

PRINCIPLES AND ACTIONS OF ESTONIAN POPULATION POLICY

2009-2013

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1. GOAL OF POPULATION POLICY

The goal of the Estonian population policy is to ensure sustainable development of the people of Estonia.

The population is influenced by the birth rate, mortality rate and migration. Therefore the structure of the document on the foundations of the population policy is based on these very demographic processes: the birth rate and the family and child policy affecting it, the mortality rate and health policy affecting it, external migration and the migration policy affecting it. The impact of other policy areas has already been taken into account in the framework of these policies.

2. PRINCIPLES AND KEY ACTIONS OF CHILD AND FAMILY POLICY

2.1. INTRODUCTION TO CHILD AND FAMILY POLICY

The child and family policy is a state policy aimed at children and families with children. In the narrow sense the family policy means measures taken by the state to increase the welfare of children and families with children during the period of raising children and taking care of them: family allowances, leaves for parents, and organisation of childcare. In the broad sense the child and family policy means all the policy areas of the state which affect the welfare of families with children. This document discusses the child and family policy in the broad sense.

The Estonian family policy can be characterised as being relatively universal. However, since 2001 income bases, i.e. selective measures have been introduced gradually. The Estonian family policy consists of four types of measures: family allowances, leaves in connection with the birth of and raising a child, children's daycare, and tax exemptions. Raising children and the welfare of families are strongly affected by local services, benefits, and the education and health care system of the state.

2.2. GOAL OF CHILD AND FAMILY POLICY

The goal of the child and family policy is to:

- ensure security for families with children, which allows for the realisation of the birth of wanted children;
- provide children and young people with a secure environment of growth.

2.3. PRINCIPLES OF CHILD AND FAMILY POLICY

In shaping and implementing the child and family policy the state abides by the following principles.

2.3.1. In any and all decisions and endeavours concerning children and families with children the state **proceeds from the interests, needs and welfare of the child and their family**. the state grants all children living in Estonia equal rights and opportunities, regardless of the gender of the child or the nationality, race, language, religion, outlook, social origin, financial status, place of residence, form of family life, or other circumstances of the child and their parent or stepparent.

2.3.2. **Prevention of problems** is more effective than mitigation of consequences. Preventive measures acknowledged by the state for preparation of people for family life and raising children include human studies, education in sexual health, and family counselling. The state supports families in raising children, providing them with the required counselling and assistance and developing a living environment and organisation of living which supports raising children and development of children in every aspect.

2.3.3. In implementing the population policy the state proceeds from people's sexual and reproductive rights. Thereby the state acknowledges **the individual's right to decide for themselves** whether and when to have children; the state ensures the availability of sexual and reproductive health services and of respective education and information.

2.3.4. The **parents of the child bear the ultimate responsibility** for raising children and ensuring their development and emotional and material well-being. The state's duty is **to reduce social and economic impediments** that force people not to have children or postpone the birth of children, and to support family policy decisions that are favourable for society.

2.3.5. The state recognises the **equal right and duty of both parents** to raise their children and take care of them and establishes equal opportunities for them for participation in work and family life. In developing the family policy the state takes the multitude of the forms and relations of family life into account.

2.3.6. The state's family policy is **universal**, covering all children and families with children. The state provides children with greater needs¹ and their families with additional measures in order to favour their development and wellbeing.

2.3.7. In general, children and their families are provided with the required assistance and support **without separating the child from the family**. A child may be separated from the family for the purpose of provision of assistance only in exceptional circumstances.

2.3.8. The parties to the child and family policy include the parents/stepparents of the child and the family, the state, the local authority, and the private and third sectors. The family policy is implemented in the **goal-oriented and coordinated cooperation** of various parties.

2.3.9. The state's child and family policy is **knowledge-based** and consistent. The state supports child and family-related surveys and monitoring and consistent collection of statistical data.

2.4. TASKS OF CHILD AND FAMILY POLICY

The goal of the child and family policy is to provide children and families with children with the best possible quality of life and a secure environment.

The main tasks of the child and family policy are the following.

