

# An International Researcher's Guide to Estonia





An International  
Researcher's Guide  
to Estonia

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# Foreword

The aim of “The Guide for International Researcher’s Moving to Estonia” is to help researchers from all over the world who plan to come to work or study in Estonia. The information provided herein is relevant and applicable for researchers, academic personnel and doctorate students, but is not necessarily applicable to other mobile workers.

Our aim is to make your mobility experience as easy as possible. This guide offers you guidelines for arranging employment and work formalities and also for managing the practical matters of everyday life in Estonia. We have tried to provide information for a short visit as well as for long-term research work in Estonia, so that you can get the most from Estonia’s research landscape.

This Guide has been prepared by members of the Estonian EURAXESS network, which is a part of European Commission’s EURAXESS initiative. “EURAXESS – Researchers in Motion” is a pan-European service network providing mobile researchers and their families with customised assistance in all matters relating to their mobility experience. The central portal of the EURAXESS initiatives is <http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess>. The Estonian EURAXESS web-site [www.euraxess.ee](http://www.euraxess.ee) provides updated information on all of the topics covered in the Guide. If more personalised assistance is needed, please feel free to contact EURAXESS Service Centres. There are 7 EURAXESS Services Centres in Estonia, the contacts for them can be found at the last pages of the Guide.

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# Research & Development

## R&D Strategy

The main strategy document for Estonia's RD&I policy is *Knowledge-based Estonia 2014–2020*, approved by the *Riigikogu* (Estonia's parliament) in the autumn of 2013. Whereas the two previous RD&I strategies focused on R&D capacity building, the current strategy aims to exploit the established potential for the benefit of Estonia's development and economic growth. Priority setting in the strategy is based on a new methodology of smart specialisation.

The strategy document sees Estonia as an active and visible international cooperation partner in the field of R&D and innovation and outlines the aspiration of Estonia's research institutions to high quality and versatility. One of the aims laid out in the strategy is to make Estonia an attractive place for R&D and to motivate more people to choose a career in research. Furthermore, it emphasises the need for R&D to serve the interests of the Estonian society and economy as well as increase the knowledge-intensity of the Estonian economy in general.

## R&D Statistics

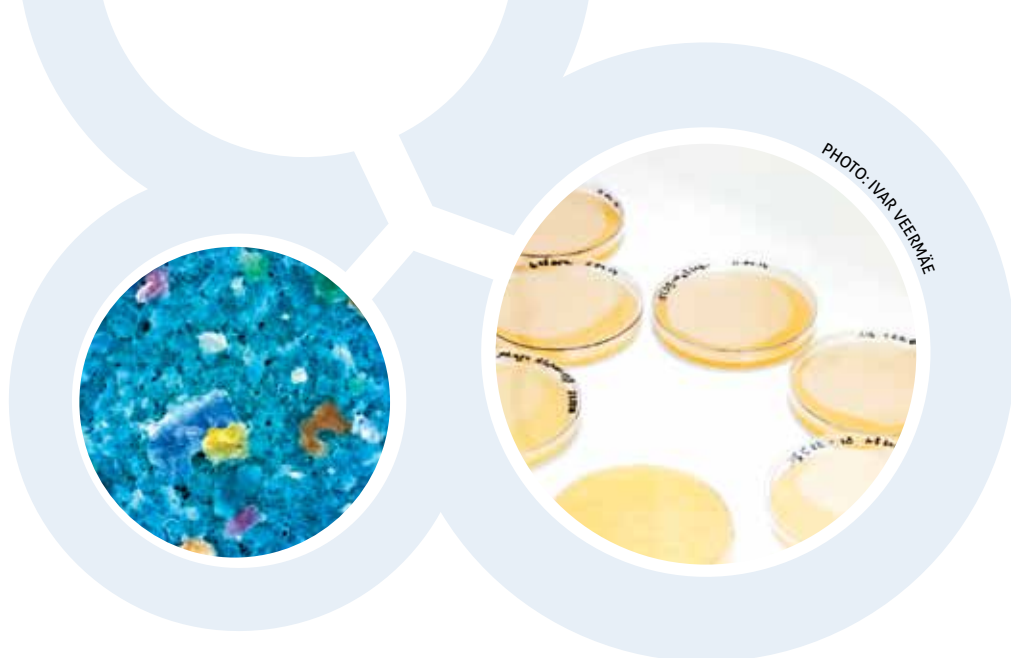
An important indicator which shows the national progress made towards creating a knowledge-based economy is R&D intensity, which is expressed as the ratio of total R&D expenditure to gross domestic product (GDP). In Estonia, the R&D intensity has been on the rise since 2001. In 2011, Estonia's total spending on research and development was boosted by investments from the oil industry: this year, Estonia's R&D intensity was higher than the EU average. Furthermore, the proportion of private sector R&D expenditure financed by the government increased by 27% in 2011 on account of the grants allocated by Enterprise Estonia to small businesses and research centres.

The number of researchers is also growing since the turn of the century, it has quadrupled in the private sector and increased by a third in the public sector. Male researchers outnumber female researchers only by a small margin. The number of foreign researchers working in Estonia is rising steadily. In 2012, 351 foreign researchers hailing from 53 different countries worked and lived in Estonia. Most of them are arrivals from neighbouring countries, such as Russia and Finland, and from other European countries (Germany, Italy, etc.).

PHOTO: KERLI ILVES







### R&D expenditures

	Expenditure on research and development, million euros	Expenditure on research and development as % of GDP	Public financing of research and development, million euros	Public financing of research and development as % from general government expenditure
2005	104,02	0,93	45,25	1,2
2006	150,99	1,13	67,28	1,5
2007	173,65	1,08	79,26	1,45
2008	208,04	1,28	104,07	1,62
2009	197,4	1,43	96,37	1,54
2010	232,76	1,63	102,76	1,76
2011	384,45	2,41	125,9	2,06

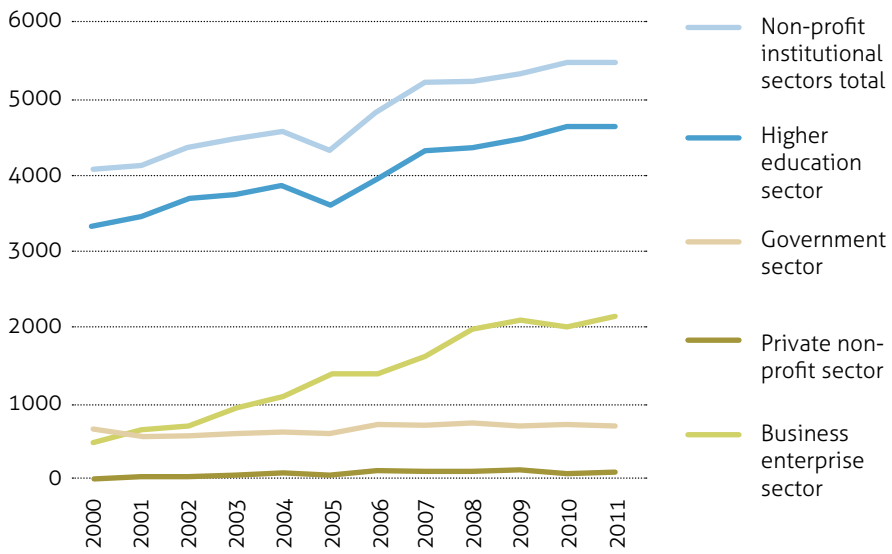
Statistics Estonia

### Researchers by sex



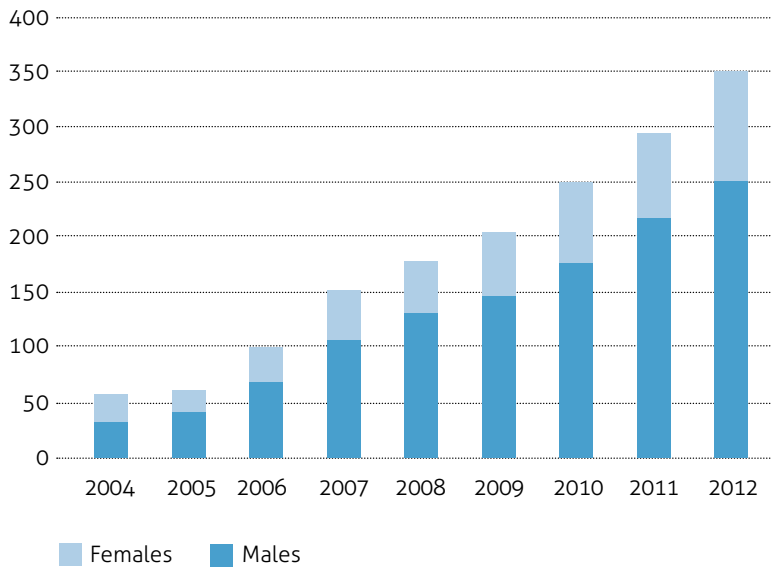
Statistics Estonia

### Researchers by institutional sector



Statistics Estonia

### Foreign researchers in Estonia by year and sex



Statistics Estonia



## R&D Funding

Baseline funding is provided from the national budget. The purpose of baseline funding is to finance R&D institutions on the basis of the quality of their research in order to support the strategic development and original research in R&D institutions that have received positive evaluations.

The Estonian Research Council receives and assesses applications for institutional and personal research grants. **Institutional research grants** are awarded with the purpose of supporting high-end research and development and related activities (so-called *research themes*) in institutions who engage in such research. The aim is to ensure the consistency of the R&D work carried out in R&D institutions, and to upgrade, supplement and maintain the infrastructure necessary for achieving this aim. **Personal research grants** are awarded to support the high-end research and development activities carried out by a researcher or a small research group headed by a researcher working in a research and development institution. Personal research grants comprise two categories of grants: exploratory research grants and start-up research grants. To develop and diversify Estonian research potential through the mobility of researchers and exchange of experience, the Estonian Research Council also awards **postdoctoral grants** to carry out a research in Estonia or abroad.

Furthermore, the Estonian Research Council participates several international cooperation programmes, e.g. with Norway, Taiwan, the UK and France, and coordinates various national and international research programmes (e.g. the environmental protection and technology R&D programme KESTA and the health promotion research programme TerVE).

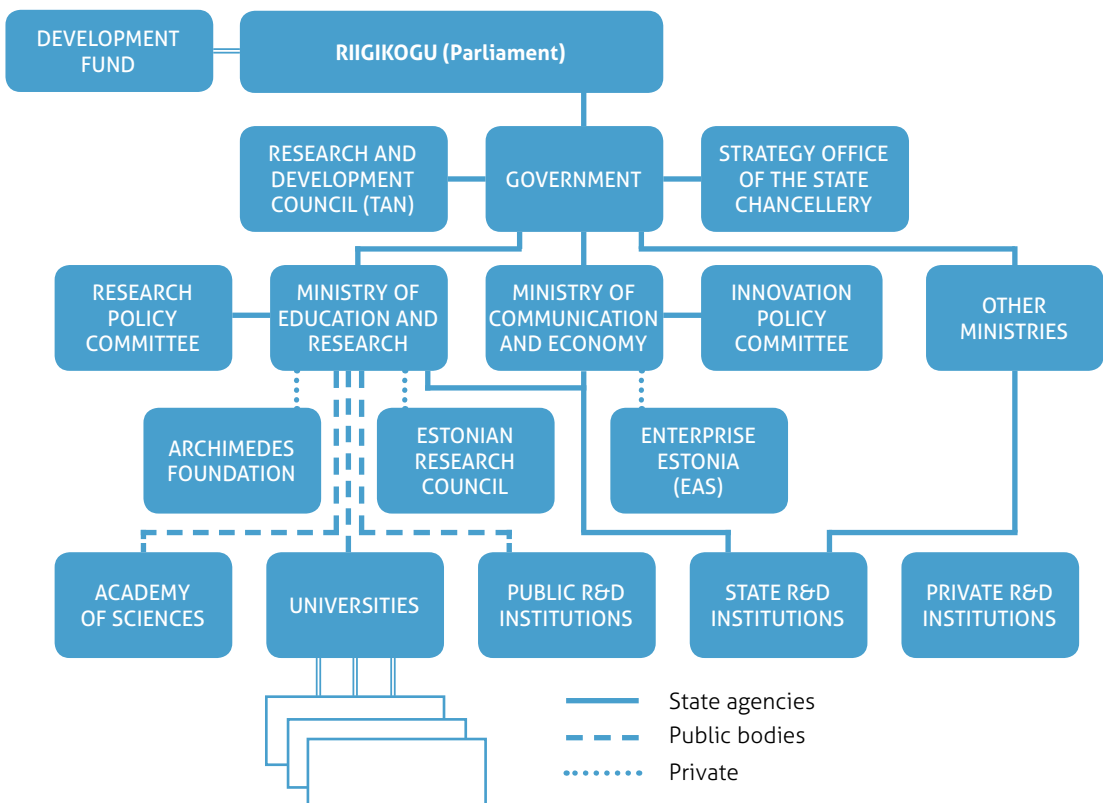
## Institutional framework for R&D

Most research and development in Estonia is performed in the public sector. The largest public research university is the University of Tartu, followed by the Tallinn University of Technology, the Estonian University of Life Sciences and Tallinn University. Other large research institutions that perform high-end research are the Estonian Biocentre, the Tartu Observatory, the Estonian Literary Museum, the National Institute of Chemical Physics and Biophysics, and the Institute of the Estonian Language. The work of R&D institutions is supported by several foundations and research parks that aim to create a favourable environment for research in Estonia.

