

National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21

I Introduction

1. The promotion and protection of human rights is Estonia's national priority and an integral part of Estonia's foreign policy. The government approved the first Human Rights Diplomacy Action Plan in 2021, outlining related foreign policy activities. Estonia views the United Nations' Universal Periodic Review (UPR) as a valuable mechanism for enhancing the protection of human rights, increasing transparency and facilitating open and constructive dialogue between states. Estonia has issued a standing invitation to all UN Special Rapporteurs.

2. Since the last Universal Periodic Review in 2021, Estonia has made efforts to address the recommendations of the review, particularly with regard to functioning as a democratic, people-centred state. In light of the current geopolitical context, ensuring national defence and security is essential. The right to life and safety is a fundamental human right. The state has a duty to ensure that people feel safe and protected from war and threats; therefore, the proportion of the budget allocated to defence has increased in recent years. According to a public opinion survey published by the Estonian Institute of Human Rights in December 2024, 69% of respondents believed that human rights could only be guaranteed if national security was ensured.

3. During the 3rd UPR Cycle, Estonia received a total of 274 recommendations, of which 192 were accepted and 82 were noted. In 2023, Estonia submitted a mid-term report in which we reported the acceptance of 16 additional recommendations. The government has taken the recommendations into account in the government's action programme and strategic development plans. The report reflects the government's efforts to implement these recommendations.

4. Estonia acknowledges that several of the challenges identified in the third UPR review still require concrete and comprehensive solutions, as well as a clearer framework. In the context of the economic downturn and the increase in the cost of living, Estonia has reviewed the financing of certain areas, taking into account the constitutional priorities that have led to the slower implementation or postponement of certain recommendations.

Preparation of the report

5. The report was coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, involving all relevant ministries. It was forwarded to the Government Office, the Chancellor of Justice, the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, and non-governmental organisations for review and an opinion.

6. The midterm report issued in 2023 provided an overview of the implementation of the recommendations. A separate national action plan to implement UPR recommendations is not prepared by Estonia, as this is carried out seamlessly through the country's overall strategic planning framework, in accordance with the competences of the relevant authorities. In Estonia, each ministry is responsible for integrating recommendations into its policy and action plans.

II Promotion of human rights

National Human Rights Institution

7. Since 2019, the Chancellor of Justice has been performing the functions of the National Human Rights Institution in Estonia, in accordance with the Paris Principles, and holds 'A' status accreditation. The Chancellor of Justice is an independent constitutional institution

under the Estonian Constitution. Since 2019, the budget of the Chancellor of Justice has been steadily increasing.

8. Estonia took the recommendation to ensure the budgetary independence of constitutional institutions seriously. In 2024, the State Budget Act was amended to increase the role of the Parliament in making budgetary decisions for constitutional institutions, in order to prevent a situation where the government decides on the financing of independent institutions that balance the executive power and exercise control over its activities. Budget requests from constitutional institutions are now reviewed by the Finance Committee of the Riigikogu.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

9. Supporting sustainable development and development cooperation is one of the pillars of the government's Foreign Policy Development Plan 2030. In Estonia, the Sustainable Development Goals are implemented on the basis of the long-term strategy 'Estonia 2035' and various sector-specific development plans. Despite the difficult socio-economic circumstances resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression, Estonia has achieved good results in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Estonia's official development assistance (ODA) amounted to 0.28% of gross national income (GNI) in 2023. Estonia has made an international commitment to steadily increase the volume of development cooperation to 0.33% of GNI by 2030.

International human rights treaties

10. Estonia has ratified the most important international human rights treaties. The government continuously assesses and analyses, and if necessary, decides to accede to human rights treaties to which Estonia has not yet acceded to, provided that there is political and social support and the ability to ensure the implementation of the treaty.

11. Estonia acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, which entered into force for Estonia on 27 June 2025.

12. Estonia acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which entered into force for Estonia on 17 October 2025.

13. Estonia accedes to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. The Riigikogu approved Estonia's accession to the Convention on 19 November 2025.

14. Although Estonia supports the objectives of the 1960 UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education, it has decided not to join the current version of the Convention. However, Estonia is implementing the Convention's recommendations in education, particularly with regard to accessibility, inclusion, gender equality, the prevention of bullying and the integration of minorities. Estonia may reconsider acceding to the Convention if it is updated.

15. Estonia currently has no plans to join a) the United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. However, Estonia considers the protection of migrant workers' rights and those of their family members to be important, and these rights are guaranteed by other international agreements, European Union law, and national legislation. Migrant workers are subject to the same working conditions as Estonian citizens, and their family members are guaranteed access to a significant number of services. Estonia complies with and implements the relevant international standards; b) the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No 189). Estonia has ratified the main ILO conventions on the fundamental rights of workers, providing a solid basis for the protection of

labour rights. Estonian labour law does not discriminate on the basis of the employee's field and guarantees equal working conditions for all employees, including domestic workers; c) the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as the domestic legal protection system is effective and functional; d) the 1954 UN Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, as the legal framework in force in Estonia is sufficient to guarantee the rights of persons with undetermined citizenship, and it is important for Estonia that the acquisition of citizenship is voluntary, based on the informed choice of the individual; e) the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Estonia complies with international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians, and the use of weapons in accordance with the principles of international law.

III Implementation of Recommendations and Development in the Field of Human Rights

Equal opportunities, gender equality and anti-discrimination measures

16. The government is committed to promoting gender equality and equal opportunities. Several initiatives have been launched to raise awareness of gender equality and to promote understanding and tolerance of different cultures, religions and sexual orientations within society.

