REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
GOVERNMENT OFFICE

Overview of the Implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda in Estonia 2021–2025



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Summary

On 25 September 2015, the UN Summit adopted the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda. The primary aim of the Agenda is to eradicate poverty everywhere and ensure dignity and a good quality of life for all, in harmony with the natural environment. The Agenda defines 17 global SDGs and 169 targets, along with guidelines for their implementation. The Agenda is universal, meaning it applies to all Member States, and both governments and non-governmental actors must contribute to its implementation.

To achieve the Agenda's goals, the declaration provides for a reporting and review system. The purpose of reporting is to obtain information on progress made and implementation measures used. The preparation of a voluntary national review (VNR) is optional, but it is recommended that each country report on the implementation of the Agenda at least twice. This year, 36 countries, including Estonia, are presenting reviews to the UN High-Level Political Forum.

This document provides an overview of the implementation of the global SDGs in Estonia. It is Estonia's third review[1] following the adoption of the UN 2030 Agenda. The review presents the main measures and activities of the government and non-governmental stakeholders in 2021–2025 that contribute to the achievement of 18 SDGs. In addition to the 17 global SDGs, Estonia also monitors the goal of the vitality of the Estonian cultural space.

Estonia has a long track record in sustainable development. In 1995, the Riigikogu (Parliament) adopted the Sustainable Development Act, which laid the foundation for strategic planning in sustainable development and created the preconditions for balanced development planning. In 2005, the Riigikogu approved Estonia's sustainable development strategy *Sustainable Estonia 21*, which defined four core goals: the vitality of the Estonian cultural space, growth in well-being, a cohesive society, and ecological balance. No separate implementation plan has been drawn up for the SDGs; instead, implementation takes place through sectoral development plans and programmes prepared on the basis of the long-term national development strategy *Estonia 2035*: all sectoral development plans approved by the Government and the programmes prepared on their basis are linked to the SDGs. The status of Estonia's SDG indicators can be publicly viewed on Statistics Estonia's Tõetamm platform[2] and the corresponding dashboard[3].

Following the last review, submitted in 2020, Estonia's long-term national development strategy *Estonia 2035* has been approved, and the country's strategic planning framework has changed significantly. In addition, recent governments have had to cope with various crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its impacts. Therefore, this review is more focused on crisis management and the effects of crises than previous reviews.

The review was prepared by the Government Office in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Statistics Estonia and non-governmental stakeholders. Civitta Estonia made a significant contribution to the review. The review is based on government public reports, examples collected from non-governmental stakeholders and proposals from ministries. The content and structure follow UN recommendations[4].

[1] Government Office, 2026.
[2] Tree of Truth, 2026.
[3] Statistics Estonia, 2026.
[4] UN Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Review, 2026.

Status of the Implementation of the Global SDGs

Estonia is generally successful in implementing the SDGs. In 2025, Estonia ranked 17th in international comparisons, with a score that has been on an upward trend since Estonia's first review.

Key progress can be highlighted in:

- **health and well-being (SDG 3),** where health insurance covers more than 95% of the population and the life expectancy trend is positive;
- **quality education (SDG 4),** where Estonia has very good educational opportunities compared to OECD countries: high-quality education is accessible to all and free of charge, regardless of gender, religion or socioeconomic background;
- **clean energy (SDG 7),** where Estonia's share of renewable energy in final energy consumption has risen by 10 percentage points over four years to 40%;
- **digital development (SDG 9),** where internet usage stands at over 92%, 85% are satisfied with digital services, and nearly 92% of residents consider cybersecurity trustworthy; and
- **effective, accountable and inclusive institutions (SDG 16),** where Estonia ranks joint 12th in the international corruption perception index and 91% of residents consider their neighbourhood safe.

Despite progress, several SDGs require significant attention. Although relative poverty has decreased, absolute poverty has increased despite efforts, putting certain vulnerable groups (e.g. the elderly, people with special needs, young people) at greater risk. Estonia is not yet on track to achieve its 2035 gender equality goals, despite a narrowing gender pay gap and improvements in the gender equality index since 2020. Greater attention must also be paid to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, despite a 66% reduction compared to 1990.

Both the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine have impacted multiple SDGs. While COVID-19 caused increased unemployment, disruptions in education and pressure on the healthcare system, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine raised energy and food prices, increased the cost of living and undermined economic stability, thereby affecting the implementation of SDGs related to poverty, inequality and economic growth.

Support for Other Countries

By international criteria, Estonia is a country with high income and a very high Human Development Index. Consequently, Estonia has both a moral obligation and an interest in contributing to global well-being, considering its capacities and adhering to international agreements. The objective of Estonia's development cooperation is to help eradicate global poverty and achieve the SDGs. Estonian humanitarian assistance to other countries aims to save lives and assist those affected by natural or man-made disasters, with particular attention to the most vulnerable population groups.

Estonia continues to prioritise support for Ukraine, allocating 0.25% of GDP annually for military assistance in 2024–2027. Estonia also continues, in line with its foreign policy objectives and international agreements, to respond flexibly to the needs of other developing countries, in particular the least developed and post-conflict countries, developing island states and landlocked developing countries.

Next Steps

Estonia's long-term national development strategy *Estonia 2035* has been in force since 2020, enabling the integration of SDGs into sectoral development plans more strongly and systematically than before. *Estonia 2035* sets five targets linked to the corresponding SDGs (Figure 1). Estonia is committed to implementing the UN 2030 Agenda, will continue its implementation and raise awareness of the SDGs, using the Voluntary National Review to highlight its efforts both domestically and internationally.

Figure 1. Links between Estonia's long-term national development strategy *Estonia 2035* and the SDGs.



Methodology, Review Process and Institutional Framework

This review was prepared in accordance with the guidelines set out in the UN Secretary-General's report. The preparation of the review was coordinated by the Government Office. Ministries contributed to the preparation, and two surveys were conducted to gather good practices from non-governmental stakeholders; a discussion seminar with ministries and non-governmental stakeholders was also organised on this year's focus themes. The draft review was sent to ministries for feedback.

The review is based on Estonia's experience in implementing the SDGs. Its purpose is to highlight the main actions in the field of sustainable development and to map good practices that can be used in implementing the Agenda. For ease of reading, the main measures and indicator-based statistics are presented by goal.

The review provides information on the institutional framework for sustainable development and 18 SDGs, including the goal of the vitality of the Estonian cultural space, which is monitored separately in Estonia. The review addresses the current status of the goals based on Estonia's SDG indicators and the main activities carried out by both the government and the non-governmental sectors to achieve the goals. Statistical data have been compiled by Statistics Estonia, which publishes SDG indicators regularly on its website.

In describing the most important government policy measures, the Government’s action programmes and reviews of their implementation, results reports and information received from ministries have been used as source material.

Institutional Framework

In Estonia, the coordination system for sustainable development covers both ministries and civil society organisations from all areas of sustainable development. At central government level, the Government Office coordinates sustainable development issues and the institutional framework. The Government Office is also responsible for preparing and monitoring the implementation of Estonia's long-term national development strategy *Estonia 2035* and the Government’s action programme.

The implementation of the SDGs is monitored in Estonia based on SDG indicators agreed upon with the participation of ministries, Statistics Estonia and stakeholders. In 2017, Estonia's list of SDG indicators was updated to align with the global SDGs. The current status of Estonia's SDG indicators can be viewed at any time on Statistics Estonia's Tõetamm platform[5] and the corresponding dashboard [6].

In October 2024, the Government decided not to extend the mandate of the Sustainable Development Commission, as most of the tasks assigned to it had been completed by that point. Non-governmental stakeholders can participate in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs through the steering committees of sectoral development plans and programmes, and the implementation of the goals is ensured by the strategic planning framework described above.

[5] Tree of Truth, 2026.
[6] Statistics Estonia, 2026.

Linkage of the SDGs with National Policy

The integration of the SDGs into sectoral development plans is ensured in Estonia through the strategic planning system. A government regulation on the preparation of strategic development plans stipulates that the preparation of development plans must, inter alia, be based on the global SDGs. This ensures that all government-approved strategic documents support the achievement of the SDGs. Estonia does not have a separate implementation plan for the sustainable development goals.

Of particular importance is Estonia's long-term development strategy *Estonia 2035*, which creates the basis for more systematic mainstreaming of the SDGs in development plans. The strategy sets strategic targets for Estonia and its people for the next 15 years and determines the changes needed to achieve them. In 2020, most sectoral development plans expired, and new ones were prepared in 2020–2021. In 2019, as part of streamlining the strategic planning framework, the number of strategic guidance documents was reduced from approximately 50 to 17 sectoral development plans. The SDGs have been integrated into all development plans approved and to be approved by the government, since sustainable development is not a standalone domain but is implemented through sectoral policies.

Ensuring that environmental, economic and social impacts are considered, is guaranteed by the impact assessment methodology approved by the government in 2021. According to this methodology, the preparation of legislation, the development of sectoral development plans and the approval of government positions on EU matters must assess impacts in the following areas: (1) social, including demographic impact; (2) impact on national security and foreign relations; (3) impact on the economy; (4) impact on the living and natural environment; (5) impact on regional development; (6) impact on the organisation of state and local governments. In addition, the Environmental Impact Assessment and Environmental Management System Act requires a strategic environmental assessment to be carried out for all strategic planning documents and spatial plans, assessing the impact on the natural, social, economic and cultural environment.

The government-approved Good Practice for Involvement also stipulates that government agencies involve interest groups and the public in decision-making that affects them. Important decisions and draft legislation are put out for public consultation. This allows interest groups to express their views and draw attention to important issues.

Implementation of the SDGs in Estonia

This chapter provides an overview of the Estonian government's objectives and main activities across the goals of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. For each SDG, the corresponding national indicators are presented in comparison with 2016 and 2020. In addition to central government measures, examples of activities by civil society organisations, local governments and/or the business sector and international development cooperation are provided. The Estonian government, larger local governments and non-governmental stakeholders contribute to the achievement of all SDGs. In addition to the 17 global SDGs, Estonia also monitors the goal of the vitality of the Estonian cultural space, which is why a total of 18 goals are covered in this review.



SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

The first SDG is primarily covered in Estonia under the well-being results domain, the central development document of which is the *Well-being Development Plan 2023–2030*. The development plan focuses on improving the well-being of children and families, increasing social and gender equality, improving employment and social welfare aligned with need, and supporting older people.

The target for reducing social inequality and poverty is to keep the absolute poverty rate at a maximum of 2.2% and reduce the relative poverty and social exclusion rate to at least 21%. Special attention is paid to reducing child poverty, with the aim of reducing the rate of social exclusion and relative poverty of children from 17.4% to at least 15%.

General Situation

Economic hardship and poverty in Estonia continue to threaten most those with health limitations and disabilities, older people, young people, women, people of other nationalities and the unemployed. The relative poverty rate is highest among older people living alone; in 2024, poverty grew most in single-parent families. Social protection measures do not always provide sufficient protection against poverty, and the potential of individuals in the labour market has not been fully realised. This is complicated by the fact that people with disabilities and reduced work capacity constitute a significant share of the population (7.4% and 9% respectively at the end of 2025, according to data from Statistics Estonia's birth-rate analysis).

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, the employment rate fell from 80.5% to 79.1% in March 2020, and the unemployment rate rose from 4.5% to 6.9%. The crisis particularly affected accommodation, catering, culture and entertainment sectors. Regional disparities also widened; for example, the unemployment rate in Ida-Virumaa rose to 11.5%. Among age groups, young people suffered the most, as a larger proportion of them worked in sectors hit by the pandemic. Youth unemployment rose from 11.6% in 2019 to 18.3% in 2020.

In the period 2021–2025, the combined effect of favourable labour market conditions and the implementation of labour market measures has resulted in a continuous upward trend in labour market participation (i.e. more people are actively participating in the labour market), the employment rate has remained consistently high and the unemployment rate has remained around 6–7%. Although the absolute poverty rate fell to 1.4% in 2021, it has risen to 3.3% by 2024 following Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine and the resulting rise in prices and cost of living.

Table 1. Indicators (SDG 1).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
1.1. Absolute poverty rate, %	3.2	2.2	**3.3** (2024)
1.2. Persistent relative poverty rate, %	16.1	14.3	**12.8** (2023)
1.2.1. Persistent relative poverty rate in households with children, %	11.4	6.9	**6.2** (2023)
1.3. Household savings rate, %	10.5	13.0	**7.3** (2024)
1.4. At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate, %	24.4	22.2	**21.8** (2024)

Measures and Activities

Central Government Level

Labour market, social, education and youth work measures contribute most to reducing poverty. Raising educational attainment, including reducing the share of people without vocational or professional education, and measures to increase employment are important contributing factors. Effective and well-targeted social benefits and improved access to public services also contribute.

Various labour market measures contribute to poverty reduction, including supporting the swift return of unemployed people to the labour market through active labour market measures, preventing unemployment through preventive measures and ensuring subsistence during unemployment through passive labour market measures. To support better subsistence of the unemployed during periods of high unemployment when returning to work may be difficult, from 2023 Estonia's unemployment insurance benefit system has become more flexible and better adapted to economic and labour market conditions. This means that the duration of unemployment insurance benefit payments can be extended by 60–120 days depending on the labour market situation. In 2025, the unemployment insurance system was updated to enable a transition to a new unemployment insurance benefit system from 2026. The change improved the situation of employed persons with reduced work capacity. With EU funding, two application rounds were opened in 2025: one to support the employment of people aged over 55 and another to support the labour market participation of people with health limitations. A pilot project was initiated to find suitable solutions for bringing economically inactive people into employment, supporting women in Ida-Virumaa to work.

In 2024, the Riigikogu approved a package of legislative amendments extending the compulsory learning obligation to the age of 18 and enabling a vocational education reform. The amendments took effect in the 2025/2026 academic year (see SDG 4 for details). Under the programme *Youth work measures for supporting youth entry into the labour market and providing support measures for NEET youth*, young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET are offered support through mobile youth work. In 2024, a development programme for mobile youth workers was piloted, and in 2025 a manual for mobile youth work was completed. The long-term goal of the programme is for 65% of NEET young people who have participated in support measures to have exited NEET status by 2029. To prevent young people from becoming NEET, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications allocated additional funds

for organising youth work camps. Supported by this, the Education and Youth Board opened up to 1,000 additional youth camp places in 2026 to enable more young people to gain their first work experience.

Benefits were increased to reduce the poverty risk of people with disabilities. In 2025, monthly benefits for children with severe and profound disabilities and working-age people with profound disabilities were increased, and a one-off additional benefit was paid. The rules for granting subsistence benefits were also made fairer by discontinuing the counting of housing as an asset. From 2026, the subsistence benefit thresholds were raised for all household members. To ensure better subsistence for older people, pension indexation was continued and the average old-age pension rose by 5.3% from 1 April 2026.

The economic security of families with children is supported by a survivor's benefit entering into force in October 2026, which will be paid to a child who has lost one or both parents. The benefit ensures more uniform support for children who have lost a parent. The amount is the same for all recipients and takes into account the cost of maintaining the child. In 2026, the amount is approximately EUR 350 per month. The benefit is paid until the child reaches the age of 19, and while studying, until the age of 21.

Non-Governmental and/or Local Government Level

In 2013, the Estonian Large Families Association launched the *Family Card* programme, aimed at improving large families' access to various products and leisure services. As of 2025, more than 60 catering establishments, 15 cultural institutions and 130 leisure service providers have joined the programme. In 2021, a bilateral cooperation agreement was signed with Latvia and Lithuania to extend the *Family Card* programme to neighbouring countries, and in 2022 development work was carried out to link the existing system with the Population Register, the Estonian Education Information System and the Transport Administration.

The Development Cooperation Roundtable raises awareness on the SDGs, global inequality and global poverty reduction. One of its objectives is to eliminate global poverty, for which it organises information activities and coordinates the work of its members.

International Level

One of the objectives of Estonia's development cooperation is to contribute to poverty reduction in the world in an environmentally sustainable manner. Considering global trends in the field, however, several challenges, including poverty reduction, have become more complex than before. Development cooperation and humanitarian aid are under increasing pressure from growing resistance to Western values, increasing tensions in international relations, sharpening competition between countries in the economic and information technology sectors, and the impact of climate change.

Changed circumstances require the development of a more effective humanitarian aid model. Accordingly, Estonia has adopted the approach that in the humanitarian field it is important to address the root causes of crises and to align their mitigation with humanitarian and donor aid. In other words, to provide humanitarian assistance in parallel with activities that improve peace and security. This makes it possible to better cope with changing circumstances and challenges, as it helps to more effectively bridge the gap between conflicts and humanitarian assistance.



SDG 2:
End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

The framework for food security and agricultural development in Estonia is the *Agriculture and Fisheries Sector Development Plan until 2030* (PÕKA), approved in 2021, the general objective of which is to ensure that locally produced food is preferred, the environment and biodiversity are preserved, food sector businesses are successful and rural and coastal communities are viable. PÕKA is based on the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 2021–2027 programme period.

In addition to PÕKA, food and agriculture objectives are also supported by the joint development plan *Estonian Agriculture and Food 2030* prepared by the Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce in 2020, focusing on increasing value added created in Estonia's agricultural and food sector supply chain by 50% by 2030; the *Population Health Development Plan 2020–2030*, covering balanced nutrition interventions; the vision document *Estonian Food 2022–2025*; and the *Estonian Circular Bioeconomy Roadmap until 2030*.

Over the years, the overall objectives of the CAP have not changed significantly, although the 2023–2027 period placed greater emphasis on environmental protection and climate action, to provide more effective support to agricultural holdings that contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, or to the production of renewable energy and biomaterials. In other respects, the CAP's focus remains, as before, on supporting agriculture and the food industry, helping those responsible for ensuring food security to maintain the necessary productivity and keep consumer prices at a reasonable level.

General Situation

As at the end of 2023, agriculture, fisheries and the food industry accounted for 3.6% of total employment. This represented a decrease compared with 2022, likely reflecting the lagged impact of the economic downturn on the labour market. Labour productivity in both agriculture and the food industry has increased significantly over the years but remains below the EU average. As agricultural land is mainly concentrated in larger enterprises, productivity growth and the uptake of new technologies are primarily driven by these enterprises.

In terms of production technologies, Estonia's continuing challenge is to strike a balance between food production and the preservation of soil and water biodiversity. Environmental protection, the sustainable use of renewable natural resources and the conservation of biodiversity in agricultural production can be supported through CAP measures and the support mechanisms of the Agricultural Registers and

Information Board (PRIA), by directing additional investments into the digitalisation of agriculture, harnessing the potential of R&D-based integrated farming and organic farming, and supporting cooperation.

Food security is also addressed by the Soil Monitoring and Resilience Directive, adopted in December 2025, which prioritises ensuring that the public, especially land users and landowners, have access to the best available information on soil condition, practices that support soil health and fertility, and funding sources. Estonia will transpose this framework through a new Soil Act, which will increase awareness of the value of soil, improve access to advisory services, enhance land value through greater soil fertility and reduced degradation, and set objectives for improved water management, support for biodiversity and increased carbon sequestration.

Table 2. Indicators (SDG 2).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
2.1. Agricultural productivity, euros	9,465	19,726	**18,291** (2024)
2.2. Share of organic farmland, %	18.02	22.4	**22.6** (2024)
2.3. Share of organic produce in agricultural output, %	9.2	8.9	**7.8** (2024)
2.4. Marketed plant protection products, active substance kg	834,328	784,059	**782,453** (2024)
2.5.1. Nitrogen fertiliser use, kg/ha	36.4	42.1	**36.9** (2024)
2.5.2. Phosphorus fertiliser use, kg/ha	3.4	4.9	**2.9** (2024)

Measures and Activities

Central Government Level

Following the approval of Estonia's CAP Strategic Plan for the 2021–2027 programming period, a range of agricultural environmental support measures were implemented. These included eco-scheme direct payments, agri-environmental support under the Rural Development Programme, support for enhanced animal health and welfare management practices, support for cooperation in animal disease control programmes, and animal welfare support measures.

One of the cross-cutting themes of the PÕKA is the bioeconomy, the development of which is also supported by the *Estonian Circular Bioeconomy Roadmap to 2030* prepared by the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture. In the agricultural sector, the roadmap focuses on soil fertility. In 2023, in cooperation with the University of Tartu, a methodology for assessing soil biodiversity was developed, and the extent to which different land-use practices affect soil biota communities was examined. The results provide a basis for identifying measures to improve soil conditions and reduce the impact of food production on soil biodiversity across different regions of Estonia. The study also serves as valuable input for the development of a national soil monitoring system, enabling more accurate assessment of human impacts on soils and the design of more targeted environmental protection measures.

In 2024, the *Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Plant Protection Products 2024–2029* was updated. Its central objective is to reduce the risks to human health and the environment associated with the use of plant protection products. In the same year, PRIA launched a free and user-friendly electronic field record book within its field management service. The tool enables farmers to reduce administrative burden and make use of data-driven and science-based digital services to improve profitability while reducing environmental impacts. It also provides government authorities with better data for evidence-based agricultural policymaking. The digital services support environmentally sustainable and economically efficient fertiliser application decisions. In 2024, additional services were introduced, including liming and fertilisation recommendations, as well as nutrient and humus balance calculators.

In 2025, further tools and methodologies were developed for farmers. A regulation governing the calculation of soil nutrient balances was adopted, and a nitrogen balance tool was introduced through PRIA's e-services platform. To support legislative development, the analysis *Legal Principles for Ensuring the Use and Protection of Valuable Agricultural Land* was completed, and an assessment of the legal framework governing land and soil use was initiated. These activities strengthened legal clarity and laid the groundwork for more effective land-use regulation. In cooperation with partner organisations, work continued on a research and development project on land and soil use aimed at establishing a monitoring and management system. Together with the Ministry of Climate and the Estonian Environment Agency, the project continued in 2025 with the objective of creating an innovative and resource-efficient national land and soil use monitoring and management system. The system will provide a foundation for integrated, high-quality spatial planning and land-use decision-making. Activities included further updating of the digital soil map, preparation of a comprehensive overview of land and soil governance, assessment of the costs of implementing the Soil Monitoring Directive, and recommendations for future action. These efforts strengthened the evidence base and improved the quality of land-use planning decisions.

