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*Democratic Innovations and Political Participation. The Case of the
Estonian Citizens' Assembly (Rahvakogu)*

Innowacje demokratyczne i partycypacja polityczna. Przypadek Zgromadzenia Obywateli Estonii (Rahvakogu)

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to examine the impact of the Estonian Citizens' Assembly, convened in 2013, on the evolution of political participation in the country. This is a significant topic, given that Estonia offers relatively few opportunities for participation between parliamentary elections. The article presents a verification of the hypothesis, assuming that the Estonian Citizens' Assembly has not resulted in notable alterations to the existing Estonian legislation, particularly with regard to the expansion of the catalogue of civic participation, both in the immediate and extended terms. The research presented in the article was conducted through the application of the decision-making method and an analysis of legal acts. The article is divided into three parts: the first part analyses the main issues related to the phenomenon of democratic innovation, including definitional issues and the process of its development; the second part locates the main circumstances of the convening of the Assembly, primarily in the context of the crisis of Estonian representative democracy caused by the "Silvergate" scandal. The procedure and stages of the holding of the Estonian Citizens' Assembly were also presented. The third part was devoted to the results achieved and their impact on political participation in Estonia. The research findings permit the conclusion that the Estonian Citizens' Assembly can be included in the catalogue of democratic innovations. This is due to the fact that it was an instrument for conferring a new role on citizens in the co-governance process, thereby creating new opportunities for political participation, decision-making and influence over representative democracy. Conversely, it is not feasible to assert that the Estonian Citizens' Assembly has exerted a profound impact on the legal system, particularly in the context of introducing novel participatory instruments.

Keywords: democratic innovations, deliberative democracy, representative democracy, political participation in Estonia, Estonian political system, Rahvakogu

INTRODUCTION

In 2012, a political scandal erupted in Estonia over the alleged illegal funding of the Reform Party (*Eesti Reformierakond*, RE). The Reform Party, which won the elections to the 12th Riigikogu in 2011, formed a governing coalition with Pro Patria and the Res Publica Union (*Erakond Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit*)¹ and its leader, Andrus Ansip, led the government. The allegations made by Silver Meikar, a member of parliament and a member of the Reform Party, hit the party's leadership as well as ministers in Ansip's government. Despite the announcement by the Minister of Justice, Kristen Michal, of an extensive investigation into the case, the investigation was ultimately terminated after several months due to the absence of sufficient evidence. In response to the affair, a group of 17 social activists published a manifesto, entitled "Charter 12", which demanded reform of the law on the functioning and funding of political parties. Additionally, the manifesto called for the prevention of the monopolisation of decision-making by political parties and the introduction of new mechanisms for political participation. This included the introduction of a people's initiative leading to a referendum into the Estonian Constitution. Following the launch of the "Charter 12" manifesto, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves convened a meeting of parliamentary representatives, liberal groups, cultural representatives and universities, referred to as the "Ice Cellar Initiative". This initiative recommended the convening of a joint assembly of Estonian citizens, with the objective of proposing corrective measures for Estonian democracy. The process, which spanned several months, encompassed the collection of proposals for change, the emergence of citizen representation, and the holding of a deliberation day. It culminated in the presentation of 15 proposals for amendments to the current legislation to the Riigikogu.

The objective of this article is to examine the impact of the democratic innovation in the form of the Estonian Citizens' Assembly on political participation in the country. It is important to note that the Estonian government does not provide a significant number of participatory opportunities between Riigikogu elections. The public pressure exerted on the authorities in the wake of the "Silvergate" scandal may have been a contributing factor in the decision to modify the existing legislation, resulting in the introduction of a broader range of tools for political participation, including direct democracy.

In the course of my research, I will seek to answer the following research questions: 1) Can the Estonian Citizens' Assembly be considered a democratic innovation?; 2) What were the circumstances surrounding the convening of Rahvakogu and its proceedings? 3) What impact has the assembly had on the development of political participation in Estonia, both in the short and long term? This article will examine the hypothesis that the Assembly of Estonian Citizens has not resulted in notable changes to existing legislation in Estonia, particularly with regard to the expansion of the cata-

¹ In 2018, the party changed its name to the Fatherland Party (*Isamaa Erakond*).

logue of civic participation, both in the short and long term. The research presented in this article was conducted using the decision-making method and analysis of legal acts.

