Competitive Role of Supreme Audit Institutions in Building Trustworthiness for Customers
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35th IBIMA Conference: 1-2 April 2020, Seville, Spain

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Abstract

There is a lot of scientific research on the concept of trust and the impact trust has on business operations. Public decision-makers also try to avoid situations that negatively affect the level of trust in public organizations and may reduce the competitiveness of domestic economies. Although Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) through their activities support competitiveness in the business sector reducing the risk of opportunistic behaviours, their role in maintaining or enhancing public trust in SAIs is virtually an unexplored area. This preliminary study addresses this research gap. The objective of this research was to identify and describe specific activities that SAIs can take to mitigate the risk of loss of public trust in its operations without negatively affecting the benefits these organizations provide to society. This study was based on a literature review, an analysis of audit reports prepared by SAIs from Poland, USA, United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, and an analysis of audit laws, regulations and standards. In addition, the study was based on information obtained from interviews carried out with SAI's representatives from Poland, the USA, Germany, and Austria. The results show that when SAIs take steps to mitigate the risk of losing trust they may create an epistemic injustice in the public audit process and they may limit their usefulness to their customers. The audit mechanisms that may enhance trust in audit institutions have been identified. The presented results may be useful for managers, practitioners and policy makers from different organizations in various ways.

Keywords: performance audit, supreme audit institution, trust, epistemic injustice.

JEL Classification: M 4

Introduction

While issues related to the strategies business institutions employ to enhance trust have been addressed by many researchers and business practitioners, the approaches employed by SAIs to strengthen trust in their organizations and the consequences of such approaches have not been the subject of much research. There is a need for such research because the audits and evaluations performed by SAIs provide critical information and recommendations to parliaments, governments, and other public and private customers.
SAIs' evaluations of public policy and the laws affecting public and private sectors have direct impacts on the private sector and the functioning of the whole innovation ecosystem and competitiveness. Therefore, the reliability of the SAIs' work is crucial to the proper functioning of

the State, which is aptly highlight by the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI), one of the biggest worldwide organizations that cooperate with the United Nations.
Although some of the research has been conducted on the nature and types of auditing activities performed by SAIs (Mosher, 1979; Pollitt et al., 1999; González-Díaz & Fernández, 2008; González-Díaz et al., 2012; Blume & Voigt, 2011; Bringselius, 2014; Dobrowolski, 2017; Dobrowolski & Szejner, 2019; Cordery & Hay, 2019) there is a research gap regarding the actions that are or could be taken by SAIs to mitigate the risk of losing public trust in their activities and limit SAIs role in enhancing competitiveness in public and private sectors. The aim of this original research was to identify and describe specific activities that SAIs can take to mitigate the risk of loss of public trust in its operations without negatively affecting the benefits these organizations provide to society. The term "supreme audit offices" is understand in the following manner. There are nonpartisan public organizations, which are independent in relation to auditees, including the governments and subordinate only to parliaments. Basically, the do not belong to judiciary, although in some countries (e.g., Portugal, Greece) they are part of judiciary.

1. Theoretical Background

Trust has been defined, among other things, as an element of social capital (Tansley & Newell, 2007; Chen & Wang, 2008; Choudhury, 2008); an organizational resource, as pointed out by Tzafrir (2005) or Fang & Chiu (2010); the foundation of social interactions in organizations (Berg et al.,1995; Weber et al., 2004); the willingness to accept the behaviour of others (Schoorman et al., 2007); and the willingness of entrepreneurs to invest and trade (Aykens, 2005; Natalier & Willis, 2008; Styles et al., 2008; Dobrowolski & Szejner, 2019). Trust plays special role in the financial sector. Without trust, this sector could not exist (Cox, 2007; Ennew & Harjit, 2007; Devlin et al., 2015). Therefore, trust is a unique capital that always affects the cost of economic or public activity.
Social capital belongs to the most important values that constitute society's cohesion and proper functioning at the level of the state, organization or family is beyond doubt not possible without it. For organizations with large social capital, it is typically much easier to achieve outcomes beneficial for organization and its stakeholders, allowing to obtain prosperity and recovering entrepreneurship, leading eventually to competitive advantage for the organization (Burt, 2000; Marjański, Sułkowski, Marjańska-Potakowska & Staniszewska, 2019). Social capital should be a tie bonding together the society, businesses, and families, filling in the social gap between people and its sources should be rooted in the links and networks founded on principles of firm cooperation. Like in the case of other kinds of capital, social capital aims to facilitate the development and performance of the organization mainly by improving the relations between its members (Lin, 2017).
Over the past thirty years, social capital has grown to become one of the most influential ideas to explain social behavior at different levels (Lin, 2017). The concept of social capital is describe in many ways, and its relations with trust as well as human, cultural and relationship capital, which have the closest connection with social capital definitions, are multi-dimensional. Compared to related concepts, social capital with over 2,33 million references is closest to human capital (2,180,000), while cultural capital has 630,000 references and relationship capital – 7.750 (Scholar Google, 20.11.2019). There are also scholars whose position is that the concept of social capital is outdated. If we take a quick look at the classical definitions of social capital, we will surely see how diverse it is. Coleman (1988: 98) defined social capital in functional terms as "a variety of entities with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of actors." For Bourdieu (1983) social capital is "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition". Putnam (2000: 19) sees it as "connections' among individuals and social networks and the norms of reciprocity and

