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THE MAIN OBSTACLES TO IMPLEMENT CHILD AND YOUTH POLICY IN LATVIA

Abstract:

In Latvia, the transition to a market economy, price liberalization and curtailment of subsidies on basic goods and services required changes in the social security system. This system inherited from the socialist past, was in need of reform to secure its financial sustainability and to meet the demographic challenges. The reforms carried out in the first half of the 1990s in Latvia were mainly ad hoc emergency measures. The purpose of the social security reform was to establish a stable and sustainable social insurance system that would be based on the two following principles, first, the scope of the social security service is proportionate to social insurance contributions; second, there is solidarity between social insurance contributions and recipients of social insurance services. According to statistical data, Latvia is one of the EU countries with the highest rates of child poverty. The presentation attempts to explore the general nature of the national child and young people policy in Latvia. It has a twofold aim, namely, to explore the institutional coverage for children and youth policy, and to analyse the main obstacles to implement child and youth policy at national and municipal level. The presentation is based on the findings of the EU FP7 project „Measuring Youth Well Being” (MYWEB, grant agreement no.613368) which takes a balanced approach to assessing the feasibility of a European Longitudinal Study for Children and Young People through prioritising both scientific and policy imperatives. According to the interviews with experts, the main obstacles to implement child and youth policy at national and municipal level in Latvia are: (1) attitude of politicians towards youth policy that is not one of the priorities and important points in national policy; (2) lack of sufficient financial resources in state budget; (3) lack of sustainability and continuity of child and youth policy; (4) lack of administrative capacity and human resources; (5) lack of focus within political documents aimed to improve quality of child and youth well-being; (6) diverse approach to the youth policy in the regions; (7) symbiosis between lack of finances and lack of public awareness regards youth policy – one of the biggest challenges in youth policy implication. Society believes that work with young people is something that can be realized without finances.

Keywords:

Child and youth policy, well-being, child poverty

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