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## **ASSESSING STRATEGIC PLANNING IN POSTMODERN ORGANIZATIONS: A CASE STUDY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR**

**Introduction.** Different sectors of the economy adopt a dynamic approach to the role of strategic planning, presenting specific arguments for its application as a management tool and the rationale behind measuring its effectiveness. Research gaps remain, as justifying the relevance of strategic planning continues to be important for postmodern organisations.

**Aim and tasks.** This study presents an instrument for managers that allows them to evaluate the results of strategic planning and thereby justify the need for strategic planning. This study explores gaps in the current practice of strategic planning in the public sector and predicts opportunities for improving performance by focusing on public organisations.

**Results.** An empirical study was conducted at the level of a single-purpose public sector organisation. The empirical study was divided into three parts: studies of the desired and achieved state of the organisation's performance quality, a set of rationally composed quantitative and qualitative research methods was selected for the latter, and finally, a synthesis of research results using the formula for assessing the maturity of strategic planning activities. The calculated average maturity score (2.71) of the managerial activity components in the chosen organisation indicates that its strategic planning maturity is at Level 3 (completed). To reach Level 4, the goals and tasks of the projects must be comprehensively aligned with the strategy, and project success should be measured based on compliance with the strategy concerning all stakeholders.

**Conclusions.** An empirical study of strategic planning in a public sector organisation based on an integral methodology showed that the process was at an average level of maturity. The need for a link between strategy and projects was identified as a relevant gap in the literature. This coherence facilitates effective risk management regarding the logical connection between tasks and their implementation, compliance with the implementation of goals with the norm, and the coincidence of the views of the organisation and its stakeholders on the quality of activities. Key issues include the mission's formal nature, bureaucratisation of the process, and stakeholders' poor awareness of project results. To move to the highest level, full strategy and project synchronisation and assessment of their success through the prism of stakeholder satisfaction are necessary.

**Keywords:** Strategic Planning, Decisions, Operational Maturity, Measurement, Postmodern Organisation.

## **1. Introduction.**

Over the years, various reasons have been identified that justify the inconsistency of research on strategic planning as a management activity, and also highlight the contradictory effectiveness of this management tool. This pertains to factors associated with planning content, including the complexity of planning processes, challenges in methodology and measurement, and frequent neglect of effective strategy implementation.

The managers of most sampled organisations criticise strategic planning as being too bureaucratic, insufficiently insightful, and unsuitable amid rapidly evolving systemic conditions. The managers claim that strategic planning is a relic that should be relegated to the bottom of the management toolbox. The recommendation “intrudes” into postmodern organisation management and takes root in organisations seeking to prosper in troubled times. Organisations seeking to prosper in troubled times should invest in market intelligence, thus in manoeuvrability or mobility, instead of strategic planning. Most organisations limit themselves to operational and tactical product production planning and ignore the development strategies of complex activities.

Strategic planning is one of the minor favourite processes in business organisations' managerial activities. Among public organisations, there is often an “allergy” to plans and their creation for reasons similar to those in the business sector. Doubts about the purposefulness of applying strategic planning as a management tool, including its effectiveness, have accumulated. Consequently, there are constant difficulties in adapting this measure to the nature of the planned activity. Cases of formality in the application of the measure are observed more frequently. This leads to stagnation in the activities of the organisations.

This prescription, which has spread in practice, is more misleading than correct because it distorts the proper role of strategic planning. The doubt and, at the same time, the question of whether and how strategic planning could still effectively improve the performance of a modern organisation has returned to the agenda of the organisation's managers.

This study aims to identify errors in strategic planning based on scientific literature and to present an instrument to the managers of organisations that allow them to evaluate the results of strategic planning and thereby possibly justify or deny the need for strategic planning. This study explores gaps in the current practice of strategic planning and predicts opportunities for improving performance.

## **2. Literature review.**

According to Pyi Wun (2019), an organisation's performance improves due to more effective procedures for organising its activities. Achieving set goals is possible if an organisation's employees plan strategic actions. Oluwaseun et al. (2020) studied the relationship between strategic planning and performance. Hypothesis testing led to the conclusion that the two have a positive relationship. Research on strategic planning activities has regained relevance because of the objectively based impact of planning activities on organisations' results (Amoo et al., 2023; Gandrita, 2023). Postmodern organisations devote more time to strategy (Haanaes et al., 2016; Kachaner et al., 2016; Polowczyk, 2012).

