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KESKKONNAAMET

STRATEGY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL BOARD

2022–2025

Introduction

The Environmental Board creates and maintains a beneficial living environment by developing the environmental sphere in a professional, balanced and sustainable manner. We ensure our common living environment is beneficial in cooperation with Estonian residents, businesses and partners, all of us recognising the need for environmental protection and protecting biodiversity. The current Environmental Board was established on 1 January 2021, when the Environmental Inspectorate and the Environmental Board were merged.

The responsibility of the Environmental Board is to implement the national policy on environmental management, nature protection and radiation safety and to monitor compliance with the requirements established for the protection of the natural environment.

The Environmental Board is a research-based and value-based organization which balances the interests of different groups in society and the needs of the environment when implementing policies. Our mission is to preserve the natural environment for future generations, and our vision is caring and progressive Estonia whose environment is clean and fosters biodiversity. The Environmental Board's key value are our trustworthy, caring, effective and cooperating people.

Strategy 2022–2025 focuses on developing the capabilities of the Environmental Board as a newly merged organization. It does not duplicate the goals of international conventions or national programmes and development plans in which the Environment Board is already involved. National goals are established during the preparation of sectoral development plans and the national budget strategy.

The strategy developed on the basis of the balanced scorecard method contains the five most important destination statements of the scorecard view. In their turn, 15 objectives, the most important actions for their implementation and the key indicators for assessing progress are formulated under the five destination statements. The strategy is to help the Board's team to understand and achieve common and interrelated goals.

The strategy drafted in period from September 2020 to August 2021 is based on analyses, discussions and proposals from the Board's personnel. In setting strategic goals and defining destination statements, the trends affecting the Environmental Board, the tasks that the Board faces and important success factors were analysed. The strategy needs to be updated as the operating environment and the resources or tasks allocated to the Environmental Board change.

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Trends influencing the Environmental Board

Urgency of environmental issues

Anthropogenic perturbation levels exceed the safe planetary boundary as far as biosphere integrity, climate change, land-system change and biogeochemical flows are concerned.¹ Increased frequency of extreme weather events caused by global warming affects economies, people's health and their livelihoods. Environmental security issues are becoming increasingly important from the national and individual perspective. Countries are paying more and more attention to reducing environmental pollution, sustainable use of natural resources and maintaining biodiversity. Environmental protection pressure and expectations have been growing worldwide, which is demonstrated by the increasingly more stringent national environmental requirements. The European Union is trying to slow down climate change and spearhead the green transition.

People are a part of nature, and the survival of humankind directly depends on the survival of nature. Given the importance of understanding the impact of human activities on the conservation of species as well as the condition of soil and water, environmental outreach activities are of extreme importance.

Research shows that although Estonian residents demonstrate a relatively high interest in environmental matters, they remain passive in promoting environmental sustainability in their daily lives.² The public expects the Environmental Board with its partners to perform continuous analysis of the state of the natural environment and prevent harmful activities. Analysing big data creates new opportunities for the assessment of environmental impacts. Stakeholders expect restrictions to be justified and sufficiently explained. Companies expect the Environmental Board to be able to consult them about choosing the best available technology.

It is important to find a balance between the functioning of the economy, people's well-being, and the preservation of the natural environment. As environmental problems gather pace and the resulting requirements are tightened, companies are motivated to develop environmentally friendly technologies and invest in these. Globalisation and open economy spur innovation but create pressure for delaying the transition to greener solutions or relocating the activities with a larger pollution footprint to the areas where requirements are less stringent. Environmental protection must undermine energy supply or energy security. To limit the placement of new natural resources under production, the world needs to develop circular economy.

