

# **Overview of the work of the joint committee of the Government of the Republic and representatives of citizens' associations for implementing the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept between June 2005 and May 2006**

## **Introduction**

This overview concerns the work and results accomplished by the joint committee of the Government of the Republic and representatives of citizens' associations between June 2005 and May 2006. The joint committee of the Government of the Republic and representatives of citizens' associations (hereinafter the 'Committee') was established by the Government of the Republic Order No. 658-k of 9 October 2003 for launching a system for evaluating the preparation, implementation and completion of the activity plans for implementation of the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept (hereinafter the 'Concept').

The Committee includes 16 representatives of the roof organisations of specialised citizens' associations and 11 representatives of the public sector<sup>1</sup>. The Committee is chaired by the Minister of Regional Affairs and its work coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior. The internal procedures of the Committee prescribe preparation of an annual overview of its work by 15 May and submission of the overview to the Government of the Republic by 1 June.

In 2004, the overview submitted to the Government was drafted as an activity plan, which received a principal approval of the Government on 12.08.2004. The organisation of the work of the Committee in 2005-2006 has been focused on the achievement of the goals specified in the activity plan and implementation of the resolutions of the Government of the Republic adopted on 16.06.2005 and recorded in the session minutes No. 26.

The process of implementation of the Concept and the activity plan comply with the good governance principles specified in the European Commission White Paper: European Governance (COM (2001) 428, July 2001) and the proposals made in the document. The activities that have been launched and are continued are related with the Recommendation Rec (2001) 19 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on participation of citizens in local public life.

## **I. OVERVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE IN THE REPORTING PERIOD**

### **1. Members and procedures of the Committee**

The membership of the Committee has changed during the year: the Ministry of the Environment, Estonian Council of Environmental NGOs and Tartu Volunteers' Centre have joined the work of the Committee. The Ministry of Social Affairs, Federation of Estonian Student Unions, Association of Estonian Youth Unions, Estonian village movement

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex 1: List of the members of the Committee

'Kodukant', Roundtable of Estonian Non-Profit Organisations have substituted their representatives. The work of the Committee is divided between three work groups: legislation and involvement, citizens' education and public awareness, and sustainability. The latter was formerly known as the work group for funding and statistics, but it was decided to rename it a work group for sustainability, as the scope of their work was wider.

The work of the Committee and its work groups in 2005-2006 has focused mainly on the implementation of the activities required for achievement of the objectives specified in the activity plan.

As the coordinator of work, the Ministry of the Interior has been responsible for preparing and supporting the Committee sessions and work group meetings. The work groups have involved different experts and representatives of relevant organisations.

In the second half of the period, the internal procedures of the Committee were amended in order to clarify the procedure for accepting and excluding members, the roles and tasks of the members and work groups.

## **2. Completion of the activity plan for implementation of the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept**

### **2.1. Activities carried out for the achievement of the goals**

- **Establishing of structures to increase cooperation between the government and civil society organisations in the development of civic initiatives**

Five sessions of the joint committee took place in the reporting period to discuss important civil society issues and to adopt decisions necessary for further development. The minutes of the meetings of the Committee and the work groups are available on the web site of the Ministry of the Interior at [www.sisemin.gov.ee/atp/kodanikuyhiskond](http://www.sisemin.gov.ee/atp/kodanikuyhiskond).

18 county level open seminars were organised in 2005 all over Estonia in order to distribute information about the role and activities of the Committee. In addition to distributing information, the seminars were also used to collect the questions, proposals and opinions of the public regarding the development of civil society (a summary is available on the web pages of the Ministry of the Interior and the Roundtable of Estonian Non-Profit Organisations). At the end of 2005, a text was prepared to introduce the 11 goals of the activity plan for the ECSD Concept to the general public, whereas each topic includes references to relevant Internet resources. The text was printed (1300 copies) in January 2006.

### **Government of the Republic strategy for promoting civic initiative**

Pursuant to the resolution of the Government of the Republic session minutes No. 26 of 16.06.2005, a Civic Initiative Support Strategy (hereinafter 'CISS') was prepared in cooperation between all the ministries and the joint committee. It is a continuation of the activity plan for the ECSD Concept 2004-2006. The strategy specifies the responsibilities of the public sector and division of tasks in the implementation of the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept. The document also includes an implementation plan for 2007-2010. A new implementation plan should be drafted in 2010.

CISS was drafted according to the good practices of involvement. Despite the tight schedule, the draft of the strategy was introduced in all counties, where also many good proposals were collected. Before the round of approval in the ministries, CISS was introduced to the secretary generals.

