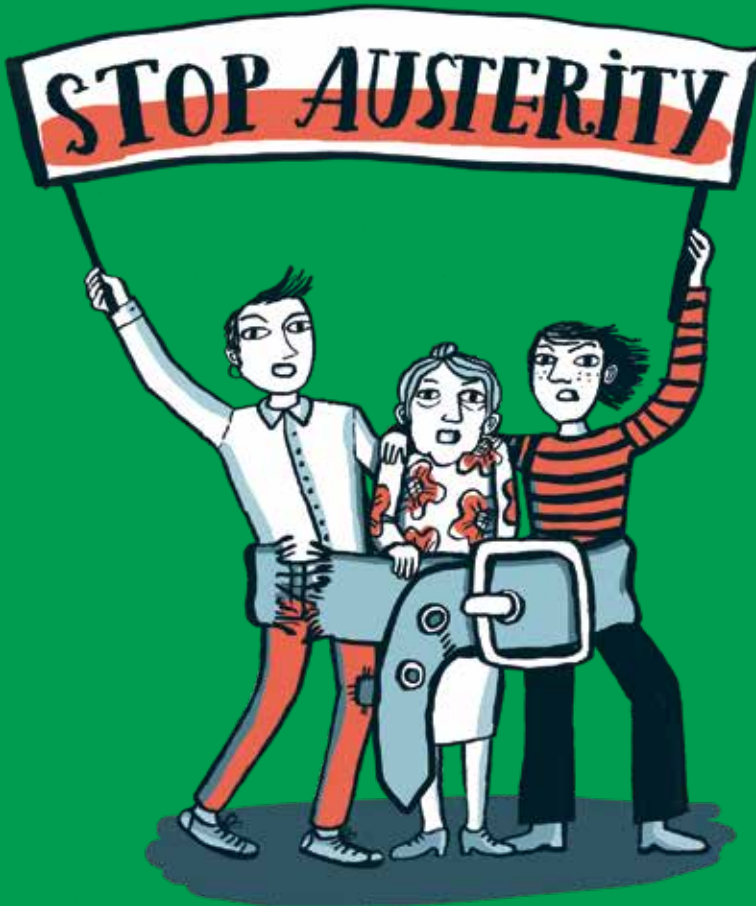


LITHUANIA

AUSTERITY, GENDER INEQUALITY AND FEMINISM AFTER THE CRISIS

Austerity Policies in Lithuania: impact on women's socio-economical situation

Jolanta Bielskienė and Severija Bielskytė



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Introduction

This paper aims to demonstrate how austerity policies introduced by the in-office right-wing government in 2009 have affected the position of women in Lithuanian society. The research combines statistical data (provided by Statistics Lithuania), an analysis of interviews with politicians and activists, and media analysis on the topic of austerity (2016-2017). We analyse various scripts and recordings of Parliament sessions during the 'Night Tax Reform' (which took place between 18 and 19 December 2008) to assess policy changes and the implementation of austerity policies (see References 10-17).

Lithuania is often considered a high achiever in the realm of women rights: voting rights for women were gained in 1918, abortion was legalised in 1955, and the country's current president is female, as is the Chairman of Parliament and a number of ministers. However, a closer look at statistics of female representation in academia, governing bodies at private companies, or governing posts in public entities demonstrates that the reality is not so optimistic. The Gender Equality Index for Lithuania as of 2017 stands at 56.8, which is below the EU average of 66.2 [ref. 27].

An analysis of Lithuania's austerity regime is crucial in the context of Europe, for this is the country that was hit the hardest of all European countries by cuts to the welfare state following the financial crisis. The austerity measures in Lithuania were drastic and the devastating results have yet not been rectified. Between 2007 and 2010 unemployment rapidly increased to a substantial 14 % (compared to the 3 % unemployment rate in Portugal, Slovakia, and Bulgaria; 4 % in Denmark, Hungary, and Greece; 5 % in Iceland; 9 % in Ireland; 12 % in Spain and Estonia; and 13 % in Latvia). As a result emigration has risen enormously. Since 2004, 571 000 Lithuanians have emigrated, 211 000

in the period between 2012 and 2016. Worryingly, these are only the official figures. Unofficial predictions estimate that up to a third of the population emigrated. Furthermore, it is estimated that 72 % of Lithuanian migrants are between the ages of 15 and 44.

Aiming to establish how austerity politics during the economic crisis of 2009 affected women in Lithuania, we have taken into consideration the following factors: average salary, the gender pay gap, unemployment, emigration, child-care costs and maternity benefits, poverty risk, education costs, and pensions. Furthermore we include domestic violence as one of the factors enabling us to measure the climate of society and progress in the realm of women's equality. These factors have been analysed in the context of three comparative time periods: 2008 (pre-crisis), 2009-2012 (the austerity regime) and 2016 (post-austerity).

