Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) Progress Report 2014-2015: Estonia

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Executive Summary: Estonia

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Estonia's second OGP action plan prioritised participatory policy-making, budget transparency, and citizen-centred public services. Although civic engagement in the OGP process has increased, the circle of involved nongovernmental actors still remains small. Moving forward, the next plan must contain specific performance indicators to be measurable. It should also prioritise anti-corruption and activities to open local government and the Parliament.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a voluntary international initiative that aims to secure commitments from governments to their citizenry to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. The IRM reviews the activities of each OGP-participating country.

In Estonia, the government agency in charge of co-ordinating OGP participation was the Government Office, from the executive branch, which collaborated with the OGP Civil Society Roundtable (CSR). Other ministries and public agencies also participated. This represented a significant improvement over the lack of institutional ownership that affected the first action plan because no agency formally agreed to assume the responsibility.

The Prime Minister participated in promoting the OGP action plan but did not take personal responsibility for its implementation.

OGP PROCESS

Countries participating in OGP follow a process for consultation during development and implementation of their OGP action plan.

Development of the second OGP action plan followed most OGP Process Requirements, but due to the general elections in early 2014, the process started late. It started two months before the 30 June 2014 submission deadline. Although well organised, a limited amount of nongovernment actors could participate, and the time constraints impacted the quality.

One of the important nongovernmental contributors to the process was the CSR, whose suggestions were often the basis for commitment development. An informal OGP Consultation Board and the formal OGP Co-ordinating Board, both comprised of government officials associated with OGP and of nongovernmental organisations partners, also had influence.

The government presented its self-assessment report on 8 September 2015 at the OGP Co-ordinating Board's meeting. A public comment period began on 12 September 2015. However, the document did not receive any public comments.

At a glance

Member since: 2011
Number of commitments: 23

Level of Completion:
Completed: 5 (22%)
Substantial: 14 (61%)
Limited: 4 (17%)
Not started: 0 (0%)

Timing:
On or ahead
of schedule: 18 (78%)

Commitment Emphasis:
Access to information: 16 (70%)
Civic participation: 12 (52%)
Accountability: 4 (17%)
Tech & innovation
for transparency
& accountability: 9 (39%)
Unclear: 1 (4%)

Number of Commitments that Were:
Clearly relevant to an
OGP value: 22 (96%)
Of transformative
potential impact: 0 (0%)
Substantially or
completely
implemented: 19 (83%)

All three (✪):   0 (0%)

This report was prepared by Dr. Kristiina Tõnnisson, Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies at the University of Tartu.

COMMITMENT IMPLEMENTATION

As part of OGP, countries are required to make commitments in a two-year action plan. The researcher organised the 23 activities in Estonia's second action plan into 11 clusters, while maintaining the original numbering, for ease of reference. These clusters categorise multiple commitments together that have similar priorities according to OGP values. The following tables summarise each commitment, including its level of completion, ambition, whether it falls within the planned schedule, and the key next steps for the commitment in future OGP action plans.

The Estonian action plan did not contain any starred commitments. Starred commitments are measurable, clearly relevant to OGP values as written, of transformative potential impact, and substantially or completely implemented. Note that the IRM updated the star criteria in early 2015 to raise the bar for model OGP commitments. Under the old criteria, seven commitments (2.5, 2.6, 4.1, 4.2, 5.2, 6.1, and 6.2) would have qualified as starred commitments. See (http://www.opengovpartnership.org/node/5919) for more information.

Table 1: Assessment of Progress by Commitment

COMMITMENT SHORT NAME	POTENTIAL IMPACT				LEVEL OF COMPLETION				TIMING
	NONE	MINOR	MODERATE	TRANSFORMATIVE	NOT STARTED	LIMITED	SUBSTANTIAL	COMPLETE	
1: TRANSPARENCY OF POLICY-MAKING PROCESS									
1.1. Visualisation of the policy-making process: Provide a better overview of the process of public policy-making and opportunities to participate.	●	●			●	●	●		On schedule
1.2. Upgrading participation channels: Enhance the user-friendliness of e-participation channels and inform potential users.	●	●			●	●	●		On schedule
1.3. Improving government websites: Provide content for the participation section of the new government website.	●	●			●	●			Behind schedule
2.1. Early notice on policy-making processes: Make information about participation opportunities available early.	●	●	●		●	●			Behind schedule
2: STANDARD FOR INFORMATION REQUESTS									
1.4. Standard for information requests: Develop a unified form for requests through the eesti.ee portal.	●	●			●	●	●		On schedule
3: EARLY ACCESS TO TAX POLICY DECISIONS									
2.3. Early access to tax policy decisions: Make important budgeting and taxation policy decisions in spring, together with the Budget Strategy.	●	●			●	●	●	●	Ahead of schedule
4: ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF GOVERNMENT-LED PARTICIPATION PROCESSES									
2.2. Participation in early stage policy-making: Promote initiatives to enable discussion about policy choices during the early stages of policy-making.	●	●			●	●	●		On schedule

COMMITMENT SHORT NAME	POTENTIAL IMPACT				LEVEL OF COMPLETION				TIMING
	NONE	MINOR	MODERATE	TRANSFORMATIVE	NOT STARTED	LIMITED	SUBSTANTIAL	COMPLETE	
2.4. Better feedback mechanisms: Introduce various methods of feedback to government bodies.	■	■			■	■	■		On schedule
3.1. Civil servant guidelines for participation: Create guidelines for methods and best practices of participation.	■	■			■	■			Behind schedule
5: CAPACITY BUILDING SUPPORT FOR NONGOVERNMENTAL PARTNERS IN POLICY-MAKING									
2.5. Selecting and funding participation projects: Provide content for projects funded by European Union structural funds.	■	■	■		■	■	■		On schedule
3.2. Training civil society organisations (CSOs): Increase CSOs' ability to analyse and to form positions on public policies.	■	■	■		■	■	■		On schedule
6: WEB TOOL FOR PETITIONS TO PARLIAMENT									
2.6. Web tool: Create a nongovernmental web-based discussion environment.	■	■	■		■	■	■		Behind schedule
7: UPGRADING GOVERNMENT PORTAL FOR OPEN SPENDING/BUDGET TRANSPARENCY									
4.1. Central government transactions: Include accounting data in the public finances web app.	■	■	■		■	■	■		On schedule
4.2. Local authorities' transactions with private entities: Publish transactions with private entities and connect this information to the business registry.	■	■	■		■	■	■		On schedule
4.3. Public spending for non-profits: Include third sector organisations in the public finances app.	■	■	■		■	■			Behind schedule
8: GUIDELINES FOR CITIZEN BUDGETING									
4.4. Guidelines for citizen budgeting: Compile guidelines for local authorities to provide concise local budget overviews to citizens.	■	■			■	■	■	■	Ahead of schedule
9: CITIZEN-CENTRED PUBLIC SERVICES									
5.1. Guidelines for redesigning public services: Create an interactive online toolbox with guidance, methods, and best practices.	■	■			■	■			On schedule
5.2. Registry of public services: Create an overview of all services in a unified, machine- and human-readable format.	■	■	■		■	■			On schedule
5.3. User-centric public services: Implement pilot projects with selected services.	■	■			■	■			On schedule

COMMITMENT SHORT NAME	POTENTIAL IMPACT				LEVEL OF COMPLETION				TIMING
	NONE	MINOR	MODERATE	TRANSFORMATIVE	NOT STARTED	LIMITED	SUBSTANTIAL	COMPLETE	5
10: ACCESS TO E-SERVICES FOR NON-RESIDENTS									
5.4. Access to e-services for non-residents: Issue digital identification documents to non-residents so they can use e-services.	▓	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓		On schedule
11: ENHANCING OPEN DATA SUPPLY AND RE-USE BY NONGOVERNMENTAL ACTORS									
6.1. Open data portal: Transform the portal from pilot use to real use with basic level of organisational support.	▓	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓		On schedule
6.2. Opening data: Organise public competitions for the opening of data.	▓	▓			▓	▓			Ahead of schedule
6.3. Supporting nongovernmental open data use: Organise events that involve public participation in using open data such as hackathons.	▓	▓			▓	▓			On schedule

Table 2: Summary of Progress by Commitment

NAME	SUMMARY
1: TRANSPARENCY OF POLICY-MAKING PROCESS	
1.1. Visualisation of the policy-making process • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Minor • Completion: Complete 1.2. Upgrading participation channels • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Minor • Completion: Substantial 1.3. Improving government websites • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Minor • Completion: Limited 2.1. Early notice on policy-making processes • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Moderate • Completion: Limited	This cluster aims to improve access to information related to participation. For the first activity (1.1), the government completed the visualisation of policy-making and legislative processes, and introduced it to partners. In the second activity (1.2), while the report for improving the channels is finished, the channels have not been enhanced or integrated. For the third activity (1.3), ministries agreed on the form and structure of the participation section of the government website. Finally, for the fourth activity (2.1), different stakeholders held strategic discussions and proposed solutions, some of which have been approved. The government reports that it will complete the activities by June 2016. A better overview of participation opportunities tries to enhance understanding of policy-making processes, but does little to motivate participation. Still, making information about the actual proceedings accessible at the early stages could raise public interest. Moving forward, the government should complete the pending activities. In addition, CSOs the IRM researcher consulted proposed giving participants in policy-making consultations more decision making powers. The researcher also recommends concentrating on improving the usability of existing systems, rather than creating new channels.
2: STANDARD FOR INFORMATION REQUESTS	
1.4. Standard for information requests • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Minor • Completion: Substantial	The main purpose of this activity is to enhance eesti.ee. The government completed the first and second stages on schedule, but as of writing this report, they were still working on some additional changes and no standard for information requests existed. CSOs consulted by the IRM researcher did not consider this activity of high importance, and some public administrators stated that it is a minor technical issue taking attention away from large challenges. The commitment does not adequately address the most significant issues such as the system's general functionality, usability, user-friendliness, etc. Future action plans could omit similar low-impact improvement activities.
3: EARLY ACCESS TO TAX POLICY DECISIONS	
2.3. Early access to tax policy decisions • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Minor • Completion: Complete	The Estonian Parliament adopted an updated Taxation Act that requires at least six months between changes in the Taxation Act and enforcement of the changes. But, while this change will increase public discussions about tax policy issues, simply allowing more time may not help achieve strategic and sustainable tax policy and may not improve transparency in state finances. Moving forward, to make more potentially impactful commitments, stakeholders should emphasise concrete participatory activities to open decision making around tax policies effectively. CSOs consulted by IRM researcher also pointed out that the State Budget Act should focus on clear language and ease of reading.
4: ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF GOVERNMENT-LED PARTICIPATION PROCESSES	
2.2. Participation in early stage policy-making • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Minor • Completion: Substantial 2.4. Better feedback mechanisms • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Minor • Completion: Substantial 3.1. Civil servant guidelines for participation • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Minor • Completion: Limited	The first activity (2.2) aims to strengthen the overall policy-making process (especially in earlier stages) and to involve more participants in policy discussions. The government reports that they are analysing the usage of different guidelines and planning several additional steps in 2016. The second activity (2.4) aims to introduce feedback to participants on policy-making processes. The government held discussions about possible solutions with stakeholders and is looking for funding for the next activities. Finally, the third activity (3.1) aims to share participation experiences with civil servants active in policy-making, but lacking deep experience in the field. Although the government did not make a new webpage for this goal, with CSOs, the government has discussed several (pending) activities to share best practices. Civil and academic organisations consulted by the IRM researcher requested support for strategic partnerships between ministries and CSOs. The IRM researcher also recommends continuing to develop participation activities, especially in budgeting, and the IRM researcher recommends further experimentation with this method at the subnational level.

(Table 2 Continued)

5: CAPACITY BUILDING SUPPORT FOR NONGOVERNMENTAL PARTNERS IN POLICY-MAKING	
2.5. Selecting and funding participation projects • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Moderate • Completion: Substantial	For the first activity (2.5), the government and civil society designed the funding measures and funded one of seven possible projects, as per schedule. For the second activity (3.2), 30 CSO leaders passed 11 different trainings as part of a leadership development programme, and various ministries are planning additional training and partnership activities. The IRM researcher recommends future action plans more closely link the design and implementation of participation commitments. CSOs the IRM researcher consulted also underscored that funded projects should include monitoring and evaluation elements as well as mainstream best practices.
3.2. Training CSOs • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Moderate • Completion: Substantial	
6: WEB TOOL FOR PETITIONS TO PARLIAMENT	
2.6. Web tool for petitions to the Parliament and municipalities • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Moderate • Completion: Substantial	The Estonian Co-operation Assembly launched the webpage in March 2016 (outside the period evaluated by this report). Citizens used the associated regulation, and the Parliament accepted the first legal amendment at the beginning of 2015. It is still unclear whether this new webpage will be popular, so the IRM researcher recommends promoting the webpage. However, the government should consider creating one central webpage. Further, a webpage is not sufficient, so while the regulation to allow for direct democracy is laudable, future commitment should be oriented specifically towards the environment and incentives for participation.
7: UPGRADING GOVERNMENT PORTAL FOR OPEN SPENDING/BUDGET TRANSPARENCY	
4.1. Central government transactions • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Moderate • Completion: Substantial	The first activity (4.1) seeks to make budget spending more transparent. The government opened a new State Finances webpage in 2014, and made improvements to its user-friendliness and volume of data. The government plans to finish development by the end of 2015 and to launch the webpage in the beginning of 2016. The second activity (4.2) publicises information on transactions with local authorities like the names of organisations, allocated funds, and purposes of the funding. The government established the scope and cost of the project, but did not approve or apply the new law. Finally, the third activity (4.3) is closely related to activity 4.1. It aims to develop the public finances application. The government reports that it is still discussing this activity. The portal does not show which companies, CSOs, or foundations outside of the government sector received public funds. The IRM researcher recommends advertising the application "State Finances" and encouraging people to use it. As a longer-term goal, the IRM researcher recommends involving more local governments in the public finance transparency process.
4.2. Local authorities' transactions with private entities • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Moderate • Completion: Substantial	
4.3. Public spending for non-profits • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Moderate • Completion: Limited	
8: GUIDELINES FOR CITIZEN BUDGETING	
4.4. Guidelines for citizen budgeting • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Minor • Completion: Complete	This activity aims to transfer the knowledge on how to create user-friendly overviews of local government budgets from the central government (the Ministry of Finance) to local municipalities. In January 2015, the Ministry prepared guidelines that were added to its webpage and introduced to local municipalities. However, various guidelines already existed on this subject. The activity does not create a new product, but offers an Estonian version of an existing product. Still, the IRM researcher recommends explaining the benefits of using the guidelines, including demonstrating good examples from local municipalities. At a later stage, a commitment to offer state funding for pilot projects to test approaches for local budgets could have more impact.

(Table 2 Continued)

9: CITIZEN-CENTRED PUBLIC SERVICES	
5.1. Guidelines for redesigning public services • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Minor • Completion: Substantial	The first activity (5.1) aims to prepare guidelines on the redesigning of public services. While the government completed the initial task of gathering the materials for the toolbox, they report that this activity will not be completed due to lack of financing. The second activity (5.2) aims to create an overview of all public services in the portfolio of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications. The Ministry described and published the public services it and sub-agencies provide. The government expects all e-services to be described in a unified format by March 2016. The third activity (5.3) aims to implement pilot projects using the guidelines to design user-friendly e-services. So far, the government funded four pilot projects that should be completed by the end of 2015. While these activities would improve the situation to a certain degree, most of the information and services were available already. Still, the IRM researcher recommends completing the pending implementation. For next steps, stakeholders should consider the resources the Open Government Guide provides on the public service topic.
5.2. Registry of public services • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Moderate • Completion: Substantial	
5.3. User-centric public services • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Minor • Completion: Substantial	
10: ACCESS TO E-SERVICES FOR NON-RESIDENTS	
5.4. Access to e-services for non-residents • OGP value relevance: Unclear • Potential impact: Moderate • Completion: Substantial	Initially, the application process for a digital ID was inconvenient because interested e-residents needed to be in Estonia to confirm their existence. However, since May 2015, it has been possible to receive the digital ID from the nearest embassy of Estonia. As of September 2015, 5,000 e-residents received their digital ID. But, although this commitment is interesting, it is not clearly relevant to open government. As written, it does not include a clear element of access to information, public accountability, or civic participation. For the next open government action plan, stakeholders should include only commitments of clear relevance to the OGP values of open government.
11: ENHANCING OPEN DATA SUPPLY AND RE-USE BY NONGOVERNMENTAL ACTORS	
6.1. Open data portal • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Moderate • Completion: Complete	These activities largely continue concern from the previous OGP action plan about public competitions and the recycling of open data. For the first activity (6.1), the government launched the full open data portal and created the organisational structure to keep the portal running. For the second activity (6.2), the government organised the relevant competition for the best pilot project and funded several pilot projects to open data. For the third activity (6.3), so far, the government held "information days" and some trainings about open data recycling. Moving forward, the IRM researcher recommends completing the rest of the activities. Then, the IRM researcher recommends that stakeholders consider increasing the number of data sets, creating dedicated civil servant positions for open data, and incorporating international open data standards. Finally, a potentially transformative new commitment could develop clear feedback mechanisms for data users and providers to identify priority datasets for release, for example.
6.2. Opening data • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Moderate • Completion: Complete	
6.3. Supporting nongovernmental open data use • OGP value relevance: Clear • Potential impact: Minor • Completion: Substantial	

Given these findings, the IRM researcher presents the following key recommendations. Beginning in 2014, all OGP IRM reports include five key recommendations about the next OGP action planning cycle. Governments participating in OGP will be required to respond to these key recommendations in their annual self-assessments reports. These recommendations follow the "SMART" logic: they are specific, measurable, answerable, relevant, and time bound.

The following suggestions are based on the assumption that Estonia will continue being an active partner in OGP and that it will pay more attention to the OGP action plan in the future. According to the focus groups and interviews, the current action plan often is seen as an additional framework instead of an opportunity to innovate and to push beyond the status quo. This is a frequent challenge for OGP-participating countries, and Estonia is not alone in needing to face it. In this sense, at best, stakeholders currently see OGP as providing "promotional" and "educational" value.

KEY SMART RECOMMENDATIONS
1. The Government Office should continue to improve proactive and regular communication around the action plan and the OGP process. This will involve dedicating sufficient time for a more participatory process in designing the action plan and optimizing communication channels to promote OGP results and outputs more clearly.
2. Estonia's OGP process requires more high-level political support to promote and galvanise wider participation in Estonia's OGP process, especially at the early stages. The Government Office should seek allies and champions across all branches and levels of government.
3. The action plan should make commitments that follow the SMART logic: they should be clear, specific, measurable, answerable, relevant, and time bound. All commitments should include clear baselines, targets, indicators, and explanations of their relationship to, or overlap with, other public administration initiatives.
4. The next action plan should focus on fewer but more ambitious reforms. Commitments should set ambitious goals with a greater focus on how the OGP action plan could add value to Estonia's open government process.
5. The action plan should include certain key open government topics that are priorities for Estonia. Among other priorities that stakeholders will identify in the consultation process, possible priorities include anti-corruption, public ethics, and key public service sectors like health and education. The plan also should be coherent and complementary with Estonia's Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Dr Kristiina Tõnnisson is the Head of Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies at the University of Tartu in Estonia. With a special regard to Central and Eastern Europe, her main research interests include regional development, public management, local democracy and civil society. She has been involved in a range of research projects and evaluation studies. She is also Chair of the Board at the Estonian "National Foundation of Civil Society."

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism assesses development and implementation of national action plans to foster dialogue among stakeholders and to improve accountability.

Open Government Partnership

I. National participation in OGP

History of OGP participation

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a voluntary, multi-stakeholder international initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to their citizenry to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. In pursuit of these goals, OGP provides an international forum for dialogue and sharing among governments, civil society organisations, and the private sector, all of which contribute to a common pursuit of open government. OGP stakeholders include participating governments as well as civil society and private sector entities that support the principles and mission of OGP.

Estonia began its formal participation in September 2011, when President Toomas Hendrik Ilves declared his country's intention to participate in the initiative.[1]

To participate in OGP, governments must exhibit a demonstrated commitment to open government by meeting a set of minimum performance criteria on key dimensions of open government that are particularly consequential for increasing government responsiveness, strengthening citizen engagement, and fighting corruption. Objective, third-party indicators are used to determine the extent of country progress on each of the dimensions. See Section IX, "Eligibility Requirements," for more details.

All OGP-participating governments develop OGP country action plans that elaborate concrete commitments over an initial two-year period. Action plans should set out governments' OGP commitments, which move government practice beyond its current baseline. These commitments may build on existing efforts, identify new steps to complete ongoing reforms, or initiate action in an entirely new area.

Estonia developed its second national action plan from April to June 2014, and the government adopted it in June. The effective period of implementation for the action plan submitted in June was officially 1 July 2014 through June 30, 2016. The government published its self-assessment report in October of 2015. At the time of writing, some of the activities planned with Estonia's commitments have been finished and some remain to be implemented. According to the OGP Calendar,[2] preparations for the third action plan should begin in January 2016.

