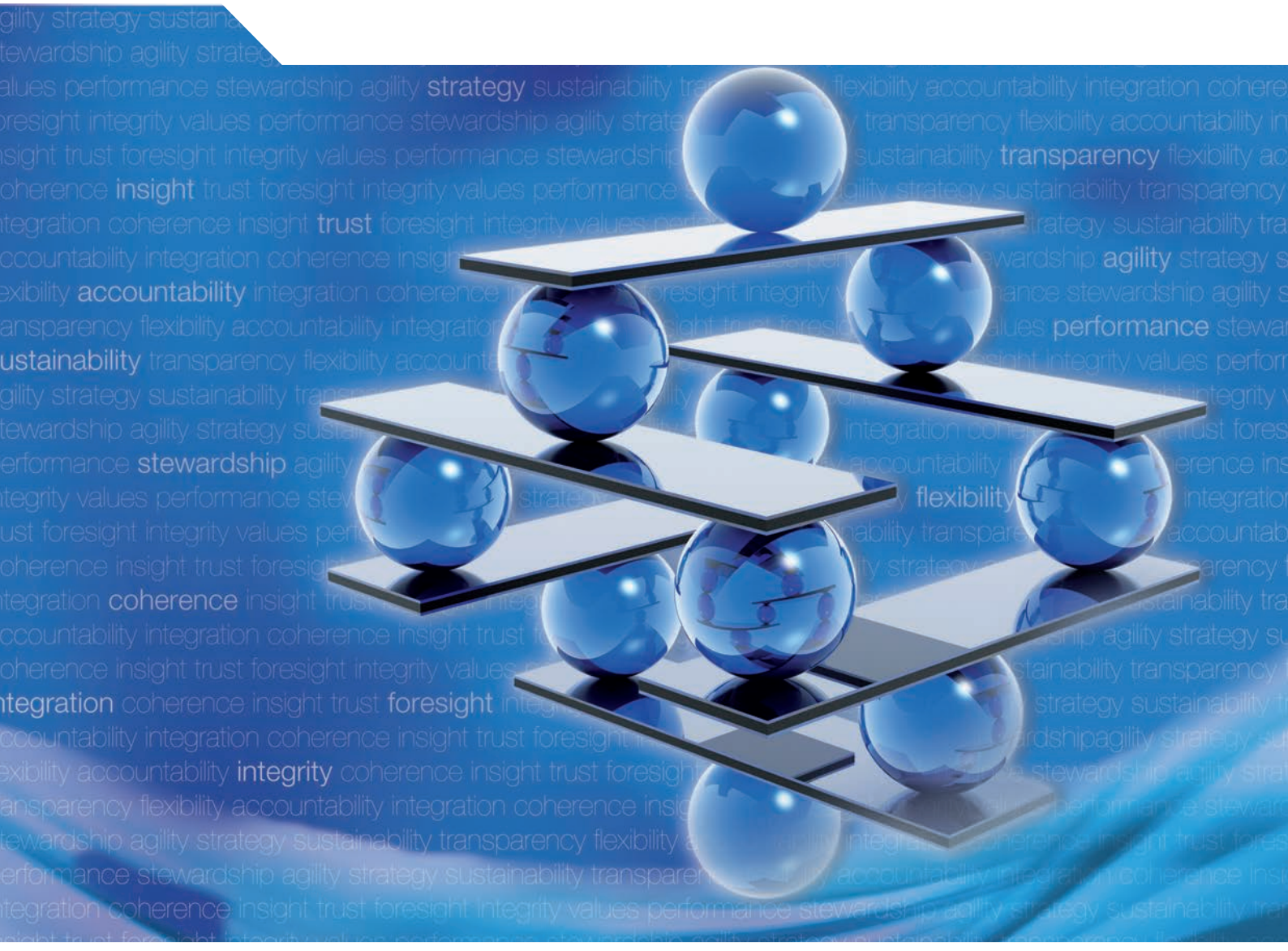
OECD Public Governance Reviews

LITHUANIA

FOSTERING OPEN AND INCLUSIVE POLICY MAKING



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Lithuania: Fostering Open and Inclusive Policy Making



BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

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Foreword

Over the last two decades, Lithuania has invested substantially in modernising its public administration. Today, the country is exploring how to strengthen active citizenship and citizen participation in policy making and service delivery. This Public Governance Review seeks to support the country's efforts to foster open and inclusive policy making and improve government-citizen relations. The Review also reflects the country's participation in the Open Government Partnership (OGP). The OGP seeks to ensure a collaborative process between government and civil society as a means to reap the benefits of citizens' participation in policy making. Lithuania joined the initiative in 2011 and has since been engaged in delivering on its OGP commitments in areas such as digital government services, access to information, public participation, accountability, transparency and the fight against corruption. Some of these issues are linked to the areas under study in the current Review.

Lithuania's strategic documents, such as the Lithuania 2030 Strategy, the National Progress Programme 2014-2020 and the Public Governance Improvement Programme, all acknowledge the importance of developing active citizenship and citizen participation in policy making and service delivery. Lithuania has taken important steps forward in developing the needed legal and policy framework to modernise its public administration, improve efficiency and effectiveness, and support accountability and transparency to establish as such a context for citizens to engage in the public policy-making process.

In the context of its ongoing efforts to further improve public governance, the government of Lithuania asked the OECD to analyse the strategic role of the centre of government while paying special attention to its enabling and leadership role as a catalyst for open government. This Review also analyses citizen participation as a crucial open government practice building on the OECD's approach to open and inclusive policy making. In addition, opportunities and challenges in the area of digital government are analysed. The Review closes by analysing open government practices at sector level and looks specifically at the healthcare sector with an emphasis on strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, citizens' engagement and digital healthcare.

The Public Governance Review of Lithuania complements the OECD Review of Regulatory Policy in Lithuania (2015). Together, these studies support the government of Lithuania in strengthening its commitment to sound public governance. This Review is part of a series of OECD Public Governance Reviews. It was conducted under the auspices of the OECD Public Governance Committee on the basis of its long-standing expertise in public governance reforms and engagement in open government in member and non-member countries.

Public Governance Reviews contribute to the work on public administration and management reform of the OECD Public Governance Committee with the support of the Governance Reviews and Partnerships Division of the OECD Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate. The Directorate's mission is to help government at

all levels design and implement strategic, evidence-based and innovative policies to strengthen public governance, respond effectively to diverse and disruptive economic, social and environmental challenges and deliver on government's commitments to citizens. The goal is to support countries in building better government systems and implementing policies at both national and regional level that lead to sustainable economic and social development.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CoG	Centre of government
CSO	Civil society organisation
DESI	Digital Economy and Society Index
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
GPRA	Government Performance and Results Act
IRD	Informatics and Communications Department (*Informatikos ir Ryšių Departamento*)
IRM	Independent Reporting Mechanism
IVPK	Information Society Development Committee (*Informacinės Visuomenės Plėtros Komitetas*)
NDNT	Disability and Working Capacity Assessment Office (*Neįgalumo ir Darbingumo Nustatymo Tarnybos*)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NHIF	National Health Insurance Fund
NISC	Non-Governmental Organisation Information and Support Centre
OGP	Open Government Partnership
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
PART	Performance Assessment Rating Tool
PGIP	Public Governance Improvement Programme
RESST	Improvement of Strategic Planning Documents Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Processes (*Veiklos Rezultatų Stebėsenos Sistemos Tobulinimas*)
SDT	Digital Agenda Council (*Skaitmeninės Darbotvarkės Tarybos*)
SIS	Monitoring Information System (*Stebėsenos Informacinė Sistema*)
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
VIIVT	State Information Resources Governance Council (*Valstybės* Informacinių *Išteklių Valdymo Tarybos*)
VORT	Improvement of Performance-based Management Project (*Valdymo Orientuoto į Rezultatus Tobulinimas*)

Country profile: Lithuania

Geography, population and living standards	
Area (km²)	65 300
Population	2 971 905
Population density (km²)	45.5
Urban population	67.1% of total population
Population growth rate	-0.29% (2014 est.)
Total fertility rate	1.29 children born/woman (2014 est.)
Life expectancy	75.98 years
Ethnic groups	– Lithuanian 84.1% – Polish 6.6% – Russian 5.8% – Belarusian 1.2% – Other 1.1% – Unspecified 1.2% (2011 est.)
Government	
State structure	Unitary state
Executive	– President elected by popular vote for a five-year term (eligible for a second term) – Prime Minister appointed by the President on the approval of the parliament
Legislative	– Unicameral parliament (Seimas) – 141 seats – 71 members elected in single-member districts, 70 elected by proportional representation – Members serve four-year terms
Elections	– Last presidential elections held on 11 and 25 May 2014 (next to be held in May 2019) – Last parliamentary elections held on 14 and 28 October 2012 (next to be held in October 2016)
Political situation	The government is headed by Algirdas Butkevicius of the Social Democratic Party (LSDP). It includes the Labour Party and the right-wing Order and Justice. The coalition has 80 seats out of 141 in the Seimas
Legal system	Civil law system; legislative acts can be appealed to the Constitutional Court
Administrative-territorial structure	– 60 municipalities – The local council is the municipality's legislative and decision-making body and is made up of members elected by direct universal suffrage for four years. It adopts the budget, enacts local legislation and has the power to establish smaller territorial units. The mayor is directly elected and is a member of the local council.

Source: Eurostat database; World Bank database; Economist Intelligence Unit.

Executive summary

Lithuania has undergone significant political, economic, social and administrative reforms since the re-establishment of its independence in 1990. These reforms paved the way for EU accession and NATO membership in 2004 and the adoption of the euro in 2015. As such, Lithuania has transitioned towards a modern public administration.

Lithuania has developed a legal and policy framework for open government with the aim to improve the openness, transparency and accountability of governmental processes and services and deliver on its commitments to citizens. The centre of government (CoG) has gained in prominence and its role has expanded, from serving the executive in administrative tasks to becoming an active player in policy development and co-ordination across the government. As part of its efforts to promote open government, the government of Lithuania has acknowledged the challenge of fighting corruption effectively and has put tools in place to combat it. It has also developed a framework for citizen and stakeholder participation in policy making and has designed strategies to improve the adoption and impact of digital government for public sector reform and greater openness. These changes have occurred in the context of European integration, globalisation and growing societal expectations and demands for high-quality and efficient public services.

Though substantial improvements have been made to public governance in the past 25 years, a number of challenges remain that require systematic intervention coupled with sustained effort over time. These include:

- restoring trust in government following the effects of the financial crisis – the degree of citizen trust in the government and parliament in Lithuania is lower than the EU average
- making anti-corruption programmes more effective – Lithuania scores poorly compared to other EU countries in the Corruption Perception Index
- improving evidence-based monitoring and evaluation of public policies
- increasing the use of performance information and fostering a culture focused on results to improve policy making and service delivery.

To address these challenges, the *OECD Public Governance Review of Lithuania: Fostering Open and Inclusive Policy Making* proposes a set of recommendations. The purpose of this Review is to support Lithuania in enhancing the openness and inclusiveness of policy making and service delivery, and strengthening government-citizen relations.

This Review covers three inter-connected areas, which are also analysed as part of a sector-level study on open government practices in the Lithuanian healthcare sector: CoG co-ordination capacity as a catalyst for open government, citizens' engagement as a core open government practice and digital government as an enabler for open government.

Open government is a relatively recent area of work for the Office of the Government. Whereas substantial efforts have been made to develop a policy on open government and identify priority actions, the engagement of the centre of government with both governmental and non-governmental actors is still characterised by a primarily top-down approach, with ample opportunity to further strengthen debate and dialogue. To improve the CoG's capacity for co-ordination and leadership on open government reforms, the Review recommends:

- strengthening the strategic use of performance data, including the streamlining of strategic plans and policy goals, enhancing the capacity to use and communicate performance data, and focusing on the role of the CoG to facilitate exchange and dialogue with citizens and other stakeholders
- developing a common vision of open government across state and non-state actors, strengthening the links with strategic country priorities and exchanging ideas both within the country and internationally as part of its Open Government Partnership membership
- increasing the visibility of existing open government good practices and institutional champions.

The government of Lithuania has recognised the strategic importance of civic engagement in law-making, policy making, and service delivery; and has established a conducive legal framework and multiple mechanisms to support it. Nevertheless, citizens' engagement rates remain fairly low. To further strengthen citizens' engagement, this Review recommends:

- elaborating a common methodology to foster citizens' engagement and a common toolkit to assist with implementation
- systematically reporting on the outcomes of consultation processes
- disseminating open government principles and practices
- promoting a culture of civic engagement and supporting the development of the voluntary sector.

Lithuania has come a long way in developing a mature digital society and market since re-storing its independence. Whereas the country has a relatively high take-up rate for online government services, quality and accessibility is heterogeneous across government. To take further steps and to reap greater benefits from digital government strategies and the use of information technology (IT) in government, the Review recommends:

- building a more coherent approach to digital government agenda-setting, implementation and use of resources, by improving incentives as well as reviewing the allocation of executive powers
- developing stronger monitoring, impact measurement and communication of digital government initiatives
- expanding the use of digital technologies to promote openness, transparency and accountability and to help fight corruption
- articulating and communicating the political importance of "getting digital government right"

- stimulating a culture of persuasion by illustrating the benefits of good service design and iterative digital service development
- making an inventory of digital skills and capacities, and mapping it against future needs
- supporting more rigorous business case thinking, including the adoption of sound risk assessment practices for government IT projects
- exploring partnerships and communities to make greater use of government data within the public sector and beyond.

The healthcare sector in Lithuania has experienced major change since the country's independence. New governance, financing and delivery models have been proposed and adopted in the past 25 years. To improve the adoption of open government principles and practices in the health sector and make progress in the fight against corruption, this Review recommends:

- developing a strategy to promote open government throughout the sector
- using monitoring and evaluation to share information with stakeholders and promote accountability
- enhancing the visibility of policy results
- improving communication concerning the inter-connectedness of the different strategic plans and programmes in the health sector
- improving citizens' engagement in health policy making and service delivery by developing consultation mechanisms that work in practice and collaboration with non-governmental organisations to combat corruption in the sector
- using digital technologies as a strategic tool to improve the quality of healthcare, address corruption and promote accountability in the healthcare sector
- reviewing the governance and oversight mechanisms for digital healthcare projects with a view to moving away from traditional rigid and linear approaches towards more agile and iterative development of digital services.

Assessment and recommendations

The context for open government reforms

The purpose of this Public Governance Review is to support Lithuania in the enhancement of open and inclusive policy making and service delivery, as well as the strengthening of government-citizen relations. This Review covers three main areas: centre of government (CoG) co-ordination capacity as a catalyst for open government, citizens' engagement as a core open government practice and digital government as an enabler for open government. The Review also includes a case study of open government in the health sector, mirroring the three main open government topics of the Review, i.e. linkage with the CoG's agenda to foster open government (at sector level), citizens' engagement and digital governance.

Since the re-establishment of Lithuania's independence in 1990, the country has undergone a series of institutional reforms, which paved the way for EU accession and NATO membership in 2004, as well as the adoption of the euro in January 2015. Whereas Lithuania has been successful in transitioning towards a modern public administration, important challenges remain. For instance, while a sophisticated planning and monitoring system is in place, it still lacks, in practice, a result-oriented focus, as well as systematic policy evaluation. In addition, though the country has taken a big step forward regarding citizen involvement and participation in policy making, a lot remains to be done to fully engage citizens in policy-making processes (including minorities), restore citizens' trust in government and administrative institutions, and fight corruption.

The priorities of Lithuania's current public administration reform strategy focus on efficiency, openness, quality, strategic thinking, digitisation of the public administration and a reduction of administrative burdens. At the request of the Lithuanian government, this Review analyses open government policies and practices as a way forward to contribute to the implementation of this reform agenda. The focus on open government for this Review builds upon Lithuania's membership of the Open Government Partnership (since 2011) and its Lithuania2030 strategy. The latter is the most important policy document guiding the government and public administration. It sets out the long-term vision for Lithuania, with open government being part and parcel, as Lithuania2030 strives – amongst others – to promote "open and empowering governance".

The centre of government as a catalyst for open government

Moving away from their traditional role of serving the executive in administrative tasks, centres of government in OECD countries now play a more active role in policy development and co-ordination. The CoG in many countries provides services that range from strategic planning to real-time policy advice and intelligence, and from leading major cross-departmental policy initiatives to monitoring progress and outcomes.

Lithuania has carried out substantive CoG reforms over the last decade, with a particular focus on strategic planning as a key CoG instrument and with a clear lead by the Office of the Government. Whereas substantial progress has been made in this area (e.g. the development of a sound legal, institutional and policy framework; streamlining the existing planning methodology, etc.), important remaining challenges include further promotion of cross-government performance-based management (i.e. strategic use of performance data for decision making) and the development of a policy evaluation culture.

Lithuania's official participation in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) is in line with the objectives of Lithuania2030. The country's OGP membership and the institutional anchorage of the latter at the level of the Office of the Government reflect a high-level commitment to open government, potentially creating visibility for open government both towards Lithuanian stakeholders and the international community. Whereas strategic planning and performance management as associated goals have been on the agenda of the Office of the Government for more than a decade, open government is still a fairly new area and is not yet fully entrenched in daily practices across government. In addition, existing open government practices are not necessarily identified as such and/or explicitly promoted and supported.

In order to foster open government practices across the public sector, the CoG should take the lead in fostering a combined rules-based (direction, oversight and enforcement) and values-based (culture of openness, integrity and collaboration) approach to open government, and in encouraging innovation in the field of open government. To achieve this goal, the following actions can be considered:

- Strengthen the strategic use of performance data as this can support openness, transparency and accountability of the public sector. This would require:
  - Further streamlining the number of plans and policy goals to make planning, monitoring and evaluation "digestible" and facilitate a focus on achieving impact.
  - Enhancing the capacity to process, use and communicate performance information across government.
  - Rebalancing the CoG's engagement with other institutions by emphasising its role to facilitate exchange and dialogue across government and with non-state stakeholders, rather than primarily focusing on top-down communication.
- Enhance the discussion across government and with non-state actors on open government in order to develop a shared vision, by debating:
  - What open government means for Lithuania.
  - How open government relates to the main strategic country priorities and policy documents.
  - How open government can be implemented in practice at the national and local level, as well as through sector policies.
  - How the country's Open Government Partnership membership can facilitate in-country and international exchange on open government policies and practices.

- Provide visibility across government (and towards citizens) of existing open government good practices and institutional champions. Visibility could be strengthened through the use of websites, awards, exchange platforms of good practices, seed money for innovative practices, etc., so as to inspire institutions and civil servants to explore new practices, analyse and share lessons learnt, and agree upon what works.

Citizens' engagement as a crucial open government practice

Lithuania has gradually established a legal, institutional and policy framework for citizens' participation. The authorities have recognised the importance of involving citizens in policy making and service delivery. The national strategy, Lithuania2030, represented a major step forward in building consensus over the main aspirations of the nation in the long run and a significant effort in involving different stakeholders in defining the strategic directions of the government. At the same time, there is ample opportunity to further strengthen public involvement and scrutiny and move to a situation where openness and citizens' engagement are the default options for policy making.

OECD analysis shows that providing information to people, consultation opportunities and citizens' engagement practices all improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public administrations and increase the transparency and accountability of the public sector as a whole. Availability of information can foster public scrutiny, while public consultations lead to policies and services that better meet people's needs. Citizens' engagement unlocks the potential of the public sector to experiment with innovative practices of co-design and co-delivery of public services and has positive effects on trust, and hence, on good governance and the strengthening of democratic institutions.

However, when designing and implementing initiatives to improve civic engagement, Lithuania's major challenge is to move beyond the current approach based on compliance with legal requirements and procedures, and rather focus on achieving impacts.

Based on the analysis of the current citizens' engagement practices and future opportunities, the following recommendations can be formulated:

- Elaborate a common methodology for citizens' engagement to be used by as many institutions as possible, both at central and local level. The methodology can build on good practices from OECD countries and on the OECD Guiding Principles on Open and Inclusive Policy Making. An explicit focus on the inclusion of minorities would increase the comprehensiveness of the initiatives implemented, as well as the representativeness of the results obtained.
- The methodology should be accompanied by a toolkit. Giving hands-on advice and guidance for policy makers on how to implement the above-mentioned methodology will help public officials to better understand its practical implication and will maximise the success rate of engagement initiatives.
- Systematically report the outcomes of consultation processes back to citizens and evaluate their impact. The lack of information on the use that public officials make of citizens' inputs directly affects the latter's willingness to take part in similar activities in the future. Moreover, without proper evaluation of the impact of current citizens' engagement practices, it is impossible for Lithuania to improve the quality, effectiveness and contribution of such practices to the whole

policy cycle. The existing e-democracy initiative could be an opportunity to centrally publish all relevant information.

- Develop a strategy to disseminate open government principles and initiatives more widely within the public sector. This strategy should build on success stories that show the value of citizens' engagement in all phases of the policy cycle (identification of policy priorities, policy drafting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) and the impact of open government practices on the quality and responsiveness of the services delivered.
- Promote a culture of civic engagement through a communication strategy and *ad hoc* campaigns that invite citizens to participate. The experiences of Lithuania2030 can serve as inspiration. Similar initiatives, coupled with specific training, should be provided to public sector officials in order to increase their willingness and capacity to endorse open government principles and implement consultation practices.
- Support the development of Lithuania's third sector through capacity building and collaboration with the activities of the newly established NGO Council. Increase the possibilities of engaging with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the co-design and co-delivery of public services, as well as through the provision of greater funding opportunities.

Digital government as an enabler for open government

Lithuania currently positions itself somewhere halfway between using IT in a 20th century "e-government" approach, characterised by development in silos and for micro-level needs, and a 21st century approach, which uses technology as a lever to genuinely reform and modernise the public sector.

Lithuania has made important and visible progress to become a more digital economy and society over the last two decades. The country has a relatively high take-up of online government services. Its current digital government strategies cover many critical issues required to ensure that digital government supports better overall government performance, i.e. ambitions to design better public services, to increase interoperability between government information systems, and to use technology to foster openness and transparency. These issues are also priorities of the European Digital Agenda, which Lithuania reflects in the formulation of national priorities.

At the same time, there is significant potential to use technology to much greater benefit for the administration and society. A rather bureaucratic and legalistic approach to digitisation across large parts of the government leads to dispersed efforts that do not always contribute to the "bigger picture" of national policy priorities. Political leaders' commitment to – sometimes even understanding of – the importance of "getting government IT right" is not a given across the administration, which leads to unclear leadership and unclear priorities. Digital government projects funded through EU Structural Funds over the coming years represent a major opportunity to create a more open, responsive and effective government. The current leadership, governance and implementation mechanisms, however, do not fully match with those ambitions. This bears major risks, well known to Lithuania as well as OECD countries, because large-scale government IT projects have in the past resulted in public services that failed to meet users' expectations. If unaddressed, such outcomes can contribute to further erosion of already relatively low levels of overall trust in government.

The Lithuanian government has proven its capacity to make progress and design good digital services in selected areas. The government has good tools, skills and capacities to leverage technology for radical digital government transformation. What is missing is visionary leadership, more effective governance mechanisms, incentives for collaboration, and better use of illustrations and good practices to persuade individual institutions to improve digital services in more user-driven ways. Designing and delivering digital services with a positive user experience has become an increasing priority for many OECD countries and there is a growing body of knowledge on best practices in this domain that Lithuania can use. Specific areas in which good practices from OECD countries can support progress are monitoring and impact measurement for digital government initiatives (including those funded by EU Structural Funds), performance reviews and evaluations, identification and availability of relevant skills, and open government data as a vector for public sector reform.

To further materialise the potential of using technology as a strategic lever for profound governance reforms, greater openness, better public services and more effective public sector action, the following actions can be undertaken:

- Invest in better monitoring and impact measurement. Lithuania should aim to move beyond EU comparison indicators at a very abstract level (e.g. online service uptake) towards measuring relevant performance criteria at the level of individual services. Data collection might be more difficult, but the pay-offs in terms of peer pressure, monitoring and resources allocation lead to a more informed debate about the quality and transformation of public services.
- Move some concepts out of the technical sphere and make these the responsibility of senior civil servants, possibly even political leaders. This means putting issues like interoperability, digital divides and inclusive service design higher up on the agenda – not for the sake of doing it, but because they facilitate a more engaging, more open government.
- Create a more coherent digital government. This is closely linked to the governance of digital services and infrastructures. Co-ordination between different actors is patchy, which makes digital government in Lithuania susceptible to overlaps and gaps in competencies. Some co-ordination issues will not be resolved by incentives and soft power alone, they will require executive powers.
- Capture the opportunities of digital technologies to tackle persistent corruption issues in the public sector. Several civil society organisations in Lithuania have proven that technology can be leveraged to avoid, detect and report corruption. The public sector has the potential to do more in this area and it can do so with relatively little resources, given that many technological platforms exist and could be reused. What it takes, though, is political will to actually open up information sources and establish workflows that make good use of digital technology.

In order to further strengthen the design of an effective governance and co-ordination framework for digital government, the following recommendations can be formulated:

- Establish clear leadership and executive co-ordination powers. This should include reviewing the mandates of the two existing co-ordination bodies for digital government and taking decisions on the “who” and “how” for high-level leadership on digital government.

- Possibly reconsider the role of the Office of the Government. It has a central policy co-ordination mandate in general in Lithuania, but not on a topic as central to government effectiveness as government IT.
- Make "smart" choices about the people who should lead the digital government transformation. Different options are conceivable, e.g. appointing an accomplished industry executive or a recognised public sector leader. Whatever the choice, it is important to equip such a position with the perspective to drive real change in terms of its mandate.
- Articulate and communicate the political importance of "getting digital government right". Digital government today impacts the quality of public services (any service, not just "e-services"); it has an impact on the trust of citizens and on the efficiency of government operations. This understanding is not widespread across the public administration and will require cultural change – which can, for example, be fostered by high-level acknowledgement of the current shortcomings of digital government.

To create a modern, open, responsive and data-driven public sector, not only co-ordination and leadership capacities are needed, but also implementation capacity. The creation of space for more radical transformation efforts and the opportunity for "fresh" talent to come and join government are instrumental. To achieve these objectives, Lithuania should:

- Further stimulate a "culture of persuasion by illustration" about the benefits of good service design. Guidelines for digital service design exist in Lithuania, but their use remains patchy across ministries. The government should make an effort to promote good design principles (based on national and international experiences) through more effective communication and illustration.
- Review current skills and capacities and map them against future needs to drive the digital government transformation. Countries that have done so identified the need to establish and develop some important functional roles – e.g. service managers, government IT architects – and the skills sets required so that these positions can make a positive impact on public service delivery.
- Encourage more rigorous business case thinking. This is particularly important for the multi-million euro projects that are part of the EU Structural Funds 2014-2020. It is evident that those types of projects have great opportunities to improve public services, but they also bear very high risks. Some risks can be anticipated and avoided by following review mechanisms that not only focus on financial and project-level tracking, but rather review the strategic orientation of those projects.
- Experiment and discover how data can add value to the public sector, to society, to the economy. Examples of new uses and combinations of existing data show how public sector data can improve public services, increase the accountability of public sector action, and create more collaborative relationships in government and in society. The government could start by creating communities of interest within the public sector to exchange good practices. Those communities could then increasingly engage with non-government stakeholders (e.g. NGOs) and communities (e.g. start-up forums) to identify a wider set of needs and opportunities for government data.

Open government at the sector level: Health sector case study

The healthcare sector in Lithuania has experienced major change since the country's independence. New governance, financing and delivery models have been proposed and adopted in the past 20 years. These have been influenced by societal changes more generally and changes in the healthcare sector more specifically. Lithuania transitioned from the Soviet healthcare system to a system based on health insurance with the adoption of the Health Insurance Law in 1996. Public ownership of healthcare facilities is combined with private ownership depending on the level, type of care and type of institution.

Public institutions play an important role in the regulation, organisation, ownership and provision of healthcare services. The main actors include the parliament (Seimas), the National Health Board, the central government, and in particular the Ministry of Health, the National Health Insurance Fund and a number of specialised state agencies that are responsible for specific services and diseases. Central institutions regulate and co-ordinate territorial offices which are subordinated to the central authorities. Since 2010, when the counties were abolished, the responsibilities of the regional level have diminished compared to the situation before this reform.

As the country's overarching strategic policy document, Lithuania2030 incorporates a horizontal dimension "Health for All" which denotes a consideration of the implications that state policies and programmes have on population health. This horizontal, inter-ministerial and inter-institutional approach to strategic planning aims at improving the effectiveness of central, local and non-state action, in order to address the main social vulnerabilities and public health concerns. The latter include the need to raise awareness and promote changes in lifestyle including healthy eating, physical exercise and reducing alcohol consumption, tobacco and psychotropic substance use.

In the last five years, health-related objectives have been integrated into the general strategic planning system and the sector has made substantial progress with developing, implementing and streamlining strategic planning. Inter-ministerial and inter-institutional co-ordination and collaboration are also becoming an important component of the current strategic planning, as the activities of ministries such as the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and the Ministry of Education and Science play a significant role in the healthcare sector. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting procedures exist for each strategic programme and are progressively becoming more result-oriented, but are not necessarily integrated, and have a primary focus on responding to the requests of the CoG.

To improve effectiveness in health programming, the Office of the Government and the Ministry of Health are interested in increasing clarity in goal setting and taking steps to ensure that the government's priorities are achieved. The Ministry of Health, through the Strategic Planning Division, is participating in a series of seminars and strategic sessions organised by the Office of the Government as part of the project "Improvement of Strategic Planning Documents Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Processes" (RESST). This initiative provides a platform for discussing inter-ministerial strategic planning and improving the understanding and capacity of line ministries in using the existing system and finding ways to improve co-ordination and maximise the impact of the inter-ministerial action plans.

In order to make the sector planning and reporting system more relevant from an open government perspective, the following recommendations can be made:

- Move from a monitoring and evaluation system that is solely focused on the needs of the CoG towards a system that is more focused on sharing information with stakeholders (in a digestible format) and promoting feedback on the sector performance (i.e. enhance the visibility of policy results).
- Invest in a communication strategy that illustrates (for non-experts) the interconnectedness between different strategies and plans, not only at the level of goal-setting and associated means, but also at the level of goal achievement across strategies and plans.
- Promote the notion of open government throughout the sector so that civil servants get a better understanding of the value added of transparency, access to information, participatory approaches; and invest in training in this area to equip staff with the appropriate tools and skills.

Involving patients and different stakeholders in the healthcare system has the objective of including their experiences and knowledge to create a more transparent, accountable and responsive healthcare system, to deliver better health services and to explore opportunities to involve stakeholders in their implementation (i.e. co-delivery of public services). According to information from Lithuania's Ministry of Health, 40% of 15-74 year olds do not trust the healthcare system in general. Adopting an open government approach and involving citizens in policy making and service provision could effectively contribute to enhancing the quality of the system and foster trust in it.

Citizens' engagement in the policy process is clearly enshrined in Lithuania's legal framework. Similarly, a legal obligation to allow the public to participate exists in the health sector. Multiple mechanisms and institutions exist in the Lithuanian healthcare system, which offer possibilities for citizens, patients or interest groups to participate. These are situated both at the national and local level. However, these consultation opportunities are mainly accessible for formally organised groups, they are not necessarily known by ordinary citizens, and there is little attention for the follow-up (or feedback) on the impact of these consultations.

According to statistics of the Ministry of Health, 75% of Lithuanians think that the health sector is corrupt and around 35% report having paid a bribe or given a gift in exchange for healthcare services. The issues mainly concern paying bribes for treatments, lack of transparency of public procurement and relations with the pharmaceutical industry. Accordingly, a Corruption Prevention Division was established in the Ministry of Health to elaborate and implement a programme to fight corruption, in collaboration with the Special Investigation Service. Measures to fight corruption include, amongst others, the public disclosure of detected corruption cases, anti-corruption assessment of legal acts or their drafts, corruption risk analysis and the provision of the information to the registers of public servants and legal entities.

Overall, key public institutions in charge of policy making and service delivery in the health sector are aware of the problem of corruption and are beginning to team up with citizens and civil society organisations (CSOs) to address the problem. Although significant results have not yet been achieved in this area, the role of open government principles, policies and practices in fighting corruption is being increasingly recognised and initial steps in the right direction have been taken.

The government of Lithuania has recognised that important cultural changes are needed for society to adopt a healthier lifestyle and that the healthcare system needs to be reformed to respond to current challenges, in particular to fight the widespread

corruption. Citizens, NGOs, patients' associations and healthcare sector employers can and should be partners of the government institutions to identify innovative approaches and promote the changes needed. To further strengthen citizens' participation in the health sector, the following actions could be envisaged:

- Take a comprehensive approach to promote the engagement of a wide range of actors. Particular efforts to reach out to unorganised patients are needed to involve them in reforms and address cultural challenges.
- Use the recommendations of the European Patient Forum[1] to develop a systematic approach to citizens' engagement in the health sector. Given the considerable differences in life expectancy for men and women and gender-specific health challenges, particular attention should be paid to the gender dimension.
- Establish mechanisms to reach out more to CSOs, patients' organisations and private sector associations active in the areas of public sector integrity and the fight against corruption, to jointly identify the most effective ways to make concrete progress. As Lithuania is facing well-known challenges in the health sector related to transparency and perceived corruption, the government should exploit the opportunities provided by open government policies and citizens' participation initiatives by forging an alliance with non-state actors to promote a culture of transparency, accountability and legality.
- Explore further possibilities to promote the development of the third sector and broaden the latter's involvement in health-related policy issues, beyond the traditional area of service delivery. Several civil society associations are engaged in the healthcare system. Yet, limited funding opportunities are an obstacle to further development. The recently established NGO Council as well as its local bodies could support such efforts. In addition, efforts to promote awareness about healthcare issues among journalists should be prioritised in order to promote an informed media sector that can report on strategic health issues.

The potential of digital healthcare projects (or "e-health") on improving the quality and transparency of the overall healthcare system is generally understood, but actual impacts remain limited. By no means is Lithuania alone in facing the challenge of achieving tangible impacts through IT in healthcare, while avoiding the repetition of past disappointments. Even advanced OECD countries struggle to narrow the gap between initial expectations and actual returns on digital healthcare investments. The main challenge is not to introduce more technology and raise take-up rates for individual online services, but rather to understand how technology can lastingly raise the level of quality of, and trust in, national healthcare.

Lithuania has, in fact, managed to rethink and redesign selected healthcare services to realise the transformative potential of technology. The examples of online medical appointments booking or digital exchanges of sick leave certificates can be mentioned. But the government needs to do more to orient major investments (including several multi-million euro projects that are primarily funded through EU Structural Funds) towards improving healthcare quality at large. Strategic use of government data can, for example, greatly improve policy formulation and evaluation; digital technologies can support the fight against corruption and bribery in the sector. More confident steps and constructive partnerships are necessary to achieve such results and Lithuania can build on

1. www.eu-patient.eu/globalassets/projects/valueplus/doc_epf_policyrec.pdf.

domestic and OECD countries' lessons learnt around governance, monitoring and evaluation.

The following recommendations aim to ensure that Lithuania's "e-health" efforts lead to tangible impacts on the actual and perceived quality of healthcare:

- A strategic vision should be fostered on how technology can not only transform the quality of public services, but also makes access to services more equal and transparent. There are missed opportunities around using digitisation to more effectively tackle the endemic issue of perceived and actual corruption in the Lithuanian healthcare sector. Individual initiatives exist, e.g. phone hotlines or corruption alert forms on hospitals' websites, but their use and effect remain marginal compared to the challenge. Initiatives such as online medical appointment bookings can help fight bribery at that level, but the service is not yet comprehensively available across the country.
- Improved monitoring and accountability of "e-health" projects should be promoted. Lithuania – like many OECD countries – has a history of electronic healthcare projects that did not deliver on expectations. Many of the problems can be traced back to ineffective governance, in the sense that the political leadership did not recognise the strategic importance (on time), or that it did not take responsibility for improving healthcare quality through those projects. The current set of monitoring practices and indicators used in Lithuania is strong in effective project management (i.e. respect of budgets, timelines and milestones), but it does not sufficiently capture and direct digital healthcare initiatives towards strategic objectives.
- Put stronger emphasis on transparency around digital healthcare investments and their impacts. Information on digital healthcare projects is available and can be obtained upon request, but it is often difficult to access or interpret by outsiders, e.g. because of inconvenient formats used to disseminate information. There is no single entry point where the stakeholders or the wider public could track progress of individual "e-health" projects and funding allocation. Stronger consideration for the needs of individuals or organisations that wish to understand, comment and compare the progress can, for example, be achieved by creating structured and visual scorecards for each digital healthcare project, link those scorecards to national policy priorities, and publish them in ways that are easy to understand and reuse.
- Enable modern ways of developing and deploying digital healthcare services and infrastructures. Compatibility of more agile development approaches with existing development and procurement rules is a common challenge to public sectors. The government should consider creating guidelines and collecting good practices that show how institutions can manage the transition away from overly big and linear IT projects towards more agile and iterative ways of designing public services – including through revision of procurement and contracting provisions in this area.

