

Measurement of Sociality in Lithuanian Municipalities: The Case of the Biržai District Municipality

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Abstract

This paper discusses the finding of Western and Lithuanian scientists, who in recent years have explored the issues of performance measurement. First of all, it is concluded that performance measurement in the public sector is beneficial in implementing citizens' expectations for effective governance. Nevertheless, it raises the following problems: can sociality be measured, is it needed in municipalities, and how it should be done. A model adapted to the Lithuanian municipalities is presented, in which measuring of the index of sociality can be carried out. The paper shows how sociality of the Biržai district municipality was measured for the first time in Lithuania.

Keywords: sociality, performance measurement, index of sociality in municipalities.

Introduction

Sociality is a value. When defining what a value is, one definition states that a value is what is important and should be done in life. The author has been convinced for 10 years (at first – in practice due to political activities, and now – theoretically) that sociality is very important in our lives. It is natural that each time this subject is analysed, a question arises: how should sociality be defined? Is it possible to define it and should it be defined at all? I think that certain characteristics may be named and a communal value may be identified with their help. The author and other scientists propose many definitions of sociality but the problem of sociality measurement is that it lacks thorough research. The **problem** of this paper is the following: better functionality of sociality as a value will be reached by measuring the index of sociality in municipalities. More requirements are appearing for responsibility and strict liability, since recently Lithuanian politics have often been declaring the importance of sociality. Therefore, measuring sociality would not only achieve an important image aspect for politics, but there is a higher probability that the frameworks of government will allocate their functions, responsibilities and resources more purposefully, consequently sociality will be more functional.

The goal of this paper is to analyse theoretical assumptions of sociality measurement in

municipalities and to propose a possible measurement model. Objectives: (1) to analyse the opinions of other scientists about the execution of measuring in the public sector; (2) to define an atheoretical model of sociality measurement; (3) to propose a possible index of sociality in municipalities. The subject of this paper is sociality measurement in municipalities.

Theoretical framework of the research.

When analysing the works of scientists, who in recent years have studied the performance measurement in the public sector, we must distinguish a Lithuanian scientist Puškorius (2004, 2010), who analyses the connection between audit and performance measurement; Sudnickas (2008), who analysed the differences in performance measurement in the private and public sectors, but performance measurement, which is the problem of this article, was analysed in municipality by Puškorius (2006) and Gudelis (2007).

From Western scientists' studies we would distinguish the following to be the most revealing for the chosen problem: Behn (2003), who structures the fulfilment motives for performance measurement in the public sector, Poister (2003), who emphasizes the field of performance measurement and implementation stages, Simmons (2004), who performed organization interest performance measurement, and Steven (2006) and Pollitt (2006), who published user results on performance measurement.

Research methodology: modelling, analysis of scientific literature about performance measurement, qualitative research.

Measurements in the public sector

Performance measurement in Lithuania in accordance with optional models and measuring standards is quite a new idea¹. It coincided when in the eighties many public administration subjects of democratic countries resurrected performance measurement. Hood (1991) indicates 7 new public

¹ During the Soviet occupation, which lasted from 1940 to 1990, there was one state standard in production, but there were ideological structures in social questions – the only leading communist party functionary personal evaluation.

management (NPM) doctrines in which performance measurement and specific measurement rate setting by relevance are in the second place. Lithuania also began to take its first steps in this area after the restoration of independence. In Western democratic countries performance measurement was demanded by tax payers, who, while privatizing public services, requested to seek clearer criteria, which could be used to properly control considerable expenditure and valid responsibility function assignation to lower chains of governance. Therefore, experience in this field for Lithuanian scientists and practitioners is very engrossing and valuable.

Achievements in this field are illustrated by the following rates, for example: USA researchers found out (Melkers and Willoughby, 2005), that 47 out of 50 states apply certain performance measurement procedures and search for agencies, capable of carrying out these calculations, although it is noted that most often they encounter activity problem identification and difficulty in evaluating them or that on the federal level most of the state agencies develop performance measurement procedures at a macro level and in the future they may identify more detailed strategic planning indicators (Poister, 2003, 6) and that the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), in its resolution, very actively encourages all level public institutions to regularly measure their operational efficiency, identify activity rates and follow identified rate advance (Lynch, Day, 1996, 406). The European Group for Public Administration (EGPA), one of the most authoritative institutions uniting public administration researchers, announced one of their public sector quality and productivity studies for 2007–2010 (EGPA, 2008) *Performance Measurement and Comparison in Public Sector Institutions*.