Basic institutional context

Civil society initiated Estonia's participation in OGP. The representative of a nongovernmental organisation named E-Governance Academy was present at the introductory meeting in Washington, D.C., where Estonia declared its desire to join OGP. Later, the same person introduced the initiative to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who agreed to start the formal process for joining OGP. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs became the official contact for preparing Estonia's membership process, but the Government Office co-ordinated in the preparation phase for the first action plan (2011-2012). The Government Office is a government institution supporting the government and the Prime Minister in policy drafting and implementation. The transfer of responsibility was necessary because policy co-ordination for internal purposes and oversight of other government agencies are not the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' core functions. During the preparations, the Government Office collaborated closely with the OGP Civil Society Roundtable (CSR), a group of voluntary civil society activists that convened specifically to facilitate the preparations for joining OGP and the development of OGP action plans. The implementation of the first action plan suffered from a lack of ownership of the OGP process because no agency formally agreed to assume the responsibility for overseeing the action plan implementation.[3]

The government that took office in March 2014 during the preparations for the second action plan stressed the need to increase openness of governance in Estonia. As a response to previous suggestions (including from the last Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) report), the Government Office was designated responsible for participating in and co-ordinating the OGP process in Estonia. This better integrated the OGP action plan into the government's focus, priorities, and planned activities.[4] The Prime Minister participated in the promotion of the OGP action plan, but did not assume personal responsibility for its implementation.

To facilitate the action plan development, the Government Office hired a consultant from a nongovernmental organisation. Further, under the leadership of the Secretary of State, the Government office actively included five ministries that are responsible for subject areas closely linked to OGP. To a lesser degree, other ministries and public agencies participated in various phases. In addition to the executive branch of government, nongovernmental organisations actively took part in the development and implementation of the action plan. Throughout the process, representatives of private sector organisations, the OGP CSR and civil society umbrella organisations were included (see Sections II and III).

For the action plan implementation, the Secretary of State formed the OGP Co-ordinating Board. This official forum included representatives of government and nongovernmental organisations in an almost equal proportion. The Co-ordinating Board was responsible for co-ordinating, monitoring, and evaluating the action plan implementation as well as making recommendations and decisions regarding the partnership. The Co-ordinating Board also was responsible for promoting Estonia's objectives and activities in participating in OGP (see Section III). This permanent consultation mechanism helped strengthen the co-ordination of the OGP action plan implementation and guaranteed permanent stakeholder involvement. The OGP CSR is considered an important partner. The CSR gave significant input into developing the action plan and was responsible for nominating nongovernmental partners to the OGP Co-ordinating Board. The CSR draws attention to open governance and related issues, even outside of the action plan framework.

In Estonia, the executive branch of government is mainly concerned with OGP. The public administrators have the main responsibility for developing and implementing the OGP action plan, and the Government of the Republic approves the action plan. The national Parliament (Riigikogu) and the political elite outside of the government have not been involved sufficiently.[5] No laws have been adopted and dedicated solely for OGP, although OGP principles are reflected in various legal acts. Further, there is only one activity related to the Parliament in the action plan (a web-based discussion environment for the preparation of collective petitions).

OGP has centred mainly on the central government. Even though Estonia has a unitary system, the second action plan did not give necessary attention to the subnational government, despite the previous IRM researcher's suggestion.[6] Local government associations were informed of the action plan development, but did not participate in the process. In addition, some activities related to local governments in the action plan (e.g. harmonizing forms for information requests, guidance on compiling a short overview of local budgets, and publicizing nongovernmental transaction partners of local authorities); however, direct responsibility and separate activities for local governments were not planned. According to the action plan, the continued focus on the central government was necessary for a more focused approach and was based on the notion that there was still much to achieve at the central government level.[7]

The budget dedicated to OGP is hard to estimate or calculate because there is no special budget dedicated to OGP. OGP activities often coincide with the implementation of

activities and measures deriving from other strategic documents.[8] In general, financial sources included in the implementation of the OGP action plan are the State Budget,[9] European Union Structural Funds (ESF and ERDF), and the budget of the Estonian Co-operation Assembly (activity 2.6, partly) that is part of the State Budget. Unlike the other activities, no additional funding was planned for activity 2.3 on fiscal policy decision timing or activity 4.4 on local government guidance for citizens' budgets.[10]

Similarly, it is hard to estimate the amount of administrative burden of OGP or the number of staff dedicated to OGP. There is a person responsible for OGP in the Government Office, and there are numerous public servants responsible for various activities working in various ministries and units. Additionally, nongovernmental organisations are dedicating significant resources to the meetings and activities. Most of the people involved carry out these responsibilities as additional administrative tasks, not as part of their main tasks. In part because no special budget was dedicated to OGP, the OGP action plan includes mostly activities that were already planned to be implemented in other strategies or documents and for which a budget was available already through other channels.

Methodological note

The IRM partners with experienced, independent national researchers to author and disseminate reports for each OGP participating government. In Estonia, the IRM partnered with Dr. Kristiina Tõnnisson from the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies at the University of Tartu. Kristiina Tõnnisson reviewed the government's self-assessment report, gathered the views of civil society, and interviewed appropriate government officials and other stakeholders. OGP staff and a panel of experts reviewed the report.

The IRM also thanks the previous national researcher for Estonia, Hille Hinsberg, who is now a member of the IRM's International Experts Panel.[11]

This report covers the first year of implementation of Estonia's action plan from 1 July 2014 to 1 December 2015. Beginning in 2015, the IRM also publishes end-of-term reports to account for the final status of progress at the end of the action plan's two-year period. This report follows on an earlier review of OGP performance, "Estonia Progress Report 2012-2013," which covered the development of the first action plan as well as implementation from 1 May 2012 to 31 July 2013.

To gather the voices of multiple stakeholders, Kristiina Tõnnisson organised two stakeholder forums, in Tallinn and Tartu, which were conducted according to a focus group technique. Kristiina Tõnnisson also reviewed two key documents prepared by the government: a report on Estonia's second action plan[12] and the self-assessment report published by the government in October 2015.[13] Numerous references are made to these documents throughout this report.

Summaries of these forums and more detailed explanations are given in Section VIII on methodology and sources.

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[1] See http://www.opengovpartnership.org/country/estonia for more information.

[2] "OGP Timeline 2015-2018," Estonia, Open Government Partnership (OGP), http://bit.ly/1LGVotN

[3] Hille Hinsberg, *Sõltumatu Hindamisaruanne: Eesti Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluse Tegevuskava Täitmine 2012-2013* (2014), 20.

[4] Riigikantselei, *Estonia's Action Plan in Participating in the Open Government Partnership 2014-2016* (Tallinn, 2014), 3, http://bit.ly/1S6jUkU

[5] Hinsberg, *Sõltumatu Hindamisaruanne*, 65.

[6] Hinsberg, *Sõltumatu Hindamisaruanne*, 69.

[7] *Estonia's Action Plan*, 4, http://bit.ly/1S6jUkU

[8] "Summary of the OGP Consultation Board's Meeting," 17 April 2014, 2, http://bit.ly/1WIHDve

[9] For some activities, it was specified that the resources would be included through the budgets of the Government Office, the Ministry of Finance, or concerned ministries.

[10] This is based on the activities described in the OGP action plan on the Government Office's website. "Tegevuskava 2014-2016," Riigikantselei, http://bit.ly/1ZsYynd

[11] The OGP provides more information about this body. "About the IEP," OGP, http://www.opengovpartnership.org/irm/about-iep

[12] *Estonia's Action Plan*, http://bit.ly/1S6jUkU

[13] Republic of Estonia, *Estonia's Open Government Partnership Action Plan for 2014-2016: The Interim Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan* by the Government Office (Tallinn, 2015), http://bit.ly/1ShJ5Ds

II. Process: Action plan development

The action plan development took place under the leadership of the Government Office. The preparations followed the majority of the OGP Process Requirements. A variety of measures were used to inform and to engage the public in the preparations. However, as the action plan development process started just two months before due date, the process was rushed. This had a significant influence on the quality of advance notice and consultations as well as on the range of stakeholders involved.

Countries participating in OGP follow a set process for consultation during development of their OGP action plan. According to the OGP Articles of Governance, countries must:

- Make the details of their public consultation process and timeline available (online at minimum) prior to the consultation;
- Consult widely with the national community, including civil society and the private sector; seek a diverse range of views and; make a summary of the public consultation and all individual written comment submissions available online;
- Undertake OGP awareness-raising activities to enhance public participation in the consultation; and,
- Consult the population with sufficient forewarning and through a variety of mechanisms—including online and through in-person meetings—to ensure the accessibility of opportunities for citizens to engage.

A fifth requirement, during consultation, is set out in the OGP Articles of Governance. This requirement is discussed in the Section III titled, "Process: Action plan implementation":

- Countries are to identify a forum to enable regular multi-stakeholder consultation on OGP implementation—this can be an existing entity or a new one.

This is discussed in the next section, but evidence for consultation both before and during implementation is included here and in Table 1, for ease of reference.

Table 1: Action Plan Consultation Process

Phase of Action Plan	OGP Process Requirement (Articles of Governance Section)	Did the Government Meet This Requirement?
During Development	Were timeline and process available prior to consultation?	No
	Was the timeline available online?	Yes[1]
	Was the timeline available through other channels?	Yes
	Was there advance notice of the consultation?	Yes
	How many days of advance notice were provided?	30
	Was this notice adequate?	No

	Did the government carry out awareness-raising activities?	Yes[2]
	Were consultations held online?	Yes[3]
	Were in-person consultations held?	Yes
	Was a summary of comments provided?	Yes[4]
	Were consultations open or invitation-only?	Open
	Place the consultations on the IAP2 spectrum.[5]	Collaborate
During Implementation	Was there a regular forum for consultation during implementation?	Yes
	Were consultations open or invitation-only?	Open
	Place the consultations on the IAP2 spectrum.	Involve

Advance notice

The action plan development had a late start due to the general elections in February-March 2014. Nongovernmental parties were disappointed that by February 2014 (i.e. two months before the initial deadline for the action plan development) the government had not decided how it would organise the action plan development and, thus, had not notified nongovernmental organisations of the plans. Nongovernmental organisations were concerned that they would not be able to contribute to the discussions or act together to promote open governance.[6]

The official preparations of the action plan started in April 2014, after the new government had entered office and named an institution responsible for OGP. However, the process was rushed (especially towards the end) as the government had to approve the action plan by 15 June 2014. Therefore, the government planned about two months for the entire process, which impacted the quality of consultations as well as the opportunities for prior notification. Although the government was able to attract new nongovernmental participants, the time was not sufficient to engage a broader spectrum of nongovernmental organisations (e.g. outside of the OGP Civil Society Roundtable (CSR)) and the general public. Additionally, as some participants commented in their anonymous feedback on the development process, the government did not provide enough time to discuss some of the fundamental questions relating to the action plan.[7] Despite the lack of time, some still considered the process to be well-organised.[8]

The final timeline and plan for engagement for the entire process of action plan development was not published before the consultations with stakeholders began. For instance, the OGP Consultation Board meetings, led by the Secretary of State, started on 17 April 2014, but the official timeline and engagement plan was not published until 21 April 2014.[9]

Awareness-raising

The government used various measures to raise awareness on the topic of the action plan development. For instance, the Government Office made press releases,

disseminated articles and information through relevant networks (e.g. the Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations and the Open Estonia Foundation), and held meetings. Proactive communication to draw broader attention to OGP action plan's priorities, commitments, and activities was considered especially important during the public consultation. During the public consultation, the Government Office also informed other parties such as local government associations, other nongovernmental organisations, and professional associations about the priorities and commitments for the new action plan. The Government Office did this via newsletters to members of the organisations, e-mails, and meetings. In addition, the Government Office offered to discuss open governance and the OGP action plan at events appropriate for such topics anywhere in Estonia.[10]

The Prime Minister also contributed to raising awareness of OGP. He participated at an event held by the Government Office to introduce the new OGP action plan to the general public on 6 June 2014. During the event, he stated that open and inclusive policy-making is the new "normal way of doing things."[11] About 70 people from various government and nongovernmental organisations were present. The introduction of the action plan by the Prime Minister, a political figure, was a positive achievement.[12] However, by that time, the public consultation process had ended already. The promotion event did offer an opportunity to make conclusions or to gather feedback on the process, but the quality of action plan could have benefitted if the Head of the Government had brought broader attention to the topic prior to or during the public consultation.

Depth and breadth of consultation

Despite the challenges described above, the Government Office, as the institution responsible for OGP, designed a collaborative process for the drafting of the action plan. A variety of consultation measures online and in-person, as described below, were used to involve stakeholders in discussions and to create opportunities for the general public to give input to the process. Compared to stakeholder involvement during the development of the previous OGP action plan, the preparations of 2014-2016 action plan had more diverse input of views. For example, the private sector got involved through its representative body, the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The employers' association and trade union association also provided their viewpoints. Various stakeholders had an important role in the action plan development. For instance, the OGP CSR gave important input throughout the process. The consultations were, to a great extent, based on the OGP CSR's suggestions submitted to the Government Office and to relevant ministries in March 2014, prior to the beginning of official preparations.[13] Nevertheless, despite all of the consultation measures created, the number of new participants was modest.

The OGP consultation board, an informal advisory group formed at the invitation of the Secretary of State, had one of the most influential roles in the action plan development. The board included secretary generals and officials from ministries most closely related to OGP, as well as partners from nongovernmental organisations, including the OGP CSR and major social partners (two employers' associations and the Trade Union Confederation).[14] The advisory group asked the previous IRM reviewer to participate in its meetings to present recommendations of the progress report.

This informal OGP Consultation Board had three meetings to discuss and make important decisions throughout the action plan development. At the first meeting on 17 April 2014, the Board focused on setting priority areas and on national co-ordination of the action plan. At the second meeting on 30 April 2014, the Board discussed the submitted proposals as well as the initiatives and activities to advance the selected priority areas proposed in the course of consultations with the ministries. At the third

meeting on 28 May 2014, the Board reviewed the recommendations made during the public consultation and approved the action plan before it was sent to the government for approval.[15] The final meeting took place one day after the end of general public consultation. Stakeholder engagement continued in the phase of the action plan implementation in a similar format to the OGP Consultation Board, but under a new name: the OGP Co-ordinating Board. Contrary to the Consultation Board, the Co-ordinating Board was formalised (see Section III).

In addition, thematic meetings took place with relevant ministries and nongovernmental organisations. These meetings discussed the recommendations of the OGP CSR and the activities that the ministries were already planning (related to selected action plan priority areas). Parliament also was consulted, but it provided only limited input. Input from local governments for the action plan's activities also was requested, but local governments' participation was modest. The action plan passed an official approval round in the relevant ministries.

Public consultation on the draft action plan took place from 9 May to 27 May 2014 on the civic engagement website (www.osale.ee) via the Information System of Draft Acts (EIS).[16] Some participants considered the time available for consultation as appropriate, but some did not manage to find the right place and information for consultation. In the course of public consultation, feedback was collected from the general public and parties interested in open governance on the expediency and ambition of commitments. Proposals to modify the activities also were gathered. Nongovernmental partners were encouraged to initiate or to execute activities in co-operation with the public sector. The public consultation start date shifted from the initially planned date of 5 May 2014 due to a lack of sufficient preparation time. The extra time was needed to gather additional information from the ministries and to structure activities according to the commitments. The ministries continued specifying their activities during the public consultation.

One comment to the draft action plan was submitted via the website (www.osale.ee). The other 43 comments were submitted via e-mails.[17] Although the public consultation was open for input from all people and organisations, only a small group of nongovernmental organisations contributed. Virtually all who participated were part of the OGP Consultation Board. The only exceptions, entities that provided comments independently, were the Estonian Association of Spatial Planners and the National Foundation of Civil Society (who is also a member of the OGP CSR). The stakeholders participating in the drafting process found the process useful and meaningful, but the circle of stakeholders involved in drafting the action plan could and should be wider in the future.

Based on the submitted recommendations and comments, the action plan was modified and improved. The comments were summarised in one table, and this feedback (with notes on why a suggestion was accepted or rejected) along with the improved action plan was sent via e-mail to the parties that had made suggestions to the action plan for review. Although not all proposed ideas were included in the action plan, the stakeholders considered the final outcome as reasonable, taking into account the available resources. The action plan was submitted to the Government of the Republic on 4 June 2014, and the Government approved it on 12 June 2014 at its regular session.[18]

Additional information

After the action plan's approval, the Government Office asked participants to give feedback on the action plan development process. The feedback was gathered from 18 to 30 June 2014, and the results were published on the Government Office's webpage.

There were five respondents. The respondents recommended that in the future, more thematic meetings should be organised, a wider group of stakeholders should be included, the action plan should be based more on analysis, it should have fewer initiatives for which the impact and costs are unknown, and there should be more substantive discussions with the parties that make proposals to the action plan.[19]

[1] "Avatud Valitsemise Partnerlus," Riigikantselei, http://bit.ly/1Nhqbh2

[2] "Peaminister Roivas: Avatud Poliitika on Uus Normaalsus," Vabariigi Valitsus, 6 June 2014, http://bit.ly/1NHDHVD

[3] Osalusveebi Haldab Riigikantselei, *Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluse Eesti Riikliku Tegevuskava Avalik Konsultatsioon* [Public Consultation in Civic Engagement Web] by Ilona Kään (Report, 9 May 2014), http://bit.ly/1mRv3K1

[4] "Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluse Tegevuskava 2014-2016 Projektile Laekunud Kommentaarid Ja Ettepanekud Tegevuskava Ettevalmistamiselt, Avalikult Konsultatsioonilt Ja Ministeeriumidega Kooskolastamiselt [Summary of All Comments Given During the Action Plan Development]," Riigikantselei, 11 June 2014, http://bit.ly/1NhqyZ2

[5] "IAP2 Spectrum of Political Participation," International Association for Public Participation, http://bit.ly/1kMmlYC

[6] Eesti, "Vabauhenduste Umarlaud Koguneb Avatud Valitsemise Partnerlust Arutama (2)," Uudised, 6 February 2014, http://bit.ly/1S6tAf8

[7] "Tagasiside Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluse Tegevuskava 2014-2016 Koostamise Protsessile Kokkuvote [Summary of Feedback on the Action Plan Development Process]," Riigikantselei, 1, http://bit.ly/1T6lvvH

[8] Summary of Feedback on the Action Plan Development Process, 1-2, http://bit.ly/1T6lvvH

[9] "Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluse (AVP) 2014.-2016. Aasta Tegevuskava Koostamise AJA- Ja Kaasamiskava [Action Plan Development Timeline and Engagement Plan]," Riigikantselei, http://bit.ly/1pyLSyE

[10] Teele Pehk, "Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluse Tegevuskava 2014-2016 Ootab Kommentaare," Open Estonia Foundation, 13 May 2014, http://bit.ly/1Zt7JnQ

[11] "Press Release of the Promotion Event of the OGP Action Plan," Vabariigi Valitsus, 6 June 2014, http://bit.ly/1NHDHVD

[12] Summary of Feedback on the Action Plan Development Process, 2, http://bit.ly/1T6lvvH

[13] Riigikantselei, *Estonia's Action Plan in Participating in the Open Government Partnership 2014-2016* (Tallinn, 2014), 5, http://bit.ly/1S6jUkU

[14] The government organisations that participated in the OGP Consultation Board were the Government Office, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications. The nongovernmental partners were the OGP Civil Society Roundtable (the organisations' leader was also a representative of the E-Governance Academy), the Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations, the Estonian Co-operation Assembly, a representative of the PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies, the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Estonian Trade Union Confederation, and the Estonian Employers' Confederation.

[15] Summaries of all OGP Consultation Board's meetings are available on the Government Office's webpage. "2014-2016 Tegevuskava Koostamise Protsess," Riigikantselei, http://bit.ly/1pInU4J

[16] "Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluse Eesti Riiklik Tegevuskava [Consultation Information in the Information System of Draft Acts]," Eelnoude Infosusteem, http://bit.ly/1PrEqu4; Kään, http://bit.ly/1mRv3K1

[17] "Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluse Tegevuskava 2014-2016 Projektile Laekunud Kommentaarid Ja Ettepanekud Tegevuskava Ettevalmistamiselt, Avalikult Konsultatsioonilt Ja Ministeeriumidega Kooskolastamiselt [Summary of All Comments Given During the Action Plan Development]," Riigikantselei, 11 June 2014, http://bit.ly/1NhqyZ2

[18] "Valitsus Kiitis Heaks Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluse Tegevuskava," Riigikantselei, 12 June 2014, http://bit.ly/1RgSV9L

[19] Summary of Feedback on the Action Plan Development Process, http://bit.ly/1T6lvvH

III. Process: Action plan implementation

The second action plan saw the introduction of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Co-ordinating Board. Consisting of nearly equal representatives of government and nongovernmental organisations, the Co-ordinating Board had a central role in co-ordinating, monitoring, and evaluating the action plan implementation. The OGP Civil Society Roundtable (CSR) organised an open call to select nongovernmental partners for the Co-ordinating Board, but unfortunately the process did not introduce new participants into the framework.

To strengthen national co-ordination of OGP and to ensure permanent participation of stakeholders, the OGP Co-ordinating Board was established to oversee the implementation of the action plan. The Secretary of State presented the proposal to create such a forum, consisting of members from the government and nongovernmental organisations, to the OGP Consultation Board during its first meeting on 17 April 2014. With the approval of the OGP Consultation Board and the government, the Co-ordinating Board was established with a directive of the Secretary of State on 26 September 2014.[1]

The Co-ordinating Board was dedicated exclusively to implementing OGP and its related decision making processes. The responsibilities of the Co-ordinating Board were to co-ordinate, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of the action plan; to provide recommendations and make substantial decisions regarding the partnership (e.g. if an action plan activity had to be changed); and to promote Estonia's objectives and activities in participating in OGP. At the first meeting of the Co-ordinating Board, the Government Office suggested considering broadening the Co-ordinating Board's competence area by including additional tasks, but they were not approved.[2] One task was to discuss project proposals prepared by the ministries or ministries with nongovernmental organisations to develop the capacities to engage and to participate in policy-making. It was rejected to avoid conflict of interests because the parties wanted to take part in procurements to implement these projects. Second, the task of creating an advisory board on good engagement practices, was not approved because the Board decided there was no need for it.

