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Monitoring and evaluating foreign policy impact: an assessment and recommendations for Lithuania

This study analyses how the performance monitoring and evaluation system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania helps identify and measure the value of the policy pursued by the Ministry. The report discusses the current policy planning and evaluation system at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, its evolution over the last decade, and its links with the national strategic planning system. The report also analyses foreign policy monitoring and evaluation systems in four case studies – Estonia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Sweden. Building on this analysis, the study presents a list of recommendations on how to improve and develop the system of policy evaluation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania.

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Contents

List of figures	5
List of Tables	6
Summary	7
Introduction	10
1. Approach and methodology	12
1.1. Analytical model	13
1.2. Methodology	16
2. The MFA performance evaluation system	18
2.1. Development of the MFA performance evaluation system 2010–2020	18
2.1.1. 2010–2015: abstract goals and subjective evaluation	19
2.1.2. 2016-present: a shift toward quantitative indicators	21
2.1.3. Summary	24
2.2. Ensuring accountability and learning in the MFA performance monitoring and evaluation system	25
2.2.1. MFA performance evaluation in the context of Lithuanian strategic planning	25
2.2.2. Ensuring accountability in the MFA internal performance evaluation system	28
2.2.3. Empowering learning in the internal MFA performance evaluation system	30
2.2.4. Summary	30
3. Case study analysis: best practices from foreign countries	31
3.1. Estonia	31
3.1.1. The foreign policy strategic planning and evaluation system	31
3.1.2. Criteria for evaluating outcomes and processes	32
3.1.3. Ensuring accountability and learning	34
3.2. New Zealand	35
3.2.1. The foreign policy strategic planning and evaluation system	35
3.2.2. Criteria for evaluating outcomes and processes	35
3.2.3. Ensuring accountability and learning	37
3.3. The Netherlands	37
3.3.1. The foreign policy strategic planning and evaluation system	37
3.3.2. Criteria for evaluating outcomes and processes	38
3.3.3. Ensuring accountability and learning	39
3.4. Sweden	40
3.4.1. The foreign policy strategic planning and evaluation system	40
3.4.2. Criteria for evaluating outcomes and processes	41

3.4.3. Ensuring accountability and learning	41
3.4.4. Summary of case studies	42
4. Summary and recommendations	43
Annex A	49
Annex B	50
Annex C	52
References	55

List of figures

Figure 1. Policy evaluation (results framework) model	14
Figure 2. A model for monitoring MFA activities	16
Figure 3. The model of the performance monitoring and evaluation system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia	33
Figure 4. The model of the performance monitoring and evaluation system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand	36
Figure 5. The model of the performance monitoring and evaluation system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands	39
Figure 6. The model of the performance monitoring and evaluation system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden	41
Figure 7. A model MFA performance monitoring and evaluation system	49
Figure 8. A model scheme for monitoring and evaluating the representation of Lithuanian interests in the EU trade policy based on results framework	50
Figure 9. A model scheme for monitoring and evaluating the inclusion of Lithuania's positions in decisions regarding international sanctions by the EU and partners	51
Figure 10. A model strategic scheme for planning the operations of the MFA evaluation department	52

List of Tables

Table 1. Criteria for impact evaluation and their values (2011–2013 MFA Strategic Operational Plan)	20
Table 2. Criteria for impact evaluation and supporting evidence (2010 MFA activity report), examples	20
Table 3. Evaluation of changes in Lithuania’s relations with Russia (2014 MFA activity report)	21
Table 4. New criteria for impact evaluation in the 2016–2018 MFA Strategic Operational Plan	22
Table 5. Results of public opinion polls in 2017-2018	23
Table 6. NPP goals and objectives related to MFA activities	26

Summary

Today, citizens and organized interest groups alike expect that public authorities can demonstrate the value of the policies they pursue. While it is natural, such expectation raises a very complex question: how and on what basis is it possible to best conceptualize, identify, measure, and evaluate the value created by public policy? In short, how can we assess its impact? This study aims to answer this question in the context of the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania (hereinafter – MFA), assuming that the fundamental criterion of the value created by this organization, like that of any state institution, is its contribution to national welfare. Accordingly, the subject of this study is the contribution of the MFA to the development of the state and the implementation of the state’s strategic objectives. More specifically, the study aims **to assess how effective the MFA’s policy evaluation system is in capturing the Ministry’s contribution to the state’s strategic objectives and to make proposals for its improvement.**

This study is based on two theoretical premises. First, building on foreign policy scholarship, the study holds that certain characteristics unique to this policy field complicate standard policy evaluation. Specifically, foreign policy is a horizontal area, encompassing a wide range of political processes and actors; foreign policy processes are often long term and there is often a significant time lag between political interventions and their effects; finally, due to various internal and external factors that shape foreign policy processes, evaluation of foreign policy activities often involves difficult impact attribution challenges. Secondly, based on the literature on governance and policy evaluation, this study identifies two main functions of policy monitoring and evaluation systems: (1) to ensure accountability and (2) to enable learning. Based on these premises, the study assesses the interaction between the MFA’s performance evaluation system and the overall strategic planning system of the Republic of Lithuania. It continues by analysing Lithuanian MFA’s current evaluation system and then discusses four foreign case studies: Estonia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Sweden.

Insights based on the analysis of the strategic planning system of the Republic of Lithuania:

- **Lithuania’s overall strategic planning system, and specifically the National Plan for Progress (NPP), which has methodological inconsistencies, has a significant impact on the criteria used to assess the value created by the activities of the MFA.** According to the Law on Strategic Governance of the Republic of Lithuania (Articles 6 and 7), strategic planning documents of the ministries (including MFA) must be based on the development goals assigned to them in the NPP and must provide activities for the implementation of these goals. Consequently, the NPP goal No. 9, which deals with foreign policy, causes certain problems for the MFA’s strategic planning processes as the composite formulation of the goal and the mutually inconsistent indicators assigned to it must be transposed to the MFA’s performance assessment system. In addition, the understanding of “progress” outlined in the NPP focuses on new policy initiatives or policy change, and as such poorly reflects the ongoing and preventive activities typical to MFA, which are nevertheless important to the country’s progress.
- **While the MFA can improve its internal performance assessment system, in the long term, these improvements should be transferred to the national level, and specifically to the NPP.** The internal planning and performance assessment system at the MFA is linked to the NPP and is therefore integral to the overall national strategic planning system. Coherent and complementary relationship between the planning and evaluation activities of the MFA and the national strategic planning system is necessary for the effective work of the ministry within the national institutional framework and, as such, for the implementation of the country’s strategic objectives. Further, gradually linking the improved MFA internal practices for policy goal formulation and evaluation to the national strategic planning system would help improve the accountability and increase efficiency (as the MFA would no longer need to report on unhelpful NPP indicators).

Insights based on analysis of the MFA internal evaluation system:

- **The current internal evaluation of MFA activities is mainly limited to the collection of data related to operational activities.** Development of an effective monitoring system at the operational level requires the consideration of logical links among activities, their products, deliverables, and the expected impact. The **results framework model** proposed in the study (elaborated in Annex B) could help with the articulation of such links.

- **Effective monitoring at the operational level relies not only on the collection of objective data (i.e., activities, products), but also on the subjective evaluation of MFA activities and their products by partners, target groups, or consumers.** While all MFA departments surveyed in the study deal with various institutional and public partners, none of them conducted regular and systemic partner or client surveys on the quality of cooperation with the MFA. Institutionalizing partner or client survey practices would also contribute to ensuring accountability and empowering learning.
- **The main challenge regarding the internal evaluation system of the MFA is not to collect additional data or to adjust individual indicators, but to reconsider the evaluation practices more fundamentally, especially by including qualitative evaluation practices.** Qualitative policy impact studies can help answer higher complexity questions concerning several problems at a time, which are endemic to foreign policy. They also allow identifying possible causes and consider policy consequences in a more nuanced, detailed way.

Insights based on the case study analysis:

- **There is no ideal model for evaluating foreign policy.** Case study interviews show that, regardless of which specific foreign policy evaluation system is in place, there are always difficulties in assessing policy impact and the search for indicators and the most appropriate model of evaluation is a continuous and complex process. Improving foreign policy evaluation systems requires not only using the most effective evaluation methods but also ensuring proactive and regular communication of outputs to other participants in the strategic planning system and to society.
- **The case study analysis of foreign practices has highlighted the importance of institutionalized, regular qualitative foreign policy evaluations.** The respondents revealed the benefits of qualitative evaluation in analysing and interpreting complex, horizontal foreign policy problems and in evaluating relevant outputs. Qualitative studies are also beneficial for MFA communication and accountability. Qualitative studies help highlight and support more general narratives concerning progress created by foreign policy. Such studies make it easier to interpret and deliver the data to the public and target groups on the achieved results.
- **The separation between the MFA internal evaluation function and the planning function is important.** The study showed that the performance evaluation models used by foreign ministries of the Netherlands and partly of New Zealand are among the most advanced. The MFA officials from both states highlighted the importance of separating the evaluation function and its independence from planning processes. Although relevant departments/agencies evaluating MFA activities assist and advise strategic planning departments, their function focuses on helping to formulate well-founded, methodically correct and measurable strategic objectives, but not their content. This ensures greater independence and objectivity of the evaluation.

In summarizing these insights, we provide two sets of recommendations. As mentioned above, planning and evaluating MFA internal activities is closely linked to the NPP objectives, thus any weaknesses in formulating and evaluating the aims will lead to inconsistencies in the MFA strategic planning documents while implementing the NPP. **The first set of recommendations focuses on the level of the strategic planning system of the Republic of Lithuania and proposes the following NPP revisions:**

- To reformulate NPP goal No. 9 (“to strengthen Lithuania’s influence in the world and relations with the diaspora”) as “Strengthen Lithuania’s influence and global role”. “Strengthen relations with the diaspora” should be one of the objectives which will contribute to achieving the goal.
- To replace NPP goal No. 9 indicator “Population survey” with the “Soft power” sub-index of the Elcano Global Presence Index. The soft power sub-index is part of the Elcano Global Presence Index, which distinguishes elements of the soft power attributable to foreign policy from the country’s exclusive economic or military power. This sub-index would complement the measurement of NPP objectives with objective information on the situation of Lithuania globally and how it changes with time, which is relevant for the goal.

- To attribute the following objectives to NPP goal No. 9: 9.1 Strengthen Lithuania's representation; 9.2 Strengthen relations with the diaspora.
- To attribute the following indicators to NPP goal No. 9: 9.1.1 Number of representatives of Lithuania elected to leadership or expert positions of international organizations by applying several category coefficients to the positions (in order to evaluate not only the number of positions, but also their weight); 9.1.2. Ranking of Lithuania in the EU Coalition Explorer index (EU countries); 9.1.3. Visibility of Lithuania in seven target foreign countries; 9.1.4. Lithuania's ranking in the KOF Globalisation Index (calculated according to the DPI methodology).
- To attribute the following indicator to objective 9.2: 9.2.1. Share of Lithuanians abroad who have taken part in the life of Lithuania and its wealth creation.

The second set of recommendations is focused on improving the MFA internal evaluation system. The following suggestions are provided:

- To change the following indicators of the MFA strategic operational plan: the indicator for objective No. 1 measure No. 1 should be replaced with different indicators to evaluate the opinions of specific target groups (including the public) of MFA activities.
- To change the indicators for objective No. 2 and for objective No. 2 measure No. 1 by differentiating the indicators by the type of the information relevant for evaluation (e.g., activity, product).
- To reformulate the internal MFA evaluation system by including a qualitative evaluation function that would allow the information provided by indicators to be interpreted. In order to optimize the information provided by indicators, we recommend that the current set of indicators be supplemented/replaced. We recommend that these changes be implemented using the 3x3 matrix and the results framework approach (see Annexes A and B).
- To institutionalize the qualitative evaluation function in the MFA. Given the examples of other countries (Estonia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Sweden), qualitative policy evaluation helps provide context and meaning to quantitative indicators, to reveal the value of MFA activities and their attribution to activities, outputs and outcomes. In light of these practices, we recommend that a regular qualitative evaluation function be set up and provide two possible alternatives for doing so:
 - **Priority option:** Establish an evaluation division within the MFA to evaluate functions. This division would employ qualitative policy evaluation methodology experts and carry out regular evaluation of the political objectives pursued by the MFA. This division would also provide advice to other divisions on how to formulate appropriate internal objectives, deliverables, outputs and planned activities, coordinate tasks related to the evaluation of opinions of target groups, promote learning, cooperation, and coordination between different divisions in order to achieve the overall goals of the MFA. High setting-up costs would pay off in the long term because internal experts would learn and become part of the MFA activities and have access to evaluation-sensitive important material. Advantages: data collection and evaluation would be carried out in a consistent manner, in the course of political processes themselves, with less distortion of information, because the information would circulate internally, and confidentiality would be ensured. Disadvantages: the risk of bias and institutional dependency and, consequently, the lack of objectivity; potential costs are higher than for external evaluators (see Annex C).
 - **Secondary option:** The MFA commissions external experts to carry out the evaluation analysis. Advantages: greater objectivity and independence from the MFA hierarchy; potentially lower costs. Disadvantages: restrictions on the transfer of information to external experts; procedures for the acquisition of expert services (time costs); and possible incoherence of evaluation due to changing experts.

Introduction

This study analyses how the performance monitoring and evaluation system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania (MFA, Ministry) helps identify and measure the value of the policy pursued by the Ministry. This scope of the study immediately raises a set of relevant and complex questions: how should the value of foreign policy be conceptualized? What mechanisms are required to identify the impact of initiatives and interventions of a particular political organization? What criteria help understand whether certain performance monitoring processes and/or measurement indicators are suitable for evaluating certain political activities? In order to answer these questions, we will first present the theoretical approach used in this study.

Due to the specific nature of foreign policy, the task of proper identification and evaluation of activities of foreign ministries is extremely difficult. Foreign policy – i.e., the formation of the external environment of a state in pursuit of its national interests – is by nature a horizontal activity covering all areas of the state policy. Accordingly, most of the activities of foreign ministries – representation, mediation and coordination – are ongoing processes. The outcomes of such activities depend both on the external environment of the state, which the state (and especially a small state) cannot control and on the performance efficiency of other public authorities. A significant part of foreign policy and diplomacy activities is preventive and reactive, aimed at prevention or de-escalation of conflicts, which makes it even more difficult to measure the value of foreign policy.

The theoretical approach to the problems of evaluating foreign policy is described in detail in **Chapter One of the study report**. This chapter also introduces the analytical model and methods of the study. As part of the study, scientific and professional literature on systems of governance and systems of evaluation of political activities were analysed, with particular focus on foreign ministries. Primary documents were also examined to evaluate the most important Lithuanian strategic planning documents related to MFA activities and MFA internal planning and performance evaluation documents. At the same time, publicly accessible evaluations, and reports on activities of foreign ministries of other countries were also analysed. The data was further supplemented by semi-structured interviews with representatives of the MFA of Lithuania and foreign ministries of Estonia, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Sweden.

Chapter Two of the study report presents the analysis of the MFA performance monitoring and evaluation system. In order to select the evaluation system and criteria (aims, objectives and indicators) suitable for MFA activities, for regular monitoring and improvement of activities and for learning, it is important to consider the experience and expectations of the actors involved. It is also important to assess the broader context of the state strategic planning system, which contributes to the formulation of goals, activities, and accountability at ministerial level. Therefore, we first carried out a retrospective analysis of the application of indicators in evaluating MFA activities and programme implementation over the past decade (Section 2.1). The analysis aimed to identify the performance evaluation models already applied in the MFA institutional development, to overview changes in the models, the reasons for choosing the models, and practices, and the application limitations of such models. Section 2.2 provides a detailed analysis of the current MFA evaluation system, including its integration into the broader Lithuanian strategic planning system. The section also analyses how the goals, objectives and indicators of the MFA monitoring system capture the relevant activities of the Ministry, enable the assessment of the quality of these activities, and help identifying causal links between MFA activities and the political changes taking place. In addition, the chapter pays special attention to evaluating whether the current system contributes to ensuring MFA accountability and enables training of MFA officials and improvement of MFA activities.

Following the analysis of the MFA performance monitoring and evaluation system, **Chapter 3 of the study considers the evaluation systems of foreign ministries of four countries – Estonia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Sweden.** The choice of countries for the case analysis aimed to embrace the diversity of possible strategic planning and foreign policy cultures while retaining relevance in the context of the MFA of Lithuania. The selected countries are relatively small, open economies and liberal democracies. The aim of the case study was to analyse possible different approaches to the problem of evaluating the activities of foreign ministries and to ascertain the best practices to identify and measure the value created by foreign policy. The case studies are based on a comprehensive analysis of primary literature and interviews with the representatives of the foreign ministries concerned. As in the case of the analysis of the MFA evaluation system, the focus was on the evaluation of the aspects of accountability, learning empowerment, and the choice and logical structure of indicators.

Based on the analysis, **Chapter 4 of the study** provides a summary and recommendations on how to improve the identification and measurement of the value of foreign policy pursued by the MFA of Lithuania. The methodological approach used in this study on the evidence-based list of measures is evaluation of programmes. The study was carried out in June-December 2021.

1. Approach and methodology

As relations between states and societies become more and more interdependent, governments' capacity to pursue national policies increasingly depends on processes in the external environment. For that reason, an increasing number of ministries have international cooperation or similar divisions. These processes have inspired a broad and multifaceted debate on the prospects of institutional evolution of foreign ministries.¹ By and large, the foreign ministry in a modern state should not be seen as the only national authority responsible for external relations, sometimes referred to as the gatekeeper. Instead, it should be viewed as an organization which both pursues foreign policy and facilitates and coordinates the external actions of other national authorities.²

However, despite the changing role of the foreign ministry in modern politics, in the absolute majority of the states, it continues to function as a separate and important institution within the composition of the national government. This cannot be attributed solely to institutional inertia. Firstly, foreign ministries perform a unique and irreplaceable role in coordinating the country's diplomatic network. Secondly, even if an increasing number of national ministries have international policy divisions, they focus on the management of the external environment only within the area of the ministry's competence. The foreign ministry must incorporate all interactions and intersections of external and internal policies and, therefore, is uniquely capable of coordinating the activities of the national government in its management of the external environment. For these two reasons alone, the foreign ministry remains an irreplaceable institution of a modern state.

If the unique role of the foreign ministry in the national institutional framework determines the longevity of this institution, it also calls for the need to ensure that the ministry contributes to the implementation of the overall state policy and national strategic objectives. If this is to be an objective for the ministry, it requires, in turn, an understanding of how in general the foreign ministry contributes to the overall goals of the state, where the ministry meets the expectations raised for it, where corrective adjustments to the activities is required, etc. In order to achieve this understanding, **a regular and institutionalized evaluation of instruments and activities of foreign policy and of the programmes implementing them** is one of the most important mechanisms.³

Based on the literature on public administration and political science, this study builds on two fundamental assumptions concerning the qualities required for an effective policy evaluation system.

