

Estonia (80)



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

49

Estonia

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2002
Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
March 31, 2003

Estonia is a parliamentary democracy. The Constitution established a 101-member unicameral legislature (State Assembly), a prime minister as Head of Government, and a president as Head of State. In January the coalition government elected in 1999 stepped down and was replaced by a new coalition comprised of the Reform and Center Parties. The judiciary is independent.

The police, who are ethnically mixed, are subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Corrections personnel are subordinate to the Ministry of Justice. The security service—Security Police—is subordinate to the Interior Ministry but also reports to the Prime Minister. Police leadership continued to work to develop, strengthen, and professionalize the police force. Police and corrections personnel continued to commit human rights abuses.

The country has a market economy and a population of approximately 1.4 million. Services, particularly financial, transit, and tourism, grew in importance compared to the historically more prominent light industry and food production. The privatization of firms, including small-, medium-, and large-scale enterprises, was virtually complete. The country experienced a growth rate of 5.5 percent, compared with 5.4 percent 2001. While wages and benefits kept up with inflation, there was a growing disparity between Tallinn (where one-third of the population resides) and the slower growing rural southeast and industrial northeast.

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens and the large ethnic Russian noncitizen community; however, there were problems in some areas. Police continued to mistreat prisoners and detainees and used excessive force. Prison conditions remained poor, although there were some improvements, including renovations in facilities nationwide. There was continued criticism of the discriminatory nature of the Citizenship and Aliens' Law due to its Estonian language requirements. Violence against women was a problem, and there were reports that women were trafficked for prostitution. Reform of the country's political and economic structure led to an invitation in December to join the European Union (EU) in May 2004. Estonia was invited by the Community of Democracies' (CD) Convening Group to attend the November 2002 second CD Ministerial Meeting in Seoul, Republic of Korea, as a participant.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports of the arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life committed by the Government or its agents.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits such practices; however, police continued to use excessive force and verbal abuse during the arrest and questioning of suspects. Six police officers were charged and found guilty of using excessive force; two others charged in 2001 were awaiting trial at year's end.

Prison conditions remained poor, although there were some improvements. By midyear the prison population was 4,737 inmates. Overcrowding was reported in the major prisons. A lack of funds and trained staff continued to be serious problems. The percentage of prisoners suffering from tuberculosis was much higher than in the general population.

The Government continued renovating and restructuring all of the country's prisons. A new prison in Tartu, built to EU standards, with a capacity of 500 inmates, opened in October. Modest gains were made in hiring new prison staff and retaining existing personnel. Work and study opportunities for prisoners continued to increase. During the year, 564 prisoners were released under the Government's early release program. Men and women were housed separately; prison facilities for men, but not for women, were overcrowded. Juveniles also are housed in separate penal facilities. Pretrial detainees and convicted prisoners were held in the same prisons, but in different sections. On September 1, a revision to the Penal Code went into effect that offered the possibility of replacing prison sentences with community service.

The Government permits prison visits by independent human rights observers; the last such visit occurred in 1999.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The Constitution and laws prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, and the Government generally observed these prohibitions. Under the Constitution, warrants issued by a court are required to make arrests. Detainees must be informed promptly of the grounds for the arrest and given immediate access to legal counsel. There is a functioning bail system. A person may be held for 48 hours without being charged formally; further detention requires a court order. Police rarely violated these limits. A person may be held in pretrial detention for 2 months; this term may be extended for a total of 12 months by court order. Lengthy pretrial detention is not a problem: The average time of detention was 3½ months. At year's end, 1,251 of the 4,415 prisoners were awaiting trial.

The Constitution prohibits forced exile, and the Government did not employ it.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the Government generally respected this provision in practice.

The judiciary operates through a three-tier court system: Rural and city courts, district courts, and the State Court (which functions as a supreme court). The district and State courts are also courts for "constitutional supervision." At the rural and city levels, court decisions are made by a majority vote, with a judge and two lay members sitting in judgment. All judges and lay judges must be citizens. The President nominates and the State Assembly confirms the Chief Justice of the State Court. The Chief Justice nominates State Court judges who are subject to confirmation by the State Assembly. He also nominates the district, city, and rural court judges who are appointed by the President. Judges are appointed for life.

