

# INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY ARRANGEMENTS FOR EVALUATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION STRUCTURAL FUNDS IN LITHUANIA



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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to assess critically institutional and policy arrangements for evaluation within Lithuanian public administration in order to manage the support of the European Structural Funds and the use of evaluation requirements of EU structural funds as a limited case study. What has been changed in the administrative arrangements of EU Structural funds support during the two programming periods 2004-2006 and 2007-2013? A key research question is to assess administrative arrangements for evaluation within Lithuanian public administration in order to manage the support of the European Structural Funds and use of evaluation requirements of the EU structural funds as a limited case study to map how these arrangements are or are not developed, and isolating the key explanatory factors. Methodologically, we used semi-structured qualitative interviews and quantitative online surveys of officials, academics and evaluators. The research results show that isomorphism and donor-oriented evaluation dominates in the evaluation system of the EU Structural and Cohesion funds. Lithuania transfers the elements necessary for support evaluation to the public administration systems. From the intervention approach, supporting many programmes and projects, there is a change to the approach based on long-term planning, programming and consulting with the stakeholders. The current paper covers three significant topics (a) the evaluation of the EU Structural support to Lithuania; (b) the institutional and policy arrangements for evaluation within Lithuanian national government; (c) evaluation capacity for public policy evaluation within Lithuania. The research itself contributes to the spread of evaluation theory and practice in the new EU member states. State officials will be able to learn and compare the implementation of evaluation in other member states, what aims were reached, what the scope and significance of evaluation is dependent on evaluation coordination and system centralization-decentralization and what the influence of cultural aspects on evaluation implementation is. The evaluation community could learn about the differences of evaluation systems, possibilities and restrictions, the applied evaluation methods and means of evaluation quality management in order to work in a certain market.

## KEY WORDS

**evaluation capacity, utilization of evaluation, monitoring, Lithuania, European Union, Structural Funds**

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## INTRODUCTION

Evaluation of public policy has been applied in Lithuania recently, and a certain impact of this tool is noted while administering the support of the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds. However, the information about evaluation has not been perfect yet. Evaluation is institutionalized in the Lithuanian

administration system. An evaluator is a new social role, and, as we know from anthropology and sociology, rights, duties, expectations, etc. are typical for any role. In addition, the role of an evaluator is related to other roles, which are politicians, administrators, citizens or modernizers and innovators (Hansson et al., 2014; Kraujutaitė, Dvorak, 2014). Rules of behavior exist for any given pair of relationship or the norms and corresponding

configurations of power; thus, not only time, but also will is necessary to include evaluation into agendas. In the process of evaluation consolidation, the evaluator has the right to ask specific questions, demand for certain information, and charge the people to use evaluation results. While analyzing the development of the evaluation function, it is important to know how evaluation influence appears, mediates, is blocked or develops or, speaking instrumentally, how the influence of any evaluation may be increased. The research on policy evaluation, as well as many other retrospective instruments of public policy, faces the lack of data.

The amount of data about the outcomes of public policy instruments, which were provided a decade ago, is significantly higher in comparison to the information on public policy evaluation provided only several years ago. Apparently, there is an existing need to clarify how public policy evaluation is applied in the Lithuanian political and administrative environment. Of course, it is not necessary to wait several decades for the information about the implementation of public policy evaluation in post-communist countries. The more institutionalized evaluation is, the more difficult it will be to make changes while reconstructing the process of evaluation/the mechanism and compare with the earlier stages of implementation.

The current paper covers three significant topics: the evaluation of the EU structural support to Lithuania; the institutional and policy arrangements for evaluation within Lithuanian national government; evaluation capacity for public policy evaluation within Lithuania.

The aim of this research is to assess administrative arrangements for evaluation within Lithuanian public administration in order to manage the support of the European Structural Funds and use of evaluation requirements of the EU structural funds as a limited case study. What has been changed in the administrative arrangements of EU Structural funds support during the two programming periods 2004-2006 and 2007-2013?

Disciplined-configurative case study was combined with a structured comparative method and applied to the analysis of evaluation of the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds in Lithuania. Using the method of disciplined-configurative analysis, the existing theories were used in order to assess the evaluation scope and significance in the new EU states. The data for the analysis were collected and analyzed applying the triangulation conception:

- document analysis (legal and administrative documents, protocols, reports and media reports);
- in-depth expert interview of direct contact and

contact by telephone;

- quantitative questionnaire of public officials;
- content-analysis;
- statistical data analysis;
- logical distribution and classification;
- comparative analysis of the features.

In-depth semi structured interview: The qualitative research started in Vilnius, Lithuania. From October 15, 2009 to April 18, 2011, 26 semi-structured interviews were carried out. Eight interviews were carried out communicating directly with the respondents, fourteen interviews were carried out on the phone and four respondents wanted to answer the questions by e-mail. Two respondents were questioned in Brussels and Maastricht.

Quantitative online survey: In order to research the scope and significance of public policy evaluation better, a survey of state officials was carried out. The survey of Ministry, the Government and Office of the Parliament officials was carried out from January 3 to November 3, 2010. The survey was carried out with pauses. The link to the survey online was sent to 349 officials. Ninety of them sent the answers back.

## 1. RISE OF EVALUATION AND ITS SCOPE IN LITHUANIA

The appearance of evaluation function in Lithuania is related to the PHARE programme of preparation to membership in the EU. PHARE programme funding was allocated in Lithuania from 1991 to 2003. In total, €512 m were allocated. Later, in 2004, the first evaluations of the preparation for membership programme PHARE started. Several projects of interim evaluation were performed by external evaluators. According to the Ministry of Finance (2007), (subsequently, MF), 112 recommendations were provided; more than half of them (57 per cent) were implemented, around one third of evaluations (35 per cent) were partly implemented, and only a small part of recommendations were not implemented or they lost their relevance. Later, in 2006, one more evaluation project was initiated. At that time, evaluation function was coordinated by the National Aid Coordinator.

