

# ROADMAP FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OECD REPORT

MOBILISING EVIDENCE AT THE CENTRE OF  
GOVERNMENT IN LITHUANIA,  
STRENGTHENING DECISION MAKING AND POLICY  
EVALUATION FOR LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT

SUPPLY OF ANALYTICAL SKILLS

THE ROLE OF STRATA AS A STRATEGIC ENABLER OF EIPM

November 2021

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in Finance and Economic Research (CEFER)



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## **Mobilising Evidence at the Centre of Government in Lithuania, Strengthening Decision Making and Policy Evaluation for Long-Term Development**

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THE ROLE OF STRATA AS A STRATEGIC ENABLER OF EIPM**

November 2021, Povilas Lastauskas

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## Actions to strengthen the supply of analytical skills in Lithuania

### ***The need to improve the supply of required analytical skills***

As covered in the OECD report on “Mobilising Evidence at the Centre of Government”, skills and capacities to supply robust and credible evidence remain low in Lithuania. Ministries suffer from analytical skills gaps, which affect their ability to supply credible, timely and robust evidence for decision-making.

The public sector as a whole suffers from a shortage of skills for analysis, due to a general lack of availability of these skills on the Lithuanian job market and a marked difficulty in attracting and retaining such staff. There is a need for at least some data-scientists or economists/statisticians competent in working with data to be present among ministerial staff so that the evidence derived from data is used correctly, and the external evaluations and assessments that require such skills are contracted appropriately.

This would require building a partnership between the university and a government institution with sufficient links to the academic sector. STRATA seems to be the best available option at the domestic level. Lithuanian government could look to similar examples in other European countries. In France, for example, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) organises master programme to train future economists and statisticians, part of which work for the government afterwards.

The Lithuanian government could also consider offering a scholarship to students who decide to study-abroad in these fields, in exchange for their commitment to working in the Lithuanian public sector, ministries or agencies for a set number of years – for example a minimum of five years. This scheme could be adapted or extended to meet the needs of the Lithuanian public sector.

While this report might suggest a more systematic and government-wide approach to training, specifically when it comes to training related to supply and use of evidence, the upskilling existing staff will not offer a structural solution to analytical skill gaps; an initiative of a postgraduate degree is a more sustainable solution in the medium term.

### ***Proposal for actions to strengthen the supply of analytical skills***

Ministries, public bodies, and the public sector at large are particularly short of economic and quantitative policy analysts in Lithuania. They are in high demand in the private sector and usually join the public sector just after university, quickly leaving into the private sector after acquiring work experience. The situation is sometimes so strained that ministries have no one being able to run their analytical model or use expensive analytical software and tools as there is nobody in-house with the required expertise after previous staff departure. Some gaps can be addressed by organising relatively basic courses on Power BI, Qlik Sense, RStudio. Ministries have unused but valid licences due to human capital mismatches. More generally, however, a rigorous training not only in the use of tools but, more importantly, in the analytical capacity needs to be developed.

Current graduates are said to be very narrowly focused. For example, policy communicators cannot read state-of-the-art research, analysts cannot communicate findings in laymen language, whereas PhDs from abroad are not interested in only policy-focused positions, especially if the main focus is Lithuania and the pay is low with few career opportunities.

As elaborated in the report, the policy advisory skills, also known as ‘analytical skills’, require that civil servants have the ability to generate and use robust and credible evidence (OECD, 2020). These skills often require a multidisciplinary set of competences drawing from a wide range of areas, including economics, statistics, social sciences, environmental sciences, law and engineering. Current programmes dispersed across faculties and universities fail to combine required competencies to succeed in quantitative policy analysis.

Moreover, Lithuanian universities lag behind Western Europe counterparts and lack research at internationally leading scientific outlets, making university studies detached from the current research frontier. That is particularly true for social sciences, still heavily integrated into the Eastern European academic networks. Therefore, course names cannot be taken at face value and require further elaboration about the contents, instructors' qualifications, quality of research, recognition in the international research arena.

Lack of economists in the public sector, in addition to salary levels and career prospects, also reflects the focus of current programmes on macroeconomic issues, central banking, finance and monetary topics (along with traditional macroeconomic methodology, time series and financial econometrics toolkit), paying less attention to micro-econometrics, applied and empirical microeconomics, which are crucially important for empirical and analytical public policy analysis.

The proposed Master in Quantitative Public Policy Analysis (Master in QPPA) should address skill gaps within the public sector and constitute an integral part of skills supply, which simultaneously requires investment into the demand for policy analysis and quality impact evaluations.

### ***Prerequisites for a competitive Master's degree in Quantitative Public Policy Analysis (QPPA)***

The proposed Master in Quantitative Public Policy Analysis (Master in QPPA) should address skill gaps within the public sector and constitute an integral part of skills supply, which simultaneously requires investment into the demand for policy analysis and quality impact evaluations. In other words, the creation of public sector-oriented quantitative analysts is a complementary task to the public service reform to attract and retain qualified public servants, open data and data availability initiatives, and training/up-skilling schemes for those already in the public sector.

The degree must be interdisciplinary in nature and should not inflate existing degrees offered by the Lithuanian higher education institutions. In addition, it must combine three core areas: economics, public policy, and data analysis.

Bank of Lithuania founded an undergraduate degree with Vilnius University, which merges data science (along with statistics and econometrics), economics and finance. Its faculty is exclusively based on researchers who obtained PhDs at leading universities in Europe and the USA and have working relationships with the central bank. Such a combination enables delivering state-of-the-art research ideas with real-world examples from policymaking. The structure of the programme differs from others in terms of the mix of scientific fields, with fewer but more in-depth courses, language of instruction, individual mentorship structure (each student gets allocated to a professor) and clear internal logic. The first year is devoted for fundamental tools (mathematics, statistics) and building of economic intuition (based on open source [Core-project](#) and [OpenStax](#)); the second year is theoretically rigorous and covers economics, finance theory, econometrics and data and computing. The third year is devoted to applied courses (applied micro and macro economics, applied finance) and deepening courses, depending on the students' choices which area to specialise in, namely data science (big data, panel data, time series), economics (applied microeconomics, international macroeconomics), or finance. There is also a bachelor's thesis. However, there are currently no quantitatively and computationally based graduate degrees with a public policy focus.

The Table 1 next page provides an overview of the main Master-level Vilnius University degrees, which, instead of starting from scratch, could underlie a new interdisciplinary Master degree, QPPA.

