

The Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities (hereinafter the Association) bases its activities on the European values of local government set out in the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia. The common goal of the members of the Association is to increase the share of local government, decision-making rights and responsibility in the management and organization of social life.

The guidelines for the activities of the Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities for the years 2022-2025 is a framework document based on the spirit of the Association's Statutes and the purpose of fulfilling the main interests of its members.

The courses of action shall form the basis for the preparation of the Association's annual action plans, including the submission of detailed proposals in the process of preparing the national budgetary strategy and other key development documents and negotiating future budgets.

MISSION

The mission of the Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities is to support the development of local governments and to protect their common interests, to promote, support and organize the joint activities of members nationwide and to create opportunities for members to better perform the tasks assigned by law.

VISION

The Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities, as a nationwide organization representing and defending the common interests of local governments that unites cities and rural municipalities, is a constructive, balanced and strong co-operation partner for constitutional institutions, government agencies, the third sector and other organizations.

AIMS

Regarding the development of the local government system:

- awareness, representation and protection of the common interests of local governments based on the values and principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia and laws in conformity therewith;
- contributing to the development of the local government system on the basis of the principles of democracy and the decentralization of power;
- contributing to the overall sustainable development of local government through the nationwide joint activities of the members of the Association;
- promoting national cooperation between members and coordinating joint projects;
- a partner with analytical capabilities in relations with the state and local governments.

Regarding the tasks of local governments:

- advocating for local governments to ensure a stable and legal revenue base and to effectively ensure local government financial autonomy;
- creating opportunities for members to better perform their statutory tasks;
- advising local government officials and employees and improving their knowledge and skills;
- participation in research and promotion of development activities.

Regarding international cooperation:

- representing the common interests of local authorities in relations with international organizations;
- developing foreign cooperation and friendships.

ACTIVITIES

I. Local government policy

The common interest of the members is to increase the share of local government, decision-making power and responsibility in the management and organization of public life, to improve the availability and quality of public services provided by local governments.

To this end:

1. to seek the opening of the principles and directions of local government policy in the programs and election platforms of political parties and in the coalition agreement;
2. to apply for the opening of the principles and directions of local government policy in the state strategy documents and action plans;
3. to support the active transformation of county towns and other centers of attraction into an engine of local development that supports the sustainability of life in the countryside as an alternative to an Estonia with one or two centers;
4. to support the sustainability of life in rural areas by contributing to the implementation of rural development programs, including in cooperation with LEADER groups and KODUKANT, the Estonian Village Movement;
5. to ensure that the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government are followed by the Riigikogu and the Government of the Republic when planning laws and decisions, including state special plans, and carrying out reforms in areas concerning local governments, according to which local authorities are consulted in a timely and appropriate manner part in all questions directly affecting them;
6. to continue the tradition of the Days of Towns and Municipalities, to organize, in co-operation with partners, the improvement of the knowledge and skills of local government officials and employees and the introduction of best practices;
7. to develop information exchange and co-operation with county self-government associations, county development centers, professional associations, associations and societies both in Estonia and elsewhere, with the aim of improving skills and opportunities in shaping the living environment and providing public services.

II. Ensuring the financial autonomy of local governments

The financial resources of local governments must be commensurate with the tasks they perform. Achieve, in cooperation with social partners, central government, universities, both business and public sector organizations and associations, the allocation of sufficient financial resources to local governments in the framework of national economic policies, which they are free to use within their powers.

To this end, find a consensus with the central government on key developments and reach agreements that allow:

2. 1. a sufficient revenue base for local governments to perform their tasks and to better organize and develop local life;
2. 2. strengthening the financial autonomy of local governments, including the extension of the right to impose local taxes, the transfer of part of national business taxes to local budgets, the transformation of personal income tax and land tax into real local taxes;
2. 3. to change the accounting of local road funding to meet real needs and to be in line with the principles of public road funding;
2. 4. maintaining and promoting the local education network;
2. 5. Ensure adequate funding for local governments to provide timely needs-based assistance and support to people in social protection.

