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## Lithuanian cultural policy: challenges and achievements

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**Abstract.** The aim of this paper is to review Lithuanian cultural policy system and achievement in its improvement. The main tasks to achieve this aim are: to give brief overview of Lithuanian cultural policy and its major developments; to compare Lithuanian cultural indicators with other EU member states; to develop policy recommendations based on analysis conducted. Studies show that adults' culture consumption habits are influenced by the frequency and the earliness of encounter with culture and whether they are taught to participate in cultural life. Therefore, increasing the accessibility of culture to children regardless of their family and social environment is an important priority of our culture policy. It can take the form of both integrating cultural education disciplines into the curriculum of general education and creating educational programmes adapted to the young generation and the cultural activity centers.

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## INTRODUCTION

Everyone knows that Arts and Culture make a contribution to health, to education, to crime reduction, to strong communities, to the economy and to the nation's well-being. (Merli, 2002). Culture is not simply a large and important sector of the economy, it is a 'social software' that is badly needed to manage the complexity of contemporary societies and economies in all of its manifold implications (Sterne, 2002). The total indirect macroeconomic impact of cultural participation is likely to be much bigger than the (already remarkable) direct one. These effects are further strengthened by the growth of the cultural and creative industries, but only insofar as such growth is as inclusive and participative as possible. There is a strong statistical association between life expectancy and cultural participation (Throsby, 2001). There is an equally strong association between cultural participation and psychological well-being (Grossi et al, 2011). The well-being impact of cultural participation is especially strong among the severely ill and the elderly. Systematic cultural participation in these categories might bring about substantial improvement in their quality of life. At the same time, cultural participation might significantly reduce hospitalization frequency and duration for chronic pathologies. If this is true, the whole program could be financed through the consequential saving on general welfare cost (Belfiore & Bennett, 2007a,b).

But reasoning about culture as a major, direct determinant of health or of physical and psychological well-being is a less uncontroversial point. This is due to the fact that, compared to other health-relevant factors such as, to name just a few, dietary and smoking habits, genetic endowment, exposure to toxicity or stress, but also level of income or quality of social relationships, culture is often intuitively judged to have a relatively minor impact on significant quantities such as life expectation or (suitably measured) well-being. At most, there may be the recognition that some of these major factors, such as for instance dietary and smoking habits, can be at least in part culturally determined. But again, concern for culture is instrumental to the fact that it turns out to act upon other, intrinsically relevant matter (Grossi et al, 2011).

Culture includes many elements, including language, customs, beliefs, traditions, and ways of communicating (Klamer, Zuidhof, 1998). Another way of defining culture is to describe it as “as the way things are done around here.” This way one can conclude that culture plays an important role and in fact causes impacts development in several different fields of our daily life (Frey, 1997). Cultural policy is a policy that governs activities related to arts and culture. It involves fostering processes, legal classifications and institutions which promote cultural diversity and accessibility, as well as enhancing and promulgating the arts, literature, and other expressions of all people and especially cultural heritage. This is a result of a strategy of “policy attachment”, whereby the arts, which constitute a policy area commanding small budgets and little political clout, have progressively attached themselves to economic and social agendas, thus benefiting from the larger budgets and greater political influence of those areas of public policy (Belfiore, 2002; Bilan et al., 2015).

Recent years have brought principal changes in Lithuania’s state cultural policy. The government approved the Inter-Institutional Action Plan for 2012-2014 Implementing the Guidelines for Alteration of the Lithuanian Cultural Policy in 2011. The Ministry of Culture set several priorities for the year 2014: access to culture for all groups in society; effectiveness of protection and relevance of cultural heritage; international competitiveness of Lithuanian culture and cultural products; enhancing tolerance and intercultural dialogue; and development of cultural services via the media. A Ministry of Culture survey Public participation in culture and content of cultural services (2014) revealed the changes in quality of cultural services provided in municipalities. According to the survey, the positive evaluation of service quality was applied to all sectors of culture. The most positive service quality changes were estimated in libraries (59% of respondents) and access to archives via the internet (55%), film shows and visual arts, however comparison of cultural indicators with other EU member states are necessary in order to reveal progress achieved in consumption of cultural goods and services by population.