The article is divided into three parts: the first part analyses the main issues related to the phenomenon of democratic innovations, including definitional issues and the process of their development. In the second part, the main circumstances of the convocation of the Assembly are placed in the context of the crisis of Estonian representative democracy caused by the “Silvergate” scandal. The procedure and stages of the holding of the Estonian Citizens’ Assembly are also presented. The third part is devoted to the effects produced and their impact on political participation.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS – INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION, DELIBERATION AND INFLUENCE?

In recent decades, we have witnessed a growing interest in deliberation and political participation among academic researchers. In the discourse on political participation, it is important to note the findings of key works, including those by Simon Verba [1972, 1978, 1995], Robert Putnam [1995, 1997, 2000], Henry Brady [1999], Pippa Norris [1999], Jan van Deth [2001], Richard P. Adler and Judy Goggin [2005], Ben Berger [2009]. As Joakim Ekman and Eric Amnå aptly pointed out in their publication, a significant part of these articles stemmed from the observed decline in citizens’ interest in public affairs in mature democracies or “old” democracies, low voter turnout, declining trust in politicians and public institutions, adding up to an overall picture of the erosion of democratic institutions [Ekman, Amnå 2012: 283]. In addition, in post-industrial societies, citizens are becoming increasingly disengaged from participating in public life through the traditional channels (e.g. elections). The idea and values of democracy are strongly supported. However, trust in democratic processes and institutions has been severely eroded. Debates on how to remedy the negative phenomena in democracy, or at least minimise their effects, point to the need for more or less citizen participation or the development of new procedures and institutions, and one of the opportunities for modernity is seen in the development of democratic innovation [Flesher Fominaya 2022: 78–80].

In general terms, it can be said that democratic innovations are designed to put the ideals of deliberation into practice in the political sphere [Grygień 2022: 169]. Ground-breaking for the study of democratic innovation was Graham Smith’s monograph published in 2009, which defined democratic innovation as “institutions specifically designed to increase and deepen citizen participation in the political decision-making process” [Smith 2009: 1]. As Stephen Elstub and Oliver Escobar note, Smith’s publication shifted researchers’ attention from framing democratic innovation as a process to identifying it with practice [Elstub, Escobar 2019: 12]. According to the definition proposed by Elstub and Escobar, democratic innovations are “processes or institutions that are new to a political issue, political role or level of governance and designed to

re-imagine and deepen the role of citizens in governance processes by increasing opportunities for participation, deliberation and influence” [*ibid.*: 14]. It also points out that democratic innovation is linked to a particular political issue and that it is linked to other democratic institutions [Jäske, Setälä 2020: 468]. The importance of democratic innovation for local governance was highlighted by John Steward, according to whom democratic innovations are a process of “designed to bring the informed views of ordinary citizens into the processes of local government” [Stewart 1996: 32].

Democratic innovations are part of the third generation of deliberative democracy thinking, where the different generations are not seen as distinct groups of theorists, but rather as markers of different trends in particular periods [Elstub, Ercan, Mendonça 2016: 141]. The first generation, which includes Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls [Habermas 1996: 315–328; Habermas 2005: 384–392; Rawls 1997a: 93–141; Rawls 1997b: 765–807; see also: Anderson 2021: 134–161; Olson 2011: 140–155; Abramowicz 2012: 31–47; Susen 2018: 43–66], focused primarily on the theoretical dimension of deliberation and the ideal communicative situation. The first generation of theorists offered a normative vision that did not take into account all the complexities of deliberation. Among the representatives of the second generation are John Dryzek [2009], Monique Deveaux [2003] and Iris Marion Young [1996]. The second generation rejected most of the idealistic insights of Rawls and Habermas and linked deliberative theory more closely to the complex conditions of contemporary democracies, including unequal access to knowledge, the asymmetrical positioning of discourse participants, and the demands of feminism, environmentalism, or multiculturalism. They also rejected the ideal of consensus as unattainable [Elstub, Ercan, Mendonça 2016: 141; Grygień 2022: 170–171]. The second generation was also lacking in institutional designs as well as in the empirical analysis of deliberative practices. This was addressed by the third generation of deliberative democracy theorists. The third generation approach is essentially a revised and institutionalised second generation approach. It was driven by the need to create institutions capable of functioning under the conditions of real problems of democracy: social inequality, selfishness, cultural pluralism. The dominant trend was the design of deliberative institutions and empirical analysis, fostered by the implementation of new deliberative practices in various parts of the world (e.g. citizens’ juries, planning cells, consensus conferences and participatory budgeting). Based on the assumption of low motivation of citizens to participate in political life, inadequacies of existing solutions, inequalities and limited access to knowledge, deliberative solutions were primarily sought to involve citizens more in the decision-making process. However, the micro-approach to the study of deliberation has proved problematic, leading to the isolation of deliberative solutions from the wider context. The fourth generation, deliberative systems, attempts to reconcile the main trends of the previous three generations: normative theory, its institutional application and empirical research. Fourth generation theorists have drawn attention to the need to infer not only the practice of individual isolated deliberative institutions, but also the relationship between them,

