**R E P O R T on the application of ratified Conventions**

**2024**

for the period **September 2021 to September 2024,** made by the **Government of Estonia**, in accordance with article 22 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organization, on the measures taken to give effect to the provisions of the

**FORCED LABOUR CONVENTION, 1930 (No. 29)**

Estonia ratified the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention in 2016.

As a response to CEACR comments, **please find attached the report of the Government on the application of the Protocol**. The Committee noted that the first report of the Government on the application of the Protocol has not been received, therefore we are providing detailed information on its application.

All comments made by CEACR are addressed in the report form:

* comment No 1 (Trafficking in persons) in article 1 paragraph 2;
* comment No 2 (Law enforcement and penalties applied) in article 4 paragraph 1;
* comment No 3 (Protection of victims) in article 3.

The following organizations have been sent copies of the report:

* Estonian Employers’ Confederation
* Estonian Trade Union Confederation

**R E P O R T on the application of ratified Conventions**

**2024**

for the period **September 2021 to September 2024,** made by the **Government of Estonia**, in accordance with article 22 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organization, on the measures taken to give effect to the provisions of the

**ABOLITION OF FORCED LABOUR CONVENTION, 1957 (No. 105)**

There have been no relevant developments regarding the application of the Convention since the last report.

The following organizations have been sent copies of the report:

* Estonian Employers’ Confederation
* Estonian Trade Union Confederation

**R E P O R T on the application of ratified Conventions**

**2024**

for the period **September 2021 to September 2024,** made by the **Government of Estonia**, in accordance with article 22 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organization, on the measures taken to give effect to the provisions of the

**NIGHT WORK OF YOUNG PERSONS (INDUSTRY) CONVENTION, 1919 (No. 6)**

There have been no relevant developments regarding the application of the Convention since the last report.

The following organizations have been sent copies of the report:

* Estonian Employers’ Confederation
* Estonian Trade Union Confederation

**R E P O R T on the application of ratified Conventions**

**2024**

for the period **September 2021 to September 2024,** made by the **Government of Estonia**, in accordance with article 22 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organization, on the measures taken to give effect to the provisions of the

**MINIMUM AGE CONVENTION, 1973 (No. 138)**

There have been f developments regarding the application of the Convention since the last report.

On 01.09.2022 and 01.01.2023 amendments in [Employment Contracts Act](https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/529052024001/consolide/current) entered into force regarding consent for employment of minor.

Paragraph 8 of the Act states the following:

1. *An expression of will made by a minor for entry into an employment contract without the prior consent of a legal representative is void, unless the legal representative subsequently approves the expression of will.*

*(2) The legal representative of a minor may not consent to the employment during the school holiday of a minor subject to the obligation to attend school for more than a half of each term of the school holiday.*

*(3) An employer may not allow a minor of 7–12 years of age to work before ten working days have passed since the entry of the minor in the employment register provided in § 251 of the Taxation Act.*

*[RT I, 22.10.2021, 2 – entry into force 01.09.2022]*

*(4) When entering an employee of 7–12 years of age in the employment register, the employer must additionally present to the Labour Inspectorate through the working environment database or in a form reproducible in writing information about the consent of a legal representative of the minor, the working conditions and duties of the minor and the minor’s obligation to attend school.*

*[RT I, 09.11.2022, 1 – entry into force 01.01.2023]*

*(5) After having received the information provided in subsections 3 and 4 of this section, the labour inspector is required to verify that the work is not prohibited for a minor, the minor’s working conditions are in accordance with the requirements provided by law and the minor wants to work.*

*[RT I, 09.11.2022, 1 – entry into force 01.01.2023]*

*(6) The labour inspector’s consent for allowing a minor of 7–12 years of age to work is presumed if the term provided in subsection 3 of this section has passed and the labour inspector has not refused to grant consent.*

*[RT I, 22.10.2021, 2 – entry into force 01.09.2022]*

*(7) If, in ascertaining the will of a minor of 7–12 years of age, the labour inspector has reasonable doubt that the minor is not expressing their true will in the presence of the legal representative, the labour inspector must ascertain the will of the minor in the presence of the minor and a local child protection official.*

