
LITHUANIAN CENTRE FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES
VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY
KAUNAS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Tautvydas
VENCIOUS

**FACTORS OF SOCIAL MOBILITY
FOR LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS
WHO RECEIVE SOCIAL SUPPORT
IN LITHUANIA**

Summary of Doctoral Dissertation
Social Sciences, Sociology (S 005)

Vilnius, 2024

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**ILGĄ LAIKĄ NEDIRBANČIŲ IR
SOCIALINĘ PARAMĄ GAUNANČIŲ ASMENŲ
SOCIALINIO MOBILUMO VEIKSNIAI
LIETUVOJE**

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The risk of long-term unemployment is not equal – it is more observable among lower socio-economic groups and especially those receiving social support (Lahtinen, 2020; Grzenda, 2019). Moreover, governments in most European countries have introduced stricter conditions for receiving social benefits, as generous social security has been blamed for discouraging the working age population from participating in labour market (Venn, 2012). According to Diop-Christensen (2015), unemployed benefit recipients must meet the established criteria to demonstrate that they are able to work. There are no exceptions in Lithuania – all working age benefit recipients must be registered with the Public Employment Service (hereinafter – the PES). Nevertheless, the knowledge on the social mobility for long-term unemployed individuals who receive social support (hereinafter – LTUSP) is still lacking, especially in the professional sense. This is especially relevant given the fact that in many societies the transition from welfare provision to active promotion of the participation in the workfare has already taken place (Bonoli, 2010). This concept of active inclusion is associated with the promotion of working age persons experiencing poverty and social exclusion to participate in the workfare. This can be particularly disadvantageous for recipients of unemployment benefits or social support, as employment agencies may insist on offering jobs that do not necessarily match the individuals' qualifications (Bethmann, 2013).

According to Pott, Crul, Schneider (2022), the life paths of vulnerable groups of society are not easy – they need more effort and time both in pursuing higher education and a higher professional position. Therefore, when assessing the challenges of LTUSP involvement in the labour market, it is important to look not only at the current situation of individuals, but also to understand what factors led to long-term unemployment and the need for receiving social support. For this purpose, the concept of social mobility serves as a valuable instrument that requires complexity and cannot be recorded by single indicators, especially considering the fact that social mobility is usually measured based on professional, income, educational or other social class or socio-economic status schemes (Saunders, 2010, Causa,

Johansson, 2010), and thus includes different institutional, economic and social factors. It is institutional factors that mostly determine the potential of individuals to pursue education and employment, while economic factors are mainly related to investments in human capital, tax systems. Social factors relate to innate abilities, parents' social and cultural capital, early year experiences, education, abilities to participate in the labour market etc. Thus, the processes of social mobility of LTUSP and the influence of the factors that determine it have been chosen for explanation through the theoretical approaches of modernization, social stratification, cultural and social capital, and social investment. Due to this complexity, when conceptualizing the concept of social mobility, we define it as movement between social positions in a multidimensional social space (Werner, 2013). On the one hand, such definition includes the main factors in intragenerational mobility (in the course of an individual's life, i.e., within one generation) related to the labour market – unemployment, loss of income etc., and demography – raising children, divorce. On the other hand, it also includes intergenerational (mobility between generations), examining the change in the individual's social position compared to the parents' position, mainly in the context of educational aspects (Pfeffer, Hällsten, 2012). Therefore, the research field of social mobility requires knowledge on social structure, status, education, income, and wellbeing over an individual's life course and between generations. The disclosure of these factors in the context of long-term unemployment and receipt of social support is even more important, as it reflects the reasons why individuals are unable to change their social position for a long time, and also simultaneously reveals systemic gaps in social policy and measures that are missing to change the situation. Although data on many of the above-mentioned indicators are being systematized in Lithuania, social mobility is not specifically emphasized in the political discourse, and especially when it comes to LTUSP.

The novelty, relevance and problem of the thesis

In this dissertation, LTUSP social group has been chosen for researching. The novelty of the thesis is first revealed in relation to the reference group – the intragenerational social mobility situation and challenges of integrating into the labour market of those individuals who have been unemployed for a long time and at the same time receiving social support (LTUSP), as well as the factors determining the social mobility experience of these persons between generations, are examined. It is stated that even generous social security systems may not be sufficient to compensate for the consequences of unemployment, especially considering that work provides individuals with a certain identity, status in society, social connections etc. (Ivanon, Pfeiffer, Pohlan, 2020). What is more, research confirms that unemployed people often make choices against their will, as unemployment is associated with critically lower self-esteem (Clark, Lepinteur, 2019). It is particularly important to note that even with overall employment rates improving, the long-term unemployment rate remains high (Spermann, 2015; OECD, 2022). Moreover, in the last decade in Lithuania, the fact has been recorded that demonstrates that not only more than a third of the unemployed are long-term, and the risk level of relative poverty remains around 20%, but also that the structure and sociodemographic characteristics of recipients of social support have not changed for a long time. In view of this, both society and policymakers constantly discuss the activation of social support recipients and set the goal that all working age, employable persons would work, yet this goal is still difficult to achieve for some groups of society.