Loss of touch with nature due to urbanisation

People moving from rural to urban areas is a global trend. While 30% of Estonian residents lived in rural areas in 2020, the situation was quite the contrary about a century before. Although Estonians like to think of themselves as a nature and forest people, urbanisation has brought about a decreased understanding of the life cycle of nature and sustainable management of natural resources. His results in unrealistic expectations and confrontation. The complexity and interdependence of processes in nature, including their direct impact on people's life, health, and well-being, are becoming increasingly difficult for people to understand. This is why talking about what is happening in nature in simple terms, involving experts and educational institutions in public awareness activities, and ensuring there is sufficient evidence-based information in the public information space is becoming increasingly

¹ Steffen jt, Planetary boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing planet, Science, 13 February 2015, vol 347 (6223).

² Tallinn University, Ministry of the Environment, Turu-uuringute AS 2020. Survey of ecological awareness of Estonian residents. Survey ordered by: Ministry of the Environment.

important. A responsible environmental organisation is expected to take part in shaping a science-based public opinion in addition to being a reliable source of information.

Increase in environmental crime and its profitability

Environmental crime causes serious damage or poses danger to the environment and people's health and undermine fair competition. The annual value of transnational environmental crime is estimated to be worth hundreds of billions USD³, which makes it one of the most lucrative types of transnational organised crime. Because environmental crime is covert, cross-border and organised, it is hard to detect, and sanctions are relatively low. Closer international cooperation is necessary to combat and prevent environmental crime.

Digitisation, mobility, new technologies

Services and employment relationships are now expected not to have any time, location or equipment restrictions. Teleworking and people's greater physical isolation boost the development of technology and the use of digital channels⁴. Service environments are expected to be more digitalised, secure, and user-friendly. The problems that become increasingly complex demand collaboration from specialists in a variety of fields and the development of information systems to support it.

Artificial intelligence is being employed for solving increasingly more complicated problems. Consequently, both work processes and data management are changing. Rapid development continues in the sphere of personalised service design, which requires data-based analysis and profiling of the customer's needs. Cyber threats and risks also become more and more plentiful. Organisations are taking smart technologies into use to increase efficiency and reduce their environmental footprint.

Expectations for open data and knowledge-based analytics

To boost innovation and make informed decisions, it is necessary to ensure that the latest relevant data of high quality are available to public authorities, civil groups, businesses, and politicians. Efficiency in working with increasing data quantities, data processing skills and data analysis skills are becoming more and more important. Requirements to cyber security and protection of personal data are expected to be met, and the state implements cross-using data. The public expects clear and reasoned decisions.

Strengthening civil society and growing opposition

Citizens want to have a greater say in decision-making and the development of public service as well as to participate in volunteer environmental protection. Greater environmental awareness and environmental anxiety lead to more frequent initiatives and campaigns conducted by civil groups. A negative development in recent years is the heightened activity of people and groups whose approach to environmental issues is polarising society and thus actually harms the natural environment instead of aiding it.

³ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-statistics/crime-areas/environmental-crime>

⁴ Talentor Estonia. Digital work environment in 2025: holograms, flexibility and mobility, 9 July 2019

Economic interests of businesses and messages of environmental activists are increasingly stronger manifested in various political advocacy activities, which result in more and more pronounced conflicts. The state is expected to balance out the interests of various parties.

Mission, vision, and values of the Environmental board

Mission

Preserve the natural environment for future generations.

Vision

Caring and progressive Estonia whose environment is clean and fosters biodiversity.

Values

trustworthiness *** consideration *** effectiveness *** willingness to cooperate

Trustworthiness stands for our honesty, impartiality, openness and consistency. To remain trustworthy, we

- are clear, unwavering and transparent in our positions and values;
- are guided by facts and use the best know-how in decision-making and information activities;
- are professional, honest, open and impartial;
- honour agreements and ethical norms. We are open to and prepared for change;
- assume personal responsibility and admit our mistakes should there be any.

Consideration stands for our respect, support and care for nature, ourselves and others. To remain considerate, we

- are committed to preserving the world we live in for future generations;
- are compassionate;
- are willing to help and always take a personal approach to our clients to make sure we find the best solution;
- take all parties into account and, in case of any disputes, do our best to find a compromise.

