian citizens abroad. Since February 2022, statistics do not reflect on the point of how many migrants managed to leave the country for purely labor reasons.

The objective of given paper is to illustrate tendencies of the labor market for Ukrainians in post-war 2022 situation when Ukrainian people faced with unprecedented circumstances.

This material has a goal to assess how the Russian war of aggression impacted on the labor migration developments within Ukrainian context and what is the state of play of Ukrainians who turned out to be in EU after 24 February 2022.

**The Impact of the Factor of Forced Internal Migration on the Assessments and Expectations of Ukrainian Citizens in the Condition of War.** Andrii Gorbachyk, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, a.gorbachyk@knu.ua, a.gorbachyk@gmail.com

The outbreak of Russia's war against Ukraine in 2014 triggered the process of internal migration in Ukraine. Many studies have been conducted to examine the peculiarities of life and adaptation of families of internally displaced persons, their life needs, and ways of integrating them into local communities. However, the beginning of Russia's full-scale aggression on 24.02.2022 caused a new wave of external and internal migration. Based on the data from the monitoring survey conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in 2022 and 2023, the report examines the differences between the group of internal migrants of this new wave, the peculiarities of their assessments of the social and political situation in the country, and the life expectations of this group. The conclusion is made that it is possible and expedient to consider the new wave of forced internal migration as a factor influencing the assessments and expectations of Ukrainian citizens in the context of war.

**Perceptions of Older Immigrants about Health Care in the host countries. Aysegul Ilgaz,**  
Akdeniz University, aysegul\_ilgaz@hotmail.com

Older immigrants may have different needs regarding health and care services compared to other age groups. There are suggestions for adapting health services to the elderly and even immigrant elderly in order to provide equal service to everyone. There are studies indicating that chronic diseases increase with advancing age and functional capacity decreases, resulting in poorer physical and psychosocial health than the general elderly population. It is stated that immigrants' use of health services is lower than that of general population. Cultural and social factors influence health behaviors, opportunities, wishes and barriers for patients to access and use health and care services. Studies stated that elderly immigrants not knowing how to apply for health services, having language problems and ineffective communication with healthcare professionals, and lack of/insufficient social, community and family support lead to isolation and inadequate use of health services. In the scoping review, it is aimed to examine the existing research which was conducted on the experiences and perspectives of older immigrants, formal and informal caregivers and healthcare workers regarding health and care services and as well as interventions for better adaptation of health and care services for older immigrants.

**The Role of NGOs in Lithuania in Providing Assistance to War Refugees from Ukraine. Agata Gluchovska,** Lithuanian Antipoverty Organizations Network, agata@smtinklas.lt

Russia's military invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 has become one of the world's biggest challenges. Millions of people have been forced to flee their homes and seek refuge. More than 80 000 war refugees have arrived in Lithuania. The NGO sector has made a significant contribution to helping the state to manage this crisis, as a powerful force for a quick and smooth response both to emergency situations and people's personal situations. NGOs have helped to set up registration centres and regulate the flow of people, coordinated humanitarian assistance to refugees, helped them find accommodation, and provided psychological, social and other necessary support.

In order to analyse the role of NGOs in providing assistance to war refugees from Ukraine, an NGO survey was carried out in June 2023, involving 120 NGOs from all municipalities in Lithuania that provided assistance to war refugees from Ukraine. The presentation will present the results of the questionnaire on what kind of assistance NGOs have provided to war refugees, the institutional and organisational challenges they have faced, the difficulties in finding housing for war refugees, the challenges of refugee integration, as well as the experience of cooperation with municipalities.

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