

The Impact of the Tax System on Business Environment

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The possibilities for business development depend in many cases on larger financial resources, which may be problematic to form from own sources, especially in developing countries. Therefore both economically developed countries and developing countries struggle actively for investment flows. As a rule, the most effective methods are employed in order to create an environment which is attractive for investments and for business development. One of the most important factors determining the attractiveness of business environment, is the level of tax burden or, more generally, tax policy. The opinions of politicians and researchers differ quite often: while the one part pays most attention to the income taxes of enterprises, the other part attach more importance to the level of capital or work taxes. Many people will, however, agree that any taxes at all contradict to the economic principles of business, and that they deform the economic relationships in the market. Therefore it is highly important to ensure that the boundary, where no stimuli are left to develop honest business and to increase the effectiveness of the activities, is not crossed while one determines the tax basis, tariffs and other conditions for assessment of income, work and capital.

Many countries in the world have achieved better results with respect to the growth of economics by means of lowering the tax rates.

Lithuanian experience with respect to the economic development after the restitution of Independence, has also confirmed the main regularities, related to tax system formation, identified by scholars who are researching tax systems, their effectiveness and tendencies of optimization in different countries. Before joining the EU, the Lithuanian government undertook major changes in the tax system of the country. Most attention was paid to the level of the assessment of enterprises' income. As the results of budget formation have shown later, lowering of profit tax rates has led to positive results with respect to growth of economics. Inflow to the State budget increased due to profit taxes, while the level of shadow economics decreased. For the present being, projects for optimization of tax distribution are being carried out so that assessment of work may be reduced.

The present article displays Lithuanian experience with respect to acceleration of the economic growth and formation of investment-friendly business environment for foreign investors. The positive rearrangements of the tax system have had a decisive influence to the fact that the rates of economic growth in Lithuania during 2004-2006 were higher than the rates of economic growth in EU countries.

Keywords: tax; return.

Introduction

The tax system is one of the most basic economic mechanisms determining the development of economics and ensuring that the most important functions of a state are executed. As a rule, financing of public sectors depends on the size of the national budget, and the size of the national budget depends on the effectiveness of the tax system and on the economic level of the state. Thus the following subjects are closely interrelated: national economics where private business plays the main role nowadays, the national budget and the condition of publicly financed sectors, such as research, education, health care, national defense and others. However, while solving the above-mentioned problems, one has to answer questions about what principles or priorities should be taken as the basis for formation of the tax system so that it becomes attractive for the business and investments (usually this is interpreted as low tax rates and various tax allowances) and ensures efficient formation of sufficient national and municipal budgets?

Countries with developed economics have much experience with respect to formation of business-friendly tax systems. There are more possibilities for lowering tax rates, while preserving inflows to the budgets, in countries which have achieved high level of work and capital effectiveness and which have a relatively higher BNP. During the last decades there is a kind of rivalry going between different countries where one attempts to attract investments by various modifications of the tax systems.

It is recommended to rely on the results of scientific research and conclusions and suggestions formulated by scholars with respect to modifications of tax systems. One will, however, soon find out that there is no concrete and detailed formula about how to form a tax system in a specific country, if one goes through a number of results of scientific investigations. Various authors have, as a rule, quite different viewpoints towards the aspects of formation of tax systems. However, certain experience of foreign countries with respect to the tax policy and results of scholars' research are valuable while solving problems of effectiveness of tax systems and economic development.

In scholarly debates, much importance is attached to the distribution of taxes, tariffs, types of tax systems and other questions which have influence to the budget's inflow, investment flows and the level of shadow economics.

The amount of the taxes determines the financing level of social programs; therefore it is impossible to reduce income taxes without reorganizing the whole tax system (Vijverberg, 2003; Duclos and Lambert, 2000; Hayes and Slottje, 1995). Some authors, who propose certain

optimizations of the tax system, refer to the Irish or Scandinavian experience with reduction of manpower assessment (Ganghof, 2005; Cnossen, 2001; Hardiman, 2001). According to their view, one can expect more effective work due to higher motivation, having balanced the assessment of capital and work. This aspect of optimization of the tax system is also relevant to Lithuania, where illegal payments for the work constitute an important problem.

There is much debate as to progressiveness of income taxes. Authors, who are exponents of progressive tax rates, emphasize the importance of the principles of social justice in a tax system (Lucy and Ackert, 2007; Rider, 2006; Charnes and Rabin, 2002; Fher and Schmidt, 1999). The adherents of progressive taxes receive, however, severe criticism based on the claims that such a system reduces effectiveness and that stimuli for business development and income increasing are lost at some level of income growth, which may lead businessmen to redirect their investments to other regions (Gravelle and Zimmerman, 1984; Buss, 2001; Munnell, 1992; Philipps and Goss, 1995; Papke, 1995).

