



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
16 March 2026

Original: English
English, French and Spanish only

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Fourth periodic report submitted by Estonia under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, due in 2024*

[Date received: 15 November 2024]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



General information

1. Estonia submitted its third periodic report on the implementation of the Covenant in August 2019. This fourth periodic report, which Estonia submits for consideration, reflects the progress made in legislation and practice relevant to the implementation of the rights set out in the Covenant during the period from 2019 to early 2024. Considering the word limit established by the General Assembly, this report focuses on the articles covered by the recommendations of the Committee, which are contained in document E/C.12/EST/CO/3.
2. The previous examination of Estonia by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2019 provided a valuable expert assessment of the State's compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and influenced some national reform. We look forward to continued engagement throughout the review and in the follow-up stages to further progress the protection of economic, social and cultural rights in Estonia.
3. This report has been prepared in accordance with the UN Reporting Guidelines to be submitted by States parties to the ICESCR under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, and it has been prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Climate, Ministry of Regional affairs and Agriculture, Ministry of Finance. Estonia does not envisage establishing a separate mechanism dedicated to following up recommendations from international treaty bodies. The different human rights recommendations that Estonia receives are followed up as an integrated part of the Estonian ministries' daily work.
4. The draft report was also submitted for consultation to the Chancellor of Justice and relevant non-governmental organisations, i.e. the Estonian Institute of Human Rights, the Human Rights Centre and the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights.

Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

5. In the recommendations, Estonia was advised to incorporate all the rights enshrined in the Covenant in the domestic legal order. The Government is of the view that ESC rights are incorporated into domestic legal order through the constitutional principle that international treaties do automatically become part of Estonian legislation when ratified by the *Riigikogu*. According to article 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia the generally recognized principles and norms of international law are an inseparable part of the Estonian legal system. The relevant rules of the international law become rules of the Estonian legal system by signing or ratification of international agreements. Thus, the international treaties are valid as part of the domestic legislation of Estonia without their domestic validity or incorporation to domestic legislation being explicitly mentioned anywhere separately. Under Article 123 of the Constitution, if laws or other acts of Estonia are in conflict with international treaties ratified by the *Riigikogu*, the provisions of the international treaty shall be applied. The preparation for the ratification of the international treaties includes a comprehensive review aimed at ensuring that Estonian law is in conformity with the provisions of said treaties. In practice it means that the *Riigikogu* will always make sure that new domestic laws are compatible with the rights set out in the international treaties.
6. Appropriate, adequate and effective judicial remedies for the protection of the Covenant rights in our domestic legal order are already in place.
7. Regarding the recommendation to enhance training for judges and lawyers, please note that the Estonian courts are independent and autonomous in relation to the Government and other government agencies. Under section 74(1) of the Courts Act the judges required to develop their professional knowledge and skills on a regular basis, and participate in training. The Judicial Training Council (one of the judges' self-governing bodies comprised of the representatives of the judiciary, Ministry of Justice, prosecutors, academics) is responsible for the training of judges. It is assisted by the Supreme Court's training department in organising the courses. Lawyers from outside the judicial system can participate in those

trainings. In addition, the Bar Association and the Lawyers' Association have their own training programmes. Several training events for judges and lawyers have taken place, which have covered aspects of international, European Union and national law, on topics such as child welfare, domestic violence and case-law of the European Court of Human Rights. Estonian legal professionals have participated in the Council of Europe HELP Network courses on human rights. They have also participated in several foreign training events related to conflicts of norms in the application of fundamental rights, human rights and access to justice in the EU and EU gender equality law such as the European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals supports legal professionals to enhance their capacities to effectively and coherently apply European fundamental rights standards at the national level and through cross-border training. All these training events have also contributed to the application of the rights enshrined in the Covenant.

8. In addition, judges and lawyers are nevertheless expected to have sound knowledge of the legal regulatory system, which includes knowledge of the international instruments by which Estonia is bound.

9. Public awareness-raising campaigns are conducted in collaboration with civil society organizations and the media.

The Chancellor of Justice

10. The Chancellor of Justice has a wide-ranging mandate that covers economic, social, and cultural rights. This is demonstrated through the annual overviews of the Chancellor's activities, the proposals, recommendations, and opinions put forward, as well as the book "Human Rights" prepared and published under the leadership of the Office of the Chancellor of Justice, and the opinions and articles published in the magazine "Social Work" and/or its newsletter. Thus, the Chancellor of Justice addresses economic, cultural, and social rights daily, frequently using the Covenant alongside other pertinent international agreements. Below are some recent examples.

11. In spring 2023, the Chancellor of Justice submitted a written report to the Social Committee of the *Riigikogu*, highlighting issues related to the legal order concerning social rights. In 2024, a circular was distributed to municipalities and cities regarding the coverage of costs for organizing 24-hour general care services provided outside the home. Furthermore, the Chancellor of Justice proposed to the *Riigikogu* that amendments be made to the Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Prevention Act, the Credit Institutions Act, the Law of Obligations Act, and the State Fees Act to ensure compliance with the Constitution. These changes would require banks to establish a "social bank account" for persons to conduct transactions necessary for everyday life in case a person cannot use his or her bank account to the usual extent because the bank fulfils the requirements for preventing money laundering and terrorist financing.

12. Additionally, the Chancellor has referenced the Covenant in its opinions to the Supreme Court. Notably, the Chancellor cited the Covenant extensively in an opinion to the Administrative Law Chamber of the Supreme Court in a case concerning the language of instruction in public schools. The Chancellor participated in this court proceeding as *amicus curiae* at the request of the Administrative Law Chamber. The Chancellor also referred to the Covenant in an opinion to the Supreme Court on a constitutional review matter regarding the reform of the compulsory accumulated pension.

13. The Chancellor of Justice is widely recognized in Estonia among judges, officials, and the general public. The Chancellor's opinions have been cited in arguments by judges, applicants, and respondents in various court cases, such as those challenging the legality of decisions made by the Unemployment Insurance Fund (e.g., see Case 1 and Case 2) and the one involving the provision of suitable housing. The National Audit Office referred to several recommendations and opinions of the Chancellor of Justice in its audit "Activities of local authorities in supporting people with special needs".

14. The duties of the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) are defined in the Chancellor of Justice Act, and its mandate covers economic, social and cultural rights. The

NHRI is a strong institution whose independence is safeguarded by the Estonian Constitution (Article XII) and the Chancellor of Justice Act. It stands separate from the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The NHRI has a separate budget approved by the *Riigikogu* with an annual state budget act. The budget of the NHRI has thus far proven adequate for fulfilling its responsibilities. However, this has relied on reasonable annual budget increments considering the rise in living costs and the potential inclusion of extra duties. Since December 2020, the Estonian NHRI has held an A-status accreditation.

15. The budgetary autonomy of the Estonian NHRI was strengthened in connection with the Act on Amendments to the State Budget Act adopted by the *Riigikogu* on 15 May 2024, whereby the *Riigikogu* Finance Committee has a leading and decisive role in the budget procedure of the Chancellor of Justice (and other constitutional institutions). In this regard, the (theoretical) risk that the government could, for example, influence the work of independent constitutional institutions exercising control over the government for political reasons, was reduced.

Maximum available resources

16. The Government pays special attention to social policy. Regardless of the Covid pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis caused by rising energy prices, inflation, and refugee crises due to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the Government has increased social spending. The increase in public social spending was largely related to higher public spending on health, social security and income, thus particular attention was paid to disadvantaged persons. The subsistence benefit level was raised in 2022 and the government has agreed to increase the level of minimum wage and the methodology for calculating the minimum subsistence level is currently being analysed.

17. With regard to Estonia's government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP, it has remained stable between 2015-2022 and was around 6%. In connection with the transition to Estonian-language education, 1225 teachers, support specialists and school leaders in Ida-Viru County will receive wage subsidy. The total amount of the wage subsidy for eight months of the year 2024 is 9.14 million EUR. The application and payment of the wage subsidy is planned to continue. In addition to teachers and support staff, the allowance will also be paid to 150 heads of educational establishments, whose payment is decided by the school management or administrator.

18. One of the Government's aims is also to modernise tax policy, thereby increasing social well-being in the biggest cities and smallest places in the country alike. Our joint wish is to make forward-looking decisions in ever-changing times so as to boost our people's well-being, offer better services, preserve our language and culture, and ensure a better tomorrow. Government's expenditure level has been increased permanently. It is a mix of raising social expenditure (+1% of GDP) to help more vulnerable groups. Benefits are targeted at low-income households, retired persons living alone, unemployed, families, etc. The share of health care and helping refugees in government spending has also been increased.

19. The government is continuing to pursue a conservative fiscal policy. Although the past few years of different crises have presented complicated challenges, the goal is still to keep the general government budget in structural balance. A strict fiscal policy will ensure that a low level of government debt is maintained, which is a prerequisite for ensuring the long-term sustainability of public finances. This in turn reassures people that the services and support provided by the state will be guaranteed at all times.

Non-discrimination

20. The institution of the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner was created in 2005 in order to help people protect their rights and to avoid any form of discrimination. The Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner is an independent and impartial official who advises and assists anyone who feel they have been discriminated against. The Commissioner carries out surveillance in both the public and private sector. The Commissioner also endeavours to ensure that people in various minority groups are treated

equally. In order to ensure the effective functioning of the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, the state budget funding to its office has increased every year, ranging from 460,000 EUR in 2019 to 527,237 EUR in 2023.

21. Regarding the recommendation to amend without delay the Equal Treatment Act, the Draft Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Act has been prepared to merge the Gender Equality Act and the Equal Treatment Act and to strengthen the protection of rights presently provided by both acts. The draft law is expected to be presented to the Estonian Government by autumn 2024. The draft will widen the scope of protection presently provided on grounds of nationality (ethnic origin), race, colour, religion or other beliefs, age, disability, or sexual orientation in the Equal Treatment Act. After the adoption, the new law, including the prohibition of direct, indirect, and intersectional discrimination, will be applicable in all fields of societal life for all protected grounds. The draft will also list additional protected grounds, such as e.g., language, origin, property, and social status, and leave the list open for other objectively identifiable real or perceived characteristics of a person that can be the basis of social prejudice, exclusion or stigma rooted in social, political, or institutional practices.

22. In order to provide effective remedies for victims of discrimination, both the present and future legal framework foresee possibility for a person whose rights have been violated due to discrimination, to demand from the person who violates the rights that discrimination be discontinued, and compensation be paid for both pecuniary and non-pecuniary damage. The amount of compensation is determined by the court, or the labour dispute committee based on the scope, duration, and nature of discrimination. According to the draft law, the compensation must be effective, proportionate, and help prevent the continuation and recurrence of discrimination. In the future the turnover and profit of the legal entity that violated the rights of the person should also be considered.

23. The prohibition of discrimination in Estonia is stated in the Constitution (Article 12) which includes an open-ended list of grounds of prohibited discrimination. In addition, the prohibition of discrimination at work is regulated by the Equal Treatment Act and the Gender Equality Act. Prohibition of discrimination is also stated in several other acts, for example the Employment Contracts Act, the Public Service Act and the Penal Code.

24. The official language of Estonia is Estonian. Dialogue and mutual understanding require knowledge of the official language as a common language of communication understood by the entire society. In order to participate meaningfully in social life, it is necessary to know the official language at least at a minimum level. According to the 2021 census, 243 languages are spoken in Estonia. According to all integration monitoring surveys carried out in Estonia, proficiency in Estonian as the official language provides the opportunity for free self-realisation: it is possible to receive the best education, to work in any field of life and to participate in politics.

25. Estonia has supported the promotion of multilingualism and the learning of different foreign languages for years. Multilingualism and the development of early foreign language learning are also set as priorities in the current Estonian-language development plan for the period 2021-2035. In Estonia, it is possible to use foreign languages when communicating with state and local government authorities. The possibility to use Russian and English is common. The possibility to use Ukrainian has been added.

26. The Citizenship Act, which entered into force on 1 January 2019, provided for the possibility of receiving free Estonian-language training and paid leave for the duration of language training; by the time of submitting the report, 1243 people have used this opportunity and 396 of them have submitted an application for citizenship. So far, the practice has shown that the need for and interest in language training agreements for acquiring Estonian citizenship is relatively high.

