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### **CONTEXT AS A FACTOR IN SENIOR CIVIL SERVICE REFORM: OPINIONS AND ATTITUDES OF SENIOR EXECUTIVES IN LITHUANIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article analyses the contextual factors and their impact on the planned creation of senior civil service (henceforth, SCS) within the Lithuanian civil service system since 2008. Based on a survey of Lithuanian senior executives' conducted in 2014 and qualitative semi-structured interviews, the aim of this article is to reveal and explain incentives and obstacles of SCS reform in Lithuania. Empirical research data clarifies attitudes of senior civil servants and their role perceptions. Senior executives' attitudes towards the establishment of the SCS system were clearly positive. However, the research data reveals that supportive attitudes depend on the perception of the roles of senior executives. Senior civil servants who perceived themselves firstly as actors in policy formation and policy implementers were much more favourable towards the creation of SCS than senior civil servants with other role identities.

### **KEYWORDS**

Senior civil service, senior executives, civil service reform, contextual factors

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## INTRODUCTION

During the last decade senior civil service systems have been reformed in many countries, while in the eastern and central European countries they have been established anew. These changes have affected not only the elements of executive corps system and its governance but also have formed new identities (official, personal, or social) and new relationship with politicians. The ideas of SCS establishment have reached Lithuania as well. It was among the most important aims in the reform of the Lithuanian civil service system during the period of the 15<sup>th</sup> Government of the Republic of Lithuania<sup>1</sup>. The primary ideas of 2010-2011 about the distinction of senior executives in the civil service system and their managerial empowerment changed later on and developed into the idea of establishing a separate SCS corps. In 2013-2014, active preparation for the SCS reform in Lithuania was taking place. Part of our research data on the issue was already published<sup>2</sup>, but here we further develop our analysis, adding supplementary comments and insights from a longer-duration perspective. Often ambitious ideas about reform are accompanied not only by public discussions and criticism but also experience political and administrative resistance. Partly, this is a tendency preconditioned by a natural aim for continuity and preservation of the *status quo* of institutional interests in the state institutions' framework<sup>3</sup>. However, ideological-political, executive resistance, and other contextual factors were involved in establishing the SCS and similar reforms, which often became an insurmountable obstacle.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to analyse the incentives and obstacles of the establishment of Lithuanian SCS taking account of two aspects: effectiveness of the reform development (to what extent primary ideas were implemented) and the attitude of

<sup>1</sup> Vitalis Nakrošis, "Valstybės tarnybos reforma 2008-2012 metais: kodėl neįvyko sisteminė kaita?" (Civil Service Reform in 2008-2012: Why did not Happen Systemic Change?); in: Vitalis Nakrošis, Egidijus Barcevičius, and Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, eds., *Kada reformos virsta pokyčiais? Politinis dėmesys, palaikymo koalicijos ir lyderystė A. Kubiliaus Vyriausybės veiklos 2008-2012 m. laikotarpiu* (When Reforms Become Changes? Political Attention, Advocacy Coalitions and Leadership during the period from 2008 to 2012 of the 15<sup>th</sup> Government [Prime Minister A. Kubilius]) (Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Saulius Pivoras, Remigijus Civinskas, and Ernesta Buckienė, *Valstybės tarnybos sistemos tobulinimas Lietuvoje: pasirinkimai, požiūriai, sandėriai* (Improving Civil Service System in Lithuania: Choices, Attitudes, Bargains) (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Jacques Bourgault and Karolien Van Dorpe, "Managerial Reforms, Public Service Bargains and Top Civil Servant Identity," *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 79 (1) (2013); Geoff White, et al., "Public Management Reform and Employee Voice in UK Public Services"; in: Peter Leisink, Bram Steijn, and Ulke Veersma, eds., *Industrial Relations in the New Europe: Enlargement, Integration and Reform* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Stephane Lavertu, David E. Lewis, and Donald P. Moynihan, "Administrative Reform, Political Ideology, and Bureaucratic Effort: The Case of Performance Management in the Bush Administration," Typescript, Ohio State University (2013): 2-3 // [https://my.vanderbilt.edu/davidlewis/files/2011/12/LLM\\_Effort\\_010712-.pdf](https://my.vanderbilt.edu/davidlewis/files/2011/12/LLM_Effort_010712-.pdf); Sylvia Horton, "Participation and Involvement of Senior Staff in the Reform of the British Civil Service," *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 25 (1) (2005).

executives towards the system to be established. The attitudes of executives, as possible SCS actors, could influence the issue of the SCS in the policy agenda of the government. The conceptual basis for the research is the analysis of factors related to the political-administrative causality and how these factors impact reform initiation and development.<sup>5</sup> This analysis is complemented by the analysis of contextual factors of the reforms in general. This allows combining political-administrative and socio-economic and societal influences in analysis of reforms. This approach allows analysing the process of reform development and implementation more consistently.<sup>6</sup> However, the theory of the context of reforms enables combining the analysis of factors at macro- and micro level. It is also important that the analysis can be supplemented by the analysis of attitudes, decisions made, and interrelationships among important interested actors (e.g. ministers), as well as civil servants.<sup>7</sup>

Analysis is based upon data collected through qualitative and a quantitative research. For the quantitative research, a total of 260 respondents were surveyed (out of 360, responsiveness was 73%), who had the status of senior civil servants (grades 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> in civil service). The survey research was conducted by telephone and by e-mail in February and March, 2014. In addition, semi-structured interviews were carried out with politicians familiar with the civil service system, as well as with the initiators and implementers of civil service reforms and experts-practitioners of civil service and civil service human resource management. In total, this article is based on the data of 15 expert interviews. Identities of the respondents in the references are coded to assure anonymity<sup>8</sup>.

## 1. CONCEPTION OF THE CONTEXTUAL FACTORS IN REFORM OF THE CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM

In the studies of public sector reform processes, the analysis of causality factors is an important approach. In their studies, Geert Bouckaert and Christopher Pollitt conceptualized these factors most extensively by using the categories of

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher Pollitt and Geert Bouckaert, *Public Management Reform: A Comparative Analysis-New Public Management, Governance and the Neo-Weberian State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 32-37.