Although there are different opinions, many authors will agree that high tax rates do not secure higher inflow (revenues) to the budget. The scholars maintain that the tax burden must not force businessmen to hide their income; there must be an optimal balance between the part of the income which remains with the businessman and may be used for business development, and the part of the income which is paid to the national and municipal budgets (Cremer and Gahvari, 1999; Auerbach, 1985; Kaplow, 1990; Fortan and Lacroix, 1994). A tax system must be based on objective demands of a democratic society, so that it is understandable to the tax-payers who will support it by voluntarily carrying out their obligations to the state (Shih-Ying Wu, 2004; Duquette and Christopher, 1999; Randolph and Williams, 1995; Turnbull, Geoffrey, 1992).

This overview, shows that optimization of tax systems is quite a complicated process which is not perceived unambiguously; it is, however, very important for many countries and for Lithuanian economics as well.

Lithuanian tax system was created by employing experience of countries with developed economics, despite the fact that economic and social conditions were extremely different. Processes such as the chaotic privatization of national property or the controversial capitalization took place in Lithuania. Little attention was paid to the effectiveness of activities; an attempt was made to achieve higher profit by means of shadow economics. Tax regulations are often changed, since tax policy in Lithuania is by and large dependant on political streams.

The problem addressed in the current article is connected with the size of income tax rates, budget revenues and the level of shadow economics.

The aim of the investigation is to prove that lower rates for income taxes lead to extension of tax basis so that budget revenues increase, while the level of shadow economics, on the contrary, decreases due to the fact that the economic stimuli to hide income and to avoid paying the taxes are reduced.

The object of the investigation is the Lithuanian business environment and the tax system.

The goals of the investigation are to provide an overview of the results of the research done by foreign researchers, to analyze the dynamics of Lithuanian budget tax-revenues, to generalize the results and to elaborate conclusions with respect to the effectiveness of the tax system.

The methodology of the investigation is based on analysis of scholarly literature and statistical data, identification of economic and social problems, and correlation analysis of dynamic changes.

The results of the investigation are valuable for solution of problems related to optimization of the tax system, increasing of the budget revenues and reduction of shadow economics. The conclusions of the investigation and the suggestions for optimizations of the tax system may be helpful for many countries which relatively lately have switched over to market economics, which encounter problems in connection to dishonest competition, unfair business, income hiding.

Relevant aspects of formation and realization of tax policy

Fiscal policy of each country comes to expression in management of the inflows and expenditures of the budget. The management of a country's budget reflects the governmental politics: the aims of the main programs, the priorities, the government's efforts in providing the society with the services it needs.

Taxes are usually treated as:

1. the means of realization of governmental politics: they help to distribute the limited national resources in order to satisfy the social and economic demands (McLure, Chareles and Thirsk, 1978);

2. the means of management and administration of the state: they describe the ways and the methods how the government's services are provided and how national programs are realized, and they determine the amount of the expenditures and the criteria for evaluation of the effectiveness of the activities, both annually and for longer periods;

3. the source of formation of the budget: they provide preconditions for the development of the national economics and of the business development of separate regions, municipalities and other administrative units. Through its function of distribution of the incomes, the budget determines the level of employment, inflation, stabilization and development of economics (Turnbull, Geoffrey, 1992). The budget is also treated as a means of financial management: it does not only perform the function of accounting on the national level, but also obligates public officers to carry responsibility for incomes and expenses in their respective spheres of competence;

In the process of formation of the budget, certain contradictions: are always encountered: firstly, one can reduce the budget itself, which means reduction of the influence of the state, corresponding fully to the nature of the liberal market; secondly, when ideal market relationships are not created and not everyone has the possibility to ensure their welfare, the authorities do not forsake certain "regulation" of the market and the social life; this is motivated by that more and more attention is paid to social

programs, health care, education, international security and similar purposes. It is the solutions of such problems in concrete economic situations determined by the government's fiscal policy determines. The solution methods may be extremely different, from liberal policy with limited taxes and minimal regulation, to centrally administrated economics, where the budget is the main component of the national economics. Decision requires deep theoretical knowledge and evaluation of the real situation.

The significance and the role of taxes as well as the external expression of their features are reflected by two functions of the taxes: fiscal and regulative (Metcalf, 1997).

Having started to apply the regulative function of taxes, improper competition relationships obtained a footing and, later, expanded actively in the market. The state, which assumes more and more responsibility and solicitude for the coordination of levels of production and consumption, strengthens at the same time the position of the centralized governance. The state also exercises influence on the process of reproduction of national product and on the supply and demand of commodities.

The authorities not only build up the wherewithal for their sustenance (that is to say, financing for the state's apparatus, national defense), but also regulate, directly or indirectly, the economics – and, to greater or lesser extent, execute social policy.

