

ESTONIAN CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2015-2020

INTRODUCTION

In order to implement the objectives and principles specified in the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept¹ approved by the *Riigikogu* on 12 December 2002, the Ministry of the Interior together with the public sector, joint committee of the citizens' associations² and strategic partners deem it necessary to prepare a new "Civil Society Development Plan" that would be in force during 2015-2020 and would follow the development plan that concluded in 2014. Previous development plans (figure 1) have significantly increased the development of Estonian civil society and improved cooperation between the public sector and citizens' associations. It is necessary to prepare a new development plan in order to continue the current good practices and express the common vision of various parties regarding development of the sector.



Figure 1. Strategic documents of civil society area 2007-2014

The general objective of the sectoral development plan "Civil Society Development Plan 2015-2020) (hereinafter the *Development Plan*) is **citizens' associations with operational capability and socially active citizens**, thereby contributing to the achievement of the "Promoting citizens' initiative and participatory democracy in cooperation with citizens' associations and the public authorities" objective of the performance area of state governance.

The Development Plan relies on the values laid down in the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept and in the Civil Society Development Plan that was effective until 2014, and it continues to shape and maintain the tradition of a democratic and open society, and creates a functioning implementation system for the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept with which to contribute to the achievement of long-term priorities: ensuring and developing a support system for citizen's initiative, introducing a culture of cooperation based on the partnership of the public authorities and citizens' initiative, introducing good cooperation practices and their wide-scale use in practice, and actively promoting life-long civil education.

The Development Plan is implemented in close cooperation with citizens' associations, which helps ensure that government agencies have a common approach to the area, and it contributes to the promotion of their cooperation in developing the area. Local governments play an important part in shaping local environment, including the provision and outsourcing of

¹ Estonian Civil Society Development Concept. Available at: <https://www.siseministerium.ee/30410/>.

² Minutes No. 2 of the session of the government committee for the implementation of action plans for implementing the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept and assessment of fulfillment and cooperation between civil society and the state, 16/12/2013, agenda item No. 2. Available at: https://www.siseministerium.ee/public/Eesti_kodanikuuhiskonna_arengu_kontseptsio_.pdf.

services and funding citizens' associations; therefore, the Development Plan also serves as guidance for local governments.

The Development Plan ties in with several areas of government of the Ministry regarding the outsourcing of public services, social innovations and social entrepreneurship. Specifically, the Development Plan ties in with the area of government of the Ministry of Social Affairs (e.g. social innovation and social entrepreneurship for the provision of social and employment services), Ministry of Education and Research (e.g. civil education, school democracy, participation of young people), Ministry of Culture (e.g. activities for people who do not speak Estonian, activities aimed at promoting an open-minded attitude and active social participation regardless of the persons' linguistic or cultural background), the Ministry of Justice (e.g. broader legal environment, statistics) and the Ministry of Finance (e.g. data and statistics pertaining to citizens' associations) and other policy areas of the Ministry of the Interior (e.g. security in the community and supporting the participation of new immigrants in society).

The Ministry of the Interior as the entity responsible for the implementation of the Development Plan considers it important that capable citizens' associations are strong partners to the state in all the sub-objectives of the Development Plan. It is important to ensure that there are resources to implement the Development Plan; otherwise, the Development Plan and the achievement of its objectives would be formal, not substantive.

ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION

In general³, a *civil society* is understood to be a sphere of society that is relatively independent from the state and the business sector in which individuals and groups cooperate to promote their interests and values and which balances the effect of the business sector and public authorities in society. In addition to the non-profit sector, press, political parties, religious associations, trade unions, etc. constitute a part of a civil society. Therefore, civil society does not only mean the so-called third sector.

The Development Plan defines *citizens' associations* as various types of non-profit associations (non-profit associations, foundations and religious associations and non-formal associations such as networks, civil law partnerships, etc.) that are formed as a result of citizens coming together. They are not, however, defined as associations established by the state or a local government.

The principles of the Development Plan are targeted at all of *civil society* or the shaping of the general environment, and target groups have been specified within objectives and measures. Many activities are targeted at *citizens' associations* acting in the public interest, including religious associations. However, the level of an individual is also covered. The Development Plan is targeted at the portion of *civil society* that is independent from the state and the business sector.