Even though evaluation started comparatively recently in Lithuania, the current research attempted to find out whether the evaluation function has had any noticeable influence on public administration. The data show that evaluation function is not completely institutionalized into the Lithuanian public administration system because most respondents do not know and have not noticed its

influence on public management. In order to find out some more issues, individualized interviews contained a question, whether the evaluation function in Lithuanian public administration has had any noticeable influence on public management. Civil servants who participated in the interview indicated that everything is starting, the function is being used, evaluation results are analyzed; however, more influence is not apparent. Nevertheless, the representatives of evaluators and academic community distinguished several influences on public administration:

- it encouraged accountability (to the European Commission and the public for the usage of financial resources);
- knowledge and capacities about evaluation appeared in the public administration system (but their dissemination is limited).

Evaluation capacities and knowledge are accumulated in one centre (in the Ministry of Finance).

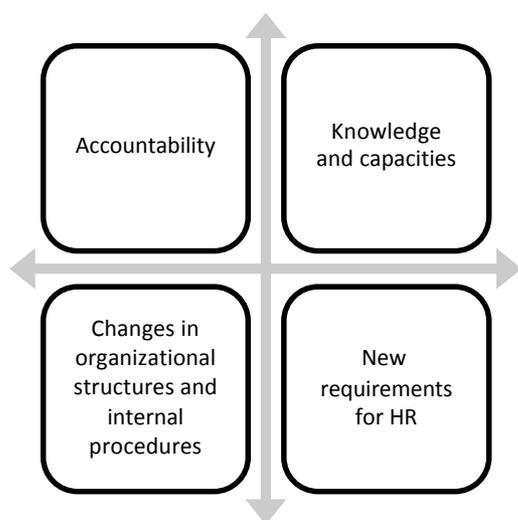


Fig. 1. Evaluation function influence on public administration in Lithuania

At the time of this writing, spread of evaluation is impeded by the fact that its rise was influenced by the formal correspondence to requirements, not because of the need to improve public governance; therefore, its dissemination scope is limited; changes in the organizational structures of the institutions and internal procedures (evaluation units were established in several ministries); new requirements for human resources. The data of qualitative research clearly show that the evaluation function is being institutionalized and is monopolized by the MF; thus it will depend on the initiative of the civil servants

of the Ministry whether the evaluation function will disseminate or whether it will remain an internal tool of the Ministry.

## 2. TWO DIMENSIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR EVALUATION

Because of public administration traditions and different delegation of functions according to the competence of regional institutions in national contexts, the systems of the EU Structural Funds management and implementation vary along the scales of centralized/decentralized governing and integrated/non-integrated system (ESTEP, 2006; European Policies Research Center, 2009). With respect to this, the main ways of organizing evaluation is centralized, decentralized and mixed.

Centralized-decentralized: While organizing the Structural Funds evaluation, Lithuania adapted the approach of centralized evaluation. Under such circumstances, the process of evaluation is coordinated by the Government of the member state, or the evaluation function is delegated to the MF. Vilpišauskas and Nakrošius (2005) enumerated several advantages of this choice. On the one hand, centralized organization of evaluation provides the possibility to save while hiring less staff and ordering evaluations. On the other hand, evaluation results are more consistent and comparable. Centralized way of coordination provides more advantages as well because evaluation unit is independent from the staff that implements programmes, and the employees of the unit acquire skills in evaluation methodology. In addition, the unit has powers, which usually lacks of decentralized subdivisions. However, this approach is criticized because of poor decision-making and maintenance of programme effectiveness at programme level. Decentralized evaluation coordination and performance preconditions a more suitable adaptation of evaluation contents for single programmes, and the responsible institutions participate in the evaluation process more, as well as use the results of evaluation recommendations (Vilpišauskas, Nakrošius, 2005; Uitto, 2014).

According to Stern (2004), it is necessary to pay attention to the functions, which are achieved while performing evaluations and constructing coordination of evaluation function. When evaluation improves the implementation of programmes and policies, it is suggested to decentralize the coordination of evaluation function, and this encourages collective learning at decentralized level

(Berriet-Soliec et al., 2014). When the function of evaluation is to reinforce central strategies and decision-making, the evaluation function is coordinated at a centralized way, but this way the staff of central governing level will learn from evaluation results, not the level of programme implementation.

Since 2004-2006 programming period, MF has been appointed as the managing authority for the implementation of the EU Structural and Cohesion funds. MF coordinated the implementation of evaluations of the Single Programming Document (subsequently SPD) in 2004-2006. The main coordinator of the EU support evaluation system is evaluation unit of the MF, which prepared the evaluation plan of the EU Structural fund support (strategic character) for 2007-2013. The first lesson learned by the civil servants responsible for the evaluation after 2004-2006 programming period was that evaluations had to be organized in a systematic way. Since 2008, the evaluation unit prepares an annual evaluation plan. The European Commission (subsequently EC) has provided guidelines for the member states about making the evaluation plan, which was adapted by each member state according to its needs. The necessity to establish the evaluation unit was mentioned in an earlier evaluation (Central project management agency, 2003); however, the recommendation to establish the unit was implemented only in 2006. Interim institutions initiate and implement evaluations with regard to the approved annual plan, but they do not have evaluation units. Usually one employee is responsible for the initiation and implementation of evaluation.

The project of annual evaluation plan is discussed by an evaluation coordination group, which consists of public servants from various interim institutions. In 2004-2006, the predecessor of the groups was SPD evaluation management group. The composition of public servants of interim institutions changes, but the civil servant from the MF is the head of the group. It is likely that such monopolization of evaluation coordination inhibits quicker evaluation dissemination in the public administration system. The civil servants from other ministries, who work in the evaluation system, do not have the feeling of ownership for the evaluation function because as long as they do not participate in managing coordination, this will be a secondary exercise. The evaluation coordination group does not have the representatives of evaluation community; it is maintained that this would not be possible to implement because the evaluation coordination group decides about administrative issues. However, a limited number of evaluators sometimes participate as invited participants. Apparently, the participation

of alternative evaluators would precondition the development of the participatory model, strengthen partnership relationship between evaluators and representatives of institutions; the good practice would be exchanged and the evaluators could share their knowledge. In order to fulfill this aim, it is necessary to establish a formal association of evaluators, which would delegate its members and this way prevent from conflicts of interests.