*(8) An employment contract which has been entered into with a minor of 7–12 years of age is void if as a result of verifying the circumstances provided in subsection 4 of this section the labour inspector refuses to grant consent.*

*[RT I, 22.10.2021, 2 – entry into force 01.09.2022]*

*(9) An employer is prohibited from allowing a minor to work without the consent or approval of a legal representative.*

Before the amendments, the age limit in articles (3), (4), (6) and (8) was 7 to 14 years. After the amendments the age limit has been 7 to 12 years. The purpose of the amendments was to reduce the administrative burden of the Labour Inspectorate as well as the employers who employ minors. In turn, the amendments contribute to more flexible working opportunities to minors, while ensuring the effective protection of minors in employment relationships.

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* Estonian Trade Union Confederation

**R E P O R T on the application of ratified Conventions**

**2024**

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**WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR CONVENTION, 1999 (No. 182)**

There have been no relevant developments regarding the application of the Convention since the last report.

The following organizations have been sent copies of the report:

* Estonian Employers’ Confederation
* Estonian Trade Union Confederation

**R E P O R T on the application of ratified Conventions**

**2024**

for the period **September 2021 to September 2024,** made by the **Government of Estonia**, in accordance with article 22 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organization, on the measures taken to give effect to the provisions of the

**EMPLOYMENT POLICY CONVENTION, 1964 (No. 122)**

There have been number of developments regarding the application of the Convention since the last report.

**New Labour Market Measures Act**

From the 1st of January 2024 the new Labor Market Measures Act[[1]](#footnote-1) replaces the previous Labor Market Services and Benefits Act. The new act reforms the legal framework of active labour market measures. Before 2024 the provision of active labour market measures was regulated by number of different pieces of legislation and different labour market services and target groups were dispersed among these. The system was very complex.

Reform was based on the analyses and suggestions conducted by OECD, prepared in the context of structural reform support project by the European Commission, which was initiated by the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs.

OECD report pointed out that the legal regulations around the provision of active labour market policies in Estonia supported flexible and effective policy responses, but it was a very complex system and difficult to understand for target groups and may cause administrative inefficiencies. With the reform Estonia made the regulatory framework of active labour market policies (ALMPs) leaner to support flexibility in policy design while supporting the capacity to respond to labour market changes.

The new Labor Market Measures Act outlines 10 labour market measures, which group together labour market services and subsidies with the same goal. Among them are for example, job placement, career services, skills development, support for employment, support for work ability, support for entrepreneurship etc. The law also specifies which measures are intended for which target groups. In addition, the three existing databases of the unemployment fund was combined into a single database, which simplifies the system and will simplify the development of the database in the future.

Labor market services and their terms and conditions are brought together in a fixed-term employment program established by a regulation of the Government of the Republic, on the basis of which the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (EUIF) can provide these services to target groups. There can be several labour market services under one measure. For example, the skills development measure includes various services such as labour market training, allowance for formal education, support for obtaining a qualification, coaching, employee’s training support and work practice. The terms and conditions of services can be adjusted according to changes in the labour market situation. This reduces duplication, increases transparency and the ability to respond effectively to the labour market situation.

**New employment programme**

From the 1st of January 2024 a new employment programme “**Employment Programme 2024-2029**" (THP) came into force. Being part of the legal framework reform of ALMPs, the new THP includes all the labour market services (currently 28 different services) provided by EUIF to different target groups and financed from different sources: state budget, unemployment insurance finances and European Social Fund+ budget.

On the basis of the employment programme the EUIF will provide labour market services to the unemployed, employed as well as to the employers. With the support of labour market services at least 56% of the registered unemployed should get employed every year, and at least 80% of those who are employed and got some skills measures should stay in employment.