The Constitution provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right. It also provides that court proceedings shall be public. Closed sessions may be held only for specific reasons, such as the protection of state or business secrets, and in cases concerning minors. The Constitution further provides that defendants may present witnesses and evidence as well as confront and cross-examine prosecution witnesses. Defendants have access to prosecution

evidence and enjoy a presumption of innocence. If a person cannot afford an attorney, the State provides one.

There were no reports of political prisoners.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The Constitution prohibits such actions, and the Government generally respected these prohibitions in practice. The law requires a search warrant for the search and seizure of property. During the investigative stage, the prosecutor issues warrants upon a showing of probable cause. Once a case has gone to court, the court issues warrants. The Constitution provides for the privacy of the mail, telegrams, telephones, and other means of communication. Police must obtain a court order to intercept communications. Illegally obtained evidence is not admissible in court.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the Government generally respected these rights in practice. The Law on Language prohibits the use of any foreign language on public signs, advertisements, and notices, including election posters. Translation may be provided into other languages; international conferences are exempt from the law.

Four major national Estonian-language and two Russian-language daily newspapers were published, in addition to several weeklies. These publications were independent and not subject to government influence; more than half were foreign-owned. A local politician's company owned one Russian daily. All newsprint, printing, and distribution facilities were privately owned. Foreign newspapers and magazines were widely available.

In January the city court of Tallinn found a journalist accused of libel not guilty. The plaintiff, whom police held briefly in connection with the 2001 murder of the publisher of a Russian-language daily, filed an appeal in District Court; the case was pending at year's end.

A 2000 administrative court decision to fine a local television newsperson for using insulting words on the air against a local writer was under appeal at year's end; further action appeared unlikely.

After a dispute in late 2001, the organization representing the country's print press ended its cooperation with the existing ombudsman organization and created a new organization--the Press Council--with a similar purpose.

State (public) broadcast media, including one nationwide television channel (Estonian Television--ETV), continued to receive large government subsidies. The Government instructed ETV to stop broadcasting commercials as of July.

There were two commercial Estonian-language television channels and a wide range of private radio stations.

Some Russian-language programs, mostly produced in Estonia, were broadcast over state and private or commercial television channels. The Government played a large role in encouraging Russian-language programs on state television. However, in proportion to the size of the Russian-speaking minority in the country, the actual amount of Russian-language programming remained small, due in part to the Russian service's limited budget. Russian state television and Russian commercial channels were available widely via cable.

Internet access was available and generally unrestricted.

The Government did not restrict academic freedom.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association, and the Government generally respected these rights in practice. Permits for all public gatherings must be obtained 3 weeks in advance. The authorities have wide discretion to prohibit such gatherings on public safety grounds but seldom did so. There were no reports of government interference in mass gatherings or political rallies during the year. Noncitizens are prohibited from joining political parties, although they may form social groups.

c. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice.

The law requires all religious organizations to have at least 12 members and to be registered with the Interior Ministry and the Board of Religion. Leaders of religious organizations must be citizens with at least 5 years' residence in the country.

Beginning in 1993, a group of ethnic Estonian and Russian parishes preferring to remain under the authority of the Russian Orthodox Church structure have attempted to register under names similar to the registered Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church (EAOC), which is independent. In May 2001, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MIA) declined to approve an application by representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate, explaining that it could not formally register this church under its desired name, since it would be confused too easily with the EAOC. Following an exchange between the Estonian Prime Minister and the Moscow Patriarch in 2001, as well as other discussions, on April 17, the MIA registered the church under the name Estonian Orthodox Church (EOC), Moscow Patriarchate.

On February 12, Parliament adopted a revised Law on Churches and Religious Organizations. The law removed a disputed provision from legislation proposed in 2001 that would have barred the registry of any church or union of congregations whose permanent or temporary administrative or economic management was performed by a leader outside the country. The President promulgated the revised law on February 27.