<sup>6</sup> Tom Christensen and Per Lægreid, "Contexts and Administrative Reforms: A Transformative Approach". In: Christopher Pollitt, ed., *Context in Public Policy and Management: The Missing Link?* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013); Edoardo Ongaro, "Explaining Contextual Influences on the Dynamics of Public Management Reforms: Reflections on Some Ways Forward". In: Christopher Pollitt, ed., *Context in Public Policy and Management: The Missing Link?* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Christopher Pollitt, "Second link": in: Christopher Pollitt, ed., *Context in Public Policy and Management: The Missing Link?* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> POLIT means politician, CHANC means ministry chancellor, EXP means expert, some numbers are lacking because not all data from conducted interviews were used for the purposes of this article.

socio-economic and political forces.<sup>9</sup> They successfully employed these categories of analysis in several comparative studies of reforms. However, effects of the socio-economic and political forces have been analysed in case studies or narrower comparative studies.<sup>10</sup> In these papers, the analysis of factors is often carried out in a functional, institutional, contextual, or historical perspective. The conception of contextual factors broadens the analysis of causality factors. The analysis of contextual factors depends on the choice of categories. Academics often choose different concepts and their operationalization.<sup>11</sup> The conception of factors itself is rather complicated, as it comprises different mechanisms and processes. In most studies, context is understood as the basis of the scheme, which includes public policy, administration, and reforms. Scholars often state that context is the main aspect in the development and implementation of reforms.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the list of contextual factors is long and indeterminate. It comprises many categories, which are a “missing link”<sup>13</sup> in the analysis of reforms and changes in systems—for instance: the extent of changes, timing of reform, trajectories of reform, incentives, risks and threats for reform.<sup>14</sup>

In the present research, the concepts of obstacles, incentives, and change processes are especially important. These categories allow for understanding the development of a reform or a system as change processes, analysing the continuity of changes or its absence, as well as the reproduction or transformations of the phenomenon, etc.<sup>15</sup> In the context of reform development and implementation, personal and institutional actors play an important role at the micro-level. Here the causality of reform trajectories is revealed by the analysis of interests of civil servants, executives, and public officials and of their opinions. In most cases, this approach analyses motivation structures or interests (they can be understood as an independent variable, i.e. resistance to or acceptance of reforms; for instance, in

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Pollitt and Geert Bouckaert, *supra* note 5, 32-35.

<sup>10</sup> Juraj Nemec, “Public Management Reforms in CEE: Lessons Learned”: 346-347; in: Geert Bouckaert, et al., eds., *Public Management Reforms in Central and Eastern Europe* (Bratislava: NISPAcee Press, 2008); Liesbeth Heyse, Berber Lettinga, and Martijn Groenleer, “Explaining Reform in Europe: Comparisons, Patterns, and Reflections”: 171-180; in: Liesbeth Heyse, et al., eds., *Reform in Europe Breaking the Barriers in Government* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Edoardo Ongaro, *Public Management Reform and Modernization: Trajectories of Administrative Change in Italy, France, Greece, Portugal and Spain* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2009), 213-215.

<sup>11</sup> Christopher Pollitt, “Fourth Link”; in: Christopher Pollitt, ed., *Context in Public Policy and Management: The Missing Link?* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Janet Newman, “Constituting Context?”; in: Christopher Pollitt, ed., *Context in Public Policy and Management: The Missing Link?* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013); Christopher Pollitt, “Preface: Context – a missing link?”: XVII-XVII; in: Christopher Pollitt, ed., *Context in Public Policy and Management: The Missing Link?* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> This metaphor is often used to describe the contextual factors in public policy and analysis studies (see Christopher Pollitt, ed., *Context in Public Policy and Management: The Missing Link?* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013)).

<sup>14</sup> Tom Christensen and Per Lægrend, *supra* note 6: 134.

<sup>15</sup> Wolfgang Streeck and Kathleen Thelen, “Introduction: Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies”; in: Wolfgang Streeck, Kathleen Thelen, eds., *Beyond Continuity. Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

the case of an attitude towards in service mobility, payment for performance, etc.). However, attitudes towards reforms are one of the most important factors (it is a dependent variable) constituting also a cultural dimension of reform or its context.<sup>16</sup> Naturally, these theoretical assumptions require empirical investigation and substantiation.

## 2. PLANS FOR SENIOR CIVIL SERVICE REFORM IN LITHUANIA SINCE 2008

The idea to establish senior civil service system in Lithuania was initiated by several sound reasons and incentives. First, direct political incentives became the basis for changes. The fifteenth government headed by Andrius Kubilius (conservative coalition government) discussed and prepared the conceptual basis of the reform. Plans for SCS were not dropped by the sixteenth government headed by Algirdas Butkevičius (social democratic coalition government). Qualitative research data confirms this. During the interviews, former ministers, high public officials and the authors of the reform noticed the continuity of the plans for SCS (e.g. they talked less about content elements).<sup>17</sup> This continuity was ensured by political ideas. In 2012, in the election programme, the Social Democratic party included the establishment of SCS<sup>18</sup> (this party had a majority and the main powers in the Government formed by the coalition). The rhetoric of the political programme, explaining the establishment of SCS, was managerial. However, the content was not elaborated in the party document. Paradoxically, this issue was not included into the programme of the 16<sup>th</sup> Government dominated by Social Democrats.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, this idea was not rejected. The continuity in the plans for the establishment of SCS was enabled by a political and institutional factor. First, the Civil Service Department (CSD), as an administrative institution partly responsible for the reform development, aimed to strengthen its power in government system. This is revealed by changes in the formal institutional status of the department (in fact, it has become an independent agency), increased

<sup>16</sup> Edoardo Ongaro, *supra* note 6: 198; Tom Christensen and Per Lægreid, "New Public Management: Design, Resistance, or Transformation? A Study of How Modern reforms are Received in a Civil Service System," *Public Productivity & Management Review* 23 (2) (1999).

<sup>17</sup> Interview, POLIT5, March 2014; Interview, POLIT8, April 2014; Interview POLIT2, January 2014; Interview EXP2, January 2014; Interview EXP4, February 2014.

<sup>18</sup> The programme explicitly provides incorporate SCS to strengthen the heads' management capacity and a higher quality of their leadership (LSDP rinkimų programa "Saugi, solidari ir teisinga Lietuva", 2012 (The election programme "Secure, solidary and just Lithuania" of Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, 2012) // <http://lsdp.lt/apie-partija/programos>).

<sup>19</sup> Interviews revealed that the organizers of the programme accidentally omitted statements about the SCS reform. Besides, the programme was consisted of enough declarative objectives and rhetorical descriptions: Šešioliktosios Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2012-2016 metų programa (The Programme of the 16th Government of the Republic of Lithuania for 2012-2016), Resolution of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania No XII-51 of the 13th of December, 2012.

financing, changes in leadership, and attempts to balance the relationship<sup>20</sup> with the Ministry of the Interior (MI) responsible for governance policy. CSD continued the development of civil service, thus, the establishment of the SCS system was a natural issue to be addressed despite the change of government. The continuity of the reform was also ensured by the amendments on Civil Service law prepared by the Ministry of the Interior immediately after the elections, in the autumn of 2012.<sup>21</sup> Those amendments defined the SCS system and its elements, such as recruitment, obligatory mobility, ranks of senior executives (a three-class hierarchical system), performance evaluation, training and salary systems. The continuity of the reform had ensured the strategic document adopted by the 15<sup>th</sup> Government, "Programme of Public Service Improvement in 2012-2020",<sup>22</sup> which defined the purpose of the establishment of senior executive's corps and the introduction of different senior service elements. Thus, on an administrative-institutional basis, the support for the reform was adequate. This is also confirmed by several interviews with almost no doubts about the necessity of this idea and the benefit of its realisation for the civil service and governance systems.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, there was some inability to share power and formal duties between CSD<sup>24</sup> and MI, as these institutions were directly responsible for the policy of civil service development. These two institutions prepared proposals concerning the establishment of SCS and submitted them for consideration at various levels.<sup>25</sup> The establishment of the SCS system was formulated as a task for the Government, which placed the Civil Service department under obligation to continue the development of the reform in 2013.<sup>26</sup> A year was given for the preparation of SCS documents (changes in the Civil Service Law). As the qualitative research has revealed, the preparation of the reform had two stages: the preparation of the legislative package and the promotion of the idea. The preparation of the reform was sufficiently intensive. The representatives of SCD and MI were involved in the

<sup>20</sup> Interview, POLIT2, January 2014; Interview, EXP4, February 2014.

