

Summaries in English

EDITOR IN CHIEF'S COLUMN

This edition's main theme - the European Union

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The main theme of this edition of RiTo is Estonia and the European Union. Could it be anything else, seeing as in only a few months the Estonian people will cast their decisive vote on entry into the EU? The second referendum in the 12 years Estonia has been newly independent is at once an evaluation of the country's most important and long-term political choice and a decision on the future. If you add to this the recent NATO expansion, it can be said that Estonia is only now stepping into the new century together with all its concerns and joys.

Having been in the waiting room of both important international organizations, we know that these organizations as well as the entire world are not what they were, say, four years ago. When the 9th Riigikogu convened, its main concern was how best to integrate with the EU on the legislative front, hold talks with the EU on entry and build up a NATO-compatible military. We did not have to worry so much about the slings and arrows of world events. But the collapse of Yugoslavia, 9/11, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have forced Estonia to view world affairs completely differently and to reevaluate its role on the world stage.

And neither does this publication remain a mere onlooker when it comes to world, EU and Estonian affairs. This batch of EU-related articles touch on many multi-faceted topics. Politicians and experts write on both the foreign policy of Estonia and the changing Europe. An overview of entry negotiations is provided, as is a look at the role of the Estonian constitution in the new Europe.

ESSAY

Politics and its codes

Rein Raud, Estonian Institute of Humanities, professor

One of the goals of the discussion is to show that the theory of collective responsibility (like many other similar groups of theories) is demagogical and harmful, designed to disenfranchise people and free those in power from primary responsibility over what happens in a state.

Such theories are vested in political code - meaning the argot and rhetorical techniques used to describe societal realities and move reality in one or another direction - they act as filters between what people know and the political environment. They always present reality from one specific angle and always have a clear agenda. Political languages are a very influential way of shaping and regulating society. If any of them become too dominant or even hegemonic, it becomes impossible to describe contradictions still smoldering underneath the surface and this starts to eat away at society as whole from within. The authorities have no other recourse but to become repressive and start implementing a policy that runs counter to the desires of the majority. The wider its base (the more populist the ruling parties), the more readily the repressive authority is accepted. But certainly its attitude toward freedom of speech will go downhill, since intellectuals who partake of this freedom the most have the best prospects of seeing right through the government's machinations.

In Estonia, the threshold of alienation is near and in some aspects, has already arrived. For example, in foreign policy, not only did 80% of people see the government as implementing a policy that went counter to their desires, the government declared openly that public opinion did not interest it.

This is a dangerous road, since one sphere of life can be followed by others. The reason for this situation is that even though running Estonia as an experimental state could pay off after some time and the political line was accepted by a large part of the populace, society has reached a phase where experimental politics should be

replaced by a symbiotic one. This is not desirable for circles that are the most interested in maintaining the experimental phase, which is also the reason why rhetoric championing a symbiotic state is repressed or neutralized. But restoring the balance of political knowledge is necessary to preserve Estonia's dynamic development, prevent brain drain and create a working and coherent, living environment based on pluralistic views.

POLITICAL FORUM

Estonia and the European Union

The role of the Riigikogu in the EU

Marko Mihkelson, MP, chairman of the Riigikogu Foreign Affairs Committee, Res Publica

In less than a year all of Estonia's institutions and government offices must adapt to the realities of EU operation. It is clear that merely handling the amount of information coming from Brussels will severely test Estonia's administrative capabilities.

This holds true for the Riigikogu as well. Already now we are faced with questions such as what is the role of national parliaments in the EU and what the relationship between Estonia's legislative and executive powers will be in these conditions.

On May 8, the Riigikogu established the European Affairs Committee as a select committee. One of the assignments of this body will be to recommend changes in the Riigikogu's rules of order and other legislative acts to take into account Estonia's entry into the EU.

It is completely clear that the current rules of order do not totally consider our everyday needs and additional duties that are accumulating in everyday parliamentary practice.

The question raised in the last Riigikogu concerning addressing European affairs in the Riigikogu must be reflected by a change in the law. It is also evident and inevitable that by May 1, 2004 at the latest, the Riigikogu must have defined its competence and purview on EU-related issues.

The Grand Enlargement and the Great Wall of Europe

Toomas Hendrik Ilves, MP and European Parliament observer, Mõõdukad

I would like to focus here on a development of central importance both for Europe and its partners elsewhere, for which planning has been intricately detailed in some areas, myopically absent in others: the new Europe we shall inhabit beginning the first of May, 2004.