2.4.1. Improvement of the quality of life of children and families with children.

2.4.2. Supporting the combination of work and family life.

¹ Children with greater needs means any and all children who require greater resources for their physical and mental development, incl. especially gifted children.

2.4.3. Valuing raising children.

2.5. KEY ACTIONS OF CHILD AND FAMILY POLICY

The following actions are primarily required for fulfilment of the tasks of the child and family policy.

2.5.1. Improvement of the quality of life of children and families with children

2.5.1.1. Preparation of people for becoming a parent and being a family and supporting them through respective training programmes and counselling services.

2.5.1.2. Provision of all children with opportunities of obtaining education that corresponds to their age and abilities and with hobby activities; development and support of the child culture².

2.5.1.3. Provision of all children with opportunities for health promoting activities, medical examination and necessary treatment.

2.5.1.4. Providing children with families with high-quality and available social services (crisis management and counselling services, child protection work, family-centred assistance, etc.).

2.5.1.5. Developing a living environment and organisation of living that takes into account the needs of children and families with children; creating leisure and recreation opportunities suitable and affordable for children and families with children.

2.5.1.6. Where necessary, assisting families with children in improving their living conditions and acquiring a suitable dwelling.

2.5.1.7. Supporting families with children through state family allowances and tax exemptions and measures supporting employment of parents.

2.5.1.8. Channelling additional benefits and services and other measures towards children with greater needs, e.g. those growing in a social welfare institution and to large families, single-parent families and families having financial difficulties.

2.5.1.9. Preferring adoption, guardianship or foster families for children deprived of parental care over growing in a social welfare institution.

2.5.1.10. In adoption of all decisions the state makes certain that these do not worsen the situation of children and families with children.

2.5.2. Supporting the combination of work and family life

2.5.2.1. Fostering such a work organisation, incl. flexible forms of work which allows for both parents to combine their work and family duties and supports the more equal division of household duties between family members. In addition to legislative measures,

² The child culture means culture aimed at children (hobby activities, literature, theatre, television and radio programmes for children, etc.)

acknowledgement and national recognition of employers promoting a family-friendly organisation culture and work organisation, and dissemination of the best practices.

2.5.2.2. Granting leave for persons raising children for taking care of and raising a child; granting holidays and additional days off at a time suitable for the family for performance of duties relating to children requiring care.

2.5.2.3. Provision of available, high-quality and need-based daycare services for each child up to the age of 7 years.

2.5.2.4. Supporting the return to the labour market of parents who did not participate in working life due to raising a child by creating in-service and re-training opportunities for them.

2.5.3. Valuing raising children

2.5.3.1. Raising awareness of the problems of children and families with children in society; increasing the knowledge of all members of society in issues concerning children and families with children. Supporting and acknowledging programmes on family life, raising children and family traditions in the media.

2.5.3.2. Compensation for parents for the time spent on children depending on the number of children (e.g. taking the number of children into account upon calculation of pension, considering time spent on raising children to be working time, etc.).

2.5.3.3. Encouraging and supporting cooperation between family members, generations and members of society in raising children.

2.6. DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION OF CHILD AND FAMILY POLICY

To attain the goals, once every two years a national development plan is drawn by ministries in cooperation with county governments and local authorities, involving associations of families, employees and employers. Drawing up and the implementation of the National Family Policy Action Plan is coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Once a year the Minister of Population and Ethnic Affairs submits a report to the Government of the Republic on the situation of families with children in Estonia.

3. INTRODUCTION TO HEALTH POLICY

People's health has a significant impact on their ability to function in daily life, to their social and economic contribution to building up the state, and to the overall success of the state. Thus, health is an important national resource, which deserves persistent and planned development. The right to health is also one of the fundamental rights of a human being and all people must be guaranteed the required preconditions for attainment of the best possible health status – each resident of Estonia must have the opportunity to live in a health-supporting environment and the opportunity to make healthy choices.

The goal of the Estonian health policy is to make people's lives, especially healthy lives, longer. To achieve this goal it is focused on the factors that affect the health of the people of Estonia the most. The principles given in this document are in compliance with the principles and key actions of the Public Health Development Plan 2008-2020.

