

SIGNALLING TRUST: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF LITHUANIA'S STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS

Eglė Stonkė

Klaipėda University

H. Manto str. 84, LT-92231 Klaipėda, Lithuania

<https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.ppa.25.1.41878>

Abstract. *The article examines how trust is reflected in Lithuania's national strategic documents. Adapting a signalling theory approach, the documents were analysed as instruments for expressing institutional intentions and governance value commitments. While most research on public-sector trust focuses on citizens' perceptions, this study shifts the perspective toward the signals governments themselves transmit. A qualitative content analysis identified 37 trust-related signals, grouped under the dimensions of competence, benevolence, and integrity. The documents show a clear aspiration to strengthen trust-based governance through commitments to collaboration, professional capacity, and value-driven decision-making. At the same time, signals related to control, centralisation, and monitoring introduce a different perspective, creating a mixed signalling environment. This coexistence suggests that trust-oriented rhetoric is moderated by established administrative practices. The findings highlight the need to examine how such signals are interpreted and implemented in practice, and how they shape broader trust dynamics in governance.*

Keywords: *trust-based governance, trustworthiness, signalling theory, strategic documents, Lithuania.*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *pasitikėjimu grindžiamas valdymas, patikimumas, signalų teorija, strateginiai dokumentai, Lietuva.*

Introduction

Public governance today operates under a combination of complex and overlapping pressures. Geopolitical tensions, social fragmentation, and rapid policy changes that exceed the capacity of traditional hierarchical steering (Dunleavy et al., 2006; Sørensen, Torfing, 2018). Under such conditions, control and efficiency-oriented governance models, long associated with New Public Management, struggle to ensure responsiveness, coordination, and legitimacy (Funck, Karlsson, 2020). These conditions highlight the need for approaches able to link different sectors, draw on varied competencies, and support joint action in areas where one institution is no longer sufficient (Kinder et al., 2020; Liu, 2022).

Recent scholarship increasingly notes that relationship-based governance depends on trust as a central enabling mechanism. Studies show that trust helps reduce administrative barriers, supports collaboration, and strengthens the legitimacy of public decisions (Hult, 2018, Schillemans, Bjurstrøm, 2020). Nordic countries have become leading examples of such trust-based governance, where administrations rely more on autonomy, dialogue, and professional judgement, and less on detailed control (Andreasson, 2017, Bentzen, 2022, Svare et al., 2023). Importantly, research also demonstrates that trust does not eliminate control. Instead, trust and control work together: trust helps make regulatory tools more meaningful and easier to accept within collaborative relationships (Bentzen, 2021; Siverbo et al., 2024).

Although trust is widely discussed, it often remains abstract and difficult to implement in practice. This is why some authors describe it as a “magic concept” – attractive and widely supported, but hard

to translate into concrete actions (Pollitt, Hupe, 2011; Bentzen et al., 2024). Research on trust in public governance mainly examines citizens' trust in institutions, public service quality, or corruption levels (Perez-Chiques, Meza, 2021; Robinson et al., 2021; Liu, Duarte, 2023, Potipiroon, 2024). Lithuanian studies follow a similar pattern, focusing on societal trust trends and the reasons for low confidence in public institutions (Gudžinskas, Bakutis, 2017, Čepeliauskaitė, Petrauskienė, 2017).

Yet one important gap persists: we still know relatively little about how governments themselves attempt to create trust. Little is known about how the state transmit its intentions, values, or capabilities to the public, or how these signals influence citizens' willingness to trust. Six (2007) argued that trust-building in governance often develops through continuous signals that actors send and interpret, suggesting that signalling processes play an important role in shaping trust relationships (Zavattaro et al., 2024). This idea has rarely been developed in empirical studies, and signalling theory has not been applied to examining how governments communicate trustworthiness through their strategic documents.

To address this gap, this study uses signalling theory to examine how the state presents itself and sends trust-related intentions in its strategic governance documents. Signalling theory explains how different actors use signals to reduce uncertainty and decide whether the other side is trustworthy (Spence, 1973). Seeing national strategic documents as signalling instruments offers a useful way to understand how governments present – or attempt to present – trustworthiness.

The study analyses key documents from Lithuania's strategic management system using qualitative content analysis. Trust-building signals are interpreted through three well-established dimensions of trustworthiness: competence, benevolence, and integrity (Mayer et al., 1995, Liu, 2022, Bentzen, 2022). This method allows linking theoretical trust-based governance concept with the actual language used in state strategies, supported by applying content analysis that first identifies signals inductively and then refines them deductively (Mayring, 2000).

The results show that Lithuania's strategic documents express a clear ambition to strengthen trust in public governance, emphasising collaboration, professionalism, and a shift toward more value-driven administration. Yet these trust-oriented messages coexist with signals linked to control, centralisation, and risk management. This creates a rather ambivalent signalling environment: on the one hand, it promotes trust-building ambitions; on the other, it reinforces structures that tend to limit them. Such tension raises important questions about how trust-based governance can be realised in practice.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Trust, distrust and control

Although the academic literature does not offer a single agreed definition of trust, most scholars link it to vulnerability and risk-taking, grounded in positive expectations about another party's behaviour or intentions (Verhoest et al., 2024). Governance research most often relies on the conceptualisation developed by Meyer et al. (1995), which frames trust as a deliberate decision based on logic, experience, and its reflection (Messick, Kramer, 2001; Möllering, 2006). In this view, trust is relational: it does not stand alone but develops within interactions between actors. Building on the logic of trust as a decision, Dietz and Den Hartog (2006) define trust as an assessment of another party's trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is described as an internal judgement about whether another actor (individual or organisation) can reasonably be trusted (Hasche et al., 2021). Trustworthiness is commonly analysed through three elements – competence, benevolence, and integrity (Gill et al., 2005, Liu, 2022, Bentzen, 2022). At the institutional level, competence is understood as the ability to operate effectively and professionally and to ensure the implementation of agreed rules (Hult, 2018; Svare et al. 2019). In governance, competence also reflects the capacity to provide public goods and generate collective welfare (Liu 2022). Benevolence directs orientation toward societal wellbeing and the avoidance of opportunism (Popelier et al. 2021). In public management, it is expressed through actions reflecting public interest and societal expectations, as well as

cooperative relations between structures and organizations (Bentzen, 2019; Vento, 2023). Integrity refers to consistent and values-based action, and alignment between words and deeds (Klimchak et al., 2020; Hasche et al. 2021). Decisions and actions grounded in integrity reflect ethical principles, fairness, transparency, equality, and orientation toward public good (Popelier et al. 2021). Perceived integrity is a critical foundation of trust: citizens are more likely to accept even unfavourable decisions, and more inclined to cooperate and follow rules, when processes appear fair and consistent (OECD, 2024).

Two analytical approaches to trust and distrust dominate the literature. The first (and most prevalent) treats them as opposing poles, where distrust inhibits trust (Latusek et al., 2020; Verhoest et al., 2024). The second, analyses trust and distrust as interrelated elements that coexist within relationships and depend on context (Bentzen, 2022). Authors note that effective relationships depend on a workable balance between trust and distrust, enabling both aspects to function productively (Oomsels et al., 2019). Importantly, this optimal balance is not a symmetrical midpoint. It is rather a context-specific ratio that maintains the functionality of both: sufficient trust to enable cooperation and new initiatives, and a necessary degree of distrust to preserve “healthy scepticism” and ensure accountability (Oomsels et al., 2019).

Literature identifies control as one of the key mechanisms to manage and reduce existing distrust in governance. Control is also described as an institutional response to emerging risks and uncertainty about potentially negative intentions or opportunism (Weibel et al., 2016). Control may take different forms. In some cases, it compensates for existing distrust (Bentzen, 2021), while in others it reinforces trust by supporting consistency and shared standards (Siverbo et al. 2024). In the latter case, control does not stem from suspicion but rather contributes to trust-building. It supports behavioural consistency, goal stability, adherence to shared norms, and ensures that actors operate under common standards (Schillemans, Bjurström, 2020; Verhoest et al., 2024).

In public governance, trust and distrust operate within a multilevel governance structure. Institutional actions at one level shape trust assessments at others and reinforcing-compensating dynamics emerge across levels (Perrier et al., 2024). These dynamics suggest that trust should be seen less as an individual attitude and more as an institutional and systemic process, where predictability, procedural fairness, and the capacity to act in the public interest play a central role (Oomsels, Bouckaert, 2014). Within this system of interdependencies, institutions continuously send signals of trustworthiness or control to each other and to society. As a result, the logic of trust and distrust naturally shifts toward the interpretation of signals, forming the basis for applying signalling theory to governance analysis.

