

## **Evaluation of environmental requirements implementation in Lithuania**

### **Basis of the Evaluation**

In 2006, before the launch of implementation of 2007-2013 Operational Programmes financed from the EU Funds, the strategic assessment of the effects of these Programmes on the environment (hereinafter referred to as SEA) mandatory under the SEA Directive and appropriate national legislation, was carried out<sup>1</sup>.

This year the Managing Authority has organised the interim evaluation of environmental requirements implementation, the need for which was predetermined by the fact that SEA was carried out at programme level, as in 2006 more detailed documents were not prepared yet (no measures/projects established). After the implementation process of the Operational Programmes gained pace, a need to conduct an interim evaluation of environmental requirements implementation emerged in order to identify:

- ▶ whether the findings of the SEA were valid by determining a similar environmental impact of the Operational Programmes;
- ▶ what are the indicators of the Operational Programmes to measure the impact of interventions on the environment;
- ▶ whether proper regulation of the environmental requirements was maintained.

The need for the aforementioned interim evaluation was also effected by the requirements of Article 10 of the SEA Directive.

For these reasons, the evaluation of environmental requirements implementation was carried out with the aim:

*firstly*, to perform an interim evaluation of environmental impact of 2007 – 2013 Operational Programmes at programme, priority, measure and project level; and  
*secondly*, to assess the eligibility and efficiency of the environmental requirements implementation at programme, priority, measure and project level.

### **Evaluation Methodology**

During the evaluation the criteria of relevancy, compatibility, effectiveness/impact, efficiency and sustainability were applied. The evaluation methodology used combined the following quantitative and qualitative research measures: a primary and secondary information analysis, multiple criteria environmental impact analysis, a survey, interview and case studies.

The evaluation data was collected from the strategic documents, statistical sources, previously performed environmental assessments, project proposals and annexes, descriptions of financing terms and conditions as well as other sources of information. In order to assess the Operational

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<sup>1</sup> SEA was obligatory for two Operational Programmes: Economic Growth Operational Programme and Cohesion Promotion Operational Programme

Programmes' impact on the environment at the project level, a multiple criteria analysis was performed by using Leopold matrix and the methodology approved by the European Environment Agency. 15 projects that were directly aimed at improving environmental conditions and 17 infrastructural projects were selected for the analysis. The results of the analysis were used for the environmental impact evaluation at measure, priority and programme level.

In carrying out the surveys of the project owners, the EU Structural Funds' administration authorities and Regional Environmental Protection Departments helped to gather the data about most common problems in the projects that are financed by the EU Structural Funds. It should be noted that the respondents' opinion on how to avoid environmental problems and integrate environmental protection requirements into the EU Structural Funds' administration system was also asked.

Case studies of Estonia and Ireland were performed in order to find out other EU countries' experience in complying with environmental requirements when planning and administering the EU Structural Funds. In addition, two projects that encountered environmental problems in the course of implementation processes were analyzed.

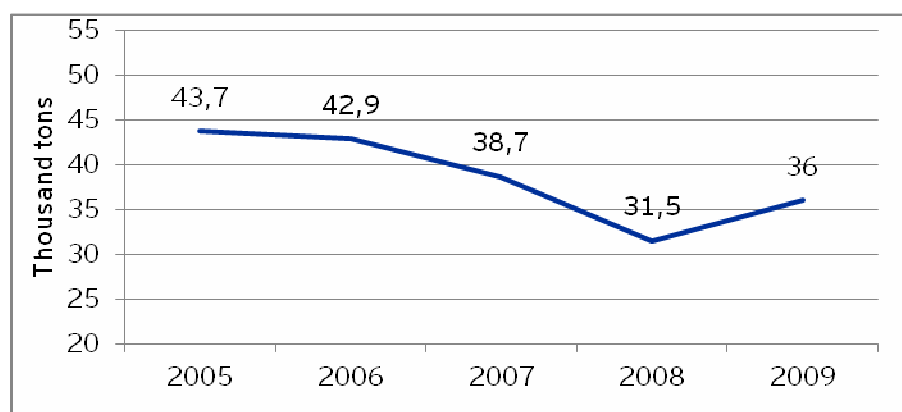
The selected evaluation methods helped to collect and analyze data, draw reasonable conclusions as well as recommendations.

### Changes in Environmental Conditions

In order to complete the first task of the evaluation, i.e. assess the impact of the Operational Programmes on the environment, changes in environmental conditions in Lithuania since 2005 were assessed by analyzing the main indicators related to air, water, and waste. The evaluation of changes in the environmental condition was carried out in view of the areas analysed during the SEA and the components defining them. The results showed that since 2005 the quality of the environment has improved.

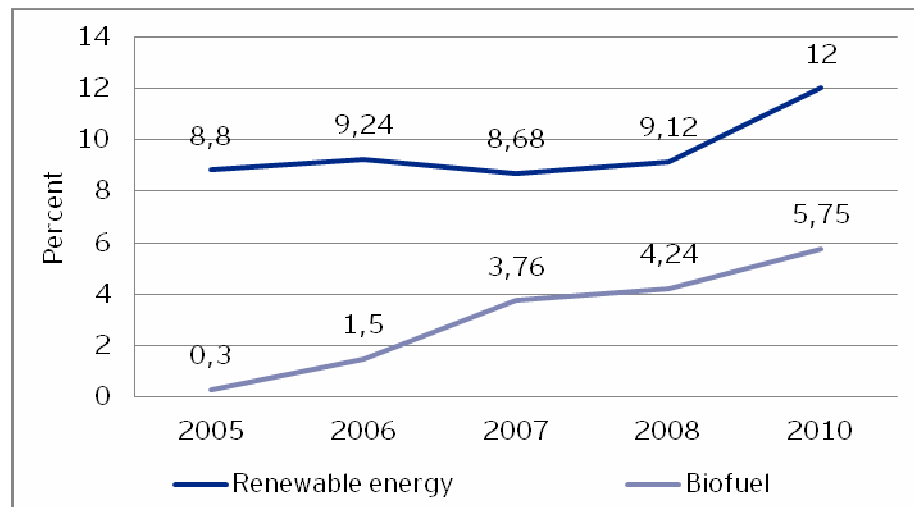
The majority of indicators that describe the air condition has improved or remained unchanged: the amount of sulfur oxides decreased (see Fig. 1.), the share of the renewable energy sources in total primary energy supply increased as well as the share of biofuel in the country's fuel for the transport market (see Fig. 2. ).

