



MOBILITY MONITORING DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS IN ESTONIA

Erki Saluveer, Positium, erki.saluveer@positium.com

On 12 March 2020 the Estonian government declared an emergency situation due to the global pandemic and spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. A number of restrictions on the movement of the Estonian population were imposed immediately, but the government needed data for their decision-making process. As Estonia has been using mobile network operators' (MNO) data for official statistics since 2009, the government's Crisis Committee gave a task to Statistics Estonia on 17 March to calculate mobility statistics and prepare a daily updated report for the government. A methodology to calculate how mobile/stationary Estonians are was developed, and all Estonian MNO's agreed to carry out calculations for the government. The Crisis Committee received the first overview 14 days after their request. Based on mobile data, the findings, after the state of emergency was declared, were a significant increase of stationary population, a significant decrease in distance travelled, and a significant reduction in the time spent outside of home area. Also, it was discovered that additional restrictions have not had a clear impact on mobility. In this paper we explain what the challenges were in setting up a project of this magnitude under high time pressure, and what was the methodology used and how was the calculation done. We highlight the beneficial use of mobile positioning data from MNO's for monitoring mobility in a country, and we present key findings on how to prepare a similar project in the future.