

4.1 General context

-

previous page

[< 4. Social Inclusion](#)

- [Up](#)

- [4.2 Administration and governance >](#)

On this page

- 1.

[Main challenges to social inclusion](#)

- 2.

[Main concepts](#)

Main challenges to social inclusion

In 2016, the Government of Estonia approved the document [Welfare Development Plan 2016-2023](#) containing analyzes of the situation and challenges in the social inclusion area. The document was prepared by the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#). The following description presents the challenges that are brought to attention as the most important areas that need development and support, and that have defined the situation of young people needing special attention divided by the field of policy objectives in the document. The statistics used are refreshed and based on most recently published sources.

Participation in working life

Target groups that require separate attention for the achievement of a higher employment rate include the young, the elderly, residents with other native languages, people who have been away from the labor market for a long time, and people with reduced work capacity. In Estonia, after reaching one of the highest levels of youth unemployment rates in Europe during the financial crisis (32.9% in Estonia vs 21% in EU-28 in 2010), the situation stabilized fast, and the share of youth searching for a job is lower in comparison with most other European countries (11.1% in Estonia and 15.0% in EU in 2019).

The unemployment risk is increased for young people with a low level of education. The share of people aged 25+ with basic or lower education is decreasing a little year by year - in 2015, 14.1% of the population had a low level of education, which is 2.5 percentage points less than in 2010. In 2019, 11.3% of young people aged 18-24 are not in education and have basic or lower education. This has not changed in the last 5-6 years significantly. The obstacles for young people entering the labor market include the restrictions of labor and tax regulation and the fact that young people are at a higher risk of suffering from work accidents. There were 3,616 accidents at work (incl. 12 fatal accidents) registered in 2019 – 30% less than in 2018.

One of the challenges is the activation of young people who do not study or work. Special attention is on the smooth movement of young people with special needs from the general education system to the next level of education (vocational training and/or higher education) and to the labor market.

Economic coping of people In Estonia, economic coping difficulties and poverty threatens the most women, the elderly, the disabled people, and the unemployed. In 2018, 21.7% of Estonia's population lived in relative poverty and 2.4% in absolute poverty. 3.8% of the population lived in severe material deprivation in 2018. In 2017, the relative poverty of families with many children and single-parent families decreased, and in 2018, it increased a little but has remained stable. Children who live with one parent or in families with many children are at a much higher risk of poverty than children who have two parents and/or not many siblings. The at-risk-of-poverty rate of couples with at least three dependent children has decreased from 26.2% in 2014 to 14.8% in 2018. The absolute poverty rate of families with many children also decreased from 15.0% in 2014 to 1.6% in 2018. The at-risk-of-poverty rate of single-parent families rose from 37.2% in 2000 to 38.8% in 2014 but has decreased to 35.4% in 2018.

Social services and protection

The financial sustainability of the social security scheme is significantly affected by the population's structure and the growth of the economy. The population of Estonia in 2020 is 1,328,976. The number has dropped by 15% since 1991. During these years, the age group of 75 years old or older has increased and the size of younger age groups has decreased. In 2016, there were 1.64 workers for one person of retirement age, but the sustainable version would be 2 workers for one person of retirement age. Children without parental care or in need of assistance numbered 7,623 at the beginning of 2015. In 2006, there were 822 such children. However, the number of children in need of assistance has grown fast mostly because the registration of such children at local governments has improved.

Equality

The efficiency of legal protection depends significantly on the awareness of people about their rights and possibilities for their protection. The options of minorities for self-representation are limited. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was ratified in Estonia in 2012, requires establishing an independent supervision mechanism for the implementation of the convention. This, however, has not yet been established in Estonia.

Health

According to the [Performance Report for 2009–2020](#) of the „[National Health Plan 2009–2020](#)“, the percentage of children reporting very good self-perceived health is growing (in 2012 the share was 29.3%, and in 2016 it was 33.8%, in 2020, it is expected to be over 34%). According to a health behavior study of school students, the percentage of students reporting very good self-perceived health did decrease in 2009/2010; however, in 2013/2014 the number of students reporting very good self-perceived health was higher than ever. Based on home language, children from families with other home language compared to Estonian home language reported a very good self-perceived health more often (the respective indicators were 34.8% and 32.7%). However, there is a link to a positive assessment of health by children and the economic situation of families. In 2014, children from families with a good economic situation reported their health as very good 1.3 times as often as children from families on average and 1.1 times as often as the children from families in a bad economic situation.

Main concepts

The approaches and principles concerned with social inclusion and welfare are defined in 2016 at the Government level in the document the [Welfare Development Plan 2016-2023](#) arise from the principles of a social and welfare state, the framework of fundamental and social rights, and social protection principles. On the one hand, the principle of a social state is ensuring that the strengthening of the state's economic development and competitive ability takes into account the needs of different social groups. For that purpose, equal opportunities must be supported and created for the population groups that would not be able to secure their livelihood and welfare in the conditions of the competition of the market economy. On the other hand, the adherence to the principle of a social state is a premise for the state's economic development and competitive ability, as it prevents and reduces the exclusion of parts of the population from the social and economic life. The broader view of the welfare of people and society is understood as affected by all aspects of life and the policies that concern them. The solutions are visioned in accordance with the general shift of welfare state policies: transferring from the policy that compensates social risks and repairs their consequences to the policy that empowers and prepares people to cope with the risks. In addition to traditional social protection, increasing people's self-sufficiency and their social and professional activity has become more and more important. Therefore, the social and labor market policies are treated in the welfare policy as investments that support people's participation in society and economy, and thus, provide an important contribution to the development of society and economy.

Some of the most important concepts are defined as the following:

- **Prevention** refers to the need to primarily focus on the prevention of social risks and the realization of their consequences, which will prevent the progression and accumulation of the problems, and overall, make solving them more time- and resource-efficient.
- **Shared responsibility** means that the person themselves and their family bear primary responsibility for securing their welfare, coping, and a decent life. State and local authorities provide support in situations where a person or a family is not able to secure their livelihood on their own. The provision of help is also based on the shared responsibility principle, as it encourages people's self-responsibility and prevents learned helplessness and dependency on help.
- **Ensuring human dignity** is the central objective for the protection of social rights. Thereby, human dignity means both a decent treatment and a decent life.
- **A comprehensive approach to human needs** means that a person's needs are assessed as comprehensively as possible and the assessment is used in designing and implementing the measures by

combining and connecting, if necessary, benefits, grants, and services.

- **Equal treatment** is based on the idea of equality among people and the prohibition of discrimination as the central principle of a social state, which must be taken into account in granting rights, their implementation, and the creation of equal opportunities. The principle of equal treatment means considering the needs of all people, not the uniform treatment of all people.