

CASE STUDY 9:

VILNIUS STRATEGIC PLAN

CITY OF VILNIUS, LITHUANIA



**skills for
the future**
making better places in europe

VILNIUS CITY STRATEGIC PLAN – GENERIC SKILLS FOR THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF A SUCCESSFUL AND SUSTAINABLE EUROPEAN CITY

Location	Vilnius, capital of the Republic of Lithuania
Initiative and Approach	<p>The aim of the project was to formulate a long-term development strategy (Vilnius City Strategic Plan 2002–2011) for the city based on a common vision, local resources and an understanding of the city's new geopolitical situation.</p> <p>The formulation of the Strategic Plan demonstrated the need for the development of a diverse range of generic skills amongst a wide range of stakeholder groups to ensure the Plan's successful preparation and implementation for the development of the city.</p> <p>A new approach was adopted to the strategic planning process, which included strategic coordination; involvement of all stakeholders in all stages of the preparation process, and partnership working.</p>
Skills Outcomes	<p>The case study demonstrates the importance of developing new skills and knowledge to successful place-making – in particular communication skills, stakeholder management, partnership working and effective project management skills were key to the preparation of the Plan.</p> <p>The case study also demonstrates how the preparation and implementation of the Plan itself has resulted in the successful development of such generic skills amongst municipal staff.</p>
Problems Encountered	A low level of involvement from NGOs and informal stakeholder groups – largely due to the ongoing formation of the civil society ¹ , in addition to the territoriality of many local community groups. These groups were not identified for targeting during the preparation process due to their embryonic status at that time.
Lessons	<p>The development of comprehensive project objectives, including strategic visioning and prioritisation.</p> <p>High profile publicity.</p> <p>Targeted activities to deploy the skills and knowledge of stakeholders.</p> <p>Involvement of all stakeholders in all stages of the preparation process.</p> <p>Leveraging sufficient financial resources.</p> <p>An in-depth understanding of the external environment, including European urban planning practices – and the ability to adapt these to local context.</p> <p>The ability to secure political support and participation of sectoral leaders.</p> <p>The use of innovative and targeted communication and engagement mechanisms.</p> <p>The development of generic skills necessary to work with the public.</p> <p>Training initiatives to build community capacity to participate.</p>

¹That sphere of voluntary associations and informal networks in which individuals and groups engage in activities of public consequence.

1. Background and Context

This case study demonstrates how new skills and knowledge can make a difference to successful and sustainable place-making. The project illustrates how the development of specific generic skills across a diverse range of occupational groups has been crucial to the preparation and implementation of the Strategic Plan. Conversely, the project also shows how the processes involved in preparing the Plan have in turn generated some of these very skills.

Vilnius, the capital of the Republic of Lithuania, measures 401 sq km and is home to 553,600 people (16.3% of the Lithuanian population). It generates over 30% of national GDP. The territorial-administrative system in Lithuania operates at three levels: national, county and municipal. The country comprises of 10 counties, with 60 municipalities of which Vilnius is the largest. The supreme governing body at the city level is the elected municipal council.

In 1938 the Law of Land Management of Settled Places came into force in Lithuania. It functioned until the occupation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union in 1940. During the Soviet period there was no law on planning regulation, only norms and rules which did not have the power of law. Planning was centralised and local authorities were only responsible for an approval of the plans before final confirmation. This means that organisational structures for the development of strategic plans at the local level are still at an embryonic stage of development.

After Lithuania regained independence in 1990, spatial planning was regulated by three major laws, including the Law on Territorial Planning (1996) which stressed public participation in the

decision-making process. Municipalities were made responsible for the planning and development of their own territories, and for the preparation and implementation of detailed plans. Although the Master Plan of a city/region must be drawn up by law, other types of plans, including long-term strategic development plans for cities/regions, are not mandatory. Despite this, most municipalities do have long-term strategic development plans in place and the 'Methodology for Preparation and Renewal of Regional Development Plans' was prepared to guide this process. The most important urban problems identified in Lithuania are a run-down housing stock, low quality of public buildings and estates combined with high energy costs, poor road maintenance, traffic congestion within the city and notable crime.

The Vilnius City Strategic Plan (VCSP) was developed during 2001–2002. The aim was to formulate a long-term development strategy for Vilnius based on a common vision, local resources and understanding of the new geopolitical situation.

