Effectiveness of the European Union grants to civil society in the Baltic states: an evaluation of the EU program 'Europe for Citizens' (2007-2020)

Jānis KAPUSTĀNS[*]

Abstract

The aim of this article is to evaluate the effectiveness of the European Union's 'Europe for Citizens' program by analyzing the situation of the Baltic states in the context of the overall EU level, as well as comparing Latvia with neighboring Estonia and Lithuania. Within the frameworks of the two actions ('European Remembrance Projects' and 'Civil Society Projects') in the 'Europe for Citizens' program for the two periods (2007-2013) and (2014-2020), both the financial support of the European Union to the most active groups of civil society (top-down) and a very high activity of civil society by project application have been examined. Under approved projects, various activities were developed, promoting public participation both at the local level and among the citizens of various European Union countries, thus starting to influence the processes at the EU level (bottom-up) as well. The data show that the population of all three Baltic states has a high sense of belonging to the European Union, well above the EU average.

Keywords: civil society, the European Union, Europe for Citizens, Europeanization, the Baltic states

Introduction

Civil society, its active and successful functioning is one of the indicators of effective democratic governance in the European Union and its member states – Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

Civil society refers to the 'third sector' of society, which is not government or business. Civil society is made up of non-governmental organizations and institutions that express the interests and will of citizens, as well as individuals and organizations in society that are independent of government.

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[*] Jānis KAPUSTĀNS is lecturer at Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Valmiera, Latvia; e-mail: janis.kapustans@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0002-7706-5887

It is in the European Union's interest to encourage and support a greater involvement of its citizens in the activities of the European Union and its values. This includes the need to increase the participation of EU citizens in current activities, as well as to promote a better understanding of the history of the European Union and the beginnings of integration in the mid-20th century.

The latest treaty on the European Union, the Treaty of Lisbon, which entered in force on 1st December 2009, introduced changes to bring the Union closer to its citizens and to promote greater cross-border cooperation on EU issues. Article 11 of the Lisbon Treaty introduced a new dimension to the participation of European citizens (EACEA, 2020b, p. 4).

The European Commission, as the EU's executive body, seeks to promote the involvement of European citizens in their common issues, which would, accordingly, encourage greater involvement of citizens in the further development of the European Union as well. In this context, the 'Europe for Citizens' program should be mentioned as one of the key programs directly aimed at involving European citizens in the common activities of the European Union. By funding schemes and activities in which citizens can participate, the 'Europe for Citizens' program help the public understand the EU's history, values and diversity as well as encourage citizens to participate and engage in democracy at the EU level.

The main research question to be answered in this study is: can the promotion of civic participation through the implementation of various projects under the 'Europe for Citizens' program at the same time promote citizens' sense of belonging to the European Union and its common values?

The aim of this article is to evaluate the effectiveness of the European Union's 'Europe for Citizens' program by analyzing the situation of the Baltic states in the context of the overall EU level, as well as comparing Latvia with neighboring Estonia and Lithuania. The first chapter will look at the theoretical framework through aspects of the Europeanisation approach. The second chapter will assess the popularity of the 'Europe for Citizens' program in terms of the number of projects submitted and supported, thus calculating the success rate, as well as participation as partners in projects of other countries. The third chapter will try to measure the effectiveness of the 'Europe for Citizens' program activities by assessing the themes used in the projects and the trends in citizens' attitudes towards Europe. Finally, conclusions will be drawn as to whether and how the 'Europe for Citizens' program has contributed to a greater participation and a sense of belonging to Europe and how that, in turn, influences citizens' attitudes towards European Union issues.

The article will use quantitative research methods – performance indicators, statistical data and realized projects. Analysis of statistical data on the popularity and success rate of the program will be implemented. Comparison of thematic applications of supported projects and the level of EU citizens' sense of belonging to the European Union will be measured and analyzed.

The study will use the annual data of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), the annual Results published by the EACEA, as well as the data provided by Andrejs Lukins and Agnese Rubene, Europe for Citizens Point of Latvia; Asta Visminaitė, Europe for Citizens Point of Lithuania; Evelyn Valtin, Europe for Citizens Point of Estonia. Unfortunately, sometimes even official statistics differ from one source to another. This may be explained by the inclusion or non-inclusion of reserve lists of projects in the overall statistics, as well as by the correct structuring of the different sub-activities of the 'Europe for Citizens' program.

In Latvia, there has been only one study on the EU program 'Europe for Citizens', which looked at the period from 2007 to 2016 (Kūlīte, 2017). There are no reports of other similar studies in Lithuania and Estonia. This article will be innovative in that it will analyze the EU's 'Europe for Citizens' program for the most recent time period available, including the years 2017-2020 as well. Thus, the article will cover both previous periods of the program (2007-2013) and (2014-2020) for which research data are available. Moreover, an unprecedented comparison will be made between the three Baltic states.

And last, but not the least, the following limitations in this article: Action 1 (European Remembrance) and Action 2.3 (Civil Society Projects) will be analyzed within the framework of the EU program 'European Citizens'. Action 2.1 (Town Twinning) and Action 2.2 (Network of Towns), where the emphasis is mainly on local government activities, but not so much on small institutions and associations, will not be covered in this paper.