- **Firstly, the quality policy evaluation system must perform two essential functions: to ensure accountability of policy makers and implementers and to empower their learning.**⁴ Clear, publicly available, and scientifically based evaluation criteria help responsible public authorities and citizens monitor the performance of policy practitioners and provide a basis to demand that the quality of certain outputs and processes is maintained. In a broader context, institutionalization of accountability of policy makers and implementers contributes to the development of the political culture based on openness, trust, and dialogue. Regular performance evaluation helps identify areas for improvement of processes or measures and provide recommendations for optimization of activities. In the longer term, institutionalization of learning based on performance evaluation strengthens the competences of policy makers and practitioners, enables new policy initiatives, and helps anticipate future threats or opportunities.
- **Secondly, the subject of policy evaluation – i.e., that which is being assessed – must be understood in an integral manner and must include both output and throughput.** In modern democratic societies, the legitimacy of public policy is determined by output legitimacy, input legitimacy and

1. Jonathon W Moses and Torbjorn Knutsen, "Inside Out: Globalization and the Reorganization of Foreign Affairs Ministries," *Cooperation and Conflict* 36, no. 4 (2001): 355–80.

2. Brian Hocking, "Introduction Foreign Ministries: Redefining the Gatekeeper Role," in *Foreign Ministries: Change and Adaptation*, ed. Brian Hocking, Studies in Diplomacy (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1999), 14–15, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-27317-1_1.

3. Regarding the need, benefit and application strategies of policy evaluation in various public policy contexts see OECD, *Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation: Lessons From Country Experience*, OECD Public Governance Reviews (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1787/89b1577d-en>.

4. OECD, 14; Also see e.g. Peter van der Knaap, "Results-Oriented Budgeting and Policy Evaluation: Accountable for Learning," in *Making Accountability Work* (Routledge, 2007); Steven Højlund, "Evaluation in the European Commission: For Accountability or Learning?," *European Journal of Risk Regulation* 6, no. 1 (March 2015): 35–46, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1867299X00004268>.

throughput legitimacy, i.e., accountability, transparency and inclusiveness.⁵ Quality processes in this regard also contribute to strengthening democracy, citizen empowerment and/or the sustainability of a state, thus they also create value. For this reason, quality evaluation of a policy programme must take into account not only output but also throughput.

In addition to these general requirements, it is also necessary to consider the specific requirements for a policy evaluation system determined by the unique context and nature of the foreign ministry. When evaluating the performance of the foreign ministry, unlike the key, mainly domestic policy-oriented, ministries, it is important that the ultimate impact of foreign policy (e.g., stability of international relations or foreign direct investment) or its outcomes (e.g., international treaties or resolutions of international organizations) do not depend solely on the ministry's activities. These factors significantly complicate the task of assessing whether the observed change (impact) of the situation is attributable to the pursued policy. Evaluating the activities of the foreign ministry is further complicated by the fact that its activities involve at least a few qualitatively different areas, e.g., "high" foreign policy (including national security), consular services, economic diplomacy, and development cooperation. Thus, although all policy evaluation systems must apply at least minimal qualitative analysis methods in order to determine the impact of political intervention, **a comprehensive qualitative evaluation appropriate for a specific area of the ministry's activities is required to determine the efficiency and value of these activities.**

This then leads to specific expectations for the ministry's performance monitoring system, i.e., for a set of indicators to measure the achievements and efficiency of the ministry's activities. More specifically, **the main function of the set of indicators is to provide information relevant for the qualitative policy evaluation.**⁶ The effectiveness of the performance monitoring system depends on whether the indicators provide as much targeted information as possible on the output and throughput and on whether the framework of these indicators allows policy evaluators to identify easier relevant causal links.

These insights steer further the analysis of the study. Other sections of the study examine how the evaluation systems of MFA and foreign ministries of four other countries – Estonia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Sweden – empower accountability and learning and how they ensure the evaluation of both the output and throughput. Particular attention within the scope of this analysis is paid to the collection of information relevant for evaluation and the role of various performance indicators of the foreign ministry in this process. The following analytical model is used to compare the performance evaluation and monitoring systems of five different foreign ministries and to structure study insights.

1.1. Analytical model

Although the performance evaluation and monitoring systems of foreign ministries in different countries may vary significantly, each of them has the same essential objectives: to collect the relevant information and to help identify causal links between policy interventions and observed changes in public life. Since 1990, the so-called results framework model has been widely used to achieve these essential performance evaluation objectives.⁷

The results framework model usually consists of the following components: inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact (see Figure 1). A well-designed results framework is helpful in performance monitoring, control and evaluation of an organisation due to several reasons:

1. It helps focus on specific outcomes and systematically analyse their links with implementation actions.

5. Vivien Schmidt and Matthew Wood, "Conceptualizing Throughput Legitimacy: Procedural Mechanisms of Accountability, Transparency, Inclusiveness and Openness in EU Governance," *Public Administration* 97, no. 4 (2019): 727–40, <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12615>

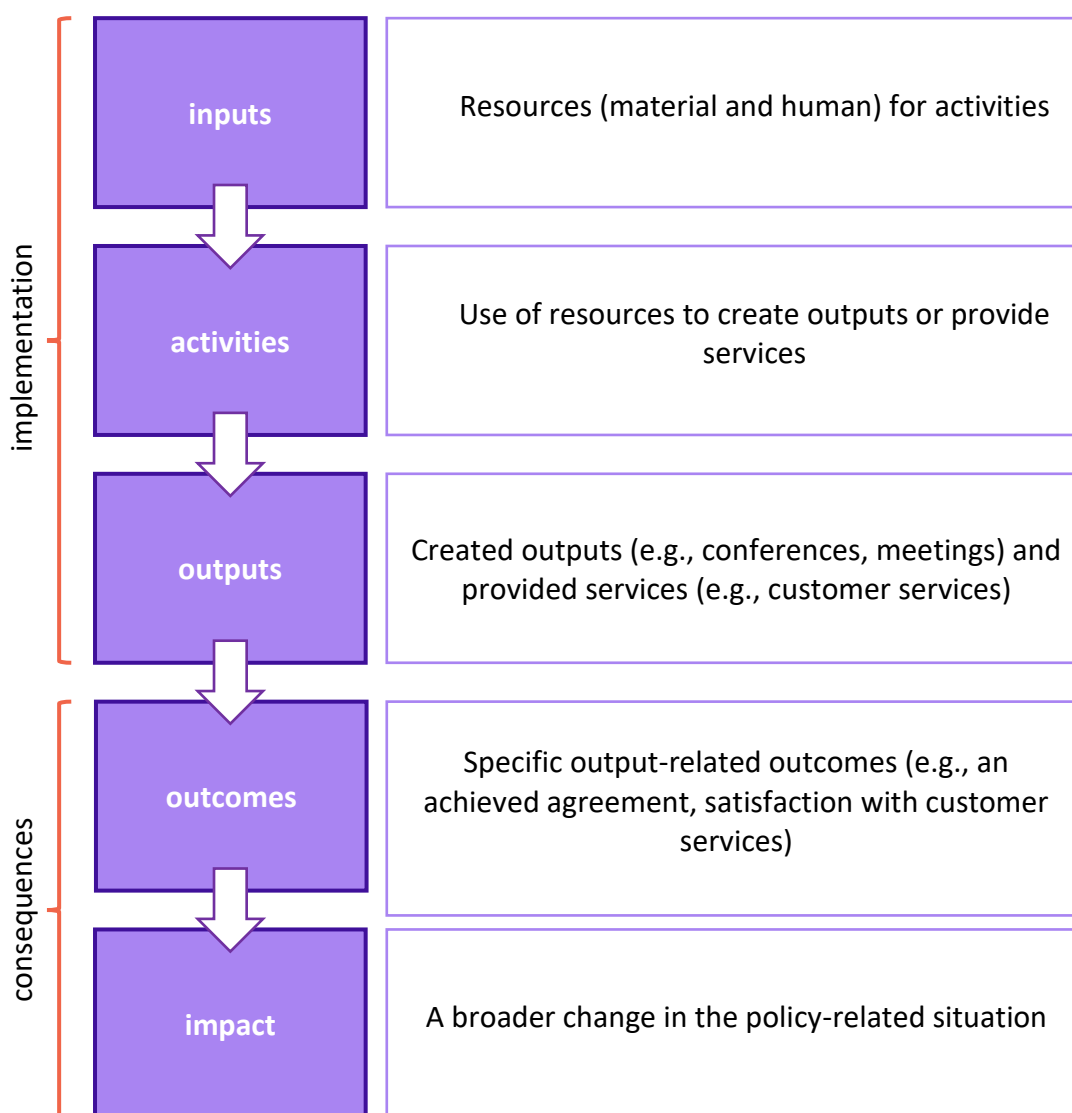
6. A Abel Schumann, "Using Outcome Indicators to Improve Policies: Methods, Design Strategies and Implementation," OECD Regional Development Working Papers (Paris: OECD, January 18, 2016), https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/using-outcome-indicators-to-improve-policies_5jm5cgr8j532-en; How important it is to discuss which information is relevant and how indicators may be useful see "Responsive Evaluation and Performance Management: Overcoming the Downsides of Policy Objectives and Performance Indicators," *Evaluation* 12, no. 3 (July 1, 2006): 278–93, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389006069135>.

7. The results chain model was developed by USAID. See USAID, "Technical Note: Developing Results Frameworks," Technical Note (Washington, D.C.: USAID, July 2013), https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/_508_RF_Technical_Note_Final_2013_0722.pdf.

2. By emphasising a distinction between outcomes and impact, the results framework allows to identify the interaction between the political supply- and demand-side interventions or activities. This, in turn, helps evaluate policy initiatives with respect to their target groups.⁸
3. It helps monitor activities aimed at achieving integral, complex (strategic) targets. The results framework can help better articulate, comprise and monitor the progress of implementation of a large number of related aims and objectives; it helps identify clearer obstacles or areas where additional measures are needed.
4. It provides relevant information to underpin reasonable and accurate attribution of outcomes to the activities being analysed.⁹

For these reasons, the information provided by the results framework can be used for accountability and learning (through policy evaluations) and for communication (both internal and external) and policy development (management and decision-making).

Figure 1. Policy evaluation (results framework) model



Source: Analysis by the authors of the study based on the OECD, the World Bank and the European Commission documents.

8. Dawn Roberts and Nidhi Khattri, *Designing a Results Framework for Achieving Results: A How-to Guide* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2012), <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/32158>.

9. For a brief overview of the impact attribution problem see Patricia Rogers, "Overview: Strategies for Causal Attribution," *Methodological Briefs - Impact Evaluation* (Florence, Italy: UNICEF-IRC, 2014), <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/751-overview-strategies-for-causal-attribution-methodological-briefs-impact-evaluation.html>.

Although this model is most widely used to monitor and evaluate the development cooperation programmes, it is also useful for examining a wider programme of foreign ministries. It is particularly important that the results framework highlights differences between activities, outputs and outcomes. On the one hand, in the foreign ministry context, it is essential to monitor activity and output indicators separately. This is because a number of activities of the ministry for programme implementation are ongoing (e.g., maintaining relations, replying to enquiries) and are not necessarily dedicated to the generation of specific outputs (e.g., a meeting, an event or expressing a position). On the other hand, the foreign policy outcomes do not necessarily depend on the outputs of the ministry, given that most of the outcomes depend on the decisions of other states, e.g., even if the MFA successfully organizes a summit (output), due to the domestic policy circumstances of another state, which are beyond the control of Lithuania, only a basic agreement (outcomes) or no agreement at all (i.e., no outcomes) are achieved during the summit.

However, in order to address the specific challenges related to the evaluation of the activities of the foreign ministry more effectively, it is appropriate to slightly modify the results framework model. As mentioned above, the foreign ministry is responsible for several qualitatively different areas of activity, e.g., consular services and foreign policy. Although the same key elements can be identified in these areas – activities, outputs, outcomes, etc. – their nature and evaluation parameters are not identical. For example, consular services focus on specific target groups and can be measured relatively easily by using objective, quantitative indicators at regular intervals; in the context of “high policy”, target groups are multi-faceted, visible short-term and long-term outcomes may differ, and quantifiable impacts of activities are often impossible to define.

For this reason, in order to monitor and evaluate the overall performance of the foreign ministry it is appropriate to use the results framework differentiated according to the areas of the ministry’s activities. Given that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania is the main subject of the study, the study will focus on the following three functions of the MFA: consular activities, economic diplomacy and foreign (high) policy. This choice requires a brief explanation. First, although consular activities (i.e., provision of consular services) can be considered as part of the MFA’s management programme, provision of services to citizens, Lithuanians who live abroad and aliens and the quality of services are largely related to long-term and permanent Lithuanian foreign policy objectives: development of the global reputation of Lithuania, strengthening of diaspora policy, empowering citizens, etc. Accordingly, this area may and must also be evaluated in terms of political impact. Second, while economic diplomacy is part of foreign policy, the target groups of the first area of activities are different (primarily specific commercial interests), as are the types of activities and impact parameters. Third, the foreign policy area covers the largest number of programmes and measures implemented by the MFA (e.g., regional cooperation, representation of Lithuania’s interests in international organizations, development cooperation), which pursue broad political and strategic objectives. Although it is a common practice in other countries to distinguish the field of development cooperation because it is characterized by qualitatively different objectives and evaluation parameters, it is more appropriate (so far) to consider this activity as part of the foreign policy area rather than a separate domain. On the one hand, the agenda of development cooperation is subordinated to broader foreign policy objectives (e.g., increasing visibility and influence, contributing to the Eastern Partnership objectives); on the other hand, the main objectives of Lithuania are currently to achieve a sufficient level of financing for development cooperation, rather than a specific impact of development cooperation in specific countries or regions.

Finally, when measuring and evaluating the activities of the foreign ministry, and their value, there is one more factor which it is important to consider, i.e., the subjective aspect of evaluation which is not reflected in the overall results framework. The foreign ministry coordinates the activities of various other institutions and social partners; the activity of this ministry is also one of the main factors forming the reputation and identity of the state in the international arena. Consequently, in order to properly measure the value created by the ministry, it is important to take the opinions of various target groups – end-users, institutional partners, stakeholders, and the general public – into account. Although subjective evaluation, i.e., knowledge and opinion, cannot replace a detailed evaluation that analyses specific causal relationships between the ministry’s activities and their impact, it provides important additional information for developing strategic relationship of the ministry with the key target groups and/or optimizing the ministry’s communication.

In the light of these insights, a modified results framework model is provided below to help compare the monitoring and evaluation systems of different foreign ministries and identify lessons and good practices relevant to Lithuania (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. A model for monitoring MFA activities

Areas of activity			
Evaluation levels	Consular activities	Economic diplomacy	Foreign policy
Visibility and reputation	Subjective evaluation indicators	Subjective evaluation indicators	Subjective evaluation indicators
Implementation	Cost, activity and product indicators	Cost, activity and product indicators	Cost, activity and product indicators
Outcomes	Indicators on outcomes and impact	Indicators on outcomes and impact	Indicators on outcomes and impact

Source: Analysis by the authors of the study.

1.2. Methodology

This study aims to achieve two main objectives: to evaluate the current MFA performance monitoring and evaluation system and to provide recommendations for improving the system. Therefore, the analysis of the study consists of two main parts: analysis of the foreign policy strategic planning system of Lithuania and analysis of good practices of foreign countries.

The following data collection methods were used:

1. Document analysis was used:

- a. To evaluate the current measurement of the value of MFA's activities in the context of strategic planning of Lithuania. The key strategic planning documents related to MFA performance and evaluation (NPP, MFA strategic plan, development programme, Government Programme), MFA aims, and evaluation indicators were analysed to offer recommendations for improvement.
- b. To provide an overview of practices applied by foreign countries. Publicly available information (evaluations, reports, reviews, etc.) and information obtained during direct enquiries were analysed.

2. Semi-structured interviews were used:

- a. To analyse the MFA internal evaluation in order to identify the MFA evaluation practices in place and the data collected in connection with the MFA outputs.¹⁰
- b. To identify good foreign policy evaluation practices in order to complement the data collected during the analysis, identify possible obstacles and opportunities in evaluating the value created by the foreign ministry.¹¹

3. Literature analysis was used:

- a. To conceptualise the most efficient foreign policy evaluation approaches developing the analytical model.
- b. To make a proposal for a set of indicators measuring the MFA value.

Since the case study plays an important part in the scope of the study, it is important to clarify the choice of the four countries – Estonia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Sweden – examined in the study. **The case studies aimed:**

10. Semi-structured interviews were organized in conjunction with the European Union Department, the External Economic Relations Department, the Eastern Neighbourhood Policy Department and the Global Lithuania Department of MFA. The Strategic Planning Department and the Audit Department of MFA provided consultancy during the preparation of the study.

11. Semi-structured interviews involved the representatives of the foreign ministries of Estonia, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Sweden. In the case of the Netherlands, two separate interviews were held.

- To highlight possible differences between the cultures of strategic planning and foreign policy. The case study includes New Zealand with the Anglo-Saxon new public management tradition.¹² The foreign policy culture of New Zealand is informed by the unique political environment of the Pacific Ocean and the dual identity of the state with a significant component of Māori culture. The remaining three case studies focus on different European states: the Netherlands is an old member at the core of the EU with a strong tradition of independent policy evaluation; Sweden is a Scandinavian country whose public governance relies on the unique culture of dialogue, the foreign policy has a strong human security and feminist dimension,¹³ and which attaches great importance to development policy and human rights; and Estonia is one of the Baltic countries, which has lived through the transition from socialist to Western political space and today is developing a unique e-state policy in the world reflected in Tallinn's foreign policy activities.¹⁴
- To ensure relevance for the Lithuanian case. All countries covered by the study are relatively small, open economies and liberal democracies. Estonia and Sweden, like Lithuania, are the countries of the Nordic-Baltic region. Lithuania, Estonia, Sweden and the Netherlands are also members of the EU. The Netherlands and Estonia are also members of the NATO. New Zealand is an increasingly important country for Lithuania in the Indo-Pacific region.

12. See, e.g. Judy Whitcombe, "Contributions and Challenges of 'New Public Management': New Zealand since 1984," *Policy Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (September 1, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.26686/pq.v4i3.4259>; June Pallot, "New Public Management Reform in New Zealand: The Collective Strategy Phase," *International Public Management Journal* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1998): 1–18, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1096-7494\(99\)80083-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1096-7494(99)80083-X).

13. Government offices of Sweden, "Feminist Foreign Policy," Government.se (Regeringen och Regeringskansliet), accessed December 31, 2021, <https://www.government.se/government-policy/feminist-foreign-policy/>.

14. Kristjan Vassil, "Estonian E-Government Ecosystem," World Development Report: Background Paper, Digital Dividends (World Bank: Washington, D.C., June 2015), <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/165711456838073531-0050022016/original/WDR16BPEstonianeGovecosystemVassil.pdf>

2. The MFA performance evaluation system

This chapter provides an overview of how the evaluation system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania (MFA, Ministry) has developed over the past decade and a detailed analysis of the current monitoring and evaluation system of the Ministry's activities. Based on the analytical approach presented above, the focus is on how the performance evaluation system ensures the accountability of the Ministry and empowers the Ministry's employees in their learning and in improving their performance. The insights provided in this section are based on the analysis of strategic planning documents of the Republic of Lithuania and the MFA, MFA annual reports, other MFA documents (e.g., regulations of individual departments) and interviews with officials of four MFA departments.

