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# Social consequences of closing the Ignalina NPP

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper is devoted to the problems that may arise upon closing the Ignalina NPP. The main aim is to describe the main possible consequences of closing the Ignalina NPP for the Visaginas city and the surrounding region. A possible impact on wider territories is analysed in less detail. Authors also analyse the main factors that may influence the character of these problems. The paper contains basic information needed for evaluation of the impact of the INPP closure on the social environment, calculation of possible social costs and description of the process of their origin. Material was collected in the way of direct questioning and investigations in Visaginas and the region. This article is mainly based on material obtained during research conducted in the summer of 1999 in Visaginas.

The workers and companies serving the INPP were questioned. The information from the Administration of the INPP, Municipalities of Visaginas and Ignalina, Ignalina Labour Exchange and its Visaginas branch, Visaginas Migration Office was used. Also, material from the state program "Atominė energetika ir aplinka" (Nuclear energetics and environment) reports was used (The impact..., 1997).

The research was based on these primary conditions: the INPP will be closed in the free market area; the INPP closure will be implemented in two steps; social consequences are long-term consequences; Visaginas will remain on the same level in the urban landscape of Lithuania, there will be no huge migrations; the main social impact of the INPP closure will be direct and indirect impact on the labour market; the INPP closure costs are costs calculated as a result of negative social loss and possible social gain.

## THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PRECONDITIONS: SITUATION AND TENDENCIES IN VISAGINAS, IGNALINA REGION AND UTENA DISTRICT

Evaluation of the possible consequences of closing the INPP for the region first of all requires some general data about the present situation as a precondition for an impact on the social environment. It is impossible to include all necessary data and all conclusions that have been made while preparing the paper. Only most essential information will be presented. For more precise information, refer to the reports "Social consequences of the Ignalina NPP closure: basic information and some primary preconditions for counting social costs" (Social..., 1999) and "Nuclear energetic and environment" (Nuclear..., 1997).

The nuclear power plant is situated in the Utena district (north-eastern side of Lithuania, at the crossing of the state borders of Lithuania, Latvia and Belarus). The region includes 5 districts and the municipality of Visaginas. The Ignalina NPP is situated in the north-eastern part of the Utena district, in the conjunction of the Ignalina, Visaginas and Zarasai municipalities. The district covers 11% of the Lithuania's territory and is inhabited by about 5.4% of total Lithuanian population (201 thousands).

In general, the whole district of Utena may be briefly characterised as an economically and socially depressed area. Almost all types of economical activity are less intensive in it; the unemployment rate is higher than the Lithuanian average. Agricultural activities and forestry dominate among economic activities in the country. The industrial potential of the region is very weak (excluding the INPP and Utena). There are no important economic resources that can give competitive advantage for the compa-

nies in the region, with the exception of recreational resources, which are more suitable for nature tourism than the average in Lithuania. These resources can be possibly used for different business activities related with recreation. The Ignalina region has old tourism and recreation traditions. Some well-organized recreation activities take place in the Aukštaitija National Park territory. Around 5000 tourists are accepted per year. Tourists from abroad make 7 percent of the total number.

The territory is less densely populated, inhabited by elderly people and is characterised by a higher negative natural migration than the Lithuanian average. There are no big cities in the area. Little villages inhabited by old people prevail in the landscape (Social..., 1999)

Previous researches have shown great social differences between the whole Utena district and Visaginas city, followed by the fact that the Visaginas city can be characterised as a very closed society having very weak social relations with surrounding territory. The everyday local migrations include only 1.3% of inhabitants (Ignalinos AE..., 1995). Notwithstanding the monofunctional and still rather closed economy of the city, it is more and more interrelated with the economies of different settlements in Utena district and in other Lithuanian cities: Visaginas serves as an important market for their enterprises.

Visaginas is a result of the not-functional and not-regional planning, therefore it is not integrated in the development of the Lithuanian territory. Actually it is a not regional and fully functioning city what is shown by the structure of population, proportions of infrastructure and a lot of not finished constructions. The geographical position of the city makes a huge impact on the development perspectives of Visaginas (especially on the diversification of industry): Visaginas is in the state border area, far from economically dynamic regions and cities.