1. Theoretical framework: Europeanization as a way forward?

Europeanization as a concept and as a theory plays an important role in the studies of the European Union, complementing such classical theories of European integration as neofunctionalism, intergovernmentalism and others. Europeanization generally refers to interactions between the European Union and its member states or third countries (including candidate countries and neighborhood countries) (Börzel and Panke, 2019, p. 116). The academic debate emphasizes that Europeanisation is the gradual transposition of EU norms, leading to the convergence of EU countries.

There are many different definitions of Europeanization in the academic literature, among which at least four definitions proposed by Ladrech (1994), Risse *et al.* (2001), Radaelli (2003) and Vink and Graziano (2007) can be highlighted (Graziano and Vink, 2013, p. 37).

The first definition of Europeanization that gained widespread attention and served as a basis for subsequent definitions of Europeanization is introduced by Ladrech in 1994. He proposes that Europeanization is an 'incremental process re-orienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and

policy-making' (Ladrech, 1994, p. 69). By 'organizational logic' Ladrech means the 'adaptive processes of organizations to a changed or changing environment' (1994, p. 71). In the definition proposed by Ladrech, the emphasis on Europeanization as a gradual process can be estimated positively. On the other hand, the possible criticism could be devoted to the reduction of the role of individuals (as opposed to the mentioned organizations).

In an article published in 2003, Claudio M. Radaelli offers a more competitive definition of Europeanization: 'Processes of (a) construction, (b) diffusion, and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things', and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies' (Radaelli, 2003, p. 30). Thus, Radaelli takes a much broader approach to the term of Europeanization. It retains the reference to formation as a process. At the same time, the author proposes to include broader new components, including: 1) formal and informal rules, accepting both organizations and individuals, 2) shared beliefs and norms, 3) logic of domestic identities. Consequently, this definition of Radaelli includes much more broadly the presence of values, attitudes and informal aspects in both European and domestic politics.

Thomas Risse, Maria Green Cowles and James Caporaso have offered one more definition: 'We define Europeanization as the emergence and development at the European level of distinct structures of governance, that is, of political, legal, and social institutions associated with political problem-solving that formalize interactions among the actors, and of policy networks specializing in the creation of authoritative European rules' (Risse *et al*., 2001, p. 3). As a possible critical evaluation of this definition by could be too much emphasis on policy networks as well as an extremely broad notion of Europeanization.

Finally, Paolo R. Graziano and Maarten P. Vink offer a broad definition of Europeanization as a process of 'domestic adaptation to European regional integration' (Vink and Graziano, 2007, p. 7).

Thus, a common feature of all the above definitions is that Europeanisation is defined as a process, gradual rather than rapid. Given that the Ladrech definition reduces the role of individuals as opposed to highlighting organizations, but Risse *et al.* (2001) offer contains risks of being interpreted too broadly, the definition of Radaelli as well as the definition of Vink and Graziano in this article could be considered more appropriate.

The concept of Europeanisation emphasizes an important structure: the interaction between the EU – the state – the society. Classical theories of European integration view the European Union as the result of an agreement between states, in which the main elements of the relationship are states and EU institutions. In contrast, the concept of Europeanisation expands this bloc of relations with society (Ozoliņa and Tisenkopfs, 2005, p. 10).

Europeanisation can be described as a two-way process, involving two different notions: 'top-down' and 'bottom-up'. The top-down Europeanization perspective seeks to explain the conditions and mechanisms through which the European Union promotes change in its member states and in third countries (Börzel and Panke, 2019, p. 119). On the other hand, bottom-up Europeanization research tries to analyze how member states and other domestic actors upload their domestic preferences to the European level (Börzel and Panke, 2019, p. 122). It is emphasized that Radaelli (2003) and Vink and Graziano (2007) definitions combine both sets of processes (bottom-up and top-down) in order to provide a more detailed characterization of Europeanization (Graziano and Vink, 2013, p. 38). The author of the article assumes that in the three Baltic states, which joined the European Union in 2004, initially the 'top-down' processes have dominated more than 'bottom-up' movement. Now, 18 years after the accession of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to the European Union, it is time to assess whether and how the 'Europe for Citizens' program has also contributed to the 'bottom-up' impact.

2. Popularity of the 'Europe for Citizens' program: trends in submitted and supported projects

From January 2021, the 'Europe for Citizens' program has been restructured and integrated into a new fund 'Justice Program & the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Program' under the program's 'Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Program' (2021-2027) measure 'Citizens' engagement and participation'.

This paper will look at and analyze the initial two previous periods of the 'Europe for Citizens' program for the periods of 2007-2013 and 2014-2020, during which the selected projects have been implemented and data on them are available for research.

2.1. Objectives and specific criteria of the EU program 'Europe for Citizens'

The general objectives of the EU program 'Europe for Citizens' are: 1) to contribute to citizens' understanding of the European Union, its history and diversity; 2) to foster European citizenship and to improve conditions for civic and democratic participation at European Union level (EACEA, 2020b, p. 5).

