

# Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM): Estonia Transitional Results Report 2018– 2020

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This report was prepared in collaboration with Maarja Olesk, Independent Researcher

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## I. Introduction

The Open Government Partnership is a global partnership that brings together government reformers and civil society leaders to create action plans that make governments more inclusive, responsive, and accountable. Action plan commitments may build on existing efforts, identify new steps to complete ongoing reforms, or initiate an entirely new area. OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) monitors all action plans to ensure governments follow through on commitments. Civil society and government leaders use the evaluations to reflect on their progress and determine if efforts have impacted people's lives.

The IRM has partnered with Maarja Olesk to carry out this evaluation. The IRM aims to inform ongoing dialogue around the development and implementation of future commitments. For a full description of the IRM's methodology, please visit <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/independent-reporting-mechanism>.

This report covers the implementation of Estonia's fourth action plan for 2018–2020. In 2021, the IRM will implement a new approach to its research process and the scope of its reporting on action plans, approved by the IRM Refresh.<sup>1</sup> The IRM adjusted its Implementation Reports for 2018-2020 action plans to fit the transition process to the new IRM products and enable the IRM to adjust its workflow in light of the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on OGP country processes.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/process/accountability/about-the-irm/irm-refresh/>

## II. Action Plan Implementation

The IRM Transitional Results Report assesses the status of the action plan's commitments and the results from their implementation at the end of the action plan cycle. This report does not re-visit the assessments for "Verifiability," "Relevance" or "Potential Impact." The IRM assessed those three indicators in IRM Design Reports. For more details on each indicator, please see Annex I in this report.

### 2.1. General Highlights and Results

Estonia's fourth OGP action plan included six commitments. All were completed by the end of the action plan term, which was an improvement compared to previous action plans. To a large extent, the timely completion of the commitments was possible thanks to the manageable number of commitments and realistic objectives set for each commitment for the two-year implementation period. In some cases, the commitments' moderate ambition helped facilitate timely implementation. For example, Commitment 6 set out to finalize the process of updating school curricula, which was originally due to be completed in the previous action plan. At the same time, Commitment 4 sought to advance open government at the local level by funding projects and raising awareness in five out of 79 local administrations. In reality, the government funded open government projects in only three municipalities, but the ones that were implemented were completed on time. To reach the objectives of this commitment, the government also conducted an awareness-raising workshop for local municipalities, reaching 20 additional municipalities.<sup>1</sup>

The two commitments that were highlighted as potentially transformative in the IRM Design Report (Commitment 1 and Commitment 5) have yielded promising results in terms of inducing change in government practices. Both were ambitious and addressed clear gaps in public access to information and/or civic participation. As a result of Commitment 5, the government launched a public online monitoring tool<sup>2</sup> outlining detailed comparative information on the performance of all Estonian local municipalities in public service provision and open government. This constitutes a major improvement in making this information accessible to the public. Commitment 1 laid a solid foundation for improved public access to information on the policy-making process and co-creation with citizens by delivering a prototype for a new information system for policy drafting and co-creation. Due to its ambition and complexity, this commitment spans several action plan cycles and will be continued in Estonia's fifth OGP action plan (2020-2022).<sup>3</sup>

### 2.2. COVID-19 pandemic impact on implementation

The COVID-19 pandemic reached Estonia in March 2020 during the last months of the fourth OGP action plan period. The government declared a state of emergency on 13 March to contain the spread of the pandemic and implemented measures such as restrictions on public events and gatherings, closing down recreation and leisure establishments, setting up travel restrictions and border control, shifting schools to distance learning<sup>4</sup> and ordering citizens to keep a 2-meter distance from other people in public places.<sup>5</sup> The government lifted the state of emergency on 17 May, relaxing most restrictions. New rules and recommendations have been adapted thereafter on a needs basis. The Estonian public has generally accepted the restrictions as justified.<sup>6</sup> The Global Monitor of COVID-19's Impact on Democracy and Human Rights launched by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance did not flag any concerning developments in Estonia's COVID-19 response in terms of risks to human rights and democracy.<sup>7</sup>

OGP's COVID-19 OpenGov Tracker has highlighted Estonia as being among the world leaders in publishing COVID testing data.<sup>8</sup> As a result of previous OGP action plans, Estonia has built a national open data portal with an increasing number of datasets as well as an active open data community. As the national Health Board initially disseminated information about new COVID-19 cases only via press releases, volunteers stepped in and built an online dashboard,<sup>9</sup> visualizing the statistical data to facilitate public monitoring of the situation.<sup>10</sup> At first the data was entered manually from the daily press releases

but due to demand from the open data community, the Health and Welfare Information Systems Center serving the Health Board reorganized their data management processes and released COVID-19 data as machine-readable open data on 1 April. The center now provides detailed data (including tests administered, number of new confirmed cases, hospitalizations, people in intensive care, and deaths by county, age, and gender) which are updated daily.<sup>11</sup>

The pandemic did not have major repercussions on the implementation of the OGP action plan since all commitments had been substantially completed by March 2020. The Estonian public administration's high level of digitalization enabled institutions responsible for implementation to shift to remote work and continue carrying out functions regardless of COVID-19-related restrictions. However, occasional delays did occur due to the crisis. For instance, the Ministry of Finance postponed the public launch of the local municipalities' performance monitoring tool (Commitment 5) from the beginning of 2020 to August the same year when the epidemic had temporarily receded.<sup>12</sup> The ministry also originally intended to involve a small group of citizens in testing the tool. However, they abandoned the idea as the testing period coincided with the state of emergency put in place from March to May 2020, which brought extra tasks to the responsible team and precluded holding physical meetings.<sup>13</sup> According to the OGP Point of Contact at the Government Office, COVID-19 did not change the country's priorities for the next OGP action plan. The co-creation of the fifth action plan had already started in fall 2019 and stakeholders still found the priorities relevant in spring, in particular as several commitments in the fifth action plan directly build upon the results of the fourth action plan.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Kaie Küngas (Ministry of Finance), 20 April 2021.

<sup>2</sup> The government's public online monitoring tool, <https://minuomavalitsus.fin.ee/en>.