In Lithuanian public institutions we cannot boast about such impressive quantitative terms for now, but during the last decade we have seen positive changes occurring not only in science but also in practical discourse. Performance measurement separation from productivity measurement, performance monitoring, performance assessment, the first in Lithuanian science discourse, was suggested to be used by Gudelis (2007, 14). He invokes the American scientist Poister (2003, 1), who defines “performance measurement” as “regular organizations and program performance result neutral rate identification, monitoring and utilisation process” and claims that it can be implemented in the public sector, the municipality. Whereas, according to Poister (2003, 6), “performance measurement” indicates an organization’s or public program’s “activity” or “performance results”, which in a certain way can be measured, it corresponds to the problem of this paper—sociality measurement—since functioning

sociality in a municipality is nothing less than a very public program.

While examining the chosen problem, it is interesting to note, in which area these measurements can be calculated. According to Poister (2003, 10), performance measurement can be applied to many areas, for example, “communication with the public”. Puškorius (2010, 10) sees measurement opportunities in other areas, mostly related to the motivational area (anticipation, which rates should be used in order to motivate that the effector would more efficiently seek determined goals). Areas distinguished by both Poister and Puškorius are important for us, because sociality is an expression of communication with the public, but also, if politics raise goals in order to encourage communication, then without proper rates it will be difficult to see the reached goals.

An important aspect of the performance measurement system in the public sector is the necessity to find all concerned side interests and to take them into account. That is one of the most challenging aspects compared to private sector performance measurement systems. In literature (Simmons, 2004) there are three distinguished prepositions, defining interest groups: (1) in organizations there are different interest groups that have influence on the organization, and the organization has influence on them; (2) interactions between the organization and the interest groups make an effect and causes change not only for interest groups, but also for the organization; (3) the opinion of the interest groups and the perspectives are very important for the organization’s strategy and its efficiency. Public sector organizations, when compared to private sector organizations, are related to a higher number of interest groups. A municipality is like an organization, which has many interest groups. Pollitt (2006) identifies three public sector performance measurement result user groups: this information is used most intensively by the ministry, which helps them to make short-term and long-term management decisions; the second group is the members of the parliament and different parliamentary structures – committees, commissions, etc., that use performance measurement information less, although they emphasize public interest areas most, often generating controversial areas related to scandals or possible corruption. The third group consists of citizens, whose interests are very different. Unfortunately, as it may be seen in Lithuania, recently politicians have spoken a lot about encouraging sociality, but citizens, who participate in sociality activities more actively, are not interested in following and analysing public sector performance information and changes in the area of sociality.

Performance measurement in municipalities is justified by Gudelis (2007, 19) in his dissertation; he

pinpointed such features as goal variety, competition, public interest, relation between customer service clients and this very specific feature in societies, like citizen participation in governing opportunities. According to him, performance measurement practices of municipalities, where citizen participation chances are high, should be that these opportunities were not be discouraged but, on the contrary, allowing citizens to use them. Performance measurement practices would encourage citizen participation in governance then, if citizens would receive proper conditions to participate in preparing performance rates, if they would be regularly provided with performance measurement information, and performance rates would ensure not only citizen demand fulfilment but also committed fulfilment measurement, measurement in municipalities would help realize citizen participation in governance opportunities (2007, 22). Namely, participating citizens are the main element of a functioning society and our suggested performance measurement model includes citizen participation.

The next question is about the motives, which determine decisions of heads of municipalities to implement performance measurement systems. According to Behn (2003, p. 588), there are possibly at least eight motives, why heads of public sector organizations and municipalities are interested in implementing performance measurement systems: assessment, control, budgeting, motivation, advertisement, public commemoration, learning and perfection. We want to distinguish that there are at least four motives, which encourage municipalities to carry out performance measurements for our discussed topic – sociality measurement. They are the following: *assessment*, with the help of which heads of public sector organizations could understand, how societies operate in their municipality; *motivation*, with the help of which heads of public sector organizations could raise a question how they could encourage interest groups and citizens to achieve better results; *advertisement*, with the help of which heads of municipalities seek to persuade legislators, interest groups, journalists and citizens, so that their municipalities would develop sociality values; *perfection*, with the help of which heads of municipalities seek to understand what should be done differently so that performance processes would encourage local society functionality to be improved and would reach better goals.