Chapter 1.

The context for open government reforms in Lithuania

This chapter presents an overview of the major reform stages Lithuania has gone through, from the Soviet heritage to post-EU accession. Subsequently, future public administration needs are contextualised by sketching out some growth and well-being indicators, i.e. the country's economic performance, its public finances and some key social data. This is followed by a short overview of some challenges Lithuania needs to consider to ensure that its public policies and institutions are fit for purpose. These challenges include enhanced public engagement in public policy, fostered trust in public institutions and forward-looking reform consolidation. Finally, open government is introduced as a way forward to address the observed challenges.

From Soviet system to post-EU accession

The Soviet heritage

The Soviet system had left behind an underperforming state apparatus and a pervasive bureaucracy. Under the Soviet regime, ministries worked in silos, which resulted in little coherence and co-ordination among them. Political and strategic decisions were taken mostly within the communist party, as opposed to the administration, and the centre of government (CoG) was rather weak (Synnerström, 1997).

Closely related to the lack of coherence and co-ordination, there was also a lack of co-ordinated staffing and personnel management. Each public institution was an independent employer, and there were no common standards for selection, recruitment, promotion or personnel management. In addition, the concept of management functions was virtually absent. Officials working for the administration were considered "specialists". However, there were no standard requirements or professional criteria for the respective positions in the state administration, which impeded job mobility across institutions (Synnerström, 1997). After Lithuania regained its independence, a job in public administration was considered unattractive as it involved many responsibilities and low salaries. Salaries for "specialists", especially for those who spoke foreign languages – English in particular – were a few times higher in the private than in the public sector. Furthermore, due to the hierarchical and legalistic nature of the system, it was more important for officials to comply with the formal rules than to ensure the actual implementation of programmes (Nakrošis, 2001). In addition, open government principles such as citizens' engagement and transparency were virtually non-existent.

Post-Soviet governance

The Constitution adopted by referendum in 1992 radically changed the governance system, abandoning the primacy of the communist party over the state. The President of the Republic, directly elected for a period of five years, is the head of state. The President appoints and dismisses the Prime Minister, with the approval of the Seimas, the Lithuanian parliament. The unicameral Seimas is composed of 141 members elected for a period of 4 years through direct, mixed-system elections. Already by 1992, only three years after the abolition of the monopoly of the communist party, a multi-party system was established in Lithuania. Lithuanian governments had single-party majorities in parliament until the year 2000. Since then, coalition governments have ruled the country (Pivoras, 2013).

Along with the political changes, the economy transformed from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. This occurred most notably through privatising state-owned property (state-owned enterprises and real estate). By 2003, more than 80% of previously state-owned property had been privatised (Pivoras, 2013). However, the scale and speed of economic reform did not come without negative side effects: inflation rose up to 1 000% in 1992, many enterprises went bankrupt, and unemployment reached 17% between 1995 and 2000. This caused a widening gap in society, with 16% of the Lithuanian population living close to or below the poverty level at that time, which consequently led to massive labour emigration (Pivoras, 2013).

By the early 1990s, Lithuania was also confronted with a specialist-based public administration with little internal coherence. The separation of the communist party from the state left Lithuania with an underperforming state apparatus and led to a dominant bureaucracy at the same time. Symptomatic for this was the lack of horizontal

co-ordination among the – nowadays – 14 very independent ministries. Furthermore, during the transition, job security in the public administration was basically inexistent, and officials were still appointed mostly on political grounds, rather than based on merit (Nakrošis, 2001). Important administrative reforms included the Law on the Government (1994), defining the composition, competences and roles of the executive; the Law on Officials (1995) which would be replaced by the new Law on Civil Service in 1999; and the Law on Local Self-Government (1994), regulating the functions and powers of municipalities.

EU accession

Accession to the European Union (EU) proved to be an important incentive for setting up structures to fight corruption and to adequately control public funds (Fritz, 2007). Not only did the EU ask for an external system of control, institutionalised as the *Valstybės Kontrolė* (national audit office), but also an internal audit system of all governmental institutions (ministries and agencies) had to be established. In addition, an Audit Committee of the Seimas was set up in 2002/04, the task of which is to hear and follow up on the reports of the audit institutions. Nevertheless, corruption remained a problem (and still does) and is reflected in low trust figures. Several initiatives were taken to face these problems. A Special Investigation Service, established as an agency under the Ministry of the Interior in 1997, was made accountable to the President and the Seimas in 2000, as a sign to make the institution more independent. Its task is to detect, investigate and prevent corruption. The Special Investigation Service was given responsibility to implement an anti-corruption strategy, developed with financial support from the European Commission PHARE Institutional Development Programme in 2000 (Fritz, 2007; Pivoras, 2013). The anti-corruption strategy was approved by the Seimas in 2002, and aimed to "strengthen the system of law enforcement and other public bodies, encourage closer co-operation with the general public and non-governmental organisations, raise civic awareness of the public and build their intolerance towards negative phenomena". Important elements to achieve these aims are corruption prevention, investigation of law violations, public education and support (National Anti-corruption Programme, 2002).

Within the scope of the EU accession, the civil service also went through substantial reforms. As mentioned previously, the introduction of the Law on Civil Service (1999) intended to ensure depoliticisation and legal accountability of the civil service. Human resources management started to be regulated, with the same rules applying for the central administration as for local ones. Entrance into the civil service became based on an open competition. In addition, the depoliticisation of the most senior level (state secretaries) was translated to other, lower levels of the hierarchy. However, while the selection process has been made more open and impartial in general, it has been found to lack transparency, offering loopholes which allowed employers to manipulate the suitability of applicants (Pivoras, 2013).

In order to prepare for EU accession, Lithuania collaborated with the Institute of Public Administration of Canada and the Ontario Public Service between 1998 and 2000. The purpose was to introduce reforms aimed at strengthening planning, co-ordination and use of evidence in the policy-making process. Under subsequent governments, this system has been further institutionalised, to connect strategic planning, priority setting and fiscal planning. In this context, the first report about the ministries' performance was submitted to parliament in 2003. Furthermore, policy impact assessment reports were introduced, which were to support ministries in their decision making, mainly based on

legal texts in the past (Evans, 2005). These reform efforts bore fruits relatively early. For instance, the gap between the requested and the approved budget decreased by 50 percentage points between 1999 (56.1%) and 2001 (6.8%). During weekly Cabinet or committee meetings with the Prime Minister, about 83.5% of the time was allocated to priority issues in 2002, compared to 42.9% just two years earlier (Evans, 2010). Over time, however, reforms lost momentum and strategic planning became a merely administrative exercise and no meaningful policy evaluation system was in place.

Post-EU accession

The post accession period has been characterised by attempts to make the public administration more result-oriented, more transparent and more open towards the Lithuanian citizens. An important initiative in that regard was the Public Administration Development Strategy (2004-10), which aimed at improving the public administration by creating "a transparent, effective public administration system, based on new technologies and oriented towards results and appropriate services" (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2014).

Regarding public administration reform, measures for working towards a "result-targeted and customer-oriented public administration model" were put forward. The same was the case for a territorial reform (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2008). As a result, the regional administrative level was abolished. In the scope of the Concept for the Improvement of the Framework of the Executive System of the State (2009/10), state institutions were to be made more efficient, transparent and accountable. Their performance was to be improved, amongst others, by defining more clearly their status and role in the formulation and implementation of state policies (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2014). The "county management reform" of 2009 addressed the counties more specifically. Functions which had formerly been performed by the county administrations were transferred to either the municipal or the national level, depending on content and purpose (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2014; Sustainable Governance Indicators, 2014).

In 2012, the Public Governance Improvement Programme (2012-20) was adopted, with the aim to "ensure determination, formation and efficient implementation of the public policy meeting public needs: to enhance openness of the public governance processes and to encourage society to take an active part in them; to provide good quality administrative and public services; to strengthen the capacities of strategic thinking in public administration institutions and to improve the management of their activities" (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2012). This programme is based on provisions of the Lithuania2030 strategy, Lithuania's long-term progress strategy, aiming at the creation of an economically and socially successful Lithuania, based on the three pillars of openness, creativity and responsibility. Lithuania2030 plays an important role in the attempts to make government more open and accountable to its citizens. The strategy emerged from civil society, and the design and implementation phases have been co-ordinated by the State Progress Council, which brings together governmental, non-governmental, academic, business and media representatives. As the strategy is considered a vision document, rather than an action plan, its goals are reflected in several other strategic planning documents, such as the National Reform Programme 2014 or the National Progress Programme 2014-2020. The latter forms the basis for attracting EU financial support, most notably by means of the European Structural Funds. The National Progress Programme is designed to implement the more general provisions of the Lithuania2030 strategy and is aligned with the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Regarding further modernisation of public administration, the National Reform Programme 2014 plans the following actions: "development of e-procurement procedures, reduction of the administrative burden, assurance of the digitalisation of public administration and better use of the EU Structural Funds".

Growth and well-being: Economic performance, public finances, poverty and population data

Economic performance

Lithuania has been rapidly catching up with other EU countries in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, though a large convergence potential remains. In 2013, GDP per capita was only 57% of the average GDP per capita in the 28 EU countries. Lithuania has been hit particularly hard by the economic crisis. Between 2008 and 2009, GDP dipped by almost 15 percentage points (Eurostat database). The recovery has been as impressive as the recession. The economy has regained steam rapidly, largely pushed by exports. Lithuania has been gaining global market shares, upgraded product quality and reoriented away from traditional markets, mostly former Soviet republics and the Russian Federation, towards new markets. However, success has been relying to a large extent on labour-intensive exports and was facilitated by favourable trading partner growth (IMF, 2014). The unemployment rate has decreased significantly from its peak of 17.8% in 2010, reaching 11.8% in 2013 (Eurostat database). Despite the good economic performance, the unemployment issue remains relevant; at the beginning of 2015 the unemployment rate was 9.6%.

Public finances

In 2008, the public debt-to-GDP ratio declined to approximately 15% due to a deficit that hovered around 1% of GDP and sustained economic growth. Consolidation, however, proved cyclical and the crisis triggered a fiscal deficit of almost 10% of GDP between 2009 and 2011. Public finances have been brought back on track through a multi-year consolidation effort that has stabilised public debt at 40% of GDP, fiscal deficit at 2.6% of GDP and ushered Lithuania into the euro zone (Eurostat database). The consolidation programme has significantly reduced government spending. Public expenditures were cut by 13% of GDP over the period 2009-12. Social benefits and current expenditures (both wages and non-wages) accounted for almost three-quarters of the consolidation measures (and approximately 9% of GDP). Capital expenditures were reduced by 1.6% of GDP (IMF, 2014) whereas in 2012 general government expenditures accounted for 36% of GDP.

Poverty and population data

Lithuania is confronted with a number of social challenges that call for a good calibration of public policies to ensure that economic performance – impressive so far – is inclusive and sustainable over time. For example, 30% of the population is at risk of poverty or social exclusion, 6 percentage points above the average of the 28 EU countries and 7-16 percentage points above its OECD and EU peers (Eurostat database). Emigration is another challenge that could affect the long-term welfare of the country. In 2010, Lithuania experienced an unprecedented peak in emigration. Although the number of emigrants remains high, emigration has been slowly decreasing since 2010. It is important to note that the emigrants have been disproportionally younger and more

educated than those who have remained, depriving the country of a qualified labour force (Sipavičienė and Stankūnienė, 2013).

Fit-for-purpose public policies and institutions: Challenges ahead

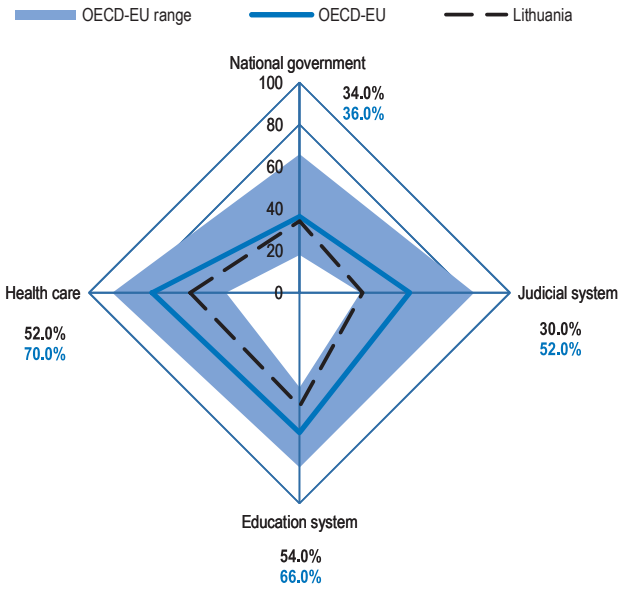
Public engagement in public policy

Historically, Lithuania has had a fairly weak tradition of citizens' participation in public policy making. An inherited culture of minimal involvement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the policy process is identified by Nakrošis (2001) as a key reason for limited policy reform pressure from the citizens and organised third sector. Considering the government's ambition to foster engagement with citizens and businesses, it needs to implement specific policy initiatives to bend historical trends in citizen engagement.

Trust in public institutions

Trust in the national government in Lithuania is relatively low – only about a third of Lithuanians tend to trust their national government – when compared to the trust in certain public services, which is higher (Gallup World Poll, n.d.). This is a trend that is common to some OECD-EU countries. Lithuanians trust their government less than the average for OECD-EU members: 34% of Lithuanians compared to 36% of OECD-EU citizens (Figure 1.1). Nevertheless, trust in government has increased when compared to the pre-crisis period – in 2007 only 27% of Lithuanians trusted their national government (compared to an average of 34% for OECD-EU member countries).

Figure 1.1. **Satisfaction and confidence with public institutions, Lithuania and OECD-EU countries**



Source: Gallup World Poll (n.d.), www.gallup.com.

Forward-looking reform consolidation

Lithuania's successful, and comparatively rapid, transformation from a Soviet regime to democracy is considered to be due to "a mixture of political consolidation around rules (despite some instability at the government level), a historical memory of independent statehood, and the positive external impact of the EU" (Fritz, 2007: 277). However, Nakrošis (2001) claims that a difference has to be made between the political and the bureaucratic reform consolidation. Thus, while Lithuania is beyond a return to the Soviet system, there is still substantial room to consolidate constructive, forward-looking policy and reform initiatives, in particular when it comes to openness and inclusiveness as mainstream elements of contemporary public policy making.

Open government as a way forward

The Lithuanian government has expressed strong interest in strengthening government-citizen relations to improve policy making and service provision through the enhancement of openness and participation in public governance processes. It considers essential to foster public trust in government, engage citizens actively in the policy-making process and ensure customer/user-oriented public services. These are core values of its Lithuania2030 strategy and are confirmed by Lithuania's participation in the Open Government Partnership (OGP).

The OGP is an international initiative that promotes a new partnership between governments and their people as they co-develop action plans to implement openness, transparency and civic engagement in their countries. Membership of the OGP has now reached 65 countries since its launch in 2011. This rapid growth gives evidence to the fact that more and more governments are adopting, or being asked to do so, open government practices to address their challenges. Countries join to promote openness and civic engagement to make government more effective and accountable, to improve services, manage public resources, promote innovation and create safer communities and achieve greater prosperity, well-being and human dignity (www.opengovpartnership.org).

A government is open when it is transparent, accountable, engaging and acts responsibly (i.e. it follows certain principles). These open government principles are likely to lead to better services and policies (intermediate outcomes), higher trust in government, social well-being, quality of democracy and economic growth (final outcomes). These improvements are likely to happen through the use of specific policy instruments and practices (catalysts) that drive change and foster innovative processes. OECD countries are employing open government practices to reach different goals. In particular, these include greater transparency, accountability, efficiency, effectiveness and accessibility of the government, and the strengthening of citizen trust in government. These can improve social cohesion and can raise the awareness of citizens and increase citizens' compliance (OECD, 2009). In a similar way, Lithuania's commitment to build an open government that engages its citizens could foster transparency and public scrutiny (i.e. fighting the still significant challenge of corruption), while inclusive policy making can push for innovative policy solutions, create greater social cohesion and increase the involvement of the significant Lithuanian population living abroad.

The OECD has been at the forefront of international efforts to promote and disseminate open government policies and practices for more than ten years. Since 2001, the OECD has collected and analysed information demonstrating the importance of citizens' participation in the design and implementation of better public policies and the

delivery of public services resulting in greater efficiency and citizen satisfaction. In collaboration with senior public officials from member countries committed to improve government-citizens relations, a set of principles was developed to guide the implementation of open government policies and ensure their success (OECD, 2001; 2009), shown in Box 1.1.

Box 1.1. **Guiding Principles for Open and Inclusive Policy Making**

1. Commitment: Leadership and strong commitment to open and inclusive policy making is needed at all levels – politicians, senior managers and public officials.
2. Rights: Citizens' rights to information, consultation and public participation in policy making and service delivery must be firmly grounded in law or policy. Government obligations to respond to citizens must be clearly stated. Independent oversight arrangements are essential to enforcing these rights.
3. Clarity: Objectives for, and limits to, information, consultation and public participation should be well defined from the outset. The roles and responsibilities of all parties must be clear. Government information should be complete, objective, reliable, relevant and easy to find and understand.
4. Time: Public engagement should be undertaken as early in the policy process as possible to allow a greater range of solutions and to raise the chances of successful implementation. Adequate time must be available for consultation and participation to be effective.
5. Inclusion: All citizens should have equal opportunities and multiple channels to access information, be consulted and participate. Every reasonable effort should be made to engage with as wide a variety of people as possible.
6. Resources: Adequate financial, human and technical resources are needed for effective public information, consultation and participation. Government officials must have access to appropriate skills, guidance and training as well as an organisational culture that supports both traditional and online tools.
7. Co-ordination: Initiatives to inform, consult and engage civil society should be co-ordinated within and across levels of government to ensure policy coherence, avoid duplication and reduce the risk of "consultation fatigue." Co-ordination efforts should not stifle initiative and innovation but should leverage the power of knowledge networks and communities of practice within and beyond government.
8. Accountability: Governments have an obligation to inform participants how they use inputs received through public consultation and participation. Measures to ensure that the policy-making process is open, transparent and amenable to external scrutiny can help increase accountability of, and trust in, government.
9. Evaluation: Governments need to evaluate their own performance. To do so effectively will require efforts to build the demand, capacity, culture and tools for evaluating public participation.
10. Active citizenship: Societies benefit from dynamic civil society, and governments can facilitate access to information, encourage participation, raise awareness, strengthen citizens' civic education and skills, as well as to support capacity building among civil society organisations (CSOs). Governments need to explore new roles to effectively support autonomous problem-solving by citizens, CSOs and businesses.

Source: OECD (2001), *Citizens and Partners*; updated in OECD (2009), *Focus on Citizens Public Engagement for Better Policy and Services*, OECD Studies on Public Engagement, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264048874-en.

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Chapter 2.

Lithuania's centre of government as a catalyst for open government

This chapter analyses the strategic role of the centre of government in Lithuania and compares it with the role of the centre of government in OECD countries as an increasingly important strategic player that provides vision, leadership and co-ordination across the government. It identifies strategic planning as an important CoG instrument and reviews the institutional set-up of the CoG in Lithuania and the development of strategic planning. An emphasis is given to changes in the recent past, including aspects of monitoring and evaluation. The chapter subsequently explores the CoG's current role as a catalyst for open government across government. The chapter identifies opportunities for the CoG to strengthen its mandate of fostering open and inclusive policy making.

The centre of government as a strategic player

From administrative support to policy co-ordination

The centre of government (CoG) is the body or group of bodies that provides direct support and advice to the head of government and the Council of Ministers. The CoG is known under different labels in different countries, such as Chancellery, Cabinet Office, Office of the President, Office of the Government, etc. From its traditional role of serving the executive from an administrative perspective, the CoG is now playing a more active role in policy development and co-ordination across OECD countries. The centre in many countries now provides services that range from strategic planning to real-time policy advice and intelligence, and from leading major cross-departmental policy initiatives to monitoring progress and outcomes (OECD, 2014b).

In a broad sense, the CoG not only refers to the Presidency or its equivalent, but also comprises key strategic partners, such as the Ministry of Finance (where policy priorities are matched with resources) or a Ministry of Planning (with an important role in designing policy priorities across the administration and the way these contribute to an overall strategic plan). As such, and depending on the particular situation of a country in terms of its institutional constellation, several actors can play an important role in CoG co-ordination. Additionally, central agencies responsible for a coherent human resources (HR) policy, e-government policy, regulatory policy, etc. across different departments also contribute to a reinforced cross-governmental co-ordination.

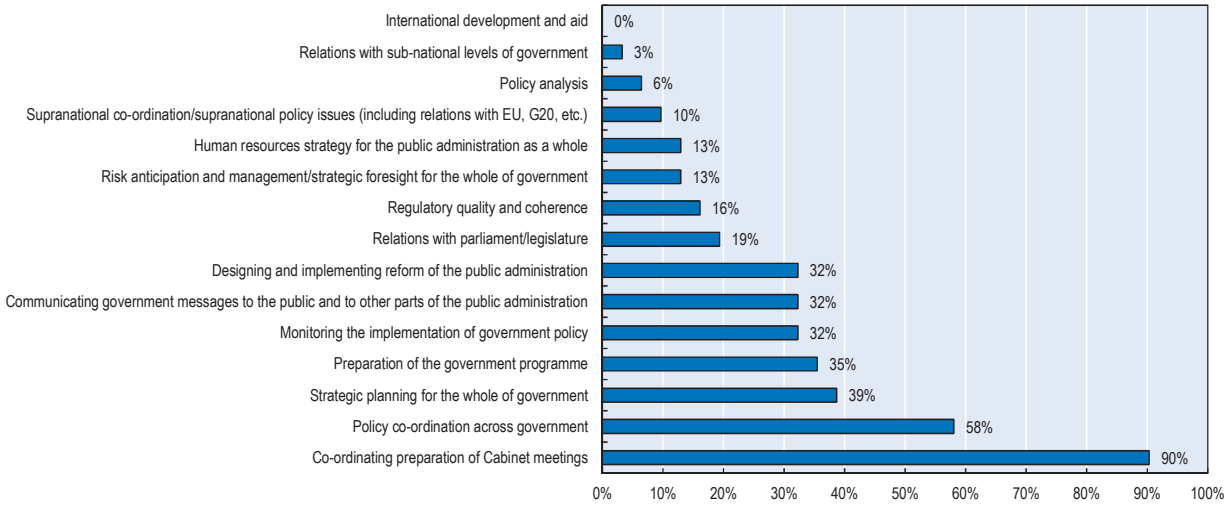
Despite playing a decisive role in key areas of public policy, the CoG in most countries is surprisingly small. The apparent disconnect between the centre's broad responsibilities and its limited budget is at least partly explained by the fact that almost all resources and most formal powers lie elsewhere in the public administration, outside the CoG. In most of its activities, the centre is working with partner organisations that are much larger and that are responsible and accountable for most, if not all, spending on those activities. Generally speaking – i.e. across presidential, parliamentary and other systems – the three key roles of the centre are: 1) supporting quality decision making by the head of government; 2) policy co-ordination across government; and 3) monitoring of the implementation of government policy. With its ambition to mobilise and influence (very often) larger budget-holding departments across government, the CoG's success depends not only on formal powers or structures but also, to a large extent, on its capacity to lead and motivate.

As the role of the CoG can comprise different aspects, Figure 2.1 provides an overview of the primary focus of CoG institutions across OECD countries. Whereas it points to a certain degree of diversity across countries, it also shows the consensus about the CoG's core functions, such as providing support to the head of government.

The OECD Survey of centres of government (OECD, 2013) also shows that a majority of countries (59%) confirms that the number of cross-ministerial policy initiatives has increased over the past few years (2008-12), and almost all respondents reported that leading policy co-ordination has now become one of the priority tasks of the centre. The centre can lead such cross-ministerial co-ordination by: 1) integrating cross-disciplinary perspectives (including its own perspective – the centre is not "policy neutral") into policy advice for the head of government and/or Cabinet, 2) leading policy co-ordination via both traditional committee architectures and more innovative and informal channels; 3) facilitating resource sharing through a closer partnership with

ministries of finance; and 4) supporting experimentation and testing of new delivery systems, many of which are based on shared service models.

Figure 2.1. **Focus of the centre of government**



Source: OECD (2014b), "Centre stage: Driving better policies from the centre of government", GOV/PGC/MPM(2014)3/FINAL, OECD, Paris, www.oecd.org/gov/Centre-Stage-Report.pdf.

Leading strategic initiatives is delicate, particularly in countries in which authority is highly decentralised. It is essential to offer both short- and long-term gains to senior public officials as incentives to co-operate in complex initiatives that involve sharing of risk, resources and accountability. For example, the long-term gains of achieving cultural change among senior civil servants in the area of collaboration should be matched with short-term "rewards" for changing their behaviour and investing time in new practices.

Centre of government anno 2014: Vision, leadership and innovation

The OECD's work on centres of government explores how governments can adapt the institutions at the centre in order to play this expanded and more outward-looking role. In spite of its prominent role in diverse parts of the policy process, the precise nature of the work of the CoG is not yet fully understood, though it invariably generates curiosity and a certain fascination. The fact that international comparisons of centres of government are so rare is somewhat surprising, particularly in light of the potential "governance premium" that effective management of policy from the centre can generate. The crisis of 2008 has, however, helped to turn the spotlight onto the crucial role that the centre plays in effective, decisive government. With declining trust figures across countries in the aftermath of the crisis (Gallup World Poll, n.d.), the CoG's leadership and innovative decision-making capacity is more decisive than ever before. Governments need to prove that they have a clear vision for the future, are capable of engaging in dialogue with the administration and citizens on this vision, and manage to deliver results, which can further foster sustainable long-term growth and well-being.

Box 2.1 provides a more detailed overview of how vision, leadership and innovation are central to the CoG's daily business these days. Across these three areas of vision, leadership and innovation, the capacity of bridging the (potential) gap between political staff (ministries, state secretaries, political advisors and senior civil servants in certain

cases) and the civil service is one of the challenges of incoming governments. To that end, it is noteworthy that some countries specifically invest in training for new political staff (OECD, 2014a). Examples include, for instance, Iceland, where the Government Office runs formal training programmes for new ministers, or the United States, where the Office of Management and Budget runs training led by former political appointees.

Box 2.1. **Centre of government – observations and trends, 2014**

The success of a government rests on its ability to define a vision for the country that reflects an electoral mandate and that is typically designed to increase well-being, prosperity and international competitiveness. In the years following the economic crisis, concern with budgets dominated in most countries, crowding out any other vision. However, those days appear to be over, and governments are seeking to be more forward-looking and strategic. Most OECD countries have some sort of vision document these days. This vision has different, interlinked dimensions, including a long-term vision for the nation, usually going beyond growth objectives to embrace well-being and sustainability goals, and a vision for what the government of the day wants to achieve.

The government no longer has a monopoly on defining the vision. While efforts to gather citizens' views could risk raising expectations that cannot be fulfilled, such bottom-up visions can help validate and legitimise government policy. Vision depends on two crucial factors that were mentioned repeatedly in the debate: trust and communication. If citizens do not trust the government, they will not trust its vision. Taking steps to strengthen trust in government more generally will help to ensure greater buy-in on more strategic goals. Communication and ownership are also important. If the vision has a strong narrative, connects to citizens' lives and is well communicated, then it can help generate support for difficult reforms. A particular problem faced by policy makers is that the reform process and its translation into real benefits for citizens are often too slow, undermining confidence and enthusiasm for longer term visions.

Leadership is crucial to drive policies that contribute to a strategic vision. In a complex and challenging policy environment, characterised by low levels of trust in government, leadership is an essential attribute of effective government. Room for manoeuvre of governments has probably diminished at both the national level, because of budgetary pressure, and at the international level, because of globalisation. Nevertheless, the centre guides in terms of substance and helps departments understand how to align policies with broader objectives. The centre also has a role to play in leading by example, promoting efficiency and good policy management by departments. A key issue is to ensure that the civil service and the political staff do not become disconnected, working as separate entities at the Centre.

Many centres of government actively promote innovation in their public services, with an emphasis on encouraging a culture of innovation in public services and providing a stable frame for policy innovation and creativity. The Centre can provide an impetus – particularly when it partners with specialist agencies that can identify talented people, good ideas and "roll-out" techniques. Some countries have successfully used innovation focal points or dedicated units to drive public sector innovation; at the same time, being the innovation leader requires appropriate financial and HR resources.

Source: OECD (2014a), "Vision, leadership, innovation: Driving public policy performance", 33rd Meeting of Senior Officials from centres of government, OECD, Paris, www.oecd.org/gov/summary.pdf.

In addition to the CoG's responsibility to display vision, leadership and innovative capacity, previous OECD Public Governance Reviews (OECD, 2014c) have shown that an effective CoG is also critical for:

- Accountability. The CoG is the steward of strategic vision. It is accountable for overall results and oversight of the delegated responsibilities. It is important, however, to avoid overly rigid "command and control" structures and micro management, but instead, to work towards a system where the CoG can exert

effective oversight and clarify lines of accountability. Line ministries need to exercise leadership for the actions and policies for which they are responsible, within the overall framework of a shared collective commitment.

- Strategic planning, policy coherence and collective commitment. The CoG needs the capacity to give a specific shape to the strategic vision, to secure its coherence and to make it operational. A starting point is likely to be the government programme or equivalent, giving effect to the political manifesto of the party or parties in power. Making the strategic vision operational is key. Otherwise, the vision is a "dead letter". The doctrine of collective responsibility is crucial to bind line ministries as well as the CoG to a course of action. It is crucial for collective commitment to be built, developed, discussed and agreed by the whole range of actors that are engaged in public policy making, implementation and service delivery.
- Communication. The CoG needs the capacity to communicate the strategic vision, how it is being taken forward and how it is implemented. Transparency and openness help to promote a shared sense of purpose, for stakeholders both outside and inside the government. Clarity of communication within the administration is important so that decentralised institutions can understand the vision and share in its construction. In this way all parts of the public sector can understand their role, responsibility and accountability for results.

Given its comprehensive set of responsibilities, the CoG also requires continuity across political cycles (OECD, 2014c). CoG institutions are best constructed, as far as possible, to withstand the vagaries of the political cycle. To be sustainable over time, it is important to implement long-term strategies. Stability of core functions and structures will raise confidence that the strategic vision is taken seriously and that the country will have the institutional capacity to carry out the vision over time.

Centre of government in Lithuania: The institutional set-up

The legal basis for the centre of government is laid down in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania and in the Law on the Government (1994). In Article 94, one of the tasks of the government is to "co-ordinate the activities of the ministries and other establishments of the government".

The Law on the Government (19 May 1994 No. I-464, as last amended on 17 January 2013, No. XII-153) is the legal basis for the structure and the activities of the government. According to this law, the government is responsible for co-ordinating the activities of ministries and agencies, as well as the activities in the scope of the strategic plans of the government, such as the Strategy for National Development. According to the Concept for the Improvement of the Framework of the Executive System of the State,[1] the executive power consists of: ministries, agencies under the ministries, government agencies, public bodies, the owner of which is the state and the state enterprises. There are also public and private limited liability companies controlled by the state. In 2013, 810 public sector organisations operated in Lithuania: 537 state budgetary agencies, 81 state enterprises, 134 public agencies, and 58 public and private limited liability companies.

Embeddedness in major public administration reforms

As referred to in Chapter 1, there was a need to reform the public administration in the context of Lithuania's accession to the European Union (EU) in 2004, to make it capable of dealing effectively and efficiently with the new requirements and tasks EU accession brought with it. After accession, a new major reform programme was started, the Public Administration Development Strategy (2004-10). It consisted of five main objectives (World Bank, 2006) and aimed for transparency and effectiveness: central government improvement (structures and performance), territorial central government improvement (structures and performance), local government improvement (structures and performance), administrative capacity (the main human resources management objective), and e-government and transparency.

To improve the management of state institutions, the government approved in 2009 the Concept for the Improvement of the Framework of the Executive System of the State (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2014b). It included increasing transparency and efficiency of the management of state-owned property and the use of state budget funds, led to less administrative burden for businesses and residents, and modernised the institutional system. The status, role and purpose of government institutions were more clearly defined, the relationships with ministries improved and organisation principles were unified. In the scope of the Concept for the Improvement of the Framework of the Executive System of the State, and in combination with the counties' management reform, the administrative layers were also restructured. The counties' management reform was led by the Ministry of the Interior which based this reform on the provision in the governmental programme to eliminate the administrations of county governors. The aim was to use state budget funds more effectively, to reduce administrative burden and bureaucracy, and to bring public services closer to the people. Tasks and functions of the county governors were transferred either to the municipal or to the central level, whichever was deemed more efficient.

The most recent, ongoing public governance reform is the Public Governance Improvement Programme (2012-20). This programme aims at improving key public management processes, such as designing, planning and implementing public policies, bearing in mind citizens' needs. Resolution No. 171 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the Public Governance Improvement Programme states its main goals as follows: "to enhance openness of the public governance processes and to encourage society to take an active part in them; to provide good quality administrative and public services; to strengthen the capacities of strategic thinking in public administration institutions and to improve the management of their activities" (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2012a). While the programme outlines the general aims, specific actions and measures for evaluation are described in action plans (currently the Action Plan 2013-2015).

Key actors and their mandates

The key actors of the CoG in Lithuania are the Office of the Government and the Ministry of Finance. In addition, the Sunset Commission plays an important role.

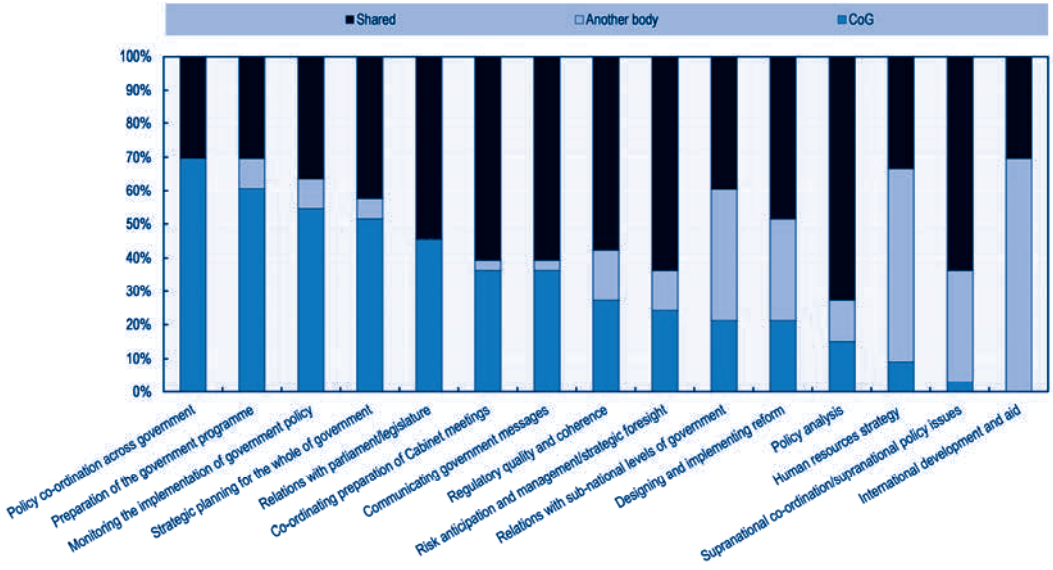
The responsibilities of the Office of the Government, headed by the Chancellor of the Office of the Government, are laid down in the Law on the Government, Ch. X, Art. 44. The Office of the Government assists in "performing the functions of the Prime Minister and the government". The Chancellor counts on two assistants: the First Deputy

Chancellor of the Government – a (political) civil servant – and the Deputy of the Chancellor – a career civil servant, who is accountable to the Prime Minister.

The Office of the Government fulfils important co-ordination functions at the government level. It co-ordinates the strategic management system, assesses the quality of the strategic planning documents, and drafts government-wide and cross-cutting strategic planning documents. Furthermore, it co-ordinates the planning and implementation process for the government's priorities, and monitors the National Progress Programme and the performance results of the government priorities. In addition, it is responsible for co-ordinating the impact assessment system and the annual legislative programme preparation process. The aforementioned responsibilities of the Office of the Government regarding cross-governmental issues (planning the government's priorities and cross-cutting strategic planning documents) are formalised in the context of the country's Strategic Planning Methodology.

In the OECD Survey of centres of government (OECD, 2013), Lithuania indicated that the CoG's (Office of the Government) priority tasks include co-ordinating the preparation of Cabinet meetings, strategic planning for the whole of government, policy analysis, and regulatory quality and coherence. Important areas where the CoG shares responsibility with other actors in Lithuania include human resources strategy and the design and implementation of public administration reform (shared with the Ministry of the Interior), regulatory quality and coherence (shared with the Ministry of Justice), policy analysis and monitoring of the implementation of government policy (shared with line ministries). These observations are in line with the overall tendencies in OECD countries regarding allocation of responsibilities (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2. **A linked-in Centre: Allocation of responsibilities by function**



Source: OECD (2014b), "Centre stage: Driving better policies from the centre of government", GOV/PGC/MPM(2014)3/FINAL, OECD, Paris, www.oecd.org/gov/Centre-Stage-Report.pdf.

