

COUNTRY FACTSHEET: ESTONIA 2012

EUROPEAN MIGRATION NETWORK

1. Introduction

This EMN Country Factsheet provides a factual overview of the main policy developments in migration and international protection in Estonia during 2012, including latest statistics. It has been prepared in conjunction with the European Commission's 4th Annual Report on Migration and Asylum (2012).

2. Legal Migration and Mobility

2.1. PROMOTING LEGAL MIGRATION CHANNELS

Amendments to the Aliens Act were brought into force in 2012 with the aim of **preventing misuse of legal (economic) migration routes** through the creation of bogus businesses (e.g. permits were abused under the clause for employment as members of managing body). The amendments established tighter preliminary control and additional conditions were set for company's economic activities. The conditions came after numerous cases of companies were seeking to employ third-country nationals for directing or supervisory functions, and did not have a tangible economic activity, or in some cases such companies ceased to exist after the resident permit was granted. As a result, it is now required for the company to be engaged in actual economic activities in Estonia for at least five months prior to the submission for the residence permit. Further, in the first half of 2012, a ban was introduced on the granting of the permits for managers of companies falling under the immigration quota.

2.2 ECONOMIC MIGRATION

On the basis of annual labour market assessments, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications has predicted that **Estonia will experience labour shortages** over the next seven years of around 20,000 workers per year, in sectors such as: manufacturing, wholesale, retail, construction, education, transport and storage. This is mostly because in the next nine years it is estimated that 110,000 persons will leave the labour market (one in 5 employees). In addition, workers will be needed to **fill**

gaps in high growth areas (e.g. research, engineering, ICT) **and in sectors where workers have a higher average age** (e.g. agriculture, healthcare, chemical industry). These positions however can only be partly covered by foreign labour force due to the immigration quota and the language requirements for certain positions.

In order to improve competitiveness, **Estonia seeks to attract foreign students and specialists** that will facilitate research and innovation and raise the quality of the workforce. It also seeks to improve uptake of EU blue card permits. In 2012, 16 blue card permits were granted to third-country nationals (only one had been granted in 2011). Estonia also undertook **consultations with social partners** into ways in which **to attract larger numbers of highly qualified foreigners**, international students and researchers. Estonia is also in the process of negotiating mutual recognition of diplomas with China (to be finalised in 2013).

2.3. FAMILY REUNIFICATION

No significant political and legal developments occurred in relation to family reunification in 2012.

2.4. INTEGRATION

Integration measures in 2012 focused not only on newly-arrived migrants, but also on established groups of long-term residents.

Estonia's five year **Integration Plan**, which began in 2008, continued to be implemented within three main integration areas: (i) educational and cultural; (ii) social and economic and; (iii) legal and political integration. In 2012 **the main emphasis was on socio-economic integration through Estonian language learning**. This was supported through various means including the provision of free (Estonian) language courses for unemployed third-country nationals and encouraging cooperation and contact between migrants and Estonians. Greater

focus was also placed on career mentoring for young migrants, and access to information for non-Estonian speaking populations.

For newly arrived immigrants, mentoring and social and psychological counselling services were introduced through co-funding from the European Integration Fund (EIF). Other activities funded by EIF in 2012 included the development of material to inform potential migrants about procedures for integration in Estonia and research into perceptions of equal treatment and discrimination in Estonia. The **research indicates that the feeling of inequality has significantly decreased among third-country nationals** compared to previous survey conducted in 2008. The results of the research will feed into processes for the development of the next Integration Plan, which will run 2014-2020.

Estonia also introduced changes to the Citizenship Act in 2012. The Act now states that where errors are made in the granting of citizenship by the government authority, the citizenship must be deemed to be legally obtained (previously this was not the case).

In recent years the rate of naturalisation has slowed down compared to the mid-2000s. In 2012, the Government **granted Estonian citizenship to 1,334 persons through naturalisation**, which are 184 less than in the year before.