**Figure 1. Emission of sulfur oxides (SO<sub>x</sub>) in Lithuania**



Source: Lithuania's Environment Protection Agency data,  
<<http://gamta.lt/cms/index?rubricId=c314b892-3b66-4c8e-a032-42c7c32dc601>>

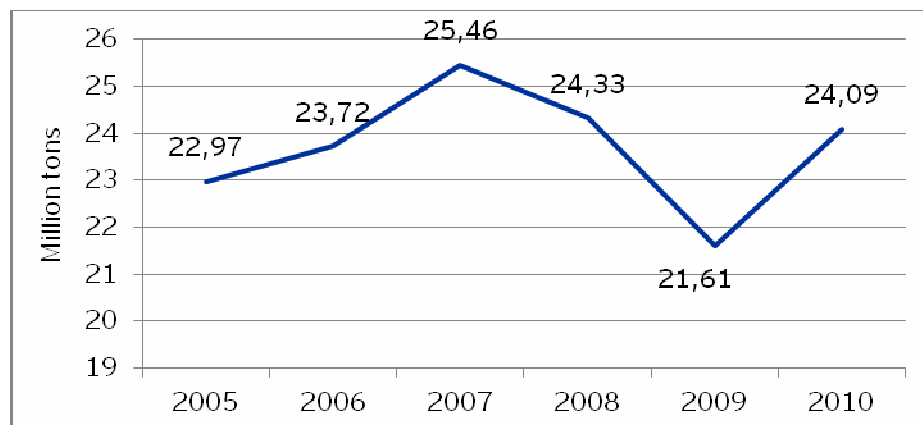
**Figure 2. Share of renewable energy in total primary energy supply and share of biofuel in transport fuels in Lithuania**



Source: Lithuania's Environment Protection Agency data,  
<http://gamta.lt/cms/index?rubricId=c314b892-3b66-4c8e-a032-42c7c32dc601>,  
<http://gamta.lt/cms/index?rubricId=c314b892-3b66-4c8e-a032-42c7c32dc601>

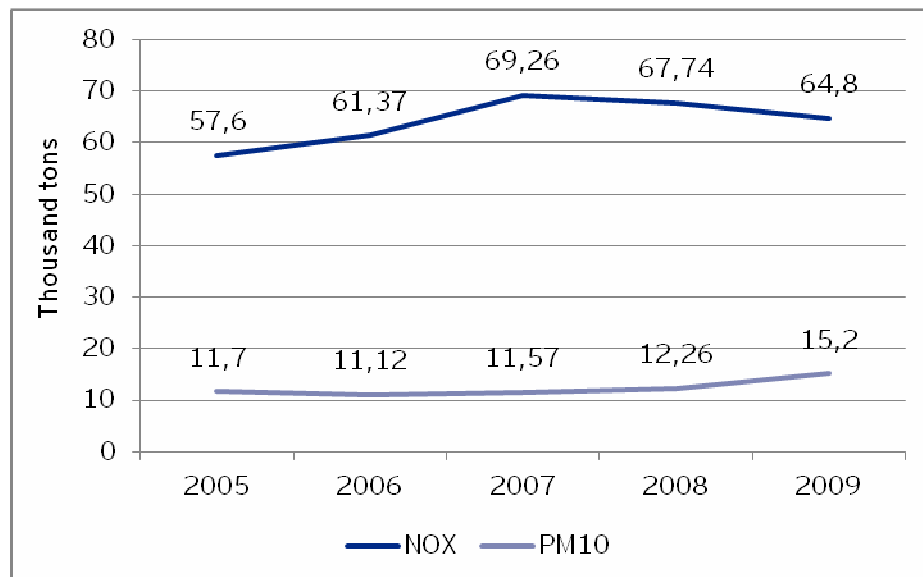
Allowable limits rate indication of the solid particles, nitrogen dioxide and ground-level ozone measurement performed by air quality research stations showed unchanged results. Although some indicators describing air quality have deteriorated – greenhouse gas emissions and total amount of environment polluting substances increased as well as amount of nitric oxide and solid particles in environment, they did not exceed the permitted levels (see Fig. 3. and 4.).

**Figure 3. Greenhouse gas (CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent) emissions in Lithuania**



Source: EUROSTAT data, "Greenhouse gas emissions by sector"  
<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsdcc210&plugin=1>