as well as the relationship between deliberative and non-deliberative practice within political systems. Importantly, even if the individual parts of the political system are not deliberative in character, the political system as a whole can be deliberative [*ibid.*: 142–143; *ibid.*: 171]. The fourth generation does not focus on Habermas' ideal type, but seeks to identify obstacles to its realisation through empirical research.

The catalogue of democratic innovations is not yet fully defined. Gianpaolo Baiocchi and Ernesto Ganuza, for example, have identified a wide range of democratic innovations: “Democratic innovations cover a wide range of instruments: participatory budgets, citizen juries, deliberative surveys, referenda, town meetings, online citizen forums, e-democracy, public conversations, study circles, collaborative policy making, alternative dispute resolutions, and so on” [Baiocchi, Ganuza 2017: 39]. Janusz Grygień lists a similar catalogue of democratic innovations, including: mini-publics (citizens' committees, deliberative polling, consensus conferences, etc.), open meetings, e-democracy, participatory budgeting, citizens' initiatives, citizens' petitions [Grygień 2022: 174]. Brigitte Geissel, on the other hand, includes only three categories among democratic innovations: collaborative governance, deliberative procedures and direct democracy [Geissel 2013]. According to Smith's classification, democratic innovations include popular assemblies, mini-publics, participatory budgeting, direct legislation and e-democracy. In contrast, Elstub and Escobar distinguish five families of democratic innovations: mini-republics, participatory budgeting, referenda and citizen initiatives, collaborative governance, and referenda and digital participation [Elstub, Escobar 2019: 25].

The various democratic innovations vary considerably in terms of: the time allowed for deliberation (from a few days to a year); the number of participants; the frequency of meetings; the actor initiating the process; the extent to which participants can influence the agenda; the degree of publicity given to the process; and the outcome (binding or non-binding for the authority) [Grygień 2022: 174–175].

Notwithstanding the above catalogue of democratic innovations, it should be noted that they are all the result of opposition to aggregative forms of democracy, the core of which is the electoral act (voting). The proponents of democratic innovation share the view that only deliberation can lead to greater legitimacy of political decisions and improved quality of decision-making. What links democratic innovation to political participation is the demand for the direct involvement of ordinary citizens in the decision-making process.

CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CONVOCATION AND PROCEDURE OF THE ESTONIAN CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

Crises within Estonian democracy are not a new phenomenon, as a gap between the vision of the state created by the political elite and the expectations of ordinary citizens began to emerge shortly after independence. Responding to these negative

trends, 26 Estonian sociologists published the manifesto *Two Estonias (Kaks Eestit)* in “Postimees”. As the authors of the manifesto pointed out: “Estonian society is in a political, social and ethical crisis” [*Sotsiaalteadlaste avalik pöördumine* 2001]. The gap between the political power elite and ordinary citizens is so wide that it is legitimate to speak of two Estonias. The high level of poverty, the low sense of security and the threat of emigration of young people were highlighted. It was pointed out that government decisions were made without consulting ordinary citizens, who were “marginalised as «Aunt Maali», whose opinion is ignored even in matters that affect them most directly”.² The authors of the manifesto also referred to the results of public opinion polls which, for the first time since independence, showed such a critically low level of public trust in democratic institutions: parliament (in 1999 – 50%, in 2001 – 30%), the government (in 1999 – 53%, in 2001 – 28%) and the prime minister (in 1999 – 47%, in 2002 – 22%). This, in turn, translated into a low level of public interest in the future development of the country, even in such key aspects as accession to the European Union. At the end of the manifesto, the authors called for a return to democratic standards and ethical attitudes in politics.

