



EUROPEAN SMALL ISLANDS FEDERATION ESIN CONFERENCE ON KIHNU ISLAND 2022

<https://www.visitestonia.com/en/>

On **September 6th - 9th** the Conference and Annual Meeting of European Small Islands Federation was held on Kihnu Island in Estonia. There were 50 participants at the Conference. Representative countries and areas at the Conference: Sweden, Scotland, Ireland, Finland, Denmark, Croatia, Åland and Estonia. In addition, Brussels. There were foreign guests from 16 islands and the number of Estonian islands from which the members of the Association of Estonian Islands took part, was 11. **So, altogether 27 small islands of Europe were represented.**

On the first day, September, 6th at Uibu Farm an introduction to Kihnu culture was made and gala dinner was held.

The second day was dedicated to the intangible heritage and lifestyle of Kihnu Island and guided tours were made around the island in English and Estonian language. Transported on trucks to the most significant sights, the guests were given thorough overviews about the culture, history and economic activity of Kihnu Island. At the local museum everyone could learn to make a ribbon of hearts. The program included visiting the most important small enterprises: fish processing and woodworking companies and a farm where Scottish Highland Cattle and the local indigenous sheep breed of Kihnu are raised. The gala dinner was held in the community center of the island where the local folklore groups Kihnumua and Manõja Poisid entertained the audience with a vivid cultural program and everyone could learn the Kihnu dances.

The third day was dedicated to various workshops, discussions and presentations. The theme of the Conference was "Island Policies and Habitability on Small Islands". Every country gave a picture of its island policies and the present situation of working on or developing its small islands act. Together a new assessment tool was practiced for defining the local situation through 45 habitability indicators. The workshop of using the tool was lead by Rose Marie Hellen ja Pia Prost. The tool can be found on the web page <https://www.abo.fi/en/centre-for-lifelong-learning/habitability/habitability-handbook/> and is meant to be used freely. At the moment it is in English but the Association of Estonian Islands finds it necessary to be translated into Estonian and the research to be conducted in the Estonian small islands, too.

National Island Policies and Island Act

Introductions of the policies of different islands often repeated their similar problem:

decrease of population, outflow of young people, problems with public transport, overload of the islands during high season of tourism (transport, waste management, sewage systems), failures in mobile phone and internet service. Organisations of the islands are standing on different levels in development or formation of their small islands act. On Swedish islands, the law has not been given much thought yet, in Finland, Croatia, Scotland and Estonia islands acts exist. But the acts always need to be supplemented.

One of the hottest problems that has been and is coming up, in many islands, is about ownership of land. Islanders have to face serious problems due to selling of land to people who live outside the island – the rise of rental prices, complicated management of the lands, difficulties in management of nature protection areas, ending of local traditional lifestyle etc.

At the end of the day the annual meeting AGM of ESIN was held.

On Friday, September, 9th the representatives of the islands left Kihnu Island and all who volunteered could go on excursions on some other small islands. Unfortunately the trip to Ruhnu was banned due to strong wind and too low water level, so all the island visitors went to Vormsi Island.

We are grateful to all speakers, organisers and participants.

AGM 2023 will be held in Ireland.

Riina Kaljulaid
Svea Aavik