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Country report

Gender equality



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Country report

Gender equality

How are EU rules transposed into
national law?

Estonia

Anu Laas

Reporting period 1 January 2014 – 1 July 2015

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1. Introduction

1.1 Basic structure of the national legal system

The highest authority of national legislation in Estonia is the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia. The highest legislative authority is the Estonian Parliament (*Riigikogu*) with 101 members. The President has veto power as well as the power to propose amendments to the Constitution. The right to initiate draft laws is held by members, political groups and committees of Parliament and the Government of the Republic. Parliament is entitled to present a recommendation to the Government of the Republic to initiate the preparation of a draft law.

The Government of the Republic and the ministers carry out the legislative function by using the right to pass regulations on the basis of and for the implementation of laws. Ministries take legislative initiatives, drafting laws and holding consultations, i.e. asking concerned interest groups and public representatives for their opinions and proposals.¹ A regulatory impact analysis and assessment is performed, and a law-drafting initiative is presented to all ministries and social partners before a draft law is produced.

The Government Office and its European Union Secretariat are the central coordination unit of Estonia's European Union policy. The Secretariat takes measures to ensure timely transposition of EU directives. The Government Office appoints the ministry/ministries responsible for the transposition of a directive.

The Ministry of Social Affairs should promote equal opportunities and gender equality and improve wellbeing. Gender equality specialists are employed in the Equality Policies Department.² They give input to other ministries for incorporating the gender aspect into draft laws and development plans. Unfortunately, a small number of employees is expected to give their gender expertise to all areas of social life. Only ten people are employed, six funded by the State and four with temporary contracts. Although national gender legislation has been developed, there are remaining issues connected with adequate implementation. The main challenges are connected with capacity, issues of competency and the high pace of law making. There is also a problem with fast changes of legal texts. For example, on 1 January 2014 there were 384 legal acts in force and out of these 320 have been amended. This fast-changing legal environment constitutes a threat to legal stability, an additional workload to ministries and to Parliament, and causes problems for law-enforcement authorities.³

The absence of a gender equality strategy,⁴ in combination with the small number of people in the ministries having gender equality competences, results in poor progress in promoting gender equality. In 2014, the Ministry of Social Affairs prepared a proposal for a development plan for social security, inclusion and equal opportunities for 2016-2023; in 2015 the draft plan was ready.

¹ Engagement practices, <https://riigikantselei.ee/en/supporting-government/engagement-practices>, accessed 6 December 2015.

² The former Gender Equality Bureau (1995-2004), and then the Gender Equality Department (2004-2014). The Department of Gender Equality was renamed as the Equality Policies Department in February 2015.

³ *Õigusloome mahu vähendamise kava*. Projekt, 13.08.2015 (*Reducing law drafting burden. Project, 13 August 2015*), http://www.just.ee/sites/www.just.ee/files/oigusloome_mahu_vahendamise_kava_.pdf, accessed 16 September 2015.

⁴ The Strategy Unit of the Government Office supports the planning of the work of the Government and coordinates the drawing up and carrying out of the Government's action plan, as well as of strategic development plans for increasing the country's competitiveness and for sustainable development. There is a strategic aim of governance to reduce a number of development plans. In this process there are no plans to work out a separate strategy for promoting gender equality and equal treatment.

This is an incomplete solution, because gender equality is seen in the narrow context as part of social welfare and social security only.⁵

The Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner is an independent and impartial gender equality body that monitors compliance with the requirements of the Equal Treatment Act (ETA) and the Gender Equality Act (GEA). The Minister of Social Affairs appoints the Commissioner for five years. Serious problems highlighted by the Commissioner are economic inequality, the gender pay gap, gender segregation in the labour market, rigid gender roles and gender stereotypes, and the big difference in the average life expectancy of women and men. The main requirement of the GEA and the ETA for state and local governments, educational institutions and employers to promote gender equality is poorly implemented.

Discrimination disputes are resolved by the court or the labour dispute committee. The Chancellor of Justice resolves discrimination disputes in conciliation proceedings. In addition, the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner can give an opinion about whether there has been discrimination. According to the public database of court decisions, sex discrimination cases are rare. The project 'Promoting Gender Equality through Empowerment and Mainstreaming' is being carried out in the period of 2013-2015 and is targeted at increasing the effectiveness of legal protection against discrimination by raising rights awareness and helping victims of discrimination directly through strategic litigation as well as increasing the capacity of officials assisting discrimination victims.⁶

1.2 List of main legislation transposing and implementing Directives

All Acts are available in English at <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/>. The translations published in *Riigi Teataja* (RT) are unofficial texts. English titles of Acts are those as used on the RT website. In Estonia, legislation has legal force only in Estonian.

- Advertising Act (AA, *Reklaamiseadus* in Estonian), Article 3(4), RT I 2008, 15, 108; RT I, 12.03.2015, 84, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/512052015001/consolide>;
- Chancellor of Justice Act (CJA, *Õiguskantsleri seadus*), RT I 1999, 29, 406; RT I, 22.12.2014, 8, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/505012015001/consolide>; Civil Partnership Act (CPA, *Kooseluseadus*), RT I, 16.10.2014, 1, should enter into force on 1 January 2016, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/527112014001/consolide>;
- Civil Service Act (CSA, *Avaliku teenistuse seadus*) RT I, 06.07.2012, 1; RT I, 18.02.2014, 4, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/509072014003/consolide>
- Employment Contracts Act (ECA, *Töölepingu seadus*), RT I 2009, 5, 35; RT I, 12.07.2014, 146, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/509012015006/consolide>;
- Equal Treatment Act (ETA, *Võrdse kohtlemise seadus*), RT I 2008, 56, 315; RT I, 06.07.2012, 22, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/530102013066/consolide>;
- Family Law Act (FLA, *Perekonnaseadus*), RT I 2009, 60, 395; RT I, 29.06.2014, 105, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/513032015005/consolide>
- Gender Equality Act (GEA, *Soolise võrdõiguslikkuse seadus*), RT I 2004, 27, 181; RT I, 26.04.2013, 9, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/530102013038/consolide>;
- Health Insurance Act (HIA, *Ravikindlustuse seadus*), RT I 2002, 62, 377; RT I, 23.03.2015, 20, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/503082015009/consolide>;

⁵ *Soolise võrdõiguslikkuse ja võrdse kohtlemise voliniku seisukoht sotsiaalse turvalisuse, kaasatuse ja võrdsete võimaluste arengukava (2016-2023) koostamise ettepaneku kohta*, 16. juuni 2014. (Position of Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner about the intention of the Ministry of Social Affairs to work out a 'Development plan for social security, inclusion and equal opportunities for 2016-2023', 16 June 2014).

⁶ This is a pre-defined project, co-financed from the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, eeagrants.org/project-portal/project/EE09-0001, accessed 15 February 2016.

- Insurance Activities Act (IAA, *Kindlustustegevuse seadus*), RT I 2004, 90, 616; recast 10 June 2015, RT I, 07.07.2015, 5, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/503082015001/consolide>;
- Labour Market Services and Benefits Act (LMSBA, *Tööturuteenuste ja -toetuste seadus*), RT I 2005, 54, 430; RT I, 30.06.2015, 25, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/511082015001/consolide>;
- Law of Obligations Act (LOA, *Võlaõigusseadus*), RT I 2001, 81, 487, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/Riigikogu/act/516092014001/consolide>;
- Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA, *Töötervishoiu ja tööohutuse seadus*), RT I 1999, 60, 616; RT I, 26.02.2015, 17, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/525022015005/consolide>;
- Parental Benefits Act (PBA, *Vanemahüvitise seadus*), RT I 2003, 82, 549; RT I, 16.04.2014, 31, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/504072014010/consolide>;
- Penal Code (PC, *Karistusseadustik*), RT I 2001, 61, 364; RT I, 12.03.2015, 21. <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/519032015003/consolide>;
- Social Tax Act (STA, *Sotsiaalmaksuseadus*), RT I 2000, 102, 675; RT I, 19.03.2015, 63, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/504082015003/consolide>;
- State Pension Insurance Act (SPIA, *Riikliku pensionikindlustuse seadus*), RT I 2001, 100, 648; RT I, 10.03.2015, 25, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/525032015003/consolide>;
- The Constitution of the Republic of Estonia (*Eesti Vabariigi põhiseadus*), RT 1992, 26, 349; RT I, 15.05.2015, 2, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/521052015001/consolide>. The Constitution with commentaries from 2002 available only in Estonian, available at <http://www.pohiseadus.ee>;
- The Regulation of the Government of the Republic of 10 June 2010, No. 71 'The Statute of the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner and the Chancellery' (Vabariigi Valitsuse määrus nr. 71, 10.06.2010 'Soolise võrdõiguslikkuse ja võrdse kohtlemise voliniku ning kantselei põhimäärus', RT I 18 June 2010, 33, 170 (in Estonian).
- Unemployment Insurance Act (UIA, *Töötuskindlustuse seadus*), RT I 2001, 59, 359; RT I, 16.04.2014, 29, <http://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/509072014020/consolide>;
- Victim Support Act (VSA, *Ohvriabi seadus*), RT I 2004, 2, 3; RT I, 15.03.2014, 24, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/517062014014/consolide>;
- Vital Statistics Registration Act (VSRA, *Perekonnaseisutoimingute seadus*), RT I 2009, 30, 177; RT I, 29.06.2014, 6, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/523012015006/consolide>.

2. General legal framework

2.1 Constitution

2.1.1 Does your national Constitution prohibit sex discrimination?

Yes. Article 12 of the Constitution sets forth the general principle of equality and non-discrimination. It prohibits discrimination and incitement to discrimination is also prohibited and punishable:

'Everyone is equal before the law. No one may be discriminated against on the basis of nationality, race, colour, sex, language, origin, religion, political or other views, property or social status, or on other grounds. Incitement to ethnic, racial, religious or political hatred, violence or discrimination is prohibited and punishable by law. Incitement to hatred and violence between social classes or to discrimination against a social class is also prohibited and punishable by law.'

Such wording is merely an expression of the general principle of equal treatment. The prohibition of discrimination based 'on other grounds' leaves the list open.

2.1.2 Does the Constitution contain other Articles pertaining to equality between men and women?

No. However, Article 27 stipulates equal rights of spouses. Equality of wife and husband is emphasised;⁷ their rights and duties to raise and care for their children are highlighted. Case law has specified that due to family protection also women and men in free cohabitation have the same parental rights and duties as married couples.⁸

2.1.3 Can the Article(s) mentioned in the two previous questions be invoked in horizontal relations (between private parties)?

Yes.

2.2 Equal treatment legislation

2.2.1 Does your country have specific equal treatment legislation?

Yes. The Equal Treatment Act entered into force on 1 January 2009. The Gender Equality Act was adopted in 2004 and several amendments were made in 2009. Article 1(2)(1) of the GEA prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex in the private and public sectors.

Employees are protected against discrimination on the grounds of sex, racial origin, age, ethnic origin, level of language proficiency, disability, sexual orientation, duty to serve in the armed forces, marital or family status, family-related duties, social status, representation of the interests of employees or membership in workers' associations, political opinions or membership in a political party, and religious or other beliefs.

The ETA prohibits discrimination of persons on the grounds of nationality (ethnic origin), race or colour in relation to education and access to vocational guidance, vocational training, advanced vocational training and retraining, including practical work experience. The Act also establishes prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion or other beliefs, age, disability or sexual orientation in relation to access to

⁷ In Estonian: *Abikaasad on võrdõiguslikud*.

⁸ Judgment of the Supreme Court of Estonia No. 3-3-1-16-00 of 19 June 2000.

vocational guidance, vocational training, advanced vocational training and retraining, including access to practical work experience.

EU directives adopted under Article 19 TFEU have been transposed into Estonian law (GEA, ETA). The two Acts have effectively created a hierarchy of protection depending on the ground of discrimination: the GEA prohibits discrimination in all areas of social life, while the ETA divides the protected areas depending on the basis of discrimination. Therefore, the ETA covers discrimination based on religion or belief, age, disability and sexual orientation only in the area of employment (as required by Directive 2000/78/EC) and discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin and colour is additionally covered in the area of services and social security (as required by Directive 2000/43/EC).

There is little awareness that the GEA and the ECA could be applied to people working under the LOA and job applicants in recruitment process. The ECA should follow the requirements of the GEA and Article 3(2)(1) of the GEA stipulates that 'employee' means a person employed under the ECA, CSA (officials and support personnel) and LOA (contracts for the provision of services), and persons applying for employment or service are also deemed to be employees.

3. Implementation of central concepts

3.1 Sex/gender/transgender

3.1.1 Are the terms gender/sex defined in your national legislation?

No. In Estonian only *sugu* is used; there is no distinction between the words 'sex' and 'gender'.⁹

3.1.2 Is discrimination due to gender reassignment explicitly prohibited in your national legislation?

No. However, an open-ended list of grounds of discrimination in Article 12 of the Constitution makes a discrimination claim due to gender reassignment possible.

Sexual identity is not on the list of protected grounds. Sexual orientation is mentioned in the GEA and the ETA.

In Estonia transsexuals are discriminated against in several areas of life (getting state-funded treatment even if they have paid social security taxes, access to work, getting married, adopting children). Medical doctor Väli gives insight into gender reassignment problems in Estonia and has pointed out that many transsexuals only go through hormone therapy and do not move on to gender reassignment.¹⁰

Gender reassignment is not defined in Estonian legislation.

Estonian law allows the change of forename and other aspects of civil status. Well-regulated is the change of forename and ID data. However, obtaining other documents (education certificates etc.) is not so easy.

Gender-reassigned persons are discriminated against in the access to health insurance to cover necessary treatments even when they have paid health insurance tax. Reassignment treatment to transgender persons is offered in Estonia, but the question relates to coverage. Hormonal treatment is partly (50 %) paid by the Estonian Health Insurance Fund. The Fund declares that the costs of health services required by the person in case of illness are covered. People who want to have their sex changed, should undergo medical examinations and procedures. In Estonia it is possible to get a new identity after a lengthy medical examination process. There is no need to have a certificate of sex reassignment surgeries.

The Civil Partnership Act (CPA) was adopted on 9 October 2014. The CPA will come into effect on 1 January 2016. The CPA is a step closer towards a more tolerant and socially inclusive society.