In 2012, Estonia experienced a critical political crisis linked to potentially illegal donations to the Reform Party. The scandal erupted when Silver Meikar, a member of the Reform Party, admitted to illegally transferring money to the party’s account. According to his testimony, he received cash from another party member and then transferred an identical amount to the party’s account as a personal donation. According to Meikar, other party members engaged in similar practices. In this way, money of unclear origin became a legitimate personal donation to the party [Cavegn 2016]. Meikar made accusations against, among others, Kalev Lillo³ and Kristen Michal, who at the time was General Secretary of the Reform Party and, according to Meikar, the organiser of the whole affair.⁴ Michal, who was then Minister of Justice, called for an investigation into the matter. The investigation into the scandal, dubbed Silvergate, was finally closed in October 2012 due to insufficient evidence. At the same time, Meikar, who maintained that the accusations made by him were true, was expelled from the Reform Party. Finally, Michal resigned in December 2012 and was dismissed the same month. Public pressure played a key role, with a poll showing that 90% of Estonians did not believe the explanations given by Michal [Cavegn 2016].

The “Silvergate” affair shocked the public, especially as neither the Reform Party nor its members suffered significant consequences. Waves of demonstrations swept

² The dissonance between the activities of the Estonian government is illustrated by the popularisation in 2001 by the first post-Soviet president, Lennart Meri, of the term “Aunt Maali” (*Tädi Maali*), i.e. the epitome of the Estonian with a lower-than-average income who does not follow innovative solutions (not only technological, but also, for example, the idea of the European Union), usually representing the older generation. The authors of the manifesto *Two Estonias (Kaks Eestit)* [2001] alluded to the stereotype of “Aunt Maali”.

³ Member of the Reform Party, MP for the XII Riigikogu.

⁴ Then MP for the XII Riigikogu, 2011–2012 Minister of Justice in the third government of Andrus Ansip, since 2024, Prime Minister of Estonia.

across Estonia, with people protesting against the Reform Party but also calling for a more transparent system of party funding and a more open political system. In response to the situation, a group of 17 social activists published the “Charter 12” (*Harta 12*) appeal in November 2012. Referring to the crisis of representative democracy in Estonia, including the political party financing scandal, the authors formulated five remedies:

- 1) the establishment of a system of funding for political parties that is transparent to citizens, including the sources of funding for party activities, both public and private;
- 2) the formation, operation and funding of political parties must be clear and parties should represent the public interest and not the partisan interest;
- 3) the electoral system must favour voters rather than politicians; for example, MPs should be obliged to report on their activities to the electorate;
- 4) a mechanism must be put in place to counteract the monopolisation of power by political parties; to this end, access to power must be facilitated for non-party forces and non-party candidates;
- 5) the possibility for citizens to participate in the decision-making process in the period between elections should be greatly increased; to this end, the instrument of the popular initiative should be introduced [*Harta 12* 2012].

In the period 14 November 2012 – 19 October 2013, more than 18,000 people signed the appeal and the project itself generated a lot of public interest, particularly in terms of making governments more accountable for their decisions and creating new tools for citizen participation in the decision-making process.

The political and social situation became so tense after the revelation of the “Silvergate” scandal and the announcement of “Charter 12” that Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves decided to convene a joint meeting of parliamentary parties, liberal groups, cultural representatives and academics. The meeting, called the “Ice Cell Initiative” (*Jääkeldri ümarlaud*), took place on 21 November 2012 under the auspices of the President, which came as quite a surprise to the representatives of the political forces, especially considering that the powers of the head of state are few [Loonet 2012; *Juhtkiri: jääkeldri protsess* 2012]. Despite much criticism⁵ [see: Hõbemägi 2013], the Ice Cell Initiative was a first step towards a wider public debate, as the meeting decided to launch a platform for crowdsourcing ideas and proposals for changes to Estonian law, and to organise a day of deliberation.

Finally, the deliberative process covered five main issues: 1) the electoral system; 2) the functioning of political parties; 3) the financing of political parties; 4) citizen participation in decision-making; 5) the politicisation of state offices [Praxis Centre for Policy Research 2014]. The phases of the process are shown in Figure 1.

