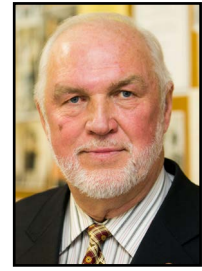


## *Work-Life Balance: A Global Perspective*

# A model of Lithuania for work-life quality balance: Private and public sectors



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**L**ITHUANIA is a country in the Baltic region of Europe, counted as one of the Baltic states. As all over the world, the country inevitably faces the problem of population ageing, declining birth rates, the emigration of people. It has also becoming increasingly important to discover and work in your favourite job, because nowadays for workers it has become more difficult to reconcile work and life, whereas there is no clear dividing line between leisure time and work. Most employees use portable electronic tools to do their jobs from anywhere they are with extensive flexibility in the timing and location of work. People are beginning to understand that both the quality of life, quality of work-life, and especially the balance of these qualities, is the key to happiness and meaningful life. Although the quality of life and quality of work-life began to be explored only in the last century, it has benefitted however, from a growing scientific interest of their importance for a happy and well-balanced life, with a work focus on the measures of life and quality of work-life balance to achieve and maintain harmony (Valiukaitė, 2016).

### **Lithuania and employees by sectors**

Lithuania is a small country; it has an estimated population of 2.8 million people. The average number of employees in the national economy, including sole proprietorships, in 2019 was 1,287,900, of which

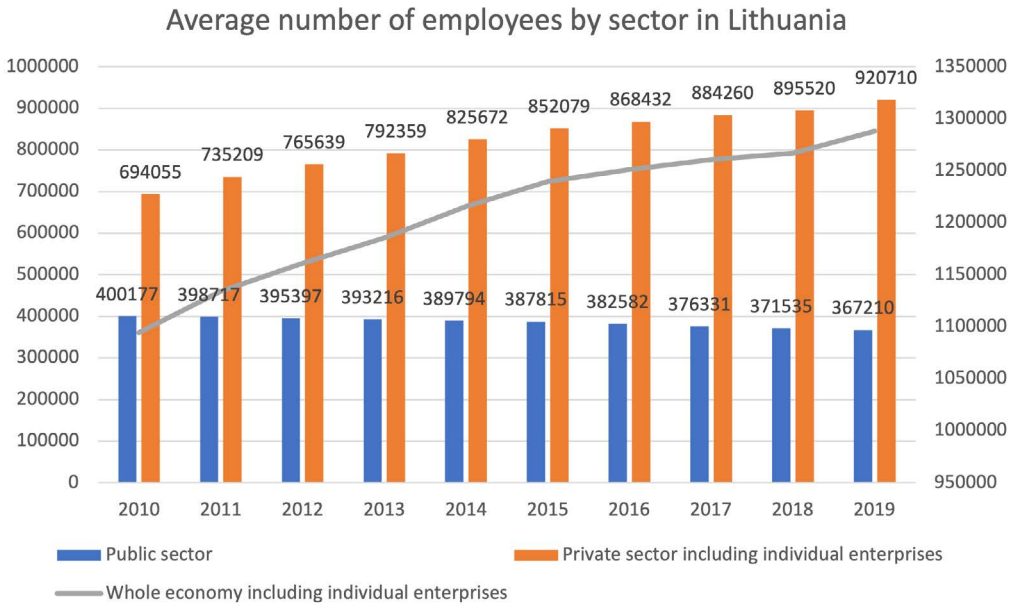
920,700 (71.5 per cent) were in the private sector and 367,200 (28.5 per cent) in the public sector (See Figure 1).

Compared to 2018, the number of employees in the country increased by 1.6 per cent (20,900). In the private sector, this amounted to a growth of 2.8 per cent (25,200), while in the public sector it decreased by 1.2 per cent over the year (4,300; Lithuanian Department of Statistics, 2021).

### **Quality of life vs quality of working life: A theoretical interpretation**

Quality of life is influenced by an individual's physical and mental health, the degree of independence, social relationship with the environment, and other factors. Quality of life could be defined as an individual's satisfaction with his or her life dimensions comparing with his or her ideal life. The evaluation of the quality of life depends on one's value system (Ruževičius, 2012; Ruževičius & Ivanova, 2019; Susnienė & Jurkauskas, 2009). The quality of working life could be defined as arising from a workplace's strategies, processes, and environment's synthesis, which stimulate an employee's job satisfaction. It also depends on work conditions and the organisation's efficiency. As such, the quality of working life concept encompasses the following factors: job satisfaction, involvement in work performance, motivation,

**Figure 1: The average number of Lithuania employees by sector (Source: compiled by the authors based on the information of the Lithuanian Department of Statistics).**



efficiency, productivity, health, safety and welfare at work, stress, workload, burn-out, etc. (Ruževičius, 2014).

