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# EXPERT GROUP OF SPATIAL DESIGN

## FINAL REPORT

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## FINAL REPORT OF THE EXPERT GROUP OF SPATIAL DESIGN

*The expert group of spatial design worked at the Government Office from July 2017 to September 2018. The task of the expert group was to determine the current state of spatial design in the national public sector and make proposals for improving the situation. This document summarises the work done, the agreed conclusions, and proposals.*

*The expert group approved the report on 5 October 2018. Dissenting opinions are presented at the end of the report.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the context of this report, space or a spatial environment is defined as physical space which includes both built and natural, as well as both exterior and interior space. Space is a limited resource, the use of which must be informed to enable all socially acceptable and desired uses, both current and future.

SPACE OR SPATIAL  
ENVIRONMENT

Spatial development, also known as spatial design, is the creation and implementation of decisions affecting the development of space. Spatial development is a complex process emerging from the combined effect of different sectors and many areas and actors. Therefore, spatial development can be a conscious and purposeful activity as well as a result arising from the achievement of another objective. The quality of spatial development is often determined by decisions which are made before the design process begins and in which spatial professionals – experts with spatial competence – are usually not involved. The expert group defines areas of spatial development primarily through related expert fields, such as spatial planning, architecture, interior design, landscape architecture, and design.

SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT  
OR SPATIAL DESIGN

SPATIAL DECISIONS  
SPATIAL COMPETENCE  
AREAS OF  
SPATIAL DESIGN

Spatial development should be a conscious and knowledge-driven activity, the main purpose of which is to improve the living environment with each decision. A prerequisite for creating a good spatial environment is the existence of a clear national spatial policy and the capacity to implement it. At present, the Estonian state does not have a spatial policy covering both the natural environment and the built environment and comprehensively addressing the various spatial design principles, which would be the basis for action at all levels of decision-making and in all areas. There is also currently no unit at the national level that would centralise the competence of various spatial development areas, address the spatial areas comprehensively, create a vision of the state's spatial future, analyse the spatial effects of important space-related decisions – give a spatial dimension to the decisions related to the spatial environment.

SPATIAL POLICY

A high-quality space (spatial environment), including the living environment and public space, is one of the factors ensuring the well-being of all inhabitants of Estonia. High-quality space and spatial solutions combine artistic, technological, and economic considerations, together with the natural environment, into a balanced spatial whole which covers the architecture of buildings, their exterior and interior space, and is the

HIGH-QUALITY SPACE

basis for creating a sustainable and holistic living environment as a result of design and construction. High-quality public spaces accessible to everyone are an important feature of an advanced democratic state.

Chancellors of Justice, professional associations, and various ministries have been referring to the fragmentation of decisions in the spatial development of the living environment and the lack of common goals as a problem already for a decade.

FRAGMENTATION OF  
SPATIAL DESIGN  
DECISIONS

The current Estonian society faces a number of national challenges. The maintenance, shrinkage, or growth of the Estonian population, the continuation and growth of investments, the increasing attractiveness of the country as a destination for talents and start-up companies, the improvement of the quality of life of the inhabitants, and the increase in the number of tourists – Estonia's competitiveness at the international level – are strongly influenced by spatial development and its quality.

COMPETITIVENESS

Several pressing issues require additional contribution in finding solutions for spatial development: the location of settlements in the country, ensuring the compactness of urban settlements, preserving the natural environment of rural areas, promoting the use of historic buildings, coordinating the cross-border development issues of local governments, implementing the school reform and creating a modern learning environment, implementing a support measure for rental dwellings, achieving a more balanced regional development and adapting to the decline in the number of inhabitants in the regions, replacing or upgrading depreciable *plattenbaus* (mass construction), as well as issues related to several major objects.

The objectives set out in several national development plans require a more cohesive and implementation-targeted approach to spatial development, including the sustainable mobility principles of the [Transport Development Plan 2014–2020](#); the adaptation to the effects of climate change in the urban environment of the [Development Plan for Climate Change Adaptation until 2030](#); the creation of a talent policy, the promotion of creative industries, and the comprehensive development of the business environment of the [Estonian Entrepreneurship Growth Strategy 2020](#); the creation of a living environment and urban space that supports self-realisation and versatile business opportunities and is attractive for foreign skilled labour and investors, as well as visitors and permanent residents of the [Estonia's regional development strategy for 2014–2020](#); the combined handling of reconstruction and new construction in ensuring the sustainability of the building fund of the [National Development Plan of the Energy Sector until 2030](#); setting the example of [Culture 2020](#) and the [Architectural Policy of Estonia](#) in achieving and maintaining architectural quality; and valuing the living environment as a whole.

CONNECTION TO  
STRATEGIES AND  
DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The Estonian society has become more aware and demanding about the quality of the living environment. Among other things, it is expressed by various public initiatives and petitions, as well as the real estate market. The human development report, which will be published in 2019, analyses and gives sense to the 'health' of democracy in Estonia from the perspective of public space, social cohesion, and sustainable development. International agreements require paying greater attention to the spatial environment: the Government of the Republic of Estonia has recently joined the European Landscape Convention and signed the Davos Declaration and committed to achieving climate goals.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE  
SOCIETY AND  
INTERNATIONAL  
AGREEMENTS

The establishment of the expert group of spatial design was based on Item 5.6 of the Government of the Republic of Estonia Action Plan and the memorandum approved by the Government of the Republic of Estonia. The work of the expert group was coordinated by the Government Office in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture.

MANDATE OF THE  
EXPERT GROUP

The expert group described the feasibility, necessity, and benefits of changes related to spatial development for the society by mapping and analysing the decisions and decision-making processes affecting the formation of the environment and the functioning of the living environment. The expert group of spatial design worked extensively on spatial development – on the decisions and processes shaping space both directly and indirectly in terms of built environment and nature.

The expert group focused on the role of the state in spatial development – mainly on the level of the central government and state authorities – and the improving of the quality of spatial development decisions through the introduction of counselling and updating and improving the implementation of legislation and spatial development documents. The expert group made proposals to improve the quality of spatial development decisions of ministries and state authorities and to enhance cooperation. The regional or county level was addressed to a lesser extent.

ROLE OF THE  
STATE IN SPATIAL  
DEVELOPMENT

The tasks of the state as a central government in spatial development are, in particular, the following.