The Secretary of State led the OGP Co-ordinating Board, which consisted of 13 members from the public, private, and third sectors. Membership followed the model of the OGP Steering Committee, with half of the members representing government agencies and the other half consisting of representatives of nongovernmental organisations.[3] The membership tilted in favour of nongovernmental representation, as they had seven seats compared to the six seats of government agencies. Representatives from local government and the Parliament were not included.

The representatives from the government organisations were fixed. They included the Secretary of State as Head of the Government Office and five secretary generals from ministries whose competency areas were related most closely to OGP, i.e. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications.

The OGP CSR was responsible for choosing the nongovernmental representatives for the Co-ordinating Board. Based on consultations, it was decided that places would be allocated to two of the three major social partners: the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Estonian Trade Union Confederation, and the Estonian Employers' Confederation, who was not selected. For the other five CSO places, the CSR organised an open competition that took place from 1 July 2014 to 1 August 2014.[4] Aside from submitting information on their prior work on open governance topics, no official selection criteria were published for this competition. The five CSO representatives in

the Co-ordinating Board are also members of the OGP CSR. The five CSO representatives were the E-Governance Academy, the Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations, the Open Estonia Foundation (the co-ordinator for OGP CSR), the PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies, and the Estonian Co-operation Assembly.

The Co-ordinating Board meetings took place in person. Because the Co-ordinating Board had to make decisions by consensus,[5] it was expected to meet approximately once per quarter.[6] They did so, and, at the beginning, the Co-ordinating Board gathered in person even more frequently, every two months.

The commitment of government representatives within the Co-ordinating Board to the implementation of OGP was and remains somewhat questionable. For instance, based on the attendance sheets, while the Secretary General of the Ministry of Justice attended all meetings (as of the writing of this report), the Secretary General of the Ministry of Finance did not attend any of the meetings (by the time of writing this report). The Deputy Secretary General mostly replaced the Secretary General of the Ministry of Finance. The Secretary General of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications attended the first meeting, but nobody from the Ministry participated in the following meetings. The Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attended one meeting, but was represented by other public administrators in three of the other four meetings.[7]

At the same time, the government pointed out that many CSOs also missed meetings. Five out of seven nongovernmental partners missed at least one meeting. The Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry missed three meetings. Summaries of all meetings are published on the Government Office's website.[8]

The IRM researcher's interviews with nongovernmental stakeholders revealed confusion and misunderstanding regarding their role. Throughout the process, they felt that the government left nongovernmental partners responsible for ensuring wider participation of nongovernmental organisations and the general public. But there were no agreed upon formats for inclusion or structures for submitting recommendations. Nongovernmental organisations stakeholders were concerned about this tendency, especially considering the differences in resources and inside knowledge between the government and nongovernmental organisations to conduct widespread communication and awareness-raising activities.

The current members of the Co-ordinating Board are mandated until the end of the implementation period of the action plan. Therefore, new members to the Co-ordinating Board should be chosen in 2016 alongside the preparations for the new action plan.[9]

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[1] Riigikantselei, "Directive of the Secretary of State Establishing the OGP Co-ordinating Board," 26 September 2014, http://bit.ly/1UGCsyb

[2] Riigikantselei, "Summary of the OGP Co-ordinating Board's Meeting on 4 November 2014," 6 January 2015, 2-3, http://bit.ly/1pIrjAw; "AVP Umarlaud 28.10.2014 [Summary of the OGP Civil Society Roundtable's Meeting on 28 October 2014]," Avatud Valitsemise Partnerlus, 2, http://bit.ly/1RyhCu4

[3] Riigikantselei, "Kokkuvote 17. Aprillil 2014 Riigikantseleis Toimunud Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluse Noupidamisest [Summary of the OGP Consultation Board's Meeting on 17 April 2014]," 3, 17 April 2014, http://bit.ly/1WIHDve

[4] "AVP Umarlaud [Summary of the OGP Civil Society Roundtable's Meeting on 25 August 2014]," Avatud Valitsemise Partnerlus, http://avatudvalitsemine.ee/juhtimine-2/

[5] "Summary of the OGP Co-ordinating Board's Meeting on 4 November 2014," http://bit.ly/1pIrjAw

[6] "Summary of the OGP Co-ordinating Board's Meeting on 4 November 2014," 3, http://bit.ly/1pIrjAw

[7] This is based on the attendance sheets of the Co-ordinating Board's meetings. "Avatud Valitsemise Partnerlus," Riigikantselei, http://bit.ly/25nmKM4

[8] "Summary of the OGP Co-ordinating Board's Meeting on 4 November 2014," 3, http://bit.ly/1pIrjAw

[9] Riigikantselei, *Estonia's Action Plan in Participating in the Open Government Partnership 2014-2016* (Tallinn, 2014), 19, http://bit.ly/1S6jUkU

IV. Analysis of action plan contents

All OGP participating governments develop OGP country action plans that elaborate concrete commitments over an initial two-year period. Governments begin their OGP country action plans by sharing existing efforts related to open government, including specific strategies and ongoing programmes. Action plans then set out governments' OGP commitments, which stretch practice beyond its current baseline. These commitments may build on existing efforts, identify new steps to complete ongoing reforms, or initiate action in an entirely new area.

Commitments should be appropriate to each country's unique circumstances and policy interests. OGP commitments should also be relevant to OGP values laid out in the OGP Articles of Governance and Open Government Declaration signed by all OGP participating countries. The Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) uses the following guidance to evaluate relevance to core open government values:

Access to information

Commitments around access to information:

- Pertain to government-held information, as opposed to only information on government activities. As an example, releasing government-held information on pollution clearly would be relevant, although the information is not about "government activity" per se;

- Are not restricted to data but pertain to all information. For example, releasing individual construction contracts and releasing data on a large set of construction contracts;

- May include information disclosures in open data and the systems that underpin the public disclosure of data;

- May cover both proactive and/or reactive releases of information;

- May cover both making data more available and/or improving the technological readability of information;

- May pertain to mechanisms to strengthen the right to information (such as ombudsman's offices or information tribunals);

- Must provide open access to information (it should not be privileged or internal only to government);

- Should promote transparency of government decision making and carrying out of basic functions;

- May seek to lower cost of obtaining information;

- Should strive to meet the Five Star for Open Data design (http://5stardata.info/).

Civic participation

Commitments around civic participation may pertain to formal public participation or to broader civic participation. They generally should seek to "consult," "involve," "collaborate," or "empower," as explained by the International Association for Public Participation's Public Participation Spectrum (http://bit.ly/1kMmlYC).

Commitments addressing public participation:

- Must open decision making to all interested members of the public; such forums are usually "top-down" in that they are created by government (or actors empowered by government) to inform decision making throughout the policy cycle;
- Can include elements of access to information to ensure meaningful input of interested members of the public into decisions;
- Often include the right to have your voice heard, but do not necessarily include the right to be a formal part of a decision making process.

Alternately, commitments may address the broader operating environment that enables participation in civic space. Examples include but are not limited to the following:
- Reforms increasing freedoms of assembly, expression, petition, press, or association;
- Reforms on association including trade union laws or nongovernmental organisation laws;
- Reforms improving the transparency and process of formal democratic processes such as citizen proposals, elections, or petitions.

The following are examples of commitments that would **not** be marked as clearly relevant to the broader term, civic participation:
- Commitments that assume participation will increase due to publication of information without specifying the mechanism for such participation (although this commitment would be marked as "access to information");
- Commitments on decentralisation that do not specify the mechanisms for enhanced public participation;
- Commitments that define participation as inter-agency co-operation without a mechanism for public participation.

Commitments that may be marked of "unclear relevance" also include mechanisms where participation is limited to government-selected organisations.

Public accountability

Commitments improving accountability can include:
- Rules, regulations, and mechanisms that call upon government actors to justify their actions, act upon criticisms or requirements made of them, and accept responsibility for failure to perform with respect to laws or commitments.

Consistent with the core goal of open government, to be counted as "clearly relevant," such commitments must include a public-facing element, meaning that they are not purely internal systems of accountability. While such commitments may be laudable and may meet an OGP grand challenge, as articulated, they do not meet the test of "clear relevance" due to their lack of openness. Where such internal-facing mechanisms are a key part of government strategy, it is recommended that governments include a public facing element such as:
- Disclosure of non-sensitive metadata on institutional activities (following maximum disclosure principles);
- Citizen audits of performance;
- Citizen-initiated appeals processes in cases of non-performance or abuse.

Strong commitments around accountability ascribe rights, duties, or consequences for actions of officials or institutions. Formal accountability commitments include means of formally expressing grievances or reporting wrongdoing and achieving redress. Examples of strong commitments include the following:

- Improving or establishing appeals processes for denial of access to information;

- Improving access to justice by making justice mechanisms cheaper, faster, or easier to use;

- Improving public scrutiny of justice mechanisms;

- Creating public tracking systems for public complaints processes (such as case tracking software for police or anti-corruption hotlines).

A commitment that claims to improve accountability, but assumes that merely providing information or data without explaining what mechanism or intervention will translate that information into consequences or change, would **not** qualify as an accountability commitment. See http://bit.ly/1oWPXdl for further information.

Technology and innovation for openness and accountability

OGP aims to enhance the use of technology and innovation to enable public involvement in government. Specifically, commitments that use technology and innovation should enhance openness and accountability by:

- Promoting new technologies that offer opportunities for information sharing, public participation, and collaboration.

- Making more information public in ways that enable people to both understand what their governments do and to influence decisions.

- Working to reduce costs of using these technologies.

Additionally, commitments that will be marked as technology and innovation:

- May commit to a process of engaging civil society and the business community to identify effective practices and innovative approaches for leveraging new technologies to empower people and promote transparency in government;

- May commit to supporting the ability of governments and citizens to use technology for openness and accountability;

- May support the use of technology by government employees and citizens alike.

Not all e-government reforms improve openness of government. When an e-government commitment is made, it needs to articulate how it enhances at least one of the following: access to information, public participation, or public accountability.

Key variables

Recognizing that achieving open government commitments often involves a multi-year process, governments should attach time frames and benchmarks to their commitments that indicate what is to be accomplished each year, whenever possible. This report details each of the commitments the country included in its action plan, and analyses them for their first year of implementation.

All of the indicators and the method used in the IRM research can be found in the IRM Procedures Manual, available at http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/about-irm. One measure deserves further explanation, due to its particular interest for readers and usefulness for encouraging a race to the top between OGP-participating countries: the "starred commitment." Starred commitments are considered exemplary OGP commitments. To receive a star, a commitment must meet several criteria:

1. It must be specific enough that a judgment can be made about its potential impact. Starred commitments will have "medium" or "high" specificity.

2. The commitment's language should make clear its relevance to opening government. Specifically, it must relate to at least one of the OGP values of access to information, civic participation, or public accountability.

3. The commitment would have a "transformative" potential impact if completely implemented.

4. Finally, the commitment must see significant progress during the action plan implementation period, receiving a ranking of "substantial" or "complete" implementation.

Based on these criteria, the Estonian action plan did not receive any starred commitments.

Note that the IRM updated the star criteria in early 2015 to raise the bar for model OGP commitments. Under the old criteria, a commitment received a star if it was measurable, clearly relevant to OGP values as written, of moderate or transformative potential impact, and substantially or completely implemented. Based on these criteria, the Estonian action plan would have received seven starred commitments:

- 2.5: Deciding upon and funding participation projects
- 2.6: Web tool for petitions to parliament and municipalities
- 4.1: Central government transactions on the government portal for open spending
- 4.2: Local authorities' transactions with private entities
- 5.2: Registry of public services
- 6.1: Open data portal
- 6.2: Public competitions for opening data

Finally, the graphs in this section present an excerpt of the wealth of data the IRM collects during its progress reporting process. For the full dataset for Estonia and all OGP-participating countries, please consult the 'OGP Explorer,' available at: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/explorer/.

General overview of the commitments

In the course of preparing the draft action plan, the government-formed OGP consultation board decided to focus on three areas as priorities towards open governance goals. The priorities are: (1) open public policy-making processes that include citizens, (2) transparent state budget and financial management, and (3) citizen-centred public services. The present choice of priorities is broader than the framework provided by the key challenges of OGP. For example, promotion of citizens' participation in policy-making processes is not among the five key subject areas. The focus was extended from the OGP key areas to the OGP core values as concentration on the latter offered more possibilities and flexibility in choosing priority areas.[1]

Two of the priority areas (openness of policy-making processes and transparency of finances) are new, whereas the priority area of developing public e-services was carried over from the previous action plan.[2] The continuation of the priority area was considered necessary due to the remaining progress to achieve in that area. On the other hand, the priority area addressing ethics of public officials was not continued as the plan preparers argued that several measures had created a solid basis for continuous development outside of the OGP framework (e.g. the new anti-corruption law, approving the anti-corruption strategy, creating Council of Ethics of Officials, and an electronic database for declarations of economic interests).[3] Nevertheless, activities in the action

plan support the prevention of corruption, for instance, the activities increasing transparency of public sector finances.

The three priority areas contain six commitments:

1. To improve the accessibility of information needed for participation.
2. To improve opportunities for participation in the public policy-making process.
3. To increase the ability of government institutions and nongovernmental partners to co-operate, to engage stakeholders, and to participate.
4. To increase the transparency and comprehension of public funds.
5. To increase the quality of development and provision of public services.
6. To use open data widely.

In determining "pivotal insufficiencies" in open governance that eventually formed the basis for the selection of the action plan's priority areas and commitments, various sources of input were considered. Input included the OGP Civil Society Roundtable's (CRS) suggestions, the OGP Consultation Board, and the IRM evaluation of the previous action plan. One of the lessons learned from the first action plan was that it lacked ambitious aims and focus. The second plan's preparers also acknowledged that the evaluation of the previous OGP action plan's success was complicated, as the previous action plan did not contain milestones or performance indicators for many of the activities which were needed to conduct a proper evaluation.

The ambition level of the action plan can be considered modest. Many of the activities included in the action plan were planned already or were in the process of being planned by the ministries (within other strategies).

The current action plan does not include performance indicators. Twenty-three activities were planned within the six commitments. Each activity has a short description, information on responsible institutions, co-operation partners, and planned implementation time. More detailed descriptions of activities were approved after the OGP Co-ordinating Board adopted the action plan, and they are published on the Government Office's website.[4]

It was decided that the action plan would be implemented in a flexible manner, stage by stage, allowing for adjustments to the activities mid-implementation based on the evaluation of the results. This decision was based on the previous IRM report's note that it might be necessary to make changes to the planned activities.[5] This also offers the chance to compensate for insufficient discussion of and rationale for decisions due to a lack of time during the action plan development.

The first draft of the action plan, developed in co-operation with partners, was submitted for public discussion in May 2014. Based on the feedback, the action plan was modified, and the second version was submitted to the government's session. It was approved in June 2014.[6]

The IRM researcher organised the 23 activities, which fall under the three priorities and six commitments listed above, into 11 clusters. The clusters were formed on the basis of the similarities of the activities' content, outcomes, and target groups. Each of the clusters covers activities that have similar outcomes and content. If any of the criteria were different, a separate cluster was formed. Each cluster represents a set of activities (or a single activity) that could be analysed within the same framework and based on similar argumentation, while addressing what happened, whether it mattered, and how to move forwards. The final clusters are as follows:

1. Transparency of policy-making processes
2. Standards for information requests

3. Early access to tax policy decisions
4. Enhancing the quality of government-led participation processes
5. Capacity-building support for nongovernmental partners in policy-making
6. Web tool for petitions to the Parliament and municipalities
7. Upgrading government portal for open spending/budget transparency
8. Guidelines for citizen budgeting
9. Citizen-centred public services
10. Access to e-services for non-residents
11. Enhancing open data supply and re-use by nongovernmental actors

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[1] Riigikantselei, *Estonia's Action Plan in Participating in the Open Government Partnership 2014-2016* (Tallinn, 2014), 6, http://bit.ly/1S6jUkU

[2] The previous Action Plan did contain activities aimed at increasing the openness of policy-making but this did not form a separate priority area.

[3] *Estonia's Action Plan*, 3-4, http://bit.ly/1S6jUkU

[4] The Government Office's website details action plan activities. "Tegevuskava 2014-2016," Riigikantselei, http://bit.ly/1ZsYynd

[5] *Estonia's Action Plan*, 18, http://bit.ly/1S6jUkU

[6] "2014-2016 Tegevuskava Koostamise Protsess," Riigikantselei, http://bit.ly/1pInU4J

1: Transparency of policy-making process

Action plan commitment text:[1]

1.1: Providing a better overview of the process of public policy making and legislation, explaining and visualizing it, describing the participation opportunities

Start Date: 1 July 2014   *End Date: 31 December 2014*

1.2: Enhancing the user-friendliness of e-participation channels, integrating them where possible, informing potential users of the opportunities provided by e-participation channels

Start Date: 1 January 2015   *End Date: 30 June 2016*

1.3: Providing content for the participation section of the new Government website, standardization of participation-related information of ministries and its presentation

Start Date: 1 July 2014   *End Date: 31 October 2014*

2.1: Making information about the proceedings and participation opportunities accessible in an early stage of the policymaking process

Start Date: 1 October 2014   *End Date: 31 December 2015*

Editorial Note: The IRM researcher clustered the activities based on their similar purpose and common theme. All of the four activities support the quality and transparency of policy-making. These activities combined are expected to provide a better overview of the process of public policy-making and legislation and to use possible outcomes to develop the participation channels and to publish information about policy-making at an earlier stage. Finally, the end dates of two activities were changed. The new end date for activity 1.1 was August 2015, and the new end date for 1.3 was October 2015.

Responsible Institution(s): Government Office

Supporting Institution(s): Ministries, E-Governance Academy, Praxis, other third sector organisations, OGP Roundtable, Enterprise Pulse, interested parties

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion			
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to information	Civic participation	Public accountability	Tech. and innov. for transparency and accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not started	Limited	Substantial	Complete
1.1. Visualisation of the policy-making process		✔			✔	✔				✔						✔
1.2. Upgrading participation channels		✔			✔	✔		✔		✔					✔	
1.3. Improving government websites		✔			✔	✔		✔		✔				✔		
2.1. Early notice on policy-making processes			✔		✔	✔					✔			✔		

This cluster of activities aims to improve public participation by creating better access to information about opportunities for participation, especially in the early stage of the policy planning processes. It contains efforts to enhance nongovernmental partners' understanding about various policy-making and legislation processes. Although general and basic channels for participation such as the central e-participation portal (http://www.osale.ee/) were created years ago, they have been largely underused. For example, from August to December 2015, it had five documents for public consultation, and they received only 15 comments. According to the focus groups, the main problem with this channel is that it gathers a lot of inadequate feedback, making the channel irrelevant both for institutions and for feedback providers. For this reason, the feedback often is requested and provided through other channels such as via special emails, meetings, etc. Thus, one challenge faced by the government is to create and implement user-friendly participation opportunities and to promote public participation at an earlier stage than is currently available.

The first activity (1.1) aims to provide a better overview of the process of public policy-making and legislation, explaining and visualizing it, and describing the participation opportunities. The visualisation is made available on the Government Office's webpage. The IRM researcher found this activity to be completed. Visualisation of policy-making and legislative process was prepared and introduced to partners.[2]

The second activity (1.2) aims to enhance the user-friendliness of e-participation channels, integrating them where possible and informing potential users of the opportunities provided by e-participation channels. To achieve the goal, the activity seeks to map the problems with existing e-participation channels such as too few public consultations, too little feedback from the public, technically not updated, etc. The activity also aims to implement recommendations on how to improve the channels. So far, while the report for improving the channels was finished,[3] the channels have not been enhanced or integrated. Thus, the IRM researcher found the level of completion of this activity to be substantial. Both the government and nongovernmental organisations agree that the activities have progressed according to the time frame.

The third activity (1.3) aims to standardise the ways in which participation-related activities are presented on the webpages of all ministries. It also aims to provide links from the government's general site to the webpages of all separate ministries with a new subsection titled "participation." To achieve the goal, the government website gathers the standardised information about participation processes and opportunities from the ministries. So far, the form and structure of the participation section of the government website was developed and agreed upon by the ministries. The development of technical solutions and the promotion of the pending "participation" subsections are still planned activities for the future. The IRM researcher found the level of completion of this activity to be limited because the process is still far from the final outcome. Until now, the ministries do not have standardised web-sections on "participation;" and the general webpage of the Government Office does not have an updated "participation" section. Based on the IRM researcher's interviews and focus groups, both the government and nongovernmental organisations agree with the level of completion, and they hope that the enhanced system will improve the usage of participation channels.

The fourth activity (2.1) aims to make the information about the proceedings and participation opportunities accessible at an early stage of the policy-making process. To achieve the goal, information about when and where important decisions will be made as well as the documents relevant for making and explaining the decisions need to be made available. Opportunities to take part in public discussions also need to be created.

Finally, ministries have to develop their activities on participation in such a way that they inform potential stakeholders about important initiatives at an early stage. So far, discussions with different stakeholders have taken place on what can and should be implemented to enhance participation opportunities at an early stage of the policy-making process. The proposed solutions by various stakeholders were approved. For example, the ministries' yearly work plans will be introduced at the beginning of the year. The Government Office still needs to find additional funding for the proposed solutions concerning the participation portal (eelnoud.valitsus.ee). After that, they would be able to start public procurement processes to find an IT-developer to work on the proposed technical advancements. The IRM researcher found the level of completion of this activity to be limited because enhancements have been planned and agreed upon, but have not been funded or implemented yet. Other stakeholders agreed with the assessment. Additionally, based on the IRM researcher's focus groups, civil society organisations (CSOs) hope that possible advancements could activate more meaningful public participation.