Theoretical aspects of optimization of income assessment of enterprises

The main task of a tax system is collection of taxes in order to finance public functions and programs (Auerbach, Hassett, 2007). Businessmen's attitude towards taxes is often negative, since any taxes contradict the economic principles of business and distort the economic relationships in the market. Therefore it is vitally important to ensure that in the process of determining tax basis, tariffs and other conditions for income assessment, one does not cross the boundary where no initiative for honest business is left, where it becomes impossible to achieve the main goal of the business – to make investments worthwhile and to receive additional income (Lukaševičius, 1999). Although different authors mention many other tasks of tax systems, the main task should be to collect as high revenues into the national budget as possible, at the same time as the suppressive effect of the taxes on business development and all economic activities is reduced. Besides, one should not forget that collection of taxes from the participants of economic activities not only distorts economic relationships, but also significantly increases governmental expenses and the tax burden of tax payers.

As results of polls among businessmen show, many of them are not hostile-minded toward taxes in general, but are rather willing to give a certain part of the net product of their business over to public needs. According to their opinion, the total tax burden should not, however, exceed a certain limit which could be, for example, 40 per cent of gross national product (BNP). On the other hand, there is an opinion that it is necessary to make tax concessions for owners of small and medium-sized businesses (Ahmed and Braithwaite, 2005). Debates among experts show that there is no common opinion on tax concessions for certain

exceptional economic agents either. A classical economic argument against such tax concessions (exclusive conditions for economic activities for certain businessmen and their enterprises) is the claim that such circumstances distort economic activities and reduce the effectiveness of resource employment. Tax systems with such effect are not considered neutral. Most tax concessions are related to promotion of investments and increased return on capital. If facilities are applied in order to initiate the growth of certain kinds of economic activities, this will lead to bigger or smaller distortion of investment patterns and influence the distribution of capital with respect to areas of activities (Buss, 2005). Various exceptions, particularly tax allowances for specific enterprises or specific areas of activities, make the tax system more complicated. Broader and more complex spectrum of tax allowances requires additional input from tax-collectors as well as from tax-payers. At the same time it leads to higher risk that the complicated rules for income tax assessment may be difficult to understand correctly, and the businessman may be punished by a tax administrator or experience other disadvantages.

There are also arguments of other kinds against tax allowances for specific participants of the market economics. Employment of benefits of one or another kind with respect to specific tax-payers creates an image of unjust tax policy. This may lead to illegal activities, hiding of income, and other negative phenomena due to unequal conditions for economic activities, when other enterprises pay lower taxes or even do not pay any taxes at all thanks to favorable tax regulations. On the other hand, tax allowances may expand the tax base and lead to a better result – higher tax-revenues to the budget. As is known, United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, Japan and some other countries expanded the tax base of corporations' income (profit) tax and lowered the tax-rates during the period from 1986 till 1990. Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands and Germany undertook similar measures and reduced the budget deficit.

All countries use various types of tax-related stimuli which depend as a rule on many factors specific to business environment in that concrete country: historic preconditions, international relationships, level of development of industry and business, social programs and many others. The main arguments for tax concessions (allowances, reductions) are the following:

1. Difficulties in connection with market. This is the classical justification of tax-related stimulation. Difficulties in the market may arise due to external factors, unreliable information, price changes, insufficient strategic planning, or other factors related to competition environment.

2. Achieving economic goals. In many countries, different stimuli have been used in order to avoid circularity of economic development. In case of decline in production and when one seeks to increase investment in production or to accelerate technological renewal of enterprises and growth of their competitive ability at international level, one can introduce tax allowances (exemption from taxes or reduced tax rates) with respect to businessmen's or enterprises' income which is used for development of production, rearrangement of technologies and similar goals.

3. Promotion of structural changes in economics. After the oil crisis in 1970s, many countries started applying tax allowances with respect to income from capital investments which were used to save energy. In other cases it may be production of children items, cultivation of ecological products, or promotion of other areas of activities. On the other side, higher taxes may be applied to such areas of activities where the profit norm is higher, the capital pays dividends more quickly or to activities which involve deepening of ecological problems or social conflicts.

4. Solving regional problems. Quite often one needs to use measures of economic promotion in order to attract investors to less business-friendly regions. This may depend on inconvenient geographic position, difficulties of obtaining or transportation of resources needed for the activities, or other environmental factors.

5. Promotion of competitive ability. Many countries seek to have a tax system which would be attractive for foreign investors. It is quite difficult to describe properties of such a system concretely, but it is possible to point out main trends of a successful promotion of international competitive ability.

The level of efficiency of a tax system depends largely on the basis it is formed on. If one seeks to achieve unconditional legitimating of the principle of justice in the sphere of taxes, one will encounter big problems with respect to realization of the principle both in practice and on the theoretical level, because the conception of justice depends on many ethic categories. If one, on the other hand, appeals to the principle of expediency, the tax policy will have to correspond to the country's social goals, programs for economic and social development, and it will answer better to the expectations with respect to the development of economics.

