

Study of the possibilities of adapting the public and private service provision network of Rapla County to population changes and future trends

The **Study of the possibilities of adapting the public and private service provision network of Rapla County to population changes and future trends** was carried out on behalf of the Association of Municipalities of Rapla County between February 2021 and May 2022. The purpose of the study was to create a knowledge-based basis for local governments and other service providers to make informed decisions about the spatial arrangement of public and private services, regarding the more efficient structure of the respective network and the implementation of smarter ways of offering. In accordance with the objective, the study contributes to the growth of the administrative and development capacity of Rapla county's local governments and county cooperation organizations, forming a clearer understanding of future developments in the field of services and more specific ways of addressing this topic in the county's development strategy and its action plan.

The methodological starting point of the study is the methodology for the analysis of the spatial location of services and the definition of locations prepared by the Center for Applied Social Sciences of the University of Tartu in 2015 ("Study on ensuring the spatial location and availability of private and public services and handling services in county plans"). Based on the methodology, county settlements are classified into 4 types of service centers – neighborhood centers, local centers, regional centers and county centers. At each service center level, a certain selection of services must be ensured based on the methodology. Based on the methodology of the analysis of the spatial location and availability of

services, there are two central factors in the assessment of service locations - the place of services in the everyday life of service consumers and the economic profitability of providing high-quality services in a specific location.

At the same time, it is important to emphasize that the results of the analysis are not the only argument when making discretionary decisions that optimize service networks. If the municipality has sufficient capacity and the quality of services elsewhere does not deteriorate due to this, services can be provided in more locations than the logic of the network of service centers requires. In addition, it is important to consider the wishes and needs of local communities in maintaining the vitality of the local community by linking networks to the implementation of additional solutions in smaller settlements with greater responsibility for the provision of services and self-sufficiency to community associations. The best development policy to increase the effectiveness of voluntary service sites is one that improves the quality and variety of services offered and implements various marketing and community measures to increase the activity of sites.

An important factor in the need for optimization of service networks is the general condition of the service provision infrastructure (premises, buildings, technical infrastructure), the volume of the investment need related to the condition (in addition to the need for repair and reconstruction of existing buildings in a worse condition, the cost of new buildings or additions is also added here) in comparison with the expected investment capacity in the following period.

The results of the mapping of the condition of the buildings carried out as part of the study show that 3% or 4.2 thousand m² of the infrastructure of the basic services (education, culture, sports) located in the municipality is in a bad condition, which means that in order to ensure the quality of

the service, it would be necessary to immediately improve the operating conditions. Considering the cost of the reconstruction of the premises to be conservatively 1,500 euros per m², this means a total of approx. 6 million euros of "quick investments" for the county, which is of the same order of magnitude as the investment volumes made annually in the period 2011-2020 in the operating conditions of the same services (4.3 million per year) and also with the volumes planned in the 2021-2025 budget strategies (4.0 million per year). If we also consider the sharp increase in construction prices in the current period, we can conclude that the immediate investment need in the county can be covered by approx. 1 year with investment funds. Since it is not the "county" that makes the investments, but specific local governments, the more important fact is that the absolute majority of the operating conditions assessed as bad are located in the Rapla municipality, and the Rapla municipality has so far invested 1.5 million a year in buildings for the same services and plans to invest 1.6 million in the near future. euros per year. Therefore, if the current pace of investment continues, it would take at least 4 years to reconstruct the business premises in a bad condition in Rapla Municipality.

An order of magnitude higher investment needs are related to operating conditions that were assessed as "satisfactory" and in which it was assumed that a significant need for improvement would arise in the medium term, within 4-8 years. There are 45 thousand m² of such premises in the county or 31%. Considering the total area of rooms in poor and satisfactory condition, the number of rooms in need

of reconstruction in the county is 50 thousand m². Again, sticking to the conservative estimate of the cost of the reconstruction of the premises (1500 euros m²), the total investment need for the next 8 years is 75 million euros, which is also in good agreement with the budget strategies of the municipalities planned by individual service places (16 million euros) and, in addition, the amount of investments assessed as an additional need (67 million euros) with the amount. One of the reasons is probably the application of similar conservative assumptions when evaluating the investment cost of individual objects. Evaluating the situation by municipality, it appears that in Kohila, Märjamaa and Rapla municipalities, the area of premises with significant investment needs is between 14-17 thousand m² while in Kehtna municipality there are about 5 thousand m² of such premises:

Considering the investment capacity of the municipalities in the periods preceding the operating conditions of the services included in the analysis - in the Kehtna municipality approx. 600 thousand euros per year, in the Kohila municipality 800 thousand, in the Märjamaa municipality 1 million and in the Rapla municipality 1.6 million euros - we can conclude that the current investment capacity and policy (i.e. the share of which is directed from the budget to improving the operating conditions of the analyzed services) if continued, this so-called medium-term investment need, which is related to the "satisfactory" current condition of the premises, will be able to be covered over a significantly longer period than the assumed 8 years. On average, it would take at least 19 years in the municipalities of the county. Thus, there is a general need for optimization of service networks (activity locations, spatial programs) in the county, as a result of the task of ensuring at least good operating conditions in each location of service provision for the sake of service quality. An alternative is the provision of services in

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premises and conditions that may inhibit the high-quality provision of services.

In the comparison of the municipalities, the greatest need for investment (and, if possible, the need for optimization) is in the Kohila municipality, where the calculated investment need for premises in poor or satisfactory condition is 20 million euros, and the investment need summed up by place of business (including additions and completely new premises for e.g. the cultural center) reaches 30 million euros. Since the municipality's annual investment volume in the analyzed areas has been approx. 800 thousand euros, it will take 26-38 years to cover this investment need if the current network of services is maintained and expanded. At the same time, the premises that are currently in good condition are also depreciated to the level of the need for repair or reconstruction.

The calculated investment need of Rapla municipality in premises in poor or satisfactory condition is 25 million euros, and the amount of the planned and additionally necessary investments in the budget strategy is a total of 32 million euros. It would take at least 16 or 20 years, respectively, to satisfy the investment need. In the case of Märjamaa municipality, the amount of investment needs for individual service places (13 million euros) is below the investment need assessment, which considers the area of premises in poor and satisfactory condition (21 million euros). This can be interpreted as a greater willingness or satisfaction to continue providing services even in premises in a satisfactory condition. It would take at least 13 or 21 years, respectively, to satisfy the investment need. The smallest need for

investment is in the Kehtna municipality, where 7.5 million euros should be invested based on the condition of the premises, and 10.5 million euros when summing up object-specific investment needs. If the current investment volumes are maintained, it could be affordable within 13-17 years.

The main results of the study are the assessment of specific **public and private service networks and, if necessary, making proposals** for changing service networks based on the results of the assessment.

Kindergarten service is a day-to-day service with a long duration, which is not directly unavoidable (there is no legal obligation to "give" a child to a kindergarten), but targeted by national policies as a service covering the majority of the target group. The goal of the Europe 2020 strategy was that by 2020, 95% of all members of the target group (children aged four to school-age) should attend kindergarten. Accordingly, kindergartens should be located at all levels of service centers (from the county center to nearby centers). The network of kindergarten services of the county ensures the availability of services in accordance with the requirements of the service center model. There is no kindergarten in Hager among the local centers, but this role is fulfilled by the Sutlema kindergarten in the service area of the Hager local center, which is located 1.7 km from the village center. The distance between the two settlements is not great, but despite this, when reconstructing the Hager schoolhouse-community house, it is worth considering bringing the kindergarten group to Hager. In this case, it is reasonable to either give up the Sutlema kindergarten building or give it another function. There is no kindergarten in Raikküla either. The service is provided in the nearby villages of Lipa and Purku, where Kabala Kindergarten groups are open. From the point of view of the network of service centers, the locations (groups) in Laukna, Inglistel, Kastil and Orgitas are excessive.

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Considering the current capacity of kindergarten groups and the forecast of the size of the target group in the service area of the respective nearby center until 2035, there is a critically insufficient service need to maintain the Purku, Laukna, Ingliste and Lelle locations. In the long term, the future of the Purku location should be resolved jointly with the Lipa location - it is recommended that when planning investments, consider building a new kindergarten-primary school in Raikküla, in such a way that it serves the settlements of Raikküla, Lipa and Purku at the same time. When the Laukna and Ingliste locations are closed, the municipality will have the task of ensuring escorted transport to the nearest kindergarten in the municipality (respectively Sipa and Valtu) and/or creating favorable conditions for the private sector to offer childcare services in its various forms - in addition to the childcare services provided under the law, also as services that support raising a child at home (playgroups, family day care, etc.) . In addition to the above-mentioned settlements, this last recommendation also concerns more sparsely populated areas, where taking children to kindergarten or day care every day is economically unwise from the family/household point of view. Despite the poor occupancy of the Lelle kindergarten group at the moment and the population forecast, which does not allow for the growth of the target group, we recommend keeping the kindergarten group at the level of problematic demand and efficiency in order to maintain the vitality of this settlement and the region, which is far from other centers. Rather, development activities should be focused on increasing the residential

