

Focus on Lone parent families:

Enhancing the dialogue concerning one parent families within society

A comparative report on the status of lone parents in
Germany, Lithuania and the UK (NI)



Preface

The Restart employability support programme for Northern Ireland was developed by Gingerbread NI, to support lone parents returning to work. Gingerbread NI has already transferred the innovative Restart programme to Norway, Italy, Poland and Cyprus. Within this project, Restart will be transferred to Lithuania and two regions of Germany.

Research shows that while many lone parents want to return to work they often face a complex combination of personal and structural barriers, which make re-entering the labour market particularly difficult. These obstacles include: low self-esteem; a lack of affordable childcare; fear of moving off benefits; the need to update skills and gain work experience; and the challenges of balancing work and family life. The Restart Programme addresses these issues by uniquely combining one to one coaching with group based learning and work experience placements. This approach has proved highly successful in helping lone parents who take part to build their professional confidence and overcome personal barriers, thus easing the transition in to work.

This report contains information from each of the partner countries on the current situation of lone parent families. The purpose of this research is to provide a deeper and up-to-date picture of the situation of lone parents in Europe, through a better understanding of the barriers for lone parents and the existence, or lack, of legislative measures.

The report is the result of contributions from the partner organisations: Caritas (Lithuania); Wisamar Bildungsgesellschaft gGmbH (Germany); and Possibilities (UK-NI). Wisamar was responsible for analysing the material from the partners and compiling the information into a comparative report. We would like to thank all of the partners for their sustained effort undertaken for a detailed research, their considerations, and evaluative texts. We hope that this report will highly contribute to ambitious results in the training pilot phase of our project.

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Leipzig, 2013

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1 Background to the Restart Project

1.1 Background

The number of lone parent families is steadily increasing in the countries that are in the spotlight of this report. Being a lone parent is, in many cases, only temporary and ends when the parent has a new partner. Considering the significant number of lone parents they are becoming more visible and commonplace in society as a group. However, the everyday life situation of single parents is very heterogenic regarding their individual situations and way of living. Different studies show, for example, that lone parents experience higher poverty risks than couples with children.¹

An important study on poverty and social exclusion among lone parent households on a European level was published by the European Commission in 2007, showed: 'family' has become a shifting concept. The challenges that members of lone parent families have to face are quite different and vary across countries. The study led to important conclusions for measures on different levels of action.

Meanwhile, ambitious targets have been established within the Europe 2020 Strategy to lift millions of people out of poverty and exclusion. The EU provides the basis for the development of national strategies and coordinates policies between EU countries on issues related to poverty and social exclusion. Lone parent family policies have to be seen in the framework of family policy in general. Universal and specific measures for lone parents are needed at the same time.

To respond to specific targets, a cross-sectoral partnership in Northern Ireland developed Restart during an EU EQUAL project. A Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation Project (2010-2012) aimed at transferring the innovative Restart programme to other European countries. Apart from Northern Ireland as project initiator and managing partner organisations from Cyprus, Italy, Norway and Poland took part in this project. In the new Restart 2 Transfer of Innovation Project (2012-2014), Germany and Lithuania were invited to join the project. What makes these countries interesting for a comparison are their historic particularities. Due to the differing infrastructure, various cultural orientations and differences in historic developments between Eastern and Western Germany can still be determined. Remarkable differences due to the development in two different societies - regarding the social situation - have to be taken into consideration in our report. Lithuania has to deal with the negative effects of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, such as emigration and a high unemployment rate. There is a strong necessity to bring about changes.

¹ Arbeitsmarktintegration und sozioökonomische Situation von Alleinerziehenden. Ein empirischer Vergleich: Deutschland, Frankreich, Schweden, Vereinigtes Königreich, Forschungsbericht im Auftrag des Bundesministeriums für Arbeit und Soziales, 2011.

1.2 Introduction to Restart 2

The Restart 2 Project is funded by the Leonardo da Vinci Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union. It started in October 2012 and will run for two years. The overall aim of Restart 2 is to transfer the Restart Employability Programme, which was developed in Northern Ireland, to Lithuania and two regions of Germany. Restart 2 also seeks to link the programme with ECVET, the European Credit system for Vocational Education & Training. It will contribute to the attractiveness of vocational education and training (VET) systems and practices throughout Europe that meet the needs of specific groups at risk.

Lone parents are the specific target beneficiary group of the project: results of different surveys in the European Union show that as a group they face personal and structural barriers in entering the labour market. To respond to these difficulties, the Restart programme offers them support. The training programme combines group work, individual life coaching, a work placement, practical help with CVs and job applications, advice on personal finances, and support with childcare and transport issues.

To be able to provide precisely targeted training programmes in Lithuania and Germany, the partners have undertaken up-to-date research of the social situation of lone parents in their countries. When designing this report the aim was to offer easy and valuable access to the information available. By means of comparing the results, we assess in Restart 2 which factors influence the labour market integration, and the risk of poverty and social exclusion. This report maintains a similar structure to the previous Restart Project's Research report, in order to facilitate the comparison of information in a wider geographical context.

The Restart 2 Project Partnership consists of six partners: four NGOs, a local government agency, and a vocational training centre. Each of them has profound experience and knowledge about the situation of lone parents:

- Gingerbread Northern Ireland, the promoting organisation, is a membership, services and campaigning organisation, working to support one parent families throughout Northern Ireland.
- Possibilities Northern Ireland, the coordinating partner, is Gingerbread's social enterprise company, provides training, mentoring and consultancy services with particular emphasis on supporting disadvantaged people who seek to return to work.
- The Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland (DEL) is a government department with extensive experience of mainstream provision of employability programmes for lone parents and other groups in society. DEL

was also an original partner in the EQUAL project, previously mentioned, which developed the Restart Programme.

- Vilniaus Arkivyskupijos Caritas (Lithuania), is a Mother and Child Care Home in Vilnius. It provides professional and practical support to lone parents, providing them with opportunities to gain work experience and life skills training.
- CJD Maximiliansau (Germany) is a Vocational Training Centre, which offers schooling, training, mentoring and support to young people and adults.
- Wisamar Bildungsgesellschaft gGmbH (Germany) is a non-profit educational institute and acts in intercultural, vocational and adult education. Wisamar is an experienced coordinator and partner in European projects. It is an accredited competence and dialogue centre, working with different disadvantaged groups.

The overall aim of the project for each importing partner is to adapt Restart for their own country. The partners will then be able to offer training to lone parents who wish to return to work. The disadvantages and challenges this group has to deal with will be addressed and the chances in entering the labour market will be increased.

1.3 Methodology

The basis for this report was the information collected from the partners. Therefore the German partner created a questionnaire using the questionnaire of the first Restart project in terms of comparability. To answer the questions the following sources were taken into account by the partners: research institutes; government statistics; regional, national, and EU policy documents; and the documentation of non-governmental organisations.

Lone parent families are not recognised everywhere as a group and, therefore, their needs are not considered or supported. Therefore, it is important to look at the differences in the definition of lone parenthood in the individual countries. For example, some countries recognise the break-up of cohabitations as equivalent to the divorce of married couples, while some do not. Therefore, it is necessary to compare the definition of the term 'lone parents' in the three countries in the first chapter of the report.

It is important to note that it was only possible to carry out an informal comparison on the data, as much of the data from the partner countries was only available in different formats and for different years. It was especially difficult to get data representing the situation in Lithuania, as sometimes the data was unavailable.

However, for the purposes of the Restart 2 Project, the data contained in this report is sufficient to highlight key areas of similarity and difference between the situations of

lone parents in each of the partner countries. This will create an overall picture providing partners with enough information to take into account the particular needs of the lone parents who will take part in the pilot delivery of the Restart 2 Programme.

2 Defining Lone Parents

2.1 Introduction

The concept ‘family’ in European society has already considerably changed since the turn of the millennium. Unmarried couples with children or single parents are now acknowledged in many countries as families. But how far does this hold true in the different states, and how far does the legislative law follow the pluralisation of family forms? The most common reason for becoming a lone parent is still divorce. However, the separation of married, or unmarried couples, or of those who never lived together, can also cause lone parenthood. But are lone parents still considered lone parents when they find a new partner or when their children undertake full-time education, for example when they start to study at a university?

Currently there is still no common definition for ‘being a lone parent family’ in Europe. The definition of a ‘lone parent’ often includes the criteria that a lone parent is an adult person living alone with one or more of their own or adopted children in one household. But this is not the case in all European countries, as the example of Lithuania shows. Here, a lone parent is not recognised as ‘family’ if the person was not previously married. On the other hand, by identifying the rights of an ‘employee, who is raising a child alone’, labour law goes further. By getting an insight into all the differences between the countries we get the picture of a very complex situation.

The definitions of ‘lone parents’ in each of the countries are essential for understanding the background in each country and to be able to compare the following data. It was, therefore, especially important for the statement of the report to find the adequate approach in the different European states. These definitions and the research provided, with support of the partner countries, are the basis for finding a comparable conclusion about the situation of lone parents.

2.2 Germany

According to the definition of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, ‘lone parents’ are mothers and fathers being unmarried, widowed, separated or divorced living together with at least one child under 18 years.² Lone parents living with a life partner in one household count among communities with children.

Institutions that get in touch with lone parents on different occasions vary slightly in their definitions. In their definitions, lone parent families often include children of majority living in the same household, as for example in the definition by the Federal

² Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend: Dossier – Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Beruf für Alleinerziehende, 2009.

Office of Statistics, which provides a Mikrozensus³ every year. Lone parents with a new partner in the household might also count as a lone parent family.

2.3 Lithuania

The State Family Policy Concept was approved by the Lithuanian parliament on 3rd of June 2008 (document No X-1569). According to this document, 'family' is understood as spouses and their children (including adopted children). In addition, there is the term 'incomplete family' in Lithuania. This term defines lone parents living with their children after a divorce or the death of one partner. But this term does not include lone parents that have never been married and, therefore, they are not counted as a family. This national concept of 'family' caused a lot of debate and controversy. The Lithuanian Constitutional Court was asked to verify the constitutionality of the mentioned concept. The Lithuanian Constitutional Court stated that this concept, which defines family only according to an existing or previous marriage, contradicts Article 38, Paragraph 1 of the Constitution - family is the basis of the society and the state - and Paragraph 2 of Article 38 - the state shall protect and take care of family, motherhood, fatherhood and childhood.⁴

According to the Lithuanian Supreme Court a 'lone parent' is a widow(er), a divorced parent living alone, a woman whose child's father is unknown or a woman whose child's father is in prison. This broader definition still does not include instances where the child's father is known and recorded on the child's birth certificate, but is not involved in child's care and not helping financially. In this case, the woman has neither the status of a single mother nor the status of family (if they are not or were not legally married).

The status of a lone parent does not provide any additional benefits. Lone parents living in a difficult financial situation may apply (like any other deprived person) for financial support at the municipality's social support department. This is regulated by the law of financial support for deprived people, defining a lone parent and his/her children under 18 years as people living together.

While there is no common definition of 'lone parent' in Lithuania, within labour legislation, we find the concept of an 'employee who is raising a child alone'. In 2003, the Lithuanian Supreme Court gave examples of these employees who are raising a child alone: widow(er), single mother, when the second parent is in prison or has limited parental rights, is divorced or separated. The court stated that this list is not exhaustive because, in practice, there can be other situations where an employee is the one who is raising the child alone. This explanation is very important, because it guarantees specific rights for lone parents in the labour market, which are further discussed in chapter 8.1.2 of this report.

³ The German micro-census is a nationwide survey of a representative 1% sample, carried out once a year.

⁴ Case no. 21/2008 dated 28th of September 2011

2.4 UK/NI

According to the terminology used for the UK General Household Survey (GHS): “a lone parent family consists of one parent, irrespective of sex, living with his or her never-married dependent children, provided these children have no children of their own”. The UK census further specifies that children only count as dependent if they are: “aged either under 16, or from 16 to 19 and undertaking full-time education”. The GHS stipulates that “married or cohabiting women with dependent children, whose partners are not defined as resident in the household are not classified as one-parent families because it is known that the majority of them are only temporarily separated from their husbands, for example because he works away from home”.⁵

Gingerbread NI, the only lone parent support charity in Northern Ireland uses a slightly different definition, expanding the term of ‘lone parent’ to include parents who have full custody of children while the spouse/partner is in long-term institutional care (i.e. prison or long-term hospitalisation). Taking into account the specific equality legislation in Northern Ireland, Gingerbread NI also expands the definition of a dependent child to include: “any child under the age of 18 years; a person who is over 18 years and due to a physical or mental disability unable to become independent of his/her parent; or a person pursuing education/training who is unable to become independent of his/her parent”.⁶

⁵ Crispin Jenkinson: Measuring Health Status and Quality of Life, 1998. Question Bank Topic Commentary on Health

⁶ Gingerbread NI, lone parent organisation UK

3 Lone Parent Demographics

3.1 Introduction

When interpreting results and comparing them to a variety of EU countries we have to remember that neither surveys nor official statistics use the same definition for lone parents. Mothers and fathers who live in cohabitation are sometimes included and sometimes excluded. Children are sometimes defined as minors, younger than 27 (or 18) or also unmarried (without age limitations). We also have to take into account, that some data is based on figures about households and other data on figures about family.

In view of the special problems associated with family statistics in international comparison, we make reference to the report by the Restart Project Partnership (2010-2012) 'Towards a Shared Understanding of the Situation of Lone Parent Families: exploring the situation in Cyprus, Italy, Norway, Poland and the UK (NI)', part 3.1., July 2011 (p. 18).

3.2 Lone parent households in figures

The number of lone parent households increased during the last ten years, in most of the EU countries (although the numbers are subject to fluctuations), whereas the number of family households overall stagnated.

To give a first overview we start with a table from Eurostat from 2009 before discussing the figures in detail for every country. We should keep in mind that the collection of data varies between countries and figures are not fully compatible. In the following table the figures for couples without children, single women without children and single men without children are not included.

Household composition* in % of all households, 2009 (Eurostat news release 36/2011, 4 March 2011)

| | Total number of households (000s) | Couples with children | Single women with children | Single men with children | Other households |
|-----------------------|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| EU27** | 200 534 | 21.5 | 3.7 | 0.5 | 19.4 |
| Germany | 39 311 | 16.7 | 3.5 | 0.4 | 12.0 |
| Lithuania | 1 393 | 20.7 | 5.5 | 1.0 | 23.7 |
| United Kingdom | 26 753 | 19.6 | 6.7 | 0.7 | 15.7 |

* Couples include both those with and without a legal basis. Two adults living together who are not a couple are counted within "other households". Children include all those aged less than 15 as well as young people aged 15 to 24 if they are economically inactive and live with their father and/or mother (e.g. students at home). Other households are those containing two adults who are not a couple or three or more adults, regardless of the number of children.

