

LANZAROTE COMMITTEE

Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe
Convention on the protection of children against sexual
exploitation and sexual abuse

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Replies to the thematic questionnaire

“Screening of professionals, volunteers and other
persons in contact with children”

ESTONIA

Replies received by the Secretariat on 7 July 2026

Main relevant provisions of the Lanzarote Convention and previous recommendations

Article 5 paragraph 3 of the Lanzarote Convention requires Parties to take the necessary legislative or other measures, in conformity with their internal law, to ensure that the conditions to accede to those professions whose exercise implies regular contacts with children ensure that the candidates to these professions have not been convicted of acts of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse of children. The Explanatory Report to the Lanzarote Convention indicates that this obligation can be also applied to voluntary activities (see paragraph 57).

In the 2nd implementation report of the 1st monitoring round (2018), the Lanzarote Committee urged those Parties that limited mandatory screening to certain professionals to extend it to the recruitment of all professionals (public or private) in regular contact with children (R19) and invited Parties to encourage continuous screening of all professionals (R20) and volunteers (R21) in regular contact with children.

Article 27 paragraph 3.b of the Lanzarote Convention requires Parties to take the necessary legislative or other measures to deny the perpetrator, temporarily or permanently, the exercise of professional or voluntary activity involving contact with children in the course of which the offence was committed.

Article 37 paragraph 3 of the Lanzarote Convention requires Parties to take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the information referred to in paragraph 1 (i.e. data related to the identity and to the genetic profile (DNA) of persons convicted of the offences established in accordance with the Convention) can be transmitted to the competent authority of another Party, in conformity with the conditions established in its internal law and the relevant international instruments.

Whenever the term “screening” is used in this questionnaire, this should be understood as “verification of criminal convictions for sexual offences against children”.

In all your answers, please provide details to the extent possible and refer to specific laws, policies, programmes, measures, etc.

Please describe the legislation, policy and practice which are in force on 27 March 2026 or are in the process of adoption (in this case, please specify the planned date of entry into force).

Please indicate:

- a. State Party in respect of which the questionnaire is submitted: Estonia.
- b. Entities and bodies which have been involved in responding to this questionnaire: Social Insurance Board, also the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Office of the Chancellor of Justice were informed about the questionnaire.

Persons concerned by screening requirements

1. Is the absence of criminal convictions for sexual offences against children required as a pre-condition in order to accede to professions, employment or volunteer positions whose exercise implies regular contacts with children? Please specify whether such restrictions apply to professions, employment or volunteer positions in the following sectors or areas of activities (additional details to be inserted below the table):

	Criminal conviction check for employment in public sector?	Criminal conviction check for voluntary activity?	Criminal conviction check for employment in private sector?	Criminal conviction check for self-employed professionals?	Please specify the professionals to whom this requirement applies
Education – Pre-school	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors
Education – Primary	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors
Education – Secondary	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors
Education – Tertiary	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role

					involves direct contact with minors
Education – Extracurricular (e.g. language schools)	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors
Childcare (e.g. kindergartens, crèches, childminders)	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors
Institutional or residential care (e.g. foster homes, orphanages, closed residential facilities)	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors
Detention	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors
Migration facilities (e.g. reception centres)	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors
Sport	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors
Culture and leisure activities	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors
Entertainment sector	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors

Faith and religion	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors
Healthcare (including psychological and psychiatric services)	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors
Social protection services	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors
Law enforcement	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors
Judicial	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors
Civil society organisations	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors
Victim services (including Barnahus, domestic violence services)	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors

Any other sectors (please specify)	yes	yes	yes	yes	All persons, if the role involves direct contact with minors
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Here you can insert additional details or specify any exceptions.

Estonia has a general statutory restriction on working with children. The decisive criterion is whether the role involves direct contact with children. The restriction applies in both the public and private sectors and also to volunteers, trainees and other comparable roles where the person is in direct contact with children. The core provisions are found in § 18 and § 20 of the [Child Protection Act](#). Under § 18(2), a “person working with children” is a person who is in direct contact with children in the course of work or professional activity, and also a person in direct contact with children in the course of voluntary activity, alternative service, employment services or traineeship.