trustworthiness that arise from them", while Fukuyama defines it generally understood rules than enable people to cooperate. In this work, definitions dominating in the literature viewing social capital as social trust, connections, and social networks that facilitate cooperation and reciprocity will be used (Sułkowski, 2017).

State institutions that influence the cooperation of market participants by passing laws and regulations have a significant impact on creating and maintaining trust. While State policies can foster trust, the actions of the representatives of public organizations in implementing the polices can also erode trust. This statement leads to the generalization that SAI's role is to prevent the erosion of public trust.

Just as there is a dependency between business and trust, there is also a dependency between auditing and trust. Lack of trust in public organizations can contribute to the necessity of their frequent auditing. If audits are perceived as a tool to be used in the continuous improvement of organizations' outcomes, they may strengthen the audited entities, and enhance public trust. An audit can enable an auditee to correct errors and/or irregularities and it should be considered to be a regular process that enables organizations (that create a particular system) become predictable in pursuing desired goals. The loss of control over audit processes leads, among others, to formalism and destroys trust (Bradach & Eccles, 1989; Das & Teng, 1998; Caldwell & Karii, 2005). Audits may erode trust (Castelfranchi & Falcone, 2000).

If there is a correlation between trust and audit one may generalize, that the audit is more effective when is conducted in a trust-based environment. Taking into account that auditing can enhance trust in auditee' operations (Das & Teng, 1998; Caldwell & Karii, 2005; Skinner & Spira, 2003) it is clear that auditing organizations and auditing systems need to include mechanisms designed to mitigate the risk of the erosion or loss of public trust. However, such mechanisms should not reduce the effectiveness of the audit.

If opportunistic behaviors increase the cost of audit activity and may lead to the wrong decision (Williamson, 2000), the auditing instruments implemented by audit organizations, such as SAIs, should be designed to reduce incentives for opportunistic behaviors in auditees through enhancing integrity, reliability, and accountability. They should also reduce opportunistic behavior among their auditors. However, implemented mechanisms cannot reduce the appropriateness of public decisions through the reduction of available data when making a decision due to avoidance of the risk of losing trust. Otherwise, the regularity of decisions is always limited due to the inability to make use of all available data when making decisions.

In contemporary western and developed countries, the role of the SAI is critical because SAIs are important pillars of parliamentary democracy that assist legislatures in the exercise of their rights concerning actions carried out by executive branches. Although governments have a major responsibility for creating an environment that does not favor or enable the occurrence of irregularities, SAIs have a key role to play as an advocate of good governance. The important role SAIs plays in promoting good governance typically results from their special position in relation to the government. SAIs usually are subordinate only to their Parliaments, and their audits are independent of their executives and judiciary branches. Having broad audit rights, SAIs typically evaluate the functioning of all government operations and the execution of public funds. From such a broad perspective they can provide guidance on how to strengthen public institutions (INTOSAI, GUID 5270; INTOSAI, GUID 5260; Dobrowolski, 2017).

