

The problem of evaluation of impact of EU structural support on the development of the territory of Lithuania

Donatas Burneika

*Lithuanian Social Research Centre,
A. Goštauto 11, LT-01108 Vilnius*

E-mail: donatas.geo@gmail.com

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It would be hard to seriously argue about the positive general influence of EU support on the economic development in such small (NUTS 2 size) and relatively poorly developed countries like Lithuania. However the actual impact of such support on spatial development inside the country is quite uncertain. The urban system with many medium size cities, which was developed in Lithuania during the Soviet period, ensures polycentric development of the country. Social relations between different regions and even municipalities are quite weak and rapid economic development in one part could make little impact on the quality of life in another. The paper aims to reveal the distribution of EU support inside the country, trying to verify a popular pre-assumption that most of the benefits of such support goes to major cities, especially capital Vilnius. Such pre-assumption often leads to the idea of necessity to change the principles of distribution of EU support and the whole regional governance of Lithuania. The author also tries to introduce alternative ways of measurement of impact of EU support on spatial development of the country, which would be based on the establishment of its impact on subjective indices such as quality of life or level of happiness in various localities. This paper stresses the need to pay attention to inter-subjective aspects of consequences of implementation of EU regional policy in different localities.

Key words: regional development, EU support, local development

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

The positive influence of EU support on the economic development in such a small and relatively poor EU country like Lithuania is quite obvious, because relatively such countries receive the highest funding. A lot of various studies have been carried out proving the positive impact of this support on European regions, though discussions of the degree of such impact are still active (Cepelen et al., 2003; Rodriguez-Pose, 2004). One of the most recent studies performed by a group of authors revealed that 1 Euro spent in Objective 1 regions on average increased GDP by 1.25 Euro proving that EU transfers are not only effective but

also cost-efficient (Becker et al., 2008). Such a positive impact should be especially evident during the period of economic recession, when available endogenous resources for investment drop drastically while the financing from the EU structural funds remains more or less at the same level.

One of the goals of this article is to reveal the spatial distribution of EU support inside NUTS 2 size country Lithuania, which does not have a clear historical regional structure at NUTS 3 level and municipalities are the main and only self-governing subjects of the country. The author is trying to verify a popular pre-assumption often stressed in local mass media that most of the benefits of such support go to the major cities, especially Vilnius. Such situation hypothetically increases

spatial imbalances of economic development and possibly raises tension among residents of different localities. Such pre-assumption often leads to the idea of the necessity to change principles of distribution of EU support and the whole regional governance of Lithuania by dividing it into 3–4 NUTS 2 regions. The idea of dividing the country into 4 NUTS 2 regions is grounded by the hypothetical need to establish Vilnius NUTS 2 region, which would have GDP per capita higher than 75% of the EU average. Rapidly developing capital city would not receive support from the EU structural funds thus assuring higher funding for the remaining regions.

The problems of measurement of distribution of EU support inside NUTS 2 regions and disclosure of the actual beneficiaries of such a support are being discussed in this article too. The author tries to raise discussion about alternative ways of assessment of impact of EU support on regional development, which should mostly concentrate on the studies of those to whom this support is finally assigned, e.g. residents of Lithuania or some other NUTS 2 region.

The evaluation of the impact of EU regional policy on regional development is a necessary stage of its implementation but its impact on the spatial development of the areas lower than NUTS 3 regions is analysed exceptionally rarely. Even the impact of support on NUTS 3 regions is analysed more often dealing with separate financial instruments than with the whole EU support. Even such analysis faces quite great problems due to the lack of available data (Shucksmith et al., 2005). Many authors noticed problems related to quite uneven economic development inside NUTS 2 level regions. In some cases quite well developed NUTS 3 regions receive support while quite poor regions do not (Becker et al., 2008). The problem of evaluation of such impact on NUTS 3 regions was recently raised by Lithuanian researchers J. Bruneckiene and R. Krusinskas who also stress the permanent need of such studies, because in fact actual outcomes on the regional level are not clear (Bruneckiene, Krusinskas, 2011). The first attempt to analyse the impact of EU support on the development of municipalities was carried out by M. Radcenko at Vilnius university in 2008, but at that time the programming period was incomplete (Radcenko, 2008).

Whole Lithuania is a single NUTS 2 region, but economic differences inside the country are huge. The previous studies of the author revealed that the existing NUTS 3 regions are not entirely suitable for measurement of spatial differences of economic development inside Lithuania. Counties do not function as single spatial economic systems and in many cases economic differences inside them are much higher than imbalances between them (Burneika, 2007). The establishment of differences of spatial imbalances of the development of the country at municipal level could help to reveal other regularities and trends.

The broadest goal of this article is to raise a question of establishment of possible impact of EU support on economic growth and life quality at municipal or NUTS 4 level. Firstly, formal distribution of EU support in relation with the existing spatial differences of economic development of the country is to be analysed. The main problem of this part of the research is related to the fact that there are no statistical data which could help to assess general economic development at the municipal level. In order to overcome this obstacle the author employed the technique which permits to compare the differences of the most important parts of GDP. Spatial irregularities of economic development will be analysed comparing the differences of gross value added created by employees and collected profit taxes in municipalities. Compensation for employees and profit make up the highest portion of GDP in Lithuania. The author tries to find out if the official statistics illustrate greater development of the largest cities (especially Vilnius) and if they really receive most of EU support as many politicians and mass media claim.

The second task of this article is to raise questions on reliability of the official data and discuss possibilities of establishment of real trends. Thus the second part of the research starts with the doubt that the official statistics can illustrate a real spatial pattern of the distribution of such a support and tries to offer ways of its identification and verification. The author discusses the problem of the evaluation of real impact of EU support on regional development stressing the impact not on statistical figures but on human beings. How the received support and perceived changes of quality of life correspond in various

areas should be the key question of a deeper research. The impact of EU support on development and even on quality of life could be measured by empirical data (e. g. received money per capita, or comparison with regions GDP) but it is quite difficult to reveal how the official statistical figures relate to the actual situation, actual impact on economy and especially on subjective understanding of various groups of population regarding the impact of this support on their life quality. This kind of study would deal with subjective understanding and vision of tentative impact of this support on people's personal life or prosperity of their business. Sociological polls, field trips and some post positivistic approaches, for example based on social constructivism, would be useful for making representations in this case.