Sociality measurement index in Lithuanian municipalities

The question if measurements in public sector and its elements in municipalities were possible would have been answered positively in the previous chapter. Before presenting the measurement model

we have to answer the following question: can sociality be measured? Based on Denhardt (2001, 248), sociality is when “a healthy and active system of “intermediation institutions”, which concentrates its attention on wishes and interests of citizens and also provides experience, which prepares citizens to better act in a bigger political system, should exist between citizens and their government. Families, work groups, the church, citizen associations, neighbourhoods, volunteer organisations and even sports groups create connections between an individual and a wider society.” According to Etzioni (1995, 23), sociality is “conviction that all people are responsible for their actions and their choices in the community where they live,” and McMillan, Chavis (1986, 6–23) think that it is “a feeling members have that they belong and that they are important for each other and the group, and their common conviction that their needs will be satisfied through their obligation to be together.” Based only on these three scientists, who research sociality, we notice that they attribute the following characteristics to sociality: interaction between citizens and the government, connections between an individual and a wider society, actions in the community where one lives, a feeling of members that they belong and are important for each other and the obligation to be together. These parameters are of qualitative nature.

We are interested most in the communities related to our place of residence. It is a local (territorial) community, which is most often defined as a group of people, who live and act on a defined territory, and who are connected by common interests. Such communities exist everywhere, but they are factual or statistical; community values may or may not be expressed in them. We, who advocate sociality, are interested in a different, functional local community. We suggest defining such community as a group of people, who live on a defined territory and act for the good of this community and who are connected by common interests and an inner feeling that they belong to that group of people. It is here that qualitative parameters, named by the above-mentioned scientists, appear. Qualitative parameters are easier to find, that is why we can claim that measuring sociality in municipalities is possible and it is advised to perform it with a particular model, which is called the municipality sociality index. Stevens (2006) with his colleagues suggested four types of indexes for performance measurement in the public sector: (1) output index – how many services were provided; (2) welfare index – what value was created for the final user; (3) performance management index – how services were provided; (4) composite index includes all three earlier mentioned index elements. Our proposed index will be the fourth one – combined. The components of this index are the following:

1. Questions, discussed at municipality council meetings, are related to the development of sociality (the municipality has to define, what questions will be considered to be communal questions). ((A) Once a year – weak; (B) Twice per year – intermediate; (C) Three times per year – good; (D) Four or more times – excellent.)
2. There are structures in the municipality council and administration, the functions of which are related to the formation of sociality. ((A) There is an employee in the municipality administration – weak; (B) There is a department (subdivision) in the municipality administration – intermediate; (C) There is a committee or a commission in the municipality council – good; (D) There is a department (subdivision) in the municipality administration, and there is a committee or a commission in the municipality council – excellent.)
3. Finances are allocated for stimulation of communal initiatives and for the disposition of CC, NGO ((A) Up to 1% of the municipality’s budget – weak; (B) 1–2% of the municipality budget – intermediate; (C) 2–3% of the municipality budget – good; (D) 3 and more % of the municipality budget – excellent.)
4. NGO, CC (community centres) and other formal citizen groups are active on the municipality territory ((A) 1–5 formal movements for 1000 inhabitants of the municipality – weak; (B). 6–10 formal movements for 1000 inhabitants of the municipality – intermediate; (C) 11–15 formal movements for 1000 inhabitants of the municipality – good; (D) 16 or more formal movements for 1000 inhabitants of the municipality – excellent.)
5. The number of members of NGO, CC ((A) Up to 10 members for 1000 inhabitants – weak; (B) Up to 20 members for 1000 inhabitants – intermediate; (C) Up to 30 members for 1000 inhabitants – good; (D) Up to 40 members or more for 1000 inhabitants – excellent.)
6. The number of projects of municipality decisions, municipality administration director orders, presented by NGO, CC and other citizen groups per year ((A) Up to 3 – weak; (B) Up to 5 – intermediate; (C) Up to 10 – good; (D) Up to 15 – excellent.)
7. Resources, received by CC, NGO from international funds, philanthropists per 1 inhabitant per year ((A) Up to 1 Litas – weak; (B) 1-50 Litas – intermediate; (C) 50-100 Litas – good; (D) 100 Litas or more – excellent.)
8. The number of events, organized by CC and NGO (independently or together with partners) for a local community per year ((A) Up to 10 – weak; (B) 11–20 – intermediate; (C) 21-30 – good; (D) 31 and more – excellent.)
9. There is a system for working with formal and informal groups in the municipality ((A) Sometimes consultative meetings with NGO, CC take place – weak; (B) Consultative meetings with NGO, CC take place systemically (according to a plan) – intermediate; (C) There is a “round table” for NGO, CC in the municipality; consultative meetings take place; administration employees participate in consultative meetings – good; (D) There is a “round table” for NGO, CC; administration employees and politicians participate in the “round table”, or a cooperation agreement has been signed – excellent.)