The most important principles of development of the Estonian general health policy were laid down upon establishment of the Estonian Health Insurance Fund. These principles have remained virtually unchanged to date. The goal of Estonian health insurance system is to cover the health care costs of the insured persons relating to prevention and treatment of illnesses, to finance the purchase of medicinal products and medical appliances, and to compensate for temporary incapacity for work. The Estonian health insurance system follows the principle of solidarity – if a person falls ill, the cost of the health care service paid by the Health Insurance Fund does not depend on the amount of social tax paid for the specific person.

The environment and lifestyle have a strong impact on public health. In connection therewith the health policy lays a special emphasis on making people's behaviour, the environment and lifestyles healthy.

3.1. GOAL OF HEALTH POLICY

The goal of the health policy is to make the life expectancy, incl. healthy life expectancy longer by way of reducing premature mortality and diseases.

3.2. PRINCIPLES OF HEALTH POLICY

3.2.1. Health is **a fundamental human right** and prerequisites for attainment of as good a health status as possible must be guaranteed for all members of society.

3.2.2. **The responsibility for public health is joint responsibility** which covers all sectors, organisations, groups and individuals of society and lays the foundations for balanced environmental, social and economic policy development. Therefore the health impact must be taken into account upon formulation of the decisions and action plans of all levels and sectors of society.

3.2.3. **Equal opportunities** for health and other values are the ideal of democratic society. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to contribute to the reduction of systematic differences in health indicators arising from inequality by supporting the most vulnerable groups of society through cooperation between various sectors and levels. Creation of equal opportunities in education, dwelling, job, and health and health services regardless of gender, nationality, social position and place of residence is the prerequisite for continued improvement of the health and quality of life of the people of Estonia.

3.2.4. **Active participation of persons, social groups and communities** in making the decisions and resolving problems affecting their own life and the life of their home area and society brings about their empowerment³ and the ability to resolve their health problems to a greater extent. Development of society oriented towards healthy choices, empowerment of areas and increase of social capital serve as the basis for the development of the living environment promoting health.

3.2.5. **First and foremost, evidence-backed knowledge** is proceeded from upon decision-making. Research helps to establish and measure goals and supports decision-makers in their work. Being based on evidence is one of the bases of national strategic development plans and a factor supporting their balanced implementation.

3.3. TASKS OF HEALTH POLICY

The main tasks of the health policy are the following.

3.3.1. Ensuring the availability of high-quality health care services to all people through optimal use of resources.

3.3.2. Ensuring the secure and healthy development of children and young people.

3.3.3. Increasing the physical activeness of the population, making people's eating habits more balanced, and reducing risk behaviour.

3.3.4. Ensuring a life, work and study environment supporting people's health.

3.3.5. Reducing people's health risks through increasing social cohesion and reducing inequality in society.

3.4. KEY ACTIONS OF HEALTH POLICY

3.4.1. Reducing social inequality in health and empowerment⁴ of groups and communities.

In the case of adequate and timely interference it is possible to prevent people's higher health risks and seclusion. In addition, the existence of services and measures aimed at specific risk groups is required.

3.4.1.1. An important starting point is the development of universal services and support in order to prevent the emergence of poverty and seclusion arising from special measures.

3.4.1.2. At the same time the problems of certain risk groups, which cannot be resolved by the system of common services and support, must be acknowledged and special measures taking into account the needs of specific groups must be used.

³ Empowerment means the ability to gain control over the organisation of one's life and thus improve one's quality of life.

⁴ Empowerment means the ability to gain control over the organisation of one's life and thus improve one's quality of life.

3.4.1.3. The state and the local authority play an important role in shaping the environment increasing equal opportunities through legislation, funding decisions and social priorities.

3.4.1.4. Involvement of non-governmental organisations, stakeholders and individuals in decision-making processes contributes to the attainment of their goals.

3.4.2. Promotion of the physical and mental health and social development of children and young people

In the childhood and youth the foundations for a person's health awareness and healthy behaviour are laid. The family and the general environment have an important role in improving children's health. The priority actions of this branch of activity are the following.

