

Underdeveloped Development Cooperation. Lithuanian Case

Giedrė Ivinskienė

Alumna of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science (IIRPS),
Vilnius University
e-mail: giedre.ivinskiene@gmail.com

Summary. This article strives to reveal the reasons hindering smooth implementation of Lithuania's development cooperation policy. Although Lithuania is less than 8 years away from the target of official development assistance at least 0.33% of Gross National Income (GNI) per year, it is currently contributing only about one-third of this amount, which naturally raises the question "Why?". Theoretical framework of the motivations behind development cooperation enforcement, specifically, Europeanisation theory, is chosen to support the research. Bearing in mind the scarcity of the academic body of work for this topic, the main instrument, questionnaire for the in-depth interviews with the main decision makers of Lithuania's development cooperation was created. 17 semi-structured interviews with experts from various backgrounds provided the valuable material for this analysis and helped to provide possible answers to the matter in question.

Key words: Lithuanian development cooperation, foreign aid, official development assistance, ODA, Europeanisation, donor country.

Neišsivystęs vystomasis bendradarbiavimas. Lietuvos atvejis

Santrauka. Straipsnyje siekiama atskleisti priežastis, trukdančias sklandžiai įgyvendinti Lietuvos vystomojo bendradarbiavimo politiką. Nors iki to laiko, kai oficiali parama vystymuisi turėtų būti pasiekusi bent 0,33 % bendrųjų nacionalinių pajamų (BNP), liko mažiau nei aštuoneri metai, Lietuva šiuo metu skiria tik apie trečdajį šios sumos, tad natūraliai kyla klausimas „Kodėl?“. Tyrimui paremti naudojamas teorinis vystomojo bendradarbiavimo vykdymo motyvų pagrindimas, ypač europeizacijos teorija. Turint omenyje mokslinių darbų šia tema trūkumą, buvo parengtas pagrindinis tyrimo įrankis – klausimynas giluminiam interviu su pagrindiniais sprendimų dėl Lietuvos vystomojo bendradarbiavimo priėmėjais. 17 pusiau struktūruotų interviu su įvairių instancijų ekspertais suteikė vertingos medžiagos šiai analizei ir padėjo pateikti galimus atsakymus į tyrimo klausimą.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: Lietuvos vystomasis bendradarbiavimas, užsienio pagalba, oficiali parama vystymuisi, OPV, europeizacija, šalis donorė.

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Introduction

On the 22nd of November 2022 Lithuanian Parliament has voted for the budget of 2023 – as always with many controversies, disagreements, passionate discussions focusing on the compensations on gas, electricity, raise of pensions, salaries for civil servants, tax incentives, and of course, investments in the national defence of the country, as the beginning of 2022 was met with the brutal war right in the neighbourhood. And then there were “silent”, marginal themes. The ones that are dealt with only after the key questions have been solved. Is it surprising that foreign policy matters are one of them? Apparently not, as people almost as a rule are more concerned with their own, internal problems. And even if some parts of foreign policy expenses are easy to comprehend for the regular resident, e.g., providing for embassies, diplomatic missions and retention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), helping less fortunate countries in the world on our own expense is definitely a textbook example of the policy part that is overlooked.

Lithuania’s development cooperation policy is an integral part of Lithuania’s foreign policy aimed at contributing to the global efforts to reduce poverty, promote democratic principles, security, stability, respect for human rights in developing countries with MFA acting as the key responsible institution.¹ Main priority of the policy is to aid the Eastern Partners,² as well as countries of migration origin and transit. The Law on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid is the leading legal act to be followed. Looking back to the history, one should not forget that Lithuania benefited from the support of more developed countries in the period 1991–2004. However, after joining European Union (EU) in 2004 the status of a recipient country

¹ Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas. 2013 m. gegužės 16 d. Lietuvos Respublikos vystomojo bendradarbiavimo ir humanitarinės pagalbos įstatymas (The Law on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid) Nr. XII-311, 7 straipsnio 1 dalis. Accessed April 9, 2021, <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.CB6DD9C7792D/asr>.

² The special attention is given to Eastern Partnership countries: Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

had to quickly transform to a donor country. Lithuania has committed to devote 0.33% of its Gross National Income (GNI) as official development assistance (ODA) by 2030 as part of its EU obligations, although the original intent was to reach it by 2015.³ Unfortunately, despite the slight growth of the support in 2014–2016 (ODA raised from 0.10 to 0.14%) it gradually went down again, and in 2020 the recorded number was 0.12%, in 2021 – 0.13%.⁴ In comparison, an average EU member state devotes about 0.48% of GNI and leading countries provide few times more: Luxemburg – 0.99%, Sweden – 0.92%, Germany – 0.74%.⁵ Looking at EU member states who only must strive for 0.33% goal, in 2021 Lithuania is ranked fourth from the end with 0.13% out of 12 countries,⁶ leaving just Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia behind. Moreover, the results of Lithuania’s regional neighbours or countries similarly accepted to EU in 2004, are much better, as Poland reached 0.15%, Estonia 0.17%, Slovenia 0.19%, Hungary 0.29% and Malta already exceeded the target by providing 0.34%.⁷ To say it bluntly, Lithuania is falling behind its financial commitments almost 3 times and naturally the question rises – what’s causing such delay?

It is important to acknowledge, that specifically Lithuanian development cooperation area is poorly explored by scholars, thus,

³ Hilmar Thor Hilmarsson, “The Baltic States and International Development Cooperation: How Can They Best Share Their Transition Experience with Less Advanced Transition Countries?” *Applied Economics: Systematic Research* 7.2, no. 7.2 (2013): 28, <https://doi.org/10.7220/AESR.1822.7996.2013.7.2.2>.

⁴ The ODA number of 2022 is not yet official, but preliminary it shows a huge growth – almost doubling the previous year with 0.29%. Due to the reasons that the preliminary numbers were announced after submission of the article, this is not analysed.

⁵ European Commission. “Publication of preliminary figures on 2021 Official Development Assistance Annex: Tables and Graphs.” Accessed January 22, 2023, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/91a0d05d-6e6c-4bf9-8bce-a644e-cafb2cf_en.

⁶ *Cyprus in not included in the statistics of 2021*.

⁷ European Commission. “Publication of preliminary figures on 2021 Official Development Assistance Annex: Tables and Graphs,” Accessed January 22, 2023, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/91a0d05d-6e6c-4bf9-8bce-a644e-cafb2cf_en.

not much academic literature is available, especially of late. In fact, only works by Panasevič, Delcour, Gadeikienė are truly dedicated to Lithuanian case, although none of them analyses the problems of Lithuanian performance.⁸ There are also authors who analysed Baltic states in general, as well as other Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, scope of which varies from Lithuania and Poland, Visegrad countries to the EU 10 countries, including Lithuania.⁹ In the latter category Lightfoot stands out, as he dedicates substantial efforts of his academic capacities for this subject. He explains “Europeanisation” of international development policies in CEE in 2010 and later in 2017, as well works jointly with other scholars on the CEE journey from recipients to donors including the reluctant behaviour and not finding the right path, role of trust funds in the foreign aid policies.¹⁰ Even with these great analyses, it is not easy to grasp,

⁸ Anastasija Panasevič, “Five Approaches to Development Cooperation: An Analysis of the Lithuanian Case” n.d., 24; Anastasija Panasevič, “Lithuanian Development Cooperation: 10 Years for Finding a Place in the Donors’ Community,” 2014, *Latvijas Intereses Eiropas Savienība, 2014/3*; Laure Delcour, “Lithuania: A Hybrid Development Cooperation Policy. Between Adaptation to Europeanization and Projection of the Transition Experience,” 2015 in Ondřej Horký-Hlucháň, *Development Cooperation of the ‘New’ EU Member States: Beyond Europeanization*, EADI Global Development Series (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015); Marta Gadeikienė, “Too Weak to Influence? A Case Study of the Lithuanian NGDOS in Foreign Aid Policy Making,” *Politologija* 87, no. 3 (October 9, 2017): 134, <https://doi.org/10.15388/Polit.2017.3.10858>.