The main aspect that influenced the structure of the social processes and development was active migration (mainly from outside Lithuania until 1993) processes, which has formed a unique national (Lithuanians constituted only 14% in 1997) and demographic (children made about 26.2%, able-bodied 65.9% of the total population in 1999) structure of the city. The negative migration saldo since 1997 has been influenced by low immigration. The emigration is almost stable – 600–700 persons per year, but this makes 1.8–2% of the total Visaginas population. Immigration fell twice in the years 1992–1998. An obvious tendency of the last years is the replacement of the international migration by the internal one (Social..., 1999).

Almost all economic activity in Visaginas is connected with the INPP or the service of the INPP workers: 39% of Visaginas able-bodied population work in the INPP. With the exception of the textile mill (935 employees), all biggest enterprises are companies working in the sphere of municipal services and trade companies. Most of other bigger companies of Visaginas are registered and pay taxes to the Ignalina region. These enterprises were highly specialised to serve the INPP.

The social situation in the Visaginas is rather contrasting. The living standards in Visaginas are quite high: the average salary is 1.9 times higher than in Lithuania and 2.1–2.8 times higher than in the surrounding territories. This is accounted for by the income from the INPP; at the same time the income of other workers are lowest in the region and 1.7 times lower than the average in Lithuania. Only 59% of able-bodied persons in Visaginas are employed (78% in Lithuania), what implies the potential problems in the labour market.

**The most essential factor that will make the greatest effect on the labor market in the following years is that the number of able-bodied persons will increase by 6.1 thousands until the year 2005. During this period less than 2000 persons will become pensioners.**

The Ignalina Labour Exchange (which also serves Visaginas) has registered 2872 persons seeking for a job, 2657 unemployed persons (including 1494 from Visaginas). There are huge inadequacies in labour supply and demand. The ratio of supply and demand is 1.29. In the labour force supply there dominate (29%) trade workers, agricultural workers (24%) and workers of industry and construction (19% and 11%). The demand for labour force is higher in the private sector (76%). The highest need is of the full time workers (76%). The biggest demand is in the service sphere (45%). The demand in the trade sphere dominates. A rather high demand for industrial workers was influenced by the demand in the Visaginas textile mill.

The Labour Exchange of Ignalina has the main functions of labour market regulation and it is comparably active in this sphere. 4.8 mill. Litas should be used for the regulation of the employment level (only 77% actually available). Seven programs were introduced: the lowering of inadequacies in labour supply–demand; prevention of decreases in working places; professional education; making of new working places; public works; supported jobs; promotion of personal business. The effectiveness of programs was different.

In general, social relations with the INPP of Ignalina region are relatively weak and tend to weaken even more. Social relations of the district with

Visaginas which fulfils some functions of a sub-regional centre consolidate, the area, however its direct attraction is rather small (includes only 3 neighboring economic units of local administration and Dūkštas).

The economic links of the region with the INPP are determined by the scope of utilities and commodities provided by the enterprises of the region. There exist almost no direct labour relations of the Zarasai region with the INPP.

From the point of view of the whole Utena district, it should be pointed out that it competes with other, even remote regions for the consumptive Visaginas market. In this way, under competitive conditions and market influence, the direct INPP relations with the centres of remote regions are expanding. Namely, the means earned by the INPP activity are used for social needs of local administrations and special programs. The income tax paid by physical persons of the INPP affects the finances of not only this region, but also of many other local administrations. The INPP activity determines the implementation of some special regional programs (the roads upgrading program).

#### **POSSIBLE IMPACT OF THE INPP CLOSURE ON THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT IN VISAGINAS AND THE UTENA DISTRICT**

Theoretically, the possible impacts of the closure of the INPP on the social environment could be positive and negative. The impact of the INPP closure to the labour market would be felt on several levels:

1. Growth of unemployment because of reduced demand for the INPP employees.

5103 persons are employed in the INPP, of them 563 belong to the administration group, 903 are specialists, 70 clutter-workers and 3567 workers. A high level of education is evident among the INPP staff. Only 90.8% of the INPP staff have the Lithuanian citizenship. Employees aged under 30 years make 12.2%, from 30 to 50 – 73.8%.