<sup>21</sup> *Lietuvos Respublikos valstybės tarnybos įstatymo 2, 6, 9, 10, 14, 16, 21, 222, 25, 311, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47 straipsnių 3 priedo pakeitimo ir papildymo bei įstatymo papildymo 131, 182, 201, 211, 221 straipsniais įstatymas (Law on amending and supplementing articles in the Law on civil service of the Republic of Lithuania)*, Draft by the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania No. 12-3971-01 (November 28, 2012) //

[http://www.lrs.lt/pls/proj/dokpaieska.showdoc\\_l?p\\_id=164164&p\\_query=&p\\_tr2=&p\\_org=12&p\\_fix=y](http://www.lrs.lt/pls/proj/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=164164&p_query=&p_tr2=&p_org=12&p_fix=y).

<sup>22</sup> *Viešojo valdymo tobulinimo 2012-2020 m. programa (Public Governance Improvement programme for 2012-2020)*, Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania No. 171 of the 7<sup>th</sup> of February, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> Interview, EXP6, March 2014; Interview, EXP5, March 2014; Interview, EXP2, January 2014; Interview, EXP1, January 2014.

<sup>24</sup> Some interviewees repeatedly emphasized, that SCD did not intend to assume responsibility for the further management of SCS. Interview, EXP6, March 2014; Interview, EXP2, January 2014; Interview, EXP 1, January 2014.

<sup>25</sup> *Public Governance Improvement programme for 2012-2020*, *supra* note 22.

<sup>26</sup> *Valstybės valdymo tobulinimo komisijos (Saulėlydžio komisijos) posėdžio protokolas (Meeting Protocol of the Public Management Improvement Commission [Sunset] under the Government of Lithuania)*, No. 63-5 of the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, 2013.



planning of changes, as well as the interested public administration and academic institutions.<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that in this process the detailed understandings about the SCS system were often complicated and perceived as risky. One of the respondents describes this process the following:

By the way, those details are important and here we have different opinions. <...> We among ourselves started discussing about this quite recently, after five years when this topic had been raised. A question was raised: what are we going to do here? And this question was raised because there is a SCS project. When we look at what we have written here, a question arises whether we really want this.<sup>28</sup>

This fragment of an interview shows doubts about the content of the reform and the correspondence between the primary ideas and the prepared reform package. This reflects typical features in the preparation of public sector reform process conceptualized by Bouckaert and Pollitt, who note that when preparing a reform package it is often necessary to come back to primary ideas and make many amendments due to political-administrative factors.<sup>29</sup> However, the preparation of the reform was complicated by the fact that other changes in the civil service system were being prepared at the same time. A new draft law on civil service was submitted to the Seimas only in spring 2014. Nevertheless, the Strategic Committee of the Government of Lithuania approved the main ideas on December 16, 2013. According to one interviewee, the Prime Minister supported the reform package.<sup>30</sup>

During another stage of reform package preparation, presentation of ideas, discussions, and adjustments started. They were taking place on different levels, starting with departmental<sup>31</sup> or institutional<sup>32</sup> and finishing with meetings of the

<sup>27</sup> Interview, EXP6, March 2014; Interview, EXP5, March 2014; Interview, EXP2, January 2014; *Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2013 m. veiklos ataskaita (Government Annual Performance Report for 2013)*, Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania No. 257 of the 26<sup>th</sup> of March, 2014; *Valstybės tarnybos departamento 2014 m. veiklos planas (Civil Service Department's Performance Plan for 2014)*, Order of the Chief of Civil Service Department of the Republic of Lithuania No. 27V-63 of the 31<sup>th</sup> of March, 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Interview, EXP6, March 2014.

<sup>29</sup> Christopher Pollitt and Geert Bouckaert, *supra* note 5, 32-35.

<sup>30</sup> Interview, CHANC3, March 2014.

<sup>31</sup> Reform ideas (year 2014) were discussed at the meetings of the Committee of State Administration and Local Authorities of the Seimas [the Parliament] of the Republic of Lithuania. Also, ideas were discussed at the meetings of the Public Management Improvement Commission ("Sunset") under the Government of Lithuania and of the Commission of Personnel Management under the of Civil Service Department of the Republic of Lithuania. Sources: No author named, "Įvyko Personalo valdymo komisijos posėdis" (There was the meeting the Commission of Personnel Management under the of Civil Service Department of the Republic of Lithuania) (April 25, 2014) // <http://www.vtd.lt/index.php?-564797654>; No author named, "Pasiūlymai dėl valstybės tarnybos tobulinimo pristatyti Viešojo valdymo tobulinimo komisijoje" (Proposals for improvement of the civil service were delivered at the meeting of the Public Management Improvement Commission) (April 25, 2014) // <http://www.vtd.lt/index.php?-1924836334>; No author named, "Valstybės tarnybos departamento direktorius Osvaldas Šarmavičius Seimo Valstybės valdymo ir savivaldybių komitetui pristatė informaciją apie Valstybės tarnybos aktualijas" (The Head of Civil Service Department presented information on public service issues for the



interest groups, presentations for the academic community, NGO and the representatives of the state and municipality institutions.<sup>33</sup> At the end of the spring of 2014 and the beginning of summer, reform criticism started with a more active public discussions and criticism, concerning the establishment of SCS and other changes in the SC. First obstacles appeared in the political-administrative domain. A decisive role was played by critical remarks expressed by the president of the Lithuanian Republic, Ms. Dalia Grybauskaitė, who did not support plans for the establishment of the formal SCS system.<sup>34</sup> In 2015 plans for the establishment of the formal SCS system were dropped with the new draft law on Civil Service, which does not mention SCS at all. Still, that draft law envisions different service conditions of senior civil servants, for instance changes in the recruitment procedure for senior civil servants, new system of competencies, performance evaluation and salaries.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the senior civil service system is being further developed even if the formal naming of it as "senior civil service" has been forgone. That draft law now is under formal discussions in the committees of the Parliament and is planned for adoption in early autumn of 2016.

The interests and opinions of the members of the top administrative apparatus often become a factor that encourages or inhibits reforms. In the comparative studies of civil service reforms, the attitudes of executives towards public sector reforms have been analysed.<sup>36</sup> Most often the attitudes towards various managerial instruments were analysed. For instance, attitudes towards the pay for performance or employment contracts in the senior civil service were analysed as well as motivation or job satisfaction.<sup>37</sup> However, the attitudes of senior executives towards reforms has already been analysed in a broader context,

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Committee of State Administration and Local Authorities of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania) (March 26, 2014) // <http://www.vtd.lt/index.php?626697502>.

<sup>32</sup> No author named, "Siūlymai dėl VT tobulinimo buvo pristatyti valstybės ir savivaldybių institucijų ir įstaigų personalo administravimo tarnybų vadovams" (Proposals for improvement of the civil service were delivered to the heads of personnel management divisions of State and municipal institutions) (January 14, 2014) // <http://www.vtd.lt/index.php?593053071>.

