

Conference Report
2.–3.10.2025

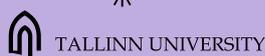
Beyond Growth Estonia

The functioning of the economy and society stays within the limits of the carrying capacity of the natural environment

ECONOMY
SOCIETY
ENVIRONMENT

An economic system that prioritises the well-being of people and ecosystems and focuses on sufficiency and time abundance

A society that values first and foremost cooperation and community



On October 2–3, 2025, the first Beyond Growth Estonia conference took place in Nelijärve, which the Estonian Chamber of Environmental Organisations selected as one of the three most environmentally beneficial actions in 2025. We invite you to read this report, which summarises the most frequently mentioned proposals and visions among the conference’s participants and speakers.

In our relentless pursuit of economic growth, we have exceeded the limits of natural ecosystems and widened the gap of social inequality, as evidenced by the increasing polarisation in society. Degrowth questions the ability of economic growth to ensure a good life for all citizens and calls for finding different ways to increase and measure well-being. Our approach places ecological sustainability, social justice, democracy and well-being at the centre of society’s values.

The conference was organised by Degrowth Estonia (Tasaarengu Eesti MTÜ) and Biotoopia in cooperation with partners from the Tallinn University SustainERA team, the Ragnar Nurkse Institute at Tallinn Technical University, the Estonian Fund for Nature, the Estonian Club of Rome, and other partners.

More than 150 people from different backgrounds took part in this inclusive conference, and 37 speakers from nearly 20 different organisations contributed to the program. In addition to the organising partners, the conference was funded by 165 supporters through the Hooandja crowd-funding campaign, as well as several other private individuals from Estonia and abroad, the Green European Foundation, and the National Foundation of Civil Society of Estonia (KÜSK).

The report gives hints and suggestions on how Estonia’s (1) economy and society could operate within the limits of the natural environment’s carrying capacity and (2) the economy could serve the needs of society and the well-being of its members.

We hope that this report will inspire readers to take bold and science-based steps towards a post-growth Estonia, where the natural environment and the well-being of society are paramount!

The summary was coordinated by Maiko Mathiesen, supported by members of Degrowth Estonia and Biotoopia. The conference council and representatives of the co-organisers contributed to the content.

The text was edited by Aet Annist and Martin Altraja. The report was designed by Maria Muuk. Photos were taken by Saara Mildeberg and Lauri Pöld.

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www.tasaareng.info

tere@tasaareng.info

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About the Conference

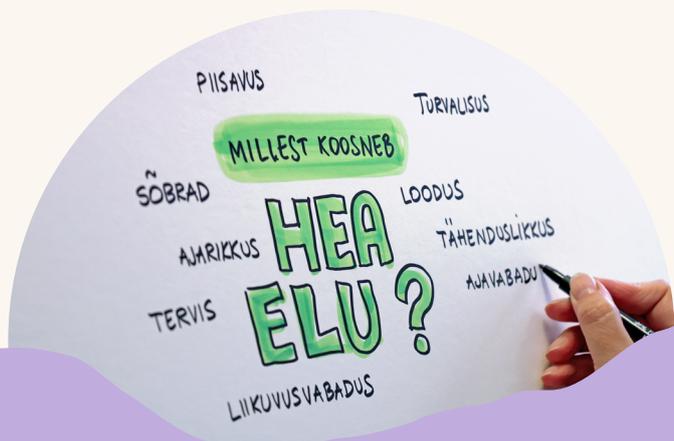
The Beyond Growth Estonia conference was the first major degrowth event to be held in Estonia, and was part of the international Beyond Growth conference series*. In 2025, similar conferences focusing on post-growth topics were also held in Spain, Austria, and Norway.

The conference aimed to spark a public debate on how to ensure Estonia's adaptability to the crises caused by the capitalist economic system, and to discuss what systemic solutions would enable our society to transition to the post-growth era.