17. The core document underpinning Estonia's long-term strategic policy planning is 'Estonia 2035', which considers the European Union's policies and international commitments, and is supplemented by various national development plans. The strategic objectives of equality policy are reflected in the Welfare Development Plan 2023–2030, alongside objectives and measures designed to promote gender equality and equal opportunities for minorities, and to reduce inequalities in society. The concrete measures launched will contribute to narrowing the gender pay gap and reducing gender segregation in education and the labour market, foster attitudes in society that uphold and value gender equality, and support the valuing and promotion of diversity within organisations and mainstreaming the principle of equal treatment and the objective of equal opportunities across all sectoral policies.

18. To promote general awareness of equal treatment, gender equality, and equal opportunities and accessibility, officials have been able to participate in e-training sessions since 2023.

19. Estonia nominates national candidates for elections to international organisations and UN treaty bodies in accordance with the principles of openness, transparency, impartiality, and sectoral competence. The selection process promotes diversity and inclusion, with an emphasis on achieving gender balance.

20. The Estonian government shall persist in its efforts to guarantee protection of all residents of Estonia from discrimination. Estonia's legal framework for preventing and combating discrimination is grounded in international human rights standards and effectively enforced through domestic mechanisms. The Constitution forbids all types of discrimination. The Equal Treatment Act forbids direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, race or colour, religion or belief, disability and sexual orientation particularly within the workplace, and more widely on some of these grounds. The prohibition of discrimination based on gender or gender identity is established in the Gender Equality Act.

21. In 2022, an amendment to the Media Services Act entered into force, stipulating that upon provision of media services it is prohibited to incite hatred, violence, or discrimination on the basis of any group identity, including nationality, gender, race, colour, ethnic or social origin,

genetic characteristics, language, religion, political beliefs, belonging to a national minority, financial status, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation, where it poses a threat to the life, health or property of the person, undermines law-abiding behaviour or incites for violation of law.

22. Estonia has set the goal of enhancing the protection of individuals against discrimination across all areas of social life, encompassing not only gender, but also other protected characteristics such as nationality, race, colour, religious and other beliefs, age, disability, and sexual orientation. To this end, an initial version of the draft Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Act was finalised in 2024. Following the change of government in July 2024, the proceedings regarding the draft law were halted; however, the government has not abandoned its stated goal, and work on the draft remains ongoing.

23. An innovative collaborative initiative, EquiTech, was launched in 2024 to evaluate the extent to which Estonia has considered the necessity of ensuring gender equality, equal treatment of vulnerable groups, and the protection of fundamental rights in the decisions made by automated decision-making systems, as well as to prevent discrimination in the development of state services based on artificial intelligence. The long-term aim of the EquiTech project is to ensure that the AI solutions and other algorithm-driven processes used by the public sector remain fair and non-discriminatory.

24. Since 2005, the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, an independent and impartial expert, has been monitoring compliance with the requirements of the Gender Equality Act and the Equal Treatment Act within both the public and private sectors. In 2025, legislative amendments were drafted to transpose the EU Equality Bodies Directives with an aim to expand the authority of the Equality Commissioner and enhance the independence of this institution.

25. Since 2019, Estonia has implemented the Strategic Partnership approach, providing three-year financing through open calls for proposals to civil society organisations dedicated to advancing equal opportunities for minority groups and promoting gender equality.

LGBTIQ rights

26. Estonia has moved towards a more equal society in recent years, establishing legal provisions to ensure equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ individuals.

27. In 2024, amendments to the Family Act entered into force, permitting two adults to marry irrespective of their gender. Also the implementing acts of the Registered Partnership Act entered into force in 2024, enabling the complete exercise of the rights and obligations established under the Act.

28. As of March 2024, homosexual and bisexual men are permitted to donate blood on equal terms with heterosexual donors.

29. Estonia has also taken an important step in supporting gender transition by publishing a guide on hormone therapy for gender transition in 2023, in accordance with WPATH's international recommendations.

30. In 2024, an e-course on LGBTIQ health for health professionals was introduced to enhance awareness among medical professionals regarding the unique healthcare requirements of LGBTIQ individuals.

31. In 2025, the first Principles and Action Plan for promotion of LGBTIQ equality 2025–2030 were adopted. The Action Plan focuses on four key areas: security, education, health, and

professional life. As a separate group, the focus is on the well-being of trans people in different areas of life.

32. To promote knowledge-based policy-making, questions about sexual orientation and gender identity were added to the Estonian social survey in 2025. The aim was to gain an understanding of the experiences and needs of different people, including minority groups' coping mechanisms, social exclusion and inequality compared with the experiences of the general population. This study will enable the corresponding policy measures to be assessed and targeted more effectively.

Measures to reduce gender segregation in education and the labour market

33. The government will continue to work to minimise the impact of gender stereotypes on educational choices and on the labour market as a whole.

34. Several research projects were conducted between 2021–2024, including 'Glass walls and glass ceiling in Estonian ICT' (2021), 'Use of nudging methods to support stereotype-free career choices and working conditions' (2022), and 'Causes of the low proportion of men among students and staff in education, health and welfare' (2024). These studies resulted in policy recommendations aimed at reducing gender segregation and supporting non-stereotypical career choices, which will be implemented from 2023 to 2029. The main focus will be on breaking gender stereotypes, particularly in the STEM and EHW sectors, and on increasing women's participation in leadership positions.