2.2. Signalling theory

Signalling theory offers a way to examine how actors communicate behaviour, information, values, and intentions. Although the theory is most often applied to interpersonal relations (Fatima et al., 2021), scholars have begun employing ST to analyse inter-organizational collaboration (Six, 2007; Fawcett et al., 2017) and communication through organizational documents (Ching, Gerab, 2017).

Signalling theory focuses on information asymmetry within relationships. It emerges when one party (managers, institutions) holds more information and by this creates unfavourable conditions for the less-informed party to adequately evaluate the situation or make decisions (Connelly et al., 2011). In the public sector, the state and its institutions typically hold superior information regarding future and decision-making, generating uncertainty and tension for citizens and stakeholders and shaping the conditions for (dis)trust formation (Raaphorst, Van de Walle, 2018).

Signals are observable signs (behaviour, communication, documents, structures) aimed at reducing ambiguity and providing information on the sender’s trustworthiness, competence, and value orientation (Fatima et al., 2021). Signals may be direct or indirect, and their interpretation often depends on how recipients view both the sender and the signal itself (Connelly et al., 2011). Interpretation is shaped by the receiver’s existing “frames”, functioning as cognitive filters for assessing information and shared purpose (Six, 2007). The normative frame (values, transparency, loyalty, competence, responsibility, and

commitments) reduces opportunism and encourages cooperation and behaviour based on moral and social norms. Signals emphasizing control, evaluation, strict procedures, and ongoing monitoring reflect the gain frame, oriented toward self-protection and behavioural regulation. Finally, the hedonic frame prioritizes rapid comfort and short-term outlooks (Lindenberg, 1997). The normative frame facilitates trust-building, while gain and hedonic frames foster distrust. Signalling theory thus shows that trust does not emerge simply from the absence of distrust; it requires continuous normative signalling that aligns the sender's and receiver's interests and supports a long-term relationship (Six, 2007).

Signals sent by the public sector (political commitments, performance indicators, procedural rules, transparency practices, the tone and structure of documents) communicate the trustworthiness of institutions and the potential for trust. For this reason, strategic and legal documents are suitable instruments for assessing state-generated (dis)trust signals. They define the state's vision, value orientation, and operating logic, and shape the relationship between the state and society (Fatima et al., 2021; Giraudeau, 2008). The provisions embedded in documents function as indicators revealing whether the state's governance orientation is driven by trust or by control, and they constitute the "frames" within which public sector actors and society operate (Lindenberg, 2003; Zavattaro et al., 2024). Clear and values-based commitments usually signal trustworthiness, while more detailed or sanction-oriented mechanisms tend to reflect a logic of distrust (Six, 2007; Hult, 2018).

Empirical research shows that the term "trust" is rarely used explicitly in documents. More often, trust signals are communicated indirectly – through accountability, transparency, engagement, cooperation, or "walk the talk" consistency. Integration of these principles serves as a core indicator of institutional efforts to create a trustworthy administrative environment (Zavattaro et al., 2024; Rochel 2023). Strategic documents are therefore an appropriate instrument for assessing state-generated (dis)trust signals (OECD, 2024). Their language, declared principles, and embedded norms serve as indicators of how the state perceives its role, what expectations it sets for institutions, and what type of relationship it seeks with society. Strategic document analysis enables the identification of the architecture of trust and control signals and the systemic assumptions underpinning public sector action (Hunt, 2003, Gunningham, Sinclair, 2009).

This theoretical approach provides the foundations for developing a signalling theory-based methodology and applying it to identify and interpret (dis)trust signals embedded in Lithuania's planning documents. Using this approach, state strategic management documents are examined not only as formal texts but also as structured communicative acts that reveal core assumptions, normative orientations, and governance expectations (Zavattaro et al., 2024). Lithuania offers a relevant case for signalling-based trust analysis because its public administration has long been rooted in control, legalism, and centralized bureaucracy (Pivoras, 2013; Nakrošis, 2018). Such system consistently generates signals emphasising procedures and control rather than cooperation or citizen engagement. The literature confirms that public institutions operate in fragmented ways, decisions are made within isolated structures, and mechanisms for collaboration and participation function weakly (Šiugždinienė et al. 2019; Juknevičienė 2023). This environment is reflected in low levels of public trust in government. According to Eurobarometer (2024) data, 71% of citizens did not trust the National Parliament and 60% did not trust the Government. Indicators confirm a longstanding deficit of trust-related institutional signals. A turning point in the Lithuanian case was the approval of the State Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2050" (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2023), which established trust as a strategic ambition for national development and governance transformation. The document signals an effort to shift from control toward empowerment, inclusive decision-making, and co-creation, thereby challenging a deeply embedded administrative culture. This enables the analytical perspective of the article – the potential transformation of strategic documents into instruments capable of shaping a new architecture of institutional signals.

Methodology

The research focuses on the trust and distrust signals that the state conveys through its strategic plan-

ning documents. The study draws on signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2011; Lindenberg, 1997), which argues that institutions influence how recipients perceive their competences, values, and intentions through rhetoric, priorities, and decisions. In this context, strategic documents are analysed as sources of social and institutional logic signals communicated by the state.

A qualitative content analysis was used and carried out in two coding cycles (Hsieh, Shannon, 2005). The first reading followed an inductive logic, identifying meaningful segments and preliminary signals. In the second cycle, the initial codes were revisited, merged, and refined deductively, during which the initial codes were revisited, merged, renamed, and organised according to established dimensions of trustworthiness (competence, benevolence, integrity). Each coded segment was additionally assigned a signal direction (positive, negative, or neutral). Coding was carried out in MAXQDA Analytics (version 24.11.0), segmenting the text into meaningful units that reflected institutional intentions, value orientations, or procedural logic. The coded material was then examined to identify dominant themes, the underlying narrative logics, and how different signals pointed either toward trust or toward control.

The documents included in the analysis come from different levels of the national strategic management system:

1. State strategy level: the State Progress Strategy Lithuania 2050 (hereafter LT2050, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2023);
2. Strategic level: the National Progress Plan 2021–2030 (hereafter NPP, Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2020);
3. Programming level: the Ministry of the Interior’s Public Governance Development Programme 2022–2030 (hereafter Governance Programme, Ministry of the Interior, 2022);
4. Operational level – the Ministry of the Interior’s Strategic Activity Plan 2025–2027 (hereafter MOI SAP, (Ministry of the Interior, 2025).

The language of strategic management documents is not strictly legalistic; rather, it reflects a formal bureaucratic and strategic-planning discourse, which makes them suitable for analysing institutional signals. Their selection was guided by their function in articulating the state’s strategic vision, institutional values, and intended logic of action.

The study has certain limitations, mainly because strategic documents describe intended rather than implemented action and exhibit the level of abstraction characteristic of strategic language. Nevertheless, this methodological approach enables a systematic identification of the trust signals communicated by the state and reveals the underlying institutional narrative across the strategic planning hierarchy.

Analysis

The analysis looks at Lithuania’s strategic planning documents to identify the trust and distrust signals the state conveys through its official strategic communication. The documents were analysed by identifying text elements (word combinations, phrases, sentences or groups of sentences) that signal the creation or strengthening of trust or distrust in public governance.

The coding scheme includes 37 trust and distrust codes (signals), which were grouped into three categories – competence, benevolence, and integrity (*a full code list is provided in Annex 1*). These categories are derived from recognised antecedents of trustworthiness in the trust literature and represent key dimensions in the formation of trust. In total, 1,496 elements reflecting trust and distrust aspects were identified. A broad analytical approach was used, and it was not limited to cases where trust or distrust was mentioned explicitly (n=58). Most identified expressions were indirect (n=1438).

The ‘Competence’ category forms the largest share of the identified codes (n=775, 52%) and covers technical, analytical, and strategic capabilities such as *efficiency, evidence-based governance, multi-level governance, risk prevention, governance improvement, leadership*, and other elements of professionalism. The category of ‘Benevolence’ (n=440, 30%) reflects the state’s intention to act for the benefit of society – to

cooperate, build partnerships and engagement, maintain dialogue, and strengthen community-based and social values. The category of 'Integrity' (n=281, 18%) encompasses responsibility, consistency, transparency, control, and mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation, procedural fairness.