Did it matter?

According to the IRM researcher, the potential impact of activities 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 is minor. By only creating a better overview of participation opportunities, the activities mainly try to enhance nongovernmental partners' understanding of policy-making and legislation process, but they do not motivate partners enough to participate. By contrast, the potential impact of activity 2.1 is moderate because making information about the proceedings and participation opportunities accessible at the early stages of the policy-making process can raise the public interest and participation.[4]

Some consulted CSOs expressed the view that, taking into account Estonia's context of relatively strong involvement in open government issues (e.g. legal framework, guidelines, active third sector, etc.), the transparency of policy-making process has not improved much. More active CSOs argued that on paper and in policy documents, the situation might have improved, but in reality there is little interest, time, and energy from the public sector to work on transparency of policy-making processes. There have been cases where ad hoc policy decisions were made without prior general discussion and without an existing appropriate policy or political framework. For example, public discussion about public financing for private schools and annual salaries for top five artists and writers occurred after the decisions were made.[5]

Civil society and academic organisations often expressed the view that in reality the key issue is empowerment. They believe that the stakeholders might be invited to take part in the discussions, but that they are not given enough power over the final decisions. According to them, the feedback they give often is not taken into account or is requested too late or with a limited time frame. In many cases, the involvement processes are led by young and inexperienced civil servants who do not have enough power or status to proceed with these ideas within the organisation or know the political and economic framework and, thus, are not familiar with the strategies or previous discussions. On one hand, capacity-building on involvement within public organisation has not happened as much as one would expect. On the other hand, empowering citizens might also mean that public institutions will summon conflicting views, which certainly require more time, energy, and resources to make decisions.

Nevertheless, there are positive local-level cases around the country that occurred independently of OGP, but that could be considered spill-over effects of the above mentioned activities. For instance, the Rõuge municipality successfully implemented an open government action plan for a year. This is just one case from which the central government could learn.

While comparing the two main e-channels for participation in Estonia, most stakeholders interviewed by the IRM researcher had stronger faith in www.osale.ee than eelnoud.valitsus.ee. The website (www.osale.ee) is a platform for sending one's ideas and proposals to the government office, gathering support and digital signatures for the proposed ideas, commenting on draft laws, and looking up and finding laws and strategic documents. The current action plan is more focused on eelnoud.valitsus.ee, a platform for co-ordination and public discussion of draft laws and finding laws and strategic documents. Nongovernmental organisations consider the latter platform to be too "administration-centred." They correlate it with the logic of public administrators, but not with general users.

The government argues that these systems have complementary while different purposes. The site eelnoud.valitsus.ee is the official system for processing all legislation adopted on the government level, while www.osale.ee is for anyone interested in taking part in policy-making. The government believes that these are different "vehicles" with different purposes and build-ups.

Moving forward

First, pending activities still should be carried out in the remaining implementing period of the current action plan: developing the participation channels according to the recommendations (1.2), developing the participation section technical solution for government website (1.3), and finding funding opportunities for implementing early-stage participation solutions (2.1).

In addition, CSOs consulted by the IRM researcher proposed the following additional steps be considered on this topic for the next action plan:

- Open more possibilities for stakeholder involvement in the early stages of policy planning;
- Give stakeholders more decision making powers over policy planning activities;
- Inform potential users of the new opportunities available after the enhancement of the e-participation channels;
- Concentrate more on improving the usability of the existing systems, rather than creating new channels or subsections in the future; and,
- Focus more on transparency of policy-making at the local level because current activities are focused on the central government.

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[1] While the description of the activities in the action plan is limited, the IRM researcher drew on additional information from the Mid-term Progress Report, the Government Office's website, additional analyses, and interviews. The IRM researcher followed the same information-gathering process for all other clusters.

[2] "Poliitikakujundamise Ja Oigusloome Protsess [Visualisation of Policy-Making and Legislative Process]," Riigikantselei, http://bit.ly/1Rluzs1

[3] Praxis Center for Policy Studies and Pulse, *Osalusveebi Ja Valitsuse Eelnõude Infosüsteemi Kasutatavuse Analüüs* by Hille Hinsberg (Report, April 2015), http://bit.ly/22wiqek

[4] Poliitikauuringute Keskus Praxis, *Kaasamine Otsustetegemise Protsessi* by Reesi Lepa, Eveli Illing, Aare Kasements, Ülle Lepp, and Epp Kallaste (Report, Tallinn, 2004), 16, http://bit.ly/1RzHv38

[5] "Erakoolid Koostasid Haridusministeeriumile Vastukaaluks Alternatiivse Seaduseelnou (17)," Uudised, 22 October 2015, http://bit.ly/1XNu4Lb; "Kulli Taro: Kirjanike Ja Kunstnike Asetamine Valjapoole Teiste Jaoks Toimivaid Reegleid Suvendab Kibestumist," Uudised, 6 November 2015, http://bit.ly/22wj1g7

2: Standard for information requests

Action plan commitment text:[1]

1.4: Developing a unified form for the submission of memoranda, explanation requests and information requests of the citizens to public authorities through the eesti.ee portal.

Start Date: 1 July 2014 *End Date: 30 January 2016*

Responsible Institution(s): Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications

Co-operation partner(s): The State Information System Authority (eesti.ee), Data Protection Inspectorate (owner of the form to be created), public sector institutions (form users), citizens, and entrepreneurs (form testers)

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion			
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to information	Civic participation	Public accountability	Tech. and innov. for transparency and accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not started	Limited	Substantial	Complete
			✔		✔			✔		✔					✔	

What happened?

The main purpose of this activity is to enhance the usability of the www.eesti.ee portal. It also aims to harmonise different e-forms and to develop a unified form for the submission of memoranda and citizen information requests of public authorities.[2] It is expected that the portal should increase the number of institutions that use e-forms. E-forms include applications and forms that citizens can file in the electronic systems instead of on paper. They will save citizens' and administrators' time, logistical resources, paper, etc.

In the previous OGP period of 2012-2013, an activity focused on enhancing the functionality and usability of www.eesti.ee portal. For example, the option "My Things" was added, which helped to personalise each user's history, searches, and applications. Because the development of the portal was an important activity for the stakeholders, there was a clear need to continue its development.[3]

At first there were four main co-operation partners responsible for the activity: the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, the Estonian Data Protection Inspectorate, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Information System Authority. But, during the process, several additional partners were invited: the Defence Resources Agency, the Association of Estonian Cities, and others.[4] This was based on the realisation that several institutions use different e-forms, and it would be more beneficial to expand the co-operation partnership while trying to improve and to merge most of the forms.

The Deputy Director of the State Information System Authority, Margus Simson, commented in May 2014 that, for the last seven years, the development of e-services has been on standby, and that there was a need for one general portal, which could unify hundreds of e-service environments.[5] The Eesti.ee portal fulfilled that need, but inefficiencies with e-forms remained. For example, citizens were asked to fill in the current date manually on the e-forms, although the technological solutions could enter it automatically.

By the end of 2014, the navigation system and prototypes for the new forms were created and tested. During the process, it became clear that there were too many forms with similar purposes (using slightly different wording or structure) within the www.eesti.ee portal. After the first stage of analysis was finished, a report brought out different possibilities for unification and suggestions for the future. The third stage of this activity will be to apply the changes suggested in the second stage and to harmonise the e-forms. This stage is expected to be completed in January 2016, depending on available finances.[6]

The IRM researcher, nongovernmental organisations, and the representatives of public organisations consider this activity to be substantially complete as of June 2015. The government completed the first and second stages of this activity according to the time frame, but they are still working on the third stage, applying the additional changes the State Information System Authority and public sector institutions suggested. The government has not created a standard for information requests yet.

Did it matter?

According to a poll conducted by TNS Emor, a research agency, the general awareness of the www.eesti.ee portal in 2014 was at 82 per cent, 14 per cent higher than in 2012. Although general awareness of www.eesti.ee portal rose, its popularity is concentrated among highly-educated people. Most people who are not aware of the portal are older people between the ages of 50 and 64, minorities, habitants in municipalities of Lääne- and Ida-Virumaa, and people who have only compulsory education. Fourteen per cent of the people questioned used www.eesti.ee portal during the last month, which is not significantly (three per cent) higher than in 2012.[7]

Although the e-form application works and should satisfy users' needs, there are still some problems. For example, users still have difficulties in searching for certain forms. Moreover, some of the e-forms are not accessible, and not all public servants have sufficient ability or knowledge to navigate e-forms and e-services. Some of the e-forms require searching for information from the State Information Management System, which is hard to use. Additionally, e-forms often are hard to visualise or test for public service providers.[8] This shows that the e-forms need to be more user-friendly both for public institutions and for citizens.

Consulted civil society organisations (CSOs) did not believe this activity had high importance, and most of them were not aware of the activity. Some public administrators stated that this activity should have been left out of the action plan because it does not offer additional value. They believed it is a minor technical issue taking attention away from real issues. While the development of a unified form is a positive step in the right direction and it will have some impact, the commitment does adequately address the most significant issues of citizen access to information requests such as usability, user-friendliness, etc.

Moving forward

As the PricewaterhouseCoopers suggests, it would be better to shift away from the old database system to more modern technology. Specifically, some of the applications like e-forms and user administration are based on an outdated development frame. The new system needs improved functionality such as programming various functions separately and exclusively for designated purposes. The government's self-assessment report mentions institutions tendency not to agree with the unified and standardised form because of the potential risk of 'loss of identity.'[9] Nevertheless, it is more convenient for end-users to have fewer versions of the e-forms and to be able to send the same form, such as an information request, to different institutions.

However, because the added value of including this activity in the OGP action plan is not high, similar low-impact improvement activities could be left out from future action plans.

[1] While the description of the activities in the action plan is limited, the IRM researcher drew on additional information from the Mid-term Progress Report, the Government Office's website, additional analyses, and interviews. The IRM researcher followed the same information-gathering process for all other clusters.
[2] Riigikantselei, *Estonia's Action Plan in Participating in the Open Government Partnership 2014-2016* (Tallinn, 2014), 10, http://bit.ly/1S6jUkU
[3] Hinsberg, *Sõltumatu Hindamisaruanne*, 30-31.
[4] Republic of Estonia, *Estonia's Open Government Partnership Action Plan for 2014-2016: The Interim Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan* by the Government Office (Tallinn, 2015), 14, http://bit.ly/1ShJ5Ds
[5] "Simson: E-riik Peab Muutuma Inimese Jaoks Lihtsamaks," Riigi Infosüsteemi Amet, http://bit.ly/1UN1JWf
[6] Riigikantselei, *Eesti Tegevuskava Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluses Osalemisel 2014-2016: Tegevuskava Täitmise Vahearuanne* (Report, Talllinn [sic], 2015), 15-16, http://bit.ly/1Mml9Qe
[7] TNS Emor, *Kodanike Rahulolu Riigi Poolt Pakutavate Avalike E-Teenustega 2014* (Report, Tallinn, 2014), 4, 145-146, http://bit.ly/1Uf58OF
[8] PricewaterhouseCoopers Advisors, *E-Vormide Analüüs, Ühtlustatud Mudel Ja Parendusettepanekud: Lõpparuanne* (Report, Tallinn, 2015), 27-29, http://bit.ly/1T8HeDq
[9] Republic of Estonia, *Estonia's Open Government Partnership Action Plan for 2014-2016: The Interim Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan* by the Government Office (Tallinn, 2015), 17-18, http://bit.ly/1ShJ5Ds

3: Early access to tax policy decisions

Action plan commitment text:[1]

2.3: It is recommended that important budgeting and taxation policy decisions be made in spring, together with the Budget Strategy

Start Date: 1 July 2014   End Date: 30 June 2016

Editorial Note: The end date of the activity was changed, since it was completed by July 2015.

Responsible Institution(s): Ministry of Finance

Supporting Institution(s): Tax and Customs Board, ministries

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion			
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to information	Civic participation	Public accountability	Tech. and innov. for transparency and accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not started	Limited	Substantial	Complete
			✔		✔	✔	✔			✔						✔

What happened?

The activity aims to provide early access to tax policy decisions by making important budgeting and taxation policy decisions in spring with the Budget Strategy. If any additional budgeting or taxation decisions are made with the strategy in spring—before the Parliament breaks for summer—they will be analysed and proposed within the same political priorities. In this way, the quality of preparing state budget increases, and public institutions can plan their activities and their available resources better. With at least six months between making taxation decisions and the date when the decisions come into force, the general public would have more time to discuss and to become more aware of the possible effects of taxation decisions on society.

Until now, the tax policy in Estonia has not involved sufficient public participation. The public often is informed about tax policy changes only when they are about to come into force. While it is common for stakeholders to make some tax policy proposals, often this is too late to have substantial impact on changing or enhancing the planning or implementation processes. The business sector and their associations repeatedly have expressed dissatisfaction with the current practice. They believe it seems to focus on filling budget gaps (i.e. introducing new taxes or increasing current taxes to create additional revenue that the public sector lacks to balance the state budget), rather than strategic and sustainable tax policy.

The Estonian Parliament adopted an updated Taxation Act that requires at least six months between changes in the Taxation Act and enforcement of the changes.[2] The state representatives, civil society organisations (CSOs), and the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) researcher find this commitment to be complete.[3] Consulted CSOs found hurried tax decisions very disturbing and welcomed the minimal period of six months between the decision and enforcement.

According to the IRM researcher, the activity's potential impact is minor. It undoubtedly will increase public discussions about tax policy issues. However, allowing more time to adjust to tax policy decisions might not help to achieve strategic and sustainable tax policy or to improve transparency in state finances. As nongovernmental organisations pointed out in focus groups, while there may be more opportunities for theoretical involvement and public discussion, the State Budget Act is less and less comprehensive every year. Increasingly it follows the internal logic of financial and fiscal principles within public sector, but the State Budget Act is not for the general public. One example that was mentioned often was a webpage created by the nongovernmental organisation Praxis, which visualises effectively the logic of public taxes and budgets. If the government aims for higher involvement in tax policy decisions, they should first share information, including on the State Budget Act, in an understandable way.

The local government also complained about the commitment to early access to tax policies because often they receive the final decision about their budget in February, after the start of the fiscal year.

Moving forward

This topic is ripe for open government reforms, so the IRM researcher recommends that future action plans continue to address the tax process. However, to make commitments more potentially impactful, stakeholders will need to put more emphasis on concrete participatory activities to open the decision making processes around tax policies at earlier stages of the budgeting process and more effectively. For example, when the Budgeting Strategy is made public, citizens and the business sector could discuss and share their ideas about tax policy more actively, such as through specific institutionalised and publicly known channels for participation in tax processes, rather than ad hoc or informal chats removed from the decision making.

CSOs consulted by the IRM researcher also pointed out that the State Budget Act should focus more on clear language and on ease of reading, than on the fiscal logic of the central government. Stakeholders could consider broadening or extending the citizen budgeting efforts, discussed below, to include tax policy. The Open Government Guide contains a variety of other practical suggestions for commitments on participation in tax and budgeting.[4]

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[1] While the description of the activities in the action plan is limited, the IRM researcher drew on additional information from the Mid-term Progress Report, from the Government Office's website, additional analyses, and interviews. The same principle applies for other clusters.
[2] Riigi Teataja, *Taxation Act*, §4[1], 1 July 2015, http://bit.ly/1Uf5Ewi
[3] See the list of interviewed stakeholders in the methodology and sources section.
[4] Open Government Guide, http://www.opengovguide.com/topics/budgets/

4: Enhancing the quality of government-led participation processes

Action plan commitment text:[1]

2.2: Promoting of initiatives that would enable discussion about principal policy choices in an early stage of the policymaking process

Start Date: 1 March 2015   *End Date: 30 June 2016*

2.4: Introducing to government institutions various possibilities and methods of feedback in order to achieve better results in policymaking, their implementation

Start Date: 1 December 2014   *End Date: 30 June 2016*

3.1: Creating guidelines for making participation methods and best practices more readily available for those who carry out processes, in accordance with policymaking situations (e.g. an interactive website with examples and methods)

Start Date: 1 October 2014   *End Date: 30 June 2016*

Editorial Note: The IRM researcher clustered these activities together because the commitment lists activities that may be described as early stage participation in policy-making, better feedback mechanisms, and interactive guidelines for public participation methods. Further, while activities 2.2 and 2.3 are similar, 2.2 targets general policy-making processes, whereas activity 2.3 specifically targets the timing of tax policy decisions.

Responsible Institution(s): Government Office

Co-operation Partner(s): Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, other ministries, nongovernmental organisations, other stakeholders

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion			
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to information	Civic participation	Public accountability	Tech. and innov. for transparency and accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not started	Limited	Substantial	Complete
2.2. Participation in early-stage policy-making		✔				✔				✔					✔	
2.4. Better feedback mechanisms	✔					✔				✔					✔	
3.1. Civil servant guidelines for participation		✔				✔				✔				✔		

What happened?

The first activity (2.2) of the cluster aims to strengthen the overall policy-making process (especially in earlier stages) and to involve more participants in policy discussions. The Government Office states that ministries often belatedly involve target groups and the public in policy-making processes.[2] According to the action plan, the focus is on increasing green and white papers (conceptual documents about certain policy areas), with the intention that this will lead to raised accessibility, usability, and awareness of all stakeholders.

A number of improvements were made: ministries are publishing their institutional action plans covering their main activities on a yearly basis. Some ministries organise events once a year to introduce their work-plan. Different training courses and seminars on how to involve stakeholders are offered for civil servants. In 2013, Estonia's green paper on the organisation of public services laid out the basic principles for developing services, but it did not provide specific guidelines for the design or the provision of services. According to the government's self-assessment report, they are analysing the usage of different papers (green and white) and supplementing the recommended guidelines.[3] In April 2016, they want to supplement the current guidelines, and from May 2016 to June 2016, the government wants to start informing activities. Therefore, the IRM researcher assesses the completion of this activity as substantial.

The second activity (2.4) aims to introduce feedback for participants on policy-making processes such as how their comments were taken into account or why they were rejected. According to nongovernmental organisations, too often, citizens' opinions do not receive feedback because of the lack of time or other reasons. The main focus and the core action of the activity is developing the Draft Act Information System, while including the function of adding notifications and feedback on citizen input. The summaries of public consultation will be added to the Draft Act Information System in co-operation with activity 2.1.[4] Currently, public and civil society stakeholders have been held discussions about possible solutions and developments, and the Government Office is looking for funding opportunities for the next activities. Therefore, the IRM researcher assesses this activity's completion as substantial.

The third activity (3.1) aims to support civil servants who are not extensively experienced with policy-making, but who still are active in policy-making. The main purpose of the activity is to share administrator experiences with those who are less experienced. The activity seeks to create guidelines for participation methods and to make best practices more available for those who make policy. The government is no longer making a new webpage for the activity because it would demand too many resources. With nongovernmental organisations, the government has been discussing various activities to promote good practices, but they are pending. Therefore, the completion of this activity is assessed as limited.

Did it matter?

The OGP Co-ordinating Board discussed activity 2.2. at their meeting in January 2015. A point of discussion was that the procedures on when and how citizens and nongovernmental organisations can participate in policy-making process has no legal definition. Making information about the beginning of policy-making process available is easier with legislations and development plans, but it is more difficult with regulations. In addition, procedural steps often are hard to follow, and they might not be standardised. The IRM researcher believes that if citizens and nongovernmental organisations do not or are not aware of the possibilities to submit information, then this activity will not achieve its goals.

Previous experiences have shown that people are interested in getting involved in policy-making processes, but that they want to receive feedback. Activity 2.4 set out to include public consultation summaries in the Draft Act Information System.[5] Both public institutions and CSOs expressed uncertainty about the number of people visiting the portal regularly or getting involved in public consultation. A TNS Emor 2014 report stated that there 39 per cent of respondents had not visited a local or state portal during the last two years. In addition, only eleven per cent of the respondents had visited the portal for legal acts called the State Gazette.[6] That is one reason why activity 2.4 may not achieve its goals.

In 2014, the Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations released a renewed guidebook for involvement. One goal is to improve participatory democracy by ensuring regular dialogue between society and decision makers.[7] This is a step forward for activity 3.1. One of the purposes of this activity was to create a user-friendly guidebook. Although the activity did not intend for an nongovernmental organisation to develop a guidebook, the guidebook still qualifies as an independent activity working towards the same aim.

Moving forward

Citizens should be more involved in the decision making process. Therefore, it is laudable that activity 2.2 works towards this goal. However, improving the Draft Act Information System may not bring the desired changes in improved participation. For example, as procedural steps are hard to read or follow, citizens and organisations might not use the system as actively as expected.

Additionally, during the IRM researcher's focus groups and interviews, civil society and academic organisations expressed the view that more strategic partnerships between ministries and nongovernmental organisations are needed in Estonia. In this regard, CSOs want support for developing their capacity for policy planning and advising. The Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations proposed two ideas:

1. Creating an "advocacy lab" for approximately 10 organisations that government would support in different ways to increase their capacity in policy planning and advising.
2. Specific strategic partnerships between civil society and public organisations.

Finally, the IRM researcher recommends continuing to develop participation, especially in budgeting at the state level. To make participatory budgeting more popular with citizens, policy-makers should improve the process via feedback from involved citizens and organisations.

