

TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

School of Business and Governance

Department of Law

Maria Haas

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ESTONIA'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY**

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Supervisor: Vlad Alex Vernygora, MA

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Maria Haas .....

(signature, date)

Student code: 154101TASB

Student e-mail address: haasmaria96@gmail.com

Supervisor: Vlad Alex Vernygora, MA:

The paper conforms to requirements in force

.....

(signature, date)

Chairman of the Defence Committee:

Permitted to the defence

.....

(name, signature, date)

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## ABSTRACT

Public diplomacy is constantly getting closer to be a standard component of overall diplomatic practice and therefore can be described as rapidly growing multi-disciplinary field. PD has been acknowledged as positively effective, but it is necessary to understand that the phenomenon is not only connected to large states. According to this statement, this thesis has a few objectives. The first one is to indicate that small countries, such as Estonia, have also the right to exercise PD related matters. Secondly the whole discussion is based on idea on how to make PD connected to policy making. Based on that the practical side of PD is proposed as gaining attention and building credibility which are some of the main challenges that countries are facing in terms of agenda-setting. Those two ideas are very closely connected, as one usually cannot exist without another in order to accomplish established goals. On one hand the proposed project has to be credible to take into account organizational capacity or legal competences, but on the other hand it is extremely hard to accomplish the goals without external support. Based on those two terms - gaining attention and building credibility - current thesis offers a few examples that are attempting to measure the effectiveness of Estonia's PD which is also reflected in the research questions. In addition due to the nature of the paper the qualitative methodology is used to collect data. All examples to measure the effectiveness propose evidence that Estonia has been able to both gain attention and build credibility with its actions, but it comes out that one of the most successful projects is the *Let's Do It!* movement which has been very resulting in both terms. Therefore, it is interesting to play with the idea that this is not Government's official project and at the same time to see how they are still using it for their own benefit.

Keywords: public diplomacy, Estonia, effectiveness, policy making, gaining attention, building credibility

## **INTRODUCTION**

Public diplomacy, sometimes even referred to as people's diplomacy, media diplomacy or even mistakenly as cultural diplomacy, is the key mechanism through which governments or other international actors communicate with the citizens of foreign countries. Diplomat Edmund Gullion is believed to be the first user of the term public diplomacy in 1965. Snow and Taylor provide the summary of Gullion's concept (2009):

Public diplomacy deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications.

The aforementioned group of people is actually very wide and diverse, for example, they may be part of non-governmental organizations and media institutions; they can be journalists or representatives of the cultural sector or just ordinary members of civil society. Although the focus of this thesis is not planned to be on the connection of soft power and public diplomacy, it is necessary to mention that it has become almost a conventional agreement on the issue that public diplomacy represents one of the key instruments of soft power. The notion of 'soft power' in itself was offered by Joseph Nye to describe a situation where a country makes others to do what it wants without force. Thus it is important to understand that the success of soft power often depends on the level of geo-strategic 'comfort' a country enjoys. If a better-positioned country has exercised PD successfully, other states will also want to follow their lead. But the phenomenon of PD itself has been recognized a long time before the debate that the world has now over the same issue, but its direction has changed a little. It is becoming more and more a standard component of overall diplomatic practice and is no longer just propaganda of diplomats

(Melissen 2005, 11). Therefore, from an academic perspective, PD is a rapidly growing multi-disciplinary field.

Presumably, in order to live in a secure environment it is necessary to have trust, communication and good or, at least, stable relations with other nations. In this context, PD-linked mechanisms have been overwhelmingly acknowledged as positively effective. It does not necessarily mean that PD does not have any weaknesses, but the consequences have been mostly described as positive. One of the most well-known examples connected to PD could be the United States where the term became especially prominent after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The leaders of the country believed in the global war of terrorism and wanted to gain worldwide support. For obvious reasons, the support after 9/11 in terms of PD rose to the heights. The evidence of this can be that people said in several languages "We're all Americans!" and were able to put themselves in the situation of the citizens of the United States, because of their successful promotion.

Intriguingly for the field of study, the phenomenon of PD is not only related to large countries. As a matter of fact, for small states - like Estonia, for example - building an attractive image through a public diplomacy-related mechanism is essential, because they do not have the same hard power capabilities as large states. As a consequence, usage of PD can be beneficial for their national security. Large and/or populated states such as China have already created their international image and have time to improve it, but small states have to make sure that people abroad get to know that they are also on the map (Bergmane 2017). Indeed, with public diplomacy Estonia has a possibility to share knowledge and information about the state and make it more visible.

Thus, to come back to the statement that PD is not only used in connection with large countries, it is necessary to mention that so far the actions that Estonia has proposed in terms of PD have been successful. It can be proved by an event that took place in 2015 when the Estonian Ambassador Taavi Toom was invited to the Diplomatic Academy of the Republic of Kosovo to conduct training on e-Diplomacy. People taking part of the training were diplomats and officials from several state institutions in order to improve their knowledge on digitalization. Ambassador Toom introduced the ways how Estonia has reached the phase of using technology as they do now and after that presented several products that are used in Estonia, for example e-Banking, e-ID, e-Police and e-Governance. However, using those benefits is not always easy. It means that there has to be education and procedures that explain how to use those products and this was also

one of the topics discussed during the training. The Director of the Diplomatic Academy, Skender Durmishi, stated that Estonia is definitely an example for Kosovo to follow in the future (Training on e-Diplomacy...2015). This shows that the efforts of Estonia have been noticed and have reached the foreign public.