The conference was preceded by a series of discussion evenings titled *Life Experiments* ("Elukatsed") in the spring and summer of 2025, which explored post-growth topics from the perspectives of education, security, nature, and the economy. The discussion evenings were framed by two central questions: **What basic assumptions should we start from to view the functioning of current systems with a fresh and active eye?** **What do we as humanity need to learn together in order to create and maintain sustainable well-being?**

The ideas that emerged during the discussion evenings were integrated into the conference program and framed by the principles of planetary boundaries: the economy must serve society, not the other way around, and society must take into account the limits of the natural environment. When compiling the program, **the focus was on the fields where Estonia needs to make a systemic leap in the economy, society, and environment.**

* The Beyond Growth conference series was launched by non-governmental organisations in 2018 at the European Parliament in Brussels. Each conference is based on a similar framework of degrowth and is organised with the support of an international support system.



In cooperation with the conference organising team and the advisory board, topics for presentations and workshops were selected that do not claim to be final or comprehensive, but rather open up important avenues for discussion.

In the field of natural environment, the emphasis was on restoring human awareness and contact with nature and the importance of soil health, recognising the central role of soil in ecosystems.

In the field of society, the nature of socio-economic inequality and ways to reduce it systematically were discussed, as well as making care work more visible, and the need to understand security as a common good of the community.

In the field of economy, the focus was on sustainable alternatives to a high-tech worldview and its hope that technology can solve humanity's greatest crises. Entrepreneurial alternatives were also discussed, using the cooperative movement as an example, as well as awareness and practices for reducing energy consumption.

The legacy of Estonia as a post-socialist country, when promises of common ownership and sharing led to widespread poverty and suffering, was also considered an important systemic factor.

In addition to presentations and discussions, participants were also able to experience direct contact with nature: take part in a forest hike, sing folk songs, practice repairing objects, and learn about the activities of the Edible City initiative. Cultural insights were provided by interactive artworks by Jane Remm, Marta Konovalova, Kaija Kesa-Rebane, and Helen Tago. The evening program also included the premiere of the film *The Cost of Growth* with a discussion attended by one of the film's authors, Lena Hartog. And a sauna with swimming in the lake!

The conference combined research-based presentations, in-depth discussions, practical perspectives, and experiential activities, helping participants to make sense of the paradigm of well-being after economic growth. It was a meeting place for policymakers, economists, researchers, journalists, civil society, practitioners, and anyone interested in the well-being of both people and nature.

On the next page:
Summary based on the *Life Experiments* discussion evenings. Author: Piret Ráni.

Life Experiments in Learning took place on May 8, 2025, at the Estonian Museum of Natural History, with participants Josep Sarapuu, Tiit Maran, Grete Arro, Mihkel Kunnus, and moderator Karin Kruup.

Life Experiments in Crisis Preparedness – Security as a Common Good took place on June 12, 2025 at Vabamu, with participants Ilmar Raag, Reelika Rohuste, Priit Saar, Inga Karton, Henrik Pöder, Hannes Nagel, Marek Kohv, moderated by Maiko Mathiesen and Imre Treufeld.

Life Experiments in Nature: A View of the Baltic Sea took place on August 27, 2025, at the Estonian Maritime Museum, with participants Tuul Sepp, Joonas Plaan, and Mihkel Urmet, moderated by Mariliis Kõuts.

Life Experiments in Economics took place on September 25, 2025, at the Estonian History Museum, with participants Mart Kuusk, Kaire Holts, Ville Jehe, and Heido Vitsur, moderated by Mayri Tiido

KESTLIKU TULEVIKUÜHISKONNA ALUSELDED

MILLISEKS ME PEAME ÜHISKONNA MUUTMA, ET KESTLIK TULEVIK OLEKS VÕIMALIK?

ÕPPIMISES

RÕHUTATUD JA VÄGA ENERGIAKULUKAS INDIVIDUALISM ON ASEENDUNUD KOOSTÖÖ JA KOGUKONDLIKKUSEGA.

SISEMISED ELUPÜÜDLUSED (PERE JA SUHTEID, ENESEARENG JA TEISTE AITAMINE JNE) ON VÄÄRTUSLIKUD JA NEED LOOVAD KESTVA HEALOLUTUNDE.

JULGEOLEKUS ON OLULISEL KOHAL HARIDUS, PSÜHHOLOOGILINE VASTUPIDAVUS NING VÄÄRTUSPÕHINE MAAILMAVAADE.

JULGEOLEK ON ÜHISVARA.

KUIDAS DEMOKRAATLIKULT JÕUDA HEALOLUNI JA JÄÄDA SEEJUURES PLANETAARSETTES PIIRIDESSE?