The Office of the Government is also responsible for the co-ordination of the Commission for the Improvement of Public Management, the so-called Sunset Commission. In 1999, this commission was established by the government. It was in

office until 2001, generating proposals for further structural reforms in public governance and the improvement of government performance. After a five-year break in existence, it resumed office in 2006 with the purpose of simplifying administrative procedures, developing a one-stop shop system and streamlining public administration (see Box 2.2 for a synthesis of its recent activities). The Sunset Commission consists of 16 members, 9 of whom are representatives from the public sector (Vice Ministers of Finance and Health, Chancellors of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Economy, Chief Advisor of the President, Director of the Lithuanian Municipalities Association, Advisor of the Parliament Committee on State Administration and Local Authorities) and 7 outside independent experts representing consultancy companies, research institutes, the Lithuanian Business Confederation and the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists. Its aim is to achieve an efficient and transparent, society-oriented public administration. As such, it provides the Prime Minister and the other ministers with analysis and advice on:

- efficiency and transparency of public management
- improvement of the institutional framework
- civil service improvement
- efficient management of public assets.

The role of the Office of the Government is to prepare the draft of the commission's annual action plan and to organise the commission's meetings (about ten per year). Furthermore, the Office of the Government analyses information provided by the different institutions forming part of the commission and submits proposals to its Chairman. It also co-ordinates the implementation of the commission's recommendations and prepares the commission's draft annual report.

Another key actor at the CoG is the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Finance co-ordinates the annual state budget planning and approval process. It also assesses the strategic planning documents regarding their impact on public finances and co-ordinates the programme evaluation system (National Progress Programme, development programmes, strategic action plan programmes). In addition, co-ordination of the public-private partnership system falls under its responsibilities. The ministry is furthermore responsible for developing and implementing the monitoring information system and for co-ordinating the drafting process of the National Progress Programme (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2002).

Under the lead of the Office of the Government, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, the relevant ministries discuss draft ministerial strategic plans (including inter-ministerial action plans) to reach an agreement regarding "strategic goals, intended results and limits of appropriations". The Office of the Government and the Ministry of Finance furthermore assess the compliance of strategic action plans with the Government Programme and the government priorities (Strategic Planning Methodology).

Strategic planning as a major centre of government instrument[2]

The evolution of strategic planning

Strategic planning in Lithuania developed in various phases. The first phase, from the late 1990s until 2003, was characterised by the roll-out of strategic planning across government and the introduction of the notion of impact assessment. This was followed by a consolidation phase through the introduction of the Strategic Planning Committee,

which ended roughly when the financial crisis hit in 2008. The third phase (until 2011) aimed at rethinking efficiency and effectiveness. A government-wide approach was

Box 2.2. Commission for the Improvement of Public Management (Sunset Commission)

Action Plan, 2014-2015

Streamline institutional framework and organisational structures

- Evaluation of 12 functional reviews such as the waste management system review and the state training centres review.
- Reductions in the number of public sector organisations and number of employees.
- Monitoring changes in the public sector: the number of organisations, number of staff, payroll.

Oversee agency performance

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the support functions of agencies accountable to the government: 18 indicators in the areas of personnel, information technology and asset management.
- Improvements in the management of organisations, data monitoring and relation between monitoring, evaluation and policy making to strengthen the achievement of government priorities.

Recommendations

- Reduce the number of agencies, especially small agencies, subordinate to ministries (a total of 73 agencies with less than 20 employees).
- Standardise and centralise support functions to optimise the network of public institutions, obtain savings and improve agency operations and service delivery.
- Streamline administrative structures of agencies accountable to the government (not less than five employees for one manager).
- Reduce the expenditure on support functions (*cf.* indicators for personnel management, financial management, etc.).
- Reduce administrative burden to businesses by simplification of procedures.
- Improve the tenure system of senior civil servants, the use of expertise from Lithuania in EU and other international institutions and the reinsertion of Lithuanian citizens who worked abroad.

Selected results

- The number of agencies accountable to the government was reduced by 24% (from 1 061 in 2010 to 810 in 2013).
- Some agencies were abolished (for example the Qualification Service) while other agencies were merged (for example the State Tobacco and Alcohol Control Service and the Drug Control Department).

Source: Sunset Commission (2014), "Commission for the Improvement of Public Management", presentation, 22 October 2014, unpublished; Office of the Government (2015), *Commission for the Improvement of Public Management: Annual Report 2014*, March, Vilnius.

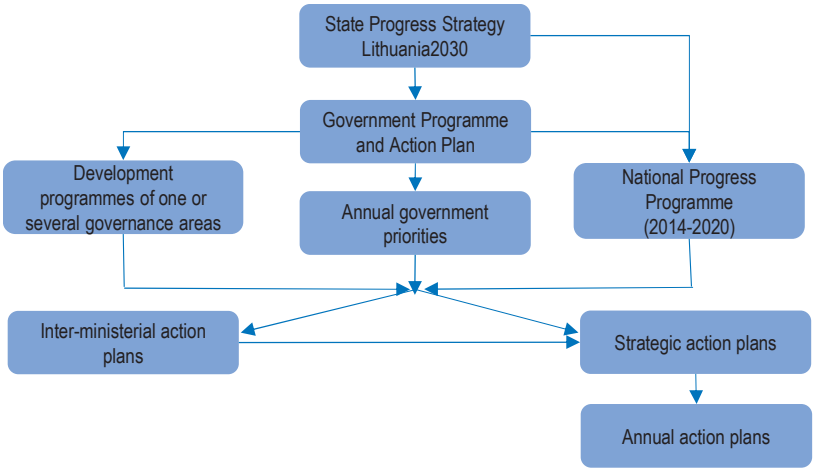
strengthened with more emphasis on political leadership and strategic thinking and the high administrative burden of the process was addressed (250 planning documents and over 300 budget programmes; and more than 200 performance indicators per ministry). From 2012 onwards, emphasis was put on result- and efficiency-oriented initiatives with a focus on connecting strategic planning with monitoring and evaluation.

Within the context of the most recent evolutions of the strategic planning system, the Public Governance Improvement Programme for 2012-2020 – under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior – plays an important role. Its primary goal is "to enhance openness of the public governance processes and to encourage society to take an active part in them". This stresses the fact that for the government to be able to deliver services effectively and efficiently to the citizens, transparency and citizen participation are key (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2012a). Consequently, improving "result-oriented and evidence-based management" is an important goal of the programme. This is supposed to be achieved by making better use of performance information, reducing regulation and improving the quality of legal acts, and strengthening cross-institutional co-operation. In addition, consultation with citizens and the involvement of the latter in policy processes are to be improved (see Chapter 3).

Components of the strategic planning system

The strategic planning system (Figure 2.3) consists of the following plans and programmes.

Figure 2.3. **Components of the strategic planning system in Lithuania**



Source: Government of Lithuania (2014c), "CoG co-ordination", presentation, October, unpublished.

Lithuania2030

Lithuania2030, Lithuania's long-term state progress strategy, is at the head of the strategic planning system. This strategy provides for long-term goals, to be achieved by 2030, aiming at the creation of an economically and socially successful Lithuania, based on the three pillars of openness, creativity and responsibility. Being a vision document rather than a policy programme, these goals need to be taken into account by all other planning documents, such as the Government Programme and the Government Action Plan, the National Progress Programme, the sectorial development programmes and the annual government priorities.

The Lithuania2030 strategy has been co-ordinated by the State Progress Council since 2011. The State Progress Council, created by the government, consists of 28 members, including government representatives, representatives of the parliament, the directors of four leading universities, business associations, the Head of the National Museum, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academics, youth organisations, businessmen and the media. The Secretariat of the Council is based in the Office of the Government, and is responsible for the co-ordination and implementation of the strategy as well as for monitoring at the governmental level. The institutional stability of the council is safeguarded by the Law on the Government. While theoretically the government can decide to abolish the council, the final decision lies with the parliament, together with a consultation with societal actors.

Each year the State Progress Council assesses the relevance of the strategy initiatives, monitors the results and reports to the government. The monitoring occurs across three lines.

First, a set of ten annual progress actions for the implementation of the most important initiatives has been defined as the so-called "quick wins". The actions for 2014 were found through open consultation. The broader society has been invited to take part in proposing ideas (via the website and Facebook), and the Open Progress Forum (see below), NGOs and other stakeholders also participated by submitting proposals. Consequently, the State Progress Council presented the list of these progress actions to the government, and recommended that they be included in annual governmental and/or ministerial priority lists, thus linking governmental annual priorities with the strategy's initiatives, and ensuring the implementation of the progress-related actions. The actions for 2015 have been discussed in focus groups, where experts have been invited to suggest what actions should be taken.

Second, the consistent implementation of the strategy is fostered by means of strategic planning documents, such as the National Progress Programme, which brings together national and EU funds. Furthermore, the Progress Report Lithuania is part of the Annual Government Report, and includes an assessment of the implementation of the annual progress actions, 31 progress indicators and the results of progress forums.

The direct involvement of communities and non-governmental organisations is the third line. This happens mainly through the efforts of the State Progress Council, its secretariat and the third key participant: the Open Progress Forum. The Open Progress Forum is responsible for the implementation strategy, and is considered a tool for thematically focused dialogue with society. It brings together academic, business, and artistic communities and other public representatives for debate and exchange of ideas. Topics which have been covered so far are, for example, strengthening local communities, leadership in education, welfare state model, children's creativity and lifelong learning. The results of these forum meetings are, for example, project initiatives for the National Progress Programme 2014-2020, suggestions for annual progress actions and various articles. In 2014, several regional meetings were also held in the scope of the Open Progress Forum.

Furthermore, the society and NGOs are invited to contribute to the implementation of the strategy with their own initiatives. Last but not least, examples of good practices are collected and presented in a "catalogue of good practice". All information about the progress of the strategy is publicly available online.

National Progress Programme 2014-2020

The National Progress Programme was approved at the end of 2012 for the period 2014-20. The programme is the connection between Lithuania2030 and the European Union's Europe 2020. Goals and priorities are set in a top-down manner, from main progress areas, to horizontal progress areas, down to sectorial priorities.

Similarly to Lithuania2030, it consists of three main progress areas: smart society, smart economy and smart governance. These main progress areas are complemented by three horizontal priority areas, namely culture, health for all and regional development. Building upon these horizontal priorities, the National Progress Programme foresees five sectorial areas for investment. Investment in these different priorities will ultimately also contribute to achieving progressive, sustainable and integral growth, the main aims of the Europe 2020 strategy (Erawatch, 2012). Removing obstacles to economic growth and creating a favourable economic framework for business creation and development are included as priority goals of the National Progress Programme. Furthermore, fostering education and the development of a socially secure and active society are targeted, next to building smart governance systems.

The National Progress Programme is funded by both the national budget and EU funds. It includes goals and priorities and approves the financial proportions for each of these priorities. It is a crucial document as it provides the basis for EU Structural Funds support for the next financing period (Erawatch, 2012). The programme was developed by five working groups, which consisted of experts, civil servants and social partners. The development process was led by five ministries (Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and Ministry of the Interior). During public consultations in mid-2012, civil society had the opportunity to react to the draft proposals. The final programme was adopted in November 2012 (Erawatch, 2012).

Annual government priorities

The concept of the annual government priorities has been reformed in three main phases. From 2000 until 2003 the priorities were developed in a top-down manner, and there was only a short list of priorities with a manageable scope of new activities, accompanied by a financial envelope. It then underwent a substantial change, between 2004 and 2008, by being developed in a bottom-up approach, and including many policy areas and operational activities. However, there was a lack of co-ordination. This led to the following, ongoing restructuring since 2009. Priorities are now set in a mix of top-down and bottom-up approaches; they are closely linked to the strategic plans, such as Lithuania2030 or the National Progress Programme, and focus on new initiatives. The centre of government co-ordinates them, and is also responsible for ensuring the monitoring and evaluation of its success.

The Strategic Planning Methodology (Resolution adopted 6 June 2002, No. 827) describes in detail the strategic planning process regarding the government priorities and the link with the budget process. The planning process from the initial draft to the finalisation of the government priorities includes political and strategic sessions in turn. In the first political session, usually in March, the government sets priorities and directions. This is followed by strategic sessions in the ministries, taking place from April until May, during which the ministries prepare their strategic plans and their contributions to the implementation of the government priorities. There are 14 working groups which continuously assess the priorities and the budget issues linked to it, to prepare for the

budget negotiations, following from May until June. During this political session the ministers, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance discuss the priorities and strategic plans. All priorities are accompanied by measures and targets to make sure they can be implemented adequately. During the last strategic sessions, the strategic plans are corrected (from July until October), and in October the Office of the Government finalises the priority document. For monitoring purposes, progress is reported quarterly: ministries submit their performance information to the Office of the Government, which analyses and summarises the results. Then the Office of the Government presents the progress to the Cabinet where the ministers have the opportunity to discuss the results.

Inter-ministerial and ministerial plans

There are currently 15 inter-ministerial action plans. These action plans are directly attached to the budget. They are horizontal planning documents, involving more than three appropriation managers in their implementation and thus they cover horizontal goals and objectives. They are approved by the government, and as such constitute tools that the centre of government can use to develop inter-ministerial action. This is a peculiarity in comparison to the development programmes, which are approved by the government but implemented through ministerial strategic action plans. The development of these formalised inter-ministerial programmes stresses the importance of cross-governmental collaboration and a whole-of-government approach to address complex problems. The inter-ministerial action plans thus constitute an important element of the strategic planning system. As one layer of the same system, it needs to be a consistent part of the entire system. On the one hand, it needs to reflect the provisions of the National Progress Programme 2014-2020 and, on the other hand, it needs to be incorporated into strategic ministerial action plans. In this way they can facilitate the implementation of strategic provisions at the ministerial level while creating the tools for the realisation of common goals across different ministries.

Next to the inter-ministerial action plans, each ministry also has its own strategic plan, as well as annual action plans, which are linked to the government priorities (Law on the Government, Ch. 8, Art. 29). The planning and implementation process of these plans is linked to the budget. The inter-ministerial action plans do not exclude other forms of inter-ministerial action. Two or more ministers can collaborate in other ways for co-ordination purposes. In these cases it is not mandatory for the respective ministries to identify specific financial resources and to link these forms of collaboration to ministerial strategic action plans.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Law on Public Administration (17 June 1999, No. VIII-1234, as last amended on 2 July 2013, No. XII-511), Ch. 2, Art. 10, provides the rules for "quality management of public administration". Monitoring is perceived as the "most important way of quality management". This includes giving "a timely notice of the changes in public administration to assess them and provide for measures of prevention of negative consequences." In order for the system to fulfil these expectations, several reforms have been carried out over the last few years. From 2009 to 2012 the government ran the "Improvement of Performance-based Management" project (VORT), with the aim to improve performance monitoring, accountability, functional analysis and decision impact assessment, and as such performance effectiveness of public administration institutions (Box 2.3).

Box 2.3. Improvement of Results-based Management (VORT): Project examples

Innovative policy evaluation

The evaluation has been designed as a systemic policy evaluation; the object of evaluation embraced various policy interventions including the implementation of Innovation Strategy 2010-2020. The main purpose was to evaluate the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the national innovation policy. Compliance of the policy goals and the needs and relevance of the logic of the model in dealing with the existing problems was the pivot point of the evaluation. In accordance with the evaluation results, policy improvement recommendations have been submitted. For instance, recommendations in the field of administrative capacities suggested improving the institutional setup, promoting results-based management principles, encouraging leadership and enhanced institutional capabilities, especially policy co-ordination capacities.

Functional review in the Ministry of the Interior governance area (vertical approach)

The Ministry of the Interior was chosen for a functional review as it is responsible for the co-ordination of the public administration reform. With this in mind, it was appropriate to test the functional review methodology in the institution that will co-ordinate the practical application of the methodology in the future. One goal of the review was to test the draft methodology and the second was to define and properly distribute functions among the ministry and the agencies subordinated to it (Information Technology and Communications Department under the Ministry of the Interior, Personal Documents Centre under the Ministry of the Interior, Migration Department under the Ministry of the Interior, etc.). After the pilot functional review was carried out, recommendations on the adjustment of the methodology were proposed, as well as recommendations concerning optimal distribution of functions of the agencies subordinated to the Ministry of the Interior.

Source: Information provided by the Office of the Government, March 2015.

The project was implemented in three phases. The first phase focused on improving the monitoring system of performance results related to strategic action plans. During this phase a methodology for improving performance indicators was developed as well as a general monitoring under the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance. The second phase centred on improving the functional analysis and the assessment of budget programmes. Functional reviews (pilots) were carried out in the area of e-government and in the Ministry of the Interior while programme evaluation pilots were carried out in the areas of rural development and information society. The third phase dealt with improving the system of drafting impact assessments. The results of the second and the third phase were tested in pilots, and civil servants were trained in the new methodologies. The first phase ultimately led to the introduction of the centralised Monitoring Information System (SIS) in 2011.

The SIS allows for the automatic delivery of performance data, can support cross-sectional analysis and offers a single access point for performance information on all planning documents. It is used by all of the institutions that are accountable to the government. Next to monitoring and evaluating the achievements of goals and targets, this system also makes it possible to link performance indicators to several documents and activities (e.g. poverty indicator in both Lithuania2030 and the Government Programme). The system is to be updated quarterly to allow for a timely reporting to the government. Achievement of the goals and targets is measured and made visible by

making use of a "traffic light system". In addition to the SIS, which captures indicators of national interest, Lithuania runs a separate monitoring system, especially for EU funds.

In November 2013, the Government Office started implementing a project to improve the monitoring and evaluation processes of strategic planning documents (Improvement of Strategic Planning Documents Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Processes, RESST). It is expected to be completed by August 2015. This project has three main goals:

- create and implement an integral system of performance indicators included in the strategic planning documents
- strengthen the programme evaluation system and capacities at government level
- strengthen capacities to use performance information.

The performance indicators system is supposed to serve as a tool for dealing with the large amount of performance indicators. Currently, the system encompasses more than 3 000 performance indicators. Furthermore, a library with best practice indicators is going to be established. Capacity building within the context of the RESST includes top manager coaching to strengthen evidence-based management; training for civil servants responsible for strategic management processes on the quality of performance indicators, performance data analysis and outcome-oriented assessments; and training for the Office of the Government staff with a focus on the linkage between performance information and budget negotiations and government priorities monitoring.

Open government policies: A priority for the centre of government

Whereas the previous section focused on a major CoG instrument, i.e. strategic planning, this section focuses on open government as a specific CoG policy. The government of Lithuania has committed itself to open government through its Open Government Partnership (OGP) membership and recognises the strategic importance of involving its citizens in policy-making processes.

Lithuania2030

As mentioned previously, Lithuania2030 is the most important policy document guiding the country's government and public administration. It sets out the vision for Lithuania, with open government being part and parcel of it. Lithuania2030 strives to promote "open and empowering governance". It recognises that the role of government should be one of a co-ordinator that delivers services together with its citizens, private sector, local communities and NGOs. Strengthening community self-governance and public participation in policy making beyond information and consultation are important aspects for Lithuania's development strategy. Accordingly, Lithuania2030 gives great importance to systematic and effective engagement of citizens in the political process and states that transparency and openness are important values to strive for (State Progress Council, 2012). Its elaboration and implementation, which incorporate a range of stakeholder engagement principles and practices (see Chapter 3), are co-ordinated by the Office of the Government.

Open Government Partnership action plans

Lithuania's official participation in the OGP is in line with the objectives of Lithuania2030. The country's OGP membership and institutional anchorage of the latter at the level of the Office of the Government reflects a high-level commitment to open

government, potentially creating visibility for open government both towards Lithuanian stakeholders and the international community. OGP members commit to a specific procedure and are as such expected to elaborate an OGP action plan in consultation with their citizens, conduct a self-assessment and participate in the OGP Independent Reporting Mechanisms (IRM) every two years. Table 2.1 shows the history of Lithuania's participation in the OGP since joining the initiative in 2011.

Table 2.1. **Lithuania's participation in the Open Government Partnership**

Membership	2011
1st OGP Action Plan	March 2012
Self-assessment	January 2014
Independent reporting mechanism	No independent reporting mechanism exists
2nd OGP Action Plan	April 2014

Source: OGP (2015b), "Lithuania", Open Government Partnership, www.opengovpartnership.org/country/lithuania.

At the time of writing, Lithuania was implementing its 2nd OGP Action Plan. In line with the OGP guidance, the action plan should set out a selection of the most ambitious and transformative national reform priorities, jointly identified by government and citizens in the area of open government. The OGP guidelines define the main characteristics of an action plan (OGP, 2015a):

- ambitious: stretching beyond existing reforms
- relevant: advancing transparency, accountability, participation, and/or technology and innovation
- SMART: specific, measurable, answerable, relevant and time-bound.

Commitments should address at least two out of five grand challenges (OGP, n.d.): improving public services; increasing public integrity; managing public resources more effectively; creating safer communities; and increasing corporate accountability.

Lithuania's 1st Action Plan was published in 2012 and focused on three main areas:

- access to information: increasing the accessibility of information held by the public and fostering centralised publishing of information
- public participation: establishment of principles and methods for public consultation and reporting on their outcomes; promotion of public participation in legislative processes and municipal affairs
- e-services: increase of e-services and involvement of the public in the improvement of services (OGP, 2015b).

These commitments are in line with the Public Governance Improvement Programme 2012-2020, the National Programme for Combating Corruption 2011-2014 and the Information Society Development Programme 2011-2019. However, the reported achievements contained in this 1st Action Plan proved to be a replica of existing commitments, hence denying the first OGP principle of being ambitious, that is stretching beyond existing reforms. In addition, by not including timelines or responsible agencies, commitments were also judged not to be SMART. This clearly hindered effective monitoring by the government as well as by citizens.

Lithuania submitted a self-assessment report of its 1st Action Plan in 2014. Analysing this report, it becomes clear that many of the activities mentioned in the self-assessment were conducted in the framework of other strategic plans of the government, and did not correspond to the specific activities that Lithuania committed to in the Action Plan. The 1st Action Plan, for example, had a commitment on access to information, aiming in this way to address the information shortage experienced by the public. Therefore it was planned, as an OGP commitment, to further clarify the reasons for not disclosing certain information. However, the actions listed in the self-assessment mostly concern the back-office of information exchange and general information about public institutions. As will be discussed below, information shortage and non-disclosure are critical issues for access to information in Lithuania. The implementation of the original commitment was thus of great importance. Similarly, the 1st Action Plan envisioned establishing principles and efficient methods for public consultation and publication of the outcomes of consultation processes. Yet, the actions mentioned in the self-assessment concern various participation measures that were undertaken. They neither include the development of a systematic consultation process nor the publication of results. Again, the implementation of this original commitment would enhance participation mechanisms in Lithuania.

In line with the OGP processes, the self-assessment report should be followed by an independent report elaborated through the OGP independent reporting mechanism (IRM) that assigns to a group of citizens or civil society organisations (CSOs; this varies considerably from country to country) the responsibility to verify the correct implementation of the commitments included in the OGP Action Plan and evaluate the process followed to elaborate the plan. However, in the case of Lithuania, no independent report was produced. According to the OGP Support Unit, this is due to the fact that the government did not react to the request asking for a self-assessment report to be submitted. It has to be noted that the self-assessment report was finally submitted with delay and that very little evidence was found that the OGP commitments were implemented (OGP, 2014).

The 2nd Action Plan somewhat enlarges the scope and includes commitments in the area of anti-corruption. In particular, the commitments include:

- public services: an inventory of services, monitoring of the quality of services and standards, and promotion of e-services
- public participation: consultation principles, publication of proposals received, enhancing the role of councils in different sectors and establishment of the NGO Council, participation at the local level, raising civic awareness, National Civil Society Fund
- access to information/open data: development of an open data supply model
- anti-corruption: transparency in decision making, access to draft legislation, anti-corruption education (OGP, 2015a).

As compared to the 1st Action Plan, the 2nd Action Plan spells out in more detail the commitments with their required actions, expected outcomes and the responsible agencies. This should help government and citizens to improve monitoring and reporting on the implementation of commitments. Furthermore, certain commitments of the 1st Action Plan were taken up again in the 2nd Action Plan as not all of these commitments had been implemented by that point. The Action Plan assembles the commitments of a wide range of ministries and institutions (for example the Ministry of the Interior, Information Society Development Committee, Ministry of Transport and

Communications, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Ministry of Education and Science, Special Investigation Service), reflecting the importance of open government principles across the government.

Lithuania's 2nd Action Plan is firmly rooted in the objectives of the Programme of the Government of 2012-2016. The detailed actions included in the plan are based on, or identical to, those in other strategic documents including: Lithuania2030, Public Governance Improvement Programme 2012-2020, Strategic Activities Plan 2014-2016 of the Ministry of Interior, Action Plan 2013-2015 of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, National Education Strategy 2013-2022, Strategic Action Plan of the Ministry of Education for 2014-2016, Strategic Action Plan of the Ministry of Transport for 2014-2016, Information Society Development Inter-institutional Implementation Plan 2011-2019, Information Society Development Programme 2014-2020 (Lithuanian Digital Agenda) and the National Anti-Corruption Programme 2011-2014.

As such, the 2nd Action Plan is again, like the first, made up of existing initiatives. To some extent, this can be seen from a positive angle as showing that open government is part of the overall, core government programme and not a separate initiative. When OGP commitments are part of already existing plans (Lithuania is not the only OGP country that has used this approach), their implementation can be easier because the financial resources, responsible institutions and monitoring measures are already in place.

However, the OGP mantra, and its recognised value added, is to push government and citizens to create a partnership based on the idea that by building on each other's strengths, more ambitious commitments can be created. Given that this has not been the case for Lithuania, civil society organisations such as Transparency International Lithuania questioned the value-added of OGP participation.

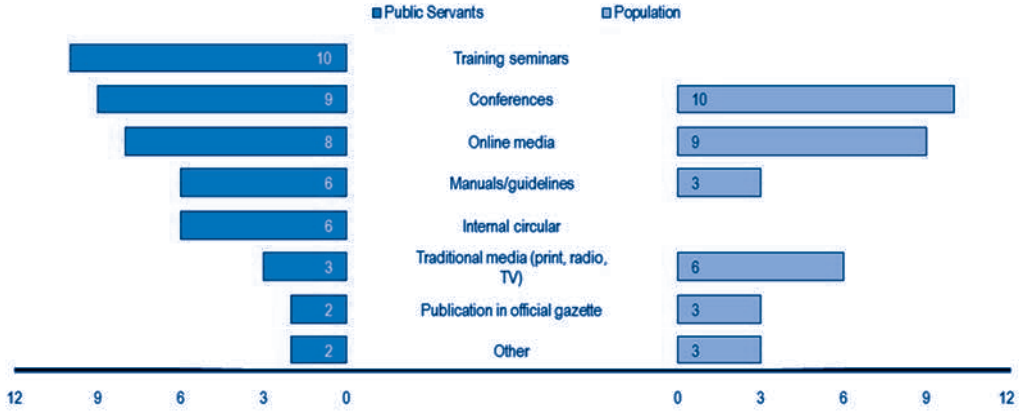
In addition, including open government activities in the Action Plan, which are incorporated in other government strategies, does not imply that public officials – including in sectorial ministries – fully understand what open government is about, how they can promote a culture of open government and how their own sector priorities are linked to the overall open government approach at the centre of government. Overall awareness of the strategic importance of open government and the OGP process remains, in fact, limited. As OECD research on open government in Latin America has shown (Figure 2.4), open government awareness (both amongst public servants and citizens) can be promoted through the active use of a broad range of communication mechanisms, which should be considered a priority for Lithuania to make the most out of its participation in the OGP.

Opportunities to strengthen the centre of government

As illustrated in previous sections, Lithuania has carried out a substantive CoG reform agenda over the last decade, with a particular focus on strategic planning and a clear lead for the Office of the Government. Whereas substantial progress has been made in this area (e.g. sound legal, institutional and policy framework), important challenges remain. Rauleckas et al. (2013) indicate, for instance, that a focus on outcomes and results is among the top three reform trends in the senior executive's policy area according to the assessment of senior civil servants. Gains in policy effectiveness and cost efficiency have been limited according to the same respondents. One can expect major gains if outcome orientation is fully operational across the public sector. As the

recent VORT and RESST projects illustrate, the government is aware of some of these challenges and has launched a number of initiatives to curb them.

Figure 2.4. **Communication mechanisms to inform on open government reforms**



Source: OECD (2014d), *Open Government in Latin America*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264223639-en.

Box 2.4. **OECD Surveys on Open Government**

The OECD is at the forefront of analysing, comparing and measuring impact of open government policies worldwide. The first Survey on Open Government focused on 11 Latin American countries that are OGP members. The OECD Public Governance Review *Open Government in Latin America* offers comparative analysis on these countries in three open government areas: open government strategies, access to information and open data.

In 2015, at the meeting of the Public Governance Committee, the OECD launched the draft Survey on Open Government Co-ordination and Citizens' Participation in the Policy Cycle to collect better data and information on the design, implementation and impact of open government policies and the involvement of citizens and civil society in the policy cycle. It will contribute to a better understanding of common challenges and trends in order to reinforce the transparency and accountability of the public sector. Lithuania is kindly invited to participate in this survey.

Source: OECD (2014d), *Open Government in Latin America*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264223639-en.

In order to further enhance the successful roll-out of cross-government performance-based management and strong policy evaluation – including remediating policy decisions, where appropriate – the system would benefit from a number of initiatives, some of which are currently already on the government's radar. They include:

- (further) downsizing of the number of policy goals in order to make the planning and associated monitoring and evaluation framework "digestible"
- appropriate incentives for achieving goals at individual and organisational level
- providing visibility across government (and towards citizens) of good practices and institutional champions
- enhanced capacities to process the (abundantly) available information

- foster dialogue between the political level and the administration about achievement or non-achievement of policy goals
- further strengthen inter-ministerial and inter-institutional collaboration and performance – particularly challenging in a context of coalition governments combined with a history of independent ministries (based on Nakrošis, 2008; Rauleckas et al., 2013; Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2014b; interviews).

In addition, a shift from a primary focus on planning towards a major focus on performance (dialogue), also requires a different *modus operandi* of the Office of the Government, with more emphasis on two-way communication, rather than top-down planning guidance.

Box 2.5, which covers the process of performance dialogue in the US federal government, provides an example of how to move from strategic planning towards a stronger focus on performance management, combining elements of dialogue, incentives, capacity building, etc. Such a comprehensive approach could assist Lithuania in moving beyond an approach that is primarily oriented towards planning and reporting compliance to a focus on the strategic use of performance data for decision making.

Box 2.5. **Performance dialogue in the US federal government**

The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) was introduced in 1993 with the aim to foster the use of performance information among federal managers. However, its success remained limited. While it succeeded in introducing a stable performance planning and reporting framework, and putting performance center stage, it did not succeed sufficiently enough in involving leadership and focusing on prioritisation or management. Consequently, the Bush administration introduced the Performance Assessment Rating Tool (PART; 2003-08), hoping to be able to overcome the shortcomings of the GPRA. Nevertheless, although PART focused more on programmes, and more data and information have been produced in the scope of these programmes, the use of the produced information remained limited.

The GPRA Modernisation Act was adopted in 2010 (enacted in 2011). It established performance improvement roles and responsibilities across all levels of government, a goal framework and performance reviews, and modernised performance reporting.

Regarding the performance responsibilities, a major innovation has been the establishment of a full-time Performance Improvement Council, which advances and expands the practice of performance management and improvement, by supporting the achievement of cross-agency and agency priority goals, as well as by creating opportunities for best practice exchange and capacity building.

The established goal framework consists of three groups of goals:

- The federal cross-agency priority goals (15 in total, at the time of writing), which are set by the President every four years, and reviewed quarterly by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and by the Performance Improvement Council. These goals are meant to increase the co-ordination on outcomes that cut across multiple agencies, and focus on the impact through improved implementation.
- The agency priority goals (96 in total, at the time of writing), set by the agency heads every two years and reviewed quarterly by the respective agency's chief operating officer and the performance improvement officer, drive progress on near-term, implementation-focused priorities. They do not reflect every priority, but complement the broader set of goals included in the agency's strategic plan.

Box 2.5. **Performance dialogue in the US federal government** (*cont.*)

- The strategic goals and objectives (303 in total, at the time of writing), set every four years and reviewed strategically on an annual basis by agencies and the OMB, are supported by multiple strategies, programmes and performance indicators. The strategic objectives break down the broad strategic goals of an agency. There are about 10-30 strategic objectives for each major agency.

Performance assessment and reporting is essential for improving the usefulness of performance and programme information. The OMB states in its analytical perspectives for the fiscal year 2011: "The ultimate test of an effective performance management system is whether it is used, not the number of goals and measures produced" (OMB, 2010: 73) Thus, in the scope of the GPRA Modernisation Act, the performance information of agencies is put on a central website[1] with quarterly updates on priority goals, and annual updates on all goals. Furthermore, a government-wide list of programmes is set up, which is updated annually.

In addition, the review of the strategic goals and objectives synthesise available performance information and evidence to inform budget, legislative and management decisions. They are conducted by the agencies for each "strategic objective" in an agency's strategic plan. The reviews are designed to help meet the needs of leadership in identifying opportunities for reform proposals, executive actions, communication opportunities, etc. Furthermore, they synthesise a broad evidence and information base (indicators, evaluations, risk management, partner contributions, external factors, research, etc.) and prioritise findings for decision making. In addition, they make meaningful distinctions in performance, such as identifying areas of noteworthy progress and significant challenges. Finally, they incentivise organisations to develop a culture focused on learning and improving performance. Thus, they are both backward-looking, insofar as they evaluate, measure and report, which allows for learning and innovation, and forward-looking, insofar as they address improvement areas, risks and opportunities. Detailed agency guidance on the process is made available through www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars_a11_current_year_a11_toc (Part 6).

These systematic and strategic goal-setting, reviewing and reporting mechanisms thus allow for better informed decision making and learning, which ultimately will improve outcomes and productivity. In more practical terms, some general lessons agencies have already learnt from this approach are:

- Breaking down silos: many agencies reported that the Strategic Review was the first time certain programmes met to discuss cross-cutting, strategic issues.
- Identifying evidence gaps: agencies were able to identify strategic objectives with relatively weak evidence and thus identify areas for improving metrics.
- Aligning activities to the strategic plan: agencies were able to begin aligning activities directly with strategic goals and objectives.
- Engagement: most agencies' performance staff were interested and engaged in finding value from strategic reviews. For instance, over 100 agency staff attended a strategic planning summit in March 2013, over 100 agency staff attended strategic review summits in both February and July 2014, and one performance improvement officer stated "it was the first time in 20 years that their programme staff had asked to participate in a performance management effort at the agency".

1. www.performance.gov.

Sources: Moynihan, D.P. and S. Lavertu (2012), "Does involvement in performance reforms encourage performance information use? Evaluating GPRA and PART", *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 72, No. 4, pp. 592-602; Mirza, A. (2014), "Improving government performance in the US", presentation made at Portugal-OECD seminar on "Strengthening ESIF Policy Indicators", Lisbon, 27-28 October 2014.

Next to cross-governmental strategic planning and performance management as important CoG instruments, the previous sections also discussed open government as a cross-government policy steered by the CoG. Its institutional embeddedness at the level of the Office of the Government is promising in terms of high-level commitment, and thus fulfils an important criterion to facilitate successful co-ordination of open government policies and practices across government. However, the country's OGP experience illustrates that, for the time being, Lithuania has not exploited the full potential of the high-level institutional anchorage of open government policies to showcase CoG vision, leadership and innovation in this area and promote open government across the whole of government.

Though the importance of a learning process has to be acknowledged (most countries display some learning curve moving from their first to their second OGP action plans in terms of goal setting, monitoring and evaluation of commitments, etc.), some critical observations about Lithuania's OGP experience can be formulated. These observations could subsequently be used to further fine-tune Lithuania's open government policy and practices.

The 1st and 2nd Action Plans show important differences. Whereas the 1st Action Plan was fairly ambitious in terms of goal setting (in line with the OGP guideline to stretch the OGP commitment beyond existing reforms), the 2nd Action Plan was primarily a copy-paste exercise of existing open government initiatives from other government strategies and plans. At the same time, the 1st Action Plan's goals were formulated vaguely, lacking time-bound specifications and responsible agencies – all of which hindered effective monitoring. In addition, the self-assessment report for the 1st Action Plan suffered from disconnection with the initial planning (i.e. reporting on activities different from those encompassed in the action plan). Hence, whereas the 1st Action Plan may primarily fall short in terms of accountability because of lack of clear goals (and hence, result orientation) combined with delayed formal reporting, the 2nd Action Plan may weaken the potential strategic leverage of the OGP membership as its goals are the existing government goals and therefore are not likely to add particular value.