3.4.2.1. Promotion of the physical and mental health and social development of children and young people.

3.4.2.2. Prevention of injuries and violence among children and young people.

3.4.2.3. Prevention of chronic diseases and their risk factors among children and young people.

3.4.3. Promotion of a healthy lifestyle

To promote a healthy lifestyle the following is attended to:

3.4.3.1. shaping social norms and values supporting health;

3.4.3.2. the private sector (incl. the media) and non-governmental organisations is more actively involved in creation of an environment favouring healthy choices.

3.4.4. Development of a living, working and studying environment supporting health

The priority actions of this branch of activity are the following.

3.4.4.1. Raising the awareness of different target groups of the health risks arising from the living, working and studying environment, and the measures of reduction of these risks.

3.4.4.2. Improvement of the system of evaluation, management and notification of health risks arising from the living, working and studying environment.

3.4.4.3. Raising the state's readiness for prevention of the spread of infectious diseases and epidemics and pandemics.

3.4.4.4. Improvement of supervision in the living, working and studying environment.

3.4.4.5. Improvement of the organisation of occupational health and a considerable increase of the quality of occupational health, and ensuring their availability for all employees.

3.4.5. Development of a patient-centred health care and social welfare system

The health care system must be patient-centred in order to ensure the consistency of treatment. A considerable prerequisite of this is the cooperation and coordination between the first contact care, specialised medical care and long-term nursing care/welfare services. An important aspect lies in the notification of the patient, which on the one hand means the skill of finding one's way through the health care system and on the other hand the awareness of one's health problems and treatment options. The priority actions of the area include the following:

3.4.5.1. the equal availability of health care services to all persons covered by health insurance is ensured, incl. the availability of high-quality health care services at the first contact level of health care services.

3.4.5.2. active treatment of the hospital network and development of long-term nursing care/welfare service is attended to. The quality and availability of social welfare and long-term nursing care services is developed.

3.4.5.3. The principle of solidary health insurance of financing health care and the principle that the health care system must be sustainable in the long term are followed in order to ensure the availability of high-quality health care services and provide the population with protection in the case of financial risks.

3.5. IMPLEMENTATION AND COORDINATION OF HEALTH POLICY

The principles, tasks and actions of the state's health policy have been specified in detail in a framework document uniting the development plans of various areas, the Public Health Development Plan 2008-2020, whose implementation is led and coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

4. PRINCIPLES AND ACTIONS OF CONTROLLING EXTERNAL MIGRATION

4.1. INTRODUCTION TO MIGRATION POLICY

Demographic and economic forecasts show that in terms of the change of the proportion of the population of the working age among the total population Estonia is among the European average in the coming decades. Over the next ten years the large so-called “Singing Revolution generation” will enter the Estonian labour market, but starting from about 2015 the ratio of non-working people and working people will start rapid inclination towards non-working people.

A quick improvement of the economic situation of Estonia, a decrease of the population and the aging of the population may increase the need for additional immigration and the probability of the influx of new immigrants. Although Estonia will not become the destination of massive migration through 2009-2013, there is reason to believe that in connection with the free movement of persons in the European Union and economic growth the number of persons of external origin will increase in Estonia. Taking into account the demographic and economic situation and the distances, the migration pressure from African and Asian countries, Russia, Macedonia, Moldova and Poland is expected to increase in Estonia. Emigration to Finland, Germany and Sweden is the most likely (Ainsaar, 2007).

According to the forecast of the need for labour force⁵ prepared by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, the additional annual labour force need over the next ten years will be approximately 14,500 persons, which more or less corresponds to the number of people entering the labour market. Thus, the need for additional immigration is not high in the coming years. Depending on the birth rate and effectiveness of the economy, it is approximately 1,000-2,000 persons, which corresponds to the present level of the immigration policy. Thereby, according to the forecast, the demand for specialists and skilled labour will increase in production as well as service. It would be most beneficial for Estonia if people with rare skills started working here and helped to create new jobs. In reality, it is complicated to bring highly qualified labour force to Estonia, because the demand for specialists is high in many Member States of the European Union.

