

DEAR in Estonia 2020: Context and project observations



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Development Education & Awareness Raising (DEAR) Support Team

The DEAR Support Team is a project of the European Commission:

- Supporting the Commission in the implementation of the EU DEAR Programme, including through
 - Programme Analyses and Studies, Database management, Communications about the Programme
- Supporting EU DEAR projects in the implementation and learning from their work, including through
 - Workshops and Exchanges ('Hubs'), Communications (Programme <> Projects), Learning from and between projects

As part of the work of the Team a series of 'country studies' have been commissioned to investigate the context in which DEAR projects operate in different EU Member States.

Details of the country studies that have been published to date can be found at

<https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/dear/news/dear-programme-reports>.

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1. Introduction

A) Assignment and Methodology

The aim of this study is to look at the national context in which the DEAR projects in Estonia operate and identify the main challenges and opportunities for their current implementation.

The research was conducted between May and August 2020 through desk study of background information, project communications and news reports. I looked at public, media and political opinions and interests relating to international development issues, national policies and strategies relevant to DEAR as well as evaluations of GE in Estonia. Zoom interviews were also carried out with all the main partners in DEAR funded projects running in Estonia at the moment (AKÜ, ERL, JTI, Mondo, Pagulasabi, Peipsi CTC)¹. The main emphasis was on DEAR projects that started in 2017 but I also included some information on projects that started in 2020 from the later Call.

The concept of DEAR encompasses both development education/global learning as well as awareness raising, which includes campaigning and advocacy activities. For the development education/global learning approach in Estonia, I've used the term global education (GE) as the Estonian term used for this "maailmaharidus" (=world education) is closest to this term, describing "an active learning process, founded on values of solidarity, equality, inclusion and cooperation, that enables people to move from basic awareness, through understanding the causes and effects of global issues, to personal involvement and informed action" (definition adopted at Global Education Forum in Amsterdam in 2004). Other linked educational terms in use in Estonia are Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) (kestliku/säästliku arengu haridus in Estonian) and partly also Environmental Education (EE), although in the latter the focus is normally on the local environment.

The main study questions were:

- Is the national context conducive to DEAR?
- Is the general ambience in the country enabling Campaigning-Advocacy?
- What are the main changes in the Estonian context from the time the projects were written up to the present?
- What opportunities and limitations of achievement have these changes caused?
- What are the main methods of engaging the different audiences?
- What are the similarities and differences between Global Learning and Campaigning-Advocacy projects?

B) Overview of the organizations and projects

The involvement of Estonian NGOs in the 2016 Call was limited. Only the National Platform AKÜ served as a co-applicant in two projects. All other NGOs were sub-grantees with very limited activities. The limited involvement could be seen to be the result of the change in the organization of the DEAR Call in 2016 when it started to involve very large consortiums with big and experienced organizations as the lead. In previous years more Estonian NGOs had been involved in DEAR projects as co-applicants and even as the lead. For the sake of this study, we did not limit the discussions only to the activities of the current

¹Interviews:

June 17, 2020: NGO Mondo Board

June 24, 2020: Estonian Refugee Council (Eero Janson), NGO Mondo (Kristina Mänd, Mari Jõgiste)

June 25, 2020: Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation (Agne Kuimet, Susanna Veevo)

June 30, 2020: Peipsi CTC (Ederi Ojasoo), Jaan Tõnisson Institute (Keit Spiegel)

July 3, 2020: Estonian Green Movement (Henri Holtsmeier)

projects, but talked about the issues in a larger context. We also interviewed the project leaders of two new projects from the 2018 Call.

The NGOs involved in the projects are diverse: from small to comparatively large organizations in the Estonian context. Some focus on the local and some have a global orientation. A couple of the organizations are very experienced in GE, some are only starting. Some organizations also have direct links to the Global South **through** volunteers, local refugee partners and social enterprises that support their GE activities.

Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation (AKÜ)

AKÜ is the National Platform for NGOs active in the field of development cooperation, GE or sustainable development. It does capacity-building and advocacy for its members and is a strategic partner for the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and acts as a consultant in the field of development cooperation, global citizenship education and sustainable development. AKÜ is the NGO member in the Development Cooperation Commission which aids the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in evaluating development cooperation proposals and project reports and to select projects for national funding. AKÜ also provides workshops and consultancy for private companies and municipalities on SDGs and does awareness raising activities for the wider public on SDGs and global issues. Currently, AKÜ is finalizing advocacy, networking and capacity-building activities for the "Coherent Europe for Sustainable Development" and "Bridge 47" projects where it served as a co-applicant. In Bridge47 AKÜ coordinated the sub-granting program "Share your Innovations in GCED" in Estonia with the aim of supporting innovative methodologies in the DEAR field and involving new organizations in GCE. The advocacy projects have helped AKÜ to strengthen its role and capacities in advocacy work.

NGO Mondo

Mondo is the leading Development NGO in Estonia working on development cooperation, humanitarian aid and GE. They also send expert volunteers to their development cooperation projects and offer grants for journalists to cover global issues. As part of GE Mondo has also conducted study trips for education policy-makers, written articles in education magazines and conducted regular studies about attitudes towards GE. Mondo's Global Education Centre provides training, workshops and materials (documentaries, teaching and learning materials, exhibitions etc.) for educators and young people. It organizes events, coordinates school visitors and organizes national contests for schools in GE. They also have digital materials on the online portal www.maailmakool.ee. NGO Mondo coordinates the UNESCO ASPnet school network. Mondo also has its own social enterprise Mondo Crafts that supports women's cooperatives through marketing their products in Estonia. In DEAR projects Mondo's main emphasis is normally on GE, but the approach includes awareness raising activities (mainly through media) as well as different advocacy activities as the organization is considered to be a key expert in GE, Fair Trade, development cooperation and humanitarian aid. Mondo has been a sub-grantee in Bridge47 project. In 2020 it started with two new DEAR projects: it is the lead partner in migration themed project: "I am European': Migration Stories and Facts for the 21st Century" and co-partner in climate change themed project "1Planet4All".

Estonian Refugee Council

The Estonian Refugee Council is the leading Estonian NGO on refugee questions, both resettlement and awareness raising on refugee issues. ERC operates humanitarian projects in the Middle East and in Ukraine and recently established a refugee-led social enterprise offering a variety of services from catering to language courses run by refugees living in Estonia. In the education field, ERC trains teachers and provides teaching and learning material. They have also been active in organizing awareness raising events to bring Estonians and asylum seekers or refugees together in joint events to overcome fears and prejudices. The awareness raising activities are mainly funded by AMIF (7 years funding received by the Ministry of Interior from the EC). ERC has also been a sub-grantee in DEAR project "Snapshots from the Borders".

The Green Movement

The Green Movement is one of the main environmental NGOs in Estonia. Previously it was active in Fair Trade issues, but now concentrates more on climate change related AR projects. It recently ran a

campaign called PÕXIT (=exit from the oil shale production, which is the main CO2 polluter in Estonia). Now this campaign has been modified to "Õiglane üleminek" (a just transition to renewable energy sources) that looks for local solutions to overcome the negative social consequences in ending oil-shale production. This campaign is run in cooperation with two other environmental organizations in Estonia. The Green Movement has been a sub-grantee in Bridge47 project with a plan to organize public speakers to Fridays for the Future student demonstrations. They were the only organization interviewed involved in street action type of campaigning.

Peipsi CTC

Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation (Peipsi CTC) is an international, non-governmental organisation that works to promote sustainable development and cross-border co-operation in the Lake Peipsi Basin since 1994. Peipsi CTC has been taking part in numerous international projects in the field of water management, environmental awareness, community development, cross-border and development cooperation. They have run DEAR projects and activities in the past. Peipsi CTC has been a sub-grantee in Bridge47 project with a plan to develop an educational interactive programme for youth about oil shale mining and its local and global impact. The idea consists of a video producing, role play and theoretical background. The current project coordinator is new to global development themes and methods, and learned about them within the Bridge47 project.