Effectiveness stands for us operating in a way that has the desired effect. To remain effective, we

- work with other key parties to set objectives for what we do;
- take a systematic approach in order to achieve the desired effect and result, analyse risks and prioritise activities;

- focus on results and solutions and see things through without undue delay;
- turn to creativity when looking for solutions and take a critical approach to assessing our activities;
- are creative in coming up with solutions and favour constructive criticism when evaluating our activities.

Willingness to cooperate stands for our genuine interest in working with others. To remain cooperative, we

- make a point of sharing information with key parties;
- make sure our colleagues and partners are involved in the decision-making process at an early enough stage;
- boldly and clearly declare our interests and expectations;
- create conditions for a constructive debate in case there are differences of opinion;
- understand that cooperation is the most effective way of arriving at the best solution.

Strategic goals and destination statements of the Environmental Board

Environmentally sustainable development

Goal 1. People in Estonian have higher environmental awareness, and their actions foster environmental sustainability.

Actions

- 1.1. Increasing the scope and amount of prevention and information activities and integrating these in our services.
- 1.2. Developing automatic notifications integrated with our services to prevent unintentional environmental violations and reduce the time it takes the clients to find information.

Indicators

- Increased environmental awareness
- Fewer environmental violations

Goal 2. Environmental goals set for the Environmental Board by national strategies and international agreements have been achieved.

Action

- 2.1. Preparing a prioritised plan of action for achieving the goals set by national strategies and international agreements, using the relevant allocated resources to implement it, and publishing the results.

Indicator

- The goals set for the Environmental Board have largely been achieved, and the relevant information is publicly available

Valued partnerships and convenient e-services

Goal 3. The Environmental Board is a reliable centre of excellence in environmental matters that provides knowledge-based expert advice on implementing environmental policies.

Actions

- 3.1. Being a part of Estonian and international networks of environmental and research institutions; initiating discussions and projects that matter for the Environmental Board in these networks.

3.2. Counselling and training for local governments to support them in solving the environmental issues which lie in the sphere of the Board's competence.

3.3. Opening discussion on important environmental topics through media and other information activities and supporting the public in expertly handling these topics. Fostering the development of our officials as opinion leaders in the area.

Indicators

- The number of projects initiated by the Environmental Board or with the Board as the leading partner is increasing
- The satisfaction of local governments with the services and support provided by the Environmental Board is growing
- The Environmental Board's trustworthiness is growing

Goal 4. The Environmental Board is available to the public through customer-friendly channels and keeps protecting the environment around the clock.

Actions

4.1. Implementing the so-called 'one door' principle to ensure that information systems are simple, easy to use and customer friendly.

4.2. In collaboration with our partners, developing convenient services that will be based on the customers' actual needs and will allow information concerning the environment (for instance, alerts about environmental hazards) to be transmitted at any time.

4.3. Ensuring the Board's continuous operation and readiness to respond to radiation emergency and other emergency situations which are within the scope of the Board's competence.

Indicators

- The share of real-time information exchange with customers is increasing
- The number of e-service users is increasing
- The satisfaction of e-service users with the user-friendliness of the application is growing
- Risks for continuous operation associated with emergencies have been mitigated

Goal 5. The Environmental Board implements effective measures to prevent environmental damage and unfair competition.

Actions

5.1. Implementing smart 'nudging' to ensure requirements are complied with and focusing on topics of major environmental influence.

5.2. Contributing to creating a regulatory environment, which will ensure effective coercion, on the basis of identified risks, administrative load assessment and the measures effective so far.

5.3. Publishing information about major environmental violations to form public opinion which will condemn environmental misconduct.

Indicators

- Customer's awareness about the environmental requirements that apply to them is increasing

- Additional legal bases have been created to assert influence on the companies with a high risk index

Goal 6. The Environmental Board works closely with all interest groups.

