

Estonia

UN CSD18: National Reporting on Common Issues

Estonian Parliament approved The Estonian National Strategy on Sustainable Development – "Sustainable Estonia 21" in 2005. The strategy determines the overarching long-term goals of Estonia for 2030 – viability of the Estonian cultural space, growth of welfare, coherent society and ecological balance. The strategy creates a general framework for interconnecting the social, economic and environmental spheres in terms of long-term development of the society and defines the general objective of the development for Estonia as movement towards the knowledge-based society. The term „ecological balance“, as one of the goals of the Strategy, covers sustainable use of natural resources, reduction of pollution and preservation of biodiversity.

Since 2006 State Chancellery's Bureau of Sustainable Development Strategy is responsible for implementation and reporting processes of the SE21 to the Government. All related ministries as well as other institutions are responsible for implementing the sustainable development goals, monitoring and reporting in their respective fields. General monitoring of the progress towards the long-term goals is supported by the Dashboard of Sustainable Development <http://www.stat.ee/dashboard>. In order to cover the cross-cutting issues and inter-linkages an inter-ministerial working group at the Deputy Secretary General level was established in 2007.

In the environmental field the most general strategic document is Estonian Environmental Strategy 2030. It builds upon the principles of the "Sustainable Estonia 21" and serves as the basis for the preparation and revision of all sector-specific development plans within the sphere of the environment. The implementation plan of the Strategy is The National Environmental Action Plan of Estonia 2007–2013. A number of more specialised development plans having great importance in promoting sustainable use of environment can be mentioned: National Waste Management Plan 2008–2013 (entered into force in 2008), Estonian Forestry Development Plan until 2010 (2002), National Development Plan for the Use of Oil Shale 2008–2015 (2008), National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (2008), National Spatial Plan "Estonia 2010" (2000), Estonian Housing Development Plan 2008–2013 (2008), Estonian Energy Sector Development Plan 2020 (2009), Biomass and Bioenergy Development Plan 2007–2013 (2007), Transport Development Plan 2006–2013 (2007).

Education, training, awareness-rising and capacity-building

In Estonia the Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for the development and implementation of educational policy and supervise on the basic and secondary schools at national level. Estonian educational system consists of basic, secondary, vocational, higher and adult education. After satisfactory completion of the compulsory nine-year basic education, pupils may continue their studies either in gymnasiums or vocational educational institutions. Gymnasiums offer a three-year secondary general education and vocational education institutions offer secondary vocational education from one to three years on the basis of both basic and secondary education. Academic higher education in Estonia is divided into three levels: bachelor's studies, master's studies, and doctoral studies. Estonia has a moderate number of public and private universities. The largest public universities are Tartu University, Tallinn University of Technology, Tallinn University, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Estonian Academy of Arts, and the largest private university is the International University of Audentes. Adult education in Estonia is regulated by a law, passed in 1993 and supplemented in 1998, which determines the duties of the state and local governments and of employers in creating necessary conditions for adult education, and prescribing financing principles. Development of a quality system of adult education will also continue as well as the awareness raising activities for general public in TV, radio and print media with the purpose of making life-long learning more popular. There are also several adult training

facilities in Estonia where one can study environmental subjects.

Environmental education

In Estonia environmental education is organised by the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of the Environment. The Ministry of Education and Research plans and organises Estonian education, research, youth and language policy in Estonia. Thus, the Ministry of Education and Research shapes the environmental education and environmental awareness of Estonian youth in the broadest sense. Activities in the scope of the Ministry of Education and Research set out a minimum content and level of environmental education provided to every student in the Republic of Estonia. By learning about environmental subjects, students are made aware of relations between nature, society and culture, of sustainable attitudes toward their environment and the idea of sustainable development. Discussion of the interrelations between man, nature and society, enables to shape the values and behavioural norms of the students. Environmental education is a part of the curriculum, continuing throughout all levels of education. People with high awareness of nature can act in a sustainable manner; therefore it is important to ensure adequate availability of environmental education.