⁹ E. Andrespok & A. I. Kasekamp, “Development Cooperation of the Baltic States: A Comparison of the Trajectories of Three New Donor Countries,” *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 13 (1) (2012): 117–130; H. T. Hilmarsson, “The Baltic States and International Development Cooperation: How can They Best Share Their Transition Experience with Less Advanced Transition Countries?” *Applied Economics: Systematic Research* (7.2) (2013): 28; A. Kaznowski, “Defying the Treaty: The Influence of the Polish and Lithuanian Council Presidencies on the Development of the Eastern Partnership. EU Diplomacy Paper No. 6, October 2014,” *College of Europe*; B. Szent-Iványi, “Aid Allocation of the emerging Central and Eastern European Donors,” *Journal of International Relations and Development* 15 (1) (2012): 65–89.

¹⁰ S. Lightfoot, “The Europeanisation of International Development Policies: The Case of Central and Eastern European States,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 62 (2) (2010); J. Orbie & S. Lightfoot, “Development. Shallow Europeanisation?” in R. G. Whitman (2017). *Foreign Policies of EU Member States: Continuity and Europeanisation*. Routledge; O. Horký & S. Lightfoot, “From Aid Recipients to Aid Donors? Development Policies of Central and Eastern European States,” *Perspectives on European Politics and So-*

why Lithuania, or any other country, could be failing to fulfil their donor duties.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that academia did dedicate considerable efforts to analyse development cooperation from the angles different than geopolitical similarities. The literature explaining, why countries do give foreign aid and what motivates them, is immensely elaborated. Swiss & Gulrajani, Reinsberg, Fielden, Forsudd, Olofsgard & Boschini, Younas, Dreher et al., Davies & Klasen, Chong & Gradstein, Wenzelburger & Böller, Dam & Dis – all provided with valuable insights of possible donor motivation, which is important both in terms of providing theoretical background and shaping empirical research itself.¹¹

ciety 13 (1) (2012); S. Lightfoot & B. Szent-Iványi, “Reluctant Donors? The Europeanization of International Development Policies in the New Member States,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 52 (6) (2014): 1257–1272; B. Szent-Iványi, B. Reinsberg, & S. Lightfoot, “Small Donors in World Politics: The Role of Trust Funds in the Foreign Aid Policies of Central and Eastern European Donors,” *The European Journal of Development Research* 31 (3) (2019).

- ¹¹ Liam Swiss & Nilima Gulrajani, “Donor Proliferation to What Ends? New Donor Countries and the Search for Legitimacy,” *Revue Canadienne d’études Du Développement = Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 40 (November 17, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2019.1543652>; Bernhard Reinsberg, “Do Countries Use Foreign Aid to Buy Geopolitical Influence? Evidence from Donor Campaigns for Temporary UN Security Council Seats,” *Politics and Governance* 7, no. 2 (June 5, 2019): 127–154, <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v7i2.1837>; Matthew B. Fielden, “The Geopolitics of Aid: The Provision and Termination of Aid to Afghan Refugees in North West Frontier Province, Pakistan,” *Political Geography* 17, no. 4 (May 1998), [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298\(97\)00034-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(97)00034-6); Carl-Magnus Forsudd, “The Motives of Aid Donors: A Comparative Study of the Aid Allocation of Denmark, Norway and Sweden.” 2009. Accessed January 10, 2021, <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:vxu:diva-5774>; A. Olofsgard & A. Boschini, “Foreign Aid: An Instrument for Fighting Poverty or Communism?” *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2002); Thomas Carothers, “Democracy Assistance: Political vs. Developmental?” *Journal of Democracy* 20 (1) (2008): 5–19; J. Younas, “Motivation for Bilateral Aid Allocation: Altruism or Trade Benefits,” *European Journal of Political Economy* (2008); A. Dreher, P. Nunnenkamp, & M. Schmaljohann, “The Allocation of German Aid: Self-interest and Government Ideology,” *Economics & Politics* 27 (1) (2015): 160–184; R. B. Davies & S. Klasen, “Darlings and Orphans: Interactions across Donors in International Aid,” *The Scandinavian Journal of Economics* 121 (1) (2019): 243–277; A. Chong & M. Gradstein, “What determines Foreign Aid? The Donors’ Perspective,” *Journal of Development Economics* 87 (1) (2008): 1–13; G. Wenzelburger & F. Böller, Bomb or build? How Party Ideologies affect the Balance of Foreign Aid

Having clear deviations of Lithuania's annual ODA results paired together with the shortage of academic debates for reasoning this issue calls for more in-depth, case study-based analysis. In this regard, the research question raised in this article is the following – what are the reasons of the low numbers of ODA of Lithuania? The main objective is to identify all possible causes, without prejudicing any possible direction, be it political, financial, societal or any other. This is done in the hope of at least going some way to filling the lack of academic debate on this topic and, moreover, of the general discussion about this particular field of foreign policy even if it is from the potentially negative point of view. The research is carried out by conducting interviews and then evaluating their answers in the light of the theoretical model constructed and presented in the first part of this article.

1. Theoretical framework

For the purposes of this research the most valuable theoretical layer to be applied is the one defining and rationalising motivations behind foreign aid policies. In academic field many theories explaining grounds to countries' development cooperation policies can be counted: 1) *Europeanisation or Compulsory altruism theory*;¹² 2) *Norm diffusion theory*;¹³ 3) *Power-political theory*;¹⁴ 4) *Political stability and democracy theory*;¹⁵ 5) *Development and performance theory*;¹⁶ 6) *Strate-*

and Defence Spending," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 21 (2019); P. van Dam & W. van Dis, "Beyond the Merchant and the Clergyman: Assessing moral Claims about Development Cooperation," *Third World Quarterly* 35 (9) (2014): 1636–1655.

¹² Simon Lightfoot, "The Europeanisation of International Development Policies: The Case of Central and Eastern European States," *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, no. 2 (March 2010): 330–332, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668130903506854>; Panasevič, "Five Approaches to Development Cooperation...", 60; Panasevič, "Lithuanian Development Cooperation...", 43.

¹³ Swiss, Liam, and Nilima Gulrajani, 1.

¹⁴ Reinsberg; Fielden, 467.

¹⁵ Fielden, 467.

¹⁶ Ibid.

gic-defensive or Cold War theory;¹⁷ 7) *Economic-commercial theory*;¹⁸ 8) *Hybrid theory*;¹⁹ 9) *Social constructivism theory*.²⁰ Even if it is not that essential for this research to pick a particular theory of Lithuanian development cooperation logic, still, the works of Panasevič and Delcour give a solid launch for assigning two theoretical approaches on Lithuanian development cooperation policies. The first one concludes that 2 theoretical approaches could be a signature to Lithuania's choices of foreign aid policies: 1) *power-political theory*, presuming that foreign aid to developing countries is being given in order to gain their support, 2) *political stability and democracy theory*, claiming that foreign aid is given to developing countries that correspond to particular standards of democracy and human rights. Another one, a *Hybrid theory*, promoted in Delcour's article, argues that Lithuania's development cooperation is driven by "the influence of EU membership and the impact of domestic dynamics",²¹ which unmistakably confirms the significance of *Europeanisation theory*, explaining that EU Member States are helping developing countries mainly because they are committed to do so in order to fulfil one of their accession conditions, and proves results of Panasevič's analysis, aimed to explain the internal motives of country's foreign policy preferences. Theoretical framework of what motivates countries was used carrying out empirical research by providing grounds for the interview questions with Lithuanian policy makers and implementers. Carefully formulating questions deriving from different theories helped unfold if and, most importantly, why some of the motives used in other countries are not working in Lithuania's case. It is expected that the main elements of assumption of why countries are motivated could be employed in reverse – by trying to find out why Lithuania is "not motivated" enough.

Theories were put to test during the interviews with the respondents, who shared their insights from the practice and accumulated

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Panasevič, "Five Approaches to Development Cooperation...", 47.

¹⁹ Delcour, 2.

²⁰ Forsudd.