The main objectives for the Strategic Plan are as follows:

- Create Vilnius Vision 2020 and set the development priorities to 2011;
- Develop the action plan for 2002–2011, progress indicators and preliminary cost estimates for each action;
- Create a system for tracking quality of life indicators, plan the implementation process, and establish a monitoring framework; and
- Pursue an active public relations and communication campaign to evaluate feedback.

The box below provides an abbreviated text of the Vilnius Vision taken from the Plan.

Vilnius City Vision 2020²:

Vilnius – the capital of Lithuania, the most modern city in Central and Eastern Europe, an international centre of politics, business, science and culture.

The modernity of Vilnius manifests itself in a **NEW ECONOMY** developed by an **ADVANCED SOCIETY** that lives in a **DISTINCTIVE ENVIRONMENT**.

Vilnius city development priorities for 2002–2011:

- Increasing the international competitiveness of Vilnius;
- Developing a new economy;
- Creating an advanced society; and
- Developing of transportation infrastructure.

² Full text of the Vilnius Vision 2020 is provided in Annex 1

2. Key Issues

After regaining independence, a new socio-economic and political environment emerged in Lithuania, alongside the need for new planning methods, instruments and skills.

Although urban planning had successfully adapted to the new planning system, it was not sufficiently integrated with the country's social and economic structures. The ability to lever in resources and prioritise were limited and the growing economy was in need of more targeted investment planning.

Preparation of the Vilnius City Master Plan in 1992 was the city's first attempt to develop a strategic document which aimed at the development of urban areas and infrastructure consistent with the rapidly changing socio-economic environment. The Master Plan was developed in accordance with the principles of sustainable development and a wide variety of methods were deployed to ensure public involvement in the planning process. Vilnius Vision (to 2015) was also formulated during this planning process.

The Vilnius City Master Plan as a strategic document was considered to be crucial to the territorial and physical development of the capital. However, the process was lengthy due to the severe shortage of strategic planning knowledge and lack of generic skills (particularly in communication, project management and teamwork). This knowledge and skills gap later narrowed, with an influx of long-serving specialists attending training courses, workshops and conferences in Lithuania and abroad³, in addition to increasing participation in the planning process amongst the educated Lithuanian youth.

Nevertheless, within the context of Lithuania's preparation to join NATO and the EU, it became apparent that the Master Plan was no longer sufficient to support the city's role as one of Europe's capital cities.

Vilnius needed a new vision and a set of clear development priorities to further the city's competitiveness, whilst preserving its high quality of life and unique culture. In 2001–2002, the Vilnius City Municipality initiated the development of the long-term Vilnius City Strategic Plan. The key challenges to be addressed included:

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- Ensuring active public partnership in the development and implementation of the plan;
- Ensuring success under rapidly changing socio-economic and political conditions; and
- Preserving the uniqueness of the city's culture and character.

³ For example, taking part in the programme 'Municipal Government and Strategic Environment Planning' for Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn (1994-1999) organised by the Urban Development Institute of Canada

3. Project Approach

VCSP Stakeholders can be divided into two major categories:

Internal stakeholders⁴:

- Vilnius City Municipal Council and its committees;
- Strategic Planning Commission comprising representatives of fractions and committees of the Municipal Council, led by the Mayor;
- Task Force for Strategic Plan preparation comprised of Municipal Administration officials;
- Direct preparers of VCSP⁵;
- Municipal staff responsible for strategic planning in structural units of the Municipality;
- Chief Executives of Neighbourhoods of the Vilnius City Municipality.

External stakeholders⁶:

- City residents;
- Government officials, politicians and representatives of political parties⁷;
- Businessmen and foreign investors;
- Science and education institutions and research institutions;

Media:

- Other groups of external stakeholders.

Preparation for the VCSP process involved setting up a formal (internal) organisational structure comprising the units at the political and administrative level (see Chart 1 overleaf).

The Strategic Plan is administered by the Analysis and Strategic Planning Division set up in the Municipality. Decisions are made by the Strategic Planning Commission. The Task Force for Strategic Plan preparation primarily organises the Plan's preparation, coordinates and controls the work of direct Plan preparers and coordinates external stakeholders. The Chief Executives of Vilnius Neighbourhoods have prime responsibility for notifying neighbourhood residents of the Plan and its preparation, organising discussions of the draft, collecting proposals from residents and ensuring their views are heard by the plan preparers and relevant structural units of the Municipality.