Environmental education in Estonian schools consists of two interconnected areas of activities. The content and organisation of environmental education as specified in the national curriculum and extracurricular activities, environmental programs, projects, the so-called eco-schools, hobby centres, etc. The national curriculum specifies that environmental education is integrated into all subjects. In gymnasium the corresponding issues may be presented as optional courses. The curricular activities do not suffice for creating and meeting the environmental interests of the students of comprehensive and vocational schools. The state and local governments have given support to schools and teachers in organising extracurricular activities, such as field studies, olympiads, competitions, conferences, etc. After their classes, the students can participate in the work of various hobby centres.

Estonia has enhanced efforts to develop and use curricula and teacher training focused on environmental topics to integrate those issues at all educational levels and across the disciplines. Having the environment and sustainable development as the underlying themes in the curricula is quite a new phenomenon in our educational system and therefore teachers and heads of schools need advice and training in these matters. To meet this demand, several environmental education projects for schools are organized.

A joint activity plan was signed by the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Education and Research on 10th March 2005 and in 2006 Environmental Education Concept For the Republic of Estonia (<http://www.envir.ee/379027>) was developed. This document gives clear strategy objectives for environmental education in Estonia. A special website was created for different environmental education programs (<http://www.keskkonnaharidus.ee/>). This website aggregates environmental education programs from all over the country by topic and target audience and gives possibilities to use them as additional materials for studying in class or in local environmental education centre. The initiator of this project was a foundation called Tartu Environmental Education Centre (TEEC), which was established in 2002 on the basis of the former Tartu Loodusmaja (Nature House). The purpose of TEEC is to develop environmental awareness and to promote sustainable values of life through training programmes, projects and public information.

Training, co-operation and awareness-raising

The Ministry of the Environment administrates the Estonian Environment Information Centre (EEIC), which is a state agency founded in 1993. The EEIC collects, processes, analyses and distributes information about the nature of Estonia, the state of the environment and factors that

impact them. Since 2004 the Ministry of the Environment also has a Bureau of Environmental Education. In addition to education this bureau deals with different public awareness programmes as well. For example the prize “Environmental Action of the Year” is being awarded to give credit for the best environmental actions. Since 2005 environmental courses are organized for decision-makers - members of the Parliament, county governors, mayors, local government representatives, journalists and others, who are not working in the environmental field.

In 2006 the first Environmental Education Forum between the Baltic States took place. Co-operation with the Netherlands was started the same year with an aim to gather new knowledge in the field of public awareness and inclusion. There are also several financial programs to encourage environmental education and establish local environmental education centers. During the last years around 2500 projects have been financed in the total amount of over the 10 million euros.

One of the most reliable ways of bringing environmental information to people is media. Estonia has different programs devoted to environmental issues, periodically all main newspapers publish analyses and overviews of the problems concerning climate change. Many tv-shows on different (both public and private) channels concentrate only on environmental issues, for example “Rohelised uudised” (“The Green News”), “Tasakaal” (“Equilibrium”) and “Osoon” (“Ozone”)

Estonia is participating in the regional sustainable development co-operation Baltic Agenda 21 which was launched by the 11 Baltic Sea Region countries in 1998. Baltic Agenda 21 is a regional expression of the global agenda 21 adopted by the United Nations “Earth Summit” in 1992. Being an open and transparent network for cooperation, Baltic Agenda 21 links together a wide range of stakeholders in a common endeavour for regional sustainable development. Education plays an important role in the Baltic Agenda 21. Since Baltic Agenda 21 is more indicative than operational, several efforts have subsequently been made to translate its intentions and perspectives into concrete policies and actions. Baltic 21 comprises Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden. Baltic Agenda 21 represents a long-term commitment, one that must involve many people and organizations. Baltic Agenda 21’s overall goal for education is that all individuals should have a competence to support development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Education on sustainable development should be based on an integrated approach to economic, societal and environmental development.

Estonian Commission on Sustainable Development was founded in 1996 as an advisory body to the Government on the issues of sustainable development. The task of the Commission is to analyse the policy of the state on sustainable development and to make proposals to the Government as well as to state and local government institutions ensuring synergy among developments in the economy, social affairs and environmental areas. The commission also has the right to propose drafting legislation and organising research on the subject. Estonian Commission on Sustainable Development supervised the development of the Estonian National Strategy on Sustainable Development – “Sustainable Estonia 21” (SE21), which was approved by the Estonian Parliament in September 2005.

