



# Comparative Analysis of Barriers and Obstacles to Empowerment in Social Service Provision Organizations in the Rural Areas of Finland, Germany and Latvia (GoA 4.1)

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**Motto: Getting to know our own weaknesses is a way how to overcome them and become stronger. - A.S.**

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## Acronyms

DE	Germany
DI	De-institutionalization
FI	Finland
GoA	Group of Activities
KDA	Kirchlicher Dienst in der Arbeitswelt – Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Norddeutschland (Church at Work – Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany)
LEN	Local Empowerment Network
LV	Latvia
NEET	Not in education, employment or training youth
SEA	State Employment Agency
SSDM	Social service department manager
SSOM	Social service organization's manager
SSPO	Social service provision organization
UoAS	University of Applied Sciences
WM	Welfare Ministry
WP	Work Package
WAK	Wirtschaftsakademie Schleswig-Holstein (Academy of Economics Schleswig-Holstein)



## End-users categories according to the location of the interviewed experts

**Refugees and immigrants, Finland and Germany (FI, DE)**

**Long-term unemployed immigrants – FI**

**Older persons – FI**

**Single parents – DE**

**Refugees – DE**

**Long-term unemployed people and their families – DE**

**Disabled adults with physical and mental handicaps – LV**

**Disadvantaged (NEET) youth – LV**



## Introduction

This article deals additional information to the survey on the socio-economic context of the local empowerment networks. The survey on the socio-economic context of the LENSs was carried out inside project's work package four as its first group of activities (WP4 GoA1, 4.3). The template of the information on a socio-economic context of the local empowerment networks consists of two parts. The content of the first part includes general and specific local statistical information on local or regional empowerment networks. The second part of the template consists of qualitative data. Coordinators of the LENSs had been asked briefly to describe the specifics of their LENSs, factors that influence the life circumstances of their end-user group, and the final question (4.3) is on "specific barriers and obstacles that social service providers face when working with the end-user group". The answers to question on barriers and obstacles had been given in so short and laconic version that it was interesting to get more information on that essential phenomena for future developments. This is a reason for an organizing expert interviews on barriers and obstacles in social service provision organizations in different countries randomly selected.

Semi-structured interviews of the social work experts are an instrument for getting an information which provides significantly broader and deeper information. Expert interviews discovered several new kinds of barriers and obstacles in comparison with the formalised survey.

### 1. Concepts definition: barriers and obstacles

It is reasonable at the very beginning to make a distinction between concepts a barrier and an obstacle. Some sources define the concept of a *barrier* using the concept of an *obstacle* for clarification. Comparing several sources and different definitions given to both concepts it is reasonable to define the meaning of the **barrier** in socio-economic context as something that depends on people, something inner, **internal** in people that block actions, movements, progress. Barriers are mostly immaterial factors which impact a human soul and action. E.g., language, cultural norms, values, habits, psychological qualities, social milieu.

The meaning of the concept an **obstacle** is something **external**, people's background that blocks or makes people's actions, movement, progress more difficult. Obstacles are mainly material factors and depend on external natural and/or human factors – mainly on decision makers and policies



makers. They are the following: handicap, law, social policy, means of mobility, access to medical care, access to education, etc.

## 2. Methodology

The source and method of additional empirical information on barriers and obstacles in a work of the social service provision organizations are the experts' interviews. Experts interviewed are representatives of the management staff of SSPOs and experienced social workers. There are carried out 16 expert interviews from three different Baltic sea region countries in the time period of June – July 2017. The last transcript of the expert interview is received on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017. All interviewed experts are professionals with work experience in the social service provision organizations. There are carried out four expert interviews in Finland, seven – in Germany, five - in Latvia corresponding to their LENs. Expert interviews give deeper and wider information on barriers and obstacles in the work of the social service provision in comparison to a formalised questionnaire on the socio-economic context of the LENs used in the project. Experts' answers to semi-structured interviews included more information than it was asked, thus there is received additional information on many matters including social empowerment tools which have been used or which are a subject of a desire.

According to the research subject the spotlight of questions to experts has been turned to barriers and obstacles in an empowerment of the end-users. Owing to this we didn't gather information on positive aspects, good practice and good examples in social service provision. Nevertheless, there was given the information on positive experience of the real social and psychological empowerment of marginalized families with children at risk. The spotlighting to barriers and obstacles is made with the aim to get to know SSPOs weaknesses and then to initiate evidence-based changes for better.

To get more detailed information on barriers and obstacles in social service provision there were sampled three particular countries for comparison. These countries are Finland, Germany and Latvia, which are geographically differently located, different in size and their developments, economics and history. The mentality of Finns, Germans and Latvians also differs but the human nature in depth is similar everywhere.



There is another distinction related to end-user groups. They are different in each project participant country and even in the same country they can be different because of the local empowerment network working with them. That is specifics of the entire project. End-users in Finland, Germany and Latvia represent various vulnerable, weak, disadvantaged social groups. They are refugees, immigrants, older persons, long-term unemployed, single parents, disabled adults, youth not in education, employment or training (NEET youth).

Experts answers on barriers and obstacles in the social service provision present the evidence of both differences and similarities as well as common problematic areas in these three Baltic sea region countries.

A framework for the analytical comparison of barriers and obstacles in the work of social service provision organizations is structured in two groups and their substructures. These structures are divided into following categories:

#### I. Material obstacles:

- I.1. Finances
- I.2. Working rooms
- I.3. Public transport accessibility

#### II. Immaterial barriers and obstacles

- II.1. Legal regulations
- II.2. Barriers and obstacles for the **staff and its working conditions**
  - II.2.1. Availability of the professional staff
  - II.2.2. **Low wages**
  - II.2.3. **Specialization of the staff**
  - II.2.4. **Bureaucratic obstacles** (amount of paperwork)
  - II.2.5. **Psychological barriers**
  - II.2.6. **Societal barriers**
  - II.2.7. **Communication and coordination**
  - II.2.8. Knowledge of foreign languages
- II.2.9. Human factor



- II.2.10. Other barriers and obstacles

### 3. Comparative analysis of expert interviews' data

#### 3.1.1. Finances as a part of material obstacles

The information given by experts on financing issues has two aspects. One aspect is related to the deficit of finances in regard to social service provision and project based short-time financing and following short-time work prospects. The second aspect of financing issue is related to the staff salaries in social service provision organizations. Low wages of the SSPOs staff is a common problem in all three countries in comparison with average wages in other employment fields in each country. There is often witnessed an interference of the financing deficit for service provision and low wages of the staff.

At the very beginning let us look at not sufficient financing for service provision, low staff wages will be discussed later.

A deficit of financing of the social services is strongly claimed by all those experts who are working with refugees and immigrants in Finland and Germany. But not only. It is expressed following:

*"Yes, budget of the local authorities is not sufficient. Alphabetization courses not sufficient, no language access for Afghans."* (DE).

They witness needs for organizing a better service provision *"more budget in the local administration"* (DE) and *"bare financial support at least for B2 language courses"* (DE). Or: *"ERC funding is very limited and has strict rules. This makes service developing difficult."* (FI).