Persons with undetermined citizenship

27. In Estonia, anyone who fulfils the conditions provided in the Citizenship Act for obtaining Estonian citizenship, can apply for it. Whether they have previously been citizens of another country or stateless persons is irrelevant here. The Government provides

information and encourages persons with undetermined citizenship to consider applying for the Estonian citizenship. The Government reimburses the costs of the Estonian language course as well as a course on the Constitutional order and Citizenship Act.

28. Persons with undetermined citizenship (including children under the age of 15) are living in Estonia on the basis of a residence permit, thus they are legally staying in the country. All the same rights, freedoms and obligations are granted for them which are granted to third-country nationals. The number of persons with undetermined citizenship by 1 May 2024 was 61,401 (4.4% of the population of Estonia). The authorities have implemented various legislative changes and systemic measures to increase the interest and facilitate the process of persons with undetermined citizenship in applying for Estonian citizenship, especially for children and elderly. There are no bureaucratic or other obstacles to applying for citizenship. Applying for citizenship is a person's free choice. The decrease of the number of persons with undetermined citizenship in Estonia continues to be the focus of our naturalisation policy.

29. In 2016, amendments to the Citizenship Act facilitated the grant of citizenship to children whose parents hold no citizenship. Under § 13(4) of the Citizenship Act, a minor under 15 years of age who is born in Estonia (or who immediately after birth takes up permanent residence in Estonia together with their parent or parents) is granted Estonian citizenship by naturalisation as of the moment of their birth, provided their parents or single parent whom no state recognises under valid laws as its citizen have or has lawfully resided in Estonia for at least five years by the moment of the child's birth. On 17 February 2020, an amendment to the Citizenship Act entered into force laying down an additional possibility to apply for Estonian citizenship for children if one of the child's parents is a stateless person but the other parent holds foreign citizenship. Upon reaching the age of 15, a child (including a child with undetermined citizenship) can apply for Estonian citizenship by themselves. As of 2 May 2024, 21 children with undetermined citizenship aged 15-17 lived in Estonia on the basis of a residence permit or right of residence.

30. Estonian citizenship policy is fully in accord with international law, including the UN 1954 and 1961 Conventions and its accession to these conventions will not provide additional benefits to persons with undetermined citizenship compared to their present status. The provisions of these conventions are less comprehensive than the rights currently enjoyed by residents of Estonia with undetermined citizenship. With regard to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, Estonia is of the opinion that every person has the right to freely choose his nationality, and the state cannot influence this choice. Estonia has constantly encouraged persons with undefined citizenship to choose between the citizenship of Estonia or another country, but making the choice is not mandatory. Estonia has considered the effects of joining the Stateless Persons Convention of 1954 and has found that persons with undefined citizenship living in Estonia are currently guaranteed all the rights provided for in the Convention.

31. The rights of individuals do not depend on whether they have the citizenship of some country, as the article 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia provides for that the rights, freedoms and duties of everyone and each person are equal for Estonian citizens and for citizens of foreign states and stateless persons in Estonia. So, persons with undetermined citizenship enjoy all the same rights as all other third country nationals do in Estonia – free healthcare, free education, social support, right to work, they have identity documents, they can travel, own real estate etc. Also, persons with undetermined citizenship, who have long term residence permits, can vote in local government elections. Since they are guaranteed all the rights that other Estonian residents have, they have no motivation to apply for citizenship.

32. The Government addresses issues related to stateless persons and persons with undetermined citizenship through the Cohesive Estonia Development Plan 2021-2030 adopted in November 2021 in cooperation with three ministries – Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Internal Security Development Plan 2030.

Asylum seekers and refugees

33. The Government of Estonia fully supports the reception of war refugees in Estonia. Estonia allocated around €220 million euros from its 2022 budget for receiving war refugees from Ukraine. Since February 24, 2022, a total of 159,524 refugees have arrived in Estonia. More than 55,000 Ukrainian war refugees have received temporary protection in Estonia (which is more than 3% of our populations and this number is likely to rise in the coming years). 33,688 Ukrainian war refugees have a valid temporary residence permit (as of 18.08.24). Citizens of Ukraine who are already in Estonia and whose visa or other basis for stay has expired or will expire soon may continue to stay in Estonia temporarily. There is no need to apply for or renew the visa. Also, applying for temporary protection is not obligatory. All citizens of Ukraine have the right to stay in Estonia even without applying for temporary protection. After applying for temporary protection, the war refugees receive similar rights as Estonian residents – the war refugees can enjoy the opportunities of Estonia’s labour market, social protection, healthcare and education. War refugees are guaranteed accommodation until they are able to find work and long-term accommodation, either renting an apartment independently, renting an apartment with the help of the local authority or staying in a place offered by volunteers. Approximately half of adult Ukrainians have managed to find work in Estonia.

34. Regarding the accommodation conditions in the asylum centres in Estonia, they are in accordance with the international law, including EU directives and indicators, ensuring the respect for human dignity and meeting the economic, social and cultural needs. Asylum seekers are accommodated in an apartment building type of houses. The housing and essential services to the asylum seekers during the asylum proceedings are provided and organised by Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers. The reception centre is a state agency administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs that operates pursuant to the Constitution, the relevant acts and other current legislation. The centres take into consideration the social, cultural and special needs of the inhabitants. The asylum seekers get an allowance equivalent to a subsistence benefit and, in addition, a food card. They also get access to necessary healthcare services, including mental health support and to recreational activities to support their wellbeing and integration.

35. The Estonian Refugee Council provides support services to beneficiaries of international protection in Estonia and humanitarian aid to people who have fled their homes abroad. The Estonian Refugee Council is one of the main competence centers on forced migration and integration in Estonia. The Council mediates also accommodation, offered by kind people in Estonia. The needs of the refugees will be mapped and if appropriate accommodation is found, the queuer will be informed within 10 days. The Estonian Refugee Council is running the “Edge Up” employability programme, aimed at people with a refugee background who wish to enter the job market or move on to a more suitable position.

36. According to the Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens, a beneficiary of international protection will receive a one-time rent benefit (up to 1200 EUR), that helps them to find their first suitable accommodation.

37. To foster the inclusion of refugees, Estonia has so far set up 4 consecutive integration strategies. A new development plan called Cohesive Estonia 2021-2030 – a joint venture between the ministries of culture, interior and foreign affairs - has been recently completed, and is to provide the basis for development of the integration field in upcoming years.

38. Three of Estonia’s integration strategies have been officially evaluated. The latest one is the evaluation of the strategy’s adaptation and integration measures for 2014-2020. In addition to the assessment of strategies and action plans, integration dynamics and processes in Estonia are sociologically monitored every 2 or 3 years. Moreover, the international Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) points out that Estonia’s integration policies are more advanced than those in most of Central and Eastern Europe. Scoring 50 out of 100 points on the MIPEX 2020 scale, the country is deemed to have a ‘comprehensive approach’ to integration which overall guarantees equal rights, opportunities and security to migrants.

39. Several studies and evaluations of integration policy measures were conducted in 2023, providing important insights and input for formulating and adjusting integration policy measures in Estonia. Firstly, ‘The final evaluation of the adaptation and integration measure of the European Social Fund in 2014–2020’ was published. The objective of the evaluation was to assess the success of the implementation of the adaptation and integration measure by analysing the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of the measures. Secondly, the results of the study ‘Organization of Estonian language learning for adults in restricted language environments’ were published. The purpose of the study was to analyse the language learning experiences, motivation, and obstacles of poorly integrated permanent residents, new immigrants, and beneficiaries of temporary protection living in restricted language environments.

40. The Cultural Diversity Department of the Estonian Ministry of Culture has led the governance of integration issues since 2009. However, migrant integration is understood as a broad social process which covers many areas of life. Therefore, other ministries, government bodies (such as the Integration Foundation) and non-governmental organisations are closely cooperating with the Ministry of Culture on different matters. As of 2023, the agency responsible for the management of the integration programme is the Integration Foundation. Estonian civil society has regularly been involved in the integration policy-making process. A steering group consisting of representatives of the public sector, civil society organisations and field experts monitors the implementation of Estonia’s integration strategies.

Equality between men and women

41. Various measures have been and are being implemented to tackle horizontal and vertical segregation, including gender stereotypes.

42. To tackle gender segregation in education and the labor 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 finalized 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. Project “Nudging to Support Stereotype-free Career Choices and Working Conditions” was finalized 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.

43. 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.

44. National curriculum for basic schools and upper-secondary schools list gender equality as one of the fundamental values of education as well as how school life is organised.

45. Since 2023, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications is implementing a range of initiatives supported by the European Structural Funds, with the primary goal of diminishing gender stereotypes and fostering gender balance in sectors marked by notable segregation, such as STEM and ICT, as well as education, health, and welfare. These initiatives include conducting research, designing and executing training modules for career counsellors, executing awareness campaigns to mitigate the influence of gender stereotypes on educational and career decisions, and endorsing non-traditional career paths. Furthermore, the ministry plans to facilitate collaboration through open calls, supporting employers, educational institutions, HR professionals, career counsellors, and other stakeholders in preventing and reducing gender segregation in education and the labor market. The open calls will commence at the end of 2024.

46. 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; StartIT (an initiative of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, to encourage girls and young women to study and work in IT fields) and Women in Tech retraining programme.

47. The leadership of the Ministry of Education and Research has approved the proposals of the STEM working group - planned activities to support the STEM study. Objectively, fewer girls choose STEM majors, but we are working on increasing the popularity of STEM. Compared to other countries, the study of physical natural sciences and bio- and environmental sciences and ICT is quite popular (for example in the field of natural sciences, almost ⅓ of graduates are women), but the share of engineering, production, technology, and construction has gradually decreased over time.

48. The Ministry of Education and Research has nominated the Engineering Academy in the higher education and vocational education and training in the European Social Fund as selected operation of strategic importance. The focus of the Engineering Academy programme is to update formal education in the field of engineering, production, and construction to increase the number of vocational and higher education graduates as well as the popularity and scope of the field. One of the Engineering Academy Programme 2023-2029 goals is increasing the number of student candidates who are motivated and aware of technical specialties, including the number of girls. Also, the IT Academy programme has, among other things, contributed to attracting women to study ICT. In Estonia, at master's level, almost half of the students in ICT are female (47%). Girls are one of the target groups of the new IT Academy programme as well. One of the IT Academy programme 2023-2029 goals is to increase the proportion of female students in the first-level curricula in the field of ICT, from 25% (2022) to 32% (2025) and 35% (2029).

49. 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 was 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 helped to increase equality by improving everyday practical skills, changing attitudes, and reducing gender stereotypes. 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.

Gender pay gap

50. From 2016 Estonian gender equality policy has been planned and implemented through the Welfare Development Plan which was the first time that gender equality had a governmental level wide-scale national strategy. In 2023, the government adopted a new Welfare Development Plan for 2023-2030, which outlines five sub-goals, including gender equality and equal opportunities. It seeks to achieve gender equality by enhancing economic equality, increasing women's participation in decision-making processes, transforming societal attitudes, and strengthening institutional capacities to promote gender equality. The working programmes of the strategy are being updated every year in order to ensure and monitor the effective implementation of the strategy.

51. In 2023, the gender pay gap in Estonia reached an all-time low of 13.1%. While still high, this represents a significant decrease of more than 10 percentage points compared to the last decade. It is noteworthy that the gender employment gap in Estonia is very low,

standing at 1.5% in 2023. During the reporting period several factors have been contributing to the decrease of the pay gap, including significant increase in the minimum wage and increased wages in female-dominated sectors, such as education, social work and health.

52. 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 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, labor 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 fraction 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. 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, digital tool Pay Mirror was developed, allowing employers to monitor the gender pay gap and other gender equality indicators within their organizations using administrative data. This tool enables quarterly monitoring of the gender pay gap situation without administrative burden, aiming to raise employers’ awareness and strengthen their role in reducing the gender pay gap.