2.1. Development of the MFA performance evaluation system 2010–2020

In order to secure funding from the state budget, from the beginning of 2000, Lithuanian public authorities switched to strategic planning according to specially formulated programmes. Funding from the state budget was linked to the implementation of specific programmes, rather than to “maintaining operations”.¹⁵ Public authorities have to plan for a period of three years and to prepare three-year strategic operational plans. The plans must reflect the strategic objectives of the institution, identify the programmes that contribute to achieving these objectives, including the target outputs, evaluation criteria and required funding. Accordingly, financial cost planning has been linked to strategic planning and performance evaluation.

In the decade in question, the MFA, like other public authorities, followed the Strategic Planning Methodology approved by Resolution No 827 of 6 June 2002 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On the approval of the Strategic Planning Methodology” in preparing their strategic operational plans.¹⁶ The three-year strategic plans were updated every year and set out the strategic objectives, programmes and their implementation objectives. The plans also indicated if they were consistent with or responded to the priorities and targets of the Government programme.

The implementation of the programmes of strategic operational plans was evaluated based on the above mentioned Strategic Planning Methodology and the Methodology for Programme Evaluation approved by Order No. 1K-281 of 16 August 2011 of the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania.¹⁷ While the Methodology for Programme Evaluation provides a rather detailed description of the structure of evaluation reports, yet the choice and substantiation of evaluation indicators and criteria are at the discretion of institutions. This condition is the reason why in its strategic planning process the MFA has for a long time been searching for the most appropriate approaches and criteria for evaluating diplomatic activities. This endeavour, although not always successful, can be largely explained by extremely specific nature of implementation of foreign policy. Maintaining diplomatic relations, representing and promoting the state's interests, consolidating specific positions in the international organizations or foreign countries is a long-term process which may simply produce no final or finished result and can hardly be squeezed within pre-defined objective parameters and quantitative indicators.

A significant proportion of the criteria and/or evaluation methods used for MFA performance evaluation in the past decade have been quantitative, although their values and changes (especially over a one-year period) may

15. Juozas Bivainis and Algirdas Butkevičius, “Nacionalinio biudžeto išlaidų planavimas,” *Pinigų studijos*, no. 4 (2002).

16. Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė, “Nutarimas Nr. 827 ‘Dėl strateginio planavimo metodikos patvirtinimo,’” Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, June 6, 2002, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalActEditions/lt/TAD/TAIS.168206>. [Pastaba: ši metodika nebegalioja nuo 2021 m. balandžio 30 d.]

17. Lietuvos Respublikos finansų ministerija, “Įsakymas Nr. 1K-281 ‘Dėl programų vertinimo metodikos patvirtinimo,’” Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, August 16, 2011, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.404942>.

be an inadequate reflection of the real effectiveness and efficiency of diplomatic activity. A decade ago, Lithuanian strategic governance researchers noted this unnatural aspiration to measure the effectiveness of foreign policy by excessively relying on quantitative parameters.¹⁸

This section reviews the main attempts to use various qualitative and quantitative criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of foreign policy and diplomatic service in the MFA strategic planning and performance evaluation process, the evolution of the use of these criteria, and the fundamental problems arising from inaccurate or improper application of the criteria.

2.1.1. 2010–2015: abstract goals and subjective evaluation

Difficulties in ensuring appropriate evaluation of the effectiveness of diplomatic activities and foreign policy were partly due to the vagueness and abstract formulation of goals and objectives in the strategic planning process. In 2019, this problem was also identified by Price Waterhouse Coopers, which carried out an evaluation of the 2008 draft strategic operational plans of all ministries and provided recommendations for their improvement. In addition to other suggestions, the report recommended the MFA “to formulate more detailed programme titles and avoid repetition of the organization’s mission”; “when formulating programme aims to focus on a clear statement of the target outputs and link them with the relevant programme and the strategic goal”; “when formulating objectives, to pay attention that the objective would articulate the target output and measure progress”; “to avoid objectives that substantially reiterate the wording of the programmes or programme objectives, to consider their added value”; “to clearly define and formalize the process of implementation, monitoring, control, supervision and updating of strategic plans by identifying its stages, functions, responsibilities and evaluation criteria”.¹⁹

In order to clarify and further specify the reports on the implementation of the strategic operational plans and the evaluation criteria, the MFA reviewed and supplemented its strategic plans with new performance indicators over the decade. During the same period, it became apparent that there was a trend to create an alleged impression of objectivity and even to provide clearly qualitative or subjective evaluations expressed as a numerical value (using percentages or scores).

The 2010–2012 MFA Strategic Operational Plan set out three strategic goals:²⁰

1. **To implement Lithuania’s interests through multilateral and bilateral diplomacy** (four programmes: formation and implementation of foreign policy; administration of the diplomatic service; Lithuanian Presidency (coordination) programme; programme for the administration of special funding for provided services).
2. **To foster the Lithuanian national identity abroad and provide effective consular services for Lithuanian citizens and foreign nationals** (two programmes: services to Lithuanian citizens and foreign nationals; formation and implementation of policy for relations with Lithuanians abroad).
3. **To implement Lithuania’s interests and international commitments through development cooperation and democracy support policy** (one programme: development cooperation and democracy support).

“The criteria for measuring the impact” of each goal were also provided, in 2010 most of them were qualitative criteria (as stated in the 2010 MFA report: “Due to the specificity of foreign policy, the planned and achieved impact values are not measured in quantitative terms, but a descriptive and analytical approach is used by providing brief information on the progress of achieving desired impact”²¹). The achievement of some of the aims and objectives of the programmes, however, had to be measured using quantitative indicators, e.g., the number of conferences, seminars, or consultancy meetings; the number of positions prepared for meetings of the EU and other international organizations; the number of visits, consultations with foreign diplomats or representatives of international organizations, etc. Eventually, the MFA strategic goals were reduced to the

18. Mindaugas Kaselis and Gintarė Gritėnaitė, “Strateginio planavimo procesas Lietuvos Respublikos ministerijose,” *Organizacijų Vadyba: Sisteminiai Tyrimai*, no. 58 (2002): 73–90.

19. Price Waterhouse Coopers, “Lietuvos Respublikos ministerijų 2008 metų strateginių veiklos planų projektų vertinimo atlikimas”. 2009, p. 2-4. Quoted in Inga Kelmaitė, “Užsienio reikalų ministerijos strateginis valdymas” (Master’s Thesis, Vilnius, Mykolas Romeris universitetas, 2010), <https://vb.mruni.eu/object/elaba:1787742/index.html>.

20. Lietuvos Respublikos Užsienio reikalų ministerijos Strateginis veiklos planas 2010-2012 m. [note: the document is currently not available to the public online]

21. Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio reikalų ministerija, “2010 metų veiklos ataskaita,” March 8, 2011, 5, https://urm.lt/uploads/default/documents/Ministerija/veikla/veiklos_ataskaita/2010m_URMataskaita.doc.

following two goals: 1) to form foreign policy consistent with the interests of Lithuania and 2) to ensure the implementation of foreign policy.²² In other words, two sides of the ongoing diplomatic process were emphasized: formulation and implementation. In addition, the priorities of the activities were identified, which were geared to the implementation of the Government programme.

The strategic operational plans formulated a decade ago, however, show abstract understanding as to how the progress of Lithuanian foreign policy could be measured and evaluated, where specific (quantitative) indicators are absent. So, the evaluation was left to the interpretation of programme implementers. The only requirement was to record “improvement” compared to the situation in the previous year. Accordingly, change in the evaluation criteria was reported by using descriptions “partially increased/improved”, “increased/improved” or “significantly increased/improved” (see Table 1). It is clear that without methodical definition of the differences between “partial” and “significant” increase, the evaluation of the programme implementation could not be objective and supported by clear evidence.

Table 1. Criteria for impact evaluation and their values (2011–2013 MFA Strategic Operational Plan)

Evaluation criterion, code	Impact evaluation criterion	2011	2012	2013
E-01-01	Exploiting the potential of EU membership to implement national interests	Partially increased	Increased	Significantly increased
E-01-02	Improving defence of Lithuanian economic interests and their representation by diplomatic means	Partially improved	Improved compared to 2011	Improved compared to 2012
E-01-03	Ensuring premises for strengthening the Lithuanian national security	Better ensured compared to 2010	Better ensured compared to 2011	Better ensured compared to 2012

Source: The 2011–2013 MFA Strategic Operational Plan.

In the case of a qualitative and essentially subjective assessment, those who prepared MFA reports provided a brief summary as to whether the activities that had been carried out were consistent with the outputs specified in the strategic plans. In most cases, regardless of the actual progress made in achieving an aim, the report simply stated “yes”, i.e., the aim was achieved, by adding for the sake of alleged objectivity that the aim/objective was 100% achieved (see Table 2). In rare cases, it was stated that the aim was “partially” achieved, and in exceptional cases it was stated that “the result cannot be measured” or the implementation is “difficult to evaluate” (e.g., in the 2010 report, such evaluation was provided for the criterion “Ensuring the support of the international community for the foreign policy objectives of Lithuania, extending the group of friends”).

Table 2. Criteria for impact evaluation and supporting evidence (2010 MFA activity report), examples

Impact evaluation criterion	2010 plan	Achievement	A brief description of the implementation
Increase of Lithuania’s energy security	Yes	Yes	Consistent efforts to increase energy security by promoting the implementation of strategic energy projects (Visaginas NPP, the energy bridge with Poland and Sweden, LNG terminal, LitPolLink, NordBalt, underground gas storage in Lithuania and other projects), reducing dependence on a single supplier. Lithuania's energy security interests are reflected in the agendas of the EU, NATO, OSCE and other multilateral fora.
Transparent foreign policy supported by Lithuanian society	Yes	Partly	A survey carried out in November 2010 showed that 35% of respondents believe that Lithuania and its citizens are properly or likely properly represented abroad. 32% felt that the representation was improper or likely improper.

22. Lietuvos Respublikos Užsienio reikalų ministerija, “2019–2021 m. strateginis veiklos planas,” December 20, 2019, https://www.urm.lt/uploads/default/documents/U%C5%BEEsienio%20reikal%C5%B3%20ministerijos%20patikslintas%202019-2021%20m_%20strateginis%20veiklos%20planas.pdf.

			The results show that 31% of the respondents believe that the society is sufficiently or likely sufficiently informed about foreign policy. 48% noted that the society is insufficiently or likely insufficiently informed.
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Source: 2010 MFA activity report, pp. 8-10.

It should be noted that the qualitative evaluation of impact and supporting evidence (which is applied today with some modifications) is often highly subjective. The MFA reports are based only on the data and descriptions provided by the MFA representatives; in most cases no comparative assessment is available; the report statements cannot be verified; no negative factors or results preventing the achievement of goals/objectives are specified. In addition, in some cases, the reports did not even take into account real developments in the international policy which rendered previously formulated aims/objectives of the programme irrelevant or unattainable.

The evaluation of Lithuania's relations with Russia can be the best example of the inertia to demonstrate the alleged progress in achieving the objectives of strategic plans. The main measure in the MFA 2013–2015 Strategic Operational Plan in this area was formulated as follows: “A truth- and justice-based dialogue with Russia is maintained.” According to the plan this dialogue should have improved every year. However, after the Russian occupation of Crimea in 2014, Lithuania's relations with Russia were essentially frozen and no meaningful dialogue with the Russian authorities took place. The 2014 report merely stated that the objective was implemented “better than in 2013” and the achievement percentage was 100% (see Table 3). Such evaluation contradicted the evaluation of the implementation of the Government programme described in the report in detail, which explained the following geopolitical changes:

In 2014, the political dialogue between Lithuania and Russia was affected by a change in geopolitical circumstances – Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its consequences (cooperation between the EU and Russia in many areas and NATO-Russia cooperation were suspended, EU restrictive measures against Russia were introduced). Therefore, there was no substantial progress in the development of cooperation with Russia in 2014.²³

Table 3. Evaluation of changes in Lithuania's relations with Russia (2014 MFA activity report)

Evaluation criterion, code	Aims, objectives and evaluation criteria	2014 values of evaluation criteria		
		Annual plan	Achievement	Achievement percentage
	Objective 4: Pursue a policy with respect to EU Eastern neighbours consistent with Lithuania's interests			
R-01.01-04-02	A truth- and justice-based dialogue with Russia is maintained	Better than in 2013	Achieved	100%

Source: 2014 MFA activity report, pp. 31-32,

The same situation can be observed in the 2015 report, which states that the achievement percentage of the objective “A truth- and justice-based dialogue with Russia is maintained” is 100%, although the description provided in the report essentially contradicts it: “The cooperation between the EU and the Russian Federation remains suspended, and depends on further actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine.”²⁴ Only later, in the 2016–2018 MFA Strategic Operational Plan was the said objective removed from the plan.

2.1.2. 2016-present: a shift toward quantitative indicators

The 2016–2018 MFA Strategic Operational Plan set out an objective to avoid overly abstract and subjective evaluation of the outcomes of foreign policy and diplomatic activity, some evaluation criteria were replaced, and some new criteria were added. The main changes in the evaluation system included the following aspects:

1. **Separation of the formulated goals, and "outcomes" and "outputs" was made.** The MFA proceeded with the qualitative evaluation of “outcomes” (which demonstrate the target level/quality of a certain area of

23. Lietuvos Respublikos Užsienio reikalų ministerija, “2014 metų veiklos ataskaita,” 2015, 79, https://urm.lt/uploads/default/documents/Ministerija/veikla/veiklos_ataskaita/URM_2014_veiklos%20ataskaita.pdf.

24. Lietuvos Respublikos Užsienio reikalų ministerija, “2015 metų veiklos ataskaita,” 2016, 36, https://urm.lt/uploads/default/documents/Ministerija/veikla/veiklos_ataskaita/veiklos_ataskaita2015.pdf.

foreign policy or a political objective), but with an aim to provide more alleged objectivity, it was indicated that the outcomes were to be measured using score values of 1 through 5. Quantitative parameters dominated in the evaluation of “outputs” (indicators for current diplomatic processes and activities) – the number of events, consultations, visits, implemented projects, participation in the meetings of working groups or other structures, etc. The shift to quantitative parameters determined new categories of “outputs”, and the “outputs” mentioned throughout the Strategic Operational Plan far outweighed the “outcomes”. The Strategic Operational Plan, however, had a number of serious methodological shortcomings:

- No clear, methodological separation of “outcomes” and “outputs” was made. For example, in the programme “Shaping and implementing foreign policy”, objective No. 7 “to pursue the interests of Lithuania through activities in international organizations”, the main expected outcome for 2016, 2017 and 2018 was “the number of documents consistent with Lithuanian interests” – 140 of such documents every year.²⁵ The defence of the interests of Lithuania in international organizations could hardly be simply measured by “outputs”, i.e., the number of documents rather than qualitative evaluation of outcomes, and how specific documents (and also the implementation of decisions) can be deemed to be consistent with the interests of Lithuania.
- Score values (1 to 5) for measuring outcomes were not specified in detail. In the absence of clear scoring conditions and criteria, their use was of little value. Moreover, since the qualitative performance evaluation was left at the discretion of the implementers of MFA programmes, without any external evaluation or verification, the subjectivity of the expected outcomes was inevitable.
- No explanation was provided for the number of outputs and their changes, i.e., why a certain number (of visits, documents, events, etc.) was planned, and what kind of changes would show more effective implementation of the Lithuanian foreign policy. It is likely that in many cases the status quo at the time was used as a reference and the aim was to maintain the same levels (therefore the reference quantity of many “outputs” was at the same level for all three years).

2. **Introduction of new evaluation criteria to measure the implementation of the strategic goal of the MFA – to ensure the implementation of the interests of Lithuania by diplomatic means.** For this purpose, public opinion polls were planned to be used to monitor every year if an increasing share of the population agrees that “the implementation of the interests of Lithuania is ensured by diplomatic means” (see Table 4).

It should be noted that the MFA already used public opinion polls and included the findings in their activity reports. However, in many cases this was not the main indicator used to assess the effectiveness of the programmes and, more importantly, this was not the criterion used to assess whether the strategic goal (e.g., opinion polls regarding the confidence of Lithuanians in the EU or NATO, surveys regarding the quality of consular services, etc.) had been achieved.

Table 4. New criteria for impact evaluation in the 2016–2018 MFA Strategic Operational Plan

Evaluation criterion, code	Impact evaluation criteria and unit of measurement	2016	2017	2018
E-01-01	Share of the Lithuanian population who consider that the implementation of the interests of Lithuania is ensured by diplomatic means ⁽¹⁾ New criterion	Larger share than in 2015	Larger share than in 2016	Larger share than in 2017
E-01-02	Share of the Lithuanian population who consider that the Lithuanian diplomatic service implements the interests of Lithuania in the EU very well/well ⁽¹⁾ New criterion	Larger share than in 2015	Larger share than in 2016	Larger share than in 2017

25. Lietuvos Respublikos Užsienio reikalų ministerija, “2016-2018 metų strateginis veiklos planas (Lietuvos Respublikos Užsienio reikalų ministro 2016 m. rugpjūčio 19 d. įsakymo Nr. V-229 redakcija),” 2016, 24, https://www.urm.lt/uploads/default/documents/Ministerija/veikla/planavimo_dokumentai/URM%202016-2018%20m_%20SVP%20keitimas%20_.pdf.

E-01-03	Share of the Lithuanian population who consider that the Lithuanian diplomatic service represents Lithuania's security interests very well/well, using bilateral and multilateral cooperation instruments and opportunities offered by NATO membership ⁽¹⁾ New criterion	Larger share than in 2015	Larger share than in 2016	Larger share than in 2017
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Source: The 2016–2018 MFA Strategic Operational Plan

Choosing to use the results of the public opinion polls (since 2016) as the most important efficiency indicator raised serious methodological problems which the MFA strategic planning specialists seemed not to be prepared to consider:

1. The formulation of a conceptually complex question for society is in itself flawed: we can hardly expect that a large part of the population clearly (and equally) understands what the “interests of Lithuania”, “implementation” of these interests and “diplomatic means” are. It is therefore likely that the answers may simply reflect the general level of trust/mistrust of the respondents in Lithuanian diplomacy or its leaders, rather than actually providing an evaluation of its effectiveness.
2. Extremely complex and bureaucratically formulated questions in public surveys (e.g., “How does the Lithuanian diplomatic service represent the security interests of Lithuania by exploiting bilateral and multilateral cooperation instruments and the possibilities offered by NATO membership”) can make any result random and inappropriate for evaluating performance effectiveness.
3. Random fluctuations in the survey results, which may depend on the mood of the public, overall trust in the Lithuanian authorities or a specific person in charge of the MFA were not addressed.