Estonia's research and technology policy is drafted in the Cabinet of Ministers and submitted to the *Riigikogu* for adoption. The Cabinet of Ministers is advised in R&D issues by the Research and Development Council. The Estonian Ministry for Education and Research, which receives advice from the Research Policy Committee, is responsible for the planning, coordination, execution and monitoring of the country's research and education policy

The main funding body for R&D in Estonia is **the Estonian Research Council (ETAg)** which was established as a government foundation in March 2012 by merging the Estonian Science Foundation with the Research Cooperation Centre, a department of the Archimedes Foundation. The Estonian Research Council is a member of Science Europe, an association of European research funding and research performing organisations.

### R&D system in Estonia





The main functions of the Estonian Research Council are those performed by its five departments. The Department of Research Funding is responsible for the distribution of institutional and personal grants and the handling of grant applications. The Department of R&D Analysis assesses the effectiveness of grants and monitors the creation and use of intellectual property. The Department of International Research Cooperation acts as a National Contact Point for the EU Framework Programme for Research and for Horizon 2020, and represents Estonia in several international cooperation programmes and networks. The Science Communication Department runs a wide variety of science communication activities addressing diverse audiences from the young people to the general public. The last but not least department administers the work of the Estonian Research Information System (ETIS) which concentrates information on researchers, research projects, R&D institutions and various research results. The database allows searches to be performed for researchers, biographies, granted projects, publications, etc. ETIS also functions as a channel for submitting and processing grant applications and for submitting and validating project reports.

Additionally, the Estonian Research Council is in charge of an initiative which aims to promote Estonian research internationally. The project is funded by the European Regional Development Fund and constitutes one of the initiatives of the Research Internationalisation Programme (*Teaduse rahvusvahelistumise programm*) that are administered by the Estonian Ministry for Education and Research. The initiative's overall objective is to raise awareness and promote the image of Estonian research internationally and to facilitate the development of high-level research contacts among developed research nations and emerging markets and to facilitate cooperation between research institutions and industry. These promotional activities are carried out under the brand name **Research in Estonia**.

As part of this initiative, the Estonian Research Council has opened the Estonian R&D Liaison Office in Brussels. The office is part of the Informal Group of RTD Liaison Offices in Brussels for EU R&D and it acts as a centre for gathering and exchanging information between the Brussels and the Estonian R&D community. The office also offers support to Estonian R&D organisations by providing assistance in promotional activities.

**The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications** is responsible for the planning, coordination, execution and supervision of innovation policy. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications is advised by the Innovation Policy Committee. The national support measures for innovation policy are implemented by Enterprise Estonia.

**Enterprise Estonia** is one of the largest institutions within the national entrepreneurship support system in Estonia, providing grants for product development, specialized advice, partnership opportunities and training for entrepreneurs, research and development institutions and for the public and the third sector.

Run by Enterprise Estonia, **the Competence Centre Programme** is aimed at improving the competitiveness of businesses through strategic cooperation between the research and industry sector in Estonia. Competence centres are small R&D organisations jointly established and operated by a number of companies and universities. Such centres are characterised by their strong focus on applied research, which is essential for developing the products of the partners who found these centres. As of summer 2013, there are eight competence centres: Electronics, Information and Communication Technologies; Food and Fermentation Technologies; Healthy Dairy Products; Software Technology and Applications; Nanotechnologies; Cancer Research; Reproductive Medicine and Biology; and Innovative Manufacturing Engineering Systems.

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**Enterprise Estonia**  
<http://www.eas.ee/>

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**The Estonian Academy of Sciences (EAS)** unites 75 top-level Estonian scientists and scholars (as of May 2013) and acts as an umbrella organisation for a number of associated R&D organisations. The primary mission of the EAS is to advance scientific research, providing high-level expertise and advice for shaping the government's science policy, disseminating knowledge and promoting research cooperation at





national and international level. The EAS represents Estonian research internationally, supports Estonian membership in international research associations and funds and operates a research exchange programme with 29 partner organisations abroad.

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#### **The Estonian Academy of Sciences**

<http://www.akadeemia.ee/>

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**The Archimedes Foundation** is an independent organisation founded by the Ministry of Education and Research to implement programmes and projects in the area of education and research. The Archimedes Foundation coordinates the EU Lifelong Learning Programme and administers several national and international scholarship schemes for improving academic mobility as well as for promoting Estonian higher education and research abroad. The Academic Recognition Information Centre (Estonian ENIC/NARIC Centre), a unit of the Foundation, is responsible for evaluating foreign qualifications. Another unit of the Foundation, the Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency, carries out institutional accreditation and quality assessment of research groups.

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#### **Archimedes Foundation**

<http://www.archimedes.ee>

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## Research Centres of Excellence

Research Centres of Excellence are internationally prestigious research groups which work under common leadership and have clearly defined common goals. They receive funding from the Research Centres of Excellence (CoE) measure. The Centres of Excellence support Estonian top-level research to strengthen the position of Estonian research cooperation and competitiveness in Europe. Currently there are 12 centres of excellence:

- Centre of Excellence in Frontiers in Biodiversity Research
- Centre of Excellence in Genomics
- Centre of Excellence for Translational Medicine
- Centre of Excellence in Computer Science
- Centre of Excellence in Chemical Biology
- Centre of Excellence in Cultural Theory
- Centre for Integrated Electronic Systems and Biomedical Engineering
- Centre of Excellence in Environmental Adaptation
- Mesosystems – Theory and Applications
- Centre of Excellence High-Technology Materials for Sustainable Development
- Dark Matter in (Astro)particle Physics and Cosmology
- Centre for Nonlinear Studies





# Estonia

## Estonia in brief

Estonia is the northernmost of the three Baltic States and has an area of 45,000 square kilometres. It is bounded on the West and North by the Baltic Sea and on the East by Lake Peipsi and the Narva River. On the East and South-East it is bordered by Russia and on the South by Latvia. Tallinn is only about 85 km south of Helsinki, the capital of Finland, across the Gulf of Finland. Sweden is Estonia's nearest Western neighbour across the Baltic Sea.

Estonia stretches 350 km from East to West and 240 km from North to South. Islands form one tenth and lakes about one twentieth of Estonia's territory. Almost half of Estonian territory is covered by forest and woodland.

According to the last Population and Housing Census carried out in 2011, Estonia's population is just 1.3 million, which makes it one of the least-populous member states of EU.

According to the Constitution, Estonia is an independent and sovereign democratic republic wherein supreme state power is vested in the people. The Estonian parliament, the Riigikogu, has 101 members who are elected for a period of four years.

The head of state is the President, elected by the Riigikogu for a five-year term. In addition to symbolic functions, the President has representational tasks and formal duties. Current president of Estonia is Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who has been elected for a second term in 2011.

The Government carries out the country's domestic and foreign policy, which is shaped by the Riigikogu; it directs and coordinates the work of government institutions.

The head of the Government, the Prime Minister, is appointed by the President and approved by the Riigikogu.

Estonia joined the European Union on the 1st of May 2004 together with nine other new member states. Already in 7 years, on the 1st of January 2011, Estonia joined the Eurozone, i.e. adopted euro.

Estonia has 6 representatives in the European Parliament. The Estonian Commissioner Siim Kallas is the Vice President of the European Commission in charge of transport for the period 2010–2014.

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**Learn more about Estonia:**

<http://estonia.eu>

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## History

### Important dates

11, 000 years ago	First settlements
1030	Tartu is mentioned for the first time in written documents
13th century	The Baltic region falls into the hands of the Teutonic Knights; Christianisation of Estonia by crusaders from Denmark and Germany
1248	Tallinn receives its city charter
14th century	The Baltic region comes under the control of the Hanseatic League
16th century, first half	Reformation reaches Estonia
1558 – 1583	Livonian War; involving Denmark, Sweden, Russia and Poland
1583 – 1721	Estonia under Swedish rule
1632	The University of Tartu is established
1700 – 1721	Great Northern War, Estonia comes under Russian rule
19th century	Period of national awakening
24 February 1918	Republic of Estonia is proclaimed
1918 – 1920	War of Liberation
1918 – 1939	Republic of Estonia
1940	Soviet occupation
1941 – 1944	German occupation
1944	Estonia forcibly incorporated into Soviet Union
1988	Beginning of Singing Revolution
20 August 1991	Estonia regains its independence
29 March 2004	Estonia joins NATO
1 May 2004	Estonia joins European Union
1 January 2011	Estonia joined the Eurozone

Learn more about Estonian history:  
<http://www.estonica.org>



## Language

According to the last Population and Housing Census (2011), 157 languages are spoken among the people of Estonia as a mother tongue. Estonian is the native language of 68.5% of the population and Russian is spoken on the same basis by around 29% of people. The official language in Estonia is Estonian. It belongs to the Finno-Ugric language family together with Finnish, Hungarian and several other lesser known languages. The Estonian language has 14 cases, but no articles, lacks the grammatical category of gender and has no future tense. Apparently, one of the most difficult aspects for foreigners learning Estonian is the proper pronunciation of the Estonian vowels õ, ä, ö, ü. If you want to master the pronunciation of Estonian, try these tongue twisters: *hauaöööudused* (which stands for 'horrors of the night in the grave') or *kuu-uurijate töö-öö jää ääres* ('working night of lunar researchers at the rim of the ice')!

### Useful words and phrases in Estonian

tere	Hello!
nägemiseni	Good bye!
tšau (Ciao)	informal and a very common way between friends to say both Hi and Bye
aitäh! / tänan!	thank you!
palun	please
jah	yes
ei	no

**TRANSPORT**

buss	bus
rong	train
pilet	ticket
takso	taxi
Palun sõitke sellel aadressil	Please drive to this address

**DOCUMENTS**

dokumendid	documents
pass	passport
id-kaart	ID card
isikut tõendav document	personal identification document
juhiluba	driving – licence
lugejapilet	library card

**SERVICES**

postkontor	post office
ümbrik	envelope
mark	stamp
arst	doctor
hambaarst	dentist
kiirabi	ambulance
haigla	hospital
pood	shop
restoran	restaurant
kohvik	café
juuksur	hairdresser
ilusalong	beauty salon
ujula	swimming pool
spordiklubi	sports club





### MONEY

pank	bank
raha	money
valuutavahetus	currency exchange
palk	wage, salary
hind	price
arve	bill
tasuta	free of charge

### FAMILY

perekond	family
naine	woman, wife
mees	man, husband
laps	child
abikaasa	spouse
kool	school
lasteaed	day-care centre, nursery – school
õpetaja	teacher

### ACADEMIC GLOSSARY

teadus	science, research
teadlane	researcher/scientist
õppemaks	tuition fee
üliõpilane	student
lektor	lecturer
professor	professor

### SOME PHRASES

Ilusat päeva!	Have a nice day!
Kuidas läheb?	How are you?
Täna küsimast, väga hästi!	Very well, thank you!
Kui palju see maksab?	How much does it cost?
Mis kell on?	What time is it?
Kus on raamatukogu?	Where is the library?
Kuidas minna ülikooli?	Which way is the university?
vasakule	left
paremale	right
otse	straight
Ma armastan Sind	I love you

## Economy

Estonian economy is considered to be liberal and innovative. Estonia became the OECD's 34th member country in December 2010. The fact that companies do not have to pay income tax for re-invested profits is considered to be an effective method of enhancing entrepreneurship and for the promotion of innovation and new business solutions. Income tax must be paid only on the profits that are paid out to shareholders.

Before 2007, the Estonian economy was growing very quickly. Estonia was among the three countries in the EU with the fastest growing real GDP. But as in many other countries, after the economic crisis, the Estonian economy fell to its 2005 level. Nevertheless, the economic growth in Estonia turned positive already in 2010, and the annual GDP keeps increasing every year.