The role of the citizens' associations in society⁴ may be divided in three: 1) they help prevent and solve social problems, 2) they participate in making and implementing decisions

³ Lagerspetz, Mikko (2007). Kodanikuühiskonna lühisõnastik. Tallinn: Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organization. Available at: <https://www.siseministeerium.ee/public/KYsonastik07WEB.pdf>.

⁴ Robert D. Putnam (1994). Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy. Princeton, NJ: Princeton

concerning the community and the state and 3) they help improve the cohesion, trust and cooperation of society. So, a civil society is diverse and citizens' associations have different objectives and needs.

Citizens' associations may be divided in two based on their main objectives: some mainly operate to achieve expressive objectives, some to achieve instrumental or operational objectives.⁵ The first group tries to maintain and promote certain normative values, and working together may also be an objective in itself for them. These include choirs, literature clubs and sports associations. Other types of organisations try to achieve specific objectives and the joy of working together is not their primary goal. These include the protection of various interests, improving the situation of a certain target group, organising services or local development. Many activities are targeted at the second type of organisations because they can be partners to the state in achieving various goals.

The following is an overview of the current situation of civil society and the major changes in recent years based on statistics and studies. Also, the general problems, threats and risks of the area are discussed.

- **There are a total of 31,581 non-profit associations in Estonia⁶**, including 813 foundations and 579 religious associations. About half of the 30,000 non-profit associations are created for the shared management of apartments, garages or other buildings or plots of land that are not traditionally deemed part of civil society.
- **There are employed persons in almost every third operating non-profit association.** The share of non-profit associations with employed persons had increased to 30.3% by 2013; in 2011 the share of such associations was 28.5%⁷. Although a slight increase has been evident in recent years, it is likely that the target level of 40% set in 2010 will not be achieved by the end of 2014. At the same time, the share of citizens' associations that has the experience of involving regular volunteers is 78% of the citizens' associations involving volunteers.⁸
- In four years, the **average gross remuneration of an employee of a non-profit association has increased.**⁹ At the end of 2013, the average gross remuneration of an employee of a non-profit association was 414 euros a month, which is nearly 60 euros more than in 2010. Still, this does not necessarily reflect the limited attractiveness of the non-profit sector as an employer because employees often work part-time in a non-profit association, which is reflected in average gross remuneration.
- **The volume of donations made by citizens' associations has grown.**¹⁰ Citizens' associations entered in the list of non-profit associations, foundations and religious associations benefiting from income tax incentives received 17.3 million euros in donations in 2013, which is one million more than in 2012. The number of citizens'

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⁵ Etzioni, Amitai (1961). *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations*. London: Collier-Macmillan.

⁶ Commercial Register as at 1 January 2015.

⁷ Estonian Statistical Office (2013). *Statistical profile - a set of economically active units (companies, sole proprietors, institutions, non-profit associations) which the Estonian Statistical Office uses as a general set of economic statistics from 1994*.

⁸ The study "Institutionalization of Civic Initiative in Estonia 2014". Not published.

⁹ Remuneration data submitted to the Tax and Customs Board.

¹⁰ INF 4 declaration data submitted to the Tax and Customs Board. Any person entered in the list of non-profit associations, foundations and religious associations benefiting from income tax incentives submits the INF 4 declaration.

associations that have declared donations increased from 972 to 1,310 in the same period. The share of regular donors in the population is only 12%.¹¹

¹¹ TNS Emor (2013) study on attitudes towards charity 2013. Study report. Available at: https://www.siseministeerium.ee/public/Aruanne_heategevus_2013.pdf.

- **31% of the Estonian population has participated in voluntary activities within the past year.**¹² This is similar to the average of the European Union (29%). The highest number of volunteers is in environmental protection, nature conservation, sustainable lifestyle, promoting local life and youth work, and working with children. The share of regular volunteers¹³ from all the participants of volunteer activities is 34% but this should be even higher.
- **Approximately 2/3 of the Estonian population tends to have an attitude of participatory democracy**¹⁴; this means that working together helps achieve more in social matters than working alone. Therefore, Estonians are open-minded in their value orientations and attitudes towards participatory democracy.

Estonian civil society has significantly improved (figure 2) – good cooperation and an effective legal environment, a strong support system and positive media coverage are characteristic in comparison to other Central and Eastern European countries.