These problematic aspects were partly recorded in the 2017 MFA activity report:

It should be noted that due to the specific nature of activities of the diplomatic service, it is inaccurate to rely solely on the public opinion in evaluating the Ministry's activities; a cumulative assessment involving political scientists, journalists and other professionals in the field would be more objective. However, such survey would require more time and financial resources, therefore its application is debatable.²⁶

Surveys conducted in 2016 reflected fairly low public acceptance indicators in the case of the following criteria: “Lithuanian diplomatic service implements interests of Lithuania in the EU very well/well” (22%) and “represents the security interests of Lithuania by exploiting bilateral and multilateral cooperation instruments and the possibilities offered by NATO membership very well/well” (28%). In 2017, these indicators improved, but as it has already been mentioned, changes might not necessarily have reflected clear perception of the public as to how Lithuanian diplomats contributed to ensuring the interests of state security or the implementation of interests in the EU. This, however, allowed the representatives of the Ministry to be optimistic about the further use of this indicator, which allegedly reflected the increasing efficiency of the diplomatic service. The MFA’s strategic plans provided that the share of the population supporting the opinion that the Lithuanian diplomatic service represented the interests of Lithuania “very well” or “well” would grow steadily every year. In contrast, the survey conducted in the early 2018 showed the opposite direction (see Table 5) – the share of the population supporting this opinion decreased (some indicators remained within the margin of error, but some changes were statistically significant).

Table 5. Results of public opinion polls in 2017-2018

Impact evaluation criteria and unit of measurement	2017 actual indicator	2018 planned indicator	2018 actual indicator
Share of the Lithuanian population who consider that the interests of Lithuania in the international community are ensured	36%	40%	34%
Share of the Lithuanian population who consider that the Lithuanian diplomatic service implements the interests of Lithuania in the EU very well/well	31%	35%	24%
Share of the Lithuanian population who consider that the Lithuanian diplomatic service represents Lithuania's security interests very well/well, using bilateral and multilateral	39%	40%	38%

26. Lietuvos Respublikos Užsienio reikalų ministerija, “2017 metų veiklos ataskaita,” 2018, 5, https://urm.lt/uploads/default/documents/2017%20m_%20URM%20veiklos%20ataskaita.pdf.

Such fluctuations in the indicators of public opinion polls and inconsistencies with the plans made the MFA employees, who prepared the 2018 report, improvise in an attempt to explain why, despite very active diplomatic efforts of Lithuania, the main performance indicators failed to reflect this. Part of the report, therefore, attempted to justify the fluctuations in public opinion rather than to focus on real and specific evaluations of MFA activities.

Despite the problems arising from the use of the results of public opinion polls as an indicator of the effectiveness of the diplomatic service, this criterion was not abandoned and was included in the subsequent MFA strategic operational plans. The reports for 2019 and 2020 indicated that the survey results were improving, but some details suggest that the MFA employees did not always interpret the fluctuations in the survey results correctly. For example, the 2020 report states:

*[...] compared to 2019, the share of the population who considered that the interests of Lithuania in the international community were ensured increased significantly and totalled 58%. [...] On the other hand, it is important that the survey methodology was changed in 2020, as a consequence, there is a greater difference in results compared to the 2019 survey.*²⁷

In this case, no comments were provided with reference to the changes in the survey methodology (and possibly the question/answer form), which makes any data comparison incorrect and potentially manipulative.

Despite these problems and some possibly somewhat incorrectly interpreted survey results, public surveys in the MFA strategic operational plans continue to play a significant role in evaluating the effectiveness of diplomatic activities. For example, the 2022–2024 MFA Strategic Operational Plan provides that the share of the Lithuanian population who consider that the interests of Lithuania in the international community are ensured, will reach 50% in 2022 (i.e., 10 percentage points higher than planned in 2020, but 8 percentage points lower than shown by the actual survey for 2020), and according to the NPP, the share of the population in this criterion is expected to reach 55% in 2030.²⁸

2.1.3. Summary

Over the past decade, the indicators for MFA performance evaluation and programme implementation have seen a significant transformation. At the beginning of the decade, qualitative indicators and subjective evaluation dominated and subsequently were replaced (or adapted) with quantitative indicators. Quantitative parameters were inappropriate even for assessing the achievement of programme aims and objectives.

A more significant change in the evaluation methodology took place from 2016, when particular importance was attached to changes in the public opinion poll results. While linking the indicators of the impact of strategic goals with changes in public opinion led to internal, subjective evaluation being abandoned, it did, however, create other evaluation problems. Attempts were made to link any changes in public opinion (or lack of change) with Lithuanian diplomatic activities, although the causal link was not clear, and the fluctuations in survey results could be merely accidental.

The significant dominance of quantitative parameters in the evaluation reports (especially after 2016) does not in itself solve the problem of subjectivity of evaluation (because quantitative indicators are selected and changes are planned by the Ministry), nor does it allow to record the efficiency of change (because quantitative indicators reflect mainly the current MFA activities and operational processes, rather than the level of achievement of goals or objectives and the effectiveness of the Lithuanian foreign policy). The examples of the evaluation criteria mentioned in this overview illustrate the ongoing problem: the MFA seeks to find a “cheap and fast” method (usually a quantitative indicator) to evaluate its activities regardless of the reliability and consistency of the indicator or real potential of foreign policy evaluation. The most serious problem which has remained unsolved over the past decade by modifying the MFA evaluation system is the evaluation of changes

27. Lietuvos Respublikos Užsienio reikalų ministerija, “2020 metų veiklos ataskaita,” 2021, 10, https://urm.lt/uploads/default/documents/URM%20%202020%20m_%20veiklos%20ataskaita.pdf.

28. Lietuvos Respublikos Užsienio reikalų ministerija, “LR Užsienio reikalų ministerijos 2022–2024 m. Strateginio veiklos plano projektas,” 26 2021, https://urm.lt/uploads/default/documents/2022-2024%20m_%20strateginio%20veiklos%20plano%20projektas.pdf.

at a political and strategic level using objective indicators that can reflect impact. This is partly compensated by detailed comments and descriptions of specific solutions or processes. Such interpretation, however, remains quite subjective and difficult to compare in the longer term.

2.2. Ensuring accountability and learning in the MFA performance monitoring and evaluation system

This section examines how the MFA performance monitoring and evaluation system helps ensure the Ministry's accountability – both external (inter-institutional and public) and internal, and what challenges MFA faces in achieving this goal. More specifically, the section analyses how the goals, objectives and indicators formulated by the MFA in its performance monitoring system incorporate the relevant activities of the Ministry, help to evaluate the quality of activities and identifying causal links between MFA activities and the political changes that are taking place. In addition, this section analyses how the evaluation system processes help/do not help to empower learning of MFA policy makers and to optimize performance.

2.2.1. MFA performance evaluation in the context of Lithuanian strategic planning

In order to ensure real accountability and learning of any political institution, appropriate elements of strategic planning must first be identified: aims, objectives, deliverables, and processes to measure performance. If the elements of strategic planning are inconsistent, or are not reasonably interrelated, performance evaluation is bound to become an instrument rather than a value-creating process. It is also important therefore to ensure smooth, regular planning and evaluation processes conducive to accountability and learning.

As regards MFA performance evaluation criteria, it is important to emphasize that the strategic planning processes of the Ministry are determined by the principles provided for in the general Lithuanian strategic planning documents. More specifically, since the Lithuanian strategic planning system is built on a hierarchical basis, i.e., longer-term planning and national-level documents inform the operational and development plans of ministries, the strategic planning documents of the Ministry must be based on and implement the progress goals laid down in the 2021–2030 NPP that are within the competence of the Ministry. Specifically, NPP goal No. 9 (“to strengthen Lithuania’s influence in the world and relations with the diaspora”) and objective No. 9.1 (see Table 6) are within the competence of MFA.²⁹ The achievement of this goal and the related objective becomes one of the main criteria for determining and measuring the value created by MFA. This brings two challenges for MFA quality performance evaluation and ensuring accountability:

1. The NPP does not reflect a significant part of the activities carried out by the MFA. The strategic objectives attributed to ministries within the scope of the NPP are directly linked to progress and change, but do not include significant ongoing activities specific to the Ministry (e.g., "maintaining friendly relations" entails a process that requires a lot of commitment and efforts, although it may not necessarily lead to clearly tangible progress or change).
2. The NPP goal attributed to the competence of the Ministry does not reflect the entire contribution of the Ministry to the progress of the state. The implementation of each strategic NPP goal partially depends on how Lithuania can manage the relevant processes of the international environment. From this perspective, the support and advisory activities of the MFA contribute, indirectly but significantly, to the achievement of all national progress goals. The MFA is the main government institution representing the interests of Lithuania in the international space; it provides expertise and advice on developments taking place in the international arena to other state institutions and develops international relations and networks which facilitate the activities of other state institutions.

29. Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė, “Nutarimas Nr. 797 ‘Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2020 m. Rugsėjo 9 d. Nutarimo Nr. 998 „Dėl 2021–2030 metų Nacionalinio pažangos plano patvirtinimo“ Pakeitimo”,” September 29, 2021, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/90085d5127f911ec99bbc1b08701c7f8?jfwid=rivwzvvpvg>; Taip pat žr., Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė, “Nutarimas Nr. 998 ‘Dėl 2021–2030 metų Nacionalinio pažangos plano patvirtinimo’,” September 9, 2020, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/c1259440f7dd11eab72ddb4a109da1b5?jfwid=rivwzvvpvg>.

The NPP goals for government institutions are subsequently transferred to the development programmes and strategic operational plans in various areas of state governance (Articles 6 and 7 of the Law on Strategic Governance of the Republic of Lithuania). These documents and progress parameters determine that the internal MFA goals and their evaluation should be steered towards the implementation of the NPP goals (thus ensuring the Ministry's accountability). For this reason, an important part of the recommendations for MFA performance evaluation are closely linked to improving the formulation and measurement of the NPP goals and objectives.

Table 6. NPP goals and objectives related to MFA activities

Goal/objective	Indicator of achievement of the goal/objective	Unit of measurement	Initial value	Target interim value (2025)	Target final value (2030)	Data source
Goal No. 9: To strengthen Lithuania's influence in the world and relations with the diaspora	9.1. Share of the Lithuanian population who consider that the interests of Lithuania in the international community are ensured	%	40 (2019)	51	55	Population survey
Objective No. 9.1. To strengthen representation of Lithuania's interests in the international arena and the diaspora policy	9.1.1. Lithuania's place in the EU Coalition Explorer – the effectiveness of Lithuania's participation in the coalitions of EU Member States, in the decision-making process that is in Lithuania's interest	place	19 (2020)	18	17	European Council of Foreign Relations survey data
	9.1.2. The number of representatives of Lithuania elected to leadership or expert positions of international organizations	units	7 (2019)	10	12	MFA
	9.1.3. The proportion of financing (of the gross national product) for development cooperation activities eligible for official development assistance	%	0.13 (2019)	0.22	0.33	OECD
	9.1.4. Share of Lithuanians abroad who have taken part in the life of Lithuania and its wealth creation	%	40 (2020)	55	60	A representative survey of Lithuanians abroad

Source: The 2021–2030 NPP (version 2021).

One indicator is provided to measure the achievement of NPP goal No. 9: “Share of the Lithuanian population who consider that the interests of Lithuania in the international community are ensured”. This indicator, measured by a population survey, cannot avoid the above risks associated with the use of public opinion polls in the context of policy evaluation. For example, using this indicator it is impossible to exclude that the change in the significance of the indicator will be essentially determined by various external factors (e.g., communication of Lithuania's influence in the world, confidence of the general public in state institutions). At the same time, the fact that public opinion on MFA activities may vary for reasons not related to MFA activities, gives rise to the likelihood that the indicator for measuring aims and objectives may in the same year show different values and opposite trends.

The above assumption entails a broader problem: a disconnect between the progress goal for MFA activities set out in the NPP and the objective for achieving the goal. In the Law on Strategic Governance, the progress objective entails a certain change in a certain area of the state's activities aimed at achieving the strategic

goal.³⁰ Accordingly, the objectives for achieving the progress goal should show the steps necessary to achieve the target, the objects of the change.

The latest 2021 version of the NPP sets out only one objective for the achievement of NPP goal No. 9 (9.1 “to strengthen Lithuania’s influence in the world and relations with the diaspora”), which does not perform its function, primarily because in its essence the objective coincides with the strategic goal itself. In the previous 2020 version, eight objectives were provided to achieve NPP goal No. 9. The radically reduced number of objectives in the new version reflects the desire to reform elements of strategic planning and evaluation of foreign policy. However, this change, while ambitious, does not in principle solve the deeper problems associated with the MFA valuation.

Like the overall goal, NPP objective No. 9.1 includes two partly related but qualitatively different MFA activities: representation of Lithuania’s interests and implementation of diaspora policy. Such wording implies that every indicator of the objective should allow to measure the effectiveness of both representation of Lithuania and diaspora policy. Due to significant differences between these areas of MFA activities, it is particularly difficult to prepare such a set of indicators. Actually, none of the indicators of NPP objective No. 9.1 incorporates both areas of MFA activities that the objective entails: e.g., indicator No. 9.1.4 covers only the dimension of diaspora policy.

None of the indicators of NPP objective No. 9.1 provides information about both MFA activities that the objective entails, neither does the set of indicators provide all the necessary information about the quality of Lithuania’s representation in the international arena. For example, the first indicator to measure the objective is “9.1.1. Ranking of Lithuania in the EU Coalition Explorer Index (EU countries)” provides information only on how the experts from other EU Member States selected by the European Council on Foreign Relations assess cooperation with Lithuania. The second indicator “9.1.2. Number of representatives of Lithuania elected to leadership or expert positions of international organizations” covers only part of international organizations and the criteria for the list of such organisations are unclear. Although the information provided by these indicators is relevant for the evaluation of the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they cover only part of Lithuania’s representation in the international arena, and other information relevant for the measurement of the task – such as the scope of the Lithuanian diplomatic network, international agreements signed, international reputation – remains unrepresented.

The third indicator “9.1.3. The proportion of financing (of the gross national product) for development cooperation activities eligible for official development assistance” requires a separate comment. Although it is important for Lithuania to ensure adequate official financing of development assistance (partly due to Lithuania’s commitments in the EU), the funds allocated to a specific political programme constitute the input of that programme rather than the activity or the outcome of the programme. Therefore, this indicator provides information about the resources allocated to the implementation of the objective, but not about the implementation of the objective.

To sum up, the value created by MFA – a system of performance evaluation – cannot just be assessed from the internal evaluation perspective of the Ministry. The MFA internal planning and performance evaluation documents are linked to the NPP and are therefore integrated in the national strategic planning system. While the Ministry can improve its internal performance measurement system and at least partially separate/complement it with respect to the national strategic planning system, thus improving the efficiency of its activities and ensuring institutional learning, it is important to transfer the improved measurement practices to the national strategic planning system in the long term. This is the only way to ensure the Ministry’s sustainable accountability and synergy, and a balance between the expectation/outcome of the elements of the national and ministerial strategic planning and evaluation.

30. See Chapter 3, Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, “XIII-3096 Lietuvos Respublikos Strateginio Valdymo Įstatymas,” Pub. L. No. TAR, 2020-07-09, Nr. 15358, XIII-3096 (2020), <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/90386d20bab711ea9a12d0dada3ca61b>.

2.2.2. Ensuring accountability in the MFA internal performance evaluation system

Since the main foreign policy goals, objectives, and the indicators used to measure the MFA value and function as the essential criteria ensuring accountability of the Ministry are formed at the interinstitutional level of the Lithuanian strategic planning system, the internal MFA performance monitoring system mainly focuses on ensuring accountability at the operational level of the Ministry. The MFA strategic operational plans (SOP) include the foreign policy objectives planned by the Ministry, the measures implementing such objectives, implementation indicators and their planned values. For example, the latest 2022–2024 MFA SOP identifies two objectives in the part of the programme that deals with the fulfilment of foreign policy functions: a progress objective (corresponds to NPP objective No. 9.1) and an ongoing activities objective (objective No. 2, “to represent Lithuanian interests abroad and international organizations”).³¹

Thus, analysis of the internal MFA monitoring and evaluation system requires that the existing practices for measuring the outcomes of the MFA’s ongoing activities and the use of operational indicators (e.g., the quality of processes, the number of services provided and the quantity of outputs) be specified. The following is an analysis of these aspects of the MFA internal evaluation system based on the data collected during interviews with officials of four MFA foreign policy departments. In order to focus on the most pressing problems and challenges, we prioritize the insights if they were mentioned by the representatives of at least two out of the four departments.

At least two main indicators for measuring outputs can be identified when analysing the MFA internal performance monitoring system. First, the qualitative indicator used in the current SOP (2021–2023) – scoring (5-point scale) to reflect the position of Lithuania on certain political issues (e.g., relations with Eastern Partnership countries) in the international arena. This indicator, however, is not included in the latest SOP (2022–2024). Second, the qualitative indicator used both in the 2021–2023 and 2022–2024 SOPs – the number of organized high-level meetings (summits) and/or initiatives/events.

In theory, both of these indicators are suitable for measuring performance and ensuring accountability: expert-qualitative assessment of policy achievements is a widely used foreign policy evaluation tool. For small countries such as Lithuania, high-level meetings with strategic partners can be considered an outcome of active foreign policy in itself. Using both indicators to evaluate the outcomes, however, poses risks. The relevance of any such risks in the MFA performance evaluation practice was confirmed by the representatives of all four departments interviewed for the purpose of the analysis:

1. The qualitative evaluation using a 5-point scale rating based on the information provided by MFA departments did not provide much additional information on the quality of MFA activities. The logic behind such scoring and why it is used in the broader performance evaluation system are unclear. According to the respondents, the shortcomings of this indicator were particularly relevant given that the value of the measured outcome – reflection of the position and interests of Lithuania in international agreements or other documents – varies greatly depending on the specific document, the type of reference to Lithuania, and the extent to which the reflection of Lithuania’s position changes the current political situation.
2. The quantitative indicator – the number of high-level meetings and similar initiatives – does not reflect the differences between the meetings organized by MFA, which is relevant for the evaluation of the outputs, nor does it provide information on the outcomes of any such meetings. At the same time, the information provided by this indicator depends largely on the specific wording of the indicator. For example, in the 2022–2024 MFA SOP, the indicator of objective No. 2 “political initiatives and high-level meetings to strengthen transatlantic relations (quantity)” raises questions regarding the type of policy initiatives that would satisfy the indicator, the ratio between high-level meetings and other political initiatives, etc. Similar comments could be made regarding the indicators for objective No. 2 instrument No. 1 intended to measure MFA performance in the context of the EU-Eastern Neighbourhood policy.

31. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, “LR Užsienio reikalų ministerijos 2022-2024 m. strateginio veiklos plano projektas.”

3. The outcomes in the case of both indicators (inclusion of Lithuanian positions in a given international document, organized high-level meetings) are usually the result of a long-term MFA activity, so it is inappropriate to use them for annual MFA performance monitoring and evaluation. This, consequently, limits the use of the information provided by such an indicator for the purpose of ensuring the MFA accountability. As one respondent said, “what can be achieved in a year is often overestimated and what can be achieved in a decade is underestimated.”