From September 2005 to February 2007 an European Union financed (6th Framework Programme) project ATLAS was initiated, with Tallinn University as a leading partner. The one major objective of the project was to survey the existing education and training provision in the field of land use and sustainability impact assessment in Europe and classify them according to pre-set criteria. The project’s web site www.atlas-eu.org was launched in October 2005. As a result of the ATLAS-project a web-based database of courses at universities, polytechnics, professional training organisations and others dealing with courses on PhD, Master-level, Bachelor level, Post-Doc, Professional training, and ‘Other’ (including summer schools) was created to help

people find landscape and sustainability impact education and training in Europe.

Environmental NGOs

The environmental movement in Estonia has developed substantially since independence from the former Soviet Union. Initially, only a few NGOs existed, the Estonian Green Movement biggest among them. Estonian Green Movement is a non-governmental, non-profit environmental organization. It was founded in 1988 as one of the first environmental NGOs in Estonia that started to deal with a wide range of environmental and developmental issues. The Estonian Fund for Nature was founded in Tartu in 1991 for the implementation of and fund-raising for environmental projects.

The environmental education is also incorporated in the activities of the NGOs. In year 2002 ten Estonian environmental NGOs established Estonian Council of Environmental NGOs (EKO) to gain a stronger influence on the environmental decision-making process in Estonia. Members of the EKO are for example Estonian Green Movement, Estonian Fund for Nature, SEI-Tallinn, Estonian Seminatural Community Conservation Association, Estonian Student Society for Environment Protection "Sorex", Tartu Student Nature Protection Circle etc. Besides those, there are several (up to 100) other NGOs who declare that they are dealing with environmental questions - Friends of Earth – Estonia, European Youth Forest Action Estonia, REC-Estonia, Estonian Geographical Society, Estonian Union of Scout Supporter's Societies, Estonian Nature Education Society, Estonian Biology and Geography Teachers Association, Estonian Ecotourism Association, Tallinn Society for Nature Conservation, Centre of Ecological Technologies, Estonian Institute for Futures Studies, Estonian Naturalists Society, Estonian Water Association etc.

Mobilization of financial resources from all sources

Sustainable development as a broader development ideology is related to the development of the economy and society as a whole and its financing. This means that it is important to pay attention to finances moving via the public sector budget and also sums from the EU structural funds in case of Estonia as a country with economy below the average level. Estonia's national budget has been growing very rapidly during the last decade. While the national budget volume in 2003, e.g., was approximately 40 billion kroons (2.5 billion euros), by 2008 it had more than doubled – approximately 90 billion (5.7 billion euros). However, the current economic crisis has caused the 2009 and 2010 national budgets to remain at the 2008 level. The 2010 national budget could be effectively described as a crisis budget.

According to the governance functions classifier COFOG¹, the breakdown of spending in the 2010 national budget is as follows: general government sector services 9.3%, national defence 4.1%, public safety and law enforcement 5.6%, economy 16.2%, environment protection 3.7%, housing and municipal affairs 0.1%, health care 13.7%, leisure, culture and religion 2.8%, education 12.5%, social welfare 32%.

¹ Classification of the Functions of Government.