Some authors speak for that the expediency principle should be laid to the basis of a tax system. Supporters of this principle raise also questions about whether it is altogether possible to comply with the justice principle while there is no common agreement on how this notion should be defined. For example, Amonn (Avižonis, 1978), who refused the justice principle in connection with tax assessment, claimed that "you won't go far with the principle of justice in the sphere of taxation – what is just in theory, may be unjust in real practice. In practical activities expediency is more important than justice". Prof. Cannan (Avižonis, 1978) argues as well that the principle of expediency is more important with respect to tax systems. In his view, one should first of all look at what is expedient, and only then at what is just. One can find several formal definitions of justice; however, it seems clear from the examples mentioned above that it is very difficult to apply one or another definition of justice to concrete situations in real life. All interpretations are too general to be applicable to concrete phenomena of the life. The notion of justice depends on many factors in the concrete reality: people's social position, cultural level, view of life, party-programs and other factors. These factors have impact on the understanding of the notion of justice and the evaluation of human actions as just or unjust. The conclusion which follows from such considerations, is that justice is not applicable as a valid criterion for concrete situations and phenomena in the real

life. It occurs rather often the same situation seems perfectly just to some people and deeply unjust to some others. For example, how could we measure the level of justice with respect to the fees of the employees, or the rates of customs duties and various other taxes?

One distinguishes two types of tax-related justice, vertical and horizontal. Vertical justice has to do with taxation of persons with different income. Vertically just is such a system where tax rates are dependent on the level of income (progressive rates are applied). The tax rate increases dependently on the growth of the tax-payer's income. Such principle of income taxation is based on conviction that persons with higher income are capable of paying higher taxes. Although such a view is more appropriate with respect to natural persons, it can also be applied in connection with taxation of income of juristic persons. Large enterprises, as a rule, are treated as individual tax-payers with high income. Besides, one means that such enterprises belong to rich stockholders with rather high income and considerable savings. In spite of the fact that there different opinions about such a view, the dominating general consensus is that application of progressive tax rates in taxation of large corporations corresponds to the principle of vertical justice. The principle of horizontal justice means that tax-payers who perform their activities in the same conditions and receive equal income, should pay equal taxes. The main task in implementation of this principle is how to decide, both practically and theoretically, which tax-payers do have the same conditions.

Tax-related factors in the business environment in Lithuania

Evaluation of the efficiency of the Lithuanian tax system may be based on the structure of inflows to the national budget and municipal budgets. According to the data from the Statistical Yearbook of Lithuania, the largest part consists of consumption taxes (VAT, excise duties) – 52-49 per cent of total inflows to the State budget and municipal budgets. However, the percentage of consumption taxes in national and municipal budgets decreased from 52 per cent to 49 per cent during the period 2002-2006, although the absolute expression of the inflows from those taxes increased (see Figure 1): inflows into the national budget by value added tax amounted to 6.2 billion Litas in 2006, compared to only 3.8 billion Litas in 2002. Excise duties increased from 1.7 billion Litas in 2002, to 2.4 billion Litas in 2006. The growth of the absolute sum of excise duties was caused mainly by increased rates of duties on tobacco, petrol and other oil products. On the other hand, the growth by more than two billion Litas of revenues into the national budget by value added tax shows an actual upturn of inhabitants' real income and consumption. Increasing of inhabitants' real income led to higher expenditures not only for the necessities of life, but also for cultural and educational wants: the demand for cultural and artistic arrangements and for higher education increased and the business of international tourism expanded. Figure 2 represents the growth of the average monthly gross salary of employees in the country's economic life in Lithuania during the period 2002-2006. As

we can see in the figure, the average monthly gross salary increased by more than 50 per cent during the first six years of the 21st century. Since the largest part of the salary was used to buy the most necessary commodities and services, it follows logically that it led to considerable growth of revenues to the national budget by value added tax.

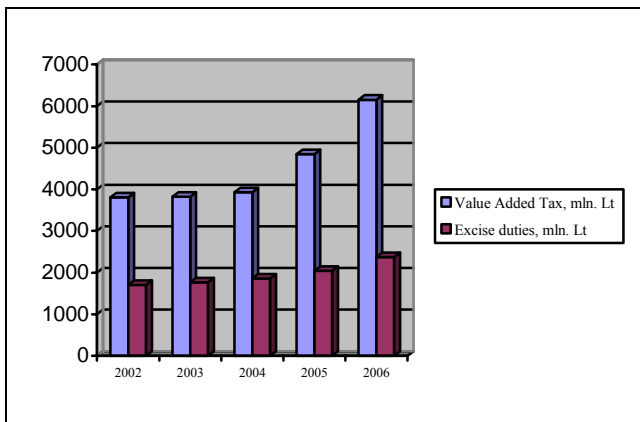


Figure 1. Revenues to the Lithuanian budget by value added tax and excise duties 2002-2006 (Statistical Yearbook of Lithuania)