**Table 1. Comparison of selected Master degrees at Vilnius University**

Programme	Core Subjects	Other Subjects	Important Details
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Master in Public Policy Analysis, Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius University	Comparative public administration, Analysis of Causal Relations (I & II), Public policy and policy analysis, EU public policy, Welfare State, Public Sector Economics, Colloquia, Master Thesis	Optional subjects from a list (subject to change)	In Lithuanian. 2 years <a href="https://www.tspmi.vu.lt/magistranturos-studijos/viesosios-politikos-analize/">https://www.tspmi.vu.lt/magistranturos-studijos/viesosios-politikos-analize/</a>
Master in Economic Analysis, Faculty of Economics and Business and Administration, Vilnius University	Final work project (I & II), Time series econometrics (I & II), Microeconometrics, Microeconomic analysis, Cost-benefit analysis, Macroeconomic analysis (I & II), Mathematical methods for economic analysis, Workshop of Economic Processes Analysis, Master Thesis	Elective courses, among others, include Economic development, Analysis and evaluation of investment projects, Analytical Information Technologies, Regional development in the global economy, Derivative financial instruments, Econometrics of big data	1.5 years. Lithuanian though separate subjects can be taught in English. <a href="https://www.evaf.vu.lt/magistranturos-studijos/ekonomine-analize">https://www.evaf.vu.lt/magistranturos-studijos/ekonomine-analize</a>
Master in Government's Economic Policy, Faculty of Economics and Business and Administration, Vilnius University	Theory of economic integration, Cost-benefit analysis, Strategic planning, Final work project (I & II), Economic globalisation, Macroeconomic policy analysis, Economics research methods, Monetary and fiscal policy, Competition policy and practice, Regional development in the global economy, Master Thesis	Elective course, among others, include Economic development, Financial markets and derivatives, International trade policy, Welfare economics, Analysis and evaluation of investment projects, International project management, Labor and social policy	Studies in evenings (full-time) or weekends (part-time studies). 2 years. In Lithuanian. <a href="https://www.evaf.vu.lt/dokumentai/nuotraukos/2021_Studiju_Aprasai/magistrai/VEP-2021-03-17.pdf">https://www.evaf.vu.lt/dokumentai/nuotraukos/2021_Studiju_Aprasai/magistrai/VEP-2021-03-17.pdf</a>
Master in Modelling and data analysis (Econometrics track), Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics, Vilnius University	Multivariate statistics, Microeconomic analysis, Parametric and nonparametric econometrics, Financial econometrics, Functional data analysis, Master Thesis	Game Theory, Panel Data Econometrics, Modern Mathematical Economics, Bayesian statistics, Deep learning methods, Sampling, Econometrics of big data	1.5 years. Lithuanian/English <a href="https://www.evaf.vu.lt/dokumentai/nuotraukos/2021-10-08_MDA_2020_magistru_programos_aprasas.pdf">2020-10-08_MDA_2020_magistru_programos_aprasas.pdf (vu.lt)</a>
Master in Modelling and data analysis (Data Science track), Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics, Vilnius University	Multivariate statistics, Data mining, Parametric and non-parametric statistics, Big data analysis, Functional data analysis, Master Thesis	Game Theory, Panel Data Econometrics, Video Signals Processing, Bayesian statistics, Deep learning methods, Sampling, Data visualisation	1.5 years. Lithuanian/English <a href="https://www.evaf.vu.lt/dokumentai/nuotraukos/2021-10-08_MDA_2020_magistru_programos_aprasas.pdf">2020-10-08_MDA_2020_magistru_programos_aprasas.pdf (vu.lt)</a>

Currently offered degrees, as summarised above for Vilnius University but that extends more broadly, fall short of the state-of-the-art course offerings that equally well encompass all three areas, data science, economics, and public policy, within one degree. In addition, rigidity across research and study fields as well as limited access to courses from different departments, constrain potential spillovers and cross-fertilisation in the research and studies process. A formal degree, acting as an umbrella of three academic fields, would help in closing the existing gaps and remove cross-faculty borders.

The programme has to follow a modern structure, to be 1.5 years instead of the older standard of 2 years. 1 year may be insufficient to cover the blocks adequately, whereas 2 years degree maybe not be as attractive and is not necessary to provide with core tools, methods, and competencies. The first year should be based on coursework, whereas the third semester should focus on a policy-oriented Master thesis.

The programme, as covered in the report and fact-checked with the ministries and other stakeholders, must be rooted in demand for quantitative, data-intensive, and analytical economics skills rather than in what is currently available at single faculty or university (refer to Table 1 for a summary). Otherwise, a new degree, constructed from a few programmes within a faculty or university, will fail to address existing needs.

Connecting presentation skills, policy advice with good economics intuition and technical/methodological skills, in particular data-intensive and modelling, remain a challenge for new hires.

The programme must be rigorous but based on real-world tasks and real policy challenge-oriented Master thesis, providing a clear pathway to the public sector, at least for the best graduates. Such an arrangement – rigour coupled with the real-world approach – necessitates having faculty staff who hold PhD degrees from leading universities but also work in the public sector (STRATA should constitute a main supplier of the faculty, requiring to take such a need into account when hiring).

To incentivise students to choose the programme in Lithuania, a partner university specialising in a similar programme should be found and agreed to collaborate in exchanging students, lecturers, organising joint events/projects. A joint or double degree would be the first best strategy; exchange collaboration a second best.

**A case similar to the one proposed for STRATA is a fresh Master of Science in Economic Policy, a joint venture by Trinity College Dublin and Economic & Social Research Institute (ESRI).** The combination of expertise from Trinity's Economics Department and the policy focused research at the ESRI provides a unique programme that combines technical and evaluation expertise applied to Irish policy challenges. Such collaboration should constitute a template for STRATA founding a degree with Vilnius University, along with the example of Bank of Lithuania and Vilnius University joint degree in Quantitative Economics at the undergraduate level.

Bank of Lithuania's Centre for Excellence in Finance and Economic Research (CEFER) played a key role of establishing a new degree. The collaboration proceeded with first signing a Cooperation Agreement between two institutions, agreeing to pursue joint objectives, and employment conditions for PhD hires who join both institutions, Bank and Vilnius University. CEFER participates in the job market in Europe (and previously, the USA) to attract fresh PhDs with the needed skills that are missing in the country to come to Lithuania. A joint salary structure makes such endeavour more likely to succeed. Such a template is recommended for STRATA as teaching in the Master programme must be an inherent part of the job. As elaborated in the Roadmap on STRATA's role in steering capacity in the second part of this document, such high level hires must follow another track with team leadership duties and should be given time to produce academic research. Otherwise, it is almost impossible to find good faculty with PhD conducting only policy tasks with no time to fulfil academic curiosity.

The new degree should not replicate what already exists or will appear in the near future, e.g., Master in Public Policy (MPP), planned to start at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science. The MPP degree is professional degree, along the lines of MBA for business professionals, focusing on issues related to public policy and the decision processes associated with them. So far MPP could not be implemented due to legal degree requirements, e.g. changing Master thesis with the applied project as in many MBA degrees. However, a more analytical programme focusing on quantitative and computational skills, merging data science, economics, and public policy, would not duplicate the proposed programme. First, the MPP is a more politics-centred programme, unlike the proposed QPPA. Second, MPP would help with raising awareness of policy evaluation but would not fill the gap of badly needed competencies in economics, data analysis, coding, programming, and policy modelling. As the University of Oxford illustrates, MPP and Master in Evidence-Based Intervention and Policy Evaluation coexist well under one university roof but different departments (Blavatnik School of Government and Department of Social Policy and Intervention, respectively), achieving different goals and developing different competencies.

Existing programmes covering some parts of the new Master in QPPA are covered in Table 1. As can be seen by comparing the proposed structure and the current supply, quite many courses can be used as the basis for the proposed courses, this way fruitfully using existing human capital, avoiding duplication, and delivering what the public sector needs most. It also places a lower burden on STRATA to attract new hires and faculty members, as creating a fully fledged programme with new faculty members would be too cumbersome task.



Before the new programme gets formalised and approved, STRATA should invest in those areas that are missing. As Table 3 illustrates, leading programmes in the USA and Europe provide better-targeted courses, some of which are not available within current curricula. One way to address such shortages is to rely on the partner university should the collaboration agreement be reached; another one is to develop those skills in-house by investing in training. E.g. Table 3 includes highly demanded courses tailored for quantitative public policy analysis at New York University, which can be taken remotely, thus preparing in-house lecturers and boosting the quality of analysis.

### ***An agenda for action***

Start with the Agreement of Cooperation between STRATA and Vilnius University with the goal to establish a joint interdisciplinary degree in Master in Quantitative Policy Analysis. The agreement should specify resources both institutions are ready to allocate, joint objectives (boosting policy studies and research, producing better quality graduates, intensifying collaboration in joint event organisation, dissemination of best practices and tools, higher usage of data sources available at STRATA by university faculty, etc.).

Allocate human resources and formulate goals in terms of preparing documentation (proposal, course structure, syllabi), agreements across three faculties, documented skill gaps across ministries and the public sector at large. The best way forward – a working group consisting of STRATA and representatives from three aforementioned faculties with an aim to launch a new degree. Funding for such activities should come as a government commitment or be integrated into the studies reform package funded by The Recovery and Resilience Facility, the so-called “Next Generation Lithuania”. Such interdisciplinary degree boosting supply of better quality skills for the public sector is a prerequisite for a more resilient, more efficient and more publicly trusted public sector.

