

Replies of Estonia to the list of issues: The combined fifth to seventh periodic reports of Estonia on the Convention on the Rights of the Child

I. New developments

1. Administrative reform took place in 2017, which altered the administrative-territorial organization of cities and rural municipalities and set the minimum size of a local government at 5,000 residents. The purpose of the reform was to ensure the professional capability of local municipalities to organize functions arising from law and provide quality public services to all the residents of a local government. After the reform, there are 79 administrative units (before 2017 there were 213). This has had a positive impact on child welfare and protection services, which lie mainly in the responsibility of local municipalities.

2. Since 2017 the Barnahus (children's house) model is used for assisting sexually abused children and children behaving in a sexually abusive manner. After piloting the model in 2017 its development was prioritized and by the end of 2022 there were four children's houses in different regions of Estonia, operated by a state agency – the Social Insurance Board (SIB). In 2022 the Child Protection Act was also amended to provide a clear legal basis for the children's house services (Child Protection Act, §29¹).

3. Since 2017 there have been significant amendments to penal law related to the protection of children from violence and abuse. On 01.11.2022 many amendments to the Penal Code (Penal Code) entered into force, notably the age of sexual self-determination was raised to 16 years with a Romeo and Juliet clause added (§145), also the legal age of marriage is now unambiguously 18 since the possibility to contract marriage with the court's permission from the age 15 was repealed (Family Law Act, §1 section 3).

4. Since 2017 several amendments entered into force in children's alternative care to promote family-based care, improve the quality of alternative care, and support more efficiently care leavers. In 2017, the arranging of adoption was transferred from the counties to the SIB, which increased the quality of the arranging of adoption.

5. In 2018 new rules on the treatment of juvenile offenders came into force with a focus on preventing problems and using educational and social interventions instead of punishment. The reform brought changes to the organization of work of various agencies, to working practices in the treatment of juveniles and to the system of services, which has decreased juvenile offences and the number of minors in prison.

6. A reform of support systems for children with special needs has been initiated, based on the same goals as long-term care: to improve the quality and availability of social services, especially the integration of social and health services, reducing regional differences in the availability and quality of services, and increasing the capacity of local governments to provide these services. From the point of view of children with higher care needs and their families with a high care burden, it is important to organize support systems. During the reform of the support system for children with special needs, services in the fields of healthcare, education, social protection and employment are integrated to provide comprehensive support to families with a care burden. The aim is to consolidate assessments from different areas in order to reduce the care burden of the parent and to provide the parent with a single safe point of contact for initial advice and help.

7. In 2022 the national family mediation service was launched, intended for parents who are separated or going through a separation and have failed to agree on issues related to their underaged child(ren)'s living arrangements (such as access or maintenance).

¹ CRC/C/EST/QPR/5-7

8. From 2018 to 2022 the Ministry of Social Affairs has amended the parental leaves and benefits system with the aim to encourage more parents to combine work and family life and especially fathers to share more care responsibilities with mothers. The parental benefits system gives families the confidence to have children and ensures a replacement income for a parent raising a child under 3 years of age. Parents can use the mother's parental benefit, the father's parental benefit, and the shared parental benefit. While the mother's parental benefit and the father's parental benefit are individual rights of the parents, the shared parental benefit is the shared right of the parents, which means that the parents may choose which one of them will receive the benefit.

9. From February 1, 2023, several important changes to the payment of family allowances entered into force. The purpose of increasing family allowances is to more efficiently ensure families with children the partial reimbursement of expenses relating to the care, raising, and education of children.

10. New Victim Support Act will be into force from 1st of April 2023. All victim support services are also provided to children. Victim support services are psychosocial support and mental health assistance, women's support centre service, sexual violence crisis support, restorative justice services, support for abandonment of violence, service for victims in human trafficking (the previous Victim Support Act only stipulated women's shelter service and psychological help, other services were offered but not regulated).

11. Among key reforms in progress impacting the future of education is the draft of the Early Childhood Education Act, the creation of state upper secondary schools (20 schools operating, 6 new schools in progress for 2023/24) as well as the transition to the Estonian-language education.

12. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, different measures were used to ensure the continuity of quality education provision as well as the safety and health of all. In the initial stages during general lockdowns, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Education and Youth Board worked on assembling necessary resources and guidance to support schools, parents and children, resources were mobilized to support the purchase of necessary hardware to participate in distance learning, substitute teacher programmes were set in place, preparatory courses were offered for exam year students, etc. Later on, the Ministry of Education and Research developed an exit strategy to better coordinate efforts on mitigation of learning loss and provision of continuous education. This exit strategy initially involved four strands of activities for 2021-2025: a) mitigation of learning gaps caused by distance learning and alleviating teachers' workload; b) activities to support the mental health of learners and educational personnel; mitigation of the impact of the crisis by increasing green and digital skills through continuing education and retraining; c) research and other activities supporting crisis management.

13. At the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, a new family benefit for the parent of a child with special needs was implemented. The transition of educational institutions to distance learning meant a significantly greater burden on the parents of children with special needs since the child's special needs require additional supervision and support in both learning and care activities, which is why parents had to temporarily leave work. The purpose of the benefit was to provide a replacement income for a parent who had to be temporarily away from work due to raising a child with special needs.

14. One of the next steps in Estonian digital transformation is the development of event-based services, which make the consumption of public services as easy and convenient as possible. The government can take a step towards the person and significantly simplify their life by making unnecessary bureaucratic activities "invisible" thus integrating services provided by different institutions into a coherent whole. Family benefits were the first event-based/proactive services - proactiveness in family benefits (all family allowances and parental benefits) means that when a child is born in the family, the entry in the population register activates all the following services - no application, no signing, simply the amount that the family is entitled to (the e-offer) needs to be confirmed with one click.

15. Another child rights-based event-based project is the „having a baby“ service. Once the future parent enters the child's expected date of birth, this portal gives all the important

information from the beginning of pregnancy to the age of 3, including various benefits, registration of child's birth and acceptance of paternity (paternity in general), parental leave, etc., links to articles, laws, etc. All the information will be calculated in a personalized way: when should the parents first contact the hospital/midwife to confirm the pregnancy, when to notify the employer, etc. If a person logs in to eesti.ee with their ID-card, it gives even more detailed information. Future plans also include adding information on different universal services (parenting classes, home visitations, early childhood services, various activities for the baby etc) but also personal offers on targeted services.

II. Rights under the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto

A. General measures of implementation (arts. 4, 42 and 44 (6))

Legislation

16. SIB performs state and administrative supervision over the implementation of the Child Protection Act, including the performance of child protection work in local municipalities. Each year SIB carries out complex supervision proceedings in local municipalities based on risk assessments but also based on complaints. Results of their supervision work show that the quality of local municipalities' child protection work is uneven but significant progress has been made since the adoption of the current Child Protection Act in 2016. The main concerns are related to the casework process and placing the child at the centre of the proceedings.

17. In 2020-2022 the Ministry of Social Affairs carried out and commissioned several analyses and studies on the quality and processes of child protection work to evaluate the implementation of the Child Protection Act, its impact on children and families and the need for legislative changes. Based on this work a reform in child protection has been initiated and the proposal for draft law will be presented to the Government in April 2023. The proposal outlines the need to bring a more systemic approach to both prevention and provision of assistance and services to children and families. This can be achieved by clarifying the tasks of local municipalities, supporting them in developing a modern and inclusive organisation where specialists can thrive and perform better results, and implementing a uniform child and family centered casework model.

18. According to Child Protection Act local government shall create conditions for the performance of child protection work with the purpose of ensuring the performance of functions listed in the Act (§17 sections 1 and 2). Out of 79 local municipalities, 77 local municipalities have at least 1 child protection worker. The average total number of children per child protection worker in a local municipality is below 1000 for the third consecutive year (986 children per CPW in 2019, 965 in 2020, and 929 in 2021).

Comprehensive policy, strategy and coordination

19. Almost for a decade, Estonia had a Strategy of Children and Families 2012-2020 with the purpose of guaranteeing clear development trends in the state for supporting the well-being and coping of children and families. The aim of the Strategy was to ensure that all children in Estonia can grow and live in a safe and human-friendly environment. The strategy includes the programme for children and families, currently valid for 2022-2025², which focuses on ensuring available and high-quality measures to increase the well-being of children and families to achieve the main goal, that is increasing the well-being of children and families and improving the quality of life, thereby promoting the birth of children. From 2023 the programme for children and families is incorporated in the new Estonian Welfare Development Plan 2023-2030, which focuses on five strategic objectives: well-being of

² Available in Estonian: <https://www.sm.ee/et/sotsiaalministeeriumi-valitsemisala-tegevusplaan-eelarve>

children and families, labour market, well-being of the elderly, social protection, and gender equality and equal treatment policies³. The Welfare Development Plan will have yearly renewable operational programs for each strategic objective.

20. Each year the indicators and activities planned in the Programme for children and families are evaluated, whether the expected activities were carried out and whether they had the expected results.

21. The Ministry of Finance has launched a portal [My Municipality](#) that provides an overview of the state of services and development possibilities in each local government to direct local development based on this information, compare local governments' service levels which contributes to sharing experiences, raise public awareness of the organisation of local services and increase citizens' informed involvement in discussing local priorities. Children's well-being is one sub-section under social protection and encompasses data and information about the management, employees and performance outcomes (as an average local municipality, and also individually on every local municipality). The portal is updated every year.

22. The Advisory Board of the Ombudsman for Children involves children in discussions on important issues that concern them, allows children to express their views and raise issues related to them. The advisory board supports the Chancellor of Justice in her activities as the Ombudsman for Children, including asking opinion from children on different draft laws and policies. The Youth Council that acts under the Estonian Union for Child Welfare brings together active young people who give their feedback and ideas for laws and policies relating to them.

23. In 2022 a new amendment to the Child Protection Act entered into force (§13) stating that a new joint government commission for cross-sectoral prevention, Prevention Council, will be created instead of the Council for Child Protection, the Council for Crime Prevention and the Government Commission for Drug Prevention. Collaboration is the key word to achieve lasting change. Previously, the prevention of legal violations and risky behaviour in Estonia was fragmented between institutions and mainly dealt with the consequences, instead of preventing risks. The new council includes the Minister of Social Protection, Minister of Health and Labour, Minister of Justice, Minister of the Interior, Minister of Education and Research and Minister of Culture and its aim is to establish common foundations for the development of cross-disciplinary prevention together with an action plan to manage cooperation between different fields, shape drug, criminal and child protection policies and set strategic goals for this. The council thus has a strong mandate to establish and implement policies, including submit proposals concerning the protection of children's rights and ensuring the well-being of children to the Government of the Republic and other relevant institutions. Additionally, the research council that consists of representatives of universities, research institutions and experts in the field, is part of the steering group with the aim to ensure that the programs, interventions and services that are implemented in the country are evidence-based and in conformity with the agreed principles and long-term plans of prevention.

Allocation of resources

24. Budget allocations for children is presented in Chapter III (Statistical information and data). There have been no austerity measures regarding children.

Data collection

25. In 2019 The Chancellor of Justice, who performs the functions of the Ombudsman for Children in Estonia, started collecting and publishing set of child well-being indicators in her website⁴. The dashboard covers different areas such as education, law, health, social support, etc. The dataset is annually updated and so far the data covers the period 2016-2020. The website also gives up-to-date overview of the study reports published about children in

³ Available in Estonian: <https://www.sm.ee/et/heaolu-arengukava-2023-2030>

⁴ Available in Estonian: <https://www.oiguskantsler.ee/et/statistika-ja-uuringud>

Estonia. In spring 2021 comprehensive article collection "Children in Estonian society"⁵ covering various areas of child welfare was published on the initiative of the office of the Chancellor of Justice. More than 40 experts participated in making the article collection. The structure of the volume is based on the basic principles of children's rights: nine chapters of the volume provide an overview of the child's rights.

26. Website [My Municipality](#) gives a systematized up to date evaluation and overview of the state of local governments' services. The methodology covers 16 areas of which local governments are responsible for: pre-school education, youth work, basic education, housing and heating, mobility, waste management, water management, children's welfare, social services for adults, public health and safety, crisis management, libraries, sport, culture, museum and governance. It gives possibilities to evaluate the state of children's welfare of each local government compared to the others, thus also highlighting issues that may need additional attention so far. The children's welfare topic is divided into the subtopics: management, employees and infrastructure, availability of information and performance. Total of 14 indicators about children's well-being are covered under these topics. The initial version of the service monitoring methodology was developed by the Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) of the University of Tartu in cooperation with Geomedia OÜ by the end of 2018. More than a hundred experts from ministries and local governments, researchers and interest groups NGOs, and the Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities participated in the creation of the methodology. The development of the methodology was funded from the European Social Fund.

27. Statistics Estonia has developed comprehensive dashboards focused on the well-being of children⁶ and young people⁷ that give a quick and convenient way to get visualised data. Age group 0-17 or 0-15 and 16-24 is also represented in various data tables covering the whole population⁸. There are seven indicators covered under the section of "Child well-being" and these indicators cover topics like poverty, housing conditions, expenditure of households with children, suicides, participation in formal childcare, infant deaths and deaths by cause of death. Depending of the data table and the relevance, data in the website of Statistics Estonia can be disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographical location, national origin and socioeconomic background.

28. Knowledge-based design of policy measures for children and families and visible data about and from children in mainstream statistics, is sentenced as one of the up-coming challenges in the Welfare Development Plan 2023–2030 of the Ministry of Social Affairs. We aim to develop and make accessible and visible a single and integrated dashboard that covers systematized data about the well-being and rights of children in different domains, e.g. children's health (both physical and mental), social, educational and legal systems and different levels (local and national).

29. Alternative care service for children without parental care was reorganized in Estonia in 2018, the service became organized by local governments. Alongside the Data Register of Social Services and Benefits (STAR) was developed to support local governments to find children the best possibilities of alternative care, to register children to services places/families. This also gave an opportunity to get complete statistical overview of children receiving alternative care services. Information on the disabilities was also linked from another register (disability database) to the STAR. STAR is being further developed to ensure more accurate and high-quality dataset for statistical overviews, but also as good operational tool for child protection workers.