The state:

- 1) shapes attitudes and raises awareness and establishes the legal system that promotes high-quality space;
- 2) shapes spatial policy and is responsible for the thoughtful use and quality of space;
- 3) implements the spatial policy and sets the pattern;
- 4) acts as the contracting entity and financier and distributor of grants;
- 5) acts as the advisor;
- 6) settles disputes;
- 7) grants permits.

Although the vast majority of spatial development decisions are made at the level of the local government, the expert group does not interfere with the spatial development at the level of the local government due to the autonomy of the local government and the great variability of local governments. The proposals of the expert group are made on the basis of the presumption that as a result of the administrative reform, for the first time ever, there will be a specialist with spatial competence working in all local government units or for several local governments. The expert group sees the relationship of the central government with the local government units as an advisory and supporting partnership. Establishing a clearer and more supportive legal system, improving the strategy documents and their implementation by the state, improving bilateral cooperation, and introducing advisory services can support the improvement of the

SPATIAL DESIGN  
AT THE LEVEL OF  
THE LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT

quality of space also at the level of the local government units without limiting the autonomy of local governments.

The proposals of the expert group should be considered as a whole: the implementation of all of them helps to move towards the achievement of the set goals. Although every single proposal helps to improve the situation, spatial development is such a complex process that no proposal alone has sufficient impact on the improvement of the quality of space in Estonia and making the processes smoother.

PROPOSALS

The proposals and conclusions presented in the report are based on a thorough analysis and on the expert opinions of the members of the expert group and its working groups. It has been determined which problems occur in the Estonian legal system and strategic development problems that impede the realisation of high-quality space and what are the shortcomings in terms of spatial development in making state decisions with significant impact on space. Proposals have also been made for increasing spatial competence at the government level.

## 1. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are based on the interviews conducted in working groups of the expert group, the analyses made, and the expert opinions of the members of the expert group and working groups.

### 1.

CURRENT  
SITUATION

A high-quality space has not been formally commissioned by the state. Therefore, a high-quality space is not a priority for the state.

- The state lacks a common understanding of and an inter-agency agreement on high-quality space.
- The statutes of government agencies, state foundation, and companies, including the State Real Estate Ltd, Land Board, Road Administration, Port of Tallinn, and others do not include the goal of designing high-quality space.

DESIRED SITUATION

**A prerequisite for designing a high-quality spatial environment is that a high-quality spatial environment has been formulated as a national interest and commission.**

### 2.

CURRENT  
SITUATION

The quality of initial decisions sets boundaries for the quality of spatial solutions. As national decisions are not balanced in terms of objectives and spatial environment remains in the background, there is a high probability of creating a low-quality spatial environment.

- Currently, the focus is on achieving the key sectoral objectives, which, as individual decisions do not take into account space, does not ensure the development of a cohesive spatial environment.
- The spatial design decisions that precede spatial development and design determine the quality of space or the lack thereof even if the design is prepared and approved by specialists with a vocation or activity licence.
- The existing rules may not ensure the development of a high-quality space on each occasion if decisions are made on the basis of methodologies which do not take into account a particular space or spatial characteristics in general.

- People tend to believe that from the point of view of spatial environment, a better decision means higher costs, but this may not be the case in the long run.

DESIRED SITUATION To avoid developing spaces of poor quality, the quality of the spatial environment is the focus throughout the decision-making process; sectoral decisions are balanced in their objectives.

3.

CURRENT SITUATION Municipalities are solely responsible for the quality of space, also when performing the tasks of state authorities.

- State authorities expect municipalities to develop spatial solutions and contribute to as well as supervise the architectural quality of the spatial environment, but municipalities often have neither the specialists with relevant education or experience nor the necessary financial resources.
- With their central departmental spatial development decisions, state authorities often put the municipalities in a situation where local decisions are not based on the local interest or need, but must adapt to the decision of the state authority.
- The state does not always cooperate with municipalities or coordinate giving investment grants to third parties.

DESIRED SITUATION The state guarantees that investment and financing decisions are based on, *inter alia*, the criteria of high-quality space, that specialists with spatial competence are involved in the development of spatial solutions, and that spatial development decisions take more into account the local interests and needs. The activities implemented in local governments under the guidance of government agencies include, in addition to achieving the sectoral objectives, contributing to the quality of space.

4.

CURRENT SITUATION The objectives of the spatial development of the state are not fully formulated in the development documents.



- The national spatial plan as the document most affecting the spatial development of the country does not fit clearly and understandably to the country's system of strategic and sectoral developments and it is not set in the legislation at a level in the legal system that the plan should be due to its content.
- The national spatial plan does not fulfil the role of a horizontal spatial development document that binds together different areas due to the selectivity of tasks and objectives set in the legislation. Therefore, it is not mandatory to take it into account when preparing and implementing sectoral development plans.
- The national spatial plan does not cover all aspects of spatial development. For example, the national spatial plan does not address architecture, building heritage, or public space.
- National plans are used to determine the substantial spatial needs of the sectors and constraints arising therefrom, which are often not considered in terms of the quality of the living environment, as the sectoral regulations are stronger – addressing space in a versatile and integrated way is left in the background.
- Architectural policy, real estate policy, and the national spatial plan are not connected.

DESIRED SITUATION

The objectives of spatial development of the state are formulated in a comprehensive way in the development documents and form the basis for the sectoral activities.

5.

CURRENT SITUATION

The decision-makers are often not aware of the wider spatial impact of single decisions taken at the national level and the spatial quality of the spatial development decisions is not verified.

- The state does not use its financing thoughtfully enough to achieve the objectives of spatial development.
- The financing measures and investment decisions do not involve the objective of a high-quality living environment because it is assumed that the quality of space has already been ensured with the previous processes (planning and licensing procedures).
- The state's investments in real estate, including the selection of locations for buildings and facilities and the development of spatial programmes, terms of reference, and procurement terms are not based on the wide objective of improving the living environment.
- The decisions are dominated by surface efficiency and cost-effectiveness criteria. Often, indirect costs are not taken into

account. These costs may mean that seemingly effective projects are unprofitable in the long term from the point of view of society as a whole.