This is the success-story of EU enlargement, a Cinderella-like tale of mutual self-interest, rewarded. Yet, if we can say that the Grand Enlargement has been successful in prompting and sustaining a revolutionary transformation of eight formerly communist countries, then the picture is rather different for the rest of the post-communist world. Those states that failed to enact deep and wide-ranging reforms are plagued by metastasizing corruption; their societies inadvertently export organized crime, illegal immigrants and little else. The New Neighbors, especially those with few prospects at this time for EU membership - Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Serbia, Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and further afield, Georgia and Armenia - have advanced little since the collapse of communism.

The fundamental strategic political and economic decision the EU faces, therefore, is what to do with the New Neighbors? This is not just a matter of delaying a decision; the EU must also consider the implications and prospects of being bounded by states rife with the very problems the Grand Enlargement was designed to eliminate. Will the New Neighbors also be offered the chance to join? Will they be offered an accession-for-reforms package? When would they join? What are the options for, what are the engines of a continued enlargement? Does the bargain, the carrot and the stick offered to the countries of the Grand Enlargement, also

hold for these new neighbors? All of these are pressing questions, for as the Grand Enlargement nears completion, the prospects for further enlargement are changing in a number of ways.

From accession negotiations to the treaty

Alar Streimann, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Under-Secretary European Integration Affairs

The article gives an overview of the beginnings and course of European Union entry negotiations, as well as problems and solutions that have emerged during the talks. The role of popular diplomacy is also discussed. Popular diplomacy over those five years was invaluable - especially as practiced by MPs, the head of state, government members through visits to member states and to the European Commission, and the participation of all Estonians - both representatives of the state and the private sector - in conferences and seminars, networking with politicians, businessmen and non-government sector, the yearly meetings of the Riigikogu and the European parliament, meetings between the speakers of member states and candidate states' parliaments. It was through such personal contacts that the basic system and understanding of Estonia as a European state was created.

During the course of negotiations, there were repeatedly situations where a position had to be adopted on issues that for various reasons had not become clear over the course of Estonia's sociopolitical debate. There were situations where politicians who, at home, stridently demanded solutions from negotiators, then cavalierly (or so we assume) neglected to support their own demands while on their own trips and meetings abroad.

These situations naturally always create frustration, especially when the public is awaiting positions and solutions, and expects negotiators to provide them. But these did not ultimately have enough decisive weight and faded away.

The accession talks with the European Union have given us a unique and invaluable experience through our participation in the complex backstage world of European relations.

Estonia's constitution in the new Europe

Raul Narits, University of Tartu, professor of Comparative Law, director of the Public Law Institute

With the ratification of the constitution, the Republic of Estonia had taken the first decisive step toward the European legal space. Today, more steps are required to be taken.

As of right now, everything that bears the name EU is very topical. Estonia has taken a lot of pains to gain EU membership. If this comes about, it is an indisputable fact that we all - the state and its citizens - will have to start fulfilling the duties of an EU member. This will require the formulation of an acceptance decision in the legal sense. Our parliament has decided to send a bill to referendum entitled "Amendment law to the Estonian constitution."

A constitutional amendment will be necessary since Article 3 sets forth a principle that holds that "State power will only be implemented through the constitution and laws that are constitutional." The constitution does not mention EU laws in any section. And Article 3 is part of the main provisions of the constitution which can only be changed by referendum.

I believe that irrespective of the social and political realities, the most important thing from the standpoint of the constitution is its durability and consistency. It is and must remain the framework document of the Estonian national contract, since that is the form in which the people have approved it.

The role of the national parliament in the European Union

Olev Aarma, European Affairs Committee of Riigikogu, Head of Secretariat and adviser

The EU entry process to date has shown that a state's executive power's role strengthens upon accession to the union. Without analyzing all of the variables contributing to this redistribution of roles, a generalization can be

made that it is a process involving the way in which foreign policy is implemented, one where the government has had more relative importance; at the same time, the EU has more effect on a country's real-life basis than does foreign policy.

Studies have shown that after accession, the role of the parliament depends greatly on the traditional relation between the executive and legislative branch before accession. If the legislative had a relatively nominal role before membership (that is, it merely confirmed the decisions and proposals of the government and proposals), it is unlikely that parliament would receive a greater significance in the decision-making process after entry.

Even though over the last ten years, the debate over the role of the parliament in EU decision-making process has emerged in many forms, the Nordic state representatives to the European Convention with their relatively strong parliamentary tradition have alluded to the fact that it is those states' parliaments whose role has been smaller who wish to increase their power on the European level through the European parliament.

One can get an overview from the EU-based share of parliamentary work to be done, looking at what is going on with the European Convention. Even though logistically it is unlikely that Tallinn-Brussels traffic would be just as busy, the number of documents stacking up is comparable to the amount of EU-issues-related paper piling up in national parliaments. If you take into account the timing of the EU, the Riigikogu should be ready for efficient and flexible work to establish a strong parliamentary monitoring system and be in a strong position outside Estonia as well. MPs' knowledge about the EU would help bring the union closer to the people on one hand and at the same time strengthen the Riigikogu's position as an institution in the eyes of the public.