JULGEOLEKUS

LOODUSKESKKONNA HOIDMINE JA JULGEOLEKU TAGAMINE TOIMIVAD KOOSLUSENA, ELURIKKAD MULLAD, METSAD JA SOOD ÜHELTL POOLT KAITSEVAD JA TEISELT POOLT LOOVAD TOIDUTURVALISUSE.

RIIK INVESTEERIB KOGUKONDLIKKU SIDUSSESSE, ENESETÕHUSSESSE JA KOOSTÖÖVALMIDUSSESSE.

LOODUSES

LOODUSE ISETAASTUMISE VÕIME TAGAMINE. LOODUS SUUDAB ISE PROBLEEMID LAHENDADA, KUI ÖKOSÜSTEEMID ON HEAS SEISIS.

LOODUSE HEA TERVIS JA TOIMIVAD ÖKOSÜSTEEMID ON EELDUSEKS, ET KOHALIK MAJANDUS JA KULTUUR SAAKS ÜLDSE TOIMIDA.

ELUKESKKONDA MÕJUTAVAD OTSUSEID VASTU VÕTTES TULEB ALATI LÄHTUDA ETTEVAATUSE PRINTSIIBIST. REGULATSIOONIDE JA PIIRANGUTE KÕRVAL ON ALATI KAALUMISEL TEHA VÄHEM VÕI ÜLDSE MITTE TEHA.

ME PEAME TAASTAMA INIMISE JA LOODUSE SUHET.

ET IGAÜKS MEIST TUNNEKS, ET ON ÖKOSÜSTEEMI OSA, ET SUHE LOODUSEGA OLEKS TUGEVI JA HÄSTI TEADVUSTATUD, JUPI HAANAL LOODUSE TAASTAMISEST EI PIISA.

ÖKOLOOGILINE MÕTLEMINE JA TERVIKLIKU MAAILMAPILDI NÄGEMINE. KÕIK MAAILMAS ON SEOTUD. IGA TEGEVUS TOOB KAASA TAGAJÄRJE. MEIE OLEME OSA SUUREST ELUVÕRGUSTIKUST.

LOODUSE AUSTAMINE. LOODUSE PÜHADUS JA ISEVÄÄRTUS. JÕED JA METSAD VÕIKS OLLA PÜHAD, NAGU ESIVANEMATEL.

INIMENE EI OLE OLULISEM KUI HÜLES VÕI KORMORAN, ME KUULUME VÕRDSE ÕIGUSEGA KÕIK SIIA.

LOODUSE HÜVESID PEAB JÄTKUMA KA JÄRGMISTELE PÕLVEDELE. TÄNAPÄEVAL NÄHAKE LOODUSES VAIK RESSURSSI, MIDA JÕUGA VÕTTA.

MAJANDUSES

MAJANDUSKASVU JÄTKUMINE SAMAS TEMPOS EI OLE VÕIMALIK. (ISEGI MITTE SIIS, KUI MEIL KLIIMAMURET POLEKS.) VANAMOODI EDASI EI SAA, KUI ME MUUTUST JUHIME, SAAME PAREMA TULEVIKU.

KUI ME EI ÕPI KOGUKONNANA EGA PEREKONNANA ELAMA, EI OLE ME KA EDUKAD. KOOSTÖÖ ON KÕIGE ALUS.

ÕHISELT LOOVA MINA KUVAND: ESMALT TEEN SEDA, MIS ON HEA ÜHISKONNALE, SIIS SEDA, MIS ON HEA KOGUKONNALE, SIIS SEDA, MIS ON HEA MINU ENDA ARENGULE.

KUIDAS MÕÖTA EDUKUST? ÕNNES? RAHAS? HEALOLUS? AJAS?

KÕIGE OLULISEM ON OLLA OSAVÕTLIK, KAASTUNDLIK, MÄRKAV, ABISTAV. MITTE-EGOISTLIK-MINA

ISIKUTE VAIMSE TERVISE JA VARAKUSE VAHEL SEOS PUUDUB.

OTSUSEID ON VÄHA VASTU VÕTTA KOHE. MEIL EI OLE AEGA ÄRA OODATA JÄRGMIST PÕLVKONDA.