Other studies suggest this concept should include additional work factors, for example, fair compensation, safe and hygienic working, and psychological conditions, knowledge, and opportunities to realise one’s skills, social integration and relationship, life and work balance, work planning, and organisation (van de Looij & Benders, 1995; Ruževičius, 2012).

Having analysed the concept of the quality of life and its correlation with the quality of working life, and having reviewed the factors that have an impact on the quality of working life it is possible – from both the theoretical and practical points of view – to analyse the relevant aspects of the balance of work and personal life. Such research would be most natural in the context of work-family conflicts. Work and family are the two pivotal areas in our lives, however, very often people encounter great difficulties while seeking to combine them in such a way that neither of them suffers.

There are also differences between traditional employees and freelancers in assessing the balance between personal life and quality of life at work. This specificity is revealed in detail by one of the authors of this article (Ruževičius, 2014).

### **A work-life quality balance model for Lithuania**

Figure 1 shows that the number of employees in the private sector in Lithuania tends to increase, while the number of those who would choose the public sector is decreasing. Such a change can be caused by many components, but one of them is work-life balance. One Lithuanian study, by the current authors, which included 251 women and 56 men who are working in the public or private sector, found that those working in the private sector rated the balance between quality of life and quality of life at work better than those who work in the public sector (Ruževičius & Valiukaitė, 2017). This can lead to a more flexible work schedule, higher pay, more freedom in decision-making, but at the same time increased responsibility.

The benefits provided by the public sector are usually stability, established procedures, fewer organisational changes, a clearer structure, and clearer lines of responsibility (Pivoras et al., 2014).

It is important to note that the quality of life and work-life balance model can change depending on age, gender, or workplace. Zalimienė and Junevičienė's (2016) research revealed that the assessment of the quality of life depends on the age of the respondents. Age is considered to be an important factor in subjective evaluations, as individuals have subjective norms concerning various concepts depending on their situation. The older the age group, the less likely the respondent is to assess the quality of life. This result can be caused by health problems with age, a slowdown in life, a lack of exercise, and active leisure. It has been found that with age, strategic thinking, insight, attentiveness, more wisdom, the ability to control life changes, holistic perception, and foreign language skills improve (Zalimienė & Junevičienė, 2016). Besides, older workers are more committed to their work and can delve deeper into it, are more loyal to their employer, and tend to go to work more frequently than workers in other age groups. As work experience increases, it leads to better collaborative skills, enhanced structural knowledge of the organisation and its functions, customer and communication links, and better-perceived changes in the operating environment (Ruževičius & Valiukaitė, 2017).

Quality of life, and in particular quality of life at work, is integral to the management and economics of organisations – the higher the quality of life and work at work, the more qualified are employees, the better quality and productivity of their activities. It should also be noted that by highly appreciating the quality of life at work, a person also feels greater satisfaction with his or her overall quality of life. Which is very important to every human. Furthermore, combining work and leisure benefits a person in the following aspects: reduces stress and contributes to