<sup>3</sup> Estonia's Open Government Partnership Fifth Action Plan for 2020–2022, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Estonia\\_Action-Plan\\_2020-2022\\_EN.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Estonia_Action-Plan_2020-2022_EN.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Government of Estonia, The Government Declared an Emergency Situation in Estonia until 1 May, 12 March 2020, <https://www.kriis.ee/en/news/government-declared-emergency-situation-estonia-until-1-may>

<sup>5</sup> Government of Estonia, The Government Will Send Everyone an E-mail and an SMS about the New Restrictions of the Emergency Situation, 25 March 2020, <https://www.kriis.ee/en/news/government-will-send-everyone-e-mail-and-sms-about-new-restrictions-emergency-situation>

<sup>6</sup> Estonian Public Broadcasting, Kümnedik Eesti elanikest näeb koroonapiirangutes inimõiguste rikkumist, 13 September 2020, <https://www.err.ee/1134465/kumnedik-estni-elanikest-naeb-koroonapiirangutes-inimoiguste-rikkumist>

<sup>7</sup> International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), Global Monitor of COVID-19's impact on Democracy and Human Rights, <https://www.idea.int/gsod-indices/#/indices/countries-regions-profile>

<sup>8</sup> Open Government Partnership, State of Open Government During COVID-19, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/state-of-open-government-during-covid-19/>

<sup>9</sup> The volunteer-built Koroonakaart application, <https://koroonakaart.ee/en>

<sup>10</sup> The Health Board later produced a similar dashboard of their own, <https://www.terviseamet.ee/et/koroonaviirus/koroonakaart>

<sup>11</sup> The data on the national Health Board's website, <https://www.terviseamet.ee/et/koroonaviirus/avaandmed>

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Ott Karulin (Government Office), 10 November 2020.

<sup>13</sup> Email interview with Andrus Jõgi (Ministry of Finance), 12 November 2020 and 3 February 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Estonia's fifth OGP action plan, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/estonia-action-plan-2020-2022/>

## 2.3. Early results

The IRM acknowledges that results may not be visible within the two-year time frame of the action plan and that at least a substantial level of completion is required to assess early results. For the purpose of the Transitional Results Report, the IRM will use the “**Did it Open Government?**” (DIOG) indicator to highlight early results based on the changes to government practice in areas relevant to OGP values. Moving forward, new IRM Results Reports will not continue using DIOG as an indicator.

Section 2.3 focuses on outcomes from the implementation of commitments that had an ambitious or strong design, per the IRM Design Report assessment or that may have lacked clarity and/or ambition but had successful implementation with “major” or “outstanding” changes to government practice.<sup>1</sup> Commitments considered for analysis in this section had at least a “substantial” level of implementation, as assessed by the IRM in Section 2.4. While this section provides the analysis of the IRM’s findings for the commitments that meet the criteria described above, Section 2.4 includes an overview of the level of completion for all the commitments in the action plan.

<b>Commitment I: Information technology supporting transparent and inclusive policy-making</b>	
<b>Aim of the commitment</b>	This commitment sought to increase citizens’ access to information on public decision-making processes and enable citizen participation in the early stages of the policy cycle. To this end, the government committed to developing a new online workspace that would enable citizens to track the status of policy initiatives across the policy cycle and participate in different stages of policy making. <sup>2</sup> The new system would address three main problems: fragmentation of information on the policy-making process between various institutions and information systems, government institutions’ tendency to share information about new policy initiatives too late to enable meaningful public participation, and the technical and functional shortcomings of existing e-participation platforms such as Osale.ee or the Information System of Draft Acts.
<b>Did it open government?</b>  <b>Major</b>	<p>By the end of the action plan period, the government’s inter-institutional task force<sup>3</sup> conducted six multi-stakeholder test groups, each involving five to six governmental and non-governmental users, to gather input for the online policy drafting and co-creation workspace.<sup>4</sup> This engagement involved identifying bottlenecks in the policy-drafting process and mapping user requirements for the prototype.<sup>5</sup> The task force then delivered a long-term vision, description of requirements, and an initial low-fidelity prototype of the new policy-drafting workspace, thus fully meeting this action plan’s objectives.<sup>6</sup> The government launch of this prototype with limited functionalities was scheduled for the end of 2020.<sup>7</sup> In reality, the last developments of the initial product are still being made in the first months of 2021. The task force aims to start testing the system with first users in March 2021.<sup>8</sup></p> <p>Due to the ambition of this commitment to integrate various types of policy initiatives and various parts of the public policy-making process into one transparent and collaborative process, the government has divided the commitment into smaller steps to be completed in the framework of several consecutive OGP action plans. In the fifth action plan, the government plans to launch the first module of the online workspace – a limited-access working space for policy drafting and co-creation.<sup>9</sup> Since public officials currently often store different versions of policy drafts on their own computer and collect stakeholder input via email, public officials expect a joint co-creation environment to meet an important practical need.<sup>10</sup> Once the first module is in place, the sixth action plan</p>

	<p>will focus on developing the system’s public interface with information and participation opportunities for the broader public.<sup>11</sup></p> <p>Because of this step-by-step approach, ultimate changes in the government’s policy-making practice can only be assessed after the completion of the next action plans. Given the current fragmentation of different steps of the policy cycle and gaps in public access to information on the government’s work, creating a single window for policy making and participation could radically improve access to information and civic participation. Despite the early stage of implementation, the first results indicate that the government is dedicated to following through with the commitment and has already made major efforts to put advancing public access to information and civic participation first.</p> <p>As mentioned above, the task force worked both on developing a long-term vision and the first technical measures during the fourth action plan period.<sup>12</sup> During the commitment’s implementation, the task force engaged public officials and non-governmental stakeholders, such as the Chamber of Commerce, Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations (NENO), e-Governance Academy and Estonian Cooperation Assembly, to discuss the needs, develop the requirements and test the prototype of the workspace.<sup>13</sup> The resulting long-term vision foresees two main functions for the workspace: 1) a ‘closed’ working environment where policymakers and selected stakeholders can co-create policy drafts, and 2) a public interface that enables citizens to participate in public consultations and track the status of policy initiatives from first preparations in government up to eventual adoption and publication. The government plans to continue the development process using an agile development methodology,<sup>14</sup> engaging users in continuous testing and improvement of the system.<sup>15</sup></p> <p>The task force also began soliciting stakeholders’ views on how the policy-making process should be redesigned for greater integration between various stages and institutions.<sup>16</sup> The task force plans to continue these discussions at a more concrete level in spring 2021, when it is possible to demonstrate the first usable prototype of the workspace co-creation functionalities.<sup>17</sup></p> <p>According to NENO, civil society organizations (CSOs) are satisfied with the first results and quality of public engagement in the commitment implementation.<sup>18</sup> The commitment has strong potential to change government practices if different institutions are willing to continue the collaboration that started in the fourth action plan period. In interviews with the IRM researcher, representatives from the Ministry of Justice and the Government Office also emphasized this commitment’s contribution to fostering public officials’ understanding of policy making as a process of co-creation. This focus is reflected in the choice of the system’s name – the State Co-creation Environment (<i>Riigi koosloome keskkond</i>) – selected as a result of a public idea competition.<sup>19</sup> The steps taken so far have therefore laid the groundwork for major improvements in public access to information and participation in the policy-making process.</p>
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**Commitment 3: Increase the openness and transparency of the Riigikogu**

