

Data Embassy



The data embassy ensures the digital continuity of Estonia as a state, should any threats or worst case scenarios become a reality. This concept is useful for all countries as it ensures the normal functioning of a state in case of a cyber attack, war or natural disasters.

As a true trailblazer in e-governance and cybersecurity, Estonia is the first country in the world to establish a data embassy outside its territory. We've chosen strategically important datasets that are crucial for continuity and that are regularly backed up. Of course, new databases can always be added should the strategic importance be re-evaluated. The data embassy is part of the national cloud policy – the Estonian Government Cloud. The Government Cloud supports Estonian digital independence and uninterrupted operations of public IT services.

Embassy without an ambassador

When we say "data embassy", we mean a data centre, which is located in Luxembourg under a Tier 4 level of security – the highest level for data facilities. It is not an embassy in the traditional diplomatic sense and while the founding agreement does take into account the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, it is something completely new under international law. It is fully under the control of Estonia, but has the same rights as physical embassies such as immunity.

Future of data embassies

Once we complete moving the first strategic databases to the data embassy, it'll be time to consider phase 2 of the project. The next step would be to make some of the databases in the embassy go live and then consider additional locations. This could mean an additional data embassy at a new location for heightened security. However, other countries have also started to take interest in this innovative way of ensuring digital continuity and Luxembourg is open to more similar collaborations with other countries.

Questions & answers

Why is the data embassy in Luxembourg?

Luxembourg is the first data embassy location because of the high quality technical capacity, but also because of their openness to work with this new concept. In this collaboration, Luxembourg and Estonia are pathfinders in creating a unique and innovative way to ensure digital continuity in the world.

What does the data embassy look like inside? Can I visit?

Unfortunately, due to the high security level, the data embassy cannot be visited. However, it actually looks just like any other regular data centre from the inside.

How often is the information stored updated?

The contents of the data embassy are continuously updated, however, the frequency depends on each individual dataset. For some it could be a real-time copy, for others a periodical back-up. In terms of functionality, the infrastructure should support all these options.

Facts and figures

- Kick-off in 2015 with the finalized agreement between Estonia and Luxembourg signed in 2017
- 10 strategic datasets altogether will be backed up to the data embassy (in no particular order): e-file (court system), treasury information system, e-land registry, taxable person's registry, business registry, population registry, State Gazette, identity documents registry, land cadastral registry, national pension insurance registry