Find an international partner early on; for a start, ESRI, Ireland’s leading not-for-profit economic and social policy research institute in Ireland, and Trinity College Dublin with a new Master degree initiative seem like natural starting points.

To make sure that the Master degree remains relevant and state-of-the-art, take up a leadership role within the studies committee and as a co-ordinator of three faculties. Given the institutional arrangement, the co-ordinating faculty should reflect the most pressing needs – either economics or data science. Explore a possibility to have different faculties co-ordinating their respective specialisations (i.e., there is a single degree with three specialisations in Data Science for Public Policy; Economics for Public Policy; or Political Economy of Public Policy).

Given feedback from the public sector, the programme shall consist of three blocks: 1) Data Analysis/Data Science; 2) Economic Analysis & Analytical Tools; 3) Political Economy/Public Policies. All three blocks should have compulsory courses, but students should be allowed to specialise in the area of interest. A combination of these blocks would be quite unique and enable attract students domestically and from abroad, necessitating teaching in English (helping with programme’s rentability and student diversity goals). For instance, computational and data aspect is well represented in Master of Science in Computational Analysis & Public Policy at the University of Chicago (see Figure 3, Appendix). Vilnius University’s Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics is well equipped to deliver the data block. More economics-oriented public policy degrees, on top of already covered Master in Economic Policy by Trinity College Dublin and ESRI is by the University of Potsdam (see Figure 2, Appendix). Last, the focus of political economy and public policy is well seen at Oxford degree (see Table 3 and Figure 1, Appendix). The proposed combined structure with the outlined courses is provided in Table 2.

**Table 2. Draft Master’s in Quantitative Policy Analysis Structure**

<b>Block</b>	<b>Core Courses</b>	<b>Optional Courses</b>	<b>Important Details</b>
Data Analysis/Data	Big Data Applications in Policy	Designing Data Collection for Program	Each block contains 3



Science	Evaluation; Machine Learning for Public Policy; Causal Inference. 15 ECTS	Evaluation, Policy, and Management; Coding in R/Python; Text Mining; Databases for Public Policy, Data Structures and Algorithms	compulsory courses. A proposal is to provide solid background knowledge for a diverse set of students lacking skills from one or more blocks (e.g., students after a degree in maths, statistics, law, etc.). The programme would consist of 90 ECTS, 60 ECTS for coursework, 25 ECTS for Master thesis, 5 ECTS for Master thesis workshop. Compulsory courses: 40 ECTS. Optional courses: 20 ECTS
Economic Analysis & Analytical Tools	Micro Economic Policy; Macro-Economic Policy; Quantitative Methods for Economic Analysis (including computational component for policy simulations). 15 ECTS	Behavioural Economics; Economics of Ageing; Climate Economics; Fiscal Policy and Taxation	
Political Economy/Public Policies/Law	Public Policy and Policy Analysis (also with qualitative methods); Politics of Economic Policy or Political Economy of Reforms. 10 ECTS	Health Policy; Social Security; Future of Work and Labour Policies; Law and Governance	
Workshops and seminars with guest lectures (incorporated into courses and extra-curriculum events)			
Public speaking workshop (incorporated into Master thesis workshop)			
Workshop on how to distil complex ideas and findings into simple words for policymakers (unevaluated, extra-curriculum course)			

STRATA should act as a social partner, delegating its employees to the studies committee once the programme gets approved. The more STRATA analysts get involved, the larger the spillover effect, in-house support for the initiative and success in terms of the studies quality. E.g. drawing from the Bank of Lithuania experience with the Bachelor programme in QE, it is advised to allocate as many STRATA analysts as mentors to students as possible to start early collaboration, development of policy-relevant Master thesis, provide with an opportunity to learn about policy analysis from the specialists, encourage joint projects.

STRATA should also provide guest lectures, practical tasks, propose topics for the Master thesis, and engage in content updating and improvement to better reflect the needs (particularly when it comes to optional courses and Master thesis, relating to topics of utmost importance to STRATA).

STRATA should run regular (not ad hoc) workshop and seminars series, where in-house analysts present their findings, incorporating external researchers, and faculty on the Master in QPPA and advanced students, working on their thesis.

Quality graduate-level studies cannot be sustainable without high-quality research which informs teaching. To improve the research-conducive environment and boost research and general interest in evidence-based policymaking, STRATA should aim to make relevant data sources available to researchers. It will naturally expand research links and networks, helping to sustainably (in terms of teaching faculty) run a Master's degree.

STRATA should also take up a challenge to create a depository of all past reports, evaluations, methodologies, primary data and other materials produced as part of policy evaluation exercises, thereby enabling ex post evaluations, reducing risk of repetition, and providing students and researchers with valuable information sources. It is important to note that the exercise should take up the challenge of collecting such data from all public stakeholders, particularly ministries, and be not limited to STRATA projects only. Collaboration with the National Martynas Mažvydas Library looks like the most efficient way to achieve this goal.

### ***Challenges and Pre-emptive Actions***

To summarise, Table 3 provides step-by-step approach to initiate a new Master's degree. However, there are also other caveats that need to be taken into account and these are elaborated below.

To successfully carry out interdisciplinary studies it is required to have adequate legal basis, i.e., possibility to award degrees not in a single field but reflecting an interdisciplinary nature of studies. Note that multidisciplinary refers to joint venture with researchers from different specialties who work together but

each one remains within his/her discipline while interdisciplinary brings those team members to put their expertise and science together in one integrated plan. The current scientific field classifier places economics and political science under Social Sciences, subfields S004 and S002, respectively, whereas statistics is part of mathematical sciences, classified as Natural Sciences, subfield N001. It is even more challenging when it comes to the list of studies fields – even though economics and political science remain part of social sciences (statistics is part of mathematical sciences), public and business management is a standalone field of study<sup>1</sup>. Instead of searching for the proportion of which field is marginally more covered in the programme for it to be allocated to a single field, there must be a proper interdisciplinary degree without artificial assignment to a single field. That requires a change in the classification of interdisciplinary degrees in Lithuania. Such request may come from the office of government with a clear goal of enabling this and other interdisciplinary initiatives to be carried out by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport<sup>2</sup>.

Research is vital to ensure state-of-the-art methods, combined with the practical approach from practitioners. Currently, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Institute of International Relations and Political Science, and Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics share no systematic joint research collaboration agenda, except for ad hoc, individual researchers-based initiatives. STRATA could play a leading role in posing relevant research questions, requiring skills from data analysis, statistics, economics, and politics, prioritising interdisciplinary research groups. As previously mentioned, STRATA should also make data access available to researchers, organise regular workshops and seminars where researchers and STRATA analysts share their research results.

**Table 3. Actions to enhance public-university collaboration and launch a Master's degree**

Action	Details
Agreement of Co-operation between STRATA and Vilnius University	Specify resources both institutions are ready to allocate (data, software, human capital, administrative support), joint objectives (boosting policy studies and research, producing better quality graduates, intensifying collaboration in joint event organisation, dissemination of best practices and tools, higher usage of data sources available at STRATA by university faculty, etc.), employment conditions for jointly hired researchers (salary sharing rules), teaching commitment by new hires, number of hires, sharing rules of intellectual property, responsibilities and confidentiality clauses.
Formation of a working group consisting of STRATA and representatives from three faculties (EVAF, MIF and TSPMI) with an aim to launch a new degree.	Working group, using a template in this roadmap, should prepare or task a relevant body to prepare a draft programme description (see suggested template within this roadmap), analysis of the gap in the market which the programme is intended to fill, employability analysis, faculty description, including research and professional experience. Such a draft programme needs to be approved by the University before it can be submitted to the <a href="#">Centre of Quality Assessment of Higher Education</a> . A potential head of the programme needs to be identified early on who shall co-ordinate group's work, defend and present the programme, etc. Given the focus on analytical economics and data science, the leading faculty should be identified, perhaps Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, where the programme is formally hosted.
Seek support from the office of government as part of the public service reform and the way to boost public sector's resilience, skills, efficiency, and enhance public support and trust in public governance.	An overarching support, in particular, to the reformed high quality public service, an analytical track, financial support (for new hires, scholarships, software, books) from the government and/or RRF and other schemes should be in place before starting a programme.
Pursue a change in the classification of interdisciplinary degrees in Lithuania.	Such request may come from the office of government with a clear goal of improving legal basis for the implementation of interdisciplinary degrees, a task to be carried out by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.
STRATA should strengthen its staff with researchers holding high quality PhD degrees,	In the meantime, invest into missing skills by signing up most promising current staff to courses tailored for quantitative public policy analysis, which can often be taken remotely, thus preparing in-

