

# Delegation Brandenburg on the topic 'Sustainable development within the framework of Saksa Kevad'

## Report on the fact-finding mission to Estonia from 18 - 20 September 2024

Travel Report by: Sebastian Zoepf (Spreekademie)

### Where "Trees of Truth" Grow

Estonia is renowned as a pioneer in digitalisation, where residents can handle 99% of administrative matters online. Our Managing Director, Sebastian Zoepf, recently had the chance to explore Estonia's advancements in digitalisation more closely during a trip organised by the Ministry of the Environment of Brandenburg. From the 18th to the 20th of September, he travelled with a small group of sustainability professionals to Tallinn to learn about the implementation of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals at both national and municipal levels.

The work began on the first evening, immediately upon arrival in the conference room. Discussions focused on the role of education in Estonia's sustainable development, with contributions from [Professor Helen Sooväli-Sepping](#), Vice-Rector for Sustainability and Green Transformation at Tallinn University of Technology and [Ms Kaidi Tamm](#) from the Stockholm Environment Institute. It became evident that Estonia faces considerable challenges in this area and is very keen to engage with German Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) practitioners.

The following morning began with a warm welcome at the German Embassy before the delegation headed to the [E-Estonia Briefing Centre](#). There, they were introduced to Estonia's digital landscape, where nearly everything—from applying for a birth certificate to paying for a dog licence—can be accomplished online using a web browser and a digital ID. This system enables even residents in remote rural areas to complete administrative tasks without leaving their homes. Imagine the transformative potential of such a system in a vast region like Brandenburg, or indeed across Germany!

The potential role of digitalisation in supporting sustainable development was a central theme of the subsequent visit to Estonia's Ministry of Climate and Regional Development. [Ms Eili Lepik](#), Head of the Department for Green Transformation at the Ministry of Climate, presented the national sustainability strategy "Estonia 2035." Particularly interesting was the development of over seven hundred individual indicators for this strategy, which enable transparent tracking of the implementation progress. The current status is visualised as a so-called „[Tree of Truth](#)“, where each leaf represents a different indicator, and the colour of the leaf indicates how close the respective target is to being fully achieved. The visualisation draws on data from all municipalities, which in Estonia are considered a public resource and made readily available.

Even more intriguing is the fact that the "Tree of Truth" effectively "grows" in every municipality in Estonia. The "Tree" allows them to access the data and understand their progress towards achieving the goals of the national sustainability strategy. It is also possible to compare the situation across municipalities, for example, to see how one's own community measures up in environmental protection compared to others. All this information is freely accessible [on the Internet](#), providing a high level of transparency in Estonia's implementation of sustainability

goals. In this respect, too, Brandenburg and Germany have much to learn from their Estonian counterparts.

During the trip, there was also much to be learned from the colleagues from Brandenburg who accompanied the delegation. So, Mr Zoepp frequently seized the opportunity to exchange ideas on successful participatory formats in rural communities. It became evident that successful citizen participation requires persistence and a positive attitude from local authorities. Perhaps, in the future, we may see the first "Trees of Truth" sprouting in Brandenburg because the seeds from this trip took root in its soil.

P.S. Special thanks to Martin Pohlmann and the Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Climate Protection (MLUK), as well as Jana Marin from the German Embassy, for making this trip possible for everyone involved.