A person who works in an organisation that is not primarily child-focused may still be covered if their job description or actual work involves direct contact with children. Conversely, persons who only incidentally serve children among the general public are not generally covered.

Under the [Child Protection Act](#) § 20 (Restrictions for working as child protection officials and persons working with children), persons punished or subjected to coercive treatment for specified offences — including sexual offences and offences involving the sexual exploitation of children — may not act as child protection officials or persons working with children. The person enabling work with children or the issuer of an activity licence must verify compliance when the person is employed or when the licence is issued.

2. In requiring the verification of criminal convictions for sexual offences against children in order to accede to the positions listed in question 1, does your State:

- a. define the level or threshold of contact with children (one-off, regular, etc.) which necessitates such a verification

No. According to the [Child Protection Act](#) § 20 there is the general restrictions for all persons working with children.

- b. distinguish between direct, indirect or online contact with children?

Yes. According to the [Child Protection Act](#) § 18 (2): A person working with children is a person in direct contact with children in the course of his or her work or professional activities and also a person in direct contact with children in the course of voluntary activities, serving in alternative service, participating in employment services or practicing as a trainee.

The law does not distinguish between online and offline contacts. Direct interaction with children through digital channels could also be considered as direct contact.

If yes, please provide details.

3. Is the absence of criminal convictions for sexual offences against children required to become:

- a. adoptive parent:

Yes, in practice the preparation of adoption includes suitability assessment by the Social Insurance Board under the [Family Law Act](#). A person wishing to adopt submits a petition to the Social Insurance Board, which performs preparatory acts and verifies whether the conditions for adoption are likely to be fulfilled (including the criminal records) before the matter is submitted to court. See also: [Mandatory procedures to be carried out during the adoption preparation process and their content, the list of information to be provided in the application for adoption, and the list of documents collected by the Social Insurance Board](#) (referring to the Child Protection Act §20).

- b. a foster parent:

Yes. Under the [Social Welfare Act](#), a foster parent is a person directly raising a child in alternative care. A person directly raising a child must comply with the requirements of § 20 of the Child Protection Act. See also: [List of documents to be collected and information to be provided for the assessment of a foster family's suitability, and the procedures for assessing a foster family's suitability](#).

- c. a child's legal guardian (including for unaccompanied children)?

The [Family Law Act](#) sets out requirements for guardians: a guardian must be an adult natural person with full active legal capacity, and a person who has been deprived of parental custody or has previously violated guardian obligations may not be a guardian. The court appoints the guardian.

Please provide details.

4. Is the absence of criminal convictions for sexual offences against children required for the household members of: The general principle according to the Child Protection Act § 20 is applied.

- a. persons carrying out professional activity in their home who are in contact with children

Estonian law does not impose statutory requirement that household members of such persons be free from convictions for sexual offences against children. The legal restriction applies to the person working with children, the general principle according to the Child Protection Act § 20 is applied.

- b. persons carrying out volunteering activity in their home who are in contact with children

The same approach applies to volunteers. The statutory restriction concerns the individual volunteer who is in direct contact with children, the general principle according to the Child Protection Act § 20 is applied.

- c. persons wishing to become an adoptive parent, a foster parent, or a child's legal guardian?

For adoption, the household and living conditions are assessed during adoption preparation. For guardianship, the court and local authority assess the suitability of the proposed guardian and the living environment.

Please provide details.

5. Does the requirement to verify the absence of criminal convictions for sexual offences against children also apply to:

- a. children applying for professional or volunteer positions

Yes, the general principle according to the Child Protection Act § 20 is applied.

- b. adults in respect of criminal convictions received before the age of 18?

Yes, the general principle according to the Child Protection Act § 20 is applied. The Child Protection Act uses the term “person working with children” and does not limit the restriction to adults or children. If the conviction is included in the criminal-record information relevant under § 20 of the Child Protection Act, the Child Protection Act does not exclude convictions solely because the offence was committed before the person reached 18.

Please provide details.