2. Cutdown of working places in the enterprises serving the INPP.

The closure of the INPP will affect the number of working places not only in the INPP, but also in other enterprises, because there are many enterprises in the region that make business with the INPP, and this makes large part of their turnover. Also, many working places are in the INPP serving companies (construction, transportation, roads, etc.). Part of the suppliers can stop their activity, or decrease the number of employees. The questioning of the INPP suppliers was carried out to elucidate the present situation.

3. Decrease of working places because of multiplication effect.

A decrease in working places occurs because of a decrease in consumer market; this would happen in Visaginas, Utena district and across Lithuania. The decrease in consumer market is based on the reasons described above. The main impact will be felt by the companies oriented to the local (Visaginas) market, mostly retail services sector. Because of the small size of these companies the possible impacts are not easily evaluated. The increase of unemployment in the region would be evident because of multiplication effect, but less evident than in the city, because orders from the INPP are not the main market to these companies. It could be that another 1000 persons would lose their job because of many multiplication effects as is proved by the researches made in the world.

The positive impact is mostly expected in the sphere of recreation and tourism.

There are two main groups of actors that can exercise a possible impact on labour market of the INPP closure. These are enterprises that create working places and employees whose possible behaviour after losing their jobs also can affect the actual situation of the labour market.

#### **The possible direct consequences of the INPP closure on the number of working places.**

In this section the direct impact on the labour market is analysed without accounting for the possible impact of the macroeconomic changes.

The calculations using the step-by-step scenario of the INPP closure show that 2500 employees would remain in the INPP in 2005, 1200 in 2008, 400 in 2015. This means that taking into account the social orientations of the INPP employees (it will be discussed later in this paper) the unemployment in the Visaginas will have grown by 350 persons by 2005 (persons who are going to stay in Visaginas); 90 persons will need requalification programs, compensations to 2100 persons should be paid.

The impact on the unemployment rate will be made not only by a decreasing number of the INPP employees, but also by a decreasing number of other enterprises in Visaginas and Lithuania that serve the INPP, because orders of the INPP make a big part of their turnover. The total turnover of services and goods with the 150 companies registered in the territory of Lithuania made up 137.65 mill. Litas in 1998. Forty-four companies with the largest turnover or most dependent on the INPP were questioned (Table 1). It could be assumed that the impact on the unemployment rate of the unquestioned companies in the case of INPP closure will be lower.

Table 1. Possible impact of the INPP closure until 2005 on the enterprises cooperating with the INPP  
1 lentelė. Galimas IAE uždarymo iki 2005 m. poveikis su IAE bendradarbiaujančioms įmonėms

Location	Number of questioned companies	No impact, No. (%)	Search for new markets No. (%)	Eliminated No. (%)	Decrease in staff No. (%)	Don't know, No. (%)
Vieta	Apklaustų firmų skaičius	Jokio poveikio	Ieškos naujų rinkų	Bus likviduotos	Sumažins darbuotojų skaičių	Nežino
Visaginas	23	0 (-)	0 (-)	18 (78)	5 (22)	0 (-)
Rest of Utena region	7	2 (29)	0 (-)	1 (14)	4 (57)	0 (-)
Rest of Lithuania	14	8 (57)	1 (7)	1 (7)	4 (29)	0 (-)
Total	44	10 (23)	1 (2)	20 (45)	13 (30)	0 (-)

The INPP purchases goods for 58.55 mill. Lit. from producers and resellers in Lithuania. In the case of the INPP closure until the year 2005, the strongest impact would be made on enterprises based in Visaginas. The reason is their narrow specialisation and high dependence on the INPP; 570 persons will become unemployed in the questioned companies. In the Utena region, 40 persons will become unemployed. The impact on the companies in the rest of Lithuania would be even smaller. The total loss in employment would be around 640 persons.

The situation is different with the companies that serve the INPP. Of 110 such companies based in Lithuania 24 were questioned, and their total turnover of services makes 79.9 mill. Lit. The strongest impact on their operations would feel companies based in Visaginas. The reasons of such huge impact are not only directly related with the INPP closure, but also with the small market of their services and because of poor knowledge of the Lithuanian language by the employees in these companies. Around 1020 persons would become unemployed in these companies. In the surrounding region the number of employees also would decrease, but none of them would be eliminated. In other Lithuanian territory around 70 persons would become unemployed. In total, 1140 persons would become unemployed in all these companies.