35. Although women account for 40.1% of all managers in Estonia, they are less likely to reach top management positions. While women account for 40% of senior managers in the civil service, they are modestly represented on the boards of many organisations with a significant economic and societal impact. The government has taken steps to improve gender balance in governance. In 2025, amendments were approved which stipulate that, in the case of listed companies, at least 40% of supervisory board members or at least 33% of the members of the management board and supervisory board must be of the under-represented sex. Also in 2025, gender balance was included as a criterion in the selection policy for board members of state-owned enterprises. In 2025, the 18-month campaign 'Breaking Gender Stereotypes in Decision-Making and Governance' began. This campaign aims to break down gender stereotypes that prevent women from reaching leadership positions in business and politics, and to highlight the societal benefits of gender balance.

36. A number of initiatives have been launched to raise awareness in society. One such example is the annual 'Girls Take Over' event, which gives girls the opportunity to shadow women in leadership positions.

Measures for reducing the pay gap

37. Estonia has taken significant steps to reduce the gender pay gap. Over the past decade, the gender pay gap in Estonia has decreased by 10 percentage points, standing at 13.2% in 2024. This trend is the result of awareness-raising campaigns, measures to reduce gender segregation, and more transparent wage-setting practices.

38. The 2019–2022 Gender Pay Gap Survey revealed that the main causes of the pay gap relate to the nature of work, the structure of the labour market, and organisational practices. Prevailing beliefs and attitudes also play an important role in perpetuating the pay gap.

39. Following the study, recommendations and (digital) solutions were developed to reduce the pay gap, thereby tackling gender inequality and poverty among women and children. One such solution is the digital tool 'Pay Mirror', which was launched in 2024 and aims to help

employers analyse the gender pay gap in their companies and support the development of fair pay systems.

40. The government's efforts to achieve wage equality are ongoing. Estonia has committed to transpose the European Union's Pay Transparency Directive, which aims to ensure that women and men receive equal pay for work of equal value, by the summer of 2026.

Measures against violence, including domestic violence

41. Although the registration of cases of domestic violence has decreased in all age groups and regions in recent years, violence continues to be a problem in Estonia. The government has implemented various measures to prevent violence and protect victims, with a special emphasis on preventing and reducing domestic and gender-based violence. These measures are based on the long-term strategies 'Estonia 2035' and 'Fundamentals of Criminal Policy 2030'. The issue of violence prevention is high on the agenda in a number of strategy papers.

42. The Domestic Violence Prevention Action Plan 2024–2027 focuses on strengthening violence prevention, improving responses to cases of domestic violence, and developing services for victims and perpetrators. Recommendations from the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention Monitoring Commission (GREVIO) evaluation report were considered when preparing the Action Plan, with a stronger emphasis placed on training of professionals and focusing on vulnerable target groups.

43. The 2021–2025 Violence Prevention Agreement encompasses activities aimed at preventing and combatting various forms of violence, with a specific emphasis on violence against children and older people, as well as mental and cyber violence. In the case of older people, national violence prevention policy has primarily aimed to raise public awareness of violence against this demographic.

44. Estonia has started to transpose the European Union directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence, which came into force in 2024. In this context, Estonia has committed to criminalising female genital mutilation, forced marriage, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, cyber stalking, cyber harassment, and online incitement to hatred or violence by 2027 at the latest.

45. The Penal Code will also be amended to align the legislation with the Istanbul Convention. Under the draft Consent Law, sexual intercourse or other sexual acts without consent will be punishable.

46. Estonia has taken the recommendations on preventing and combating violence against children very seriously. Legislative amendments that entered into force in 2022 enhanced the protection for children in cases of sexual abuse. The age limit for sexual self-determination increased from 14 to 16 years, the penalties for the sexual exploitation of a child were increased, and the exceptional marriage age for minors was abolished, so that only adults and persons with legal capacity can marry in Estonia.

47. In 2023, the new Victim Support Act entered into force, significantly improving access to support for victims of violence, crime or crisis and strengthening their rights. Victims of domestic and sexual violence have the right to receive mental healthcare to support their recovery from trauma, even if no criminal proceedings have been initiated. Witnesses in criminal proceedings are also entitled to receive mental health care on the same grounds as the victim.

48. The awareness of authorities responding to incidents of violence, in particular the police and rescue workers, has increased significantly. The focus has shifted towards the activities

of the police, the prosecutor's office, victim support services and the local government in identifying, responding to and processing incidents.

49. To better recognise cases of domestic violence and support victims more effectively, e-learning courses have been created, targeting a wide range of professionals (including law enforcement) and the wider public. Special training has been developed for professionals working with children, focusing on recognising violence and intervention skills. Training on cyberviolence is increasingly being provided to women's support centres and victim support staff.

50. Public campaigns have made society more aware of violence-related issues.

51. Reducing crimes related to domestic violence is a policy priority for the police and cases are processed in an average of 26 days. However, many cases do not reach the police because victims are either afraid or unaware of how to seek help. This issue continues to require systemic attention and targeted policies. To strengthen the mechanisms for implementing the prohibition on stay, the Government has initiated amendments to the Law Enforcement Act.

Combating of human trafficking, including the implementation of a victim-centred approach

52. In line with international standards, the government has significantly strengthened its anti-trafficking measures, building on the 2021-2025 Violence Prevention Agreement, which includes measures to prevent and combat violent crimes and addresses violence against, among others, women, children and the elderly. Prevention, investigation and victim support have received the most attention.

53. Amendments to the Victim Support Act, which entered into force in 2023, have clarified the various services and rules for providing services to victims. The Child Protection Act provides specialised and safe assistance to minor victims through the child-friendly Barnahus (Children's House) centres. Since July 2023, child protection groups have been working within police prefectures to investigate sexual offences against children. Sexual crimes against minors have been among the government's anti-crime priorities since 2005.