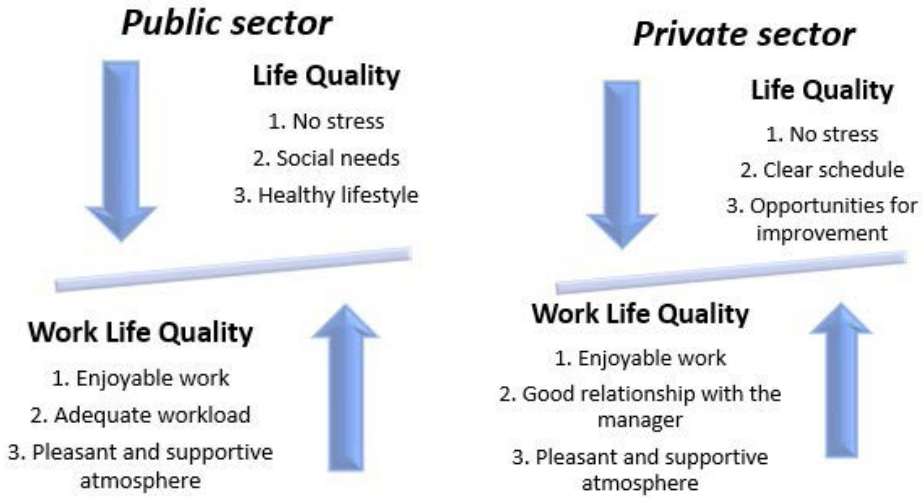
the maintenance of good health, promotes creativity and social integration, provides freedom of choice, and the opportunity to develop skills useful for work, competence (Queensland Government, 2013). During the Covid-19 quarantine period, state and municipal institutions and bodies within Lithuania flexibly adapted to the necessary changes and actively organised the work remotely. Persons applying to the institutions were also served remotely (Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, 2020). Finding a suitable balance between work and life is a challenge for all workers, especially working parents. The ability to successfully combine work, family commitments, and personal life are important for the wellbeing of all members of a household (OECD, 2021).

### **Work-life balance across the public and private sectors in Lithuania**

Ruževičius and Valiukaite's (2017) study revealed that the general model of quality of life assessment is better valued among working women in the private sector in Lithuania. The higher quality of life and work is at work, the more qualified employees and the better quality and productivity of their activities. The higher quality of life at work, the greater person's satisfaction with their overall quality of life and the balance between leisure and work. There is also an inverse relationship – the better respondents value the quality of life, the better they tend to value the quality of life at work (Ruževičius & Valiukaitė, 2017).

Intangible factors predominate in the model of the quality of life and working life balance of both public and private sector employees, but their distribution varies in importance, which can be determined by different types of work, internal rules, and employees' values, which sometimes determine the employee's choice in which sector they work. The study revealed that the importance of factors for the assessment of the quality of life is different across sectors. The quality of life of those working in the public sector is mainly determined by the

Figure 2: A model for ensuring the quality of life and working life balance in Lithuania (Source: designed by the authors using the results of this study).



absence of stressful situations and communication with relatives, to a lesser extent by the healthy living style. See Figure 2.

Within the private sector, there is a strong focus on reducing stress and stressful situations, but, in contrast to the public sector, has attached great importance to compliance, such as clear schedule and stability, is also open to innovation and challenges, which is mentioned as ‘opportunities for personal improvement’.

Both private and public sector workers singled out the most important factor determining their quality of life at work – enjoyable work, which is the key to the happiest work life. However, the second factor is different – public sector workers singled out the normal workload, in third place is a supportive atmosphere at the workplace. Meanwhile, the opinion of the representatives of the private sector differs – in the second place is a good relationship with their manager and in the third-place – same as public sector employees (Ruževičius & Valiukaitė, 2017).

Work-life balance is about being able to combine family commitments, leisure, and work. Ideally, the scope of this dimension would include aspects such as the quantity of time devoted to leisure and personal care as well as people’s satisfaction with

their time use, and some sense of the balance between both paid and unpaid work (OECD, 2020). The secret of true balance is the conscious choices we make based on what our most important needs are at the time. By choosing one thing over another, we should have a good understanding of how it could affect other areas of life (Jonaitytė-Karalienė, no date).

### **Improving on work-life balance and life in general**

But in general, Lithuanians are less satisfied with their lives than the OECD average. Lithuanians rated it as 5.9 on average (on a scale from 0 to 10), lower than the OECD average of 6.5. An important aspect of work-life balance is the amount of time a person spends at work. Evidence suggests that long work hours may impair personal health, jeopardise safety and increase stress (see for example Ruževičius & Valiukaitė, 2017). The more people work, the less time they have to spend on other activities, such as time with others, leisure activities, eating, or sleeping. The amount and quality of leisure time are important for people’s overall wellbeing and can bring additional physical and mental health benefits. In Lithuania, full-time workers devote more of their day on average, to personal care (eating, sleeping, etc) and leisure (social-

ising with friends and family, hobbies, games, computer and television use, etc.) than the OECD average of 15 hours. Life satisfaction measures how people evaluate their life as a whole rather than their current feelings (OECD, 2020). No matter how we want or try to separate the quality of life and the quality of life at work into two separate poles, it is not possible to do so – these are two things that have a completely direct connection.

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