Methodology and a note on difficulties gathering statistics

The process of this project consisted of collecting and correlating statistical data from Statistics Lithuania, interviewing three politicians/political activists to get a sense of the immediate effects of the 'Night Tax Reform', analysing transcripts of Parliament sessions to paint a picture of the tax and law amendments and analysing public discourse, or lack thereof, from media articles and public social media pages such as Facebook on austerity measures. The analysis of statistical data posed certain problems, as data collection has not all been consistent for the years in question (for example in 2016 we can find statistical analysis of gender inequality indicators, but in 2011 there is no such analysis, and data collected is more related to women's position in relation to marriage and family). Furthermore, there has been little gender mainstreaming of the available data, so it is often the case that the relative position of women compared to the rest of society is not available.

Gains for women's equality in the period preceding the austerity regime: pre-crisis period

During their term in office, from 2001 to 2008, the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party introduced various policies with the aim or effect of enhancing the relative position of women. The most significant of these for this paper was the increase to pensions, the improvement of the national minimum wage, a 3 % cut to income tax, and a substantial expansion of maternity benefits. The policies were proposed in 2007 and came into effect in 2008.

Notably, pensions were increased for around 450 000 pensioners, with significant benefits for women and people with disabilities. This is due to a change in how entitlement was calculated, placing greater importance on the highest salary earned during the person's years of service. This positively impacted the aforementioned groups as they are more likely to have had prolonged or repeated gaps in employment, or have worked part-time, due to caretaking responsibilities or health issues.

Furthermore, Lithuania's maternity leave became one of the most generous in Europe. Maternity benefits were increased by 150 %, the childcare allowance of 52 Litas (EUR 15), previously paid only until a child was 12 years old, was extended until adulthood, paid parental leave was extended to two years, and the possibility of paternity leave was introduced. These new social benefits signified substantial gains in gender equality.

These changes resulted in a rapid increase in birth rates, which had been falling off since 1994. The first sign of turning statistics was in 2006, when the Social Democrats introduced new family support policies. The year 2008 saw 3 000 more babies born than in the previous year, the number rising to an additional 16 000 more the following year, with numbers increasing until the effects of austerity measures set in.

An overview of austerity measures and the austerity regime period

The following period of 2008 to 2012, however, marked Lithuanian history with an austerity regime, introduced by a new Coalition Government formed by the Conservative and Liberal parties.

In December 2008, the new Government's policy package of budget spending cuts and tax reforms was brought before the Seimas (Parliament). It became known as the 'Night Tax Reform', as the Seimas met for two days and nights to vote on it. Just before Christmas, over 60 amendments to the law and more than 100 tax amendments were adopted within just a few days and came into force in January 2009. These sudden and drastic changes, coming just after the holiday period, hit taxpayers hard due to the lack of an adequate layover period or time to prepare for the change. In his speech on the situation in 2009, then-Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius stated:

Experts note that the Baltic States have been hit hardest by the global crisis, with the deepest downturn in the world. Before the crisis, the economies of the Baltic States grew rapidly with the financing of easily accessible credits, which meant that the decline in the Baltic States was much higher than that of the EU's older members, since the old European Union countries grew slower and more modestly; their economies were not overheated. In 2009, the economy of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia dropped by 15 % on average, while in Germany and the Scandinavian countries it went down by only 5 %. Another reason for the relatively bigger crisis in the Baltic States is that the Baltic economies are very open; 60 % of our gross domestic product is from export [...]. By closing our main markets both in the East and in the West, our exports also dropped very fast. [ref. 20].

Yet a paradox of the Conservative-Liberal government's choices can be found in their refusal to borrow from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Conservatives argued their case on the grounds that this would result in drastic cuts to social securities and benefits. The irony, however, lies in the reality of the government's already applied austerity measures, ones significantly more deeply cutting than even those required by the IMF, and their choice to instead take out loans elsewhere that were an estimated four to five times more expensive (from an as-of-yet undisclosed foreign commercial bank). As a result, Lithuania is still repaying these loans at an 11 % interest rate, with a yearly cost of an estimated 600 million euros. By the end of 2012, the general government gross debt has more than doubled, reaching 13 264 billion euros. The largest part of this debt - 5 billion euros - is expected to be repaid only between 2020 and 2022.

Main amendments during the austerity regime

During the austerity regime, the value added tax (VAT) was increased to 19 % (from 15 %), taking effect immediately, and was yet again raised to 21 % in September 2009. All tax exemptions were lifted, with the exception of medicine, books (left at 9 %), and heating (5 %). At the beginning of 2010, pensions were cut by 12 % and working pensions (for those retirees still working) by up to 70 %. Additionally, extra reductions were also made to the pensions of public sector workers, general social benefits, disability benefits (groups II and III), maternity, unemployment, and child benefits.

