



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Seventh periodic report submitted by Estonia under article
18 of the Convention, due in 2022***

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General

Question 1

1. Between 2016-2021 several tools and web applications were created and upgraded to improve the collection and analyses of data that help to measure equality between women and men.
2. In 2019 a web application “the Tree of Truth” was created by the Government Office and Statistics Estonia to make the objectives of the country’s strategies more comprehensible to the general public, the governance more transparent and performance-based. The application shows the status of main indicators, comparing actual results on the basis of three national strategic documents: “Sustainable Estonia 21” strategy, “Estonia 2035” strategy and the Governmental Action Plan. The application includes indicators like Gender pay gap, Female managers, and Gender Equality Index. The application is constantly updated and available to everyone on the website of Statistics Estonia.
3. The earnings application was upgraded in 2021 by Statistics Estonia together with the Commissioner for Gender Equality and Equal Treatment (the Commissioner), University of Tartu, Tallinn University of Technology, and the Social Insurance Board (SIB). The earnings application shows differences in the monthly gross earnings of full-time employees by sex, county, and occupation. As part of the application update, more occupational groups, comparison of men’s and women’s monthly earnings, and earnings and pension projections were added to the application, to increase the usability and usefulness of the application for comparing gender pay statistics. More information on that in section on Employment.
4. In 2019 labour market application was commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The labour market application allows customised analysis of data of the Estonian Labour Force Survey. It is possible to combine employment, unemployment, inactivity, and educational indicators with different background characteristics, including gender, age, nationality, citizenship, disability, presence of children in the household etc. One can observe changes in the labour market over time and compare population groups. The analysis results can be downloaded as graphs or data tables.
5. To support employers in analysing gender pay gap in their organisations the prototype of a tool called “Pay Mirror” was developed in the framework of our gender wage gap research project REGE in cooperation with Tallinn University and Statistics Estonia. The Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for developing this prototype further and the actual tool should be published and in use by 2024. The main aim is to make the identification and analysis of the pay gap as easy and accessible as possible for the employer, without increasing the administrative burden, and to increase employers’ awareness about pay inequality and pay gap. More info on that in section on Employment.
6. According to the Rules for Good Legislative Drafting and Technical Rules for Drafts of Legislative Acts, adopted in 2012, there is an obligation for every state institution to include interested parties, including citizen’s organisations, into the discussions and decision making. This regulation is established based on subsection 27 (3) of the Government of the Republic Act. The process of involving the interest groups to the decision making is described in the Good Practice of Engagement approved by the Government.
7. Draft of the current report was submitted for comments and proposals to the following NGOs: NGO Oma Tuba, the Estonian Women’s Associations Roundtable, the Estonian Women’s Shelters Union, the Estonian Human Rights Centre and the Estonian Women’s Studies and Resource Centre.
8. From 2019 the Ministry of Social Affairs has started strategic partnerships, which include financial support, as a form of cooperation with civil society. The calls for strategic

partnership proposals have specific topics supporting the strategic gender equality goals defined in the Welfare Development Plan. One of the goals of the strategic partnership was to reduce the dependence of NGO funding on short-term projects and increase their economic sustainability, as well as the ability to plan their activities strategically and in the longer term.

9. The first round of calls for strategic partnerships on gender equality took place in 2019 and resulted in two-year contracts with the Estonian Women's Associations Roundtable and the Estonian Women's Studies and Resource Centre together with NGO Oma Tuba. The second round of open calls for promotion of gender equality was announced in 2022 and resulted in three-year strategic partnership contracts with the Estonian Women's Studies and Resource Centre and NGO Oma Tuba (together with Praxis Centre for Policy Studies).

Women's rights and gender equality in relation to the pandemic and recovery efforts

Question 2

10. Several measures have been taken to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 pandemic. Measures targeting social protection, labour market, and economic, fiscal and business support have varied a lot since the first wave of virus. A study on the pandemic's socio-economic impact on gender equality was carried out by the Praxis Centre for Policy Studies funded by Estonian Research Council. The focus group and expert interviews conducted in spring 2021 gave an indication for it to be likely that, like in many other countries, the pandemic has affected gender inequality in Estonia, primarily due to the difficulty of reconciling work and family life, which hit women harder than men. Expert interviews also indicated that although the importance of the gender perspective in the development of "pandemic policies" might be recognised in principle, there is room for improvement when it comes to effectively and systematically applying gender mainstreaming principles to policymaking.

11. During the first wave of COVID-19 the salary subsidy was paid from March-June 2020 to employees whose employer's activities were significantly influenced by the pandemic. The measure directly reached 17,500 institutions and 137,500 people. 50% of the employees to whom the salary subsidy was paid worked in wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles or accommodation and food service activities, which both are female dominated sectors. Nevertheless, according to the Praxis Centre for Policy Studies analyses, while the measure helped prevent inequalities from increasing, both the measure and the crisis itself had a greater impact on relative poverty among men.

12. To strengthen the resilience of people to labour market shocks, it is crucial to invest in people's skills also during the crisis. For realising new employment possibilities, it is important to offer people possibilities for re-skilling and up-skilling, enabling them to put their knowledge, skills and competence into use to meet the needs of the changing labour market. As a specific COVID-19 pandemic related measure, from July to December 2020, in collaboration with Coursera platform, free online courses were offered to people who had lost or were at risk of losing their job due to COVID-19. Approximately 65% of those registered for the courses were women. Additional resources are planned from the React-EU and the Recovery and Resilience Facility for different labour market measures, focusing on COVID-19 influence and especially for training and retraining measures.

13. During the lock-downs due to COVID-19, the local governments were obliged to guarantee childcare for frontline workers, while it was not rare during the first wave of pandemic that other parents were strongly advised not to take children to the care or kindergarten without pressing need. During the first wave of pandemic all schools except the ones teaching students with learning disabilities were closed and distance learning was implemented.

14. The closure of educational establishments laid even greater burden on parents of children with special needs. Therefore, a temporary special allowance was made available to provide replacement income for parents who due to care responsibilities were temporarily forced to be absent from work.

15. From the fall of 2020 the decisions to close schools and implement distance learning was avoided as a national level policy as much as possible and the regional or school-based decisions were favoured. The instructions for schools stressed the need to continue with contact-learning for children with learning disabilities.

16. To support more equal sharing of care burden between men and women in the long term, Estonia has implemented changes to the parental leave and benefits system. The Ministry of Social Affairs has also worked on long-term care solutions, with the aim to increase the availability of long-term care services to reduce the care burden on informal carers and through that, support women's reconciliation of work and care. More information on both can be found in section on Employment.

17. From December 2021 to January 2022, the sixth Gender Equality Monitor, a representative population survey mapping gender equality related experiences and attitudes, was carried out. The survey also included questions to examine how COVID-19 related restrictions affected the sharing of unpaid work and care duties between women and men in Estonian families. According to the survey 47% of respondents did not experience any change in the distribution of chores – the share remained similar among men and women. 54% of men thought that the added chores were shared equally between partners. That view was less shared by female respondents (41%). In addition, male respondents claimed that in 11% of the households the added chores were done by their partner, according to the female respondents 31% claimed that they had carried the burden of the added chores.

18. Unlike some other countries, there was no increase in reporting of incidents of domestic violence during the restrictions, rather a small decrease was noted at first. It is likely to be related to the fact that such reports were more difficult to make in situations where the victim and the perpetrator were in proximity due to restrictions. Also, only slightly more than 10% of such reports are made by someone other than the victim. Additional steps were taken to guarantee support for the victims of gender based and domestic violence, as well as for the specialists working in shelters. In connection with the COVID-19 related restrictions, additional efforts were made to provide victims with help through victim support hotline and web-based solutions. Continuation of the services was a priority: shelters were supported with personal protective equipment, calls were made to witnesses to report incidents, and a helpline was opened for perpetrators. Also, additional resources were allocated from the state budget to the financing of victim support and psychosocial crisis aid services.

19. The government has made several additional contributions to the Health Insurance Fund to cover the costs incurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic (personal protective equipment, medications, increase in health workforce salary and preparedness etc). Treatment and healthcare service provision in case of COVID-19 disease are considered emergency care, and therefore, it is ensured for everyone, including women without health insurance. Emergency care provided by hospitals, family doctors and emergency ambulance are free of charge for everybody in Estonia.

20. In addition, several healthcare services are provided also during COVID-19 pandemic to persons without health insurance including reproductive health counselling and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases for persons up to 26-years of age (incl.). Pregnant women and persons receiving childcare allowance (paid until the child becomes 3 years old) are automatically insured. COVID-19 vaccination is free of charge for all persons living in Estonia and for those temporarily studying or working in Estonia.

Legislative framework

Question 3

21. The planned amendments described in the follow-up of the previous report to the Gender Equality Act (GEA) which should have applied on 1 July 2020 giving the Labour Inspectorate the mandate to monitor the implementation of the equal pay requirement for women and men and the right to oblige employers to carry out equal pay audits in the public sector dropped out of the legislative proceedings for not having been adopted before the parliamentary elections of 2019.

22. From April 2021 Estonian Government has supported the proposed EU Pay Transparency Directive aimed at increasing pay transparency and empowering employees to enforce their right to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through a set of binding measures on pay transparency. Amendments of the GEA are planned to be introduced in line with the transposition of the EU Pay Transparency Directive.

23. In 2019 amendment of GEA entered into force that specified the employment agency's restraint enquiring the information about pregnancy, childbirth, parenting, performance of family obligations or other circumstances related to gender.

24. The provisions of the GEA specifying the employees right to request opportunities for reconciliation of work and family life, the duty and timeframe for employer to provide an explanation when the person's application has been refused or postponed and the provision of care for a person with serious medical reason as base of direct discrimination were amended on 1 April 2022.

25. More information on the efforts concerning gender mainstreaming, tackling stereotypes, gender-based violence, pay gap is described in several sections.

26. The number of complaints related to gender filed to the Commissioner has been higher than in the previous reporting period.

Table: The number of complaints related to gender filed to the Commissioner, 2016-2021

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
158	213	137	160	135	239

Source: The Commissioner for Gender Equality and Equal Treatment

27. The number of labour dispute proceedings of the Labour Disputes Committee related to unequal treatment during the reporting period was 17-25 cases per year. 2016 the number of cases related to gender was 8, after that the numbers have been lower. Most cases are related to discrimination on the basis of family obligation or harassment. On one occasion Labour Dispute Committee ruled occurrence of discrimination on the basis of equal pay and severance pay was sentenced.

28. The number of cases in court remains low – most of them are related to discrimination in professional life connected to maternity or family obligation. In recent years there have also been proceedings on sexual harassment in professional life.

29. In 2016, the Chancellor of Justice conducted one conciliation procedure. In 2017, the Chancellor received one application to start conciliation proceeding, which was rejected due to procedural reasons. There were no conciliation proceedings in 2018-2020.

Women's access to justice

Question 4

30. Pursuant to § 146 of the Estonian Constitution, justice shall be administered solely by the courts. Under Estonian law, the Commissioner currently does not have the right to bring a claim to court in their own name. With a view to improving the protection of GEA and Equal Treatment Act (ETA), the supervision and efficiency of the implementation of GEA and ETA including the mandate of the Commissioner is being analysed by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

31. Additionally, the Commissioner has assessed that, while strategic litigation has considerable potential, there are certain challenges in implementing it. One being that Estonian court system is very much directed at reaching an agreement or a settlement wherever possible (in all the levels of court). Further, the decisions of lower courts have less authoritative value in shaping court practice in Estonia. Therefore, getting a case far enough to achieve at least some of the aims of strategic litigation can become difficult. However, the Commissioner has practiced it in 2015. The Commissioner was heavily involved with 8 cases in total with varying levels of success. In 7 out of 8 cases, the Commissioner ended up achieving at least some kind of a positive outcome from equality point of view. It should also be mentioned that compromise or a settlement was involved in a few of them.

32. Under Estonian law, everyone has equal access to justice. A natural person may receive state-funded legal aid where the person is unable to pay for competent legal services due to the person's financial situation at the time the person needs legal aid or where the person is able to pay for legal services only partially or in instalments or where the person's financial situation does not allow for meeting basic subsistence needs after paying for legal services. The provision of state legal aid is regulated by the State Legal Aid Act. Pursuant to § 180 (4) of the Code of Civil Procedure, the provisions of Section 6 of the Code of Civil Procedure governing Granting State Financial Aid Towards Case Costs apply only to the extent to which the State Legal Aid Act does not provide otherwise.