The coalition agreement

The new coalition agreement: to be tested in battle

Rain Rosimannus, MP, Reform Party

Compared to previous ones, the contract between Res Publica, Reform Party and the People's Union is undoubtedly a new approach. The primary new aspect that was included in the agreement through consensus is the assignation of priorities. Where previous agreements were preoccupied with statehood and the economy, this agreement concentrated on programs in fields that have in common their concern for support of Estonia's human resources.

In order for the agreement not to go unfulfilled and future disagreements not to reach a crisis, it is a good idea to also set up a plan whereby the agreement is to be fulfilled. What is meant by an ambiguous wording? Does a given provision require any laws to be amended? Who will write the bill and spearhead the amendment? The relative ease with which the previous coalition tandem lived up to its agreement is partly due to the fact that there was such a plan in place, and it was checked frequently.

In short, someone must also act as a strong leader when it comes to implementing the coalition agreement, and it is hard to look anywhere else but to prime minister Juhan Parts and his team in this regard.

The electors write the coalition agreement

Janno Reiljan, MP, University of Tartu, professor of foreign economics, People's Union

If Estonia does not want to remain a haven for cheap subcontracted labor, now is the time to start moving from a minimalist, conservation-minded state toward an innovative state that invests in its people's future. It was fairly easy in this post-election coalition agreement to agree on the need to increase education investments and raise teachers' salaries, and increase science funding in the SKP. Unfortunately, fifty years of the pseudosocialist ideology of the occupation forces has made a lot of people passive. The last elections did not offer any kind of sign as to the desires and wants of people who stayed home on election day. At the same time, the main direction that the government is moving in is something that is shaped by hundreds of thousands, not by the couple hundred people who took part in writing the coalition agreement. Estonia will only become an advanced democracy when the predominant majority of citizens understand their role and responsibility in the political decision-making process.

The number one priority for the coalition

Katrin Saks, MP, Mõõdukad

Cooperation between partners with diverse interests is only possible when a common ground is found and agreement is able to be reached on the principles. This means a coalition agreement is essential, though it is a separate matter how detailed a given agreement should be in terms of concrete policies.

The coalition agreement between Res Publica, Reform Party and the People's Union is quite different from previous ones in terms of its volume. It raises the question of what sort of role a coalition agreement will fulfill. Is it a matter of a declaration on common values, of describing goals, a plan of activity for the next four years, or distribution of state posts?

Regardless of the fact that family and demographic policy is still in the formative stages, this field has been a priority in the coalition agreement. Unfortunately, the wording of more specific family policy goals remains a little vague. Indeed, it has been murky for politicians for years. Often the only goal they see is an ascending curve in the birth rate and it is taken as a yardstick for the effectiveness of support and services for families with children.

The coalition agreement mentions both maternity leave payments and infant-rearing support, with repeated mention of words such as 'child at risk' and support centers, but this need not mean we are moving toward a social welfare state. The agreement's elegant slogans about child-friendliness do not count for anything without a proper system of subsidies on the state and local levels.

Government agreements over the years

Küllo Arjakas, MP, Centre Party

Estonia is used to coalition agreements being the programmatic basic documents of the mutual agreements between the political forces in the governing coalition. Pre-WWII Estonia handled such issues somewhat differently, but back then, too, most senior leaders addressed the Riigikogu with long declarations, thus apprising the public of the duties that would be undertaken by the government. Edgar Savisaar's program for his 1990 government can be deemed the first thorough program-type document of the modern era. The first stylistically pure tripartite coalition agreement was signed by Pro Patria, the National Independence Party and the Mõõdukad in fall 1992. The agreement signed after these latest elections by the troika of Res Publica, Reform Party and the People's Union can be compared to the lengthy programs of the early 1990s in terms of its size and detail.

CONSTITUTIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Government

Governmental stability in Estonia - dream of the future or reality?

Olaf Dahlmann, Potsdam University, M.A.

Despite the frequent changes of governing coalition, Estonia is considered the most successful transitional state in Eastern Europe.

The article raises the question whether we can talk about governmental stability in such a state. The article presents the supposition that stability consists of several variables which influence one another. No fundamental conclusions can be drawn based on the duration of an average cabinet. Rather we should examine the underlying political reasons for changes of government.

STUDIES AND OPINIONS

Electoral behavior

Motives and mechanisms for the Estonian electorate

Marti Taru, University of Tartu, Master's student of political science

Rein Toomla, University of Tartu, Department of Political Science

Much data has been gathered to understand the political preference of the electorate in Estonia. But what good are data if they are not put to use to further develop and modernize politicians' and officials' knowledge?