** EU27 excluding Denmark and Sweden

3.2.1. Germany

Germany is one of the countries with the lowest percentage of lone parents in the EU. But the situation within Germany varies significantly. On the one hand, 18.3% of all families in Western Germany are lone parent families, and on the other hand, the eastern part of Germany has one of the European's highest percentages, with a proportion of 25.9% of lone parents. The number of lone parents has also increased much more significantly in Eastern Germany than in Western Germany.⁷

However, in both parts of Germany, differences between urban and rural areas are obvious. In towns with more than 500,000 inhabitants, lone parents amount to 26% of all families, in towns with less than 5,000 inhabitants this falls to 15%. The highest proportion of lone parents is to be found in the German capital Berlin with 32% of all families living in Berlin.⁸

The following table shows the change in family forms over the last years:⁹

| Family form (in thousand) | 1996 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2011 |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| All families | 13,155 | 12,793 | 12,576 | 11,774 | 11,709 |
| Married couples | 10,408 | 9,855 | 9,230 | 8,316 | 8,171 |
| Lone parents | 2,236 | 2,311 | 2,572 | 2,655 | 2,685 |
| Domestic partnerships | 511 | 627 | 774 | 804 | 853 |
| Non-matrimonial domestic partnerships | 506 | 621 | 770 | 799 | 849 |
| All families with children under the age of 18 | 9,429 | 9,241 | 8,901 | 8,123 | 8,080 |

The data of the Mikrozensus 2011 showed that lone parent families with children without age limit amounted to 2.69 million or 23% of all families (with children without age limit). Lone parent families with children under the age of 18 amounted to 1.59 million or 19.6% of all families with children under the age of 18. On the one hand, the big difference in those numbers (2.69 million compared to 1.59 million) might reflect the high extent to which parents are still responsible for their children even when they are of majority age. On the other hand, there are many cases where

⁷ Families and Households, Mikrozensus 2011.

⁸ Mikrozensus 2009

⁹ Table based on the research report on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs: Arbeitsmarktintegration- und sozioökonomische Situation von Alleinerziehenden. Ein empirischer Vergleich: Deutschland, Frankreich, Schweden, Vereinigtes Königreich, Forschungsbericht im Auftrag des Bundesministeriums für Arbeit und Soziales, 2011.

a child cares for the parent when she/he gets older and where, therefore, a parent is living together with her/his child in one household.

3.2.2. Lithuania

Because of a lack of a consistent definition of lone parent families in Lithuania it is difficult to find data on the numbers of lone parents. The Lithuanian statistic on income and living conditions states that 54.8% of all families are 'incomplete families'.¹⁰ According to the definition of 'incomplete families', this number does not represent lone parents that have never been married and who are, therefore, not counted as families.

There are also statistics about households. A 'household' is defined as a person living alone or a group of persons sharing the same living accommodation and expenditure, including a collective provision of vital needs. Household members are defined as: usual residents related to other household members; usual residents, not related to other household members; resident boarders, lodgers, tenants, live-in servants - if they have no private address elsewhere or their intended duration of stay is 6 months or more; children in the household in education or working persons away from home if they have no private address elsewhere and maintain close ties with the household; persons having family or financial relations with the household in long-term absence, e.g. in hospital or nursing home, whose expected duration of absence is less than 6 months.

The household type is determined by the demographic structure of the household and the presence of children in the household. A child is defined as any person under the age of 18 and an economically inactive (not working and not engaged in active job search) person aged 18–24 living with at least one parent (or persons treated as such). An adult is any person in the household not classified as a child.

The following data on households from the year 2011 has been made available: 37.1% of all households are families with children. 21.29% of those households consist of three or more adults with children. Households with two adults and at least one child represent 61.46% of all households with children, and 17.25% are households where one adult is living with at least one child.

Another way to get a better picture of the number of lone parents in Lithuania is to take a look at the birth rate. In 2011, 34,385 children were born in Lithuania. 70% of births were legitimate births which implies that the parents were married. Illegitimate birth means that the parents are not married and have to sign an official statement. In 7.8% of all cases (and thus for 2,696 children) only the mother signed the statement, so it is likely that those mothers are lone parents. Furthermore 10,300 couples got divorced in 2011, of which 5,700 (55%) had children. If we assume that

¹⁰ Statistics Lithuania: Income and Living Conditions, 2011, p. 36, www.stat.gov.lt, (ISSN 2029-3720)

after divorce the children stayed with one parent – in 2011, 5,700 families became lone parent families. According to the statistics of 2007-2011, about 6,000 parents become lone parents every year. If we aggregate the number of families getting divorced every year and the one for children where only the mother signed the official statement in 2011 8,396 families became lone parent families, an even higher number compared to the official statistics.

3.2.3. UK/NI

In November 2012, the Office for National Statistics reported that there are currently 2 million lone parents with dependent children in the UK (26% of all families with dependent children¹¹). The following figures provide an idea of the rate at which lone parent families have increased over the past few years: In 2010, the number of lone parent families was 1.8 million, and in 1996 the number of lone parent families in the UK was 1.6 million.

3.3 The gender dimension and age of lone parent families

3.3.1. Introduction

Lone parenthood has a highly gendered dimension as the vast majority of lone parents are women. As far as data was available in the partner countries, nine out of ten parents were mothers. Traditionally mothers assumed the primary care role for children which might be one of the explanations for this trend. The average age of lone mothers in Germany, as well as in the UK, is about 38 years (38.75 years in Germany and 38.1 years in the UK). Similarly, the majority of lone mothers in Lithuania are aged between 25 and 39 years.

3.3.2. Germany

Nine times out of ten, single parents are mothers (1.43 million lone parents with children under the age of 18, which means about 90% in 2011). Only every tenth single parent is a father (157,000 or 10% according to the Mikrozensus 2011).

In Germany, the majority (45%) of lone parents are aged between 35 and 44. 24% are between 45 and 54, 23% between 25 and 34, 6% are younger than 25 and 2% are older than 55 years. On average, lone parents in Eastern Germany are somewhat younger - 37.2 year in comparison to 40.3 year in Western Germany.¹² These figures represent lone parents with children under the age of 18.

¹¹ Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

¹² Federal Office for Statistics: Alleinerziehende in Deutschland. Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2009.

3.3.3. Lithuania

There was no data available for the numbers of lone fathers or mothers. According to the experiences of Caritas Vilnius, it is mainly mothers who take care of their children as single parents.

In Lithuania, the only figures available were those for the age of lone mothers. The majority of lone mothers in Lithuania are aged between 25 and 39 years. In detail 0.3% of lone mothers are aged under 16, 2.4% are between 16 and 17 years old, 2.4% between 18 and 19, 30% between 20 and 24, 28% between 25 and 29 and 29% between 30 and 39.

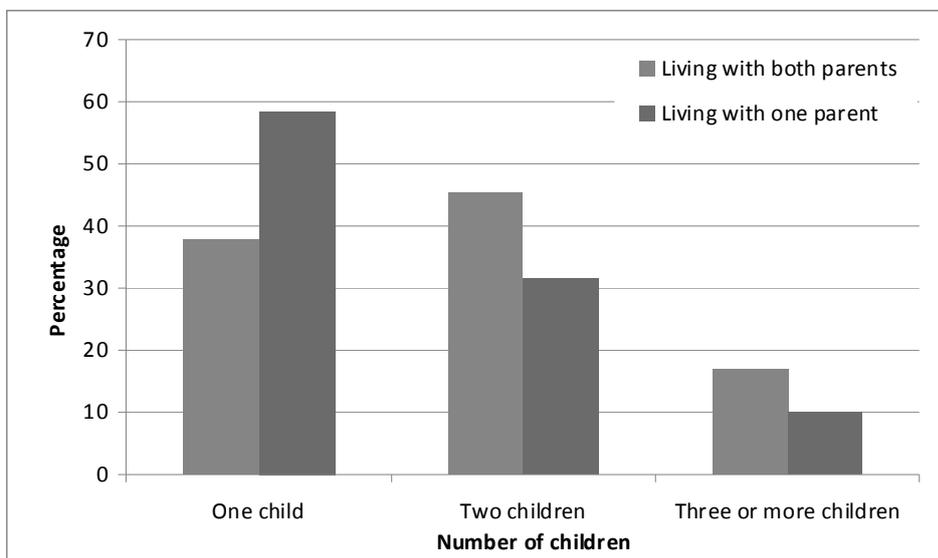
3.3.4. UK/NI

In the UK 91% (1.82 million) of all lone parents are women and 9% (180,000) are men.

The average age of lone parents with dependent children is 38.1 years. This figure has increased by 2.3 years since 2001 (when it was 35.8 years). In 2011, 45% of lone parents were aged 40 or over, and only 2% of lone parents were under 20 years old (the same percentage as ten years earlier).¹³

3.4 Children in lone parent families

3.4.1. Germany



Figures reveal that the majority of lone parents have households with just one child. While lone mothers are predominately the head of lone parent households overall, statistics show that the average age of children cared for by lone fathers tends to be higher. Furthermore, lone mothers often have responsibility for more children than

¹³ Office for National Statistics, 2012.

lone fathers. The average number of children of lone parents amounted to 1.39 in 2011 (fathers 1.28 and mothers 1.40). The average number was slightly higher in Western Germany (1.40) than in Eastern Germany and Berlin (1.36).¹⁴

The following table shows a clear statement regarding the gender aspect of lone fathers and lone mothers in comparison to the number of children.

Own Table: **Number of children (under 18) in a family, Germany 2011** (Mikrozensus 2011)

| | | 1 child | 2 children | 3 or more children |
|------------|--------------------------|---------|------------|--------------------|
| Share in % | Living with both parents | 37.65 | 45.35 | 17.00 |
| | Living with one parent | 58.29 | 31.69 | 10.02 |
| | Mother | 57.68 | 32.05 | 10.27 |
| | Father | 64.71 | 29.41 | 5.88 |

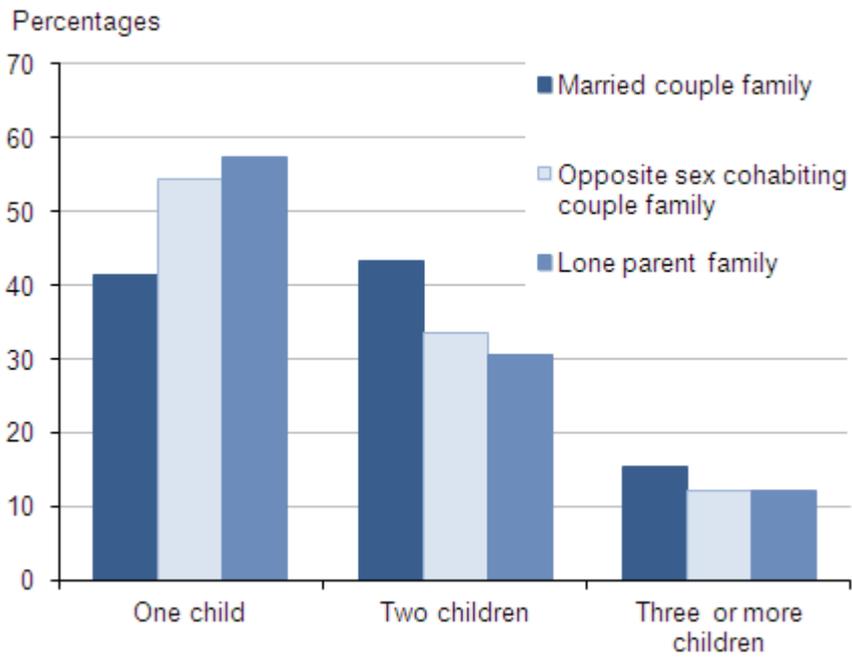
3.4.2. Lithuania

Unfortunately, no statistics exist regarding the number of children in lone parent families in Lithuania.

3.4.3. UK/NI

In 2012, there were 4.6 million households with dependent children and two parents in the UK, and 2.0 million single parent households with dependent children. The number of children per household is as follows (Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics) overleaf:

¹⁴ Mikrozensus 2011



4 Routes to Lone Parenthood

4.1 Introduction

The main reason for becoming a lone parent is the divorce or separation of the parents. The marriage and divorce rates in the UK and Germany are similar. In Lithuania the divorce rate is slightly higher, and the marriage rate is significantly higher. But the number of marriages and divorces varies strongly in Europe according to the circumstances. In general it can be said that the number of marriages is decreasing and the number of divorces is increasing.

Own table: **Marriage rate**, 1980-2009 (marriages per 1,000 inhabitants)¹⁵

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2009 |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Germany | 7.4 | 6.3 | 6.5 | 5.1 | 4.6 |
| Lithuania | 9.5 | 9.2 | 9.8 | 4.8 | 6.2 |
| UK | 7.5 | 7.4 | 6.6 | 5.2 | 4.4 |

Own table: **Divorce rate**, 1980-2009 (divorces per 1,000 inhabitants)¹⁶

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2009 |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Germany | 1.3 | 1.8 | 1.9 | 2.4 | 2.3 |
| Lithuania | 2.2 | 3.2 | 3.4 | 3.1 | 2.8 |
| UK | 1.0 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.6 | 2.2 |

According to the European Demography Report 2010, the proportion of live births outside marriage in the EU continued to increase in general: These new ways of family formation may occur to non-marital relationships or cohabiting couples as well as to lone parents.

Own table: **Live births outside marriage**, 1980-2009 (% of total live births),¹⁷

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2009 |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Germany | 7.2 | 11.9 | 15.3 | 23.4 | 32.7 |
| Lithuania | 3.7 | 6.3 | 7.0 | 22.6 | 27.9 |
| UK | 8.0 | 11.5 | 27.9 | 39.5 | 46.3 |

Both being a lone parent, also living together as a couple, can be temporary situations and the family situation can change several times within a lifespan. Being a lone parent in terms of being the only responsible person for a child is therefore, in

¹⁵ Eurostat (online data)

¹⁶ Eurostat (online data)

¹⁷ Eurostat (online data)

a lot of cases, a transient phase in life. According to the definition, this phase usually ends when the youngest child becomes an adult. But in reality it can be a longer responsibility for the single parent, as it often takes longer (up to an additional decade) before a child becomes economically independent. Also, a new partnership can often mean that only some of the parenting responsibilities are shared but not necessarily all of them. .

4.2 Germany

Getting a divorce or separating is the most common reason for becoming a lone parent in Germany. There are age-specific differences. More than half of single mothers in their forties (54%) and 62% of those in their fifties were married to their former partner. Middle-aged women, therefore, become lone parents mostly due to divorce and have lived in long term relationships previously. The majority of younger lone parents were not married to their former partner: 62% of lone mothers between 30 and 39, and 85% between 18 and 29, were not married to their former partner.¹⁸ The following figures give an overview of the routes into lone parenthood in Germany¹⁹:

- Divorce: 40.6%
- Becoming a widow or widower: 19.4%
- Separated 13.6%
- Never living together with the other parent: 26.3%

The majority of marriages still end with the death of one of the partners. Of the 18.1 million marriages that existed in 2010, 1% ended in divorce and 3% ended with death. This means that about 11 out of 1,000 marriages ended in divorce. The status of being married or living in a partnership is evaluated very diversely among lone parents. For some lone mothers the significance of marriage and partnership decreases with increasing age, whereas, more than 50% of lone parents aged under 40 state that a good partnership is important for them.²⁰ In Germany about 5% of pregnant women are under 25 years old.

4.3 Lithuania

Concerning routes into lone parenthood there was only data available for divorces. 55% of all lone parents are lone parents because of a divorce. It was not possible to find any information about the percentage of widows/widowers and separated parents or parents that never lived together. Only 33 people under the age of 18 had a child in 2011.

¹⁸ Sinus Sociovision 2012.

¹⁹ Federal Office for Statistics, results of 2012.

²⁰ Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend: Alleinerziehende in Deutschland – Lebenssituationen und Lebenswirklichkeiten von Müttern und Kindern, Monitor Familienforschung, Ausgabe 28, 2012. p.11

4.4 UK/NI

The overview of routes into lone parenthood in the UK gives the following picture:

- Divorce/separated from marriage: 46.0%
- Becoming a widow or widower: 6.5%
- Teenage pregnancies: 2%
- Other²¹: 45.5%

The UK 2001 census showed 46% of lone parenthood was due to separation or divorce. In Northern Ireland, 45% of lone parents have never been married, 3% are still married, 33% are separated and 17% are divorced²².