33. In addition, legal counselling is provided to an Estonian resident whose average gross monthly income is up to 1,200 euros or legal advice concerning the rights of the child in family matters is provided to an Estonian resident whose average monthly gross income is up to 1,700 euros. Regardless of the income legal counselling is provided to persons with disabilities and elderly persons.

34. Currently there are no developments to report regarding the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

35. In the criminal justice system, there have been improvements in both in-service and in basic training on sensitive treatment of victims, assistance to victims of domestic violence, etc. For example, in 2016, the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences developed a curriculum for a training on the sensitive treatment of victims of crime, aimed at police officers, prosecutors, judges, victim support staff and other persons who come into contact with victims in criminal proceedings.

36. From 2019 to 2021 Estonian Institute for Open Society with partners carried out a project "Developing gender stereotype-free and efficient law enforcement system for prevention of gender-based violence". The central objective of the project was the development of a law enforcement culture and communication standards free of gender stereotypes which would increase the victims' trust in law enforcement agencies and encourage them to cooperate by training law enforcement specialists, analysing the existing regulation and making recommendations for the improvement of legislation.

37. According to the FRA's Fundamental Rights Survey reporting the incidents of physical violence remained low in 2019 but at the same time the majority (80%) of those who turned to the police in Estonia were satisfied with the treatment of the police.

National machinery for the advancement of women

Question 5

38. Strategy and policy measures to promote gender equality and equal opportunities (on other grounds) are planned through the Welfare Development Plan 2016-2023. The current "Welfare Development Plan for 2016-2023" has four sub-goals, one of which is gender equality, thereby creating the first ever governmental level wide-scale strategy for gender equality. The achievement of this sub-goal is supported by other development strategies.

39. Measures planned in the development plan and the gender equality programme vary from awareness raising to legislative initiatives, including both special measures to promote gender equality and activities that support the implementation of gender mainstreaming. To reduce gender inequality, prevent its resurgence, and achieve gender equality in different spheres of life, attention is paid to reducing gender stereotypes that cause gender inequality and their negative impact; reducing gender segregation in education and the labour market; supporting the economic independence of men and women, therein reducing the gender pay gap; achieving a gender balance on the decision-making levels of society; enhancing the protection of rights; and ensuring institutional capacity, including the analysis and management capabilities necessary for the promotion of gender equality. Implementation of the development plan and the programme is monitored through indicators.

Table: Welfare Development Plan gender equality programme indicators

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Initial rate</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>Reference level 2023</i>
The number of women who received a degree (ISCED 5–6) in mathematics, science, and technology per one thousand women aged 20–29* (source: Statistics Estonia)	14,1 (2018/2019)	14,2	15,2	-	14,8
Proportion of residents who consider the gender pay gap to be a big or a major problem, % (source: Gender Equality Monitor)	64% (2016)	-	-	54%	- (reference was 74%)
Gender equality index (source: EIGE)	59,8 (2019)**	59,8	60,7	61,6	63,3

* The indicator compares the number of women who completed tertiary education in public or private educational institutions in the observed academic year, i.e. those who completed the curriculum at the first and subsequent levels of higher education (ISCED 2011 levels 6-8) with the average annual population of women of the respective age.

** Gender Equality Index indicator published in 2019, which is mainly based on data from 2017, following indicators follow the same pattern.

40. The strategy “Estonia 2035” (approved by the Parliament in 2021) sets five long-term goals that are based on the base principles. The goals were agreed upon at discussions that took place across Estonia over a period of two years and based on opinion gathering (almost 17,000 people have contributed). Strategic goals are value-based goals that are the basis for making the country’s strategic choices and to the implementation of which all Estonian strategic development documents contribute. They are also taken into account in the state budget strategy and in the preparation of the government’s action programme. One of the base principles is ‘Everyone must have equal opportunities for self-fulfilment and participation in society, regardless of their individual characteristics and needs, belonging to different social groups, their socio-economic capacity, or place of residence’. The base principles are monitored by 9 indicators one being the gender equality index.

41. The new Welfare Development Plan 2023-2030 will be proposed to the government by the end of 2022. The strategy will have five sub-goals, one being gender equality and equal opportunities.

42. In order to improve implementation of gender mainstreaming, i.e. that gender, age, special needs and other aspects would be taken into account in policy-making, in 2021-2022, the Ministry of Social Affairs is implementing a pilot project together with other ministries. The aim of the project is to find the most efficient (both resource and result-wise) and sustainable solution for co-ordinating, supporting and implementing gender mainstreaming in national policy-making. Results of this project will be presented, together with further policy and practice proposals, to the Government in 2023. Similar project on the municipal level is planned to take place in Ida-Viru region. The project also aims to improve guidance materials and tools for municipalities in other regions.

43. Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Competence Centre for the use of the Cohesion Policy Funding continues to provide knowledge-based, effective, and motivating support for promoting gender equality and equal opportunities, to implementers of projects financed from the European Structural and Investment Funds. There are currently 3 staff members working for the competence centre.

Question 6

44. The Commissioner is responsible for the use of funding allocated to the Office from the state budget and is entitled to apply for additional funding from e.g. relevant EU programmes. Funding allocated to the Commissioner from the state budget is increasing yearly, being 506,969 in 2020, 507,458 in 2021, 509,870 in 2022, and 514,369 euros for 2023. However, the Commissioner has applied and received funding for various projects, widening its activities and increasing the budget. For example, with additional funds, the Commissioners’ budget for 2020 was 791,822 euros and for 2021 902,492 euros.

45. There are currently 9 staff members working in the Commissioner’s the office.

46. According to the ETA § 15, the Commissioner is an independent and impartial expert who acts independently, monitors compliance with the requirements of ETA and GEA and performs other functions imposed by law.

47. The competition for the office is conducted by the minister responsible for the area. The Commissioner is appointed to the office by the minister responsible for the area for five years. This is preceded by an impartial procedure of selection. Possible scenarios for enhancing the mandate and independence of the Commissioner’s institution among other aspects are currently being analysed as mentioned above in section on women’s access to justice.

48. In 2022 the staff of the Department of Equality Policies in the Ministry of Social Affairs consists of 14 positions, 3 of whom are working for the Equality Competence Center of the European Union Cohesion Policy Funds and 1 for implementation of Norway Grants programme. The department is responsible for promoting gender equality and promoting equal

treatment on other grounds, including promotion of accessibility. The department also coordinates activities to decrease violence against women, including trafficking in women.

49. Funding allocated to the Department of Equality Policies in the Ministry of Social Affairs to gender equality policy formulation and implementation was 338,682 euros in 2020, 503,845 euros in 2021, 915,513 euros in 2022 and will be 865,643 euros in 2023 (does not include the funding for the Competence Center).

50. During the reporting period the work format of an inter-ministerial gender mainstreaming working group was piloted in 2017. The work format did not perform and was replaced by targeted meetings and trainings. Some trainings were carried out during the reporting period, but a systematic approach needs to be developed. Therefore, the pilot project to create a coordination model is being carried out (more information on the project in section on National Machinery for the Advancement of Women). Furthermore, a project funded by Norway Grants is being carried out, aimed at developing a virtual gender equality competence centre where a wide range of information, including data, studies, training material, study programmes for stakeholders, including employers, teachers, and policy makers, will be made available. By the end of 2022 online training module for policy makers to increase their knowledge of gender mainstreaming will be developed.

51. Upon planning, implementation and assessment of national, regional, and institutional strategies, policies and action plans authorities must take into account the different needs and social status of women and men and consider how the measures will affect the situation of gender groups in society. In 2012, the Government of the Republic approved an impact assessment methodology, the purpose of which is to provide guidance to government agencies in conducting impact analyses to improve and harmonise the capacity of government agencies to plan, implement and evaluate government policies. The methodology was updated in 2021. According to the Rules for Good Legislative Practice and Legislative Drafting the legislation's impact to "social, including demographic" that includes gender impact must be assessed. Since 2020 there is also an obligation to carry out impact assessment for the proposal of a development plan and the plan itself.

52. In 2020 the state adopted Performance-Based Budgeting (official name Activity-Based Budgeting in Estonia), which aims to achieve more effective and efficient implementation of public functions, higher quality of public services, reduction of general government expenditure and staff costs, and more flexible and less bureaucratic management of the government sector. Therefore, the budgeting is based on programs which must be drafted according to the governmental decree on impact assessment method.

53. In order to provide additional support for the policymakers and –implementers, a competence centre for gender mainstreaming and complying with the principle of equal treatment in the use of the EU Structural and Investment Funds was created in 2015. One of the main tasks of the centre is to provide feedback and counselling in the process of preparing conditions for granting support from the ESI Funds and to carry out surveys to analyse the outcomes of gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities activities at project level. The centre has also created a variety of information materials, including thematic factsheets and guidelines for implementing agencies, intermediate bodies, and users of the funds, and organised trainings to support their efforts. In addition, it co-ordinates the work of an equal opportunities network to support a practical co-operation in promoting gender equality and equal opportunities on other grounds in the use of ESI Funds.

Temporary special measures

Question 7

54. During the reporting period no national temporary special measures were implemented nor were there any national campaigns on the promotion of the understanding and importance of temporary special measures. In 2017 there was a discussion held in the Constitutional Committee of the Parliament about draft act of striped electoral lists and proposal to increase the women's representation on the boards of state-owned enterprises. However, neither of the proposals received support.

55. The discussions about temporary special measures were held during the project Nudging Women to Power by think tank Praxis (for more on that see section on Participation in Political and Public Life).

Stereotypes and harmful practices

Question 8

56. From 2017-2019 the Commissioner's Office together with Estonian Public Broadcasting, Tallinn University, SA Innove, Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson of Lithuania and the Centre for Gender Equality in Iceland carried out cross-media project BREAK!. The project was mainly funded by the European Commission. The aim of the BREAK! cross-media project was to influence the audience in the direction of open-mindedness regarding gender role stereotypes - to empower (young) people and help them overcome stereotype-based barriers concerning occupational choices. During the project TV series "Miks Mitte?!" (Why not?!) and radio shows, which aired on Estonian Public Broadcasting channels, were produced and a photo exhibition was created. Also, study materials for teachers were created and trainings for teachers and career counsellors took place.

57. In 2020-2022 the Commissioner's Office in Estonia coordinated and implemented a project 'Towards gender equality through increased capabilities for work-life balance'. The project is co-financed by the European Commission. The aim of the project was to promote gender equality and increase the capacity of women and men to balance their work-life by developing several innovative and interactive tools. These tools help to increase equality by improving everyday practical skills, changing attitudes, and reducing gender stereotypes.

58. One of these innovative tools is a strategic learning game, with both a physical board game and a digital version of the game having been developed. The learning game was designed for use in schools, workplaces and by the public. The learning game can be used in parallel with a series of short films which aired also on Estonian Public Broadcasting channels as well as several public and private streaming channels. Besides the game and series project output was a series of easily understood guidelines supporting balance between work-life for people with family responsibilities, their co-workers, employers and employees, local government, educational institutions, policy makers and contractors.

59. In 2020 media campaign "Everyone is different but equally human" #samapaljuinimene (English: #equallyhuman) took place. The campaign consisted of 5 short videos and out-door campaign highlights stories of bullying, migrant workers, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and religious beliefs.

60. In 2021 the Ministry of Social Affairs published a series of 10 short (approx. 2-3 minutes) video-lectures with an aim to raise awareness on gender equality, violence against women, including digital violence, equal treatment of minorities and on

promoting diversity. From the gender equality perspective, the lectures touched upon topics such as gender segregation of education and labour market, men`s role in promoting gender equality, gender (in)balance in politics, controlling behaviour in intimate relations, gender-based cyberviolence and children as witnesses of (domestic) violence. These so-called micro-lectures were released approximately once a week and were accompanied by a press release and/or blog entry or an entry in social media.

61. One of the strategic partners of the Ministry of Social Affairs in promoting gender equality is NGO Oma Tuba. The NGO Oma Tuba launched a feminist web magazine called *Feministeerium* in 2015, which has currently approximately 11,000 readers per month. NGO Oma Tuba has raised awareness on various issues regarding gender inequality, gender-based violence and the negative impact of gender stereotypes and has also promoted temporary special measures and a consent-based approach to rape, sexual violence and sexual assault in legislation.

62. Other projects aiming to tackle stereotypes were also carried out some of which are described in sections Education and Employment.