## THE MAIN TARGETS OF LITHUANIAN CULTURAL POLICY

The objectives of Lithuanian culture policy are laid out in several documents: the Provisions for Culture Policy of the Republic of Lithuania, the Government Programme, and the Strategic Plans of the Ministry of Culture for 2009–2011 and 2010–2012. The Provisions for Culture Policy of the Republic of Lithuania is an important document. Although the state had been implementing culture policy before it was drawn up, this document was adopted only in 2001. This document lists the main objectives of Lithuanian culture policy:

1. To preserve and cultivate the national cultural identity;
2. To encourage creative activity and artistic diversity;
3. To develop the information society;
4. To encourage the openness of national culture;
5. To create the conditions for the society to participate in and consume culture.

The Ministry must implement these objectives through its strategic plans. The objectives laid out in the Provisions are long-term, yet they are fairly abstract; however, the Ministry's strategic plans reveal the Ministry is currently in the process of implementing most of its objectives (Rimkus, 2010). This document was adopted 9 years ago, while the situation in both Lithuania and the world has already changed. In 2010, the need for the Law on Culture Policy was addressed. The President initiated a working group to draw up the new culture policy guidelines, yet the Parliament still delays the reading of this project for unclear reasons. There are different commentaries, yet it is obvious that Lithuania needs a high-quality document regulating culture policy. The Lithuanian culture policy guidelines project presents one objective: "to create a renewed Lithuanian culture policy model that would make it possible to reveal, preserve and develop the society's cultural identity and creative potential".

1. The objective entails 10 tasks, which the interviewed expert identified as existing problems of Lithuanian culture policy (Liutkus, 2010):
2. To establish the status of culture as a strategic direction of the state's development by giving priority to culture policy.
3. To reform and democratize the administration of culture by developing the self-regulation of the latter.
4. To improve the current culture funding system by ensuring the reinvestment of the income of the culture sector back into culture.
5. To increase the intellectual capital of Lithuanian artists and the competitive potential of the creative industries based on it.
6. To encourage life-long development of people's cultural competencies and creativity.
7. To develop an all-encompassing, integrated heritage preservation policy.
8. To ensure sustainable development by combining the objectives of heritage and environmental protection with urban development and spatial planning.
9. To make culture more accessible in the whole of Lithuania.
10. To expand Lithuania's cultural space by bringing together Lithuania's representatives in the world.
11. To disseminate Lithuanian culture abroad in a conceptual and targeted way, seeking to attain the long-term objectives.

These objectives are long-term and remain relevant today. The first objective encompasses all elements related to the unique identity of the national culture and its recognition. It entails, first of all, preservation of the national language, encouragement of correct use of the latter, preservation of ethnic culture, preservation and popularization of cultural heritage by linking it to tourism, as well as provision of support to Lithuanian communities in foreign countries and ethnic minorities in Lithuania. The basis of the second objective is the support of artists and their organizations, creation of conditions for dissemination of art not only on the national level, but also in municipalities, ensuring people's access to high-quality cultural services, and development of creative industries. The third objective creates the preconditions for the citizens to educate themselves and receive information through libraries and museums, as well as for the training of culture specialists. The fourth objective creates the preconditions for representing Lithuania abroad and shaping its international image through culture. The task emphasized by the fifth objective is to engage the public in the art and culture processes through cultural events and encouragement of non-professional art collectives, societies and gatherings. This objective also stresses the need to support non-governmental organizations as agents that encourage public involvement, and to create favorable conditions for their development. Municipalities are not left out either. Together with the ministry, they are responsible for implementing the identified long-term objectives. The following key principles are emphasized: identity – the ensuring of Lithuanians' and the ethnic minorities' possibility to cultivate and preserve their culture; decentralization – the division of culture policy management, formulation and implementation between municipalities and

the state, development of cultural self-governance; openness – dissemination of Lithuanian culture abroad and acquaintance with other nations' cultures (Rimkus, 2010).