The fourth Estonian civil society conference titled 'Small Country with vast Society' was organised in Tallinn by the Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organisations (NENO) on 24.-25.11.2005. The topics discussed included advocacy, involvement and policy-making. The conference had 300 participants representing the third sector, public sector, entrepreneurs and media. In his speech, Prime Minister Andrus Ansip presented the good practice of involvement.

A community foundations' conference for rural municipality leaders was organised together with Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation on 07.04.2006 in Viljandi, discussing the cooperation opportunities between the public sector and citizens' associations as well as the nature of the community foundation as a practical solution for local development. The representatives of Estonian and Latvian public and non-profit sectors presented several good examples of the work of community foundations.

- **Clear mechanisms for the involvement of the representatives of civil society organisations in the development and implementation of policies and legislative acts**

A Good Practice of Involvement was prepared in 2005 in cooperation between the ministries and citizens' associations under the leadership of State Chancellery. It includes general principles of involvement, which the institutions and organisations can use to prepare guidelines and involvement actions. The Good Practice of Involvement has been promoted broadly since autumn 2005 (e.g., a workshop on involvement during the forum of public servants). The State Chancellery has also initiated an action plan for the implementation of the Good Practice of Involvement, which also includes presentation of the practices and the principles of civil society during training courses for public servants.

- **Overview of different forms of civic engagement and the appropriate legal environment for the support of civic initiatives**

The Committee has cooperated with the Tartu Volunteers' Centre in order to analyse the requirements and opportunities for legal regulation of volunteer activities. The expert assessment of the legal aspects of volunteer activities was completed in June 2005 (prepared by Margit Vutt). Based on the analysis and having held consultations with all the ministries, the joint committee decided to initiate the development of a strategy of volunteer activities. Development of the strategy started in the beginning of 2006. A respective work group has been established and the finished document is expected at the end of 2006.

A mapping of active civil law partnerships in rural areas was carried out through the network of the movement 'Kodukant' from January to April 2006 in order to determine the number of partnerships, the nature of their activities and their relationships with the local government. The results were analysed by Ülle Lepp, an expert with the work group for sustainability, and the joint committee will take account of the relevant proposals in its future work. The data collectors and the expert finds with regard to the conclusions of the survey report that the

persons entering into civil law partnership agreements do not have a clear idea of the legal nature of partnerships and the respective regulations; there is a shortage of relevant information materials and training; a database of civil law partnerships must be created at the local governments.

- **Effective usage of technological means for the involvement of citizens in the decision-making processes**

The work on the mapping of existing web-based decision-making and legislative, or edemocracy opportunities has been continued with the aim of using the results for creating a single web portal. The State Chancellery has a work group entrusted with the task of creating a user-friendly web portal, which would serve as a tool for government institutions and citizens' associations participating in e-consultations. The initial assignment description for the involvement web was prepared by the State Chancellery from September to December 2005. It was followed by the preparation of a public procurement for the involvement web, which was announced in May 2006. The process has included several discussions to identify, which needs of the government institutions should be met by the involvement web and which opportunities it should offer to the citizens' associations.

- **Transparent and clear funding schemes targeted to support the development of civil society and civil society organisations from the state budget**

The Ministry of the Interior has prepared an overview of the funding allocated to the civil society organisations from the state budget in 2001-2003; it was heard during the cabinet session on 30 September 2004. The survey of the ministries was repeated in the autumn 2005. The results of the survey indicate that the funding schemes can be made more transparent and be better targeted through agreement regarding the general principles of supporting the citizens' associations, continuous analysis of the efficiency and bottlenecks of different schemes, as well as the development of assessment methods for the results of funding.

With the approval of the joint committee, the Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organisations initiated in May 2005 a project for the development of unified principles and harmonisation of funding schemes based on these principles. In this framework, the funding consultant Kalle Jürgenson has developed proposals concerning the funding of citizens' associations from the state budget. The joint committee reviewed the funding principles during its session on 16 May 2006 and decided that the materials can be used as a basis for future work. In addition to the joint committee, the project has been supervised by the steering committee for the funding project. The project was supported by the Baltic-American Partnership program. There are already plans for a follow-up project, which would analyse the opportunities for the implementation of the unified funding principles.

- **Improved and targeted system of tax benefits and charitable giving**

In the summer of 2005, the joint committee, the Ministry of Finance and the Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organisations published information materials (3000 leaflets) on the existing opportunities for charitable giving, which have been distributed through the cooperation networks and during a number of different events.