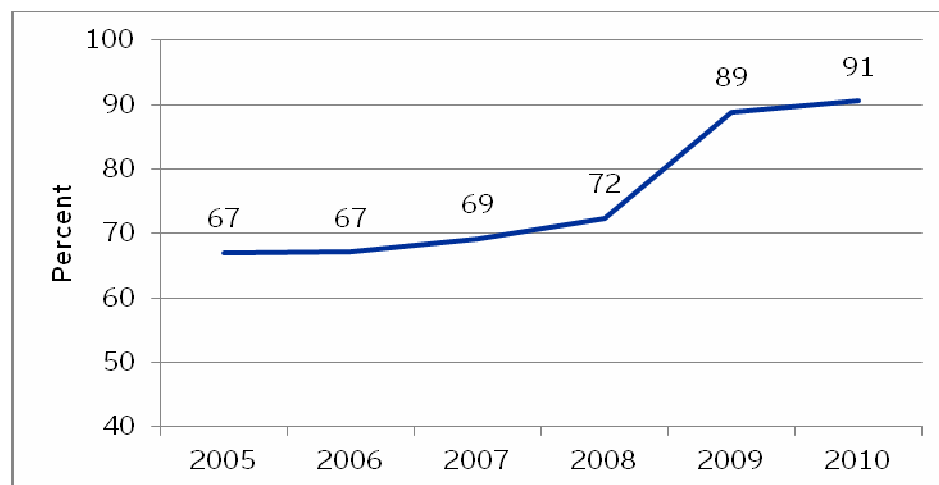
**Figure 4. Nitrogen oxides (NOX) and particulate matter (PM10) emission in Lithuania**



Source: Lithuania's Environment Protection Agency data, <http://gamta.lt/cms/index?rubricId=c314b892-3b66-4c8e-a032-42c7c32dc601>

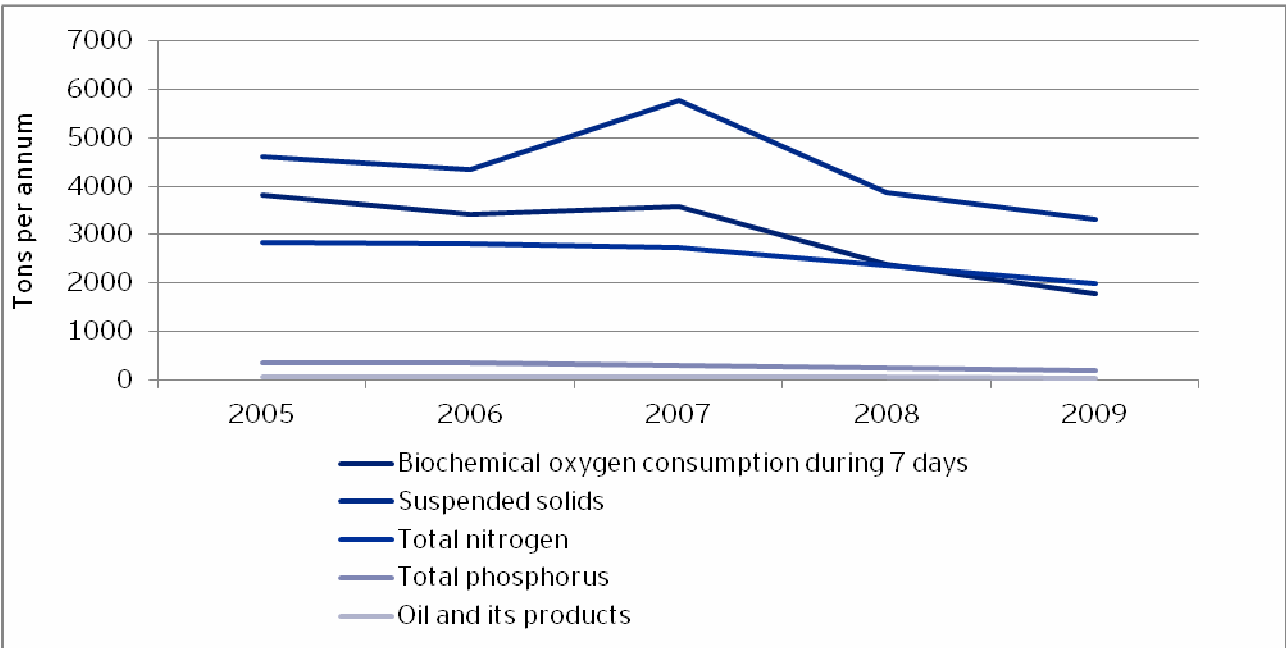
The indicators describing water condition in many cases improved or remained unchanged – the level of waste water treatment substantially increased (see Fig. 5.), pollution of concentrated pollution sources decreased (see Fig. 6.), the surface water condition also improved. The share of good condition groundwater remained unchanged.

**Figure 5. Wastewater treatment level in Lithuania**



Source: Lithuania's Environment Protection Agency data, <http://gamta.lt/cms/index?rubricId=185d57de-925c-484d-a3e0-94dcc058e6bd>

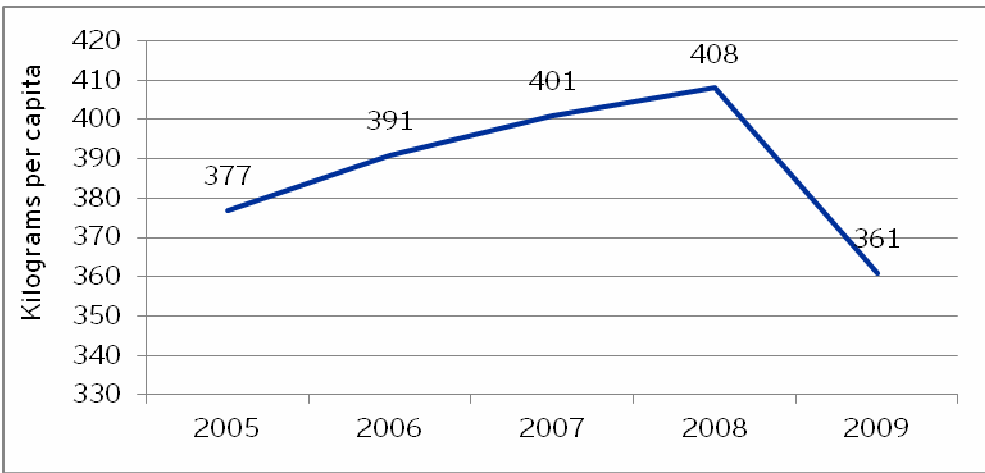
Figure 6. Wastewater water pollutionin of concentrated pollution sources in Lithuania