63. In the field of education, the Estonian Women`s Associations Roundtable has created a website gathering resources on all aspects of gender and education. The website “*Haridus ja sugu*” (“Education and gender”) offers explanations of concepts, gender-sensitive pedagogy, teaching materials, research and analysis, promotion of gender equality, best practices for learners from different countries and ages. The material is available to all and can be used by students and teachers of both general education and higher education.

64. In 2019-2022, the Estonian Women`s Associations Roundtable with partners from Norway and Czechia implemented the European Commission`s funded Erasmus+ program project *Fair Play at Schools*, which focused on promoting gender-sensitive education. Training modules for teachers to promote awareness on gender equality and gender sensitive education free from gender stereotypes were developed.

65. Awareness and education on different identities, including, but not limited to sexual orientation, gender identity, and cultural differences (students with different first languages, roma students, etc) has been introduced to schools through different evidence-based programmes, such as *KiVa* Antbullying Program (introduced in 2017, renewed and updated in 2020), *VEPA* (internationally known as *PAX* Good Behavior Game), *Hooliv klass* (Caring Class) and other programmes. These programmes are based on intervention and are adopted by schools individually. Such programmes reach about 70% of Estonian schools and 80% of Estonian preschools. In cooperation with student representative boards, students have been given the opportunity, by way of different calls for proposals, to suggest activities which aim to increase mutual tolerance, mutual respect regardless of individual differences, and encourage an overall supportive environment in schools and in the community.

Gender-based violence against women

Question 9

Table: Experiences of physical violence in the past 5 years among Estonian women

<i>Age group</i>	<i>percentage</i>
16-29	24
30-44	24
45-54	15
55-64	10
65+	8

Source: Fundamental Rights survey, 2020

Table: Number of crimes of domestic violence, 2016-2021

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
3017	2632	3607	4119	3987	3760

Source: Ministry of Justice, Kriminaalpoliitika.ee

Table: Distribution of violent crimes related to domestic violence by type of crime in 2021 (%)

Physical abuse	83%
Threatening	10%
Sexual offenses	5%
Other violent crimes	2%

Source: Ministry of Justice, Kriminaalpoliitika.ee

66. Violence prevention has always been done in cooperation of the state and civil society. The Governmental Strategy for Preventing Violence in 2015-2020 was implemented in cooperation with NGOs. Also, in preparing for the new Violence Prevention Agreement 2021-2025, there was close cooperation with the civil society, including women's NGOs. The Strategy's implementation is coordinated by the Ministry of Justice. Seven ministries are responsible for the implementation; their representatives made up the lead group of the Strategy. Violence Prevention network, including all the relevant ministries, police, victim support, prosecutors' office, NGOs etc has its e-mail list and meetings.

67. All the women's rights organisations receive all law proposals, national strategy proposals etc. relevant to women's rights protection. There is obligation for every state institution to include interested parties, including citizen's organisations, into the discussions and decision making. The procedure regarding legislation is described in the Rules for Good Legislative Practice and Legislative Drafting as described in section on National Machinery for the Advancement of Women.

68. The Victim Support Act gives the legislative framework for national victim support. All the services are organised/provided by the SIB and paid from the state budget. Services available for victims of violence against women are following:

- National victim support service includes counselling of victims and assisting victims in communicating with state and local government authorities and legal persons. In every county there is at least one victim support specialist working, mostly in joint premises with the police. Most clients of victim support specialists are women who have fallen victims of violence in close relationship;
- Women's shelters are specially for victims of violence against women. All service providers are NGOs/women's organisations. Women's shelters are providing victims with a free service package initial, case-based, and psychological counselling, psychotherapy, legal counselling, and shelter service if necessary. Service is available in every county in Estonia and is accessible 24/7;
- Around-the-clock victim support crisis hotline 116 006 for victims of violence, including violence against women. Counsellors provide primary counselling, advice on how to proceed with the case, including suggestions on services and safety planning. Counselling is available also via website www.palunabi.ee, where one can use chat to contact the counsellor;

- Services for victims of sexual abuse/rape are being coordinated by the SIB in cooperation with hospitals, police, NGOs etc. Immediate trauma support and collecting of biological evidence takes place in 4 hospitals in 4 regions (Tallinn, Tartu, Kohtla-Järve, Pärnu);
- Support services for prostituted/sexually exploited women include psychological, legal, social counselling, medical services, outreach work (services are arranged by the SIB and the Health Development Institute). Prostitution is considered as a form of violence against women and women are treated as victims of violence. Low-threshold services are provided by NGO Eluliin that has extensive experience in supporting women in prostitution;
- Services for trafficked men and women include accommodation, catering, financial assistance, psychological and legal counselling, interpretation. Starting from 2021, the service is provided by the SIB to enable better cooperation with the law enforcement and more flexible service provision.

69. Estonia's new strategy to prevent and fight violence, the Violence Prevention Agreement, was confirmed by the Government in July 2021 and sets out 14 measures for violence prevention. The agreement does not include a complete list of violence prevention activities, but the focus is on problems that still need more attention or have so far been overshadowed or where the expected progress has not been made compared to earlier strategies. Measures or directions of work are following: 1. Attitudes and norms condemning violence and awareness of violence; 2. Prevention of violence in educational institutions, youth work and hobby education and activities; 3. Supporting children and young people who have problems with violence; 4. Prevention and reduction of domestic violence; 5. Recognizing and preventing violence against the elderly; 6. Violence prevention in the digital world; 7. Prevention of human trafficking; 8. Prevention of sexual violence; 9. Specialists' awareness of violence and intervention skills; 10. Victim-friendly procedure; 11. Better protection and support for victims of violence; 12. Supporting non-violence; 13. A stronger role for health and social care providers in preventing violence; 14. Investigating the impact of violence prevention policies. The implementation of the agreement will be monitored annually by the Government.

70. Estonia is currently drafting a new Victim Support Act. The purpose of the new Victim Support Act is to ensure requirements for service providers, to describe all services provided through victim support to victims of various crimes, to expand the target groups of psychological assistance and to simplify the procedures for compensation to crime victims. The law introduces for the first time the principles of treatment of victims, the educational requirements of specialists working with victims, specifies, among other things, the principles of providing services to victims of human trafficking and supplements the list of services. The law should come into force in 2023. The new law is being drafted in close cooperation with service providers and relevant state organisations, including prosecutor's office, police, ministries etc.

71. In May 2022 Parliament adopted the amendment of the Penal Code, setting the minimum age of sexual self-determination to sixteen years, with the exception of when the age difference between the legal person and the person aged fourteen to sixteen is not bigger than five years.

Question 10

72. In view of the previous Committee's recommendations (para.19 b.), we would like to inform that there have been no developments regarding amending the definition of rape at the Penal Code.

73. The remarks and behaviours with a sexual or sexist connotation regarding the definition of sexual harassment have been regulated in the GEA.

Question 11

74. In Estonia, violation of restraining order (also named as restriction order according to the § 3312 of Penal Code), or any other measure of protection of personality right imposed by a court decision, is criminalised if this poses a danger to the life, health or property of persons, or is repeated violation. Violation of protection order is punishable by a pecuniary punishment or imprisonment up to one year.

75. Number of registered violations of protection orders has been steadily declining in recent years. The data in years 2017-2021 is presented in table 1. A large proportion of all registered violations of restraining orders is committed by a small group of offenders. For example, in 2021, 63% of all violations were committed by nine offenders, in 2019 half of the violations were committed by 5 offenders and in 2017, 79% of all violations were committed by three offenders. The median of registered violations per violator of the restraining order has remained within one or two in recent years. The vast majority of restraining orders in criminal proceedings is applied in cases of domestic violence, mainly in intimate partner violence cases. Thus, a typical violator of a restraining order is a man, who violated a restraining order imposed in order to protect his former partner or spouse.

Table: Number of registered violations of restraining orders (§ 3312 of Penal Code), 2017-2021

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
193	176	113	79	60

Source: The Ministry of Justice

76. Data of detained persons, who have been suspected in violation of restraining orders, is presented in the following table. In most cases, persons detained were also suspected of crimes other than violation of protection order.

Table: Number of persons detained during the year, who have been violating protection order, 2018-2021

2018	2019	2020	2021
5*	8**	13*	6

* One person was detained twice per year.

** Two persons were detained twice per year.

Source: The Ministry of Justice

Table: Number of offences and persons sent to court by prosecutor's office in cases of violation of protection order, 2017-2021

	<i>Sent to court</i>	
	Offences	Persons
2017	214	16
2018	166	19
2019	82	30
2020	80	25
2021	50	32

Source: The Ministry of Justice

77. The draft amendments of the Family Law Act that contained inter alia the provisions concerning domestic violence when determining custody of children, did not receive sufficient support by other ministries and are currently on hold. We hope to continue work on this draft in 2023.

78. In September 2019, amendments to the Code of Civil Procedure entered into force, according to which a court must take into account whether a participant in the proceeding has been violent towards another participant in the proceeding. According to § 551 (3) *Upon application of measures for interim protection of the claim as a measure of interim protection of a right the court takes account of whether a parent has been violent towards a child or the other parent.* § 552¹ (1) also states that *Upon organising the hearing of a child, the court takes account of whether a parent has been violent towards a child or the other parent,* and § 558 (1) states that *If a proceeding is conducted in the matter of endangerment of the welfare of a child, the court hears the parents in person and discusses the protection of the child's interests with them.* Further, § 561 (1) states *When steering the parties towards settling the matter by agreement or drawing their attention to the possibility to seek the assistance of a family counsellor, the court takes account of whether a parent has been violent towards a child or the other parent.* The provisions concern family matters dealt with under the rules for actions by petition. The use of remedies does not depend on whether the injured party is a woman.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

Question 12

79. Estonia has a national policy and a strategic development plan of the Government of the Republic for combating trafficking in human beings since 2006. One of the fields of the latest governmental strategy [Violence Prevention Agreement 2021-2025](#) is fight against and preventing trafficking.

80. State services for victims of crime, incl. victims of THB, are coordinated through SIB which is state authority organising support for families, children, also special services are provided for the victims of THB, sexually abused children, and for the victims of domestic violence. Support services for victims of THB are regulated in the Victim Support Act.

81. Since May 2021 all the victim support services are provided by the SIB. Before the shelter services and psychological counselling and judicial counselling services were provided by NGO under the public procurement contract and until 2019 hotline services as well. All the

services to victims of THB are now organised through SIB. Main major goal is to provide client centred service and follow the client's basic and primary needs. All clients receive information about their rights and opportunities in four languages: Estonian, Russian, English, and Spanish. Police also works proactively in detecting pimping and sexual exploitation cases through early identification web-based monitor system for advertisements for selling/buying sex and also for active contact making and awareness raising of the state social help assistance possibilities with potential victims of THB/persons engaged in prostitution. Estonia also has victim identification and referral guidelines that is being used by police, prosecutors, labour inspectors and other relevant parties to make sure that victims are properly identified and referred to assisting services provided by the SIB.

Table: THB victims identified over the years of 2017-2020. Information provided to GLOTIP 2021 report

	2017	2018	2019	2020	Additional Comments
	Reported	Reported	Reported	Reported	
Persons identified by State authorities as victims of trafficking in persons					
Total number of victims of trafficking	10	12	12	5	The data covers information about the identified victims.
Adults	6	5	12	5	
Adult females	5	5	10	4	
Adult males	1		2	1	2020: 1 male, came to the services as an child in the
Other adults					
Minors	4	7			
Female children (girls)	4	5			
Male children (boys)		2			
Other children					
Unknown					
Source(s) of the data provided in this table: National Social Insurance Board					

82. In addition to identified victims, services are offered to presumed victims, regarding whom the investigation has not been carried out which might identify them as victims of THB crimes, but they might be related to crimes of pimping for example, or they have experienced violations of labour rights and labour conditions and their cases have been dealt with in the Labour Inspectorate.

83. Until 2019 we have had almost only Estonian people as victims, but since then the situation has changed. In 2019-2021 we had migrant women and men related mainly to pimping cases and also presumed victims of labour exploitation cases were detected.

Table: Presumed victims of sexual and labour exploitation, 2019-2021

Year	Presumed victims of sexual exploitation	Presumed victims of labour exploitation
2019	54	111
2020	17	12
2021	28	7

Source: The Ministry of Justice

84. Victim support services are provided to all victims of crime by the SIB and under the Victim Support Act. This Act also offers specialised services to trafficking victims and presumed victims of trafficking.