The service sector plays an important part in the Estonian economy, employing around than 64% of the work force. More than 71% of the Estonian GDP is derived from that sector.



Tourism is the driving force in the economy of several regions, for instance the island of Saaremaa and the resort town Pärnu Spas and health resorts have become tourism attractions for people from Finland and Sweden, but also from many other countries in Europe.

Among industrial branches, the production of wood products is one of the best-established industries. That is due to the fact that Estonia has a lot of forests, which has led to long traditions in carpentry and log-house making. Large industrial sectors are the food industry, light industry, machinery and engineering. Approximately 32% of work force is occupied in industry.

Agriculture does not involve very many people in Estonia, giving employment to 4% of the workforce. Nevertheless, it is an important sector, providing resources for the food industry. Estonians themselves tend to prefer food produced by local companies. Joining the EU has had a positive impact on Estonian agriculture, as the area of cultivated land has increased. The main agricultural export articles are fish and fish products, milk products and eggs, and meat and meat products.

Banking has developed significantly in the last years thanks to advanced Internet banking system: the majority of Internet users make their everyday transactions via Internet banking or even smart-phone applications.

Information technology (IT) is one of the most popular areas of business and also the subject to study. Everybody knows Skype, but only a small number of "skypers" know that the software was and still is developed in Estonia. The use of IT has infiltrated services as well as industry, and has thus greatly changed the way things work nowadays (see E-Estonia).

## E-Estonia

Three quarters of the Estonian population aged between 16–74 years use the Internet. Fast Wi-Fi is available in many public places for no charge at all. You can also enjoy a free WiFi connection in many intercity buses.







PHOTO: MELIS-LOKK

Estonia, in the vanguard of the most advanced e-societies, offers its residents a wide variety of public services through of the Internet, such as e-school, e-taxes, e-police, e-elections, e-healthcare, and many more. In Estonia you can use the Web to vote, file tax returns, check the marks your children have been given at school, or even get a digital prescription from your physician, thus cutting down on unnecessary bureaucracy. Isn't it amazing that a businessman can establish a new company directly from behind his personal computer, spending less than 20 minutes for the entire process?

All these innovative e-services can be easily accessed by means of the Estonian IDcard which does not only serve as an identity or travel document within the EU, but can also be used for online user authentication and for the signing of digital documents. The ID card with its separate PIN codes for different categories of operations is a secure means of authentication. Web authentication with mobile phones for online services is also possible.

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**Discover more about fantastic Estonian e-solutions**  
<http://e-estonia.com>

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## Climate and Nature

The Estonian climate is temperate and mild, characterised by warm summers and fairly severe winters. The weather is often breezy and humid due to the proximity of the Baltic Sea. Seasons in Estonia vary widely. Average temperatures range from 20.9° C in summer, with July usually being the hottest month, to -8° C in winter, although occasionally the temperature may rise to 30° C and above in summer or fall below -23° C in winter. The longest day of the year is 21st June, with 19 hours of full daylight.

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**You can always check the weather forecast in Estonia at**  
[www.weather.ee](http://www.weather.ee)

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The Estonian natural environment is influenced by the low population density (around 31 inhabitants per square km), its proximity to the Baltic Sea and its position between the Eastern and Central European bio-geographical area. That means there is a borderline of occurrence for many species and types of landscapes here. Bogs, meadows, forests, and little lakes offer the opportunity to experience silence and pristine nature. Furthermore, Estonia has more than 1500 charming islands: the largest are Saaremaa, Hiiumaa and Muhu.

Spending time outdoors is a pleasure in Estonia. Estonian nature is picturesque and vibrant. Hiking trips and camping are very popular in summer, and skiing is enjoyed by many in winter.

The State Forests offer beautiful hiking trails and possibilities for accommodation. There are also many other places in Estonia where one can spend enjoyable time outdoors. Probably the best places for skiing are in southern Estonia, where there are also possibilities for mountain skiing, for example at Kuutse Hill (in Estonian Kuutsemäe), but don't expect the Alps! Beautiful cross-country skiing trails can be found in Otepää, Kääriku, Vooremäe, Haanja, Mõedaku or Kõrvemaa, but also within city limits — in Piritu in Tallinn and in Tähtvere park in Tartu. Beautiful places worth visiting are Taevaskoja, Soomaa, Saaremaa, Hiiumaa, the North coast, Lahemaa, the Piusa caves, the Endla Nature Reserve and Suur Munamägi and many others.

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**RMK. State Forests**

<http://www.rmkk.ee/>

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**Estonian Rural Tourism Organisation**

<http://www.maaturism.ee/>

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**Visitestonia.com**

<http://www.visitestonia.com>

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## Customs and holidays

St. John's Day and Christmas are the most important festivals in Estonia. On the evening of 23rd June, Estonian cities become half-empty. Everybody who can do so travels into the country in order to celebrate St. John's Eve. On that night darkness lasts for only a few hours. Hundreds of bonfires are lit all over Estonia, people sing and dance around them, and when the flames have died down a bit, those who are brave enough leap through the fire to shake off the last year's evils. St. John's (Midsummer's)

Day marks the longest days of the year, and the customs relating to it go back to pre-Christian pagan times.

Christmas falls in the darkest period of the year and is primarily a family-centred holiday. On Christmas Eve both the old and the young sit down to a festive dinner, which usually consists of roast pork, black pudding with cowberry jam, and sauerkraut with roast potatoes by a ornamented, candle-lit Christmas tree; decorated gingerbreads are typical sweets. Afterwards Father Christmas will deliver presents, expecting a song or a poem for each present.

Other ancient customs, which relate to the time of year are still practised. On Shrove Tuesday, in February, adults seize the chance to go sledging together with their children, on the pretext of the old custom. On St. Martin's Eve (9th Nov.) and St. Catherine's Day (25th Nov.), children in costumes go from house to house, earning sweets with their singing and dancing.

The most important national holiday falls on 24th February, when Estonia celebrates the declaration of independence in 1918. Regardless of the weather, which in February may vary between mild thaw and fierce frost, a military parade takes place in the morning. In the evening, the majority of Estonians gather in front of their television sets to watch the President's reception – if they are not invited to attend themselves, that is.

## Culture events

There are several databases about upcoming concerts, theatre performances and exhibitions. Concerts of the Estonian National Male Choir, Estonian National Symphony Orchestra or Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir are definitely worth watching out for. The most important organisation that organises classical music concerts is the State Concert Institute, Eesti Kontsert.

The variety of museums ranges from a mining museum, a glass museum and railway museums to the Seaplane Harbour Museum (Tallinn) and Science Centre "AHHAA" (Tartu). The permanent exhibition of the Estonian National Museum introduces the everyday life of Estonian peasants, Estonian holidays and changes in Estonian culture. The most recent addition to Estonian museums is KUMU Art Museum, which was opened in 2006.

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### Upcoming culture events in Estonia:

<http://www.culture.ee>

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### Tourist web portal of Tallinn

<http://www.tourism.tallinn.ee/>

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### Culture and main events calendar in Tartu

<http://www.kultuuriaken.tartu.ee/>

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### Eesti Kontsert

<http://www.concert.ee/>

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### Piletilevi. Tickets on the Internet

<http://www.piletilevi.ee/>

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PHOTO: HARRI ROSSU

## Religion and churches

Estonians are fond of talking about their Lutheran work habits. This is largely the only religion-related topic that reaches your ear. In predominantly Protestant (since the early 16th century) Estonia, the church is separated from the state, and religious topics only emerge at Christmas and Easter. Confessional belonging is strictly everybody's own business. Representatives of the state, however, consider it necessary to appear in church from time to time, and the church diligently voices opinions on social matters. The most heated religious debates focus on whether or not religion should be a compulsory subject in the school curriculum.

The mass Christianisation of Estonians began in the 13th century, although the previous pagan beliefs persisted until the 17th century. Alongside Christian holidays there are also a number of "pagan" traditions alive today; such as bonfires in May and on Midsummer's Eve.

The majority of religiously active people belong to the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church or the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church in Estonia has two separate branches: the Russian-language church subordinated to Moscow and the Estonian-language church subordinated to Constantinople.

By Lake Peipsi, the archaic community of Old Believers has sheltered since the Russian reformation. The most common time for Sunday services is 10 o'clock, but in some congregations services begin at 11 or 12. You should contact a congregation directly if you wish to become a member.

## Media

The Estonian media system involves both private and public media channels. Estonian Public Broadcasting (Eesti Rahvusringhääling, ERR) was established in June 2007 by merging two public service broadcasting organisations – Eesti Televisioon and Eesti Raadio. Eesti Televisioon (ETV) is the national public television broadcaster, and was established in 1955. ETV supports Estonian national culture and keeps an archive of the unique aspects of Estonian culture. ETV is responsible for the



information needs of the whole society and thus the programme is versatile and offers something interesting for various tastes. The films and imported programmes mostly have subtitles and are broadcast in the original language. This applies also to private television stations in Estonia.

Eesti Raadio is the Estonian public radio broadcaster. Eesti Raadio has assumed the responsibility of chronicling, upholding and introducing important events of Estonian national culture and history; of satisfying the needs of all of the country's population groups for information, culture and entertainment; and to offer varied and balanced programmes. Eesti Raadio offers 5 different programmes, having different target groups and complementing each other, one of them in Russian.

The Estonian print media is mostly owned by private companies. Five daily nationwide newspapers are published in Estonia: Postimees (in Estonian and Russian), Eesti Päevaleht, Äripäev, and Õhtuleht. The biggest weekly newspapers are Eesti Ekspress, Maaleht and Den za Dnjom (in Russian). Several other newspapers and regional newspapers are published on a weekly or monthly basis. Estonian and international newspapers and magazines are sold in bigger shopping centres and R-kiosks.

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**Estonian news in English:**

<http://news.err.ee>

<http://news.postimees.ee>

<http://estonianfreepress.com>

<http://www.baltictimes.com>

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# Entry, Residence and Work Permits

Different rules about residence and work in Estonia apply to citizens of the EU and to persons from third countries. The length of your stay also influences which rules you must follow. EU citizens are free to enter Estonia, but in the event they stay for more than 3 months, they should register their residence with the local government. Citizens of third countries may need a visa for short-term visits (up to 6 months). Citizens of third countries need a residence permit for employment for long-term work (more than 6 months) in Estonia.



## EU citizens

EU citizens are free to enter Estonia and can work and live here without work or residence permits. The same applies to the nationals of Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. The only requirement is that EU citizens should register their residence at the local government authority within 3 months of arrival. The registration of the place of residence gives the right to temporary residence for 5 years.

The family members of an EU citizen, who come from a third country, will have the right of temporary residence if the EU citizen is employed in Estonia or has sufficient legal income to ensure the subsistence of him/herself and the family.

Within a month after the place of residence has been registered and the right to temporary residence has been obtained, you must apply for an Estonian ID card at a customer service of the Citizenship and Migration Bureau of the Prefecture. The ID number enables you to obtain health insurance through the Estonian Health Insurance Fund when employed by an Estonian organisation. The ID card can be used as identification and for giving digital signatures, and it certifies your right of temporary residence. ID cards can be used for a wide range of electronic services.

An EU citizen who has resided in Estonia permanently for five successive years on the basis of the right of temporary residence shall obtain the right of permanent residence.

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**Contacts of Customer Service Centres of the  
Police and Border Guard Board**

<http://www.politsei.ee/en>

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## Citizens of third countries: Short-term stay (up to 6 months)

### ENTRY

If you are not a citizen of the EU, EEA or Switzerland, you should first check whether you need a visa to enter Estonia. Information on visa requirements and the contact information of all of the embassies can be found at the web page of the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is useful to check the website of the Estonian embassy in your home country for specific information.

If you plan to stay in Estonia for less than 90 days, a short-term visa (Schengen visa type C) can be applied for. If you wish to work in Estonia for 3 to 6 months on end, you will need to apply for a long-term visa (Schengen visa type D). Both short-term and long-term visa applications are processed in 30 days.

Short-term visas have to be applied for at the Estonian representation or at the representation of the member state representing Estonia in issuing Schengen visas. Long-term visas still need to be applied in person at the nearest Estonian foreign representation.

If you wish to visit several Schengen member states (incl. Estonia), the visa has to be applied for from the Schengen state's foreign representation that is the state of main destination. If you wish to visit several Schengen member states and are not sure of the state of main destination or if you plan to spend an equal number of days in each state, the visa must be applied for from the representation of the country through which you enter the Schengen area.