Regarding the negotiations on the state budget and the state budget strategy:

- a. to participate, similarly to the ministries, in the budget negotiations as an equal partner with the Government Committee, with the aim of ensuring a sufficient revenue base necessary for the performance of the tasks assigned to local governments by law and formed on the basis of legal regulations;
- b. to request that the state budget strategy reflect information related to the revenue base of local governments and outline the amounts of funds allocated from the state budget to local budgets within the administrative areas of ministries, in order to ensure additional stability and transparency in local government budget planning;
- c. to represent the interests of local governments in shaping the use of European Union structural funds;
- d. call for medium-term planning to take into account globalization, the need to contribute to ecological balance, an aging population and other trends with an overall impact;
- e. to request budget negotiations with the participation of the relevant ministers and the national local government association to be involved on an equal footing with the ministries in the process of drafting the state budget;
- f. to proceed from the principle that upon transfer of tasks to local governments by the state, the funds transferred to the local government revenue base must be in accordance with the funds actually required for the performance of tasks, and to demand that draft legislation prepared by the Government of the Republic of Estonia granting new tasks to local governments must include an analysis of the cost of performing these tasks and planning the allocation of corresponding amounts to local governments in coordination with the national local government association upon the entry into force of such legislation;
- g. keep under control and consistently defend the implementation of the negotiated agreements.

III. Legal protection of local governments

It is necessary for the legal protection of local governments to ensure the continuous participation of

local governments in national legislation, in the process of which the principle and value of the European Charter of Local Self-Government would be followed, and

the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia.

To this end:

3. 1. to continue the legal protection of the interests of local governments through the EIF (draft legislation information system) in the field of legislation;
3. 2. to continue to participate in the discussions of the concepts of the most important draft legal acts regulating the activities of local government or local life, requesting the involvement of the representatives of the Association in the working groups, if necessary;
3. 3. require government agencies to adhere to the methodology for drafting legislation, in particular to carry out an analysis of the effects of the draft (social and cultural consequences and effects on budgets, regional development and work organization);
3. 4. to monitor the observance of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in legislation and to draw the attention of the ministries to the problems in case of violations, if necessary by turning to the Government of Estonia, other constitutional and European institutions to ensure legal protection;
3. 5. to continue active co-operation with the Riigikogu with the aim of reaching an agreement on the fundamental issues of local government development directions.

IV. International cooperation

International cooperation between municipalities is becoming increasingly network- and project-based. It also creates new opportunities to take advantage of the opportunities offered by different funding programs. The common interest of the members is the participation of local governments and the representation of their interests in the institutions of the European Union and the Council of Europe, as well as cooperation with local government organizations in other countries.

To this end:

4. 1. to participate and represent the common interests of its members in the governing bodies, committees, commissions and working parties of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union (CdR) and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (CLRAE);
4. 2. to participate and represent the common interests of the members in the governing bodies, committees, commissions and working groups of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and, through it, the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG);
4. 3. to ensure, with the assistance of the Association's Representation in Brussels, that members and experts working in the Association's Office are kept informed of the preparation of European Union legislation and that the networks important and necessary to represent the interests of their members are operational;
4. 4. to cooperate and exchange information in the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy;
4. 5. Participate in the implementation process of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region;
4. 6. to strengthen ties and cooperation with the associations of local governments of the countries bordering the Baltic Sea and to support the members in their cooperation with twin local governments.

V. Ensuring the awareness of local governments, introducing the activities of the Association

The Association has a clear communication strategy. In order to ensure that local governments are informed and to introduce the activities of the Association, it is important to keep the information mediated by the Association operative and easily accessible.

To this end:

5. 1. ensure the operative availability of the necessary information to the members of the Association and information on the issues to be discussed at the meetings of the Board and the Council of the Association;
5. 2. continue to ensure the openness of the meetings of the Board and the Council of the Association to the representatives of the members of the Association;
5. 3. develop networking with local government leaders and specialists in order to gather sector-specific positions and form common positions;
5. 4. inform the public of the Association's requests, views and activities;
5. 5. ensure consistent media communication with the general objectives of the Association;
5. 6. organize information days and joint projects with partners to increase the knowledge and awareness of local government officials and politicians and to promote good practice.

VI. Development and consulting in the field of information and communication technology (ICT) services

The Association will further develop the information technology (IT) capabilities of its Office and support the development of municipal information technology. **To this end:**

6. 1. advise the members of the Association on the organization and development of ICT systems;
6. 2. apply to the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Infrastructure for an ongoing partnership in financing;
6. 3. represent the common interests and needs of the members of the Association at the national level and in the development of private sector information systems concerning a large part of the members of the Association;
6. 4. develop and provide the necessary common information systems for the members of the Association.

VII. Central coordination of local government staff development activities

The purpose of guiding the developing of competence of the Association's staff is to contribute to the capacity building of local governments in fulfilling strategic goals and organizing basic services, including the preparation and implementation of development projects financed by the European Union Social Fund, through more systematically targeted training and development activities.

To this end:

7. 1 apply for funds from the state budget and EU structural funds for the organization of training activities;
7. 2 involve universities and experts in the field as partners.