The specific objectives of the EU program 'Europe for Citizens' are: 1) to raise awareness of the remembrance, common history and values and the European Union's aim to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples by stimulating debate, reflection and development of networks; 2) to encourage democratic and civic participation of citizens at the European Union level, by developing citizens' understanding of the EU policy-making process and promoting opportunities for societal and intercultural engagement and volunteering at European Union level (EACEA, 2020b, p. 5).

Specific criteria of selection procedure for Action 1 – European Remembrance are as follows: 1) to finance projects reflecting on causes and consequences of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes in Europe's modern history (especially but not exclusively Nazism that led to the Holocaust, Fascism, Stalinism and totalitarian communist regimes) and to commemorate the victims of their crimes; 2) encompasses activities concerning other defining moments and reference points in recent European history, preference to actions which encourage tolerance, mutual understanding, intercultural dialogue and reconciliation as a means of moving beyond the past and building the future, in particular with a view to reaching the younger generation; 3) projects should be implemented on a transnational level or with a clear European dimension (EACEA, 2020b, pp. 21-22).

Action 2.3 – Civil Society Projects are aimed at supporting projects promoted by transnational partnerships and networks directly involving citizens. Specific criteria for the selection procedure for this action are: 1) activities promoting debate/campaigns/actions on themes of common interest in the framework of the rights and responsibilities of the European Union citizens and making the link to the European political agenda and policy making process; 2) activities aiming at gathering the individual opinions of the citizens favoring a bottom up approach (including the use of social networks, webinars, etc.) and media literacy; 3) activities promoting solidarity among European Union citizens and beyond (EACEA, 2020b, p. 25).

These previously mentioned goals of the EU program 'Europe for Citizens' are also in the interests of the Baltic states. For example, Latvia's civil society policy implementation plan (for years of 2019-2020) envisages similar priorities:

1.1. To educate the public about the possibilities of civic participation.

1.2. To promote citizen participation by ensuring sustainable support mechanisms (The Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia, 2018, p. 4).

What is the situation of civil society in the three Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania? The occupation and rule of the Baltics by the USSR for half a century in the 20th century contributed to the brutal repression of different views and discouraged wider civil activities in everyday life. The first non-governmental organizations were set up in the leisure, sports and culture sectors. Therefore, the legacy of the USSR, although significantly reduced, still has some effect.

The activity of civil society in all three Baltic states is slowly but steadily increasing. Compared to other Northern and Western European countries, civic activity rates in the Baltics, similarly to other Eastern European countries, are considered to be relatively low. Data from the European Social Survey 2015 show that in Estonia and Latvia 9% of the population can be considered as civic active, in Lithuania – 7%, while in Western European countries about 25% of the population is civic active, and in the Scandinavian countries – even every third (The Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia, 2018, p. 7).

Citizens' participation is closely linked to their ability to cooperate, which in turn depends on their ability to trust each other. According to the data of the 2015

European Social Survey, the share of mutual trust between people in Latvia is 51%; comparison, the highest indicator is in Norway – 88%, Finland 87%, Denmark 86% (The Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia, 2018, p. 7). Citizens' participation is also closely linked to civic education, an understanding of democracy and the skills to participate.

Although civil society organizations in all three Baltic states continue to be on the rise compared to other European countries, they are still facing various difficulties. As in other European countries, they are struggling with problems arising from insufficient state funding. International, mainly European, grants are often their only chance to obtain any form of long- term funding (Hummel *et al.*, 2020, p. 36).

2.2. Assessing the popularity of the 'Europe for Citizens' program: increase in the number of projects submitted

From the outside, on a European and global scale the three Baltic states – Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania – are often considered to be similar countries, almost identical. However, there are also differences between the three Baltic states, for example in terms of population. It is also useful to look at the size of the national population of countries in order to correctly analyze the number of project applications.

Table 1. Population, Eurostat 2020

Countries	Population numbers	Population rate
Estonia	1.328.976	0.25%
Latvia	1.907.675	0.36%
Lithuania	2.794.090	0.53%
Program Total*	532.118.604	100%
EU Total	514.345.458	

Note: * Participating countries are 28 EU member states + 6 non–EU countries.
Source: EECEA, 2021, pp. 47–48

Table 2. European Remembrance Projects: applications submitted (2007 – 2013)

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2007–2013
Estonia	2	0	2	3	2	1	8	18
Latvia	4	7	5	4	13	17	16	66
Lithuania	1	1	22	25	16	22	20	107
EU	126	130	201	217	220	311	425	1.630

Source: author's representation based on EACEA annual data, Results publications and data provided by Europe for Citizens Points in the Baltic states

At the start of the program in 2007, a relatively small number of project applications were submitted under the European Remembrance support. However, the number of project applications submitted has gradually increased over the years. For Estonia, the trend for 6 years has been steadily stagnant and only in the last year (2013) has there been a sharp increase in the number of applications (8). In 2008, Estonia did not have any project applications at all. For Latvia, which started the period with 4 applications in 2007, the number of applications was relatively stagnant in 2009-2010. In turn, in 2011-2013, a large increase in the number of project applications from Latvia has been observed, reaching 17 applications in 2012. In Lithuania, there has been a significant increase in the number of project applications since 2009, which has largely continued throughout the rest of the period. The largest number of applications submitted to Lithuania in one year reached 25 in 2010. In total, during the 7-year period (2007-2013), Lithuania submitted the largest number of project applications from the Baltic states (107). Latvia prepared almost half as many project applications (66). The number of projects submitted by Estonia lags far behind (18).