MEIL ON VAJA AEGA, ET ÕPPIDA. AEGLAASELT. AEGLAANE HARIDUS.

MEIL ON VAJA AEGA, ET ELADA. SEAL ON ÕNN.

VABATAHTLIKUS LOOBUMISEKS ON VAJA MÕISTA.

ELUPAIKUS. LIHTSUS. AEGLUSTAMINE. KOGUKONN. VÕIMALUSTE OTSIMINE.

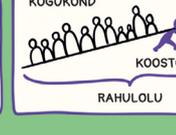
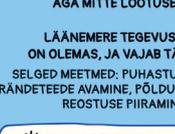
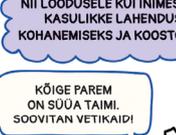
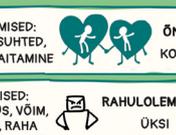
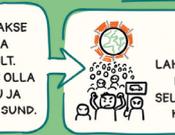
INIMENE ON PARIM KOHANEJA!

BIOSFÄÄRI- JA VÄÄRTUSÕPETAUS ÕPPEKAVADESSE! SEOTUS. KESKKONNA VÄÄRTUSTAMINE.

MIS ON ROHEPÖÖRDES VALESTI?

MAJANDUSE KASVUMODEL ON SISSE JÄÄNUDI!

KASV, SUURENEMINE, LAIENEMINE... EI MAHU KASVAMA! PLANETAARSED PIIRID ON ÜLETATUDI!



VALIK ALUSEELDUSI ON KOGUTUD BIOTOPIA JA TASAARENGU EESTI VESTLUSÕHTUTE SARJA "ELUKATSED" RAAMES

VESTLUSRINGIDE LINDISTUSED LEIAD LEHULT: KASVUJÄRGNE-EESTI.EE/EVENTS/

WWW.KASVUJÄRGNE-EESTI.EE

Below, we present the prerequisites for systemic change in three areas (natural environment, society, and economy), which were developed based on a synthesis of the ideas of the organisers, speakers, participants, and the members of the conference's council.

By prerequisites, we mean the changed cultural values and principles that make it possible to address the root problems of a system dependent on (economic) growth and to start moving towards a sustainable, post-growth Estonia.

Prerequisites in Natural Environment

- **The functioning of the economy and society must stay within the limits of the carrying capacity of the natural environment.**

Sustainability can only be based on the understanding that a social order geared towards endless growth is in direct conflict with the limitations of the planet. This is why environmental sustainability must become the foundation of all political and economic processes. Our survival and well-being depend on the preservation of healthy ecosystems and biodiversity.

- **Ecological thinking and respect for nature.**

It is essential to promote a holistic worldview that recognises that, rather than being the masters of nature, humans are part of a diverse planetary web of life together with other species.

- **Preserving the natural environment works well for our security.**

Nature conservation and security are inextricably linked. Healthy forests, bogs, and water bodies are critical to national defence because they act as a diverse barrier against enemies and provide protection and shelter for the population. Biodiverse soils are the basis of our food security in a situation where global supply chains may be disrupted due to various crises. Functioning ecosystems are an elementary prerequisite for the local economy and culture to function and survive.

The natural environment section of the conference consisted of the following workshops: →

Nature as
a "who"!

Natural
defence
in addition
to national
defence!

Contact
with land
and soil is the
foundation of
good life!

WORKSHOP “HOW TO REUNITE HUMANS AND ECOSYSTEMS?”

Conducted by Jaanus Terasmaa (Tallinn University/SustainERA),
Grete Arro (Tallinn University/SustainERA), Toomas Trapido (Gaia Academy)



Key Issue:

Modern humans have lost sight of their dependence on the natural environment; instead, they mistakenly consider themselves superior to it. Although we understand nature better than ever before thanks to science, the state of the environment is rapidly deteriorating, in some cases irreversibly. **How has this happened despite our scientific knowledge? And how can we recreate the bond between humans and nature to sustain both us and the environment?**

Proposed Solutions:

1. Change language use and perception by viewing nature as a “who” (subject) rather than a “what” (object).
2. To reconnect with nature, everyone needs to have their own experiences with it. Finding “one’s own place” in nature, to regularly visit and engage in activities, can get us closer to that.
3. Nature education should include practical activities (e.g., chopping wood, hiking) and learning about the circle of life, including the natural relationships between decay and death.
4. In all our (economic) activities, the premise should be that the responsibility of a powerful species, such as us, is to give back more than we take. This can take the form of increased biodiversity, beauty, and/or balance

WORKSHOP “HEALTHY SOIL = TRUE WEALTH”

Conducted by Priit-Kalev Parts (heritage constructor and small-scale farmer),
Marian Nummert (permaculture designer)



Key Issue:

Soil health is deteriorating in Estonia and elsewhere in the world. **How can we move away from intensive agriculture, damaging soil vitality, towards more sustainable farming methods?**

Proposed Solutions:

1. Replacing the linear system (extract—fertilise—grow—eat—pollute) with a circular one (grow—eat—excrete—compost—grow). The goal is to reuse waste for the new cycle of crop growing.
2. Preferring perennial plants and mixed crops to annual plants.
3. Make soil nutrition a goal in itself!
4. Reuniting crop production and animal husbandry.

Prerequisites in Society

- **Meeting basic needs and ensuring a dignified life for everyone.**

Society must guarantee a dignified life to everyone, and meet all basic needs, such as clean water, air, food, security, healthcare, education, as well as social participation, regardless of a person's success in market competition. We must recognise that the roots of today's crises are in neoliberal capitalism, and move away from GDP-based social progress measurements toward indicators that reflect social cohesion and the actual well-being of the population.

- **Putting cooperation and community first.**

The current energy-intensive individualism must be replaced by cooperation and community, where the state purposefully promotes social cohesion and participatory democracy. This also means rethinking security, allowing us to recognise the importance of community cooperation and autonomous grassroots solutions alongside heavy weaponry.

- **Transformation of the education system.**

Invest in an education system supporting the ability of every child and adult to learn independently, think critically, and apply the principles of systems thinking.

The society section of the conference consisted of the following workshops: →

WORKSHOP "EXPOSING THE INVISIBLE. RETHINKING CARE WORK"

Conducted by Greta Roosaar (Feministeerium), Isabel Jezierska (Praxis), J. Margus Klaar (service designer, NGO Vabatahtlikud Seltsilised)

Key Issue:

Care work is necessary for the broader functioning of society, both for the "production" of new workers, i.e., children, and for the reproduction of the ability for the existing workforce to continue working (rest, food, mental and other forms of recovery) for the capitalist system. And yet, this system undervalues care work and pays for it inadequately, if at all. **How can care work be valued more by the society, and made more gender-equal and community-oriented?**

Proposed Solutions:

1. Calculating the GCP (Gross Care Product) to place a higher value on social care work.
2. Widespread introduction of a four-day working week, which would give people more time to engage in care work.
3. Encouraging intergenerational social relations in real estate development and public infrastructure planning to ensure greater social cohesion (e.g., the Life Cycle Centre in Tartu, community housing developments in Western Europe).



We need a new "Finnish TV" – an inspiring vision of a better world!

More collective spaces, events, meetings to practice being in community!

Focus on well-being, not welfare!

WORKSHOP “DEFENSE AS A COMMONS. LESSONS IN CRISIS PREPAREDNESS”

Conducted by Richard Wouters (Wetenschappelijk Bureau GroenLinks, NL),
Imre Treufeld (NGO Degrowth Estonia)

Key Issue:

In addition to reducing military threats, we also need to ensure the security of our society in the event of environmental and other crises. **How can we promote crisis preparedness in a situation where social trust and social ties are low, and the contribution of different genders to our shared security is not balanced?**

Proposed Solutions:

1. To build mutual trust, we need shared spaces, events, and meetings. To maintain communities, we need a common goal and a desire to overcome differences. The state should support the creation and maintenance of communities.
2. Being prepared for different crises reduces fears. Communities can playfully practice preparedness, create spaces to express concerns, and assign clear roles that people take up in times of crisis.
3. Security is increased by developing more flexible opportunities for women and other social groups currently excluded from contributing. This would also be facilitated by making the values of security structures more accessible to the general public.



