

# DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR CIVIC INITIATIVE SUPPORT 2007-2010

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Estonian Civil Society Development Concept<sup>1</sup> specifies the complementary roles and cooperation principles of public authorities and civic initiative in developing and implementing public policies. The objective of the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept (hereinafter CSDC) is to express a shared understanding of the public authorities and the non-profit sector of the need for cooperation to build in Estonia a sustainable and developing civil society based on active participation of the citizens.<sup>2</sup>

In 2003, a joint committee of the Government of the Republic and representatives of citizens' associations for launching a system for evaluating the preparation, implementation and completion of the activity plans for CSDC implementation was established.<sup>3</sup> The Committee developed the first activity plan for CSDC implementation in 2004-2006. The activity plan envisages preparation and implementation of a Government of the Republic strategy for the support of civic initiatives.<sup>4</sup>

The CSDC implementation process complies with the good governance principles specified and proposals made in the European Commission White Paper on European Governance<sup>5</sup>, as well as with the Recommendation 19 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on participation of citizens in local public life.<sup>6</sup> The activities that have been initiated and continued are associated with the Estonian National Strategy on Sustainable Development 'Sustainable Estonia 21'<sup>7</sup>, Estonian Regional Development Strategy<sup>8</sup>, the concept of county development centres<sup>9</sup>, and the Estonian Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Development Plan 2006-2010<sup>10</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Riigikogu Resolution of 12.12.2002

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from the document: 'Activity plan for implementation of the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept 2004-2006'

<sup>3</sup> Government of the Republic Order No. 658-k of 09.10.2003

<sup>4</sup> Government of the Republic Resolution of 12.08.2004

<sup>5</sup> White Paper: European Governance COM(2001) 428, July 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Recommendation Rec(2001) 19 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on participation of citizens in local public life.

<sup>7</sup> Riigikogu Resolution of 14.09.2005

<sup>8</sup> Government of the Republic Resolution of the minutes of 19.05.2005 (approved)

<sup>9</sup> Government of the Republic Resolution of the minutes of 25.02.2003 (approved)

<sup>10</sup> Government of the Republic Order No. 281 of 11.05.2006

**The objective of Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support is to create favourable conditions for civic engagement in Estonia.**

The implementation of the Development Plan will enable to:

1. contribute to the strengthening of democratic processes, firm establishment of good governance principles, and promotion of participatory democracy;
2. achieve better coordination of the cooperation in the public sector in supporting the development of civil society;
3. increase the mutual trust and motivation for stable cooperation between citizens' associations and the public sector;
4. apply unified principles for supporting the citizens' associations from the state budget.

The Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support is based on the long-term priorities specified in the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept:

1. Major rise in civic education and citizen action, and strengthening of involvement democracy.
2. Introduction of the cooperation based on partnership principles between the public sector and non-profit sector, promotion and wide implementation of good cooperation practices and creation of cooperation network.
3. Guaranteeing of a functioning support system for civic initiative.

This document concerns civic initiative, which serves public interests.

For the purposes of this document, the terms are defined as follows<sup>11</sup>:

Public interest – public interest concerns the types of benefits, which are not used for private consumption but are available to everyone, such as nature, security, culture, etc.; activities directed to one narrow group serve the public interest if this group has a disadvantage compared to the rest of the society so that the provision of support to this group would increase social justice.

Involvement – activity of the public authorities, which is aimed at providing associations and individuals the opportunity to participate in the making of decisions relevant to them, incl. legislative developments.

Civic initiative – an initiative of non-governmental institutions to develop a certain area of life.

Citizens' association – an organisation founded by individuals or legal persons for non-profit purposes.

Civil society – a society that protects the basic human rights and freedoms and enables individuals to influence political decisions.

## **2. INVOLVED MINISTRIES, PERSONS AND INSTITUTIONS**

---

<sup>11</sup> *Abridged and selected from the publication: Lagerspetz, Mikko 2006. Kodanikuühiskonna lühisõnastik.*

The Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support includes the civic initiative support activities of ministries and county governments. The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for strategic planning, implementation and coordination between different partners in supporting the development of Estonian civil society.

Ministry of the Interior:

- submits to the Government of the Republic the plan of implementation of the Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support, based on the objectives specified in this Development Plan;
- evaluates the situation and supplements the Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support if necessary;
- informs and engages other associated institutions, incl. other ministries, public authorities, non-profit and business sectors, actively in supporting the development of civil society;
- represents Estonia and the Estonian positions in respect of supporting the development of civil society at the international level, incl. in the international organisations associated with the government area of the Ministry of the Interior.

