

# Council of Europe

## Contribution for the

### 52<sup>nd</sup> UPR (April-May 2026)

## Estonia

Ref ► DGI/GE/KN/cg/324-25

Strasbourg, 22 September 2025

1. The present contribution is based on the recommendations of the Council of Europe bodies in respect of Estonia and aims at providing up-to-date information relevant for assessment of compliance with recommendations issued by the last UPR cycle in respect of Estonia.

#### Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights

2. As of today, there are 3 leading cases under standard supervision of their execution pending before the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in respect of [Estonia](#). They concern the lack of diligence in the adoption proceedings and of sufficient procedural safeguards to protect privileged data during the seizure and the subsequent examination of a lawyer's laptop and mobile telephone; and the procedural deficiencies in criminal proceedings where the exclusion of the main evidence resulted in the acquittal of an accused.

#### Ratification and accession to the international instruments

3. Estonia signed the Council of Europe [Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer](#) on 12 May 2025. It should be encouraged to ratify it.

#### European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)

4. The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) visits places of detention to assess the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty. Following each visit, it adopts a detailed report for the State concerned, outlining its findings along with recommendations, comments, and requests for information. The submission is based on the report on the CPT May 2023 visit [[CPT/Inf \(2024\) 26](#)] published on 26 September 2024 – concerning the UPR recommendations 137.152 (prohibition of torture & ill-treatment) and 137.151 (conditions of detention).
5. Police and Border Guard custody - While no recent credible allegations of physical ill-treatment were received, some detained persons reported derogatory language based on nationality or ethnicity. Access to lawyers and the right to notify a third party of detention were generally respected. However, the CPT's long-standing recommendation to grant all detainees an express right of access to a doctor from the outset of deprivation of liberty remains to be implemented.

6. Material conditions were mostly adequate, though some detention houses lacked proper exercise yards. Persons can still be held beyond 48 hours in these facilities; such detention should be eliminated, and if unavoidable, detainees must be provided with access to outdoor exercise and meaningful activities such as TV, books, and sport.
7. Immigration detention - Material conditions at Estonia's sole immigration detention facility were very good. However, the outdoor space was oppressive, lacking shelter and seating, and no organised activities were offered to persons detained for extended periods. The CPT stressed that for long-term detainees, activities should be expanded and outdoor facilities improved to promote well-being and reduce idleness.
8. Prisons - Estonia has replaced all Soviet-era prisons with modern facilities and maintains a low occupancy rate. Nevertheless, the incarceration rate remains high, and greater use should be made of non-custodial measures, alternatives to imprisonment, and reintegration programmes. Staff-prisoner relations were generally positive, but there were isolated allegations of excessive force and verbal abuse, highlighting the need for clear reiteration to staff that all forms of ill-treatment are unacceptable and subject to sanctions. Inter-prisoner violence persisted, especially in Tartu and Viru Prisons, requiring continued proactive prevention.
9. While material conditions of detention were generally good, ventilation problems, inadequate outdoor facilities for remand and isolated prisoners, and complaints about the quantity and temperature of food persisted. Remand prisoners often remained locked in their cells for up to 23 hours per day for months or years, with minimal purposeful activity. This regime must be improved to allow at least eight hours a day of structured out-of-cell time, including vocational work and education.
10. Healthcare provision was generally good, but significant shortages in mental health services and breaches of medical confidentiality remained, notably when medication was distributed by custodial rather than healthcare staff. The planned transfer of prison healthcare to the Ministry of Health in July 2024 should be accompanied by increased staffing and resources to improve access to psychiatric care. Patients in Tartu Prison's Psychiatric Unit remained in de facto solitary confinement without therapeutic activities, a practice that should end.
11. The maximum legal duration of disciplinary solitary confinement remains excessive. While amendments are planned to reduce it to 14 days for adults and three days for juveniles, solitary confinement should never be used for juveniles. Segregation under Section 69 should not be used as a substitute for punishment and must include regular reviews, individual regime plans, and at least two hours of meaningful human contact per day.
12. Psychiatric institutions - No credible allegations of physical ill-treatment were received, but some verbal abuse by orderlies was reported at Viljandi Forensic Department. While living conditions were generally acceptable, rooms were often austere, lacked privacy, and could not be personalised. Establishments should provide lockable storage for personal items and more therapeutic environments. Beyond pharmacological treatment, psycho-social and rehabilitative activities were limited, and staffing of psychologists, occupational therapists, and social workers was insufficient.
13. The CPT raised serious concerns over the use of mechanical restraint, including lack of direct nursing supervision, excessive duration, and the involvement of police or security staff. Restraint should be used only when absolutely necessary, for the shortest possible time, and performed solely by trained healthcare personnel. Some patients, including

minors, were restrained without consent or review of their legal status, and legal safeguards should be strengthened to address these practices. Gaps also remain regarding guardianship information for newly admitted “civil” patients and the absence of automatic court review of compulsory treatment for forensic patients; both require urgent legislative reform.

14. Military detention - The holding cell at the Kuperjanov Infantry Battalion headquarters was unsuitable for overnight use and should only be used for very short periods with adequate means of rest. Military personnel serving disciplinary detention at Tallinn Detention House were not always offered genuine daily outdoor exercise; this situation should be addressed in practice for all military detainees.

#### European Social Charter

15. Concerning recommendation 137-201 (Right to education): ECSR – Conclusions 2023, Article 17§2 - right of children and young persons to social, legal and economic protection- free primary and secondary education - regular attendance at school, state that Estonia does not collect data on absenteeism and that the drop out rate in the 2020/2021 school year were 0.07% in the 1<sup>st</sup> level of basic education (grades 1-3), 0.08% in the 2<sup>nd</sup> level (grades 4-6) and 0.22% in the 3<sup>rd</sup> level (grades 7-9). The European Committee of Social Rights notes from other sources (UNESCO database) that the enrolment rates in 2021 were as follows: 97.88% in primary education, 98.08% in lower secondary education and 93.34% in upper secondary education. Further details on the Estonia’s situation in the area of social rights can be found at [Estonia - Social Rights](#).

#### Convention on Access to Official Documents (Tromsø Convention)

16. The Baseline [Report](#) of the Access Info Group on the implementation of the Tromsø Convention by Estonia was issued on 16 July 2024. On this basis, the Parties of the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents (Tromsø Convention) issued the [2024 recommendations](#), *inter alia*, that Estonia should revise the Public Information Act.

#### Protection of children against sexual abuse (Lanzarote Convention)

17. Concerning recommendation 137.242 : The Lanzarote Committee noted efforts to combat violence against children include 24/7 free helplines. It recommended comprehensive sexual education, clarity on reporting abuses, and strong protection for reporting professionals. [Child-friendly multidisciplinary inter-agency services](#) are in place – it is recommended for nationwide implementation.

#### Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (GREVIO)

18. Concerning recommendations 137.207 et further (violence against women) : [Baseline evaluation report](#) in respect of Estonia was published in November 2022. GREVIO noted positive reforms, including criminalisation different forms of violence against women, support centres, data systems; and ongoing challenges, including need for holistic policy, training gaps, persistent stereotypes, insufficient support for vulnerable women, consent provisions in Penal Code. The Committee of the Parties’ [Recommendation](#) in respect of Estonia was issued in December 2022. Estonia is expected to report by 4 December 2025.
19. In the meantime, GREVIO launched its first thematic evaluation procedure, dedicated to the theme “Building trust by providing support, protection and justice,” in December 2024. The evaluation is currently underway, with an evaluation visit to Estonia scheduled

for autumn 2025 and the publication of the first thematic evaluation report expected in autumn 2026.