Table 3. Civil Society Projects: applications submitted (2007 – 2013)

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2007–2013
Estonia	0	0	2	1	1	3	7	14
Latvia	3	0	4	2	8	6	10	33
Lithuania	2	12	24	28	25	13	7	111
EU	286	286	356	448	665	590	574	3.205

Source: author's representation based on EACEA annual data, Results publications and data provided by Europe for Citizens Points in the Baltic states

'Europe for Citizens' Action 2.3 – Civil Society Projects – aims to support civil society organizations, so there is a demand for funding for this action. However, at the beginning of the 2007-2013 period, there were no project applications prepared from Estonia for two years (2007 and 2008), nor was there any project application from Latvia in 2008. In the next 4 years, the minimum number of project applications was submitted from Estonia and higher activity appeared only in 2013 (7 applications). Larger activities appeared in Latvia in the last 3 years of the period, with the largest number of applications in 2013 (10 applications). In Lithuania, on the other hand, a high level of activity in project preparation and submission has appeared already since 2008, after which the activities doubled even more, reaching the largest number of applications in 2010 (28 applications); however, in the last 2 years the activity decreased. For 2007-2013 Lithuania is overwhelmingly dominating the period with 111 project applications submitted. Latvia and Estonia lag significantly behind in the preparation of civil society projects – 33 applications and 14 applications, respectively.

Table 4. European Remembrance Projects: applications submitted (2014 – 2020)

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2014-2020
Estonia	N/A*	N/A*	4	3	2	7	3	32
Latvia	9	9	17	10	7	5	5	62
Lithuania	17	16	8	12	2	5	5	65
EU	472	538	468	286	357	262	255	2.638

Note: * Data for Estonia separately for 2014 and 2015 are not available, however, total data for the 7-year period (2014-2020) are available.
Source: author's representation based on EACEA annual data, Results publications and data provided by Europe for Citizens Points in the Baltic states.

The next period of the program (2014-2020): what is the situation here with the activity of preparing and submitting project applications for the action 'European Remembrance projects'? For Estonia, although data are not available separately for 2014 and 2015, they are available for a total period of 7 years, so it is possible to calculate that in 2014 and 2015 there were a total of 13 applications for both years (32 – 19 = 13), so on average this is about 6.5 applications per year. Existing data show that in Estonia, project submission was more active at the beginning of the period (2014-2015) as well as at the end of the period (2019). In other years, there has been a significant decline in activity in Estonia. The highest activity in Latvia is observed in the first half of the seven-year period, reaching the highest activity in 2016 (17 project applications). After that, the activity in Latvia decreases. The situation is similar in Lithuania, where the highest activity is observed in the first half of the seven-year period, with the largest number of applications prepared in 2014 (17 applications). In Lithuania, too, activity declined in the second half of the period. The total number of prepared project applications over a 7-year period is quite similar for Latvia (62 applications) and Lithuania (65 applications), while Estonia lags far behind (32 applications).

Table 5. Civil Society Projects: applications submitted (2014 – 2020)

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2014 – 2020
Estonia	N/A*	N/A*	10	3	4	4	7	32
Latvia	10	5	6	6	5	5	9	46
Lithuania	11	10	14	11	5	7	12	70
EU	538	440	541	361**	353	415	571	3.219

Note: * Data for Estonia separately for 2014 and 2015 are not available, however, total data for the 7-year period (2014-2020) are available.
** + 1 applicant withdrew, not included in statistics.
Source: author's representation based on EACEA annual data, Results publications and data provided by Europe for Citizens Points in the Baltic states

Comparing the period 2007-2013 with the period 2014-2020, for Estonia, the total number of project applications prepared in the second period has almost doubled (from 18 to 32 applications). Latvia has a slight decrease in the second period compared to the first period (from 66 to 62 applications). For Lithuania, the number of applications in the second period has decreased almost 2 times compared to the first period (from 107 to 65 applications). On the other hand, the number of project applications in the second period in the European Union has increased significantly compared to the first period (from 1.630 to 2.638 applications). This general tendency of the European Union, therefore, is different from the tendencies of Latvia and Lithuania, where there is a decrease in activities.

