

## BUILDRES Project

Project number: 2024-2-CY01-KA220-YOU-000295718

### EU COUNTRIES DESK RESEARCH

Partner organisation: University of Thessaly

Research on: Estonia

#### 1. Country overview

Estonia's population on 1 January 2025 was approximately 1,369,285 persons, continuing a gradual decline driven by low fertility and reduced migration inflows (ERR News, 2025). In 2024, the country registered 9,646 live births and 15,596 deaths, resulting in a negative natural population change (ERR News, 2025). In 2023, there were 10,721 births and 15,832 deaths, confirming a continuing demographic contraction (Statistics Estonia, 2024). The total fertility rate was estimated at 1.31 births per woman in 2023, below the replacement level and slightly under the EU-27 average of 1.45 (Europe Data, 2024). The **average age of mothers at childbirth** in 2023 was **30.4 years**, while the **average age at first birth** was around **28.5 years**, indicating a moderate postponement of motherhood compared to Southern Europe but earlier than in Nordic countries (Statistics Estonia, 2024).

Estonia combines relatively modern family structures with strong social welfare support. Cohabitation without formal marriage is common, and **around 60% of all births occur outside marriage**, reflecting shifting social norms and gender equality values (Statistics Estonia, 2024). Decisions regarding childbearing are influenced more by **economic security, housing, and childcare availability** than by traditional moral or religious expectations (OECD, 2023).

Estonian society promotes **work–family balance** and gender equality in caregiving, with broad public acceptance of shared parental roles. Surveys show that the majority of Estonians believe both parents should participate equally in childcare and household responsibilities ([European Institute for Gender Equality, 2024](#)). These attitudes align with state policies that encourage fathers' participation in parental leave.

Estonia has one of the **highest maternal employment rates in the EU**, with about **80% of mothers with children under six** participating in the labour market (OECD, 2023; Eurofound, 2023). This is facilitated by extensive **parental leave entitlements**, generous income-based parental benefits, and well-developed **publicly subsidised childcare**. Most mothers return to work within 12–18 months of childbirth, supported by flexible working arrangements and early childhood education (Eurofound, 2023).

Estonia offers a **universal child allowance** for all children, along with **income-related parental benefits** for up to **18 months** following childbirth (Social Insurance Board, 2024). Additional benefits are available for **large families, single parents, and low-income households** (Sotsiaalkindlustusamet, 2024). The combination of stable digital public services, accessible healthcare, and strong family

benefits contributes to Estonia's reputation as one of the most **family-supportive welfare states** in Central and Eastern Europe (OECD, 2023).

## 2. Healthcare services available & accessibility

Estonia operates a **universal public healthcare system** administered by the *Estonian Health Insurance Fund (Haigekassa)*, which covers all residents who pay social taxes and their dependent children. The system is financed primarily through payroll contributions and state transfers, ensuring **free or highly subsidised access** to medical care, including **maternal, reproductive, and child health services** (Estonian Health Insurance Fund, 2024). Pregnant women with valid insurance are entitled to **free prenatal check-ups, screening tests, childbirth, and postnatal care** in public or contracted hospitals ([Estonian Health Insurance Fund, 2024](#)).

Regarding **reproductive health**, abortion is legal in Estonia up to **11 weeks of gestation on request**, and up to **21 weeks under medical or social indications**, regulated by the *Termination of Pregnancy and Sterilisation Act (1998)* (Riigi Teataja, 1998). Contraception counselling and family-planning services are provided mainly through **family doctors and women's clinics**, with partial reimbursement for certain contraceptives (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2024). **Assisted reproductive technologies (ART)**, including IVF, are permitted for women up to age 50 and are **partially covered by the public system** for insured patients, with both public and private fertility centres operating nationwide (Tervisekassa, 2024).

**Mental health services** are included within Estonia's public health coverage, though availability varies by region. Care is provided through **family physicians, psychiatric outpatient clinics, and hospitals**, and access to **psychological counselling** has expanded through digital platforms such as *Peaasi.ee*, which offers free online mental-health support in Estonian, Russian, and English (Peaasi.ee, 2024). The state has also prioritised mental-health promotion and suicide prevention under the *National Mental Health Action Plan 2023–2030* (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2023).

Despite universal coverage, **regional disparities** persist—particularly in rural areas where specialist availability and waiting times are longer. However, Estonia's strong **digital-health infrastructure** (e-prescriptions, e-records, and teleconsultations) significantly improves accessibility and continuity of care, making it one of the most advanced e-health systems in Europe (OECD, 2023).

## 3. Financial and Social Benefits Related to Family, Parenthood, and Health

### Maternity and Paternity Leave

In Estonia, mothers are entitled to **140 days (about 20 weeks) of fully paid maternity leave**, which can start 30–70 days before the expected due date. Payment is made at **100 % of the average salary** via the *Health Insurance Fund* (Estonian Health Insurance Fund, 2024). Fathers are entitled to **30 calendar days of paternity leave**, paid at 100 % of earnings (Social Insurance Board, 2024). After maternity or paternity leave, either parent may take **parental benefit (vanemahüvitis)** for up to **435 days (about 18 months)**, receiving income-related compensation capped at € 4,085 per month in 2024 (Sotsiaalkindlustusamet, 2024). Parents can share or alternate the benefit flexibly until the child turns 3 years old (Eurofound, 2023).