Short time prospects due to project-based financing of the social service provision is another serious obstacle for many social service provision organizations. This problem is formulated by experts of the SSPOs such:

*"No stable funding - project based activities"* (LV),

*"[...] short term plan (one year) is difficult, it would be more helpful to have a long-term view and a larger budget."* (DE),





*“Yes, there is a deficit (of financing. – A.S.). We have no gender-budget for the steady realization of projects for females.” (DE),*

*“[...] not enough financial support in the realization of projects. The short period for financial support (The projects period ends, the consequence: the finances are depleted). Sometimes it is not even possible to start a new project, because the costs will be reimbursed too late [...]”. (DE),*

*“[...] consulting services are rather expensive, I mean, if we are evolving expertise, outsourcing; and we are trying to find those who are able to share their knowledge without payment; it is bargaining process, we are trying to find “business angels”; somehow it is of course limiting our work; we are thinking to attract also international resources – we are thinking about some kind of volunteering, or share of knowledge and projects that could help us.” (LV),*

Indirectly expressed *“if the resources for social interaction, social issues (funding for material and technical basis, human resources) is not enough, it is difficult to guarantee the results (for example, a social pedagogue is one for 600 students)“.* (LV).

### **3.1.2. Obstacles concerning spatial conditions: working rooms**

Another kind of material obstacles is related to working conditions in terms of space. Several LENSs have difficulties related to working rooms, that issue is topical for a small number of the LENSs. There are following messages in expert interviews on that from four LENSs:

*“[...] our technical condition of building is rather poor. Heating is very poor and it is rather hard to work in wintertime. At the moment municipality is not planning renovation of the building.” (LV).*

*“[...] social pedagogue and career counsellor do not have their office rooms and equipment, workshop space; they work in the classes”. (LV).*

*“The info desk work is done far away from the educational facilities. It makes cooperation difficult.” (FI),*

*” [...] a lack of offices and centers for encounter” (DE).*

*“[...] no relevant problem, nevertheless sometimes we are missing offices”. (DE).*

*“it is important to have a separate meeting room, the workload is huge and often we are working even over-time.” (LV).*



### **3.I.3. Obstacles concerning spatial conditions and a mobility: distances between social service provision locations and end-users' living places. The public transportation accessibility**

An obstacle related to spatial conditions in rural area is large distances to social service provision organizations for end-users and versus for social service provision staff to end-user's residence. This obstacle is mentioned by Finnish and Latvian experts:

*"Not enough resources. Transport problems, older adults have difficulties to get to where the activities are." (FI).*

*"There is a big problem for disabled people to go to get health service, to go for shopping due to lack of transport." (LV).*

*"[...] transport availability (many young people from the rural areas have problems with transport, a rare traffic; the project "Know and do" covers travel expenses, otherwise it would be very problematic to reach the target (the project ends in December 2018). It is rather difficult or not possible to reimburse travel costs in existing budget." (LV).*

*"Lack of transport services; long distances and rare public transportation is a problem for many to engage, it is hard to get home in the late evening. In rural district the public transportation is not available." (LV).*

*"[...] availability of resources: trainings, workshops and other activities depends on distance (more activities in centers – cities, less in rural areas)". (LV).*

Transport accessibility of the both public and private is a very important and serious problem for Latvian rural population due to lack of a sufficient offer of this service in general and due to widespread poverty among rural population in Latvia and thus a lack of finances to buy a private car. So it is a problem for all generations – from young to old who have to live willy-nilly ascetic. A process of depopulation of rural living places in Latvia, especially, since 2009 when there were implemented austerity measures with the aim to consolidate a state budget in order to overcome financial crisis and saving the big private bank on costs of tax payers money is an essential cause of destroying public transport system in regions. The state budget has cut financing for public transport in regions and countryside but private business never has an interest to act without a profit.



In Finland situation differs and is more related to a specific end-users category – older persons and big distances to reach them. The older persons might have difficulties to drive their own car themselves.

## Conclusions on the material obstacles (I)

### Finances

The deficit of finances for sufficient and good quality services is witnessed by Finnish and German experts working with refugees and immigrants.

Expensive consulting services are a matter of a claim on deficit of financing as well as in work with the local NEET youth.

Another problem concerning financing issue is short-time financing of projects. Such working conditions do not permit long-term planned activities and strategies. This is typical characteristic of work for the NGOs.

### Working rooms

Working rooms cause inconveniences in some places for the Latvian and German social service providers. But this problem is not crucially important and, as practice shows, might be solved by workers own activities.

### Public transportation

Public transportation accessibility is a highly serious problem in rural areas of Latvia.

A state of the public transport in rural areas of Latvia is a part of a **destruction of the rural infrastructure**. The austerity measures for rural areas in Latvia since 2009 were a closing down an accessibility to health care, education, public transportation. Such were the means to cope with the finance crisis and saving big privat bank from a bankruptcy with state budget - tax payers money. These measures were a strong means to push out and emigrate the youth and adults in working age from rural areas to cities and/or abroad because of a lack of jobs and social services. So, the **rural depopulation** and **ageing** of the rural population was stimulated by the governance. A majority living there is the old age pensioners.



The rural inhabitants are not able to solve the problem of difficult access to public transport services themselves. It depends on the quality of governance and personal features of those who are in power and make decisions.

Finnish specific features are large distances to the single elderly living in rural areas and low population density in some rural territories. Thus, reaching older persons and service provision for them request the additional efforts.

### 3.II. 1. Legal regulations

Legal regulations are a rational framework for the social service provision. But sometimes they are obstacles because of a lack of a harmonization or an insufficient harmonization between different legal acts and/or between different levels of the juridical regulations. Such state can make serious obstacles in the social service provision. The state of the legal regulations can be a serious obstacle if laws are changing, especially, in case of radical changes. Obstacles related to legal regulations and the impact of legal norms on the work of the SSPOs are witnessed by experts in following statements:

*“Laws guide the work, but the whole social service provision system is changing now, and there are big challenges in service provision right now.” (FI).*

*“The systems are too complex, the way to claim support is too hard” (DE).*

*“ [...] frequent changes in legislature and conduction of courses leads to obstacles, e. g. administrative offices: often status’ of refugees not clear depending on law regulations → some of the refugees live for a long term in Germany, but because of their status they cannot participate in language courses”. (DE).*

*“[...] restriction of the target group (end-user). No advice for women, who are registered in the Agentur für Arbeit or the JobCenter”. (DE).*

*“Yes, sometimes obstacles and sometimes legal certainty”. (DE).*

*“The project “KNOW and DO” is targeted at those who are not registered at SEA and may not be registered in any of educational institutions. In reality, the young people are registered in those institutions due to the fact that otherwise their families may not receive additional social support*



*services in case if they are not registered. It is an important part of their income – social benefits, and they are eager to register for this purpose.” (LV).*

*“In the context of legal regulations we have restrictions to be defined as social entrepreneurs; our legal framework regarding social entrepreneurship is in its development stage and thus not very clear what exactly is meant and how it is going to work in near future; still we are working as social entrepreneurship as NGO, networking and finding different solutions to help our entrepreneurs using the space.” (LV).*