The codes, along with the differences between individual documents, point to distinct dominant governance logics. LT2050 stands out due to its 'Benevolence' (n=225) and 'Competence' (n=223) codes (values, cooperation, partnership, trust), reflecting the purpose of a visionary document – to set a normative direction, foster a sense of collective purpose, and articulate the value framework for state action. The NPP is dominated by 'Competence' (n=245), emphasising a practical orientation towards diagnosing existing problems and planning implementation processes. Frequent codes such as challenges, efficiency and competences and skills reaffirm a functional–technocratic governance logic.

The Government Programme is marked by a distinctly lower number of identified codes (n=91) and a narrower range of them. This reflects the document's operational and bureaucratic nature of the document – it is oriented towards detailing NPP objectives, programming measures, and implementing performance indicators. Due to this structure, the document constructs management procedures rather than relational or value-based narratives.

The MOI SAP codes related to control, digitalisation, risk prevention and efficiency dominate, reflecting the operational nature of the document and the specific functions of the Ministry. The categories of 'Competence' (n=254) and 'Integrity' (n=128) are particularly prominent, indicating a strong orientation towards process efficiency, transparency, accountability, and institutional order.

Table No. 1. Most Frequently Occurring Codes Across the Documents

	LT2050	NPP	Governance Programme	VRM SVP
Most frequently identified codes	Values (n=50)	Challenges (n=50)	Consistency (n=13)	Efficiency (n=43)
	Cooperation (n=37)	Efficiency (n=31)	Multi-level governance (n=9)	Competencies and skills (n=40)
	Trust (n=35)	Partnership (n=22)	Challenges (n=9)	Risk prevention (n=40)
	Partnership (n=30)	Cooperation (n=19)	Efficiency (n=8)	Control (n=36)
	Competencies and skills (n=26)	Competencies and skills (n=18)	Engagement (n=8)	Governance Digitalization (n=33)

Source: Author

When examining how the codes relate to one another across documents, it becomes clear that the categories function as an interconnected network of governance elements. The co-occurrence analysis highlights how different components of trust interact across the texts. The most frequent code pairs (multi-level governance & governance improvement (n=9), multi-level governance & efficiency (n=9), efficiency & competences and skills (n=9)) indicate that governance is conceptualised as a coherent system of collaboration, professionalism, and institutional capacity, linking multiple governance levels and sectors. Efficiency, grounded in human capabilities, reflects a results-oriented logic built on innovation and capacity strengthening rather than strict oversight. Co-occurrences of control & multi-level governance (n=8) signal an aspiration to disperse centralised management through a multi-level system, strengthening distributed responsibility. The pairing of evidence-based governance & evaluation and monitoring (n=8) indicates a move towards data-driven governance, where evaluation plays a dual role – informing decision-making while also reinforcing oversight and control.

The explicit use of the trust code (n=58) shows that trust functions as a multi-layered and governance-relevant concept, operating at both interpersonal and institutional levels. Its identified expressions encompass interpersonal trust, trust in institutions, democratic procedures, and the state. Trust is framed both as a component of social capital ('[...] progress objectives will contribute to building an open, free, and self-confident society [...]', NPP, Annex 5, p. 14) and as a precondition for governance quality ('Voter turnout and trust [...] constitute key characteristics of a democratic state', NPP, Annex 5, p. 10) and resilience ('[...] Trust in oneself, in one another, and in state institutions becomes one of our essential existential aspirations', LT2050, p. 21). The institutional and governance dimension is especially visible in strategy documents, where trust acquires a normative and value-based character ('Citizens and public authorities are linked by a relationship of mutual trust and openness', LT2050, p. 23).

There are clear differences in how trust is expressed across the documents. LT2050 frames trust as a normative foundation for the functioning of the state and democracy ('Citizen-created democracy: reliable, open, inclusive', LT2050, p.21), acting as a condition for systemic transformation and a component of the social contract. In the NPP, trust acquires a functional meaning and is understood as an indicator of social capital ('Attention should also be paid to people's trust in one another. [...] only a small share of the population trusts others', NPP, Annex 5, p. 6), shaping social well-being, civic responsibility, and public sector effectiveness. In contrast, the Government Programme and MOI SAP reduce trust to an indicator ('Share of residents who trust institutions', MOI SAP, p. 68), with limited conceptual elaboration. In these documents, trust is applied mainly as a measure of institutional reputation and administrative performance. These differences suggest a tension between the strategic vision and the realities of operational governance. High-level documents construct trust as a holistic direction for public governance, whereas operational documents fragment it and do not integrate it consistently into everyday governance practices. Nonetheless, a common narrative runs across all documents – trust is understood both as a condition for modern governance and as an outcome of it.

A closer look at the codes for *control*, *centralisation*, and *evaluation and monitoring* proved especially informative, as the academic literature often treats them as the opposite to trust – mechanisms defining hierarchical, rule-based, and oversight-driven governance (Latusek et al., 2020). In the analysed documents, these codes are the only ones directly signalling regulatory or distrust-oriented logic. This represents an attempt to assess how governance architecture aligns with trust-building ambitions and what signals the documents send about prevailing governance orientations.

Across the documents, these codes appear consistently and are closely interlinked. LT2050 presents *evaluation and monitoring* as tools for *responsibility*, *transparency*, and *adaptability*, while also acknowledging their potential to strengthen *control* ('The deployment of advanced technologies in governance systems may reinforce inclusive democracy and transparency, [...] but they may also be used for increased societal control and surveillance', LT2050, p. 9). In the NPP, *evaluation and monitoring* and *control* are oriented towards efficiency, risk management, and performance, while *centralisation* is justified by crisis management, competence disparities, and financial stability ('To mitigate the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis, it was necessary to mobilise state resources', NPP, Annex 5, p. 5). In the MOI SAP and the Government Programme, these codes become administrative functions – monitoring, checking, regulating, and consolidating decisions – with decentralisation largely remaining rhetorical.

Looking at how these codes relate to *trust* shows a more ambiguous connection. Strategic documents frame *trust* as a value-based direction for state development, yet at the implementation level the structures of *evaluation and monitoring*, *control*, and *centralisation* dominate. This does not indicate opposition but rather co-existence: trust operates as a normative aspiration, while control and monitoring function as practical instruments for ensuring predictability, reliability, and risk management. In programmatic documents, these functions are further strengthened: *control* becomes a guarantee of external *trust*, *evaluation and monitoring* establishes the basis for *efficiency* and *consistency*, and *centralisation* serves as a coordination mechanism.

Taken together, the documents outline a dual, hybrid governance paradigm. On the one hand, the state

identifies the importance and necessity of trust; on the other, real governance effectiveness is associated with discipline, coordination, and risk management. This points to a broader assumption—also reflected in empirical trust data—that commitments to inclusiveness and decentralisation remain largely declarative, while actual governance is grounded in centralised authority and monitoring instruments.

Results

The analysis showed a consistent intention to move away from the control- and efficiency-oriented logic of New Public Management and toward a more trust-based approach that emphasises inclusion, value-driven dialogue, and cooperation. Across all documents, trust is presented broadly, covering institutional reliability, elements of social solidarity, and aspects of democratic system stability. In these documents, trust appears at several levels: as a normative principle, a strategic state objective, and also as an instrument for reinforcing system resilience, citizen engagement, and governance quality. This trust-oriented discourse is particularly pronounced in a context where public confidence in institutions has historically remained low.

Using signalling theory, the documents were examined as state-issued trust signals that point to the declared logic of institutional action, the prevailing normative frame, and the intended trajectory toward a trust-based governance model. A total of 1,496 segments were assigned to 37 signal codes and grouped into three trustworthiness dimensions: competence, benevolence, and integrity. The results demonstrate a clear imbalance among these categories: competence accounted for 52% of all signals (775 segments), benevolence for 30% (440 segments), and integrity for 18% (281 segments). This distribution shows a continued emphasis on professionalism, evidence-informed decision-making, elements of risk management, and various efficiency-related practices as the primary mechanisms through which trust is constructed.

Competence as a central part of the trust architecture

Competence-related codes reflected commitments to efficiency, strategic capacity, risk prevention, leadership, process improvement, and evidence-based governance. These signals convey the state's aspiration to build a professional public sector capable of managing complexity and uncertainty. In this framing, trust is constructed primarily through institutions' ability to operate professionally, consistently, and rationally. Such a logic continues the long-standing administrative tradition in which legitimacy is closely linked to performance and effectiveness.