Soil organic carbon content, which is essential for maintaining soil fertility, is also being assessed under the requirements arising from the Soil Monitoring Directive, and information is being disseminated on measures to improve soil health. Several research and development projects are currently underway in this area, alongside the launch of a comprehensive soil monitoring analysis that is expected to support the development of long-term strategic guidance for landowners and land users, including food producers.

The first report of the *Green Traffic Light* (Rohefoor) study has been completed, and work is continuing on the development of a prototype. Rohefoor is a new digital tool designed to assess and promote environmental, social and governance (ESG) sustainability at farm level. The initiative is intended to support the achievement of European and national green transition objectives, particularly the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the conservation of biodiversity and the protection of agricultural soils. As agriculture accounts for a significant share of environmental pressures, Rohefoor focuses specifically on primary production and agricultural enterprises.

In 2023, in cooperation with the Estonian University of Life Sciences, green transition roadmaps were developed for four agricultural and food sectors: dairy, meat, cereals and horticulture. These roadmaps help define the objectives of the green transition and identify the actions required to achieve them within the agricultural and food sectors. In the same year, the *Organic Farming Development Action Plan 2023–2030* was adopted, based on PÕKA, and an organic food support scheme for educational institutions was launched. As a result, lunches prepared from healthy and organic ingredients are now provided to 20% of

Estonia's kindergarten and school children in 153 educational institutions. The objective is to ensure that by 2030 at least 50% of lunches served in kindergartens and general education schools are prepared using organic food. Overall, Estonia's organic sector remains in a strong position. As of 2025, Estonia had 1,869 organic producers, and organically managed land accounted for approximately 23% of the country's total agricultural area.

In the food industry, the Act on Combating Unfair Trading Practices in the Agricultural and Food Supply Chain entered into force, helping to protect suppliers of agricultural products and food from unfair trading practices by buyers. Implementation of the objectives of the *Estonian Food 2022–2025* vision document continued, contributing to the promotion of local food, raising consumer awareness, increasing appreciation of domestic food production and strengthening the competitiveness of food producers. Through the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS), knowledge transfer activities support the dissemination of marketing-related knowledge and good practices to businesses. Efforts also continued to diversify school food programmes by encouraging the consumption of milk and dairy products, fruit and vegetables among children and promoting healthy dietary habits in pre-primary, basic and upper secondary education.

In 2023, the National Centre for Laboratory Research and Risk Assessment (LABRIS) commenced operations within the area of responsibility of the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture. One of its key functions is to assess risks related to food safety, communicate food-chain risks and provide scientific advice on food safety issues. Among its most significant recent activities, LABRIS has led assessments of the incidence of food-borne disease outbreaks and contributed to the development of methodologies for measuring consumer awareness of food safety.

Each autumn, Estonia celebrates the Month of Estonian Food, coordinated by the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture and its partners. The initiative centres on events dedicated to local food held throughout the country, including fairs, festivals, workshops and conferences.

In 2025, important steps were taken to promote public health and sustainable food choices in Estonia. Analysis began on the possibility of introducing public procurement criteria that would increase the share of locally produced, organic and plant-based food in public catering services. Discussions were also launched on the introduction of front-of-pack nutrition labelling systems, including Nutri-Score. In addition, the food assistance card system was further developed and the level of support increased. At the end of 2025, the amount loaded onto food assistance cards was raised from EUR 30 to EUR 36, reflecting the fact that the cost of a minimum food basket had increased by almost one fifth over the previous two years.

Non-Governmental and/or Local Government Level

In Estonia, the largest civil society organisations working on issues related to food security are the Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce and its member organisation, the Estonian Food Industry Association. The primary role of both organisations is to raise awareness and provide information. The Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce is also one of the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture's key partners, contributing to the management of projects of national importance, including international initiatives, while representing the interests of food producers and agricultural enterprises in their relations with the state.

Since 2021, the NGO Green Municipality (*Roheline Vald*) has coordinated a food-sharing initiative aimed at contributing to poverty reduction by 2030 through solar-powered community food-sharing cupboards. These cupboards provide a simple and practical way to promote environmentally sustainable behaviour, strengthen community cohesion and prevent edible food from being discarded. The weatherproof cupboards operate on solar energy and are accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They allow people either to leave surplus food for others or to take food for consumption or meal preparation. The initiative is open to everyone regardless of socio-economic background, with the emphasis placed on fostering sustainable consumption practices and reducing food waste across society.

To reduce food waste and support people in need, Estonia is home to the Estonian Food Bank, a network of charitable organisations that distributes food rescued from retail chains, food donated by citizens and food assistance provided through European Union programmes. In 2025, the Food Bank distributed a total of 3.9 million kilograms of food, supporting an average of 15,300 people each week.

International Level

In 2024, the Fisheries Information Centre was established in Estonia with support from the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) 2021–2027. The Centre's role is to enhance the knowledge and skills of businesses operating in fisheries, aquaculture and the valorisation of aquatic biological resources, thereby contributing to greater economic and environmental sustainability. In addition, the Centre promotes cooperation among enterprises, non-governmental organisations, and research and development institutions in the sector, while also improving public awareness and the overall image of fisheries.

Through support provided under the Fund, investments are being made to establish new marine aquaculture farms and expand existing facilities for fish production. Increased production volumes contribute to improved profitability of aquaculture enterprises and reduce the need for imports of raw materials by companies engaged in processing aquaculture products. This, in turn, strengthens Estonia's food security.

In 2024, Estonia participated in the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) Safe2Eat campaign, which focuses on raising awareness and improving public understanding of food safety across Europe. In addition, the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture contributes to the work of the Codex Alimentarius programme, helping to shape international food safety standards and support high levels of food safety both in Estonia and globally.



SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

The strategic objectives for health and well-being are set out in the *Population Health Development Plan 2020–2030* and the *Well-being Development Plan 2023–2030*. Estonia's main health sector objectives are to raise the average life expectancy of Estonian people to 78 years for men and 84 years for women by 2030. Also set for 2030 is the objective to increase the number of healthy life years in a way that the number of healthy life years grows faster than life expectancy, i.e. that people can live a larger part of their lives without health-related limitations.

General Situation

Estonia's overall health system can be considered effective, as 93.9% of the population was covered by health insurance in 2024 and life expectancy has increased at a faster rate than the EU average. The trend in life expectancy remains positive despite the decline of 0.4 years recorded during the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, the gender gap in life expectancy remains significantly larger in Estonia than the EU average. In 2024, the gap across the European Union was 5.2 years, whereas women in Estonia lived, on average, eight years longer than men. The disparity is even greater among population groups with differing socio-economic backgrounds. Similar inequalities are observed in healthy life years. According to 2024 data, healthy life expectancy was 56.8 years for men and 60.6 years for women, representing an average increase of 2% compared with 2020.

The share of older persons in the population and the number of persons with disabilities continue to increase, creating a growing need to improve the accessibility of the living environment and strengthen the long-term care system. Estonia's long-term care system does not yet adequately reflect demographic changes and continues to provide insufficient support for those in need of assistance. For this reason, reform of the social protection system is identified as one of the priorities of the Estonia 2035 strategy, with the aim of ensuring adequate health insurance coverage in the future and maintaining the long-term sustainability of healthcare financing.

Table 3. Indicators (SDG 3).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
3.1. Life expectancy	77.78	78.76	**79.46** (2024)
3.2. Healthy life years	56.5	57.5	**58.7** (2024)
3.3. Share of population with excess body weight, %	52	52	**53.0** (2024)
3.4.1. Deaths due to accidents, poisoning and trauma per 100,000 population	65.28	70.96	**66.38** (2024)
3.4.2. Fatal occupational accidents per 100,000 population	1.98	0.75	**1.02** (2024)
3.5.1. Treatable mortality	2,468	2,190	**2,064** (2024)
3.5.2. Preventable mortality	3,158	3,169	**2,877** (2024)
3.6. Mortality from chronic diseases per 100,000 population aged under 65	156	147.6	**147.6** (2020)
3.7.1. HIV infections per 100,000 population	17.4	11.1	**8.2** (2025)
3.7.2. Tuberculosis infections per 100,000 population	12.7	8.2	**5.2** (2024)
3.7.3. Acute hepatitis B infections per 100,000 population	0.6	0.2	**0.1** (2025)
3.7.4. Chronic hepatitis B infections per 100,000 population	1.3	1.6	**1.9** (2025)
3.7.5. Acute hepatitis C infections per 100,000 population	1.1	0.9	**0.9** (2025)
3.7.6. Chronic hepatitis C infections per 100,000 population	15.4	10.3	**6.8** (2025)
3.8. Suicides per 100,000 population	13.91	15.56	**12.46** (2024)
3.9.1. Incidence of mental and behavioural disorders per 100,000 population	1,702.9	1,583	**2,235.1** (2024)
3.9.2. Mental and behavioural disorders due to psychoactive substance use per 100,000 population	217.8	198.1	**179** (2024)
3.10. Alcohol consumption per person aged 15 and over, litres of pure alcohol	10.2	10.8	**10.7** (2024)
3.11. Tobacco consumption among persons aged 16–64, %	21.3	17.9	**13.2** (2024)

Measures and Activities

Central Government Level

In 2023, the *Stepped Care Action Plan for Mental Health* was developed in response to the growing prevalence of mental health disorders in Estonia in recent years. To address this challenge, a stepped care model was introduced, providing a framework for the graduated delivery of evidence-based psychological interventions and support. The model is intended to improve both the quality and accessibility of mental health services.

In the same year, the Riigikogu adopted amendments concerning the supervision arrangements under the Biocides Act and approved an updated Water Act, reducing health and environmental risks associated with drinking water supply.

Under the *People-Centred Healthcare Programme*, EUR 13.2 million in one-off state support was allocated to hospitals included in the *Hospital Network Development Plan* and to ambulance service providers delivering vital services. The funding was intended to ensure the uninterrupted operation of hospitals and emergency medical services at full capacity during power outages and to safeguard continuous access to emergency healthcare for the population.

The Government also decided to support the treatment of children with rare diseases, as well as the continuation of treatment for rare diseases diagnosed in childhood, with approximately EUR 4 million annually. The funding covers the costs of orphan medicines, healthcare and support services, as well as out-of-pocket expenses incurred by families.

In 2023, the Government adopted a new national curriculum for physical education, transforming the subject into *movement education*. The revised curriculum places greater emphasis on the knowledge and skills required for independent lifelong physical activity. At the end of 2024, the Ministry of Education and Research allocated EUR 3 million to local governments and private school operators for the purchase of modern teaching equipment to support implementation of the new curriculum. The Ministry also supports the *Schools in Motion* programme during the period 2024–2028. The programme promotes opportunities for physical activity throughout the school day and school life, from the journey to school to extracurricular activities. As of early 2026, 226 schools were participating in the programme.

In December 2024, the Riigikogu adopted amendments to the Child Protection Act and related legislation aimed at strengthening cooperation between child protection workers and professionals working with children across different sectors. The amendments clarify existing obligations to report children in need of assistance and identify categories of professionals who have an enhanced duty to recognise signs of need and notify local governments.

A new Public Health Act entered into force in 2025, accompanied by the secondary legislation necessary for its implementation. The Act and its regulations affect a wide range of everyday services and institutions. For example, they establish new nutritional requirements for kindergartens, schools and social welfare institutions. These institutions are now expected to provide more diverse and balanced menus, with a stronger emphasis on vegetables, fruit, berries and fish. The Act also introduces requirements relating to electromagnetic fields, beauty services and swimming facilities. Under the new legislation, tanning salon and tattoo services are restricted to adults. Furthermore, all ministries are

assigned responsibilities in the field of public health, including the obligation to assess and take account of health impacts when developing policies and decisions.

In 2025, state fees and annual charges were introduced for placing tobacco products and electronic cigarettes on the market. Amendments to the Tobacco Act entered into force in January 2026, aligning the regulation of heated tobacco products with that of other tobacco products, including a ban on characterising flavours.

Additional amendments to the Health Insurance Act were adopted to improve social protection for parents returning to work after parental leave. Since July 2024, sickness and care benefits for these parents have been calculated based on their previous income rather than the statutory minimum wage. The reform strengthens social guarantees for parents of young children and supports a better balance between work and family life.

In 2025, EUR 3.96 million was allocated through a targeted state programme to support treatment for children with rare diseases and for individuals continuing treatment initiated in childhood. The programme covers costs not reimbursed through health insurance, including orphan medicines, healthcare services, support services and family co-payments. In 2025, support was channelled through four charitable organisations, which ensured that assistance reached patients and their families.

Since 2025, local governments have received permanent funding to provide community-based mental health services. This funding creates the conditions for psychosocial and psychological support to become more widely accessible across all municipalities. To facilitate early identification of symptoms associated with common mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression, Estonia is further developing the stepped care model, ranging from guided and self-guided self-help interventions to clearly defined treatment pathways between primary and specialist care. A pilot implementation plan has been completed, and funding has been secured for the preparation and testing of the model.

In 2025, the integrated social and healthcare support service VESTA was launched in Ida-Viru County. The new service combines healthcare and social support, enabling people to access the assistance they need through a single point of contact. The VESTA team includes ten health pathway coordinators with qualifications in nursing or social work. They help individuals develop personal well-being plans, coordinate necessary services and support health-related decision-making, particularly during challenging periods. The service simplifies access to coordinated support for residents while allowing family physicians to focus on medical treatment, with social issues managed by the health pathway coordinators.

In 2025, a study was launched to assess the effects on human health of exposure to environmental chemicals, including oil shale industry chemicals, heavy metals and pesticides. The findings are expected to improve understanding of long-term health risks, support the development of more effective risk mitigation measures and help target preventive interventions to regions and population groups facing higher exposure burdens.

From 1 January 2026, access to voluntary health insurance was expanded. All residents of Estonia can now conclude a voluntary health insurance contract through the Health Portal, regardless of previous insurance history or social tax contributions, and payments can be made in monthly instalments. This reform particularly benefits individuals with irregular income patterns or interruptions in their employment

history, helping to prevent gaps in health insurance coverage and ensuring continuous access to healthcare services.

Non-Governmental and/or Local Government Level

In 2020, with support from the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior, the Foundation Valuing Life launched the project *Cooperative Provision of Services Supporting the Well-being of Children and Families*. The project aims to improve the rules and procedures governing judicial and administrative proceedings to ensure children access to information about their rights, free legal counsel and other legal support. The project also includes the sub-programme *Dialogue on Behalf of Children*, which is aimed at separating families with more complex relationship dynamics to mitigate the negative effects of high-conflict separations.

In 2020, with support from the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior, the Foundation Valuing Life also launched the project *Cooperative Provision of Services Supporting a Child-rich Estonia and Family Well-being*. The project aims to strengthen a life-course-based system of services for families and improve existing cooperation networks. It is expected to promote a positive image of parenthood and increase young people's readiness to establish family relationships independently.

To prevent and reduce problems related to drug use, the Government approved the strategy *Estonia's Drug Policy until 2030* in 2021. Its objective is to reduce drug use and related harm and to promote a healthier and safer society. Local authorities and civil society organisations play an important role in its implementation, as prevention and early intervention require cooperation across all levels and sectors, particularly in awareness-raising to ensure public support for the policy. Implementation is led by the Ministry of the Interior in cooperation with various partners, with the aim of achieving a sustained downward trend in drug-related problems by 2030.

Since 2022, the Estonian Union for Child Welfare has coordinated the Children's Report submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The report is prepared by children themselves and provides an overview of how children in Estonia are doing, as well as what causes them concern and brings them joy. It brings together children's reflections on how their rights are protected and what could be improved in their lives. In the report completed in 2023, children in Estonia conveyed their messages to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child themselves for the first time. During the process, they were supported by advisers from the Children's and Youth Rights Department of the Office of the Chancellor of Justice and by staff of the Estonian Union for Child Welfare. To improve children's well-being and promote more equal rights, children and young people put forward a range of proposals, from recommendations at the local government level to measures concerning children's safety and labour market competitiveness.

From 2025, amendments to the Social Welfare Act entered into force to improve access to psychosocial and psychological support. Previously, local governments had to apply to the state for funding for mental health services through application rounds; from 2025 onwards, this funding is included annually in the local government support fund. This more stable funding mechanism gives local governments greater autonomy in providing services suited to local needs. The development of mental health and psychosocial services has also been supported through project-based calls for proposals and strategic partnerships.

International Level

In 2023, under the leadership of the Police and Border Guard Board, work began on the European Union Internal Security Fund project *Preventing Children from Becoming Victims of Sexual Abuse Online*. The project raises awareness among children, parents and professionals working with children about the sexual abuse of children online, conducts relevant research and develops evidence-based prevention measures.

Between 2023 and 2029, the Education and Youth Board and the Ministry of Education and Research are implementing the European Social Fund co-financed programme *Youth Work Measures to Support Young People's Entry into the Labour Market and to Provide Support Measures for Young People in NEET Status*. One of the objectives of the programme is to increase mental health awareness among lower secondary school pupils through the implementation of the Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) programme in Estonia. YAM is an international school-based prevention programme that helps improve young people's mental health literacy and strengthens protective factors, supporting mental well-being before problems emerge or become established. In 2024, the first group of facilitators for the youth mental health programme completed their training and will begin implementing the programme in different regions of Estonia. The objective is for a total of 5,500 young people to have taken part in the programme's activities by 2029. The Ministry of Education and Research also continues activities to prevent and reduce bullying and support mental health in educational institutions.

Estonia continued to show support and solidarity with Ukraine by providing EUR 1.8 million for prosthetic treatment for Ukrainians injured in the war. Between 2022 and 2024, 41 Ukrainian combatants received prostheses and the necessary treatment at the rehabilitation centre of East Tallinn Central Hospital. This cooperation also enables Estonia to learn from Ukraine's wartime experience and strengthen its own crisis preparedness. Estonia signed a cooperation agreement to support Ukraine in restoring and developing its healthcare system and on its path towards accession to the European Union. This represents Estonia's contribution to Ukraine's reconstruction and to the protection of people's health. In addition, the European Commission approved Ukraine's funding application for cross-border health data exchange. The exchange of patient summaries and e-prescriptions will first be piloted between Ukraine and Estonia through the existing central MyHealth@EU infrastructure.

To promote international health cooperation, Estonia concluded a memorandum of understanding with Cyprus focusing on three key areas: early detection and diagnosis of cancer, development of e-health and data exchange, and improving medicines pricing and joint procurement. Together with Latvia, Lithuania and Denmark, Estonia signed a declaration of cooperation on joint procurement of medicines in order to strengthen security of supply. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania also signed a memorandum of understanding enabling mutual support in ensuring access to blood and necessary equipment in emergencies or during temporary shortages.

Estonia participated in the United Nations General Assembly, sessions of the World Health Organization Regional Committee for Europe, and meetings of European Union health ministers, reaffirming that Estonia's health policy is both nationally responsible and internationally engaged. Discussions focused, among other issues, on the implementation of the pandemic agreement, the health impacts of climate change and efforts to counter health-related misinformation.



SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

The objectives of Estonia's education sector are set out in the *Education Strategy 2021–2035* and the *Youth Sector Development Plan 2021–2035*. The overarching goal of Estonia's education policy is to ensure that people possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to fulfil their potential in personal life, work and society, while contributing to the development of Estonia and to sustainable development globally.

The key indicators targeted through strategic policy interventions include reducing the share of 18–24-year-olds with low educational attainment who are not participating in education or training, increasing participation in lifelong learning among adults, raising the share of adults with vocational and professional education, increasing the proportion of students achieving top-level skills, and strengthening young people's trust in public institutions.

General Situation

Compared with other OECD countries, Estonia offers excellent opportunities for acquiring education. Public expenditure on education accounts for approximately 6% of GDP. Education is accessible and free of charge for all, regardless of gender, religion or socio-economic background. The quality of education is high, as demonstrated by Estonia's strong performance in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and by the high participation rates in early childhood and general education.

To further improve equal opportunities and reduce socio-economic inequalities linked to educational outcomes, the Government is implementing the transition to Estonian-language instruction in basic and upper secondary education. The reform aims to improve educational attainment, further study opportunities and labour market competitiveness among children and young people whose first language is Russian, while reducing socio-economic disparities associated with educational and linguistic differences in society.

The relevant amendments to the Education Act were adopted in December 2022. The transition began in 2024 in pre-primary education and in Grades 1 and 4 of general education schools. The reform will be fully implemented by the 2032/2033 academic year.

Table 4. Indicators (SDG 4).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
4.1.1. Adult participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training, %	15.7	17.1	**23.8** (2025)
4.1.2. Adult participation rate in informal learning, %	n/a	59.6 (2021)	**65.7** (2025)
4.2. Share of people aged 25–34 with tertiary education, %	41	43.1	**44.3** (2025)
4.3. Share of people aged 25–64 with vocational or professional education, %	71.5	74.1	**73.8** (2025)
4.4. Share of people aged 16–74 with at least basic digital skills, %	60	62 (2019)	**62.52** (2025)
4.5.1. Share of top-performing students in reading, %	13.9 (2021)	n/a	**10.6** (2022)
4.5.2. Share of top-performing students in mathematics, %	15.5 (2021)	n/a	**13.1** (2022)
4.5.3. Share of top-performing students in science, %	12.2 (2021)	n/a	**11.6** (2022)
4.6. Share of young people aged 7–26 participating in hobby education, %	24	30.3	**32.9** (2024)
4.7. Share of 18–24-year-olds with low educational attainment not in education, %	11.4	8.5	**11** (2024)

Measures and Activities

Central Government Level

In 2024, a new Preschool Education Act was adopted to better respond to the needs of children and families and to improve access to early childhood education and care. Under the new legislation, local governments are required, upon request by parents, to ensure a childcare place for all children aged 1.5–3 and a kindergarten place for all children aged 3–7, considering parental preferences regarding location. To fulfil this obligation, local governments may make use of private childcare and kindergarten providers and cooperate with other municipalities.