The State Chancellery, all ministries and the Bureau of the Minister of Population Affairs are all involved in the preparation, updating and implementation of the Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support. Taking into account proposals from other ministries, the Development Plan specifies measures that support civic initiative also from the government area of other ministries. As far as needed and possible, the ministries participate in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the activities for supporting civic initiative in their respective government areas in keeping with the objectives of this Development Plan. The Development Plan as a reference document of the Government does not impose direct obligations on local governments, business and non-profit sectors, but it creates favourable preconditions for efficient operation of the public sector as well as the civil society as a whole.

### **3. ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION**

On 01.05.2006, Estonia had **23 937** non-profit associations and foundations (incl. **11 286** apartment and garage associations).

A comparative analysis of the citizen's associations in the Middle and Eastern Europe indicates that, according to the assessment of local activists, the conditions for civic initiative are good and improving in Estonia: the general assessment rose between 2000 and 2004 on a seven-points-scale from 2.4 to 2.1 (the best possible score on this scale is 1). For example, the survey of Latvian citizen's associations in 2004 indicated a score of 2.6, while Russian citizen's associations gave a score of 4.2.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> USAID 2005. *The 2004 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia.*

### 1. Administrative efficiency of the public sector in supporting the development of civil society

The joint committee of the Government of the Republic and representatives of citizens' associations has been responsible for the implementation of CSDC since October 2003. A joint activity plan for solving different issues has been developed, but the plan could not be implemented to the full extent due to the shortage of resources. At the time of drafting, the creators of CSDC did not envisage a separate institution that would bear daily responsibility for its implementation. Supporting the development of civil society is the task of the Ministry of the Interior, which needs further development.

The public sector approaches civic initiatives in many different ways. Generally, the public authorities have not specified officials who would be dealing with the problems in the field of civil society, for example, they do not have contact persons for citizens' associations. The administrative efficiency and attitudes of the public sector towards supporting civic initiative can be very variable at the local level.

### 2. Funding and support system for civic initiative

Since the year 2004, the building of a national support system for civic initiative has been based on county development centres, using the experiences gained earlier from the creation of a network of support centres for non-profit associations. As the training and advisory needs of the non-profit sector can be expected to increase with the development of the civil society, the advisory services provided to the non-profit sector in the county development centres should be developed further, both in respect of their quality and scope. It is important to ensure consistent and uniform availability of the service in all counties.

The activities of the local governments and networks of citizens' associations in supporting civic initiative are unbalanced and consistent monitoring data on the national level is not available.

Several national programmes and foundations have been created for funding citizens' associations and they usually do not permit support for operating expenses. Many foreign assistance programmes that started in the beginning of the nineties have ended and have not been replaced by corresponding internal measures. The foreign assistance is expected to decrease further in the next years. However, the associations believe that their economic viability has increased. It is evident, for example, in the generation of own income and increased volume of services provided to the public sector.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. Involvement

---

<sup>13</sup> *Eesti Mittetulundusühingute ja Sihtasutuste Liit 2005. Vabariiklaste arengust Eestis: ülevaade 2005.*

In 2005, the CSDC joint committee and State Chancellery developed the good practice of involvement, which is a set of principles to guide the cooperation between citizens' associations, interest groups and public sector in decision-making processes. The good practice of involvement serves as a recommendation for both the public sector and citizens' associations. Previously, the practice of involvement has been very variable in the public authorities at the intermediate and local levels. The aim of the good practice of involvement is to harmonise practices and establish a foundation from where each institution can develop their own practices of involvement.

Nine of ten public servants in Estonia believe that consultations with all interested parties help to achieve the best solution in policy development. However, more than half of the public servants have no experience of cooperation with citizens' associations. Cooperation with the citizens' associations is customary and continuous for every ninth government official, every third county government official and every fourth local government official.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. Public information and statistics

Public information on the operation of the government sector is available to the citizens' associations through the mandatory responses of the public authorities to information requests as specified in the Public Information Act, as well as through public web portals and printed media.

The Statistical Office, Tax Board and commercial register see the non-profit sector as a uniform whole, i.e., associations serving the public interest are not differentiated from the apartment and garage associations and non-profit associations and foundations established by the public sector itself. A problem is the reliability of statistical data, because it is not known what is the number of functioning associations, how many jobs are created, what is the level of volunteer contributions and investments. The register does not contain data on the membership of the associations, which does not enable assessment of the impact and reach of associations in the society. It has become an hindrance of successful involvement for the public sector.