<p><b>Aim of the commitment</b></p>	<p>This commitment aimed to improve public access to information on the work of the Riigikogu (the Parliament of Estonia). Parliamentary committees often published their meeting minutes with long delays and the committees had diverse practices of publishing the minutes online. Moreover, non-governmental stakeholders could not easily analyze and reuse information about the Riigikogu’s plenary work as the</p>
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	<p>Riigikogu’s data was either not in open data format or, where it was, the data was not available in a machine-readable format. With this commitment, the Riigikogu sought to harmonize the practice of publishing the minutes of committee meetings online in a timely manner. It also aimed to release information about the Riigikogu’s work as machine-readable open data.</p>
<p><b>Did it open government?</b></p> <p><b>Major</b></p>	<p>As a result of the commitment, the Riigikogu accelerated the publication of the minutes of committee meetings as planned. With some exceptions, the minutes are now available on the Riigikogu’s website on average within three days and usually no more than seven days after a sitting.<sup>20</sup> This is an improvement compared to the pre-action plan period when publication time varied greatly between committees, ranging from a couple of days to up to several weeks and months.<sup>21</sup> Delays of more than a week are no longer common.</p> <p>In addition, the Riigikogu published information on its work as machine-readable open data, which is reusable under an open license from the Creative Commons family.<sup>22</sup> The open data involves, for example, draft laws discussed at the plenary meetings, agendas and minutes of plenary meetings, different types of documents from the document register, MP participation statistics in sittings and votings, speeches held, voting results, verbatim reports from the plenaries, and so on. The data is available through an API in a machine-readable format (JSON),<sup>23</sup> which enables machine-to-machine data requests and allows applications and services using the data to make automatic updates. The datasets are updated on a regular basis and users can point to errors or suggest improvements to the API on a public GitHub repository.<sup>24</sup></p> <p>The Riigikogu’s data has already found active users. The key data user is the Estonian Cooperation Assembly, which manages the Citizens’ Initiative platform (Rahvaalgatus.ee).<sup>25</sup> The Citizens’ Initiative uses the data to keep track of the status of citizens’ policy proposals signed and sent to the Riigikogu via the platform.<sup>26</sup> In addition, researchers from the University of Tartu used the data to develop a public application analyzing and visualizing the activity (e.g. voting results, speeches, questions, participation statistics) of MPs in the Riigikogu.<sup>27</sup></p> <p>According to the manager of the Citizens’ Initiative platform at the Estonian Cooperation Assembly, the Riigikogu’s open data has been a valuable addition to the platform.<sup>28</sup> Specifically, the public can now follow the status of the collective initiatives in almost real time and receive automatic email notifications from the platform when the Riigikogu has discussed or taken a decision on an initiative. Since the Chancellery of the Riigikogu consulted with the Cooperation Assembly when implementing the commitment, the data format corresponds to the needs of the Citizens’ Initiative platform. Before the commitment implementation, the platform’s manager often needed to manually update the status of the initiatives.<sup>29</sup> This is no longer the case as all updates now automatically come in via the API. Occasional delays in receiving information still occur but according to the manager of Citizens’ Initiative platform, the delays are likely not due to technical problems but hiccups in the internal work process of the Riigikogu.</p> <p>Together, the two parts of the commitment (accelerating the publication of meeting minutes and providing machine-readable open data) constitute a commendable improvement in public access to information on the Riigikogu’s work. To further enhance its transparency, the Riigikogu could focus on improving the ‘human-readability’ of the information and making discussions in committees and plenary sittings easily accessible for citizens. To this end, the Riigikogu could</p>

	<p>start by engaging users to analyze their needs and propose design ideas for the website’s public interface. The Riigikogu could also improve the findability of committee minutes based on discussion topics. The website’s general keyword search provides access to minutes related to discussing specific draft acts or EU documents, but not to those that have involved other types of discussions or hearings, for example in relation to processing Citizens’ Initiatives. The Riigikogu could therefore consider how to help citizens find relevant information online more easily.</p>
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<p><b>Commitment 5: Simple and user-friendly presentation of local public service levels</b></p>	
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<p><b>Aim of the commitment</b></p>	<p>This commitment aimed to advance open government in local municipalities by improving public access to information on the quality of public services provided by municipalities. The Estonian government conducted a large-scale merger of local municipalities in 2017 with the aim to strengthen the governance capacity of local municipalities and improve the quality of public services provided at the local level. However, the level of public services had not been measured systematically, nor did the public have access to information about municipalities’ performance in terms of service quality.<sup>30</sup> To create a reference base for monitoring changes in local governments’ performance, the government set out to develop a data-driven public online monitoring tool that would allow policymakers and citizens to assess and compare the performance of all local municipalities in a range of domains, from the provision of communal and social services to open government practices.</p>
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<p><b>Did it open government?</b> <b>Outstanding</b></p>	<p>By the end of the action plan period (albeit with a delay of several months), the Ministry of Finance launched the online monitoring tool on the website <a href="https://minuomavalitsus.fin.ee">https://minuomavalitsus.fin.ee</a>. Its development process in 2018–2019 involved various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders (e.g. Government Office, Statistics Estonia, Estonian Cooperation Assembly, e-Governance Academy, Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities).<sup>31</sup></p> <p>The resulting web application aggregates and visualizes comparative data on the performance of all 79 merged local municipalities in Estonia in 16 domains that concern key local public service areas (education, youth work, housing and communal facilities, mobility, social protection, public health and safety, and culture, sports, and leisure) as well as public governance. As part of the governance dimension, the application also assesses municipalities’ performance in open government. It shows, for example, whether a municipality implements a local open government action plan, publishes information on the local budget and work of the local government, implements participatory budgeting, enables public participation via its website, has established transparent procedures for funding CSOs and conducting public procurement, and so on.</p> <p>To facilitate comparison, the application shows the performance level (“basic”, “advanced”, or “excellent”) of each criterion<sup>32</sup> based on the methodology that the University of Tartu and Geomedia (a private consultancy) developed in consultation with local governments, experts, and interest groups.<sup>33</sup> While the broader public may find the methodology difficult to grasp, the online application’s use of clear visuals and color codes facilitates understanding of where each municipality stands in comparison with others. The website also provides explanations in clear language on the usage possibilities of the application and limitations of the data.<sup>34</sup></p>
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Compared to the situation before, the application constitutes an outstanding improvement in public access to information on the work of local governments. It also provides data for local and central government to assess whether policy support, including changes to allocation of funding, is needed to support changes in practice or to address inequalities across local administrations. According to an interviewed representative of the Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations (NENO), having access to detailed and comparable data on local municipalities substantially simplifies the work of advocacy organizations, who previously needed to talk to tens of municipalities to develop some level of understanding of local-level problems and needs.<sup>35</sup> Since the application uses data from a 2020 survey which assessed residents' satisfaction with their municipalities' services, the NENO representative believes the tool could provide the necessary evidence for citizens to demand better services from their local administrations. As an important result, the survey showed that citizens are unsatisfied with the level of civic engagement in most municipalities.<sup>36</sup>

