

**EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER  
(REVISED)**

**Fifth Report**

**Provided within the Framework of Article 22 of the  
Social Charter by the Republic of Estonia**

For the reference period 01/01/2020 – 31/12/2024

For the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2024 made by the Government of the Republic of Estonia in accordance with Article 22 of the European Social Charter concerning provisions which were not accepted at the time of ratification in 2000.

In accordance with Article C of the Revised European Social Charter and Article 23 of the European Social Charter, copies of this report have been communicated to Estonian Trade Union Confederation (EAKL), Estonian Employees Unions Confederation (TALO) and Estonian Confederation of Employers (ETTK).

All Estonian legal acts that have been translated into English are available on the Internet at <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/>.

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## Article 2 § 4 – The right to just conditions of work

*Please describe the general framework. Please specify the nature of, reasons for and extent of any reforms.*

Occupational health and safety in Estonia is regulated in the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) (OHSA) (adopted on 16 June 1999) and Government regulations issued under the Act. The Occupational Health and Safety Act sets out occupational health and safety requirements; the rights and obligations of an employer and an employee; the organisation of occupational health and safety in enterprises and at state level; the liability for violation of the occupational health and safety requirements. The explanations about the Estonian occupational health and safety regulations were described in the 2010 report and in previous report. The main concept of the regulations has not changed and therefore it will not be repeated in this report.

However, during the reporting period (2020-2024) some changes were made in the occupational health and safety regulation. The main changes are described below.

### 1. Updated list of occupational diseases

As mentioned in previous report in 2019, a new version of the OHSA came into force, which provided a more precise definition of psychosocial risk factors, distinguishing them from psychological hazards and social hazards.

New article foresees that psychosocial hazards are work involving a risk of an accident or violence, unequal treatment, bullying and harassment at work, work not corresponding to the abilities of an employee, working alone for an extended period of time and monotonous work and other factors related to management, organisation of work and working environment that may affect the mental or physical health of an employee, including cause work stress.

In 2023 new [list of occupational diseases](#) entered into force which is supplemented by an article 4<sup>1</sup> which sets list of occupational diseases caused by psychosocial agents in the working environment. The following are occupational diseases caused by psychosocial agents in the working environment:

- 1) post-traumatic stress disorder;
- 2) other diseases caused by psycho-social agents in the working environment.

### 2. Telework regulation

As of COVID-19 pandemic the importance and percentage of telework increased and therefore there was a need for more accurate regulation of obligations. As with any other job, the employer shall carry out a risk assessment of the working environment in order to protect the employees' health. Risk assessment shall be based on the nature of the specific work. The risks associated with the place of work, the use of work equipment, and the organisation of work shall be assessed.

The risk assessment shall:

- identify the working environment hazards that may harm the employee;
- assess their impact on the health and safety of employees.

Based on the results of the risk assessment, measures shall be taken, if necessary, to prevent risks to the health of employees.

An employer can enable teleworking in jobs where the risk of damage to the employee's health is low and the employee is able to manage the hazards in the environment on-site on the basis of the employer's instructions (e.g. work using computer, easier handicrafts). As it is difficult for an employer to adequately control an employee's working conditions in a teleworking environment, teleworking should not be performed if special requirements apply to the working environment (e.g. forced ventilation, noise insulation).

If an employee performs his or her duties by way of teleworking at home, he or she may allow the employer to identify the risks in the working environment on site (e.g. risk assessment in the home office or home workshop). As the inviolability of home and protection of privacy are values protected by the Constitution, the employer can only assess the risks in the employee's home with the employee's consent. The main way for an employer to mitigate the risks of a place of teleworking is to instruct the employee. Article 13<sup>5</sup> of OHSA also foresees obligations of employer in case of teleworking.

(1) An employer is required to:

- 1) set out in the risk assessment of the working environment possible risks arising from the nature of work and, considering the particular nature of teleworking, apply measures for preventing or reducing an employee's health risks;
- 2) instruct an employee before permitting teleworking and on a regular basis as needed based on the provisions of § 13<sup>3</sup> of this OHSA and considering the particular nature of teleworking;
- 3) ensure proper work equipment for performance of duties;
- 4) organise medical examinations of employees according to the provisions of § 13<sup>1</sup> of OHSA;
- 5) investigate occupational accidents and occupational diseases according to the provisions of § 24 of OHSA;
- 6) pay sickness benefit according to the provisions of § 12<sup>2</sup> of OHSA.

(2) The workplace for teleworking is furnished by agreement of the employee and the employer.

(3) An employer must perform occupational health and safety obligations not specified in subsection 1 of this section insofar as possible considering the particular nature of teleworking.

### 3. Regulation of occupational health service

The regulation of occupational health service has also been modified. Since 2023, the occupational health doctor, in addition to conducting employee health examinations, performs a comprehensive analysis of the workplace's occupational health situation based on the findings from employee's health examinations. The aim of the changes was to improve the organization and quality of occupational health services, including collaboration between employers and occupational health physicians, to support the protection of employees' health in the workplace and to prevent and detect work-related health issues at an early stage.

Article 13<sup>1</sup> of OHSA foresees that:

(1) An employer must organise the provision of an occupational health service.

(2) The occupational health service is provided by an occupational health doctor, involving other specialists, where necessary.

(3) In the provision of the occupational health service, the occupational health doctor:

- 1) reviews the risk assessment of the working environment and, where necessary, visits the working environment;

2) analyses the company's occupational health situation as a whole;

- 3) carries out a medical examination of employees on the basis of the risk assessment of the working environment;
- 4) makes proposals to the employer for improving the working conditions and promoting the health of employees;
- 5) consults the employer in issues of adapting the working environment and working conditions and promoting the health of employees;
- 6) consults an employee in issues of health promotion.

The analysis of the company's occupational health situation specified in clause 2 of subsection 3 of article 13<sup>1</sup> of OHSA is organised by the employer on a regular basis as needed but no less than once every three years.

This means that the occupational health physician, together with their team, will not only conduct health checks for employees but also assess the overall occupational health situation of the company. This may involve visiting the workplace to provide recommendations for its improvement.

#### 4. Risks assessment of working environment

A workplace risk assessment tool has been implemented within the Labour Inspectorate's Occupational Environment Self-Service System (TEIS) to facilitate employers in evaluating workplace risks. Henceforth, employers are required to conduct occupational risk assessments using the designated tool in TEIS or upload a pre-existing risk analysis to the system. The development of this risk assessment tool aims to enhance companies' awareness of occupational hazards, provide essential support (specially for SME's), facilitate informed decision-making, and offer constructive feedback to improve workplace conditions. Furthermore, it serves as an incentive for businesses to establish and maintain safe and healthy working environments. A key objective of this database is to significantly strengthen employers' capacity for workplace risk assessment while reinforcing the Labour Inspectorate's advisory and supervisory functions in overseeing occupational risks.

#### 5. OSH requirements for service providers

According to updated OHSA regulation, two service providers must inform each other of hazards related to their activities and ensure that their operations do not pose a risk to workers. The amendment was driven by the need to ensure a safe working environment for both service providers and employees operating within a shared workspace. Given the wide variety of contractual arrangements under the law of obligations, it is not justified to distinguish solely between sole proprietors in the legislation of safety. The provision of services under contractual agreements governed by the law of obligations is an increasingly prevalent trend. In 2021 the term "self employed" was replaced with "service provider" in the context of OHSA.

The new regulation stipulates that if a self-employed individual providing a service works at a workplace alongside employees of another employer, the employer must inform them of the hazards present in the workplace and provide guidance on how to avoid them. Additionally, individuals working under a service provision contract must be made aware of the arrangements for emergency response and first aid. It is important to note that the employer is required to inform the service provider as necessary, based on the specific risks involved.

#### 6. Working on the basis of certificate for sick leave

According to updated OHSA regulation, an employee and their employer have the right to agree in written form on a temporary basis on performance of work corresponding to state of health on the basis of a certificate for sick leave, if more than 60 calendar days have passed from the date of release from the performance of employment or service duties indicated in the employee's

certificate for sick leave and the release from the performance of employment or service duties lasts for at least 90 calendar days, until the date provided in subsection 1 of § 57 of the Health Insurance Act. An official being in service on the basis of a certificate for sick leave is formalised by a directive. An employer and an employee are required to comply with the working conditions corresponding to the state of health indicated in the certificate for sick leave. If an employer cannot provide an employee with working conditions corresponding to the employee's state of health, the employee may not work on the basis of a certificate for sick leave. An employer may not pay wage for working on the basis of a certificate for sick leave less than 50 per cent of the wage applicable on the day preceding the day of release from the performance of employment or service duties as indicated in the certificate for sick leave.

In addition to the wage paid by the employer, an employee receives a sickness benefit on the conditions and in accordance with the rules provided in the Health Insurance Act. An employee and their employer may cancel such an agreement at any given time. It is important that the working environment remains safe for the employee and the health condition is not being damaged.

## 7. Directives

During the reporting period, regulations issued under the Occupational Health and Safety Act were also amended in relation to amendments made to EU Directives or the enforcement of new Directives.

**Our position regarding the Article 2 § 4 remains the same.** The principal duty of the employer set out in the OHS Act is to guarantee a safe and healthy working environment for workers relying on working environment risk assessment. The Estonian occupational health and safety regulation is in compliance with the EU occupational health and safety regulations. The EU occupational health and safety framework directive 89/391/EEC states that the employer has a duty to ensure the safety and health of workers in all aspects of their work, by applying the appropriated measures. These measures do not include shortening the working day or granting additional paid leave. **Extra leave or shorter working hours should not be regulated in the law but can form a part of an agreement between employers and employees.**

*Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.*

### Strategic objectives on occupational health and safety

The main actions in the field of occupational health and safety are described in the Welfare Development Plan 2016–2023. The main policy instruments are:

- Support to workers and employers in implementing OSH rules, improving working environments, coping with new working environment risks and preventing employee's loss of ability to work.
- Enhance monitoring of the work environments to identify and eliminate violations related to the work environment.
- Make OSH legislation clearer and compatible with the changing labour market situation and economy.
- Reduce employer's administrative burden.
- Make state supervision and counselling activities more efficient.

Second part of reporting period is covered by Welfare Development Plan 2023–2030. The main policy instruments are:

- Increasing awareness among employers and employees regarding occupational safety and employment relations.
- Support and advise employers and employees in complying with occupational safety requirements and mitigating workplace risks, considering specific workplace hazards and health risks (including mental health, sedentary work, biological and chemical hazards);
- Strengthen work environment and employment relations supervision, implementing enforcement mechanisms, with a particular focus on high-risk companies and institutions where the threat to workers' health is significant.

