Republic of Estonia
Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications

Spatial planning of renewables in Estonia: system, reforms and digital public participation. Current challenges.

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Multi-country Flagship Workshop on Planning of Renewable Energy Projects
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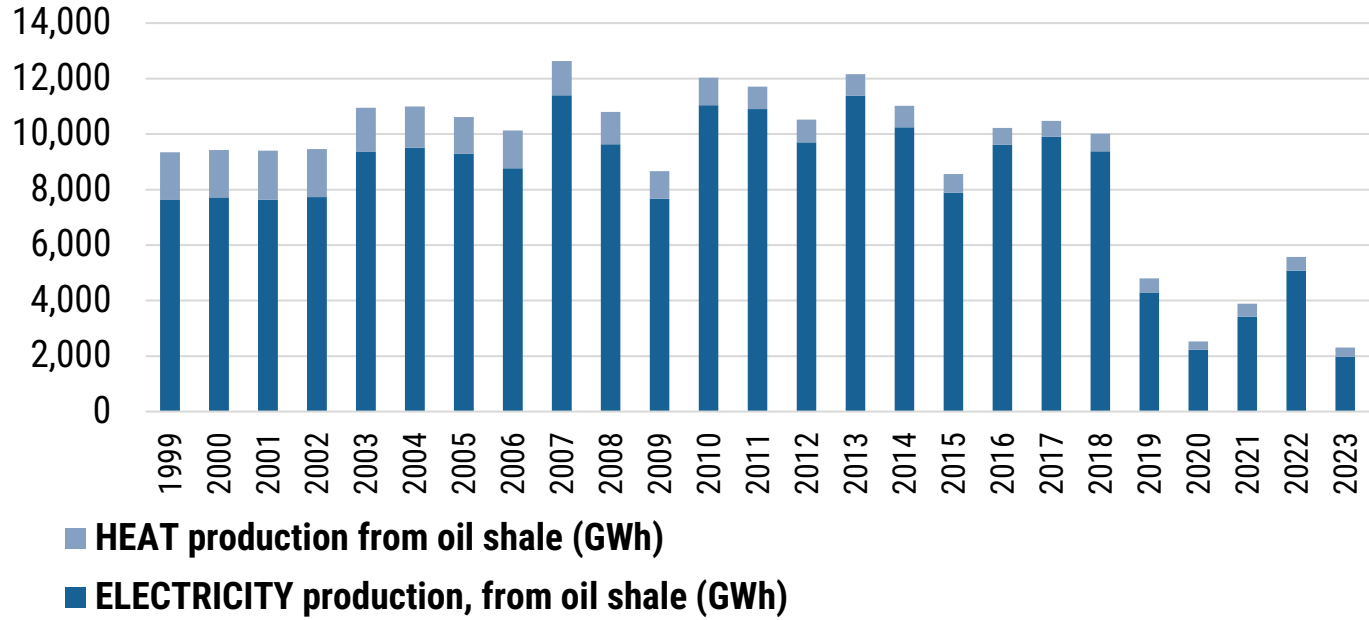
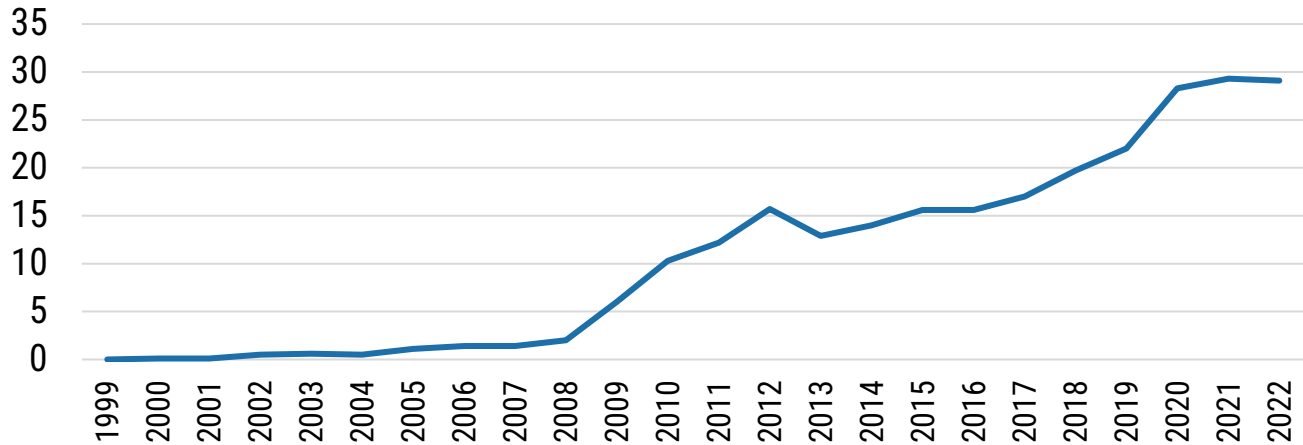
The overall setting