Source: Lithuania's Environment Protection Agency data, <<http://gamta.lt/cms/index?rubricId=185d57de-925c-484d-a3e0-94dcc058e6bd>>

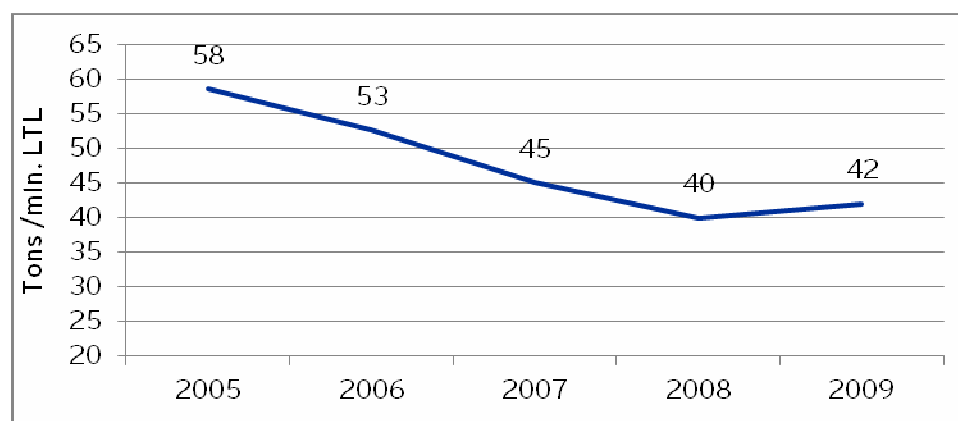
Constantly increasing municipal waste amount per capita since 2005, in 2009 decreased and reached the level of 2005 (see Fig. 7.), amount of production waste per capita was reduced, the amount of collected hazardous waste increased, collection of industrial waste decreased (see Fig. 8.). It is likely that one of the main reasons for these changes was the fact that the country was facing the economic crisis.

Figure 7. Municipal waste per capita in Lithuania



Source: Lithuania's Environment Protection Agency data, <<http://gamta.lt/cms/index?rubricId=ab9ca396-c732-462c-a1c3-96260482d7ed>>

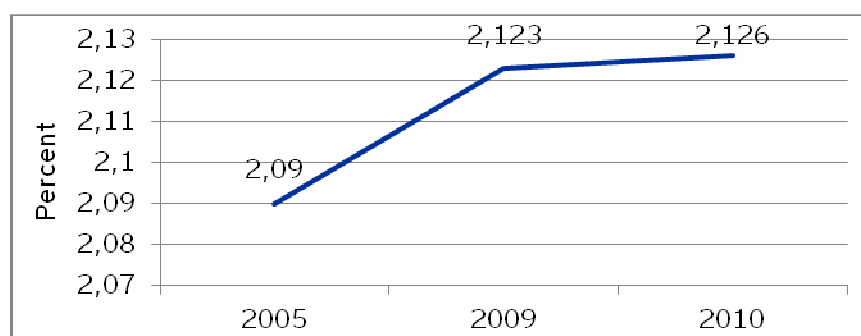
**Figure 8. Collection of industrial waste**



Source: Lithuania's Environment Protection Agency data, <  
<http://gamta.lt/cms/index?rubricId=ab9ca396-c732-462c-a1c3-96260482d7ed>>, Statistics  
Lithuania data <<http://db1.stat.gov.lt/statbank/default.asp?w=1280>>

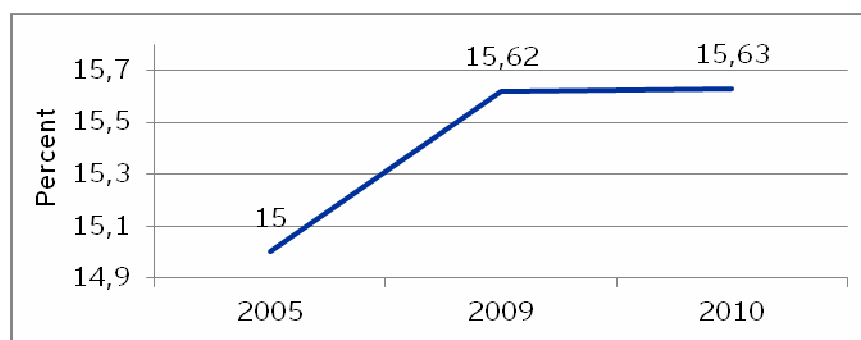
The indicators related to landscape and biodiversity improved: the territories of forests and protected areas increased (see Fig. 9. and 10.), more and more works related to restoration and management of protected areas were carried out, recultivation of the damaged areas also started.

**Figure 9. Forest area in Lithuania**



Source: Lithuania's Environment Protection Agency data, <  
<http://gamta.lt/cms/index?rubricId=0729e5c2-6079-441c-8fdd-35ad93fedea3>>

**Figure 10. Protected areas in Lithuania**



Source: Lithuania's Environment Protection Agency data, <  
<http://gamta.lt/cms/index?rubricId=0729e5c2-6079-441c-8fdd-35ad93fedea3>>

## Lithuania's Possibilities to Reach EU Average Values of Indicators

Lithuania's possibilities to reach average values of EU economic and social development, resources efficiency, environmental pollution indicators, not to exceed EU standards and to comply with other requirements by 2015 were evaluated after analyzing the changes of the environmental conditions in Lithuania.