On legal regulations of work at schools: *“the work is regulated by government legislation defining educational standards at secondary education institutions (curriculum content is very compacting, theoretical and oriented towards the achievement of academic knowledge, not on competence-based learning. That's why many young people are not interested and motivated to study. There is little opportunity for teachers to interact in the flexible and creative learning manner by using new teaching methods). At the moment due to OECD recommendations we are challenging our public education paradigm towards more competence based education. Our challenge is practice - how it will happen, what does it mean for us, our professionals and institution! Competence-based education and learning is an idea to change the current education standard. Our concern is that they want to implement new methods but do not want to keep the old one... however, competence-based education must be very good for those who are not motivated, socially retarded or legging behind, having behavioural problems and other.*

*Secondly, we do have a problem with inclusion of social dimension, social services into the educational system and general education institutions. Social pedagogue's task is to solve social issues in this educational environment, provide support and assistance for disadvantaged young people. Neither the Ministry of Education nor the Ministry of Welfare regulate or methodically conduct social pedagogue professional activities, in comparison with the social worker's professional activities in the social service (it is very low professional recognition and legitimacy of social pedagogue in community).” (LV).*

The above said evidences of the influence of legal regulations to social service provision practitioners, and their working conditions show that sometime legislative norms are serious obstacles, especially, in situations of changing legislative norms in transition periods from former



rules to new norms. For example, actual novelty of a deinstitutionalization of several end-users' categories in Latvia:

*“Deinstitutionalization is actual and stressful issue because of uncertainty and lack of knowledge on process and its results.”*

*„Two client categories – mentally disabled and children in children’s homes<sup>1</sup> are financed for two years from the EU funds because of deinstitutionalization project.” (LV).*

*“Changes in legislation in foreign affairs concerning the right to asylum and family reunification. The harsh new laws make people’s lives difficult.” (FI).*

## Conclusions and recommendations on the legal regulations (II.1)

Legal regulations sometimes can be obstacles in social service provision because of a lack or not sufficient harmonization between different legal acts and/or between different level of the legislative regulations.

The other kind of obstacles referring to jurisdiction is permanent changes and amendments in laws or radical changes in legislation as it witnessed by German and Finnish experts who work with refugees and immigrants.

Sometimes an obstacle is a lack of the rules for certain areas of activities as it is in case of the social pedagogy or social entrepreneurship<sup>2</sup> in Latvia.

## Recommendations

The goal of the legal regulations is to make a rule of law based state and to achieve high level harmonization of the legislative rules and the system. It is possible to achieve this goal by careful and responsible systematic work in the field of jurisdiction. These actions should not be quick and short-time orientated. Moreover, laws and amendments to them do not have to be designed for a benefit of the particular social group (often for the benefit of the rich). The value of the justice has to be the basis of the legislation and statutes but not the interest of some social groups.

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<sup>1</sup> In Latvia approximate two thousand children of alive parents are living in the institutions due to their parents' unemployment, poverty, immigration and/or addictions, widespread is alcohol addiction, but drug addiction also is becoming widespread. – A.S.

<sup>2</sup> The Law on the social entrepreneurship is accepted by the Parliament in October 2017 and now is waiting for coming in force after a signature of the Latvian State President. – A.S.



### 3.II.2. Staff

The most important and at the same time problematical area in social service provision organizations is their staff.

There are following six main kinds of the barriers and obstacles actualized by experts in relation to staff – an **availability** of staff and **insufficient number** of staff, **low wages**, a **lack of a specialization** or **specialized staff** to work with specific client categories, **need of psychological empowerment/support** for the both staff and end-users and regular **supervision** for the staff, **overwork** and an **overload with bureaucratic functions** (so called amount of paperwork).

#### 3.II.2.1. Availability of professional social work staff

An **insufficient number** of social work staff is a subject reported in nine LENSs of Germany and Latvia. The experts reported it following:

*“An availability of professional staff in rural area is a problem. Young specialists do not want to go to rural area, because they want bigger wage, better and more interesting life conditions than can offer rural places. “last time, when a vacancy was published, four candidates applied, three of them didn’t have the minimum of education required by law for this position. [...] Socially isolated clients – disabled and elderly want more communication, have a talk, a conversation but social worker has not time for talking.” (LV).*

*“Availability of professional staff is limited. We have established partnership with some persons or employees that are offering specific services. Still we have shortages, and we are looking for assistant and different opportunities, volunteers; at the moment we do not have experts – persons who are able constantly provide consultations for our “beginners” with general knowledge, information, education etc.” (LV).*

*“Our Institution has a lack of professional staff. We would need more young and good educated colleagues, because some employees will retire soon.” (DE).*

*“In the social service area is generally a shortage of professional staff. [...] The shortage of skilled social workers will also be an issue in the near future. We have to make the jobs in social work more attractive for young people.” (DE).*





*"We do have five fulltime jobs, but we do need more cultural mediators (Kulturmittler) without having any money," (DE).*

*"Difficulties to find qualified personnel". (DE).*

*"[...] There is a need for several social pedagogues, at least 2 teachers at school, as well as would be necessary to engage police officer at school."*

*"All professionals have the necessary professional education. Still this is dynamic, changing society (also due to undergoing legislative changes) and there is a need for regular professional development training and supervision. We lack practical training, also education for us as service providers (knowledge and useful information on different topics). We are looking forward to strengthen and develop supportive and effective teamwork. In our work it is important to strengthen confidence, trust between professionals, teamwork. It is important that society to believe that professional (e.g. teacher) is trustful person, professional able to deal with all situations, able to work with different information, identification for solutions." (LV).*

And continuing a quotation of answers on barriers and obstacles in relation to staff linked to financial deficit: *"in provision of support and counselling services at the earliest possible stage, lack of school support staff (social pedagogue, career counsellor, treatment, psychologist is working with 1 to 9 classes. [...]There is a limited access to continuing education, professional development training and supervisions (training, psychosocial treatments and supervisions are expensive and the school cannot finance all the training and supervisions that could be offered by social work professionals)." (LV).*

*"We haven't own staff for social services like SEMPRE. We are relying on external social provider for the implementation and realisation of provisions.*

*"We have a lack of specialists/professional employees. Our colleagues often have fixed-term contracts and the payment is different because of two different collective agreements. That is demotivating." (DE).*

*"[...] lack of human resources, proficiency to act in modern/ today's environment; insufficient number of social workers." (LV).*





Despite the permanent educational process of social workers there is an acute lack of professional staff in social service provision organisations, which is a strong signal that the prestige of this profession is low. Arguments on that will come further.

### 3.II.2.2. Low wages

Experts' evaluation of social work staff wages shows that the job of professionals in this area is not adequately paid. This job is underestimated due to its hardness, high stress and distress level, even hyperstress and sometimes helplessness in solving problems of the weak, disadvantaged or deviated individuals and social groups. Low wages are an essential reason of deficit of the social work staff. My experience in the field of the education in social work program has showed that big part or even the biggest part of social work graduates avoid working in their profession just after studies. Their argumentation is that social work profession is not attractive and interesting for them owing to low wages and high stress level. Low wages are mentioned as an obstacle by experts of all three countries under research – Finland, Germany and Latvia.