Benevolence and the shift toward value-driven governance

The benevolence dimension, most prominent in vision-level documents, signals the state's aim to foster a partnership-based, dialogic relationship with society. This category foregrounds community solidarity, democratic participation, partnership, and inclusion. Particularly strong trust-enhancing signals appear in the LT2050 vision, where trust is articulated as a moral foundation of the relationship between the state and society. This dimension reinforces the communicative message that the state seeks not only to act efficiently but also to align governance with shared values and the broader public good.

The more limited articulation of integrity

Integrity-related codes (monitoring, evaluation, procedural consistency, risk governance) were concentrated in operational-level documents. While these elements signal transparency and accountability, their comparatively low intensity reveals an important gap. Institutional durability, rule adherence, and procedural stability are essential sources of trust, yet they are not prominently communicated as strategic commitments. This suggests that the procedural foundations of trust are less strongly articulated than the aspirations related to competence or value-driven collaboration.

Differences across documents

The analysis also identified marked differences between documents depending on their purpose and target audience. The LT2050 vision emphasises value-based and benevolence-related signals aimed at strengthening public trust. The NPP translates these normative aspirations into strategic priorities, focusing on capacity building, efficiency, and quality of governance. Operational documents (Governance Programme and the SAP MOI) are primarily directed at internal governance actors. Consequently, they contain a higher concentration of integrity-related, control-oriented, and procedural accountability signals. Their orientation focuses less on cultivating public trust and more on maintaining administrative functioning and operational standards.

Signal direction and ambivalence

Although trust-enhancing signals dominate, the overall signalling environment still appears somewhat ambivalent. Problem and risk-oriented codes (challenges, threats) reinforce perceptions of fragility, while neutral or ambiguous signals (control, centralisation, multilevel governance) underline the continued reliance on centralised oversight. This tension is further illustrated by the pairing codes of evidence-based governance with evaluation and monitoring, where tools intended to support improvement function as mechanisms of hierarchical control. Taken together, these patterns point to a hybrid governance model in which aspirations for trust, engagement, and decentralisation coexist with signals emphasising discipline, coordination, and risk management. This corresponds with the growing scholarly view that trust and control can coexist and may even reinforce one another within governance arrangements (Oomsels et al., 2019, Bentzen, 2022;).

However, empirical trust data indicate that commitments to engagement and cooperations remain largely declaratory, while core governance practices continue to reproduce centralised control structures. This dynamic aligns with research showing that strategic documents frequently function as rhetorical instruments that signal desirable values but are not consistently translated into administrative practice (Gunningham, Sinclair, 2009; Zavattaro et al., 2024). This contributes to a persistent gap between the strong emphasis on trust in official documents and citizens' lived experience as a the primary foundation upon which institutional trust is formed.

Conclusion and Discussion

Contemporary governance relies increasingly on collaboration, shared responsibility and various forms of cross-institutional coordination. In such settings, trust often becomes central to how public governance functions. The scientific literature shows that trust-based governance emerges when institutions demonstrate competence, benevolence, and integrity. These dimensions play a major role in how actors judge trustworthiness. The study shifts the usual focus on citizens' trust in government by looking instead at how the state attempts to signal trustworthiness through its strategic documents. Using signalling theory, the research analysed national documents as communicative instruments that transfer institutional intentions, values, and governance logic. The results indicate that Lithuania's strategic documents mostly send positive trust signals, especially those related to competence and benevolence. These signals demonstrate a shift from control-oriented administrative traditions toward more participatory and value-driven governance.

However, the documents also include another layer of signals focused on control, centralisation and monitoring. These elements do not undermine the idea of trust, but they do create a more ambivalent signalling environment, where normative commitments coexist with mechanisms aimed at ensuring predictability, discipline and risk management. This pattern is consistent with the literature on the coexistence of trust and control. It also points to a structural challenge: trust-oriented ambitions appear much stronger in vision-level documents than in day-to-day operational practice.

This divergence may partly explain why public trust in institutions remains low, even though strategic

documents place strong rhetorical emphasis on trust. Strategic texts signal intentions, but they reach only a limited audience and, on their own, cannot reshape how people experience governance in practice. Future research should therefore examine: 1) how these signals are interpreted by civil servants and citizens; 2) how declared commitments translate into administrative practice.

Taken together, the findings suggest that strategic documents operate as important trust signals from the state, yet they convey a hybrid message: trust appears mainly as a normative aspiration, while control remains embedded in everyday operating logic.

Data Availability Statement

The data used to support the findings of this research are available from the corresponding authors upon request.

References

1. Andreasson, U. 2017. "Trust - the Nordic Gold." Nordic Council of Ministers. <https://www.norden.org/en/publication/trust-nordic-gold> <https://doi.org/10.6027/ANP2017-737>
2. Bentzen, T. Ø. 2019. "The Birdcage Is Open, but Will the Bird Fly? How Interactional and Institutional Trust Interplay in Public Organisations." *Journal of Trust Research* 9 (2): 185-202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21515581.2019.1633337>
3. Bentzen, T. Ø. 2021. "Breaking the Vicious Circle of Escalating Control: Connecting Politicians and Public Employees through Stewardship." *Administrative Sciences* 11 (3). <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci11030063>
4. Bentzen, T. Ø., 2022. "The Tripod of Trust: A Multilevel Approach to Trust-Based Leadership in Public Organizations." *Public Management Review* 25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2022.2132279>
5. Bentzen, T. Ø., S. Siverbo, and M. Winsvold. 2024. "Keeping the Magic Alive: The Multiple Functions of Magic Concepts." *Public Administration Review* 85 (2): 280-95. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13814>
6. Čepeliauskaitė, G., and R. Petrauskienė. 2017. "Pasitikėjimą valstybės tarnyba sąlygojantys veiksniai Lietuvoje." *Viešojoji politika ir administravimas* 16 (3): 405-23. <https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.ppa.16.3.19339>
7. Ching, H. Y., and F. Gerab. 2017. "Sustainability Reports in Brazil through the Lens of Signalling, Legitimacy and Stakeholder Theories." *Social Responsibility Journal* 13 (1): 95-110. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SRJ-10-2015-0147>
8. Connelly, B., T. Certo, R. Ireland, and C. Reutzel. 2011. "Signaling Theory: A Review and Assessment." *Journal of Management* 37: 39-67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310388419>
9. Das, T. K., and B. Teng. 2001. "Trust, Control and Risk in Strategic Alliances: An Integrated Framework." *Organization Studies* 22: 251-84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840601222004>
10. Dietz, G., and D. N. Den Hartog. 2006. "Measuring Trust inside Organisations." *Personnel Review* 35 (5): 557-88. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00483480610682299>
11. Dunleavy, P., H. Margetts, S. Bastow, and J. Tinkler. 2006. "New Public Management Is Dead-Long Live Digital-Era Governance." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 16 (3): 467-94. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jop-art/mui057>
12. European Commission. 2024. Standard Eurobarometer 101 (Spring 2024). Brussels: Directorate-General for Communication. Accessed [2025 12 06].
13. Fatima, S., K. C. Desouza, J. S. Denford, and G. S. Dawson. 2021. "What Explains Governments' Interest in Artificial Intelligence? A Signalling Theory Approach." *Economic Analysis and Policy* 71: 238-54. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eap.2021.05.001>
14. Fawcett, S. E., Y. H. Jin, A. M. Fawcett, and G. Magnan. 2017. "I Know It When I See It: The Nature of Trust, Trustworthiness Signals, and Strategic Trust Construction." *The International Journal of Logistics Management* 28 (4): 914-38. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJLM-11-2016-0268>
15. Funck, E. K., and T. S. Karlsson. 2020. "Twenty-Five Years of Studying New Public Management in Public Administration: Accomplishments and Limitations." *Financial Accountability & Management* 36 (4): 347-75. <https://doi.org/10.1111/faam.12214>
16. Gill, H., K. Boies, J. E. Finegan, and J. McNally. 2005. "Antecedents of Trust: Establishing a Boundary Condition