The Classification of Economic Activities used in statistics is not suitable for describing the non-profit sector and does not enable comparisons between Estonia and other countries. As a result of these shortcomings, the government does not have a complete overview of the non-profit sector.

The problems associated in Estonia with the statistical data on the non-profit sector have

---

<sup>14</sup> *Riigikantselei ja Eesti Humanitaarinstituut 2006. Rollid ja hoiakud avalikus teenistuses.*

been studied at the government level in 2003 and several solutions have been proposed.<sup>15</sup> However, they have not been transformed into practice due to various reasons.

## 5. Citizen activity

The continuing alienation of the population from the state, indicated also by low participation in the elections, is a growing concern. While 68.9 % of the persons with voting rights voted in the elections of Riigikogu in 1995, the number had dropped to 58.1 % in 2003. The number of voters in the local government elections in 2005 was the lowest of the last 15 years with less than half of the electorate – 47.4 %.<sup>16</sup> Three respondents of five admit that politics is complicated and they do not really understand what is going on. 3 % of the men and 2 % of the women are members of a political party.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, it is important to increase the awareness of the citizens of the basic principles of a democratic country, as well as the rights and obligations of a citizen. More attention should be dedicated to citizen activity at the national, county and local levels.

An important indicator of citizen activity is the participation of the youth in youth associations. According to surveys, every tenth young person in Estonia is participating in the activities of some association.<sup>18</sup> This is slightly lower than the Lithuanian and Latvian level, but is still higher than the European average. A significant trend in the comparison between 1999 and 2005 is that Estonian people aged 14-16 attach increasing importance to the need to hear the voice of the people and they display increased interest in politics. Unfortunately, the behavioural attitudes of the youth tend to be oriented towards passive activities that do not require initiative; willingness for personal involvement is low.<sup>19</sup>

The overall attitude towards social solidarity is evident in the level of willingness to help other members of the society from one's free time. Three of five respondents support such behaviour, while one of ten opposes it.<sup>20</sup>

Equally important is the sense of solidarity and care for the events in the rest of the world. A world citizen feels personal responsibility and sees opportunities for conscious initiative to contribute actively to the solving of global problems, such as poverty, global

---

<sup>15</sup> Poliitikauuringute Keskus PRAXIS 2003. *A study of the non-profit associations statistics in Estonia* (unpublished)

<sup>16</sup> National Electoral Committee 2005. <http://www.vyk.ee/> 28.03.2006

<sup>17</sup> Eesti Tervise- ja Käitumisteaduste Tippkeskus 2005. *European Social Survey Report on Estonia 2004*. [http://www.tai.ee/failid/ESS04\\_Eesti\\_raport\\_uus.pdf](http://www.tai.ee/failid/ESS04_Eesti_raport_uus.pdf) 20.03.2006

<sup>18</sup> Eurobarometer 2003.1 *Youth in New Europe*.

<sup>19</sup> Toots, Anu, Idnurm, Tõnu, Ševeljova, Maria 2006. *Noorte kodanikukultuur muutuvus ühiskonnas. Final report of the follow-up of the Estonian citizen education survey*

<sup>20</sup> Eesti Tervise- ja Käitumisteaduste Tippkeskus 2005. *European Social Survey Report on Estonia 2004*. [http://www.tai.ee/failid/ESS04\\_Eesti\\_raport\\_uus.pdf](http://www.tai.ee/failid/ESS04_Eesti_raport_uus.pdf) 20.03.2006

warming, spread of terrorism, etc. Unfortunately, the readiness for personal involvement is low in Estonia in this respect as well. Two thirds of the population claim that they are interested in global issues concerning the developments in the world, but only 6 % are actively engaged in this field.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4. GOALS AND MEASURES

Based on the analysis of the current situation, this Development Plan sets the following goals for the year 2010:

1. **The public sector is an administratively efficient partner to the citizens' associations and individual activists in developing the society.**
2. **Support and funding of the citizens' associations is organised in a systematic way, based on knowledge and experiences.**
3. **The public sector is consistent and efficient in involving the citizens' associations in the decision-making processes.**
4. **The public, business and non-profit sectors are mutually well informed and are prepared to cooperate to strengthen the civil society.**
5. **People with active and caring attitude receive support and are competent to make their contributions to the society.**

The list of measures to achieve these goals is provided below.