The results of the evaluation showed that changes of most economic and social development, resource efficiency and environmental pollution indicators on an average improve faster than those in EU countries, and by some indicators, such as cargo turnover, municipal waste per capita, the share of the renewable energy of total energy consumed, the condition in the country is better than the EU average (see Table 1.). However, in spite of rapid improvement since 2005, many of Lithuania's indicators are much lower than the EU average. Although 2007-2013 Operational Programmes being implemented in full scope and on time would slightly reduce a gap between Lithuania's values and the EU average, opportunities to reach the EU average by 2015 are low due to large differences.

**Table 1. Lithuania's and EU economic and social indicators change**

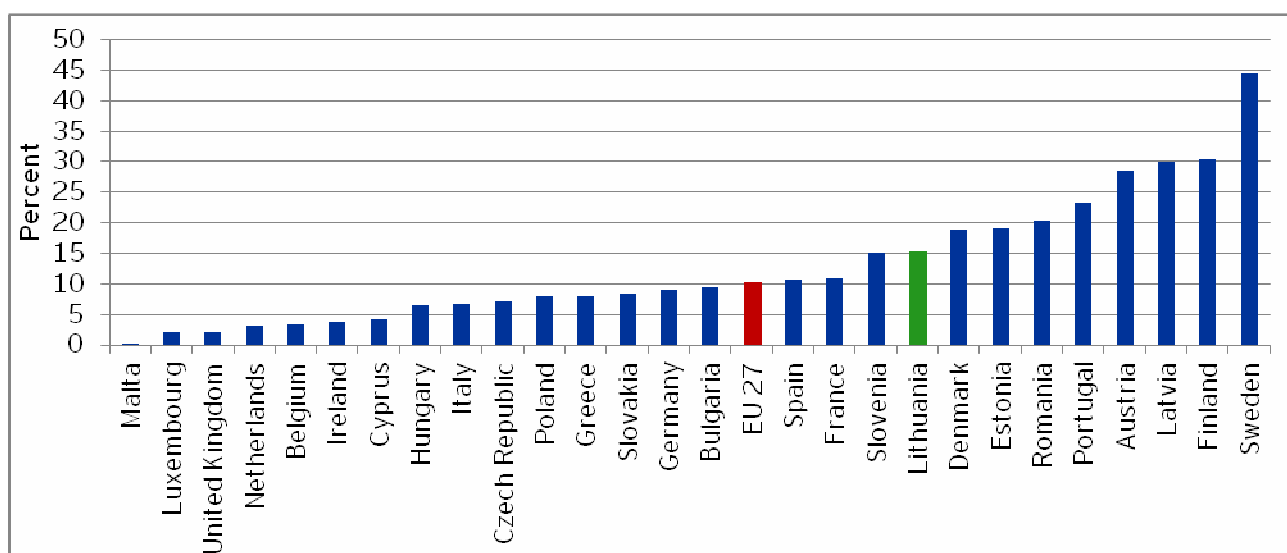
Indicator	Percentage change between 2005 and 2009		Lithuania's attainment of EU 27 average
	EU 27	Lithuania	
GDP per capita*	9%	36%	33,9%
Spending on R&D	10,4%	12%	41,8%
Energy intensity	4,6%	10,2%	37%
Labor productivity	1%	5%	50,9%
Freight turnover	-8,3%	1,1%	122,3%
Tourism intensity	2,3%	0,7%	17%
Investments	-4,5%	-25%	90%

Source: Evaluation Report "Evaluation of Environmental Requirements implementation", UAB Ernst &Young Baltic, 2011

As compared with averages of the changes in the EU, economic and social development in Lithuania is in many cases faster: since 2005 in Lithuania GDP per capita, expenditure on research and development, labour productivity have been growing more rapidly, still, as the gap between Lithuania's and the EU's social – economic development is too wide, it is not likely to reach the averages soon.

In terms of the use of resources, Lithuania, in some respects, performs better than the EU on an average: in Lithuania, the average share of renewable energy in total energy consumption is higher by 5 percentage points. Evaluation of all the planned EU Structural Funds for enhancing the use of the renewable resources and increasing the funds used to achieve the growth, it is projected that in this field Lithuania would get closer to EU leaders.

**Figure 11. Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption**

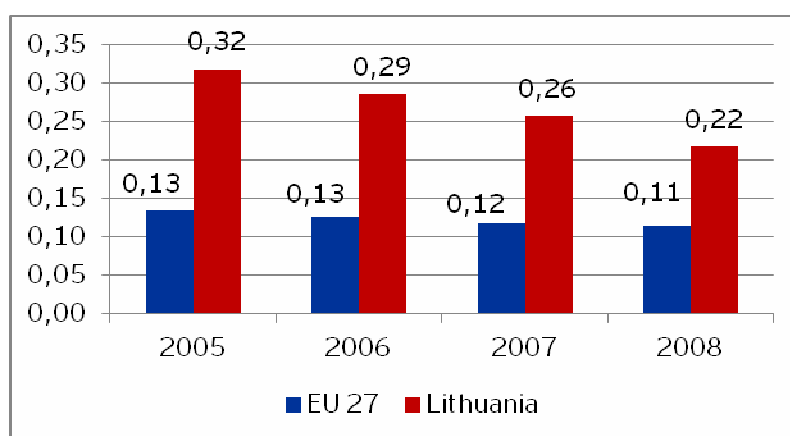


Source: EUROSTAT,

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcod e=tsdcc110>

In spite of the observed positive changes, a large gap makes Lithuania's opportunities to reach EU averages of environmental pollution indicators to be assessed with skepticism (for instance, greenhouse gas emission, see Fig. 12.).

**Figure 12. Greenhouse gas emission (thousand tons CO2 equivalent/million LTL GDP)**



Source: EUROSTAT,

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcod e=ten00072>,

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcod e=tec00001>

The important reason for such evaluation is the lack of measures aimed at improvement of the environmental condition. During the evaluation it was determined that, for example, measures to increase the use of centralized wastewater collection and treatment would have had a positive impact on the environmental quality, however, due to the lack of action, the scope indicators describing the environmental pollution in Lithuania would not have reached the EU averages.