There were also some changes made in context of services design:

* To focus the labour market training even more on the skills that are needed for employment in the occupations with the greatest labour shortage, the **duration of the funded trainings** was limited on at least 26 academic hours.
* For employed people "Work and Study” measures the **unemployment insurance payments minimum period requirement** was restored. In order to participate in the skills measures, a person must have paid at least 12 months of unemployment insurance during the 36 months prior to submitting the application.
* Short term e-seminars and employer’s subsidy for their **employee's green skills** development were added.
* In addition to people with partial work ability (employed or unemployed), employed people with no work ability can participate in **occupational rehabilitation service**.
* The short term sheltered work service was transformed into a **supported employment service**, with the aim of helping people with partial work ability for whom work-focused counselling and previous employment services have not been sufficient to become and stay employed to enter the open labour market.
* Since May 2024, **people on long-term sick leave** (more than 60 days) are allowed to work during the sick leave and EUIF offers **supportive services** for them without the work ability assessment (occupational rehabilitation, adapting the workstation or tools, work-related technical aids, working with a support person, peer support, counselling for employers). The aim is to help people with long-term health problems return to work and prevent the permanent decrease in working ability.

**Targeted measures for youth**

A number of programmes target young people.

The national Action Plan for Strengthening the Youth Guarantee 2022–2027 renewed in 2021, is coordinated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications and the Ministry of Education and Research. Action Plan includes activities aimed at reducing the overall risk of social exclusion of young people and at preventing them from dropping out of the labour market and/or the education system, and at ensuring their rapid and smooth return to the education system or the labour market in the event of a NEET situation. The action plan will be implemented with the help of different actors, such as ministries, universities, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, the Education and Youth Board, youth umbrella organizations and municipalities.

Since 2018, the Youth Guarantee Support System (YGSS) has been in operation, which allows Estonian local governments to receive information twice a year on needy children and young people aged 16−26 who are not studying or working and may need additional support. YGSS is part of the Estonian Youth Guarantee Action Plan. The 13th monitoring is ongoing. Based on the information received, the local government can proactively provide support. Specific case management under the Youth Guarantee Support System is ensured through a number of areas of action, where youth-centred support is provided depending on the domain. Based on the proactive case management approach, the child/young person’s need for assistance is assessed first and, where appropriate, they are then supported in accordance with networking principles. In order to ensure that basic needs are covered, cooperation will take place with the social departments of local governments.

Also, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications has allocated €13 million for the development of the Estonia-wide Youth Guarantee support system and case management in the period of 2023–2029. Currently, 62 municipalities (78% of Estonian municipalities) have received support and a new call for applications is about to open. The development work in the current period is based on the national co-creation process, on the basis of which a cooperation model for providing services and support to youth in a NEET situation or at risk of NEET was prepared for local authorities. The framework created will allow for a harmonized understanding of how to reach and support children and young people.

EUIF as PES is one of the institutions implementing the National Youth Guarantee Action Plan, which aims to ensure that young people who become unemployed or leave school can return to work, continue their education or otherwise be actively involved in society as soon as possible. In addition to traditional labour market services such as career counselling, employment advice, job shadowing, work practice, etc., the Youth Guarantee offers young people specific services such as "My first job" and e-trainings in general skills.

The aim of the My First Job subsidy is to increase the employability of young people and reduce unemployment by facilitating young people with little work experience in gaining work experience, developing their skills and knowledge. The ‘My First Job’ wage subsidy is paid to an employer who hires a young person aged 16–29 and whose background qualifies for the measure.

In 2024, the EUIF launched a series of webinars for young people aged 16-29. The seminars, which will take place over four months for one group, will help young people acquire the skills they need to succeed and stay in the world of work. They will also give them the encouragement and knowledge they need to make the right decisions about their careers and studies. Topics include communication and cooperation skills, self-management, caring for mental health, critical thinking, green skills, financial literacy and more.

**Person with decreased work ability**

Work Ability Reform was implemented in June 2016. Since then, EUIF is the one, who organizes the assessment of work ability, pays work ability allowance and offers supportive services to people whose health condition affects working.

A large-scale study „Assessment of the macroeconomic impact of the creation and implementation of the work ability support system“ was completed in 2022. The conclusion of the study was that the reform was an appropriate and effective measure that positively influenced the growth of employment of people with reduced working ability.