An interviewed representative from Kodukant, the Estonian Village Movement, considers the application a valuable tool in advancing their network's strategic partnership with local municipalities and monitoring the success of their advocacy and capacity-building work without the need to commission separate studies.<sup>37</sup> The representative highlights the value of the visual design of the tool, in particular the map view, which gives the public a quick and easily accessible comparative overview of municipalities. An additional benefit is that the tool provides the underlying data used in the measurement in an open format for public reuse.<sup>38</sup>

As the application was only launched in August 2020, the Ministry of Finance's next priority is disseminating information on the tool among potential users.<sup>39</sup> So far, the ministry has conducted a press conference, launched a dedicated Facebook page,<sup>40</sup> and disseminated information on meetings and seminars with local municipalities, government ministries, and CSOs (e.g. the Good Citizen Club co-organized by NENO and Open Knowledge Estonia<sup>41</sup>). The ministry also plans to publish more media articles in local newspapers to disseminate information on the tool to the public. In addition to mobilizing users, the ministry plans to continue the development of the assessment methodology, having established a broad-based stakeholder advisory group with CSOs such as Kodukant for the purpose.<sup>42</sup> It also regularly collects users' feedback via the website.<sup>43</sup>

While the delay in launching the tool has also delayed activities targeted at informing and mobilizing users, the commitment has transformed the quantity and quality of available information on local governments. The public, as well as policymakers and interest groups, now have access to a tool that provides evidence on local municipalities' services and public governance practices based on a uniform methodology, allowing both for comparison and zooming in on a single municipality of interest. While translating the information into policy changes will take time, government officials have started using the tool when preparing visits to municipalities to acquire an overview of the municipalities' strengths and weaknesses.<sup>44</sup> As another example, the new youth strategy for 2021–2035 plans to use the system to track the progress of one of the strategy's key outcome indicators – percentage of local municipalities providing youth services at an 'advanced' level.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>1</sup> IRM Design Reports identified strong commitments as “**noteworthy commitments**” if they were assessed as verifiable, relevant, and “transformative” potential impact. If no commitments met the potential impact threshold, the IRM selected