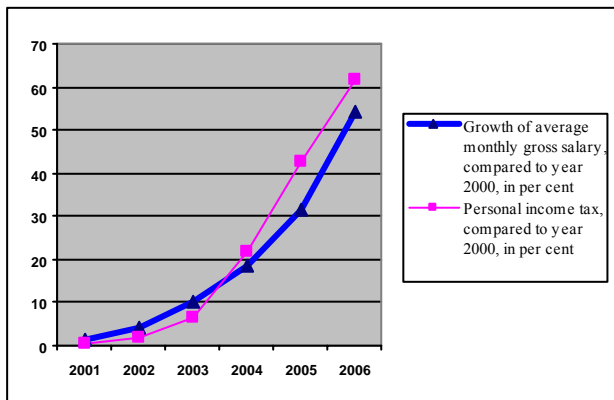


Figure 2. The dynamics of average monthly salary of the employees in the country's economic life and the personal income tax 2001-2006 (Statistical Yearbook of Lithuania)

According to the data from the Lithuanian Department of Statistics, the growth rates of tax revenue to the budget during 2000-2006 were lower than the growth rates of revenues from the enterprises' profit tax (see Figure 3). In 2006, taxes on enterprises' profit exceeded 1.9 billion Litass, while in 2000 they amounted only to 311.7 million Litass and in 2001 only to 259.2 million Litass. Low revenues from profit taxes were the main reason which made the Government and the politicians to look through the tax policy and to come to decisions based on scholars' recommendations, namely to reduce the rate for the profit tax to 15 per cent and thus to expand the base for this particular tax. When the rate for the profit tax was reduced, the revenues from the profit tax not only did not decrease, but on the contrary increased more than 6 times in the period 2003-2006, from 0.31 billion Litass in 2003 to 1.9 billion Litass in 2006. Such sudden growth of the amounts of the profit tax were explained by the Lithuanian government as a result of business development, better conditions for business, increased competitive ability. However, many specialists claim that the amounts of the

profit tax increased mainly due to the lower tax rate, it was the reason which urged businessmen to exercise more transparent accounting of income and expenses and not to hide the income.

When the profit tax rate was reduced, businessmen obtained a stimulus to enlarge profit and to reduce production outlays and expenditures for activities at the same time as the official average monthly gross salary increased to 1496 Litass in 2006, while in 2000 it was less than 1000 Litass, namely 971 Litass (see Figure 4). It seems obvious that lower taxation of profit led to lower unofficial income, but to higher profit and higher officially paid salary. When stimulus to hide income had disappeared, fewer opportunities remained to pay salaries unofficially. Many businessmen chose honest accounting and showed the real results of their activities. In this way, the reduction of the profit tax contributed to successful solution of several problems, and better results were achieved:

1. Increased possibilities and stimuli for business development.
2. Lower level of hidden income and shadow economics.
3. Higher budget revenues due to enterprises' profit tax and personal income tax.
4. Lower level of unofficial salaries and higher national insurance contributions.

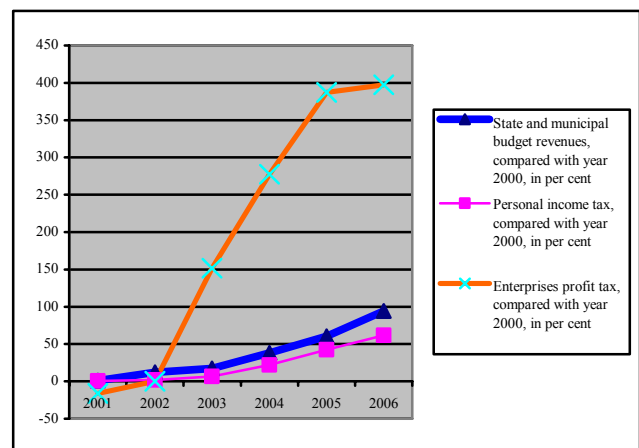


Figure 3. The dynamics of the Lithuanian State budget and municipal budgets revenues during 2001-2006. (Lithuanian Statistic Yearbook)

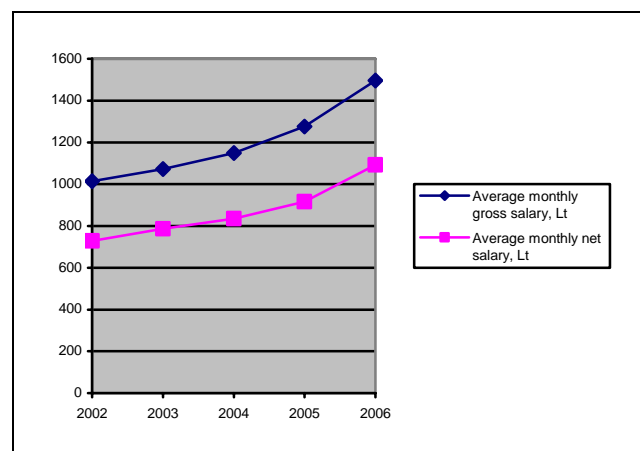


Figure 4. Average monthly salary of employees in Lithuania's economic life 2002-2006 (Lithuanian Statistic Yearbook)

The reduction of profit tax not only had positive impact on the growth of revenues to the State budget, but also made the investment environment better. This can be shown by the dynamics of foreign investments in the Lithuanian economic life. In the period 2002–2006, foreign investments grew. They increased from 10662 million Litas in 2002 to 123896 million Litas in 2006, according to data from Lithuanian Statistic Yearbook.