53. 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 labor 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. As a result of the research, a web application for gender differences in income and wealth was developed.

54. By June 2026, Estonia will transpose the EU pay transparency directive, clarifying rules on pay transparency for both employees and employers. From 2026, Estonian employers must establish pay structures to ensure non-discrimination and transparency, evaluating all positions based on gender-neutral criteria. To assist employers in meeting these requirements, training sessions, online courses, and guidelines on gender neutral job evaluation will be provided by the state. From 2026, applicants must receive information about pay or pay ranges before interviews, and upon request, employers must provide employees with information about pay ranges for employees doing the same work or work of equal value. Employers with 100 or more employees will face monitoring and reporting requirements, and gender pay gap indicators will be disclosed to employees, the Labour Inspectorate, and the public.

Right to work

55. Under the European Social Fund’s programme “Development of Vocational and Higher Education and Training in line with Labour Market Needs” (PRÕM), three new models of work-based learning (construction, metalwork and commerce) have been developed in vocational education and training, which have been implemented in 2023/24. Between 2015 and 2022, the programme involved more than 1,500 companies and

institutions in work-based learning and created training places for more than 7,600 work-based learners.

56. Estonian Ministry of Education and Research has commissioned special continuing education courses provided for developing green skills with the help of RRF; providers are Estonian universities, institutions of professional higher education and vocational educational institutions. As part of this, a separate marketing and communication campaign is planned to raise awareness among businesses and adults about green skills, the importance of learning and developing them.

57. The Ministry of Education and Research, with the support of ESF, provides free courses that are designed for adults to improve their professional skills and employability. The training needs have been designed taking into account the recommendations of the reports of the Labour Force and Skills Forecasting System in Estonia (OSKA) and regional training needs.

58. Adults aged 50+ with no vocational education, no secondary education or with outdated skills can acquire new skills in vocational training institutions and higher education institutions of applied sciences offering vocational and professional training across Estonia. The range of learning opportunities is very varied, including training in nearly 30 different fields of study as well as general skills.

59. In addition to training and upskilling measures for unemployed people, Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund provides training and retraining measures for employed people since May 2017. The package of measures is called “Work and Study”, containing measures provided directly to employees, as well as via their employers. Employees can participate in career counselling (free and unlimited access to all regardless of their age and employment status), in job related training and upskilling, they can acquire a (new) degree with support of degree study allowance and get reimbursed for the cost of a certificate or attestation. Within the measure employers can develop their employees’ ICT skills, Estonian language proficiency, train employees in changing circumstances and in certain cases when hiring a new employee. Within the “Work and Study” package an additional green skills measure for employers will be implemented from June 2025.

60. Starting from 1 January 2024, additional labour market measures financed from Just Transition Fund are made available to support fair transition in North-East Estonia (Ida-Viru County). Extra support will be provided through the Public Employment Services for employees in Ida-Viru County who have lost or are in the process of losing their jobs due to changes in the oil shale industry resulting in decreased labour demand. First, job to job support is offered to people who have lost their jobs in the oil shale industry and are willing to accept a new job in a different industry within three months after registering as unemployed and being issued unemployment insurance benefits. Support is paid up to 12 months in order to prevent long-term unemployment and support fast job-to-job transition. Also, skills development possibilities through degree study or acquiring micro-credentials is offered with the financial support from the public employment services.

61. 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 programme, and 9,125 spots for temporary protection recipients under the adaptation programme. Additionally, language support activities saw 5,113 participations. Specific programmes designed to assist new immigrants and returning Estonians in integrating into the job market include the “Work Practice Programme” and the “Workforce Mobility Programme.” The “Work Practice Programme” offered participants from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds placements in public sector institutions. The “Workforce Mobility Programme” prepared to provide language immersion opportunities by placing workers in Estonian-speaking environments.

Occupational safety and health

62. According to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, data of occupational accidents and diseases are collected based on information submitted to the Labour Inspectorate by the employer or doctor and are stored in the Working Environment Database (TEIS). Compared to 2017, when the employer had the obligation to inform the Labour Inspectorate of every occupational accident, since 2019 the Labour Inspectorate will only be notified of occupational accidents resulting in temporary incapacity for work or death.

63. In 2023, 3,296 occupational accidents were registered, 389 accidents less than the year before. (See Table 2). A high number of occupational accidents is not necessarily a bad sign – it may indicate that employers and employees' knowledge about occupational health and safety have been increased. At the same time, Estonia is aware that the actual number of occupational accidents may be higher than the administrative statistics shows. The Statistics Estonia has been publishing the estimated number¹ of occupational accidents, which was 5,650 in 2021 and reporting rate of occupational accidents was 59.1 percent. (See Table 1).

64. In 2023, 51 occupational diseases and illnesses caused by work were registered, 10 cases less than the year before. (See Table 2). Occupational diseases and illness caused by work may have remained partially undiagnosed or may have been diagnosed as general illnesses. In 2024-2025 Estonia is carrying out a study to find out the problems and possible solutions in the process of diagnosing of occupational diseases and illness caused by work.

65. The strategic objectives of occupational health and safety in Estonia, including the activities for raising employers' and employees' awareness about occupational health and safety are planned in the Welfare Development Plan 2023-2030. The main priority activities that come from the plan are:

- Support and advise employers and workers in complying with occupational safety and health requirements and in managing risks in the workplace;
- Ensure a functioning occupational health management system and improve its quality;
- Develop digital solutions that make it easier for employers to comply with safety requirements.

66. In spring 2020, the Labour Inspectorate opened a new Working Environment Database (TEIS) which aim is to promote occupational safety, by enabling the Labour Inspectorate to process information relating to occupational health and safety for the purpose of assessing enterprises' working environments, planning, and executing prevention and supervision activities. The database also supports the employer in creating a good and healthy workplace for employees – e.g., employers can prepare the risk assessment in TEIS. Labour Inspectorate also provides consultation and work environment counselling services to employers and employees.

67. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication is using 2024-2029 the resources of the European Social Fund to contribute to the improvement of working conditions, i.e. occupational health and safety, as well as industrial relations, and the creation of a healthy working environment. Activities aimed at creating a safe and healthy working environment help to improve the safety culture in companies and reduce occupational accidents and work-related illnesses.

68. With regard to the recommendation to increase the Labour Inspectorate financial and human resources, in 2023, 46 inspectors (in 2017, 44) in the Labour Inspectorate carried out daily state supervision in the field of occupational safety and health and labour relations. There were also 2 environment consultants (in 2017, 4), 1 mental health consultant, 12 counselling lawyers (in 2017, 9). Using the Working Environment Database has made the work of the Labour Inspectorate faster and more efficient. For example, since 2020, state supervision can be carried out in two ways - contactless through TEIS and during a visit to the company on site.

¹ The estimated number of occupational accidents is based on absence from work of more than 3 days.

69. The personnel costs of the Labour Inspectorate in 2023 were 3.15 million (in 2017, 1.91 million) and the management costs were 522 00 (in 2017, 215,090). Based on above data, the financial cost of Labour Inspectorate has been increased, especially personnel costs. Also, using the resources of the European Social Fund, it is possible to increase the capacity of the Labour Inspectorate through employee development (e.g., individual and team training) and institutional capacity improving.

70. Regarding the establishment of an occupational health safety insurance scheme, the compensation system for occupational accidents in Estonia is currently based on the national social security system (e.g., state health and pension insurances). Employees receive medical services and benefits from the state. Also, employees have the right to demand compensation from their employer and if an employer is dissolved without having a legal successor, the Social Insurance Board compensates for proprietary damage caused to a person by their employer through health damage or death arising from an occupational accident or disease. It is sometimes difficult for employees to get compensation from employers, because disputes often end up in court. In 2024-2025 the Ministry of Social affairs in cooperation with social partners is carrying out a study to analyse the problems and find possible solutions to improve the compensation system for damage arising from occupational accidents or diseases.

Table 1
Occupational accidents, source - Statistics Estonia

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 and 2023
Estimated number of occupational accidents	6 311	6 238	6 184	5 361	5 650	Data not yet available
Registered number of occupational accidents (more than 3 days of absent of work)	3 599	3 676	3 619	3 168	3 342	Data not yet available
Reporting rate of occupational accidents, %	57.0	58.9	58.5	59.1	59.1	Data not yet available

Table 2
Occupational accidents, source - Labour Inspectorate

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Registered number of occupational accidents	5 210	5 170	4 277	3 641	3 883	3 685	3 296

Table 3
Occupational diseases and illness caused by work, source - Labour Inspectorate

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of occupational diseases	37	49	34	22	16	24	13
Number of illnesses caused by work	78	55	57	87	38	37	38
Total	115	104	91	109	54	61	51

Trade union rights

71. Civil Service Act entered into force in 2013. The law significantly narrowed the definition of an official (compared to the old law) and linked it to the exercise of public authority. Thus, all persons who exercise official authority are not allowed to strike. The scope of public service varies significantly in different countries and the definition of an official is also different. Officials in Estonia according to the Civil Service Act are those who exercise public power, they perform those tasks that the state has entrusted only to officials because they are loyal, impartial, must meet higher requirements, behave with dignity etc. Therefore, it is justified to apply a strike ban to officials. Institutions and other organisations specified in the Collective Labour Dispute Resolution Act, whose right to strike is denied,

can resolve collective labour disputes by means of negotiations, with the help of a public conciliator or in court. Public conciliators are independent, impartial officials. Civil servants who do not have the right to strike, can resolve collective disputes by mediation, conciliation or the courts.

Social security

72. Estonia has a comprehensive social security system that covers different branches of social security. Estonia provides social security coverage through a number of programmes. The system aims to cover all citizens and residents, ensuring a safety net for various life circumstances.

73. National health insurance system covers a wide range of health services, including primary care, specialist care, hospital services, and prescription drugs. Long-term care is provided under the healthcare system. Sickness benefits are provided to insured people who are unable to work due to illness. These benefits are funded by social insurance contributions. Compensation for employment injuries and occupational diseases is covered under the state social insurance scheme. This includes medical care, rehabilitation, and financial compensation. Estonia provides various family benefits, including child allowances, parental benefits, birth allowance. Maternity benefits include maternity leave and financial support during pregnancy and after childbirth. These benefits are funded by social insurance contributions and are intended to support mothers before and after the birth of a child. Once designated, the limits on the parental benefit do not change when the calendar year changes. As an exception, if the amount of the parental benefit is the minimum wage rate and on 1 January the minimum wage established by the Government rises, the parental benefit is paid at the new minimum wage rate. As of 2024 the minimum wage is 725 EUR.

74. Estonian social security system guarantees non-contributory social assistance allowances for disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and families who are not covered by contributory schemes. Disability benefits are provided to individuals who are unable to work due to disability. The benefits include financial support, rehabilitation services, and other forms of assistance. Survivors' and orphans' pensions are provided to dependents of deceased insured persons. This includes financial support for spouses and children.

75. Large groups of the non-active population have healthcare covered on the basis of solidarity (e.g., all children and pensioners) or by contributions paid on their behalf by the State. The cost of treatment is paid by the social insurance scheme; however, co-payments are also required at the point.

76. Free dental care is provided for children and adolescents up to 19 years, including preventive and curative services. Adult dental care must be paid for out-of-pocket but is subject to partial re-imburement by the Health Insurance Fund.

77. Emergency care is provided regardless of insurance status, all individuals in Estonia are entitled to emergency medical care.

78. An unemployed mother is entitled to parental benefits starting from the birth date of the child. For insured mothers who did not work during the reference year, the maternity benefit is equal to the monthly minimum wage which was applicable in the previous calendar month of the payment of benefit.

79. Additional support is available through family and child benefits, which can provide financial assistance for child-rearing.

80. Childbirth allowance is a one-time allowance in the amount of 320 EUR paid when you have registered the birth of your child.

81. Child allowance is paid to children until they turn 19 years of age 80 EUR per child per month.

82. An allowance for a family with 3 to 6 children is 450 EUR per month. The allowance amount for a family with 7 or more children is 650 EUR per month.