- Cooperation between state authorities is insufficient in many respects, as well as the consistency between state and local government spatial development decisions.
- Persons with spatial competence are not involved in the preparation of terms of reference for buildings and infrastructure or financial decisions. Architects, planners, landscape architects, interior designers, and designers are only involved in the process of designing and planning – when the important decisions have already been made.

DESIRED SITUATION    **The decision-makers are aware of the broader spatial impact of individual decisions made on state level; the quality of spatial development decisions is monitored and their spatial impact assessed.**

6.

CURRENT SITUATION    **The spatial data is not sufficiently concentrated.**

- The quality aspects of space are not coherently mapped by any geographic information system. Spatial development decisions are made without an overview of the existing and planned (also by the municipalities' general plans) areas and objects with spatial value. Various spatial data registers and map applications are not associated, which makes searching for the necessary information laborious and troublesome.
- Therefore, the conditions arising from the particular spatial features of the area are not taken into account in preparing the decisions, their budget and time planning, and preparing the procurement conditions.

DESIRED SITUATION    **Spatial data (registers and map applications) is assembled as open access data, available to everyone and easy to use; values of any specific space are known to decision-makers in making spatial development decisions.**

7.

CURRENT  
SITUATION

The laws<sup>1</sup> that affect space do not set the goals for spatial development but are limited to procedural regulation and narrowly defined sectoral objectives.

- No existing law deals with spatial development in a comprehensive and cohesive manner.
- The principle of improving the living environment is not sufficiently widespread in the legislation. The Planning Act highlights the improvement of the living environment, the balancing and integration of interests, and the principles of practical, reasonable, and sustainable land use in the drafting of plans, but the plans only cover a part of spatial development and the principles of the Planning Act are not applied outside the plans. Other laws dealing directly or indirectly with spatial development do not have a similar approach.
- The Building Code is essentially a safety code that does not address the quality of the space in the broader sense.
- In addition, the current approach does not ensure the integral and associated development of public space or the involvement of specialists of all spatial development domains in the decision-making process affecting the public space on a unified basis.
- The legal system can affect the changing of the physical space more appropriately and in a better way, but no law can succeed without the will and skills of its implementers or the acceptance of the society at large.
- The principle of property inviolability can impede the development of high-quality space. The local government does not have a sufficiently clear basis for requesting a high-quality space from private owners.

DESIRED SITUATION

All lawful spatial development decisions are guided by the goals of spatial design and take into account the principle of improving the living environment in a balanced way.

8.

CURRENT  
SITUATION

There are not enough specialists with spatial education at the national level to fulfil the objective of improving the living environment and ensure that competent decisions are made in terms of spatial development.

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<sup>1</sup> The only exception is the Planning Act.

Cooperation between areas of spatial development is not sufficiently cohesive.

- Often, specialists with spatial competence are not involved in important spatial development processes, although they would be able to draw attention to the shortcomings in the quality of the space.
- Different ministries, agencies, and organisations that the state has asked to make decisions related to space do not have or involve (also external) specialists with sufficient spatial education to analyse and explain the spatial effects of sectoral decisions.
- The cohesiveness of the different areas of spatial development needs to be improved: the cohesiveness between spatial development, architectural design of buildings, technical infrastructure design, landscape design, and the public space.

DESIRED SITUATION **There are more specialists with spatial education at the state level, which ensures that competent decisions are made in terms of spatial development. Cooperation between the areas of spatial development is more cohesive.**

**Regarding the country's development, the listed issues are serious and require steps to be taken to improve the situation. The problems are structural and require continuous attention to be solved: in particular, setting high-quality space as one of the objectives of sectoral decisions, increasing spatial awareness and competence, and increasing the participation of spatial design professionals in spatial development processes.**

## 2. PROPOSALS

The proposals of the expert group must be considered comprehensively: their simultaneous implementation helps to move towards achieving the set objectives, but no proposal alone has sufficient impact on the improvement of the quality of space in Estonia and making the processes smoother. **The proposals for amending laws and development documents** mainly help to balance and improve the cohesiveness of the national spatial policy and sectoral spatial design decisions. **The proposals for ensuring the quality of spatial environment, increasing spatial competence, and improving cooperation** mainly help to achieve greater consistency between individual decisions that have a spatial impact, external funding, public investments, and support measures, following the principles of spatial development and increasing the general spatial competence.

### 1. High-quality spatial environment is an important public interest, which needs to be set as a national request and goal for the contracting entity, (co-)financer, as well as the shaper of spatial design decisions.

A high-quality space must be set as an objective next to other sectoral objectives and the state must set an example in creating it. To ensure the quality of space in individual decisions with an impact on space and to achieve greater conformity with the principles of spatial development, the approach to space must be more systematic.

#### 1.1. The criteria for high-quality space must be developed.

Criteria for high-quality space must be agreed upon so that state authorities could use these as the guideline. They would also provide a basis for evaluating the spatial impact.

#### 1.2. Consider making appropriate amendments to the laws to set up the commission for high-quality space.

Make the appropriate amendments to, for example, the State Assets Act and other relevant property management legislation to set up the request for a high-quality space.

#### 1.3. The request for high-quality space must be set in the statutes of the main government agencies, state foundations, and state companies related to the design of the spatial environment.

### 2. State decisions, including financial measures, must be used more to promote high-quality living environment and regional development.

The national decision-making processes and funding measures should be supplemented with spatial criteria to promote the active use and restoration of

valuable buildings and the creation of high-quality contemporary and sustainable public space, architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, and environmental design; maintenance and compactness of settlement centres; the application of environmentally friendly construction and maintenance technologies; and the sustainable use of natural resources.

**2.1. The principle of improving the living environment should be added to the principles of allocating the European Union Structural Funds in the future.**

As an immediate action, this provision would provide the opportunity to consider the spatial effect of the investments and in the long run, it would allow us to use investments systematically for improving the living environment.

**2.2. In making critical decisions affecting space and planning space, the total life cycle cost for the society should be estimated.**

To ensure the objectives of spatial policy, the long-term socio-economic impact, including the whole life cycle of the buildings – construction, use, maintenance, and demolition, the creation and maintenance of value, and the effects arising from the location – must be taken into account when making important spatial design decisions. Spatial and financial planning need to be better integrated. The cost to the society should be converted into fiscal numbers<sup>2</sup>, because a high-quality space can ultimately be developed only within the limits of available resources.