Implemented reforms of the tax system led to positive changes in business environment. Lithuania achieved relatively high rates of economic development, which is reflected in Gross National Product (GNP) growth rates. As one can see in Figure 5, the GNP increased 1.6 times during 2002–2006. Other indicators of the growth of Lithuanian economy became better as well. Export, for instance, increased 2.1 times. This led to 1.8 times higher inflow to the State budget and municipal budgets, which in its turn ensured better financing for educational and health care programs. However, it is necessary to continue improvements of the tax system. More attention should be paid to reduction of taxation of work income. Results from year 2006 show that reduction of wage tax to 27 per cent (calculated by the sum after the non-taxable income minimum has been deducted) led to more rapid growth of average salary, as well as of amounts of personal income tax and the obligatory national insurance.

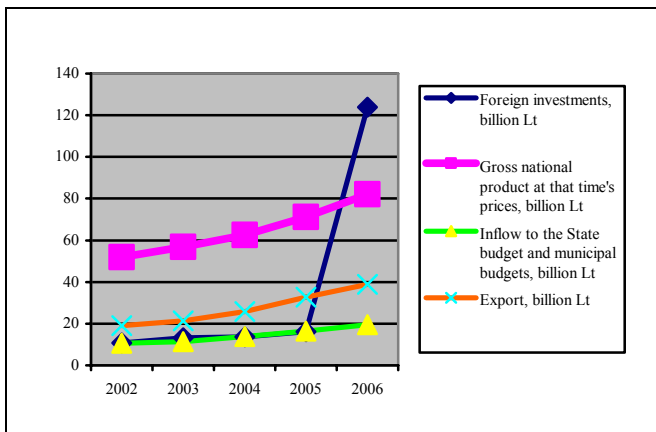


Figure 5. Dynamics of Lithuanian GNP, other macroeconomic indicators, 2002–2006 (Lithuanian Statistic Yearbook)

Conclusions

1. Business environment is influenced by many factors, but investment-related decisions are often conditioned by economic factors, such as liberality of the tax policy, the size of the total tax burden, the level of income taxation.
2. An optimally balanced tax system does not have a negative impact on business development, while it is important with respect to formation of investment-friendly environment and motivating businessmen to develop honest business.
3. Many scholars agree that a central role in evaluation of business environment is played by enterprises' profit tax. The size of the profit tax often determines a businessman's decisions in connection to business development, enlargement

of efficiency, distribution of profit and investments.

4. The analysis of tax revenues to the Lithuanian State budget shows that high tax rates do not guarantee higher inflow to the budget, but on the contrary stimulates businessmen to hide their real income instead of enlarging business efficiency. When the profit rate was reduced almost to half its size, revenues to the State budget due to this particular tax did not decrease, but on the contrary increased and surpassed growth rates of both gross domestic product and of all the tax revenues. Besides, the level of unofficial income and accounts decreased which led to higher official wages and, at the same time, wage taxes and obligatory national insurance premiums.
5. Improvement of business environment by refinements of the tax system and other measures created preconditions for Lithuania to achieve high growth rates of general domestic product, which were higher than the EU average and the level of economic growth of other countries. The dynamic growth of the country's economy was influenced by the reforms of the tax system, when tax rates were reduced. Lower profit tax rates stimulated intensive development of economy, improved business conditions and created a more attractive investment environment.

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Mokesčių sistemos įtaka verslo aplinkai

Santrauka

Verslo plėtros galimybės daugeliu atvejų priklauso nuo didesnių finansinių išteklių, kuriuos suformuoti iš nuosavų šaltinių, ypač

besivystančiose šalyse, yra gana kebli. Tiek ekonomiškai išsivysčiusios, tiek besivystančios šalys aktyviai kovoja dėl investicijų srautų įvairiais metodais. Dažniausiai pasirenkami efektyvesni ekonominiai metodai, kuriais stengiamasi sudaryti investicijoms ir verslo plėtrai patrauklią aplinką. Vienas iš svarbiausių veiksnių, lemiančių verslo aplinkos patrauklumą, yra mokesčių naštos lygis ar apskritai mokesčių politika.