The nature and scope of the SAIs' important role in the public and private sectors can be demonstrated by an examination of the functions they perform. One can distinguish the following SAI functions: control, informative, regulatory, advisory, and preventive, investigative, educational, and political. How the SAI carries out its audit derives from laws and regulations. Audit effects depend not only on the SAI's efforts but also on inter-organizational collaboration. All SAIs' efforts are intended to establish the facts based on audit evidence, determine the cause and effects of irregularities or best practices, and make proposals (recommendations) to eliminate irregularities in and or improve auditees' activities. By providing decision-makers and the general public with fair and objective results of the audits, SAIs affect the activities of institutions using

public funds by promoting an attitude of respect for the law, integrity, transparency and accountability. The results of SAIs' financial audits help to reassure policymakers that they have reliable data about the financial status of public sector entities. The SAIs' conduct analyses to determine whether auditees apply the best accounting practices. This means that SAIs do not only monitor compliance with accounting rules but also propose approaches to improve accounting systems (Dobrowolski, 2017; European Court of Auditors, 2019).

The Welfare concept that is well known in developed countries has been associated with significant increases in public expenditures. This affects the scope and manner of state audits. While the reliability of financial data is still a crucial element of the state audit, it is no longer sufficient. Currently, there is a need to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of the executive power resulted from the need to maintain an "in check" of government spending. Such audits are defined as performance audits, or value for money audits and were introduced in most European democracies after World War II. In some new member states of the European Union, this was at the end of the 20th century after the reintroduction of a free market economy and democratic order in those countries. Among the reasons in favor of carrying out this kind of audit is accountability. Decision-makers are responsible for the efficient management of public organizations that includes legal and reliable spending of public funds and efficient, cost-effective implementation of tasks. The results of the performance audits give citizens an insight into the course and results of actions taken by state institutions or bodies financed from the State (public sector). The need to study the efficiency of public organizations results from the nature of governance. Representatives of the authorities try to meet the expectations of its citizens and gain their trust and thus obtain the chance of re-election. Therefore, they demand, on behalf of the citizens, efficient realization of public tasks (Dobrowolski, 2017).

The objectives of the performance audit vary in different countries. They may be defined in the SAIs' basic legislation or be a matter for internal decisions within the SAI. In general, most SAIs set to achieve one or more of the following objectives: 1) to provide the legislature or discharge authority with independent assurance as to the economic, efficient and/or effective implementation of policy; 2) to provide the legislature or discharge authority with independent assurance as to the reliability of indicators of or statements about performance that are published by the audited entity; 3) to identify areas where performance is poor and thus to help the audited entity, or government more generally, to improve their economy, efficiency and/or effectiveness; 4) to identify examples of "best practice" and draw these to the attention of government and/or audited entities (Contact Committee of Presidents of the SAIs of the European Union, 1998).

The audit objectives described above leads to a generalization about the SAI role. SAI audits play an important role in the information network. During SAI audits public organizations and the public may participate in by providing comments suggesting proposed solutions to problems identified. Although these suggested solutions may have been identified by the government directly, the gathering of such information in the audit work of the SAI (independent of the executive branch, which has no supervisory powers in relation to public organizations) helps in an impartial informing of decision-makers about the problems faced by the public administration. Using this process and enabling public consumers' inputs, SAIs promote the democratization of the public sector. Results of audits carried out by SAIs gives citizens an insight into the course and results of actions taken by organizations financed by the State, and the statements of the persons responsible for the execution of specific tasks. The aim of SAIs is to ensure the accountability of those who are responsible for resource management in the public sector. SAI analyses provide information on the extent to which public administrators' activities are based on the generally applicable legal standards. This helps to guarantee citizens that officials will be predictable, and on the other hand ensure citizens' equality before the law and impartiality of public officials in decision making. SAIs examine whether the activities of public organizations are reliable, but also whether better results may be delivered. Through their informative function SAIs also realize other functions, including civic and general education (Dobrowolski, 2017).

SAI plays an important role in maintaining the innovation ecosystem, which is defined as the network of interconnecting and interacting organizations. An innovation ecosystem models the economic dynamics of the complex relationships that are formed between entities whose functional goal is to enable innovation. In this context, parts of such ecosystem include the material resources and the human capital (Jackson, 2011; Dobrowolski & Szejner, 2019). The functioning of innovation ecosystem requires compliance culture, where preventive measures against opportunistic behaviors of different individuals are taken in place. This compliance culture should be maintained by SAI, which evaluates the conditions of ecosystem functioning (Dobrowolski & Szejner, 2019).