Estonia's long-term strategy, Estonia 2035, consists of a general part and an action plan. The general part was adopted by the parliament on May 12, 2021. The action plan is updated annually in April by the Government of the Republic. The main policy instruments in Estonia 2035 regarding OHS topics are:

- Modernize occupational health services to support health and reduce work capacity loss, which requires:
  - Enhancing awareness among labour market participants and establishing an effective occupational health system and safety services to prevent physical and mental health issues in employees;
  - Preventing the development of permanent work capacity loss.
- Prepare for the future of work, ensuring that labour law and occupational safety regulations are updated as needed, in line with the evolving nature of work.

Main policy instruments set in Public Health Development plan 2020-2030 are:

6.2.1 (Promotion of mental health) – One of the key objectives is to focus on maintaining and promoting mental health in the workplace;

6.2.2 (Injury prevention) – Recognizing that a significant portion of injuries occur in the workplace;

6.2.5 (Prevention and control of infectious diseases) – Considering the importance of managing biological hazards in the workplace;

7 (Health-supporting environment, including the work environment) – One of the prerequisites for achieving the desired outcomes is raising public awareness and skills, including in the field of occupational safety.

#### State supervision

State supervision over the compliance with the requirements provided for in occupational health and safety legislation is exercised by the Labour Inspectorate. During a general inspection, labour inspectors assess the working environment activities of an employer, hazards in the working environment and whether or not those hazards have been mitigated. For the first time since 2024, the Labour Inspectorate is publishing a list of companies that will be subject to inspections at ongoing year.

#### Awareness-raising activities and digital tools

Labour Inspectorate developed online tools and resources for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to facilitate compliance with health and safety regulations, mainly TEIS with different modules (risk assessment, posted workers etc).



Both the Labour Inspectorate and other partners regularly conduct campaigns and awareness initiatives to promote occupational health and safety. Most campaigns were raising awareness of performing risk assessment of working environment, for example:

- Campaign “Work Should Protect the Worker” (2024):  
The objective of this campaign was to encourage companies, particularly small and micro-enterprises, to conduct a workplace risk assessment using the Labour Inspectorate’s self-service system. The campaign emphasized the importance of risk assessments in preventing workplace accidents.
- Implementation of the Labour Inspectorate's Self-Service System (TEIS) (2020):  
In 2020, the Labour Environment Information System (TEIS) was launched to facilitate communication between the Labour Inspectorate and employers and to reduce the administrative burden on businesses.
- Campaign “Healthy Workplaces Lighten the Load” (2020–2023):  
This pan-European campaign focused on preventing work-related musculoskeletal disorders. In Estonia, seminars were organized on topics such as awkward postures, repetitive movements, and manual handling of loads.

The Labour Inspectorate's Work Life portal also conducts awareness-raising activities, campaigns, events, and informational sessions to enhance awareness. Additionally, it publishes articles on common employment relations and occupational safety and health issues.

There are also regular tripartite meetings between Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Estonian Employers’ Confederation and Estonian Trade Union Confederation, where matters related to the regulation of employment relations and the working environment are being discussed.

*Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information, if appropriate.*

The Labour Inspectorate, through its surveillance activities, impacts the working environment of approximately 100,000 employees annually (about 15% of all employed persons).

**Table 1. Activities of the Labour Inspectorate in 2020-2024 in the field of occupational health and safety**

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of inspectors involved in inspection work	41	45	46	46	46
Number of enterprises visited during inspection of health and safety at work	4 511	4 022	4 638	4 164	3 726
Total number of violations discovered during national surveillance	11 530	13 053	15 624	16 628	15 139
Number of work places where work was suspended	112	77	90	168	92

Number of work equipment the use of which was forbidden	71	77	134	318	229
Number of misdemeanours processed	32	59	56	136	123
Number of fines imposed	32	57	51	130	109
Fines imposed (Euro)	7 520	14 320	11 560	37 112	30 980

*Source: Labour Inspectorate*

## Article 3 § 4 – The right to safe and healthy working conditions

*Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of, reasons for and extent of any reforms.*

The legal framework was described under Article 2 § 4. Most of the described changes are also relevant in this area of occupational health and therefore the legal frameworks is not repeated here.

**Our position regarding the Article 3 § 4 remains the same**, which means, that the provision of occupational health services still poses a number of problems in Estonia which do not allow to ratify the provision, such as the lack of occupational health specialists and uneven quality of occupational health services.

*Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.*

The main activities of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications and Labour Inspectorate were described under the Article 2 § 4. Most of the described activities are also relevant in this area of occupational health and therefore those activities are not repeated here.

In addition, in 2023 a guidelines developed by occupational health doctors were completed.

The need for this guideline arose from the request of occupational health doctors and companies utilizing occupational health services to harmonize the quality of occupational health services, particularly to specify the medical procedures necessary for assessing the health effects of workplace factors and to recommend evidence-based interventions for preventing or mitigating these effects.

The guideline establishes a uniform standard for addressing the health effects of occupational hazards. It serves as a foundation for standardizing and improving the quality of occupational health services, ensuring that the assessment of occupational hazards remains consistent across different service providers. The evaluation follows agreed-upon principles based on scientific research, relevant medical and behavioral guidelines, international standards, and applicable legal frameworks.

Additionally, the guideline provides clarifications for primary care physicians, specialists, and other healthcare professionals involved in occupational health services. It supports better collaboration in differential diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, and health management, as these aspects are integral to the work of occupational health doctors.

*Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information, if appropriate.*

### Estonian Working Life Survey (2021) results

Approximately 5% of organisations with at least five employees are free from workplace hazards. Additionally, around 15% of employees either do not encounter work-related hazards at all or are exposed to them for less than 25% of their working time. Workplace accidents have occurred in approximately 9% of organisations in the year preceding the survey.

To facilitate the early detection of health issues and identify work-related hazards, 87% of employers have sent their employees for occupational health checks within the three years preceding the survey. While employed at their current organisation, 67% of employees have undergone a medical examination by an occupational health doctor.

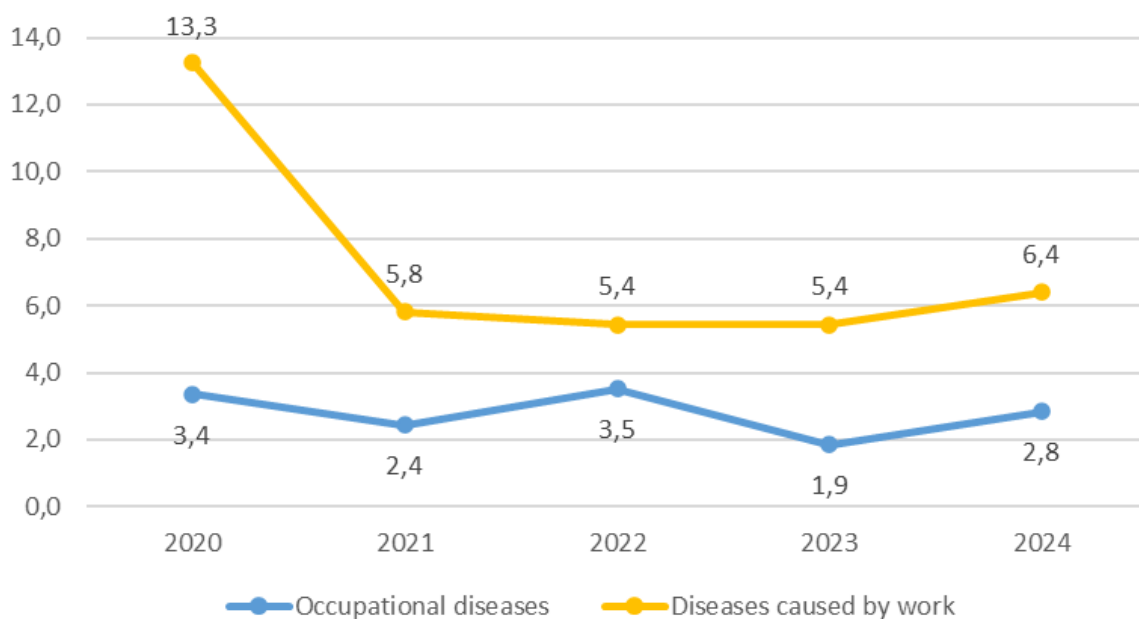
Furthermore, 87% of organisations have implemented health promotion initiatives aimed at maintaining and improving employees' overall well-being and motivation. These activities include, for example, subsidies for sports activities and mental health support. Around 60% of employees have participated in such initiatives.

#### Statistics on Health Problems Caused by work in Estonia 2020 – 2024

According to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, health issues caused by workplace hazards – specifically, occupational diseases and work-related illnesses – must be recorded in Estonia. The register of occupational diseases and work-related illnesses is maintained by the Estonian Labour Inspectorate. Occupational diseases are registered based on reports filed by employers, while work-related illnesses are recorded based on notifications from doctors.

The number of registered occupational diseases and work-related illnesses has remained stable during the reporting period (Figure 1). However, 2020 was an exceptional year, with a notably high number of work-related illnesses being recorded, not representing the typical trend. Overall, these conditions are generally considered to be underreported.

**Figure 1. Registered health problems caused by work per 100,000 employed persons in Estonia, 2020-2024**



*Source: Labour Inspectorate*

Over the years, most cases of work-related illnesses have been registered in the construction sector, healthcare, and the manufacturing industry (particularly in the wood and metal industries). The most common diagnoses have remained consistent over the years – most are related to musculoskeletal disorders such as joint pain, strain-related conditions, and carpal tunnel syndrome.

Figure 2 below provides a summary of the occupational disease situation in Estonia. Although it covers the years 2013–2022, it still remains relevant in 2024, highlighting the most affected groups, activities, and illnesses.

**Figure 2. Occupational diseases in a nutshell, 2013-2022**



Source: European occupational diseases statistics (EODS) – experimental statistics – Country profile: Estonia

#### Statistics on occupational health specialists in Estonia

According to Health Board register, at 7.03.2025 there are:

- 80 occupational health services;
- 109 certificated occupational physicians;
- 24 certificated occupational health nurses.

According to the Register of Economic Activities there are 114 non-medical service providers.

