

# A Timeline of the Key Events of the Administrative Reform 2015–2017

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## 2015

8 April

After the parliamentary elections, the Reform Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union sign a coalition agreement that includes the implementation of administrative reform.

9 April

Taavi Rõivas' (Reform Party) government takes office. Arto Aas (Reform Party) becomes the new Minister of Public Administration.

14 May

A government committee for administrative reform is established.

29 May

An expert committee established by the Minister of Public Administration holds its first meeting. In 2015, the committee meets on several occasions and, following their discussions, submits

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|                   | proposals that largely form the reference points for many decisions that are made on the administrative reform.   |
| 2 July            | The cabinet approves the local government reform approach following explicit criteria and agrees to double merger grants.   |
| 25 August         | The coalition agreement is amended, introducing the objectives of defining the merger criteria by 1 November and allowing for geographically or demographically justified exceptions. |
| September–October | Seminars on administrative reform are held in every county.   |
| 20 October        | Märjamaa hosts a forum for all merged municipalities to share their experience of mergers.  |
| 19 November       | The cabinet approves the reform criteria, exceptions and updated time frame, and formally acknowledges the administrative reform concept document.                                    |
| 18 December       | The draft Administrative Reform Act is sent for review to the ministries and associations of local authorities.   |
| <b>2016</b>       |   |
| 10 March          | The government approves the draft Administrative Reform Act and decides to send it to the <i>Riigikogu</i> (Estonian Parliament) for legislative proceedings.                         |
| 6 April           | The draft Administrative Reform Act passes its first reading in the <i>Riigikogu</i> .  |
| 11 April          | By order of the Minister of Public Administration, three regional committees composed of county governors, experts and ministry representatives                                       |

are established to implement the administrative reform: the committee for northern Estonia covers the counties of Harjumaa, Järvamaa, Lääne-Virumaa and Ida-Virumaa; the committee for western Estonia covers Hiiumaa, Saaremaa, Läänemaa, Raplammaa and Pärnumaa; and the committee for southern Estonia covers Jõgevamaa, Tartumaa, Põlvamaa, Võrumaa, Valgamaa and Viljandimaa.

- 11, 12, 17 and 18 May The draft Administrative Reform Act passes its second reading in the *Riigikogu*.
- 7 June The *Riigikogu* adopts the Administrative Reform Act.
- 13 June The president proclaims the Administrative Reform Act.
- 30 June The regional committees for the implementation of the administrative reform are established by the government to guarantee greater independence for them.
- 1 July The Administrative Reform Act enters into force.
- 21 July The government approves the formation of the municipalities of Saue<sup>1</sup> and Tõrva.
- 4 and 24 August Regional visits to merged municipalities are organised to share experiences.
- 31 October A draft Act Amending the Local Government Organisation Act and Other Acts Related to the Implementation of the Administrative Reform is circulated for approval.

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<sup>1</sup> Saue rural municipality is formed through the merging of the city of Saue and the rural municipalities of Kernu, Nissi and Saue. Tõrva rural municipality is formed through the merging of the city of Tõrva and the rural municipalities of Helme, Hummulu and Põdrala.

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| 23 November | Jüri Ratas' (Centre Party) government takes office. Mihhail Korb (Centre Party) becomes the Minister of Public Administration.  |
| 20 December | The Supreme Court decision on the constitutionality of the Administrative Reform Act is handed down after 26 local authorities file applications contesting the Act's constitutionality between 30 June and 27 September. The Court rules the Administrative Reform Act constitutional and declares invalid only the maximum rate of compensation for government-initiated mergers. |
| <b>2017</b> |   |
| 1 January   | The period for voluntary mergers initiated by municipal councils ends.  |
| January     | The government approves the formation of all the municipalities resulting from voluntary mergers.   |
| January     | The three regional committees hold discussions and submit recommendations to the government on ways to implement the government-initiated mergers under the Administrative Reform Act within the respective regions of the committees.  |
| 9 February  | The government decides to make proposals for government-initiated mergers and orders the Ministry of Finance to send out proposals to the municipal councils for their opinions.  |
| April–May   | The municipalities that received the government proposals conduct public opinion polls.   |
| 15 May      | Deadline for local authorities to respond to government proposals. Those local authorities that failed to respond are considered as having agreed with the proposal. The authorities of   |

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|         | 65 municipalities, or nearly two-thirds of those that received a proposal from the government, do not agree with the proposal; 25 municipalities agree and 14 do not respond.   |
| 25 May  | The government approves the formation of the municipalities of Saaremaa and Otepää.   |
| 12 June | Jaak Aab (Centre Party) becomes the new Minister of Public Administration.  |
| 14 June | The Riigikogu adopts the Act Amending the Local Government Organisation Act and Other Acts Related to the Implementation of the Administrative Reform and an act regarding the abolition of county governments.   |
| 22 June | The government approves the formation of the municipalities of Hiiumaa, Alutaguse, Lüganuse, Järva and Väike-Maarja, Pärnu, Rapla, Peipsiääre, Kambja, Tartu and Võru, and the transfer of the city district of Viivikonna from Kohtla-Järve to Narva-Jõesuu.   |
| 10 July | The government approves the formation of Setomaa municipality.  |
| 13 July | The government approves the formation of Lääne-Harju municipality, the incorporation of Tähtvere rural municipality into the city of Tartu and the county placement of Setomaa rural municipality.  |
| October | The Constitutional Review Chamber of the Supreme Court rules on the applications of 17 rural municipalities (in 11 merger areas) that were to be merged by the government but contested the merger regulations adopted by the government. All government regulations for municipal mergers remain in force. |

15 October

Municipal council elections are held. Mergers enter into force as the election results in the new municipalities are announced between 20 October and 11 November.

**2018**

1 January 2018

New local authorities formed as a result of municipal mergers begin work.