3.2 Direct sex discrimination

3.2.1 Is direct sex discrimination explicitly prohibited in national legislation?

Yes:

- Article 12 of the Constitution;

⁹ In the Estonian context it is important to understand what it means if the word 'sugu' is used in a text. However, translation of gender could be *sotsiaalne sugu* (*sugupool*) and sex is *bioloogiline sugu*. Taking into account the context, different words are used in translation like *seksuaalne* or *sooline*.

¹⁰ Väli, M. (2015), 'Transseksualism – kui loodus eksib' (Transsexualism – if nature is mistaken) *Tervis. Postimees*, 5 April 2015, <http://tervis.postimees.ee/3144087/transseksualism-kui-loodus-eksib>, accessed 8 September 2015.

- Article 1(2)(1) of the GEA;
- Article 5(1) of the GEA;
- Article 6 of the GEA.

Direct discrimination based on sex is defined in Article 3(3) of the GEA. Direct discrimination based on sex occurs where one person is treated less favourably on grounds of sex than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation. Direct discrimination based on sex also means less favourable treatment of a person in connection with pregnancy and childbirth, parenting, performance of family obligations or other circumstances related to gender, as well as gender-based harassment and sexual harassment and less favourable treatment of a person due to rejection of or submission to harassment.

The definition complies with the EU definition.

The Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner has analysed complaints and gave opinions in connection with unequal pay to female and male employees in the same job.¹¹ Some cases have reached the courts, and dispute resolution is taking place.

3.2.2 Are pregnancy and maternity discrimination explicitly prohibited in legislation as forms of direct sex discrimination?

Yes:

- Article 3(3) of the GEA (more in 3.2.1.);
- Article 6 of the GEA (discrimination in professional life).

A pregnant employee has legal protection not only in the employment relationship, but also in recruitment processes. Pregnant job applicants should not be discriminated against.

The Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner has analysed several complaints in connection with the dismissal of pregnant employees and unfair treatment of employees after returning back to work after the leave period. Some complaints have concerned a situation where a woman returning to her previous place of employment after childcare leave was considered by her employer as a new employee which influenced both her tasks and salary which was therefore lower than the salary of colleagues who were doing the work of equal value but had not recently been on childcare leave. According to the opinion of the Commissioner, the employer had discriminated against the complainant based on gender.¹²

The provision complies with Article 2(2)(c) of Directive 2006/54.

3.2.3 Are there specific difficulties in your country in applying the concept of direct sex discrimination? If so, please explain these difficulties, with reference to legislation and/or (national) case law if relevant.

A small number of claims has been submitted to equality bodies and courts. Content of the claims submitted to the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner shows that some people have applied to try and test the boundaries of the concept. There have

¹¹ <http://www.vordoigusvolinik.ee/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/SVV-Aastaaruanne-2014.pdf>, accessed 17 December 2015.

¹² Opinions of the Equality Commissioner are not publicly available, but some overviews and statistics could be studied from the Annual Reports. Available in Estonian at; www.svv.ee; <http://www.vordoigusvolinik.ee/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Voliniku-2012.-aasta-tegevuse-ylevaade.-Kokkuvõte.pdf>, accessed 17 December 2015.

been claims about the ladies' beach,¹³ claims regarding bars where women were attracted with entry free of charge (where men were expected to pay), events in museums inviting only boys to a cars' exhibition etc.

Awareness of officials and employers about direct sex discrimination is increasing every year due to publications, training, and media.

Potential claimants have the right to ask for advice from the Equality Commissioner or from the Equality Policies Department at the Ministry of Social Affairs.

3.3 Indirect sex discrimination

3.3.1 Is indirect sex discrimination explicitly prohibited in national legislation?

Yes:

- Article 5(1) of the GEA;
- Article 3(1)(2) of the GEA.

Article 3(4) of the GEA defines the concept of indirect discrimination based on sex as an apparently neutral provision, criterion, practice or activity that would put persons of one sex at a particular disadvantage compared with persons of the other sex, unless that provision, criterion, practice or activity is objectively justified by a legitimate aim, and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.

In the expert's view this definition complies with the EU definition.

3.3.2 Is statistical evidence used in your country in order to establish a presumption of indirect sex discrimination? Please provide some examples of cases, if available.

Estonia has had the largest gender pay gap in Europe for many years (about 30 %). Women's low income will be a problem in future caused by low pensions for women. Therefore evidence and causes of the gender pay gap have been studied and activities to tackle this social problem have been integrated into a national action plan.¹⁴

3.3.3 Is in your view the objective justification test applied correctly by national courts? Please provide some examples of cases, if available.

There have been some court cases, asserting that there is no need to prove intention to discriminate, but that it is important that the outcome has created a situation where persons were treated differently, and unequal treatment has been discovered. Articles 3(1)(1) and 3(1)(2) of the GEA were applied.¹⁵ Article 3(1)(1) provides the meaning of gender equality (the equal rights, obligations, opportunities and responsibility of men and women in professional life, when entering education, and when participating in other areas of social life) and Article 3(1)(2) defines equal treatment of men and women which means that there is no discrimination whatsoever based on sex, either directly or indirectly.

¹³ A hundred years ago a separate ladies' beach was distinctive and women in swimming costumes enjoyed privacy. Pärnu ladies' beach is still open for the very same reason, and today women can sunbathe in the nude without being disturbed.

¹⁴ *Sotsiaalministeeriumi valitsemisala arengukava aastateks 2014–2017* (2014–2017, Development Programme and Plan of Action of the Ministry of Social Affairs), accessible in Estonian: https://www.sm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/Ministeerium_kontaktid/Ministeeriumi_arengukava_ja_tooplaan/sotsiaalministeeriumi_arengukava_2014-2017.pdf, accessed 7 December 2015.

¹⁵ Judgment of the Civil Chamber of the Supreme Court of Estonia No. 3-2-1-135-11 of 4 January 2012.

- 3.3.4 Are there specific difficulties in your country in applying the concept of indirect sex discrimination? If so, please explain these difficulties, with reference to legislation and/or (national) case law if relevant.

Article 6(5) of the UIA could be neutral, but could create a basis for discrimination. The aim is to have equal treatment in the light of unemployment, but actually insured persons who have used pregnancy leave, maternity leave, adoptive parents leave or parental leave during the 36-month period and those who have not are treated differently.¹⁶

3.4 Multiple discrimination and intersectional discrimination

- 3.4.1 Is multiple discrimination – i.e. discrimination based on two or more grounds simultaneously – and/or intersectional discrimination – i.e. discrimination resulting from the interaction of grounds of discrimination which interact to produce a new and different type of discrimination – explicitly addressed in national legislation?

No. Due to the wide scope of the GEA other laws could be applied in conjunction with the GEA.

Among discrimination claims to the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner following grounds of discrimination are dominant: sex, parenting, pregnancy, disability, age, ethnicity, race. According to the 2014 annual report by the Commissioner the number of complaints on multiple grounds is increasing.¹⁷

- 3.4.2 Is there any case law that addresses multiple discrimination and/or intersectional discrimination (where gender is one of the grounds at stake)?

No.

3.5 Positive action

- 3.5.1 Is positive action explicitly allowed in national legislation?

Yes. Article 5(2)(5) of the GEA.

Application of specific temporary measures to promote gender equality and to give advantages to the less-represented sex or to reduce gender inequality is not deemed to be direct or indirect discrimination based on sex. The meaning of 'temporariness' has not been specified in law or case law.

This definition in the expert's view does not entirely comply with the EU definition found in Article 157(4) TFEU. The ultimate goal to ensure full equality in practice between men and women in working life is not pointed out by Article 5(2)(5) of the GEA. However, Article 1(1) of the GEA declares that promotion of equality of men and women is a fundamental human right and the GEA is applicable for the public good in all areas of social life.

¹⁶ For an insured person who has used pregnancy leave, maternity leave, adoptive parents leave or parental leave during the 36 months specified in Clause (1) 2) of this section, the 36-month period shall be extended by the time spent on leave if there is no information in the unemployment insurance database concerning the person's unemployment insurance period. However, if this person had a job during the leave period, this protective measure will be lost.

¹⁷ <http://www.vordoigusvolinik.ee/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/SVV-Aastaaruanne-2014.pdf>, accessed 14 December 2015.

Case law is missing in Estonia.

- 3.5.2 Are there specific difficulties in your country in relation to positive action? If so, please explain these difficulties, with reference to legislation and/or (national) case law if relevant.

Article 5(2)(5) of the GEA is an abstract and general statement and there is no requirement that these temporary measures must be compatible with the principle of proportionality. In all events, in cases of fundamental rights the 'necessity and proportionality' test applies, as is true for other cases of limitation of fundamental rights.

It could be easier to apply the temporary specific measures if accompanied by Articles of the Constitution. Article 27(4) of the Constitution provides the protection of parents and children. Article 28(4) of the Constitution could be applied for positive discrimination, which stipulates that families with a large number of children as well as people with disabilities enjoy special care of the national Government and of local authorities. Article 50 of the Constitution provides protection for national minorities and their culture. Specific temporary measures could be applied to protect employees in connection with pregnancy and maternity.

- 3.5.3 Has your country adopted measures that aim to improve the gender balance in company boards?

No. The Estonian Government and the Estonian Employers' Confederation are against quotas.¹⁸ In all events, women's voice has been for quotas, which was also expressed in the 2012 consultation period.¹⁹

There are no proposals pending that address the gender balance in company boards. There are no policy measures aimed at addressing the gender balance in company boards, but there was one campaign to tackle gender stereotypes 'Does it have to be like this? Or can we change it together?', which produced seven video clips. These short video clips were broadcast on national TV at prime time for some period and many gender-blind people noticed that there are some problems with gender equality, prejudices etc.

- 3.5.4 Has your country adopted other positive action measures to improve the gender balance in some fields, e.g. in political candidate lists or political bodies? If so, please describe these measures.

No. However, the possibility to introduce 'striped' candidate lists (alternating female and male candidates) in election processes and a voluntary quota system for promoting democracy within parties has been debated in recent years.²⁰

¹⁸ Opinions regarding quotas in Estonian available at: <http://www.employers.ee/uudised/pevkur-tahab-sookvootide-kehtestamise-oiugust-vaid-eestile-jaetta/>; <http://www.employers.ee/uudised/ettevotted-sookvoodid-on-ajaraisk/>, accessed 14 December 2015.

¹⁹ Women's Studies and Resource Centre (NGO), http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/gender-equality/opinion/files/120528/all/114_en.pdf, accessed 14 December 2015.

²⁰ *Eestimaa naiste VI kongressi manifest* (Manifesto of Estonian Women's VI Congress). <http://naised.net/2014/03/25/manifesto-of-estonian-vi-womens-congress/>, 14 December 2015; Statement by the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner in the media that women's position in the electoral lists should be fairer, <http://uudised.err.ee/v/eesti/abe532df-60a8-4cf6-8060-0736282c8be9>, accessed 14 December 2015.

3.6 Harassment and sexual harassment

3.6.1 Is harassment explicitly prohibited in national legislation?

Yes. An amendment to Article 3(1)(3) of GEA entered into force on 23 October 2009. Direct discrimination based on sex occurs where one person is treated less favourably on grounds of sex than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation. Direct discrimination based on sex also means less favourable treatment of a person in connection with pregnancy and childbirth, parenting, performance of family obligations or other circumstances related to gender, as well as gender-based harassment and sexual harassment and less favourable treatment of a person due to rejection of or submission to harassment.

The concept of sexual harassment is defined in Article 3(1)5) of the GEA, which states that sexual harassment occurs where any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct or activity of a sexual nature occurs, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating a disturbing, intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

This definition in the expert's view complies with the EU definition found in Article 2(1)(c) of Directive 2006/54.

3.6.2 Does the definition of harassment cover a broader scope than employment in your country? If so, please specify the scope.

The scope is broader. Estonian legislation provides that sexual harassment is direct discrimination based on sex. Article 3(1)(3) of the GEA stipulates that direct discrimination based on sex also means less favourable treatment of a person in connection with pregnancy and childbirth, parenting, performance of family obligations or other circumstances related to gender, as well as gender-based harassment and sexual harassment and less favourable treatment of a person due to rejection of or submission to harassment. Article 2(1) of the GEA states that the GEA is applicable to all areas of social life.

The concepts of harassment on the ground of sex and sexual harassment have been regulated in the GEA since 2004. Before transposition of Directive 2006/54/EC, the GEA defined 'sexual harassment' in connection with the existence of subordination or a dependent relationship. The concept of 'sexual harassment' was brought in line with the Directive in 2009, and no changes have been made to the legal definitions in recent years.

3.6.3 Is sexual harassment explicitly prohibited in national legislation?

No, several articles should be applied.

This definition in the expert's view complies with the EU definition in Article 2(1)(d) of Directive 2006/54. It is included in Article 3(1)(3) of the GEA and Article 3 of the ECA.

Uibo (2014) has studied sexual harassment from a legal perspective and has proposed in order to improve the detection of potential forms of discrimination to supplement Article 28(2) of the ECA by including the employer's obligation to treat workers with dignity, attention and respect, including ensuring protection from harassment, sexual harassment and discrimination based on sex.²¹

²¹ Uibo, L. (2014), *Seksuaalne ahistamine töökohal* (Sexual Harassment at the Workplace), Master Thesis, University of Tartu, https://dspace.utlib.ee/dspace/bitstream/handle/10062/42656/uibo_lille.pdf?sequence=1, accessed 10 September 2015.

- 3.6.4 Does the definition of sexual harassment cover a broader scope than employment in your country? If so, please specify the scope.

The GEA is applicable in all areas of social life. It can be stated that the legislation effective in Estonia ensures protection from sexual harassment in an employment relationship, allowing the use of various legal remedies, but the practical application of these legal remedies has been challenging.

- 3.6.5 Does national legislation specify that harassment and sexual harassment as well as any less favourable treatment based on the person's rejection of or submission to such conduct amounts to discrimination (see Article 2(2)(a) of Directive 2006/54)?

Yes, in Article 3 of the GEA and Article 3(3) of the ETA. Article 3(1)(3) of the GEA defines any less favourable treatment based on the person's rejection of or submission to such conduct as direct discrimination based on sex. Article 3(1)(5) of the GEA provides the meaning of sexual harassment and Article 3(1)(6) of the GEA is about gender-based harassment.

3.7 Instruction to discriminate

- 3.7.1 Is an instruction to discriminate explicitly prohibited in national legislation?

Yes. According to the GEA, direct and indirect discrimination based on sex, including instruction to discriminate, is prohibited. It must be emphasised that the GEA does not only prohibit discrimination and thereby demand equal treatment of women and men.