- for the Relation between Propensity to Trust and Intention to Trust.” *Journal of Business and Psychology* 19 (3): 287-302. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-004-2229-8>
17. Giraudeau, M. 2008. “The Drafts of Strategy: Opening Up Plans and Their Uses.” *Long Range Planning* 41 (3): 291-308. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2008.03.001>
 18. Gudžinskas, L., and R. Bakutis. 2017. “Pasitikėjimo valdymo institucijomis raida: lyginamoji Baltijos šalių analizė.” In R. Bakutis, D. Dranseika, L. Gudžinskas, V. Kuokštis, K. Malūkaitė, and V. Nakrošis, *Pasitikėjimas valstybe: prielaidos, iššūkiai, sprendimai*, 69-94. Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla.
 19. Gunningham, N., and D. Sinclair. 2009. “Regulation and the Role of Trust: Reflections from the Mining Industry.” *Journal of Law and Society* 36 (2): 167-94. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6478.2009.00462.x>
 20. Hasche, N., L. Höglund, and M. Märtensson. 2020. “Intraorganizational Trust in Public Organizations - The Study of Interpersonal Trust in Both Vertical and Horizontal Relationships from a Bidirectional Perspective.” *Public Management Review* 23 (12): 1768-88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2020.1764081>
 21. Hsieh, H. F., and S. E. Shannon. 2005. “Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis.” *Qualitative Health Research* 15 (9): 1277-88. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
 22. Hult D., 2018. “Creating trust by means of legislation - a conceptual analysis and critical discussion”, *The Theory and Practice of Legislation*, 6(1): 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20508840.2018.1434934>
 23. Hunt, B. 2003. “Plain Language in Legislative Drafting: An Achievable Objective or a Laudable Ideal?” *Statute Law Review* 24 (2): 112-24. <https://doi.org/10.1093/slr/24.2.112>
 24. Juknevičienė, V. 2023. *Viešojo administravimo teisinės apibrėžties problema: praktika, užsienio patirtis ir galima alternatyva*. Vilnius: Vidaus reikalų ministerija.
 25. Kinder, T., F. Six, J. Stenvall, and A. Memon. 2020. “Governance-as-Legitimacy: Are Ecosystems Replacing Networks?” *Public Management Review* 24 (1): 8-33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2020.1786149>
 26. Klimchak, M., A. Ward Bartlett, and W. MacKenzie. 2020. “Building Trust and Commitment through Transparency and HR Competence: A Signaling Perspective.” *Personnel Review* 49 (9): 1897-1917. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-03-2019-0096>
 27. Latusek, D., F. Six, and K. Verhoest. 2020. “Trust and Distrust: Conceptual Issues.” In *Report on Trust in Government, Politics, Policy and Regulatory Governance* (online ed.), 2-40. European Commission.
 28. Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas. 2023. *Nutarimas dėl Valstybės pažangos strategijos “Lietuvos ateities vizija ‘Lietuva 2050’” patvirtinimo*, 2023 m. gruodžio 23 d., Nr. XIV-2466. Vilnius. L
 29. Lietuvos Respublikos vidaus reikalų ministerija. 2022. *2022-2030 metų plėtos programos valdytojos Lietuvos Respublikos vidaus reikalų ministerijos viešojo valdymo plėtos programa, patvirtinta Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2022 m. kovo 9 d. nutarimu Nr. 206*.
 30. Lietuvos Respublikos vidaus reikalų ministerija. 2025. *Lietuvos Respublikos vidaus reikalų ministrui pavestų valdymo sričių 2025-2027 metų strateginis veiklos planas, patvirtinta Lietuvos Respublikos vidaus reikalų ministro 2025 m. sausio 17 d. įsakymu Nr. 1V-46 (2025 m. gegužės 14 d. įsakymo Nr. 1V-319 redakcija)*.
 31. Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė. 2020. *Nutarimas dėl 2021-2030 metų nacionalinio pažangos plano patvirtinimo*, 2020 m. rugsėjo 9 d., Nr. 998. Vilnius.
 32. Lindenberg, S. 1997. “Grounding Groups in Theory: Functional, Cognitive and Structural Interdependencies.” *Advances in Group Processes* 14: 281-331. Research Gate
 33. Lindenberg, S. M. 2003. “Governance Seen from a Framing Point of View: The Employment Relationship and Relational Signalling.” In B. Nooteboom and F. E. Six (Eds.), *The Trust Process: Empirical Studies of the Determinants and the Process of Trust Development*, 37-57. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781843767350.00009>
 34. Liu, Y. X. 2022. “Public Trust and Collaborative Governance: An Instrumental Variable Approach.” *Public Management Review* 26 (2): 421-42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2022.2095003>
 35. Liu, Y., and H. Duarte. 2023. “Repairing Public Trust through Communication in Health Crises: A Systematic Review of the Literature.” *Public Management Review* 27 (5): 1292-312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2023.2284224>
 36. Mayer, R. C., J. H. Davis, and F. D. Schoorman. 1995. “An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust.” *Academy of Management Review* 20: 709-34. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1995.9508080335>
 37. Mayring, P. 2000. “Qualitative Content Analysis.” *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social*

- Research 1 (2). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-1.2.1089>
38. Messick, D. M., and R. M. Kramer. 2001. "Trust as a Form of Shallow Morality." In K. S. Cook (Ed.), *Trust in Society*, 89-117. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Stanford Graduate School of Business+1
 39. Möllering, G. 2006. *Trust: Reason, Routine, Reflexivity*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
 40. Nakrošis, V. 2018. *Public Administration Characteristics and Performance in EU28: Lithuania*. European Commission. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=19958&langId=en>
 41. OECD. 2024. *OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions - 2024 Results: Building Trust in a Complex Policy Environment*. Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9a20554b-en>
 42. Oomsels, P., and G. Bouckaert. 2014. "Studying Interorganizational Trust in Public Administration: A Conceptual and Analytical Framework for 'Administrational Trust.'" *Public Performance and Management Review* 37 (4): 577-604. Taylor & Francis Online+1 <https://doi.org/10.2753/PMR1530-9576370403>
 43. Oomsels, P., M. Callens, J. Vanschoenwinkel, and G. Bouckaert. 2019. "Functions and Dysfunctions of Interorganizational Trust and Distrust in the Public Sector." *Administration and Society* 51 (4): 516-44. SAGE Journals+1 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399716667973>
 44. Otálvaro-Ramírez, S., C. G. Scartascini, and J. M. Streb. 2025. "Transparency and Government Reputation: An Experiment on Signaling." *IDB Working Paper Series*, No. IDB-WP-1546. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank. <https://doi.org/10.18235/0013390>
 45. Perez-Chiques E., Meza O., 2021. "Trust-based corruption networks: A comparative analysis of two municipal governments", *Governance*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12554>
 46. Perrier, A., A. Akremi, C. E. Manville, and M. Molines. 2024. "It's All about Trust! A Multilevel Model of the Effect of Servant Leadership on Firefighters' Group Task Performance, Adaptivity and Emotional Exhaustion." *Public Administration Review* 85(4): 1150-1172. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13893>
 47. Pivoras, Saulius. 2013. "Post-Communist Public Administration in Lithuania." In *Public Administration in Post-Communist Countries: Former Soviet Union, Central and Eastern Europe, and Mongolia*, edited by Saltanat Liebert, Stephen E. Condrey, and Dmitry Goncharov, 139-56. New York: Taylor & Francis. (Access via ProQuest Ebook Central.) <https://doi.org/10.1201/b14237-8>
 48. Pollitt, C., and P. Hupe. 2011. "Talking about Government: The Role of Magic Concepts." *Public Management Review* 13 (5): 641-58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2010.532963>
 49. Popelier, P., Glavina, M., Baldan, F., and van Zimmeren, E. 2022. "A research agenda for trust and distrust in a multilevel judicial system". *Maastricht Journal of European and Comparative Law*, 29(3):351-374. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1023263X221096026>
 50. Potipiroon, W. 2024. "Political Corruption, Political Responsiveness and Public Trust: Testing the Implicit Exchange Hypothesis." *Governance* 38 (2). <https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12888>
 51. Raaphorst, N., and S. Van de Walle. 2020. "Trust, Fairness, and Signaling: Studying the Interaction between Officials and Citizens." In V. Luoma-aho and M. J. Canel (Eds.), *The Handbook of Public Sector Communication*. Newark: John Wiley & Sons. (Accessed November 27, 2025, via ProQuest Ebook Central.) <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119263203.ch3>
 52. Robinson, S. E., J. T. Ripberger, K. Gupta, J. A. Ross, A. S. Fox, H. C. Jenkins-Smith, and C. L. Silva. 2021. "The Relevance and Operations of Political Trust in the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Public Administration Review* 81 (6): 1110-19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13333>
 53. Rochel, J. 2023. "Error 404: Looking for Trust in International Law on Digital Technologies." *Law, Innovation and Technology* 15 (1): 148-84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17579961.2023.2184139>
 54. Schillemans, T. 2013. "Moving beyond the Clash of Interests: On Stewardship Theory and the Relationships between Central Government Departments and Public Agencies." *Public Management Review* 15 (4): 541-62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2012.691008>
 55. Schillemans, T., and K. H. Bjurstrøm. 2020. "Trust and Verification: Balancing Agency and Stewardship Theory in the Governance of Agencies." *International Public Management Journal* 23 (5): 650-76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2018.1553807>
 56. Siverbo, S., T. Johansson, T. Ø. Bentzen, and M. Winsvold. 2024. "On the Diffusion and Implementation of Trust-Based Management in Scandinavia: Cross-Country Survey Evidence." *International Journal of Public Sector Management* 37 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPSM-01-2023-0020>