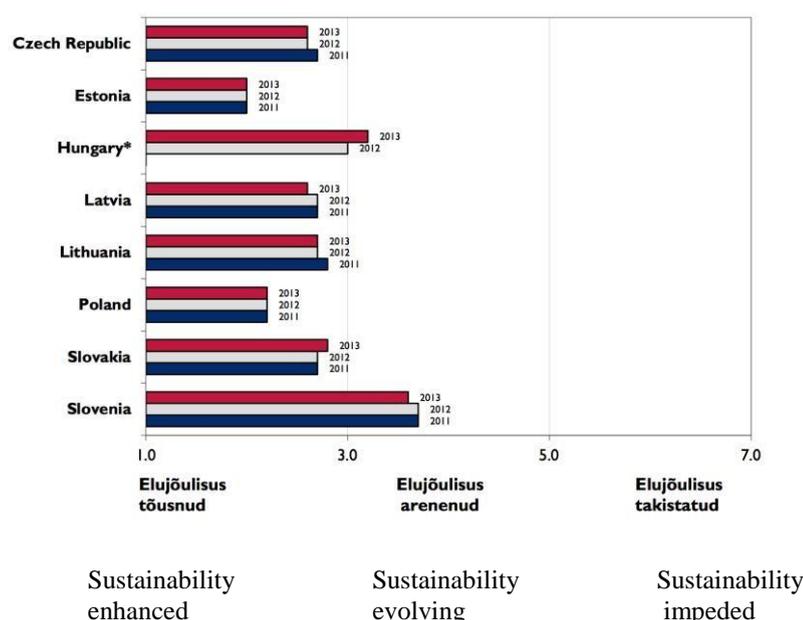


Figure 2. Comparison of USAID NGO Sustainability Index

It continues to be necessary to develop the operational capability and financial standing of citizens' associations¹⁵ (figure 3). In addition, more attention should be paid to the participation of citizens' associations in the shaping of policy, involvement, social entrepreneurship and social innovation and to the developing of the potential of citizens' associations as providers of public services. Equally important are the capability of citizens'

¹² Uus, M., Hinsberg, H., Mänd, T., Batueva, V. (2013). Participation in volunteer activities in Estonia 2013. Tallinn: Praxis Center for Policy Studies. Available at:

https://www.siseministeerium.ee/public/vabatahtlikus_tegevuses_osalemine_2013.pdf.

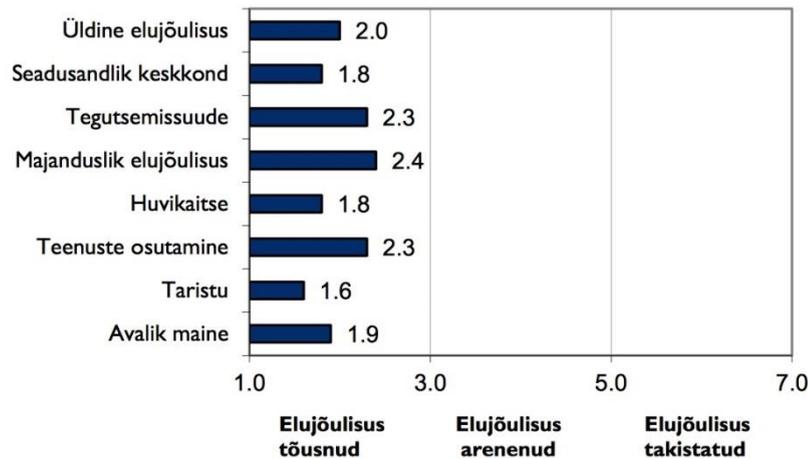
¹³ Share of volunteers who, by their own estimate, have regularly participated in volunteer activities within the past 12 months (at certain intervals, e.g. once a week, month or quarter).

¹⁴ Centre for Civil Society Research and Development (2012). Values and patterns of behaviour supporting civil initiative in Estonian population 2011-2012. Available at:

https://www.siseministeerium.ee/public/danikualgatust_toetavad_vaartused_ja_kaitumismustrid_Eesti_elanik_konnas_2011-2012_uuringu_teostaja_Kodanikeuhiskonna_uurimis-ja_arenduskeskus_Tallinna_Ulikool.pdf.

¹⁵ NGO Sustainability Index (USAID) (2013). Available at: <http://ngo.ee/sites/default/files/files/Estonia+.pdf>.

associations to involve the resources required for their activities and the development of a support structure of advocacy.