<sup>1</sup> [V-1075 Dėl Studijų krypčių ir krypčių grupių, pagal kurias vyksta studijos aukštosiose mokyklose, sąrašo... \(e-tar.lt\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> The questions and suggestions to enable interdisciplinary studies have been covered for quite some time with no action from the ministries. See Professor Račkauskas entry [here](#).

ready to pursue policy research and teaching. Its internal culture should be conducive to research, seminars, workshops, data initiatives (open micro-level data, depository of policy evaluations and studies, easy data merging options, and other necessary prerequisites to attract talent to come to Lithuania).	house lecturers and boosting the quality of analysis.
Reach out a partner university specialising in a similar programme with a view to initiate a joint or double degree.	A relevant example is a joint venture by Trinity College Dublin and Economic & Social Research Institute (ESRI). Bank of Lithuania (CEFER) and Vilnius university should also be consulted for details.

When it comes to the accessibility of micro-level data, legal matters need to be addressed, enabling STRATA to share confidential data under binding agreements with the researchers (possibly only onsite). Other challenges include confidentiality concerns, merging multiple datasets using identifiers, depersonalisation of data, etc. One action is the creation of Data management rules for outside researchers and the creation of special facilities (particularly computers) enabling safe data use. As mentioned in the report, even though Statistics Lithuania has the necessary infrastructure to open up its data for EIPM, it lacks an adequate legal framework to do so; STRATA should thus be not only legally granted access to but also be able to provide strictly observed sharing opportunities of administrative data for external researchers. Main challenges with the micro level data access included legal mandate (e.g., policy unit versus research unit in the same institution), public procurement to purchase data preparation (though data are free, its preparation is charged to reflect the time needed to prepare a requested dataset), narrowly defined rules for dealing with personal data even for research purposes (failure to have right facilities, anonymisation rules and tools, etc.), micro-level data inaccessibility due to narrow objectives (e.g. Statistics Lithuania does not share micro-level survey data on the grounds of objectives being limited to collecting data to publish aggregate survey results, whereas research is outside the scope and requires agreements from each respondent separately). It is therefore needed that Statistics Lithuania: conducts all surveys with the scope that includes research activities with individual data; opens up micro data for research purposes (STRATA should have research unit status for the suggestion to make data available to external researchers to be implementable); enables access to personal but fully anonymised data merged from different sources for policy questions to be tackled (e.g., [State data governance initiative](#) is the right step but it is still not functioning).

Finally, as suggested in the OECD report, development of skills for analysis in the Lithuanian public sector needs to take a systematic approach, including an analytical track within the civil service, a scholarship programme that would send Lithuanian student for graduate studies abroad, overall civil service reform fostering a whole of government approach towards a shared vision and an organised mobility across ministries and public entities. Otherwise, the new programme will fail to achieve its goals if an appreciation of the evidence-based approach to policymaking, the quality time required for the analysis, the ultimate use of the proposals, a cultural shift in the public sector are not pursued simultaneously. STRATA's role as a co-ordinator of EIPM activities, disseminator of the know-how, organiser of open seminars, workshops, conferences, and the active engager with the stakeholders is therefore crucial.

Table 4. Comparison of selected Master degrees and graduate courses in Europe and the USA

Programme	Core Subjects	Other Subjects	Important Details
Advanced Certificate in Quantitative Methods for Policy Analysis, New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service	Statistical Methods; Multiple Regression and Introduction to Econometrics	Advanced Empirical Methods; Geographic Information Systems; Large Scale Data Analysis I and II; Designing Data Collection for Program Evaluation, Policy, and Management; Using Large Data Sets in Policy Research; R/Python Coding for Public Policy	At least 5 courses to complete for earning a certificate (2 core and 3 optional) <a href="https://wagner.nyu.edu/education/certificates-non-degree-programs/quantitative-methods-policy-analysis">https://wagner.nyu.edu/education/certificates-non-degree-programs/quantitative-methods-policy-analysis</a>
Advanced Certificate in Program Evaluation and Impact Assessment, New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service	Statistical Methods; Evaluating Programs and Policies; Multiple Regression and Introduction to Econometrics	Advanced Empirical Methods; Geographic Information Systems; Estimating Impacts in Policy Research; Large Scale Data Analysis I and II; Designing Data Collection for Program Evaluation, Policy, and Management; Using Large Data Sets in Policy Research; R/Python Coding for Public Policy	At least 5 courses to complete for earning a certificate (3 core and 2 optional) <a href="https://wagner.nyu.edu/education/certificates-non-degree-programs/program-evaluation-impact-assessment">https://wagner.nyu.edu/education/certificates-non-degree-programs/program-evaluation-impact-assessment</a>
MSc in Economic Policy, Trinity College Dublin and the Economic and Social Research Institute	Micro Economic Policy; Macro-Economic Policy; Quantitative Methods for Economics I & II; Research Methods for Economics; Research Dissertation	Regulation and Banking; Behavioural Economics; Urban and Housing Economics; Health Economics; Energy, Environment and Climate Change; Taxation and welfare	The MSc carries 90 ECTS. Candidates take 60 ECTS taught modules and complete a research dissertation (30 ECTS). The course comprises 12 modules, six of which are compulsory modules and will focus on core concepts and skills. The other six modules are focused on key policy areas, and students will select three of these. Students will carry out a dissertation in their second year relating to a relevant policy area. <a href="#">MSc in Economic Policy - Economics - Trinity College Dublin (tcd.ie)</a>
Master in Analysis and Policy in Economics, Paris School of Economics	Courses in the first year are categorised in the following fields: Economic history, Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, Quantitative methods, Social sciences. Courses in the second year are categorised in the fields of Development, Economic and social history, Economic theory, Economics of human behaviour, Globalisation, political economy and trade, Labour and public economics, Macroeconomics, Regulation, environment, market. Research seminar and Master thesis.	Optional seminar, electives from a list (environmental policies, macroeconomic policies, labour economics, etc.). The second year includes a wide variety of advanced courses to specialise in.	Two streams, M1 and M2. A standard entry is M1, making the whole programme 2 years in length. However, students can enter the M2 year, if they have already taken and passed coursework that provides a level of preparation equivalent to that of Year 1 of the APE Program. This programme is funded by a French government subsidy managed by the Agence Nationale de la Recherche under the framework of the Investissements d'avenir programme reference ANR-17-EURE-0001. <a href="https://www.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/en/teaching/masters-program/ape-analysis-policy-in-economics/">https://www.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/en/teaching/masters-program/ape-analysis-policy-in-economics/</a>
MSc in Evidence-Based Social Intervention and	Social Interventions (SI stream); Social Policy Analysis (PE stream); Research Methods;	Examples: Welfare of children and families; Community analysis and large-scale interventions; Health: policy and Inequalities; Advanced	Two streams: Social Intervention (SI, covering evidence-based methods to evaluate social interventions, theories underlying interventions, ethical issues, and applying research in practice and policy, including the challenges of