Table: Persons prosecuted and convicted of committing trafficking crimes (Penal Code 133). Information provided to GLOTIP 2021 report

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total number of persons prosecuted	15	9	8	10
Adults	15	9	7	9
Adult females	1			1
Adult males	14	9	7	7
Other adults				
Minors			1	1
Female children (girls)				
Male children (boys)			1	1
Other children				
Unknown				
Indicate the article(s) of the criminal code you refer to: Penal Code 133				
Source(s) of the data provided in this table: Register of Criminal Proceedings				
	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total number of persons convicted	15	4	5	8
Adults	14	4	5	7
Adult females	1			1
Adult males		4	5	7
Other adults		0		
Minors				
Female children (girls)				
Male children (boys)				
Other children				
Unknown				1
Indicate the article(s) of the criminal code you refer to: Penal Code § 133				
Source(s) of the data provided in this table: Information System of Courts				

Question 13

85. Support services for prostituted/sexually exploited women include psychological, legal, social counselling, medical services, outreach work (services are arranged by the SIB and Health Development Institute and paid by the state budget). Prostitution is considered as a form of violence against women and women are treated as victims of violence. Low-threshold services are provided by NGO Eluliin that has extensive experience in supporting women in prostitution. The NGO also does outreach work and browses online platforms to identify women in need of help. If women wish to leave prostitution, in addition to services provided by NGOs, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (EUIF) provides extensive counselling

relevant to (future) job-seekers. Benefits, training, psychological counselling, work trial, job club are all available for women who want to leave prostitution. NGO Eluliin keeps contact with women and provides support in job search as well.

86. Every year, around 300-400 women involved in prostitution are being supported. The Police and NGO Eluliin share the opinion that around 700 women in Estonia are involved in prostitution.

Participation in political and public life

Question 14

87. In 2018-2019, a project “The Role of Women and Men in Local Governments and Councils”, co-financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs, was carried out by a think tank Praxis. The aim of the project was to give an overview of the role of women and men in shaping the local life by collecting and analysing data of the education level, age, pay and occupation of the employees of local governments. The results were published in 2019 as a policy brief which can be used to improve the situation of women in local governments in the future.

88. According to the analyses, 31% of Estonian local government council members are women and 69% are men. 75% of vice-chairperson and 83% chairperson are men. Only 25% of vice-chairperson are women and 17% of the chairpersons are women.

89. Among local government employees there are almost three quarters (73%) of women. At the same time, men are dominating in the elected positions - 71% of men and 29% of women are deputy mayors / deputy rural municipality elders and as many as 83% and 17% of women among mayors / rural municipality elders.

90. As of December 2021, women account for 26% of members of Parliament (26 women and 75 men. Among the 51st Government of the Republic of Estonia there are 6 female ministers (including the Prime Minister) and women account for 40% of ministers.

91. According to the #SHEcurity Index, in 2019 47% of Estonian ambassadors were women and Estonia employs more women than men in their diplomatic corps – there were 61% of women in diplomatic corps in 2019.

92. There is no data collected about women in judiciary, media sector and in state-owned companies.

93. In 2019-2020, the think tank Praxis implemented a project “Nudging Women to Power”, financed from the European Commissions` Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme, with a co-financing from the Ministry of Social Affairs, the National Foundation of Civil Society and the Nordic Council of Ministers. The general objective of the project was to improve women’s access to high-level political decision-making. This project helped to increase knowledge, awareness and understanding of the importance of gender equality in public policy making and how the media as well as political organisations can help to empower women in achieving higher positions as well as increase their visibility and credibility in public domains. Based on existing literature, experiences of politicians, and behavioural insights, recommendations and practical tools were developed to support women’s wider participation in politics and high-level decision-making.

94. From 2014 to 2020 integration policy was framed by development plan “Integrating Estonia 2020” with an overall goal of a socially coherent society where people with different language and cultural backgrounds actively participate in social life and share democratic values. One of the subgoals of the plan was a continued support for the integration of permanent residents whose native language and culture is other than Estonian. The goal had three measures: 1) Creating opportunities to increase the social activity and support the integration

of Estonian permanent residents with foreign origin; 2) Supporting legal-political integration; 3) Promoting equal treatment in the labour market. More information on the third measure can be found in section on Employment.

95. The largest activity of the second sub-goal was project „Terms and conditions of the provision of support for activities promoting integration in Estonian society” 2014-2022 financed by the European Social Fund (ESF). The participants in the trainings of the program improved their Estonian language skills and frequency of its use, and their knowledge and skills of participating in public sphere, civil society and labour market improved. Totally 11,685 people (most of them were women), or about 4% of the target group of lowly integrated permanent residents, participated in the project in 2014-2020. Among them, 1,424 people participated in the trainings on knowledge of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia and the Citizenship Act, which is 35% of those who passed the citizenship exam in the period 2014-2020.

96. In November 2021, the Government approved the Cohesive Estonia Strategy 2021-2030. Its general objective is that Estonia is a cohesive and inclusive society. Subobjective of the strategy in the field of integration is the following: Estonia supporting adaptation and integration - Estonian society is cohesive and stable where people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds carry the Estonian identity, participate actively in social life, share democratic values and a common cultural, information and communication space, and feel a sense of unity. One of the key policies of the plan is supporting an innovative and responsible labour market by: improving access to the labour market; services for people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds; supporting the recruitment of potential employees with other native languages in state and local government agencies; improving the ability of employers to cope with a multicultural and multilingual environment.

97. In 2019 the Government established a high-level Accessibility Task Force, led by the State Office of Estonia. The aim of the Task Force was to identify the situation and problems of accessibility in all major aspects of the environment and society, including access to public buildings and institutions and all public spaces and their various parts (commercial enterprises, cultural and entertainment institutions, public outdoor gyms, light traffic roads, sports facilities, etc.), public and private services (banking services, television and audiovisual services, etc.), e-services, residential real estate and means of transport. Its objective was also to develop policy guidelines and solutions to move towards having an accessible society, public space, and services in the next ten years. The aim was to implement the principles of accessibility and universal design as a natural part of all policies, with a priority that the public sector would lead the implementation of these principles; as well as raising awareness and competence on accessibility throughout society. The accessibility of decision-making was one of the objectives as well. Various ministries, state agencies and representatives of local government, representatives of employers and NGOs were involved in the work of the Task Force. In the fall of 2021, the final report of the Task Force was submitted and presented to the Government. The recommendations were approved by the Government and the Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for coordination of the implementation.

98. Since 2017 harassing pursuit (§ 157-2 of Penal Code) has been criminalised in Estonia regardless of if it is committed offline or online. For example, in 2021 almost three-quarters of all registered harassing pursuit offences were committed by means of e-mail, text (or online) messages or internet (social media) or digital devices (cameras) and 90% of the perpetrators were men. No data is collected according to the public status of victim, but it is known that in recent years there have also been registered some rare cases where public figure has fallen victim of cyber or offline harassment.

Table: Registered harassing pursuit offences, 2017-2021

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
87	200	202	225	167

Source: The Ministry of Justice

99. As cybercrime in general is increasing, we also turn more attention to prevention of cyber violence. For example, the Violence Prevention Agreement 2021-2025 sets out prevention of digital (cyber) violence as one of 14 priority measures of violence prevention.

Nationality

Question 15

100. Everyone who meets the conditions provided for in the Citizenship Act can apply for Estonian citizenship. In the procedure for acquiring citizenship, it does not matter whether the person is a citizen of another state, beneficiary of international protection or a stateless person – the procedure is the same. There are no gender differences in the requirements for acquiring citizenship. Throughout the asylum process, women are provided with effective legal protection, including by providing legal aid, legal representation, and assistance, as necessary and on an equal basis. The same is valid in the case of applying for Estonian citizenship.

Table: Persons with undetermined citizenship who have acquired Estonian citizenship

Year	Women	Men
2017	220	194
2018	178	148
2019	189	161
2020	208	190
2021	306	240

Source: The Ministry of Interior

Education

Question 16

101. To tackle gender segregation in education and the labour market, two 18-months applied research projects have been implemented. Both projects are concentrating on finding new possibilities to use nudging for promoting gender equality and are co-funded by the Estonian Research Council from the European Regional Development Fund, and the Ministry of Social Affairs. Project “Glass Walls and Ceiling in the Estonian ICT Sector” was finalised in the first half of 2021. It had a specific aim to ascertain nudges to increase the share of women among ICT sector students and employees. Nudges were developed and tested for three target groups – high school students, employers, and public/parents.

102. Project “Nudging to Support Stereotype-free Career Choices and Working Conditions” was finalised in spring 2022. The aim of the research project was to help find ways to support teachers and career advisers in promoting career choices that are free of gender stereotypes, and

to support employers in ensuring equal and fair working conditions and stereotype free recruitment and promotion. Nudges were developed for three target groups: teachers at general education schools, career specialists and employers. The biggest barriers to dealing with gender stereotypes at school and in work life (as determined by the qualitative survey) were taken into consideration when developing the nudges. The total of three nudges were piloted with the help of volunteer partners. The main conclusion of the pilot is the pressing need for a more systematic approach in tackling stereotypes although nudges can be used as an additional measure.

103. Results of these two projects are laying the groundwork for the next steps and measures aimed at decreasing the gender segregation in education and labour market, with a special focus on increasing the share of women in STEM, including ICT. Promoting women's and girls' choices of non-traditional fields of education, such as STEM and digital technology, is one of the main objectives in a set of measures that address structural problems in the Estonian labour market. These measures and activities include decreasing gender-stereotyping and increasing co-operation between schools, vocational training institutions, recruitment agencies and employers. Preparations for these activities started in 2022 and will be implemented in 2023-2029, with co-funding from the Structural Funds.

104. Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Competence Centre has produced guidance materials for teachers supervising afterschool activities in the field of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The guidance material aims to raise awareness on gender biases and stereotypes and promote choices that are free of gender stereotypes. Also, a booklet was produced for parents.

105. Several initiatives by private and third sector actors, as well as state-initiated activities, aim to increase girls' interest towards ICT. These initiatives include HK Unicorn Squad (developed as a private initiative), aiming to increase girls' (aged 7-14) interest towards technical fields, robotics and STEM fields; Tech Sisters (third sector initiative), aiming to increase girls' and women's interest towards IT and technology; Digigirls, developed for girls (grades 7-12), is a series of events, mostly as workshops, to introduce ICT fields, designing apps, web environments etc; and StartIT (an initiative of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, to encourage girls and young women to study and work in IT fields. Several general state-initiated awareness-raising programmes have also been initiated.

106. According to the document "Requirements for Study Literature, Minimum Requirements for Study Literature Review and Reviewers, and Types of Minimum Study Literature Provided by the State by Class and Subject", the study literature must correspond to certain requirements, including the following criteria: the fundamental values of education specified in § 3 of the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act and in the general part of state curricula, the concept of learning, the general and subject-specific objectives of teaching and learning, the applied learning outcomes and content, the tasks of the school and the learning environment; the information contained in the study literature and the manner of its presentation are age-appropriate, diverse and methodologically expedient, supporting the development of the moral, physical and social development of the pupil, an integrated worldview and the ability to learn independently.

107. There is currently no up to date and extensive research on gender stereotypes in school textbooks and teaching materials. Such research is planned to be carried out by the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2024. The analysis aims to explore how are gender stereotypes, especially those that negatively affect pupils' interest and willingness to study and work in non-traditional fields, such as STEM and ICT for girls, manifested in the study materials and textbooks used in Estonian schools.

108. In 2021, a report titled "Current situation of gender equality and ways of improvement in Estonian science" was completed by the Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) of the University of Tartu. The report concluded that the proportion of women in science and technology has not increased much over the years; that the number of men and women among

academics is practically equal, however there are large differences between professions (women are less likely to be in senior positions than men); and there are fears that gender mainstreaming is at odds with supporting the most competent people, which impedes the discussion on gender-sensitive measures in academia.

109. According to the latest data (2018), the share of women researchers in the European Union is 33% (incl. 44% in the public sector, 42% in the higher education sector and 21% in the business sector): the share of women researchers in Estonia is significantly higher than the EU average. The pay gap between women and men is the lowest in Europe.

110. One of the activities of the Estonian RDI Strategy and Entrepreneurship Strategy 2021-2035 to ensure the basic capacity of the research system, is to support research institutions and universities in developing and implementing an academic career model that offers flexible, equal opportunities (incl. gender equality), diversity and greater stability.