Article 5(1) of the GEA stipulates that direct and indirect discrimination based on sex, including giving orders therefor, is prohibited.

Article 1(1) of the GEA provides that the purpose of this Act is to ensure equal treatment of men and women as provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia and to promote equality of men and women as a fundamental human right and for the public good in all areas of social life. Article 1(2) of the GEA specifies that discrimination on the grounds of sex in the private and in the public sector is prohibited and state and local government authorities, educational and research institutions, and employers should promote gender equality.

- 3.7.2 Are there specific difficulties in your country in relation to the concept of instruction to discriminate? If so, please explain these difficulties, with reference to legislation and/or (national) case law if relevant.

No cases can be reported.

- 3.7.3 Is incitement to discrimination explicitly prohibited in your country?

Yes, in Article 12 of the Constitution (2.1.1). Article 151(1) of the Penal Code stipulates that incitement to discrimination can be punished if danger to the life, health or property of a person occurred. Nationality, race, colour, sex, language, origin, religion, sexual orientation, political opinion, and financial or social status are seen as a basis of incitement to discriminate.

3.8 Other forms of discrimination

Are any other forms of discrimination prohibited in national law, such as discrimination by association or assumed discrimination?

No. However, the GEA does not only prohibit discrimination and thereby demand equal treatment of women and men, but the GEA requires to promote gender equality as a fundamental human right and public good in all areas of social life. Therefore, avoidance of gender stereotyping and prejudices is indirectly stipulated in the GEA.

4. Equal pay and equal treatment at work (Article 157 TFEU and Recast Directive 2006/54)

4.1 Equal pay

4.1.1 Is the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value implemented in national legislation?

Yes, the principle of equal pay for equal work of equal value is indirectly defined in national legislation and several articles about non-discrimination in professional life were added in 2009. Article 6(2)(3) of the GEA stipulates that activities of an employer are deemed to be discriminatory, if the employer establishes conditions for remuneration or conditions for the provision and receipt of benefits related to the employment relationship which are less favourable regarding an employee or employees of one sex compared with an employee or employees of the other sex doing the same work or work of equal value.

Article 3 of the ECA explores the principle of equal treatment. An employer shall ensure the protection of employees against discrimination, follow the principle of equal treatment and promote equality in accordance with the ETA and the GEA. In several of its articles, the ECA refers to agreement between employee and employer. The Government of the Republic shall establish by regulation the minimum wage corresponding to a specific unit of time, and a regulation on the conditions and procedure for payment of average wages. Estonia's unionization rate of employees is low, which forms a solid basis for pay differentials. However, due to the large gender pay gap, a national action plan was adopted to tackle this in 2012. Widely amended, the Civil Service Act (CSA) entered into force on 1 April 2013 and attention has been paid to salary guides.²²

4.1.2 Is the concept of pay defined in national legislation?

Yes, but the definition of the concept of pay could be derived from several articles.

The ECA entered into force on 1 July 2009.²³ A clear legal definition of pay is not provided in the ECA. Pay is remuneration for work according to a (written) agreement. Article 1(1) and 1(2) is about the employment relationship between employee and employer, where a natural person (employee) does work for another person (employer) in subordination to the management and control of the employer. The employer pays the employee remuneration for such work. The wage is a monetary (Article 29(3) of ECA) or if agreed, in kind or other, form of benefits (Article 29(4) of ECA).

A definition of work of equal value is lacking in the GEA and there is no relevant national case law either. The terms 'same work' and 'work of equal value' occur in Article 6(2)(3).

This definition complies with the definition of Article 157(2) TFEU, where the meaning of 'pay' is the same. Articles 157(2)(a) and 157(2)(b) have not been directly transposed into Estonian legislation. The ECA stipulates that there should be working conditions, and a pay agreement between employer and employee. Then there is a general antidiscrimination article, which requires that an employer shall ensure the protection of employees against discrimination (Article 3 of the ECA).

²² The Minister of Finance is responsible for the implementation of the CSA and pay policies in the public sector. The Minister is satisfied and states that the salary system is more transparent and fair, as it considers the employment market and the each person's responsibility and competitiveness, <http://www.fin.ee/personnel-policy-of-state>, accessed 14 December 2015.

²³ The Wage Act (from 26 January 1994 to 30 June 2009), where Article 2 provided a definition of pay, was repealed; <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/13100033>, accessed 14 December 2015.

4.1.3 Does national law explicitly implement Article 4 of Recast Directive 2006/54 (prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of sex with regard to all aspects and conditions of remuneration)?

Yes. Article 6(2)(3) of the GEA provides that discrimination occurs when the employer establishes conditions for remuneration or conditions for the provision and receipt of benefits related to the employment relationship which are less favourable regarding an employee or employees of one sex compared with an employee or employees of the other sex doing the same work or work of equal value.

4.1.4 Is a comparator required in national law as regards equal pay?

Yes, indirectly. Article 11.1(3) of the ETA is the only article where the question of comparison is discussed. This provides that a comparable employee means an employee working for the same employer, who is engaged in the same or a similar work, due regard being given to qualifications and skills of the employee. Where there is no comparable employee employed by the same employer, the comparison shall be made by reference to the applicable collective agreement. Where there is no collective agreement, an employee engaged in the same or similar work in the same region shall be deemed to be a comparable employee.

4.1.5 Does national law lay down parameters for establishing the equal value of the work performed, such as the nature of the work, training and working conditions?

No. However, these requirements exist in national law indirectly. An employer should ensure the protection of employees against discrimination. Pay regulations and job descriptions and specifications are gender neutral. There has been no case law yet, but there are some opinions from the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, finding sex discrimination after job evaluation.²⁴

4.1.6 Does national (case) law address wage transparency in any way?

Yes. Article 7(3) of the GEA stipulates that an employee has the right to demand that the employer explain the bases for calculation of salaries and obtain other necessary information on the basis of which it is possible to decide whether discrimination has occurred.

Estonia has a large gender pay gap and there are problems with non-transparent wage policies and poor regulation in these matters. Article 28(13) of the ECA stipulates that the employer is obligated not to disclose information about wages calculated, paid, or payable to the employee without the employee's consent or without a legal basis. However, the employer should provide information about pay. In labour disputes the texts of employment contracts and a company's pay rules are important pieces of evidence, considering that a written employment contract contains the agreed remuneration payable for the work (wages), including remuneration payable based on the economic performance and transactions, other benefits if agreed upon, and the manner of calculation.²⁵

It seems that the public sector is nearer to achieving fairer wages for female and male civil servants. Article 63(1) of the CSA stipulates that a salary guide is a procedure for the determination and payment of salaries. The salary guide shall prescribe the basic

²⁴ Opinions of the Commissioner are not legally binding, but could be used in the labour dispute committee, <http://www.vordoigusvolinik.ee/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Voliniku-2012.-aasta-tegevuse-ylevaade.-Kokkuvõte.pdf>, accessed 17 December 2015.

²⁵ Article 5(1)(5) and Article 5(1)(6) of the ETA.

salary or the basic salary range for the position, the conditions and procedure for payment of the variable salary, additional remuneration and benefits provided by law and the time and manner of the payment of the salary. The CSA provides a list of institutions and respective authorities (head of authorities, ministers, high-level representatives), which should establish salary guides. The local government council shall establish the salary guide for a local government authority. Article 10(5) of the CSA stipulates that the procedure for drafting the salary guide and determination of the salary components for other public bodies should be specified by regulation of the Government of the Republic. The CSA entered into force on 1 April 2013. The regulation entered into force on 24 May 2013.²⁶ It could be said that the salary system is more transparent and fair, as it takes into account the employment market and each person's responsibility and competitiveness. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for the implementation of the Civil Service Act. The Public Administration and Public Service Department of the Ministry of Finance develops personnel and training policy, and organises salary management.

Some attempts have been made in public sector, where salary guides are required. The salary guide of the authority shall be disclosed on their web page. Estonian public sector wages have been available on the Internet. Article 65 of the CSA specifies disclosure of remuneration. It requires that the basic salary of an official as of the current calendar year should be published on the website of the authority at the latest on 1 May. The basic salary, salary supplements and other income for the previous calendar year should be made public. Research findings show that the share of performance pay, bonuses and benefit as a percentage of the pay of state officials has declined in the last decade from 8 % (2007) to 3 % (2014).²⁷

4.1.7 Is the European Commission's Recommendation of 7 March 2014 on strengthening the principle of equal pay between men and women through transparency applied in your country?

No. It is complicated to get information by gender from the public sector. There is judgment by the Supreme Court of Estonia No. 3-4-1-1-09 of 19 May 2009, which does not contribute to higher wage transparency between women and men. It decided that public-sector wages should be available without names of officials.²⁸ The Judgment referred to Article 26 of the Constitution on the right to privacy:

Everyone is entitled to inviolability of his or her private and family life. Government agencies, local authorities, and their officials may not interfere with any person's private or family life, except in the cases and pursuant to a procedure provided by law to protect public health, public morality, public order or the rights and freedoms of others, to prevent a criminal offence, or to apprehend the offender.

It is impossible to analyse pay differences by gender given this level of privacy protection.

4.1.8 Which justifications for pay differences are allowed in legislation and/or case law?

²⁶ *Riigi personali- ja palgaarvestuse andmekogusse andmete esitamise ja arvestuse toimingute teostamise kord. Vabariigi Valitsuse määrus nr 76*, 16.05.2015 (Regulation of the Government of Republic No.76 of 16 March 2013 on administration of the state personnel and payroll database remuneration levels).

²⁷ Estonian Civil Service 2014. Public Service Factsheet. <http://www.fin.ee/personnel-policy-of-state>, accessed 10 September 2015.

²⁸ Available at (in Estonian): <http://www.estlex.ee/tasuta/?id=8&aktid=115476&fd=1&grupp=5&leht=3&lineid=5&toprint=1>, accessed 28 August 2015.

Article 5(1)(5) of the ECA explores the content of employment contracts, which include the agreed remuneration payable for the work (wages), including remuneration payable based on the economic performance and transactions, and the manner of calculation.

In Estonia individual pay agreements between employer and employee are dominant and it is often claimed that women agree to work with lower pay. It is also claimed that specialists from abroad should be paid more.

4.1.9 Are there specific difficulties related to the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work and work of equal value in practice? For example in case of out-sourcing?

Wages of out-sourced people are not available to the wider public.

4.2 Access to work and working conditions

4.2.1 Is the personal scope in relation to access to employment, vocational training, working conditions etc. defined in national law (see Article 14 of Directive 2006/54)?

Yes. According to Article 6 of the GEA men and women in professional life, in education and in other areas of social life are entitled to equal rights, obligations, opportunities and liabilities.

National law does not have a definition of 'worker'. However, Article 3(2)(1) of the GEA defines 'an employee' as a person employed under an employment contract (working under the ECA) or a contract for the provision of services (working under the LOA), an official or any other person working under the CSA. Persons applying for employment or service are also deemed to be employees.

Persons who provide work under the law of obligations (LOA) are defined as 'a mandatar' (presuming that the mandatar performs the mandate in person, usually the duration and deadlines are specified) and 'a contractor' (presuming that the contractor is not required to perform the obligations arising from the contract in person, usually the duration and deadlines are specified).²⁹

²⁹ Here the meaning of the term 'worker' in the Estonian language and international legal texts should be explored. In Estonian it is a bit complicated to make a clear distinction between 'an employee' and 'a worker'. An employee and a worker could both be translated as 'töötaja' or 'tööline', and a person who works under the CSA is 'teenistuja'. In Estonian 'worker' has a broader meaning and an employee is associated with contractual relations. In legal texts, there is a quite clear distinction in English between an employee and a worker. In this sense it could be concluded that workers in the legal sense exist in Estonia. Mostly their work is covered by the law of obligations (LOA). There are also seasonal workers who do not have written (employment) contracts, but whose work is based on oral agreements, where both the ECA and the LOA could be applied, depending on the agreement.

The LOA covers two types of contracts for work: authorisation agreements and contracts for services. In both cases the work provider is defined. Article 619 of the LOA defines 'a mandatary' as a person who undertakes to provide services to another person (the mandator) pursuant to an agreement (an authorization agreement to perform the mandate) and the mandator undertakes to pay remuneration to the mandatary therefor if so agreed. Article 622 of the LOA specifies that it is presumed that a mandatary shall perform the mandate in person. A mandatary also has the right to use the assistance of third parties in performing the mandate.

Article 635 of the LOA defines a contractor as a person who undertakes to manufacture or modify a thing or to achieve any other agreed result by providing a service (work), and the other person (the customer) undertakes to pay remuneration as agreed by the contract of services.

The mandatar and the contractor working under the LOA are covered by the GEA, but he/she enjoys far less protection.³⁰

Performance of certain work in a specified period without social security obligations for the customer is attractive for third-sector organisations, where a lot of work is done either on project basis or on a voluntary basis.

4.2.2 Is the material scope in relation to (access to) employment defined in national law (see Article 14(1) of the Recast Directive 2006/54)?

Yes, in Article 29 of the Constitution on the right to choose the area of activity, profession and position of employment. Sex discrimination in professional life is prohibited by Article 6 of the GEA.³¹

Article 2(1)(1) of the ETA explicitly stipulates that discrimination is prohibited if restrictive conditions are set for the access to employment, to self-employment or to occupation, including selection criteria and recruitment conditions, as well as upon promotion. The ETA highlights grounds for discrimination in connection with the access to employment (nationality (ethnic origin), race or colour).

Article 3(1)(1) of the GEA pays attention to the access to gender equality, which covers the equal rights, obligations, opportunities and responsibility of men and women in professional life, when entering education and when participating in other areas of social life.

This scope is the same as the scope of Article 14(1) of Recast Directive 2006/54.

4.2.3 Has the exception on occupational activities been implemented into national law (see Article 14(2) of Recast Directive 2006/54)?

Yes. Article 5(2) of the GEA explains situations, which are not considered discrimination. It describes differences in treatment due to a person's sex in relation to certain activities (compulsory military service only for men, joining women's or men's only organisations), in the access to employment, including training required for employment, and when supplying goods and services. There can be several reasons and justifications (context and nature of activities, sex as determining requirement etc.). Such differences in treatment should be justified by a legitimate objective and must be proportional to the objective.

Has such an assessment led to (legislative) changes?

No.

4.2.4 Has the exception on protection for women, in particular as regards pregnancy and maternity, been implemented in national law (see Article 28(1) of Recast Directive 2006/54)?