Policy Evaluation, University of Oxford	Evaluation Methods; Systematic Reviews; Quantitative Analysis; Qualitative Methods	Methods	implementing programmes in the real world;) or Policy Evaluation (PI, focusing on social policy analysis, policy formation, and the relationship between evidence and policy, and different research methods for evaluating policies, e.g. quasi-experimental designs, natural experiments.) <a href="#">MSc in Evidence-Based Social Intervention and Policy Evaluation   University of Oxford</a>
Master of Data Science for Public Policy, Hertie School, Berlin	Data structures and algorithms, Introduction to data science, Public policy, Economics, Mathematics for data science, Causal inference, Machine learning, Law and governance, Internship, Master thesis.	Data science concentration electives: deep learning, data science and decision making. Governance and management for data science concentration electives: governance and politics of AI, AI in government, Leadership, power and influence. Students deepen their knowledge and expand their policy and data science portfolio by attending two additional portfolio electives. They can be selected from the entire catalogue of electives across the School's graduate programmes.	2-year, full-time programme (120 ECTS) in English. <a href="#">Master of Data Science for Public Policy (hertie-school.org)</a>

Figure 1. Structure of Master in Evidence-Based Intervention and Policy Evaluation, University of Oxford

	Michaelmas Term (Oct-Dec)	Hilary Term (Jan-Apr)	Trinity Term (May-Aug)
<b>Core papers</b> 1 module; <i>different</i> for Social Intervention & Policy Evaluation students.	<b>Social Interventions</b> (SI stream)  <b>Social Policy Analysis</b> (PE stream)		<b>Policy Exercise</b> (both streams)
<b>Research Methods papers</b> modules <i>same</i> for Social Intervention & Policy Evaluation students.	<b>Evaluation Methods</b>  <b>Systematic reviews</b>  <b>Quantitative Analysis</b>	<b>Evaluation Methods</b>  <b>Systematic reviews</b>  <b>Qualitative Methods</b>	<b>Evaluation Methods</b>  <b>Systematic reviews</b>  Advanced Methods (optional/offers vary)
<b>Option papers</b> 1 module chosen by student.		<b>Examples (may change)</b> - Welfare of Children & Families - Community Analysis & Large-Scale Interventions - Health: Policy & Inequalities	
<b>Exams &amp; Research</b>	<b>Methods assignments</b>	<b>Methods assignments</b>	<b>Exams (Core/Option) MSc Thesis</b>

Table 5. Structure of Master in Economic Policy and Quantitative Methods, University of Potsdam

CONTENT AND CREDIT POINTS (CP)	
Modules	Credit points
<p>A. Basis Courses</p> <p>All modules (worth 9 CP each) must be completed.</p> <p>Advanced Microeconomics</p> <p>Advanced Macroeconomics</p> <p>Advanced Microeconometrics</p>	27 CP
<p>B. Specialization</p> <p>Students must complete 54 CP of Specialisation Modules. Students choose 30 CP of Economic Policy Modules and 24 CP of Quantitative Methods Modules.</p>	54 CP
<p>B.1 Economic Policy Modules</p> <p>Political Economics I/II: Methods / Applications</p> <p>Urban Economics I/II: Methods / Applications</p> <p>Growth and Distribution I/II: Theory / Applications &amp; Empirics</p> <p>Economic Policy</p> <p>Advanced Economic Policy II: Theory / Applications</p> <p>Behavioural Economics</p> <p>Recent Topics in Economic Policy I (e.g. Environmental Economics, Economics of Climate Change, Entrepreneurship)</p> <p>Recent Topics in Economic Policy II (e.g. Gender Economics, Economic Development, Innovation Economics)</p> <p>Seminar in Economic Policy</p>	30 CP
<p>B.2 Quantitative Methods Modules</p> <p>Policy Evaluation I/II: Methods*/Applications*</p> <p>Econometric Methods and Applications I/II (e.g. Time Series Analysis, Panel Data Econometrics, Machine Learning)</p> <p>Quantitative Methods I/II (e.g. Dynamic Optimization, Experimental Methods, Bayesian Methods)</p> <p>Seminar in (Applied) Quantitative Methods</p> <p><i>*joint Master/Ph.D. course with the Berlin School of Economics (for further details see: <a href="#">BDPEMS</a>)</i></p>	24 CP
<p>C. Electives</p> <p>Students must complete modules of 18 CP. The modules can be selected from the following modules and the modules from area B. Specialisation. Modules that have already been completed cannot be re-occupied. A maximum of 12 CP can be acquired through an internship.</p> <p>Advanced Economic Studies I/II/III</p> <p>Internship I/II/III</p> <p>Internationalisation Module</p>	18 CP
<p>D. Master's Thesis and Research Colloquium</p>	21 CP
<p>Research Colloquium</p>	3 CP
<p>Master's Thesis</p>	18 CP
<p>Total</p>	120 CP



**Figure 2. Structure of Master of Science in Computational Analysis & Public Policy (MSCAPP), a joint venture by the Harris School of Public Policy and the Department of Computer Science at The University of Chicago**

	Fall	Winter	Spring
<b>Year 1</b>	<a href="#">Computer Science with Applications 1 [CS]</a>	<a href="#">Computer Science with Applications 2 [CS]</a>	<a href="#">Databases for Public Policy [CS]</a>
	<a href="#">Statistics I [H]</a> – Standard option – Advanced option	<a href="#">Statistics II [H]</a> – Standard option – Advanced option	<a href="#">Program Evaluation [H]</a> *
	<a href="#">Analytical Politics [H]</a>	<a href="#">Mathematics for Computer Science and Data Analysis [CS]</a>	<a href="#">Machine Learning for Public Policy [CS]</a>
<b>Summer</b>	<a href="#">Internship</a>	-	-
<b>Year 2</b>	<a href="#">Microeconomics I [H]</a> – Standard option – Advanced option	<a href="#">Microeconomics II [H]</a> – Standard option – Advanced option	<a href="#">Elective</a>
	<a href="#">Elective</a>	<a href="#">Elective</a>	<a href="#">Elective</a>
	<a href="#">Elective</a>	<a href="#">Elective</a>	<a href="#">Elective</a>

\* Programme Evaluation is typically offered every quarter; we encourage students to take it in the spring quarter of their first year, but it may instead be taken in any quarter of the second year.

## Actions to strengthening the role of STRATA as a key strategic centre of the evidence informed policy making system in Lithuania

This roadmap seeks to provide a set of actions that would strengthen the role of STRATA in the evidence-informed policy-making system in Lithuania. The roadmap draws from the recommendations presented in the chapter 4 of the OECD report and sets out a few actions to promote policy evaluation and evidence use in the public sector. Three core areas will be discussed in more detail: Mandate, which is further subdivided into objectives, main topics to be analysed, and networking, Transparency, and Funding.

### ***The role of STRATA to strengthen capacity for evidence and evaluation across government in Lithuania***

As identified in the Report, Section 4, STRATA is given a substantial role in steering evidence-based and evaluation capacity across government. STRATA needs to adapt its governance, organisation and resources to make the most of its new mandates and better respond to the government's needs for cross-government analysis.

#### *Mandate: Objectives*

The report suggests refocusing STRATA's responsibilities on evaluation, foresight and regulatory impact assessment-related activities in order to increase its legitimacy and impact. STRATA has been given a mandate in several stages of the preparation and implementation of the main strategic planning documents of the Lithuanian government (foresight for the preparation of the State Progress Strategy 2050 and the National Progress Plan 2030).

And yet the exact distribution of tasks between STRATA and the Office of the Government has yet to be determined. The methodology for the strategic governance framework suggests that STRATA needs to prepare the report analysing the strategic objectives and their impact indicators of the National Progress Plan (NPP) annually (Government of Lithuania, 2021).

The nature of STRATA's position, at arm's length of the centre of government, and the skills of its staff members, are better suited for foresight, advice and evaluation than for monitoring. Such an arrangement also helps to avoid unnecessary political tensions.

Therefore, STRATA should refocus its mandate on advising state and municipal institutions on methodological issues related to evidence-based decision making, as well on conducting "studies, evaluations and forecasts on strategic issues", as mandated by article 30 of the law on government (Parliament of Lithuania, 1994[10]). This mandate would complement the quality control and assurance it provides in the area of ex ante and ex post regulatory assessment

#### *Mandate: Topics*

In terms of topics and specialisation, STRATA's current core focus is on education, science and innovation, which reflect the inheritance from MOSTA. That is excessive given the general nature of STRATA's current new functions and may detract STRATA from fulfilling its other functions to the best of its ability. Due to competing demands and limited resources, the report has recommended transferring some of these functions back to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, which is in need of increasing its internal capacities for analysis. This would concern in particular the analysis of workforce needs, of human capital and vocational training.

