

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

Faculty of Social Sciences

Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

Anna-Maria Kolessova

**COVID-19: HOW DOES THE ESTONIAN GOVERNMENT STIMULATE
AND USE THE IDEA OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY?**

Bachelor's Thesis

Supervisor: Andrey Makarychev, PhD

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Abstract

In light of recent events regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, social responsibility has become a relevant topic in political discussions. This thesis examines the ways in which states can use their citizens' sense of social responsibility while handling the COVID-19 crisis, using the example of Estonia. The research describes the implemented measures, recommendations that were given and the respective reaction of institutions during the first wave of coronavirus by conducting a discourse analysis.

The findings indicate the importance of cooperation between the state and the people. The government stimulates cooperation by promoting responsibility through raising awareness, public announcements addressing the nation and social campaigns. In response to that, institutions and people make responsible choices and behave accordingly. However, it is up to institutions to define what constitutes responsible choices. As a result, public debate finds that the line between reasonable and unjustified measures remains unclear and this uncertainty is reflected in the strategies of institutions. Responsibilization of citizens is a major part of the strategy developed by the Estonian government which makes overcoming the pandemic possible.

Keywords: COVID-19, social responsibility, Estonia, governance, responsibilization

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INTRODUCTION

Since COVID-19 was first detected in China, it has spread worldwide relatively fast. At that time the number of infected cases was growing rapidly every day and it soon became an international concern; the virus outbreak was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020).

The pandemic has caused many challenges to governments worldwide and countries had to come up with action plans in order to avoid losses as much as possible. It was especially challenging since the situation was very new and there is no comparable experience in recent history. It was important to make decisions and act fast, considering the fact that there was no vaccine or medicine and the number of infections was constantly growing. Closing borders, lockdowns, social distancing etc. were among the first steps taken aimed at trying to stop the virus from spreading. In March, when we first faced COVID-19, governments had multiple choices regarding the policies that countries could implement - should they be strict with restrictions like China or give people more freedom like Sweden? In some countries, governments decided to use a biopolitical tool; they relied on the social responsibility of their citizens, despite having the legal authority to apply serious restrictions.

The thesis analyses the reasons behind favouring the idea of social responsibility and the ways in which the concept was applied in practice. The analysis especially focuses on Estonia and its action by conducting a discourse analysis of official sources and public announcements informing citizens of measures and recommendations and news from the Estonian news portal. This thesis aims to determine how the Estonian government uses its citizens' sense of social responsibility and why it relies on it instead of applying more strict measures justified by law. The aim will be reached through examining relevant literature on the social responsibility concept, conducting a discourse analysis of announcements, recommendations and decisions taken by the Estonian government and analysing the reaction of institutions to any advice given. One of the research questions

also focused on the public debate around measures that evaluates whether some of the actions taken by institutions are an overreaction or rational decisions. The term “overreaction” is used to refer to the type of reaction to the pandemic that takes extra-legal and overtly exceptional forms and does not necessarily stem from the instructions of the government.

The author hypothesizes that responsabilization is one of the key mechanisms that plays an important role in handling the COVID-19 crisis.

The theoretical framework is based on the literature that examines the concept of social responsibility. As the world is still in the middle of the pandemic, some of the COVID-19 related research is yet to be published. However, some research papers on responsible behaviour during the pandemic are already available and those focus on a variety of countries like Italy, India, Latvia, etc. The situation in Estonia has not been analysed in this way yet. Therefore “COVID-19: HOW DOES THE ESTONIAN GOVERNMENT STIMULATE AND USE THE IDEA OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY?” is a current and relevant research area.

The research focuses on the period during the declared state of emergency in Estonia that lasted from the 12th of March until the 17th of May of 2020. This period is also considered the first wave of coronavirus.

The first section of this paper examines and reviews relevant literature. It then goes on to explain the methodology of the research in detail. The third chapter is concerned with describing the situation regarding COVID-19 in Estonia, the approach of the government and responsibility in the context of Estonia. It also includes measures taken by institutions of Estonia and the public debate around them. The last section of this paper presents and discusses the findings of the research.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The whole world faced a new reality - countries had to come up with actions in order to protect people. The virus was spreading fast and it soon became a life-threatening factor. As the situation was new for everyone, there were no guidelines and every country had to find its own way of dealing with the problem. Therefore countries had different approaches, but a common goal: attempting to slow down the spread of the virus while also taking into account socio-economic factors, because the situation also threatened social security and prosperity.

“ 'A sanitary war' – Corona, medical power(lessness) and responsabilization” describes how the pandemic thus triggers control mechanisms and contributes to creating new ones. To avoid the spread of disease, bodies must be regulated either willingly or by coercion, not merely to preserve life itself, but also because preserving life is essential to sustaining political stability and economic power. A global crisis may justify the introduction of far-reaching control measures, and it is a political decision as to what level of restriction is appropriate. The United Nations Office for Human Rights released an emergency statement on March 16, 2020 warning that the situation threatens to provide justification for human rights violations. For instance, actions such as restricting mobility and a ban on large gatherings are not common for a democratic society (Gadebusch, Söderfeldt, 2020:4, 5).

Some governments assumed that the best way to fight the virus was to cooperate with the people because while restrictions are effective, people obey the rules out of fear, not fully realizing the true reasons behind them. When people are more aware and have more information, they are more likely to have a more conscious behaviour. People must be convinced that risk is imminent and lethal and that the enforced limitations on rights would serve to alleviate it in order for the restrictions to be recognized. The genre of the "address to the nation" is being used by heads of state and government to clarify and defend their

decisions. Their rhetoric takes into account culture-specific differences and it helps to reach the nation more effectively (Gadebusch & Söderfeldt, 2020:5).

When society recognizes a threat, immunity politics unfolds at the intersection of health, life, law and politics. As a result of this, the state implements political interventions to protect the immunity of society, and life becomes the main focus of politics. Eventually politics becomes a form of biopolitics (Gadebusch & Söderfeldt, 2020:6). Söderfeldt explains that states cannot “fight” the virus directly since it does not have a physical body. The human body acts as a host for the virus and consequently, all actions forwarded to dealing with bodies are tantamount to the realm of biopower (Foucault, 1998 as cited in Gadebusch & Söderfeldt, 2020:7).

In the series of Lectures at the Collège de France "Society Must Be Defended", Michel Foucault has touched on the term “biopolitics” and the role of authorities in handling diseases. Since the end of the 18th century, epidemics have been replaced by endemics. Those diseases are rather difficult to get rid of, yet, they are not considered as a reason for many deaths. Instead, the diseases are seen as constant factors that cause a decrease in the population’s strength, shortened working time, wasted energy and financial losses that are both due to low production and medical care costs (Foucault, 1976:244).