## Environmental Impact Evaluation

Environmental impact interim evaluation of the Economic Growth Operational Programme (hereinafter – EGOP) and the Cohesion Promotion Operational Programme (hereinafter – CPOP) was performed at project, measure, priority and programme level.

Environmental impact evaluation was based on the methodology approved by the European Environment Agency and Leopold matrix. During the environmental impact evaluation at project level, individual infrastructural projects, which could have had a negative impact on the environment and environmental projects directly aimed at the improvement of environmental conditions, were analyzed. Impact and possible changes, as a result of the projects' implementation and subsequent management were assessed according to the following environmental components:

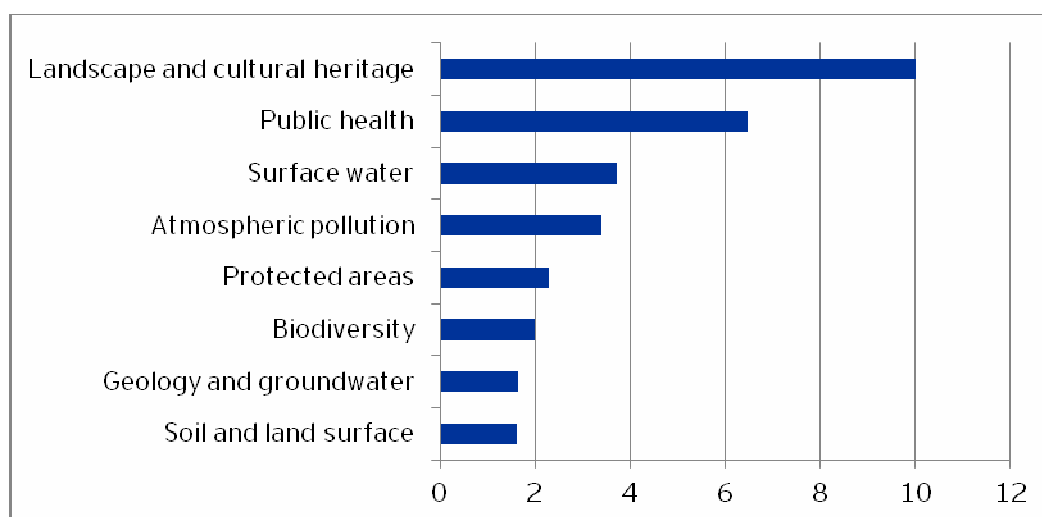
- ▶ public health;
- ▶ geology and underground waters;
- ▶ soils and land surfaces;
- ▶ surface waters;
- ▶ atmospheric pollution;
- ▶ biodiversity;
- ▶ protected areas;
- ▶ landscape and cultural heritage.

Impact of the projects was assessed in this order:

- ▶ each selected project and related environmental documentation was evaluated;
- ▶ Leopold matrix was completed for each project (project's impact on every environmental component was assessed by applying impact significance criteria from 0 to 9);
- ▶ according to the impact on environmental component, it was measured whether the criteria would be positive or negative;
- ▶ final results were calculated after evaluating the "weight coefficients".

The results acquired by using Leopold matrix showed that the impact of all projects on the environmental components was positive. The implementation of the environmental projects had greater impact on different environmental components than the infrastructural ones. The latter had greater positive impact only on the condition of air and landscape. In general, implementation of the projects financed by the EGOP and CPOP had the biggest positive impact on landscape and public health, also significantly contributed towards the improvement of surface waters' and atmospheric air (see Fig.13.).

**Figure 13. Project impact on the separate environmental components**



Source: Evaluation Report “Evaluation of Environmental Requirements Implementation”, UAB Ernst &Young Baltic, 2011

The results of the multi-criteria analysis showed that the implementation process of the analyzed projects, exclusively during the construction period, has an impact on three areas – increases noise and vibration levels, has a physical impact on soil and surface. Still, the occurring impact is a short-term/ temporary and insignificant.

The environmental impact evaluation of the EGOP and CPOP at measure, priority and programme level was based on the results acquired by evaluating the environmental impact caused by projects and taking into account the scope and implementation progress of the financed measures and priorities.

The environmental impact interim evaluation results of the measures and priorities directly depend on the state of implementation: the environmental impact of the measures and priorities implemented to a greater extent is greater. As during the evaluation the scope of implementation of the measures and priorities financed by Operational Programmes was relatively small (70% of the measures monitoring indicators’ planned values have been reached by no more than 30% or completely unreached), their environmental impact was not yet significant and would gain strength in the future, after the full implementation of the planned activities.

The biggest possible environmental impact of the measures is expected after implementation of the CPOP priority’s “Environment and sustainable development” measures which are aimed at improving the environment: this priority will have a strong positive impact on public health, contribute towards the reduction of atmospheric pollution, improvement of surface waters, the quality of soil, and also landscape and cultural heritage preservation (see Fig. 14.). The evaluation results showed that the measures and priorities which funded the infrastructural projects would also have a positive or neutral impact on the environment.

**Figure 14. Possible environmental impact of the measures**

Priorities of operational programmes	Funding, LTL	Potential environmental impact index
2007-2013 m. Economic Growth Operational Programme		

Research and technological development for economic competitiveness and economic growth	2 682 272 495	39,94
Business efficiency enlargement and business environment improvement	2 808 176 494	25,4
Main economic infrastructure	2 834 641 974	48,45
Trans-European transport network development	4 444 729 795	61,73
<b>2007-2013 m. Cohesion Promotion Operational Programme</b>		
Local and urban development, cultural heritage and nature preservation and for tourism development	3 932 714 188	70,79
Quality of public services and accessibility of health, education and social infrastructure	2 611 264 525	48,27
Environment and sustainable development	4 851 828 434	156,79

Source: Evaluation Report "Evaluation of Environmental Requirements Implementation", UAB Ernst &Young Baltic, 2011

To sum up, the results of the environmental impact interim evaluation proved the SEA conclusions that the environmental impact of all Operational Programmes' measures and priorities would be positive or, in some cases, neutral and reversed the conclusions of the likely negative environmental impact of some EGOP activities.