Reinforcement of the Ministry of Culture and the restoration of its role of initiator and coordinator of culture policy can be considered one of the objectives of the 15<sup>th</sup> Government of Lithuania. The Councils of the Ministry do not stay behind as well, as they seek to improve their regulations and quality of work, as well as developing the artists' social security programme (pension schemes for artists). The development of the creative industries is another focus, with encouragement of scientific research and artistic/cultural projects, incentives for investment in Lithuanian cinema, and creation of a special foundation using money from the European Union's structural funds.

The National Lithuanian Cultural Development Programme 2003–2009, drew up by the Ministry of Culture, attracted quite a lot of criticism. The 2009–2011 strategic plan of the Ministry of Culture has been met critically as well, and lists the same three strategic objectives: 1. "To encourage the creative activity of art and culture creators and its dissemination". 2. "To preserve and popularize Lithuania's cultural heritage and traditions, encourage the public to participate in cultural processes, and increase the accessibility of culture and public-access information". 3. "To provide the infrastructural and financial framework for the development of high-quality services and promotion of diversity of cultural initiatives".

Of particular importance is the Regional Culture Development Programme– it is a legal document which promotes an even cultural development of the country's regions. The document presents an analysis of the existing situation: county governors lack concern for culture, while state funding of regional programmes is insufficient, and is usually tied to official anniversaries. Regional cultural institutions do not receive the necessary and innovative technical means, information is scarce, often uncoordinated and duplicated, dissemination of professional art is decreasing in scale, increasingly few cultural services are available, traditions and ethnic culture do not receive due attention. The objective of this programme is the decentralization of culture management by creating the legal, financial and administrative conditions for the development of regional culture. The private sector is encouraged to support cultural heritage by organizing special projects, seminars and conferences. The means of implementation are these: establishment of regional culture centers, creation of an electronic database of culture and tourism services, heritage objects and recreational routes, and surveying the residents' cultural needs (Liutkus, 2010; Martinaitytė & Kregždaitė, 2015).

The means of culture funding can be divided into two groups: direct and indirect. The direct ones include subsidies for cultural institutions, grants and rents for artists, and similar forms of funding. The indirect ones include VAT and other exemptions for businesses creating the cultural product. One problem is the decreasing expenditure for culture; another problem is that the Ministry of Culture cannot receive money from the EU structural funds directly, as it failed to prepare the projects for receiving financing from the structural funds in 2008–2013, and therefore has to cooperate with other ministries in order to make use of at least a part of the EU money. Having in mind that the financing of the Ministry of Culture is among the lowest in Lithuania, this is a great loss and a great inadvertence.

At the moment it is the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania that formulates and implements the culture policy. The Ministry's mission is to create the conditions for the continuity, development and dissemination of national culture, the society's free creative expression and participation in cultural activity, and preservation of cultural values; to shape and help reveal the spiritual and material values of social groups and ethnic communities; to help develop a democratic, free and open society. The Ministry of Culture coordinates the work of the following councils, committees and expert commissions: The Lithuanian Culture and Art Council; The Cinema Council; The Library Council; The National Culture and Art Award Committee; The Lithuanian Council of Author's and Neighboring Rights; Expert commissions of the Ministry of Culture (Theatre, Fine Arts, Publishing, etc.).

Regional self-government and public institutions also influence culture policy. The Parliament's Science, Education and Culture Committee solve various culture-related issues, make decisions and analyses the culture-related legislation. Every Government of the Republic of Lithuania prepares its action plan, which encompasses the spheres of culture, art and cultural heritage. The Ministry of Culture provides support for regional or municipal cultural projects and professional art performances outside the bigger cultural centres as well as those initiatives of ethnic cultural groups. In 2011, the Ministry of Culture passed the Resolution on the Programme of Development of Culture in the Regions for the year 2012-2020. Total financing by the Ministry of cultural activities in the regions and maintenance of institutions (Centre of Folk Culture) was 12 767 000 LTL in 2014. The Programme of Development of Ethnic Culture may be closed at the end of 2014 (launched in 2010). The Lithuanian Culture Council supports the programmes / projects which help to increase the cultural activities of municipalities and NGOs and to extend presentations of professional art performances beyond the bigger cultural centres.

