



ESF project "Government Task Forces for more holistic, inclusive and knowledge-based policies"

Estonia

Key facts

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE OF OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME

'Improve policy development process through introducing mechanisms and tools for more holistic, inclusive and knowledge-based policies'

TARGET GROUPS



Policy makers (including non-governmental interest groups and experts) and implementers of policies belonging to the field covered by a Task Force.

BENEFICIARY ORGANISATION

Government Office of Estonia

PROJECT DURATION

01/03/2014 – 31/12/2023

COORDINATOR

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BUDGET

EUR 1,870,000

ESF contribution

EUR 330,000

National budget of the Republic of Estonia contribution



PROJECT/ORGANISATION WEBSITE



<https://www.riigikantselei.ee/et/rakkeruhmad>

<https://www.riigikantselei.ee/en>

PARTNERS

Government ministries that are involved in establishing and managing the specific Task Forces

Activities implemented

PROJECT IN NUMBERS



Task Forces between 2012 and 2019



Number of participants in Task Forces



Average number of organisations involved in a Task Force



Average duration of a Task Force

MAIN PROJECT TASKS

- Making a concerted effort to address complex and strategically important long-term issues in society that span across ministries, levels of government and societal sectors, and which require the cooperation of a range of stakeholders.
- Engaging with relevant ministries, government agencies, local government experts, non-governmental and private sector organisations to gain a comprehensive picture of multi-faceted issues, and to incorporate the diverse parties involved in the problem.
- Tackling problems systematically and in depth by conducting relevant analyses and impact assessments, making international comparisons, carrying out surveys and organising study trips and seminars.
- Encouraging stakeholders to cooperate and coordinate their activities. Determining the roles and responsibilities of various ministries and other government institutions.
- Developing plans and presenting the results of each Task Force to the Government for approval, together with suggestions and proposals for relevant changes to legislation, strategic development plans and procedures.

Project journey: from conception to delivery

INITIAL STAGE

CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

The 2011 OECD Public Governance Review of Estonia concluded that Estonia operated a **fragmented public administration** that was in need for better horizontal coordination and cross-sectoral cooperation. To increase the capacity of the Estonian public administration to deal with complex policy problems, the OECD proposed the use of temporary **task forces** (TF). The first experimental TFs were created in 2012 and 2013 with support from the ESF. Based on the experience of these TFs, the 2014-2020 Operational Programme for Cohesion Policy Funds provided for a separate activity of establishing government 'task forces and expert groups'.

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

To ensure policy making is more 'holistic, inclusive and knowledge-based', the 2014-2020 programme provides for task forces to be established **'to solve strategic challenges** requiring the cooperation of several ministries, government levels and/or sectors, with the aim of finding more efficient solutions for the state as a whole in cooperation'. Government Task Forces have a mandate from the Government, they address complex cross-sectoral policy issues and are limited in duration, usually lasting 1.5-2 years.

PROJECT PHASE

MAIN CHALLENGES FACED, AND DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

Three main challenges were encountered during the implementation of the TFs. First, the mediation of different interests demanded strong leadership to facilitate the embracing of conflicting perspectives and the achievement of compromises. Second, the complexity of the issues and contrasting viewpoints often translated into great volumes of inputs, high workload, delays to the initial schedule and difficulties in making concrete agreements. Third, questions arose over 'ownership' in implementing the results of the TF.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND EVENTS DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

TFs and their core activities vary according to the topic, policy field and specific task at hand. Nevertheless, all have been characterised by an attempt to engage the majority of relevant stakeholders; by initiatives to map the existing situation in the policy field in order to create a joint information space and reach a shared understanding of the problem; and by the aim of producing a binding plan for the future.

KEY RESULTS AND SUCCESS FACTORS

By 2019, a total of eight Government TFs have completed their work (six of these during the period 2014-2019). This means that in eight crucial policy areas, **joint definitions have been agreed upon, and shared agendas have been formulated**. The work of TFs has resulted in a number of legislative changes, additional budgetary allocations and the clarification of accountability in certain areas. Several vital policy areas such as long-term care, premature death and civil protection have been given a concrete shape, and have gained the political attention that is a precondition for reforms and investments.

RESULTS, IMPACTS

IMPACT ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

The establishment of Government TFs has been both an attempt to improve cross-sectoral coordination, and to change the **administrative culture** in Estonia. TFs have encouraged stakeholders to cooperate and coordinate their activities, and have created a space in which the responsibilities of various actors can be determined, leading to the development of more holistic, inclusive and knowledge-based policies.

LESSONS LEARNT: THE ROLE OF ESF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The implementation of Government TFs has provided several lessons: a capable **leader** is critical for the success of a TF; the **task** assigned to a TF must be specific; concrete **agreements** must be made; **ownership** and **political commitment** are crucial; and continuity of the **people** involved matters. The evolution of Government TFs reflects **the significance of ESF support** to the development of the Estonian administrative system by backing systemic learning, enabling interventions that benefit the analytical capacity of government institutions, and supporting investment in instruments that link together diverse institutions and policy fields.

REFLECTIONS



Source: Code of conduct compiled by the TF of civil protection

Personal experiences



'A Task Force is a problem-based instrument. It provides leadership and brings people together, but also enables research and impact analyses. It is a flexible tool combining various activities to increase administrative capacity.'

– **Merilin Truuväart**, Project Manager in the Innovation Team of the Government Office

'One thing we have understood since the end of the Task Force is that it was a lot more useful than we initially realised. Today, we are preparing the long-term care reform. The value that we did not at first recognise was in that the process of stakeholder involvement. Instead of starting from 'point zero', we have been able to take bigger steps and work on more detailed models.'

– **Gerli Aavik**, Adviser in the Social Welfare Department, Ministry of Social Affairs

The study "Progress Assessment of the ESF Support to Public Administration" (PAPA) aims to present specific cases of ESF-funded public administration reform and capacity building initiatives. The contractor prepared 30 case studies and factsheets on ESF supported projects funded in 17 beneficiary countries of Thematic Objective 11 during the programming period 2014-2020.

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PPMI

Find out more about the project by following the link <http://bit.ly/PAPA-PPMI> or scan the QR code using your smartphone camera.

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