When faced with survival challenges, it is not logical to focus entirely on the manoeuvrability. It becomes much more critical when it is “connected” with the organisation's readiness for a long-term perspective. The latter winning ability is developed only through systemic thinking (Kachaner et al., 2016), which aims to identify future potential in the context of emerging opportunities and threats, a process closely linked to strategic planning. Strategic planning makes it possible to create a vision of the organisation's development based on the search for a consensus on the efficiency and continuity of activities by activating learning processes. It is a creative, free-flowing process that aims to create the conditions for survival in a dynamically changing environment that raises prospective uncertainty.

The strategic planning of public institutions is a legally regulated and standardised process (Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, 2021), which may limit the expression of their dynamic abilities.

Therefore, strategic planning in the public sector can be defined as a deliberate and disciplined approach to adopting essential public decisions and actions that shape and determine what an organisation is, what it does, and for what purpose (Bryson et al., 2024). According to Ahmad and Ahmad (2019), strategic planning should be considered an attempt to prepare an organisation for future contingencies and adapt to the environment's dynamics. Henderson and Hines (2019) treat strategic planning as a procedure for determining and validating the direction of an organisation's activities. They are seconded (Al Qershi, 2021; Kunzmann, 2014).

Guyadeen et al. (2022) describe strategic planning as a process during which long-term goals and priority actions to achieve the goals are determined, and human and financial resources are mobilised to carry out these actions. Strategic planning helps an organisation configure limited resources and abilities against the background of a dynamic competitive environment. From the situation's perspective, thanks to the best configuration, it can meet the ever-changing market needs, justify the expectations of stakeholders, simultaneously achieve the set goals, and maintain the strategic direction (Knight, 2015).

Previous studies have claimed that institutional strategic planning is a bureaucratic process associated with lower employee commitment and difficulties in implementing organisational processes (Gandrita, 2023). According to George et al. (2021) meta-analysis, bureaucracy can harm employee well-being by directly impacting employee outcomes and fostering alienation through overly restrictive rules, regulations, and procedures.

According to the general conclusion of the research conducted by Dwi Retnandari (2022) on implementing strategies in the public sector, strategic planning is formal and not prospective. Planning decisions are not based on developing the organisation's activities in the chosen direction. Strategy implementation planning is recognised as highly problematic, and the lack of an interface between strategy and projects is a relevant gap.

It is evident that in a rapidly changing and, at the same time, unpredictable environment, timely changes in their activities are essential for organisations.

A strategic plan is an essential factor that determines the success or failure of an organisation. Their survival and success may depend on whether these decisions are prepared and implemented appropriately. Therefore, a small mistake in the plan can reduce the competitive advantage (David et al., 2020). In addition, most organisations lack an effective strategic planning process (Kachaner et al., 2016; Narayanan & Fahey, 2013).

According to Gomes et al. (2019) and Cheung and Yu (2020), a typical strategic planning process includes external and internal environment analysis, strategy formulation, implementation, and control and evaluation. The success of planning may depend on the method chosen and the analysis and evaluation performed (Hamdan et al., 2020; Karatop, 2021). Theorists and practitioners seek to systematise the causes of the failure of strategic initiatives while proposing measures whose application would improve the process.

The individual stages of strategic analysis, target orientation, strategy development and planning, and implementation monitoring should be clearly defined and structured. Based on the results of the analysis of strategic planning within the country's public institutions (Leskaj, 2017), strategic analysis is the most troublesome stage of preparing a strategic plan, and predicting changes in a dynamic environment is difficult.

The uncertainty of government programs and the state's long- and medium-term goals leads to difficulties in determining institutions' missions and implementation goals. At the same time, the inevitable consequence of continuing the mentioned mistakes is a questionable operational strategy and inadequately detailed criteria for implementing the strategy. This text highlights the imbalance in the indicators used to measure the progress of institutional activities and how they often do not align with various aspects of development. One significant mistake is the issue of "irrational cascading" during the strategy implementation planning phase.

This refers to the lack of detailed strategic activity plans at the lowest organisational levels and for individual employees. As a result, the plans fail to demonstrate how the actions of all organisation members are compatible, and they are not practical tools for communication. Inaccuracies were also observed regarding the organisation of planned activities, such as the uncertainty of the functions of strategic groups, the programme coordinator, and task executors. Therefore, organisational efforts are necessary to determine individual roles, functions, and the number of members when preparing, adopting, and implementing activity plans.

Narayanan and Fahey (2013) even pointed out mistakes in preparing a strategic plan to increase its effectiveness.