## Article 4 § 1 – The right to a fair remuneration

*Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of, reasons for and extent of any reforms.*

Relevant information was submitted to the Committee in 2015. In addition, a new provision in the [Employment Contracts Act](#) entered into force on 22 November 2021, according to which the Government of the Republic establishes the minimum wage on the basis of collective agreement concluded between the employers' confederation and the central federation of trade unions. Thus, it is established as an obligation that the Government of the Republic must follow the collective agreement concluded between the employers' confederation and the central federation of trade unions. This means that the Government of the Republic may not deviate from the agreement reached between these two parties. The amendment to the law was necessary in order to continue the established practice whereby the national minimum wage is primarily agreed by the social partners, namely the representative organizations of employees and employers – the Estonian Employer's Confederation and the Estonian Trade Union Confederation.

[The Collective Agreements Act](#) (hereinafter referred to as KLS by its Estonian acronym) was also supplemented by § 4<sup>6</sup>, which introduced the regulation on the agreement on national minimum wage and which entered into force on 22 November 2021. Pursuant to § 4<sup>6</sup>(1) of KLS, by way of a collective agreement a confederation of employers and a confederation of employees may agree upon a national minimum wage applicable to all employees and employers. The agreement on a national minimum wage is not subject to the provisions on the extensions of collective agreement conditions, as set out in § 4<sup>2</sup> – §4<sup>5</sup> of KLS (§ 4<sup>6</sup>(2) of KLS). The minister in charge of the policy sector will publish the agreement on a national minimum wage in the official publication *Ametlikud Teadaanded* within ten business days after its presentation to the minister (§ 4<sup>6</sup>(3) of KLS). The agreement on a national minimum wage takes effect after the passing of one month from the publication in the official publication *Ametlikud Teadaanded*, unless the agreement sets out a later date (§ 4<sup>6</sup>(4) of KLS). KLS § 4<sup>6</sup> was established with the aim to ensure that the long-standing practice, in which the Estonian Employer's Confederation and the Estonian Trade Union Confederation, as social partners, agree on the national minimum wage rates, does not change and sets out the nature of this special agreement in the Estonian context. The Government of the Republic has been following the agreement of the central organizations of social partners in establishing the minimum wage rate since 1994.

**As the Committee has also reaffirmed, the situation in Estonia is not fully compatible with Article 4 § 1 of the Charter, and therefore we do not see the possibility of ratifying this article.**

*Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.*

On 19 December 2024, the Government of the Republic issued [Regulation No. 87, Establishment of Minimum Wages](#), pursuant to which the minimum wage was prescribed for the year 2025. From 1 January 2025, the minimum hourly wage rate is 5,31 euros and the minimum monthly wage for full-time work is 886 euros. The minimum wage in same amount had previously been agreed by social partners, as described prior.

In the last years most amendments in labour policy have taken place by agreement of social partners. In 2023, social partners concluded a goodwill agreement setting targets for increasing the minimum wage until 2027. According to the agreement, the minimum wage increase should be a progressively growing proportion of the average wage, with targets set at 42.5% in 2024, 45% in 2025, 47.5% in 2026, and 50% in 2027.

*Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information, if appropriate.*

Wage levels in Estonia have steadily increased over the years. Meanwhile, the ratio of the minimum wage to the average and median wage has remained stable at approximately 40% and 50%, respectively.

**Table 2. Monthly wages in Estonia, in euro, 2021-2024\***

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Average gross wage	1 474	1 645	1 832	1 981
Median gross wage	1 200	1 340	1 501	1 628
Minimum gross wage	584	654	725	820
Minimum wage of average wage	40%	40%	40%	41%
Minimum wage of median wage	49%	49%	48%	50%

Source: Statistics Estonia

\* Since 2021, the average and median wage have been published using a new methodology, making 2020 data not comparable to subsequent years and therefore excluded

## Article 7 § 5 – The right of children and young persons to protection: Right to fair wage or other appropriate allowances

*Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of, reasons for and extent of any reforms. Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.*

Relevant information was submitted to the Committee in 2015. There have been no changes to the legal framework regarding youth wages. Estonian legislation does not provide a separate regulation for the remuneration of young workers. According to clause 2 of subsection 2 of section 2 of the [Equal Treatment Act](#) prohibits, wage discrimination on the grounds of age is prohibited.

**In a situation where the Committee has reaffirmed that the situation in Estonia does not seem to be compatible with Article 4§1, it would be unreasonable to introduce possibilities to differentiate between young worker's wage from adult starting wage. Therefore, ratifying Article 7§5 of the Charter is not reasonable at this point of the time.**

*Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information, if appropriate.*

The share of 15–26-year-olds who are employed, studying, or combining both has remained relatively stable (Table 4). Over the reporting period, depending on the year, 60–62% were studying, 42–43% were employed, and 15–18% were both working and studying. Among employed individuals in this age group, 35–38% were also enrolled in studies.

For the younger subgroup (15–18-year-olds), the distribution has also been consistent. During the reporting period, 94–96% were studying, 6–9% were employed, and 5–8% were both working and studying. Among employed 15–18-year-olds, around 90% were also studying, but this share has gradually declined to 82% in 2024.

**Table 4. Persons aged 15-18 and 15-26 by employment status and studying, 2020-2024, in thousands**

Age group	15-18					15-26				
Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Employed	3.4	3.1	4.7	4	4.4	64.4	61.6	71.1	67.9	67.9
Studying*	49.8	50	51.9	54.9	57.8	92.8	91.9	92.6	96.4	96.4
...incl. employed and studying**	3	2.8	4.2	3.4	3.6	22.6	22.9	27.2	25.4	25.4
Age group total	51.9	52.7	55.1	58.1	61.7	150.5	148.1	154.1	156.6	156.6

Source: Statistics Estonia, Labour Force Survey

\* Persons, who have been in general secondary, vocational or higher education within the last four weeks

\*\* Persons, who have been in general secondary, vocational or higher education within the last four weeks and have been in employment at the same time



The average monthly gross wage of employed persons under the age of 25 has consistently been lower than that of all other age groups (Table 3). The wage ratio compared to other age groups has also remained relatively stable over the years, averaging around:

- 65% of the wage of 25-34-year-olds,
- 63% of the wage of 35-44-year-olds,
- 71% of the wage of 45-54-year-olds,
- 84% of the wage of 55-64-year-olds,
- 94% of the wage of those aged 65 and older.

**Table 3. Average monthly gross wage for salaried employees, 2021-2024\*, average of four quarters**

Age group	2021	2022	2023	2024
Under 25	1 044	1 203	1 337	1 420
25-34	1 616	1 827	2 027	2 183
35-44	1 690	1 876	2 077	2 244
45-54	1 500	1 671	1 869	2 026
55-64	1 270	1 410	1 582	1 721
65+	1 135	1 252	1 417	1 550

*Source: Statistics Estonia, employment register and tax declarations*

*\* Since 2021, the average wage has been published using a new methodology, making 2020 data not comparable to subsequent years and therefore excluded*

## Article 7 § 6 – The right of children and young persons to protection: The rights of young workers to working time

*Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of, reasons for and extent of any reforms. Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.*

There have been no changes to the legal framework regarding vocational training by young people during normal working hours. Relevant information was submitted to the Committee in 2015.

At the same time, we can point out the amendments to the Employment Contracts Act that will enter into force as of 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2025 and concern the working time of minors and entry into employment with minor.

Firstly, one of the key changes relates to § 7(4) of the Employment Contracts Act, which regulates the right to conclude an employment contract with a minor. Pursuant to § 7(4) an employer may enter into an employment contract with a minor of 13–14 years of age or a minor of 15–16 years of age subject to the obligation to attend school and allow them to work if the duties are simple and do not require any major physical or mental effort (light work). The right to conclude an employment contract for light work, which currently applies to 15–16-year-old minors subject to compulsory schooling, is expanded to include 15–17-year-old minors subject to compulsory schooling. The conditions for the employment of minors are regulated by Directive 94/33/EC of the Council of the European Union, according to Article 4 of which minors may only perform light work. Since, 17-year-olds will also be compulsory school age in the future, the light work requirement must be extended to them as well.

Secondly, subsection 4 of § 43 of the Employment Contracts Act is supplemented with clause 3, according to which working time restrictions applicable to minors subject to compulsory schooling will also apply to minors aged at least 15 (i.e., 15–17-year-olds). This amendment is necessary because Directive 94/33/EC requires the working time of minors subject to compulsory schooling to be limited during school periods.

This means that a minor who has completed basic education (i.e., 9<sup>th</sup> grade) but is still subject to compulsory schooling (continues studying) will be subject to a working time restriction of 2 hours per day and 12 hours per week during the school quarter. Article 8(1)(c) of Directive 94/33/EC, which regulates the working time of minors, allows minors who have reached the age of 15 to work up to 8 hours per day and 40 hours during a period when school is not operating. As a result, Estonian legislation is amended to regulate the permissible working hours for 15–17-year-old minors. At this age, it is important to acquire work habits and gain work experience, which is why it is reasonable to allow 15–17-year-old minors to work full-time during school holidays. However, since they are still minors, they will be subject to a restriction that allows them to work only for a half of each term of the school holiday (§ 8(2) of the Employment Contracts Act).

Thus, full-time working during school holidays will not hinder the education of 15–17-year-old minors. They will have sufficient time to rest from school while also being given the opportunity to develop work habits and gain valuable work experience.

Thirdly, one of the amendments concerns subsection 5 of § 43 of the Employment Contracts Act, which is amended by adding a second sentence stating that the working time of a minor who has fulfilled the obligation to attend school shall not exceed 8 hours per day and 40 hours over a period

of seven days in the case of calculation of the summarised working time. This addition is necessary because, under the current law, questions have arisen as to whether the working time of a minor who has fulfilled the obligation to attend school may exceed the permitted full-time working hours under a summarised working time arrangement. The purpose of the provision has been to ensure that the working time of all minors is limited in the case of summarised working time calculation, and overtime work is not permitted. Therefore, it is important to supplement § 43 (5) of the Employment Contracts Act accordingly.

**Adding an obligation to include an employee's vocational training as part of working time (and thus pay wages for that time), although the need for training has not risen due to the need of the employer, may lead to a situation where young worker become less attractive for the employer because of the additional costs involved. This, in turn, could have a negative impact on youth employment, which has already been problematic in Estonia. Therefore, accepting Article 7§6 of the Charter is not reasonable at this time.**

*Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information, if appropriate.*

The number of students enrolled in vocational education institutions under workplace-based study arrangements has been declining in recent years, primarily due to the conclusion of a European Social Fund-funded project. Enrollment dropped from 2,309 students in the 2020/2021 school year to 1,348 in 2023/2024. The share of graduates from workplace-based study programs relative to the total number of vocational education graduates has also decreased: from 17.2% in 2021 to 13.2% in 2022 and 11.6% in 2023. Workplace-based vocational education remains predominantly pursued by students aged 25 and older, who accounted for 88.5% of all participants in the 2023/2024 school year. (Ministry of Education and Research reports, 2023)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [TUA\\_23\\_Tark\\_ja\\_tegus\\_rahvas.pdf](#) and [TA\\_analüütiline\\_lisa\\_2023.pdf](#)

## Article 10 § 5 – The right to vocational training: Obligation to implement measures to facilitate access

*Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of, reasons for and extent of any reforms.*

*Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.*

The legal framework for vocational education and training has not changed, some modifications to the Vocational Educational Institutions Law were made in 2020-2024.