Building up a discussion on the framework-providing research in an academic *niche* that is close to policy-making, the main purpose of this thesis is to determine whether or not Estonia as a small state has enough capabilities to use public diplomacy-originated mechanisms effectively and whether or not the country's efforts made so far have actually gained attention and helped to build credibility as desired. Due to the observational nature of this paper, a proper argument can well be substituted by a set of the following research questions: 1) What would be a framework-providing theoretical base for Estonia when seeking positive results out of its PD-related initiatives? 2) What are the ways to make PD effective and successful for Estonia? 3) Has Estonia gained wider attention from the foreign public in terms of PD? 4) How have the actions of the Government of Estonia influenced the opinion of foreigners about Estonia?

There is a multi-dimensional methodological framework used in this paper. Mainly, the observation is driven by a range of qualitative methodology to collect data – for example, this paper's literature review will be framed by discourse analysis on different primary and secondary sources, surveys, and process tracing to establish a number of causal connections between facts. On a specific note, the paper will be focusing on the Estonian case in the context of the phenomenon under study.

To consider the message that the thesis wishes to deliver, it is divided into logically successive chapters. The first chapter of the thesis is responsible for setting up the framework of the discussion and brings out the justification why Estonia is talked about in the context of PD. It offers an overview of the idea of PD, its communication methods as well as the motivation to use it. The chapter elaborates on PD's ties to nation branding. The second chapter of the thesis focuses on findings connected to the applicability of PD in Estonia. Several examples are brought out, such as the *Let's Do It!* movement, the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2017 and the hundred years of the Republic of Estonia. Based on the second chapter, the third chapter of the thesis examines how relevant this topic actually is for Estonia and whether the findings are as beneficial as the country's leaders hope for.

# **1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

The discussion based on theoretical frameworks of the current thesis has two sides. The first one is directly connected to the theoretical side of PD and provides knowledge and notions about the term itself, which is also related to international relations theory. The other part is the practical side of PD that has all those different applications from the first part and they are also put into use. It means that the second part of the thesis explains why states need to use those application methods which are stated in current thesis for gaining attention and building credibility.

## **1.1. Theoretical side of Public Diplomacy**

PD is an important framework-providing field for officials dealing with foreign policy as well as scholars of international relations. As a matter of fact, PD is mainly connected to the field of international relations that has divided diplomacy into two – traditional diplomacy and PD. Traditional diplomacy deals with government-to-government negotiations which are usually carried out by government leaders or other higher officials (Golan *et al.* 2015, 94). PD at the same time is a contemporary form of diplomacy through which nations try to gain support among the citizens of other states and make them follow their lead without force. In the most traditional sense, it is directed to foreign publics, but actually separating domestic and outside audience is becoming more and more complicated. It often happens that leaders direct certain information to the local audience, but it reaches the foreign public or the other way around (Melissen 2005, 13).

In case the officials want to have an effective and influential communication using PD, they need to have an understanding of the standpoint of the people they are communicating with. It means that it is necessary to make clear the ideas that you are interested in and further understand the attitude of the target group connected to the same issue. The best way to build that strong communication is two-way communication which means that it takes place in the form of a dialogue. Another option is one-way communication which means that target group has not been



listened to or officials do not have enough knowledge about the views of those people (Golan *et al.* 2015, 267). For obvious reasons, this is definitely not the best way to build strong relations and it can even damage the situation more rather than improve it. The term that is often associated with public diplomacy is public relations. They are not exactly the same concepts, but both have some similar characteristics in terms of communication that need to be clarified in order to delve into the topic. Naturally the ways of communication for both public diplomacy and public relations have changed in the course of time. For example, four types of communication can be brought out in public relations: publications by press agents, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical communication (Golan *et al.* 2015, 268). Arguably, it is steadily better to prefer two-way communication as it creates a surface where the target group understands the goal seeker and the other way around. Therefore, it is believed communication in public relations can be very useful in PD.

There are several factors that motivate the new PD and are connected to the changes taking place in the world, such as new actors in international politics, new modes of communication and a new geopolitical context (Pamment 2013, 25). The first factor of new actors in international politics is closely connected to globalization which is certainly not a new topic, but at the same time is making states more interconnected in different fields, such as economy, culture and politics. Globalization has strengthened the invasion of media technologies and therefore the implementation of foreign relations has also changed as it should. Pamment cites in his book the words of an international relations scholar, Brian Hocking, who believes that the greater citizen participation in foreign affairs is connected to the improvement of communication technologies which means that people form new links with other humans and also receive new information about the surrounding cultures (2013, 26). This is definitely something that people can benefit from as that kind of globalization enriches the minds of human beings and can change their world. Mostly this leads to a situation where regular citizens are able to contribute more to the ideas of their government or other organizations. The second factor – new modes of communication – is connected to media and also the changes in the ways of communication. As already previously mentioned, communication strategies are moving towards a space where both sides can give their opinion about certain issues. It means that listening, dialogue and collaboration are beneficial for both sides. The best example to express the third factor – new geopolitical context – is to link it with 9/11 attacks in the United States. It is believed that those attacks are connected to the United States' failure to understand the importance of PD after the Cold War (Pamment 2013, 28).

### **1.1.1. Nation branding as part of Public Diplomacy**

As Szondi has stated, in 1996, Simon Anholt supposedly proposed the term 'nation branding', but the idea of marketing and branding itself occurred earlier (2008, 4). It was argued that in the process of nation branding image promotion is the main goal. Szondi has brought out the quotation of Anholt in his book that reads as follows (2008):

Country branding occurs when public speaks to public; when a substantial proportion of the population of the country – not just civil servants and paid figureheads – gets behind the strategy and lives it out in their everyday dealings with the outside world.