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[1] While the description of the activities in the action plan is limited, in the following narrative the IRM researcher drew on additional information from the Mid-term Progress Report, from the Government Office's website, additional analyses, and interviews. The same principle applies for other clusters.
[2] Riigikantselei, *Eesti Tegevuskava Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluses Osalemisel 2014-2016: Tegevuskava Täitmise Vahearuanne* (Report, Talllinn [sic], 2015), 19, http://bit.ly/1Mml9Qe
[3] *Eesti Tegevuskava Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluses Osalemisel 2014-2016, 19*, http://bit.ly/1Mml9Qe
[4] *Eesti Tegevuskava Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluses Osalemisel 2014-2016, 19*, http://bit.ly/1Mml9Qe
[5] Riigikantselei, "Tegevus 2.4. Poliitikakujudamise Tulemustest Parema Tagasiside Andmiseks Erinevate Võimaluste Ja Meetodite Tutvustamine Valitsusasutustele, Nende Kasutuselevõtt," http://bit.ly/21JVvqe
[6] TNS Emor, *Kodanike Rahulolu Riigi Poolt Pakutavate Avalike E-Teenustega 2014* (Report, Tallinn, 2014), 36, http://bit.ly/1Uf58OF
[7] EMSL, *Kaasamine: Avalikus Sektoris Ja Vabakonnas* by Urmo Kübar and Hille Hinsberg (Report, Tallinn, 2014), 12, http://bit.ly/1oaek8P

5: Capacity-building support for nongovernmental partners in policy-making

Action plan commitment text:[1]

2.5: Providing content for participation projects financed by European Union structural funds and implementation of these projects in cooperation with third sector organizations

Start Date: 1 June 2014   *End Date: 30 June 2016*

3.2: Increasing the ability of social partners and other third sector organizations to better analyse public policies and to include their member organizations in the formation of positions regarding public policies

Start Date: 1 October 2014   *End Date: 30 June 2016*

Editorial Note: The IRM researcher clustered the two activities because they both support capacity-building for nongovernmental partners. The cluster forms a whole first by increasing the ability of social partners to analyse public policies and then by funding participation projects.

Responsible Institution(s): Government Office, Ministry of the Interior (issues related to strategic partnership)

Supporting Institution(s): Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations, other government authorities, and civil society organisations (CSOs)

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion			
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to information	Civic participation	Public accountability	Tech. and innov. for transparency and accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not started	Limited	Substantial	Complete
2.5. Deciding upon and funding participation projects			✔			✔					✔				✔	
3.2. Training CSOs		✔				✔					✔				✔	

Note: Under the old criteria of starred commitments, commitment 2.5 would have received a star because it is measurable, clearly relevant to OGP values as written, of moderate potential impact, and substantially or completely implemented. The IRM updated the star criteria in early 2015.

What happened?

This cluster of activities provides capacity-building support for nongovernmental partners in policy-making. Activity 2.5 aims to fund participation projects. The Government Office, with other nongovernmental organisations and governmental institutions, already designed measures for acquiring EU Structural Funds.[2] They earmarked financial support for three kinds of activities for 2015-2020: (1) testing new participation solutions; (2) developing government participation solutions; and (3) capacity-building of nongovernmental partners in policy-making. With 440,000 Euros, the Government Office is planning to support seven projects that enhance participation

practices in Estonia, which equates to approximately 60,000-70,000 Euros per project. One project was selected and funded. According to the IRM researcher, the level of completion of this activity is substantial because the funding measures have been designed and one out of seven possible projects has been funded, as per schedule.[3]

Activity 3.2 aims to build the capacity of nongovernmental partners through a leadership development programme and a capacity-building programme in policy-making. The leadership development programme was completed, and 30 participants passed 11 trainings (e.g. strategic management, personnel management, impact evaluation, co-operation and co-ordination, communication, policy development, role of the managers in nongovernmental organisations, etc.).[4] In November 2015, the Government Office plans to start a new capacity-building programme in policy-making with nongovernmental partners that is expected to end in June 2016. Further, the Ministry of the Interior is working to unify the strategic partnership between nongovernmental partners and public institutions. According to the IRM researcher, the level of completion of this activity is substantial because the leadership development programme was completed and preliminary activities for the capacity-building programme were made. Nongovernmental organisations interviewed by the IRM researcher especially appreciated the Ministry of the Interior's initiative to establish and to fund a multi-year strategic partnership between nongovernmental partners and the Ministry.

Recent years have shown positive developments in stakeholders' attitude and skills in policy-making. Positive developments have become evident in designing and implementing participation processes in public institutions. The authorities acknowledged the relevance in raising the competence of CSOs and the general public to discuss and to solve policy problems.[5] However, to be more on par with the decision makers, the capacity of nongovernmental actors needs to be higher, including the ability to carry out evidence-based analysis.

Did it matter?

This commitment sets out to increase the capacity of the government and nongovernmental partners to engage and to be engaged in policy-making, both through special participation projects in the policy planning process (2.5) and by increasing the analytical, co-operative, and institutional capacities of social partners to analyse public policies better (3.2). While possible participation projects still have not been selected or funded, the leadership development programme under activity 3.2 was implemented and received positive evaluations from the participants as well as from the trainers. According to the IRM researcher, the potential impact of both activities is moderate because, according to the designed measures, important capacity-building and participation activities will be funded. Civil society partners interviewed by the IRM researcher found the funding measure and programmes to be helpful, but the problem of how to make the participation of public and nongovernmental organisations sustainable and effectively outcome-oriented still remains.

Civil society, academics, and private organisations pointed out that involvement in policy-making is very demanding and time-consuming and that it requires a lot of effort from them. Accordingly, only the bigger and stronger nongovernmental partners can participate. In the opinion of the IRM researcher, this leads to a vicious circle in which stakeholders only increase their capacity when they feel that they are invited and involved in policy planning process; at the same time, according to some CSOs consulted by the IRM researcher, the public sector invites mostly nongovernmental organisations that have sufficient capacity for involvement.

Moving forward

While publishing policies early in their development processes could help nongovernmental partners to participate, offering opportunities for participation does not automatically increase participation. To have more impact on participation, commitments in this area should consider and focus on other crucial aspects of involvement, such as methods for involvement or groups to be involved.

Additionally, the IRM researcher recommends that commitments more closely link their design and implementation. For example, activities within the transparency in policy-making processes should be linked more strongly with the capacity building for nongovernmental partners activities.

Finally, consulted CSOs underscored that funded projects should include monitoring and evaluation elements and should mainstream best practices.

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[1] While the description of the activities in the action plan is limited, in the following narrative the IRM researcher drew on additional information from the Mid-term Progress Report, the Government Office's website, additional analyses, and interviews. The same principle applies for other clusters.

[2] "Kaasamisprojektid 2015-2020," Riigikantselei, http://bit.ly/1LLsgBU

[3] Riigikantselei, *Eesti Tegevuskava Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluses Osalemisel 2014-2016: Tegevuskava Täitmise Vahearuanne* (Report, Talllinn [sic], 2015), 19, http://bit.ly/1Mml9Qe

[4] "Arenguprogramm: Vabaühenduste Juhtidele," Praxis, http://bit.ly/1LLsokO

[5] Praxis, *Vabaühenduste Sisedemokraatia Uuring [Evaluation of Internal Democracy in Non-profit Organisations]*" (Report, 2014), 56, http://bit.ly/1LLssAZ

6: Web tool for petitions to Parliament

Action plan commitment text:[1]

2.6: Creating a non-governmental web-based discussion environment to give citizens an opportunity to initiate, compile and then submit, digitally signed, collective memoranda to state and local authorities

Start Date: 1 December 2014   *End Date: 28 February 2014*

Editorial Note: The end date of this activity was postponed to December 2015.

Responsible Institution(s): Estonian Co-operation Assembly

Co-operation partner(s): Parliament, the Government Office, interested ministries

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion			
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to information	Civic participation	Public accountability	Tech. and innov. for transparency and accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not started	Limited	Substantial	Complete
			✔			✔		✔			✔				✔	

Note: Under the old criteria of starred commitments, commitment 2.6 would have received a star because it is measurable, clearly relevant to the OGP values as written, of moderate potential impact, and substantially or completely implemented. The IRM updated the star criteria in early 2015.

What happened?

Although the commitment as written was not clear on the specific tool it would enable, it nevertheless proposed to design a website that enables the general public to raise issues, deliberate, and develop ideas on legislative proposals, and to submit citizen initiatives to the Parliament. Prior to this activity, two similar webpages already existed: (1) www.osale.ee and (2) eelnoud.valitsus.ee. The former is the platform for sending one's ideas and proposals to the government office, gathering support and digital signatures for the proposed ideas, commenting on draft laws, and looking up and finding laws and strategic documents. The latter is the platform for the co-ordination and public discussion of draft laws and for finding laws and strategic documents.

A 2011 OECD report found that the Estonian Government had difficulties in involving citizens in decision making processes because most civil society organisations (CSOs) have low capacity and professionalism, and the public sector does not have the necessary knowledge and skills to involve citizens effectively.[2] According to Estonia's Progress Report of 2012-2013,[3] the problem remained without an appropriate solution. The new webpage attempts to address this problem.

In 2013, the People's Assembly, considered the pioneer of the new webpage, collected proposals from the public through crowdsourcing. They received 15 concrete ideas for legislative amendments.[4] One idea was to define a legal regulation for collective citizen initiatives (petitions). The Parliament drafted and adopted the regulation. It stated that citizens and permanent residents may submit proposals for the amendment of legal provisions and for addressing social issues if they have at least 1,000 signatures. It was an important legal change to improve opportunities for collective petitions.

Although the webpage is being developed still, active citizens have used the regulation already. At the beginning of 2015, the Parliament accepted the first legal amendment initiated by the public. The Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with 1,300 entrepreneurs and active citizens, made the proposal.[5] The main purpose of this law was to change the time between ratifying a law of taxes and enforcing it to at least six months (see cluster 3).

The new law has been used already, but the output still is missing, namely, the webpage. Therefore, the completion of this activity is limited. The government's self-assessment report states that the webpage is being developed. By the end of 2015, the Estonian Co-operation Assembly should have arranged a competition for the webpage name, tested the web-environment, and launched it. After that, managing and moderating the webpage should have begun. Later it will be possible to add new functions and levels to the webpage. For example, local governments could use the same platform. The end-of-term report that covers the second year of implementation of these activities will evaluate whether the Estonian Co-operation Assembly achieved these plans.

Finally, the Government Office explained during their review of this report that the tool currently is for petitions to the Parliament only, although the original commitment text included local level government as well.

Did it matter?

The activity is expected to increase civil society engagement by improving the process of public engagement, specifically, by making a special webpage for raising questions, negotiating them, and collecting signatures for support. This activity has moderate potential impact. Making a new webpage for petitions may not be enough to raise citizens' use of e-democracy services. This activity alone might not be ambitious enough to achieve the goals. Additional preconditions and activities might be needed (e.g. increasing the trust in political parties and the Parliament, increasing voter turn out, increasing faith and motivation to be active citizens, etc.) before the platform would be successful.

The government faces serious challenges concerning active citizenship. The main problem is that citizens do not feel their opinions are taken into account in the discussion and decision making processes. Ninety-five per cent of people who participated in the People's Assembly felt that their participation did not affect the result.[6]

In December 2014, the Good Governance Programme made several suggestions to fulfil this activity. First, it suggested that the general public and civil servants test the webpage. Second, the Good Governance Programme proposed that the Parliament should be provided with an overview of participants and their efforts with the draft act. In addition, the programme suggests that, given too many passive participants in the involvement process, it would be better to involve citizens directly.[7]

For these reasons, it is still unclear whether this new webpage will be popular amongst citizens. Recent research shows that the number of citizens who use e-democracy services is relatively low. According to a 2014 TNS Emor poll, 67 per cent of internet-users had never used e-democracy services, which was eight per cent lower than in 2012.[8] The same TNS Emor's poll analysed how many people published their opinion in the two webpages. One per cent of respondents had used www.osale.ee, and seven per cent of people had used www.petitsioon.ee.[9] If the percentage of citizens who use e-democracy services remain low, then the probability that the new webpage is going to be successful is also low. Additionally, if nongovernmental organisations manage the webpage without financial support to keep it running and to update it regularly, then the consistent functioning of the webpage would be questionable.

In general, nongovernmental organisations considered this activity as having high potential to make big change in society. The Prime Minister also promoted this webpage in his introduction of the action plan. Margus Lehesaar, Advisor at the Development Department of the Ministry of Finance, stated that, at the local level, they created a similar information system or platform that enables the local governments to make their decisions and discussion public. Through this system, it is possible to follow the local government meetings in real time and to involve the public. Currently, approximately 25 local governments use the system, and it costs 60 Euros per month per local government. The system is updated constantly based on the feedback of users.

More critical voices expressed the opinion that too many portals and web tools exist. They believe that a change in the culture of citizen engagement is needed, not the creation of another platform. Because this is the one activity in the action plan for which a nongovernmental organisation is responsible, in general CSOs' hopes are rather high.

Moving forward

The IRM researcher recommends opening the webpage as soon as possible and promoting it actively, including through social media. A future commitment on this topic could include promotional activity as well as more specific activities to encourage local municipalities to take advantage of the system.

However, bearing in mind civil society's criticisms, the government should analyse critically all existing participatory webpages and, if possible, should consider developing one central webpage with partners. A reform with more impact would be to focus on participatory environment improvements because a webpage is not sufficient to increase the usage of e-democracy services. It is laudable that the commitment's implementation sought to allow for direct democracy, but a future commitment should be oriented towards improving the overall environment and incentives for participation, in addition to promoting or improving this new webpage or a centralised one.

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[1] While the description of the activities in the action plan is limited, the IRM researcher drew on additional information from the Mid-term Progress Report, the Government Office's website, additional analyses, and interviews. The same principle applies for other clusters.

[2] OECD, "Estonia: Towards a Single Government Approach, "*OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing* (2011): 278-279, http://bit.ly/22zes4R

[3] Hille Hinsberg, *Independent Reporting Mechanism Estonia: Progress Report 2012-2013* (Report, Washington, D.C.), 36, http://bit.ly/1oaeSeZ

[4] *Kodanikuühiskonna Arengukava 2015-2020* (Tallinn, 2015), 16-17, http://bit.ly/1Uf88KX

[5] Annika Uudelepp, "Rahvakogule On Tänu Võlgu Vähemalt Kolm Valimistel Osalevat Erakonda," Uudised, ERR, 20 February 2015, http://bit.ly/1LLt8GC

[6] Hille Hinsberg, "Rahvakogu Tulemus: Võim Kaotas, Kuid Inimesed Lähenesid," Arvamus, Postimees*,* 22 November 2014, http://bit.ly/1oafdhL

[7] Eesti Koostöö Kogu, *Riigipidamise Kava* (Report, 2014), 4, http://bit.ly/1pB3eLc

[8] TNS Emor, *Kodanike Rahulolu Riigi Poolt Pakutavate Avalike E-Teenustega 2014* (Report, Tallinn, 2014), 79, http://bit.ly/1Uf58OF

[9] *Kodanike Rahulolu Riigi Poolt Pakutavate Avalike E-Teenustega 2014*, 80, http://bit.ly/1Uf58OF

7: Upgrading government portal for open spending/budget transparency

Action plan commitment text:[1]

4.1: Including the accounting data of central government, persons in public law and as many other units of the public sector as possible in the designated public finances web-based application, with a level of detail as required in the chart of accounts

Start Date: 1 September 2014   *End Date: 31 December 2015*

4.2: Publicizing private sector and third sector transaction partners of local authorities and interfacing this information with the business registry to show persons related to these transactions

Start Date: 1 January 2016   *End Date: 31 July 2016*

4.3: Including third sector organizations that have received funding from the state budget in the public finances application

Start Date: 1 September 2015   *End Date: 30 June 2016*

Editorial Note: The cluster combines efforts to enhance transparency of government-held spending data of local municipalities, central government institutions, and civil society institutions (CSOs). The start date for 4.1 was postponed by three months to December 2014. In the progress report, it became evident that the end date for 4.2 would be expedited by one month to June 2016. The end date for 4.3 would be expedited six months to December 2015.

Responsible Institution(s): Ministry of Finance

Co-operation partner(s): Praxis, citizens' associations; the Ministry of Justice, the State Audit Office; the Ministry of the Interior, the Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion			
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to information	Civic participation	Public accountability	Tech. and innov. for transparency and accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not started	Limited	Substantial	Complete
4.1. Central government transactions				✔	✔		✔	✔			✔				✔	
4.2. Local authorities' transactions with private entities			✔		✔		✔	✔			✔				✔	
4.3. Public spending for non-profits				✔	✔		✔	✔			✔			✔		

Note: Under the old criteria of starred commitments, commitments 4.1 and 4.2 would have received stars because they are measurable, clearly relevant to the OGP values as written, of moderate potential impact, and substantially or completely implemented. The IRM updated the star criteria in early 2015.

What happened?

Activity 4.1 seeks to make budget spending more transparent. It aims to make available the accounting data of the central government, persons in public law, and other units of the public sector. For this activity, the government committed to updating a new web-based application called "State Finances" in co-operation with the research centre Praxis and civil society associations. Feedback and experiences from previous projects like "State Cloud" (a cloud-based webpage where people could see the budgeting of local governments from 2004 to 2012 and which had 8,600 visitors and 200,000 enquiries)[2] helped to develop the new webpage. State Cloud served a similar purpose, but it did not update the data and was not user-friendly. There was high demand for a better open spending webpage.

State Finances improved aspects of user-friendliness and has a higher volume of the data. Additionally, it is available in Estonian and English. The government opened the new State Finances application webpage in 2014. The government is planning to finish testing and development it by the end of 2015. The webpage launch is planned for the beginning of 2016. The IRM researcher finds the completion of the activity substantial, although the development activities are behind schedule.

Activity 4.2 focuses on publicising local authorities' private and third sector transaction partners (names of organisations, allocated funds, purposes of the funding, etc.). It also aims to add information to the business registry to show persons related to different transactions. The main goals of this activity are to improve transparency, to improve trust, and to decrease corruption. The Ministry of Finance is planning to change the financial management law to specify the accounting data details for local government units.[3]

The updated draft act on financial management is the precondition for the web-page application to be a requirement for all public institutions. The government hopes it will be accepted by June 2016, in which case the new law would take effect on 1 September 2016.[4] The IRM researcher assesses the completion of this activity as substantial because the activity range and its costs were defined. The draft act and application of the new law is not done yet.

Activity 4.3 is related closely to activity 4.1. Both aim to develop the public finances application. This activity set out to make public expenditures more transparent and to facilitate the general public and the public sectors' open data use. Previously, the spending data of central government institutions including state-owned enterprises and foundations, universities, and hospitals were available in financial statements and accounting formats. These formats did not enable access nongovernmental actors or the general public to search for data or to analyse it independently. There was no register of the third sector organisations (nongovernmental organisations or foundations) that had received support from government agencies or municipalities.[5] Thus, including third sector organisations that received funding from the state budget in the public finances application will call upon government actors to justify their decisions, to act upon criticisms or requirements, and to accept responsibility for possible failures of the organisations to perform with respect to commitments.

According to the government's self-assessment report, the content and structure of this activity still is being discussed. Currently, the portal does not show which companies, CSOs or foundations outside of the government sector, received government or

municipality funding. The IRM researcher assesses the completion of this activity as limited because description and the main aims of this activity still need to be discussed.

Did it matter?

Currently two webpages have the purpose of making public sector budget spending more understandable and visual to citizens. The Praxis Research Centre released a webpage (www.meieraha.ee), which visualises state budget spending and shows the budget of some municipalities and how their taxes are spent. Another webpage (riigiraha.fin.ee), developed by the state under activity 4.1, opened in April 2014. It helps users analyse and compare the expenses and incomes of different municipalities of Estonia. Users also can enter their salary and the application calculates how their taxes are spent.

Until now, the public sector has made strong attempts to make fiscal and accounting data available in a readable and accessible way. At the same time, nongovernmental organisations claim that www.meieraha.ee is a much more logical platform, and the team developing riigiraha.fin.ee should learn simplicity and user friendliness from www.meieraha.ee. However, the goal of riigiraha.fin.ee was to provide a tool to acquire analytical information while being an open data application. The two sites are complementary in that www.meieraha.ee provides the overall summary of how the state money "comes and goes," and the riigiraha.fin.ee provides more concrete numbers, facts, and statistics.

The OGP Co-ordinating Board discussed activity 4.2 in September 2015. They are waiting for general agreement on the details of the publicized data to set up the total work capacity. The draft financial management law as well as other activities which are necessary for the change of financial management law were pending at the time of writing this report. The government's self-assessment report states that they are having difficulties publicizing open-data because transparency and openness are not deeply rooted in Estonian society. In addition, local governments have different accounting systems, which are not compatible with the project.[6] This activity is ambitious in aiming to increase transparency, but there have been difficulties with local government accounting systems. CSOs believe that the commitment aimed higher than its outcomes. Also, public servants commented that many ministries were not informed about the process at first, and there have been communication problems. Most of the relevant civil servants in ministries were not involved in designing the processes. In addition, the Estonian Co-operation Assembly of the Municipalities found that this activity is not producing the expected result and that it will increase the work load of local government accountants.[7] That might mean that this activity needs more time to include all the data from local government accountings and to make sure that the data will be collected effectively.

The OGP Co-ordinating Board meeting discussed activity 4.3, and the issue was raised that this activity lacks a clear goal in terms of what data will be published. It is important to systematise the financial relations between public sector institutions and civil society.[8] Activity 4.3 was too ambitious, and the expected goals surpassed the real situation. Civil society and academic organisations pointed out that missing visualisation of spending, missing budgets on various issues, and missing webpages are additional drawbacks that hinder public discussion.

Moving forward

Regarding immediate next steps, the IRM researcher recommends advertising the application State Finances webpage and encouraging people to use it. The public finance application is a good way to raise trust towards the government, but it has not been advertised yet, and there are only a few articles on it.