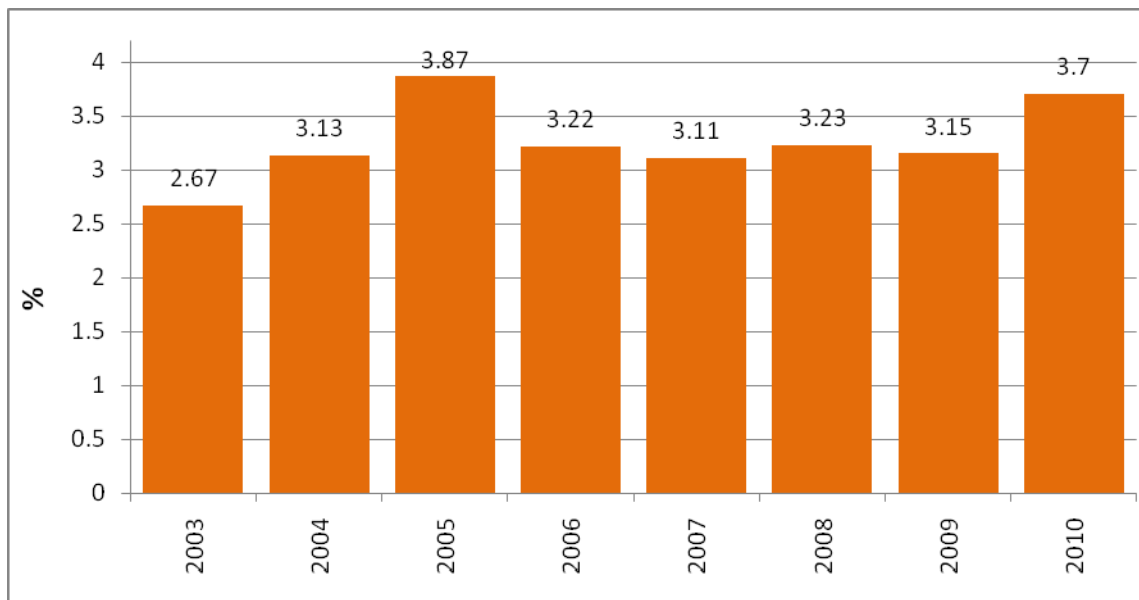


Figure 1. Share of environmental spending of Estonia's national budget in 2003-2010 (%) (Source: Covering letter of the 2010 draft national budget)

A closer study of the environmental protection spending as per year shows that with minor fluctuations the proportion has remained more or less the same. The increase in 2010 is mainly related to the greater spending on account of foreign support and earnings from the sale of greenhouse gas quotas. Environmental priorities in the coming period are above all water treatment and waste handling. Almost half of the 3.7 percent of the 2010 budget is allocated to investments in local governments' water and waste handling projects.

The total volume of the European Union (EU) support to Estonia in the 2007-2013 programme period amounts to 53.3 billion kroons (3.4 billion euros). The use of the structural funds is based on the Estonian National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013² and three operational programmes³. Within the Estonian National Strategic Reference Framework, 23.7% of the funds would be used for the priority Sustainable use of environment. But most of the other priorities like Educated and active people, Better connection opportunities, Integral and balanced development of regions are also highly important for the realisation of the sustainable development ideas.

The main distributor of the EU structural funds' resources as for environment in Estonia is the foundation Environmental Investments Centre (EIC). The main activities of the EIC are to channel the proceeds from the exploitation of the environment into environmental projects, to perform as the implementing agency for the environmental projects funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF) and to lend money for the implementation of environmental projects⁴. In 2000-2008 the EIC has allocated support to more than 11,000 projects at a total amount of more than 4.1 billion kroons (262 million euros). The EIC has intermediated in the years 2007-2013 a total amount of 2.5 billion kroons (163 million euros) from the ERDF⁵, 50 million kroons (3.2 million euros) from the

² For details see http://www.strukturifondid.ee/public/Estonian_NSRF_21June07_ENG.pdf

³ 1) Operational Programme for Human Resource Development; 2) Operational Programme for Development of Living Environment; 3) Operational Programme for Development of Economic Environment; For details see: <http://www.strukturifondid.ee/index.php?id=12034>

⁴ The EIC grants special purpose loans from its own funds. The loan is, in the first place, intended for environmental investments and for the development of projects supporting sustainability and restoration of the environment.

⁵ In the years 2004-2006, the EIC as the implementing agency of the environmental measure financed channelled a total of 150 million kroons (9,5 million euros) for the development of the environmental infrastructures from the ERDF. By now the financing decisions concerning the entire allocated amount have been made and most of the

ESF and the CF will finance large-scale waste management and water management projects with 9.8 billion kroons (626 million euros) in 2007–2013.

Among other significant institutions besides the EIC we should mention the Estonian Agricultural Registers and Information Board⁶ (among other it mediates the EU farming and rural life development support and the European Fisheries Fund support), which finance such areas important for sustainable development like organic farming, landscape protection etc. The Enterprise Estonia⁷ and Credit and Export Guarantee Fund KredEx⁸ have also issued supports, which could be linked to sustainable development.