WORKSHOP “SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITY, BASED ON THE CASE OF THE EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS ACT”

Conducted by Triin Roosalu (Tallinn University),
Ivika Aman (Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions)

Key Issue:

Would socio-economic inequality deepen, remain stable, or decrease in a post-growth society? Inequality affects people’s access to economic, political, social, and cultural activities. It becomes particularly problematic when poverty becomes normalised and persistent inequality seems “inevitable”: in Estonia, the proportion of low-wage earners has grown significantly, especially among young people. **What form of solidarity would reduce stratification in the labour market and the emergence of “cheap labour,” and how can the rights of people working under flexible working time agreements be protected?** The starting point for the group work was the draft Employment Contracts Act (TLS 602SE) being debated in the National Parliament (Riigikogu), which would allow employers to sign open-ended “flexitime” employment contracts with employees based on the needs of the employer, rather than the employee.

Proposed Solutions:

1. Employees working “on an hourly basis” must be guaranteed a minimum monthly wage regardless of the number of hours worked in order to avoid the wage poverty trap.
2. To compensate for unstable workloads and express solidarity, employers should pay employees performance-based bonuses and/or share dividends with them once a year.
3. To increase solidarity, the supervisory powers of works councils and labour inspectorates should be strengthened.



Prerequisites in Economy

- **The main goal of the economic system must be the well-being of people and ecosystems.**

The economy must be reorganised to serve the interests of society and nature as a whole, shifting the focus from quantity (economic volume, profit accumulation, shareholder returns) to quality (value creation for society and ecological balance). In implementing the state budget, taxes should be used to restrict areas that burden the environment and society (e.g., fossil fuels, advertising, gambling, etc.) and redirect these resources to nature conservation and social development.

- **Cooperation and democratic management of the economy.**

The economy must be managed democratically, giving preference to employee-led and cooperative forms of enterprise that increase the cooperation and sustainability of these organisations and the self-fulfilment of the participants.

- **Focus on sufficiency and time abundance.**

Instead of assuming consumption is the source of freedoms, the society should seek to achieve sufficiency—a state where freedom is measured in terms of happiness and well-being. This means solving the problem of time poverty and creating time wealth (e.g., through a shorter working week), which allows people to devote themselves to their families and communities.

The economy section of the conference consisted of the following workshops: →

WORKSHOP „MASSIVELY REDUCING ENERGY CONSUMPTION“

Conducted by Ingrid Nielsen (Estonian Fund for Nature),
Halliki Kreinin (GFZ Research Institute for Sustainability in Potsdam)

Key Issue:

How to reduce energy consumption at both the individual and systemic levels in a country such as Estonia, which significantly exceeds the planetary boundaries and overconsumes energy?

Proposed Solutions:

Set regulations and taxes on carbon limits and other environmental damage for high-income consumers and companies, and, vice versa, provide subsidies for environmental protection and socially valuable activities:

1. Set a limit on the number of flights company executives are allowed to take each year. In turn, give employees an extra day off for environmentally friendly travel.
2. Set a progressive property tax, for example on each additional property. In turn, support and develop co-housing projects. Residents in such shared-service buildings live in their own living spaces but share common areas such as laundry rooms, saunas, etc. Such buildings are advertised on an equal footing with other new developments.
3. Tax private transport in the Tallinn metropolitan area. In contrast, support car sharing.



WORKSHOP „GOING AGAINST THE GRAIN!?”
A STORY OF COMMONING FROM THE JUMINDA PENINSULA”
Conducted by Artur Talvik and Ants Viirmaa (Leesi Tarwitajate Ühisus)



Key Issue:

How can we create commoning projects in a society dominated by neoliberal prioritisation of private investments and shareholder returns?

Proposed Solutions:

1. The introduction of a non-refundable membership fee encourages genuine members to join the cooperative and prevents potential conflicts of interest arising from private gain.
2. Involve members' children in the cooperative's activities – children bring people together!
3. Redirecting profits back into the community helps to create new shared value.
4. Cooperative projects create good conditions for community centres to emerge.

WORKSHOP „TECHNOLOGY IN A DEGROWING WORLD”

Conducted by Alex Pazaitis (TalTech Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance), Madis Vasser (University of Tartu), Ave Matsin (University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy)



Key Issue:

How can we easily transition from the current inefficient high-tech system, which damages nature and society, to post-growth technologies?