Additional elements which emerged in interviews during the review process, pointing to the challenges that Lithuania is facing in the area of open government, include the importance of ensuring that co-ordination and consultation are not only part of the planning phase, but also of the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases. The current working group responsible for monitoring the OGP implementation process is, for instance, solely composed of government representatives – no other stakeholders are involved. Finally, an enhanced exchange within government on open government policies and practices would also foster the entrenchment of the open government approach in other government-wide policies (e.g. competency framework for civil servants). It would facilitate acknowledging existing good practices in the field of open government and give more visibility to these practices inside and outside of government.

Recommendations

This chapter analysed strategic planning as a key CoG instrument and open government as an important CoG policy – both led by the Office of the Government as a key CoG actor. Whereas strategic planning (and performance management as an associated goal) has been on the agenda for more than a decade, open government is still

a fairly new area of work for the Office of the Government. In order to strengthen both fields of work, the following areas for further consideration can be formulated:

- Strengthen the strategic use of performance data as this can support openness, transparency and accountability of the public sector. This would require:
  - Further streamlining the number of plans and policy goals to make planning, monitoring and evaluation "digestible" and facilitate a focus on achieving impact.
  - Enhancing the capacity to process, use and communicate performance information across government (including on open government).
  - Rebalancing the CoG's engagement with other institutions by emphasising its role to facilitate the exchange and dialogue across government and with non-state stakeholders, rather than primarily focusing on top-down communication.
- Take full advantage of the OGP membership and process to enhance the discussion on open government across government and with non-state actors in order to develop a shared vision. In other words, fully exploit the potential for the CoG to foster a joint vision on open government across governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, to take the lead in fostering a combined rules-based (direction, oversight and enforcement) and values-based (culture of openness, integrity and collaboration) approach to open government, and to encourage innovation in the field of open government. For that purpose, it is worthwhile debating:
  - What open government means for Lithuania.
  - How open government relates to the main strategic country priorities and policy documents.
  - How open government can be implemented in practice at the national and local level, as well as through sector policies.
  - How the country's Open Government Partnership membership can facilitate in-country and international exchange on open government policies and practices.
- Provide visibility across government (and towards citizens) of existing open government good practices and institutional champions. Visibility could be strengthened through the use of websites, awards, exchange platforms of good practices, seed money for innovative practices, etc., so as to inspire institutions and civil servants to explore new practices, analyse and share lessons learnt, and agree upon "what works".

Notes

1. Concept for the Improvement of the Framework of the Executive System of the State, www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=382452&p_tr2=2.

2. This section is primarily based on presentations made by the Office of the Government and the Ministry of the Interior during the first fact-finding mission in October 2014.

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Chapter 3.

Citizens' engagement as a crucial open government practice in Lithuania

This chapter reviews and discusses citizens' engagement in policy making and service delivery from an open government perspective. It presents and assesses its legal and policy framework and analyses the status of civil society and the culture of civic engagement in the country as a basis for successful open government policies. It then focuses on reviewing the practices of citizens' consultation and participation by looking at their implementation and impact, and recommends ways in which the government can enhance their inclusiveness and effectiveness in contributing to the policy-making cycle.

The reestablishment of Lithuania's independence and the adoption of the Constitution – which stipulates that Lithuania is a democratic republic "striving for an open, just and harmonious civil society and state under the rule of law" (preamble) – set the preconditions to develop a sound open government policy framework and an active engagement of citizens in the policy-making cycle. While civil protests characterised Lithuania's path to independence in the years 1988-91, popular mobilisation has ever since significantly decreased in the country, as is the case for many other post-Soviet states (Ekiert and Foa, 2011). Nevertheless, Lithuania has gradually embarked upon a path to establish an enabling legal, institutional and policy framework for citizens' participation over the last decades. Nowadays, the country needs to make an extra step to firmly establish openness and citizens' engagement as the default options for policy making and service delivery.

The current Lithuanian government has recognised the importance of building an open government that involves its citizens to address socio-economic challenges. Its guiding vision, Lithuania2030, sets out smart governance and smart society among its priority goals. Smart governance refers to governance that is open and participatory, promoting access to information, public consultation and participation in decision making. Smart society reflects the aim for a society that is open, creative and responsible, including an energetic civil society and a society that encompasses Lithuanians living abroad (State Progress Council, 2012). This chapter discusses how citizens' engagement can contribute to achieve these goals.

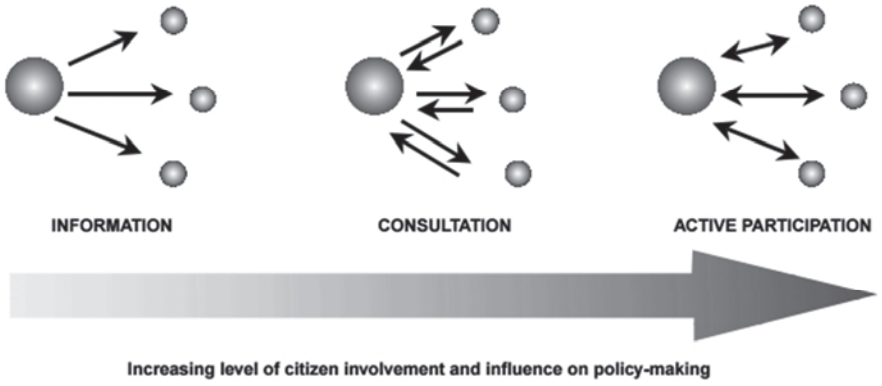
OECD approach to citizens' engagement

The OECD, together with its member countries, has been promoting open government reforms for more than a decade. The OECD defines open government as "the transparency of government actions, the accessibility of government services and information, and the responsiveness of government to new ideas, demands and needs" (OECD, 2005). Citizens' engagement, which is an inherent part of open government, refers to the idea that, to fully reap the benefits of active interaction with their population, governments should treat them as partners when providing information, consulting with or engaging them. These relationships are defined by the OECD as follows (OECD, 2001):

- Information is a one-way relationship in which government produces and delivers information to be used by citizens. It covers both "passive" access to information upon citizens' demands and "active" measures by government to disseminate information reaching them. Examples include access to public records, official gazettes and government websites.
- Consultation is a two-way relationship in which citizens provide feedback to government. It is based on the prior definition by government of the issues on which citizens' views are being sought and require provision of information. Governments define the issues for consultation, set the questions and manage the process, while citizens are invited to contribute their views and opinions. Examples include public opinion surveys and comments on draft legislation.
- Active participation is a relationship based on a partnership with government, in which citizens actively engage in defining the process and content of policy making. It acknowledges equal standing for citizens in setting the agenda, proposing policy options and shaping the policy dialogue – although the

responsibility for the final decision or policy formulation rests with the government. Examples include consensus conferences and citizens' juries.

Figure 3.1. **Defining information, consultation and active participation**



Source: OECD (2001), *Citizens as Partners: Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy Making*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264195561-en.

OECD analysis and data collection show that providing information to citizens and actively engaging them can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public administrations and increase the transparency and accountability of the public sector as a whole. In particular, availability of information fosters public scrutiny whereas through consultations, governments can receive new ideas and feedback from citizens on policies and services. Active participation promotes co-creation of policies and services enhancing both their quality and people's compliance. Overall, citizens' engagement (i.e. as the combination of information, consultation and active participation initiatives) has positive effects on people's trust in government and on the quality of a country's democratic life and has the potential to promote socio-economic development and generate the conditions for inclusive growth. Yet, for citizens' engagement to have these positive effects, and measurable impacts to be visible, it is important that citizen engagement is conducted following certain criteria. The OECD Principles for Open and Inclusive Policy Making (see Box 1.1 in Chapter 1) support countries in designing and implementing an effective framework for citizens' engagement and are based on concrete good practices implemented by OECD member countries. In particular, the principles first highlight the importance of co-ordination of engagement initiatives across the whole of government in order to avoid consultation fatigue and to create a coherent and systematic approach. Second, the principles stress the key role of accountability mechanisms, which implies reporting back to citizens about the impact of their inputs. Third, the role of monitoring and evaluation of participation initiatives to capture their effectiveness and outcomes is also underlined and, lastly, the principles emphasise the relevance of promoting an active citizenship that is capable of engaging with the government.

When designing and implementing citizen engagement initiatives it is equally important to keep in mind their specific objective to ensure that they are not implemented simply to comply with laws or regulations, but actually achieve the desired goals. Engagement practices can be successfully utilised to improve the performance of governments for the benefit of their citizens. Box 3.1 outlines typical expected benefits of consultation in the field of regulatory and legislative drafting processes in more detail.

These include improved compliance with legal provisions based on increased legal literacy and the anticipation of possible conflicts.

Box 3.1. **Benefits of consultation**

- Transparency and access to information: Public consultation can increase the transparency of the rule-making process because stakeholders have access to the process itself, as well as to timely and relevant information about the proposed legislation. Consultation therefore contributes to equal access to information.
- Added value: The public is a rich source of instant and updated information. It is the driver of innovation, and public consultation enables policy makers to make use of the public's precious experience and knowledge.
- Alienation and connectivity: Public engagement in rule making can raise support for regulations, as citizens feel connected to the policy-making process. Disenchantment with politics bears the risk of declining support for reform, and for undermining public confidence and trust in national political institutions.
- Increased compliance: Engaging the public and striving for consensus can help to increase the social acceptance of regulations. It can contribute to greater compliance and, therefore, reduce enforcement costs.
- Regulatory literacy: Stakeholders will learn about the complexities of setting regulations, finding compromises and trade-offs. Open government illustrates to the public the constraints and limitations faced by authorities. Public consultation therefore promotes public education on rule making, and provides stakeholders with a chance to increase their regulatory literacy.
- Anticipating the impact: Public consultation is necessary to anticipate the likely impact of the regulation on stakeholders, contemplate unintended consequences and consider alternatives to the proposed regulatory option.
- Managing conflict: Public consultation provides a mechanism to manage conflicts at an early stage. Engaging the public in rule making is one tool for mediating among various interests in society and increasing awareness of compromises.
- Pursued public interest: Quality regulations are based on public interest. Yet, public interest is not static – but a dynamic concept that needs to be continuously defined. Naturally, the definition and pursuit of public interest can only take place through dialogue with the public.

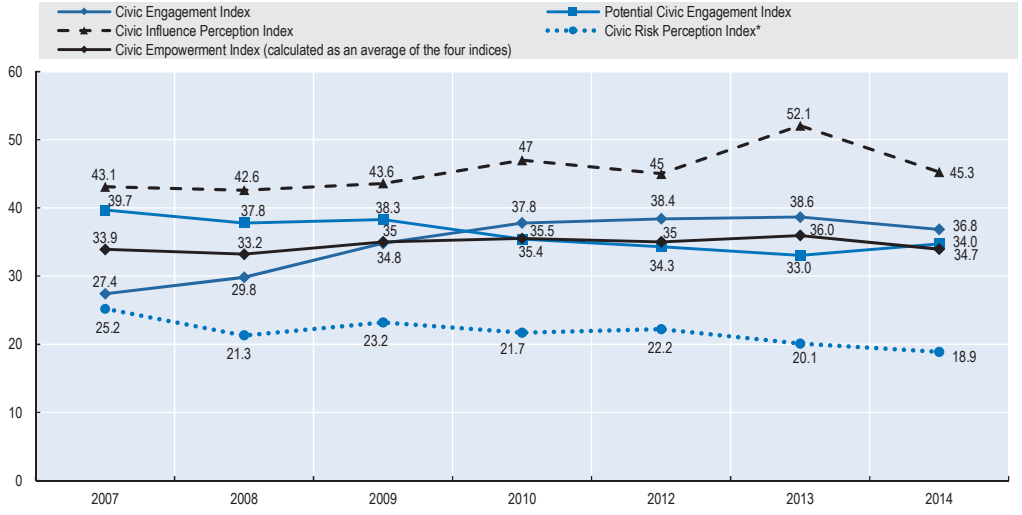
Source: OECD (2012), "Regulatory consultation: A MENA-OECD practitioners' guide for engaging stakeholders in the rule-making process", OECD, Paris.

Civil society engagement in Lithuania: Setting the scene

Lithuania has been generally successful in building a democratic state that guarantees civil liberties, political rights and freedoms – an important condition to enable civil society to strive and citizens to participate in the political process (Cameron, 2007; Skaaning, 2006). This is confirmed by indicators such as Freedom House and the Economist Intelligence Unit's *Democracy Index*, which attributes Lithuania with a score of 9.58/10 for its electoral process and 9.71/10 for its civil liberties (Freedom House, 2014; Economist Intelligence Unit, 2014). At the same time, the Economist Intelligence Unit's *Democracy Index* points to challenges in the area of civic engagement with far

lower scores on political participation (6.11) and political culture (6.25). The Civic Empowerment Index developed by the Lithuanian Organisation Civitas (published by the Civil Society Institute) with a score of 34/100 in 2014 confirms limited civic engagement. In its strategic vision Lithuania2030, the government – based on the index – acknowledges that even though civic empowerment has improved, it is still relatively limited. The index measures through an annual survey, civic activity since 2007. It also looks at civil society's perception of its influence and of the risks potentially associated with civic activity (Civil Society Institute, 2015; State Progress Council, 2012).

Figure 3.2. **Civic Empowerment Index 2007-14**



Note: * Higher index values indicate that different risks related to civic engagement are seen by citizens as unlikely or very unlikely.

Source: Civil Society Institute (2015), Civic Empowerment Index 2014, www.civitas.lt/lt/?pid=74&id=78.

Their research shows that engagement of the general public in policy making faces several challenges, including a generalised disbelief that it can influence policy making and that collective action can make a difference. In addition, Lithuanians associate certain risks with civic engagement, which include job loss, physical harassment or threat, having a bad reputation or being seen as selfish.

Civil unrest characterised Lithuania's path to independence in the years 1988-91. Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets to protest against Soviet rule and for independence. Since then, popular mobilisation has decreased in Lithuania, as in other post-Soviet countries. Government officials cited the moderate reaction of the people to the government's policies following the financial crisis in 2007/08 to illustrate the current political culture in the country. At the time, the government, in agreement with trade unions, cut public spending by 30% which did not ignite popular protest.

According to the Civic Empowerment Index 2014, the most popular civic activities in Lithuania are donating (56%), environment cleaning actions (50%) and community activities (33%), while getting in touch with public servants, demonstrating, signing petitions, boycotting and buying ethical goods are the least popular, with a participation rate of around 5-10% (Civil Society Institute, 2015). This is in line with the finding that protest campaigns are seen as a last resort only in the event of significant impact on living conditions and a threat to the political regime (Civil Society Institute, n.d.).

Changing the political culture is a challenge that Lithuania share with other former Soviet countries (Pop-Eleches and Tucker, 2013). Even though civic organisations and, in particular, trade unions existed under the Soviet regime, participation in these was often mandatory and regulated by the state. Thus, after independence a deficit of independent civic organisations and distrust in the public sphere characterised the context for civic engagement (Pop-Eleches and Tucker, 2013). Since then, there has been a rise in civil society organisations but the legacy of the Soviet regime continues to influence the political culture and scepticism to engage remains an issue, as interviews for this Review confirm.

Even though there has been a steady increase in the number of civil society organisations since independence, the proportion of the population involved in social activities remains rather stable. In 2014, around 8.9% of the population participated in societal movements and 8.2% in religious associations (Civil Society Institute, 2015). According to 2012 data of the National Register, around 24 000 civil society organisations (CSOs) are registered in Lithuania but it is estimated that only half of them are active. These CSOs include foundations, professional and business associations, hospitals, schools, local community organisations and other non-profits. Most of the organisations operate at the local level and are predominantly involved in cultural activities rather than in activities that involve the government (USAid, 2012). It also appears that CSOs are facing several challenges, including a lack of stable funding, limited professionally skilled staff and high reporting requirements from donors (USAid, 2012).

The CSO landscape is pluralistic with diverse opinions represented. An organisation like the Lithuanian Non-Governmental Organisation Information and Support Centre (NISC; Box 3.2) tries to act as an umbrella organisation, though not all major non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are part of this structure, and it attempts to improve knowledge about the Lithuanian NGO sector and to co-ordinate the National NGO Coalition (NISC, 2015). Still, public institutions find it difficult to engage with the third sector as a whole due to a still important degree of fragmentation, which results in a limited number of CSOs often invited for consultation.

A conducive legal framework for citizens' engagement

Constitution

The Constitution of 1992 states that Lithuania is a democratic republic (Article 1), which guarantees civil liberties and participation of citizens in political affairs. In particular, the Constitution makes explicit reference to the following rights: freedom of expression (Article 25); the right to participate directly and through elected representatives; the right to criticise the work of the state while prosecution of criticism is forbidden; the right to petition (Article 33); the right to form political parties, societies, associations (Article 35) and trade unions (Article 50); and the right of legislative initiative (Article 68). The provisions include the right to complain about abuse of authority and the creation of the Seimas Ombudsman (Article 73). Furthermore, the Constitution creates the possibility for referendum on the most significant issues concerning the life of the state and nation or when proposed by at least 300 000 citizens. Lithuania's EU membership, for example, was submitted to referendum. Since 1990, 11 referenda have been held.

Box 3.2. **The Non-Governmental Organisation Information and Support Centre (NISC)**

The NISC is a non-governmental organisation that was established in 1995 by the Open Society Fund Lithuania (OSF) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Its strategic goals are:

- Strengthening of the NGO sector (organisations): dissemination of information, consulting, training, methodological assistance, databases, various conferences and forums.
- Development and strengthening of NGO coalitions: development of NGO coalitions in various public policy areas, expansion of the NGO network, development of a national organisation uniting NGOs, development of an accountability system for the coalitions.
- Strengthening of co-operation between NGOs and the government: monitoring legal regulation pertaining to NGO activities, preparation of law proposals for the Seimas and the government, improvement of the 2% income tax donation mechanism, improvement of NGO funding systems at the national and municipal levels, development of an NGO representation mechanism.
- Improvement of NGO environments: increasing awareness of NGOs in society, development of the online bulletin *The Third Sector*, dissemination of information about Lithuanian NGOs in national and international publications, administration and renewal of the NISC website, creating a positive image for the NGO sector.
- Development of volunteer work traditions: preparing and implementing a proposal for the legal regulation of voluntary work, creating conditions that could ensure the systematic compensation and execution of voluntary work, creating greater societal awareness about voluntary work.

Source: NISC (2015), Non-Governmental Organisation Information and Support Centre website, www.3sektorius.lt/en.

Box 3.3. **Seimas Ombudsmen**

In line with most OECD countries, Lithuania established an Ombudsman Office based on its constitutional provision and the Law on the Seimas Ombudsmen (1998). The purpose of the Ombudsmen is to "protect a person's right to good public administration securing human rights and freedoms, to supervise fulfilment by state authorities of their duty to properly serve the people" (Article 3). This independent institution, which is accountable to the Seimas (parliament), thus watches over the activities of the public administration. It investigates complaints addressed to it by citizens or by members of the Seimas and can open an investigation on its own initiative (for example based on reports by the mass media). The activities of the President, the members of the Seimas, the Prime Minister, the government, the State Controller and the judges of the Constitutional Court or other courts and municipal councils are, however, outside of its jurisdiction. Currently, the Ombudsmen is aiming to become also a national human rights institution, as there is no institution responsible for monitoring human rights in Lithuania.

In 2013, the Seimas Ombudsmen received 1 846 new complaints and initiated 22 investigations itself. Of these complaints, 1 382 were against officials of state institutions and 628 against officials of municipal institutions (164 complaints related to both). Of the closed complaints, approximately half were refused and half were investigated on the merits. Twenty-two percent of investigations against state officials and 42% of complaints against municipal institutions were declared justified. In 2013, the Ombudsmen provided 903 recommendations.

Box 3.3. **Seimas Ombudsmen** (*cont.*)

Table 3.1. **Ten institutions against which the largest number of complaints were received in 2013**

	Institution	Number of complaints received	Number of complaints refused to be investigated	Number of complaints investigated on the merits
1	Vilnius City Municipality	213	85	119
2	Lukiškės Remand Prison – Closed Prison	103	47	50
3	Pravieniškės Correction House – Open Prison Colony	102	77	37
4	National Land Service under the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania	75	29	37
5	Vilnius Correction House	65	36	30
6	Kaunas City Municipality	64	33	40
7	Central Prison Hospital	57	24	32
8	Alytus Correction House	39	21	19
9	Marijampolė Correction House	35	20	18
10	Vilnius District Municipality	33	13	16

Table 3.2. **Review of investigations of complaints by ministry, institutions and agencies attributed to its management sphere**

Ministry, institutions and agencies attributed to its management sphere	Received complaints	Investigations refused	Investigated on the merits	Decisions made	Justified complaints	Dismissed complaints	Investigation discontinued	Recommendations provided
Environment	93	33	44	49	25	13	11	72
Energy	14	4	7	8	3	2	3	7
Finance	29	18	9	10	4	4	2	2
National Defence	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Culture	6	3	1	1	1	0	0	3
Social Security and Labour	51	21	23	23	8	8	7	27
Communications	9	3	7	8	1	5	2	3
Health	37	14	17	20	9	8	3	24
Education and Science	6	5	3	4	2	1	1	4
Justice	565	292	270	380	44	280	56	62
Economy	7	4	3	5	1	1	3	5
Foreign Affairs	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	2
Interior	127	58	54	59	10	42	7	11
Agriculture	241	111	109	131	46	37	48	145

Openness about the activities of the Seimas Ombudsmen and abuse of office by the public administration is enshrined in its law. The Seimas Ombudsmen publishes its annual report as well as the statements on complaints, which include the complaint and its analysis on its official website. The state or municipal institutions which are concerned are required to publish the Ombudsmen's recommendations on their own website. This does, however, not yet occur in all cases.

Source: Seimas Ombudsmen (2013), "Summary of the annual report of 2013 on the activity of the Seimas Ombudsmen", www.lrski.lt/images/dokumentai/SK%20ataskaita%20EN.pdf accessed (20 March 2015).

Legal framework for non-governmental organisations

From a legal perspective, NGOs are clearly defined only since 2013. The Law on Development of Non-Governmental Organisations (2013) states that an NGO "shall mean a public legal entity, independent from state and municipal institutions and agencies, which acts on a voluntary basis for the benefit of society or its group, and which does not have the aim to seek political power or purely religious goals" (Article 2). The law sets out as one of its main aims to foster the development of NGOs and their engagement with state and municipal institutions, an important step to promote civic empowerment. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour is responsible for the formulation, implementation, and co-ordination of an NGO development policy and municipal institutions for NGO development at the local level. Engagement of NGOs shall include:

- providing information on activity and co-operation policies of state and municipal institutions
- consulting with NGOs
- financing NGOs' programmes, projects and initiatives.

Box 3.4. **Promoting the third sector in Estonia**

Like Lithuania, Estonia regained its independence in the early 1990s. All democratic institutions and practices had to be reinstituted and a third sector had to be established. The government developed a number of instruments and practices to ensure inclusive policy making. They included:

- a Civic Society Development Plan 2011-2014
- a Citizen Engagement Good Practice Guide (2011)
- joining the Open Government Partnership (2011)
- e-Estonia: an online portal with a variety of public services and information
- e-law: an online portal about all legislative drafts and related documents in the legislative procedure
- participate.ee: a platform for citizens to bring forward new ideas, comment on draft laws, sign petitions and collect signatures for a new draft or proposal
- common web platform for local governments which includes e-tools for citizen engagement.

Support structures for the sector include:

- a third sector fund: builds third sector capacity, finances projects, co-ordinates co-operation between national level trusteeships and networks that act in public interests
- EAS Enterprise Estonia: regional development centres that provide free information, consultation, third-sector capacity building at the local level
- Local Initiative Programme: training and support on how to start projects.

Source: Sepper, M.-L. (2014), "Citizen and NGO engagement in policy making – Estonian experience", presentation, 19 November, Amman, Jordan.

The law creates a national NGO Council as well as municipal NGO councils acting as advisory bodies. The national NGO Council has the following tasks:

- submit proposals regarding the priorities of an NGO development policy
- submit proposals for the funding priorities of programmes for NGOs
- publish a report on the state of NGOs in Lithuania
- other functions as set out in the regulation.

The NGO Council is composed of 20 members:

- 9 state institutions
- 1 representative of the Association of Local Authorities
- 10 representatives of NGOs.

These NGO councils have been created with the purpose of facilitating the interaction between the government and civil society. However, the national NGO Council was only created in summer 2014 and held its first meeting on 11 February 2015 (Ministry of Social Security and Labour, 2015). The effectiveness of the council can therefore not yet be evaluated. However, its establishment was a long process and several NGOs, such as Transparency International Lithuania, criticised the unclear selection procedures of its members. Nevertheless, the national council, as well as the municipal ones, represents a much needed opportunity to strengthen engagement with state institutions and foster NGO development.

Access to information

Access to information – both through the proactive release of information and the passive release of information – is a key pillar of open government policies and important to foster informed engagement of citizens as well as public scrutiny. The Law on the Provision of Information to the Public (adopted in 1996) and the Law on the Right to Obtain Information from State and Municipal Agencies (2000) guarantee access to the information of the public sector and outline the procedure to collect and disseminate this information. In addition, Lithuania has signed the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents (2015) and the UN Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (2015).

The law guarantees the right to obtain information, to reuse it for commercial and non-commercial reasons and to criticise the state. This right applies to citizens and legal persons of Lithuania and states of the European Economic Area as well as to foreign nationals with a residence permit. In 71% of OECD countries (of those that participated in the 2011 OECD survey), there is no legal restriction concerning the status of applicants (OECD, 2011a). Applicants have to provide their name and address, thus the procedure does not permit anonymous information requests. Information must be provided within 20 days, in line with most OECD countries (OECD, 2011a). Disseminators of public information and journalists have the right to receive the information within one day if it does not require the production of additional data, and if it does, within one week (Article 6.4 of the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public).

In accordance with good practices of OECD countries, the provision to obtain information in Lithuania refers to all levels of the state, yet it excludes the legislative

branch; the latter being the case in about half of OECD countries (OECD, 2011a). In addition, Lithuania's law includes companies and institutions providing services, state and municipal enterprises, public institutions at least partly owned by the state or by municipalities, and public and private companies where the state or municipalities hold 50% of the vote in the meeting of shareholders.

Access to information is guaranteed, except when it may be restricted by law to protect Lithuania's state security, territorial integrity, public order, constitutional system, impartiality of judicial authority, public health and morality, private life and dignity (Article 3.4 of the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public). These exceptions are similar to practices in OECD countries (OECD, 2011a). Information may also not be provided if it pertains to state, professional, commercial and bank secrets (Article 18.1 of the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public). An institution may also refuse to provide information if it requires work and time effort that is considered disproportionately high (Article 16.2.1 of the Law on the Right to Obtain Information from State and Municipal Agencies). The law does not mention harm test or public interest to override exceptions in contrast to most OECD countries (Global Right to Information Rating, n.d.).

Any refusal must be justified in writing and the applicant can appeal to the court, the Chief Administrative Disputes Commission or file a complaint with the Seimas Ombudsmen. The number of complaints filed with the Seimas Ombudsmen amounted to 45 in 2013 and to 75 in 2014. According to interviews with the institution, the Ombudsmen mainly make recommendations on access to information when it is based on a concrete case, even though they also have the mandate to oversee the implementation of access to information. Many countries have established an information commissioner or another similar oversight body. In addition to powers to supervise and promote the implementation of the law, they often have the authority to receive and review complaints on access to information. In Lithuania, the Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics is responsible for public information and can make recommendations on laws regarding access to information.

Referenda and petitions

The Law on Referendum (2002) lays out the procedures for referendum as guaranteed in the Constitution. It creates the opportunity for mandatory and consultative referendum. Mandatory referenda are required for the amendment of certain constitutional provisions, to join international organisations that require a transfer of power, and other laws or provisions thereof under specific circumstances. Consultative referenda can be called upon by 300 000 citizens or the Seimas on issues of utmost importance to the state and the people. For the referendum to be considered valid, over half of the citizens eligible have to vote. Except for changes of constitutional provisions, a decision is approved if half of the population who voted in the referendum and at least one-third of the total eligible population voted in favour.

The Petition Law (1999) guarantees a citizen the right to submit a petition to the parliament, government or municipal authorities on human rights and freedoms, state and municipal institution reform or other issues relevant to the public, municipality or state. The parliament's Petition Commission decides upon the validity of the petition. If an applicant does not agree with the decision of the commission, he or she can resubmit his petition. Anonymous petitions are not accepted. In 2014, the Petition Commission of the Seimas received 67 petitions and formulated 98 proposals (Seimas Petition Committee,

2014). The right of legislative initiative enables citizens to propose laws when at least 50 000 citizens support it. The Seimas is then required to discuss the draft law, verifying first if it complies with existing ones (Office of the Seimas, 2006).

Local government

The Law on Local Self-Government outlines in detail the mechanisms citizens have to influence or participate in policy making at the local level and ensure transparency of the process. It enshrines participation in municipality affairs (Article 4.9) as well as transparency of activities (Article 4.10). Further, the law establishes the following citizen engagement mechanisms:

- Access to information: Residents are entitled to get access to draft decisions of municipal institutions and receive public and justified answers (Article 4.12).
- Municipal council meetings: Municipal council sittings are open to the public and should be broadcasted if possible. Their agenda is announced in advance. Citizens can take part in an advisory capacity in work of the committees of the municipal council (Articles 13-14).
- Representation of local communities – the elders: The elders are a representation mechanism of the local communities in which members are nominated by residents and non-governmental organisations. The elders represent the interest of the local population in various local institutions and organises events of the village/town/city. Further, the elders are entitled to access information about the municipal administration and can obtain draft legal actions. They shall provide information to residents on the municipal institutions and administration (Articles 33-35).
- Local population opinion surveys: Local surveys are conducted to enable citizens to express their opinion on municipal affairs. The population may initiate them. Their outcomes are of an advisory character (Articles 36-47).

Citizens' engagement in practice

Despite a rather poorly organised civil society and overall low citizens' participation rates, the government of Lithuania has recognised the strategic importance of civic engagement in law making, policy making and service delivery, and has established multiple mechanisms to support it. These mechanisms differ in their effectiveness and the approach they follow. In addition, the overall transparency or opacity of the decision-making process and the availability of information on participation opportunities further determine or undermine the willingness and ability of citizens to participate (as well as the impact of these initiatives), as experiences of OECD countries show (see Box 3.5 for an example).

Access to information

As discussed, Lithuania has a legal framework in place guaranteeing access to information. A 2010/11 survey carried out by Transparency International shows that 29% of people have used this right at least once in the last two years (Transparency International Lithuania, 2013). According to the same survey, in 45% of the cases the information provided was only partial or unsatisfactory, while 44% of residents believe that the current information that is not released is too large. The Human Rights

Monitoring Institute (2015) further states that public institutions use the regime of exceptions too often to avoid providing information. Similarly, Transparency International Lithuania confirms that in certain cases information can only be obtained by invoking the legal provisions and that sometimes multiple requests have to be submitted to receive a satisfactory answer. In order to support the public's use of this right, Transparency International Lithuania (n.d) developed a leaflet on access to information.

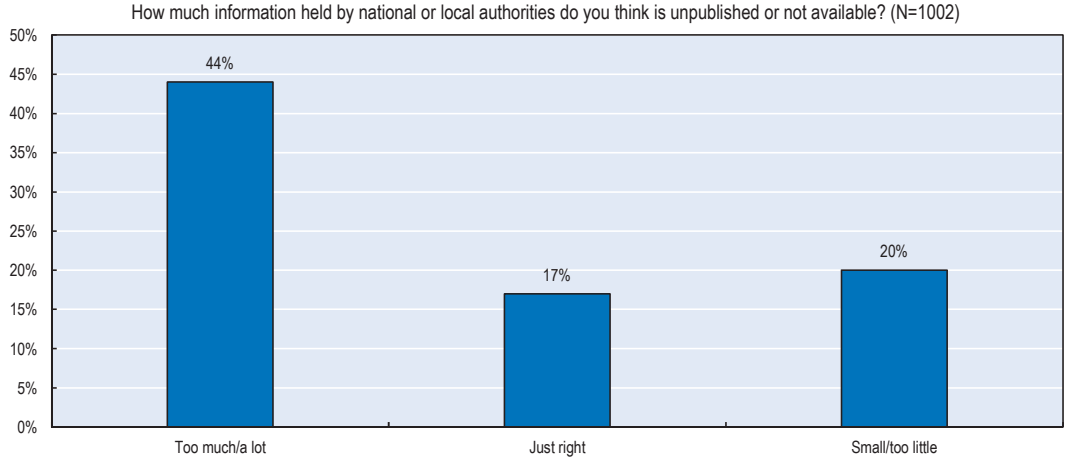
Box 3.5. **Parent Know How (United Kingdom)**

This award-winning project aims to get parents, particularly young fathers, more involved with the upbringing of their children. Developed between the UK Education Department and Digital Public, a private company, it uses third-sector service providers to develop a range of innovative digital services which provide information, advice and social networking. Services were developed in collaboration with young people and included: online messaging to access relationship support services; an online space to enable fathers to stay in touch with their children; a facilitated social networking space and counselling through Second Life, and a virtual parenting magazine; an interactive parent resource network for younger parents which includes customised services through chosen formats. Mobile phone-based technology combined with direct input from young parents themselves ensures service relevance and increases their ownership of the need to change, particularly fathers.

The technology is a means of building links and networks which provide the support needed to achieve ongoing change. To date, over 1 million parents have been involved and the cost per user interaction has been greatly reduced, compared with traditional services. Adding in user networks has meant that expensive professional services can be targeted where most needed. This is an example of ongoing input to service delivery.

Source: MCA (n.d.), "Parent Know How transforming outcomes for children for the Department of Children, Schools and Families", MCA Innovation Consultancy Case Study, Management Consultancies Association, London, www.mca.org.uk.

Figure 3.3. **Access to information in Lithuania: Survey results**



Source: Transparency International Lithuania (2013), "Informacijos prieinamumas Lietuvoje" (in Lithuanian), Transparency International Lithuania, http://transparency.lt/media/filer_public/2013/01/22/informacijos_prieinamumas_lietuvoje.pdf.

Since the adoption of the law, ten media organisations have complained to the Seimas Ombudsman about the lack of access to information. Judging these complaints eligible, the Seimas Ombudsman has recently addressed a recommendation to the Ministry of Culture to ensure that the right of journalists to obtain information is properly implemented particularly addressing the issue of receiving information promptly (Seimas Ombudsman, 2014a).

Citizen engagement in major policy documents

Lithuania2030

The importance of open government principles and initiatives is not only reflected in the goals of Lithuania2030 (as discussed previously), but also in the way the document was drafted and later on in the follow-up linked to its implementation. The State Progress Council and the Open Progress Forum are two key platforms established through Lithuania2030, uniting a variety of different stakeholders, including academics and civil society organisations, to ensure an inclusive process for the drafting and implementation of this key strategic document.

The State Progress Council led the development of the strategy. The council, chaired by the Prime Minister, was created by a resolution approved by the Seimas. Its members include representatives from the business, culture, art and science sectors and the government. The council led the drafting process of the strategy: government authorities, business leaders, community groups and prominent public figures participated in its development. Three working groups were set up on smart economy, smart governance and smart society. Through consultations across the country and among Lithuanians living abroad via meetings held in their embassies, the council wanted to involve as large a variety of opinions as possible. The council also went on a road trip to discuss with mayors, municipality representatives, young people and NGOs. Civil society played a crucial and active role in drafting the strategy by engaging in public discussions, participating in the National Day of Ideas across the country, in an idea week in schools and in online consultations. In total, more than 100 discussions fed into the final proposal of the Lithuania2030 strategy. An illustrative example of the creativity of the council is its interaction with elderly people. Since this age group was especially seen not to believe in the strategy, the council reached out to school children, who were trained to interact with the elderly. Another effort consisted of organising a trip to the United Kingdom, where the majority of Lithuanians abroad live, to discuss with the Lithuanian community. The result is a society-based strategy, which received strong support in the parliament.

Nowadays, the State Progress Council is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the strategy. Its composition was adjusted to include 50% civil society members, 20% parliamentary groups and 30% government representatives (State Progress Council, 2012).

The Open Progress Forum plays an important part in the implementation of the strategy. It serves as a forum for continuous dialogue with society on the country's development, bringing together stakeholders from the academic, business and artistic community (State Progress Council, 2012). Regular meetings are organised to discuss various issues addressed in the strategy. These include a forum on local community in 2012, on education in 2013 and on the welfare state in 2013 (Lietuva2030, n.d.).