Implementation stages of the sociality index in Lithuanian municipalities

Performance measurement systems have to be created individually for every institution, organization, system, country or even global objects. By the way, composition, purpose and functions depend on what is measured, what goals have been set, what activities have been performed, what stages of the process have been examined and on many different aspects and their combinations. That means that one should distinguish overall performance measurement system creation and functioning features and special surroundings, adapted to a specific object, in which this system is operating, and other specific factors, which influence is used to understand and measure (Puškorius, 2010, 12). Puškorius suggests to take notice of Poister’s (2003, 23) distinguished implementation of performance measurement system stages while carrying out performance measurement.

1. Guarantee organization managerial commitment (heads of different level organizations, systems or programs would be interested in performance measurement).
2. Organize the system expansion process (decisions have to be made by the highest level managers for performance measurement system creation because otherwise this process would not be properly carried out that is why a person or group should be appointed to be responsible for this system creation).
3. Highlight the goal and system parameters (should highlight or thoroughly define the purpose of the performance measurement system, identifying the performance system rate users, what information is needed for the users or that system’s purpose would be only to inform about the present situation, if it will be used while making decisions, how often the system should present results and recommendations, etc).
4. Identify results and other criteria (focus on aims, organization or system goals and results).

5. Identify, rate and gather activity indicators (Overall theoretical recommendations for this question can help very little because every organization's set goals, activity areas, which are rated, what factors should be considered, how to distribute these priorities, etc., depend on the organization's specific activity, rated area and other factors).
6. Expand information selection procedures. Take care of quality (it is important to use different information, special research method implementation, information treatment).
7. Explain system design in detail (identify message rate and information transmission channels, set analytical messages and reporting format, etc.).
8. Perform an experiment (project execution while implementing performance measurement system in an organization. This is an unnecessary stage but sometimes it is advisable in order to find out the drawbacks of this system performance).
9. Implement a system (system performance approbation, i.e. understanding if it can properly operate, necessary information selection and treatment procedures, conclusion and recommendation phrasing and the opinion of managers about them, received performance measurement system inclusion in decision making procedures).
10. Use, rate, properly modify this system (necessity to constantly observe performance measurement operation, rate implemented procedures and conclusion phrasing mechanisms, in case one has to change the system performance goals, modify information selection and treatment procedures, conclusion and recommendation presentation, conduct employee surveys in order to find out their opinion about the system quality and benefits).

Considering the majority of Poister's (2003) performance measurement stages, Lithuanian municipalities were suggested to perform sociality evaluation methodology; the sociality index in municipalities will be determined by a special municipality work group – *krivulė*². Work group (*krivulė*) consists³ of:

- About 3 municipality politics (representing different political parties and at least one from the opposition);
- About 3 municipality administration employees (requested: an accountant, because there will be financially related questions, culture – educational specialist, municipality citizen organization activity coordinator, and others);
- About 3 monitors (if there are no wards, one can increase the number of politicians, municipality administration employees and citizen organization representatives);

² It is an old Lithuanian word which meant community gathering when people would come to talk about important problems.

³ Taking into consideration the municipalities, there may be possible changes in *krivulė*.

- About 6 municipality citizen organization representatives (community centres, NGO, wards, etc.);
- About 3 educational representatives (born in the municipality bachelors, masters, who study social sciences, who could execute work group organizational job).

