

Compliance with Article 15 of ICESCR in 2023

1. Promotion of Cultural Participation:

- **Cultural Backpacks Program:** In 2023, the Cultural Backpacks initiative was expanded to allow children and youth to attend theater performances, cinema screenings, concerts, and museum visits as part of their educational curriculum. This program reached approximately 138,000 primary school students, supported by a budget of 1.5 million euros .

2. Support for Creative Individuals:

- **Creative Persons and Artistic Associations Act:** Amendments to this act were prepared in 2023 to improve social guarantees and financial support for creative individuals. The introduction of creative worker's wages aimed to ensure a stable income for artists significantly contributing to Estonian culture .
- **Cultural Endowment Fund:** Additional resources were allocated to support cultural projects and individual artists through the Cultural Endowment of Estonia .

3. Preservation of Cultural Heritage:

- **Heritage Awareness Campaign:** A heritage awareness study conducted in 2023 indicated that the Estonian public values cultural heritage highly, leading to increased efforts in promoting and preserving Estonia's tangible and intangible cultural heritage .
- **Establishment of Heritage Repositories:** Plans to consolidate museum storage facilities continued, aiming to improve the preservation and accessibility of heritage collections .

4. International Cultural Cooperation:

- **European Capital of Culture – Tartu 2024:** Preparations for Tartu's designation as the European Capital of Culture in 2024 included various cultural projects and partnerships, enhancing Estonia's cultural diplomacy .
- **Participation in UNESCO Initiatives:** Estonia, in collaboration with Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine, submitted a joint application to inscribe the letters written on birch bark by Gulag prisoners in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register .

5. Digitalization of Cultural Heritage:

- **Digital Heritage Strategy 2023-2029:** This strategy was developed to ensure that Estonia's cultural heritage is accessible in digital form. By the end of 2023, significant progress was made, with 60% of heritage items digitized, improving public access to cultural assets .

6. Support for Ukrainian Cultural Sector:

- **Emergency Fund for Ukrainian Cultural Projects:** The Ministry supported various cultural and sports events for the Ukrainian creative sector in Estonia, contributing to the resilience of Ukrainian culture amidst ongoing conflict .

Compliance with Concluding Observations Point 57

In response to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' concluding observations, Estonia has taken several steps to address cultural rights issues:

1. Promotion of Minority Cultures:

- **Support for Cultural Organizations:** Funding and strategic support were provided to cultural organizations representing ethnic minorities, ensuring their active participation in Estonia's cultural life. In 2023, specific measures were taken to support cultural activities for Ukrainian refugees and other recent immigrants .
- **Cultural Integration Projects:** Various integration projects aimed at fostering multicultural dialogue and cooperation were implemented, promoting inclusivity and cultural diversity. The Integration Foundation (INSA) played a significant role in supporting these efforts through various programs and initiatives .

2. Accessibility of Cultural Services:

- **Infrastructure Improvements:** Investments were made in cultural infrastructure to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities. This includes modifications to theaters, museums, and other cultural venues to make them more inclusive .
- **Inclusive Cultural Programs:** Special programs and events were organized to include marginalized groups, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate in cultural activities. For instance, the "Flexible Integration Program" offered cultural education to 310 participants, focusing on museum visits, city tours, and workshops .

3. Public Awareness and Education:

- **Cultural Awareness Campaigns:** Campaigns to raise public awareness about the importance of cultural rights and heritage preservation were conducted throughout 2023 .
- **Educational Programs:** Schools and educational institutions were encouraged to include cultural education in their curricula, promoting a deeper understanding and appreciation of Estonia's cultural heritage among young people.

General Information on Estonia's Demographic, Economic, and Financial Situation

Demographic Situation

- **Population:** As of 2023, Estonia's population stands at approximately 1.3 million people. The demographic structure is characterized by an aging population with a median age of around 43 years.
- **Birth and Death Rates:** The birth rate has been relatively low, with a total fertility rate of 1.6 children per woman, while the death rate has slightly exceeded the birth rate, contributing to a natural decrease in population .
- **Migration:** Net migration has been positive in recent years, with an influx of foreign workers and returnees offsetting the natural population decline.