If the first two challenges can be solved by correcting specific indicators or the practice of using such indicators, the third problem is fundamental. This calls for using other indicators to measure and evaluate foreign policy outcomes and impact based on good practices of foreign countries and insights offered by strategic governance resources (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Another important function of the internal performance monitoring and evaluation system is to collect relevant information at the operational level. In the MFA context this function is performed by regular internal reports of MFA departments or diplomatic missions of Lithuania. They provide factual information about the activities, services and outputs of the Ministry's departments and diplomatic missions. Since this process is decentralized and takes place at the level of an individual department or representation, its detailed analysis and evaluation of the most relevant/commonly observed problems would entail a review of at least a few internal reports of each department and representation. Although the analysis at this scale is beyond the scope of this study, the MFA documents analysed for the purpose of this study and conducted interviews allow to identify a number of key factors to ensure that the collection of information at the operational level would contribute to the overall MFA performance measurement and evaluation process in a quality manner:

1. When providing factual information on the activities carried out during the reporting period, it is important to specify the share (percentage) of unplanned activities, e.g., responding to unforeseen developments in the international arena, non-regular consultations provided to citizens or businesses, etc. out of all activities carried out during the period. As most respondents noted, although unplanned and reactive activities (“firefighting”) represent a significant portion of all activities of individual departments, this does not reflect in the overall MFA evaluation system. This circumstance is particularly important in order to understand how much time and resources an individual department could de facto have allocated to the achievement of the aims and objectives of MFA programmes, because this information is directly relevant for the MFA performance evaluation and accountability assurance.
2. According to the information obtained during the interviews, most information about the outputs or services of MFA departments is provided in absolute values (units). Although such factual information is important, it is less informative than the information provided in relative values (percentage), which gives a more complete understanding of the workloads and efficiency of a department or agency. It is therefore important to reflect the ratio between the executed work and the enquiries received, and the essential quality parameters of the processes (e.g., percentage of positions prepared within X days of the receipt of the enquiry) when providing information on the outputs of coordination activities (e.g., prepared positions, conducted analyses) or services provided on a regular basis (e.g., issued documents).

To sum up, the information collection practices at the operational level in the MFA performance monitoring system, the main challenge is not to adjust specific indicators, but to fundamentally review the use of these indicators in the monitoring and evaluation system. Information at the operational level is important for the overall evaluation of a political organization because it allows to identify possible bottlenecks, which prevent achievement of aims and outputs. It also informs about the distribution of the workload, the need for implementation of actions to achieve certain outcomes, etc. Thus, development of the information collection system at the operational level requires that the logical links between activities, their outputs, outcomes and the anticipated impact be considered.

It should also be noted that not only is objective and factual information (i.e., executed activities, created outputs) important for the collection of information at the operational level, but subjective assessment of MFA activities and outputs in the eyes of partners, target groups or consumers are also important. Although each department, representatives of which participated in the interviews organized within the framework of this study, works with various institutional and public partners (e.g., other ministries or state agencies, business associations) and serves different groups of society (e.g., provides information to companies or citizens), none of them have conducted any regular surveys of partners or customers on the quality of their cooperation with the MFA. This information is important not only as an additional source to fully evaluate the MFA activities, but

also to identify aspects that required rectification (i.e., institutionalized practice of interviewing partners or customers contributes both to ensuring accountability and to empowering learning).

2.2.3. Empowering learning in the internal MFA performance evaluation system

The current MFA performance evaluation system is not balanced for empowering policy learning and helping policymakers improve their activities. This is partially also a consequence of the problems discussed above: inappropriate indicators, discrepancy in the time horizons of the MFA policy activities and MFA monitoring system, the lack of a conceptual cause/change logic in the monitoring system, which restrict both the opportunity to ensure MFA accountability and to empower learning. However, information obtained during interviews with MFA representatives may offer a few additional insights:

1. The majority of respondents emphasized the lack of feedback in the MFA planning system. MFA officials highlighted two aspects of this problem. First, no comments or recommendations regarding continuous improvement of activities were provided after submission of reports by policy departments to the Strategic Planning Unit and the management. Second, MFA representatives acknowledged that the performance indicators were not relevant for the annual planning of the departments' activities and their specific values did not help calibrate the priorities of the department for the next year. Therefore, reporting on activities is understood as a bureaucratic process which, although necessary, does not create a significant added value.
2. The majority of respondents agreed that institutionalised qualitative evaluations that cover several policy departments would help enhance the work of their unit and help calibrate their strategic planning activities. calibrated by evaluations that would incorporate activities of several departments or even the entire Ministry in the particular area of competence of the department. According to one representative, individual department are often prone to institutional silos and may not see the possibility of strengthening their activities by cooperating with other departments or, conversely, may miss certain bottlenecks at the ministerial or interinstitutional levels that are detrimental to the department's activities. Institutionalised qualitative evaluation processes would also help policymakers generate new ideas and insights relevant for the department's activities. .

According to the respondents, such evaluation could also be carried out by external experts, e.g., academic staff and experts of analytical centres. However, the majority of MFA representatives emphasized that involvement of external experts in the evaluation of the Ministry's activities entails several problems. Since external experts have limited access to internal MFA documents and other sensitive information, there is an issue of information asymmetry between external experts and MFA officials. Thus, external experts must inevitably ask MFA representatives for information. This not only creates additional work for the representatives of departments (to complete questionnaires, to participate in interviews) but also limits the possibilities to generate new insights.

2.2.4. Summary

In sum, the above insights suggest that the MFA performance monitoring and evaluation system mainly focuses on ensuring external accountability (i.e., accountability at the interinstitutional level within the limits of a budget cycle), but the selected indicators are not suitable for measuring the value created by all MFA activities and for reasonably evaluating performance. This is hampered by an imbalanced internal performance monitoring and evaluation system, which prevents proper evaluation of long-term processes and their outcomes. At the same time, due to the lack of feedback and horizontal cooperation between departments, the internal MFA performance monitoring and evaluation system does not provide opportunities for policy makers to learn and to improve the policy pursued by the Ministry. For the evaluation system to contribute to ensuring accountability, it is necessary to identify a certain causal link between MFA activities, outputs, and outcomes in a certain area of MFA's activities or to pursue a specific aim, which would make it easier to identify weaknesses in MFA's activities and help solve impact attribution challenges. If the evaluation system is to empower the learning of MFA policy makers, a fundamental review of the functions of the system is required in the meantime. This review should focus on the reinforcement of effective feedback channels (e.g., consultations following evaluations and/or operational planning), consolidation and dissemination of information available to different MFA departments, and the development of general analytical MFA competences.

3. Case study analysis: best practices from foreign countries

This chapter analyses the evaluation systems of foreign ministries of four countries – Estonia, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Sweden. Each case study is based on a comprehensive analysis of primary literature (documents of ministries and other responsible institutions) and interviews with the representatives of the foreign ministries concerned. The foreign policy strategic planning and evaluation system of each selected country is analysed using the criteria for evaluating outcomes and processes and processes to ensure accountability and empower learning.

A certain reference model or an “ideal type” is required to study and compare different and unique case studies in a systematic way. The MFA evaluation model (see Fig. 2) provided in Chapter 2 serves such purpose. Consequently, each case study presents how the core components of the model are reflected in the performance evaluation system of the foreign ministry of the selected country. It should be noted that the possible differences between the reference model and the specific evaluation system of the country should not automatically be considered as weaknesses in that system: this model is just an analytical tool and not an ideal standard.

3.1. Estonia

Due to its many similarities with Lithuania – the size of the country, historical experience, geopolitical situation, EU and NATO membership, economic structure, etc. – Estonia is a natural choice for the case study analysis. The additional relevance for this case study is that in 2019–2020, Estonia carried out a major foreign policy planning and evaluation system reform. The aim of the reform was to address the challenges related to foreign policy evaluation, which is also the motivation for this study.

3.1.1. The foreign policy strategic planning and evaluation system

The highest-order long-term strategic planning document in Estonia is the national development strategy “Estonia 2035,” adopted in October 2020.³² It was the first strategic planning instrument of this kind in the history of the state. Until then, the Estonian strategic planning system consisted of about 120 sectorial or thematic strategic development plans interconnected by complex hierarchical links. While proceeding with the reform of the broader national strategic planning framework, Tallinn also initiated the development of a long-term foreign policy strategy: “**Estonian Foreign Policy Strategy 2030**”.³³ The document was adopted in July 2020 and provides for the overall foreign policy goal of the country, the main objectives related to the goal, and a set of indicators for measuring the attainment of these objectives.

Like “Estonia 2035”, the new foreign policy strategy was the first document of its kind in the field of foreign policy in Estonia. Prior to the preparation of this strategy, every four years the MFA of Estonia used to prepare a general operational plan with specific activities planned for each year, focusing on budget appropriations and optimal use of the budget. As one of the authors of the new strategy emphasized during the interview, by 2020, the MFA’s strategic and policy planning was almost entirely process-oriented and focused on the short-term perspective. At the same time, as confirmed by another official from the Estonian MFA, before 2020 Estonia did not have a unified and integrated system of indicators for foreign policy evaluation, and different departments of the Ministry used their own discretionary indicators to perform internal performance evaluation. In sum, the new strategic planning and evaluation system provided the long-term perspective for the MFA’s activities, explicated the links between foreign policy and overall national development, established

32. Estonian Government, “Strategic Goals | Eesti Vabariigi Valitsus,” valitsus.ee, accessed December 31, 2021, <https://valitsus.ee/en/estonia-2035-development-strategy/strategy/strategic-goals>.

33. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, “Estonian Foreign Policy Strategy 2030,” 2020, https://vm.ee/sites/default/files/Estonia_for_UN/Rasmus/estonian_foreign_policy_strategy_2030_final.pdf.

performance-oriented goals and objectives, and proposed an integrated set of indicators to measure the value of foreign policy.

3.1.2. Criteria for evaluating outcomes and processes

Following the adoption of the “Estonian Foreign Policy Strategy 2030”, Estonia’s main foreign policy objective is:

“The preservation of the Estonian people, the Estonian language and the Estonian culture through the ages, as well as reinforcing the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Estonia in international relations, increasing prosperity in Estonia and protecting the interests of the Estonian community abroad, and increasing Estonia’s contribution to global sustainable development.”³⁴

As confirmed by the official who prepared the strategy, this complex objective was formulated to incorporate all operational dimensions of the Ministry (high policy, international development cooperation, economic diplomacy, diaspora policy) and to address the Ministry’s main target audiences: Estonian citizens, diaspora, business community and the international community.

Given the complex nature of the general goal, the strategy states that the goal will be pursued “by strengthening the three strategic axes of foreign policy”. They are as follows: (1) ensuring security, stability, and sustainable development, (2) external economy policy, and (3) relations with the Estonian community abroad. The following further specific objectives and interests (sub-objectives) for each strategic axis are set out:

- **Strategic axis 1:** *Ensure security, the stability of international relations, sustainable development*
- **Objective 1:** *Ensuring the security of the Estonian people and the state, and the growth of prosperity*
- **Interest:** *Preservation and further strengthening the current rules-based system of international relations*
- **Activities:** *Support of the functioning of international arms and export control regimes, consistently draw attention to violations of international law attributing them to specific perpetrators, and defend and strengthen the EU and UN human rights conventions*

The strategy also provides for the fourth strategic axis – to strengthen the capacity of the diplomatic service – which covers all areas of foreign policy. Unlike the first three axes, this strategic axis focuses on the improvement of the quality foreign policy processes rather than on the specific foreign policy outcomes.

The official who has prepared the strategy emphasized that the most difficult challenge in this process was to choose the appropriate and relevant indicators to measure the implementation of the general objective and strategic objectives. During the interview, the respondent explained that she had prepared a long list of various potential indicators to measure the general objective. During internal workshops, the dedicated team of Ministry’s officials selected the smallest possible set of relevant indicators that would incorporate all dimensions of the overall goal. The strategy developers aimed that, where possible, the evaluation indicators should be external, independent of the Ministry, and publicly available. Such approach was prompted by considering the maximum use of resources, transparency and objectivity. Finally, five indicators were selected to measure progress towards achievement of the overall goal:

1. *Expert assessment of regional security*
2. *Evaluation of EU cohesion*
3. *Estonia's ranking in the Global Competitiveness Index*
4. *Assessment of Estonia’s influence among small-size countries*
5. *Share of development cooperation in the gross national income (GNI)*

34. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, 7.

As can be seen, with the exception of the first indicator, the sources of the remaining indicators are either international indices or Estonia’s official national statistics. At the same time, the subject of each indicator is a certain political outcome.³⁵ According to an Estonian representative, it was impossible to identify objective external indicators to measure regional security, so it was decided to use a hybrid model: the Ministry’s officials and experts assess the regional security situation as “stable” or “unstable” based on the selected international and internal indicators on a regular basis.

In addition to the set of indicators for the achievement of the overall goal, 1-4 additional indicators were identified to measure the achievement of the objectives of each strategic axis. These indicators, unlike the five indicators provided above, include both political outcomes and operational achievements (outputs and process quality), as well as public opinion. The complete set of these indicators, broken down by the type of the evaluation and the area of activity of the Ministry (“strategic axis”), is provided in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The model of the performance monitoring and evaluation system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia

Areas of activity	Consular activities	Economic diplomacy	Foreign policy
Evaluation levels	Strategic axis 3: The Estonian community abroad and effective consular services	Strategic axis 2: Strengthening external economy policy	Strategic axis 1: Ensure security, stability of international relations, sustainable development
Awareness and reputation	Public opinion poll on knowledgeable travel	n/a	Support for the EU; support for NATO; support for development policy and humanitarian aid; awareness of EE foreign policy
Implementation	Strategic axis 4: Strong diplomatic service		
	Expert evaluation of Estonian representation in the world and availability of services		
Outcomes	Participation of diaspora in elections; percentage of returning citizens; expert evolution of the attractiveness of consular services to clients and compliance with the e-state image	Labour productivity (% of the EU average), sustainable FDI growth, exports to third countries	Ability to form coalitions, Cyber Security Index, KOF Globalization Index

As in the case of the overall goal, only a small portion of objectives associated with the four strategic axes of foreign policy are evaluated using internal or expert indicators. More specifically, the internal expert evaluation is used to determine the difference between the real activities of the Estonian diplomatic service and the “ideal situation”, which was determined by reference to such criteria as the number of Estonian representations, the number of Ministry’s employees in the target areas, and the application of innovative representation solutions. The internal expert evaluation is also applied to the indicator measuring the attractiveness of consular services and their compliance with the image of Estonia as an e-state. This synthetic indicator consists of sub-indicators, including convenience, cost-effectiveness, the ratio of digital and conventional technologies, etc., that are assigned different weight. According to the Estonian official who prepared the strategy, the advantage of such synthetic indicators is that they allow to shorten the overall list of indicators in areas where the overall policy outcome reflects the performance across multiple different dimensions of the issue at hand. At the same time,

35. It should be noted that the share of development cooperation in GNI could be considered as a political cost rather than an outcome. However, it is an outcome from the Foreign Ministry’s perspective.

an internal expert evaluation can consider the specific situation or needs of Estonia better – e.g., sensitive security issues or the unique e-state concept in the world.

Following the adoption of the long-term strategy, the MFA of Estonia also initiated a review of the evaluation system of programme-level activities. Since this process is still ongoing, the officials of the Ministry could not share detailed information on the indicators and their weight. The analysis of the 2020 operational report on the performance of the MFA of Estonia³⁶ provides two important insights into the interim outcomes of this process:

1. Very much like in the long-term strategy, external indicators are used in evaluating programme-level activities where possible (e.g., in the evaluation of the programme "Protecting Estonia's interests in international organizations", expert quality evaluation of Estonia's international relations was replaced with the indicator measuring Estonia's ability to form coalitions in the EU [EU Coalition Explorer index]). Internal expert indicators used in the programme-level activities remained only in the field of security policy.
2. Evaluation of programme-level activities focuses on process evaluation. To this end, the indicator of customer experience surveys is used (e.g., in the evaluation of the programme "Greater coherence of foreign policy and external relations", the indicator "Evaluation of partner cooperation with Foreign Ministry (percentage of satisfied)" is used; in the evaluation of the programme "Promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation and support for tourism" the indicator "Survey of the satisfaction of business and professional associations (percentage of satisfied)" is used. Customer satisfaction surveys also apply to the evaluation of consular activities.

3.1.3. Ensuring accountability and learning

Having provided the overview of the main criteria and indicators for the evaluation of outcomes and processes, we may also discuss how they are used to ensure the accountability of the MFA of Estonia and empower learning of its foreign policy makers.

The strategy implementation plan specifies the following evaluation procedures:

- The MFA of Estonia will provide an annual progress report on achievement of the objectives of the strategy to the Parliament.
- At the end of the first phase of the programme-level activities (2023), an interim strategy evaluation will be carried out to determine whether a review of the strategy is required.
- The final evaluation of the strategy will be carried out in 2030.

Estonia's MFA provides information on the foreign policy achievements to the Government annually, and the National Audit Office carries out an external annual audit of the Ministry's activities. The Board of the Ministry is responsible for the internal evaluation, including the assessment of whether the long-term strategic objectives are achievable. The internal evaluation process is integrated into the state budget planning process, during which the Ministry provides an overview of its objectives and their attainment together with the budget proposal,

During the interview, the representative of the MFA of Estonia emphasized that the foreign policy evaluation is not a "mathematical task". The respondent pointed out that when evaluating the overall success of foreign policy, it is not possible to determine mathematically whether achieving one indicator is more significant than failing to achieve another indicator. Therefore, indicators are treated as an additional source of information in order to support a more general qualitative evaluation of a specific area, taking into account other domestic and international policy considerations relevant to that area.

Finally, the respondent pointed out that the indicators are also used as an opportunity to highlight certain problems or trends in foreign policy. Since annual operational plans of the Ministry are based on the annual progress made in the long-term strategic indicators, the analysis of any change may inform about the need to optimize one foreign policy area or another. For example, when commenting on Estonia's ability to form coalitions in the EU, the respondent stressed that the UK had demonstrated extremely low scores in this

36. Välisministeerium, "Välispoliitika tulemusaruanne 2020," Munich Security Report (Välisministeerium, February 2020), <https://doi.org/10.47342/IAQX5691>.

indicator for a long time, signalling a certain break from its EU partners before the Brexit referendum took place. However, the Estonian official emphasized that the indicators alone do not provide information, so additional instruments (e.g., expert advice) are required to be able to use the MFA's performance monitoring system e.g., for policy learning. No information on the application of such instruments was obtained from the MFA of Estonia.