In addition, gaps in the effectiveness of social policy measures are evidenced by the fact that some individuals are not only unemployed for a long time, but also receive social support for a long time. Research shows that employment and job search criteria are increasingly dominant and are applied to social support recipients to integrate them into the labour market as quickly as possible (Horn, Kevins, Kersbergen, 2022). The European Commission (EC) already in 2008 announced and the EU member states adopted the Active Inclusion recommendations, which aim to increase the participation of the most vulnerable groups in society in the labour market. Unfortunately, as summarized by Gruževskis, Krutulienė, Miežienė (2021),

it is clear from the published reports that only minimal progress has been made in implementing these recommendations. **Therefore, the key research question is what and why determines that individuals fail to work and receive social support for a long time and do not change their social position?**

Thus, looking at the problems experienced by LTUSP and the challenges of integration into the labour market through the prism of social mobility is a new and original approach. This is not only because little is known about the challenges and opportunities of social mobility of this group of persons, but also because social mobility in general is a scarcely researched topic in Lithuania. On the one hand, this is very important for the social policy of our country, as high indicators of relative poverty have been recorded for many years, on the other hand, LTUSP often fall into the “poverty trap”. The part of the long-term unemployed among all the registered unemployed and long-term recipients of social support is a cause for concern as well. It is also worth considering the research stating that economic tensions experienced by individuals can lead to numerous negative psychological and social consequences that can be transmitted between generations (Clark, Lepinteur, 2019). That is why it is important to study the trajectories of individuals’ intragenerational social mobility, as they reveal the work experiences LTUSP had, the reasons for job loss, and the means and assistance that helped them to return to the labour market.

However, it is important to mention that the situation of long-term unemployment and/or social support recipients is often seen only in a statistical context. This study not only reviews the statistical context, but also analyses the effectiveness of social policy measures specifically targeted at LTUSP. Delphi method is also used, which, with the help of experts from various institutions, enables finding and determining the interdisciplinary consensus of LTUSP intragenerational and intergenerational social mobility factors. Finally, in the opinion of the author of the study, the most important step of the research is made – the perspective of LTUSP themselves is being heard, which, as a result, allows to study and draw research conclusions and make recommendations not about LTUSP, but together with them.

Thus, taking into account the above, the thesis has both theoretical and practical significance. From a theoretical point of view, it tests and develops

new approaches that explain the dynamics of LTUSP social mobility in the post-socialist space; provides knowledge to social policy makers and practitioners in an empirical sense.

Research subject: factors of LTUSP intragenerational and inter-generational social mobility in Lithuania.

Aim and objectives of the thesis

The aim of this thesis is to study the challenges of integration into the labour market and factors of social mobility for long-term unemployed individuals who receive social support in Lithuania.

Objectives

1. To analyse the problem, concept, types, factors of social mobility and links with socio-economic deprivation;
2. To establish links between employment, social services, and cash social assistance systems in order to integrate LTUSP into the labour market;
3. To analyse the causes of long-term unemployment and receiving social support, and the means most helpful in changing the social position;
4. To analyse the factors of intergenerational and intragenerational social mobility of LTUSP in Lithuania.

The statements defended in the thesis

1. **Looking at the problems experienced by LTUSP and the challenges of integration into the labour market through the prism of social mobility** helps to comprehensively analyse the challenges and opportunities of this group's integration into the labour market and complements previously conducted research, which was mainly based only on the perspective of quantitative analysis;
2. **The study of the causes of unemployment and receipt of social support of LTUSP reveals the ineffectiveness of the applied**

- activation measures and requirements of the social support system related to employment.** LTUSP challenges to improve their social position show the lack of interinstitutional cooperation of the current social policy system – in the fields of cash social assistance, social services, employment, health, education – and the failure to identify the complex needs of this group of persons, and as a result, limit the possibilities of intergenerational and intragenerational social mobility of these individuals;
3. The structural changes that took place after the restoration of the independence and different modernization processes currently taking place increase the overall level of absolute social mobility, **but complicate the possibilities of changing the social position of persons belonging to the lowest social groups;**
 4. The social and labour market services provided to LTUSP in Lithuania are not coordinated, integrated, consistent and complementary, therefore their effect does not ensure the social integration of unemployed persons with multiple problems – the restoration and building of social independence and work capacity, professional competence, and capacity to participate in the labour market. **Unsecured continuity of support** does not give rise to the sustainability of LTUSP social mobility;
 5. The assessment of the factors of social mobility only from the perspective of social security runs the risk of failure to clarify the fundamental reasons for unemployment and receiving social support, **therefore their analysis requires the use of an individual life path perspective**, which includes the entire life experience of individuals;
 6. **The study of LTUSP social mobility proves the influence of social origin and the greater likelihood of intergenerational transmission of low social status.** This phenomenon of status transmission “from generation to generation” reflects reasons at the individual and institutional level.

Research methods used in this thesis

The following research methods were used to achieve the aim of the thesis and to implement the objectives:

- The analysis of scientific literature;
- To analyse the social mobility of LTUSP and describe the characteristics of the integration of these persons into the labour market, a three-stage empirical study was conducted by combining quantitative and qualitative research methods and using methods triangulation:
 - In the first stage of the research, to analyse the picture of LTUSP in Lithuania and the connections with aid measures, the general situation of long-term unemployment and social support was analysed, and the way how the integration of LTUSP into the labour market took place in a specific initiative – The Model of Employment Promotion and Motivation for Unemployed and Social Support Receiving Individuals. The study was conducted in 2022.
 - In the second stage of the research, to analyse the reasons for the long-term nature of unemployment and receiving social support and to determine the factors of social mobility of individuals between generations, repeated data collection was carried out using Delphi method with experts from ministries, municipalities, social service centres, PESs, NGOs, and academic institutions. The study was conducted in 2021–2022.
 - In the third stage of the research, to reveal the position of LTUSP themselves and the obstacles to intragenerational social mobility, an analysis of biographical interviews was carried out. The study was conducted in 2022 (February – May).