²¹ Delcour, 17.

know-how in the field. It is worth mentioning that according to few respondents there is a lack of motivation in general.²² This signalises that there could be instant flaws in Lithuania's motivation per se. However, most answers showed that there are many motives: EU obligations; Democratisation, especially in Eastern Partnership countries; Enhancement of diplomatic relations/fostering Lithuania's image in international arena; Sharing and gaining of good practices within institutions, experts; Humanity and compassion; *Advocating Lithuania's business abroad*.²³ The dominant one, mentioned almost by everyone, was commitments to the EU. It is also supported by the simple fact that the birth of development cooperation is marked not long after 2004 when Lithuania joined EU (in MFA development cooperation division was created at the end of 2004²⁴ and in 2006 the first high-level legal act dedicated to development cooperation was adopted).²⁵ As explained by one of the key persons responsible for the newest report on Lithuania's development cooperation,²⁶ resulting from "Create Lithuania" project,²⁷ "while talking to members of Parliament or to advisers to the President, this is the first thing they pay attention to".²⁸ Representatives of the MFA admitted that statistical state institution is not really aware what development cooperation is, apart from the EU obligations,²⁹ others expressed the same idea in

²² Interviewee No. 1, interview with the author, 11 August 2021; Interviewee No. 5, interview with the author, 19 October 2021.

²³ *Economic-pragmatic rationale* was mentioned by many, but mostly referring to the fact that Lithuania does not know yet how to employ such incentive, how to make it a solid motive behind our actions in developing countries. So, it is more a potential motive rather than the existing one.

²⁴ Interviewee No. 1, interview with the author, 11 August 2021.

²⁵ Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė. 2006 m. birželio 8 d. nutarimas Nr. 561 "Dėl vystomojo bendradarbiavimo 2006–2010 m. politikos nuostatų patvirtinimo". Accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.374E061306C3>.

²⁶ Kurk Lietuvai. "Lietuvos vystomojo bendradarbiavimo politikos veiksmingumo stiprinimas". Accessed April 6, 2021, <http://kurk.lt/projektai/lietuvos-vystomojo-bendradarbiavimo-politikos-veiksmingumo-stiprinimas>.

²⁷ *Project was made in cooperation with Lithuanian President's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during September 2020 – March 2021.*

²⁸ Interviewee No. 6, interview with the author, 20 October 2021.

²⁹ Interviewee No. 7, interview with the author, 21 October 2021.

a more moderate manner, but, notably, addressed it at the very beginning of conversation.³⁰ Also, almost nobody raised a question, that maybe a concrete financial input required by EU should not be the main milestone in development cooperation policy. So, *Europeanisation theory* indeed seems to be the most relevant in Lithuania's case.

Another important fact is that most interviewees noted several motives, thus allowing us to assume that the *hybrid theory* appears to be important as well – besides obligations to EU different national objectives appear, be it strive to democratize and help Lithuanian neighbours in the Eastern borderlands, aim to improve diplomatic relations or build the image of a respectable player. Whatever quantity or combination, there are usually two parts: external and internal. The ground motivator, according to the data collected, is still the external one – international obligations to EU. The necessity to achieve the required 0.33% is still the main indicator of how Lithuania measures development cooperation implementation, which clearly shows that it is the need to fulfil what is requested in Brussels that matters at the end of the day. As explained by one of the interviewees, “development cooperation policy did not emerge organically in Lithuania, it was imposed mechanically”.³¹ Therefore, it is quite possible that Lithuania is still holding on to external factors because it did not yet learn how to foster development cooperation policy from the internal values and perceptions, its motivation neither genuinely derives from a wish to aid countries in need nor is driven by the premeditated goals benefiting Lithuania's diplomatic relations or economy. And this could already be one of the reasons why problems in Lithuanian development cooperation policy exist.

2. Methodology

The primary and most important source in this empirical research is semi-structured in-depth interviews, as the academic literature and col-

³⁰ Interviewee No. 11, interview with the author, 12 November 2021; Interviewee No. 12, interview with the author, 12 November 2021.

³¹ Interviewee No. 7, interview with the author, 21 October 2021.

lections of other data on Lithuanian development cooperation trends is scarce. The main goal was to interview the principal levels of the development cooperation policy's governing structure in Lithuania: legislative, executive branches, focusing on MFA as the institution responsible for development cooperation policy formation and implementation and Central Project Management Agency (CPMA), responsible for the management of development cooperation projects.

The list of possible “elite” interviewees was drawn up after consulting with the Development Cooperation department of MFA, as well according to observations of the most active (in their field of work, media, in various events, conferences) politicians and other advocates for Lithuanian development cooperation policy. After few interviews the list was expanded as the answers from some respondents led to the idea that additional angles, like education or non-governmental approach on the subject or the position of European Commission, should be analysed too, and moreover, the “snowball” effect got into motion as some of the interviewees recommended to talk to other certain people. Ultimately, 17 interviews were carried out in the period of August–December, 2021 with the sitting representatives of European Commission DG INTPA,³² European Parliament, main Lithuanian state bodies (Parliament, Government, President's Office, MFA, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, Ministry of Economics and Innovations), as well as CPMA, NGDO Platform,³³ organisation “Create Lithuania”. At least one person from each body was interviewed with the exception of MFA with four interviews, as MFA was the essential source of information for the reasons disclosed earlier. Most of the respondents were high-level officers or leading experts in their field. Six interviews were conducted during face-to-face meetings, the rest held online via video calls.

³² DG INTPA (*The Directorate-General for International Partnerships*) is responsible for formulating the EU's international partnership and development policy.

³³ NGDO Platform, established in 2007, is an association uniting organizations working in the field of development cooperation from Lithuania. Currently the Lithuanian NGDO Platform has **22 members**. Nacionalinė nevyriausybių vystomojo bendradarbiavimo organizacijų platforma. Accessed January 23, 2023, <https://www.vbplatforma.org/EN/about-project>.

All interviewees were asked the same general question (if they thought that the low ODA numbers and the approaching target of 2030 is important and why) and additional 7–9 questions depending on the answers given. The questionnaire was prepared in advance, nonetheless during the interviews additional questions were asked or original ones altered to adapt to the conversation, or the profile of the institution represented by the person.

For the examination of the data gathered during the interviews the thematic content analysis from the inductive point of view was used. It was suitable because of the lack of previous research findings on the subject, so the questions were asked without prejudgement on what could be the possible obstacles in the development cooperation policy. After collecting all the answers, patterns in the data were reviewed, provided reasons categorised in expectations to develop a conclusion that could explain those patterns.

It is important to mention that for gathering background data, measuring a status of Lithuania's development cooperation implementation in numbers, as well as reviewing attitudes of relevant groups on individuals (e.g., Lithuanian citizens, politicians, media representatives) *quantitative methods* (mainly statistical analysis and data from quantitative surveys) were used as well.

3. Main reasons of low performance of Lithuanian development cooperation

3.1. Bureaucracy and legal issues

Although there is no separate theory grounding the success of the development cooperation policy with the smooth and efficient bureaucratic instruments that enable it, there are authors who strongly suggest that “ensuring policy coherence through coherent legislative arrangements is absolutely crucial”.³⁴ These statements were in the past addressed

³⁴ Simon Lightfoot & Irene Lindenhovius Zubizarreta, “The Emergence of International Development Policies in Central and Eastern European States,” 23 (2021): 179.

as a critique for the CEE countries, Lithuania included, for not having a special law on development cooperation, but it could be extended to the malfunctioning or errors of existing legislation too.

Flaws in formal regulations were elaborated most comprehensively by the representative of MFA, who initiated long awaited legal changes in development cooperation implementation field.³⁵ According to him the biggest problem was binding development cooperation projects to the budget year, although around the world, development cooperation projects are mostly multiannual: “The reality is that our Law on Budget Structure, unfortunately, is archaic and does not reflect the real needs of our country to have some flexibility in certain areas, especially in foreign policy. Moreover, the Ministry of Finance has been keeping the position that at the end of the budgetary year all the money has to be spent down to zero, otherwise next year you will not get it.”³⁶ It is important to remark that the drafting process was long and complicated not only because an extensive persuasion had to be done in all the possible levels of state apparatus, but also that there were people, who “either have some narrower interest and vision of their own, or some who don’t want to leave their comfort zone.”³⁷ And on top of that, the idea of the multiannual fund dedicated to development cooperation needs had to be defended against resolution of Constitutional Court, which concluded at the end of 2020 that creating funds that can accumulate and keep state money for more than one budgetary year was against the Constitutional prerogative of the Parliament to approve the state budget annually.³⁸

³⁵ *From January 1, 2022, the Development Cooperation Fund, managed by CPMA, was supposed to start operating, however, the official date of the launch of the fund was in July, 2022. It should provide possibility to implement multiannual projects and give budgetary flexibility.*

³⁶ Interviewee No. 7, interview with the author, 21 October 2021.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucinis Teismas. 2020 m. lapkričio 3 d. nutarimas Nr. KT187-N15/2020 “Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos įstatymų, kuriais reguliuojamas tam tikrų programų, fondų arba institucijų finansavimas, nuostatų atitiktis Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucijai”. Accessed October 11, 2021, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/358326e11edf11eb9604df942ee8e443>.