The transition to an Estonian-language education system began in 2024, initially in pre-primary education and in Grades 1 and 4 of general education schools. The greatest challenge in ensuring a smooth transition has been the shortage of qualified education professionals. To address this, a range of measures aimed at training educational staff and increasing the attractiveness of the education sector as an employer were introduced in 2023. These included a support measure encouraging Estonian-speaking education professionals to take up positions in Ida-Viru County, with a planned annual budget of EUR 15 million. In 2023, salary support under the scheme was provided to 1,151 education professionals as well as 150 school principals and vice-principals. In addition, state-funded Estonian language courses at B1, B2 and C1 levels were offered to education professionals in Narva, Sillamäe, Kohtla-Järve and Tallinn. In 2023, a total of 297 participants completed these courses. A further support measure enabled school and kindergarten providers to apply for funding for additional Estonian-language instruction, expanded Estonian-language teaching and the education of newly arrived immigrants. In total, EUR 5 million in language-learning support was allocated in 2023. In 2024, teachers providing instruction in Estonian in Ida-Viru County received salary supplements

amounting to approximately EUR 15 million. Thanks to these support measures and salary incentives, more than 400 new teachers and support specialists joined educational institutions in Ida-Viru County in autumn 2024. While previous efforts focused primarily on improving teachers' language proficiency, greater attention has been given since 2025 to teaching methods and professional support. The Ministry prepared guidance materials for teachers, supported schools in acquiring additional teaching resources and continued to provide higher salaries for teachers delivering instruction in Estonian in Ida-Viru County.

At the end of 2024, the Riigikogu adopted legislative amendments establishing compulsory participation in education until the age of 18. The previous compulsory school attendance requirement, which applied until age 17, was replaced by an obligation to remain in education until reaching adulthood. As a result, young people are required to continue their studies after completing basic education, either in general secondary education or vocational education and training, until they turn 18 or complete a secondary or vocational qualification. The objective is to support every student in continuing their educational pathway after basic school and to reduce dropout rates from both vocational and general education, ensuring that all young people remain engaged in education until adulthood and retain opportunities for future vocational or higher education studies.

In 2023, preparations began for a reform of vocational education and training aimed at increasing the diversity and flexibility of vocational secondary education programmes offered to graduates of basic schools and extending most programmes to four years, with a stronger emphasis on general competences. In 2025, vocational education institutions launched the first four-year vocational secondary education programmes under the new model. These programmes provide young people with both occupational skills and a strong secondary education, enabling them either to enter the labour market or continue into higher education. In autumn 2025, students were able to enrol in 13 new programmes across 12 institutions. While vocational education had previously been largely free of charge for adults as well, repeat studies were made subject to tuition fees where an individual had already obtained a qualification at the same or a higher level. The aim of this change is to direct resources more effectively towards supporting initial education for young people.

A dedicated funding instrument was established within the area of responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research to support the development of research and development capacity in professional higher education institutions. Like the arrangements for universities, the objective is to ensure that professional higher education institutions have the research and development capability necessary to maintain the quality of higher education. Eligibility for funding is based on an institutional development plan and an associated action plan setting out research and development objectives, expected results and planned activities. The level of support is set at 5% of the operational grant allocated to the institution under the Higher Education Act.

Amendments to the Higher Education Act entered into force from the 2024/2025 academic year, clarifying the conditions for tuition-free higher education and improving access for individuals without a higher education qualification. The amendments restrict repeated tuition-free study at the same level of higher education. Individuals who already hold a higher education qualification may enrol again in tuition-free studies at the same level only after ten years have elapsed since graduation.

A reform of the student loan system was introduced to make student loans more attractive and flexible. In June 2026, the Riigikogu adopted amendments to the Study Allowances and Student Loans Act, extending the repayment period, reducing the interest rate and abolishing the requirement for a private guarantor or real estate collateral. The reform enters into force in autumn 2026.

The Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund offers a range of learning opportunities for adults, available to both unemployed and employed persons. Support is provided for participation in formal education,

acquisition of qualifications, labour market training and employer-based training. In 2024, additional ESF+ funding became available for the development of green skills and transversal skills. In 2025, the Fund adopted a new strategy that places particular emphasis on strengthening the digital skills of unemployed persons.

The Government is also developing education programmes in the field of national defence under the leadership of the Ministry of Defence. Three national defence elective modules were developed under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Research, each consisting of three courses. These modules help young people to act more effectively in crisis situations. The objective is to strengthen security and comprehensive national defence through education, research and development. Activities are implemented by the Estonian Military Academy, which provides military degree programmes and continuing education and contributes to the development of military science.

Non-governmental and Local Government Level

The Mondo World School programme implements global education activities that support schools, education professionals and young people in addressing global issues. The World School portal (maailmakool.ee) provides learning materials, films, exhibitions, guest lectures and workshops that help learners analyse global challenges and opportunities.

Since 2012, Mondo has coordinated the global education course *Global Education in a Changing Society* for education and youth work professionals. The course focuses on the Sustainable Development Goals and the understanding of global challenges, while introducing innovative teaching methods that support the development of critically minded and responsible global citizens. Approximately 25 education professionals from Estonia participate in the course each year.

Since 2012, the KiVa anti-bullying programme implemented by the Bully-Free School Foundation has continued to operate nationwide. The programme aims to raise awareness of bullying prevention and early identification of bullying in schools. Preventive activities include the development and dissemination of information and educational materials, as well as lessons for pupils in grades 1–9, focusing on strengthening group dynamics and social skills. Schools participating in the programme establish dedicated KiVa teams, whose members receive comprehensive training in responding to bullying incidents and supporting victims. At the end of each school year, the effectiveness of the programme is assessed to evaluate its impact.

In preventing and reducing bullying and supporting mental health, the Ministry of Education and Research cooperates closely with the NGO Vaikuseminutid (Minutes of Silence), Peaasi.ee (Head Matters), the Estonian Union for Child Welfare and the Bully-Free School Foundation.

International Level

Between 2023 and 2024, People to People Estonia implemented the *Women Online* project under the Interreg Central Baltic programme. The project provided online marketing training to 80 Ukrainian women currently living in Estonia and Latvia. Participants who completed the training obtained the LP1 certificate in online marketing.

In cooperation with researchers from Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden, Mondo coordinated the development of *Climate Call*, an educational card game, between 2021 and 2023. The game helps young people and adults understand the climate impacts of everyday activities and makes climate change more accessible and understandable. To date, the game has been translated into nine languages and is widely used in Estonian schools in both Estonian and Russian. In 2023, it received the Environmental Footprint Award for Educational Material of the Year.



SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

The strategic framework for gender equality policy is provided by the *Welfare Development Plan 2023–2030*, which outlines Estonia's key challenges and opportunities in the fields of gender equality and equal treatment, sets out the main policy directions for advancing these objectives, and establishes relevant indicators and targets for 2030. Activities aimed at promoting a more equal distribution of care responsibilities between women and men are also implemented through the Ministry of Social Affairs' Children and Families Programme, while access to sexual and reproductive health services is supported through the *Population Health Development Plan 2020–2030*. The strategic framework for preventing and combating violence against women is provided by the *Action Plan for the Prevention of Domestic Violence 2024–2027*. Under the *Estonia 2035* strategy, the national target is to reduce the gender pay gap to 5% by 2035.

General Situation

Stereotypical perceptions of the roles of women and men in society continue to influence individual choices and contribute to the persistence of social and economic inequalities between women and men in the labour market, education and leisure activities. Over the past decade, Estonia's gender pay gap has narrowed by nearly ten percentage points, and Estonia ranks sixth among European countries in terms of improvement in its score on the European Institute for Gender Equality's (EIGE) Gender Equality Index.

At the same time, women's participation in leadership positions and other strategic decision-making roles remains a challenge, with Estonia continuing to perform below the European Union average in this area. Estonia also exhibits a higher degree of gender segregation in tertiary education than the EU average. Among women enrolled in tertiary education, 46% choose fields related to education, health or the humanities, whereas only 17% of male tertiary education students select these fields of study.

Estonia's older population is characterised by a higher proportion of women among older age groups, primarily because of the substantial difference in life expectancy between women and men. According to 2024 data, women in Estonia live on average nearly eight years longer than men, with life expectancy at birth standing at 83 years for women and 75 years for men. In the same year, healthy life expectancy at birth was 3.8 years lower for men than for women.

Table 5. Indicators (SDG 5).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
5.1. Gender pay gap, %	20.9	15.6	**13.2** (2024)
5.2. Share of women in managerial positions, %	36.2	37.4	**43.1** (2025)
5.3. Gender Equality Index, points	53.5 (2021)	54.2	**59.4** (2025)

Measures and Activities

Central Government Level

In 2023, the *Welfare Development Plan 2023–2030* was adopted. One of its sub-objectives is to ensure that women and men in Estonia enjoy equal rights, responsibilities, opportunities and obligations across all areas of society. The Development Plan includes measures to strengthen legal protection in the field, enhance cooperation between public authorities and organisations and networks promoting equality, raise public awareness with the aim of changing societal attitudes and reducing the prevalence of gender stereotypes, and increase women's economic participation and opportunities in society.

In 2024, amendments to the Securities Market Act entered into force with the aim of promoting gender balance on the boards of large, listed companies. Under the new provisions, the general meeting of a listed company must adopt one of two targets to improve gender balance: either at least 40% of supervisory board members must be from the underrepresented sex, or at least 33% of the combined members of the management board and supervisory board must be from the underrepresented sex.

To support employers, the Government developed the *Pay Mirror* digital application in 2024. Based on administrative register data, the tool enables organisations to monitor and analyse gender pay gaps within their workforce. Its purpose is to increase employer awareness and support the development and implementation of fair and transparent pay systems.

The gender pay gap and broader gender inequalities are influenced by gender stereotypes and gender segregation in education and the labour market. A study completed in 2024, *Reasons for the Low Representation of Men among Students and Employees in the Fields of Education, Health and Welfare*, examined gender balance in Education, Health and Welfare (EHW) occupations and how it has evolved over time. The study also analysed the factors influencing men's entry into and retention within these professions and proposed measures to increase male participation. While the study found that the number of men in EHW occupations has increased, their representation remains very low. The findings provide an evidence base for policymaking and the design of measures aimed at reducing gender segregation.

In 2024, training was launched for career guidance specialists of the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund with the objective of promoting gender stereotype-free career counselling. Preparations also began for a regulation establishing the support scheme *Reducing Gender Segregation in Education and the Labour Market*. The scheme is designed to support collaborative projects between educational institutions and employers aimed at reducing gender segregation in both EHW and STEM fields, including

information and communication technologies, and at improving gender balance at all levels of decision-making and leadership. The first calls for proposals were launched in 2025.

To draw attention to gender stereotypes in leadership and decision-making, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, in cooperation with Junior Achievement Estonia, organised the #GirlsTakeOver job-shadowing initiative for the first time in Estonia. The initiative aims to encourage girls to aspire to leadership positions, highlight gender-related barriers to advancement in senior management, and challenge gender stereotypes. Participants included girls from lower secondary schools, upper secondary schools and vocational education institutions across Estonia. Nearly 170 participants had the opportunity to shadow women leaders from a wide range of sectors, including government ministers and senior executives in the private sector.

Through strategic partnership funding, long-term support is provided to civil society organisations engaged in promoting gender equality and advocating for gender equality issues.

In recent years, growing public attention has been paid to violence against women and domestic violence, which accounts for approximately half of all violent crime in Estonia. At the end of 2023, ministries agreed on the cross-government *Domestic Violence Prevention Action Plan 2024–2027*. The plan is built around two principal objectives: ensuring that domestic violence is recognised and unequivocally condemned, and ensuring that people affected by domestic violence receive systematic, needs-based support. The Action Plan aims to reduce the share of repeat victims among registered domestic violence offences from 19% to below 9% by 2027 and to increase victims' satisfaction with the handling of domestic violence cases to at least 65%.

To achieve these objectives, the Action Plan focuses on strengthening the competence and awareness of professionals, increasing public awareness, improving procedures and support mechanisms affecting victim safety, enhancing the rehabilitation of perpetrators and strengthening crime prevention efforts.

Under the national curricula for basic schools and upper secondary schools that entered into force in 2023, the content of different subjects must include basic knowledge and skills enabling students to discuss issues related to gender equality and inequality. These topics are addressed primarily through personal, social and health education and civics education, but also more broadly across social science subjects. The objective is to develop students' ability to recognise gender inequalities in society and to contribute to the promotion of gender equality.

Non-Governmental and/or Local Government Level

To support victims of violence against women, regional support centres operate across Estonia under the umbrella of the Estonian Women's Shelters Union, which provides services in 14 counties. In addition, a nationwide 24-hour free helpline is available, enabling women who have experienced violence to access advice and support at any time. The Estonian Women's Shelters Union also engages in advocacy on women's rights and gender equality issues. The organisation has participated in research activities and provided feedback on legislative proposals. For example, in 2022 it submitted opinions and recommendations concerning the new Victim Support Act.

Since 2015, the independent feminist organisation Feministeerium has been active in Estonia, working to promote equality and strengthen the empowerment of women. Its principal areas of activity include communication, advocacy and community empowerment. In 2023, the Tallinn Feminist Forum (TALEF) was organised to strengthen and mobilise the feminist community through public discussion and

dialogue. In 2024, Feministeerium conducted awareness-raising activities on inclusive and sustainable urban space, drawing attention to shortcomings in existing urban planning practices and fostering discussion on how urban development can better reflect the needs and interests of diverse communities.

International Level

Since November 2024, Estonia has participated through the NGO People to People Estonia in the project Voices of Change, which focuses on strengthening European civil society by involving girls and young women with migrant backgrounds in European Union decision-making processes. The project aims to increase awareness among girls and young women who have migrated to or sought refuge in Europe of both their rights and the functioning of European Union policymaking processes.

SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all



Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

The long-term development objectives for the water sector are set out in the *Estonian Environmental Strategy until 2030*, adopted in 2007, and are implemented, inter alia, through the *Marine and Water Programme*. In addition, the *Strategic Roadmap for Water Utility Reform 2025–2035* has been developed to support the long-term sustainability of the water sector. The Government's objective is to ensure that every resident has access to high-quality, clean and affordable drinking water. According to 2025 data, 99.4% of consumers connected to the public water supply system receive drinking water that complies with quality requirements.

General Situation

As of 2023, 83% of Estonia's population was connected to the public water supply system and 82% to public sewerage services. Compared with a decade earlier, both indicators have increased by approximately ten percentage points. Expenditure on water services accounts for an average of 1.1% of household income, largely due to European Union support, which has financed the expansion and reconstruction of water infrastructure over recent years.

Looking ahead, the cost of water services is expected to increase, as available support funding will no longer be sufficient to cover the sector's investment needs. This challenge is compounded by the anticipated reduction in European Union funding for the sector. Total investment requirements in water services are estimated at approximately EUR 2.2 billion, reflecting the need not only to maintain existing infrastructure and service quality but also to undertake additional environmental investments.

To ensure universal access to public water supply and sewerage services, the cost of these services should not exceed 3–5% of the net income of a household member. The Government has therefore set the objective of improving the long-term sustainability of water services in order to ensure the continued provision of high-quality and affordable water supply and wastewater services throughout Estonia.

Table 6. Indicators (SDG 6).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
6.1. Volume of wastewater receiving at least secondary treatment, million m³	117	113.54	**116.12** (2024)
6.2. Share of consumers supplied with compliant drinking water through the public water supply system, %	98.1	99.2	**99.4** (2025)
6.3. Groundwater abstraction, million m³	221	221.28	**203.40** (2024)
6.4. Share of surface water bodies with at least good overall status, %	54	53	**50** (2024)

Measures and Activities

Central Government Level

To promote the sustainable use and protection of water resources, a new Public Water Supply and Sewerage Act was adopted in 2023. The Act established a legislative framework for improving stormwater management and introduced opportunities to encourage more efficient water use through water pricing mechanisms.

In 2025, the *Water Sector Reform Roadmap* was completed with the objective of developing solutions to ensure the long-term sustainability of water utilities and maintain affordable water service prices. As one of its guiding principles, the steering group overseeing the reform decided to establish a price cap for water services, under which the cost of water services should not exceed 2% of the income of a household member in Estonia's lowest-income county. The preparation of the roadmap was led by a steering group comprising representatives of relevant ministries, public authorities, professional associations and sector experts, supported by a consultancy consortium specialising in water sector reform. The objective is to develop a water pricing methodology that supports the sector while promoting efficiency and to identify a suitable model for sustainable water utility operations in Estonia, thereby ensuring the continued quality of water supply and wastewater services.

River Basin Management Plans are prepared to improve the condition of rivers, lakes, groundwater, coastal waters and the marine environment, to reduce flood risks, and to retain sediment and nutrients carried from agricultural and forest land through ditches and streams. These plans are prepared together with *Flood Risk Management Plans* for each river basin district for six-year periods and are subsequently updated. The current plans cover the period 2022–2027. In February 2024, the Minister of Climate initiated the update of the *River Basin Management Plans and Flood Risk Management Plans* for the period 2028–2033. The updated plans are scheduled for completion by the end of 2027.

The Ministry of Climate also updated Estonia's flood risk assessment. Based on the results of the analysis, 17 new flood-prone areas were identified as vulnerable to flooding and potentially at risk of damage from future high-water events. Water utilities, local governments and county-level local government associations located in these risk areas may apply for support from the Environmental Investment Centre (KIK) to reduce the adverse impacts of flooding.

A national policy on water reuse is currently being developed to enable the use of treated urban wastewater, quarry and mining water, and other previously used water resources in activities where drinking-water quality is not required. The objective is to conserve natural water resources and improve resource efficiency. In addition, a support measure promoting the energy efficiency of wastewater treatment is being implemented to reduce operating costs for water utilities and decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

Non-Governmental and/or Local Government Level

The Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce participates as a partner in the *LIFE IP CleanEST* project, which aims to improve the status of water bodies in Ida-Viru and Lääne-Viru counties. The project supports the implementation of measures foreseen for the Viru sub-basin under the River Basin Management Plan for Eastern Estonia and contributes to the preparation of subsequent river basin management plans. As part of the project, opportunities for improving the condition of water bodies are being analysed and measures implemented over a ten-year period. The project covers 38 rivers and streams, two coastal water bodies and eight groundwater bodies.

In 2022, the beverage producer A. Le Coq opened a technological wastewater treatment facility that enables the company to produce biogas from its wastewater and reduce the pollution load of wastewater discharged into the City of Tartu's sewerage system by up to 80%.

International Level

In November 2024, the Estonian Water Works Association, in cooperation with partners from Latvia, organised a PoVE (Centres of Vocational Excellence) water mission to South Africa. As part of the initiative, training materials for water treatment specialists were developed to promote water-sector professions in Cape Town. Estonia also gained valuable insights into wastewater treatment practices in South Africa, which can serve as useful examples for further improving wastewater management in Estonia.

In cooperation with the Latvian Association of Water and Wastewater Utilities, the Estonian Water Works Association implemented the Erasmus+ project *Development of Vocational Education in the Environmental Sector*. The project aimed to prevent environmental pollution that could result from shortages of qualified personnel in the water sector. Through cooperation with Latvian partners, Estonia gained valuable experience and new perspectives on strengthening cooperation among water utilities and improving mechanisms for stakeholder feedback and engagement.

In April 2024, Estonia, together with the World Health Organization, the Nordic Council of Ministers and Norway, organised a meeting of the Nordic-Baltic Drinking Water Network under the UNECE–WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health. The main objective of the meeting was to strengthen regional cooperation among Nordic and Baltic countries and to facilitate the exchange of experience and best practices in implementing risk-based approaches to drinking water monitoring and the requirements of the revised Drinking Water Directive.

SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all



Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

Estonia's energy policy is based on the European Union's climate and energy policy framework and the *National Development Plan for the Energy Sector until 2035* (*ENMAK 2035*), adopted in early 2026 in alignment with that framework. ENMAK 2035 sets out three overarching objectives for Estonia's energy sector: ensuring energy security, strengthening the country's competitiveness and supporting the transition to a clean energy economy.

A central objective of ENMAK 2035 is to ensure a diversified energy production portfolio to maintain a reliable and resilient electricity system under all circumstances. Alongside the effective utilisation of Estonia's domestic renewable energy resources, particularly wind and solar energy combined with energy storage solutions, it is essential to ensure the availability of sufficient dispatchable generation capacity within Estonia. This approach is intended to enhance the security of energy supply, support the integration of renewable energy sources and strengthen the resilience of the national energy system in an increasingly interconnected and rapidly changing energy market.

General Situation

ENMAK 2035 envisages the gradual phase-out of the direct combustion of oil shale for electricity generation by 2035. After 2035, oil shale may only be used, in the absence of alternative solutions, as part of an out-of-market strategic reserve in situations where security of supply standards cannot otherwise be met. The use of shale oil for domestic heat production is to be phased out gradually by 2040.

To strengthen energy security and ensure the reliability of electricity supply, the Baltic States set the objective of synchronising their electricity networks, previously operating under the BRELL agreement, with the Continental European electricity system. This objective was achieved in February 2025. The Baltic States' withdrawal from the Russian-managed electricity system and integration into the Continental European synchronous area is also one of the European Union's strategic priorities, aimed at enhancing long-term security of electricity supply, supporting the development of the electricity market and promoting fairer competition, including in Estonia.

To facilitate the deployment of renewable energy, suitable state-owned land has been allocated to developers through competitive auctions in order to identify and develop the most appropriate locations for wind energy projects.