6. If a person legally changes their name, how does your State ensure that their criminal record remains linked to their new name?

Criminal record information is linked to a personal identification number and this is not changed in the case of a name change.

Please provide details.

7. Is access to public funds for projects implying contact with children conditional on the absence of criminal convictions for sexual offences against children for persons employed in or volunteering for such projects?

There is no legal basis for such a requirement.

Please provide details.

Information included in screening

8. Does the criminal record check include criminal convictions for:

The Estonian screening mechanism is based on the offence lists in § 20 of the Child Protection Act, which refer to specific sections of the Penal Code:

- (1) A person who has been punished or to whom coercive treatment has been imposed for a criminal offence provided for in §§ 89–93, 95–112, 113, 114, 116, 118¹, 133–133³, 141–145¹, 175–179 or 187 of the Penal Code, the information concerning punishment of which has not been deleted from the criminal records database according to the Criminal Records Database Act or the information concerning punishment of which has been deleted from the criminal records database and entered in the archives of the criminal records database, may not act as a child protection official or as a person working with children.

(1¹) The restriction provided for in subsection 1 of this section shall also be applied to persons who have been punished before entry into force of the Penal Code for acts qualified under §§ 100–102, 115–117, subsection 2 of § 118, § 200, 200³, 202, 202², 202⁴ or clause 1 or 2 of subsection 3 of § 202⁶ of the Criminal Code and also to persons who have been punished for equal criminal offences committed in a foreign state.

- a. sexual abuse of a child (Article 18 of the Lanzarote Convention)
Penal Code § 141–146.
- b. sexual exploitation of a child (“child prostitution” Article 19 of the Lanzarote Convention)
Penal Code § 133–133³, 141–147, 175.
- c. acts involving child sexual abuse material (“child pornography” Article 20 of the Lanzarote Convention)
Penal Code § 175¹, 178-178¹, 179.
- d. offences related to the participation of children in pornographic performances (Article 21 of the Lanzarote Convention)
Penal Code § 175¹, 178-178¹, 179.
- e. corruption of a child (causing a child to witness sexual activities) (Article 22 of the Lanzarote Convention)
Penal Code § 179.
- f. solicitation of a child for sexual purposes (“grooming”), including online (Article 23 of the Lanzarote Convention)
Penal Code § 179.
- g. aiding and abetting or attempting the above offences (Article 24 of the Lanzarote Convention)

Yes.

h. any other convictions (please specify)?

Penal Code § 89–93 (Offences against humanity and peace), § 95–112 (war crimes and offences against international security), § 113 (Manslaughter), § 114 (Murder), § 116 (Infanticide), § 118¹ (Disabling female genital mutilation), § 133–133³ (Trafficking in human beings, Support to human trafficking, Pimping, Aiding prostitution), § 187 (Inducing minors to illegally consume narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances or other narcotic substances).

Please provide details.

9. Does the screening of persons applying for roles or positions specified in questions 1 and 3 above extend beyond criminal convictions for sexual offences against children to:

For the purposes of the statutory screening required under § 20 of the Child Protection Act, the check is limited to criminal-record information concerning convictions for the offences specified in that provision.

- a. relevant administrative or disciplinary sanctions
- b. other information available to the authorities (e.g. judicial decisions in civil proceedings)?

Please provide details.

10. If restrictions on the exercise of the relevant activities apply as a result of a criminal conviction for sexual offences against children, in line with Article 27 paragraph 3.b:

- a. are they life-long?

Depending on the offense, the restriction on working with children may be either lifelong or temporary, lasting until the sentence has been served. For the offences covered by § 20(1) of the Child Protection Act, the restriction generally continues to apply even after the conviction has been transferred to the archives of the criminal records database and therefore functions as a permanent restriction.

- b. if they are not life-long, please specify the time-limits applicable.
- c. are they applied only to activities in the public sector?

No. The restriction under § 20 of the Child Protection Act applies irrespective of whether the activity is carried out in the public, private, or voluntary sector.

Please provide details.

11. Does the criminal record check verify the existence of an expunged or spent criminal conviction for sexual offences against children for persons applying for roles or positions specified in questions 1 and 3?