Bureaucratic system does not work in development cooperation's favour, on the contrary, it complicates procedures and even discourage stakeholders to participate in the activities. The current one-year projects offered by MFA are actually 7–8 months duration in practice (time to prepare the contract, to close earlier in order to provide necessary reports is subtracted from the given 12 months), so the administrative burden for the project implementers is enormous, not to mention the fact, that it is strategically very difficult to create some real value in the partner country during such short time.³⁹ It was stressed by the representative of the NGDO Association, who noted that “at some points NGDOs chose to participate in EU based programmes, rather than national ones, because there are too much complicated finance mechanisms to handle with a very little reward”.⁴⁰

Luckily, the nuances of the Constitutional Court ruling, that it is only applicable, if the funds are used for everyday public purposes, and proving that development cooperation is an exceptional type of activity, helped to overcome this obstacle. “The hope for a new era” with the creation of Development Cooperation Fund was expressed, as well as other tools like appointment of the national experts to the EU delegations in other countries, which could really help building the ties and connections before the projects.⁴¹

Development Cooperation Fund is already one year in working progress, but its efficiency is yet to be felt and evaluated, as the first round of projects financed by it are not yet finished. Anyway, this marked a great milestone for the regulatory framework, so at least from this point of view the issues should not be as visible as before.

3.2. Inability to “economise” development cooperation

One can feel disappointed that the altruistic, humanitarian essence of development cooperation in which it originated in the first place,

³⁹ Interviewee No. 14, interview with the author, 22 November 2021.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Interviewee No. 2, interview with the author, 16 August 2021.

seems forgotten, when we talk about economic-commercial approach. However, if wisely adopted it can only increase the ability to use other tactics too – this was agreed among respondents almost unanimously. There are many ways in which foreign aid can contribute to the commercial interests of the donor state, like promoting potentially beneficial political and economic reforms in the recipient country, introducing special rules in development cooperation programmes that would require buying goods and services from the donor, or simply using projects for cooperation between individuals, building confidence between the societies and creating a better climate for investments.⁴² All these options if not more were indicated by interviewees, but all in the context of disappointment that Lithuania is only at the very beginning of this path, and much more should be done.

The representative from MFA mentioned that in centralised European programmes Lithuania is underperforming quite significantly. Even if there is much potential in some areas, like renewable energy, wastewater treatment, IT sector, financial technologies, public administration, unfortunately, the know-how how to employ it in practice, a well-functioning mechanism is not yet in place.⁴³ The representative of the Office of the Government strongly expressed support to the concept that development cooperation policy should work as balanced system between public sector, NGOs and businesses. Although formally ODA consists of only funds allocated from the state budget, there are no barriers to search for additional financial resources that could boost the development cooperation portfolio. Moreover, she underlined that development is inseparable from economic development and creation of quality jobs, so the role of private business in development cooperation is very important. Hence, proper financial instruments could contribute to increasing the possibilities of Lithuania's commitment without directly requiring an annual increase in the public budget.⁴⁴

⁴² Panasevič, "Five Approaches to Development Cooperation...", 47.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Interviewee No. 3, interview with the author, 8 October 2021.

An important aspect emphasised by the advocates for economic-based approach, is a very uneven distribution of ODA in multilateral and bilateral aid directions. For many years now Lithuania's ODA consists of roughly 80% of multilateral aid and not more than 20% of bilateral aid. If compare it to the EU average in 2021 (35.5%), this gap is quite pronounced.⁴⁵ All respondents, but from the Ministry of Finance, were in favour that bilateral aid portion should be enhanced so the business could have future prospects in recipient country. "We pay into the EU budget, to the funds of World bank, the UN, and we forget that money, we don't really have ownership of that multilateral aid. Whereas bilateral aid is money that we ourselves can control, to pursue a political, economic impact on our partner countries", noted representative from MFA.⁴⁶ His colleague added that there are excellent examples in the "old" EU Member States whose businesses are very much involved, and they are taking back a really big part of contributions in various projects all over around the world.⁴⁷ According to the respondents, there was a study on the impact of bilateral aid on trade which concluded that one dollar spent on bilateral aid generates a return of two dollars over time. Multilateral aid, on the other hand, may pay more political dividends, but in practice it is an economic loss for the donor country.⁴⁸ However, no one suggested that Lithuania should blindly move more financing into the bilateral aid basket. Without proper mechanisms there is no purpose of enhancing bilateral aid. Now the arguments of the Ministry of Finance give a completely different light on the subject. It insisted that it is possible to have the return of what Lithuania provides into international multilateral funds, because its companies can participate in the public procurement calls there: "With our contribution of 3–4.5 million euros [per year], Lithuanian companies are able to get contracts

⁴⁵ OECD (2021). Development Co-operation Profiles, *OECD Publishing*, Paris. Accessed October 20, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1787/2dcf1367-en>.

⁴⁶ Interviewee No. 7, interview with the author, 21 October 2021.

⁴⁷ Interviewee No. 12, interview with the author, 12 November 2021.

⁴⁸ Interviewee No. 7, interview with the author, 21 October 2021.

worth up to 20 million euros in some years.”⁴⁹ Also, they disagree with the statement, that Lithuania is not able to track how Lithuanian donations were used, on the contrary, at least with the World Bank, the accountability to the donors is quite exhaustive – meetings three times a year, discussing the commitments and results to be achieved, as well as reports and mid-term reviews every three years.⁵⁰

Another point which needs to be revealed is the reluctance from the business itself. As noticed by the representative of the Ministry of Economic and Innovations, business’ interest is low, because it takes more initial effort than the alleged return, so they are more likely to be contractors than implementers, unless they have other objectives, e.g., in terms of contacts, access to information in those particular countries. “We do not have a tradition of public private partnership in development cooperation field either.”⁵¹ The same was expressed by MFA, which encountered in practice that business avoids risks and seeks simplest solutions: “We have a lot of cheap EU money, but we use it for “paving the sidewalks”, not for meaningful activities, job creation, intellectual potential, science, education.”⁵² Another example also concludes the same – in 2019, representatives of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) visited Lithuania to advertise and present their activities, offer products such as soft loans or equity investments.⁵³ However, very few invited large companies were interested in expanding in Africa, in Asia, everybody is more invested in closer countries, like Ukraine, Moldova.⁵⁴

Analysing these findings, it is apparent that *Economic-commercial theory* is not yet visible in Lithuania’s motivation for the foreign aid. There are only first attempts to at least think of different opportunities of how development cooperation could bring financial benefits to the donor itself. The reasons for this are multilayered, starting with the

⁴⁹ Interviewee No. 10, interview with the author, 27 October 2021.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Interviewee No. 9, interview with the author, 25 October 2021.

⁵² Interviewee No. 7, interview with the author, 21 October 2021.

⁵³ *If you acquire a company in a certain developing country, IFC can give a loan, to finance the acquisition, so that it can develop its activities there.*

⁵⁴ Interviewee No. 10, interview with the author, 27 October 2021.

different opinions between key institutions like MFA and the Ministry of Finance of how to distribute aid into bilateral and multilateral parts. Business sector's indifference towards the investments in developing countries is intertwined with the possible lack of knowledge, bureaucratic obstacles, or poor communication. Perhaps first of all the clear decision to explore this side of development cooperation must be taken, as at the moment it seems to be *ad hoc* based and fragmented.