⁵ Available in Estonian: https://www.oiguskantsler.ee/sites/default/files/Lapsed-Eesti-Uhiskonnas_kogumik%202021.pdf

⁶ Available in English: <https://www.stat.ee/en/find-statistics/statistics-theme/well-being/children>

⁷ Available in English: <https://www.stat.ee/en/find-statistics/statistics-theme/well-being/youth>

⁸ For example data table: [THV23: DISABLED PERSONS BY AGE GROUP, SEX AND COUNTY, 1 JANUARY.](#)

30. Data on children who are victims of violence is collected in the criminal justice system and through different services. The Ministry of Justice collects, analyses and regularly publishes data on registered crimes, including domestic violence (including violence against a child or affecting a child) and sexual violence (including sexual abuse of children). The Child Helpline 116 111 collects data about children and adults contacting the helpline according to topics, one of which is “maltreatment” with several sub-categories. In the last few years child maltreatment has been the most frequent reason for contacting the helpline. Recent amendments to the Child Protection Act will enhance collection and analysis of data regarding sexual abuse of children – since May 2022 local municipalities are obliged to notify SIB (children’s houses, *Barnahus*) of all cases and suspicions of child sexual abuse. Thus, SIB is able to get a comprehensive overview of such cases and to perform analyses for developing the support system for victims and targeting prevention and capacity-building activities.

31. Child well-being analysis and studies conducted in 2017 – 2022⁹:

- 2017. The living standards of families with disabled children. ([Summary in English](#))
- 2017. [Increasing the effectiveness of child protection work at the local level and developing sustainability](#).
- 2018. Child’s rights and parenting ([Summary in English](#)). Regular follow-up study will be carried out in 2023/2024.
- 2019. Development and provision of support services for disabled children and encouraging the reconciliation of work and family life. ([Summary in English](#)).
- 2019. [Children's subjective well-being in a local and international perspective](#).
- 2020. [Study of accessibility for children](#).
- 2020 Results of the OECD International Early Childhood Education and Child Wellbeing Survey (IELS) in Estonia. ([Summary in English](#)).
- 2021. [Study of preschool education and childcare in Estonia](#).
- 2021. [Opportunities for open youth work, hobby education and hobby activities to increase the social inclusion of young people, especially young people at risk of exclusion, and the needs for developing these opportunities opens in a new tab; slides introducing the study](#)
- 2022. [A study to improve the system of timely identification and effective assistance of at-risk children: lessons from the life paths of children in a closed children's institution](#)
- 2022. [The effectiveness of interventions to prevent and reduce bullying and the experiences of educational institutions in their implementation](#)
- 2022. Supporting transitions of students with special educational needs for smooth movement between education levels and types and to the labor market. ([Summary in English](#)).
- 2022. Analysis on modern child protection case management, data exchange and e-services
- 2022. EU funded activities delivered between 2014–2020 and the amendments to the Social Welfare Act on the provision of Alternative care in Estonia. ([Summary in English](#)). Study about young people start living independently from alternative care. ([Summary in English](#))

⁹ More studies conducted in Estonia on the topic of children's rights and well-being can be found here: <https://www.oiguskantsler.ee/et/statistika-ja-uuringud>

Independent monitoring

32. Visibility measures of the Office of the Chancellor of Justice include consultations with children, website, Facebook account, publications, media articles, public events, and trainings.

33. The Chancellor's advisers consult with children through the Advisory Committee comprised of young people and by listening to children with particular life experiences. Consultations with children have concerned issues like healthcare, working conditions, digital world and climate justice. The Office of the Chancellor of Justice (the Office) has organised a photo hunt to collect children's observations of problems at their local communities, and a creative writing of 'recipes' about what kind of parents children need. The Office also has regular meetings with major child- and youth led organizations in Estonia. On the website there is a separate subsection introducing the mandate of the Ombudsman for Children and the rights of the child. The website is available in Estonian, Russian and English. Introduction of the rights of the child in all three languages is among the most visited part of the whole website. The website lists also various printed and video materials of the Office, in Estonian and Russian. Child-friendly publications include booklets on the Ombudsman for Children, on the rights of the child, on child patient, on contact with the police. Printed materials are distributed during school visits, public events and inspection visits. The website leads also to Facebook site.

34. The Office's largest reach-out events taking place annually are the film programme on the rights of the child as part of the youth film festival 'Just Film'¹⁰, and the event "With and For Children" awarding merits to those children and adults who have significantly contributed to the well-being of children. The organizing teams of both events also include young people under the age of 18. The Chancellor's advisers regularly train child protection and social workers on the rights of the child, but trainings have also been offered to judges, attorneys, prosecutors, police-, prison- and probation officers, paediatricians and family doctors, child psychiatrists and school psychologists, alternative care and youth workers, supervisory officials of SIB, and medical and youth work students.

35. Complaints may be filed by children themselves or on behalf of children, by any means and in free format. In 2021, there were 258 complaints concerning rights of the child, mainly from parents. In 2017-2021, 34 complaints were filed by children. Complaints are mainly written in Estonian but also in Russian and in English. In addition, the Chancellor's advisers talk directly with children (in Estonian, in Russian and in English, if needed) whenever paying an inspection visit to a children's institution in order to discuss their lives and concerns. Every year the Office has meetings with hundreds of schoolchildren and in schools all over the country. The Office promotes the well-functioning child helpline (116 111) which is intended to be the first contact point for children in need of assistance or asking for advice in child-related matters.¹¹

Dissemination, awareness-raising and training

36. Estonia is committed to making children's voices heard and amplified. A network of children's rights ambassadors, whose members participate in various projects (for example organizing the international ISPCAN youth forum and expressing opinions in the press, participate in various committees, juries and in preparing children's report for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child) is in place. The network has pan-Estonian regional coverage for representing children's opinions (from local to national level and vice versa) on various topics as well as on promoting and disseminating the rights laid down in the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

37. The international MAPChiPP project (Multi-disciplinary Assessment and Participation of Children in Child Protection Proceedings: training programme with modules

¹⁰ Films and following discussions are taking place both in Estonian and in Russian. 13 864 viewers have benefitted from the child rights' film programme in 2017-2021.

¹¹ 12 855 contacts in the year [2021](#).

and toolbox, international network) aimed at promoting child protection across disciplines was started in 2017 by Estonian Union for Child Welfare. Since 2018, the NGO has been conducting "Working together for the child" trainings in municipalities to support the multidisciplinary cooperation network of specialists working with children at the local level. The trainings improve the skills of practical specialists working in various fields (e.g. social and health workers, the police, the justice system) and to promote multi-disciplinary cooperation in procedures relating to children. The project is supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs through strategic partnership.

38. Since 2016, the National Health Institute has offered free of charge in-service training for child protection workers. The trainings are divided into basic training with a volume of 108 academic hours and for additional training on the necessary topics. The basic training includes subjects such as: planning of prevention and community work, legal bases on children rights, court proceedings, custody and communication rights, guardianships, as well as the child's well-being assessment, case management and communication with the family system, parents and child. There are ten additional trainings in the program to date and they have included subject areas such as intimate partner violence, supporting a child in foster care, child sexual abuse, "Let's Talk About Children" method, work with drug users with parents. In 2022 child protection workers training needs analysis was carried out and new modules and subjects will be developed to better meet the needs and the expectations of children and families with the aim of turning in-service training compulsory for all child protection specialists. From 2023 the in-service training will be offered by SIB combining and unifying both child protection and wellbeing implementation and training centre competencies.

39. Since 2020, the Estonian Union for Child Welfare also organizes summer schools for child protection workers to provide an opportunity for further education in an informal environment, with an emphasis on media communication, mental health, supporting child-friendly child protection work and other topics necessary for the daily work of child protection workers.

40. Current curricula in higher education for child protection work does not correspond to the specific needs of children and families. On the one hand, curricula must provide broad-based and theoretical knowledge in the field of social work but it is also important that theoretical approaches and everyday practice are better integrated, which in turn supports entering into the labour market or continuing working there. Therefore, changes to the curricula are planned.

41. The core of national curriculum introduced in 2014 consists of eight overall competences that are to be cultivated during the study process. The emphasis has shifted from a teacher-centred approach to a student-centred one. In order to guarantee that the students will attain overall competences, an interdisciplinary approach has been introduced binding together individual disciplines through the study of common subjects to compliment the individual subjects' study and pedagogical aims. Competence is defined as a compilation of knowledge, skills, values and opinions, which ensures readiness to engage in lifelong learning and an ability to attain results in a chosen field.

42. The values considered important in the national curriculum (Curricula of Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools §2) derive from the ethical principles specified in the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the founding documents of the European Union. General human values (honesty, caring, respect for life, justice, human dignity, respect for oneself and others) and social values (freedom, democracy, respect for the mother tongue and culture, patriotism, cultural diversity, tolerance, environmental sustainability, rule of law, solidarity, accountability, and gender equality) are emphasized as core values, throughout the curricula.

Cooperation with civil society

43. Since 2020, strategic partnership is a new form of cooperation with NGOs. Strategic partners support the achievement of the performance goals of the ministry's governance area and contribute to policy implementation and design. Support is given to projects related to

promotion of children's well-being, rights and inclusion. Application rounds are announced for specific topics, the aim is to provide long-term financing (minimum 2 years per round) and in addition to a meaningful action plan, the organizational development of the partner organizations is promoted.

Children's rights and the business sector

44. Estonian Association of Information Technology and Telecommunications (ITL) is a member of the advisory chamber and part of many activities in the project Wisely on the Internet. ITL has always provided its support along with the funding request. Telia (one of the biggest telecommunication companies) and TalTech (Tallinn University of Technology) also participate directly in this initiative. ICT companies are also taking part in accessibility initiatives since in addition to people with special needs, they also focus on children, so that children can safely and age appropriately use products and services. In policy making, ICT companies represented by ITL are also involved in relevant law making, for example in drafting the proposal of the EU's Regulation on the Prevention and Suppression of Child Sexual Abuse. In this field, larger communication companies also voluntarily implement preventive measures, which have been agreed with the Ministry of Justice.

45. Also, there are series of initiatives that are not so much related to children's rights, but to the direction of safe behaviour on the Internet and bullying such as Telia's Greatest Courage, Cyber Needle, Cyber Nut, Cyber Drill, Cyber Pin, cyber security game SPOOFY, CGI Estonia (IT and business consulting services) talks about cyber security in schools, Money Wisdom Compass (Admiral Markets is one of the creators), a game called CyberSec Stories created by Baltic Computer Systems and TalTech.

46. In 2017 cooperation "Nutikaitse 2017" was agreed, the initiators and signatories were the Certification Center (currently SK ID Solutions), the State Information System Board, Swedbank Estonia, SEB Bank, Telia Estonia, Elisa Estonia and Tele2 Estonia. The aim was to jointly increase the security awareness and usage skills of smart device users, developers and sellers, while creating opportunities for secure software to be easily available and user-friendly. The project was coordinated by the See the World Foundation.

International cooperation

47. Estonia's target is to contribute 0,33% of gross national income to development cooperation by 2030. In 2020 Estonia contributed 0,16% of gross national income. In 2021/22 Estonia reformed its development cooperation system. EstDev, the Estonian Centre for International Development, was created to bring more efficiency to the sector. Also, the structure in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was streamlined and the Department of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid created. Both changes were made with the aim of bringing development cooperation more to the focus and enable increasing our ODA. In the coming years we foresee the rise of our development cooperation volumes, also partly due to the war in Ukraine. Estonia has been a steady supporter of Ukraine and is committed to continuing its aid.

B. Definition of the child (art. 1)

48. Family Law Act was revised and §1 section 3 is repealed as of 01.11.2022 - minimum age for marriage is now 18 years of age without exceptions.

C. General principles (arts. 2–3, 6 and 12)

Non-discrimination

49. The purpose of Equal Treatment Act is to ensure the protection of persons against discrimination on grounds of nationality (ethnic origin), race, colour, religion or other beliefs, age, disability or sexual orientation (§1). The current scope of application differs depending on the grounds, providing a wider protection against discrimination on grounds of nationality (ethnic origin), race or colour (covering access to the services of social welfare, social

security and healthcare, including social benefits, the area of education and access to and supply of goods and services which are available to the public, including housing). Discrimination on the grounds of religion or beliefs, age, disability and sexual orientation is prohibited in relation to work life and vocational training.

50. A bill amending the Equal Treatment Act to widen the scope of application of the Equal Treatment Act concerning discrimination of persons on grounds inter alia of age went successfully through the first reading in the Parliament in February 2022. However, after that the bill is stalled and there is no progress to report.

51. The Ministry of Social Affairs organised an [equal treatment awareness campaign](#), which was carried out in January and February 2020. The campaign aimed to break down stereotypes and prejudices towards different minority groups, promote understanding and solidarity between different social groups, and reduce discrimination by setting an example. The aim was also to promote tolerance towards minority groups and to promote societal attitudes where each individual has the right to exercise himself or herself in society and to feel safe. The campaign produced five video clips that were shown in both social and traditional media, radio clips heard on the radio, a photo bank, a street campaign, various articles on equal treatment and other PR activities in the media.

52. Through strategic partnership with Estonian Human Rights Centre and Estonian LGBT Association, the Ministry of Social Affairs supports and finances the activities of the [equal treatment network](#).

53. Parental program Incredible Years for parents with children aged 2-8 years and advanced Incredible Years program for parents with children aged 4-12 years are offered through local municipalities and children's mental health centres with state funding. The groups are offered both in Estonian and Russian languages. From 2022 same trainings are also offered for parents who are in the state of migration for example due to war in their home country. These groups can be held in Russian or in English and can hold up to 1/3 of parents from local Estonian community to help parents adjust with local conditions.

