



Governance 2030. Scenarios for public sector governance and e-Estonia

The discussion on the governance reform in Estonia is lacking diversity and has offered only a limited range of alternatives. This has caused a massive rift in the public opinion and has made it difficult to find compromises. The debate often focuses on issues of limited importance, such as how many members the Riigikogu should have or whether the President should be elected directly. Issues like these are not fundamental for ensuring a governance that is inclusive, efficient and adapts to changes in the external environment.

The Foresight Centre is proposing five scenarios for governance and e-Estonia, to broaden the public debate and identify important decision-making opportunities in shaping the future of Estonia. The scenarios highlight the pros and cons of different options and focus on crucial dilemmas, i.e.:

- how successfully the governance involves and engages the citizens;
- how much the state intervenes in people's lives and directs these;
- how decentralised or centralised is the administration;
- how important is the speed of decision-making, or is priority given to calculating and analytical approaches and comprehensive engagement;
- how extensive is the legitimacy of governance;
- how individualised or universal are the services and solutions offered by the public sector?

SCENARIOS

Ad hoc governance has centralised and project-driven administration, rapid revision of priorities, and “campaign-style” activities. Citizens have unequal and unreliable opportunities to participate in decision-making processes, and the volume and quality of services reflect that. Some important services evolve quickly and efficiently, while others can remain poor or suffer from the constant re-allocation of resources.

Night-watchman State wants to reduce public functions and prefers not to interfere too extensively in the activities of people and businesses. The state introduces significant cost cuts and reduces public sector employment, defines its activities clearly while keeping these limited, and privatises services. For the citizen, this means limited access to education and health services as well as minimal and standardised digital tools for using public services. Citizens are not engaged in public decision-making processes, but have a lot of freedom for making life decisions without state intervention.

Entrepreneurial State is a state that acts as a large enterprise, investing in major projects, outsourcing services to the private sector, and developing public-private partnerships. Priority services (e.g. education) is developed as a quality service that is accessible to all. However, as the demand for more

tailor made services grows and citizens are not significantly engaged in the decision-making processes, all services cannot sufficiently adapt to meet the public demand.

Caretaker State hopes to “educate” the society and meet the growing demand for more and better public services. The state increases expenditures and the number of public sector employees, actively intervenes in different areas of life, and takes care of its citizens. The decisions are knowledge-based and considered, although citizens are not particularly engaged in the decision-making process. Vices are extensively regulated and taxed, and big data is preventively used to guide citizens towards making better decisions.

Network governance wants to delegate and decentralise the decision making process as much as possible, ensuring that the decisions best meet the citizens' needs. This can be compared to developing open source software. E-government services and solutions are varied, and the services of authorities and local governments are complemented by citizen-driven innovation projects. Active citizens have many possibilities to participate in the decision-making process and to contribute to the co-development of public services. For a passive citizen, this scenario means versatile services whose quality and availability may vary greatly.



	AD HOC GOVERNANCE	NIGHT-WATCHMAN STATE	ENTREPRENEURIAL STATE	CARETAKER STATE	NETWORKED GOVERNANCE
CITIZEN	Uneven services	Standardized basic services. Extensive degree of freedom for guiding life	High-quality services in priority areas	Uniformly high level of services, the state intervenes in daily life of citizens	Can participate in decision-making processes. Diverse services
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT	Role increases on priority issues	Role increases, but only in limited areas	Significant growth and strategic project initiation	Systemic, detailed, and intervening central government	Role decreases. Decisions are sub-delegated
RIIGIKOGU	The Riigikogu plays a modest role, except in some strategic issues	The number of members and funding of the Riigikogu are significantly cut	Riigikogu's importance decreases for decision-making purposes	Funding increases and decisions are legitimized as speech parliament	The Riigikogu role increases and it becomes working assembly that engages citizens
LOCAL GOVERNMENTS	The role of local governments and fiscal autonomy diminish	Fiscal autonomy decreases and aggregates them to cut costs	The role of local governments decreases, with the exception of Tallinn and Tartu, which will be included in strategic projects	Actual significance does not change, although importance is formally emphasized	Fiscal autonomy increases and local governments become important in local decision-making and engagement
LARGE SCALE PROJECTS	Both the implementation potential as well as state funding grows	Private sector projects are promoted, but the role of the state is not to participate in them	Very important. State funding and support grow	They are not a priority and can harm the citizens' living environment	Diverse interests make it impossible to implement them
SERVICES	Provision of services becomes more efficient and new solutions are being tested	A common base in certain areas and the privatization of services	Priority services, e.g., education are developed. Others receive less attention	Emphasis on broad-based quality enhancement	Services are diversified and the variety of providers grows
ADAPTABILITY	Smaller changes can be easily implemented, strategy component can remain low	Inertia is low, but the ability to meet the strategic challenges is low	Rather high, but depends on government's credibility	Low. Strong link to existing services and procedures	Broad, consensual, but slow
DIGITIZATION	The emphasis is on cost savings, but some areas are developed as a priority, while others are ignored	Digitization is important for reducing bureaucracy, but is limited to ensure excessive guidance or interference by the state	Digitization grows. Strategic areas are developed as a priority	Extremely important, since it can provide better services and data helps to develop pre-emptive policies	Diverse promotion of digitization for service provision and engagement, with different administration models