- **Overview of umbrella organisations, their development and cooperation with the public sector**

The Network of Estonian Nonprofit Associations continued the development project for umbrella organisations, which included three seminars: sustainable strategic management, advocacy and involvement of members, development of the management organ for the umbrella organisations. The training events have improved the ability of umbrella organisations to represent their members and to participate in the decision-making processes.

- **Adequate and informational register of non-profit organisations and data collection methods describing civic engagement**

Further correspondence and consultations with the representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, Statistical Office, Tax and Customs Board, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finance, Centre of Registers and the joint committee have been held in the reporting period to improve the data in the register of non-profit organisations. We have reached an agreement in principle that § 36 of the Non-profit Associations Act should be amended so that the non-profit associations (incl. the churches) would submit their annual reports to the register of non-profit organisations (and not to the Tax and Customs Board as today). The Ministry of Justice has granted its approval to the amendment. The Ministry of Finance considers it practical that the expenses related to the improvement and development of the register would be handled during the approval procedure of the 2007 budget by the Ministry of Justice as the manager of the register of non-profit associations. This would enable to start implementing the act on the reporting period that starts on 1 January 2007 or at a later date.

- **Educational institutions are nurturing the development of caring and responsible citizens who value participation and volunteering**

2005 was proclaimed by the Council of Europe as the European Year of Citizenship through Education, which provided the committee with a good opportunity to draw more attention to the citizenship education and involve further parties in the activities.

A web site on citizenship education was published at [www.bapp.ee/kodanikuharidus](http://www.bapp.ee/kodanikuharidus). It presents a great variety of information, including a database of citizens' associations prepared to assist teachers in presenting the relevant subjects in the classes or to present their activities during the events organised by the schools.

Three in-service courses (2 in Tallinn, 1 in Tartu) for the teachers of Civic Education took place in August 2005. A forum of citizenship education was organised in Hiiumaa in cooperation with the Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association.

The Baltic-American Partnership program has initiated and funded several competitions at schools in the framework of the Year of Citizenship through Education, aimed at the development of methodological materials for Civic Education and finding good cooperation opportunities for joint projects between the schools and citizens' associations. Many information materials (leaflets, posters, books) on citizenship education have been distributed in the schools. The Year of Citizenship through Education was concluded on 18.11.2005 with a thematic conference in Tartu that summarised the events of the past year, announced the winners of the competitions and recognised the outstanding activists. The conference had 82 participants.

A recognition ceremony for the work of 100 volunteers was organised on 4 December 2005 in the concert hall 'Estonia', preceded by the selection of the best from among nearly 350 nominees. The next recognition ceremony for volunteers will take place in December 2006.

The Ministry of the Interior and Non-Estonians' Integration Foundation published an updated version (5200 copies) of the 'Citizen's Manual', which was sent in April 2006 to the county development centres, local governments, libraries, schools and many non-profit organisations.

The national curricula developments have been consistently monitored and respective memos and proposals have been submitted to the Ministry of Education and Development of Curricula Development of the Research and National Examination and Qualification Centre.

The Ministry of Education and Research and the Centre of Educational Programmes of the Integration Foundation have funded a follow-up survey of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievements (IEA) on the democratic practices at schools. The results were presented on 17.04.2005 and they evoke significant responses in the society.

- **Sustainable networks that support civic engagement and cooperation in civic initiatives**

In 2005, the government started to allocate support through the Enterprise Estonia Foundation to the county development centres to organise training courses for non-profit associations. The training courses were well received all over Estonia and, in addition to the representatives of NGOs, attracted interest also among the local government officials. The training courses continue in 2006. The Ministry of the Interior and the Committee have been in close cooperation with the Enterprise Estonia in the matters of evaluating the projects directed to the citizens' associations as well as developing the advisory and support system.

In August 2005, the Ministry of the Interior developed the basic principles for a public awareness campaign on civic engagement. Two public competitions have been announced during the reporting period with the total value of 800 000 kroons; a total of 91 applications were submitted and 13 projects received funding. The main objective of the programme is to increase citizens' awareness of the public administration processes and the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept, as well as to value the cooperation between civic initiatives and associations and the government. The competitions for public awareness campaigns should continue in the next years.