The next period of the program (2014-2020) for the action 'Civil Society Projects'

For Estonia, although data separately for 2014 and 2015 are not available, it is still possible to calculate that in these two years there have been a total of 4 project applications (32–28=4), so on average 2 applications per year. The available data show that in Estonia the highest activity in project preparation was in 2016 (10 applications) and partly in 2020 (7 applications), while in other years the activity was lower. The highest activity in Latvia is visible at the beginning of the period – in 2014 (10 applications) and at the end of the period – in 2020 (9 applications). The number of projects prepared in other years has been halved. In Lithuania, in five years from the 7–year period, a lot of activity has been observed, reaching 14 project applications in 2016. In Lithuania, relatively less activity is observed at the end of the period – in 2018–2019. Comparing the Baltic states for the 2014-2020 period in total, the largest number of prepared applications is convincingly for Lithuania (70 applications), followed by Latvia (46 applications) and Estonia (32 applications).

Comparing the period 2007-2013 with the period 2014-2020, for Estonia the total number of project applications prepared in the second period has increased 2 times (from 14 to 32 applications), so a rapid increase. Latvia also experienced an increase in the number of projects in the second period compared to the first period (from 33 to 46 applications). In Lithuania, on the other hand, the number of project applications decreased sharply in the second period compared to the first period (from 111 to 70 applications). In the European Union as a whole, the second period shows a similar trend as in the first period: the number of project applications in fact has neither increased nor decreased (from 3.205 to 3.219).

2.3. Evaluation of the approved projects of the 'Europe for Citizens' program and their success rating

The number of projects approved by the 'Europe for Citizens' program is possible to evaluate by the following two criteria:

1. Have the projects submitted by the state been approved at all and, if so, how many?
2. What is the success rate of project approval? = number of submitted projects: number of approved projects.

Table 6. European Remembrance Projects: applications selected / success rate (%) (2007 – 2013)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2007 – 2013
Estonia	2/ 100%	0/ 0%	0/ 0%	1/ 33.33%	1/ 50.00%	0/ 0%	0/ 0%	4/ 22.22%
Latvia	1/ 25.00%	2/ 28.57%	0/ 0%	1/ 25.00%	2/ 15.38%	2/ 11.76%	0/ 0%	8/ 12.12%
Lithuania	0/ 0%	0/ 0%	3/ 13.64%	6/ 24.00%	6/ 37.50%	2/ 9.09%	2/ 10.00%	19/ 17.76%
EU	36/ 28.57%	48/ 36.92%	56/ 27.86%	57/ 26.27%	49/ 22.27%	37/ 11.90%	31/ 7.29%	314/ 19.26%

Source: author's calculations based on EACEA annual data, Results publications and data provided by Europe for Citizens Points in the Baltic states

In the first period of the European Remembrance Projects action (2007-2013), all three Baltic states have had unsuccessful years when their project applications have not received any approval. Estonian applications have not been successful for 4 years, while Latvian and Lithuanian applications have been unsuccessful for 2 years. Lithuania has had the largest number of approved projects from the Baltic states in one year – 6 projects in both 2010 and 2011. In the period 2007-2013, Lithuania in total has the largest number of approved projects (19), while the number of approved projects in Latvia (8) and the successful projects in Estonia (4) lag far behind.

A different picture emerges when analyzing by success rate. As the number of project applications submitted by Estonia was the lowest in the Baltic states, Estonia's success rate in 2007-2013 is the highest among the Baltic states (22.22%). Estonia's success rate is even above the European Union's average success rate (19.26%). Compared to the average success rate of the European Union, Lithuania's success rate, despite the large number of approved projects, is lower (17.76%). The success rate for projects approved from Latvia is also even lower (12.12%).

What is the situation in the 2007-2013 period of the Civil Society Projects action? Judging by the real number of approved projects, all three Baltic states have had years when no project application has been approved. The anti-record here belongs to Estonia, for which no project at all has been approved under the Civil Society Projects action during the seven-year period. Latvian project applications have not been approved for 2 years, Lithuanian project applications have not been approved for 1 year. Lithuania had the largest total number of approved projects

during the 2007-2013 period (14). A total of 7 project applications were approved for Latvia and 0 for Estonia.

Table 7. Civil Society Projects: applications selected / success rate (%) (2007 – 2013)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2007 – 2013
Estonia	0/	0/	0/	0/	0/	0/	0/	0/
	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Latvia	2/	0/	1/	0/	1/	2/	1/	7/
	66.67%	0%	25.00%	0%	12.50%	33.33%	10.00%	21.21%
Lithuania	1/	6/	3/	2/	1/	0/	1/	14/
	50.00%	50.00%	12.50%	7.14%	4.00%	0%	14.29%	12.61%
EU	138/	138/	117/	108/	35/	27/	26/	589/
	48.25%	48.25%	32.87%	24.11%	5.26%	4.58%	4.53%	18.38%

Source: author's calculations based on EACEA annual data, Results publications and data provided by Europe for Citizens Points in the Baltic states

Evaluating by the success rate coefficient, the projects submitted by Latvia have the best success rate indicators for 2007-2013 period in total (21.21%). The European Union average has a lower success rate (18.38%). Lithuania's success rate is even lower (12.61%). For Estonia, due to the fact that none of its projects have been approved in 7 years, the success rate is 0%.