CSO sustainability
 Legal environment
 Organisational capacity
 Financial viability
 Advocacy
 Service provision
 Infrastructure
 Public image

Sustainability enhanced

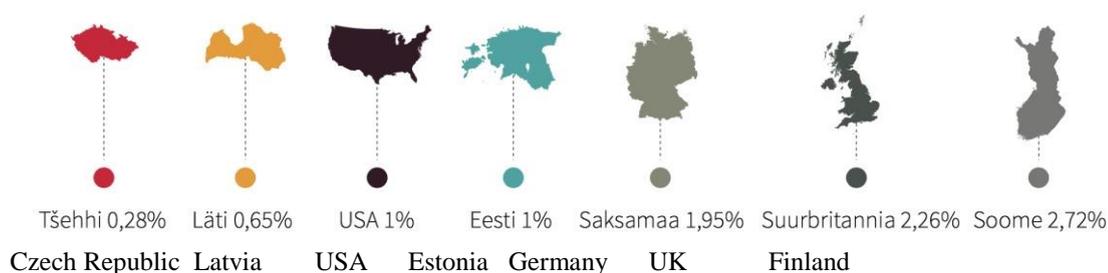
Sustainability evolving

Sustainability impeded

Figure 3. 2013 scores for Estonia based on the USAID NGO Sustainability Index

Citizens' associations also contribute to the economy. In addition to economic activities and collecting member fees, they also create preconditions for economic growth because participation in an association as a member or a volunteer keeps a person active, helps distribute information, encourages society-centred thinking, brings people together and unites them.

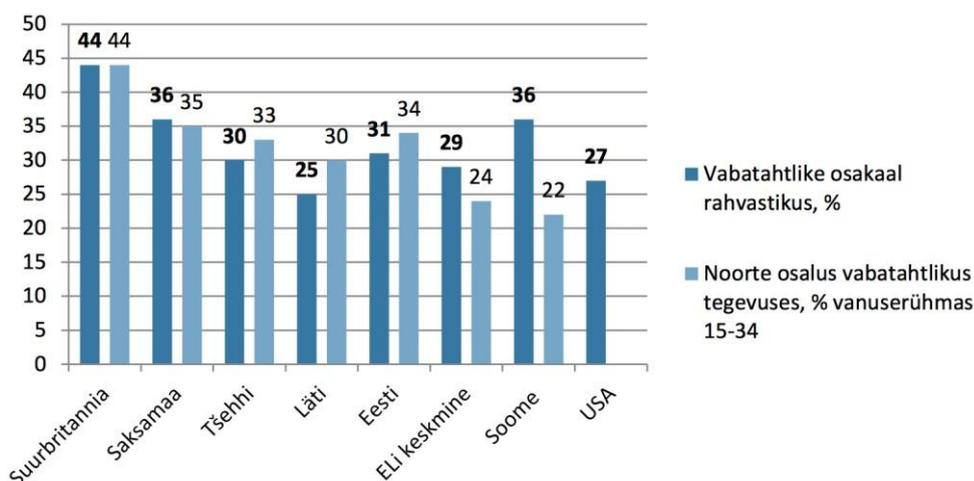
There is no information regarding the contribution of citizens' associations to gross domestic product (hereinafter GDP) but the contribution of volunteer activities in Estonia is about 1% alone; in Germany, for example, it is nearly 2% and in Finland it is close to 3% (figure 4)¹⁶.



¹⁶ Uus, M., Hinsberg, H., Mänd, T., Batueva, V. (2013). Participation in volunteer activities in Estonia 2013. Tallinn: Praxis Center for Policy Studies. Available at: https://www.siseministeerium.ee/public/vabatahtlikus_tegevuses_osalemine_2013.pdf.

Figure 4. Economic value of volunteer activities (percentage from GDP)

In other member states of the European Union, the share of volunteers in the population is comparable to the average indicator of the European Union (figure 5).