Monitoring and evaluation unit was established in the Ministry of Agriculture (subsequently, MA) and is responsible for the evaluation of Rural Development Programme. This programme was financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. The MA was appointed as the management institution of the Rural Development Programme. The activities of the Monitoring and Evaluation unit of the Ministry were organized in conformity to the Order of the Lithuanian Minister of Agriculture from May 22, 2009 according to the monitoring and evaluation plan of Lithuanian Rural Development 2007-2013 programme to 2015, No. 3D-371. In 2008, in conformity to the Order No. 3D-546 of the Minister of Agriculture, an evaluation coordination group was established, which was mainly composed of the officials of MA and the agencies subordinate to it. Also, the civil servants from the evaluation unit of the MF were incorporated into this group. Even though the composition of the group constantly changes, the leaders are the civil servants from the Ministry of Agriculture. One should note that in 2010 the vice-minister of the MA became the leader of the group, as the political civil servant. Similarly to the MF, the representatives of evaluators are not incorporated into the group.

Summing the dimension of evaluation coordination of the EU Structural and Cohesion funds, one can maintain that two models are dominant: a hierarchical and a non-hierarchical one. The hierarchical evaluation coordination model dominates in Lithuania, the centre of which is formed by the administrative unit. The aims of the hierarchical model coincide with the aims highlighted in the legal documents. The main actors are the MF, other ministries and institutions, and the evaluation coordination group. According to the hierarchical model, evaluations are ordered, meetings of civil servants are organized by the evaluation coordination group, and the evaluation results are presented. In addition, training and conferences are organized. Mainly these activities are indicated in the plan taking into consideration the budget; however, they can be organized taking into consideration the needs. The output of this model is the following: evaluation plans, methodological evaluation documents,

conferences and market coordination.

The non-hierarchical model has been noted only recently when the evaluation unit at MF started using the participatory approach and in strengthening the capacities. The first discussion, which involved evaluators, took place in 2008; the representatives of the academic community participated in the second discussion in 2010. The objectives of this model are described before the meetings, but in general it can be noted that an attempt is made to strengthen evaluation capacity. In addition to the civil servants of ministries and other institutions, evaluators and the academic community participate in this model. It functions as a focus group or as a discussion-meeting and operates according to the needs of the MF. The output of the non-hierarchical model is the improvement of priority evaluation topic and quality of formulating evaluation questions. In 2010, a suggestion was made for the society to formulate evaluation topics for the first time. Seventeen evaluation themes were received in 2010 and twenty themes in 2011.

### 3. THE USE OF EVALUATION RESULTS

It is possible to analyze the use of evaluation results in decision-making using the analytical model by Ferry and Olejniczak (2008). Its essence is that the use of recommendations depends on five main factors related to the creation of evaluation knowledge and stages of use:

Characteristics of the learner/recipient. This factor comprises the quality of human resources of public administration institutions and the dominant tradition of public administration. It is likely that the personnel that have evaluation knowledge, skills and experience, can perceive evaluation advantages better

and know how to use them in their work. The stability of institutions, position in the political system and experience in planning and implementing interventions can become an effective incentive for the use of evaluation results because knowledge is necessary to solve new complicated situations. In my opinion, this category has to comprise not only the employees of public administration institutions, citizens or their groups. Informativeness of media representatives about evaluation and their participation in the evaluation process can be an effective support in using evaluation recommendations in decision-making.

In Lithuania, the civil servants consider programme or project management (development, administration, implementation, and evaluation) in the list of their typical duties (see Tab. 1), (Bučinskis et al., 2014). The making of strategic, performance, and development plans, the adjustment of indicators, and monitoring were also typical day-to-day duties. Atypical duties identified during the research included participation in events or discussions, conducting of population surveys, replies to Member of the Parliament, international co-operation, proposals regarding the new EU financial perspectives, and drafting economizing plans (Bučinskis et al., 2014). It became evident that the duties typical of some civil servants can be atypical of others. The civil servants working for ministries needed analytical skills, however, those who worked for local government or sectoral institutions require a more technical skills (drafting of letter or investigation of complaints).

True, the critics (Nakrošis, 2008; Masiulis, 2009) note that the civil service is still not result-oriented; the society is not satisfied with the provided services and their quality. This is indicated by the index of civil servants' performance evaluation, according to which such evaluations decreased in 30 per cent in 2008 compared to 2007 (Pivoras, 2010). The government

Tab. 1. The actual duties in public administration: summary of interviews

INSTITUTION	TYPICAL AND ATYPICAL DUTIES	DUTIES LEARNT ON THE WORK SITE
Representatives of civil service	<p>Typical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the drafting of documents, including programmes, strategic plans, or action projects; drafts of legal acts; reports and decisions; population surveys; replies to complaints and requests from different constituents;</li> <li>• programme or project management;</li> <li>• participation in an event or discussion;</li> <li>• international communication.</li> </ul> <p>Atypical: what is typical for some may be atypical for others</p>	<p>Administrative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding of legal norms and economical methods and ways of organization;</li> <li>• strategic planning; quality assurance;</li> <li>• project management, public finance management;</li> </ul> <p>Research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• paper analysis;</li> <li>• investigations;</li> <li>• evaluations;</li> </ul> <p>Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collaboration with other civil servants and stakeholders, record keeping</li> </ul>

Source: (Bučinskis et al., 2014).

can be defined as a provision of services to the citizens; therefore, these services do not often have a direct addressee, even though they are financed by taxpayers, and they also have to be qualitative. However, service culture has not been formed during the period of Lithuanian independence. Apparently, the reason for mistrust is that the residents have faced with irresponsible civil servants. The reason for this behaviour may not always be the will of the civil servant to humiliate the client: it is in the system itself where the citizen is described as an unsentenced criminal, while the job of the civil servant is to catch these criminals; otherwise, he/she is threatened with the punishment as well. Such organizational culture encourages condemnation and regulation of clients, the taxpayers, by using administrative tools rather than serving for the society.