Table 7. Indicators (SDG 7).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
7.1. Energy productivity, euro per kilogram of oil equivalent	2.8	4.2	**4.6** (2024)
7.2. Energy dependency rate, %	8.1	10.5	**4.6** (2024)
7.3. Share of energy expenditure in total household expenditure, %	9.1	7.9	**8.3** (2024)
7.4. Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption, %	29.2	30.1	**42.2** (2024)

Measures and Activities

Central Government Level

Preparations are underway for the national designated spatial plan for the electricity connections of the Gulf of Riga offshore wind farm. The objective is to plan the infrastructure required to connect the offshore wind farm to the onshore transmission network, enabling electricity generated at sea to be delivered to consumers. This objective is also supported by the national designated spatial plan currently being prepared for the fourth Estonia–Latvia electricity interconnection. The new connection will strengthen security of electricity supply beyond 2033 and increase the capacity of the electricity network in western Estonia to integrate larger volumes of renewable energy, thereby contributing to the achievement of Estonia's climate neutrality target for 2050.

In 2025, preparation began for the national designated spatial plans covering the onshore sections of ESTLINK 3 in the Tallinn region and on the Rehemäe–Aulepa section. The new interconnections and substations will help address projected electricity transmission capacity constraints in the region beyond 2035. At the beginning of 2026, the Government initiated the national designated spatial plan and strategic environmental assessment for the Estonian onshore section of the Nordic–Baltic Hydrogen Corridor. The project aims to establish the necessary hydrogen transport infrastructure, creating the technical and economic conditions for the development of a domestic hydrogen network in Estonia while strengthening regional security of supply.

In 2026, the Riigikogu adopted legislation transposing amendments to the Renewable Energy Directive. The new provisions simplify permitting procedures for renewable energy projects, establish renewable energy acceleration areas and clarify the sustainability requirements applicable to forest biomass. Under the revised framework, sustainability criteria will apply to a broader range of heat, electricity and cooling producers using solid biomass fuels. Whereas these requirements previously applied only to installations with a capacity of 20 MW or more, they will now apply from a threshold of 7.5 MW.

On 8 April 2021, the Government authorised the Minister of the Environment to establish a Nuclear Energy Working Group. The Working Group, comprising representatives of ministries and public authorities, was tasked with analysing the feasibility of introducing nuclear energy in Estonia. Guided by the roadmap of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Group was asked to submit conclusions, recommendations and proposals to the Government. By the end of 2023, the Group had

completed its final report and hosted an IAEA Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review mission. The Working Group concluded that, provided there is timely planning, adequate financing and sufficient political and public support, the introduction of nuclear energy in Estonia is feasible.

Based on the findings of the final report, the Riigikogu adopted the resolution *Supporting the Introduction of Nuclear Energy in Estonia* in April 2024, endorsing preparations for the introduction of nuclear energy and the development of the necessary legal framework. Following this decision, the mandate of the Nuclear Energy Working Group was updated, specialised sub-groups were established and work commenced on the second phase of the nuclear energy roadmap, beginning with the preparation of an appropriate legal and regulatory framework. The draft Nuclear Energy and Nuclear Safety Act passed its first reading in Parliament in spring 2026 and, according to the draft, is expected to enter into force on 1 January 2027.

In 2025, the Government initiated the national designated spatial plan and strategic environmental assessment for a 600 MW nuclear power plant and the infrastructure required for its operation.

Non-Governmental and/or Local Government Level

Over the past five years, Estonia's installed wind power capacity has doubled. In 2025, wind farms generated a record 1.3 TWh of electricity. Since 2021, six new wind farms have been commissioned. The largest completed during this period is the Sopi–Tootsi Wind Farm, inaugurated in 2025 with a capacity of 255 MW. Local authorities have adopted spatial plans for wind energy projects with a combined capacity of 323 MW, while projects representing a further 564 MW are in the final stages of planning. Estonia's total installed wind power capacity now stands at 694 MW, while installed solar generation capacity exceeds 1,200 MW.

To strengthen security of supply, Elering is procuring gas-fired generation facilities and battery energy storage systems through long-term frequency reserve tenders, providing a combined capacity of 236 MW. Additional battery storage projects are also being developed on a market basis, supported in part by the opening of new frequency reserve markets in 2025. Furthermore, amendments to the Electricity Market Act that entered into force at the beginning of 2026 eliminated the double taxation of stored electricity, ensuring that network charges and renewable energy fees are applied only to the net electricity consumed by storage facilities. The opportunity to participate in frequency reserve markets, introduced in 2025, has also accelerated investment in energy storage. Previously, payments for frequency control services were made to Estonia's eastern neighbour; these revenues can now remain within the domestic energy sector. According to Elering, battery projects with a combined capacity of approximately 1,700 MW are currently at various stages of grid connection.

In 2023, Estonia's first large-scale district heating thermal storage facility was commissioned in Tartu, with a storage capacity of up to 500 MWh. The facility can supply the district heating network with heat equivalent to the output of a 30 MW boiler plant for short periods, reducing the need for fossil natural gas. In 2025, the largest thermal storage facility in the Baltic States was completed in Tallinn, with a storage capacity of 1,100 MWh.

International Level

In international comparisons, Estonia performs well across a range of energy-sector indicators. According to the Energy Sustainability Index, Estonia ranked 7th among 126 countries in 2023 (compared

with 19th place for Latvia and 24th place for Lithuania).[7] According to other energy-related indicators, Estonia ranked in 2025:

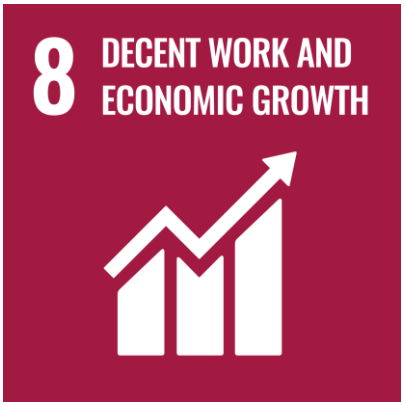
- 11th among 118 countries in the Energy Transition Index (Latvia ranked 7th and Lithuania 19th)[8],
- 16th among 88 countries in the Quality of Life Index, immediately behind the United States;[9],
- 17th among 167 countries in the Sustainable Development Report rankings (Latvia ranked 13th and Lithuania 29th)[10].

Based on the latest available statistics from the first half of 2025, Estonia's final electricity prices remained below the European Union average for both household and non-household consumers.[11]

In 2023, Estonia and Latvia secured funding from the European Union budget for the pre-development phase of the joint offshore wind project ELWIND. The project envisages the development of an offshore wind farm with a generation capacity of up to 1,000 MW and an expected annual electricity output of more than 3 TWh. Half of the project's costs are financed through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF).

Since 2021, the Port of Tallinn has sourced 100% renewable electricity for its operations. Renewable electricity accounts for approximately 77% of the port's total energy consumption.

[7] WEC Energy Trilemma Index Tool
[8] Fostering Effective Energy Transition. Insight Report, 2025.
[9] Quality of Life Index by Country, 2026
[10] Sustainable Development Report, 2025.
[11] Eurostat, 2026.



SDG 8:

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

The objectives related to sustainable economic growth and decent work are primarily addressed within the Government's budgetary outcome area of *Research and Development and Entrepreneurship* and are largely covered by the *Research, Development, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Strategy 2021–2035* (TAIE). These efforts are complemented by indicators and measures set out in the *Welfare Development Plan 2023–2030* and the *Education and Youth Sector Development Plan 2021–2035*.

Under the long-term strategy *Estonia 2035*, the overarching objective of TAIE is to ensure that research, development, innovation and entrepreneurship contribute jointly to increasing societal well-being and economic productivity by providing competitive and sustainable solutions to Estonia's and the world's development challenges, in line with European Union priorities. To achieve this objective, the Government seeks to maintain a high level of scientific excellence and ensure the sustainability of Estonia's research system, strengthen knowledge transfer, promote cooperation between research institutions and the private sector, and foster a competitive, high value-added business and consumer environment.

At the same time, the Government's long-term objective is to create a labour market in which labour demand and supply are well balanced, employment remains high and quality working conditions support longer participation in working life.

General Situation

In 2025, Estonia's gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 0.5%. Growth at current prices was considerably stronger, reflecting the continued rapid increase in prices throughout the year. Net exports also made a positive contribution to economic performance, with the chain-linked value of exports of goods and services increasing by 5%. By the end of 2025, foreign trade accounted for 78.4% of GDP.

Despite the economic downturn, employment growth continued. Estonia's employment rate among people aged 20–64 reached 82.1%, one of the highest rates in the European Union, surpassed only by Sweden and the Netherlands. At the same time, the economic slowdown contributed to increased tensions between employers and employees, reflected in growing mental health concerns and a 23% increase in labour disputes.

Occupational safety indicators, however, improved. The number of occupational accidents declined by 11% in 2023. While this may partly reflect improvements in workplace safety culture, it is also associated

with the cooling economy, as workers may be less likely to report minor incidents due to concerns about job security.

Between 2021 and 2023, Estonia maintained public funding for research and development at the level of 1% of GDP, providing the stability necessary to initiate structural reforms and strengthen the research and innovation system. Due to fiscal consolidation measures and budget reallocations, public funding for research and development fell below 1% of GDP in the 2024 budget and remained below that level in the 2025 State Budget.

Estonia's long-term objective is to achieve a "one-to-two" funding model for research, development and innovation, whereby public investment amounts to 1% of GDP and is complemented by private-sector investment equivalent to 2% of GDP. Achieving this objective requires continued efforts to create an innovation-friendly environment that encourages businesses to invest in research and development while also motivating researchers to engage more actively with the private sector. It is equally important to challenge the perception that scientific careers can only be pursued within universities.

According to Statistics Estonia, expenditure on research and development reached EUR 791 million in 2024, the highest level ever recorded, representing approximately 2% of GDP. Growth was driven primarily by the business sector, which accounted for around 60% of total expenditure.

Estonia's innovation performance has improved since 2022. In the European Innovation Scoreboard, Estonia retained its position as a Strong Innovator and ranked 11th among European Union Member States. The decline in labour productivity relative to the EU average also came to a halt, with productivity increasing by 0.1% in 2025. Further improvements in innovation capacity will require increasing the number of innovative enterprises across different sectors, strengthening competencies related to environmental sustainability and promoting growth in labour productivity throughout the economy.

Resource productivity in the utilisation of domestic resources remains relatively low. Although it has improved slightly since 2020, it reached only 0.83% in 2025. Low resource productivity reflects both the resource-intensive structure of the Estonian economy and the effects of an uncertain economic environment shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's aggression against Ukraine. These developments have negatively affected investment confidence, extended project implementation timelines, disrupted supply chains and reduced marketing activities. Nevertheless, Estonia's resource productivity continues to improve over the longer term.

Table 8. Indicators (SDG 8).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
8.1. Real GDP growth rate (change compared with the previous year), %	3.2	-2.9	**0.6** (2025)
8.2. Resource productivity, euro/kg	0.63	0.76	**0.83** (2024)
8.3. Labour productivity as a percentage of the EU average, %	73.3	81.8	**77.5** (2023)
8.4. Labour force participation rate among persons aged 15–74, %	..	72.1	**74.1** (2025)
8.5. Long-term unemployment rate, %	2.1	1.2	**1.8** (2025)

8.6. Young people aged 15–24 neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET), %	9.1	9.7	**10.9** (2025)
8.7. Share of persons aged 16 and over with a high care burden (at least 20 hours per week), %	..	2.3 (2021)	**1.9** (2025)

Measures and Activities

Central Government Level

In 2023, the Government adopted a new Labour Market Measures Act and launched a supporting Employment Programme for the period 2024–2029. The Act streamlined the legal framework governing labour market services and measures, while the Employment Programme serves as its operational instrument. Its objective is to align people's knowledge, skills and attitudes with labour market needs and changing economic conditions. The programme also seeks to strengthen society's preparedness for the jobs of the future and to promote social cohesion and equal opportunities.

More specifically, the programme enables the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund to manage labour market services and benefits as a coherent whole and to place greater emphasis on skills development in areas experiencing the most acute labour shortages. It also provides measures to support employed persons in upgrading their skills and assists people with reduced work capacity in entering, remaining in or returning to the labour market.

In 2021, work began on a new Research, Development and Innovation Organisation Act (RDI Act) with the aim of establishing a clearer framework for the governance and financing of research, development and innovation. In 2023, the draft legislation was expanded to include provisions on research ethics and open science. The Act was adopted by the Riigikogu and entered into force in 2025. It improved the governance of research, development and innovation activities, clarified the roles of stakeholders and strengthened the stability of research funding. The legislation also simplified the evaluation of research activities at higher education institutions and, for the first time, established a legal framework for the governance of research ethics.

In 2023, the Estonian Centre for Applied Research commenced operations within Metrosert, a state-owned company under the administration of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications. The Centre's mission is to support the development activities of Estonian enterprises and strengthen their international competitiveness. Initially, five strategic focus areas were established: biorefining, medical data, hydrogen technologies, drone technologies and autonomous vehicles.

In 2024, the Government, in cooperation with businesses and the wider public sector, agreed on the principles of economic policy across seven key areas. These principles support the development of a responsible and competitive economy. To implement them, action plans to strengthen economic competitiveness and support industry were prepared for both 2025 and 2026, with further planning continuing. The measures support business growth and innovation, contribute to creating an investment-friendly business environment and promote regional economic development. Strategies were also developed to support exports and increase value added in the tourism sector. The strategy *Estonian Tourism: A Long-Term Vision 2025–2035* establishes strategic priorities aimed at increasing Estonia's international visibility by turning the country's unique characteristics into a competitive advantage and

promoting them through smart marketing. The strategy is implemented through four-year action plans. These and other economic strategies contribute not only to SDG 8 but also to several other Sustainable Development Goals.

Regions dependent on fossil fuel production or other greenhouse gas-intensive industries are particularly vulnerable during the green transition. In Estonia, Ida-Viru County has been designated as the primary transition region due to its historical reliance on the oil shale industry. To support a fair transition, dedicated support measures have been implemented to facilitate the development of new climate-friendly industries and businesses.

Under Estonia's Recovery and Resilience Plan, support measures have been introduced to assist enterprises in transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, thereby strengthening their energy security and resilience.

One of the key challenges in implementing labour market measures is ensuring the fullest possible utilisation of labour market potential. European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) resources have been mobilised to support the employment of various target groups, NEETs, persons with reduced work capacity, women, Roma communities and people arriving through family migration. Special labour market measures also continue to be implemented for workers who have lost employment in the oil shale sector, supporting their transition into emerging sectors of the regional economy.

Non-Governmental and/or Local Government Level

To further develop Estonia's start-up ecosystem, the *Startup Estonia* programme adopted a new strategy for the period 2021–2027. The updated strategy aims to strengthen the Estonian start-up ecosystem by ensuring continued annual growth of approximately 30%, including growth in the overall number of start-ups. It also seeks to increase the volume of research and development cooperation within the sector, promote the participation of a broader range of population groups in entrepreneurship, and establish a clearer governance and policymaking framework for the start-up sector.

According to data from the Estonian start-up ecosystem platform, 1,608 start-ups were operating in Estonia as of October 2024. Together, they employed approximately 14,000 people and contributed more than EUR 280 million in labour taxes to the Estonian economy by the third quarter of 2025.

Each spring, the Responsible Business Forum Estonia (KELL) publishes the *Responsible Business Index*. The Index serves as a development tool that helps companies assess and strengthen their social responsibility performance across both environmental and social dimensions.

Under the coordination of the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture, work has continued on the preparation of regional development agreements. The purpose of these agreements is to establish shared priorities and actions for regional development between the central government, county-level representatives and other stakeholders, including universities, businesses and civil society organisations. In 2022, the Government authorised the preparation of a pilot initiative for regional development agreements and councils covering one or two integrated regions. Central Estonia and Southern Estonia were selected as the pilot regions.

In addition, new regional development support measures have been introduced to promote the development of local business environments outside Harju County and the Tartu urban region. These

measures aim to strengthen regional competitiveness, encourage investment and support balanced economic development across Estonia.

International Level

Since 2014, the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has implemented projects aimed at strengthening business relations that contribute to economic development and improved well-being in developing countries under Estonia's development cooperation framework programme.

As part of these initiatives, the Chamber facilitates visits by business delegations from developing countries to Estonia, enabling them to meet relevant public and private sector stakeholders and explore opportunities for cooperation. Likewise, it organises business missions for Estonian companies to developing countries in order to support the establishment of new partnerships and commercial opportunities.

The Chamber also covers a range of organisational costs associated with these activities, including local transport for delegation members, the organisation of business seminars and the coordination of on-site programmes. Through these efforts, Estonia contributes to sustainable economic development, knowledge exchange and the strengthening of international business cooperation.



SDG 9:
Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

The objectives for developing Estonia's digital society are set out in the *Digital Society Development Plan*, adopted in 2021 and updated in 2026. The overarching objective of the updated strategy is to ensure a human-centred, trustworthy, efficient, smart and resilient digital society. The aim is to guarantee that individuals retain control over their personal data, interactions with public authorities are convenient, satisfaction with digital services remains high, and the development of the digital state is strategically managed, effective and sustainable. The strategy also seeks to ensure the continuity of critical services under all circumstances, significantly strengthen cybersecurity and provide access to ultra-fast internet connectivity throughout Estonia.

The objectives for transport, mobility and infrastructure are defined in the *Transport and Mobility Development Plan 2021–2035*. Estonia's priorities include ensuring high-quality modern infrastructure and promoting sustainable transport and mobility solutions. By 2035, Estonia aims, first, to make cities and settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and second, to provide residents and businesses with convenient, accessible, safe, fast, smart and sustainable mobility options that are aligned with European Union objectives.

General Situation

As of 2024, satisfaction with public digital services stood at 85%, while 91.8% of the population considered Estonia's cybersecurity environment to be trustworthy. Although both indicators are already high, the Government aims to increase satisfaction with public digital services to over 90% by 2035 and maintain public confidence in cybersecurity at a level exceeding 96%.

Estonia has also made significant progress in improving digital connectivity. By the end of 2024, 81% of businesses and households had access to very high-capacity networks. To accelerate the deployment of ultra-fast communications infrastructure, further efforts are needed to support the construction of strategic connections in rural market-failure areas and along major transport corridors. The relatively modest uptake of high-speed internet services is primarily attributable to the pricing policies of service providers rather than a lack of network availability.

The principal challenge facing Estonia's transport sector is the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The objective is to decrease emissions from 2.64 million tonnes of CO_2 equivalent in 2022 to 1.7 million tonnes by 2035. Road transport accounts for approximately 97% of transport-sector emissions. Owing to Estonia's geographical characteristics, freight transport relies predominantly on road infrastructure. This

is compounded by the high share of private vehicle use and a consumer preference for vehicles with larger engine capacities.

Table 9. Indicators (SDG 9).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
9.1. Gross domestic expenditure on research and development (GERD) as a percentage of GDP, %	1.2	1.7	**2** (2024)
9.2. Number of researchers and engineers in the private sector per 1,000 population	1.07	1.65	**2.83** (2024)
9.3. Share of households with high-speed internet access, %	11.5	25.8	**31.8** (2022)
9.4. Internet usage rate, %	87.2	89.1	**94.9** (2025)
9.5.1. Share of rail passengers in inland passenger transport, %	2.0	1.9	**2.3** (2023)
9.5.2. Share of passenger car users in inland passenger transport, %	79.8	88.2	**83.6** (2023)
9.5.3. Share of bus and trolleybus passengers in inland passenger transport, %	18.3	9.9	**14** (2023)
9.5.4. Share of rail freight transport in inland freight transport, %	42.9	38.6	**14.6** (2024)
9.5.5. Share of road freight transport in inland freight transport, %	57.1	61.4	**85.4** (2024)

Measures and Activities

Central Government Level

To simplify access to public services, Estonia introduced its first life-event services at the end of 2022: the childbirth information service and the marriage service. In 2023, three additional life-event services were launched, covering the death of a close relative, military service obligations and settling in Estonia. By the end of 2025, the Government achieved its objective of providing at least ten life-event services through the state portal eesti.ee. These included both entirely new services, such as becoming a volunteer and changing one's name, and enhancements to existing services through the introduction of data exchange and status-tracking functionalities, including marriage-related services and military service obligations. The services have been well received by users, recording more than 478,000 visits during 2025 alone.

A major step forward in improving service quality was the launch of the Eesti.ee mobile application at the end of 2024, providing citizens with convenient access to public services through mobile devices regardless of location or time. Another significant development was the introduction of personalised and proactive services, enabling citizens to receive timely and relevant information and services through a single digital environment.

In 2023, a cybersecurity maturity assessment was conducted across ministries, constitutional institutions and larger local governments. The assessment provided a comprehensive overview of the cybersecurity landscape and identified capability gaps that were subsequently addressed in the updated cybersecurity strategy, *A More Cyber-Aware Estonia by Design*, adopted in 2024. Compared with the 2022 maturity assessment, organisations demonstrated improved cybersecurity awareness, stronger practices in procuring secure software and a reduction in the use of unsupported legacy software.

To promote a more uniform level of cybersecurity, local authorities and educational institutions received support in 2024 for assessing and implementing information security measures. Practical workshops were organised on the implementation of information security standards. The maturity assessment methodology was also harmonised, and a new measurement framework was introduced to help institutions evaluate their compliance and identify further actions needed to achieve baseline cybersecurity standards. In 2025, a framework of essential cybersecurity measures was developed for small and micro-enterprises, enabling smaller organisations to focus on priority security issues, reduce administrative burdens and strengthen their overall cyber resilience.

To improve digital connectivity, Estonia completed a 5G spectrum auction in the 26 GHz frequency band in 2023. As a result, all three European Union-harmonised 5G frequency bands have now been allocated to mobile network operators in Estonia. The broadband access network support scheme launched in 2017 and implemented by Enefit Connect was also completed in 2023. During that year alone, more than 17,000 addresses gained access to fibre-optic connections, bringing the total project scope to 40,016 addresses nationwide.