Jaan Tõnisson Institute (JTI)

JTI is a small project-based organization that has hosted various DEAR projects in the past, but has lately been less active in the field. JTI organizes training for teachers on civics and has in the past also worked on development cooperation. They recently received a small project grant from Bridge47 to organize training for kindergarten teachers on multiculturalism issues.

C) Main changes in the context in 2018-2020

Through the interviews and desk study the following issues were identified as the main changes in the context during the past few years:

- 1) Changes in the political context due to the inclusion of a new populist right-wing party in the government (from April 2019);
- 2) COVID-19 pandemic;
- 3) New policy planning processes for policies relevant to DEAR, as well as recent policy changes requiring advocacy actions.

Their impact on project implementation and on DEAR activities will be discussed further.

2. National context in which DEAR projects operate

A) Main actors, funders and policies for GE

The main promoters and actors in GE have always been NGOs. The NGOs have quite successfully cooperated in their activities and advocacy efforts and promoted the inclusion of GE in the education field, e.g. through a joint working group for GE in AKÜ.²

However, the same cannot be said about the public administration. Traditionally, the concepts that GE represents have been divided between different ministries: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has funded awareness raising on development cooperation, the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) education for sustainable development (ESD), and the Ministry of the Environment (MEnv) environmental education (EE).

MFA funds DEAR projects from its budget for ODA. The funds allocated for these purposes have remained small, the sums vary according to years, but usually during recent years there has been one open GE Call annually for a sum of €50 000-60 000. MFA includes in its DEAR all volunteer sending programs and institutional support to some key partners. There is some controversy in the MFA about the aims of their DEAR Call which is called "Raising Awareness of Development Cooperation". Although they support all types of quality GE projects through the Call, their expectation is still that the Call will help in gaining support for the development cooperation funded by MFA, their choice of target groups, issues and methods, and that is what is measured in the opinion surveys commissioned by the MFA.

In addition to the DEAR Call, the MFA also provides co-funding for EC DEAR projects. During the last years, the MFA has almost automatically paid the co-funding part (5-20% of project budget) when an Estonian NGO receives a DEAR grant from the EC. This practice has, however, changed with the new government and Minister of Foreign Affairs who has refused to co-fund EC DEAR projects with a migration theme.

MER has not been very active in GE in the past, but it supports ESD with small allocations to different initiatives like Estonian UNESCO ASPnet (incl. the Baltic Sea Project), the coordination of international ESD project GLOBE (Global Learning and Observations to Benefit Environment), olympiads organized by the Tartu Environment Centre. In recent years the total sum for these initiatives has been around 60 000 EUR annually. MER and MEnv recently made a joint Implementation Plan for EE which foresees support for environmental education and awareness raising on sustainable development through joint project funding.

Environmental education has greater resources, but the focus is not on global or development issues. Funding for environmental education is distributed mainly through the Environmental Investment Centre's Environmental awareness program (Keskkonnainvesteringute keskus, KIK). The aim of the program is to support the development of environmentally friendly consumption habits by Estonians and an awareness of ecological balance. The budget for the Environmental Awareness Program in 2019 was €2 300 000. However, GCE does not feature in the plans, except for the small funds that are devoted to "environmental education and awareness raising on sustainable development" and includes the activities supported by the MER mentioned above.

There are a couple of other local actors that occasionally promote and fund GE. The Archimedes Foundation has in the past supported youth projects with a GE focus. The Integration Foundation has occasionally issued Calls for projects with the objective to contribute to a tolerant and integrated multicultural society. These projects normally need to be targeted towards the Russian-speaking population or involve them in the project implementation. Estonia inherited a large Russian-speaking

²AKÜ hosts a GE working group of NGOs (normally 4-5 NGOs active in global education) which comes together occasionally to share information and to do joint advocacy work. The working group has e.g. given joint suggestions to the MER during different curriculum reforms.

minority (25% of the population) from the Soviet era and the situation of the minority has been a source of anxiety throughout the re-independence period. In the education sector separate Russian-language schools exist at the primary level. The teaching in Estonian is gradually increased in the Russian-language schools and the upper-secondary schools are bilingual. While Estonian-language knowledge has increased, the issues around the minority have become less politicized. Since most of the Russian-speakers live in the North-East corner of the country, there still exists a linguistic and regional division within the country. NGOs working on global education need to take this into consideration in DEAR activities and make extra efforts to involve Russian-speaking teachers and schools into their activities. Most of the NGOs are doing this. Extra support for integration projects can be obtained from the Integration Foundation.

Funding for GE is limited in Estonia and larger actions have relied heavily on EC DEAR projects. Since 2007 there has been normally 2-3 EC funded DEAR projects running in parallel, as the European Commission has been promoting projects from new member states with additional funds and lighter requirements. The Estonian NGOs are well connected to other European NGOs and have been able to build up successful partnerships. However, the application process is still highly competitive and time-consuming. During recent years the EC has also started to prefer fewer but larger inter-European projects, and thus the number of projects implemented in Estonia has decreased, and as seen in the division of EC funding between Estonian NGOs, tend to concentrate on a couple of the most experienced NGOs in the GE field (AKÜ and Mondo).

A positive development took place in 2019 with the GENE Peer Review process. More collaboration has emerged between the various stakeholders (MFA, MER, MEnv and NGOs). The parties have started to plan more cross-sectoral cooperation and are in the process of forming a National Platform for GCE. Unfortunately, this process has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is some hope that the new National GE Platform will be fundamental in bringing EE and GE closer together under a joint ESD umbrella and to form partnerships to link the national resources in collaborative strategies, projects and actions. This could in the future mean more local funding for projects with more global emphasis on sustainable development. However, at the moment it is more likely that EC DEAR Calls will remain an important source of NGO funding for DEAR activities also in the future.

SPACE FOR GCE IN THE ESTONIAN EDUCATION FIELD

Education is highly valued in Estonia and Estonians are proud of faring well in PISA comparisons. The PISA 2018 focused on reading, with math, science and global competence as minor assessments. Estonia did not participate in the assessment of global competence, but the Estonian students ranked first among the European countries in all three domains of the assessment.

Although it is unfortunate that we do not have the international comparison of Estonia on global competence, the fact that this aspect is now included as part of PISA can, however, be seen as one motivating factor behind the increased interest towards GE in MER. In the Estonian educational system assessment is one of the main motivating factors and schools in Estonia tend to be ranked based on their national exam results. Many school headmasters have implied that long as GE is not part of assessment, it is not a priority.

The current State National Curriculum (2011, revised in 2014) still gives room for GE in its general values, competencies and cross-cutting themes. Although mainly visible in social subjects, GE is also increasingly perceived as a cross-cutting issue in the curriculum. It can also appear in extra activities and be introduced and implemented by teachers themselves, by schools, by associations (e.g. NGOs) coming into schools. At the gymnasium level there is also an optional course called “Globalizing World”. However, GE is still not very visible in the education field and the quality and quantity of GE in schools varies depending on the energy, enthusiasm and work of committed individuals, be they teachers, school directors, ministry officials or NGO workers.

The lack of knowledge, experience and motivation of teachers to address global issues is one of the main obstacles for greater GE content in school practice. PISA studies have concluded that the most critical problems of the Estonian education system are related to teachers. Teaching is not an attractive profession and salaries continue to be low despite attempts to increase them. Initial teacher education is seen to be too formal and not enough emphasis is put on values education.

Several initiatives have been undertaken to tackle the problem, e.g. creating a new, competency-based career model, establishing competence centers in universities to support professional development and research on teaching practices, and encouraging cooperation among teachers within and between schools. For example, the Centre for Ethics at the University of Tartu (Eetikakeskus) has been working on a "Good School Model" which was launched in 2012 and promotes a whole-school approach to value education. Both main teacher training universities, Tallinn University and the University of Tartu, have also established Centers of Competence, responsible for the development of teacher education and educational research. The Competence Centre at Tallinn University has recently launched a new "Future school" project to support innovation in education. Their EDULab is co-creating innovative approaches together with schools and one of their "Living Labs" is focused on GE, civics, ESD, entrepreneurship and social innovation and has involved people working in GE, EE, ESD into its team.