*"The salary is very low." (FI).*

*"The salary you get in the social field is very low, compared to other fields.*

*"I also miss a system where you are able to show and to deal with your work overload." (DE).*

*"[...] salaries could be better, work load very high". (DE).*

*"The salary you get in the social field is very low." (DE).*

offered work conditions - *" It is also a deficit that the employees get temporary contracts. They have not any guarantee to stay for a long term in their company." (DE).*

*"Implementation of the project "Know and Do" activities depends on social worker fulfilling out the tasks in the project, thus having additional obligations to the existing tasks - as the results being overloaded, those hours paid by the project are not enough to carry out those tasks." (LV).*

An evaluation phrase "low paid job" appears in expert interviews very often in different contexts. It is evident that in order to change the attitude to a prestige of social work profession, it is necessary to raise wages in this field. Higher wages will make a job in social service provision organisations more



attractive for young specialists and could be a factor promoting to continue job in that area for a presently working staff.

### **3.II.2.3. A specialization of the social service provision organizations' staff**

Another claim of experts beside a lack of qualified social work professionals is a need of specialization in social service provision. An efficient service is possible in case professionally specialized and skilled staff is trained to work with particular groups such as physically disabled persons, mentally retarded persons, dysfunctional families with children, refugees, immigrants, single parents, NEET youth, and other weak, vulnerable or deviant social groups.

*“Especially specialization is needed in work with mentally retarded and psychiatric patients these different groups can not put together. Each group of them need separate care and different approach” (LV).*

*“There is a need for several social workers working with families with children and young people, especially in rural areas, especially with those young people who are older than 18+.” (LV).*

*“I think that the staff has not enough Gender-Knowledge. Often the colleagues don't know exactly what gender and its theory's means.” (DE).*

Specialization of social service providers is necessary in work with all end-users' categories but it is an absolute must in work with very specific end-user groups. Otherwise a success of the work is under a risk.

### **3.II.2.4. Bureaucratic obstacle - extensive documentation instead of a contact with end-users and providing a real social service**

Extensive documentation on activities has been called by Danish expert “amount of paperwork” is another obstacle in social service provision. It has been mentioned in interviews of Latvian experts and spotlighted by Danish partner in characteristics of socio-economic context of the LENSs.

*“[...] staff - acute problem and conflict solving; **paperwork** etc. It is huge work and all these duties are resource-intensive.” (LV).*

*“We are permanently overloaded with payment of social benefits and those mountains of papers...” (LV).*



*“Social workers are overloaded both with interacting in families in need as well as with administrative tasks. It is time consuming to prepare all required documentation, prepare administrative files. Little time remains for psychosocial work; additional duties are carried out within the framework of existing obligations outside working hours, low paid job.” (LV).*

A representative of Danish LENS has given a bright description and argumentation how an **extensive documentation or needed “amount of paperwork”** become an obstacle in everyday work with refugees. He has written:

*“Another example of how the legal infrastructure might impact the service providers work with the end-user group is the **amount of paperwork**. An **extensive documentation** practice among service-providers might leave refugees with an experience of having certain legal limitations to their own engagement with the surrounding society, which might in turn impact their wider sense of empowerment.” (DK).*

A logical conclusion and a recommendation finalising a subject on bureaucratic obstacles is a practice of a permanent revising a quantity and quality of documentation with the aim to control and stop a growth of electronic and paper documents.

### **3.II.2.5. Need of a psychological empowerment and support for the both staff of social service provision organizations and end-users**

Regular high stress and distress situations for the both social service provision staff and end-users and hyper-stress for the staff have initiated thoughts of managers of social service provision organisations and other experts on a necessity of a professional psychologist as a part of a staff team.

*“Psychologist is needed as paid staff on a regular basis.” (LV).*

*“Psychologist is what we really need to have in our team.” (LV).*

*“There are deep psychological problems among clients and social workers – both sometimes are using impolite, harsh communication style and a contact because of that does not take a shape.” (LV). This expert tells on angry end-users and their exaggerated selfishness when reaction to small waiting period after regular services is assessed with words: “have I to die in a ditch?”*



The expert of municipal social service department in Latvia have witnessed that rude/impolite mutual communication style is a barrier why collaboration and mutual supporting behavior with disabled people as clients is not successfully formed.

*"We, as service providers, [...] need money, place and workers. [...] money is secondary, primary is worker, educated, active and with soul and heart."* (LV).

*"Social workers receive a psychological aid in supervisions as prevention tool from burning out. In Kurzeme region of Latvia supervision service is available since 2016. A procurement for that is organized by the Welfare Ministry, service receivers have to pay 30%, 70% pays WM. In 2017 the cheapest supervision service has such quality that nobody wants it to have. The cheapest procurement is not the most effectiveness, that is a fact."* (LV).

The interviewed social work expert in Latvia speaks on many barriers in her job:

*"Lack of professionals, extra " hands", psychologists and professionals, including those who can establish good contact with the disadvantaged NEET youth. Low-paid jobs, rather deep and difficult cases, requiring new methods, trainings, skills."* (LV).

A German expert has expressed on that following: *"In case of problems more offer for help for the responsible staff."* (DE).

*"The offers have to be more addressed on the needs of the long-term unemployed people. It needs offers, which strengthen the self-esteem and the basic emotions."* (DE).

To sum up, there is an actual need for a psychological support and empowerment – internal empowerment for all kinds of end-users' groups but, especially as it has been mentioned by experts – for disabled people, NEET youth, long-term unemployed, refugees and immigrants, and for everyone in their crisis situations.

There is a need for a psychological support in a form of a supervision for social service provision organizations' staff on a regular basis. This need has been emphasized by experts in Latvia.

Latvian society is sick due to polarization of inequality, lightning social polarization, widespread poverty, and bad governance directed to the benefit of the rich.



### 3.II.2.6. Societal problems

Negative attitude to disadvantaged social groups has an evolutionary determination and it is permanently stable because of very deep roots in human nature. Disadvantaged social groups are estimated like strangers in social meaning. Historically strangers are foreigners in a spatial aspect like refugees and immigrants nowadays. They suddenly are beside you in the community or they are living with you in same community, but they are different from you. People look at strangers as at a danger and a risk for them. There are also cases when community members can be evaluated as strangers, because of their possible illness, addictions, or deviant behavior. They all are different from ordinary people and many of them behave risky, thus they are dangerous or bring discomfort and inconvenience to others. A phenomenon of a stranger in society has been excellently analyzed in the classical sociology. (Simmel, G., 1992; Schütz, A., 2004).

A negative attitude towards strangers from other countries who appear suddenly in a spatial closeness has been witnessed by experts differently.

*"The societal atmosphere is harsh to migrants, and people (even service providers) have strong opinions which are not in accordance to human rights."* (FI).

*"Some people are excluded. Especially if there are difficulties with residence permits. Also since the family reunification has been made impossible, people cannot start integrating into the society."* (FI).