As a longer term goal, perhaps for the next action plan, the IRM researcher recommends involving more local governments in the public finance transparency process. The government's self-assessment report recognised that one of the risks of activity 4.2 was that local governments' accounting systems are sometimes too different to be rearranged in accordance to this activity's goals. It will be important to describe the new aspects of the financial management law, to give local governments enough time to adjust possible changes, and to guarantee their full, integrated inclusion in Estonia's spending transparency.

[1] While the description of the activities in the action plan is limited, the IRM researcher drew on additional information from the Mid-term Progress Report, the Government Office's website, additional analyses, and interviews. The same principle applies for other clusters.

[2] E24, Majandusajakirjanik, "Omavalitsuste Finantsandmed On Nüüdsest Püsivalt Kättesaadavad," Majandus, Postimees, 14 April 2014, http://bit.ly/22zfcqD

[3] Riigikogu, "Seletuskiri Kohaliku Omavalitsuse Üksuse Finantsjuhtimise Seaduse Eelnõu Juurde," http://bit.ly/1Rp8Z5S

[4] Riigikantselei, "Tegevus 4.2. Kohalike Omavalitsuste Erasektorisse Ja Kolmandasse Sektorisse Kuuluvate Tehingupartnerite Avalikustamine Ning Selle Info Liidestamine Äriregistriga Tehinguga Seotud Isikute Väljatoomiseks," http://bit.ly/1XRK2nM

[5] Riigikantselei, *Estonia's Action Plan in Participating in the Open Government Partnership 2014-2016* (Tallinn, 2014), 13, http://bit.ly/1S6jUkU

[6] Riigikantselei, *Eesti Tegevuskava Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluses Osalemisel 2014-2016: Tegevuskava Täitmise Vahearuanne* (Report, Talllinn [sic], 2015), 30, http://bit.ly/1Mml9Qe

[7] Eesti Koostöö Kogu, *Valitsuskomisjoni Ja Omavalitsusliitude Koostöökogu Delegatsiooni Läbirääkimiste Kokkuvõte 2016. Aasta Riigieelarve Osas* (Report, Tallinnas, 2015), http://bit.ly/1XRKP83

[8] Liis Kasemets, *Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluse Koordineeriv Kogu* (Meeting protocol, Tallinn, 8 September 2015), 2, http://bit.ly/1XRKRwB

8: Guidelines for citizen budgeting

Action plan commitment text:[1]

4.4: Compiling the guidelines for local authorities for providing a concise overview of the local budget understandable to a citizen, in a manner similar to the State Budget Strategy and the state budget

Start Date: 1 November 2014   *End Date: 30 March 2015*

Responsible Institution(s): Ministry of Finance

Supporting Institution(s): E-Governance Academy, local government associations, the Government Office

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion			
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to information	Civic participation	Public accountability	Tech. and innov. for transparency and accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not started	Limited	Substantial	Complete
			✔		✔					✔						✔

What happened?

This activity aims to transfer knowledge from the central government's Ministry of Finance to local municipalities on how to create and how to publish brief overviews of local government budgets in a user-friendly and readable way. Although some local municipalities experimented with participatory budgeting, they mostly do not create user-friendly access to budgets or spending documents. This activity was a step towards disseminating OGP principles of openness at the subnational level.

The Ministry of Finance publishes the State Budget Strategy for the following budgetary year and the subsequent three years, as well as annual budgets to inform the general public of financial forecasts and budgeted revenues and costs. In January 2015, the Ministry of Finance prepared guidelines for the local governments on preparing brief overviews of local budgets. The guidelines were added to the Ministry of Finance's webpage and introduced to local municipalities. The IRM researcher found the commitment to be completed because guidelines are published[2] and were introduced to the local governments. The challenge faced by the government is to increase local municipalities' interest to following the guidelines. Because the Ministry of Finance has a separate department addressing questions from local governments, they could advocate the guidelines while promoting good examples. Local governments' representatives taking part in the IRM researcher's focus group were not aware of the guidelines, and they did not consider it to be a useful activity, in general (at least for their municipalities). Civil society organisations (CSOs) welcomed activities that might create better access to information, but they questioned whether the guidelines reach the target groups and if they are followed in practice.

Did it matter?

The IRM researcher considers the potential impact of the activity as minor because various national and international guidelines and suggestions that help create a simple overview about local government budgets already existed. The activity does not create

any new product, but offers an Estonian version of it. Because using the guidelines is optional, one should not expect a large number of municipalities to follow them. According to the Ministry of Finance, so far the interest of using the guidelines is low because local municipalities have limited budgets, and all extra costs for compiling and publishing the reports are viewed mostly as an additional duty, not as an opportunity. Local government representatives in the IRM researcher's focus groups were not aware of the guidelines, nor had other stakeholders heard about the guidelines.

Moving forward

The stakeholders the IRM researcher consulted had somewhat diverging opinions on this topic. Local government representatives suggested more publicity to improve awareness and usage of the guidelines. Nongovernmental organisations advocated for more emphasis on sharing good or best practices on how local government have created and published user-friendly and readable budgets, rather than more emphasis on the guidelines. Overall, because interest in using the guidelines is low, the IRM researcher recommends in short-term activities explain the benefits of using the guidelines, including demonstrating good examples from local municipalities. At a later stage, a commitment with possibly more impact could be to offer state funding for pilot projects in various-sized local governments. The pilot projects should test and discover the most workable, valuable, and user-friendly approaches to create and to publish local government budgets or sub-budgets.

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[1] While the description of the activities in the action plan is limited, the IRM researcher drew on additional information from the Mid-term Progress Report, the Government Office's website, additional analyses, and interviews. The same principle applies for other clusters.
[2] "Kohalike Omavalitsuste Finantsjuhtimine," Rahandusministeerium, http://bit.ly/1LLv8OX

9: Citizen-centred public services

Action plan commitment text:[1]

5.1: An interactive web-based toolbox for developing public services will be created where service developers from the public, private and NGO sector can obtain guidelines, methods, handbooks and best practices for developing new services or for redesigning existing services.

Start Date: 1 September 2014   End Date: 30 September 2016

5.2: To create an overview of public services where all public services would be described in a unified, machine and human readable form, and where citizens can find information on what quality level service is promised to them

Start Date: 1 July 2014   End Date: 31 December 2015

5.3: Pilot projects will be carried out with selected public services being designed in accordance with the guidelines of designing user-friendly e-services

Start Date: Not specified   End Date: 30 June 2016

Editorial Note: This cluster of activities focuses on designing public services in accordance with co-creation and a user-centric approach. It will create better preconditions to develop and to use public services in a user-centric manner.

Responsible Institution(s): Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications

Supporting Institution(s): State Information System Authority (RIHA), Ministry of Finance (public procurement registry), other government institutions

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion			
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to information	Civic participation	Public accountability	Tech. and innov. for transparency and accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not started	Limited	Substantial	Complete
5.1. Guidelines for redesigning public services			✔		✔			✔		✔					✔	
5.2. Registry of public services			✔		✔			✔			✔				✔	
5.3. User-centric public services				✔	✔					✔					✔	

Note: Under the old criteria of starred commitments, commitment 5.2 would have received a star because it is measurable, clearly relevant to OGP values as written, of moderate potential impact, and substantially or completely implemented. The IRM updated the star criteria in early 2015.

What happened?

The focus of this cluster is the user-friendliness of public services. With the aim to raise the skill level of civil servants and to motivate a user-centric approach, several handbooks were published. For example, guidelines on user-focused planning of delivery processes and on designing user-friendly e-services were published. Currently, there is no uniform database of the services provided by government agencies and local

authorities. Without a comprehensive database and accessible register, it is challenging to initiate co-operation between public institutions or to develop integrated services. This cluster of activities aims to make materials easily usable for public services providers as well as for service users and other stakeholders.

Activity 5.1 aims to prepare guidelines on the redesigning of public services. To achieve the goal, all materials (guidelines, methods, handbooks, and best practices) have to be made easily accessible and usable by developing an interactive web-based toolbox for all the public service developers from the public, private and nongovernmental organisation sector. While the government gathered the materials for the toolbox, they reported lacking financing to make the toolbox interactive. The IRM researcher found the level of completion of this activity to be substantial.

Activity 5.2 aims to create an overview of all public services in the portfolio of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications. In it, public services are described in a unified, machine- and human-readable form, and citizens can find information on the quality level of services that they should expect to be delivered. So far, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications described and published the public services it and its agencies provide.[2] Other ministries are expected to follow the example. All public e-services are expected to be described in a unified format by March 2016.[3] According to the IRM researcher, the level of completion of this activity is substantial.

Activity 5.3 aims to carry out pilot projects in which selected public services are designed according to guidelines of user-friendly e-services. To achieve the goal, several e-services will be developed. So far, four pilot projects were funded to design user-friendly e-services: (1) the Estonian Tax and Customs Board e-rescheduling taxes and the Estonian Road Administration's e-services; (2) the privileges and rights of a traffic registry; (3) a logbook of sample numbers; and, (4) ordering and managing number plates. The IRM researcher found the level of completion of this activity to be substantial because all four projects are in their final development process and should be completed already by the end of 2015 (the official deadline had been set to June 2016).

Did it matter?

Activities 5.1 and 5.2 are still in process and the broader outcomes of the activities are still to come. The public services of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications have been described and published on their webpage, one of the first steps towards the standardisation of public services. It is too early to evaluate the broader outcome. Thus far, the four e-services to be developed and finalised under activity 5.3 received positive user feedback. However, for agencies providing these e-services, the services are not considered core or essential (e.g. logbooks, e-rescheduling taxes, etc.). On his blog, Margus Simson, an e-services expert, recommends a more unified system of developing the e-services and toolboxes. Janek Rozov, Head of Information Society Services Development Department at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications believes that creating a registry for public services is one of the most essential activities in the action plan. He believes that it might have a transforming effect on developing and upgrading public services.

There are two types of public services: (1) mechanical ones (giving out licences, compiling the data, etc.) and (2) professional ones (educational, medical, social services). Mechanical services are relatively easy to standardise. In these cases, unification process could help to increase the quality of services. By contrast, the same approach does not always help the professional services. Having a common design for the services does not necessarily mean that the quality of the services will increase. Academic organisations especially acknowledged that the activities are implemented in

the field, but for the same reasons mentioned above, they were sceptical about the outcomes.

According to the IRM researcher, activities 5.1 and 5.3 have minor potential impact. They would improve the situation to a certain degree, but most of the information produced and public services were available already. Activity 5.2 is of higher potential impact because it goes beyond a centralised portal to incorporate innovative accessibility principles. In fact, the European Commission recognised this commitment for making Estonia one of the first European Union countries to use the "Core Public Service Vocabulary Application Profile."[4]

Different public service developers have pointed out that developing services requires a lot of resources.[5] Having the guidelines for common design of the services does not automatically mean that all service providers have the resources to develop services accordingly. Additionally, it is important to keep the toolbox materials updated (guidelines, methods, handbooks, and best practices) because circumstances and expectations for public services are constantly changing.

Moving forward

For this cluster of activities, the IRM researcher recommends completing the pending implementation. Pending activities include finding possible funds for developing the above-mentioned interactive web-based toolbox (5.1), introducing the unified system of public services to other ministries, later describing all the public e-services in unified way (5.2), and implementing the e-services development projects (5.3).

For next steps, stakeholders should consider the resources the Open Government Guide provides on the public service topic.[6]

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[1] While the description of the activities in the action plan is limited, the IRM researcher drew on additional information from the Mid-term Progress Report, the Government Office's website, additional analyses, and interviews. The same principle applies for other clusters.

[2] "Service Search," Republic of Estonia, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, http://bit.ly/1oagOEo

[3] During finalisation of this report, the government reported that 83 institutions mapped over 1400 services. The end-of-term report will evaluate this activity because it falls outside the period covered by this report.

[4] "Known Reuse of the CPSV(-AP)," Joinup, European Commission, http://bit.ly/1UMel0W

[5] "Avalikud Teenused: Probleemid Ja Väljakutsed Eri Osapoolte Silmis," 29 October 2015, http://bit.ly/1MFIuHo

[6] These resources are available online. "Public Services," Open Government Guide, http://bit.ly/1q5dY57

10: Access to e-services for non-residents

Action plan commitment text:[1]

5.4: Start of issuing digital ID documents to non-residents, thus improving the opportunities of non-residents to use e-services and participate in affaires of the society as well as business

Start Date: 1 December 2014   *End Date: 30 June 2016*

Responsible Institution(s): Ministry of the Interior (first), government office (later)

Co-operation partner(s): the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Justice, the Parliament, the Enterprise Estonia, representatives from private sector

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion			
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to information	Civic participation	Public accountability	Tech. and innov. for transparency and accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not started	Limited	Substantial	Complete
			✔				Unclear				✔				✔	

What happened?

In Estonia, it is possible to use public e-services, even if you are a non-resident. In December 2014, the President of Estonia, T. H. Ilves, gave the first digital identification (ID) to a non-resident, Edward Lucas, a well-known British journalist.[2] People with digital IDs become e-residents. The main goals of this activity are to improve the access to e-services for non-residents and to issue digital ID documents to non-residents. This would improve e-residents' involvement opportunities both in the Estonian society and in business, for example, by enabling them to establish and to administer companies, to conduct banking services, to declare taxes, to sign contracts digitally, and to access international payment providers. The activity also aims to improve the e-residency programme by raising the number of e-residents and improving e-services for them.

Initially, the application process for a digital ID was inconvenient because interested e-residents needed to go to Estonia to confirm their existence. However, since May 2015, it is possible to receive the digital ID from the nearest Estonian Embassy. In September 2015, 5,000 e-residents had received their digital ID.[3] The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications hopes to reach 60,000 e-residents by the end of 2017. The main goal to have 5,000 e-residents by the end of 2015 was met.

The e-residency activity received a lot of attention, and the activity was expanded. The following actions were conducted since the start of the activity in December 2014: e-residency application processes were simplified. Creating a company and opening a bank account virtually is easier, and different information events have been compiled. New co-operation partners were added because the activity turned out to be more successful than expected. Partners include the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, who is responsible for the 10 Million E-Estonians programme, several representatives of state institutions such as the Ministries of the Interior, Finance, Justice, the Parliament, and Enterprise Estonia (EAS) as well as representatives from the private sector.

The IRM researcher assesses the completion of this activity as substantial. Some of the missing actions have been planned for the end of 2015 and for the beginning of 2016. For instance, the government is working on developing additional e-services for e-residents.[4]

Did it matter?

The interest for e-residency has been more popular than expected. The e-residency programme went viral through social media even before the government began promoting it. E-residents were able to go online and perform different functions like tax filings, annual report submissions, shareholder meetings, and simpler things like changing a company's e-mail address, which required visiting a notary prior to the e-residency programme. Additionally, visitors of Estonia can use the e-residency card in local pharmacies, libraries, and supermarkets as a discount card. Through this activity, Estonia aims to increase economic income by the extra income generated by Estonian companies who offer services to e-residents, not by direct taxation. Moreover, Estonia received a lot of attention in worldwide media channels with no marketing costs. This attention can increase foreign trade investment, tourism, and export business. In 2016, the government wants to start an advertising programme in the US to introduce the e-residency service to attract international interest in Estonian economy, science, and education.[5]

While there are several benefits of e-residency programme, there are also some challenges. Taavi Kotka, the Head of the Estonian E-residency Programme Council, admitted that e-residents find it hard to use e-services and that using e-services can be especially challenging for people unfamiliar with Estonian culture.[6] Even if the e-residency programme received positive feedback overall, there are risks connected to the activity such as security, money laundering, e-crime, e-identity theft, e-framing, and e-terrorism.[7] Additionally, the project must stay independent from political powers. It is important to remember that the investors of the e-residency programme are Estonian tax payers.

Civil society stakeholders claim that it is hard to evaluate the real outcome of the e-residency because the concept is new and still at an early stage. They added that e-residency may have received too much attention, thereby detracting from other important issues such as transparency and stakeholders' involvement. Civil society stakeholders believe that the issues should be fixed before the government proceeds with this activity. E-residency also was criticized for taking the focus away from other areas such as educational problems, challenges faced by food industries, and problems in the medical system.

Finally, while this commitment is interesting, it is not clearly relevant to open government. As written, it does not include a clear element of access to information, public accountability or civic participation.

Moving forward

The e-residency programme has a variety of clear next steps. These include improving the user-friendliness and creating regular updates to avoid abuse. Further, the e-residency programme has not been researched academically, and it opens a new field in the study of government and public administration. Questions exist around the place of e-residency in the 2018 EU regulations, the political and legal implications if the EU gives Estonian e-residents an EU e-residency, and the implications for nation-states if the digital-IDs become adopted widely.[8]

However, for the next open government action plan, stakeholders should include only commitments clearly relevant to the OGP values of open government. If stakeholders

decide to include commitments on e-residence or other e-services, they will need to articulate clearly commitments' relevance to access to information, public accountability, or civic participation in government decision making.

[1] While the description of the activities in the action plan is limited, the IRM researcher drew on additional information from the Mid-term Progress Report, the Government Office's website, additional analyses, and interviews. The same applies for other clusters.

[2] Kadri Hainsalu, "Eesti Esimeseks E-Residendiks Saab Edward Lucas,"Postimees, 27 November 2014, http://bit.ly/1WNabDQ

[3] Taavi Kotka, "E-Residentsus, Riiklik Idufirma," Arvamus, Postimees, 11 October 2015, http://bit.ly/1Rkj0oq

[4] Riigikantselei, "Tegevus 5.4. Mitteresidendi Digitaalse Isikutunnistuse Väljaandmise Alustamine," http://bit.ly/1T8KsGS

[5] Tegevus 5.4, http://bit.ly/1T8KsGS

[6] Kotka, http://bit.ly/1Rkj0oq

[7] Mariann Kirsipuu, "Ootamatult Suur Huvi Digi-ID Vastu," Arvamus, Postimees, 21 February 2015, http://bit.ly/1RCDryZ

[8] Taavi Kotka; Carlos Ivan Vargas Alvarez del Castillo, and Kaspar Korjus, "Estonian E-Residency: Redefining the Nation-State in the Digital Era," in *Cyber Studies Programme, Working Paper No.3*, (University of Oxford, September 2015)*, 13, http://bit.ly/1NfgPBv

11: Enhancing open data supply and re-use by nongovernmental actors

Action plan commitment text:[1]

6.1: Transforming of open data portal opendata.riik.ee from pilot use to so-called real use, with a guarantee for basic level organizational support.

Start Date: 1 July 2014   *End Date: 30 November 2014*

6.2: Organizing of public competitions for opening data, incl. implementation of pilot projects of link data

Start Date: 1 July 2014   *End Date: 31 July 2016*

6.3: Organizing of events facilitating the recycling of open data (hackathons, trainings etc.)

Start Date: 1 July 2014   *End Date: 31 July 2016*

Editorial Note: This cluster of activities focuses on creating wider use of open data by enabling co-creation processes with nongovernmental actors. The end date for activity 6.1 was postponed to January 2015; and the end date for activity 6.3 is foreseen for Spring 2016.

Responsible Institution(s): Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications

Supporting Institution(s): Association of Information Technology and Telecommunications, open data community, data owners in the public sector

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion			
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to information	Civic participation	Public accountability	Tech. and innov. for transparency and accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not started	Limited	Substantial	Complete
6.1. Open data portal			✔		✔			✔			✔					✔
6.2. Opening data			✔		✔						✔					✔
6.3. Supporting nongovernmental open data use		✔			✔	✔				✔					✔	

Note: Under the old criteria of starred commitments, commitments 6.1 and 6.2 would have received stars because they are measurable, clearly relevant to OGP values as written, of moderate potential impact, and substantially or completely implemented. The IRM updated the star criteria in early 2015.

What happened?

These activities aim to create wider use of open data by enabling nongovernmental actors to participate in the co-creation of processes such as new knowledge, innovations, and services. Activity 6.1 aims to transform the open data portal opendata.riik.ee from pilot use to full use. According to the IRM researcher, this activity is completed. The open data portal opened, and the organisational structure to keep the portal running was created.

Activity 6.2 aims to organise public competitions that open data. To achieve the goal, pilot projects that open data were funded. According to the IRM researcher, this activity was completed because the competition for the best pilot project was organised and several pilot projects to open data were funded.

Activity 6.3 aims to organise events that involve public participation in the recycling and re-using of open data (hackathons, trainings, etc.). So far, there have been information days[2] and some trainings about open data recycling.[3] According to the IRM researcher, the level of completion of this activity is substantial because most of the planned activities already took place, but a hackathon is still planned for Spring 2016.

This cluster of activities is largely a continuation from the previous action plan 2012–2014.[4] It increases the ambition level concerning the public competitions and the recycling of open data. In 2014, a green paper on open data was presented on regulating recycling and re-usage of data.[5] The Public Information Act established a regulatory base for opening government-held data. The Act stated that, by 1 January 2015, free access to data collections had to be guaranteed, and the data had to be published in a machine-readable form.[6]

Did it matter?

Upgrading the portal, as set out by activity 6.1, will create the necessary infrastructure to further data use. The other activities in this cluster—organising competitions (6.2) and hackathons (6.3)—support government agencies' publication of data and generate nongovernmental actors' and businesses' motivation to re-use data. Re-using data can reduce the number of requests to government institutions and thereby reduce the bureaucracy and save users' time.[7] The potential impact of commitment six is moderate because Estonia does not produce enough valuable data for broader scale analysis. The databases are too small to create valuable analysis out of them. Uploading data is voluntary and using open data in its current form sometimes can be more complicated than making official information requests to government institutions. Currently, the available data are very hard to use because they have not been cleaned and each organisation uploaded data based on their own logic. Overall, according to academic, private, and civil society stakeholders, the usability of the data is very low.