The analysis of a learner's characteristics reveals that during the first programming period in 2004-2006 there was a lack of human resources in evaluation administration. This was influenced by a common turnover in the employees of ministries, which has already been mentioned in this research, and it actually affected the continuation of the accumulated experience (Stankaitienė, 2009). When the MF established the evaluation unit, the number of employees increased from one to six during several years. Accordingly, five people work at the evaluation unit in the Ministry of Agriculture. Other ministries do not have a person who works only with evaluation, thus, such employee is responsible both for monitoring and publication of information; therefore, an employee cannot allot enough time for evaluation. Boeckhout et al. (2002) emphasize that the difference in employee number is not significant in the member states. The authors claim that the quality of the staff is much more important than quantity. There was an attempt to solve the problem of human resources, and during the planning period of 2007-2013, there was a requirement for the ministries to have not less than one employee responsible for the evaluation of the EU structural support (Stankaitienė, 2009).

Generalizing the information collected during the qualitative research, one can maintain that most respondents admit that the competence is increasing, but there is a variety, in which the subdivision of the MF is the strongest; in addition, a big mechanism of evaluators exists in implementation agencies. Maybe these circumstances conditioned the fact that 70 per cent of recommendations provided in evaluation reports were implemented (Ministry of Finance, 2009). However, in this context it is important to emphasize that quite a number of evaluations, which were carried out in Lithuania, were related to the establishment the baseline of the

criteria or collection of monitoring data. Some authors (Markiewicz, Patrick, 2015) appreciate thinking in that streamline. Thus these recommendations of the process improvement could be implemented because of the need to improve the work of the department or accounting to the EC. However, as the evaluator noted: „Lithuania is a small country, and there is still no evaluation culture here; our role as a critic was often difficult (...) for our customers, the ministries (...). We used to argue about every sentence, and it was very painful for them<sup>1</sup>”. In fact, this means that the evaluator has to know psychology very well and be diplomatic; thus it would be purposeful to complement the analytical model about the learner's characteristics by Ferry and Olejniczak with the characteristics of the evaluators' human resources in the country.

Characteristics of the policy which is being evaluated. The scope of public intervention and its importance in the political process may be the critical factor in using the evaluation results. The evaluation comprising policies will possibly get more attention from the politicians, administrators and the society. It is also similar with the programmes that receive much investment because their results are important for the society; therefore, probably, the evaluation results will be used as well.

There is a triple opinion about the EU Cohesion policy, and this, of course, influences the activities of evaluation. First, the attempt is made to have an effective regional policy and decrease differences between regions; however, as we can see, the regional policy does not help to achieve cohesion, and there is no assimilation of regions. Second, even though regional policy does not directly influence the development of regions and economy growth, in the areas where the institutions performed their tasks properly, a more effective regional policy was noted. Third, it is highlighted that the regional policy has a negative impact on the economy and business development of the country; the allocated EU resources do not have an impact on the growth of the region and economical convergence.

According to Barca (2009), cohesion policy invested significantly into the learning process, which facilitates the exchange of experience and encourages evaluation. As noted by Stame (2008) and Barca (2009), there is an area, which still does not exhibit progress and understanding what operates and what effect is caused by a certain intervention, what the additional value is for the whole EU. After twenty years of cohesion policy existence, little is known about its effects, and it is important for the new reformed policy to improve along these lines (Barca, 2009).

<sup>1</sup> Interview with the evaluator of the project „EQUAL” [05.05.2010].

Tab. 2. Operational programmes of the programming period of 2007-2013 and 2014-2020

OPERATIONAL PROGRAMMES	ALLOCATED FUNDS EUR	OPERATIONAL PROGRAMMES	ALLOCATED FUNDS EUR
Promotion of cohesion	2648,33	National advancement programme	8,35
Economic growth	3098,85		
Development of human resources	935,01		
Technical assistance	93,28		
<b>In total:</b>	<b>6775,47</b>	<b>In total:</b>	<b>8,35</b>

During the programming period of 2007-2013, Lithuania indicated four operational programmes: promotion of cohesion; economic growth; development of human resources; technical assistance (see Tab. 2). Such little number of programmes, compared to other EU member states (Poland and Slovakia) has some advantages: a bigger impact can be expected because financing is not distributed for many various programmes. This also facilitates monitoring and evaluation. Taking these priorities into consideration, 6,8 billion EUR were allocated for Lithuania from structural and cohesion funds. The amount of funds allocated for the 2014-2020 period – 8,35 billion EUR. Starting from this programming period Lithuania spends all allocated funds through one operational programme – National advancement programme.

The characteristics of the EU Cohesion policy pose the task for the evaluation to answer whether the resources of structural and cohesion funds are used the most effectively and how efficiency will be improved. In order to answer this question, it is important to take the sectors and the scope of intervention into consideration, which asks what relationship with the respective methodology, is (Gaffey, 2007; Jacob et al., 2015).

Fig. 2 provides dynamics about the evaluations carried out in 2004-2014 devoted for the

implementation period of SPD (Single Programming Document) in 2004-2006 and ES Structural Funds for 2007-2013 programming period.