THE STRUCTURE OF THESIS

The thesis consists of the introduction, six main parts, discussion, conclusions, recommendations, the reference list and appendices.

The first part of the thesis presents the theoretical and methodological assumptions of the dissertation: the concept of social mobility, approaches to theories of modernization, social stratification, cultural and social capital, and social investment. Social mobility is defined as movement among social positions in a multidimensional social space (Werner, 2013). This means that the change of social position is influenced by many factors at various levels and especially by the structural changes that took place in the context of Lithuania and other Eastern European countries. After assessing this context and the theoretical concept of social mobility, it was decided to empirically evaluate and interpret the factors of social mobility in LTUSP using the theoretical approaches of modernization, social stratification, cultural and social capital, and social investment and their reference lines, which allow examining this phenomenon from both an intragenerational and intergenerational perspective.

The aforementioned theories help to explain the process of social mobility in several ways. The approach of social stratification reveals how upward or downward social mobility occurs between different and unequal social groups or classes and social exclusion and inclusion. It is worth noting that studies show greater stratification in post-communist countries, which are characterized by higher levels of social exclusion and inequality. Gugushvili (2017) emphasizes that the transition period in post-communist countries was characterized by the changing influence of social origin (socio-economic status of some individuals worsened), increased educational opportunities, although at the same time the growing privatization of education was recorded, as well as due to the increased unemployment and changed professional demand, the current social situation of many individuals has changed. According to Matulionis (2014), when assessing the current social structure of the country, it is important to focus on the institutional framework and demographic situation, as it is precisely these dimensions in the context of different social classes that best reflect not only

the challenges faced by societies (unemployment, regional inequalities etc.), but also how different institutions contribute to reducing social exclusion and inequality. In the context of LTUSP, this is particularly important as these individuals, belonging to the lowest socio-economic position, face numerous socio-economic challenges, which, among other things, are long-term. It is the theory of modernization that helps to understand that the movement among social groups is constantly affected by structural changes in the labour market and the development of the service sector. Although it is recognized that social mobility is a feature of a modernizing society, it has to be stated that these changes have the opposite effect on individuals of low socio-economic status. For these individuals, this creates additional challenges, as economic activity is expected in neoliberal societies, and those people who do not have a valid excuse for unemployment (such as illness, old age, or other circumstances) are seen as abusing the social security system (Suwada, Debska, 2020). All this leads to the fact that both unemployed recipients of social support and their children face stigmatization, lack of social connections, and exclusion. Therefore, the theory of cultural and social capital complements the latter approaches with the importance of having positive social environment and social relations. The mentioned elements become inseparable from the pursuit of upward social mobility, as research proves that even having positive social connections increases the chances of changing one's social position. Thus, on the one hand, unemployment negatively affects the possibility of establishing social relationships and can promote social exclusion, on the other hand, strong social ties can be a source of support for people experiencing unemployment and help them find work (Suwada, Debska, 2020). All the mentioned aspects are also relevant when evaluating them from a subjective point of view, because those who find themselves at the top of the social hierarchy during various changes believe that poverty is rather a personal and not a structural problem. In contrast to those who belong to the lower strata, who believe that more prominent redistribution is needed and feel nostalgic for socialism (Zelinska, Gugushvili, Bulczak, 2021). At that time, the social investment paradigm, which emphasizes the economy based on knowledge and services, the successful transition to the labour market, and an adequate protection of minimum income, becomes

a unifying approach that complements the previously mentioned theories and that should promote both intragenerational and intergenerational social mobility. It is worth noting that it is social investment that also emphasizes the relevance of new social risks that are important for LTUSP, such as unpopular professions, changing labour market needs, lifelong learning etc. Overcoming these challenges requires investment in human capital, preventive policies, as this is the best way to prevent the risk of unemployment and poverty. In addition, this perspective of the analysis emphasizes the fact that the priority of the activation policy must be given to the unemployed, persons with lower education, but to achieve these goals, adequate social support must be ensured at the same time.

Despite the fact that modernization is an inseparable feature of modern society and manifests itself in new forms in the system of social stratification, the paradigm of social investment reveals continuous efforts to mitigate inequality and the risk of poverty. Thus, looking at the social mobility and labour market integration of LTUSP through the prism of theories of social mobility and modernization, social stratification, cultural and social capital, and social investment will help answer the main problematic question – what causes individuals to become LTUSP and why do they become the LTUSP and why are they unable to change their social position?

The second part examines the institutional structure and connection of participants (institutions) providing services and assistance to LTUSP. The roles of the institutions involved in LTUSP social inclusion and problem solving – the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (MSSL), the PES, municipalities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – and the preconditions for providing legal assistance are discussed. These actors are understood in the thesis as certain public entities that have specific functions established by legislation and are responsible for the performance of these functions. To better understand the importance of the inclusion/involvement of each actor and the specifics of their activities, the chapter discusses their role in the context of national legislation. It is important to mention that the empirical part of the thesis also analyses the opinions of the representatives of these institutions, and LTUSP themselves speak about their activities. In practice, it has been observed that the functioning of these institutions in

relation to LTUSP is fragmented, lacks cooperation, and does not respond to the complex challenges experienced by this group of individuals. To solve these problems, in 2019, a new mechanism was initiated – The Model of Employment Promotion and Motivation for Unemployed and Social Support Receiving Individuals (hereinafter – the Model), the implementation of which was targeted at solving the aspects of cooperation and distribution of responsibilities among the institutions discussed below, empower the most vulnerable groups of society, harmonize the provision of employment promotion and motivation services and monetary social support, to provide individualized assistance. On the basis of the implementation of the good practices of the Model, other changes in the field of employment were carried out. The chapter explains in more detail the implementation of this Model and its significance for LTUSP social mobility.