1. Insufficient attention has been paid to systematically analysing problems based on the link between cause and effect.

2. Preconceived, possibly erroneous assumptions about the factors determining strategic decisions.

3. An unclear and unspecified course of action.

4. The organisation's capabilities are insufficient to implement an innovative strategy.

5. One-way communication between managers, strategy developers, and implementers.

In the context of future research, strategy can be equated with target orientation. This orientation typically considers mission, vision, and goals as critical elements. The formation of target orientation involves aligning strategic points that collectively chart a course toward the desired end state (Rajnoha et al., 2019). Setting strategic goals bridges an organisation's mission and vision. The success of strategic planning hinges on the soundness of goal-setting.

Moreover, a frequent reason for strategy failure is the lack of originality, a fundamental planning requirement. Mere imitation is insufficient and cannot substitute for genuine strategic thinking. Distinct expectations of external and internal contractors propel the evolution of postmodern organisational activities.

This trend is seen as a result of globalisation, where intervention strategies and their execution are intertwined with continuous organisational training and learning.

This fosters proactive human resource development, acknowledging new knowledge as a strategic asset and the most valuable resource for an organisation's long-term outlook (Raudeliūnienė et al., 2018; Raudeliūnienė et al., 2020; Zbucea et al., 2019). It is important to recognise that organisational development strategies grounded in productive knowledge are deemed significant (Bolisani&Bratianu, 2017; Zbucea et al., 2019; Kools & George, 2020).

The development and application of global knowledge and the ability to access such knowledge in specific situations are the engines of sustainable development. Managers must ensure the integration of managerial processes, such as planning and organising plan implementation.

Linking strategies and projects is essential for creating value. An organisation's flexible strategy requires a systemic approach (Molineux, 2018), as an action program is prepared to implement strategic decisions. Its function is to predict the most suitable strategies and coordinate and control their implementation (Korkmaz, 2020).

According to Aldehayyat et al. (2011), Amoo et al. (2023), and Messaoud (2022), managers of organisations who fundamentally believe in the superiority of strategic planning are more empathetic to the application of this managerial tool. An organisation's ability to adapt its strategy to a changing environment depends on the manager's attitude toward changes and the management of the organisation's activities (Knight, 2015).

Organisational leaders treat strategic planning as the only and best way to create effective programs, the implementation of which would help to achieve a competitive advantage in terms of the actual value created for stakeholders, and provide continuously flexibility and the opportunity to plan the future of the organisation, which is becoming increasingly volatile due to the turbulent environment (Gandrita, Rosado, 2022; Puglieri et al., 2022).

It is also proposed that an organisation's strategic flexibility be based on ensuring employees' loyalty (and not on their pressure), assigning government powers to employees and giving them broad powers to act together, and combining autonomy with control (Kemp, 2013; Sarhadi et al., 2018; Hess & Flatten, 2019). To achieve harmony, it is essential to create a system that combines strategy development, project management, and communication and cooperation between the strategic and project groups (Fischer et al., 2020; Hidalgo & Morell, 2019; Thesing et al., 2021; Gandrita, 2023).

The requirements for new content for the organisation's managerial activities are determined by the increasing power of users and changes in their nature. Mufudza (2019) identifies environmental turbulence as encompassing swift shifts in consumer preferences, increased global talent mobility, rapid technological advancements, and large-scale technology transfer.

These concurrent trends signal the need for companies to seek novel strategic planning approaches (Bolisani & Bratianus, 2017; Shar & Irani, 2017; Johnsen, 2021, 2022). The diversity of environmental factors and the interface of various elements suggest that the strategy for a postmodern organisation should be founded on constructive dialogues about rational insights and the implementation of practical activity development examples. Thus, a strategy's main requirement is adapting its flexible characteristics.

### **3. Analytical Tools and Frameworks.**

Using formalised expressions, the research methodology integrates several components: comparative analysis of scientific literature, systematisation, document analysis, interviews, surveys, authoring, and synthesis. Undoubtedly, the literature on strategic management offers a wide range of recommendations – from principal frameworks to specific measures – as well as guidance on the composition of the strategic background that is rational to choose and how to analyse and evaluate factors in the literature on strategic management.

Normative, widely known strategic planning tools for analysing the external environment, such as PESTEL or PESTLE, and M. Porter's Five Competitive Forces model, are recommended to be enriched with factor levels, considering the complexity and network nature of international activities, and geopolitics (Sharif, Irani, 2017), and the importance of circular economy (Puglieri et al., 2022) factors.

Systematisation of the general environment according to the PESTEL model is recognised by most theorists; this model is often used in practice and ensures the success of the strategic management of companies (Marinović-Matović, 2020; Marinović-Matović & Arsić, 2020; Puglieri et al., 2022; Yeaw Chong, 2022).