PECULIARITIES OF DEVELOPMENT OF LITHUANIAN TERRITORY IN NEW MILLENNIUM

There has been much speculation in various popular Lithuanian publications concerning much faster economic development of the largest cities, especially Vilnius, during recent years. Such an opinion is widely accepted for granted. In fact faster development of capital cities was common for all new democratic countries of Central Europe from the very beginning of market reforms (Bachler, Downs, 1999). This was especially evident during first years of market economy. Up to now in mass media it is widely regarded that "all benefits of economic development go to the capital city", however, there were no official data illustrating the actual pace of economic growth in smaller territorial units than counties. The author's previous calculations revealed that county level cannot be regarded as a reliable dimension for the analysis of regional differences in economic development. It would rather conceal than reveal because differences of GDP per capita are often higher inside one county than those between counties. The county itself cannot be regarded as an economic system, because there are very few inside factors consolidating it into one entity (no common policy, no individual planning, no budget, tax systems, etc.). There is no such phenomenon as the "economy of a county" (Burneika, 2007).

10 NUTS 3 regions (counties) of the country were created bureaucratically joining several municipalities into the central one. They do not present any historical or cultural or economic entities. Actually, it's a result of Soviet central planning when Lithuanian urban system with 10–12 medium size cities was developed. This development, quite optimal for Soviet command economy system, was based on the modified ideas of W. Christaller and ensured polycentric development of the country (the main initial idea was the prevention of growth of the largest cities and development of new regional centres). At present such heritage creates a lot of problems of social development. Social and even economic relations between different regions are quite weak and rapid economic development in one part makes little impact on the quality of life in another. Growing differences inside the country could increase social tension and facilitate emigrational processes, which could help to solve some social problems *in situ* but may cause other problems. Weak economic and especially social relations with major cities result in growing emigration to western European countries, which offer not only higher salaries but also a better psychological environment (e. g. one could find more relatives and friends in Ireland or London than in Vilnius). Finally, artificially delayed urbanisation processes during the Soviet regime resume but gain international dimension thus increasing depopulation of the country.

The previous researchers illustrated tremendous spatial differences of economic development inside Lithuania which have been taking place here till the beginning of the new millennium. Differences of GDP per capita reached 5 times in different municipalities (GDP per capita in municipalities was calculated according to differences of employment, salaries and gathered profit tax in different municipalities of the county) (Burneika, 2007). Such differences did not disappear during recent period but they were not growing either. Fig. 1 illustrates relative differences of GVA (gross value added) per capita created by employees in municipalities, which reached 3 times in 2009.

The compensation for employees comprises the biggest part of GDP in Lithuania (45% in 2009), profit and mixed income take the second place (30% in 2009) (<http://db1.stat.gov.lt/statbank/Se->

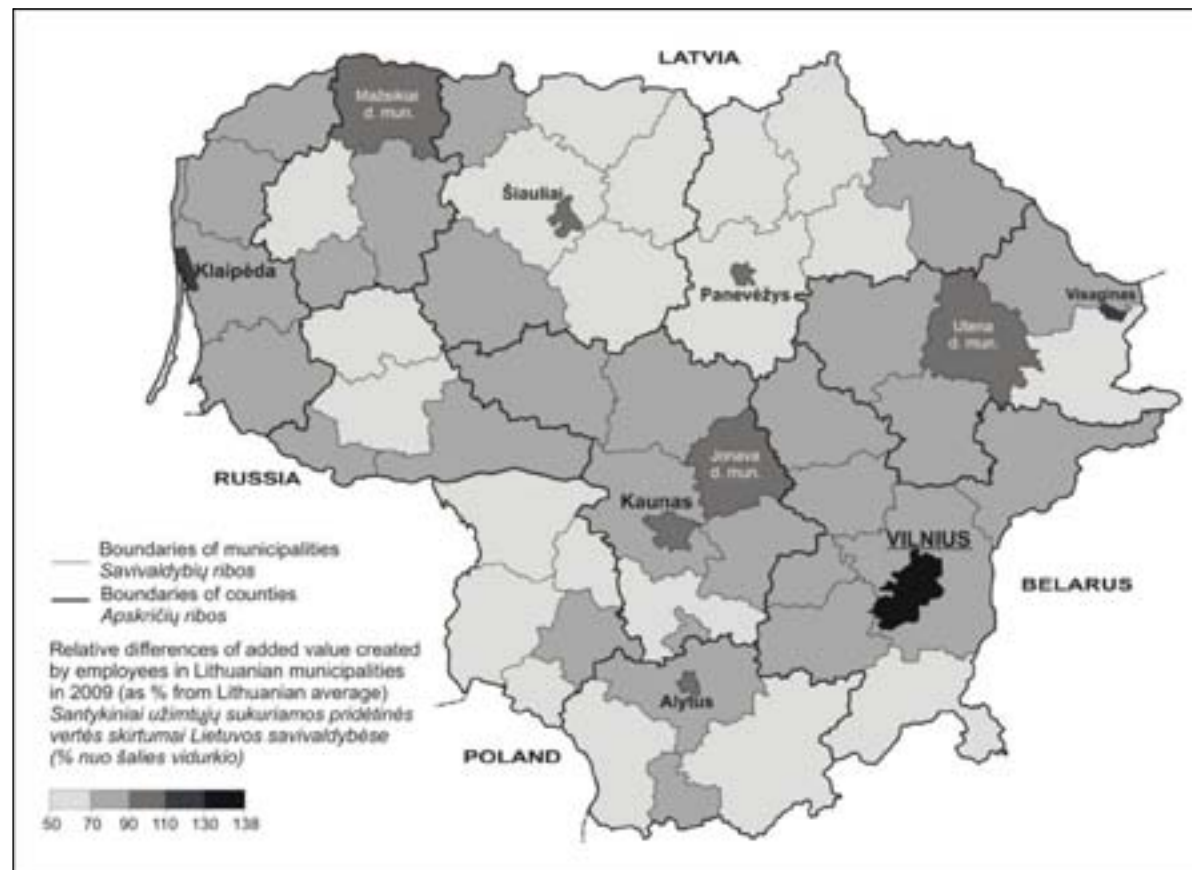


Fig. 1. Relative differences of added value per capita created by employees in Lithuanian municipalities in 2009 (based on the data of Department of Statistics of Lithuania. <http://db1.stat.gov.lt/statbank/default.asp?w=1024>)
 1 pav. Užimtųjų sukuriamosios pridėtinės vertės vienam gyventojui santykiniai skirtumai Lietuvos savivaldybėse 2009 m. (Lietuvos statistikos departamento duomenys. <http://db1.stat.gov.lt/statbank/default.asp?w=1024>)

lectVarVal/saveselections.asp). In order to illustrate real spatial imbalances of economy in the country, one should pay attention to differences of profit as well. Not surprisingly, differences of profit are much higher (Fig. 2). Actually 62.8% of all gathered profit taxes were collected in Vilnius city municipality. There are very few other municipalities capable to create profit exceeding country's average. Although 2009 was not the most prosperous year of Lithuanian economy, obviously situation in Vilnius grew worse in 2010, when the amount of gathered profit tax dropped twofold and its share reduced to 47.8%.