Actions

- 6.1. Involving our strategic partners in the operation of customer associations.
- 6.2. Actively contributing to our partners' counselling and information events and conferences.
- 6.3. Involving our partners in filling our capability gaps.

Indicators

- The satisfaction of strategic partners with our cooperation is growing
- A functioning volunteer environmental protection system has been created
- A functioning network of experts has been created

Integrated services

Goal 7. The Environmental Board's services are effective, have the desired impact and are promptly improved as needed.

Actions

- 7.1. Developing our services by means of the service design method, integrating prevention, information, management, and risk-based supervision within the service.
- 7.2. Developing the ability to respond to new situations, including change management skills.
- 7.3. Developing quality control and management system

Indicators

- The share of redesigned services is increasing
- The customers' satisfaction with the services is growing
- We have been awarded the gold quality label by the Responsible Business Forum
- The EMAS environmental management system certificate has been renewed

Goal 8. The institution's analytical capabilities support making and explaining knowledge-based decisions.

Action

- 8.1. Implementing good practices to increase our real-time monitoring and analysis capabilities (including more efficient remote monitoring) and to improve the decision-making process.

Indicator

- The number of innovation projects is increasing

A professional and motivated team

Goal 9. Our organisation is an attractive employer for experts.

Activities

- 9.1. Devising a competitive salary and motivation package and valuing flexible work organisation.
- 9.2. Creating a value-based organisation culture and ensuring our reputation as an employer matches it.

Indicators

- Voluntary turnover stays within 5–10%
- The NPS is growing
- The pay gap with the public sector median according to the Fontes General Compensation Survey is decreasing
- The employer reputation of the Environmental Board is growing

Goal 10. We are a research-based organisation that never stops learning

Actions

- 10.1. Developing the management culture which promotes learning through the use of flexible work organisation and flexible working hours.
- 10.2. Organising cooperation with research institutions and scientists (i.e., creating a research council) to develop research methods, increase the officials' awareness and conduct the studies relevant for the Environmental board.
- 10.3. Providing the officials with ongoing information events and training courses, taking future needs, scientific research and global trends into account.

Indicators

- The annual number of training hours per official is increasing
- The personnel training budget is growing

Goal 11. We adopt new technology and ICT solutions to support innovation and change.

Actions

- 11.1. Following the latest technology trends and adopting new technologies as soon as we can.
- 11.2. Developing our analytical capabilities and the ICT environments to support these.
- 11.3. Developing our ability to take into consideration the environmental risks associated with cyber threats within the procedure of issuing permits and supervision.

11.4. Preventing the use of ICT legacy systems in collaboration with the agencies under the Ministry of the Environment.

Indicators

- Satisfaction with IT systems is growing
- Digital literacy is improving

Goal 12. We foster a working environment that promotes effective cooperation. We support the health and well-being of our employees.

Actions

12.1. Developing effective cooperation as well as the technologies and organisation of work that support teleworking (incl. emphasising the role of managers in achieving this).

12.2. Devising a plan of action for promoting the officials' health and workplace safety.

12.3. Implementing the green office concept in cooperation with our partners.

Indicators

- We have achieved the gold label as a family-friendly employer
- The officials' rating of our organisation of work and cooperation in the satisfaction survey is improving

A sustainable organisation that is sufficiently well funded

Goal 13. Sufficient resources are available for the green transition, development and rendering high-quality services.

Actions

13.1. Analysing the need for resources necessary for optimally rendering our existing services.

13.2. Ensuring there are resources for performing the Environmental Board's tasks based on the present and future needs.

13.3. Implementing life cycle costing principles in budgeting for our services.

Indicators

- We have an overview of the resources we are going to need
- The annual amount of additional project-specific resources is increasing
- Regular costs of annual management and acquisition costs are budgeted (the gap is decreasing)

Goal 14. The cost of services is mostly covered by those who use them on the basis of the polluter pays principle.

