

EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS FOR A CERTAIN POPULATION RISK GROUP IN LATGALE REGION

NOTEIKTAS IEDZĪVOTĀJU RISKĀ GRUPAS NODARBINĀTĪBAS PROBLĒMAS LATGALES REĢIONĀ

Anda Zvaigzne

Dr.oec., leading researcher at the Scientific Institute for Regional Studies,
Rezekne Higher Education Institution
assistant professor at the Faculty of Economics, Latvia University of Agriculture
E-mail: anda.zvaigzne@llu.lv; phone: +371 63025170,
Latvia

Inese Saulāja

Mg.oec., lecturer at the Faculty of Economics, Latvia University of Agriculture
E-mail: inese.saulaja@llu.lv; phone: +371 63025170,
Latvia

Aija Čerpinska

Mg.sc.soc., lecturer at the Faculty of Economics and Management,
Rezekne Higher Education Institution
E-mail: aija@ru.lv; phone: +371 28338556,
Latvia

Abstract. *The overall research aim is to examine employment problems for a certain population risk group in Latgale region and make proposals for tackling these problems. The research object is a population risk group – individuals after their child care leave, as this population group faces a high unemployment probability after their child/children care leave ends.*

According to a survey, a certain population risk group faces various employment problems in Latgale region, and the availability of the labour market and the reduction of discrimination in Latgale region have to be tackled at the national government level by imposing certain reliefs, so that any such population groups are respected in the labour market. Besides, various government support measures have to be taken to integrate individuals after their child care leave into the labour market in Latgale region.

Keywords: *employment, population risk group, Latgale region.*

JEL code: *J14, J71*

Introduction

The employment rate in Latvia's regions is one of the indicators of the national economy. The employment rate shows the economic situation in the country and significantly affects the national economy of Latvia.

Promoting employment both in Europe and in Latvia is an economic and social need. Presently, a part of the working age population is not employed for various reasons, therefore, a lot of efforts are made to

integrate various economically inactive individuals into the labour market.

After examining the employment problems in the country in general, a population risk group – individuals after their child care leave – was especially addressed in the present research. This population group, given the present complicated economic conditions, has to be especially socially protected. An analysis of employee motivations showed that not always the main motivation of an employee was an increase in the wage. According to studies, some of the most motivating factors are social guarantees and flexible working hours, especially after returning to the labour market after a child care leave. Therefore, it is important to identify the employment problems of this population group that hinder individuals to successfully return to the labour market.

Research hypothesis – the employment of a certain population risk group in Latgale region is affected by various problems that hinder individuals to successfully return to the labour market after their child care leave.

The overall research aim is to examine employment problems for a certain population risk group in Latgale region and make proposals for tackling these problems.

To achieve the research aim, the following research tasks were set:

1. To examine the employment situation in Latgale region and compare it with that in other Latvia's regions.
2. To survey a certain population risk group in Latgale region to identify its main employment problems hindering individuals to successfully return to the labour market.
3. To make proposals for tackling the employment problems identified.

The research object is a population risk group – individuals after their child care leave.

The research subject is a certain population risk group's employment problems that hinder individuals to successfully return to the labour market after their child care leave.

The monographic and descriptive methods as well as analysis and synthesis, the graphic method, document analysis, correlation analysis, data grouping, and a sociological research method – a survey – were employed in the present research.

The survey data were processed by means of the tools of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel.

The present research is based on various scientific publications, publicly available documents, information available in databases of the Republic of Latvia, the survey of a certain population group, and other sources.

1. Employment situation in Latgale region compared with the other regions of Latvia

The total number of employed individuals decline in Latvia from year to year. An analysis of the number of employed individuals broken down by statistical region reveals that the situation is different (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1

Number of employed individuals in Latgale and the other regions of Latvia in 2006-2011, ths (authors' construction based on Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) data (4.))

Statistical region	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Change (+-) 2011/2006 %
Riga	381.3	386.1	380.6	333.3	306.0	320.7	-15.9
Pieriga	172.6	189.1	192.8	170.7	168.2	174.3	1.0
Vidzeme	105.0	105.9	105.9	94	95.5	98.8	-5.9
Kurzeme	138.4	145.7	144.5	128.4	125.9	124.9	-9.8
Zemgale	129.4	133.4	137.5	118.8	111.7	118.2	-8.7
Latgale	160.9	158.8	162.8	141.5	133.7	133.6	-17.0
Latvia	1087.6	1119.0	1124.1	986.7	940.9	970.5	-15.9

According to Table 1.1, the greatest change in the number of employed individuals was observed in Latgale region; in 2011 compared with 2006, it decreased by 17.0%. In the entire Latvia, in contrast, it fell by 15.9%. Only in Pieriga region this number rose by 1.0%.