### Environmental Problems

Environmental problems arising from the implementation of the EGOP and CPOP were determined and analyzed in order to find ways how to avoid and solve them by reducing a negative environmental impact. Problems emerging during the implementation of the environmental and infrastructural projects funded by the Operational Programmes were determined by surveying four groups of respondents who participated in the projects: the representatives of project owners (beneficiaries), implementing institutions, representatives of project promoters (consultants) and representatives of Regional Environmental Protection Departments. According to the survey results, most common problems related to the implementation of the projects arise from the required formal environmental procedures or preparation of the documentation. The problems in this area were identified by all survey groups. Other commonly encountered problems were related to the public opposition. Based on the survey results, most commonly, the environmental problems arose in implementing projects in the areas of infrastructure, transport and energy. Problems were identified in the documentation of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) together with the mitigation measures.

The survey also collected the data to identify which environmental problems are encountered in different phases of the projects: planning, implementation (constructions) and management.

According to the survey results, the main problems arose due procedures for environmental impact evaluation and "Natura 2000" significance setting. The main and most important reason –

long timings of EIA procedures and non-compliance. The survey data showed that the current EIA documentation and “Natura 2000” significance setting were the most common reason for the delay in implementation of the planned projects.

Most common environmental problems in construction stage are related to environmental components or public health. The main environmental problem which is encountered by all survey groups at this stage is related to the public opposition to activities. The greatest environmental problems when using infrastructure developed in the course of projects are also related to the public opposition to activities. The public opposition to the great extent is caused by the adverse effects such as odors, noise and so on, which results from the activities.

In the course of the evaluation, the analyzed best practice examples proved that the public opposition is often caused by the lack of information. For example, development of the municipal and biodegradable waste management infrastructure in Telšiai District caused residents to complain to the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania on the proposed conclusion that the environmental impact evaluation is not mandatory. In order to reduce the public opposition to the project, the representatives of Šiauliai Regional Environmental Protection Department, who are interested in environmental impact evaluation individuals, the organizer of the planned economic activity and the authors of the documentation, organized a meeting with the public. During the meeting the authors of the documentation explained the targets of the planned economic activity, technological parameters, an impact of the planned economic activity, the impact mitigation measures and other information in detail as well as answered the questions proposed by the representatives of the public.

“Development of the water supply and wastewater management infrastructure in Šiauliai” project owners encountered a problem when residents did not connect to the centralized water supply and wastewater management system (not mandatory) and continued using the existing systems that often did not comply with the environmental requirements. Before starting work on the project, the project owners held meetings with residents and explained terms of the connection to the water supply and wastewater networks, the schedule of network construction, benefits of the project and provided various technical documentation. All the measures and actions ensured 70% (which is much larger than average) of new users access to drinking water supply and wastewater management infrastructure.

Good practice examples ensured that broader co-operation and information about activities spread at planning stage can help to avoid later conflicts and achieve the objectives.

### **Integration of Environmental Requirements**

Lithuania, as well as any other EU member country, is committed to integrate EU directives into national legal framework. After the analysis of the Operational Programmes, it was determined that the environmental procedures and requirements are properly integrated into the EU Structural Funds management system at programme, measure and priority level.

In order to identify whether the environmental procedures’ integration into EU Structural Funds management system is adequate, the main legislation of the EU Structural Funds management

was analyzed as well as the funding descriptions of the environmental and infrastructural measures.

In all funding descriptions of the EGOP measures it is required to submit:

- ▶ Findings of the responsible authorities concerning implications on procedures of the environmental impact evaluation and/or approvals that procedures are not mandatory;
- ▶ Findings of the responsible authority concerning implications on “Natura 2000” significance setting or approval that activity does not require significance setting.

In funding descriptions of the CPOP measures the following is required:

- ▶ The environmental impact evaluation procedure, if a project complies with the list of the projects that require the environmental impact evaluation;
- ▶ Implications on “Natura 2000” significance (in measures related to environmental protection when a project might impact areas of “Natura 2000”).

After evaluation of the funding descriptions of the environmental and infrastructural measures, it was determined that the legal requirements of the environmental procedures are properly integrated into the descriptions of the measures funding terms and conditions.

The Republic of Lithuania Law on the Environmental Impact Evaluation of the Economic Activity establishes the mandatory procedures. Their objective is to determine whether the planned activity of the project after evaluating its nature and impact on the environment is permissible in the selected location. Environmental procedures require to identify the need for environmental impact evaluation, environmental impact evaluation’s procedures, impact on Europe’s ecological network “Natura 2000” areas. Evaluating the maintenance of the environmental requirements’ compliance, it was identified that, at all stages of the project implementation, the maintenance of the compliance with the environmental requirements was effective and did not require additional measures.

In certain cases, the maintenance of compliance with the environmental requirements in project selection phase was not efficient due to the excess of the requirements specified in the descriptions of the projects’ funding terms and conditions and the lack of the methodology for evaluation of projects’ compliance with the environmental requirements. Firstly, the requirements for submitting documentation that verifies environmental procedures in some cases were excessive and formulated regardless the nature and specification of the planned projects’ activities. Secondly, enforcement to submit documentation that justifies compliance with the environmental requirements differs (in some cases document is required from responsible institution, in others applicant’s approval in written is sufficient and so on) as well as methods used by the implementing institutions.