- **Various opportunities for lifelong learning accessible to everyone**

According to the agreement concluded in 2005 between the Ministry of Education and Research and the Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association, 2 million kroons have been allocated from the state budget to support the work of 49 adult education schools, 73 learning circles, and the methodological development activities of the Non-formal Adult Education Association. The Non-formal Adult Education Association has prepared a basic curriculum for civic education. Development of a system for evaluating the quality of education provided by the adult education schools has been started.

## **2.2. Other activities supporting the implementation of the activity plan**

### • **Awareness-raising**

The web page of the Ministry of the Interior<sup>2</sup> serves as the daily source of information and the Civil Society section provides updated overviews of the source documents related to the work of the Committee, minutes of meetings and other materials.

The Ministry of the Interior prepares press releases on the most important activities of the Committee.

An important channel of information is available through the organisations and networks represented by the members of the Committee. For example, the web sites and newsletters of NENO and other organisations continuously publish information related to the implementation of the CSDC.

In the beginning of 2006, the Ministry of the Interior issued a publication to inform the public about the role and activities of the Committee, and it has been distributed during larger events. An updated version of the Brief Glossary of Civil Society (by Mikko Lagerspetz) was published (1400 copies) to harmonise and explain the terminology associated with the civil society.

#### ▪ **Presentation of the Estonian civil society to the embassies**

A presentation event for embassies was organised on 13.06.2005, where the Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organisations provided to 12 embassies an extensive overview of the Estonian civil society and the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept.

#### ▪ **Session of the European Economic and Social Committee**

A session of the European Economic and Social Committee was held on 31.03.2006 in Tallinn, which was dedicated to the topic “Future of Europe and civil society” where a representative of the Ministry of the Interior gave a thorough presentation of the Estonian civil society and the cooperation between the government and citizens’ associations.

### **3. The resources available to the Committee and the use of resources**

The work of the Committee and implementation of the activity plan have been financed through:

- the resources planned for the said activities in the activity plan and the existing budget resources;
- contributions made by the organisations participating in the process.

In 2005, the state budget allocations for the coordination expenses of the Committee amounted to 200 000 kroons. The funds were used through the agreements with different organisations to accomplish the following activities: an international seminar ‘From Agreements to Results’; specification of the legal problems associated with volunteer activities and legal expert assessment; organisation of county-level seminars to introduce the work of the Committee; publications presenting various opportunities for charitable giving; organisation of the

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sisemin.gov.ee/atp/kodanikuyhiskond>

concluding event of the Year of Citizenship through Education; volunteer recognition event; publications (CSDC activity plan and Brief Glossary of Civil Society).

The funds allocated for the citizen public awareness programme were 300 000 kroons in 2005 and 500 000 kroons in 2006. The continuation of the public awareness programme was made possible by the supplementary budget 2005, where 2.5m kroons were allocated for the civil society programmes. The supplementary budget enable to issue the reprint of the Citizen's Manual, map the civil law partnerships in rural areas, develop indicators for the implementation of CSDC, organise the community foundations' conference, employ an expert for the preparation of CISS, and provide support to the organisations engaged in the implementation of CSDC.

A large part of the results of the joint committee have been made possible by the contributions from the organisations, whose representatives are responsible for chairing the work groups of the Committee. In addition to the organisations participating in the work of the Committee, a significant contribution towards implementation of the activities associated with the Civil Society Development Concept was made by the Baltic-American Partnership program. The organisations participating in the work of the Committee and other interested organisations have contributed their resources towards implementation of various activities to support the implementation of the Civil Society Development Concept.

## II. FUTURE CHALLENGES

### ▪ **Willingness of the organisations to make contributions and rate of participation**

The Committee includes representatives from 11 organisations of the public sector and 16 citizens' associations<sup>3</sup>. The participation of the members and organisations represented by them in the implementation of the activities and in contributing to the process is uneven – larger roles and responsibilities are borne by the organisations whose representatives chair the work groups.

The internal procedures of the Committee and the process of implementing the Concept are built on the premise that the participants are active contributors, who highlight the needs and ideas of specific target groups but are also able to consider the needs of the civil society as a whole.

A training and awareness project is launched in May 2006 to engage the members of the Committee and improve the work with the media, including the following activities:

1. Preparation and organisation of a public awareness event to promote civic engagement in the summer of 2006 in Tallinn, where the different citizens' association would present their objectives, activities and achievements, focusing on practical participation opportunities and introduction of the impact of their work.
2. Preparation and organisation of two communication development seminars for the members of the joint committee of the Government of the Republic and representatives of citizens' associations. Topics: increasing the role of the members in the communication activities of the

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<sup>3</sup> Addition of new members to the Committee is being processed



joint committee; providing training to the members on the principles, target group, impact and evaluation of communication, media procedures and lobbying.