<sup>33</sup> No author named, "Konferencijoje pristatytos valstybės tarnybos naujovės" (The innovations of public service were presented at the Conference) (April 11, 2014) // <http://www.vtd.lt/index.php?193102649>; No author named, "Nacionalinėje M. Mažvydo bibliotekoje įvyko diskusija, skirta aptarti aktualius valstybės tarnybos reformos klausimus" (In Martynas Mažvydas national library of Lithuania was held discussion about relevant issues of public service reform) (March 27, 2014) // <http://www.vtd.lt/index.php?-880619066>.

<sup>34</sup> Vitalis Nakrošis, *supra* note 1: 128.

<sup>35</sup> Saulius Pivoras, "Laukia nuosaiki ir subrandinta reforma" (A Moderate and Matured Reform Awaits), *Valstybės tarnybos aktualijos* (2015 m. rugsėjis).

<sup>36</sup> John D. Huber and Charles R. Shipan, *Deliberate Discretion? The Institutional Foundations of Bureaucratic Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 17–24; Francesco Paolo Cerase and Domenica Farinella, "Public Service Motivation: How Does It Relate to Management Reforms and Changes in the Working Situation of Public Organizations? A Case Study of the Italian Revenue Agency," *Public Policy and Administration* 24 (3) (2009).

<sup>37</sup> Dennis M. Daley, "Pay-for-Performance and the Senior Executive Service: Attitudes about the Success of Civil Service Reform," *The American Review of Public Administration* 25 (4) (1995): 355–372; Kaifeng Yang and Anthony Kassekert, "Linking Management Reform with Employee Job Satisfaction: Evidence from Federal Agencies," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 20(2) (2010); Geoff White, et al., *supra* note 3: 200; Stephane Lavertu, David E. Lewis, and Donald P. Moynihan, *supra* note 4: 15.

such as in a European research project in which the attitudes of executives towards managerial reforms in the EU countries were analysed.<sup>38</sup> This article is based on the main assumption that the ideas of the SCS reform and the elements being implemented (e.g. fixed term of office and in - service mobility) are perceived negatively by executives, as these limit their career possibilities and decrease guarantees. In addition, such changes critically affect the autonomy of senior executives, their behaviour models and long-term satisfaction with their roles. Therefore, these actors can act passively, aim to opt out, or become opportunists.

### 3. DATA AND METHODS OF QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

This article analyses the attitudes of 260 senior executives working in the public administration system in Lithuania.<sup>39</sup> Data was collected via an internet/telephone survey in 2014. The questionnaire consisted of questions related to the attitudes towards the SCS reform, its obstacles and incentives, as well as the novel or radical element of its content, e.g. obligatory mobility. The questionnaire also included typical socio-demographic questions. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the main variables.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the main variables

	N	Min.	Max.	St. deviation	Mean
SCS aim: creation of a general management culture	259	1	7	5,5	1,4
SCS aim: improvement of the institution activity management	258	1	7	5,3	1,6
SCS aim: conditions for a more efficient interaction between SC, Ministers, and the Government	259	1	7	3	1,3
Threat to SCS: SC appointment and dismissal according to politicians' will	259	1	7	2,9	1,3
Threat to SCS: decrease in professional activity management of institutions	259	1	7	3,4	1,2

<sup>38</sup> Gerhard Hammerschmid, Anca Oprisor, and Vid Štimac, "COCOPS Executive Survey on Public Sector Reform in Europe," Research Report (2013) // <http://www.cocops.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/COCOPS-WP3-Research-Report.pdf>; Steven Van de Walle, et al., "How do top public officials evaluate public sector reforms? Findings from the COCOPS Top Executive survey" Draft (2014) // [http://www.kozminski.edu.pl/fileadmin/www/seminarium\\_interdyscyplinarne/Kozminski\\_COCOPS\\_survey\\_0403.docx](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl/fileadmin/www/seminarium_interdyscyplinarne/Kozminski_COCOPS_survey_0403.docx).

<sup>39</sup> Senior executives who implement public policy and contribute to public policy-making. They were mostly included from ministries of the Republic of Lithuania (e.g., chancellors of ministries, directors of internal departments), institutions under ministries of the Republic of Lithuania (e.g., heads of institutions) and institutions accountable to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (e.g., heads of institutions).

Threat to SCS: concentration of power in administrative elite	259	1	7	2,5	1,3
Threat to SCS: reduction in management quality	259	1	7	5,3	1,4
Threat to SCS: no real impact on public administration	259	1	7	5,5	1,3
Obstacle: mistrust of politicians in senior executives in civil service	260	1	7	5,5	1,2
Obstacle: unfavourable attitude of the society	259	1	7	4,6	1,6
Obstacle: inflexibility of the public administration system in Lithuania	260	1	7	5,9	4
Obstacle: absence of continuity of public administration reforms	260	1	7	5,3	1,3
Obstacle: unstable economic and political environment	258	1	7	4,8	1,6
Obstacle: Soviet heritage phenomena, such as favouritism, clientelism, or conformism	259	1	7	4,7	1,6
A serious risk to a successful operation of SCS: reduction in professional management of institution activity	259	1	7	5	1,6
A serious risk to a successful operation of SCS: the created system will not have a real impact on the effectiveness of public administration	260	1	7	4,7	1,4

#### 4. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA OF QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

As the data of the survey shows, the attitudes of the respondents towards the establishment of the SCS system were very clearly positive (see Table 2). 59.5% of the executives supported the reform (only 14.6% of the respondents did not support this reform).<sup>40</sup> Comparing the data with the results of the survey in 2011, it can be observed that the attitude of civil servants towards the civil service reforms was more careful.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> It should be noted that at survey making time were presented only reform idea guidelines without the draft law. It should also be mentioned that not all respondents are heads of institutions.

<sup>41</sup> Remigijus Civinskas, "Can a Senior Civil Servant Adapt to Managing by Contract? Reform and Civil Servants' Preferences in Lithuanian Government," *Baltic Journal of Law & Politics* 4:2 (2011).

Table 2. Attitudes towards the establishment of the SCS system

	Frequency	Percentage
Totally disagree	13	5.0
Disagree	11	4.2
Partly disagree	14	5.4
Neither agree, nor disagree	67	25.9
Partly agree	75	29
Agree	66	25.5
Totally agree	13	5.0
N	259	100.0

This data is slightly different from the data obtained during the "COCOPS" project, which analysed the attitudes of executives/public officials towards the reforms of the 15<sup>th</sup> Government (headed by Andrius Kubilius). In that survey, a bigger part of the respondents thought that the reforms of the government were semi accidental, heterogeneous and partial, oriented towards saving, etc.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, the authors, who interpreted the data of COCOPS survey, relate these attitudes of executives to the economic crisis and negative attitudes towards managerial reforms in general. Several factors could have pre-conditioned such data. The attitudes of executives could have become more moderate after the crisis, which is supported by our survey of senior executives' data. Even 62% of the respondents thought that the economic-political environment can become an obstacle to the operation of SCS system. The emphasis on stability as a factor possibly reinforces the argument about a stable reform context.