111. The Estonian Research Agency contributes to the promotion of gender equality in several ways. In 2020, a gender equality plan was adopted (renewed in December 2021), which raises gender awareness among its staff and members of its collections and commissions, pays additional attention to the principles of equal treatment, strives for greater gender balance in collections, commissions and other experts, and grants, awards and among applicants and beneficiaries. Additional attention is paid to gender awareness in communication activities and to equal treatment and opportunities for the institution's staff.

112. To increase the visibility of female researchers, Estonia participates in the AcademiaNet project: in cooperation with positively evaluated Estonian research institutions, recognized researchers are nominated annually to the AcademiaNet portal of top researchers. There are also two Horizon 2020 projects promoting gender equality: GEARING-Roles and Gender-Net Plus to exchange experiences with partners from other countries.

113. The first "Women in Science" day was celebrated in 2021 (an initiative of the University of Tartu and the Estonian Young Academy of Sciences), another initiative includes the yearly scholarship l'Oréal Baltic for Women in Science Programme.

114. The Estonian Women's Studies and Resource Centre (ENUT) has been publishing the first and only peer-reviewed journal of women's and men's studies (Ariadne Lõng) from 2000-2018. After a short hiatus in 2018, ENUT plans to re-launch it and continue publishing the magazine as a part of strategic partnership agreement with the Ministry of Social Affairs. ENUT also maintains a library for women's and gender studies and provides support for students interested in gender studies and gender issues in their research field.

115. As stipulated in the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act Estonian education is based on principle of inclusive education (§ 6. Principles of organisation of studies that 1) "general education of good quality adheres to the principles of inclusive education and is equally available to all persons regardless of their social and economic background, nationality, gender, place of residence or special educational needs;"). Inclusion in education means that every child is offered an educational arrangement that suits their abilities and needs. Office of Inclusive Education in Education and Youth Board publishes guidance materials and advice to help teachers, kindergartens, schools, and municipalities better engage children with different needs and families to better support the development of their special children as well as offers counselling for parents, teachers, and other specialist in schools.

116. The principles of inclusive education and promotion of equal opportunities are put into practice through our Education Strategy for 2035, which aims to provide the necessary preconditions for providing access to high quality education on equal grounds, regardless of their social and cultural background, regardless of their age, gender, special needs, etc.

117. In 2022 the Estonian Women's Associations Roundtable in cooperation with the Association of Pre-School Teachers in Estonia provided trainings for preschool teachers on gender sensitive teaching and education as a part of strategic partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Employment

Question 17

118. In August 2018, the Government approved and sent to the Parliament a draft amendment to the GEA, aimed at increasing pay transparency. Unfortunately, due to expiry of the mandate of the Parliament in February 2019, the draft was dropped from the proceedings. From 2021 Estonian Government has supported European Union directive aimed at ensuring that the right to equal pay is upheld across all member states. For more information see section on Legislative Framework.

119. From January 2019 to 2022 research project REGE – “Reducing the Gender Wage Gap” was carried out with an aim to decrease the still unexplained part of the gender pay gap by clearing up further reasons for it through linking together different existing databases, adding qualitative analysis, and using simulation and prognosis models to design evidence-based policy scenarios. The project also aimed to create a low-administrative-cost database for up-to-date data on gender pay gap. Based on the analysis, user-friendly digital awareness-raising features have been developed. The project was co-financed from the Regional Development Fund through RITA programme managed by the Estonian Research Council.

120. The research showed that linking together different existing databases enabled to explain significantly larger part of the gender pay gap – 40% instead of previous 15%. Individual level characteristics, such as level of education, labour market status, age, and nationality, explain only marginal share of the pay gap, while the average salary paid, and the share of women employed by the employer play more substantial role. Occupation and sector of economic activity are moderately important in explaining the gap. The results also show that in the lowest income quintile men earn approximately 5% more than women and almost all the pay gap can be explained, mostly by individual characteristics (age, nationality, education, mother tongue) and characteristics of the employer. With the parametrics included in the analysis, whilst almost all of the pay gap could be explained with the low-wage earners, only half could be explained for the medium-wage earners and only a fractions for high-wage earners. The research also showed that in Estonia women with children earn almost 25% less than women without children - the average working income of mothers is still less 7 years after giving birth than before the birth of the child.

121. In addition to the research and the digital tool development the project also contributed to the awareness raising with different art projects, digital game development and media appearances. Research results and policy proposals from this project are used for future policy plans. Based on the prototype developed in the REGE project, in the coming years, the tool is further developed to make it available to employers to increase the number of organisations analysing relevant data from the perspective of gender pay gap and the principle of equal pay, and making informed decisions based on this.

122. During the reporting period several other factors have been contributing to the decrease of the pay gap. The minimum wage has increased 52% comparing the 2016 and 2022. The increase in the minimum wage has also helped to reduce the gender pay gap and has had a positive effect on reducing the gender and age pay gap in the lowest wage groups. Moreover, successive governments have taken steps to ensure adequate wages in female-dominated sectors, such as education. There has been a pan-party political commitment to raise the (average) salaries of basic school and upper-secondary school teachers over the last years, with an aim to reach 120% of the average salary in Estonia. Their salaries have almost doubled during the last eight years, although actual salaries of both primary and secondary school teachers still need to increase to reach the OECD average.

123. From 2019 to 2020 the project InWeGe (Income, Wealth, Gender) coordinated by the Commissioner’s Office was carried out. The project provided an innovative and statistics-based

web application primarily for women to allow them to make decisions and better choices in the labour market. The project monitored the gender gap in income and wealth over the life cycle of people with the help of economists, and it also analyses the gender-based differentiation in income and pension assets, focusing on trends dominating in Estonia. The analysis also uses comparative data from other European countries. Women's wages, assets, and pensions are under examination. As a result of the research, a web application for gender differences in income and wealth was developed. The web application can be used by anyone who wants to make a job-related decision based on the current level of wages (currently prevalent in the market), given one's educational background, gender, and other data.

Question 18

124. During 2018-2022 the Ministry of Social Affairs has amended the parental leave and benefit system with the aim to encourage more parents to combine work and family life and especially fathers to increase their share in care responsibilities.

125. The parental leave and benefit reform has been implemented in several parts. From 1st March 2018 parents may earn parental benefit as well as income and the parental benefit will be reduced only when the monthly income exceeds 1.5 times Estonian average salary. From 1st July 2020 all fathers will have an individual right for paternity leave and benefit for 30 days and 19 months of parental benefit and leave can be used in one part or in several parts at any time until the child turns three years old. The fathers may use their right 30 days before the due-date of the child and until the child turns three years old. After using the individual right, the parents may use the sharable parental leave and benefit.

126. These changes have had a positive effect on increasing women's participation in the labor market. The proportion of fathers receiving parental benefit is increasing, amounting to 16% of all recipients of parental benefit in 2021. In 2017 the share of fathers receiving parental benefit was 8%. The number of parental benefit recipients, who receive income from work has also increased from 9% to 20% during last five years, which means that the parents are increasingly using the possibilities to combine work and family life.

127. The second part of the amendments (came into force 1st April 2022) allow for more flexible forms to reconcile work and family life. The changes allow both parents to be on leave and/or receive parental benefit up to 60 days. When parents use this option together, the overall period will be reduced proportionally by the days used together. Also, according to the law amendments parents may stop and re-start receiving the benefit daily until the child turns three years old. This enables both parents to share the care responsibility and work part time. The maternity leave period is shortened from 140 days to 100 days and the parents will have a longer period of paternal leave and benefit, which is shareable by both parents.

128. According to Statistics Estonia (Estonian Labour Force Survey), the employment rate of female by presence of a child less than 2 years old has increased in recent years. In 2018 the female employment rate for such target group was 43% and in 2021 it had increased 4 percent points (to 47%). However, the employment rate of men by presence of a child less than 2 years old has decreased in 2018-2021 from 95% to 93% accordingly.

129. In addition to the media campaign "Grow Together" which was carried out from November to December 2017 calling on fathers to spend more time with their children, including using parental leave, in 2021 the Ministry of Social Affairs, in co-operation with the SIB and the consulting company EMOR, conducted a research on the use of paternity leave and parental benefit. The aim of this research was to map possible restrictions when it comes to the use of paternity leave and the use of paternity benefit. By mapping the necessary information and discovering constraints, the project team developed nudges that would guide fathers to make more use of the opportunity granted to them. In the long scope, the aim was to increase the use of paternity leave and the use of paternity benefit.

130. In 2019-2021 the Commissioner partnered in the European Commission's project Parents@Work, which focused on work-life balance best practice and recognising discriminatory practices in the workplace. The project aimed to improve the protection against discrimination of pregnant workers and those who have family obligations.

131. According to analysis from 2021 by Eesti Rakendusuringute Keskus Centar and financed by the ESF preschool childcare in Estonia is mainly organised through nurseries run by local authorities. In total, there were 557 local authority owned nurseries in 2019, which formed 67% of all nursery and childcare service providers. This was followed by private childcare service providers with 192 establishments. There were significantly fewer private nurseries and local authority run childcare service establishments (54 and 25 accordingly).

132. In regions with higher population density, the number of local authority owned nurseries per 1,000 children is lower. Even though there are more private service providers in higher population density areas, there are 6.2 nurseries or childcare service providers per 1,000 children in central regions, compared to twice as many in peripheral regions.

133. There were 69,624 preschool-age nursery and childcare service users, which forms 61% of all 0–7-year olds. In 2015 it was proportionally similar at 62%. The frequency of use of nursery and childcare service increases with age. According to the parent survey, the services are used by 4% of children under the age of 12 months, 21% of those aged 12 to 24 months, 78% of 2-year-olds and 90% or more of those aged 3 and above.

134. The largest share (90%) of children using nursery or childcare service use a local authority owned nursery. Childcare service is used for children under 3 years of age: 2.1% of 2-year-olds and 7.5% of 2–3-year-olds use the childcare service. The use of childcare service is different in Harjumaa and Tartumaa, where 20% and 17% of 2–3-year-olds use childcare service accordingly. Childcare service is specifically used in these counties to alleviate the shortage of places in local authority owned nurseries. Around half of the parents (approx. 57% according to the parent survey) would like to change their existing childcare arrangement. Most of these parents (51%) would like to increase the use of some form of childcare.

135. During the reporting period 976 childcare places were created financed by the ESF. Services for children with disabilities such as childcare, support person and transport services are organised by local governments in accordance with the Social Welfare Act. From 2015 until 2020, the SIB supported the provision of services to children with severe and profound disabilities through its procurement partners financed by the ESF. From 2021 local governments can apply for support from the ESF for the provision of transport services, childcare, and support person services for children with severe and profound disabilities.

136. From 2016 the Ministry of Social Affairs has developed a Family Friendly Employer program and badge funded by the ESF. From 2017 over 130 organisations have been part of the program.

137. Long-term care has been on the political agenda during recent years. A special high-level task force that was assembled at the Government Office from 2016 to 2017 developed general policy guidelines and solutions to decrease the care burden. First proposals about reorganisation of LTC in Estonia were approved in 2018 and since then several action plans to the Estonian Cabinet of Ministers have submitted. Changes in long-term care cannot be implemented without preparatory and supportive activities in social welfare and health, as well as support to local governments.

138. In 2017, Estonia started piloting a care coordination project in close cooperation with local governments, family practitioners and regional hospitals. The purpose of this project is to create a person-centered coordination system for people with complex care needs. Project is currently going on in six regions in Estonia.

139. A flexible respite care service for people with a mental disability was launched on 1st January 2018. The aim of this service is to free up time of family members to support their participation in the labour market.

140. A new leave form (carer leave) entered into force under the Employment Contract Act from 1st July 2018. Employees can use additional leave (5 days per calendar year) to care for an adult family member with a profound disability. The leave allowance is compensated based on minimum wage. In 2022 steps are taken to extend scope of persons who are entitled to this leave. The right to use the carer leave will be linked to the actual need for care of the person cared for, and not by the severity of the disability identified by the SIB as it is today. The paid leave benefit rate will be increased from the minimum wage to the average income subject to social tax contributions.