- noteworthy commitments from the commitments with “moderate” potential impact. For the list of Estonia’s noteworthy commitments, see the Executive Summary of the 2018-2020 IRM Design Report, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Estonia\\_Design\\_Report\\_2018-2020\\_EN.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Estonia_Design_Report_2018-2020_EN.pdf)
- <sup>2</sup> Estonia IRM Design Report 2018–2020, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/estonia-design-report-2018-2020/>
- <sup>3</sup> The task force included officials from the Ministry of Justice, Government Office, and the Parliament.
- <sup>4</sup> Interview with Karmen Vilms (Ministry of Justice), 6 November 2020.
- <sup>5</sup> Government Office, OGP repository, <https://www.riigikantselei.ee/valitsuse-too-planeerimine-ja-korraldamine/valitsuse-too-toetamine/avatud-valitsemise-partnerlus#tegevuskava-2018-202>
- <sup>6</sup> The action plan had three objectives: 1) assessing the needs of stakeholders and potential users, 2) describing the desired functions of the tool, and 3) preparing terms of reference and requirements for the information system and developing a prototype. Estonia’s OGP Action Plan for 2018–2020, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/estonia-action-plan-2018-2020/>
- <sup>7</sup> Government Office, Algas Õiguse Koosloome Keskkonna Nimekonkurss, 12 October 2020, <https://www.riigikantselei.ee/et/uudised/algas-oguse-koosloome-keskkonna-nimekonkurss>
- <sup>8</sup> Email from Karmen Vilms (Ministry of Justice), 9 February 2021.
- <sup>9</sup> Estonia OGP Action Plan 2020–2022, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/estonia-action-plan-2020-2022/>
- <sup>10</sup> Interview with Karmen Vilms (Ministry of Justice), 6 November 2020.
- <sup>11</sup> Interview with Ott Karulin (Government Office), 10 November 2020.
- <sup>12</sup> Interview with Karmen Vilms (Ministry of Justice), 6 November 2020.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* An early version of the vision was presented to the public at an Innovation Club meeting on 6 February 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/events/359336541312615/>
- <sup>14</sup> Agile development refers to a set of software development practices based on the Manifesto for Agile Software Development (<https://agilemanifesto.org>). The key principles of agile development include a focus on satisfying the customer, possibility of changing requirements throughout the development process, simplicity, working by way of collaboration and self-organizing teams, regular reflection on the progress, and continuous improvement of software.
- <sup>15</sup> Interview with Karmen Vilms (Ministry of Justice), 6 November 2020.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> Email from Karmen Vilms (Ministry of Justice), 9 February 2021.
- <sup>18</sup> Interview with Alari Rammo (Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations), 12 November 2020.
- <sup>19</sup> Ministry of Justice, Eesti Õigusloome Ühte Kohta Koondav Süsteem Hakkab Kandma Nime Riigi Koosloome Keskkond, 9 November 2020, <https://www.just.ee/et/uudised/eesti-ogusloome-uhte-kohta-koondav-susteem-hakkab-kandma-nime-riigi-koosloome-keskkond>
- <sup>20</sup> Meeting minutes of parliamentary committees, <https://www.riigikogu.ee/tegevus/paevakorrad-ja-protokollid/>. The estimated average of three days is based on the IRM researcher’s analysis of the publication dates of the meetings of permanent committees on the working weeks of 10-14 February and 14-18 September 2020.
- <sup>21</sup> Estonia IRM Design Report 2018–2020, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/estonia-design-report-2018-2020/>
- <sup>22</sup> The Parliament’s data on the national open data portal, <https://opendata.riik.ee/andmehulgad/riigikogu-veebi-avaandmed/>.
- <sup>23</sup> The published open data, <https://api.riigikogu.ee/swagger-ui.html>
- <sup>24</sup> The GitHub repository, <https://github.com/riigikogu-kantselei/api/>
- <sup>25</sup> The Citizens’ Initiative is a public participation instrument enabling citizens to propose collective addresses to the Parliament if signed by at least 1,000 citizens. The online platform facilitating the co-creation and signature of the initiatives was developed as part of Estonia’s second OGP Action Plan – see the IRM end-of-term report, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/estonia-end-of-term-report-2014-2016/>
- <sup>26</sup> An example of a policy proposal (citizens’ initiative for banning fur farming in Estonia), <https://rahvaalgatus.ee/initiatives/9a805471-3705-4522-9b6f-9cbd7a455f40>
- <sup>27</sup> The public application, [https://webapps.skytte.ut.ee/riigikogu\\_info/](https://webapps.skytte.ut.ee/riigikogu_info/)
- <sup>28</sup> Interview with Kadri Org-Lilleväli (Estonian Cooperation Assembly), 16 December 2020.
- <sup>29</sup> Estonia IRM Design Report 2018–2020, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/estonia-design-report-2018-2020/>
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>31</sup> Email interview with Andrus Jõgi (Ministry of Finance), 12 November 2020.
- <sup>32</sup> The University of Tartu and Geomeedia methodology, <https://minuomavalitsus.fin.ee/en/andmed-ja-metoodika/evaluation-methodology>
- <sup>33</sup> The report by University of Tartu and Geomeedia, <https://minuomavalitsus.fin.ee/sites/default/files/lingitud%20failid/KOV%20teenuste%20metoodika%20lõpparuanne.pdf>
- <sup>34</sup> This information is provided in the Frequently Asked Questions, <https://minuomavalitsus.fin.ee/en/faq>
- <sup>35</sup> Interview with Alari Rammo (Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations), 12 November 2020.
- <sup>36</sup> Satisfaction survey dashboard: <https://minuomavalitsus.fin.ee/et/rahulolutoolaud>
- <sup>37</sup> Interview with Krista Habakukk (Kodukant, the Estonian Village Movement), 16 November 2020. Kodukant is a network of organizations working to empower local communities, especially in rural areas.
- <sup>38</sup> The open data, <https://minuomavalitsus.fin.ee/en/data-and-methodology/database>
- <sup>39</sup> Email interview with Andrus Jõgi (Ministry of Finance), 12 November 2020.
- <sup>40</sup> The Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/minuomavalitsus/>
- <sup>41</sup> More information about the event, <https://www.facebook.com/events/811135476094112/>
- <sup>42</sup> Interview with Krista Habakukk (Kodukant, the Estonian Village Movement), 16 November 2020.
- <sup>43</sup> A “Rate our website” button is featured in the footer of each page on the website.
- <sup>44</sup> Email from Andrus Jõgi (Ministry of Finance), 3 February 2021.
- <sup>45</sup> Annex 2 to the youth strategy 2021–2035: Methodology and sources of indicators, [https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/noortevaldkonna\\_arengukava\\_2021-2035\\_lisad\\_seisuga\\_23.04.2020.pdf](https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/noortevaldkonna_arengukava_2021-2035_lisad_seisuga_23.04.2020.pdf)

## 2.4. Commitment implementation

The table below includes an assessment of the level of completion for each commitment in the action plan.

<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Completion</b> (no evidence available, not started, limited, substantial or complete)
<b>1. Information technology supporting transparent and inclusive policy making</b>	<b>Complete:</b> For details regarding the implementation and early results of this commitment, see Section 2.3.
<b>2. Inclusive, knowledge-based and citizen-centered policy-making process</b>	<p><b>Complete:</b></p> <p>The State Shared Service Center, an executive agency under the Ministry of Finance, commissioned trainings for central and local government officials on four topics: 1) the basics of policy making, 2) public engagement and process management, 3) impact assessment, 4) and selected methods in policy evaluation.<sup>1</sup> Each training module lasted for one to three days and the modules were repeated four times during the action plan period.<sup>2</sup> The trainings were also open to CSOs – the State Shared Service Center originally aimed to recruit at least 30 percent of participants from CSOs and local municipalities. Overall, the trainings had 888 participants. About 6 percent of participants were from local municipalities and 9 percent from CSOs (in the compulsory modules on public engagement and impact assessment, the percentage of CSOs amounted to 16).<sup>3</sup> The Shared Service Center claims to have tried to reach more CSOs and local municipalities,<sup>4</sup> but according to CSOs, information on the participation opportunity could have been disseminated more widely.<sup>5</sup></p> <p>The network of public engagement coordinators in ministries met four times per year during action plan implementation. The coordinators revised the operating model of the network and developed a harmonized definition of the role of engagement coordinators across ministries.<sup>6</sup> The role involves planning public engagement processes in ministries, training new civil servants in the basics of public engagement, quality control of ministries’ public engagement processes, sharing engagement-related information and best practices within the ministry, collecting feedback from participants, facilitating non-governmental stakeholders’ communication with public officials, and helping them formulate proposals to the ministry.<sup>7</sup></p> <p>While work still needs to be done to communicate this role and improve the position of engagement coordinators in some ministries, the network now provides a forum where coordinators can regularly share their concerns and support each other.<sup>8</sup> The coordinator network is also actively engaged in the implementation of Commitment 2 in the next OGP action plan (2020-2022), which involves the collection of best co-creation practices and testing co-creation methods in central government policy making.<sup>9</sup></p>
<b>3. Increase the openness and transparency of the Riigikogu</b>	<b>Complete:</b> For details regarding the implementation and early results of this commitment, see Section 2.3.

