



# Participatory democracy

The Citizen initiative platform [rahvaalgatus.ee](https://rahvaalgatus.ee) connects the citizenry, parliament, and local governments.

It enables people to implement their right to submit collective proposals conveniently by making political decision-making processes more transparent and dialogue more open.

2016 - launched - two years after creating the Collective Proposals Act nationally.

2020 - expanded - to support citizen initiatives also on a local level.

Currently, it is the most used digital participation channel in Estonia. In 2023, a more e-votes were collected through [Rahvaalgatus.ee](https://rahvaalgatus.ee) as in the general elections the same year. These were the first elections where more than half of the votes were cast online in Estonia.

As it has reached that volume, it operates as a calibre of societal temperature, reflecting the importance of various topics to the people. Additionally, it functions as a societal valve, providing a peaceful outlet for expressing frustration and sentiment through digital signatures.

This platform plays a crucial role in bringing attention to issues that necessitate in-depth discussions at both the state and local levels. Furthermore, it acts as an accelerator for open governance, allowing everyone to track the progress and responses.

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## Recognised Open Data reuser

National-level processes on [Rahvaalgatus.ee](https://rahvaalgatus.ee) are fully automated using the Parliament's [public data API](#) - so that information regarding parliamentary proceedings of initiatives are automatically updated on [Rahvaalgatus.ee](https://rahvaalgatus.ee), and notification is sent in real-time to everybody interested.

The platform also provides its open data via a [public API](#). The open data includes, for example, statistical data on the initiatives published on the platform and status updates of the initiatives' proceedings in the Parliament, votes collected, etc.

## Youth democracy

To foster a thriving civil society, there is a commitment to advancing youth democracy and democratic education. For this purpose, a sandbox called Democracy Workbook has been created on the platform for conducting participatory budgeting in schools and for digital signing.

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## Questions & answers

### The story - how the star of open government was enlightened?

The platform is maintained by an independent think tank, the Estonian Cooperation Assembly, established by the decision of the President of Estonia. The same organisation mediated the countrywide deliberative People's Assembly (2013), where the proposal for the Citizen Initiatives Right

was born. The development of the portal was a joint commitment between the Parliament, the Government Office, and the Cooperation Assembly in the Open Government Partnership action plan for 2014-2016.

### Who can vote?

Permanent residents of at least 16 years of age.

### What is the process in the Parliament?

When an initiative is sent to the Parliament, the Chancellery of the Parliament checks whether at least

1,000 signatures are valid. Then, the Board of the Parliament validates whether the initiative's content complies with legal requirements and assigns the proposal to a relevant Parliamentary committee.

The proposal is discussed in three months, and the initiator is invited to a meeting(s). A decision needs to be formulated not later than 6 months after the initiative has been assigned to a committee.

Only about 30 per cent of initiatives have been rejected, but direct legislative change also does not occur often. More frequently than achieving immediate legislative change, initiatives shape the Parliament's agenda and political discourse on particular topics. They are covered in the media and have sparked discussion on issues that would have remained underrepresented without the initiative system.

## Facts & figures

- thresholds: 1% for local gov, 1000 votes for Parliament
- 700 000+ votes collected so far
- 600+ initiatives started, from which 200+ reached the threshold
- experiencing exponential growth: the early majority is coming aboard
- uses and produces open data for public value
- half of the municipalities engaged