When analysing employment in the country, it is important to examine the rate of employment or the proportion of employed individuals in the total number of population expressed as a percentage (Table 1.2).

The average proportion of employed individuals in the total number of population in Latvia in the period 2006-2011 was 58.1 percent point. The highest annual rate was in Riga region, as it is the capital city of Latvia. Over the period of analysis, a decrease in the rate of employment was observed in all the regions. The greatest decrease was in the regions of Riga, Pieriga, and Zemgale. The smallest decrease in the rate of employment was observed in Latgale region with 1.2 percent point.

Table 1.2

Rate of employment in Latgale and the other regions of
Latvia in 2006-2011, %
(authors' construction based on CSB data (4.))

Region	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Change (+-) 2011/2006 percent point
Riga	65.3	66.7	66.4	58.8	54.7	58.1	-7.2
Pieriga	64.0	63.9	64.8	56.2	54.9	57.1	-6.9
Vidzeme	55.6	57.0	57.7	52.1	52.0	54.3	-1.3
Kurzeme	57.4	61.6	61.2	54.6	53.8	53.9	-3.5
Zemgale	60.3	59.5	60.9	53.6	50.7	54.2	-6.1
Latgale	51.6	56.3	58.1	50.8	49.7	50.4	-1.2
Latvia	60.1	62.0	62.6	55.2	53.1	55.3	-4.8

The rate of job seekers tended to increase in Latvia every year (Table 1.3). The proportion of job seekers is an indicator showing a percentage of job seekers in the total number of economically active population.

Table 1.3

Proportion of job seekers in Latgale and the other regions of
Latvia in 2006-2011, %
(authors' construction based on CSB data (6.))

Region	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Change (+-) 2011/2006 percent point
Riga	5.8	5.8	7.8	17.1	21.2	16.0	10.2
Pieriga	4.9	4.9	5.9	15.1	16.9	13.5	8.6
Vidzeme	6.4	6.6	9.2	18.7	14.6	11.9	5.5
Kurzeme	7.5	5.2	6.4	14.7	15.3	14.2	6.7
Zemgale	6.7	6.5	7.8	19.4	21.6	17.7	11.0
Latgale	10.8	8.0	8.4	17.3	18.4	17.8	7.0
Latvia	6.8	6.0	7.5	16.9	18.7	15.4	8.6

According to Table 1.3, the proportion of job seekers increased in each region in 2006-2011. The greatest increase in 2011 was observed in the regions of Zemgale and Riga, whereas the smallest increase was in Vidzeme region with 5.5 percent point.

One of the most urgent problems in the labour market of Latvia from 2009 to 2011 was high unemployment. The number of unemployed individuals increased even two times in Latvia.

A sharp increase in the number unemployed individuals was observed in 2009 when, compared with 2007, especially in Riga region – 305.6%, followed by Pierīga region with 291.8%, and in the remaining regions it was average 200.0%. (3.,5.) Over the period considered, such an increase in the number unemployed individuals might be explained by the worsening economic situation in the country. The situation slightly stabilised in 2011 when, compared with 2009, this number started decreasing: by 35.9% in Riga region, 36.3% in Pierīga, 30.5% in Kurzeme, 8.5% in Latgale, 26.0% in Vidzeme, and by 26.2% in Zemgale region. (5.) According to data of the State Employment Agency (SEA), the highest proportion of unemployed individuals in their total number in Latvia is observed for the risk group – long-term unemployed individuals. An analysis of individuals returning to the labour market after their child care leave revealed that the largest group facing the risk of unemployment is individuals after their child care leave. In Latgale region, the highest proportion of this risk group among the unemployed was reported in 2007 (28.1%). In 2011 compared with 2006, the proportion of unemployed individuals after their child care leave decreased by 3.8%, and in the period 2006-2008 it declined by 5.6%. Yet, in 2011 compared with 2008, this indicator rose again by 1.8%.