Data of the quantitative research shows that positive attitudes could have been formed by the favoured professionalism of the executive corps and by emphasis on the need for change. In addition, positive preferences about the SCS system could also have been influenced by a blurred attention to its possible constituent parts. For instance, a slightly larger part of the respondents responded negatively about rotation (obligatory mobility of the heads of institutions after two terms in office), as an element of SCS (absolutely unnecessary 18.5% and unnecessary 15.4%). Hypothetically, it can be claimed that senior executives were more positive about the reform, as it could create their different identities, strengthen their status, etc. Thus, it is important to analyse to what extent this depends on their positions (variables: work experience, experience in leadership,

<sup>42</sup> However, the survey sample of "COCOPS" research is hardly comparable to survey sample of this study because in COCOPS survey attitudes of 450 executives were analysed – some of them worked at the lowest positions (e. g., heads of units) (Rimantas Rauleckas, et al., "Public Administration Reforms during Fiscal Crisis in Lithuania: Perceptions of Senior Civil Servants," *Viešoji politika ir administravimas* 12 (3) (2013)).

and levels of positions), demographic characteristics (age as a variable), and administrative-cultural variables (identification with roles in a position<sup>43</sup>).

Analysis of the data of the survey is based on the following assumptions: 1) senior executives (Chancellors of Ministries and Heads of institutions) evaluate the establishment of SCS more positively than other executives (they have a potentially higher possibility to obtain a status in SCS, which is related to a new identity); 2) the respondents with political experience (former politicians, actors in parties, etc.) are more critical towards the reform; 3) the executives identifying with generalist roles evaluate the reform more positively (this is conditioned by the planned to introduce mechanisms of obligatory mobility and improvement of competencies). Data reveals statistically significant linear relationship in the attitudes towards the reform (Kendall tau\_b = -0.512,  $P < 0.001$ ) and work experience of the senior executives (Kendall tau\_b = -0.945,  $P < 0.001$ ). A more detailed analysis of the data shows that the respondents who had less work experience<sup>44</sup> and, accordingly, less work experience as executives (up to 15 years), evaluated the suggested SCS system more positively. Data has revealed that the reform was totally unsupported by the executives who had a longer career, had longer experience as executives, and were older. Such trends were not unexpected. As the research on attitudes towards reforms shows, age often preconditions negative attitudes towards reform.<sup>45</sup> In addition, the opinions of older executives could be influenced by personal interests with aim to keep the current position and status, to continue work career, etc.

The attitude towards the establishment of SCS in Lithuania could be preconditioned by administrative-cultural variables. The respondents who had a strong role identity as policy implementers evaluated SCS reform especially positively. It seems that this understanding could be influenced by the desire to strengthen senior executives' identity (higher autonomy of decision making, relationship with policy, etc.), as well as their factual status. This can be explained by pointing out the importance of planned changes for these executives. However, the data demonstrates that the attitudes of senior executives towards the establishment of a new corps were heterogeneous in the context of cultural-administrative identities. None of the role identities of "executive-manager," "executive-provider of services to the citizens," or "executive of the institution" statistically correlates with the attitudes towards the reform. The cultural identity of senior executives is a source for the attitudes towards the SCS, as a basis for the

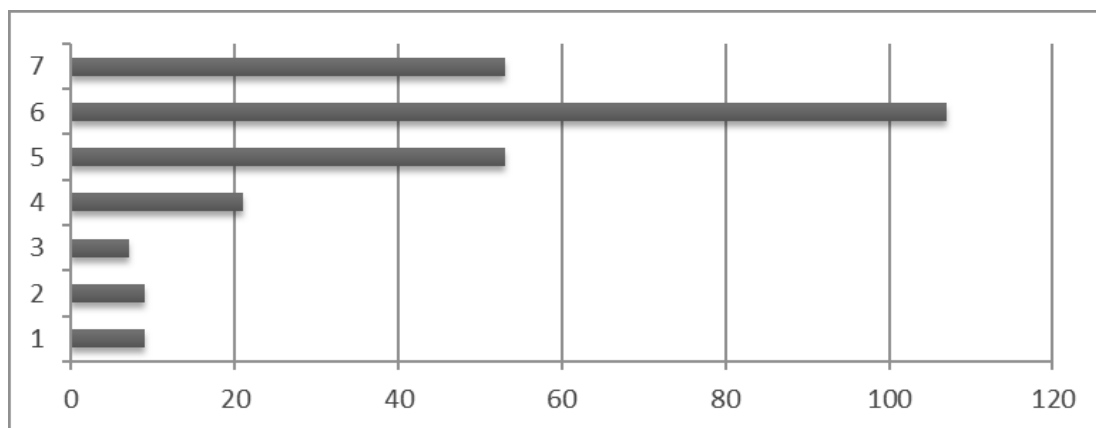
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<sup>43</sup> Variable of role identity can be attributed as cultural variable only conditionally, because it express not only the understanding of the roles, but also the functions performed by senior servants.

<sup>44</sup> This is confirmed by the relationships with "age" as demographic variable (Kendall tau\_b = -0.889,  $P < 0.001$ ).

<sup>45</sup> Steven Van de Walle, et al., *supra* note 38.

establishment of a new administrative culture system. The data provided in the Figure 1 clearly demonstrates that most respondents understood cultural factors as a basis for a possible identification with the system. At the same time, some respondents perceived the Soviet tradition with its phenomena of clientelism and favouritism and other similar behaviour as a major obstacle (see Table 3). Different attitudes suggest the necessity of certain administrative culture, as a basis for the establishment of SCS.



7 – especially significant, 1 – absolutely insignificant.

Figure 1. Attitudes towards SCS as a corps possessing a common culture

Attitudes of the senior executives cannot be understood without the analysis of contextual factors. Here an assumption is that senior executives, as the participants of a political-administrative system, adequately evaluate the operation of the political-administrative system and threats to it not only because they have more information and know more about institutional and political-administrative relationship and change processes, but also because they are keenly interested in planning their possible behaviours. Analysis of respondents' opinions about the effects of contextual factors reveals that neither unstable economic environment nor the attitude of the society was perceived as an obstacle (see Table 3). It can be observed that some respondents emphasized the support of society as an important factor.<sup>46</sup> Support of society, as a factor, was also emphasized in similar studies of reforms.<sup>47</sup> However, it was used in broader processes of reform establishment and implementation. The importance of economic factors was not emphasized by our survey respondents, probably taking into consideration the fact that the establishment of SCS, as a reform, might not require large financial resources, and its impact on economy could be only indirect. On the basis of the survey data, it

<sup>46</sup> Interview, EXP1, January 2014; Interview, EXP5, March 2014; Interview, POLIT8, April 2014; Interview, POLIT9, April 2014.

<sup>47</sup> Tom Christensen and Per Lægrend, *supra* note 6.

can be said that senior executives viewed the factors of the political-administrative system as more significant. In the answers, inflexibility of the administrative system and distrust in politicians were especially emphasized (see Table 3).