54. Children who arrive as unaccompanied foreign minors are provided with alternative care under the same conditions as children staying in Estonia, the same service quality requirements must be observed. While earlier only some unaccompanied minors or child refugees with their parents ended up in Estonia, since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, many Ukrainian war refugees have arrived in Estonia, and the number of unaccompanied minors has increased. Ukrainian war refugees who have received temporary protection have the right to receive the same benefits and subsidies as Estonian residents.

55. Children who are victims of violence and of trafficking are entitled to state-funded victim support services as well as child protection services. Based on the situation and specific needs of the child, SIB and/or the local municipality provide essential services to the child including safe accommodation, health care and social services, including counselling and psychological help.

Best interests of the child

56. Information on the best interests of the child is disseminated to professionals in multiple ways: mailing lists, trainings, written guidelines both in electronic format and hard copy, also video recorded trainings, sharing and discussing case law. Some examples include: mailing list of prosecutors; mailing list of judges who are specialised on children and juveniles (used for direct dissemination of information), mailing list of Violence Prevention Agreement for every professional and organisation who wishes to participate, be engaged and receive information on research, analysis, trainings, workshops, conferences, prevention campaigns, guidelines, calls for project proposals, new policies and initiatives etc; a separate [web-page on child-friendly justice](#) for children, their parents and caregivers and professionals in the justice and child protection systems (focuses on children regardless of their role in the justice process, also includes information on aspects that professionals working with the cases and being in contact with children must know); in the "Youth friendly justice" project (Norway and EEA Grants) a comprehensive training programme has been created and trainings are offered on topics providing holistic knowledge and skills for working with

children in the justice and child protection system; video training materials on child-friendly justice have been created for reaching professionals during COVID-19 pandemic and beyond (focus on general principles of child-friendly justice, professional work with juveniles, child-friendly healthcare and the EU directive on juvenile justice; a check-list/guideline for professionals on cultivating child-friendly justice routines and best practice (a practical tool helping professionals in law enforcement and beyond to be child-friendly in their ways of communicating with children).

57. Private law trainings on best interests of the child have included topics such as legal custody and parent-child attachment (best interests of child in the context of legal custody proceedings, questioning a child from a developmental view, parent-child attachment in theory and its evaluation), interviewing a child in court proceedings (overview of the questioning procedure, what and how to ask taking into account the level of development of the child, educational videos for participants, mock questioning sessions and video learning feedback), obligation to provide maintenance to a child (legal amendments of the maintenance providing system, an overview and the problems pertaining to the best interest of the child), parental alienation as a form of domestic violence (overview of the psychological abuse that may arise in family law cases and how it affects the psychology of the child), state-funded family mediation services to facilitate cooperation between parents concerning the upbringing of their child and, by this, to ensure protection of the child's interests and the child's well-being,

58. Criminal law trainings on the subject have included topics such as psychological aspects of domestic violence (a comprehensive overview of the different forms of domestic violence and of its impact on a child's psyche), treatment of minors and young adults in criminal proceedings (a two-day training event focused on the youth-friendly legal system and the treatment of young victims and offenders in the criminal justice system along with proper sanctions applicable to minors and young adults, interviewing a child in criminal proceedings (overview of the questioning procedure, what and how to ask, considering the level of development of the child, educational videos for participants, mock questioning sessions and video learning feedback, roundtable discussions with criminal judges, members of the Estonian Bar Association, the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board, the Prosecutor's Office along with Clinical Child Psychologists and Psychiatrists on the treatment of young victims and offenders in criminal proceedings, interviewing a child in criminal proceedings (practical information also about the different use of safe rooms and videoconferencing tools. Follow up training events are set to take place in 2023 with specific focus on both civil and criminal matters), treatment of minors in court proceedings that is a generalized training for all judges (an in-depth overview of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child along with addressing the topic of how to best protect a child's interests during different court proceedings).

59. During the reporting period, children's alternative care training has been renewed. The training includes various modules, e.g., child rights, child development, attachment, trauma and loss, abuse, child mental health, positive parenting, etc. The training is offered free of charge to both foster care institutions and children's shelters. In addition, training has been developed for sexually abused children and children who are victims of human trafficking. Foster families continue to be offered preliminary and basic PRIDE training, which during the period was adapted in Estonia.

60. Several additional trainings have also been offered, e.g., TBRI (Trust-Based Relational Intervention) training to raise trauma awareness of families, Sensoa Flag System training to prevent sexual violence, ART (Advanced Aggression Replacement Training) to support conflict resolution, a training to improve coping with children with special needs or with teenagers, etc. In addition, Incredible Year training has been offered to alternative care educators, family parents, and foster families to improve skills of positive parenting.

61. In addition, a number of guidelines have been prepared in alternative care that support ensuring the best interests of the child. For example SIB has prepared a guide for local authorities on foster care family placement, an aftercare planning guide for service providers for local authorities and the young people themselves etc. The quality guide for alternative care service has also been completed.

Respect for the views of the child

62. All specialists working with children in the social field (child protection workers, substitute care specialists and those conducting supervision) have received trainings and a lot of attention has been paid to hearing children and child participation. Amendments to the Civil Procedure Code (§552¹) entered into force in 2022, stating that the court personally hears a child in a matter concerning a child who is capable of holding their own opinions (before the age for hearing the child was 10 years).

63. In 2020, the Education and Youth Board was established as a government agency (merging the activities of the Youth Work Centre, Foundation Archimedes, Foundation Innove, Estonian Information Technology Foundation for Education). In the youth field, the Education and Youth Board promotes the implementation of youth policy and organizes and develops Estonian youth work services, directs the development of the field, manages and develops youth information service; works with monitoring and impact assessment in the field of youth and the development and implementation of the quality system of local government youth work; implements programs and activities in the field of youth, which, by supporting youth participation and initiative, youth camps and smart youth work, reduces the risk of exclusion of young people and helps to find solutions for young people with NEET status.

D.Civil rights and freedoms

64. In Estonia, several steps have been taken to determine the number of persons without citizenship and to stop the increase in its number. In 2015, amendments to the Citizenship Act were adopted, which stipulated that a minor under 15 years of age who was born in Estonia (or who immediately after birth takes up permanent residence in Estonia together with their parent or parents) is granted Estonian citizenship by naturalisation as of the moment of their birth, provided their parents or single parent whom no state recognises under valid laws as its citizen have or has lawfully resided in Estonia for at least five years by the moment of the child's birth. This has essentially stopped the increase of persons with undefined citizenship in Estonia. Upon reaching the age of 15, a child (including a child with undetermined citizenship) can apply for Estonian citizenship by themselves. As of 24.01.2023, 30 children with undetermined citizenship aged 15-17 lived in Estonia on the basis of a residence permit or right of residence.

65. Persons with undetermined citizenship are living in Estonia based on a residence permit, so they are legally staying in the country. All the same rights, freedoms and obligations are granted for them which are granted to third-country nationals staying in Estonia based on a residence permit. Information about residence permits is available in the Police and Border Guard Board's databases and in the Population Register.

66. Estonia does not have a separate statelessness determination procedure stipulated in legislation, but a person's citizenship (or lack thereof) is determined during other procedures (e.g. during the procedure for granting international protection or a residence permit). Possession or non-possession of citizenship is not an obstacle to obtaining international protection, residence permit or citizenship, if other conditions provided by law for obtaining them are met.

67. Estonia believes that its accession to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions will not provide benefits to persons with undetermined citizenship compared to their present status. The provisions of these conventions are less comprehensive than the rights currently enjoyed by residents of Estonia with undetermined citizenship. Regarding the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, Estonia is of the opinion that every person has the right to freely choose his nationality, and the state cannot influence this choice. Estonia has constantly encouraged persons with undefined citizenship to choose between the citizenship of Estonia or another country, but making the choice is not mandatory. Nevertheless, Estonia will analyse the possibility of joining these conventions.

E. Violence against children (arts. 19, 24 (3), 28 (2), 34, 37 (a) and 39)

Freedom of the child from all forms of violence

68. Prevention of online sexual exploitation and abuse works mainly through providing information and knowledge on cyberhygiene that is offered in school curricula in all levels of education. Cyberbullying can be prevented with the development of digital skills, critical thinking and media literacy. These skills and competences are part of the national curricula and taught as cross-curricular topics. Education and Youth Board of Estonia has developed guidelines on how to prevent bullying at school, how to approach the topic in a classroom, what background and other materials could be used by the teachers. Moreover, NGO Kiusamisvaba Kool (Antibullying School) KiVa program is implemented widely. The NGO receives financial support from the Ministry of Education and Research to develop the program that includes trainings (to teachers, as well as parents and school communities, classes) and counselling among other services.

69. In 2019-2021 international project TOOL4GENDER was carried out, the aim was to raise awareness and educate specialists working in various fields (teachers, psychologists, social pedagogues, staff of training centres) about gender-based violence, its forms and spread, and thereby prevent cases of gender-based violence among 8-16 year olds. Online courses and study materials together with an online platform were developed and are freely available on [the project's web site](#).

70. The Violence Prevention Agreement 2021-2025, approved by the Government, covers the prevention and combating of various forms of interpersonal violence. The main focus is on violence against children. The agreement sets out 14 measures for violence prevention, including: violence prevention in educational institutions, youth work, and hobby education and recreational activities; supporting children and young people who have problems with violence; prevention and reduction of domestic violence; prevention of sexual violence and human trafficking; prevention of violence in the digital world.

71. The Estonian Strategy for Internal Security 2020-2030 includes two measures/activities on violence: 1) a measure to prevent violence and reduce the risk of violence. Under this measure there are sub-measures to create a unified communication plan against domestic violence to enhance awareness, including a sub-measure to prevent sexual exploitation of children, especially on the web; 2) a measure aimed at protecting violence victims. Under this measure there are sub-activities aimed at training the Estonian police force on issues on violence, how to deal with victims and how to better recognize domestic violence. There are also activities aimed at further developing the capacity for investigating sexual abuse cases online, the application of restorative justice etc.

72. All forms of child abuse, including corporal punishment, are prohibited under §24 of Child Protection Act. Its implementation includes systematic development of parenting education and support and promoting positive parenting. This is a task of Estonian National Institute for Health Development with a dedicated budget under the programme for children and families. They share information, resources and support to parents via webpage [Tark Vanem](#) ("Wise Parent"). They also coordinate nation-wide provision of parenting program Incredible Years, including the basic program for parents with children aged 2-8 years and the advanced program for parents with children aged 4-12 years. The programs are offered through local municipalities and children's mental health centres with state and local funding, parents are engaged in the program either by child protection services or by own application. The Institute also regularly holds social campaigns related to positive parenting. A social campaign in 2019-2020 "Take care of your own needs to be a happier parent" reminded parents that in order to provide a safe environment to the child, they must take care of their own mental and physical health and partnership needs. In 2022, a social campaign "[Rahunemispaus](#)" ("A Break to Calm Down") was launched that drew parents' attention to the importance of taking time out to calm strong emotions and teaching children the same. In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs provides regular funding to several NGOs as strategic partners, among them the Estonian Union of Child Welfare who is also offering support to parents and promoting positive parenting.

73. An important aspect on strengthening protection of children against violence is to guarantee that all the problematic signs are noticed in time and thus reacted upon quickly. SIB has developed a new and easily usable tool for a preliminary assessment of the child's needs. This preliminary assessment tool has the potential to be used by other specialists working with children as well (family nurses and doctors, teachers, police etc) with the aim to create a common framework in assessing and reporting of child in need.

74. The domestic violence plan for 2019-2023 has had a positive effect on fighting violence against children and child abuse. Most often domestic violence takes place at home and according to police data children are direct or indirect victims in 27% of cases (in 2021). A new domestic violence action plan for 2024-2027 is being drafted with a focus on prevention (domestic violence is recognized and not tolerated by the society and provision of assistance is systemic and needs based). In Estonia the MARAC model is implemented for most serious cases of domestic violence, which helps to ensure that children involved in the cases receive needed attention and assistance. As of 2024 the MARAC model is state funded.

75. There is a growing common understanding among specialists that children are victims of domestic violence even if they are not directly (physically) abused. Children involved in domestic violence cases are usually notified to the child protection services. In 2020, a data and information exchange solution between the Police procedure information system (*MIS*) and STAR was launched, which helps the police and local government exchange information quickly and without duplicating activities. Information about people in need of help and at risk, including children, is automatically sent from the police to the local government and, with their consent, to the victim support service of SIB.

76. The main avenues for seeking justice for children who are victims of abuse and neglect are Children's helpline: number 116 111 and chat option www.lasteabi.ee, that runs 24/7 in Estonian, Russian, English; children's house for sexually abused children and those suspected of sexual abuse in 4 Estonian regions (located in Jõhvi, Pärnu, Tartu, Tallinn) and available to all children in Estonia; Sexual Assault Centres for medical and psychosocial assistance in case of sexual violence in 4 different hospitals in Estonia; other victim support services by SIB – a state-funded service for everyone, including children; victim support crisis helpline 116 006 and chat option www.palunabi.ee in four languages.

77. Reported and recorded crime is observed and published by the Ministry of Justice annually and periodically under "Crime in Estonia". Research and analysis is conducted by various institutions, including the Ministry of Justice on [prevalence and incidence of all forms of violence](#). In 2015 and 2020 two surveys were conducted respectively among the 16-19 year olds and 16-26 year olds to measure the prevalence of life-time sexual abuse among children and youth. The 2015 survey also mapped the prevalence of mental and physical abuse. Summary of the 2020 survey is available [here](#).

78. The Estonian Police and Border Guard Board uses a system called POLIS (the overall police info system), and additionally also MIS, which hold information about victims of crime. Police can extract and analyse certain data in ALIS that covers data all over Estonia.

Sexual exploitation and abuse

79. Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse of children is one of the aims and measures of the Violence Prevention Agreement 2021-2025, that coordinates and guides prevention and awareness raising activities in all sectors of governance. The activities are compiled [here](#). In recent years, specialists have been offered training on Sensoa flagsystem and supporting tools for identifying and effectively reacting to signs of children's harmful sexual behaviour. Every year Estonia draws attention to the End Sexual Abuse of Children day on 18th of November by launching prevention videos and campaigns in social media and media. Using the e-lecture platform "Tagasi kooli", the Ministry of Justice has broadcasted several e-courses for pupils both in Estonian and Russian on prevention of sexual violence against children.