In other words, the deaths are not the main issue, but the economical consequences are. This makes governments interested in keeping the population healthy and safe. The COVID-19 indeed has a visible impact on countries’ economies and Estonia is not an exception. For instance, the registered unemployment rate rose from 5.68% to 7.65% during the first wave of coronavirus according to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (Unemployment Insurance Fund as cited in ERR, 2020). Also, Swedbank predicted in May that unemployment could double to 100,000 by the fall, depending on the additional effects of the pandemic (ERR, 2020a). It would also cause difficulties for hospitals, as an overload of COVID-19 patients might disrupt daily healthcare services, such as planned surgeries. Those factors give the Estonian government additional motivation to protect the population from the virus. Besides that, Foucault argues that the mechanisms created

by biopolitics differ from disciplinary mechanisms and have a variety of functions. Those mechanisms include statistical estimates and overall measures. Its aim is not to change any given phenomenon as such, but to change the individual to the degree that he is a part of a mechanism and, ultimately, to interfere at the level to which these general phenomena are decided. A citizen is not seen as an individual itself but as a part of a global mechanism in which s(he) should behave accordingly to reach a balance on a general level. For the mechanism to be effective, it should be regularized, not only disciplined (Foucault, 1976:246).

The framework is also based on findings from the paper “We are all responsible now: Governmentality and responsabilized subjects in corporate social responsibility”, which argues that “employees” are both the objects and the subjects of corporate social responsibility since they are seen as a group that organization should be responsible for and at the same time should be responsible itself (Siltaoja et al. 2014: 445). That is to say that the government as an “organization” is responsible for its citizens and simultaneously the responsibility is placed on the citizens.

Corporate social responsibility is correlative with the concepts of “responsibilization” and “governmentality” introduced by Foucault. Nowadays power and power relations work in liberal democratic regimes and governmentality is used to explain the way they function together (Foucault et al., 2008). The definition of corporate social responsibility has been used to describe businesses’ cooperative initiatives that are supposed to contribute to social and environmental well-being beyond the simple emphasis on economic well-being (Siltaoja, 2015:447).

Responsibilization, however, is “a governance technique that is designed to address the issue of governance and control that originates from freedom of choice and individual liberties” (Biebricher, 2011 as cited in Siltaoja et al., 2014:448). The purpose of the responsabilization is that the people are in charge of their deeds and entire social conduct while bearing in mind the objective of the responsible behaviour. “The strategy of responsabilization, or the transfer of responsibility from governments to individuals and

other actors, reflects an effort to increase the awareness of individual actors so that they will undertake the preparations needed to avoid unnecessary risks and dangers” (Garland, 2001 as cited in Rådestad & Larsson, 2018:91). Responsibilization turns people into subjects who believe that they are free and responsible for their own decisions and outcomes and entails persuading people to act in a certain way through legal norms, guidelines, moral exhortation, informal prohibitions, and unspoken agreements. Responsibilization can be widely used to support social systems, for instance, health care incorporates the idea to make every citizen a partner that helps to make health care run smoothly. (Biebricher, 2011:471).

Responsibility becomes a form of reflexive prudence, and concerning their possible consequences, individuals and groups are expected to increasingly perform moral assessments of their behaviour, measure and plan their life path in ways that aim to minimize harm and danger and optimize the benefit to themselves and others (Giddens, 1999). Sally Engle Merry claims that responsibilization stresses the concept of self-control and hence responsibilized subject is autonomous and self-governing. The autonomy of the subject is expressed through responsibility for its actions. It is worth noting that if the subject succeeds, it is thanks to the agency, but if the subject fails, it is its own fault (Merry, 2009:403). In other words, it means that people’s lives depend on the ability to be responsible and in the context of coronavirus it could mean that adequate and self-disciplined social behaviour is the way to protect ourselves from the virus. A low rate of coronavirus infection would indicate that the state had the right strategy when dealing with the problem, at the same time, high rates might be interpreted as the citizens’ fault.

One of the forms of collective social responsibility is implied when communities gather around a particular health issue to inform and encourage each other and attract more involvement in their health issues by the state and corporations. “Engaging in discourses of responsibility and accountability, these groups direct demands towards the state, scientific entities, and corporate business seeking not only care, research, and investment, but also the extension of decision-making beyond both the state and the realms of the

scientific enterprise through public-private ‘partnerships’ envisioned to enable greater degrees of ‘patient choice’”(Epstein, 1998 as cited in Trnka & Trundle, 2014:5).

The Internet is considered one of the most powerful instruments for biopolitical subjectification and responsabilization and throughout the pandemic, it has acquired a significant meaning. News and messages from the government and its offices reach people on a minute-by-minute basis, but speed is not the only relevant factor here. For instance, many of the new materials are available to everyone eager to read it and, through social media, anyone can communicate their understanding and share their views. News portals serve as a platform to communicate important guidelines with steps that people should take based on scientific explanations (Söderfeldt, 2020:7).

To summarize, the terms “social responsibility” and “responsibilization” are relatively old, but nevertheless gain, during the pandemic, a new significance and have an important place in creating and applying national strategies. The next chapter moves on to describe the methodology of current research.

2. METHODOLOGY

This thesis aims to analyse how the Estonian government stimulates and uses a sense of social responsibility during the first wave of coronavirus. The aim is being reached by conducting a discourse analysis of public announcements regarding the situation with the COVID-19 made by the Estonian government and other institutions. A case-study approach was adopted to help understand how social responsibility functions in Estonia, and for that qualitative methods were useful for identifying and characterising the government's arguments and policies. The objects of discourse analysis are pandemic-related material (announcements, information, guidelines, recommendations, legal acts) published from 12th of March until 17th of May, 2020 on the website of the Estonian government as well as of governmental bodies such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education and Research, the Estonian Health Board. The thesis also refers to government press conferences, speeches addressing the nation and news on Estonian online news portals such as Postimees, ERR and Delfi both in Estonian and English. ERR is the main news portal used in this thesis out of convenience since the news is also available in English. The named ministries and institutions represent the areas that were most affected by COVID-19. Criteria for selecting the items were as follows: items should indicate the steps taken by the government, refer to responsibility and fit into a given timeframe. When working with websites, the focus was on the published news and the "filter by date" option helped to sort out the time period of interest. First, announcements were gathered from the website that is managed by the government Communication Office - www.kriis.ee. The website consists of information related to the COVID-19 crisis in Estonia and gives all necessary details about each aspect of everyday life, including services, education, work, travelling, etc. in three languages - Estonian, English and Russian. The announcements are identical in all three languages. Following this, the data was collected from the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education and Research, the Estonian Health Board in the Estonian language and translated into English. After gathering the data, the items were then examined from the viewpoint of information concerning the encouragement from the government to act responsibly, along with practical recommendations that are not regulated by law directly. Then, the

stenograms of press conferences held by the government were collected from the official website of the government (www.valitsus.ee). The thesis also includes in the database speeches by the prime minister, who was also a leading figure during the state of emergency. Another part of the empirical data includes extracts from the press conferences translated from Estonian to English, which is later analysed in more detail (the data is presented in Appendix 1).

The research questions for the discourse analysis are the following:

1. What arguments did the Estonian government use to call on people to act responsibly?
2. Which recommendations have the government of Estonia given to people?
3. What were the measures that non-governmental institutions have implemented?

The thesis also gives an overview of the city governance on example of two biggest cities in Estonia – Tallinn and Tartu by collecting relevant information from official websites of the named cities. Lastly, the research describes the public debate around taken measures with help of applicable news.

The following chapter introduces actions that taken by different institutions and organizations, analyzes the arguments used by the government and touches on the legal discussion around the anti-pandemic policy measures.

3. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE TIME OF THE PANDMIC

As the situation with COVID-19 was getting more serious, the Estonian government declared the state of emergency and called together a Committee aiming to solve all problems related to coronavirus on March 12th, 2020. The Committee consisted of the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Economic Affairs and Infrastructure, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Social Affairs, the Foreign Minister, the Minister of Education and Science, the Minister of Defence, the State Secretary and the activities were led by the Prime Minister. Protecting the health and well-being of people was defined as a priority. The government formulated the following goals for dealing with the crisis (Political statement by Prime Minister Jüri Ratas in the Riigikogu, 12 March 2020):

1. to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus to Estonia
2. to prevent the local spread of the coronavirus in Estonia
3. ensure that the healthcare system can cope with the control and treatment of the coronavirus
4. to prevent panic in society and to raise public awareness of the prevention and treatment of the coronavirus
5. to ensure that the population can cope with the indirect effects of the coronavirus
6. to ensure the functioning of the Estonian economy as normally as possible

Throughout the first wave of coronavirus, the government made several public announcements that contained both restrictions and recommendations, stressing that everyone should contribute personally - “alongside the health care system and the preparedness of the authorities, the personal contribution of each individual remains very important”. The prime minister also explained that working both together and individually, respecting each other, and contributing as a society is a way to overcome the COVID-19 crisis (Political statement by Prime Minister Jüri Ratas in the Riigikogu, 12 March 2020).

In the same statement, Prime Minister Jüri Ratas introduced some general recommendations. The prime minister advised monitoring health for 14 days after returning from a risk area and contacting a doctor if any symptoms appear. Citizens were advised to stay at home for 14 days, avoid going to the store, to the cinema or the theatre and avoid contact with other people. It was stressed that recommendations concerning travel should be followed carefully and trips should be avoided. He mentioned that the personal contribution of each individual can be expressed in following normal hygiene rules such as washing hands and avoiding contact with people having respiratory symptoms. He also suggested avoiding visiting elderly people when suffering from respiratory illnesses to not put them in danger and that it is important to remind this to close ones such as family, colleagues, neighbours and friends (Political statement by Prime Minister Jüri Ratas in the Riigikogu, 12 March 2020). The following part of this thesis moves on to describe in greater detail the measures taken by the government.

3.1 Governmental measures

As pointed out in “Language matters in a pandemic” (2020), linguistics plays an important role in public health because the message must be clearly conveyed when the measures incorporate the limit of freedom and negatively impact the economy and everyday life. The proper language can motivate people to act in a certain way and effective communication determines the success of steps aimed to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

During the given period, the government held nine press conferences with the participation of the head of the emergency situation Jüri Ratas, who gave updates on the situation with coronavirus in Estonia. When analysing the texts from the press conferences, the main focus is placed on finding phrases that mention the recommendations and encourage responsible behaviour among citizens. As a result of the analysis, several phrases have been extracted and presented in Appendix 1.

The extracts from press conferences (presented in Appendix 1) can be divided into two groups. The first group of phrases indicates the call for responsibility and the second group consists of given recommendations. The key phrases are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Key phrases extracted from press conferences.

Responsibility	Recommendations
“We also have a responsibility”	“Stay at home”
“Please follow what we ask”	“Please do not use cash”
“I call on all Estonians”	“Avoid close contact”
“Established recommendations for restricting the spread of the virus”	“Follow hygiene rules”
“Following these rules and recommendations”	“2 + 2 rule”
“Together we will protect ourselves”	“We go to the shops alone”
“These rules are not there to circumvent”	“Look after neighbours”
“We protect the lives of other people through our actions”	“Stay healthy”
“Let’s not forget the rules this coming week”	“We do our best not to get infected”
“When we have symptoms, we stay home”	“We recommend”
“I commend all the people of Estonia”	

“Thank you”	
“I ask the people of Estonia to behave responsibly”	
“I ask you to stick to them (rules)”	
“Today is not the time to make discounts”	
“Keep ourselves and our loved ones healthy”	
“The behaviour of people has been right”	
“I beg you wholeheartedly”	

Created by author; Source: Press conferences held from the 16th of March to 7th of May, 2020, published on valitus.ee

The prime minister made sure to stress the responsibility of each person by saying that it is the way people can protect themselves, each other and their loved ones. He stated that it is in the interest of people to follow the recommendations and encouraged them to look after each other. As in many other public announcements, the 2+2 rule and proper hygiene were being promoted a lot, alongside avoiding contact and staying home.

It is worth mentioning that the general message emphasized a collective approach through using phrases such as “we”, “people of Estonia” and “together”. This way people can feel that responsibility is demanded from everyone, not just from them, and since everyone around is contributing, they are more willing to join the majority. The speaker thanks everyone who has been responsible. On the one hand, it acknowledges those who already act responsibly and on the other hand, it serves as a motivator for those who do not. As it is stressed that the coronavirus outbreak is a collective issue, people could feel guilty for not making efforts to achieve the common goal and might change their behaviour. Jüri

Ratas relates to people when he says he understands it is difficult to give up traditions that families have been following for a long time. However, they are not alone in this and everyone is asked to do so. This brings the leader and people closer and people tend to trust the advice more.

The prime minister also brought up that attracting people with sales is wrong and irresponsible - “today is not the time to make discounts, be it 5% or 10% or 50%”. Apparently, it was a reference to sporting goods chain Sportland that launched major sales two days before the lockdown. People were attracted to the announced 50% discount and rushed to the stores; as a result stores were crowded and the safety measures were not respected (ERR, 2020e).

All measures were presented in the form of recommendations, not obligations. This method of communication appears to be effective as it gives people freedom over their actions and the right to choose. In addition to linguistic aspects, the government used other ways to motivate people to be responsible which is described in the next section.

Additionally, the government has launched several social responsibility campaigns. One of them was “You go out – You spread the virus. Stay home!”, which calls on people to prevent the unintentional spreading of the virus. The campaign was launched in April when people started growing tired of the virus and the situation around it, however, during that time, it was important to stay alert and keep following the guidelines. The general message was a call to stay home because according to researchers it is the way to limit the spread. The campaign was built on examples of how simple it is to spread the virus if people do not follow the rules. The Director of the Government Communication Office, Urmas Seaver, mentioned that society was showing signs of growing tired of coronavirus, which can make individuals more reckless about preventing the virus from spreading - “the next two weeks will be critical in controlling the spread of the coronavirus, and it is important to follow the requirements established to prevent the spread of the virus strictly.” The campaign provided people with three general guidelines for controlling the

spread of the virus – staying home, avoiding close contact and following hygiene rules (Kriis, 2020c).

The second campaign was launched before the end of the state of emergency. The social campaign “Stay healthy!” was calling on people to continue following the measures preventing the spread of the coronavirus following the end of the state of emergency. The campaign gave examples of how easy it is to stop the virus from spreading. According to the Director for Government Communication, Urmas Seaver, “New outbreaks can be prevented by, in the coming months, continuing with the measures of keeping the number of close contacts to a minimum, washing your hands, staying home when ill, and, if necessary, covering your nose and mouth in public closed spaces”. Trends in the weekly public opinion polls highlighted the need for a social campaign. If four out of five individuals (81%) followed the rules developed to avoid the spread of the virus a month ago, it would have fallen to 65%. The number of individuals staying at home also decreased (from 58% to 48%). Despite that, the Estonian people considered their actions to be conscientious. The campaign included several booklets, instructions, audio files, and posters with recommendations on behaving in different situations such as cinema, concerts, schools, museums, exhibitions, shops, libraries, restaurants, gyms, theatres, universities, public transport, spas, water parks, and hospitals (Kriis, 2020d).