3.3. Absence of clear strategy

The absence of the strategy for development cooperation policy was frequently noticed during conversations. It was pointed out either straightforwardly or emerged in the context of different thematic problems, but in any case, evidence shows the lack of strategical alignment of development cooperation policy as such. Just plainly looking at the numbers, illustrated by the graphic below, we can notice the up-and-down jumping tendencies of Lithuanian ODA and lack of the strategy to gradually increase it:

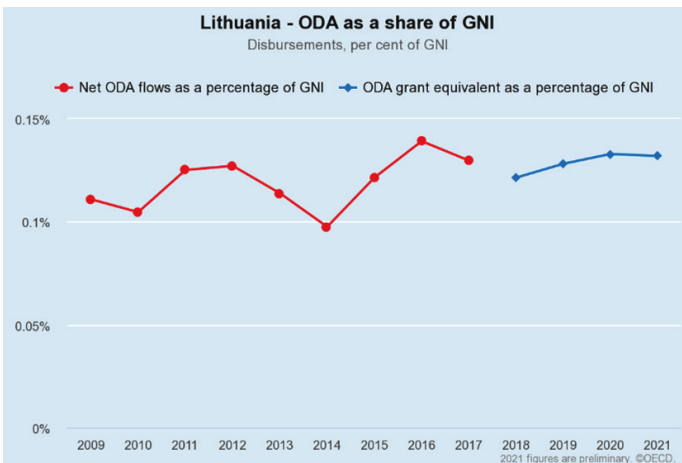


Figure 1. Lithuanian ODA statistics (Source: OECD⁵⁵)

⁵⁵ OECD (2022). "Lithuania", in *Development Co-operation Profiles*, OECD Publishing, Paris. Accessed December 18, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3eb7f948-en>.

There is a strategic document for development cooperation – The Law on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid – which sets main goals and principles, assigns responsible institutions, defines main means of financing, etc. But it is too general to provide any tangible strategy and according to the Lithuanian legislature principles it is normal not to overload legal acts adopted by the Parliament with the details.⁵⁶

Governmental level should be expected to cover this task. Until the end of 2021 Interinstitutional action plan for development cooperation was the main executive legal act. It was set for the period of 2019–2021 and is now expired.⁵⁷ There were several points set out in it: main directions (Eastern European region, emphasising Eastern Neighbourhood countries, countries of migration origin and transit), declaration to reach 0.33% of GNI by the year 2030, commitment to cooperate with international bodies, goals to educate young generation, etc. However, apart from very generic milestones (to reach 0.14% in 2019, 0.15% in 2020 and 0.16% in 2021) there was no detailed action plan of how to actually do it, as the latest numbers of ODA showed, desired targets were not reached.

For the new strategy in the beginning of 2021 MFA created a working group, but there was not much publicity about that. The only pub-

⁵⁶ *The Constitutional Court, in its ruling of 26 October 1995, stated that the law establishes rules of a general nature, whereas they may be elaborated in secondary legal acts, which may also regulate the procedure for their implementation.* Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucinis Teismas. 1995 m. spalio 26 d. nutarimas “Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos įstatymo „Dėl piliečių nuosavybės teisių į išlikusį nekilnojamąjį turą atstatymo tvarkos ir sąlygų“ 10 straipsnio septintosios dalies nuostatos, taip pat dėl Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 1994 m. sausio 26 d. nutarimo Nr. 55 „Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 1991 m. lapkričio 15 d. nutarimu Nr. 470 patvirtintos Lietuvos Respublikos įstatymo „Dėl piliečių nuosavybės teisių į išlikusį nekilnojamąjį turą atstatymo tvarkos ir sąlygų“ įgyvendinimo tvarkos dalinio pakeitimo“ 1.2 punkto nuostatos, 2.1 punkto ir jo 1, 2 bei 3 papunkčių atitikimo Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucijai”. Accessed October 25, 2021, <https://www.lrkt.lt/lt/teismo-aktai/paieska/135/ta435/content>.

⁵⁷ Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė. 2016 m. rugsėjo 21 d. nutarimas Nr. 937 “Dėl vystomojo bendradarbiavimo tarpinstitucinio veiklos plano patvirtinimo”. Accessed October 7, 2021, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/728ed9a083e611e6a0f68fd135e6f40c?jfwid=-vdxstep3d>.

licly available information about the work group was gathered on the website of NGDO Platform, where they published the letter of discontent that they were not originally invited to participate in it.⁵⁸ At the very end of 2021 the development cooperation strategic directions were finally adopted by the MFA.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, the creation of this essential document was far from perfect. Its draft was not published in the official information system of Lithuanian legal acts (TAIS), so there were no possibilities for the society and the players of the development cooperation ecosystem (state budgetary institutions, NGOs, business representatives) to comment and give their opinion, apart from those directly invited in the working group. Then the adopted legal act was again not published in TAIS, which in itself is already a violation of the rules for adopting legislation.⁶⁰ Most probably it was done due to the rush to adopt the act by the end of 2021, so that the year 2022 could start with the strategic directions for development cooperation policy. Even so, the silent pushing of such an important strategical document gave a bad impression and created a space for controversies and doubts for everyone involved in this field.⁶¹ Moreover, aside from categorising in more details thematic and geographical directions of development cooperation policy and making the document more convenient to navigate, not much changed in essence.

One can argue that it is possible to find other legal documents of strategic nature or defend the way they are being created, however, the

⁵⁸ Nacionalinė nevyriausybių vystomojo bendradarbiavimo organizacijų platforma. “Dėl Darbo grupės vystomojo bendradarbiavimo strateginėms kryptims parengti”. Accessed November 23, 2021, [https://vbplatforma.org/uploaded_files/articles/Rastas%20Nr.%20VBPF0323%20\(1\).pdf](https://vbplatforma.org/uploaded_files/articles/Rastas%20Nr.%20VBPF0323%20(1).pdf).

⁵⁹ Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio reikalų ministerija. 2021 m. gruodžio 27 d. įsakymas Nr. V- 554 “Dėl vystomojo bendradarbiavimo strateginių kryptių 2022–2025 metams”. Accessed December 18, 2022, <https://urm.lt/uploads/default/documents/Vystomojo%20bendradrbiavimo%20strategines%20kryptys.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas. 2012 m. rugsėjo 18 d. Lietuvos Respublikos teisėkūros pagrindų įstatymas Nr. XI-2220, 6 straipsnio 2 dalies 11 punktą, 7 straipsnis, 19 straipsnio 1 dalis. Accessed December 18, 2022, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.433088/asr>

⁶¹ Interviewee No. 14, interview with the author, 22 November 2021.

evaluation and verdict by the policy makers themselves are important, as many of them have critique to share. The representative of the Office of the Government emphasised that firstly there should be “a clear ambition of where we want to go, not just in terms of % of the aid, but more broadly, in terms of policy, in terms of results.”⁶² It was marked that our legal acts are too general and areas, sectors where Lithuanian achievements are most valued must be defined. It was stressed that Lithuanian development cooperation should not be regarded as Lithuanian *public sector* development cooperation. Instead, the multi-sectoral approach should be promoted, where all three layers of stakeholders collaborate: regulatory public sector, implementing private sector, and finally non-governmental structures with the know-how of the public sector. “Only then we will be able to move forward.”⁶³ Similar insights were given by the representative of President’s Office, who expressed disappointment that Lithuania does not yet have the good examples of coherent development cooperation policy implementation, “where all the chains worked, the information received was in line with the programme and with Lithuania’s geographic and economic diplomacy priorities, where business was involved”.⁶⁴ Another aspect is narrower, addressing to the fact that Lithuanian development cooperation projects are small-scaled and scattered. The representative of the project “Create Lithuania” expressed anticipation that the new strategic directions by MFA will be clearer, because until now “we had 17 different topics and countries with no reasonable logic behind.”⁶⁵ This was repeated by the CPMA who administers the projects⁶⁶ and by the NGDO Platform members of which implement the projects⁶⁷.

Absence of strategic approach correlates closely with the fact that there are no Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure the im-

⁶² Interviewee No. 3, interview with the author, 8 October 2021.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Interviewee No. 2, interview with the author, 16 August 2021.

⁶⁵ Interviewee No. 6, interview with the author, 20 October 2021.

⁶⁶ Interviewee No. 15, interview with the author, 25 November 2021.

⁶⁷ Interviewee No. 14, interview with the author, 22 November 2021.

plementation of Lithuanian development cooperation policy. Some of the goals are expressed in the Implementation Plan of the Programme of the XVIII Government of the Republic of Lithuania but the only tangible KPI is again the % of GNI that ODA should reach until 2030. This problem was mentioned few times when discussing the lack of communication about development cooperation to the society by suggesting, that “there is only tracking of the numbers, how much money we are allocating to it, but what are we doing with that money? What can we tell the public apart from how much we have spent? For example, beekeeping in Georgia was funded, but so what? If we had a specific tracking system for KPIs, where we go back to our partners to see what has been done afterwards, then a very good public awareness campaign could be done, but we are not doing that.”⁶⁸

There is clear indecisiveness of how Lithuanian development cooperation policy should be shaped like and, correspondingly, how it should be measured. This could derive from the fact that Lithuania’s motivation is both hybrid (mixed directions of foreign aid come from it) and based mostly on the EU obligations, which misleads to concentrate on the only goal – to reach the desired 0.33%.