*Table 3. Obstacles to the establishment of SCS system*

	Environmental factors		Factors of the political - administrative system			Factors of tradition
	Unfavourable attitude of the society	Unstable political-economic environment	Inflexibility of the public administration system	Absence of reform continuity	Distrust of politicians in executives; no granting of operative autonomy to them	Soviet heritage, favouritism, clientelism
N	258	258	260	260	260	258
Mean*	4,6023	4,8682	5,8769	5,3861	5,5731	4,7410

\* a seven-point scale, where 1 – would not disturb at all; 7 – an especially serious obstacle

It seems that this attitude was preconditioned by the perceived threats of appointment and dismissals, which were especially taken into account by the respondents in comparison to the wins in strengthening leadership (see Table 4). Apparently, senior executives were afraid of transformations in political-administrative relationships and their negative consequences.

*Table 4. Attitudes towards the threats related to the establishment of the SCS system*

	Appointment and redundancy of executives according to the politicians' will	Less professional activity management of institutions	Concentration of power in administrative elite	Lower leadership quality	Absence of real impact on the effectiveness of public administration
Number of respondents	260	259	259	260	260
Mean*	6,0846	5,0772	5,0425	4,2731	4,75

\* a seven-point scale, where 1 – the threat is not serious at all; 7 – an especially serious threat

The threat of politicization was viewed as an important factor by a part of senior executives. A deeper analysis of respondents' ideas reveals that when answering the questions about politicization in the apparatus, they noticed the phenomena of party patronage in the appointment of executives (the mean is 5,1737<sup>48</sup>). The importance of the phenomenon of politicization is partly confirmed by the qualitative research. However, as has been noted by the respondents, politicization depends on the ministry or public officials.<sup>49</sup> It can be asked whether a tradition related to the culture of clientelism and favouritism and the absence of senior executive culture can be understood as a missing link in the implementation

<sup>48</sup> Answers: 1 –not prevailing at all, 7- totally prevailing.

<sup>49</sup> Interview, POLIT5, March 2014; Interview, POLIT8, April 2014.



of the reform. Naturally, it is difficult to analyse without longitudinal research; however, apparently, this is a significant factor.

The evaluations of reform could be influenced not only by senior executives' identity, as well as cultural and other contextual factors, but also by the content of reform. Obligatory mobility after two continuous terms in office for a part of senior executives in public sector organizations in Lithuania was broadly discussed publicly and was in fact introduced in 2010. Thus, attitudes towards obligatory mobility or the other tangible elements in the SCS model could have determined the evaluations of the reform in general. Even though there is no significant statistical relationship between the evaluation of the reform and obligatory mobility, it can be noted that rotation<sup>50</sup> was viewed sufficiently negatively by a part of the respondents (negative opinions form 38.5%, positive 46.5%, and neutral 15%). But another element of mobility—a fixed term in office—was evaluated more positively (see Table 5).

*Table 5. Perception of the planned constitutive elements of the SCS system (statistical means)*

Obligatory mobility (rotation) after the two continuous terms in office	3.9192
More executives from the private sector when recruiting to SCS	4.2054
Making a "reserve list" for the purpose of selection of senior officials	4.2779
Fixed term in office	4.3846
Differentiated salaries according to the amount of work and competencies required	5.3807
Annual activity plans with targets and means how to reach them	5.4208

\* a seven-point scale, where 1 – totally unnecessary; 7 – especially necessary

The views on annual activity plans as performance management tool demonstrate an understanding and evaluation of the reform elements. These views were considerably more positive than views on the means of mobility or selection of senior officials with the help of a "reserve list" (see Table 5). However, two partly opposite opinions on the reserve list (one related to closeness, other in case of the executives having experience in private sector orient themselves toward openness and mobility) have appeared. This may demonstrate a lack of deeper understanding of the SCS mechanisms. In any case, this phenomenon requires further analysis via the qualitative research data.

<sup>50</sup> Common assessment is neutral.

## 5. PREPARATION OF THE SENIOR CIVIL SERVICE REFORM: INCENTIVES, OBSTACLES, AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Analysis of data obtained while doing individual semi structured interviews has revealed that several contextual factors are important in the preparation of reform. Political and/or administrative culture may be a missing link (a contextual factor) in the preparation and, possibly, the implementation of the reform. The respondents reflected on the political-administrative culture (partly, on the political system), clientele relationships, politicians' inability to reconstruct the civil service, the absence of common values among senior executives, the absence of performance culture, etc.<sup>51</sup> Analysis of interview discourse has revealed that political and administrative culture or administrative tradition have been understood as a given or as a necessity in culture change (in theoretical approaches these could coincide with the categories of organization culture or reform culture<sup>52</sup>). It is important to rely upon assertions in scholarly literature that changes in administrative culture are conditioned by the senior executives, as leaders' corps. In other words, cultural attitudes of administrative elite are connected with the necessary essential changes in the public sector or civil service.<sup>53</sup>

Analysis of manifestations of reform ideas in relation to administrative culture in the interview discourse shows that some senior executives and politicians critically evaluated the aims of the civil service reformers of the 15<sup>th</sup> Government to change the civil service system on the basis of cultural change.<sup>54</sup> One of the respondents called this idea "a nice idea, just only idée fixe". Critical remarks were directed at the perceived overabundance of idealism in the reform planning, which disregard the fact that all cultural changes need time. Additionally, the above mentioned respondent clarified that the "system" (having the ministries in mind) managed to oppose the implementation of the ideas. Another respondent (one of the main former reform authors of the 15<sup>th</sup> Government) explained that without cultural changes, no reform can reach its final aims. He noted that:

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<sup>51</sup> Interview, POLIT1, January 2014; Interview, POLIT5, March 2014; Interview, POLIT6, March 2014; Interview, EXP1, January 2014; Interview, EXP4, February 2014.

<sup>52</sup> Kuno Schedler and Isabella Proeller, "Public Management as a Cultural Phenomenon: Revitalizing Societal Culture in International Public Management Research"; in: Kuno Schedler and Isabella Proeller, eds., *Cultural Aspects of Public Management Reform* (Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2007); Elvira Nica, "Organizational Culture in the Public Sector," *Economics, Management, and Financial Markets* (2) (2013): 179-180.

<sup>53</sup> Leadership and organizational culture links has long been conceptualized by Edgar H. Schein. These aspects were developed in the research of top management in public sector (see Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 223-250; Anne Ketelaar, Nick Manning, and Edouard Turkisch, *Performance-based Arrangements for Senior Civil Servants: OECD and other Country Experiences*, OECD Working Papers on Public Governance (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2007), 21, 44.

<sup>54</sup> Interview, POLIT1, January 2014.

In general, this reform should initiate cultural changes; then it would be implemented. But if we have organizations, which do not communicate and only fight, then SCS or the executives' corps should change the system, i.e. executives would construct a hierarchical system, on which state and all its organizations are based.<sup>55</sup>

In addition, not only transformation visions were reflected upon, but also a possible success of the reform was reflected in and related to institutional cooperation. Thus, culture (administrative culture) had to become the basis for institutional cooperation, performing a "glue" function.