On 1 August 2020, amendments to §§ 11 and § 141 of the Vocational Education Institutions Act entered into force, according to which HARNO conducts an expert examination and organizes quality assessment when granting the right to conduct studies, previously this was the task of the Ministry of Vocational Education and Training.

The conditions of and the procedure for quality assessment were established by a regulation of the minister in charge of the policy sector. The quality shall be evaluated by an assessment council which shall be formed and the rules of procedure which were approved by the Education and Youth Authority. [RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

The following amendments to the national curricula and reforms have been made:

- In the spring of 2020, amendments to the national curricula of all disciplines entered into force; instead of the previous module “Career Planning and Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship”, the module “Apprenticeship and Work in a Changing Environment” was developed and established in the national curricula.
- The choice of profession curricula implementation with the support of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism started in 2021.
- ESF funding instruments prepared 2020-2022 for curricula development, boosting work-based learning, renewing quality assurance system in VET and qualifications system and skills needs forecast system. The implementation of the project will be conducted till 2027.
- Based on the recommendation of the EU Council and the Estonian Education Development Plan 2022-2035, the Estonian Vocational Education Action Plan 2022-2030 has been prepared.
- In connection with the transition to Estonian-language education, 2022 changes were made to the regulation of the language of instruction in the Vocational Educational Institutions Act. Some changes came into force in 2024 September.
- A procedure for admission and expulsion of a student from a vocational educational institution, minister’s regulation was adopted on 21.08.2024
- The right to conduct preparatory studies was granted in 2024 (entry into force in 01.09.2025). Preparatory education is a level of education in the personal development curriculum group, during which the competences necessary for continuing secondary education or vocational education at the second qualification level are acquired. The purpose of preparatory education is to support the student in getting to know themselves and understanding the options available, and to ensure the student's readiness to make and implement decisions related to studies and working life.

- Paid vocational education was established 2024 and it will come into force in 2025. A state or municipal school requires reimbursement of tuition fees, i.e. fees for the entire curriculum, from a student who:
  - 1) has already been accepted into free vocational education or matriculated into free higher education when applying for a place of study;
  - 2) has completed free higher education within the ten years preceding to the admission;
  - 3) has completed free vocational education of the same or higher level within the five years preceding to the admission, unless he or she is enrolling in continuing education at the level completed;
  - 4) has been accepted into free vocational education on two or more occasions before admission and has interrupted his or her studies on all occasions, and less than five years have passed since the last interruption.
- The Ministry of Education and Research initiated the reform of vocational education in 2023 with three main goals:
  - Developing new vocational education curricula and aligning the provision of vocational education with the expectations and needs of the labour market.
  - Organizing the use of vocational education resources by developing both legal regulations for free formal vocational education and updating the regulations on operating subsidies for vocational education institutions
  - Organizing the school network of vocational education institutions and establishing education centres

**We agree with the Committee's conclusion that there are no major obstacles, however the possible ratification of article 10 § 5 of the Charter by Estonia needs to be more thoroughly analysed.**

*Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information, if appropriate.*

**Table 4. Number of students in vocational training during the period of 2019-2024**

	<i>Type of financing</i>						
<b>Academic year</b>	<b>European Economic Area subsidies</b>	<b>ESF funded vocational and higher education development programme PRŌM</b>	<b>Local municipality financed</b>	<b>Other state-funded study place</b>	<b>Total number of non-state-funded study places</b>	<b>State-funded state-commissioned education place</b>	<b>Students in VET total number</b>
2019/2020		1314		519	<b>1833</b>	22184	24017
2020/2021		1585		607	<b>2192</b>	23356	25548
2021/2022	125	927		771	<b>1823</b>	24039	25862
2022/2023	134	278	12	699	<b>1123</b>	24346	25469
2023/2024	114	57	37	633	<b>841</b>	25470	26311
<b>Total</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>4161</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>3229</b>	<b>7812</b>	<b>119395</b>	<b>127207</b>

Source: Ministry of Education and Research

## Article 18 § 3 – Obligation to liberalise regulations governing the employment

*Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of, reasons for and extent of any reforms.*

*Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programs, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.*

*Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information, if appropriate.*

The general legal framework is the same as described in the previous report. The legal basis for a foreigner to enter, stay, reside and work in Estonia are stipulated in **the Aliens Act**. For the citizens of the European Economic Area and citizens of the Swiss Confederation and the family members thereof, **the Citizen of European Union Act** applies.

### Main amendments and changes to the Aliens Act

In 2020, the Aliens Act was amended several times. The amendments were made due to various reasons. Firstly, amendments were made deriving from **Directive 2014/66/EU on the conditions of entry and residence of third country national in the framework of an intra-corporate transfer**. With the amendments, the remuneration may be paid also by a company located outside EU (i.e. it does not have to be the Estonian branch that pays the remuneration). Also, it was specified that a temporary residence permit for an intra-corporate transferee may be issued without the permission of the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (EUIF). Secondly in 2020, Estonia introduced the **Digital Nomad Visa**, which allows remote workers to live in Estonia and legally work for their employer or their own company registered abroad. Also, several changes were made due to the **COVID-19 lockdown**, e.g. the legal basis to stay in Estonia could be prolonged.

In 2022, **Russian aggression against Ukraine had the biggest effect** on migration in general. To make the entry into the labour market easier for Ukrainian nationals fleeing from the war, requirements for registering short-term employment were dropped with amendments made to the Aliens Act. According to the amendment, if a person has been granted a legal basis to enter and stay in Estonia, provisions regarding short-term employment in Estonia do not apply to their employment. Employer is required to pay them a remuneration which is at least equal to the average annual gross monthly salary of Estonia of the area of activity in which employment is commenced (last published by Statistics Estonia) and multiplied by the coefficient of 0.8. The calculation of the average gross monthly salary of an area of activity is based on the letter code of the Estonian Classification of Economic Activities EMTAK. Remuneration requirement was lowered from the average gross annual salary to 0.8 of the average gross annual salary of the relevant field of activity to avoid possible labour related exploitation. This was decided to support the self-sufficiency of Ukrainian citizens staying in Estonia and provide them with an opportunity to work temporarily without excessive bureaucracy and requirements for registering short-term employment.

Also in 2022, several other important amendments were made to the Aliens Act, which regulates the entry, temporary stay, residence and employment in Estonia. Firstly, regarding highly qualified workers, **top specialists' remuneration requirement was reduced** from twice the Estonian average salary to 1,5 times the average salary. Previous salary requirement was mainly fulfilled by the ICT sector, where the average salary was highest in Estonia. However, highly qualified top specialists, who are increasingly more difficult to find in the Estonian labour market, are also needed in other areas/sectors where average salary is not comparable with the ICT sector. Therefore, with the salary requirement lowered, other industries such as the machinery industry

are now able to recruit top specialists who are exempt from the immigration quota and work permit from the EUIF.

Secondly, a new type of **temporary residence permit for short-term employment** was introduced (entered into force on 1st of January 2023). Residence permit for short-term employment will allow foreigners who have worked in Estonia on a short-term basis for at least nine months to apply for a residence permit that is valid for up to two years (also called a 1+2 scheme). The employer must meet certain requirements for the employee to be eligible for this type of residence permit, such as being trustworthy and having paid the employee a corresponding salary during the period of short-term employment. The residence permit is exempt from the annual immigration quota but cannot be extended. Changes were made because labour shortage was an acute problem addressed by certain sectors. Since the annual immigration quota fulfils quickly, registering short-term employment was used more and more. However, as recruitment from abroad and training on the post is time consuming and the employer must meet salary criterion, the timeframe of actual short-term work (365 days during 455 days period) was found unproportionally short. This new type of residence permit allows these individuals easier access to reside and work in Estonia and ease labour shortages.

Thirdly, amendment was made to the Aliens Act to introduce a new initiative for **hiring foreign labour to a growth company** (entered into force on 1st of January 2023). Growth company is defined as a company registered in Estonia with the purpose to continue developing a business model with high global growth potential, innovative and replicable that shall significantly contribute to the development of the Estonian business environment. Growth companies will be allowed to offer salaries to foreign employees that are at least 80% of the average salary in Estonia and residence permits issued to foreign employees of a growth company will not be subject to the annual immigration quota. Until relevant amendment was introduced, Aliens Act stipulated special incentives for hiring foreign labour to startup companies. At the same time, several innovative and fast-growing startups operate in Estonia that have grown out from the startup phase and who have been in the market for more than 10 years but to whom favourable conditions for recruiting foreign employees no longer apply. Thus, with this amendment technology-based growth companies will have similar benefits for hiring foreign labour as is available for startups. So, starting from 2023, technology companies that have been operating in Estonia for more than ten years are able to use the growth company regulation to recruit workers from abroad. The possibility to recruit foreign talent is important for Estonian tech companies, as the local labour market has a shortage of workers who are suitably qualified for both developing business and growing rapidly. The Estonian technology sector is becoming an increasingly important employer and taxpayer, and it is important for the state to encourage start-ups and technology companies to have their headquarters in Estonia, allowing them to create new jobs in Estonia and keep the associated taxes in the state budget. The growth company regulation, modelled on the Startup Visa regulation, will thus create the indispensable prerequisites for technology companies that have successfully established themselves in Estonia to grow and develop here, and for their development units and headquarters to remain in Estonia in the future, as well.

In 2023, there was also an important change made regarding **digitalisation of processes**. A new regulation was passed "Statute on Database of Registering Short-term Employment of Aliens in Estonia" and registering third country nationals' short-term employment is now migrated to a new online environment/database, which allows to make automated checks against other databases, keeps the data entered up-to-date and helps making registering procedures paperless.

Also, an **introductory welcoming programme** that was launched in 2015 had some important updates regarding language trainings in 2022 and 2023. The programme consists of basic and thematic trainings (work and entrepreneurship; education; research; family life; children and teenagers; international protection) and language trainings. In addition to 100 hours of A1 language training, 150 hours of A2 and 250 hours of B1 language trainings were added. Programme is not mandatory and is provided free of charge for all foreigners who have resided in Estonia on the basis of residence permit or right of residence less than five years.