<p><b>4. Open government action plans and activities in local governments</b></p>	<p><b>Complete:</b></p> <p>During the action plan period, the Ministry of Finance funded the development of open government projects in three local municipalities (Põlva, Valga, and Rakvere vald) through an open call for proposals financed from the European Social Fund.<sup>10</sup> Eight proposals did not receive funding due to high competition (only about half of municipalities' proposals were successful).<sup>11</sup> This fell short of the action plan's target of implementing open government-related projects in at least five municipalities.<sup>12</sup></p> <p>To reach this commitment's objective of improving local authorities' awareness of open government, the Ministry of Finance conducted a seminar for local municipalities in June 2019, sharing information and best practices from previous OGP action plans. Officials from 20 municipalities attended the seminar.<sup>13</sup></p> <p>The government will continue promoting open government principles at the local level in the next OGP action plan. The Ministry of Finance will organize regular open government workshops for local municipalities (Commitment 3), while the Ministry of the Interior will offer a development program on policy co-creation for five local municipalities with the aim to co-create a working model for local community engagement together with citizens (Commitment 4).<sup>14</sup></p>
<p><b>5. Simple and user-friendly presentation of local public service levels</b></p>	<p><b>Complete:</b></p> <p>For details regarding the implementation and early results of this commitment, see Section 2.3.</p>
<p><b>6. Develop attitudes towards and skills in participatory democracy</b></p>	<p><b>Complete:</b></p> <p>In 2018, the Ministry of Education and Research formed an expert working group to formulate the learning objectives and learning outcomes for teaching civic participation skills in social science subjects in the new basic and secondary school curricula. The working group presented their proposals to the Foundation Innove (the ministry's executive agency) in January 2019. At the same time, parallel expert groups developed vision documents as input to new strategies in the education field (including education strategy and youth strategy).<sup>15</sup></p> <p>The ministry used input from the working groups as a basis for consultations with various stakeholders (e.g. teachers, youth, students, parents, school principals, education innovators, local municipalities) in the development of the new education strategy for 2021–2035<sup>16</sup> and the new school curricula.</p> <p>The government approved the education strategy in October 2020. As of November 2020, the strategy is pending discussions in the Parliament before final adoption.<sup>17</sup> The Ministry of Education and Research aims to start transitioning to the new curricula from 2022–2023.<sup>18</sup></p>

<sup>1</sup> The training agendas and materials, <https://www.riigitootaja.ee/rtip-client/app/#/training.materials>

<sup>2</sup> The schedule of the trainings, <http://www.praxis.ee/tood/polititikakujundamise-oskuste-arendamise-programmi/>

<sup>3</sup> Ott Karulin (Government Office), email, 18 March 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Email interview with Cherlin Agu (State Shared Service Center), 9 November 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Alari Rammo (Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations), email, 19 March 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Email interview with Ivar Hendla (Government Office), 22 December 2020.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Estonia's fifth OGP action plan, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/estonia-action-plan-2020-2022/>

<sup>10</sup> Information on the funding scheme and projects funded in 2019: <https://www.rtk.ee/kohalik-ja-regionaalne-arendusvoimekus-koostoo-ja-teenuste-osutamine-2019> (information on the 2018 competition is no longer available due to the State Shared Service Center's transfer to a new website).

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Kaie Küngas (Ministry of Finance), 20 April 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Estonia's OGP Action Plan for 2018–2020, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/estonia-action-plan-2018-2020/>

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Kaie Küngas (Ministry of Finance), 20 April 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Estonia's fifth OGP action plan, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/estonia-action-plan-2020-2022/>

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Education and Research, Strateegiline Planeerimine Aastateks 2021–2035, <https://www.hm.ee/et/kaasamine-osalemine/haridus-ja-teadusstrateegia-aastateks-2021-2035>

<sup>16</sup> The list of consultation events and stakeholders engaged is on the website of the Ministry of Education and Research, <https://www.hm.ee/et/kaasamine-osalemine/strateegiline-planeerimine-aastateks-2021-2035/avalikud-arutelud>

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Education and Research, newsletter November 2020/6, <https://www.hm.ee/et/kaasamine-osalemine/strateegiline-planeerimine-aastateks-2021-2035/infokiri>

<sup>18</sup> Estonian Public Broadcasting, Haridusministeerium Kulutab Uute Õppekavade Elluviimiseks 14 Miljonit Eurot, 28 November 2019, <https://www.err.ee/1007883/haridusministeerium-kulutab-uute-oppekavade-elluviimiseks-14-miljonit-eurot>

### III. Multi-stakeholder Process

#### 3.1 Multi-stakeholder process throughout action plan implementation

In 2017, OGP adopted the OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards intended to support participation and co-creation by civil society at all stages of the OGP cycle. All OGP-participating countries are expected to meet these standards. The standards aim to raise ambition and quality of participation during development, implementation, and review of OGP action plans.

OGP’s Articles of Governance also establish participation and co-creation requirements a country or entity must meet in their action plan development and implementation to act according to the OGP process. Estonia **did not act** contrary to OGP process.<sup>1</sup>

Please see Section 3.2 for an overview of Estonia’s performance implementing the Co-Creation and Participation Standards throughout the action plan implementation.

**Table 3.2: Level of Public Influence**

The IRM has adapted the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) “Spectrum of Participation” to apply it to OGP.<sup>2</sup> In the spirit of OGP, most countries should aspire to “collaborate.”

Level of public influence		During development of action plan	During implementation of action plan
<b>Empower</b>	The government handed decision-making power to members of the public.		
<b>Collaborate</b>	There was iterative dialogue AND the public helped set the agenda.	✓	✓
<b>Involve</b>	The government gave feedback on how public inputs were considered.		
<b>Consult</b>	The public could give inputs.		
<b>Inform</b>	The government provided the public with information on the action plan.		
No Consultation	No consultation		

The government implemented most of the action plan commitments in close collaboration with CSOs and non-governmental experts. The level of government-civil society interaction varied depending on the nature and design of the particular commitment. In Commitment 1, CSOs had an active role in each step of the development process of the new policy-making tool. CSOs also had a say in designing and developing the local municipalities’ monitoring tool as part of Commitment 5. The level of stakeholder participation was also high in the implementation of Commitment 6, where the Ministry of Education and Research extensively engaged CSOs and experts in designing the new school curricula and education strategy. At the same time, the Parliament implemented Commitment 3 mostly on its own, with some input from the Estonian Cooperation Assembly. Similarly, Commitment 4 did not involve a high level of CSO engagement due to being focused on funding local municipalities’ project proposals. However, e-Governance Academy, a non-governmental expert organization, was involved in designing a training day for local administrations and sharing good practices of open government as part of Commitment 4. Lastly, CSOs were engaged in the implementation of Commitment 2 as participants in the training program on policy-making skills and civic participation (on a few occasions, experts with a CSO background also acted as trainers).