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**Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

<http://www.vm.ee/>

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PHOTO: ERIK RIKKOJA

**WORK**

If your period of work in Estonia is shorter than 6 months, you do not need a work permit if your short-term employment is registered before arriving in Estonia by the employer at the Police and Border Guard Board. The easiest way is to register short-term employment by mail. The decision to register short-term employment for scientific work, teaching or for senior specialist will be done immediately, at the latest by next working day.

Short-term employment must be registered **before** applying for a **visa**, and the document confirming registration must be appended to the visa application.

## Citizens of third countries: Long-term stay (more than 6 months)

**ENTRY/WORK**

Citizens of third countries who **stay in Estonia for work** lasting longer than 6 months must apply for **a residence permit for employment. Researchers planning to work in Estonia should apply for a residence permit for employment as a scientist (researcher)**. The residence permit for employment as a scientist is issued if the R&D host institution has been registered by the Ministry of Education and Research, has received a positive evaluation and has concluded a hosting agreement with the researcher. There are several ways how to apply for a residence permit for employment as a scientist: most of them are presented in the **road-map for coming to Estonia**.

**The hosting agreement** certifies to the Police and Border Guard Board that you will be doing research in Estonia. The hosting agreement should contain: your name and qualification; the name and registration code of the hosting institution; the name of your contact person in the institution; the duration of the research project and the financing source of the project.

The list of other necessary documents and the application form for the residence permit for employment as a scientist can be found at the website of the Police and Border Guard Board. The residence permit for employment is valid for up to two years, and can be extended for up to five years at a time.

PHOTO: JUHAN VOOLAIK



PHOTO: ANDRES TENNIS



## Road-map for coming to Estonia

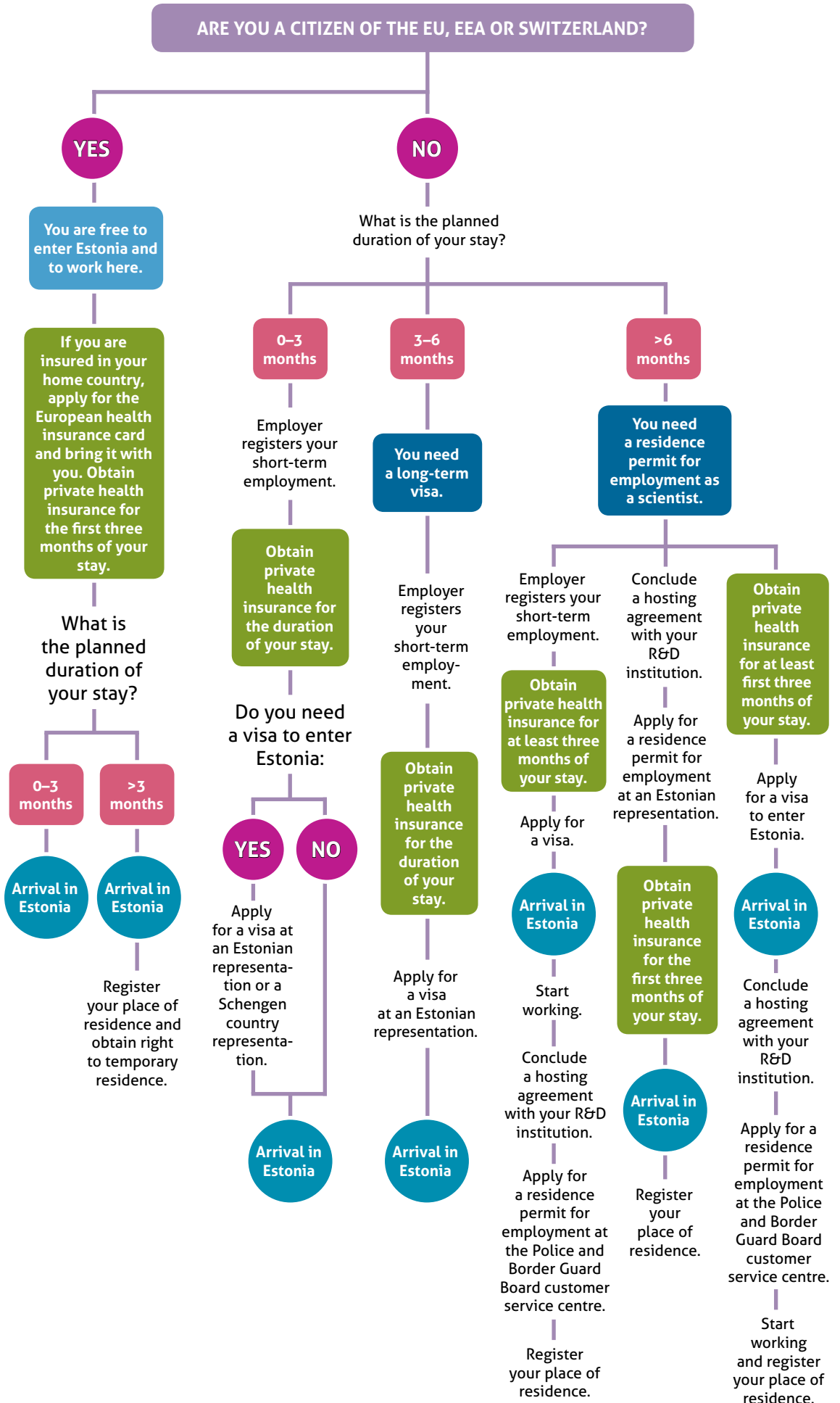


PHOTO: OVE MAIDLA



PHOTO: OVE MAIDLA



Together with the residence permit for employment or the residence permit, you will receive an Estonian ID number and an Estonian ID card. The ID number enables you employer to forward all the necessary information to the Estonia Health Insurance Fund, the Tax and Customs Board and the Social Insurance Board so that you will have health insurance and other benefits resulting from paid taxes. The ID card can be used as identification and for giving digital signatures, and it carries the residence permit and work permit data.

**The family members of the citizen of a third country** must apply for a residence permit. Citizens of third countries may apply for a temporary residence permit for settling with their spouse to whom a residence permit for employment has been granted. For your children, you should apply for a residence permit for settling with a close relative. The applications for residence permits for family members can be submitted at the same time as the researcher's application. The decision whether or not the family members will be granted a residence permit will be made after the decision concerning the researcher has been made.

#### **ENTRY/STUDY**

You should apply for **a temporary residence permit for study**, if you wish to study in **educational institutions of Estonia acknowledged by the state** (incl. doctoral studies). If a student coming to Estonia for up to 6 months (e.g. as a visiting PhD student), he or she can apply for either a short-term or a long-term visa.

A residence permit for study is issued for a period of up to one year but no longer than the estimated duration of the studies. The permit may be extended by one year at a time. For the last year of studying the residence permit can be extended for longer than one year but not more than 6 months after the end of your studies. In the event that you have been issued a residence permit for study, you are exempt from the immigration quota.

You may take employment in Estonia without a separate permit on condition that working does not interfere with your studies and that you study full-term. For the period of study you need to obtain a private health insurance contract.

# General working conditions and regulations

General working time in Estonia is 8 hours a day, 5 days per week. 12 public holidays and one national holiday, i.e. the Anniversary of the Republic of Estonia on the 24th of February, are days off.

The duration of the annual vacation is 28 days, and an extended vacation is granted in the case of some professions, such as state officials and local government officials, teachers, academic staff and other pedagogical and scientific staff, and others. National holidays and public holidays are not included in the calculations of the duration of the vacation. Employees who have worked at least six months during their first working year have the right to be granted a vacation in proportion to the number of months worked.

A woman is granted 140 days pregnancy and maternity leave, which may be commenced 70 days before the estimated birth of the child. The pregnancy and maternity leave should be commenced at least 30 days before the estimated birth of the child, or else deductions will be made to the maternity benefit. A mother or father shall be granted parental leave at her or his request for raising a child of up to 3 years of age. For more details about maternity and child-care benefits, see chapter "Family benefits".

PHOTO: ANDRES TENNUS



PHOTO: ANDRES TENNUS



Employment contracts may have a specified or an unspecified term. In the event that the term is fixed, the contract is made for no longer than 5 years. With the agreement of both employer and employee, an employment contract can be terminated at any time. It can be terminated on the initiative of the employee by giving at least one month notice in advance if the employment agreement has an unspecified term. In the case of an employment contract with a fixed term, it is necessary to give 2 weeks advance notice, if the term of the contract exceeds one year, and 5 days in the event of a shorter contract.

Employment contracts may only be terminated on the initiative of the employer for serious reasons and with at least two weeks advance notice (in the case of long-term incapacity for work), although in most cases notice must be given at least 1 month in advance.

It is generally prohibited to terminate an employment contract with a pregnant woman or a person raising a child under three years of age. An employment contract with a pregnant woman or the parent of a child under three years of age can be terminated only with the consent of the labour inspector.

Employers are required to pay compensation to employees upon termination of their employment contracts due to the closing down the organisation, the laying-off of employees or old age. The amount of compensation that must be paid depends on the length of time that the employee has been continuously employed by the employer. In the event that the reason for the termination of the employment contract is employee unsuitability, the employer must pay compensation in the amount of one month's salary. In the event of the termination of employment contracts due to a declaration of bankruptcy, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund shall pay compensation to the employees.

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**The most important legal acts that regulate employment and working conditions in Estonia are the Republic of Estonia Employment Contracts Act, the Holidays Act and the Working and Rest Time Act. All these can be found in English at the electronic database:**

<http://www.legaltext.ee/indexen.htm>

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## Employment regulations at universities

Estonian universities are autonomous and thus are entitled to regulate their internal work procedures, employment conditions and other issues based on the decisions of their councils. Each university has its own regulations concerning employment conditions for researchers and academic staff. The salary level and other conditions of employment are established in an employment contract, based on the rules of the university and on the Employment Contracts Act. The salary rules vary for professors, docents (assistant professors), specialists and other academic positions, and the rules are reviewed on a regular basis. The rules can be found on the web pages of the universities.

## Intellectual property rights (IPR) in Estonia

The authorship in Estonia is protected by the Copyright Act. The legal protection to the objects of industrial property is regulated by Patents Act, Utility Models Act, Trademark Act, Industrial Design Protection Act and international treaties. All universities have their own detailed IPR principles following the international and state legislation. The author has copyright in the work as of the creation of the work. An author also has copyright in the results of the intermediate stages of creating a work (drafts, sketches, plans, figures, chapters, preparatory design material, etc.).

The original title of a work is subject to protection on an equal basis with the work itself.

Copyright is constituted by moral rights and economic rights. The moral rights of an author are inseparable from the author's person and are non-transferable. The economic rights of an author are transferable as single rights or a set of rights for a charge, or free of charge.

The author of a work created under an employment contract or in public service in the execution of his or her direct duties has moral rights to the work created. The economic rights of the author remain or are transferred to the employer depending on the contract and institutional principles. This applies to textbooks, lecturing material, handbooks etc.

Work published by another person may be reproduced for private use without the authorization of its author and without payment of remuneration.

PHOTO: MATS ÖUN



PHOTO: ANDRES TENNUS



The public performance of works in the direct teaching process without the authorisation of the author and without payment of remuneration is permitted if the name of the author of the work is duly referred to.

Inventions are legally protected by patents or as utility models. An invention is patentable if it is new, involves an inventive step and is susceptible to industrial application. A utility model, like an invention protected by a patent, must be new; but, compared to the latter, it has lower inventive step requirements. The author of the invention is entitled to apply for a patent or a utility model.

In Estonian universities there is a general principle that the economic rights to industrial inventions created in the execution of duties are transferred to the employer. In the case of inventions and utility models, the economic rights are transferred to the employer on the basis of a contract. Such an agreement may be included in the employment contract or concluded with a separate contract.

Applications for Estonian patents and utility models should be submitted to the Estonian Patent Office.

The IPR regulations of universities are available on their web pages.

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**The IPR related acts at**

<http://www.legaltext.ee/indexen.htm>

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**The Estonian Patent Office**

<http://www.epa.ee/>

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# 5



# Taxation

## Determination of the country of residence

A key element for all your taxation issues is to work out whether you are an Estonian resident or non-resident for tax purposes. Residency rules can be quite complicated so please read with care. Before coming to Estonia, we advise to ask from your local tax authority a certificate proving your previous status as taxpayer. This comes handy especially in case your home country has a bilateral tax treaty with Estonia and you are subject to certain benefits. It is important to remember that your status of residence must be certified by the Estonian Tax and Customs Board. The decision will be made upon your application that you should file after arriving.