*"[...] problems with few German participants of training courses who demonstrate their anti-stance against foreigners (hostility towards foreigners)."* (DE).

Professionals try to change people's negative attitude into a positive attitude.

*"In the Diaconie of Dithmarschen we take a firm stand to have a positive attitude in the work with single parents."* (DE).

But in depth of human consciousness negative attitude is still alive. A German expert demonstrates the following:

*"[...] stigmatization is a big problem in society (example: a local politician was discriminating single parents in an open conference)."* (DE).

Latvian expert has expressed it in relationship to the NEET youth following:



*“Society expects successful young people and the whole society system is focused on academic achievements, prestige and leadership, dominated by material resources. In our terms there is a gap between those “successful” and “unsuccessful”. It is important that society sees also the disadvantaged young people as a resource. Still it is a huge work with those who are disadvantaged; it is easier to work with leaders, motivated and good students. It is hard to involve different groups. All kind of activities at the moment are separated – those being successful students are involved in all kind of school activities, they are representatives of youth centres, leaders in municipality, attending interest groups and vocational trainings; those disadvantaged young students are socializing between similar (high segregation), do not participate in other activities and are more silent.” (LV).*

Easier for the NGOs is a choice to work with those who are orientated to a success:

*“Still we are partly closed community – as we are collaborating with those who are creative and socially active, leaders themselves; we have no experience to engage economically inactive part of youth; we are not working with those who are not motivated, or who are not able to take their own responsibility about activities, finances.” (LV).*

Else experts of Latvia have witnessed:

*“[...] widespread intolerant and negative attitude of society to dysfunctional families and their children. [...] material support to poor families excites an envy among other people of community [...] People are against expenses for others – disabled, poor, addicted.” (LV).* Additional one expert has informed, that parents prohibited their children to take part in events which were organized for and with children from dysfunctional families.

To sum up, distinctions often create a negative attitude in spite of the fundamental humanitarian document called the Universal Human Rights Declaration. Cultural, social, behavioral differences make ordinary people vigilant, circumspect and refusal. They do not have tolerance, though, the idea to be welcoming towards strangers is proclaimed in the both the Bible and the Universal Human Rights Declaration. But people have fears and feel endangered to the self-preservation and survival.



### 3.II.2.7. Communication and coordination of activities

Communication and coordination have horizontal egalitarian dimension and vertical subordinated dimension. Sometimes communication and coordination of social service provision activities go on in a harmony. Sometimes there are different difficulties in the both dimensions and in different aspects of the communication and coordination.

#### Communication with end-users

Experts mentioned different difficulties in communication with end-users. One of them is a difficulty to reach older persons as end-users of services as it is in Finland:

*“Hard to reach out to all the older adults, requires cooperation between actors.” (FI).*

*“To reach out to all, especially to find those who are in need of this kind of service.” (FI).*

Similar difficulty is mentioned in the work with long-term unemployed persons in Germany:

*“It is difficult to come in contact with the end-users, to reach the end-users. The long-term unemployed people don’t come to the neighbourhood meeting “willy-nilly” (einfach so).” (DE).*

Difficulties in mutual understanding due to lack of language knowledge and prejudices are usual things in communication with refugees and immigrants:

*“[...] linguistic problems with refugees who are beginners in language courses. Refugees have high expectations towards the offer of the Academy of Economics in language and integration courses. There are problems with few German participants of training courses who demonstrate their anti-stance against foreigners (hostility towards foreigners).” (DE).*

Obstacles in communication with single-parents have different roots arising from specifics of the life conditions of this social group:

*“Yes, (there are obstacles. – A.S.) in the campaign “More females in local politics”. Single mothers are often not able to visit the political conferences (only in the evenings), especially because they don’t have a Babysitter. It is not easy to reach out to the single mothers. They are often afflicted with a double burden and they have a lack of time.” (DE).*

Communication problems can arise unexpected suddenly: *“sometimes only because of the shortage of skilled social workers”.* (DE).





Rude mutual communication style as a barrier is documented by experts in Latvia. Expert has informed on such part of end-users who are coming to municipal social service provision department simply to make there a conflict, they often are angry, sometimes they are demanding permanent services and even in short-time break of service provision they make a blackmail, e.g., saying: “do I have to die in a ditch?” (LV).

Even the service provision staff sometimes did not keep calm and polite conversation style either via phone and/or face-to-face communication.

Poverty is a socially constructed phenomenon and often a cause of people’s negativity. Life in poverty doesn’t make people kind and polite. Life in poverty, especially, if it combines with disability can create negative qualities of the poor’s characters and actions. Life in poverty can make and often makes people evil, malicious. It is evidence-based in this project’s interviews in Latvia.

Long-term unemployment correlates with life in poverty and all this impacts people. They are marginalized and they feel a stigma, and that is why they try to avoid the communication with others.

Skilled professionals are a significant factor for successful communication with the end-users.

### **Communication and coordination of activities between institutions**

A deficit and bias of communication and coordination inside an organization and between institutions has been claimed in all three countries. Experts working with refugees and immigrants witness:

*“There has been severe lack of coordination between different actors in the field. My job seeks to answer these challenges by creating networks.” (FI).*

*“The information systems are not up to date, and since social assistance (monetary) was moved from the municipalities to the government (Kela), many people do not get the services they would be entitled to.” (FI).*

*“Some good things have been achieved. The immigration council has done great work with especially schools. However, many challenges still exist. There is lack of coordination between social services and service providers in education (adult education) and employment.” (FI).*





*“There are deficits **of coordination of activities**, but we are improving due to some hard working NGO’s.” (FI).*

*“Working together with the immigration services is hard. The forms are too confusing for migrants, and there is hardly any support or guidance available.” (FI).*

Another kind of a deficit **of coordination of activities** in the **problem solving process** related to the refugees has been expressed following:

*“[...] - controlling organization partly very stringent in their rules (e.g. no recognition of signature lists; notation differs sometimes. Simplicity of required and standardized forms is not satisfied, refugees don’t understand the questions/content, the official language isn’t understandable. Participants were sent by official authorities like job centers without any information towards the refugees as well as towards execution organizations (e.g. for participation in integration courses), (Deficit of – A.S.) clear statements about targets, goals especially from the authorities.” (DE).*

*“The procedure in the execution of courses for refugees is different in the branches. This requires a better communication between the different branches.” (DE)*

*“[...] sometimes the internal communication is far away from the everyday tasks / the actual tasks.” (DE).*

To the question how it could be possible to overcome some of the barriers and obstacles in work with refugees, one expert mentioned as a priority means to “make communication better”:

*“Yes, it’s possible by better communication with other responsible bodies, public authorities, service provider.” (DE).*

Positive communication as an essential means in problems solving has been recognized in work with single-parents following:

*“All over it is a positive communication and a productive cooperation, but there is sometimes a lack in transparency when it comes to work processes. There is also no joint team for/with the single parents.” (DE, Ditmarschen1). And once more on the best way how to solve problems and*



communicate with society *“More positive, but unfortunately it is not easy to motivate the society to work with social themes and social issues.”* (DE).