³⁰ Mandataries and contractors do not have any rights to holidays paid by the mandator or customer as expected for work done under the ECA. The mandatar and contractor do not have childcare and parental leave. Social security for persons working under the LOA depends on their own contributions. There is an option for the pregnant mandatar (or contractor) to apply for social security from the contractual partner if the work performed (working time, control, management, instructions and regulations by the customer) had all features of the work performed under the ECA in the framework of an employment contract. Then a claim could be made for a revision of the contractual relationship and if the Labour Inspectorate or court finds it applicable, the mandatar could also be entitled to all social guarantees applied to the ECA with the employment contract.

³¹ <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/530102013038/consolide>, accessed 17 December 2015.

Yes. Article 5(2)(1) of the GEA stipulates that provisions concerning the special protection of women in connection with pregnancy and childbirth are not considered to be direct or indirect discrimination based on sex. Pregnancy and maternity protection is explicitly stipulated in the ECA, CSA and OHSA.

4.2.5 Are there particular difficulties related to the personal and/or material scope of national law in relation to access to work, vocational training, employment, working conditions etc.?

Due to strong gender segregation in the labour market there might be a need to introduce specific temporary measures to give advantages to the underrepresented sex. It is possible that hidden indirect discrimination exists in relation to access to work, vocational training, employment, and working conditions.

Discrimination in professional life is prohibited and situations where discrimination may occur are listed in Article 6 of the GEA. Article 6 entered into force in October 2009. However, unfortunately, pregnant women and persons with family obligations still find it complicated to get a job. Article 6(4) of the GEA stipulates that employers and legal persons in private law or sole proprietors entered in the register of economic activities as labour-market service providers shall not request information (pregnancy, childbirth, parenting, performance of family obligations or other circumstances related to gender) which may place a job applicant in a less favourable situation.

According to Article 11 of the ECA, in precontractual negotiation processes, including job advertisements or job interviews, only questions with a legitimate interest can be asked. Hidden discrimination exists. Questions about the job applicant's personal life are common practice in Estonia.³² The Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner received about 192 claims and 114 were related to the employment relationship. Claims in connection with pregnancy have increased in recent years. The Commissioner has found 39 discrimination cases out of all 192 claims.³³

³² The media (newspapers, the Internet) are popular labour-mediation services providers. In cv forms, employers ask for the applicant's sex, age, often about family and children. The Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner has studied the issue due to numerous claims. Internet service providers have stated that they are mediators and ask what employers want to know. The Equality Commissioner has explained that a request for personal information by employer and labour mediation service providers is prohibited. See Opinion No. 37 of 2 October 2015 of the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, available in Estonian at: http://www.vordoigusvolinik.ee/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Arvamus_nr_37_toovahendusportaalid.pdf, accessed 17 December 2015.

³³ <http://www.vordoigusvolinik.ee/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/SVV-Aastaaruanne-2014.pdf>, accessed 17 December 2015.

5. Pregnancy and maternity protection; maternity, paternity, parental leave and adoption leave (Directive 92/85, relevant provisions of the Directives 2006/54 and 2010/18)

5.1 Pregnancy and maternity protection

5.1.1 Does national law define a pregnant worker?

Yes, but not explicitly in a separate article. A pregnant employee is an employee who has informed the employer and has a health certificate issued by a GP or gynaecologist (Article 18 and 93(3) of the ECA).

There are articles about pregnant employees and about employees who have a right to take pregnancy leave. The ECA and CSA include articles connected with working conditions, health and job protection. Non-discrimination and equal treatment are stressed in the GEA and ETA. Less favourable treatment of a person in connection with pregnancy and childbirth, parenting, and performance of family obligations constitutes direct discrimination.

This definition is consistent with the definition in Article 2 of Directive 92/85.

5.1.2 Are the protective measures mentioned in the Articles 4-7 of Directive 92/85 implemented in national law?

Yes. The ECA and the CSA include articles, where protection of pregnant employees is specified in employment relationships.

Working conditions should correspond to the state of health of employee who has informed her employer about her pregnancy (Article 18 of the ECA). A pregnant employee and an employee who has the right to pregnancy and maternity leave have the right to demand that the employer temporarily provides them with work corresponding to their state of health if the employee's state of health does not allow for the performance of the duties prescribed in the employment contract on the agreed conditions. If the employer cannot provide the employee with work corresponding to her state of health, the employee may temporarily refuse to perform the duties.

Article 18(5) of the ECA stipulates that upon termination of pregnancy and maternity leave a woman has the right to the improved working conditions which she would have been entitled to during her absence. Article 19(2) of the ECA states that an employee has the right to refuse to perform work if an employee is temporarily incapacitated for work. Article 21(3) of the ECA provides that a pregnant woman and an employee raising a child under the age of three or a disabled child may be sent on a business trip only with his or her consent. Article 44(5) of the ECA prescribes that working overtime cannot be demanded from a minor, a pregnant woman or an employee who has the right to pregnancy and maternity leave. Night work for pregnant employees is not prohibited; night work could be performed upon mutual agreement.

Similar protective measures are specified in the CSA. If an official is appointed to the service for a specified term, their contract shall be suspended for the period while the official is on maternity, adoptive or parental leave (Article 23(4) of the ECA). Working conditions of pregnant officials and officials who have a right to pregnancy and maternity leave are specified in Article 48 of the CSA.

5.1.3 Is dismissal prohibited in national law from the beginning of the pregnancy until the end of the maternity leave (see Article 10(1) of Directive 92/85)?

Yes. The employer should be informed about the employee's pregnancy. Article 92(1) of the ECA and Article 100(1) of the CSA prohibit the dismissal of pregnant employees.

Exceptional cases are possible and legally accepted (economic reasons, bankruptcy, lay-off). Article 93 of the ECA stipulates specifics regarding the termination of an employment contract with a pregnant employee. In these cases the employees' representative, the Labour Inspectorate and the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) should be consulted. The UIF is in charge of unemployment issues and obliged to pay redundancy benefit and benefits following the insolvency of an employer.

Employers should pay compensation in the event of collective redundancy (a redundancy of five or more employees), and then the UIF should contribute. In case of micro firms monthly contributions by employers and employees have been paid to the UIF, but it is impossible to receive monetary compensation from the UIF. This is unequal treatment of redundant employees, since those working in small firms are worse off.

When an employee is made redundant during her maternity leave the payment for maternity leave does not cease. Payment for pregnancy and maternity leave is calculated on the basis of the former salary, regulated by the HIA and paid by the Health Insurance Fund.

In February 2014, an important decision by the labour dispute committee of the Labour Inspectorate was issued in a case regarding the unlawful dismissal of a pregnant employee during her probationary (trial) period. Probationary periods are common and can last for four months. Fair and equal treatment is required. In this case the employer had terminated the contract with the employee due to her pregnancy and because in addition, this employee had a child under three years old at home. Employees must not be discriminated against on grounds of fulfilling family obligations. Pregnant employees have special protection.

5.1.4 In cases of dismissal from the beginning of pregnancy until the end of maternity leave, is the employer obliged to indicate substantiated grounds for the dismissal in writing (see Article 10(2) of Directive 92/85)?

Yes. Article 95 of the ECA requires that the cancellation of an employment contract is declared in writing. An employer shall justify the cancellation. An employee shall justify extraordinary cancellation.³⁴ For instance, the employee may cancel an employment contract extraordinarily due to a reason related to the employee's state of health or family duties.

The reason for dismissal must be given to the employee in writing or a format that can be reproduced in writing. In the civil service, an administrative act should be issued (Article 103(1) of the CSA). In this administrative act the reason for release should be specified (Article 103(2)(4) of the CSA).

Dismissal of a pregnant employee is possible under the ECA and the CSA in extraordinary cases (e.g. bankruptcy, economic difficulties of employer). Article 93 of the ECA provides specifications for cancellation of the employment contract with a pregnant woman or person raising a child under the age of three. Article 105(1) of the CSA

³⁴ Manners of the cancellation of employment contract is stipulated in Articles 85-94 of the ECA. An employee is not obligated to give the employer advance notice of extraordinary cancellation if, considering all circumstances and mutual interests, it cannot be reasonably demanded that the performance of the contract be continued until the expiry of the agreed term or term for advance notice. The employee may cancel an employment contract extraordinarily due to a reason related to the employee, in particular if the employee's state of health or family duties do not allow him or her to perform the agreed work and the employer does not provide him or her with suitable work.

provides that upon liquidation of the authority, it is allowed to release from service an official who is pregnant, who has the right to pregnancy and maternity leave or who is raising a child under the age of three.

In the case of a discrimination claim and a labour dispute an employer should provide substantiation. A dismissed pregnant official or official who has the right to pregnancy and maternity leave (or who is raising a child under the age of seven) has a right to claim compensation and reinstatement.

Only insured women who were working prior to going on pregnancy and maternity leave have the right to the related benefits, others are paid a fixed minimum specified by the State. This applies to young mothers who did not previously enter the labour market. People working under the law of obligations whose social contributions were poorly paid or paid irregularly might need support from the State. Self-employed persons have compulsory social minimum taxes to pay and they have the right to receive the respective payment.

Among family benefits is the childbirth allowance, which is a single benefit paid in case of birth. The amount of the benefit is EUR 320. In the case of a multiple birth of three or more children, the amount of childbirth allowance is EUR 1000 for each child.

5.2 Maternity leave

5.2.1 How long (in days or weeks) is maternity leave? Please specify the relevant legislation and Article(s).

According to Article 59 of the Employment Contracts Act (ECA), which entered into force on 1 July 2009, a woman has the right to 140 calendar days of pregnancy and maternity leave.³⁵ Persons working under the law of obligations do not have maternity leave, if their contract has lasted less than one month.

All universal family benefits are applicable also for persons working under the LOA.

5.2.2 Is there an obligatory period of maternity leave before and/or after birth?

No. The employee has the right to take or interrupt these leaves. Pregnancy leave before birth should start between 30 and 70 days prior to the expected birth, when a woman wants to get the benefit for 70 days paid by the State. During such leave, a benefit equal to the woman's average daily income is payable by the Health Insurance Fund. The pregnancy leave could be shorter than 30 days, but the benefit is paid for the number of days actually used as pregnancy leave. Maternity leave is 70 days and can be used only by the mother or adoptive parent. The mother could also continue to work, if there is a possibility, need or willingness. Fathers cannot take paid parental leave during 70 days after their child is born.³⁶ They can apply for paid parental leave when the child is 70 days old.

5.2.3 Is there a legal provision insuring that the employment rights relating to the employment contract are ensured in the cases referred to in Articles 5, 6 and 7 of Directive 92/85?

Yes. Maternity and subsequent parental leave are job-protected leaves for employees and officials (working under the ECA and under the CSA). All employed mothers are

³⁵ Pregnancy leave is 70 days, and maternity leave is 70 days – applicable only to the mother. After the maternity leave, parental leave follows, which could be taken by the father or another family member. Their job is protected until the child is three years old.

³⁶ Fathers can take 10 days paid paternity leave.

eligible for maternity leave, including workers with temporary contracts if the contract lasts more than one month.³⁷ Self-employed people qualify for maternity benefits on the same conditions as employees and officials, even without taking up the leave.

5.2.4 Is there a legal provision that ensures the employment rights relating to the employment contract (including pay or an adequate allowance) are ensured during the pregnancy and maternity leave?

Yes. Maternity allowance is paid by the State. Article 54(1)(4) of the Health Insurance Act (HIA) prescribes the payment of 100 % (benefit for temporary incapacity for work).

5.2.5 Is pay or an allowance during the pregnancy and maternity leave at the same level as sick leave or is it higher?

The pregnancy and maternity leave allowance is higher (100 %) than the average pay for a day of sick leave (70 %) .³⁸

According to Article 54(1)(4) of the HIA, maternity leave is a paid leave (100 % of the average income of the insured person per calendar day based on the data on payment of social tax available from the Tax and Customs Board. No ceiling applies.

5.2.6 Are statutory maternity benefits supplemented by some employers up to the normal remuneration?

Not usually, but some enterprises have introduced a maternity grant (single payment). Maternity benefits are paid by the State. Some local governments have introduced a single payment as a maternity grant.

5.2.7 Are there conditions for eligibility for benefits applicable in national legislation (see Article 11(4) of Directive 92/85)?

Yes. Special cases exist:

- A precondition to receive payments from the Health Insurance Fund is to be an insured person;³⁹
- The minimum wage (EUR 390 per month) is paid to mothers who did not work during the previous calendar year but have worked prior to the birth of a child;
- For women who have not worked before their pregnancy, the state minimum of maternity benefits will be paid;
- People who worked under the LOA, at least a one-month contract is expected prior to application for benefits.

In connection with payment of benefits the ECA refers to the HIA. Article 58(4) of the ECA stipulates that there is a right to obtain compensation for pregnancy and maternity leave in accordance with the HIA. Article 50(3) of the HIA states that the types of benefit for temporary incapacity for work are sickness benefit, maternity benefit, adoption

³⁷ The law was amended, and lately there has been a requirement for a contract of a minimum of three months to get social security.

³⁸ In case of illness, quarantine, non-work and traffic injury and the complications or illnesses caused by it, the benefit is paid by the employer from day 4 to day 8. After day 9, sickness benefits are paid by the Health Insurance Fund.

³⁹ Article 5 of the HIA provides a definition of the insured person. A payer of social tax (employer, the State agency, local authority, contractor, spouse, person herself or himself) must pay social tax in accordance with the procedure, in the amounts and within the time limits provided for in the Social Tax Act. This is also true for a person considered equal to such persons on the basis of the HIA or on the basis of a contract specified in Article 22 of HIA, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/503082015009/consolide>, accessed 16 September 2016.

benefit and care benefit. The procedure for granting and payment of benefit for temporary incapacity for work is provided in the HIA.

5.2.8 In national law, is there a provision that guarantees the right of a woman to return after maternity leave to her job or to an equivalent job, on terms and conditions that are no less favourable to her, and to benefit from any improvement in working conditions to which she would have been entitled during her absence (see Article 15 of Directive 2006/54)?

Yes. Article 18(5) of the ECA and 48(5) of the CSA provide that upon termination of pregnancy and maternity leave, a woman has the right to the improved working conditions which she would have been entitled to during her absence.

Article 23 of the CSA provides special provisions for persons who have been appointed to the service for a specified term. Article 23(4) points out that the service position will be suspended for an official who is on maternity, adoptive or parental leave.

5.3 Adoption leave

5.3.1 Does national legislation provide for adoption leave?

Yes, in Article 61 of the ECA.