Proposed Solutions:

1. **Focus on mid-tech: a synthesis of the flexibility and versatility of low technologies and the possibilities of high technology.** For example, public repair and craft workshops that the community can use to create the buildings and elements they need with shared 3D printers and tools (e.g. [Tzoumakers](#)).
2. **Glocalism—combining global and local opportunities; using the Internet to share ideas, source materials and machines, or build locally.** For example, 3D printable models and open-source construction drawings (e.g. [Precious Plastic](#)).
3. **Valuing low-mid-heritage-tech, based on locally found or residual materials and combining forebearers' wisdom and a certain scalability.** Scaling up such non-industrial solutions (e.g., DIY/community biomethane production, algae cultivation, etc) requires a systemic push for lifestyle changes, but an infrastructure of shared tools and skills can be created already today (e.g. [Living Energy Farm](#)).

Quality-based economy over quantity-based economy!

Measure wellbeing and happiness, not GDP!

Technology won't solve social problems—and vice versa.

Visions for a Post-Growth Estonia

The following paths to a post-growth society have been compiled based on the group work, insights, and feedback of the conference participants. The structure (Today; 2–5 years; 2050) is based on a joint session conducted by Johanna Vallistu.

2025

2030

2035

Today (IMMEDIATE CHANGES)

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT:

Let's start setting a personal example today, based on the best scientific knowledge available and living in harmony with nature. Our immediate focus is on reducing consumption, which includes, for example, reducing the consumption of fossil fuels and animal-based foods, increasing car sharing, and more. In our use of goods and energy, we are guided by the principle of sufficiency. We also promote a culture of borrowing by using so-called libraries to borrow tools, toys, and other items.

SOCIETY:

Our personal contribution begins with being positive and constructive communicators. We create and maintain communities. For example, we organise neighbourhood parties to promote communication and community spirit. We take on the role of "public educators" to initiate discussions in our social circles about the shortcomings of the capitalist system and the post-growth future, while breaking down stereotypes. In addition, we normalise the conscious division of care work in relationships. Children are taught how to grow and prepare food in schools because these skills are valuable.

ECONOMY:

We make daily choices as informed consumers, repairing things and avoiding pointless gifts. We will prioritise local jobs and join unions that can make our voices heard in the public sphere. We will contribute to the state budget by paying our taxes honestly to ensure that our basic needs are met. We start promoting sufficiency, normalising the idea that success does not mean a new car or a big house, and that beauty does not require makeup – we are valuable just as we are.

During the next 2–5 years

(SYSTEMIC ADAPTATION)

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT:

We contribute to the creation of a conscious food system and reduce food waste by acting in accordance with our values and beliefs and respecting food and animals. We start by closing down intensive farms and are aware of the importance of protecting keystone species – whose existence and activities are essential for the preservation of the entire ecosystem (e.g. beavers). We have created nature education opportunities for all ages.

SOCIETY:

Our tax system supports community spirit, for example, the creation of community centres, teaching self-management skills starting in kindergarten, developing non-violent peaceful communication skills, and more. Family gatherings are becoming more frequent and the sense of solidarity is growing. Slow journalism is developing new best practices and higher standards for newsworthiness, supporting substantive and friendly dialogues.

ECONOMY:

We are moving towards a four-day working week. Instead of using private cars, we prefer car sharing or car clubs, because it is more convenient and smarter to preserve the natural environment than to pay congestion charges and parking fees. The development of micro-mobility (e.g. box bikes) is also gaining momentum. A prerequisite for new residential developments is walking distance to the services necessary for a good life.

2040

2045

2050

The year 2050

(SUFFICIENCY AND PROSPERITY)

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT:

By 2050, nature will have restored itself. We have consistently taken planetary boundaries into account and **left half of the Earth untouched by human influence**, creating protected areas and implementing sustainable forestry. The Estonian landscape is wild and full of wildlife. We do not own the forest, but we take care of it.

Food production is dominated by organic food, foraging, and permaculture, and there is enough time to grow our own food. Environmental protection has become the norm and pristine nature is valued.

SOCIETY:

Society is characterised by **sufficiency**, followed by **freedom**. Human life is valued throughout its entire lifespan, and care work is recognised as truly essential work. Large cities have spread out into garden suburbs.