One can see that the highest number of evaluations were carried out in the sector of agriculture (25 per cent) in 2004-2006 and 13 per cent in 2007-2013, 15 per cent of evaluations were related to the administration of SPD implementation in 2004-2006 and the highest number of evaluations (29 per cent) was conducted in 2007-2013, 12 per cent with the information society in 2004-2006, however only 3 per cent during 2007-2013 and 10 per cent were evaluations of a programme level and 27 per cent in 2007-2013. It can be expected that more recommendations and results were used in these areas. The analysis of evaluation content of SPD and EU Structural Funds implementation administration reveals that most evaluations are devoted for the improvement of processes; for example, how the prices of certain goods should be established in a grounded way, procedures of control and confirmation of payment request, evaluation of project risk, structure of applications or rational use of the resources for dissemination and publication of information. In the area of agriculture, the evaluations which implement processes and develop capacities or determine the effectiveness of the system were dominant, even though some of them could

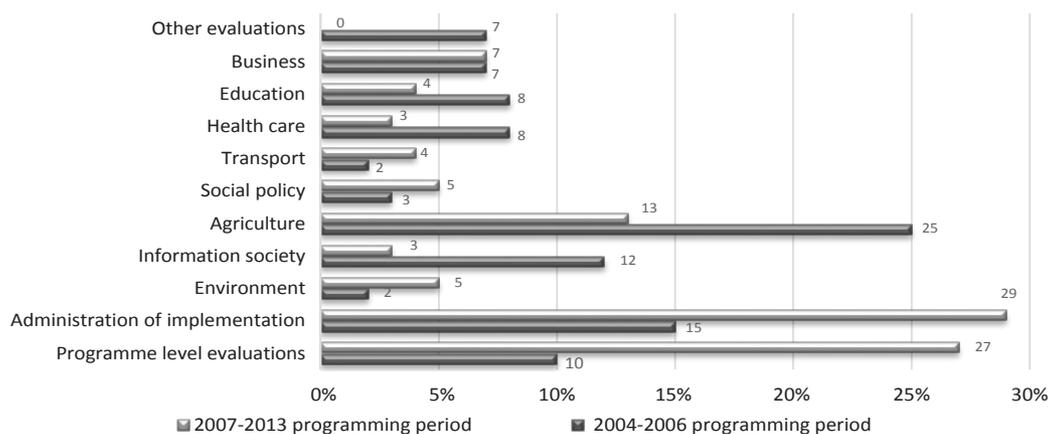


Fig. 2. Distribution of evaluation studies according to different areas carried out in 2004-2014

contribute to the development of public policy in the area of agriculture (for instance, the development of innovations in the modernization of the farms, that participate in the measures of SPD rural development and fishery priorities in 2004-2006; ex-ante evaluation of the national strategic plan of Lithuanian fishery sector in 2007-2013).

interested in evaluation results and recommendations. However, one respondent emphasized that the Committee on Rural Affairs is constantly incorporated in the presentation of evaluation results carried out by their Ministry, even though he could not tell to what extent the members of Parliament are interested. The respondents of the qualitative research mentioned several reasons of not being interested.

Tab. 3. Use of results by politicians

ARE THE MEMBERS OF PARLIMENT INTERESTED IN EVALUATION RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS? (N=90)	PERCENTAGE [%]
Yes	9
No	32
Partly	59

The analysis of Fig. 2 reveals that in the areas of social, transport and environmental protection policies, the number of evaluations was minimal, even though these areas are related to the problems and perspectives of Lithuania. The evaluation results and recommendations ensured the functions of accountability and planning development in the areas of environmental protection and social policy. The evaluation results of environmental protection were used in accounting for the EC, while the results of social policy were used in planning the interventions of 2007-2013 (Ministry of Finance, 2010). The evaluation results and recommendations in the transport area contributed to administration and improvement of processes in this area (Ministry of Finance, 2010).

As the results of the survey indicate, it was asked whether the members of Parliament are interested in the evaluation results and recommendations (see Tab. 3). The biggest part of the respondents (59 per

First, information and recommendations have to be presented in an aggregated form. According to the respondent, the information is not provided for the Parliament; besides, „this institution manipulates more global indicators and more global conclusions<sup>2</sup>”. Second, there is the principle of separation of powers. As the respondent noted, the members of Parliament wanted to participate in work groups which were programming Structural funds during the time of Brazauskas or Kirkilas' Governments<sup>3</sup>. However, a legal dilemma arises because of the principle of separation of powers, as it is the function of the Government to prepare programmes; however, evaluation would be useful for the Parliament in carrying out parliamentary control<sup>4</sup>.

During the process of the research, a survey was carried out in order to find out who decides whether the results obtained during evaluation should be used (see Tab. 4). 22 per cent of the respondents claimed that this decision is made by the minister, while

Tab. 4. Who decides whether evaluation results should or should not be used? (N=90)

NO.	RESPONSE OPTION	PERCENTAGE [%]
1.	Minister	22
2.	Vice-minister	22
3.	Head of department	25
4.	Head of unit	13
5.	Others	18
<b>IN TOTAL:</b>		<b>100</b>

cent) thinks that the members of Parliament are partly interested in evaluation results and recommendations.

The respondents who participated in the qualitative research were asked the same question. Most of them noted that the members of Parliament are not

2 Interview with the employee of the Office of the Prime Minister [21.10.2009].

3 Interview with the employee of the Institute of Public Policy and Management [15.10.2009].

4 Interview with the employee of the Institute of Public Policy and Management [15.10.2009].

22 per cent noted that this decision is made by the vice-minister. Thus according to 44 per cent of the respondents, these decisions are made by politicians and the civil servants of political trust. According to the opinion of 25 per cent of respondents, these decisions are made by the head of the department, while 13 per cent claimed that this is made by the head of the division. Thus 38 per cent of the respondents marked that top civil servants decide whether the evaluation results should or should not be used. 18 per cent of the respondents chose the answer „other”.

The answer „other” meant different variants: „all the mentioned”; „such decision to use the obtained results is not necessary”; „the obtained results are often used by the specialists themselves (maybe you would call them administrators) in everyday work, while preparing the projects of various documents, preparing the projects of various decisions as an argumentative measure”; „work groups and committees”; „the Ministry of Finance”; „the chancellor and the vice-chancellor”. Summing up these responses, it is possible to maintain: decisions are often made in a collegial way in work groups and committees or individually while preparing the grounding for the decision.

