

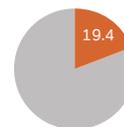
“ Country recommendation

Estonia should directly channel the investments in children, because by investing in the green- or digital-transitions we forget/overlook children.

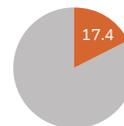
Country Profile 2022



Estonia



Child Population:
258,227
(19.4% of total population)



Child Poverty Rate:
17.4% (2021) ▼*

* lower compared to pre-covid rates in 2019

RESPONDENT ORGANISATION(S):

Estonian Union for Child Welfare (EUCW)

European Semester Country Report and Recommendations

Overview of the Country Report: identification of the children in need

The [European Semester Country Report for Estonia](#) addresses the needs of children mainly in the context of families, health, and education. The report welcomes the **National Recovery and Resilience Plan's actions (NRRP)** focused on enhancing the accessibility and resilience of the healthcare and social protection system by **improving care for children with high-care needs**. The Estonian Union for Child Welfare welcomes the remark in the country report on the lack of common national standards and the shortage of workers, which make it difficult to ensure quality of care.

The Estonian Union for Child Welfare (EUCV) further remarks the inclusion of the **child poverty rate** monitoring in the context of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Social Scoreboard. The country report states the rate of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Estonia (17.4%) remains below the EU average (24.2%).

Other **areas such as early childhood education, education, and children's mental health are not adequately addressed by the report**. Early school leaving, mentioned in the context of high unemployment rate of people with disabilities (one of the highest in the EU at 40.4%), remains higher among young people with disabilities (16.2%).

One of the key deliverables in the field of children's rights in the digital environment is the 'digital transition'. However, according

to the Estonian Union for Child Welfare, this measure shows a lack of focus on children, as it targets broadly all generations to ensure a better access to public services.

When it comes to migrants' children, the report highlights the needs of **Ukrainian refugee children**. In December 2022, the number of Ukrainian children in Estonia was 27 780.¹ Estonia has promptly reacted to the needs of arriving refugees from Ukraine. The EUCV explains that a [new school for 560 Ukrainian children](#) was opened in Tallinn in September and many Ukrainian refugees have been reunited with their families living in Estonia. All over Estonia, temporary accommodations have been set up, and in some cases non-traditional solutions such as ships have also been put forward.²

Needs analysis: alignment at country-level

The [Country Specific Recommendations for Estonia](#) correspond well to the reforms needed in the country. In the current cost of living crisis and soaring energy prices, households are facing greater care responsibilities and unemployment due to companies' closures and therefore are in need of greater support. Even if children are not mentioned in this context, this situation risks of pushing more children into poverty.

In this regard, the third recommendation stands out asking to 'strengthen social protection, including by extending the coverage of unemployment benefits, in particular to those with short work spells and in non-standard forms of work. Improve the affordability and quality of long-term care, in particular by

1 [Ukrainian refugee statistics | Estonian | Republic of Estonia Social Insurance Board](#)

2 [Estonian Public Broadcasting, The first refugees moved to the Tallink ship \(in Estonian\), 2022](#)

ensuring its sustainable funding and integrating health and social services'.³

Poverty and Social Exclusion – experiences of children, families, and communities

Child poverty in Estonia

Estonia has a total [child population of approximately 258,227, 17.4% of which lived at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2021](#). Children affected by poverty and social exclusion come mostly from Russian-speaking families living in Eastern Estonia, single-parent families, and from families with children with special needs.

The Estonian Union for Child Welfare emphasises that **Estonia's Child Guarantee National Action Plan summarises well all groups of vulnerable children, the gaps, and the intended actions**. Another plan

also addressing poverty in Estonia is [the Welfare Development Plan 2023-2030](#), foreseen to be adopted in December 2022. The document brings together the policy areas related to 'Wellbeing' – i.e., reduction of social inequality and poverty, gender equality and greater social inclusion, promotion of equal treatment of people belonging to minority groups, employment, long and high-quality working life, population policy, and increasing the wellbeing of children and families.

The EUCV is a member of the steering committee, whose purpose is to ensure the implementation of the current Welfare Development Plan 2016-2023 and the preparation and implementation of the Welfare Development Plan 2023-2030.

European Child Guarantee

Estonia's National Action Plan

The [Council Recommendation for a European Child Guarantee](#) asked Member States to submit a National Action Plan (NAP) that would outline how the Child Guarantee would be implemented at national level by 15 March 2022.

National Action Plans should outline the children most in need, the planned and existing policy actions and measures to support them, and a monitoring and evaluation framework. The plans should also be drafted in consultation with children, civil society, and national authorities.

The **Estonian Child Welfare Union has been extensively involved and consulted on the draft of [Child Guarantee National Action Plan](#)**, published on 20 April 2022. The EUCV has conducted consultations both at national

and local levels and have also involved children. Their feedback was directly incorporated in the NAP. Their involvement can be considered as a **good example of co-designing** this important policy for children. The only point of improvement was the time pressure, since there was only one month to run and process the consultations.

The EUCV further explains that the NAP provides a comprehensive overview of the situation of children, including statistical data and relevant gaps. All consulted stakeholders, children and local municipalities' and NGOs' representatives, have made recommendations that were translated into actions in the NAP. Therefore, the **resulting Estonian NAP is a relevant policy document that can make substantial improvements in children's lives**. The part that should be further developed is the monitoring and evaluation framework, including a set of

³ [Country specific Recommendations for Estonia](#), p.10.

indicators that would adequately measure the progress on reduction of child poverty and other areas.

EU Funding

Civil Society engagement in the implementation of EU funds

The Estonian Child Welfare Union has been involved in **national working groups** (for example on Sustainable Development, new national Welfare Development Plan 2023-2030, National Recovery and Resilience Plan), where they have been providing input in regards to legislative and non-legislative changes and proposing new laws related to children, family, and other topics.

Example of EU-funded projects:

In regards to the digital rights of children, The Estonian Union for Child Welfare has implemented:

- the [*Smartly on the Internet*](#), an initiative through which they operate the **national Safer Internet Centre**;
- the [*GaminGEE*](#) project whose aim is to provide educators and families with effective resources and to raise awareness of values applied to sex and affections, such as gender equality, etc.;
- the Erasmus+ projects [*Home / tool4gender*](#) on gender equality education.

Priorities for EU funding in Estonia

The Estonian Union for Child Welfare calls the government of Estonia to prioritise investment in:

- **mitigating the urban-rural disparities** by investing in services and their accessibility for children regardless their place of inhabitancy;
- Investing in **extra-curricular time activities, education, mental health, and health care for children.**