At first, the basic salary rate was decreased proportionately to comply with the Lithuanian Constitution. However, this policy was later abandoned, as salaries of public officials were reduced by cutting bonuses and so-called 'qualification' premiums for expertise levels. A point of importance can be found here, for it has become apparent from interviews with politicians that this period in fact saw an *increase* in the Gender Equality Index of Lithuania. This was not due to significant gains or salary increases for women, but to the *decrease* in the average salaries of men, who, as public sector officials, had previously benefited from bonuses and premiums unlike their female colleagues. So in fact the increase of the Gender Equality Index meant diminished living standards for men, not an improved situation for women.

It is important to note that amidst the austerity reforms the Conservative-Liberal coalition also introduced higher education reforms and, despite the Constitutional Court's warnings, tuition fees were introduced in 2009. This has resulted in an increase of inequality in the higher education system for while tuition fees apply only to a portion of the student body, government-funded university places are rewarded on a meritocratic basis. While this gives the illusion of fairness, the reality is that applicants from less academically vigorous schools (most of which are situated in poorer, often rural, areas) and who often achieve lower scores on national exams, are less likely to be rewarded with funded university places. As a result, those from already underprivileged backgrounds are burdened with increasingly high tuition rates, and, more often than not, unforgiving loans. Tuition fees also radically increased emigration among young people who instead chose to study abroad.

In November 2009, conservative Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius boasted on BBC Hard Talk of Lithuania as an example to other European countries of the right way to introduce austerity measures. To Jonathan Charles' comment that 'people will suffer', A. Kubilius replied, 'Of course people will suffer. But the economy comes first.' [ref. 19].

Later in 2014 a compensation mechanism for losses in pensions was introduced by a new Social Democrat government. Nonetheless, as seen from statistics [ref. 24], 167 000 pensioners did not receive this compensation, as they passed away before the law came into effect in May 2014. Lawyers and members of Parliament also received compensation unlike the rest of the public, who had to make do with their losses.

Employment and income

According to Labour Force Survey data, in 2016 the activity rate of women aged 15 to 64 stood at 73.9 %, that of men at 77.1 %; the employment rate of women 15 to 64 stood at 68.8 %, that of men at 70 %. Women working part-time made up 10 % of all employed women, men working part-time, 6 % of all men employed. The female unemployment rate was 6.7, male 9.1 %.

Health care and social work, where women made up 85.3 % of

all persons employed, remained the most feminised field of activity; in accommodations and food service activities, women made up 78.8 %, in education 78.7 %. The most masculine fields of activity were construction (where men made up 90.6 % of all persons employed) and transportation and storage (75 %). A total of 16 % of female enterprise managers worked in retail (excluding the motor vehicles industry), 14 % in membership organisations, 9 % in education, and 6 % in wholesale trade (again excluding the motor vehicles industry).

According to earnings statistics in 2016 the average gross monthly earnings of women was 84.4 % of men's. The gender pay gap (GPG) in the private sector was bigger, at 17.6 %, than in the public sector (13.7 %). The largest GPG was recorded in the financial and insurance sectors (38.3 %) and the information and communication sectors (29.9 %). Based on the data from the Statistical Register of Economic Entities, at the beginning of 2017, there were 31 000 female enterprise managers, or 30 % of all managers of economic entities in operation. The largest proportion of female managers was recorded in patient care with 63 % of all managers in the field, health care and social work at 62 %, and education 50 %. The smallest – 11 % – was in construction. A comparison of changes in professional divisions can be seen in Table No 5.

Average salary, pay gap, unemployment, emigration

The average salary during the pre-crisis period (2008) was EUR 653.6 per month. Immediately after the 'Night Tax Reform' average salaries started to drop from EUR 624.6 in 2009 down to EUR 571.7 in 2012. In the post-austerity period the average salary started to grow immediately reaching EUR 709.7 by 2016.

From these figures it seems apparent that the austerity regime has drastically reduced consumerism and spending instead of increasing it.

Here we need to introduce the statistics of the gender pay gap. The GPG in Lithuania was 10 % in 2017 (in 2016 it was 14.4 %, in 2015, 14.2 % on average) (21). However, for this analysis it is important to follow the changes in the gender pay gap during the crisis. In 2008 the GPG stood at 21.6 %. It fell during the austerity regime to as low as 11.9 % in 2011 and then rose again during the post-austerity period. As mentioned earlier, this is not due to successful gender equality measures but is predom-

inantly to a large number of bonuses and premiums being cut. The beneficiaries of these bonuses prior to the cuts were predominantly men, uncovering the deep inequalities in the labour market. As a result, salaries in the public sector became more equal between genders and this resulted in a lower GPG (in comparison, the GPG in Lithuania in 2009 was 21 % in the private and 13 % in the public sector). When during the post-austerity period the average salary started to climb, the GPG started to grow too, mainly because salaries grew in the private sector, which is responsible for the biggest GPG. For example, the highest pay gap - 45 % - was recorded in the financial and insurance sectors.