In 2024, amendments to the Aliens Act entered into force transposing into national law the EU Directive 2021/1883 (revised **EU Blue Card directive**). The amendments specify among other things the definition of higher professional qualifications and the educational requirements that EU Blue Card holders must meet in terms of their education. It also regulates the higher professional skills which are considered equivalent to the knowledge, skills and competence attested by higher education qualifications for the purpose of applying for a Blue Card. Among other, the period of validity of the required employment contract was shortened from one year to six months. Also, the Blue Card holder may be unemployed for a total of up to three months if they have held a Blue Card for less than two years, and for a total of up to six months if they have held a Blue Card for at least two years. The amendments also stipulate the conditions for mobility for EU Blue Card holders and establishes more favourable conditions for family reunification.

**With regards to the ratification of the article 18 § 3, Estonia is in line with the article 18 § 3 and Estonian legislation has constantly changed in order to simplify procedures and facilitate integration. However, in order to keep flexibility to develop legislation according to the actual need of the Estonian economy in cooperation with social partners and relevant professional associations, Estonia prefers not to ratify the article 18 § 3.**

*Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programs, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.*

In 2021, the government approved the new **“Internal security development plan 2020-2030”** which among other topics, sets goals for Estonian migration policy. The strategy also includes immigration policy instruments to promote the arrival of qualified foreigners and to support cohesive society etc. Representatives of social partners, local governments, international organisations, ministries and other relevant governmental authorities were involved in the process of preparing the strategy.

In 2022 Enterprise Estonia and Work in Estonia developed an **action plan for the period of 2022-2025 for attracting external talent under the Work in Estonia program**. The program focusses not only on attracting IT specialists, but also on supporting the recruitment of engineers and specialists in natural and exact sciences in general. Increasing the involvement of foreign talent is one of the strategic objectives to alleviate the shortage of skilled labour in the fields of ICT technology and natural sciences and science. Work in Estonia also carried out a programme **“Re-invent yourself”** for the spouses of foreign specialists residing and working in Estonia aimed at assisting with re-invention professionally. The programme includes training sessions to help find a professional path, networking meetings with local professionals and HR specialists and individual career consultations. Four-week programme is free of charge and is organised by Work in Estonia in cooperation with EUIF and MoveMyTalent.

In addition, the **Police and Border Guard offers migration advisory service** to help both foreigners planning to settle in Estonia or residing in Estonia as well as companies and organisations that hire foreigners to get personalised and trustworthy advice on the matters of migration and migration law. Advisors work in Estonian, English and Russian. Migration service is free of charge, and it is possible to ask to advise via phone, email, Skype, etc., or ask by appointment. Also, regular training sessions are organized to employers, universities, etc., to explain the framework and procedures and advise cooperation partners about migration legislation.

*Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information, if appropriate.*

**Table 5. Decisions to issue first time residence permits for employment**

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Albania	1	4	1	1	2
Algeria			2	2	
Argentina	2	7	11	3	5
Armenia	4	8	17	18	13
Azerbaijan	16	27	48	51	51
Australia	6	11	6	10	10
Bangladesh	2	4	7	7	1
Belarus	159	218	161	9	3
Bhutan					2
Bolivia			1		
Bosnia and Herzegovina		3	1	1	1
Brazil	42	44	173	59	30
Cameroon	1	1	2	1	1
Cambodia			1		
Canada	6	7	7	4	11
Chili		3	2	2	2
China	21	8	9	14	13
Colombia	7	9	21	12	6
Costa Rica	2	4	3		2
Cote d'Ivoire					2
Cuba		1	7	2	1
Dominican					1
Ecuador	3	1	2		2
Egypt	2	14	12	9	7
El Salvador		2	1	2	1
Ethiopia		1			
Fiji					1
Gambia	1			1	1
Georgia	13	24	16	43	42
Ghana	3	4	8	4	4
Great Britain		17	28	22	24
Guatemala		1	2	3	
Guinea					1
Haiti			1		
Honduras			5		3
Hong Kong		1	2	1	
India	97	121	193	154	144
Indonesia	1	6	14	11	6
Iran	23	24	12	9	5
Iraq		1	2		0
Israel	5	5	16	10	7
Jamaica					1
Japan	17	23	23	8	20

Jordan		1	1	1	1
Kazakhstan	8	23	22	29	17
Kenya	1	1	2	3	2
Korea	4	4	8	17	1
Kosovo			3		
Kyrgyzstan	4	8	6	8	6
Laos					1
Lebanon	1	2	1	1	
Malaysia	1	3	5	8	7
Mali		1	1	1	
Marrocco	2	4	10	7	4
Mauritius		1		1	
Mexico	11	9	13	8	6
Moldova	15	14	17	57	57
Montenegro			1	1	
Mozambique			1		
Myanmar					1
Nepal	5	8	3	16	16
New Zealand	3		4	1	3
Nicaragua			2		
Nigeria	4	14	21	15	7
North Macedonia	3	1	4	2	
Pakistan	14	18	41	18	17
Panama			2		
Paraguay	1			1	
Peru		2	1	3	
Philippines	6	8	33	43	57
Russia	353	400	215	17	2
Saint Kitts and Nevis				1	
Saudi Arabia					1
Serbia	7	8	10	7	4
Singapore	1	3	5	2	3
South Korea	22	11	23	14	4
Sri Lanka	4	3	24	14	5
Sudan		1	1		1
Syria		1	1	1	
Zambia			1		
Zimbabwe		2	4		
Taiwan	2	1	3		
Tajikistan		1	7	17	10
Thailand	2	19	2	13	9
Trinidad and Tobago				1	
Tunisia	2	7	5	2	
Turkey	26	42	111	57	28
Turkmenistan			1	1	2
Uganda		2		2	
Ukraine	1091	949	931	963	402

United States	37	51	48	66	35
Undefined citizenship	2	6	1	5	3
Uruguay		1		1	
Uzbekistan	17	13	44	147	93
Venezuela	6	1	4	4	
Vietnam			2	4	4
Yemen		1	1	1	
<b>In total</b>	<b>2089</b>	<b>2249</b>	<b>2463</b>	<b>2054</b>	<b>1235</b>

Source: Police and Boarder Guard Board

**Table 6. Refusals to issue first time residence permit for employment**

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Algeria					1
Armenia				1	
Azerbaijan	2	2	8	4	1
Australia		1	1	1	
Belarus	5	39	118	8	2
Bolivia				1	
Bosnia and Herzegovina					2
Brazil		1	1	1	
Cameroon		1		1	
Canada			1	2	
Chili			1	1	1
China		1	1	1	
Colombia			1		
Egypt		2	1	1	
Gambia			1		
Georgia	2	10	1	14	12
Great Britain				1	
Guatemala	1				
India	4	6	19	12	4
Indonesia					1
Iran				1	
Israel			1	1	
Japan	2				
Kazakhstan	2		1	2	
Kenya					1
Korea			1		
Kyrgyzstan	2			5	3
Mexico	1				1
Moldova	1	6	33	61	18
Nepal			11		1
Pakistan	5			1	2
Philippines			1	1	
Russia	16	41	166	13	3
Saint Kitts and Nevis					1
Saudi Arabia					1

Sri Lanka			1		
Taiwan					1
Tajikistan		2	3	9	
Thailand	4	1		2	1
Turkmenistan					1
Turkey	1		1	2	2
Ukraine	74	303	624	237	53
Undefined citizenship		2		1	
United States		1			
Uruguay		2			
Uzbekistan	3	2	30	52	20
Vietnam				1	
<b>In total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>1027</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>133</b>

Source: Police and Boarder Guard Board

**Table 7. Decisions to extend the residence permit for employment**

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Albania		1			1
Argentina	1			1	1
Armenia			1	1	
Azerbaijan	1	1	1	5	1
Australia	1	2	4	6	2
Bangladesh				5	2
Belarus	14	16	15	40	14
Bosnia and Herzegovina				1	
Brazil	1	4	2	4	2
Cambodia					1
Cameroon	1			2	7
Chile				1	
China	9	8	4	8	8
Colombia	1	2		1	3
Cuba			1		
Ecuador	1				
Egypt			1	1	2
Ethiopia				1	
Georgia	1	3	6	4	3
Ghana			1	2	1
Great Britain			2	2	3
India	24	18	22	16	20
Indonesia					1
Iran	2	5	7	2	3
Iraq			1		
Israel		1	1	4	
Japan	1	6	6	3	2
Jordania					1

Kanada		1	1	2	2
Kazakhstan			2	2	1
Kenya	1		1		
Kirgizstan				2	1
Korea	1				2
Lebanon				1	
Malaisia			1		
Marrocco		1			
Mexico		4	2	4	1
Moldova		2	1	3	1
Nepal		1	3	3	2
New Zealand	1	1			1
Nigeria		2	1	5	7
North Macedonia	1				
Pakistan	2		3	2	4
Panama		1			
Philippines		9		1	2
Russia	47	53	102	84	39
Serbia	1	1			1
Sierra Leone					1
Singapore	1			1	1
South Africa			1	1	
Sri Lanka					1
Zimbabwe				1	
Tadzhikistan	2			1	
Tai	2	4	1	1	2
Tunisia		1	1	1	2
Turkey	4	3	9	9	6
Ukraine	276	171	111	145	86
Undefined citizenship		1	1	1	2
United States	12	9	21	9	19
Uzbekistan			3		1
Vanuatu			1		
Venezuela		1			
<b>In total</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>263</b>

Source: Police and Boarder Guard Board

**Table 8. Decision of refusal to renew the residence permit for employment**

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Armenia					1
Belarus	3	1	3	7	5
Brazil	1				
Canada		1			
Egypt				1	1
India				2	2
Iran					2
Kirgizstan					1

Moldova					1
Nigeria					1
Pakistan					2
Russia		2	5	3	11
Serbia				1	
Tadzhikistan					2
Turkey				1	1
Ukraine	9	17	4	22	23
United States					1
Undefined Citizenship	1				1
Uzbekistan					1
Vietnam					1
<b>In total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>57</b>