In formulating the future migration policy the choice has to be made between three options:

- (1) zero migration (the migration balance is 0, i.e. the number of those leaving and arriving is balanced);
- (2) bolder favouring of immigration than in the past;
- (3) careful immigration policy along with selective immigration.

Estonia's current immigration policy may be considered selective limitation of immigration. In a situation where residents of the European Union have free access to taking up residence in Estonia, the immigration quota to people from third countries is up to 0.1% of the permanent population (approx. 1,340 persons a year). However, Estonians, family migration, study migration and citizens of the US and Japan are not covered by this quota. In shaping Estonia's migration policy the already large share of those who were not born in Estonia and the national security must be taken into account.

⁵ http://www.mkm.ee/failid/MKM_toojou_vajaduse_proгноos_2014.pdf.

4.2. GOALS OF MIGRATION POLICY

The goals of the migration policy are the following:

- ensuring the demographic and economic sustainability necessary for Estonia;
- conflict-free co-existence of all people residing in Estonia, prevention of conflicts of the needs and values threatening the security of society.

4.3. PRINCIPLES OF MIGRATION POLICY

In shaping and implementing the migration policy the state abides by the following principles.

4.3.1. The Estonian immigration policy is selective, **based on people's qualifications**. Estonia prefers employees who have skills that are important for the Estonian economy. Estonia is open mainly for top specialists and employees with special skills.

4.3.2. The migration policy may be **different in the case of short-term and long-term immigrants**. In the case of people taking up permanent residence in Estonia it is important to create a common national identity⁶, incl. the skill of the Estonian language. The migration and integration policy must ensure the preservation of the common Estonian national identity in order to develop the common meaning of the state for permanent residents⁷ of Estonia. Possibilities in the field of education, social security, health promotion, business, leisure and creative self-expression have been guaranteed to all residents of Estonia. All residents of Estonia⁸ must adhere to the legislation effective in the Republic of Estonia.

4.3.3. **In implementing the migration policy the state follows national security interests** and may establish additional immigration conditions for certain groups of immigrants for the purpose of attainment of this goal.

This may mean the application of the requirement of existence of a job, income, subsistence or recipient or examinations of the knowledge of the language and society in the case of different groups of immigrants. The requirement of the aforementioned additional social guarantees also helps to ensure the better functioning of immigrants having a certain functioning risk in Estonia.

4.3.4. The state adheres to **international agreements** in implementing its migration policy. If necessary, bilateral agreements are made between states in the field of migration. Estonia continues its present asylum policy.

4.3.5. The goal of the integration policy is to **prevent nationality-based segregation**. The goal of successful integration is to reduce nationality-based or language-based seclusion and being left out of social life. At the same time the characteristics of different cultures are recognised.

4.3.6. **The state favours the return of the people of Estonian origin**. To that end the state favours the preservation of the national identity, incl. of the Estonian language and introduction of the Estonian culture among people of Estonian nationality living abroad.

⁶ A common national identity as the us-feeling of the people of Estonia is related to people's feeling of security that they participate in Estonian social and political life and to the positive emotional sense of belonging connected with the nation and territory.

⁷ In this context a permanent resident means an Estonian citizen residing in Estonia or a person residing in Estonia based on a long-term residence permit or permanent right of residence.

⁸ For the purposes of this document an Estonian resident means are person residing in the territory of Estonia. An Estonian resident may be an Estonian citizen; a person who resides in Estonia legally or illegally; a person who resides in Estonia on the basis of a temporary or fixed-term residence permit; a person who resides in Estonia based on international agreements, etc.

Through an active information policy the return of Estonian citizens and people of Estonian origin to Estonia is supported.

4.4. TASKS OF MIGRATION POLICY

The migration and integration policy has the following main tasks.

4.4.1. Provision of Estonia with the resources of labour force with the required expertise through sufficient immigration.

4.4.2. Favouring the return of people of Estonian origin.

4.4.3. To support the sense of belonging to Estonian society among immigrants.

4.4.4. To provide immigrants with the sense of social security.

4.5. MIGRATION POLICY ACTIONS

The following actions are primarily required for fulfilment of the tasks of the migration policy.