Of course these high imbalances are also related to great differences of social structure in different parts of the country and some other non-economic factors but obviously some municipalities have got very few value added activities in their territories. Obviously the capital city is the most

economically advanced place, though statements that its development continues to be the fastest are weakly reasoned. Such popular opinion is also related to mass media, which tends to be highly critical of everything in Lithuania (in this case of Government's inability to ensure proper development of peripheral regions). De facto such an unevenness of the spatial development reached its peak in 2001 but since then the trends have changed. The pace of development of Vilnius was not in any way exceptional and GDP per capita in many municipalities was growing faster during recent years.

The short history of development of Lithuanian market economy permits to make an assumption that the highest spatial economic disparities occur during periods of economic recession, while during periods of relatively stable economic development spatial differences used to evolve much more slowly or even start disappearing as in re-

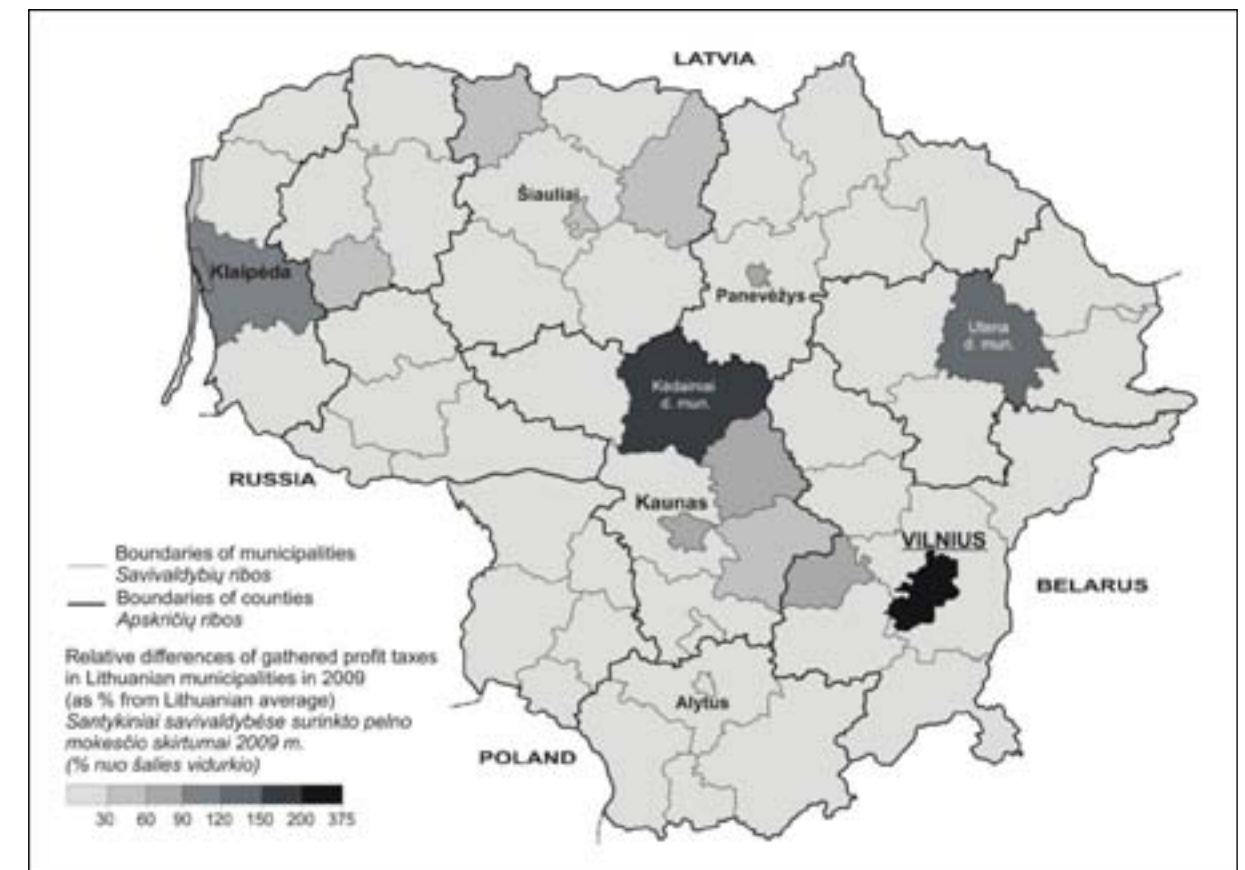


Fig. 2. Relative differences of gathered profit tax per capita in Lithuanian municipalities in 2009 (according to the data of State Tax Inspection. <http://www.vmi.lt>)
 2 pav. Surenkamo pelno mokesčio vienam gyventojui santykiniai skirtumai Lietuvos savivaldybėse 2009 m. (Valstybinės mokesčių inspekcijos duomenys. <http://www.vmi.lt>)

cent years. The preliminary analysis of the economic crisis of 2008–2009 suggests that the largest cities, especially Vilnius, this time will have more severe impact compared with peripheral regions, as agricultural sector was not affected so badly as construction sector. The data from Lithuanian Labour Exchange and from the Bank of Lithuania also confirm that this time the major effect can be felt in the capital and other large cities. For example, the amount of deposit accounts in commercial banks grew in the whole country, with the exception of Vilnius county, during the first quarter of 2009, when the crisis hit the country most seriously (<http://www.lb.lt/home/default.asp>). In some rural municipalities, the growth constituted up to 10% at the same period. The amount of money in current accounts was shrinking across Lithuania, but in larger cities the pace was highest.

