



e-Democracy Timeline

e-Democracy, the smart use of digital tools to enrich and transform the existing e-governance models and practices, is an integral part of e-governance development. Its essence lies in the enhancement of democratic processes by means of technology. ICT profoundly increases the transparency, responsiveness, and accountability of the government and offers citizens an additional opportunity to participate in political processes. The result is better political decisions for the whole society.

ESTONIAN E-DEMOCRACY TIMELINE

1996 Tiger Leap

The Tiger Leap Program adjusted Estonian educational system to the needs of the information society by equipping schools with information and communication technology, linking schools to the Internet and providing ICT education to teachers. The program was called 'Tiger Leap' to signify the rapid changes and technological change as Estonia's main agenda, referring also metaphorically to the example of economic giants in Asia.

2001 Look@World

Look@World helped to increase the e-Literacy of Estonians and as a result also Estonia's overall competitiveness. The training activities covered 10% of the population.

2001 TOM

Launched in 2001, this public participation portal allowed citizens to engage directly with legislative and policy-making processes either by proposing new legislation or by suggesting amendments to existing laws. By launching TOM, the Estonian government was one of the pioneers in the field of e-Participation. However, in reality, only relatively few activists took part in TOM and actual virtual debate took place in other informal forums. Nevertheless, Estonia's TOM transformed into the international project TID+ (Today I Decide+). The project offers free of charge software for non-commercial use and aims at disseminating the tool and the lessons learned from it to interested parties in the EU.

2002 Heakodanik.ee

In December 2002, the Estonian parliament, Riigikogu, adopted the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept as a basis for co-operation between the public sector and the non-profit sector, setting strong civil society as an overarching aim for Estonia. Systematic approach to engagement and participation were set as objectives and subsequent digital solutions were created based on the Concept. The Concept itself was developed mainly by the civil society organisations using all digital tools available at the beginning of 2000s.
<https://heakodanik.ee/en/estonian-civil-society-development-concept/>

2005 i-Voting

Internet voting, or 'i-Voting', first introduced during the local elections of 2005 allows voters to cast their ballots online via an Internet-connected computer, from anywhere in the world. It is used as an additional voting method to improve accessibility to elections. I-Voting with binding results has been carried out eleven times in Estonia by now. Last time, during the 2023 parliament elections 51.1% of all voters voted online.

2007 Osale.ee

The portal for public participation osale.ee provides a platform for ministries to organise online public consultations. Documents are published for feedback and users can submit their comments via the platform. After the launch of the Information System for Draft Legal Acts (EIS) in 2011, documents have been made available for commenting already in the public consultation stage. The government has an obligation to respond to all submitted ideas via the portal within one month.

2010 www.petitsioon.ee

A participation platform enables a petition to be started by paying a usage fee, which currently stands at 40 EUR. An electronic ID card in addition to identification proves authenticity of signatures by e-mail address or Facebook profile. For example, the petition called Harta 12 initiated in 2012, which managed to gather 18,210 signatures and had a tangible outcome: it was the key driving force behind the initiation of the *Rahvakogu* (the People's Assembly).

2011 e-Governance Tools for Municipalities

VOLIS is the information system for local authorities that enables meetings and sessions to be conducted online. The software digitally generates views for different categories of users and roles performed and links them according to the procedural regulations of the local administration. It also enables decision-making with digital authentication, allows members virtually participate in council meetings with full rights (including voting) and real-time overview. KOVTP is a service portal that offers a website solution for LGs with a specific layout of information and an interface with many applications. Both of the systems have a separate functionality for public voting via ID card, and can be used for different civic e-engagement initiatives in Estonia.

VOLIS has a separate functionality for the conduct of participatory budgeting that offers a special citizens' view that enables public involvement, i.e. allows citizens to present proposals, amendments to drafts as well as to offer their opinions in real time.

2012 Rahvakogu

The People's Assembly was initiated by the Estonian President and active NGOs with the aim of improving the functioning of democracy in Estonia. The assembly combined e-tools with traditional face-to-face discussions. In three weeks, the website received close to 2000 proposals from citizens, and the top 15 ideas were presented to the Parliament, with seven of those having now been adopted as laws.

2013 Participatory Budgeting

Participatory budgeting (PB) is an innovative way to manage public funds, and to engage people in issues of local government. In cooperation with e-Governance Academy, Tartu was the first city in Estonia that opened up its budgeting process for citizens and experimented with PB in 2013. In 10 years, this policy instrument spread all over the country, numbering over 50 municipalities out of 79 implementing it as of 2022. The PB diffusion in Estonia was influenced by the availability of the existing e-tools for local governments that enabled them to conduct online voting on participatory budgeting projects and hence, decreased the costs of implementation.

2016 www.rahvaalgatus.ee

The Citizen Initiative Portal (rahvaalgatus.ee) was born in the process of the People's Assembly, organised in 2012. The Portal enables to write collective proposals, hold discussions, compose and send digitally signed collective addresses to the Estonian Parliament or local governments on how to amend existing regulations or improve the society. During the period from spring 2014 until beginning of 2024, the Parliament and local governments have processed over 220 initiatives. Since 2016 Rahvaalgatus.ee has collected over 750,000 votes.

For more information:

www.ega.ee