3.4. Lack of human resources

Almost every interviewee has referred to the issue of the lack of human resources in the field of development cooperation. At least 2 aspects are worth mentioning: physical lack of people working in the development aid field and lack of people who have proper competence.

The shortage of staff, truth to be told, was mentioned just once by the representative of Development Cooperation department in MFA. It was presented in the light of a general concern: “The problem across the public sector is that there are massive staff shortages

⁶⁸ Interviewee No. 6, interview with the author, 20 October 2021; Interviewee No. 13, interview with the author, 19 November 2021.

everywhere. In our department, only 10 out of 17 posts are filled. This is a general crisis of the civil service.”⁶⁹ Unfortunately, it looks like the current situation in Development Cooperation department is not something that happened recently. Back in 2006 there were positive trends showing Lithuania’s growing attention to working forces of MFA directly involved with development cooperation issues – during few years staff numbers grew from 3 to 14.⁷⁰ However, it appears like the efforts nearly stopped at that point, as the total staff quota for 2021 was 17. The goal to reform state service, to make it more efficient and attractive was raised by the current Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė, who included state service reform in the portfolio of five strategic works/projects of the current Government.⁷¹ This lets us to presume that the scarcity of staff in MFA is indeed a wide-ranging problem. Despite that, more emphasis was given to the lack of competences in those who remain working.

Insufficient competence or even its absence was explained from different perspectives. First of all, via the established rotation principles of the diplomats in MFA. Many of the employees in executive positions are diplomats, who undergo rotations every 3–4 years or with the change of the political leadership. Respondents note that diplomats come and go, some with more ambition, others who don’t find development cooperation the most interesting field. In MFA while new people get around, it’s almost time to go out [to be rotated] again. There is no “human memory”, they change all the time, almost half of the department changes, you have to re-learn, understand everything anew.⁷²

⁶⁹ Interviewee No. 12, interview with the author, 12 November 2021.

⁷⁰ Lightfoot & Zubizarreta, 179.

⁷¹ Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė. „Ministro Pirmininko strateginių darbų (projektų) portfelis“. Accessed December 10, 2021, <https://lr.v.lt/lt/aktuali-informacija/xviii-vyriausybe/ministro-pirmininko-strateginiu-darbu-projektu-portfelis>.

⁷² Interviewee No. 13, interview with the author, 19 November 2021; Interviewee No. 8, interview with the author, 22 October 2021; Interviewee No. 6, interview with the author, 20 October 2021. It could be that too much credit was given for the attempts to deal with the problem, as today, after more than a decade, situation is still the same.

Second, the diplomat's profile as such looks like not being ideal to work with development cooperation challenges: "For a diplomat it's important to put on the armbands. The ministers met, had a nice chat, took a photo, signed the agreement, and nobody is interested in the implementation. This area is harder to understand because there is a strong financial-economic engineering component. The classical diplomat is more of a political operator, he is interested in the political wind, the direction, but he is not able to go deep into the substance".⁷³

Third, Lithuanian specialists are mostly skilful only in the public sector projects. The representative of the Office of the Government notices that "our experience is mainly in the public sector, usually through Twinning projects; concrete experience in providing development assistance is very limited. We do not have people who work consistently for years, like in Scandinavian countries, where even in embassies there are deeply involved development cooperation specialists. Unfortunately, we do not have much of that practice, although there are new specialists coming up, but it takes a lot more to get the required level."⁷⁴

Lastly, most of experience is gained only in the Eastern Partnership region. This is also an advantage, as Lithuania can ensure the quality of the projects in this area. However, in the long run and with the widening tendencies of the geography of development cooperation, lack of knowledge in, e.g., Africa or Asia is a challenge. One more element was not stated by the respondents directly, but certain conclusions could be drawn from the discussions about the proportion between multilateral and bilateral aid. As correctly mentioned by the European Commission, the more countries work in bilateral

But again, after checking facts, we can see that back in 2008 the situation was quite similar and Lithuania was even praised for recognising the matter: "Lithuania is trying to deal with this by putting in place half diplomats and half civil servants, so that some sort of institutional memory can be established through the civil servants and the problem can be overcome", see: Lightfoot & Zubizarreta, 180.

⁷³ Interviewee No. 7, interview with the author, 21 October 2021.

⁷⁴ Interviewee No. 3, interview with the author, 8 October 2021.

projects themselves and not just giving the money to various international funds, the more their experts gain particular experience.⁷⁵ The fact that only 20% of Lithuanian development cooperation aid is provided via directly managed bilateral projects could be a factor diminishing the prospects for the experts to build and strengthen their competences.

From the first glance the lack of human capital seems like the easiest problem to fix. However, as claimed by the respondents, the most enduring concern is not the number of experts, it is their proper competences and their durability. According to the dispersed nature of Lithuanian development cooperation policy it does not come as a surprise that dispersion lies within the implementors too.

3.5. Inadequate support from the society

One of the most popular problems, specified by the interviewees, was a low support from the society. The most recent surveys, conducted both by the European Commission and by Lithuania, indeed show that Lithuania's citizens support is far from satisfactory. The most recent Eurobarometer report "EU citizens and development cooperation" reveals the mediocre figures about Lithuanians: 1) 33% think partnering with countries outside the EU to reduce poverty around the world is very important; 2) only 18% are the most likely to "totally agree" that tackling poverty in developing countries should be one of the main priorities of the EU.⁷⁶ National survey "Residents' opinion poll on financial aid for other countries" indicates the lack of support from society in different angles, beginning with the statistics what Lithuanians know about development cooperation as such.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Interviewee No. 17, interview with the author, 22 December 2021.

⁷⁶ Eurobarometer. "EU Citizens and International Partnerships". Accessed December 18, 2022, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2673>.

⁷⁷ Nacionalinė nevyriausybių vystomojo bendradarbiavimo organizacijų platforma. "Šalies gyventojų nuomonės tyrimas dėl finansinės pagalbos kitoms šalims". Accessed December 18, 2022, https://issuu.com/vbadmin/docs/ataskaita_-_vb_platforma_2022_10_3_.

The report exposes the shocking truth – only 6% of citizens claim that they know what development cooperation is, supplemented with 24% who say that “they have heard something about it”, while the rest 70% admit that they do not know what it is at all. When asked, if Lithuania should help people in economically underdeveloped countries, the results are much better with 19% respondents being confident that it must and 63% leaning towards the positive answer. At least two conclusions arrive when reviewing both reports: first, Lithuanians simply are not familiar with the term “development cooperation”, secondly, they are not acquainted with the EU policies or are sceptical about them. Anyhow, the facts are obvious and give clear grounds why the lack of support from society was indicated as a major issue. Several angles were touched when discussing this problem with interviewees.

The belief that national problems are more important was stressed few times. “Our citizens agree that we need to help developing countries, but not on our account, somebody else has to do it.”,⁷⁸ stated the representative from MFA. His colleagues added that society thinks that “when there is a lack of funds for social protection, health, education, why should we support others, let us get our own house in order first”⁷⁹ and that “if there is any kind of support for someone, the money is immediately taken out of the grandmother’s pension, salary, that the aid is given at the expense of the well-being of the people of Lithuania, which is already not enough”.⁸⁰ The representative from CPMA gave an example from the project implementation: “Sports ground in Lithuanian village is more visible and better received than the rebuilt school in Ukraine’s Avdiivka region”⁸¹.⁸² Ministry of Finance reflect-

⁷⁸ Interviewee No. 1, interview with the author, 11 August 2021.

⁷⁹ Interviewee No. 12, interview with the author, 12 November 2021.

⁸⁰ Interviewee No. 7, interview with the author, 21 October 2021.