⁴ Internal (primary) project stakeholders are those who have contact, legal as well as non-regulated project obligations (leading the project team, managing resources, controlling project activities, keeping in contact with all other stakeholders). One of the characteristics of this category of stakeholders is the fact that they are usually formalised in relation to the project.

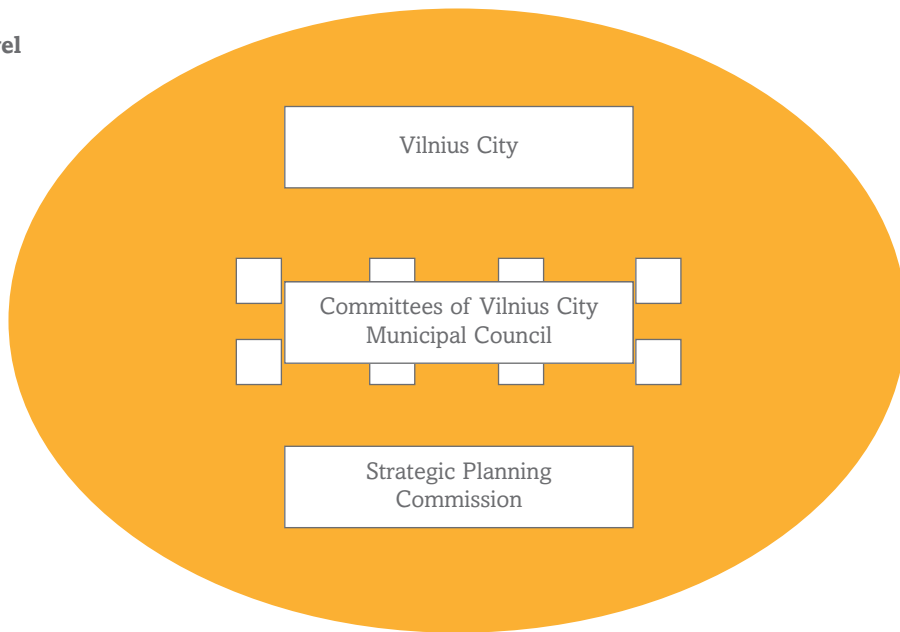
⁵ Direct preparers of VCSP were from 8 organisations: the municipal company Vilniaus planas, V__Ekonomini_tyrim_centras, UAB Urbanistika, UAB Baltijos konsultacin_grup_, UAB Vie__j_ry_i_partneriai, association the Knowledge Economy Forum, Monument Restoration Institute, Law Philosophy Department of the Lithuanian University of Law.

⁶ External (secondary) stakeholders are those which have no subordination or contact obligations and can act for or against the project. One of the distinctive features is that they are not formalised in relation to the project (have no formal structures).

⁷ Representatives of the Seimas, Government and their administrations, representatives of ministries and other public authorities; members of Lithuanian municipal councils, representatives of county and municipal administrations.

**Chart 1 –
Internal organisational
(management) structure
of Vilnius City Strategic
Plan preparation**

Political Level



**Administrative
Level**



Key characteristics of project approach

- Strategic coordination – during VCSP preparation, solutions were coordinated with key international (including EU), national and regional strategy documents. The process involved regular communication with key stakeholders.
- Horizontal and vertical integration – achieved through the targeted set up of the project team and planning the preparation process to enable a diverse range of stakeholders to input into all stages of the preparation process, with mechanisms in place to ensure that the loudest voice does not dominate the process.
- Community participation – a communications plan was devised identifying key stakeholder groups, methods and forms of communication with stakeholders. For example, during 2001–2002 the draft Plan was widely discussed with the community and raised great public interest; three surveys of Vilnius residents, guests and experts were carried out (over 1,400 people interviewed in total); a new virtual public space was created whereby community members sent their proposals regarding VCSP (more than 100 proposals were submitted by the city residents); and interactive online discussions were organised to debate the final VCSP draft (over 500 internet users participated). The use of such tools promoted engagement and stimulated extensive public debate.
- Interaction and cooperation between science, business and government – particular emphasis was placed on ensuring interaction between these groups during the development of the vision and priorities for Vilnius (and later during implementation).