Amine and Smith (2009) evaluated consumer segmentation assumptions and proposed segmentation methods grounded in consumer research. These methods consider key consumer characteristics and behaviours, including multiplicity, unpredictability, and inconsistency. Researchers have focused on tools for identifying the needs and expectations of stakeholders who are strategically important at specific stages of an organisation's life cycle (Falqueto et al., 2019; Gandrita, 2023; Puglieri et al., 2022) to inform the development of a relevant strategic foundation.

An effective strategic planning model for an organisation should focus on achieving goals while understanding and developing the need for activities. It aims to identify ways to meet these needs, ensuring that the organisation can adapt effectively to its environment. A model meeting these requirements usually has the following components: strategic analysis, formation of target orientation, development of strategic decisions, preparation of an action plan for implementing decisions, and monitoring their implementation (Table 1).

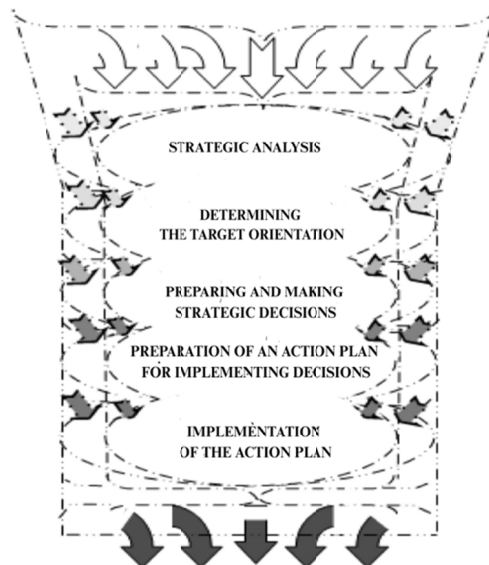
Based on the justification for the components presented, a strategic planning model is proposed. This model illustrates the interaction of its key components, which form the foundation of effective strategic planning in a postmodern organisation.

**Table 1. Content of the Strategic Planning Model for an Effective Postmodern Organisation.**

Components	Purpose
Strategic analysis of postmodern organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify the factors those determine the postmodern organisation's adequate adaptation to its uncertainly changing environment.</li> <li>• To determine the possibilities of the postmodern organisation's adequate adaptation to its uncertainly changing environment.</li> <li>• To reveal the features of the development of postmodern organisational activities.</li> </ul>
Determining the target orientation of the postmodern organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To make sense of the activities of a postmodern organisation.</li> <li>• To identify the outcome of a possible better interface between the postmodern organisation and its uncertainly changing environment.</li> <li>• To orient the activities of the postmodern organisation towards such a result.</li> </ul>
Preparation and adoption of strategic decisions of a postmodern organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerning the challenges posed by the uncertainly changing environment, to base the solutions of prospective operational problems, perceived as opportunities to act differently.</li> <li>• Taking into account the results of the analysis and evaluation, select the most suitable decisions which can be implemented to achieve the set goals.</li> </ul>
Development of an action plan for the implementation of strategic decisions for a postmodern organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure the rational distribution and use of postmodern organisation resources in order to implement solutions to problems of its prospective operation, which are perceived as opportunities to act differently.</li> </ul>
Monitoring the implementation of the action plan of the postmodern organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To observe the changes in the resources and environment of the postmodern organisation, to record the results of operations.</li> <li>• To examine the actual performance indicators of the postmodern organisation, to compare them with the planned values.</li> </ul>

The determining factors of globalisation (the nature of PESET factors, the background of the sector, and the relevant competitive forces) impose new requirements on the management models of organisations. This trend is particularly relevant for organisations that are focused on aspects of sustainability and that simultaneously envisage significant investments in innovations (Kneipp et al., 2019; Puglieri et al., 2022).

The complex objects of strategic analysis at the aggregated level are the organisation's potential and its environment, from the nearest to the most general set of factors that indirectly affect the activities of organisations at both local and global levels. An indisputable axiom of strategic planning is that strategic analysis focuses on analysing and assessing the situation in strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1. The Model Components Interface for Effective Strategic Planning.**

Strategic analysis aims to examine both the external environment to identify the organisation's most critical challenges and the internal environment to identify its most significant weaknesses and strengths (Abdelaal et al., 2021). Preparing and making strategic decisions without a systematic analysis of the situation violates the basic rule of strategic management: internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) are controllable elements, and external factors (opportunities and threats) are uncontrollable. Adapting the SWOT analysis tool to today's business context using the cascading principle is becoming increasingly common among practitioners.