The goal of this analysis is to inform politicians and officials of data that is necessary for their decision-making, data gathered at different intervals and by different work groups. These are data from Estonia-wide surveys conducted by ES Market Studies and Saar Poll and Raivo Vetik's research group at the behest of the Chancellery of the Riigikogu, also public opinion polls done by University of Tartu's political science department.

The following questions have been in the secondary survey spotlight on electoral research and civic awareness: the influences on the formation of political views and knowledge, factors contributing to level of engagement and attitude toward the electoral system, also, the preferences of the supporters of larger parties in terms of sociopolitical views.

The empirical evidence shows that the level of knowledge of political systems is directly tied to electoral behavior. People with a more exhaustive understanding are more rational in choosing their party preference. Even the passive viewing of political campaigns increases people's knowledge, level of engagement and trust in institutions.

Estonian women in positions of power

Estonian women in positions of power, 1992-2003

Tiina Raitviir, Tallinn Pedagogical University, Department of Sociology

The number of women running for parliament is small (13.4% in 1992, 17.5 in 1995, 27% in 1999, 21.4% in 2003). With such a low number of candidates, it is hard to achieve the goals set at the fourth world women's congress (Beijing 1995) of 30% female membership of parliament. Even fewer women got into the parliament: 12.9% of 1992 were women, 11.9% in 1995, 1999 17.8% and 18.8% in 2003. The ratio of women to men in government has fluctuated but is usually low: 21.4% in 1992, 6.7% in 1994, 13.3% and 11.8% in 1995, 13.3% in 1997 and 1999, and 35.7% in 2002 and 7.1% in 2003.

In March 2003, the first woman was elected speaker of parliament - Ene Ergma.

On the local level, there are more women running and being elected. The percentages were: 1993 - 28.3%, 1996 - 33%, 1999 - 35.6%, 2002 - 37.7%. In councils, 1993 - 23.9%, 1996 - 26.6%, 1999 - 28.3%, 2002 - 28.3%.

The top level in local governments was even more unattainable than the council level. In January 2003, 15% of city chairmen were women and 12.4% of parish chairmen. Of mayors, 12.5% were women and of parish leaders, 11.9%.

In Estonia, executive power is valued greater than legislative, both on the state and local level. What is more in demand is harder to get.

Things seemed to be going in the right direction in Estonia, but slowly and with a step back for each couple steps ahead. The last few years have seen a slowdown: increase in the share of woman candidates in parliamentary and local elections has been slight or non-existent from 1999-2003.

According to stereotypes that persist in society, women are not suitable for politics or high leadership. Estonia is very traditional when it comes to gender issues. Both the public and party politicians have trouble understanding that there is nothing counter-intuitive in giving women equal opportunity. Nothing more is required than for Estonian policy and politicians to be willing to observe the Estonian constitution and universally accepted (at least in European culture) human rights.

Before a bill becomes law

Use of material pertaining to legislative process in the judicial review process

Virgo Saarmets, Ministry of Justice, Department of Legislation, Service of Public Law, adviser

A legislative bill is never without accompanying documents that annotate its content and aims, helping legislators understand the necessity of passing the law and propriety of the measures within. The documents can also see use in the first days that the law enters into force, giving insight into the legislator's intent in implementing the law. But in the legal literature there are opinions both in favor as well as against the use of such materials in the interpretation of laws on the books. The fact that such materials are not the result of the parliamentary process - they are not voted on, but only the text of the law - is certainly cause for some trepidation. In the practice of other states (US, UK, Germany, Finland) there has been a gradual retreat over time from a more negative view of the use of such materials - such material is seen as more useful now, at least for dissenting opinions.

The Supreme Court of Estonia has on 19 occasions turned to material used to introduce a bill for getting insight into the meaning and intent of a provision. On three occasions, a justice's dissenting opinion refers to such material. These instances date from 2000-2003.

From a survey of Supreme Court justices, we can state that generally, senior judges do not consider such material very reliable and prefer to latch their interpretation to the actual text and general principles of justice. The opinion continues to resound, however, that the scant use of such material in interpretation stems more from the low quality of the material than any ideological resistance to such sources.

Judges have the most faith in cover letters accompanying bills; the synchronized updating of bill and letter has been considered the most effective way to improve the court's opportunities to divine the intent of the legislator. Aside from the letters, positions expressed in Riigikogu session garner somewhat more trust, and judges proposed making the lead commission's introduction more thorough (making it a report). In summary, we could say that while use of introductory material after a bill becomes law has been considered passable in theory, it has been and likely will continue to be a secondary method of judicial interpretation.