Determining the place of residence is based on a number of conditions. Firstly, it is of importance, whether your home country has an effective bilateral tax treaty with Estonia. If yes, then it is considered whether:

- 1) You stay in Estonia less than 183 days within 12 month period; and
- 2) You receive income from sources outside of Estonia; and
- 3) Your employer does not have a permanent establishment here to conduct business in Estonia.

If the answer to these questions is yes, then you will probably be considered resident of the other contracting country, your income will be taxable only in your home country and you do not have to pay taxes in Estonia. Treaties may also prescribe other conditions for the determination of residency. To prove that prior to arriving in Estonia you have been a tax resident of the other contracting country, you need a certificate issued by your local tax authority.

Even if one condition is not fulfilled – for example, if you are employed by an Estonian organisation Estonia has the right to tax your income. Usually the employer withholds income tax according to Estonian legislation already while making payments. In case the employer does not withhold income tax, it is your obligation to declare your income.

In the event that your home country does not have an effective bilateral tax treaty with Estonia, the decision concerning your residency is based upon the number of days spent (or planned to be spent) in Estonia. If you stay in Estonia less than 183 days within 12-month period and the income is paid by

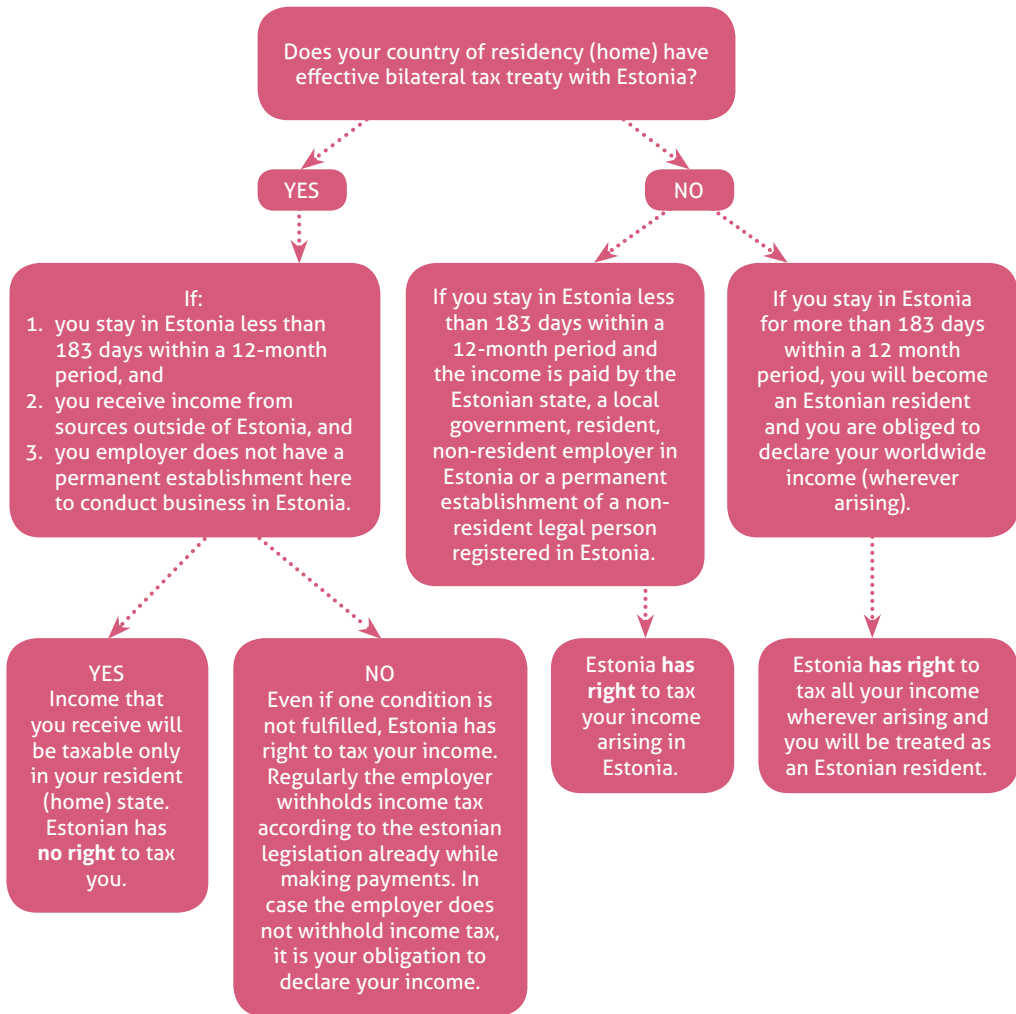
Estonian state, local government, resident, non-resident employer in Estonia or permanent establishment of non-resident legal person registered in Estonia, you are considered a non-resident of Estonia and Estonia has the right to tax your income arising from Estonia.

If you stay in Estonia for more than 183 days within 12-month period you will become an Estonian resident and you are obliged to declare your worldwide income (wherever arising). Estonia has the right to tax all your income wherever arising and you will be treated as Estonian resident for tax purposes.

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**Estonia has signed bilateral tax conventions with several countries for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and capital. The texts of these conventions can be found at the website of the Estonian Tax and Customs Board, at <http://www.emta.ee/?id=1830>.**

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Estonian Tax and Customs Board: <http://www.emta.ee/index.php?id=30746>

## Taxation of residents

The Estonian tax system is considered to be simple and liberal. One big difference compared to most European countries is that income tax has only one overall flat rate.

Direct taxes are **income tax**, unemployment insurance and the funded pension payment. As of autumn 2013, income tax is 21%, and there is a monthly **unemployment insurance tax** of 2%, which is deducted from your salary by your employer.

A **funded pension payment** is withheld from your salary at a rate of 2%, if you have joined the optional funded pension system.

144 EUR per month or 1728 euros per year is **income tax free**. You must apply to your employer for the income tax free sum to be taken into account monthly for salary payments. Income tax is not charged on compensation for official travel, accommodation and daily allowances, if these are within the limits established by the law. **Social tax** is paid by employers at a rate of 33% on all payments made to employees for salaried work performed, as well as 1% unemployment insurance. The social tax is not part of the salary figure; it is calculated on the basis of the agreed salary. 13% of the social tax goes to the Health Insurance Fund and 20% goes to the State Pension Insurance Fund.

For example, if your salary number in your employment contract is 1500 EUR (gross salary), then:

- Firstly, 2%, i.e. 30 EUR, would be withheld from your salary if you have joined the optional funded pension system (II pillar).
- Secondly, of the remaining 1470 EUR, 144 EUR is income tax free, and 21% income tax (278.46 EUR) would be withheld from the rest.
- Thus, your net salary would be 1191.54 EUR.
- Your employer would pay an additional 495 EUR social tax and 15 EUR unemployment insurance.

Your gross salary:				Paid by your employer:	
Income tax 21% (income tax free amount 144 EUR)	Funded pension payment 2% (optional)	Unemployment insurance 2%	Net salary	Social tax (33%)	Unemployment insurance 1%

## Income tax return

Income tax returns must be presented by Estonian residents. A non-resident is obliged to submit a tax return if he/she has received income that is subject to taxation in Estonia, but on which no income tax has been withheld upon payment.

Estonian residents must also declare the income that they have received abroad.

If an Estonian resident stayed abroad for work more than 183 days in 12 consecutive months and taxes were paid from the income abroad, no additional income tax has to be paid in Estonia, and the income must be declared as tax free income from abroad.

If an Estonian resident stayed abroad for work less than 183 days, income tax has to be paid on the salary received abroad as well. Taxes paid abroad are taken into account, so no double taxation occurs. If the income tax in the other country is smaller than in Estonia, the difference in the income taxes must be paid in Estonia. If the income tax in the other country is higher than in Estonia, no refunds are paid for the difference in the taxation rates.

PHOTO: OVE MAIDLA





PHOTO: LIINA LAURIKAINEN

In Estonia income tax returns must be presented by 31st March. If you have only received income from employment in one organisation and no other income, you do not have to present an income tax return, but you can still do so, as you may get some refunds.

Refunds are paid in the extent of the income tax on educational costs; paid housing loans; donations and gifts to non-profit research, cultural, educational, sports or social welfare

organisations, religious organisations, public universities or political parties; and optional funded pension payments. Additional refunds are paid to families with two or more children.

Married couples can present a joint income tax return, which is useful if one of the two does not have a permanent income or the income received is below the income tax free limit.

While income tax returns can be filed on paper in the regional offices of the Estonian Tax and Customs Board (ETCB), the most convenient and widespread method is electronic submission through the e-Tax Board, where pre-completed forms containing the information the Estonian Tax and Customs Board possesses about your tax payments and refundable expenditures are available. The e-Tax Board can be entered from the Estonian Tax and Customs Board's homepage with your ID card, or through an Internet bank. Furthermore, since 2012 the income tax can be declared even by a smart phone!

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**For further assistance, please contact:**

**EURAXESS Service Centres:**

<http://euraxess.ee/euraxess/services-centres/>

**or Estonian Tax and Customs Board:**

<http://www.emta.ee/>

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## Taxation of non-residents

A non-resident is someone whose permanent place of residence is not Estonia and who stays in Estonia for less than 183 days over a period of 12 months. Residency is decided on the basis of all of the days that were physically spent in Estonia. Non-residents have limited tax liability in Estonia, and only the Estonian-source income is taxed in Estonia.

Non-residents can claim deductions and allowances available to residents if they are residents of another EU country and have obtained at least 75% of their income from Estonia. Otherwise they are not eligible to claim deductions from their paid income tax.

If the bilateral convention for the avoidance of double taxation prescribes more favourable conditions for the taxation of the income of non-residents than those provided by law, the provisions of the convention apply. You can apply for the **tax incentives** or exemptions arising from these tax treaties if you have certified your residence status to the tax authority, which can be done using Form TM3 (available on the website of the ETCB). It is not necessary to submit the document if data on you and your residency have been entered in the register of taxable persons. In the event that your income tax has been withheld at a higher rate than prescribed in the tax treaty, you may apply to the Estonian tax authority within three years from the deadline for the payment of the tax for a refund of the overpaid tax amount.

A non-resident is obliged to submit a tax return if he/she has received taxable income that is subject to taxation in Estonia, but on which no income tax has been withheld upon payment.

There are generally no differences for the taxation of residents and non-residents in the case of social tax.

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**Guide on Taxation of Income of Non-residents:**  
[http://www.emta.ee/public/Nonresidents\\_2007.pdf](http://www.emta.ee/public/Nonresidents_2007.pdf)

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## Indirect Taxes

The most important of the indirect taxes is the value-added tax (VAT), which is 20% for most goods. The VAT for some goods, for example books, medicines, etc., is 9%. There are also additional indirect taxes for gambling, tobacco products and alcohol.





PHOTO: LIINA LAURIKAINEN

# Social Security

In Estonia, the Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for social security. Under the Ministry there are two public legal entities that are responsible for the administration of social security: the Health Insurance Fund and Unemployment Insurance Fund. Eligibility for social security in Estonia is based on residence (nationality is not a criterion). The social protection system consists of three social security schemes: health insurance, pension insurance, and unemployment insurance. First two are financed from social tax, the latter – from unemployment insurance contributions. All other schemes (family benefits, etc.) are financed from State revenues. If a foreign researcher has a residence permit and has an employment contact (i.e. pays taxes), he/she is insured equally to the nationals of Estonia. However, the length of stay may influence certain entitlements.

Researchers without employment contract who are members of social security in their home country (EU/EEA state) can benefit from the public healthcare services provided in Estonia (it doesn't necessarily mean that treatment will be free of charge!). If they are not entitled to a European Health Insurance Card from their home country, or are coming with visa (third country citizens) they must obtain a private voluntary insurance to cover any medical expenses they might incur in Estonia.

## Health Insurance

The Estonian health insurance system is based on solidarity – all insured people have the same rights. To receive health insurance from the Estonian Health Insurance Fund (EHIF), taxes must be paid in Estonia, and an Estonian ID number is needed. You get an ID number together with a temporary residence permit or residence permit for employment. If you are working in Estonia for a short period and do not possess a residence permit, you can receive an ID number by contacting the county government and filling in an application form.

You will then receive a document with your ID number that you will have to present to your employer. Your employer will then forward all the necessary information to the EHIF, the Tax and Customs Board and the Social

Insurance Board, so that you will have health insurance and other rights resulting from paid taxes.

When visiting a doctor you only need to take an identification document with you and the health care provider will be able to find out the necessary information using your identification number.