Summarising, the author must state that there is no evidence proving statements concerning exceptionally rapid development of Vilnius city during last several years but there is some evidence illustrating the opposite trends. Statements concerning the necessity to slow down the rapid development of Vilnius are at least not properly reasoned. Also, there are no serious arguments that faster development of the capital city is a serious problem, which is to be solved using various financial measures, even if it takes place. The author of this paper is keen to think that exceptionally rapid development of Vilnius city (not only in relative economic terms) which was evident right after the collapse of the Soviet Union, is a natural consequence of the artificial retard of its development during those years. On the contrary, the small size of the largest city could be an obstacle for the

development of the whole country in the present highly competitive economy of the world, where competing cities play the most important role.

EU SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITHUANIA AND ITS DISTRIBUTION INSIDE THE COUNTRY

The development of the whole economy of Lithuania and of course trends in various regions gained new important factor in the second half of the first decade of the new millennium. As a small NUTS 2 size country with GDP per capita less than 75% of EU average, Lithuania gained possibility to employ large amount of EU money for the support of its economy. Though there are a lot of various sources of EU support, which could make some impact on regional development of the country, most of them are too small in order to make a decisive impact on the spatial differences of its development. Actually, there were 3–4 instruments, which regulated major flows of the EU support in Lithuania until 2008 and even 2009. These are: Single Programming Document, regulating support from the Structural funds, The Strategy of Cohesion Fund for 2000–2006 and Actions supported from Guarantee section of European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund. The latter in fact had two different kinds of support measures, which had different spatial outcomes. Other programmes, such as Community initiatives, Framework programme and other were of much lesser scale, though in some cases they can make quite an important influence.

The main sources of EU support for Lithuania until 2008:

1. Suppt from the Structural funds through Single Programming Document (SPD) for 2004–2006: 0.93 billion Euro.
2. Cohesion Fund for 2004–2006: **0.83 billion Euro.**
3. Support from **European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund** (Guarantee section):
 - Rural development plan for 2004–2006: **0.49 billion Euro.**
 - Direct payments for agricultural lands: **0.37 billion Euro.**

The annual GDP of Lithuania in 2004–2006 increased from 18 to 23.8 billion Euro. It reached 28.4 billion in 2007, when the impact of

EU support of period 2004–2006 should have been most evident (<http://www.stat.gov.lt/en/pages/view/?id=1867>). It is easy to calculate that the support from these instruments was approx. 2.6 billion Euro or 0.87 billion Euro per year, what is approx. 4% of annual GDP during that period, although actual inputs of those funds reached Lithuania with the delay of 2 years.

There were several studies carried out which attempted to evaluate some impacts of EU support on the development of the whole country (Cibulskienė et al., 2005) or NUTS 3 regions (Bruneckienė, Krusinskas, 2011). Though there are a lot of speculations that the biggest part of the support flows to Vilnius or to a lesser extent to other large cities, the analysis of its impact on the development of municipalities has been never done. Supposedly, the main reason of such an “unfair” situation is related to better abilities of key cities to receive grants but not to the greater need. Though all data about distribution of EU support throughout the territory of Lithuania in 2004–2008 are available on the Internet (<http://www.esparama.lt/2007-2013/lt/projektuzemelapis>), there were almost no attempts to evaluate relative distribution of this support according to actual residents, employed persons or GDP per capita.

As was pointed out in the previous section, there were three main sources of EU funding in Lithuania and all of them had different impact on conditions of economic development in different areas. The support from the structural funds received through Single Programming Document (SPD) had a purpose to reduce regional imbalances of development of the country and such priority was included into recommendations for project evaluation process. The support from EAGGF Guidance section and Cohesion fund had no clear deliberate purposes to deal with regional development although the received funds were of similar quantities and could have made similar impact on economic development in different regions.

Obviously not all received finances from EU had great or at least noticeable positive impact on long-term development in certain municipalities. Notwithstanding many weaknesses of statistical analysis of distribution of EU support, it could reveal spatial impacts on the development of Lithuanian territory at least to some extent. The analysis is based on the data provided by the Ministry of

Finance to the Government of Lithuania, which has published all implemented projects determining the exact municipality, which is classified as a main recipient of the support (<http://www.esparama.lt>). The author of the paper simply had to sum up the received EU money for various projects in certain municipalities and calculate per capita amounts.

First of all the situation with funding from SPD is to be discussed as its purpose is to reduce economic differences between regions. The proposed reforms of regional governance and principles of distribution of EU support in Lithuania first of all concern the support from EU structural funds. At present the definition of structural funds is different and the support from them is being received according to the Lithuanian Strategy for the Use of European Union Structural Assistance for

2007–2013. The strategy includes Cohesion fund, but other principles are more or less similar. The provided data concerning the distribution of EU support among different municipalities were not absolutely reliable as many projects were being implemented in several municipalities and final recipients of the support are often located in different cities (in most cases in country's capitals). This means that though beneficiaries of the support formally live in one municipality, the real financial inputs could go to different destinations. So the actual impact of EU structural support cannot be easily established using these statistical data and obviously is different from that presented in Fig. 3.

Fig. 3 illustrates the distribution of EU support of the first programming period of 2004–2006. Most of the projects were finally implemented in