2.5 MANAGING MIGRATION AND MOBILITY¹

No significant political and legal developments occurred in relation to managing migration and mobility in 2012. During 2012, Estonia mainly continued implementing the **integrated border management** and solidarity principles for **guarding the EU external border**. For example, Estonia contributed first and foremost into developing the external border of the EU mainly through the European External Borders Fund. Estonia also furthered its use of biometric data in residence and visa documents as a means to preventing the fraudulent acquisition and use of free movement rights by third-country nationals. **Mobile border control devices** (Visiotec Mobile) aimed at processing biometric data were set up at the external border. At the border, three new videospectral comparators were acquired for increasing 2nd level border checking capacity. Estonia successfully passed Schengen evaluation of sea and air border, while land border will be assessed in 2013.

Estonia was also connected to the European Border Surveillance System (**EUROSUR**). In 2013 border surveillance at the Estonian-Russian border (EU

external border) will be further developed through the acquisition of additional mobile complexes.

3. International Protection and Asylum

In 2012 several changes took place in relation to **reception conditions for asylum seekers**. Estonia increased the capacity of its reception system and improved access to services for resident applicants. The Illuka Reception Centre will be relocated to Väike-Maarja and its management will be changed during 2013. By consequence, support services to assist asylum seekers in finding accommodation, completing administrative duties, and interpretation services will be improved given the location of the centre, which has been brought closer to the capital, where the application procedure takes place. The rules on the provision of language classes were also updated (language classes are now given at least once a week, and twice a week if the number of asylum seekers is above 15). The reception centre will be re-opened in its new location in 2014.

4. Unaccompanied Minors and other Vulnerable Groups

Estonia does not experience large numbers of unaccompanied minors looking for asylum (UAMs). During 2012 there were 17 cases of alleged unaccompanied minors from which eleven undertook the age assessment test, concluding that ten of them were deemed to be adults. In addition there were two unaccompanied minors who had arrived in Estonia in 2011, but only applied for asylum at the beginning of 2012. In 2012 there was only one unaccompanied minor granted with international protection, and was provided with accommodation at a substitute home.

In order to develop the asylum system for unaccompanied minors, the **International Organization for Migration- Tallinn has been co-financed by the European Refugee Fund (ERF) to increase the capacity and professionalism of officials participating in the asylum proceedings** (including those dealing with UAM asylum applicants). Within the framework of this project, legal representatives of UAM applicants and other officials receive fundamental rights training and participate in study visits.

5. Actions against Trafficking in Human Beings

In April, **trafficking in human beings was recognised as a distinct crime in the penal code for the first time** through an amendment to Article 133. New penalties for trafficking offenses now range up to 15 years' imprisonment, penalties that are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with penalties

¹ "Managing migration and mobility" refers to the following themes: visa policy, Schengen governance and border monitoring.

prescribed for other serious crimes, such as forcible sexual assault. A total 32 cases of trafficking in human beings were registered and 31 persons were convicted of the crime.

No residence permits were granted to third-country nationals victims of human trafficking during the reporting period. However, guidelines were developed for specialists carrying out training on the identification of victims and guidelines for the referral of and assistance to victims are in the process of reviewed and updated.

6. External Dimension of EU Migration Policy

In 2012 **Estonian and Georgian Governments** signed **the protocol to the readmission agreement** between the EU and Georgia which entered into force on November 9 2012. During the same year, **negotiations also started with Kosovo** on an application protocol on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation.

7. Irregular Migration

The **main form of irregular migration was visa misuse**, although irregular entrants were also detected (see below). These trends have encouraged Estonia to place increasing importance on visa inspection and follow-up controls.

In 2012 the number of third-country nationals found to be illegally present was 905, which is somewhat less than in 2011 (1,050). The number of irregular immigrants of African origin decreased in 2012, whereas **irregular migrants from Russian Federation and Vietnam grew in number**. The Police and Border Guard Board caught a total of 56 Vietnamese nationals trying to illegally cross the border from Russia en route to Poland or Germany. The number is significant as Estonia typically apprehends fewer than 100 irregular migrants per year and it was suspected that the Vietnamese were crossing into Estonia as part of a human trafficking operation.

Estonia addresses irregular migration largely through cooperation agreements with other Member States and with third-countries in relation to the control of shared borders, border surveillance, the implementation of readmission agreements and the exchange of information, **and through the updating and use of border management technology**.

Estonia also established links with border guard and migration surveillance officers in Latvia and Lithuania for the **exchange of information on return**, and bilateral cooperation on border surveillance with Russia was also further enhanced.