1780 persons would become unemployed in the case of the INPP closure in all questioned companies. It is possible that at least 200 persons more (150 in Visaginas) would lose their job in non-questioned companies. This means that around 2000 people would become unemployed because of the INPP closure (around 85% in Visaginas). The impact on the companies in the Utena region would be lower; much lower would be the impact on the Lithuanian unemployment rate.

Judging by the answers to the question what impact the closure will make after 2005, the respon-

dents distributed similarly (Table 2). The losses would be biggest in Visaginas. In this questioning answers like "don't know" (41% of total) and "we'll seek for new markets" (6 companies in Visaginas) are very popular. The slow shut down of the INPP would enable companies to change their specialisation or to search for new markets and at the same time to avoid the bad consequences, if the decision of closure was clearly stated.

According to the questioning results, the total loss in the employment rate would be lower. 423 persons would lose their job in the companies that would be eliminated. 200 working places would be lost in companies that would decrease their employees' number. It could be expected that some working places would be lost in the companies that cannot say anything about their future. In total, around 1000 persons would lose their job, mainly in Visaginas.

There would be an increase in the unemployment rate because of multiplication effect. Some forecasts could be made on the decreasing number of working places in the city, region and whole Lithuania because of reducing the consumer market of Visaginas and the surrounding region. In the first stage the strongest impact will be felt by the enterprises oriented to the local Visaginas market, especially by companies in the sphere of services. The main impact will be concentrated on Visaginas – almost all other companies in the city work only for the local market (except the enterprise "Visatex"). The primary multiplication effect would be sensible because of the income loss of the INPP and the INPP serving companies' workers. The secondary effect would be sensible because of the income loss of the companies serving persons mentioned in the primary effect, etc. It is hard to describe the exact numbers in this calculation, but according to the worldwide multiplication effect researches at least around 1000 persons would lose their job (Social..., 1999).

Table 2. Possible impact of INPP closure after 2005 on the enterprises cooperating with INPP  
2 lentelė. Galimas IAE uždarymo po 2005 m. poveikis su IAE bendradarbiaujančiomis įmonėmis

Location Vieta	Number of questioned companies Apklaustų firmų skaičius	No impact, No. (%) Jokio poveikio	Search for new markets No. (%) Ieškos naujų rinkų	Eliminated No. (%) Bus likviduotos	Decrease in staff No. (%) Sumažins darbuotojų skaičių	Don't know, No. (%) Nežino
Visaginas	23	0 (-)	6 (26)	6 (26)	3 (13)	8 (35)
Rest of the Utena region	7	2 (29)	0 (-)	0 (-)	1 (14)	3 (43)
Rest of Lithuania	14	6 (43)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	8 (57)
Total	44	10 (23)	6 (14)	6 (14)	4 (9)	18 (41)

The actual situation in the labour market will depend also on the **possible behavior of Visaginas inhabitants in case of the INPP closure**. A few questionings were made trying to find out a possible behavior and opinion of different groups of population in Visaginas. Due to the earlier mentioned reasons, only very general data will be presented.

*Opinion of Visaginas population.* To get information about the social opinions of the Visaginas population concerning the INPP closure, the questioning was carried out in May 1999. One percent of the total Visaginas inhabitants was interrogated – 338 respondents, including 301 able-bodied persons. Only the opinion of able-bodied respondents is represented here.

In general, 4/5 of the population thinks that city is too much dependent on the INPP. Almost half of respondents (48%) would stay in Visaginas in the case of INPP closure, 26% would emigrate, 21% move to other cities in Lithuania, and 5% could not answer. If in the case of INPP closure they lost job, most of respondents (56%) expect to find some other job, 8% start their own business, 10% trust in requalification programs, 25% think that they will be unemployed. Among persons who would leave Visaginas those with university education dominate.

From all respondents that would like to stay in Visaginas after INPP closure, no one expressed the positive opinion about the INPP closure. If in the case of INPP closure any of persons who intend to stay in Visaginas lost their job, 32% think they will become unemployed and must get support from the state.