**3. Extend the principle of improving the living environment to all of spatial development and establish a clearer basis in the legislation to implement this principle.**

The conscious changing of space under various laws should, to the possible maximum extent, contribute to the improvement of the living environment and the achievement of sustainable development objectives. The principle of improving the living environment can be goal-oriented if it is applied to a wider extent and the state makes it clear how the implementation of this principle is ensured.

**3.1. Consider amending the legislation for better spatial consideration and to shape the attitudes of the society.**

Legislation should establish clearer bases for spatial development as a whole, covering all spatial development decisions in an integrated manner. The law must deal with the principles and concepts of spatial development in an integrated manner. Emphasising the importance of public space in spatial

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<sup>2</sup> One possible methodology for this is the *BREEAM standard 2*.

development and formulating the quality requirements provide a better basis for designing a high-quality public space and built environment and assessing the spatial impact of the drafts. The legislation regarding sectoral spatial development must also be amended so that specialists with the best competence due to the spatial specification are involved in the decision-making process related to spatial development.

The amendment of legislation means either supplementing the existing laws and guidelines with aspects of spatial development – where appropriate – or creating a new general law (so-called Spatial Development Act).

### 3.2. The spatial impact should be assessed when drafting legislation and strategic documents.

The impact assessment methodology<sup>3</sup> should be complemented by adding the spatial impact criterion in addition to the environmental impact criteria. The assessment of spatial impact requires the presence of specialists with the relevant competence or their involvement in the preparation of decisions.

## 4. Improve the consideration of the spatial development objective and needs in the development and implementation of sectoral development plans.

### 4.1. Take into account spatial impact in drawing up the structure of the state's activity-based budget and in developing the methodological bases of the national strategy and sectoral development plans.

Spatial impact must also be considered in the process of preparing an investment plan and in planning the activities of areas related to spatial development.

### 4.2. Broaden the approach to spatial development fields in the national spatial plan and improve their consideration in the development and implementation of sectoral development plans, including design and construction.

Integrate the national spatial plan to the strategy document system and establish it as the underlying set of policy principles to ensure that the plan is implemented in full. The national spatial plan as a source document for spatial policy, which manages spatial development at all scales and levels, should be complemented with the principles and criteria of high-quality

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.just.ee/sites/www.just.ee/files/elfinder/article\\_files/mojude\\_hindamise\\_metoodika.pdf](https://www.just.ee/sites/www.just.ee/files/elfinder/article_files/mojude_hindamise_metoodika.pdf)

space, including the objectives of built environment, architecture, cultural heritage, landscape architecture, design, and interior design.

A national spatial plan or other broad-based spatial policy document is required to create a cohesive substantive basis for considering and assessing the spatial impact both in various strategic documents, in planning, designing, building, and using the space, as well as in making separate spatial development decisions or decisions that affect space.

The new horizontal strategy *Estonia 2035* must formulate all development directions of Estonia's spatial environment, covering all areas of spatial design.

#### 4.3. Support planning across all administrative boundaries both at the regional and local level.

Given the small number of local government units in counties as a result of the administrative reform, it would be better to draw up regional plans instead of county plans, which take into account the regional specificities and needs (natural and cultural landscapes, construction culture, ethnic culture, and economic activity). Urban-area plans must be drawn up to promote the intertwined spatial development of cities and neighbouring rural municipalities. Regional plans can be better integrated with the regional development strategy of Estonia.

### 5. Develop a service supporting spatial design by integrating spatial data databases and map applications and adding map layers for spatial value.

#### 5.1. Further develop the map application system of the Land Board and add map layers of spatial values as open data, developing a so-called spatial atlas.

The spatial atlas should include objects and areas of spatial value, including connecting the spatial values mapped and planned with the plans with the spatial development decisions made in that area – for example, budget planning and the need to include spatial competence.

Spatial data, including the data of spatial values mapped and planned with the country and comprehensive plans, as well as data of spatial values on the local level, must be made available in one place. The spatial atlas could be a handy tool for politicians, officials, and specialists in making carefully-thought-out spatial development decisions and for the civil society in acknowledging and protecting the values of the environment.



- 5.2. Better match between the existing registers to increase the time spent on substantive work by reducing the time spent on searching for information.

The spatial atlas should become part of a unified national system of spatial development registers and map applications, which also includes the register of state plans, the register of construction works, the register of real estate, etc.

## 6. Supplement the relevant spatial development guides with the best spatial development principles.

- 6.1. Supplement or modify the relevant standards. The preparation of standards should be more transparent and they should be clearer.

Improve general awareness of the indicative nature of standards: the purpose of standards is to simplify the work of designers and officials – to support them without banning special solutions. The use of a standard does not mean that a spatial analysis does not have to be carried out and it does not always ensure the best possible result. It is necessary to upgrade the standard EVS 843: *City streets* so that it would consider city streets and roads as public space in a more place-based and balanced way.

- 6.2. Continue and initiate the preparation of guidelines introducing best spatial design practices in spatial development fields.

Using the best expertise in preparing common assisting and guidance materials saves social resources, including money, because the duplication of activities will decrease (the solutions developed by the best competencies are used, the time spent in various agencies on solving the same problems is reduced, the risk of litigations decreases, as well as the related costs to the society). It also improves legal certainty and guarantees the uniform application of the law throughout the country<sup>4</sup>.

- 6.3. Develop guidelines and best practice for public procurements which would support the objective of sustainable development and high-quality space.

The design of representative offices of the state (including embassies) and the design of public indoor and outdoor spaces is often what leaves the first impression to the visitors of the country, but still, products from other countries are bought for those places. The main reason is the fact that public procurements allow replacing the designed original products with analogue

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<sup>4</sup> *Ellex Raidla* Arhitektuurivoiniku kontseptsioon, 2012

products in the tenders. In practice, this means replacing Estonian design with mostly cheaper copies produced in third countries. Procurements should consider authorship that protects the Estonian design and thereby, the identity of Estonia. We have introduced a number of principles by joining the European Union which protect authorship, but in the case of design, these principles are not followed.