In addition to press conferences, Prime Minister Jüri Ratas has made several “addresses to the nation” encouraging people in a difficult time and giving some recommendations on coping with the virus. The prime minister suggests that uniting as a society is an effective way to overcome the crisis. “This is a time to work together as a society against a common threat. Make efforts all together as well as individually, stay calm and rational in thought, respect each other and contribute as a society. It will help us weather this difficult situation” (ERR, 2020f).

"We need to stay healthy, by keeping our distance and following hygiene rules. When falling sick, stay at home and avoid contact with others. We have been helped by the recommendations, rules and restrictions, which will remain in place for the coming weeks

as well. I believe that, despite the difficulties, we can continue to be smart, careful and responsible” (ERR, 2020g).

Starting from the 12th of March until the 17th of May 2020 (the period of the state of emergency), Estonian news portals such as Delfi, Postimees and ERR, have been posting updates on the number of new coronavirus cases. The updates from the Health Board also included the number of deaths caused by coronavirus and the most affected cities. It has become a part of a morning routine to check the news and see the updates on coronavirus in Estonia. This might affect people in a way that after seeing the statistics, people are more conscious and start putting more effort into preventing the spread of the virus. Therefore the news portals serve as a channel for promoting responsible behaviour.

The government also had a personalised way to reach people - on the 27th of March, the government sent out emails to all addresses in the population register and SMS messages to customers of Estonian mobile operators to inform them about the new restrictions and changes. The content of email is available in Appendix 2. The information was available in Estonian, English and Russian and the main message urged everyone to stay at home and to follow the 2+2 rule while outside. While the SMS message consisted of a short note, the email was more informative. The description of the restrictions was followed by a moral explanation of the measures: “Following the measures of the emergency situation is the obligation of each and every person. This is the only way we can protect ourselves, our loved ones, and the most vulnerable part of the Estonian population: our older generation and people with chronic illnesses” (“Important information on emergency situation measures from the Estonian government”, Appendix 2).

3.2 Health care

Health care is the most challenging area when it comes to the pandemic. The Estonian health care system had to make many adjustments to its daily operation so it would be able to function. The Health Board recommended that care institutions restrict the visits of elderly and immunocompromised people during the season of viral infections to protect

their health from infectious diseases (Terviseamet, 2020a) and allow ambulance personnel to temporarily reduce the number of crew members (Terviseamet, 2020b). This was introduced as an option, not an obligation, decided by each ambulance. Due to the spread of the coronavirus within hospitals, the Health Board recommended postponing the start of planned medical treatment to ensure the safety of patients. By the end of March, the Health Board suspended planned treatments outside the national hospital network to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to save the personal protective equipment. It was also the way to prepare for the shortage in labour, and medical workers would be transferred to places where they were needed the most. Private medical institutions and dental clinics could only provide emergency care. Most hospitals made significant changes to their work concerning the use of personal protective equipment, treatment instructions, personnel and infrastructure to be ready to receive COVID-19 patients (Terviseamet, 2020c).

Family doctors also added some changes to their work. Since the physical visits were cancelled, family doctors started giving patients advice by phone or email (ERR, 2020b). If home care did not help or if the consultation by phone was not sufficient, the patients could still make an appointment to see a doctor. Also, family doctors could continue to provide care for infants. An e-solution was introduced to open a sick note for sick patients in the patient portal so that the family doctors could focus on other tasks. Additionally, every hospital took measures that were necessary for that hospital. For instance, workers at West Tallinn Central Hospital were temporarily banned from travelling outside Estonia and planned holidays would be interrupted if the number of people in need of hospitalization increased significantly and there were not enough staff (Terviseamet, 2020d).

Larger Estonian hospitals decided to limit the entry of fathers or other supporting individuals during childbirth, however, several county hospitals would still let one support person come, but with certain restrictions, including that if they leave the building, they cannot return (ERR, 2020c).

3.3 Education

Education was also an area that had to adjust to the situation. At first, the Ministry of Education notified all educational institutions of the need to be ready to close schools and teach online (Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, 2020a). It was followed by sharing instructions for schools to follow, which included the reminder of the recommendation from the Health Board to stay home for two weeks after returning from an area with high risk. The instructions also included guidelines to limit the spread of viral diseases (ensure high-quality and regular ventilation; arrange daily wet cleaning; wash benches/tables, door handles, dining tables, etc. with proper washing/ disinfecting products; clean furniture, shelves, radiators twice a week; clean and disinfect toilet furniture and surfaces daily; provide toilets with a sufficient amount of hand sanitiser and waste containers that can be opened by foot; dry hands with a disposable paper towel; wash hands with warm running water and soap and alcohol-based hand sanitiser) and if a child develops respiratory symptoms such as a cough, fever, or difficulty breathing while in school, the child should contact a school nurse immediately (Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, 2020b). Later the ministry cancelled all education-related competitions and decided to switch schools to online learning following the government's recommendation. As of 16 March, schools were required to suspend regular classroom studies and switch over to remote and home studying. It was decided that universities and research institutions will continue their research and development activities, but hobby education must be suspended. The decisions on whether to close kindergartens and childcare establishments and how to organise their work were made by the local governments or other operators of kindergartens (Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, 2020c, 2020d). Due to the changes in the learning system, The Ministry of Education and Research decided to postpone the final examinations of the upper secondary school due to an emergency, adding that the new examination times depend on the duration of the emergency. It was announced that the conditions of admission to a gymnasium, vocational education institutions and higher education institutions would be determined by each educational institution itself. Both universities and many upper secondary schools assured the ministry that they are looking for suitable solutions and were ready to act flexibly, which refers to the willingness of

educational institutions to cooperate (Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, 2020e). The government approved and sent to the Riigikogu amendments to the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act which creates an opportunity to change the organization of conducting final examinations and the conditions for graduating from school; the organization of student assessment during distance learning would also be made more flexible. Later, the government approved the proposal of the Minister of Education and Research, according to which basic school examinations would not be held in that year and the final examinations of the upper secondary school are not mandatory. In other words, the upper secondary school could also be completed without passing state examinations (Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, 2020f, 2020g).

Turning now to the experience of certain educational institutions, the University of Tartu had to implement various adjustments mandated by the government, but some changes were up to the University itself. Due to the state of emergency established by the government, no classroom teaching took place at the University of Tartu from the 13th of March. The university reorganized classroom teaching using e-learning opportunities and other forms of distance learning. The University recommended that all students living in dormitories go home. If the programme of study required contact, it had to be reorganized in the form of e-learning or other distance work or postponed until the end of the emergency (Tartu Ülikool, 2020).

At the beginning of May, the University announced that teaching and studies would continue in an online environment until the end of the semester. The administration asked to conduct all exams and assessments online. If face-to-face interactions were absolutely necessary, the participants had to stick to the following recommendations: people with virus symptoms were not allowed to participate in classes and the terms for completing the course should be agreed upon with them individually; up to 10 people could be in a room at the same time; wearing a face mask was recommended and having a mask was everyone's own responsibility; course organisers must ensure that the hand sanitiser is available for use, and if possible, that the rooms are aired; face-to-face classes should be organised in as compact a manner as possible (five days a week, from morning to

evening), so as to limit the students' need to travel within Estonia; students should not gather in corridors and they should be able to keep a two-metre distance from each other (University of Tartu, 2020a).

The Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs announced a month before the end of the emergency that the University of Tartu would not hold graduation ceremonies because these events usually attract crowds of people and close contact is impossible to avoid (University of Tartu, 2020b).

The TalTech senate agreed that it would not admit applicant students into the first and second year of studies from countries where the total number of positive corona tests in the previous 14 days was greater than 16 per 100 000 inhabitants, or where accurate data was missing about the country and there was a high risk of the virus spreading. The decision affected over 300 student candidates (TalTech, 2020). On the other hand, the University of Tartu decided to admit all international students who enrolled in the university and all current and new foreign employees. The Estonian government also agreed to allow arrivals from all states for studies and work, however, residents from third states with a high infection rate would be subject to a set of restrictions such as two-week isolation upon arrival. The foreign student or employee and the university as the inviting party were responsible for following the rules (ERR, 2020k). The approach of different educational institutions shows that there are multiple ways to perceive responsibility and adjust the activities accordingly.

3.4 Travel and transportation

Due to the continued spread of the coronavirus, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked people to evaluate the inevitability of all foreign trips. Estonian residents were advised against planning holiday travel for the coming months (Välisministeerium, 2020a). Sanitary inspections were employed at border crossing points in airports and ports to detect the symptoms of the coronavirus in people and people also had to start filling in forms upon entering the country to identify their origin. Only Estonian citizens and

Estonian residents with a residence permit or a right of residence would be able to enter Estonia. Access was also granted to foreign nationals whose family members reside in Estonia (Välisministeerium, 2020b). Package cruises on the Tallinn-Stockholm route were suspended, but people would still be able to buy one-way tickets between the two capitals. The measures to limit the spread of the virus were to be developed and implemented in cooperation with the shipping company (Kriis, 2020a). On the 6th of March, the Ministry announced the list of countries where it was not recommended to travel to including the People's Republic of China, Italy, Iran, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Alsace in France and North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany (Välisministeerium, 2020c). Starting from the 14th of March the Ministry of Foreign Affairs began posting updates on the travel situation. The updates included information about the countries that had closed the borders or implemented restrictions upon arrival. As the number of countries introducing new measures was constantly increasing, travelling became complicated, because it caused a risk of not being able to go back to Estonia due to the interruption of transport connections. The Ministry also asked all Estonians on a trip to return home as soon as possible. Those who have decided to stay abroad during the crisis had to take into account that the end of the crisis is difficult to predict and should be ready to stay there for at least the next few months (Välisministeerium, 2020d).

Reisi Targalt, the website supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was also an important channel during the first wave. It gathered detailed information regarding trips to the countries of the European Union and in those countries where Estonia has a foreign representation, in case they are unavoidable. The website encouraged people to follow guidelines during their trips which included: checking the information on the infection rate of the destination country, checking the local restrictions, registering trips on Reisi Targalt, following the recommendations of the Health Board (Reisi Targalt website).

The Head of the emergency situation ordered a two-week movement restriction for people entering Estonia meaning that each person would have to stay home for 14 days and could go outside only at the request of a care provider or the police, or in the case of an

emergency that threatens the person's life or health (Kriis, 2020b). The section below describes this understanding in the context of transportation companies.

The public transport industry was deeply affected by the coronavirus outbreak and it led to an 80% decrease in the number of passengers. As a result, the number of daily departures from Tallinn Bus Station fell to 53 (in March the number was 178). Elron, a state-owned train operator, announced that the company was following the recommendations from the Health Board and the government and all workers were aware. All customer service representatives regularly used hand sanitiser to prevent possible transmission of the virus. The interior of Elron trains were being cleaned daily, including continued attention to contact areas. The Head of Marketing and Communications Mariis Adamberg recommended on behalf of Elron that all passengers follow the instructions of the Health Board and the government and restrict their movement and avoid contact as much as possible (Postimees Tervis, 2020).

Lux Express informed its customers by sending an announcement regarding the new changes after the state of emergency was declared. Lux Express cancelled all international departures, except the St. Petersburg – Helsinki route owing to countries closing their borders. The company contributed to making trips safer by implementing the following steps: customers were asked to present a paper or electronic ticket and travel documents holding the ticket in their own hands, 1-4 seats were temporarily closed for passengers, giving water and headphones to VIP programme customers was suspended, passengers were advised to disinfect hands (hand sanitiser available both at the front door and in the middle of the bus), asking the customers to monitor their health and behave in accordance with the instructions of the Health Board if any symptoms occur (Logistikauudised, 2020). Lux Express suspended the operation of some domestic routes and therefore offered to postpone the trips as an option if the ticket was already purchased. The ticket sales on coaches were temporarily discontinued (Lux Express Newsletter, 2020). Additionally, Lux Express introduced a twin-seat option which meant that passengers could add another seat with a 50% standard ticket price (Lux Express, 2020).

The number of trips by Go Bus significantly decreased. The head of Go Bus Andrei Mändla reminded passengers that when using public transport, the requirements set by the emergency manager must be followed in order to prevent the spread of the virus. "Bus drivers are largely older people and they belong to the risk group of getting infected with the virus, therefore we ask to keep distance from each other in the interests of bus drivers as well as ourselves and passengers. Buy tickets online before the trip or, in extreme cases, with a bank card from the bus driver. In case of symptoms, public transport should be avoided if possible and every precaution should be taken to avoid transmission of the virus (Go Bus announcement, 2020)".

The bus company Taisto Liinid first reduced the number of trips and then cancelled all departures due to the emergency situation and a small number of passengers - many trips took place without any passengers since the beginning of the emergency. The company announced: "It is very good that people have followed the recommendation to stay at home. Now we also give our employees the opportunity to maintain the health of themselves and their loved ones and stay at home" (ERR, 2020j). Further discussion about measures implemented by transportation companies is presented later on.

3.5 Startups

The Estonian startup community came up with solutions relatively quickly. Right after Estonia declared a state of emergency, the private and public sector organized a two-day online hackathon to find solutions to address the coronavirus (ERR, 2020d). Namely, Garage48 put together an online hackathon in 6 hours in collaboration with Accelerate Estonia and with the help of community people. As a result, 96 (Garage48, 2020) technological solutions were created, including "SUVE", "VAAB", "Koroonakaart" and "Koroonatest" including the map at <https://koroonakaart.ee> that displays current data about the virus's spread; the chatbot SUVE (<https://eebot.ee/>), a reliable source of crisis information; the health questionnaire at <https://coronatest.ee>, which helps to assess one's risk of infection; and the platform <https://vaab.ee>, which helps to connect volunteers with a medical background.

The chatbot SUVE - the current description on the official website of SUVE is the following: “Suve is an automated chatbot, whose main task was to make sure that you and everyone living in or visiting Estonia got their questions answered from official sources. During the emergency situation that existed in Estonia in Spring 2020, Suve was integrated into several public websites and helped provide accurate and trustworthy information in English, Estonian and Russian. As the emergency situation ended, Suve continued its work with limited functionality” (SUVE, 2021).

