National Institute for Health Development

The National Institute for Health Development Development Plan 2024–2027

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TAI vision, mission, and values

TAI VISION

TAI aims to be a leading influencer and spokesperson for public health development in Estonia.

TAI MISSION

TAI is dedicated to shaping research-based healthy choices.

TAI VALUES

Competence

- Our activities are based on research, the best practices of Estonia and the world, and the needs of target groups.
- We maintain our competences through constant self-improvement.
- Our activities are grounded in scientific evidence, adherence to good scientific practices and ethical principles, and the incorporation of the best practices from both Estonia and around the world, all tailored to meet the needs of our target groups.
- We maintain and develop our competence by continuously improving ourselves.
- We create new knowledge, use it, and share our knowledge and skills.

Cooperation

- We engage, listen, share knowledge, and provide support.
- We agree on common goals and focus on teamwork in achieving them.
- We respect and inspire each other, to achieve more as a team than we would achieve alone.
- We value each other's views and seek for best solutions together.

Innovation

- We seek actively and boldly new solutions, while considering the needs of target groups and developments in society.
- We offer and implement smart solutions while being creative, flexible and considerate. We are inquisitive and open to new ideas in our work.

Introduction

The National Institute for Health Development (hereinafter referred to as TAI or the institute) is a leading public health research and development institute that provides reliable knowledge on population health and public health solutions. TAI is a state agency administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs. As a research and development institute, we engage in public health research and health promotion as well as development and implementation of disease prevention programmes and activities. Additionally, we manage Estonia's national health statistics and manage population-based registries. Our mission is to design evidence-based healthy choices.

In the institute's development plan, we define the vision and mission of the institute, main goals, strategic directions, and key activities to achieve them. It is important to us that the institute's main objectives are timely and relevant. Compared to the existing development plan, the updated document is characterized by transparency of strategic directions with clearly described steps to achieve them, which reflect our ambitions and strategic directions. Our activities support achieving objectives in sustainability, health, and social protection presented in the country's long-term development strategy "Estonia 2035." In addition, we are dedicated to achieving the objectives of the "Research and Development, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship (TAIE) Development Plan" and the "Population Health Development Plan 2020-2030." We review the development plan annually to keep our activities up to date.

We follow these principles in our activities:

Strong, clear, and accessible health-related knowledge supports the consideration of evidence in health policy and is the foundation for developing innovative public health solutions. Internationally recognized scientific community and research support the dissemination of knowledge into Estonian society, and academic independence allows us to raise important public health issues and develop the field objectively.

Health data that meets the needs of society, is easy to be used, processed, and interpreted, and that reveals the need for changes and reflects the success of implemented activities. We are reliable keeper of health data and leader in the field, offering simple, interactive, and user-friendly solutions. As an institute, we are a strong partner in collecting health data and creating interoperability of information systems, and we contribute to a better understanding of the population's health status and factors affecting it.

Assessing health needs and impacts provides us with the opportunity to highlight key public health issues and support decision-making accordingly. In collaboration with partners, we create knowledge about the population's health status and health needs and provide recommendations for decision-making. We systematically draw attention to how the socioeconomic situation and cultural background of various population groups affect health.