A systemic approach perceives the research object, development, as a system. This perspective is shaped by configuring pairs of factors, where internal factors are seen as the primary drivers of change within the context of external factors. Based on the results of the factor analysis, organisations can develop four "relational" strategies: StrOp (strengths – opportunities), StrTh (strengths – threats), WeOp (weaknesses – opportunities), and WeTh (weaknesses – threats) (Benzaghta et al., 2021). Despite the weaknesses and threats, each combination ensures a perspective using the strategy created on its basis.

Each combination, even with weaknesses and threats, ensures the perspective using the strategy created on its basis. It is only expedient not to forget the golden rule: the results of SWOT analysis and assessment are a guideline to concentrate attention and efforts on the most relevant problems. This enables organisations to allocate their limited resources more effectively by prioritising the most significant changes from an environmental standpoint. Originality is critical in strategic planning, as mere imitation is insufficient; without uniqueness and originality, a strategy is less effective.

After preparing a strategic plan, assessing its effectiveness is vital and complex. Researchers continuously seek answers to fundamental questions such as: Does strategic planning support organisational goals? Does this lead to successful strategies? Is it practical? (Tapinos et al., 2005).

The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) is one of the most popular models for assessing the achievement of organisational goals. It combines four essential aspects of an organisation's strategy implementation success into one balanced system (Rosli et. al., 2018).

In the academic literature, the value of strategic planning is justified not only by financial outcomes but also by dimensions of social efficiency, such as environmental sustainability, organisational social responsibility, and responsiveness to stakeholder needs. Another way to assess the effectiveness of strategic planning in organisations is to assess set goals and achieved results or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) (Bishop, 2018; Parmenter, 2019).

The methods mentioned are not primarily aimed at evaluating the management process as a whole. However, applying the strategic management auditing method allows for combining the assessment of the implementation of goals according to KPI and the management process assessment (Balkaran, 2016; Korkmaz, 2020).

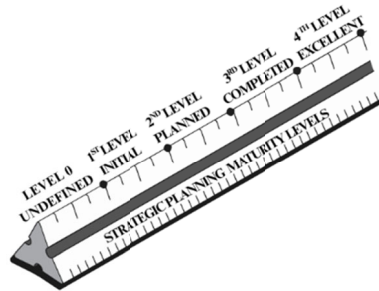
The maturity assessment method can be used to evaluate an organisation's strategic planning process by examining seven key dimensions: strategic leadership, planning ideology (or concept), planning processes and tools, organisational structure and design, human planning resources, organisational culture, and the evaluation of planned activities (Demir, 2018).

Applying the 360-assessment method fosters communication and cooperation, reducing the possibility of misinterpretation and misguided decisions. Combining this method with the other assessment tools mentioned is expected to provide a more comprehensive assessment of the link between strategy and projects in organisations.

According to Fuertes et al. (2020), research on the effectiveness of strategic planning is conducted using quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative methods allow us to understand the planning results, considering the budget and the ratio of income and expenses, thus routinely assessing the effectiveness of managerial activities.

Qualitative methods allow us to understand the causes and consequences of planning and success, and interpret situations using non-numbers. Combining qualitative and quantitative research methods enables a more comprehensive evaluation of the relationship between strategies and projects.

To support this, a five-level assessment scale was proposed to measure the maturity of strategic planning (Fig. 2). The involvement and commitment of all employees in the implementation process help strengthen the connection between operational strategy and project execution.



**Fig. 2. Rating Scale for Assessing Strategic Planning Maturity.**

*Source: based on Demir (2018).*

\*Level 0 (undefined) means that strategic planning is not carried out in the organisation: a strategic action plan is not prepared. Therefore, a target orientation (mission, vision, strategic goals) is not created, there is no strategic planning committee, and the link between strategy and projects is not assessed.

Level 1 (initial) – the components of strategic planning are formally described but are not implemented.

Level 2 (planned) – the strategic planning components are described and implemented formally. Strategic goals, plans, and actions have been created and implemented per established deadlines and responsibilities. The strategic action plan implementation is monitored after the approved plan is fully implemented.

Level 3 (completed) – the strategic planning process is effectively implemented in the organisation, and strategic goals and implementation plans are implemented according to the established procedure. The implementation of the strategic plan is monitored, the achieved results are evaluated, and, if necessary, the necessary corrections are made.

Level 4 (excellent) – the strategic planning process is fully integrated into all levels and is effectively implemented in the organisation. The goals are achieved or exceeded, and strategic actions are linked to the organisation's performance results.

