

### **Estonia: TOM, Täna Otsustan Mina = Today I Decide H**

TOM is the first in Estonia attempt to start the discussion between the state and the society using the possibilities offered by the modern ICT. Transparency of the decisionmaking

process and improvement of the state-society dialogue can be achieved that way.

The key objective is not to provide an electronic service, but to improve democratic discussion. TOM was launched on 25 June 2001; at present, there are about 4,000 registered users and the average number of visits per month is 80,000. In broad terms, the TOM process may be divided into six parts from the submission of an idea until its implementation:

- (1) Submission of an idea — many people have good ideas that are not voiced for some reason.
- (2) After the submission of the idea, others have 14 days to comment on it and the author can defend the idea — there is discussion, from which democratic decisions emerge.
- (3) This phase is followed by the editing period — the originator of the idea takes proposals, criticism and pro-arguments into consideration and makes amendments, if necessary.
- (4) The idea is voted on — everybody can vote for or against. A simple majority endorses the idea.
- (5) The person who submitted the idea and those who share the view that it should be implemented, sign it.
- (6) After signature, the idea / proposal moves to the government for processing. The proposal is directed to the public agency whose administration area it belongs to. According to the Public Information Act, the public agency has one month to either start implementation or to submit a substantiated answer that explains why the idea / proposal does not merit implementation. The answers are published in the portal.

What has been learned?

- Unequivocally clear, understandable rules must be established that would facilitate the management of discussion.
- In order to avoid excessive emotions and the feeling of impunity, the e-democratic discussion must avoid anonymity.
- All participants in the discussion must clearly see the extent to which their input is considered in the policy shaping process, or the feedback.
- Citizens have to be constantly informed about the opportunity to participate in policy shaping, both at the regional as well as the state level.
- People who are involved understand better the complexity of the policy formation process, and the decision makers learn to make better use of people's knowledge.

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