83. A single parent's child allowance for mothers raising a child alone is 80 EUR per month.
84. An allowance for multiple birth of three or more children is 1,000 EUR per family per month, until the children reach the age of 18 months.
85. The guardianship allowance is paid for a person raising a child whose parents do not fulfil their obligation to raise a child. The guardianship allowance is 240 EUR per month.
86. Long-term care is provided under the healthcare and welfare systems. The healthcare system provides inpatient and home nursing care. The welfare system generally provides different types of long-term care services: residential, semi-residential day care and domestic service.
87. Overall, Estonia's social security system is designed to provide comprehensive coverage across these branches, ensuring that residents have access to necessary support in various life situations. The named branches are mainly contribution based.
88. The legal residents of Estonia are eligible for the subsistence allowance if their income is below the subsistence level. Additional social assistance programmes are available to residents, to help with specific needs like covering the cost of housing. Including an allowance for a pensioner living alone. Non-nationals who are legally residing in Estonia and are employed, self-employed, or voluntarily insured are covered by the Estonian Health Insurance Fund. This coverage includes a wide range of health services. Non-nationals can also access the Healthcare services when registering as unemployed, when a person is unemployed, they can also apply for unemployment allowance. The list that is provided above also includes non-nationals. All residents are eligible for long-term care benefits.
89. All individuals in Estonia, regardless of residency status or insurance, have access to emergency medical care.
90. Family benefits and child allowance are paid to aliens who hold a temporary residence permit. Employed and self-employed women with legal residency, including those making voluntary contributions, are entitled to maternity benefits. This includes financial support during pregnancy and after childbirth. The primary condition for legal residents to these non-contributory benefits is having legal residency status in Estonia. This includes those with temporary or permanent residence permits.

Old age pension

91. In Estonia, men and women have the same retirement age and the same length of service requirement of 15 years. Also, both sexes are treated equally when it comes to considering child-caring periods. Caring periods are counted for collecting pension contribution periods for children up to three years and caring for people with disabilities. Additionally, one parent gets a pension supplement per each child raised for at least eight years, or alternatively, the state makes payments to the statutory pension fund of a parent for three years (4% of the previous year average wage, applies for a child born after 2013). If there is a disagreement between parents, the pension rights are divided equally. The gender pension gap has not reached pensions yet, as today's pensioners receive pensions largely for periods that did not depend on salary.
92. Estonia has a three-pillar old age pension system: a state pension (first pillar), a mandatory funded pension (second pillar), and voluntary funded pension (third pillar). Pensions are indexed annually on 1 April each year to keep pensions in balance with changes in wages and prices. The index is a weighted average of the consumer price index and the growth of social tax revenues to the pension insurance system (in a 20:80 proportion). The old-age pensions parts are indexed differently – flat-rate base amount is indexed 1.1 times of index and other components 0.9 times of index.
93. The allowance for a pensioner living alone is 200 EUR, and it is paid once a year, in October. There is no adjustment for inflation. The allowance helps pensioners who are living alone to have a better standard of living.

94. Work ability allowance is indexed annually on 1 April. The index depends on the increase of consumer prices and the increase of social tax revenue. From 1 April 2024, the daily rate of the work ability allowance is 20.57 EUR.

95. The subsistence level, which determines eligibility for subsistence benefit is legally set to cover the minimum cost of food, clothing, footwear, and other goods and services to meet basic needs. From 1 June 2022, the subsistence level for a person living alone or the first member of a family is 200 EUR per month and 160 EUR for the second and each subsequent adult member of the family. The subsistence level for each minor member of the family is 240 EUR per month. A recipient of the subsistence benefit whose family members are all minors is entitled to a supplementary social benefit of 15 EUR. Housing costs can also be covered when the living allowance is determined. The subsistence level is established by the *Riigikogu* for each budgetary year. The subsistence benefit is not automatically indexed.

96. If a person is not entitled to an old-age pension when they reach retirement age due to a lack of years of pensionable service, and they have lived in Estonia for at least five years right before applying, they are entitled to a national pension of 372.05 EUR per month.

97. The Estonian law allows self-employed persons to join the second pillar. Joining a mandatory accumulated pension does not mean an automatic obligation to start making contributions, but it requires receiving income, which is taxed with social tax. As of 1 January 2024, persons who have joined the second pillar will have the opportunity to increase their 2% funded pension contribution rate to 4% or 6% if they wish. The self-employed person has the same possibilities to change the funded pension contribution rate as an ordinary natural person. The purpose of the change is to increase people's pension assets and to get a higher replacement rate and higher pension in old age. People born from 1942-1982 have also the possibility to join the second pillar voluntarily. Starting from 1 January 2021, applications to join the second pillar can be submitted at any time.

98. In Estonia, public social security schemes are supplemented by private schemes and informal arrangements. Mandatory Funded Pension (Second Pillar): this is a compulsory private pension scheme funded by employee contributions (2% of gross salary) and a state contribution (4% from social tax). Managed by private pension funds, it supplements the state pension to ensure better retirement income. The voluntary funded pension (Third Pillar): individuals can make additional contributions to private pension funds, benefiting from tax incentives. This is a voluntary scheme aimed at further enhancing retirement savings. Employer can make additional contributions to employees' supplementary pension fund. These arrangements are not mandated by law but serve as an additional layer of social security.

Unemployment benefits

99. Unemployment benefits are available through the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund. These benefits are provided to individuals who have lost their jobs and meet specific eligibility criteria. The minimum amount is legally established and reviewed regularly to reflect economic changes. In 2024 the unemployment allowance is 362.7 EUR per month. The unemployment allowance is not adjusted automatically. The daily unemployment allowance rate is established by the *Riigikogu*. The daily rate will not be lower than 50% of the minimum wage of the previous year. The minimum wage is agreed between employers' and employees' representatives and established by the government, usually at least once a year.

100. The current insurance system is structured so that if the employment relationship ends at the employee's initiative or fault, unemployment insurance benefits are not paid. In such a case, the situation cannot be regarded as if the unemployment were forced upon the person. However, an unemployed individual can apply for an unemployment allowance, which also covers employment relationships terminated at the employee's initiative or fault. Additionally, since 1 September 2020, it is allowed to do temporary work for up to 8 days per month while registered unemployed and receive an income of up to 40% of the minimum wage. This change helps to improve the economic well-being of the unemployed, as well as encourages employment and maintains work habits. Also, according to the Estonian

Government coalition agreement, the Minister of Economic Affairs and Communication shall present an analysis and proposal for the expansion of unemployment insurance for those who work in non-standard forms of work to the government in May 2025. If the government approves the proposals, work on the necessary legislative changes will commence.

Minimum age of marriage

101. As of 1 November 2022 legal minimum age for marriage is 18 years with no exceptions and the law is effectively enforced.

Domestic violence

102. The Government has given priority to combating domestic violence and prevention of various forms of violence has been addressed in several national strategies and action plans. The goals and actions aimed at preventing violence against women and other forms of violence are consolidated in the Violence Prevention Agreement (VEKO) 2021-2025. It was confirmed by the Government in July 2021 and sets out 14 measures for violence prevention.

103. The Governmental Strategy for Preventing Violence in 2015-2020 was implemented in cooperation with NGOs. The new Violence Prevention Agreement 2021-2025 was prepared also in 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.

104. The Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Education and Research, in collaboration with subordinate institutions, have developed a new Domestic Violence Action Plan for the years 2024-2027, based on two main goals: 1) Recognizing and condemning domestic violence; 2) Providing systematic and needs-based assistance to those affected by domestic violence. The implementation of the Action Plan will be assessed and its performance monitored regularly by the Steering Group on Domestic Violence, which was set up by the 2018 Memorandum of Understanding of the Government of the Republic. If necessary, additional funding will be requested or internal reorganisation will be undertaken.

105. Also, under the Action Plan the following activities will be carried out: a) training for the police staff in order to review work procedures; b) upgrading the curricula of the Police and Border Guard College on the subject of domestic violence (including digital domestic abuse); c) creation and implementation of regular in-service training on violence in line and the survey on attitudes towards violence (including digital domestic abuse); d) development/revision of systematic training to equip law enforcement agencies with the necessary skills to deal with all victims of violence (including victims of sexual violence), while applying a victim-centred and gender-sensitive approach. This framework is designed to provide an instrument to collect information regarding the fair and effective investigation and prosecution.

106. The new Victim Support Act came into force on 1 April 2023, prepared since the drafting of the Victim Support Act (VTK) from 2019, as it required the involvement of many institutions and the development of new solutions. The new Act explicitly defines crisis aid for sexual violence, non-violence support services, psychosocial crisis aid as well as essential victim support services. It also covers the topic of domestic abuse and what it means and how to receive help. According to the Victim Support Act, survivors of domestic violence are entitled to a wide range of free services, provided and funded by the Social Insurance Board. Several services that were not previously regulated by law were provided for in the new Victim Support Law. These include crisis support service for victims of sexual violence (highlighted positively in the GREVIO evaluation report on Estonia); support service for abandoning violence; psychosocial assistance in crisis situations; and the core victim support service. Also, descriptions of services are provided to women's support centres; restorative justice, and victims of human trafficking were supplemented, as well as the content and

requirements for mental health support for trauma recovery. The goal was greater clarity regarding what individuals are entitled to and how this support is provided. Stricter requirements for the professional training of individuals providing victim support were established through implementing regulations of the Victim Support Law to provide the best assistance to vulnerable groups. The system for applying for compensation for victims of crime became clearer, making the application process easier for victims. Victims of domestic and sexual violence can receive mental health support for trauma recovery (services of psychologists, psychotherapists) even without criminal proceedings, whereas previously, initiating proceedings was a requirement. Data exchange between institutions was established to provide victims with better access to services. For the first time, data exchange on cases of high-risk domestic violence and informing the Social Insurance Board about victims requiring special treatment and protection was regulated to proactively offer assistance.

107. Safe, easy-to-use, accessible and confidential reporting mechanisms are in place. National Victim Support System is training workers, both in NGOs and the state sector. They encourage reporting to law enforcement authorities and continue providing support for all victims, whether they report or not. In addition to victim support helpline (free of charge), phone and chat counselling are available around the clock.

108. Since 2019, the number of registered domestic violence crimes has fallen. In 2023, 3186 domestic violence crimes were recorded, a decrease of 2% compared to 2022. The largest proportion of domestic violence crimes (66%) was intimate partner violence. The typical perpetrator of domestic violence was male. Domestic violence tends to be directed against women, as the vast majority of perpetrators are men (84%-88%) and the victims are mostly women (78%-81%), but it is important to note that the statistics may be slightly skewed in this respect, as men victims of violence do not tend to report cases officially.

109. Domestic violence is criminalised in Estonia in the Penal Code. There are no specific laws regarding any type of crime in Estonia, all crimes are and can be stipulated only in the Penal Code. The effectiveness of the system does not come from the name of the law, but the actual practice. The absence of a specific law on domestic violence has no impact to the investigations, prosecutions and convictions of domestic violence in Estonia.

110. The Government is continuously organising information and awareness-raising campaigns to combat violence against women and domestic violence. The new Domestic Violence Action Plan includes the promotion of awareness raising, and a cross-sectoral communication plan to continue with systematic campaigns. To better recognize domestic violence, the Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Social Insurance Board, plans to increase awareness among professionals dealing with domestic violence cases over the next four years regarding trauma-informed care principles and domestic violence. For example, the Social Insurance Board has already developed various e-courses: 1) Resolving domestic violence cases, 2) Practices considering psychological trauma, 3) Providing psychological first aid to individuals in crisis. These courses are available to all individuals.

111. In 2024 a new survey was published. The aim of the survey “Estonian Population Awareness Survey on Gender-Based Violence and Trafficking in Human Beings” was to map people’s awareness and attitudes on these topics and to compare the results with surveys conducted in 2014 and 2016. According to the survey, recognition of domestic violence has increased significantly. While previous surveys have found a number of violent couple situations that were perceived as violent by around half of the population, by 2024, recognition of domestic violence has reached a level where, for all situations covered by the survey, around 80% or more of the population perceive them as mild or severe violence. Particularly noteworthy is the change in attitudes towards situations where one partner forbids the other from socialising with friends or takes control of the other’s bank card and shopping, now considered violent by 78% and 81% of respondents respectively. Attitudes towards victims of domestic violence have also changed. While in the past, around half of the population saw victims as partly to blame, by 2024 this percentage has fallen to 38%. In addition, the proportion of people who see domestic violence as an internal matter in which external people should not intervene has decreased. In 2014, 22% of the population considered domestic violence to be an internal family matter that should not be interfered with, but by 2024 this figure has fallen to 10%.