54. The government has introduced a number of measures to prevent labour exploitation. Amendments to the Taxation Act, which entered into force in 2023, enable the monitoring of the number of undocumented foreign employees working on construction sites, their working hours, and the wages paid. They also introduce an obligation for construction companies to register their employees in the e-services environment of the Tax and Customs Board, which contributes to the more efficient detection of cases of human trafficking.

55. Estonia will transpose the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on strengthening the protection of victims of human trafficking by 15 July 2026.

56. Between 2021 and 2024, 179 crimes related to human trafficking were recorded, 27 court decisions were issued, and 27 persons and three legal persons were punished. Penalties imposed for human trafficking crimes are usually carried out under probation supervision, but short-term prison sentences ranging from six months to one year are also imposed.

57. There is a strong emphasis on training for public sector professionals, including police officers, prosecutors, social workers, victim support workers and organisations working with young people. The training of officials is continuously improved, including through international training.

58. Estonia plays an active role in international and regional initiatives aimed at preventing and combatting cross-border human trafficking. It served as the head of the Council of the Baltic Sea States Anti-Trafficking Working Group 2024–2025 and is an active member of the European Union Network of National Coordinators and Rapporteurs on Human trafficking. In 2024, Estonia organised a best practice workshop to enhance regional cooperation, focusing on the experiences of the Baltic Sea, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia regions in preventing human trafficking. All training on human trafficking emphasise the importance of a victim-friendly approach.

59. The government aims to increase the capacity of law enforcement agencies and other key agencies to prevent human trafficking, identify cases, and support victims.

Fighting terrorism and extremist ideologies

60. Estonia has made serious efforts to minimise the threat posed by the spread of terrorism and extremist ideologies.

61. In Estonia, acts of terrorism are defined in § 237 of the Penal Code.

62. Amendments to the Penal Code and the Code of Misdemeanour Procedure in 2022 prohibited the public display of symbols relating to acts of aggression, genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes. Activities supporting or justifying these symbols were also prohibited.

63. In 2024, an amendment to the Information Society Services Act entered into force, aligning Estonian law with the European Union regulation aimed at combating the dissemination of terrorist content online.

64. An action plan for preventing radicalization is being composed, including an intervention model to support people in moving away from extremism and deradicalizing.

65. Estonia stresses the importance of commemorating the victims of the crimes of Nazism and communism. Such regimes have not disappeared from the world, and these crimes and victims must be remembered to prevent a repetition of the horrors of the past. It is important to raise public awareness of the timeless crimes against human rights committed by totalitarian regimes. To this end, Estonia will open an international memorial museum for the victims of communism in 2026.

Fight against racism

66. Estonia has incorporated measures to combat racism and racial discrimination into several national strategies and action plans. These include the Welfare Development Plan 2023–2030, which focuses on general equality policies, the Culture Development Plan 2021–2030, which aims to strengthen cultural diversity and ensure equal access to culture; the Cohesive Estonia Strategy 2021–2030, which aims to increase understanding between different communities and support social cohesion, integration, and a sense of belonging; the Internal Security Strategy 2020–2030, which addresses national security, the prevention of violence and terrorism, migration, and asylum policies; and the Education Strategy 2021–2035, which focuses on the promotion of a common cultural and value space.

67. In 2024, the Equality Commissioner conducted a study ‘Racial Discrimination in Estonia’. The survey results showed that racial discrimination is often un-acknowledged, highlighting the need to raise general awareness of its various forms and strengthen protection mechanisms.

68. In preventing and combating racism, the government focuses on supporting the proper implementation of the European Union’s Anti-racism Action Plan (2020-2025) and Anti-racism Strategy (2026-2030), helping to combat both visible and hidden racism and discrimination.

Hate speech

69. Estonia acknowledges that the current provision on incitement of hatred (§ 151) in the Penal Code is insufficient to ensure effective protection against hate speech. Discussions are ongoing to align the penal provisions on hate speech with international standards and the 2008 EU Framework Decision (2008/913/JHA) on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia through criminal law

70. A draft Act concerning incitement of hatred is being coordinated, which takes into account both the 2023 European Union regulation and the recommendations made by the UN treaty bodies. It provides for the criminalisation of public incitement to hatred, violence, or discrimination against a group of people or an individual on the basis of nationality, race, colour, sex, disability, language, origin, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs or financial or social status.

Measures to strengthen social cohesion

71. Social cohesion is promoted through a range of policies and programmes that focus on strengthening trust and cooperation between residents, and creating equal opportunities. Integration policies must respect the principle that supporting the preservation of the rights, freedoms, language and culture of persons belonging to minority groups is an integral part of international human rights protection.

72. Integration policy is implemented on the basis of the Cohesive Estonia Strategy 2030. Various measures support the active participation of people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds in society, including access to the labour market.

73. Since 2023, local governments have been supported to strengthen their capacity to take into account the needs of people whose mother tongue is not Estonian when providing integration services. Activities are planned until 2029 with a total budget of EUR 5,859,037.

74. The government is paying special attention to Ida-Viru County, where 81.5% of people were non-native speakers according to the 2021 census. There is a strong emphasis on local solutions and community-level engagement to support cultural integration through language learning, educational support, cultural participation, and access to the labour market.

75. One of the priorities of Estonian integration policy is to improve the Estonian language skills of non-native speakers and create opportunities for active language use. New initiatives consistently promote Estonian language learning and facilitate the integration of minorities into society. As a result of the government's targeted policy, the proportion of people of other nationalities with active Estonian language proficiency has steadily increased, reaching 46% in 2025, while the proportion of people who do not speak the language at all has fallen to 4%.

76. To promote language learning and integration, the Estonian Language House, run by the Integration Foundation, has opened in two Estonian cities, Tallinn and Narva. It organises free Estonian language courses and activities nationwide. There are year-round cultural and club activities that support learners according to their proficiency level.