A deeper analysis of the interviews has revealed that a results-oriented culture type (in research, it is also called managerial<sup>56</sup>) can be distinguished, which serves as a reference point of change (traditional/bureaucratic vs managerial/results-oriented culture<sup>57</sup>). This represents liberal values, which is partly opposed by the reform authors (or at least by some of the interviewees), without providing a clear conceptual alternative.<sup>58</sup> Second, the importance of senior executives in the change process in which they are the actors who transmit and implement culture can be observed all across the public sector.<sup>59</sup> Here, the use of the culture argument can be viewed as an instrument in reform battles. It is often exploited in political-administrative discourses as a rhetorical argument or a determinist position expressed by the following observations: "This is the culture; it is difficult to change something." A critical analysis of the interview data demonstrates that such ideas appeared only in several cases. But at least some respondents reflected on the models of cultural changes and even their possible content. They related the SCS system and the establishment of a new culture to the appropriate people in SCS, as well as to new recruitment into the system and the development of competencies.<sup>60</sup> However, the respondents did not emphasise SCS instruments as important *per se*. They discussed the complexity of culture change as a phenomenon in a broader perspective. One interviewee noted correctly that "either a reform makes a cultural change or not. This is not easy. I would really respect anyone who would make a cultural move or change."<sup>61</sup> According to interview data, the factor of administrative culture gained some importance. The respondents who consider this phenomenon in a broader perspective have noted that not only administrative culture and tradition play an important role, but that it

<sup>55</sup> Interview, POLIT2, January 2014; Interview, EXP4, February 2014.

<sup>56</sup> Kuno Schedler and Isabella Proeller, *supra* note 52.

<sup>57</sup> It was obviously supported by some respondents for political and ideological reasons. This can be considered as limitation of the qualitative research this article is based upon.

<sup>58</sup> Interview, EXP1, January 2014.

<sup>59</sup> It should be emphasized, that SCS reform was not associated with essential changes all over the public sector by respondents; Interview, CHANC 3; EXP 1; EXP 3; POLIT 3.

<sup>60</sup> Interview, POLIT2, January 2014; Interview, EXP4, February 2014; Interview, EXP6, March 2014.

<sup>61</sup> Interview, EXP4, February 2014.

is also necessary to consider the perspective of political culture in the analysis of SCS reform contexts.<sup>62</sup> The respondents most often understood political culture as a discrepancy between normative attitudes and requirements for real action. One of the respondents reflected on this phenomenon in the following way:

This is such a political culture: there are people somewhere, ... like by magic. If we gather them and give them an optimization task, as in automatic programming, we give them an input and they give us an output, according to which everyone is happy and satisfied. But this doesn't happen, it doesn't. If you live in the society in which there is an agreement, some discussions, a consensus, so you go this way, not that way. If you go that way, you can never find a chancellor, who tells you how to give something for everyone, not to take anything and even not to borrow [money]. This cannot be like this.<sup>63</sup>

In these assertions one can observe several dimensions of culture. On the one hand, societal perceptions are based on irrational expectations. On the other hand, it can be noticed that professional incompetence of ministers is another dimension of "uncultured/uncivilized" phenomenon. One respondent, who had the experiences of being a minister and a senior civil servant, noted that elites of the apparatus can construct ministers on the basis of their own understanding and interests.<sup>64</sup> It was also emphasized that role identity depended on the competencies of a minister, as well as on the interests and attitudes of a senior civil servant. It seems that such expressions of culture are not typical in behaviour and they do not always have clear structures. Interviewees also paid attention to a legalistic tradition and especially to the lawyers, who are highly visible among senior civil servants. The subculture of lawyers is understood as opposing the managerial culture. The perception of the relationship between society, and political and administrative elite culture have revealed that the phenomenon is complex and there is some interrelationship effect. On the one hand, this is a part of political-administrative practice; on the other hand, this is something taken for granted, as a cultural phenomenon. Both quantitative and qualitative research revealed that politicians, public officials, and senior executives understood this problem of "swampy" culture with regard to SCS reform and the operation of the future system; however, they did not have ideas or recipes for how this could be changed. Ambitious aims of the 15<sup>th</sup> Government to change the CS culture were evaluated critically and sceptically. From a broader perspective, it can be noted that a substantial part of the research on similar topics in general shows that preparation and implementation of reforms

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<sup>62</sup> Interview, POLIT6, March 2014; Interview, POLIT5, March 2014; Interview, POLIT2, January 2014; Interview, POLIT1, January 2014.

<sup>63</sup> Interview, POLIT5, March 2014.

<sup>64</sup> Interview, POLIT6, March 2014; Interview, POLIT5, March 2014.

is dependent upon political, administrative, and society culture.<sup>65</sup> Favouritism and clientelism of a politician can be interpreted as part of political-administrative culture. These can also be viewed as a contextual factor of a policy and understood as a phenomenon of political-administrative heritage. Politicization of senior civil servants is a substantial common phenomenon in eastern and central Europe. However, Lithuania takes a middle position in the list of politicized countries in comparative research studies (2007-2008). However, the reliability of that comparative research can be doubtful because of its empirical validity. Obviously, it is difficult to analyse this complicated phenomenon from an all-encompassing perspective.<sup>66</sup> Analysis of our qualitative data has revealed that politicization can be viewed as a threat for the implementation of the SCS reform and operation of the system.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, respondents, senior civil servants, and a part of former ministers noted that they have not faced politicization directly (i.e. political or personal favouritism or political pressure).<sup>68</sup> Other respondents did not dare to speak about the scope, frequency and elements of politicization.<sup>69</sup>

Analysis of the qualitative data allowed the highlighting of several factors of resistance to reforms: the political process (firstly related the legislative process at parliament) and the attitudes of top executives. Starting with the analysis of the latter factor, an observation can be made that the respondents, present or former politicians and public officials, e.g. ministers or members of the Seimas or senior executives, had noted that resistance, as a reaction, was an obvious phenomenon:

Respondent CHANC2: "I think that there is no resistance from the society or from civil servants, but there is an aspect of fear. Practice shows that when one government rules, it dismisses one certain group; when another government rules, it dismisses other certain group, and so on."

Respondent EXP1: "Every reform provokes resistance. Just because it is a reform. In fact, maybe it can be some misunderstanding why in the civil service it is necessary to distinguish one more group [SCS system]? But I think that more explanation is necessary, which first would show the positive aspect."

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<sup>65</sup> Gerhard Hammerschmid, Renate E. Meyer, and Christoph Demmke, "Public Administration Modernization: Common Reform Trends or Different Paths and National Understandings in the EU Countries": 145-149; in: Kuno Schedler and Isabella Proeller, eds., *Cultural Aspects of Public Management Reform* (Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2007).

<sup>66</sup> Jan-Hinrik Meyer-Sahling and Tim Veen, "Governing the Post-Communist State: Government Alternation and Senior Civil Service Politicisation in Central and Eastern Europe," *East European Politics* 28 (1) (2012); Vitalis Nakrošis and Liutauras Gudžinskas, "Party Patronage and State Politicisation in The Post-Communist Countries of Central and Eastern Europe: A Game Theory Approach," *NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy* 5 (2) (2012); Jan-Hinrik Meyer-Sahling, *Sustainability of Civil Service Reforms in Central and Eastern Europe Five Years After EU Accession*, Sigma papers No. 44, (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2009), 34.