At the EU level, it was found out that director level staff does not often have time to read evaluation reports (Pollitt, 2006). Many top civil servants prefer either a one-page summary in their computer or a quick oral presentation to long reports. Of course, the result of the evaluation should be understandable for the final user, so that he/she would like to use the evaluation results or find out how it is possible to use them. Evaluations should indicate a wide spectrum of potential consequences: systematic, productive, economical, nutritional and social environmental.

Research time. Evaluation is performed at different stages of the public policy cycle. While planning a policy or a programme, the ex-ante evaluation is carried out. While implementing the programme, the intermediate evaluation is performed. After the implementation is finished, the ex-post evaluation is done.

The evaluation cycles of the EU Structural and Cohesion funds are interrelated. Therefore, the use of evaluation results depends on the changing situation because there is not an automatic relationship between the evaluation report and factual changes because the process is influenced by many factors (the position of parties and the government, competencies of the institutions, interest groups and the opinion of the media). This way, the time of the research may not have much significance for the use of recommendations because during the

programming period of 2004-2006 little evaluations were performed, and during the new programming period recommendations lose their significance. The planning of the programming period of 2007-2013 started in 2005 and took place until the end of 2007. Accordingly, when new programming started, public administration did not have implementation experience; thus there was a lack of factual data analysis from the previous period. When the first and the second evaluation cycles merged, no basis was formed for the actions in the future.

The MF organized a preliminary evaluation of all operational programmes of 2007-2013. The results of this project were discussed by a commission responsible for the programming of the EU Structural Funds (ESTEP, 2006). The respondents of the qualitative research noted that the recommendations of the preliminary evaluation were used naturally because evaluators were working together with institutions which prepare programmes, and this significantly improved the quality of programmes, while the results were integrated into the programmes being prepared. The community of European evaluators formed a critical opinion about preliminary evaluations. They are viewed as an inefficient task because the Commission has a list of priorities and suggests the leading institution to take into consideration the priorities while programming. It is thought that the evaluation of the needs of the country is more effective in such case; besides, this evaluation is applied while planning interventions, and its importance has increased during the last decade. The civil servant of the EC admitted that „Preliminary evaluation was carried out practically in many countries as a formal process, so that it would be possible to mark it in a check-list, and that's it”<sup>5</sup>. This can be interpreted as the non-existent independence of evaluators and a threat to express opinion freely about the things that are agreed about and decided.

The finance and economics crisis and the increased pressure from the society and politicians show that the time of the research is topical for the use of the results. In such turbulent situation, a question arises for many people what they should do in this unstable environment. Public administration was analyzing what aims should be orientated to and if they should be changed taking into consideration the present events. The participant of the evaluators' discussion noted that „We got a recommendation that long-term goals should not in fact be changed because of the crisis. We could face the pressure and ground that

<sup>5</sup> Interview with the employee of the European Commission [03.06.2010].

it is not necessary to change everything all of a sudden, as we had the conclusion of independent evaluators that it is unnecessary to destroy everything and construct new goals because the goals and strategy are suitable despite the fact that short-term goals are new or changed<sup>6</sup>.

As we can see, that the time of the research is important for the use of the results, even though it is not less important who says that, that is independent evaluators, and this, respectively, creates assumptions for the civil servants to have proof in order to defend their position. According to Albaek and Hojlund the results, which ground the aims and points of view of the activity of a person or an organization, is one more important form of using evaluation research (Albaek, 2004; Hojlund, 2014).

The used evaluation approach. This factor divides it into two aspects: one oriented towards experts and another oriented towards participation. In the first case, the experts performing the evaluation analyze the programming documents, statistical data and the information provided by the partners. Evaluation customers and the interested parties remain passive during the process of evaluation; therefore, the evaluator interprets the proof, provides conclusions and prepares the report. In the second case, the partners are encouraged to participate in the discussion about the programme. Their point of view is important while preparing the recommendations and conclusions. It is likely that the participating partners will understand about evaluation more and use the recommendations in their work

According to Pawson and Tilley (2004), programmes are theories because they start in the heads of policy architects, move to the hands of practitioners and sometimes through the thoughts of the programme subjects. As the authors claim, the programmes cannot be totally isolated or viewed as constant because unpredicted events and political changes take place, as well as changes in staff, physical and technological improvements, internal and external interactions, training, media attention, organizational imperatives and innovations of activity management. Sabatier agrees with this. He claims that in the search on how public policy operates, the knowledge about many actors of the country are necessary, and legal, technical and scientific questions of the decade should be comprised (Ministry of Finance, 2010). Thus, as has been mentioned in the present research, the programme theory was created by the evaluators and the members of the academic community.

While analyzing the case of Lithuania, it was found out that the evaluations of the EU structural support are rarely based on the programme theory, which would attempt to explain the mechanism of a concrete intervention and the results of public policy (Ministry of Finance, 2010). The experts note that theoretical assumptions are not often distinguished publicly (Ministry of Finance, 2010). While making logical models, a Keynesian economics theory is used. It may be that logical framework or econometrical models are formed (Ministry of Finance, 2010). The application of these models is indicated by the Keynesian demand management tradition, which dominates in the academic environment; it is also supported by many officials in the ministries because many of them graduated from Lithuanian universities. Besides, evaluation has some influence as well, as it is accumulated in several evaluation companies because there is a lack of more innovative evaluation methods, and a part of evaluations is based on the same evaluation structure. One can note that while trying to change this situation, foreign experts and their methodologies are used; for instance, while carrying out the evaluation of the EU Structural Funds impact on the GDP, the economical macro model HERLIT was used, which is based on HERMIN<sup>7</sup> methodology widely used in other member states (Ministry of Finance, 2009). Eventually, it appeared that this model is viewed critically: the comparison of HERMIN and another macro model results in four states shows that the differences are very big (Hart, 2007). Only one counterfactual impact evaluation was conducted in 2007-2013, however the implementation of the evaluation arose few issues: difficulties to obtain the data from public institutions due to data protection and missing link between officials and evaluators.