Table 1.4

Percentage distribution of the unemployed by risk group* in
Latgale region in 2006-2011
(authors' construction based on SEA data (1.,2.))

Risk group	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Long-term unemployed individuals	61.3	61.2	60.7	36.9	28.5	32.3
Disabled individuals	28.8	28.2	27.0	24.3	25.8	26.9
Young individuals (aged 15-24)	25.1	25.3	18.2	18.3	22.8	24.5
Individuals after their child care leave	27.8	28.1	22.2	24.0	25.1	24.0
Individuals released from imprisonment	39.0	38.5	23.8	23.9	21.1	20.9
Unemployed individuals of pre-retirement age	34.7	33.6	23.2	21.4	23.9	26.1

* number of the unemployed may repeat among the risk groups

In general, these indicators used to change and did not differ significantly, being on average 25.2% in the period 2006-2011. The authors conclude that if such a trend continues, it is important to identify the problems that cause this indicator to be so high – approximately one fourth of the total number of the unemployed in Latvia.

A correlation analysis was performed to find out whether a statistically significant correlation existed between two variables – the number of job vacancies and the number of the unemployed after their child care leave. Since the correlation coefficient was 0.85 ($r=0.85$), there was a 99% probability that there was a strong positive correlation between the number of job vacancies and the number of the unemployed after their child care leave.

2. Employment problems for a certain population group in Latgale region, according to the survey

The authors of the paper conducted a survey with the purpose of identifying employment problems, which hinder returning to the labour market, for a certain population risk group in Latgale region.

The period of surveying lasted from December 2012 to February 2013. The survey was conducted in Latgale region. The respondents were individuals after their child care leave.

The survey's 45 questions were set out on 6 pages. The survey's questionnaires were sent in two ways: in printed and electronic forms. The time to fill in a questionnaire took not more than 10 minutes. To make the filling in of a questionnaire easier, mainly closed-type questions were included in the questionnaire. There were several reply options for the purpose of raising the credibility of survey findings. The survey data were processed by means of the tools of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel.

In total, 214 filled-in questionnaires were received back. By gender, most of the respondents were women (98%), and 2% were men. As regards the respondents' age, most of them (34%) were aged 31-35, which made the researched labour market problems credible, as this age individuals had faced this situation in the labour market quite recently (after their child care leave) (Fig.2.1).

Most of the respondents (76%) had higher education. Of the respondents, 10% had incomplete higher education, 10% - secondary special education, and 3% - secondary education, while only 1% had incomplete primary education.

Almost all the respondents were employed. Of the respondents, 49% had a length of service within a range of 11-20 years, and 46% had a work experience of less than 10 years, while 5% had a length of service of 21 years or more.

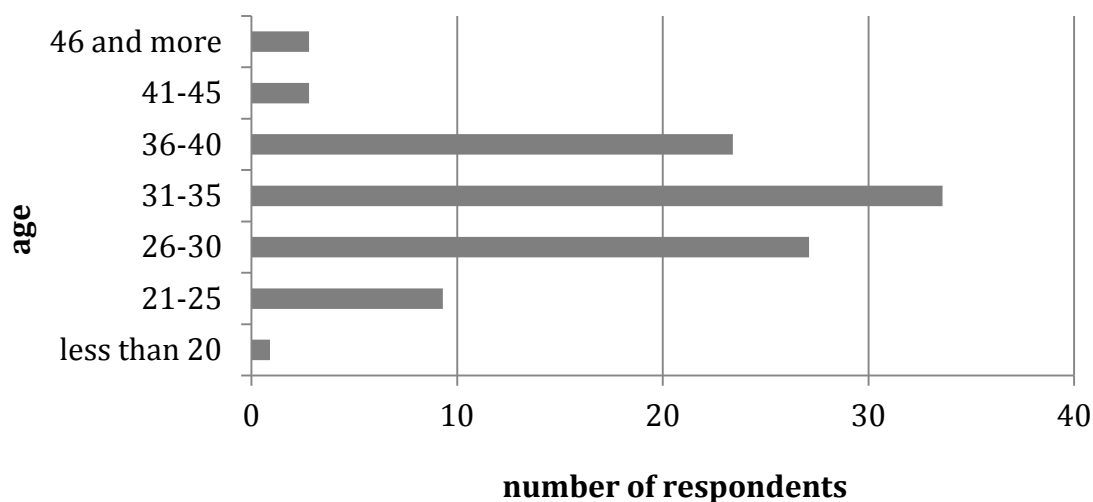


Fig. 2.1. Distribution of the respondents by age (authors' construction based on the survey data)