⁵ In the public sphere, the convening of the Ice Cell Initiative was seen more as an attempt to salvage the image of the Reform Party in the wake of the party’s illegal funding scandal than as a genuine attempt to solve the problems of Estonian democracy.

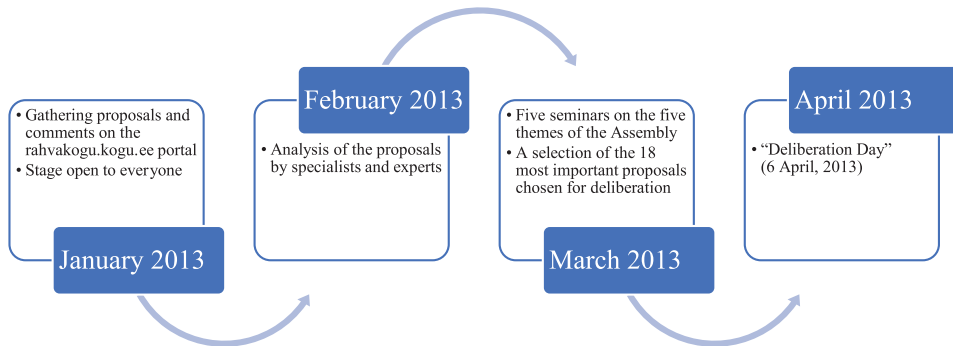


Figure 1. Stages of the Estonian Citizens' Assembly 2013

Source: Author's own study based on: Eestii Koostöö Kogu [2014]; Praxis Centre for Policy Research [2014].

In January 2013, the website rahvakogu.kogu.ee was launched to collect citizens' suggestions on the five areas mentioned above [NGOs Launch Crowd-Sourcing Project to Repair Democracy 2013]. In fourteen weeks, approximately 6,000 solution proposals and comments were submitted and the website was visited by 60,000 users, including 3,000 registered users. In February 2013, the proposals submitted were analysed by experts who assigned them to specific categories and divided them into sub-categories. Five thematic seminars were then held in March, attended not only by specialists but also by politicians and those who had submitted individual proposals. The outcome of the seminars was the selection of the 18 most relevant projects to be taken forward during the consultation day ("Deliberation Day", 6 April 2013). This was attended by 314 people randomly selected on the basis of place of residence, gender and age [People's Assembly Seeks 500 to Debate Proposals 2013]. Each of the 18 proposals for changes in Estonian law was discussed in ten-person tables with the participation of an expert moderator. As a result of the deliberations, 15 of the 18 proposals discussed were submitted to Riigikogu. As Estonian law did not specify how the proposals developed by the Estonian Citizens' Assembly should be submitted to Parliament, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves exercised his prerogative and submitted the 15 proposals to the Parliamentary Constitutional Committee for its opinion [President Toomas Hendrik Ilvese poliitiline avaldus Riigikogus 9. aprillil 2013].

THE IMPACT OF THE ESTONIAN CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN ESTONIA

A wide range of participation opportunities is not provided for in Estonian law. Participation in the decision-making process takes the form of voting in elections to the Riigikogu and in referendums, as well as in elections to local authorities and the European Parliament [The Constitution of the Republic of Estonia 1992: § 56,

§ 156]. Citizens of the state are also eligible to run for the office of President of the Republic of Estonia. Furthermore, Estonian citizens may apply for positions in state institutions and local administration, although the Constitution explicitly states that these positions may be given to foreigners and stateless persons only in justified cases. The law also provides for the possibility of submitting petitions and memorandums to state bodies and local government institutions, and the right to hold peaceful meetings and assemblies without prior notification [*ibid.*: § 46 and § 47]. Membership of political parties is restricted. It is guaranteed only to citizens of the state [*ibid.*: § 48]. Estonians do not have the right to initiate a referendum or to propose legislation. The opportunities for political participation and thus for influencing the decision-making process between elections are quite limited. Therefore, the initiative to introduce legal changes that would both compensate for the shortcomings of Estonian democracy and be drafted by ordinary Estonians (not parliamentarians) has aroused considerable interest.