The third part presents the three-stage research methodology in a detailed way. The research aims to collect information as extensive as possible, covering the entire complexity of the process under consideration – by analysing general data and a specific initiative intended for LTUSP, expert opinions and insights, and finally the perspective of LTUSP themselves. To achieve the aim and objectives of the study, the three-stage study was conducted, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. First of all, during the research, secondary quantitative data on the general employment and unemployment situation in the country and recipients of monetary social support, the PES data on sociodemographic characteristics of LTUSP, as well as primary data, which included data collected by the author of the study on 546 persons who participated in the Model in 2021 and got employed, were analysed. In the second stage of the research, the factors of social mobility between generations are studied from the perspective of social policy makers and institutions responsible for its implementation. An expert survey was conducted using Delphi method, in which 24 experts representing different sectors and fields (labour market, social security, education, health, NGOs, and academic field) participated. This method was chosen as it helps not only to collect research data – experts’ opinions, but also to come up to a general agreement of the experts – consensus, by assessing which features of the studied phenomenon are the most important,

which is especially crucial when studying such a complex phenomenon as social mobility. Finally, in the third stage, LTUSP themselves are included in the analysis through the method of biographical interviews. This part analyses interviews of 12 informants, belonging to 1970-1984 generation, that reveal an intragenerational perspective on social mobility.

The combination of different research methods made it possible to overcome the shortcomings of the application of certain methods; collect diverse and ample material about the analysed social phenomenon; justify research results by different data sources. LTUSP social mobility was examined at various levels (intergenerational and intragenerational) and elements, by studying both the influence of various factors and the subjective experience of a change in social position or its stagnation.

To successfully analyse the social mobility issues of LTUSP, first of all, **the fourth part** reviews the general context of unemployment and social support system, determines the extent of long-term unemployment, and analyses the characteristics of LTUSP. Finally, this part of the study reveals how the integration of LTUSP into the labour market took place in a specific project, in the previously mentioned Model. Therefore, in this part of the research, not only the support measures that help to find employment are analysed, but also it is explained why still a very large part of the persons who received support repeatedly drop out of the labour market, in this way, when looking for links or social mobility between generations, the experience is perceived as a decisive influencing factor.

Data analysis shows that long-term unemployment in Lithuania remains an important problem requiring solution. In the general context of unemployment, the long-term unemployment rate has been consistently high for many years, indicating that the causes of unemployment are not being effectively addressed. This results in long-term unemployed individuals who also receive social support for a long time. The number of LTUSP has remained stable for the past years, except for 2021, when a jobseeker's allowance was paid. However, it should be noted that neither this allowance, nor the fact that most of the beneficiaries left the support system during its payment period, did not improve the situation, as already

in 2022, the statistics showed the return of long-term unemployed and support recipients to the support system.

On this basis, it was important and meaningful to analyse how the integration of LTUSP into the labour market took place in a specific project (the Model), which applied a complex method of solving the problems of this group of individuals, i.e. a case management method was used. The analysis of the Model implementation practices and participants' characteristics revealed that municipal specialists (employment case managers) understand the problem of long-term unemployment and support, as they sought to include in the Model's activities those persons whose unemployment duration was less than one year. It is also important to mention that work with this group of persons at the beginning of the implementation of the Model in 2020 was prevented by the Covid-19 pandemic and the quarantine introduced as a result. It can be said that during this time the provision of services and support was significantly limited, as more than half of the funds allocated for the provision of services were not used and the employment rates of individuals were also significantly lower.

It was established that intensive service provision takes an average of 209 days for LTUSP to become employed but varies from 105 to 313 days according to different municipalities. It is important to note that this period largely depends on what barriers to employment of persons participating in the Model are addressed. For example, if more persons who have one or another addiction are included in the activities of the Model in a relevant municipality, it is natural that overcoming it will require a longer time than, for example, only informing, counselling, or accompanying services. The analysis showed that the most common reasons for the unemployment of those participants of the Model employed in 2021 are related to the lack of accessibility, motivation, addictive behaviour, debts etc. Therefore, it can be seen that the services that were applied were mostly aimed at a targeted solution to these challenges – individual and group motivational or self-help training, psychologist, lawyer consultations, transportation, informing, counselling etc.

On the other hand, the employment of individuals does not yet mean a sustainable improvement in the situation of intragenerational social mobility. Analysis of the data on whether the persons who got employed

after the provision of the aforementioned services continue to work after 3 months showed that half of them are no longer working. The reasons for this are different, but at the same time they are also related to the factors of intragenerational social mobility – health, qualifications and education, other key competencies. This shows that it is necessary to provide support, communication assistance and other support services for at least one year after the employment. Otherwise, the unemployed person may re-enter the social support system or the PES, and in some cases remain at the margins of the relevant institutions.

The fifth part of the thesis presents the results of the second stage of empirical research. Delphi study for the assessment of social mobility factors of LTUSP was conducted, which involved participants from various institutions or organizations responsible for the social integration and support of these persons, who in one way or another were involved in this process both at the level of policy formulation and practical implementation.