During action plan implementation, the multi-stakeholder forum (the Open Government Development Committee) met four times, which is less frequent than required by OGP standards. However, members of the forum shared information via email between meetings and the OGP government Point of Contact met civil society stakeholders at the OGP Civil Society Roundtable meetings to discuss action plan implementation and co-create the next action plan. An interviewed representative of the CSO roundtable at the forum considers the level of government-civil society collaboration between the forum meetings as satisfactory.<sup>3</sup> The representative emphasizes that the forum meetings are necessary for taking high-level decisions but the bulk of the daily work on the OGP action plan is usually done between meetings where the public officials responsible for action plan implementation usually frequently interact with the relevant CSO stakeholders. In sum, with some exceptions, the level of interaction between the government and civil society during action plan implementation generally amounted to the level of ‘collaborate’ on the IAP2 spectrum.

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<sup>1</sup> Acting Contrary to Process - Country did not meet (1) “involve” during the development or “inform” during implementation of the action plan, or (2) the government fails to collect, publish, and document a repository on the national OGP website/webpage in line with IRM guidance.

<sup>2</sup> “IAP2’s Public Participation Spectrum,” IAP2, 2014.

[https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/pillars/Spectrum\\_8.5x11\\_Print.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/pillars/Spectrum_8.5x11_Print.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Alari Rammo, Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations, 12 November 2020.

### 3.2 Overview of Estonia's performance throughout action plan implementation

Key:

Green= Meets standard

Yellow= In progress (steps have been taken to meet this standard, but standard is not met)

Red= No evidence of action

Multi-stakeholder Forum	During Development	During Implementation
<p><b>1a. Forum established:</b> During action plan implementation, the government merged the former OGP Coordinating Committee with the government committee on advancing the government's administrative capacity to form a new Open Government Development Committee.<sup>1</sup> The new committee's mandate includes overseeing the co-creation and implementation of OGP action plans.</p>	Green	Green
<p>1b. Regularity: The Open Government Development Committee met four times during the two-year implementation period.<sup>2</sup> OGP standards require that the forums meet at least once every quarter. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a previously scheduled meeting for 25 May 2020 was replaced with an e-mail correspondence.</p>	Green	Yellow
<p>1c. Collaborative mandate development: This standard was assessed in the IRM Design Report and the situation did not change when the new coordinating body was established during the implementation phase of the fourth action plan.</p>	Green	Green
<p>1d. Mandate public: Information on the Open Government Development Committee remit, membership, and governance structure has been published on the government's OGP website.<sup>3</sup></p>	Green	Green
<p><b>2a. Multi-stakeholder:</b> The Open Government Development Committee includes representatives of government institutions, local municipalities, and non-governmental organizations.<sup>4</sup></p>	Green	Green
<p>2b. Parity: The new Open Government Development Committee (reformed during the implementation period) does not have an equal number of governmental and non-governmental participants. However, it does involve a variety of stakeholders in addition to members representing government institutions, including a Parliamentary think tank, local municipal governments, a quasi-governmental organization and non-governmental organizations. One of the non-governmental representatives represents the OGP Civil Society Roundtable. According to the point of contact at the Government Office, the representative of the OGP Civil Society Roundtable represents the voice of many CSOs that belong to the Estonia's OGP Civil Society Roundtable.<sup>5</sup></p>	Green	Yellow
<p><b>2c. Transparent selection:</b> Non-governmental members of the Open Government Development Committee were selected jointly with the OGP Civil Society Roundtable and civil society members of the former OGP Coordinating Committee.<sup>6</sup> The participating civil society entities claim that</p>	Green	Green



the selection process was transparent for them, <sup>7</sup> although public information on the process is not available.		
2d. High-level government representation: The committee membership comprises the Secretary of State and Secretary-generals of four ministries. All are high-level officials with decision-making authority from government.	Green	Green
<b>3a. Openness:</b> The Open Government Development Committee accepts input on action plan implementation from any interested party. Stakeholders can participate by contacting the OGP point of contact at the Government Office <sup>8</sup> or the OGP Civil Society Roundtable coordinated by the Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations. <sup>9</sup>	Green	Green
3b. Remote participation: Opportunities for remote participation via online videoconferencing tools are provided in all meetings. <sup>10</sup>	Green	Green
3c. Minutes: The Open Government Development Committee proactively publishes minutes of all meetings on the government's OGP website. <sup>11</sup>	Green	Green

Key:

Green= Meets standard

Yellow= In progress (steps have been taken to meet this standard, but standard is not met)

Red= No evidence of action

Action Plan Implementation	
4a. Process transparency: The national OGP website provides regular updates on the progress of commitments whenever there is new information to share. However, the updates are provided less frequently than the OGP recommendation of every six months, and do not always specify progress against specific milestones or reasons for delays. <sup>12</sup> For instance, the March 2020 overview of the action plan had no information on the implementation of activities related to the network of public engagement coordinators, which was part of Commitment 2.	Yellow
4b. Communication channels: The website includes the contact details of the OGP point of contact at the Government Office but does not allow the public to leave comments on action plan progress.	Yellow
4c. Engagement with civil society: The Government Office met the OGP Civil Society Roundtable once per year during action plan implementation to discuss the ongoing and subsequent action plan. <sup>13</sup>	Green
4d. Cooperation with the IRM: The Government Office has shared IRM reports with other government institutions during the pre-publication comment phase and with the OGP Civil Society Roundtable during the public comment phase. <sup>14</sup>	Green
4.e MSF engagement: The Open Government Development Committee discusses commitment progress regularly in its meetings. <sup>15</sup>	Green
4.f MSF engagement with self-assessment report: The government submitted its end of term self-assessment report to the multi-stakeholder forum for feedback and approval. <sup>16</sup>	Green

**4.g. Repository:** The Government Office keeps a public OGP repository on the national OGP website.<sup>17</sup> It is partly in line with IRM guidance<sup>18</sup> since it is updated slightly less frequently than every six months. As of November 2020, the last updates on the action plan progress were dated March 2020, while only partial evidence was provided to confirm the status of commitments 2 and 3. For example, the report on Commitment 2 had no information nor evidence of the activities of the public engagement coordinator network. The report on Commitment 3 did not include any links to minutes of parliamentary committees.