The parliament and state budgets

The role of the Riigikogu in shaping the state budget

Olev Raju, University of Tartu, Chair of Economic Theory, professor

The drafting and passage of the most important politico-economic document of the year, the state budget, are regulated in Estonia chiefly by three laws: the constitution, the budget law and the parliamentary rules of order. In the constitution, the part pertaining to the constitution has not always worked that well. Fortunately it has not produced notable problems in drafting and approving the budget. The shortcomings in the constitution stemming likely from Soviet standards have been corrected in the budget law.

In Estonia, the government compiles the budget and sends it to parliament for approval. The parliament's role in shaping the final text is an active one - the budget is discussed, amendments are proposed and the final budget is passed along with any amendments that received majority support. In analyzing the budget procedures, it emerges that the parliament's role was active up until 1998. Following that year its role diminished markedly. There were 210 amendments to the 1996 budget, 131 in the 1997 and 241 in 1998 but only 33 in 2002 and 22 in 2003. Moreover, a majority of the amendments now originate with the government (in other words, as it is being discussed in parliament, it is also being finalized), not at the initiative of MPs. The share of amendments made in parliament as a part of the entire budget has also decreased.

All this shows that the period in which the budget was discussed and actively shaped by parliament (and largely this was out of necessity - government structures were still weak) at the same time is ending. The Riigikogu is less in the role of doing the maths and more in the business of discussing and approving the package. This change in role requires that the budget be presented to the Riigikogu in a more itemized and finished form. We can see a trend toward the opposite case in recent years.

The free movement of the labor force

The free movement of the labor force - bane or boon for Estonia?

Epp Kallaste, PRAXIS Center for Policy Studies, assistant to Project Manager

Kaia Philips, University of Tartu, Chair of Statistics, docent

Concerns involving the free movement of workers in Estonia are different from the ones in current EU member states. It is not an influx that is feared but rather an exodus of younger people due to a preponderance of highly qualified people and a resulting shortage of staff and drop in competitiveness.

The main contributor to an outflow is the disparity in incomes between Estonia and the EU. The disparity is greater now than it was during previous enlargements and thus migration flows could be greater than in the past as well.

The net loss of Estonian workers to foreign markets in the case of transitionless EU entry is widely predicted to be around 1-4%. Since Estonians have free access to only five employment markets in the EU, emigration may not reach that level. Sweden, Denmark, the UK, Ireland and Holland have announced they will not seek a transition period. Since the forecasts remain modest, it will not affect the labor market or salaries significantly. But it could affect some fields more than others so that salary rises prove inevitable and a shortage of qualified personnel results. Health care is such a field; it has a shortage of workers in many European countries. To a smaller degree we can expect the departure of younger and more qualified workers from Estonia, which will likely not create significant problems in the labor market. Rather there may be advantages in such emigration, since upon returning, people will be more skilled and their value on the market will be greater. It is important to promote the return of Estonians to Estonia.

A quality education

A basic education in the third millennium

Tiina Annus, PRAXIS Center for Policy Studies, Education Policy Program, director

The information-based economy needs workers who are able to integrate their skills with personal traits and views to adapt to the period of economic transition.

The strategy for an information-based Estonia states as its goals the renewal of knowledge stores and increasing the competitiveness of enterprise. The main requirement for achieving these aims is the existence of specialists in all professions. A flourishing economy is not possible with people with incomplete and lacking educations. We need information workers whose education enables retraining and transitions into new industries as frequently as demanded by the changing times and economy. If there are areas that are not addressed in full in a basic education - areas that are necessary for additional study and a society that enshrines the value of lifelong learning - then there is not a sufficient foundation for people to acquire more specialized skills. For years, the dropout rate has been under one percent, but the national total for a given year is equivalent to the student body at an average city school. And the number of people with less than a secondary school education is growing among young people. Even though the percentage of people who graduated from high school in the 1990s is high, the effectiveness of education gets a bad grade in preparing students for their given field and the high unemployment in the ranks of 20-24-year-olds (19.4%). The third millennium educational ethos means simply placing a premium on students' desires and needs and placing the teacher in an advisory and guiding role - a paradigm shift from fact-and-teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning. Thus, among our educational policy goals should be a duty to evaluate the success of students several years after they finish school: what opportunities were afforded by their basic education?

The party-politicization of local politics

The politicization of local representatives

Anu Toots, Tallinn Pedagogical University, Department of Government, docent

The role of parties is influential in local government, especially at election time. In their views and work as representatives, council members still consider the views of the local people more than their party.