In recent years, the divorce rate has fallen in the UK. The figure for 2012 shows a 2% decrease compared to the 2011 figure. Alongside this there has been a decline in the number of marriages across the UK (there has been a downward trend since the 1970s), with marriage rates in England and Wales in 2009 being at their lowest ever.

As in many other countries there has been an increase in cohabitation in the UK, and cohabiting families are the fastest growing family type. Cohabiting couple families tend to be younger than married couple families. In 2012, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported that the number of cohabiting couples in the UK was 2.9 million (a 50% increase since 1996). Some 38% of married couples and 39% of cohabiting different-sex couples have dependent children. In addition, the number of people aged 35 to 44 who cohabit increased from 7% to 15%. Statistics show that cohabiting couples are more likely to split up than married couples.²³

²¹ This includes unmarried couples that have children in a cohabiting relationship that breaks down; couples living separately that have a relationship that breaks down; and situations where there is no couple relationship to the other parent.

²² Scullion & Hilliard, 2005.

²³ Office for National Statistics, 2012.

5 Attitudes Towards Lone Parenthood

5.1 Introduction

The cultural and educational background of a country is strongly reflected in social attitudes towards lone parenthood. In general, all our partner countries still have to take discrimination, stigmatisation and inequality – in various degrees - into account. The causes for negative attitudes towards lone parenthood in society differ according to the situations in the everyday life, the workplace, the neighbourhood, low social status, etc.

5.2 Germany

According to the Family Report 2012 of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youths, lone parents now receive respect and acceptance in German society significantly more often than in earlier times. However, acceptance still depends on factors such as social status.

In Germany, equality of men and women has been an issue in many reports, studies, and agreements for many years now. Nevertheless, in reality the inequalities still continue to exist. Barriers for lone mothers are to be found in the same fields as for women in general. First and foremost, women earn lower wages in comparison to men and there is also segregation in the labour market. Furthermore, there are other difficulties for women, for example: gender roles reinforced by school and study choices; stereotypes of men and women in the society; the largely traditional images of women in the media; and family education and expectations. Men as lone parents are more accepted, even admired. In the workplace they work in better paid jobs and often have only one, older, child to care for.

5.3 Lithuania

In Lithuanian society lone parents (usually lone mothers) are divided into two groups. The first group consists of lone mothers who are well educated, have well-paid jobs and therefore live under quite safe conditions. They create a positive or neutral picture of lone parent mothers among the public. However, society still commonly depicts lone mothers as women with low education and low income levels, who live on social benefits. It is also a common opinion, especially among older people or people living in rural areas, that it is shameful to be a lone mother. This statement is based on many years of experience of social workers in the Caritas Mother's and Child's Care Home.

Although the EU has clear gender equality standards, Lithuanian gender policy is still quite superficial. Lithuania was the first country in Central and Eastern Europe which adopted the Equal Opportunities Law, but the principle of gender is not the most important issue in shaping macroeconomic policy. In Lithuania, the principle of gender equality is still not in the line with EU requirements, making it difficult to achieve true equality in all spheres of life. Gender equality requires a global women's and men's participation in all spheres of life, including the decision-making process, and ensuring equal opportunities. However, the statistical analysis of the data showed that women's representation at all levels of government is insufficient.²⁴

The statistical data shows that there is positive change, as there is an increase in the number of educated women and their participation in the labour market has improved. But there is still a noticeable gap between men's and women's incomes. One of the reasons why women's labour market situation is still complicated is that women are consciously or unconsciously forced to choose between motherhood and career. There are not enough child care facilities and social services for families with children. A noticeable stereotypical attitude towards a woman's role in the family still exists, which occasionally prevents women's integration into the labour market. In addition, there has been a low level of public awareness on gender equality.²⁵

Because statistical information and research on the situation of lone parents is less widely available in Lithuania than in the UK and Germany the partnership have included the following Case Study to give a picture of the situation of a lone parent in Lithuania:

Case Study of a 19-year-old single mother who came to Caritas Care Home:
“She told us that, being pregnant, she used to live with her mother, her younger sister and her grandmother in a two-bedroom apartment, belonging to the grandmother. After the child was born, her grandmother refused to take her back into the apartment, unless she would give up custody. The girl's mother could not do anything because the apartment belonged to the grandmother. In addition, the girl's mother is suffering from a cardiovascular disease, is unemployed, has a disability and has to take care of her second daughter. The girl's parents got divorced when she was 15 years old. The father had been violent and had often beaten her mother. When he began to commit acts of violence against the daughters, the mother asked for a divorce. After the divorce the father did provide them with financial assistance. But after he found out about the pregnancy of his unmarried daughter, he refused to

²⁴ Aistė Dromantaitė-Stanickienė, Zina Gineitienė: The Situation of Women Seeking a Career in Lithuania. Mykolas Riomeris University, Lithuania 2010.

http://www.google.lt/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CDQQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.mruni.eu%2FIt%2Fmokslo_darbai%2Fsms%2Farchyvas%2Fdwn.php%3Fid%3D269288&ei=QV7dUamYNIXaPJbWqLAG&usq=AFQjCNFAMHUuHRIOXuhmASdIRbFRSa46nw&sig2=50xDlzyP4lejTsluKYxBtQ&bvm=bv.48705608.d.ZWU

²⁵ Aistė Dromantaitė-Stanickienė, Zina Gineitienė: The Situation of Women Seeking a Career in Lithuania. Mykolas Riomeris University, Lithuania 2010.

http://www.google.lt/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CDQQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.mruni.eu%2FIt%2Fmokslo_darbai%2Fsms%2Farchyvas%2Fdwn.php%3Fid%3D269288&ei=QV7dUamYNIXaPJbWqLAG&usq=AFQjCNFAMHUuHRIOXuhmASdIRbFRSa46nw&sig2=50xDlzyP4lejTsluKYxBtQ&bvm=bv.48705608.d.ZWU

help her. The father of the child was not ready for parenthood, did not think about their life together, never had worked and was often drunk. The girl had never been employed, graduated after 11th grade, had no income and no place of residence. But she had a strong motivation to raise the child even without the help of her relatives and stated willingness to continue to learn, to get a profession, to find a job and a place of residence. Since this is a big challenge for a single person she came to the Caritas Mother's and Child's Care Home hoping for help to solve this situation."

5.4 UK/NI

Despite the increasing social acceptance of divorce and the fact that the number of lone parent families has been steadily increasing since the 1970s, there would still appear to be a stigma attached to lone parenthood in the UK. NGOs working with lone parents have pointed to the negative labels that are still attached to this family type. In Northern Ireland, qualitative research with 82 lone parents showed that they themselves perceive stigma and many believe they were perceived negatively if they were reliant on social security.²⁶ The stigma attached to lone parents can be linked to poverty and social exclusion due to a lack of access to education, training, and employment opportunities as well as provision of services, such as travel and childcare etc.

Lone parent organisations point out that the UK media routinely reinforces negative stereotypes of lone parents by presenting detrimental opinions and using loaded language when reporting on issues that relate to lone parenthood. Research undertaken by the Policy Studies Institute has confirmed that the existence of the media, and in previous times the Government, stereotype of the teenage lone parent getting pregnant to secure local authority housing and benefits is not supported by the available evidence.²⁷ The government's new policies around benefits for lone parents have caused controversy. The Conservative Government advocates that more lone parents should be 'moved off' benefits and into work. Although this is a positive long-term goal, commentators have predicted that, the abruptness of policy change will cause problems for lone parents in the long term, and further reinforces the stereotype that lone parents do not want to work. In the past the contributions made by parents as carers were recognised as socially useful, and lone mothers were granted assistance on the basis of their maternal status to enable them to care for their children. However, this opinion has declined in recent years as entitlement to welfare without work requirements has come to be regarded as a central factor in entrenching welfare dependency.

²⁶ Gray, AM and Carragher, L. Possibilities: A Gender Analysis of Lone Parents, Training and Employment. Belfast: UU and Gingerbread NI, 2008

²⁷ SLIM: Moving Towards Inclusion - Lone Parents, 2003

The Government's focus on employment and obtaining paid work enforces a link between social inclusion, active citizenship, and the status of an individual in society. The shift from policies which focused on supporting lone mothers to policies which seek to persuade and compel lone mothers to enter the paid labour market has been described as a 'farewell to maternalism'.

Furthermore, the UK media in particular has reinforced the view that parental unemployment, and by extension poverty, has numerous negative impacts on a child's well-being and its long term prospects, echoing Government policy that workless households tend to create cycles of deprivation, and that it is important that children have working parents as role models. The normalisation of maternal employment in one-parent households appears to have led to the loss of the status of lone parents as a vulnerable group in need of financial support. Thus the space has opened up for the removal of support for lone parent households through the policy process and consequently, lone parenthood was redefined as being a personal experience rather than a social 'problem' deserving state support.²⁸

In the UK, 91% of lone parents are female and only 9% are male. The historically disadvantaged position of lone mothers in the benefit system stems from the fact that social security policy in the UK was built around the model of the male breadwinner (which continues to be so even when this was no longer the norm).

Also, there are still more conservative attitudes in Northern Ireland than in many other European countries with regard to views on mothers with young children working outside the home. In Northern Ireland, lone mothers are still less likely to be in employment than mothers with a partner.

In addition, the gender pay gap persists and is especially strong with regard to part-time work. As most lone parents are women, this introduces a gendered element to their economic situation. The greater vulnerability of one-parent families to poverty has been linked to broader issues relating to women and the labour market, which in turn can be traced to traditional views on gender roles, assuming the primary role for women to be a caring one, or an expectation that women will combine work and care roles. Although there is legislation in the UK enforcing equality of pay for men and women, in reality this is not the case and the pay gap continues to exist. There are also persistent imbalances in the number of men and women in high paid employment, with a disproportionate number of women employed in low paid sectors or working part-time, usually in an attempt to combine work and family.

For women, more than for men, a job does not imply an adequate income. The lack of childcare provision and the cost of it is a significant factor for the large number of lone mothers working part-time, as mothers try to fit work around childcare and family responsibilities. The nature of the part-time labour market in the UK has many disadvantages including low pay, insecurity of employment, lack of opportunity for

²⁸ Laura Davies, *Lone Parents: employed or otherwise engaged?*, 2012.

progression and a high degree of occupational segregation, which has impacted negatively on the gender pay gap. The latter increased with the substantial growth in service sector employment since the 1990s. In their analysis of gender and poverty, Bradshaw et al. also correlated lone parents' poverty to their spatial concentration in areas of high unemployment.²⁹

²⁹ Gray, AM and Carragher, L. Possibilities: A Gender Analysis of Lone Parents, Training and Employment. Belfast: UU and Gingerbread NI, 2008.

Rubery, J Grimshaw, D and Figueiredo, H.: How to Close the Gender Pay Gap in Europe: Towards the Gender Mainstreaming of Pay, Industrial Relations Journal, 2005.

Bradshaw, J and Mayhew, E.: Mothers, Babies and the Risk of Poverty, 2005.

6 Lone Parent Families and Poverty

6.1 Introduction

Despite increasing participation in the labour market, the poverty risk of lone parents has not decreased. This shows that higher risk is not only the result of a lower level of education and low participation in the labour market. Social benefits, in some cases, partly substitute for the second household income, but they cannot compensate for the lack of the second income. So the poverty risk cannot be reduced to the level of two parent families. In the German tax and transfer system lone mothers get policy incentives to underemployment and inactivity.

The definition of poverty is similar in all three countries. Relative poverty indicators calculated in the European Union under a single methodology are referred to as at-risk-of-poverty indicators. The at-risk-of-poverty threshold is set at 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income in cash. To enhance the comparability of households of different composition, the so-called modified OECD equivalence scale is used. Since 2005, the calculation of at-risk-of-poverty indicators is based on the data of a statistical Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC). At-risk-of-poverty indicators are calculated based on the income in the previous year (the survey collects data on household composition and living conditions at the time of the survey, and on the income during the previous calendar year). The main indicators used for poverty analysis are the at-risk-of-poverty rate and the at-risk-of-poverty gap. The at-risk-of-poverty rate is the share of people with an equivalised disposable income below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold. The at-risk-of-poverty gap is defined as the difference between the at-risk-of-poverty threshold and the median equivalised disposable income of people below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, expressed in per cent.

In Germany, and the UK (but to a much lesser extent in Lithuania), lower levels of income due to part-time work are compensated by the payment by government of in-work welfare benefits to 'top up' income. A respective social benefit to complete their own income (as in other European countries) – in the form of housing benefits or educational benefits – would be a much better way to cover the basic needs of a household.³⁰

6.1.1. Germany

In Germany, an average income in the years 1994 to 2009 amounted to €750 per month. The quota of poverty risk in these years was about 11.2%. 14% of lone parents say that living alone with their children is a desirable lifestyle. 83% of them wish to live in a partnership. In 2010, about 41% of all lone parent households were

³⁰ Arbeitsmarktintegration und sozioökonomische Situation von Alleinerziehenden. Ein empirischer Vergleich: Deutschland, Frankreich, Schweden, Vereinigtes Königreich, Forschungsbericht im Auftrag des Bundesministeriums für Arbeit und Soziales, 2011.

dependent on social assistance according to Book II of the Social Code (Sozialgesetzbuch II (SGB II)).³¹ One of the reasons is that lone parents are not able to participate entirely in the labour market. This clearly shows that sustainable employment is the key to improve their financial situation. Therefore, it is controversial that the German State prioritises further financial support instead of creating work opportunities. For example, by August 2013 childcare payments will be introduced for parents who do not want, or are not able, to leave their children in publicly funded facilities. In addition, insufficient access to childcare provision mainly leads to problems concerning access to the labour market. Similarly, the greater the number of children in a family, the higher the household financial demands and caring responsibilities are. Results of statistics vary according to different survey designs and income definitions, but overall the quota for lone parents is higher and has increased. The reason for this is simple: the lower the occupation rate, the higher the risk of poverty.

According to The Family Report 2012 the poverty risk is 5.2% for parents working full time and 19% for parents working part-time. For jobless parents, the quota is ten times higher. An evaluation of the Socio-Economic Panel for the years 1995 – 2009 clearly indicates the most important factor leading to poverty is unemployment of the head of the household. As shown in the table below, another factor is that there is only one parent in the family. For lone parent families these two risks factors are often related.

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Lone parents with children under the age of 15 with relatively low household income (less than 60% of the median income = EU-convention for poverty risk) | |
| Socio-demographic features/in per cent (SOEC 1995-2009, Family Report 2012) | |
| Head of household unemployed | 48 |
| Head of household employed | 9.1 |
| Household without partner | 33.3 |
| Household with partner | 10.3 |
| Number of children: three or more | 19.3 |
| Number of children: less than three | 10.5 |
| Age of children: youngest less than four | 14.6 |
| Age of children: youngest older than four | 12.1 |

As lone parents often have a low income compared to the average, the children in these families frequently have to face poverty. The social stigma that was common up until the 1970s no longer exists, but certain stereotypes still exert their influence, as a study of the university of Bielefeld shows: 31% of the interviewed children say

³¹ Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales: Alleinerziehende unterstützen – Fachkräfte gewinnen, 2011.

that they are often angry and 21% claim to feel ashamed regularly;. 22% of the poorer children with lone parents say that they are often sad without knowing why; 34% state that they are teased by others; 23% claim to be alone very often. Every third child states they are bullied by other children.³²

6.1.2. Lithuania

In 1995, Lithuania signed the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development according to which a commitment to poverty reduction became the priority in social policy directions. One of the provisions of the Copenhagen Declaration, that Lithuania undertook, was to recognise that the family is the basis of society and that it plays a crucial role in human social development, and also to strengthen social protection and support for families. Since then, various measures to improve the situation of families in Lithuania have been implemented among them are: child benefit payments for under 18s; better maternity leave conditions; and the new possibility for parental leave. However, until now, families in poverty remain a pressing problem.