Goal 1. The public sector is an administratively efficient partner to the citizens' associations and individual activists in developing the society.

Measures to achieve this goal:

1. Increasing the competence of the structural units and officials responsible for the development of civil society.

The ministries appoint the structural units and/or officials responsible for communication with the citizens' associations to ensure clear responsibility for this communication. The State Chancellery organises training courses on civil society for the responsible officials and, in order to improve the cooperation, the Ministry of the Interior will manage the organisation of joint seminars for the officials and representatives of the citizens' associations.

Output: the responsible persons have been appointed and disclosed by the institutions; 5 training days for a total of 50 officials have been organised in each year; and one joint seminar for 40 participants has been organised in each year.

Result: clear responsibility for communication with the citizens' associations; increased competence of the officials, improved willingness to cooperate and mutual awareness.

---

<sup>21</sup> *Avalik arvamus arengukoostööst. Välisministeeriumi tellimusel Turu-uuringute AS 2005. [http://www.vm.ee/est/kat\\_425/](http://www.vm.ee/est/kat_425/)*

## 2. Increasing the awareness of the public sector to civic initiative.

The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for drafting a 'Civic Initiative Reference Manual for Public Servants' and the State Chancellery organises training on civil society issues for the interested officials.

Output: the reference manual and its reprint in 1000 copies have been published and two training days for a total of 20 officials have been organised in each year.

Result: the awareness of the officials has increased.

## Goal 2. Support and funding of the citizens' associations is organised in a systematic way, based on knowledge and experiences.

Measures to achieve this goal:

### 2.1. Harmonisation of the principles and models of funding of citizens' associations.

The ministries organise extensive discussions between themselves to harmonise the principles and models, based on the results of the project for funding the citizens' associations, which was completed and submitted to the CSDC joint committee in 2006.

Output: the discussion between the ministries has taken place.

Result: a unified understanding of the principles of funding the citizens' associations from the state budget.

### 2.2. Development of the county support system for civic initiative.

The Ministry of the Interior continues through Enterprise Estonia the provision and development of the support services for the citizens' associations in the county development centres. In addition, support is provided for the organisation of base training of non-profit associations and institutional ability training in the counties.

Output: a county development centre is active in every county and annual training courses have been organised corresponding to the needs of the associations in each county.

Result: high-quality support services are ensured for the citizens' associations and the institutional efficiency of the associations has increased.

### 2.3. Further development of national funding programmes.

The Ministry of the Interior continues the implementation and development of the local initiative programme to strengthen the local community and the competitiveness of the region. The Ministry of Education and Research supports youth associations to ensure their activity. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides continuous funding to the citizens' associations engaged in development cooperation to increase their role in the development cooperation.

Output: project competitions have been organised and support has been allocated to the associations.

Result: As a result of the support, the ability of the citizens' associations to carry out their mission has improved and their activity has improved the situation of the target groups.



Goal 3. The public sector is consistent and efficient in involving the citizens' associations in the decision-making processes.

Measures to achieve this goal:

3.1. Implementation of the good practice of involvement and harmonisation of the practice in public institutions.

The State Chancellery organises creation of guidance materials on involvement for the officials and the good practice of involvement is introduced in the seminars to reinforce the good practice of involvement.

Output: guidance materials have been prepared and distributed to the target groups; one seminar for 20 officials has been organised in each year.

Result: involvement activities follow the good practice.

3.2. Further development of the national involvement web.

The State Chancellery leads the creation of the involvement web to increase the transparency of the decisions of government institutions, and the web is regularly updated.

Output: working involvement web, which is used as a tool of involvement.

Result: an opportunity has been created to involve the interested parties in the decision-making processes and the public sector receives a good input for decision-making.

Goal 4. The public, business and non-profit sectors are mutually well informed and are prepared to cooperate to strengthen the civil society.

Measures to achieve this goal:

4.1. Improvement of the register of non-profit organisation.

The Ministry of Justice improves the register of non-profit organisations so that it would provide accurate and useful data. The Classification of Economic Activities (hereinafter CEA) is improved to enable proper identification of the work of the associations.

Output: legislation has been amended and CEA has been improved.

Result: an overview of the active citizens' associations is available and the Estonian data are comparable with international statistics.

4.2. Implementation and support of the cooperation structures of public, business and non-profit sectors.

The Ministry of the Interior supports national cooperation bodies and representative organisations of the citizens' associations and development of the regional cooperation bodies in order to implement CSDC.