Table 8. European Remembrance Projects: applications selected / success rate (%) (2014 – 2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2014 – 2020
Estonia	1/	0/	1/	0/	0/	0/	1/	3/
	N/A	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	9.38%
Latvia	1/	1/	1/	1/	1/	1/	1/	7/
	11.11%	11.11%	5.88%	10.00%	14.29%	20.00%	20.00%	11.29%
Lithuania	2/	2/	1/	1/	0/	1/	1/	8/
	11.76%	12.50%	12.50%	8.33%	0.00%	20.00%	20.00%	12.31%
EU	36/	33/	38/	39/	37/	49*/	54**/	286/
	7.63%	6.13%	8.12%	13.64%	10.36%	18.70%	21.18%	10.84%

Notes: * Initially, in July 2019, 45 projects have been approved and 5 projects were put in the Reserve List. In November 2019, 4 out of 5 projects from the Reserve list were approved due to budget availability.
** 49 projects were granted initially + 5 projects from the reserve list.
Source: author's calculations based on EACEA annual data, Results publications and data provided by Europe for Citizens Points in the Baltic states

Let's look at the 2014-2020 period for the European Remembrance Projects action. Unsuccessful years again for Estonia, whose project applications have not been approved within 4 years of the 7-year period. There was one empty year (2018) for Lithuania when its project applications have not been approved. Latvia has had a stable success, with project applications being accepted for all 7 years of the period. A total of 8 projects have been approved for Lithuania, 7 projects for Latvia and 3 projects for Estonia during 2014-2020 period. The success rate coefficient shows that Lithuania has the highest success rate during the period (12.31%), which is higher than the EU average (10.84%). Latvia's success rate is also higher than the EU average (11.29%). Estonia, on the other hand, has the lowest success rate (9.38%).

Comparing the 2014-2020 period with the 2007-2013: there are no significant changes in the total number of approved projects for Estonia - 4 projects were approved in the first period, 3 projects in the second period. Similarly, in Latvia both periods of the program are quite similar: 8 projects were approved in 2007-2013, then 7 project applications approved in 2014-2020. Larger changes are observed in Lithuania, where the number of approved projects has decreased more than 2 times – from 19 projects in the first period to 8 projects in the second period.

Accordingly, comparing the success rate by periods, it is possible to see that the success rate for Estonia has significantly decreased from 22.22% in the 2007-2013 period to 9.38% in the period of 2014-2020. The second largest decline in the success rate is for the EU average, from 19.26% in the first period to 10.84% in the second period. Lithuania also has a rather large decrease in the success rate – from 17.76% in the first period to 12.31% in the second period. In turn, the success rate in Latvia has remained almost unchanged – from 12.12% in the period of 2007-2013 down to 11.29% in the 2014-2020 period.

Table 9. Civil Society Projects: applications selected / success rate (%) (2014 – 2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2014 – 2020
Estonia	1/ N/A	0/ 0%	1/ 10.00%	0/ 0.00%	0/ 0.00%	0/ 0.00%	1/ 14.29%	3/ 9.38%
Latvia	1/ 10.00%	0/ 0%	0/ 0%	0/ 0.00%	1/ 20.00%	1/ 20.00%	1/ 11.11%	4/ 8.70%
Lithuania	1/ 9.09%	1/ 10.00%	1/ 7.14%	1/ 9.09%	1/ 20.00%	1/ 14.29%	1/ 8.33%	7/ 10.00%
EU	29/ 5.39%	27/ 6.14%	25/ 4.62%	27/ 7.48%	31/ 8.78%	29/ 6.99%	33/ 5.78%	201/ 6.24%

Source: author's calculations based on EACEA annual data, Results publications and data provided by Europe for Citizens Points in the Baltic states

The Civil Society Projects action: period of 2014 – 2020: for Estonia, this period has been the most unsuccessful of the Baltic applications: Estonian project applications have not been approved in the 4 years of the period. Latvia has not done very well either: project applications have not been approved in the 3 years of the period. Only Lithuania has successfully obtained project approvals in all 7 years of the period. Lithuania has the largest number of approved projects during this action period (7 projects). 4 projects have been approved for Latvia in 7 years, but only 3 projects for Estonia. Lithuania also has the highest success rate during the 2014-2020 period (10.00%). Estonia follows with a success rate of 9.38%. Latvia has a similar success rate (8.70%). Interestingly, the average success rate in the European Union is only 6.24%. This means that for all three Baltic countries the success rate is higher than the EU average success rate.

Comparing the period of 2014-2020 with the previous period 2007-2013, the opposite trends appear. Estonia after 0 approved projects in the first period has had 3 approved projects in the second period. In contrast, Latvia, after 7 approved projects in the first period, is followed by a decline to 4 approved projects in the second period. A big decrease is also observed for Lithuania: from 14 approved projects in the first period to 7 approved projects in the second period. There is also a big drop for the European Union on average: from 589 projects to 201 projects in the second period.

Success rate comparison for both periods – 2007-2013 and 2014-2020: Estonia's success rate has risen from 0% in the first period to 9.38% in the second period. Latvia's success rate has fallen from 21.21% in the first period to 8.70% in the second period. Lithuania's success rate has fallen slightly from 12.61% to 10.00% in the second quarter. In contrast, the European Union's average success rate of a respectable 18.38% has fallen sharply to a low of 6.24% in the second period.