The Ministry of Social Affairs launched “Koroonatest” created by the Ministry of Social Affairs - it is a simple survey that helps users to see if they're having any of the coronavirus's typical symptoms. Users can respond to short questions and share their locations with the Estonian Health Board, which is available in Estonian, English, and Russian. Following that, Koroonatest makes suggestions for the next steps based on the answers provided by the users. This is a simple way for potential patients to determine their risks and get answers about what to do if they are at risk and assist the Estonian Health Board in making forecasts about the virus's spread (Haynes, 2020).

Koroonakaart is a virtual map created by OKEE for the Hack the Crisis Garage48 Hackathon. It offers an overview of the COVID-19 situation in Estonia. Koroonakart, which is updated daily with data from the Estonian Health Board, Estonian Land Board, and demographic data from Statistics Estonia, helps people stay informed about existing coronavirus events. It also shows the number of tests performed, the number of patients in care, and the estimation of active cases, all of which can be broken down by the county. This app provides a short overview of the current situation, allowing people to make better everyday decisions (Haynes, 2020).

The database of volunteers with medical background “VAAB” strengthens the health care system by providing a database to bring together volunteers and organizations. Additionally, the Estonian government collaborated with companies to create an app “HOIA”. The companies contributed free of charge to the production of the software

because they trust in its effectiveness in limiting the spread of infection and restoring normal life. The official website of the app has the following description: “HOIA is a mobile app that helps limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus with the help of the app users. The purpose of the app is to inform the close contacts of those infected with the coronavirus and, therefore, to provide them with initial instructions on how to proceed. In this way, the user can quickly find out about possible close contact with a COVID-19 infected person, allowing them to take steps to protect their own health and the health of others” (HOIA, 2020).

The Estonian startup community responded to the crisis without delay, which may be associated with social responsibility and understanding that their contribution is important for the welfare of society. As a matter of fact, startups were not obligated to cooperate and create such solutions; this behaviour was motivated by their personal decision.

3.6 City Governance

The following part of this thesis moves on to describe the approach of the two biggest cities in Estonia - Tallinn and Tartu to handling the spread of COVID-19. This section takes into consideration measures taken specifically by the Tallinn City Government and Tartu City Government in addition to nationwide decisions.

Tallinn as a capital took various additional measures. This has been seen in the case of the government closing all public playgrounds and sports grounds to limit the risk of spread (website of Tallinn, 2020a). The administration of Tallinn decided to temporarily make public transport free for all, supporting the decision for two reasons. Firstly, the measures would help to reduce close contact when buying a ticket from a driver and while police officers conducted the ticket check. Secondly, it would mean that there was no need to visit the service halls. By implementing this measure, the city wanted to reduce the number of possible close contacts - both when buying a ticket from a bus driver and while checking the ticket by a municipal police officer. The city government did not reduce public transport services to avoid crowding. However, the city recommended that

people carefully consider the necessity of going out and assessing the need for public transport (website of Tallinn, 2020b). Speaking of transport, the administration also decided that the front doors of public transport would not be available for passengers and there would be a sanitary zone from the front door to the front seat row to ensure the safety of drivers (website of Tallinn, 2020c). Another decision made by the city was to waive the fees for municipal kindergarten place fee from March 16th until the end of April (website of Tallinn, 2020d) as well as the fees of municipal hobby schools until the end of emergency situation (website of Tallinn, 2020e). Despite having planned major events for May and the beginning of summer, the city decided to either cancel or postpone them (website of Tallinn, 2020f). The administration of Tallinn came up with an idea that would help to raise awareness of the citizen, namely, that drones equipped with speakers announcing messages about the current situation and 2+2 rule in three languages – Estonian, Russian and English - were flying daily in parks, beaches, wetlands and popular sports and walking grounds of Tallinn. Deputy Mayor Mr Kalle Klandorf stressed that the purpose of it was not violating people's privacy, but it was being used as an aid measure in managing the spread of the coronavirus (ERR, 2020h). Lastly, the city of Tallinn increased the number of cleaning services around the city to help prevent the spread of the virus, that included cleaning bus shelters, benches, driveways, sidewalks, parking lots, bicycle and footpaths (website of Tallinn, 2020g). Overall, these cases support the view that Tallinn made an additional effort to ensure the safety of residents.

Tartu, the second biggest city, also took further steps towards keeping the outbreak under control. Following the declaration of a state of emergency, the city published a press release introducing new measures. Namely, the administration closed all sports centres that belong to the city and are managed by the city office. The facilities of the city government were closed for citizens and all services were provided by email or phone, however services that require personal presence such as registering marriages or divorces would still continue. The administration decided to close Tartu's waste disposal stations since people started to bring large amounts of household waste and it led to long queues and bigger groups of people gathered in one place (Tartu City Government Press Release, 2020b). In regard to transportation, it was decided to start disinfecting buses at terminal

stations, purchasing tickets from drivers was suspended and front doors remained closed (Tartu City Government Press Release, 2020a). Besides that, the city instructed taxi drivers to clean the vehicles after every client. (Tartu City Government Press Release, 2020b). Tartu Smart Bike Share users were asked to follow additional safety measures such as cleaning hands after riding the bicycle, keeping distance with other users at docking stations and while riding and following the 2+2 rule. The city was responsible for disinfecting the bicycles and docking stations every day (Tartu City Government Press Release, 2020). Similar to Tallinn, the Tartu city government decided that kindergarten would not charge fees from the 16th of March until the 1st May and facilities would be open 24 hours a day to support parents. At the same time Mayor Urmas Klaas advised parents not to bring children to kindergarten in order to limit the spread of the virus. He also shared that many parents did indeed follow the given recommendation and the number of children in kindergartens had decreased remarkably (ERR, 2020i). Lastly, the Tartu city government launched a campaign at city bus stops and on social media to call on people to think about one another's lives and stay at home to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Messages included slogans like "Whom are you willing to live without?" "You are dangerous outside. How many lives will end up on your conscience?" and "Each person who dies of the virus would have wanted to be at home with their family. Why don't you want to be?" (ERR, 2020s).

There have been a lot of discussions around the Christmas Market in 2020. This case belongs to the time after the first wave of coronavirus, yet it could be seen as an example of uncertainty while making decisions about restrictions. At first, the administration of Tallinn announced on the 16th of October that the traditional Christmas market would not take place in 2020 due to concerns regarding coronavirus (ERR, 2020l). The announcement was confirmed once more a month later on the 15th of November saying that the city is preparing for the holiday season but without the Old Town Christmas Market this time (ERR, 2020m). Nevertheless, four days later Tallinn's City Center elders confirmed that the Christmas Market would still take place on a smaller scale (ERR, 2020n). On the other hand, Tartu announced from the beginning that the Tartu's open-air Christmas village would take place that winter with a modification that the traditional

market would only last for one day due to concerns arising from coronavirus (ERR, 2020t).