Statistics show that the level of poverty in families with children is higher than in families without children. In 2006 and 2007, the poverty level of lone parent households declined due to social benefits and not because of other income.

At-risk-of-poverty rate by household type/ in per cent (Department of Statistics)

| Type of household | At-risk-of-poverty rate | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
| Households without children | 17.6 | 19.2 | 20.2 | 21.0 | 21.1 | 18.6 | 17.1 |
| Households with children | 22.6 | 20.5 | 18.5 | 19.4 | 20.1 | 21.4 | 22.1 |
| 1 adult with at least 1 child | 48.4 | 44.2 | 41.5 | 48.3 | 44.3 | 44.4 | 42.4 |
| 2 adults with 1 child | 15.2 | 16.1 | 14.0 | 12.5 | 14.1 | 19.0 | 16.7 |
| 2 adults with 2 children | 18.0 | 15.4 | 12.7 | 13.2 | 18.0 | 21.1 | 19.7 |
| 2 adults with 3 or more children | 44.4 | 41.5 | 38.2 | 46.0 | 31.3 | 23.4 | 33.1 |
| Other households with children | 14.4 | 13.1 | 14.4 | 15.0 | 14.9 | 16.3 | 17.0 |

It can also be noted that the poverty rate is highest for lone parents with one or more children and large families. The poverty rate depends on individual factors (education, skills, qualifications, family structure, number of children, age, physical health etc.), as well as structural factors (economic, political and social conditions).

³² http://www.die-alleinerziehenden.de/studie_uni_bielefeld
<http://www.jugendhilfeportal.de/forschung/familienforschung/artikel/eintrag/studie-kinder-mit-nur-einem-elternteil-fuehlen-sich-nicht-benachteiligt/>

Each factor affects a person's opportunity to remain in the labour market. According to the Lithuanian Department of Statistics, incomes for households consisting of one adult (usually the mother) and a child were 30% lower than the average income for all households with children. The level of education is also an important factor in determining the level of poverty. In 2005, household budget surveys showed that the higher the educational level the higher the income from employment, and that for declining educational level the social benefits are increasing. The analysis of household incomes also points out that; in households where the head of the household is a woman, the income is lower than in households which are headed by men. This leads to the conclusion that lone mothers are more likely to suffer from poverty than lone fathers.

Average disposable income by household type, 2008/ per household member per month, LTL (Lithuanian Department of Statistics, 2010):

| The type of household | Head of the household | |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|
| | Woman | Man |
| Single person | 1084,3 | 1378,1 |
| Single parent with children under 18 | 634,0 | 836,8 |
| Couple without children | 1183,5 | 1229,8 |
| Couple with children under 18 | 794,7 | 937,4 |
| Other households with children | 698,8 | 827,9 |
| Other households without children | 991,5 | 1216,0 |

The family income is also affected by the place where the family lives. Families in large cities have the highest income, whereas the poorest families live in smaller towns and rural areas.

The third book of Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania states: "Children born out of wedlock and children born to married parents have equal rights." Lithuanian laws provide special measures to protect children growing up in lone parent families (e.g. the right to a survivor pension after the death of a parent, parental obligation to maintain their minor children after divorce), as well as an increase for the basic allowance for lone parents. Despite these measures, and other state provided social benefits and privileges, poverty research shows that lone parent families are more common amongst the poorest. It emphasises, that children from lone parent families face stigma in schools, and are often unable to participate in additional activities because of low family income. Children from lone parent families (usually having only the mother) have fewer opportunities to express their talents and they often experience problems at school (i.e. school attendance, classroom behaviour, academic achievement, etc.) which affects their future. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour states that in Lithuania, the majority of poor lone parent families consist of women with small children and that for these families, due to not being able to combine work and family responsibilities, the main source of income are social benefits.

6.1.3. UK/NI

The latest year for which household income data is available is 2008/09. In that year, the 60% threshold was £119 per week for a single adult with no dependent children; £206 per week for a couple with no dependent children; £202 per week for a single adult with two dependent children under the age of 14; and £288 per week for a couple with two dependent children under 14. These sums are measured after income tax, council tax and housing costs have been deducted, with housing costs including rents, mortgage interest, buildings insurance and water charges.

Paid work is not a guaranteed route out of poverty for lone parents; the poverty rate for lone parent families is 23% where the parent works part time, and 18% where the parent works full time. The median weekly income for working lone parent families working 16 hours a week or more is £337, compared with £491 for couple families with one worker, and £700 if both parents work. Lone parent households are the most likely to be in arrears on one or more household bills, mortgage or non-mortgage borrowing commitments (at 31%). 38% of lone parents said that money always runs out before the end of the week/month, compared to 19% of couples. 63% of lone parents have no savings, compared to 34% of couples.

Lone parents in Northern Ireland are the household type most vulnerable to poverty, and they are statistically more likely to be in poverty for longer periods than other households. This is due to: reliance on social security benefits which have not increased in line with earnings; the over-representation of lone parents in low-paid, part-time work; and a reliance on social housing. Northern Ireland also has an expensive public transport infrastructure making accessibility to training, employment and leisure activities more difficult, and the UK has the second highest rates of childcare costs in Europe.

Children in lone parent families have a much higher risk of living in poverty than children in couple families. Every 4 out of 10 (41%) children in lone parent families live below the poverty line compared to 2 in 10 children in couple families (17%). Lone parents and their children face various forms of social exclusion, for example; an element of social exclusion within education is that school fees and uniforms can be very expensive. Lone parents who are financially worse off or live below the poverty line often struggle with some of these high expenses at school. As a result, they are discriminated against by not having the same choice of schools as other parents.

6.2 Employment and having paid work

6.2.1. Introduction

According to the expertise of the Robert-Koch-Institute of 2005, the labour market

situation in general is characterised by different requirements.³³ Lone parents must be highly resilient, flexible and need extraordinary organisational skills. On the other hand, being employed is an important precondition for an independent life. It is especially important for women to re-enter the labour market. To achieve this, they have to reorient themselves in career terms and handle changing labour market situations. This can also mean a lower income for them. In international comparison, lone mothers are more often in employment compared to mothers in two parent households.

6.2.2. Germany

On the one hand, statistics state in 2011 1.74 million (64.8%) out of 2.69 million lone parents (with children without age limit) were employed, 2.9% more than in the year before.³⁴ On the other hand, 31% of those employed lone parents still depended on additional Hartz IV benefits to make a living.³⁵

The labour status and earned income of lone parents depends on their educational background as well as the number and age of their children. The higher the age of the youngest child, and the higher the educational level, the more likely they are to be employed. While almost all lone mothers without a school-leaving certificate are not, or only marginally, employed; more than half of the mothers with at least a secondary education, and about two thirds of the mothers with A-levels, are working part-time or full-time. In 2012, as the Family Report 2012 of the Ministry of Family Affairs indicates, 40% of lone mothers and unmarried mothers had full-time jobs. About half of the mothers in Germany work part-time between 15 to 32 hours per week. 25% of the married mothers, but only 12% of lone mothers and 9% of unmarried cohabiting mothers, are marginally employed. For lone fathers, working part-time is an exception. Data from 2010 shows that 94% of them were full-time employed and 6% part-time.³⁶

6.2.3. Lithuania

In Lithuania, 68% of lone parents are working part-time or full-time.³⁷

6.2.4. UK/NI

In the UK, 59.2% of lone parents are in work. Where lone parents are not working it is often because there are health issues that make work difficult: 33% of unemployed

³³ Beiträge zur Gesundheitsberichtserstattung des Bundes: Armut, soziale Ungleichheit und Gesundheit, 2005. Expertise des Robert-Koch-Instituts

³⁴ micro-census 2012

³⁵ 'Armutsfalle' Kinder – Die wirtschaftliche Situation Alleinerziehender, Dokumentation der Arbeitsgruppe 2 auf der 6. Armutskonferenz der Fraktion DIE LINKE 'Frauenarmut in einem reichen Land' am 6. Oktober 2012 in Chemnitz.

³⁶ Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend: Alleinerziehende in Deutschland – Lebenssituationen und Lebenswirklichkeiten von Müttern und Kindern, Monitor Familienforschung, Ausgabe 28, 2012. p.17

³⁷ Income and living conditions 2011, Statistics Lithuania 2012, p. 15 <http://web.stat.gov.lt/lt/catalog/viewfree/?id=2121>

lone parents have a disability or longstanding illness; and 34% care for a child with a disability. In July 2012, the number of economically inactive people in the UK was 9.07 million. In the UK, economically inactive people are those defined as ‘neither employed nor unemployed’. This figure represents over 20% of the UK population and generally comprises of adult students, the long-term sick, unpaid carers, those who retire early, or women or men who are not working but are not entitled to benefit. In 2012, the Office of National Statistics reported that 20% of all lone parents in the UK were defined as economically inactive. In Northern Ireland, this figure was slightly higher at just under 30%. Figures for Northern Ireland showed that 33% of working age inactive women were unavailable for work due to family/home commitments.³⁸ Those who are categorised as economically inactive may have income from sickness or disability benefits or a Carer’s Allowance for adult dependants, or they may not be receiving any income at all, i.e. mothers who have partners who are working.

6.3 Welfare benefits and social assistance

6.3.1. Introduction

To get an overview, it is useful to start with the differences in social security expenditure of our partner countries. These differences will be put into relation to the gross domestic product (GDP). The results are as follows.³⁹

Percentage of total expenditure on social protection, 2011 in comparison to 2003 (in brackets), in % of GDP:

| | |
|---------------|---------------|
| Germany | 27.76 (30.46) |
| Great Britain | 23.72 (25.73) |
| Lithuania | 16.16 (13.75) |

Percentage of total expenditure on social protection, 2011 in comparison to 2003 (in brackets), per head of population (Euro):

| | |
|---------------|---------------|
| Germany | 7,463 (7,642) |
| Great Britain | 5,849 (6,745) |
| Lithuania | 1,232 (640) |

It becomes clear at first sight that significant material differences have to be taken into account when comparing further details. It is stated in the above mentioned document that “the differences in social protection in the EU Member States became even more prominent if the payments are broken down for individual types of benefit and social sectors”.

³⁸ Source: Department for Enterprise Trade and Industry Labour Market Report, June 2011, Belfast: DETI

³⁹ Social Security Compass of the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs, p.79

6.3.2. Germany

In 2011 7.5% of lone parents were not in work, noteworthy is the difference between Eastern (13.3%) and Western Germany (6.1%), and 27.7% of lone parents were economically inactive. This figure also includes people under the age of 15 and over the age of 75. Nearly one fifth of all lone parents (18.3%) were dependent on employment benefit I or Hartz IV benefits; noteworthy again the is difference between the eastern and western part of Germany with 24% in Eastern Germany compared to 16.6% in Western Germany.⁴⁰

A table from the Federal Office for Statistics in 2010 compares the status of employment of lone mothers and mothers in couple families. While 31% of lone mothers receive benefits, this holds true for only 6% of women in pair families. The following table for 2009 reflects the differences between lone mothers and mothers in pair families very well by showing the source of their income.

| | Lone mothers (%) | Mothers in pair families (%) |
|---|------------------|------------------------------|
| Own employment | 58 | 52 |
| Transfer payments (social security under Hartz IV, Social Code XII, unemployment benefit I) | 31 | 6 |
| Revenues of relatives | 3 | 36 |
| Other | 7 | 5 |
| Remark: The statistics only include the main source of income (in case of different sources). | | |

Which benefits are paid by whom has been issue of the annual census of the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youths since the year 2006. The Family Report for 2012 stated that 156 different matrimonial and family oriented benefits existed in 2010. These benefits include: maternity allowance (13€ per day); parental leave (maximum of 3 years) and parental allowance (minimum amount of €300 a month, irrespective of income, for up to 12 months); child benefit (between 184€ and 215€ per month); an education and participation package for children from low-income families (covering school trips, transport to school, equipment for school, school lunch, out-of-school learning support, music school, sports club); tax relief for single parents; child tax credit; unemployment benefit category II/Hartz IV. The overall amount of money spent for these benefits has increased since 2009. The three main reasons are an increased child benefit (since 2009, €20 per month per child), the tax deduction for children (2.0 billion Euro) and the expansion of day care facilities (1.6 million Euro).

The parental allowance has increased the income of families after the birth of a child. In doing so, it has allowed fathers to be more involved in childcare immediately after the birth of a child. According to statistics, fathers received parental allowance for more than every fourth child born in 2010 (25.3%). Fathers use the time for childcare and make it easier for their partners to return to work earlier. The most important benefits are currently re-evaluated to find out to what extent they reached their

⁴⁰ Mikrozensus 2011

targets to promote the economic stability of families and in how far they serve the reconciliation of work and family life. This evaluation started in 2009 and will be finished in 2013.

6.3.3. Lithuania

In Lithuania, 22% of lone parents get welfare benefits, 1% raising a child alone have a disability or are on sick leave, and 9% are economically inactive and do not have an income.

6.3.4. UK/NI

In 2010, 21% of people in Northern Ireland claiming income support (a means-tested, non-contributory benefit) were lone parents, 97% of them women.

The Comprehensive Spending Review set out significant cuts in public expenditure. UK-wide analyses argue that these decisions shift more of the burden onto women. Cuts in benefits are likely to exacerbate existing inequalities in income between men and women. Given that more women work part-time and are on lower wages, they rely on benefits and tax credits more than men do and these make up a larger share of their income. Families with children will be affected by the following:

- Health in Pregnancy Grant: The universal payment of £190 for a pregnant woman who is 25 weeks pregnant was abolished in January 2011.
- Sure Start Maternity Grant: From April 2011 onwards, this grant of £500 paid to a low-income mother who is 29 weeks pregnant to help with the cost of a new baby will only be paid for the first child but not for subsequent children.
- Child Benefit: From April 2011 onwards, there will be a three-year freeze on Child Benefit and from January 2013 onwards, it will be withdrawn from women living in a household where one adult is a higher-rate tax payer.
- Baby Tax Credit: This benefit for a child under one year was abolished in April 2011 and the Toddler Tax Credit, for households with children aged one or two, will not be introduced as promised by the previous government. The baby element of tax credit is worth up to £545 for eligible families and the toddler element would have offered up to £208.
- Childcare Tax Credit: The percentage of childcare costs covered reduced from 80% to 70% in April 2011.

The Fawcett Society and the Institute for Fiscal Studies estimate that single women will lose an average of just under 5% of their annual income as result of changes to the tax and welfare system by 2015, and that lone mothers can expect to lose 8.5%

of their annual income by 2015, equivalent to a month's take-home income every year and three times the percentage amount the average childless couple will lose.

Housing benefit will be cut significantly. For homeowners with a mortgage, Mortgage Interest Rate Support was cut in October 2010 from 6.08% to 3.63%. Since January 2011, JSA claimants lost it altogether if they had been on benefit for two years.

6.4 Child maintenance

6.4.1. Introduction

Financial contributions from the non-custodial parent are very important for lone-parent families. Therefore, one of the financial pillars is child maintenance. But in the different countries it varies to what extent maintenance is actually paid by the non-custodial parent.