The communication barriers and a deficit of coordination of activities in solving problems mentioned also related to the NEET youth:

*There is “[..] a lack of information and coordination of activities between schools (different organizations and/or departments): these young people also have behavioural problems at school, they tend to be negative and aggressive and school often lack the internal resources to overcome the problems, to work on their motivation and find better solutions. They are isolated in their own environments – communicating with the similar; teachers sometimes do not understand those young persons, their behaviour and attitude.”* (LV).

*“We do have a problem to engage and involve new perspective people, young persons that are at the moment outside our social network. It is not easy to start the business without any knowledge, information and understanding. Thus, the deficit of our coordination may be mentioned the educational/ informational activities for society in general (more or less today we are using direct methods – and well-targeted).”* (LV).

And another dissatisfaction with the coordination of information flow has been documented in such a way:

*“We have several important issues to discuss – primarily, responsibility and competences (which institution have responsibility to respond, engage and carry out specific activities), who (professionals) shall be responsible for the process, services and how to ensure those services.”* (LV).

The communication and coordination are serious barriers in every day work of the social service provision organizations.

Better communication and more responsible coordination of activities between subordinate bodies of social service provision are important tools in problems solving and in an improvement of functioning social service organizations. It depends mainly on management of organisations. And it is easy to improve by activating management functions.



### 3.II.2.8. Knowledge of foreign languages

Knowledge of foreign languages is another part of barriers and obstacles connected with the social service provision for refugees and immigrants. It is worth to pay a little bit attention to offers of experts how to solve these problems. There is a very actual need in work with refugees and immigrants to organize more language courses and to have more money for interpreters. This need is documented variously and it is assessed as a means of overcoming many barriers by German experts:

*“There is a strong demand and less offer of language courses”, (DE), “[..] We need more money for more translator, also to support Language courses [..] more language courses for all refugees, also for Afghan”, “ the refugees need more time for their courses (very limited in time) because of bad results in the first language examinations, this trend can be seen by all language training institutes [..] or: “One barrier is to find a translator for Tigrini or Kurd”. (DE).*

There is mentioned a necessary service which is missing: *“Translator for Hospital escort, no one is paying for the translator. The insurance Companies or Sozialzentren are not willing to pay. [..] Less practical exercises for refugees in language courses, visits of companies and official offices, methodology: “learning by doing””. (DE).*

As a way of support and empowerment of the organization which provides services for refugees and immigrants has been stated:

*“A license for execution of examinations for language courses of all levels (on low level available in the academy).” (DE).*

The social services for refugees and immigrants are more expensive due to different foreign language services, that is the main conclusion on the communication with this group of end-users by means of interviews. There should be necessary specific additional services and payments to work for the benefit of refugees and immigrants.

### 3.II.2.9. Human factor

#### **Qualities of the persons’ in power impact on the social processes and social service provision**

A fact that persons in power can influence significantly social processes is evident.



Several experts worried about qualities of new persons in power as decision makers after an election to come soon the both the national level parliament election and the municipal election. The value system, attitudes, intelligence, political orientation of persons in power impact their decision making and policies. In the same way they impact legal regulations, laws, management of finances.

One German expert has expressed the concerns in context of persons in power on the social service provision in future following:

*“The change of government will be a big challenge. New social laws will be reproofed and we can hope that the new law for equality will persist.”* (DE).

Two Latvian experts were interviewed a day before a municipal election of deputies taken place on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2017. One of them has many times mentioned a fact of the municipal elections and has expressed her wish:

*“let it more quickly gone away this municipal election for seeing who, that means, what qualities’ people will come in power”.*

The expert has concerned because of decisions of local authorities about social services and their financing due to political orientation and value system of these persons. She had expressed concerns due to long-term experience and observation:

*“[...] persons in power don’t make anything in long-term perspective”.* (LV).

Another Latvian expert had expressed same concerns in relationship to regional and municipal authorities and their impact on such end-user group as NEET youth, saying that municipal elections (took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2017) may influence its participation and activities and that a social engagement depends on the leadership.

*“Lack of education to officials about reading and writing Finnish in a way that non-Finnish speakers can also understand.”* (FI) - this quotation, of course, can be fully related to the representatives of the highest-level institutions and their subordinated communication using the same terminology of the official bureaucratic and legislative language between the both institutions and ordinary people. This notice characterizes widespread qualities of persons in power position at



the different levels. There is often witnessed a lack of trust towards politicians because of their low intelligence, lack of the ethics, selfishness, and their alienation from the ordinary people.

### **Influence of the qualities of the end-users on their involvement and empowerment**

Several experts have given an information on typical characteristics of their end-users. Different end-users' groups have, without any doubt, their specific qualities. Their characteristics are sometimes a barrier in social service provision process.

There is mentioned *“a passivity of the disabled people”* as a barrier in promotion of their quality of life in Latvia.

The NEET youth have own specifics and has been characterized more extensive:

*“Last year we had an exchange of experience – good-practice with Jelgava (they had a police employed at school and it was changing); it is also very important to ensure safety at schools (we have experience when students are drunken, aggressive, and how control the students, what to do when they do escape, or do not want to attend the school).”* (LV).

*“[...] problems (drop-outs, very low grades and motivation to study, aggression and intolerance, different set of addiction) tend to be difficult and is the result of poor socio-economic situation (influenced by poverty, generational effect, parental antisocial or low level of education, unemployment etc., parental addiction, lack of parenting time). Hot topic is collaboration between school and family, parental involvement. Usually parents of disadvantaged youth do not want to cooperate, involve and are very passive. Still their involvement is very important.”* (LV).

Another quality of the rural NEET youth mentioned is a low self-esteem.

*“[...] we found out that a lot of young people are afraid and with low self-esteem to start the entrepreneurship, they do not believe in their own ideas; Therefore, pre-incubation is very crucial part of our framework and work, still missing financing. It is very important that persons who have ideas get this “push”, becomes open and can test (practice) their ideas”.* (LV).

To sum up, this subject show, that a permanent work directed to the changes in people's consciousness and behavioural specifics is an essential faction and aspect of the empowerment of end-users in rural area.



### 3.II.2.10. Other barriers and obstacles

Other barriers and obstacles form those barriers and obstacles which are not included in the categories written above but they are mentioned by the interviewed experts. So, a reason for that is a sense of gratitude to experts and a duty not to lose the gathered information.