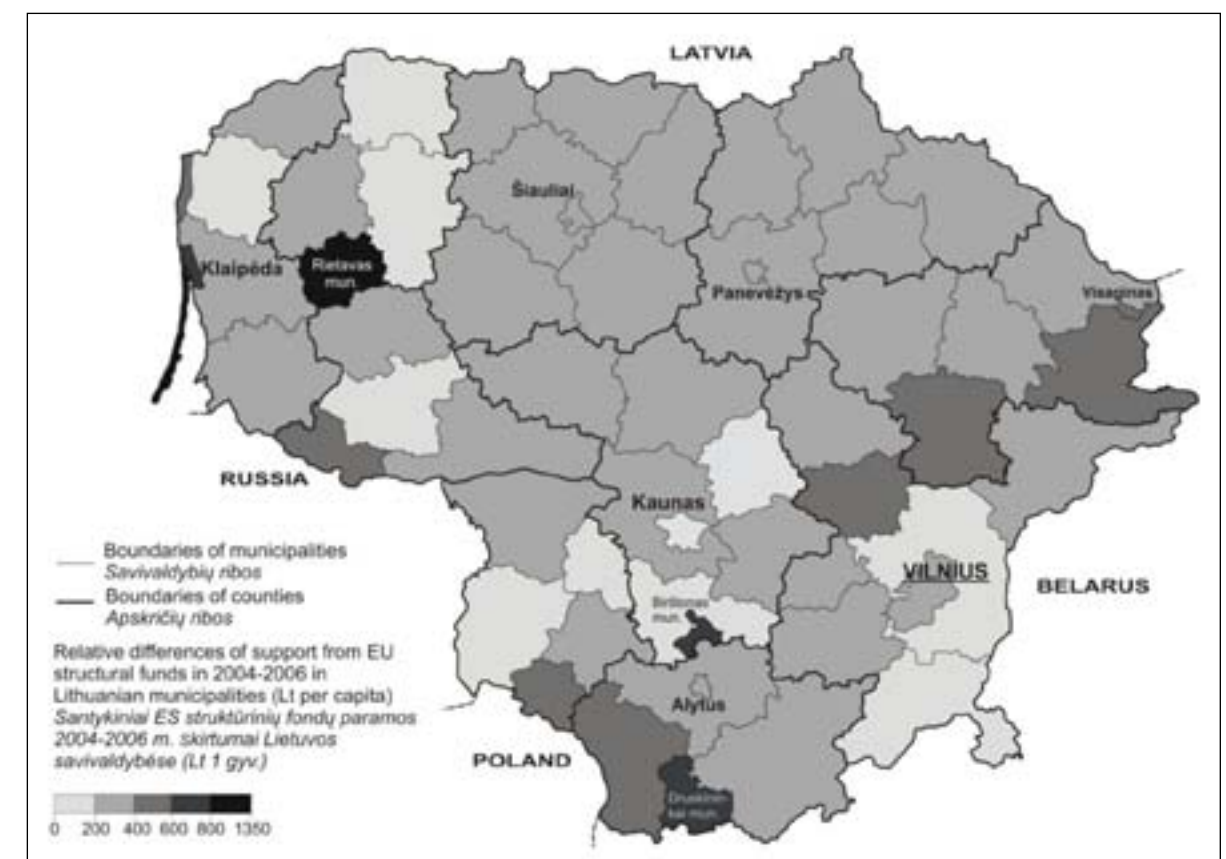


Fig. 3. The distribution of support through SPD for programming period 2004–2006 in Lithuanian municipalities (according to the data of the Ministry of Finance. <http://www.esparama.lt/lt/bpd/zemelapis>)
 3 pav. Paramos pasiskirstymas Lietuvos savivaldybėse pagal 2004–2006 m. BPD (Finansų ministerijos duomenys. <http://www.esparama.lt/lt/bpd/zemelapis>)

2008 and some even in 2009. The total amount of the received EU support through Single planning document is approx. 78 Euro per capita. Distribution of funding among municipalities is quite even and from the first sight the popular statement that cities (Vilnius) receive most of the support seems incorrect. Although the total amount of EU support is highest in the capital city, it received just 73.6 Euro per capita or less compared to country's average. It seems that the distribution of EU support is very even throughout the country, with some exceptions. Municipalities with a resort status (Druskininkai, Birštonas and seacoast municipalities) have received higher support and this partly explains why some municipalities were making efforts to receive a resort status. Another exception is particularly small municipalities where implemented project can make a very great impact on average numbers (e. g. Rietavas municipality).

SPD regulated financing of 5 different priority areas, which could have different impact on economic development because investments in different sectors have different outcomes on economy. 5 priority areas were defined in Lithuanian SPD:

1. The development of social and economic infrastructure
2. Human resources development
3. The development of production sector
4. The rural development and fishery
5. Technical assistance

A. Rodriguez-Pose and U. Fratesi find that despite the concentration of development funds on infrastructure and, to a lesser extent, on business support, the returns to commitments on these axes are not significant. Support for agriculture has short-term positive effects on growth, but these wane quickly, and only investment in education and human capital – which only represents about one-eighth of the total commitments – has medium-term positive and significant returns (Rodrigues, Fratesi, 2004). Support for development of human resources is relatively small in Lithuania (approx. 18% from SPD measures) and it is quite evenly distributed in all municipalities with very small exceptions. Evidently it does not make great impact on spatial differences of economic development. Spatial differences of the received support within other priority areas are much higher than those of total support. The

highest proportion of the received support was granted for development of infrastructure in those municipalities, which received relatively high total support. The greatest spatial imbalances are evident in the 3rd priority area – development of production sector (Fig. 4).

Obviously abilities of business to receive funding differ a lot in various places and sectors. It also appears that the municipalities with big industrial sector (like 3 major cities) have not got higher support. Actually in many cases the relative support was highest in localities with very weak industry (Molėtai, Druskininkai and Neringa received relatively highest support, though those areas are mostly famous for their tourism attractiveness). Vilnius city received exceptionally high support for technical assistance and that is quite understandable having in mind bureaucratic procedures of EU support management; however, they comprise just a small fraction of total support.

The distribution of support from Cohesion fund could have had a serious impact on development of various municipalities, because the received funding was quite sufficient and the implemented projects were quite large. However, the statistical analysis of this distribution once again presumes that Vilnius and other cities do not receive exceptional amounts of such support. It is complicated to estimate the exact figures because most projects financed from this fund were implemented in several municipalities, but Vilnius city and the surrounding region received approximately 11% of total support for Lithuania (http://www.esparama.lt/lt/sanglaudos_fondas/sanglaudos_fondo_projektai/projektu-zemelapis), while 18% of Lithuanian population reside in Vilnius city. Hence one could make an assumption that the use of support from this fund did not increase spatial imbalances of country's development and there is no need to change the regional principles of its management. Or at least the official figures do not confirm such trends.