Tallinn University has also developed a new program "Sustainable Development and Natural Sciences" for BSc students certified by Gaia education. This program includes a course called GE (4 credits). They have involved NGOs active in GE in the implementation of the courses. NGOs are also organizing their own in-service training for teachers. As teachers are obligated to take at least 160h of in-service training per year, these trainings are quite popular. Thus, the situation in teacher training is gradually improving.

There are plans for curriculum review and reform in Estonia in the near future. In the GENE Peer Review the MER partners indicated an intention to include GE perspective to a greater extent in the curricula of social studies and natural sciences. More emphasis will also be put on education for sustainable development, values education as well as media literacy and tackling disinformation as these topics have lately received quite a lot of attention in Estonia. However, the process has been delayed due to the fact that MER is going through a structural reform. Starting from 1 August 2020 a new Education and Youth Agency will be formed that merges Archimedes Foundation, Innove, HITSA and Estonian Youth Work Centre. There will also be a department working on curriculum reform in the new agency. The reform process is awaiting the new structure to be up and running.

In the education sector, the issues related to sustainable consumerism have been the most popular among Estonian teachers as they provide a possibility to link local with global in a concrete and practical way and have been recognized as part of ESD. NGOs have also supported teaching issues of ethical consumerism and Fair Trade with study materials, campaigns and school visitors. The UNESCO ASPnet is active in Estonia and has GE and ESD as well as SDG4 in the core of its activities. It organizes seminars for teachers, study trips and annual Model UN simulation for the students in the member schools.

One special characteristic of the Estonian education field is the strong emphasis on "digital competence". It proved to be highly useful in the current pandemic situation where the children stayed at home and teaching and learning was organized online. As Estonian schools have organized their communication with students and their parents by using special applications designed for that (eKool and Studium), there was no great interruption in delivering education during the lockdown. Due to the good digital skills of the teachers and their experience in online education, it was also easy for the NGOs implementing DEAR projects targeting teachers and pupils to move the planned training and activities online and continue reaching their target groups via the Internet.

Teachers use several portals where digital learning materials and methods are gathered. The e-learning materials are mainly created and shared by teachers themselves and are made available on the digital study material portal E-Koolikott (E-Schoolbag) and Opiq (<https://www.opiq.ee/>) which gives basic school pupils and teachers free access to digital textbooks. The creation of digital learning materials involves a network of e-learning material experts from the subject associations who guarantee the quality of materials. NGOs can also present their digital materials to the E-Schoolbag and Opiq. Previously, there

were not many GCE related materials in these digital portals, even if they provide a good channel to reach the teachers. With their first Bridge47 sub-grant in 2019, NGO Mondo digitized its "Globalizing World" course material and placed it in the Opiq-portal. Globalizing World is a textbook with background information, as well as lesson plans and interactive methods that can be used for the optional course "Globalizing World" at the gymnasium level.

SPACE FOR GCE IN YOUTH WORK

In Youth Work MER plans youth policy, organizes youth work and manages the work of the Estonian Youth Work Centre (EYWC). Local authorities and the state are partners in organizing youth work in Estonia. It is common practice to delegate some of the tasks of practical implementation of youth work to NGOs. The development of youth affairs is supported by several umbrella organizations, societies uniting different professions and organizations of youth work, youth associations and foundations. Hobby schools, work brigades, camps, youth centers as well as youth associations managed by the non-profit and private sectors render their services at the level of local government.

The Archimedes Foundation has been the implementing body of Erasmus+ projects. It has helped NGOs to apply for EC funding, especially with regards to developing youth work. Through Archimedes it has been possible to apply for funding for strategic partnerships with other organizations in EC countries in order to improve the quality of youth work. Some funded projects have had a GE focus. The work earlier done by Archimedes will continue under the new Education and Youth Agency starting in August 2020.

The youth sector has been dealing with GE already for some time. The first trainings for youth workers on global education were organized in 2009 with the support from Archimedes.³ Some youth trainers and facilitators have gained expertise in GE and can include the topics into their training for youth workers. Youth workers can then bring some of the themes into youth centers and youth organizations. Many youth workers work in schools as a "huvijuht", i.e. the educator organizing extracurricular activities.

However, GE is not very visible in national youth strategies. The Estonian Development Plan for the Youth Sector 2014–2020 has a focus on better opportunities for youth in developing their creativity, initiative and cooperation, success in the job market, and active participation in society and decision-making. One of the aims of youth work is values education, e.g. respect for other cultures and the feeling of being a citizen. EC cooperation in youth policy is also a focus with one its aims being: to support youth participation and input into global policy and its implementation (e.g. climate change, SDGs, human rights) and cooperation with regions outside Europe.

Studies show that there is interest in global issues among the youth organizations⁴, but the youth organizations are at different starting points. The subject of developing countries is still a distant theme for Estonian youth organizations, with local issues tending to dominate their work. Youth organizations have in the past been involved in GCE, e.g. through workshops and training on Fair Trade and interdependencies concerning practical issues like clothes, food, environment, studying, electronics, relationships, knowledge, mobility, etc.

³https://mitteformaalne.archimedes.ee/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/maailmaharidus_noorsootoos.pdf

⁴According to a study conducted in 2013 among youth organizations about their involvement in GE (conducted by Mondo), there is positive interest towards global issues. 80% of the survey respondents acknowledge the role they (can) play in global issues and 72% were familiar with the term global education. 57% of the respondents acknowledge that they already work with topics concerning global issues like higher education, health and unemployment, intercultural dialogue, sustainable development, discrimination, human rights and children rights. Their main activities on the listed topics have been awareness raising projects and local activities (information days). The most interesting topics in global issues were: intercultural dialogue (79% of the respondents), access to education (75%), sustainable development (70%), human rights and discrimination (62%).

B) Main actors and policies for AR and advocacy

For awareness-raising activities the main partners have been media and journalists. Advocacy activities have targeted different decision-makers in the public and private sector.

Journalists have been involved in DEAR projects taking part in training and receiving grants for going on trips to cover development themes. From 2015-2018 Mondo led a project "Media for Development" where the Estonian Broadcasting Company (ERR) was a project partner, developing documentary films, organizing debates and running a portal on development issues, which helped to foster stronger links with journalists. Their new migration project "I am European" also has a focus on young journalists. AKÜ has collaborated with ERR, e.g. in co-organizing a series of expert speakers to introduce environmental documentaries on TV. The Refugee Council has given grants for journalists to cover refugee issues. Estonian journalists are often interested because of the travel opportunities which they would otherwise not have.

With policy-makers a lot depends on personal relations. As Estonia is a small country with a population of only 1.3 million, the people working in these circles tend to remain the same. Often this makes approaching policy-makers easier and less formal. With consistent advocacy work towards civil servants, it is possible to gradually see a change in attitudes and policies which are not threatened by sudden political changes. NGOs have been organizing trainings, seminars and conferences for policy-makers on GCE, SDGs, refugee issues, climate change and other DEAR related topics for several years and are regularly targeting them with advocacy materials and messages. The more experienced NGOs have been able to establish good working relations with ministry officials. NGOs are also nowadays more accepted as experts and partners in policy-planning processes than earlier. For example, AKÜ applauded the recent participatory process in preparing the Estonian Strategy 2035 led by the State Chancellery. The process itself led to more awareness on SDGs within ministries and better cooperation on sustainability issues. However, the same is not the case with all the policy-planning processes led by ministries themselves.

There have also been direct advocacy efforts targeted towards politicians, e.g. Mondo has taken one of the leaders of EKRE (the right-wing populist party), who later became the Speaker of the Parliament, to visit development cooperation projects in Ghana. His support for small-scale local development projects was also reported in the media. That might have had some impact in that the party has not targeted development cooperation negatively while in power.