The study concluded that the capability of people with reduced working ability to find work has increased (the employment rate of people with reduced working ability has reached to 53,4% in 2023) and their economic livelihood has improved, social attitudes towards people with reduced working ability have a positive trend and more and more companies are ready to hire people with reduced working ability.

In 2021, the number of people with reduced working ability reached its highest peak (more than 97 000 people) because the transitional period from old system to new one ended. Since then, the number of people with reduced working ability has slightly decreased reaching to 94 700 in 2023.

Estonian Unemployment Fund supports people with reduced working ability by:

* Assessing work ability (the decision can be partially able to work or not able to work)
* Paying work ability allowance to people who are partially or not able to work
* Counselling on finding out suitable work, courses, services
* Counselling employers
* Offering services that support work ability – vocational rehabilitation, workplace adaption, work-related technical aids, working with a support person, peer support, supported employment service
* Offering skills development services in preferential conditions
* Offering different financial incentives for hiring

One of the recommendations of the above-mentioned study was also that in order to keep the number of people with reduced working ability stable, it is necessary to pay attention to the decrease in working ability. Therefore, from the 15th of May 2024, it is now possible to return to work being on a long-term sick leave (60+ days), if it is agreed on between the person, employer and the doctor, if it is possible to work part time or in adapted conditions and if it does not affect healing. Temporarily adapting work to the condition of an ill or injured worker so that the worker can return to work as quickly as possible is a key component of recovery and prevention of permanent decline in working ability. To support the return to work, the design of services that support work ability were changed in THP to enable EUIF offer those services also to people who are on long-term sick leave (without work ability assessment). These are vocational rehabilitation, workplace adaption, work-related technical aids, working with a support person, peer support and employers counselling.

**Regional measures**

Special attention is paid to the oil-shale sector workers in North-East of Estonia expected to be most affected by the green transition. With the support of Just Transition Fund some new labour measures are offered by the PES to support the smooth job transition of the oil shale workers. These include widening the reskilling and upskilling schemes, including a new support for acquiring micro-credentials and also introducing a job-to-job transition allowance since the beginning of 2024.

**Skills measures**

As part of the new "Employment Programme 2024-2029," which came into effect on January 1st, a revised approach to skills development has been introduced:

* **Harmonized Training Card Terms**: The terms of the training card for both unemployed and employed individuals have been unified, allowing everyone to select training courses worth up to 2,500 euros over a three-year period. Previously, the limit for unemployed individuals was set over two years.
* **Minimum Training Hours**: A minimum of 26 academic hours has been established for training, placing greater emphasis on longer courses that provide more comprehensive skill sets and knowledge to support the transition to employment.
* **Targeted Training for Unemployed Individuals**: The new approach prioritizes training in professions with a high demand for employees, while limiting training in fields where gainful employment is less likely. The curriculum list is developed by the Unemployment Insurance Fund in collaboration with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications and the Ministry of Education and Research, based on labour needs surveys specified in the Professions Act, state strategic and sectoral development plans, labour market statistics, and other relevant data. Where applicable, degree programs are preferred over shorter courses, particularly for individuals without a foundational education in the desired field or who have not yet earned a degree.
* **Skills Development Seminars**: New skills development seminars have been introduced to help individuals acquire general skills and knowledge in a non-formal learning environment. These seminars are typically conducted online.
* **Green Skills Training Grant (2025)**: In June 2025, as part of the training grant for employers, a green skills measure will be implemented. This measure, funded by ESF+, will allow employers to allocate up to 2,500 euros over three years to develop their employees' green skills.