The unemployment rate rose dramatically during the austerity regime. Between 2006 and 2008 unemployment was at an average of 5.1 % for women and 5.4 % for man. From 2009 to 2012 the unemployment rate was 13.05 % for women and 19.3 % for man (see Table 2).

Furthermore, reductions in base income and tax increases affected industries and businesses. It resulted in losses of better paid jobs where men were overwhelmingly overrepresented. As a higher percentage of women worked in lower paid jobs such as social work, cleaning, and catering, their unemployment rate in comparison was not affected as much.

While a surface analysis of this data signifies that the male population suffered much higher losses in the labour market as a result of austerity measures, we can also draw the conclusion that these figures are most likely affected by emigration. Statistical figures on emigration (see Table 3 and Table 4) are scarce and sporadic for the period under study¹ and do not allow for statistically air-tight conclusions to be drawn, however, information provided by public debates, speeches of politicians, and media articles provides a wider picture of the gendered effects of emigration and has particular significance when discussing the consequences of austerity. It is important to underline that the austerity regime was in itself a central reason for the dramatic increase in emigration, in particular when it comes to female migration. Before the austerity cuts men were more likely to emigrate. Due to the cuts

.....
¹ More accurate data on emigration only began to be gathered as new penalties for not declaring one's emigration status and not paying into social security were introduced at the end of 2016.

to social benefits and a decrease in salaries, young women started to emigrate in large numbers, leaving their children to be looked after by grandparents or other family members.

A more insightful and gender-minded analysis would reflect that, while a significant number of men who found themselves unemployed moved to European or North American countries looking for employment and sustenance for their families in Lithuania, women left behind had to cope with a dual pressure. Women faced the added strain of keeping their jobs in a precarious labour market as well as looking after children or elderly relatives alone. Furthermore, large numbers of women (those who lost their jobs or were no longer able to support themselves on their salaries) who emigrated left their young children in the care of grandparents. This put additional pressure on older women, those not yet retirement age, yet, in a way having to go back in time to juggle work and caretaking responsibilities again.

Overview of child and parental benefits

As demonstrated in more detail in Table 6, currently there are the following forms of childcare and parental benefits in Lithuania:

- ◆ Maternity or paternity leave until the child is one: a mother or father can choose to leave work for up to a year and receive a proportionate amount of their yearly salary.
- ◆ Maternity or paternity leave until the child is two: a mother or father can choose to leave work for up to two years and receive 70 % of their yearly salary for the first year and 40 % for the second (the years can also be split between the mother and father).
- ◆ Maternity benefit: paid to a woman when she leaves work due to pregnancy and childbirth.
- ◆ Paternity benefit: paid leave (from two weeks to a month) for a father in the first month after a child is born.
- ◆ One-off pregnancy subsidy
- ◆ Birth subsidy
- ◆ Child benefits

Maternity and paternity leave

Due to low birth rates (the average family in Lithuania has one child) and high emigration, Lithuania's population is decreasing. For this reason, in the pre-crisis period, the Social Democrat government introduced an extra package of child care benefits, as mentioned earlier. This resulted in an increase in birth rates. In particular, the additional package, relating to the mother's salary, encouraged career seeking women to start or increase their families. If in 2007 the average mater-

nity benefit (pregnancy and childbirth) was EUR 1 580, in 2009 it rose to EUR 2 510. However, after the 'Night Tax Reform', maternity benefits were cut and reached their lowest point in 2011 at EUR 2 280. Furthermore, the 'Night Tax Reform' introduced a maternity benefit ceiling, which discouraged high earning women from having children.

Until 2009 maternity leave was available for mothers for up to three years. The length of the maternity leave eventually taken was left up to mothers, but employers were required by law to keep their job position open for up to three years, the first two years being paid for by the state. In 2009, the average maternity/paternity benefit was EUR 8 760 a year. Due to the austerity reform these benefits were cut, hitting the lowest average of EUR 5 000 in 2013. By the end of 2016 the average for the first year of maternity leave was EUR 5 320, with the average for the second year even lower, EUR 3 630.