- In early 1990s, more than 80% of Estonia's electricity came from oil shale
- Use of oil shale to be phased out
- Share of renewables in total electricity consumed is growing
- Estonian own energy production from renewables increasing





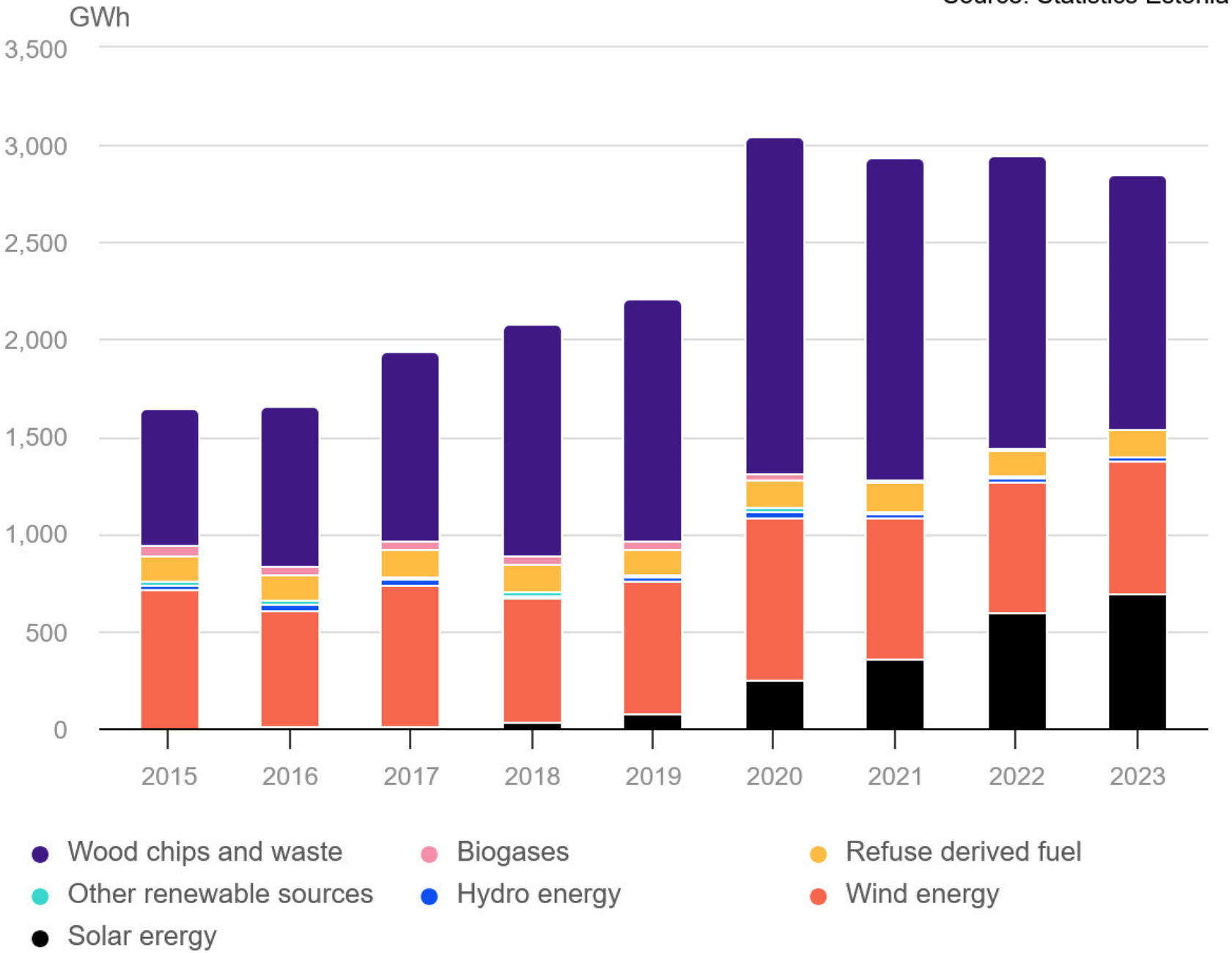
Electricity generated from renewable energy sources, %

Electricity produced from renewable energy sources *vs* gross national electricity consumption (=gross national electricity generation + imports – exports)