SAIs through their activities support competitiveness in the business sector reducing the risk of opportunistic behaviors. For example, SAIs identify constraints that reduce competitiveness of entrepreneurs and countries, in particular, SAIs assess the effect the deficit has on the country' competitive position in the world, focusing on the issues and challenges the deficit poses for the future regarding education, health care, banking and capital markets, the environment, and transportation infrastructure. They analyze how do public organizations assess their progress in the ongoing improvement of public tasks, which helps implement the learning culture necessary to build intangible assets and using them create tangible outcomes. SAIs present audit findings in written reports addressed to the legislature. The right of the public disclosure of audit results is limited by the protection of the interests of the state and the auditee. Audit reports are typically available to the public unless they contain classified information. (GAO/RCED-92-16, 1991; GAO-18-656, 2018; Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, 2017; GAO, 1990; GAO, T-IMTEC-90-12, 1990).

2. Research Objective, Methodology, and Data

The theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence presented above suggests the following research question. Can efforts taken by SAIs to reduce the risk of losing trust in their activities negatively affect the benefits SAIs provide to society?

The following methods and techniques used to identify and describe the specific activities that SAIs can take to mitigate the loss of public trust:

- A comprehensive literature review.
- An analysis of audit reports prepared by SAIs from Poland, USA, United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic (listed in references), and an analysis of audit laws, regulations, and INTOSAI standards (listed in references).
- Informal interviews carried out with SAI's representatives from Poland, the USA, Germany, and Austria. These interviews were conducted with SAI officials in person (all – 6 officials who participated in meetings of INTOSAI Working Group Fighting Against Corruption and Money Laundering in 2008-2016. These officials were asked to provide information regarding which SAI's activities they perceived, as attempts to mitigate the risk of losing trust in their SAI.

The selection of the SAIs included in this study was based on the following criterion - the SAI's legal authority and capacity to conduct financial and performance audits. All selected SAIs report to legislative authority and they are independent on the executive branch of the State. The research methodology, presented above, was carried out is in line with the requirements of the triangulation of data collection and research methods used in management science.

3. Results and Discussion

4.1. Approaches that build trust in the supreme audit office

What follows is a presentation of results of the analysis of four major approaches that SAIs utilize to maintain trust in their organizations and an assessment of the effect of each approach.

4.1.1. SAI position in the macrostructure of the State

Trust can be considered as a key factor in the relations between the provider of goods or services and the client. The following values influence customer trust: 1) satisfaction with the services or products provided; 2) sense of justice and security (Pizzutti & Basso, 2012; Roman, 2003); 3) Customer loyalty, which can be explained to a substantial degree by customer satisfaction (Ball et al., 2004; Eisingerich & Bell, 2008).
These generalizations are also true in the case of SAIs' relationship with their clients. According to INTOSAI standards, SAIs have to continuously strive to increase their credibility. This enables them to fulfil their functions and ensure their potential value to citizens. SAIs only deserve trust if they are objectively judged as being credible, competent and independent. To make this possible, they need to be model institutions, being an example for others in the public sector and the auditing profession to follow. (INTOSAI, ISSAI 12).
Although SAIs cannot be independent because they are typically subordinate to their Legislative Branches, they normally have functional and organizational independence required to accomplish their tasks (INTOSAI, ISSAI 1). This requirement established in official INTOSAI standards can help reduce the risk of losing public trust due to improper relations of SAIs with auditees. According to INTOSAI standard - ISSAI 1, Supreme Audit Institutions shall be provided with the financial means to enable them to accomplish their tasks. Supreme Audit Institutions shall be entitled to use the funds allotted to them under a separate budget heading as they see fit (INTOSAI, ISSAI 1). Review of SAI laws from analysed countries (Poland, USA, United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic) confirms, that these SAIs have financial independence from the executive branch. Of course, it would be naive to think that SAIs are financially independent of those ruling the State. The political parties that form governments have the majority in parliaments or are in coalitions ultimately decide about SAI budgets . An important characteristic of SAIs is that they are financially independent of auditees. This helps to ensure the basic requirement of audit objectivity. This requirement was pointed out by all interviewed SAI auditors as crucial for maintaining SAI impartiality.