The EHIF pays for visits to doctors and hospital treatment, and covers part of the costs of some medicines. The EHIF covers the costs of medical treatment, apart from the fee for visiting medical specialists (5 EUR) and the hospital in-patient fee (2.5 EUR per day and for up to 10 day per hospitalisation). First aid in the event of emergencies is free of charge for everybody.







The EHIF pays sickness benefits on the basis of a certificate of incapacity for work, which you receive from your doctor and must then present to your employer. In case of an illness, quarantine, household or traffic injury and complications and illnesses caused by traffic injuries, the sickness benefit is 70% of the average income per calendar day and is paid by the employer from day 4 to day 8. Since day 9, the benefit is paid by the Health Insurance Fund. The average daily income is calculated by the employer based on the average wage in the last six months and by the Health Insurance Fund based on social tax payments made during the last calendar year.

In case of occupational diseases or workplace accidents, compensation is received only from the Health Insurance Fund, starting from the second day at the rate of 100%.

If the family members of an EU citizen remain in their home country, their health insurance can be covered by the EHIF after the E109 form has been issued by the EHIF and registered in the country of residence of the family members.

EU citizens who are staying in Estonia temporarily or are posted here are also insured as long as their European health insurance card is valid on the basis of previous work or other insurance conditions in their home country. In the event of short-term work, you should check the term of validity of your health insurance and your European health insurance card. If your European health insurance card is valid, you will be granted necessary health care while staying in Estonia.

An employee who is posted for a short term from another EU member state to Estonia can receive necessary health care by presenting his/her European health insurance card. In case you are posted to Estonia from another EU member country for a long-term assignment you are entitled to obtain health care in Estonia on the same terms as local insured persons. You should receive from your employer form E106 or S1 from your employer or health insurance institution, which you should bring with you to Estonia. Go to the Estonian Health Insurance Fund's customer service with S1 or 2 copies of form E106 and your residence permit or Estonian ID card and fill in an application to be registered in Estonia as a posted worker.

Citizens of third countries coming to Estonia for a short period of time should obtain private health insurance in their home country or in Estonia. Having valid health insurance is one of the visa requirements. Citizens of third countries staying here on the basis of a residence permit or a residence permit for employment and employed here are insured by the EHIF.

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**Estonian Health Insurance Fund (EHIF)**

Lembitu 10, Tallinn 10114

Phone: (+372) 620 8430

Fax: (+372) 620 8449

E-mail: [info@haigekassa.ee](mailto:info@haigekassa.ee)<http://www.haigekassa.ee/eng/>

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## Health Care System

The first person to consult in case of illness is the general practitioner – **family physician**; if necessary, they refer the patient to a specialist. Family physician gives advice concerning the prevention of diseases, takes preventive measures and issues health certificates, certificates of incapacity for work and prescriptions. Everyone has the right to choose (and change) his or her own family physician by submitting an application to the physician selected.

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**For any assistance, please call to the advisory line of the family physician 1220.**

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Visits to family physicians are free of charge if you have valid Estonian health insurance or an European Health Insurance Card. Currently, a fee of 5 EUR is to be paid for a family physicians home visit.

In order to see a medical specialist you need a referral from your family physician and some patience — the queues can be long. For visits to medical specialists, a visit fee is charged (no more than 5 EUR, but it may vary in different practitioners). No referral letter is needed to visit a psychiatrist, gynaecologist, dermatovenerologist,





PHOTO: LIINA LAURIKAINEN

ophthalmologist, dentist, pulmonologist (for tuberculosis treatment), surgeon or orthopaedist (for traumatology) or infectious diseases specialist (for AIDS/HIV treatment).

Dental care is free for residents under the age of 19. Pensioner can ask for an annual refund (19.18 EUR) from the Estonian Health Insurance Fund. Higher rates of compensation are established for pregnant women, mothers of children up to 1 year of age and those in greater need of dental treatment because of sickness (28.77 EUR per year). There is also additional compensation for dentures for pensioners. There are some public dentistry clinics and a large number of private dental clinics.

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**The EHIF has established an advisory line that operates 24 hours a day; the service is free of charge and you can use it by dialling 1220.**

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**Medicines** are divided into prescription and non-prescription medicines. Both can be bought in any pharmacy. The Estonian State Agency of Medicines holds registers of medicines and pharmacies. There are many pharmacies in Estonia, some of which are open 24 hours a day. You can find a pharmacy in most big shopping centres, but also at the town hall squares in Tallinn and Tartu. A portion of the price of prescription medicines is compensated to people who have valid Estonian health insurance. The compensation rate depends on the diagnosis.

The **digital prescription** (e-prescribing) was launched in Estonia in 2010. The system allows doctors to prescribe medications for patients using their computer software and forward an electronic prescription to the national database. An e-prescription is then immediately accessible in every pharmacy upon a patient's request. Thanks to such automated processing, all prescriptions issued for a patient by different doctors are duly recorded and can be evaluated if necessary.

## Unemployment insurance

Unemployment insurance is a compulsory insurance that is collected to pay benefits to employees in the event of unemployment. As of 1 July 2013 all employees pay 2% of their earnings and employers pay 1% of the payroll for unemployment insurance. Unemployment insurance is withheld from the employees' salary automatically. Persons who are old enough to receive an old age pension do not have to pay unemployment insurance.

Unemployment insurance benefits are paid to legal residents of the EU. To receive an unemployment insurance benefit, unemployment insurance contributions must have been paid for at least 12 months of the previous 36 months.

A legal resident of the EU has the right to apply for an **unemployment insurance benefit** from the country where he or she last worked and paid taxes. The period of time that a person has worked and paid unemployment insurance contributions in other EU countries is considered when deciding whether and how long a person is entitled to receive the unemployment insurance benefit. The sum of the benefit paid by Estonia is calculated on the basis of the wages earned in Estonia. An unemployed person should register him/herself at an employment office in order to receive the unemployment benefit. The unemployment insurance compensation is paid at a rate of 50% of the previous wage or salary for the first hundred days and thereafter at a rate of 40%. Unemployment benefit is paid between 6 months and one year, depending on the length of insurance coverage.

If you do not meet the conditions to receive an unemployment insurance benefit, or if you have exhausted your rights to a benefit, you may still qualify for the





unemployment allowance. A person is entitled to a **state unemployment allowance** if he or she has registered as unemployed with the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund and has been employed or engaged in an activity equivalent to work (e.g. attended daytime studies, was raising a child under the age of eight, etc.) for at least 180 days during the 12 months prior to registering as unemployed. The allowance is calculated on the basis of a daily rate of 3.28 EUR. In the latter case the benefits are paid for up to 270 days.

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**Further information on unemployment insurance is available on the web site of the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund**

<http://www.tootukassa.ee>.

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## Family benefits

State family benefits are paid to permanent inhabitants of Estonia and foreign nationals residing in Estonia on the basis of a temporary residence permit. Citizens of the EU who work in Estonia can also apply for family benefits for children who are not living in Estonia. You should submit an application for an allowance to the Social Insurance Board's local pension office within six months after starting work in Estonia, and also present your ID card with the residence permit and the child's birth certificate.

The Health Insurance Act ensures insurance coverage for all pregnant women whose pregnancy has been established by a physician. If you are not insured before pregnancy, you should personally visit the Health Insurance Fund with your passport and a physician's note certifying pregnancy or send the necessary documents by post. If you are a resident of Estonia and your child is born in Estonia, you are entitled to a state **childbirth allowance**. In order to receive additional childbirth benefits from a local government, you should be registered as a resident at the local government registers' office for at least 6 months before the birth of the child.

It is possible to take a **pregnancy vacation** (maternity benefit) starting 70 days before the expected birth of a child. People who are employed receive a maternity benefit. Your gynaecologist will give you a document certifying the expected birth of



PHOTO: LIINA LAURIKAINEN

a child, which you must present to your employer. A father has a right to be granted 10 days additional childcare leave within two months prior to the expected due date as determined by a doctor or midwife, and within two months of the birth of the child. The leave is compensated.

The **parental benefit** is paid to the parent that stays at home with the child. Parent may also work or earn income during the period in which they receive the parental benefit, if the income is higher than 290 € the parental benefit will be reduced. If the income is higher than 1450 € per month, the benefit is not paid.

The parental benefit is paid after the end of the maternity benefit. Together the **maternity benefit** and the **parental benefit** are paid as of July 2013 for a period of 575 days (140 + 435 days). Non-working parents receive the parental benefit for 18 months from childbirth. Fathers have a right to parental benefits starting from 70 days after the birth of the child. The amount of the benefit depends on the parent's income in the previous calendar year that is calculated on the basis of the social taxes paid in Estonia. Those, who did not receive any taxable income in Estonia in the previous calendar year, receive the parental benefit according to the monthly rate of the benefit. In the year 2013 the monthly rate for parental benefit is 290 EUR. The maximum amount of parental benefit that is paid in one month is 2234.19 EUR in 2013. A parent who is raising children under the age of 3 receives a child-care allowance.

A monthly **child allowance** of 19.18 EUR is paid to one of the parents of a child under the age of 16, and in case the child continues his/her studies, the child allowance is paid until the child's 19th birthday.

Apart from the maternity benefit, these benefits are paid by the Social Insurance Board. Most of these benefits are available to you even if your children live in a different EU country, the EU regulations apply then.

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**Social Insurance Board. Pensions and benefits:**  
<http://www.ensib.ee>

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## Pensions

Each EU country contributes to a person's pension according to the amount of time they have worked in that country. Work in Estonia is added to the pensionable service from other countries if a person has worked in Estonia for at least one year. Estonia contributes to pensions for the time worked in Estonia.

Permanent residents of Estonia and persons living in Estonia under a temporary residence permit are entitled to receive a **state old-age pension** (I pillar) in Estonia if they have pensionable service in Estonia or in another EU member country for at least 15 years. Work in another EU member country or in Norway, Liechtenstein, Iceland or Switzerland is taken into account if the person has worked in one of those countries for at least one year and has the necessary documents to prove it (i.e. employment contract, etc.).

In addition to the state pension, the Estonian pension scheme also includes a funded pension scheme and a voluntary supplementary pension scheme. Joining the **funded pension scheme** (II pillar) is optional for persons born before 1983 and obligatory for persons born later than 1983. A person pays 2% for the funded pension (deducted from the salary by the employer), and the state adds 4% from the social tax paid by the person.

Joining the **supplementary funded pension scheme** (III pillar) is voluntary. The amount of the contribution can be determined individually, as well as the period of receiving payments from the supplementary funded pension. Income tax from payments for the supplementary funded pension is refunded. It is also possible to continue payments to a pension fund in another country.



PHOTO: LIINA LURIKAINEN



The retirement age in Estonia is currently 63 years for men and 61.5 years for women (as of July 2013). The retirement age for women is gradually rising; so by 2016 the retirement ages for both sexes will be 63.

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**More information on pensions can be found at**  
<http://www.pensionikeskus.ee/>

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## Other benefits

The state pays disabled persons pensions for incapacity to work. Additional benefits are paid to compensate the need for personal assistance. Parent of a disabled child receives a benefit to compensate the additional expenses; the amount of the benefit depends on the child's level of disability.

Survivor's pensions are paid upon the death of the provider of the family to the family members who were under his/her maintenance.

State compensations are paid to crime victims to compensate loss due to incapability to work, victim's medical treatment costs or other relevant and important costs related to the crime.

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**The Social Insurance Board regulates the payment of these benefits. To apply for a pension or a benefit, one should contact the local Pension Office. Additional information on pensions and benefits can be found at the web site of the Social Insurance Board,**  
<http://www.ensib.ee/>

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PHOTO: LIINA LAURIKAINEN

# Family

## Day care and schooling

In general, children stay at home until the age of 1.5 years, i.e. until one of the parents can stay home receiving parental benefits. There are four types of preschool childcare institutions – day nurseries (for children 1 to 3 years of age), nursery schools (for children 1 to 7 years of age), special nursery schools, and nursery-primary schools. Most day-care centres do not accept children younger than 1 year.

The demand for nursery school places is very high in Tallinn and Tartu. In Tallinn each nursery school has its own queue of applications for registering to the school. In Tartu there is one centrally administered queue, applications for registering should be submitted to the Tartu City Government educational department. In municipal nursery schools parents pay for the cost of meals and a small tuition fee, but the rest is covered by the local government. Additionally to municipal nursery schools, privately-owned preschool child care institutions offer their services as well. Furthermore, babysitters can be found with the help of friends, agencies or through newspaper advertisements.



School is obligatory from the age of 7 until acquiring basic education or attaining 17 years of age. Municipal schools are prevalent; some schools belong to the state and a few are privately owned. At municipal and state owned schools there is no tuition fee, and parents must only buy school supplies.