3. Preparation and distribution of monthly electronic newsletters providing information on the work of the joint committee of the Government of the Republic and representatives of citizens' associations as of May 2006.

4. Public awareness activities in November 2006 during the week of the Citizen's Day (target group: pupils).

5. Preparation of a communication strategy for the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept.

▪ **Ensuring sufficient resources for the implementation of CSDC**

The 2006 budget of the Ministry of the Interior foresees 700 000 kroons for the coordinating expenses of the Committee, aimed at ensuring the required resources for ordering expert assessments and surveys, publication of necessary information materials and organisation of key events. As the first stage of implementation of CSDC (2004-2006) will be completed by the end of 2006, serious consideration should be given to surveys and analyses to identify any changes and developments in the society in connection with the implementation of CSDC. We have been able to develop the indicators for the implementation of CSDC, but the associated surveys still lie ahead.

The needs will increase after the Committee expands its activities and starts to implement CISS and the currently available amounts would not be sufficient to coordinate the future work and activities. So far, many activities have been accomplished thanks to non-governmental organisations, who have contributed their resources towards the activities needed for the implementation of the Concept. However, such support may not be ensured in the future, because the support organisations will restrict their activities in Estonia as the country develops.

▪ **Implementation of the Government of the Republic Civic Initiative Support Strategy (CISS)**

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 and limited timeframe.

The next step in the implementation of CSC will be the implementation of the Government of the Republic Civic Initiative Support Strategy. The objective of CISS is to create favourable conditions for civic engagement in Estonia.

The Strategy 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 government 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 principles of volunteer activities will be prepared by the end of 2006 as a support document that is based on CISS.

**Members of the Committee\***

Pursuant to the Government of the Republic Order No. 658-k of 9 October 2003 (amended by the Order No. 896-k of 24.12.2004) for launching a system for evaluating the preparation, implementation and completion of the activity plans for implementation of the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept, the joint committee of the Government of the Republic and representatives of citizens' associations shall be chaired by the Minister of Regional Affairs Jaan Õunapuu and shall include the following members:

Aare Kasemets – adviser to the Administrative Department of the Ministry of the Environment

Anneli Entson – adviser to the Vice-President of Riigikogu

Anu Rannaveski – chief specialist of the Social Welfare Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs

Eha Paas – manager of the Estonian village movement 'Kodukant'

Eino Pedanik – adviser to the Arts Department of the Ministry of Culture

Eleka Rugam-Rebane – information officer to the Government Communication Office

Heiki Lemba – chairman of the management board of the Federation of Estonian Student Unions

Helve Luik – chairman of the management board of the Estonian Chamber of Disabled People

Ivo Eesmaa – chairman of the management board of the Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association

Jaan Sõrra – member of the board of the Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce

Kadri Jäätma – president of the Estonian Union of Disabled Children's Parents

Kaja Kaur – chief specialist of the Local Government and Regional Administration Department of the Ministry of the Interior

Kristina Mänd – manager of the Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organisations

Mall Hellam – executive director of the Open Estonia Foundation

Mare Räis – chief expert in social subjects at the National Examination and Qualification Centre

Marin Vallikivi – adviser to the Legislative Methodology Department Public Law Division of the Ministry of Justice

Marit Otsing – chairman of the management board of the Estonian Union of Co-operative Housing Associations

Marit Valge – chairman of the management board of the Association of Estonian Youth Unions

Merike Metstak – adviser to the Minister of Regional Affairs

Riina Kallas – member of the Representative Council of the Roundtable of Estonian Non-profit Organisations

Tauno Teder – executive secretary of the Estonian Council of Churches

Tiia Niine – head of the Budget Division of the State Budget Department of the Ministry of Finance

Tiia Tähtsalu – senior specialist of the Local Government and Regional Administration Department of the Ministry of the Interior

Timur Seifullen – honorary president of the Union of Estonian Nationalities

Tuulike Mänd – member of the management board of the Tartu Volunteers' Centre

Valdur Lahtvee – director of the Estonian Institute for Sustainable Development

Valter Haamer – chairman of the Central Societies of Estonian National Culture Federation

**Substitute members:**

Kaido-Allan Lainurm – member of the management board of the Estonian village movement 'Kodukant'

Anu Sarnet – training manager of the Estonian Union of Co-operative Housing Associations

Triin Nymann – legal adviser to the Legal Department of the Ministry of the Environment