Though the support from Guidance section of EAGGF has slightly different principles and ideas, the aim to support rural areas itself should tend to diminish spatial imbalances of social and economic development in the country, because cities (or city municipalities) are relatively more developed than rural areas in Lithuania (from the

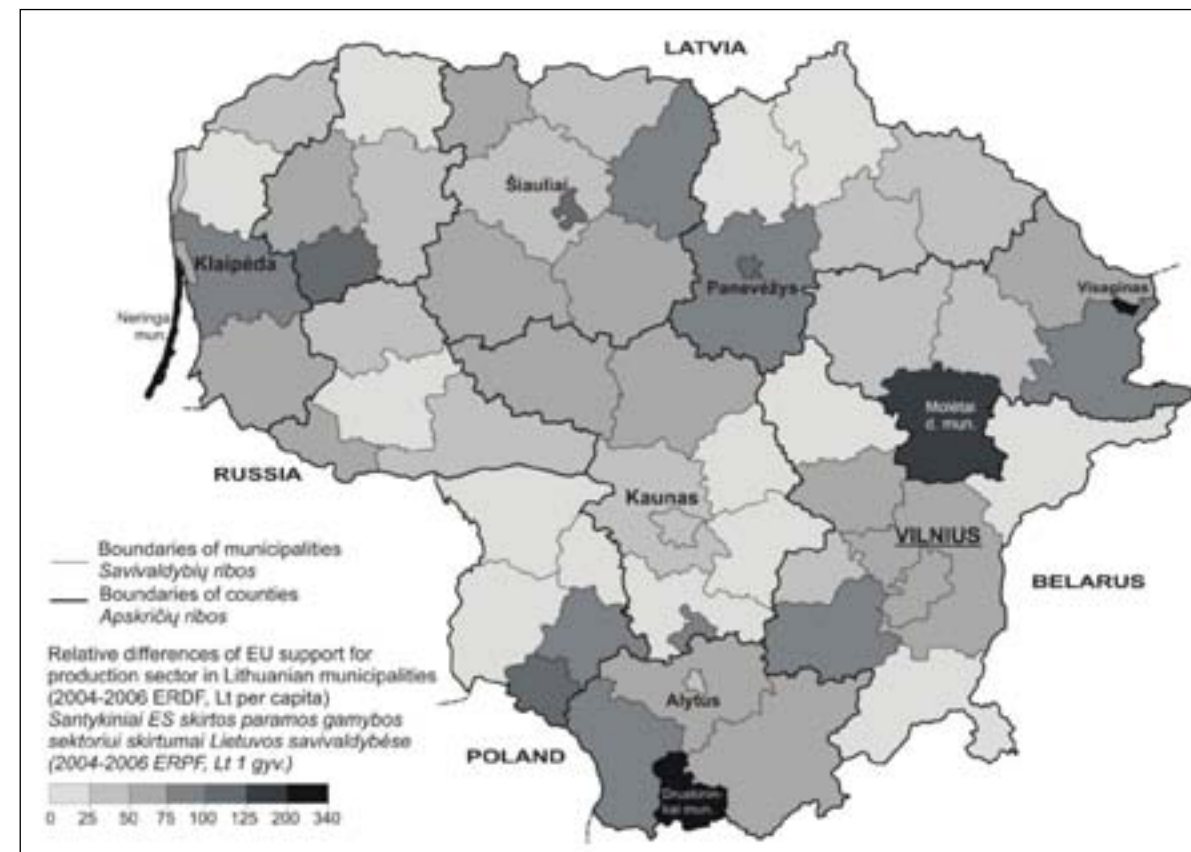


Fig. 4. The distribution of support for production sector from ERDF of 2004–2006 (According to the data of the Ministry of Finance. <http://www.esparama.lt/lt/bpd/zemelapis> and Department of Statistics of Lithuania. <http://www.stat.gov.lt>)

4 pav. Paramos gamybos sektoriui pasiskirstymas iš ERPF 2004–2006 m programavimo laikotarpiu (Finansų ministerijos (<http://www.esparama.lt/lt/bpd/zemelapis>) ir Lietuvos statistikos departamento (<http://www.stat.gov.lt>) duomenys)

point of view of GDP per capita). However, differences of development between rural municipalities tend to increase. The biggest support reaches the most developed rural municipalities, because they have the highest proportion of agricultural lands and most intense agricultural production. Back in 1999 A. Evans argued that though common agricultural policy might have even stronger impact on development than ERDF, actually it is working against the regional equality or cohesion (Evans, 1999). It seems that this is to some extent true in case of local development as well (Fig. 5).

Summarising the statistical analysis of distribution of EU support among municipalities of Lithuania the author must state that there is no statistical evidence of exceptional support for the largest cities or for the most developed municipa-

lities. No municipality with the highest GVA or profit rates received the highest support from EU funds. On the contrary, the official figures permit to expect that the highest support is received in peripheral regions. Statistically, the relatively less developed municipalities received higher support per capita and the impact of this support on their development should have been felt stronger.

REVEALING HIDDEN BENEFICIARIES OF EU SUPPORT

The presented results of distribution of EU support throughout Lithuanian territory illustrate very general situation as they are based on highly generalised data. The reliability of such data is quite disputable. The Ministry of Finance is a “concerned player” in this area because this institution is