attractiveness of the Lelle neighborhood center with good transport connections. The Kasti and Orgita kindergarten groups are excessive in terms of their location in the service network, but the occupancy of the groups and the population forecast show that the regional need service is sufficient to maintain the place of operation and there is no need to close it.

everyday **general education services**, the model of service centers distinguishes three levels of service centers based on the mandatory nature of the service and the adequacy of the number of children in the service areas to complete the classes - the locations of secondary education are county centers (state high schools) and regional centers (full-cycle so-called regional high schools), local centers and primary schools I are designated as the locations for all three levels of basic education. - Nearby centers as locations of the II school level.

The county's general education service network meets the requirements of the model for the upper secondary level. The most critical is the service need in the Märjamaa region, where it is currently possible to complete one medium-sized class set for each school year, and based on the population forecast, the target group of the service and the need for the service will rather decrease to a small extent. In order to maintain the vitality of regional centers and to ensure the sustainability of the entire county network of service centers, it is still essential to maintain rural high schools in regional centers - the loss of the high school level and thus the youth of high school age may also be followed by a catalyzed decrease in the target group of other important services as a domino effect.

The network of elementary schools in the county is denser in terms of the III school level than the service model requires. In relation to the normative network, the grades III of elementary schools located in Eidapere, Kabala, Valgu,

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Hagudi and Kaerepere and the grade III of one elementary school in Vigala region are excessive. In the first three of these elementary schools, the number of students in grade III is below the criterion that has recently emerged as a national guideline, that there should be at least 30 students in grade III. Given that the population forecast does not foresee an increase in the number of children aged III school level (by 2035, a decrease of up to 25% should be considered), the feasibility of maintaining III school level, first of all, in Eidapere, Kabala and Valgu schools must be seriously considered. Based on the logic of the service centers, there is no direct need for the III school level in these settlements, but it is important to assess beforehand the impact of the possible liquidation of the III school level on the viability of the lower school levels - to what extent it affects the number of students there, taking into account the parents' preference to keep the child permanently in one school, and how it affects the effectiveness of the school's operating costs. The place for a separate decision is the location of the III school level - and in fact, considering the generally small number of children, all school levels of the elementary school - in the Vigala region. At the moment, the primary school in Vana-Vigala is overcrowded (partly due to children with special needs from remote areas who use the student home), while in Kivi-Vigala there is a complete school complex in good condition, but used extremely inefficiently.

Regarding the first and second level of education, there is an insufficient need for services in the nearby areas of Eidapere, Kivi-Vigala and Varbola, and the

maintenance of these schools is not sustainable in the long term, because the efficiency of operating costs is very low in the mentioned schools and the number of children in these schools today and in the future is too small. However, due to the position in the network of service centers (relative distance from the nearest center of the same level), closing Varbolas and Eidapere I-II school level is not the first choice - rather, efforts must be made in the coming years to strengthen the vitality of settlements and schools, including involving the local community. In the Vigala region, it is reasonable to form one 9-grade elementary school instead of the two existing elementary schools, in which the community has an important place in the location decision process, but the condition of the educational buildings must also be considered. The old Vigala school building needs significantly larger investments. In this case, scheduled school transport and a year-round light traffic road between the two settlements must be ensured.

the general logic of the network of service centers, grades I-II of elementary school (or at least 4th grade elementary school) should be located in all nearby centers. In the nearby centers of Rapla county, where they are not available, the local service needs are sufficient for a strong primary school (at least 10 students per class on average) only in Aespa and Prillimäe. The need for the Aespa school also depends to a significant extent on the developments in the Saku municipality - to what extent the Kurtna school can cover the service needs of the region. In any case, when developing the school network in Kohila municipality, it is necessary to take into account the significant service needs of Aespa, and from the point of view of the families' daily life and satisfaction with the living environment, the best solution would be to establish a primary school in Aespa. Considering the proximity of Prillimäe central settlement to Kohila and the habit of children to attend school in Kohila due to the