For the private sector the access to banking capital was good till year 2007 and the interest rates were low. For the technology related projects that are too risky for commercial banks the companies have had possibility to apply for innovation grants from the foundation Enterprise Estonia. In 2006, the Estonian Development Fund was created by the Estonian Parliament to improve access to the venture capital for Estonian companies (Private venture capital market is underdeveloped in Estonia at the time being). At the same time the motivation of the companies for new technological solutions, if not to speak about just simple purchasing new equipment from foreign countries was relatively low before the current economic crises. The economy developed mainly on the basis of domestic market boom and relatively non complicated export production (mainly subcontracting). In the field of developing environmental technologies Estonia has a few promising domestic R&D companies, but most of them are small firms with moderate sales volumes.

Cooperative frameworks and partnerships

Estonians have always been concerned about and interested in the environment and their future development, therefore they participate actively in the decision making and future planning processes. The best examples of that are national activities carried out in recent years. In 2008 hundreds of organisations and more than 50 000 volunteers cleaned up more than 10 000 dumping sites all over the country (<http://www.teeme2008.ee/?setlang=eng>). In 2009, a brainstorming session called My Estonia brought together more than 11 000 participants in order to generate ideas for improving our neighbourhood and the entire Estonia (<http://www.minueesti.ee/?lng=en>).

To improve the efficiency in implementing the Estonian National Strategy on Sustainable Development, an inter-ministerial working group for sustainable development was also created by a directive of the State Secretary on 7 March 2008. Since 2005 the State Chancellery has taken the initiative to form partnerships among the society. To improve the partnerships the State Chancellery has coordinated the work to come out with the Code of Good Practice on Involvement which declares the principles of partnerships between state offices and their partners. The document declares that interested parties should be involved in decision making processes on preparation of following documents:

- Drafts of legislation acts;
- Drafts of orders and regulations of the Government of the Republic;

projects have been accomplished.

⁶ For details see: www.pria.ee/

⁷ Enterprise Estonia is one of the largest institutions within the national support system for entrepreneurship, providing financial assistance, advisory, cooperation opportunities and training for entrepreneurs, research establishments, public and third sector. For details see: www.eas.ee

⁸ The Credit and Export Guarantee Fund KredEx was founded in 2001 by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications with the aim to improve the financing of enterprises in Estonia, decrease export-related credit risks, enable people to build or renovate their homes and promote energy efficiency in Estonia. During the period 2003-2008 Kredex has allocated support for sustainable renovation in the amount of 129 million kroons (8 million euros). For details see: www.kredex.ee

- Drafts of ministerial orders;
- Documents, conceptions, policies, action plans, programs etc. which have great influence on state development;
- Drafts of legislation acts and strategic documents of EU institutions;
- Instructions and procedures for public services;
- Conventions and international agreements as well as documents developed according to them, which have great influence on society.

To raise public participation in decision making processes the public involvement web-page (www.osale.ee) has been set up where all the drafts of the documents mentioned above have been published. All interested parties have a free access to them and have equal possibilities to comment on them.

To meet the needs of professional and highest level environmental protection and economical growth, the Estonian Ministry of the Environment has signed the Good Will Contracts with several companies in which both parties express a common understandings and achievements in the field (<http://www.envir.ee/992335>). According to these contracts the Estonian Ministry of Environment takes responsibility to inform the partner about the oncoming changes in legislative acts and invites the partner to participate in the preparation of strategic documents in the field. The partner on the other hand takes responsibilities which are not stated in valid legislation but which significantly improve the environmental conditions.

To increase the participation in the decision making processes nine biggest environmental NGO-s have collaborated under the roof organisation called EKO (<http://www.eko.org.ee/>). These organisations have regular meetings with representatives of the Estonian Ministry of Environment to discuss different topics concerning environmental protection and sustainable development (<http://www.envir.ee/1002784>). To share the latest information in the field there is a special open mailing-list (lloodusaeg@lists.ut.ee). Governmental offices regularly present their information about future events, meetings and legislation acts in preparation stages. This is also an active discussion forum in the field.