

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

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

Travel Report by: Estonia by Konrad Gürtler (Research Institute for Sustainability Potsdam)

Potsdam, 24th September 2024

The delegation trip to Estonia proved profoundly enriching for our work at the Research Institute for Sustainability (RIFS), offering valuable perspectives in several key areas. Foremost among these were the professional insights from our Estonian colleagues, whose contributions were both candid and illuminating. Particularly striking were the evaluations shared by researchers from Tallinn University of Technology and the Stockholm Environment Institute, who underscored the critical importance of sustainability while drawing attention to the absence of clear priorities and cohesive climate and energy policies—a challenge amplified by Estonia's ongoing crises.

Additional depth was provided by reports from the Ministry of Climate and Environment, which highlighted initiatives aimed at fostering transparency across regions in pursuing sustainability goals and achieving greater comparability. As a transformation researcher, I found the discussions on the oil shale region of Ida-Virumaa especially compelling, particularly the focus on navigating the complexities of a just industrial transformation (Just Transition). The participation of two municipal representatives, who travelled to Tallinn to share their projects and experiences, added a practical dimension that was both inspiring and highly relevant to our research.

In addition to the exchange of experiences with Estonian stakeholders, discussions within our Brandenburg delegation proved equally valuable. Particularly noteworthy were the conversations on the state of structural change in the Lusatia region, the broader (sustainability) political landscape in Brandenburg, and the challenges and successes of citizen participation processes implemented in various municipalities. The firsthand perspectives shared by the diverse members of our delegation added significant depth to these discussions.

Looking ahead, I find the collaboration potential with Ida-Virumaa representatives, Meelis Kuusk and Hardi Murula, particularly compelling. The structural transformation challenges faced by their region share notable parallels with those in other mining areas, such as Lusatia, while also reflecting unique regional differences. Until now, my understanding of the challenges in Ida-Virumaa had primarily been based on research literature, which is why I suggested inviting the two representatives of the region. Given the shared and divergent challenges, I see considerable potential for future collaboration—particularly on the role of sustainability in implementing structural change projects. A joint application for a Horizon Europe research project or a smaller-scale research initiative could be a promising avenue.