According to preliminary data (based on the population register), 26,399 people arrived in Estonia in 2023, and 12,543 people left, resulting in a positive migration balance of 13,856 people. 5,511 Estonian citizens left the country, while 5,758 returned, meaning the number of arrivals exceeded the number of departures by 247 people.

11,529, or 57% of all immigrants, were Ukrainian citizens. Compared to the previous year, the number of Ukrainian immigrants decreased by 21,688. Although the number of Ukrainian immigrants is three times lower compared to 2022, it is still several times higher than before the start of the full-scale war (2020: 2,374, 2021: 3,047).

6,515 Ukrainian citizens left Estonia. Since the beginning of the war, 50,654 people have applied for temporary protection status as of December 31, 2023. As of December 31, 35,384 people held valid temporary protection, and 6,393 people had renounced it. During the period from February 24, 2022, to December 31, 2023, a total of 6,908 people applied for international protection (excluding temporary protection), of which 6,379 were Ukrainian citizens.

Non-Discrimination and Equality Policies

- **Equal Treatment Act:** Estonia has implemented the Equal Treatment Act, which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of nationality, race, color, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. The act has been continuously updated to align with EU directives .
- **Gender Equality:** Various programs and initiatives have been undertaken to promote gender equality in the workplace, including measures to address the gender pay gap and support work-life balance .
- **Integration Programs:** The Ministry of Culture and other government bodies have launched several initiatives to support the integration of ethnic minorities and new immigrants, focusing on language training, cultural exchange programs, and community engagement .

Funding for Cultural and Social Programs

- **Budget Allocation:** In 2023, the total budget allocated to cultural programs was 378.015 million euros, while sports programs received 68.157 million euros .

Lisa: Kultuuriministeeriumi sisend ÜRO majanduslike, sotsiaalsete ja kultuurialaste õiguste rahvusvahelise pakti 4. aruande osas.

- **Cultural Endowment Fund:** The Cultural Endowment of Estonia provided substantial grants to support a wide range of cultural activities and projects, promoting artistic creativity and cultural preservation .
- **European Union Funds:** Estonia successfully secured funding from various EU programs to support digital heritage projects, cultural infrastructure improvements, and integration initiatives .

Specific Actions and Outputs

1. Promotion of Minority Cultures:

- **Support for Ukrainian Refugees:** In 2023, Estonia provided extensive support to Ukrainian refugees. This included cultural, educational, and social support programs .
- **Integration Programs:** The Integration Foundation (INSA) launched several programs, including language courses and cultural orientation for new immigrants. The "Settle in Estonia" program recorded 13,831 participations.
- **Cultural Exchange and Support:** Financial support was provided to 17 umbrella organizations representing over 260 cultural societies of ethnic minorities, ensuring their active participation in cultural life .

2. Accessibility of Cultural Services:

- **Inclusive Infrastructure Projects:** Cultural institutions received funding to enhance accessibility. For example, projects in 2023 included enhancing access to digital resources and facilities for people with disabilities in several cultural institutions.
- **Cultural Festivals and Events:** Events such as the multicultural festival attracted over 600 participants, fostering intercultural dialogue and understanding .

3. Integration and Language Training:

- **Language Programs:** In 2023, the Ministry of Culture funded approximately 13,500 language learning spots. This included 3,605 spots through the Integration Foundation's Estonian Language Houses and their partners, 787 spots for regular immigrants under the adaptation program, and 9,125 spots for temporary protection recipients under the adaptation program. Additionally, language support activities saw 5,113 participations .
- **Employment Support:** Specific programs designed to assist new immigrants and returning Estonians in integrating into the job market include the "Work Practice Program" and the "Workforce Mobility Program." The "Work Practice Program" offered participants from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds placements in public sector institutions. The "Workforce Mobility Program" prepared to provide language immersion opportunities by placing workers in Estonian-speaking environments.