The results of this part of the study showed that LTUSP has limited opportunities for both intragenerational and intergenerational social mobility. The study confirms the assumptions made by Lahtinen et al. al. (2020) stating that the risk of unemployment is much more likely for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Nevertheless, the analysis of the expert interview revealed that despite being of working age LTUSP having legal jobs as they have debts or do not want to lose their right to one or another social benefit. It has been noticed that the profession acquired by these persons is currently not in demand, and due to rapidly changing socioeconomic situation and implementation of new technologies, they have not been able to adapt to the new conditions of the market economy. All this happens due to the fact that previously acquired education and professional qualifications are currently no longer needed or difficult to apply in the labour market. According to both the research experts and researchers, further technological progress may further affect the demand for various unskilled jobs, which will have an even greater impact on the increasing polarization among individual social groups (Lahtinen et. al., 2020).

On the other hand, the modernization theory explains that increasing social mobility is a consequence of structural changes and modernization.

However, the results of this study highlight the problem – many people were simply unable to adapt to the changing system, to retrain, and acquire the know-how and skills necessary for the new economic model, so the opportunities for social mobility not only for themselves but also for their children were severely restricted. Newer studies emphasize the importance of increasing access to education and reducing educational inequality (Breen, Muller, 2020), but as it can be seen from the results, the education of these individuals is poor, and according to experts, the education system is still not able to effectively solve the problems of children from families experiencing social risk as schools are not sufficiently interested in a child's social environment and related learning difficulties.

To restore skills or solve problems that hinder employment, according to the experts, measures related to education would help the most. This is all linked to the examined social investment paradigm, which assumes that human capital development is particularly important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and describes education as the best insurance against unemployment. Inter-institutional cooperation is also emphasized together with the aim to provide support and services to persons individually and to meet specific needs as much as possible. However, when going back to the results of the first part of the study, it is necessary to remind that even after the provision of such services, only about half of the employed manage to stay in the labour market. Unfavourable public attitude may also contribute to this, because according to the experts, more support measures could be applied to these persons, but due to public pressure, priorities are given to assistance and services for children, grandparents, persons with disabilities, and not for support applicants of working age.

Another issue confirmed by the research and emphasized by other authors (Goldthorpe, McKnight, 2006) reveals the fact that lower social status associated with unemployment can be passed over between generations. The analysis showed that too little attention is paid to the education of children from socially vulnerable families. According to the experts, the biggest problem is not that disadvantaged families do not have the financial means to invest in quality education for children, but that there is a lack of role models for children, which affects their shortage of social and cultural capital. Subsequently, this leads to situations where prejudices

begin to dominate that a child from a poor family will not achieve anything, which prevents their future opportunities. Moreover, it is claimed that the insufficiency of motivation and the pursuit of a higher social status can be limited by the scarcity of social connections, when there is a lack of people in the family or close circle who would motivate and encourage the pursuit of higher education and a well-paid job. An example is the deficit of contact with people who have a higher education. This can be an important factor influencing educational decision-making as many people from low socio-economic status groups do not believe that higher education can help them, and they have less confidence in their ability to obtain it simply because they do not know people who have higher education. All of this end up being major obstacles to upward social mobility.

Research shows that countries with high income inequality tend to have lower social mobility (Corak, 2013). This is also supported by the experts who participated in the study – according to them, the scale of inequality in Lithuania is very high, and the higher the inequality, the lower the opportunities for upward social mobility. In addition, as reported by them, it is precisely during various crises (COVID-19 pandemic, economic fluctuations, rising prices of energy resources, war) that vulnerable groups of society are most negatively affected, and their opportunities get limited in the long term. And although greater emphasis on increasing access to education and reducing educational inequality is being placed (Breen, Muller, 2020), according to experts, the education system is still not capable to effectively solve the problems of children from families experiencing social risk, as schools are not sufficiently interested in a child's social environment and related learning difficulties. In particular, the involvement of health professionals is lacking in this process. However, the experts emphasize that social origin becomes an even greater obstacle for children from foster care institutions – this experience is emphasized not only among other children, but also among educators, and often prejudiced attitudes and stereotypes of society prevail in relation to children from poor families, saying that “well, this child will not achieve anything”. This is also confirmed by OECD (2022) research, which shows that socio-economic status also shapes a child's own ambitions – in the states of OECD, only about half of fifteen-year-olds from low socio-economic status families expect to obtain high education.

The analysis of biographical interviews with LTUSP presented in **the sixth part** revealed their life experiences, details of their personal lives, causes of unemployment, and employment challenges. This helped to evaluate the processes of long-term unemployment, receipt of social support and social mobility not only in the context of statistical or institutional experts' evaluations, but also to evaluate the life of the informants. Especially as in recent years a qualitative research tradition in social mobility research that actualizes the importance of individual experiences is intensifying (Folkes, 2022).

All LTUSP were observed to have had childhoods marked by complex challenges related to various family difficulties, leading to the complex beginning of the path of intragenerational social mobility. Experienced poverty, violence, alcohol consumption by parents, broken ties with relatives, institutional experiences led to an early start of independent life, difficulties at school and uneven continuation of studies or integration into the labour market. These aspects demonstrate that the informants lacked access to quality education and pre-school educational institutions during the crucial early periods of their lives, their parents were not given the opportunity to balance family and labour market responsibilities, which had an impact on their development and the lack of resources (financial, social, cultural) in the family.