Mokesčių sistema yra vienas pagrindinių ekonominių mechanizmų, lemiančių ekonomikos plėtrą bei užtikrinčių svarbiausių valstybės funkcijų vykdymą. Labai dažnai valstybinių sričių finansavimas priklauso nuo valstybės biudžeto dydžio, o biudžeto dydis- nuo mokesčių sistemos efektyvumo, nuo šalies ekonomikos lygio. Taigi šalies ekonomika, kurioje šiandien pagrindinį vaidmenį vaidina privatus verslas, valstybės biudžetas, valstybės finansuojamų sričių (mokslo, švietimo, sveikatos apsauga, krašto apsauga ir kt.) būklė yra glaudžiai susiję dalykai. Tačiau, sprendžiant paminėtus uždavinius, iškyla klausimas, kokių principų ar prioritetų pagrindu turi būti formuojama mokesčių sistema, kad ji būtų patraukli verslui, investicijoms (dažnai tai suprantama kaip maži mokesčių tarifai, įvairios mokesčių lengvatos) ir užtikrintų reikiamą valstybės ir savivaldybių biudžetų suformavimą?

Išvystytos rinkos ekonomikos šalys turi turtingą patirtį formuojant verslui palankias mokesčių sistemas. Daugelyje šalių, kuriose pasiektas didelis darbo ir kapitalo efektyvumas ir kuriose palyginti aukštesnis bendrojo vidaus produkto lygis, yra daugiau galimybių mažinti mokesčių tarifus, nesumažinant įplaukų į biudžetus. Pastaraisiais dešimtmeciais vyksta savotiškas šalių lenktyniavimas siekiant pritraukti investicijų, įvairiai modifikuojant mokesčių sistemas.

Pertvarkant mokesčių sistemas, rekomenduojama pasikliauti mokslininkų tyrimų rezultatais, jų suformuluotomis išvadomis, pateiktais pasiūlymais. Tačiau, paanalizavę daugelio mokslininkų tyrimų rezultatus, įsitikinsime, jog konkretus ir tikslus recepto, kaip formuoti mokesčių sistemą vienoje ar kitoje šalyje, nėra. Įvairiais mokesčių sistemos formavimo klausimais dažnai atskiri autoriai turi skirtingas nuomones. Tačiau, nepaisant nuomonių skirtumo, tam tikra užsienio šalių mokesčių politikos patirtis, mokslininkų tyrimų rezultatai yra vertingi, sprendžiant mokesčių sistemos efektyvumo ir ekonomikos plėtros klausimus.

Mokslinėse diskusijose daug dėmesio skiriama mokesčių paskirstymui, mokesčių tarifų dydžiui, mokesčių sistemų tipams ir kitiems klausimams, nuo kurių priklauso biudžeto pajamos, investicijų srautai, šešėlinės ekonomikos lygis. Nuo mokesčių dydžio priklauso socialinių programų finansavimo lygis, todėl negalima sumažinti pajamų mokesčių, nepertvarkius visos mokesčių sistemos (Vijverberg, 2003; Duolos ir Lambert, 2000; Hayes ir Slottje, 1995). Kai kurie autoriai, teikdami pasiūlymus mokesčių sistemai tobulinti, remiasi Airijos, Skandinavijos šalių pavyzdžiu, mažinant darbo jėgos apmokestinimą (Ganghof, 2005; Cnossen, 2001; Hardiman, 2001). Jų nuomone, subalansavus kapitalo ir darbo apmokestinimą, galima tikėtis efektyvesnio darbo, didėjant darbo motyvacijai. Toks mokesčių sistemos tobulinimo aspektas aktualus ir Lietuvai, kur yra aktuali nelegalaus darbo apmokejimo problema.

Daug diskutuojama dėl darbo pajamų mokesčių progresyvumo. Autoriai, pasisakantys už progresinius mokesčių tarifus, akcentuoja socialinio teisingumo principų svarbą mokesčių sistemoje (Lucy ir Ackert, 2007; Rider, 2006; Charnes ir Rabin, 2002; Fher ir Schmidt, 1999). Tačiau progresinių mokesčių šalininkai dažnai sulaukia kritikos, paremtos teiginiais, kad tokia sistema mažina efektyvumą, kad, pasiekus tam tikrą pajamų augimo ribą, prarandami stimulai plėtoti verslą, didinti pajamas, ir verslininkai gali nukreipti investicijas į kitus regionus (Gravelle ir Zimmerman, 1984; Buss, 2001; Munnell, 1992; Philipps ir Goss, 1995; Papke, 1995).

Nors nuomonės įvairios, daugelis autorių sutinka, kad dideli mokesčių tarifai negarantuoja didesnių biudžeto pajamų. Mokslininkų nuomone, mokesčių naštos dydis neturi versti slėpti pajamas, turi būti optimalus santykis tarp pajamų, paliekamų verslininkui verslo plėtrai, ir pajamų dalies, sumokamos į valstybės ir vietinių biudžetų (Cremer ir Gahvari, 1999; Auerbach, 1985; Kaplow, 1990; Fortan ir Lacroix, 1994). Mokesčių sistema turi būti pagrįsta objektyviais demokratinės visuomenės poreikiais, kuriuos suprastų ir remtų mokesčių mokėtojai, geranoriškai vykdydami išpareigojimus valstybei (Shih-Ying Wu, 2004; Duquette ir Christopher, 1999; Randolph, ir Williams, 1995; Turnbull, Geoffrey, 1992).