The proposals developed during the Deliberation Day were classified into five principal categories:⁶

- 1) Funding of political parties, which comprised four proposals for change:
 - half of the funds from the state budget earmarked for financing political parties should be allocated to parties elected to parliament, while the remaining half should be distributed between all candidates and parties in proportion to the number of votes received (87);
 - enhance the monitoring of political party funding, including the strengthening of the powers of the committees responsible for overseeing party funding (86);
 - anonymous, hidden or business donations to political parties should be subject to criminal liability (85);
 - maintain the current party electoral law, under which only citizens, not legal entities, can make political donations (78).
- 2) Politicization of public offices (two proposals):
 - the introduction of legislation regulating the requirements for state and local government representatives and the role and responsibility of board members of state-owned companies (87);
 - banning MPs from sitting on the boards of state-owned companies (62).
- 3) Political parties (three proposals):
 - lowering the electoral threshold for parliamentary elections from 5% to 3% (75);
 - reduce the number of people required to form a political party from 1,000 to 200 (65);

⁶ The percentage of support for a particular proposal among the participants of the Deliberation Day is given in brackets.

- the possibility for the candidate to waive the deposit requirement if a certain number of signatures are collected (44).
- 4) Election laws (three proposals):
 - amend the Electoral Code to require elected candidates to take office and to establish a list of permitted exceptions (93);
 - independent candidates should have the same requirements as party candidates (92);
 - change the party’s list of candidates in accordance with the number of votes received, in order for the party to determine the final position (59).
- 5) Civic participation (three proposals):
 - if a sufficient number of signatures have been collected, Parliament must debate publicly initiated motions (petitions) (95);
 - regulate how information on proposals is published and increase public participation in the drafting of legislation (84);
 - simplification of the process for citizens’ initiatives and referendums (75) [*Estonia Citizens’ Assembly, Restoring Political Legitimacy 2019; People’s Assembly Results: Lower Election Threshold, But ‘No’ to Direct Presidential Elections 2013*].

Ultimately, three of the proposals put forth by the Estonian Citizens’ Assembly were adopted by the Riigikogu. Firstly, the proposal was accepted, stipulating that parliament must proceed with projects that have been signed by a minimum of 1,000 individuals. This change has been implemented since 2014 through the platform *rahvaalgatus.ee*, which collects draft amendments to the current law addressed to Parliament and proposals for better organisation of social life addressed to local authorities. Between October 2014 and September 2024, the platform collected 168 draft amendments to the current law, which are currently at different stages of the procedure.

Secondly, the Parliament adopted a law that streamlines the formation of new political parties, assuming that 500 members are sufficient to register a party (in contrast to the proposal put forth by the Estonian Citizens’ Assembly, which suggested that this should be 200). Thirdly, the Parliament reduced the deposit paid by a candidate by half and increased funding for parties that did not cross the electoral threshold. The remaining four proposals (the first three indicated above regarding the funding of political parties and the introduction of equal requirements for independent and party candidates) were either partially introduced or attached to other parliamentary proposals. It is noteworthy that the participants in the Estonian Citizens’ Assembly did not advocate for the introduction of direct elections for the President of the State, instead proposing that the President be elected by parliament as the optimal solution.

The Estonian Citizens’ Assembly, with its demand for the introduction of a people’s initiative leading to a referendum, triggered a debate on expanding the catalogue of direct democracy. This demand was particularly pushed by the Estonian Conservative People’s Party (EKRE), which, together with the Centre Party and the Isamaa, which formed Jüri Ratas’ second government in 2019. EKRE’s programme calls

for the introduction of the right of citizens to initiate binding laws and referendums through a people's initiative [*EKRE programme* 2019]. EKRE representatives pointed out that the institutions of direct democracy are a manifestation of the maturity of democracy as well as a guarantor of the protection of minority rights. This demand was also reiterated in the party's election manifesto for the 2023 Riigikogu elections [EKRE 2023]. Opponents of this solution (including the authors of the modern Estonian Constitution) stressed that the institutions of direct democracy could lead to a shaky foundation of the state, because they threaten the legislative function of Parliament and the creation of a competing centre of power. Furthermore, they perceive a potential risk associated with the populist utilisation of direct democratic institutions [*Jaak Valge: otsedemokraatia kriitikute hirmudest* 2019; *Hänni: rahvaalgatuse kehtestamine võib ohustada riigikorralduse stabiilsust* 2019].