80. The Estonian Police has adopted guidelines to ensure the best protection of children and avoid any other harm to child victims. These guidelines set out how to act around and

treat children, how to act when encountering a child in danger or a child in need, how to treat a child who's under investigation and many other important aspects. These guidelines also include how to best act with unaccompanied foreign minors.

81. In 2022 the Child Protection Act was amended to specify the task of the SIB in helping children in cases of sexual abuse in children's houses (*Barnahus*). The main changes brought by the new regulation were adding to the target group of the children's house children with sexually abusive behaviour, and stipulating the obligation of local government units to inform SIB immediately about all children who have been sexually abused or suspected thereof or who behave sexually abusively.

82. Providing specialised service to sexually abused children has increased the awareness of children, professionals working with children and the general public. The work of Barnahus and also sexual assault centres in Estonia since 2017 have contributed to increased reporting of sexual abuse and violence. In 2022 the Ministry of Justice published an [overview](#) of the investigations and prosecutions of recorded sexual offences.

83. Estonia has and will continue to take steps in order to prevent child sexual exploitation and abuse both online and offline. Estonia plans to invest 750,000 euros in the years 2023-2027 to prevent children from becoming victims of sexual abuse online. This is also in accordance with the EU Strategy for a More Effective Fight Against Child Sexual Abuse¹².

84. An information campaign is being carried out to prevent children and young people from becoming victims of sexual abuse in cyberspace. Children's awareness and skills on how to behave in the cyber world will be improved in order to avoid becoming victims of sexual abuse and blackmail in cyberspace. Interactive video clips in Estonian and Russian will be prepared in cooperation with children themselves. Also old materials will be adapted and new materials created on the topic of prevention of sexual abuse of children for teachers, youth workers, child advocates and police officers. Separately, the focus will be on materials intended for parents, to increase their awareness and skills in talking to children about this topic. Trainings are also planned as part of the project (for example, for police officers and other professionals who work directly with children) to raise the awareness and skills of adults who encounter young people, to spot a young person who has become a victim of online abuse, to offer appropriate help and in turn to conduct prevention lectures on this topic.

85. Estonian Union of Child Welfare belongs to the INHOPE network and is running also the whistle blower platform "Vihjeliin" which enables Internet users to provide information about material being distributed online which depicts illegal content – the sexual abuse or exploitation of minors and child trafficking. The aim is to harmonize the work in cooperation with the work done already by the Safer Internet team.

86. In Estonia there are web-constables - police officers that work on the internet. In recent years the number of web-constables has increased. They respond to notifications and letters submitted by people via the internet and train children as well as adults on internet security.

87. In 2021 the Ministry of Justice in cooperation with other stakeholders composed a list of recommendations for creating child-friendly environments and specially equipped rooms for child-friendly facilities. These recommendations have been taken into account in projecting a new court house, composing and distributing boxes with child-friendly justice items for all county courts and making adjustment to other law enforcement child-friendly hearing and interview rooms. The box contains items that help create a cosy feeling for the child or young person during the procedure, such as toys, bottles of drinking water, snacks, knitting paper, drawing pencils and pictures to colour, calming pop-it game and a magnetic construction kit. Furnishing the premises of the courthouse with objects that favour a child-friendly environment helps professionals working in the court to support establishing contact with the child in the courthouse.

88. There is a separate web-page on child-friendly justice for children that also includes information for parents, caregivers and specialists. Also, there is a separate platform where

¹² [EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse](#), COM(2020) 607, 24 July 2020, p. 2.

child victims can give feedback on how police, prosecutors, courts, victim support and Barnahus have provided support to them as victims of crime.

89. The SIB's Victim Support and Prevention Services Department creates a safer life for all people in Estonia and for Estonian citizens abroad. Among others, they support victims of human trafficking, sexually abused and unaccompanied minors, etc., as well as people who want to abandon their own violent behaviour.

90. The number of reported sexual offences has increased two times over the past 10 years. This means that people are more aware of violence and ways of seeking help, also reporting. Particularly in case of children, sexual abuse is reported also by professionals who notice the signs of sexual abuse. Change in prevalence of sexual abuse can be measured with surveys. Last survey among 16-26-year-olds was conducted in 2020.

91. In the Children's House there has been a yearly increase of criminal proceedings in the cases of sexual exploitation and abuse of children. There has also been a yearly increase of children using the services provided by the Children's House.

F. Family environment and alternative care

Family environment

92. In September 2022, a national family mediation service was launched. The family mediation service is intended for parents who share a common underage child or children and who have broken up or are in the middle of a break-up and have failed to agree on issues related to their child's living arrangements (such as access or maintenance). The family mediation service is provided by a family conciliator – a neutral party who helps parents relay their thoughts and settle disagreements.

93. The outcome of the family mediation service is a parenting plan between the parents. The parents may reach a written plan between themselves or have it approved by the SIB. If SIB approves the plan it becomes an enforceable title which means that if one party fails to follow the plan, the services of an enforcement agent may be enlisted. Even if the parents do not want to reach a written plan, family mediation should still be sought because the presence of a neutral mediator facilitates discussions over the child's living arrangements and making of verbal agreements.

94. The state-funded family mediation service is governed by the Act on State-Funded Family Mediation Services and is organized by SIB and it is free of charge for parents. This service is available everywhere in Estonia in Estonian, English and Russian.

95. Child support up to 100 euros per month is paid by the state to children whose parent or parents do not fulfil the maintenance obligation. The support is paid during the court proceeding, additionally amendments entered into force that also grant the support during the enforcement and bankruptcy proceedings of the debtor in case the debtor does not fulfil its obligation to pay maintenance.

96. Since 2017, many amendments to support enforcing child maintenance claims have been enforced:

- If, during enforcement proceedings, a child maintenance debtor has not, within three months, made regular payments towards the child's maintenance, and the enforcement agent's attempts to collect such maintenance out of the debtor's property have not been successful, the court may also, by order, revoke the following documents of the debtor, and restrain the issue of such documents for up to two years: 1) an Estonian citizen's passport; 2) an alien's passport; 3) a refugee's travel document; 4) a temporary travel document; 5) a seafarer's discharge book; 6) a certificate of record of service on an Estonian ship; 7) a diplomatic Passport.
- Also, if a maintenance debtor has not voluntarily handed over a vehicle or other property, the enforcement agent may enlist the assistance of a police officer to take control of such a vehicle or other property which is in the direct possession of the debtor. Additionally, when person has to be identified before a monetary obligation

owed to them is performed, and where performance of such an obligation is to be made in cash and its amount exceeds 5000 euros, the person subject to the duty to identify must, as a preliminary matter, establish whether they are dealing with a maintenance debtor. If this is the case, the person subject to the duty to identify refuses to perform their obligation to the maintenance debtor and, without delay, notifies an enforcement agent who is conducting proceedings on the maintenance claim of the debtor's claim against them. The enforcement agent has the right to seize the claim.

97. Parental leaves and benefits system has been amended to support parents in taking care of children and in equally sharing family responsibilities. Generally, parents can use parental benefits for up to 605 calendar days until the child is 3 years old.

98. Maternity benefit is an individual right of the mother, meaning that only the mother is entitled to it and the other parent cannot use it. An employed mother is entitled to up to 100 consecutive calendar days of maternity leave, taking in to account the child's estimated date of birth. The mother is not allowed to work while on maternity leave. Fathers are entitled to paternity benefit of 30 calendar days which can be used up to 30 calendar days before the estimated date of birth of the child until the child attains three years of age. Paternity benefit is an individual right of the father – the benefit and leave days can only be used by the father and they cannot be transferred to the other parent.

99. Whereas maternity benefit and paternity benefit are individual rights of parents, shared parental benefit is a right shared between the parents, i.e., it is up to the parents to decide who will start receiving the benefit. Shared parental benefit offers more flexibility to families – in particular, fathers now also have the right to use shared parental benefit from the time the child reaches 31 days of age. This change is important as it allows fathers to take leave earlier and be more involved in the child's upbringing. Parents have the opportunity to use parental leave at the same time for up to 60 days, during which time both parents will be paid parental benefits. This way, both parents can care for the child at the same time.

100. The maximum allowed monthly income rate increased remarkably. As of 1 March 2018, if monthly income is smaller than half of the maximum benefit amount (2145,65 euros in 2023), then the parental benefit amount will not decrease.

101. Children in the highest risk of poverty are growing up in single-parent families. To alleviate poverty, from January 1, 2023, the support for a child of a single parent (child allowance is paid to children whose birth certificate does not have a father's name) increased from 19.18 euros to 80 euros. In addition, to reduce poverty, we are developing a package of services that would help increase the number of children, in whose lives both parents participate. To support single parents on a similar basis, in coming years there is a plan to transfer a survivor's pension from the pension scheme to the family benefits scheme. Purpose is to support children with one parent in a fixed and adequate amount. Currently payable amount of survivor's pension varies in a large scale and children with one parent are supported very differently. Reforming the survivor's pension and bringing over to the family benefits scheme will create an opportunity to support the children of the deceased parent equally.

Children deprived of a family environment

102. As of 2019, the average number of children per child protection worker in Estonia is 929, but the average number of children in each municipality does not fall below one thousand children per full-time worker. Solutions to the shortage of qualified workforce problems are being addressed within the framework of the child welfare reform, which include updating the basic and in-service training of child protection workers, creating a work support and mentoring system and popularization of the profession.

103. New family mediators are constantly being trained, and the goal is to further expand the number of family mediators, who can provide services in Russian to support the Russian-speaking community.

104. Promoting family-based alternative care is one of the primary goals of the alternative care. Since 2017, several amendments to the law have been implemented to realize this goal regarding adoption and foster families.

105. In 2017, a national register of adopters was created and the organization of adoption transferred from the counties to the SIB, to ensure a uniformly high quality of adoption arrangements. In 2018, amendments to the Social Welfare Act entered into force, to promote family-based care. Support for children growing up in families was harmonized with children growing up in institutions, the preference for family-based care through organization and coefficient-based funding was encouraged, and a requirement was set to prefer family-based care if alternative care is needed.

106. Training has been developed and offered for all family-based care providers (for foster families, guardian families, and adoptive families), also individual and group support services have been developed and offered for all foster families.

107. Since 2020, a crisis (emergency) foster family service has been piloted to provide short-term care, and a special care family service has been piloted for children with high care needs. In 2023, an intent to develop legislative changes will be completed, proposing additional changes to promote family-based foster care. The aim is to pay more attention to guardianship families, to regulate the provision of support services to foster families and the provision of crisis and special foster care. Incredible Years parenting program is also offered for workers in substitute care.

108. In 2018, the Social Welfare Act established general service quality principles that also extended to alternative care service and shelter services. The alternative care standard is being prepared and will be completed in the coming years.

109. In 2020, the obligation of an activity license came into effect for the shelter service. Also, the requirements for the qualification and further education of the persons directly providing the service came into force. Shelter service providers are offered the same 160 hours of in-depth preparatory training as alternative care service providers.

110. Local governments are obliged to prepare a case plan for a child directed to alternative care. The plan is reviewed at least once a year. In addition, the representative of the local government is obliged to visit the child in alternative care service at least twice a year to ensure the child's rights and well-being.

111. In 2018, the supervision of social services, including alternative care service, was transferred from county governments to SIB. This ensured uniform supervision throughout the country. During this time, supervision has developed from formal supervision to more substantive supervision that takes into account the rights and well-being of children in alternative care. In the course of supervision, children are always talked to and also checked to ensure that children are provided with information and opportunities to contact, for example, a child protection specialist or the Ombudsman for Children.

112. In 2018, an aftercare service was created for young adults leaving alternative care. The service is need-based and is provided on the basis of a case plan. The purpose of the service is to support continuing studying and independent living. The components of the service are housing, covering personal expenses, and need-based additional support and services. In the case of continuous learning, the aftercare service is provided to young people who have left the alternative care service up to a maximum of 25 years of age. The local government decides on the provision of aftercare services for young people who have left guardianship and young people who are not studying. The provision of support person service has been developed. Comprehensive instructions have also been prepared for local governments, service providers, and young people themselves.

113. In each prison furnished children's play areas in the rooms that are used for meetings with children are in place. Furnished children's corners are also in the entrance area to make it more comfortable for children to wait for their visit. In the case of long-term visits, all necessary equipment (e.g. cot, bath, changing table, games, books, etc.) is provided in the meeting room. Prison officers have been trained to explain the child age appropriately the

process of visitation, for the child to have as positive experience as possible and to encourage future visits. The prison has also produced information material for the parent(s).

114. The establishment of the prison's Mother and Child Unit and its continuous efforts to make it more child-friendly have taken into account various recommendations by the Chancellor of Justice over time. For example, child-friendly accommodation has been created for mothers, separate from other prisoners, including free access to private sanitary and washing facilities (e.g. the cell also has a bath) and to the kitchen (the cell doors are open 24 hours a day). There are also indoor and outdoor play facilities. Depending on the age of the child, childcare is provided either inside the prison or in a pre-school outside the prison. The prison also pays for the nursery and provides transport to and from the nursery. The possibility of a smooth transition to a free society is also guaranteed. Where necessary, the local authorities and child protection services will be involved at various stages to ensure that children's rights are guaranteed at all times.

G. Children with disabilities (art. 23)

115. The organisation of studies for students with special educational needs is based on the principle of inclusive education, i.e. such students attend, as a rule, regular schools. If a student's disability or disorder requires a highly specialised organisation of studies or support services, they are provided an opportunity to study in a special group or attend a special school. Parents can choose what suits their child better – a regular or special school. The trends in the state co-ordinated development of the organisation of studies for students with special educational needs are described in the relevant concept for the organisation of studies for special needs students.

116. If it becomes apparent that a student has special educational needs, the co-ordinator for specialised studies initiates the necessary educational and psychological assessment and additional supportive measures are implemented. The services of special education teachers, psychologists or social pedagogues are made available to the student, if needed. The additional support measures most often implemented by schools include differentiated instruction in the classroom, extra help after classes, special-pedagogical help and speech therapy sessions in study support groups and individual learning curriculum.

