

**STATE CHILD RIGHTS PROTECTION AND ADOPTION SERVICE UNDER THE  
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SECURITY AND LABOR**

**ANALYSIS OF FEEDBACK ON CHILDREN OVER 10 YEARS OF AGE, ADOPTED BY  
FOREIGNERS**

In these latter years the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labor (hereinafter referred to as the Service) has received over 400 reports on feedback every year, submitted by the authorized institutions of foreign states as well as central adoption institutions. Also, the Service sometimes gets letters from the families after adoption; they send photos, videos, drawings of children, etc.

Pursuant to the Clause 22.8 of the Description of procedure for authorizing the institutions of foreign states to act in pursuance of the intercountry adoption in the Republic of Lithuania, approved by the Order of the Minister of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania No. A1-162 of 3 June 2005, the authorized institutions of foreign states shall furnish the Service with the feedback on the adopted children (during the first 2 years following the adoption – every six months, during the next 2 years – once a year, in 4 years following the adoption – upon the Service’s request), consisting of notices of the prescribed form of the integration in the family, living conditions, development, health, and video material of the adopted child.

The analysis covers the portraits of adopted children and adoptive parents, information on the life of children over 10 years of age, adopted by the families of foreign citizens in 2009–2012, in their new home, the situation and points at issue of the adoptive families, as well as certain tendencies. Furthermore, the analysis covers an overview of the way the children, parents, and other family members adapted to new conditions as well as of the role of Lithuania and connection to Lithuania.

**MATERIAL OF ANALYSIS**

The reports on 34 children over 10 years of age (22 cases), adopted in 2009–2012 by the families of the citizens of foreign states, received by the Service after the adoption, are analyzed. The adopted children live in Europe (Spain, Italy, Poland, France, and Switzerland), North America (USA), and Oceania (New Zealand). The oldest child was born in 1993 (adopted of the age of 17 in 2011), the youngest – in 2005 (adopted of the age of 4 in 2009 together with big sisters

(respectively of the age of 9 and 15). The age of most of the adopted children was 10–14 years. Just a few children of 15–17 years of age were adopted.

### **Portrait of adopted children**

Adopted children of the age of 10–17 are afraid to trust new people for a long time due to losses and difficulties experienced in the past. They want to be independent and have distance from the adults. Such children have gone through hard childhood; in a way they are still children, who need attention and assistance. On the other hand, they are almost grown-ups with formed character and temper and very often with the extensive experience of life in foster home.

### **Portrait of adoptive parents**

The adoptive parents of older children are usually of the age of 46–50 (in certain cases, over 50), well-off, working according to profession, usually without any biological children, or with the latter having almost reach the adulthood. They adopt because they do not have the biological children, because they want to help a child left without parental care, or because their daughter or son would need a brother or sister and the family cannot have more children on their own.

## **SITUATION AFTER ADOPTION**

Usually the children are active, agile, smart, fond of sports and staying outside. They physical development is good and they do not have major health problems.

After a while the children become social, in good mood, though for quite some time they still need the parents to help and comfort them as regards to the problems relevant to anger, anxiety, alienation, fear of abandonment and new environment. Children are taught to accept certain rules and stick to them consistently with a view to ensure stable routine.

**Typical situation.** Adopted children have suffered huge shock, experienced pain and loss due to discontinued connection with Lithuania, people they used to communicate with, as well as ordinary environment. For some time they share their experiences with the adoptive parents. Children claim that they do not want to stay here, that they did not really understand what the adoption is really about. Situation is aggravated by continuous calls or such other ways to try to keep in touch by the members of biological family and friends from the foster home, where the children used to live. In presence of strangers the children call their adoptive parents “mother” and

“father”, but they refuse to say the same at home. They treat other people better than their parents. It should be emphasized that in the beginning the children have closer communication with their grandparents, e.g. they tell their rosary together, put under the pillow the sacramental pictures, given by their grandmother, etc.

Thus, the children undergo crises, which prevent from smooth process of adaptation to a new family. Often the parents have to consult the psychiatrists or psychologists, in some cases, even the antidepressants are prescribed for the children. It should be concluded that the adoptive families face the emotional and social problems of the children more than the health problems.