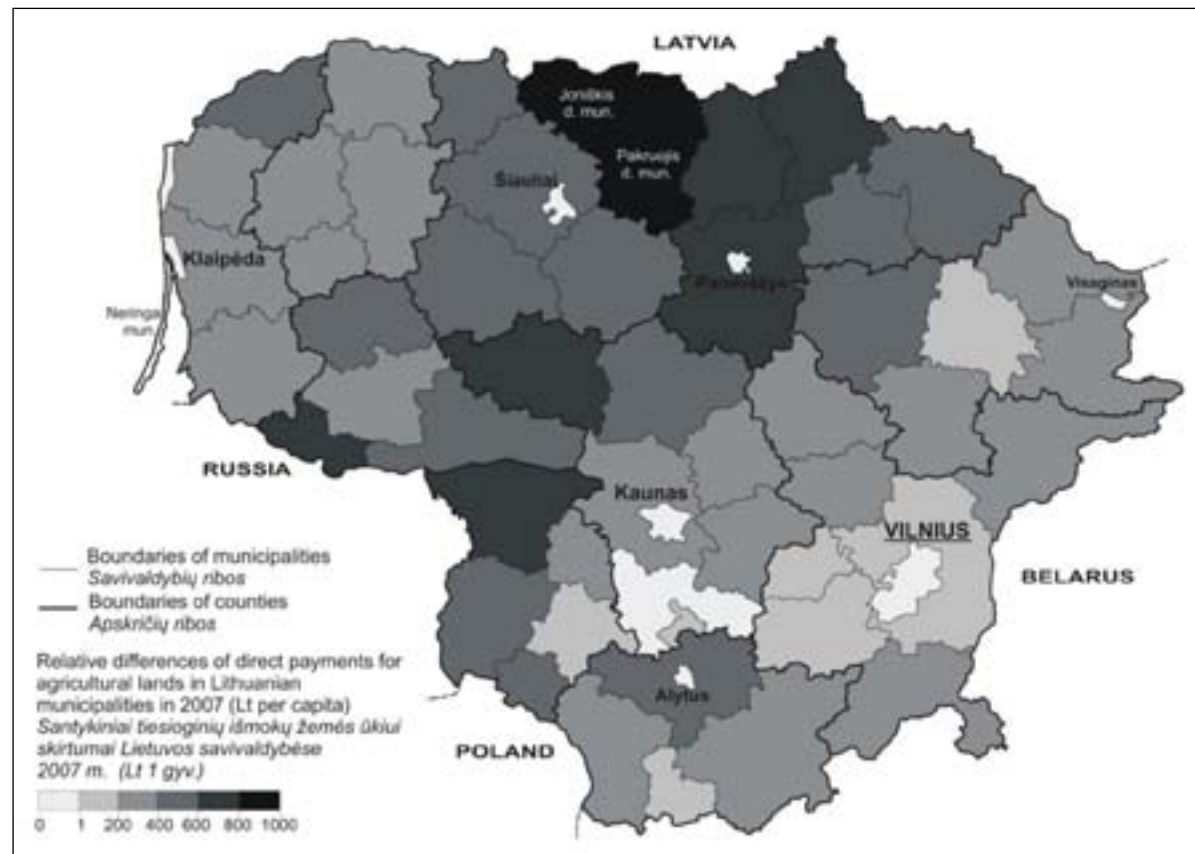


Fig. 5. The distribution of direct support for agricultural lands in Lithuanian municipalities in 2007 (According to the data of National Paying Agency. <http://www.nma.lt>)

5 pav. Tiesioginės paramos žemės ūkiui pasiskirstymas Lietuvos savivaldybėse 2007 m. (Nacionalinės mokėjimų agentūros duomenys. <http://www.nma.lt>)

responsible for an even distribution of EU support throughout the country. Motives, why money received from some project was allotted to a certain municipality, are not clear, especially in cases when project was implemented in several municipalities and the applicant (or receiver of the support) is registered in some third one. Actual financial flows and consequently the impact on GDP growth cannot be evaluated very accurately. From the author's point of view, case study approach would be the best choice in order to find out exact destinations and beneficiaries of EU support. It is suitable because projects with EU support are quite open for researchers. Social scientist B. Flyjberg considers case studies useful both for empirical and theoretical sciences (Flyjberg, 2006). Probably such methods as actor network approach (Latour, 2005; Jauhiainen, 2007) could be more useful for explaining actual distribution of EU assistance

among various places and groups. Possibility to involve oneself into the management of such projects and become a part of them, as suggested by Thrift's non-representational theory (Thrift, 2007), would perhaps be even a better choice, but it is not always possible or reasonable. The problem is related to the number and variety of such projects. Such a research also would be quite complicated if one had a purpose to reveal all spatial peculiarities of distribution of the support throughout the country.

The author has carried out a brief analysis of the projects implemented under the support of Cohesion fund. It appeared that the actual flows of funding and spatial distribution of real beneficiaries differed a lot from the statistical one. For example, a brief analysis of transport projects revealed that there had been 17 projects implemented and support of approximately 400 million

Euro received from 2000–2006 programming period (<http://www.esparama.lt/en...>). Irrespective of the fact that the projects were implemented across the country, in 16 cases final recipients of the support resided in Vilnius. Situation with environmental projects is not so strict, but in most cases the final recipients are located in major cities too. The real implementers of projects, who actually earn money, are even more hidden. For example, the implementation of Cohesion fund project "Creation of system for waste management in Utena region" results in creation of new waste depositories. The facilities were constructed by the company and workers from another municipality – Panevėžys. So the highest increase in income possibly also can be felt there, while Utena region benefits mostly indirectly. This situation obviously is common for the most EU funded larger projects and the author does not try to criticize it. This example once again illustrates how difficult it is to reveal the real impact of EU support on smaller regions and how poorly reasoned are all speculations concerning distribution of benefits of EU support. Only a detailed and case study based analysis could help to draw a real picture and in some cases perhaps to explain it (for example, to reveal why the variety of companies implementing large infrastructure projects is so small).

The analysis of other projects funded from Cohesion fund also reveals that actual implementers of various projects in the peripheral regions reside in Vilnius or in other major cities. In that case one could expect that the benefit of Vilnius from EU support is much higher than is officially declared. On the other hand, changing of principles of EU support and creation of 3 or 4 separate NUTS 2 regions would not change the situation substantially, because there would be no guarantee of avoiding such situations anyway. The formal distribution of EU money is quite even already and there will be no guarantee that those who actually will be implementing projects will reside not in major cities, especially Vilnius, where the headquarters of most companies are located. On the other hand, 3 different NUTS 2 regions would require 3 different strategies, 3 different bureaucratic teams and procedures as well as additional funding for technical assistance.

CONSIDERATION REGARDING MEASUREMENT OF IMPACT OF EU SUPPORT ON QUALITY OF LIFE IN DIFFERENT LOCALITIES

In simple words, the main idea and final goal of EU regional policy, which at present is expressed by the concept "convergence", is to make life better in disadvantaged regions. It means that any researcher, who is analysing the impact of this policy, should find out if the quality of life or wellbeing has increased in less developed regions. This is of course an ultimate goal, which could not always be completely achieved in all studies of regional geography. However, the author of this article presumes that there is no sense in spending money for regional development if this does not make people feel that their life is improving. This satisfaction in personal life is the main measurement of life quality or personal wellbeing from the author's point of view. The faster economic development itself cannot guarantee this as the benefits of such a growth could be distributed very unevenly, consequently social differences could increase and make many people feel even worse though their incomes are rising, what is also not always the case. According to judgment theories of life satisfaction, if individuals judge themselves as better than others, they will be satisfied with their life and vice versa (Meadow et al., 1992). In that case, thinking geographically, people will be satisfied with their life only if it will be improving more substantially than that of neighbouring people, neighbouring municipalities or neighbouring countries.