After analysing the strategic planning maturity (Figure 2) assessment techniques proposed by Balkaran (2016), Bishop (2018), Demir (2018), Korkmaz (2020), Parmenter (2019), the study adapted a tool, the application of which allows assessing 7 parts of strategic planning: the rationality of the content of the strategic action plan, the validity of the mission, vision, goals, the expediency, efficiency and suitability of the means of implementing the goals, the organisation of the plan implementation, the interconnectedness of the activity strategy and projects. These components are consistent with the content of the postmodern strategic planning model. According to the assessment scale, the final maturity assessment of the strategic planning process is calculated by deriving the average of the 7 component assessments (formula 1).

$$FN = \frac{AC + AM + AV + AO + EES + ASC + LSP}{7}, \quad (1)$$

where:

FN – final maturity assessment of strategic planning;

AC – assessment of the rationality of the content of the strategic action plan;

AM – assessment of mission validity;

AV – assessment of the validity of the vision;

AO – assessment of the validity of the objectives;

EES – assessment of the expediency, efficiency, and suitability of implementation measures;

LSP – assessment of the link between strategy and projects;

ASC – assessment of the strategic planning committee.



According to Alpi and Evans (2019), case analysis is a qualitative method for a researcher to study a real, limited system (case) over a certain period, comprehensively and thoroughly collecting and analysing data from information sources, and systematising the case's characteristics.

Based on the relationship between strategy and projects, a substantiated assessment of the maturity of strategic planning in a public sector organisation is provided. The research methods include a synthesis of the results of the first and second parts of the study, summarising whether the projects being implemented correspond to the organisation's strategy or whether there is a link between these objectives. The assessment was formalised using a scale. The empirical foundation of the study is a case analysis of the dynamic strategic planning system employed by public sector organisation X.

#### **4. Results.**

This empirical research focuses in detail on two core objects: the strategy and the set of projects implemented by public sector organisation X. By treating the operational strategy as a prospective state of the organisation's performance quality and projects as the achievable or already achieved state, the empirical research is structured into three parts. First, the study examines both the desired and achieved levels of performance quality. Second, a rationally selected set of research methods is applied to evaluate the achieved states. Finally, the results were synthesised using a maturity assessment formula to determine the overall level of activity maturity.

The analysis begins by identifying an organisation's goals and assessing the link between strategy and projects. This part of the study also includes an examination of the characteristics of programs and projects, as well as the strategic planning process, which allows for the prediction of possible reasons for the (non-) achievement of goals to provide suggestions for strengthening the link between strategy and projects. The research method used in the first part involved analysing documents and strategic action plans.

According to Busetto et al. (2020), document research is a researcher's review and interpretation of primary written material. The key source in this phase is the Strategic Activity Plan of Public Organisation X for 2021–2024, which provides data on strategic goals, performance indicators, and the programs and projects designed to achieve them. In addition to this core planning document, the research also draws on the official Letter of State Expectations addressed to the organisation and the organisation's statutes, both of which were used to further clarify and validate the stated objectives. The SMART method of goal assessment enables the identification of implementation potential. To supplement this analysis, the State Audit Report was used to summarise the latter's situation.

In the examination of strategic planning, primary data are crucial as they are both authentic and reflective of the organisation's actual operational context. According to Roberts et al. (2021), a qualitative survey is an open, detailed study of a specific general nature about which the interviewee has experience and great insight. The purpose of surveying specialists from the Strategic Planning Department of public sector organisation X is to identify the key characteristics of managerial activities. Respondents were asked open-ended questions related to the approach to planning, adapting business management practices in the public sector, bureaucracy, organisation of activities, problems with plan implementation, and the link between operational strategy and projects.

The survey was anonymous, meaning that responses were collected without personal identification using the Google Forms survey tool. The survey results were used to summarise the study. The Good Governance Index (2020–2021, 2021–2022) compiled by the Governance Coordination Center was used to identify the state of strategic planning, which covers the quality of strategic planning and its implementation, albeit more from a formal perspective (whether it performs a strategic planning function, analyzes the current situation, anticipates risks, and develops specific action plans to avoid them).

Further analysis was conducted on the organisation's ongoing and completed projects and the results achieved. The research method applied was document analysis, specifically the examination of the plan implementation reports. Annual activity reports from 2020, 2021, to 2022 were used as sources of data on the organisation's yearly performance outcomes.