The significance of these cuts, which still continue even in the post-crisis period, cannot be understated. They have had the effect of financially disadvantaging women who choose to have children, with single mothers no doubt being the most affected. From the numbers given, in 2016 mothers were receiving almost two times less income from maternity benefits on average than in 2009, while the cost of living has risen exponentially. On the other hand, however, allowing men to take paternity leave in place of maternity leave has incentivised them to do so, as have, in some ways, the benefit caps. As men's salaries are on average higher, the parental benefits they receive are also higher, providing a financial incentive for fathers to take parental leave instead of their partners.

In 2016, 41 500 people were on parental leave, just under half of these in the first year of the two-year parental leave. In the same year, 16 300 men, or about one-fifth of fathers to whom a child was born in that year, made use of the paternity benefit, which entitles them to a month of leave the first month after their child is born.

This paternity benefit for the first month after birth is paid by the state, covering the monthly salary. As seen from the analysed data, it appears that paternity leave is significantly more highly paid than maternity leave. In 2016 the paternity leave benefit was EUR 750 a month and maternity leave 5 320 a year. This could also be explained by the

fact that paternity leave is more likely to be taken by highly educated and qualified men. Their average salary is much higher than the average salary of women in Lithuania.

As previously touched upon, cutting maternity leave benefits may have inadvertently also had a positive effect. As the amount of parental benefits received is related to the salary of the mother or father, more men choose to take parental leave and care for their children instead of the mothers. Given the gender pay gap this choice often results in a more financially beneficial arrangement for a family. Furthermore, as parental benefits have been split into two separate payment years, some couples decide to split parental leave. This allows for a higher involvement on the part of fathers in childcare and increases gender equality in the country.

Child benefits

There has never been a significant child benefit in Lithuania which substantially improved the wellbeing of families. Before the 'Night Tax Reform' a small amount in child benefits was paid to every child until adulthood. However, the reforms cut its duration and now only allocates it to the lowest income families. It was reinstated to all in 2017. The reinstated child benefit is as low as EUR 15 per month, so for many families it is not worth the convoluted, and at times humiliating, process of applying for it at the social security offices. Compensation for people having children was implemented through an amendment to the taxation system, where one of the parents would be given a tax allowance. However, this excluded the unemployed or those not earning enough to be eligible for the allowance. The current Peasants-Greens government is attempting to rectify this situation and introduced a new child benefit, paid directly to one of the parent's accounts.

It is difficult to include childcare costs in the analysis as that statistical data has not been collected. Childcare costs are important to factor into this analysis as they often become one of the major expenses for working age women. We have drawn up estimates of these costs by looking through conversations on the cost on social media and believe that the average fee for a childminder grew from EUR 1 per hour before the austerity regime to EUR 5-10 per hour in 2017. The increase

in these costs may be the result of emigration, the introduction of the euro in 2015, and the decrease in public childcare. From the interviews we conducted with parents and politicians we would estimate that the costs for a state kindergarten are around EUR 100 a month, an average of EUR 600 per month to hire a private nanny, and EUR 700-1 000 per month in fees for a private kindergarten. At state primary schools, lessons finish around 1 p.m. and from then on, every hour of afterschool class is EUR 3-5, which comes to around EUR 50-70 a month. During the austerity regime the Conservative-Liberal government implemented wide-ranging measures to privatise kindergartens.

Table 1. Preschools

	2005	2010	2015	2016
Urban	491	499	614	633
Rural	165	127	107	104
Total	656	626	721	737
Of those private	4	4	115	131
N° children in them, thousand	90.0	94.7	115.6	116.8
Of those private, thousand	0.3	0.3	5.9	6.8

Population pre-crisis was growing consistently, with births reaching a high of 116 800 (as a result of financial encouragements discussed above), but the number of kindergartens was increasing slowly in cities (from 491 to 633) and drastically decreasing in rural areas (from 165 in 2005 down to 104 in 2016). At the same time the number of private kindergartens was soaring (from four in 2005 up to 131 in 2016) (see Table 1). Most of the state kindergartens that were closed due to cost cuts were in fact simply privatised and became unaffordable for the majority of Lithuanian families.

Risk of poverty statistics did not change significantly during the austerity regime. According to official governmental numbers, it even went down to 18.6 % in 2012 (in comparison in 2008 it was 20.3 % and in 2016, 21.9 %). However, statistics of risk of poverty for pensioners are much more revealing. In 2010 pensions were cut by 12 %. The state also discouraged pensioners from working by cutting pensions by 70 % for those working even a minimal number of hours a week. If during the pre-crisis period the average monthly state pension was EUR 265, during the austerity regime it went down to EUR 236.21. Even in the post-austerity period this was never returned to the previous level (in 2016 the average state pension was EUR 255.28).