Output: the activities of the cooperation bodies and representative organisations have been continuously supported.

Result: the government has professional partners among the citizens' organisations and the regional cooperation has been improved.

### 3. Continuous monitoring and analysis of the development of civil society.

The Ministry of the Interior organises civil society surveys to analyse the development of the Estonian civil society and to direct the developments on the basis on the knowledge gained.

Output: at least one extensive survey has been carried out in each year.

Result: an overview of the development of the Estonian civil society is available.

### Goal 5. People with active and caring attitude receive support and are competent to make their contributions to the society.

Measures to achieve this goal:

#### 5.1. Better treatment of the values and functions of the civil society in the general education.

The Ministry of Education and Research develops the topics of civic education in the National Curriculum for Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools.

Output: the curriculum has been upgraded.

Result: the school provides the pupils with modern civic education.

#### 5.2. Creation of non-formal education opportunities to improve the skills of active participation.

The Ministry of Education and Research develops the topics of civic education in the framework curriculum for pre-school education.

Output: the curriculum has been upgraded.

Result: the knowledge on the basics of civic education are provided in the nursery schools.

#### 5.3. Promotion of volunteer activities.

The Ministry of the Interior supports volunteer activities and annual recognition of the volunteers at the national level.

Output: the national event for the recognition of volunteers has been organised.

Result: volunteer activities have been spread and play an important role in the Estonian society.

#### 5.4. Diversification and support of the participation opportunities for the youth.

In order to involve the youth in the decision-making processes, the Ministry of Education and Research develops participation bodies for the youth and establishes schemes of consultations with the youth at the national and local levels.

Output: youth bodies are functioning in all counties and the consultation schemes have been established and publicly advertised.

Result: the youth has been involved in the decision-making processes.

### 5. Increasing the awareness to civic initiative.

The Ministry of the Interior organises public awareness campaigns on civic initiative to raise the public awareness to civic initiative. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications coordinates the work of the ministries in making their web pages user-friendlier. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs finances the activities to promote information campaigns and global education in order to raise the awareness of the public and particularly the youth of the development cooperation and participation opportunities.

Output: projects of information campaigns and global education have been organised and the web pages of the ministries have been redesigned to be user-friendlier.

Result: increased public awareness to the civic initiative and participation.

## 5. COST PREDICTION

The cost prediction has been prepared for the years 2007-2010. All activities are financed from the state budget and the amounts have been approved by the relevant ministries. The parties carrying out the specific activities will be appointed by the ministry responsible.

2007	2008	2009	2010	Total cost
33 620 000	32 670 000	37 910 000	51 150 250	155 350 250

All costs required to implement the Development Plan will be foreseen and planned in the budget of each relevant ministry. The division of costs between strategic goals, measures/activities and sources has been provided in Annex 1.

## 6. IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT

The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for the implementation and management of the Government of the Republic Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support. In addition, the activities specified in the Development Plan will be implemented by the Ministry of the Interior, State Chancellery, all ministries and the Bureau of the Minister of Population Affairs, involving the local government units, non-profit and business sectors.

The Ministry of the Interior in cooperation with the involved ministries and other relevant institutions will prepare an implementation plan for the Development Plan and will submit it to the Government of the Republic for approval within three months after the approval of this Development Plan. Before submitting the implementation plan to the Government of the Republic, the Ministry of the Interior will coordinate it with the involved ministries and institutions.

The Ministry of the Interior coordinates and raises issues related to the supplementation and amendment of the Development Plan, and monitors the implementation of the Development Plan and its compliance with the goals specified.

The Ministry of the Interior will submit to the Government of the Republic annual progress reports on the implementation plan and the Development Plan, based on the assessment of the responsible ministry and involved ministries on the compliance of the activities with the goals specified in the Development Plan.

The Ministry of the Interior will contact the involved ministries and other relevant interested persons and institutions in the matters associated with the reporting on the Development Plan, its cost prediction and implementation plan, as well as supplementation and amendment of the said documents. The ministries involved and other relevant interested persons and institutions associated with this Development Plan are required to submit the data related to the implementation, supplementation or amendment of the Development Plan.

The involved ministries and institutions will inform the Ministry of the Interior during the preparation of the national budget strategy and state budget of the civic initiative support activities planned for the next planning period and budget year in their government area, based on which the Ministry of the Interior will launch the implementation plan and Development Plan amendment process if required.