CONCLUSIONS

The Estonian Citizens' Assembly was established in 2013 in response to the crisis in Estonian democracy caused by one of the most significant political scandals in modern Estonian history.

Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves opted to pursue this course of action in response to mounting pressure from influential opinion formers, who demanded sweeping reforms to the legal system. These included the introduction of a transparent funding mechanism for political parties, enhanced citizen oversight of parliamentary activities, a level playing field for party and non-party candidates in electoral competition, and expanded citizen participation in decision-making processes between elections.

The Estonian Citizens' Assembly served as an additional channel for public involvement in the decision-making process, representing a novel approach to citizen participation. The outcome of the Estonian Citizens' Assembly was the formulation and submission to the Riigikogu of 15 draft amendments to the extant legislation. These were organised under five principal categories: political party financing, politicisation of public offices, political parties, electoral law, and civic participation. However, among the drafts adopted by parliament, those that would most affect political participation, namely the people's initiative for binding projects and the people's initiative leading to a referendum, were not included.

It is also noteworthy that the initiative of the Assembly of Estonian Citizens was evaluated in a somewhat ambiguous manner. The role of the experts, who were assigned significant responsibility in analysing the proposals submitted, was also called into question. As Alar Kilp observed, the task of reconciling conflicting proposals should be the responsibility of the political forces in parliament, rather than that of experts [Kilp 2013]. The absence of a formalised process for referring the draft proposals to the Riigikogu was perceived as a limitation of the initiative, which in turn gave rise to concerns about the Riigikogu's capacity to advance the draft proposals.

Additionally, among the critiques of the process, there is a debate surrounding the number of proposals developed during the Estonian Citizens' Assembly that were considered by the Parliament and the number that were not.

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INNOWACJE DEMOKRATYCZNE I PARTYCYPACJA POLITYCZNA. PRZYPADEK ZGROMADZENIA OBYWATELI ESTONII (RAHVAKOGU)

Celem artykułu jest zbadanie wpływu Zgromadzenia Obywateli Estonii, zwołanego w 2013 r. na ewolucję partycypacji politycznej w tym państwie. Jest to ważne zagadnienie, szczególnie zważywszy na fakt, że Estonia oferuje stosunkowo niewiele możliwości partycypacji między wyborami parlamentarnymi. W artykule przedstawiono weryfikację hipotezy zakładającej, że Zgromadzenie Obywateli Estonii nie doprowadziło do znaczących zmian w obowiązującym ustawodawstwie estońskim, w szczególności w zakresie rozszerzenia katalogu partycypacji obywatelskiej, zarówno w perspektywie krótko-, jak i długofalowej. Przedstawione w artykule badania zostały przeprowadzone przy zastosowaniu metody decyzyjnej oraz analizy aktów prawnych. Artykuł jest podzielony na trzy części: w pierwszej przeanalizowano główne zagadnienia dotyczące innowacji demokratycznych, w tym kwestie definicyjne i proces ich rozwoju; w drugiej przedstawiono główne okoliczności zwołania Zgromadzenia, przede wszystkim w kontekście kryzysu estońskiej demokracji przedstawicielskiej wywołanego skandalem „Silvergate”. Przedstawiono również procedurę i etapy organizacji Zgromadzenia Obywateli Estonii. Trzecia część poświęcona została osiągniętym rezultatom i ich wpływowi na partycypację polityczną w Estonii. Wyniki badań pozwalają stwierdzić, że Zgromadzenie Obywateli Estonii można zaliczyć do katalogu demokratycznych innowacji. Wynika to z faktu, że było ono instrumentem nadającym obywatelom nową rolę w procesie współzrządzenia, tworząc tym samym nowe możliwości partycypacji politycznej, podejmowania decyzji i wpływania na demokrację przedstawicielską. Nie można natomiast twierdzić, że Zgromadzenie Obywateli Estonii wywarło głęboki wpływ na system prawny, zwłaszcza w kontekście wprowadzania nowych instrumentów partycypacyjnych.

Słowa kluczowe: innowacje demokratyczne, demokracja deliberatywna, demokracja przedstawicielska, partycypacja polityczna w Estonii, system polityczny Estonii, Rahvakogu

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