Innovative aspects of the approach

The preparation of the Plan was the first time such forms of communication with stakeholders had been used. These methods proved highly effective and included regular media coverage, the creation of a virtual public space and films showcasing the city's development potential. However, perhaps most effective were the broadcasting of meetings from the Mayor's office and informal 'business over

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breakfast meetings' held with the Mayor, representatives of the Municipality and stakeholder groups. The latter has been identified as particularly effective in increasing stakeholders participation in VCSP preparation and in raising financial resources.

Development/acquisition of generic skills in relation to the project

The preparation and implementation of the VCSP has resulted in the successful development of a diverse range of generic skills by stakeholders groups – these are identified in Table 1 (below).

	Key generic skills	Categories (groups) of stakeholders developing or acquiring skills
1.	Inclusive visioning	Internal and external stakeholders
2.	Project management	Internal stakeholders
3.	Leadership	Internal and external stakeholders
4.	Brokerage	Internal stakeholders (especially, team members of the Strategic Planning Commission group for strategic plan preparation and direct preparers)
5.	Team/partnership working	Internal stakeholders and groups of certain external stakeholders (e.g. representatives of business groups)
6.	Financial management and appraisal	Mostly internal stakeholders
7.	Stakeholder management	Internal stakeholders
8.	Analysis, evaluation	Internal and certain external stakeholders (e.g. 'external' experts of certain areas, representatives of government structures, residents of Vilnius who took part in SP debates)
9.	Communication	Internal and external stakeholders

Of the skills identified in Table 1, the development of communication skills has been key. The preparation process resulted in municipal employees developing a range of tools for engaging the public in the process, as well as drawing in representatives from the business and scientific community, ensuring input from these groups in addition to involving the media, politicians and other professional groups. Communicating the vision, understanding how to manage information and building working relations with and between relevant stakeholder groups was crucial to this process, as was the creation of an environment where knowledge-sharing partnerships can develop and evolve. Moreover, the Strategic

Plan itself included a number of objectives and actions aimed at further developing and supporting partnership working and stakeholder engagement, ensuring staff have the necessary skills to support this – in addition to an emphasis on the development of effective project management skills.

4. Outcomes

The skills and knowledge deployed in the development of the VCSP by city politicians, administrative staff and neighbourhood representatives have had a positive impact not only on the Plan and its implementation, but also on a wider scale.

The generation of analysis and evaluation, project management and financial management skills were found to play a significant role in helping stakeholders to:

- Take into account national and EU policy developments in the strategic decision-making process;
- Ensure Vilnius has a full and successful integrated system of plans⁸, where VCSP solutions determine how the city's resources will be managed;
- Create, monitor and analyse a quality of life indicator system (also for the first time in Lithuania);
- Significantly improve the management of projects, including investment projects; and
- Initiate effective and targeted work with projects supported from EU funds.

The use and development of knowledge and skills around communication and partnership working has also had a significant impact on different areas of city life across many levels. These skills, coupled with the knowledge and skills developed through various activities such as inclusive visioning, stakeholder management and leadership, have had a significant impact on the following outputs:

At the international level

- The formulation of priorities and a clear vision for Vilnius that is both comprehensive and appropriate to the international community has effectively marketed the city to an international audience and resulted in the formation of international partnerships⁹.

At the national level

- The development of generic skills has played a vital role in initiating the development of new partnerships between the Vilnius City Municipality and a wide variety of national institutions and organisations operating at the city level, including the development of:
 - A partnership agreement on sustainable development and the improvement of environmental and cultural protection with the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of the Environment;
 - A partnership agreement on the evaluation of urban development quality with the Lithuanian Association of Architects;
 - A partnership agreement on the development of the knowledge economy in Vilnius with the Knowledge Economy Forum, Vilnius University and Vilnius Gediminas Technical University.
- Partnership relations have also developed between Vilnius and other cities in Lithuania. For instance, VCSP preparation involved the development of a network of metropolitan cities¹⁰ – this involved the development of the Vilnius-Kaunas duopoly¹¹, working to improve the

international competitiveness of two of the largest Lithuanian cities. In 2005–2006, the Vilnius-Kaunas duopoly was hailed as the Eastern and Central European Region of the Future. Other partnerships ensued, such as the formation of Vilnius-Klaipėda development partnership (a Lithuanian port city, Klaipėda). Furthermore, in line with the ethos of partnership and cooperation, Vilnius City Municipality has begun to share its strategic planning experiences with other municipalities throughout the country, through workshops and training programmes.