The majority of citizens are nominally Lutheran, but relations between the various religious communities generally are amicable. Tension between the ethnic Estonian and ethnic Russian populations generally did not extend to religious matters; however, the hierarchical dispute and legal conflict over church property did result in some resentment on the part of Christian Orthodox believers belonging to the EOC, Moscow Patriarchate.

For a more detailed discussion see the 2002 International Religious Freedom Report.

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The law provides for these rights, and the Government generally respected them in practice. Passports served as identification but do not have to be carried at all times. There were no exit visas.

The Government did not restrict the right of noncitizen residents—persons who are citizens of another country or stateless persons—to foreign travel, emigration, or repatriation, although some noncitizens complain of delays in obtaining travel documents. The majority of noncitizens were ethnic Russians (see Section 5). The Government issued alien passports to resident aliens not in possession of other valid travel documents. Such aliens included: Persons who are designated as stateless, foreign citizens who cannot obtain travel documents from their country of origin or from another state, persons who file for Estonian citizenship and pass the language examination if required (pending receipt of citizenship), and aliens who are departing Estonia permanently. The Government approved the issuance of alien passports to noncitizens intending to study abroad and agreed to issue them to former military personnel who cannot or do not want to assume Russian

citizenship.

The law provides for the granting of refugee and asylum status in accordance with the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The Government cooperated with the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees. The Citizenship and Migration Board has authority over domestic refugee issues and oversees the state registry for asylum. Since 1999 an accelerated procedure has been in effect for processing refugee applications for those in the country, in addition to the already existing procedure at the border. Temporary residence permits may be granted to persons whose applications for a residence permit are based on an international agreement.

In the past, the Government granted first asylum, but it denied first asylum to all seven applicants during the year. The accelerated program began in 1999; during the year, 69 persons applied for asylum, of whom 7 were waiting for a reply at year's end. Of the applicants processed, four were granted asylum, and seven were granted temporary residence permits. The Citizenship and Migration Board turned down the remaining applications on the grounds that the applicants did not fulfill the criteria for refugee status as defined in the 1951 U.N. Convention.

The Government deported a small number of illegal aliens during the year, usually persons caught in criminal acts. By the end of July, three illegal aliens were held as internees pending deportation or a court order granting them residence.

There were no reports of the forced return of persons to a country where they feared persecution.

Section 3. Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage. On January 8, the coalition government elected in 1999 stepped down and on January 28 was replaced by a new coalition comprised of the Reform and Center Parties. On October 20, nationwide municipal elections were held.

Only citizens may vote in parliamentary elections and be members of political parties. However, resident noncitizens and those who have lived permanently in the area for at least 5 years preceding the election may vote in local elections, although they may not run for office. Approximately 1.1 million persons were citizens, of whom approximately 117,000 received their citizenship through the naturalization process. Holders of permanent or temporary residence permits numbered approximately 270,000 persons, 80 percent of whom are ethnic Russians (see Section 5). Illegal residents numbered approximately 30,000, and most were ethnic Russians; they were not included in the census figures.

There were 17 women in the 101-seat legislature. Four of the 13 cabinet ministers were women.

Ethnic Russians, who made up 28 percent of the population, held 7 of the 101 seats in the State Assembly. The law requires that Members of Parliament speak Estonian.

Section 4. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were usually cooperative and responsive to their views. A nongovernmental legal information center in Tallinn provided free legal assistance to individuals—citizen and noncitizen alike—seeking advice on human rights-related issues.

The Government's Human Rights Institute monitored human rights and provided information to the international community. It investigated reports of human rights violations, such as allegations of

police abuse and the inhuman treatment of detainees. The Institute operated an information center in the heavily ethnic Russian town of Kohtla-Järve.

A presidentially established roundtable composed of representatives of the State Assembly, the Union of Estonian Nationalities, and the Russian-speaking population's Representative Assembly discussed and made recommendations on social integration issues, as did an analogous but independent roundtable that met monthly in the county of East Virumaa.