Yellow

<sup>1</sup> The committee and its mandate has been established by an order of the Secretary of State (Government Office): <https://dhs.riigikantselei.ee/avalikteave.nsf/documents/NT00352532/%24file/RS1943.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The meetings took place on 24 May 2019, 3 December 2019, 18 February 2020, and 10 August 2020,

<sup>3</sup> The national OGP repository, <https://www.riigikantselei.ee/valitsuse-too-planeerimine-ja-korraldamine/valitsuse-too-toetamine/avatud-valitsemise-partnerlus>

<sup>4</sup> The list of member institutions has been published on the government's OGP repository,

<https://www.riigikantselei.ee/valitsuse-too-planeerimine-ja-korraldamine/valitsuse-too-toetamine/avatud-valitsemise-partnerlus>

<sup>5</sup> According to Ott Karulin (Government Office, interview on 10 November 2020), the committee composition was based on the objective of including an equal number of members representing the central government and those representing other types of key stakeholders independent of central government institutions. The latter category includes CSOs but also local municipalities, experts and think tanks, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Interviews with Ott Karulin (Government Office), 10 November 2020, and Alari Rammo (Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations), 12 November 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Alari Rammo (Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations), 12 November 2020.

<sup>8</sup> The contact details are on the government's OGP website, <https://www.riigikantselei.ee/valitsuse-too-planeerimine-ja-korraldamine/valitsuse-too-toetamine/avatud-valitsemise-partnerlus>

<sup>9</sup> The contact details are on the roundtable's website, <http://avatudvalitsemine.ee/osale/>

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Ott Karulin, Government Office, 10 November 2020; interview with Alari Rammo, Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations, 12 November 2020.

<sup>11</sup> The OGP repository contains a link to the Government Office's public document register where the minutes are published, <https://dhs.riigikantselei.ee/avalikteave.nsf/protocolsbyissuer?open>

<sup>12</sup> The national OGP website (section "Tegevuste ülevaade"), <https://www.riigikantselei.ee/valitsuse-too-planeerimine-ja-korraldamine/valitsuse-too-toetamine/avatud-valitsemise-partnerlus#tegevuskava-2018-202>

<sup>13</sup> The meetings took place on 21 October 2019 and 6 February 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Ott Karulin (Government Office), 10 November 2020.

<sup>15</sup> The committee discussed action plan progress, for example, in its meeting of 18 February 2020,

<https://dhs.riigikantselei.ee/avalikteave.nsf/documents/NT0037B202/%24file/ARVAL20PI.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> The Open Government Development Committee discussed the self-assessment report for the 2018–2020 action plan in its meeting on 10 November 2020.

<sup>17</sup> The national OGP website, <https://www.riigikantselei.ee/valitsuse-too-planeerimine-ja-korraldamine/valitsuse-too-toetamine/avatud-valitsemise-partnerlus#tegevuskava-2018-202>

<sup>18</sup> IRM Guidance for Online Repositories, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/IRM\\_Guidance-for-Repositories\\_Updated\\_2020.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/IRM_Guidance-for-Repositories_Updated_2020.pdf)

## IV. Methodology and Sources

Research for the IRM reports is carried out by national researchers. All IRM reports undergo a process of quality control led by IRM staff to ensure that the highest standards of research and due diligence have been applied.

The International Experts Panel (IEP) of the IRM oversees the quality control of each report. The IEP is composed of experts in transparency, participation, accountability, and social science research methods.

Current membership of the International Experts Panel is

- César Cruz-Rubio
- Mary Francoli
- Brendan Halloran
- Jeff Lovitt
- Juanita Olaya

This review process, including the procedure for incorporating comments received, is outlined in greater detail in Section III of the Procedures Manual<sup>1</sup> and in Estonia's Design Report 2018–2020.

### About the IRM

**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 (IRM) assesses development and implementation of national action plans to foster dialogue among stakeholders and improve accountability.



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<sup>1</sup> IRM Procedures Manual, V.3: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/irm-procedures-manual>

## Annex I. IRM Indicators

The indicators and method used in the IRM research can be found in the IRM Procedures Manual.<sup>1</sup> A summary of key indicators the IRM assesses is below:

- **Verifiability:**
  - Not specific enough to verify: As written in the commitment, do the objectives stated and actions proposed lack sufficient clarity and specificity for their completion to be objectively verified through a subsequent assessment process?
  - Specific enough to verify: As written in the commitment, are the objectives stated and actions proposed sufficiently clear and specific to allow for their completion to be objectively verified through a subsequent assessment process?
- **Relevance:** This variable evaluates the commitment's relevance to OGP values. Based on a close reading of the commitment text as stated in the action plan, the guiding questions to determine the relevance are:
  - Access to Information: Will the government disclose more information or improve the quality of the information disclosed to the public?
  - Civic Participation: Will the government create or improve opportunities or capabilities for the public to inform or influence decisions or policies?
  - Public Accountability: Will the government create or improve public facing opportunities to hold officials answerable for their actions?
- **Potential impact:** This variable assesses the *potential impact* of the commitment, if completed as written. The IRM researcher uses the text from the action plan to:
  - Identify the social, economic, political, or environmental problem;
  - Establish the status quo at the outset of the action plan; and
  - Assess the degree to which the commitment, if implemented, would impact performance and tackle the problem.
- **Completion:** This variable assesses the commitment's implementation and progress. This variable is assessed at the end of the action plan cycle, in the *IRM Implementation Report*.
- **Did It Open Government?:** This variable attempts to move beyond measuring outputs and deliverables to looking at how the government practice, in areas relevant to OGP values, has changed as a result of the commitment's implementation. This variable is assessed at the end of the action plan cycle, in the IRM Implementation Report.

### Results oriented commitments?

A potentially starred commitment has more potential to be ambitious and to be implemented. A good commitment design is one that clearly describes the:

1. **Problem:** What is the economic, social, political, or environmental problem? Rather than describing an administrative issue or tool (e.g., 'Misallocation of welfare funds' is more helpful than 'lacking a website.')
2. **Status quo:** What is the status quo of the policy issue at the beginning of an action plan (e.g., "26 percent of judicial corruption complaints are not processed currently.")?
3. **Change:** Rather than stating intermediary outputs, what is the targeted behavior change that is expected from the commitment's implementation (e.g., "Doubling response rates to information requests" is a stronger goal than "publishing a protocol for response.")?

### Starred commitments

One measure, the "starred commitment" (★), deserves further explanation due to its particular interest to readers and usefulness for encouraging a race to the top among OGP-participating countries/entities. To receive a star, a commitment must meet several criteria:

- The commitment's design should be **Verifiable, Relevant** to OGP values, and have **Transformative** potential impact. As assessed in the Design Report.

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- The commitment's implementation must be assessed by IRM Implementation Report as **Substantial** or **Complete**.

This variable is assessed at the end of the action plan cycle, in the IRM Implementation Report.

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<sup>1</sup> "IRM Procedures Manual," OGP, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/irm-procedures-manual>