Nation branding can be a separate form of branding with a purpose of presenting certain country at home as well as abroad. All the interests connected to nation branding can be promoted through economics, politics or the social sphere. Governments often get advice from marketing consultants to get ideas on how to brand states and structure the results so that it would catch a lot of attention. Arguably branding targets the attention of mass audiences, but PD is meant more for people who are interested in foreign policy, such as political elites. So although a mass audience is more passive, it is easier to communicate with this group of people as they are not that interested in the reasons, do not ask many questions, but rather want to see the results and conclusions. At the same time, the target groups of PD are more complex individuals. For them the discussion, giving their own opinion and being part of the activities and decisions is very important.

There are several views that try to identify the relations between nation branding and PD. Mostly, nation branding is believed to be one of the instruments of PD. Some governments were very interested in the idea of nation branding in the past and hoped that it could improve the image of the state abroad. Sometime later they understood that it does not work fully without extra support and therefore consider it as one of the many communication tools used in PD (Szondi 2008, 23). Branding and marketing are closely connected and people usually do not have a very positive attitude towards it nor do they trust it.

## **1.2. Practical side of Public Diplomacy: gaining attention and building credibility**

Agenda setting is an extremely important stage in any policy-making process. There are instances where regular members of civil society do not show a huge interest in the policy-making processes, but at the same time those who are interested just do not get desired information as it is often somehow behind the curtains of higher officials. The article of Sophie Vanhoonacker and Karolina Pomorska presents four agenda-setting strategies in foreign policy processes, such as mobilizing support, arousing interest, claiming authority and building capacity, which are very applicable to public diplomacy and therefore suitable to use in further research (2015). There are two main challenges for the agenda-setters to deal with – **gaining attention and building credibility** – that are helped by those four strategies. Understandably, a small country like Estonia is very eager to face those two challenges. As a result, Estonia wants to consider the process of gaining attention and building credibility as a success story rather than a hardship.

Basically, an entrepreneur of any field who wants to establish something has to gain attention for it, otherwise without any support it is very hard to go further with the idea. Therefore, the two main strategies to gain attention are mobilizing support and arousing interest. It means that it is necessary to clearly frame the topic and present it to the audience as fluently and strongly as possible. If people, organizations or states get interested in the issue, it is easier to mobilize supporters, because then they already have set their mind on whether they are interested in developing the topic further or not. To arouse interest a lot promotional activities are often done, such as presentations, conferences and social media posts which nowadays have an enormous effect on the general public.

At the same time, gaining attention does not work without building credibility. Although this definitely does not mean that if someone is gaining a lot of attention, they necessarily have built credibility at the same level or the other way around. Arguably, nowadays it is easier to gain attention than build credibility thanks to technological innovations. Although in the context of PD, the situation is often described only based on a certain event and is not always similarly applicable to other projects. The two main strategies for building credibility are building capacity and claiming authority. To talk specifically about policy issues, the project has to be credible in

terms of organizational capacity on one side and on the other side in terms of legal competences. Furthermore, in order to build trust it is necessary to define the mission of the project and set down values. It means understanding the reason of commitment to the current issue. In addition, the suitability of the project and its creator should be made clear. It is not easy to introduce something to the wider public and build credibility and trust if those two are not compatible. This means that if a state is creating its image, it has to be based on the real nature of the state. For example, Estonia is always promoting itself as being a technology country and at the same time a close-to-nature state, based on the area of its forests. Those two statements reflect some images that Estonians are most proud of and at the same time there are several examples of proof that they are also correct, not just image-builders.

## **2. THE APPLICABILITY OF ESTONIAN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY MECHANISMS**

Several events and factors can exemplify the Estonia-originated PD mechanisms in the context of this research work. The following chapter focuses on findings connected to applicability of PD in Estonia. Specifically, it lists four extremely important events or creations that go together with the practical side of PD through which Estonia tries to gain attention and build credibility. Further on the idea of effectiveness will also be explored to see whether Estonia has actually accomplished what it desires.

### **2.1. A hundred years of the Republic of Estonia**

On 24 February, 2018 the Republic of Estonia celebrated 100 years of independence. The birth of Estonia was a long and complicated process. Therefore, the celebrations of the centenary take place from April 2017 to February 2020. April 2017 marked the anniversary of the union of the territories settled by Estonians and February 2020 marks the commemoration of the signing of the Tartu Peace Treaty. Between those years, many important milestones are celebrated, such as 100 years from the start of the War of Independence, 150 years of Estonian Song and Dance Celebration and 100 years of Riigikogu (Centenary...2018). The declaration of the independence of Estonia 100 years ago is the most important part of Estonians history and means a lot for all the people in Estonia, whether they are young or old. Also it has to be mentioned that a government committee coordinates the preparations of Estonia 100 and, in addition, Estonia 100 steering group and organizing committee are established within the Government Office to make the preparations smoother (Organisation...2018).