117. Children with disabilities have the same rights to receive services and support as children without disabilities. The family doctors' monitoring system, in which 0-3-year-old children are regularly assessed, contributes to early involvement and detection. If the severity of the child's disability is identified, he/she has a legitimate basis to receive rehabilitation services and aids at a discounted price. Everyone has equal access to health services and inclusive education.

H. Basic health and welfare

118. Mental health in general, with a strong focus on children and youth, has risen to the centre of public attention in Estonia during recent years, leading to the adoption of long-awaited mental health strategy – Green Paper of Mental Health – by the government in spring 2021. The strategy is addressing the gaps in the current system and growing need for mental health interventions and services.

119. The increase of mental health problems in children and youth has been a trend since 2010, recorded by the regular survey [Health Behaviour of School Children](#). In 2018, 40% of the children aged from 11 to 15 reported the symptoms of depression. [The Estonian National Mental Health Study](#), carried out from 2020-2022, identified the risk for depression and anxiety disorder almost twice more prevalent in the 15-24 years old than in general population. The same study revealed that covid-crises had a greatest impact on youth, as did the regular surveys of the State Office during the pandemic.

120. Addressing the mental health problems in children and youth, strong emphasis has been put on prevention, supporting the development of socio-emotional skills, parental education and promoting safe environment in schools. To support parents, National Institute

for Health Development runs a website tarkvanem.ee, where up-to-date evidence-based parenting know-how is presented in an easy, understandable way. The Institute also implements Incredible Years, a set of evidence-based programs to develop parenting skills. Currently, programs are available for parents of children aged 2-12, the program for parents of smaller children and expecting parents is in the process of development. The program is highly appreciated and demanded among parents and the strategic goal set for 2030 is to make the program available in every municipality and ensure it reaches vulnerable groups.

121. The promotion of mental health in schools comprises of mental health issues integrated to the school curricula, supported by the training of teachers, and various extra-curricular activities voluntary for school. There are two evidence-based programs available in Estonia – Good Behaviour Game implemented by the National Institute for Health Development, and anti-bullying program KiVa. There are two initiatives offering schools to measure children’s welfare and mental health and offer the advice and support accordingly – Clanbeat and Helgeapp. The variety of trainings on mental health available for schools is large, including training on self-regulation methods based on mindfulness, work with traumatized children, suicide prevention etc. In 2023 the evidence-based suicide prevention program Youth Aware of Mental Health will be implemented in Estonia.

122. Estonia’s education system has built-in tools for supporting children in need, in other words specialist care either provided on-site in the school or brought in in cases of need - school nurse, social pedagogue, school psychologist, special pedagogue, case coordinator etc. The current challenges are to provide educational system with personnel needed to provide that care, particularly in remote areas, and to enhance cooperation with social and health system. The Ministry of Social Affairs also funds the counselling services provided by NGOs such as peaasi.ee and others.

123. Estonia’s health system provides free access to health care to all children at their will. Until 2021 there was an exception for psychiatric care – children needed their parent’s consent unless the case was defined urgent by the medical professional. In 2021 that barrier was removed, and children can turn to a psychiatrist at their own initiative. The main entry point to the health system is still a family doctor, who treats milder cases and can refer a patient further to specialists like psychologist, clinical psychologist and psychiatrist. The main challenge for the health system in supporting children’s mental health and addressing mental health problems is the lack of specialists. The Ministry of Social Affairs has taken several initiatives to tackle the problem – from 2021 the ministry provides additional finances for the training of specialists. The ministry has also started the revision of services for mental health with the aim to broaden and strengthen the lower-intensity services such as support groups, peer-counselling etc. Ministry has also opened a call for local governments to provide mental health services for their residents.

124. Estonia is developing cross-sectoral approach to prevention and has implemented several activities to support children’s social skills, self-regulation and reduce risk taking behaviour. In addition, National Institute for Health Development is providing evidence-based information via internet special web-pages on [alcohol](#), [tobacco](#) and [drugs](#) (these webpages are also available in Russian). Since November 2022, 24h support line on drugs, which in case of children co-operates with children’s helpline is available. Specific campaigns for children related to drugs are not carried out as it is not supported with evidence.

125. In 2022, in co-operation with several organisations (ministries, surveillance authorities, representatives of schools and pupils, WHO) an action plan was developed to prevent and decrease nicotine use of children. The action plan will be implemented in upcoming years. In addition, during the last decade in the course of implementation of a comprehensive and evidence-based alcohol and tobacco policies, several changes have been made in regulations to decrease the visibility and attractiveness of the products including to children and young people.

126. In all regions, ambulatory treatment and counselling services are available for children and young people with addiction problems. In Tallinn, also stationary services are available. In addition, young people with addiction problems (target group 13-18 years old persons and their close ones) are offered treatment in Torujõe Youth Home (Torujõe Noortekodu, provides counselling and also 24h services).

127. Development and provision of rehabilitation services for children with addiction problems are based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Closed children's institution service is a temporary 24h support for a child, whose behaviour is a threat to her/his own (or someone's) life, health, and development. It is also for children whose arrest is replaced. In addition to the voluntary rehabilitation service in Torujõe Youth Home, help and services for children with addiction and behavioural problems are also provided in Tallinn Centre for Children in Risk (incl stationary).

128. Currently a Green Paper on Nutrition and Physical Activity is being drafted, which also focuses on tackling childhood obesity. Balanced school meals are available to most children free of charge. The regulation that sets the requirements for school meals is being updated to bring the requirements into line with the latest nutritional recommendations. In addition, a food re-formulation plan to lower consumption of sugar, salt and fat is under development (expected to start implementation from the second half of 2023).

129. In 2022, a guideline was compiled to the Association for Estonian Broadcasters (AEB) on how to market to children (food and drinks, with the aim to support balanced nutrition of children). AEB has compiled and adopted the self-regulation (entered into force 01.01.2023). based on this guideline, criteria proposed by WHO have also been taken into account.

130. All children, including those with disadvantaged background and disabilities have access to sexual and reproductive health services. There are free counselling centres all over Estonia for youth from both sexes (until 26 years old persons even if they are not covered with health insurance). In addition, anonymous counselling via internet is provided (in Estonian and Russian language). It is possible to get help for transgender children from the paediatrician or the Medical Expert Committee, and Committee's service is financed from health insurance starting from 2022.

131. All pregnant women are covered with health insurance and pregnancy monitoring is carried out by midwives, gynecologists and family doctors. Postnatal care for newborns is also covered by health insurance and is available to everyone. Preventive monitoring of babies is carried out by family doctors and nurses.

132. Home visitation program is also being tested since 2022. The service is carried out by trained midwives, it offers high-quality, integrated and accessible support system to support the well-being of young children and their families. Evidence-based and validated assessment tools (Calgary and EPDS) are being used to assess and evaluate mother's mental health and risks for the unborn baby. Early perceived risks are mitigated and the family is supported in many ways through additional home visitations until the baby reaches the age of 1 year.

133. The main national health strategy – The National Health Action Plan 2020-2030 – is implemented through three programs: one focussing on healthy choices, the second on health supportive environment and the third on people centred health care. The following principles are considered in the planning and implementation: life cycle based, decreasing of inequalities, evidenced base, engagement of communities, health in all policies. Therefore, needs of children are covered in our strategic planning, implementation and also in evaluation of policies and programmes.

I.Education, leisure and cultural activities

134. The drop-out rate from primary education remains low (0.2-0.3% in general; 0.3-0.4% for boys). To tackle the drop-out rates, educational subsidies for municipal and private schools and study places in state schools are guaranteed. Its purpose is to create conditions for fulfilling the school obligation and to reduce dropout rates and interruption of studies. The state has provided educational support to the owners of municipal and private schools, guaranteed study places in state schools and supported the implementation of IBO (International Baccalaureate Organization) curricula, prison education and European School development. Educational support includes support for the acquisition of educational materials to contribute to the creation of a diverse and meaningful learning environment and the differentiation of learning according to the learner's needs.

135. Additionally, to support youth inclusion, a Youth Guarantee Action Plan has been created and approved by the Government for its implementation. Both the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research plan and implement various measures to support young people in the NEET situation and at risk of the NEET situation.

136. The main goal of the transition to Estonian-language education is to provide all children, regardless of their mother tongue, the opportunity to acquire quality education in Estonian, which supports the shaping of Estonian national identity, increases social integration and reduces educational and socio-economic segregation. This is also for the benefit of learners. A completely Estonian-language educational environment ensures better opportunities for further education, for coping in the labour market and for sharing a common information and value space in Estonia.

137. In classes where the language of instruction is entirely Estonian, Russian is no longer a compulsory subject. When students' mother tongue is different from Estonian and where there are at least ten students speaking the same mother tongue in school, they would study their mother tongue and culture two lessons per week from the 1st grade onwards, if the students and their parents request it. Teaching of mother tongue and culture starts from the 1st grade and plays an important part in the development of a student's identity.

138. Enrolling to teacher education university programmes has increased over the years. Developing the new generation of teachers is one of the top priorities of the Ministry of Education and Research. The Ministry will increase the number of student places for teacher training by 342. To fill the student places, students will also be offered special scholarships to help them reach graduation and start their professional careers. In addition to teacher training, there is a need to increase flexibility in the provision of the knowledge and skills needed to start a career as a teacher, and for this, different micro-credential programmes will be developed in cooperation with universities by 2023.

139. Current Preschool Child Care Institutions Act has been in force since 1 February 2018. Preschool education is not compulsory in Estonia, however municipalities are obliged to guarantee a place in a preschool institution of the child's residence for all children between 1.5 and 7 years of age.

140. Children attending early childhood education have guaranteed access to speech therapists and special education teachers. Local governments and early childhood education also use the services provided by regional counselling centres (speech therapists, special education teachers, psychological and social-pedagogical counselling).

141. The national curriculum for early childhood institutions follows child-centred active learning methods. The goal of pre-school education is to support the children's individuality, creativity and learning through play. Children whose home language is other than Estonian will receive state support to learn Estonian from the age of three onwards. In addition, methods of teaching foreign languages to Estonian-speaking children of pre-school age are developed.

142. Comparative international studies indicate that Estonian early childhood institutions have created good conditions for child-centred learning and teaching in co-operation with families. Estonian early childhood education places emphasis on teaching values, including supporting children's well-being and safety, preventing bullying and developing tolerance, caring, honesty and courage in children.

143. The Estonian Vocational Training Action Plan 2022-2030 has been prepared based on the recommendation of the Council of the European Union and the Estonian Education Development Plan 2022-2035. In the development of vocational education and training, the Ministry of Education and Research cooperates closely with the central and professional associations of employers, contractor organisations, other ministries and educational institutions that organize vocational education and training, also in close cooperation with the labour market and continuing learning, digital transformation, teachers and heads of educational institutions, study and career guidance, adult education and school network.

144. All the major partners are brought together by the Vocational Training Advisory Board, whose main task is to advise the Ministry of Education and Research and educational

institutions on strategic planning in the field of vocational education, organisation of the network of educational institutions, planning and financing of training areas and other important issues. The Ministry's partner in implementing the strategic objectives of vocational education is the Estonian Society for the Development of Vocational Training.

145. One of the cross-curricular topics in basic and upper-secondary education is environment and sustainable development. In the process of developing the curricula, the learning outcomes and content of the environmental topic were updated in the curricula for 2021-2022. The formation of a natural scientific worldview and the valuing of the principles of sustainable development are also reflected in vocational education curricula.

J.Special protection measures

Asylum-seeking, refugee and unaccompanied children and children in situations of migration

146. As a general practice asylum seeking children and certainly refugee children and unaccompanied children are not detained. Although national legislation provides a possibility to accommodate an unaccompanied minor to the accommodation or detention centre, it has not been used in practice for years. The Tallinn Circuit Court has specified, that detention of a minor is justified only in extreme circumstances, as something truly extraordinary, such as a serious threat to public order (suspicion of terrorism, impossibility to be separated from a person whose detention in a detention centre is unavoidable etc).

147. Alternatives to detention are provided. An unaccompanied minor shall be provided substitute care service (incl. accommodation) by SIB during his/her stay in Estonia. There are no specific alternatives to the administrative detention for unaccompanied minors, but there are general alternatives brought out in the Obligation to Leave and Prohibition on Entry Act.

148. Estonia follows the Reception Conditions Directive in provision of reception conditions. The families in need are referred to the reception centre. If the families have the means or relatives to stay in private housing, then they need to apply for separate permission from the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board. In the reception centre obligatory health check is undergone by both adults and children. Needs based health services, including mental health, are provided throughout the stay in reception centre. Children aged 7-17 are obliged to attend school and children between 1.5-6 (incl) can attend local kindergarten, which is strongly encouraged. Children have access to playground and age appropriate activities in the centre.

149. Dependent on the reception centre, families are provided cash allowance which is tied with subsistence benefit levels. Should there be a need, child protection is notified, and relevant counselling and help is provided. Once the family receives international protection, they have the same rights and obligations as all other Estonian residents (access to education, labour market, social services and benefits etc.). One time off financial support is provided once the family moves out from the reception centre. Aged out minors have the opportunity to use the support independently from rest of the family.

150. An unaccompanied child is immediately temporarily placed in a Safe House – a place where emergency care is provided to children who are separated from their families. In the Safe House the child is interviewed by a specialist from SIB, a case plan is made. After a short term stay at the Safe House, the child moves on to alternative care (foster home or foster family, depends on which solution works best for the child). The foster homes follow a family based model that is up to six children and up to three caretakers in a family like unit.

151. Special needs and vulnerability of all asylum seekers including children is assessed on regular basis. It is a compulsory part of the asylum procedure starting from making the application until the end of the proceedings. Since 2020, the Police and Border Guard Board is using an assessment tool for assessing vulnerabilities of asylum seekers. The tool is used also on the border. The tool contains a checklist for aspects necessary to identify whether the person is in a vulnerable situation. The assessment is done in written form and is recorded in

the database. The assessment is shared with the accommodation centre. We are looking into adopting vulnerability assessment tools developed by UNHCR and/or EUAA.