Programme of the Government

One of the main activities included in the programme of the current government is the promotion of a national public administration and local governments that are oriented towards public needs, are transparent and deserve people's trust. Open government and citizens' engagement are cross-cutting themes in most of the sector policies included in the Programme of the Government (2012), as shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3. **Citizens' engagement in the Programme of the Government**

Sectorial policy	Citizens' engagement reference
Social policy	Promote dialogue among employers, the state and employees and involve trade unions in social policies
Youth	Support youth NGOs and encourage youth to participate in political life
Education	Strengthen state interaction with student associations, rectors, employers, scientists, trade unions, the Lithuanian Academy of Science in key decision-making processes on education
Culture	Involve artists and cultural associations in policy-making processes
Health	Ensure co-operation with the National Health Council, the private sector and NGOs in the implementation of health policy at the national and municipal levels Encourage patient organisations to participate in health policy
Sport	Establish an advisory body for sports policy
Environment	Involve NGOs in decision making on environmental issues
Foreign policy	Encourage the creation of new NGOs and a more active involvement of experts in the policy decision-making process on foreign policy issues
Information and communication technologies	Promote the active participation of people in policy making in providing comments and suggestions online

Source: Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania (2012), Resolution No. XII-51 on the Programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 13 December, Vilnius, www.lrv.lt/bylos/vyriausybes/16_vyr_%20programa_EN.pdf.

The programme additionally highlights the importance of bringing governance closer to citizens, to develop e-democracy tools, to involve the public and to increase the transparency and openness of the public sector. Equally, the programme recognises the importance of joining efforts with various stakeholders (civil society, media, business sector and religious organisations) in the fight against corruption. Given that more than 600 000 Lithuanians live abroad – a significant part of a total population of 3.6 million Lithuanians worldwide – it is a laudable step that the programme points to the need to involve Lithuanians abroad in state activities. An inter-institutional Action Plan to implement Global Lithuania is foreseen (BNS, 2014). Resolution 1696 (2009) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe calls specifically upon countries to engage their diasporas in domestic politics and to involve them in the political, economic, social and cultural development of their countries of origin (PACE, 2009). Morocco also has a large diaspora, which it tries to involve in national policies through various means as elaborated in Box 3.6. Sierra Leone, for example, involved its diaspora in the consultation process for the OGP Action Plan (Thompson, 2014), an example that Lithuania could consider following.

In addition to the Programme of the Government, various additional reform initiatives recognise the importance of openness, civic engagement and of governance arrangements that are closer to citizens (Table 3.4). This analysis of the various strategic documents of the government shows that open government and citizens' engagement are formally and widely recognised as strategic objectives in Lithuania.

Box 3.6. **Virtual consultation of Morocco's diaspora**

According to the Ministry of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration Affairs (MMLAMA), Morocco has a large diaspora community of nearly 3.5 million people, representing over 10% of the national population. The MMLAMA has developed a strategy and action plan to reach out to this population and which includes five strategic areas, one of which focused on communication.

According to the MMLAMA website, to "better target and meet the expectations of CMRE" (*communauté Marocaine résidante à l'étranger*, Moroccans residing abroad), a communication strategy will be implemented with the contents, forms, methods and means that reflect the needs, aspirations and value systems of the CMRE. This strategy has as major objective that of strengthening the ties between Moroccan citizens abroad and their homeland and the provision of *ad hoc* services."

In this context, the Moroccan Commission on National Dialogue and New Constitutional Prerogatives[1] also launched virtual consultations for civil society organisations of Moroccans residing abroad. This represents an unprecedented opportunity to encourage dialogue with civil society of Moroccans residing abroad on the implementation of the Constitution to promote a strong and fair law-making process, and, ultimately, greater confidence in the Constitution as a blueprint for future legislative reform through inclusive participation.

1. http://hiwarmadani2013.ma.

Source: OECD (2015), *Open Government in Morocco*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, forthcoming.

Table 3.4. **Open government in Lithuania's strategic framework for public governance**

National Progress Programme 2014-2020	Priority 1: Public education, science and culture – Promote citizenship through legal and economic awareness and democratic participation – Priority 5: Progressive public governance in line with public needs: Ensure the openness of public governance processes and encourage society to take an active part in them
Public Governance Improvement Programme 2012-2020	1st programme goal: – Enhance openness of the public governance processes and encourage society to take an active part – Ensure accessibility of public information to society – Encourage the participation of NGOs and local communities
Commission for the Improvement of Public Management	Objective: efficient and transparent public administration oriented towards the needs of society

Source: Government of the Republic of Lithuania (2012), "Public Governance Improvement Programme for 2012-2020"; Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania (2012b), National Progress Programme 2014-2020, Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania No. 1 482, 11 December, No. 144-7430, www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=439028.

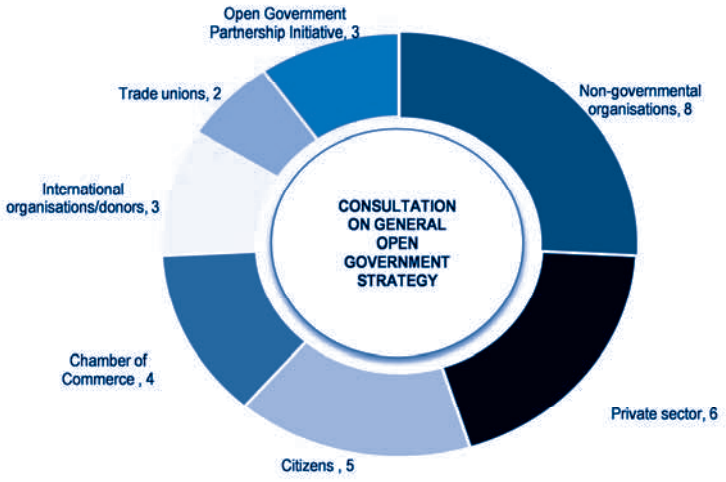
Open Government Partnership

In line with the Programme of the Government, Lithuania's membership in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) is an important opportunity for the country to involve its citizens and civil society to make ambitious reforms. Yet, the consultative process that Lithuania has so far undertaken to draft and implement its OGP action plans could be greatly enhanced. For the 1st OGP Action Plan, the Office of the Government organised several roundtables to define Lithuania's OGP commitments. Civil society organisations such as Transparency International Lithuania presented their recommendations. According to the interviews carried out for this Review, no feedback was provided and

the perception was that they were taken into account to a limited extent only. No civil society representatives or citizens have been involved in the implementation phase. Similarly, for the 2nd Action Plan a working group with different line ministries was created but civil society did not participate in it, despite the fact that extensive consultation is one of the requirements of the OGP.

In the United Kingdom, for example, after a 1st Action Plan, which was equally drafted without meaningful consultation, the NGO Involve was asked by the Cabinet Office, OGP co-ordinator for the United Kingdom, to promote and co-ordinate the participation of civil society in the drafting of the 2nd OGP Action Plan. This decision resulted in a much more inclusive process and in a more ambitious Action Plan. As another example, Figure 3.4 shows various stakeholders that were consulted to elaborate the OGP Action Plan in the different Latin American countries.

Figure 3.4. **Stakeholders consulted to define open government priorities in Latin America**



Source: OECD (2014), *Open Government in Latin America*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264223639-en.

Additional formal participation mechanisms

Councils: A permanent dialogue for sector policies

In line with the practice in many OECD countries, a Tripartite Council was established in 1995. Its 15 members represent trade unions, employers' organisations and the government. It is the main platform to discuss economic and social development policies as well as labour relations. The council deals with issues such as employment, occupational safety, illegal labour, taxation and healthcare. It can develop and co-ordinate draft legislation and has the right to conclude collective labour agreements (Lietuvos Respublikos trišalė taryba, 2015).

The Council of Youth Affairs is a consultative body to the Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. Half of its members are representatives of state institutions and the other half represent youth organisations, delegated by the Lithuanian Youth Council (LiJOT; Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, n.d.). The LiJOT is an umbrella structure

with 64 non-governmental youth organisations representing 200 000 young people. They are the main partner of the state, business and educational institutions (LiJot, 2012). The Council of Youth Affairs advises the Department of Youth Affairs on youth policy. Its advice is not binding. Other examples from different sectors include, for instance, the National Health Board (see Chapter 5).

These consultative arrangements provide additional opportunities to involve relevant stakeholders on a permanent basis and offer important occasions to receive inputs on sector-specific challenges and identify shared solutions. Their effectiveness and impact depend, however, on the ability to transform these councils from a legal obligation into an actual partner in the policy-making process. This would require institutional willingness to take into account their recommendations and advice and transform them into better policies through a fully transparent decision-making process. The government of Lithuania could consider instituting systematic reporting mechanisms on the outcome of these consultations, which could positively influence citizens' motivation to participate in such initiatives and their overall trust in them.

Sector-related consultations

Public consultations are conducted by a variety of ministries and government institutions. The website of the Office of the Government[1] lists some of them. At the time of writing, these included the consultation on the OGP Action Plan as well as consultations conducted by the Ministries of Economy, Energy, Social Security and Labour, Culture, Environment, Interior, Finance and a link to a European Commission consultation (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, n.d.). Yet, every institution seems to apply its own methods and practices: each ministry conducts these consultations independently and without co-ordination across the government, uses its own means to announce them and its own tools to conduct them and report about them, if at all. Currently, no sharing of good practices is in place (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2014).

In 2011, 8 consultations were organised by ministries, whereas in 2013 the number increased to 66, according to official information. However, no data is available on the outcomes of these consultations, which, in addition, do not seem to be evaluated. Transparency International Lithuania monitored public consultations at the municipality level in 2014 and came to the conclusion that the practices are not applied systematically (Transparency International Lithuania, 2015). In general, there are no clear common guidelines on public consultation, including on publishing their results and on providing citizens with feedback with regard to their inputs. As Lithuania is a relatively small country, most ministries and other governmental institutions often know the main non-governmental stakeholders, be they CSO representatives or experts, and contact them directly when they require public inputs. This is, however, not the case for smaller organisations and the general public. These informal consultation practices are not unusual in several OECD countries as well but it would be more appropriate to utilise them as additional consultation mechanisms rather than as an alternative to more formal and structured processes.

Participation in the legislative process

Citizens have the possibility to participate in the legislative process and a unified system has been established to facilitate this participation. The 2012 Law on the Legislative Framework recognises transparency and openness as well as public participation as crucial principles of the legislative process (Article 3 and 7). All draft

laws have been systematically published on the website of the Seimas for public comments since 2009 through the legislative information system, a practice which can be observed in many OECD countries. Through this system, citizens can comment on draft laws and institutions have to present arguments why they are not taking into account citizens' comments. Published material includes: legislative initiatives, drafts of legal acts, comparative documents of the drafts of legal acts, information on the consultation process (time, manner, outcomes) and information on monitoring of legal regulations. In 2012, residents submitted electronic proposals on 5% of the drafts of legislative acts.

Some ministries publish draft laws or policies on their own website for public input before they are approved or go to the Seimas, such as the Ministry of Health. Civitas criticises this practice as it makes access to draft legislation more confusing (Civil Society Institute, 2009).

Furthermore, committees of the Seimas hold meetings to discuss draft laws. A variety of stakeholders are invited to participate in these meetings or present their opinions. The meetings are open to the public. The parliament is improving its use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to foster engagement. The e-Seimas Project[2] will include several options for citizens to engage with parliament, including online petition submission, e-legislation (registration of public legislative initiatives, commenting of draft laws, evaluation of legal acts), ordering of archival material, e-letter to Seimas and competent user access (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, n.d.).

Participation to fight corruption

Even though Lithuania's score on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index has been improving, with a score of 58/100 in 2014 (100 being the best score), corruption remains a serious challenge in Lithuania (Transparency International, 2014). Lithuania has recognised the problem and set up a variety of tools and institutions to fight corruption. In addition to the previously mentioned institutional initiatives, mechanisms have been created to involve citizens and civil society in the fight against corruption. Transparency International Lithuania has, for instance, been invited to present its ideas and recommendations on the National Anti-Corruption Programme 2015-2025 adopted on 10 March 2015, although they have not received immediate feedback on how their recommendations were included. It was only through the participation in further meetings that it became clear which recommendations were taken into account and why. Other civil society organisations have also established initiatives to fight corruption. These include, for example, "White Gloves" which is an initiative to detect corruption in elections or "Without shadow" which puts in place a website to report illegal trade points of certain goods (e.g. alcohol, tobacco) (Lithuanian Tribune, 2014; Lietuva be šešėlio, 2015). Several NGOs, notably the Human Rights Monitoring Institute, Free Market Institute and Civil Society Institute, have also sporadically been involved in anti-corruption work and formed a Civil Alliance against Corruption in 2005 (Velykis, 2010).

The Special Investigation Service offers multiple gateways for citizens to participate in the fight against corruption. Citizens can report corruption cases in person, via mail, telephone, email, fax or the website. Anonymous reporting is also a possibility (Special Investigation Service of the Republic of Lithuania, n.d.). In 2013, 1 262 complaints were filed, 33% of which were anonymous. In addition, as further discussed in Chapter 5, the agency has co-operated with Transparency International Lithuania and the Ministry of Health on *ad hoc* initiatives in the fight against corruption.

The Chief Official Ethics Commission (COEC) is responsible for overseeing and controlling standards of institutional ethics and conduct, public and private interests in the civil service and lobbying activities. According to information of the COEC, publicity and transparency of civil service activities and adopted decisions is one of the goals of the commission. The commission conducts investigations on persons and heads of institutions holding top positions in the civil service when state or municipal institutions are unable to do it. Its decisions on conflict of interests of the COEC and the local ethics commissions are made public and according to its own information generally attract media attention. In 2013, 116 decisions were adopted regarding the conduct of civil servants. Eighty percent of these investigations were based on complaints of citizens and legal entities, while the others were initiated by the commission based on publicly available information. Most complaints come from colleagues, citizens or entrepreneurs. The commission can also receive anonymous complaints, which amounted to 9% in 2013 (COEC, 2014).

In 2012, in co-operation with the State Tax Authority, the COEC established an electronic declaration system of private interests for public officials. The Law on the Adjustment of Public and Private Interests in the Civil Service (1997) requires that the declarations of "state politicians, judges, chairmen and deputy chairmen of parliamentary political parties, heads and deputy heads of state or municipal institutions, civil servants of political personal confidence who perform the duties of heads of structural divisions of institutions or establishments" are published on the website of the COEC.[3] The COEC is reponsible for approving the list of positions whose declarations are to be made public[4]. The COEC also publishes information about lobbying, including the lobbyists recorded in the Register of Lobbyists, and citizens can notify the COEC about possible violations of the Law on Lobbying Activities.

Engagement in municipal affairs

Lithuania has 60 municipalities which, according to the law, are required to offer multiple channels for citizens to engage in municipal policy-making processes.

The elder, as a representative of the local community, is elected by the residents upon proposal of local associations or residents. The elder is supposed to represent the community's interest. He/she organises cultural and sport events. There are no formal mechanisms for the elder to engage with residents, evaluating their needs and priorities depends thus on his/her own initiative. The elder can participate in various work of the municipality, such as the council meetings, committee meetings and seats in the local ethics commission. The elders of some municipalities (Vilnius city, Kaunas city, Alytus district, Šilutė district) have created elders' associations. Its webpage[5] allows citizens to report problems and to contact their elder directly. At the central level, the Ministry of Interior is trying to enhance the role of elders to promote local participation. It has issued a *Guide for Elders* (Seniūnaičių asociacija, 2015).

The Association of Local Authorities is a non-governmental organisation that represents the interest of the 60 municipalities. It was involved both in the development of Lithuania2030 and in the OGP Action Plan. Further, it is a member of the recently established NGO Council. The association fosters exchange among the municipalities, including on civic engagement (ALAL, 2015).

The development of e-democracy tools shall further facilitate access to information and civic participation. The municipality of Vilnius (Box 3.7) has developed various e-democracy tools with the support of the EU Structural Funds.

Box 3.7. **E-democracy in the municipality of Vilnius**

The municipality of Vilnius has adopted e-democracy tools to enhance access to information and participation in municipality affairs. The website of the municipality offers many documents to be informed about the latest activities, laws and services under discussion as well as opportunities for citizens to express their views. The information and participation mechanisms, include among others:

- The agenda of the council's committee meetings
- videos of the council's meetings
- service surveys
- e-petition
- draft legislation
- consultations
- urban problems
- information about the municipality (i.e. council members, budget, strategic plan, activities)
- possibilities to contact the municipality.

According to the municipality, citizens can comment on draft laws and voice their opinion on the budget. The service surveys offer citizens the possibility to express their views on public services. The poll includes questions on the development of public services, such as which lighting to use to illuminate one of Vilnius's bridges (ca. 5 000 respondents), the start time of high school (16 000 respondents), on the bicycle path development plan (1 600 respondents) as well as evaluation of public services. Further, citizens have the possibility to register problems that they encounter in the city. These could be linked to street maintenance, traffic lights, noise prevention etc. They can follow if their problem has been registered or closed and which is the responsible agency (Vilnius, 2015c).

Sources: Vilnius (2015a), "Apklausos", Vilnius City Municipality Administration, Municipality Budget Office, www.vilnius.lt/lit/Apklausos/1350; Vilnius (2015b), "E-demokratija", Vilnius City Municipality Administration, Municipality Budget Office, www.vilnius.lt/lit/E_demokratija/8; Vilnius (2015c), "Miestoproblemos", Vilnius City Municipality Administration, Municipality Budget Office, www.vilnius.lt/lit/Miestoproblemos/29 (all accessed 11 May 2015).

However, statistics collected by the Lithuanian government show that only 34% of the population has received information on the activities of municipalities and other local authorities, while in 2013 only 17% expressed an opinion on local affairs on issues of high importance. According to residents, the best ways to express their opinion are through online surveys (e.g. on the website of the municipality), by voting in a meeting, by signing on the survey participant sheet or through a selective survey at home.

Transparency International Lithuania conducted a study in 2014 on transparency in the municipalities. The study found that none of the municipalities publish information about their meetings with interest groups, only Birštonas district municipality publishes declarations of public and private interests and that one-fifth of municipalities publish information on how citizens can get involved. The research analyses the information published by municipalities and attributes scores accordingly (Transparency International Lithuania, 2015). On an interactive website,[6] both citizens and municipalities can explore

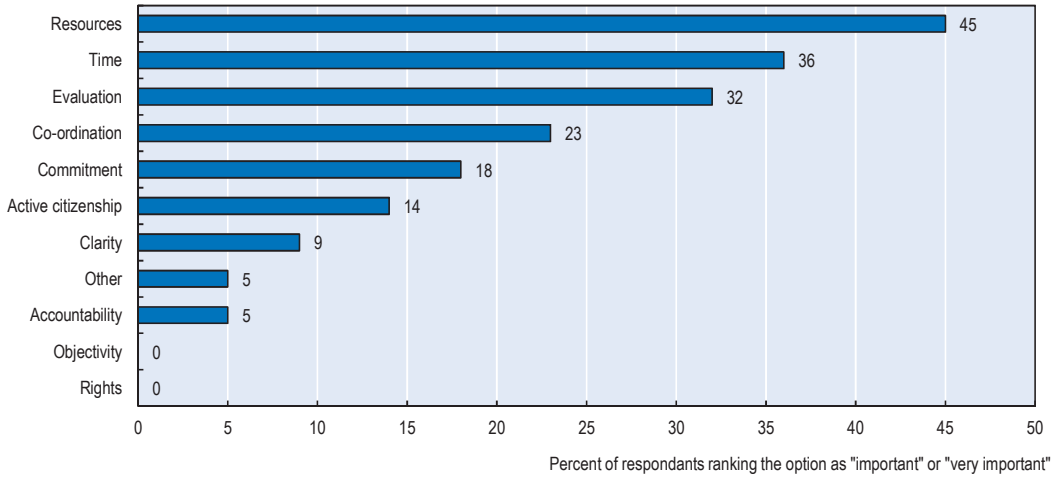
the results and scores in categories such as information about employees, anti-corruption, on council meetings, etc.

Towards a strategic and coherent approach to open government and citizens' engagement

The rapid growth of OGP membership, from 8 countries in 2011 to 65 in 2015, shows the worldwide commitment to adopt open government practices and involve citizens as partners in the policy-making process to jointly identify solutions to current challenges and build trust in government. OECD countries have been exploring effective, open and inclusive policy-making processes for more than two decades. Lithuania has equally embarked on this process and has enshrined the strategic importance of open government and citizens' participation in its key policy and legal instruments and, as a result, multiple engagement initiatives exist. Yet, a more strategic and coherent approach to open government and citizens' engagement is needed to involve a wider public and range of stakeholders within the public administration in order to increase the positive impact of open government policies and practices on the socio-economic development of Lithuania.

As introduced in the previous chapter, the OECD Principles on Open and Inclusive Policy Making stress the importance of co-ordination, accountability and evaluation. Even though the Ministry of the Interior keeps statistics on the amount of public consultations conducted, no information is available on their content, outcome and impact. In addition, every consultation follows its own mechanism. This makes it not only more complicated for citizens to engage, but also for the government to know the value-added and outcome of the consultations conducted. As Figure 3.5 shows, many OECD countries consider co-ordination and evaluation as principles that are challenging to achieve.

Figure 3.5. **Open and inclusive policy-making principles which are most difficult to meet**



Source: OECD (2009), *Focus on Citizens: Public Engagement for Better Policy and Services*, OECD Studies on Public Engagement, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264048874-en.

Co-ordination

The government of Lithuania is currently developing an e-democracy initiative. The aim is to build a portal where civil society organisations or any public person can enter

their comments, launch a petition, submit a complaint or take part in a consultation. The vision is that participation would be transparently managed and users would receive feedback on their proposals. While many digital services for citizens and business entities exist, e.g. on www.epaslaugos.lt/portal (see Chapter 4), the e-democracy project seems to be still in a very early stage. If this initiative unites all existing e-participation options it could be a good opportunity to create a coherent system as the use of the Internet to interact with the government is fairly high. However, as the initiative refers only to engagement mechanisms that occur through e-tools, further efforts are needed to co-ordinate offline initiatives.

Systematic citizens' engagement

In order to overcome the previously mentioned distrust of citizens in the impact of their participation in policy processes and to engage a larger group of citizens in the policy-making process, it is important to establish clear guidelines for citizens' participation and to communicate outcomes and success stories more widely to increase confidence in them. Elaborating a methodology for citizens' engagement is one of the commitments of the 1st and 2nd OGP Action Plans. The elaboration and implementation of a structured, systematic and transparent mechanism for citizens' engagement would foster the involvement of a larger share of the population. Several OECD countries have developed guidelines that could inspire Lithuania (see Box 3.8 for an example from the United Kingdom).

Box 3.8. **UK Code of Practice on Consultation**

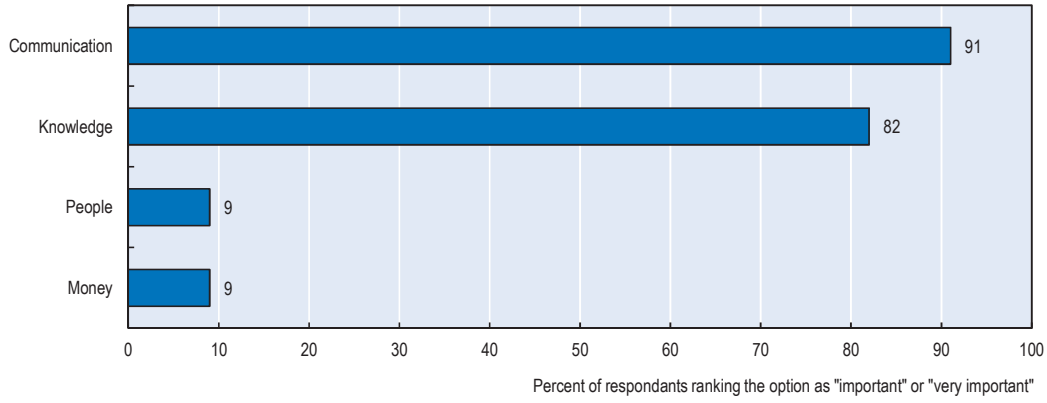
1. When to consult: Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.
2. Duration of consultation exercises: Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.
3. Clarity of scope and impact: Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.
4. Accessibility of consultation exercises: Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.
5. The burden of consultation: Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.
6. Responsiveness of consultation exercises: Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.
7. Capacity to consult: Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learnt from the experience.

Source: HM Government (2008), "Code of practice on consultation", Crown copyright, London, www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/100807/file47158.pdf.

Communication

Currently, the legal framework in Lithuania foresees many opportunities for citizens to participate in the policy-making cycle at the national and local levels. Legal obligations foster compliance and the number of consolations held, but do not ensure that public officials understand the strategic importance and value-added of engaging citizens and actually make proper use of the inputs received, hence drastically reducing their potential impact. Investing in the capacities of public officials to process the information received during the consultations and to report government decisions back to the people involved is important to close the feedback loop and give citizens the sense that their time and efforts are considered and meaningful. Investing in communication and capacities (i.e. guidelines and tools for open government and training opportunities for civil servants) is essential to promote open government and effective citizens' engagement. As Figure 3.6 shows, OECD countries give greatest importance to communication and knowledge to enhance open and inclusive policy making.

Figure 3.6. **Resources devoted to promote open and inclusive policy making**



Source: OECD (2009), *Focus on Citizens: Public Engagement for Better Policy and Services*, OECD Studies on Public Engagement, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264048874-en.

As it is the case with citizens' engagement, the successful communication of the importance of open government would be greatly enhanced if it were built on measured impact and clearly identified value-added. Accordingly, Lithuania could take advantage of its detailed strategic planning system, which records inputs and outputs, to measure impact and communicate success stories more widely and effectively.

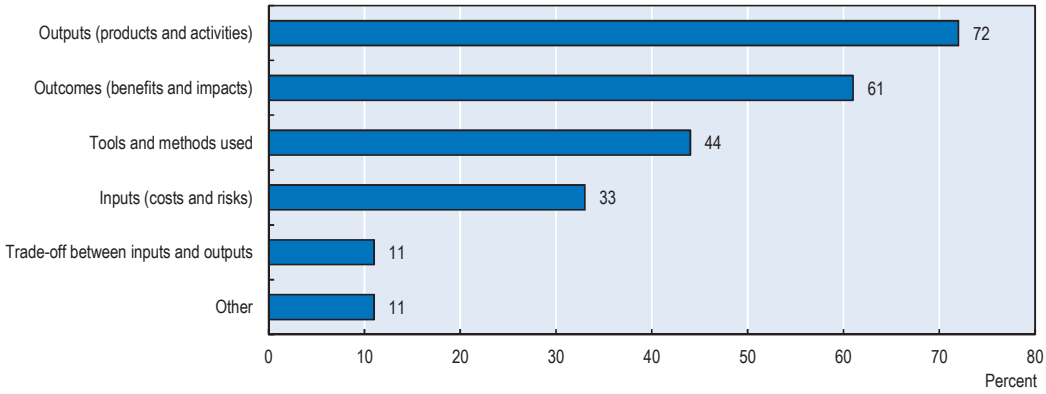
Evaluation

The government should consider investing in its capacities to evaluate engagement mechanisms. OECD countries recognise the importance of this aspect and evaluate the numerous factors that constitute the key aspects of the consultation process, from methods to impact (Figure 3.7).

Adopting an evaluation approach will support the government to adapt its approach and mechanisms based on impact achieved, while citizens will be aware of the influence they can have. There are several examples of good practices abroad (Box 3.9), but also in Lithuania that can serve as an inspiration. These should be shared widely among the public administration to enhance learning.

Figure 3.7. **Factors evaluated in open and inclusive policy making**

% respondents, n = 18 countries



Source: OECD (2009), *Focus on Citizens: Public Engagement for Better Policy and Services*, OECD Studies on Public Engagement, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264048874-en.

Box 3.9. **Guidelines on Regulatory Consultation**

Below is an extract of the Guidelines on Regulatory Consultation focusing on evaluation methods:

- Is there a monitoring mechanism in place to evaluate the quality of the consultation process and outcomes of the consultation?
- When developing a monitoring mechanism, have the following questions been addressed:
  - Does the monitoring process include a tracking document that reports when/how stakeholders' comments are taken into account?
  - Is there a mechanism in place that makes sure to adequately use the input received?
  - Is feedback provided to the stakeholders?
  - When issuing the final regulation, have policy makers indicated whether or not they agree with the comments received?
  - Is the protection of confidential information and personal data received from stakeholders during consultation guaranteed?
  - How many stakeholders have been reached?
  - Have the tools and methods to reach out to stakeholders been appropriate?
  - Was there an equal opportunity for all stakeholders to take part, and was the process easily understood by stakeholders?
  - Was the timetable respected?
  - How much time and resources have been spent; did the costs exceed the initial expectations?

Source: OECD (2012), "Regulatory consultation: A MENA-OECD practitioners' guide for engaging stakeholders in the rule-making process", OECD, Paris.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis of current citizens' engagement practices and future opportunities as presented in this chapter, the following recommendations can be formulated:

- Elaborate a common methodology for citizens' engagement to be used by as many institutions as possible, both at central and local levels. The methodology can build on good practices from OECD countries and on the OECD Guiding Principles on Open and Inclusive Policy Making. An explicit focus on the inclusion of minorities would increase the comprehensiveness of the initiatives implemented, as well as the representativeness of the results obtained.
- The methodology should be accompanied by a toolkit. Giving hands-on advice and guidance for policy makers on how to implement the above-mentioned methodology will help public officials to better understand its practical implications and will maximise the success rate of consultation initiatives.
- Systematically report the outcomes of consultation processes back to citizens and evaluate their impact. The lack of information on the use that public officials make of citizens' inputs directly affects the latter's willingness to take part in future, similar activities. Moreover, without proper evaluation of the impact of current citizens' engagement practices, it is impossible for Lithuania to improve their quality, effectiveness and contribution to the whole policy cycle. The existing e-democracy initiative could be an opportunity to centrally publish all relevant information.
- Develop a strategy to disseminate open government principles and initiatives more widely within the public sector. This strategy should build on success stories that show the value of citizens' engagement in all phases of the policy cycle (identification of policy priorities, policy drafting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) and the impact of open government practices on the quality and responsiveness of the services delivered.
- Promote a culture of civic engagement through a communication strategy and *ad hoc* campaigns that invite citizens to participate. The experiences of Lithuania2030 can serve as inspiration. Similar initiatives, coupled with specific training, should be provided to public sector officials in order to increase their willingness and capacity to endorse open government principles and implement consultation practices.
- Support the development of Lithuania's third sector through capacity building and collaboration with the activities of the newly established NGO Council. Increase the possibilities of engaging with NGOs in the co-design and co-delivery of public services, also through the provision of greater funding opportunities.

Notes

1. www.lrv.lt/lt/veikla/viesosios-konsultacijos.
2. http://lrs.lt/investiciniai/e-seimas.
3. www.vtek.lt.
4. For an in-depth review of asset declarations in Lithuania see OECD (2011b).
5. www.seniunaiciai.lt.
6. www.jurgiokepure.lt.

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Chapter 4.

Digital government as an enabler for open government in Lithuania

This chapter analyses the development and role of digital government in the promotion of open government. Starting out with a brief description of the national digital context, it discusses if and how the Lithuanian government succeeded to set digital government priorities that are aligned with national policy priorities; whether current governance and co-ordination frameworks are fit to achieve those objectives; and the ways in which implementation capacities can be further improved to support the development of a more open and effective government.

Governments are under pressure to respond to multiple demands. They are expected to formulate good policies and ensure that they are effectively implemented. They face ever greater demands to become more transparent and accountable, to make decision processes more inclusive and to increase participation options. At the same time, they need to reduce costs. Moreover, governments are expected to proactively address complex emerging issues and respond to populations' changing needs while showing a creative vision for the future of domestic society and its integration in the global context.

Digital government is expected to support the achievement of such government objectives. Traditionally, "e-government" was perceived to be about making existing services available online. That is changing at a fast pace as technologies permeate virtually all areas of public and personal lives. Decision makers today increasingly formulate government IT policies that are aligned with wider government objectives and that help them to better match resources to policy objectives. In practice that means they need to understand the very tangible implications that technological developments have on government, on citizens and on their mutual interactions. Recent OECD work points to those changes in public governance as they are triggered by wider adoption of mobile technologies (OECD, 2011), open government data (OECD, 2013b), cloud computing (OECD, 2014a) and social media (OECD, 2014b). These changes are also expressed in the OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies*, which Lithuania adopted on the date of its original ratification by the OECD Council (see Box 4.1).

After a brief introduction on Lithuania's digital context, this chapter analyses:

- if and how Lithuania has succeeded in setting digital government priorities that actively address issues of national priority (both digital development and overarching public sector reform objectives such as open government, effective public service delivery, efficiency, transparency)
- whether current governance and organisational frameworks are fit to achieve such public sector reform objectives
- the current implementation capacities and potential shortcomings in this area.

Lithuania's digital context

The OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies* outlines the general pre-conditions that have to be met before digital government effectively contributes to the achievement of government policy objectives. However, each context has its specific opportunities and challenges. Before analysing the factors that determine digital government performance in Lithuania, it is worth highlighting important contextual factors that influence overall technology adoption and maturity in the country.

Lithuania has come a long way in developing a mature digital society and market since restoring its independence. The EU's Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) places Lithuania above the EU average, in the vicinity of countries like Austria, Germany, Ireland and Spain (Figure 4.1). Lithuania scores above the average in DESI on:

- Connectivity: Lithuania is placed among the top ten best connected EU countries thanks to very high take-up rates for mobile broadband, as well as high speeds and availability of Internet connections. Fixed broadband take-up rates are,

however, low and below the EU average; they point to remaining challenges in bringing the Internet to people living in rural areas of the country. In fact, as many as 25% of Lithuanians are reported to have not used the Internet (European Commission, 2015).

Box 4.1. OECD Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies

Adopted on 15 July 2014, the OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies* is a structuring element for decision makers and stakeholders that need to navigate government objectives and resources in an increasingly complex policy-making environment. Digital technologies create both opportunities and challenges for successful government reforms in any policy domain, e.g. welfare, economic development, administrative services efficiency. A set of 12 principles, grouped under 3 themes, guide decision makers:

I. Engage citizens and open up government to maintain public trust.

1. Ensure greater transparency, openness and inclusiveness of government processes and operations.
2. Encourage engagement and participation of public, private and civil society stakeholders in policy making and public service design and delivery.
3. Create a data-driven culture in the public sector.
4. Reflect a risk management approach to addressing digital security and privacy issues, and include the adoption of effective and appropriate security measures.

II. Adopt cohesive approaches to deliver public value throughout government.

5. Secure leadership and political commitment to the strategy.
6. Ensure coherent use of digital technologies across policy areas and levels of government.
7. Establish effective organisational and governance frameworks to co-ordinate the implementation of the digital strategy within and across levels of government.
8. Strengthen international co-operation with other governments.

III. Strengthen government capabilities to ensure returns on IT investments.

9. Develop clear business cases to sustain the funding and focused implementation of digital technologies projects.
10. Reinforce institutional capacities to manage and monitor projects' implementation.
11. Procure digital technologies based on assessment of existing assets.
12. Ensure that general and sector-specific legal and regulatory frameworks allow digital opportunities to be seized.

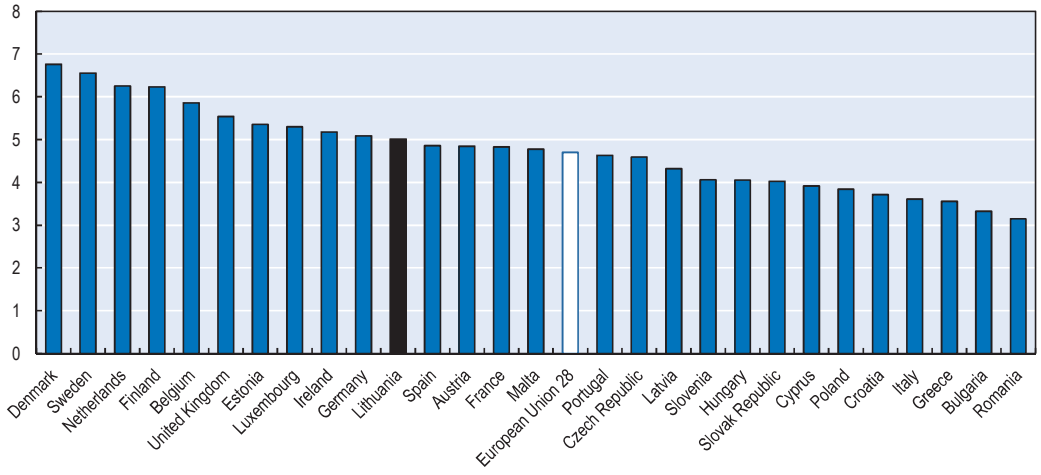
Source: OECD (2014c), *Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies*, adopted by the OECD Council on 15 July 2014, OECD, Paris, www.oecd.org/gov/public-innovation/recommendation-on-digital-government-strategies.htm.

- Internet use: Lithuania scores relatively high in this sub-part of the index, mainly due to high rates for consultation of online news (first in the European Union), Internet video calls (second in the EU), social media use and electronic banking.