Adoptive leave is 70 days of the date of entry into force of the court judgment approving the adoption (if a child is under 10), paid by the State for 100 %.

5.3.2 Did the Government take measures to address the specific needs of adoptive parents (see Clause 4 of Directive 2010/18)?

Yes. In all articles about childcare leaves and parenting the adoptive parent has the same rights. Adoptive parents may enjoy the time off for the care of dependant(s) as specified in law.

Parental leave may be used by one person at a time. Article 65(2) of the ECA states that the actual caregiver of a child has the right to the parental leave. Article 161 of the Family Law Act (FLA) stipulates that the adopted child acquires the legal status of a child of adoptive parents or parent.

5.3.3 Does national legislation provide for protection against dismissal of workers who take adoption leave and/or specify their rights after the end of adoption leave (see Article 16 of Directive 2006/54)?

Yes. Article 92 of the ECA provides that an employer may not cancel an employment contract on the ground that the employee is pregnant or has the right to pregnancy and maternity leave, or that the employee performs important family obligations. Article 93 of the ECA specifies cancellation of an employment contract with a pregnant woman or person raising a child below the age of three.

Estonia also provides family benefits for adoption. Adoption allowance is a single allowance paid to an adoptive parent from whom an adopted child does not descend and who is not a stepparent of the child, if childbirth allowance has not been paid to the family for the same child earlier. The amount of the adoption allowance is EUR 320.

5.4 Parental leave

5.4.1 Has Directive 2010/18 been explicitly implemented in your country?

Yes. Article 62 of the ECA is about parental leave, and states that a mother or father has the right to parental leave until his or her child reaches the age of three. Parental leave may be used by one person at a time.

Parental leave immediately follows maternity leave. The father of a child has the right to the parental benefit once the child has reached the age of 70 days. If the initial recipient of the parental benefit is the father, the mother must prove that she is not on parental leave.

5.4.2 Is the national legislation applicable to both the public and the private sector (see Clause 1 of Directive 2010/18)?

Yes.

5.4.3 Does the scope of the national transposing legislation include contracts of employment or employment relationships related to part-time workers, fixed-term contract workers or persons with a contract of employment or employment relationship with a temporary agency?

Yes.

5.4.4 What is the total duration of parental leave? If the provisions regarding duration differ between the public and the private sector, please address the two sectors separately.

In the public sector: Until the child reaches the age of three. Leave is a family entitlement.

In the private sector: Until the child reaches the age of three. Leave is a family entitlement.

5.4.5 Is the right of parental leave individual for each of the parents?

Yes. Parental leave may be used by one person at a time. The entire period of the parental leave is transferable, but cannot be used by parents at the same time.

5.4.6 What form can parental leave take (full-time or part-time, piecemeal, or in the form of a time-credit system)? Do the various available options allow taking into account the needs of both employers and workers and if so, how is that done (see Clause 3 of Directive 2010/18)?

Maternity leave and parental leave cannot be taken in the form of part-time work, except for self-employed persons. Parents or persons giving the actual care could work temporarily, but then they should interrupt their leave. Carers could work for another employer during their parental leave, but then they lose part of their monthly parental benefit.

5.4.7 Is there a notice period and if so, how long is it? Does the national legislation take sufficient account of the interests of workers and of employers in specifying the length of such notice periods and how is that done? (see Clause 3 of Directive 2010/18)?

The notice period is 14 days, as stipulated in the ECA and in the CSA.

5.4.8 Is there a work and/or length of service requirement in order to benefit from parental leave?

Yes. Article 5(2)(1) of the HIA states that an insured person is someone who has worked on the basis of an employment contract concluded for a term exceeding one month or for an unspecified term and for whom the employer must pay social tax. This also applies to persons receiving remuneration or service fees on the basis of a contract for services, a mandate or a contract under the law of obligations for the provision of any other services, which is concluded for a term exceeding one month or for an unspecified term.

Two types of benefit are available to all families who meet the eligibility conditions, whether or not parents take parental leave. Parental benefit is paid at 100 % of the average earnings (calculated on employment in the previous calendar year) for 435 days (i.e. 62 weeks) from after the end of maternity leave, with a ceiling of EUR 2 549 per month in 2015, equivalent to three times the average earnings, based on provisions from the Parental Benefit Act (PBA).⁴⁰ The minimum benefit paid to working parents is the minimum wage, EUR 390 per month. For parents who are not on leave and not working, parental benefit is paid from the birth of the child at a flat rate of EUR 355 per month until the child is 18 months old.⁴¹

This right to use parental leave applies to parents, adoptive parents, step-parents, guardians and caregivers raising a child with respect to whom a written foster care contract has been entered. These persons have the right to receive parental benefits.

In case of successive fixed-term contracts with the same employer (as defined in Council Directive 1999/70/EC on fixed-term work), the sum of these contracts is taken into account for the purpose of calculating the qualifying period.

5.4.9 Are there situations where the granting of parental leave may be postponed for justifiable reasons related to the operation of the organisation?

Parental leave is not compulsory, could be interrupted etc. Parental leave must be used in time. The days of leave not used in time cannot be taken in the future, saved for future periods.

5.4.10 Are there special arrangements for small firms?

No.

5.4.11 Are there any special rules/exceptional conditions for access and modalities of application of parental leave to the needs of parents of children with a disability or a long-term illness?

Yes. There is additional paid childcare leave (3-6 days a year) for persons who take care of disabled children.

Article 63(3) of the ECA provides additional days off for childcare leave which shall be remunerated on the basis of the minimum wage established by the Government of the Republic, and a mother or father of a disabled child has the right to childcare leave of one working day per month until the child reaches the age of 18, which is remunerated on the basis of the average wages.

Article 64(1) of the ECA stipulates that a mother and father who is raising a child until the age 14 or a disabled child until the age of 18 has the right to childcare leave without pay of up to ten working days every calendar year.

⁴⁰ <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/504072014010/consolide>, accessed 25 August 2015.

⁴¹ Pall, K., Karu, M. (2015), Estonia country note, in: Moss, P. (ed.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2015*, http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/, accessed 20 September 2015.

There is a restriction in connection with business trips. The parent of a disabled child may be sent on a business trip only with his or her consent (Article 21(3) of the ECA).

The Social Benefits for Disabled Persons Act provides the grounds for the payment of disabled child allowance and education allowance.⁴²

5.4.12 Are there provisions to protect workers against less favourable treatment or dismissal on the grounds of an application for, or the taking of, parental leave (see Clause 5 of Directive 2010/18)?

Yes. Withdrawal of an employment contract is prohibited. Employees on maternity and parental leave cannot be fired in case of a decrease in work volume or enterprise reorganisation. In case of redundancy employees on maternity and parental leave should be kept on. But in case of bankruptcy or cessation of the activities of the employer also employees who have a child under three could be dismissed.

5.4.13 Do workers benefitting from parental leave have the right to return to the same job or, if this is not possible, to an equivalent or similar job consistent with their employment contract or relationship?

Yes. Until the end of the parental leave period (when the child turns three) their job is protected. Article 93(1) of the ECA stipulates that an employer may not cancel an employment contract with a pregnant woman or a woman who has the right to pregnancy and maternity leave, or a person who is on parental leave or adoptive leave due to lay-offs, except upon cessation of the activities of the employer or declaration of the employer's bankruptcy, if the activities of the employer cease or upon termination of bankruptcy proceedings, without declaring bankruptcy, by abatement.

5.4.14 Are rights acquired or in the process of being acquired by the worker on the date on which parental leave starts maintained as they stand until the end of the parental leave?

Yes.

5.4.15 What is the status of the employment contract or employment relationship for the period of the parental leave?

Employment contracts are suspended for the term of the parental leave.

5.4.16 Is there continuity of the entitlements to social security cover under the different schemes, in particular healthcare, during the period of parental leave?

Social security (e.g. health insurance) payments are made by the State during the parental leave period, during which the parent is insured.

Article 60(6) of the HIA explains that the insured person who has the right to receive maternity benefits or adoption benefits does not have the right to receive sickness benefits or care benefits in the same period. The insured person who has the right to receive sickness benefits does not have the right to receive care benefits in the same period.

⁴² Disabled child allowance shall be paid monthly to a child under the age of 16 for the additional expenses caused by the disability and, upon existence of a rehabilitation plan, for the activities prescribed therein. Children aged 16-17 can receive benefits and allowances, available for disabled, working-age people.

5.4.17 Is parental leave remunerated by the employer? If so, how much and in which sectors?

Parental leave is paid by the State.

5.4.18 Does the social security system in your country provide for an allowance during parental leave? If so, how much and in which sectors?

Parental benefits are stipulated by the PBA.

5.4.19 In your view, regarding which issues does the national legislation apply or introduce more favourable provisions (see Clause 8 of Directive 2010/18)?

Parental leave in Estonia is long and rigid. Three years of job-protected leave has a positive effect on family life, but also has a negative side, which is connected with employers' human resource management and costs, also regarding women's lower career and employment prospects.

Estonia has nine types of family benefits. One of the benefits is the childcare allowance, and the rate of the allowance is specified every year. Childcare allowance is a monthly allowance paid to one of the parents. The amount of the child allowance depends on the age of the child and the number of children, and could be half or a quarter of the basic rate of child allowance, which is EUR 76.70 in 2015.

5.5 Paternity leave

5.5.1 Does national legislation provide for paternity leave?

Yes, in Article 60 of the ECA.

A father may take up to 10 working days of paternity leave during the two-month period prior to the expected birth of the child and the two-month period following the birth of the child. A piecemeal way is possible, but not less than one day at time. Paternity leave is compensated to the employer by the State based on the father's average income. There is a ceiling equivalent to three times the average gross monthly salary in Estonia on the basis of data published by Statistics Estonia concerning the quarter preceding the quarter in which the holiday was used.

There is a problem with fathers who have more than one employer. Then part of the leave will be unpaid. The state will compensate employers for no more than 10 days. If there are two employers and the father takes 10 days of leave, then only 5 days to both employers will be compensated.

5.5.2 Does national legislation provide for protection against dismissal of workers who take paternity leave and/or specify their rights after the end of paternity leave (see Article 16 of Directive 2006/54)?

Yes. Article 93(1) of the ECA provides that an employer must not cancel an employment contract with a pregnant woman or a woman who has the right to pregnancy and maternity leave, or a person who is on parental leave or adoptive leave due to lay-offs, except upon cessation of the activities of the employer or declaration of the employer's bankruptcy, if the activities of the employer cease or upon termination of bankruptcy proceedings, without declaring bankruptcy, by abatement.

All employed fathers with permanent or temporary employment contracts are eligible, but fathers with contracts working under the LOA, are not entitled to paternity leave. Undertakings and organisations where project-based and temporary work is frequent,

prefer work done using authorisation agreements or service contracts. A minimum in social and other security taxes are expected to be paid, but health and unemployment security is guaranteed only if the contract lasts for a minimum of one month at a time.⁴³ All natural and legal persons providing this type of work are required to register the persons employed by them in the employment register.

5.6 Time off/care leave

5.6.1 Does national legislation entitle workers to time off from work on grounds of force majeure for urgent family reasons in case of sickness or accident (see Clause 7 of Directive 2010/18)?

Yes, in Article 92(2) of the ECA. Article 2(4) of the ETA requires equal treatment in labour relations on grounds of family-related duties.

Article 92(2) provides that an employer must not cancel an employment contract if the employee performs important family obligations. However, Article 91(3) points out the possibility for an employee for extraordinary cancellation of the employment contract due to a reason arising from the employee, in particular if the employee's state of health or family duties do not allow him or her to perform the agreed work and the employer does not provide him or her with suitable work.

Time off from work is possible if agreed with the employer. There is additional paid childcare leave (3-6 days per year depending on the age and the number of children) for persons who take care of child(ren) or a disabled child.⁴⁴

Article 51(4) of the HIA stipulates that the care benefit is paid to an insured person in insured events (nursing a child under the age of 12, nursing a family member who is ill at home, caring for a child under the age of 3 or for a disabled child under the age of 16 when the person caring for the child is ill or is receiving obstetrical care). In some cases it is possible to get paid by the Health Insurance Fund, but only 80 % will be covered. Article 54(1)(1)(1.1) of the HIA provides that the Health Insurance Fund will pay the benefits for temporary incapacity for work to an insured person per calendar day amounting to 80 % of their average income per calendar day if the insurer takes care of a child under the age of 3 or of a disabled child under the age of 16; if the person providing the care is ill or being provided with childbirth assistance, is taking care of an ill family member at home or if a child under the age of 12 is treated in a hospital or at home.

5.7 Leave in relation to surrogacy

5.7.1 Is parental leave available in case of surrogacy?

Surrogacy is prohibited. The child has a mother (the term 'mother' is connected with delivery, the woman who has given birth) or is adopted. For adoptive parents parental leave is possible.

⁴³ This is a positive development: before 1 January 2014 the contract requirement to get health insurance was not less than three months.

⁴⁴ Each calendar year a mother or father has the right to child leave which shall be remunerated on the basis of the minimum wage established by the Government of the Republic. If a mother and father do not take this leave, monetary compensation is not paid. Child leave is available for three working days if she or he has one or two children under 14, and for six working days if she or he has at least three children under 14 or at least one child under 3 (Article 62 of the ECA).

5.8 Leave sharing arrangements

5.8.1 Does national law provide a legal right to share (part of) maternity leave?

No. The 70 days after childbirth are maternity leave for the mother only. Article 62 of the ECA allows a mother or father to take parental leave until their child is three years old. The employee should choose whether to take the leave or not, there is no legal right to take maternity leave on a part-time basis.

All employees and civil servants have a right to take maternity leave, no negotiations needed. The size of the employer does not play any role. Employer and employee can make agreements, maternity leave could be interrupted any time, but a father of the child cannot 'take over' the maternity leave. Paternity leave could be used for emergency situations of the mother's employer. But these arrangements are voluntary and made in good faith, with no obligations to parents.

The father has the right to enjoy parental leave, this is not connected with the 10-day paternity leave (see 5.5.1). This can be taken in the two months before or the two months after the birth of a child. It can be taken in blocks, with a minimum of one day at a time.

Although the father or the mother could both enjoy parental leave, it is impossible to share it at the same time. Parental leave can be taken consecutively.

5.8.2 Is there a possibility for one parent to transfer part of the parental leave to the other parent?

Yes. Parents can choose who takes parental leave (Article 62 of the ECA).