Estonia prioritises voluntary return over forced return. During the reporting period, an Operational Information Exchange Network on Voluntary Return was created between Migration and Border Guard authorities of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Nonetheless, in 2012, the Police and Border Guard Board returned around 100 third-country nationals through forced means. This is similar to the number of people forcibly returned in 2011. Most returnees were citizens of the Russian Federation and Georgia, followed by Vietnamese and Ukrainian nationals.

Since 2011 the **Estonian Red Cross has been monitoring the forced returns of irregular migrants** at the request of the Estonian Ministry of the Interior. This includes being present when the authorities transfer persons from the Harku Detention Centre to the border. IOM Estonia also enhanced respect for fundamental rights in return procedures by training officials in cultural awareness, psychological behaviour and best practice.

With regard to supporting Member States facing disproportionate pressure at the border, 74 border guard officials of Estonia took part in operational activities in the framework of joint operation Poseidon. Additionally, Estonia supported operational activities by deploying thermo vision vehicle to the operational area for 8 month and fixed wing aircraft for one month period. Five Estonian Border Guard screening experts were deployed for joint operation Attica.

8. Provision and Exchange of Information to support Policy Development

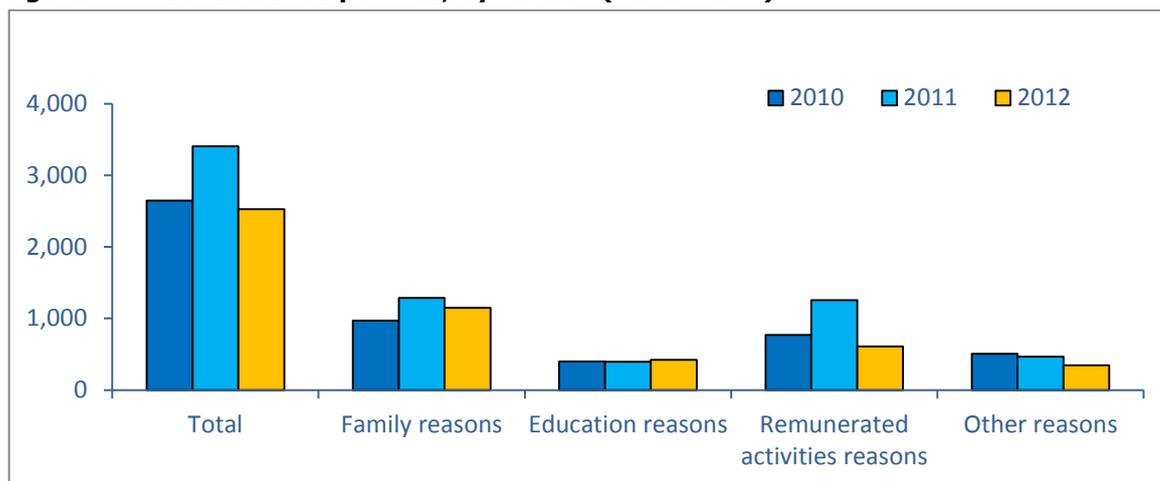
At the EU level, Estonia exchanges information through its active use of the EMN network, both to gain information about different practices in other Member States and to share Estonian experiences. In addition, everyday communication takes place with Estonia's representations abroad and with other Member States (bilaterally or in various working groups) and with international organisations (e.g. UNHCR, IOM, ICMPD).

STATISTICAL ANNEX

The Statistical Annex provides an overview of the latest available statistics for Estonia on aspects of migration and asylum (2010-2012), including residence, asylum, unaccompanied minors, irregular migration, return and visas. Where statistics are not yet available, this is indicated in the Annex as "N/A".