## COMPARISON OF LITHUANIAN CULTURAL INDICATORS WITH OTHER EU MEMBER STATES

European Commission is not authorized to harmonize legal and administrative regulations of the member states in the cultural sector, though it has had the effect of standardizing policy formats across the EU in those areas in which it has become involved (Directorate General Internal Policies of the Union, 2006). The design, focus and implementation of European cultural policies vary across countries. Some have a centralized, ministry-supervised structure; others are decentralized. In some countries, public intervention plays the "sovereign" of culture; others employ a combination of public and private interventions. "There is a great variety – limited only by the number of countries – in cultural policies and in the institutions set up to implement them. And this variety reflects not only differing national traditions in the organization of public functions and the delivery of public services, but differing philosophies and objectives regarding the whole area of culture and the arts" (Cummings, 1987). It is obvious need of a harmonized system of indicators for monitoring and evaluating at the Community level, a redefinition of national statistics, and monitoring and evaluating individual member states (Fink-Hafner & Kustec-Lipicer, 2003; Heilbrun, Gray, 2001). *Eurostat*, the statistical office of the European Union, has been directly involved in the process of harmonizing cultural statistics, and a cultural statistics.

Libraries are the major source of culture dissemination in Lithuania. The libraries network of which covers the whole Lithuania have de facto become the hotbeds of culture dissemination in the Lithuanian province, attracting the communities' cultural initiatives. The cultural activity they carry out must be appropriately encouraged and funded with regard to the role that library play (and could play even more actively) in the regions' cultural life. Their mission would be to foster cultural life in the province, encourage and serve the local cultural initiatives, provide tourism information, etc. There is a need for a competition-based funding programme for museum activity and presentation of professional art that would provide equal opportunities to receive funding to all public subjects who carry out museum activity in Lithuania.

There were 3 108 employees in Lithuania's state and municipality museums (106), 808 professional librarians in libraries under the Ministry of Culture (7 libraries) and 2 516 in 60 municipalities (1 281 libraries), and 4 337 employees in municipal cultural centres (761) in 2013.

According to labour force surveys conducted by *Lithuania Statistics*, the average monthly net wage of persons employed in the fields of arts, entertainment and recreation corresponded to 1 636 LTL in 2012 (around 474.5 EUR). In comparison, for those employed in professional, scientific and technical sectors, the

average monthly wage was 2 691 LTL in 2012 (around 780 EUR). The average monthly net wage of culture employees was 700-800 LTL (around 200-250 EUR), least of all employees.

In order to increase the real (*net*) wage in the cultural sector, in 2008 the government approved the Programme for Raising Wages in the Culture and Art sector for the year 2009 – 2011. However, due to the economic crisis the increase in the level of wages has stopped. In 2014 the Ministry of Culture prepared the new model of remuneration for actors of state drama and music theatres who have partial labour hours in permanent job institutions. According to data selected by the Ministry in 2013, more than a quarter of the permanent professional actors of these theatres were not very active in repertoire plays and only performed in, on average, two plays per month. The model proposes to reorganise national and state theatres and concert institutions into non-public institutions and to form theatre companies on temporary labour contracts

Therefore though the employment in cultural sector is quite high in Lithuania however the wages of cultural workers are significantly lower than those of teachers and are among the lowest. The wages of cultural workers must be raised to the point where they will be sufficient not only for taking care of the basic needs, but also for ensuring a complete life. It is also necessary to renew the infrastructure of cultural institutions and invest into establishment of new community centers. Purposeful investments in culture would be a sign that culture is treasured at the national level, and that the state needs cultural workers. One of the chief objectives of the *Culture without Walls* programme is to minimize the various forms of cultural exclusion by increasing the accessibility of culture. For this reason, it is necessary to renew cooperation and minimize the gap between professional and amateur art. It seems that until now the state has not realized the educational potential that amateur collectives have, has not dedicated due attention to such collectives' activity, and has not raised the cultural workers' wages and its spending on the upgrade of their qualification

One of the major culture policy tasks is to create the demand for culture by ensuring the continuity of cultural life and seeking to minimize cultural exclusion within the society. On the one hand, it is necessary to take care of the creation of future demand for culture by rising the young generation as consumers of culture. On the other hand, it is also necessary to take care of the creation of demand for culture by encouraging the emergence of local hotbeds of consumption of culture – creating funds for supporting the small-scale cultural projects of the communities (inviting authors or cultural personalities for a creative evening, etc.) and ushering in the emergence of local cultural initiatives and clubs. The cultural workers' proactive role is particularly important in this process.