**Indicators**

**Employment rate in the age group 20-64**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** |
| Total | 79,7 | 80,5 | 79,1 | 79,3 | 81,9 | 82,1 |
| Males | 82,8 | 83,5 | 81,3 | 81,2 | 83,3 | 83,3 |
| Females | 76,8 | 77,5 | 76,9 | 77,5 | 80,4 | 80,9 |

Source: Statistics Estonia, Labour Force Survey

**Unemployment rate of persons aged from 16 years to retirement age, %**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** |
| Total | 5,4 | 4,6 | 7,2 | 6,5 | 5,9 | 6,6 |
| Males | 5,5 | 4,1 | 7,3 | 7,1 | 6,3 | 6,3 |
| Females | 5,4 | 5,1 | 7,0 | 5,9 | 5,4 | 7,0 |

Source: Statistics Estonia, Labour Force Survey

**Unemployment rate by region (15-74), %**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** |
| Total | 5,4 | 4,5 | 6,9 | 6,2 | 5,6 | 6,4 |
| Northern Estonia | 4,3 | 3,4 | 6,2 | 5,7 | 5,8 | 6,2 |
| Central Estonia | 5,3 | 4,0 | 7,0 | 5,4 | 5,7 | 7,8 |
| Northeastern Estonia | 11,3 | 9,2 | 12,2 | 11,5 | 10,7 | 10,1 |
| Western Estonia | 5,6 | 5,9 | 7,2 | 6,2 | 4,0 | 5,7 |
| Southern Estonia | 5,1 | 4,5 | 6,0 | 5,5 | 3,9 | 5,3 |

**Youth unemployment rate (15-24), %**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** |
| Total | 12,0 | 11,6 | 18,3 | 16,7 | 18,6 | 17,3 |
| Males | 12,9 | 11,2 | 18,4 | 18,4 | 21,0 | 18,4 |
| Females | 11,1 | 12,0 | 18,3 | 15,0 | 16,5 | 16,4 |

Source: Statistics Estonia, Labour Force Survey

**Long-term unemployment rate (15-74), %**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** |
| Total | 1,3 | 0,9 | 1,2 | 1,6 | 1,3 | 1,3 |
| Males | 1,5 | 1,0 | 1,4 | 2,0 | 1,5 | 1,2 |
| Females | 1,2 | 0,8 | 1,0 | 1,1 | 1,0 | 1,4 |

Source: Statistics Estonia, Labour Force Survey

**Inflow to active measures by labour market measure and year**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Labour market measure** | **Year** | **Inflow to active measures** |
| Career services | 2021 | 129 560 |
| 2022 | 135 503 |
| 2023 | 150 756 |
| Skills development | 2021 | 47 160 |
| 2022 | 41 514 |
| 2023 | 40 415 |
| Support for starting and maintaining employment | 2021 | 10 811 |
| 2022 | 13 984 |
| 2023 | 13 569 |
| Support for work readiness | 2021 | 9 281 |
| 2022 | 8 296 |
| 2023 | 9 035 |
| Support for work ability | 2021 | 3 192 |
| 2022 | 3 016 |
| 2023 | 2 808 |
| Work-oriented councelling | 2021 | 1 113 |
| 2022 | 1 422 |
| 2023 | 1 476 |
| Other services | 2021 | 1 032 |
| 2022 | 1 069 |
| 2023 | 973 |
| Support for starting a business | 2021 | 789 |
| 2022 | 529 |
| 2023 | 545 |

Source: Unemployment Insurance Fund

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Inflow and outflow of registered unemployed** | | | | | |
|  | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** |
| Inflow of registered unemployed | 96 332 | 75 499 | 93 045 | 92 842 |
| Outflow of registered unemployed | 77 167 | 85 085 | 85 633 | 91 206 |
| … Becoming employed | 57 050  (73,9%) | 63 202  (74,3%) | 61 577  (71,9%) | 63 553  (69,7%) |

Source: Unemployment Insurance Fund

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| The proportion of registered unemployed who have moved into employment (%) | 51,5% | 55,6% | 56,0% | 54,2% |
| The proportion of new registered unemployed (excluding those with reduced capacity for work) who moved into employment within 6 months, (%) | 42,8% | 42,1% | 45,9% | 44,3% |
| The proportion of new registered young unemployed (aged 16–29) who have entered employment, enrolled in education, participated in labor market training, or attended work practice within 6 months (%) | 60,9% | 61,7% | 61,9% | 57,6% |

Source: Unemployment Insurance Fund

The following organizations have been sent copies of the report:

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* Estonian Trade Union Confederation

1. <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/Riigikogu/act/515112023002/consolide> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)