



General Assembly

Distr.: General
26 January 2026

Original: English

Human Rights Council
Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review
Fifty-second session
Geneva, 4–15 May 2026

Estonia

Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

I. Background

1. The present report was prepared pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21, taking into consideration the outcome of the previous review.¹ It is a compilation of information contained in relevant United Nations documents, presented in a summarized manner owing to word-limit constraints.

II. Scope of international obligations and cooperation with human rights mechanisms

2. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was gravely alarmed by the steps taken or being considered by Estonia to withdraw from the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. He called on all States to refrain from leaving any international humanitarian law treaty, and to immediately suspend any withdrawal process that might be under way.²

3. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that Estonia accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.³

4. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure.⁴

5. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.⁵



6. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination encouraged Estonia to ratify the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97) of the International Labour Organization.⁶ The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that Estonia ratify the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) of the International Labour Organization.⁷

7. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia ratify the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.⁸ The Committee on the Rights of the Child also recommended that Estonia consider ratifying the European Convention on Nationality and the Council of Europe Convention on the Avoidance of Statelessness in relation to State Succession.⁹

8. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended that Estonia be encouraged to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights¹⁰ and the Convention against Discrimination in Education.¹¹

9. The Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended that Estonia further strengthen its collaboration with civil society organizations.¹²

10. Estonia contributed financially to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights during the period 2021 to 2025.¹³

III. National human rights framework

1. Constitutional and legislative framework

11. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that Estonia adopt legislation covering all internationally prohibited grounds of discrimination, encompassing direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres and intersecting forms of discrimination.¹⁴ The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination made a similar recommendation.¹⁵

12. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia speed up the revision of the Equal Treatment Act and combine it with the Gender Equality Act to expand its scope of protection against discrimination to children in all spheres and sectors.¹⁶

13. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommended that Estonia review disability-related legislation and policies, and repeal derogatory terminology and concepts from the Social Benefits for Disabled Persons Act and the Equal Treatment Act.¹⁷ It also recommended that Estonia accelerate the amendment of the Equal Treatment Act to recognize discrimination based on disability across all areas of life and sectors, as well as multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination.¹⁸ It further recommended that Estonia mainstream the rights of women and girls with disabilities into all gender-specific and disability-related legislation and policies.¹⁹

14. The same Committee recommended that Estonia review its interpretative declaration on article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; guarantee the right of all persons with disabilities to equal recognition before the law and establish supported decision-making mechanisms in all areas of life; amend the Civil Code to repeal the guardianship regime; and adopt a plan of action to restore the full legal capacity of all persons with disabilities.²⁰

15. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended that Estonia amend its Penal Code to ensure that punishments for offences such as disseminating ideas based on racial hatred and engaging in hate speech and incitement to hatred were commensurate to the gravity of the crimes, in line with article 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.²¹

16. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia develop a child-rights impact assessment procedure for national legislation and policies relevant to children and ensure sufficient human, technical and financial resources for the implementation of such legislation.²²

2. Institutional infrastructure and policy measures

17. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination welcomed the accreditation of the Chancellor of Justice with A status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions and recommended that Estonia raise general awareness of the institution's role and mandate regarding racial discrimination.²³ The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia strengthen the Children's and Youths' Rights Department of the Chancellor of Justice.²⁴

18. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommended that Estonia strengthen the Office of the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner by providing it with adequate human, technical and financial resources to effectively and independently discharge its mandate.²⁵ Estonia provided responses.²⁶

19. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination welcomed the approval, in 2021, of the country's first-ever action plan on human rights diplomacy.²⁷

20. While welcoming the adoption of the welfare development plan for 2023–2030, the national health plan for 2020–2030 and the education strategy for 2021–2035, the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia ensure their effective implementation, supported by sufficient human, technical and financial resources.²⁸

21. The same Committee recommended that Estonia establish a standing government structure with the mandate and resources to effectively coordinate and prepare reports to international and regional human rights mechanisms and to coordinate and track follow-up to, and implementation of, the recommendations and decisions emanating from such mechanisms, in consultation with the Office of the Chancellor of Justice and civil society.²⁹

22. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommended that Estonia ensure appropriate coordination and cooperation among entities at the national and municipal levels, ensure the accessibility and availability of social protection programmes and mainstream community services for persons with disabilities.³⁰

IV. Promotion and protection of human rights

A. Implementation of international human rights obligations, taking into account applicable international humanitarian law

1. Equality and non-discrimination

23. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern about the low level of reporting of hate speech and hate crimes, and recommended that Estonia ensure the effective implementation of existing legislation prohibiting racial discrimination, access to justice for all victims, the investigation of cases of racial discrimination and the prosecution and conviction of perpetrators.³¹ Estonia provided responses.³²

24. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia strengthen the availability of affordable childcare options for working parents and continue to strengthen the role of fathers in the upbringing of their children.³³

25. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommended that Estonia adopt a definition of reasonable accommodation in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, recognize the right of persons with disabilities to request reasonable accommodation in all sectors and areas of life and recognize in legislation the denial of reasonable accommodation as a form of discrimination on the basis of disability.³⁴

2. Right to life, liberty and security of person, and freedom from torture

26. UNHCR underlined that, although national legislation provided for alternatives to detention (so-called surveillance measures), those measures were not systematically applied in practice. UNHCR recommended that Estonia, in its national legislation, explicitly require that alternatives to detention be explored first, and prohibit the detention of children.³⁵ The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia protect and ensure the visitation rights of the children of incarcerated parents and continue the reforms to facilitate the contact of children with their parents.³⁶ It also recommended that Estonia abolish disciplining children in detention by solitary confinement.³⁷

27. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities observed with concern the involuntary internment and treatment of persons with disabilities in mental health settings and information indicating that they were subject to seclusion, solitary confinement, mechanical, physical and chemical restraints, forced medication and other forms of ill-treatment in those settings. It recommended that Estonia ensure the right of persons with disabilities to make autonomous decisions concerning any type of medical treatment,³⁸ and ensure that all private and public penitentiary, psychiatric and residential care facilities were subject to independent monitoring, in line with article 16 (3) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and ensure the involvement of civil society organizations in independent monitoring mechanisms.³⁹

28. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern about the high number of non-Estonians among the prison population and reports of prison authorities refusing to accept complaints from prisoners written in languages other than Estonian. It recommended that Estonia ensure that prisoners were not penalized for administrative and disciplinary matters related to their insufficient understanding of the Estonian language.⁴⁰

3. Administration of justice, including impunity, and the rule of law

29. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that Estonia adequately fund legal aid schemes; ensure the mobilization of resources under the Recovery Plan funded by the European Union to strengthen access to justice for women; strengthen capacity-building programmes for judicial and law enforcement officers and victim service support professionals on gender-sensitive investigation and interrogation methods and court procedures to prevent the revictimization of women; and ensure access to redress for disadvantaged groups of women.⁴¹

30. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia ensure that all children had access to confidential, child-friendly and independent complaint mechanisms in all settings for reporting all forms of violence, abuse, discrimination and other violations of their rights, and to legal support and representation, age-appropriate counselling and remedies.⁴²

31. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommended that Estonia ensure full accessibility and procedural accommodations for all persons with disabilities being investigated or prosecuted, at all stages of criminal proceedings.⁴³

4. Fundamental freedoms and the right to participate in public and political life

32. Several special procedure mandate holders expressed concern about legislative, judicial and administrative measures taken against the Estonian Christian Orthodox Church, its canonical leadership and its adherents, and considered that they might amount to impermissible restrictions on freedom of religion or belief and minority rights.⁴⁴

33. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted with concern reports of intimidation and harassment of women journalists and women human rights defenders, and recommended that Estonia protect such journalists and defenders from reprisals for their legitimate work and ensure that all cases were prosecuted and perpetrators adequately punished, and that victims of such violations had access to effective remedies.⁴⁵

34. UNESCO indicated that, in accordance with the Penal Code of Estonia, defamation was regarded as a criminal offence. UNESCO recommended that Estonia decriminalize defamation.⁴⁶