Poverty and inequality

112. Reducing poverty and dealing with related problems is a continuing priority of the Government. While absolute poverty has fallen sharply in recent years the relative poverty rates have stayed high. The share of people living in relative poverty has remained around 21–22% in recent years. The share of people living in absolute poverty has been steadily decreasing, reaching 2.2% in 2020.

113. Estonian government employs a wide range of measures to address poverty and pays special attention to the regions where the unemployment and poverty rates have been higher, such as Ida-Viru and South East regions (for example through the EU Just Transition Fund). Measures to improve social protection must be considered jointly with revenue and expenditure adjustments to ensure fiscal sustainability. Reduction of social inequality and poverty are also the general objectives of the Welfare Development Plan 2023–2030.

114. In May 2023, the Estonian Trade Union Confederation, the Estonian Employers' Confederation and the Minister of Economic Affairs and Communications concluded a goodwill agreement on the growth rate of the minimum wage until 2027, when it will be 50% of the average wage. Under this agreement, the minimum wage in Estonia will rise from its current level of 39% (in 2023), to 42.5% of the mean wage in 2024, 45% in 2025, 47.5% in 2026 and 50% in 2027.

115. On 1 April 2021, an additional increase in the base amount of the pension was made as a solidarity component increasing the pension of all old-age pensioners. The increase in the base amount of the pension affected almost 320,000 people. It is estimated that this will reduce the relative poverty rate of pensioners by an estimated 1.2 percentage points.

116. In April 2021 the national pension was also increased. The national pension provides income in old-age for people who have not fulfilled the length of service requirement for receiving an old-age pension and who have lived in Estonia for at least five years directly before applying for the pension.

117. From 1 January 2023, an additional increase in the average pension and an income tax exemption was made. These changes will increase the retirement pension per year for about 970 EUR. From the beginning of 2023, basic component of the pension and national pension were increased by 20 EUR. An increase in the basic part of the pension helped to improve the livelihoods of more than 321,000 pensioners and an increase in the national pension rate helped the subsistence of 3,200 national pensioners.

118. From 1 January 2023, a separate tax-free income applies to people who have reached the old-age pension age, which guarantees a person an income-tax-free subsistence minimum to the extent of the average old-age pension (704 EUR), regardless of the amount of the person's income. This means that the average pension is exempt from income tax.

119. Increase was made in the subsistence level, starting from 1 June 2022:

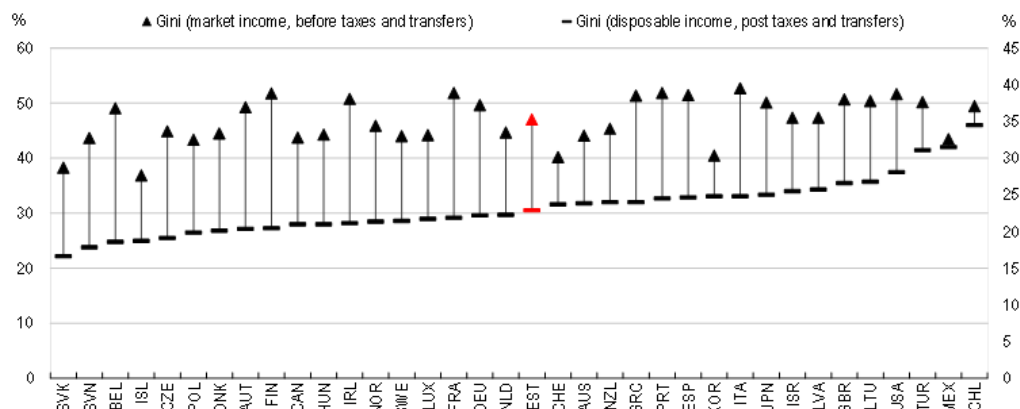
- For a person living alone or for the first family member of the family 200 EUR per month (previously 150 EUR).
- For each minor child (under 18 years of age) 240 EUR per month (previously 180 EUR).
- Per the second and each following family member 160 EUR per month (previously 120 EUR).

120. Starting from 1 July 2022, the repayment of the loan (incl. the loan interest and the mandatory home insurance premium) is taken into account as housing expense upon calculation of a subsistence benefit.

121. Estonia has traditionally preferred a simple tax system with few exemptions and low tax rates, where the progressivity of personal income tax is introduced via a basic tax allowance. We have understood that a progressive tax system is not a panacea, as we can clearly see from the inequality statistics from other OECD countries with different approaches (ref table below). It is one of the possible instruments, alongside others, that

might address problems of inequality. The debate over what works best will certainly continue, also in Estonia.

Inequality levels before and after redistribution



Source: OECD Income distribution database.

Right to housing

122. The housing stock quality plays a key-role in people's wellbeing. Living conditions have a direct effect on physical and mental health. Households represent 40% of total final energy consumption in Estonia. The energy-saving potential in residential buildings is considerable, in particular through implementing digital and innovative technologies. With renovation, fossil fuel imports and carbon dioxide emissions would be reduced. It is the objective of the state to create conditions that enable Estonians to purchase or rent suitable housing and to improve residential building quality with maximum independence. State subsidies and other financial instruments play a part in achieving this. By 2050, Estonia's target is to achieve complete renovation of buildings built before the year 2000 to a Class C standard at minimum. This can be used to accomplish a reduction in heat consumption of up to 70% as well as electricity consumption of up to 20% (saving 7 TWh per year).

123. Estonian housing market is characterized by a high rate of private ownership of the housing stock and high rate of owner-occupation: 80% of the households live in dwellings that they own. 737,873 dwellings were counted in the 2021 Population and Housing Census. According to Population and Housing Census 2021, of the more than half a million households in Estonia live in a private house. These households comprise 29.3% of Estonia's total population. Flats, including terraced houses and semi-detached houses, are home to 70.8% of households. 1.6% of the population reside in collective living quarters (care homes, dormitories) and 1.2% in other dwellings. To a great extent the housing stock originates from the mass-construction period between the 1960s and 1990s and is therefore more than 30 years old. In general, the availability of comfort characteristics in the dwellings of Estonia's inhabitants has improved slightly since the previous population census (2011). In the 2021 census, 94% of inhabitants had access to water supply system, 93% to bathing facilities, and 92% to toilet facilities. 71% of the population lived in a dwelling with central heating. Understandably, these figures are even higher in blocks of flats, with 99% of inhabitants having access to running water and flush toilet and 97% equipped with bathing facilities. 86% of people living in a block of flats have central heating.

124. As stated in the Social Welfare Act, housing is an obligation of local authorities – they are obliged to provide a dwelling to persons or families in their district who are not able to afford it by themselves, and where necessary, also allowing renting a social housing. The financing and regulation of social housing is done on a local level. Therefore, the criteria for accessing social housing, the organisation and the quality of the service varies between local governments, which have different financial capabilities.

125. Some municipalities offer various kinds of housing possibilities which low-income households with children have access to, in addition to social housing. For example, Tallinn

offers municipal housing to individuals and families in need of housing because of their socio-economic circumstances, one of the main target groups being low-income households with children. They also have a second housing programme which accommodates essential workers and their households. Apart from those options, Tallinn provides a social housing service for households that are unable to ensure their own housing and need assistance with everyday activities.

126. KredEx is a foundation set up by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications with the aim of providing financial solutions to allow people to buy their own home. It has set up two measures to aid low-income families with children in accessing adequate housing. First, there is the home support for families with many children. The objective of this measure is to improve the living conditions of low-income families raising three or more children. With the help of this support, families can either build or remodel their existing dwelling or buy a home. The amount of home support depends on the number of children in the household with the maximum amount of being 10,000 EUR. To be eligible for home support in 2022, a household had to fill the following criteria: a) it had to include at least three children up to the age of 19; b) the taxable income received in 2021 per household member had to be less than 355 EUR per month; c) the household could not own two or more dwellings; d) there could not be any court judgements against any household members; e) the term of the right of residence or residence permit of at least one parent had to exceed the term of fulfilling the obligation set by the support (at least five years). A household may apply for the measure for a maximum of two times. The low-income threshold for this measure was 1,420 EUR per month for a family with two adults and two children in 2022. This is higher than the at-risk-of-poverty threshold for Estonia for the same type of household. According to Eurostat, this was 1,325 EUR per month (15,905 EUR annually) in 2021.

127. Furthermore, KredEx provides a housing loan guarantee to young families which allows a mortgage to be obtained with 10% self-financing and no additional collateral. The loan guarantee can be up to 40% of the value of the property, but up to a limit of 50,000 EUR. The guarantee fee (2% of the guarantee amount) must also be paid upon the conclusion of the contract as a single payment. Only one KredEx housing loan guarantee can be used at a time. There is no low-income criteria for this measure. To qualify for the loan guarantee, a household must meet either of these criteria: a) if they are raising one child who is aged below 16, then at least one parent must be aged below 35; b) if a household is raising two children aged below 16, then at least one parent must be aged below 40. All bigger banks in Estonia issue KredEx's housing loan guarantees.

128. In addition, families in need have the right for subsistence benefit. Subsistence benefit is a state aid for people in need, paid by the local government. Dwelling costs that are taken into account when calculating the benefit: rent, the cost of managing the apartment building, including repair costs, repayment of a loan for the renovation of the apartment building, the cost of water supply and wastewater disposal services, the cost of heat or fuel consumed for the supply of hot water, cost of heat or fuel used for heating, cost of electricity consumption, cost of household gas, land tax cost, calculated on the basis of three times the floor area of the dwelling, building insurance cost, the fee for the transport of household waste.

129. The municipality is in charge with the tenant's eviction issues, and tenants have several defences available against eviction abuses. Tenant eviction is regulated by the Law of Obligations Act in Estonia which was issued in 2002, and by the Code of Enforcement Procedure, entered in force in 2006. The law specifies the obligations of a possessor, the circumstances in which possession is considered legal, as well as the rights a tenant has based on lease agreements. A tenancy can be interrupted (and a tenant evicted) with prior notice and based on relevant arguments. At the same time, a tenant may contest the eviction, or even claim extension of the lease period if motivated by specific circumstances. There is a standard procedure for tenant eviction process. The steps of tenant eviction must follow a specific order. First, the tenant needs to receive a notification. Only when the tenant fails to comply with the notification, the court may receive the petition elaborated by the landlord, in which he/she can claim the eviction of the tenant. Grace periods can be allowed, for tenants to pay the remaining debts, but these periods cannot be of more than two weeks. A court may suspend eviction proceedings or extend or defer eviction if continuation of the proceedings

is unfair in respect of the debtor. In such case, the interests of the claimant and other circumstances are taken into account, including the family and economic situation of the debtor. If evictions do take place for any reason, local government are ensuring that alternative accommodation exists to rapidly rehouse those who are evicted, as well as ensuring long term housing solutions.

130. There is no specific data collected on homelessness in Estonia. However, homeless shelters and local municipalities have to report to the state on the number of people that received services for shelter and accommodation. In 2022 homeless shelter services were provided by 19 institutions with 504 places. Most of the institutions belonged to the local municipalities (13), the institutions were offering services in 13 counties. Over half of the service recipients were in Tallinn (54%). In 2022 there were 1718 homeless shelter service recipients, out of whom 78.4% were homeless and 21.6% needed shelter for other reasons. Since 2018 the number of people receiving homeless shelter services has decreased by 13.4%.