3.2. New Zealand

The foreign policy strategic planning and evaluation system of New Zealand is particularly institutionalized to ensure the highest possible accountability and learning. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) of New Zealand reports not only to its leadership, but also to the Parliament. Furthermore, the involvement of stakeholders and communication to the public are among the key aspects promoting accountability, as reflected in performance indicators. The MFAT performance evaluation is carried out using both quantitative and qualitative methods, but the system is constantly evolving and a significant shift is taking place toward purely qualitative methods, based on the thinking that they allow better identification of specific outcomes of MFAT activities, enable incorporation of the analysis of contextual factors relevant to the MFAT activities and help communicate the value of MFAT activities to interested parties and the public more effectively.

3.2.1. The foreign policy strategic planning and evaluation system

The foreign policy strategic planning system of New Zealand is based on the document of **Strategic Intentions**, which sets out the main strategic foreign policy goals and specific objectives of New Zealand.³⁷ The document also provides indicators of change and the organizational MFAT development directions. The document on strategic intentions projects change for a period of ten years and specific objectives for the four-year government term. The document is presented to Parliament and approved by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The strategic intentions are adjusted as necessary by means of a comprehensive strategic evaluation every three years, identifying the main drivers of change, strategic actors, and the trajectory of the development of the international community. The strategic evaluation involves not only amendment or revision of the existing strategic foreign policies, but it is also used for foreign policy decisions in the current period. This allows New Zealand to respond more actively and quickly to developing foreign policy opportunities, to make better decisions and to actively shape the international agenda rather than only perform the role of a passive player. Although the strategic evaluation is carried out every three years, smaller-scope interim evaluations are also performed between strategic evaluations.

Strategic evaluations are supplemented with a risk study document which assesses the potential obstacles to achieving the planned goals and offers risk management mechanisms to help reduce or neutralize risks. At the same time, MFAT operational planning and delivery is carried out based on the valid overall strategic intentions, strategic evaluation, and risk assessment. The planning and delivery establish how all departments will contribute to the fulfilment of the goals assigned to them. It reaffirms that the MFAT follows the strategic line established in the strategy and has adequate resources for this purpose. This planning and delivery are reviewed and, if necessary, amended every three months.

3.2.2. Criteria for evaluating outcomes and processes

The criteria for evaluating outcomes and processes applied by New Zealand's MFAT primarily derive from the Strategic Intentions:

- International Rules and Institutions – Strengthen, protect and use international rules and institutions to pursue Aotearoa New Zealand's values and interests

37. The latest strategic intentions document covers the period of 2021-2025. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand, "Strategic Intentions 2021-2025" (New Zealand Government, 2021), <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/About-us-Corporate/MFAT-strategies-and-frameworks/MFAT-Strategic-Intentions-2021-2025.pdf>.

- Economic Returns and Resilience – Grow sustainable economic returns and resilience from trade, investment and other international connections
- Indo-Pacific – Embed Aotearoa New Zealand as an active and integral partner in shaping an Indo-Pacific order that delivers regional stability and economic integration
- Pacific – Promote a peaceful, prosperous and resilient Pacific in which Aotearoa New Zealand’s interests and influence are safeguarded
- Environment and Climate Change – Promote sustainable international solutions to global environment and natural resource challenges that impact on Aotearoa New Zealand
- Security and Safety – Lead Aotearoa New Zealand’s international action to advance and protect New Zealanders’ safety and Aotearoa New Zealand’s security
- International Relationships – Build and leverage targeted international relationships to achieve our goals.

Each of these goals has its own assigned desired outcomes and measurement indicators. For example, the first strategic goal includes the following desired outcomes:

1. Aotearoa New Zealand has used international rules and institutions to progress national interests
2. Aotearoa New Zealand has helped protect and strengthen international rules and the effectiveness of the multilateral system

The indicator for the first desired outcome is “to maintain or increase the volume of concessional financing for the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank to the Pacific”. The second indicator is “to subscribe to global disarmament treaties”. The achievement of both indicators is measured by additional indicator “We will report on progress towards our priorities and relevant core work”. This indicator supplements each objective of each strategic goal and features as the only change indicator in one third of the 15 objectives (of the 7 strategic goals).

A separate evaluation of New Zealand’s relationships with New Zealand partners, Maori, internal stakeholders and the New Zealand public is worth particular attention. Many objectives intended for the achievement of this goal are measured by stakeholder surveys: stakeholder satisfaction with engagement with the MFAT, satisfaction of other stakeholders with the Ministry’s effectiveness representing New Zealand’s interests, understanding of the Ministry’s roles and what it delivers for New Zealanders’, visit numbers and user satisfaction with the Ministry’s websites and social media platforms, and timeliness of response to requests.

Figure 4. The model of the performance monitoring and evaluation system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand

Areas of activity	Consular activities	Economic diplomacy	Foreign policy
Evaluation levels			
Awareness and reputation	Public and stakeholder surveys	Public and stakeholder surveys	Public and stakeholder surveys
Implementation	Strategy and Performance Division	Strategy and Performance Division	Strategy and Performance Division
Consequences	Quantitative indicators + qualitative studies	Quantitative indicators + qualitative studies	Quantitative indicators + qualitative studies

3.2.3. Ensuring accountability and learning

The MFAT of New Zealand has the **Strategy and Performance Division**, which aims to create synergies between strategy, planning, resource allocation and performance evaluation to maximize the efficiency of the Ministry's activities.

This department assists the Ministry in setting the strategic direction and formulating the general strategic benchmarks into coherent deliverables at the ministerial level. The department also ensures that sufficient funding and adequate resources are provided for the implementation of the Ministry's priorities. Finally, the department is responsible for the evaluation of the Ministry's activities and qualitative changes that the Ministry creates for the benefit of New Zealand.

The Ministry has internal evaluation and accountability systems in place to deliver on the strategic framework. Each of the nine goals in the Strategic Intentions is led by a senior responsible owner of the goal who is also a member of the senior leadership team. The owners coordinate and account for the delivery of goal outcomes. The Strategic Intentions provides guidance to the staff on the Ministry's priorities and impacts to be delivered over the next four years. Business planning cascades the Strategic Intentions into team business plans and individual performance and development plans. Leaders continually monitor the operating environment and adjust resources and effort to respond to changes in that environment.

The Ministry's board assesses the impact the organization is making at the outcome level through biannual goal assessments. These include a qualitative assessment of outcome delivery, quantitative measurement, and risk updates. Planning leads assist responsible senior owners in driving delivery, accountability and learning. Following each biannual goal assessment, the outcomes are presented to staff. Assessment outcomes also contribute to strategic thinking and plans for the next four years. The final evaluation of the year contributes to the content of the annual MFAT report.

3.3. The Netherlands

The planning and evaluation system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (*Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken*, BZ) was chosen as a case study for several reasons. First, the joint EU-NATO membership and the open economy model determine similarities between the foreign policy priorities of Lithuania and the Netherlands. Second, the Netherlands, a country at the core of Western Europe and EU, differs significantly from Lithuania in its geopolitical situation and the European policy experience. Third, unlike most EU countries examined prior to selecting the countries for the case study, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs has an internal, but independent, specialized evaluation body which plays a key role in the Ministry's evaluation system. Thus, the inclusion of the case of the Netherlands in the analysis ensures a greater degree of variation on the issues relevant to the study.

3.3.1. The foreign policy strategic planning and evaluation system

A regular and independent performance evaluation at BZ has been carried out since 2001.³⁸ As in the case of other ministries, BZ evaluation is linked to the government budget planning managed by the Ministry of Finance. The Netherlands has introduced a mandatory evaluation of each budgetary programme every 5-7 years, together with interim and final evaluations of each programme which last for more than five years. BZ is responsible for two budget lines: (1) the foreign policy programme and (2) the trade and development cooperation programme. Within the scope of the relevant programme, individual BZ departments set their annual objectives, which are then aggregated into the proposal for the annual budget. The BZ evaluation system also consists of two evaluation programmes dedicated to the above budget lines. These evaluation programmes are planned for a period of six years but are updated annually and presented to the Parliament together with the annual budget.

The BZ performance evaluation system performs a dual function. In view of its close link with budget planning, the evaluation is aimed at helping the Parliament, the Ministry of Finance, and other responsible authorities to understand the real effectiveness of the budget programme-level activities better and to ensure BZ accountability. Regular and comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of foreign policies is also aimed at

38. Regular evaluation of the development cooperation programmes was also carried out earlier.

identifying effective processes and processes that must be adjusted and enabling further improvement of existing policies and learning of policy makers.

Evaluations can be divided into two groups according to their scope and complexity. Smaller-scale and less-complex evaluations (at the level of a policy instrument or a project) are performed by BZ departments or representations. Evaluations of a larger scope and complexity, e.g., covering a few policy areas and/or goals are performed by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (*Internationale Onderzoek en Beleidsevaluatie*, IOB). The BZ performance evaluation system is mostly comprised of *ex post* evaluations.

IOB operates within BZ but is independent from it. IOB has a separate budget and the right to prepare programmes for policy evaluations independently. An expert/official with 15-year' experience at IOB, who was interviewed for this study, explained that the independence of IOB has been strengthened since 2008. Today IOB has its own budget and the right to independently prepare multi-annual evaluation programmes. The IOB team consists of 30 employees and the evaluation activities are structured around three thematic clusters: foreign policy, development cooperation and international trade. (The political impact of consular services is assessed within the scope of the foreign policy cluster). According to the BZ official, IOB publishes 5–15 evaluation reports every year; in 2020, 9 evaluations were carried out (5 on foreign policy, 2 on development cooperation and 2 on trade) and 14 more evaluations were in progress and will be finalized and presented later.³⁹

In order evaluations would enable policy improvement and learning of policy makers, IOB designs its multi-annual evaluation programmes in line with the broader needs of BZ. More specifically, IOB organizes a joint workshop with the BZ Finance Department and leaders of policy divisions every year to review the completed evaluations and to identify the needs for new evaluations or insights. At the same time, when preparing an evaluation programme, IOB takes into account the need to ensure the formal accountability of BZ, e.g., timely performance of interim or final evaluations of a particular foreign policy project.

3.3.2. Criteria for evaluating outcomes and processes

The methodology of BZ evaluations, including indicators, varies according to the group of evaluations. Evaluations of a smaller scope and complexity, carried out within individual BZ policy departments or representations, focus on operational – process quality or output – indicators. IOB evaluations are performed by applying a methodology balanced for a specific policy issue, based on a thorough analysis of relevant literature and studies conducted in other countries. IOB uses the evaluations at the level of a policy instrument or a project conducted by BZ departments for impact assessment studies. During the interview, the IOB official emphasized that in the field of foreign policy, IOB often evaluates both the impact and the process.

According to the respondent, all IOB evaluations are based on qualitative research methodologies. Although quantitative approaches (e.g., an econometric analysis) are also used in the evaluation of development cooperation and trade policy, they always have a qualitative component. More specifically, qualitative approaches are particularly helpful in addressing impact attribution, e.g., whether a change in quantitative indicators – improved socio-economic indicators in the development cooperation partner country or increased trade volumes – can be attributed to BZ activities or other external factors. In the field of foreign policy evaluation, according to the respondent, qualitative analysis methods are almost exclusively applied, mainly process tracing and qualitative comparative analysis.

For example, in 2019, IOB carried out an evaluation of the Dutch contribution to the EU Neighbourhood Policy in 2011–2017.⁴⁰ The evaluation analysed the interaction of Dutch political interventions with four factors identified in the academic literature that significantly contributed to the effectiveness of the EU Neighbourhood Policy: (1) application of the EU principle of conditionality, (2) the degree of coherence between the EU and its Member State policies (3) the level of "ownership" of the EU Neighbourhood Policy in the neighbouring countries and (4) the role of external actors in the EU neighbourhood. The IOB evaluation report notes that such indirect approach was chosen because it was impossible to establish a direct causal link

39. Due to its scope, some IOB studies take more than a year.

40. Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, "The Dutch Contribution to the European Neighbourhood Policy 2011-2017," IOB Evaluation (The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands, 2019), <https://www.iob-evaluatie.nl/publicaties/beleidsdoorlichtingen/2019/09/01/425-iob-the-dutch-contribution-to-the-european-neighbourhood-policy-2011-2017>.

between the Dutch actions and the outcomes of EU Neighbourhood Policy. It may, however, be reasonably assumed that if the Dutch political interventions with regard to these four factors are constructive, this should increase the likelihood that the common EU policy will be effective. During the evaluation, IOB relied on the analysis of primary sources and secondary literature, semi-structured interviews with Dutch and EU officials, and an analysis of four policy case studies of the EU Neighbourhood Policy – Azerbaijan, Egypt, Georgia, and Tunisia.

Since IOB sets the criteria and indicators for each evaluation, a single set of criteria for BZ performance evaluation cannot be provided. However, it should be noted that public opinion surveys are not used for policy evaluations. The overall BZ evaluation scheme is shown in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5. The model of the performance monitoring and evaluation system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

Areas of activity	Consular activities	Economic diplomacy	Foreign policy
Evaluation levels	(Assigned to foreign policy)	Trade policy	Foreign policy, development cooperation
Awareness and reputation	n/a	n/a	n/a
Implementation	At the level of an individual programme/project: internal department/embassy evaluations		
Consequences	At the level of several programmes/projects or a department: IOB evaluations		
Consequences	Target IOB evaluations (integrating them into a broader evaluation of foreign policy activities)	Targeted IOB evaluations	Targeted IOB evaluations

3.3.3. Ensuring accountability and learning

As mentioned above, the entire BZ evaluation system focuses on both accountability and learning assurance. However, the extent to which these functions are fulfilled depends on the evaluation level. Smaller-scale evaluations carried out by BZ departments mainly focus on ensuring accountability for activities at the operational level; they contribute to learning indirectly by providing data for broader IOB studies and evaluations. In the meantime, IOB studies contribute to ensuring accountability for policy outcomes and provide more information relevant for learning of policymakers.

The key process to ensure accountability is the presentation of internal and IOB evaluations to the Parliament during the discussions of the BZ draft budget and the programme-level activities. In the interview, the IOB official pointed out that Parliament committee on foreign affairs maintains a close dialogue with IOB when evaluating BZ performance to take better decisions on further financing, potential programme corrections, etc. Moreover, to ensure accountability to the public, all IOB evaluation reports are published on the websites of the IOB department and BZ.

IOB activities in the area of learning empowerment are not limited to the preparation of comprehensive evaluation reports. During the interview, the IOB official noted that the IOB conducts ongoing consultations with the representatives of BZ policy units in order to help them formulate achievable and measurable objectives. During these consultations, according to the respondent, IOB pays particular attention to the so-called “theory of change” – i.e., how policy makers understand the relationship between their activities, outputs and possible political impact. The respondent also pointed out that there were cases when IOB notified foreign policy makers that certain goals or objectives of the planning system were not realistic or that their progress could not be evaluated. In other words, by providing consultancy to BZ policy units, IOB aims to help policy makers to better understand the causal links between policy actions and consequences, and to plan activities in the way that facilitates their measurement and evaluation.

3.4. Sweden

The Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with more than 100 missions abroad, form the Swedish Foreign Service. Sweden's missions abroad are not under the direct leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but function as Government institutions linked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by horizontal, not hierarchical relations. Horizontal relations and coordination are common to the entire strategic planning and evaluation system of the Swedish Foreign Office. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs functions as one of the elements of the Foreign Service network, and evaluation and coordination for evaluation purposes are performed with a focus on learning rather than on control. Foreign policy evaluations are purely qualitative, with quantitative estimates only for administrative budgets. The evaluations are carried out in the form of regular interviews and dialogues between the different departments, representations and agencies of the Ministry, in order to determine their progress toward the overall foreign policy strategy objectives.

3.4.1. The foreign policy strategic planning and evaluation system

The key valid strategic Swedish foreign policy planning document is the "Strategy 2019–2022" (hereinafter – Strategy).⁴¹ It was adopted for the term of office of the Government by the political leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – three of its ministers and their subordinate secretaries (political appointees). In the Foreign Service network, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is exclusively responsible for the relations of Sweden with other states and international organizations, development cooperation and international trade policy. Three ministers appointed by the Government are responsible for these three areas of the Ministry's activity: Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for International Development Cooperation and Minister for Trade and Nordic Affairs. Each minister also has politically appointed secretaries (state secretaries) and together they form the Ministry's political leadership, which sets out the strategic direction of the Ministry and approves the strategy for the government's term of office.

The foreign policy Strategy is based on and is coordinated with Sweden's 2030 Agenda, the Swedish Government feminist foreign policy for the relevant period⁴², the Paris Agreement and the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy. It aims to establish a political vision for the Government's term of office and sets out how the organization needs to develop and improve in order to deliver the mandate given to it. The Strategy provides a vision for human resource and skill management and sets out how to attract skilled professionals. Subsequently, on the basis of this strategy, the departments of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, representations abroad and other agencies prepare their operational plans, indicating how they plan to contribute to the policy objectives set out in the Strategy. The following are current foreign policy objectives of enshrined in the Strategy:

- A strong and cohesive EU
- Drive for democracy
- Shared responsibility for peace and security
- A strong rules-based multilateral world order
- Sustainable development to combat poverty and oppression
- Active diplomacy
- Enhanced feminist foreign policy
- Free, fair and sustainable global trade
- Export initiative for more jobs throughout the country
- Enhanced consular assistance abroad

The managers and staff of departments also propose measures to achieve these political objectives. During the annual analysis, based on operational dialogues and resource planning, it is assessed whether a review of the entire Strategy or part thereof is required. The monitoring of measures and activities provided for in the operational plan of the Swedish Foreign Office is performed on an annual basis and the leadership group of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is notified about it.

41. The Strategy is not publicly available. The representatives of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs shared this document with the authors of the study.

42. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Swedish Foreign Service Action Plan for Feminist Foreign Policy 2019–2022, Including Direction and Measures for 2021" (Government Offices of Sweden, n.d.).

3.4.2. Criteria for evaluating outcomes and processes

The daily work of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is carried out by around 30 departments responsible for a specific geographical area or area of activity, such as trade, development cooperation or international law. Heads of departments and missions abroad are responsible for ensuring that their activities are carried out in accordance with high standards, adapted to changing pace and global conditions. They are also responsible for ensuring good internal governance, accountability and systematic planning and monitoring of all activities.

In 2022, a strategy was developed through an inclusive process, which started back in 2017 and was further developed through discussions at the meetings of Swedish Ambassadors, regional meetings, meetings of the heads of departments, the Ministry's Cooperation Council, and departments and representations abroad. Altogether 10 main political goals of the Swedish Foreign Office were identified, and these became essential guidelines for the operational plans of the various departments, embassies, foreign representations and agencies. These goals are distributed among the different Foreign Service entities during the operational dialogues, when it is planned how best to achieve them in the day-to-day activities.

Strategy 2022 and its policy objectives help departments and representations abroad to define their operational priorities. It consists of three closely linked and mutually reinforcing elements: a policy vision, organizational work methods and management of human resources and skills. All these parts are discussed in detail within the framework of operational dialogues in order to not only achieve a coherent foreign policy, but also a unified organizational culture.