Statistical Annex: Immigration and Asylum in Estonia (2010-2012)

Figure 1: First residence permits, by reason (2010-2012)



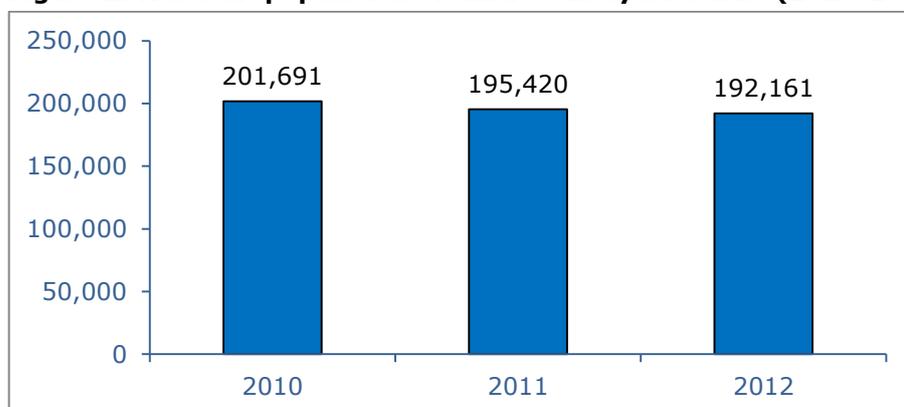
Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_resfirst)

Table 1: First residence permits: Top 5 nationalities (2010-2012)

2010	2011	2012
1. Russia – 1,088	1. Russia – 1,445	1. Russia – 940
2. Recognised Non-Citizens – 503	2. Ukraine – 645	2. Ukraine – 403
3. Ukraine – 252	3. Recognised Non-Citizens – 451	3. Recognised Non-Citizens – 140
4. USA – 145	4. USA – 143	4. USA – 65
5. Turkey – 85	5. Belarus – 119	5. Belarus – 58

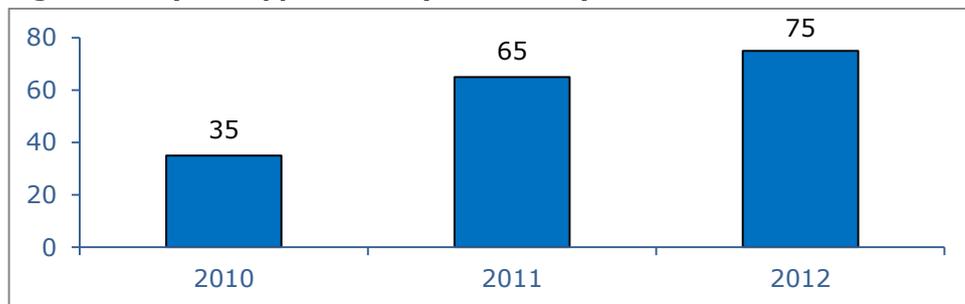
Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_resfirst)

Figure 2: Resident population of third-country nationals (2010-2012)



Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_pop1ctz)

Figure 3: Asylum applications (2010-2012)



Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_asyappctza)

Table 2: Asylum applications: Top 5 nationalities (2010-2012)

2010	2011	2012
1. Afghanistan – 10	1. Afghanistan – 10	1. Georgia – 35
2. Russia, Nigeria, Sri Lanka – 5	2. Congo – 10	2. Russia – 10
	3. Georgia, Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Somalia, Stateless, Cameron, Libya, Uzbekistan – 5	3. Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Armenia, Turkey, Belarus, Vietnam – 5

Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_asyappctza)

Table 3: Asylum applications - First instance decisions by outcome (2010-2012)

	Total decisions	Positive decisions	Of which:			Negative decisions
			Refugee status	Subsidiary protection	Humanitarian reasons*	
2010	40	15	10	5	Not applicable	25
2011	60	10	10	5	Not applicable	50
2012	55	10	10	5	Not applicable	45

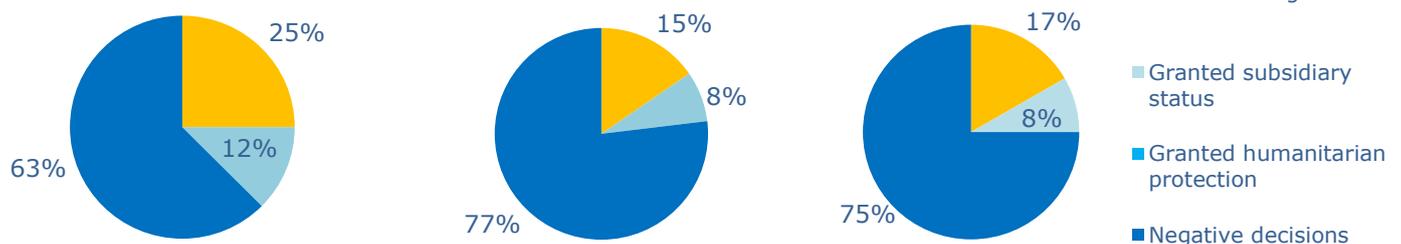
Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_asydcfstz); * Estonia does not grant asylum for humanitarian reasons