5.9 Flexible working time arrangements

5.9.1 Does national law provide workers with a legal right (temporarily or otherwise) to reduce working time on request?

Yes, there is a legal right to reduce working time upon agreement. Article 43(1) of the Employment Contracts Act (ECA) stipulates that it is presumed that an employee works 40 hours in a period of seven days (full-time work), unless the employer and the employee have agreed on a shorter working time (part-time work).⁴⁵

If the employer is not willing to consider the employee's request, working hours cannot be reduced. The employee's care needs do not give the right to advantages for setting an exceptional working-time regime. The employer's statement about work organisation and working-time arrangement in the company is taken into account. Research findings show that the labour-market situation of parents with young children is greatly dependent on employers in Estonia.⁴⁶

The employer should notify a full-time employee of the possibility for part-time work and a part-time employee of the possibility for full-time work, considering the knowledge and skills of the employee (Article 28(19) of ECA).

⁴⁵ <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/509012015006/consolide>, accessed 14 September 2015.

⁴⁶ Naelapea, A., *Paindliku töökorralduse rakendamist mõjutavad tegurid: Eesti ettevõtete kogemused ja praktikad* (Factors Influencing the Application of the Flexible Work Organisation: Experience and Practices of Estonian Enterprises), http://www.praxis.ee/fileadmin/tarmo/Publikatsioonid/too_sisu_low0.pdf, accessed 15 December 2015.

5.9.2 Does national law provide workers with a legal right to adjust working time patterns (temporarily or otherwise) on request?

Yes. Negotiating working arrangements between employer and employee is possible. Article 47(1) of ECA specifies the organisation of working time.

5.9.3 Does national law provide workers with a legal right to work from home or remotely (temporarily or otherwise) on request?

Yes. Article 6 of ECA regulates working conditions in special cases. Article 6(4) of the ECA stipulates that if an employer and employee agree that the employee does work, which is usually done in the employer's enterprise, outside the place of performance of the work, including at the employee's place of residence (teleworking), the employer shall notify the employee that the duties are performed by way of teleworking and it should be stated in an employment contract. Many companies have written internal regulations, specifying work organisation.

A person who takes parental leave can also get parental benefits. Article 2(2) of the PBA specifies persons, who have a right to receive parental benefits. A parent, adoptive parent, stepparent, guardian or caregiver raising a child with respect to whom a written foster care contract has been concluded has the right to receive benefits.

5.9.4 Are there any other legal rights to flexible working arrangements, such as arrangements by which workers can "bank" hours to take time off in the future?

No, there is a legal possibility, but no legal rights.

Negotiating working arrangements between the employer and employee is possible. Article 47(1) of the ECA specifies organisation of working time. An employee shall perform duties at the employer's enterprise or facilities at the normal time (organisation of working time), unless agreed otherwise. The organisation of working time includes, in particular, the start and end of the working time and breaks during the working day.

Additional free days for care stipulated by law expire at the end of the year and cannot be collected and compensated.

6. Occupational pension schemes (Chapter 2 of Directive 2006/54)

6.1 Is direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of sex in occupational social security schemes prohibited in national law?

Yes. Article 1(1) of the GEA prohibits discrimination in all areas of social life. The GEA is applicable in areas of social protection, provision of goods and services, healthcare and housing.

Article 5 of the GEA prohibits direct and indirect discrimination based on sex. Article 6 of the GEA prohibits sex discrimination in professional life, e.g. discriminatory conditions for remuneration or conditions for the provision and receipt of benefits related to the employment.

Article 14.1(1) of the IAA stipulates that the differences between insurance premiums and insurance indemnities of females and males must not be caused by the use of the gender factor in the assessment of the insured risks (valid until 31 December 2015). And Article 14.1(2) adds that an insurance company is permitted in the assessment of insured risks in sickness insurance to take into account risks which are gender-related (connected only with women or men), and to differentiate, if necessary, to the extent of the specified risks the insurance premiums and insurance indemnities of females and males.⁴⁷

6.2 Is the personal scope of national law relating to occupational social security schemes more restricted or broader than specified in Article 6 of Directive 2006/54? Please explain and refer to relevant case law, if any.

The personal scope specified in Article 6 of Directive 2006/54 applies to all members of the working population, including self-employed persons. In Estonia the personal scope is more restricted.

Article 1(2) of the OHSA includes a long list of working persons and explicitly mentions certain professions, but persons who work under law of obligations contracts are left out. The Labour Inspectorate has conducted awareness campaigns for people to understand the difference of employment contracts and authorisation agreements or service contracts. Work contracts under the LOA do not offer any social security if the required amounts of social contributions are not paid. However, when applying gender equality and the GEA, people who work under the LOA are also seen as 'employees'. There is some space for improvement of the legal text.

There are serious disparities between people working in the private and in the public sector. Disabled people are poorly paid, but they have (a minimum) security from the statutory security system.

⁴⁷ In 2015, a new Insurance Activities Act (IAA) was adopted, which enters into force on 1 January 2016. There is a Chapter about the protection of clients and the assessment of the gender factor is tackled in Article 216. Article 14.1(2) of the former version of the IAA will no longer be valid, but gender differentiation is possible in gender-related risks. Such differentiation will be accepted without legal regulation as stated in the Explanatory Memorandum. The new version of the IAA was motivated by the EU insurance supervision reform. <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/508012016001/consolide>, accessed 17 December 2015.

6.3 Is the material scope of national law relating to occupational social security schemes more restricted or broader than specified in Article 7 of Directive 2006/54? Please explain and refer to relevant case law, if any.

The Constitution stipulates the duty of the State to ensure public assistance in cases of old age, incapacity for work, or loss of a provider of livelihood. At the same time, the Constitution provides a person's right to health protection. Implementation of the OHSA has required many regulations for occupational safety requirements for different occupations, including a list of occupational diseases, but occupational social security schemes are scarce. Occupational safety rules at workplaces are compulsory. The Labour Inspectorate handles state supervision regarding compliance with occupational health and safety requirements.

On 1 April 2013 the amended CSA entered into force, now making a distinction between officials (state or local government officials to perform the functions of the authority) and support personnel.⁴⁸ The period of employment in the civil service (from 1 April 2013 officials only) determine the right to increased old-age pensions according to their position and years of service. For example, judges receive a pension equal to 65-85 % of their final salary.

Several professions in the public sector have been awarded with special occupational pensions. Reforming this system is now debated due to the high costs involved. The right to a special pension is still granted to the officials of the defence forces and police. The law enforcement system is male dominated. There are various opinions regarding whether the special pensions system of law enforcement should be changed or completely abolished. Judges were opposed to changes and won the decision that retired judges have a right to receive pensions connected with the growing wages of acting judges.⁴⁹

6.4 Have the exclusions from the material scope as specified in Article 8 of Directive 2006/54 been implemented in national law?

No. Occupational security payments on voluntary social security by employees and employers are rare.

If employers pay for employees' sports activities, the fringe benefit tax should be paid. Some companies make contributions to the employees' pension fund. Granting special pension through the third pillar, however, requires an agreement between an official and the State. As such, insurance is voluntary.

6.5 Are there laws or case law which would fall under the examples of sex discrimination as mentioned in Article 9 of Directive 2006/54?

No.

6.6 Is sex used as an actuarial factor in occupational social security schemes?

No.

⁴⁸ In Estonia, at the end of 2014 there were 29 361 officials; 23 571 of them worked in state agencies and 5790 in local government agencies, <http://www.fin.ee/personnel-policy-of-state>, accessed 15 December 2015. The public sector included 119 000 people (about one sixth of the number of persons employed).

⁴⁹ Constitutional judgment No. 3-4-1-1-14 of the Supreme Court of Estonia of 26 June 2014, www.riigikohus.ee/?id=1516, accessed on 3 December 2015.

6.7 Are there specific difficulties in your country in relation to occupational social security schemes, for example due to the fact that security schemes in your country are not comparable to either statutory social security schemes or occupational social security schemes? If so, please explain with reference to relevant case law, if any.

Estonia did not manage to create a system for occupational accident insurance and occupational disease insurance. Only some insurance companies offer employees' insurance to corporate clients. Employers can conclude employees' insurance contracts (accident insurance, employer's health insurance, travel insurance, pension supplements to the third pillar). Corporate responsibility is punished in Estonia – employers are expected to pay income tax on fringe benefits.⁵⁰ On 1 January 2015 an amendment to the Income Tax Act (ITA) enters into force, which makes untaxed support in case of work capacity loss possible: Fringe benefits do not include expenses made for granting medical devices to an employee whose loss of capacity for work has been established to be 40 per cent and more (in the case of an auditory disability, decrease of auditory ability of 30 decibels and more) or whose degree of disability has been determined and the value of which does not exceed 50 per cent of the total size of payments subject to social tax made to the employee during one calendar year (Article 48(5.4) of the ITA).

According to data from the Health Board, women formed a majority of people with occupational disease: 74 % are women.

Life insurance is optional. Insurance is in many aspects highly gendered and there might be some indirect discrimination. It is suggested to people with dangerous jobs (e.g. drivers, builders, policemen, or people working with machinery and other similar mechanisms). Estonia has a gender-segregated labour market and in some fields of activities more work accidents occur. In 2014, 2982 men and 1653 women were injured as a result of a work accident, which means that 64 % of work accidents happened to men (in 2013 - 2635 men and 1548 women, the relative importance of men was 63 %). The majority of work accidents involved men aged 25-34.⁵¹

Life insurance is also suggested to persons who are the main or sole providers in their family. Women head the majority of single-parent families. In 2011, 20 % of children lived with a mother only and 1.5 % lived with a father.

⁵⁰ If the policyholder is a private person, insurance premiums and indemnities are exempt from tax. If the policyholder is a legal person, insurance premiums are deemed to be fringe benefits and relevant tax requirements will apply.

⁵¹ http://www.ti.ee/fileadmin/user_upload/failid/dokumendid/Meedia_ja_statistika/Toeokeskkonna_ulevaat_ed/2014/TKY_2014_ik.pdf, accessed 25 August 2015.

7. Statutory schemes of social security (Directive 79/7)

7.1 Is the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security implemented in national legislation?

Yes. Equal treatment for men and women is provided in Article 1(1) of the GEA, Article 14.1(1) of the IAA and in the OHSA.

Article 1(1) of the GEA states that the purpose of the GEA is to ensure equal treatment of men and women as provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia and to promote equality of men and women as a fundamental human right and for the public good in all areas of social life.

Article 14.1(1) of the IAA stipulates that the differences between insurance premiums and insurance indemnities of women and men shall not be caused by the use of the gender factor in the assessment of the insured risks. Neither pregnancy nor maternity shall affect the size of the insurance premiums and insurance indemnities.⁵²

Today the retirement age is different for women and men, but it will be the same in 2026, when the pensionable age will be 65. There is a transition period, starting in 2017 for the people born in 1954-1960; their retirement age will gradually be increasing by three months for every year of birth.

7.2 Is the personal scope of national law relating to statutory social security schemes more restricted or broader than specified in Article 2 of Directive 79/7? Please explain and refer to relevant case law, if any.

In the case of old age, incapacity for work or loss of a provider the State shall pay monthly financial social insurance benefits: a state pension. If self-employed persons have paid a minimum of social tax (the minimum payment is regulated by the State), then their income will be low in case of their illness, work inability and retirement.

7.3 Is the material scope of national law relating to statutory social security schemes more restricted or broader than specified in Article 3 par. 1 and 2 of Directive 79/7? Please explain and refer to relevant case law, if any.

The same.

There is a problem regarding the low wages of women (the gender pay gap being 30 %), which leads to a gender pension gap in the future.⁵³ Old-age, incapacity-for-work and survivor's pensions are based on former work input. Women's life expectancy is higher compared to men.

7.4 Have the exclusions from the material scope as specified in Article 7 of Directive 79/7 been implemented in national law? Please explain (specifying to what extent the exclusions apply) and refer to relevant case law, if any.

No.

⁵² On 10 June 2015 the new IAA was adopted, which enters into force on 1 January 2016. The Article about the gender factor in risk assessment follows the requirements in EU Directive 2004/113/EC.

⁵³ Estonia now has one of the smallest gender pension gaps, due to the influence from the Soviet years. After the indexed pension system from 1998, women often did not 'earn' the 1.000 index, but due to their low salaries they did not get to one pension year. The current legal principles of the state pension insurance system have been effective since 1999-2000. Then the old-age pension was linked to the amount of social tax paid by or on behalf of the person over the full career. Mandatory funded pensions started from 2002. Possibilities for supplementary funded pensions were created in 1998.

7.5 Is sex used as an actuarial factor in statutory social security schemes?

Yes, until 2026 women's and men's retirement age is slightly different.

7.6 Are there specific difficulties in your country in relation to implementing Directive 79/7? For example due to the fact that security schemes in your country are not comparable to either statutory social security schemes or occupational social security schemes? If so, please explain with reference to relevant case law, if any.

The Estonian social protection system is structured around three contributory social security schemes: pension insurance, health insurance and unemployment insurance. Pension insurance and health insurance are financed from a social tax, while unemployment insurance is funded by unemployment insurance contributions. The other schemes - family benefits, state unemployment allowances, national pension, death grants and social benefits for the disabled - are non-contributory, being financed from general state revenues.

Pensions are financed from social tax (13 % of gross pay) and payments for sick leave also depend on social taxes (20 % of gross pay). This means that income inequalities of women and men are persistent- women are paid 30 % less today and their pensions will be lower.

Estonia is preparing a work ability reform.⁵⁴ The aim is to make a shift in the attitudes in connection with partial work incapacity to reduced work capacity and ability to work. Permanent incapacity for work could be total or partial (10-90 %) if a person is able to do some work. Work incapacity 40-100 % gives a right to apply for work incapacity pension and it also gives health insurance. It is estimated that two thirds of these pensioners are employed. There are more than up to 100 000 people with reduced work capacity in Estonia. It is estimated that 42 % of them are currently employed. If the system will be not reformed, the prediction is that in 2023 there will be 117 000 pensioners with reduced work capacity, which is 16 % of the people of working age. This system is not sustainable and reform is needed. This means that many people who have minimum social security today will suffer. There are more disability pensioners and early-retirement pensioners among men than among women.⁵⁵

There are serious problems with paid sick leave for insured persons, because the first days are unpaid, then the employer pays and in the last place the State pays. Employers and sole proprietors have a compulsory part of social tax for health insurance coverage. There are payments, but protection is poor. Also there are serious problems in connection with unemployment. Employers and sole proprietors make compulsory payments to an unemployment insurance fund, but compensation in case of unemployment and related services are limited.