## Family and Child Benefits

All residents are entitled to a **universal child allowance** (*lapsetoetus*) of **€ 80 per month per child**, increasing for larger families (€ 100 for the third and subsequent children), and a **family benefit supplement** for families with three or more children (€ 650 per month as of 2024) (Social Insurance Board, 2024). Additional supports include a **single-parent allowance**, a **child-birth grant** (€ 320 per child), and **needs-based family allowances** for low-income households. Families raising a child with a disability receive an extra **disability child allowance** (€ 80–€ 120 per month depending on severity) (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2024).

## Non-Governmental and Community Services

Civil-society organisations complement state provision in family and mental-health support. **Eesti Lastekaitse Liit** (Estonian Union for Child Welfare) advocates for children's rights and offers parental-education programmes; **Peaasi.ee** promotes mental-health awareness and counselling; and **MTÜ Eluliin** provides confidential pregnancy and family-support helplines in Estonian and Russian (Peaasi.ee, 2024; Eesti Lastekaitse Liit, 2024).

## **Hotlines and Emergency Services**

- **116 111 – Child Helpline**, 24/7 free support for children and parents
- **1247 – National Information and Crisis Hotline** (general & psychosocial help)
- **112 – European Emergency Number**
- **Eluliin Helpline (655 6088)** – pregnancy and family counselling

## **Digital Resources and Online Platforms**

Residents and migrants can access verified information and online services through:

- [www.sotsiaalkindlustusamet.ee](http://www.sotsiaalkindlustusamet.ee) – family and parental benefits portal;
- [www.haigekassa.ee](http://www.haigekassa.ee) – maternity, paternity, and healthcare coverage;
- [www.peaasi.ee](http://www.peaasi.ee) – digital mental-health support and chat counselling;
- [www.lastekaitseliit.ee](http://www.lastekaitseliit.ee) – child-welfare advocacy and parental resources;
- [www.eesti.ee](http://www.eesti.ee) – official e-government platform with integrated family-benefit applications.

<b>Name of the organisation</b>	Estonian Health Insurance Fund (Haigekassa)
<b>Short Description (Around 300 characters)</b>	National public agency managing Estonia's health insurance and reimbursement system. Covers maternity, childbirth, and parental medical benefits, including infertility treatments.
<b>Country</b>	<b>Estonia</b>
<b>Mail</b>	<a href="mailto:info@haigekassa.ee">info@haigekassa.ee</a>
<b>Phone</b>	+372 669 6630
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.haigekassa.ee">www.haigekassa.ee</a>
<b>Address</b>	<b>Lastekodu 48, 10144 Tallinn</b>
<b>Name of the organisation</b>	<b>Social Insurance Board (Sotsiaalkindlustusamet)</b>
<b>Short Description (Around 300 characters)</b>	Government body administering parental benefits, family allowances, and social protection schemes for families, children, and persons with disabilities.
<b>Country</b>	<b>Estonia</b>
<b>Mail</b>	<a href="mailto:info@sotsiaalkindlustusamet.ee">info@sotsiaalkindlustusamet.ee</a>
<b>Phone</b>	+372 612 1360
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sotsiaalkindlustusamet.ee">www.sotsiaalkindlustusamet.ee</a>
<b>Address</b>	<b>Endla 8, 15092 Tallinn</b>
<b>Name of the organisation</b>	Ministry of Social Affairs (Sotsiaalministeerium)
<b>Short Description (Around 300 characters)</b>	National ministry overseeing health, labour, and social policy. Develops programs on family welfare, gender equality, and mental-health promotion.
<b>Country</b>	<b>Estonia</b>
<b>Mail</b>	<a href="mailto:info@sm.ee">info@sm.ee</a>
<b>Phone</b>	+372 626 9101
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sm.ee">www.sm.ee</a>
<b>Address</b>	<b>Suur-Ameerika 1, 10122 Tallinn</b>
<b>Name of the organisation</b>	<b>Eesti Lastekaitse Liit (Estonian Union for Child Welfare)</b>
<b>Short Description (Around 300 characters)</b>	Leading NGO promoting children's rights, parenting education, and family-support initiatives. Operates advice lines and collaborates with ministries on welfare policy.
<b>Country</b>	<b>Estonia</b>
<b>Mail</b>	<a href="mailto:info@lastekaitseliit.ee">info@lastekaitseliit.ee</a>
<b>Phone</b>	+372 631 1128
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.lastekaitseliit.ee">www.lastekaitseliit.ee</a>
<b>Address</b>	<b>Tõnismägi 3, 10119 Tallinn</b>
<b>Name of the organisation</b>	<b>Nova Vita Clinic (Private Fertility Centre)</b>
<b>Short Description (Around 300 characters)</b>	Accredited private clinic providing infertility diagnostics, IVF, egg/sperm donation, and reproductive counselling. Collaborates with public healthcare for insured patients.
<b>Country</b>	<b>Estonia</b>
<b>Mail</b>	<a href="mailto:info@novavita.ee">info@novavita.ee</a>



<b>Phone</b>	+372 606 4424
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.novavita.ee">www.novavita.ee</a>
<b>Address</b>	Tartu mtn 13, 10145 Tallinn