United Kingdom Germany Czech Republic Latvia Estonia EU average Finland USA Share of volunteers in population, %

Participation of young people in volunteer activities, % in age group 15-34

Figure 5. The share of volunteers in the population and young people (Source: the comparison is based on data from the “Volunteering in the European Union” and “Youth on the Move” studies, except in the case of Estonia for which data from the Participation in Volunteer Activities in Estonia 2013 omnibus survey has been used)

When looking at how many people are in a citizens’ association and participate outside of citizens’ associations, it turns out that about one in every five (21%) Estonian citizens claims to be a member of a citizens’ association¹⁷. The rate of non-institutional social-political participation of the population¹⁸ that characterises participation outside of citizens’ associations has increased compared to, for example, 2008, but it remained at more or less the same level in 2010-2012 (figure 6). The study report of 2014 will be published in the autumn of 2015.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The share of the population that has participated in at least one of the next three activities within the past 12 months: 1) signed a petition; 2) taken part in a lawful public demonstration, 3) boycotted a product. These three forms of participatory democracy are outside of the activities of non-profit associations of political parties and therefore are the best indicators of the level of the non-institutional social-political participation.

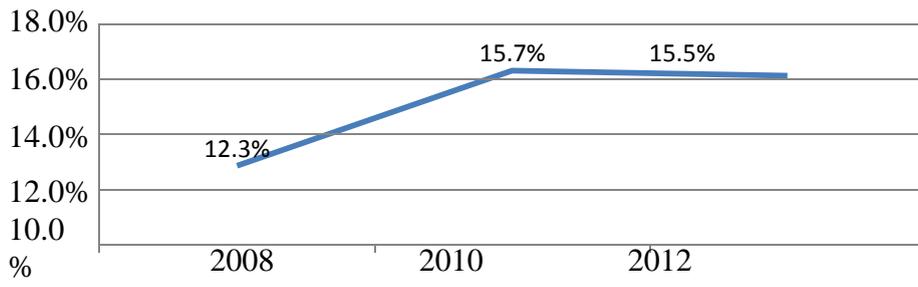


Figure 6. The rate of non-institutional social-political participation of population in 2008-2012.

The size of the membership of a citizens' association does not allow for assessing how effectively or efficiently the association works and the rate of non-institutional social-political participation does not actually indicate the activeness of people in having their say in social matters; instead, it reflects the dissatisfaction of citizens with the decisions made. Dissatisfaction is reflected in petitions and taking part in public demonstrations or wearing campaign badges. Therefore, both indicators may be used to characterise general trends but not to assess objectives.

As a result of the work to date, the sustainability of national umbrella organisations of citizens's associations and networks has increased due to the application rounds of the National Foundation of Civil Society (hereinafter NFCS). The advocacy of citizens' associations and capability of participating in the shaping of policy have also developed. Several citizens' associations participate in work groups, committees and other discussions. Citizens' associations have also contributed to the negotiations of the conditions for structural support of the European Union 2014-2020. The capability of citizens' associations to involve volunteers and gather donations has also increased.

The Development Plan that was implemented until the end of 2014 has been effective in developing an environment that supports the operation of citizens' associations. As of today, there are specific proposals to amend legislation, some of which have already entered in force, including the reimbursement of volunteers' expenses through involvement in citizens' associations.

Four types of future trends have been taken into account in preparing the Development Plan.

- Grants from the public sector are likely to decrease in the future and competition for grants among citizens' associations will increase. Also, interest in and the need for involving grants from the business sector will increase. Non-monetary support of the state will become important as well as contributions to the operating environment of citizens' associations.
- The importance of citizens' associations as providers of services will increase because the public sector needs, and is looking for, partners who are capable of offering high quality professional services.
- The role of citizens' associations will also increase in the participation of shaping policy and with that the responsibility of citizens' associations. In the coming years, it is important to pay attention to the internal democracy of citizens' associations and to the transparency of the work of umbrella and representative organisations. However, it is important to keep in mind that both the providers of services, advocacy organisations and other strategic partners of the state require stable funding for their efficient operation.
- Differences between sectors will decrease. This will bring about the use of business models in citizens' associations, including earning their own revenue and the necessity to enhance competence in the provision and development of services.

In order to help citizens' associations fulfil their roles, limited resources have to be allocated to fewer but more specific activities than has been the case to date; however, the focus will be on the most important activities. **Therefore, the Development Plan focuses on two priority directions instead of five: participation of citizens' associations and their effect on the prevention and resolution of social problems.** The remainder of the areas support civil society as a support structure or ensure the means and prerequisites for its development. **The**

first two sub-objectives of the Development Plan are of equal importance; the third sub-objective contributes to the achievement of the first two.

Next, the content of each sub-objective is briefly described and an overview of activities, results and obstacles to date is provided. Also, the main problems to be resolved with the help of the Development Plan are introduced, and an overview of planned activities by measures of the implantation plan is presented.