

Auditing environmental aspects of infrastructure and land-use planning issues in Estonia

**Session: Urban development and infrastructure
issues**

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Auditing the topics of land use, urban development and infrastructure

- Infrastructure and urban land use planning is mainly done at local government level (both detailed plans and general plans)
- NAO of Estonia mandate is to make compliance audits at local level
- NAO of Estonia hasn't audited the state and county level spatial planning issues
- We have audited different environmental and sustainability aspects of infrastructures, but not so much related to (urban) land use and its management (planning)

Audit: Road maintenance and supervision of road maintenance (2012)

Audited aspect: are the environmental aspects considered in road maintenance works?

Methods:

- visual control
- chlorides concentration analysis of water samples from the melting snow in spring
- evaluation of the State's environmental supervision data about groundwater wells, years 2000–2010

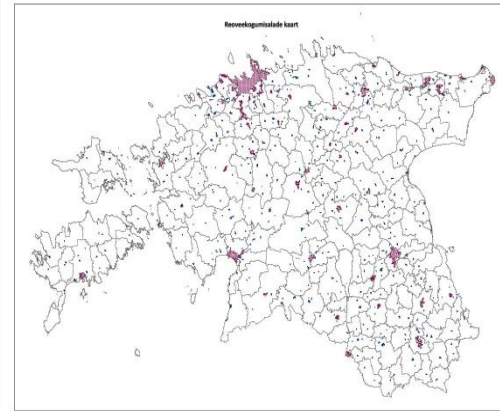
Recommendations:

- analyse the usage of chloride and its influences to the groundwater and work out limits for using chlorides in order to protect the groundwater
- work out guidance materials for road maintenance companies about the restrictions of the pesticide and herbicide use.



Audit “Sustainability of water infrastructures and their impact in achieving environmental objectives” (2013)

Audited aspect 1: is the formulation of agglomerations justified? (area with waste water collecting network)



Method:

- asking for data from the MoE which was the bases for creating big agglomerations (> 2000 p.e)
- comparing the “official” pollution load with real data (e.g number of inhabitants on agglomeration)

Recommendation: pollution load of agglomerations should be re-evaluated; there might be no need for water infrastructure construction works in urban areas

(Audited aspect 2: financial and social sustainability of water infrastructures)

Audit: Effectiveness of collection and recovery of packaging waste (2010)

Audited aspect: is packaging waste collection network at place? Is it easily noticeable and accessible by inhabitants?

Methods:

- contracts between local authorities and producer responsibility organisations
- involvement of NAO staff identifying the packaging network spots
- visual observations

Recommendations: to specify in legislations the requirements for location and marking of packaging containers



Audit: The state's actions in ensuring the sustainability of heating supply (2011)

Audited aspect: are environmental aspects (incl heat losses and efficiency) considered in (re)constructing district heating systems?

Methods:

- Survey of local authorities
- Observing price approval regulation and financing conditions for district heating (re)construction
- Comparing data of Statistics Estonia, LA survey and Competition Authority

Recommendations:

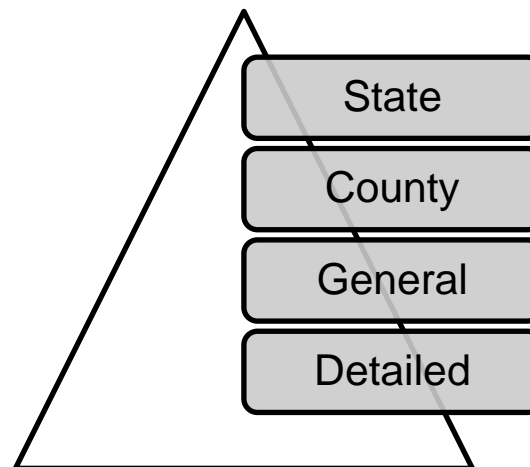
- more attention should be paid to efficiency and sustainability of district heating systems
- statistical data should be improved at state level



Overview of the general plans of rural municipalities and cities and the reasons for their lacking (2008)

Results:

- In 2008 only 39% local authorities had a general plan (88 out of 227)
- A large number of local authorities do not consider it feasible to carry out strategic environmental assessment (SEA) of the general plan
- Local authorities do not integrate the results of SEA into general plan



Audit: Organisation of detailed plan preparation in rural municipalities and cities (2009)

Results:

- Three level planning system does not work
- Half of the local authorities do not have valid general plan
- Planning is done by private companies
- Local authorities do not evaluate the environmental aspects of the detailed plans

Audit: Construction activities in local governments with fast population growth (2011)

Problem: Economic growth resulted construction boom and urban sprawl > illegal construction

Results:

- Local governments are unable to identify and curb illegal construction activities
- State register of construction works does not fulfil its purpose
- There is poor planning and lack of supervision by local governments

Remarks

- Land-use planning for infrastructure is mainly done at detailed and general plan level, which might not follow the county or state level plans
- Environmental impacts are not much considered in planning process
- It is difficult to audit land use issues when there are no valid land use plans
- Nevertheless, different environmental and sustainability aspects of infrastructures can be audited

Thank You!

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