77. According to the Estonian Integration Monitoring, integration into Estonian society has been a consistent and positive process. Among other things, differences in employment opportunities for Estonians, non-native speakers, and new immigrants have decreased. According to the 2023 integration monitoring report, the Russian-speaking population does not form a single Russian-speaking community, but is divided into smaller groups. A total of 58% of the non-Estonian-speaking population have a positive attitude towards the state and are integrated.

Roma

78. According to the 2021 census, there are 676 Roma living in Estonia, i.e. 0.05% of the population.

79. The government continues to promote the integration of Roma community by supporting their equal opportunities and social inclusion. One of the key challenges in Roma integration is the low employment rate among Roma. Therefore, a project to increase the employment of Roma will be carried out in 2025–2027 with a total budget of EUR 300,000. A mentoring service will be implemented for Roma children and young people to support their education and fund Roma cultural and language learning initiatives.

Supporting the cultural identity of national minorities

80. One of the objectives of Estonia's cultural policy is to contribute to the integration of national minorities into Estonian society and cultural space, while promoting the preservation, presentation and celebration of national minority cultures. State support for national minority umbrella organisations has steadily increased, with operating support provided to them seeing a 23% increase from 2021 to 2025. In total, cultural associations of national minorities receive more than EUR 900,000 in funding per year.

81. The government supports Estonian media outlets to ensure that information is published in different languages. Foreign language TV channels are widely available via cable and digital distribution throughout Estonia.

82. Between 2022 and 2024, the government supported the creation of Russian-language journalistic content by four Estonian private media channels with a total of EUR 4.3 million, which was intended to prevent the spread of misinformation.

Access to labour market services for people from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds

83. The government has worked effectively to improve access to labour market services for people with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This has involved supporting the recruitment of non-Estonian-speaking employees in state and local government institutions, as well as helping employers to cope with multicultural and multilingual environments.

84. A serious challenge remains the inclusion of women whose mother tongue is not Estonian into the labour market. Although their employment figures have improved in recent years, differences remain. To include women whose mother tongue is not Estonian in the labour market, Estonia is implementing a programme aimed at improving the livelihood of 40–64-year-old women in the Ida-Viru region who remain outside the labour market and increasing social well-being and cohesion. The programme's budget is EUR 800,000.

Health system

85. The development of the health system to ensure equal access to quality health services for all will continue. Important reforms to the organisation of health services have been launched. Measures have been implemented to strengthen primary care, improve access to healthcare, support mental health and integrate health and social care services.

86. The National Health Plan 2020–2030, which was approved in 2021, focuses on developing a people-centred health system and shifting the focus of healthcare towards prevention and promoting physical, mental and social well-being.

87. In 2025, a new Public Health Act entered into force with the aim of establishing conditions to extend life expectancy and the remaining number of healthy life years of the population, prevent and mitigate undesirable health effects, and promote greater health equality among the population, thereby enhancing the overall health of the population.

88. In the coming years, the government will focus on ensuring the sustainability of healthcare financing, expanding insurance coverage, reducing waiting lists, and improving service availability across regions. This will involve systematically reorganising services based on the principles of primary and specialised medical care and smart solutions.

Mental health

89. The mental health of the Estonian people has been affected by the pandemic, the war, the economic situation, and a decrease in stigma. Improving access to mental health services is a key priority action in the government coalition agreement.

90. In 2021, the government approved the ‘Green Paper on Mental Health’, which highlights challenges in this area and proposes further systemic developments. This resulted in the creation of the Mental Health Action Plan 2023–2026, which addresses all areas of mental health, including promotion, prevention, community-based support, the development and delivery of services, and crisis preparedness. Separate actions are also planned to reduce stigma and discrimination related to mental health.

91. Preventive measures have been key in addressing mental health issues in children and young people. In 2024, recommendations were developed in inter-ministerial cooperation to take care of the mental health of children and young people, the implementation of which will be monitored.

92. In 2024, the National Action Plan on Suicide Prevention 2025–2028 was finalised with the aim of reducing the number of suicides to zero.

Measures to improve social protection

93. Estonia continues its efforts to strengthen its social protection system and raise the standard of living. In 2021, it implemented the recommendation to strengthen the pension system, completing the first and second pillar pension reforms. These reforms aimed to increase people’s freedom of choice and give them more control over their pension assets, enabling them to make informed and flexible choices to secure their future. The reform changed the retirement age. From 2027 onwards, it will depend on the average life expectancy. As life expectancy increases, so will the retirement age. This will ensure that the pension system aligns with demographic changes, enabling equivalent pensions to those of today to be paid in the future, even as the population declines and will not be based solely on forecasts and political agreements.

Measures to reduce poverty

94. Reducing poverty and exclusion has been a long-term goal of Estonian governments. Estonia has set a target of reducing the absolute poverty rate to 2.2% by 2030 and has introduced measures to reduce relative poverty and improve the livelihoods of vulnerable groups. As noted in the UPR mid-term report, changes have been made to the social benefits

system to alleviate poverty. The single-parent allowance increased in 2022, the state maintenance allowance doubled in 2025, and the rates of family benefits have been increased. The regular indexation of pensions has also continued.

95. Amendments adopted in 2022 improved the situation of subsistence benefit recipients and the unemployed. The Social Welfare Act established an obligation to provide support services to families in need, including debt counselling. It also established an obligation to take into account the amounts withheld in enforcement proceedings upon payment of a subsistence benefit. In autumn 2025, the government passed the State Budget Act, deciding to raise the subsistence benefit threshold in line with the increase in the cost of living in subsequent years.