Possibilities for **education in English** can be found in the two biggest cities – Tallinn and Tartu, where Tallinn International Kindergarten, the International School of Estonia, Tallinn European School (opened in August 2013) and Tartu International School operate. The International School of Estonia accepts students up to grade 12 (17–18 years of age). Tartu International School educates students from age 6 to 14. There is also Tartu International Daycare that is governed by the same non-profit organisation. All these are private institutions; thus, a tuition fee must be paid for the studies.

If your child needs tuition in English, but you prefer **the municipal educational institution**, you should contact as the first step the school you are interested in sending your child to. Some of the schools, e.g. Miina Härma Gümnaasium Tartu and Tallinn English College, have already obtained the right for tuition on the basis

of International Baccalaureate Organisation programmes, which give international education at the primary level (at the moment in 1st and 2nd grades) and for the gymnasium level (grades 10–12).

A school is required to ensure educational opportunities for each child who resides in the school's catchment area. Some schools do not have a catchment area and may accept pupils on the basis of admission tests or other requirements. A child should be registered at a school by the 1st of June, for schools with admission tests earlier, and for that parents should submit to the school an application for admission together with a copy of the child's personal identification document or birth certificate. In the event that your child has already attended school, documents certifying education obtained abroad or in another school in Estonia must also be presented.

After satisfactory completion of basic education, pupils obtain the Basic School Certificate at the end of grade 9, and are entitled to continue their education at upper secondary schools or vocational education institutions. An upper secondary school (*gümnaasium*) is a school that provides opportunities to acquire general secondary education. An upper secondary school covers grades 10–12. Most schools offer all levels of general education: elementary, basic and secondary level, i.e. grades 1–12.

Admission to upper secondary school takes place on the basis of admission tests and results from basic school. In most schools, admission tests to upper secondary level take place in March or April; the local education board can give you the exact dates.

For some professions, vocational schools offer curricula that can be attended after graduation from basic school, and in many cases secondary education can also be obtained while acquiring vocational training. Several professions can be studied at a vocational school after obtaining secondary education. Some vocational schools offer professional higher education.



PHOTO: FABIEN CREMONA



The national curriculum establishes compulsory subjects and the minimal scope of their treatment (compulsory courses and compulsory topics). Schools establish their own study branches through the choice of optional subjects and courses and/or by intensified study in some compulsory subjects. The number of optional subjects and courses is determined by the national curriculum, but the school, taking into consideration students' wishes and opportunities, determines their content. A school may have more than one branch of study.

The academic year usually lasts from 1 September until June of the following year. It consists of a study periods, examination periods, and holidays, which include one week in the autumn, two weeks at Christmas and one week in the spring. The maximum number of lessons per week varies from 20 lessons (grade 1) to 34 lessons (grade 9). At upper secondary school the number of lessons may be 35 or even more.

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**Estonian Ministry of Education and Research**

<http://www.hm.ee/>

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**Tallinn Board of Education**

<http://www.haridus.ee/en/>

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**The International School of Estonia in Tallinn**

<http://www.ise.edu.ee/>

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**Tallinn European School:**

<http://www.est.edu.ee>

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**Tallinn International Kindergarten in Tallinn**

<http://www.kindergarten.tln.edu.ee/ing.htm>

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**Tartu International School**

<http://www.istartu.edu.ee/>

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## Finding a job for the partner

The most common ways for finding a job in Estonia are with the help of friends, through newspaper advertisements, personnel search companies, Internet portals and with the help of the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (Eesti Töötukassa) Market Board and its offices. Job offers and useful information on employment and living conditions in Estonia can also be found at EURES, the European Job Mobility Portal. The EURES (European Employment Services) consultants in Estonia work at the labour market offices.

Applying for a job generally requires presenting one's CV and an application. In many cases one must also undergo additional rounds, which may include writing an essay or taking a language test or job-suitability test. Finally – if you are successful – you can expect an invitation to an interview.

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**For further information, you can refer to Eesti Töötukassa website**

<http://www.tootukassa.ee>

**or to the Estonian EURES website**

<http://www.eures.ee/>

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**Useful job search portals on the Internet that are available in English are:**

**EURES**

<http://europa.eu.int/eures/>

**Research related jobs in Estonia**

<http://euraxess.ee/jobs/>

**CV-Online**

<http://www.cv.ee/>

**CV Market**

<http://www.cvkeskus.ee/>

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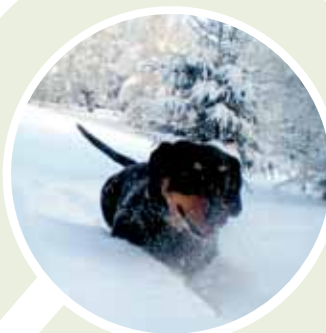


## Pets

If you wish to bring a pet to Estonia with you, you will need to have an international veterinary certificate or an animal passport issued in your home country before travelling to Estonia. Your animal will require an electronic microchip or a readable tattoo with the same code as the one documented in the passport.

The Infectious Animal Disease Control Act prescribes that all pets, including indoor ones, living in Estonia must be vaccinated against rabies. Estonian Small Animal Veterinary Association recommends vaccination against other diseases as well. Additionally, local governments have made certain regulations about the keeping of pets. Dog droppings must be cleaned up in all local governments. In Tallinn and Tartu, dogs must be registered: in Tallinn in one of the authorised processors of the Tallinn Central Register of Pets; and in Tartu in the Register Service of City Government at K uuni 5 (phone 736 1142). Dogs must be vaccinated before they are registered. In Tallinn, dogs are also to be marked with a microchip applied by a certified veterinarian.

Other pets also can be registered, but it is not obligatory.





# Everyday Necessities

## Arrival in Estonia

You can arrive in Estonia by plane, bus, train, ferry, car, and, from Finland, even by helicopter.

### **BY PLANE**

There are direct flights to Tallinn from a number of European cities. The best flight connections are with Helsinki, Copenhagen and Stockholm, with several flights leaving both ways every day. Estonia's national carrier, Estonian Air, is affiliated with the SAS. Other airline companies also operate in Tallinn.

Tallinn Airport is located 4 kilometres from the centre of Tallinn. You can get to the centre by taxi or also by a public bus. The bus stops at the airport are located on Floor 0 (facing the parking lot in front of the airport). The taxi fare from the airport to the city centre should be around 7–10 EUR.

It is also possible to fly to Tartu: Flybe Airlines in cooperation with Finnair operates passenger flights on the route Helsinki–Tartu–Helsinki. Transport between Tartu city centre and Tartu airport is provided by the comfortable Airport Shuttle service.

**BY FERRY**

Arrival in Estonia by sea is possible from Helsinki and Stockholm. In summer, ferries also go to Rostock and St. Petersburg. The ship traffic between Tallinn and Helsinki is frequent and fast. Smaller boats take an hour and half for the trip from Helsinki to Tallinn, but they are unsuited to navigate in frozen seas and cannot travel in winter. Large ferries run all year round and require slightly more than 3 hours for the trip. The port of Tallinn is at walking distance from the city centre.

**BY BUS**

International bus lines connect Estonia with Central and Western Europe, as well as its eastern neighbours. There is regular coach service between Tallinn, Tartu and Pärnu, and buses from Russia also stop at Narva. Connections with the other Baltic countries are quite frequent, which means that it is possible to arrive in Estonia via Riga, the capital of Latvia.

**BY TRAIN**

An international rail connection exists between Tallinn and Moscow and between Tallinn and St. Petersburg. If you are fond of travelling by train, but your point of departure lies outside Russia, you have to combine trains with other methods of transportation.

## Transportation in Estonia

**BUSES**

Public transport in Tallinn is free of charge for all residents of Tallinn, as well as for any school students or any passengers aged 65 years or over. Residents are required to purchase a plastic public transport smartcard, register it and validate in the bus at the start of each journey. The smartcard can also be used by passengers who are not residents of Tallinn (and who do not necessarily have to register it) but in that case needs to be charged with money. One-way paper tickets are available from the bus driver.



In Tartu, passengers can buy regular single-fare bus tickets or public transport cards which are valid for 10, 30 or 90 days. The bus tickets and public transport cards which are linked to the passenger's ID card (only Estonian ID cards are eligible) are cheaper and can be bought by online bank transfer or using a landline or mobile phone.

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#### **Tallinn. Public transport**

<http://www.tallinn.ee/eng>

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#### **Public transport in Tartu**

<http://buss.tartu.ee/>

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### **LONG-DISTANCE BUSES AND TRAINS**

The long-distance bus schedules between cities are quite good. There are, for example, more than 40 buses from Tallinn to Tartu every day. You can buy bus tickets online, at the Bus Station, or from the driver. Almost all buses have free WiFi connection. In the Hourlyexpress buses of SEBE every passenger has an entertainment center with an eight-inch touch screen for their personal use. The centre allows to watch movies, listen to music, play games, etc.

Long-distance train lines are usually managed by the company Edelaraudtee. In case of Edelaraudtee you can buy tickets online or on the train. You have free Internet access in the first class carriage of Tallinn–Tartu line. The vibrant electric train system near Tallinn, in Harju County, has frequent departures and is used as everyday transport by thousands.

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#### **Long-distance buses**

<http://www.tpilet.ee>

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#### **Long-distance trains, Edelaraudtee**

<http://www.edel.ee/>

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#### **Information about Harju County electric train system**

<http://www.elektriraudtee.ee/>

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### CARS AND PARKING

Renting a car is quite expensive (and one generally needs to use a credit card), so for a longer stay alternative options, like leasing or bringing your own car, are more convenient. In Estonia you can drive a vehicle registered abroad for 12 months without registering it here. In the event of a longer stay, the vehicle should be registered at the Estonian Motor Vehicle Registration Centre. All vehicles must be insured. Driving licences of the European Union are valid in Estonia and you do not need to exchange them for an Estonian licence. Foreign driving licences that have been issued in accordance with the Vienna Convention are valid in Estonia for one year, and you should exchange your driving license for an Estonian license within 12 months after coming to Estonia. Otherwise you must pass a theoretical and practical driving exam to exchange your driving licence for an Estonian one.

Lights must be turned on and safety belts fastened when driving in Estonia. A parking fee is usually required in city centres. Signs indicate the prices for different parking zones. Blue lines on a parking space also indicate that it is in a paid parking area. Parking tickets can be purchased from street-side machines. It is also possible to pay for parking using a mobile phone, for which detailed instructions are provided by your mobile phone operator. Usually the first 15 minutes of parking are free of charge (depending on local government regulations) if you indicate the starting time. A parking fee must be paid in Tartu from 8.00–18.00 from Monday to Friday. In Tallinn, a parking fee must be paid in the City Centre, Downtown, the Old Town and the Pirita area. The times for paid parking differ in Tallinn by city districts. Both Tallinn and Tartu have different parking rates for different city districts.

The Automobile Club of Estonia helps its members and others in case of unexpected car problems, such as flat tires, and provides other services.

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**The Automobile Club's help number is 1888.**

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**The Estonian Motor Vehicle Registration Centre:**

<http://www.ark.ee/>

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**Parking in Tallinn:**

<http://www.parkimine.ee/en>

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### **TAXI**

There are many taxi companies in the bigger towns. Taxi prices are quite affordable, and it is possible to get a receipt from the driver. Fare prices can be checked from the taxi window before getting in. While taxis can be found in stops in the cities, ordering a taxi by phone is more convenient as well as more efficient.

### **BIKES**

The number of cyclists in Tallinn and Tartu is increasing every year. Cycling is especially amongst students and academic staff.

## **Renting a house or a flat**

Several Estonian universities offer possibilities for accommodation at student dormitories. Their advantage is cheapness and generally also closeness to the university buildings. Most of the student dormitories have been recently renovated. Some universities also have guesthouses or flats for visiting researchers.

Before you decide to rent a flat you should know that prices in two biggest cities Tallinn and Tartu are at the Scandinavian level: in the city centre, a modest domicile could cost a packet. Your colleagues will treat you to a brief overview of the benefits and drawbacks of various districts in the city.

In Soviet times, regions of high-rise houses were built around city centres. In that rather desolate environment, however, you can find properly renovated flats for rent at a decent price.

The absolute ideal of Estonians themselves is a single-family house in the countryside near the city. Estonians are not afraid of the time-consuming journey home, as long as they have their own house and sauna, because they want to live in the city as if they were in the country.

There are a great number of real estate agencies to turn to — agencies usually charge a fee in the amount of one month's rent. You can also explore newspaper advertisements.