Creative industries are activities which are based on the individual's creativity, skill and talent, and which can create material prosperity and jobs through the production of intellectual property. Creative work generates higher added value and creates the conditions for faster growth of income, providing long-term competitive advantage. Therefore it is evident that Lithuania's economic policy should encourage creative work rather than technical one, making the former constitute an increasingly larger part of the economy. It would be useful to enrich the existing industrial companies with creative industry units within them (the vertical approach). The main benefits provided by creative industries in Lithuania are: emergence of a strong economy sector with a high growth potential and possible influence on other sectors (e.g. tourism); possibility of economic and social cohesion in the country's regions; positive effect on the image of the country and the region; dissemination of creativity and innovation in society; increasing prominence of creative professionals in businesses, changing organizational culture.

Presently, Lithuania's creative industries-based business is fragmented, do not see themselves as a single movement, and are unwilling to open to collaboration in fear of competition. State support and opportunities to develop shared projects and integrate into international networks could bring them closer together. In the initial stage initiators of creative industries need state support to turn their creative skills into a source

of livelihood and make their activity interesting to the business sector, so that the latter would see them as economic partners.

The Eurobarometersurvey on *Cultural access and participation* (2013) shows that since 2007 there has been a general decline in participation in most cultural activities in EU countries. The research revealed that only 49% of Lithuanians are interested in national culture and art whereas the average in Europe is 69%. In comparison with EU index (62%), a big number (71%) of Lithuanians don't participate in any individual or group cultural activity. In a significantly better position are Latvia (58%) and Estonia (50%). Attendance (visitors, spectators, readership) ratios depend on a variety of factors: quality of services, ticket prices, financial capacity of the population, their cultural interests, leisure time priorities, specifics of the event itself (theatre performance, concert, exhibition, etc.), and the image of the institution. Surveys which monitor the participation of national minority groups in multi-cultural festivals have not yet been developed.

Development of attendance rates for selected cultural institutions in Lithuania during 2007-2011 is given in Table 1

Table 1

Dynamics of attendance rates for selected cultural institutions in Lithuania during 2007-2011

Institutions	Number of institutions	Visitors, spectators, readers	Number of institutions	Visitors, spectators, readers
	2007	2007	2011	2011
Cinemas	44	3 300 000	33	3 047 300
Drama theatres	13	1 000 000	13	890 000
Non-public theatres	21	295 000	26	296 000
Concert organisations	6	146 000	8	140 000
Museums	106	3 100 000	105	2 655 000
Libraries	1 395	752 000	1 327	716 000
Public archives	15	33 749	16	36 400

Source: (Statistics Lithuania. Culture, Press and Sports, 2008; 2012).

Cinema attendance during the last years in Lithuania was strongly influenced by tickets prices, film advertising and management failures, the real income level of the population and the processes of emigration. In 2012, there were 32 cinemas operating in the country, with a total of 83 cinema halls and 1.250 showings per cinema hall on average (Table 2).

Table 2

Dynamics of cinema attendance in Lithuania during 2011–2013

Year	Total admissions	Per capita	Population of Lithuania
2011	3 047 300	0.93	3 201 334
2012	3 020 332	1.009	3 007 758
2013	3 256 995	1.10	2 958 182

Source: (Statistics Lithuania. Culture, Press and Sports, 2008; 2012).

In Table 3 the main cultural indicators discussed in this chapter are compared for Lithuania and several EU member states.