According to the survey data, 52% of the respondents (110) believed that it was possible to find a job, while many (26% or 54 of their total number) believed that it was difficult to find a job in Latgale region. Although more than a half of the respondents believed that it was possible to find a job, yet, 85% said that they did not seek a job at that moment. On the one hand, it may be explained by the lack of jobs in Latgale region, while on the other hand there might be several reasons that hinder the successful competitiveness of individuals in the labour market, and the reasons are: lack of professional knowledge, lack of time, low self-esteem, etc.

By means of the questionnaires, it was found out how the length of service affected the chances of individuals to find a job (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Distribution of the respondents' replies regarding their chance to find a job by length of service
(authors' construction based on the survey data)

Length of service	Distribution of replies regarding a chance to find a job					total
	difficult	possible	possible if I do not reveal that I have a child/children	no problem	easy	
less than 10 years	24	52	12	6	2	96
11-20 years	26	54	8	8	8	104
21 and more years	4	4	0	0	0	8
total	54	110	20	14	10	208

According to Table 2.1, 20 respondents (10%) believed that it was possible to find a job if they did not reveal that they had a child or children. Most of such replies (12 respondents) were expressed by individuals having a length of service less than 10 years. It may be explained by the fact that there were individuals in this group who recently or at that moment faced such a situation in the labour market. With increase in the length of service, fewer individuals made such a reply, as many of them had grown-up children. It is supported by the fact that almost 15% of the respondents pointed to a stereotype existing in the society – employees with children more often are late to their job because their children used to be sick.

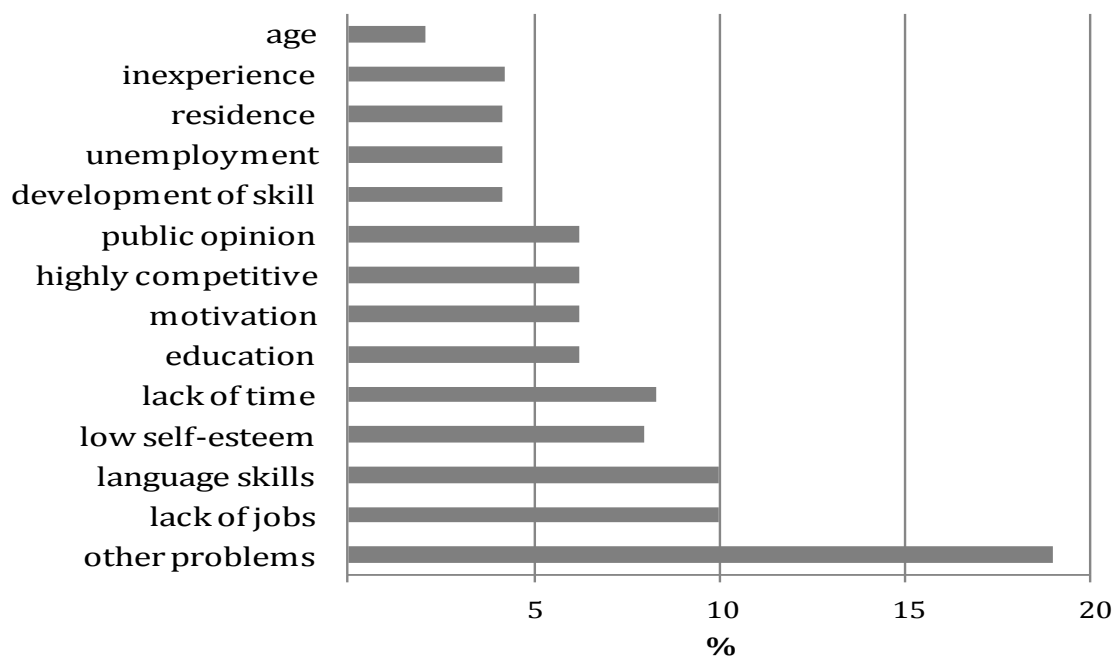


Fig.2.2. Percentage distribution of the respondents' replies by problem in the labour market in Latgale (authors' construction based on the survey data)

The main labour market problems faced by individuals after their child care leave were identified in the questionnaire survey.