Source: Police and Boarder Guard Board

**Table 9. Decisions to register short-term employment**

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Afghanistan		3	3		
Aland		1			
Albania	1	5	4	4	1
Algeria	4	3	7	2	3
American Samoa	1				
Angola					1
Argentina	7	17	13	13	11
Armenia	12	56	88	36	29
Azerbaijan	61	145	284	149	118
Australia	20	22	15	16	13
Bahama				1	
Bangladesh	52	12	52	22	27
Belarus	1 371	1 849	839	18	2
Benin	1				
Bolivia			1	1	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	5	3	5	7
Brazil	89	109	250	61	77
British Indian Ocean Territory		1			
Cambodia		1	1		3
Cameroon	7	4	9	4	7
Canada	14	21	25	14	22
Central African Republic					1
Chile	6	4	4	9	5
China	28	27	27	30	128
Colombia	6	29	27	16	13
Costa Rica	4	9	5	2	7
Cote d'Ivoire	1			1	1
Cuba	1	4	10	8	3
Dominica			1		
Dominican Republic		3		1	
East Timor		1			

Ecuador	1	5	2	8	4
Egypt	19	37	38	30	17
El Salvador		4	5	1	1
Equatorial Guinea			1		
Ethiopia	3	1	1	1	3
Fiji				2	
Gabon	1				
Gambia	1	6	4	6	5
Georgia	268	351	1 161	410	235
Ghana	7	16	17	10	5
Gibraltar			2		
Great Britan		50	46	46	45
Guatemala	2		4	2	1
Guinea	1	3		1	1
Guinea-Bissau				1	
Haiti			2		1
Honduras		1	6	2	5
Hong Kong	1	2	2	3	
India	278	308	445	316	287
Indonesia	2	10	22	9	35
Iran	43	78	45	19	14
Iraq	2	1	2		1
Israel	10	7	24	24	9
Jamaica					1
Japan	19	31	29	22	32
Jemena	1		2		
Jordan	1	7	10	5	1
Kazakhstan	108	143	341	193	78
Kenya	4	2	5	5	29
Kongo		1			
Korea	6	11	35	12	6
Kosovo	10	8	3	1	
Kyrgyzstan	130	216	659	105	57
Laos				1	
Lebanon	2	19	3		2
Liberia			1	1	
Macau					1
Malaisia	2	5	14	4	13
Maldives		1			
Mali	4		3		
Marocco	7	12	21	10	14
Mauritius	2		5	3	
Mexico	22	27	27	21	15
Moldova	920	1 583	2 747	1 487	1 082
Monaco		2			
Mongolia		2			
Montenegro		3		1	1
Mozambique			1		
Namibia	1	1	3	1	0



Nepal	35	46	47	48	36
New Zealand	2	3	7	3	2
Nicaragua		1	1		
Niger		1			1
Nigeria	13	73	59	26	29
North Macedonia	2	7	6	2	2
Oman		1	1		
Other	15	30	4		3
Pakistan	39	64	90	40	45
Panama		1	2		
Paraguay	1	1		1	1
Peru	6	3	5	6	1
Philippines	19	30	80	106	96
Republic of South Sudan	1			1	
Reunion		1			
Russia	1 056	1 798	1 080	65	14
Saint Kitts and Nevis			1	2	
Zambia			1	1	1
Saudi Arabia				1	
Senegal	2	2	3	1	2
Serbia	38	18	22	23	13
Singapore	3	11	5	3	10
Solomon Islands		1			
Somalia			1	1	
South Africa	17	23	51	189	31
Sri Lanka	8	17	39	22	19
Sudan	1	2	1	1	
Suriname					1
Syria		4	5	1	2
Zimbabwe	1	4	4	4	1
Tadzhikistan	183	282	531	115	60
Taiwan	2	3	2	4	2
Tanzania	1				1
Thailand	37	15	91	26	36
Trinidad and Tobago	1		1		
Tunesia	6	10	12	6	8
Turkey	73	122	228	135	145
Turkmenistan	12	19	64	9	7
U.S. Minor Outlying Islands	1				
Uganda	4	13	10	1	
Ukraine	15 776	23 544	11 430	2 087	1 635
Undefined Citizenship	111	88	86	46	38
United Arab Emirates		1			
United States	93	154	139	103	113
Uruguay	1	3		1	4
Uzbekistan	915	1 187	2 831	789	520
Vanuatu			2	1	
Vatican	2				
Venezuela	4	7	11	5	3

Vietnam	2	3	10	5	16
<b>In total</b>	<b>22 048</b>	<b>32 878</b>	<b>24 369</b>	<b>7 056</b>	<b>5 378</b>

Source: Police and Boarder Guard Board

**Table 10. Decisions to refuse to register a short-term employment**

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Armenia		7	12	1	1
Azerbaijan				9	1
Australia				1	1
Bangladesh		15	3	8	14
Belarus	22	20	54	33	5
Brazil				2	1
Cameroon					2
Canada					1
China		1			
Cuba		1			
Ecuador			1		1
Egypt	5	3	1	1	1
Gambia				1	
Georgia	9	24	74	105	25
Great Britain			1		
India	5	8	6	35	5
Indonesia		1	1	2	
Iran		1		1	
Israel			2		
Jordan	1				
Kazakhstan	4			17	3
Kirgizstan	13	47	62	49	5
Liberia				1	
Macau				1	
Marocco				4	1
Mauritius					1
Moldova	11	19	57	169	31
Nepal		2	2	13	3
Nigeria	1		2	2	3
Other	3	4	3	2	
Pakistan	2	2	1	3	5
Peru				2	1
Philippines			6		3
Reunion		1			
Russia	8	16	46	32	15
Rwanda			2		
Serbia				1	
Singapore				1	
Sri Lanka				2	1
Syria	1	1			
Tadzhikistan	5	30	39	49	3
Thailand			7	11	6
Tunesia					1
Turkey	2	1	2	1	5
Turkmenistan		1		2	1
Ukraine	312	423	161	100	66

Undefined Citizenship	3	5	1	3	4
United States					2
Uzbekistan	51	116	186	290	70
Venezuela					1
Vietnam					8
<b>In total</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>749</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>297</b>

*Source: Police and Boarder Guard Board*

## Article 23 – The right of the elderly persons to social protection

*Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of, reasons for and extent of any reforms.*

There are no changes to the legal framework concerning the regulation of the Equal Treatment Act described in the previous report. Regardless of several attempts, planned amendments to the ETA described in the previous report have not been adopted. In 2023, the responsibility for co-ordination of equal treatment policy, including proposing relevant legislation, was transferred from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications. In 2024, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications prepared and sent for public consultation a draft law proposing merging the Gender Equality Act and the Equal Treatment Act. The draft also aimed to strengthen the protection of rights presently provided by both acts, including by widening 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 similarly to the ground of gender to all areas of public life. Due to change of government and responsible minister in July 2024, the processing of the draft law stopped.

### Changes in the State Pension Insurance Act and the Funded Pensions Act

In the previous report, we provided a detailed overview of the first-pillar pension reform carried out in 2021. The reform made the pension formula more solidarity-based and introduced a new type of pension – the flexible pension, which better integrates employment and retirement. Also, from 2027 onwards, the retirement age will be linked to life expectancy, ensuring the sustainability of the pension system in response to demographic changes.

### **The option to increase II pillar contributions**

From January 1, 2025, contributions to pillar II can be made at 4 or 6% of the gross salary instead of the usual 2%. Increasing the contribution rate is optional, by default the contribution rate of 2% continues to apply. 2025, approximately 23 percent of all second pillar contributors increased their contribution, approximately 8.7% increased their contribution rate to 4% and approximately 14.3% to 6%. Higher contributions to the II pillar ensure better retirement security for future pensioners, reducing reliance on state pensions and enhancing their financial well-being in old age.

*Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.*

### **Welfare Development Plan 2023-2030 (WDP)**

The "Welfare Development Plan 2023-2030" (WDP) aims also to ensure equal treatment and to promote equal opportunities for self-realization and participation for minorities and people with special needs. Activities that are being carried out to implement the WDP also include those aimed at raising employers' awareness on promoting diversity in public and private sector organizations. For this purpose, the government continued to (financially) support celebrating the Diversity Day (and Month) in May each year, the work of the network of employers committed to the Estonian Diversity Charter (<https://humanrights.ee/en/topics-main/diversity-and-inclusion/charter/>), and the administering of the Diverse Workplace Label (<https://humanrights.ee/en/topics-main/diversity->

[and-inclusion/mitmekesise-tookoha-margis/](#)). All three activities have been carried out and/or coordinated by the Estonian Human Rights Centre. By the end of 2024, 222 public, private and non-governmental organisations were committed to implementing the Estonian Diversity Charter. As of 2024, the Diverse Workplace Label has been awarded (for two years) to 60 organisations.

Additionally, activities are implemented to improve physical (including building and transport) and digital (including services) accessibility which supports participation of people with special needs, including elderly, in society.

### **Pension Awareness Strategy 2023–2027**

Estonia's Pension Awareness Strategy 2023–2027 aims to enhance public understanding of the pension system, entitlements, and the importance of pension savings. The strategy seeks to encourage individuals to take proactive steps in securing their financial well-being for retirement. As part of this initiative, we collaborate with companies to offer free, objective, and reliable pension information sessions. These sessions provide practical guidance on using pension calculators and developing personal pension plans, empowering people to make informed decisions about their future financial security.

### **2022 Pension System Adequacy Analysis**

Every five years, an analysis monitoring the adequacy and sustainability of the pension system is conducted, providing an assessment of the overall state of pensions.

The Committee on Social Rights of the European Social Charter says that the minimum pension must be at least 40% of the median income. The Analyses show that the Estonian minimum pension does not reach that standard.

From a policy maker's point of view, the state should guarantee all the elderly at least an income equal to the calculated subsistence minimum (national pension). However, the current subsistence minimum methodology dates to 2004 and is in dire need of change.

The average pension should be one that guarantees at least 60% of the median wage for a person with 40 years of retirement experience who has worked at the median wage all his life. According to the base scenario, it is between 50-55%. Therefore, the average pension goal is not reached.

In European Union, Estonia has the biggest difficulties in ensuring the adequate pension replacement rate and as a result, the relative poverty rate of elderly Estonians is among the highest in the EU. Women, who live longer than men and are therefore often alone, are in a particularly difficult situation. The Estonian pension system has coped with the fight against deep poverty, the rate of material deprivation in Estonia is close to the average of the European Union. This is because less than 1% of pensioners receive a national pension, most pensioners have accumulated enough length of service during their lifetime, and relatively few current pensioners pensions depend on the contributions, i.e. the amount of salary. For the same reason, the gender pension gap is practically non-existent in Estonia.

Estonia's low pensions result from the fact that Estonia spends very little on pensions, among EU countries only Ireland spends even less GDP on pensions. Mainly due to low pensions, the employment rate of Estonians aged 65-74 is however the highest in the European Union.