Parties have emerged as movers and shakers in the local governmental field fairly recently, around the time of the 2002 local council elections. The turning point was an amendment that initially banned party blocs from forming at local elections. Parties' better internal organization also played a role, helping to force through changes in the law on political parties and non-profit organizations.

An analysis of election statistics and party statutes gives reason to state that local elections and decision-making mechanisms in councils are ever more similar to those in the Riigikogu, where all processes (nomination, competition, committee appointments) proceed by party affiliation. Still, there persist traditions - the top-down party politicization of elections has not changed the previous patterns of local democracy.

State procurements

The procurement system's flaws

Hindrek Baum, M.A. Administrative Management

Following the entry of the law on state procurement on April 1, 2001, the question has arisen of why buyers or public organizations do not use open tenders and still try almost without exception to offer unadvertised tenders, which are regulated by a special section of the law. Unadvertised, negotiated tenders have become the tendering process, accompanied by lawsuits and media stories of corrupt special interests and accusations of skimming of state funds. This article examines deviations from the law that take place when public services are purchased from out of house providers, and attempts to analyze the flaws in the procurement system. In tying up the conceptual problems with this law, it must first be stated that the new law ignores specificity of services, being more suitable for purchasing material goods than immaterial services with a complicated structure. The law also ignores the need for long-term relationships, making it difficult to build on transactions from both the buyer and vendor's perspective. Third, under the law, high service costs are internally programmed into contracts; the law also ignores buyers' needs to enter into short-term contracts with specific providers, to vet them for future use as long-term partners. In short, these are flaws that could not be apprehended at the time the law was drafted. When the construction of a system is lacking, its implementation will be flawed and fixing the consequences will not solve the problem.

Policy networking

Networks lead to cooperation

Kristi Meinvald, Ministry of the Environment, Strategy and Investment Department specialist
Jaanika Sõmmmer, Tallinn City Council Office, Documentation Department senior specialist

Even though a great volume of operations and development plans have been drawn up in Estonia over the last few years, making them official in government has been a complicated affair. Many of them have not had a clearly identifiable effect on society. The reasons are many, starting from the fact that the planned policy does not meet the needs of society, and ending with the fact that some unforeseeable circumstances kept the plans from coming to life. One of the reasons for unimplemented policy can be the omission of key, competent people from strategy planning. In the last few years these people have finally understood the necessity of common activity and, forming networks, have set to shaping policies together. Sure, it is hard and time-consuming to reach consensus by network, but the result, once achieved, is as legitimate as can be.

Estonia's political elite

Estonian politicians on nation and power

Annika Tamra, Uppsala University, master's student of political science

The article focuses on Estonia's political elite's vision of politics and society, in the context of the media discussion of the growing distance between people and politicians. My interest in the culture of the political elite was piqued by the fact that trust in Estonia seemed very low compared to Sweden. I was led to interview 33 Estonian MPs in Sweden as part of my master's work in Uppsala. I divided my work into four parts - vision of politics, vision of politicians, vision of the people and vision of power. It emerged that the biggest difference with Sweden when it came to the discussion about the nature of politics was the relative insignificance of ideology. In general, the third of the body of the Riigikogu that I was able to interview had a very serious attitude toward their work. To improve the reputation of politicians and politics, politicians must simply communicate more with the people and educate the people better politically.

CIVIC SOCIETY AND STATE AUTHORITY

The support structure of civic associations

The public expects credibility

Kadri Kopli, Ministry of Internal Affairs, head specialist

The structure of civic associations includes both supportive and coordinating as well as developmental roles. Its inseparable parts are representative and umbrella organizations on the one hand and organizations that inform and advise associations that provide services to them on the other hand. Therefore, the structure of civic associations is a common denominator tying together networks, support centers and local cooperative bodies.

The support network's role is to support associations in their effective functioning, so that they could fulfill their member-declared goals and meet the needs of the community.

Support structure organizations have a multitude of functions: to promote the effective advising of organizations, raise the capabilities of organizations, participate in the shaping of decisions by civic associations and other issues in the public eye and stand for their members' interests.

Certainly support structure functions and services must be developed in accordance with associations' needs. As of today the capabilities of associations to fulfill their roles and the quality of their services varies widely. Their visions of their role, functions and future is also very different. There is no long-term planning and strategy.

For the support structure to function effectively, it is important to ensure sufficient and long-term resources. State funding is largely through what is laid down in writing. State funding must be arranged through long-term service contracts or startup financing.

Support centers: for what and whom?