141. In September 2018, the Dementia Competence Centre (DCC) was founded. The focus areas of the DCC are integration of service provision; training of service providers and stakeholders; supporting people with dementia and their families; coordinating academic research, communication, and social awareness on dementia-related topics. DCC coordinates support groups and provides education and training seminars on various topics regarding dementia. In December 2018, the Ministry of Social Affairs issued an open call to allocate funds for dementia-friendly environmental design in care homes. This open call is envisioned to be working in tandem with the DCC whereby the physical environment is adapted for care needs of people with dementia and the social environment (i.e. knowledge, skills and values of caregivers) is empowered by specialists working at the Dementia Competence Centre via education and trainings. 26 care homes were granted, which resulted in the adaptation of 806 service places for people with dementia (including the adaptation of 682 previous places and the creation of 124 new places).

142. With the support of EU structural funds several projects and other measures have been initiated in recent years to support local governments in their tasks and address regional disparities. A mentoring programme to the North-East Estonian local municipalities was developed in December 2019 to encourage them to design and provide more social welfare services. Local governments, private and third sector service providers have had a possibility to apply for funding to develop social welfare services for persons with disabilities and the elderly. The developed services are for example support person service, personal assistance service, day-care centres, interval-care and home-care service, counselling services and support groups for people with care burden, integrated welfare services and other services that help to reduce care burden and enable labour market participation of carers.

143. In 2021 the Ministry of Social Affairs prepared a bill to change the Social Welfare Act and Family Law Act, which entered into force in the second quarter of 2022. These changes lay foundation for the organisation of long-term care and greater support for people with care burden and are following:

- Defining a long-term care in legislation for the first time. According to this definition long-term care means providing care for a person who needs help for a longer period in daily activities because of his or her physical or mental or work capacity has degraded. Long-term care includes healthcare services, care services and support services for everyday coping;
- Local government has to prefer home care services to institutional services. As a first choice, local government has to provide for a chance to live in home and offer adequate support, e.g., domestic service, support person service, personal assistant service;
- Local government is obliged to identify/asses the need for support for a person with a care burden. While evaluating a person's need for assistance, local government has to identify a person with care burden, assess his/her need for support and provide appropriate assistance (trainings, services etc.) when it is needed;

- Second-degree relatives are no longer required to provide maintenance. It means that grandchildren are released from the maintenance obligation towards their grandparents and vice versa in case of adult grandchildren.

144. In 2021 the Ministry of Social Affairs also initiated amendment of the Employment Contracts Act and related laws so that employees and officials with caring responsibilities have the right to apply for flexible working conditions (for example, part-time or flexible working hours, teleworking, etc.). In addition, the amendment provides additional protection for employees and officials with caring responsibilities in the event of termination of employment or dismissal, and the reversal of the burden of proof in disputes concerning termination of employment or dismissal.

145. In coming years, the next step is to implement new financing scheme for 24-hour general care service provided outside home. The main aim is to reduce out of pocket payments for care recipients and their families by increasing public funding. A separate financing scheme will be established, according to which the financing of the service would be divided between the individual and the public sector to a greater extent than before. Decisions to receive additional funds for the state budget will be made by the government in autumn 2022.

Question 19

146. Persons who suspect they have been discriminated (definition includes sexual harassment) against, can turn to the Commissioner who advises and assists anyone who has experienced discrimination. The Commissioner monitors compliance with the requirements of the GEA and the ETA. The Complaint to the Commissioner can, if necessary, also be submitted anonymously. The complaint can be submitted on the Commissioner's website, via e-mail or in person. It is also possible to get counselling on the phone or via social media.

147. There is a webpage (ahistamine.ee) created in 2020 by the Commissioner on harassment explaining what gender-based or sexual harassment is, how could it be prevented and how to act if one has experienced harassment.

148. In the case of physical violence, the person should turn to the police. If the measures and resources applied by the employer do not ensure safe working environment or if the employer refuses to deal with the problem, person experiencing harassment can turn to the Labour Inspectorate.

149. Measures to reduce horizontal and vertical occupational segregation are mostly described in sections on National Machinery for the Advancement of Women, Participation in Political and Public Life, and Stereotypes and Harmful Practices.

150. To mention some other initiatives in 2018, a two-year programme/information campaign "ICT is everywhere" was initiated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications. It was directed at young people aged 15-29 years, targeting primarily girls and young women aged 15-19 to inspire them to study IT-related fields. The programme tried to overcome the stereotypes linked with careers in the ICT-sector. A special focus of the campaign was on informing girls on various job opportunities involving ICT in order to encourage them to consider studies or jobs in digital economy. Another aspect of the campaign was to highlight female role models, as the lack of them is one of the factors why many women do not choose a career in the ICT sector. During the two-year campaign, 50 media events took place in spring and autumn in schools around Estonia and, in cooperation with the non-profit organisation Tech Sisters and various technology companies, 10 separate workshops were organised. For the campaign the ministry partnered with, among others, Idea Group, Estonian Association of Information Technology and Telecommunications, TalTech University, NGO Community Tech Sisters and the educational programme "Enterprising School".

151. Another project, "Choose IT!" is being carried out together with Estonian IT companies and enables postgraduates to learn a new profession and become software developers. The

programme involves a 6-week training course followed by an 8-week internship in a company. While this project is not specifically targeted at women, around 62% of the project participants during 2017-2020 were women.

Table: Statistical data on employment by gender, persons aged 15-74, year 2018-2021

<i>Year</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Employment rate, %</i>	<i>Labour participation rate, %</i>	<i>Unemployment rate, %</i>	<i>Proportion of persons in part-time employment in main job, %</i>	<i>Proportion of employed persons with temporary job, %</i>	<i>Share of employed persons working remotely, %</i>
2018	Men	72,2	76,4	5,6	7,8	3,7	15,9
2018	Women	65,1	68,7	5,2	16,6	3,3	14,9
2019	Men	72,4	75,6	4,1	8	3,1	18
2019	Women	65,5	68,9	4,8	17,3	3,2	17,4
2020	Men	70,2	75,6	7,1	8,8	2,8	22,5
2020	Women	64,2	68,8	6,6	17,9	2,9	25,3
2021	Men	69,5	74,6	6,8	8,6	1,8	25,3
2021	Women	64	67,8	5,6	18,5	1,7	30,6

Source: Statistics Estonia, Labour Force Survey

Table: Share of women in managerial positions, 2016-2021

	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>
Female managers	36,2	38,5	36,1	37,1	37,4	41,1

Source: Statistics Estonia

Table: Share of men and women in managerial positions in private sector, 2017-2021

<i>Management positions in private sector</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>
men, %	66%	68%	67%	67%	64%
women, %	34%	32%	33%	33%	36%

Source: Statistics Estonia, Labour Force Survey. 2017 result is based on Estonian Labour Force Survey old methodology. 2018-2021 results are calculated with new methodology.

152. Discrimination disputes between employer and employee are described in section on Legislative Framework.

153. According to the Employment Contracts Act upon termination of maternity leave, in addition to her previous work position, a woman is entitled to use the improved working conditions which she would have been entitled to during her absence. Based on the specifics of the leave systems, this regulation is also interpreted to include the situation of return from the childcare leave.

154. During the reporting period project Parents@Work focused on work-life balance best practices and recognising discriminatory practices in the workplace. The project developed a Code of Conduct for the supportive team, information booklets for employers and parents and gathered best practice from different Estonian organisations. Materials are available online: toetav.ee.

155. LGBTI women's access to the labour market is also promoted through the ministry of Social Affairs' strategic partnerships with NGOs. A recent partnership (for years 2022-2024) between the Ministry and the Human Rights Centre as well as LGBT Union focuses among other topics also on supporting vulnerable groups on wide range of areas. The Human Rights Centre also works with employers.

156. In 2013-2016, the Commissioner's Office implemented a project under the Norway Grants gender equality programme. The project was aimed at promoting gender equality through empowerment, awareness raising and gender mainstreaming. One set of activities under the project aimed at increasing the effectiveness of legal protection against gender-based discrimination by raising rights awareness and helping victims of discrimination directly through strategic litigation and by increasing the capacity of officials assisting discrimination victims. The project had a special focus on minority communities and vulnerable social groups who are more likely to be victims of gender discrimination and multiple discrimination. Among others, the project also improved the capacity of the Commissioner to provide counselling and legal support to women who have faced discrimination when pregnant or returning to work from child-care leave.

157. In the framework of this project, information materials (brochures and web materials) on equal treatment principle were compiled and published, information materials were made available concerning ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation. Information materials published are available (mainly in Estonian, to some extent in Russian and English) at: <http://www.volnik.ee/trukised/>.

158. In the framework of the same project, the Commissioner commissioned development and initial implementation of an equality measurement model. Prepared by the Tartu University Johan Skytte Institute for Political Studies, a study report on an equality measurement framework was published in 2016, where indicators were proposed to monitor inequality based on gender, disability, ethnic origin, age and sexual orientation and an analysis of the situation of persons belonging to different population groups was provided. The study showed that according to the indicators used in the framework, gender inequality manifests primarily in career, sense of security, education, health, and politics.

159. In 2017 the Work Ability Reform was implemented. Before the reform, the proportion of people with reduced working ability in society was growing. A lot of them were not active – people moved out of the labour market and stayed passive. There were multiple reasons: the system supported the idea of staying at home, the society was not ready to accept disabled people in the labour market, there were not enough support measures, and the idea of staying active despite the disability was not popular. According to Eurostat, about 31% of the employed population and 32.4% of the unemployed in Estonia had a longstanding illness or a health problem in 2012. The corresponding proportions in the EU27 were 8.8% and 12%, respectively.

160. Considering the increasing number of people receiving pension for incapacity for work the existing system in Estonia was not sustainable. In 2016, a new system (Work Ability reform) was set up for supporting working ability, which renewed the way of assessing working ability, also the subsidies' system and the range of services provided by the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (EUIF). The system is based on individual approach and case management for every person with a disability.

161. The new working ability support system has had a significantly positive effect on the labour market participation. Initially when the system was developed, a goal was set that by

2022 the number of persons with reduced working ability in employment would be increased by over 50% - that goal was established already in 2017. According to the estimates of the Ministry of Finance, by 2022 there will be 19,100 more persons in employment and 16,400 more persons actively looking for work due to the working ability reform, compared to how many there would be with the old system.

162. The eligibility rules of occupational rehabilitation have been revised so that persons with disabilities currently in employment would have access to services that could help them stay at work. In addition, several revisions to the policy were proposed to increase the supply and quality of active labour market services and rehabilitation services for the people with an occupational disability.

163. EUIF pays subsidies and provides services for persons with reduced work ability and employers of persons with reduced workability.

164. The usage of this service has increased significantly after the service was redesigned and made more accessible for employers. Before redesigning the service, the employer had to apply for reimbursement every month providing evidence about person's salary etc. After redesigning, the employer only must apply once and after that the EUIF automatically receives monthly data from database of Tax and Customs Board and the reimbursement is paid. The number of employees participating in this measure has increased from 15,256 in the average month in 2015 to 25,732 in the average month in 2018, so for today the percentage of people with reduced work ability participating in this measure has increased by 69%.

165. Wage subsidies can be granted to employers who employ an unemployed person. In addition to other cases, an employer may also apply for a wage subsidy if they employ a person with decreased working ability. Also, persons with reduced work ability can have vocational rehabilitation, trainings, assistance at job interviews, work with a support person and other job market services available for all target groups, like work practice, trainings etc.

166. Three social advertising campaigns were launched during the reporting period: in 2017 a campaign "Don't worry", introducing disabled people living everyday life and working successfully; in 2018 a campaign "Never mind", introducing people with mental health problems and giving advice about communicating with them; and in 2019 a campaign "Open your senses", introducing people with visual and hearing disabilities successfully managing their work, studies etc.

167. In the integration policy development plan "Integrating Estonia 2020" one aim of the measures was to raise organisations' awareness of the need to reduce ethnic segregation in the labour market.

168. Several activities of the development plan were focused on tackling ethnic segregation in public sector. In 2019, the Ministry of Finance published an analysis entitled "Transmission of public sector employment opportunities to non-native speakers", which included an action plan. The study emphasised the need to intensify co-operation between public sector organisations and upper secondary schools and universities, to find an opportunity to teach professional Estonian in workplaces and to inform potential candidates more actively about their job opportunities through their preferred communication channels.

169. Public sector employers were informed about the importance of equal treatment in personnel policy and the multicultural work team, and young people were introduced to career opportunities in the public sector with the support of the ESF. The project produced web pages, a campaign, videos, and seminars.