It is possible to state that the choice of evaluation methods is conditioned by the scientific tradition of the country, education of the evaluators and the EC. In Lithuania, the traditional methods of survey of the target group, in-depth interview and expert evaluations are often used. However, evaluations are carried out using new methods: a comparative method of programmes and financed areas, the analysis of expenses and results; in one project a correlation between the results obtained during the project and the expenses allocated for the project was counted, analysis of supervision results applying SMART methodology (by the way, the application of this method causes additional difficulties if the indicators are not the information of SMART

<sup>6</sup> Discussion of the networking of Lithuanian evaluators [02.12.2010].

<sup>7</sup> Prof. John Bradley (ESRI) was the author of the original HERMIN model. HERMIN is econometric model to assess a potential impact of the European Union Structural Funds on the macroeconomic situation in the country.

supervision); use rates of the structural support and the analysis of fact comparison (Hart, 2007). Stame (2008) notes a regular tendency here because, according to the author, statistical and econometrical models are used at the EU level in order to indicate macro effects, while qualitative methods are used on the local level.

Evaluators of the EQUAL project use a participatory approach by using the method of focus group discussions. According to the evaluator, „When you form a group and talk to the project recipients and implementers, then the participants talk constructively, (...) the people express themselves, and the evaluator comes and does not look at the data as an inspector; he/she allows the people talking among themselves, think, open up, and this way the recommendations are accepted much better; even the report is not important then”<sup>8</sup>. This method helps creating the feeling of ownership of the evaluation results; therefore, a dialogue between the evaluator and the participants is created, they are helped with formulating recommendations, which will be implemented in the future. In general, it can be noted that even though there are not many evaluators in Lithuania, most of them represent certain schools of research methods by choosing evaluation approaches, which are constantly used in evaluation. Other companies, that participated in evaluations, use a traditional quantitative survey and qualitative in-depth interview research methods.

Quality of the report. Qualitative preparation of the evaluation reports is the premise for its further usage in the formation of public policy formation. Apparently, this variable depends not only on the evaluators who perform the evaluation but also on the participation of the employees of the client (the managing authority).

Many respondents have noted that the quality of evaluation reports is constantly increasing. In improving quality, qualification of evaluators is mentioned the most often; however, it is noted that the quality was increased by competition among providers of evaluation services. It is admitted that during the programming period of 2004-2006, the quality of evaluation reports was fluctuating in different ministries. This can be seen from the analysis of the reports provided on the internet website: in some of them, simple surveys are carried out in order to find out the opinion of a certain respondent group. According to the civil servant, „the ministries received some resources for evaluation of structural funds, and they ordered evaluations; maybe not all evaluations were qualitative, maybe

some of them were left in the chest of drawers”<sup>9</sup>. As noted by the respondents of public administration, content mistakes were more common: a low quality report was provided; the recommendations and the conclusions are not good sufficiently or they are distant from the reality.

The quality of the reports can be improved by collaboration between the institutions. More attention was paid to this during the new programming period of 2007-2013 when the evaluation unit was empowered to coordinate the evaluation process. The evaluation unit of the MF discusses intermediate results with other ministries, and the employees of the ministries are constantly taught how to supervise the quality of results. Even though the employees of the MF indicate this as a merit, this in fact shows the lack of centralized evaluation coordination because the staff of the ministries will constantly need help and they will be forced to ask the evaluation unit for help because they will doubt about the evaluators and their own skills to determine whether the evaluation is carried out qualitatively.

The measures implemented by the MF in order to reach a better quality of the reports shows Tab. 5. The quality control was developed by improving the evaluation process and evaluation results. In the development of the evaluation process, the documents of buying evaluation services were improved (technical specifications, evaluation questions and the criteria of economic usefulness), as well as the supervision of evaluation services implementation; introductory meetings were started to be organized and discussion of intermediate results. The evaluators are asked to provide initial, intermediate and final reports of service agreement implementation. On the other hand, cooperation between evaluators and civil servants is very important while striving for high quality evaluation because the civil servants know the context of the object being evaluated. It is necessary to cooperate intensively for a qualitative service in order to avoid elementary mistakes.

In order to improve evaluation results, an EC evaluation methodology was adapted and methodological guidelines were prepared by the order of the MF, which suggested a quality control form. The EC uses an EVALSED<sup>10</sup> manual for quality evaluation, which distinguishes eleven criteria (for example, suitability of scope, structure and reliability of the data) and the upper and lower limit of evaluation were set (very positively or very negatively). Each technical task indicates that evaluation results will be checked according to the

<sup>8</sup> Interview with the evaluator of the project „EQUAL” [05.05.2010].

<sup>9</sup> Interview with the employee of the MF [15.10.2009].

<sup>10</sup> Evalsed is an online resource providing guidance on the evaluation of socio-economic development.

Tab. 5. Improvement of evaluation quality

QUALITY CONTROL	
EVALUATION PROCESS	EVALUATION RESULTS
Public procurement documents for evaluation services purchasing improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ToR;</li> <li>• evaluation questions;</li> <li>• economic efficiency criteria</li> </ul>	Evaluation report style – according to the Evaluation style guideline
The review of the evaluation services implementation process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• introduction meetings;</li> <li>• introduction, ongoing and final implementation report of the service contract;</li> <li>• ongoing results discussion</li> </ul>	Evaluation report quality control in the accordance of special form

Source: (Burakienė, 2009).

quality control form. In addition, the manual of report style was prepared by the order of the MF, which is used by the evaluators, and this is recorded in the technical task.