We live closely together, with several generations in modular dwellings, where everyday activities (e.g., laundry) are shared in common spaces. Community ties have been reestablished, and care and responsibility are more important than ownership. Community decision-making helps to involve both new and old residents.

We are happier and more content than before. Our physical health, mental alertness, sense of community, and respect for all have improved.

ECONOMY:

The focus of the economy is **sufficiency**. Wholeness is more important than money. Work is meaningful and in harmony with life (nature and people). The work week is three or four days long, which gives more time for family, community involvement, and loitering. We are rich in time.

Instead of pensions, we have a universal basic income. The sharing economy and collaborative management are widespread in the social sphere, where local and small businesses, communities, and non-governmental organisations are at the forefront. Economic democracy prevails, with companies owned by their employees, avoiding dependence on banks and oligarchs. Innovation is driven by medium and low-tech approaches.

Our cities focus on comfort, sustainability, and community, with all services within walking distance. Quiet and comfortable public transport ensures a clean urban environment filled with birdsong.

Conclusion

The first Beyond Growth Estonia conference was a historic milestone in the public discussion on degrowth in Estonia. It clearly highlighted the central role of the growth paradigm of the hitherto unshakeable capitalist economic system in creating the current crises. **The main message of the inclusive conference was that the economy must serve society and society must take into account the limits of the natural environment, not the other way around.**

Undoubtedly, reversing the dominant narrative requires a profound change in values and cultural space, and the course of our ship must be corrected sooner rather than later. However, in order to achieve a positive course, many basic conditions must be met. To do this, we need to restore the connection between humans and nature, focus on ensuring people's basic needs in society, and move from profit-driven goals in the economic system to creating socially useful value.

The eight focus topics on the conference program aimed to engage participants in discussions on bold post-growth topics that have not received sufficient attention in the Estonian public sphere or where there is high potential for moving towards a sustainable society. As a result of these discussions, the report presents more than 30 different proposals and steps to policymakers for moving towards a post-growth Estonia.

With the help of conference participants, a vision was developed for the prosperity of sufficiency by 2050. According to it, a balance with the natural environment has been achieved, the idea of sufficiency has permeated the cultural and value space, the economy is managed democratically, and people are time-rich. **To achieve such a future, we need to create a new positive narrative – comparable to the influence that Finnish television had on Estonians in the past – that does not frighten the population with catastrophes, but offers an attractive and achievable vision of a fulfilling life outside the hamster wheel of unceasing work and consumption.**

Although we must also be aware of possible obstacles (the crisis of democracy, security threats, etc), we invite you to join us in creating a sustainable Estonia, where success is not measured by new cars or GDP growth, but by time-richness, happiness, health, and mindfulness. Just as we had the opportunity to briefly experience it in Nelijärve with the conference guests, speakers, and partners.





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- en.kasvujargne-eesti.ee
- [Recordings of main sessions \(ENG\)](#)
- FB: [@tasaareng](#)
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Media responses in Estonian:

- [Giorgos Kallis: tasaareng soovib muuta eesootavad rasked ajad vähem raskeks, mitte kõike vähendada, Trinokkel \(Eesti Postimees\), 27.09.2025](#)
- [Tadeáš Žďárský: tasaarengu liikumine annab inimestele lootust, et teistsugune maailm on võimalik, Trinokkel \(Eesti Postimees\), 30.08.2025](#)
- [Maiko Mathiesen: eesmärk on vältida looduskeskkonna kiiret hävitamist ja sotsiaalse ebavõrdsuse suurenemist, Trinokkel \(Eesti Postimees\), 30.08.2025](#)
- [Eesti Keskkonnaühenduste Koja äramainimine 2025. aasta tunnustust vääriiva keskkonnateona](#)
- [„Kriisides aitab meid ideederikkus“, Sirp, 09.01.2026](#)
- [Kai Pata: kasvujärgse ühiskonna haridus peab olema tee inimeseks olemise sügavama tähenduse leidmiseks, Eesti Postimees, 11.11.2025](#)
- [Eerik Kergandberg: väljakutse Peeter Koppelile – tule ja tõesta oma lahmivaid väiteid, Delfi, 10.11.2025](#)

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