170. In the framework of the Interreg Central Baltic Program 2014-2020, the project "Cross-border co-operation in providing mentoring and support services to unemployed low-income permanent residents CROSS CB52" prepared by INSA was approved in 2016. The most important results of the project, which ended in mid-2018, are a thorough meta-analysis of the

national and linguistic distribution of Estonian labour market and the piloting of mentoring for the low-integrated unemployed and the mentoring program completed on the basis thereof.

171. Since 2012, organisations have had the possibility to join the Diversity Agreement. By joining, a company, NGO or public sector organisation confirms that it respects diversity and values the principle of equal treatment among its employees, partners and customers. By 2021, 20 public sector organisations, 101 companies and 23 NGOs had joined the agreement.

172. The Diverse Workplace Label model was created in 2016, and the Estonian Center for Human Rights Foundation has been appointed to carry out the implementation of the model through procurement, which has become the leader of the Diverse Workplace project. The Diverse Workplace Label is a quality label that shows that a company is an attractive employer looking to hire talent regardless of gender or background. As of May 2021, 32 organisations have received the label.

173. In 2020 and 2021, the Integration Foundation implemented an internship program for students with a mother tongue other than Estonian. A total of 21 trainees and 13 state agencies participated in the pilot project. The internship program introduced students to the work of public authorities and encouraged them to apply for positions in the public sector in the future. Internships were available in different areas: recruitment and criminal policy, child-friendly justice, civil society, international cooperation, employment and adaptation. The internship program will continue in 2022 and beyond.

174. In 2020 and 2021 the Integration Foundation offered an in-service (working assignment) language learning project for working people – social work employees, care workers and local government officials with a mother tongue other than Estonian. Employees were provided an opportunity to improve their Estonian language skills at a different, mostly Estonian-speaking, institution during 20 working days and two weekends, a total of 24 days. The aim of the project was to encourage employees and officials to communicate in Estonian at work and take steps to achieve the necessary Estonian language skills.

Health

Question 20

175. In 2021, Estonian Government adopted the National Health Plan 2020-2030 – the main strategic document for health sector in Estonia. Alcohol and drug use as health risk factors (incl. prevention, treatment, and harm reduction) are both covered by the strategy and are considered important to achieve the health targets set for 2030.

176. Estonia has followed the guidance of WHO in the matter of effectiveness of alcohol policy tools and has systematically transposed the measures provided by the global strategy since its adoption. Our national alcohol strategy, adopted in 2014, follows the structure of the global strategy and covers all 10 areas of the global strategy. The comprehensiveness of the alcohol strategy combined with regular surveillance helped to identify the gaps in the alcohol policy, thus the Alcohol Act and the Advertising Act were amended 2017. The changes in the Alcohol Act concerned the regulation of alcohol sales, the presentation of alcoholic products, and age verification for purchasing alcoholic beverages. The Alcohol Act stipulates control transactions to improve surveillance to ensure better adherence to the ban on alcohol sales to minors and energises the fight against illegal alcohol sales. The law also changed the provisions of the Advertising Act to restrict the content of alcohol advertisements, amends the list of locations where alcohol advertising is banned, and clarifies provisions that restrict the use of cheap pricing to market alcoholic beverages, as well as the advertising requirements set for health warnings.

177. The Ministry of the Interior and the National Institute of Health Development organise parental education programs. The annual public campaigns against drink-driving continue and random breath-tests are carried out continuously. The range of interventions for drunk drivers and other drunk offenders has widened at the same time, the offenders are offered training programs, counselling, or treatment according to their personal need. A large-scaled and strongly funded program to develop a comprehensive system to prevent and treat alcohol-use disorders in Estonia – “Sober and Healthy Estonia” – was initiated in 2015 to meet the growing demand. The program has reshaped the dependence treatment in Estonia, building up a comprehensive and holistic approach integrating healthcare and social services. For today, health care professionals in more than half of family doctor centres in Estonia are trained to evaluate patient’s alcohol use risk level and provide a brief intervention if necessary. Also, accessibility to treatment in case of alcohol abuse is improving (3200 persons per year).

178. In 2021, Government’s drug prevention committee adopted “Estonian Drug Policy 2030” – it is the new strategic document for the area, and it also covers prevention, treatment, harm reduction. One of the goals of the strategy is to offer more need-based treatment and support services including gender-based services. Evidence based information is provided on drugs and different available programs and services (to receive advice or help) on webpage <https://www.narko.ee/> (in Estonian, English but also in Russian language).

179. In Estonia, access to a midwife and gynecologist is possible without a referral from a family doctor. It is also possible for a family doctor to ask a gynecologist for an e-consultation (starting from 2017). In addition, an opportunity has been created to employ a midwife in primary care centres and we also have pregnancy crisis counselling available. Guidelines for school health services have been updated and these cover the sharing of knowledge / training on sexual health in schools. From 2021, access to breast cancer screening is guaranteed for uninsured women. During the COVID-19 pandemic, remote reception and funding opportunities were created in health care and it has improved accessibility to health care services in all geographical points in Estonia.

Economic empowerment of women

Question 21

180. The Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund provides support for starting a business (start-up subsidy up to 6000 euros) and reimburses the costs of training and individual mentoring in connection with the field of activity. In addition, consultation are provided in a mentor club.

181. There is also an opportunity to apply for start-up support in maximum sum of 15 000 euros from the State Shared Service Center. County development centers offer free counseling services in all 15 counties. Our centers employ a total of 47 business consultants in the field, who offer consulting from the formulation of a business idea to the start of export.

182. Estonian Business and Innovation Agency supports entrepreneurship with different business development measures such as grants, masterclasses, mentoring, advice from development experts etc.

183. Promoting entrepreneurship among women has been actively taken up by the third sector. Estonia has several NGOs (ETNA, BPW-Estonia, ENUT etc) who have over the years organised conferences, trainings, mentoring programmes and even built up a microcredit-scheme to boost women’s entrepreneurship.

184. Startup Estonia is a governmental programme with the aim of creating more start-up success stories in Estonia by developing their ecosystem. One of Start-up Estonia’s strategic priorities for the period 2021-2027 is to ensure a diverse and competitive startup ecosystem

through greater diversity in gender, age, and cultural or geographic background. In 2021 five different expert groups were founded by Start-Up Estonia one being on diversity.

185. From July 2022 child maintenance allowance will also be extended to those children whose debtor's parent is declared bankrupt and bankruptcy proceedings are initiated. The maintenance allowance during the bankruptcy proceedings will be paid throughout the bankruptcy proceedings, the amount of the allowance for one child is 100 euros per calendar month. The Ministry of Social Affairs is constantly working to increase the amount of maintenance allowance.

Rural and marginalized groups of women

Question 22

186. The ETA as currently in force, prohibits discrimination on the ground of nationality (ethnicity), race and colour in employment, in access to the services of social welfare, social security and healthcare, in the area of education or in access to and supply of goods and services, which are available to the public, including housing. The Act prohibits discrimination on the ground of age, disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation in employment and vocational education.

187. The Act is currently being amended, widening the protection on the grounds of age, disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation to the same level as it is currently on the grounds of nationality, ethnicity, and race or colour. The amendments were approved by the Government in January 2022 and have succeeded the first reading in the Parliament. Currently the amendments are being prepared for the second reading in the Parliament.

188. Gender identity as a ground is not included in the ETA. However, it is interpreted as being included in the GEA. The Commissioner has used the interpretation in several cases.

189. The central strategic framework document guiding the state's regional policy has been the Estonian regional development strategy until 2020, by which the Government of the Republic set the central principles, goals and action plan for directing the country's regional development. From 2021, the most important development needs, goals and directions of the country's regional development will be set by the national strategy "Estonia 2035" instead of the previous basic strategy of regional policy and the 4-year regional policy program of the state budget result area "efficient state".

190. The key needs for regional development are: ensuring the availability of good services and employment opportunities in all regions; supporting the more balanced development of the regions by making more effective use of the potential arising from the specific features of each region and by increasing the contribution of all regions to the country's economic growth; strengthening the role of centres in regional development beyond major urban areas; ensure good interconnections between regions; providing support to regions in pursuing their development goals.

191. Regionally, special attention is paid to the development of Ida-Viru County and the region of South-Eastern Estonia. These regions face several development challenges, which require good cooperation between different regions and national partners.

192. Since green transition affects Ida-Viru County which is more dependent on energy industry there are regional social development programs implemented in the next period to facilitate the changes. One of the measures is focused on improving the quality of policy making on local level by improving the capacity to promote gender equality, gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities.

193. In 2021 and 2022 the Association of Estonian Rural Women in partnership with the Estonian Women's Associations Roundtable (strategic partner of the Ministry of Social Affairs in previous period) organised seminars for municipalities to promote gender mainstreaming, introducing the proposals from local women's organisation to the development plans of the municipalities. In 2021 a survey on the life of Estonian rural women was carried out. The survey studied the experiences of rural women mainly focusing on the CEDAW Convention areas. The results were disseminated, and suggestions offered in seminars for municipalities mentioned above and in focus group organised for decision-makers.

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Ethnic Nationality</i>	<i>Employment rate, %</i>	<i>Unemployment rate, %</i>	<i>Labour participation rate, %</i>
Men	Estonian	70,9	5,4	75
Men	Other Nationality	71,4	5,6	75,6
Men	Russian	65,1	11	73,1
Women	Estonian	67	3,9	69,8
Women	Other Nationality	55,4	11,2	62,4
Women	Russian	58,5	8,7	64,1

Source: Statistics Estonia, Labour Force Survey

Table: Health of persons aged 65 and over, 2021, %

	<i>Very good or good</i>	<i>Neither good nor bad</i>	<i>Bad or very bad</i>
Men	25,2	48,8	26
Women	22,3	49,3	28,4

Source: Statistics Estonia

Table: Limitations of everyday activities of persons aged 65 and over, 2021, %

	<i>Very much restricted</i>	<i>To some extent restricted</i>	<i>Not at all restricted</i>
Men	23,9	33,2	42,9
Women	25,5	35,4	39,1

Source: Statistics Estonia

Table: At-risk-of-poverty rate by Sex and Disability, in 2020, %

	<i>Persons with and without disability</i>	<i>Disabled persons</i>	<i>Persons with limited capacity for work</i>	<i>Persons without work ability and with partial work ability</i>	<i>Persons with activity limitations</i>
Men	18	36,5	32,9	31,9	27,6
Women	22,9	46,6	23,8	22,3	38,5

Source: Statistics Estonia

Table: At-risk-of-poverty rate of elderly by Sex and Age, in 2020, %

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
60 and older	26,1	42,6
65 and older	27	47,9
75 and older	25,6	58,6

Source: Statistics Estonia

Table: At-risk-of-poverty rate by sex and age group, 2016-2020, %

	<i>Men</i>					<i>Women</i>				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
16-24	18,3	19,8	20,1	23,3	21,6	25,9	22,2	19,1	19,7	20,1
25-49	15,4	15,7	14,5	15,1	14,0	12,7	12,8	12,7	11,4	11,5
50-64	19,0	19,4	22,2	19,5	19,9	16,9	17,0	17,3	16,3	17,4
65 and older	28,4	35,0	31,9	30,5	27,0	47,8	52,3	49,9	47,2	47,9

Source: Statistics Estonia

Table: Persons, who provide care and assistance for people due to their old age and/or the long-term health problem/ disability, 2021

	<i>Persons with taking care to an adult</i>	<i>Share of employment</i>
Men	41%	55%
Women	59%	52%

Source: Statistics Estonia, Labour Force Survey

Table: At-risk-of-poverty rate of disabled people by sex and age group, 2016-2020, %

		<i>Total</i>	<i>18-64</i>	<i>20-64</i>	<i>65 and older</i>
		2016	Men	32,2	34,9	34,9	34,8
	Women	46,1	31,3	31,6	57,8
2017	Men	36,1	38,8	39	39,3
	Women	47,6	34,8	34,9	58,4
2018	Men	37,6	40,7	40,7	41,1
	Women	47,8	30,6	30,6	60,6
2019	Men	34,2	37,4	37,4	33,7
	Women	45,7	30	30,5	58,4
2020	Men	36,5	39,1	39,3	35,5
	Women	46,6	27,9	28,6	59,9

Source: Statistics Estonia

Table: Gender pay gap, average salary and ratio to national average salary by county, I quarter 2022