There would be more value, especially for private sector organisations, if similar data were available from neighbouring countries, which would allow for more comprehensive analyses (e.g. from Baltic countries, Nordic countries, Central and Eastern European countries, etc.). In this context, Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said that Estonia and Finland should develop a data exchange and possibly lead the way in cross-border digital co-operation.[8]

On the other hand, the Deputy Secretary General for Communications and State Information Systems at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Taavi Kotka, said that most state institutions have not opened their data and are breaking the law.[9] Nongovernmental organisations also pointed out that the challenge faced by the government is to make the database known among potential users and to keep the databases constantly updated.

Moving forward

First, the IRM researcher recommends completing activities that have not be completed yet, including organizing events that facilitate recycling open data, like hackathons or trainings, even if those events cannot be held until after the current OGP action plan is replaced in June 2016.

Then, the IRM researcher recommends additional work in this sector. Stakeholders should consider the following suggestions and observations:

- Although Estonia is known as an e-country, only a few data sets available. All the consulted stakeholders agreed on the need to make additional applications and data sets available.
- The government should consider the costs and benefits of creating civil servant positions, especially dedicated to open data management, which the country currently does not have. Other governments like the United States and the United Kingdom prioritised open data by creating specific open data roles. Dedicated civil servants will be more effective at opening data if that is not just an additional task among many others.
- The government needs wide, basic standards on how data are uploaded and what is considered clean data. Pursuing the Five-Star Scheme for open data or an open data certificate would be useful to set goals and to identify best practices.[10]

Finally, a new commitment with potentially more impact could revolve around informing potential databases users about the various possibilities available to them and developing clear, easy-to-use feedback mechanisms for data users and providers. For example, they could identify priority data sets for release. Such an open function would be useful in deciding a reasonable number and content of data sets.

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[1] While the description of the activities in the action plan is limited, the IRM researcher drew on additional information from the Mid-term Progress Report, the Government Office's website, additional analyses, and interviews. The same applies for other clusters.

[2] "Ettekanded," Tark E-Riik, http://bit.ly/1T8KUVK

[3] "Hommikuseminar: Mis On Avaandmed Ning Kuidas Neid Praktikas Hallata?," Eesti Koolitus- Ja Konverentsikeskus, http://bit.ly/1WNaRZZ

[4] "Estonia," Open Government Partnership, http://bit.ly/1RpbQfp

[5] "Avaandmete Roheline Raamat [Open Data Green Paper]," Avaandmete Portaal, https://opendata.riik.ee/roheline-raamat

[6] Republic of Estonia, "Public Information Act," http://bit.ly/1UPL2JK

[7] Institute of Baltic Studies and Praxis, *E-Teenuste Kasutamise Tulemuslikkus Ja Mõju* by Tarmo Kalvet, Marek Tilits, and Hille Hinsberg (Tallinn, 2013), http://bit.ly/1UoNxEi

[8] Republic of Finland, "Estonian and Finnish Heads of State Discussed the Future of Cross-Border E-Services," Press release, Office of the President, 11 November 2015, http://bit.ly/1UMhU7h

[9] "Eesti Avaandmete Kasutamist Piirab Kohalik Turuolukord," Uudised, Err, 23 March 2015, http://bit.ly/1VM4Kqw

[10] Leigh Dodds, "Comparing the 5-Star Scheme with Open Data Certificates," News, Open Data Institute, 20 February 2015, http://bit.ly/1oaiVIl

V. Process: Self-assessment

The government compiled a mid-term self-assessment report in October 2015 to give an overview of the first year of the action plan's implementation. The report was open for public consultation for two weeks, and the ministries approved it. The self-assessment report did not include detailed analysis of the action plan's compliance with the previous IRM report's suggestions. However, based on the content of the action plan, it can be concluded that the recommendations were followed only in part.

Self-assessment checklist

Was the annual progress report published?	Yes
Was it done according to schedule?	No
Is the report available in the administrative language(s)?	Yes
Is the report available in English?	Yes
Did the government provide a two-week public comment period on draft self-assessment reports?	Yes
Were any public comments received?	No
Is the report deposited in the OGP portal?	Yes
Did the self-assessment report include review of consultation efforts during action plan development?	Yes
Did the self-assessment report include review of consultation efforts during action plan implementation?	Yes
Did the self-assessment report include a description of the public comment period during the development of the self-assessment?	Yes
Did the report cover all of the commitments?	Yes
Did it assess completion of each commitment according to the timeline and milestones in the action plan?	No
Did the report respond to the IRM key recommendations (2015+ only)?	Yes

Summary of additional information

The Government Office prepared the government's self-assessment report in co-operation with the representatives of the ministries that co-ordinated the action plan's activities as well as nongovernmental organisations. According to the explanatory note of the draft self-assessment report, the Good Practice of Public Engagement was followed in compiling the report.[1]

The government first sent the self-assessment report to the OGP Co-ordinating Board on 3 September 2015, in preparation for their introduction and discussion at the Board's meeting on 8 September 2015. It was decided that the members of the Co-ordinating Board could give additional feedback and make suggestions to the report until 10 September 2015.[2] The draft report was published from 12 to 25 September 2015 for public consultation on the central civic engagement website (www.osale.ee).[3] A press release at the beginning of the public consultation was published on 14 September 2015.[4] No comments were received during the public consultation. The self-assessment report also passed an official approval round in the ministries from 15 to 25 September 2015. The report then was submitted to the government's session on 28 September 2016 and the government discussed it on 1 October 2015,[5] a day after the deadline (30 September 2015).

The self-assessment report assessed the completion of commitments according to the timeline set in the action plan. However, as the details of the activities were specified only after the adoption of the action plan, the time frame changed for some activities. The self-assessment report reflected the updated schedule in its analysis. Further, the action plan did not contain milestones or indicators for the activities. These were specified only later along with the other details of each activity. Further, the self-assessment's overview of implementation status for each activity (including completed and further work) is based on the updated details. The mid-term self-assessment report concluded that out of a total of 23 activities planned, five activities were finished fully during the first year of implementation (originally, six had been planned to be completed). The report found that 13 activities were in progress in accordance to the initial schedule, and the time frame for five activities changed.[6]

When the results of the self-assessment report were discussed at the Co-ordinating Board's meeting on 8 September 2015, it was suggested that the general public should be informed of the results of the OGP activities. The Government Office responded that broader communication would commence after the completion of Activity 1.3 (a civic engagement section on the new government website), allowing for involvement-related information to be provided in one place.[7]

Follow-up on previous IRM recommendations

The government's self-assessment report did not include a separate section on how the results of the previous IRM report were used to improve the process of the development and implementation of the action plan. Direct reference to the IRM's recommendations was made only in general terms in both the self-assessment and the action plan. They stated that the recommendations were considered one of the sources of input for several issues: determining priority areas and other action plan content, deciding on the institution responsible for OGP, and establishing a forum for co-operation and the principle of phase-based implementation of the action plan.

In terms of content, the action plan did not respond to all of the IRM's suggestions. Below is an overview of the previous IRM recommendations, and the current IRM researcher's analysis on the new action plan's compliance with them.

Stakeholder engagement:

- **Recommendation 1: The government should reach out to the public while renewing the action plan**. Various measures were used to raise awareness of OGP and to involve stakeholders in the action plan development and implementation. The consultations included different nongovernmental participants. In addition to civil society organisations (CSOs), the private sector was represented by two employers' associations. The Trade Union

Confederation also participated. This was an improvement from the previous action plan development and implementation.

Nevertheless, the circle of stakeholders that participated remained limited. The OGP Consultation Board and the OGP Co-ordinating Board had virtually the same nongovernmental participants. In addition, although the local governments and the Parliament were consulted, their participation in the development and implementation phase was limited. Despite awareness-raising and public consultation efforts, it is unknown whether the awareness of the general public increased.

- **Recommendation 2: Provide a clear agenda for consultation and engage in proactive communication**. The timeline and engagement plan for action plan development (including information on planned activities, target groups, and expected results of each activity) was available on the Government Office's website, although the consultations had started before it was published. Invitations to participate in drafting the action plan were sent to different parties, depending on the contribution expected from them. For instance, the participants involved in the OGP Consultation Board were invited to participate at the beginning of the preparations. However, the general public and other parties not involved in the action plan's initial development were invited or informed only in the final stages of the drafting.

- **Recommendation 3: The government should create space for CSOs to engage in implementing and monitoring the commitments**. The recommendation was followed when the official OGP Co-ordinating Board was created to oversee the implementation of the action plan and to make OGP-related decisions. Nongovernmental organisations also were included as co-operation partners in the implementation of several activities. For instance, the Estonian Co-operation Assembly is the institution responsible for the implementation of one activity.

Ownership and scope of OGP

- **Recommendation 4: Define clear responsibility and ownership by one lead agency, and set up a transparent mechanism for co-ordinating OGP**. The recommendation was heeded when the Government Office was designated responsible for the co-ordination of OGP. Co-ordination was enhanced with the creation of the OGP Co-ordinating Board, led by the Secretary of State.

- **Recommendation 5: Expand the action plan by subnational level activities**. Local government associations were involved as co-operation partners in the implementation of some activities in the action plan, and some activities affect local governments. However, no separate activities were planned for local governments.

- **Recommendation 6: Expanding the action plan with the Parliament activities**. The Parliament was involved, but its involvement has been limited. The Parliament was consulted during the action plan development, and the Parliament is a co-operation partner for one Parliament-related activity planned within the action plan.

Ambition of level of commitments and overall action plan

- **Recommendation 7: Estonia should select OGP-related topics that are regarded as ambitious (i.e., exceeding the present rate of performance).** The ambition level of the action plan can be considered modest and shallow. Many of the activities included in the action plan were planned already or were

in the process of being planned by the ministries in other strategies. Nevertheless, of all the activities already planned, the aim was to select the most ambitious ones to include in the action plan.[8]

Measurement of commitments and OGP goals

- **Recommendation 8: Set clear baselines with associated indicators and target levels of achievements of commitments.** The action plan for 2014-2016 still did not include indicators and methods for verifying progress. The detailed descriptions of activities (including milestones and associated indicators) were specified only after the action plan's adoption. Institutions responsible for each activity did this with concerned parties whose activity area related to an activity. The OGP Co-ordinating Board approved the detailed descriptions, and the Government Office's website published them. In addition, as part of recommendation eight, the previous IRM report suggested that it may prove necessary to abandon or re-structure some existing commitments or to add new commitments to the action plan during the action plan implementation. This suggestion was taken into account, and the implementation of the action plan for 2014-2016 was designed to be more flexible and phase-based. It allowed activities to be implemented stage-by-stage, and adjustments were made to the activities whenever necessary.[9]

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[1] "Eesti Tegevuskava Täitmise Aruanne Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluses Osalemisel," Eelnõude Infosüsteem, September 2015, 1, http://bit.ly/1SaTMoZ

[2] Liis Kasemets, *Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluse Koordineeriv Kogu* (Meeting protocol, Tallinn, 8 September 2015), 1-2, http://bit.ly/1XRKRwB

[3] Osalusveebi Haldab Riigikantselei, *Eesti Tegevuskava Täitmise Aruanne Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluse Osalemisel [Public Consultation on the Self-Assessment Report]* by Ilona Kään (Report, 12 September 2015), http://bit.ly/1Rr4Gt8

[4] Liis Kasemets, "AVP Tegevuskava Täitmise Vahearuanne On Avalikul Konsultatsioonil," Press release on the beginning of public consultation on self-assessment report, Government Office, 14 September 2015, http://bit.ly/22zUzuh

[5] Kristiina Tiimus, "Eesti On Kaasanud Vabaühendusi Avatud Valitsemise Partnerlusse Kõige Paremini," Uudised, Riigikantselei, 1 October 2015, http://bit.ly/1UgYeIQ

[6] Republic of Estonia, *Estonia's Open Government Partnership Action Plan for 2014-2016: The Interim Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan* by the Government Office (Tallinn, 2015), 10, http://bit.ly/1ShJ5Ds

[7] Kasemets, 2, http://bit.ly/1XRKRwB

[8] Riigikantselei, "Kokkuvote 30. Aprillil 2014 Riigikantseleis Toimunud Avatud Valitsemise Partnerluse II Noupidamisest [Summary of the OGP Consultation Board's Meeting on 30 April 2014]," 2-3, 30 April 2014, http://bit.ly/1Sb0Sd0

[9] *Estonia's Action Plan*, 18, http://bit.ly/1S6jUkU

VI. Country context

This section places the action plan commitments in the broader national context and discusses the concrete next steps for the next action plan. The key additional points of Estonia's context involve participation, local open government, corruption, and technology.

Partnership between public authorities and civil society, inclusion of nongovernmental actors

Estonia has been considered successful in involving nongovernmental parties into the development, implementation, and monitoring of the OGP action plan.[1] In addition, based on the USAID Civil Society Organisation (CSO) Sustainability Index, Estonia is a frontrunner in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. The USAID CSO Sustainability Index's analysis concludes that CSOs in Estonia have a supportive legal environment, a strong support system, a positive public image, and have been considered strong advocates and service providers.[2] CSOs are allowed to operate freely without fear of harassment.

The inclusion of nongovernmental stakeholders in government processes has received special attention in Estonia for more than a decade. In 2002, the Parliament approved the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept (the Concept)[3] that determined the principles for partnership between public authorities and civil society. The Concept created a framework for strategic development of civil society, increasing citizens' activity and strengthening democracy in Estonia. Moreover, several legal acts regulate inclusion of nongovernmental actors in policy-making, including the Constitution, the Law on Public Information, the Local Government Organisation Act, the Rules of the Government of the Republic, the Regulation on the Legislative Drafting of Draft Acts in Parliamentary Proceedings, and the Rules for Good Legislative Practice and Legislative Drafting. The general framework created various entry points for nongovernmental participants. In addition, guidance on stakeholder engagement has been provided. For instance, in 2014, a new version of the handbook on nongovernmental stakeholder engagement was created for public administrators and CSOs.[4] Finally, following the Good Practice of Public Engagement[5] is required at various instances.

The implementation of values and principles set out in the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept has been promoted with the adoption of Civil Society Development Plans. The government approved the latest Civil Society Development Plan 2015-2020 on 19 February 2015. This plan focuses on two priority areas that should strengthen the main functions of CSOs in society: (1) participation of CSOs and (2) their role in preventing and solving societal problems. The development plan continues to develop and to ensure a tradition of a democratic and open society.

As a result of various efforts, public administrators increasingly acknowledge the importance and possibilities offered by including nongovernmental stakeholders.[6] Nevertheless, despite the favourable framework and advancements over the years, various challenges still affect the quality of inclusion of nongovernmental parties. The shortcomings relate to both sides. On one hand, the public authority is not always interested, willing, or capable and, hence, it is not always successful in engaging nongovernmental parties. On the other hand, nongovernmental parties do not always participate or contribute.

From the government's side, it has been noted that decision makers do not prioritise offering opportunities for participation or interest group involvement. Although knowledge of it exists, there is a lack of resources, creativity, and willingness necessary for meaningful engagement.[7] Thus, nongovernmental parties' engagement is not always

seen as an opportunity, but rather as an obligation and as an activity separate from the rest of policy-making processes. In its most common form, inclusion is limited to a formal process of informing the general public and nongovernmental actors and collecting their comments on a particular issue (e.g. a draft act).

Moreover, by the time nongovernmental actors are asked to participate, the substantive policy decisions often have been made already. This leaves little, if any, room for their input. This also means that interest groups' suggestions that are of a transformative nature (e.g. do not specify only details) may not be considered, especially when inclusion takes place too late.[8] The nongovernmental participants in policy-making processes often are overburdened, and information on various ongoing processes is difficult to find.

In addition, the circle of nongovernmental actors involved is often narrow. Not enough co-operation or participation measures are practiced to would allow both the experienced and less experienced CSOs (with regard to participation in general or in a certain subject area) to participate in discussions. Because of an inability to communicate with civil society or because of a lack of contact with them, not enough diverse and relevant opinions are included. It has been noted that this is why public administration should be more diverse in its composition and should represent various social groups.[9] It has been found that consultation with nongovernmental organisations and experts takes place more often than is documented in the explanatory notes of draft acts.[10] In a small state like Estonia, informal communication in policy-making occurs easily and is not something extraordinary.

The Civil Society Development Plan 2015-2020 stated that a core problem of civil society engagement is divergent expectations on participation: different parties do not understand the tasks, needs, and opportunities of the opposite side. While the public sector might expect proposals from nongovernmental organisations that are clear, well thought-through, and that take into account the larger picture, nongovernmental organisations might expect simpler participation opportunities, more openness, and willingness for discussions and thinking along. The new development plan aimed to replace consultative engagement with participation and co-operation. Engagement was not considered a target on its own but rather one of the methods to implement various actions.

Despite the increased viability and visibility of some CSOs, there are concerns about the willingness and capacity of CSOs more generally. Not all CSOs have the necessary competency, time, and money to contribute to policy-making processes. This is why often only the most capable, advocacy-oriented, and strongest organisations can focus on ensuring that the public sector takes into account their input.

A narrow circle of nongovernmental parties is able or willing to commit to participate can negatively influence the quality of decisions. Participation is especially important in the agenda-setting phase, and failure to have a variety of interests or interest groups represented at that time can result in an unbalanced representation throughout the process. For the participation to be successful, it is important that the CSOs focus on democratically finding the best persons or organisations to represent their field's interests in policy-making and finding opportunities to co-operate with other nongovernmental organisations.

Open governance at the local government level and in the Parliament

Despite receiving little attention from the OGP action plan 2014-2016, open governance principles are important in local governments and in the Parliament. In Estonia, the local government is the level of public administration closest to the citizens, and it has a variety of responsibilities directly affecting the well-being of inhabitants. Given its

significant role, open governance principles should be followed by the local governments. Several local government units (e.g. Tartu, Viljandi, Kuressaare, and Elva) already started to focus on increasing the openness of local governance by using participatory budgeting.

In addition, at the initiative of the E-Governance Academy of Estonia, a special project called "Open Governance Partnership in Local Governments" started in 2014 to introduce open governance and its values to local governments. The project will last two years and be administered in co-operation with the Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations. The project was not planned within the OGP action plan 2014-2016, but the action plan stated that the "co-operation project presents a good opportunity to learn how to design similar projects, so that the experience accumulated at the local level may turn out to be sustainably usable."[11] Within this project, a set of instructions has been compiled to guide the process of implementing open governance principles in local governments.[12]

Demands for more openness and nongovernmental stakeholder inclusion in the Parliament also have been raised. Special focus has been put on increasing the openness of parliamentary committees. In addition, it has been considered necessary to engage nongovernmental stakeholders more actively in the discussions of the committees. It has been noted that although the Riigikogu Rules of Procedure and the Internal Rules Act establish principles that recommend inclusion, actual inclusion varies between different parliamentary committees. Well-argued discussions on policy-making and policy options rarely takes place in parliamentary committees and, given that, it is not necessarily in the best interests of the parliamentarians for the discussions to be made public.[13]

Corruption continues to occur

Based on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2014, Estonia ranked 26th out of 175 evaluated countries. According to the index, perceived corruption in the public sector has improved in recent years. On a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean), Estonia received 64 points in 2012, 68 points in 2013 and 69 points in 2014.[14] Nevertheless, corruption continues to be an issue. In 2014, 101 corruption cases were registered at the level of the central state and agencies administered by the state (including state-owned companies or foundations). In 2014, an additional 34 cases occurred at the level of local governments and agencies administered by local governments, and 163 cases occurred in the private sector.[15] Recent corruption cases that have been made public also emphasise the existence of corruption. For instance, in August and September 2015, allegations of corruption were levelled in separate cases against: (1) the CEO and board member of state-owned Port of Tallinn for taking bribes, including in a recent contract to purchase new ferries for the company;[16] (2) the Tartu rural municipality mayor for providing finances to an organisation with which he was affiliated and for embezzling the assets of the municipality;[17] and (3) to the mayor of the largest municipality, the capital Tallinn city, for accepting properties and favours as bribes on behalf of himself and his party.[18] The presence of corruption cases at the local level once again highlights the need to improve open governance in local governments.

In 2013, the Anti-Corruption Strategy 2013-2020 was adopted. The Strategy aimed to promote corruption awareness, to improve transparency of decisions and actions, to develop investigative capabilities of investigative bodies, and to prevention of corruption that could jeopardise national security.[19] The Strategy deemed it important that the legislative drafting and political decision making processes should be transparent, namely that it should be possible to understand who influenced the decisions and how they were made. According to the Strategy, entrepreneurs perceive corruption as more prevalent at the central state level. Nevertheless, local governments

are not immune to corruption, which relates to the lack of transparency of activities, weak internal audit systems, conflicts of interests in public procurements, and preferential treatment in various transactions. The Strategy highlighted that one of the areas where corruption is prevalent is public procurement (both at the local and state levels), due to the large amount of financial resources and high discretionary power of decision makers involved in the processes.

According to the 2014 annual progress report of the Anti-Corruption Strategy, most attention was on increasing people's awareness of corruption, on transparency of various financial transactions, and on organisational analytical capacity of Estonia to deal with corruption. It is too early to evaluate how successful these activities were, but these activities most probably have had some positive impact, given Estonia's improvements in Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index.

