

# Estonia

## Apie



Gender issues started to receive attention in Estonia in the late 1990s upon the ratification of international conventions and with preparation for accession to the European Union (EU).

The legal framework for gender equality is contained in both the Estonian constitution, which provides, inter alia, that everyone is equal before the law and that no one shall be discriminated against on the grounds of sex, and in the Gender Equality Act 2004, which defines equality of women and men as a fundamental human right and provides for gender equality to be

women and men as a fundamental human right and provides for gender equality to be mainstreamed into all areas of social life.

It was at the start of the 2000s that the first gender-mainstreaming initiative, organised by the Ministry of Social Affairs, took place. The aim of the project was to improve understanding of gender equality and to use the dual-track approach to achieve equality and develop specific methods and tools, in particular on gender impact assessment, for the promotion of gender mainstreaming. In the following years, several EU-funded projects focusing on gender mainstreaming were developed and continue to be implemented.

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## Structures



The permanent body for dealing with gender-equality issues was established in December 1996 as the Gender Equality Bureau within the Department of International Cooperation and European Integration. It was reorganised into the Gender Equality Department in December 2003, and since 2005 it has been in charge of developing gender-mainstreaming processes and methodologies.

In 2011, a Gender Mainstreaming Working Group, composed of representatives from Estonian government ministries and coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs, was re-formed with the aim of providing training for a range of government employees on gender mainstreaming and drafting gender-mainstreaming strategies in various policy areas.

Furthermore, a Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner works on discrimination issues as an independent and impartial expert, monitoring compliance with the requirements of the Gender Equality Act.

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## Laws and policies

Gender-equality issues are mainly regulated by the Gender Equality Act (GEA) 2004. The act stipulates that state and local government agencies are required to promote gender equality systematically and purposefully; that public authorities are required to address conditions and circumstances that hinder the achievement of gender equality; and that agencies must take into account gender equality when planning, implementing and assessing national, regional and institutional strategies, policies and action plans. The act also established the institution of the Gender Equality Commissioner.

Although a gender-mainstreaming strategy is absent at national level, several programmes on gender equality and gender mainstreaming have been carried out, as well as projects financed by EU or external funds.

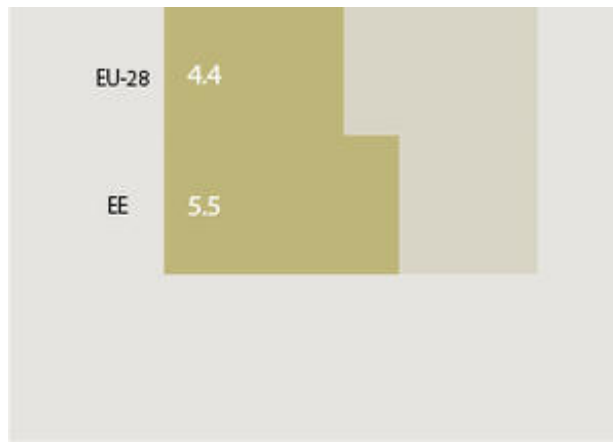
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## Methods and tools





Few gender-mainstreaming methods are being deployed. Training and capacity-building has been provided to officials from the Ministry of Social Affairs and other public servants. In addition, a range of support materials exist, such as publications or awareness-raising efforts that have been made over the past few years. Statistics and data are disaggregated by sex.

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## Good practices

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