- 7. Increase and expand at the national central government level spatial competence and cooperation to achieve spatial development decisions of better quality at the national level, and a smoother and more informed spatial development. Put together a spatial development unit by drawing together the spatial competence of existing government agencies and adding a spatial development team.<sup>5</sup>**

**Spatial competence must be increased among the main state authorities related to spatial development.**

The activities of the units related to spatial development must be re-structured and the competence of all spatial development fields must be increased. This can be done by hiring people with spatial competence and organising trainings.

A spatial development unit must be formed that shapes and coordinates the national spatial design as a whole. The spatial development unit must be formed to coordinate the activities of the various ministries, agencies, public limited liability companies, etc. of the state in shaping Estonia's space. So far, such activities have often been controversial and inconsistent. To ensure a sustainable living environment and to avoid spatial pollution, the state must act more actively, comprehensively, and thoughtfully in the long term. A better implementation of the spatial policy requires the targeted work of experts in areas of spatial development, including participating in the processes, working groups, and committees preparing legislation, strategy documents, and individual decisions relating to spatial development.

Lack of cooperation and spatial knowledge is one of the main shortcomings in spatial development – at the moment, the state has neither set the tasks nor appointed the people for it. Currently, no one is responsible for spatial development at the government level.

**Although putting together a spatial development team and consolidating spatial competence is only one part of the proposals of the expert group, the structural change is an important prerequisite for changing the way of thinking, conduct of affairs, and decision-making processes in the organisation and the state government.** Further details on this proposal are provided in Chapter 3.

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<sup>5</sup> According to the dissenting opinion of the Ministry of Finance, the need to put together a new spatial design unit is not substantiated clearly enough.

7.1. Put together a spatial development team at the central government level as a department of the ministry.

Putting together a spatial development team complements the state-level spatial competence with new specialists and brings together the competence of spatial development, architecture, interior design, landscape architecture, and design as a so-called competence centre for spatial development. According to the expert group, the most practical thing would be to **put together the spatial development team as a spatial development department of a ministry (Ministry of Finance or Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications)**. It is important that the spatial development unit be represented at the level of the deputy secretary general.

The deputy secretary general for spatial development represents the areas of spatial development at the highest level of state governance. The deputy secretary general for spatial development is necessary to ensure that the work on spatial development is coordinated and represented at a sufficiently high level at the initial stage of the decisions. Currently, spatial development does not have a so-called owner in the state structure. Without a clear structural unit and leadership, no sense of ownership can arise.

When bringing the spatial development team under the leadership of the existing deputy secretary general, the title of the deputy secretary general should be renamed or extended.

The task of the spatial development team should be the consistent implementation of other proposals by the expert group.

7.2. Re-arrange the activities of entities involved in spatial development of the state in different ministries; consolidate the existing spatial competence.

The spatial development team (for example, department) should be joined with the Spatial Planning Department of the Ministry of Finance, the Construction and Housing Department of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, the architectural competence of the Ministry of Culture, and the design competence of the Ministry of Culture (joined or integrated). The structural unit should be joined with the regional administration competence of the Ministry of Finance, the design competence of the innovation unit, and the corresponding competence of other entities making spatial development decisions.

The working group preparing the formation of the spatial development team is responsible for developing relationships with the existing positions and

making concrete proposals for consolidating the national spatial competence.

If the consolidation fails or the technical analysis of the working group shows that it does not guarantee the desired result, it is possible to consider an alternative option: for example, putting together a spatial development team by the Government Office, which is currently in charge of sustainable development issues.

## 8. Increase spatial awareness and competence for making spatial development decisions and in the society at large.

### 8.1. Continue to organise trainings and information days while expanding the topics to all areas of spatial development.

In addition to the trainings offered by the Ministry of Finance in the field of planning, also organise trainings on other fields of spatial development, in particular on architectural and landscape architectural design issues. Information days for the pilot projects and best practices of different fields of spatial development contribute to the improvement of the overall quality of spatial development. Expand the target groups for the training to include both the public and private sector, as well as the third sector.

### 8.2. Integrate spatial education into the curricula of general education.

If possible, integrate spatial education with different subjects and introduce the elective subject 'Architecture and living environment' horizontally at the upper secondary level. Every citizen deserves to have a basic knowledge of space to value their living environment and to contribute to spatial development by making informed and wise decisions.

### 8.3. Continue cooperation with universities to develop the Master level study programme, as well as the refresher training programme in spatial development.

Further development and implementation of learning is important both for increasing spatial development competence and – ultimately – improving the quality of space in Estonia.

### 3. SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Considering the spatial competence needs of the fields of spatial development, architecture, interior design, landscape architecture, and design, it would be best to **put together a spatial development team consisting of an additional 5 to 15 people to fulfil the new tasks. The team will become a spatial development unit of the Ministry of Finance or the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications under the guidance of the deputy secretary general of spatial development because:**

- it makes it possible to fulfil all tasks included in the report of the expert group, including those which are partly or fully not fulfilled at the state level today;
- it combines the space-related tasks, which are currently fragmented, into one place;
- it makes it possible to take advantage of the existing spatial competence within the Ministry;
- there is currently a nation-wide network for regional administration at the Ministry of Finance, which allows communicating with the local government units;
- the state assets department of the Ministry of Finance coordinates the implementation of the state real estate policy and making financing decisions, and directs the activities of the State Real Estate Ltd;
- the Ministry of Finance coordinates the state's strategic design and fiscal policy, including investments;
- by working at the Ministry of Finance, it would be possible to organically join the experiences in financial design and spatial development;
- by working at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, it would be possible to organically join the Construction and Housing Department with the spatial development team, which would allow to direct the field of construction significantly more efficiently, covering the whole life cycle of construction;
- by working at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, the spatial development team could easily work together with the Road and Railway Department, Transport Development and Investment Department, and the Department of Foreign Instruments to take into account the quality of space in investments.

When creating additional posts for the spatial development team, opportunities should be found to reduce the number of officials in line with the general direction of increasing national efficiency and reducing bureaucracy.

At the state level, a large number of space-related decisions are made every day at different levels of decision-making. The spatial development team cannot participate in all decision-making processes. Therefore, it is also important to increase spatial competence at the government level in general, as well as include additional professional associations in the area of spatial development.

#### Tasks and roles

These tasks have predominantly not been set at the national level today or the responsibility in fulfilling the tasks has been dispersed. Some planning tasks are fulfilled by the Planning Department or the Regional Administration Department of the Ministry

of Finance; some tasks are partially fulfilled by the Construction and Housing Department of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, as well as the architectural advisor to the Ministry of Culture.