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existing network, there is no direct need for a primary school in the Prillimäe area. The issue could come up for discussion if a completely new multi-functional educational and cultural center was planned for Prillimäe, which, in addition to the kindergarten, would also include the premises of a school, youth center or room, clubhouse and library. In other nearby centers - Sipal , Järlepa , Kodila, Lelle, Purkus and Raikküla - there are no prerequisites for establishing a primary school due to the need for services. Similar to Prillimäe, the possibility of establishing a primary school in Raikküla could come up in conjunction with the construction of a new multifunctional educational and cultural center, where Lipa and Purku kindergarten groups, library and community hall functions would be combined.

It is in the interest of the balanced development of the county that both **vocational schools** continue in their places of operation. The existence of a vocational school is also important for achieving national educational goals, so that more young people choose vocational training when continuing their education after primary school. In the county, the effect of the location of the vocational school on post-primary school education choices can be observed - compared to young people in other municipalities, a significantly higher proportion of young people in the Kohila municipality, where there is no vocational school nearby, prefers a high school education to general education.

Interest education is a voluntary, frequently used service with a significant duration, the target group of which is a relatively small part of the corresponding

age group. Therefore, high-quality and efficient service provision is generally possible only in the service area of at least the regional service center. The network of hobby schools in Rapla county is sufficient to satisfy the need for services, and partly also excessive. In addition to county and regional centers, hobby schools are also located in most local centers - Kehtna, Järvakandi, Juurus and Kaiu. The number of students shows that only Kehtna Art School's location in Kehtna township is independently sustainable among such interest schools.

Due to the nature of the service, the closure of the place of business means that a significant part of the people who have used the service so far (i.e. hobby school students) give up using the service elsewhere (i.e. attending a hobby school), and there are even fewer who make the primary decision to use the service (entering a hobby school) in the condition where it is difficult (more difficult than a general education school) to access. Therefore, the first recommended point of consideration when optimizing business locations with low service demand in local centers is the assessment of the feasibility of implementing the Kehtna municipality model, where a school branch (study group) operates in Järvakandi, both in terms of efficiency and service quality. In the example of Kehtna Arts School, the branch's operational cost efficiency is about 25% lower, which could be a tolerable price for better service availability. The effectiveness of the hobby school can also be increased by implementing a hybrid learning model, where part of the lessons take place online and/or some students are included in the lesson via the web (with relevant teaching materials and methodologies, of course). Merging the Kaiu Music School with the Kaiu Primary School in 2022 will help reduce excessive costs, but it will also worsen the opportunity for children in the region to acquire a musical interest education.

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In a broader perspective, the poor availability of hobby education in smaller centers can inevitably be compensated at the expense of hobby activities taking place at schools or led by civic associations, the use of resources of which is generally significantly more efficient compared to hobby schools. In the future, the availability of high-quality interest education - incl. for children and young people from sparsely populated areas - hopefully improving with the support of nationwide online interest schools.

Open youth centers are part of an open youth work network, in which the services provided are voluntary and replaceable for the users, used rather regularly (daily or weekly) and with a significant duration. From the point of view of the team providing the service, the service is rather simple - the presence of one youth worker is minimally necessary for the functioning of the youth center or youth room. In the case of open youth work, it is of primary importance that a complete network should operate in each municipality, consisting of an open youth center in the center of the municipality, regardless of the level of the municipality center in the hierarchy of service centers, and youth rooms connected to the center. Youth rooms must be maintained or established in local centers and maintained in nearby centers where the youth rooms have developed a sufficient user base.

The county's network of open youth centers ensures sufficient service availability - there are open youth centers in every municipal center and at least youth rooms in all local centers (Järvakandi - open youth center). The need to change the network most

obviously stems from the low intensity of use of the service in the target group of youth work in several nearby centers in the youth room - primarily in Hager, Prillimäe, Purkus and Raikküla. Therefore, it is worth considering closing them down if a way to better involve the target group is not found. The effectiveness of operating costs is very low in Vana-Vigala, Prillimäe, Varbola and Hager centers due to low attendance and high maintenance costs, and as such the economic feasibility of keeping them open is doubtful. Therefore, it is worth seriously considering the feasibility of investing in Purku and Prillimäe youth centers. Considering the size of the potential target group and the growth perspective, there is a need for a new youth center or at least a youth room in Kaerepere and Aespa . In other regions, it is expedient to solve youth work tasks using mobile and digital youth work methods, including using the existing infrastructure of other services (community and community centers, etc.).