There are many different events taking place during the celebrations and they are meant for everyone in all the corners of Estonia. It is necessary to mention that although during the period of the celebrations Estonians look back to the milestones of their history, at the same time the program of the centenary focuses on the future. It is created in such a way that Estonians in

Estonia as well as those abroad have an opportunity to remember their history, think about the present time as well as establish new and far-reaching goals for the future. As a matter of fact, for Estonians it is very important to take some parts from every stage and bring with them when moving forward. They want to be ancient and innovative at the same time and in doing so they do not want to lose their identity and sight of where they come from. Though arguably there are moments when Estonians are too stuck to their past and find it hard to establish new milestones in their future, but with time the self-confidence of Estonia and its citizens has been constantly increasing. The overall name of the program is Estonia 100. In the context of Estonia 100, it is necessary to mention the logo of the celebration. It is very creative as it consists of the number 18 and 100 where the first symbolizes the year of the declaration of independence and the second the hundred years the Republic of Estonia.

The program is very people-centered which means that they are the ones to shape the nature of the celebrations. To mention the events taking place in Estonia, people from different countries and cultures are also welcomed to take part of the celebration. Based on the fact mentioned in the previous paragraph that most of the events are focused on the future, it is important to state that the overall focus of the Estonia 100 celebrations is also on children and the youth. With that Estonia is trying to shape an image of itself as being a very 'looking forward to the future' nation. In addition, it is stating that the current actions of the state are meant for younger generations and their future, so that they can live in a safe and pleasant environment. Out of too many to mention, 'An Instrument for Every Child' is one the most well-known initiatives in connection to children through which the organizers are trying buy new musical instruments for different musical schools in Estonia (Centenary...2018).

In addition to the celebrations on Estonian soil, an international program has also been created to celebrate the centenary around the world. The aim of those events is to raise Estonia's profile globally and make it more visible. The Estonia 100 international program consists of more than 150 cultural, educational, research and technological events (Centenary...2018). One of the biggest and hopefully most successful events is going to be the World Cleanup Day 2018 by the *Let's Do It!* movement that will also be discussed later in this paper.

## **2.2. The Estonian Presidency in the Council of the European Union**

Estonia held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (hereinafter *the Presidency*) in the second half of 2017. The preparations started in 2012 when the Estonian Government established a committee for the Presidency. There were several events held in Estonia under the Presidency, such as international summits, informal meetings of ministers, experts and other higher officials, seminars and conferences.

On the level of country's civil society, Estonia has a strong belief that Europe has enough in common to work together towards the established goals. The Eurobarometer, which is a survey that usually consists of 1000 face-to-face interviews per country, gives a good overview about citizens' opinions and attitudes connected to the EU. In autumn 2017 the Eurobarometer 88 was conducted in 34 states, including Estonia (Eurobarometer 88...2017, 2). The attitude of Estonian citizens towards the EU is mainly neutral. 49% of people mark themselves as being neutral, but at the same time 40% of citizens have positive attitude towards the EU and only 11% of them have negative opinion (Ibid., 10). To describe the support for the EU politics, there is 95% support for the free movement that gives people an opportunity to work, study and be engaged in business and 84% support for common currency that are both actually very high (Ibid., 11). Thus, there is necessity to have openness in different spheres, such as economy, politics and society. It is obvious that states have different traditions and ideas, but the goal should be to find the balance between the interests and get the best results with working together and without hurting some group of people. In case the states and higher-level organizations are able to establish safe ground for relations, regular European citizens can also benefit from the situation. Therefore Estonia had four priorities for the Estonian Presidency that sound as follows: an open and innovative European economy; a safe and secure Europe; a digital Europe and the free movement of data; and an inclusive and sustainable Europe (Priorities...2018).

Clearly Estonia set up an action plan before the Presidency so that the preparations and the organization of the event itself would pass successfully. The current chapter gives an overview of the goals and expected results of the Presidency while the next part of the thesis analyzes whether it was as effective as planned. Thus to have a successful Presidency there has to be communication with the Estonian public as well other nations. During the Presidency, Estonia was working towards the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of Estonia that certainly created an opportunity to show that this country is a very active, innovative and hard-working state. The

communication during the Presidency had six main objectives as follows: to ensure the information exchange necessary for effective cooperation within the Presidency team as well as with key institutional cooperation partners; to bring to the public media and strategic target groups clear understanding of the principles and substantive goals of the Presidency; to explain to the public the organization, preparations and work of the Presidency; to inform the domestic and foreign public and the media about EU policies; to communicate final outcomes to the public and to take up the opportunity to introduce Estonia to the other EU nations (Action Plan...2015, 30).

Events outside of Estonia were also organized under the Presidency which were supported by the activities of Estonia 100 which will be discussed later. Those events were introduced under the Common International Programme. In 2015, the main target states for the program were chosen. There were 34 countries, to name a few: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Ireland, Greece, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Sweden, Denmark, The United Kingdom, Norway, Turkey, The United States and Canada (Action Plan...2015, 37). The activities under the program took place all over the world, especially in Europe.

### **2.3. E-Residency in the Republic of Estonia**

Estonia is the first country to offer e-Residency to foreign citizens since 2014. It offers secure access to different e-services of Estonia. Through that e-residents firstly have an opportunity to establish a company online which means that they can start a business online from everywhere in the world; secondly they can manage it remotely meaning that they can sign, encrypt and send different documents securely and without worrying about scanning or posting; and thirdly achieve location independence by continuing their work with the company online and abroad (Become an e-resident...2018). Applying takes place through an online form and in the case it is approved, the applicant gets a digital ID card to prove its residency. It is necessary to mention that it is not an official identification document and it does not have person's photo on it. In addition, e-Residency does not give citizenship or residence permits.