### *Mandate: Networking*

As highlighted in chapter 3 of the report, a clear government-wide framework on co-ordination for RIA could be helpful to clarify the role of STRATA versus other institutions (such as Office of Government, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Economy and Innovation, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Finance) in providing methodological support for RIA. It is foreseen that STRATA could act as the main methodological centre for RIA.

STRATA is mandated by article 30 of the law on government to manage a network of public sector analysts (Parliament of Lithuania, 1994). One way to promote analytical competencies in the public sector is for STRATA to foster and manage a network of analytical capacities across ministries and agencies. By giving seminars, sharing knowledge management and developing methodological guides for analysis and evaluation, STRATA could support the continuous development of public sector skills for evaluation.

STRATA should organise government-wide training programmes on RIA to staff from across the government rather than respond to ad-hoc requests.

### *Transparency*

In order to further improve this credibility, the STRATA board could consider making its decision-making process surrounding the annual activity plans more transparent, such as publishing the minutes of the meetings of the board. In addition, members of the board should be subject to clear provisions related to conflict of interest, which should be publicly available on STRATA's website.

### *Funding*

The current budget structure is overwhelmingly based on projects, i.e. more than 70% of STRATA's funding comes from projects. Most of these projects are due to end at the end of 2022 (STRATA, 2020). While project-based funding ensures independence and additional capacities to STRATA, policy advisory bodies also need some stable funding to: maintain the independence and credibility of their advice (OECD, Policy Advisory Systems: Supporting Good Governance and Sound Public Decision Making, 2017); remain flexible and agile in responding to the government's needs. Therefore, there is a need to adjust resources of STRATA and provide the centre with some core resources commensurate with its responsibilities at least over a 4 to 5 year cycle, that could be then subject to performance assessment and review.

## ***Positioning STRATA in a strategic way as part of the system for evidence informed policy making and evaluation across government***

### *Mandate: Objectives*

To address the objectives component of the STRATA mandate, in addition to transferring the NPP monitoring function, STRATA should not strive to replicate what has already been in place or is an overlap with the current objectives of other entities.

For instance, when it comes to NPP, there must be a clarification and alignment of objectives with the State Progress Council (SPC), which is formally in charge of the National Progress Plan 2030 monitoring, updating, and results evaluation (for more details and particulars see [Government resolution](#) and government's section on the [State Progress Council](#)). According to the strategic governance law STRATA conducts environmental analysis, whereas the government co-ordinates the preparation of the state progress strategy, where, among other institutions, STRATA and the State Progress Council play their parts (see the aforementioned law Article 13-3 and 3-17-(9,10)). Such an arrangement, where a new player, STRATA, is entitled to carry out tasks similar to those of SPC, requires streamlining in terms of key players, their mandates to avoid duplication and confusion. Another example concerns better regulation –

though STRATA is supposed to promote better regulation as part of a strategy, a clear role of other players and the relationship between each other, e.g., with [Better Regulation Supervisory Commission](#)<sup>3</sup> is not clarified, ending up in a confused, spread out and inefficiently functioning institutional setup.

As a consequence, one important step forward is an audit of the current institutional landscape from a bird's view to stop replicating, duplicating, and seeking similar or sometimes identical objectives with other public bodies. Given the experience and human resources, the government office may order a review (audit) of the institutional landscape in charge of the most policy-relevant questions to be conducted by STRATA in conjunction with relevant ministries. The second step, after having carried out a review, renounce shared functions in other institutions and organs, thereby achieving institutional transparency and clarity, helping identify key players, boost cross-institutional spillovers. Moreover, as elaborated below under the heading Transparency, role clarity is a crucial component of institutional independence.

As stipulated in the [Statutes of STRATA](#), three main areas of activity are public policy, science, and non-formal education. As suggested within the report, analysis on the workforce needs of human capital and vocational training shall be transferred to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. In addition to the resources, focus, and specialisation issues, an issue of other public bodies focusing on the same or highly similar tasks, duplicating each other, as indicated above, is also relevant. For instance, [Government Commission for the Coordination of National Human Resources Monitoring](#) is said to be in charge of continuous data collection and analysis to help educational entities (educational institutions, other educational providers and educational management entities) to analyse and evaluate the labour force status, change, processes in various aspects and predict future trends, make evidence-based decisions. Therefore, a systematic and all-encompassing approach is needed to consolidate human capital, clarify mandates and responsibilities, improve information flows, and make the whole ecosystem function more effectively. This can be achieved, as mentioned, by a two-step procedure: initiate an audit, identify all overlaps and inefficiencies, which obscure and slow down processes, and implement renouncement of redundancies by changing mandates and/or merging duplicating bodies.

Another problem concerns the competencies mapping. As mentioned in the report, though the Ministry of the Interior is currently mapping skills based on a broader competency management framework and the Human Resource Management System does track civil servants' career progression, analytical coverage in terms of topics, methodologies, modelling skills is lacking. Given the size of the labour market, STRATA should collaborate on more formal grounds rather than on an ad hoc basis with the applied institutes. There could be positive externalities both ways: more policy-oriented and relevant research at the institutes and cutting-edge methodology applications at STRATA. For instance, [Lithuanian social sciences centre \(LSSC\)](#), hosting Department of Labour Market Research, Department of Social Policy Research, Department of Social Change and Inequality Studies, among others, is a large research entity, whose resources are well fit for research work in the respective areas.<sup>4</sup> STRATA could pursue the following strategy: 1) Formal collaboration with respective institutes (MoU or agreement basis), clarifying areas of interest; 2) Production of a map of all skills, topics, and methodologies that would help immensely to use limited human capital more efficiently; 3) Rotation programme across analytical centres, where STRATA should play a leading role in making such rotations happen.

To help achieve STRATA objectives and improve the working connections with the ministries, it is advised to substantially improve cross-department co-ordination within ministries. Currently, ministries function with

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<sup>3</sup> It is a government commission whose purpose is to perform the tasks established in the Law on Administrative Burdens and assigned to it by the government in relation to the assessment of administrative burdens and the application of mitigation measures in state and municipal institutions and bodies.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, ministries sometimes procure short-term research projects but can also suggest topics to be added to the thematic plans of LSSC.

a very fragmented internal structure; it is effectively departments based. Even within a ministry, there is limited consolidation effort or the bird's view knowledge of what is going on elsewhere, even at the highest level of management. Such a structure makes other institutions, including STRATA and the office of government, interactions more difficult (e.g., gathering, prioritising, and addressing analytical needs for the whole ministry). Some ministries expressed concerns the other way round that it is not clear with whom to consult at STRATA, how to make an order regarding policy evaluation. Though the office of government is supposed to consolidate the ministerial needs, it is clear that the feedback mechanism at the specialist level or a single shop at the office of government are not functioning satisfactorily. One way forward is the creation of an independent Chief Policy Advisor role or expanded role for the Head of the research group (when it exists) within ministry. It seems important that such role would take some responsibilities as done by Chief Science Advisors; see Box 1 below on the tasks and credentials of such persons, yet it should remain a broader position. A background in research and independence from political pressures are important – something that cannot be fully replicated by asking political civil servants like ministries' chancellors (heads of offices) to represent scientific and analytical needs or, in fact, expect them to be appropriately trained to deliver such tasks. Absent proper representation and co-ordination within ministries will make STRATA work on spreading evidence-informed policy making within the whole public sector way more complicated if not impossible.