⁸¹ Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio reikalų ministerija. „Mokykla Avdiivkoje – didžiausias Lietuvos vystomojo bendradarbiavimo projektas“. Accessed November 30, 2021, <https://usa.mfa.lt/default/lt/naujienos/mokykla-avdiivkojedidziausias-lietuvos-vystomojo-bendradarbiavimo-projektas->.

⁸² Interviewee No. 15, interview with the author, 25 November 2021.

ed that there is even a hesitation from their side to publish how much Lithuania gives to international funds, because “we will get very bad reviews in the media from the public, of why we give so much to Africa although we have so many problems ourselves”.⁸³ Affiliated with the latter is an excuse “It is too far away to concern us”. As noticed by NGDO Platform, other policy areas are closely related to people living in Lithuania, we see what is happening, we are close to it. When we talk about development cooperation, it is very far away, our money is going somewhere out of our comprehension.⁸⁴ These examples signalise the possible absence of compassion, lack of societal maturity which is difficult to prove and measure, nevertheless, it could be put into comparison with other nations. The representative of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Lithuanian Parliament shared that “In United States of America they invest in dignity, greatness, strength, individuality of the human being and person’s ability to share with others, because humanity is most importantly manifested not when you take, but when you give to others. In Lithuania, unfortunately, it is understood only by enthusiasts. <...> We are still coming out of the Soviet system.”⁸⁵ The high representative of MFA also agreed that “probably we have simply been weaned from the Western culture of sharing, of caring for others, by the Soviet era and even earlier occupations [that resulted in] low indicators of solidarity and trust.”⁸⁶

The second side of this predicament is misunderstanding of why, to whom and how the aid is given. The CPMA representative assumed that it is possible that people don’t quite understand or trust how development cooperation works. “They hear about the corruption, how much of that money is being taken out in millions and billions, how the leaders of the aided countries are getting rich.”⁸⁷ This problem is closely related to the abovementioned statistics that only

⁸³ Interviewee No. 10, interview with the author, 27 October 2021.

⁸⁴ Interviewee No. 14, interview with the author, 22 November 2021.

⁸⁵ Interviewee No. 4, interview with the author, 11 October 2021.

⁸⁶ Interviewee No. 11, interview with the author, 12 November 2021.

⁸⁷ Interviewee No. 13, interview with the author, 19 November 2021.

6% of Lithuanians know what development cooperation is. Society's misconception of foreign aid is closely related with lack of education about it. Several respondents pointed out that education about development cooperation is almost not existent. It is worth mentioning that "development education" as a concept has in many countries become subsumed within themes such as global education, global citizenship, and sustainable development.⁸⁸ Lithuania is no exception, where a more known term "global education", which is an active teaching and learning process that aims to help people understand the challenges facing the world, their causes, and the impact of their choices on global processes,⁸⁹ is used. According to the 2020 report "Global education – current situation, needs and opportunities",⁹⁰ extent of global education in Lithuania is quite poor. The same report was made in 2014, and the 2020 report concludes that legal and administrative prerequisites almost haven't change since then: Lithuania still does not have a National global education strategy, the "Law on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid" still contains a very generic ambition to increase public acceptance and support for development cooperation activities and the Regulation of National Commission on Development Cooperation⁹¹ continues the theoret-

⁸⁸ Douglas Bourn, "What is Meant by Development Education?". 2021. Accessed December 5, 2021, <https://2013-2021sinergiased.org/index.php/revista/item/51-douglas-bourn-what-is-meant-by-development-education>.

⁸⁹ Nacionalinė nevyriausybinų vystomojo bendradarbiavimo organizacijų platforma. "Globalus švietimas". Accessed December 5, 2021, <https://vbplatforma.org/LT/veikla/globalus-svietimas>.

⁹⁰ Lietuvos nevyriausybinių vystomojo švietimo ir bendradarbiavimo organizacijų tinklas – asociacija LITDEA. "Globalus švietimas Lietuvoje – esama situacija, poreikiai ir galimybės". Accessed January 6, 2023, https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rc=t=&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjY_4fq9bL8AhURlosKHVN-ADdUQFnoECAwQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.esinvesticijos.lt%2Fmedia%2Fforce_download%2F%3Furl%3D%2Fuploads%2Fmain%2Fesproducts%2Fdocs%2F113179_f3d5d5a632b39eb748103bbf4c066f8d.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0YKEw-giSAFY6xUfrW-m0MO.

⁹¹ Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė. 2014 m. sausio 15 d. nutarimas Nr. 42 "Dėl Nacionalinės vystomojo bendradarbiavimo komisijos sudarymo ir jos nuostatų patvirtinimo". Accessed December 5, 2021, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/ef2509d081e611e396708cdccb584cb5/asr>.

ical notion that if necessary, special work groups can be formed of particular development cooperation issues, which was not used in practice yet. The representative from the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (who is formally responsible for the enforcement of global education) admitted that indeed there is much work to be done. The goal of global education is officially assigned to non-formal education system with the main working document “Description of non-formal education for children”, first adopted in 2015, but only in 2020 has undergone legal amendments⁹² in order to include the goal to enhance a competency of citizenship education of children.⁹³ There are of course various initiatives, like the “Global education week” organized every year⁹⁴ or other programs, activities coordinated by Lithuanian Centre of Non-formal Youth Education, but they are not nearly enough. In formal education programs this topic falls under the subject of social education (comprising from history, geography, citizenship education, economics and entrepreneurship, psychology)⁹⁵ and the citizenship education is the one that should mainly cover the global education aspects. So Lithuanian children and youth are only at the beginning phase of learning about the global world and its challenges.

Focusing only on the aid to Eastern Partners was suggested by the Lithuanian representative in European Parliament: “Our society under-

⁹² *The new legal act was adopted in January 2022, however, global citizenship is not much elaborated, introduced only as one of the fields of possible non-formal education for children.* Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo, mokslo ir sporto ministerija. 2022 m. sausio 10 d. įsakymu Nr. V-46 patvirtintas “Neformaliojo vaikų švietimo programų finansavimo ir administravimo tvarkos aprašas”. Accessed February 9, 2023, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/4a573010725411ecb2fe9975f8a9e52e>.

⁹³ Interviewee No. 16, interview with the author, 30 November 2021.

⁹⁴ Lietuvos mokinių neformaliojo švietimo centras. “Globalaus švietimo savaitė 2022”. Accessed January 6, 2023, <https://www.lmnc.lt/renginys/globalaus-svietimo-savaite-2022/>.

⁹⁵ Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo, mokslo ir sporto ministerija. 2021 m. gegužės 3 d. įsakymu Nr. V-688 patvirtinti “2021–2022 ir 2022–2023 mokslo metų pradinio, pagrindinio ir vidurinio ugdymo programų bendrieji ugdymo planai”, 83 p. Accessed December 5, 2021. <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/f0828f70abe911eb8cb8b1cdd5d7f785>.

stands and supports Lithuania's engagement in the Eastern Partnership countries because it feels solidarity with the people of these countries and is also aware of the extent to which authoritarianism, military conflict can affect Lithuania's prosperity, security and development. Lithuanians understand aid for Ukraine, but Africa is too far".⁹⁶ Ministry of Finance similarly noticed that countries in Africa and Asia are very distant, with no embassies or trade relations, and for the media and politicians sometimes it seems that the state is giving money without clarity what is the interest to Lithuania. These insights prove to be true now in the midst of the war in Ukraine – Lithuanian citizens are obviously determined to help Ukraine in all ways possible: all types of donations, welcoming the refugees, offering shelter, food, clothes, etc.⁹⁷

3.6. *Insufficient communication*

Another problem indicated by the research is a scarce communication about development cooperation. Providing proper information is lacking not only in regard to the common citizens in Lithuania, but in some case, to the perspective development cooperation policy stakeholders: state institutions, NGOs, business companies. The latter aspect indirectly proves the practically non-existent *Economic-commercial theory*, which, if enabled, would result in the tight cooperation and communication between the state and private sector and consequently help to expand the development cooperation project "portfolio". Meanwhile, the unaware citizens of Lithuania create a separate problem which not only escalates to low motivation of state institutions to advocate more this important policy field, but also prevents the society from evolving and becoming the catalyst of providing aid to those in need themselves.

The statistics of Lithuanians basically not being aware about the development cooperation, provided earlier, speak for themselves that

⁹⁶ Interviewee No. 5, interview with the author, 19 October 2021.