**The tasks of the spatial development team do not extend to the decision-making level of the local government.** The content and form of the counselling support service of the local government units require further analysis and negotiations with local authorities. The spatial development team will not deal with issues of the local administrative level or duplicate the work of the local government unit specialist, but engage in larger and more general tasks.

An essential part of the work of the spatial development team is visionary and creative work, including the initiation, development, and implementation of projects promoting national space (for example, a follow-up project for the Estonia 100 'Good public space' project), as well as contributing to solving the challenges of topical spatial development problems in the society (for example, improving the competitiveness of the state by improving the quality of space, adapting to shrinkage, replacing or modernising mass construction, preserving and improving the living environment of rural areas and small settlements, fostering the use of historic buildings, coordinating urban development issues, achieving sustainable development goals, developing a modern learning environment, etc.).

**The main target groups for services provided by the spatial development team are:**

- government agencies, in particular the development departments of ministries (development plans and investments);
- state authorities: in particular the Road Administration, the National Heritage Board, the Environmental Board, and the Land Board; state-owned companies: Riigi Kinnisvara AS, the State Forest Management Centre, etc.;
- foundations Innove, Enterprise Estonia, KredEx, the Environmental Investment Centre, and the Agricultural Registers and Information Board;
- professional associations and centres in spatial development fields;
- industry and entrepreneurs, as well as local government units regarding capacity building and developing instructional materials.

The main task of the spatial development team should be **extending the principle of improving the living environment set out in the Planning Act to all areas of spatial development**: its implementation in future spatial development decisions on the use of state property, real estate investments, and financing measures, as well as participation in solving current problems in society. At the same time, long-term projects should be initiated, such as updating and creating strategic documents and legislation and planning the systematic changes to decision-making processes and information systems. Being proactive and taking initiative is important in fulfilling all tasks.

**I Creation and implementation of spatial policy bases (implementation in documents).**

DEVELOPS AND COORDINATES THE STATE SPATIAL POLICY AND WORKS FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION. MAKES PROPOSALS FOR AMENDING LEGISLATIVE ACTS AND STANDARDS FOR SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT.

The spatial policy (national spatial plan) covers architectural, land, landscape, regional, cultural, construction, social, and environmental policies, and the state real estate strategy. The spatial development team is involved in policy development and monitors their implementation in terms of space. In addition to contributing to policy documents, the spatial development team also participates in developing and updating key strategic documents and legislation.

The spatial development team aims to better align the national spatial development goals, the legislation, and development plans, and participates in the preparation of laws and other legislation relating to spatial development. The task is fulfilled in cooperation with ministries, professional organisations, and other related parties.

**II Implementation of the spatial policy with individual decisions (implementation in space).**

ADVISES THE STATE IN COMMISSIONING REAL ESTATE BY TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE OBJECTIVE OF IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF SPACE AND THE LIVING ENVIRONMENT.

The spatial development team ensures the competence of the state as a contracting entity. It participates in the preparation of terms of reference and makes proposals for research while working with the State Real Estate Ltd, the Road Administration, the State Forest Management Centre, the Environmental Board, ministries, recipients of state or European Union co-financing, etc. The team makes proposals for organising procurements for planning and design services (including idea competitions) and developing the public space, infrastructure, and public transport. It is important to involve the local government at the earliest stage in fulfilling the tasks.

ADVISES IN THE STRATEGIC USE OF STATE ASSETS.

The spatial development team advises government agencies in the governance and vision of both improved and unimproved property. Makes proposals, if necessary, and provides expert opinions on the use of real estate, demolition, temporary release, or transfer to the ruler of the state asset or the state company

or foundation providing the real estate services on matters of major importance in real estate.

MONITORS THE COMPLIANCE OF INVESTMENTS AND GRANTS WITH THE SPATIAL POLICY OBJECTIVES.

The spatial development team monitors the achievement of nationally important spatial development goals and the quality of decisions with significant spatial implications. The team participates in the development of state investment support measures, the allocation of grants, and monitors its intended use. Makes proposals for planning and using state budget funds for ordering plans, building projects, and surveys that are nationally necessary.

### III **Counselling on spatial development and creating a vision.**

OFFERS SOLUTIONS FOR TOPICAL SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS IN THE SOCIETY AND ADVISES IN MAKING SIGNIFICANT SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS.

The spatial development team advises government agencies in developing strategies and plans, as well as in making significant spatial development decisions, participates in the development of significant spatial development and national development plans, and in working groups and committees related to large-scale objects (e.g. ports, airports, museums, stadiums, major road construction sites) to ensure that the spatial impact is taken into account in making decisions. Participates in the work of working groups and committees related to spatial development, such as the Commission for Sustainable Development, the working group of the Landscape Convention, etc.

Advises state authorities and companies in deciding on the location of important buildings, as well as making decisions regarding spatial development and spatial design, including construction decisions. Makes proposals for architectural competitions and preparing expert opinions; compiles sketches, volumetric analyses, and spatial analyses.

WORKS WITH SPATIAL DATA AND MAP LAYERS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE TO MAP, ANALYSE, AND SYSTEMATISE THE STATE'S INTEREST REGARDING COMPREHENSIVE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT

The spatial development team analyses and synthesises spatial data and map layers at the national level and makes proposals to improve the cohesiveness of the existing map layers and create new map layers.

### IV **Cooperation and training on spatial development.**



ORGANISES COOPERATION WITH PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND FIELD EXPERTS. ORGANISES TRAINING IN THE AREAS OF SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT.

The spatial development team opens up spatial topics for the public and highlights important issues and organises cooperation and training for all areas of spatial development. Advises politicians and communicates the views of the public or government agencies, promoting two-way communication. Explains the problems of spatial development and opens the context for the wider public.

The spatial development team initiates discussions on spatial development, organises seminars, conferences, and trainings. It puts together and manages working groups to address topical issues. Collects, aggregates, and analyses the research and projects in the areas of spatial development and puts together, on the basis of experiences, the relevant help and guidance materials for local government units and developers.

## V International cooperation.

REPRESENTS ESTONIA ON ISSUES OF SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT INTERNATIONALLY.