In the case of similar people (income, age, length of service), the pensions of people who have withdrawn money from the II pillar are lower compared to those who have not joined the II pillar at all. On the other hand, on average (not in a comparison of similar people), those who left the II pillar have higher pension rights in the I pillar compared to people who never joined the II pillar. Therefore, on average, people who were born before 1983 and who did not join the II pillar start receiving the lowest pension.

Pillar I expenses will exceed revenues for the next 40 years, the deficit will be stable at around 0.5% of GDP per year during this period.

The impact of the III pillar on the average pension is small in the coming decades, in the long term it may increase the average replacement rate by a few percent.

Currently, 97% of the money is taken from the II pillar as a one-time payment, however, it is still too early to draw further conclusions, because 50% of those who have joined the II pillar and are at retirement age still have money in the pillar.

The profile of those who withdrew money from pillar II has been relatively similar of that of the average person who joined pillar II. Only the younger age groups have fewer leavers. Compared to the polls before the Pillar II was made voluntary, the money withdrawn from Pillar II has been used less for loan repayment and investment, and more for consumption.

The most important propositions of the analysis are:

- significantly increase the minimum pension to reduce poverty
- create an occupational pension in pillar II or III to meet the average pension goal.

**Our position about possible ratification of Article 23 remains the same, we find that currently it is not possible for Estonia to ratify Article 23 as we believe we are not in full conformity with the Article.**

*Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information, if appropriate.*

**Table 11. Average old age pension, national pension rate, relative and absolute poverty lines, 2020-2024, in Euros**

	Average old age pension	Average wage	National pension rate	Relative poverty line (month)	Absolute poverty line (month)
<b>2020</b>	519.1	1448	221,63	631.1	220.5
<b>2021</b>	551.0	1473	255,18	741.3	233.6
<b>2022</b>	588.7	1645	295,34	756.4	303.4
<b>2023</b>	680.0	1833	336,39	807.0	338.2
<b>2024</b>	756,5	1981	372,05	-	345.8

- not available yet

Source: Statistics Estonia

**Table 12. At-risk-of-poverty rate, absolute poverty rate and at-risk-of-poverty gap of people aged 65 and older, 2020-2023, %**

	At-risk-of poverty rate			Absolute poverty rate			At-risk-of-poverty gap		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
<b>2020</b>	40.6	27.0	47.9	..	..	..	14.9	15.6	14.8

<b>2021</b>	52.3	43.6	57.1	..	..	..	21.6	18.8	22.2
<b>2022</b>	46.8	36.2	52.5	1.5	..	..	19.3	18.4	19.6
<b>2023</b>	39.4	26.8	46.3	..	..	..	13.4	14.3	12.9

... not available due to small sample

Source: Statistics Estonia

**Table 13. Care home service providers, places in care homes and care home service clients in 2020-2023\*, at the end of the year**

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Care home service providers	<b>175</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>174</b>
Places in care homes	9 989	10 436	10 861	10 534
Care home service clients (from the age of 18)	9 025	9 100	9 617	10 534
of them diagnosis of dementia	1 257	1 919	2 396	2 848
Care home services clients <u>65 years and older</u>	8 062	8 200	8 722	9 657
of them diagnosis of dementia	1 161	1 794	2 264	2 700
Service costs, thousand euros	89 513	97 423	112 145	149 103

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs

\* The full-year 2024 impact assessment data will be available in summer 2025.

**Table 14. Care home service providers, places in care homes and care home service clients in 2020-2023 \*, at the end of the year**

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Care home service providers	<b>175</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>174</b>
Places in care homes	9 989	10 436	10 861	10 534
Care home service clients (from the age of 18)	9 025	9 100	9 617	10 534
of them diagnosis of dementia	1 257	1 919	2 396	2 848
Care home services clients <u>65 years and older</u>	8 062	8 200	8 722	9 657
of them diagnosis of dementia	1 161	1 794	2 264	2 700
Service costs, thousand euros	89 513	97 423	112 145	149 103

\* The full-year 2024 impact assessment data will be available in summer 2025.

## Article 31 – The right to housing

### Article 31 § 1 – Obligation to promote access to housing of an adequate standard

*Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of reasons for the extent of any reforms.*

Since the submission of the last report no new changes have been made to the general housing legal framework.

The Social Welfare Act defines social housing as a dwelling in municipal ownership provided to a person in need of social services and stipulates that housing services are among the social services. Social Welfare Act (§ 41) states that local municipalities are responsible for ensuring the provision of dwelling for those who due to socio-economic situation are unable to provide a dwelling which corresponds to their needs.

The Social Welfare Act (§ 42) also states that persons who have difficulties moving about, caring for themselves or communicating in a dwelling as a result of a disability are assisted by local municipalities in adapting their dwelling or in obtaining a more suitable dwelling.

In accordance with the Social Charter the right to adequate housing has to be guaranteed and on 01.01.2018, the quality principles of the provision of social services entered into force on the basis of the Social Welfare Act, which must be followed in the provision of the service. The Act defines nine principles that focus on person-centredness and more organised organisational organisation in order to ensure transparent and more competent services. Also different services have more specific guidelines including the provision of dwelling, where the quality principals have been set.

**Although the state offers many different supportive measures to help local municipalities meet the needs of the population in this matter, but they do not guarantee conformity with Article 31 § 1 of the Charter. Therefore, we do not see that it would be possible for Estonia to ratify this article at this time.**

*Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.*

**The Welfare Development Plan 2023–2030** continues to emphasize the importance of accessible and adequate housing as a fundamental part of overall well-being. It highlights that ensuring people can live independently in their own homes for as long as possible is crucial for their quality of life and social inclusion. Special attention is given to supporting the independent living of older people and other vulnerable groups through community-based services, home adaptations, and personalized support measures, reducing the need for institutional care.

#### Social and municipal housing

In addition to the measures described above, local municipalities also contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of permanent residents (according to the Population Register) of their administrative territories. Most local municipalities have established procedures that regulate how rented housing (owned by the local municipality) is applied for, let and used. In general, only persons who are registered in the Population Register of the given local municipality can apply to rent housing from the local municipality. Local authorities allocate housing on the basis



of need, but usually priority is given to families with children, including single parents, elderly persons, disabled persons and other vulnerable groups.

Circumstances which are taken into consideration upon granting social and municipal housing are usually the following:

- the time the individual was taken into account as an applicant for municipal housing;
- the size and the condition of the applicant's current and desired dwelling;
- the size of the family (including the amount of underage children in the family);
- the health condition of the applicant and his or her family members and other social facts.

Generally, there are two types of dwellings one can apply for – municipal housing and social housing. Social houses are usually dwellings rented to individuals with a need of social services (e.g. dwellings adjusted for wheelchair access to accommodate handicapped people, dwellings appointed to the supported residing of mentally challenged individuals and the houses of the elderly). The rest of the dwellings are municipal houses. In case there are no suitable or available apartments or rooms in municipal or social houses, local municipalities must help people in need with finding a suitable place for them to live from the open market by also helping them cover the primary costs (and from there on, also monthly dwelling costs by granting subsistence benefit – see Article 31 § 2). The exact procedure for provision and use of social and municipal housing is established by the local municipalities.

In the end of 2023, there were 79 local municipalities units in Estonia and out of them 78 local municipalities had municipal or social houses and/or beds in social housing units and all of them provided service for people in need. There were 6683 municipal and social housings (5418 apartments and 1265 rooms). 91,1% of municipal and social houses were occupied and around 14 795 people lived in them. At the same time there were in total 2348 families with 4446 members, who were still waiting for provision of dwelling. The numbers have stayed stable throughout the years even with the arrival of the Ukrainian refugees.

There are several reasons for the waiting lines, but mainly they are related to bad conditions of the dwelling, dwelling not being suitable (big enough, adapted in accordance with specific needs, the offers are in different areas etc) for the applier or simply the lack of dwelling stock.

In addition, Estonia continues to offer as a housing policy instrument, loan guarantees through KREDEX for private persons to buy or renovate their home (certain terms and conditions apply<sup>2</sup>) and loan guarantees and loans for apartment associations to renovate the apartment buildings. In 2020 a total number of 3860 loan guarantee contracts were signed with the total amount of 42,5 million euros, in 2021 the respective numbers were 4749 with 49,9 million euros, in 2022 a total of 2896 contracts with 29,43 million euros, in 2023 a total of 1888 contracts of 18,8 million euros and in 2024 a total of 2251 contracts in the amount of 22,9 million euros.

Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information, if appropriate.
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The number of dwellings in Estonia has increased and also the average dwelling space per one person has gradually increased. By January 2012, almost half of the Estonian households had more than one room per one person. According to Statistics Estonia, in 2019 the total number of dwellings was 724 000.

Throughout the years noise and pollution in the vicinity of the dwelling were defined as the major problems in housing.

**Table 15. Users of housing service (social housing, municipal housing, beds in social housing unit, private sector used by local municipalities), 2020-2023 (end of the year)**

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of household (incl. single member households)	9196	9081	9233	8602
Number of household members	15815	15705	15849	14795
including people in pensionable age	3564	3900	4211	3792
including people with special needs	2163	2024	1844	2129
in social housing units	917	798	934	868
in the private sector	4889	4898	4930	4856
% of household members				
people in pensionable age	22.5%	24.8%	26.6%	25.6%
people with special needs	13.7%	12.9%	11.6%	14.4%
in social housing units	5.8%	5.1%	5.9%	5.9%
in the private sector	30.9%	31.2%	31.1%	32.8%

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs

**Table 16. Use of social and municipal housing, need for additional places, 2020-2023 (end of the year)**

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of dwellings	7584	7534	7427	6683
of which apartments	5431	5459	5590	5418
of which rooms	2153	2075	1837	1265
Apartments and rooms adapted to persons with special needs	454	526	486	523
Number of occupied dwellings	6685	6654	6636	6090
of which apartments	4904	5036	5167	4955
of which rooms	1781	1618	1469	1135
Number of households applying for housing (incl. single persons)	2306	1909	2583	2348
of which need adapting the dwelling	43	34	20	19
<b>People in need of housing service</b>	<b>4658</b>	<b>3914</b>	<b>4988</b>	<b>4446</b>

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs

## Article 31 § 2 – Obligation to prevent and reduce homelessness

Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of reasons for and extent of any reforms.