In the places of cultural life (cultural centers, community centers, club houses, outdoor stages, cinema) services are offered, which can be both weekly (round trip activities) and case-specific (events, performances). These are voluntary and substitutable services, where the usage volumes of service locations can vary greatly - depending on the meaningful activity of communities and local cultural life, which largely determines the effectiveness of the locations and thus their relative necessity.

On the basis of the hierarchical model of the network of service centers, cultural activity building should be located for "inside" activities in all service centers from the county center to nearby centers - the difference is only in the names (which do not always correspond to the distinctive content) and expectations regarding the size, variety and technical equipment of the rooms. Cultural institutions can also be distinguished on the basis of the presence of

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personnel organizing cultural activities (generally referred to as cultural and community centers) or their absence (social centers). Regardless of the classification, the effectiveness of such cultural life activities is significantly shaped by the number of participants in organized/hosted events and the number of participants in cultural tours.

In addition, the county and regional center should have a separate cinema building or cinema complex within a larger cultural building or complex. Considering the "municipality-based" organization of local cultural life, the need for an outdoor stage or song stage with proper technical preparation and spectator seats in each municipality center or its vicinity is also justified. In other service centers, it is enough to have a place to organize outdoor events - either as an independent or cross-use facility.

The most important "gap" in the network of cultural activities in the county is the absence of a cultural building (indoor spaces for cultural activities) and a cinema in Kohila. Considering the principles of high-quality space, we recommend that a choice be made from the ideas under discussion in the municipality for the establishment of a multifunctional modern cultural and activity center in cooperation with the private sector on the property of the ruins of the old paper factory. All local centers have a community or cultural center, but the existing situation at the level of nearby centers is significantly different from the logic of the network of centers - there are no community or community centers in Sipa , Purkus , Kabala, Kodila, Alul, Hagudis, Prillimäel and Aespa , and there

are so-called excessive ones in Haimre , Keava , Vahastus and Kuimetsa . Since the use of public and social centers in a significant part of nearby centers (circles, events) is very modest based on the data provided (also in 2019 before the health crisis), it is not practical to build public or social centers in every nearby center if the current level of activity in Rapla county's local cultural life is maintained - if, then based on general local demand (ie population) and position, it could be considered in Kabala. The main criterion for the feasibility of maintaining and investing in public and community centers in local centers or other even smaller settlements and investing in these buildings should be the actual use of these "houses" for outreach work and conducting (public) events. Eidapere , Hageri, Raikküla, Järlepa , Haimre , Keava and Ingliste are problematic locations based on low usage intensity and cost efficiency .

The primary solution to increasing the effectiveness of the network of public and community centers is, of course, to increase their use - more activity circles and cultural events aimed at the public in "houses", i.e. revitalizing local cultural and social life. If the actual local need remains at the level of 1-2 self-activity circles and an event held once a month, alternative space solutions should be seriously considered when creating operating conditions - temporary space use of other existing but underutilized buildings (including production buildings) as a venue for events, cross-use of the spaces of other service institutions (schools, libraries) for circular activity. When organizing cultural life, it must be considered that residents' interests are becoming more and more diverse, and also in circle activities, more and more virtual or hybrid opportunities for specialized interest-related activities are opening up for residents, which is why the demand for participation in circles organized in a local community center or social

center with an inevitably limited selection may decrease below a critical level.

The library service is a voluntary and replaceable service used by readers fairly regularly (depending on the type of reader either daily, weekly or monthly), which should be available in every center of the network of service centers. This is mostly the case - only in the nearby centers of Aespa and Prillimäe there are no libraries. The activities of the libraries Ingliste, Keava, Haimre, Laukna, Tenuse, Härgla, Kuimetsa, Vahastu and Kuusiku can be considered to be located outside the nearby centers, i.e. excessive in terms of hierarchy.