57. Six, F. E. 2007. "Building Interpersonal Trust within Organisations: A Relational Signalling Perspective." *Journal of Management and Governance* 11: 285-309. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10997-007-9030-9>
58. Šiugždinienė, J., E. Gaulė, and R. Rauleckas. 2019. "In Search of Smart Public Governance: The Case of Lithuania." *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 85 (3): 587-606. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852317707814>
59. Spence, M. 1973. "Job Market Signaling." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 87 (3): 355-74. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1882010>
60. Sørensen, E., and J. Torfing. 2018. "Governance on a Bumpy Road from Enfant Terrible to Mature Paradigm." *Critical Policy Studies* 12 (3): 350-59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2018.1437461>
61. Svare, H., Å. Johnsen, and C. Wittrock. 2023. "Does Trust-Based Management Reform Enhance Employee-Driven Innovation? Evidence from a Scandinavian Capital." *Nordic Journal of Innovation in the Public Sector* 2 (1): 43-58. <https://doi.org/10.18261/njips.2.1.4>
62. Verhoest, K., Latusek D., Six F., Maman L., Papadopoulos Y., Schomaker R., Trondal J. 2024. "Trust and Distrust in Public Governance Settings: Conceptualising and Testing the Link in Regulatory Relations." *Journal of Trust Research* 14 (2): 127-56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21515581.2024.2383918>
63. Vento, I. 2023. "Trust, Collaboration, and Participation in Governance: A Nordic Perspective on Public Administrators' Perceptions of Citizen Involvement." *Public Administration Review* 84 (5): 870-87. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13833>
64. Weibel, A., D. N. Den Hartog, N. Gillespie, R. Searle, F. Six, and D. Skinner. 2016. "How Do Controls Impact Employee Trust in the Employer?" *Human Resource Management* 55 (3): 437-62. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21733>
65. Zavattaro, F., V. von Wyl, and F. Gille. 2024. "Examining the Inclusion of Trust and Trust-Building Principles in European Union, Italian, French, and Swiss Health Data Sharing Legislations: A Framework Analysis." *The Milbank Quarterly* 102 (4): 973-1003. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0009.12722>

Eglė Stonkė

PASITIKĖJIMO SIGNALAI: KOKYBINĖ LIETUVOS STRATEGINIŲ VALDYSENOS DOKUMENTŲ ANALIZĖ

Anotacija. Straipsnyje analizuojama, kaip pasitikėjimas konstruojamas Lietuvos nacionaliniuose strateginiuose dokumentuose. Taikant signalų teorijos priegą, dokumentai vertinti kaip instrumentai perteikti valdysenos institucinius siekius ir vertybines nuostatas. Nors dauguma tyrimų pasitikėjimą analizuoja per visuomenės požiūrį į valdyseną, šiame straipsnyje fokusas perkeliamas į valdymo struktūras ir jų siunčiamus signalus.

Atlikta kokybinė turinio analizė dokumentuose identifikavo 37 su pasitikėjimu susijusius signalus, suskirstytus į kompetencijos, geranoriškumo ir sąžiningumo kategorijas. Dokumentai atskleidė siekį stiprinti pasitikėjimu grindžiamą valdyseną, skatinant bendradarbiavimą, profesines kompetencijas ir vertybėmis grįstą sprendimų priėmimą. Tuo pat metu, kontrolės, centralizacijos ir stebėsenos signalai atskleidė kitą perspektyvą, kuri kuria dviprasmišką signalų aplinką. Abiejų pozicijų egzistavimas leidžia daryti prielaidą, kad į pasitikėjimo kūrimą orientuota retorika yra veikiamą nusistovėjusių administracinių praktikų. Tyrimo rezultatai išryškina poreikį toliau analizuoti, kaip tokie signalai interpretuojami bei įgyvendinami praktiškai, taip pat kaip jie formuoja platesnę pasitikėjimo dinamiką valdysenoje.

Eglė Stonkė, PhD candidate in Political Science at Klaipeda University

El. paštas: egle.stonke@ku.lt

Eglė Stonkė, Politikos mokslų doktorantė, Klaipėdos universitetas

El. paštas: egle.stonke@ku.lt



Annex 1

	Code Name	Code Description	Code Frequency	Trust Signal Direction	Illustrative Quote
Category COMPETENCE					
1.	Governance improvement	Improving the efficiency of the public sector through better planning, optimization of resources and networks, fostering cooperation between institutions, reduction of regional disparities, and greater public involvement.	56	Positive Indicates awareness and ownership of existing systemic problems, accompanied by a clear commitment to addressing them.	„Tobulinti viešojo valdymo sistemą, didinti jos efektyvumą ir atvirumą“ (NPP, Annex 1, p. 12)
2.	Evidence-based governance	The ambition to transform existing governance culture by grounding planning documents, objectives, and decisions in clear data, evaluation indicators, and analytical evidence.	63	Positive Emphasises the ambition to ensure more effective, transparent, accountable, and citizen-oriented state action.	„Sukurti sąlygas įtraukiam, visuomenės dalyvavimu ir duomenimis grįstam teisėkūros procesui“ (Valdymo programa, p. 12)
3.	Opportunities	Positive, data-informed aspects of national development (economic, social, institutional) that provide the foundation for implementing the stated ambitions.	33	Positive. Reinforces the view that the state possesses the necessary potential to achieve its future objectives.	„Šiltesnis klimatas ir ankstesnis pavasaris Lietuvoje gali sudaryti sąlygas anksčiau pradėti sėjos darbus, padidinti šalies rekreacinį potencialą“ (LT2050, p. 7)
4.	Challenges	Negative, problematic, or risk-inducing economic, social, and governance factors that threaten goal attainment and indicate the need for change.	100	Negative. Identifies weaknesses in national development and governance, highlighting deficiencies and problems.	„Lietuvos eksporto struktūroje jau ilgą laiką vyrauja mažesnio ir vidutinio sudėtingumo gaminiai, todėl ilgalaikėje perspektyvoje tai gali riboti eksporto plėtrą“ (NPP, Annex 5, p. 4)
5.	Public Sector Openness and Innovation	A shift in public sector governance culture that reflects the system's capacity to embrace technological, organisational, and cultural innovations aimed at enhancing efficiency and quality.	25	Positive. Demonstrates the state's intention to respond to a changing environment, adapt, maintain high-quality performance, and meet citizens' needs.	„Valdymo efektyvumas ir kokybė labai priklauso nuo viešojo valdymo institucijų orientacijos į inovacijas.“ (NPP, Annex 5, p. 44)