For the possible influence of the INPP closure to that part of the population, which do not work at the INPP, questionnaires for the persons employed in the sphere of services were processed separately. A rather big group of these respondents (27%) compared with other respondents would emigrate in

the case of INPP closure; 24% would move to other Lithuanian cities, 49% would stay in Visaginas. Even 56% of respondents who work in the sphere of services are afraid that they would become unemployed in the case of INPP closure. 9% suppose that the fact of closure would do good to their job activity. Almost half of persons who are afraid of job loss think that they will find a new job, 30% think that they will become unemployed in the case of INPP closure.

*Opinion of the INPP staff.* 429 employees of 12 main departments of the INPP were questioned in May 1993. Most of the INPP personnel intend to stay in Visaginas in the case of the INPP closure. 27% would emigrate abroad, 7% would change their living place to other Lithuanian towns or villages. Two thirds have answered that the income from the INPP makes 100% of their family incomes. In case of the INPP closure one third of the questioned personnel expects to find a working place in the closed plant and a half think that they will become unemployed (Social..., 1999).

Judging from the data collected, there will be a stronger impact of INPP closure to the Visaginas inhabitants than the direct impact on the INPP staff.

In conclusion, it is necessary to mention a possibility that new working places could appear because of changes in the markets and in the demand, but only in the place of old ones. Totally new working places in this case should be based only on the external market, not the local, because exactly to this market the production of the INPP was oriented. The establishment of new working places usually requires higher spending and longer investment. But the city and its inhabitants have no such possibilities to invest.

The impact on the labour market in Lithuania because of increase in price of electricity and lower competitiveness of goods produced in Lithuania, competitiveness of younger generation in the labour

Table 3. **Preliminary prognosis of the unemployment increase in the case of the INPP closure (in 2005–2008)**  
3 lentelė. **Preliminari bedarbystės išaugimo prognozė uždarius IAE 2005–2008 metais**

Area and effect Teritorija ir poveikis	Extra number of unemployed persons Papildomas bedarbių skaičius	Persons changing their profession Pakeisiančių profesiją skaičius
Decrease in INPP staff Darbuotojų skaičiaus sumažėjimas IAE	2980	510
Decrease in the number of employees of the companies in Visaginas serving the INPP Darbuotojai, neteksiantys darbo IAE aptarnaujančiose Visagino kompanijose	1700	n.a.
Decrease in the number of employees of the companies outside Visaginas, serving the INPP Darbuotojai, neteksiantys darbo IAE aptarnaujančiose ne Visagino kompanijose	300	n.a.
Multiplication effect in the Visaginas city Multiplikacinis efektas Visagino mieste	1040	420
Multiplication effect in the region Multiplikacinis efektas regione	40	–
Total Iš viso	6060	930

market are also not included here. The creation of new working places because of the INPP closure works, what will happen in any case, was not evaluated, but this will reduce the diminishing of consumer market.

**Possible impact of the INPP closure on the recreational activities in Ignalina region.** Possible changes in the nearest future in the recreational usage of the region are connected with the closure of the INPP. This fact in advance is supposed to be positive to the recreational usage of the region. There are many high-quality recreational resources in the region of the INPP, this region was famous among tourists from the CIS countries and Lithuania.

According to the special questionnaires, the region's attractiveness was higher than the fear of the INPP to the tourists from Russia. The flow of the tourists from the Western countries is in the initial phase, to the people who are already visiting this region (they are mostly young people, staying in the region for some days) the impact of the INPP is neutral. It can be briefly stated that the INPP makes some impact on recreational activity in the region. There were respondents who absolutely avoid visiting the Ignalina region or try to go further from the NPP, because of fear of the INPP (up to 1/5 of all questioned respondents), but on the other hand Visaginas inhabitants and its visitors are one of the biggest users of the recreational resources of the region (Social..., 1999).

**There is no basis to assert that the region will be used more intensively for the recreational purposes in case of the INPP closure.** It is hard to believe that in the case of the INPP closure Visaginas becomes a recreational city by itself, without any investments. Important are not only investments to the recreational infrastructure, but also the maintenance of the social level of Visaginas. This means expenses on the creation of the new jobs.

## MAIN CONSEQUENCES AND PROPOSALS

1. The socially and economically depressed region surrounding the INPP and Visaginas, closed society of Visaginas with weak relations with the surrounding territory, the situation in labour market of the city and demographical trends here make unfavourable preconditions for possible social consequences of the INPP closure.