152. Proceedings with children and especially unaccompanied children and other vulnerable groups are prioritized. Considering the best interests of a child is a legal requirement in Estonia (Child Protection Act §21). This requirement applies to all persons and institutions engaging with the child and in all processes. The best interest of the child is also primary consideration in all actions carried out by the Police and Border Guard Board.

153. The system of guardianship and legal representation is organized as provided by the asylum procedures directive and reception conditions directive. The Police and Border Guard Board is obliged to undertake efforts to trace family members of the child as soon as possible. In 2022 a joint training on the rights of the child and guardianship of UAC together with Police and Border Guard Board and SIB was carried out.

154. All unaccompanied minors are under guardianship of the local municipality. As legal guardians are nominated for children in due time, then they are also responsible for assisting in questions of residence permits, applying for international protection, etc.

155. Free legal counselling is provided throughout the asylum procedure for the child and child's guardian who represents the child in the administrative proceedings. There are 3 counsellors specialized in the asylum proceedings (since 2018) and 7 counsellors who are specialized in all other forms of legal stay (since 2017). These advisers have been recruited by the Police and Border Guard Board. They provide information by phone, email, Skype and by direct meetings.

156. Free legal counselling and representation is granted on the basis and in accordance with the procedure provided for in the State-funded Legal Aid Act. The Bar Association has established an obligation for lawyers representing minors under the state-funded legal aid procedure to undergo additional training, and since 2021, lawyers can only represent minors under the state-funded legal aid procedure if they have undergone training related to children's developmental psychology, questioning of children and children's rights.

157. The body monitoring the guardianship is civic court.

Sale, trafficking and abduction of children

158. Overview of the trafficking crimes throughout the years and for 2021 can be found [here](#). The number of trafficking crimes has been relevantly stable, a slight rise has been due to several cases involving the same persons, either victims or perpetrators. It has been very rare when children have been victims of trafficking crimes, yet in 2022 out of 6 registered trafficking crimes 5 involved children, either they were forced to steal from the shops or they were sexually exploited or forced to send revealing pictures, videos of themselves under threats.

159. In 2019 the last update was made to the [guidelines](#) of referral and identification of victims of trafficking. A special chapter dedicated to the children is included. Since 2021 the state coordinates all the services offered to trafficking victims including children.

160. In recent years no children who are victims of trafficking have needed rehabilitation and reintegration assistance, but the readiness to offer those services is in place. However, child victims of trafficking crimes are usually notified to the local government's child protection services as children in need of assistance.

161. Work in preventing human trafficking has been carried out for years, starting already at vocational schools. Estonian anti-trafficking experts together with vocational students meet on a yearly basis to discuss various types of human trafficking, for instance sham marriages and sexual exploitation. The experience with the vocational schools worked as a solid base to build youth campaigns on human trafficking. The "Back to School" initiative in 2020 was used to reach out to schools and disseminate information to children aged 15-18. Two video lessons were made (in [Estonian](#) and [Russian](#)), also lectures and other materials made by the state were added to the e-school site [E-koolikott](#). In 2023 we will start with the new initiative to raise the knowledge on human trafficking of the gymnasium students (1/3 of all) during the years 2023-2029. The good experience on preventing trafficking of children

is also shared in the recent [round up report](#) of Council of Baltic Sea States, including awareness raising on the law and media students in Tallinn and Tartu University.

Administration of child justice

162. In 2018, the Estonian offence proceedings for children and young people were updated to foster the implementation of restorative justice. The preparations for these changes began in 2015 due to domestic and international trends of making the specialised juvenile justice systems more child-friendly, incl. guaranteeing the fundamental rights of children during the proceedings and increasing the use of non-penal measures.

163. The most important changes included: the police and prosecuting authorities decide the scope of intervention in each individual case, the use of restorative justice measures is more popular; the number of options has increased to have more possibilities for imposing a measure on a child or young person based on their needs; the number of minors in prison has dropped (2020 and 2021 maximum 5 minors in prison); the attitudes of the parties to the proceedings towards the measures of restorative justice is positive; the inclusion and significance of the youth workers in the proceedings has grown; the need for cross-sectoral networking has increased and it is used more widely; SIB offers services designed for juvenile offenders at the national level (including 'Out of the Circle', conflict resolution, consultations for closed child care institutions, social rehabilitation services, multi-dimensional family therapy, and the local governments).

164. Although it is used very rarely, a minor who is 14 years of age or older may be in custody during pre-trial proceedings for up to 2 months (the Code of Criminal Procedure §131-1 (1): An underage suspect or an underage accused may not remain committed in custody during pre-trial proceedings for more than two months.) §131 (3) stipulates that where the person to be committed in custody is a minor, the pre-trial investigation judge assesses, with particular thoroughness, any potential adverse impacts that such a person's committal in custody would entail.

165. Also, according to the CCP §131 (3-2), where a minor is committed in custody, the court may order the minor's committal to be substituted by placement in a closed children's institution. But it can also happen that if the minor who has been committed in custody and who violates the conditions of their stay in a closed children's institution may, based on a corresponding report of the Head of the institution, and with permission of the court, be transferred to a prison to serve their custody (§131 (3-3). According to the Imprisonment Act §12, men and women; minors and adults; imprisoned persons and persons in custody, are held separately from each other. Nevertheless, the Imprisonment Act §12 (5) also stipulates that exceptions from this rule may be made if it is necessary in connection with studies, work or other activities, or if segregation of a minor from adults is contrary to the interests of the minor. For example, if there is only 1 minor who is in custody and only 1 minor who is imprisoned, then it may be to their interests that they are not held separately from each other. Or, if there are no minors in custody and only 1 minor who is imprisoned, then it may be in the interests of the minor to be held together with young adults, to avoid isolation.

166. Relevant section of the Imprisonment Act regarding education in the context of pre-trial detention (pre-trial detention and custody are used as synonyms) is § 93(4), and in the context of imprisoned persons §84 (and §34-36).

167. Relevant section of the Imprisonment Act regarding health in the context of pre-trial detention is §93(6), and in the context of imprisoned persons §14(1-1), §49, §49-1, §52, §53.

168. Relevant sections of the Imprisonment Act regarding correspondence and telephone calls in the context of pre-trial detention are §28 and §29, and in the context of imprisoned persons §96 and §97.

169. By the decision of the Board of the Bar Association, three training courses were determined for the year 2021, the completion of which is mandatory for lawyers who represent minors under state legal aid in custody, communication rights and guardianship matters, as well as in criminal cases. As of 31 December 2021, 127 lawyers have fulfilled this obligation, i.e. 10 lawyers were added during the year 2021, who completed all three mandatory trainings. The topics of these trainings are as follows:1) children's rights; 2)

questioning of children, 3) developmental psychology of the child. In the State Legal Aid information system, orders related to children are only distributed to lawyers who have completed the aforementioned trainings.

K.Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

170. The “sale of children” is criminalised in the Penal Code §173.
171. The “child pornography” is criminalised in the Penal Code §175-1 and §178.
172. Children are not criminalized for consensual sharing of self-generated sexual images (Penal Code §175, §175-1, §178, §145-1 and §179).
173. Children between the ages of 14 and 18 are explicitly protected from sexual exploitation in prostitution and their use in pornographic performances and materials (Penal Code §175-1 and §178).

L.Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict

174. Committee recommendation was that Estonia should ban the handling of firearms for children under the age of 18 years in general. We would like to explain that according to the law, the shooting instructor can train anyone older than 12 years with a parent’s permission and under the supervision of the instructor. Estonian Defence League complies with the law and they are not carrying out military trainings for children under 18 years but rather teach other specifics such as orienteering, hiking and surviving in nature. For further clearance the Estonian Defence League Act enacts that junior member cannot be invited to participate in military trainings.

175. Regarding the independent complaint mechanism, all the training for the junior members is done by professional instructors and with the permission of parents. Independent complaint mechanism functions under the Ombudsman for Children.

M.Optional Protocol on a communications procedure

176. Further analysis is required before Estonia can take a position on ratifying the third Optional Protocol.

III.Statistical information and data

A. General measures of implementation (arts. 4, 42 and 44 (6))

177. Information on the budget lines regarding children and social sectors.

Table 1. Expenses or budget (thousand euros) of Ministry of Social Affairs for the protection of children's rights

Group of services/ year	2017*	2018**	2019	2020	2021	2022 budget	2023 budget
Organization and development of alternative care	15 734,32	16 924,10	17 384,52	21 170,05	22 950,31	22 603,85	24 100,01
Providing and developing services for children with special needs	15 798,42	19 612,90	21 630,63	19 747,53	21 062,70	23 187,73	20 715,67
Organization and development of child protection	1 073,04	890,75	1 503,07	1 901,31	2 158,67	2 403,85	2 192,45

Victim support services for children and families	31,92	378,66	544,65	701,64	848,18	1 248,40	1 842,45
The family reconciliation service							1 636,48
Providing and developing services for at-risk children and young people	858,89	1 073,20	1 928,37	2 662,10	3 350,21	3 566,39	4 431,33
Developing parenting skills	849,07	525,10	892,69	705,55	962,75	927,26	1 157,50
TOTAL expenses (Ministry of Social Affairs) for the protection of children's rights	34 345,67	39 404,70	43 883,94	46 888,18	51 332,82	53 937,46	56 075,88
The proportion of (Ministry of Social Affairs) children's rights expenses from the State Budget	0,37%	0,37%	0,39%	0,39%	0,39%	0,38%	0,33%
Expenditure budget in the State Budget	9 375 547	10 530 461	11 257 689	12 083 411	13 303 715	14 253 281	16 838 947

*year 2017 is not comparable, because of methodology

**until year 2019 the value added tax is calculated within expenses

Source: Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs

B. Definition of the child (art. 1)

178. Data on the number and proportion of children under 18 years of age.

Table 2. Population 1. January by age and sex, thousand persons

Age / year, gender	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
0-2	21,72	20,36	21,95	20,27	22,05	20,48	21,89	20,69	21,43	20,55	20,90	20,01
3-6	30,06	28,50	29,04	27,70	28,86	27,55	29,15	27,52	29,33	27,40	29,75	27,78
7-10	31,20	29,63	31,86	30,31	31,60	30,05	30,86	29,40	30,17	28,68	29,25	27,95
11-14	26,68	25,47	27,84	26,27	29,32	27,52	30,55	28,65	31,22	29,69	31,81	30,36
15-17	18,68	17,50	19,00	17,89	18,88	18,14	19,47	18,87	20,37	19,39	21,45	20,09
Total 0-17	128,34	121,45	129,69	122,43	130,70	123,75	131,92	125,13	132,52	125,71	133,15	126,18
Percentage of the population	20,8%	17,4%	20,9%	17,5%	20,9%	17,7%	21,0%	17,9%	21,0%	18,0%	21,0%	18,1%

Source: Statistics Estonia

Table 3. Population aged 0-19 by country of citizenship, thousand persons

Citizenship /year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Estonia	263,60	266,51	269,08	269,91	270,88
EU country (excl. Estonia)	1,79	1,90	2,02	2,12	2,27
Non-EU country	9,32	9,64	10,18	10,52	11,05

Source: Statistics Estonia

Table 4. Population aged 0-19, 1. January, by county*, thousand persons

County (City)/ year	2018	2019	2020	2021
Harju	128,30	131,04	133,41	134,94
...Tallinn	86,36	87,44	88,15	88,30

Hiiu	1,48	1,50	1,49	1,46
Ida-Viru	25,34	24,97	24,59	23,98
Jõgeva	5,35	5,32	5,29	5,21
Järva	6,03	6,01	6,01	5,99
Lääne	3,97	3,96	4,04	4,06
Lääne-Viru	12,33	12,37	12,37	12,33
Põlva	4,65	4,65	4,63	4,67
Pärnu	17,77	17,94	18,12	18,12
Rapla	7,15	7,25	7,37	7,35
Saare	6,12	6,18	6,22	6,26
Tartu	35,28	35,93	36,63	36,96
...Tartu City	22,50	22,52	22,69	22,52
Valga	5,58	5,53	5,48	5,45
Viljandi	9,18	9,19	9,18	9,23
Võru	6,79	6,80	6,76	6,69
County unknown	0,10	0,02	0,03	0,09
Whole Estonia	275,40	278,65	281,62	282,78

*The place of residence is the place of residence stated in the Population Register, if it is left unmarked, the persons will be categorised under "County unknown".

Source: Statistics Estonia.