Considering the modest volume of the operating costs of libraries per location and their important role in the renewed concept (library as an education and information center, including local government, state and private sector e-services support center, library as a community center and meeting place), the closing of libraries is justified only by very low intensity of use and in case of cost effectiveness. The highest operating costs per reader occur in the locations of Service, Kodila and Kuimets, as well as, for example, in Järvakandi. As a general assessment, there is no direct need to close libraries in the county - rather, the challenge is again to expand the scope of activities of libraries, including, if necessary, in the function of community center and community center. In such a multifunctional role, they are also needed in Aespa and Prillimäe. The task of optimizing the network arises more clearly in the situation where the condition of the library premises is unfit for further activities and it is necessary to reconstruct the premises or create them

in a completely new building. In such a case, in the case of options, settlements in the network of centers should be preferred (exclude, for example, investments in the Service Village location).

sports opportunities available to residents, the model of service centers defines a complex hierarchy, where it is recommended to have a competition stadium in the county center, a swimming pool and a training stadium in the county and regional centers, a gym with a full-size basketball court, a small stadium and a health track in the county, regional and local centers, and the presence of a simpler gym and outdoor sports fields in nearby centers. In addition, there should be at least one health port center in the county.

The county's only stadium meeting the criteria of a competition stadium (400m, 6-8 running tracks, stationary grandstand) is located in Märjamaa. In addition, the county has 3 training stadiums (400m, at least 4 running tracks) in Kehtna, Kohila and Rapla. Therefore, the main need for the development of the service network is the construction of a modern competition stadium in the county center Raplas. The reconstruction of the Rapla stadium as a county stadium is also included in the county's development strategy action plan for the years 2019-2022 and in the municipality's budget strategy (as an investment in 2024).

There are two swimming pools in Rapla county - one in the Märjamaa regional center in the view of the service center model, and the other in Kaerepere in the nearby center - 3.5 km from the town boundary of the regional center Rapla. Therefore, from the point of view of the model of service centers, the primary need is to build a swimming pool in the Kohila region - a need that is reduced by the fact that a significant part of the municipality's residents are closely related to Tallinn (which is within a 27 km radius of the district center for the residents of the township of Kohila), with which the township has also created

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good facilities for other groups of residents transport connections for using the swimming pools there. From the point of view of the logic of the operation of the service centers, it is challenging to find a good economic solution in the Rapla region, where there is no swimming pool in the city of Rapla, the regional center itself, so planning for its construction has been started. From the broader point of view of the network of service centers, it would be preferable to limit the management and development of one existing (Valtu) swimming pool in the region and direct investment funds to cover the development needs of other services - especially considering the expected cost of the swimming pool (at least 5 million euros) and the already large investment need of Rapla municipality.

In terms of sports halls, the existing network meets the needs - in the county and regional centers there are decent sports buildings with full-sized halls and stands, in local centers there are gymnasiums that cover the needs of hobbyists. There is no gym in the local centers in Aespa , Hager, Prillimäe, Sipas , Valgus, Purkus , Raikküla and Lelle. Considering the general mediocre use of gymnasiums in smaller settlements, it is not practical to build new gymnasiums in the county, and the municipalities are not planning it either. Sports facilities need to be created in Aespas and Sipas , where there are also no outdoor sports fields. The need for a health trail is in the Vigala region, and in order to be closer to home, also in the small towns of Kehtna and Juuru or directly near the settlement. In the case of these local centers, there is a health track in the area, but it is located further away from the center.

of care centers for the elderly in the county ensures that all those in need of services are guaranteed a place in a care home and there are no "queues". Given the projected increase in the number of elderly people, the demand for elderly care services in the county is expected to increase. The main point of choice is the form in which care is provided - whether to build new nursing homes (including by creating motivating conditions for this in the private sector) or to disperse the need for care services among services with different care intensity, developing a network of supported living centers with significantly lower "unit costs" than nursing homes, specifically for the target group of the elderly. Such centers aimed at the target group of the elderly do not exist in the county and in Estonia in general, and the need for development is pervasive - the supported living service has so far mainly been aimed at persons with special needs.

of the day care center for the elderly is a replaceable well-being service, the use of which strongly depends on the availability of the center and also on the proactivity of social work that promotes the coping and well-being of the elderly - shaping the demand for the services of the day care center. An important function of day care centers is to maintain the active and social lifestyle of the elderly and thereby prevent and postpone "problems". Therefore, it is recommended to have day care centers at least in local centers and to integrate the services of individual day care centers aimed at the elderly (based on local demand) into the work of other service institutions (e.g. community centers, as well as youth centers and rooms, libraries as information centers). Day care centers for the elderly operate in county and regional centers, but from local centers only in Järvakandi. Therefore, there is a great need for development - in the Kehtna, Vigala, Juuru and Kaiu regions, where as a first step, opportunities should be found to use public

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or social houses also in the function of a day care center for the elderly.