In the field of SDGs there are various actors as new platforms have been created and the previous ones reformed and activated. The Estonian Commission for Sustainable Development was established in 1996 as an advisory commission to the government. The Commission brings together non-governmental umbrella organizations in various areas of sustainable development – environmental protection, business, research institutions, heritage protection, child protection, youth associations, energy, etc. In 2016, the membership of the Commission on Sustainable Development was reviewed to cover all major issues related to global sustainable development goals. Until then the Commission lacked representatives in the field of development cooperation, but now includes also AKÜ.

There is also an inter-ministerial Working group on Sustainable Development which consists of representatives of ministries and Statistics Estonia. The working group has worked on SDG indicators and SDG reporting. In 2018, a Coalition for Sustainable Development was formed. It is an inter-sectoral and cross-sectoral network of cooperation and involvement aimed at raising public and self-awareness of the world's sustainable development and development goals. To date, more than 20 organizations from the public, private, and third sectors have joined the coalition. AKÜ is heading the coalition.

C) Public attitudes

Public opinion on issues relevant to DEAR projects - development cooperation, SDGs, Fair Trade, migration, climate change - is not very supportive, but the overall trend shows positive signs. It is good to keep in mind that Estonia has come a long way since re-independence and the transition process to a market economy has not been easy to many parts of the society which have not seen their lives improve in the process.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND THE SDGS

Estonia became a donor country in 1998, when the MFA made its first foreign aid allocation: €31 000 for food-aid to Ukraine. Since then Estonian bilateral development cooperation is primarily directed towards former Soviet republics (Ukraine, Belarus, the Southern Caucasus, Central Asia) where the Estonian reform experience is considered to be relevant. Only a small proportion of the bilateral budget is allocated to the least developed countries (LDCs). However, Estonia claims to support LDCs through allocating a large portion of ODA through international organizations. Estonia joined the OECD in 2010 and is an observer in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), while it does not yet fulfill the criteria for becoming a full member of DAC (ODA at least 0,2% of GDP).

At the policy level, giving international assistance to other countries was clearly motivated by the fact that it was one of the prerequisites for EU membership. Still today development cooperation is considered to be more of an obligation than a guiding moral principle based on global solidarity. Estonia's global responsibilities are usually absent in political speeches. The overall interest towards development issues continues to be limited among the general public. The main argument against development cooperation tends to be that "we are ourselves poor or have many poor people in Estonia and thus we have no possibility or obligation to help elsewhere". The arguments for it are again based on the relative affluence of Estonia in global comparison, moral obligation to help, and the reputation and security of the country.

When Estonian joined the EU it made a commitment to raise its development cooperation budget to 0.33% of GNI. The national budget strategy foresees ODA level to be 0.17% of GNI until 2021. The level was gradually increasing until the new government took office. In 2018 Estonian ODA was around 41 million EUR equivalent to 0.16%. In 2019 there was a drop to 0.15% of GNI although the actual sum increased slightly to 42 million. Out of the development cooperation budget the MFA also supports awareness raising on development cooperation. During the pandemic already opened development awareness Calls were cancelled.

In the latest Eurobarometers from 2018 and 2019, Estonians are among the most sceptical towards development cooperation. According to the 2019 poll, 70% of Estonians think that helping people in developing countries is important (EU average 86%). One-third (34%) of respondents think tackling poverty in developing countries should be one of the main priorities of the EU and just 17% of respondents in Estonia think tackling poverty in developing countries should be one of the main priorities of their national government - both numbers being the lowest proportion of any Member State (EU average 70% and 58%). Estonian respondents score the lowest also in arguments for development cooperation: the least number of people are of the opinion that it strengthens the country's global position or contributes to a more peaceful and fairer world. Although refugee issues have been high on the national agenda, Estonia is the only country where less than half (45%) see that financial assistance to developing countries is an effective way to address irregular migration - however this number has increased 8% from 2018.

Revealingly, Estonians also score high on "I don't know" questions whether more or less money should be spent on development cooperation and what role the private companies should play (Eurobarometer 2019). In the 2018 Eurobarometer there were also questions about personal commitment. Less than one in five respondents in Estonia (16%) agreed that as an individual they can play a role in tackling poverty in developing countries, compared to the EU average of 53%. In fact, 47% totally disagree with this idea. Furthermore, just over one in five (21%) say they are personally involved in helping developing countries

- the EU average is 42% (Eurobarometer 2018). These results clearly show the need for more DEAR in Estonia.

However, in the opinion polls conducted by the MFA support for Estonian Development Cooperation has been gradually growing.⁵ In the most recent poll from 2020, which was conducted during the COVID-19 crisis by AKÜ, more than 90% of the respondents supported at least some action in development cooperation. The most popular priorities were quality education and health. The selected target areas in Eastern Partnership countries also received support from the population. However, only a small minority found that their knowledge about development cooperation is sufficient, which again supports more DEAR.

According to the NGOs, the knowledge of SDGs has increased remarkably during the last years, especially among entrepreneurs and policy-makers, due to the joint strategy processes and awareness raising campaigns. The emphasis has, however, been more on Estonia's own position in different SDG indicators and how to improve those, instead of the global aspect of supporting poorer nations to achieve the SDGs. The State Chancellery has supported raising awareness on SDGs, e.g. via supporting the participation in the European Sustainable Development Week and by organizing discussions at the annual Opinion Festival in Estonia. Cooperation between different actors is also strengthened in various networks and there is a plan to create an online central platform for sustainable development where everyone could receive information on sustainable development issues and take responsibility for achieving SDGs.

The knowledge and trust in Fair Trade (FT) has improved among the school pupils according to a study conducted on behalf of Mondo in 2018. 65% of young people recognized the FT label and 60% had trust in the system. In a similar study in 2016, the number of young people that knew the label was 26%. For young people the label was most of all linked with fair pay for the workers (74%), ban on using child and forced labour (70%) and also trustworthiness (55%). Only 4% answered that FT is a marketing trick. 73% of young people believed that through consumer behaviour it is possible to have an impact in developing countries. 72% are ready to buy FT products and 33% said that they buy the products when they have a chance. For 67% of the young people answering the survey the main channel for getting information on FT is school, for 56% it was the Internet. Taking into consideration that the awareness raising on FT started in Estonia some 12 years ago and the availability of FT products is limited in shops, the work done in schools in raising the awareness on FT has had a strong positive impact.

MIGRATION AND REFUGEES

The recent refugee crisis in Europe has contributed to a political shift to a more nationalistic and populist direction. This could be seen in the recent (March 2019) parliamentary election results with the significant rise of a populist right wing party (EKRE) which won 19% of the votes. Although the number of refugees in Estonia is extremely small, only about 500 persons have got asylum in Estonia, the issues of refugees and migration arouses a lot of tension among the population. This could be seen at the end of 2018 when the political turmoil over the UN Migration Pact almost brought the government down.

In general, the NGOs working on refugee issues see that that situation has calmed down from the previous years. When Estonia started to take in refugees in 2015 there was panic and populists were cultivating fear. Society became polarized on migration themes and humanitarian values were overshadowed. In the opinion poll on the attitudes towards migration and refugees conducted in 2015 almost 40% of the population was extremely critical towards refugees, a year later the number had decreased to 30%. Unfortunately there have been no later polls to compare these numbers with. But the recent public discussions whether to allow seasonal migrant workers into the country during the pandemic show that attitudes change slowly.

The NGOs working in this area still see a remarkable change for the better of people's opinions on refugees and asylum seekers. People have seen that nothing terrible has happened, have maybe had

⁵In an opinion poll conducted by the MFA in 2015 74% of the general population and 98% of opinion leaders found that Estonia should support poorer nations. There was a 9% increase in the opinions of the general population compared to similar research in 2005.

more contact with the newcomers which has contributed to fewer fears. This speaks for the effectiveness of the awareness raising and educational projects involving migrants and refugees on the ground for meaningful encounters.