There is no sense in trying to reveal the exact meaning and sense of the construct "quality of life" here. The concept is highly subjective and inter-subjective (as all social constructs), because its meaning in every case depends both on personal experience and interpersonal relations and practices. Social world is a world of common consciousness of all humans. It is a world of thoughts, concepts and ideas, which were formulated and created collectively. All meanings (and the meaning of "life quality" as well) are constructed collectively (Berger, Luckman, 1966; Onuf, 1989). The complex content of this concept makes the tasks of the regional policy more complex too. Consequently, the assessment of impact of the support on quality of life is a very complicated task. Statistical analy-

sis could help to reveal formal impact, expressed, for example, through increase of GDP per capita, received money or improvements of living environment. However, the quality of life finally could only be measured through studies of human mind or language, which became an important part of social analysis at the end of last millennium (Derrida, 1978). “Language is a place where reality and representation meet” (Barnett, 1993). On the other hand, obviously these two sides have some interdependence and growing GDP could and usually makes people feel better. It means that statistical analysis of distributed money in different regions could reveal some impact of EU support on the quality of life of residents in various places and it can be used as one of tools for such an analysis. However one should be very cautious in making strict conclusions. This “better life” should be felt not only in economic or even social statistics but in human mind as well. In other words, people should feel happier and more satisfied with their life. So probably the real evaluation of EU support impact could be made through studies of discourses of ordinary people, because language is the place where the consequences of interrelations between human being and its environment are expressed (Barnett, 1993). Sociological polls or field studies involving talks and discussions with ordinary people could help to find out this relative and highly subjective matter. A researcher, who is trying to assess the real impact of EU support, should employ such methods too.

CONCLUSIONS

The trends of regional development in Lithuania and most recent situation show that there are no exceptional problems of much faster development of metropolitan areas in Lithuania during recent few years and there are no arguments that faster development of capital city is a serious problem. There are no doubts that EU support makes positive influence on economic development in all Lithuanian municipalities and this impact statistically is quite even with very few exceptions. There is no statistical evidence concerning greater support for the most developed large cities and especially Vilnius, thus there are no formal arguments concerning the necessity to fundamentally reform distribution of EU support establishing 4

separate NUTS 2 regions in order to exclude the capital city from the support schemes. The official data illustrate that rural and resort municipalities receive relatively bigger amounts of EU support so ensuring diminishing of imbalances of economic development among cities and less urbanised areas. However, at a closer look, an analysis based on case study approach, could reveal a different picture and it may appear that actual spatial distribution of EU support differs a lot from the statistical one. Most of such hidden beneficiaries appear to be located in major cities, especially Vilnius, so actual distribution of EU support and its impact on regional development of such small countries like Lithuania could be quite different. Changing of principles of EU support or creation of 4 separate NUTS 2 regions would not solve this problem as this would not help to eliminate the causes of such situation. The impact of EU support on subjectively perceived quality of life or satisfaction with life, which is actually the final aim of EU convergence policy, is even more uncertain. The statistical data and empirical analysis can not help to answer such questions and other post-positivistic approaches and methods should be employed.

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Donatas Burneika

ES STRUKTŪRINĖS PARAMOS LIETUVOS TERITORIJOS VYSTYMUISI VERTINIMO PROBLEMA

Santrauka

Nors Lietuvos teritorija yra palyginti nedidelė, tačiau ekonominiai jos išsivystymo skirtumai yra akivaizdūs. Egzistuojanti statistinė informacija neleidžia objektyviai jų įvertinti, nes pagrindiniai ekonominiai rodikliai pateikiami tik apskričių lygmeniu. Deja, Lietuvos apskritys nėra tinkamas teritorinis vienetas ekonominiams reiškiniams vertinti, nes jos nefunkcionuoja kaip vieningos ekonominės teritorinės sistemos ir skirtumai jų viduje tarp atskirų savivaldybių dažnai akivaizdžiai didesni nei tarp apskričių. Tyrimas atskleidė, kad esminių BVP dalių skirtumai Lietuvoje siekia kelis ar net keliolika kartų, todėl ES parama gali turėti didelės įtakos šalies plėtros tendencijoms. Svarbiausi paramos šaltiniai, iš kurių iki 2009 m. faktiškai buvo teikiama parama, yra Bendrasis programavimo dokumentas, Sanglaudos fondas bei parama žemės ūkio gamybai per tiesiogines išmokas. Formali lėšų pasiskirstymo statistika iliustruoja, kad parama gauta pagal Bendrąjį planavimo dokumentą pasiskirstė gana tolygiai. Labiausiai išvystytos savivaldybės, ypač didieji miestai, negavo daugiau paramos nei kitos savivaldybės. Daugiausia paramos sulaukia kurortai, todėl nenuostabu, kad savivaldybės siekia šio statuso. Parama žemės ūkiui daugiausia skiriama remti intensyvaus žemės ūkio kraštus ir veikia šalies teritorijos išsivystymą dvejopai: mažina skirtumus tarp kaimo ir miesto, tačiau didina tarp intensyvaus ir mažai intensyvaus žemės ūkio vystymosi teritorijų. Struktūrinė parama iš Sanglaudos fondo pasiskirsto netolygiai, tikrieji paramos gavėjai arba savivaldybės, kurių augimą ji veikia, dažnai nesutampa su formaliaisiais naudos gavėjais. Norint įvertinti realią tokios paramos įtaką šalies raidai, reikalinga gilesnė atskirų projektų analizė. O geriausiai ES paramos įtaką atskirų regionų raidai galėtų įvertinti tie, kurių gerovei ji skirta, t. y. Lietuvos gyventojai. Formali statistikos analizė neleidžia nei patvirtinti, nei paneigti pasitaikančių teiginių apie netolygų paramos paskirstymą bei didžiųjų miestų, ypač Vilniaus, gaunamą išskirtinai didelę dalį. Taip pat akivaizdu, kad pakoregavus ES paramos skirstymo principus, suskaidžius šalį į kelis NUTS 2 regionus, situacijos iš esmės nepavyks pakeisti ir garantuoti, kad paramą gaus tie, kam labiausiai jos reikia.

Raktažodžiai: regioninė plėtra, ES parama, vietos plėtra