The role of the Chancellor of Justice and the ombudsman were combined under legislation passed by the State Assembly in 1999. The chancellor-ombudsman, who also operated a branch office in the heavily ethnic Russian northeastern town of Narva, handled complaints by private citizens against state institutions.

Section 5. Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The Constitution prohibits discrimination for any reason; however, reports of discrimination against ethnic Russian residents continued.

Women

Violence against women, including spousal abuse, reportedly was common and continued to be the subject of discussion and media coverage. Neither domestic violence nor marital rape are criminalized, although they may be prosecuted under existing law. Rape and attempted rape occurred infrequently. In the first 11 months of the year, there were reports of 67 rapes and 10 attempted rapes, compared with 43 rapes and 9 attempted rapes for all of 2001. However, studies showed that 40 percent of crime, including domestic violence, went unreported. Even when the police were called, the abused spouse often declined to press charges, due to societal pressure.

There were reports that women were trafficked for prostitution (see Section 6).

Sexual harassment existed but was not reported officially. Although sexual harassment is not specifically mentioned in the penal code, it is possible to prosecute such cases under Code provisions on "Violation of Gender Equality." Although women have the same legal rights as men under the law and are entitled in theory to equal pay for equal work, this was not the case in practice. While women's average educational level was higher than that of men, their average pay in general was lower, and there continued to be female- and male-dominated professions. Women constituted slightly less than one-half of the work force; they also carried most major household responsibilities.

The Center of Women Citizens and a roundtable of women's organizations worked to promote women's rights.

Children

The Government is strongly committed to education; it gave a high priority to building and refurbishing schools. The mandatory education period is 9 years. Education is free. Approximately 97 percent of those eligible attended school, with attendance in proportion to the breakdown by gender in the population. The Government provided free medical care for children and subsidized school meals.

There is no societal pattern of child abuse; however, studies, including one published by the local U.N. Development Program office during 2000, found that a significant proportion of children had experienced at least occasional violence at home, in schools, or in youth gangs. In the first 11 months of the year, police registered 27 cases of sexual abuse involving 26 female victims and 1 male victim, all below age 16. In the same period, there were 32 cases of procurement for prostitution or criminal activity of victims younger than 18 years old. In one rape case, the victim was younger than age 14.

Persons with Disabilities

While the Constitution provides for the protection of persons with disabilities against discrimination, and both the Government and some private organizations provide them with financial assistance, little has been done to enable persons with disabilities to participate normally in public life. There is no public access law, but some effort was made to accommodate persons with disabilities; for example, ramps were installed at curbs on new sidewalk construction, and public transportation firms acquired some vehicles that are accessible, as have some taxi companies. The law allows for persons with serious sight, hearing, or speech impediments to become naturalized citizens without having to pass an examination on the Estonian Constitution and language.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

During the years of the country's forced annexation by the Soviet Union, large numbers of non-Estonians, predominantly ethnic Russians, were encouraged to migrate to Estonia to work as laborers and administrators. These immigrants and their descendants made up approximately one-third of the total population; about 40 percent of these persons were born in Estonia.

The Law on Cultural Autonomy provides for the protection of cultures of citizens belonging to minority groups. Some noncitizens termed the law discriminatory, because it restricts cultural autonomy only to citizens; however, noncitizens may participate fully in ethnic organizations, and the law includes subsidies for cultural organizations.

In districts where more than one-half of the population speak a language other than Estonian, the law entitles inhabitants to receive official information in that language.

All residents, whether or not they are citizens, may complain directly to the State Court about alleged violations of human or constitutional rights. The State Court justices review each case. All decisions are in Estonian, but if a complaint is received in a language other than Estonian (usually Russian), the court provides a translation.