In 2025, a further broadband deployment measure financed through the European Union Recovery and Resilience Facility was completed, providing fibre-optic connection opportunities to an additional 7,585 addresses. The same year saw the introduction of standalone 5G networks in Estonia, enabling faster, more efficient and environmentally sustainable data communications services. By the end of 2025, 5G networks capable of providing download speeds of at least 100 Mbps covered 88.8% of households.

Significant progress has also been made in transport infrastructure. In 2023, planning for local infrastructure components of the Rail Baltica project was completed, with nearly 30 associated projects either completed or under implementation. By 2024, approximately 75 kilometres of railway embankments had entered the construction phase. In addition, by the end of 2023, a total of 240.25 kilometres of existing railway lines had been reconstructed, exceeding initial annual targets by 20.1%.

The Motor Vehicle Tax Act entered into force in 2025. The tax is calculated on the basis of a vehicle's base component, mass and specific CO_2 emissions. It applies both as an annual tax on existing vehicles and as a registration tax on newly acquired vehicles. Through its emissions-based component, the registration tax is designed to encourage consumers to choose less polluting vehicles.

The Ministry of Climate continues to invest in making infrastructure more climate resilient. Tartu and Pärnu have been allocated EUR 26 million for the construction of cycling infrastructure to promote sustainable mobility and reduce dependence on private cars. Nationwide, EUR 10 million is being invested to improve the safety and accessibility of public transport stops. To increase the energy efficiency of existing airports, including Tallinn Airport, the Government is investing EUR 14.4 million.

A reform of doctoral studies was launched in 2022, enabling doctoral candidates to be employed by universities as junior researchers and receive remuneration equivalent to Estonia's average salary. In

2023, doctoral candidates were additionally given the opportunity to work in positively evaluated research and development institutions and, through Structural Funds support, in the private sector. The reform contributes to the development of highly qualified specialists and researchers for both the public and private sectors and promotes long-term cooperation between universities, businesses, public authorities and other organisations.

In 2024, the Government, in cooperation with businesses and public-sector stakeholders, agreed on broad economic policy principles across seven areas. These principles support the development of a responsible and competitive economy, including industrial development and infrastructure investment. To implement these principles, an action plan to strengthen economic competitiveness and support industry was adopted for 2025, with a particular focus on reinforcing Estonia's industrial base.

The same year, a cross-sectoral agreement was reached to promote innovation through public procurement. Under this approach, innovation will be systematically considered in procurement processes, and targets have been established regarding the share and volume of public procurement dedicated to innovative solutions.

Estonia has established as a strategic objective the maintenance of public funding for research, development and innovation at a level of at least 1% of GDP.

In 2023, Estonia's first Applied Research Centre was established within the state-owned company Metrosert. Five strategic focus areas were launched: biorefining, medical data, hydrogen technologies, drone technologies and autonomous vehicles. The Centre's mission is to provide services and cooperation opportunities that strengthen the internal development and innovation capacities of enterprises.

A number of initiatives supporting knowledge-intensive entrepreneurship and deep-technology start-ups were launched or entered their second year of operation. These included business development support measures, the CDL programme, NATO DIANA, the AI Development Programme and other initiatives. Together, they contribute to the ambitious objective of significantly increasing the number of deep-tech start-ups in Estonia. Various business development support schemes were also implemented, including innovation and development vouchers, product development grants, investment support for development centres and enterprise development programmes. Most of these support measures were opened during the first half of 2023.

Implementation continued of the recommendations issued by the Accessibility Task Force in 2021. The Task Force presented 250 recommendations to improve accessibility across the public sector. By the first half of 2024, responsible institutions reported that 41 recommendations had been completed, 76 were being implemented as ongoing activities, 67 were in progress, 35 were pending, 22 had been discontinued and 9 remained of unknown status. For example, the Ministry of Climate is preparing legislative amendments to strengthen accessibility requirements for buildings, with implications across multiple sectors.

Non-Governmental and/or Local Government Level

Construction of the Rail Baltica Ülemiste Terminal began in 2022 and is expected to be completed by 2028. The Ülemiste Terminal will serve as the starting point of the high-speed rail connection linking the Baltic States with Western and Southern Europe, while also functioning as a public transport hub and

development centre in Tallinn. The Rail Baltica route towards Europe will begin at Ülemiste, connecting all three Baltic States to a European standard-gauge high-speed rail network.

Since 2023, support has been provided to increase the research intensity of entrepreneurship in Ida-Viru County. The objective of the support measure is to develop the capacity of Ida-Viru County colleges to commercialise research results, strengthen cooperation between research institutions, higher education institutions and enterprises, and support the development of high value-added products and services in the region as alternatives to the oil shale energy sector, thereby creating new jobs.

Under the action plan, funding is provided during the period 2023–2029 for basic and applied research, experimental development, infrastructure investments to establish laboratory capacity in the target region for the provision of research and development services, the involvement of high-level researchers in units operating in Ida-Viru County, the dissemination of research and development results to enterprises and the wider public, and coordination of the action plan's implementation. As a result of these activities, sustainable regional capacity has been established to provide enterprises with research, development and innovation knowledge, services and infrastructure.

International Level

The e-Governance Academy Foundation supported the Turks and Caicos Islands in preparing for the establishment of a digital identification system. In 2023–2024, the Turks and Caicos Islands began developing a national eID solution. The e-Governance Academy also helped prepare the technical specification for the eID system and carry out the analyses required for its development.

Estonia became a full member of the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), gaining voting rights in the CERN Council, the Finance Committee and the Scientific Policy Committee. CERN's objective is to promote cooperation among European countries in fundamental nuclear research. Estonia's membership provides Estonian enterprises with opportunities for knowledge transfer, particularly in high technology, and broader access to participation in CERN procurement.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and Digital Affairs, Estonia organises the Tallinn Digital Summit (TDS). The Summit has become a recognised global brand in the digital field, with its business diplomacy dimension strengthening each year. In November 2024, TDS was held under the theme *Securing the Digital Tomorrow*.

Estonia continues to participate in the work of the UN Digital Public Goods Alliance (DPGA). For example, in cooperation with DPGA and the private donor fund Co-Develop, Estonia organised a visit to Tallinn focused on open digital infrastructure, bringing together representatives of donor organisations and countries interested in Estonia's digital solutions.

The new global strategy for advancing open digital infrastructure for 2023–2028 laid the foundation for the 50-in-5 initiative, led by the Digital Public Goods Alliance. Open digital infrastructure is also supported through the GovStack initiative, which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs leads together with other founding partners: Germany, the International Telecommunication Union and the Digital Impact Alliance (DIAL). In 2024, participation by Estonian partners and companies in the GovStack initiative increased. In October 2023, the Women in GovTech programme was launched to empower women in developing countries to participate more actively in digital issues through training and mentoring programmes in 45 countries. The GovStack Centre was established in Estonia.



SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

The policy directions and indicators for equal treatment in Estonia are set out in the development plans *Cohesive Estonia 2030* and the fifth sub-objective of the *Welfare Development Plan 2023–2030*. From the perspective of state budget planning, measures aimed at reducing inequalities are distributed across three performance areas: cohesive society, effective state, and living environment, mobility and maritime affairs.

The Government has set the overarching objective of making Estonia a more cohesive and inclusive society by 2030 and ensuring equal opportunities for self-realisation and participation in society for both women and men as well as for minority groups. The *Cohesive Estonia 2030* development plan focuses on increasing the share of people with a strong or moderate sense of national identity, strengthening the sense of belonging among Estonians living abroad, improving residents' satisfaction with local government engagement, and increasing satisfaction with Population Register e-services. The *Welfare Development Plan 2023–2030* focuses on reducing the share of people experiencing discrimination, narrowing the gender pay gap, and improving accessibility.

Estonia's efforts to reduce inequalities are primarily directed towards addressing social inequalities and stem largely from challenges related to gender equality and the integration of Estonian society. The latter contribute both to exclusion based on ethnicity and language and to disparities in economic well-being resulting from language barriers.

General Situation

Challenges related to social integration have intensified since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. According to the 2023 Estonian Integration Monitoring Survey, Russia's aggression has directly affected the lives of 32% of ethnic Estonians and 46% of residents of other ethnic backgrounds. The impacts most frequently relate to security concerns, but also to perceptions that attitudes towards the use of the Russian language have deteriorated and that the war has compelled people to choose sides between the West and Russia.

This polarisation is not based solely on citizenship status but reflects deeper societal divisions. While 83% of ethnic Estonians and 44% of residents of other ethnic backgrounds support Estonia's efforts to assist Ukraine, 70% of ethnic Estonians and 47% of residents of other ethnic backgrounds would be willing to defend Estonia in the event of war. By comparison, 21% of ethnic Estonians and 33% of residents of other ethnic backgrounds would not be prepared to do so. In addition, 25% of residents of

other ethnic backgrounds do not feel part of Estonian society, while 22% report an emotional attachment to Russia.

The proportion of older persons and persons with disabilities in Estonian society continues to increase. By the end of 2025, persons with disabilities accounted for 7.4% of the population. At the same time, the built environment has not adapted sufficiently to demographic change and does not adequately reflect a life-course approach. As a result, a significant share of the population continues to face barriers in accessing both physical environments and digital services.

Table 10. Indicators (SDG 10).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
10.1. Annual income per household member, euro	10,697.88	14,218.01	**19,669.60** (2024)
10.1.1. Income per household member in households without children, euro	10,063.47	13,467.41	**18,934.20** (2024)
10.1.1.1. Income per household member in one-person households, euro	7,899.39	10,576.34	**15,166.22** (2024)
10.1.1.2. Income per household member in one-person households aged 65 and over, euro	5,664.67	7,805.19	**11,626.56** (2024)
10.1.1.3. Income per household member in one-person households aged under 65, euro	9,760.99	12,580.93	**17,923.84** (2024)
10.1.1.4. Income per household member in couples aged under 65 without children, euro	12,630.53	18,166.41	**25,002.47** (2024)
10.1.2. Income per household member in households with children, euro	11,366.57	14,998.93	**20,424.61** (2024)
10.1.2.1. Income per household member in single-adult households with child(ren), euro	8,957.47	10,022.64	**14,982.78** (2024)
10.1.2.2. Income per household member in couple households with one child, euro	12,511.95	17,166.50	**21,957.19** (2024)
10.1.2.3. Income per household member in couple households with two children, euro	12,341.86	16,227.83	**21,976.06** (2024)
10.1.2.4. Income per household member in couple households with three or more children, euro	9,930.62	14,115.14	**20,246.31** (2024)
10.2. Income inequality, quintile share ratio	5.4	5.0	**5.1** (2024)
10.3. Share of people with unmet needs for specialist medical care, %	15.7	14.6	**8.5** (2024)

Measures and Activities

Central Government Level

On 1 January 2024, marriage equality entered into force in Estonia, allowing two consenting adults to marry regardless of their sex. This marked a historic step in ending decades of legal discrimination against same-sex couples in Estonia by granting them the right to marry or to convert a registered partnership into a marriage through a simplified procedure. The legislation also grants same-sex spouses the right to jointly adopt a child with the consent of the biological parent. Although the Registered Partnership Act had been adopted in 2014, the necessary implementing provisions had not been enacted, meaning that formalising a registered partnership often required court proceedings. The Act Amending the Family Law Act and Related Legislation, which established marriage equality, was adopted by the Riigikogu in June 2023.

In 2023, approximately 13,500 Estonian language learning places were funded through the Ministry of Culture. These included 3,605 places provided by the Integration Foundation's Estonian Language Houses and their partners, 787 places for regular migrants through the adaptation programme, and 9,125 places for beneficiaries of temporary protection through the adaptation programme. Participation in language-learning support activities totalled 5,113 instances. In 2024, the Integration Foundation provided 12,743 language-learning places, including 1,378 places through its Estonian Language House and 11,365 places through partner language schools. Of these, 1,760 places were intended for permanent residents and returnees, 9,154 places for participants in the *Settle in Estonia* adaptation programme, and 451 places under the Citizenship Agreement framework. Participation in language-learning support activities totalled 3,485 instances.

In 2019, the Government Office established a task force comprising professional associations and representative organisations to address accessibility issues. By 2021, the task force had developed minimum requirements for the reconstruction of existing buildings and analysed the main barriers related to accessibility. The results of its work informed the design of accessibility-related measures included in the Government Action Programme 2021–2023.

In February 2023, a new Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner took office. The Commissioner is an independent and impartial official responsible for matters falling under gender equality and equal treatment legislation, including providing legal opinions in discrimination cases and assessing the impact of legislation affecting equal treatment and minority groups. In 2024, the Commissioner received 230 enquiries, compared with 198 in 2023. Of these, 47 concerned sex-related characteristics, 21 concerned disability and 20 concerned nationality. A significant number of enquiries fell outside the Commissioner's statutory mandate, limiting the ability to provide an opinion or assistance. The budget of the Office of the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner amounted to EUR 552,038 in 2023 and is financed annually from the state budget. At the beginning of 2025, an Advocacy Council was established under the Commissioner's Office to facilitate cooperation among organisations active in the field.

Participation in the *Respect Differences* Diversity Label, established in 2016, has continued to grow. By the end of 2024, 69 companies, public sector organisations and civil society organisations had obtained the label. Participating organisations commit to promoting diversity within their organisations in a systematic and strategic manner.

Participation in the voluntary Diversity Agreement has also continued to expand. By the end of 2024, 226 organisations and companies had joined the agreement. Established in 2012, the agreement allows businesses, non-governmental organisations and public institutions to formally commit to respecting diversity and promoting the principle of equal treatment among their employees, partners and clients. Diversity is also highlighted annually through Diversity Day, celebrated each May.

Through strategic partnership arrangements, the Government provides long-term funding to civil society organisations that promote equal treatment and equal opportunities for different minority groups.

In 2024, a vision for a gender and equality mainstreaming governance model was developed. Policymakers across different sectors received guidance and training on equality mainstreaming, including through dedicated e-learning courses on equality policy.

An equality data module has been developed for inclusion in Estonia's 2025 Social Survey (EU-SILC). The module will enable analysis of living conditions, income levels and social exclusion using new demographic variables, including information on respondents' religious beliefs and various LGBTIQ characteristics.

Estonia's first LGBTIQ action plan, *Principles and Action Plan for Promoting Equal Opportunities for LGBTIQ People 2025–2030*, has been completed. Estonia is also coordinating the implementation of the European Union Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020–2025 at the national level. In addition, draft legislation has been prepared to harmonise protection across all grounds of discrimination.

Non-Governmental and/or Local Government Level

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Estonian Refugee Council has coordinated a range of humanitarian assistance projects for Ukrainians. These include support funded by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for displaced and non-displaced persons affected by hostilities; assistance funded by the World Food Programme (WFP) for war-affected populations in the Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy and Kharkiv regions; and support funded by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) reaching approximately 6,720 households. In addition, with support from various partners, the Estonian Refugee Council provides group counselling services for Ukrainian refugees. These services offer free guidance on integration, employment, digital skills and supporting children's adaptation to a new environment.

The Estonian Association of Large Families represents families with three or more children and advocates for their equal participation and recognition in society. As of 2023, the organisation's network included 3,894 large families. Its activities primarily focus on awareness-raising campaigns and events for large families. The Association has also developed the Family Card programme, a discount card that enables large families to access cultural and entertainment venues and make purchases at reduced prices. In 2023, a user survey of the Family Card programme was conducted to further improve its effectiveness.

Since 2012, Mondo has continuously implemented the Migration School programme. The programme is an online platform developed by World School (*Maailmakool*) that provides educators and young people with practical knowledge and methodologies for addressing issues related to migration, integration and intercultural understanding. The objective of the programme is to strengthen knowledge about migration through free online courses. The content is regularly updated to reflect current developments. In 2024,

new modules were added on human trafficking and migration resulting from Russia's war against Ukraine.

International Level

Estonia's priority partner countries for development cooperation are Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Botswana, Kenya, Namibia and Uganda. In 2023, Estonia allocated EUR 9.6 million in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, EUR 1.8 million to priority countries in the Eastern Neighbourhood, and EUR 2 million in Official Development Assistance (ODA) to countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The majority of Estonia's development cooperation funding is channelled through bilateral cooperation mechanisms. On the Estonian side, these efforts are coordinated primarily by the Estonian Centre for International Development (ESTDEV), a state foundation, and the Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation, a non-governmental umbrella organisation.

SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable



Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

Estonia's objective is to ensure a clean and diverse living environment and to promote a responsible attitude towards nature. Progress towards this objective is supported through the *Living Environment and Circular Economy Programme*. Another key objective related to the sustainability of cities and communities is set out in the *Internal Security Development Plan 2020–2030*, which focuses, among other priorities, on ensuring the safety and security of the living environment and public spaces. In addition, Estonia seeks to ensure sustainable transport and more efficient mobility solutions, supported by the objectives of the *Transport and Mobility Development Plan 2021–2035*.

General Situation

Compared with OECD countries, Estonia experiences significant regional disparities despite its relatively small territory. One challenge identified by the OECD is the insufficient integration of regional policy objectives and regional needs into sectoral policy planning and the allocation of financial resources. Similarly, the European Commission has recommended that Estonia place greater emphasis on reducing regional development disparities within the country and on aligning sectoral policies with regional development objectives.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has increased the need to strengthen national preparedness and resilience. While surveys conducted during the preparation of the *Internal Security Development Plan* indicated that residents generally considered their local environment to be safe, the situation has changed since 2022. Estonia must now devote greater attention to internal security issues and preparedness for emergency situations, including the testing of crisis scenarios and the development of shelter infrastructure.

The *Transport and Mobility Development Plan 2021–2035* sets the objective of making transport infrastructure less environmentally burdensome, more demand-driven and more sustainable, while reducing transport-related carbon dioxide emissions to 1,700 kilotonnes. However, according to projections published in 2023, this target is unlikely to be achieved by 2035, as the currently available measures are insufficient to deliver the required level of emissions reduction. The implementation of additional measures remains either incomplete or postponed indefinitely, largely because recent energy-related challenges and the broader economic impacts of Russia's actions have limited the financial capacity to undertake the necessary investments.

Table 11. Indicators (SDG 11).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
11.1. Share of listed buildings in good or satisfactory condition, %	72.4	63	**62.7** (2025)
11.2. Number of road traffic accidents involving casualties	1,468	1,368	**1,615** (2025)
11.3. PM_{10} emissions to ambient air, thousand tonnes	11	10.4	**8.8** (2023)
11.3.1. $PM_{2.5}$ emissions to ambient air, thousand tonnes	6.9	4.9	**4.7** (2023)
11.4. Access to green areas, % of population	n/a	84	**88.6** (2025)
11.5. Satisfaction with the living environment, % of population	n/a	n/a	**72** (2024)
11.6. Share of people commuting to work by public transport, bicycle or on foot, %	40.2	36.9	**35.8** (2025)

Measures and Activities

Central Government Level

To strengthen regional development policy, Estonia prepared a cross-government Regional Development Action Plan in 2021, aiming to give greater strategic attention to regional development objectives and territorial needs. To improve governance in this area, a governmental reorganisation in 2023 merged regional policy and rural development policy under the newly established Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture, creating better conditions for balanced regional development and more coherent regional and rural policy implementation.

In 2023, the Estonian Parliament approved updated National Security Policy Principles based on a comprehensive security concept. Security is understood not only as military defence but also as encompassing civil protection, the continuity of essential services, social cohesion, economic security and international cooperation that contributes to Estonia's safety. Based on these principles, defence expenditure was increased to 3.4% of GDP in 2024, and work began on a new Civil Crisis and National Defence Act that will replace the existing fragmented legal framework governing emergencies and national defence.

To improve the integration of mobility services, EUR 840,000 from the Public Sector Innovation Fund was allocated in 2023 for the development of the Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) X-Road platform. The project aims to create a standardised data exchange platform connecting different transport operators and enabling integrated ticketing and travel discounts. The objective is to make public transport and alternative mobility options more attractive and user-friendly.

Residential building renovation accelerated significantly, supported by EUR 170 million in nationwide funding and an additional EUR 15 million dedicated to Ida-Viru County. This largest-ever renovation support programme is improving housing conditions for tens of thousands of residents across Estonia.

In 2025, Estonia also adopted the National Cycling Strategy, which aims to increase the share of all trips made by bicycle from 5% today to 13% by 2040.

To improve the quality of the built environment and strengthen cross-sectoral spatial planning, preparations began in 2023 for establishing a unified land, regional development and planning agency. The Land and Spatial Planning Board commenced operations on 1 January 2025, addressing the long-standing fragmentation of spatial governance. The new institution supports better spatial planning decisions, more efficient resource use, climate adaptation, reduced forced mobility, prevention of segregation, environmental protection, and improvements in physical and mental well-being.

Estonia is currently preparing the national spatial plan *Estonia 2050*, which will define the country's spatial structure, land-use principles and development directions up to 2050. As the spatial expression of the national long-term strategy *Estonia 2035*, the plan supports the achievement of multiple SDGs. During 2024, extensive stakeholder consultations and background studies were conducted, including analyses of settlement development scenarios, valuable landscapes and ecological networks. Based on these studies, a draft planning solution was prepared in 2025 and will undergo public consultation and coordination during 2026.

In 2024, an applied research project produced Estonia's first comprehensive toolbox for sustainable and high-quality spatial planning, providing practical guidance and knowledge for planners at both national and local levels. The toolbox also contributes to achieving SDGs related to climate action and biodiversity.

The Civil Protection Action Plan 2024–2027, adopted in 2024, directs efforts to strengthen public safety, crisis preparedness and societal resilience. The plan emphasises cooperation between the state, local governments and communities, while also promoting public awareness and preparedness training.

Recent years have seen major improvements in emergency warning systems. Estonia has introduced language-preference-based SMS alerts, expanded location-based warning capabilities, tested the multi-channel EE-ALARM system and integrated notifications into the Eesti.ee mobile application. In parallel, Estonia is piloting Europe's first 5G-based emergency warning solution and has begun implementing cell broadcast technology to enable faster and more targeted alerts.