#### Box 1. Better Co-ordination, Public Leverage, and Support for Evidenced-Based Policy

Professor Dame Angela McLean, Chief Scientific Advisor at the Ministry of Defence, United Kingdom, described the role of scientific advisor as requiring a strategic focus, particularly to fulfil a mandate to protect the department's funding, defending the base of the long-term science and technology budget. One of the main challenges for the ministry is organising and curation of the enormous amounts of data and information it has (and generates), and ensuring it is effectively shared not just within Defence but across relevant government departments. According to Dame Angela McLean, among the key tasks of Chief Scientific Advisor are influencing the civil service to have a greater scientific perspective and to question more critically. A background in academia was the necessary foundation to succeed.

Source: <https://www.csap.cam.ac.uk/news/article-how-be-chief-scientific-advisor-government/>

In fact, a way to boost evidence-based policy making is to create small analytical teams within ministries, similarly to the experience of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, where the “Strategic Decisions Support and International Cooperation Group” can be invoked by policy units to conduct an assessment of the monetary impacts of legislative projects. A similar group is in the making at the Ministry of Economy and Innovation, also considered at Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. For instance, New Zealand has been dealing with co-ordination and evidence-based policymaking culture issues more than a decade ago. In the [report](#) by Chief Science Advisor to the Prime Minister, Sir Peter Gluckman, it is said that the structure of ministries and agencies that collate scientific advice internally can be haphazard. One of the ways out is the Departmental Science Advisor, usually appointed for a limited-term secondment from academia. In Lithuania's case, such a role can be undertaken by the heads of ministerial analytical groups when they exist or an external academic when they do not. STRATA would then be able to better target key figures in evidence-based tasks, involve them in regular meetings, events, training, and improve the spillover effects of the know-how. Moreover, it would also help receive feedback on the needs, challenges, required expertise or requests for external procurements.

When it comes to the STRATA objectives of a systemic change in the evidence-based policymaking, one of the lowest hanging fruits is the expansion of currently run [Catalogue of Impact Evaluations](#). More effort and resources should be devoted for the augmentation and management of an archive of all studies and policy evaluations, accessible by all ministries, thereby ensuring continuity in the face of political changes

and improving the culture of evidence and science role in the decision-making process. It is now based on publicly available data, which is an excellent starting point but needs to be augmented with studies and evidence projects that rest with ministries, thereby requiring more work from STRATA to identify key persons at ministries, on-site visits, and digitalisation efforts of paper documents. Ministries seem to lack a centralised database with past policy evaluations and a platform to track previous governments' works, projects, and studies. First, STRATA should allocate more human resources to co-ordinate archives, studies, past evaluations, particularly those not covered by the eGovernment development in Lithuania. A second action for STRATA would be advertising more widely the depositary for it to be known and used by ministries and potentially analysed by researchers and more often featured in policymakers' workflow.

STRATA's role in ex post regulatory assessment is unsatisfactory, given that relying merely on the Ministry of Justice and current methodology are too focused on the legal matters but avoid data-driven quantitative assessments rooted in the state-of-the-art policy evaluation [methodology](#) (see Nobel prize laureates in economics in 2021 and their contributions to [the methodology of causal analysis and ex-post evaluation of public interventions](#)). Skills and competencies within STRATA remain inefficiently used if all ex post assessments are housed in the Ministry of Justice (MoJ); STRATA should play at the very least an advisory role in delivering quantitative approaches to avoid formalistic ex post evaluations but the first best is actually mandating STRATA to conduct major ex post evaluations, encompassing measurable impacts, often tracked by administrative data, with smaller ones left for the ministry. That requires expanding STRATA's statutes and revising MoJ's role in ex post evaluations.

STRATA should also play a quality filtering role for the public policy projects coming from ministries, providing STRATA with an across-the-board presence, and making use of its in-house competencies. STRATA should also help ministries in formulating technical descriptions to meet ministerial needs. The advisory role in selecting the right project would be a tangible step forward in increasing the quality of external analysis and advice (e.g., outside research on demand, as covered below) sourced by better-prepared public tendering and procurement.

#### *Mandate: Topics*

**As already indicated, there is a wedge between the expectations from STRATA to play key roles in innovation policy, green deal, ageing society, smart specialisation, evidence-based public management and others, and the [Statutes of STRATA](#), where public policy is just one third of other main areas of activity.** Failure to focus on strategic issues and RIAs would make STRATA a back office of the Government Office, jeopardising the objectives of a systemic change in the public sector and strategic advice to the government. Covid-19 provided an example when a number of institutions were tasked to produce evidence to ease policymaking, with little if any long-term or strategic dimension (see Box below for more information). The capability to synthesise or summarise data exists across institutions but strategic advice is in short supply. It, therefore, seems more fit to task STRATA with co-ordination exercise rather than make it produce summary statistics, also done in other institutions, or deal with tactical questions. **STRATA's visions should therefore be like the [Joint Research Centre](#), which is the European Commission's science and knowledge service, providing independent scientific advice and support to EU policy, not a producer of prompt entries into ongoing matters, presentations or visits.**

In the Covid context, the key to the policymaker, scenario building, evaluation of policy tools, suggestions, and clear policy advice were in short supply. As summarised in Box 2, many institutions are tasked with advisory role, with additional ad hoc arrangements, ending up in co-ordinator failure, potential resource mismanagement, and lacking longer-term view. **STRATA is therefore advised to build capacity for scenario planning and, more generally, strategic foresight in close co-operation with the Future Committee at Seimas.** In times of rapid change and uncertainty, as was the case with the Covid-19 shock, multiple future possibilities need to be taken into account. See [OECD report](#) for more on the foresight

capacity building. Summaries are useful inasmuch they are ingredients in the decision-making process; they cannot be objectives in their own right. Given that STRATA is endowed with the foresight exercise for National Progress Plan, its capabilities need to be strengthened (therefore, the current staff structure reviewed). Also, reports produced by STRATA should have more clearly worked out policy suggestions, even if framed with required conditionalities (i.e., they work only if certain conditions are satisfied). Two steps are proposed: 1) Current [structure](#) fails to reflect the foresight function, requiring STRATA to hire more senior people with experience in strategic foresight methods and applications, ability to critique, analyse and elevate strategies, policy formation and managerial skills; 2) STRATA should make scenario analysis and alternatives coverage its modus operandi in the main reports, rather than ad hoc, which is one of the ways to perform foresight function.

To boost foresight and quantitative policy evaluation capacity, a two-tier entry and career options should be considered. On the one hand, academically rigorous competencies in economics, statistics, and modelling should be maintained by PhD holders, particularly from leading Universities in Europe or globally, acting as group leaders, specialising in key areas, whereas analysts largely following the lead should constitute another stream. Within such a proposed system, core people should be identified and offered clear career paths, preserving STRATA's resilience to the labour market and other changes. Turnover will not be a big problem if key people are retained. Such policies as time for independent research (as in the Bank of Lithuania where researchers are given time for unsupervised research to fulfil their academic ambitions), training opportunities, funds for attending and presenting at conferences, inviting external researchers working on similar issues should be put in place.



### Box 2. Covid-19 and Co-ordination Failure

To counteract the Covid-19 shock, many public actions were undertaken. The president has initiated the [Health Expert Council](#), split into three sections: Situation Analysis and Forecasting Group; Public Health Measures Group; Healthcare Work Organization Group. In addition, to inform policy decisions, the government had also established an advisory board of experts. The Board of Experts is tasked with considering and submitting to the Government proposals for the application and implementation of COVID-19 disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment and other epidemic management measures.

These ad hoc groups, however, are not the only advisors and input providers when it comes to dealing with the Covid crisis. The Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (LAS), according to its Statutes, “advises the Seimas and the Government in accordance with its competence, provides them with recommendations and expert assessments” ([Statutes, 5.2](#)). As an independent expert and advisor to the Seimas, the government and its subordinate institutions, it is tasked to provide advice on issues of science and studies, culture, social development, economy, nature protection, health care, technology and other issues. The only tangible response is the creation of a platform ([www.lma.lt/covid-19](http://www.lma.lt/covid-19)) with links to research on Covid-19, largely unknown to the general public.