Looking at the poverty risk for those 65 and over it becomes apparent that women are in a strongly disadvantaged position compared to men. It is evident from statistics from 2010 that gender inequality follows women through all stages of their lives. During the austerity regime 14 % of men 65 and over were at risk of poverty, in comparison to 22 % of women of the same age. Once the work restriction for pensioners were lifted post-austerity, this gap soared to new heights. In 2016, 17 % of elderly men were at risk of poverty and for women this number reached a staggering 33 %.

We can identify the following reasons for such a disparity. Firstly, women's pensions are much lower than men's, as pensions are calculated from the amount earned when working. The gender pay gap shows that throughout their lives women earn less than men. Secondly, women have more gaps in their careers due to pregnancy and care-taking (something which also factors into the gender pay gap). Lastly, poverty in old age is also a result of societal norms and prejudices. Men over the age of 65 are often still viewed as potential employees, while

women see themselves facing ageism as they are considered less desirable workers as they age.

Households by household type

Family types presented according to their per cent income and living conditions [ref. 10] starting with families who fair best and finishing with those living in the worst conditions. These figures have been taken from the post-austerity period statistical analysis.

1. Single person: 37.6 %
2. Two adults, both <65 years, without children: 13.4 %
3. Two adults, at least one ≥65 years, without children: 9.9 %
4. Two adults with one child: 9.5 %
5. Two adults with two children: 8.6 %
6. Three or more adults without children: 7.7 %
7. Three or more adults with children: 5.9 %
8. One adult with at least one child: 5.3 %
9. Two adults with ≥three children: 1.8 %

Although such data is not available, it can safely be said that should every 'adult' in the previous list be changed to 'female adult', the income and living conditions would worsen. As demonstrated in previous statistical analyses, women lose around 15 % of their average salary compared to men, and often work in lower paid jobs due to gendered job roles (for example, 20 % of working women are in the service and retail industries compared to just 7.7 % of the male workforce). Furthermore, women lose out in their career and perspective salary increases due to childbirth and caretaking. Later on, as we have demonstrated, women receive lower pensions due to lower salaries throughout their lives.

We can speculatively compare the average households of one working adult + one child, where the adult is female to an average household of the same composition where the adult is male from 2012 and 2016. These are not precise calculations but still provide a visible explanation of the differences of gender inequality. If in 2012, when austerity cuts made the difference between male and female households less painful (EUR 18.04 difference), in 2016, after the crisis, when

male's salaries in the private sector started to grow much faster and the GPG expanded, the difference between households grew (EUR 102.20).

2012

Adult is a female

Average salary = 571.70

Gender pay gap 12.6 %

Average consumption EUR 247.4

Left to pay for childcare and unexpected expenses: **EUR 252.26**

2012

Adult is a male

Average salary = 571.70

Average consumption 247.4 EUR

Left to pay for childcare and unexpected expenses: **EUR 270.3**

2016

Adult is a female

Average salary = 709.7

Gender pay gap 14.4 %

Average consumption EUR 297.5

Left to pay for childcare and unexpected expenses: **EUR 310**

2016

Adult is a male

Average salary = 709.7

Average consumption EUR 297.5

Left to pay for childcare and unexpected expenses: **EUR 412.20**

Violence against women

Data from 2017 [ref. 28] shows that domestic violence against women has been growing. In 2017 there were over 48 000 police reports of domestic violence with 80.2 % of victims women. In 2014 the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) conducted a 28-member state review of over 42 000 women about their experiences of physical and sexual violence [ref. 25] showing that 24 % of Lithuanian women have experienced such abuse, 23 % from an intimate partner¹. They also state that these crimes are widely under-reported across the EU and argue that a rise in reporting (such as we have seen in the case of Lithuania) may indicate an increase in gender equality within society, more awareness of issues of domestic violence, and the availability of support services. They also noted higher rates of reporting of partner violence, which may mean that women only decide to report after repeated incidents, an inclination they might not otherwise have in a one-off incident with a stranger.

According to this report, 67 % of women in Lithuania have seen or heard of campaigns against violence against women. However, statistics of domestic violence are rising not because the amount of incidents is growing. This is more likely due to the new anti-domestic violence law introduced in May 2011. This legislation encouraged victims to speak out and contact the police. The new law also allowed more support programs to be introduced at the governmental and NGO levels.

¹ The Lithuania specific data collated for this survey was collected in 2000.

Mapping of governmental bodies and their budgets for women issues

1. EU institutions

- a. European Institute of Gender Equality is an autonomous body of the European Union based in Lithuania. The EIGE operates within the framework of European Union policies and initiatives.