It should be noted that all LTUSP informants have shorter or longer work experience in their lives. The first work experiences are recorded when they were minors helping their parents in their work or taking temporary jobs for the summer. Given the described family situations, it can be seen that these jobs were more of a necessity than an independent choice. Such situation resulted mainly due to the fragmentation of the parents' professional career caused by various bad habits, and often only one parent provided for their family. The professional careers of LTUSP parents also were marked by the fact that their jobs did not match their education or required special qualifications. This fragmentation of participation in the labour market is also recorded in LTUSP intragenerational perspective. The stories told by the informants showed that the development of the professional working career was inconsistent, there were no long-term jobs for them. This was caused by the bankruptcies of companies that occurred for various causes,

the personal reasons of the informants, the mismatch between the acquired education and profession with the ever-changing needs of the labour market.

When interpreting why LTUSP had been struggling to get a job for a long time, it turned out that the reasons for not getting a job were usually related to debts, commuting problems, forms of addiction, lack of motivation and social skills, health problems, lack of work experience, lack of jobs etc. The informants admitted that in order to overcome these challenges they were registered at the PES or participated in NGO activities for several years, but even this resulted in a failure to help to improve their lives. On the one hand, they believe that institutions are not capable of solving their problems or responding to individual needs and offering a suitable job. On the other hand, as it turned out later when assessing their income situation, LTUSP themselves are not always interested in changing their situation, as they fear to lose social benefits, to come into the sight of the bailiffs etc. However, it is recognized that a constant lack of income causes great tension, stress, encourages constant thinking about livelihood, which has a negative impact on health and general well-being.

The end of the thesis presents **the discussion**, which gives the links between the dissertation research and the works of other researchers, as well as the observations and reflections of the author of the thesis. The discussion emphasizes that LTUSP social mobility process involves not only LTUSP themselves, but also their children. It is obvious that long-term unemployment and the need for social support are caused by various reasons and circumstances that occurred in the early life of individuals. That is why the discussion presents a model of social mobility factors, which includes the dimensions of education, professional status, income and health and reflects groups of economic, social, institutional and horizontal factors of each of them. The complexity of LTUSP social mobility determines the fact that the process of social inclusion of this group of persons is slow and complicated, not only due to the specificity of the organizational framework or social structure, but also the interdisciplinary nature of factors related to the change of a social position.

Finally, **the main conclusions of the thesis** are presented:

1. Looking at the problems experienced by LTUSP and the challenges of integration into the labour market through the prism of social mobility is a new and original approach. The combination of modernization, stratification, social capital and social investment paradigm theories allowed to have a multifaceted look at LTUSP barriers to social mobility and research long-term unemployment and access to social support. This helped to assess LTUSP social mobility not only from a social security and employment perspective, but also to include education, health, subjective assessment, and other dimensions. Such approach to the analysis laid the foundation for empirical analysis, which revealed the essential factors of LTUSP social mobility and at the same time very precise obstacles to LTUSP integration into the labour market, the assessment of which in Lithuania was fragmented prior to this study, covering only a part of the researched phenomenon.
2. The study showed that the risk of long-term unemployment and receiving social support is mostly faced by persons with low education, who live in remote regions and lack commuting options, who have debts, addictions, various health problems etc. In most cases, long-term unemployment and the need for social support for these individuals was determined by systemic reasons (such as a lack of jobs, employers' attitudes, insufficient support from state institutions, gaps in the social security system), the long-term non-addressing of which influenced the emergence of individual causes such as addictions, low self-esteem and motivation, lack of social skills, minimization of needs etc. An assessment of the challenges experienced by LTUSP in achieving a better social position shows that these individual and systemic level causes are related and interdependent, as many individual problems subsequently limit participation in relevant aid measures as well.
3. The pursuit of employment of LTUSP is not a targeted part of the state's social policy. Although individual initiatives, such as the Model analysed in this thesis, have been applied, they are not subsequently allocated adequate funding, systematic training of employees (case managers) is not organized, while municipalities can choose whether

to apply aid based on the case management method, or to employ persons for unqualified fixed-term jobs, which does not solve the fundamental problems. The analysis of the individual situations of the employed participants of the Model revealed not only the main causes of long-term unemployment, but also the fact that solving LTUSP problems requires particularly individualized attention and a clear cooperation strategy in the areas of social support, social services and employment. Moreover, although the insights of both this and previous studies indicate that after the employment of LTUSP it is necessary to ensure supportive assistance and post-employment accompanying, which is not addressed in the current system. All this leads to cases where individuals, due to relapse of health problems, still underdeveloped social skills, various challenges at work etc. drop out of the labour market again.

4. The qualitative data collection and analysis approach applied in the study – Delphi method – enabled to come to a general consensus of opinions of the experts in employment, social security, education, health, NGOs, and academic field. The results show that the most important obstacles to social mobility in Lithuania are the negative impact of the family and neighbourhood environment, and the lack of social skills passed on from parents to their children. The improvement of the situation is hindered by the still uneven inter-institutional cooperation, the lack of adequate help and services for the whole family. The inequality and differences in opportunities between urban and rural children are particularly emphasized, and this becomes even more relevant when families are unable or avoid accepting the help of social workers or other specialists, thus making it difficult to provide timely help to children. It was also found that the social support system does not fulfil the theoretically intended goal of activating individuals, as the conditions for providing support and awareness of the enabling measures are insufficient, and their design is described as discouraging to change.
5. The analysis revealed that the measures that most help (can help) LTUSP to get a job and seek another social position include three main dimensions – individualized support (application of the case