4.1.2. The nature and type of work SAIs undertake

In general, SAIs do not carry out ex-ante audits. This approach makes it much easier to manage the risk of losing public trust. It is much easier to assess the process and its effects as part of the ex-post-audit. It is obvious that based on the auditee experience, having an overview of all the conditions accompanying the performance of public tasks, one can formulate assessments, comments, and recommendations from the long term "sage's perspective". Analysis of SAI reports (listed in references of this article) showed that the assessment of effectiveness, legality, reliability, and saving of auditees prevails in audit reports. Interviewed auditors confirmed that there is much easier to evaluate the activities of auditees that lead to savings than the efficiency of auditees. Their answers are convergent with research, where one pointed out the fact, SAIs avoid the assessment of efficiency of auditee's economical activities (Pollitt et al., 1999). Meantime, such an assessment is necessary for a comprehensive assessment of public activity.
It is clear that there is some ineffectiveness of SAIs in the fight against corruption or money laundering. This is pointed out in the results of a study published by Transparency International of the Basel Institute of Governance. The level of corruption or the threat of money laundering are significant in the countries analysed in this research study (Transparency International, 2019; Basel Institute of Governance, 2018). These two public diseases have disastrous effects on the economy and society. (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016; Chayes, 2016; Fisman & Golden, 2017; Dobrowolski, 2017).
There is a research problem related to the functioning of SAIs identified during this research work. There is a lack of scientific research on how SAIs select areas or organizations to be audited. For example, data is unavailable on how much of their work is directed by Parliament? Meantime, these questions are crucial from the point of SAIs benefits for societies. A good mix of parliamentary requests with SAI's own audit initiatives may increase the SAI usefulness for society in a short time. Audit recommendations, resulting from audits carried out from SAI

initiatives, provided to auditees may help resolve some management and particular society problems. But this does not necessarily mean that such audits (initiated by SAIs, and not by parliaments) are crucial from the interest of whole country and society, specially from the long-period perspective. Interviewed auditors confirmed that their SAIs undertake audits that are based on SAI initiatives as well as parliamentary requests.

Undertaking self-initiative audits can be a way to build SAI image as society useful organization, and the same time, the way to avoid the risk of losing SAI reputation caused by examining the issues that SAI auditors do not have sufficient knowledge and skills. However, in order to increase the utility of SAI for parliament, the number of audits ordered by the parliament might be increased as a proportion of the total number of audits carried out by SAI.

Using arguments formulated by Fricker (2007) one can state that prejudice of auditors wrongly deflates judgement of the credibility of auditees. Such unduly deflated credibility of auditees may be not only an epistemic dysfunction but it may also be an ethical dysfunction. For example, if an auditee is wrongly assessed by the auditor with a lack of credibility. Such a situation can be understood as an epistemic injustice in public audit. To prevent this, a number of approaches have been introduced in the SAI. First, is the requirement that an auditor must be excluded from the audit when there is a conflict of interest. Secondly, the principle of many eyes is implemented. For example, draft audit reports are reviewed by several senior auditors. Thirdly, the audit process provides for the auditee's submission comments on audit findings including its methods, assessments, conclusions and recommendations. These approaches should reduce the risk of loss of public trust arising from epistemic injustice.

According to the INTOSAI standards "auditors should actively manage audit risk, which is the risk of obtaining incorrect or incomplete conclusions, providing unbalanced information or failing to add value for users. Many topics in performance auditing are complex and politically sensitive" (INTOSAI, ISSAI 300). The analysis of this statement leads to a generalization that INTOSAI representing SAIs may recommend that risky topics be avoided. Interviewed auditors confirmed that their SAIs do not audit politically sensitive issues such as assessment of advisability of actions undertaken by local government decision makers. However, such avoidance of risky topics may also limit the role of SAIs as the public auditor. Also, avoidance by auditors of some topics leads to unequal treatment of auditees by auditors. Taking into accounts this fact one can generalize that the solutions adopted by the SAI to limit the risk of loss of public trust in SAI through limitation audit scope may catalyse epistemic injustice in the public audit process.

There is also another problem that should be discussed in future research. Do SAI audits identify areas of good performance? Review of SAI audit reports (listed in the bibliography of this article) did not confirm that SAIs always focus their activity on identification of areas of auditee good performance. Also interviewed auditors could not confirm that their SAIs always identify examples of auditee good performance. Taking into accounts this fact, one of one's concerns may be that SAI audits mainly tend to focus on weaknesses and do not inform the public of positive aspects of government operations. Such a focus on negative aspects of realized government tasks could contribute to erosion to public trust in governments.