The county's network of **primary health care services** generally meets the needs. Primary health centers operating in modern premises have been established in Rapla and Kohila. Although Märjamaa has not managed to create a single strong primary health center so far, all the most important primary health services are covered by service providers. Family doctor and nurse appointments also take place in all local centers. In the case of the places of operation there, the recommended development is the integration of the family doctor service with regional health centers, which would ensure, in the case of limited local demand (as evidenced by the relative "shortness" of existing family doctor appointments and the projected population of the region), the continuation of the service even when specialists working in the region leave (retirement, move to live and work elsewhere). It has already happened in Vigala, but Järvakandi, Kaiu and Juuru should also prepare for such developments. The use of telemedicine opportunities in the work of health centers will become an increasingly important component of improving the availability of services and the economy of use.

The **pharmacy service** is either case-specific or regular (for chronically ill patients). Due to the strict requirements for service provision and the economic profitability limit of running a pharmacy, the model of service centers sees the need for pharmacies in county and regional centers. In Rapla county, these requirements have been met, as well as

three more pharmacies in three settlements of Kehtna parish - Kehtna, Järvakandi and Lelle. As it is a trade service provided by the private sector on a commercial basis, the "excess" of pharmacies is not a problem for the network of service centers.

Also, in terms of other **trade (building stores, food and convenience stores)**, the service networks of the county are close to what is recommended in the service center model. The most critical level is the neighborhood centers, in which the store has been closed in 2 settlements in the last 10 years - Eidapere and Järlepa. New stores have been added in county and regional centers and, as important for Aespa's growing immediate area, also in Roobukal in Saku municipality. Nationwide practice shows that 500 residents in the region is the general profitability limit of a small shop, as a result of which, in the absence of an additional component of passing traffic, the excessive service network stores of Teenus and Kasti, as well as the stores of Kodila, Kabala and Kivi -Vigala from the nearby centers, are at risk. The e-stores of national retail chains are increasingly becoming a competitor of small stores, which simultaneously increase the availability of food and basic necessities for residents of scattered settlements. At the moment, however, their service area covers only a part of the county's settlements, and rather those where the availability of goods is already better. In peripheral scattered settlements, the more critical service needs can be partly covered by home service and social and demand transport.

The model of service centers and the county plan do not define the service affiliation of **waste stations** to a specific level of the service center hierarchy. In terms of distances, intensity of service use and scale requirements, waste stations are practical at the regional center level. Waste stations in Rapla County are located in regional centers in Kohila, Märjamaa and on the border of Rapla city. In Järvakandi, it is worth maintaining

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the waste station due to the long transport distances to other waste stations for the residents of the area. The network of waste stations must be supported by the separate collection and removal services of large and hazardous waste and the introduction of on-site circular economy solutions by companies, institutions and households.

The **rescue service network** consists of national rescue teams and volunteer rescue teams. National rescue teams in Rapla county are located at the regional center level, i.e. in Rapla, Märjamaa and Kohila, and at the local center level in Järvakandi. The network of national commands is based on the goal of the Rescue Board's strategy, and there is no need to change it. The network of national commands is supported by 10 volunteer rescue commands. Only very sparsely populated points and areas not connected by roads are excluded from the 30-minute response time zones of the rescue teams in Rapla County. Considering the population and the long response time, it would be worthwhile to consider establishing a volunteer rescue command in Juuru and Kivi-Vigala. However, the most important level of the rescue network is the level of households, institutions and companies, where as a result of preventive activities and increasing the local response capacity, damage can be prevented and rescue cases can be solved most effectively.

of law enforcement services in Estonia is organized regionally and county-wise. Rapla has lost its independent police station as the county center, but the central service is still provided in the county - at the Rapla location of the Central Estonian Police Department. For

regional presence and availability, 10 regional police officers operate in the county: 2 in Kehtna municipality, 2 in Kohila municipality, 3 in Märjamaa municipality and 3 in Rapla municipality. Considering the relatively low level of offenses in the county, this is sufficient. The main development need is to increase the "volumes" of preventive measures and community solutions (e.g. child and youth education; safe space design; neighborhood watch; surveillance cameras/video surveillance in public spaces).