Amendments to the Emergency Act have strengthened the role of civil protection training and made such training mandatory for certain target groups. These efforts are supported by the Digital State Academy's online training programme, which provides practical guidance on coping during crises.

From 2026 onwards, newly constructed larger buildings must include shelters, while existing larger buildings will be required to prepare shelter plans and adapt designated shelter spaces.

Non-Governmental and/or Local Government Level

Government-supported urban development programmes continued in 2023. A total of EUR 23.5 million was allocated for the revitalisation of urban areas in Ida-Viru County, while an additional EUR 12 million supported environmentally friendly and smart urban space solutions across larger urban regions in Estonia. In 2025, EUR 2.5 million was allocated to 34 municipalities for improving accessibility at 330 public transport stops nationwide.

The Responsible Business Forum Estonia (KELL) organised a seminar in late 2025 entitled *Sustainability as the Foundation of Crisis Resilience – How Businesses and the State Can Strengthen Estonia's Resilience*

Together. The recommendations developed during the seminar are being implemented in cooperation with the Rescue Board and the Government Office.

The Ministry of the Interior launched a *Municipal Safety Development Programme* in 2023 to strengthen local-level safety governance. The programme supports systematic safety planning, monitoring of results, implementation of evidence-based prevention measures, and better integration of safety considerations into other policy areas.

Since 2021, municipal crisis preparedness has been measured through a preparedness index ranging from 0 to 9. Targets established by the Rescue Board aim for all municipalities to reach at least a basic preparedness level, with most progressing to advanced or exemplary levels. Although preparedness has improved, further work is needed in practical exercises and risk communication. Municipalities are also required under the EU Critical Entities Resilience (CER) Directive to prepare risk assessments, develop emergency plans and participate in crisis exercises. Additional national support has strengthened evacuation, sheltering and crisis response capacities in both public spaces and residential buildings.

International Level

Estonia joined the Chaillot Declaration, through which dozens of countries committed to making the construction and housing sectors more environmentally sustainable. The declaration prioritises sustainable renovation, climate-resilient and high-quality construction, and the promotion of affordable housing solutions.

The NGO People to People Estonia, together with the Tallinn City Council, participated in the 24-month project on sustainable and green urban environments. The project promoted cooperation between municipalities and civil society organisations across Europe and facilitated the exchange of best practices on urban greening and suitable tree species for urban spaces. Ten workshops were organised with participants from Estonia, Italy, Croatia, Germany, Poland, Bulgaria and Malta, while also encouraging citizen participation in shaping greener urban environments.



SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

Estonia's objectives for sustainable consumption and production are defined in the National Waste Plan 2023–2028 and the National Mineral Resources Policy until 2050. These strategies aim to achieve sustainable resource use and consumption by 2030 while ensuring that mineral resources are managed and utilised in a science-based, environmentally responsible and resource-efficient manner that supports economic growth and protects human health. National efforts to promote sustainable consumption and production are implemented through the Living Environment and Circular Economy Programme and the Energy, Mineral Resources and Ambient Air Programme. In early 2026, the Government approved the new National Energy Development Plan 2035 (ENMAK 2035), updating previous energy objectives in line with the European Green Deal and the Clean Industrial Deal.

General Situation

To contribute to a more resource-efficient, competitive and climate-neutral Europe, Estonia began a comprehensive reform of its waste management system in 2023. The reform seeks to support sustainable production and consumption, increase material recycling rates and reduce the environmental impact of waste management. New obligations arising from European Union legislation, particularly regarding the collection and recycling of textile, biowaste and packaging waste, require substantial restructuring of the national waste management system.

A major milestone was reached in January 2026 with the entry into force of the municipal waste reform. The reform aims to increase the use of waste as a secondary raw material while making separate waste collection simpler and more beneficial for households. The reform is being implemented through cooperation between businesses, public authorities, researchers and other stakeholders. Legislative amendments, research activities and consultations with municipalities are ongoing to support implementation. Several municipalities have already introduced measures encouraging waste prevention and improved waste sorting practices.

Oil shale continues to play an important role in Estonia's economy and energy system. However, its extraction and use generate substantial amounts of waste, including mining residues and ash, while the competitiveness of oil shale power generation is steadily declining. Current analyses indicate that oil shale power plants may become economically uncompetitive as early as 2027. Despite this, Estonia remains one of the least import-dependent countries in Europe in terms of energy supply due to its domestic oil shale resources and the growing share of renewable energy. Consequently, research and

development efforts continue to focus on increasing the added value of oil shale while reducing its environmental footprint through more efficient and sustainable utilisation methods.

Table 12. Indicators (SDG 12).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
12.1. Municipal waste recycling rate, %	27.9	28.9	**36.4** (2024)
12.2. Waste generation, thousand tonnes	24,440.77	16,699.40	**14,593.85** (2024)
12.2.1. Hazardous waste generation, thousand tonnes	9,753.95	1,676.45	**1,506.47** (2024)
12.3.1. Organisations implementing the EMAS environmental management system	6	4	**26** (2025)
12.3.2. Organisations implementing the ISO environmental management system	552	616	**659** (2025)
12.4. Circular material use rate, %	11.6	16.3	**20.5** (2024)
12.5. Eco-Innovation Index as a percentage of the EU average, %	78.7	92	**91** (2024)
12.6. Oil shale extraction, thousand tonnes	12,691	9,194.7	**8,549.3** (2024)

Measures and Activities

Central Government Level

In 2023, Estonia completed a nearly three-year EEA and Norway Grants programme with a total budget of EUR 22.1 million, which supported a wide range of circular economy initiatives. The programme produced circular economy roadmaps for participating municipalities, trained environmental and public sector specialists, developed indicators for green public procurement, and supported pilot projects such as circular economy centres and material reuse banks. More than 40 activities of varying scope were implemented under the programme. To further accelerate the transition to a circular economy, Estonia plans to allocate an additional EUR 75 million to circular economy development in the coming years.

Efforts also continued in 2023 to expand the knowledge base on mineral resources with significant economic potential. The objective is to ensure that mineral resource management is aligned with circular economy principles, prioritising resource efficiency, higher added value and lower waste generation. The government also placed increased emphasis on critical raw materials, supporting the exploration and utilisation of strategically important mineral resources.

In 2024, Estonia introduced a nationwide ban on single-use tableware at public events, requiring organisers to implement reusable alternatives. During the same year, mandatory source-separated collection of biowaste entered into force across the country. Households are required either to compost biowaste on-site or collect it separately for municipal collection. The system has been widely adopted and is considered a successful nationwide model for improving waste management and resource recovery.

To improve industrial sustainability and competitiveness, Estonia launched a EUR 35 million energy and resource efficiency support scheme for industrial and service-sector enterprises in 2024, financed through the European Union Cohesion Fund. The measure supports investments that reduce resource consumption, improve energy efficiency and generate environmental benefits while strengthening business competitiveness.

At the end of 2025, the Estonian Parliament adopted a comprehensive municipal waste sorting reform, which is being implemented gradually from 2026 onwards. The reform establishes a harmonised national standard for separate waste collection and introduces phased obligations for municipalities. Its objectives are to increase recycling rates, transition to real-time waste data systems by 2027, significantly reduce landfill disposal, and ensure the availability of high-quality secondary raw materials for the recycling industry. To support the development of recycling infrastructure and capacity, EUR 29 million from the European Union Cohesion Fund has been allocated to businesses and local governments.

These measures collectively support Estonia's transition towards a circular economy by reducing waste generation, increasing resource efficiency, promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns, and strengthening the domestic recycling and resource recovery sector.

Non-Governmental and/or Local Government Level

Since 2008, the annual nationwide spring clean-up campaign *Teeme Ära!* has taken place across Estonia. The initiative has now been running for more than 15 years. Over time, *Teeme Ära!* has inspired a range of smaller local clean-up activities, as well as the international World Cleanup Day, first held in 2018. By 2024, *Teeme Ära!* had reached 112 countries, engaging more than ten million people worldwide in cleaning up natural and urban environments. In Estonia alone, 32,000 volunteers took part in 2024, helping to organise 1,117 clean-up activities and establish nearly 200 educational gardens in kindergartens and schools.

In 2025, Lääne-Harju Rural Municipality Government organised the educational programme *Less Waste* in nine kindergartens. Through the programme, children learned how to sort waste and understand the importance of reducing waste in protecting nature.

Since 2024, local governments have implemented a ban on single-use tableware at public events. This has strengthened the capacity to introduce reusable systems and has also helped municipalities to address the broader issue of organising more environmentally sustainable events.

Since 2024, local governments have also implemented mandatory separate collection of biowaste on properties where composting is not possible. The transition has been successfully managed at the local level and has already contributed to improving the national recycling rate.

The Estonian Social Enterprise Network helps develop sustainable and long-term solutions. Its statutory objective is to increase the number and capacity of social enterprises in Estonia. More broadly, the network contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through the development of local entrepreneurship. To this end, it organises educational activities for its members and supports the development of targeted support mechanisms and legal assistance. As of 2025, the network included 250 social enterprises. The largest among them include AbeStock, a wholesale company operating in all three Baltic States; Humana Sorting Centre, which sells second-hand clothing; and Biomarket, one of Estonia's largest retail chains for organic products.

International Level

Estonia's largest beverage producer, A. Le Coq, commissioned an industrial process water treatment system in 2022 that enables the company to produce biogas from its wastewater. The system covers up to 10% of the factory's heat energy demand, replacing approximately 185,000 cubic metres of fossil natural gas annually. This reduces dependence on imported fuels while improving resource efficiency and supporting more sustainable production processes.

A notable example of international cooperation for sustainable development is the NGO Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation, which implemented the project *Supporting Youth Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development in Uganda's Agricultural Sector* in 2021–2023. The project aimed to strengthen social entrepreneurship among young people in the food production sector through training focused on sustainable agricultural practices and digital solutions. Implemented in cooperation with the local partner Incredible Youth International, the project reached approximately 100 young people in two pilot regions of Uganda and contributed to building local capacities for sustainable production and entrepreneurship.



SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

Estonia's climate objectives are based on the 2015 Paris Agreement, the 2021 European Green Deal and the related *Fit for 55* package. The main goals of Estonia's climate policy are the transition to climate-neutral energy production, the implementation of circular economy principles, the development of sustainable transport and energy infrastructure, and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector. Estonia's climate policy is also guided by the strategic vision document *Climate Policy Fundamentals until 2050*, originally adopted in 2016 and updated in 2023. According to this vision, Estonia aims to become by 2050 a competitive, knowledge-based and climate-neutral country with a high-quality living environment and strong capacity to adapt to climate change and manage its impacts. More detailed objectives, measures and indicators are defined in sectoral development plans, including the *National Energy Development Plan 2035*, approved by the Government in early 2026.

General Situation

According to the 2024 greenhouse gas inventory, Estonia's total greenhouse gas emissions amounted to 12.14 million tonnes of CO_2 equivalent. Emissions have been on a long-term downward trend since 1990, decreasing by 9% compared to 2023 and by 66.5% compared to 1990. The most significant reductions have occurred in the energy sector, where emissions fell by 16% over the year, primarily due to declining fossil fuel-based electricity generation and continued growth in renewable energy production. Compared with other European Union Member States, Estonia ranked among the five lowest emitters in terms of total greenhouse gas emissions in 2023.[12]

Table 13. Indicators (SDG 13).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
13.1.1. Greenhouse gas emissions per euro of GDP, kg	0.93	0.41	**0.37** (2023)
13.1.2. Greenhouse gas emissions per capita, tonnes	14.99	8.53	**7.93** (2023)
13.2. Net greenhouse gas emissions (including the LULUCF sector – Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry), million tonnes of CO_2 equivalent	17.63	12.48	**12.99** (2023)
13.3. Greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector, thousand tonnes of CO_2 equivalent	2,365.86	2,458.32	**2,647.95** (2023)

[12] European Parliament. Greenhouse gas emissions by country and sector, 2024.

Measures and Activities

Central Government Level

As part of a government reform carried out in 2023, the former Ministry of the Environment was reorganised into the Ministry of Climate. The new ministry was established to ensure the coherent implementation of the green transition, coordinate climate policy and encourage businesses to adopt cleaner technologies. Alongside the reform, work began on developing a Climate-Resilient Economy Act to modernise the existing legal framework and create stronger conditions for achieving Estonia's climate objectives.

A draft Climate-Resilient Economy Act was subsequently prepared to support the transition towards a more environmentally sustainable and higher value-added economy, thereby contributing to broader societal well-being. The legislation aims to provide certainty for citizens, businesses, organisations and public authorities by establishing a clear and coordinated framework for implementing climate action and green transition measures. More than 100 organisations participated in working groups during the drafting process, and over 500 individuals contributed to consultations. The Government approved the draft legislation in May 2026.

According to the State Budget Strategy, approximately EUR 415 million from the Modernisation Fund and revenues from the sale of CO_2 emission allowances has been allocated for improving the energy efficiency of municipal buildings during the period 2021–2029. The programme supports both the renovation of existing buildings and the construction of new nearly zero-energy buildings, provided that older, less energy-efficient buildings are demolished. By the end of 2025, support decisions amounting to EUR 112.6 million had been approved, benefiting 106 municipal service buildings across Estonia.

Between 2023 and 2026, the Education and Youth Board and the Ministry of Education and Research are implementing the programme *Green Skills for Supporting the Green Transition of Enterprises*. The programme supports the development of both general and sector-specific green skills needed for the transition to a more sustainable economy. Through this initiative, at least 3,000 people are expected to improve their green competencies, helping businesses adapt to climate-related challenges and opportunities.

Non-Governmental and/or Local Government Level

Between 2014 and 2021, the programme *Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation*, financed through the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism, supported a range of climate-related initiatives, including the preparation of municipal climate and energy plans. These plans were designed to strengthen local governments' capacity to adapt to climate change and address climate-related risks. In total, ten climate and energy plans were prepared, one for each participating municipality. Each plan was tailored to local circumstances and identified the measures and capacities needed to manage climate-related risks effectively at the local level.

In addition to supporting municipal climate planning, the Ministry of Climate established a Green Transition Network for Local Governments. The network serves as a platform for information sharing and the exchange of experiences on topics such as public transport, green spaces and other sustainability-related issues. Its objective is to ensure that successful local solutions are shared and replicated across Estonia rather than remaining isolated examples.

A prominent example of sustainable construction and climate-conscious urban development is the Nature Hub (Loodusmaja) in Tallinn's Noblessner district. Construction began in July 2024 with the laying of the cornerstone for what will become Estonia's largest wooden building. Scheduled for completion in 2026 near the Seaplane Harbour, the complex combines smart technologies with climate adaptation and environmental sustainability principles. The Nature Hub consists of three separate buildings connected underground and is primarily constructed using Estonian timber. It will bring together several environmental institutions, including the Estonian Museum of Natural History, the Land and Spatial Planning Board, the Environmental Board, the Environment Agency, the Environmental Investment Centre and the Environmental Research Centre. In parallel, a concept for an environmental education development centre has been prepared, and work is underway on the new permanent exhibition of the Estonian Museum of Natural History.

International Level

According to the Environmental Performance Index compiled by Yale and Columbia Universities, Estonia was recognised as the world's most environmentally sustainable country. This achievement was largely attributed to the significant reduction of emissions from the energy sector.

Estonia supports the European Commission's proposed objective of reducing European Union greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by 2040 compared to 1990 levels, provided that the necessary enabling conditions are in place. Achieving this target will require the deployment of new technologies across the European Union, particularly solutions related to carbon capture, utilisation and storage, including biogenic carbon. Several such technologies are already being tested successfully, and Estonia is home to companies whose business models are based on carbon capture solutions. Carbon capture is viewed as a complementary measure that supports, but does not replace, other greenhouse gas reduction efforts. Early agreement on the 2040 climate target is considered important for providing clear signals to financial markets and industries, enabling long-term investment planning and supporting investments in skills development for citizens, businesses and policymakers.

Estonia also actively participates in regional cooperation within the Baltic Sea region. The Council of the Baltic Sea States supports cooperation among all member countries, while the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is supported by a dedicated secretariat. Estonia held the presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States during 2024–2025, with resilience and sustainability as the overarching themes of its presidency. All democratic countries surrounding the Baltic Sea are now also members of NATO, further strengthening regional cooperation and security.

Climate diplomacy continues to play an important role in promoting Estonia's green transition internationally. Estonia actively participated in the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku under the theme *Enhance Ambition and Enable Action*, contributing to international dialogue on advancing the objectives of the Paris Agreement. Key priorities have included promoting the Three Seas Initiative and its investment fund, supporting the European Union's green transition, representing Estonia's interests in EU climate discussions, and strengthening the competitiveness, resilience and connectivity of Estonia and the wider Baltic Sea region.



SDG 14:
Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

The protection and sustainable use of the marine environment in Estonia are guided primarily by the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive and related EU legislation, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the requirements of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (HELCOM Convention). In fisheries management, Estonia follows the EU Common Fisheries Policy and the objectives of the Agriculture and Fisheries Development Plan 2030, which focus on the sustainable management of fish stocks and strengthening the competitiveness of the fisheries sector. Due to its geographical location, Estonia's marine policy and conservation efforts are primarily focused on the protection of the Baltic Sea.

General Situation

Although relatively small on a global scale, the Baltic Sea is the world's second-largest brackish water body and is therefore particularly sensitive to environmental pressures caused by human activity. The most significant threats facing the Baltic Sea are eutrophication, overfishing and hazardous substances[13]. Intensive maritime transport and oil pollution incidents also place additional pressure on the marine environment and may cause coastal pollution.

The conservation status of Baltic Sea habitats remains unfavourable, and improving the environmental condition of the Baltic Sea and Estonia's marine areas continues to be a government priority. Achieving this objective requires adherence to the principles of Estonia's maritime spatial plan, adopted in 2022, which aims to ensure the sustainable use of marine areas while safeguarding the functioning of marine ecosystems. In line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and HELCOM regional objectives, Estonia intends to further expand its network of marine protected areas. The implementation of the Marine Strategy Programme of Measures and River Basin Management Plans also continues in order to reduce human pressures and their impacts on marine ecosystems.

According to the updated assessment of Estonia's marine environment published in 2024, good environmental status has not yet been achieved in Estonian marine waters. Estonia continues to face the same challenges affecting the Baltic Sea as a whole, including eutrophication, hazardous substances and

[13] State of the Baltic Sea 2023.

other environmental pressures. As of 2025, 19.3% of Estonia's marine area, covering a total of 36,620 km², is under protection.

The sustainable use of fish stocks and environmentally responsible commercial fishing remain important national priorities. Estonia continues to develop and implement fisheries management measures aimed at conserving fish stocks while ensuring the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the fisheries sector.

Table 14. Indicators (SDG 14).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
14.1. Share of protected marine areas in Estonia's marine area (including the exclusive economic zone), %	n/a	18.7	**19.3** (2024)
14.2.1. Spawning stock biomass of Gulf of Riga herring, tonnes	121,596	117,627	**129,815** (2024)
14.2.2. Reference biomass level for Gulf of Riga herring spawning stock, tonnes	60,000	72,907	**72,907** (2024)
14.2.3. Relative spawning stock biomass of Baltic herring in the Central Baltic Sea*	560,793	0.40	**0.65** (2024)
14.2.4. Relative reference biomass level (MSY Btrigger) for the Baltic herring spawning stock in the Central Baltic Sea*	460,000	1	**1** (2024)
14.2.5. Spawning stock biomass of Baltic sprat, tonnes	1,099,000	874,038	**597,371** (2024)
14.2.6. Reference biomass level for Baltic sprat spawning stock, tonnes	570,000	541,000	**541,000** (2024)
14.2.7. Relative spawning stock biomass of Western Baltic cod compared with the long-term average biomass*	12,742	0.36	**0.08** (2024)
14.2.8. Relative reference biomass level (MSY Btrigger) for the Western Baltic cod spawning stock*	23,492	1.03	**1.03** (2024)
14.3.1. Total phosphorus load to the sea, tonnes*	0.7	646	**590** (2024)
14.3.2. Total nitrogen load to the sea, tonnes*	34	32,752	**30,675** (2024)

* Following a benchmark assessment of fish stock models conducted in 2023, the spawning stock biomass (SSB) of Central Baltic herring and Western Baltic cod is reported as a relative indicator (SSB/MSY Btrigger). MSY Btrigger is the minimum spawning stock biomass that ensures the achievement of maximum sustainable yield (MSY) over the long term when fishing mortality is maintained at FMSY.

Measures and Activities

Central Government Level

In 2024, Estonia updated its assessment of the environmental status of marine waters, providing an overview of the condition of marine ecosystems and the pressures resulting from human activities. The assessment concluded that good environmental status has not yet been achieved for any of the descriptors under the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, although overall trends indicate gradual improvement. During the same year, Estonia also updated its marine environmental objectives, which are to be achieved by 2030.

In 2025, Estonia carried out a mid-term review of the implementation of its Marine Strategy Programme of Measures. Of the 36 measures updated in 2023, three had been fully completed by early 2025, while implementation of the remaining measures continued. Estonia's activities are also linked to the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, supporting efforts to improve environmental conditions both within Estonian marine waters and across the Baltic Sea region.

To protect marine biodiversity and ecosystems, Estonia has supported the installation of artificial spawning grounds and the restoration of fish populations in marine and coastal habitats. In addition, a national research programme for 2021–2027 has been launched, supporting studies related to fisheries, aquaculture, the valorisation of aquatic biological resources and environmental protection.

Between 2021 and 2025, numerous scientific and applied research projects were conducted to improve marine monitoring and assessment methods and to better understand the impacts of climate change and human activities on marine ecosystems. Research findings indicate that climate change impacts are more extensive than previously estimated and that increasing phosphorus release from seabed sediments is contributing to eutrophication risks. In response to the EU Nature Restoration Regulation, Estonia has refined mapping of marine habitats, is developing a digital twin of its marine area and is introducing new cost-effective monitoring methods.