6.4.2. Germany

Children under 12 years of age who live with a lone parent who does not receive any, or regular, maintenance from the other parent are supported with the additional maintenance payment. The monthly additional_payment amounts to €133 for children aged from 0 to 5, and €180 for children aged from 6 to 11. It is paid for 72 months as a maximum, but only up to when the child is 12 years old. Normally, a non-resident parent is required to make maintenance payments. The amount – according to the so-called Düsseldorf-table – depends on the income, the number of children, and their age.

6.4.3. Lithuania

In Lithuania, if the family income is lower than 525 Lt (€152) for one person per month, there is an additional child maintenance payment depending on the situation of the family. For children under 2 years the payment is 97,50Lt (€28,25) per month per child. When the child is aged between 2 and 7 years the payment is 52 Lt (€15,06) per month. In case where there are three or more children in the family, and the household income is less than 525 Lt (€152) per person per month, the family receives a payment of 52 Lt (€15,06) per child aged between 7 and 18 years.

Separated or divorced parents are encouraged to reach an agreement about the financial support of the child. If the parents cannot reach an agreement then the courts can make a ruling for financial support to be paid by the parent living separately from the child. If the non-custodial parent is not able to pay the full amount, the other parent can apply to the Children's Maintenance Fund (CMF) for compensation. However, compensation from the Children's Maintenance Fund cannot exceed 195 Lt (€56,50). It is worth noting that compensation from the CMF is not paid if paternity has not been established or if the father of the child is unknown.

6.4.4. UK/NI

Less than half of all mothers in the UK who are entitled to receive payments from their children's father receive any money at all. New proposals introduced by government (June 2011) aim to encourage parents to reach a voluntary agreement about maintenance without using the Child Support Agency (the agency responsible for child support payments in the UK). Controversially, it was recently proposed that a parent who cannot obtain a voluntary commitment and who wishes to use the Child Support Agency to do so (this will be mothers in most cases) will have to pay an upfront fee of £100. It is argued that this will further penalise lone mothers who are already financially vulnerable.

6.5 Health

6.5.1. Introduction

The strongest increase in life spans can no longer be seen in the countries with the highest prosperity level and per capita income. However, it is to be found in those countries with a small disparity of income, according to the Robert-Koch-Institutes expert report in the frame of the Second Poverty and Wealth Report of the German Federal Government in 2005. This analysis was supported by the results of the Socio Economic Panel (SOEP). In addition to the usual group with a high poverty risk there is also a danger for people who come close to the poverty line due to unemployment or indebtedness. Because lone parents are part of the group with a high poverty risk it could be expected that their health might be negatively affected as well.

6.5.2. Germany

Up-to-date health statistics for lone parents are not available. The last important report about health of lone fathers and mothers, which was created by the Robert-Koch-Institute, in 2003, described that objective living conditions led to a variety of physical and psychological complaints, which provoke long-term health damages. Regarding chronic diseases, the amount of heavy diseases was significantly higher in one parent families than in families with two parents. The reports about general impairments on health of lone parents were very similar; they suffered from feelings of faintness, dizziness, restlessness, back pain etc.

Studies by the German Institute for Economics Köln, carried out in 2012, state that children of lone parents are more likely to suffer ill health. The impact of attending day care and especially kindergarten for a longer time is obvious; it can result in an academic progress of one school year. It might be of great importance in facilitating children to cope with situations of separation from the parents.

6.5.3. Lithuania

There was no data available for Lithuania.

6.5.4. UK/NI

Lone mothers experience greater ill health than other mothers. They are more likely to suffer material disadvantage and also more likely to be smokers. Lone mothers (defined in the research by sole registration of birth status) have been found to be at particularly high risk of pregnancies with a low birth weight, above the risk predicted from areas with deprivation indices, and are at excess risk of stillbirths. Lone mothers have also been found to be at higher risk of infant mortality, but it is not clear if this is entirely explained by their socio-economic circumstances.⁴¹

Qualitative research with lone parents in Northern Ireland found that almost one third (32.9%) of the lone parents interviewed said that they (or their child) had an illness or disability that would affect their ability to participate in paid work. Over one third (35.4%) of lone parents had, or were currently being treated for, clinical depression. The link between depression and living on low incomes has been well established by large-scale quantitative studies. Analysis of the Northern Ireland Household Panel Survey showed that mothers of children in poverty were significantly more likely to have poorer mental health and well-being than parents of children who were not in poverty.⁴²

6.6 Housing

6.6.1. Introduction

Many lone parents in the partner countries are in need of benefits to support the housing of the family. There are different ways to cope with the housing problem. With the intention to care for later times and old age, parents buy houses and have to pay off in instalments; others have to apply for Housing Allowance.

The data outlined below, showing the expenditure of housing benefit in the partner countries, is significant for our comparison.

⁴¹ Burstron, B Whitehead, M Clayton, C Fritzell, S Vannoni, F Costa, G (2010): Health inequalities between lone and couple mothers and policy under different welfare regimes – The example of Italy, Sweden and Britain, *Social Science & Medicine* 70, 912–920

Dummer, T.J.B. Dickinson, H.O. Pearce, M.S. Charlton, M.E. Parker, L. (2000): Stillbirth Risk with social class and deprivation: no evidence for increasing inequality. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*. 53, 147-155.

Pattenden, S. Dolk, H. Vrijheid, M. (1999): Inequalities in low birthweight: parental, social class, area deprivation and lone mother status. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 53, 355-358.

⁴² Dohrenwend, B. (1992): Socio-economic status and psychiatric disorders: the causation – selection issue, *Science*, 255, 946–52

Turner, R and Lloyd, D (1999) Personal Resources and the Social Distribution of Depression, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 27, 5, 643-672

Goodman, E, Slap, GB, MS and Huang, B (2003) The Public Health Impact of Socioeconomic Status on Adolescent Depression and Obesity, *Adolescent Health* 93,11, 1844-1850

Monteith, M. Lloyd, K. and McKee, P., (2008) *Key Findings: Persistent Child Poverty in Northern Ireland*, Research Paper, Belfast: Save the Children and AR

Expenditure of Housing Benefit 2011 and 2003, in % of total expenditure of social benefit⁴³

| Country | 2011 | 2003 |
|---------------|------|--------|
| Great Britain | 5.35 | (5.53) |
| Germany | 2.16 | (1.15) |
| Lithuania | 0.01 | (0.01) |

6.6.2. Germany

Regarding the different needs of the regions, social housing funding was transferred to the level of the states. The essential aspect is the granting of housing allowance, which is basically defined through the income. Housing Association accommodation only makes up 6% out of the total amount. The social housing concept is changing, as more and more buildings and building complexes are privatised. Particularly in bigger towns it is getting more and more difficult to find appropriate accommodation, and rents are increasing.⁴⁴

In 2011, around 18.3% of lone parents with their children received unemployment benefit I or Hartz IV benefits. Many lone parents live in rented flats, especially in urban regions. People receiving Hartz IV benefits get financial support through a housing allowance. In 2000 16% of lone parents in the western part of Germany, and 7% in the eastern part of Germany, lived in their own house or flat. In comparison, the rate of house or flat owners amongst couples with children was between three to four times higher.⁴⁵

6.6.3. Lithuania

In Lithuania, 1,537 people live in social housing accommodation. However, people living in institutions like care homes or shelters are not included in this number. There are no specific statistics available for lone parents.

6.6.4. UK/NI

In the UK 43% of single parents are social housing tenants, compared to 12% of couples. The exact figure for lone parents who own their own house or flat is unknown, but it is likely to be less than those who are in social housing, and less than those privately renting accommodation.

⁴³Social Security Compass of the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs, p.76

⁴⁴ <http://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/Statischer-Content/Statistische-Analysen/Analytikereports/Zentrale-Analytikereports/Jaehrliche-Analytikereports/Generische-Publikationen/Analyse-Arbeitsmarkt-Alleinerziehende/Analyse-Arbeitsmarkt-Alleinerziehende-2011.pdf> und http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sozialer_Wohnungsbau , <http://www.berlin-institut.org/?id=817>

⁴⁵ <http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Broschuerenstelle/Pdf-Anlagen/PRM-6719-Broschue-Alleinerziehen-in-De,property=pdf.pdf>

In Northern Ireland, the private rented sector houses a larger proportion of lone parents (37%) than any other tenure. This may be a reflection of difficulty in accessing other tenures, but could also be related to improved standards in private sector accommodation. 71% of all single parent renters receive housing benefit compared to 25% of all couple renters.⁴⁶

6.7 Impact of the recession of the last decade on lone parent families

6.7.1. Introduction

The recession which the EU countries have been in for quite a number of years also shows its impact on the life of lone parent families. In many countries rising unemployment rates can be observed and welfare benefits were cut due to the economic crisis and their consequences. This further exacerbates the situation of lone parents which can be seen in the following examples of the three partner countries.

6.7.2. Germany

The recession during the last years has had a visible impact on the citizens of Germany, also affecting lone parents to at least the same extent. Due to the economic crisis, many companies had to deal with uncertainty and poor business. This led to an increase in redundancies and, as a consequence, to a rise in unemployment figures. People changed their buying behaviour and they did not allow themselves to go on holiday or to go abroad for holidays. The recession led to cuts in welfare benefits that also affected lone parents. For example since 2011, regarding parental allowance, parents only received 65% of their net income due to cuts in the German federal budget if their monthly salary before the birth was higher than 1,200€. ⁴⁷ Parental allowance was cancelled for people already receiving unemployment benefits II. Cuts in benefits are likely to intensify the burden on lone parents, taking into account that many lone parents seek benefits.

6.7.3. Lithuania

During the financial crisis, maternity and social benefits were decreased, which influenced the situation of lone parents. Until 1st of July 2011, a person on parental leave got 90% of the salary before the parental leave as a compensatory income during the first year, and 75% of the salary as a compensatory income during the second year. Since July 2011, a person can now choose how long the maternity leave will last – one or two years. If a person decides to take one year maternity

⁴⁶ Northern Ireland Housing Executive Stats, 2010.

⁴⁷ Bundesrat: Gesetzesbeschluss des deutschen Bundestages. Haushaltsbegleitgesetz 2011 (HBelG 2011), p. 19/20; <http://files.vogel.de/iww/iww/quellenmaterial/dokumente/103995.pdf>

leave he or she gets a 100% of their salary. If a person decides to take two years of maternity leave he or she gets 70% of their salary during the first year, and 40% during the second year. During the second year a person is also allowed to work and to apply for social benefits. There is also regulation regarding the highest maternity leave payment – it cannot be higher than 2,500 Litass (€724). This new system changed the situation especially for families with twins and triplets, as the parental leave benefits cannot be higher than 100% of the last salary. In the previous system rates of compensation were multiplied accordingly.

6.7.4. UK/NI

Young people and women have been affected most by the economic downturn, and unemployment figures in Northern Ireland continue to rise. The Institute for Public Policy Research found that the worst affected by the recession, across all age groups throughout the UK, are young women with no qualifications - whose unemployment rate is 46%, an increase of nearly 18% since March 2008. Women's employment looks to be further under threat with substantial redundancies forecast in the public sector where women make up the majority of the workforce.

Efficiencies and cut-backs are underway with casual and temporary jobs being hit and working hours for full and part-time workers being reduced. Cuts to hours affect lone parents disproportionately given that many work part-time and the number of hours worked can drop below the threshold for claiming in-work benefits for those on low incomes.

Since 2008, UK government has been introducing changes to the benefit system aimed at moving people from benefits in to work. Up until then, lone parents had to attend work-focused interviews but participation in training and employment was voluntary. In 2008, welfare reform legislation introduced greater conditionality. By the time the youngest child was 12 years old lone parents were expected to seek work. In October 2011, the child's age was lowered to 5 years. Lone parents must actively seek work or they will be penalised financially. As a result of these changes, lone parents in Northern Ireland face a more precarious existence than elsewhere in the UK given historically low levels of childcare provision.

7 Obstacles to Lone Parents' Employment

7.1 Introduction

Besides educational attainment, the number and age of the children has an impact on the labour status and earned income of lone parents in the partner countries. Lone parents are more likely to be employed depending on the higher the level of their education and the older the youngest child is. Lone parents (mostly mothers) without qualifications or with low level school-leaving qualifications tend not to be employed, or are marginally employed. There is a lack of flexible care times in day nurseries, kindergarten and after-school provision. Obstacles that lone parents are facing are to be found on the employment market, in the work place, and in society as a whole.

7.1.1. Germany

Lone parents are usually highly motivated to get into employment. For many lone parents, their own career goals are an important motive for a return to employment (79% of lone parents compared to 62% of adults in two parent families).⁴⁸

With regard to day care provision, almost one third of lone mothers request that care times in all phases of childcare provision should be more flexible. About one third would appreciate more flexible working hours and part-time options. However, half of the lone mothers in Eastern Germany working part-time indicate that they want to work full-time, but say these options were not available. Many of them wish to increase their income. For almost seven out of ten, higher financial support by the state would be desirable. More than half of the lone parents would appreciate financial support in cases of emergency.⁴⁹

Despite a quota system and Gender Mainstreaming: women in German society are discriminated against with regard to: recruitment in to employment; promotions to higher posts or leading positions; and terminations. This affects especially lone mothers since they cannot rely on a second income of their partner.

7.1.2. Lithuania

Many lone parents withdraw from the labour market or experience difficulties finding a job. The main problems are: low payment due to low skills; poor working conditions; few job opportunities; difficulties matching working hours and childcare (both a lack of flexible working hours and a lack of flexible childcare options); a lack of self-presentation skills; and low levels of self-confidence. Another problem is that if a

⁴⁸ Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2008.

⁴⁹ Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales: Alleinerziehende unterstützen – Fachkräfte gewinnen, 2011. p. 33.

person starts to work (even if he/she gets only a minimum wage) he/she (including lone parents) loses welfare benefits and certain other benefits (such as a reduced cost of childcare services) to which they were previously entitled. Therefore, the motivation to start work is very low.

In Lithuania, it is difficult to use flexible forms of employment for lone parents. Reasons for this are: low salaries; high unemployment rates; and partly the lack of knowledge about opportunities. However, the Lithuanian Labour Code provides exclusive rights for lone parents.⁵⁰ For example:

Employees raising a child under 3 years old, lone parents with children under the age of 14, or with a disabled child under the age of 18 can:

- request a part-time job, for example 4 hours per day, but in this case, the salary decreases. (Art. 146)
- be assigned to work overtime only with their consent. (Art. 150, part 4)
- be assigned to be on duty only with their consent. (Art. 155, part 4)

Employees who are lone parents raising a child under the age of 14 have:

- a prior right to choose the work shift, if possible. (Art. 147, part 5)
- to be assigned to night work only with their consent. (Art. 154, part 4)
- a right to a minimum annual leave of 35 days. In normal cases it is 28 days. (Art. 166, part 2)
- a prior right to choose the time of annual leave. (Art. 169, part 4)

However, quite often we are confronted with situations where lone parents fail to enforce their rights because they are in fear of losing their job, or because they do not know about these regulations.

7.1.3. UK/NI

A recent policy brief on the welfare to work policy in Northern Ireland summarised the employment challenges facing lone parents. It showed that there is a strong consensus in research conducted across the UK that lone parents want to work, but that they face significant structural obstacles including⁵¹:

- Low wage levels;
- Childcare availability and cost (including provision which meets the flexibility required by employers);
- A lack of up-to-date skills and qualifications that facilitate labour market progression;

⁵⁰ Dr. Giedrė Baltrušaitytė, Jumbo Klerq, Joan Joosten: A practical view to flexibility in the work place for lone mothers and fathers, project materials within the project "A flexible model for persons from social risk or social exclusion situations to integrate them into labour market" (VP1-1.3-SADM-02-K-01-020), implemented by "The Socialization and Vocational Training Center". http://www.sidmc.org/project_020/wp-content/uploads/III_vienisi_tevai_santrauka_doc.pdf

⁵¹ Gray and Horgan, 2010.