Villu Vatsfeld, SA Saaremaa Enterprise Center, director

The network of Estonian non-profit organizations in ten regions in the country is now four years old. The need for such a network was indicated by the rapid growth of NGOs across the country at the end of the 1990s, when it became clear that it would not be possible to service more than 10,000 different organizations. Where there is demand, eventually there will be someone to fill it. The shoulders to rest on came from the Estonian Union of Non-Profit Associations and the Open Estonia Foundation's Baltic-American Partnership Program. The latter has supported the support center program since 2000, decreasing support by 25% each year. In the meantime, the network and centers have done good work in finding additional funding both locally and internationally. Now it is important that the state enlighten people as to the necessity of such organizational support. Centers consider their best prospects for funding in the future to be state budget and local governmental sources.

THE PARLIAMENTARY WORLD AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Networks and parliamentary research and information services

Networks between parliamentary research and information service

Aare Kasemets, Chancellery of the Riigikogu, adviser

The research and info services of many European parliaments cooperate with libraries, the largest networks being the European Center for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (www.ecprd.org) and the International Federation of Library Association's (www.ifla.org) Section on Library and Research Services for Parliaments. In the first part of the article, the writer gives a short history of the IFLA section (110 countries) and ECPRD (40 countries) and their structure. It then focuses on the ECPRD's increasingly more important work beginning at the behest of parliament speakers in 2000 following the Rome conference, together with the activity of Estonian representatives and future prospects. In the context of the Riigikogu's plan (2002-2006) to develop support networks key activities related to participating are providing public resources on rights and responsibilities as well as opportunities to use other countries' comparative surveys and databases in parliamentary work. The writer finds that knowledge of analytical background information and legislative practice in other countries can save working hours and make it possible to ride rather than reinvent the wheel, and thus bypass the learning curves of other countries that got a headstart. The ECPRD network and web act as an information bank, reinforced by seminars (6-9 a year), 3 work groups and comparative surveys. The goal of the web is to provide its and other parliaments' members with information, surveys and other documents in an ever-more global working environment. If necessary material on other states is not available on the Internet or in the libraries, an ECPRD correspondent can perform queries by e-mail. The number of such queries has grown rapidly in recent years. According to Riigikogu statistics from 1999-2002, there have been 131 written works with queries made to other parliaments, 23 in 2000, 33 in 2001 and already 53 in 2002 on topics wall-to-wall. All of the queries and the information they returned are in the intranet of the ECPRD. It is a parliamentary infobase that becomes fuller each year and is often relied on for answers to questions such as "whether, why and how is a certain field regulated in other European states and what are the effects/results?"

Both ECPRD and the more global IFLA section are part of an international parliamentary infrastructure, helping to strengthen information-based political and legal cooperation. The writer believes that although the cultural, economic and institutional history of nations and peoples is different, parliament members and officials understand each other fairly well, since the nature of the work, constitutional duties and global challenges are the same. We have many common issues - *such as on what basis and how to make prognosis about short-term and long-term events and the effect of new laws on society in a situation where there are hundreds of interest groups within and without parliament and the borders between national and international are not always clear?* If the majority of Estonian citizens say 'Yes' to the EU on September 14, a large body of questions will arise that will be easier to resolve in tandem with the information services of other parliaments.

Research and legislation

Knowledge and power: the essential connection between research and the work of legislature

William H. Robinson, US Congress Research Service, senior specialist in public policy

Well-functioning parliamentary information services can make legislation more effective. Parliamentary resource centers must make their services more relevant and easier to use for legislators. The process must start with individual MPs and move onward and upward to committees and the leadership of the assembly. If the parliament has many new members, special effort must be seen to introduce them to the work done by the information service. There must be easy access to parliamentary libraries and information agency data and services (including computer networks) and they must be easy to use - that is, the information must be concise, understandable, and must include diagrams and visual aids where necessary. Concentrating on MPs and their unique needs in the legislative environment is the deciding factor for supporting information services. According to the writer, it is important to convince MPs and committees of the merits of balanced analysis provided by information services, to draw upon unified views of good political philosophy in situations where legislators are continuously influenced by intelligent people who spin facts to serve their interests. Legislators need impartial arbiters who can verify the truth of information.

This article is an Estonian translation on the author's work, "*Knowledge and Power. The Essential Connection Between Research and the Work of Legislature.*" Dick Toornstra, ECPRD, European Parliament 2002. Full text: www.ecprd.org.

Volunteers

Volunteers in parliament

Andres Siplane, Chancellery of the Riigikogu, Economic and Social Information Department, adviser

Every MP has things in his schedule that someone else could do for him or her but which are not in the job description of anyone working in the Riigikogu. One solution out of many is to use volunteers. This question has been raised in many parliaments, though a successful long-term model has not been found anywhere.

One problem is the time needed to mentor volunteers - MPs are very busy. Another obstacle is insufficient preparation of potential volunteers - many assignments require prior knowledge - the first week of work it would probably be hard even to find the right door, let alone questions of protocol. A third problem is perhaps a question of individual styles. Not all MPs would necessarily work well with volunteers.