The gathered work group confirms its activity regulation after this presented example:

1. Municipality sociality index identification work group establishment⁴ initiative depends on the municipality's mayor or the head of administration.
2. It is announced about the prepared work group on the municipality's website and other media outlets.
3. The mayor or the head of administration considers, which organization employees should be invited, but the organizations decide, who specifically represents the organizations.
4. During the first meeting the gathered work group elects its head and discusses about the index rate criteria.
5. They arrange, who will gather information and from which databases.
6. When the data is collected and rated, and reliability is ensured, the attribution of the rate criteria is discussed.
7. When rating is finished, a protocol is written, signed by all work group members.
8. The index is announced on the municipality's website or other media outlets.
9. The work group, seeing that there are specific sociality criteria in the municipality, can make a decision about the criteria digest addition 10 criteria. The decision is made in consensus.
10. The work group is organized for one year, and the index is set once a year⁵.
11. Accomplishing the measurements after the set criteria, conclusions and recommendations are prepared in case there are changes in organizing work in the municipality so that the local societies would be more functional.

The level of sociality in the municipality of the Biržai district

In Lithuania the assessment of the level of sociality of municipalities according to certain modified indices as well as its measurement is a new phenomenon. Seeking to measure the sociality of municipalities for the first time in Lithuania the municipality of the Biržai district was chosen. Seeking to perform the research in an objective way experts from the Biržai district municipality

⁴ The mayor can negotiate with the municipality council or other representative institutions operating in the municipality (for example, municipalities' citizen organization "round table").

⁵ If no Republican or regional analysis are conducted, time is chosen independently.

were asked for help; they formed the work group (krivulė) of sociality measurement. The methods used were analysis of documents and qualitative research (interview with experts). Documents of the Biržai municipality concerning community activities were analysed, and interviews were conducted with 18 experts (employees of the administration of the Biržai district municipality, politicians, elders, NGOs, representatives of civil organisations). The measurement was performed in April of 2012. Fig. 1 shows the values of the index of the Biržai district municipality.

The measured values of sociality have their scale:

- From 1 to 9 points – weak sociality;
- From 10 to 18 points – intermediate sociality;
- From 19 to 27 points – good sociality;
- From 28 to 36 points – excellent sociality.

After summarizing the values in the municipality of the Biržai district a total sum of 29 points was accumulated, which shows that the level of sociality in this municipality is excellent. After comparison of the index of the ideal sociality model and the case of sociality in the Biržai district municipality, we can see the differences that appear between the ideal model and the case (Fig. 2).

