

## **Questions and answers about the Ice Cellar Initiative**

### **What exactly is the Kadriorg Ice Cellar Initiative?**

On 21 November 2012, the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, summoned a meeting of the representatives of third sector organisations and political parties, cultural figures and political scientists; the meeting took place in the old Ice Cellar building in Kadriorg. At the meeting, it was decided that by spring, most likely by the end of March, proposals for developing democracy would be developed through the combined efforts of the population and then submitted to the Riigikogu. The organisation of the process was entrusted to the Foundation Estonian Cooperation Assembly ( [www.kogu.ee](http://www.kogu.ee) ).

### **What is the driving force behind the initiative?**

Over the last six months, in fact the last number of years, Estonian society has been discussing whether the election system that was established 20 years ago, the rules applicable to the activities of political parties and options available for citizens to participate in politics during the period between elections meet the demands of a democratic society. People are worried about the communication style and type of our politicians. They are also not happy with the ways used by the government, parliamentary politicians and political parties to justify their actions and decisions. This spring, society was shaken when a serious suspicion was raised – that the real sources of donations to political parties may not always be transparent and known. One of the foremost expressions of this dissatisfaction was the Harta 12 ( [www.harta12.ee](http://www.harta12.ee) ) manifesto, which was published in November. Dozens of proposals have been made for the refreshment of the governance system. It is time to start summing up the discussions and get involved in some real action, meaning that the time has come to modify some laws.

### **Which subjects are open for making proposals?**

In short, five major areas are involved: 1) the electoral system, 2) organisation of the work of political parties, internal democracy within parties included, 3) monies flowing to political parties and politics in general and the methods for the donation, reporting and supervision of such monies, 4) options available to citizens to be involved in shaping our policies during the interval between elections, 5) links between public sector positions and political parties.

### **When can one start making the proposals?**

The uniform crowdsourcing platform will be implemented in January 2013. Everyone is welcome to send their proposals to the Estonian Cooperation Assembly either by e-mail or traditional mail to [info@kogu.ee](mailto:info@kogu.ee) and Roheline aas 5, 10150 Tallinn, respectively.

### **What do you mean by "crowdsourcing" method?**

Crowdsourcing is a term of English origin and stands for an initiative that involves the collection, systematisation and synthesising of public opinions and proposals. This method was successfully used a couple of years ago to develop a new constitution in Iceland. While ideas and proposals to amend laws usually come from the government and the Riigikogu (and from the President in the case of the Constitution), this time people will have the chance to define the issues and methods for implementing the desired changes.

### **How do you intend to ensure that my proposal will become a new law?**

This is a joint, crowdsourcing effort – therefore, ideas may be changed and modified in due course through common discussion. Should your proposal pass analysis conducted by experts, public discussion and make it to the Parliament as an official proposal, it is quite possible for it to become a law. Still, there are no guarantees as laws are processed and enforced in Estonia by the Riigikogu. The whole process in general is aimed to bring the members of the Parliament, the political parties represented in the Riigikogu, experts, citizens and their representative organisations together and then develop solutions – together – regarding what can be done to change the current situation. A process with such a well-defined goal and

deadline, agreed rules and the assumption that everyone will participate has not taken place in Estonia before.

**How do you intend to ensure the transparency of the process and that some consideration is given to each and every proposal?**

The crowdsourcing process is public and transparent; all proposals that match the subjects will be taken into consideration and their processing can be observed and proposals discussed.

**Why are the individuals who make proposals required to identify themselves?**

The creation of laws and making proposals for that purpose is a task loaded with responsibility and represents a privilege of free people living in a free society and each citizen will, most naturally, participate in this process under his or her correct name. Hopefully, the joint creative environment will have a separate section for exchanging opinions and participation in discussions may be more relaxed. The section for proposals and opinions will definitely have moderators to keep obscenities and flaming away from this environment; the same goes for committed and organised attempts to change the direction and subject of a discussion. One must also stick to the discussed topic. Low wages and costly electricity are important; there is no doubt about this, as are issues that involved hundreds and thousands of Estonian people. But the environment concerned will be focusing on elections, the lives of political parties and their funding as well as other factors that have an immediate influence on the future of democracy in Estonia.

**Why do you need to build a new environment when we already have Täna Otsustan Mina (Today I Will Decide) or TOM, osale.ee, Facebook and possibly others?**

It is possible that these environments, their parts or elements will be used. The difference between these environments and the created platform relies on the fact that the latter has very specific time and content parameters. The activities are divided into well-defined stages and spheres from the very beginning. While TOM and osale.ee are i.e. open-end platforms, there

are already agreements in force with regard to the further processing of proposals made to the joint creation portal.

**Are you going to organise public meetings?**

Yes, at the moment there has been a suggestion that to discuss systemised proposals or more accurately, their "bunches" an over-Estonian public meeting will be convened in March 2013 at which the participants will represent a cross-section of society.

**Who are the experts who will start sorting and sieving through the gathered proposals?**

All those who were involved in launching the Ice Cellar initiative have the right to make proposals regarding people to sort and analyse the proposals, and the experts are expected to have some practical and academic background experiences in running a democratic country, organisation of the work of political parties and public governance.

**Will the Riigikogu be required to consider the proposals that are made through the involvement of the people?**

There will be no immediate obligations, as these are not provided by effective laws. However, as the parliamentary political parties are also involved in the process and have expressed their willingness to modify the legislation in force, it can be assumed, at least, that the Riigikogu will approach the initiative with full responsibility. Furthermore, political parties themselves have already started to develop the modifications.