131. Homelessness is tackled through a combination of financial assistance, and targeted support services. Local municipalities are obliged to provide housing for persons or families who are themselves unable and incapable to provide it for them or their families. Persons who have gotten into a socially helpless situation due to loss or lack of means of subsistence will be provided inevitable social assistance (food, clothing and, if necessary, shelter). All other social benefits and services that the local municipalities offer are also available for the homeless. The local authorities are offering two kinds of shelters: an around the clock shelter and a night shelter. 24/7 temporary shelter is for adults who do not have a home and who need care and personal assistance due to their health condition. It is possible to be there around-the-clock and catering is a part of the service. People receive care, nursing, food and counselling at the shelter until they are able to move onto another service that meets their needs, such as a social housing unit or general care service. A night shelter only offers a place to sleep and is opened during limited evening hours. At the night shelter, i.e. homeless shelter, people are ensured an accommodation. A bed to sleep in, a shower, clothing and food aid, and to do laundry is provided as well as find information about other aid programmes, such as applying for documents, services and benefits provided by the social welfare unit of the city government. Social housing can be a subsidised apartment or a place at a social housing unit.

Right to food

132. Estonia as part of the European Union (EU) follows the EU's Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) that aims to support farmers and improve agricultural productivity, ensuring a stable supply of affordable food.

133. Estonia has adopted the Estonian Agriculture and Fisheries Strategy 2030. The overarching goal of the Strategy is that Estonia will prefer local food, a healthy environment and biodiversity, thriving food businesses and viable rural and coastal communities.

134. Due to recent crises, Estonia has developed the Food Security Strategy 2023+ which lists the actions that state and relevant parties should take to contribute to ensure food security in the country.

135. In April 2023, a pilot project for food assistance cards was launched in major counties in cooperation with a supermarket Rimi Eesti Food AS. The food assistance card replaced the distribution of purchased food aid, and from October 2023, the previous purchased food aid was replaced with food cards across Estonia.

136. The list of food aid recipients is compiled based on applications and recipients of subsistence benefits and local government support. To apply for food aid, individuals must contact their local municipal social worker. Additionally, homeless individuals staying in shelters are eligible for food aid.

137. Each quarter, 30 EUR per person is credited to the food assistance card. One card is issued per family, and the total support amount for the entire household is credited to that card. For subsistence benefit applicants, the support amount is calculated based on the number of family members, whereas for local government income-dependent support, the

support amount is calculated only for the applicant. The support must be used within the quarter, and any remaining amount does not carry over to the next quarter. The food assistance card can only be used to purchase food and essential items. Reports show that beneficiaries make healthy choices, primarily purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy products, and meat products. People appreciate having the autonomy to decide what to buy from the store.

138. Since 2019, in addition to food cards, donated food aid has also been distributed to people in need. This food aid is collected and distributed by food banks throughout the year. The target group includes economically disadvantaged individuals or households (parents/guardians and children living at the same address) whose need for assistance has been identified by a municipal social worker. Donated food aid can be received during the month of needs assessment and the following three months. If the need for assistance is longer, the social worker reassesses the situation.

139. All recipients of food cards and donated food aid receive counselling from local government social workers. They are also introduced to accompanying measures offered by local governments, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, and other state institutions, including measures funded by various support programmes.

Right to water

140. Access to safe drinking water is essential to health and environment, a basic human right and a component of effective policy for health protection. The number of consumers supplied with fluoride-free drinking water continued to decrease in the periods 2020-2023 due to the installation of new treatment solutions or the merger of small water utilities with larger ones. In waterworks with more than 2,000 consumers, the fluoride content met the requirements in all waterworks in 2023. According to the Health Board, the fluoride content of smaller waterworks exceeded the permitted limit in the water of 3-4 waterworks in the period 2020-2022 which were used by a total of 2-4 consumers. Meeting the standard for every consumer is being enforced by the Health Board continuously. While in 2022, boron exceeded the standard (1.0 mg/l) in the water supply of two small accommodation facilities, no exceedances were detected in any state-supervised water supply during 2023.

141. Estonia has a special aquifer (i.e., an underground reservoir of water) for drinking water that is high in naturally dissolving radium isotopes. In order to assess the impact of radioactivity on the consumer health, the Health Board together with the Radiation Safety Department undertook a risk assessment of drinking water in the borewells of several areas. The risk assessment results showed that a health damage of random nature arising from the presence of radionuclides in water is unlikely. However, as a precaution, the Health Board suggests that a bottled water is used in these areas for preparing the infant formulas. To monitor the drinking water quality, the Radiation Safety Department constantly take samples and more than 99% of these quality parameters comply with the EU standards. However, filters have been installed to improve and maintain the groundwater quality in all pumping stations in use.

142. So far, in the course of studies conducted concerning water for human consumption, no additional increased radon concentration has been found in the water for human consumption taken from aquifers. The radon concentration in water for human consumption originating from aquifers has been measured, during various studies, in 135 samples, with more than 10 times each in seven water layers with higher radium concentration. The average results for the aquifers range from 9.0 to 19.4 Bq/l, which is considerably lower than the reference parameter value of 100 Bq/l in the EU Directive. However, in our legislation it is stated that radon must be determined in drinking water if, based on new research data or other reliable information, the national Health Board has reason to assume that the control value may be exceeded.

143. In order to reduce the risk of lung cancer linked with radon exposure, long-term goals have been set. Activities that contribute to achieving the objective are, for example, conducting radon studies, updating legislation concerning radon, informing the public and other people involved in this field.

144. Organisation of the water supply in the rural municipality or city is the function of a local authority. One of the targets is increasing of the total number of persons who are supplied with safe drinking water (coming from the public water supply system) with target indicator percentage of population supplied with drinking water conforming to requirements. In order to increase the total percentage of population who has access to safe and monitored drinking water, a lot of remedies have been implemented and investments have been made, including finances from the state budget, EU funds, as well as drinking water producers themselves. The results are obvious – percentage of population supplied with drinking water by public drinking water supply conforming to requirements has risen over the years and based on 2023 data, 86% of the population is connected to public water supply network and 99% of them receives water that corresponds to the requirements. These are drinking water supplies that are under the Health Board supervision. Estonia is a very sparsely populated country and therefore 14% of population get water from their own private well, which are not subject of state supervision and the users of such water systems are self-responsible for their water quality. However, Estonia has made an overview of such individual water works and guidelines were prepared for the owners of private wells as well as opportunities were searched for them to connect to the public water supply or implement other measures for safe drinking water. The overall aim is to connect them to the public water supply if possible or implement other remedies for water safety. Health Board local regional services must advise private well owners concerning water quality. Estonia has several future challenges related to sustainability and affordability issues in water sector. Water utilities efficiency must be raised through consolidation of smaller water companies to regional ones. The Estonian Waterworks Association (EVEL) is a nationwide voluntary association of water companies providing the service of public water supply and sewerage and other business operators related to this area of activity. For its members EVEL is organizing information sharing, training programmes and workshops related to the water sector's issues as well as by the Environmental Board training materials prepared concerning minimizing water wastage and protection of water sources.

Mental health

145. Estonia has witnessed a constant declining trend in suicide rates throughout the 21st century. Over the past decade, this downward trend has shown stagnation. In 2023, the age-standardised suicide rate was 14.0/100.000 (for males 24.2, for females 6.7). In recent decades, previous suicide prevention efforts have a multifaceted approach, focused on integrating awareness and knowledge on suicide prevention into society, establishing crisis hotlines, restricting access to means and providing in-person psychosocial and psychiatric crisis services. A shift towards prioritising mental health occurred with the government's approval of the Green Paper on Mental Health in April 2021, establishing the Mental Health Department in the Ministry of Social Affairs, and making the Mental Health Action Plan (2023–2026) in collaboration with the stakeholders. In 2021, Estonia joined the EC Initiative, Joint Action ImpleMENTAL (JA-implementAL), which obliges the country to develop a Suicide Prevention Action Plan (SEPT) during 2024. The SEPT responds to two issues: the stagnation of suicide rates and the lack of a national suicide prevention programme. The Strategic Planning Approach (SPRC) was employed during the action plan preparation, considering the WHO's LIVE LIFE approach to initiate suicide prevention. The development of this document was managed by the Mental Health Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the National Working Group (NWG). The SEPT establishes strategic goals, which are subdivided into operative goals and implementing measures. These include clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and level of intervention (universal, selective or indicative). The SEPT framework identifies eight strategic goals; 1) awareness and knowledge, 2) support and treatment through early intervention, 3) intervention for people at high risk of suicide, 4) postvention – developing care options, 5) restriction of access to means of suicide, 6) embedment into health promotion activities, 7) coordination and organization, 8) monitoring and health outcome.

146. Estonia has also decided to address the downward trend in mental health of youth and children. In Estonia, the schools are obliged to offer psychologist's services for their pupils and in half of the schools the psychologist is working on-site permanently, as well as a school

social worker or a special pedagogy specialist. Every school has a school nurse who carries the regular surveillance of children's health, regulated by law and monitored by the National Health Board. The educational system is revamping the quality system for schools to address the educational stress and improve the psychosocial environment, the programmes to increase the qualification of teachers on mental health issues are developed, the legislation regulating pre-school and kindergarten is updated to improve the qualification of teachers and environmental conditions in these facilities. Anti-bullying programmes are implemented in Estonian schools, pre-schools and kindergartens. Evidence-based psychoeducational interventions such as Be Good Game are offered to schools by the National Institute for Health Development, and the Ministry of Education is offering evidence-based suicide prevention programmes for schools. The Estonian Olympic Committee is actively implementing measures and interventions to prevent malpractice and abuse in youth sports, the Ministry of Culture has started the discussions to extrapolate this experience to other areas of children's extracurricular activities. The social sector has revamped the Child Protection Act and is renewing the service system. To level up and coordinate the efforts to improve children's mental health, the government has established a national task force to elaborate the propositions to improve mental health of children and youth.

Drug policy

147. The Estonian Drug Policy 2030 formulates Estonia's most important goals in the area of substance use. One of the main principles of the national drugs policy 2030 is to pursue a health-led rather than a criminal justice approach to drug use. Seeing drug use as a health issue rather than a criminal one is an important step towards reducing the stigma experienced by people who use drugs. The damage caused by the use of narcotic substances is still a serious and draining problem in Estonia. Reducing the supply of and demand for narcotics is an important priority in the area of government of the Ministry of the Interior. The need to combat the social stigma against drug users is also relevant in Estonia. Activities that aim to raise awareness of the issue and to reduce the stigma are ongoing. In Police and Border Guard Board, stigma is covered by general training in social skills and dealing with people with mental health problems. In general, there have not been trainings that focus on the reduction of stigma but since 2014 (first Estonian Drug Prevention White Book was accepted on governmental level) there has been better cooperation between supply and harm reduction agencies and acknowledgment of the drug user as a person in need of support, not as a criminal. Health system and social system still have some barriers for people who use drugs but generally this target group is seen as people in need of care. The main barriers are more related with some inherently outdated regulations (i.e., you have to be drug free to enter in some social services) and the structure of the social and health care system, which makes it difficult for vulnerable groups to operate between them. However, continuing training is needed for health care and social work professionals.

148. The services to reduce harm from drug-related problems are being expanded in Estonia since 2017. In 2024 the service is offered in various settings: stationary services, outreach services, mobile services (since 2018) and also since 2019 pharmacy-based services. There are 35 harm reduction service sites in different regions of Estonia, of which 18 are stationary centres (including three pharmacies), 15 units based on development and two special-purpose buses. Most harm reduction services are available in major cities and counties. Harm reduction mobile buses operate in 24 regions in total. These are van-type buses, with special equipment and a consultation room offering various health and social services.

149. The resources for harm reduction have increased over the years since 2017. Extra for services targeted for PWID from the year 2023 harm reduction has expanded to recreational settings like nightclubs and summer music festivals. Currently the service is still not widely available, but the network to offer those services is growing steadily. Although there has been an increase in the resources and services offered over the years, currently all the harm reduction services need to fight for the governmental resources due to the global financial crises.

150. People who have used the services of systems that allow early intervention of drug abuse, harm reduction, treatment and rehabilitation are guaranteed privacy and the services are provided in accordance with the Personal Data Protection Act valid in Estonia.