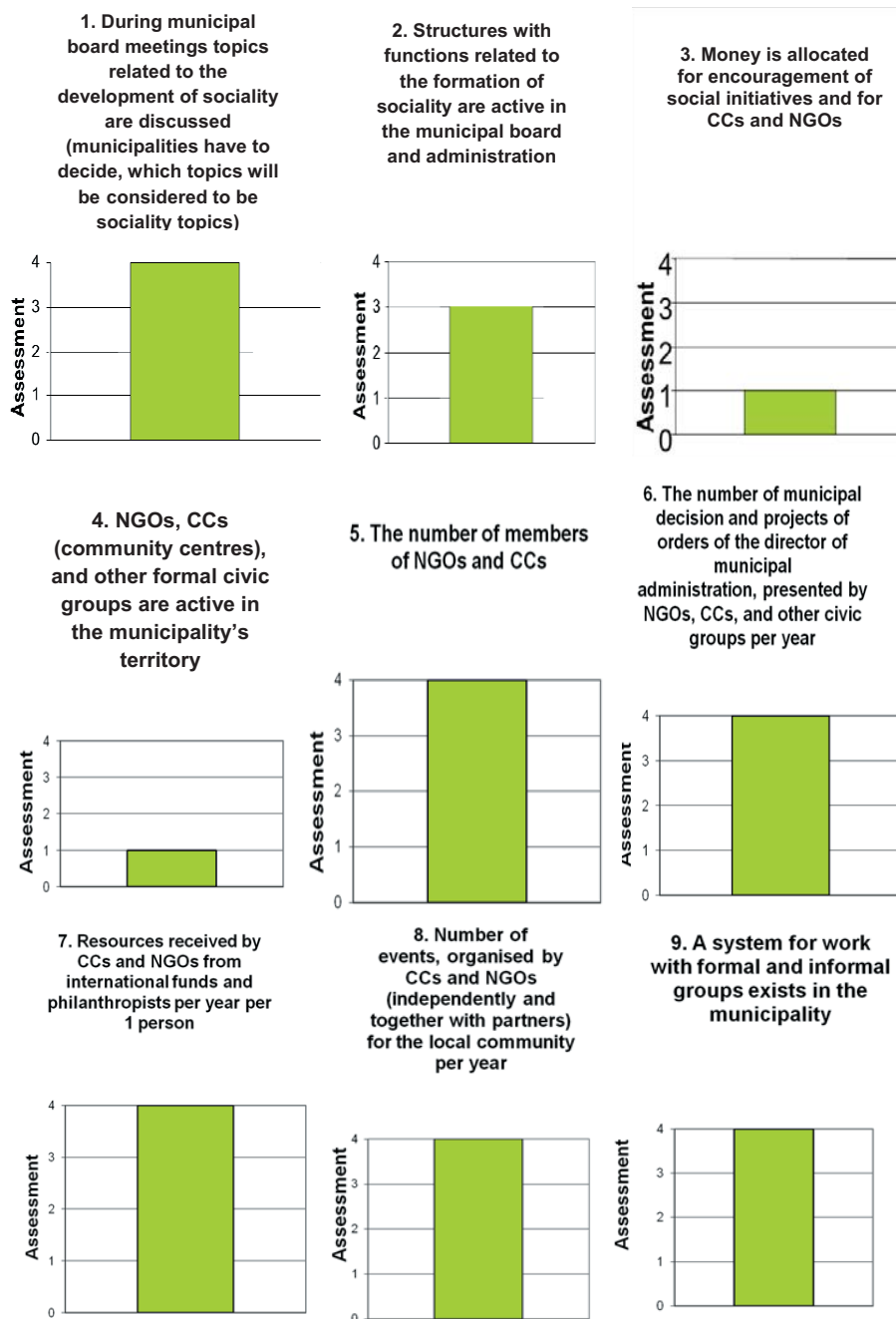


Fig. 1. Assessment of sociality of the Biržai district municipality

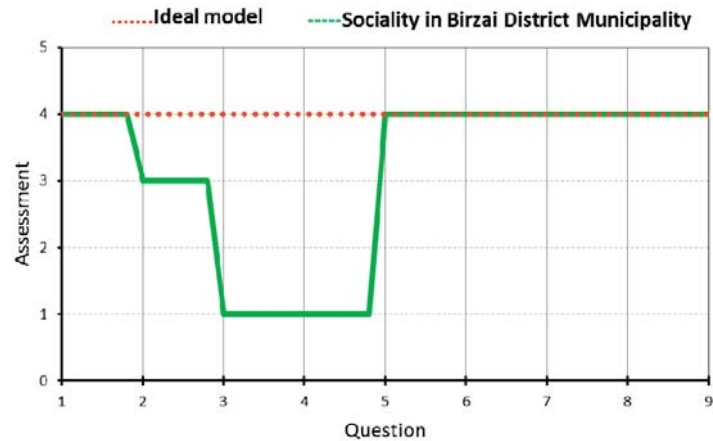


Fig. 2. Comparison of the real model of the Biržai district municipality with the ideal model

Comparison of the real model existing in the municipality of the Biržai district with the ideal model. It was determined that the level of sociality in the Biržai district municipality was good (29 points).

The identification of the sociality index, according to the initiators, should be a self-purposeful, self-organisational action. Having performed the index identification and seeking for the level of sociality to rise or to stay excellent if it was determined as such, the activities should not stop there. Certain political-organisational actions are planned for the level of sociality of a certain municipality to rise. But surely we will not avoid a certain comparison or inter-comparison among municipalities, but during such comparison the main task should be to learn from other municipalities that do more or differently in the area of sociality than to compete.

This municipality is the first one that assessed its level of sociality, and it became a perfect example for other municipalities in Lithuania. According to the mayor of Biržai Varžienė (2012, 1) it is useful to assess the level of sociality because the received results reflect the weak sides that need to be developed, and attention is drawn to matters that were not noticed before. Besides, this is another form that brings together people of different viewpoints, who seek to achieve a common aim – the formation of sociality.

Conclusion

Performance measurement in Lithuanian municipalities as part of the public sector is possible and essential, because it confirms the long-lived practice of Western countries and certain manifestations, occurring in Lithuania.

Despite the fact that sociality is a value, it can be done in order to perform measurements, because there are both qualitative and quantitative rates, and having a goal for the communities to be more

functional using the index may prove useful.