⁵⁴ *Work ability reform*, Ministry of Social Affairs, <http://sm.ee/en/work-ability-reform>, accessed 14 December 2015. The Ministry of Social Affairs is planning a reform by which every fifth incapacitated person would start working. According to the planned reform, partially incapacitated persons who work and earn Estonian average wages should be able to manage without any supplementary allowance starting from 2020 at the latest.

⁵⁵ http://www.shareestonia.ee/fileadmin/share_6_laine_uus/Gerti_KarilaidVidder_2015_Varajast_toeoteturult_lahkumist_mojutavad_tegurid.pdf, accessed 15 December 2015.

8. Self-employed workers (Directive 2010/41/EU and some relevant provisions of the Recast Directive)

8.1 Has Directive 2010/41/EU been explicitly implemented in national law?

Yes. In Estonia self-employed persons are called sole proprietors in legal texts.

On 14 June 2012, Parliament adopted the Act on Amendments to the Social Tax Act and Other Acts, which entered into force on 1 August 2012.⁵⁶ This Act ensures equal treatment of female and male sole proprietors and offers an opportunity for equal social protection of spouses participating in the activities of sole proprietors' businesses. Amendments were made to the Social Tax Act (STA), the Taxation Act (TA), the Health Insurance Act (HIA), the State Pension Insurance Act (SPIA), and the Labour Market Services and Benefits Act (LMSBA). There was no need for substantial amendments to the Gender Equality Act (GEA) and the Equal Treatment Act (ETA).

Estonia has explicitly amended the law to comply with Article 7. From 1 August 2012, sole proprietors can register their husband/wife as assisting spouse with the Tax and Customs Board office. Sole proprietors should pay a monthly minimum in social taxes for the spouse.

8.2 What is the personal scope related to self-employment in national legislation? Has your national law defined self-employed or self-employment? Please discuss relevant legislation and national case law (see Article 2 Directive 2010/41/EU)

The Commercial Code (CC) defines 'an entrepreneur' as a natural person and/or a company. According to the CC, this is a natural person who offers goods or services in his or her own name and for whom the sale of goods or provision of services is their permanent activity.

8.3 Related to the personal scope, please specify whether all self-employed workers are considered part of the same category and whether national legislation recognises life partners.

All categories are covered. More flexibility has been achieved in connection with sole proprietors' taxation. Agricultural workers and other persons are allowed to interrupt their social tax payments due to seasonal activities. On 20 January 2014 amendments to the Creative Persons and Artistic Associations Act (CPAAA) took effect to increase social protection for people engaged in a creative or liberal profession, whose income is often irregular. In cooperation with representing creative societies and associations and the Ministry of Culture and Sports social security was arranged for members of creative organisations.⁵⁷ A creative person may be a member of one or several artistic associations.

⁵⁶ *Sotsiaalmaksuseaduse ja teiste seaduste muutmise seadus* (Amendments to the Social Tax Act and related legal texts), 14 June 2012 (passed in Parliament on 14 June 2012), <http://www.riigikogu.ee/tegevus/eelnoud/eelnou/be4d767a-e504-4521-9b58-0080007ea808/Sotsiaalmaksuseaduse%20ja%20teiste%20seaduste%20muutmise%20seadus/#>, accessed 14 December 2015.

⁵⁷ According to the Creative Persons and Artistic Associations Act (CPAAA) 'a creative person is an author or a performer within the meaning of the Copyright Act who acts in the field of architecture, audiovisual arts, design, performing and stage arts, music and sound engineering, literature, visual arts or scenography'. A more convenient term to use is 'a freelancer', who is a person who works as a writer, designer, performer etc.

Estonian legislation only recognises married spouses. However, the CPA was adopted in 2014, and should enter into force on 1 January 2016. Amendments are necessary regarding a remarkable number of legal texts and regulations to implement the CPA.

8.4 How has national law implemented Article 4 Directive 2010/41/EU? Is the material scope of national law relating to equal treatment in self-employment more restricted or broader than specified in Article 4 Directive 2010/41/EU?

The material scope is the same. The principle of equal treatment already was a legal requirement before the transposition of Directive 2010/41. Article 3(2) of the GEA stipulates that 'equal treatment of men and women' means that there is no discrimination whatsoever based on sex, either directly or indirectly. Article 5(1) of the GEA prohibits direct and indirect discrimination including giving orders. This article entered into force in October 2009. It extends to self-employment when a self-employed person has employees.

8.5 Has your State taken advantage of the power to take positive action (see Article 5 Directive 2010/41/EU)? If so, what positive action has your country taken? In your view, how effective has this been?

Every year there are some projects to promote female entrepreneurship and encourage young women to start their own business. The State has been quite passive, but non-governmental organisations have taken initiative. One of success stories has been the ETNA Estonia Microcredit Project in 2012-2014, funded by the Open Estonia Foundation. Group mentoring, entrepreneurship trainings and microcredit was offered for rural women business start-ups.⁵⁸

8.6 Does your country have a system for social protection of self-employed workers (see Article 7 (Directive 2010/41/EU)?

Yes. Self-employed persons have the same rights as employees selling their work if they have applied for social security and have paid social taxes. Social protection of self-employed persons (sole proprietors) covers pension and health insurance.

Payment of social taxes is a precondition for obtaining revenues required for pension insurance and state health insurance. Estonian health insurance relies on the principle of solidarity. If a self-employed person has paid social taxes (advanced payment), her or his sick leave compensation depends on the amount paid. If payment was at the minimum level, the compensation for sick leave is also very low. When a self-employed person needs a doctor and treatment, there is no need for additional payment, in spite of the fact that only a symbolic amount of money was paid to the social fund. Significant differences will appear in the future, when tax policies and public pensions will be contrasted.

To apply for social protection is voluntary for adults in Estonia. Self-employed persons should make mandatory contributions to a funded pension scheme depending on her/his social tax payments. This is mandatory for employers, and self-employed persons are obliged to pay a mandatory minimum amount.

The Social Tax Act (STA) includes an exception that applies to sole proprietors who are incapable of working. They are not required to meet the minimum obligation of payment of social tax if they do not receive any income. The minimum obligation means that if no

⁵⁸ The idea of microcredit works on principles of group loan, which gives extra value of entrepreneurs making cooperation, acting together in the community, helping and supporting each other. More: www.fem.ee/meetmed/, accessed 16 February 2016.

income is earned, social tax must be paid during the year in an amount equal to 12 times the monthly rate.

To get social protection for spouses registration in the Tax and Customs Board is necessary and social contribution payments are mandatory.

8.7 Has Article 8 Directive 2010/41/EU regarding maternity benefits for self-employed been implemented in national law?

Yes. The Directive requires that women should be granted a maternity allowance and a leave of at least 14 weeks. In Estonia, a woman has the right to 140 calendar days (20 weeks) of pregnancy and maternity leave. However, self-employed female workers and assisting spouses of FIEs can receive maternity benefits, even without pregnancy and maternity leave. The precondition for these benefits is payment of social security contributions in the past year(s). A minimum payment is mandatory. The FIE and the registered assisting spouse have health insurance and free-of-charge medical aid (universal right for insured persons), but sick leave benefits depend on previous social tax payments. Parental benefits are universal benefits and not related to employment status. If social taxes have not been paid before childbirth, the national minimum parental benefits will be paid.

There is a serious problem with non-existing services supplying temporary replacements for FIEs who are on pregnancy or maternity leave. Some business associations (farmers' associations) have created some project-based social services. For micro-enterprises such as those of FIEs, there are also many subjective obstacles for creating national social services supplying temporary replacements.

8.8 Has national law implemented the provisions regarding occupational social security for self-employed persons (see Article 10 of Recast Directive 2006/54)?

No.

8.9 Has national law made use of the exceptions for self-employed persons regarding matters of occupational social security as mentioned in Article 11 of Recast Directive 2006/54? Please describe relevant law and case law.

Statutory social security schemes are applicable.

8.10 Is Article 14(1)(a) of Recast Directive 2006/54 implemented in national law as regards self-employment?

Yes. Article 6 of the GEA prohibits discrimination in professional life. Article 2 of the ETA explores the material scope. Gender is not explicitly mentioned as a ground of discrimination in the ETA. Article 3 of the CC allows any natural person to be a sole proprietor (self-employed).⁵⁹ A sole proprietor shall submit a petition for his or her entry into the commercial register before commencing the activity.

⁵⁹ <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/516062015010/consolide>, accessed 25 August 2015.

9. Goods and services (Directive 2004/113)

9.1 Does national law prohibit direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of sex in access to goods and services?

Yes. Article 7.1 of the GEA entered into force on 1 August 2012 (a supplier of goods or services is required to provide a written explanation concerning the activities of the supplier to a person who believes that he or she has been discriminated against in relation to the access to or supply of goods or services on the grounds of sex). Article 14.1 on the gender factor in the assessment of insured risk was added to the IAA, and entered into force on 6 May 2013. The new IAA was adopted on 10 June 2015 and enters into force on 1 January 2016.

Articles 2(1)(5) and 2(1)(7) of the ETA prohibit discrimination of persons on grounds of nationality (ethnic origin), race or colour in the access to the services of social welfare, social security and healthcare, including social benefits and in the access to and supply of goods and services which are available to the public, including housing.

9.2 Is the material scope of national law relating to access to goods and services more restricted or broader than specified in Article 3 of Directive 2004/113? Please explain and refer to relevant case law, if any.

In Estonia the scope is more restricted. Article 2(1)(7) of the ETA stipulates that discrimination of persons on grounds of nationality (ethnic origin), race or colour is prohibited in the access to and supply of goods and services which are available to the public, including housing. Article 5(1)(4.1) of the GEA includes some exceptions and differences available in the treatment of persons due to their sex in the supply of goods and services. In Estonia non-discrimination principles relating to the access to goods and services are followed, but a proactive approach is missing. For example, no attention is paid to the adoption of specific measures to prevent or compensate for disadvantages linked to sex.

9.3 Have the exceptions from the material scope as specified in Article 3(3) of Directive 2004/113, regarding the content of media, advertising and education, been implemented in national law?

No. However, job advertisements should not discriminate against anyone.

9.4 Have differences in treatment in the provision of the goods and services been justified in national law (see Article 4(5) of Directive 2004/113)? Please provide references to relevant law and case law.

Article 14.1(2) of the IAA provides that an insurance company is permitted in the assessment of insured risks in sickness insurance to take into account the risks which are characteristic only of persons of one gender, and to differentiate, if necessary, to the extent of the specified risks the insurance premiums and insurance indemnities of females and males.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ The current version of the IAA will be repealed on 31 December 2015. The new version has deleted this part of the Article.

9.5 Does national law ensure that the use of sex as a factor in the calculation of premiums and benefits for the purposes of insurance and related financial services shall not result in differences in individuals' premiums and benefits (see Article 5(1) of Directive 2004/113)?

Yes, in Article 14.1(1) of the IAA.

The differences between the insurance premiums and insurance indemnities of females and males must not be caused by the use of the gender factor in the assessment of the insured risks.

However, there is a problem with women on maternity leave and women and men who have a right to parental leave, but would like to work, since the interruption of parental leave could cause loss of rights to unemployment assistance. The UIA needs to be amended to avoid discrimination of clients who have paid unemployment insurance tax.⁶¹

9.6 How has the exception of Article 5(2) of Directive 2004/113 been interpreted in your country? Please report on the implementation of the C-236/09 Test-Achats ruling in national legislation.

Allmäe has analysed the implementation of the C-236/09 *Test-Achats* ruling in national legislation.⁶² Allmäe has found that some amendments to Article 14 of the Insurance Activity Act follow the *Test-Achats* ruling (Article 14.1(1) and Article 14.1(3) of the IAA), but the amendment in Article 14.1(2) is not the best. Allmäe proposes that 'sickness insurance' should be deleted or that Article 14.1(2) should be repealed entirely.⁶³ On 10 June 2015, a new version of the IAA was adopted and the Chapter about protection of clients' rights was added. Taking sex into account in risk assessment is regulated by Article 216, which is the same as Article 14.1 of the IAA (old version), but 14.1(2) is deleted.

9.7 Has your country adopted positive action measures in relation to access to and the supply of goods and services (see Article 6 of Directive 2004/113)?

No. However, Article 5(2) of the GEA has provided the basis for positive action measures in relation to the access to and supply of goods and services.

It should be mentioned that there have been attempts to establish a Child Maintenance Guarantee Fund by the State, which primarily supports children and women, because the majority of single parents are women. Regulations for the Fund have not yet been drafted.

⁶¹ More in Chapter 9.8.

⁶² Allmäe, A. (2014), *Erand diskrimineerimiskeelust kindlustusteenuse osutamisel*. (Exception to the prohibition of discrimination based on insurance group approach). Magistritöö (Master Thesis). Tartu Ülikool (University of Tartu).
http://dspace.utlib.ee/dspace/bitstream/handle/10062/43119/allmae_ma_2014.pdf?sequence=1, accessed 2 September 2015.

⁶³ Article 14.1(2) of the IAA stipulates that an insurance company shall be permitted in the assessment of insured risks in sickness insurance to take into account the risks which are characteristic only of persons of one gender, and to differentiate, if necessary, the insurance premiums and insurance indemnities of females and males to the extent of the specified risks.

9.8 Are there specific problems of discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy, maternity or parenthood in your country in relation to access to and the supply of goods and services? Please briefly describe relevant case law.

Padu has analysed problems with the implementation of the equality principle in the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Act (UIA).⁶⁴ One problem that Padu pointed out was connected with statutory childcare leaves: an insured person who has used a pregnancy leave, maternity leave, adoptive leave or parental leave in the relevant 36 months and has worked at the same time is treated differently from persons who did not. The 36-month period must be extended by the time spent on leave if there is no information in the unemployment insurance database concerning the person's unemployment insurance period. Currently, if a parent chooses to work, it will not be extended. With such regulation the Government discourages parents from working while home with a baby.

⁶⁴ Padu, K. (2015), *Võrdse kohtlemise põhimõtte probleeme Eesti töötuskindlustusõiguses* (Problems of Implementing Equality Principle in Estonian Unemployment Insurance Law), Magistr töö, Tartu Ülikool, http://dspace.utlib.ee/dspace/bitstream/handle/10062/47561/padu_kristiina.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y accessed 5 September 2015.