CLIMATE CHANGE

One of the major energy sources in Estonia is oil shale which is mined in mainly Russian-speaking Ida-Virumaa county in North-East Estonia. This industry uses a lot of natural resources and causes high CO₂ emissions which has resulted in the CO₂ footprint of Estonians being among the highest in EU countries after Luxembourg. So far, the Estonian government has promised to decrease the emission of greenhouse gases by 80% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels which is not enough to fulfill the Paris Climate agreement. Eventually Estonia needs to find a way out of relying on oil shale production.

However, due to regional politics (employment for the miners) and security reasons (fear of relying on Russian energy) the government has shown no real ambition to take climate change for real and form a clear plan on how to decrease the emissions. In March 2020 the Estonian Parliament approved a plan to allocate €125 million to build a new oil factory in Ida-Virumaa for the state energy company Enerfit280. Many civil society organizations were against the plan, but due to the State of Emergency for COVID-19 were not able to organize demonstrations. The plan was criticized in the media and social media for environmental and economic reasons. Estonian youth organizations made a joint open letter to the government against the plan.

In the interviews with respondents environmental organizations stated that knowledge on climate change has improved during the last years. However, they are disappointed by the low ambitions of the government on climate issues. Climate Action Network (CAN) ranks Estonia among the countries that have made the EU's weakest efforts in fighting climate change. During recent years there has been more pressure on the government from Estonian environmental organizations with e.g. the Green Movement collecting petitions for PÕXIT (exit from oil shale production) and a campaign for a just transition from oil-shale production (be it direct burning or making it into oil with the planned factory) to greener energy.

In 2019, Estonian youth also joined the campaigning for climate action with the Fridays for Future - movement (F4F). Before the pandemic there were regular climate strikes and a week of climate events – A Week for the Future – was organized in the autumn by young activists from F4F. Film evenings, lectures, workshops, and demonstrations took place in various cities across Estonia with the aim of raising awareness of the climate crisis and environmental problems. In the beginning it attracted larger crowds of participants in different cities, later the numbers decreased, but still some 1500 people are active in Tallinn, Tartu and Pärnu to keep the campaign alive.

D) Recent Political Changes

As mentioned above, since April 2019 the Government coalition includes a populist right-wing party (EKRE) which holds the key position of minister of finance, and the MFA is in the hands of a minister from the conservative party (Isamaa). The prime minister and ministers of education and social affairs are from the Centre Party.

The new Coalition has been dodged by political scandals, starting from alleged display of neo-nazi symbols by members of EKRE to sexist comments about the new female prime minister of neighbouring Finland. Many have alleged that the new government has ruined the good reputation of Estonia as an innovative and open society. However, internationally it seemed not to have a negative impact in the recent international campaigning for the rotating seat at the UN Security Council. Estonia serves as a non-permanent member of the Security Council 2020-2021. This new high-profile position has brought some more attention to international issues in the Estonian media and public discussion.

However, the new government has been dividing society. While many felt that a change in the long rule of the liberal centre-right Reform Party was needed, the new mainly male government with very conservative views on sexual minorities, abortion and migration, has raised a lot of opposition among more liberal-minded Estonians. Many issues have also tested the relations between coalition partners. Most recently, the Minister of Finance defunded some long-term NGO partners of the Ministry of Social Affairs working on gender issues and sexual minorities of their funding. This abrupt decision raised tensions between these ministries led by different coalition partners.

Under the current government many policy-processes that were planned previously have continued as planned as they are led by public servants not by politicians. These include developing the Strategy for Estonia 2035, developing an Agency for Development Cooperation, drafting a Foreign Policy Strategy and Africa Strategy. These processes have provided NGOs with new opportunities for awareness raising and advocacy work.

E) Choice of Methods for DEAR projects

The choice of methods was discussed with the DEAR implementing organizations based on the division of the approaches between 'Global Learning' (enhancing the competencies of target groups in understanding and addressing issues of global development using learner-centred, participatory, and dialogue-oriented methodologies and often in working within the formal or non-formal education sectors) or on 'Campaigning-Advocacy' (aimed at concrete changes in behaviour at individual and collective levels, or in institutional/corporate policies through usually pre-determined public actions).

Most of the NGOs interviewed for this study preferred the educational approach to campaigning. They saw that quality GCE fosters critical understanding which cannot be achieved through simplified campaigning messages. However, as stated in the beginning, the organizations and project coordinators have been working on the issues for different lengths of time and thus their experiences vary. Some of the more experienced NGOs combine an educational approach with advocacy work, based on fostering relations with public servants, working as experts, trying to get their views into policy documents.

The Bridge47 project has introduced some organizations to new methods. For example, Peipsi CTC had developed a role-play with teachers and an environmental education specialist on mining oil shale for young people with a Bridge47 sub-grant. The idea came from one of the Bridge47 capacity-building meetings where they realized that role-play is a good method that has not been used much in Estonia. As oil-shale mining is currently a contested issue in Estonia, it was considered a good theme for role-play as it is polarizing, the issues have a lot of different aspects, and are intriguing. Through role-play young people can develop their analytical skills. According to the project coordinator, the method worked well in test situations with adult players (environmental activists). Unfortunately due to the pandemic they were not able to organize role plays with youth as of yet. Instead they were training teachers for conducting the role-play, as it requires skills and knowledge from teachers to stay in a neutral position as facilitators.

Other organizations that received small-grants from Bridge47 sub-granting were also using it for educational materials and methods. Mondo used the funds to digitalize the teaching and learning material "Globalizing World" and included it in the national Opiq -portal. The materials and exercises can be used as a material for an optional course at the gymnasium level, or separately in various social subjects. With the Bridge47 funding they also developed new material, an animation for kindergarten teachers, where a small girl, Amanda, takes the children with her to discover the world. Training for kindergarten teachers was very popular. Kindergarten teachers in one particular multicultural kindergarten were also the target of the small-project by JTI, which was postponed due to the pandemic. The aim is still to organize training for the teachers and joint multicultural events with the children and their parents.

Campaigning in the form of street actions and petitions were not supported by the NGOs for a variety of reasons:

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- 1) They were not seen as culturally appropriate to the Estonian context. According to the informants, it is hard to make sceptical Estonians behave as activists;
 - 2) As seen from the Eurobarometer surveys, Estonians are not well-informed about international development, do not see that the EU or their national government should have a role, and see their personal role also as insignificant in tackling the issues of global poverty. This makes it hard to mobilize them for campaigning actions;
 - 3) Global Learning approach is seen as more beneficial because Estonia puts a lot of emphasis on the importance in education - having more GE in the education sector is seen to result in greater impact;
 - 4) Many bigger organizations that are involved in long-term partnerships with civil servants prefer a less confrontational approach in order not to jeopardize their good relations. They fear that simplistic campaigning would diminish their role as expert partners;
 - 5) Some expressed the opinion that in a society that is already polarized on issues of migration and refugees, it is better to try to find common ground for listening, learning and finding compromises for the way forward instead of campaigning for one perspective.

However, there were also different opinions, mainly by the Green Movement, which has recently renewed its board of directors with younger activists, who see street actions and protests as a powerful means of raising awareness on issues and advocacy as a tool for propagating change in policies. With their experience from Fridays for Future campaigning they were more positive towards street actions and petitions (the Green Movement project coordinator is also the F4F coordinator in Tartu). Their challenge was to get the schools to participate. Only a handful of teachers were supportive of the campaign and there were also headmasters who refused to let their pupils attend the protests as that would have a negative impact on their schoolwork. As one school headmaster put it: "children need to study, not to march". Very few educators seem to understand that taking part in protest could be a learning experience. However, the Green Movement used their small-grant from Bridge47 to include more education content into the street actions. The original plan was to involve public speakers in the protests but due to the pandemic this plan was modified to climate themed online lectures.