	Code Name	Code Description	Code Frequency	Trust Signal Direction	Illustrative Quote
Category COMPETENCE					
6.	Ecosystem	An understanding of the state as a holistic system in which societal needs and activities align with principles of sustainability and environmental protection.	27	Positive. Shows that the state is committed to maintaining the quality of the living environment and fulfilling its international obligations.	„Sumažinti gamtinių ekosistemų ir šalies ūkio sektorių pažeidžiamumą, sustiprinti gebėjimą prisitaikyti ir padidinti atsparumą klimato kaitos pokyčiams“ (NPP, Annex 5, p. 40)
7.	Security	Strengthening state resilience and the necessary capacities to address geopolitical, cyber, infrastructural, and social security threats.	48	Positive Highlights the state's capacity to identify existing threats and respond to them by strengthening the necessary competences and capabilities.	„Stiprinti partnerystes su artimiausiais sąjungininkais, siekiant įgyvendinti užsienio politikos, saugumo įtvirtinimo, ekonominio saugumo, ekonominio konkurencingumo ir kitus uždavinius“ (NPP, Annex 5, p. 47)
8.	Risk prevention	The state's capacity to anticipate and manage a wide range of external and internal risks and threats.	61	Positive Emphasises the state's responsible preparedness — defined actions, preventive measures, and partnerships — to manage risks.	„Nuosekliai visuose švietimo lygmenyse ugdant kritinį mąstymą, visuomenė tampa vis atsparesnė dezinformacijai ir kitoms informacinėms manipuliacijoms“ (LT2050, p. 28)
9.	Innovations	A focus on technological and economic transformation, collaborative creative solutions, and experimentation..	17	Positive. Shapes the notion of a forward-looking, adaptive state oriented towards progress and technological advancement.	„Kartu turi būti stiprinama konkurencinga mokslo ir inovacijų sistema, įgyvendinama socialiai atsakingos ir ekologiškai tvarios ekonomikos plėtra, vykdoma subalansuota ir tvari teritorinė plėtra“ (LT2050, p. 46)
10.	Governance digitalisation	A direction of state governance transformation focused on digitalisation and technological advancement..	50	Positive. Expresses the state's ambition to modernise by focusing on improving the accessibility and effectiveness of governance processes.	„Sukurti ir įdiegti skaitmeninį įrankį viešųjų paslaugų prieinamumui įvertinti, kai inicijuojami teisinio reguliavimo pokyčiai“ (VRM SVP, p. 14)

	Code Name	Code Description	Code Frequency	Trust Signal Direction	Illustrative Quote
Category COMPETENCE					
11.	Efectiveness	Optimisation of state governance competences and processes aimed at improving existing performance outcomes.	99	Positive. Emphasises the ambition to strengthen governance professionalism, improve performance outcomes, and modernise public administration.	<i>Sisteningai atliekama viešojo saugumo būklės analizė, rengiami pasiūlymai, teisės aktų projektai viešajam saugumui stiprinti ir krizių valdymui gerinti, ...įstaigų veiklos efektyvumui ir veiksmingumui didinti“ (VRM SVP, p. 8) .</i>
12.	Competence and skills	Improvement of the state's human resources and institutional capacities.	95	Positive. Indicates the state's intention to continuously develop and strengthen its existing base of professional knowledge, abilities, and skills, while fostering motivation and a commitment to promoting the common good.	<i>„Stiprinti pačių gyventojų gebėjimus visavertiškai pasinaudoti naujomis technologijomis, didinti supratimą apie ateinančius technologinius pokyčius ir įgalinti valstybę prie jų prisitaikyti“ (NPP, Annex. 5, p. 19)</i>
13.	Future planning	The state's efforts to anticipate and shape long-term development trajectories by assessing global trends and modelling future scenarios and alternatives.	14	Positive. Indicates the state's ability to plan national progress and to shape coherent public governance oriented towards the achievement of long-term goals.	<i>„Lietuva 2050“ parengta kaip Valstybės pažangos tarybos ir bendrakūrėjų pastanga apmąstyti ir ateinantiems dešimtmečiams nubrėžti valstybės raidos kontūrus“ (LT2050, p. 3).</i>
14.	Multi-level Governance	The distribution of state powers and functions across national, regional, and local structures, reinforcing subsidiarity and inter-institutional cooperation.	55	Neutral. Indicates an ambition to strengthen subsidiarity, expand regional powers, and enhance municipal autonomy, while emphasising the importance of inter-institutional cooperation. At the same time, it highlights persistent issues such as power concentration, lack of subsidiarity, and overlapping functions.	<i>„Viena esminių sąlygų siekiant užtikrinti paslaugų prieinamumą ir pasiekiamumą, o drauge optimalų tinklą – savivaldybių ir kitų paslaugų teikėjų regioninis bendradarbiavimas“ (NPP, annex. 5, p. 42)</i>

	Code Name	Code Description	Code Frequency	Trust Signal Direction	Illustrative Quote
Category COMPETENCE					
15.	Visions	The state's capacity to define long-term development directions and formulate a coherent plan for their implementation.	13	Positive. Indicates that the visions are coherent and oriented towards strengthening societal and institutional capacities, enhancing national well-being, and fostering community cohesion.	<i>„Lietuva, įgyvendinusi savo ateities viziją 2050-aisiais, yra atspari ir klestinti valstybė, kurios žmonės – pilietiškai ir jaučia gyvenantys gerą bei prasmingą gyvenimą“ (LT2050, p. 16)</i>
16.	Leadership	Individual, institutional, and state-level capacities to inspire, take initiative, mobilise others, and drive necessary change.	12	Positive. Emphasises the strengthening of individual, institutional, and state-level leadership capabilities, focusing on the ability to mobilise, provide direction, and make responsible decisions..	<i>„Kurdamą ir eksportuodama žinias bei inovacijas, Lietuva užima unikalią lyderio poziciją strateginėse tarptautinėse vertės grandinėse“ (LT2050, p. 33)</i>
17.	Consultations	Implementation of state processes through the involvement of diverse stakeholders and the provision of practical support aimed at improving the quality of activities.	7	Positive. Indicates a mode of state action grounded in open dialogue and value creation.	<i>Atvrumo ir įtraukimo principas: vizija įgyvendinama į sprendimų priėmimo procesus įtraukiant visas suinteresuotąsias šalis ir konsultuojantis su visuomene, socialiniais ir ekonominiais partneriais“ (LT2050, p.48)</i>
Category BENEVOLENCE					
18.	Values	A set of broadly accepted state governance principles, moral and ethical standards, and norms that underpin and advance societal well-being.	65	Positive. Emphasises the state's orientation towards every individual, the adoption of inclusion and co-creation principles, and the articulation of a positive vision for the future.	<i>„Lietuva – tai ją kuriantys žmonės. Valstybės pažanga įmanoma tik kuriančių ir išsilavinusių žmonių dėka“ (LT2050, p. 15)</i>

	Code Name	Code Description	Code Frequency	Trust Signal Direction	Illustrative Quote
Category BENEVOLENCE					
19.	Social Openness and Equality	A commitment to ensuring the inclusion of all societal groups, guaranteeing equal opportunities and equitable conditions for full participation in public life.	16	Positive. Conveys a commitment to include diverse societal groups, reduce inequality, ensure equal rights, and create favourable conditions for all..	„Atviros ir pilietiškai aktyvios visuomenės, kurioje užtikrinamos lygios galimybės, stiprinamas nevyriausybinis sektorius, skatinama savanorystė bei gerinama užsieniečių integracija, stiprinimas“ (VRM SVP, p. 25)
20.	TRUST	The relationship between society and the state (its institutions) grounded in shared values and built on mutual assessments of trustworthiness. The code captures explicit references to trust or trustworthiness in the text.	58	Positive Emphasises the state's long-term ambition to purposefully shape a positive, value-driven governance culture, declaring a clear objective to build and strengthen trust..	„Jos piliečiai pasitiki savimi, vienas kitu ir savo valstybe, pasižymi aukšta mokesnine morale ir yra aktyviai įsitraukę į bendrą reikalą – savo valstybės valdymą ir kūrimą“, (LT2050, p. 16)
21.	Communication	Consistent, professional, and coordinated provision of information to the public and international partners, aimed at fostering engagement and ensuring transparency.	26	Positive. Information exchange, inclusion, and the promotion of dialogue indicate openness and convey an invitation to trust.	„Institucionalizuota profesionali viešoji komunikacija suprantama kaip valdžios institucijų pareiga bendrauti su žmonėmis, išklausti ir atliepti piliečių lūkesčius“ (LT2050, p. 23)
22.	Dialogue	Purposeful inclusion of diverse societal stakeholder groups, state institutions, and international partners in joint discussions, consultations, and processes of shaping the future.	19	Positive. Emphasises the ambition to strengthen inclusive and open dialogue with diverse stakeholder groups.	„Stiprinti socialinį dialogą ir gerinti darbo vietų kokybę“ (NPP, Annex 1, p.3)