35. UNESCO highlighted that there was no comprehensive media law and that the broadcasting sector was directly regulated by the Media Services Act.⁴⁷

36. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted with concern the decrease in the representation of women in decision-making positions and the absence of targeted measures to accelerate the achievement of parity in political and public life. It recommended that Estonia appoint equal numbers of women and men to leadership positions in all spheres of the Government, the judiciary and State-owned companies.⁴⁸

37. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommended that Estonia repeal all discriminatory provisions of the Code of Civil Procedure denying the rights of persons with disabilities to vote and to be elected, and guarantee that electoral and voting procedures, facilities and online or printed election materials were accessible in plain language and Easy Read formats.⁴⁹ It also recommended that Estonia strengthen and implement mechanisms for the effective involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in public decision-making.⁵⁰

5. Right to marriage and family life

38. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that Estonia systematically collect data on the economic consequences of divorce or dissolution of other recognized unions for women and adopt adequate measures for the economic protection of women in such unions.⁵¹

39. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities noted with concern the provisions in the Registered Partnership Act denying the right of persons with disabilities subject to guardianship to marry, and the provisions in the Family Law Act requiring a guardian's consent for persons with disabilities to exercise parental responsibilities, and recommended the removal of those discriminatory provisions.⁵² It also recommended that Estonia set up a legal and policy framework to promote a safe family environment for children with disabilities, prohibit the separation of children from their parents on the basis of disability and ensure that alternative care was only provided within a biological, extended, foster or adoptive family.⁵³

6. Prohibition of all forms of slavery, including trafficking in persons

40. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted with concern that Estonia continued to be a source, transit and destination country for trafficking in women and girls for purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour. It recommended that Estonia ensure that cases of trafficking were investigated effectively and perpetrators prosecuted and adequately punished; reduce the demand for prostitution and provide exit programmes for women; promote the visibility of and access to helplines and victim support services; and intensify bilateral, regional and international cooperation to prevent trafficking in persons, among other measures.⁵⁴ Estonia provided information.⁵⁵

41. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia continue to provide referral and support services to children who were victims of trafficking, investigate all such cases and bring perpetrators to justice.⁵⁶

7. Right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work

42. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that Estonia regularly review wages and benefits and further strengthen measures to close the gender pay gap; strengthen the mandate and role of the Labour Inspectorate and provide it with adequate human, technical and financial resources; ensure women's access to affordable quality childcare facilities and their reinsertion in the labour market following child-rearing periods or engagement in other unpaid work; and promote the representation of women in

managerial positions. It also recommended that Estonia establish effective independent complaints mechanisms for women victims of sexual harassment in the workplace and ensure protection from retaliation.⁵⁷

43. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended that Estonia ensure that language requirements in relation to employment were based on reasonable and objective criteria, and address the persistent disadvantages faced by minority groups regarding employment rates and remuneration based on language proficiency, including through special measures to reduce the income gap.⁵⁸

44. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommended that Estonia ensure that persons with disabilities had access to work and employment in the open labour market and to inclusive work environments, adopt a strategy to abolish sheltered employment, adopt measures to combat attitudinal barriers among employers and adopt an action plan to periodically assess accessibility in the workplace.⁵⁹

45. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia ensure that no child engaged in work in the informal sector and that working conditions were safe and in line with legislation requirements.⁶⁰

8. Right to an adequate standard of living

46. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia analyse the effects of the maintenance support system introduced in the Family Law Act (2022), including on the ability of the child to cope with economic difficulties.⁶¹

9. Right to health

47. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted the regional disparities in the access of women and girls to health services. It recommended that Estonia integrate a gender perspective and regularly monitor and evaluate the gender-specific impact of health policies and strategies and ensure equal access for women and girls to health services.⁶²

48. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities noted with concern the barriers faced by persons with disabilities, especially women with disabilities subject to guardianship, in gaining access to healthcare services and equipment. It recommended that Estonia strengthen action plans to ensure the accessibility and availability of healthcare services for persons with disabilities and provide women and girls with disabilities with access to sexual and reproductive healthcare.⁶³

49. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia raise the public spending on healthcare and provide incentives for healthcare professionals in the context of recruitment; increase the number of specialized paediatricians, family doctors and nurses, in particular in rural areas; and increase vaccination coverage among children.⁶⁴

10. Right to education

50. UNESCO recommended that Estonia be encouraged to enshrine the right to education in legislation, make at least one year of pre-primary education free of charge and compulsory and guarantee the right to inclusive education for all, paying particular attention to gender equality and the inclusion of persons with disabilities and minorities.⁶⁵

51. The Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern about the significant number of children who did not complete their education in secondary and vocational schools.⁶⁶ UNESCO noted that the significant dropout rates among boys in basic education had been identified as a key challenge. In that regard, a central objective of the Estonian education strategy for 2021–2035 was to ensure equal access to and increase participation in lifelong learning, with a view to generating greater societal value and providing comprehensive support for all learners.⁶⁷ The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia improve access to and coverage of education at all levels through the provision of equitable financial and human resources to local governments, improve the continuation of every student's education beyond the primary school level, and reduce dropout from vocational and upper secondary schools.⁶⁸

52. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities noted with concern the slow progress towards achieving inclusive education, as recognized in the Basic and Upper-Secondary School Act, the prevalence of special schools and classes and the greater barriers to education faced by children requiring higher levels of support. It recommended that Estonia develop a strategy for implementing quality, inclusive education with specific targets, timelines and a budget and share responsibilities between the national and municipal levels.⁶⁹

53. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted with concern the limited educational opportunities for older women, the traditional educational choices of girls and women and the persistence of stereotypes in textbooks. It recommended that Estonia repeal any unnecessary age restrictions and disseminate information on relevant educational programmes; provide incentives to promote non-traditional educational choices and career paths for girls and women, including in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and information and communications technology, and review school curricula and textbooks at all levels of education to eliminate discriminatory gender stereotypes.⁷⁰

11. Development, the environment, and business and human rights

54. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia establish and implement regulations to ensure that the business sector complied with human rights, labour, environmental and other standards, in particular with regard to children's rights.⁷¹

55. The same Committee recommended that Estonia integrate a child rights-based approach into its legislation and policies related to environmental protection and climate change; ensure that children's special vulnerabilities, needs and views were taken into account in developing policies and programmes to address climate change and disaster risk management; and take the steps necessary to ensure that the European Union nationally determined contributions and the related national energy and climate plan for 2021–2030 were participatory and child rights-based.⁷²

B. Rights of specific persons or groups

1. Women

56. While welcoming the adoption of the Welfare Development Plan 2013–2030, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women expressed concern about the limited results achieved through the gender equality strategies, the lack of gender-responsive budgeting and the lack of institutional coordination and collaboration between the Office of the Chancellor of Justice and other relevant entities. It recommended that Estonia adopt a comprehensive national strategy on gender equality, with the involvement of women's organizations, and further strengthen the machinery for the advancement of women by providing adequate human, technical and financial resources and by strengthening the mandate and political authority of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications.⁷³

57. The same Committee recommended that Estonia amend article 141 of the Penal Code to introduce a definition of rape based on lack of consent rather than use of force, in line with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention); build the capacity of law enforcement officers on the prompt and gender-sensitive investigation of complaints about gender-based violence; address victim-blaming beliefs and judicial gender bias; adopt legislation to separately and specifically criminalize femicide and intimate partner violence; ensure access to protection orders for victims and provide capacity-building for judges and court clerks on the issuance of protection orders; ensure access to victim support services; and amend the Family Law Act to ensure that incidents of domestic violence were adequately considered in decisions on child custody and visitation rights.⁷⁴

58. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia implement the action plan to combat domestic violence for 2024–2027, ensure that children who were exposed to domestic violence had victim status and procedural rights, and improve access to trauma support, especially in rural areas.⁷⁵

59. UNHCR noted that, in the area of gender-based violence, forcibly displaced and stateless people still faced challenges in accessing victim services. It recommended that Estonia enhance access to information related to gender-based violence and interpretation services, launch targeted public awareness campaigns to address stigmatization, cultural barriers and fears of retaliation, and promote help-seeking among affected groups. It also recommended that Estonia strengthen multisectoral coordination mechanisms, including joint protocols, and referral pathways, and enhance the capacity of social workers on the issue of gender-based violence.⁷⁶