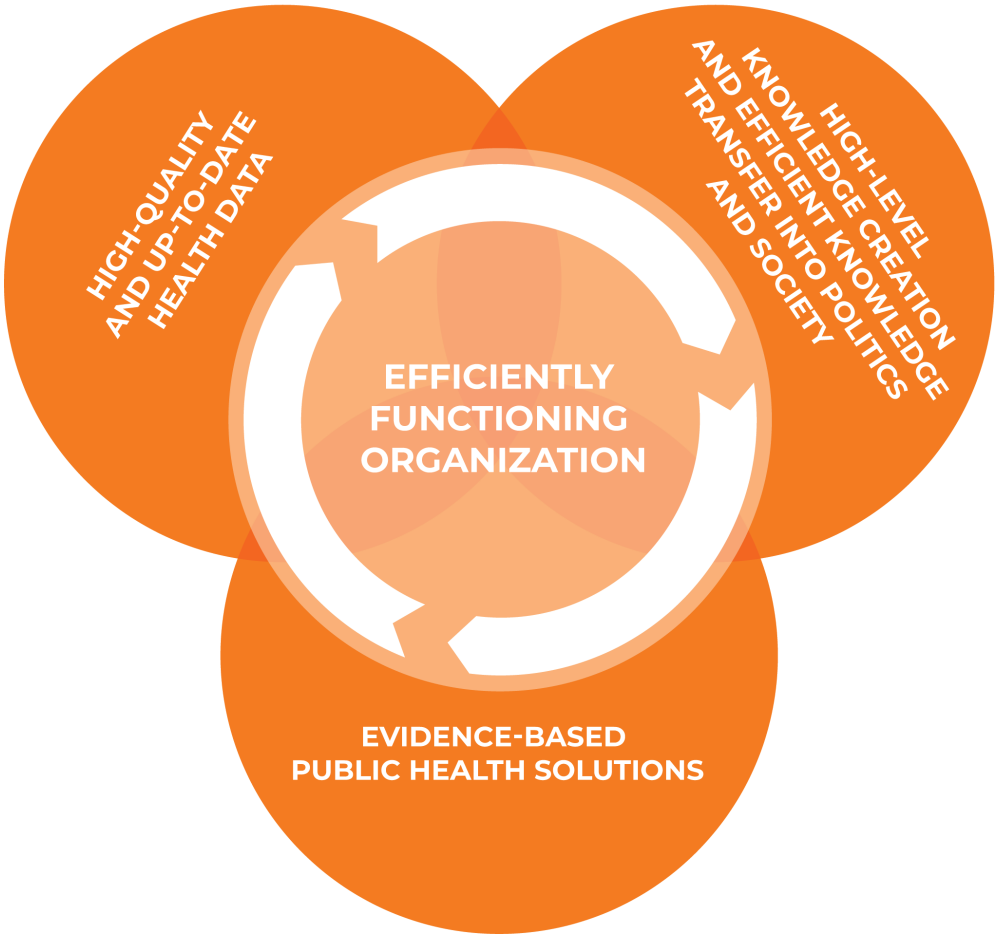
Effective prevention helps to prevent the development, worsening, and recurrence of health problems. We develop and implement activities that help to prevent health problems and increase well-being. We examine the feasibility and effectiveness of activities conducted, ensure activities are implemented as planned and monitored regularly. We participate in shaping prevention policies, support the development and research of prevention activities, support institutions and municipality level organizations in planning, implementing, and evaluating prevention activities, develop competence of people working in the field of prevention, and advocate for data- and evidence-based decision-making in prevention.

People's health and health behaviour is shaped where they work, live, and learn every day. Therefore, we assist local governments, employers, county level development organizations, and educational institutions in developing competencies and skills to strategically plan and implement topics related to people's well-being while considering evidence. We engage in advocacy to ensure that well-being of people would be priority among organization leaders and that they invest in systematic and consistent long-term activities with proven impact.

We are an open, dynamic, proactive, and innovation-valuing organization.

Strategic Goals

TAI shapes the evidence-based healthy choices of Estonian residents and influences developments in public health through its strategic goals. High-quality and up-to-date health data helps to create high-level knowledge that is transferred to policymaking and society. Knowledge transfer helps to create necessary innovative evidence-based public health solutions. A comprehensive and efficiently functioning organization supports implementation of all our strategic goals.



Strategic Objectivities

I Objective – High-Quality and Up-to-Date Health Data

We ensure high-quality and comprehensive health data for research and studies that meet the needs of target groups. Our data is easily accessible, processable, and can be linked with data not managed by TAI. To provide a better overview of data used in TAI, we will create a central data management system connected to the national data management application RIHAKE. We expedite data publication deadlines and improve data accessibility to promote use of data in political decision-making and inform stakeholders and the public. We develop user-friendly dynamic visualization while ensuring the machine-readable use of open data. We collaborate with research and educational institutions to promote secure re-use of secondary health data.

DIRECTIONS OF ACTIVITY

COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH DATA

Data has value when it can be used. We consider important to conduct comprehensive analysis of population health, systematic overview of studies over time that would enable to discover links between health status and health related behaviour. To compare health conditions and health behaviour over the years, health data must be in a standardized format, processable and analysable in combined form.

Key activities

- Standardizing and machine-processing data from completed studies.
- Implementing a unified visualization solution.
- Creating a central system for archiving research data.
- Creating a central data management system connected to the national data management application RIHAKE.

MAINTENANCE, DEVELOPMENT, AND MANAGEMENT OF REGISTRIES

Research-based development of health registries allows us to conduct registry-based research work based on reliable data to assess population health trends and determinants. Data quality and timely publication are supported by close cooperation with data providers, efficient data transmission channels, and extensive use of data in research.