4.1.3. SAIs use various audit methods and techniques to reduce the risk of incorrect findings, conclusions, and recommendations

Today's SAIs are unable to review and evaluate all expenditures, due to the size of the public sector. This creates a problem with the credibility of certifying the correctness of keeping books and preparing financial statements. There are therefore solutions mitigating the SAI's risk of issuing an incorrect opinion about the financial statements or more broadly about audit findings, conclusions, and/or special considerations for recommendations. First, SAI uses the well know concept of materiality and audit risk (INTOSAI, ISSAI 1003). The application of the audit risk, materiality, and audit sampling approaches help to reduce or manage the risk of reaching an inappropriate audit conclusion and helps to mitigate the risk of losing audit trust (which one may define as the willingness of stakeholders to use the results of SAI audits when making decisions).

However, it cannot be ruled out that even after employing the proper sampling techniques, the auditor can incorrectly assess the audited evidence. Based on interviews with SAI representatives, it was established that one approach to limiting such risk is the introduction of a requirement to place randomly drawn audit evidence in audit working files. The Polish SAI also requires auditors to digitize audit evidence.

Based on interviews with SAI representatives, it was established that typically it was the practice followed by SAI auditors was to make notes from the review of documents - "auditor's notes". Such a practice of allowing auditors to make auditor's notes from the document review may be considered as the weakness of the audit procedure. There is a risk that the information contained in such auditors' notes is unreliable. It was also established that audit methods enable auditors to treat the interviews with representatives of auditees as a valid source of information. Such an audit approach related to information provided by auditees can be considered as a manifestation of confidence in auditees. However, relying only on interviews with individuals from auditees instead of analyzing documentary evidence also generates the risk of incorrect audit findings and evaluations. This may undermine trust in SAIs.

To minimize the risk of an incorrect assessment of the activities SAIs typically reach agreement on draft reports that outline the audit findings and conclusions with auditees. Agreeing on the draft documents should be considered not only as a way to reduce the risk of wrong auditor's assessment but also as a tool of reduce the risk of weak implementation by auditees SAI recommendations. In such situations, SAI may ask about the implementation of recommendations despite the absence of the legal authority to oblige auditee to implement recommendations. Through making available to the public "agreed with auditees" audit findings, opinions, comments, recommendations, SAI may require the implementation of recommendations, arguing that audit reports have not been questioned (INTOSAI ISSAI 1003). In the well-known concept - change management, trust plays an important role in communication and allows decision-makers to carry out any change more effectively (Neves & Caetano, 2006; Lee & Teo, 2005). The process of agreeing to SAI's audit reports with auditees can be considered as the tool of increasing trust in change management.

The SAI's inability to assess the advisability of actions undertaken by auditees, as well as, the replacement of ex ante audit by the ex-post audit favors limiting the risk of loss of public trust. Another SAI approach that limits the risk of losing trust is the optional nature of SAI audit recommendations. Audited entities are not required to carry out SAI audit recommendations. SAIs' recommendations typically only point to the possibility of improving audited activities; with the final choice of solutions improving the operations of the audited entity belongs to its management (INTOSAI, ISSAI 300). If relevant and allowed by the SAI's mandate, auditors should seek to provide constructive recommendations. However, they should be phrased in such a way that they should not encroach on the management's responsibilities. In other words, while auditors can make recommendations, they need to take care that they do not assume the responsibilities of the responsible parties (INTOSAI, ISSAI 300). The optionality of audit recommendations is therefore, a tool that limits the risk of losing trust in SAIs. However, the optional nature of SAI recommendations can limit the overall effectiveness of SAI's activities. Because of the optional nature of recommendations, auditees may adopt an approach of avoiding proposed changes by claiming that steps to realize SAI audit recommendations are in progress.

4.1.4. SAIs treat their audit reports as products, which should be properly advertised and promoted to enhance public trust.