The spatial development team is a partner in international discussions on spatial issues and ensures the consistency of cooperation. Participates in the discussions regarding the spatial development of the Baltic Sea region and the Nordic countries, including in the policy-making at the European Union level. The areas of architecture, construction, and planning are currently separated at the European level. The Ministry of Finance works on the VASAB (Vision and Strategies Around the Baltic Sea) project, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prepares the Baltic Sea Strategy Conference, etc. The team contributes to shaping the European dimension in making decisions regarding regional development and urban policies (Urban Europe, URBACT, digital mapping). Participates in coordinating the cooperation in Estonia on new European Union directives that have an impact on space and shaping Estonia's attitudes towards them.

The list of tasks is neither final nor ranked by priority. The working group is responsible for determining the exact activities of the spatial development team, avoiding duplication, the tasks set, and the mechanisms for fulfilling them, as well as other topics by negotiating with different parties.

#### 4. STEPS NEEDED FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSALS (IMMEDIATE ACTIONS)

The following steps are needed to implement the proposals of the expert group:

1) **Put together a working group<sup>6</sup>**

The expert group suggests putting together a working group to prepare for the launch of the spatial development unit, which would create the prerequisites and bases for the activities of the spatial development team. The working group should consist of about 3–5 people. The estimated working period of the working group is 1 year. The working group includes competence of the areas of spatial development, law, and public administration.

##### The working group:

- analyses and maps the tasks of existing units;
- makes proposals and discusses with the related parties the most appropriate structure for the spatial development team;
- determines the future work organisation and resource requirements in the changed structural units;
- prepares in cooperation with the related parties the amendments to the statutes of public sector bodies making spatial decisions;
- makes proposals, negotiates, and coordinates the activities of the spatial development department and the parties involved in the area of spatial development in the public sector to connect the decision-making processes and establish the basis for cooperation with professional associations;
- prepares a draft for the Government of the Republic Act to amend the acts regulating the tasks and work organisation of ministries to put together a spatial development team and organise its management structure.

2) **Based on the results of the working group, form a spatial development unit and appoint a deputy secretary general responsible for space design.**  
The spatial development department will start implementing the other proposals of the expert group.

#### 5. BENEFITS TO THE SOCIETY

The implementation of the proposals of the expert group will provide a better basis for creating a high-quality space because:

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<sup>6</sup> The Association of Estonian Cities believes that the tasks of the working group can be fulfilled without putting together a working group. The dissenting opinion is included at the end of the report.

- the general principles of spatial development are described in laws;
- a high-quality living environment is commissioned by the state;
- the space values are on the map and the data systems are connected and can be used as open data;
- the state spatial policy is comprehensive and covers all areas;
- the national spatial development goals are consistent;
- the state and the local governments are smarter contracting entities;
- the sectoral spatial development decisions are better considered;
- the state regionally supports a more balanced spatial development;
- the cooperation between state authorities and local governments is better.



### EXPECTED BENEFITS FOR ESTONIA

- **Making national spatial development decisions will become more efficient** both in the short and long term because the state has more knowledge about the area of spatial development and is more competent in it. Additionally, the cooperation between the various actors is more cohesive.
- The **use of national resources will become more efficient and economical** because there will be a continuous and long-term overview of the Estonian spatial environment and its development.
- The **quality of the Estonian spatial environment will increase**, which, in the long term, brings many social benefits in all areas from public health to the economy because the interests and goals of the state are more clearly and uniformly defined from the point of view of space and a person has been appointed who is responsible for them.
- Estonia will be **more competitive internationally** as a better spatial environment is more attractive for residents, businesses, investors, and guests.
- Estonia's **spatial development will become more balanced and, if necessary, faster**. As the legal system regarding the areas of spatial development will become clearer, the number of disputes, including the number and duration of litigations, of construction projects, plans, etc. will reduce and less money will be spent on them.
- The **reputation of Estonia will improve**. By making decisions and taking concrete steps to achieve the objectives of several international spatial policy documents (European Landscape Convention, Davos Declaration, United Nations

Sustainable Development Goals, etc.), Estonia can lead the way for other countries.

## 6. COMPOSITION OF THE EXPERT GROUP

The work of the expert group of spatial design was summarised by **Jaak-Adam Looveer**, the leader of the expert group, and **Kaidi Põldoja**. The content of the report of the expert group of spatial design is based on the proposals of the members of the expert group and the working group and has been discussed extensively.

Leaders of the working groups, **Katrin Koov**, **Veronika Valk-Siska**, **Toomas Paaver**, **Indrek Ranniku**, and **Kalle Vellevoog**, significantly contributed to the compilation of the report. **Marten Kaevats** and **Anni Katkosild** from the Government Office supported the work of the expert group.

### MEMBERS OF THE EXPERT GROUP:

**Ministry of Culture:** Hillar Sein and Tarvi Sits, alternate members Siim Raie and Indrek Rünkla;

**Ministry of Finance:** Veronika Ilsjan and Tiit Oidjärv, alternate members Marika Tuusis and Andres Levald;

**Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications:** Indrek Gailan and Karin Sillmann, also Jüri Rass; alternate members Triin Orav and Liis Vahter;

**Ministry of the Environment:** Taimo Aasma, alternate member Marika Erikson;

**Ministry of Education and Research:** Indrek Riisaar, alternate member Marianne Rohulaid-Kuusik;

**Union of Estonian Architects:** Aet Ader, Peeter Pere, and Toomas Paaver, alternate member Katrin Koov;

**Estonian Association of Spatial Planners:** Heiki Kalberg, alternate member Maila Kuusik;

**Estonian Landscape Architects' Union:** Ülle Kunnus, alternate member Sulev Nurme;

**Estonian Association of Interior Architects:** Reio Raudsepp, alternate member Raul Tiitus;

**Estonian Association of Designers:** Ilona Gurjanova;

**Estonian Academy of Arts:** Toomas Tammiss, alternate member Andres Ojari;

**University of Tartu:** Rein Ahas, alternate member Garri Raagmaa;

**Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities:** Angelika Kallakmaa-Kapsta, alternate member Endrik Mänd.

The **spatial division working group**, led by Indrek Ranniku, consisted of: Angelika Kallakmaa-Kapsta, Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities; Siim Raie, Ministry of Culture; Pille Metspalu, Estonian Association of Spatial Planners; Veronika Ilsjan, Ministry of Finance; Maila Kuusik, Estonian Association of Spatial Planners; Triin Orav, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications; Garri Raagmaa, University of Tartu; Tõnu Laigu, the Union of Estonian Architects; Tarvi Sits, Ministry of Culture; Katrin Koov, Union of Estonian Architects; Teele Nigola, Estonian Landscape Architects' Union; Teele Pehk, Cooperation Assembly; Tiit Oidjärv, Ministry of Finance; Helen Sooväli-Sepping, Tallinn University.