<sup>67</sup> Interview, EXP4, February 2014; Interview, EXP3, January 2014.

<sup>68</sup> Interview, EXP4, February 2014; Interview, EXP3, January 2014; Interview, POLIT5, March 2014; Interview, POLIT2, January 2014.

<sup>69</sup> Interview, EXP6, March 2014; Interview, EXP5, March 2014; Interview, POLIT10, April 2014; Interview, POLIT1, January 2014.

It should be noted that resistances (to be more precise, negative attitudes) are related to the political process and negative reactions of the society. A large part of the respondents (both politicians and civil servants) attempted to evaluate the phenomenon from a larger perspective and distinguish different factors of resistance. One of them was related to a possible institutional resistance to SCS reform. This resistance was evaluated as the most intensive and the most complicated ("huge," "gigantic" <sup>70</sup>). When explaining this resistance, the respondents were grounding it in institutional interests (e.g. the aim to keep power)<sup>71</sup> or were reasoning about departmentalism.<sup>72</sup> For understandable reasons, the respondents did not enumerate institutions and their concrete interests. Thus, on the basis of general considerations, it is difficult to perceive deeper and more concrete institutional interests. Considerations of individual concrete obstacles for reform implementation were clearer. One head of department indirectly responsible for the reform preparation evaluated situation in the following way:

I have seen much of such things. The essence is when people are not involved in the preparation process and only the fact is presented for them. Even though it can be a great thing, resistance will be faced only because some people are not a part of this. This is very human. Not because it's a bad thing. It's very good. You will resist it only because someone behave as bounders. That's it. Even not because of a contribution. Maybe someone want to contribute, but no, they simply disregard you, don't involve you, and don't share. Maybe one or another remark, but well, why are you so eager, what do you want here, I'll do this, you'll see. Then there is a political disagreement. Because you didn't discuss it before doing it, before suggesting. And now I even don't want to look, I just object. It's like with voting: people vote against someone, not for someone, against everything. That's it.<sup>73</sup>

It should be noted that, in this interview excerpt, the position of the senior executive is based on personal grievance and non-involvement in the reform preparation. Such personal attitudes may not be considered significant. However, it should be stressed that political motives were also emphasized, which would transform personal grievances into a political interest. Attention should be drawn to the fact that some politicians participated in the research as factual heads of the above cited civil servant. Their position was different, reflecting on the topic of resistance to reforms. A respondent who previously held a Vice-Minister position noted that:

<sup>70</sup> Interview, CHANC3, March 2014; Interview, POLIT2, January 2014; Interview, EXP4, February 2014.

<sup>71</sup> Interview, POLIT10, April 2014; Interview, POLIT5, March 2014; Interview, EXP4, February 2014.

<sup>72</sup> Interview, POLIT2, January 2014.

<sup>73</sup> Interview, EXP3, January 2014.

Civil servants are very smart, and they see how much you know or how much you can, well, I mean, they get clear opinion during a short period of time. And if at the beginning they don't accept anything, after half a year, all this resistance disappears because they see very well that, well, you take more areas, you start controlling more areas and they simply cannot bluff.<sup>74</sup>

Interests are conditioned by personal grievances and/or fears<sup>75</sup>, and they can transform into resistance, which, according to the interviews, become obstacles in the reform implementation.<sup>76</sup> This shows that it is impossible to concentrate attention only on the loyalty of senior executives to politicians/ministers. The data also suggests that individual interests can become obstacles to the reform implementation.

As the research data has revealed, the main obstacle of reform implementation was held to be the reform process itself. As previously mentioned, the interview data has demonstrated that antagonistic positions were typical also in the government itself.<sup>77</sup> There were even more such antagonistic or adversarial positions in the parliament, according to many respondents. They emphasized that the reform could experience obstacles because of different attitudes in the Seimas towards the system being created.<sup>78</sup> In order to prove this, many respondents mentioned different attitudes towards the SCS system of the members of parliament as well as in the government coalition and among the members of the same party. It was also noted that most members of Seimas do not understand the content and meaning of the SCS. Many respondents also observed that negative attitudes in the society and public criticism towards the SCS raise only indirect threats to the reform. On the one hand, attention was paid to the fact that the elitist orientation and behaviour of politician-populists can stop the reform implementation. On the other hand, a counter-argument was provided about the possible success of the reform, namely, that it could depend on the political conjuncture and political will of the majority of the Seimas.

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<sup>74</sup> Similar opinions about the civil servants' desire to abuse lack of competency of political officials were also mentioned by other respondents; Interview, POLIT5, March 2014; Interview, POLIT2, January 2014; Interview, EXP2, January 2014.

<sup>75</sup> Interview, CHANC2, January 2014.

<sup>76</sup> Other respondents also mentioned about mobbing, revenge and individual conflicts; Interview, POLIT8, April 2014; Interview, POLIT6, March 2014.

<sup>77</sup> Interview, CHANC3, March 2014.

<sup>78</sup> Interview, POLIT6, March 2014; Interview, POLIT5, March 2014; Interview, POLIT2, January 2014; Interview, EXP4, February 2014.



## **CONCLUSIONS**

Analysis of the attitudes of the senior civil servants leads to the assertion that the plans for the SCS reform were met with obvious approval of senior executives in Lithuania. As the survey data reveals, 59.5% of the senior executives supported the reform being prepared, while only 14.6% of the respondents disapproved plans for such reform in 2014.

Analysis of the quantitative data shows that one of the main research hypotheses has been confirmed: senior civil servants who perceive themselves firstly as actors in policy formation and implementation favour the creation of SCS more than senior civil servants with other role identities. This stance of senior servants with specific role identity is strengthened not only by their aspirations to ensure a more distinctive status (autonomy of decision-making, security, etc.), but also because a whole new role identity is possible in new corps, having its own distinctive culture. However, the preferences and cultural identities of senior executives could have been preconditioned by defensive positions. Apparently, senior executives were afraid of the possible transformations in political-administrative context and their negative impact, which could have been conditioned by the inflexibility of the civil service system, possible politicization, etc. Because of feeling afraid, they viewed the content of the reform, especially related to rotation (obligatory mobility) or recruitment, negatively or more cautiously. These views were preconditioned by an understanding that the administration system is inflexible. However, senior civil servants take a defensive position, do not trust, and are afraid of transformation because of politicians and former experience of ineffective changes (as the qualitative research has revealed). Data from the qualitative research demonstrates that the defensive positions of senior civil servants can be determined by a specific culture of civil service and public administration in Lithuania, operating as a contextual factor. Hostility, un-cooperation, inertia, and legalistic values (as well as subculture of lawyers) are the features that can be used to characterize this culture. It operates as a negative environment for changes. But it operates in the context of a specific political culture whose typical features are narrow interests and the incompetence of politicians (ministers) to perform their duties. Still, the main obstacle for the preparation and enactment of the reform was the political decisions of the ruling parties. As the interviewees emphasized, the resistance of senior civil servants is inevitable because of personal interests, fear of changes and their consequences, and political interests. But this should not become an insurmountable obstacle to reform; probably reform of a more evolutionary nature can help.

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