This indicates high readiness among the population to consume digital content and use digital services – provided they are designed to respond to their needs.

- Integration of digital technology in the business sector: Lithuania scores above average because of two factors: a relatively high degree of businesses using advanced technologies such as radio frequency identification, social media and electronic invoices; a relatively high share of commerce taking place over the Internet, including by small and medium-sized enterprises and to customers abroad (Lithuania ranks fifth in the EU in this latter category).

Figure 4.1. **Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), aggregate scores, 2015**



Source: European Commission (2015), *Digital Economy and Society Index*, https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/digital-economy-and-society-index-desi.

Besides the challenge of connecting more rural areas, the DESI also points to two further challenges in Lithuania's digital context:

- Human capital: Lithuania sits below the EU average, although still within the middle tier, for the availability of basic IT skills and advanced IT skills. Coupled with the fact that around 25% of Lithuanians do not use the Internet, this points to limits, especially for vulnerable parts of the population, to use the Internet as a vector for better inclusion.
- Digital public services: Lithuania receives a below-average aggregate score in this category because of below average implementation levels for open government data, electronic prescriptions and electronic medical information exchanges. These issues are further analysed in this chapter and in Chapter 5.

Identifying priorities and building strategies

Digital government can have a crucial role for successful public sector reform. The OECD recommends that leadership and political commitment to digital government strategies be ensured to achieve effective digitisation (Principle 5, Box 4.1); and that governments should aim for coherent use of digital technologies across all policy areas (Principle 6, Box 4.1). As such, it is recognised that improved service delivery and internal public sector efficiency go hand-in-hand with economic growth, inclusive

decision making, greater transparency and integrity. The challenge for governments is therefore not one of introducing more technologies into public administrations, it is rather one of making the right choices and firmly integrating technology use into public sector modernisation efforts. This is a cultural transition and governments that fail to make this transition feel the consequences of poor service delivery, uninformed decision making and loss of citizen trust.

Opportunities and challenges for digital government in Lithuania

Breaking down the previously introduced DESI by individual variables, we find that Lithuania sits slightly above the EU average for the sub-category "e-government" (European Commission, 2015). Lithuania fares quite well in three out of the four sub-areas that are summarised under "e-government":

- Lithuania has a relatively high take-up rate for online government services. This is closely related to the fact that Lithuanians are relatively advanced users of Internet content and services, not least digital signatures that are a key enabler for trusted government-citizen interactions on the Internet. But it is also a merit of government's increasing user orientation when developing online government services. A recent EU benchmarking exercise confirms that Lithuania managed to put key enablers into action and achieve high levels of user centricity in online services provision (European Commission, 2014).
- The share of filled forms being sent over the Internet to public authorities is relatively high. While this is an advantage in the early stages of digital government development, it actually becomes an obsolete factor in more advanced settings. Estonia has, for example, been extremely successful in removing the burden of filling in forms from individuals in many service areas. Instead, interoperable information systems exchange data in automated ways with the result being that concerned users do not have to file any forms at all if the data exists somewhere across the public sector (OECD, 2015b).
- The number of services that can be completed online in Lithuania lies slightly above the EU average. This points to the success not just of individual ministries, but also the co-ordinated effort of establishing a widely used entry point to online government services.[1] The portal's success is also the result of high levels of Internet use by citizens, as well as the wide take-up of digital signatures (the use of government-operated digital signatures is still very low, most digital government transactions use authentication mechanisms operated by commercial services providers such as banks or mobile phone operators; see IVPK, 2015).

At the same time, overall usability and coherence issues remain. The quality and accessibility of public services is heterogeneous across government. Coherence suffers from low levels of interoperability between different government information systems, which results in many online services that cannot be entirely completed online (LR Valstybės Kontrolė, 2014). Accessibility of online government services is not always upheld, especially for users with special needs, and is part of the reason why there is still a gap between take-up rates for average users and for less experienced users, e.g. less educated parts of the population, impaired users. Although rules to measure quality and accessibility of public services exist, they are not uniformly applied across government – e.g. because some methodologies apply only to digital services developed with the help of EU structural funding.

Another underlying issue, which also reduces the DESI "e-government" score for Lithuania is the low implementation of open government data. A growing number of OECD countries recognise the potential to open up government data for reuse to improve public services and citizen engagement (OECD, 2013b). Although Lithuania's government has started to centrally collect information and data sources as part of the EU's first PSI Directive, the government has yet to develop into an advanced platform to stimulate reuse of public sector data.[2]

Matching strategies with priorities

Lithuania has two strategic documents that provide guiding directions on digital government: 1) the Public Governance Improvement Programme 2012-2020 (PGIP), stewarded by the Ministry of Interior; 2) the Digital Agenda 2014-2020, stewarded by the Ministry of Transport and Communications. The two strategies pick up important national priorities and establish objectives and responsible institutions for achieving those objectives.

Under the PGIP, digital government initiatives are expected to contribute to:

- Openness and transparency of public governance. This objective includes the goal to increase user satisfaction with online services.
- Better public services. This objective includes two digital government goals: to reduce administrative burdens through online services and to increase the share of online service delivery as a share of total services delivered.
- Strategic capacities and management in the public administration. This objective should be achieved by development and take-up of interoperability; and by greater take-up of IT governance standards.

These priorities are complemented by the national Digital Agenda, which covers six important objectives, of which two are directly related to IT use in the public sector:

- Improving the supply and take-up of digital public services. This objective consists of several subordinate goals: to increase online service take-up, to increase the e-government portal use, to raise take-up of "e-health" services, to have higher online consultation rates for legal drafts, to increase "e-democracy" take-up and to develop better online services for transport enterprises (an important sector in Lithuania's economy).
- Ensuring security and interoperability of government information systems. This should be achieved by higher take-up rates of the electronic ID, wider use of the interoperability platform, and by promoting automated information exchange and interoperability.

The fact that there are two complementary strategies is not a problem as such, but can lead to difficulties in establishing roles and responsibilities where overlaps occur. Development and promotion of IT governance standards is, for example, included in both strategies, albeit with somewhat different goals and responsibilities. So are standards for front-facing services, which means both the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Transport and Communications take stewardship roles in this area.[3]

Unclear leadership on common standards bears the risk of having line ministries not fully commit to the common objectives. That risk has become a reality in Finland in recent years. A long-time leader in digital government, the country today faces a situation where less than one-third of central government ministries and agencies consider the

national digital government strategy as relevant for their work (OECD, 2015b). There is a risk this could happen in Lithuania too if strategic issues such as interoperability of information systems or usability of government services are not effectively co-ordinated.

Two further points should be highlighted that merit closer attention in the near future: local government involvement and the use of public sector IT to promote greater openness of the public sector:

- Around half of OECD member countries also include objectives for regional and local government in their national digital government agendas (OECD, 2015a). This is not the case in Lithuania. The two national digital government strategies include issues that are of interest and relevance to local governments, but without determining specific goals or responsibilities for local governments in this respect.
- Openness seems to be insufficiently addressed by the current digital government strategies. Selected references can be found in the PGIP and in the Digital Agenda. The PGIP, for example, aims to boost take-up and satisfaction with online services as a means to promote greater transparency of public sector processes. The Digital Agenda has an additional goal in this area, which is to increase the number of legal acts on which citizens comment in electronic form (responsibility of the Parliament Chancellery). These individual initiatives do not seem to be part of a wider vision on how technology can truly transform the public sector towards greater transparency and accountability. That means some opportunities are missed to use technology to tackle corruption in a country where large parts of the population perceive corruption in the public sector to be a major problem (Transparency International, 2013).

Other countries have taken steps to make more strategic use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to increase the transparency and accountability of the public sector, e.g. Colombia and its "Urna de Cristal" programme (Box 4.2) or Spain and the central role of ICTs in its ambition to create a more transparent public sector (OECD, 2014d). Civil society groups can be a constructive partner in this endeavour, also because they often already have effective tools in place that can be reused and scaled up. Transparency International's Lithuania chapter has a dedicated section on transparency tools that leverage technology opportunities.[4] Other examples exist and should also become part of constructive partnerships between the public sector and civil society.[5]

Box 4.2. **Colombia: "Urna de Cristal" programme**

Colombia's Crystal Urn (*Urna de Cristal*) is a national initiative to use ICTs to empower and engage citizens and to enhance political accountability. The figurative Crystal Urn refers to the declared government objective of being like "fish swimming in an aquarium", i.e. with no possibilities of hiding from public scrutiny. The *Urna de Cristal* uses different platforms to engage with citizens and to allow people to analyse and discuss matters of public policy. The platforms include traditional channels as well as the Internet and social media. Colombia's President for example uses Google+ Hangouts to talk with young Colombian talents from different parts of the country as a means to open up. This is helping to familiarise the general population with government policies, and to receive feedback on those policies. The Crystal Urn was also used to promote simplification projects within the administration, e.g. by crowdsouring ideas from the wider public in an "anti-procedure crusade".

Source: OECD (2013a), *Colombia: Implementing Good Governance*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264202177-en.

Putting digital enablers in place

Since regaining independence, Lithuania has managed to put in place a set of important enabling technologies that support the strategic digital agenda for government and society: digital signatures, legal validity of electronic communications and legal provisions for interoperability (even though their implementation is still hampered).

Lithuania introduced the digital (electronic) signature into national legislation as early as 2000 (Law on Electronic Signature, 2000, VIII-1822). The law recognises digital signatures as being fully equivalent to handwritten signatures, both in commercial transactions as well as in transactions with the public sector. The law helped Lithuania achieve widespread adoption and use of electronic IDs in private sector and public sector contexts. As is the case in several European countries, the Lithuanian public sector recognises non-state actors' electronic IDs, i.e. identification and authentication mechanisms operated by commercial banks or mobile operators. The fact that individuals were early on able to use online banking credentials for public services too has had a catalysing effect on take-up. Moreover, EU citizens from several countries can use their national electronic ID to access services on www.epslaugos.lt.

The right to digital communications with the public sector was established in 2005 (Law on the Right to Obtain Information from State and Municipal Agencies, 2005,VIII-1524). The then existing law on access to public sector information from 2000 was amended to validate any electronic means to obtain information from the public sector, provided the individual can be fully identified. Lithuania therefore precedes many OECD countries on the implementation of digital public sector communications. To this day, only around half of OECD member countries have such legal provisions in place.

What is missing in Lithuania is the "once only" principle set down in law. There is no legal provision that gives citizens or businesses the right to provide information "once only" to the public sector; or, in other words, there is no obligation for the public sector to obtain information from existing registers when that information already exists. Such principles are present in almost half of OECD member countries. What seems a relatively minor issue has, in fact, major implications for interoperability in the public sector – a fact that Estonia has been able to leverage to great effect (OECD, 2015b).

The Lithuanian government recognises the challenge that lack of interoperability poses for policy making and public service delivery. An interoperability framework was developed in 2008 and is available for use by public institutions (*Valstybės informacinių išteklių sąveikumo platforma*, VIISP). Various additional standards exist to determine the conditions under which information systems should be designed, created and developed. As a result, good examples of interoperability certainly exist: the Lithuanian income tax declarations are pre-filled with values obtained from the social security information systems; the registers operated by the Ministry of Justice's Centre of Registers provide standardised interfaces to other data users and providers across government; the VIISP offers interoperable authentication procedures for digital service providers.

Despite an existing legal framework, the actual state of interoperability in Lithuania is much less advanced than in Estonia, which was mentioned before. Several interlocutors admit that data exchanges between different ministries' information systems do not necessarily take place using central government standards. This also includes institutions exchanging data with the Ministry of Health (see Chapter 5). Another example, the Ministry of Justice and its affiliated agencies are singled out by the national audit office as developing information systems without use or reference to government-wide

standards (LR Valstybės Kontrolė, 2014). Such silo-based information systems and unstandardised data exchanges eventually result in government IT that slows down government instead of making it more agile. Even leading OECD countries such as Finland have experienced this (OECD, 2015b).

Beyond the previously discussed legal provisions, there are a number of enablers that are grounded in other types of policy decisions. The following is only a selection of relevant government decisions (for a more comprehensive list see www.ivpk.lt/lt/lthm/teisine-informacija/teises-aktai):

- IVPK decree on IT systems' life-cycle governance methodology (2014)
- government decision about information system establishment, creation, development and liquidation rules (2013)
- government decision about registers' establishment, creation, development and liquidation rules (2013)
- IVPK decree on IT services governance methodologies (2013)
- government decision about interoperability system use by public administration information systems when delivering public electronic services (2009)
- government decision about government information resources governance law conception (2006).

Adding to this, there is a large number of ministerial decrees around IT governance. This illustrates an overall rather legalistic approach to digital government, which has advantages – the biggest being a strong mandate and continuity of strategic vision and directions. But for the same reason, it can be problematic when laws, decisions and decrees are overused. Creating those legal acts can be a long and rigid process, and it can create lock-in on decisions that might be difficult to revert in case of need.

Recommendations

This section analysed whether Lithuania is effectively putting digital government at the service of overarching government priorities. The government is halfway between using IT in a 20th century "e-government" approach, with conception in silos and for micro-level operational needs and actually using technology as a lever for profound governance reforms, greater openness, better public services and more effective public sector action. To move ahead on this transformation, the following recommendations can be formulated:

- It will be important to improve monitoring and impact measurement. This includes moving beyond EU comparison indicators at very high level and complementing them with key performance indicators for individual services. Whereas detailed data collection is more difficult, this can result in increased peer pressure, transparent monitoring and resources allocation – and ultimately in a more informed debate about the quality and transformation of public services.
- Some concepts need to move out of the technical space and become the responsibility of senior civil servants, maybe even political leaders. Issues like interoperability, digital divides, inclusive service design are laid down in regulating documents and government programmes. Their application across government is, however, still not wide enough and can be improved by

communicating on the importance of these issues for overall government effectiveness. Stewardship of these issues by political leaders can help to commit individual line ministries to the relevant items on the national Digital Agenda.

- Create a more coherent digital government. This is closely linked to the governance of digital services and infrastructures, which seems to have some shortcomings in Lithuania (see next section). Co-ordination between different actors is patchy, which makes digital government in Lithuania susceptible to overlaps and gaps in competencies. Some co-ordination challenges will not be resolved by incentives and soft power only, and will require allocation of executive powers.
- Capture the opportunities of digital technologies to tackle persistent corruption issues in the public sector. Several civil society organisations in Lithuania have proven that technology can be leveraged to avoid, detect and report corruption. The public sector has the potential to do more in this area. And it can do so with relatively little resources, given that many technological platforms exist and could be reused. What it takes, though, is political will to actually open up many of the information sources and establish effective workflows in order to make good use of digital technology platforms.

Designing effective governance and co-ordination frameworks

The OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies* outlines the importance of governance and organisational frameworks to ensure that digital government strategies are formulated and implemented in ways that support wider government objectives (Principle 7, see Box 4.1). More specifically, this means:

- identifying clear responsibilities to ensure overall co-ordination of the implementation of the digital government strategy
- establishing a system of "checks and balances" for government decisions on technology spending, to increase the level of accountability and public trust, and to improve decision making and management to minimise the risks of project failures and delays.

The impact of governance shortcomings

The digital government strategies formulated in Lithuania are a good starting point because they outline directions for central government and are linked to national priorities. However, the capacity of the Lithuanian government to implement those strategies is limited by a cumbersome governance setting. Three areas illustrate the problems posed by insufficient leadership and co-ordination: interoperability and compliance with governance rules, quality of digital government services, control of government IT spending.

- Co-ordination in the development of government IT services and information systems is critical because agility, responsiveness and coherence of public sector organisations depend on their capacity to share and exchange information. The government is making noticeable efforts in this area, e.g. consolidation of state infrastructures has started and a draft decree foresees the establishment of shared services providers for data centres, platforms, software, etc.[6] Those efforts are critical because government information systems in Lithuania are still too often

designed without recourse to central government standards, and are therefore hard to interconnect when the need arises. Compliance with existing rules and standards is not uniform and there are no effective instruments to monitor and enforce compliance. This has been pointed out as a challenge by interlocutors across government and has also been highlighted by the national audit office (LR Valstybės Kontrolė, 2014).

- Online services are relatively available and accessible in Lithuania (see DESI scores presented earlier). Looking at the whole spectrum of government services provided, however, one finds a wide range of quality. There are user interfaces that are responsive and adapt to the different needs of users; but there are also many user interfaces that are difficult for non-experienced users to handle or that are simply difficult to complete online. Part of the reason is that many service needs and user requirements are formulated by individual ministries, instead of attempting to create synergies through more co-ordinated public service design (LR Valstybės Kontrolė, 2014).
- Finally, there is no central control of government IT spending. EU Structural Funds have so far been channelled through the IVPK and monitoring for this type of funding is quite rigorous. However, this channel is not the only funding for government IT investments and operations. The national audit office found that between 2008 and 2011 only around half of government IT investments benefited from EU funding, i.e. were co-ordinated and monitored by the IVPK (LR Valstybės Kontrolė, 2014). The remaining 50% of government IT investments were of course accounted for in financial reports, but they mostly escaped specific monitoring and performance evaluation according to IT governance standards. A loose consultation mechanism exists between the Ministry of Finance and the IVPK, but it has no coercive measures.

Regarding the latter point, it is true that only around half of OECD countries today centrally monitor and periodically report government IT expenditures in a comprehensive way (OECD, 2015a). But those that do are able to identify systematic problems in government IT spending and take targeted action. For example, by calculating the high prices incurred through legacy systems and lack of interoperability, identifying price differences for identical services or goods purchased by different departments, and identifying insufficient investments in new service delivery capacities. Australia's 2008-09 government IT spending review was ground-breaking in this respect and has led to substantial changes in the governance of government IT investment decisions – notably much stronger business case requirements (see Box 4.3; and the next section on implementation). Publishing detailed IT spending data is moreover a tool to increase transparency in an area where government spending is significant and should be open to public scrutiny just like any other type of public spending – see for example the United States Federal IT Dashboard at https://itdashboard.gov.

Towards recognised leadership and more effective governance

Effective co-ordination and strategic alignment of government IT investments require strong leadership and clear organisational settings. At this point neither are fully present in Lithuania.[7] At least two institutions have the ambitions and mandate to lead and co-ordinate use of IT within government: the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Transport and Communications (and its subordinate agency, the Information Society Development Committee). The 2011 Law on the Governance of State Information

Resources outlines the competences of these two ministries with respect to digital government. It further defines the mandate of the Ministry of Justice as operator of several registers. In practice, however, issues such as the promotion of interoperability, development of online services and setting of standards for IT project management are shared between the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

Box 4.3. **Australia's IT spending review**

In 2008, the Australian government published the results of the "Gershon review" of government IT spending. It was a comprehensive collection and analysis of the entire central government's spending on IT. The review had a huge impact because it illustrated the strategic importance of identifying spending patterns and problems around the way that government designs, develops, purchases and operates its digital infrastructures and services.

A key finding was that 77% of total government IT spending went towards what was termed "business-as-usual". As a result, agencies face heavy burdens when dealing with legacy hardware and software. Only 23% of government IT spending went towards the "creation of new capabilities", a share that the Australian government aimed to increase. The review also suggested ways that large agencies could reduce their IT spending by up to 15%, e.g. through data centre consolidations. Most importantly, by analysing whole-of-government IT spending data, the review was able to identify weaknesses in the governance of IT across government, which led to more stringent review procedures for strategic government IT projects.

More countries now centrally collect IT spending information and conduct in-depth IT spending reviews. This is helping governments to better answer the emerging questions about IT use and its benefits. The issues identified in the Australian government IT spending review are in fact recurrent features across OECD governments, e.g. high shares of spending on maintaining legacy systems, large price variations for identical IT goods or services procured across government, mismatches between ambitions of digital government and the effectiveness of existing governance arrangements.

Sources: Gershon, P. (2008), *Review of the Australian Government's Use of Information and Communication Technology*, review commissioned by the Australian Department of Finance and Deregulation, Commonwealth of Australia, August, www.finance.gov.au/publications/ICT-Review/docs/Review-of-the-Australian-Governments-Use-of-Information-and-Communication-Technology.pdf; OECD (2013c), "Special feature: Central government ICT spending", in: *Government at a Glance 2013*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2013-25-en.

The Ministry of the Interior is the formal steward of the PGIP 2014-2020 and is responsible for public administration reform and modernisation in wider terms. By law the ministry has the official mandate to promote and co-ordinate the use of IT in the public sector. In practice, however, the financial and human resources of the ministry are limited and concentrated within the relatively small "e-Government" Unit. The unit is currently composed of only five people, which are responsible for policy formulation as well as overseeing implementation for digital government. The unit is also overseeing IT projects that are specific to the ministry, e.g. related to policing, firefighters, criminal investigation information systems.

There seems to be little willingness to enhance the support given to digital government through political or at least senior leadership in this ministry. An illustration is the fact that the unit has the same organisational status as the ministry's human resources unit, internal audit unit and external communications unit, i.e. it seems to be

designed to hold a supporting function, as opposed to the seven departments at the ministry, which each have more people and more administrative units attached.[8]

A subordinate agency, the Informatics and Communications Department (IRD), exists but its activities are focused entirely government IT security. Despite "department" in its title, the IRD is an executive agency subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior.

The Ministry of Transport and Communications is the formal steward of the Digital Agenda 2014-2020, the majority of which is funded through EU Structural Funds. The agenda includes several initiatives to the improve digital performance of the public sector, notably on interoperability and the governance of government information systems. And although government IT is only one strategic direction among others in the agenda, the ministry shows clear leadership ambitions in this area. It has a full department dedicated to information society development and the minister recently appointed an experienced IT industry executive as advisor dedicated to the formulation of policies for the development of state information systems and consolidation of state information resources.[9] Moreover, the ministry will administer EU Structural Funds for digital government from 2014 on, a planned total amount of EUR 244 million for the 2014-20 period.

A specialised agency, the Information Society Development Committee (IVPK), is subordinated to the Ministry of Transport and Communications and is charged with implementing the ministry's political mandate. The IVPK is called a committee, but is in fact an implementing agency. The IVPK is an influential actor for the co-ordination of state information resources, mainly because of its human and financial resources and a good track record of digital services development. It has around 30 employees and until 2014 it administered the bulk of EU Structural Funds that went towards digital government (IVPK, 2014).

Despite the fact that its formal mandate is quite wide because it encompasses information society promotion at large, the IVPK is in practice first and foremost concerned with IT use in the public sector. Two out of its three strategic priorities are directly related to that area:[10] maintaining and promoting use of the state information resources interoperability platform, and co-ordinating the creation of state information resources governance and regulation (which includes oversight of take-up and implementation). Most interlocutors in line ministries point to this institution as a point of reference for standards and good practices on IT governance and interoperability.

The Government Chancellery is a third actor with an important role. Its strict mandate revolves mostly around the development of "e-democracy", which in Lithuania includes online consultation and participation initiatives. Given its direct dependence of the Prime Minister, one could imagine it taking a more strategic lead, similar to the Estonian "Strategic ICT Advisor" in the Government Office. This has not been the case so far and digital government leadership ambitions are mainly divided between the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

Cross-government bodies as a remedy?

These governance shortcomings are not new to the government. It has shown willingness to deal with the issue of heterogeneous state information system developments across relatively autonomous ministries. In response to the emergence of these challenges over time it created two cross-cutting institutions to improve co-ordination:

- The State Information Resources Governance Council (VIIVT) was established in 2011 (Law on the Governance of State Information Resources), but started its activity only in 2013. It is a collegial advisory body with representation of selected ministries (Transport and Communications, Interior, Justice, Finance), the IVPK, the President Chancellery, the Government Chancellery, the Parliament Chancellery, the Director of the National Library, representatives of the courts administration and the Association of Municipalities. It is presided by the Vice-Minister for Transport and Communications. The VIIVT Council is formally tasked with co-ordinating government IT across the entire central government. In practical terms it lacks the capacity to do so because only a small number of ministries are represented and it lacks the powers to review or mandate a review of government IT projects at its own initiative. It does not have strong political support either in order to compensate for its weak mandate. According to the council's official website, it has only met five times so far[11].
- The Establishment of the Digital Agenda Council (SDT) was foreseen in the Information Society Development Programme 2014-2020. The council was set up in 2014 by decree of the Vice-Minister of Transport and Communications and has held several meetings since first gathering in November 2014. Council membership is wider than that of the VIIVT in the sense that practically all ministries are represented, as well as the business sector through the "Infobalt" business association. Like the VIIVT, this council also has mainly an advisory function. It is chaired by the Minister for Transport and Communications. All meeting materials, including presentations of ministries' projects, are made public on the Ministry of Transport and Communications' website. The SDT Council has a stronger political mandate than the VIIVT and wider objectives. Although the formal purpose of the SDT is to steer developments under the national Digital Agenda, the focus of most meetings so far has clearly been on IT use by and in the public administration. The majority of projects discussed at the eight meetings held by the time of writing have to do with the development of ministries' digital services, development of information systems and improvement of ministries' capacities to use IT for better policy formulation and implementation.[12]

While these two councils are certainly steps in the right direction, they might not be sufficient to create incentives for ministries and agencies to follow rules and guidance for the development of digital services and IT systems; or alternatively to enforce compliance. The national audit office in a 2013 report (LR Valstybės Kontrolė, 2013) recognised improvements in government IT co-ordination through the 2011 Law on the Governance of State Information Resources. But it also reported that more than half of the surveyed central government institutions still see a need for a more clear-cut leadership and co-ordination function in this area. It remains to be seen whether the SDT Council will be able to address this need.

There is a risk of overlaps and gaps in the work of the two councils. Even though the two councils' mandates are stipulated in law, several actors within and beyond government reported they are confused as to which body is actually responsible for co-ordinating government IT developments. What is more, it does not seem that either of the two councils can take binding decisions, which reduces the capacity to steer developments, resolve conflicts and impose compliance with IT governance standards. It is important to address this lack of a clear mandate and executive powers in order to avoid negative impacts on the quality of digital services. Some OECD countries have

established bodies with more effective control and monitoring capacities, e.g. the Danish IT Council (Box 4.4).

Box 4.4. **Denmark's "Council for IT Projects" to govern high-risk government IT projects**

In 2010, the Danish government recognised that many government IT projects suffered from structural difficulties and established the need for more professional central review mechanisms. The Council for IT Projects was established in 2011. It reviews any IT project with a budget of more than DKK 10 million (around EUR 2 million) and any government IT programme with a budget of more than DKK 60 million. The council evaluates whether the project or programme has high risks. If it does, close monitoring of the project becomes mandatory, including reporting every six months and the option of conducting an external review. The council can also recommend that projects that are already underway be subject to a review if they are delayed, become more costly than planned or face substantial challenges to the realisation of expected benefits.

The Danish Council for IT Projects is composed of nine senior managers, primarily from the private sector, but also from semi-public and public IT-intensive organisations. Its members have experience with large-scale IT projects or projects for change and can contribute solid and competent guidance to government IT projects. So far the council has carried out around 50 risk assessments for government IT projects, out of which 9 were found to be of high risk.

Source: Danish Council for IT Projects (n.d.), www.digst.dk/Servicemenu/English/Policy-and-Strategy/Interministerial-Project-Office/The-State-Council-for-IT-Projects.

What is almost entirely missing is co-ordination between the central and local levels of government. It is true that the Lithuanian Association of Municipalities is represented in the VIIVT Council. And local government affairs are the competence of the Ministry of Interior, which engages in individual projects to streamline government IT across Lithuania's 60 municipal governments. Together with the IVPK, the Ministry of the Interior plans to harmonise the digital services provided by Lithuanian municipalities in 2015, using also the national interoperability platform VIISP.

Despite these advances there are challenges to having more effective and systematic co-ordination between the central and local levels of government. A common agenda has not yet been formulated clearly enough in the sense of a common set of priorities for the coming years. This is critical to achieve buy-in from independent municipalities. The interoperability platform VIIVT has potential to generate that buy-in because of the potential savings on the development and harmonisation of locally provided services.

Recommendations

This section highlighted some significant problems Lithuania faces when turning the relatively well-formulated strategic directions into actual services and infrastructures. Lithuania does not lack co-ordination procedures or institutions, but rather the possibility to federate support and commitment around those procedures and institutions. A good balance of incentives, persuasive practices and arguably also some executive powers are needed to be able to utilise IT as a transformative element for government as a whole, rather than as a supporting element for individual ministries' agendas. Some elements to make this happen:

- Establish clear leadership and executive co-ordination powers. This should include reviewing the mandates of the two co-ordination bodies and taking political decisions on leadership for digital government. The current set-up of two ministries and an agency assuming leadership over digital government bears the risk of co-ordination losses across government. Some OECD countries recently moved digital government leadership closer to the centre of government in order to raise the political leverage for digital government co-ordination (e.g. France, Spain, United Kingdom).
- In that light there is possibly space in Lithuania to reconsider the role of the Office of the Government. It has a central policy co-ordination mandate in general in Lithuania, but not on a topic as central as government IT. A look at the Estonian model might be worthwhile. There, a "tandem" is in place: a senior official ("strategic ICT advisor") in the Government Office is responsible for alignment of ICT policies with national priorities, steering digital government and the national digital agenda and for identifying partnerships – domestically and abroad; a government CIO is situated in a line ministry (Ministry of Economics and Communications), has a strong mandate to implement government priorities in areas like interoperability or public service design, and uses good practices to illustrate benefits of digital service transformation. A dedicated agency (State Information Systems Authority, RIA) has an important role in the implementation and co-ordination of strategic issues, e.g. the national interoperability layer.
- But it is not just about the mandates and institutions. There is great benefit in making "smart" choices about the people who should lead digital government transformation. Different countries use different ways, e.g. Estonia made an experienced professional from the private sector the Government CIO, Spain elevated the recognised CIO of the tax administration to become Government CIO. Whatever the choice, it is important to make that position attractive enough for a "smart" leader to take it, i.e. there must be a perspective to drive real change.
- Articulate and communicate the political importance of "getting digital government right". Digital government today impacts the quality of public services (any service, not just "e-services"), it has an impact on the trust of citizens and on the efficiency of government operations. This understanding is not widespread across the public administration and will require cultural change, which sometimes needs to be triggered by strong statements – just like the United Kingdom's request for a "revolution, not evolution" of government IT in 2010 (Fox, 2010).

Improving implementation capacities

Good implementation capacities are critical to achieve expected outcomes for digital government strategies. The OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies* highlights the importance of structured management and monitoring capacities, the use of business cases to focus implementation, the need to have the necessary skills and capacities at hand, and to strategically use open government data.

Public service quality and harmonisation

At the face of it, online government services in Lithuania are of good quality and enjoy relatively high take-up rates. The government portal[13] – maintained by the IVPK – is a central entry point to hundreds of digital services for individuals, businesses and

public administrations. Individual ministries have shown capacity to transform public services with great care for user needs. The Lithuanian social security fund, SODRA, recently redesigned its entire web offer to respond to the needs of a wide and diverse user base.[14] More than just redesigning the front-end of its web pages, SODRA also has a track record of transforming entire services, e.g. the exchange of sick leave certificates which moved from a paper-based to a digital process some years ago.

However, such practices of public service design are still not widely spread across government. Key digital services, e.g. the 20 essential public services that were established by the European Commission, enjoy relatively high user orientation in the way they have been designed and implemented (IVPK, 2012). But it is the "long tail" of a huge number of government services at central, as well as at local level of government, that do not live up to high standards. The repeated failures of the online application system for kindergarten spaces in the capital city of Vilnius illustrates the greater challenge the public sector faces in redesigning digital services.

A major reason for this is that most institutions still develop online services in a supply-driven manner. That means they do not have a good understanding of actual user needs at the beginning of the process, they do not sufficiently involve users during design and development, they allow for only limited user testing before launching services and they rarely apply design guidelines for digital user interfaces. The national audit office repeatedly criticised that digital service development is too rarely used to actually review and redesign processes and in that way reap greater benefits of digitisation (LR Valstybės Kontrolė, 2014). This is a challenge the government needs to overcome in order to achieve the objectives of the national Digital Agenda 2020 on creating high-quality digital services that respond to users' needs.

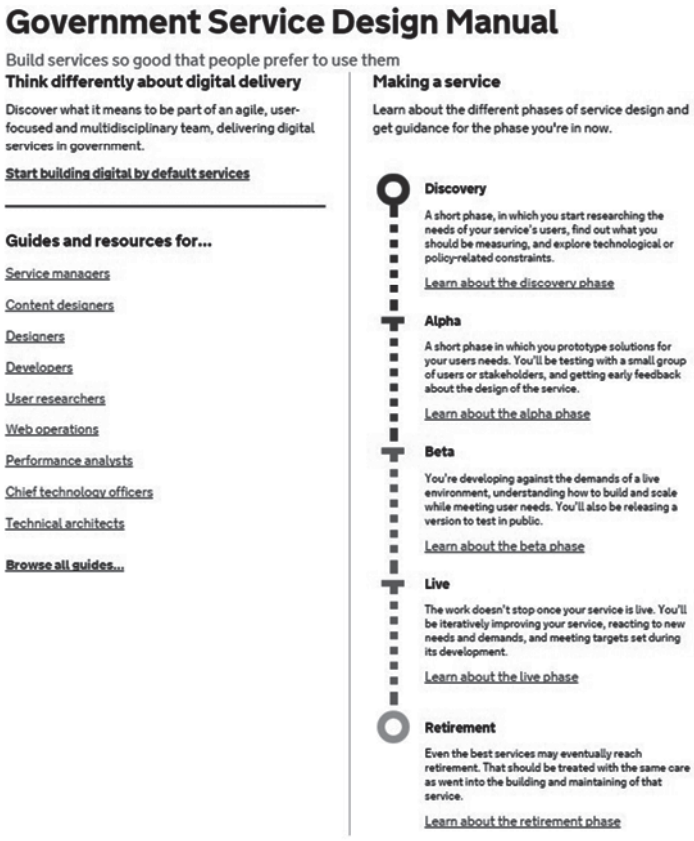
Effective tools for digital service transformation

Lithuania's challenge of harmonising the usability and design of digital services is shared with many other OECD countries. The government has, in fact, developed a set of guidelines for more iterative and inclusive design of digital public services.[15] The guidelines are quite comprehensive and provide examples of good and bad practices for digital service design. They include a checklist for institutions to solve common issues in the design of digital services.

Those guidelines are a very good starting point and need to become more commonly used. Digital services in Lithuania are still very different from one institution to another, which has a negative impact on the user's experience. There are few incentives or coercive mechanisms that would make line ministries or agencies adopt and apply the guidelines. The guidelines themselves are not necessarily designed in a way incites senior executives to take them up in their institutions.

The UK government can provide inspiration for a *Government Service Design Manual* that addresses these two issues. The manual is today part of a government requirement since 2014 that all new services must meet the "Digital by Default Service Standard". But it is also presented in a way that makes it easier for line ministries and service delivery agencies to integrate into their work (Figure 4.2). Entry points are provided for different service delivery roles, e.g. service managers, content designers, developers; along with explanations of the different phases of an effective service design process: discovery, alpha, beta and live. This makes it easier for different types of public administration officials to refer to the manual at different phases of a digital service project.

Figure 4.2. **UK Government Service Design Manual**



Source: www.gov.uk/service-manual.

A critical element of digital transformation of public services is being able to monitor and compare the performance of public services. A comprehensive catalogue of public services[16] is a starting point the Ministry of Interior disposes of. At this point it is, however, unclear to what degree this service catalogue is used to actually monitor and measure performance. It contains mostly meta-information on the provider and conditions for the delivery of individual services, including at local levels of government.

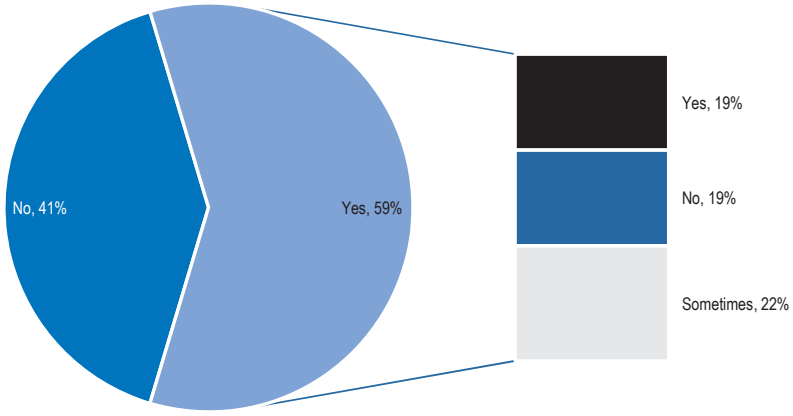
The public service catalogue has the potential to become a very useful tool for service transformation, e.g. by building performance evaluation on top of that catalogue. This will require close collaboration with the IVPK in order to combine the performance information for digital services available at the national web services portal www.epaslaugos.lt. The vision could be to arrive at something that resembles the UK government's performance data portal and its evaluation based on key performance indicators where each service is evaluated according to four headlined indicators:[17] cost of transaction, share of digital channel use in the total of transactions, user satisfaction and transaction completion rates. This type of performance measurement contributes to a transparent debate about public service quality and transformation.