For the respondents, the most topical problems were: lack of vacancies (10.4%), poor language knowledge (10.4%), lack of time (8.3%), low self-esteem (8.3%), etc. (Fig. 2.2). In the reply option "other problems", the respondents pointed to several problems: age, attitude of colleagues, inability to change the place of residence, being a lonely parent, attitude of the employer, etc.

Many respondents believed that for being competitive in the labour market, they need: an additional time to adapt to the labour market after their child care leave (38%), professional knowledge (19%), language

knowledge (14%), experience (12%), a place where to leave a child or children while working (3%), to start working gradually (initially, a part-time job) after their child care leave, etc., while 10% of the respondents had everything to be successfully competitive in the labour market.

In general, the analysis of the respondents' opinions about employment in Latgale region revealed that many respondents were ready to have a part-time job, as the lack of time was a very essential problem to them. After analysing the labour market problems, the authors propose the ways of how to significantly improve the situation in the labour market in Latgale region. At the national level, the minimum wage should be raised, as a very high proportion of the respondents with higher education did a low-paid job, according to the survey. Since the rate of unemployment in Latgale region is much higher than in the other regions, it is important to create new jobs. New jobs will be created by the present or potential businessmen, however, it is important that the national government provides an appropriate environment for business.

Based on the problems mentioned in the survey, one can conclude that the national government should set a longer child care leave (at least a place in a municipal kindergarten should be guaranteed). Many respondents believed that the national government has to change the tax policy concerning dependents. In their questionnaires, the respondents mentioned that in order to be competitive in the labour market after their child care leave, training and knowledge development had to be performed. It means that the State Employment Agency should examine the situation in the labour market in Latgale region in more detail and provide the necessary training to individuals (including employed ones). Local governments, in their turn, should provide a place in their kindergartens. One in ten respondents pointed that the problem was the working hours of kindergartens (sometimes the kindergarten was closed at 17.30 or 18.30). Local governments could offer various babysitting services. One more problem mentioned by the respondents was the availability of national and municipal institutions or their working hours. A unifying recommendation for the national government, local governments, employers, and the entire society is to change the public's opinions, as, according to the survey, there are many various stereotypes in the society about individuals who return to the labour market after their child care leave.

Conclusions and proposals

1. The proportion of job seekers in Latgale region differs from that in the other statistical regions. The proportion of job seekers rose by 7% in the period 2006-2011.

2. The highest proportion of individuals after their child care leave in Latgale region was observed in 2007 (28.1%). This proportion declined by 3.8% in 2001 compared with 2006, yet, it still accounted for one fourth of the total number of unemployed individuals in Latgale region.
3. Almost all the respondents were employed. Of the respondents, 49% had a length of service within a range of 11-20 years, and 46% had a work experience of less than 10 years, while 5% had a length of service of 21 years or more.
4. According to the survey, 52% of the respondents (110) believed that it was possible to find a job, while 26% (54) believed that it was, however, difficult to find a job in Latgale region.
5. Of the respondents, 20 (10%) believed that it was possible to find a job if they did not reveal that they had a child or children. Most of such replies (12 respondents) were made by individuals having a length of service less than 10 years.
6. According to the respondents, the most significant problems they faced in the labour market after their child care leave were that they needed: a time to adapt to the labour market after their child care leave (38%), professional knowledge (19%), language knowledge (14%), experience (12%), a place where to leave a child or children while working (3%), to start working gradually (initially, a part-time job) after their child care leave, etc., while 10% of the respondents had everything to be successfully competitive in the labour market.
7. The research hypothesis proved to be true. People face different problems in the labour market when returning to it after their child care leave.
8. To improve the situation in the labour market in Latgale region and tackle problems, the national government should raise the minimum wage, set a longer child care leave (at least a place in a municipal kindergarten should be guaranteed), change the tax policy concerning dependents, as well as the State Employment Agency should examine the situation in the labour market in Latgale region in more detail and provide the necessary training to individuals (including employed ones).
9. Local governments should provide a place in their kindergartens to parents, control the working hours of kindergartens (sometimes the kindergarten is closed at 17.30 or 18.30), establish and offer babysitting services, as well as ensure the availability of national and municipal institutions after their working hours (at least these institutions should have longer working hours a few days a week).