4.5.1. The current moderate immigration policy of Estonia will be retained. In the coming years Estonia will retain the migration policy effective in 2008, harmonising it, where necessary, with the directives effective in the legal space of the European Union. The state encourages moderate immigration of labour force especially in the key economic areas of the state in the framework of the immigration quota and foreign students staying who have higher education in Estonia after completing their studies. Simpler immigration procedures may be applied to strategically important immigrant groups if it has been proven that they are necessary for Estonia. The migration of post-graduate students to Estonian universities and their employment in Estonian companies after successful completion of their studies. According to the international law, the reunion of families is ensured.

4.5.2. The Estonian state supports the return of people of Estonian origin to Estonia. The state supports the preservation of the Estonian language, culture and identity in Estonian communities abroad. To that end Estonian schools, teaching Estonian, and cultural missions are supported. To encourage the return migration it is important to inform fellow countrymen residing outside Estonia about the opportunities of studying in Estonia, returning and receiving and restoring Estonian citizenship, counselling those returning as well as providing material support and favouring adaptation.

4.5.3. The Estonian state is interested in accurate migration and integration data and therefore makes efforts to develop and create respective registers and systems which allow for gaining a reliable overview of the movement of people. Recording migration is important in the case of immigration and emigration. The welfare and functioning of ethnic minorities and new immigrants is carried out. Reliable and adequate statistics and surveys are important background materials for developing specific measures and activities.

4.5.4. The sense of belonging of each permanent resident is supported through sharing values common with those of Estonian society and through speaking the

official language.⁹ The Estonian language is the universal language of communication in the public sphere. The skill of the Estonian language is one of the prerequisites of successful integration, which gives everyone the opportunity to participate in social life on equal bases. The common national identity as the us-feeling of the people of Estonia helps to ensure the feeling of security that one participates in the social and public life of Estonia, is accepted as a part of the Estonian social and political life, and emotional sense of belonging relating to the people and the territory. Where necessary, the state provides foreign knowledge migrants with additional support for adaptation.

4.5.5. Opportunities for developing other languages and national cultures are created

Estonia as a culturally diverse society pays special attention to the possibilities of non-Estonian residents and new immigrants residing in Estonia to preserve and develop their culture and language and to introduce their ethnic-linguistic identity. The value of a culturally diverse environment and shaping a positive attitude towards other cultures runs through the compilation of new teaching aids and training school heads.

4.5.6. All residents of Estonia are treated equally regardless of their nationality, native language or place of residence. This means that discrimination based on nationality and origin is prevented in the labour market, education system and social sphere. Retraining and in-service programmes offer opportunities for improving one's competitiveness in the labour market. New immigrants can also participate in acclimatisation programmes that offer language and social training.

4.6. IMPLEMENTATION AND COORDINATION OF MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

Under the guidance of the minister attending to population affairs the constant monitoring and analysis of the Estonian Integration Plan 2008-2013 and the provision of feedback to the partners implementing the development plan and the public is organised. The area is analysed annually in order to get an overview of the status of integration, activities and the results of implementation of the development plan. A report on the implementation of the development plan is drawn up annually under the guidance of the minister attending to population affairs and approved by an order of the Government of the Republic. In 2010 the minister attending to population affairs will organise an interim evaluation of the Estonian Integration Plan 2008-2013, which will serve as the basis for drawing up the implementation plan for 2011-2013. In 2011 the minister will launch the preparation of a new national development plan with the goal of continuing coordinated integration activities.

By the beginning of 2009 the Fellow Countrymen Programme 2009-2013 and its implementation plan will be compiled. The implementation of the programme is organised and coordinated by the Fellow Countrymen Council formed under the Office of the Minister of Population and Ethnic Affairs. Its members include representatives of relevant ministries, area specialists and foreign Estonians. The chairperson of the Fellow Countrymen Council is the Minister of Population and Ethnic Affairs.

Applications of the migration policy are developed in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, the Office of the Minister of Population and Ethnic Affairs and other ministries and

⁹ Estonian Integration Plan 2008-2013.

state authorities. The Estonian migration policy and needs will be analysed in detail not later than in 2010.