2. Children

60. Regarding violence against children, the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia put in place accessible, confidential and child-friendly mechanisms for children to report violence; facilitate and promote the mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect; strengthen the local child protection infrastructure; and ensure that all child victims or witnesses of violence had prompt access to child-friendly, multisectoral and comprehensive interventions, services and support.⁷⁷

61. Regarding corporal punishment, the same Committee recommended that Estonia continue to promote positive, non-violent and participatory forms of child-rearing and discipline by implementing evidence-based programmes, and intensify awareness-raising campaigns for parents and professionals working with children.⁷⁸ Estonia provided information in that regard.⁷⁹

62. The same Committee recommended that Estonia promptly adopt a strategy and action plan for the deinstitutionalization of children, monitor the number of children placed in safe houses and the length of their stay and ensure that they were not deprived of a family environment longer than necessary.⁸⁰

63. The same Committee recommended that Estonia ensure that children's right to have their best interests taken as a primary consideration was consistently interpreted and applied in all legislative, administrative and judicial proceedings, decisions, policies, programmes and projects that affected children.⁸¹

64. The same Committee recommended that Estonia establish the root causes of child mortality resulting from accidents and injuries, strengthen preventive measures, including psychosocial support to children, and ensure a safe environment.⁸² It expressed concern about the growing suicide rates among children and the shortage of mental healthcare specialists for children, and recommended that Estonia strengthen its focus on prevention, including through socioemotional support and parental education.⁸³

65. The same Committee recommended that Estonia address the inequalities in the availability of services for children with disabilities among local authorities; ensure that children with disabilities with high supportive needs received additional support from the State; and develop a wider range of support services and increase the flexibility of care services.⁸⁴ The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities expressed similar views.⁸⁵

66. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Estonia take immediate measures to ensure that children with disabilities had access to healthcare at their place of residence,⁸⁶ ensure that children with disabilities had access to inclusive education in mainstream schools and ensure cooperation between social and education specialists in assessing special needs in schools and kindergartens.⁸⁷

3. Older persons

67. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that Estonia ensure that older women had affordable access to specialized health services addressing their specific health needs.⁸⁸

68. The same Committee noted with concern the increased poverty among older women due to, *inter alia*, disproportionately low pension benefits. It recommended that Estonia adopt targeted measures to address poverty among older women, including by increasing the coefficient for counting periods of child-rearing, unpaid care and domestic work towards women's pension benefits.⁸⁹

4. Persons with disabilities

69. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities noted with concern that persons with disabilities under guardianship were *de facto* denied access to justice and faced paternalistic attitudes and lack of information in accessible formats throughout legal proceedings. It recommended that Estonia ensure full recognition of the legal capacity of all persons with disabilities and of their right to gain access to justice on an equal basis with others throughout judicial and administrative proceedings and develop alternative and augmentative means of information and communication for use throughout legal proceedings.⁹⁰

70. The same Committee noted with concern that the Mental Health Act allowed for the involuntary treatment of persons with psychosocial disabilities and the deprivation of liberty on grounds of disability and perceived dangerousness, and that the Social Welfare Act allowed for the restriction of movement of persons placed in care facilities. It recommended that Estonia review and repeal the relevant provisions in those Acts and develop human rights-based mental health provisions.⁹¹

71. The same Committee recommended that Estonia adopt a comprehensive strategy to prevent and combat all forms of violence and exploitation against persons with disabilities and ensure that the violence prevention plan and its related programmes explicitly included persons with disabilities, providing support for victims and sanctioning perpetrators.⁹²

72. The same Committee recommended that Estonia enact a moratorium on the institutionalization of persons with disabilities and revise its deinstitutionalization strategy.⁹³

73. The Committee on the Rights of the Child urged Estonia to adopt a human rights-based approach to disability and set up a comprehensive strategy for the inclusion of children with disabilities.⁹⁴

74. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities observed with concern that women with disabilities under guardianship could be subjected to sterilization or abortion without their consent. It recommended that Estonia prohibit the forced sterilization and termination of pregnancies of women with disabilities based on third-party requests and adopt protocols promoting respect for the sexual and reproductive rights of persons with disabilities.⁹⁵

75. The same Committee recommended that Estonia adopt a national accessibility strategy encompassing physical, information and communication, and digital access and strengthen its mechanisms for monitoring accessibility at the municipal level; review the Public Transport Act of 2015 and the Building Code of 2015 to align them with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; introduce accessibility standards within the e-Estonia system; and transpose into national legislation and regulations Directive 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services and Directive 2018/1972 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 establishing the European Electronic Communications Code.⁹⁶

76. The same Committee noted with concern barriers faced by persons with disabilities in accessing emergency information and devices and recommended that Estonia ensure that all persons with disabilities in situations of risk or humanitarian emergencies could access information through alternative modes of communication and information and that the emergency number 112 was fully accessible.⁹⁷

77. The same Committee recommended that Estonia ensure access to sign language interpretation and speech-to-text services for deaf and hard-of-hearing persons in all areas of life.⁹⁸

5. Indigenous Peoples and minorities

78. UNESCO noted that, in 2022, Estonia had approved a detailed action plan and legislative amendments for transitioning to Estonian-language education,⁹⁹ and recommended that Estonia be encouraged to ensure that all learners, including minority learners, had equal access to education.¹⁰⁰ The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended that Estonia reconsider the degree to which it made the Estonian language a condition for employment and other essentials.¹⁰¹ The same Committee also expressed concern that the Language Act restricted the use of minority languages in public administration to local governments and recommended that Estonia review its legislation to allow a wider scope for the use of minority languages in public administration.¹⁰² Special procedure mandate holders expressed grave concern about recent legislation that appeared to eliminate minority language education from all preschool and school institutions.¹⁰³

6. Migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers

79. UNHCR expressed concern about amendments made to the State Borders Act in 2022, allowing the Police and Border Guard Board to deny entry and refuse applications for international protection from individuals crossing the border irregularly during declared emergencies.¹⁰⁴ UNHCR recommended that Estonia amend its national legislation to guarantee access to its territory and the asylum procedure for those who might be in need of international protection, irrespective of their mode of arrival, including in times of emergency, and to ensure full respect for the principle of non-refoulement.¹⁰⁵ UNHCR also recommended that Estonia enhance the capacity of Police and Border Guard Board staff to identify, among applicants for international protection, individuals with specific needs and ensure their effective access to support services and their referral to appropriate alternatives to detention.¹⁰⁶

80. UNHCR recommended that Estonia ensure that professional legal assistance and representation was available, free of charge, at all stages of the asylum process, including to applicants in detention, and provide unhindered access by UNHCR and its legal partners, and non-governmental organizations, to persons at the border and detention facilities, to enable them to deliver assistance and legal counselling.¹⁰⁷

81. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern about the living conditions in reception centres for asylum-seekers, the acute shortage of housing available for refugees and the absence of a comprehensive national refugee integration strategy and policy framework.¹⁰⁸

82. The Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern about the detention of children for migration purposes, and recommended that Estonia amend the Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens (2005) in order to prohibit the detention of refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant children and ensure that asylum-seeking children were assigned an independent legal representative immediately upon arrival.¹⁰⁹

7. Stateless persons

83. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended that Estonia reduce the number of persons with undetermined citizenship by identifying them and assisting them in gaining access to citizenship.¹¹⁰ The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women expressed similar concerns, in particular with regard to stateless persons born in the Soviet Union, and, in that context, recommended that Estonia establish a statelessness determination procedure to expedite naturalization.¹¹¹

84. UNHCR recommended that Estonia introduce a legal framework for the effective identification, statelessness determination and protection of stateless persons; provide automatic citizenship to all children born in Estonia who would otherwise be stateless, including by eliminating the permanent residency requirement; and reduce statelessness by facilitating naturalization for stateless persons.¹¹²