2. Governmental institutions

- a. Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson. Budget in 2017: EUR 390 k; in 2016: EUR 453 k; and in 2015: EUR 406 k.
- b. Department of Gender Equality of the Republic of Lithuania's Ministry of Social Security and Labour.
- c. Advisor to the Prime Minister on Gender Equality

3. Non-governmental institutions

- a. Centre for the Advancement of Equality
- b. Human Rights Monitoring Institute
- c. Lithuanian Human Rights Centre
- d. Tolerant Youth Association
- e. DEMOS Institute of Critical Thought
- f. Emma Social Centre in Kaunas

Conclusions

As we have established throughout this report, Lithuania was a country hit the hardest by the austerity regimes that swept through Europe after the financial crisis. As we saw, unemployment rose to 14 % and the average salary dropped by around 12 % in just a year. At first glance it appears that these measures hit men the hardest, with their unemployment rates being higher and salaries taking larger hits (as seen from the closing up of the gender pay gap). However, it would be wrong to make claims that these measures aided women's equality. The lowering of the gender pay gap during the austerity period was not due to gender positive reforms but was a side effect of the coalition government's goal to lower wages to a greater degree than constitutionally allowed, which they succeeded in doing by cutting public servants' bonuses rather than salaries outright. Unsurprisingly, it transpired that the beneficiaries of these bonuses were predominantly men. Furthermore, as women were, and continue to be, employed in lower wage jobs and industries (such as the service and retail industries, as well as health care) they were less likely to become unemployed. Therefore, while initial analysis shows that the gender pay gap closed up during austerity, the staggering extension of the GPG since this period (almost 2 % in just four years) shows that this was a false, short-term gain and that in fact the long-term repercussions have been significant.

Statistics [ref. 29] show that while the wealth of the top of society has been growing in the post-austerity period, that of the most vulnerable proportion of society has stagnated, resulting in an expansion of wealth inequality in Lithuania. Furthermore, as we have shown, women are more likely to fall into this category as they earn less on average, rarely find themselves in managerial and executive positions, and are overrepresented in low-waged professions. Women are more likely to be the only adult in a single parent household, which have some of the poorest living conditions in Lithuania. With social securi-

ty benefits being cut during the austerity regime, vulnerable people, in particular people with disabilities who saw their disability benefits cut, will have seen their living conditions decline to a greater degree than the well-off.

Apart from the practical consequences of benefit cuts and lower wages, the ideological goal of a political agenda intent on rolling back the hand of the state was undeniably successful. If we focus on aspects relevant to women (who are more likely to make career sacrifices when it comes to childcare) we see that the privatisation of kindergartens reduces the choices available to parents, while also creating previously absent inequalities between families. The marketisation of education further burdens the younger generation, disproportionately disadvantaging the already disadvantaged. The poor are forced out of education or into debt.

A culmination of the aforementioned effects of austerity have resulted in perhaps the most measurable consequences of the 'Night Tax Reform': high levels of emigration. As we have noted, the emigration levels of men are higher than women's, although by a relatively low proportion. The consequence of mothers being left alone to raise children (often while working) cannot be ignored, nor can the fact that many women of the older generation have also been left with a return to the responsibilities of childcare.

While it is undeniable that the cuts to maternity benefits financially disadvantaged mothers, the restructuring of parental leave policies has encouraged fathers to take paid paternity leave, as this makes financial sense for the many families in which men earn more than their female partners. However, during the austerity years we saw birth rates plummet after positive incentives for career seeking women to form or increase families were cut. While we do not wish to narrowly define women's role primarily as mothers and do not see their worth solely in their reproductive capacity, falling birth rates due to the barriers women face negatively affect society as a whole. This, paired with emigration, means that Lithuania is a rapidly aging country yet one in which the wellbeing of senior citizens is much disregarded, as we saw during the austerity regime.

Although it may at first glance seem that the initial effects of

austerity and the reforms that came with it created more equality between men and women (including those over 65), the poverty they were pushed into caught up and the reinstatement of the ability to work to add to your pension revealed further, deep inequalities. This shows the difficulty that female pensioners face if they wish to add to their low pensions by working part-time. We see staggering long-term results, as in 2016 the risk of poverty rate for women over the age of 65 was astonishingly almost double that of men's of the same age.

Despite this, these facts, and those of the effects of austerity on women of all ages, have largely been ignored by the feminist movement in Lithuania. This may in part be due to the fact that comparative statistics about the austerity regime and its impact on the socio-economic wellbeing of different groups have not been recorded or analysed. Therefore, there have not been any attempts to publicly argue the additional harm austerity has done to women's wellbeing or requests to rectify this with extra adjustments.

The feminist movement in Lithuania has grown in recent years and become somewhat fashionable. However, it is often largely divorced from radical and emancipatory politics. Instead of focusing on the emancipation of all women, with a particular view to those on the fringes of society who face possibly the toughest consequences of gender inequality, the focus becomes the position of the elite woman and on gender identity in and of itself.