151. Naloxone take-home programme was launched at the end of 2013 and has expanded due to the high drug-related overdose deaths rate over the last 11 years to most of the harm reduction and drug treatment services in Estonia. The opioid agonist therapy (OAT) is also available in 10 different settings in Estonia, designed for the target group offering various psychosocial services. Since 2023 in addition to methadone treatment also buprenorphine is available if prescribed by a doctor.

152. Estonian drug policy is gender-sensitive, with goals and actions planned with equal respect and attention to all people, regardless of sex, gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, or age. There are no gender related barriers in the drug treatment in Estonia. The only limitation is the availability of treatment slots in general.

153. In 2017, a special webpage (narko.ee) was renewed, containing wide range of drugs and services related information. Since 2022 the webpage has 24h helpline (chat app on webpage). The helpline is for anyone who has questions and worries about drugs. The mental health specialists of the support line provide support to both people who use drugs and their loved ones, share information about available assistance options and refer them to assistance services. Support is available in Estonian and Russian around the clock.

154. The number of drug fines have gradually been lowering in the last 10 year, from 2020 to 2023 around 10% less fines were given out for drug use.

155. With regard to the recommendation to investigate cases where women with children have reportedly been unlawfully forced to terminate opioid substitution therapies, under the threat of losing their parental rights, no such cases have been reported in Estonia ever since.

156. There are no reported cases of abuse and harassment by police against drug users, or the cases of deprivation of parental rights for using drugs and punish those responsible in Estonia. Any unlawful use of power by the police is conditioned to be investigated by special task force and, if applicable, external investigators.

157. In Estonia, there is no practice of forced drug testing in the street. Suspects can be subjected to voluntary drug testing by saliva test strips, but confirming the use of drugs is done in a medical facility by medical personnel. The use of urinary catheters to confirm drug use is not a common practice, but is done only as utmost necessity and decided by medical personnel.

HIV/AIDS

158. Estonia has a national Action Plan for HIV for the period 2017-2025 which focuses on HIV prevention in the general population and injecting drug addicts, sex workers and men who have sex with men. In addition, the national HIV action plan outlines measures that help to protect children and adolescents from HIV infection. Some of these measures address preventing spread of HIV from mother to child (e.g. providing antiretroviral therapy during pregnancy for HIV-positive women), improving awareness and reducing stigma among youth, implementing high quality sexual education in the school system and also providing sexually transmitted diseases diagnostics and treatment to youth up to age 26 (included). These interventions are already implemented and funded, as are free of charge sexual health counselling services for all youth up to the age of 26 (included). Dedicated HIV counselling and testing cabinets are also available to everybody in all major cities of Estonia. The implementation of the national action plan is monitored by the HIV Government Committee which is headed by the Minister of Health.

159. In Estonia sexual and reproductive health counselling services as well as certain procedures (diagnostics, analyses etc) are provided for all people regardless of sex up to the age of 26 free of charge regardless of health insurance status. These services are available in all bigger hospitals in Estonia as well as in designated youth counselling centres. The services include advice on questions related to the development of the human body, sexual

relationships, gender and sexual identity, counselling on the choice of contraceptives, as well as advice in case of unwanted pregnancies and help and counselling in cases of sexual violence.

160. Sexual education, which also includes the prevention of STD-s, is a mandatory subject in the national curriculum at elementary schools and high schools with specified learning outcomes. From the 1st to the 3rd grade the focus is mainly on emphasizing friendship, developing communication skills, and promoting a healthy lifestyle. From the 4th to the 6th grade topics taught at school involve healthy lifestyle, puberty and physical changes, safety and risk behaviour, diseases and first aid, as well as communication skills. From the 7th to the 9th grade school lessons focus on human life cycle and adolescence within it, safety and risk behaviour, self-identity and adolescent changes, health, relationships, and sexuality. In high school the focus is more on family education meaning long-term relationships, marriage, home and daily life, and family in human life.

161. Estonia's national immunisation schedule for children provides free of charge vaccination against 12 different communicable diseases, which includes for example hepatitis B, poliomyelitis, and measles. Estonia's national immunisation calendar also includes vaccination against HPV for both boys and girls. In addition, children aged 7 years and younger and children belonging to risk groups are also provided free flu vaccination.

162. The general awareness of HIV testing possibilities in Estonia could be improved. When the Ministry of Health will start work on a new National Plan for HIV, concrete measures to increase and normalise HIV testing in Estonia will be designed.

163. Antiretroviral drugs are provided to all HIV-positive people free of charge regardless of their health insurance status.

164. Psychological counselling, social counselling, experience counselling and support services are available to people living with HIV. These services are available in bigger hospitals in major cities in Estonia. The national Action Plan for HIV addresses also the HIV-related stigma, including public awareness raising actions and targeted awareness campaigns for different age groups.

165. According to the Communicable Diseases Prevention and Control Act § 20 all cases of communicable diseases are registered in the Estonian Communicable Diseases Register, this also includes HIV/AIDS. Protection of the registry data is ensured through the assessment of availability, integrity, and confidentiality parameters in accordance with the requirements of the national information system security measures framework.

Right to education

166. In Estonia, the right to education is stipulated in the Constitution § 37: Everyone has the right to education. Basic education is compulsory for children between 7 to 17 years and is free of charge in general schools established by the national government and by local authorities. In order to make education accessible, the national government and local authorities maintain a requisite number of educational institutions. Other educational institutions, including private schools, may also be established and maintained pursuant to the law. Parents have the deciding say in the choice of education for their children. The provision of education is overseen by the national government. Everyone has the right to be taught in Estonian.

167. All children in Estonia have the right to quality early childhood education, and local authorities have an obligation to ensure that all children aged 1.5 to 7 in their area of service who have parents who wish them to do so have the opportunity to attend early childhood education institution. Attendance is not compulsory, but the vast majority of children between 1.5 and 3 years old (81%) and children between 4 and 7 years old (94%) attend an early childhood education institution. The Ministry of Education and Research is currently updating the Preschool Child Care Institutions Act. The aim of the new law is to make the early childhood education system more coherent to support school readiness for all children. Early childhood education is already part of the education system in Estonia and has its own

curriculum, and it promotes the implementation of different child-centred active learning methods.

168. Estonia has managed to build a well-functioning education system by the world standards: in the last published international OECD PISA ranking for 2022, Estonian students ranked at the absolute top in Europe and in the top eight globally.

169. The drop-out rates have been stable (0.3% in general and 0.4% among boys) and have to be under constant monitoring. In the Education and Youth Programme 2024-2027 (as an action plan for Education Strategy 2035), a special measure tackles the issue with creating flexible learning opportunities at different education levels, as well as other support system measures needed.

170. Enrolment rates in primary education remain high, with temporary decrease in 2022 due to the influx of refugees fleeing from Ukraine. Estonia remains committed to provide equal access to free quality education to all children regardless of their socio-economic background or geographic location. According to OECD's PISA 2022 results, socio-economic background affects educational results less than OECD's average.

171. The Education and Youth Programme 2024-2027 (as an action plan for Education Strategy 2035) has a separate action measure to ensure access to higher education.

172. Policies and measures addressing the gender gaps exist, but could be further consolidated. Currently, there are no specific measures to address boys' difficulties. The existing programmes are seen as also benefiting boys. Estonia's education strategy for 2035 highlights the importance of gender equality and recognises the need to organise learning in gender-sensitive ways. According to the Estonian language strategy for 2035, ensuring that everyone has good Estonian language skills will, inter alia, reduce gender gap in education.

173. Regarding the status and benefits of schoolteachers, the Ministry of Education and Research is currently negotiating an all-encompassing Education Agreement with all stakeholders and actors in the field of education. The Agreement would include the introduction of a four-cycle career model for teachers and corresponding salary scales, an agreement on teacher-student ratios and a new funding model for schools. In addition, the leadership of the MoER has approved the proposals of the STEM working group - planned activities to support the STEM study. Objectively, fewer girls choose STEM majors, but we are working on increasing the popularity of STEM. Compared to other countries, the study of physical natural sciences and bio- and environmental sciences and ICT is quite popular (for example in the field of natural sciences, almost 2/3 of graduates are women), but the share of engineering, production, technology and construction has gradually decreased over time.

174. The preparations for the reform of vocational education and training system are underway. The aim of the reform is to make the vocational education and training offered to basic school pupils more varied and flexible, with curricula predominantly four years in length, and to increase the proportion of general skills in the curricula. The terms and conditions of the "Engineering Academy and IT Academy in Vocational, General and Recreational Education", which will support advanced training in engineering and ICT in vocational schools, have been approved.

175. In order to support the digital and green transition of businesses, the conditions for granting support from the Recovery and Resilience Facility have been approved to create additional flexible learning opportunities that meet the development needs of the labour market. ICT skills training, including cyber-security, and the development of ICT modules in vocational training curricula will be supported. Professional standards for teaching green skills will be updated and VET curricula revised, continuing training programmes will be developed to equip the workforce with green economy knowledge and skills.

176. Estonia ensures equal access to quality education for all children, including in preschool education. Availability of pre-primary education is one of the cornerstones of equal education system in Estonia. Also, all persons staying in Estonia and beneficiaries of international protection or persons applying for international protection have the right to acquire education and access to education is independent of a person's linguistic, cultural and racial background and religious beliefs. In addition, children with special educational needs are targeted by the corresponding support measures provided by the state. Estonia has paid

great attention to the provision of free language courses, which allows the provision of Estonian language courses to all citizens of undetermined citizenship or third countries, regardless of whether they take the citizenship examination or not.

177. Since the start of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine, Estonia has welcomed more than 42,000 refugees from Ukraine, around a third of whom are children. In the fall of 2022, a separate school for Ukrainian students was created in Tallinn at the Lilleküla school branch - Freedom School which provides education to children displaced by the war in Ukraine. In accordance with the Estonian national curriculum, studies are largely conducted in Estonian, but Ukrainian language and culture are also continued. One third of the school's teachers are Ukrainians, most of whom are also war refugees. In the 2023/2024 academic year, over 9,000 Ukrainian children studied in various schools across Estonia, where additional teachers and support staff have been hired to teach and adapt to them.

178. The government is strongly committed to continue offering support to ethnic minority groups which includes offering mother tongue and culture courses both within the school as well as through extracurricular hobby school activities.

Cultural diversity

179. Estonia has always been home to different peoples of the world and the world has always been home to Estonians. Currently, there are people of 211 different ethnicities living in Estonia, speaking 243 mother tongues, and holding citizenship of 151 countries. It is the interplay of these distinctive traits at the individual and community level that give rise to Estonia's cultural diversity. We are all aware of the paradox of the modern society, which has equipped us with the best technological tools for communication while conditioning withdrawal and fragmentation to an extent unknown before. To ensure the sustainability of our societal functioning and economic growth, the Government is tirelessly working to improve the capacity of our communities to understand each other and cooperate.

180. Estonian citizenship policy is fully in accord with international law, and the fundamental rights and freedoms are guaranteed in Estonia to all, including foreign nationals and persons with undetermined citizenship. The cultural services are open for everyone to enjoy and benefit from regardless of their status.

181. The Government has developed several policies aiming at broadening access and participation in cultural life. For example, the Culture Development Plan for 2021-2030 aims at empowering cultural diversity and ensuring equal access to culture. The state and local governments regularly support cultural diversity and encourage the cooperation of minority national cultures and Estonian cultural organisations.

182. 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 programmes, and community engagement. Special programmes and events have been organized to include marginalized groups, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate in cultural activities. For instance, the "Flexible Integration Programme" offered cultural education to 310 participants, focusing on museum visits, city tours, and workshops. The Integration Foundation (INSA) launched several programmes, including language courses and cultural orientation for new immigrants. The "Settle in Estonia" programme recorded 13,831 participations. Events such as the multicultural festival attracted over 600 participants, fostering intercultural dialogue and understanding.

183. Financial support was provided to 17 umbrella organizations representing over 260 cultural societies of ethnic minorities, ensuring their active participation in cultural life. Funding and strategic support is provided to cultural organizations representing ethnic minorities, ensuring their active participation in Estonia's cultural life. In 2023, Estonia provided extensive support to Ukrainian refugees, and other recent immigrants. This included cultural, educational, and social support programmes. 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 programmes and initiatives.