The **spatial design decision-making working group**, led by Kalle Vellevoog, consisted of: Endrik Mänd, Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities; Triin Talk, Ministry of Culture; Heikki Kalle, Estonian Association of Spatial Planners; Veronika Ilsjan, Ministry of

Finance; Sulev Nurme, Estonian Landscape Architects' Union; Silver Riisalo, Estonian Landscape Architects' Union; Reio Raudsepp, Estonian Association of Interior Architects; Liis Vahter and Triin Orav, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications; Andres Alver, Union of Estonian Architects; Jiri Tintera, Valga Local Government; Andres Levald, Ministry of Finance; Tõnu Laigu, Union of Estonian Architects; Taimo Aasma, Ministry of the Environment; Timo Aarmaa and Peeter Mauer, Riigi Kinnisvara AS.

The **spatial competence working group**, led by Katrin Koov, consisted of: Anu Hallik-Jürgenstein, Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities; Kaie Enno, Estonian Association of Spatial Planners; Veronika Ilsjan, Ministry of Finance; Peeter Pere, Union of Estonian Architects; Aet Ader, Union of Estonian Architects; Triin Orav, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications; Timo Aarmaa, Riigi Kinnisvara AS; Mart Hiob, Estonian Landscape Architects' Union; Veronika Valk-Siska, Union of Estonian Architects; Tiit Oidjärv, Ministry of Finance, Silver Meikar, Ministry of Culture; Marten Kaevats, Government Office.

The **spatial law working group**, led by Toomas Paaver, consisted of: Merike Alep, Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities; Carolin Pihlap, Ministry of Culture; Maila Kuusik, Estonian Association of Spatial Planners; Ülle Reidi, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications; Indrek Rünkla, Ministry of Culture; Teet Kukk, Ministry of Finance; Ülle Kunnus, Estonian Landscape Architects' Union; Triin Orav, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications; Daimar Liiv, administrative court; Aet Ader, Union of Estonian Architects; Endrik Mänd, Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities; Toomas Tammis, Estonian Academy of Arts; Katri-Liis Ennok, Ministry of Finance.

## TO SUMMARISE

Estonian state and the people living here benefit from a high-quality spatial environment both economically as well as regarding social equality, democracy, migration, investments, and choice of residence. Therefore, every decision at the national level which contributes to achieving a high-quality spatial environment, as well as every step that is taken towards improving it, is important.

By sustaining Estonia's spatial values and improving the quality of our spatial environment, we can be more successful as a state, being more competitive as a place of residence and a place of work, as well as a tourist destination. Developing the spatial environment in a more informed and considered way helps to improve the quality of life in Estonia and increase the well-being of the population both now and in the future.

The expert group of spatial design was the first broad-based long-term forum for analysing the problems of spatial development and suggesting solutions, which included representatives of the most important specialist organisations in the field, universities, ministries, and other government agencies who make national spatial development decisions directly or indirectly on a daily basis; as well as external experts.

As such, the expert group has a symbolic meaning. It is important for the Government of the Republic of Estonia to take concrete steps to realise the proposals submitted as a result of the expert group's extensive work by the specialists in the field.

The leaders of the expert group of spatial design thank all members of the expert group and working groups and external experts for meaningful cooperation.

**We need to make changes to achieve different results.**

## ADDITIONAL POSITIONS AND DISSENTING OPINIONS

### 1. Dissension opinion of the Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities

/LOGO OF THE ASSOCIATION OF ESTONIAN CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES/

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Expert group of spatial design  
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Your e-mail 21 September 2018  
Our e-mail 26 September 2018 No. 1-7/215

#### Final report of the expert group of spatial design (specified)

The management board and council of the Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities (ELVL) has discussed the materials of the expert group of spatial design on several occasions this year – including the meetings of the management board of the Association of Estonian Cities (ELL) and ELVL on 23 January 2018 and 8 May 2018, the council of the ELVL on 27 February 2018, as well as at the meeting on 11 September 2018.

We have submitted our views, based on the need to maintain the functioning of the principle of local government autonomy, including planning autonomy, at least three times (letter of the ELL of 1 February 2018 No. 1-7/30 Issues of spatial and strategic design; letter of the ELVL of 13 March 2018 No. 1-7/53-1 Interim report of the expert group of spatial design of the Government Office (draft); letter of the ELVL of 14 May 2018 No. 1-7/117 Interim report of the expert group of spatial design of the Government Office (draft) II. Representatives of the ELVL have also expressed their views during the meetings of the expert group.

The ELVL has shaped its positions on the basis of the principle of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia: all issues of local life are decided and organised by local governments, who independently act on the basis of law. The self-management right of local governments also includes planning activities, i.e. the planning right of local governments covers, *inter alia*, territorial planning, including the right to organise comprehensive plans, special plans, and detailed plans. Local governments have the authority to decide on any issue that is not a matter of national affiliation without a provision of delegating authority.

In light of the above, we repeat that the management board and council of the ELVL do not agree with the restriction of the autonomy, including planning autonomy, of local governments or the objectives of increasing departmental administration, which, unfortunately, has become the main direction of the final report of the expert group of spatial design and the activities planned on the basis of it (see final report, pages 19–24: Spatial development team; Task force).

We continue to believe that it is impossible to improve the quality of spatial development by creating additional administrative structures to the ministries or the Government Office. Instead, we should take practical steps in everyday work, incl. systematically develop the networking of experts, to improve the competence requirements of job descriptions of officials, supplement the statutes of agencies, and systematically and purposefully train specialists and officials. Last but not least – we need to support civil society initiatives.

Respectfully

/signed digitally/

Jüri Võigemast

Executive Director of the Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities

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