The first person to gain Estonian e-Residency was a British journalist Edward Lucas whose words have been brought out in the Estonian e-Residency official website:



Estonia's e-Residency is a game-changer. Anyone in the world can now apply for a rock-solid digital ID, giving them what Estonians have taken for granted for years: the ability to identify themselves online, to make binding agreements and to communicate securely. This turns the Internet from a confusing Wild West into an environment where trustful interaction is frictionless and ubiquitous.

To mention the numerical data connected to the e-Residency, there are all together 33 438 applicants from 154 countries and, in addition, 5033 companies established by e-residents (Home...2018). The states from where Estonia has the most e-residents are Finland, Russia, the United States, Ukraine, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, Latvia, India and the Netherlands (Estonian draft legislation...2016). There are 41 locations all over the world where the e-residents can pick up their ID cards. The newest additions are Seoul in the Republic of Korea and Bucharest in Romania. It is very beneficial to add locations where to get the ID cards, as otherwise people have to travel to nearby countries to pick it up. On the one hand, it makes the life of the resident easier, but on the other hand it opens up an opportunity to spread more knowledge about e-Residency to those states.

#### **2.4. *Let's Do It!* movement**

The *Let's Do It!* is a civil society movement created in 2008 where about 50 000 Estonians stepped out of their houses and decided to clean the whole Estonia. It is very remarkable as it took only about five hours. This movement got huge media attention and spread quickly to our neighboring countries, such as Latvia and Lithuania and later to the whole of Europe. On September 15, World Cleanup Day 2018 will be organized and it has an extremely ambitious goal. The main idea is to include 150 countries and clean up those within just one day. In case of success, about 5% of the world's population will be engaged (Toolkit...2018).

The *Let's Do It!* team considers cooperation and partners to be a very important part in the way of achieving goals. They find it necessary to have as many partners supporting the idea as possible. Taking up a new action and introducing it to the public at large can be rather difficult. Therefore, it is important to have an action plan and preliminary goals ready to present them to potential partners. There are several ways of convincing people or companies to join and support the action in question. It refers to the necessity of having a team with broad-based knowledge

and motivation to involve partners. The *Let's Do It!* team has stated that in the case of their movement, for some partners helping to make the world a better place is sufficient motivation, but for others visibility or a positive reputation is more important (Ibid.). Therefore, public relations and marketing are indeed very important tools to get ideas out to people and organizations that are needed to support a particular initiative.

*Let's Do It! World* is a non-political and non-profit organization which means that they are not able to fund different Cleanup Day activities. They have tried to find funding from state ministries, municipalities, state funds, private funds, companies and co-funding platforms. The *Let's Do It!* movement has many partners, such as *Enterprise Estonia* (EAS), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Environment and Estonia 100. For example, Estonian Republic 100 provides financial support from their budget to organize World Cleanup Day with a goal to introduce Estonia and also the movement itself that has received enormous public attention. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also funds World Cleanup Day from the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid program (Toolkit...2018).

The former President of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves has taken part of the *Let's Do It!* movement several times. In 2008, he held a speech at the closing event of the *Let's Do It!* movement. He was pondering about what this movement can give to Estonia and its citizens. Firstly, Ilves brought out that the Estonian environment got cleaner and as a result of that even more beautiful. So it is easy to say that it gives even more reasons for Estonians to enjoy the amazing nature and landscape. Secondly, there is reason to believe that nature will remain clean, because after someone has cleaned up the waste once in his or her life, they never want to pollute nature again. Thirdly, Ilves also hoped that the attitude of Estonian people changed in a direction where they would be more sustainable in their everyday life as well as produce less waste and garbage. He finalized his speech with the belief that civil-led movements like *Let's Do It!* are a symbol of a mature and healthy society which means that it is going to the right direction.

Unquestionably, social media has a huge influence, especially nowadays. In 2016, Ilves shared on his *Facebook* page a poster about *Let's Do It!* World Cleanup Day. He has around 100 000 people following his page which means that everything he posts gets a lot attention from Estonians as well as foreigners. People in high positions like Ilves have a strong influence over citizens. It does not mean that every person has to support him to put his ideas on the move, but

he at least has the power to spread the message, so that it can reach individuals in every part of Estonia or farther.

In addition, it is necessary to make clear that PD is not able to exist without the involvement of non-state actors who also have influence over citizens. Arguably sportsmen, musicians, poets and artists have at least the same, maybe even greater power to make the state visible and to share information about it. As a relevant example, it is worthwhile mentioning Arvo Pärt, a world-renowned composer of classical music who has been the most performed living composer since 2010. Even if someone is trying to get information about Estonia from the official tourist information website of *Visit Estonia* and opens the category of history and culture that writes about TOP 10 world-famous Estonians, the first name that the visitor can see is Arvo Pärt (2018). It means that his name is brought out because of a certain reason. But it is important to understand that in the overall context of PD, it is no longer only about Pärt as an individual. The idea is about how the government is using him as an effective tool of PD to further gain attention of the worldwide public. For example, in the framework of Estonia 100 the performances of Pärt were presented in Berlin Konzerthaus from 27 to 29 of March 2018. Three of his major works *Adam's Lament*, *Tabula rasa* and *Miserere* were performed there, so the benefits of the Estonian Government, Estonia 100 and Pärt himself were mixed in this situation.