- management method, provision of legal advice, especially those related to debt collection, and comprehensive preventive assistance); employer engagement, which includes creating LTUSP “friendly” workplaces where individuals can learn, not be afraid to make mistakes, develop their social skills; formation of public attitudes and more active use of NGOs in service provision (this requires wider dissemination of good examples of LTUSP education or employment, allocation of more funding to this area and empowerment of NGOs).
6. LTUSP own voice was also heard in this study. They also emphasized that the changed social reality caused self-doubt, indecisiveness, lack of motivation, and the work previously performed, which was attributed to a higher social status, nowadays became worthless. Even today, structural changes, economic fluctuations or the requirements of the social support system limit the opportunities not only to get a job, but also to participate in a full-fledged social life. Despite the fact that the historical context of modernization has already led to many changes that resulted in a leap of absolute social mobility, these changes in many cases had the opposite effect on vulnerable groups of society – the inability to adapt to new economic and social conditions led to long-term unemployment, the need for social support, various personal problems, which ultimately prevented successful upward social mobility. Therefore, based on the results of the study, the models illustrating different LTUSP intragenerational social mobility practices were constructed. On the one hand, it can be seen that the problems of long-term unemployment are helped to be solved by services such as transportation, consultations of lawyers, psychologists and other specialists, but their lack of continuity does not ensure the sustainability of social mobility. On the other hand, the analysis of biographical interviews revealed the importance of examining not only the period of unemployment of LTUSP, but also the reasons that led to it, which are often directly related to the transmission of low social status between generations.
 7. LTUSP obstacles to social mobility – indebtedness, addictions, structural changes, health problems, lack of access to services etc. – expands the boundaries of the phenomenon of long-term

unemployment and receipt of social support as well as the issue of LTUSP support. The untimely identification of these obstacles shows that in Lithuania the topic and aspiration of the connection between employment and social support was not a priority of social policy and a means for the inclusion of vulnerable groups of society. In addition, the problems of LTUSP are perceived and their solutions are implemented only within the framework of the social security system. The analysis revealed that specialists from other social policy sectors (especially health, education) do not identify themselves as actors capable of influencing long-term unemployment and receiving social support and the process of intergenerational transfer of LTUSP status. Therefore, the services intended to LTUSP are perceived as services in the social sphere, which exclude representatives of all other sectors – health care, education, culture, politics etc. Given the researched complex LTUSP problems and the lack of inter-institutional cooperation in solving them, it can be argued that this limits the possibilities of social mobility.

8. The activation of beneficiaries is currently mainly limited to the practice of compulsory registration at the PES, which is identified as the main means of potential integration into the labour market. This shows that instead of looking for long-term solutions, more control-oriented social policy measures are applied in the country and that the social support system lacks solutions focused on an individual, their problems and their context. In the process of adaptation to disciplinary requirements and by internalizing this situation into comfortable practice, LTUSP consider various individual trainings, classes, consultations etc. only as a formality, and not as measures that can actually increase employment opportunities.
9. Even though it is believed that the chances of social mobility for current generations are greater in comparison to previous ones, the objectively increased opportunities are inhibited by new challenges for vulnerable groups and society as a whole, such as various digitalization processes, economic recessions, Covid-19 pandemic, persistent poverty, inequality etc. These challenges complicate and limit the upward social mobility of individuals of the lowest socioeconomic status most.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the conducted research, recommendations can be made for social policy makers and practitioners as well as future researchers of this topic.

Recommendations for social policy makers and practitioners

1. Given the fact that a large number of employed LTUSP drop out of the labour market a few months after their employment, it is necessary to ensure the provision of support, communication and other accompanying services for at least one year after employment. Otherwise, the unemployed person may re-enter the social support system or the PES, and in some cases remain at the margins of the relevant institutions.
2. Referring to the analysed employment challenges of LTUSP and especially the obstacles arising from debts, to determine that no deductions from wages would be applied for at least one year after employment.
3. To ensure continuous monitoring of demand and availability of services provided to LTUSP. This is important as municipalities have different networks of services and infrastructure (e.g., transportation, childcare facilities etc.), which leads to inconsistencies in the support provided.
4. To provide increased funding to address barriers to employment for the long-term unemployed participating in employment enhancement programs, thereby ensuring that more LTUSP and future potential job market participants have access to services and other support.
5. Given the fact that it is complicated for people living in more remote areas of municipalities not only to reach workplaces, but also the services that are intended for them, to adjust public transport schedules accordingly, as well as to create opportunities for people to obtain a driver's license.

6. To consider opportunities for the development of social business, with the help of which “soft” workplaces would be established, where LTUSP could develop and improve their social and professional skills.
7. Much focus must be placed on improving the qualifications of the PES and municipal case managers, as they currently do not have special training or are self-taught.
8. To activate policies related to children’s early and basic education to overcome the intergenerational transmission of poverty through education.
9. To strengthen the links between cash social assistance for poor residents, regulation and implementation of social services and employment policy, thus aiming to provide complex and timely support to the unemployed and persons experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

Recommendations for researchers

1. To conduct comparative studies of the international context with the analysis of the causes of long-term unemployment and receipt of social support and measures that help LTUSP to find employment.
2. To start collecting long-term longitudinal data about Lithuania, which would help to analyse unemployment, income, health, education and other dimensions of measuring social mobility and help to facilitate the assessment of the influence of different factors on LTUSP social mobility.
3. To conduct more research that would assess the manifestations and context of social mobility using not only quantitative but also qualitative data.
4. To analyse the reforms carried out in the fields of employment and social support by assessing not only their impact on the unemployment rate, but also the social impact created at the individual and macro levels.