HISTORY OF THE RIIGIKOGU

Memories of the VII Riigikogu

Helle Ruusing, Chancellery of the Riigikogu, Press and Information Department, adviser

In the early 2002, the Riigikogu secretariat organized a competition for preparatory school students - collecting memories from MPs in the 7th Riigikogu. Even though only 12 works were received, they proved that there was enough interesting material to go around. The format chosen by the organizers (interview) and the themes (effects on home and school life, choice of political career and the nature of the work and daily life in Riigikogu) allowed one to contrast and compare interview material. I would hope that we can begin a larger project in the coming years that would serve as an archive of the history of independent Estonia.

This publication makes use of the work that was submitted. The published excerpts are the answers of the then-MPs to three groups of topics:

1. How did they become a politician, and what were their ties with voters like?
2. What were people's relations like and work conditions in the parliament building?
3. How did work proceed in factions, committee and plenary session, and how were decisions formed?

Statistics on the legislation passed by the IX Riigikogu

Kaja Vaabel, Chancellery of the Riigikogu, Head of the Documentation Department

The 9th Riigikogu closed for business, as it were, on February 13, 2003, having passed 881 acts of law, joined by two acts passed at extraordinary session on February 25 - a constitutional amendment and the appointment of the Auditor General - bringing the total to 883 (771 laws, 110 decisions, 1 proclamation and 1 appeal).

500 or 65% of the laws amend or add to pre-existing laws, 154 or 20% are framework laws, and 116 (15%) ratify foreign treaties, and one is a law on denunciation. In the 8th Riigikogu, 55% of laws were amendments.

The most frequent initiators of bills were the government (570, 65%) and the Riigikogu (313, 35%).

Since the beginning of the independent era, the Riigikogu has passed 2166 acts, including 1843 laws. In the same period, the president has left 42 laws unsigned, of which 19 were subsequently passed in amended form and 9 in unchanged form.

LITERATURE AND DATABASES

Five years of the EU Information Center

Anu Nestor, Director of the EU Information Center at the National Library

The National Library has been the EU's depository library since April 1992.

This status, which is generally given to national libraries, means the library gets one free copy of every periodical publication published by EU institutions. It entails the duty to preserve the publications and make them available to the public at no cost.

The parallel to the depository library is EU documentation centers at the universities of member and candidate states (in Estonia, University of Tartu since 1992 and Concordia since 2002). Euroinfo centers like the one at the Chamber of Commerce distribute info to entrepreneurs. The public at large can go to the European Commission's Estonian delegation's information center and to county Euroinfo centers. September 2003 will mark the fifth anniversary of the EU information center. In the course of this time, we have responded to thousands of questions. September 14 will reveal whether we have helped people make up their minds. As the EU enlarges and changes, the National Library's EU information center is ready to respond to questions.

The Council of Europe's Tallinn Information Office

Ülla Jürviste, director of the Council of Europe's Tallinn Information Office

May 14 of this year marked ten years since Estonia was approved as the 27th member of the CE. The CE, founded in 1949 by 10 countries, is a continually changing organization with a membership that has grown from 26 to 45 over the last ten years. According to its statutes, the organization is charged with achieving greater unity between its members, foremost through acknowledging common values (pluralistic democracy, human rights and the paramount position of the rule of law) and through practical cooperation. The CE has had a notable role in standardizing legislation in European countries.

The organization pursues its goals through multilateral international treaties (conventions, charters), the total of which is around 200 (as of May 1, Estonia was ratified about 64 and signed 14). The best known are the conventions on human rights and fundamental freedoms, the convention on bioethics, the framework convention on protection of ethnic minorities, and the convention on culture.

After ratification, these conventions become binding for states. Aside from them, a number of standards and directives are also established (eg standards on houses of detention) and ethical codes are adopted for specialty fields (police and civil service) and recommendations are issued for finding solutions to common problems (performance-enhancing drugs, battling drug addiction, AIDS).

In order for these treaties and conventions to reach ordinary people, the CE started creating documentation and information centers in Central and Eastern European states in 1991 through aid programs. There are now such centers in 19 states (regional centers as well as in Russia and Bulgaria). Among others an information service was set up in Estonia in spring 1995, originally as a structural unit of the National Library. Today the centers are subunits of the CE.

In the course of eight years, the Tallinn information service has offered systematized information about the organization: responded to queries related to the work and documents of the CE, provided Estonian translations of CE documents, furthered cooperation with other international organizations, institutions, schools and civic bodies, held seminars and lectures on areas the CE is active in, and served as a liaison between the CE and the local press corps.