### **3. MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ESTONIA'S EFFORTS IN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY**

#### **3.1. A hundred years of the Republic of Estonia**

The events of the centenary take place from 2017 to 2020. Therefore, the final conclusions about the success of Estonia 100 in terms of PD cannot be made before 2020. But there are several projects that can already be analyzed. As stated in the previous chapter, Estonia held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2017. Thus, it is necessary to bring out that to improve knowledge about Estonia abroad, a collective international program was created between Estonia 100 and Estonian Presidency. With this particular program, they are trying to present some of the best parts of Estonia, including culture, technology and science. But to go further into the topic, it is necessary to understand that in the context of current paper Estonia 100 is not only analyzed based on the events marked in the program, but also the idea of whole 100 years of independence is taken into account.

In the context of the independence of Estonia, it is fitting to offer an example of an event that began in 2015 when the Estonian Institute of Human Rights started a PD project in Kyiv and which lasted until 2017. The official name of the project was 'Advocacy of Human Rights of Crimean Tatar People Through Public Diplomacy', so understandably the main idea of it was to deepen knowledge about Crimean Tatars (Estonian Institute of Human Rights...2015). The most important partner during the project was the Estonian Institute of Human Rights and the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs funded it. Therefore, it is evident that Estonia was very tied with the project. One of the leaders of it from the Ukrainian side was Mustafa Dzhemilev who argued that Estonia is without doubt a state that knows the importance and value of independence, referring to Estonian history (Ibid.). In addition, he stated that thanks to Estonian knowledge on the issue they are capable of helping Crimean Tatars to stand for their freedom (Ibid.). At the same time, the Estonian side believed that with raising awareness on their issue, they have better possibilities for creating links with international allies. Thus, the previously mentioned PD

project is very smart. On the one hand, the project is not about Estonia or its issues, but about Crimean Tatars. On the other hand, Estonia had an amazing opportunity to show them as being a supportive, go-ahead and intelligent nation that others can count on. It means that during this project, Estonia was standing next to Ukraine in an equal position, but with different goals to consider, for example the PD effect for Estonia. Thus, it is not always about the direct use of PD, but a clever applicability of PD.

Another considerably interesting example is the development cooperation project “Civil society support for strengthening national resilience and security in Ukraine” that was launched by the International Centre for Defence and Security and supported by the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ukraine Civil Society and Security...2018). Before the project the team found that Ukraine did not have a good approach to national security and out of that came one of the main tasks of the project which was to promote Estonia's approach there which was considered to be very comprehensive (Ibid.). Therefore, Estonia had once again opportunity to go there, show their approach to security and national resilience as well as pass their knowledge during different workshops and trainings. So despite not having very long time of independence it was again possibility to demonstrate how far Estonia has become.

Estonia 100 is probably one of the hardest events to analyze in the context of gaining attention and building credibility. On one side with so short history, Estonia has already gained a lot of attention and built credibility with its actions in different fields and shown how strong and 'look forward to the future' nation they are. With the program during the Estonia 100 they have a great possibility to gain attention as events are taking place all over the world. But at the same time it is not yet possible to analyze the actual effect of those events, as they are taking place until 2020. For foreigners who are taking place of international events this can be more considered to be like promotion and presumably does not make them think about the actual capabilities of Estonia in terms of building credibility.

### **3.2. The Estonian Presidency in the Council of the European Union**

The Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2017 was overall considered to be successful. The next Presidency will be held in Bulgaria and the organizers believe that they gave the event away with rather good results. One of the main topics that was included in all

fields was the digital area. Although for Estonians this topic is quite ordinary and citizens are already using most of the benefits of the digital area, the main interest of the current Presidency was to spread those advantages to Europe, so that actions over borders would be easier as well. A more digital European Union would be more competitive. During the Presidency, 377 drafts were worked through, such as legislative initiatives and strategies (The preliminary results...2017, 1). When considering the results of the Presidency, even an international political magazine Politico evaluated the achievements to be mostly successful. They scored it between points from five to nine out of ten, giving nine points to Estonian energy and environmental policy and only five points to healthcare.

The fields discussed at the Presidency were digital topics, social affairs and health, environment, internal security, migration, defense, finance, agriculture, trade, energy, transport and foreign policy (Parksepp 2018). In the digital area, Estonia did not achieve everything they had hoped for. It is believed that during the Presidency Estonia especially stood out with digital meetings where the Member States got an overview about the main future topic connected to the field. Some of the most important steps were taken in the field of free movement of data, the end of geo-blocking and the development of a 5G network (Vahtla 2018). The 5G network will clearly change the digital era of Europe by making the investments easier or introducing new services. It is also very beneficial for regular citizens of Europe as it makes their life easier as well as the technological life more operative. The social sphere and healthcare was one of the most complicated areas to coordinate. Despite the fact that Estonia raised many issues connected to the situation in healthcare, most of them remained at the level of debate and there were not any successful results or drafts issued. Arguably there were many controversial reactions to drafts proposed by Estonian Presidency, but at least they were able to influence other countries until some of them decided to change their opinion. As this is very complicated area, even the previously mentioned factor was a big success for Estonia. The environment and climate can be considered as one of the most successful areas during the Presidency. The member states were able to reach an agreement, considering all the drafts proposed. It is also necessary to bring out one of the main points that were established during the Presidency connected to the environmental area. Estonia was successful in agreeing with the European Parliament on the emission trading system. It means that considering the agreement, the amount of emission quotas will start to decrease rapidly and in turn it will increase their price. As a result, the economy should get greener.