In 2025, the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture further developed Estonia's fisheries policy framework with the objective of supporting sustainable fish stocks and the long-term viability of coastal fisheries. Fishing opportunities, annual catch limits and fee rates for commercial fisheries were established for 2026. In addition, an economic analysis of the coastal fisheries sector covering the period 2020–2024 was completed, and discussions on a broader coastal fisheries reform were launched. The reform aims to improve fish stock conditions, secure incomes within the sector and attract younger generations to fisheries.

Non-Governmental and/or Local Government Level

In 2025, the municipality of Lääne-Harju organised coastal clean-up activities that resulted in an exhibition of installations created from marine litter. The initiative aimed to raise public awareness about the importance of maintaining clean and healthy coastal environments.

In 2024, the Läänemaa Coastal Fisheries Association adopted a new development strategy, *The Fisheries Area Development Strategy of Läänemaa for 2023–2030+*. The strategy identifies development needs in the fisheries areas of Lääne-Nigula, Haapsalu, Vormsi and Lääneranna municipalities. Among its objectives is the improvement of environmental conditions along Estonia's western coast to support the restoration and reproduction of fish stocks.

International Level

In October 2021, ministers from the Baltic Sea countries adopted an updated HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), containing approximately 200 measures aimed at improving the condition of the Baltic Sea. The plan focuses on strengthening the protection of marine biodiversity, reducing the impacts of pollution and marine litter, and ensuring that maritime activities are conducted in a safer and more environmentally sustainable manner. In 2025, HELCOM member states reported on the implementation of BSAP measures. The updated action plan seeks to achieve a significant improvement in the environmental status of the Baltic Sea by 2030.

In 2025, the Ministry of Climate established a support scheme to facilitate the retrofitting of vessels for improved environmental performance and to promote the decarbonisation of maritime transport. The measure forms part of a broader strategy aimed at supporting economic growth, strengthening the maritime sector and creating new jobs while contributing to climate and environmental objectives.



SDG 15:

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

Estonia's strategic objectives in environmental protection and biodiversity conservation are addressed through policies covering agriculture, fisheries and land improvement under the Agriculture and Fisheries Development Plan 2030 (PÕKA 2030), as well as through environmental, circular economy and climate policy frameworks, including the Estonian Environmental Strategy until 2030, Climate Policy Fundamentals until 2050 and the Climate Change Adaptation Development Plan until 2030. The government's overarching objective is to ensure a safe, high-quality and needs-based living environment for all. This objective is supported through sectoral programmes whose shared aim is to safeguard biodiversity and the environment while promoting sustainable and efficient use of natural resources. In addition, the EU Soil Monitoring and Resilience Directive has introduced a new objective of achieving healthy soils by 2050, which Estonia will transpose through a new Soil Act currently under preparation.

In response to climate change and biodiversity challenges, Estonia has set the goal of maintaining the proportion of habitat types protected under the EU Habitats Directive that are in favourable conservation status at the current level of 57%. The government also aims to reduce air pollutant emissions, particularly greenhouse gas emissions from the energy and transport sectors and ammonia emissions from agriculture. According to the 2022 greenhouse gas inventory, Estonia's total emissions amounted to 14.3 million tonnes of CO_2 equivalent, including emissions and removals from the land-use and forestry sector. As projections indicate a growing trend in total emissions, additional measures will be required to reduce air pollution and achieve climate objectives.

General Situation

The condition of Estonia's terrestrial ecosystems is generally considered very good. As of 2024, forests covered 51.8% of Estonia's land area, of which 19.7% was under strict protection and excluded from economic use, while an additional 10.1% was subject to management restrictions. Overall, 23.4% of Estonia's territory was protected under the Nature Conservation Act, including 19.8% of land area.

Species and habitat conservation in Estonia is guided by the objectives and indicators of the Natura 2000 network established under the EU Habitats Directive and Birds Directive. Estonia's Natura 2000 sites have been designated to protect 60 habitat types, 53 species of animals and plants, and 129 bird and migratory bird species.

Compared with much of Europe, soil conditions in Estonia remain relatively good, although long-term trends indicate gradual degradation pressures. Estonia is characterised by a comparatively high share of

peat soils, which are particularly important from both biodiversity and climate perspectives. The country has a long tradition of soil monitoring and maintains a digital soil map that is being comprehensively updated, with completion expected by the end of 2026. An important new policy direction in land and soil management is the introduction of a land-use hierarchy approach, aimed at managing land take more sustainably and reducing unnecessary conversion of natural and agricultural land.

Table 15. Indicators (SDG 15).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
15.1. Share of protected areas in the terrestrial territory, %	18.7	19.4	**19.8** (2024)
15.1.1. Share of protected areas in Harju County, %	n/a	20.1	**21** (2024)
15.1.2. Share of protected areas in Hiiu County, %	n/a	23.5	**23.6** (2024)
15.1.3. Share of protected areas in Ida-Viru County, %	n/a	21.0	**21.6** (2024)
15.1.4. Share of protected areas in Jõgeva County, %	n/a	14.2	**14.4** (2024)
15.1.5. Share of protected areas in Järva County, %	n/a	14.4	**14.6** (2024)
15.1.6. Share of protected areas in Lääne County, %	n/a	28.9	**29** (2024)
15.1.7. Share of protected areas in Lääne-Viru County, %	n/a	16.8	**17.1** (2024)
15.1.8. Share of protected areas in Põlva County, %	n/a	8.3	**8.4** (2024)
15.1.9. Share of protected areas in Pärnu County, %	n/a	27.3	**27.8** (2024)
15.1.10. Share of protected areas in Rapla County, %	n/a	20.1	**20.4** (2024)
15.1.11. Share of protected areas in Saare County, %	n/a	18.9	**19.4** (2024)
15.1.12. Share of protected areas in Tartu County, %	n/a	18.4	**18.6** (2024)
15.1.13. Share of protected areas in Valga County, %	n/a	21.3	**21.7** (2024)
15.1.14. Share of protected areas in Viljandi County, %	n/a	17	**17.1** (2024)
15.1.15. Share of protected areas in Võru County, %	n/a	17.2	**17.3** (2024)
15.2. Share of strictly protected forest area in total forest area, %	12.9	14.2	**19.7** (2024)
15.3. Emissions of acidifying gases, thousand tonnes of acidification equivalent	2.4	1.4	**1.3** (2023)
15.3.1. Sulphur dioxide (SO_2) emissions, thousand tonnes	35.3	10.9	**11** (2023)
15.3.2. Nitrogen oxides (NO_x) emissions, thousand tonnes	31.5	20.8	**18.7** (2023)
15.3.3. Ammonia (NH_3) emissions, thousand tonnes	10.2	10.3	**9.7** (2023)
15.4. Emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), thousand tonnes	22.0	23	**23.1** (2023)
15.5. Share of Habitats Directive habitat types in favourable conservation status, %	52	57	**57** (2024)
15.6. Share of Habitats Directive species in favourable conservation status, %	54	56	**56** (2024)

Measures and Activities

Central Government Level

The process of drafting the Climate-Resilient Economy Act was launched to strengthen public confidence that Estonia's climate mitigation and adaptation efforts are legally clear, coordinated and predictable. The legislation forms part of the broader mandate of the Ministry of Climate, established in 2023, to coordinate the implementation of Estonia's green transition. In connection with this work, the national Green Reform Action Plan was updated in 2023. The Government approved the Climate-Resilient Economy Act in May 2026.

In January 2023, Estonia launched the nationwide climate adaptation project LIFE-SIP AdaptEst with a total budget of EUR 18.8 million. The project includes the updating of climate projections, the deployment of a technically enhanced wildfire risk map, the preparation of a management plan for the semi-natural grasslands of Alam-Pedja Nature Reserve, and the renewal of the reserve's conservation management plan. Approximately 2,400 hectares of habitats have been surveyed in Alam-Pedja, while hydrological restoration works have begun on approximately 630 hectares. The project has also supported groundwater and surface water assessments, analyses of wastewater reuse opportunities, the establishment of mixed-forest demonstration sites, experimental plantations, the reintroduction of threatened fish species such as whitefish, asp and grayling, and the removal of migration barriers in rivers important for salmonid species.

Amendments to the Nature Conservation Act and the Forest Act were prepared to strengthen biodiversity protection, provide greater legal clarity for landowners and support sustainable forest management. The amendments clarify conservation principles and update regulations governing logging and forest plantations. One of the most significant changes is the establishment of a national target to place 30% of Estonia's land area under protection. Currently, 28.7% of land is protected in some form, including coastal and shoreline protection zones. Achieving the new target will require the protection or restoration of approximately 60,000 additional hectares of valuable habitats, including meadows, wetlands and aquatic ecosystems.

In 2024, the Ministry of Climate launched a project to update Estonia's national soil map and improve soil-related datasets. Soil plays a central role in regulating climate, supporting biodiversity and maintaining a healthy living environment. It is a critical resource for food, energy and raw material production. Research indicates that soils host more than half of the world's species and represent the planet's largest terrestrial carbon reservoir.

The State Forest Management Centre (RMK), which manages state forests according to sustainable forestry principles and contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted a new development plan for 2024–2028. Under the plan, RMK aims to ensure that its forests and lands annually sequester a net total of 2.9 million tonnes of CO_2. This target forms part of Estonia's broader climate neutrality efforts and is supported by RMK's dedicated carbon emission reduction plan.

The Minister of Climate initiated the expansion of Alutaguse National Park to improve the protection of threatened species and habitats. The expansion will incorporate high-value natural areas, primarily wetlands and forests, as well as adjacent protected habitats already under conservation management.

In 2025, the Ministry of Climate and its partners launched a broad stakeholder engagement process for the preparation of Estonia's National Nature Restoration Plan, based on the EU Nature Restoration Regulation that entered into force in 2024. The plan will provide a comprehensive framework for restoring biodiversity and ecosystems by assessing current conditions, identifying restoration actions, outlining financing mechanisms and establishing pathways to achieve the regulation's objectives.

The Nature Restoration Plan aims to improve biodiversity and ensure that Estonia's forests, agricultural landscapes, wetlands, water bodies and urban ecosystems continue to support human well-being, economic resilience and national preparedness. For example, healthier pollinator populations will support agricultural productivity, while restoring wetlands and river connectivity will help reduce flood risks. Nature-based solutions in urban areas will contribute to climate adaptation. In accordance with the EU regulation, Estonia must submit a draft national restoration plan to the European Commission by September 2026, including detailed targets until 2032 and a longer-term vision extending to 2050.

The Ministry of Climate has also initiated, together with the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, research institutions and stakeholder organisations, the preparation of a new Soil Act, the renewal of the national soil monitoring programme, the completion of the updated national soil map by the end of 2026, improvements to LULUCF datasets and methodologies, and the development of a land-use and land-take monitoring system. Initial results from these activities are expected by the end of 2027, while the new Soil Act is planned to enter into force by the end of 2028. Follow-up measures will be implemented through 2030 based on the findings of ongoing research and development projects.

These activities aim to establish a coherent national soil monitoring framework, reduce soil pollution to levels that no longer pose risks to human health and ecosystems, prevent soil degradation, improve soil quality and ensure that soils can continue providing essential ecosystem services. The long-term objective is to achieve healthy soils by 2050, capable of supporting environmental, social and economic needs, mitigating climate change and biodiversity loss, increasing resilience to natural hazards and strengthening food security.

Non-Governmental and/or Local Government Level

In 2024, the Estonian Council of Environmental NGOs prepared a spatial dataset for the Ministry of Climate identifying 99 of the most biodiverse and ecologically valuable state-owned forest areas. According to the Council, managing these forests more sustainably or placing them under strict protection would represent an important contribution to achieving the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

The Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF) works to protect biodiversity and ecosystem health. Its conservation activities focus particularly on threatened species and habitats, including the Siberian flying squirrel, bats and amphibians. To strengthen public support for nature conservation, the organisation implemented the EU LIFE-funded communication project *NaturallyEst LIFE* between 2017 and 2022. The project piloted new approaches to conservation communication and stakeholder engagement related to Natura 2000 protected areas.

In the field of soil protection, a national Soil Cooperation Centre was established in early 2026 under the leadership of the Rural Knowledge Centre. The centre brings together policymakers, research institutions and land users into a single network. Its objective is to strengthen cooperation between science and

practice, identify practical needs and provide recommendations for evidence-based policymaking. In parallel, the Ministry of Climate established three working groups on soil monitoring, land use and land take, and land managers and users. These groups are contributing to the development of the new Soil Act.

International Level

One of Estonia's development cooperation priorities is supporting the development of green innovation ecosystems in partner countries. This includes helping countries develop technical solutions and regulatory frameworks that are currently lacking. By combining projects addressing basic needs with digital innovation and sustainable development solutions, Estonia contributes to long-term societal development. Areas of cooperation include improving access to safe drinking water, strengthening food security and promoting affordable and sustainable construction solutions.

Under the EU Nature Restoration Regulation, all Member States are required to submit national restoration plans to the European Commission within two years. Estonia's plan, covering the period until 2050, will include detailed measures until 2030 and longer-term strategic objectives thereafter. The plan addresses the restoration of terrestrial and marine habitats, urban greening, river connectivity, pollinator populations and agricultural and forest ecosystems. Preparation of the plan began in 2024 and is scheduled for completion in 2026.

International cooperation on soil protection and land degradation is guided by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), which Estonia joined in 2011. In 2026, Estonia will participate in the convention's reporting cycle to assess the effectiveness of actions undertaken under the 2018–2030 strategic framework and to evaluate progress toward sustainable land management objectives.



SDG 16:

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

The indicators and policy framework for promoting peace, justice and strong institutions are primarily based on the *Internal Security Development Plan 2020–2030*, the *Cohesive Estonia Development Plan 2030*, the *National Defence Development Plan 2022–2031* and, to a lesser extent, the *Youth Sector Development Plan 2021–2035*.

In the areas of violence prevention and criminal policy, the government's objective is to strengthen law-abiding behaviour within society and improve the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. Particular emphasis is placed on making the system more victim-centred, human-oriented and digital. Priority areas include preventing crimes involving children and young people, reducing domestic violence and strengthening anti-corruption efforts.

General Situation

The number of registered domestic violence offences has declined since 2019 and has remained relatively stable over the past three years. In 2025, a total of 3,125 domestic violence offences were recorded, representing a 7% decrease compared with 2024. The largest share of these offences involved intimate partner violence.

The typical perpetrator of domestic violence was male. The youngest recorded perpetrator was 14 years old and the oldest 88 years old. The majority of domestic violence incidents were committed against women and girls. Among minor victims, 55% were girls and 45% were boys.

The detection, prevention and suppression of corruption also remain important priorities for the state. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, Estonia ranked 12th out of 180 countries in 2025, sharing its position with Canada. Estonia's strong performance is further reflected in the 2022 assessment by the MONEYVAL, which concluded that corruption is not a systemic problem in Estonia.

Table 16. Indicators (SDG 16).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
16.1. Corruption Perceptions Index	70	75	**76** (2025)
16.2. Share of persons with undetermined citizenship, %	6.2	5.4	**4.4** (2025)
16.3. Share of people who consider their neighbourhood safe, %	94	92	**91** (2024)
16.4. Deaths due to assault per 100,000 population	2.4	3	**1.6** (2024)
16.5. Share of people who have been victims of violent crime in Estonia, %	1.8	0.9	**1.3** (2025)

Measures and Activities

Central Government Level

In 2023, a project was launched to promote and support the participation in society of young people with a history of offending, strengthen their independent coping skills and support their entry into and retention in education and the labour market. The aim is to prevent the emergence or worsening of social problems.

In 2023, a project to improve the protection of victims of crime was successfully completed. Under the project, the Ministry of Justice, the Police and Border Guard Board, the Social Insurance Board, the healthcare sector and other stakeholders jointly developed dedicated tools for assessing victims' needs, referring victims between services, improving the information provided to victims and ensuring processes that better protect and support victims of crime.

To implement structural changes and prevent violence, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice and Digital Affairs, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research approved the *Domestic Violence Prevention Action Plan 2024–2027*. The plan aims to ensure that domestic violence is recognised at an early stage and that people affected by violence receive consistent, systematic and needs-based support. The objective is to move from a reactive approach towards a preventive and integrated intervention model.

Implementation of the Action Plan is monitored and supported by an expert group comprising all participating ministries and their subordinate agencies, which meets monthly. In addition, a steering group meets twice a year, bringing together deputy secretaries general of ministries and heads of relevant departments. Its role is to monitor implementation and provide additional guidance. As domestic violence concerns several policy areas and each sector has a role in preventing and reducing it, it was jointly agreed that leadership of the Action Plan during this period would rotate among the responsible institutions.

To strengthen internal security, Estonia updated the foundations of its security policy and allocated an additional EUR 80 million for the development of comprehensive national defence during 2024–2027. A key government priority is to strengthen comprehensive national defence in order to increase the resilience of the population and preparedness for different types of crises, regardless of their nature or

cause. In 2023, three major exercises were organised to support comprehensive national defence: MILJON MIKSI, CREVEX and ORKAAN. These exercises included practising the establishment and operation of evacuation centres.

In 2024–2026, the Decisive Lancer 24/25/26 command post exercises were organised in cooperation with the Estonian Defence Forces, covering both crisis-time and wartime activities. Local authorities were also involved, enabling the functioning of civil-military cooperation to be tested in the context of comprehensive national defence. In 2024, the evacuation exercise Lõuna Sild 2024 was held in Southern Estonia, focusing on practical activities, including the organisation of population evacuation and ensuring regional reception capacity.

KEVADMURD 2025 was a nationwide crisis exercise in which municipalities and service providers practised responding to a large-scale emergency, such as a prolonged power outage. Approximately 72 municipalities participated, together with various institutions, to improve cooperation and preparedness in crisis response.

The next major stage will be the complex exercise ILVES 2026, taking place from 8 to 12 June 2026. Its purpose is to practise the state's integrated crisis response and the functioning of comprehensive national defence. Approximately 130 organisations will be involved, including local governments, state institutions, voluntary organisations and the highest political leadership of the state: the Government of the Republic, the President of the Republic and the Riigikogu.

In 2019, the Government decided to allocate revenues from CO_2 quotas to improve air surveillance capabilities in North-Eastern Estonia, in order to lift height restrictions in parts of Virumaa for the development of wind farms. In 2021, the Government made an additional decision to allocate revenues received under an intergovernmental statistical transfer agreement to release a larger share of mainland Estonia from national defence-related height restrictions. At present, height restrictions on wind farms apply in most of Estonia, including North-Eastern Estonia, because tall wind turbines interfere with equipment used for national defence. The Government's decision reflects the principle that national defence and climate objectives should not hinder one another; instead, additional investments are needed to ensure that both objectives can be achieved.

In spring 2024, the Government Office launched the Co-Creation Accelerator, a funding and support programme. Twice a year, ministries can apply for up to EUR 50,000 to involve external engagement or co-creation experts in order to implement important initiatives in a more inclusive manner. At the time of preparing this report, eight initiatives from five ministries were participating in the Co-Creation Accelerator.

Non-Governmental and/or Local Government Level

To strengthen cooperation in creating safety and developing voluntary activity in internal security, the Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with the Rescue Board and the Police and Border Guard Board, renewed cooperation agreements in 2021 for the following ten years with the NGOs Estonian Neighbourhood Watch, the Estonian Assistant Police Officers Association, the Estonian Rescue Association and the Estonian Voluntary Maritime and Lake Rescue Association.

In 2025, the Responsible Business Forum Estonia implemented the project *Empowering Young People for Sustainable Advocacy*. As part of the project, young people prepared five policy briefs focusing on critical

issues shaping Estonia's future: education, sustainability, regional development, food systems and digital equality. Each brief reflects young people's perspective: practical, direct and focused on real-life impact.

International Level

In April 2023, Estonia and Ukraine signed a defence cooperation agreement to improve the coordination of future joint activities. Under the agreement, Estonia and Ukraine will continue cooperation and information exchange in defence policy and planning, intelligence and situational awareness, military education and training, and several other areas.

In 2023–2025, the Estonian Centre for International Development and the Police and Border Guard Board implemented the project *Developing the Regional Management Capacity and Leadership of the Ukrainian Police in the National Police Headquarters and Patrol Police Units of Kirovohrad, Chernihiv and Zhytomyr Oblasts Based on the Experience of the Eastern, Western and Southern Prefectures of the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board*. The project aimed to develop the skills and knowledge of regional police leaders in Ukraine and improve the organisation of work within police units in order to strengthen public trust in the police and reduce corruption. It also aimed to improve regional leadership capacity in the police headquarters and patrol police units of Kirovohrad, Chernihiv and Zhytomyr Oblasts.

Over nearly two years, the cooperation project brought together police leaders from three Ukrainian regions with leaders and experts from the Eastern, Western and Southern Prefectures of the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board. Training activities focused on sharing experience and addressing modern management practices, police development, innovation and organisational culture.

In 2024, Estonia and Moldova implemented the project *Facilitating Knowledge Transfer and Experience Exchange with Estonian Border Authorities on Delegating Competencies at State Border Crossings*, aimed at strengthening the capacity of Moldovan border crossing points. Activities included optimising border guard operations and reviewing information systems and legal frameworks.

In summer 2021, Ukrainian officers completed maritime practice in Estonia aboard the flagship of the Police and Border Guard Board, gaining an overview of new-generation vessels, fleet management and Estonia's maritime surveillance solutions.

The main objective of Estonia's cyber diplomacy is to strengthen national security through the development of international cyber norms and cyber deterrence. *The Estonian Foreign Policy Development Plan 2030* sets the objective of remaining an active advocate for international cyber policy, participating in the development and strengthening of cybersecurity initiatives in international organisations, and strengthening international bilateral cyber cooperation based on the principles of democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights.