Many organizations that have previously been partners in DEAR projects with pan-European campaigns were sceptical towards Europe-wide campaigns which often tend to have too simplistic and controversial messaging. In a population that is not well aware of the issues in question, like in Estonia, they tend to raise confusion and negative responses. Therefore, the message has to be adapted to the context and situation in each country. In their experience, petitions don't normally work except in cases where they are on issues close to the local reality (e.g. environment).

As an example, the Estonian Refugee Council was involved in the DEAR project "Snapshots from the Border" with a subcontract to organize a one-time event on refugee issues. The same project also runs a pan-European campaign to have 3 October named as the European Day of Memory and Welcome to commemorate people who have lost their lives crossing the Mediterranean. The main partner was from Italy, where a large proportion of the population wanted the EU to play a bigger role in development cooperation and in solving the migration crisis. The attitudes are quite the contrary in Estonia as can be seen in the latest Eurobarometers. Therefore, the Refugee Council decided that they will not take part in the petition campaign but the activities are adapted to the national context. With the sub-grant the Refugee Council organized a film screening and discussion with refugees which, according to them, worked well. They had a substantial number of people present and a good discussion on the issues. That was in accordance with their approach on raising awareness on migration and refugee themes. They have learned that meeting refugees face-to-face and hearing their stories works best to calm down fears.

In their new migration and climate themed projects Mondo is combining social media campaigning with GE approach. In the new Call the campaigning method was a requirement. However, in their projects there is flexibility in campaigning methods and messages depending on the country context. The campaigning is mainly done with the help of youth themselves: supporting their activities, using social media and taking part in festivals that young people attend. Media is also seen as a good partner for AR and advocacy in reaching wider audiences. The new projects are targeting especially young journalists through training and grants. Although the last Call emphasized the need for reaching wider audiences

through campaigning, both new projects include Global Learning components: preparing materials for teachers and training them. Teachers and youth workers are seen as multipliers.

Mondo expressed their dilemma in organizing events and talking to the already converted or going with big campaigns where you might reach more people but most likely will not succeed in changing their opinions. According to Mondo, deeper global education activities are also needed to bring about change. For this reason, their main focus is in formal education, working with universities to include GE into initial teacher training and with educational agencies to have it in in-service training using participatory, transformative pedagogy concepts. The fact that they have been able to sustain the Global Education Centre already for more than 12 years and develop it into a resource centre recognized by the educators and policy-makers has been one of the key factors of their success in the education field. One positive aspect is also their ability to involve their Southern partners into learning activities and promote their perspectives (e.g. through twinning projects between schools and school visits).

AKÜ is mainly involved in advocacy efforts. With the resources it has got through DEAR funding it has been able to build better networks with other platforms to build their own expertise and advocate for common issues. They have also been able to establish themselves as an advocacy organization representing a number of NGOs and thus a legitimate partner in different policy planning processes. They were also not in favour of street actions, preferring to work in partnership with government partners through working groups and committees which they are invited to join. In their opinion the DEAR project visibility guidelines can sometimes be problematic. As there is clear scepticism towards the EU in political circles, it is not always beneficial to advertise the fact that activities are paid by the EC for the advocacy efforts. They were looking for more flexibility in rules on the visibility of EU logos.

3. Major Challenges and Opportunities for DEAR Projects in 2017-2020

Below we analyze the impact of some of the main changes in the Estonian context: the challenges and opportunities coming from the changes in the political context due to new populist right-wing government, the COVID-19 pandemic, and different policy-planning processes which have required adaptation from the DEAR projects and approaches.

A) Political Changes

Although there were initially fears that the new government would attack Estonian development cooperation, this has not happened. A worrying trend is that in the background the funds allocated to development cooperation are still decreasing. The main open public enemies for the populist right-wing politicians seem to be migration and liberal leftist values which propagate gender equality and equal rights for sexual minorities.

Funding for awareness raising on refugees comes mainly from EC AMIF funds which are administered by the Ministry of Interior, where the EKRE party leader Mart Helme is the minister. The Estonian Refugee Council receives most of their funding for awareness raising through the Ministry of Interior and reported that their relations with the civil servants continues undisturbed and the political leadership has not affected their work in this regard. The awareness of refugee issues Call funded by AMIF was carried out as planned and funds allocated.

However, the situation seems to be different in the case of MFA where the current minister is Urmas Reinsalu from Isamaa (a conservative party). The previously automatic co-funding for DEAR projects did not take place with Mondo's new EC project, but was rejected due to the fact that it was concentrating on migration issues. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that Foreign Minister Reinsalu personally wants to defund all activities that bring foreign students from the Global South to Estonia.

The NGOs are confused about the actions of the MFA during the pandemic. They first announced their Call for awareness raising activities in the beginning of the year. Proposals were submitted and evaluated. However, later the Call was cancelled. The reason being the pandemic and possible changes in budget allocations. The same happened also with development cooperation Calls. However, later some Calls were targeted to some organizations to organize projects in developing countries alleviating the COVID-19 pandemic. The awareness raising funding is still frozen.

The latest political scandal in the funding of civil society activities happened only a few weeks ago when the Minister of Finance (from EKRE) refused to pay out already contracted support to NGOs working on human rights, gender and sexual minorities. Some 13 NGOs are considered as strategic partners to the Ministry on these issues and have received funding on a quarterly basis. The Minister of Social Affairs (from the Centre Party) has since cancelled their agreement with the Ministry of Finance to allocate the funds for these partner organizations and has promised to find the funds from inside his own ministry. These political struggles might be a result of the growing popularity of EKRE at the expense of their coalition partners.

Another politicized issue in the news lately has been the situation of foreign students outside of the EU coming to study in Estonia. The Ministry of the Interior has finished drafting amendments to the Aliens Act which limits the issuance of residence permits to foreign students' family members. The draft law allows the students only to work part-time, up to 20 hours a week, and allows the Police and Border Guard Board (PPA) access to sensitive banking information regarding a foreign student's wages. The explanation of the draft law sees foreign students as a potential terrorist threat, as "a student who chooses to remain in Estonia after their studies might have to accept a lower position, which could lead to them taking offense and being disappointed...this could lead to closed communities and parallel societies, where the customs and norms of Estonia are ignored...segregation and economic vulnerability again create a fertile ground for radicalization and and though that support for terrorism". Due to the restrictions around coronavirus, ministers had previously said students may not be allowed to enter Estonia at the start of the school year in September. Closing the borders and hardening the lines for people from outside of Europe to get visas and residence permits cause problems to DEAR projects which rely on the Saunter partner visits and incorporate foreign students in the activities.

B) COVID-19 Pandemic

Estonia had the first case of COVID-19 at the end of February. By 13 March the number of known cases was 27 and the Government announced a State of Emergency. There was a lockdown of the economy, which required distant learning and working. With the number of infections going down, the government ended the lockdown in June and the country has gradually started working again. As the infection rate remains low for the time being, the government's rapid response has been applauded, although it has had negative economic consequences and according to the Bank of Estonia the economy will decrease by 10%.

However, the lockdown has also brought Estonia some positive attention. With its well-developed digital society, all the necessary prerequisites for moving work and services online was already in place. Estonia offers widespread free wireless internet, encourages technology start-ups and has put most government services online. Digital learning is also highly valued and has been one of the key objectives of the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 is to contribute to more effective use of digital technology in learning and teaching and to improve the digital competence of the entire population. As a result there was no interruption in public services and schools worked efficiently online when compared to most other countries. Currently, the Estonian digital innovations in e-learning are shown as examples of good practices on how to flourish during crises which might work as a positive boost to its digital start-ups and companies.

The shift to working from home has been easy and smooth also for the DEAR projects. All the partners reported working from home-offices from March onwards. For many this has had a positive impact in

making work more effective as there is no time wasted for commuting, although people with small children at home also report it being difficult to arrange peace and quiet time for working.