Notes

- ¹ [A/HRC/48/7](#), [A/HRC/48/7/Add.1](#) and [A/HRC/48/2](#).
- ² See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/07/un-human-rights-chief-volker-turk-gravely-alarmed-steps-withdraw-anti>.
- ³ [CEDAW/C/EST/CO/7](#), paras. 10 and 45.
- ⁴ [CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7](#), para. 46.
- ⁵ [CERD/C/EST/CO/12-13](#), para. 49; [CEDAW/C/EST/CO/7](#), para. 48; and [CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7](#), para. 47.
- ⁶ [CERD/C/EST/CO/12-13](#), para. 49.
- ⁷ [CEDAW/C/EST/CO/7](#), para. 32.
- ⁸ UNHCR submission for the universal periodic review of Estonia, p. 8; [CEDAW/C/EST/CO/7](#), para. 28; [CERD/C/EST/CO/12-13](#), paras. 15 and 49; and [CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7](#), paras. 21 and 40.
- ⁹ [CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7](#), para. 21.
- ¹⁰ UNESCO submission for the universal periodic review of Estonia, para. 34.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, para. 29.
- ¹² [CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7](#), para. 14; and [CERD/C/EST/CO/12-13](#), para. 53.
- ¹³ See, for example, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/aboutus/fundingbudget/voluntarycontributions2025.pdf>.
- ¹⁴ [CEDAW/C/EST/CO/7](#), para. 12.
- ¹⁵ [CERD/C/EST/CO/12-13](#), para. 33.
- ¹⁶ [CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7](#), para. 17.
- ¹⁷ [CRPD/C/EST/CO/1](#), para. 8.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 12.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 14.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 24.
- ²¹ [CERD/C/EST/CO/12-13](#), paras. 26 and 27.
- ²² [CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7](#), para. 6.
- ²³ [CERD/C/EST/CO/12-13](#), paras. 3 and 13.
- ²⁴ [CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7](#), para. 12.
- ²⁵ [CEDAW/C/EST/CO/7](#), para. 12; [CERD/C/EST/CO/12-13](#), para. 11; and [CRPD/C/EST/CO/1](#), paras. 11 and 12. See also [CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7](#), para. 12.
- ²⁶ [CERD/C/EST/FCO/12-13](#), paras. 2–4.
- ²⁷ [CERD/C/EST/CO/12-13](#), para. 3.
- ²⁸ [CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7](#), para. 7.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 50.
- ³⁰ [CRPD/C/EST/CO/1](#), para. 8.
- ³¹ [CERD/C/EST/CO/12-13](#), paras. 28, 29 and 33. See also [CCPR/C/EST/FCO/4](#), paras. 2–4.
- ³² [CERD/C/EST/FCO/12-13](#), para. 4.
- ³³ [CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7](#), para. 25. See also [CRPD/C/EST/CO/1](#), para. 14.
- ³⁴ [CRPD/C/EST/CO/1](#), para. 12; see also paras. 46, 47, 52 and 53.
- ³⁵ UNHCR submission, pp. 3 and 4. See also [CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7](#), paras. 43 and 44.
- ³⁶ [CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7](#), para. 27.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 44. See also [CAT/C/EST/6](#), para. 119.
- ³⁸ [CRPD/C/EST/CO/1](#), paras. 30 and 31. See also [CCPR/C/EST/FCO/4](#), paras. 6–13.
- ³⁹ [CRPD/C/EST/CO/1](#), para. 33.
- ⁴⁰ [CERD/C/EST/CO/12-13](#), paras. 45 and 46.
- ⁴¹ [CEDAW/C/EST/CO/7](#), para. 14. See also [CERD/C/EST/CO/12-13](#), para. 37.
- ⁴² [CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7](#), paras. 11; see also para. 23.
- ⁴³ [CRPD/C/EST/CO/1](#), para. 28.
- ⁴⁴ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/12/un-experts-concerned-escalating-legislative-and-administrative-measures>; and communication EST 2/2025, available from <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30183>.
- ⁴⁵ [CEDAW/C/EST/CO/7](#), paras. 39 and 40.
- ⁴⁶ UNESCO submission, paras. 17 and 30.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, paras. 18 and 24.
- ⁴⁸ [CEDAW/C/EST/CO/7](#), paras. 25 and 26.
- ⁴⁹ [CRPD/C/EST/CO/1](#), para. 57.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, paras. 10 and 14.
- ⁵¹ [CEDAW/C/EST/CO/7](#), para. 44.
- ⁵² [CRPD/C/EST/CO/1](#), paras. 44 and 45.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, para. 45.