Finnish experts' expressions on the barriers and obstacles in work with refugees and immigrants are following:

*"We need more courses for different types of students. Now refugees and other migrant have to all be in the same classes even though some are illiterate refugees and some educated migrants. These situations prolong integration and language learning. [..]"*

*Not enough individual guidance. [..]"*

*Open jobs and unemployed migrants do not meet. [..]"*

*All the social benefits are now to be applied through an internet based service. This excludes those groups of people who are not equipped to use the computer." (FI).*

Other received expressions on the barriers and obstacles are:

*"The refugees need more time for their courses (very limited in time) because of bad results in the first language examinations, this trend can be seen by all language training institutes." (DE).*

The barriers and obstacles to specifics of rural area generally are:

*"Rural areas - difficulties whit offering activities equally for the whole area of responsibility (entire municipality)." (FI).*

*"Logistic is of high importance." (FI).*

*"There are threshold to use the advisement. It takes some efforts. Some of them are hard to reach, for example, because of mental or psychological diseases." (DE).*

One of the Finnish experts is worrying about the social service provision in the next few years looking at the social processes to come and what is going on:

*"Cuts being made in the municipality. Cuts in social welfare for older adults. Relatives are expected to take care of their older adults while the demands on labor market are getting higher. It remains to be seen, due to the social welfare and health care reform in Finland." (FI).*



## Conclusions and recommendations on the staff and its working conditions (II.2)

The staff issue is the most important and complicate factor in the work of the social service provision organizations. The staff is a core element and it has many dimensions of the barriers and obstacles which impact on the good service provision and job satisfaction of the staff.

There are following main barriers and obstacles highlighted by experts in relation to staff, firstly, the difficulties to recruit a social work staff and a limited **availability** of the staff, that results in the **insufficient number** of the staff. Secondly, **low wages**, thirdly, a **lack of a specialization or specialized** staff to work with the specific client categories, fourthly, an acute **need of psychological support/ empowerment** for the both staff and end-users and a regular **supervision** for the staff, fifthly, an **overwork** and an **overload with bureaucratic functions** preparing many documents (so called amount of paperwork) what causes a reduction of a direct contact with end-users and empowering them.

The **low wages** are the common obstacle to recruitment of the staff for all three countries.

The staff wages are inadequate low in comparison to a work load and a hardness of social work. Low wages are a subject of complaints in all three compared countries.

Low wages and stressful job are causes for a low prestige of social work and **insufficient number** of the good professional staff.

Another actualized issue by experts is a need of a **specialization** in social service provision corresponding end-user categories like it is an evident norm in medicine and many other professions.

The huge **bureaucratic documentation** – in electronic and paper versions is another serious obstacle in social service provision. This work deprives, especially, if it is huge, direct work with the end-users.

A heaviness of the social work with weak, disadvantaged or deviant people in a combination with unsatisfactory labor conditions makes psychological footprints. A part of the staff burns out and does not want to continue the work with the end-users. In case they stay at the SSPO they prefer to work only with documentation – to prepare, to check and to order documents and refuse to work with the end-users. It appears here clearly a problematic why professionals in the social service provision organizations need they selves an empowerment. The main empowerment form used for professionals in the social service provision organizations is a **supervision** but experts expressed



definitely a need to have a psychologist as a staff member and a need of the staff to receive the psychological consultations. In the same way, there are possible other innovative forms of the empowerment of the staff and a prevention its from a burning out.

**Societally negative attitude** to disadvantaged social groups makes a turbulent background for the social service provision. It has an evolutionary determination and it is permanently stable element because of its very deep roots in the human nature. The distinctions among and between people diminish biologically their tolerance and often awake their negative feelings and attitudes despite the ideas of the love to other humans spread in the Bible or the secular fundamental humanitarian document - the Universal Human Rights Declaration and many other texts.

Concerning a **communication style of the end-users** and **with them** a general conclusion is that the hard life makes communication style rude. Life in poverty can make and often makes people angry, aggressive and sharp. It is evidence-based in this project in the experts interviews in Latvia.

German case show how long-term unemployment correlates with life in poverty and how all that impact people. They are marginalized and they feel a stigma, and that is why they try to avoid the communication with others. Skilled professionals are significant factor for the successful communication with the end-users always.

Another dimension of the communication is an **official communication** between professionals in a problem solving process. A lack of the work coordination is a serious barrier in every day activities of the social service provision organizations.

A lack of an operative circulation of the information from decision makers and social policy makers as well as their coordination of the activities is an other obstacle refusing an effective work of the social service organizations.

Better communication and more responsible coordination of activities between subordinate bodies of the social service provision are important tools in solving problems and promotion of the social service provision. The quality of communication and coordination depends on the quality of the management and governance of the institutions.





The human factor is evaluated in the expert interviews in two aspects. One aspect relates to qualities of the persons in power. Their value system, ethics, and political orientation are significant factors which influence decision making and policies.

Another aspect of the human factor relates to the characteristics of the end-users. The Latvian experts complains about a passivity, isolation trends, low self-esteem of the end-users.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **1. The necessity and measures to increase a prestige of the social work professionals.**

Concerning the social service provision staff there is an absolute necessity to enhance a prestige of a social worker profession. It means to send a message to decision makers and policy makers on the necessity to enhance their work conditions and try to convince them to make decisions and manage processes that lead to an

increase wages, a specialization of professionals to work with concrete specific end-users' category, offer supervision on regular basis, revise an amount of needed documentation for service provision (thus they will have more time for communication with end-users), empower staff with different events and offers for them. These measures could reduce the actual difficulties in Germany and Latvia to recruit high qualified staff.

A topic on a necessity to enhance a wellbeing of social service provision professionals and its positive impact on the wellbeing of the end-users has to been kept permanently in the communication with the decision and policy makers.

#### **2. A control over the characteristics of the management staff.**

More positive communication style among people and more rational organization of subordinated communication between institutions and coordination of the labor is a function of a management. And it depends on qualities and responsibilities of different level managers.

#### **3. The influence on the consciousness and behaviour of the population in the education process.**

A permanent work directed to make changes in end-users' consciousness and behavioural specifics is an essential faction and aspect of the empowerment of end-users. The same means would lead to slowly changes in people's attitudes.



## Appendices

There is given in a form of the appendices the experts' thoughts on different issues outside the core plan of the interview with an aim to prevent losing some information given by the interviewed experts.

### 1. Experts' view on needs of the social service provision organizations and their staff

*"Further education (training)." (FI, Vaasa, Novia1), " [...] more financial support and more jobs for employees. Steady internal quality management and the tools and resources to implement this." (DE).*

*"It needs wider network with a good flow of information. For example, round tables with participation of social providers and end-users." Support for staff "I need more scope and more freedom for my work with long-term unemployed people. My organisation asks if these activities are relevant for my job. The benefit isn't acknowledged." (DE).*

*"Centralized administration would be helpful, all service provider should be located in one place in order to clarify the unshorten administrated process necessary for a successful integration into the labor market." (DE).*

*"The social service providers need to get more knowledge about empowerment. They also need to learn how to imply empowerment in their concepts. This could help to involve the single parents also in political decisions." (DE, Ditmarschen2).*

*"A functioning network is important and the cooperation with other providers. Thematic trainings. Necessary freedom to do what I think it is right to do" (DE).*

*"I would need a fulltime job for my work field." (DE).*

To sum up, experts have expressed the needs of a support for the social service provision organizations and their staff in such key words: education, training, quality management, more information, more freedom, networking, cooperation, more contracts, fulltime job, centralized administration, and more knowledge about empowerment.