96. In 2023, a nationwide system of food aid cards was launched, where a person can choose which food products they want to buy with the support. This innovation made assistance to the most vulnerable members of society more flexible and dignified.

97. In September 2025, the government approved amendments to the Social Welfare Act with the aim of modernising the subsistence benefit system. Once the amendments enter into force, the application process will be simplified and the system will become fairer, reducing the bureaucratic burden. The aim is to provide improved support to families with children, encourage education and employment, and ensure that support reaches those who need it most.

98. An on-going study is investigating ways to develop a more effective, evidence-based poverty reduction and social assistance system, which is expected to be completed in 2026.

Rights of the child

99. The government's work focuses on the well-being of children and families, and on the development of social security and support services. The government's overarching goal is to ensure that Estonia is a good place to start a family and raise children.

100. The Estonian child protection system is being amended in its entirety and is based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, one of the most important foundational documents. The government has actively implemented the UPR review's recommendations on child welfare. Several legislative amendments have entered into force with the aim of early detection of children in need, enhancing cooperation between different sectors, and ensuring a sustainable support system for foster, guardian, and adoptive families. Children's rights and well-being are firmly embedded in the national strategies 'Estonia 2035' and 'The Welfare Development Plan 2023–2030', which prioritise prevention, child-centred support services, and supporting families.

101. The Child Protection Act stipulates that the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration in all actions concerning children. The Child Protection Act prohibits child abuse and violence against children, including corporal punishment, both at home and in school.

102. Between 2020–2022, an analysis of the quality and processes of child protection work was carried out in Estonia. As a result, a new case management model called 'Safety signs' is being implemented in local governments from 2025 to 2027. The model is centred on the involvement of children and families as partners, with the aim of creating solutions that strengthen the capabilities of families.

103. The 2022 amendment to the Child Protection Act established the legal framework for supporting sexually abused children through the Children's House service, which is available in four regions.

104. The Victim Support Act, which entered into force in 2023, established the right of a child who has been sexually abused to receive state-funded mental healthcare to support their recovery from trauma, regardless of whether criminal proceedings have been initiated in relation to the incident, until such time as the need for treatment ceases to exist.

105. Following the 2025 amendment to the Child Protection Act, Lasteabi has the right to provide call recordings to the police, the Prosecutor's Office, and the court upon request, for use as evidence in offence proceedings, to ascertain the child's need for assistance, and to improve the quality of assistance provided.

106. There is a strong focus on promoting the safe and informed use of the Internet and digital media among children and young people, with the aim of preventing them from becoming victims of online bullying and violence. Safer Internet Days are organised for children and young people, and beginning in 2024, Safer Internet Days for Preschoolers (DigiRapid) are being organised, where children learn to navigate the Internet more safely through engaging activities. A special 'Smartly Online' programme has been set up for school-age children.

107. Estonia continues to develop a child-friendly justice system. When implementing this recommendation, a strong emphasis has been placed on training legal practitioners and professionals to work with offender minors and young people. One of the most important goals for the coming years is to prevent offences committed by children and young people, and to provide those who have committed offences with the necessary support to enable them to continue leading law-abiding lives.

108. In connection with Estonia's accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, a number of activities have been initiated, including child-friendly media coverage on relevant topics for the target group.

Rights of disabled persons

109 In accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Estonia will continue to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. Since the previous UPR review, significant progress has been made in terms of accessibility and the availability of assistive devices. Benefits and the possibility of flexible working for individuals on long-term incapacity for work have also improved, with the aim of preventing permanent incapacity for work and exclusion from the labour market.

110. The Product and Service Accessibility Act, which entered into force in 2025, helps to ensure that various services and products are available to people with special needs. Sign language interpretation or subtitles are provided at major cultural events.

111. In addition to the state, advocacy organisations promote accessibility. Reform of the Estonian Paralympic Committee, an umbrella organisation that promotes sports for people with special needs, is underway. Work is ongoing to improve accessibility.

112. Amendments to the Social Welfare Act and other Acts, adopted in 2022, have simplified administration and ensured higher-quality, faster, and more comprehensive welfare assistance for people with disabilities. Local authorities automatically receive information on people with a degree of disability, enabling them to proactively provide them with services. Disability benefits can be granted indefinitely to old-age pensioners.

113. As of September 2025, state-sponsored aids can be purchased without a prior assessment of the degree of disability or reduced work ability being carried out. Children receive aids at a 90% discount, while people of working age will receive them according to the aids regulation list. Most aids will be available at a 90% discount.

114. Amendments to the Social Benefits for Disabled Persons Act, which entered into force in June 2025, increased benefits for children with severe and profound disabilities and for working-age persons with profound disabilities. Allowances for working-age persons with severe disabilities are no longer dependent on the type of disability and have been harmonised.

115. Work has begun on enabling the 112 emergency service to use video-calls and/or real-time text. This will give persons with disabilities, including those with hearing or visual impairments, better access to life-saving services. The live text service will be deployed in April 2026.

116. In Estonia, all children have the right and opportunity to acquire an education, regardless of disability. The education system is based on the principle of inclusive education, whereby education must be equally accessible to all children, including those with severe disabilities, according to their abilities and needs. Inclusive education assumes that all children, regardless of their special needs, will generally attend school in their home county and receive the necessary support they need thanks to adaptations.

117. The rehabilitation system is being restructured to ensure that people receive needs-based, timely and integrated services in the areas of social care, health, employment and education.

118. The guardianship system needs to be modernised in order to respond more effectively to people's needs, reduce stigmatisation, and comply with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The aim is to strengthen the protection of the rights of persons with restricted active legal capacity and increase their opportunities to participate in society.