Statistics Estonia KE033, KE36

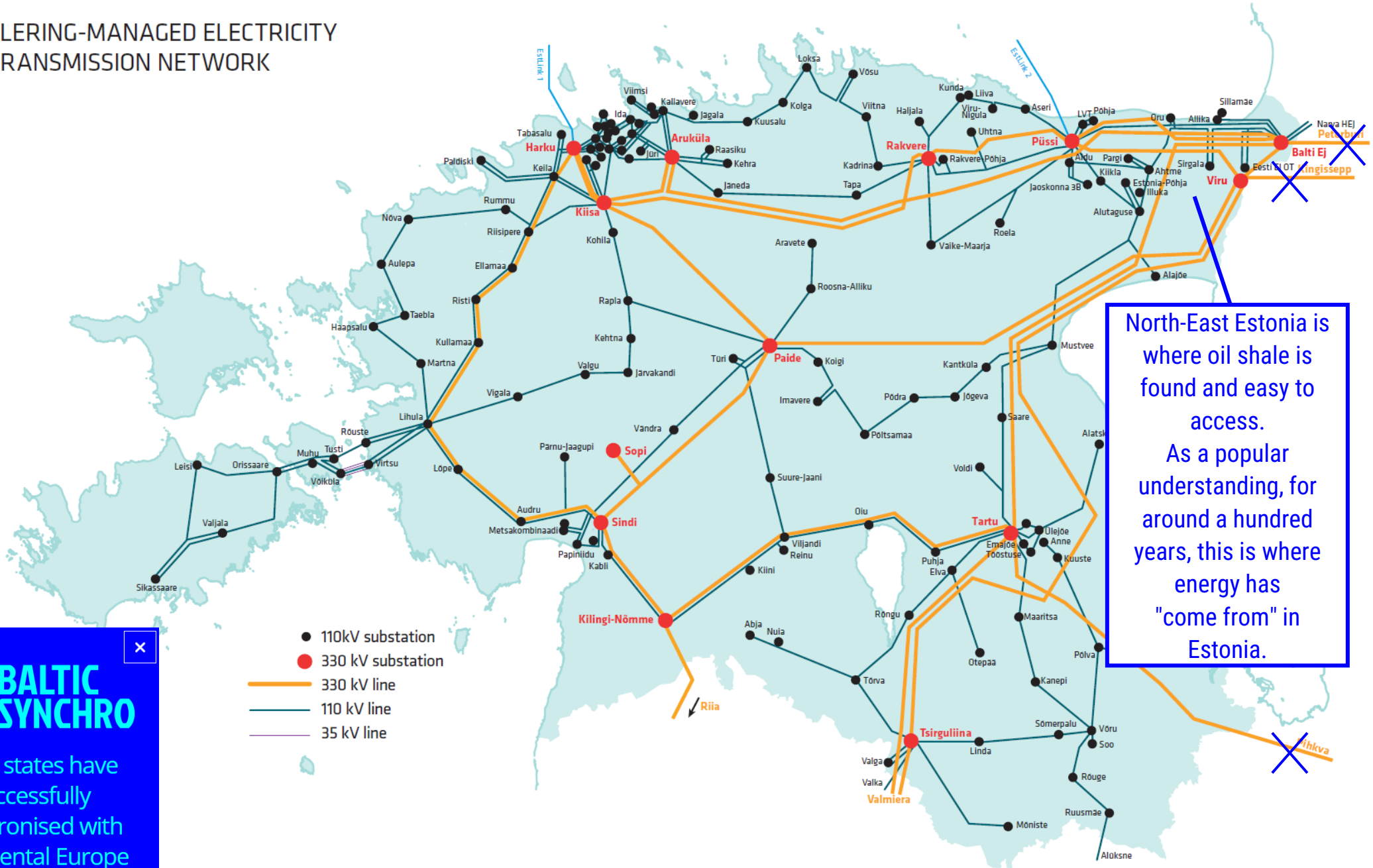
Electricity generated from renewable energy sources | 2015–2023

Source: Statistics Estonia



Statistics Estonia

ELERING-MANAGED ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION NETWORK



North-East Estonia is where oil shale is found and easy to access.
As a popular understanding, for around a hundred years, this is where energy has "come from" in Estonia.

BALTIC SYNCHRO

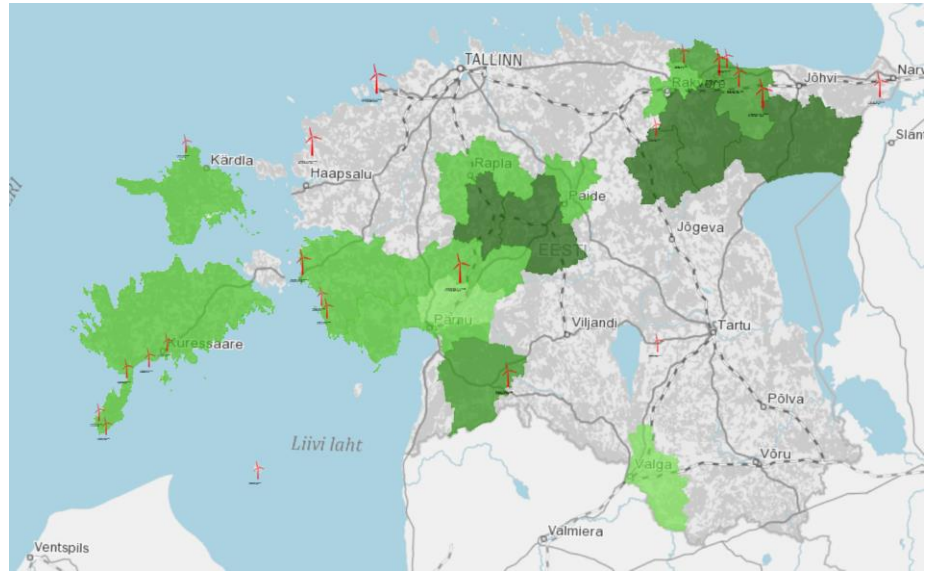
Baltic states have successfully synchronised with Continental Europe