Actions

14.1. Submitting proposals for adjusting state fee rates; establishing new state fees or charges depending on the cost of the service and using the principle of the environmental permit life cycle.

14.2. Submitting proposals for establishing supplementary paid services.

indicators

- State fee rates are being adjusted to match the cost of the services (the gap is decreasing)
- The Board's annual own revenue is increasing

Goal 15. Our tasks are consistent with our resources, and the continuous operation of highly important services is ensured

Actions

15.1. Using budget and cost analysis broken down by services to determine how much of the budget is allocated to services and filing justified requests for resources. Adjust our services if the resources are insufficient.

15.2. Evaluating the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of our services and making proposals for changes in work organisation or legal acts.

15.3. Determining the activities with a low environmental impact and using risk assessment to automate or terminate the respective services.

Indicators

- Necessary resources are available for providing sustainable services (the gap with how much we need is decreasing)
- The number of overtime hours is decreasing
- The customer's administrative load is decreasing

Key success factors and competencies for achieving the goals

For the strategic goals to be achieved, it is essential to ensure that appropriate competencies are in place and that the requirements arising from critical success factors are fulfilled. The development of the competencies we lack or outsourcing these, and the creation of appropriate conditions are parts of the action plan for the implementation of the strategy of the Environmental Board.

Resulting from the above, our **key success factors** are the following.

Effective prevention

- Advisory, educational, and preventive outreach activities consisting of programmes to promote environmental awareness and environmentally friendly choices, including media and training programmes for a variety of target groups
- Early intervention in activities of potential environmental risk. Greater ability for early intervention and good partnerships that we proactively maintain.
- Role of the opinion leader in environmental matters. Knowledge, skills, and weight necessary for acting as an independent and trustworthy speaker for the environment.

Simple, fast and convenient services

- Customer-friendly e-services that work at any time, in any place and on any device.
- State-of-the-art, efficient, and convenient IT systems and hardware.
- High-quality data ensured by efficient data management and cross-using data.

A united and cooperative Environmental Board

- Cooperation between the departments of the Environmental Board and clear division of responsibilities within the organisation to ensure a common understanding of unified processes and a sense of belonging.
- Legal and procedural clarity ensured by devising consistent interpretations and harmonised procedures as well as consolidating best practices.
- Valued partnerships and the organisation culture that promotes learning, knowledge exchange and innovation.

Sustainable Environmental Board

- Sufficient resources for performing our tasks, budgeted for operational costs of the services and development needs. Data analysis for making informed decisions of the use of resources.
- Competent employees who are open to change, happy, motivated, and committed to acting in accordance with the Board's values.

- International cooperation with partners whose expertise can be used for rendering better services.

The personnel competencies to be prioritised for the implementation of the strategy are the following.

- Analytical skills, including the ability to understand the effect of one's actions on the achievement of goals.
- Ability to view processes in a customer-oriented way and redesign them if necessary.
- Ability to deliver results through efficient project management and collaboration.
- Digital literacy, including the ability to use technological solutions and data in one's work and act as a smart customer when the services are digitised.
- Ability to convey clear messages, providing knowledge-based explanations.

Implementation, monitoring and updating

The strategy is to be used as a basis for the preparation of development plans, action plans and budgets for cooperation within the Board and with external partners. The actions and indicators of the strategy as well as the fulfilment of its goals are to be analysed once a year, which is to be used as the basis for making proposals for updating the strategy and the relevant work plan. The strategy is to be reviewed, and the necessary changes are to be made during the preparation of the work plan for the following year. At least one strategy seminar per year with the participation of all the executives is to be held in order to review the strategy.

In the first years of the implementation of the strategy, it is important to monitor that the established goals and indicators are accurate and relevant, including the creation of basic data for the indicators that were not available at the time when the strategy was drafted.