Figures 4-6: Asylum applications - First instance decisions by outcome (2010-2012)

2010

2011

2012

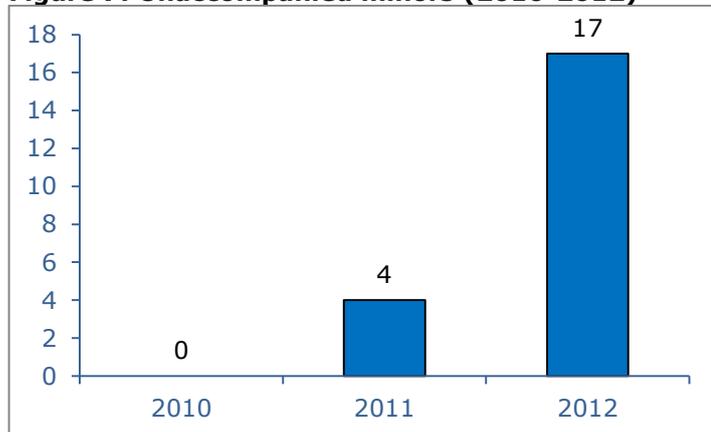


Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_asydcfstz)

Table 4: Third-country nationals relocated and resettled (2010-2012)

	2010	2011	2012
Third-country nationals relocated	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Third-country nationals resettled	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

Estonia does not participate in resettlement programmes of the persons receiving international protection or in the resettlement programmes inside the European Union.

Figure 7: Unaccompanied minors (2010-2012)

Source: Information provided by the EMN NCP; *arrived in Estonia in 2011, but applied for asylum in the beginning of 2012

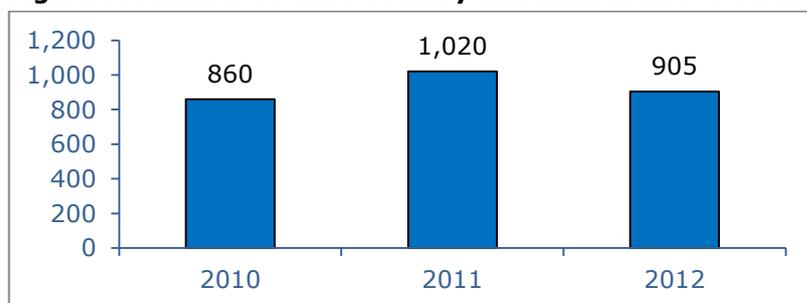
Table 5: Unaccompanied minors (2010-2012)

	2010	2011	2012
Unaccompanied minors (total)	0	4	17
Unaccompanied minors not applying for asylum	0	3	17
Unaccompanied minor asylum applicants	0	2	2*

Table 6: Number of third-country nationals refused entry at external borders (2010-2012)

	2010	2011	2012
Third-country nationals refused entry at external borders	1,665	2,205	1,915

Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_eirfs)

Figure 7: Number of third-country nationals found to be illegally present (2010-2012)

Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_eipre)

Table 7: Third-country nationals returned (2010-2012)

	Third-country nationals ordered to leave	Returned as part of forced return measures	Returned voluntarily*	Returned through an Assisted Voluntary Return Programme*
2010	110	39	N/A	7
2011	480	85	78	8
2012	580	116	89	29

Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_eiord); *National contributions to EMN Annual Policy Reports

Table 8: Number of visas issued by type (2010-2012)

	2010	2011	2012
Total visas*	116,436	142,715	172,935
Schengen visa (short-stay visas)**	116,270	142,031	171,989
National visa	166	684	946

Source: Information provided by the EMN NCP according to the Ministry of Interior; *Sum of the National Visas and Schengen Visas; ** DG HOME Statistics on Visa Policy website http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-policy/index_en.htm