Information is a product of SAI, like in the case of mass media. The adoption of this statement as obvious allows one to determine the dimensions of trust and use of research results regarding trust in the media. There are the following dimensions of trust: credibility (Audi, 2008; Ganesan & Hess, 1997), competence, predictability, relevance, and brevity (Audi, 2008). All those dimensions are taken into accounts in SAIs and their audit reports (National Audit Office, 2006;

U.S. GAO, 2019; Rechnugshof Österreich, 2018; Czech Republic Supreme Audit Office & Bundesrechnungshof, 2019; Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, 2019).
Analysed audit reports have a specific structure. Typically the initial section of an audit report presents the principal audit findings, recommendations or special considerations for recommendations. Detailed information is presented in other parts of the audit reports. The audit reports are concise, precise and written in an un-bias manner. SAIs use a standardized physical makeup for their products to help make them recognizable as SAI products (National Audit Office, 2006; U.S. GAO, 2019; Rechnugshof Österreich, 2018; Czech Republic Supreme Audit Office & Bundesrechnungshof, 2019; Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, 2019).
In all studied SAIs press releases are prepared that focus on the most important findings and conclusions of audits. Interviewed auditors confirmed that SAI employees responsible for media policy have the task of determining when to provide the media with information about the results of the audit. Of course, the audit reports are delivered first to the statutory organs such as parliamentary committees, and appropriate members of the government. The moment of making the information available for other stakeholders is important. Information about the results of the audit should not be secondary or tertiary information of the day. Appropriate SAI internal entity has primary responsibility for ensuring the media receive accurate and timely information about SAI activities. Information about audit results is presented in such a manner that they have to focus the attention of decision-makers and the public on SAI activity. Interviews with SAI representatives and the author's observation show there is the requirement that audit information should consolidate the positive image of the SAI and enhance public trust in SAI. The generalization about the promotion of SAI audit reports (SAI advertisement) is justified.

4. Conclusions

This research study found that: 1) Audit trust can be defined as the willingness of stakeholders to use the results of SAI audits when making decisions; 2) SAIs use different activities for limiting the risk of losing public trust in SAIs. One of them is the process of reviewing SAI's audit reports with auditees. This process, however, needs special security tools to prevent auditor's opportunism; 3) Epistemic injustice in public audit can be understood as a situation whereby the auditee who receives a prejudicially deflated degree of credibility from an auditor is wrongly assessed; 4) The exclusion of certain areas of public activity from the SAI audit due to the avoidance of risky topics and protection against weakening trust in SAI is a manifestation of epistemic injustice; 5) To prevent opportunistic behavior among SAI auditors and do not reduce SAI usefulness for society SAIs should convince themselves that lack of mistakes in their audit activities should not be perceived as the indicator of professionalism but also it may be indicator of improper SAI activity. SAIs have the right to make mistakes and correct them; 6) In order to counteract the negative consequences of SAI artificially increasing its audit's utility for parliament and society, parliamentary verification of SAI audit initiatives is necessary. Audits undertaken on the own initiative of SAI and not commissioned by parliament should be the subject of a periodic evaluation carried out by the special parliamentary commission to establish the necessity of such audits for the country and society and their benefits. Such review, however, should not limit the SAI audit's independence stated in INTOSAI standards.
The research assumption was also to identify research problems that need to be solved during future scientific research. This goal has been achieved. The following research questions were identified during this research: 1) To what extent SAIs focus in their audits mainly on weaknesses in government activities? 2) Do they realize how such activity (described in question 1) influence on public trust in the State?; 3) How does such SAI activity erode the public trust in the State? 4) How does SAI select areas or organization to be audited if audits are undertaken from SAI own initiative? How much of SAI audit work is commissioned by Parliament? To what extent audits

undertaken by SAI on its own initiative covered key problems of the functioning of the state and its institutions?
The generalizations formulated in this article are not an attempt to create a new paradigm but indicate the direction in which further research into public auditing and its impact on public trust should be pursued.
One can formulate the following perspective of the competitive role of supreme audit institutions in building trustworthiness for customers. SAI should constantly develop the informative function of state audit knowing that strengthening this function provides ongoing accountability within the government and the SAI, and will create a preventive environment that does not favour organizational pathologies in the State. The informative function of the state audit should be realized by presenting complete and accurate audit findings, conclusions and recommendation in audit reports. SAI should precisely explain and public present audit methodology used during the audits, especially audit sampling. SAI should consider the public access to digitalized audit working papers, where audit evidence is gathered which are the base for audit reports. This will strengthen SAIs' trustworthiness for their customers.

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank for the comments from anonymous reviewers.

Limitations of the Work

There are not limitations of the work

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