Some noncitizen residents, especially ethnic Russians, continued to allege job, salary, and housing discrimination because of Estonian language requirements. The Citizenship Law includes a residency requirement for naturalization of 5 years and requires knowledge of the Constitution and the Citizenship Law, as well as Estonian language capability. Persons who were legal residents in the country prior to July 1, 1990, were exempt from the 5-year legal residence and 1-year waiting period requirements. The law allows the Government to waive the language and civic knowledge requirements for applicants who have Estonian-language elementary or higher education, or who have performed valuable service to Estonia. The Citizenship Law, as amended in 1998, grants citizenship to stateless children born to legally resident stateless parents after February 26, 1992 (upon the parents' or guardians' application). As of December, parents had applied for citizenship for 2,178 such children; 2,026 of the applications were approved.

While the OSCE and some other international organizations, such as the Finnish Helsinki Committee, have found the citizenship law to be satisfactory, some U.N. officials, the Russian Government, and members of the local ethnic Russian community continued to criticize the Citizenship Law as discriminatory, notably for its Estonian language requirements.

By law the following classes of persons are ineligible for naturalization: Those filing on the basis of false data or documents; those not abiding by the constitutional system or not fulfilling the laws; those who have acted against the State and its security; those convicted of felonies; those who work or have worked in the intelligence or security services of a foreign state; or those who served as career soldiers in the armed forces of a foreign state, including those discharged into the reserves or retired. The latter category includes spouses who came to Estonia in connection with the service member's assignment to a posting, the reserves, or retirement. A provision of the law allows for the granting of citizenship to a foreign military retiree who has been married to a native citizen for 5 years. During the year, 4,091 persons received citizenship by naturalization. A total of 213,717 persons held permanent residence permits; 52,758 held temporary residence permits. Bureaucratic delays also were cited as disincentives for securing citizenship.

Partly in response to allegations by foreign governments of human rights violations against the noncitizen population, the Government in 1998 established a high-level commission to examine all aspects of bilateral relations, including a subgroup that would examine the humanitarian aspects of the Russian minority in Estonia and possibly of the Estonian minority in Russia. However, by year's end, there had yet to be a formal session of the commission, and no action appeared likely.

A 2000 amendment to the law on aliens provides that the annual immigration quota does not apply to non-Estonian spouses of Estonian citizens if the spouses have a common child up to 15 years of age or if the female spouse is more than 12 weeks pregnant. In addition, the amendment provides that the quota does not apply to children up to 15 years of age if the parents are applying for a residence permit. On June 28, Parliament adopted an amendment to the aliens law that allows permanent residents who have resided in the country for at least 5 years to bring in spouses or close relatives without regard to the immigration quota.

Other than for land ownership, the law does not distinguish between citizens and noncitizens for purposes of business or property ownership, and land ownership by foreigners is restricted only in certain strategic areas. All legal residents of the country may participate equally in the privatization of state-owned housing.

The Language Law requires that all public servants and public sector employees, service personnel, medical professionals, and sole proprietors must use the Estonian language, with actual proficiency determined through examination. Non-Estonian citizens who have obtained at least primary education proficiency in the language are exempted from the requirement to pass a language examination. A total of 28 prison officials were fired for noncompliance with the language requirement.

The Language Law, amended in 2000, conforms with EU recommendations regarding language requirements for persons working in the private sector. For employees of private enterprises, nonprofit organizations, and foundations, as well as sole proprietors, the amended law establishes a requirement of proficiency in the Estonian language if it is in the public interest.

The language office liberally granted extensions to persons who can explain their failure to meet the requisite competence level. The Government established language-training centers; however, they lack qualified teachers, financial resources, and training materials. There were allegations that the examination process, which 75 to 90 percent of persons pass, was arbitrary. Some ethnic Russians asked for free language training. The examination fee for either language test—for employment or citizenship—was 15 percent of the monthly minimum wage, although it was waived for the unemployed. An EU program reimbursed language training costs for those who passed the examination.

The President's Roundtable continued to seek practical solutions to the problems of noncitizens. The Government continued implementing an integration program instituted in 2000 for the years 2000-07 aimed at fostering the integration of the non-Estonian-speaking population into Estonian society. In addition, at least 10 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) developed and implemented local programs to assist the integration of non-Estonians into society.