When it comes to public policy and economic inputs, the [Bank of Lithuania](#) has started publishing key indicators, often based on micro-level data, on Lithuanian labour, energy and global financial markets every week to help make economic, financial and business stabilisation decisions. At around similar time, STRATA started to publish Economics Pulse analysis, a more descriptive version of the largely same indicators. Examples of more valuable inputs, a [pan-Baltic comparative review](#), [behavioural approaches to communication](#) or policy briefs summarising other countries' responses reflect the right direction but nevertheless lacks Lithuanian context, data usage and more clear guidance for the policymakers.

Though many attempts have been made to help policymakers arrive at better decisions, co-ordination to avoid replicating or duplicating tasks was insufficient, whereas modelling, scenario building and analytics of policy interventions alternatives and their effects were too dispersed and scarce (e.g. researchers from Mathematics and Informatics Faculty played a role but academic economists were not part of an effort to help policymaking, perhaps reflecting a larger problem of poor academic economics stance in the country).

In case of ad hoc tasks and questions from the government, STRATA should act as advisors and methodology and templates providers to be used by the ministries but not as main drivers of tactical or niche questions, going outside the mandate (e.g., sectoral analysis, wild animal shipping, shadow economy). Ministries must have their own analytical capacity, supported by STRATA consultations, to deal with questions within the ministerial scope. Otherwise, not only STRATA will fail to achieve its objectives, in particular spillovers of evidence-based policymaking culture would not happen, but also risk losing the highest calibre staff, often trained in particular areas (particularly, analysts with PhDs, competently using particular methodologies, not new “recipes” without appreciating their limitations or fit to the question at hand).

Generally, only topics that transcend the limits of a single ministry are long-term in nature, multi-sectoral and require co-ordination effort should be considered as relevant for STRATA. The way forward is to require that official requests from the office of the government to STRATA be through the official letters signed by the Prime Minister, thereby ensuring that STRATA focuses only on the strategic and right level issues.

A currently missing or not perfectly functioning system of stakeholders' feedback generates some doubts about the usefulness of the output. For instance, stakeholders express doubts about reports which mainly

review and describe data and current state, compare situation to counterparts in foreign countries but fall short of clear and feasible policy implications, thus often replicating what can be found in other studies conducted by, say, OECD. Two ways forward are suggested: 1) Collect feedback by engaging directly with the main users of different products of STRATA to improve their contents and quality (e.g., liaise with Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport about Review of the State of Science; engage with Ministry of the Economy and Innovation on Review of Lithuanian Innovation Ecosystem; other products, such as on human capital, require to involve more than one ministry); 2) provide clear, Lithuanian-context oriented, logically following pieces of advice and implications, thereby creating additional value-added on top of monitoring of the trend and summary of the existing evidence.

#### *Mandate: Networking*

**Information flow about STRATA activities should be strengthened.** Not only there are signals about targeted groups at ministries not learning about the events, but also, STRATA is not yet a recognised player in the eyes of major stakeholders. It seems that offices of ministries should be more involved, as well as a clear request and information dissemination strategy developed. To improve information flows from STRATA to ministries and other agencies, it is suggested to directly involve all key persons from ministries who deal with analytical tasks (small analytics teams at ministries, if they exist), in addition to the head of the ministry's office. It is also important to involve all other actors in the evidence-based policy ecosystem, including, for instance, the Research unit (Department of Communication and Information) at Seimas. The first steps should involve the following: 1) Services group should organise a kick-off round-table meeting with all heads of analytical teams from the ministries and Research unit at Seimas, clarifying tactical and strategic objectives of STRATA, announcing initiatives, and collecting feedback, agreeing on the frequency of such meetings; 2) Production of regular Information Letter distributed by email and through social networks on events, trainings, upcoming products and their coverage, contact persons, etc.

A number of stakeholders have expressed concerns that Lithuanian Research Council (LRC) is not the best fit for managing short-term -demand research requests. The procedure is too long, the chosen projects are too distant from reality for them to be useful inputs into the policymaking, and expertise is too much focused on other things (like scientific novelty), and not on a particular challenge at hand. It is recommended that research inputs into the priority areas of public policy and reforms are funded directly by the specifically allocated budget in the government budget and STRATA acts as a unifying entity to collect research requests, announce a call of interest and allocate resources through competitive bidding. STRATA's competence in formulating clear objectives and selecting required skills seem to be superior to a generic research funding body.

#### *Transparency*

STRATA is seen as the MOSTA's reincarnation, endowed with the new tasks yet with an older inherited setting. To enable STRATA achieve challenging objectives, its independence, well-defined objectives, impartiality, and quality of work must be prioritised. According to the [OECD's Practical Guidance Against Undue Influence](#), five essential dimensions that determine a regulator's de facto independence are: **role clarity, transparency and accountability, financial independence, independence of leadership, and staff behaviour and culture of independence**. In addition to all advice, information and analysis produced and provided to the government being subject to public scrutiny through consultative forums and release of preliminary findings and draft reports, STRATA should aim to embrace the open-source policy. Analysis and more quantitatively driven results should be made transparent in terms of data use, techniques employed, assumptions made, and should also be reproducible by external users, at least in principle (i.e., when having access to the same dataset). Publishing technical details, codes, and data sources are the actionable steps forward. See [Open Source Policy Center](#) for examples.

STRATA should be subject to external evaluation to contrast its performance to comparable institutions abroad. Such arrangement, on a regular rather than ad hoc basis, would help improve quality assurance and boost transparency. The findings of the evaluation should constitute a basis for the board and the office of government in formulating objectives, key performance indicators, and implementing needed structural or other changes. The state-of-the-art knowledge and capabilities on policy impact, foresight and strategic issues are stocked at OECD to externally evaluate the quality of STRATA products and objectives with the help of peers from academia, thereby ensuring full impartiality and respect for STRATA's independence.

To promote public support, gain more leverage, and boost open dialogue with the main stakeholders, STRATA should aim at a more serious publicity effort. Publicity can be seen a [measurable element of performance](#). For instance, the Bank of Lithuania holds a press conference and Q&A sessions whenever its flagship biannual Lithuanian Economic Review is announced and presented. Similarly, STRATA should engage more and with larger groups to disseminate its results. Another example is an annual Lithuanian Economics Conference, focusing on a different topic each year, or Invited Lecture Series, conducted by the Research Centre at the Bank of Lithuania, merging course on an important topic by the globally leading academic with the small conference on the last day of the event, thus bringing researchers, academics, analysts from Lithuania and abroad to present their studies on the same topic as was the course. STRATA should play a similar role in the areas of policy evaluation, big data use for policy questions, causal policy impacts, etc. to boost interest, train public sector analysts, make valuable connections, and increase awareness among the public that STRATA is indeed the centre of excellence in these areas.

### *Funding*

For STRATA to be seen as an independent, strategy-oriented organisation, providing policy advice and impact assessments, in the medium run, it has to have a path towards more budgetary independence. Clearly, at the current transformational stage, a close connection to the office of the government outweighs the concerns of credibility or independence. However, to save from political cycles and ensure continuity, STRATA should have a clear track towards budgetary independence as a self-standing appropriations manager, i.e., it should follow its own budget submission. The budget structure should be changed from the current 1/3 from the state and 2/3 from projects (EU structural fund) to 2/3 from the state and 1/3 from the projects. Such a movement should be gradual, first building capacity within STRATA, increasing its leverage publicly, reaching a quality standard commensurate with the size of the institution. Ultimately, STRATA should be part of the long-term budgeting with long term projects, independent of political cycles. Such an approach would enable keeping core researchers and analysts but preserve competitiveness and agility to changing demands.

## ANNEX List of institutions met.

The experts and the OECD Secretariat warmly thank the various officials and officials of the ministries and government departments who contributed greatly to drafting this roadmap proposal. Thanks for their time and inputs go to representatives from:

- Bank of Lithuania
- Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Vilnius University
- Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics, Vilnius University
- Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius University
- Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport
- Ministry of Social Security and Labour
- Ministry of the Economy and Innovation
- Office of the Government
- Seimas (Parliament)
- STRATA
- STRATA Board