In addition, based on the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO)'s recommendations made to Estonia in 2012, measures have been taken to prevent corruption in Parliament. For instance, a Code of Conduct for members of Parliament was adopted in December 2014. In addition, a new system for declaring public officials' assets and interests launched in 2014. It involved the digitisation of data collection and a storage system. However, GRECO emphasised that the supervision of the Code of Conduct and the system for the declaration of assets and interests by the Anti-Corruption Select Committee of Parliament should be improved, and the awareness of parliamentarians should be increased further.[20]

In the process of rising civic participation in debates, CSOs have become more active in uniting, representing, and expressing the views of like-minded actors. With the professionalisation of CSOs' advocacy role and with more active participation in policy-making, the need for developing lobbying rules has been stressed to ensure transparency in policy-making.[21] GRECO paid special attention to the Parliament and recommended introducing "rules on how members of Parliament engage with lobbyists and other third parties who seek to influence the legislative process."[22] The Anti-Corruption Strategy 2013-2020 took this into account. It aims to develop good practice and lobby rules for the public sector's interaction with interest groups in 2015-2016. Currently, discussions are focusing on the choices for better regulation of lobbying.

Information society and technology

Estonia is known for being an e-state due to its success in using technology to improve the provision of public services (e-services) and in enhancing possibilities for democratic participation. Supported by citizen extensive use and entrepreneurs, several pioneering technological solutions were launched, including the electronic identity card that allows the provision of electronic signatures and electronic voting. According to the Open Data Barometer 2014, Estonia ranks 13th out of 86 countries based on its use of open data. Based on the analysis, Estonia was part of the group of countries with high-capacity in terms of readiness, implementation, and impact of open government data.[23]

The Principles of Estonian Information Policy adopted by the Parliament in 1998 and renewed in 2006 provides the general framework for the development of information society. Based on this general framework, the Estonian Information Society Strategy 2020 was adopted in 2013 to direct the development of information society. The Strategy includes a focus on improving the use and accessibility of technology as well as the safe use of data in the field of policy-making and public administration. The Strategy has the main purposes of guaranteeing a well-functioning environment in Estonia, supporting the extensive use of ICT, and creating smart solutions, which in turn will increase economic competitiveness, the well-being of people, and efficiency of governance.

In 2014, the green paper on the machine-readable publication of Estonian public data was adopted, complementing the Information Society Strategy. It offered an integrated and systematic approach to open data policy in Estonia, discussing the current situation, problems and challenges, and giving directions for the future. The green paper was especially important due to the Public Information Act requirement that from 1 January 2015 all public sector databases had to be downloadable in machine-readable format.[24] In its overview of the use and preservation of state assets in 2013-2014, the National Audit Office found that the green paper's weaknesses were that its implementation was voluntary and no clear guidelines were provided on how public agencies should make data accessible to the public.[25]

Moreover, loading databases into the data repository had an extremely slow start. The requirement was known since 2012, and a special open data portal (opendata.riik.ee) was opened in January 2015, but by March 2015, only about 10 public sector information holders had made their machine-readable data available there.[26] However, it has been noted that it is hard to criticise information holders (i.e. public sector organisations) because the green paper on the machine-readable publication of Estonian public data, the guiding material for such a complicated procedure, was approved too late. It was approved two years after the respective legal provision was passed and only a month before its implementation deadline.

According to Directive 2013/37/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 amending Directive 2003/98/EC on the Re-use of Public Sector Information, Estonia (among other EU member states) had to ensure the adoption of necessary implementing acts to ensure compliance by 18 July 2015.[27] However, the transposition of the Directive was delayed because the legal analysis, the assessment of comments, the assessment of amendment proposals submitted in the approval round, and resolving disagreements took longer than initially predicted. By October 2015, the draft act changing Public Information Act and other necessary legal acts had been submitted to the Parliament for approval.

Stakeholder priorities

The stakeholders' priorities from the current action plan were mainly connected to public participation, public budgeting, and improving public services. Based on the comments made during public consultation, it can be said that topics not included in the action plan but also considered important by the stakeholders were enhancing anti-corruption activities and promoting open governance at the local level. For instance, with regard to corruption prevention, the OGP Civil Society Roundtable (CSR) suggested that special measures aimed at ensuring the ethics of public officials and preventing corruption at the local level should be included in the action plan. The OGP CSR also suggested that measures should be adopted for the protection of whistle-blowers, and the transparency of political parties' funding should be increased by specifying the requirements for reporting on media coverage and associated costs during election campaigns.

In addition, the OGP CSR found that the government should plan a programme for the promotion of open governance principles and applications on the local government level. The OGP CSR also recommended that local governments facilitate the use of participatory budgeting as a new engagement measure.[28] However, these suggestions were not included in the action plan.

Finally, the OGP CSR also prioritised facilitating open governance in the Parliament, which received little attention in the action plan. According to the representative of the E-Governance Academy, the efforts at the executive government level are not enough to have a breakthrough in established practices of policy-making and state governance or

to achieve significant advancements in the implementation of open governance principles. According to the representative, this also needs the participation of the legislative branch of government, which should serve as an example.[29]

Scope of the action plan in relation to the national context

It is difficult to estimate the actual contribution of the action plan as many of the action plan's activities were planned already in other strategies, work documents, etc., before its adoption within the framework. During the action plan development, it was stressed that the activities already planned by the public authorities should be reported and the most ambitious ones would be selected to be included in the action plan.[30] Perhaps this is why no separate resources were provided solely for the implementation of the action plan and why public administrators consider it an additional activity. By relying on initiatives that were planned already, the level of ambition of the action plan remains limited. While OGP should complement existing initiatives, OGP represents an opportunity to go beyond the status quo. As the Articles of Governance state, these commitments should be "ambitious and go beyond a country's current practice."[31]

Given the overall national context, the activities planned with the action plan create opportunities for the advancement of open governance. Nevertheless, their actual impact depends on how well the activities are implemented and used by their target groups. For instance, if the information on participation, the measures promoting early-stage participation, or the e-services are not used by the planned beneficiaries, the expected results will be limited.

The action plan failed to prioritise the promotion of ethics and corruption prevention for public officials. Corruption continues to be a problem, but other measures (outside of the action plan) are used to address the issue. In addition, the action plan's focus on local governments and the Parliament is limited, although certainly needed and have the potential to advance open governance. Nongovernmental stakeholders (especially the OGP CSR) helped to highlight the importance of these topics. At the local government level, the OGP CSR is a leader and pioneer in promoting the practice of open governance principles in municipalities through its own initiative outside of the action plan's framework.

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VII. General recommendations

This section recommends general next steps for Estonia's OGP participation in general, rather than for specific commitments. The following suggestions are ideas to consider before preparing the next action plan. While it is advisable to consider all the issues raised, these will have to be balanced with suggestions made by the team preparing the action plan.

The following suggestions are based on the assumption that Estonia will continue being an active partner in OGP and that it will pay more attention to the OGP action plan in the future. According to the focus groups and interviewees, the current action plan is often seen merely as an additional framework or document that does not offer additional value to existing activities. This is a frequent challenge for OGP-participating countries, and Estonia is not alone in needing to face it. In this sense, at best, stakeholders currently see OGP as providing "promotional" and "educational" value. Thus, the IRM researcher first suggests that the government and other stakeholders thoroughly discuss the role and place of the OGP and the action plan within Estonia's strategic and political documents.

Crosscutting recommendations

After this initial discussion, the IRM researcher offers a variety of cross-cutting recommendations. These centre on the topics of process, format, and content.

Process

1. **The Government Office should continue to improve proactive and regular communication around the action plan and the OGP process**.
   a. The government should allocate more time to developing the action plan, and it should notify stakeholders and raise awareness of the potential timeline and process for developing the action plan as soon as possible to enable stakeholders to plan for participating fully.
   b. The Government Office's website should provide a clearer picture of the process and opportunities for participation.
   c. The Government Office should update the information on its site about each planned activity regularly, including actions that already finished and those that have yet to be completed. The action plan's activities will only achieve their full potential if stakeholders are aware of their new solutions and results. The Government Office's site and other communication activities should include discussions, evaluations, and summaries of progress towards the current action plan.
2. **Estonia's OGP process requires more high-level political support to promote and to galvanise wider participation in Estonia's OGP process, especially at the early stages**.
   a. Political leadership should come from the Prime Minister's Office, the Government, the Parliament, and local governments, and administrative leadership should complement it by extending responsibility from the Government Office to other public organisations.
   b. Possible activities could include awareness-raising and efforts to identify key "champions" among stakeholders not directly involved in the process so far such as new nongovernmental organisations, local governments, and the Parliament. Widening participation and high-level support will help ensure quality and broad-based decisions, and it will facilitate the creation and delivery of ambitious and out-of-the box ideas.

Format

1. **The action plan should make commitments that follow the SMART logic: They should be clear, specific, measurable, answerable, relevant, and time bound.**
   a. Planned activities should include clear baselines, targets, and indicators to evaluate results. This increases transparency and accountability. One way of achieving this is by basing more of the plan on analysis, discussion, and evaluation of alternative choices. Additional evaluation would help ensure a better-informed and more evidence-based selection of priorities and activities for the action plan.
   b. Amendments to the planned activities can be made during the action plan's implementation to adjust to changing circumstances, but amendments should be communicated clearly and transparently.
   c. Commitments should specify whether their planned activities are new to the OGP plan or if they were included already within other national strategies, documents, or frameworks. This would help stakeholders design commitments that improve government practice and transform the status quo in the relevant policy areas.

Content

1. **The next action plan should focus on fewer but more ambitious reforms.**
   a. It should include not only low impact activities that would be implemented through other initiatives. Instead, the plan should set at least some highly ambitious goals, with a greater focus on how the OGP action plan could add value to Estonia's open government process.
   b. Commitments could identify specific civil society partners to oversee and to support government activity. However, if stakeholders decide to pursue this strategy, the specified partner organisations must volunteer for the role actively, and ultimate responsibility for completing the commitment must remain with the government.

2. **The action plan should include certain key open government topics that are priorities for Estonia.**

   a. Ethics of public officials and corruption prevention need continuous focus and could form a separate priority area in the next plan. Good topics to consider include local government ethics, protection of whistle-blowers, and transparent political party financing.
   b. The Government Office should make sure that the action plan is coherent with the activities around Estonia's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, beginning in 2018.
   c. Stakeholders could consider including more activities connected directly to certain public policies of high importance for the country, like health, education, social affairs, and taxes. Activities linked to certain public policies might achieve higher impact and completion and might encourage wider participation than activities around the general effectiveness of public administration.

Top SMART recommendations

Beginning in 2014, all OGP IRM reports include five key recommendations about the next OGP action planning cycle. Governments participating in OGP will be required to respond to these key recommendations in their annual self-assessment reports. These recommendations follow the "SMART" logic. Thus, the IRM researcher offers the

following five key SMART recommendations, based on the findings in this report and the more detailed cross-cutting recommendations described above.

KEY SMART RECOMMENDATIONS
1. The Government Office should continue to improve proactive and regular communication around the action plan and the OGP process. This will involve dedicating sufficient time for a more participatory plan design process and optimizing communication channels to promote OGP results and outputs more clearly.
2. Estonia's OGP process requires more high-level political support to promote and to galvanise wider participation in Estonia's OGP process, especially at the early stages. The Government Office should seek allies and champions across all branches and levels of government.
3. The action plan should make commitments that follow the SMART logic: They should be clear, specific, measurable, answerable, relevant, and time bound. All commitments should include clear baselines, targets, indicators, and explanations of their relationship to or overlap with other public administration initiatives.
4. The next action plan should focus on fewer but more ambitious reforms. Commitments should set ambitious goals with a greater focus on how the OGP action plan could add value to Estonia's open government process.
5. The action plan should include certain key open government topics that are priorities for Estonia. Among others that stakeholders will identify in the consultation process, possible priorities include anti-corruption, public ethics, and key public service sectors like health and education. The plan should be coherent and complementary with Estonia's Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

VIII. Methodology and sources

As a complement to the government's self-assessment report, well-respected governance researchers, preferably from each OGP-participating country, write an independent IRM assessment report.

Experts use a common OGP independent report questionnaire and guidelines,[1] based on a combination of interviews with local OGP stakeholders as well as desk-based analysis. This report is shared with a small International Expert Panel (appointed by the OGP Steering Committee) for peer review to ensure that the highest standards of research and due diligence were applied.

Analysis of progress on OGP action plans is a combination of interviews, desk research, and feedback from nongovernmental stakeholder meetings. The IRM report builds on the findings of the government's self-assessment report and any other assessments of progress by civil society, the private sector, or international organisations.

Each local researcher conducts stakeholder meetings to ensure an accurate portrayal of events. Given budgetary and calendar constraints, the IRM cannot consult all interested or affected parties. Consequently, the IRM strives for methodological transparency and, therefore, where possible, makes public the process of stakeholder engagement in research (detailed later in this section). In national contexts where anonymity of informants—governmental or nongovernmental—is required, the IRM reserves the ability to protect the anonymity of informants. Additionally, because of the necessary limitations of the method, the IRM strongly encourages commentary on public drafts of each national document.

The following individuals contributed to the report through their participation in the focus groups held by the IRM researcher:

Focus Group in Tallinn on 2 November 2015, participants included the following:

- **Maarjo Mändmaa** (Chairman of the Board of the State-Owned Enterprise Hoolekandeteenused; Former Secretary General of the Ministry of Social Affairs; Chairman of the Council of the Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations)
- **Katre Eljas-Taal** (Assistant Director of the Baltic office at the Technopolis Group; Former Head of Foreign Financing Department of the Ministry of Environment)
- **Andrei Liimets** (OGP Co-ordinator at Open Estonia Foundation; the Co-ordinator of OGP Civil Society Roundtable)
- **Agu Laius** (Executive Director of the National Foundation of Civil Society);
- **Teele Pehk** (Executive Manager at the Foundation Estonian Co-operation Assembly; Expert at the Urban Lab (Linnalabor); Former Consultant at the Government Office in compiling the 2014-2016 OGP action plan; Manager of the Urban Lab)
- **Maris Jõgeva** (Executive Director of the Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations; Former Expert at Open Estonia Foundation)
- **Maiu Uus** (Member of the Supervisory Board of the National Foundation of Civil Society; Programme Manager of the Thematic Discussion Stages of the Opinion Festival; Visiting Researcher at the PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies; Expert on Advocacy for Transparent and Effective Public Funding of Estonian NGOs at the Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations; Former Analyst at the PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies)

- **Asso Prii** (Member of the Board of the Transparency International Estonia; Attorney at Supremia Attorneys at Law; Former Executive Manager of Transparency International Estonia)
- **Liia Hänni** (Senior Expert on E-Democracy at the E-Governance Academy; Former Member of Parliament, Minister of Property Reform and Member of the Constitutional Assembly; Member of the Council of the Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations)

The focus group had three parts:

1. Discussion about the preparation process of the action plan (time frame, resources, parties involved, selected ideas, challenges, opportunities, etc.);
2. Feedback about current outcomes concerning all listed commitment and activities (based on the participants' knowledge and experience);
3. Lessons learned from the process and from the action plan for the future and for the next action plan.

Focus Group in Tartu on 6 November 2015, participants included the following:

- **Kristina Reinsalu** (Head of E-Democracy Domain and Programme Director of Local Governments at the E-Governance Academy; Lecturer at the University of Tartu on e-governance and public sector communication)
- **Tarmo Tüür** (Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Estonian Fund for Nature; Leader of the Community Activities Day "Let's Do It")
- **Gea Kangilaski** (Analyst and Project Manager at Estonian Trade Union Confederation; Member of the City Council of Tartu; Citizen Activist)
- **Tiit Toots** (Mayor of Rõuge Municipality Government)
- **Kajar Lember** (Deputy Mayor of Tartu City Government (responsible for entrepreneurship, financing, city assets); Former Parliament Member)
- **Lilian Lukka** (Head of Information Service at Tartu City Government; Communication Specialist at Tartu Centre for Creative Industries)

The focus group had two parts:

1) Feedback about current outcomes concerning listed commitments and activities that were familiar for the stakeholders;
2) Lessons learned from the process and from the action plan for the future and for the next action plan.

Interviews:

- 21 September 2015: **Liis Kasemets** (Governance Advisor at Government Office, contact person for OGP; Former External Expert to the Integrated Governance Review of Estonia and Finland at OECD)
- 21 September 2015: **Hille Hinsberg** (Expert on Governance and Civil Society Policy at the PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies; Member of the International Expert Panel of the Independent Reporting Mechanism; Former IRM researcher for Estonia, Communication Officer at the Government Communication Unit of the Government Office)
- 3 November 2015: **Janek Rozov** (Head of Information Society Services Development Department at Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications)
- 3 November 2015: **Margus Sarapuu** (Strategy Director of the Strategy Unit of the Government Office; Former Secretary General of the Ministry of Justice)
- 6 November 2015: **Andrus Jõgi** (Advisor at the Local Governments Financial Management Department of the Ministry of Finance)

- 6 November 2015: **Norman Aas** (Secretary General of the Ministry of Justice; former Prosecutor General)
- 9 November 2015: **Margus Lehesaar** (Advisor at the Development Department of the Ministry of Finance; Former Deputy Head of the Regional Administration Department of the Ministry of Finance)
- 9 November 2015: **Juhani Lemmik** (Senior Adviser on Policy-Making, Strategy and Reform at OECD SIGMA; Member of the Committee on Budget and Finance of International Criminal Court; Former Governance Advisor of the Strategy Unit of the Government Office, Director of Audit at National Audit Office of Estonia, Deputy Head of the State Budget Department of the Ministry of Finance)
- 11 November 2015: **Veiko Lember** (Director of and Senior Research Fellow at the Ragnar Nurkse School of Innovation and Governance of the Tallinn University of Technology; Member of the Editorial Team for the Journal Administrative Culture)
- 11 November 2015: **Tanel Tammet** (Professor of the Chair of Network Software of the Department of Computer Science of the Tallinn University of Technology)
- 13 November 2015: **Kaspar Korjus** (E-Residency Programme Director at the Enterprise Estonia; Former E-Residency Project Manager at the Estonian Development Fund, Cloud Business Manager at TeliaSonera)

About the Independent Reporting Mechanism

The IRM is a key means by which government, civil society, and the private sector can track government development and implementation of OGP action plans on a bi-annual basis. The design of research and quality control of such reports is carried out by the International Experts' Panel, comprised of experts in transparency, participation, accountability, and social science research methods.

The current membership of the International Experts' Panel is:

- Anuradha Joshi
- Debbie Budlender
- Ernesto Velasco-Sánchez
- Gerardo Munck
- Hazel Feigenblatt
- Hille Hinsberg
- Jonathan Fox
- Liliane Corrêa de Oliveira Klaus
- Rosemary McGee
- Yamini Aiyar

A small staff based in Washington, D.C. shepherds reports through the IRM process in close co-ordination with the researcher. Questions and comments about this report can be directed to the staff at irm@opengovpartnership.org.

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1 Full research guidance can be found in the IRM Procedures Manual, available at: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/about-irm.

IX. Eligibility requirements

In September 2012, the OGP began strongly encouraging participating governments to adopt ambitious commitments in relation to their performance in the OGP eligibility criteria.

The OGP Support Unit collates eligibility criteria on an annual basis. Estonia's scores are presented below.[1] When appropriate, the IRM reports will discuss the context surrounding progress or regress on specific criteria in the section on country context.

	2011	Current	Change	Explanation
Budget transparency[2]	ND	ND	N/A	4 = Executive's Budget Proposal and Audit Report published 2 = One of two published 0 = Neither published
Access to information[3]	4	4	No change	4 = Access to information (ATI) Law 3 = Constitutional ATI provision 1 = Draft ATI law 0 = No ATI law
Asset declaration[4]	3	4	↑	4 = Asset disclosure law, data public 2 = Asset disclosure law, no public data 0 = No law
Citizen engagement (Raw score)	4 (8.82)[5]	4 (8.82)[6]	No change	1 > 0 2 > 2.5 3 > 5 4 > 7.5
Total/Possible (Per cent)	11/12 (92%)	12/12 (100%)	↑	75% of possible points to be eligible

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[1] "Eligibility Criteria," Open Government Partnership, http://bit.ly/1929F1l

[2] For more information, see Table 1 in the Open Budget Survey (http://bit.ly/1Q6kx11). For up-to-date assessments, see the OBS Tracker (http://www.obstracker.org/).

[3] The two databases used are Constitutional Provisions (http://bit.ly/1IlnjKB) and Laws and Draft Laws (http://www.right2info.org/access-to-information-laws).

[4] Simeon Djankov, Rafael La Porta, Florencio Lopez-de-Silanes, and Andrei Shleifer, "Disclosure by Politicians," (Tuck School of Business Working Paper 2009-60, 2009), http://bit.ly/19nDEfK; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), "Types of Information Decision Makers Are Required to Formally Disclose, and Level Of Transparency," in *Government at a Glance 2009*, (OECD, 2009), http://bit.ly/13vGtqS; Richard Messick, "Income and Asset Disclosure by World Bank Client Countries" (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2009), http://bit.ly/1cIokyf; For more recent information, see http://publicofficialsfinancialdisclosure.worldbank.org. In 2014, the OGP Steering Committee approved a change in the asset disclosure measurement. The existence of a law and de facto public access to the disclosed information replaced the old measures of disclosure by politicians and disclosure of high-level officials. For additional information, see the guidance note on 2014 OGP Eligibility Requirements at http://bit.ly/1EjLJ4Y.

[5] Economist Intelligence Unit, "Democracy Index 2010: Democracy in Retreat" (London: Economist, 2010), http://bit.ly/eLC1rE

[6] Economist Intelligence Unit, "Democracy Index 2014: Democracy and its Discontents" (London: Economist, 2014), http://bit.ly/18kEzCt