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**Real Estate Web**

<http://www.kv.ee/>

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**City24 Real Estate Portal**

<http://www.city24.ee/>

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Usually you do not have to sign contracts for water or electricity yourself, but you have to bear in mind that the rental price does not include these expenditures. Upon agreement with the owner, you can still choose yourself the most suitable for you electricity package and sign a contract with its provider for a specified term. Prices for electricity are high, so find out the approximate heating costs before signing a lease contract.

In case you are looking for something exotic and historical, find a flat without central heating and heat your own stove. In winter the exotic side might become a bit too much, but if you stay here for more than 6 months, the sense of history emanating from the flames in your stove is well worth the effort.

**LEASE CONTRACTS** can have a specified or an unspecified term. You should return the leased property together with any further belongings to the owner at the time agreed. The owner should make repairs to the property in case of defects that have not been caused by the renter. The renter should remove minor defects that can be removed by light cleaning or maintenance which are in any case necessary for the ordinary usage and preservation of the rented property.

Before making any improvements or alterations to the property, the owner's written consent is required. If the value of the property increases because of the alterations, the renter can ask for compensation. It would be advisable to agree on the amount of compensation for alterations or improvements in advance.





In case you have a lease contract with an unspecified term and the owner wishes to raise the rent, he must inform you 30 days beforehand in writing.

The owner can ask for a deposit in the amount of up to 3 months rent. The renter can demand repayment of the deposit in case the owner has not informed the renter of any claims against him within two months after the expiry of the lease contract.

Lease contracts with an unspecified term may be cancelled by giving at least three months' notice. Upon lease of furnished rooms, a lease contract may be cancelled by giving at least one month's notice. The owner can cancel the lease contract if the renter has not paid the rent for three or more months.

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**In Estonia, a lease contract should be prepared in accordance with the Law of Obligations Act, which has also been translated into English and can be found at <http://www.legaltext.ee/text/en/X30085K7.htm>. Paragraphs 271-338 deal with lease contracts.**

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## Banking

Banking in Estonia is well developed, and financial matters are quite straightforward and convenient. Opening a bank account is very simple – you can do so at the nearest bank office; all you need for this is an ID card or passport.

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**Swedbank**  
<https://www.swedbank.ee>

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**SEB Bank**  
<http://seb.ee>

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**Danske Bank**  
<http://www.danskebank.ee>

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**Nordea Bank**  
<http://www.nordea.ee>

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**Krediidipank**  
<http://www.krediidipank.ee>

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In addition to cash, debit and credit cards are also accepted in most shops, restaurants and companies. Salary payments are usually made to a person's bank account. The ATMs of the larger banks can be found in branch offices, petrol stations, larger supermarkets and other frequently visited places. VISA and MasterCard are widely accepted. Internet banking is very common, while cheques are seldom used in Estonia.

## Communication

### PHONE

Estonia boasts one of the highest numbers of mobile phones per capita in the world. Many people have stopped using landline and prefer mobile phone services.

Customers can choose between a contract with a mobile phone service provider or a pre-paid calling card. Calling cards (in Estonian *kõnekaart*) have no monthly fee, but are charged slightly higher rates per minute, and can easily be bought from any petrol station or newsstand. Popular brands are Simpел, Smart, Diil and Zen.

Estonia is in the forefront of using innovative mobile technologies. Mobile phones can be used for parking, buying public transport tickets, and making other payments. Furthermore, you can use an e-service called Mobile-ID that allows you to use a mobile phone as a means of secure authentication. The system uses a specialised Mobile-ID SIM card that you should request from your mobile phone operator.

The three largest mobile phone service providers in Estonia are EMT, Tele2 and Elisa. There are also many service providers for landline phones. Several service providers offer various options for Internet access.

In order to make international phone calls, you must first dial 00 or +, followed by the country code. Estonia's country code is 372.

### INTERNET

There are plenty of possibilities to access Internet in Estonia. WiFi is ubiquitous and can be accessed free of charge in pubs, hotels, petrol stations and other public places. Several Internet cafés operate in bigger cities. Public Internet access is provided in most libraries.





To get connected to the Internet, you can also use an Internet 'dongle' with a SIM card inside. The dongle connects your computer to a mobile network, allowing you to access Internet almost anywhere. To make the connection, insert the dongle into a USB port on your computer. These devices are sold by mobile phone operators.

You can also access the Internet on your smartphone. Modern smartphones enable you to 'share Internet', i.e., to connect your computers to Internet via mobile network. Smartphones can be connected to computers via a cable or Bluetooth, some also include a hotspot feature which turns them into miniature WiFi stations.

### **POSTAL SERVICE**

*Eesti Post* is the only provider of universal postal service in Estonia. It has around 400 offices across the country and offers its customers a wide range of services.

For sending/receiving parcels you can also use the 'self-service post offices', i.e., automated parcel terminals which are open round the clock and can be found in many shopping centres. Post24 and SmartPost operate such parcel terminals all around Estonia.

For very fast delivery, you can also use the courier and parcel services of CargoBus, which amongst other services (like terminal-to-terminal or terminal-to-receiver) also offers door-to-door delivery.

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**Estonian Post:**

<http://post.ee>

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**Post24:**

<https://www.post24.ee>

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**SmartPost:**

<http://smartpost.ee>

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**CargoBus:**

<http://www.cargobus.ee/en>

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## Disabled access

Facilities for disabled people in Estonia are improving. Recently erected public buildings are disabled-friendly, but in older buildings disabled access can still be a problem.

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**You can find useful information regarding disabled access in many public places in Estonia (academic buildings included) at <http://www.liikumisvabadus.invainfo.ee>.**

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Access to public transport in Tallinn and Tartu is also improving, as new buses with low floors have been acquired. The public transportation between different cities is problematic, as possibilities for people in wheelchairs are very limited. However, personnel in bus stations will help if necessary. It is possible to use a special taxi service for disabled people in both Tallinn and Tartu. To use the taxi service you should contact the Tallinn City Board of Disabled People, phone number (+372) 655 4160, e-mail: [tiia@tallinnakoda.ee](mailto:tiia@tallinnakoda.ee) in Tallinn, or the social welfare department in Tartu.

Disabled people can obtain support and additional information from their local government's social welfare departments. Contact them also to obtain more information about getting help from a personal assistant.

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### **Tallinn Social Welfare and Health Care Department**

Address: Narva mnt. 11d, 10151, Tallinn  
 Phone: (+372) 645 7440  
 Fax: (+372) 645 7444  
 E-mail: [sotsiaal@tallinnlv.ee](mailto:sotsiaal@tallinnlv.ee)

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### **Tartu Department of Social Welfare**

Address: Raekoja plats 3  
 Phone: (+372) 736 1300  
 Fax: (+372) 736 1301  
 E-mail: [sao@raad.tartu.ee](mailto:sao@raad.tartu.ee)

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## Shopping and cost of living

Shopping in Estonia is quite comfortable and easy. All of the bigger supermarkets are open from 10–21 or even 9–23. Opening hours for other shops, such as those selling jewellery or sportswear, are 10–18 or 10–19, but in bigger shopping centres these may also be open longer. Smaller shops close earlier on the weekends, but most supermarkets keep the same opening hours as on the weekdays.

The most popular places for everyday shopping are the supermarket chains Konsum, Prisma, Rimi, Selver, and Säästumarket. Many people also like to do some of their weekly purchases at markets, which usually close earlier.

### **SOME AVERAGE PRICES IN SUMMER 2013 MIGHT GIVE YOU AN IDEA OF THE POTENTIAL COST OF LIVING:**

Monthly rent for a 2-room flat in Tallinn (not in the Old Town)	270.00–450.00 EUR/month
Monthly rent for a 2-room flat in Tartu	250.00–380.00 EUR/month
Bread	1.00 EUR/loaf
Pasta	1.00–1.50 EUR/kg
Milk	0.50–1.00 EUR/l
Chicken breast	5.00–6.00 EUR/kg
Dinner at a restaurant	10.00–25.00 EUR/person
Cinema ticket	5.50–8.00 EUR/full ticket
Fuel	1.35–1.40 EUR/l
Bus ticket Tallinn–Tartu	10.80 EUR/full ticket





Your rights as a consumer are protected by the Consumer Protection Act and, if necessary, the Estonian Consumer Protection Board will give you information and assistance to help you protect your rights.

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**European Consumer Centre of Estonia**

<http://www.consumer.ee/>

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**Estonian Consumer Protection Board**

<http://www.tka.riik.ee/>

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## Waste management

Every household should have a contract with a waste management company for the collection of their everyday waste. If you are living in a flat in an apartment building, the apartment association will have a waste collection contract for the whole building. It is common to separate paper, packaging, leftover food and hazardous waste from other waste.

Paper and metal, as well as plastic and glass bottles can be recycled. Paper and mixed beverage containers are located in several places in towns.

Most of beverage bottles, plastic, metal as well as glass, can be returned for a return fee. The amount of the return is also depicted on the bottles. Shops should be able to provide information about the nearest collection point.

Containers for old batteries can be found supermarkets and photo and electronics shops. Oil, oil filters and car batteries can be returned to containers in petrol stations.

Recycling Centres in Tallinn and Tartu accept old furniture and other items that are no longer needed in your household but could be used by someone else. The recycling centre can provide transportation for larger items.

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**A guide to sorting waste:**

<http://www.tallinn.ee/eng/A-Guide-to-Sorting-Waste>

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## Emergencies

In an emergency situation, call:

**110 Police**

**112 Emergency calls, Ambulance**

Calls to emergency numbers are free of charge and can be made from any phone, including pay-phones and the mobile phones of any service provider (incl. foreign).

You should report the following when making an emergency call:

- What happened?
- Where did it happen?
- Who is calling?
- Is somebody injured? What is their condition?
- Can somebody give first aid?

In case you are contacting the police, you should describe as precisely as possible the people and/or vehicles involved. Remain calm and answer any additional questions you might be asked. Do not end the phone call before you have been told you may do so.

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### **Estonian Police**

<http://www.pol.ee/>

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### **Estonian Rescue Board**

<http://www.rescue.ee/>

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## Libraries

Estonian libraries have merged their databases into a joint electronic catalogue. This electronic database provides information about collections at university libraries, the central libraries in Tallinn and Tartu as well as the National Library of Estonia, the library of the Literary Museum, the Medical Library of Estonia, and the Repository Library of Estonia.

A reader's card can be obtained directly in the library. An ID card or passport is required in order to obtain a reader's card. Having a reader's card enables you to borrow books from the library and use other library services. Libraries also offer one-day visitor's cards, which enable you to use books in the library, but borrowing books or ordering them from collections is restricted.

The National Library of Estonia does not lend books, but you can order a wide range of materials from their collections and use them in the library. It is possible to access electronic journals and publications and databases through university servers.

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### **Estonian Libraries' Catalogue**

<http://www.elnet.ee/en/ester/>

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### **National Library of Estonia**

<http://www.nlib.ee/>

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## **Euraxess Service Centres in Estonian R&D Institutions in Tallinn**

**Estonian Academy of Sciences**  
e-mail: [mobility@akadeemia.ee](mailto:mobility@akadeemia.ee)  
tel: +372 644 8677 or +372 645 1925

**Tallinn University of Technology**  
e-mail: [anu.johannes@ttu.ee](mailto:anu.johannes@ttu.ee)  
tel: +372 620 3578

**Tallinn University**  
e-mail: [mobility@tlu.ee](mailto:mobility@tlu.ee)  
tel: +372 6409 111

**Archimedes Foundation**  
e-mail: [julia.duh@archimedes.ee](mailto:julia.duh@archimedes.ee)  
tel: +372 699 6496

## **Euraxess Service Centres in Estonian R&D Institutions in Tartu**

**Estonian Research Council**  
e-mail: [euraxess@etag.ee](mailto:euraxess@etag.ee)  
tel: +372 730 0338

**University of Tartu**  
e-mail: [kristi.kuningas@ut.ee](mailto:kristi.kuningas@ut.ee)  
tel: +372 737 5844

**Estonian University of Life Sciences**  
e-mail: [mobility@emu.ee](mailto:mobility@emu.ee)  
tel: +372 731 3020

## **Euraxess Estonia Online:**

**EURAXESS Estonia web page:**  
[www.euraxess.ee](http://www.euraxess.ee)

**EURAXESS Estonia Newsletter:**  
[www.euraxess.ee/newsletter](http://www.euraxess.ee/newsletter)

**EURAXESS Estonia Facebook page:**  
[www.facebook.com/euraxess.ee](http://www.facebook.com/euraxess.ee)

**Central EURAXESS Jobs Portal:**  
[www.ec.europa.eu/euraxess](http://www.ec.europa.eu/euraxess)