C. General principles (arts. 2–3, 6 and 12)

179. Data on the number of children who attempted or completed suicide.

Table 5. Suicides by sex and age group (0-19)

Age group / year, gender	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
0-9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10-14	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	2	1	0
15-19	3	2	7	3	5	3	7	5	3	5
Total 0-19	6		11		9		15		9	

Source: The Health Statistics and Health Research Database

Table 6. Intentional self-harm by sex and place of residence (aged 0-17)

County	Gender / year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Harju	Boys and girls	83	84	123	128	155
	Boys	31	24	37	37	33
	Girls	52	60	86	91	122
Hiiu	Boys and girls	0	1	2	3	1
	Boys	0	1	0	0	0
	Girls	0	0	2	3	1
Ida-Viru	Boys and girls	21	17	16	27	19
	Boys	5	8	5	10	4
	Girls	16	9	11	17	15
Jõgeva	Boys and girls	2	6	7	8	4
	Boys	2	2	3	3	0
	Girls	0	4	4	5	4

Järva	Boys and girls	3	3	10	7	7
	Boys	0	1	3	3	0
	Girls	3	2	7	4	7
Lääne	Boys and girls	3	1	1	3	2
	Boys	1	1	0	1	0
	Girls	2	0	1	2	2
Lääne-Viru	Boys and girls	10	9	14	6	14
	Boys	3	1	0	2	3
	Girls	7	8	14	4	11
Põlva	Boys and girls	5	3	1	4	9
	Boys	1	0	1	1	1
	Girls	4	3	0	3	8
Pärnu	Boys and girls	14	14	8	5	17
	Boys	3	0	2	0	0
	Girls	11	14	6	5	17
Rapla	Boys and girls	3	6	5	13	15
	Boys	0	3	1	2	1
	Girls	3	3	4	11	14
Saare	Boys and girls	4	3	7	2	4
	Boys	1	1	3	1	1
	Girls	3	2	4	1	3
Tartu	Boys and girls	25	23	29	25	29
	Boys	5	4	5	8	6
	Girls	20	19	24	17	23
Valga	Boys and girls	2	8	3	9	6
	Boys	1	3	1	3	0
	Girls	1	5	2	6	6
Viljandi	Boys and girls	2	13	6	8	6
	Boys	0	4	2	3	2
	Girls	2	9	4	5	4
Võru	Boys and girls	5	5	5	3	7
	Boys	2	1	0	2	0
	Girls	3	4	5	1	7
County unknown	Boys and girls	0	0	3	2	0
	Boys	0	0	1	1	0
	Girls	0	0	2	1	0
Living outside Estonia	Boys and girls	1	0	1	0	1
	Boys	0	0	0	0	1
	Girls	1	0	1	0	0
Place of residence unknown	Boys and girls	0	0	1	0	0
	Boys	0	0	1	0	0
	Girls	0	0	0	0	0
Whole Estonia	Boys and girls	182	196	240	253	295
	Boys	55	54	64	77	51
	Girls	127	142	176	176	244

Source: The Health Statistics and Health Research Database

E. Violence against children (arts. 19, 24 (3), 28 (2), 34, 37 (a) and 39)

180. Data on violence against children and child victims.

Table 7. Number of victims in violent crimes registered in 2018-2022*

Year	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
	Victims under 18	All victims	Victims under 18	All victims	Victims under 18	All victims	Victims under 18	All victims	Victims under 18	All victims
§ 113. Manslaughter	0	38	2	29		32		19		16
§ 114. Murder	2	19	1	8		23	2	12		5
§ 115. Manslaughter in provoked state						1				
§ 117. Negligent homicide	0	10	0	4		3		5		5
§ 118. Causing serious health damage	5	81	1	68	3	52	1	60		42
§ 119. Causing serious health damage through negligence	3	12		1		1	1	2	1	7
§ 119 ¹ . Participation in fight				1						
§ 120. Threat	48	462	31	373	22	274	25	237	33	311
§ 121. Physical abuse	338	2646	198	1715	163	1424	179	1351	318	2141
§ 123. Placing in danger	1	2				1		2		1
§ 133. Trafficking in human beings	0	1	2	5	5	8	1	4		6
§ 133 ² . Pimping	0	3				1				
§ 135. Hostage taking	0	1								
§ 136. Unlawful deprivation of liberty	3	18	11	30	3	17	5	15	2	7
§ 141. Rape	33	103	34	86	24	76	36	83	30	90
§ 141 ¹ . Act of sexual nature against will	2	2	4	8	20	43	19	42	19	46
§ 142. Satisfaction of sexual desire by violence	2	5			2	3			1	2
§ 143. Compelling person to engage in sexual intercourse or other act of sexual nature	1	3	1	1						
§ 143 ¹ . Compelling person to satisfy sexual desire	0	1								
§ 143 ² . Sexual intercourse or other act of sexual nature using influence	0	0	10	15	5	11	7	21	4	11
§ 144. Sexual intercourse with descendant	3	7	3	8	4	6	7	13	6	10

§ 145. Sexual intercourse or other act of sexual nature with child	27	49	18	33	16	33	21	40	36	63
§ 145 ¹ . Buying sex from minors	12	14	7	11	6	15	7	16	22	40
§ 200. Robbery	12	118		98	12	87	9	102	6	74
§ 263. Aggravated breach of public order	62	432	46	282	22	184	16	146	39	205

* Age is given at the time of registration of the crime

Source: Estonian Ministry of Justice

Table 8. The proportion of crimes involving child victims and/or child witnesses out of all domestic violence crimes

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Proportion	Approx. 30%	Approx. 25%	29%	27%	27%	26%

Source: Estonian Ministry of Justice

Table 9. Number of victims in offences against minors registered in 2018-2022

Offences against minors (Penal Code) /year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
§ 175. Human trafficking with respect to minors	34	16	26	16	5
§ 175 ¹ . Requesting access to child pornography and watching thereof	4	6	4	4	0
§ 178. Manufacture of works involving child pornography or making child pornography available	42	22	28	29	42
§ 178 ¹ . Agreement of sexual purpose for meeting with child	5	0	0	0	0
§ 179. Sexual enticement of children	83	77	92	48	85
§ 182. Inducing minor to consume alcohol	74	90	49	57	71
§ 182 ¹ . Sale of alcohol to minors and purchase of alcohol for minors	0	12	3	7	3

Source: Estonian Ministry of Justice

F. Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5, 9–11, 18 (1)–(2), 20–21, 25 and 27 (4))

181. Data on the number and proportion of families and children receiving economic and other type of support services.

Table 10. Payment of subsistence allowance to families with children, 2017–2021

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of families with children, who received subsistence allowance (during the year)	4411	3597	3254	3265	2833
...from them families with one adult	2938	2453	2288	2228	1959
Number of children in families, who received subsistence allowance (during the year)	8652	6616	6042	6008	5162

Source: Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs

182. Data on the number of children in institutional care and family-based and community-based care.

Table 11. Number of children separated from their family (during year)

County (City)/ year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Harju	79	73	91	102	77
...Tallinn	59	49	57	39	64
Hiiu	2	4	0	0	0
Ida-Viru	54	92	54	32	23
Jõgeva	9	8	10	6	3
Järva	3	8	7	4	6
Lääne	4	7	0	2	0
Lääne-Viru	18	5	20	8	23
Põlva	12	7	13	7	7
Pärnu	11	12	12	21	23
Rapla	7	3	17	13	23
Saare	5	5	0	0	2
Tartu	32	28	29	49	41
Valga	8	13	19	26	7
Viljandi	16	7	9	2	7
Võru	7	15	11	12	13
Whole Estonia	267	287	292	284	255

Source: Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs

Table 12. Substitute care for children without parental care (the number of persons aged 0-19 at the end of year)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
number of persons aged 0-19 in institutional care	968	899	797	800	787
number of persons aged 0-19 in family-/community-based care.	1552	1552	1532	1477	1426
Proportion of family-based care	61,6%	63,3%	65,8%	64,9%	64,4%

Source: Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs

Table 13. Substitute care for children without parental care (mainly aged 0-19) in institutional care, average days of stay in care, number and proportion of persons with disability in institutional care

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total number of children in institutional care (at the end of year)	968	899	797	800	787
average days of stay per year (by persons in care during the year)	307,7	301,9	308,0	307,8	309,5
number of persons with disability in institutional care (at the end of year)	403	394	359	344	335
Proportion of persons with disability in institutional care (at the end of year)	41,6%	43,8%	45,0%	43,0%	42,6%

Source: Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs

Table 14. Substitute care for children without parental care (mainly aged 0-19) in family-based and community-based care, number and proportion of persons with disability in family-based and community-based care.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total number of persons in family-based and community-based care (at the end of year)	1552	1552	1532	1477	1426
number of persons with disability in family-based and community-based care (at the end of year)	...	...	...	217	212
Proportion of persons with disability in family-based and community-based care (at the end of year)	...	...	...	14,7%	14,9%
Number of persons in foster care	161	124	133	145	146
... with disability in foster care	...	...	...	23	27
Number of persons on guardianship care	1391	1428	1399	1332	1280
... with disability on guardianship care	...	...	...	194	185

Source: Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs

G. Children with disabilities (art. 23)

183. Data on children with disabilities.

Table 15. Number of children with disability (age 0-17, at the end of the year)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of children with disability (age 0-17, at the end of year)	12896	13928	12949	10125	9808
Disability severity:					
moderate	5000	5133	4372	3660	3934
severe	7164	7986	7768	5796	5253
profound	732	809	809	669	621
Disability type					
intellectual (not including mental illness)	1861	2361	2971	3341	3457
mental illness	393	275	509	559	612
language and speech	1201	1449	1301	1009	1097
hearing	254	265	282	269	244
visual	160	156	146	120	113
mobility	937	938	936	605	489
combined	3957	4442	3888	2474	2302
other	4133	3929	2879	1748	1494
type missing	...	113	37	...	

Source: Estonian Social Insurance Board

Table 16. Number of children with disability (age 0-17, at the end of year)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total number of children with disability	12 896	13 928	12 949	10 125	9 808
Number of children with disability in foster care	...	...	...	23	27
Number of children with disability on guardianship care	...	...	...	186	173
Number of children with disability in institutional care	367	360	341	322	316

Proportion of children with disability living in institutional care	2,8%	2,6%	2,6%	3,2%	3,2%
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Sources: Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Insurance Board

H. Basic health and welfare (arts. 6, 18 (3), 24, 26, 27 (1)–(3) and 33)

184. All children in Estonia have health insurance.

185. Data on the number of pediatric and mental health services and professionals specialized in young children and adolescents.

Table 17. Number of pediatric professionals medicine specialized for young children and adolescents.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
School doctor	5	4	4	7	7
Child and youth psychiatrist	11	12	20	21	18
Pediatric surgeon	17	16	17	17	17
Pediatrician	154	147	148	138	136
School nurse	281	290	299	307	312
Children's nurse	299	289	297	282	282

Source: The Health Statistics and Health Research Database

186. Data on adolescent mothers.

Table 18. Women given birth by age group and place of residence

County/ Year, age	2017			2018			2019			2020			2021		
	10-14	15-17	18-19	10-14	15-17	18-19	10-14	15-17	18-19	10-14	15-17	18-19	10-14	15-17	18-19
Harju	0	11	65	1	19	53	0	11	47	2	15	52	0	8	25
Hiiu	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ida-Viru	0	13	24	0	10	27	0	13	33	0	13	29	1	8	16
Jõgeva	0	5	5	0	0	5	0	4	5	0	1	6	0	4	7
Järva	1	4	13	0	2	8	0	1	8	0	1	10	0	1	8
Lääne	0	1	12	0	2	6	0	0	6	0	2	3	0	1	6
Lääne-Viru	0	12	13	0	3	21	0	5	16	0	4	10	0	4	15
Põlva	0	1	6	0	1	6	0	2	6	0	0	3	0	1	1
Pärnu	0	7	15	0	4	26	0	9	25	0	1	15	0	4	18
Rapla	0	1	7	0	0	6	1	2	6	0	1	5	0	2	0
Saare	0	2	2	0	2	4	0	3	2	0	1	4	0	2	3
Tartu	0	8	29	1	6	31	1	3	19	0	5	20	0	5	15
Valga	0	3	10	0	2	5	0	0	4	0	2	13	1	2	2
Viljandi	0	3	11	0	4	14	0	3	9	0	4	11	0	4	11
Võru	0	2	7	0	6	5	0	2	9	0	4	5	0	4	3
Living outside Estonia	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Whole Estonia	1	73	221	2	61	217	2	58	195	2	54	186	2	50	130

Source: The Health Statistics and Health Research Database

187. Data on children abusing drugs or alcohol.

Table 19. Frequency of using cannabis during last 12 months, 15 and 16 y/o (%)

	Boys and girls	Boys	Girls
Has not used	83,6	81,3	85,8
1-2 times	7,5	7,7	7,2
3-5 times	3,7	3,8	3,5
6-9 times	1,8	2,2	1,5
10-19 times	1,6	2,3	0,9
20 and more times	1,8	2,7	1,1

Source: The Health Statistics and Health Research Database, European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD)

Table 20. Frequency of using inhalants during last 12 months, 15 and 16 y/o (%)

	Boys and girls	Boys	Girls
Has not used	94,1	95,1	93,2
1-2 times	4	4,3	3,7
3 and more times	1,9	0,6	3,1
3-5 times	..	..	..
6-9 times	..	..	..
10-19 times	..	..	..
20 and more times	..	..	..