3.7 Public debate

On the question of lawful justification, the following section turns to Chancellor of Justice Ülle Madise's evaluation. She advised choosing reasonable restrictions, otherwise, too strict measures could scare people and might lead to misbehaviour (ERR, 2020o). Speaking of restrictions, she said that restrictions should not be based on emotions and were justified if they are "reasoned and logically necessary" (ERR, 2020p). Decision-makers are in a difficult position since they have to act fast, having little information and there is also strong emotional pressure from the public. It is worth noting that at first people tend to ask for more strict rules, but then they might complain that restrictions are too strict (ERR, 2020p). The previous sections of this thesis described some measures implemented by different institutions. In response to some measures, the chancellor evaluated them in accordance with the law. Namely, it was previously mentioned that the Health Board suspended planned treatments at dentists and private clinics. However, the chancellor claimed that by doing so, the Health Board overstepped its authority and this matter should be assessed by the minister of social affairs. Besides that, this kind of restriction had to be further justified if the personal protective equipment was sufficient and the safety of doctors and patients was ensured (ERR, 2020q). Another notable example concerns prohibiting birthing partners to attend births at hospitals. Ülle Madise explained that a birthing partner is not just a visitor; studies have shown that partners play an important role in childbirth since they can help overcome communication problems, support the mother physically and emotionally. Taking that away significantly affects the birthing experience (ERR, 2020r).

The fact that there are discussions assessing measures suggests that recommendations from the government allow a relatively wide range of interpretation.

CONCLUSION

The current thesis aimed to examine the sense of social responsibility in the context of measures designed to limit the spread of COVID-19 undertaken by the Estonian Government. The second aim of this study was to understand why the government presents some measures as recommendations instead of obligating citizens to follow strict rules justified by law. The findings from the theoretical framework have shown that in the case of health care issues, politics is transformed into biopolitics, which is reflected in the mechanisms that governments launched. Biopolitical mechanisms make an individual a part of the mechanism of care and protection, and the COVID-19 issue has responsabilized citizens to a degree when people feel connected to the outcomes of their actions or inactions. Individuals as subjects feel free to act however they want, but at the same time, they are persuaded to act the “right” way with the help of moral norms, moral exhortation and recommendations.

In addition, it is important to ask what the interest the state has in dealing with the virus and why the state relies on the responsibility of citizens. First of all, the coronavirus is seen as a threat to the welfare state and leads to significant economic consequences. Consequently, the state is interested in avoiding or at least minimizing the losses. At this point, the government starts to seek the best way to handle the outbreak and responsabilization appears to be an effective instrument that also allows to shift the responsibility to people. Although it might require more effort, due to the need to provide explanations supported by scientific findings and numbers, than just setting strict rules and expecting people to obey only because it is law, people are more willing to follow the recommendations when they understand the reasons. When people choose to be responsible, it dictates the right behaviour and people feel accountable for their choices and actions. Bearing that in mind, people tend to try to minimize the harm that might have been caused by them to others and maximize the benefit for society in general. This observation may support the hypothesis that the Estonian government aims to minimize the economical disadvantages and avoid the threat to the welfare and finds responsabilization an effective tool to achieve that. When the state claims that the only

way to overcome the COVID-19 crisis is to collectively tackle the problem and success depends on each member of society, people realise their role on a national level.

This thesis indicated several biopolitical tools in the Estonian government's approach. The first significant aspect is that during the first wave of coronavirus the government actively introduced measures and important steps in the form of recommendations. This is primarily concluded based on the press conferences given by the Head of the emergency state Jüri Ratas. The result of discourse analysis shows that the government achieves its goal by using a language that motivates people to be responsible. Addressing the nation helps to bring the government and people closer and when people sense relatability on a general level, they tend to trust suggested measures and recommendations. At the same time, they do not feel pressured to do something by coercion and while having freedom over their choices, they are likely to choose what is in the interest of the government. Another key point is a daily update on new cases of COVID-19. At first sight, it might seem that those are just numbers, but in fact, it could be suggested that the statistics not only keep people updated but also affect people on a deeper level. This way people face reality and come to understand that the situation is serious and calls for their action. On the other hand, the government also views the updates differently as it serves as an indicator of whether people follow the recommendations or not. Additionally, social campaigns telling people to "Stay healthy!" and that if "You go out – You spread the virus. Stay home!" are a significant contribution to raising the responsibility of the population. People are surrounded by posters, announcements and booklets, so the message reaches more people and everyone is aware of the recommendations. SMS messages and emails from the government have a similar impact.

Returning to the hypothesis posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that responsabilization is indeed a key mechanism that gives directions while overcoming the crisis. The recommendations from the government would not be enough by itself, but by adding responsabilization, this becomes an effective way to limit the spread of the coronavirus.

When it comes to the implemented measures, some decisions were up to institutions and companies, but at the same time recommendations from the government were taken as a guideline. As it was mentioned earlier, the government set various goals when dealing with COVID-19 and stated that the safety and health of citizens is a priority. Keeping that in mind, the companies and institutions adjusted their agendas, daily work and tasks in accordance with what the government has said. For instance, the education field rearranged in-person studies to distance learning aiming to keep the students, teachers and their families safe. Hospitals made remarkable changes to their work arrangements, the share of resources and task-wise priorities. The health care system had a big responsibility since the well-being of people partly depended on its capacity. Thus, hospitals felt obligated to prepare the needed environment for new patients and help them recover. The goal to keep the population safe was pursued by transportation companies as well, but in addition, their interest was to make a profit. It is fair to assume that transportation companies reduced the number of departures not only because they wanted to contribute to limiting the spread of the virus, but also because it was not profitable to continue on the same scale. Whereas companies that service popular routes did their best to maintain the position. By respecting the precautions and ensuring the safety of each client, they wanted to remain active and make a profit during the difficult times as well.

This thesis particularly described the approach taken by the Tallinn and Tartu city government during the first wave of coronavirus. It serves as an example illustrating that despite having a general recommendation from the government, cities interpret them differently, taking into account specific needs and opportunities of the city. Nobody instructed the administration of Tallinn directly to use drones to inform people or to cancel all events; those steps were supported by recommendation, but made by the city itself.

Consequently, the research has also shown that the interpretation pattern remains quite unclear and two similar institutions may view their actions towards responsibility differently. Namely, the two biggest Estonian universities implemented different policies regarding foreign students. The TalTech decided that they would not admit foreign

students as it would help to spread the virus but, on the contrary, the University of Tartu accepted all students from abroad and followed the developed guideline for welcoming students from other countries. Similarly, the discussion around the Tallinn Christmas market is another example of a responsibility related issue. Although this event was not prohibited by the state, the organizers wanted to act responsibly and help people to avoid the crowds. From another point of view, this justification might not have been enough and cancelling such an important long-awaited event was a harsh measure. The event took place in the fresh air where it is possible to keep the distance and besides the importance of the event to the people, it was important for businesses that make a lot of profit during those days. The public debate puts measures into questions in case if the logic behind them does not offer a reasonable justification. This has been seen in the case of suspending dental treatments and restricting the birthing procedure. To sum up, responsibility is a complex idea and since it does not have clear guidelines, it might be difficult to see a line between overreaction and actual practice of responsibility.