Kaip matome iš pateiktos apžvalgos, mokesčių sistemos optimizavimas yra gana sudėtingas ir nevienareikšmiškai suvokiamas procesas, tačiau aktualus daugeliui šalių, taip pat ir Lietuvos ekonomikai. Lietuvos mokesčių sistema buvo kuriama naudojantis išvystytos ekonomikos šalių patirtimi, nors ekonominės bei socialinės sąlygos buvo labai skirtingos. Lietuvoje vyko chaotiškas valstybės turto privatizavimas, prieštaraujantis vertinamas kapitalizacijos procesas. Mažai dėmesio skirta veiklos efektyvumui, didesnių pelnų siekiama, plėtojant šešėlinę

ekonomiką. Kadangi mokesčių politika Lietuvoje dažnai priklauso nuo politinių srovių, neretai keičiami mokesčių įstatymai.

Straipsnyje **nagrinėjama problema** susijusi su pajamų mokesčio tarifų dydžiu, biudžeto pajamomis bei šešėlinės ekonomikos lygiu.

Tyrimų tikslas įrodyti, kad mažesni pajamų mokesčių tarifai išplečia mokesčių bazę, todėl padidėja įplaukos į biudžetą, mažėja šešėlinės ekonomikos lygis, kadangi sumažėja ekonominių stimulų slėpti pajamas ir nemokėti mokesčių.

Tyrimų objektas – Lietuvos verslo aplinka ir mokesčių sistema.

Tyrimo uždaviniai – apžvelgti užsienio mokslininkų atliktų tyrimų rezultatus, išanalizuoti Lietuvos biudžeto mokesčių pajamų dinamiką, apibendrinti rezultatus ir parengti išvadas dėl mokesčių sistemos efektyvumo.

Tyrimų metodologija sudaro mokslinės literatūros ir statistinių duomenų analizę, ekonominių ir socialinių problemų identifikavimas, dinaminį pokyčių koreliacinę analizę. Remiantis tyrimų rezultatais, parengtos išvados, kuriose apibendrintos šios pagrindinės nuostatos:

1. Verslo aplinką veikia daugelis veiksnių, tačiau dažnai investicinius sprendimus lemia ekonominiai veiksniai, tokie, kaip mokesčių politikos liberalumas, bendros mokesčių naštos dydis, pajamų apmokestinimo lygis.
2. Optimaliai subalansuota mokesčių sistema nedaro neigiamo poveikio verslo plėtrai, tačiau yra reikšminga formuojant palankią investicinę aplinką, didinant verslininkų suinteresuotumą plėtoti sąžiningą verslą.
3. Daugelio mokslininkų nuomone, svarbiausią vaidmenį vertinant verslo aplinką vaidina įmonių pelno mokestis. Pelno mokesčio dydis dažnai lemia verslininko sprendimą dėl verslo plėtros, efektyvumo didinimo, pelno ir investicijų paskirstymo.
4. Lietuvos biudžeto mokesčių pajamų analizė leidžia tvirtinti, jog dideli mokesčių tarifai neužtikrina didesnių biudžeto

pajamų, o skatina verslininkus slėpti tikrąsias pajamas, nedidinti verslo efektyvumo. Sumažinus pelno mokesčio tarifą kone dvigubai, šio mokesčio įmokos į valstybės biudžetą ne sumažėjo, bet padidėjo, gerokai viršydamas bendrojo vidaus produkto ir visų mokesčių biudžeto pajamų augimo tempus. Be to, sumažėjo neoficialių pajamų gavimo ir atsiskaitymų mastai, todėl padidėjo ir oficialūs darbuotojų darbo užmokesčiai, o kartu ir mokesčiai nuo darbuotojų darbo užmokesčio bei privalomojo socialinio draudimo įmokos.

5. Verslo aplinkos gerinimas įgyvendinant mokesčių sistemos tobulinimo ir kitas priemones sukūrė sąlygas Lietuvai pasiekti sparčių bendrojo vidaus produkto augimo tempų, viršijančių ES šalių vidurkį ir kitų šalių ekonomikos augimo lygį. Šalies ekonomikos dinamiškam augimui įtakos turėjo mokesčių sistemos reformos, susijusios su mokesčių tarifų mažinimu. Mažesni pelno mokesčio tarifai paskatino intensyvių ekonomikos vystymą, pagerino verslo sąlygas, padarė patrauklesnę investicinę aplinką.

Tyrimų rezultatai vertingi sprendžiant mokesčių sistemos optimizavimo, biudžeto pajamų didinimo bei šešėlinės ekonomikos mažinimo uždavinius. Lietuvos mokesčių sistemos tobulinimo patirtis gali būti naudinga daugeliui šalių, kurios palyginti neseniai pradėjo ekonomikos plėtrą rinkos ekonomikos sąlygomis.

Raktažodžiai: *mokesčiai; pelnas.*

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