The quantitative survey of the organisation's beneficiaries aims to analyse the opinions of the organisation's service recipients about the significance of planned decisions for creating their well-being. According to Escudero-Mancebo et al. (2021), surveys collect people's thoughts and opinions about a product, process, or method. Surveys are easier to use than real-time methods, such as observation, and they help obtain data from more patients. The questions of the quantitative study of beneficiaries were based on the organisation's projects. For this study, three well-known projects in Lithuania were selected. These projects are intended to improve service quality, and customers should feel the benefits.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections. First, it aimed to determine whether the respondent used the organisation's services. Second, respondents rated the service on a scale of 1 to 5. The final part includes questions about a project, beginning with whether the respondent is aware of an ongoing project. They are then asked to assess whether the project achieved its goals or had a noticeable impact on customers. The last question sought respondents' opinions on whether the project was worth investing in or should be continued in the future. The survey contained 16 questions. The survey was anonymous, and responses were collected without identifying information using the Google Forms platform.

According to Lakens (2022), justifying the sample size is one of the most critical aspects of conducting an empirical study. The sample's representativeness determines whether accurate and generalizable conclusions about the entire population can be drawn. The required number of respondents completed the questionnaires. First, the research population was defined based on 2021 data, which showed that the organisation served 421 natural and legal persons.

Second, using the sample size calculation formula, it was determined that approximately 384 service users needed to be surveyed, assuming a 95% confidence level, an expected proportion of 0.5, and a margin of error of 0.05. In total, 411 respondents completed the questionnaires.

The results of the study on the strategic planning system of public organisation X, obtained through the applied research methodology, provide the basis for the following evaluation of the system:

$$FN = \frac{3+2+2+3+2+4+3}{7} = 2,71.$$

The calculated average of the components allowed for sharing the organisational strategic planning maturity score of 3. This means that the strategic planning process is implemented in the organisation's activities: strategic goals and their implementation plans are realised according to established procedures.

The implementation of the strategic plan is monitored, the achieved results are evaluated, and, if necessary, corrections are made. The organisation's mission lacks details of obligations and responsibilities, and uniqueness as a motivating factor for functioning. The vision of the previous version was ambitious but irrational in terms of feasibility (Level 2).

Goals are assessed at Level 3 on the maturity scale: goals are defined, the organisation's role is detailed, and most of the indicators to evaluate the achievement of goals have been identified.

The organisation under consideration is focused on implementing state expectations: implementing new technologies, providing good customer service, using resources efficiently, changing its legal status, and developing a sustainability policy. To justify its existence, the organisation carries out systematic strategic planning activities, starting with four strategic goals: sustainable development, advanced service provision, operational excellence, and sustainable organisational development. The list of indicators for measuring the implementation of goals lacks indicators detailing the State Expectations Letter.

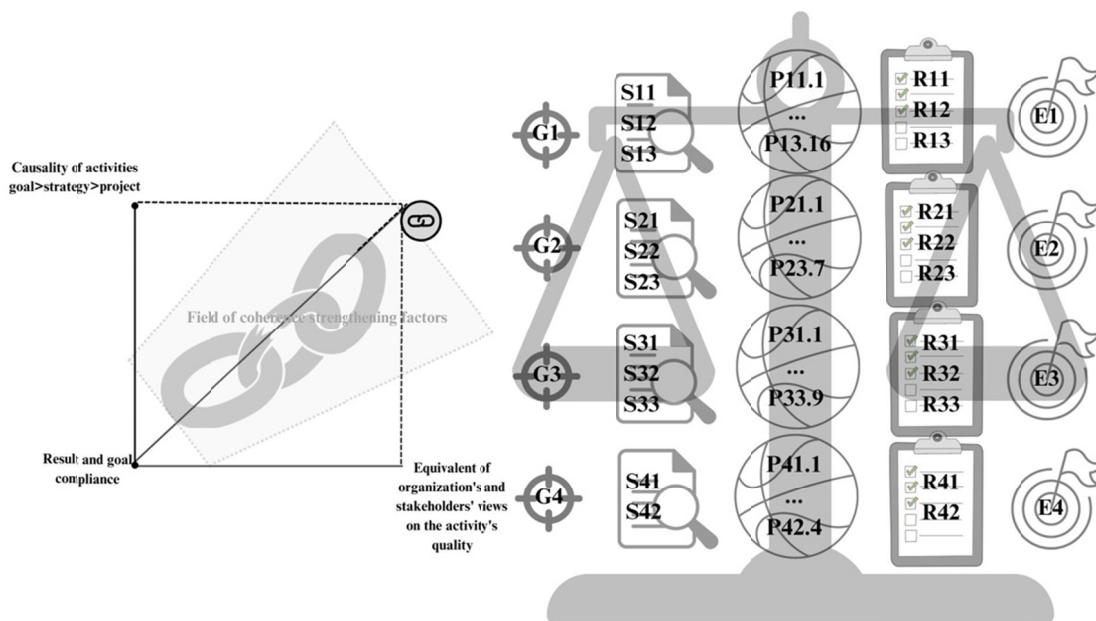
Based on the qualitative study results, the link between planned decisions for the implementation of goals should be fixed, and the bureaucratic nature of strategic planning is noted as an obstacle to ensuring the latter. The results of the analysis of the organisation's activity reports cast doubt on the maximum achievement of goals due to the unequal selection and comparison of the values of planned and actual indicators in terms of content, as well as the uncertainty of users of the services provided by the organisation about the improvement of the quality of the organisation's activities.