Respondents of evaluators also claimed to be using various measures in order to ensure quality. In the subdivisions of foreign audit companies, ISO 9001 quality standards are implemented in order to ensure internal processes and internal quality of the companies. In other evaluators' companies, informal quality evaluation processes operate, which are similar to the review system of scientific journals. The conclusion and recommendations are presented to the colleagues who are not related to the project and their opinion is asked about complementing the recommendations. In addition, the evaluators understand that it is important to work with the customer; thus they attempt to cooperate while carrying out evaluation projects. The quality of evaluation results is influenced by certain factors: a broad scope of the evaluation indicated in the technical specifications of evaluation projects, some evaluation questions are excess and unrelated with the evaluation aim, objectives and the period being evaluated. A similar problem exists in the EC and the institutions of the member states: the evaluators are asked many questions, to which the evaluators simply cannot answer, especially taking into consideration the time perspective. In the XI conference in Warsaw the evaluator Toulemonde (2009) provided an example: the evaluators were asked forty questions, ten of which comprised the analysis of causal relationship<sup>11</sup>. The administrators' group admitted to the above mentioned remark.

The use of evaluation results is also conditioned by the quality of formulating questions. As the civil

servant has noted, „Naturally, there's a complicated issue with the formulation of questions. Sometimes it is necessary to analyse the whole pile of literature in order to formulate a question well. (...) sometimes it is necessary to get into the theme very much. What concerns, European evaluations, there are questions which should be answered by carrying out concrete obligatory evaluations. There are guidelines which help, there are also methodological documents"<sup>12</sup>. Apparently, the ability to formulate questions is very important; in Lithuania it was noted in the national discussion of evaluators. However, this is influenced not only by the inability of the administrators to ask but also by the unwillingness of the evaluators to get deeper into it.

One more indicator of the report quality is the data obtained during the quantitative research: whether the evaluation provides more information about the problem and about the ways of solving it. The results of the survey carried out showed that 59 per cent of the respondents consider that evaluation provides more information about the problem and the ways of solving it, 38 per cent of the respondents indicated that they obtain knowledge about the problem and the ways of solving it only partly (see Tab. 6). Only 3 per cent of the respondents think that evaluation does not provide more knowledge about the problem and the ways of solving it.

Generalizing these results, one can claim that most of evaluation reports are qualitative because they provide the respondents with actual information, and using it, it is possible to solve the problems.

During the process of the research, a survey was carried out in order to find out whether evaluation increases the quality of decisions and their implementation (see Tab. 6). 49 per cent of the

<sup>11</sup> Oral presentation during the conference in Warsaw 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with the employee of the Ministry of Agriculture [21.10.2010].

Tab. 6. Indicators of the quality of evaluation report

<b>DOES THE EVALUATION PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROBLEM AND THE WAYS OF SOLVING IT? (N=90)</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE [%]</b>
Yes	59
No	3
Partly	38
<b>DOES THE EVALUATION INCREASE THE QUALITY OF DECISIONS AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION? (N=90)</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE [%]</b>
Yes	49
No	8
Partly	43

respondents answered „yes”, 43 per cent of the respondents marked „partly”, and only 8 per cent of the respondents chose the answer „no”.

The analysis of the data revealed that almost half of the respondents admit that evaluation increases the quality of decisions and their implementation; quite a lot of the respondents think that it is increased partly. Based on this, it is possible to state that the results provided by the evaluators are useful, while the information of the reports is qualitative. Civil servants can learn from the evaluations, and therefore, the implementation of the decisions improves.

## CONCLUSIONS

The research results show that isomorphism and donor-oriented evaluation dominates in the evaluation system of the EU Structural and Cohesion funds. Lithuania transfers the elements necessary to support the evaluation to the public administration systems. Concerning the intervention approach, supporting many programmes and projects, there is a change to the approach based on long-term planning, programming and consulting with the stakeholders. The methodological documents of evaluation created by the EU are used and new national methodological evaluation guides are created. The officials participate in the EU evaluation networks and initiate national evaluation associations or networking. The mentioned circumstances denote the dominating management of evaluations, the basis for which is the institutionalization of evaluation activities. However, it should also be understood that management by evaluations should be used and guaranteed that because of the evaluation study, the government fulfills the evaluation functions analyzed in this research.

As the qualitative and quantitative data analysis shows, the EU member states have different evaluation organizing approaches, taking into consideration public management organization in the state.

In Lithuania, evaluation function is not widely developed, applying the centralized evaluation approach; it is transmitted to other ministries, even though the skills of the Lithuanian Ministry of Finance are evaluated very well.

The quantitative and qualitative data analysis on evaluation shows that Lithuania was not prepared for the collection of monitoring data and it was not planned what data would be necessary for evaluations. Monitoring of financial data worked best, as it was the inheritance of economic-financial control, which operated quite effectively during the period of socialist regime. The data of physical monitoring was not collected or there was no continuation of data collection because of staff changes. Inappropriate definition of indicators conditioned the scarcity of qualitative data of monitoring system.

In order to assess the use of evaluation results, Ferry and Olejniczak's analytical model was used. Taking into consideration the obtained results, it can be concluded that in a well-operating state office, the recommendations received during evaluation become the source of alternative information for the decision maker. Very much attention is paid on the EU Cohesion policy and its evaluation on the EU level. The EU budget is prepared on the basis of the evidence; however, in Lithuania, the Cohesion policy lacks the local officials' feeling of ownership; therefore, there is also a lack of evidence use while reaching the changes in the country through the assimilation of resources of Structural Funds. Time of the research is an important factor in the use of evaluation results. However, it was noted that interim evaluation and results are viewed as an unnecessary task because evaluation recommendations are not used as the EU priorities provided for the member states, and they have to ensure the reflection of priorities in the strategic documents of the country. Under such circumstances, it would be useful to carry out the evaluation of the country's needs. The used evaluation approaches and quality of the report are viewed as important factors, which influence the use of the results. In fact, traditional qualitative and quantitative

methods still dominate, the innovative evaluation methods (counterfactual analysis) are transferred to Lithuania. The quality of evaluation reports is constantly increasing because the officials' skills in project management are improving. In addition, the evaluators in Lithuania view this business seriously because there is an evaluation plan, according to which future activities may be planned.

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