There is general background check from the Criminal Records Database accordingly to the Child Protection Act § 20.

Please provide details.

Screening procedure

12. How is the screening procedure set out in your legal framework (in a single piece of legislation, sector-specific legislation, or other)?

There is a general obligation (Child Protection Act § 20 (3)) to conduct background checks, as well as the option to do so.

[Child Protection Act](#) - defines persons working with children and establishes restrictions and verification duties;

[Criminal Records Database Act](#) - regulates access to active and archived criminal-record data;

[Penal Code](#) - defines the relevant offences and sanctions for illegal enabling of work with children;

Sector-specific legislation - Social Welfare Act, Family Law Act etc.

Please provide details.

13. If screening is required, who is required to act?

The primary obligation lies with the organisation enabling work with children or the issuer of the relevant activity licence. The obligation to conduct initial checks rests with the person who permits work with children, or with the issuer of the operating licence for such activities. The obligation to conduct regular checks, however, rests with the employer, or with another person who enables work with children, such as an internship provider, a volunteer coordinator, or others in similar roles. To ensure compliance with the restriction on working with children, an organization that works with children must also screen employees who were hired before the restriction was implemented, using the same criteria. A person who enables working with children is required to verify the compliance of the person working with children at least once in 12 months.

- a. the employer, volunteer recruiter or child protection authority is expected to obtain the necessary information directly from the authorities
- b. the candidate must provide proof of absence of convictions
- c. another scenario. Please specify

Please provide details.

See more: [Restrictions on working with children | Registrate ja Infosüsteemide Keskus](#); also: [Mida peab teadma lastega töötamise piirangutest | Sotsiaalkindlustusamet](#) (in Estonian).

14. If screening is required, who bears the costs of screening procedures?

Inquiries are free of charge for child-related organizations and parents. A child-related organization may also submit a free inquiry regarding a person who has already begun working at the organization.

Please provide details.

See more: [Restrictions on working with children | Registre ja Infosüsteemide Keskus](#)

15. How does your State monitor that employers, volunteer recruiters or child protection authorities comply with the relevant regulations on screening?

Please provide details.

The employer, volunteer coordinator, internship provider, activity licence issuer, or any other person enabling work with children is required to verify compliance before the individual is allowed to work with children, and at least once a year thereafter.

The Child Protection Act provides for state supervision of compliance with these requirements, with the Social Insurance Board acting as one of the competent supervisory authorities.

All queries are logged and are accessible in the query history to both the person submitting the query and the person concerned.

Unlawful enabling of work with children constitutes a punishable offence under the Penal Code (§179¹).

16. If screening is required, are there sanctions foreseen for failure to comply with it? If yes, what type of sanctions?

Please provide details.

According to the [Penal Code](#) (§179¹ Illegal enabling of work with children): Hiring a person in a position or service as a person working with children or enabling such person to work with children in another manner, if the person is prohibited by law to work with children, and authorising issue of an activity licence by an authorised person for work with children, if this is prohibited by law, is punishable by a fine of up to 300 fine units (max 2,400 euros). The same act, if committed by a legal person, is punishable by a fine of up to 32,000 euros.

17. Is regular screening, beyond the initial recruitment process, required, for:

- a. professionals in contact with children

The person enabling work with children must verify compliance at least once every 12 months.

b. volunteers in contact with children

The same.

c. foster parents and legal guardians?

Guardianship is supervised by the court and local authorities according to family-law and child-protection rules.

If regular screening is required, please specify its frequency and provide other details.

Where a person working or volunteering in contact with children is under investigation for a sexual offence against a child, are law enforcement or other authorities allowed to inform the employer or volunteer organisation about the ongoing investigation? If yes, what is the consequence?

In Estonia, law enforcement and prosecuting authorities are generally not permitted to inform employers or volunteer organisations solely on the basis that a person is under investigation for a sexual offence against a child, due to confidentiality rules governing criminal proceedings. Employers are informed only if there is a legal basis, such as a final court decision or a recorded restriction in the criminal records database prohibiting work with children. In such cases, the employer is obliged to remove the person from duties involving contact with children.