⁸ An integrated system of plans has been created and used in two municipalities in Lithuania, i.e. Vilnius City Municipality and Kaunas City Municipality.

⁹ Two examples include: the number of international conferences, top-level political meetings and other large international events held in Vilnius has increased; and efficient VCSP preparation processes and subsequent decisions played an important role in ensuring that Vilnius will become (in 2009) the cultural capital of Europe.

¹⁰ This was one of the principles of the Master Plan of the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania – a spatial development strategic document of national importance (approved by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Resolution No. IX-1154 of 29 October 2002).

¹¹ The distance between Vilnius and Kaunas (second largest Lithuanian city) is just 100 km.

At the city community/municipal level

- The use of innovative forms of communication has improved awareness and understanding of the issues at stake between the Vilnius City Municipality and other groups of stakeholders. As a result, the number of stakeholders participating has increased substantially.
- In order to further capacity, the Municipality has also been active in identifying and addressing the skill needs of stakeholder groups.
- The public-private partnership formula has been used increasingly widely in municipal projects.
- The Municipality has implemented an e-city concept primarily aimed at the provision of municipal e-services to the city residents. As a result, Vilnius was awarded the Governance and Administration award in the Baltic Challenge 2006 for implementing over 200 standardised municipal services, all using a single-counter principle¹².

5. Good Practice Lessons

One of the less successful aspects of VCSP preparation was the low level of involvement from local NGOs and informal community groups. This is largely due to the ongoing formation of the civil society (that is, the embryonic formation of voluntary associations and informal networks in which individuals and groups engage in activities of public consequence), in addition to the territoriality of many local community groups. These groups were not identified for targeting at the outset due to their embryonic status at that time. Targeted engagement mechanisms were not deployed and generic communication tools proved less effective with these groups.

Despite this, on balance the VCSP has been a success. The aforementioned Vilnius e-Municipality has been hailed as '...a fine example of a model that can be replicated both within and outside Lithuania'¹³ and the World Bank's (2003) report on the competitiveness of the Lithuanian economy¹⁴ cited Vilnius as a strategic example for other Lithuanian cities to follow¹⁵.

The key principles for successful and sustainable place-making that have emerged from this project have been identified as:

- The importance of developing comprehensive objectives, including strategic long-term visioning and prioritisation of plan objectives;
- High profile publicity, including the use of diverse and flexible forms of communication to raise project awareness and ensure stakeholder input;
- Targeted activities to deploy the skills and knowledge of stakeholders, including utilising the skills of qualified experts;
- Partnership working with educational institutions to build community capacity to participate;
- Effective leadership skills, planning for financial and human resources and strong project management skills;
- An in-depth understanding of the external environment, including European urban planning practices, and adapting these to the local socio-economic and political context;

- The need to secure political support and participation of sectoral leaders;
- The identification of key stakeholders and use of innovative involvement mechanisms, ensuring individual stakeholders do not dominate the decision-making process;
- The need to reach out to the community/informal groups and ensure that all stakeholders are involved;
- The provision of public information in a clear and easily understandable form (avoiding the use of bureaucratic jargon), including the use of visual materials (presentations, videos, illustrated publications) to explain the expected outcomes clearly to the public;
- The municipal administration, politicians and planners must possess generic skills if they are to work successfully with the community (to moderate meetings, solve disputes and seek consensus).

Two overall skill implications have emerged from this project:

- The need for municipal staff to possess the core generic skills if they are to make a difference to successful place-making. This can be achieved through learning by doing – the very preparation and implementation of the Plan resulted in the development of many of these skills.
- The need to specifically target local NGOs and informal community groups from the outset and devise tailored communication/involvement mechanisms to ensure their participation.

¹² See <http://www.balticchallenge.net/feature.asp?IdNr=10> – accessed 21.09.06

¹³ <http://www.balticchallenge.net/feature.asp?IdNr=10> – accessed 21.09.06

¹⁴ The World Bank, Lithuania Aiming for a Knowledge Economy. Washington, March 2003.

¹⁵ In particular, the report highlighted the comprehensive vision for the development of the Vilnius knowledge economy as one of the key strategies for enhancing city competitiveness

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