⁹⁷ *The society's support for Ukraine in a time of war will not be discussed here in detail, as this topic is worth a separate analysis.*

there are serious problems in spreading information about this important topic. Looking at the financial “attention” given by the state to the projects dedicated to dissemination of development cooperation policy, it is necessary to clarify that they fall under the same category as global education projects, which constitute very low proportion of overall ODA (0.16% in 2016 and 0.14% in 2017⁹⁸). The testimony from the representative of NGDO Platform⁹⁹ is the following: “We have one single call for public information activities, and that is MFA’s call. There is maximum 2–3 projects of 15–30 thousand euros each.”¹⁰⁰ Apart from these projects, there is only fragmented, *ad hoc* based communication from the state’s side. The same respondent underlined other significant problems: 1) no clear communication strategy of how and what is communicated; 2) no dedicated specialist in MFA for communication tasks; 3) no single communication platform. There is only www.orangeprojects.lt, which is now not working,¹⁰¹ but even there the information is very insubstantial. There are separate ministries, separate pages, separate sections, difficult to explore.¹⁰² The interviewee from CPMA agrees, that there is no consistency: “A targeted publicity campaign is needed, because you can’t say that there is no publicity, but as far as it is scattered across different communication channels, topics, it probably doesn’t reach the “consumer”.¹⁰³ The representative from MFA noticed that even www.orangeprojects.lt webpage was not a proper idea, as the philosophy behind it deemed to be linked more to “colour revolutions” and not with development cooperation in general, which could be misleading.¹⁰⁴ Another angle of this problem is linked

⁹⁸ Lietuvos nevyriausybių vystomojo švietimo ir bendradarbiavimo organizacijų tinklas – asociacija LITDEA. “Globalus švietimas Lietuvoje”.

⁹⁹ *NGDOs are usually the ones that apply for the information/education projects.*

¹⁰⁰ Interviewee No. 14, interview with the author, 22 November 2021.

¹⁰¹ *www.orangeprojects.lt was closed in October 2021 after supposable cyber security problems.* Interviewee No. 7, interview with the author, 21 October 2021.

¹⁰² Interviewee No. 14, interview with the author, 22 November 2021.

¹⁰³ Interviewee No. 15, interview with the author, 25 November 2021.

¹⁰⁴ Interviewee No. 7, interview with the author, 21 October 2021. *Note by the author – only in April 2023 the webpage <https://ltaid.urm.lt> was launched.*

to the more critical opinion that “we do not communicate because there is nothing to communicate about”.¹⁰⁵ This position is linked with the absence of KPIs of development cooperation implementation and belief that society and stakeholders must be provided with quality data, not random announcements.

Because of these reasons potential implementers of foreign aid projects, both state institutions and private companies, are discouraged from being more involved and step by step expanding the “ecosystem” of development cooperation policy. They either are not aware of the possibilities, or the inconsistent information deters them from trying. The factor of uninformed citizens is also important as it later leads to the insufficient support of society which was discussed earlier.

Conclusions

In the beginning of the research a goal to find the reasons explaining insufficient ODA numbers of Lithuania was set. Due to the shortage of the academic literature and considering the nature of the study, a major reliance on the empiric approach was made. The first-hand information was gathered by interviewing people currently involved in the Lithuanian development cooperation policy formation, implementation, and management. 17 semi-structured interviews were conducted within every level of development cooperation policy institutional framework in Lithuania (Presidents’ Office, Government, Parliament, MFA, Ministry of Economy and Innovations, Ministry of Finances, Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, CPMA) and additionally with the NGDO side, Lithuanian representative in European Parliament and, finally, with the DG INTPA in European Commission. Respondents were asked several questions, centred around comprehending the obstacles in a way of the efficiency of development cooperation policies in Lithuania.

¹⁰⁵ Interviewee No. 6, interview with the author, 20 October 2021.

Theoretical basis of the analysis allowed to explore motivation behind Lithuania's development cooperation policy. The results showed that the key motivator is still the obligations to the EU, thus confirming the *Europeanisation theory* to be relevant. Even though pursuing enhancement of diplomatic relations and aspirations to spread democracy within country's Eastern borders are relatively strong too, it seems that it is more the justification of the achievements already made in this field. Certainly, it became motivator once the results were obvious, and it is a positive fact, that it is seen as a motive more and more. Economic-pragmatic rationale is still very fragile and the altruistic, compassion attitude unfortunately is rather the exception of the rule than the rule itself. The combination of motivators correlates with the *hybrid theory*, but to add the conclusion from this research, *Europeanisation* factor is predominant, while the internal perceptions are quite dispersed and more *ad hoc* based. Combining the theoretical approach with the empiric data suggests that prevalence of the *Europeanisation theory* reflects in a "mechanic" motivation in Lithuania's development cooperation policy, which possibly leads to the lack of genuine wish in the political level to make this policy successful. Moreover, as the European Commission's representative honestly pointed out, there will be no legal consequences for failing to reach the desired 0.33% target on time. Relying on this, one should not be much surprised that development cooperation ecosystem is not functioning properly.

Empiric research revealed that none of the respondents disagreed with the notion that Lithuania's development cooperation policy is indeed facing difficulties, thus the main argument of this article that low ODA level is seen as problematic proved to be true. Some were more optimistic, others openly shared their doubts that Lithuania will reach the defined goal of 0.33% ODA of GNI until 2030. Different types of problems for this were mentioned, with the main tendencies quite evenly distributed between respondents: bureaucracy and legal issues, lack of economic approach, absence of clear strategy, scarce human resources, weak public support, insufficient communication and education. It is important to stress that none of these difficulties

are indicated as isolated from one another. On the contrary, they intertwine and derive from each other, making the overall picture quite complex. Disappointing observation picked up from absolutely all interviews is that all these problems for a long time were not the priority of decision makers, who were given quite harsh critique.

Nevertheless, during the last Parliamentary elections in 2020 probably for the first time most political parties incorporated provisions on development cooperation in their programs. It looks like the current (XVIII) Government of the Republic of Lithuania, which came into power at the end of 2020, shows positive intentions towards progress of development cooperation policy. The current Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė personally showed a great deal of interest in development cooperation issues. In the 2019 interview she argued that to strive for enhancement of ODA is a matter of political will and our self-respect as a state¹⁰⁶. The Program of the Government included quite distinct commitments in the development cooperation area.¹⁰⁷ More importantly, the Implementation Plan for Measures of this program contains several measures dedicated to development cooperation, some of which now have already been implemented. The hope of increasing political will can be detected from the financial point of view: 2023 State budget appropriations for MFA concluded 147.856 million euros¹⁰⁸ – quite huge 50.341 million euros increase when comparing to the 2022.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Nacionalinė nevyriausybių vystomojo bendradarbiavimo organizacijų platforma. „Pasaulio laiku“ su Ingrida Šimonyte”, Youtube video (from ~22 minute). Accessed December 9, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7x0lK0XUi9c&t=1065s>.

¹⁰⁷ Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas. 2020 m. gruodžio 11 d. nutarimas Nr. XIV-72 “Dėl Aštuonioliktosios Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės programos”, p. 253.6. Accessed October 7, 2021, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/973c87403bc311eb-8c97e01ffe050e1c>.

¹⁰⁸ Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas. 2022 m. lapkričio 22 d. “Lietuvos Respublikos 2023 metų valstybės biudžeto ir savivaldybių biudžetų finansinių rodiklių patvirtinimo įstatymas Nr. XIV-1556”. Accessed January 22, 2023, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/40977c216c2611ed8a47de53ff967b64?positionInSearchResults=0&searchModelUUID=fc1a8973-94d9-4847-ae4a-175f683d0db6>.

¹⁰⁹ Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas. 2021 m. gruodžio 14 d. “Lietuvos Respublikos 2022 metų valstybės biudžeto ir savivaldybių biudžetų finansinių rodiklių patvirtinimo

Although the findings of this research are far from optimistic, the recent positive changes in the political level (more decisive program of the XVIII Government of the Republic of Lithuania, creation of Development Cooperation Fund, Lithuania's accession to the DAC, launch of the LTAID webpage, etc.), why they emerged and whether they will be manifested in practice, could be an interesting topic for future investigations. Another related issue that would be worth looking into is the reasons why Lithuania prefers multilateral aid instead of bilateral, which goes into the opposite direction from the majority of other EU countries.

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