184. Investments were made in cultural infrastructure to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities. This includes modifications to theatres, museums, and other cultural venues to make them more inclusive. Projects in 2023 included also enhancing access to digital resources.

185. On 3 June 2020, the *Riigikogu* amended the Act of the Government of the Republic and the Language Board replaced the Language Inspectorate on 1 August 2020. The main task of the Language Board is to monitor compliance with the Language Act and implementation and development of language policy. Compared to the Inspectorate, the Board has a greater advisory function. Thus, the Board's tasks include advising individuals and institutions on the implementation of language policy and legislation in the field of languages and language learning, as well as advising individuals and institutions on the implementation of legislation on language skills and language use. The Language Board cannot take or impose punitive actions. A language proficiency test is required only for particular occupations. In the implementation and development of language policy, one of the Board's main tasks is also to prepare proposals for changes to legislation on language knowledge and use and for better organisation of the language field.

186. Estonians typically have a given name followed by a family name. Given names are often chosen for their meanings and are influenced by Estonian history, nature, and sometimes names popular in other European cultures.

187. The use of names is regulated by the Names Act, which states that a personal name consists of a given name and a surname. This Act establishes the principles of and the procedure for the assigning and application of names of natural persons (personal name) and the bases for the uniform use of personal names of Estonian citizens and aliens staying in Estonia. Patronyms have not historically been used as part of a personal name in Estonia, and they are not an official part of a person's name. In Estonia, surnames are used.

188. Nevertheless, there are no obstacles in Estonia for those who want to use their patronym in practice. The use of patronyms in private communication is not regulated or restricted in any way by law. A person may also freely use their patronym in communication with the authorities or local government authorities and when submitting various applications or letters, which will be answered pursuant to the general procedure. Moreover, A person may apply to the authorities for the use of their patronym in official documents as a part of their name, i.e. as an additional name (e.g. Ivan Ivanovich Ivanov in the case of a Russian patronym). Therefore, lack of regulation of the use of patronyms by national law does not prevent the factual and practical use of patronyms, including in official documents.

189. With regard to the conditions for the use of traditional local names, street names and other public topographical indications, the place names are regulated by The Place Names Act which stipulates that Estonian place names shall be in Estonian. The Place Names Act guarantees also the use of minority names of cultural and historical value, in particular Estonian Swedish place names in Vormsi, Ruhnu, Noarootsi and the coastal areas of north-western Estonia. In Estonia, this would primarily apply to names of Swedish or Russian origin used in areas where the minorities have lived. A special clause of the law stipulates that the linguistic situation of the year 1939 has to be taken into account when deciding minority names. After that year, with the beginning of the war and the following mass migrations the local population structure changed significantly. Therefore, the law gives priority to historic names. In the cities of northern and north-eastern Estonia, such as Sillamäe, Kohtla-Järve and Narva, there are no cultural-historical names of such symbolic value.

190. A new feature in the law is the provision for parallel names. Where there have been historically mixed linguistic areas two official names may be approved, one in the language of the local majority and the other from the local minority.

Information and communication technology

191. In accordance with the coalition agreement signed on July 22, 2024, the justice and information technology ministries portfolios were merged, as from 23 July 2024, the responsibilities of the minister of justice and digital affairs, in addition to leading the Ministry of Justice and its administrative area, will also include planning and implementing digital society policy, organizing and supervising digital development and cybersecurity, coordinating the development of state information systems, including central network and information systems, managing telecommunications.

192. When Estonia started the digitalisation route, it also claimed responsibility to help people obtain essential ICT skills and raise awareness on the topic. Raising awareness and teaching people to use digital tools was and continues to be a common goal.

193. The Government has launched several educational projects to increase citizens' digital skills, enabling people living in Estonia to have better knowledge of IT technology and access to digital public services.

194. Primarily, Estonia has reached out to its population via public libraries. The courses and assisting activities to enhance digital literacy started already in 2018. One of the main tasks of local libraries is to offer courses on information literacy, including digital skills. This includes the use of e-government services and everyday digital services, as well as using smart devices. For example, in 2020, Estonian libraries counselled or trained more than 80 000 people in these areas. Libraries are one of the key stakeholders in bringing these digital literacy skills to older persons and persons with low levels of education and income through these training projects funded by the state.

195. The Ministry of Education and Research and the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund are supporting various trainings for adults who would like to improve their basic digital skills. Based on OSKA workforce forecasting results, trainings are provided to acquire job specific digital skills, which also improves participants personal-life digital capability. In addition, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications together with Tallinn University of Technology have opened an online course platform the Digital State Academy. This is a first-of-its-kind approach where the development of knowledge and skills about the digital state is offered centrally through an e-learning platform. The Digital State Academy is primarily aimed at the public sector, but the courses are publicly accessible free of charge.

196. The Estonian law does not foresee a specific right to equal access to public services, whether digital or not, however such right stems from Article 12 of the Estonian Constitution, which sets forth the right to equal treatment, as well as the Equal Treatment Act, which lays out the obligation to protect all persons against discrimination. In addition, the Estonian legislation prescribes an obligation for all public web service providers to ensure equal accessibility standards that facilitate the user experience for all groups. The general obligation for all public authorities maintaining a website or mobile application to ensure accessibility is set forth in the Public Information Act. The current Digital Society Development Plan 2030 mentions that increasing the accessibility of digital public service would contribute to the over-all cohesion and inclusiveness of the Estonian society, it specifically mentions the needs of people with low to moderate technical skills, special needs or migrant background. Furthermore, the development plan emphasizes the importance of inclusive design and accessible public space not only in physical, but also in digital architecture. As for internet access, the Development Plan highlights the need to improve the availability of fixed broadband subscriptions in rural areas.

Other recommendations

197. Reply to recommendation no 54. The Estonian Government believes effective domestic laws already exist where individuals can seek enforceable remedies if their rights have been breached. Any individual can take their case to domestic courts to seek a suitable remedy, and ultimately, any individual can seek justice also from the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, if its human rights have been breached and all available domestic remedies have been exhausted. currently there are no plans to accede to the Optional Protocol.

198. Reply to recommendation 55. With regard to the ratification of the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the national procedures for ratifying the Convention have already started and in process.

199. With regard to the ratification of the International Convention and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Estonian Government considers that the rights of irregular migrant workers covered by the ICRMW are adequately protected by other international human rights instruments to which Estonia is a party, and in domestic legislation through the Aliens Act, the Working Conditions of Workers Posted to Estonia Act and various EU directives and regulations. The Government has no current plans to do so.

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals

200. The goals of the 2030 Agenda are implemented in Estonia at the government level through sectoral policies. The goals of the 2030 Agenda are covered by strategic documents at various levels, including both horizontal strategies and sectoral development plans. In Estonia, the global issues related to the implementation of the sustainable development goals are reflected in the development plans and programs prepared on the basis of the “Estonia 2035” strategy which creates a strong basis for a more systematic and robust reflection of sustainable development goals in sectoral strategies. It sets long-term cross-cutting goals for the next 15 years and provides guidelines for the implementation of sustainable development goals in Estonia. In summary, it can be said that the Estonian government and NGOs implement various measures and activities in all 17 areas of sustainable development goals. In addition to the 17 global sustainable development goals, Estonia also monitors the goal of the viability of the cultural space, which arises from the Estonian national strategy for sustainable development “Sustainable Estonia 21”. The integration of sustainable development into various policies will be continued.

201. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is monitored through a monitoring mechanism based on national sustainable development indicators and a regularly issued report on sustainable development indicators prepared by Statistics Estonia in cooperation with the Government Office and ministries. The overview of the state implementation of the SDGs by all areas of governance is available to all on the Government’s website. Estonia performs well on most of the SDGs indicators. Our strengths are high-quality and accessible education, high employment, including a minimum long-term unemployment rate, and a large share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption. However, while improving, the Government is fully aware of the challenges it faces and in which areas it must continue its efforts to achieve SDGs. The main tasks are to achieve gender equality, reduce the risk of poverty for women and people with disabilities, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, preserve biodiversity and promote well-being of all ages.

202. In accordance with the Council of European Union’s 2017 conclusion, Estonia has committed to achieving the ODA target of 0.33% of GNI by 2030, demonstrating its dedication to progressively increase its commitment to international development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

Business and human rights

203. Respect of human rights, both within and outside the territory of Estonia is a constitutional obligation that extends to all Estonian nationals, residents and companies operating in Estonia. Estonia has always taken into account the principles of human rights in development and cooperation projects in foreign trade and export policy. Estonia applies the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights through a variety of thematic development plans and strategies.

204. The National Action Plan for corporate social responsibility (CSR) was last updated in 2017 by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications together with several partners, both from public and private sector. The plan outlines activities and measures that companies can implement to promote sustainability, environmental protection, ethical

business practices, and social responsibility. The focus of the update was primarily on such areas as business and human rights; environmentally friendly solutions and sustainability; socially responsible working conditions; promotion of ethical business practices.

205. The Responsible Business Forum in Estonia addresses CSR issues on a more systematic basis and contributes to promoting corporate social responsibility in Estonia. It is a non-profit organisation with the aim of furthering CSR in the Estonian society through being the centre of competence-building and communication on CSR.

206. Over the years, several positive changes have taken place in Estonia on corporate social responsibility. The number of organisations which have realised that being ethical and responsible in business contributes to long-term and sustainable success is growing every year. More and more companies are implementing CSR policies in their everyday activities and CSR is integrated into their business model.

Climate policy

207. On 12 May 2021, the *Riigikogu* adopted Estonia's long-term strategy "Estonia 2035", which sets out five long-term strategic goals that are value-based and serve as a foundation for the country's strategic choices. These goals are supported by all of Estonia's strategic development documents and are considered in the preparation of the state budget strategy and the government's action plan. Achieving these goals requires considering Estonia's development needs, global trends, the European Union's political framework, and the global sustainable development goals.

208. According to the strategy, by 2050, Estonia will be a competitive and climate-neutral country with a knowledge-based society and economy, and a high-quality and biodiverse living environment that aims at and is capable of reducing the harmful effects of climate change and making the best use of its positive aspects. The prerequisite for achieving sustainable development goals is the coordinated development of cultural, social, environmental, and economic sectors. In Estonia, decisions are made based on knowledge, and efficient and innovative approaches are preferred when selecting solutions.

209. The "Estonia 2035" action plan is updated annually, if necessary, based on domestic events affecting the country's development and changes in the external environment. The "Estonia 2035" action plan is also Estonia's reform plan, which has been submitted within the framework of the European Semester for economic policy coordination. The current action plan was approved by the government on 28 April 2022.

210. In March 2022, a proposal was submitted to the *Riigikogu* to amend the Climate Policy Basics until 2050 (hereinafter KPP 2050) document to align Estonia's long-term goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050 with Estonia's long-term strategy "Estonia 2035" to achieve a climate-neutral country by 2050 and to remove the interim targets set for the 2030s and 2040s. The *Riigikogu* approved the KPP 2050 amendment on 8 February 2023. "General Principles of Climate Policy until 2050".

211. The Ministry of Climate is preparing a draft of the climate-resilient economy law (the so-called climate law) which is expected to enter into force on January 1, 2025, following a large public consultation and adoption by Parliament next year. following a large public consultation and adoption by Parliament next year. The law is expected to clarify how Estonia can reach climate neutrality by 2050 and create the prerequisites for better adaptation to climate change.

Appropriate indicators on the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights

212. Over the last years, the Government has stepped up its efforts to secure stronger legal protection for economic, social and cultural rights, and to raise awareness of what these rights include. Appropriate and various interconnected indicators are used to monitor the achievement of economic, social and cultural rights and to measure their progressive realization and compliance with ESCRs.

213. Reply to recommendation 58. The Government has regularly communicated with a wide range of stakeholders on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Committee's concluding observations and will continue to do so. Also, this report has been prepared with the input of all relevant partners and NGOs. We recognize that this is a long-term effort that needs to continue.