According to the adoptive parents, the peace comes slowly thanks to tremendous effort of both the parents and of the children. It is indicated in the reports that as a matter of fact the adopted children have no problems to have harmonious communication with their cousins, aunts, uncles, and other relatives, whereas such communication with the parents is usually missing for quite a few months.

It should be noted that the children, adopted at an older age, usually remember, in their opinion, neglect and sometimes even exploitation or violence in foster home or foster family. After a while such adopted children gradually adapt to new environment, learn the language, make friends, etc.

Quite a few older children, who are adopted in foreign countries, already have some knowledge of language of that country. Staying in the families of foreigners during vacation for the number of years contributes a lot to the knowledge of language. Usually it takes a few weeks and the children are already able to understand the language; in a few months they can already have some communication in the language of their adoptive parents. The children do not speak Lithuanian at all, though they understand and do not forget it for long. In fact, if the family adopts a group of sisters and brothers, then the children speak Lithuanian with each other for quite some time.

In the beginning the language barrier is very inconvenient to study, adapt to new environment – children need intense help. In such cases, they get help from their parents as well as private language teachers.

### **Adaptation of adoptive parents and their relationship with children**

The relations between the parents and the children are based on mutual respect, trust, as well as straight and sincere communication. Problems relevant to the children’s past, abandonment, and anguish, are solved immediately in the family or together with the specialists. The parents request

assistance (including psychological) from respective services in order to strengthen their parents' abilities.

The reports submitted enable making judgments that sometimes the parents must aspire after close, affectionate, and friendly relations with their children for quite a few years. Often it takes a lot of time to develop real mutual trust. The establishment of mutual emotional relation is followed by the establishment of spiritual relation, which later grows into sincere relationship between parents and children. The parents aim at mutual respect, highlighting and demonstrating the abilities and strengths of every adopted child.

The children are educated by both parents. Certain educational and disciplinary measures are seen as usual and comprehensive for the children: to forget favorite or desirable things for some time, to stay in the room alone in order to have some quiet time to think of his behavior and actions, etc. In the beginning the children tend to check their parents' point of view and evade the rules, but soon they start to understand them as well as realize the internal organization and that they must comply with certain procedure. As indicated by the parents, they always try to find this balance between control and freedom.

### **Connection to Lithuania**

Almost all adoptive parents (approximately 70 percent) wish to establish or maintain relations with the Lithuanian culture, especially some time later in the future. They communicate (or intend to communicate) with the foster home, where the adopted children used to live, biological family and relatives, who stayed in the homeland of the adopted children, they speak about Lithuania, life in Lithuania, as well as engage in the activities of the Lithuanian community. Rather often in the beginning the children deny and repudiate the connection to Lithuania, later they "grow up", but the mother-tongue is already forgotten. Then the adopted children often start telling their memories from their life in Lithuania, they want to visit their home country, socialize with their relatives, etc.

## CONCLUSION

1. Adopted children from Lithuania of the age of 10–17 are afraid to trust new people for a long time due to losses and difficulties experienced in the past.
2. The adoptive parents of older children are usually of the age of 46–50 (in certain cases, over 50), well-off, working according to profession, usually without any biological children, or with the latter having almost reach the adulthood.
3. The adopted children have suffered huge shock and have gone through crisis, followed by pain and loss, due to broken relations with Lithuania, people close to them, friends, etc. For some time they would share their experiences with the adoptive parents, remembering of the past.
4. The adopted teenagers would learn a new language very well after approximately one year, and their knowledge of language would be excellent after 2–3 years.
5. The children go to school, where they get help from individually appointed teachers or by studying according to special program. Difficulties related to studying mathematics and problems related to the language (especially writing) should be distinguished, also intentional carry-on, provoking uncontrolled situation in the class or another environment, is typical.
6. The parents must aspire after close, affectionate, and friendly relations with their children for quite a few years.
7. The adoptive families face the emotional and social problems of the children more than the health problems.
8. Almost all adoptive parents (approximately 70 percent) wish to establish or maintain relations with the Lithuanian culture, especially some time later in the future.
9. Some children were adopted by those families of foreign citizens, which the minor children used to stay with during their vacation.
10. Information, given in the post-adoption reports, demonstrates that the adopted children over 10 years of age managed to adapt to the conditions of new life abroad, though the period of adaptation was more complicated and longer as compared to the adoption of younger children.