8 Feb, 2025

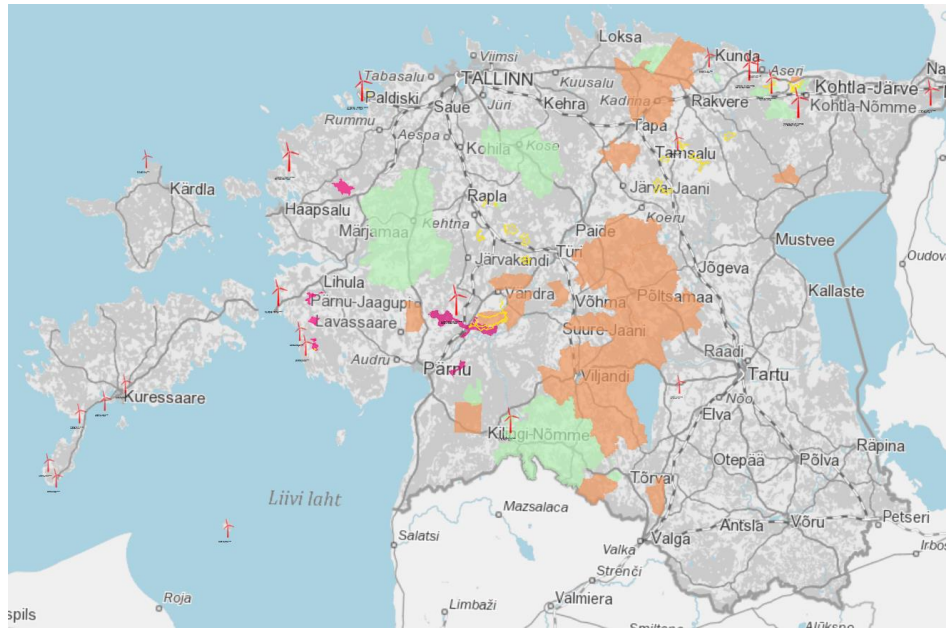
Elering

Spatial planning and licencing procedures

- Developing a wind park in Estonia requires a spatial planning procedure by the local municipality, based on the national Planning Act. Currently, wind energy is planned in up to around 50 planning procedures across Estonia. Permitting succeeds spatial planning.
- Developing PV does not require a dedicated spatial planning procedure. Procedural requirements (design specification, permitting) come from the national Building Code, location-specific contitions from the local municipality comprehensive plan



Wind energy being planned in local municipality comprehensive plans (above) and designated wind park planning procedures (below)



More information: Planning Act, Building Code, Planning map (informative)

Activities to support local municipalities in wind planning

- In 2024, the Estonian Environment Agency concluded country-wide environmental studies to pre-select areas suitable for wind development, using REPowerEU funds. Potential locations were identified for around 1,500 MW of wind energy (7.2MW turbine). The mapping bears no legislative force. The mapping did not include public consultations. Mapping excluded dwellings + 1000 metre radius. More information (in Estonian).
- Since early 2024, local municipalities can apply for financial support to strengthen their expertise in wind planning procedures (studies, additional personnel, legal expertise, communication, etc.), uring REPowerEU. More than 20 local municipalities have utilised or are using the support. More information (in Estonian).
- To address spatial planning related topics, the ministry responsible for spatial planning is hosting round tables for local municipalities, spatial planning related information is shared. More information (in Estonian): 1, 2.
- Changes have been made in the national Planning Act to lessen bureaucraticc burdens related to wind energy development (more information (in Estonian)), further changes are planned (more information (in Estonian)).

Current challenges

- With the local municipality elections approaching in October 2025, some political parties have announced that they object wind energy plans. This includes local council members.
- Concerns by the local include energy price and availability, health risks related to turbine proximity, visual alterations.
- The practice of digital pariticipation in public hearings varies. Challenges include using digital channels for political aims rather than for addressing locals' concerns. Digital channels do not necessarily contibute to greater involvement.