

Proactive government

"Estonia plans a big push towards automated, proactive public services. This means that the government preemptively steps in to help or assist when the citizen needs it, instead of when they request for it."



Ott Velsberg, The Chief Data Officer of Estonia

The implementation of digital services to increase public sector efficiency started in Estonia more than twenty years ago. Today, a shift in the service delivery approach provides the basis for a truly seamless digital state. The Estonian government approved a plan for proactive services in 2018 already. Proactive services are the next evolutionary step following the Estonian once-only principle.

As citizens have no need to be aware of government complexity and do not wish to fill multiple complex paper or web forms, government services as a whole, or partly, need to become more seamless, reusable, and proactive. Once one institution inside the state has the information, other institutions would not need to ask this from the citizen twice. People must be able to get things done in one interaction, intervening only if prompted by the government, if at all. Proactivity in Estonian state policies adds another layer to the services and ties multiple government processes into a seamless singularly activated service. This means that the state does not have to wait for the citizen to ask for grants, assistance, advice. Instead, the government can proactively offer citizens unique opportunities, as all the information is available, and citizens have agreed to the use of this information for those purposes.

List of proactive services

LIVE RIGHT NOW:

- **Childbirth** - Parents will no longer have to apply for family benefits after the Social Insurance Board completed its automatic proactive service in 2019. As soon as a child has been born and registered in the population register and given a name, a population entry activates all of the following services. Also, the Social Security Agency will send an email to the parents to receive family benefits.
- **Starting a business** - This service is already available on the entrepreneur portal as an event logic-based solution. The service combines the company registration process, applying for the VAT nr and registration of employees.
- **Retirement** - At least six months before retiring, a citizen will receive an email from the government about this life event. The offer will describe various paths regarding their pensions' savings and present the total amount received from the state as an old-age pension. On that life-event page, a person could either postpone the pension (continue working) or apply for an early leave. The citizen will go through the planning within a single interface, but in the back-end, at least four institutions are offering more than six different services during that process.

IN PROGRESS:

- **Change of residence or building a new property** - These life-events usually require plenty of paperwork, especially building, so handling them in a single gateway saves time. Being up to date in real-time how far the administrative process is should also help keep some nerves.
- **Driving licence, buying a car** - This service gathers the following events into a once-only step for a citizen: application for a driver's licence, replacing the licence, health-related documentation needed for applying, or replacing the licence, vehicle ownership, and the change of ownership.
- **Military service** - Military service is mandatory for most men in Estonia. Therefore, approximately 3000 citizens per year will need to go through this process. As soon as a person is being listed, an invitation will be sent to a medical examination, offering preferences regarding the service type
- **AI in healthcare** - algorithms can help predict when people need to have medical checkups based on their healthcare records and pre-existing conditions. Diabete sufferers, for instance, may be called into doctors' office more frequently in a year than healthy people.

AI in Public Sector

In May 2019, an expert group led by Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications (MKM) and Government Office presented proposals on advancing the take-up of artificial intelligence (AI) in Estonia aka for Estonia's national AI strategy.

The strategy is a sum of actions that Estonian government will take to advance the take-up of AI in both private and public sector, to increase the relevant skills and research and development (R&D) base as well as to develop the legal environment. According to the earlier strategy, the country invested around 10M euros into governmental AI solutions and today more than 130 AI projects have been performed.

Estonia continues to invest in AI research and development, aiming to maintain its position as a leader in digital innovation. The country is focused on creating a sustainable AI ecosystem that supports economic growth, enhances public services, and improves the quality of life for its citizens.

- **AI-based interface** - opportunity for people to use public direct and informational services by voice-based interaction with AI-based virtual assistants.
- **Interoperable network of AI applications** - (agents, bots, assistants), which would work from the user perspective as a single, united channel for accessing public direct and informational services.

Facts and figures

- 130+ AI projects carried out in the public sector since 2019.
- In Estonian mythology, a Kratt is a magical creature. Essentially, Kratt was a servant built from hay or old household items. Therefore, the Estonian government uses this character as a metaphor for AI and its complexities.

BÜROKRATT

- **A vision** - how public services should digitally work in the age of artificial intelligence (AI).

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