2. The possible impact of the INPP closure on the social environment touches not only the INPP personnel, but also the inhabitants (and families) of Visaginas, working in the sphere of services, enterprises servicing and supplying goods to the INPP, Visaginas, Ignalina region and Utena district, municipal budgets of Visaginas, Ignalina and Zarasai region, budgets of less developed regions of Lithuania that get subsidies through the INPP payments, some other special social groups and institutions, including students that are prepared for the work in

the INPP, other places of Lithuania where the unemployed people from Visaginas will move.

3. A possible gain of the INPP closure is almost invisible.

Even today, possible social changes are influenced by the unclear situation in the INPP closure. This fact could make a huge impact on the social orientation of the INPP personnel and Visaginas inhabitants, their preparation to social changes, social mobility. Some facts should be declared before the evaluation is done and possible ways of eliminating the social consequences are found:

1. Planned activities on the creation of new working places in the region should be implemented: the migration of Visaginas inhabitants would not be so high to eliminate the huge increase in unemployment rate. There are almost no alternatives of new income sources, including private business. The labour market in the region has no possibilities to absorb such a quantity of highly qualified persons.

2. There are no financial resources in Visaginas and in the region (including foreign investment) to increase the number of working places, therefore investments and regulations on the national level are needed.

3. In the phase of finding the possible ways to eliminate social consequences, the following three levels should be analysed: 1) implication of means into current regional development programs; 2) integration of means to perspective regional development programs; 3) preparation of special programs of economic development for Visaginas and its region.

4. A possible way to reduce the social consequences in the region is creation of the Euroregion in the crossing of three states. Social monitoring should be implemented without delay in Visaginas and in the region.

In any case, all expenses concerning preparation and implementation of economic development programs in Visaginas (in the case of the INPP closure) and its region should be included in the calculation of the INPP closure social costs.

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## SOCIALINĖS IGNALINOS AE UŽDARYMO PASEKMĖS

### S a n t r a u k a

Šiame straipsnyje analizuojamos galimos Ignalinos AE uždarymo socialinės pasekmės Visagino miestui ir platesnėms teritorijoms. Tam tikslui buvo tiriama socialinė ir ekonominė Utenos apskrities ir Visagino miesto aplinka, kadangi ji atspindi AE uždarymo sąlygas ir todėl turi būti laikoma vienu uždarymo socialinių pasekmių veiksmu. Utenos apskritis socialiniu ir ekonominiu požiūriu trumpai gali būti apibūdinta kaip depresinė zona, Visagino miestas – kaip uždaras sociumas, labai priklausantis nuo AE veiklos, o tai savaime nepalankus veiksnys likviduojant AE uždarymo pasekmes.

Svarbiausia socialinė AE uždarymo pasekmė – poveikis darbo rinkai mieste ir už jo ribų. Siekiant jį išsiaiškinti analizuotos dvi pagrindinės žmonių grupės, galinčios daryti įtaką darbo rinkoje. Apklausų metodu tirtas galimas uždarymo poveikis darbo vietų skaičiui įmonėse, susijusiose su AE, bei galima gyventojų elgsena uždarymo atveju. Darbo vietų skaičius priklauso nuo uždarymo grafiko. Bet kuriuo atveju labiausiai nukentės Visagino miestas, nes darbo vietų jame būtų prarasta daugiau nei pačioje IAE. Atskirai analizuotas galimas teigiamas uždarymo poveikis rekreacinės veiklos intensyvumui regione, tačiau vienareikšmių išvadų daryti negalima.

Gyventojų reakcija į IAE uždarymą yra vienareikšmė. Absoliuti dauguma respondentų neatsieja IAE likimo nuo miesto. Prognozuojamas elgesys skiriasi priklausomai nuo respondentų darbo vietos, amžiaus, išsilavinimo, bet apskritai apie ½ respondentų tikisi išvykti iš miesto, sumažindami nedarbo lygį mieste, bet didindami kitose vietose.

Tyrimas įrodė, kad nedarbo problemos mieste turi būti sprendžiamos kartu su miesto integracija į Lietuvos visuomenines teritorines sistemas. Akivaizdu, kad siekiant sumažinti socialinius kaštus reikalingos specialios vystymo programos, orientuotos į naujų darbo vietų kūrimą ekonominiuose, ne į vietinę rinką nukreiptuose sektoriuose.