Key activities

- Focusing on cooperation with data providers and users of registry data (researchers), creating an effective feedback system.
- Continuing the development of modern data transmission channels.
- Continuing improvements in data quality.

ENHANCEMENT OF HEALTH STATISTICS DATA PLATFORM

Public health decisions must be based on adequate health statistics. We align the collection of health statistics data with the principle of single data submission. We apply for the status of national health statistics producer for TAI, which increases our responsibility in the field and allows us to implement protective measures established for national statistics. The status of producer of national statistics allows us to request data directly from other national data-sets, thus reducing administrative burden on us and data providers. Higher quality and more extensive health statistics enables us to conduct better health analyses and establish connections between statistical indicators and life circumstances. To support political decisions, we make data collection platforms more efficient.

Key activities

- Aligning the collection of health statistics data with the principle of single data submission.
- Applying for the status of national health statistics producer for TAI.
- Creating opportunities for more efficient data processing and more comprehensive quality control of data.
- Automating the submission of international health data.
- Ensuring the machine readability of open data.

Metrics

- Proportion of data providers
- Deadline for publishing data in all data-sets
- Number of scientific articles based on TAI data within a year
- Satisfaction of data providers
- Satisfaction of data users

II Objective – High-Level Knowledge Creation and Efficient Knowledge Transfer into Politics and Society

As an internationally competitive research institute studying population health, health behaviour, and health determinants, we provide evidence-based input into national public health policy-making, development of public health solutions, and research of interventions affecting health behaviour. To improve people's health behaviour, we maintain a high level of knowledge and boldly seize the opportunity to engage in important health-related discussions in our society.

DIRECTIONS OF ACTIVITY

APPLIED AND INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

In selecting research topics, we base our choices on the country's long-term development needs and key public health challenges, including prevention of non-communicable diseases, cancer prevention, and mental health promotion. Interdisciplinary research facilitates the development of health programs and preventive measures that reduce the diseased burden in society and improve health and well-being of individuals. Long-term studies allow to assess relationships between social, behavioural, genetic, and metabolic factors and health outcomes throughout the life course. Evaluating the effectiveness of public health programs and interventions is part of our work. In times of crisis, we are ready to adjust research and surveillance topics and share relevant knowledge with the public. We support researchers in popularizing science in their daily work, using out organization's communication channels. We raise important research topics from a population health perspective and make evidence-based suggestions to reduce health inequalities and strengthen sustainability of the health-care system.

Key activities

- Implementing a European Union joint project (JA PreventNCD) aimed at preventing cancer and other non-communicable diseases.
- Engaging in international interdisciplinary research cooperation and securing external funding to enhance TAI's research capacity.
- Making targeted contributions to academic succession to strengthen research groups, including through knowledge transfer PhD programs.

MONITORING OF POPULATION HEALTH, HEALTH BEHAVIOUR, AND HEALTH DETERMINANTS

We analyse and interpret changes in population health indicators and conduct monitoring of health determinants. To better track and compare health-related changes over time and with other countries, we use modern solutions for data collection and analysis, facilitate data exchange, and increase our participation in international research network.

We provide clear and up-to-date messages about long-term trends and challenges related to population processes. We offer solutions for changing the situation and mitigating future risks. We make suggestions for the construction of a mental health monitoring system.

Key activities

- Making poropsals to the development of a national monitoring system for children and adults' mental health, based on the results of studies on the mental health of the population and children.
- Publishing an annual population health report.
- Submitting Estonian data to international databases for childhood cancer and cancer screening.

CONDUCTING HEALTH ECONOMICS IMPACT ANALYSES

We are establishing the capability to assess broader impact of population health loss, decisions, interventions, and other measures related to health or social policy. To achieve this, we are pooling competencies and resources in epidemiology, health statistics, and health economics into a cross-sectoral research group that will systematically deal with analyses of preventable health loss and its economic impact on risk factors.

Key activities

- Pooling expertise in epidemiology and health economics, as well as resources in health statistics and health research, into a cross-sectoral research group.
- Organizing analyses of health impact of interventions (e.g., impact analysis of Estonian alcohol policy) and analyses of disease burden and costs (e.g., cost study of sedentary lifestyle and overweight).

Metrics

- The proportion of employees with academic degrees
- The number of peer-reviewed scientific articles
- Satisfaction of TAI knowledge users (360° feedback)
- The proportion of TAI employees' scientific articles on which a scientific news item has been published.