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

List of publications

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1. ESPAnet 2020 Online PhD Seminars. Pranešimo tema: „Patterns of intergenerational social mobility in Lithuania“. 2020-09-04.
2. Tarptautinė mokslo konferencija „Socialinės politikos iššūkiai COVID-19 ir atsigavimo po COVID-19 laikotarpiu: pasekmės, sprendimai ir naujovės“ (Lietuvos socialinių mokslų centro Sociologijos institutas ir Tarptautinė sociologų asociacija). Pranešimo tema: „Factors of social mobility of long-term unemployed and social support recipients in Lithuania“. 2022-08-24.
3. International Symposium „Social work in changing world: the power of care and participation“ (Marijampolės kolegija ir Liepojos universiteto Edukologijos institutas). Pranešimo tema: „The Role of

National conferences:

1. 2020 m. kovo 5 d., VI nacionalinė jaunųjų sociologų ir antropologų konferencija. Pranešimo tema: „Socialinio mobilumo tarp kartų apibrėžimas Lietuvoje“;
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3. 2020 m. lapkričio 27 d., Lietuvos sociologų draugijos konferencija. Pranešimo tema: „Socialinis mobilumas Lietuvoje: ar tikrai vienintelis kelias aukštyn?“;
4. 2021 m. kovo 26 d., VII-oji nacionalinė jaunųjų sociologų ir antropologų konferencija. Pranešimo tema: „Socialinis mobilumas tarp kartų Lietuvoje: skirtingo matavimo perspektyvos“;
5. 2021 m. spalio 26 d., VU socialinės politikos konferencija. Pranešimo tema: „Ilgą laiką nedirbančių ir socialinę paramą gaunančių asmenų užimtumo skatinimas: misija (ne)įmanoma“;
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7. 2022 m. vasario 28 d., mokslinė–praktinė konferencija „Piniginės socialinės paramos nepaėmimas Lietuvoje: priešasčių ir masto identifikavimo galimybės“ (Mykolo Romerio universitetas). Kartu su bendraautoriais skaityto pranešimo tema: „Piniginės socialinės paramos išmokų nepaėmimas piniginės socialinės paramos reformos kontekste“;
8. 2022 m. gruodžio 2 d., XIV nacionalinė Lietuvos sociologų draugijos konferencija (Lietuvos sociologų draugija ir Kauno technologijos universiteto Socialinių, humanitarinių mokslų ir menų fakultetas). Pranešimo tema: „Išklausykime pažeidžiamiausius: ilgalaikis nedarbas nuo „biurokratinės dehumanizacijos“ iki biografinių naratyvų konteksto“.

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Tautvydas Vencius baigė socialinės politikos bakalauro ir magistro studijas Vilniaus universitete, studijas tęsė sociologijos doktorantūroje Lietuvos socialinių mokslų centro Sociologijos institute. Dirba Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijoje, kur yra atsakingas už pažeidžiamų visuomenės grupių (ilgalaikių bedarbių, iš laisvės atėmimo bausmės atlikimo vietų paleidžiamų asmenų, benamystę patiriančių asmenų ir kt.) socialinės įtraukties iniciatyvas ir jų įgyvendinimą. Nuo 2021 m. dėsto Vilniaus universiteto Socialinės politikos katedroje, 2024 m. pradėjo dirbti projektuose („Lietuvos socialinės ir gynybos politikų sankirtos: socialiai pažeidžiamų grupių atsparumas hibridinėms grėsmėms“; „Gerovės valstybės vystymosi galimybės ir rizikos Ukrainoje globalaus neapibrėžtumo sąlygomis“) jaunesniuoju mokslo darbuotoju. Jo moksliniai interesai – pažeidžiamų visuomenės grupių socialinė įtrauktis ir socialinis mobilumas, ilgalaikis nedarbas, socialinės paramos sistema.

Tautvydas Vencius doktorantūros studijų metu aktyviai dalyvavo tiek nacionalinio, tiek tarptautinio lygio mokslinėse konferencijose, parengė 4 mokslines publikacijas. Taip pat vykdė mokslo sklaidos veiklą: disertacijos tema kalbėjo LRT radijo laidoje „Homo cultus. Iracionali būtis“ (2023), publikuotas interviu dienraštyje „Savaitė“ (2022), Vilniaus universiteto mokslo populiarinimo žurnale „Spectrum“ (2021).

Tautvydas Vencius completed his bachelor's and master's degree studies in Social Policy at Vilnius University and continued his doctoral studies in Sociology at the Institute of Sociology of the Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences. He currently works at the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, where he is responsible for social inclusion initiatives and their implementation for vulnerable groups of society (long-term unemployed, people leaving prison, persons experiencing homelessness etc.). From 2021, he teaches at the Social Policy Department of Vilnius University; in 2024, he started working on projects (“*The Intersection of Social and Defense Policies in Lithuania: Resilience of Socially Vulnerable Groups to the Hybrid Treats*”; “*Opportunities and Risks for Welfare State Development in Ukraine under Global Uncertainty*”) as a junior researcher. His research interests are social inclusion

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During his doctoral studies, Tautvydas Vencius was an active participant of both national and international scientific conferences and prepared 4 scientific publications. In addition, he carried out scientific dissemination activities: he spoke on the subject of his dissertation on the Lithuanian National Radio and Television's radio show "Homo cultus. Iracionali būtis" (2023), had his interview published in the weekly magazine "Savaitė" (2022) and Vilnius University science promoting magazine "Spectrum" (2021).