- Poor health of the parent or the children;
- Worries about combining paid work with looking after children and perceived inflexibility of employers when children are ill.

In accordance with the EU flexible working directives, parents have had the right to request flexible working, but not entitlement for the request to be granted. There is no data on the number of requests or the percentage of successful requests. Employees in the public sector are much more likely to be able to avail of flexible working than employees in the private sector.

Labour market trends since the 1990s point to a significant increase in employment, but a large part of this employment was part-time work in the service sector. This often requires people to be flexible in their working hours, which is particularly difficult for lone parents as childcare provision is not flexible. The type of work available to lone parents (i.e. part-time or low-skill jobs) is often at a lower rate of pay, due to the nature of the employment or the number of hours the parents can work. Low pay is an obstacle to employment as the wages paid are often not sufficient to lift lone parents out of poverty when housing costs, transport, childcare, etc., are taken into account.

Lone parents often seek to re-enter the labour market after a period of several years in which they have not been working. The type of employment available after a long period outside of the labour market is often low-paid, temporary or part-time; has variable, long or unsociable hours; is labour-intensive; low-skilled and has a high staff turnover. If lone parents have not been working for a longer period, it may be necessary for them to update their skills. This can be difficult considering that training courses can be expensive and time-consuming. Their confidence about labour skills can also be affected if they feel they are out of date. As job seekers, lone parents face additional challenges: they need to find flexible work and a childcare facility as well as payment for this, all in a highly uncertain labour market. Career progression, or entering into a higher skilled profession, can also be an issue for lone parents due to obstacles faced in attaining further education, such as: financial costs, tuition fees, time constraints, and a lack of suitable childcare.⁵²

7.2 Education

High levels of education and the attainment of qualifications can be an important determining factor in terms of opportunity for many types of employment. In both the UK and Lithuania, there is currently no research into the educational/qualifications level of lone parents as a group. In Germany, according to the Mikrozensus 2011, 62% of lone parents had finished vocational training, 10.7% held a degree in higher education and 26.7% were without vocational education. Those figures just slightly differ from those of the entire German population. The situation might be slightly

⁵² Centre for Social Justice, 2011.

different in the UK and Lithuania since the process for attainment of higher levels of education is significantly more expensive than it is in Germany. For lone parents part-time education course can provided suitable options, however the opportunity for these varied in the respective countries.

7.2.1. Germany

First of all, it is worth mentioning that there are no tuition fees in Germany, except in Bavaria and Lower Saxony. Also, during vocational training the apprentice gets an allowance from the company he/she is working at. Statistics regarding vocational training do not take into account that apprentices with a child should be seen as an individual group. There is some data available on the number of apprentices with children doing part-time training: a total of 1,056 new training contracts that were concluded in 2010 referred to part-time training. This corresponds to 0.2% of all new training contracts in the respective year.⁵³ It is likely that a part of this group are lone parents because part-time training is much more flexible and corresponds better to available child care provision. Since there are no specific figures on lone parents in part-time training available, this is only an assumption. On 6th of February 2013, amongst others, the Federal Ministry Economics and Technology, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Federal Employment Agency and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder signed an agreement to support part-time vocational training for young mothers and fathers.⁵⁴

Young people who have a child while being in vocational training have to deal with a personal and institutional limitation of educational opportunities.⁵⁵ Especially women are affected by these limitations.⁵⁶ Some studies show that early motherhood during the vocational education often leads to a termination of the apprenticeship and, consequently, to an increased medium-term and long-term risk of a lack of labour market integration, where there is no supporting network for the parent.⁵⁷

University studies have partly undergone considerable changes during the last years due to the 'Bologna Process'. According to this process, students shall finish their degrees full-time, concentrate on their studies and not work while studying. The new structures bring a risk for parent students as the changes within the Bologna Process also led to an increase of courses with mandatory attendance. Many universities have not yet sufficiently taken into account flexible study possibilities to foster family-friendly ways of education.

⁵³ Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend: Familiengründung und Elternschaft in Ausbildung und Studium. Monitor Familienforschung. Beiträge aus Forschung, Statistik und Familienpolitik; Ausgabe 29, 2012.

⁵⁴ <http://www.bmwi.de/BMWi/Redaktion/PDF/E/gemeinsame-erklaerung-teilzeitberufsausbildung,property=pdf,bereich=bmwi2012,sprache=de,rwb=true.pdf>

⁵⁵ Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2004.

⁵⁶ First Equality Report 2011.

⁵⁷ Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2002.

5% of all university students have a child. The living situation of parent students is characterised by the compatibility of studying and raising a child. It becomes apparent that the main problems regarding the compatibility of family and education are time and money. There is a high risk of a study termination when young people have a child. But this leads to long-term consequences for the integration in the labour market and, therefore, also affects the future financial security.

Part-time studies are seen as an opportunity to better reconcile studying and raising a child. In Germany, students have the opportunity to enrol at a university for part-time studies. Nevertheless, full-time studies are still the most common form for this type of education. One of the reasons for this tendency is the relatively small amount of part-time degree courses that are offered to students. In 2009, they amounted to only 2.5% of all undergraduate studies.

7.2.2. Lithuania

Lithuania has a very small number of state-funded places in the higher education system. These state-funded places belong to students with very good learning results. Other students are obliged to pay for their studies. Often, single parents stop developing their formal learning and professional skills due to limited time and resources. Their time and energy is dedicated to raising a child, and as a result of this, they are exposed to social exclusion and poverty.

7.2.3. UK/NI

There are opportunities for adults to return to education, but for many lone parents there are financial barriers. Statutory support for education and training is normally only available up to NVQ Level 2 (essentially labour market entry qualifications). This often only opens up opportunities to low-paid work and limits opportunities for progression. The introduction of tuition fees and loans for university education resulted in a decline in mature students in general.

Tertiary education fees can be very expensive. In the UK, these have risen during the last year from £3,500 per year to an average of £9,000 per year, with degrees lasting on average 3-4 years. These costs, on top of childcare costs, and with the added pressure of not being able to work if you are in full-time education, can make a traditional university education financially unviable for lone parents. There are no direct government schemes to help lone parents in education with childcare costs or travel expenses. Some universities have crèches for the students to use, but not many colleges and not all universities offer this option. Some universities offer hardship grants or further financial support to students who are on a very low income or who have circumstances such as a disability or dependents, however, students must seek out this support and it is not made widely available. There are some

solutions such as studying part-time at a college or university, allowing for more flexible time management. Part-time courses can also be a less intense course of study, however, they usually take twice as long to complete compared to full-time study. It is also possible to study with a distance learning provider such as The Open University. Distance learning allows a person to study mainly from home and to their own schedule, offering the possibility to gain nationally recognised qualifications or a degree. The Open University also offers support for those whose income is below a certain amount and can be a very low-cost option for further study.

There are a number of vocational training programmes for 16-18 year-olds and for 18-25 year-olds. However, the choice of training courses available for young men and women is gender-stereotypical. Young men have always had between 74% and 78% of the places in the Jobskills vocational training courses compared to young women's share of between 22% and 25%. There are also more young women than young men in mainstream Further Education Courses.

7.3 Child Care

7.3.1. Introduction

The 2002 Barcelona European Council resolved that, by 2010, childcare should be provided in the Member States to at least 90% of children between the age of 3 and the mandatory school age, and to at least 33% of children under the age of 3.⁵⁸ Below we look at how the situation actually improved in Lithuania, Germany and Great Britain.

7.3.2. Germany

In 2012, there were 52,000 day care facilities in Germany. But big differences exist between the eastern and western part of Germany. In Eastern Germany the proportion of children under 3 years enrolled in day care facilities was 49% and 22.3% in Western Germany. For children older than 3 years the situation is similar in both parts of Germany with a proportion of children enrolled in day care facilities of 95.6% in Eastern and 92.9% in Western Germany. There are also differences concerning the opening hours: in 2012 81% of all day care facilities in Eastern Germany opened before 7 am; in Western Germany, this was only the case in 5% of the facilities.⁵⁹

Lone parents have different opportunities for childcare in Germany. From 0 years onwards, children can be cared for by private persons (a nanny, or baby-sitter), or parents can bring children to the day care centre, which is included in the

⁵⁸ eur-lex.europa.eu

⁵⁹ "Kindertagesbetreuung in Deutschland". Brochure on occasion of the Press Conference of the Federal Office for Statistics on 6. November 2012

kindergartens. Children aged 3 or older are entitled to a place in kindergarten. Children aged 6 to 14 are obliged to attend school. All-day schools are scarce in Germany: there are only 6,400 all-day schools.⁶⁰ All other schools are usually half-day schools. This system can lead to difficulties for lone parents with a full-time job. Care in the afternoon is always an opportunity, but at an additional expense.

In 2013, families will benefit from an improved arrangement of childcare provision. The Federal Government, the Federal States of Germany (Länder) and the communities have agreed on a new legal entitlement starting in August 2013 on the childcare provision for children over the age of one. The number of nursery places has increased in recent years, but it is still not certain if Germany will be able to reach this target. There is still a lack of places and professional staff.

The expenses for day care facilities in Germany vary tremendously. Parents of pre-school children pay about €150 per month and about €70 for school children between 6 and 13 years. The contributions of the parents depend on their annual income, the state and the municipality in which they live. People with less financial resources can apply for a waiving of their parental contribution at the Youth Welfare Office.

One decisive indicator regarding the quality of childcare or provision, before and after school, is the qualification of the staff. In connection with a Federal Press Conference in November 2012, discussing issues on the situation of childcare provision, the German Office of Statistics published a brochure listing the qualifications of the staff at vocational schools and institutions of higher education. Pre-school and school childcare is also considered in this document. These figures show that the personnel in Germany are highly qualified. The best qualification can be found among qualified social education workers or social workers followed by educational scientists, remedial teachers, and kindergarten teachers. Only a relatively small amount of persons from other professions are trainees still in vocational training or without a certificate, normally working as supplementary labour. Qualifications in child day care show a slightly different picture: 20% of people working in that field are highly qualified, but 57% hold a lower qualification and 6% have a qualification in another field.⁶¹

German day care facilities provide a large range of educational concepts. Especially in urban regions, parents have more choices. When choosing a facility, parents take into account indicators such as a stimulating programme that concerns all areas of education, the ability to address the individuality of the children, good working conditions of the staff and involvement of the parents. In 2011, the government started an initiative for higher quality childcare and imposed the action plan *Early chances: Main focus - Kindergartens Language Integration*, which promotes language skills in the early years. Also the importance of providing facilities in the

⁶⁰ <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/GanztagsschuleDeutschland>

⁶¹ 'Kindertagesbetreuung in Deutschland', Press Conference on 6.Nov. 2012, Federal Office for Statistics, 2012

workplace of the parents is an up-to-date point of discussion. Moreover, it contributes to quality in another way, by supporting the ‘work-life balance’ of parents.⁶²

Lone parents rely on childcare provision to a larger extent, as they have to take care of the living expenses of the whole family alone. In more than 60% of lone parent families with young children, the caring is partly undertaken by grandparents, brothers, sisters or other relatives.⁶³ Sinus Sociovision states that lone parents rely on their support for about 18 hours a week. It is difficult to find detailed sources about grandparents’ or other relatives’ support. One figure showed that some of these persons work as day carers and, in this function, include their own grandchildren in the group they care for. Out of 133,454 day carers in total, 2,380 grandparents and 1,266 relatives are caring for these children.

7.3.3. Lithuania

The support given to take care of children is connected to their age. Pre-school education is available for children from 1 to 5 (or 6) years old. Pre-school education is not obligatory and might be provided according to parents’ request. In individual cases it might be mandatory for children from high social risk families. Pre-school education is provided by a public or private kindergarten or a pre-school. There are also rules on how educational assistance can be provided for families who decide to school their child at home.

The pre-school system differs in urban and rural territories. In 2011, there were 647 institutions of pre-school education in urban territories, but only 126 in rural territories. In 2011, there were 100 places for 103 children. There is a special kind of pre-school education, which is adapted for children at their 6th (or 5th) year, aiming to prepare them for school. This programme lasts one year and since it is free of charge, everybody can participate. But it is not obligatory – parents can decide if they want their child to participate in this school preparation programme. This programme can be organised by the kindergarten, primary schools, freelancers, or other educational institutions.

A child starts school in the year he/she turns 7. From 7 to 16 years, education is mandatory and free of charge. There are activities for children that are fully or partially financed by the government. Those who need social support can participate in day care centres, where they get material, social and psychological help. For children from disadvantaged families, refugee children, or children not attending school, education is ensured while providing social services and pedagogical help. There is no data available concerning the quality of childcare or before/after school provision.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Lois/Kopp 2011.

Public organisations are free of charge for children from families who need social support. There is also a law to ensure the entitlement for children with special needs to receive education close to their place of residence. Children who cannot attend school because of an illness can get teaching at home or self-learning programmes.

7.3.4. UK/NI

In the UK, children enter formal education at 4-5 years old, and compulsory education continues until the child is aged 15-16. Optional (non-compulsory) further formal education for 16 to 18 year olds is available in most schools and Further Education Colleges. One or two years prior to entering compulsory schooling, it is possible for a child to attend a state-funded pre-school class or nursery for up to one year, either in a private or public nursery school. However, pre-school classes are often offered on a part-time basis only (i.e. morning or afternoon only).

Some parents will choose private day care to supplement nursery hours or as an alternative, as it works better with working hours, but it is very expensive. The UK has the second highest costs of childcare in Europe and this isn't equalised by the national wage. It is also possible to hire a babysitter/child-minder to look after the children at the family home or the babysitter's home. These options are also available for school age children.

Once a child enters formal schooling, it is possible that a parent might have access to free or low-cost afterschool care that is run by the school. In the UK, all schools are obliged to offer an option for children to stay at the school supervised until 6pm. However, in Northern Ireland this is not a requirement made on schools and out-of-school care is not widely available. Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK without a child care strategy. In April 2011, the Northern Ireland Executive announced a funding of £12 million for childcare over a period of three years, but still there is no strategy or clear policy on childcare provision.

The most widely used childcare subsidy in the UK is a free, part-time early-years education, according to the Daycare Trust every child aged 3-4 years is entitled to 15 hours free childcare provision a week. In Northern Ireland, the government's aim is that every 3-year-old should have access to a part-time pre-school nursery place, but this target has not been met so far. In Britain, nursery school provision is better, with government policy aiming to extend it to 2-year-olds in areas of social and economic disadvantage. Nursery school provision in Northern Ireland is provided by the state, but other pre-school provision and day care provision for working parents is mostly provided by the private sector. The level of childcare provision in Northern Ireland is low in relation to that in the rest of the UK. The ratio of childcare places per children in Northern Ireland is 1:6, compared to England's 1:4. Since 2002, availability has actually decreased, especially in the number of registered child-minders which has decreased by 17%.

There is no government childcare strategy in Northern Ireland. Childcare is expensive and scarce. There is more reliance on informal childcare provided by family and friends than elsewhere in the UK. There is a greater availability of private childcare than childcare provided by schools, for example. Government provides a means-tested subsidy (through Tax Credits) which cannot exceed 70% of the cost. It is only available to parents if they use professional childcare. Professional childcare services have to be registered, and there is variability in quality, with little research in Northern Ireland on this issue. OFSTED (the inspection body for all children’s services in England) has found public provision to be of higher quality than private, but there is no specific data for Northern Ireland.