III Objective – Evidence-Based Public Health Solutions

Our goal is to provide information, tools and solutions that support people's opportunities, capability and motivation to make healthier choices. We act as an incubator for creation and testing of innovative ideas and solutions. We support the formation of strong public health networks and strengthen cross-sector collaboration. Together with institutions (including employers and educational institutions) and local governments, we shape health-supporting environments and ensure that our messages reach decision-makers whose actions and policies impact health. We advocate for evidence- and data-based decision-making in prevention. It is important to us that health, social, education, and justice sectors work together and focus on actual needs and well-being of individuals.

DIRECTION OF ACTIVITY

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS THAT MEET TARGET GROUP NEEDS

We support the extensive adoption of effective tools and update them, as necessary. Solutions must be user-friendly and accessible regardless of a person's place of residence, native language, socio-economic conditions, and special needs. To achieve this goal, it is important to integrate solutions from different fields so that people most affected by health inequalities and those who have difficulties obtaining the necessary support, can access and use these solutions.

Key activities

- Testing, developing, or adapting innovative tools (including parenting support, cancer screening, harm reduction associated with the use of new substances (including in nightlife), addressing mental health issues, and drug prevention.
- Developing low-intensity psychological interventions (LIPIs) aimed at addressing mental health and substance use issues, in close cooperation with the social sector.
- Developing, adapting, and implementing assessment tools, including psychometric instruments, and making them easily accessible to professionals.
- Creating a system for developing and testing preventive activities and developing the competence of the prevention workforce.
- Developing interventions aimed at harm reduction associated with the use of new substances (including in nightlife).
- Developing new solutions for cancer screenings.

SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING HEALTH NETWORKS

Health of the population is influenced by the activities of many sectors and organizations. It is important to enhance health awareness and capability of those institutions responsible for promoting people's health. To achieve this, we support organizations in planning and implementing public health activities and increase their involvement in health promotion. The goal is to increase the number of organizations that, based on a data-driven action plan, plan, implement, and monitor prevention and promotion activities with proven levels of evidence. To develop the public health capacity of community organizations (educational institutions, local governments, regional development organizations, employers, entrepreneurs, etc.), we offer training for public health specialists and decision-makers according to their needs.

Key activities

- Organizing high-quality training and development programs that follow adult education principles, including diversifying the format of training (increasing the proportion of e-learning and webinars, among other opportunities).
- Providing professional support to network members, including counselling, mentorship, and peer supervision.
- Developing methodological tools and guidance materials, including assessment instruments for both team self-evaluation and compiling health indicators of the current situation in the community.
- Advocacy activities for organizational leaders and specialists, including individual meetings and regular feedback.

INCREASING HEALTH AWARENESS AND HEALTH CAPACITY IN SOCIETY

We promote a science-based view of health within society and respond to societal events by expressing clear, science and data-supported positions in both public and sector-specific communications. We keep key public health issues in the media spotlight and share information on health-related matters, developments, and needs with stakeholders, including journalists affecting population health.

We participate in processes that influence health policy and provide recommendations for policy decisions. We are proactive in disseminating our knowledge, and in developing and maintaining partnerships with the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. We ensure that target groups have access to quality, up-to-date health information through modern and attractive web solutions, communication channels, and awareness activities. This deepens specialists' knowledge in the field and increases their involvement in health-promoting activities, as well as supports the public's health awareness, motivation, and skills to make health-supporting decisions and care for their health.

Key activities

- Developing a strategic communication plan and core messages and positions based on the institute's priorities.
- Developing and marketing TAI communication outputs (e.g., the Journal of Social Work, TAI health information newsletter) and their distribution platforms, including better profiling of content and reading opportunities according to the needs of target groups, increasing the cross-use of different channels and materials.
- Creating strategic partnership relations.
- Updating TAI-managed websites.

Metrics

- Satisfaction of solution users and target groups.
- The number or proportion of new solutions that meet the needs of the target group, whose effectiveness has been evaluated or is under evaluation, etc.
- The visitation and user feedback of media channels used in all our areas of responsibility.
- The number of media coverage related to TAI, including the proportion of influential features (the source for measurement indicator is the analysis of keyword and theme-based features published on Station.ee).
- Satisfaction with training and the assessment of the applicability of acquired knowledge and skills in daily work.

