

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

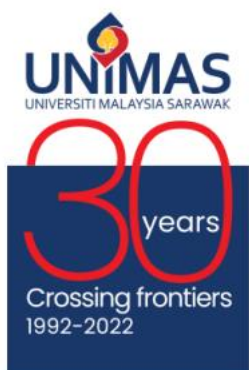
Kenyataan Akhbar
Press Release

Title: Estonia e-governance educational visit gave insights to Sarawak civil servants about Estonian Digital Transformation

KOTA SAMARAHAN, 22 February, 2023 – Twelve Sarawak State civil servants who have completed UNIMAS Master in Information Technology Management attended the Estonia e-Governance academic visit from 6th-10th February 2023. This educational visit is part of the long-term support by UNIMAS to the state government in the Digital Transformation and Post Covid-19 Development Strategy (PCDS) by the Sarawak government.

The program is an intensive 5-day program designed to introduce e-Estonia from the government level and to give an overview of how things are rolling in the ICT sector in Estonia. It emphasized the value that e-services could provide for different stakeholders (citizens, public entities and privately held companies etc.) and the main steps of the digitalization process together with the data management, including the re-use of the data explored. AI and automatization have now characterized the second wave of digitalization in Estonia. It means decision-making processes are automated, and the government becomes more invisible in providing essential services based on the citizen's data.

The Sarawak officers learnt that the digital transformation process is not as straightforward as it may seem because the transformation does not happen one-to-one by simply turning a paper copy into a digital one. Many things must be re-designed, involving organizational, structural and legal changes and re-evaluation of the existing processes and their functionality. During the seminar sessions at Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech), Estonia, the officers had the opportunity to meet several experts, such as Assoc. Prof. Ingrid Pappel, Head of the e-Governance Technologies and Services MSc program at TalTech, Katrin Nyman-Metcalf (Estonian-Swedish legal scholar) and Arvo Ott, the Director of e-Governance Academy (eGA) Estonia. Apart from that, the officers also visited several key organizations such as Guardtime (a private company specializing in Blockchain services for the Estonian government), NATO CR14 (official NATO Cyber Range centre), Riigikogu (Estonian



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Chancellory Division
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
94300 Kota Samarahan
Tel +60 82 582 401
Fax +60 82 665 088
Email: snsze@unimas.my

Government Parliament), e-Estonia innovation hub and Tallinn Old Town.

UNIMAS delegates Assoc. Prof Dr Johari Abdullah, Assoc. Prof Dr Sze San Nah and Dr Suhaila Saeed had also initiated research discussions and potential collaboration with the TTU Data Science Research Group, TTU E-Governance Research Group and TTU Cybersecurity Research Group.

U N I M A S



Seminar session at Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia



Riigikogu (Estonian Government Parliament)



Study visit to Guardtime, specialist of blockchain protocols and applications

Testimonial by D'zul Izzat (MITM student):

E-governance has been the buzzword for quite a while, and judging by its growth rate, it is only a matter of time before this approach goes global. Sarawak Government has to be applauded for taking its own initiatives to adopt a similar model for the government, which has led us to this trip, whereby Sarawak civil servants from various agencies participated in a short winter school program in Estonia to experience and study e-Governance. The trip is one of the enrichment programs organized by UNIMAS Master in IT Management program. During this trip, the program exposed us to multiple strategies that Estonia had devised in its journey towards where they are currently.

Various experts from the Estonian government, academic personnel and service providers have shared their insights on their roles and responsibilities in ensuring that the implementation of e-governance in the nation can be deemed a success. I came in with the preconception that the only reason e-governance works in Estonia is due to the small population, yet somehow massive investments by the government. However, while the preconceived idea may be true to a certain extent, after face-to-face engagements with these technological experts, we realize that these are not the defining factors of its success. Despite the vast difference in social demographics and geographical factors between Estonia and Sarawak, there is still a lot that we can learn from the Estonian government, especially on how they seamlessly deploy and utilize digital identifications in running their public services.

Sarawak may not immediately experience a similar level of acceptance due to the contrasting social upbringing and limited infrastructure. However, as one of the lecturers has explained, if the government can provide a value proposition to whatever technological advances in the e-government, people will jump on the bandwagon. Building public trust is the key here; admittedly, that is still a considerable challenge that needs a strategic way to overcome. As the Estonian government has shown us in the program, we need to be adaptable to changes, as what might have worked in the past decades may no longer be relevant today. We should prepare ourselves to completely revamp our internal processes if it means that our efficiency and productivity can be improved. We agree that we still have a long way to go, but Estonia as an aspiration and reference model is already a step in the right direction. As good rapport and connections have been established between Estonia and Sarawak, further engagements with the country may prove fruitful in the long run.



Visit to NATO Cyber Range center, D'zul Izzat (4th from left)
