

Lithuania

Self-rule

INSTITUTIONAL DEPTH AND POLICY SCOPE

Under communism, Lithuania had one intermediate tier of government consisting of forty-four regions and eleven city regions (Council of Europe: Lithuania 1997). The first constitution after independence stipulates that municipal councils have the right to self-government and that higher level administrative units may be created by the government (C 1992, Arts. 199 and 123). A 1994 local government reform (implemented in 1995) provided self-governance for municipalities (Law No. 533/1994). The capital city of Vilnius received a similar legal status as municipalities (Council of Europe: Lithuania 2001, 2012). At the same time, ten higher tier *apskritis* (counties) were created (Law No. 558/1994 and No. 707/1994), which is the relevant tier for our purposes.

Apskritis were initially set up as deconcentrated general purpose administrations, headed by a government-appointed governor, to coordinate ministerial policy in the region. In theory, the remit of the governor's coordinative role was broad. It included vocational and technical education, civil protection, hospitals, welfare homes, social security, town and spatial planning, environmental protection, parks, sports and cultural facilities, regional development, agriculture, and local government (Beksta and Petkevicius 2000; Council of Europe: Lithuania 1997, 2006; Law No. 707/1994, Arts. 5–11 and 14). However, the ministries were reluctant to cede functions (Gaulé 2011: 415).

In 2000, *apskritis* appropriated policy authority and some representative institutions when they took control over indirectly elected regional development councils (*regiono plėtros tarybos*), which had been created in each *apskritis* to assist in national and EU regional policy (Law No. 1889/2000, Art. 13). This was made easier because the regional development councils had the same territorial boundaries as the *apskritis*. During the ten years of their co-existence, the regional development council provided voice to local government interests, while the *apskritis* governor, who chaired the council, provided leadership and administrative support. The regional development council approved development plans concerning social and economic development and environmental protection, and the governor implemented them (Gaulé 2011; Vaiciuniene and Nefas 2012: 628).

Central ministerial resistance persisted, reinforced by EU concerns about the administrative capacity of these subnational governments (European Commission 2000: 75–77; Hughes, Sasse, and Gordon 2004: 100, 104–105, 108). In the first round of the EU structural funds programming, *apskritis* and local governments were frozen out of decision making (Nakrosis 2008). This paved the way for the abolition of the *apskritis* in 2010 (Law No. 248/2010), and their tasks were taken over by ministries and agencies operating at the regional level. Interestingly, the *regiono plėtros tarybos* continue to exist, they can now elect their chairperson, and they have gained a stronger consultative role in national and EU regional development (Burbulyte-Tsiskarishvili, Audrius Kutkaitis, and Normante 2013; Council of Europe: Lithuania 2012; Stonkutė and Gaule 2017:

390–396), but the ministry of the interior has now replaced the governor in preparing and implementing the regional development plans (Astrauskas 2017; Law No. 735/2010, Art. 14). From 2010 we score the *regiono plėtros tarybos* as an incipient tier of regional governance.^β

FISCAL AUTONOMY

Apskritis and *regiono plėtros tarybos* are dependent on intergovernmental transfers and have no tax autonomy (Gaulé 2011; Law No. 707/1994, Art. 3; No. 1889/2000; No. 735/2010).

BORROWING AUTONOMY

Apskritis and *regiono plėtros tarybos* have no borrowing autonomy (Gaulé 2011; Law No. 707/1994, Art. 3; No. 1889/2000; No. 735/2010).

REPRESENTATION

From 2000 until 2010, *apskritis* had a regional development council composed of the governor, deputy governor, and mayors of the municipalities in the *apskritis* (Law No. 707/1994, Art. 15). The governor was appointed by the central government (Beksta and Petkevicius 2000; Law No. 707/1994, Art. 4). Since 2010, the regional development council is composed of representatives elected by and from municipal council members and mayors within the region and one central government appointee. The regional development council elects its own chair but executive power is exercised by deconcentrated central government offices (Astrauskas 2017; Council of Europe: Lithuania 2012; Law Nos. 735/2010, Arts. 13.1–2, 14; No.1094/2014, Arts. 15.1–2, 17).

Shared rule

There is no shared rule for *apskritis* or *regiono plėtros tarybos*.

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Self-rule in Lithuania

			Institutional depth	Policy scope	Fiscal autonomy	Borrowing autonomy	Representation		Self-rule
							Assembly	Executive	
Apskritys	I	1995-1999	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	I	2000-2009	2	1	0	0	1	0	4
Regionų plėtros tarybos	I	2010-2018	1	0	0	0	1	0	2

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