“COVID-19: How does the Estonian government stimulate and use the idea of social responsibility?” analysed the approach during the first wave of coronavirus and it has been a valuable experience for everyone, from the government to institutions and regular people. Back then, everything was new and unknown: people had little information about the coronavirus and it was difficult to know what were appropriate actions and how exactly the whole situation was handled. Further research of the coronavirus opened the door to a better understanding and scientific support was essential for a thoughtful reaction to the crisis. The state of emergency and restrictions at that time had a good impact as it helped to keep the outbreak under control. That is why society was prepared for future outbursts and could use the previous experience. These findings contribute in several ways to understanding governance supported by responsabilization in Estonia and provide a basis for further research of a period after the first wave. To develop a full picture of the social responsibility mechanism in Estonia, additional studies will be needed to take into account the time frame after the first wave of coronavirus. Furthermore, the reaction of citizens and their understanding of responsibility could be another item of research that would focus, for instance, on the change in behavioral

patterns and reasons why people agree to be responsible. The current thesis researched the question mainly from the position of the government, however, on the contrary, it is important to see the other side, which is the general population.

Appendix 1

16.03.2020 “Now some suggestions. First of all, honourable Estonian elderly people, of course also the chronically ill! I beg you wholeheartedly: stay at home as much as possible. And please avoid close contacts as much as possible. We call on people to avoid gatherings of people and go to the malls unless it is unavoidable - I emphasize: unavoidable - when necessary. The country has sufficient food supplies and there is no need to queue at the grocery store. We recommend using alternatives instead of cash. If possible, do not use cash. Bank cards and transfer options are available. Of course, if there are no symptoms - if we are not talking about people who are quarantined - spring is here and normal life is happening. So, as much as possible, stay outdoors, and as much as possible, walk outdoors.” Translated transcript of the press conference on 16.03.2020

19.03.2020 “Now the special situation caused by the coronavirus in Estonia continues. We all still need to avoid unnecessary close contacts with other people and follow hygiene rules to keep ourselves and our loved ones healthy.” Translated transcript of the press conference on 19.03.2020

26.03.2020 “I call on all Estonians to fight the coronavirus. I also call on shopping malls, private owners and CEOs: today is not the time to make discounts, be it 5% or 10% or 50%. Dear private sector! You have to understand for yourself that you invite people to your stores. There is also a rule that if two people are together, they should be two meters apart. We also have a responsibility. At one point, an individual can also be the owner of a company, the CEO - today is not the time to make such calls to invite people to your store, although you can get cheap goods there. Please, people too: today is not the time to go shopping for such campaigns. This is a direct threat to the spread of the virus. Dear Estonian people! This must be adhered to now, at the weekend. Also in nature, also on hiking trails, not to mention public space, not to mention indoor spaces. Everywhere. When I asked Estonian entrepreneurs and the private sector during Question Time to the Riigikogu yesterday, and I asked today: who can produce various personal protective equipment here in Estonia, please let me know, members of the government, the State

Appendix 1 (continued)

Chancellery. This is very important information today. I am grateful for the appeals that came yesterday.” Translated transcript of the press conference on 26.03.2020

02.04.2020 “It continues to mean that we ask people: please follow what we ask, very carefully! Please follow these thoughts! We avoid close contact, we are at home. We do everything so that when we have symptoms, we stay home, we don't go to the streets, we don't go out.” Translated transcript of the press conference on 02.04.2020

09.04.2020 “I commend all the people of Estonia who follow the established rules and also the established recommendations for restricting the spread of the virus. And this formula is similar to what it has always been, that only by following these rules and recommendations together will we protect ourselves, we will protect the health of our grandmother and grandfather, mother and father, sister and brother, our children. So we protect the lives of other people through our actions. Now what I definitely want to say is that Good Friday is coming, a quiet Saturday is coming. Sunday is the first Easter, the Christian world celebrates the second Easter on Monday. Even in these days and hours, when there are far fewer such daily work edits, I have a request for families, groups of friends, everyone: we are not in the phase today to say that yes, these days can now be enjoyed by our friends and family. No, unfortunately, this cannot be done today. The same rule must be followed, which is: 2 + 2 rule. This means that if possible, we go to the shops alone, assuming that the nearest shop visitor is at least two meters away. And I have a request that if we look at our neighbours, be it in an apartment building or a private house, and we know there are older people, we ask them to not go to the store this weekend - say what you need and we'll bring you a food bag behind the door. Don't even go in if it's possible. And the same is true for other goods. I believe that this can also be done in pharmacies.” Translated transcript of the press conference on 09.04.2020

Appendix 1 (continued)

16.04.2020 “I have a request for all the schoolchildren: please, let’s not forget the rules this coming week. Those are the 2 + 2 rule and hygiene. It is also the case when you do sports and walks in the yard, you must, of course, follow the 2 + 2 rule.

It is difficult to abandon beloved traditions, but this year it must be done because of the spread of the coronavirus, as public gatherings, both indoors and outdoors, are banned in an emergency to prevent the spread of the infection. So I ask you to stick to them as well now this week or this weekend. Thank you!” Translated transcript of the press conference on 16.04.2020

23.04.2020 “I thank the responsible people of Estonia! We avoid close contacts, stay at home if possible and move outside, especially in the family circle. Only in this way will we be able to overcome this outbreak soon and gradually begin to alleviate it.” Translated transcript of the press conference on 23.04.2020

30.04.2020 “Stay healthy - that means we are careful. This means that we all have a great sense of responsibility, and this will help us to be able to do everything proactively on our own to alleviate this second wave, should it come. We stay healthy, 2 +2, wash our hands - I think that's what we can do here today. We do our best not to get infected and, as I said, we stay healthy.” Translated transcript of the press conference on 30.04.2020

07.05.2020 “We can tell that the percentage is indeed low. This means that the behaviour of people has been right. I ask the people of Estonia to behave responsibly. These rules are not there to circumvent and find legal and permissible solutions, but they are so that we can still do everything we can to get out of this outbreak as quickly as possible and that we can seriously prepare for this second wave, should it come. Congratulating mothers, we must remember that the same distance rules must be followed and also with our close contacts, as much as possible.” Translated transcript of the press conference on 07.05.2020

Source: Press conferences held from the 16th of March to 7th of May, 2020, published on valitus.ee

Appendix 2

Fellow Estonians!

On 12 March 2020 the Government of the Republic of Estonia declared an emergency situation to contain the spread of the coronavirus. On 24 March the government adopted additional measures to stop the spread of the virus.

As of 25 March:

- **in public places and indoor spaces (except at home), keep a distance of at least 2 metres with other people.** Public places include playgrounds and open air sports facilities, beaches, promenades, biking and hiking trails.
- **no more than 2 people at a time can gather in public places.** The restriction does not apply to families moving around together and people in official public functions.

As of 27 March:

- **only essential shops and services will remain open in shopping centres.** Shops and services that will remain open include grocery stores, pharmacies, communications service providers, bank offices, parcel lockers, and shops that either sell or lease equipment for the disabled and medical devices. Eateries at shopping centres can only sell take-away food. At the entrances of all shops and service points that will stay open, disinfectants must be provided.
- **restaurants and bars cannot be open later than 10 pm** (except for take-away and delivery).
- **entertainment and leisure locations will be closed.**

These restrictions are subject to review in two weeks.

Following the measures of the emergency situation is the obligation of each and every person. This is the only way we can protect ourselves, our close ones, and the most vulnerable part of the Estonian population: our older generation and people with chronic illnesses.

If you have questions, read more at kriis.ee/en or call 1247.

Protect yourself and your close ones! Government of the Republic of Estonia

Source: Email sent by the Estonian government on the 25th of March, 2020

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