In 2003 20% of working parents in Northern Ireland with children under age 5, and 28.9% of working parents with children under age 12, relied on informal childcare. This included when a child was looked after by an older sibling, grandparent, other relative, or a friend while the parent is at work, without any formal care being involved. In 2012, over 33% of working parents with children aged 5-11 used childcare provided by a relative or friend. Grandparents account for almost 65% of informal care, so that altogether 18.5% of children receive care from older siblings and 10.4% from other relatives or from friends. Many more households are using informal care as a supplement to formal care. Informal care is especially used by parents with non-standard working hours, as professional childcare is usually only provided during standard working hours (9-5 or sometimes 8-6).⁶⁴

7.4 Primary school: age, school hours and extended services

7.4.1. Germany

In the Federal States of Germany there are different offers concerning the care time for children/hours per day (Federal Office of Statistics, 2012):

| Age | Germany | Eastern Germany | Western Germany |
|-----------------------------|---------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 0 – 3 (day care facilities) | 7.5 | 8.3 | 7.1 |
| 0 -3 (child day care) | 5 | 7 | no figures available |
| 3 – 5 | 7.2 | 8.2 | 6.9 |
| 6 – 10 | 5 - 7 | 5 – 7 | 5 - 7 |

The educational institutions in Germany consist of half-day schools, all-day schools, after-school care centres and boarding schools. 45% of all primary schools offer all-day care. The amount of all-day schools has always been very low, only 30% of the pupils profit from these. Generally, Germany has two different arrangements for day care: public sector institutions and institutions run by independent governing bodies. There is a steady tendency in favour of institutions that are run independently, 51% of these are run by Christian associations (private welfare organisations).⁶⁵ Current

⁶⁴ Skinner & Finch, Lone parents and informal childcare: a tax credit childcare subsidy? Social Policy and Administration

⁶⁵ Kindertagesbetreuung in Deutschland, Press Conference on 6. Nov. 2012, Federal Office for Statistics 2012

discussions follow the necessity to develop new models for all-day schools, combined facilities and centres for children and parents. It is very interesting to what extent day care facilities are used in Western Germany compared to Eastern Germany:⁶⁶

| Children in day care facilities (in %) on 1st of March 2012 | | | | |
|---|--------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| In the age of | 0 – 3 | 3 – 6 | 6 - 11 | 11 - 14 |
| Germany | 23.4 | 92.9 | 21.1 | 0.8 |
| Western Germany (without Berlin) | 18.2 | 92.4 | 15.1 | 0.6 |
| Eastern Germany (without Berlin) | 45.7 | 95.7 | 61.8 | 2.4 |

The provision of childcare shows regional differences according to the needs of the parents. In Eastern Germany, half of the parents with a child under 3 would like to get day care provision (compared to 36% in Western Germany). All over Germany, obvious differences concerning childcare are to be found according to the population density of the region. In urban regions, childcare for this age is provided up to 40.2%, in comparison to 32.5% in rural areas.⁶⁷ Urban regions record a higher amount of lone parents, most probably because of the better infrastructure in towns.⁶⁸

7.4.2. Lithuania

In Lithuania, 6-10 year old children receive primary education, lasting for 4 years (grades 1-4). Primary education is mandatory for all children. This education is organised by primary and secondary schools; there are also private schools. Children attend school 5 days per week and lessons start around 8:30 and end around 12:00. This means that children up to 10 years spend 4 hours per day at school. After lessons, children can choose extra activities. In this case they stay at school for a few more hours.

In 2011, children could choose to participate in the following non-formal education activities: music, arts, dances, theatre, sports, technical work, tourism, nature, ecology, road safety, IT, and others. In 2011, 101,133 children were participating in extra activities – about 33% of them in sports activities and 32% in music activities. This extra education is organised by public and private institutions. Children from families who get social benefit can go to day care centres.

Costs of non-formal education differ from 1103 Lt (€320) to 4027 Lt (€1166) per child. Parents pay around 8% of all payments for non-formal education. For art schools, parents might expect to pay a bigger contribution.

There is a huge difference between rural and urban territories in non-formal

⁶⁶ Statistics of the Area of Child and Youth Welfare, German Office of Statistics

⁶⁷ Deutsches Jugendinstitut: AID:AKiföG 2011

⁶⁸ Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales: Alleinerziehende unterstützen – Fachkräfte gewinnen, 2011.

education. The number of children participating in non-formal education ranges from 3% to 68% of all children living in that territory. This also depends on the financial possibilities of a municipality. In urban territories, children have a lot more possibilities to choose public or private institutions for extra activities.

7.4.3. UK/NI

School hours vary from school to school and across the UK. Generally, the pattern is as follows: Age 4-7 from 8.45am to 2.00pm, age 7-10 from 8.45am to 3.00pm. There are two types of after-school provision:

1. Public: In most of the UK, schools are obligated to provide supervised after-school care that lasts until 6pm - this tends to be free or low-cost. However, this provision is not always available or regulated in Northern Ireland, as it is not an enforced requirement. Some schools offer a wraparound service that includes care in the morning time as well; this can also include the provision of meals before and after school.

2. Private: There are more options available privately. There is the possibility to hire a child-minder or to use the facilities of a day care centre that may have also options for children over 4 years. Generally, a nursery is attached to a primary school, so this limits locations available. There are not many options of private childcare that help with childcare in the hours before school. Private childcare can be very expensive: After Switzerland, the UK has the second-highest childcare costs of any country. On average, childcare costs are equal to 26.6% of a family's income, and for single parents on a single wage, this figure is 40.9%, meaning that nearly half of their income has to be spent on childcare.

In urban areas, due to a greater demand and a larger population, it is likely that parents have more options to choose from and that availability is higher. It is unlikely that there would be much difference in cost. However, it is possible that prices are more expensive in urban areas (due to a greater demand).

7.5 Legislation to protect lone parents against discrimination

7.5.1. Introduction

The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) provided legislation which enables individuals and employers to enforce anti-discrimination laws. This legal framework gave rise to different directives on anti-discrimination and gender equality:

- Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin⁶⁹
- Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation⁷⁰
- Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services⁷¹
- Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation⁷²
- Proposal for a Council Directive of 2 July 2008 on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation⁷³

The adoption and implementation of anti-discrimination law is very important for equal treatment as it protects the rights and opportunities of minority and marginalised groups within society. However, currently anti-discrimination laws do not protect lone parents specifically as a group where discrimination can occur, particularly for example within the workplace. .

7.5.2. Germany

Germany transposed the EU anti-discrimination laws into national law with a single General Act on Equal treatment. It bans discrimination both under labour law and civil law. The Gender Equality Act includes a general ban for discrimination due to gender. The Working Environment Act protects all workers from discrimination due to political opinion, age, sexual orientation and disability. The German Constitution in article 3 and the anti-discrimination laws now protect against discrimination due to sex, religion, ethnicity, race, language and disability.

Lone parents are not mentioned as a specific group that needs to be protected against discrimination by the General Act on Equal Treatment. It is sometimes possible to construe protection from the indirect discrimination based on sex (as discriminatory regulations regarding childcare more often affect women than men, and this means that there is an indirect discrimination based on sex), but this is just

⁶⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32000L0043:en:NOT>

⁷⁰ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32000L0078:en:NOT>

⁷¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:72004L0113:en:NOT>

⁷² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:72006L0054:en:NOT>

⁷³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52008PC0426:en:NOT>

an auxiliary construction. The General Act on Equal Treatment deals with the issue of parenthood and childcare only by means of sex and therefore only partially reflects certain life realities.

7.5.3. Lithuania

There are no laws protecting lone parents from discrimination exclusively. But like all Lithuanian citizens, lone parents are protected by the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania as for example in the following Articles: Human rights cannot be restricted, nor granted any privileges on the grounds of gender, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, religion, beliefs, or opinions. (Article 29) The state provides care for families raising children at home and, according to the law, provides them with support. Working mothers are entitled to paid maternity leave before and after childbirth, favourable working conditions, and other benefits. Minor children are protected by law. (Article 39)

7.5.4. UK/NI

Northern Ireland has specific legislation (the Statutory Duty Section 75) which places an obligation on public authorities not to discriminate against people on the grounds of gender, race, age, religion, whether or not they have dependents, etc. But this does not apply to private sector employers.

There is also the Equality legislation, which applies throughout the UK, the Sex Discrimination Act and Equal Pay legislation. Despite the existence of such legislation since the 1970s, there is still a problem with discrimination against women who are dismissed because they are pregnant.

Anti-discriminatory legislation is a limited protection for lone parents as it is unable to deal with the informal discrimination or the negative attitudes some employers have about employing lone parents. Also, some of the obstacles faced by lone parents are more to do with inadequate structural support than discrimination in the labour market.

8 Taking Actions to Support Lone Parent Families

8.1 Introduction

The majority of lone parents cope with the challenges of the daily routine. Those who need assistance require specific types of support. Some examples of best practice for supporting lone parents in Germany, UK and Northern Ireland, and Lithuania are outlined in the following section of this report.

8.1.1. Germany

The aims of a targeted family policy, at present, are to offer more opportunities to mothers and fathers to combine career and family responsibilities. This means, first of all, the expansion of the childcare infrastructure and secondly, the development of family-friendly working conditions to support parents in everyday situations with their children. According to the Family Report 2012, government policies concentrate on: the expansion of childcare provision, flexibility of parental leave, measures aimed at family-friendly employment, and family support services. These measures also benefit lone parents, outlined in the examples below.

On February 8th 2011 the 'Charter for family-friendly working hours' was signed by the Ministry of Families and associations of the German Economy and Trade Unions.

There are other programmes like 'Good employment for lone parents'. The Berlin pilot project 'abba' aims on the implementation of a unique monitoring system for the promotion of lone parents with employment benefit II regarding profession and qualification.

'Perspectives for lone parents' is a cooperative partnership between the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens and Youth, the National Employment Agency and the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs.

There are other offers to assist lone parents in obtaining a better education. They partly offer special chances to people receiving unemployment benefit II, which applies to a certain number of lone parents. Benefits for lone parents are in particular:

The programme 'Effektiv!', funded by the German government, is an initiative to foster an improvement of family-friendliness at German universities.

Single parents who take part in advanced training for craftsmen jobs or specialist jobs (Meister) receive €113 per month (Meister-BAföG addition for lone parents) to cover childcare costs while they take part in the training. This payment shall facilitate the access to further education and training for lone parents and therefore support better job perspectives.

Germany developed a National Action Plan in 2005, whose implementation

supported lone parents and their children in the following fields:

- Improvement of the working and living conditions (an ideas contest with the title 'Good work for lone parents' was initiated: Lone parents were supported by 77 ESF projects between 2009 and 2012.)
- Education for all
- Campaign against violence
- Health
- Ideas to fight poverty
- Livelihood security and family
- Effective prevention of poverty

The Federal Government, the Federal Employment Agency and most of the Federal states defined single parents in 2010/11 as a specific target group. Target agreements regarding the basic security benefits for job seekers (SGB II) are used as control mechanism. The Federal Employment Agency declared in 2011 that an improvement of the job prospects for single parents would be one of their six business focal points within the framework of the SGB II.

8.1.2. Lithuania

There are no specific programmes for lone parents at governmental level. However, there are programmes for vocational education or employment for unemployed people, and unemployed single parents have an equal right to participate in these programmes.

The Ministry of Social Security and Labour is responsible for an ESF programme which aims to address labour force shortages by mobilising available human resources and upgrading skills and qualifications. The first priority of this programme is 'high-quality employment and social inclusion'. The aims of this priority are: helping workers and companies adapt to changing market conditions; upgrading skills and access to the labour market, thus boosting social inclusion. This programme shares out 1.269 million Litas (about €368 million) across 411 projects. These projects were developed by different governmental and non-governmental organisations. Different target groups were involved in the projects: women, social risk families, disabled people, youth, elderly, addicted people, and other marginalised groups. Lone parents were included as a sub-group in the projects that targeted unemployed women and social risk families, but there were only a few projects of this type.

8.1.3. UK/NI

New Deal for Lone Parents was launched nationally in October 1998. It was a voluntary programme that aimed to help and support lone parents to improve their job

readiness for a move into employment. It aimed at getting 70% of lone parents into work by 2010, however, this objective was not met. The programme came to an end in March 2011. Evaluations showed that the quality of the training was very variable, actually depending a lot on the Personal Adviser dealing with each individual. There were also problems with the types of courses offered (gender stereotyping, lack of labour market demand) and a lack of support and mentoring and low pay if people moved into work. In 2011 the existing welfare-to-work provision, including Flexible New Deal and Pathways to Work, were replaced by a single integrated Work Programme. The Work Programme supports unemployed lone parents into employment, alongside other unemployed people, using an outcome-based, staged entry point model. In an effort to simplify the benefit system and improve work

incentives, Universal Credit is set to replace the present benefit structure. Subject to the passage of the Welfare Reform Bill, changes would take effect from 2013. Universal Credit will simplify the benefits system by bringing together a range of working-age benefits into a single streamlined payment. The lowest earning families and individuals stand to lose out on the equivalent of two-thirds of the intended increase to their untaxed earnings when Universal Credit and the Personal Tax Allowance interact for the first time in 2013.

For every £1,000 increase in the Personal Tax Allowance, working people in receipt of Universal Credit will take home the equivalent of just £70, compared with £200 for those not reliant on government financial support. Gingerbread warns that the majority of the UK's 1.1 million working single parents, who are disproportionately likely to be in lower paid jobs and therefore reliant on in-work financial support, will be among those to lose out.. There is considerable evidence of lone parents cycling on and off benefits – moving into work but finding they were no better off (especially once they lost Housing Benefit) or could not get appropriate childcare and going back onto benefit.

The UK priorities that reference the situation of lone parents in the UK in the National Social Report include (by article number):

No 13. The family is the first and most important building block in a child's life and any government serious about delivering Social Justice must seek to strengthen families.

No 16. The UK Government is committed to a preventative approach to social policy, prioritising interventions that will support families and children to lay the right foundations for their lives and prevent problems developing in the future.

No 26. The Social Justice strategy sets out the nature and scale of the challenge posed by worklessness, family breakdown, low educational attainment, drug and alcohol dependency, debt and crime. It examines the evidence around the number of people experiencing specific disadvantages at any one time, and goes on to assess

the numbers of individuals and families facing multiple disadvantages.

No 31. The UK Government has committed to support families and reduce the impact of family breakdown, including by:

- Committing £30 million over the next four years to provide relationship support for couples.
- Committing £20 million over the next three years to help separated and separating parents to work together in the best interests of their child.
- Providing local authorities with funding of over £2.2 billion per year through the Early Intervention Grant to fund early intervention and preventative services for children, young people and families.

The UK National Plan on Social Inclusions: ‘Working Together’ (2008) outlines the following policies related to lone parents (by article number):

No 46. Increasing the opportunities in the labour market for those in key target groups: disabled people and those with learning disabilities; older people; lone parents; people from ethnic minorities; young people leaving care; people leaving prison; those living in the most deprived areas; and people with low or no qualifications.

No 47. Increase employment for lone parents by 300,000.

No 56. There will be an increase in obligations for lone parents in line with other organisations for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. This is consistent with the Government’s commitment to the principle that once children are older, lone parents who are able to work and are claiming benefits should be expected to look for paid work. Lone parents who are claiming Income Support based solely on being a lone parent will no longer be eligible for this benefit and may claim Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) or another appropriate benefit, when their youngest child is: 12 and over from November 2008; 10 and over from October 2009; and 7 and over from October 2010. Those eligible for JSA will be expected to look for, and be available for, suitable paid work in return for personalised help and support.