2.4. Number of partner organizations in selected projects

Another tool for getting involved in projects supported by the 'Europe for Citizens' program is the opportunity to participate as partners in projects of other countries that have been approved and funded by the program. Unfortunately, the existing data is incomplete. There is a strong lack of data on Estonian activities. Therefore, to perform a full-scale analysis is quite difficult. On the other hand, the available data show a certain level of activity and their tendencies.

Table 10. European Remembrance Projects: partners in selected projects (2007 – 2013)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2007 – 2013
Latvia	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	5	5	9	23
Estonia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lithuania	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	7	4	9	25

Source: author's calculations based on results publications and data provided by Europe for Citizens Points in the Baltic states

Table 11. Civil Society Projects: partners in selected projects (2007-2013)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2007 – 2013
Latvia	N/A	N/A	N/A	15	10	5	4	34
Estonia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lithuania	N/A	N/A	N/A	15	6	3	8	32

Source: author's calculations based on results publications and data provided by Europe for Citizens Points in the Baltic states

Table 12. European Remembrance Projects: partners in selected projects (2014-2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2014 – 2020
Latvia	7	7	3	3	2	2	3	27 (13*)
Estonia	N/A	N/A	6	4	3	4	4	21
Lithuania	10	9	7	3	10	8	9	56 (37*)

Note: * Data calculated by author for the period of 2016-2020.
Source: author's own calculations based on results publications and data provided by Europe for Citizens Points in the Baltic states

Table 13. Civil Society Projects: partners in selected projects (2014 – 2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2014 – 2020
Latvia	10	4	5	2	10	5	2	38 (24*)
Estonia	N/A	N/A	7	3	5	5	6	26
Lithuania	7	1	4	2	6	4	8	32 (24*)

Note: * Data calculated by author for the period of 2016-2020.
Source: author's calculations based on results publications and data provided by Europe for Citizens Points in the Baltic states

An examination of existing, albeit incomplete, data shows quite similar levels of activity for all three Baltic states. In the period of 2014-2020 Lithuania participates in the most approved projects as a partner country for the European Remembrance Projects action. On the other hand, the situation of Civil Society Projects in the 2014-2020 period as partners in projects of other countries is quite similar among the Baltic states. In order to be able to compare all three Baltic states more accurately, the data for Latvia and Lithuania for the period 2014-2020 are presented in brackets for the period 2016-2020, for which data are also available for Estonia. And they show a more or less similar situation for the Baltic states.

3. The thematic focus of the supported projects and the level of EU citizens' sense of belonging to the European Union

One of the criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the EU's 'Europe for Citizens' program is to assess whether the approved projects meet the program's objectives and thematic criteria. The annual 'Results' of selected projects prepared by the EACEA show quite positive trends. For example, 'Results 2019 shows that approved projects have a strong thematic focus, covering all the multi-annual priorities set out in the program (EACEA, 2020a, p. 12). Table 14 and Table 15 below show the project themes submitted from the Baltic states.

Table 14. European Remembrance Projects: thematic classification of supported projects (2007-2020)

		2007 – 2013	2014 – 2020
1.	In memory of the victims of the communist terror	11	
2.	Preserving memories about the victims of Soviet and Nazi crimes	5	2
3.	Jewish history and the Holocaust	7	6
4.	Roma history: victims of Nazism		2
5.	Recent historical past of the Baltic countries	5	1
6.	European integration after World War II		1
7.	Democratic revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe (1989)		1
8.	EU enlargement in Central and Eastern Europe (2004)		1
9.	Migration, refugees and humanitarian aid		3
10	EU Charter of Fundamental Rights		1
11.	N/A	3	

Source: author's calculations based on EACEA annual data

Within the framework of the European Remembrance Projects action for the Baltic states, especially in the first period (2007-2013), the main emphasis of the projects is on the suffering during the Second World War and the repressions carried out by the Communists and Nazis. While Western Europe mostly remembers the

distress of the Nazis, the Baltic states also experienced prolonged Soviet occupation and communist atrocities. In the second period of the program (2014-2020), newer topics appear, such as European integration, like the enlargement of the European Union to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Topical issues such as migration and refugees and human rights have also emerged in recent years. All these themes have a strong emphasis on the local region, linking it closely with the rest of the European Union.

Table 15. Civil Society Projects: thematic classification of supported projects (2007-2020)

		2007-2013	2014-2020
1.	Lisbon Treaty: empowerment of European citizens	1	
2.	Debating the future of Europe		3
3.	Opportunities for civil society to influence EU decision-making, role of citizens in Europe	3	
4.	Fostering intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding of migrants and minority groups	3	1
5.	Inclusive and sustainable Europe, common values of EU	2	4
6.	Volunteering	2	1
7.	Youth civic participation	1	1
8.	Local community traditions and local identity	3	
9.	National culture in Europe	4	
10.	Against corruption	1	
11.	History		1
12.	Social integration		1
13.	Against fake news, for better news media		2
14.	N/A	1	

Source: author's calculations based on EACEA annual data

There is also a strong emphasis on local civil society in the 'Civil Society Projects' action. At the same time, many of these projects have a clear link with Europe, with Europeanization as a process. In the projects from Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania approved by the program, it is possible to draw thematically an international framework with topics such as the debate on the future of the European Union, common EU values, and migration processes. The next framework is relatively domestic: local traditions and local identity, youth, volunteering, corruption, national culture expressions. There is also a recent trend: fake news. And last, but not least, the civic participation in European Union processes: how can European citizens influence the EU?