In November and December 2017, the Government Office of the Republic of Estonia ordered a survey about the knowledge and attitude of Estonians in regards to issues connected to the European Union. Obviously, it included questions about the Presidency. There were all together a little over 1000 respondents. 52% of them stated that they were familiar with the activities of the Presidency. 17% of them said they are very familiar and 35% believed that they are rather familiar. Mostly people between the age of 60–74 and individuals with higher education stated that they are familiar with the activities of the Presidency. Estonia was considered to be successful by 61% and unsuccessful by 15% of the respondents. It is necessary to mention that 24% of the residents did not have an opinion about that topic and, in addition, 11% of them were not familiar at all with the topics covered during the Presidency. (Uuring...2017) To come back to the six main objectives of the Presidency mentioned in the previous chapter, one of them was to explain to the public the organization, preparations and work of the Presidency. Something to further think about is that if one fourth of the public does not have an opinion about the success of the Presidency, has it actually accomplished one of its main objectives. It is not only about introducing Estonia to foreign nations through the Presidency, but also to make sure that the citizens themselves have enough knowledge about current issues, because they also have the power to introduce Estonia in other states. In 2016, a former Foreign Minister of Estonia, Marina Kaljurand stated the following:

Estonia's global influence today is much stronger than one would assume from our small population. It's partly because of Estonians, who are unofficial representatives of their country in different parts of the world.

It means that taking Estonia, its culture, technology, ideas and so on to a foreign public is not only the privilege or in the hands of the Estonian Government or higher officials, but one can get an even better response by sharing it from one citizen to another. It is interesting that there are situations where ordinary citizens have better chances to reach out to a foreign public.

Piret Seeman, an advisor of the Presidency, said that one of the main side effects of the Presidency for Estonia is the consolidation of its image of a developed digital nation in Europe (2018). During the Presidency, a move towards the supportive environment for digital innovation in EU took place. Furthermore, Estonia had once again an opportunity to showcase itself as an innovative technology country.

Therefore, from the building credibility point of view Estonia was successful in organizing the Presidency. As Estonia was able to go through with many ideas in the digital area as well as environment and climate, the Government is mostly pleased with the results. Estonia is brought out as an example to follow and got a lot of positive feedback in terms of organizing the whole event. In addition Estonia was able to establish new drafts that were passed on to following Presidency which also demonstrates the influence of Estonia. From the gaining attention side Estonia was not as successful as considering credibility side. Obviously the Presidency caught the attention of Presidents, Prime Ministers and other officials who were connected to the event as well as those who are interested in the field. At the same time the attention from ordinary people is questionable, especially considering the statistics about Estonian citizens themselves who were the closest one to the whole event.

### **3.3. E-Residency in the Republic of Estonia**

Estonia has been trying to establish itself as an ever developing technology country. Despite its small population of around 1.3 million people, Estonia has gained a lot of attention in this field. E-Estonia was created by the Government and it directs citizens to use electronic solutions in communication with the state. When talking about the success stories of E-Estonia, the main ones to mention are e-Governance in 1997, e-Tax in 2000, X-Road in 2001, Digital ID in 2001, i-Voting in 2005, Public Safety in 2007, Blockchain in 2008, e-Health in 2008 and e-Residency in 2014 (Success stories...2018). Estonia usually calls the last one as their gift to the world and for obvious reasons it has gained a lot of attention.

In order to analyze the success of E-Residency and the E-Estonia overall, it is necessary to go back in time and understand how Estonia was even able to establish them as such a developed tech-country. Every state has some aspect through which they want to show them as being serious, developed and capable in participating in global actions. For some states, it is the military, for others, such as Estonia, it is technology. Therefore, Estonia considers itself as being effective in promoting Estonia as an E-country, specifically thanks to the successful introduction of E-Residency. Actually one of the milestones in Estonian technological development was Skype, founded in 2003, that spread quickly around the world and was later sold to Microsoft. It is understandable that even if Estonians did not believe that it would go so worldwide, users will still get to know at least some points about Estonia if they choose to use it. For Estonians, it is



very ordinary to have 4G network and Wi-Fi everywhere in Estonia or online voting. So if other states do not have the same opportunities, it definitely catches their attention. One of the latest success stories in Estonia connected to technology was e-Residency in 2014. That was four years ago and therefore it is necessary to consider how often that kind of new inventions should occur given that Estonia is a 'technology country'. Four years is a long time and during that time there might be several countries wishing to gain that position. Technological innovation is a clever way of gaining attention through PD. It is something that spreads quickly, as the society nowadays is mostly interested in technology. Innovation does not always have to be proposed by the Government, but a smart one uses it for their benefit. That is what the Estonian Government is doing as well.

Connected to e-Residency Estonia has done considerably successful work in both sides - gaining attention and building credibility. With that invention they were again able to show them as innovative and successful technology country. Based on the previous Estonian technological innovations that have lasted through years, it is easier for foreigners to trust current e-Residency system as well. At the same time it makes the life of foreign citizens easier, which is nowadays a huge benefit. But somehow creating the image of Estonia being one of the leading technology countries has made their life more complex, as new and even more innovative solutions are expected.