119. Persons with reduced work ability receive the work ability allowance, which is indexed on 1 April each year. The Unemployment Insurance Fund provides support services to help people with reduced work ability stay in the labour market.

Persons of unspecified nationality

120. Estonia's citizenship policy is in accordance with international law, including the UN conventions of 1954 and 1961.

121. The Government has encouraged persons with undetermined citizenship to apply for Estonian citizenship through various measures. A number of legislative amendments have been adopted to simplify naturalisation procedures, particularly for children and the elderly, and to increase the interest of stateless persons in applying for Estonian citizenship. The current coalition agreement stipulates that alien's passports will no longer be issued to foreign children born in Estonia. The corresponding legislative amendment is subject to approval.

122. Reducing the number of people with undetermined citizenship and promoting Estonian citizenship lie at the heart of Estonia's integration policy. The number of people with undetermined citizenship has decreased by 30,000 in the last 10 years (2015–2025). According to the Population Register, as of 1 January 2026, there are 58,432 people with undetermined citizenship in Estonia, and this figure is steadily decreasing.

123. Foreign national legally residing in Estonia, including those with undetermined citizenship, may acquire Estonian citizenship by naturalisation.

124. Applicants for Estonian citizenship can study the Estonian language free of charge and receive compensation if they have taken an unpaid study leave from work to study the language. Students are approached personally, taking into account their level of language proficiency and their preferences regarding the form, location, and time of study.

125. Article 9 of the Constitution ensures that the rights, freedoms and obligations of Estonian citizens, foreign citizens, and stateless persons staying in Estonia are equal. Persons of undetermined nationality have the same rights as all other third-country nationals, including the right to healthcare, education, social benefits and employment. They have identity documents and can move freely, open a bank account and own real estate.

126 In 2024, the Institute of Baltic Studies conducted a survey of residents with undefined citizenship regarding their attitudes towards Estonian citizenship. The results confirm that these residents have a strong social and cultural connection with Estonia. The vast majority of people with undetermined citizenship (65%) said they were ready to apply for Estonian citizenship, with 15% thinking it would happen within the next year and 28% within the next two to five years.

127. On 26 March 2025, the Riigikogu passed an Act amending the Constitution of Estonia, according to which the right to vote of third-country nationals residing in Estonia and, as of 2029, also stateless persons was revoked in local elections. The transitional period provided for in the Act gives stateless persons sufficient time to apply for Estonian citizenship and to participate in future elections as Estonian citizens.

Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons

128. Estonia fulfils all obligations arising from the European Union asylum acquis and international agreements, including the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol concerning the protection of applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection. All applicants for international protection are guaranteed access to the international protection procedure and the guarantees established by the EU asylum acquis.

129. Beneficiaries of international protection shall be entitled to social protection under the same conditions as permanent residents, including state pensions, family benefits, labour market benefits, social benefits and health benefits. Everyone, including migrants, has access to emergency medical care in the event of serious or life-threatening health problems. Estonia ensures that refugees who have been granted temporary protection and residence permits have access to health insurance on the same basis as other residents of Estonia. All childhood and at-risk vaccinations (e.g. influenza) are carried out in accordance with Estonia's national immunisation plan. Every child with refugee status or a temporary residence permit has an automatic right to education.

130. The living conditions in the reception centres correspond to the standard of living in Estonia. The assessment and needs-based development of living conditions and services is an on-going process.

131. Several support services have been developed for newly arrived immigrants and the proactive government service 'Settling in Estonia' is provided to support the early integration of new immigrants arriving and living in Estonia.

132. To support the early integration of aliens who are settling in Estonia and to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills, those who have lived in Estonia for up to five years are offered a free adaptation programme, which includes adaptation training, thematic training and basic language training.

133. According to the Estonian Integration Monitoring 2023, the majority of newly arrived immigrants (79%) consider their quality of life in Estonia to be better than in their country of origin. This assessment covers not only economic aspects, but also a safe and stable living environment and the existence of clean natural surroundings.

134. Since the start of the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the target group of new immigrants has grown significantly due to Ukrainian war refugees, creating serious challenges in terms of policy-making and the provision of services. As of 1 January 2025, 56,747 people have applied for temporary protection status. Estonia has provided comprehensive support to Ukrainian war refugees who have arrived in Estonia, offering both social benefits and labour market measures. As of 2023, young people fleeing the war in Ukraine will receive support to help them remain connected to their language and culture. This is important for both the adaptation of Ukrainian youth in Estonia and for their eventual return to Ukraine.

Rights of Prisoners

135. In Estonia, torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment are strictly prohibited under the Constitution and the Criminal Code. Estonia is a party to the UN Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol, as well as the relevant Council of Europe agreement, and fulfils the obligations arising therefrom. There have been no reported cases of torture or ill-treatment in Estonian prisons, and all allegations of ill-treatment are investigated by independent authorities. The application of disciplinary measures to detainees must be in accordance with the European Prison Rules and the Mandela Rules. Estonia continues to prioritise the training of officials and the implementation of dynamic security principles to facilitate the reintegration of prisoners into society.

136. The debate on the electoral rights of prisoners continues, but as there is currently no consensus on this issue, no legislative changes are currently planned.

Right to education

137. The Estonian education system underwent significant changes during 2021–2025. Despite the COVID pandemic, fundamental education policy values, such as accessibility, equality and quality, have not been compromised. Children and young people are guaranteed opportunities for personal fulfilment, regardless of their socio-economic or national background. According to PISA surveys, the results of Estonian students have been among the highest in the world, especially in mathematics, natural sciences and creative thinking.