- 54 CEDAW/C/EST/CO/7, paras. 23 and 24.
- 55 CERD/C/EST/FCO/12-13, para. 8; and CAT/C/EST/6, para. 75.
- 56 CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7, para. 42.
- 57 CEDAW/C/EST/CO/7, para. 32.
- 58 CERD/C/EST/CO/12-13, para. 25.
- 59 CRPD/C/EST/CO/1, para. 53.
- 60 CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7, para. 41.
- 61 Ibid., para. 33.
- 62 CEDAW/C/EST/CO/7, paras. 33 and 34.
- 63 CRPD/C/EST/CO/1, paras. 48 and 49.
- 64 CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7, para. 29.
- 65 UNESCO submission, para. 29. See also CRPD/C/EST/CO/1, para. 47.
- 66 CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7, para. 35. See also UNESCO submission, para. 11.
- 67 UNESCO submission, para. 11.
- 68 CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7 para. 36.
- 69 CRPD/C/EST/CO/1, paras. 46 and 47.
- 70 CEDAW/C/EST/CO/7, paras. 29 and 30.
- 71 CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7, para. 16.
- 72 Ibid., para. 34.
- 73 CEDAW/C/EST/CO/7, paras. 15 and 16.
- 74 Ibid., paras. 22, 43 and 44.
- 75 CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7, para. 23.
- 76 UNHCR submission, pp. 6 and 7.
- 77 CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7, para. 23.
- 78 Ibid., para. 24. See also CRPD/C/EST/CO/1, para. 33.
- 79 See CRC/C/EST/5-7. See also CAT/C/EST/6, paras. 139 and 144.
- 80 CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7, para. 26.
- 81 Ibid., para. 18.
- 82 Ibid., para. 19.
- 83 Ibid., paras. 30 and 31.
- 84 Ibid., para. 28.
- 85 CRPD/C/EST/CO/1, paras. 15 and 16.
- 86 CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7, para. 28.
- 87 Ibid., para. 36.
- 88 CEDAW/C/EST/CO/7, para. 34.
- 89 Ibid., paras. 35 and 36.
- 90 CRPD/C/EST/CO/1, paras. 25 and 26.
- 91 Ibid., paras. 27 and 28.
- 92 Ibid., para. 33.
- 93 Ibid., para. 39.
- 94 CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7, para. 28.
- 95 CRPD/C/EST/CO/1, paras. 34 and 35.
- 96 Ibid., paras. 19–20.
- 97 Ibid., paras. 21 and 22.
- 98 Ibid., para. 43.
- 99 UNESCO submission, para. 15.
- 100 Ibid., para. 29.
- 101 CERD/C/EST/CO/12-13, paras. 17 and 25.
- 102 Ibid., paras. 20 and 21.
- 103 See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/08/estonia-new-law-banning-mother-tongue-education-minorities-may-violate-human#:~:text=%E2%80%9CBy%20eliminating%20minority%20language%20instruction,Estonian%20Government%20regarding%20these%20issues>. See also communication EST 1/2025, available from <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29717>; and <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=37721>.
- 104 UNHCR submission, p. 2.
- 105 Ibid., p. 3. See also CCPR/C/EST/FCO/4, para. 25.
- 106 UNHCR submission, p. 4. See also CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7, para. 40.
- 107 UNHCR submission, pp. 4–6.
- 108 CERD/C/EST/CO/12-13, para. 40. See also CRPD/C/EST/CO/1, paras. 36 and 37.
- 109 CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7, paras. 39 and 40.
- 110 CERD/C/EST/CO/12-13, para. 15. See also CRC/C/EST/CO/5-7, para. 21.

¹¹¹ [CEDAW/C/EST/CO/7](#), paras. 27 and 28.

¹¹² UNHCR submission, pp. 7 and 8. See also [CERD/C/EST/CO/12-13](#), para. 3.