Cyber diplomacy shapes and implements cooperation with partner countries in line with Estonia's foreign policy priorities. It also contributes to the development and implementation of international norms in various international organisations and formats. Estonia actively participates in international discussions, including within the United Nations, the European Union, NATO, the OECD, the Council of Europe and the OSCE, addressing challenges related to the global governance of technology, including the ethical and responsible use of technology.

SDG 17:
Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development



Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

Estonia's objectives for advancing global partnerships are based on the *Foreign Policy Development Plan 2030*, which derives from the long-term national strategy *Estonia 2035*, Estonia's European Union policy and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The overarching objective of Estonia's foreign policy is threefold: ensuring the preservation of the Republic of Estonia and the Estonian nation, language and culture; supporting prosperity growth in Estonia and protecting the interests of Estonians internationally; and increasing Estonia's contribution to global sustainable development.

The implementation of Estonia's foreign policy is organised around three main pillars: security, foreign economic relations and issues concerning Estonians living abroad. Achievement of these objectives is further supported by Estonia's *National Security Policy Foundations* and the *Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Strategy 2024–2030*.

General Situation

Development cooperation policy is designed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while implementation and management are carried out by the Estonian Centre for International Development (ESTDEV). The objective of ESTDEV is to strengthen cooperation with other donors, thereby increasing the impact and visibility of Estonia's development cooperation, while involving the expertise of Estonian civil society, public institutions and the private sector to an ever-greater extent.

Estonia provides voluntary annual contributions to support development cooperation and humanitarian assistance through international organisations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). In addition, Estonia provides targeted support to thematic programmes implemented by these organisations.

In pursuing its Official Development Assistance (ODA) and humanitarian aid objectives, Estonia follows the political commitment agreed by European Union Member States to reach an ODA contribution level of 0.33% of gross national income by 2030. Estonia's ODA in 2023, covering the entire public sector's external cooperation activities with developing countries, amounted to EUR 77 million, representing 0.2% of GDP.

A key challenge for Estonian foreign policy remains supporting Ukraine in the face of Russia's ongoing aggression and defending the democratic and rules-based international order. In recent years, European countries have increasingly recognised that strengthening security requires greater, more effective and more coordinated efforts. By the beginning of 2024, several countries, including Estonia, had increased defence spending, while the European Commission adopted a European Defence Industrial Strategy and intensive discussions continued on common EU funding mechanisms for security and defence. Estonia's initiative to allocate annually 0.25% of GDP in military assistance to Ukraine has received significant international attention.

Supporting Ukraine remains one of Estonia's foremost foreign policy priorities. The Government has committed to allocating 0.25% of GDP annually as military assistance to Ukraine during the period 2024–2027. Ukraine's success also strengthens confidence in other countries of North-Eastern and Eastern Europe that their national identity, language and culture can be protected against aggression.

In line with Estonia's foreign policy objectives and international commitments to increase support for vulnerable countries, Estonia continues to respond flexibly to the needs of other states, particularly least developed countries, post-conflict countries, small island developing states and landlocked developing countries. Estonia focuses its support on areas where it can provide clear added value. The importance of development cooperation in ensuring security and stability both in Estonia and globally is also emphasised in Estonia's National Security Policy Foundations.

Table 17. Indicators (SDG 17).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
17.1. Official development assistance as a percentage of gross national income (GNI), %	0.2	0.2	**0.2** (2025)
17.2. General government budget balance, % of GDP	0.2	-4.1	**0.0** (2024)
17.3. General government gross debt, % of GDP	10.0	19.1	**24.1** (2025)
17.4. Environmental taxes as a percentage of total tax revenue, %	8.9	7.1	**7** (2023)

Measures and Activities

Central Government and International Level

In July 2023, Estonia became a member of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Membership helps ensure the professionalism of Estonia's development cooperation and humanitarian assistance activities and increases opportunities to implement projects jointly with other major international donors. In cooperation with the DAC, Estonia is introducing a results-based evaluation system to support the objective set in the *Foreign Policy Development Plan 2030* of increasing the long-term impact and effectiveness of Estonian development cooperation.

An important institutional development in Estonia's development cooperation framework was the establishment of the Estonian Centre for International Development (ESTDEV) in 2021 as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' foundation responsible for the practical implementation of development cooperation

activities. To improve the involvement of domestic development cooperation partners, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also established the Development Cooperation Council in 2024.

In March 2023, Estonia initiated an EU-wide effort to procure one million rounds of artillery ammunition for Ukraine within twelve months. Although the initiative was approved by the European Union and procurement was delayed beyond the original deadline, it contributed significantly to a broader understanding that Europe must invest substantially more in its defence industry. During a visit to Tallinn on 19 January 2024, European Commissioner Thierry Breton announced that the EU defence industry would be capable of producing up to 1.4 million artillery shells annually by the end of 2024, representing a substantial increase compared with pre-initiative production levels.

A major challenge remained the inability of EU Member States to agree on a long-term mechanism for military assistance to Ukraine, with discussions continuing throughout 2024. Through the European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine), nearly 40,000 Ukrainian personnel had received training. Estonia contributed actively to these efforts, and training activities continued in 2024.

In 2023, Estonia adopted a foundational policy paper defining the principles and priorities of its digital diplomacy. Governance of global technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, has increasingly become a central topic of international diplomacy. Key forums for these discussions include the European Union, the United Nations, the G20, the G7, UNESCO, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the OECD, all of which Estonia actively follows and contributes to.

Estonia continues to serve as an international hub for digital governance and cybersecurity issues. This role was reflected in three major international events held in Tallinn and co-organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: the Tallinn Digital Summit, the e-Governance Conference organised by the e-Governance Academy, and the Open Government Partnership Global Summit.

Estonia further strengthened its reputation as a leader in open digital infrastructure and continued participating in global initiatives promoting its development. Estonia’s Ambassador-at-Large for Digital Affairs contributed, together with like-minded partners from the European Union and beyond, to the development of 21 digital public infrastructure components under India’s G20 digital agenda.

Estonia also remained actively engaged in the work of the United Nations Digital Public Goods Alliance (DPGA). For example, in cooperation with the DPGA and the private donor fund Co-Develop, Estonia hosted a study visit to Tallinn focused on open digital infrastructure. The visit brought together donor organisations, including private foundations and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, as well as representatives of countries interested in Estonia’s digital solutions. Following the visit, Bangladesh took its first steps towards implementing the X-Road data exchange platform, while Co-Develop entered into an agreement with the Estonian company Digital Nations to advise global partners on open digital infrastructure solutions.

Estonia’s commitment to multilateral cooperation was further demonstrated through its service on the United Nations Security Council from May 2020 to June 2021, marking the first time in the country’s history that Estonia held a seat on the Council. Estonia’s priorities included promoting international norms in cyberspace, strengthening the role of human rights in conflict prevention, addressing the future of Afghanistan, increasing the visibility of the European Union within the UN system and enhancing the transparency of the Security Council.

During its first year on the Council, Estonia organised seven informal meetings, contributed to the adoption of 58 resolutions and successfully raised the issue of cyberspace stability for the first time in the history of the UN Security Council. Although Estonia's term was overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, developments in Afghanistan and Belarus, and Russia's continuing aggression, Estonia successfully used the Security Council platform to draw international attention to cybersecurity issues. Estonia also encouraged other Council members, including Kenya and Indonesia, to organise similar discussions focused on cyber stability and security.

Non-Governmental and/or Local Government Level

Building on Tallinn's designation as the European Green Capital 2023, the City of Tallinn has increasingly promoted discussions on innovative governance approaches for sustainable development. In 2023 and 2024, the Tallinn City Government developed a sustainability management model for the city.

A central component of the model is an ex-ante impact assessment tool designed to evaluate how planned policies and initiatives contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The tool provides a structured framework for integrating sustainability considerations into strategic planning and decision-making processes.

The model enables city leadership to manage change more effectively by taking into account sustainability, social cohesion and economic efficiency in a balanced manner. Through this approach, Tallinn aims to strengthen evidence-based policymaking and support decisions that contribute to long-term sustainable urban development.



SDG 18: Viability of the Estonian Cultural Space

Estonia's Objectives and General Situation

In 2021, the Government of Estonia adopted the *Culture Development Plan 2021–2030*, which established more specific sectoral objectives to strengthen the vitality of Estonia's cultural space and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Development Plan makes a significant contribution to the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and is closely linked to other national development plans and strategic objectives. It is also aligned with the principles of European Union cooperation in the field of culture, including the promotion of cultural diversity, the development of digital skills, support for the creative economy, and other cross-cutting priorities.

The Government has set the objective that, by 2030, 80% of Estonia's population will participate in cultural activities. This target reflects the recognition of culture as a key contributor to individual well-being, social cohesion and sustainable development, as well as its role in strengthening Estonia's cultural identity and resilience.

General Situation

Estonian culture is vibrant thanks to the people of Estonia. Despite the small size of the Estonian language and cultural space, Estonia's cultural landscape is diverse and of high quality. Culture is important to the people of Estonia, and Estonia ranks highly in European comparison in terms of participation in culture, despite the strain placed on the cultural sector by the COVID-19 pandemic and the crises that followed. In the context of various international crises and Russia's aggression against Ukraine, culture and sport play an even greater role than before in strengthening social cohesion. From a security perspective, it is important that the presence of the state is felt across the country; in this respect, the cultural and sports sectors have an important role to play by ensuring access to culture.

According to the 2025 reading survey, 34% of Estonia's population read books regularly, while 26% do not read at all or read only very rarely. The most active readers are the youngest (15–24) and oldest (65–79) age groups, and women read twice as much as men. Printed books remain the dominant format, preferred by 75% of readers.

According to the 2025 survey on possible barriers to visiting cultural institutions, people in Estonia continue to have a strong interest in visiting cultural institutions. Among respondents aged 15 and over, 53% visited cinemas at least a few times a year or more often; 36% visited libraries at least a few times a year; 32% attended theatre performances; 29% visited museums; and 28% attended concerts at least a few times a year or more often.

Table 18. Indicators (SDG 18).

	2016	2020	Current status (year)
18.1. Natural increase	-1,339	-2,602	**-6,066** (2024)
18.2. Cohort fertility rate (women aged 40)	1.83	1.86	**1.81** (2025)
18.3. Number of Estonian speakers, thousand	672.6	656	**649.9** (2025)
18.4. Share of people aged 15 and over participating in cultural activities, %	..	73.8	**79** (2023)
18.5. Share of people aged 15 and over engaged in cultural activities (including physical activity), %	..	67.5	**72** (2023)

Measures and Activities

Central Government Level

Both the *Culture Development Plan 2021–2030* and other national development plans have identified the digitisation of valuable cultural heritage with high public interest, as well as ensuring the accessibility and long-term preservation of digital cultural heritage, as strategic priorities. By the end of 2023, 42% of the cultural heritage held in Estonia's memory institutions was available in digital form. In 2024, the Cultural Heritage Digitisation Action Plan 2024–2029 was adopted, setting the objective of making 55% of the cultural heritage preserved in Estonia's memory institutions (museums, libraries and archives) digitally accessible by 2029, alongside the creation of 3D digital representations of 21% of priority immovable heritage sites. The Action Plan also aims to improve access to digital cultural heritage through innovative solutions and technologies and to continue cooperation among memory institutions in developing long-term digital preservation infrastructure, including cross-border solutions. In addition to the digitisation of documentary, printed, photographic and film heritage in 2D format, coordinated 3D digitisation of immovable heritage and museum objects will also be undertaken.

To improve regional access to culture and support both the development of future cultural professionals and the growth of informed audiences, the Cultural Backpack support measure has been implemented since 2022. The initiative enables children and young people to visit theatre performances, cinemas, museums and other cultural institutions or events as part of their educational programme. In the 2024/2025 academic year, 136,154 basic school pupils benefited from the scheme.

In 2023, two major library sector reforms were implemented. The National Library of Estonia assumed all functions of the Estonian Depository Library and its structural unit, the Estonian Library for the Blind, and the Estonian Depository Library ceased operating as a separate state institution. In addition, the *Library Accelerator* support measure for public library development projects was established to improve the quality and accessibility of municipal library services, support the adaptation of library spaces for community activities, and enhance the professional skills of library staff. In 2023, support amounting to EUR 500,000 was allocated to 46 library projects, with local governments providing matching contributions. Lectures, workshops and seminars brought together librarians with architects, designers and other professionals, encouraging new perspectives on libraries as unique public spaces.

The XIII Youth Song and Dance Celebration *Püha on maa* (*The Earth is Sacred*), held in 2023, brought together 31,415 singers, dancers and musicians and attracted nearly 90,000 visitors. Particular attention was paid to environmental sustainability, including the use of reusable tableware. In 2025, the XXVIII Song Celebration and XXI Dance Celebration *Iseoma* were successfully organised, with approximately 41,200 participants taking part as singers, dancers and musicians and around 140,000 people attending as spectators.

According to the first Cultural Heritage Awareness Survey, conducted in 2023, the Cultural Heritage Awareness Index (Heritage Barometer) stood at 60 points out of 100. The index provides a composite assessment of participation in heritage, contributions to its preservation, and attitudes towards its significance. The survey showed that people in Estonia consider cultural heritage important and recognise its contribution to both spiritual and material well-being. However, there remains scope for greater personal investment of time and resources in heritage conservation and restoration.

In 2025, the Year of the Book, *Estonian Book 500*, was celebrated through hundreds of events, exhibitions and initiatives across the country. Estonian children's and young adult literature, together with its illustration tradition, was featured as the Guest of Honour at the Bologna Children's Book Fair, the world's largest children's book fair. Illustration was highlighted both through a major exhibition at the fair and a large-scale exhibition in the heart of Bologna.

In 2025, amendments to the Media Services Act and related legislation were submitted to the Riigikogu to implement the European Media Freedom Act. The amendments strengthen media freedom, increase transparency and modernise broadcasting regulation. Investments were also made to enhance the continuity and crisis resilience of public service media, and continued efforts in this area remain important.

Through support for research and development, funding calls were launched under the Estonian Culture Research and Development Programme and for artistic research projects. Research projects supported through the museum studies measure addressed topics including Estonian art, maritime archaeology, Estonian musical heritage, summer cottage architecture and changing reading habits.

In 2026, the Government approved long-prepared amendments to the Public Libraries Act, and the draft legislation was submitted to Parliament. The principal objective of the reform is to ensure high-quality library services for all people in Estonia. The amendments will provide readers with more convenient access to services regardless of their place of residence and improve access to publications and digital information for people with visual impairments and other print disabilities.

Non-Governmental and/or Local Government Level

In 2024, the city of Tartu held the title of European Capital of Culture. A wide range of events took place under four programme lines: Life and Environment; Humanity and Skills; Uniqueness and Europe; and Science and Technology. Environment was also a separate key theme of the Capital of Culture programme.

The lead organiser, the Tartu 2024 Foundation, developed an environmental action strategy in cooperation with the sustainable event planning company Acento OÜ. The strategy provided event organisers with practical recommendations on how to follow objectives related to nature conservation, climate-friendly approaches and sustainability. These included enabling the use of environmentally

friendly materials, introducing solutions for separate waste collection, and promoting transport options with the lowest possible carbon footprint.

The broader aim of the strategy was to embed environmentally responsible practices among event organisers in Southern Estonia and raise their awareness, so that the environmental footprint of events would be taken into account more systematically in the future.

International Level

In 2023, a Creative Economy Academy on the preservation and digitalisation of cultural heritage was held in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia, in cooperation between Creative Estonia and the Estonian and Namibian National Commissions for UNESCO. A high-level conference and a hackathon for young people interested in entrepreneurship were organised to support sustainable development by promoting creative enterprise based on cultural heritage. In Namibia, as elsewhere in the world, there has been growing recognition in recent decades that culture and the creative economy contribute to job creation and the emergence of enterprises with innovative business models, improve people's living standards and the country's economic performance, and attract foreign investment. The cooperation ideas were developed and their implementation led by Creative Estonia, which has long-standing experience in developing the creative economy in Estonia and in the Eastern Partnership countries. The project was funded by the Estonian Centre for International Development (ESTDEV).

In spring 2023, the European Commission and Europeana launched the Twin it! campaign, inviting the ministries of culture of Member States to 3D digitise one object of cultural value and submit it to Europeana. The initiative resulted in a symbolic, high-quality pan-European collection of 3D-digitised heritage.

In 2025, Estonia developed its positions on the long-term preservation of digital cultural heritage outside national borders within the European Union. Estonia's positions were submitted to the European Commission and presented to the Member States. Estonia's proposals received broad support and, on this basis, the European Commission convened a dedicated working group to analyse, in 2026, the feasibility of long-term preservation of pan-European digital cultural heritage and to design a corresponding solution.

Estonian musical culture has gained significant international recognition. The 90th birthday of Arvo Pärt was celebrated across the world, with major events involving Estonian musicians including a concert by the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir with Tõnu Kaljuste at the BBC Proms and a concert by the Estonian Festival Orchestra conducted by Paavo Järvi at Carnegie Hall. The 95th anniversary of the birth of Veljo Tormis was also marked. In 2025–2027, Estonia is one of the focus countries at hcmf// (Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival), the United Kingdom's largest festival of contemporary music. The internationalisation and export of culture will remain a priority for the cultural sector in the coming years.

To enable Estonians, regardless of their place of residence, to exchange ideas and access relevant information on language learning, cultural events, business opportunities in Estonia and relocating to Estonia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has developed a common Estonian information space. In cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and the Integration Foundation, global newsletters are published monthly on the Global Estonian portal, and virtual forums are held twice a year.

With funding from the Ministry of Education and Research, stable support is provided to around 82 teaching locations abroad, including four day schools in Helsinki, Riga, Stockholm and Pechory, and two kindergartens in Stockholm and Helsinki (temporarily suspended). Estonian-language instruction is mainly provided in the format of Sunday schools. The application of tuition fees is an increasing trend, with parents assuming responsibility for contributing financially to educational activities. The largest number of pupils is enrolled in the Global School, which, in its 13th academic year, has 305 pupils from 34 countries. The school also offers preparation for Estonian language proficiency and national examinations. The network of Estonian mother tongue teachers abroad includes 350 teachers, from Australia to North America. Global training days are held twice a year, along with a summer school in Estonia and mother tongue days at one of the teaching locations in Europe.

In cooperation with domestic partners, Estonia supports return migration and the promotion of Estonian culture abroad. Virtual forums on global Estonians are also organised.

Next Steps

As part of the preparation of this Review, a stakeholder engagement seminar was held to gather views and recommendations. In line with the thematic focus of this year's High-level Political Forum (HLPF), the proposals focused primarily on strengthening energy security and resource efficiency, promoting sustainable mobility, adapting to technological change, enhancing community resilience, and advancing responsible governance and public awareness. The issues highlighted during the engagement event reaffirmed the need to continue addressing the Sustainable Development Goals through an integrated and cross-sectoral approach. The priorities identified in the discussions are directly linked to several SDGs.

- **Accelerating the uptake of energy efficiency and circular economy solutions (SDGs 7, 9, 12, 13)**
  Participants emphasised the importance of improving energy efficiency in buildings, industry and infrastructure. Recommendations included supporting the adoption of energy-efficient technologies, increasing the scale of renovation activities, and promoting circular economy principles. Attention was also drawn to the need to reduce dependence on imported energy sources and strengthen local renewable energy solutions.

- **Implementing sustainable mobility and spatial development strategies (SDGs 3, 9, 11, 13)**
  Discussions highlighted the need to improve the quality and accessibility of public transport, develop multimodal mobility solutions, and advance the objectives of Estonia's Cycling Strategy. Participants also stressed the importance of designing living environments in ways that reduce dependence on private cars and encourage healthy and environmentally sustainable modes of transport.

- **Strengthening the resilience of communities and local services (SDGs 1, 10, 11, 16)**
  Participants identified the need to ensure access to high-quality services across all regions and to enhance the capacity of local communities to cope with crises. Particular emphasis was placed on supporting local initiatives, strengthening community cooperation, and developing solutions that help reduce regional disparities.

- **Enhancing preparedness for technological change (SDGs 4, 8, 9, 17)**
  The discussions addressed both the opportunities and risks associated with rapid advances in digitalisation, automation and artificial intelligence. Participants highlighted the importance of investing in skills development, lifelong learning and reskilling to support labour market adaptation. They also underlined the need for systematic assessment of the impacts of emerging technologies on society, the economy and public services.

- **Promoting data-driven and responsible governance (SDGs 16, 17)**
  Improving the use of high-quality data in decision-making and strengthening the public sector's capacity to analyse complex future trends were identified as key priorities. Participants emphasised the importance of reinforcing strategic planning, risk assessment and cross-sectoral policy coordination.

- **Increasing public awareness and engagement (SDGs 4, 10, 16, 18)**
  Several recommendations focused on raising awareness of sustainable development issues. Participants stressed the need to strengthen knowledge through both formal and adult education

in order to support sustainable choices and improve society's capacity to adapt to change. The importance of clear and trustworthy communication in countering misinformation was also highlighted.

- **Strengthening partnerships for achieving the Goals (SDG 17)**
  Participants emphasised that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires stronger cooperation among government institutions, local governments, businesses, research organisations and civil society. Particular importance was attached to partnerships that bring together knowledge, resources and innovation to address shared challenges.
- **Linking sustainable development with security and resilience**
  The discussions highlighted the close interconnections between sustainable development, security and societal resilience. Future efforts should place greater emphasis on crisis preparedness, energy security, resilient supply chains and society's ability to respond to climate-related, economic and geopolitical changes.

In the years leading up to 2030, Estonia will continue to address these issues through its existing strategic planning framework and policy-making processes. Particular attention will be given to solutions that enhance societal well-being, economic competitiveness, environmental sustainability, and the preparedness of the state and communities to respond to changing circumstances.

Estonia also considers it essential to continue cooperation among the public sector, businesses, research institutions, local governments and civil society in support of the Sustainable Development Goals and to ensure that decision-making benefits from the knowledge and experience of all stakeholders. Attention will also remain focused on safeguarding and strengthening the vitality of culture as an integral component of Estonia's sustainable development framework.