	Code Name	Code Description	Code Frequency	Trust Signal Direction	Illustrative Quote
Category BENEVOLENCE					
23.	Partnership	Strategic and purposeful strengthening of the state's position and collaboration within the international arena.	79	Positive. Emphasises Lithuania's integration and active engagement in the international arena, indicating strengthened partnerships and the associated benefits and opportunities.	„Ateityje Lietuvai bus ypač svarbu įsitraukti į Europos ir Jungtinių Amerikos Valstijų (toliau – JAV) bendradarbiavimą ir jį palaikyti ginant ir atnaujinant demokratinėmis vertybėmis grindžiamą pasaulio tvarką“ (LT2050, p. 10).
24.	Cooperation	Unified and purposeful collaboration among representatives of different sectors, optimising existing knowledge and resources to advance national progress.	77	Positive Emphasises the ambition to work collaboratively in addressing public problems and future challenges.	„Lietuva aktyviai bendradarbiauja su jai palankiais visuomeniniais partneriais ir suinteresuotomis šalimis kitose valstybėse“ (LT2050, p. 39)
25.	Engagement	Ensuring that all societal groups have the opportunity to participate in social, cultural, and political life and to influence public decision-making.	64	Positive. Emphasises the ambition to create an environment in which citizens, communities, NGOs, the diaspora, and vulnerable groups are seen, heard, and genuinely empowered to participate.	„Svarbu tinkamai pasinaudoti vietos plėtros, bendruomeniniu pagrindu kylančiomis iniciatyvomis, įtraukti nevyriausybinį sektorių į paslaugų teikimą“ (NPP, Annex. 5, p. 42)
26.	Co-creation	The formulation of public policy in collaboration with diverse societal stakeholder groups, sharing responsibility for the state's future and the common good.	14	Positive. Emphasises the ambition to encourage society to become co-creators in state-building and governance, thereby fostering openness and improving policy quality.	„Lietuvos piliečiai tampa valstybės užsienio politikos bendrakūrėjais ir jos savininkais“ (LT2050, p. 19)
27.	Accessibility	The state's efforts to ensure that public services and opportunities are easily reachable, of high quality, and accessible to all residents.	22	Positive. Emphasises the state's commitment to removing existing barriers and creating conditions for equal opportunities and social justice.	„Gerinti viešojo valdymo institucijų teikiamų paslaugų kokybę, didinti jų prieinamumą ir patrauklumą“ (NPP, Annex 1, p. 12)

	Code Name	Code Description	Code Frequency	Trust Signal Direction	Illustrative Quote
Category INTEGRITY					
28.	Evaluation and Monitoring	Systematic observation, analysis, and assessment of public policy implementation to identify risks, evaluate progress, and adjust ineffective decisions..	52	Positive. Emphasises the state's commitment to responsibility and accountability, and its ambition to establish more transparent, effective, and data-driven governance.	„Įvertinti galiojančių Lietuvos tarptautinių sutarčių atitiktį nacionalinio saugumo interesams ir, jeigu būtų nustatyta nacionalinio saugumo interesų neatitinkančių sutarčių, inicijuoti jų nutraukimą“ (VRM SVB, p. 23)
29.	Incentives	Measures designed to enhance the attractiveness of the public sector and to motivate and encourage both new and existing employees.	4	Neutral. Although a positive ambition is emphasised - strengthening public sector competences and motivation through financial incentives - public sector employees are primarily motivated by contributing to societal well-being, signalling a potential mismatch between the incentive logic and actual motivational drivers.	„Vidaus tarnybos sistemos patrauklumo ir vidaus tarnybos sistemos pareigūnų motyvacijos didinimas bei centralizuotos ir efektyvios pareigūnų rengimo ir kvalifikacijos tobulinimo sistemos sukūrimas“ (VRM SVB, p.9).
30.	Decentralisation	The redistribution of central government authority, strengthening subsidiarity, local self-government autonomy, and the inclusion of diverse groups.	8	Positive. Aimed at empowering and transferring responsibility to institutions at different levels, while involving relevant stakeholder groups in governance processes..	„Peržiūrės valdymo sistemos ir jos institucijų veikimą, stiprins atskaitomybės principų veikimą, mažins valdžios centralizaciją, stiprins subsidarumo principo vaidmenį ir daugiapakopį valdymą“ (LT2050, p. 22)
31.	Responsibility	The commitment of state institutions, organisations, communities, and individuals to act with integrity, transparency, and efficiency.	23	Positive. Strengthening responsibility is emphasised as an essential condition for fostering more effective, transparent, and expectation-aligned public governance.	„Bendruomeniškumas apima ir atsakomybę ateities kartoms – savo vaikams ir jų vaikams turime perduoti išsaugotą ir turtingesnę praeities kartų paveldą, nenuskurdintą aplinką, pasaulį, saugesnį ir geresnį gyventi, negu jis yra šiandien“ (LT2050, p. 16).

	Code Name	Code Description	Code Frequency	Trust Signal Direction	Illustrative Quote
Category INTEGRITY					
32.	Threats	A set of long-term, complex external actions—primarily by Russia and Belarus—such as military, hybrid, nuclear, migratory, and cyber activities that endanger state security, political stability, and socio-economic order.	38	Negative Highlights an unstable and insecure external environment that generates constant threats. Although actions to mitigate these threats are indicated, the measures presented function as reactions to continually escalating risks rather than evidence of a stably controlled situation.	„Lietuvos nacionalinių interesų užtikrinimas, politinis stabilumas, socialinė ir ekonominė gerovė tiesiogiai priklauso nuo Rytų kaimynystėje vykstančių procesų ir Rytų partnerystės valstybių euroatlantinės integracijos reformų įgyvendinimo rezultatų“ (LT2050, p. 16)
33.	Transparency	The pursuit of open, honest, and accountable governance, grounded in clear standards, evidence, and equal access to information.	26	Positive. Emphasises an orientation towards strengthening more open, accountable, and corruption-free governance.	„Lietuvos gyventojų dalyvavimas rinkimuose ir pasitikėjimas vykdomos politikos ir jos įgyvendinimo skaidrumu yra vieni esminių demokratinės valstybės požymių“ (NPP, Annex 5, p. 10).
34.	Control	The set of governance mechanisms—including regulation, oversight, coordination, standard-setting, and process evaluation and management.	48	Neutral. Control mechanisms are presented as “soft” or process-oriented instruments (coordination, oversight, regulation, etc.), serving as responses to existing risks rather than strict constraints. Nevertheless, ambiguity remains, as certain elements highlight power concentration and problem-focused framing, the interpretation of which depends on context.	„Pažangiosios technologijos gali būti panaudotos ir didesnei visuomenės kontrolei bei stebėsenai, siekiant suvaržyti žodžio laisvę ar net perauklėti visuomenę“ (LT2050, p. 10)

	Code Name	Code Description	Code Frequency	Trust Signal Direction	Illustrative Quote
Category INTEGRITY					
35.	Justice	An effective system that safeguards individual rights, grounded in the rule of law, transparency, and social justice.	10	Positive. Reinforces the rule of law, promotes social justice, and supports efforts to reduce inequality.	„Mažinti pajamų nelygybę, kuri didina visuomenės susipriešinimą, emigraciją, nusikalstamumą, mažina socialinio teisingumo jausmą, todėl neigiamai veikia visuomenės socialinę gerovę“ (NPP, Annex 5, p. 24)
36.	Consistency	Systematic alignment of the state's strategic visions, indicators, and institutional responsibilities to ensure continuity.	58	Positive. Reveals the coherence and alignment of state documents.	„2021–2030 metų Nacionalinio pažangos plano sąsajos su Valstybės pažangos strategija „Lietuvos ateities vizija „Lietuva 2050“ ir darnaus vystymosi tikslais“ (NPP, Annex 3, p. 1)
37.	Centralisation	Concentration of authority at the national level, consolidating state-managed resources, strategic decision-making, and their coordinated implementation.	14	Neutral. Emphasises the ambition to ensure coordinated and consistent governance, particularly during crises and complex situations. At the same time, the strengthening of the “centre” highlights problems at lower levels and signals reluctance to decentralise authority.	„Stiprinami ateities valdysenos centrai įstatymų leidžiamajame valdžioje (tobulinant Seimo Ateities komiteto veiklą) ir vykdomajame valdžioje, Vyriausybės kanceliarija pertvarkoma (evoliucionuoja) iš teisėkūros administratorės į strateginių reformų valdymo centrą“ (LT2050, p.50).