Sociality measurements in municipalities have not been executed yet, but providing a proper methodology and performing experiments the question will be answered about their expedience. It is important to know that sociality index identification would not become a formal matter, but citizens would feel the benefits, which are the most important functioning parts of the society.

Having performed the pilot measurement of sociality index in the municipality of the Biržai district it has become apparent that the measurement index is acceptable, therefore it is possible to use it in other municipalities as well, and heads of the municipality and other members of the work group (krivulė) were very eager to participate in the identification of the index because they understood that thus they contributed to the formation of sociality.

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Nefas, S.

Bendruomeniškumo matavimas Lietuvos savivaldybėse: Biržų rajono savivaldybės atvejis

Santrauka

Straipsnyje sisteminamos Vakarų šalių ir Lietuvos mokslininkų mintys, kurie tyrinėja veiklos matavimo problematiką. Tai Puškoriaus (2004, 2010), tyrinėjančio audito ir veiklos matavimo sąsajas, Sudnicko (2008), analizuojančio veiklos matavimo viešajame ir privačiajame sektoriuose skirtumus, o veiklos matavimą šio straipsnio problemoje apibrėžiamame objekte – savivaldybėje – nagrinėja Puškorius (2006) ir Gudelis (2007).

Iš Vakarų šalių mokslininkų pastarųjų metų darbų išskirtume pasirinktai problemai atskleisti aktualius Behn (2003), sisteminančio veiklos matavimo atlikimo motyvus viešajame sektoriuje, Poister (2003), kuris apibrėžia veiklos matavimo sritis ir diegimo etapus, Simmons (2004) organizacijų suinteresuotumą atlikti veiklos matavimą, Steven (2006) ir Pollitt (2006) veiklos matavimo rezultatų naudotojų grupes. Visi šie mokslininkai pagrindžia, kad veiklos matavimas viešajame sektoriuje yra tikslingas įgyvendinant piliečių lūkesčius dėl efektyvesnio valdymo. Keliamą problema, ar bendruomeniškumą galima ir tikslinga matuoti savivaldybėse ir kaip tai reikia daryti. Pateikiamas modelis pritaikytas Lietuvos savivaldybėms, kuriose gali būti atliekamas bendruomeniškumo indeso nustatymas. Svarbus klausimas, kaip pamatuoti bendruomeniškumą, remiantis indeksu. Tai daryti siūlome todėl, kad, matuojant bendruomeniškumo lygmenį (nustatant indeksą), identifikuosime bendruomeniškumo formavimosi svarbius komponentus, o tai gali paskatinti priimti vienus ar kitus sprendimus dėl bendruomeniškumui įtaką darančių veiksmų.

Šio indekso sudėtinės dalys yra šios:

1. Savivaldybės tarybos posėdžiuose svarstomi klausimai

mai susiję su bendruomeniškumo plėtojimu (savivaldybė turi apsibrėžti, ką laikys bendruomeniškais klausimais).

2. Savivaldybės taryboje, administracijoje yra struktūros, kurių funkcijos yra susijusios su bendruomeniškumo formavimu.
3. Bendruomeniškoms iniciatyvoms skatinti ir BC, NVO disponavimui yra skiriami finansai.
4. Savivaldybės teritorijoje veikia NVO, BC (bendruomenių centrai) ir kitos piliečių formalios grupės.
5. NVO, BC narių skaitlingumas.
6. Savivaldybės sprendimų, savivaldybės administracijos direktoriaus įsakymų projektų NVO, BC ir kitos piliečių grupės pateikia per 1 metus.
7. BC, NVO gaunamos lėšos iš tarptautinių fondų, filantropų 1 gyventojui per metus.
8. Renginių, organizuojamų BC ir NVO (savarankiškai ar kartu su partneriais) vietos bendruomenei, skaičius per metus.
9. Savivaldybėje yra darbo su formaliomis ir neformalioomis grupėmis sistema.

Svarbu, kad siūlomas savivaldybių bendruomeniškumo indeksas nebūtų primestas iš šalies, o atsirastų remiantis partnerystės principu (mokslinės įžvalgos ekspertuojamos ekspertų – praktikų, taip pat vyksta viešieji pristatymai, kur savo nuomonę gali išsakyti savivaldybininkai ir bendruomenininkai).

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: bendruomeniškumas, veiklos matavimas, savivaldybių bendruomeniškumo indeksas.

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