### **3.4. *Let's Do It!* movement**

The *Let's Do It!* movement is definitely considered to be one the most important success stories of Estonia. Although it is a civil-led movement and not started by the Government, they definitely use it in PD. There are also very many Estonian politicians and higher officials who spread the strong message behind the idea. The *Let's Do It!* movement is probably one of the best examples of gaining attention and building credibility for Estonia in the context of PD that has actually been effective. One of the main pieces of evidence is that it was created in 2008 and has lasted so far and spread every year to more and more countries. Therefore, it is possible to say that a very strong foundation was established for this movement. To build credibility their team has established a clear vision, mission and plan that are some of the most important factors in this side. They have several documents to support the actions of different teams, including Toolkit which was designed to support national teams during their activities. It provides all the

information that those teams need, starting with the overall idea behind the cleanup and continuing with how to organize such an enormous event, how to find partners, build a team, start cooperation, find finances and market the event to name a few. The *Let's Do It!* movement team believes in the necessity of having as many partners tied to the event as possible. Therefore, they always have an action plan and goals ready to introduce to public. But one thing of it is having that foundation; another thing is to see it actually working. So far the movement has achieved most of its goals, but they have very ambitious goals to follow. The *Let's Do It!* movement has also partners with excellent reputation, such as *Enterprise Estonia* (EAS), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment that make the movement more trustworthy.

In some ways, the *Let's Do It!* movement has gained attention for very obvious reasons which is to clean up illegal waste from Estonia and world. Understandably, trash is becoming one of the biggest problems globally, but its support is not only based on that noble idea. They also want to unite the global community and raise people's awareness about a specific topic. Behind the main idea, there is actually an enormous amount of promotion and media support to spread the message. There are several press releases, newsletters and other news and media coverage consistently sent out as well as promotion materials to use in other countries. It also has to be mentioned that Estonia is a very hard-working nation and they do not hope that success falls into their hands. When the movement took place for the first time in 2008, Estonians were able to clean the whole Estonia within one day. At that time, they definitely did not do so purposefully, for example to gain attention that they were able to do it that quickly, but it had its effect on the following years.

There are several fascinating success stories connected to *Let's Do It! Cleanup*. One that really shows the influence of the movement comes from Afghanistan. In 2015, there were several deadly suicide attacks in Kabul where more than 40 people were killed and many got injured (Afghanistan Held a Big Waste Cleanup...2015). However, they still decided to organize the cleanup as planned, only some days later. The regional coordinator there believed that during hard times people are especially keen to do something good and positive for their country and at the same time they have a chance to forget the attack for some hours during the event. This situation gives an impression that people actually want to benefit their society and it is possible to understand the scale of influence the Estonian *Let's Do It!* movement has.

To come back to the aforementioned practical side of PD then from the gaining attention point of view *Let's Do It!* movement has absolutely been successful. After the first cleanup the organizers in Estonia uploaded a video to *YouTube* just to share what a small country like Estonia is able to do with just one day. It started to spread extremely quickly and not a long time after the event people from different countries started to show their interest. They wanted to know several issues, such as how to do it, how to create the team and how to collect the right people. After so many motivated people from different countries got engaged, Estonians understood that they have the leader position in the movement and fortunately did not give it away. At some point there was a belief that now people know how to do it and every country has the possibility to get engaged. But it was a movement with so important message that leaders from other states wanted Estonian team to continue in order to keep the movement going and hold it together in the way it should exist. In this case it is interesting that the levels of gaining attention and building credibility are not far away from each other. Situations where some projects get a lot of attention from public, but at the same time they do not have enough organizational capacity or legal competences happen quite often. Thanks to enormous attention new partners also got involved in terms of building credibility. Many ordinary individuals, corporations and government support it. It has constantly growing network of partners which make the movement more and more trustworthy. *Let's Do It!* movement even has partnership with the UN Environment and is part of their Sustainable Development Goals. All these statements demonstrate the scope of the movement. It can even be argued that it is definitely an example of a project that many states would like to follow. On one side it is not the project of the Government, but on the other side, they know exactly how to use it in their own benefit.

## CONCLUSION

PD is an important and interesting framework-providing field for officials dealing with foreign policy as well as scholars of international relations. It is somewhat far away from the idea of traditional diplomacy and therefore intriguing subject to analyze. The older part of it is based on the idea that it is directed only to foreign public, but nowadays the actual separation of domestic and outside audience is very complicated. At the same time local people have also an opportunity to spread the ideas of their own country. In terms of PD it often depends on the ways that states communicate with each other and how they use the gathered knowledge.

The aim of the current thesis was to determine whether or not Estonia as a small state has enough capabilities to use public diplomacy-originated mechanisms effectively and whether or not the country's efforts made so far have actually gained attention and helped to build credibility as desired. Gaining attention and building credibility are some of the greatest challenges for countries and Estonia as a small nation should be very eager to test those. So this thesis tried to measure the effectiveness of Estonia's PD and used several examples, such as *Let's Do It!* movement, the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2017 and the hundred years of the Republic of Estonia which should be known for all the Estonians and expectedly for foreign publics as well. *Let's Do It!* movement proved itself to be one of the most successful projects in both gaining attention and building credibility. It is especially interesting, because it is not Government's official project, but they are still able to use it in their own benefit. Considering other projects it is possible to say that all of them somewhat lack whether gaining attention or building credibility. It is often that Estonia has done a lot of work considering organizational capacity or legal competences, but at the same time lack actual attention from foreigners. This is definitely one issue to develop further to see what Estonia is doing wrong in this matter and how to improve it.

Future researches in the area are definitely recommendable as the world is constantly changing. Presumably states, whether small or large, are more and more considering PD related mechanisms as being positively effective and therefore more eager to connect it with policy

making. To develop further the research about Estonia it is possible to bring more examples into the comparison or it would even be interesting and fruitful to tear PD into smaller pieces, such as sport, music, arts etc. and see the effectiveness of those separate fields. As a result it would be possible to see whether the efforts in different areas function at the same level, what are the areas that need more attention and whether those fields actually offer desired results.

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