Transformation of user experiences is tightly linked to transformation of government information systems. It is critical to achieve a certain degree of harmonisation in the design, development and use of information infrastructures. Standards for IT project management exist, e.g. the 2014 decrees on public online services usability methodology

recommendations and on information systems life cycles. The IVPK moreover compiles a register of all information resources across government,[18] in other words the "back-end" equivalent to the public service catalogue compiled by the Ministry of the Interior.

These initiatives now need to be coupled with ways to ensure wider application and achieve actual impact. Establishing and promoting common IT project management standards is not a challenge unique to Lithuania. Just over half of OECD governments have standard IT project management tools in place (Figure 4.3), but only a small number make their use mandatory. The use of standard tools has great implications for the possibility to achieve set objectives for digitisation; and for transparent reporting about the objectives achieved with digitisation. Like many OECD countries, Lithuania struggles to report the financial and other benefits of digitisation initiatives.

Figure 4.3. **Existence and mandatory use of standardised model for ICT project management in OECD countries**



Source: OECD (2014e), OECD Digital Government Performance Survey, OECD, Paris.

Achieving strategic, even political, support for digitisation is particularly important for high-impact projects. The Lithuanian government plans for government IT projects that are individually worth multiple millions of euros and that span several years. These are mostly part of EU funding initiatives for information society development and receive sophisticated financial monitoring and spending controls. What is lacking is more effective functional review and control. High-impact projects are expected to transform public service delivery and improve government effectiveness and efficiency. But they also bear high risks – research shows that it is very common for public sector IT projects with high budgets and long time lines to result in products that do not actually meet user requirements; or to have such delays that final products are already outdated when they first launch (Budzier and Flyvbjerg, 2012).

More advanced OECD countries address these risks by making it mandatory to establish and review business cases for large IT investments. This approach would also have benefits for digital government performance in Lithuania. Business cases are a tool to support strategic decisions on ICT investments and to frame and articulate the expected benefits and costs of a given project. They create transparency for decisions on government projects and allow identification of synergies, avoidance of overlaps or duplication of efforts and monitoring of success across the various project phases. The case of Denmark was mentioned earlier (Box 4.4). Other countries have established fixed

monetary thresholds above which any government IT investment needs to pass a central business case review, e.g. Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom. In some cases those thresholds are set particularly low, e.g. only GBP 100 000 in the United Kingdom for front-facing services as a means to ensure quality control over any public-facing public services.

Improving skills and capacities across government

Having the right skills and capacities at hand is pivotal to transform digital strategies into effective implementation. For that reason the OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies* underlines the importance of "reinforcing […] digital and project management skills, mobilising collaborations and/or partnerships with private and non-governmental sector actors as necessary" (Principle 10, Box 4.1).

Lithuania has taken interesting steps to enlarge the pool of leadership and talent available to the public sector. Experienced IT industry leaders are taken on board as advisors to the Prime Minister, to line ministers and to the Digital Agenda Council. That experience could be enhanced by giving outsiders more than just an advisory role. In the United States, the "Presidential Innovation Fellowship" programme[19] is now in its third year and has established a recognised track record of successful public service transformation by pairing senior civil servants with non-government technology leaders for work on specific projects over a determined period of time.

These and similar initiatives need to be complemented by a systematic evaluation of the future skills needs for the Lithuanian public administration. Government and society have achieved high levels of technology sophistication. This is a good moment to undertake a larger exercise to understand the strengths, weaknesses and actual needs for digital government transformation. Such an exercise took place in the United Kingdom, where the national audit office kick-started the discussion by issuing a short, yet impactful overview of the "government IT profession".[20] The competency and skills framework developed in that review helped the government to more clearly distinguish the roles and functions needed for successful implementation of IT projects – from executive leadership to technical skills and competencies. Today, the UK government is in a position to provide detailed guidance on the critical roles and skills it takes to transform digital service delivery in the public sector.[21]

Such a review of the different functional skills would help Lithuania to identify the skills sets needed – beyond just technical IT skills – to achieve tangible public service improvements through digitisation. A critical role in this regard are service managers (or service owners) who are responsible and the main contacts for any question of redesign of any public service.[22]

Other countries have similar challenges. Digital transformation units such as the UK GDS or the US 18F are now being emulated in different forms across OECD countries. But there is a challenge of broadening these experiences across the public sector. Lack of skilled human resources, lack of capacity to adapt to emerging trends and requirements, and the particular challenges at local levels of government are a common thread. OECD governments have responded in various ways, e.g. by creating recruitment programmes aimed at recent graduates (Australia's "ICT Cadetship Programme") or by partnering with civil society and business to bring in technology leaders to the public sector who work on specific, time-limited projects (Code for America in the United States).

Open government data as a vector of transformation

Lithuania is developing an open government data initiative. This is part of the Information Society Development Plan and in 2014 the Prime Minister sent official letters to line ministries and agencies to encourage them to open up data. Parts of the infrastructure and information have already been in place since the implementation of the first EU Directive on public sector information, e.g. through development of a preliminary open data portal. The Ministry of Transport and Communications now plans to spend around EUR 4 million on the development of an advanced open data portal (Ministry of Transport and Communications, 2015). The Lithuanian government can furthermore build on good examples to showcase the use of opening up public sector data, such as the Social Security Fund SODRA's open data platform.[23]

The importance of political leadership and a functioning portal cannot be underestimated. At the same time, what proved to be instrumental in countries like France, the United Kingdom or the United States was gradual experimentation and early collaboration with potential reusers of government data. There is a risk that Lithuania conceives the development of the open data portal in the traditional way of building digital services, and thereby repeats some of the deficiencies discussed in this chapter. It would be a missed opportunity to make an open government data project "owned by" one single ministry, and to focus on the supply of data without stimulating and promoting actual demand. Leading countries in this area went through alpha and beta phases of their national portals during which they actively involved businesses, civil society, researchers and individuals to better understand the demand and reuse patterns around government data.

In fact, open government data in the beginning is often about working with intermediaries, instead of final users. Businesses, non-governmental organisations and associations are the ones that can best transform government data into products and services that serve their target groups. These actors understand societal needs and commercial opportunities, and can therefore reuse government data for applications that government might not think of. This could, for example, be in the area of transparency and the fight against corruption.

An important partner for opening up government data is the business community, including small and medium-sized enterprises. In cases where government agencies have developed revenue models around restricting access to public sector data, changing those business models might seem difficult. It requires mechanisms that can compensate for lost revenues through clearly determined benefits. These benefits will not necessarily be realised by the agency opening up its data assets, but can be realised by businesses. It is therefore important to properly account for the benefits of opening up government-held information by considering wider economic benefits, see the examples of Denmark and Spain (Box 4.5).

Box 4.5. **Open government data: Economic incentives in Denmark and Spain**

In 2002, the Danish government decided to make data in the National Address Data Register available free of charge. At that point, very few European countries made such data freely available. A Danish government evaluation in 2010 concluded that direct financial benefits in the period 2005-09 were around EUR 62 million – the total costs were around EUR 2 million in the entire period (2010 figures). Net direct financial benefits are annually estimated at around EUR 14 million, of which 30% are in the public sector and 70% in the private sector. This study only includes direct benefits from around 1 200 parties receiving address data directly, not the benefits arising in later parts of the distribution chain.

In Spain, http://datos.gob.es encourages the reuse of government data by providing access to government datasets in reusable formats. Since 2012, the Spanish government has been surveying companies in various sectors that reuse such data. It is estimated that those companies employ around 4 000 people and generate over EUR 1 billion aggregate annual revenues. Around half of the revenues can be linked back directly to the reuse of government data.

Sources: Danish Government and Local Government Denmark (2012), *Good Basic Data for Everyone: A Driver for Growth and Efficiency*, The eGovernment Strategy 2011-2015, October, www.fm.dk/publications/2012/good-basic-data-for-everyone/~/media/Publikationer/Imported/2012/Gode%20grunddata%20til%20alle/BasicData_UK_web_2012.10.08.ashx; Red.es (2015), "Estudio de caracterización del sector infomediario 2014", National Observatory for Telecommunications and the Information Society, Madrid, www.ontsi.red.es/ontsi/es/informacion-y-recursos/estudio-de-caracterizaci%C3%B3n-del-sector-infomediario-2014.

Recommendations

Lithuania has some important basics well in place: a catalogue of public services, a register of information systems, standards for project management, a list of information resources for public access, a plan to open up government data. What is needed is a more strategic vision of how these individual and mostly uncoordinated elements can work together to create a modern, open, responsive and data-driven public sector. This goes back to the establishment of visionary leadership for government IT. But it also has to do with creating space for more radical transformation efforts, partnering with non-government stakeholders and allowing "fresh" talent to support the transformation.

- There is need to stimulate a culture of persuasion by illustration about the benefits of good service design. Guides for better digital service design are provided, e.g. by the IVPK, but their use and application remain very limited and patchy across ministries. The government can stimulate the adoption of good design principles (based on good national and international practices) through more effective communication and illustration. Transformation will require guidance that is easy to adopt and apply for civil servants across the entire government.
- Skills and capacities issues are commonplace, and are not alien to Lithuania either. It would be beneficial to conduct a systematic identification of the functional roles necessary to drive digital government transformation. That can be mapped against the existing set of institutions, roles, skills and development programmes. There are, for example, some important functions that do not currently exist (or at least not to a full degree) in Lithuania but that are important to consider: service managers; a government IT architect; senior digital transformation leaders that respond to business-oriented – not IT-oriented – performance objectives.

- More rigorous business case thinking can facilitate much of the expected change. This is particularly important for the multi-million euro projects that are part of the EU Structural Funds 2014-2020. Feasibility studies and other reviews are already part of standard monitoring. It is, however, important to recognise the high risks of failure associated with large public sector IT projects in any country. Some can be anticipated and avoided by following review mechanisms that focus not only on financial and project-level tracking, but rather include reviews of strategic orientation. Others will require more agile service design principles to make sure front-facing digital services do not just follow the public administration's logic, but really focus on user needs.
- Open government data needs a less supply-based approach and more of an experimental approach to discover how data can add value to the public sector, to society, to the economy. Large parts of the public sector consider their data of no or limited interest to the wider public. But examples of new uses of existing data show how public sector data can improve public services, increase the accountability of public sector action and create more collaborative relationships in government and in society. The government should start by creating communities of interest within the public sector to exchange good practices. Those communities can then increasingly engage non-government stakeholders to identify a wider set of needs and opportunities for government data. One example is the way the French government has done through its "DataConnexions" networks, contests and communities.[24]

Notes

1. www.epaslaugos.lt.
2. http://opendata.gov.lt.
3. The Ministry of Transport and Communications is preparing amendments to existing legislation that will establish government-wide requirements and standards for high-quality digital services, oriented towards user needs. It is too early to evaluate the impact of these amendments.
4. http://transparency.lt/initiatives/technology-and-transparency.
5. www.beseselio.lt.
6. www.lrs.lt/pls/proj/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=1021577&p_org=21&p_fix=n&p_gov=n.
7. Recent changes made to Lithuania's governance framework on digital government are not reflected in this text. These include nomination in March 2015 of a ministerial advisor on government IT to the Minister of Transport and Communications. According to government information the advisor is the *de facto* Government CIO.
8. www.vrm.lt/lit/Struktura-ir-kontaktai/12/5.

9. According to information received by the Ministry of Transport and Communications, this nomination resembles the establishment of a *de facto* government CIO. It is too early to evaluate the impacts of this action on the governance challenges highlighted in this section. www.transp.lt/lt/naujienos/13510.

10. www.ivpk.lt/en/enhm/about-isdc.

11. www.transp.lt/lt/veikla/veiklos_sritys/informacines_visuomenes_pletra/valstybes_informaciniu_istekliu_valdymo_tarybos_veikla.

12. www.transp.lt/lt/veikla/veiklos_sritys/informacines_visuomenes_pletra/skaitmenines_darbotvarkes_tarybos_veikla.

13. www.epaslaugos.lt.

14. www.sodra.lt.

15. http://epaslaugos.ideacode.lt/index.html.

16. www.lietuva.gov.lt.

17. www.gov.uk/performance.

18. http://registrai.lt.

19. www.whitehouse.gov/innovationfellows.

20. www.nao.org.uk/report/nao-review-a-snapshot-of-the-governments-ict-profession-in-2011.

21. www.gov.uk/service-manual/the-team.

22. www.gov.uk/service-manual/the-team/service-manager.html.

23. http://atvira.sodra.lt/lt-eur/index.html.

24. www.etalab.gouv.fr/dataconnexions.

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Chapter 5.

Open government at the sector level in Lithuania: Health sector case study

This sector-specific chapter analyses open government in service delivery, exploring open government in the health sector. It introduces health sector governance in Lithuania and reviews the interplay between strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, and performance management as centre of government instruments and their application in the health sector. The chapter then reviews citizens' engagement at the sector level, paying particular attention to using citizens' participation as a tool to fight corruption in the health sector. The chapter then discusses and assesses efforts in e-health and recommends ways to improve the governance of e-health projects and the use of e-health initiatives to improve transparency and accountability.

Health sector governance in Lithuania

The healthcare sector in Lithuania has experienced major change since the country's independence. New governance, financing and delivery models have been proposed and adopted in the past 25 years. These have been influenced by societal changes more generally and changes in the healthcare sector more specifically. Lithuania transitioned from the Soviet healthcare system to a system based on health insurance with the adoption of the Health Insurance Law in 1996. Public ownership of healthcare facilities is combined with private ownership depending on the level, type of care and type of institution.

Public institutions play an important role in the regulation, organisation, ownership and provision of healthcare services (Table 5.1). The main actors include the parliament (Seimas), the National Health Board, the central government, particularly the Ministry of Health, the National Health Insurance Fund and a number of specialised state agencies that are responsible for specific services and diseases. Central institutions regulate and co-ordinate territorial offices which are subordinated to the central authorities. They include five territorial branches of the National Health Insurance Fund, ten public health centres, subordinated to the Ministry of Health, and local healthcare providers which are owned by municipalities and regulated by the Ministry of Health. Since 2010, when the counties were abolished, the responsibilities of the regional level have diminished compared to the situation before this reform.

Inter-ministerial and inter-institutional co-ordination and collaboration are an important component of the current strategic planning documents. The activities of ministries such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and the Ministry of Education and Science play a significant role in the healthcare sector.

A number of healthcare reforms have been adopted since Lithuania's independence. These have reflected larger changes in public administration and public policy according to the different phases of reform discussed in Chapter 1. In the early 1990s, the primary goal of health policy was the creation of the legal and regulatory framework to reflect the new economic and political realities of post-Soviet Lithuania. This first phase included the adoption of four main legislative acts: the Health System Law (1994), the Healthcare Institutions Law (1996), the Health Insurance Law (1996) and the Public Health Law (2002). In 1997, the compulsory health insurance scheme was introduced and a single payer, the National Health Insurance Fund, was established to administer the scheme. At the turn of the century, primary care development constituted a main policy goal and in 2002 general practitioners acquired a gate-keeping role in the healthcare system. The same period witnessed gradual restructuring of the service organisation and provider network with the aim to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the system as a whole.

Connecting the health sector with the centre of government: Planning and reporting

Strategic planning and inter-institutional collaboration

Lithuania2030 incorporates a horizontal dimension "Health for All" which denotes a consideration of the implications that state policies and programmes have on population health. This horizontal, inter-ministerial and inter-institutional approach to strategic

Table 5.1. **The main actors and responsibilities of Lithuania's health system governance**

Actor	Responsibilities
Parliament (Seimas)	– Initiates and adopts healthcare legislation – Sets the health policy agenda
National Health Board	– Advises on public health and healthcare policy
Central government	– Co-ordinates the activity of ministries and specialised state agencies: Statistics Lithuania; Drug, Tobacco and Alcohol Control Department; and State Food and Veterinary Service
Ministry of Health	– Stewards the entire health system and is responsible for overall governance and performance – Drafts legislation and issues regulation – Develops healthcare infrastructure plans along with the Ministry of Finance – Develops and manages national health programmes – Co-ordinates the activity of specialised national agencies and their regional offices – Regulates healthcare provider licensing through the State Healthcare Accreditation Agency – Owns large hospitals
National Health Insurance Fund	– Implements and administers the national health insurance scheme – Performs budget planning and control of the health insurance system
Ministry of Finance	– Allocates the budget of the Ministry of Health – Funds the state's contribution to the health insurance budget – Decides on major investments – Conducts strategic planning and programme budgeting
Ministry of Social Security and Labour	– Finances medical support in social care institutions – Regulates safety at work – Finances sick leave, disability pensions and special nursing needs
Ministry of Education and Science	– Regulates medical training as part of the educational system
Ministry of Defence, Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Justice	– Run parallel healthcare systems that are not integrated into the national healthcare system
Regional actors	– Five territorial branches of the National Health Insurance Fund – Ten public health centres
Municipalities	– Organise the delivery of primary and social care locally – Own public outpatient facilities and public nursing hospitals – Own small and medium-sized hospitals within local jurisdictions – Approve, fund and implement local public health programmes

Source: Interviews during 2nd fact-finding mission (February 2015), complemented with legal and policy framework documents.

planning aims at improving the effectiveness of central, local and non-state action, in order to address the main social vulnerabilities and public health concerns. The latter include the need to raise awareness and promote changes in lifestyle including healthy eating, physical exercise and a reduction in alcohol consumption, tobacco and psychotropic substance use. Major strategic planning and inter-institutional collaboration for the period 2010-15 include:

- state progress strategy Lithuania2030 (2012)
- National Progress Programme 2014-2020 – horizontal priority "Health for All" (2012)
- National Drug Control and Drug Prevention Programme 2010-2016 (2010)
- Lithuania Health Programme 2014-2025 (2014)
- inter-institutional action plan "Health for All" (2014)
- Mental Health Strategy and Suicide Prevention Action Plan (2014)
- Drug, Tobacco and Alcohol Prevention Inter-institutional Action Plan (2015).

In addition, the Government Programme 2012-2016 as well as the annual government and sector priorities also address a number of health-related goals.

The involvement of stakeholders in the definition of strategic goals and indicators varies depending on the type of goals. Highly technical aspects attract less attention than more general public health issues for which there are already established non-governmental organisations promoting the interests of the patients in those respective specialties. There is a formal process of consultation with non-state actors, according to methodological guidelines, that the Ministry of Health is following before any major policy change. The Public Relations Division within the ministry manages public relations and the ministry uses its website to share with the public and non-governmental organisations its annual activity report and a wide range of other information of general interest.

Lithuania2030

Improving population health constitutes a horizontal priority in the Lithuania2030 strategy along with culture and regional development. These horizontal, cross-cutting priorities differ from the three main vertical pillars of the strategy which include smart economy, smart society and smart governance. The strategy thus views healthcare priorities, grouped under the heading "Health for All", as a progress area that affects the realisation of the three vertical progress areas.

Good health for the entire population is also expected to contribute to improving civic participation and a broad public engagement in community life, thus fostering social capital and social cohesion. The strategy discusses the importance of developing healthy lifestyles from a young age and taking measures to prevent disease: "Good public health ensures active participation in civic life. Health is seen as the most valuable asset and is important for both personal and public well-being and, therefore, a healthy lifestyle is consistently fostered from a young age, focusing on disease prevention and health preservation". More specifically, under the smart society pillar, the strategy aims at providing the strategic leverage for "developing a healthy lifestyle as a prerequisite for a dynamic, energetic society and mobilizing public and institutional efforts towards better public health through measures preventing the use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs and increased public awareness with regard to the benefits of a healthy lifestyle."

National Progress Programme 2014-2020

The purpose of the National Progress Programme 2014-2020 is to make the general provisions of the Lithuania 2030 strategy concrete and facilitate its implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In addition to the horizontal priority "Health for All", the first two priorities of the National Progress Programme 2014-2020, i.e. "public education, science and culture" and "active and supportive society", include a number of health-related objectives and measurable targets to be achieved by 2020 (see Table 5.2 for an example).

Lithuania Health Programme 2014-2025

The Lithuania Health Programme 2014-2025 was approved by the parliament on 26 June 2014 (Resolution No. XII-964). The programme established specific healthcare goals, objectives and targets to seek to improve public health and address identified public health concerns and related risk factors. A significant component of the programme consists of developing inter-sector collaboration and societal engagement to

promote healthy lifestyles, including reduction in alcohol consumption, tobacco use, and illicit use and accessibility of drugs and psychotropic substances. The programme envisages measures to improve inter-institutional co-ordination and international collaboration to prevent and address addictions that threaten well-being and put strain on the health and social care systems.

Table 5.2. **National Progress Programme 2014-2020: Health-related objective (example)**

Priority	1. Public education, science and culture		
Goal	1.5. Promoting health and environmental sustainability		
Objective	1.5.1. Developing self-awareness of healthy lifestyle		
Budget	1.51%		
Evaluation criteria	Health-related lifestyle changes by age and gender	Fresh fruit and vegetable intake	Percentage of population with low physical activity
Measurement unit	**Percentage**	**Grams per person per day**	**Percentage**
Initial value	21.0%	228	24.1%
Final value	26.0%	250	22.0%
Participating ministries	Ministry of Education and Science (co-ordinator), Ministry of Health, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Agriculture		

Source: Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania (2012), National Progress Programme 2014-2020, Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania No. 1 482, 11 December, No. 144-7430, www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=439028.

The development and adoption of the Lithuania Health Programme 2014-2015 is justified by the need to develop a set of measurable objectives in order to achieve the priorities of Lithuania2030, the National Progress Programme 2014-2020 and other governmental strategic plans. The programme sets goals as well as specific objectives and targets to be achieved by 2025. The overarching goal is to improve public health, increase life expectancy and reduce health inequalities by 2025. This goal is operationalised through four objectives and a number of specific targets. The four objectives are:

- increase life expectancy, improve public health and reduce health inequalities
- create a safer social environment, reduce health inequalities and social exclusion
- create a health-supporting work and living environment
- create a culture of healthy lifestyle.

"Health for All" Action Plan (2014)

The rationale of the inter-institutional action plan "Health for All", approved by the government on 26 March 2014, is to implement the goals of the horizontal priority "Health for All" of the National Progress Programme 2014-2020. The plan is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Health and includes the participation of the following nine other ministries: Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Energy, and the Ministry of Transport and Communications. Following the provisions of the Strategic Planning Methodology, the plan outlines specific goals, objectives, measures and budgetary appropriations for 2014, 2015 and 2016 as well as the total amounts for 2014-20. Importantly, each objective falls under the responsibility of a specific ministry, which needs to incorporate the responsibility into ministerial strategic action plans.

National Drug Control and Drug Prevention Programme 2010-2016

In 2010, the parliament approved the National Programme on Drug Control and Prevention of Drug Addiction 2010-2016. The responsible institution for drug policy implementation was the Drug Control Department, a department under the government. Starting on 1 April 2011, the responsibility for the programme was transferred to the Drug, Tobacco and Alcohol Control Department, a newly established agency under the government. This organisational change heralded the recognition that greater inter-sectoral and inter-institutional co-ordination was needed in the area of substance abuse with implications for public health policy more generally.

The Ministry of Education and Science, most notably, is the implementing institution of the prevention and educational component of the programme. This universal prevention programme has been implemented since 2011 in 964 schools and continued in the following years. The Ministry of Health collaborates with the Drug, Tobacco and Alcohol Control Department in providing leadership and an integrated approach to substance abuse and public health that spans different social sectors and institutional actors. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour, through the Agency for State Child Rights Protection and Adoption, manages the register of families at social risk.

The implementation measures are approved annually by the government which decides on the budget and the institutions that need to contribute to the implementation of the measures. The Drug, Tobacco and Alcohol Control Department is responsible for co-ordinating implementation and delivers an annual report by 1 March. The department submits the report to the government, relevant institutions and the general public and in this way documents the results of the measures in the previous year and informs of any changes that occurred during that time period.

Drug, Tobacco and Alcohol Prevention Inter-institutional Action Plan

An inter-institutional working group was set up on 4 February 2014 by a decree of the Director of the Drug, Tobacco and Alcohol Control Department. The working group approved the draft of the National Programme for Control, Use and Prevention of Drugs, Tobacco and Alcohol, the purpose of which is to develop long-term goals and measurable objectives that align with the existing national strategic documents. One year later, on 25 February 2015, the government approved the resolution of a Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco Prevention Inter-institutional Action Plan. The action plan envisages three implementation measures:

- reduce the supply of drugs, tobacco and alcohol
- reduce the demand for drugs, tobacco and alcohol
- strengthen the management and co-ordination of activities, monitoring, inter-institutional and international co-operation, the development of competencies in the areas of control and use prevention of drugs, tobacco and alcohol.

The Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco Prevention Inter-institutional Action Plan includes detailed provisions concerning the goals, objectives and measures to be achieved during 2015-2017. Specific funding is budgeted for 2015 and expected appropriations are foreseen for each goal, objective and measure for 2016 and 2017 respectively. Importantly, the plan lists the participating ministries and agencies for each specific measure.

Government Programme 2012-2016 and annual government and sector priorities

The Government Programme 2012-2016 acknowledges the importance of improving population health and emphasises the role of prevention, early diagnostics, health promotion and securing adequate financial, material and human resources. The programme includes a number of health-related provisions to be considered during the timeframe of the programme. Chapter XI integrates these provisions while recognising the need for inter-ministerial collaboration and targeted action that promotes the adoption of healthy lifestyles and supports social well-being. Organisational and structural changes are envisaged to improve healthcare provision and the quality of medical and social care interventions while addressing factors that jeopardise the realisation of these goals. These factors include the need to address corruption and its manifestations, such as the use of informal payments and illegal public procurement practices.

The current government assumed the priorities of the long-term planning documents and developed the following annual priorities, which are further translated into measurable objectives and measures to be implemented in the short term: "promotion of healthy lifestyles and reduction in mortality from external causes" (2013 and 2014) and "increase access to public health services" (2015).

The strategic priority action No 7: "to develop and begin to implement a strategy for the prevention of suicides and other premature deaths caused by external factors" was incorporated into the Strategic Action Plan 2014-2016 of the Ministry of Health in 2014, which shows the inter-relations between governmental and ministerial planning and budgeting. This specific priority was integrated into the Mental Health Strategy and an Action Plan for Suicide Prevention was adopted by the Order of the Minister of Health on 28 March 2014. The plan includes specific provisions for 2014-16 and targets a stabilisation of cases during this period. The Ministry of Health formed a working group in order to develop an action plan to facilitate the implementation of the strategy. This working group consists of both governmental and non-governmental actors, including representatives of universities and professional associations, such as the Lithuanian Psychologists Society, the Lithuanian Society of Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists, the Lithuanian Association of Psychiatrists. The non-governmental sector was also represented through different other organisations: the Lithuanian Forum of Disabled People, the Global Initiative in Psychiatry, Welfare Society for Persons with Mental Disabilities "Viltis", the Human Rights Coalition or the Human Rights Monitoring Institute. The action plan was made available online in the register of legal acts of the parliament and on the website of the Ministry of Health.

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

To improve effectiveness in health programming, the Office of the Government and the Ministry of Health are interested in increasing clarity in goal setting and taking steps to ensure that the government priorities are achieved. The Ministry of Health, through the Health Strategic Development Division, is participating in a series of seminars and strategic sessions organised by the Office of the Government as part of the project Improvement of Strategic Planning Documents Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Processes (RESST). This initiative provides a platform for discussing inter-ministerial strategic planning and improving the understanding and capacity of line ministries in using the existing system and finding ways to improve co-ordination and maximise the impact of the inter-ministerial action plans.

Co-ordinating ministries are responsible for the achievement of objectives and results included in the strategic documents starting with Lithuania2030 and the National Progress Programme 2014-2020, and then further down to the government priorities and the inter-institutional action plans. Reflecting the strategic planning methodology, the objectives of the National Progress Programme 2014-2020 need to be incorporated into the strategic action plans and annual action plans of each participating ministry. The Office of the Government is tasked with monitoring the overall implementation of the programme. An inter-ministerial working group, led by the Director of the Department of Economic Development in the Office of the Government, was established in February 2015 (Ordinance 36/2015 of the Prime Minister). The working group's tasks are to approve the programme evaluation plans, discuss the interim and final reports and issue recommendations for programme improvement.

In terms of the inter-institutional action plans, each includes detailed performance evaluation criteria for the objectives for 2014, 2015 and 2016 as well as the final goal to be achieved by 2020. One ministry, in this case the Ministry of Health, is ultimately responsible for performance (inter-institutional action plan "Health for All", 2014). The Ministry of Health is tasked with reporting annually to the government on the performance of the plan and integrates this performance information into the annual ministerial report. The Ministry of Health is also responsible for quarterly reporting to the Office of the Government through the monitoring information system on achieved performance as compared to the expected performance for each indicator.

The Lithuania Health Programme 2014-2015 is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Health and the latter is thus responsible for monitoring, evaluation and reporting. The Ministry of Health collects information on the performance indicators annually and submits it to the government for monitoring and evaluation along with the annual activity report. An interim evaluation is planned for 2020 and a final evaluation at the end of the programme in 2025.

Recommendations

Health-related objectives have been integrated into the general strategic planning system and the country has made substantial progress with developing and implementing strategic planning in the health sector following the lead by the centre of government, which has increasingly assumed a more active strategic role. Though the number of strategies and plans remain substantial, some streamlining has been achieved, with clearer interconnectedness between different plans, which contributes to transparency. Inter-ministerial planning and collaboration have been invested in and progress has been made over the last few years. In addition, monitoring, evaluation and reporting procedures exist in each strategic programme, e.g. the Lithuania Health Programme 2014-2025, the inter-institutional action plan "Health for All" or the Mental Health Strategy and Suicide Prevention Plan. In order to make the planning and reporting system more relevant from an open government perspective, the following recommendations can be made:

- Move from a monitoring and evaluation system that is solely focused on the needs of the centre of government towards a system that is more focused on sharing information with stakeholders (in a digestible format) and promoting feedback on the sector performance (i.e. enhance the visibility of policy results).
- Invest in a communication strategy that illustrates (for non-experts) the interconnectedness between different strategies and plans, not only at the level of

goal-setting and associated means, but also at the level of goal achievement across strategies and plans.

- Promote the notion of open government throughout the sector so that civil servants get a better understanding of the value added of transparency, access to information, participatory approaches and investment in training in this area to equip staff with the appropriate tools and skills.

Citizens' engagement in the health sector

Involving patients and different stakeholders in the healthcare system has the objective of including their experiences and knowledge to create a more transparent, accountable and responsive healthcare system, to deliver better health services and to explore opportunities to involve stakeholders in their implementation (i.e. co-delivery of public services). According to information of Lithuania's Ministry of Health, 40% of 15-74-year-old people do not trust the healthcare system in general (Ministry of Health, n.d.). Adopting an open government approach and involving citizens in policy making and service provision could effectively contribute to enhancing the quality of and foster trust in the healthcare system.

Public engagement with health sector institutions

Citizens' engagement in the policy process is clearly enshrined in Lithuania's legal framework. Similarly, a legal obligation to allow the public to participate exists in the health sector. The main law governing the health system – the Law on the Health System (1994) – states that the participation of the public has to occur directly and through democratically elected representatives (Article 5.8). Furthermore, the law outlines the right to form public organisations to promote citizens' rights and suggests that the state support the activities of these organisations (Article 5.6). Multiple mechanisms and institutions exist in the Lithuanian healthcare system that offer possibilities for citizens, patients, CSOs and interest groups to participate. These are situated both at the national and local level.

Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health is the main institution responsible for health policy. Citizens and associations have various options to interact with the ministry to influence its policies. The ministry developed measures to listen to patients' needs, complaints and questions. Patients can come to the reception of the ministry, call its hotline or send emails and letters. Patients can also lodge a complaint directly to a health institution or to the Commission on Evaluation of the Damage Caused to the Health of Patients.[1]

Table 5.3 shows the channels available to patients and citizens in OECD countries to seek redress and safeguard their rights. As in most OECD countries, Lithuania has a charter of patients' rights, the Law on the Rights of Patients and Compensation for the Damage to their Health (1996). Citizens can also complain to the Seimas Ombudsman, whose annual report shows that the Ministry of Health is among the ministries with the highest percentage of justified complaints concerning their management (Seimas Ombudsmen, 2013).

In addition to responses to individual patient needs, citizens can get involved in the policy-making process. Through its website, the ministry shares information on the Patient Forum, the Tripartite Council, funding available to non-governmental

organisations (NGOs) and on many matters related to accessing healthcare, including information on healthy lifestyles. In addition, the ministry conducts surveys on current relevant health issues. For example, questions like "should restaurants provide information on possible allergies?" are regularly published. The results of all surveys are public. The number of respondents varies greatly according to the topic, ranging from 10 to almost 4 000 comments (Ministry of Health, 2015e). According to officials of the Public Relation Division, draft laws and policies are also posted for public comment. Additional information is often published to promote informed comments. Mailing lists of target groups are also used to promote the participation of stakeholders that are considered of particular relevance. After the consultation process, the modified law is published again. While these are all positive initiatives, participation rates remain generally rather low.

Table 5.3. **Citizens' rights in the national healthcare system in OECD countries, 2009-12**

	Formal definition or charter for patients' rights at the national level (2012)	Patient can seek redress in courts in case of medical error (2009)	Hospitals are required to have a patient desk for collecting and resolving complaints (2009)	Ombudsman office is responsible for investigating and resolving complaints against health services (2009)	Class action suits permitted against health providers and pharmaceutical companies (2009)
Total OECD	26	25	19	21	14

Source: OECD (2013), *Government at a Glance 2013*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2013-en.

More organised citizens – such as patients' organisations, nurses' organisations, etc. – have further formal and informal mechanisms to influence the policy-making cycle. A Patient Forum was set up in 2012 replacing the Patient Council according to the Ministry of Health. Currently, 21 patients' organisations are members of the forum and new ones can be admitted. It is a formal link between the Ministry of Health and patients that aims to include patients' interests in the definition of health policies and programmes and in their implementation. The forum provides its opinion on these various issues and its proposals are published on the Ministry of Health's website (Ministry of Health, 2013).

The Lithuanian National Health System Tripartite Council was established in 2013 to unite the different members of the healthcare system, such as employers, employees and healthcare organisations. Currently, the council is chaired by the Ministry of Health. This council discussed, for example, the unpaid leave introduced in the system following the budget cuts in the context of the crisis and declared this practice unlawful (Ministry of Health, 2015c). The ministry also forms working groups and organises *ad hoc* meetings in which different stakeholders are invited to present their views. These are based on informal networks and are not open to the general public, nor is information about their outcomes published.

The development process of the Lithuanian National Health Programme 2014-2025 also offered multiple opportunities for stakeholders to present their ideas, in particular during conferences as stated by officials of the Ministry of Health. The programme was designed in line with the European policy framework Health 2020 that is based on the values of the WHO Constitution, which includes transparency and participation in decision making. The framework recognises that health can be improved if governments focus on two strategic objectives at the same time: "improving health for all and reducing health inequalities" and "improving leadership and participatory governance for health".

As such, Health 2020 clearly underlines the importance of the governance system in the health sector as a success factor to improve overall health (WHO, 2012).

National Health Insurance System

As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, Lithuania has a compulsory health insurance (CHI) managed by the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF), which was established in 1996 as a public body subordinated to the Ministry of Health (Kacevičius, 2015).

A Council of the Compulsory Health Insurance Fund was established to make recommendations on the insurance system to the Ministry of Health. Recommendations concern the introduction of new services, prices, drugs and the budget of the NHIF. The council consists of government, trade union, healthcare and patient representatives, which enables a constant dialogue among different stakeholders on the insurance system that can influence policy outcomes (Kacevičius, 2015). This is in line with the legal requirement to involve the public in the insurance system (Article 6.7). Its power to influence the budget of the NHIF has, however, diminished. Whereas its decisions used to be binding, they are now only recommendatory. The general public has the opportunity to influence the NHIF budget once it is in parliament for approval. On this occasion, the Seimas Committee on Health consults various stakeholders.

As the NHIF has five regional funds, five regional supervisory bodies also exist. These are composed of local politicians and representatives of each municipality. They supervise the regional funds, approve applications of new providers and can watch over equal access to healthcare (Ministry of Health, 2014a).