Hopefully, our research will provide new impetus for more demands for social and economic policies to improve the position of women in Lithuania.

Appendixes

Table 2 Unemployment (%):

	Women	Men
2006	5.4	5.8
2007	4.3	4.3
2008	5.6	6.0
2009	10.4	17.0
2010	14.4	21.2
2011	15.9	23.8
2012	11.5	15.1
2013	10.5	13.1
2014	9.2	12.2
2015	8.2	10.1
2016	6.7	9.1
2017	5.4	8.6

Table 3 Emigration (persons)

2012	41,100
2013	38,818
2014	36,621
2015	44,533
2016	50,333
Total	211,405

Table 4 Emigration (%)

	Working age women (25+64) compared to the total n° of emigrant women	Working age men (25-64) compared to the total n° of emigrant men
2005	47.7	47.9
2010	64.5	65.9
2015	60.0	61.4
2016	61.7	64.3

Table 5 - Employed persons by occupational group (%)*

	2016		2014		2011	
	Women	Man	Women	Man	Women	Man
Managers	7.1	11.5	6.7	11.1	6.9	11.6
Professionals	32.0	14.3	31.4	14.6	30.5	13.3
Technicians and associate professionals	10.9	8.1	12.6	8.6	13.5	9.5
Office workers	6.2	2.1	5.2	2.0	6.2	2.2
Service and sales workers	20.0	7.7	20.1	7.0	19.2	8.1
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	4.0	6.7	5.3	7.6	5.3	7.1
Craft and related trades workers	5.7	22.6	5.4	22.7	5.1	21.7
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	3.9	17.9	4.9	18.3	5.3	18.3
Unskilled occupations	10.2	8.5	8.4	7.4	7.9	7.5
Armed forces occupations	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.7	0.1	0.7

*Earlier statistics are not provided accordingly

Table 6 - Parental and child benefits currently available

		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Maternity (pregnancy and childbirth)	EUR k/year	1.58	2.33	2.51	2.38	2.28	2.38	2.40	2.48	2.53	2.55
Paternity (until child is 1 month old)	EUR k	0.60	0.75	0.76	0.66	0.64	0.68	0.66	0.70	0.73	0.75
Maternity/paternity (until child is 1)	EUR k/year	4.76	7.03	8.76	7.47	6.41	6.13	5.00	5.06	5.19	5.32
of which paternity	%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	8.38	8.42	7.88
Maternity/paternity (from 1 to 2 years old)	EUR k/year	n/a	n/a	n/a	6.75	5.74	6.13	3.49	3.43	3.54	3.63
of which paternity	%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.9	1.17	1.55
One-off pregnancy grant	EUR k	0.073	0.076	0.075	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.069	0.078	0.070
Birth grant	EUR k	0.073	0.301	0.399	0.415	0.414	0.414	0.414	0.413	0.419	0.417
Child benefit (only for families under income cap)	EUR k/year	0.236	0.2235	0.274	0.243	0.229	0.236	0.232	0.228	0.228	0.227
Guardianship benefit	EUR k/year	1.622	1.588	1.593	1.599	1.612	1.556	1.550	1.532	1.552	0.583

Table 7

	Pre-crisis	Austerity regime					Post-austerity			
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
average salary	653.6	624.6	600.2	613.3	571.7	597.8	623.7	655.2	709.7	
gender pay gap	21.6	15.3	14.6	11.9	12.6	12.6	14.8	14.2	14.4	
unemployment	5.8 %	13.7 %	17.8 %	15.4 %	13.05 %	11.8 %	10.7 %	9.1 %	7.9 %	
pregnancy and childbirth EUR/year	2,510	cut from 3 to 2 years	2,280	2,280	2,280	2,280				
maternity benefit EUR/year	8 760	5,000							4,475	
minimum wage EUR/month	231.7	231.7	231.7	231.7	246.2	289.6	300	325	380	
base income EUR/month	37.07	35.33	35.33	35.33	35.33	35.33	35.33	35.5	35.5	
poverty risk % entire population	20.3 %	20.6 %	20.5 %	19.2 %	18.6 %	20.6 %	19.1 %	22.2 %	21.9 %	
poverty risk men over 65			8.0 %	9.0 %	14.0 %	11.0 %	11.0 %	16.0 %	17.0 %	
poverty risk women over 65			11.0 %	10.0 %	22.0 %	24.0 %	24.0 %	30.0 %	33.0 %	
average pensions EUR	265	265	265	236.21	236.21	238.13	240.32	244.46	255.28	

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AUSTERITY, GENDER INEQUALITY AND FEMINISM AFTER THE CRISIS

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