Figure 6. The model of the performance monitoring and evaluation system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden

Areas of activity	Consular activities	Economic diplomacy	Foreign policy
Evaluation levels			
Awareness and reputation	n/a (department of communication)	n/a (department of communication)	n/a (department of communication)
Implementation	Operational dialogues + administrative indicators	Operational dialogues + administrative indicators	Operational dialogues + administrative indicators
Consequences	Operational dialogues	Operational dialogues	Operational dialogues

3.4.3. Ensuring accountability and learning

The key method for coordinating relations between different departments, embassies, representations, and agencies abroad is operational dialogues. They contribute to setting priorities and implementing the Strategy and key policy priorities. These operational dialogues are a key element of the planning and follow-up procedure.

These dialogues aim to ensure both further planning and accountability for already completed activities. They are both hierarchical and non-hierarchical, depending on the nature of the relationship: senior officials, directly subordinate to the authority of the political leadership, lead operational dialogues at the level of the departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Meanwhile, different departments appointed to monitor different representations or agencies lead operational dialogues with representations abroad, which are entities independent from the MFA. Such dialogues are much more focused on information exchange, cooperation, assistance and learning rather than on accountability.

In summary, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not have an indicators-based system of evaluation, and the assurance of control and efficiency is conducted by way of a dialogue, by preparing operational plans

that the departments or agencies seek to implement or to contribute to the implementation of one or more of the 10 policy goals set out in the Strategy. Regular interviews, called operational dialogues, ensure accountability and learning, and are used to identify potential risks and evaluate outcomes.

3.4.4. Summary of case studies

The case study analysis has shown that all the countries have systems for MFA performance evaluation in place which are at least partially quality oriented. The Swedish case stands out for its quantitative metrics applied only to a limited extent and formally in evaluating and reporting on the budget expenditure. Meanwhile, the progress and outcomes in achieving all strategic foreign policy objectives are evaluated in Sweden by way of a specific method of operational dialogues. Through regular dialogues between departments, representations and agencies, the compliance of the operational plans and outcomes with the strategic foreign policy objectives set by the current government for a period of four years is evaluated. Until 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia did not have a unified foreign policy evaluation system. Today its performance is evaluated on a set of indicators which, in addition to international indices and official state statistics, also includes an expert/qualitative assessment. Although Estonia has continued to develop its evaluation and accountability system during the preparation of this study, it is important to highlight that the information provided by the indicators used by the Estonian MFA in the process of evaluation and accountability is and will be interpreted on the basis of qualitative methods. In the Netherlands, less complex evaluations related to operational indicators are carried out at the level of different MFA departments, and larger and more complex evaluations are carried out by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB). Within the scope of such evaluations, IOB establishes indicators that provide the most relevant information for the evaluation; IOB also uses evaluations performed at the level of MFA departments. The IOB seeks to help policy makers better understand the causal links between policy actions and consequences and to plan activities in a way that facilitates their measurement and evaluation. In terms of its functions, New Zealand's Strategy and Performance Division is similar to the Dutch IOB. The responsibility of the division is to assist the Ministry in setting a strategic direction and to assist specific departments in converting complex foreign policy objectives into coherent and feasible action plans. Finally, the division is responsible for the evaluation and analysis of MFAT's activities and changes in the international environment that are relevant to the Ministry.

In conclusion, the representatives of the foreign policy ministries of all the countries studied consider performance analysis as a multi-faceted, complex process, for which quantitative metrics are not sufficient. All the respondents emphasized that due to the specifics of foreign policy processes, standard and quantitative indicators and standard budgetary evaluation cycles are often inappropriate for performance evaluation. Therefore, as the case study analysis has shown, the most effective and most appropriate evaluation approaches are constantly evolving. The search for indicators that help measure the efficiency and quality of MFA activities is a continuous and complex process. In order to identify suitable data and/or change indicators, their interpretation and significance must be considered at the political level. The relationship between an MFA's activities, their outputs, outcomes and political impacts is usually not linear or unambiguous. So, the inclusion of a qualitative methodology and analysis in an MFA performance evaluation has become an integral element of a properly functioning strategic planning and evaluation system. The extent to which and the way how such evaluation should be carried out (e.g., by external experts or an internal analytical department) depends on the specific choice and options of the specific MFA.

4. Summary and recommendations

The purpose of this study was to assess whether the existing MFA performance monitoring and evaluation systems – both in the context of the Lithuanian strategic planning system and within the Ministry – are suitable for evaluating the contribution of the Lithuanian MFA to the development of the state and the implementation of the state’s strategic objectives. Based on the analysis of the primary strategic planning documents of Lithuania and the MFA, scientific literature, best practices of foreign countries and the of current MFA activities, the concept of “value” created by foreign policy was conceived broadly. More specifically, the study was based on the following assumptions about the value of foreign policy:

- foreign policy can create value both directly and indirectly
- value can be created by both progress-oriented and ongoing foreign policy activities
- value created by foreign policy can be both political and economic, and reputational
- the beneficiaries of the value created by foreign policy can be different target groups within and outside the state.

Such a complex perception of foreign policy and the value created by MFA determined the view that the MFA monitoring and evaluation system cannot be limited to the criteria of economic returns or focus only on measuring progress measures.

The analysis highlighted two more factors of particular relevance to the evaluation of the MFA activities. First, when assessing the value of MFA activities, it is necessary to understand when and how the value (or inability to achieve it) is attributable to the Ministry's activities, and where it is (or is not) determined by the activities of other state institutions. Second, when evaluating the MFA performance, it is necessary to identify where the value (or inability to achieve it) depends on the actions or influence of Lithuania, and where it is related to the activities of foreign entities and therefore is independent from the actions or influence of Lithuania. In short, the question of the attribution of value is essential for the evaluation of the MFA activities.

These insights have important consequences for thinking about an appropriate MFA monitoring and evaluation system and the role of indicators. First, given the complexity of the value created by MFA and the challenges of value attribution, it is clear that **proper assessment of MFA value can only be achieved through comprehensive, thematic evaluations of the foreign policy pursued by the MFA**. Second, no indicator can perform such an evaluation function because no indicator conveys information on the **causal relationship** between activities and impacts. Thus, the real **purpose of the indicators is to provide relevant information for policy evaluation**. Third, in order to ensure that the selected set of indicators effectively provides relevant information, it is important to not only carefully select the specific indicators and their sources but also to establish clear connections between the different objectives and levels of activity. Therefore, in order to build an efficient MFA monitoring and evaluation system, **the selected indicators must be set out according to a certain results framework or the theory of change**.

The analysis of practices of foreign countries supports these conclusions. The institutionalized policy evaluation practice is particularly strong in the evaluation system of the Dutch MFA; New Zealand's MFAT is currently reorienting its monitoring and evaluation system toward a model based on thematic qualitative evaluations; in Sweden, the policy evaluation function is performed by a unique process of an exceptionally qualitative methodological nature – “operational dialogues”. Even in the case of Estonia, where the quantitative indicators play a more prominent role, the indicators are ultimately only considered as a source of additional information for the annual qualitative review of foreign policy activities and implementation of the strategic objectives of Estonia’s MFA. Representatives of all four foreign ministries stressed the importance of causal logic (theory of change) in strategic planning and evaluation processes.

In order to select what design of a monitoring and evaluation system – i.e., the evaluation processes, set of indicators, and their logical structure – is most suitable for the Lithuanian MFA, three qualitatively different areas of MFA activities were identified: consular services, economic diplomacy, and “high” foreign policy. It must be emphasized that the three areas differ in terms of activities and the information relevant for the monitoring and evaluation of these activities:

1. In the context of evaluation of consular services, it is important to establish the relationship between the quality of these activities (processes), the quantity and the variety of their outputs, and customer satisfaction.

2. In the context of evaluation of economic diplomacy, it is important to establish the relationship between MFA activities and outputs, the satisfaction of stakeholders, and the various objective economic criteria (depending on the specific issue, e.g., FDI, GDP growth, export flows).
3. In the context of evaluation of foreign policy, it is important to establish the relationship between MFA activities and outputs, public opinion, the satisfaction of other state institutions, and the various qualitative foreign policy success criteria (depending on the specific issue e.g., stability of relationships, reflection of interests, etc.).

However, it is noteworthy that the MFA activities in each of the above-mentioned areas ultimately contribute to the delivery of the general strategic objectives of the state's foreign policy, which go beyond the limits of the specific area. This condition further strengthens the need for comprehensive and targeted political evaluations.

By identifying three qualitatively different areas of MFA activities, it is also important to identify different types of information required to measure foreign policy activities. Based on the methodological literature for policy monitoring and evaluation, three levels of information required for foreign policy evaluation can be distinguished:

- Subjective evaluation: information on customer satisfaction, opinion of target groups, and support and understanding of the public, and/or the level of information. Such information is collected by way of sociological surveys, direct feedback, and evaluation forms.
- Operational level: information on the type of the activities, process quality, and output quantity and variety. Such information is collected in the departments by means of regular activity reports.
- Political level: information on politically important changes in the area of activity. Such information is collected on a specific foreign policy area (e.g., economic data, international indices, security situation assessment).

Information on the MFA activities at all three levels clarifies causal links or their absence, thus providing the necessary source for qualitative evaluation.

Identification and amalgamation of three different areas of MFA activities and three different levels of information relevant for the measurement of the MFA value, provides a monitoring and evaluation system which can be represented as a 3x3 matrix (see the section on Methodology and Annex A). Recommendations for the inclusion/modification of specific indicators and the structure of the set of indicators will be presented on the basis of this matrix.

No	Problem or risk	Recommendations	Responsible authority/bodies	Timeframe for implementation
1.	<p>According to the current logic of the Lithuanian strategic planning system and the Law on Strategic Governance of the Republic of Lithuania (Articles 6 and 7), the MFA strategic planning documents must be based on the progress objectives attributed to the MFA's competence in the National Plan for Progress (NPP) and reflect the activities planned for the implementation of the objectives.</p> <p>The progress targets and measurement indicators developed for the NPP are not suitable for the MFA for following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goal No. 9 "to strengthen Lithuania's influence in the world and relations with the diaspora" (hereinafter – goal No. 9) contains two implicitly related, but different elements. Strengthening relations with the diaspora is not identical to strengthening Lithuania's influence in the world but is rather part of increasing the influence. - Indicator (population survey) of goal No. 9. This indicator, measured by a population survey, is not suitable, because it does not show to what extent the outcome is related to the MFA activities and to what extent it is related to the MFA communication; the outcomes do not necessarily reflect a clear public perception of the implemented changes. It is also difficult to interpret such an indicator objectively: it is too abstract, so that its results can be translated into analytical recommendations for performance improvement. - Goal No. 9 "to strengthen Lithuania's influence in the world and relations with the diaspora" and objective No. 9.1 "to strengthen representation of Lithuania's interests in the international arena and diaspora policy" (hereinafter – objective No. 9.1) are in essence 	<p>In view of the identified problems, it is recommended to make the following amendments to the formulation of the goals, objectives and indicators attributed to the competence of MFA in the Strategic Planning System of the Republic of Lithuania:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. To reformulate NPP goal No 9 to read as follows: "to strengthen Lithuania's influence and global role in the world". "To strengthen relations with the diaspora" should be one of the objectives which will contribute to achieving the goal. 1.2. To replace the indicator "population survey" of NPP goal No. 9 with the "soft power" sub-index of the Elcano Global Presence Index.⁴³ The soft power sub-index is part of the Elcano power index, which distinguishes the soft power elements attributable to foreign policy from the state's exclusive economic or military power. This sub-index would complement the measurement of the NPP objectives with the objective information on the situation of Lithuania globally and how it changes with time. 1.3. To attribute the following objectives to goal No. 9: 9.1. Strengthen Lithuania's representation; 9.2. Strengthen relations with the diaspora. 1.4. To attribute the following indicators to NPP goal No. 9: 9.1.1. The number of representatives of Lithuania elected to leadership or expert positions of international organizations by applying several category coefficients to the positions (in order to evaluate not only the number of positions, but also their weight); 9.1.2. Ranking of Lithuania in the EU Coalition Explorer index (EU countries); 9.1.3. Visibility of Lithuania in seven target foreign countries⁴⁴; 9.1.4. Lithuania's 	<p>MFA (submits a proposal)</p> <p>Government</p> <p>Ministry of Finance</p>	<p>Prepare until the next NPP review cycle</p>

43. Elcano index: <https://www.globalpresence.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/about>

44. https://www.esinvesticijos.lt/lt/rezultatai-ir-statistika/sukurti_produkta/lietuvos-zinomumo-ir-reputacijos-tikslinese-uzsienio-salyse-ir-salies-gyventoju-lietuvos-vertinimo-tyrimas

	<p>identical, there is no conceptual separation between the goal and the steps needed to achieve it: activities, outputs, and outcomes, and there is no possibility to determine in which step the change took place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not all indicators attributed to objective No. 9.1 are correct. For example, indicator No. 9.1.3. “The proportion of financing (of the gross national product) for development cooperation activities eligible for official development assistance” provides information on the financial input of the MFA, but does not provide information on the achieved outcomes. At the same time, in the recommendations section regarding analytical consistency, we suggest separating the element of diaspora and the corresponding indicator into a separate objective. <p>The planning and evaluation of the MFA internal activities are closely linked to the NPP objectives. The inconsistencies concerning the formulation and measurement of the objectives cause inconsistencies in the MFA strategic planning documents for the NPP implementation.</p>	<p>ranking in the KOF Globalisation Index (calculated according to the DPI methodology ⁴⁵).</p> <p>1.5. To attribute the following indicator to objective No. 9.2: 9.2.1. Share of Lithuanians abroad who have taken part in the life of Lithuania and its wealth creation.</p>		
<p>2.</p>	<p>The internal evaluation system of the MFA activities included in the annually updated MFA’s strategic operational plans (SOP) contains indicators to measure the implementation of the MFA objectives and measures. In view of the scope of the study, the monitoring and evaluation system for the performance of the programme for foreign policy functions in the new – 2022–2024 SOP is analysed.</p> <p>The first objective of the MFA SOP foreign policy programme and the indicators attributed to it are identical to the NPP objective No. 9.1 and its indicators. Hence, they exhibit the same problems as noted above in discussion of the NPP objective No. 9.1.</p> <p>The current system of the programme is inappropriate for the following reasons:</p>	<p>In view of the identified problems, it is recommended to make the following amendments to the performance monitoring and evaluation system for the internal MFA activities:</p> <p>2.1. In order to optimize the information provided by indicators, we recommend supplementing/modifying the current set of indicators and its structure. Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to replace the indicator of objective No. 1 instrument No. 1 with different indicators suitable to measure the opinions of specific MFA target groups (including the public). - the indicators for objective No. 2 and objective No. 2 instrument No. 1 must be differentiated according to the type of information relevant for 	<p>MFA</p>	<p>During the preparation of the next MFA SOP</p>

45. See p. 9; DPI index: <https://pardee.du.edu/sites/default/files/Power%20Codebook%2020180702.pdf>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The indicator for objective No. 1 instrument No. 1 “favourable opinion of the population about the Lithuanian diplomatic service” does not provide sufficient relevant information to measure and evaluate the implementation of this measure and its value. The interpretation of the indicator is also complicated by the fact that it does not show to what extent the outcomes are related to the activities of the MFA and to what extent they are related to the MFA communication. Finally, this subjective opinion indicator is not sufficiently differentiated in relation to target groups. - The indicator for objective No. 2 does not provide sufficient information required for the evaluation of the implementation of this objective (ongoing MFA activities, outputs and outcomes). The indicator is not sufficiently precise: e.g., it is not clear whether it entails participation in high level meetings or organization of such meetings. - The indicators for objective No. 2 policy instrument No. 1 do not provide sufficient information relevant for the evaluation of the measure. Specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The first indicator of this policy instrument does not differentiate between the outcomes of the MFA’s international and internal activities. o The second indicator does not indicate whether the initiatives in question must be organized by Lithuania and in what format (bilateral, EU, multilateral, public diplomacy) they must operate. o The third indicator does not differentiate between participation in regular meetings and the meetings organized on the initiative of Lithuania, and between different formats of such meetings. o Finally, the indicators provided for the policy instrument do not provide information on other activities related to the formation and implementation of foreign policy, e.g., the relationship between planned/unplanned activities. 	<p style="text-align: center;">the evaluation (e.g., activity, output). We recommend making these amendments using 3x3 matrix and results framework approach (see Annexes A and B).</p> <p>2.2. To institutionalize the qualitative evaluation function in the MFA. Given the examples of other countries (Estonia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Sweden), qualitative policy evaluation helps provide context and meaning to quantitative indicators, to reveal the value of MFA activities and their attribution to activities, outputs and outcomes. Given these practices, we recommend that a regular qualitative evaluation function be set up by providing two possible alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A priority alternative: Establish an evaluation division within the MFA to evaluate functions. This division would employ qualitative policy evaluation methodology experts and carry out regular evaluation of the political objectives pursued by the MFA. This division would also provide advice to other divisions on how to formulate appropriate internal objectives, deliverables, outputs and planned activities, coordinate tasks related to the evaluation of opinions of target groups, promote learning, cooperation, and coordination between different divisions in order to achieve the overall goals of the MFA. High setting-up costs would pay off in the long term, because internal experts would learn and become part of the MFA activities and have access to evaluation-sensitive important material. <i>Advantages:</i> data collection and evaluation would be carried out in a consistent manner, in the course of political processes themselves, with less distortion of information, because the information would circulate internally, and confidentiality would be ensured. <i>Disadvantages:</i> the risk of bias and institutional dependency and, consequently, the lack of objectivity; potential costs are higher than for external evaluators (see Annex C). - Secondary option: The MFA commissions external experts to carry out the evaluation 		
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	<p>- No indicator is provided for objective No. 2 instrument No. 3.</p>	<p>analysis. <i>Advantages:</i> greater objectivity and independence from the MFA hierarchy; potentially lower costs. <i>Disadvantages:</i> restrictions on the transfer of information to external experts; procedures for the acquisition of expert services (time costs); and possible incoherence of evaluation due to changing experts.</p>		
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Annex A

The annex provides a model MFA performance monitoring and evaluation system developed in accordance with Recommendation 2.1. In this system, the sets of indicators for measuring specific goals, objectives and measures of MFA activities are divided into three main MFA areas of activity and cover all three assessment levels. Indicators to measure the information relevant for the evaluation of implementation and impact include four key components of the results framework: activities and outputs (implementation), and outcomes and impact (consequences); inputs can be monitored separately (*see Annex B*). The most appropriate indicators to measure policy impact would be identified within the scope of the targeted evaluations. Such evaluations would be based on qualitative studies. During such studies, data provided by indicators would be interpreted in order to establish causal links, which would allow to evaluate the impact of MFA activities and the scope of implementation of the relevant policy objectives. These evaluations would be carried out by a newly established evaluation unit or external experts (according to Recommendation 2.2; *see also Annex C*).