Flexibility in organizing working time and place is still something people want to continue also after the pandemic. Organizations working with international partners report that the pandemic has had more impact on foreign partners than on Estonian NGOs. Many have stopped working while in Estonia everything moved quickly to the Internet.

The impact of the pandemic on project implementation differs depending on the project. Many sub-grantees for the Bridge47 innovative educational projects got their funding just before the pandemic hit and have thus had to adjust their projects.

MOVING ACTIVITIES ONLINE

As Estonians are in general tech savvy and online, it has also been easier than in many other countries to continue targeting the same target groups but with digital methods. For example, the original plan for the Green Movement was to organize speakers for fourteen Fridays for Future youth climate strikes with the Bridge47 funding. The project was supposed to start at the same time as Estonia announced the State of Emergency which meant that all planned events were cancelled. However, as the project coordinator used to work in IT, within a week all activities were moved to the internet. The project was re-oriented towards the same target group (youth in gymnasiums and higher grades in basic school) but now included online lectures on climate change delivered by politicians and economists. The problem was that the original project plan did not foresee funding for advertising this content. The project coordinator ended up working voluntarily to target youth and teachers through social media and letters. According to him, teachers were not very cooperative, out of 360 schools that were contacted, 5 responded. He was still able to get enough teachers involved via teachers' associations. In the end, they were able to organize the 14 lectures with 15-20 participants in each - around 200 young people in total. The positive side of the reorientation of the project was that now they have online recordings that can be used afterwards. The project coordinator still feels that if they had been able to continue with the original plan, that would have had more impact. Currently, young people are already overloaded with online materials, face-to-face campaigning in F4F would have been a more engaging and interactive activity. In the pandemic situation the problem was also that the young climate activists were not able to participate as they had online school at the same time.

As mentioned above, some of the organizations have been using digital learning in GE already before the pandemic. Mondo offers teachers online materials in their Maailmakool -portal and with their first small project from Bridge47 revised and digitized their Globalizing World study materials to Opiq-platform, which is the most used platform for E-learning materials in Estonia. Teachers and pupils can access the texts, videos directly with their own devices and fill in the exercises that are developed to test the understanding of the given issues.

During the last five years the in-service training course on GE organised by Mondo concentrated on digital skills. During the 60-hours GE course the teachers learned about GE, SDG and how to use different digital tools and platforms to make their teaching more interesting and interactive. One of their tasks was also to develop in groups digital lesson plans on SDGs. Digital learning is also included in the documentary film library Mondo is hosting for schools. Via the Internet schools have access to more than 200 documentaries on global themes that can be watched jointly in the classroom or individually at home. Mondo has also developed lesson plans for the films which are also using digital methods (different platforms for discussing the films or creative tasks using digital apps like making a music video etc.).

During the pandemic the Global Education Centre has concentrated in giving advice to teachers on how to use the digital materials, organizing video lectures with partners like Tagasi kooli (Back to the School), promoting films and videos. From March to May 2020 the staff at the Global Education Centre organised digital visitors to schools on the themes of migration, Fair Trade and climate change. In addition to online lessons, the pupils also got homework in the form of making a podcast, taking part in a digital climate strike, filming a video, etc. Their second small project from the Bridge47 funding was not affected by the

pandemic much as it concentrates in developing animation for kindergarten teachers. At the moment, they are working on 3 short video courses which support educators in gender equality, children's and women's entrepreneurship. They plan to continue working with the same format including open video lectures where different schools/classes can take part at the same time complemented with lesson plans with ideas for pupils' own work on the issues discussed.

All the planned trainings were also organised online during the lockdown. Mondo organized training for teachers and kindergarten teachers, AKÜ changed planned two-day on-site training for teachers into one-day (5h) online training. Both organizations stated that organizing Zoom-trainings is easy and they are popular among teachers. As the organizations also gained new skills and saw how effectively digital training work they plan to organize training online also in the future.

In general, the project coordinators at Mondo saw that digital learning has both positive and negative sides. In Estonia, targeting schools via digital methods, training and materials is easier than in many other countries. It tends to be more effective and more open, e.g. NGOs can involve good lecturers from abroad. However, with impersonal web-trainings it is difficult to impact deeper values. Pupils also need hands-on educational experiences which cannot be replaced by digital means. One problem is also that digital platforms are already filled with materials, it is difficult for the teachers to find the most suitable ones. Teachers also report having an overload of the internet when one sits in Zoom most of the day.

EXTENDING THE PROJECT PERIOD

In cases where going on-line has not been an option and the projects are coming to an end with activities still incomplete, projects have been extended. For example, in the Bridge47 project some of the main Europe level advocacy events were planned to take place at the end of the project. Although in Estonia AKÜ was able to continue the national advocacy work as all the policy-makers were online and policy-processes continued via Zoom meetings, this was not the case at the European level where the EU institutions do not seem to be as digitally competent. While AKÜ reported that they have been able to locally exceed their advocacy targets as the pandemic did not interrupt the work but brought new issues to advocate for, the European level advocacy efforts required a 10 months extension of the project period to enable face-to-face encounters with VIPs.

Some educational methods that the NGOs are using were also not possible during the pandemic, which led to project extension. For example, the Estonian Refugee Council reported stopping most of the awareness training work during the pandemic as their work is based on face-to-face meetings with refugees living in Estonia. These projects are funded by AMIF through the Ministry of Interior. The projects were extended without any problems in a timely manner as also the officials at the ministry administering the funds preferred postponing the events to making them online.

MAKING CHANGES TO PROJECT DESIGN

The role-play events planned in the Bridge47 small project by Peipsi CTC had to be cancelled or postponed. Instead of organizing the role-plays themselves, they changed the financial resources devoted for that into educational materials and organized training on how to carry out role-plays and worked out short role-play scenarios. This, however, included some additional work that was not foreseen in the original project and budget. In their opinion, Internet-based training was useful and more sustainable, and in the future they plan to include online based methods and materials in their project plans.

AKÜ reported that as some planned international events were cancelled or postponed they had more time to work at the local level and do more national advocacy work than planned. They were also able to re-allocate funds and make some additional communication materials - videos and texts with the travel funds that were saved. In their opinion, those materials have a bigger value than one meeting would have had.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM COVID-19

The following are some of the remarks from the NGOs interviewed on how to be better prepared in the future for situations like the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Need of Plan B: make preparations for working from home if needed and for moving activities online by increasing the amount of digital tools and methods used;
- Flexibility needed from the donors to review and approve necessary changes to projects quickly in changing situations;
- Need to figure out where to get extra funds for people's salaries if the project period is extended. There should be flexibility to move budget items around so that e.g. funds saved from travel can be reallocated to human resources
- Need to find ways to account for the extra work when changes into the project design are made. Moving things online or preparing new materials and training and advertising them to the target groups requires time and effort and should be compensated.

C) New Policies Relevant to DEAR projects

There have been a number of new policy processes that have provided opportunities for advocacy work on issues relevant to DEAR projects. The most important of these have been the preparation of the Estonian long-term development strategy: "Estonia 2035" and the process of making a National Platform for GE.

The process of drafting "Estonia 2035" is coordinated by the State Chancellery and was initiated in March 2018. The draft sets five goals for Estonia: Estonians are smart and active people who care for their health; Estonian society is caring, cooperation-minded and open; Estonian economy is strong, innovative, and responsible; Living environment of Estonia takes into account everyone's needs, is safe and of high quality; Estonia is an innovative, trustworthy, and people-centred state.

The draft has been prepared with the involvement of very large numbers of people. During the idea collection, discussions, seminars and analyses nearly 17,000 people made their contribution. Currently, the State Chancellery is awaiting feedback from the public on the draft to give it the final touches before forwarding the draft to the government and parliament. AKÜ has been part of the process to advocate for GE and global solidarity themes. The environmental organisations interviewed did not, however, put high hopes on the strategy fundamentally improving anything.