Source: The Health Statistics and Health Research Database, ESPAD

Table 21. Frequency of being drunk by sex and age, 2017/2018 school year (%)

		11 y/o	13 y/o	15 y/o
0 times	Boys and girls	96,7	88,2	59,9
	Boys	94,9	88,5	56,9
	Girls	98,6	87,8	62,7
1 time	Boys and girls	2,2	5,5	12,9
	Boys	3,4	4,8	13,9
	Girls	0,9	6,2	11,9
2 or more times	Boys and girls	1,1	6,4	27,2
	Boys	1,7	6,7	29,2
	Girls	0,5	6	25,4

Source: The Health Statistics and Health Research Database, ESPAD

Table 22. Frequency of being drunk by economic situation, 11, 13, 15 y/o, 2017/2018 school year (%)

	Good	Average	Poor
0 times	82,5	81,3	81,2
1 time	7,5	6,4	6,9
2 or more times	9,9	12,3	11,9

Source: The Health Statistics and Health Research Database, ESPAD

Table 23. Frequency of being drunk by nationality, 11, 13, 15 y/o, 2017/2018 school year (%)

	Estonians	Non-Estonians
0 times	80,9	84,1
1 time	6,9	6,9
2 or more times	12,3	9

Source: The Health Statistics and Health Research Database, ESPAD

Table 24. Frequency of being drunk during last 30 days among 15-16 y/o, by sex, 2019 (%)

	Boys and girls	Boys	Girls
Not even once	91,5	92	91,1
1-2 times	7	6,5	7,4
3-5 times	0,9	0,9	0,9
6-9 times	0,4	0,4	0,4
10-19 times	0,1	0,2	0,1
Over 20 times	0,1	0	0,1

Source: The Health Statistics and Health Research Database, ESPAD

Table 25. Frequency of being drunk during last 12 months among 15-16 y/o, by sex, 2019 (%)

	Boys and girls	Boys	Girls
Not even once	34,3	38,8	30,1
1-2 times	22,7	21,5	23,8
3-5 times	14,8	13,2	16,2
6-9 times	10,8	10,8	10,9
10-19 times	9,4	8,7	10
20-39 times	4,8	3,9	5,6
Over 40 times	3,2	3,1	3,4

Source: The Health Statistics and Health Research Database, ESPAD

188. Data on overweight/obese children.

Table 26. Overweight/obese by sex and age, 2017/2018 school year

	11 y/o	13 y/o	15 y/o
Boys and girls	17,7%	17,2%	16,4%
Boys	21,0%	21,2%	19,7%
Girls	5,0%	13,2%	13,3%

Source: The Health Statistics and Health Research Database, Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC)

Table 27. Overweight/obese children by place of residence, 2017/2018 school year, all ages

Harju, Rapla	15,3%
Ida-Viru, Lääne-Viru	17,8%
Järva, Pärnu, Viljandi	19,2%
Tartu, Jõgeva, Põlva, Valga, Võru	17,2%
Hiiu, Saare, Lääne	26,0%

Source: The Health Statistics and Health Research Database, HBSC

Table 28. Overweight/obese children by economic situation, 2017/2018 school year, all ages

Good	13,9%
Average	17,5%
Poor	20,7%

Source: The Health Statistics and Health Research Database, HBSC

Table 29. Overweight/obese children by nationality, 2017/2018 school year, all ages

Estonians	17,5%
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Non-Estonians	16,0%
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Source: The Health Statistics and Health Research Database, HBSC

189. Data on youth counselling services.

Table 30. Number of youth counselling services available for children and young people until age of 26

Whole Estonia	Tallinn	Tartu	Pärnu	Viljandi	Paide	Haapsalu	Rapla	Põlva	Saaremaa	Valga	Võru
17	4	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2

Source: The Estonian Sexual Health Association (<https://seksuaaltervis.ee>)

190. Main poverty indicators used in Estonia are the absolute and the at-risk-of-poverty (relative poverty) indicators. The absolute poverty rate shows the proportion of persons with an equivalised disposable income below the absolute poverty threshold (subsistence minimum), which is calculated on the basis of expenditure. The absolute poverty threshold comprises three primary components of expenditure: reference food basket (excluding alcohol and tobacco products), housing expenses, and personal non-food items.

191. The relative poverty rate shows the proportion of persons with an equivalised disposable income below the relative poverty threshold. In Estonia, as in all other EU countries, the relative poverty threshold is set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers.

192. The relative poverty rate of children decreased to 13.6% in 2021 (income year)¹³. Estonia is one of the few countries where the relative poverty rate among children is lower than that of the overall population. For example, based on the Eurostat data, in 2021 (survey year, income year is 2020) there are nine other EU countries where the relative child poverty is lower than the corresponding indicator for the entire population.

193. Also, the absolute poverty rate of children 0–17 years of age decreased from 2.5% in 2017 to 1.3% in 2021.

Table 31. Share and number of children in poverty and poverty thresholds, 2017–2021 (income years; survey years 2018–2022)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
At-risk-of-poverty rate, %					
Total population	21,9	21,7	20,7	20,6	22,8
0–17	15,2	17,2	15,2	15,5	13,6
Absolute poverty rate, %					
Total population	2,7	2,2	2,3	2,2	1,4
0–17	2,5	1,6	2,5	2,7	1,3
Number of children in poverty					
Children in relative poverty, thousands	38,2	43,8	38,9	40,3	..
Children in absolute poverty, thousands	6,4	4,1	6,5	6,9	..
Poverty thresholds, euros					
Monthly at-risk-of-poverty threshold, euros	527	573	611	631	763
Monthly absolute poverty threshold, euros	207	215	221	220	234

.. number of children in poverty on 2021 will be published in March 2023.

Source: Statistics Estonia, Estonian Social Survey 2018–2022 (income years 2017–2021)

¹³ Here and hereinafter, poverty rates published by Statistics Estonia are presented by the income year and poverty rates published by Eurostat are presented by survey year.

194. In terms of households with children, the highest poverty rate is in households with a single parent. The poverty of couples with three or more children has decreased so much over the years that in 2021 their relative poverty rate was the lowest among households with children.

Table 32. At-risk-of-poverty and absolute poverty rate by household type, 2017–2021 (income years; survey years 2018–2022)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
At-risk-of-poverty rate, %					
Household with children, total	13,7	15,2	14	14,2	13
Adult and child(ren)	39	35,1	27,3	36,6	32,7
Couple with one child	9,9	11,6	9	9,8	10,3
Couple with two children	11,5	15,1	12,2	13,2	9,3
Couple with three or more children	14,7	15	16,8	14,1	5,3
Other household with children	9,9	10,3	14,4	8,9	14
Absolute poverty rate, %					
Household with children, total	2,2	1,5	2,3	2,2	4,2
Adult and child(ren)	7,8	4,6	5,3	6,1	..
Couple with one child	..	..	1,5	1,1	1,2
Couple with two children	2,8	1,6	2,8	2,6	..
Couple with three or more children	2,3	1,6	3	1,9	..
Other household with children	..	..	..	..	..

..unreliable data due to small size of the observations.

Source: Statistics Estonia, Estonian Social Survey 2018–2022 (income years 2017–2021)

195. The depth of relative poverty can characterise by the poverty rate upon different poverty thresholds: 40%, 50% or 70% of median equalised income (relative poverty is officially calculated 60% of median income). The relative poverty threshold at 40% of median equalised income distinguish the persons with the lowest resources living in relative poverty. Statistics Estonia data shows a positive change – the share of children whose equalised disposable income is less than 40% has decreased between 2017 and 2021 (from 5.3% in 2017 to 4.5% in 2021). Also, there are a decrease of those, whose income comprises less than 50% of median.

Table 33. At-risk-of-poverty and absolute poverty rate among children by different poverty thresholds, 2017–2021 (income years; survey years 2018–2022)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
At-risk-of-poverty rate, %					
40% of median income	5,3	5,3	5,4	6	4,5
50% of median income	9,2	10	9,2	10,6	8,6
60% of median income	15,2	17,2	15,2	15,5	13,6
70% of median income (not in relative poverty)	23,4	24,4	21,3	23,7	19,8
Absolute poverty rate, %					
Up to 80% of the absolute poverty threshold (direct poverty)	1,3	1,2	1,8	1,9	0,8
80-99% from the absolute poverty threshold (poverty endangering area)	1,3	..	0,7	0,7	..
100-125% from the absolute poverty threshold (not in absolute poverty, at-risk-of-poverty area)	2,1	2,1	1,3	1,6	..
Over 125% from the absolute poverty threshold (not in absolute poverty, poverty-risk-free area)	95,4	96,3	96,1	95,7	97,9

..unreliable data due to small size of the observations.

Source: Statistics Estonia, Estonian Social Survey 2018–2022 (income years 2017–2021)

I. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28–31)

196. The compulsory schooling ends with the graduation from basic school (on average the age of 16) or when a person turns 17.

197. Data on the number and proportion of children who have dropped out of school;

Table 34. Number and proportion of children who have dropped out of school;

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Basic school	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.25%
Upper-sec	0.8%	1.6%	1.2%	0.7%	0.9%

Source: Estonian Education Information System

198. In the year 2021/2022, there were 2 primary schools, 35 basic schools, 36 upper-secondary schools and 4 adult gymnasiums in Estonia, whose statutes specify Russian or Estonian and Russian as the language of instruction. 21,079 students studied in the Russian language of instruction in the stationary form of education and 76 students in non-stationary education. 24 of the students studied at the upper-secondary level of private schools, the rest at the elementary school level.

199. Data on the number of children in special schools and in special classes in regular schools for children with special educational needs arising from disabilities.

Table 35. Distribution of students who need special and enhanced support in general education in 2017-2022 by study form.

Study form / Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Special school for SEN students	39,3%	35,1%	36,5%	35,0%	31,6%	29,2%
Special class	33,3%	31,8%	32,4%	32,9%	34,0%	34,6%
Mainstream class	27,4%	33,1%	31,1%	32,1%	34,4%	36,2%

Source: Estonian Education Information System

200. Data on the number and proportion of children attending early childhood education.

Table 36. Number and proportion of children attending early childhood education

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of children in early childhood education	66,895	65,935	66,330	66,375	66,979	68,983
Proportion (3-7) %	91.2	91.3	91.1	91.6	91.2	91,6

Source: Estonian Education Information System

201. Data on the number of children in public and private schools, including religious schools.

Table 37. Number of children in public and private schools, including religious schools.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Basic school TOTAL	126,384	129,317	131,095	132,050	132,965
Basic: private	7,539	8,355	9,094	9,701	10,418
Basic: municipal	116,787	119,048	120,207	120,505	120,585

Basic: state	2,058	1,914	1,794	1,844	1,962
Upper-sec TOTAL	26,893	27,333	27,639	28,779	29,611
US: private	1,353	1,449	1,444	1,577	1,744
US: municipal	21,708	21,285	21,244	22,024	21,611
US: state	3,832	4,599	4,951	5,178	6,256

Source: Estonian Education Information System

Table 38. Number and share of young (from 15 to 24 years) persons neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET), thousand persons.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of NEETs, thousands	12,0	12,3	8,6	12,2	13,4	13,4
Males	5,4	6,9	4,1	6,2	7,4	8,5
Females	6,6	5,5	4,5	6,0	6,0	4,9
Share of NEETs in corresponding group of persons, %	9,4%	9,8%	6,9%	9,7%	10,9%	10,7%
Males, %	8,4%	10,8%	6,6%	9,6%	12,1%	13,6%
Females, %	10,5%	8,9%	7,3%	9,8%	9,7%	7,8%

Source: Statistics Estonia

J. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 32–33, 35–36, 37 (b)–(d) and 38–40)

202. Data on asylum-seeking and refugee children.

Table 39. Number of asylum-seeking and refugee children by country

Citizenship	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Afghanistan			1		6	4	11
Albania	1		2				3
Armenia			1		2		3
Azerbaijan		2					2
Bangladesh		2					2
Egypt		3					3
Eritrea			2	2	2		6
Georgia	8					1	9
India		1					1
Iraq	5		1		1		7
Iran	1	1	1				3
Yemen			1		2		3
Kosovo	1		1				2
Pakistan		3					4
Palestine		1					1
Sri Lanka	5						5
Syria	2	1	5	4		1	13
Tajikistan				1	1	1	3
Turkey			10		3	1	14
Ukraine	7	6	3			121	137
Belarus	4				2	3	9
Russia	3		7	2		46	58
Total	37	20	36	9	19	178	299

Source: Ministry of the Interior

Table 40. Number of asylum-seeking and refugee children, disaggregated by gender

2017		2017 Total	2018		2018 Total	2019		2019 Total	2020		2020 Total	2021		2021 Total	2022		2022 Total
F	M		F	M		F	M		F	M		F	M		F	M	
4	5	9	3	2	5	6	8	14	1	1	2	4	1	5	10	5	15
3	3	6				1	2	3				1	1	2	4	6	10
1		1	1		1	1		1				1		1	7	4	11
				1	1		1	1	2		2				1	3	4
1		1	1		1										4	7	11
1	1	2	1		1	1		1					1	1	8	4	12
							1	1				1	1	2	4	6	10
1	1	2				1		1				1		1	6	5	11
2	1	3				2		2							6	7	13
1	3	4	1		1					1	1				6	5	11
2		2		3	3		3	3	1		1	1	1	2	5	5	10
1		1					1	1					1	1	4	8	12
1		1	1	1	2	1		1		1	1				6	8	14
1		1				2	1	3				2		2	2	5	7
						1	1	2							1	3	4
												1	1	2	7	3	10
	1	1	1	1	2					2	2				2	6	8
1	2	3		3	3		2	2							1	4	5
20	17	37	9	11	20	16	20	36	4	5	9	12	7	19	84	94	178

Source: Ministry of the Interior

203. In the context of asylum no such statistics are available. Please see the table referred to in point (a).

204. Data on unaccompanied asylum-seeking children;

Table 41. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

Citizenship	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Afghanistan						2	2
Total	0	0	0	0	0	2	2

Source: Ministry of the Interior

Table 42. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, disaggregated by age and gender

Age/Sex	2022		2022 Total
	F	M	
16		1	1
17		1	1
Total		2	2

205. There are no asylum-seeking and refugee children, and children in situations of migration, who have been detained, including in transit centres.

206. All children including asylum seeking and refugee children have access to school and healthcare on general grounds.

207. In 2017 and 2018 there are no children involved in registered trafficking cases (Penal Code §133), in 2019 there are 2 out of 5 cases, in 2020 19 out of 20 cases, and in 2021 5 out of 6 cases, where children are involved.

208. All children have access to rehabilitation services. Children assisted: in 2019 1 boy, in 2018 7 minors (5 girls, 2 boys), in 2017 4 girls.

209. In all the cases that have resulted in sanctions, perpetrators are of Estonian origin and penalties vary from 3-4 years of imprisonment for the trafficking crimes.

210. In 2018 youth justice reform took place in Estonia. The aim of the reform was to provide wider possibilities for police and prosecutorial discretion and using punishment and imprisonment as last resort. Punishment may be applied only if other juvenile measures are not enough to prevent the further offences and juvenile detention may be substituted with placement to closed children institution. (Please see also information provided under point 162). In the last five years, the number of juveniles in prison has decreased 6 times. At the end of 2021, there were 5 minors in prison, one of them convicted and 4 in pre-trial detention. In previous years the numbers were accordingly 5 in 2020 (3 convicted, 2 in pre-trial detention), 15 in 2019 (9 convicted, 6 in pre-trial detention) and 14 in 2018 (10 convicted, 4 in pre-trial detention).

K. Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

211. There have been no reported cases of sale of children during the reporting period. Purchasing sex from minors is criminalized (Penal Code §145¹) and in 2017-2020 the registered cases are 142 crimes in total.

212. Crimes of purchasing sex from children (Penal Code §145¹) have been sent to court on the years 2017-2021 in 99 cases and terminated by the prosecutor's office in 29 cases.