IV Objective – Efficient Organization

TAI is an attractive and recognized employer for both current employees and newcomers to the organization. We ensure diverse development and career opportunities for our staff, support learning culture, and offer various opportunities for continuous competency development. To cope with changes in the external environment and to evolve as an organization, we follow commonly agreed values and involve our employees in setting and achieving goals, providing opportunities for them to apply their expertise, encourage collaboration, and develop infrastructure. To ensure efficient operation of TAI, we maintain good functioning of the organization at both management and other levels. We value work- and personal life balance, offering flexible working conditions and promoting employees' mental and physical health. We provide our employees with quality support services, enabling them to focus on their core work.

DIRECTIONS OF ACTIVITY

KEEPING OUR ORGANIZATION MODERN AND EFFICIENT

We prioritize the consistent quality and efficiency of our services across the entire organization. We develop a comprehensive and inclusive planning process, where health data, knowledge creation, public health and social protection solutions development, and specific supporting competencies (e.g., analysis, finance, law, human resources, training, marketing, communication) form a whole. We focus on the efficient use of resources by involving the best competencies. Specific support competencies are organized into separate units, TAI's work processes are standardized and outlined. We implement clear metrics focused on key results to assess achievement of the organization's goals, ensuring the institute's continuous development and success. We initiate and value collaboration and promote open communication and stakeholder involvement in all important processes. Our action in crisis situations to ensure services is well-thought out.

Key activities

- Modernizing TAI's strategic planning process and management principles.
- Mapping and enhancing processes to standardize the quality of services and reduce time, money, and other resources spent on implementation activities.
- Implementing service-based management.
- Ensuring the continuity of TAI´s services and employee´ readiness to act in crisis situations.

WE ARE A LEARNING AND DIGITALLY COMPETENT ORGANIZATION

We foster a learning organization mindset within TAI. We encourage and value employees' professional development and the application of new knowledge and skills in their work, including digital skills. We encourage employees to share their knowledge, thereby supporting each other's development and the organization's knowledge creation. We enhance leaders' management competencies and role awareness, supporting their development into leaders who inspire employees so that management decisions and actions are transparent and consider the organization's continuous development. We gradually develop digital infrastructure and increase the use of digital solutions.

Key activities

- Promoting management culture and quality through training and development programs.
- Increasing digital competence.

VALUING EMPLOYEES, IMPLEMENTING VALUE-BASED MANAGEMENT, AND FOSTERING SUCCESSION

We value each employee, recognizing and appreciating their work achievements and personal contributions. To create a supportive and positive work environment, we implement value-based management. We support employees in promoting their health, with special attention to mental health maintenance and work-life balance. We encourage honest, open communication, and involve employees in implementing changes necessary for organizational development. We keep the employee value proposition up to date. We comprehensively develop our current employees. We assist dedicated talents in realizing and developing themselves through career paths within the organization. To foster succession, we collaborate with high schools, vocational schools, universities, and other research institutions.

Key activities

- Developing and implementing best management practices at different levels.
- Developing and implementing a talent management system.
- Applying for and maintaining various employer awards.
- Introducing TAI to educational and research institutions, participating in career fairs and other employer branding events, and collaborating with educational institutions to foster succession.

Metrics

- Employee referral index
- Employee satisfaction with management
- Employee satisfaction with development opportunities
- TAI's recognition and reputation
- The number of interns in TAI's core areas

Development Plan Terms

Metric - A measure used in assessing quality or performance.
Public Health - A field of action aimed at strengthening and improving the health of the population, extending the life expectancy of citizens, and reducing health inequality.
Public Health Solutions - Services, products, or their collections that allow solving a public health problem or meeting a need that has arisen in public health.
Knowledge Creation - The creation of knowledge or wisdom as a collection.
Knowledge Transfer - The transmission of academic knowledge into society, businesses, organizations.
Evidence-Based - Applying or based on scientific achievements.
Health Behaviour - Individual behaviour that affects a person's health.
Health Awareness - Awareness and understanding of health and health behaviours, an understanding of a healthy lifestyle and healthy choices, and the ability to maintain health based on this information and understanding.
Health Economics - A sub-discipline of economics that studies how resources are allocated to and within the health sector and the efficiency of these resource uses, covering both the healthcare system and health in general.
Healthy Choice - A decision beneficial to health.
Social Protection - Methods and means for ensuring the welfare of society members in case of unemployment, health issues, disability, poor family livelihood, etc.
Strategic Objective/Goal - A goal related to achieving a distant aim that encompasses the necessary methods and means.
Mental Health - A state of well-being in which an individual realizes their abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to contribute to their community.
Vision - An understanding or vision of where one is heading.
Value - An idea, principle, or understanding that is widely esteemed.