18. Where a person working or volunteering in contact with children is under investigation for a sexual offence against a child, are law enforcement or other authorities allowed to inform the employer or volunteer organisation about the ongoing investigation? If yes, what is the consequence?

Please provide details.

Cross-border screening

19. If the candidate for roles or positions specified in questions 1 and 3 has previously resided or worked in different countries, is it required to verify the absence of criminal convictions for sexual offences against children in each of those countries in respect of:

- a. professionals
- b. volunteers
- c. persons wishing to become an adoptive parent, a foster parent or a child's legal guardian?

Please provide details.

If the person subject to the check has spent an extended period of time in a third country, that person must contact the criminal records office of the relevant foreign country to obtain the information.

[EU criminal record check](#)

If you are submitting a query to the Criminal Records Database regarding a person who has lived or worked in another European Union country, you must also request information regarding any potential punishments from that country's criminal records database. You must also contact the criminal records database of the other Member State if the response to the query of the Criminal Records Database indicates that the person may have punishments in other European Union countries.

In such cases, the following information must be added to the application submitted via info@karistusregister.ee:

- the country or countries where the person has lived or worked;
- country of birth;
- town of birth;
- nationality;
- type of document;
- document number;
- former given name(s);
- former surname(s);
- father's given name(s).

For more details on requesting an extract from the Criminal Records Database, see [Issuing a notice from database](#). As the speed of processing requests varies from country to country, please allow up to 10 (ten) working days for a response.

See more: [Restrictions on working with children | Registrate ja Infosüsteemide Keskus](#)

20. Is there a mechanism to:

- a. request data about a person's criminal convictions for sexual offences against children from the competent authority of another State outside the context of criminal proceedings¹ (please specify)
- b. provide data about a person's criminal convictions for sexual offences against children to the competent authority of another State outside the context of criminal proceedings (please specify)?

Please provide details.

Please see previous answer.

¹ For purposes of recruitment, volunteering, adoption, foster care or guardianship.

21. Is there an obligation to provide data about a person's criminal convictions for sexual offences against children at the request of the competent authority of another State outside the context of criminal proceedings?

Please provide details.

In Estonia, if the person is unable to use the e-File system or require a paper copy of your criminal record, the person may request an official document from the Criminal Records Database confirming your criminal record or the absence thereof. To do so, he or she must send a completed application to the Criminal Records Database by email (info@karistusregister.ee) or by post to: Lubja 4, 19081 Tallinn.

In the case of a chargeable query, please attach a copy of the document confirming payment of [the state fee](#) to your application. Information on paying state fees can be found on [the State Fees](#) page.

The application must be signed on paper or digitally (this requirement arises from clause 15 (2) 6) of the Criminal Records Database Act). Unsigned applications cannot be processed.

The notice from database will be issued:

- As a digitally signed file (PDF), which is sent to the email address specified in the application.
- A paper document bearing a signature and stamp will be sent by post to the address provided in the application.

Please see more: [Issuing a notice from database | Registrite ja Infosüsteemide Keskus](#)

Additional details and reflections

22. Please add any further details regarding the modalities of the screening procedures applicable in your State, if relevant.

Please provide details.

23. What challenges related to the screening for criminal convictions for sexual offences against children of professionals, volunteers and persons wishing to become adoptive parents, foster parents or a child's legal guardian exist in your State in practice (e.g. administrative costs, delays, cross-border co-operation)?

There is a question, how to assess whether a role involves direct contact with children (for example roles not primarily aimed at children (transport, healthcare, cultural services)? Screening is primarily based on Estonian criminal records, access to foreign convictions depends on cross-border cooperation mechanisms (EU systems / mutual assistance). There is room for improvement in raising awareness among institutions, parents and others who work with children of the obligations related to background checks for those working with children, and of the feasibility of such checks.

24. What promising practices, if any, would your State like to highlight in the screening of professionals, volunteers and other persons in contact with children?

The technical solution for background checks based on data from the Estonian criminal records database is straightforward and user-friendly. The Child Protection Act's general principle regarding restrictions for individuals working with children is also clear.

Please provide details.