At project’s implementation stage, according to the results of the research, compliance with the environmental requirements was maintained efficiently. Maintenance was performed by responsible institutions in accordance with the legal requirements that determine procedures for construction activities. Projects’ impact on environment was not monitored additionally at this

stage by the administrative institutions, and actions were taken only when information about possible negative projects' environmental impact was received.

After projects' implementation, compliance with the environmental requirements was maintained efficiently and was performed by various responsible institutions, including the environmental ones,. There was no need for broadening the functions of the implementing institutions at this stage.

### **Assessment of Monitoring System**

During the evaluation, the suitability and adequacy of the monitoring indicators used for assessing measures that were aimed at improving environmental conditions were analyzed. The attention was focused on those measures of the Operational Programmes which, according to the results of the environmental impact evaluation, had a significant positive impact on the environmental conditions.

The assessment of the monitoring system showed that the existing monitoring indicators are insufficient to perform environmental impact monitoring. The monitoring indicators that were suitable to assess the direct impact on the environment comprised only a small part of all indicators. Fact monitoring indicators to track infrastructure developed during the project or documentation were broadly used. However, indicators that would help to identify a negative environmental impact were not used in the entire system. It was noticed that in some cases monitoring indicators did not supply information about the qualitative results of the project implementation, and it was impossible to evaluate the changes of the environmental impact after the project's implementation. In some cases, monitoring indicators were not informative due to the environmental impact scale.

The efficiency of the projects' environmental impact monitoring can be improved by eliminating uninformative product's "turnover" indicators (for example, monitoring indicators of the prepared documentation amount) and replacing them with evaluation indicators for direct environmental impact area. Newly determined indicators should be required to give the assessment of the projects' contribution to the country's environmental tasks and objectives. The existing monitoring indicators should be specified and oriented towards accumulation of the actual information for the environmental impact evaluation.

### **Other EU Countries' Experience**

In order to determine what are the environmental problems and how they are solved in other EU countries, the experience of two EU countries, Estonia and Ireland, was analyzed. The first choice was made because of similarities with Lithuania: environmental problems that were aimed to be solved, EU structural funds' scope allocated to environmental protection, experience in administering the EU Structural Funds and maintaining compliance with the environmental requirements. Ireland was chosen as a result of greater experience in implementing projects financed by the EU Structural Funds and an opportunity to analyze previous investments during 2000-2006 related to environmental protection.

During the analysis of Estonia's experience in maintaining the environmental requirements, good experience examples were identified. The Law on Public Procurement was supplemented with the

provisions that require the exercise of “green procurement”, hence during the implementation of the projects financed by the EU Structural Funds “green procurement” was broadly executed. In addition, when projects’ selection was performed using the competition principles, additional points were added, i.e. an opportunity to obtain EU funding was increased. Estonia’s experience in maintaining compliance with environmental requirements could be applied in Lithuania: during the implementation of the projects financed by the EU Structural Funds “green procurement” could be executed more actively, as well as during the selection of the projects’ the priority could be given to the projects that had more significant impact on the environment. More active execution of “green procurement” would not only help to reduce negative aspects that arise as a result of projects’ implementation, but also it would make the process less harmful to the environment. The supplementation of projects which would have greater positive impact on the environment with additional points would encourage project promoters to evaluate what impact their planned projects might have even in those cases when the planned result was not directly related to the improvement of environmental condition, and to look for measures that would increase the positive impact.

After analyzing the experience of Ireland in maintaining the environmental requirements, an example aimed at improvement of the monitoring indicators that had positive impact on programme’s implementation monitoring efficiency was given. It showed how the number of product’s indicators was reduced and additional impact evaluation indicators were included: during the 2000 - 2006 programming period the monitoring indicators of the economic and social infrastructure programmes’ implementation were changed by withdrawal of old product “turnover” indicators and including more indicators suitable for the measurement of the performed activities. Given the fact that the monitoring system of the Operational Programmes performed in Lithuania lacks impact assessment indicators, experience that proved in Ireland could be applied in Lithuania.

## **Recommendations**

After the execution of the evaluation, strategic and technical recommendations were prepared.

*Strategic recommendations* are aimed at the 2014-2020 programming period. It was proposed that while preparing operational programmes directly related to the environmental improvement measures’ formation, the requirements (EU and national) for individual environmental areas should be taken into account as well as more attention to the funding aimed at condition improvement of those areas where the risk not to achieve the set requirements was the greatest should be given. It was also recommended to include more environmental impact assessment indicators and to form monitoring indicators of the measures and projects aimed at environmental improvement so as it would be possible to evaluate the contribution of the operational programmes when executing tasks determined for Lithuania were in the area of environmental protection.

*Technical recommendations* were aimed at reduction of the administrative burden and more efficient information about planned projects and their impact on environment. It was offered to simplify the requirements for the submission of the environmental documentation which are determined in funding terms’ descriptions in order to reduce administrative burden for the

applicants and various institutions that issue certificates. Also, it was recommended to pay more attention at planning stage to introduce the public with project's (or entire measure) activities, expected results and positive impact on the living environment: it would be appropriate, along with usual publicity measures, to organize meetings/discussions with the public.

## **Conclusions**

The conducted evaluation of the environmental requirements implementation helped to determine not only the current impact of the implemented measures on various environmental components, but also to identify the areas on which impact would be strengthened in the upcoming programming periods. The benefit of the evaluation would especially occur when planning and allocating funding to future programmes, measures and projects. The evaluation also proved the importance and relevance of the SEA the execution of which is required for operational programmes. During the evaluation the main conclusions of the SEA were proved, hence it was proposed that the SEA helped to identify the impact of the implemented programmes on the environment. It was determined that indicators used in the SEA were relevant in order to conduct the environmental impact monitoring. During SEA the performed environmental condition evaluation was significant for the monitoring changes that resulted from the implementation of the operational programmes.