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Kopsavilkums

Pētījuma mērķis ir izpētīt noteiktas iedzīvotāju riska grupas nodarbinātības problēmas Latgales reģionā un sniegt priekšlikumus problēmu risināšanai. Pētījuma objekts ir iedzīvotāju riska grupa - personas pēc bērna kopšanas atvaļinājuma, jo šai iedzīvotāju grupai pastāv augsta bezdarba iespējamība pēc bērna/u kopšanas atvaļinājuma beigām.

Darba meklētāju īpatsvars Latgales reģionā atšķiras no pārējiem statistiskajiem reģioniem. Latgales reģionā visaugstākais īpatsvars personām pēc bērna kopšanas atvaļinājuma bija 2007.g. (28.1 %). 2011.g. šis īpatsvars salīdzinot ar 2006.g. ir samazinājies par 3.8 procentpunktiem, tomēr tā ir apmēram ¼ daļa no bezdarbnieku kopskaita Latgales reģionā.

Raksta autori veica aptauju ar mērķi apzināt personu pēc bērna kopšanas atvaļinājuma nodarbinātības problēmas Latgales reģionā, kas traucē tām veiksmīgi atgriezties darba tirgū.

Gandrīz visi aptaujātie respondenti strādā.

Lielākajai aptaujāto daļai darba stāžs ir no 11 līdz 20 gadiem, kā arī lielai daļai aptaujāto darba pieredze ir mazāka par 10 gadiem, savukārt, 5% aptaujāto darba stāžs ir 21 un vairāk gadi.

Pēc aptaujas datiem redzams, ka lielākā daļa respondentu uzskata, ka darbu atrast ir iespējams, bet daudzi uzskata, ka darbu tomēr ir atrast grūti Latgales reģionā.

Pētījums atklāj, ka 10% respondentu uzskata, ka atrast darbu ir iespējams, ja neatklāj, ka ir bērns/i. Visvairāk šādu atbildi sniedza cilvēki ar darbu stāžu līdz 10 gadiem.

Pētījuma rezultāti parāda, ka personām pēc bērna kopšanas atvaļinājuma pastāv dažādas nodarbinātības problēmas Latgales reģionā un pētījuma hipotēze apstiprinās.

Kā pašas būtiskākās problēmas, ar ko respondenti ir saskārušies, ir laika trūkums, lai varētu iejusties darba tirgū pēc bērna kopšanas atvaļinājuma, kā arī profesionālas zināšanas, valodu zināšanas, pieredzes, vieta, kur atstāt bērnu/-us, iespēja atsākt strādāt pakāpeniski (sākumā ar nepilnu slodzi) pēc bērna kopšanas atvaļinājuma u.c., bet 10% respondentiem bija visi priekšnoteikumi veiksmīgai konkurētspējai darba tirgū.

Darba tirgus pieejamība un diskriminācijas mazināšana Latgales reģionā ir jārisina valstiskā līmenī, nosakot konkrētus atvieglojumus, lai šādas iedzīvotāju grupas tiek respektētas darba tirgū. Latgales reģiona iedzīvotājiem ir nepieciešami dažādi valsts atbalsta pasākumi, lai varētu integrēties darba tirgū pēc bērna kopšanas atvaļinājuma.

Lai uzlabotu situāciju darba tirgū Latgales reģionā un risinātu problēmas, valdībai vajadzētu paaugstināt minimālo algu, nodrošināt garāku bērna kopšanas atvaļinājumu (vismaz līdz laikam, kad tiek garantēta vieta pašvaldības bērnudārzā), mainīt nodokļu politiku attiecībā pret apgādājamiem, kā arī Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūrai būtu dziļāk jāpēta darba tirgus situācija Latgales reģionā un jānodrošina cilvēkiem (arī nodarbinātajiem) apmācība.

Pašvaldībām būtu jānodrošina vieta bērnudārzos, jākontrolē bērnudārzu darba laiks, pieskatīšanas dienestus, kā arī jānodrošina valsts un pašvaldību iestāžu pieejamību vismaz dažas dienas nedēļā pēc noteiktā darba laika (nodrošinot ilgāku darba laiku).