<i>County</i>	<i>Gender pay gap</i>	<i>Average salary (euros)</i>	<i>Ratio to national average salary</i>
Harju	18,2%	1805	1,15
Järva	18,0%	1280	0,81
Rapla	13,5%	1246	0,79
Lääne	10,4%	1227	0,78
Hiiu	15,6%	1205	0,76
Saare	12,3%	1188	0,75
Pärnu	13,0%	1240	0,79
Viljandi	14,0%	1270	0,81
Jõgeva	14,5%	1194	0,76
Lääne-Viru	15,3%	1221	0,77
Ida-Viru	21,0%	1204	0,76
Jõgeva	14,5%	1194	0,76
Valga	11,3%	1133	0,72
Tartu	14,7%	1547	0,98
Põlva	5,8%	1218	0,77
Võru	14,2%	1193	0,76

Source: Statistics Estonia

Table: Disability free life expectancy by sex and nationality, 2016-2020, years

		<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
2016	Estonians	55,04	60,91
	Non-Estonians	52,80	54,73
2017	Estonians	54,74	58,73
	Non-Estonians	53,14	53,70
2018	Estonians	52,36	56,35
	Non-Estonians	53,54	54,11
2019	Estonians	53,50	58,94
	Non-Estonians	55,78	55,27
2020	Estonians	55,34	60,96
	Non-Estonians	55,59	56,29

Source: Statistics Estonia

Table: Populations' health, self-assessment, by age and sex, 2016-2021, %

		<i>Men</i>					<i>Women</i>						
		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Very good or good	16-24	84,5	85,6	83,4	87,3	88,7	86,8	87,3	88,8	81,6	87,3	90,9	86,3
	25-34	84,9	84,3	78,4	80,1	84,8	81,0	83,2	84,4	80,7	86,3	89,9	87,9
	35-44	73,9	75,3	70,1	75,1	78,6	73,8	77,1	79,5	74,4	78,3	82,7	78,8

	<i>Men</i>										<i>Women</i>															
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021								
	45-54	58,2	55,0	54,9	60,4	60,0	63,2	60,9	61,4	59,9	64,5	69,2	67,2	45-54	58,2	55,0	54,9	60,4	60,0	63,2	60,9	61,4	59,9	64,5	69,2	67,2
	55-64	32,8	33,5	34,2	36,8	39,5	40,7	35,8	37,2	37,6	39,7	43,7	42,8	55-64	32,8	33,5	34,2	36,8	39,5	40,7	35,8	37,2	37,6	39,7	43,7	42,8
	65 and older	15,6	20,7	17,9	19,9	22,6	25,2	16,7	15,5	17,0	17,6	20,3	22,3	65 and older	15,6	20,7	17,9	19,9	22,6	25,2	16,7	15,5	17,0	17,6	20,3	22,3
Neither good nor bad	16-24	12,3	11,6	13,9	11,4	9,1	11,3	11,6	9,8	15,9	10,8	7,6	10,6	16-24	12,3	11,6	13,9	11,4	9,1	11,3	11,6	9,8	15,9	10,8	7,6	10,6
	25-34	11,1	12,6	16,7	16,7	12,5	14,9	14,6	12,7	16,6	10,9	8,9	10,4	25-34	11,1	12,6	16,7	16,7	12,5	14,9	14,6	12,7	16,6	10,9	8,9	10,4
	35-44	22,1	21,4	24,4	20,1	17,8	19,7	18,1	17,1	21,2	16,6	13,8	17,8	35-44	22,1	21,4	24,4	20,1	17,8	19,7	18,1	17,1	21,2	16,6	13,8	17,8
	45-54	32,5	37,3	33,8	28,0	33,2	28,4	30,2	30,2	32,8	27,3	24,4	25,4	45-54	32,5	37,3	33,8	28,0	33,2	28,4	30,2	30,2	32,8	27,3	24,4	25,4
	55-64	47,8	46,7	46,0	45,3	43,2	42,9	49,4	48,0	45,0	44,2	41,8	43,1	55-64	47,8	46,7	46,0	45,3	43,2	42,9	49,4	48,0	45,0	44,2	41,8	43,1
	65 and older	52,5	48,5	50,3	51,2	50,5	48,8	47,2	48,9	47,2	49,7	51,6	49,3	65 and older	52,5	48,5	50,3	51,2	50,5	48,8	47,2	48,9	47,2	49,7	51,6	49,3
Bad or very bad	16-24	3,2	..	2,7	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	3,1	16-24	3,2	..	2,7	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	3,1
	25-34	4,0	3,1	4,9	3,2	2,7	4,1	2,2	..	2,7	..	..	..	25-34	4,0	3,1	4,9	3,2	2,7	4,1	2,2	..	2,7	..	..	..
	35-44	4,0	3,3	5,5	4,8	3,6	6,5	4,8	3,4	4,4	5,1	3,5	3,4	35-44	4,0	3,3	5,5	4,8	3,6	6,5	4,8	3,4	4,4	5,1	3,5	3,4
	45-54	9,3	7,7	11,3	11,6	6,8	8,4	8,9	8,4	7,3	8,2	6,4	7,4	45-54	9,3	7,7	11,3	11,6	6,8	8,4	8,9	8,4	7,3	8,2	6,4	7,4
	55-64	19,4	19,8	19,8	17,9	17,3	16,4	14,8	14,8	17,4	16,1	14,5	14,1	55-64	19,4	19,8	19,8	17,9	17,3	16,4	14,8	14,8	17,4	16,1	14,5	14,1
	65 and older	32,1	30,8	31,8	28,9	26,9	26,0	36,1	35,6	35,8	32,7	28,1	28,4	65 and older	32,1	30,8	31,8	28,9	26,9	26,0	36,1	35,6	35,8	32,7	28,1	28,4

Source: Statistics Estonia

Marriage and family relations

Question 23

194. In May 2022 the amendment of the Family Law Act paragraph 1, setting the minimum age of marriage at 18 without exceptions, was passed. The previous exception of court extending the active legal capacity of a person who has attained at least 15 years of age and getting married was used rarely – in 2018 there was 1 marriage and in 2019 4 marriages.

195. No cases of child and/or forced marriages have occurred during the reporting period.

196. As of 1 January 2022, the minimum monthly child maintenance payment does not depend on the minimum wage anymore. Instead, it is bound to the needs of the child, economic capability of the parents, family allowances paid by the state and the number of the children entitled to receive maintenance from the same person.

197. The minimum sum of child maintenance payment is consisting of following elements:

(a) Base amount is 200 euros. The base amount of maintenance is the minimum amount of maintenance proposed by the researchers in a recent survey of the minimum needs of the child. This sum shall be adjusted annually on 1 April according to the changes in the consumer price index;

(b) Economic situation of the obligated parent. In order to calculate the minimum maintenance, 3% of the Estonian average gross monthly salary of the previous calendar year is added to the base amount. On 1 January 2022 the amount to be added is 43 euros. The amount to be added shall also be adjusted annually on 1 April. The first recalculation on the basis of the average gross monthly salary of 2021 will take place on 1 April 2022. By agreement of the parents or determined by a court, the sum added to the basic amount may be 3% of the actual

monthly salary of the obligated parent instead of the average gross monthly salary, provided that the actual salary is higher;

(c) Family allowances paid by the state. Child allowance and the allowance for a family with many children are taken into account to determine the amount of maintenance. The parent does not have to provide maintenance to the extent that the child's needs can be met at the expense of these allowances. If the main caregiver of the children receives these allowances, half of the allowance for each child is deducted from the amount of maintenance. If the obligated parent receives those allowances, this amount is added to the maintenance. Currently half of the child allowance for one child is 30 euros (full sum is 60 euros per child);

(d) Shared parenthood. If the child stays with the obligated parent for a monthly average of seven to fifteen days, the amount of maintenance is reduced proportionally to the time spent with the obligated parent. Thus, if the child resides with both parents equally, maintenance can only be claimed due to the greater needs of the child, a significant difference in the income of parents or an unequal distribution of the expenses between the parents;

(e) Number of children receiving maintenance in the same household. Considering the possibility to somewhat aggregate the costs of raising several children at once (reuse of furniture, clothing, toys, etc), the amount of maintenance from the second child onwards is 15% lower than the amount of maintenance for the first child. The amount of maintenance is not reduced for twins, triplets etc and children with an age difference over three years.

198. For example, if maintenance has to be paid to one child, the income of the obligated parent does not exceed the gross monthly salary in Estonia and the child resides with the obligated parent less than 7 days monthly, the minimum amount of maintenance is 213 euros per month per child (200+43-30).

199. Parents can also calculate the minimum sum by themselves, using a web application created by the Ministry of Justice - an amount of child maintenance that the court would probably establish in case of their family. The application (in Estonian) can be found here: <https://www.just.ee/elatiskalkulaator/>. We intend to translate it also into English in near future.

200. The measures for the enforcement of child support orders have not been amended recently. The claimant can contact a bailiff for the enforcement of a child support order, if the other parent does not pay child maintenance voluntarily. The right of security on seized assets created on the basis of a child support order is of higher ranking than the other rights of security on seized assets regardless of the time of seizure.

201. Pursuant to subsection 63 (11) of the Code of Enforcement Procedure, information on whether a person has a child support debt and, if it exists, the amount of the collectable outstanding debt is publicly available in the enforcement register: https://www.eesti.ee/est/teenused/kodanik/oigusabi_2/elatisvolgnevus.

202. There is also a number of restrictions in place for the parents that do not fulfil their obligation to provide maintenance to their children. The Code of Enforcement Procedure §177² foresees that if, during enforcement proceedings, a child maintenance debtor has not, within three months, made regular payments towards the child's maintenance, and the enforcement agent's attempts to collect such maintenance out of the debtor's property have not been successful, the court – with the consent of the party seeking enforcement and on an application of the enforcement agent which has been preceded by warning the debtor – may, by order, indefinitely suspend the following rights and licences: 1) a right to engage in hunting; 2) a right to drive a motor vehicle; 3) a weapons permit and an acquisition permit for a weapon; 4) a right to drive recreational craft and personal watercraft; 5) a fishing card. Further, in these situations a court may, by order, revoke the following documents of the debtor, and restrain the issue of such documents for up to two years: 1) an Estonian citizen's passport; 2) an alien's passport; 3) a refugee's travel document; 4) a temporary travel document; 5) a seafarer's discharge book; 6) a certificate of record of service on an Estonian ship; 7) a diplomatic passport.

203. The regulations to implement Registered Partnership Act of 2014 did not pass the Parliament together with the Act. The Ministry of Justice is waiting for further steps by the Parliament in this matter.

Climate change and disaster risk reduction

Question 24

204. Strategy Climate Change Adaption Development Plan until 2030 was approved by the Parliament in 2017. The Ministry of the Environment was responsible for compiling the development plan. Preparation of the development plan was led by steering group chaired by a representative of the Estonian Environmental Research Center which included relevant ministries, local authorities, non-governmental organisations and representatives of research institutions. Prior to the preparation of the strategy four research papers were commissioned in different areas, one being “Adapting to the climate change in the economic and societal spheres”. The development plan broadens the possibilities of the public and the stakeholders to have a say in making the decisions and helps to better understand climate risks and the measures implemented for managing them. One of the objectives of the development plan is to raise awareness of the risks and opportunities regarding the climate change, including improving the risk management considering also different impacts the climate change has on various groups.

205. The Ministry of the Environment has started preparing a strategic development document in the field of environment with the aim to create a unified development plan. The process of preparing the development plan is approved by the steering committee of the development plan, which consists of the umbrella organisations of the most important stakeholders in the field, state agencies and representatives of the academic community. There are also public discussions taking place involving wider public.

Additional information

206. In April 2021, the Government adopted the first Human Rights Diplomacy Action Plan that sets out Estonia’s foreign policy actions for the protection of human rights and advancing democracy. Among thematic priorities, also protection of human rights of women and girls is listed, the activities focusing on achieving gender equality, empowering women and girls and fighting sexual and gender-based violence.

207. Our third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security until 2025 was adopted by the Government in May 2021. The action plan focuses on improving the situation of women in and after conflicts, raising awareness, improving cooperation and information exchange, and the representation of women in positions related to peace and security in Estonia. Estonia is also actively involved in Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action (WPS-HA) Compact which was announced at the Generation Equality Forum in July 2021, and the development of its framework. The Compact seeks to drive a global inter-generational movement to implement existing commitments on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action. Signatories are invited to take transformative action for gender equality through strengthened coordination on existing mechanisms for women peace and security and humanitarian action; improved monitoring and assessment of progress; and a focus on financing, advocacy, and increased visibility.