Estonia took part in the GENE Peer-review process in 2019. At the report launch event it was agreed that the ministries involved, MER and MFA, will start a process to develop a National Platform for GE. There are still different opinions between the ministries on who should take the lead, but according to AKÜ the process has been ongoing even during the pandemic, even though it slowed the process a bit.

The MFA is also going through many reforms and policy processes. A new "Foreign Policy Development Plan 2030" was drafted in 2019. The DEAR related aim in the policy is formulated as: "the public opinion towards development cooperation and the SDGs is supportive" and foresees activities like: "making the awareness raising efforts more effective in order to improve the public awareness of the importance of development cooperation and humanitarian aid", "we'll continue to support global education", "we'll help to increase the capacities of NGOs to apply for funding from the EC". In this document GE was for the first time mentioned as a separate issue from the awareness raising efforts of development cooperation.

The MFA is currently also transforming its development cooperation department into an agency which should start operating in the beginning of next year. This might raise the importance of development cooperation in the future and make its administration easier. At the same time, Estonian development cooperation seems to move more in the direction of international trade promotion. This could be seen in the process of preparing the Africa Strategy in the MFA which is supposed to be ready this autumn. The emphasis seems to be in supporting Estonian enterprises in offering digital innovations to African

countries. According to plans, the new projects need to have a digital component and they are targeted towards companies not NGOs. NGOs active in Africa at the moment can serve as partners to businesses. With the economic decline looming globally, all projects are also expected to have an emphasis on entrepreneurship.

The digital component has been present in the Estonian development cooperation previously, but in the Africa Strategy it seems to take precedence. The NGOs have criticized Estonia to be overly optimistic about the opportunities of technology. E-solutions are not a magic bullet to solve the problems of the developing countries, but could also have risks to further deepen the existing inequalities between rich and poor, men and women, and urban and rural dwellers. Very little consideration is also given to the risks of digitization in some contexts where there is no protection of personal information, repression of opposition, dissemination of fake news, etc. These risks do not mean that e-technologies cannot be introduced, but that they should be introduced in a way that acknowledges the risks and tries to lower the inequalities.

Estonia was among the first countries to report on their implementation of the SDG in 2016. In 2019 the country prepared the second report to the UN. The report is being prepared by the State Chancellery, who is also drafting the "Estonia 2035" Strategy. According to the monitoring report, Estonia's strengths are high-quality and accessible education, efficient health care management, high employment, including a minimum long-term unemployment rate, and a large share of renewable energy in final energy consumption. However, Estonia also has several areas in which it must continue its efforts to achieve global goals and Estonia's sustainable development goals.

The main tasks are to achieve gender equality (although the pay gap in Estonia has decreased in recent years, it is still one of the highest in the EU), reduce the risk of poverty for women and people with disabilities, including families with children with disabilities, ensure efficient waste management and recycling, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and preserve biodiversity. When talking about Estonia's global role, the report relies mainly on examples of the development cooperation projects from different NGOs in all the SDGs. SDG reporting seems to be a good advocacy tool in promoting projects that fall outside of the digital innovation spin but help in achieving the SDGs in partner countries.

The main advocacy organization AKÜ has been involved in different strategy processes and applauds the participatory approach by the State Chancellery. The MFA strategy processes have been less participatory with short deadlines for commenting. In addition to the strategy processes, they have taken part in many ad hoc advocacy efforts that try to change the policy actions, e.g. they were part of the joint NGO and business sector appeal to the prime minister asking for greener policies in June 2020. During the Spring they sent letters to the MFA about the cancelled and postponed Open Calls for development awareness and development cooperation.

AKÜs has suggested that the Estonian MFA could follow the example of countries like Sweden, Norway, Belgium during the pandemic to ease the work for NGOs. This would include decreasing the co-funding percentage for ongoing projects and making the percentage that can be used for human resources more flexible. This would make it possible to use budget lines that will remain unused due to the pandemic (e.g. travel expenses) and allocate that to human resources to cover project extensions and increased workload due to project changes and digitalization.

D) Big Consortiums, large campaigning projects

One issue that also came up in the discussions with NGOs was how much harder it has become to be part of the DEAR projects. The DEAR consortium projects are important for the new EU member states. In many cases the local funding for DEAR is unstable, especially in countries like Hungary and Poland, but also countries like Estonia have seen the rise of the populist right that is not supportive of the values that DEAR represents. NGOs working in these countries need these EU grants to be able to survive and continue their work. The tendency in the last years to prioritize big consortiums with experienced leads

with big financial means, has made it harder for NGOs in countries where DEAR is needed the most to compete for the funding. They might be sub-grantees in large consortium projects led by partners in western Europe where the situation and needs can be very different. With the small sub-granting they can do only small things. Only as co-applicants or lead applicants they will be able to build their own capacities.

Evidence shows that too big consortiums are not as effective as smaller ones. The ideal number of partners tends to be 5-7. The practitioners state that smaller consortiums have a bigger impact. As discussed above, the big pan-European campaigns fit poorly to the Estonian context. Campaigns might have a bigger reach, but the overall impact is questionable. For changing attitudes, opinions and eventually values, the work needs to start with the education sector and introducing Global Learning from early ages. The tendency to move away from Global Learning towards Campaigning and Advocacy approaches was, therefore, not supported by the NGOs interviewed.

The NGOs also complained about the long period from preparing the project through concept note, final application, until getting the grant. The process takes a couple of years in total during which the context might already have changed.

4. Conclusions

In this study we examined the position of DEAR in the form of Global Learning or as Advocacy/Campaigning in Estonia. NGOs are the main promoters and actors in DEAR. While there are various opportunities for both approaches, the education sector has become more open and involved in GE and the Ministry of Education and Research more supportive. Plans to make a National Platform for GE can further support the Global Learning approach. Most NGOs prefer Global Learning combined with Advocacy to Campaigning, or to combine the approaches. Media and journalists are the main partners in campaigning.

The main changes in the Estonian context during recent years have been: 1) Changes in the political context due to the new populist right-wing government, 2) COVID-19 pandemic, 3) New policy planning processes for policies relevant to DEAR as well as recent policy changes requiring advocacy actions.

The political changes have not been as drastic as feared in the beginning but have nevertheless resulted in decreasing ODA and issues like migration becoming a sensitive theme in GE and awareness-raising projects. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a shift towards online activities. Estonia is a pioneer in E-learning and the NGOs are also developing digital learning materials and methods for DEAR. However, there are limitations to the impact of online activities.

New strategy processes in the national context have opened new possibilities for advocacy work on GE and SDGs. The COVID-19 pandemic has also required new advocacy efforts. It has also required flexibility from both project implementers and funders as projects have had to be changed and/or prolonged. They also called for more flexibility from the funders in terms of consortium sizes, efficiency in digital skills, communication and administering the DEAR Calls faster.

DEAR SWOT:

STRENGTHS:

- good cooperation between NGOs
- experienced NGOs in GE
- room for GE in education and youth policy and practice
- good cooperation between NGOs, journalists and the National Broadcasting Company
- effective digital society, E-learning materials and joint portals for sharing them
- expertise in digital methods and materials

WEAKNESSES:

- general opinions negative on development cooperation and migration
- low ambitions on climate policy
- quality, skills, motivation of teachers and school headmasters in GE
- schools prioritizing assessment
- development cooperation seen as international trade promotion, own role in tackling global poverty considered small

OPPORTUNITIES:

- improved cooperation between NGOs and public servants
- experienced NGOs in GE getting more recognised by educators and policy-makers
- plans to create National Platform for GE could lead to better cooperation and increased national funding
- cooperation with universities to improve teacher training and develop innovational approaches in education
- curriculum reform
- SDG reporting and policy-making processes increasing knowledge on SDGs, and importance of GE and development cooperation

THREATS:

- growing support for populist right ideology
- some values and issues questioned (human rights, protection of minorities and refugees etc.) and not getting government support (e.g. migration)
- relying on DEAR Calls for funding – weak sustainability of funding and activities
- funding channelled to most experienced NGOs making it difficult for new actors to enter the field

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