138. In December 2022, the Riigikogu passed the necessary legislation for the transition to Estonian-language education. The transition to Estonian-language studies began in ECEC institutions and 1st and 4th grades on 1 September 2024. The transition process will continue until 2030. The aim of the transition to Estonian-language learning is to provide all children, regardless of their mother tongue, the opportunity to acquire high-quality education in Estonian. This benefits children and young people themselves, as learning in Estonian helps them integrate into Estonia's cultural and value space, broadening their choices while preserving their national identity. A common Estonian language education space ensures equal opportunities for all children and young people to progress to the next level of education and find suitable employment in the future. The transition to Estonian language learning is a long-term process, carried out in accordance with the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), as well as the international obligations assumed by Estonia and international law. In the transition to Estonian-language learning, attention is paid to supporting the professional development of educators and support specialists. Level work will be carried out to monitor the transition, the results of which will allow for flexible and tailor-made adaptation of the measures and provide targeted support to educational institutions.

139. The Estonian Integration Monitoring shows population support for the reform: 87% of all respondents and 70% of respondents from other nationalities assessed the transition to

Estonian-language education favorably. Respondents found that the transition to Estonian-language education supports the integration of Russian-speaking youth into the Estonian-language cultural space and the labour market.

140. In 2023, the national curricula for basic and upper secondary schools were updated to increase schools' autonomy in designing learning content and taking a learner-centred approach. Teaching became more learner-centred, taking into account developments in society and on the labour market. Core values in the national curriculum derive from the ethical principles of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the OECD Learning Compass 2030 and the basic documents of the European Union.

141. Estonia takes ensuring a safe learning environment very seriously. The state supports the prevention of bullying and the promotion of mental well-being. As a result, bullying in the Estonian school environment has consistently decreased, with the exception of cyberbullying.

142. It is important to ensure the safe and responsible use of digital technologies in school learning and to develop the digital competences of pupils, teachers and parents. The national curriculum is set to include a focus on strengthening the digital environment and related risk factors.

143. In September 2025, the education programme AI-Leap was launched in Estonia, which aims to provide upper secondary school students and teacher training with necessary AI skills development and access to AI-based learning tools. The programme provides free access to digital learning applications and language models to prepare young people for the demands of the job market. The AI-Leap programme involves extensive private-public cooperation and has an annual budget of EUR 6.5 million.

The Culture Schoolbag programme

144. Since 2022, the Culture Schoolbag programme has been offered to improve access to culture for all Estonian children and young people. This enables them to visit at least one cultural institution per year in connection with the school curriculum, helping them to acquire the subject competences prescribed by the national curriculum. The programme has a budget of EUR 1.5 million and can be used by all Estonian students in grades 1–9.

Early school leaving

145. Measures implemented in recent years have reduced early school leaving among young people, including those with special educational needs. These measures support structural changes in the prevention of early school leaving. Early detection systems, learning counselling services and evidence-based intervention models for tracking and supporting young people's learning pathways are now in place.

146. As of 2022, the Alarm Bell warning system has been implemented in the learning information systems used by Estonian schools. This data-based solution generates notifications to help schools identify and intervene at an early stage in cases where secondary school and upper secondary school students are at risk of dropping out.

147. On 1 September 2025, the learning obligation entered into force for young people up to the age of 18. The aim is to support every learner in continuing their education after secondary school and to reduce drop-outs from vocational or general education. A reform of vocational education has also been launched, making vocational secondary education an equal alternative to upper secondary education and allowing students to continue their studies in higher education and to successfully find employment in the labour market.

New technologies

148. The Estonian state is committed to building a digital society and developing digital services in all spheres of life. Services have been set up to support the development of digital skills for older people in order to reduce the digital divide. Libraries provide free Internet access, study days and digital training for older people, as well as support in using the Internet and digital devices.

149. Building a digital space based on democracy, the rule of law and human rights is an important part of Estonia's foreign policy. Estonia pays special attention to everyone's free and unrestricted access to the Internet, and to guaranteeing that democratic and human rights-respecting values also apply in the digital environment.

150. The National Media Literacy Action Plan 2024–2026, adopted in 2024, aims to improve the population's ability to critically assess, understand, and responsibly use different media and information sources. The plan focuses in particular on developing media literacy among young people, teachers and the elderly, as well as building resilience to disinformation.

151. Estonia's AI and data policy strategies, as set out in the White Paper on Data and Artificial Intelligence 2024–2030, the AI Action Plan 2024–2026 and the Data Action Plan 2024–2025, prioritise the protection of human rights, and the promotion of human-centricity and integrity. Every year, the mainstreaming of human rights principles and risks in AI documents increases, with a particular focus on the ethical application of technology and the importance of a rights-based approach to digital governance. A toolbox and support services are being developed to help developers of artificial intelligence and data-driven technologies assess and mitigate risks to fundamental rights related to technology.

Actions in response to climate change

152. Estonia has actively contributed to international efforts to combat climate change, supporting the objectives of the UN Climate Framework Convention and the European Union's climate policy. In December 2023, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution presented by Estonia to declare 20 September as World Cleanup Day in the UN calendar. World Cleanup Day, initiated by Estonians in 2008, is now the world's largest citizens' initiative.

153. Estonia's legislative framework for climate objectives aligns with the requirements of the European Union's climate policy, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support adaptation to climate change. Estonia is currently drafting a Climate Resilient Economy Act, where equal opportunities and reducing the vulnerability of disadvantaged groups feature as key topics.

Business and human rights

154. Estonia considers respect for human rights in business operations to be important and supports global efforts to improve respect for human rights in business, based on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. Estonia is preparing to implement the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), which aims to prevent the adverse impact of company activities and those of entities in its subsidiary's value chains on human rights and the environment.