Figure 7. A model MFA performance monitoring and evaluation system

AREAS OF ACTIVITY	Consular activities	Economic diplomacy	Foreign policy
EVALUATION LEVELS			
Awareness and reputation	<p>Customer satisfaction surveys: Lithuanian citizens making international travel; Lithuanian citizens living abroad; foreigners</p>	<p>Target group satisfaction surveys: business associations, other public institutions operating in the field of economic diplomacy (Invest Lithuania, Ministry of Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania, etc.); foreign companies</p>	<p>Public opinion polls. Survey of diaspora members. Views of Lithuania in foreign media and social networks.</p>
Implementation	<p>Activities: timely implemented inquiries (% of all inquiries) Outputs: issued visas, document authentication, etc.</p>	<p>Activities: overview of completed activities (participation in events, representation at international negotiations, etc.); implemented inquiries (% of all enquiries); unplanned activities (% of all activities) Outputs: positions submitted to Lithuanian or international institutions, organized meetings, visits by investors, etc.</p>	<p>Activities: overview of completed activities (participation in events, representation at international negotiations, etc.); implemented inquiries (% of all enquiries); unplanned activities (% of all activities) Outputs: positions submitted to Lithuanian or international institutions, organized meetings, visits by investors, etc.</p>
Consequences	<p>Outcome and impact indicators relevant in the field of activity: defending the legitimate interests of Lithuanian citizens in foreign countries, travel flows, involvement of citizens living abroad in the life of the state, etc. Specific relevant indicators to be set within the scope of target evaluations. <i>For example:</i> Evaluation of the impact of the quality of consular activities on the reputation of the state and the Lithuanian diaspora policy.</p>	<p>Outcome and impact indicators relevant in the field of activity: reflection of Lithuania's interests in international trade agreements or in the development of the EU trade policy instruments, changes in export/import, government revenue, socio-economic indicators, etc. Specific relevant indicators to be set within the scope of target evaluations. <i>For example:</i> Evaluation of Lithuania's position in the EU trade agreements and their impact on the Lithuanian economy.</p>	<p>Outcome and impact indicators relevant in the field of activity: reflection of Lithuanian interests in international organizations or bilateral relations, stability of regional security, democracy quality indices in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood, etc. Specific relevant indicators to be set within the scope of target evaluations. <i>For example:</i> Evaluation of Lithuania's position in decisions regarding international sanctions by the EU and partners. Evaluation of the impact of the Lithuanian development cooperation policy on Lithuania's influence in partner countries.</p>

Annex B

Based on the model MFA performance monitoring and evaluation system provided in Annex A, two possible examples for monitoring and evaluation of specific MFA policy programmes have been developed based on the results framework. The examples illustrate how the internal MFA evaluation can be organized by integrating the regular performance evaluation within the scope of the annual budget and/or strategic planning cycle and the target evaluation of consequences depending on the need for any such evaluation, the feasibility of a comprehensive and quality study and other objective circumstances.

Figure 8. A model scheme for monitoring and evaluating the representation of Lithuanian interests in the EU trade policy based on results framework

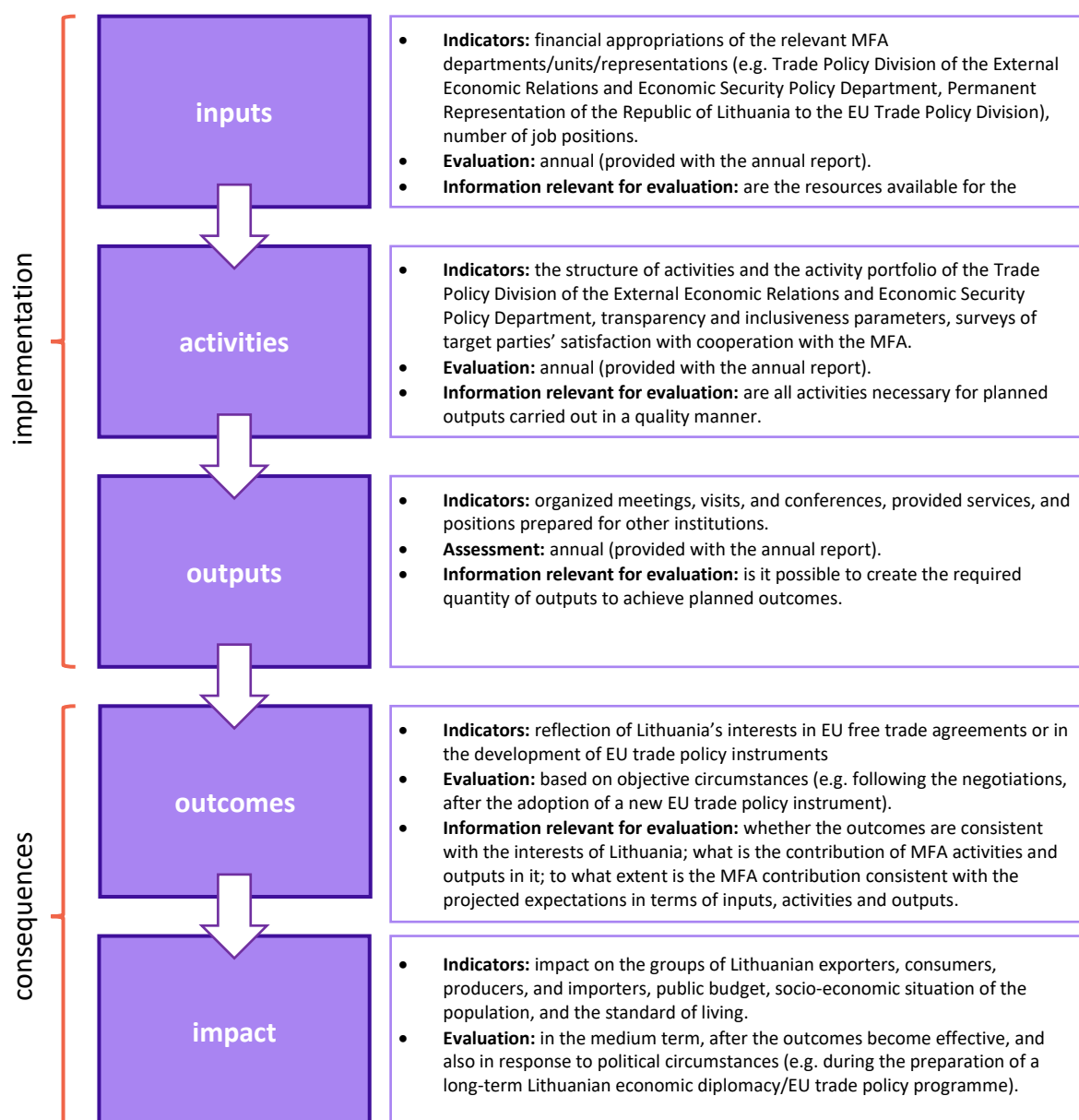
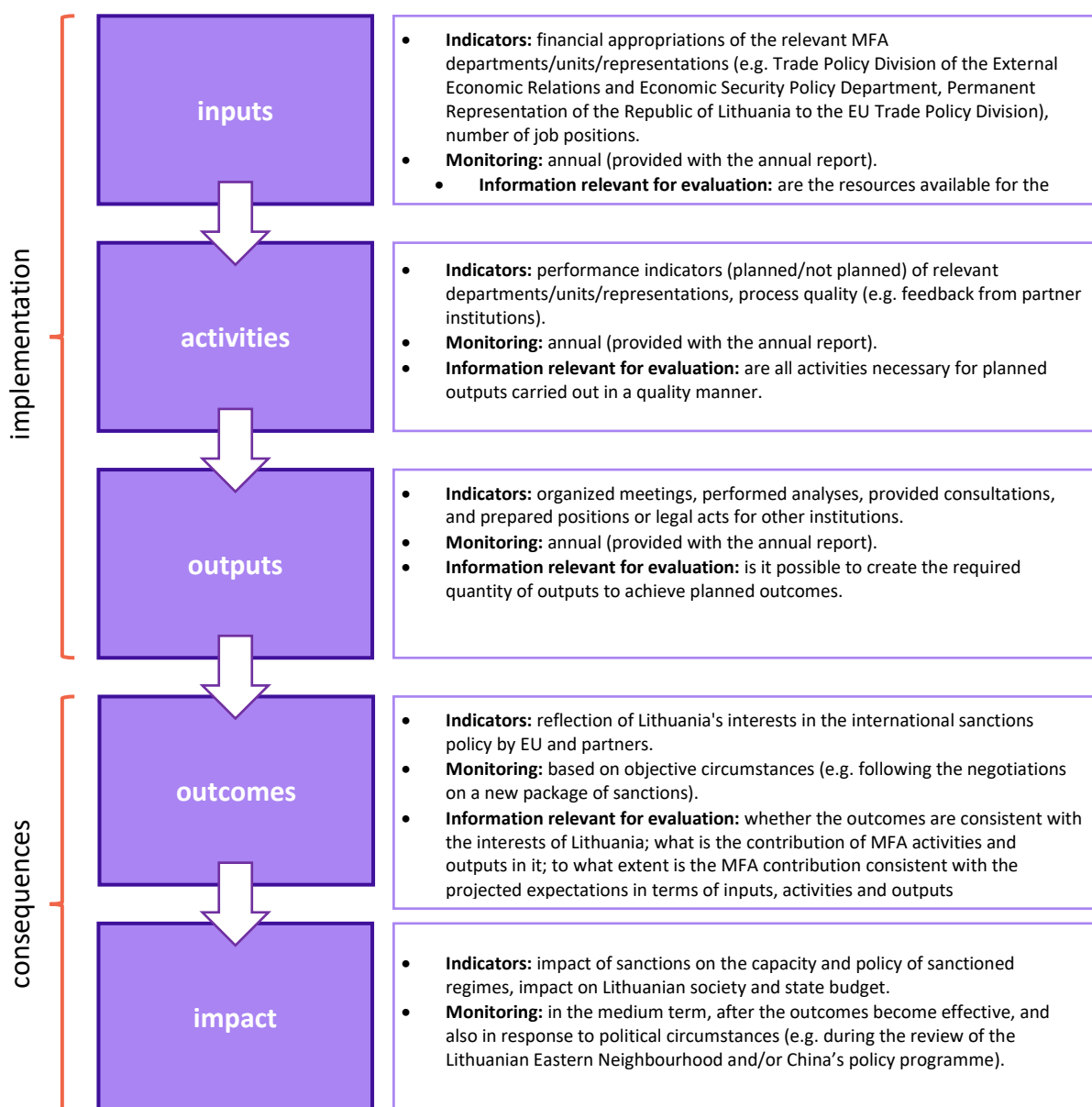


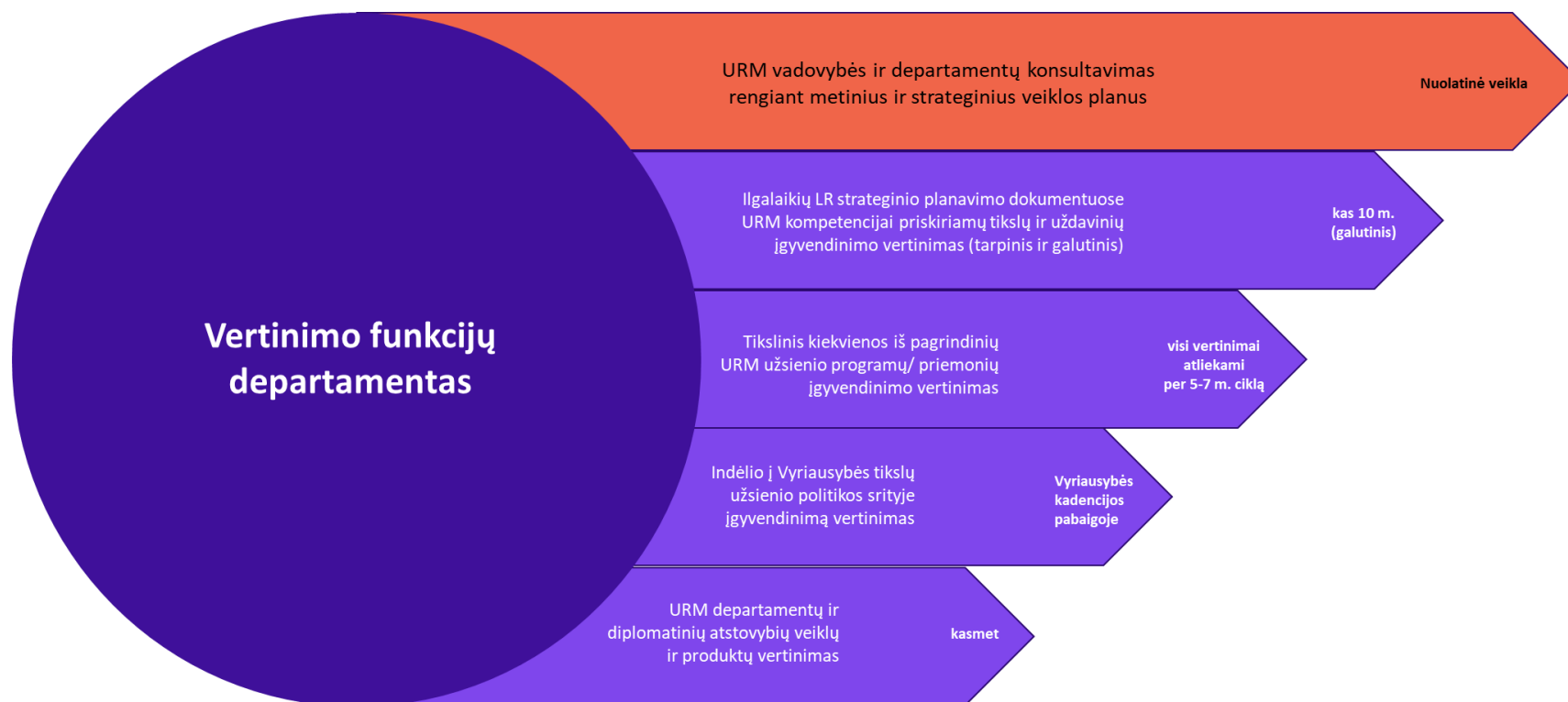
Figure 9. A model scheme for monitoring and evaluating the inclusion of Lithuania's positions in decisions regarding international sanctions by the EU and partners



Annex C

This annex provides a model operating scheme for the recommended MFA evaluation department (priority alternative of recommendation 2.2.). Based on the needs of the Ministry and good practices of foreign countries, such a department could perform both evaluation and advisory functions. Figure 4 provides a non-exhaustive list of activities and responsibilities of such a department which can be further amended. The MFA evaluation department, where appropriate, should cooperate with other institutions that ensure policy accountability, e.g., the National Audit Office of the Republic of Lithuania, the MFA Audit Department of, etc.

Figure 10. A model strategic scheme for planning the operations of the MFA evaluation department



Evaluation Department	Consultancy to the MFA leadership and departments during preparation of annual and strategic operational plans	Permanent
	Intermediate and final evaluation of the implementation of long-term goals and objectives of strategic planning documents for Lithuania assigned to MFA competence	Every 10 years (final)
	Target evaluation of the implementation of each of the main MFA foreign programmes/measures	Over a 5-7 year cycle
	Evaluation of the contribution to the implementation of the Government's objectives in the area of foreign policy	At the end of the government term in office
	Evaluation of activities and outputs of MFA departments and diplomatic missions	Annually

Based on the diagram in Figure 4, below is a brief explanation of the possible activities of the recommended evaluation department:

1. Consultancy activities

- 1.1. To provide consultancy to the MFA leadership and the strategic planning department during preparation of strategic operational plans of the Ministry. The scope of consultancy entails assessment as to whether the goals and objectives of strategic operational plans are measurable, what information is required to evaluate their implementation and whether this information is available, and what activities and outputs are required to achieve these goals and objectives (consultancy in terms of the theory of change).
- 1.2. To provide consultancy to individual MFA departments and Lithuanian diplomatic missions during preparation of their annual operational plans. The scope of consultancy entails evaluation as to whether the goals and objectives of the operational plans are measurable, what information is required to evaluate their implementation and whether this information is available, and what activities and outputs are required to achieve these goals and objectives (consultancy in terms of the theory of change).

2. Evaluation activities

- 2.1. To perform interim and final evaluations of the implementation of goals and objectives of strategic planning documents for Lithuania assigned to MFA competence. For example, the department could carry out a detailed evaluation of the implementation of the 2021–2030 NPP goal No. 9 and related objective (either separately or in coordination with other evaluation bodies) at the end of the NPP term, and also an interim evaluation in 2025. Such evaluation could offer recommendations both in terms of MFA activities (i.e., what must be adjusted) and the NPP goal and objectives (i.e., whether adjustments are required). During these evaluations, the department could use information on the Ministry's activities and outputs collected during the preparation of the MFA annual reports as one of the sources.
- 2.2. To perform targeted evaluations of the implementation of each of the main MFA programmes/measures incorporating all relevant areas and sub-areas of MFA activities (e.g., consular activities, economic diplomacy activities, specific foreign policy areas, such as development cooperation, Eastern Neighbourhood Policy, or coordination of activities in international institutions).

The department would undertake to evaluate, within a certain period (e.g., 5-7 years), each relevant area or sub-area of MFA activities. The timeframe for evaluations is agreed in consultation with the MFA leadership, the strategic planning department and the departments pursuing foreign policy, considering the development of foreign policy processes and other circumstances (e.g., coordination of EU affairs could be evaluated after the end of the five-year EU political cycle; coordination of trade policy could be evaluated after the conclusion of one or more of the EU free trade agreements, etc.) These evaluations would be based on a detailed qualitative analysis of the selected area/sub-area, and within this framework the most relevant MFA performance efficiency indicators would be identified. During these evaluations, the department could use information on the Ministry's activities and outputs collected during the preparation of the MFA annual reports as one of the sources.

- 2.3. To perform an evaluation of the contribution of the MFA to the implementation of the foreign policy objectives set out in the Government programme. At the end of the term of office of the Government, the MFA evaluation department could provide a consolidated assessment of all the Ministry's activities contributing to the implementation of the Government programme. Such a document could be presented to the new Seimas and the new Government in order to ensure a smooth and efficient transfer of power and to consider the completed work, ongoing processes, and other circumstances in shaping the foreign policy objectives of the new Government programme. During these evaluations, the department could use information on the Ministry's activities and outputs collected during the preparation of the MFA annual reports as one of the sources.
- 2.4. To contribute to the preparation of the MFA annual report. The evaluation department could assess whether the Ministry's activities and outputs for the reporting year are sufficient/of sufficient quality to achieve the long-term, strategic, and political goals and objectives of the Ministry (e.g., goals and objectives envisaged in the NPP, Government programme and/or SOP). More specifically, the department would evaluate whether the actual values of activities and outputs correspond to the values of foreign policy outcomes in the results framework (required in order to achieve the results and impacts) and what external and internal causes may determine the actual values (e.g., changes in the international environment; a sudden need to carry out unplanned activities). Since one-year period is usually too short to assess the outcomes and impact of the activities or outputs, a direct evaluation of these values would be inappropriate. Evaluation of activities and outputs – i.e., values for monitoring of which one-year period is appropriate – would allow to maintain the focus of the overall governance and evaluation system on outcomes and impact.

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