The model of service centers provides for the county center **as the location of the state's "business services", and as such, the services in the city of Rapla are generally located within the State House**. This part of the Riigimaja concept, which aims to make public sector jobs available in all regions, should also ensure that, even if the demand for direct physical services of the residents continues to decrease and the use of e-services (including voice robots and similar supported long-distance communication services) expands, state offices will be preserved in county centers, including Rapla. and as such, the ability to provide face-to-face services to residents.

In summary, **the comprehensive spatial patterns of the location of services in Rapla county** largely correspond to the logic of the hierarchical model of service centers. Both local government units, the central government and private companies adapt to changes in the need for services - both due to the nature of the service (e.g. e-services in the provision of state services, other technological solutions) and due to changes in the customer base. In the case of local government services in particular, adaptation takes place with reference and delay. At the same time, premature and just-in-case optimization of the service network in terms of worsening the network and thus also the general availability of services can itself shape changes in the need for services - initiate the

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processes of settlements being emptied and the network of service centers thinning out.

When maintaining the vitality of lower-level service centers, it is expedient to develop the network and design mobility solutions that ensure the availability of services based on the so-called bottom-up hierarchical functioning of the network. The quality of services must be (sufficiently) uniform everywhere so that services close to home are the first choice for the residents of the center and its natural hinterland settlements. The use of services close to home must also be supported by local mobility infrastructure (safe and maintained pedestrian, light traffic and car roads, streets and lanes, with parking solutions). Based on the results of the study, compared with the county planning solution, we propose to abandon the development of Laukna and Keava as nearby centers. Instead of developing service points in these settlements, the focus should be on strengthening the services of the nearest local centers (Sipa and Kehtna as settlements offering local center services) and ensuring very good connectivity there. Among the settlements raised as local centers within the scope of the study (Purku, Järlepa and Kodila), the complex development of local center services is the most relevant in Järlepa. The development of Purku as a service center should be prioritized by strengthening Raikküla as a nearby center by consolidating the services of the region there (in addition to Purku, Lipa also has service institutions). The service needs of the Kodila area are also insufficient to function as a local center. The existing and projected population status of the more

distant centers of Kehtna parish - Eidapere and Lelle - is at a critical limit for fulfilling the role of a local center, but due to their position, we still consider their preservation and development as local centers necessary.

At the level of county and regional centers, the network of service centers of Rapla county is strong and logical and overlaps to a large extent with the administrative-territorial division. Rapla serves as the county center and as a regional center for the territory of Rapla and Kehtna parishes, the hinterland of Kohila as a regional center is mostly limited to the territory of Kohila parish, and together with Rapla, the regional center is Järlepa to the nearby area. The influence of Märjamaa as a regional center overlaps with the borders of Märjamaa municipality. The demand for high-quality and economical provision of regional services (gymnasium, primary health center with its 4 main services, swimming pool) and forecast for the next 15 years in Järvakandi and its natural hinterland is obviously insufficient. Therefore, unlike the county planning, we recommend treating and developing Järvakandi as a local service center.

With such a change, we do not want to send a signal that the town of Järvakandi has no development perspective or that this perspective could deteriorate in the foreseeable time period. On the contrary, with the Rail Baltic railway connection, the development prerequisites of the settlement and its immediate surroundings will improve significantly, and as a result of smart development activities, positive developments can be expected both in local entrepreneurship, the labor market and population development. The issue is only the economy and practicality of developing the services characteristic of a regional center in a region whose population remains below 2 thousand inhabitants now and in the forecast period. The population of Järvakandi and its hinterland, as well as the customer base of the services, should at least double in order to

have a reasonable level of economy, based on which the development of such services could be considered. In a time perspective longer than the forecast period of the study, such population growth may also occur. However, until there is no clear and unequivocal evidence of rapid population growth, it is expedient to develop Järvakandi township as a strong local service center and not as a regional center with a large service deficit, with the accompanying pressure to plan resources to reduce these deficits.