There is no legally required data collection on homelessness in Estonia and also there is no official definition of homelessness in Estonian legislation. However, the definition which is used for collecting statistics has not changed since the last reporting: a homeless person is someone who has no legal connection (ownership, lease) with living space which is qualified as building, room or a part of them. In terms of data collection we operate with the numbers of night shelter or other institution users. Every ten years the Statistics of Estonia carry out the population survey, which includes a question on type of dwelling that includes homeless/roofless as an answer and according to the statistics there were 1068 individual homeless persons (67% men, 33% women, 0,08% of the whole population) in 2021.

There is no national strategy in the field of homelessness and it is not seen to be composed in the near future.

With the Social Welfare Act (starting from 2016) the state delegates the task of assisting those in need to local municipalities. 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 (emergency benefits, benefits for covering medicine etc) and services (learning how to cope better, debt counselling, daycentres with possibilities to wash your laundry or yourself etc) that local municipalities offer are also available for the homeless.

The state allocates means to the local municipalities to pay out subsistence benefit for the needy (see Table 21 and Table 22). The aim of this benefit is to alleviate poverty and guarantee minimal means of existence. The subsistence benefit consists of the subsistence level and housing costs, which can also be applied for separately (for example if one does not have housing costs). All persons, whose income after the payment of housing costs falls below the subsistence level are eligible for subsistence benefit. The number of times receiving the benefit is not limited and the amount of the benefit varies monthly depending on family composition and housing expenses. In 2023 the subsistence level for the first or only family member was 200 euros, 160 euros for each following member and 240 euros for a minor.

The following housing costs (within certain surface limits established by the law) are taken into account upon calculating the subsistence benefit:

- 1) rent;
- 2) the administration costs of the apartment building, including costs related to repairs;
- 3) repayment of loan taken for renovation of the apartment building;
- 4) the cost of services of supplying water and leading off waste water;
- 5) the cost of thermal energy or fuel consumed for supply of hot water;
- 6) the cost of thermal energy or fuel consumed for heating;
- 7) the costs related to consumption of electricity;
- 8) the cost of household gas;
- 9) the expenses made on land tax, which is calculated based on the size of land that equals three times the area under the dwelling;

- 10) the expenses made on building insurance;
- 11) the fee for the transport of municipal waste;
- 12) the repayment of the loan taken in order to acquire housing which includes the loan interest and the mandatory home insurance premium (added to the legislation on 1st of July in 2022).

In addition, local municipalities, who grant and pay the subsistence benefit, must make sure that the established limits for the aforementioned housing costs are reasonable and ensure decent subsistence for persons and their family members.

The subsistence level (aka coping line) is established and revised each budgetary year by the Estonian Parliament taking into account minimum expenditure on food, clothing, footwear and other goods and services to satisfy persons' basic needs. The average subsistence benefit per application in 2024 was 413 euros and it has been rising annually (see Table 22).

In order to effectively help the homeless, more local municipalities understand that while they need more social housing units (subsidised rentals), which are a step forward from shelters, they also need good re-socialisation methods and services to give people enough help to exit the social housing units and lead independent lives.

As stated in our previous report, for example Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, has created a four-step re-socialisation (rehabilitation) system for homeless people, which is supported by accommodation possibilities of different comfort levels:

- 1) night shelters and shelters for emergency assistance;
- 2) shelters for people in difficulties;
- 3) social housing units;
- 4) social and municipal housing.

Night shelters and shelters for emergency assistance are free of charge. Shelters for emergency assistance are meant for the homeless who are unable to stay in night shelters due to their health condition. In shelters for people in difficulties there are 2-22 people in one room. A re-socialisation service agreement is signed with the people.

In social housing units (subsidised rentals) 2 to 3 persons live in one room and families are provided with a separate room. Habitants of social housing units also have to fulfil their personal re-socialisation plan.

Social and municipal houses are rental buildings belonging to the local municipalities. The accommodation conditions are similar to regular apartment buildings. The single person or family has a separate dwelling. The habitants have to pay for rent and utilities. The habitants have the possibility to apply for the subsistence benefit, including to cover their expenses connected with housing.

In the end of 2023, there were 20 institutions providing shelter service with 533 beds to 1836 people during the year. There were 1435 service users who reported themselves homeless during the year for at least some period of time. Remaining 401 service users needed a temporary place to stay due to domestic violence, crisis situations etc. The number of shelter users and homeless has been decreasing in recent years (see Table 21).

Since there is no national strategy plan in the field of homelessness, the local municipalities tackle the problem on their own based on their skills and possibilities, which may differ greatly in different local municipalities. At the same time homelessness is a bigger problem in larger cities where homeless people oftentimes gather (better opportunities, more to do etc). This on one hand puts

more pressure on the larger municipalities, but on the other hand larger municipalities also have more monetary means and expertise to offer more suitable services. **All in all, it has become more clear to all parties involved, that while we need more affordable quality housing, we also need more targeted services to people in danger of becoming homeless and steps are being taken in that direction. However, we do not see at the moment that we fully comply with the Article 31 § 2 of the Charter, and as we have no certain strategy at the moment in that field, we are therefore not ready to ratify Article 31 § 2 of the Charter.**

Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information, if appropriate.

**Table 17. Receivers of subsistence benefit and subsistence benefit paid, 2020-2024**

Year	Number of satisfied applications for subsistence benefit	Incl.		Number of households receiving subsistence benefit	% of receivers of subsistence benefit from the population	Subsistence benefit paid to people (euros)	Incl.	
		Satisfied applications to cover housing expenses (in addition to guaranteeing the subsistence level)	% of satisfied applications to cover housing expenses				Cover for housing expenses (euros)	% of subsistence benefit used to cover housing expenses
2020	63 350	30302	47.8	10 502	1.4	15 905 332	3489891	21.9
2021	60 363	32320	53.5	9 810	1.2	16 169 559	4149097	25.7
2022	106 680	45492	42.6	25 018	3.7	39 873 441	8173621	20.5
2023	110 251	56614	51.4	19 593	2.7	45 052 262	11926214	26.5
2024	93 687	53708	57.3	15 562	2.0	38 701 498	11474544	29.6

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs

**Table 18. Households receiving subsistence benefit by Ukraine temporary protection or refugee status, 2022-2024**

	Number of households without Ukraine temporary protection or refugee status receiving subsistence benefit	Number of households with Ukraine temporary protection or refugee status receiving subsistence benefit	% of households with Ukraine temporary protection or refugee status receiving subsistence benefit
2022	11029	13987	55.9
2023	11501	8090	41.3
2024	10831	4723	30.4

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs

**Table 19. Shelter service**

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023
Institutions providing service, end of year	19	19	19	20
Number of beds, end of year	546	534	504	533
People receiving service during the year	1 750	1 673	1 719	1 836
Incl homeless	1 459	1 284	1 347	1 435

*\*2024 data has not yet been made available by the time of submitting the report.*

*Source: Ministry of Social Affairs*

**Table 20. Average amount of subsistence benefit per application (in euros)**

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Average amount of subsistence benefit paid per one application	251.07	267.87	373.77	408.63	413.10

*Source: Ministry of Social Affairs*

## Article 31 § 3 – Obligation to make the price of housing accessible to those without adequate resources

*Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of reasons for and extent of any reforms. Please indicate measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.*

As described above, the state has implemented many support measures to make the price of housing affordable for persons with insufficient income.

The Social Welfare Act states that local municipalities are responsible for ensuring the provision of dwelling for those who due to socio-economic situation are unable to provide a dwelling which corresponds to their needs. It is possible for the local municipality to offer people a place in a subsidised municipal or social house or unit or help them find a suitable living space from the free market by also helping them cover the primary costs. The rent prices in municipal and social houses are substantially lower than the rent prices in the open market, so subsidised dwellings are crucial for guaranteeing people with low income a place to live.

Also, if a local municipality offers people in need a provision of dwelling, they are obligated by the Social Welfare Act (§16) to evaluate if and how much they can charge the person in need for the service offered and that the fee cannot prohibit receiving the needed service.

In terms of EU-28 housing cost overburden rate, Estonia's rates (7,6%) are lower (see Table 23) than the EU-28 total (8.8%). In 2018, there were about 103 800 people, who had difficulties with meeting housing costs.

Statistics Estonia also gathers and analyses information about households in Estonia who are in material deprivation by the items of paying rent or utility bills in time and keeping home adequately warm. The statistics show that while keeping one's home adequately warm is not a common problem, paying bills in time was a challenge for 7,3% (ca 98 900 people) of the population in 2024.

With regards to the aforementioned rates, people can apply for the subsistence benefit (Social Welfare Act § 131-135, see Article 31 § 2), which is a general minimum income system in Estonia which guarantees a subsistence level and also covers dwelling costs (in accordance with socially justified norms and price limits). In 2024 in total 27827 people with 15 554 different households received the benefit, where 30,4% of the applicants were Ukrainian refugees. The largest groups receiving the benefit are families with registered unemployed members, families with single parents and families with members with limited or no work capability.

As can be seen above in Article 31 § 1, the local municipalities own 6683 social or municipal residential premises (flats or separate rooms) as of the end of 2023 and in addition around 533 beds in social units. 91,1% of these residential premises were occupied. In the end of 2023 there were 4446 people still waiting in line for housing.

Estonia's severe housing deprivation rate is lower than the EU-28 average rate, but the problem exists and there is continuous need for new and renovated social, municipal and open market dwellings with adequate standard and reasonable, accessible pricing.

Considering the aforementioned, the state also offers grants to local municipalities for building new municipal rental apartment buildings and renovating the existing ones.

Overall, providing a dwelling and making the price of housing accessible to those without adequate resources is the obligation of local municipalities. Since local municipalities and their population

(and their needs) are very different, some are meeting the obligations and needs better than others. Since 2015 the national government has financed the construction of 9 social apartment buildings with 304. **It is therefore important for the state to support local municipalities in these efforts, but at this time it is not possible to conclude that the current situation fully complies with Article 31 § 3 of the Charter and, therefore, we are not ready to ratify this article. However, the state is making continuous efforts in developing targeted measures to different municipalities (for example rural areas) to tackle the problem.**

*Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information if appropriate.*

**Table 23. Housing cost overburden rate (% of total population), 2020-2024**

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
European Union (28 countries) – Total	7.8	8.7	8.7	8.8	-
Estonia	4.4	4.4	4.9	7.6	8.6

Source: Eurostat

- not available yet

**Table 24. Share of persons (%) in material deprivation households by the items of "Paying rent or utility bills in time" and "Adequately warm home", 2020-2024**

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<i>Paying rent or utility bills in time</i>	6.0	5.7	6.2	5.8	7.3
<i>Adequately warm home</i>	2.7	2.0	3.4	4.1	3.7

Source: Statistics Estonia