Table 3

## Cultural indicators in EU member states in 2011

	Lithuania LT	Latvia LV	Netherlands NL	Finland FL	Poland PL	Czech Rep. CZ	Denmark DK	Slovakia SK
Percentage of persons who have read at least one book in the last 12 months, %	68	74	-	80	63	78	-	-
Average annual number of cinema admissions per inhabitant	1.0	1.1	1.7	1.3	1.0	1.2	2.5	0.8
Number of inhabitants per cinema screen, 1000s	43	50	26	17	38	15	14	21
Employment in cultural sectors as a share of total employment, %	2.0	2.3	2.0	2.3	1.4	1.7	2.3	1.1
Share of cultural expenditure in total household expenditure, %	2.8	3.8	4.7	5.1	4.3	5.0	5.6	3.3
Percentage of persons who have attended a live performance at least once in the last 12 months, %	47	45	55	64	22	37	61	52
Mean consumption expenditure of household on cultural goods and services, PPS	14,730	11,381	30,288	-	-	15,263	28,560	15,041
Households having access to the internet at home 2012, %	60	58	90	78	59	53	85	62

Source: (Eurostat, 2016).

As one can see from information provided in Table 3 the share of cultural expenditures as a share of total household expenditures is the lowest in Lithuania comparing with other analyzed EU member states though the percentage of persons who attended a live performance at least once per year and cinema admission indicators are quite high in Lithuania comparing with Poland and Czech Republic. This indicates comparatively low prices of live performances and high share of expenses on food and communal services in Lithuania. The average annual number of cinema admissions per inhabitant in Lithuania is quite similar to other EU member states and higher than in Slovakia. The percentage of persons who have read at least one book per year in Lithuania is also higher than in Poland and other EU member states.

Indicators of employment in cultural sectors are also quite high in Lithuania and makes 2% of the total employment. In Slovakia, Poland and Czech Republic this indicator is significantly lower. In Denmark this indicator is 2.5 times higher than in Lithuania, in old EU member states cultural indicators representing involvement of citizens in cultural life and state financing of culture are significantly higher than in new



EU member states. In Lithuania state expenditures for culture sector makes about 2.6% of total budget expenditures in 2012 and is similar to Denmark's cultural expenditures share in total expenditures in 2001. In Estonia public expenditure on culture makes about 3.6% of total expenditures.

Indicators of IT usage in households are very high in Lithuania and internet access in household's makes 60% and are higher than in Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and other new member states. Just old EU member states such as Netherlands, Denmark, Finland and others have higher internet access of households' indicators.

## CONCLUSIONS

Culture and arts make a contribution to health, to education, to crime reduction, to strong communities, to the economy and to the nation's well-being therefore cultural policies are being implemented in all developed and developing nations.

Though Lithuania has developed ambitious cultural policy country distinguishes from other EU member states with quite average cultural indicators showing low rates of percentage of persons who have read at least one book in the last 12 months, low annual number of cinema and theatre admissions etc. showing low affordability rate to cultural services in the country.

Improvement of the legal framework, implementation of the adopted legal provisions and increase in the efficiency of State assistance in coordinating the priorities of the different sources of funding for culture development have created the possibility of protecting and developing culture in Lithuania.

The large numbers of creative professionals encourage the development of the creative industry. Improvement of the institutional system for cultural heritage protection enables collaboration between public authorities, municipalities as well as legal and natural entities in the management of cultural heritage objects. Development of the cultural NGOs allows formation of a State culture policy that meets the public needs. Modern IT tools contribute to the dissemination of national culture as well as accessibility of culture to the public in Lithuania.

In Lithuania cultural expenditures as a share of total household expenditures is the lowest comparing with other EU member states though the other cultural indicators such as admission of live performances or cinema are quite high showing comparatively low prices of live performances and high share of expenses on food and communal services in Lithuania.

Indicators of employment in cultural sectors are quite high in Lithuania and makes 2 percent of the total employment however salaries in this are the lowest one. Lithuanian state expenditures for culture sector makes about 2.6% of total budget expenditures in 2012 and are lower than in Latvia, Estonia and many old EU members states indicating low budget expenditures for culture.

Seeking to achieve a consistent cultural policy and taking into consideration that the situation of culture in Lithuania demands a critical approach, attention and positive changes as up to now this sector hasn't attract necessary state support.

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