Section 6. Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The Constitution provides for the right to form and join a union or employee association. The largest trade union is the Central Organization of Estonian Trade Unions (EAKL); it was wholly voluntary and had approximately 50,000 members. Another trade union, the Organization of Employee Unions, split from the EAKL and has approximately 40,000 members. A third central union represented food processing and rural workers. Approximately one-third of the country's labor force belonged to one of the three labor federations. Unions were independent of the Government and political parties.

The ICFTU's 2000 "Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights" stated that the registration requirements for trade unions, set out in the 1996 Non-Profit Associations Act, were "overly detailed" and "limited their right to decide upon the functioning of their decision-making bodies, stipulated procedures in respect to the establishment, merger, and separation of trade unions, federations and confederations, and gave the authorities the power to liquidate trade unions." A 2000 trade union law eliminated many of the problems.

The Labor Code prohibits antiunion discrimination, and employees may go to court to enforce their rights. The law provides for collective bargaining, collective dispute resolution, and shop stewards.

Unions may join federations freely and affiliate internationally.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

While workers have the legally acquired right to bargain collectively, collective bargaining has not developed fully. According to EAKL leaders, few collective bargaining agreements have been concluded between the management and workers of a specific enterprise. However, the EAKL has concluded framework agreements with producer associations, which provide the basis for specific labor agreements, including the setting of the minimum wage (see Section 6.e.). The EAKL also was involved with developing the Labor Code, which covers employment contracts, vacation, and occupational safety.

The law provides for the right to strike, and the Constitution and statutes prohibit retribution against strikers. On December 9, railwaymen, metalworkers, and airline employees staged a 1-hour warning strike, which the unions said was necessitated by the Government's nonfulfillment of its obligations concerning labor market policy.

There were no export processing zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Bonded Labor

The Constitution does not specifically prohibit forced or bonded labor by children, and there were reports that families forced children into begging (see Section 6.d.).

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

The statutory minimum age for employment is 16 years. Minors 13 to 15 years of age may work provided that they have the written permission of a parent or guardian and the local labor inspector. The work may not endanger the minor's health or be considered immoral, cannot interfere with education, and must be included on a government-approved list. Government authorities effectively enforce minimum age laws through inspections.

There were instances in which families forced their children to engage in peddling or begging (see Section 6.c.).

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The Government, after consultations with the EAKL and the Central Producers Union, sets the minimum wage. The monthly minimum wage was \$115 (EEK 1,850). The national minimum wage--received by 5 to 6 percent of the workforce--was not sufficient to provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. The average monthly wage in the second quarter was approximately \$321 (EEK 5,140).

The standard workweek is 40 hours, and there is a mandatory 24-hour rest period per week. According to EAKL sources, legal occupational health and safety standards are satisfactory in theory; however, they were extremely difficult to achieve in practice. The National Labor Inspection Board is responsible for enforcement of these standards, but it has not been very effective. The

labor unions also have occupational health and safety experts who assisted workers to bring employers into compliance with legal standards. Workers have the right to remove themselves from dangerous work situations without jeopardizing their continued employment.

f. Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits trafficking in persons; however, while there were no official reports during the year that persons were trafficked to, from, or within the country, it was generally believed that women were trafficked to other countries, and there were reports of prostitution of victims younger than 18 years old (see Section 5).

The new Penal Code that took effect on September 1 specifically criminalized the trafficking of persons. There were no arrests or prosecutions of traffickers during the year.

There were reports that women were trafficked from the country to Scandinavia and Central Europe. Reportedly job advertisements placed from abroad to recruit women were in some cases associated with international prostitution rings.

In May the Nordic Council of Ministers, in cooperation with the Government, held a seminar in Tallinn entitled, "Trafficking in Women." The Conference drew public attention to the issue of trafficking in women and promoted international cooperation to address the problem. NGOs carried out several anti-trafficking campaigns.