National Health Board

The National Health Board – established by the Health System Law (Article 67) – is a forum to advise the Health Committee of the Seimas. It unites different stakeholders such as representatives of the government, the scientific community, the healthcare system and civil society organisations (CSOs). Its members include five representatives of the health boards of municipalities delegated by the Association of Municipalities, five representatives of non-governmental organisations and five public health specialists (Office of the Seimas, n.d.a). The membership structure is discussed by the Seimas Health Committee and members are voted in the Seimas. Some have argued therefore that the choice of members is based on political considerations. The Board has several meetings annually to co-ordinate and discuss health issues, ranging from the health strategy to particular health problems. The meetings are open to the public and announced in advance on the website where the decisions are also published. The annual report is presented to the Seimas and is also publicly available. The proposals of the Board are addressed to the Seimas Health Committee and have an advisory character. In addition, the Board can present its advice on draft legal acts and draft health programmes (Office of the Seimas, n.d.b). All members participate on a voluntary basis in the Board, in addition to their regular job. According to some members of the Board, this voluntary nature of their appointment and the limited secretariat do not allow them to make sufficiently informed recommendations and compel them to choose a limited range of topics on which to exercise their advisory role. Despite these considerations, the Board has been successful in some instances in promoting its recommendations. Members told the OECD Peer Review team that the Board succeeded in introducing their proposal on alcohol consumption in the Law on Professional Drivers. Hence, although limited in its

ability to set a strategic vision and influence policy making, the Board seems to provide an important opportunity to discuss critical health issues from various view points and find consensus.

Seimas Committee on Health Affairs

The Committee on Health Affairs is responsible for health policy in the parliament, proposing legislation on different issues and supervising the policies of the Ministry of Health. The current priorities of the committee are to improve healthcare and to promote a healthy lifestyle. To promote changes in lifestyle, they try to bring together different ministries (i.e. Ministry of Social Security and Labour and the Ministry of Education and Science). In order to inform its decisions, the committee requests the opinion of various stakeholders (hospital representatives, university, association of doctors and patients' representatives) and invites them to present their views to the committee. The committee lacks formal engagement mechanisms, and the needed financial and human resources to operationalise them, and thus relies on the capacity of associations to reach out and engage with its members (Office of the Seimas, n.d.c).

Stakeholder engagement at the local level

The format of the National Health Board is replicated at the municipal level. In every municipality, a community health board advises the municipal councils. It consists of enterprises, healthcare specialists, NGOs and institutions of the municipality,. They discuss and approve the primary healthcare development programmes of the municipal council. The board meets only once a year, but in the meantime informal consultations take place. Similarly to the Seimas, the municipal council has a Health Affairs Committee advising on health affairs at the local level. Furthermore, the municipality organises public consultations on various topics. Each healthcare institution (hospital or healthcare centre) has an advisory board that supervises activities and agrees upon priorities. These boards consist of representatives from the municipality, doctors, persons elected by the hospital and from the association of physicians.

Non-governmental stakeholders in the health sector

The organisations that are active in the health sector in Lithuania include patients' organisations, associations of professional healthcare employees, the business sector (e.g. pharmaceutical industry) and various NGOs which are mostly engaged in the provision of health services. As described above, the healthcare system offers various formal mechanisms to consult with these stakeholders. In addition, many organisations interact with government institutions through informal networks, which are especially active in the capital city Vilnius.

There are several patients' associations that advocate for their rights. These organisations have multiple opportunities to influence policy making – some based on formal mechanisms and some on informal networks. Every patients' association can become a member of the Patient Forum and thereby engage in a formal dialogue with the Ministry of Health. Some associations are also invited as experts/advisers to meetings of the Seimas Health Committee, to working group meetings of the Ministry of Health or even in an advisory capacity to the Minister of Health. Despite these opportunities, associations voice that the actual impact they have in reality remains very limited.

Furthermore, there are organisations that represent employees of the healthcare system at different levels. For example, the Lithuanian Nurses Organisation, established

in 1992, is a trade union for nurses and has about 7 000 members. It participates in collective bargaining for better working conditions, provides capacity building courses and publishes articles on relevant topics for its members. The organisation plays an active role as a member of the Tripartite Council, in workshops of the Ministry of Health, in the Seimas Committee and as a member of the trade union confederation. In contrast to NGOs and patients' associations, it is more effective in lobbying the government as it represents a large group in the healthcare sector and has more formal mechanisms to discuss policies directly with the ministry.

From the point of view of co-design and co-delivery of public services, the Lithuanian Red Cross is among the most active national CSOs in this field. With several hundred nurses working for it, the Red Cross concentrates the majority of its work in local hospitals, where they integrate public sector employees in the provision of care in particular to elderly patients. With the majority of funds being provided by the municipalities, and to a more limited extent by the Ministry of Health, the Lithuania Red Cross is an example of the untapped potentialities Lithuania could exploit by better partnering with its third sector in the delivery of public services, as most OECD countries are currently experimenting (see Box 5.1 for an example).

Box 5.1. **Health Buddy scheme (Netherlands)**

A partnership with the private sector, the Health Buddy scheme provides simple-to-use technology – a small device known as a health buddy – in people's homes. The device provides online decision support tools and can prompt patients to monitor and review their conditions, ensure that medication or treatment is followed, support lifestyle changes such as diet monitoring or make contact with a professional caregiver. It provides patients with access to their own medical information and can connect to medical professionals as needed. All data input by the patient is collated and categorised on a colour-coded basis: green, amber or red according to level of risk. This is available on a confidential basis to professionals, who can use it to respond appropriately. The Health Buddy schemes have been piloted at local level in the cities of Utrecht and Nieuwegein. An evaluation of the effect of the Health Buddy schemes on patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases conducted in 2005 by the University Medical Centre in Utrecht reported that using the device reduces hospital admissions and increases patient satisfaction. In addition, more than 90% of the patients experienced high satisfaction with the Health Buddy, and more than 80% of the patients reported better insight into their medical condition and self-management. The duration of hospital stays was also significantly reduced. Studies in the United States have shown very positive results for similar schemes to reduce hospital admissions, emergency treatments and nurse home visits. The Health Buddy System costs about GBP 6 per patient per day, and there are 400 patients using it in the Netherlands. The system substitutes user monitoring and illness management for a previously professional function. Expensive professional services can then be focused on supporting patients to maintain their health and for more complex aspects of treatment, which need medical expertise, reducing costs.

Sources: Kimmelstiel, C. et al. (2004), "Randomized, controlled evaluation of short- and long-term benefits of heart failure disease management within a diverse provider network: The SPAN-CHF trial", *Circulation*, Vol. 14, No. 114, pp. 1 450-1 455; Kobb, R. et al. (2003), "Enhancing elder chronic care through technology and care coordination: Report from a pilot", *Telemed Journal and E-health*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 189-195; Niesink, A. et al. (2006), "Evaluation of the effects of telemonitoring for COPD patients",University Medical Centre, Julius Center for Health Sciences and Primary Care, Utrecht.

The Lithuanian Association of Hospital Managers, founded in 1991, is an NGO that promotes the interests of its members by commenting on draft laws and giving their recommendations on matters related to the management of hospitals through the Seimas Committee. Examples of their advisory role include inputs on the law on patients' rights

as provided in working groups of the Ministry of Health. Their participation is mostly based on networking and direct contacts with key policy-makers rather than by a specific formal mechanism.

Stakeholder engagement to fight corruption in the health sector

According to statistics of the Ministry of Health, 75% of Lithuanians think that the health sector is corrupt and around 35% report having paid a bribe or given a gift in exchange of healthcare services (Ministry of Health, 2014b). The issues mainly concern paying bribes for treatments, the transparency of public procurement and relations with the pharmaceutical industry. Accordingly, a Corruption Prevention Division was established in the Ministry of Health to elaborate and implement a programme to fight corruption, in collaboration with the Special Investigation Service. Measures to fight corruption include, amongst others, the public disclosure of detected corruption cases, anti-corruption assessment of legal acts or their drafts, corruption risk analysis and the provision of the information to the registers of public servants and legal entities.

According to Transparency International Lithuania, the priorities in the fight against corruption in the health sector are, however, neither clear nor effective. An important aspect of the intervention of the ministry concerns public education and awareness raising to create a culture of legality and change the behaviours of citizens and health professionals. In this field, the ministry also collaborates with Transparency International by inviting it to participate in trainings on anti-corruption in hospitals, together with the Special Investigation Service. Recently the ministry established a commission, that also includes Transparency International representatives, to elaborate a Corruption Index in the regions. A special session in the Patients Forum was devoted to fight corruption (Ministry of Health, 2013). In addition, citizens can participate in the fight against corruption by informing the Ministry of Health about corruption cases through its hotline or by reporting to the Special Investigation Service anonymously. Information displays in healthcare institutions inform about the criminal act of corruption and where and how to launch a complaint. The fight against corruption in the health sector was also included in Lithuania's 2nd Open Government Partnership Action Plan.

Overall, key public institutions in charge of policy making and service delivery in the health sector are aware of the problem of corruption and are beginning to team up with citizens and CSO organisations to address the problem. Although no significant results have been achieved in this area for the moment, the role of open government principles, policies and practices in fighting corruption is being increasingly recognised and initial steps in the right direction have been taken.

Promoting access to information

The proactive disclosure of information related to the healthcare system can improve outcomes and allow patients to take more informed decisions, in addition to playing a more active role in scrutinising the delivery of this public right and related services. Lithuania has recognised the importance of publishing data that could be to the benefit of citizens and of the sector as a whole. The Law on Rights of Patients and Compensation for the Damage to their Health guarantees the right to access information (Article 5). In particular, it sets out the right to receive information on healthcare services and healthcare professionals. In practice, for example, waiting times in hospitals are published online and have affected the behaviour of patients. Yet, the state holds further important data that could be made accessible to the public, while respecting privacy concerns. The

Commission on Evaluation of the Damage Caused to Health of Patients already allows patients to participate in its meetings and includes NGOs in its board. Yet, the annual report it prepares about the damages caused and decisions taken is not published, even though it contains valuable information for citizens and the media. The United Kingdom was able to considerably improve its quality of cardiac surgery in publishing comparable data on individual clinical outcomes. In nine years, deaths decreased by 1 000 per year following surgery (Kesley, 2013).

Recommendations

The government of Lithuania has recognised that important cultural changes are needed for society to adopt a healthier lifestyle and that the healthcare system needs to be reformed to respond to current challenges, in particular to fight the widespread corruption. Citizens, NGOs, patients' associations and healthcare sector employers can and should be partners of the government institutions to identify innovative approaches and promote the changes needed:

- Lithuania recognised the importance of engaging stakeholders and established several formal mechanisms. In addition, many stakeholders participate through informal means. Yet, these are mainly accessible to organised groups and lack transparency. Their impact is not evaluated and communicated. A comprehensive approach to engage a wide range of actors is recommendable. Particular efforts to reach out to unorganised patients are needed to involve them in reforms and address cultural challenges. The experience of Canada, discussed in Box 5.2, could be an inspiration.

Box 5.2. **Involving the public in healthcare sector reform in Canada**

The Romanow Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada conducted a series of dialogues to involve the general public in shaping the agenda for the healthcare sector reform. Twelve-day long dialogue sessions with 40 randomly selected participants each were held across Canada. The aim was to discuss conflicting values and difficult choices and receive input on the reform choices from unorganised citizens. People working in the healthcare system were excluded from the dialogues. Participants had to develop their own vision of the healthcare system and then discuss the practical implication based on four scenarios that were developed in discussion with experts and the commission. The participants' acceptance of certain reform models were measured at the beginning and the end of the process, showing a move towards greater acceptance of reforms and a convergence about which reform model is preferred across all dialogues. The outcomes of the dialogues were included in the final report of the Romanow Commission.

Source: Maxwell, J. et al. (2003), "Education and debate: Giving citizens a voice in healthcare policy in Canada", *BMJ*, Vol. 326, 10 May, www.viewpointlearning.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/healthcare_0503.pdf.

- The recommendations of the European Patient Forum[2] could support Lithuania in developing a systematic approach to citizens' engagement in the health sector that is built on clear guidelines and evaluates its impact. Given the considerable differences in life expectancy for men and women and gender-specific health challenges, particular attention should be paid to this dimension.
- As Lithuania is facing well-known challenges in the health sector related to transparency and perceived corruption, the government should exploit the

opportunities provided by open government policies and citizens' participation initiatives by forging an alliance with non-state actors to promote a culture of transparency, accountability and legality. Accordingly, it would be advisable to establish mechanisms to reach out more to CSOs, patients' organisations, private sector associations active in the areas of public sector integrity and the fight against corruption to jointly identify the most effective ways to make concrete progress. Building on the presence of a commitment on the promotion of the transparency and integrity of the health sector in its current OGP Action Plan, Lithuania should include additional commitments in these areas (i.e. the inclusion of third-sector actors in the promotion of integrity and fight against corruption). This would be an excellent signal of continuity of their efforts and allow the government to mobilise citizens and CSOs around this important national priority.

- Several civil society organisations are engaged in the healthcare system. Yet, limited funding opportunities are an obstacle to further development. In collaboration with the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, further possibilities could be explored to promote the development of the third sector and broaden its involvement in health-related policy issues, beyond the traditional area of service delivery. The recently established NGO Council as well as its local bodies could support such efforts. In addition, efforts to promote awareness about healthcare issues among journalists should be prioritised in order to promote an informed media sector that can report on strategic health issues.

Digital healthcare (e-health)

Digital technologies are transforming public service delivery across all areas of government activity, including healthcare. At the same time, the healthcare sector is probably one of the sectors where initial expectations for digitisation and the actual impacts suffer the highest gaps.

Different technology applications have long been on governments' agendas, e.g. electronic health records, electronic prescriptions, telemedicine. Overall, however, healthcare remains a policy area with many question marks around how to maximise the impacts of digitisation. Individual initiatives can be successful, but their contribution to wider quality of healthcare is not always clear. In Estonia, for example, close to 100% of medical prescriptions are electronic, i.e. no paper is exchanged between physician, patient, pharmacy and insurer; medical health records are seeing increasing take-up rates too (OECD, 2015). Yet, Estonia – like Lithuania – continues to suffer from relatively low rates of people's satisfaction with healthcare (Figure 5.1). Despite visible improvements since 2007, the challenge for electronic healthcare continues to be the same: not to introduce more projects and raise take-up rates, but to design and provide services that have a tangible impact on the actual and perceived quality of healthcare.

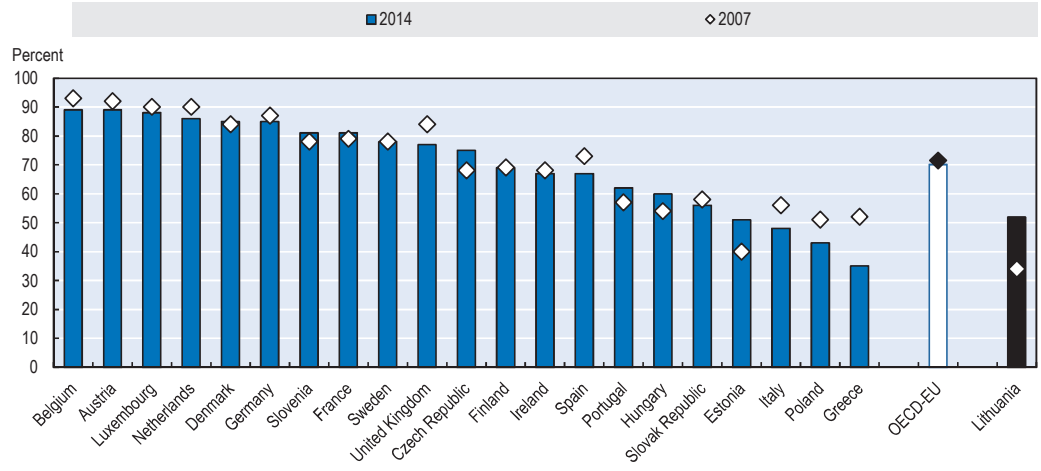
Effective strategy in place, but comprehensiveness could be strengthened

The Lithuanian government early on recognised opportunities of digitisation for better healthcare service delivery. Between 2005 and 2007, the government attempted to establish a centralised national electronic healthcare information system (NESS I). The results did not meet the expectations and a second round of development was undertaken from 2007 on (NESS II). Individual hospitals across Lithuania were able to introduce digital information systems as part of these projects; and digital services were created by individual service providers. Overall, however, national government "e-health" initiatives

during that time were judged to have been largely ineffective by the national audit office; and around half of the total cost of LIT 34 million spent between 2006 and 2011 was considered to be ineffective spending (LR Valstybės Kontrolė, 2011).

Figure 5.1. **Satisfaction with quality of healthcare, 2007-14**

In %



Source: Gallup World Poll (n.d.), www.gallup.com.

The Ministry of Health undertook a thorough assessment of progress and shortcomings, which resulted in a new plan for the 2009-15 period, issued by ministerial decree (V-151, 22 February 2010). The majority of initiatives under that plan are financed by EU Structural Funds disbursed over the 2007-13 funding period:

- development of a patient-centric online portal to act as gateway for medical information and services
- a centralised register of electronic health records and linking of individual healthcare providers' information systems to that register
- recording of patient-physician interactions and diagnoses in the register
- electronic medical referrals
- electronic prescriptions
- development of online medical appointments booking
- development of a medical imaging exchange infrastructure.

These priorities have been largely confirmed by strategic documents that have been developed since then. The national strategy Lithuania2030 and its National Progress Programme for 2014-20 contain a pillar on "Health for All" with achievement indicators on use and take-up of electronic healthcare services (under responsibility of the Ministry of Health). The national Digital Agenda 2014-2020 has the same goal for electronic healthcare, i.e. to raise take-up and use rates.

Substantial progress was made in some areas. At this stage, the online medical appointment booking is available as an operational service. At www.sergu.lt patients can book appointments with general practitioners and specialists. Healthcare information

systems have been developed in major university clinics (Santariškės, Kaunas, Klaipėda) and in a few other major polyclinics. A centralised information system has been developed for cardiology information exchanges.

As for the remaining priority areas, most services are expected to turn operational in 2015. The 2014-15 biannual Strategic Action Plan of the Ministry of Health, for example, explicitly states Q2 2015 as official launch date for the central electronic healthcare information system (ESPBI IS), the electronic prescriptions system and medical imaging exchange infrastructure.

The bulk of financing for electronic healthcare in Lithuania is disbursed through EU Structural Funds. Over the course of 2009-15, a total of 29 projects were funded with a total value of LIT 95 million (around EUR 30 million). Under the new round of EU structural funding for 2014-20, 16 "e-health" projects are currently foreseen, with a total project value of over EUR 21 million.[3] Seven of those projects co-funded by EU Structural Funds have a total planned budget that exceeds EUR 1 million (see Table 5.4).

Table 5.4. **Lithuanian e-health projects co-funded by EU Structural Funds with a total project value over EUR 1 million**

Project	Total project value	Start year	Expected end year
Electronic healthcare services development in four public hospitals (Šiauliai, Panevėžys, Klaipėda, Kaunas)	EUR 2 876 500	2011	2015
* Central electronic healthcare information system (eSPBI IS)	EUR 2 819 781	2011	2015
Information system development for two university hospitals (Kaunas); electronic healthcare services development in four public hospitals (Šiauliai, Panevėžys, Klaipėda, Kaunas))	EUR 2 625 176	2011	2015
* Medical imaging exchange infrastructure	EUR 2 052 283	2011	2015
Electronic healthcare services development for the medical institutions affiliated to Santariskiai (SANTA-HIS)	EUR 1 737 702	2011	2015
* Electronic prescriptions	EUR 1 736 680	2011	2015
National medical decision-making support system	EUR 1 066 358	2011	2015

Note: * Denotes projects implemented by the Ministry of Health.

Source: Based on www.esparama.lt.

Despite the existence of strategic and costly digital healthcare projects, it is unclear whether the political leadership is sufficiently aware of the transformative impacts – but also of the great risks – related to those projects. Judging from the objectives and goals formulated in high-level strategy documents, that is not always the case. There is a clear need to better articulate the expected outcomes of digital healthcare projects. Currently used indicators are mostly on processes (e.g. in the Ministry of Health's Strategic Action Plan 2014-2016 the main objective is to have a "timely launch" of three electronic healthcare projects, but there are no real progress indicators) or on take-up rates (e.g. in Lithuania2030 and the Digital Agenda 2020, the government aims to raise take-up rates for electronic healthcare services without making reference to the actual impacts this is expected to have on the quality of healthcare). The high investments made in digitising healthcare in Lithuania need to be matched with a more sophisticated set of performance indicators and better ways of monitoring that performance.

Good project management cannot replace political and strategic leadership

Governance choices and challenges can help explain and possibly improve some of those shortcomings. Digital healthcare projects are usually ambitious in OECD countries, and the previous section has shown this is no different in Lithuania where several high-stakes projects are underway. The question is whether existing governance mechanisms are conducive to steering government IT projects towards the achievement of national priorities for better healthcare.

The two main institutions around digital healthcare in Lithuania are the Ministry of Health and the National Electronic Healthcare Development Co-ordination Council.

At the Ministry of Health, the unit for electronic healthcare co-ordination and implementation ("e-Health Co-ordination Unit") is the main steward of digital healthcare transformation in Lithuania. The head of the unit reports directly to a Vice-Minister who oversees a total of seven units and two departments (departments are hierarchically superior and dispose of more human resources than units). The e-Health Co-ordination Unit has six staff and formulates general digital healthcare policy directions, implements selected projects alone or in partnership, and co-ordinates all other digital healthcare projects across government.

The National Electronic Healthcare Development Co-ordination Council ("e-Health Co-ordination Council") was first established in 2006, but it was not until 2009 that its mandate and working procedures were formulated by decree of the Minister of Health (V265, 8 April 2009). The council is presided by a Vice-Minister at the Ministry of Health, and has around 20 further members, including representatives of practitioners' associations, stakeholder associations, hospitals, the e-Government Unit at the Ministry of the Interior, the Information Society Development Committee (IVPK) under the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Association of Municipalities, the IT industry association "InfoBalt", and the Prime Minister's knowledge economy advisor (Ministry of Health Decree V-919, 1 September 2014).

A third institution with relevance to digital healthcare is the state enterprise "Centre of Registers" under the Ministry of Justice. The centre is the Ministry of Health's implementing partner for the centralised healthcare information system ESPBI IS. As the operator of several state registers, the centre has a proven track record in this area.

A major incision for digital healthcare governance in Lithuania took place in 2011. The Lithuanian parliament amended the Law on the Health System to explicitly include the notion of "electronic healthcare", which laid the basis for stronger political backing around the objectives and governance modes for digital healthcare. It also laid down the basis for more specific regulations around the management of digital healthcare projects, e.g. the Ministry of Health's Decree on the National Electronic Healthcare Architecture (V294, 28 April 2011).

These provisions resulted in more rigorous project management rules and practices. The e-Health Co-ordination Unit monitors budgets, timelines and regularly reports to different state institutions on the progress of individual projects. Public scrutiny of those progress reports is not easy because little systematic information is shared with the public. Nevertheless, the common architecture established in 2011 continues to be one of the main steering documents for developments in this area, providing a high level of planning certainty to involved institutions.

The new provisions did not, however, lead to stronger strategic or political leadership in this area. The outcomes of digital healthcare projects as they are underway in Lithuania will determine the government's ability to deliver quality public services that respond to citizens' expectations in the 21st century. Yet responsibility for delivering on these expectations is largely delegated to the project management level, in particular the e-Health Co-ordination Unit. This approach bears many risks as a growing number of OECD countries realise that the performance of strategic "e-health" projects is to a large degree dependent on governments' abilities to dedicate strategic leadership. When the United States portal www.healthcare.gov came to a standstill in 2013, it was not an IT system that under-performed, but a country's entire healthcare insurance reform and policy that turned dysfunctional. The political consequences were immense and the platform's redesign became a matter of presidential priority. It was a testimony to the fact that healthcare IT performance today directly impacts on healthcare system performance (and eventually trust in the healthcare system) – it should therefore be monitored and controlled at the political level, starting with the conception of a project.

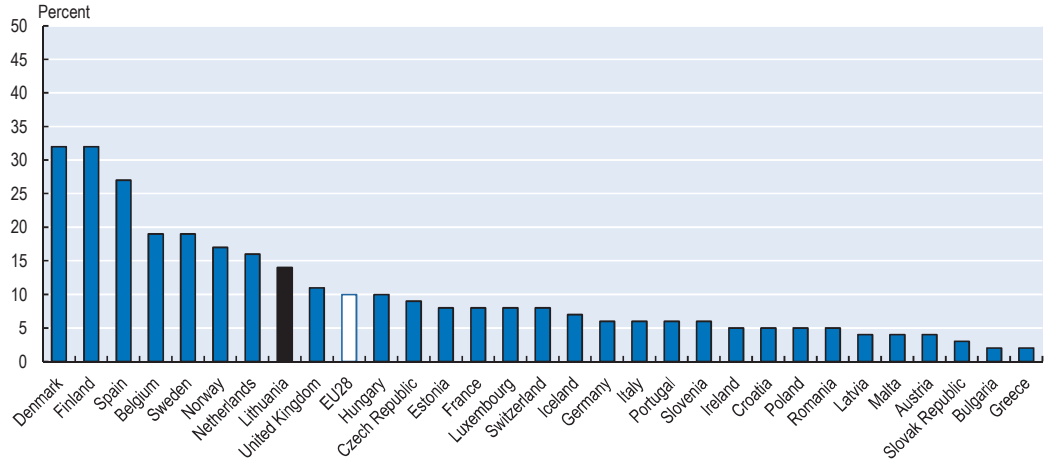
Better performance information is needed to support good implementation capacities

Digital healthcare in Lithuania benefits from dedicated and skilled people for implementation. The central healthcare information system is, for example, implemented in co-operation between the Ministry of Health and the Centre of Registers, the latter of which has a proven track record in information system design and development. There are further examples that testify to the capacity and willingness of the administration to deliver high-quality digital healthcare services:

- The national online portal for booking medical appointments, www.sergu.lt, allows individuals to book appointments with general practioners and specialists. Currently, 69 institutions and 500 practitioners are available via the portal, although not the entire country is covered. Besides greater convenience, it is also a means to reduce the possibilities for physicians requesting bribes for the allocation of appointments. The portal is developed in partnership between the project lead, Santariškiai hospital (VUL Santariškių klinikos) and 19 healthcare institutions across the country. Lithuania therefore ranks high in EU comparison for medical appointments booking online (Figure 5.2).
- The Disability and Working Capacity Assessment Office (NDNT) under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour closely collaborates with healthcare providers to establish more fluent exchanges of disability-related data and digital services for the affected people. Together with three hospitals the NDNT developed an infrastructure for real-time data exchange, which turned fully operational in 2013 and is now being scaled to include over 140 healthcare institutions in the country. The NDNT moreover provides an online pre-registration service for affected people, which allows booking appointments, exchange of documents and requests of certification. The service is integrated with the national online service platform www.ePaslaugos.lt.
- The State Social Insurance Fund Board (SODRA) since 2009 operates a system for the electronic exchange of sick leave and parentship leave certificates between physicians, individuals, employers and insurance institutions. The system handles over 2.5 million electronic sick leave certificates per year.[4] As mentioned in Chapter 4, the SODRA has shown good capacity for digital service developments,

e.g. through user-oriented redesign of service delivery or through the ongoing development of its open data portal http://atvira.sodra.lt.

Figure 5.2. **Percent of individuals who booked a medical appointment online, 2014**



Source: Eurostat database ("Internet activities - individuals (isoc_ci_ac_i)", indicator "Internet use: Making an appointment with a practitioner via a website (I_IUMAPP)"), 2014 data.

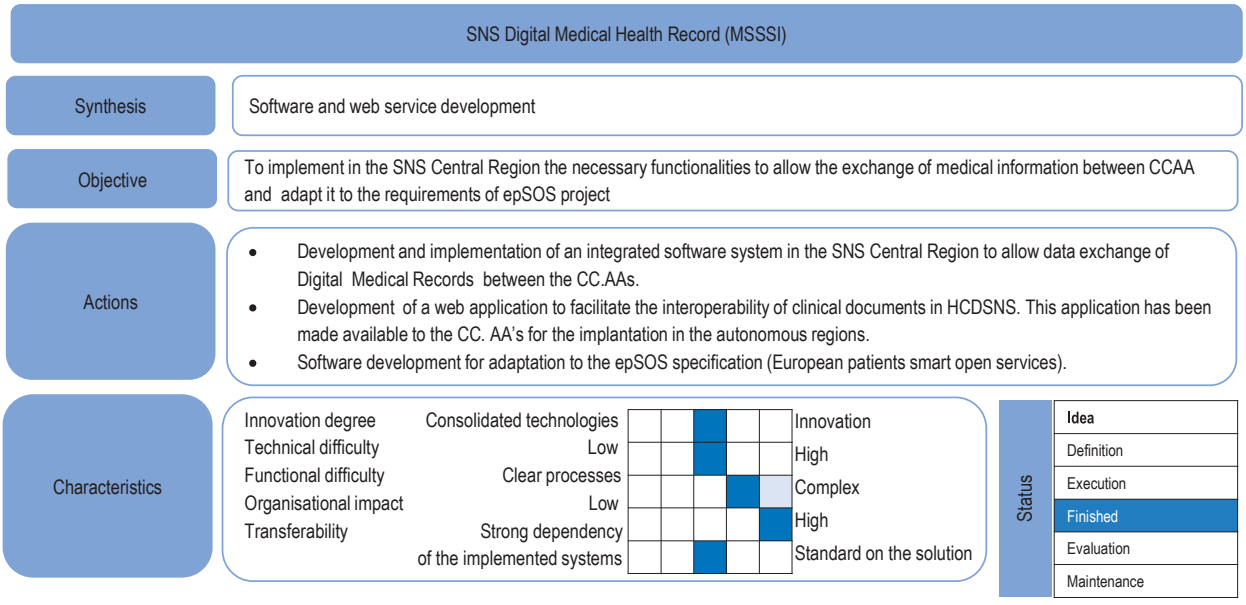
The challenge ahead is to expand on individual good practices and attain strategic healthcare objectives throughout the entire sector – higher levels of trust, satisfaction and service quality. A fundamental requirement to make this happen is to formulate and monitor relevant objectives, which currently is not always the case in Lithuania. Most of the supposedly strategic objectives for electronic healthcare use process or take-up indicators. There are too few impact-oriented objectives, such as achieving lower levels of perceived or actual corruption, or reducing the costs of services as they are delivered digitally.

The UK.GOV performance dashboard is a good illustration of indicators that allow more effective monitoring for digital healthcare at both project and political levels. Monitoring of services like the NHS "Choose and Book" service for outpatient appointments is based on key performance indicators, including cost per transaction and digital take-up.[5] This allows senior decision makers – and the general public – to better understand the opportunities and challenges around digital healthcare, e.g. by analysing the linkages between a relatively low share of digital service take-up (13% of transactions done online) and a very high average cost incurred on the public sector for each appointment booking (GBP 43 on average across all delivery channels). Such metrics and indicators drive public service improvement; and they enhance transparency and accountability in an area of high public spending.

Lithuania could, in fact, put a stronger emphasis on transparency around digital healthcare investments and their impacts. At this point, there is no single entry point where the general public or interested stakeholders can track the progress of individual "e-health" projects and the ultimate destinations of funding. Some general information on EU-funded projects is available on a dedicated website for EU funding in Lithuania (www.esparama.lt). The Ministry of Health publishes strategic documents, legal acts and ministerial decrees on its website, but many of them are scanned copies of legal texts and

thus difficult to access or interpret. Stronger consideration for the needs of individuals or organisations that wish to understand, comment and compare the progress could, for example, be achieved by creating structured and visual scorecards for each digital healthcare project, and publish them as is being done in Spain (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3. **Spanish scorecard for digital healthcare projects**

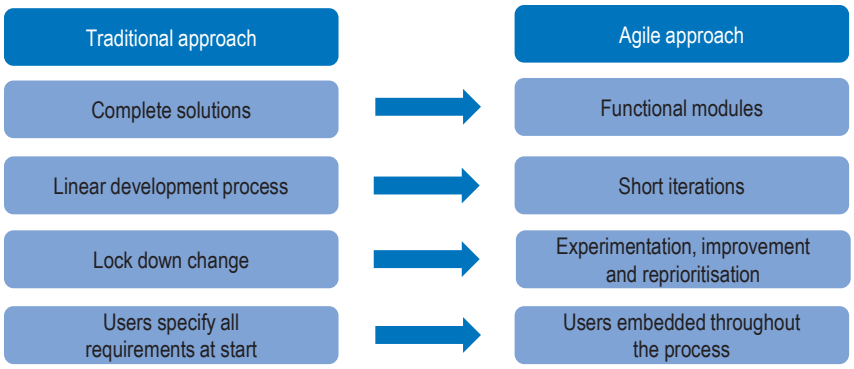


Source: Red.es (2012), *Las TIC en el Sistema Nacional de Salud*, Red.es, Madrid, www.red.es/redes/sala-de-prensa/centro-de-documentacion?id_doc=10222&quicktabs_3=2.

One argument often heard in Lithuania is that more effective monitoring and accountability will start once services are in full operation: use rates, completion rates, satisfaction, etc. However, the United States' experience around www.healthcare.gov, as well as major service delivery breakdowns in other countries, shows the importance of having actual performance monitoring ahead of the operational launch of an information system. The United Kingdom's Government Service Design Manual recommends identifying key performance indicators in the early stages of a service, i.e. already during the alpha and beta phases.[6]

Part of the challenge in changing towards such an approach is the fact that a lot of digital service development, not just in the healthcare sector, continues to follow linear "think big" approaches. This means formulating a large set of detailed specifications from the outset, developing them through sequential phases (mostly done by external contractors) and then receiving a relatively final service that can only be adjusted in minor ways. This approach poses problems to the fast-changing environment of digital services, because product specifications often change as users interact with the first actual prototypes. In those instances, government administrations often discover that their preconceived notions of user behaviour and expectations do not match with the behaviour and expectations of real users interacting with a service. The UK parliament therefore early on advocated for a shift towards more agile, more iterative digital service development as early as 2011 (UK Parliament Public Administration Select Committee, 2011; see also Figure 5.4). A wide-ranging digital transformation has since been underway throughout all of the public sector.

Figure 5.4. **Waterfall versus agile development of digital services**



Source: Institute for Government (2011), "System error: Fixing the flaws in government IT", Institute for Government, London, cited in UK Parliament Public Administration Select Committee (2011).

Recommendations

The following recommendations aim to ensure that Lithuania's "e-health" efforts lead to tangible impacts on the actual and perceived quality of healthcare:

- There are missed opportunities around using digitisation to more effectively tackle the endemic issue of perceived and actual corruption in the Lithuanian healthcare sector. Individual initiatives exist, e.g. phone hotlines or corruption alert forms on hospitals' websites, but their use and effect remain marginal compared to the challenge. Initiatives such as online medical appointment bookings can help fight bribery at that level, but the www.sergu.lt service is not yet comprehensively available across the country. Overall, a strategic vision on how technology can not only transform the quality of public services, but also make access to services more equal and transparent must be fostered.
- Lithuania – like many OECD countries – has a history of electronic healthcare projects that did not deliver on expectations. Many of the problems can be traced back to ineffective governance, in the sense that the political leadership did not recognise the strategic importance (on time); or that it did not take responsibility for improving healthcare quality through those projects. The current set of objectives, indicators and monitoring practices used at strategic and political levels are not enough to remedy the various shortcomings. Lithuania should build on examples from OECD countries that have improved the monitoring and accountability of "e-health" projects.
- Lithuania can put an even stronger emphasis on transparency around digital healthcare investments and their impacts. Information on digital healthcare projects is available and can be obtained upon request. But it is often difficult to access or interpret by outsiders, e.g. because of inconvenient formats used to disseminate information. Moreover, there is no single entry point where the public or stakeholders could track progress of individual "e-health" projects and funding allocation. Stronger consideration for the needs of individuals or organisations that wish to understand, comment and compare the progress could be achieved by creating structured and visual scorecards for each digital healthcare project, linking them to national policy priorities and publishing them in ways that are easy to access and understand.

- A challenge Lithuania faces – along with OECD countries – is to enable modern ways of developing digital services and infrastructures in the sense of making them more agile and iterative. Decision makers tend to shy away from such approaches partly because they appear difficult to combine with existing rules and regulations around public procurement and contracting for digital services. Although no "off-the-shelf" recipes exist, a growing number of government institutions manage the transition away from overly big and linear IT projects towards more agile and iterative ways of designing public services. This includes reviewing provisions on procurement and contracting in this area (for example: Brett and McKie, 2014; and Chapter 20 in Wernham, 2012).

Notes

1. Articles 23 and 24, Law on the Rights of Patients and Compensation for the Damage to their Health.
2. www.eu-patient.eu/globalassets/projects/valueplus/doc_epf_policyrec.pdf.
3. For the list: www.esparama.lt/igyvendinami-projektai?pgsz=50&order=&page=&proCode=&applicantName=&proName=&program=&amountSupportFrom=&amountSupportTo=&program_priority=&amountPaidFrom=&amountPaidTo=&measure=VP2-3.1-IVPK-10-V&contractDateFrom=&contractDateTo=&kvi.
4. http://epts.sodra.lt/stat.
5. www.gov.uk/performance/dh-choose-book.
6. www.gov.uk/service-manual/phases/discovery.html.

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