Therefore, the assessment of the measures for implementing the goals was 2. The organisation of the development and implementation of the strategic activity plan should be assessed at Level 4 because of the composition of the strategic planning committee identified during the interview (it consists of management entities representing the highest level, various areas of activity, and departments) and the application of a project-based work management system in the organisation (the importance of the link between the activity strategy and projects is noted in the organisation's strategic documents).

To ensure transparency in the application of the research methodology, the features of the formation of the content of the assessment of the link between strategy and projects are shown in the Figure 3. For each of the four strategic objectives of the public sector organisation, the logical link between tasks and actions to implement them, the compliance of the fact of the implementation of the objectives with the norm, and the coincidence of the views of the organisation and its stakeholders on the quality of the activities were identified using the results of the analysis of planned and accompanying documents, interviews, and surveys.

The entire project is inherently connected to the tasks of implementing the goal. These projects receive exceptional attention, including state appropriations and EU funds. Although the implementation of the goal is formally assessed at 100%, the survey revealed limited opportunities for respondents to evaluate the impact of the projects on services due to insufficient information.

Summarising the results of the analysis of the current planning system situation of public organisation X (Figure 3), it was found that the first two strategic goals (G) are linked to planned decisions (planning decisions – strategy (S), project (P)).



**Fig. 3. Principle Diagram of the Study Link between Strategy and Projects.**

The other two are only partially linked to planned decisions. The score on the maturity scale of the link between the operational strategy and projects is currently at Level 3. To reach Level 4, the goals and tasks of the projects must be naturally and comprehensively aligned with the strategy, and project success should be measured based on compliance with the strategy concerning all stakeholders.

Ensuring coherence between operational strategies and projects is essential for sustainable organisational development. This coherence facilitates effective risk management regarding the logical connection between tasks and their implementation, the compliance of the fact of implementing goals with the norm, and the coincidence of the views of the organisation and its stakeholders on the quality of activities. To ensure the coherence of planned decisions, researchers are committed to searching for more effective management tools to ensure that the link between strategy and projects is highly relevant.

## **5. Conclusions.**

In the context of uncertainty, research on strategic planning is becoming increasingly relevant because of the complex impact this managerial activity has on organisational success. Strategic planning enables organisations to optimally allocate limited resources and capabilities within a dynamically competitive environment, thereby addressing constantly evolving market demands, meeting stakeholder expectations, achieving established goals. Criticism of strategising is mitigated by empirical research that confirms a positive relationship between strategic planning and organisational performance, including higher productivity, improved efficiency, and other performance indicators.

However, organisations require an effective strategic planning process. Furthermore, individual stages, such as strategic analysis, target orientation, strategy development, and implementation planning and monitoring, are often fraught with errors.

Strategic management theorists and practitioners continue to seek ways to systematise the causes of strategic initiative failures while proposing measures to improve this management process. Considering the results of empirical research in strategic management, planning for strategy implementation was recognised as particularly problematic, with the need for a link between strategy and projects identified as a relevant gap.

An empirical study was conducted at the level of a single-purpose public sector organisation. Treating the operational strategy as a prospective state of the organisation's performance quality and projects as an achieved state of the organisation's performance quality, the empirical study was divided into three parts: studies of the desired and achieved state of the organisation's performance quality, a set of rationally composed quantitative and qualitative research methods was selected for the latter, and finally, a synthesis of research results using the formula for assessing the maturity of strategic planning activities.

The calculated average maturity score of the components of managerial activity indicates that the organisation's strategic planning maturity is at Level 3.

This signifies that the strategic planning process is embedded in the organisation's operations, and established procedures implement strategic goals and plans. Concerning the coherence of planned decisions, it is worth highlighting the efforts of researchers to develop more effective management tools that strengthen the link between strategy and projects.

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The empirical study is based only on publicly available information (planning documents, activity reports, etc.), often summarised as public organisations' primary operational objectives and the results of their implementation.

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