Another way to measure the effectiveness of the EU's 'Europe for Citizens' program is to look at European citizens' attitudes towards the European Union and

their sense of belonging to the EU. Of course, there are influences from other domestic and foreign factors as well. And yet, at least partly, does the program's activities aimed at promoting civic participation at local and European level play a role? Table 16 below can be used for the answer.

Table 16. Feeling of being a citizen of the EU (2012-2020)

	Spring 2012	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Spring 2015	Spring 2016	Spring 2017	Spring 2018	Spring 2019	Summer 2020
EU	**61**	62	65	67	66	68	70	73	**70**
Estonia	**67**	70	76	79	76	75	78	79	**79**
Latvia	**54**	56	62	69	71	74	74	76	**76**
Lithuania	**60**	65	71	78	74	77	78	80	**81**
	EB 77 p. 22	EB 79 p. 23	EB 81 p. 7	EB 83 p. 17	EB 85 p. 38	EB 87 p. 38	EB 89 p. 36	EB 91 p. 36	EB 93 p. 14

Source: author's calculations based on EACEA data, 2021, p. 46

Eurobarometer data for the period 2012-2020 show that the sense of belonging to the European Union has gradually, but quite significantly, increased in all three Baltic states. In the summer of 2020, Lithuanian citizens' sense of belonging to the European Union has reached the highest level from the Baltic states (80%). Estonia (79%) and Latvia (76%) also have high rates. The sense of belonging to the European Union of the population by all three Baltic states is convincingly higher than the EU average (70% in the summer of 2020). By comparison, Eurobarometer data show the lowest sense of belonging in countries such as Italy (48%) and Bulgaria (52%) (EECEA, 2021, p. 46). In this context, the feeling of belonging to the European Union of the people of the Baltic states can be assessed as strongly positive.

Conclusions

The author has assumed that in the three Baltic states, which joined the European Union in 2004, initially the 'top-down' processes have dominated more than the 'bottom-up' movement. This is due to the EU's financial contribution and the initial little experience of being the member states in the European Union. However, 18 years after the accession of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to the European Union, it can be clearly concluded that the activities of the 'Europe for Citizens' program have been one of the instruments that have also contributed to the bottom-up impact.

Within the frameworks of the two actions ('European Remembrance Projects' and 'Civil Society Projects') in the 'Europe for Citizens' program for the two periods (2007-2013) and (2014-2020) both the financial support of the European Union to the most active groups of civil society (top-down) and a very high activity of civil society by project applications have been examined. Under approved projects,

various activities were developed, promoting public participation both at the local level and among the citizens of various European Union countries, thus starting to influence the processes at the EU level (bottom-up) as well.

Reports from the European Commission's Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency on the popularity of the 'Europe for Citizens' program focus on the success rate in terms of the number of project applications and the number of projects supported. However, it is very likely that member states' performance should also be an important indicator. That is, the correct criteria are whether and how many projects have been approved for each country. Because the number of applications is naturally less for smaller countries than for larger ones.

How to measure the results of the 'Europe for Citizens' program? The article used indicators such as the popularity of the program or the number of submitted project applications, the number of approved projects and the calculated success rate, as well as the thematic compliance of the supported projects with the objectives of the program. These criteria show that the Baltic states have made active use of the support offered to civil society activists by the 'Europe for Citizens' program. They, in turn, have fostered public participation and greater involvement in various activities, thus also influencing European Union policies from the bottom up. It is not insignificant that the projects of the Baltic states show not only themes typical of the entire European Union, but also issues specific to Eastern Europe, as well as relevant interpretations of the history of this region.

One of the general indicators is Europeans' sense of belonging to the European Union. The data show that the population of all three Baltic states has a high sense of belonging to the European Union, well above the EU average. Of course, the feeling of belonging to Europe can also be affected by other internal and external factors, by various economic and political crises. However, during the functioning of the 'Europe for Citizens' program, the feeling of belonging to Europe has gradually but steadily increased in the Baltic states. And this could be facilitated, at least in part, by the activities of the 'Europe for Citizens' program. Unfortunately, it is not possible to measure precisely how much. It is clear that there are other important factors that determine the increase of feeling of belonging to Europe as well. A broader analysis of these factors is the work of another, further research.

In conclusion, it is possible to conclude that the 'Europe for Citizens' program is quite effective and useful. The program has shown itself well on the example of the Baltic states in the period under review (2007-2020). The activities of the program have fostered greater involvement of civil society in various activities. And it is a good way to influence European processes from the bottom up, with greater involvement of European citizens.

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