## 2. Experts' proposals how to overcome the barriers and obstacles

Any experts have given their proposals how to overcome any barriers and obstacles. They have a good understanding on their locations and needs of their organizations and end-users. Proposals of experts are following on an enhancement of a work:

*"Further **cooperation** with other service producers within the same field." (FI).*

*"Increased **cooperation**. Marketing for reaching out to all. Need for increased **cooperation** between different service providers.*

*Older adults who have reduced mobility are in risk of exclusion (due to rural areas and problems with travelling to the activities). Motivational work is needed to reduce exclusion.*

*Increased working hours for visibility. Enhancement of structuring the work." (FI).*

*"We would need a steady department, which would work with the needs and problems of single parents.*

*"The Job-centers have to change their concepts. It would be helpful if they would leave the single mothers and fathers alone, until the children are older and the parents can decide themselves to go back to work (In the moment the Job-centers are allowed to pressure and to take coercive action)." (DE).*

*"We need more stories and information about long-term unemployed people in the press and public. That would be helpful for changing the attitude towards the end-users and for changing prejudices." (DE).*

The proposals of the experts on the societal, professional and psychological issues are following:

*"There must be wider offers with new targets. With other idea of man/human being. With other views at long-term unemployed people." (DE).*

*"The measure of controlling should to be cut down. It binds to much energy and capacities. A three-year perspective would be more helpful." (DE).*

*"The childcare and the work time has to be more flexible. The childcare should also be free of charge." (DE).*



*"[...] offers have to be more addressed on the needs of the long-term unemployed people. It needs offers, which strengthen the self-esteem and the basic emotions. They should be less performance-oriented."* (DE).

There is necessary *"to built separate education of disabled inside life long education because they feel badly learning together with ordinary people."* (LV).

*"State paid service assistants for disabled and mental retarded people are highly demanded owing to their functions to be present outside home, to teach how to cook, how to wash clothes. Actual is a need a client orientated specialization of assistants. Carers come only for making any housekeeping jobs."* (LV).

*"There is a need of specialization of services in rural areas for a reason to avoid that everywhere is done the same, e.g., there are everywhere group flats and no other services. All other services are available closer to the capital city Riga. But there is necessity for an availability of these services in regions."* (LV).

*"We need more controversy about gender and about single parents in the local politics."* (DE).

To sum up, the most significant proposals how to overcome barriers and obstacles in different places working with different end-users are: cooperation, reciprocity, freedom for single parents in decision making when to return in labor market, more information in mass media about long-term unemployed people with an aim to change negative social attitude to them, reducing the control measures, a separate education for disabled people, the wider service provision and specialization in rural area.

### 3. Experts on the evidence-based empowerment tools

Experts from Kurzeme region in Latvia deal with their experience on the **empowerment tools** which their have found for and with disabled people. One of the social empowerment tools is:

*"small group meetings of disabled and retired people what practice SEMPRE Diaconal centre of Liepaja. Gathering them together outside their own home and therefore an exchange of opinions and experiences how to do something or how to cope difficult situations. A result is an empowerment of these people."* (LV).

Another social empowerment tool is characterized so:



*“long-term working with dysfunctional and poor families has evidenced that an empowerment of these socially excluded marginalized people is a publically saying of any words and sentences for protection and advocacy their children. After that they **have a courage to speak**, before that they have kept a silence.” (LV).*

Third empowerment tool is a **social entrepreneurship** what can empower people socially, psychologically, and materially.

The successful social entrepreneurship needs:

*“an active man who organize and make projects. There was once in Rucava a franchise of business where were employed socially weak people. They folded cards for the Easter, Christmas and put they in envelopes. But this business is gone away seems to China where there is a cheap labor force.” (LV).*

#### **4. Experts on the emergent innovations**

Those of experts who wanted refer to emerging innovations in their social service provision organizations have said:

*“The use of Digital Storytelling in language teaching (e.g. <http://dstfinland.ning.com/>)” (FI).*

*“Development of digital tools. Networking, different service producers working together in smaller (less populated) areas.” (FI).*

*“For some years the social service providers and the corporation have been working more and more with prevention in the social field. As an example: The child protective services getting information about issues with mother and child or families can react earlier with appropriate provisions.” (DE).*

*“Being friendly and open to all refugees.” (DE).*

*“Good experiences with “collegial advice” (it’s a standardized method), trainings and education. Valuable impulses through the training with Prof. Herriger within the scope SEMPRE.” (DE).*

*“Networking is helpful, as well as contacts to other social providers. Because of other social providers long-term unemployed people come to the neighbourhood meeting.*



*Good press and publicity work is helpful” (DE).*

*“Many experiences. One example of a good practice: in 2015 our employees have been trained in a special advisory concept. The issues were the understanding of advice and the attitude. The main message was not to force advice but to look at the strength of the clients and to look at that, what they bring for themselves. That was a special training of the “Agentur für Arbeit” for the jobcentre. Another experience was the project “Selbstvermittlungcoaching” [self-job placement coaching]. It will end because of a lack of counselling experts.” (DE).*

*“There is a need for sustainability and long-term teamwork, interacting with each young person (necessarily need psychosocial support, psychotherapeutic support etc.); the young person requires a trust in person who truly understands him, his situation, professional being able to be with him during the longer period of time.” (LV).*

*“We need new solutions, techniques in communication between the institutions, other service providers and parents; we need mentors, new training methods; we need some knowledge of new information technologies, that can be used in such trainings; we also need the solutions – techniques in effective process management, new tools.” (LV).*

## **5. Experts on the challenges in the social service provision in future**

Any experts have looked at the social service provision trends and challenges in the future. Their forecasts are expressed on the services for elderly, refugees and immigrants, long-term unemployed people among immigrants. There are mentioned the following future challenges:

*“To keep up with the development. People are meant to live at home for longer and longer which leads to **worsened conditions among those older adults living at home** compared to earlier. Support and guidance needed for those nearest to the older adult. All service producers are affected by this development, both municipalities and organizations. This NGO is a complement to the statutory service. New working methods and tools are needed for coping with the situation. Loneliness is a big challenge that set demands on both relatives and homecare staff.” (FI).*

**“To integrate the refugees, that will take many years, especially the women.” (DE).**



**“Unqualified personal of the local administrative level and above** (massive lux in the administration flow from e.g. ministries into the municipal / local level, insufficiently trained stuff.” (DE).

**“A lack of professionals (teachers with license) for C1 courses especially for occupational language courses on a high level.”** (DE).

**“It’s important to have a good balance in the provision of offers.** There are more and more measures/programs for refugees and migrants. We have to take care, that long-term unemployed people don’t fall through the cracks.” (DE).

**“More and more young people are without jobs and get long-term unemployed.** We have to create offers for this age group. We have to customize our offers.” (DE).

**“It’s more and more difficult to find good counselling experts.** The customer structure will change. We have to customize our counselling.” (DE).

Experts thoughts and forecasts on challenges in the future briefly are: “worsened conditions among those older adults living at home”, difficulties in the *integration of the refugees, especially immigrant women, unqualified personal of the local administrative level and above, increasing number of young people without jobs and getting long-term unemployed, a lack of high level professionals - teachers [..] for occupational language courses and counselling experts.* (DE).



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