No 67. UK government is piloting a Better Off In Work Credit to ensure that all long-term claimants see a significant rise in their incomes when they take a job, and introducing a number of measures for lone parents (the majority of whom are women) to make work pay, help sustainability and progression once in work. These include: the national roll out of In-Work Credit, In-Work Advisory Support and an In-Work Emergency Discretion Fund for lone parents. UK government will also ensure that programs and policies meet the needs of people who are disadvantaged in the labour market by offering targeted back to work programs.

No 69. The European Social Fund will invest over £3 billion in jobs and skills in the UK in 2007-2013. It will support two main priorities: extending employment opportunities to people who are unemployed or economically inactive, especially

groups at a disadvantage in the labour market such as lone parents.⁷⁴

8.2 Examples of good practice, campaigns, projects

Besides different financial transfers, further initiatives of the state and public programmes, lone parents in the investigated countries are offered programmes by non-profit organisations. Examples are; leisure time offers for children and families or assistance in psychosocial regard (self-help groups). There is also assistance for daily life problems and the possibility for legal assistance. These offers are of various qualities and differ in the countries included in this report.

8.2.1. Germany

German examples of good practice are the following:

With the German federal programme 'Elternchance ist Kinderchance' (English: Parental opportunity is an opportunity for children) parents will be given additional guidance on promoting family life during the initial stages of education or during the periods of transition between children's educational institutions. Between 2011 and 2014, 4,000 specialists who are already working in parental and family education, will firstly gain further qualifications as parents counsellors.

'Elternbegleitung Plus' (English: Parent counselling plus) is being trialled at 100 pilot locations in local education cooperation initiatives. It aims to win over socially disadvantaged families to the education of their children.

'The way is the goal – here is the way' This project of the State Association of Saxony for Lone parents (SHIA e. V.) in 2012 – funded to 80% by the Free State of Saxony - aimed on facilitating lone parents and their children a worthwhile and healthy life style. This programme comprised a number of events like action days, special days of counselling offers, offers of trips, expert discussions, drawing competitions etc.

Another valuable project in 2012 of the Association was "Family lives – live family". On a special website, cultural or leisure-time activities were offered free of cost or at low costs.

SHIA e. V. has created a Strategic programme for the period 2013 – 2015 to foster the integration of lone parents in all spheres of society. Principal themes are as follows:

- creation of contact and coordination points for lone parents
- reintegration into professional life with relevance to lone parents and family-friendly working conditions plus a living wage for full-time employment
- a living wage for full-time employment

⁷⁴ Department for Work and Pensions

- accordingly flexible and close-to-home, high-quality day care arrangements
- suitable mobility
- changes concerning existing social structures (that means: balanced policies in all relevant spheres towards lone parents
- in legislative processes: an early examination of the precise consequences

Concerning these claims, the association launched a campaign collecting signatures, which were sent to the respective authorities.

8.2.2. Lithuania

The public organisation *Saugaus vaiko centras* (Secure Child Centre) in Kaunas developed a programme on professional self-realisation and full integration into the labour market especially for lone parents with children suffering from behavioural or emotional difficulties. Title: 'Vieni, bet ne atskirti' (English: Single, but not excluded). VP1-1.3-SADM-02-K-01-097 (<http://www.saugus-vaikas.lt/index.php/en/>)

The public organisation *Naujos kartos moterų iniciatyvos* (English: New generation women initiatives) developed the project 'MOMA: mobile mothers – workers of a new generation' from 2009 to 2011. VP1-1.3-SADM-02-K-01-042

From 2009 to 2011, the public organisation *Socialisation and job training centre* (Vilnius) developed a model for job integration by using flexible working patterns for people surviving social exclusion. VP1-1.3-SADM-02-K-01-020

The public organisation *Blesses J. Matulaitis family support centre* (Vilnius) developed the project 'Vocational rehabilitation centre - cafe for socially vulnerable women' from 2009 to 2012. VP1-1.3-SADM-02-K-01-081

The fund of social innovation (Kaunas) developed the project 'Model promoting women's social mobility' from 2009 to 2012. VP1-1.3-SADM-02-K-01-114

The *Lithuanian women's society* (Vilnius) developed the project 'Help for women to integrate into the labour market through the development of skills which lead to success' from 2009 to 2012. VP1-1.3-SADM-02-K-01-070

The public organisation *Human social development research centre* develops the project 'Active family – the key into quality life' from 2012 to 2015. VP1-1.3-SADM-02-K-03-015

The Europe innovation centre develops the project 'Work instead of social benefits' from 2012 to 2014 VP1-1.3-SADM-02-K-03-075

The Social innovation fund develops the project 'Social incubator' from 2012 to 2015 VP1-1.3-SADM-02-K-03-079

The public organisation *Psychological aid and counselling centre* (Kaunas) develops the project 'Help to integrate people surviving social exclusion into the labour market' from 2012 to 2015 VP1-1.3-SADM-02-K-03-089

Vilnius Caritas Mother's and Child's Care Home was working on the Grundtvig project 'Empower: Lone parents building confidence and accessing learning' from 2008 to 2010 LLP-GRU-MP-2008-LT-00107.

8.2.3. UK/NI

There is some good practice in statutory sector. For example, in some areas there are examples of employers working closely with Jobs and Benefits Offices and Personal Advisers to match skills to labour market needs etc. There is also good practice within the voluntary sector with programmes such as Gingerbread's EQUAL project 'Possibilities' (which led to the development of the Restart model and subsequently to the Restart and Restart 2 TOI Projects), its long-running ESF project, Choices Plus, and an innovative employability programme delivered in partnership with retailer Marks and Start, all having good outcomes and developing models of good practice – some of which were incorporated into statutory training programmes. Restart is a 13-week employability support programme for lone parents returning to work which combines: classroom-based group learning, confidence building, employer expectations, job search; one-to-one coaching and mentoring support – to overcome personal barriers, e.g. childcare; work experience placement; and personal financial advice.

Choices Plus is a unique way of supporting lone parents who want to achieve higher level qualifications with a view to returning to work. Funded by the EU's European Social Fund programme and designed to complement government programmes, it offers support and bursaries to help with the costs associated with returning to study, including childcare, travel and course fees.

Marks and Start is retail giant Marks & Spencers' flagship community programme which provides support and work experience to help those facing real barriers find a job, including a special programme which aims to help lone parents rebuild confidence and develop new skills for life and work. Marks & Spencers works in partnership with Gingerbread NI and its social enterprise, Possibilities NI, to deliver the programme locally.

Motivate, designed to help boost confidence and motivation, is a short course developed by Gingerbread to support lone parents who want to return to employment. Topics include:

- Tips for building self-confidence
- What are employers looking for
- How to deal with interview nerves
- Presenting yourself positively
- Making the most of your skills and experience
- Setting your future goals and getting there

The 'Make it Work'-campaign launched in October 2012 by the charity Gingerbread aims to help single parents provide for their family by campaigning to get the government and employers to take a set of realistic actions that would make it work for single parents. Make it Work aims to: make work a guaranteed route out of poverty for single parents; get 250,000 more single parents into work by 2020; employ a different attitude to work and school hours; unlock single parents' skills and potential.

The 'Lets Lose the Labels'–campaign led by Gingerbread to stop negative labelling of lone parents and the use of language that stigmatises them (particularly in media and government). As a direct result of the campaign, 119 MPs signed up to pledge to tackle this prejudice, including political party leaders David Cameron, Nick Clegg and Gordon Brown and many of the Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet.

From 2013 on, the UK Government will provide an extra £300 million for childcare costs. It means that from 2013 on, money will be available for childcare to cover part-time and mini-jobs – helping many single parents to get back into work in a way that fits around school or nursery hours. It also means that work will continue to pay for those who want to work more than 16 hours a week to bring in a better income. The current tax credit rules – where you can claim up to 70% of childcare costs up to a maximum of £175 per week for one child, or £300 per week for two or more children – will be extended to all parents from 2013 on, whether you're working less or more than 16 hours per week.

9 Conclusion

In this report, data concerning the situation of lone parents in Germany, Lithuania, the UK, and Northern Ireland has been collected and evaluated. The general structure of the report maintains that of the Restart Transfer of Innovation Project (2010-2012) which presents similar information on the situation of lone parents in Cyprus, Poland, Italy, and Norway. The format for both reports follows a similar structure so that the information within can be more easily compared. The variance in the availability of data in the partner countries in the Restart 2 Project shows the different acknowledgements of lone parents in these countries. Also, it is noteworthy that the definition of lone parents is slightly different in the respective countries, particularly in relation to the age at which children are considered independent of their parents.

The collected data in this report underlines that lone parenthood is still sometimes seen as a 'deviation' from the traditional family model, not only to a certain degree in our partner countries but also in many other countries, as evidenced in the research report of the first Restart Project. The number of lone parent families in all of the partner countries has increased year on year over the past decade, as such it is imperative that modern societies recognise the status of lone parents as a group. There is a noticeable trend in the European countries that marriage and parenthood are no longer necessarily connected. People have more opportunities for their life planning and one of them is becoming a parent without being married. This trend will probably become more widespread in all European countries. Therefore, a fundamental change in social attitudes towards lone parents needs to take place within societies, and policies have to promote this thinking. It is important that society acknowledges lone parents and the role they play.

The report clearly shows that a significant proportion of lone parents face a greater risk of poverty compared to two parent families. Reasons for this can be found in employment which is not family friendly especially regarding working hours, the lack of flexible child care and the situation of women on the labour market in general, since most lone parents are women. In addition there is a lack of suitable legislation in the researched countries to overcome the various obstacles lone parents are facing. The last chapter of the report gives examples of good practices, campaigns and projects to support lone parent families.

On the one hand there is a need of lobbying among employers for family friendly workplaces. On the other hand it is necessary to enable lone parents to (re-)enter the labour market by giving them the opportunity to update their skills and gain work experience. The Restart training course for lone parents is a good example in this context since it combines a work placement with group work, individual life coaching and practical help with CVs and job applications. In this way it increases the chance of lone parents to get sustainable employment and supports them in managing the

challenges of balancing the demands of working and family life.

Annex: Survey to Restart Project Partners

Dear project partners,

The Restart 2 Project will continue to transfer the Restart Employability programme of the Restart 1 TOI (2010-2012) to further countries. To design a questionnaire we could take profit from a valuable basis – a variety of questions having led to a meaningful report on the situation of lone parents in different countries. An advancement through revising the questionnaire can mainly be achieved asking for new situations and attitudes or recent trends (or just upcoming discourses in the public), developments in policies and programmes in our countries.

Please answer the following questions about lone parents as they apply specifically in your country and add latest trends as mentioned above. It is probably asked for information that is not available in each partner country, but this will also constitute data. If the questions indicate too detailed information, just let me know.

An important analytical dimension for us again will be regional differences, which is related to different welfare state arrangements. Another dimension will probably be the dynamics between general and targeted economic policies.

1. Background/demographic information

- 1.1. How is a lone parent family defined in your country? Which source?
- 1.2. How many lone parent families are there in your country?
- 1.3. How many parents (both or lone), and how many children? (How many lone parents and how many single child-households?)
- 1.4. What proportion of all families in your country are headed by a lone parent?
- 1.5. What percentage of these lone parents are lone mothers?
- 1.6. What percentage of these lone parents are lone fathers?
- 1.7. Are there differences according to ethnic background? (In case of “Yes” please give relevant sources.)
- 1.8. What is the average age of lone parents in your country?
- 1.9. How many of these parents are:
 - Working, part time or full time?
 - On welfare benefits
 - On disability or sick leave?
 - On paid transitions between sick leave and work?
(This will depend on the general policy for disability pensions, sick leave and other transitional arrangements.)
 - Economically inactive (no income at all)

1.10. How many of these parents:

- Are in social housing?
- Own their own house or flat:?
- Rent their place of living, but not through social housing?
- Other:

1.11. How many have access to public transport?

(Is there a useful structure of public transport also in rural areas? Are there tickets free or with reduced prices available for lone parent families/children?)

1.12. Is there any tracking at the national level of one-parent families and their situation? (Please distinguish between public statistics and various policy initiatives?)

1.13. What are the most common routes into lone parenthood in your country?

Please give percentages for each route:

- Divorce:
- Becoming a widow or widower:
- Separate (living separately but not legally divorced):
- Never living together with the other parent:
- Teenage pregnancies:

2. Child care provision

2.1. What age spans are covered?

2.2. How long school hours do children up to 10 years of age have?

2.3. Which before or after school provision - public or private – do you have, and to what cost?

2.4. Are there differences between urban and rural areas?

2.5. Are subsidised places available?

2.6. What is the quality of child care or before/after school provision?

2.7. Are there differences in quality between public and private arrangements?

2.8. To what extent are children of lone parents cared for by grandparents or other relatives during their parent's working hours? (Please answer only, if you will find relevant sources.)

3. The situation of lone parent families

3.1. In your country, is there a social stigma associated with being a lone parent? (Please give concrete examples with relevant sources.)

3.2. Which matters of fact are mostly contributing to the gendered dimension of lone parenthood (mothers)?

3.3. What are the links between lone parenthood and poverty/social exclusion?

- 3.4. What are the obstacles and disadvantages lone parents face in the work place? (E.g. working hours and child care, leave when children are ill, access to transport, shopping facilities, services etc.)
- 3.5. What are the obstacles and disadvantages lone parents face on the labour market? (E.g. How "employable" are they felt to be? To what extent are anti-discrimination rules a protection for lone parents?)
- 3.6. Does any legislation exist to protect lone parents against discrimination? (E.g. that you cannot discriminate against people with dependents, unmarried parents etc.?)
- 3.7. Do lone parents face disadvantages in the educational system? If so, what are they like?
- 3.8. Is it common for lone parents to experience that their children face stigmatisation at school or disadvantage due to an inability to participate in extra curricular activities because of low income?

4. Government Policy/ Programmes

- 4.1. How do you define for a (lone parent-) family to live below poverty line? (What is the definition for poverty in your country?)
- 4.2. What government policies/public dialogues are in place to combat lone parent poverty?
- 4.3. Is there any reference to lone parents in your National Action Plan?
If so, please explain and provide reference details.
- 4.4. What has been the impact of the recession on one parent families in your country?
- 4.5. Are there any programmes to assist lone parents into employment? If so, what are they like?
- 4.6. Are there any programmes to assist lone parents to better education? If so, what are they like?
- 4.7. Are there any examples in your country of good practice in working to support lone parent families, either policy or provision of services? If so, describe it/them!

5. Claims, projects, campaigns concerning political issues in regard to lone parent families. Outcomes for one parent families /Wishes of one parent families.

Please add by yourselves summaries of any new interesting studies from your country for taking additional points into account such as:

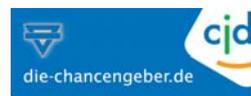
- What are the health outcomes for one parent families?
- What is the social situation in one parent families (What might make a difference to two parent families)?

- What kinds of networks do one parent families have?
- What are important political claims, targets of the relevant public/associations for the next years?
- What are important political campaigns of the relevant public/associations for the next years?

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Possibilities NI
Consultancy
Mentoring
Training

 Department for
**Employment
and Learning**
www.delni.gov.uk

 **die-chancegeber.de**



For more information about the Restart 2 Project and the situation of lone parent families in Europe please visit:

www.restart2.eu