10. Violence against women and domestic violence in relation to the Istanbul Convention

10.1 Has your country ratified the Istanbul Convention?

No. It has not been ratified, but it has been signed. Estonia signed the IC on 2 December 2014. The Norway Grants programme 'Domestic and gender-based violence' has played an important role. The programme has supported training⁶⁵ and provision of support services for victims and women's shelters in Estonia. The programme has contributed to awareness raising about gender-based violence.

Tackling domestic violence was one of the priority issues on government level in 2014. A new national 2015-2020 Development Strategy for Preventing Violence was prepared in 2014.⁶⁶ The strategy is planned to reduce violence related to children, domestic violence, gender-based violence and trafficking in human beings. The Violence Prevention Strategy was discussed in Parliament on 18 February 2015 and the need to prepare for ratification the Istanbul Convention was emphasised.⁶⁷

One of the challenges for ratification of the Convention is the lack of an available and affordable victim support service system. A victim support service is defined in Article 3(1) of the Victim Support Act (VSA).⁶⁸ The victim support service is a public service aiming at maintaining or enhancing the ability to cope of persons who have fallen victim to negligence, mistreatment or physical, mental or sexual abuse. Victims reach the victim support specialist in various ways and often due to a good network of police, doctors, social workers, and other specialists.

Estonian legislation defines victims narrowly. There is a lack of such services, lack of funding, lack of information about existing services, and only some victims are seen to get support services paid by the state system. There is one restriction – victim support services by the Social Insurance Board are guaranteed for victims in cases where criminal proceedings have been commenced (Article 3(2) of the VSA) or to a minor who has been victim of human trafficking or sexual abuse. It is also expected that the victim has health insurance. There are legal amendments in progress to remove such restrictions. The Ministry of Justice is working on amendments and drafting regarding the VSA.

Article 3(2)(3) of the VSA states that safe accommodation should be part of the victim support service. In connection to shelters, state funding, reaching the target group (victims of violence) and availability are highly problematic. In 2015, there were thirteen women's shelters, providing female victims of violence and their children. Women's shelters have existed mostly based on projects and enthusiastic people. Currently there is a new project, funded by the Norway Grant programme (developing services for victims of domestic violence, strengthening co-operation between different institutions and raising awareness among victims and the general public).⁶⁹

⁶⁵ <http://www.kriminaalpolitika.ee/en/node/885>, accessed 17 December 2015.

⁶⁶ *Vägivalla ennetamise strateegia 2015-2020*, https://valitsus.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/arengukavad/vagivalla_ennetamise_strateegia_2015-2020_kodulehele.pdf, accessed 21 September 2015.

⁶⁷ Available in Estonian at: <http://stenogrammid.riigikogu.ee/et/201502181400#PKP-16665>, accessed 17 December 2015.

⁶⁸ Victim Support Act (VSA), <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/517062014014/consolide>, accessed 21 September 2015.

⁶⁹ <http://www.naisteliin.ee/index.php?keel=2&id=62>, accessed 20 May 2015.

In Estonia stalking is not legally addressed and legal protection against stalking is missing.⁷⁰

There is a lack of specialists, lack of shelters, and sustainable funding might be a serious obstacle. Social services are poorly funded and a lot of work is project based. One step towards IC ratification is the transposition of Directive 2012/29/EU into national law.⁷¹ Preparatory works on the transposition of the Victim's Directive started in May 2015.

The 2015-2020 Development Strategy for Preventing Violence and the 2015-2018 implementing plan⁷² was approved by the Government on 26 February 2015. The Strategy was discussed in the Legal Affairs Committee in the beginning of 2015, but not yet in general sittings in Parliament. Ratification of the IC was promised during the implementation of 'The 2015-2020 Development Strategy for Preventing Violence'.⁷³

⁷⁰ Article 137(1) of the PC stipulates that the observation of another person in order to collect information relating to such person by a person without the lawful right to engage in surveillance is punishable by a pecuniary penalty or up to three years' imprisonment.

⁷¹ Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA.

⁷² *Rakendusplan 2015-2018* (The 2015-2018 implementation plan), <http://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/et/rakendusplan-aastateks-2015-2018>, accessed 21 September 2015.

⁷³ Plan of implementation of the 2015-2020 Development Strategy for Preventing Violence, <http://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/et/rakendusplan-aastateks-2015-2018>, accessed 17 December 2015.

11. Enforcement and compliance aspects (horizontal provisions of all directives)

Article 4(3) of GEA stipulates that the shared burden of proof does not apply in administrative or criminal proceedings. There is a principle in administrative court procedures that the party to the proceedings has to prove the facts on which it based her or his allegations.⁷⁴

Prejudices and stereotyping might affect fair trial and should be avoided. In 2015, media debates were also connected to prejudices and gender stereotypes, which might lead to unfair judgments. Judges have access to training, but gender issues are not taught. Judges have a high workload. The term 'gender' is missing in the Code of Civil Procedure (CCP).⁷⁵ However, Article 7 stipulates that administration of justice must take place on the basis of equality ('the parties and other persons are equal before the law and the court').

Article 231(1) of the CCP stipulates that a fact, which the court deems to be a matter of common knowledge, need not be proved. A fact concerning which reliable information is available from sources outside the proceedings may be declared a matter of common knowledge by the court. Article 232(2) defines the procedure of evaluation of evidence and states that this decision is made according to the conscience of the court.

An employee has the right to claim compensation for unlawful termination and/or to continue the employment relationship. If the court or the labour dispute resolution body finds that the dismissal was unlawful, the employment contract is deemed not to have been terminated.

11.1 Victimisation

11.1.1 Are the provisions on victimisation implemented in national legislation and interpreted in case law?

Yes. Article 3(6) of the ETA stipulates that discrimination also includes a situation where one person is treated less favourably than others, suffers negative consequences because he or she has filed a complaint regarding discrimination or has supported a person who has filed such complaint.

The GEA provides general protection against victimization. Article 5(1.1) of the GEA stipulates that adverse treatment of a person, as well as causing negative consequences for that person due to the fact that that person has relied on the rights and obligations provided for in this Act or has supported another person in the protection of his or her rights provided for in this Act shall also be deemed to be discrimination.

The GEA does not stipulate any specific regulations concerning victimisation. Article 1(1) and Article 2(3) define persons who should be protected against discrimination and also explicitly specify representatives of the interests of employees or members of employees' organisation.

Article 89(5) of the ETA gives preferential rights of keeping a job to the employees' representative and an employee who is raising a child under the age of three upon cancellation of an employment contract due to lay-offs.

⁷⁴ Article 59 of the Code of Administrative Court Procedure, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/530032015001/consolide>, accessed 30 August 2015.

⁷⁵ <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/516062015009/consolide>, accessed 13 September 2015.

The protection against victimisation complies with Article 24 of Recast Directive 2006/54/EC.

11.2 Burden of proof

11.2.1 Does national legislation and/or case law provide for a shift of the burden of proof in sex discrimination cases?

Yes. In case of labour disputes concerning discrimination, the shared burden of proof prescribed in the ETA or in the GEA applies. In Estonia, the employer should keep data of the pool of candidates in the recruitment process to be able to provide explanations in the case of a claim.

Article 4 of the GEA specifies that an application of a person addressing a court, a labour dispute committee or the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner shall set out the facts on the basis of which it can be presumed that discrimination based on sex has occurred. In the course of proceedings, it shall be for the respondent to prove that there has been no breach of the principle of equal treatment. If the person refuses to provide proof, such refusal shall be deemed to be equal to acknowledgment of discrimination by that person.

11.3 Remedies and Sanctions

11.3.1 What types of remedies and sanctions (e.g. compensation, reinstatement, criminal sanctions, administrative fines etc.) exist in your country for breaches of EU gender equality law? Please specify the applicable legislation.

It is possible to demand termination of the harmful activity, to obtain the opinion of the equality body (Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, Chancellor of Justice), to receive compensation as 'a reasonable amount of money' according to court decision, and to be reinstated.

According to the CSA, an pregnant official or official who has the right to pregnancy and maternity leave (also who is raising a child under the age of seven) is entitled to demand that the administrative act on his or her release from service be declared unlawful upon unlawful release from service, to demand amendment of the basis for the release from service and compensation in the amount of six average monthly salaries. The court may amend the amount of compensation, taking account of the circumstances for the termination of the service relationship and considering mutual interests. The dismissed official is also entitled to demand, upon the unlawful release from service, the cancellation of the administrative act on his or her release from service, reinstatement of himself or herself into service and remuneration for the period of forced absence from the service.

Grounds for compensation for damage in relation to unequal treatment or discrimination have not been defined in the State Liability Act (SLA), which is a general Act regulating compensation for damage caused by a public authority, or in any other Act.

Claims for compensation related to discrimination have been rare. In 2014, unlawfully treated employees were paid EUR 71 000 by employers.⁷⁶ This shows that only small awards of compensation are paid.

⁷⁶ *Soolise võrdõiguslikkuse ja võrdse kohtlemise voliniku 2014. aasta tegevuse ülevaade* (The 2014 annual report by the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner), *Soolise võrdõiguslikkuse ja võrdse kohtlemise voliniku kantselei* (2015), available at (in Estonian): <http://www.vordõigusvolinik.ee/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/SVV-Aastaaruanne-2014.pdf>, accessed 30 August 2015.

Article 13 of the GEA regulates the issues of compensation for damage. Article 13(1) stipulates that if the rights of a person are violated due to discrimination, he or she may demand from the person who violates the rights the termination of the harmful activity and compensation for the damage on the basis of and pursuant to the procedure provided by law. Article 13(2) provides that an injured party may demand that, in addition to the provisions of subsection (1) of this section, a reasonable amount of money be paid to the party as compensation for non-patrimonial damage caused by the violation. According to Article 13(3), upon determination of the amount of compensation, a court or a labour dispute committee shall take into account, *inter alia*, the scope, duration and nature of the discrimination.

In employment relationships, the general principles of responsibility of the employer and employees are stipulated in the ECA; additionally the remedies of the general law of obligations can be applied if the employee is guilty of violation (Article 72 of the ECA). Liabilities of the employee and specifications for compensation for damage to the employer are more clearly provided in the ECA compared with compensation for damage to the employee.

11.3.2 In your opinion, do the remedies and sanctions meet the standards of being effective, proportionate and dissuasive? Please explain, if possible referring to relevant legislation or case law.

There are few cases to compare and evaluate effectiveness and dissuasiveness. There is one recent case on age discrimination, which could be highlighted.⁷⁷ According to Decision No. 3-14-164/38 of 10 October 2014, the Tartu administrative court found age discrimination, because the redundant employee had higher qualifications compared to other employees in the same position. The employer claimed that this employee had poor social skills. According to Article 24(1) and 24(2) of ETA in this case of redundancy also a compensation for damage should be paid and it was found that the annual wage was 'a reasonable amount of money' to be paid to the person as compensation for non-patrimonial damage caused by the violation.

11.4 Access to courts

11.4.1 In your opinion, is the access to courts safeguarded for alleged victims of sex discrimination? Please explain and discuss particular difficulties and barriers victims of sex discrimination have encountered. Refer to relevant legislation and case law.

There are several obstacles:

- Poor knowledge of discrimination issues;
- Only few cases of sex discrimination have reached the courts;
- People do not have the experience or habit to defend their own rights;
- Estonia is a small country and employers do not like claimants; it is complicated to find a job after a court case;
- Defending one's own rights is expensive;
- Court procedures are time consuming (many years of court disputes do not help the victim to cope with injustice);
- Faith in courts could be low due to media debates.

⁷⁷ Available at (in Estonian): https://www.riigiteataja.ee/kohtuteave/maa_ringkonna_kohtulahendid/menetlus.html?kohtuasjaNumber=3-14-164/38, accessed 8 September 2015.

11.4.2 In your opinion, is the access to courts safeguarded for anti-discrimination/gender equality interest groups or other legal entities? Please explain and refer to relevant legislation and case law.

Before starting court proceedings, good advice should be asked from the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner. The Commissioner gives an opinion about the case and prospects in court proceedings. A victim could apply for advice and support from civil activists. In spite of existing supportive networks there are few court cases.

In 2014, the mandate of the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner was debated several times in the drafting process and communications between the Commissioner and the Ministry of Justice. The Commissioner's opinion was that the Commissioner's mandate should be broader. The Commissioner should have the right to take discrimination cases to court.⁷⁸ The Ministry of Justice opposes this proposal. The Ministry of Justice refers to the possibility in Article 3(2) of the CCP:

'In the cases prescribed by law, the court also conducts proceedings in a civil matter if a person files a claim with the court for the protection of a presumed right or interest protected by law of another person or the public.'

Article 44(1) of the Code of Administrative Court Procedure (CACP) stipulates that a person may have recourse to an administrative court only for the protection of his or her rights. However, Article 44(4) provides that the Government, a local authority or a legal person in public law may bring an action against another public authority for the purpose of protection of its rights.

11.4.3 What kind of legal aid is available for alleged victims of gender discrimination?

Victims of gender discrimination could consult the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner. The Office of the Commissioner can assist if persons have been treated less favourably due to their being a parent or having family obligations, or because they belong to a trade union. The Commissioner also provides assistance in compiling a submission or a claim to a court or a labour dispute committee at the Labour Inspectorate. In the case of suspected discrimination, the Commissioner gives an Opinion, giving a legal assessment of the case.

11.5 Equality body

11.5.1 Does your country have an equality body that seeks to implement the requirements of EU gender equality law?

Yes.

- Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner
<http://svv.ee>
<http://www.vordoigusvolinik.ee>
- Chancellor of Justice
<http://oiguskantsler.ee>

1. The Commissioner covers discrimination on grounds of sex, nationality (ethnic origin), race or skin colour, religion, views, age, disability or sexual orientation. The

⁷⁸ The Ministry of Justice believes that the Commissioner could take a case to court in the name of the claimant. The Ministry opposes the possibility that the Equality Commissioner takes a case to the civil or administrative court in the name of the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, but with the claim of the claimant.

Commissioner also assists people who suspect that they have been discriminated against due to their family obligations, or belonging to a trade union.

2. The Chancellor of Justice conducts a conciliation procedure if the complainant states having been discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, nationality (ethnic origin), colour, language, origin, religion or religious beliefs, political or other opinion, property or social status, age, disability, sexual orientation, or other discrimination grounds specified by law.

The Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner is an independent and impartial expert who acts independently, monitors compliance with the requirements of the ETA and the GEA and performs other functions imposed by law. The Commissioner works with the assistance of the Office of the Commissioner. The activities of the Commissioner and the Office are financed from the state budget. In 2014-2015 there was an important support from the Norway Grants.

Article 16 of the ETA stipulates that the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner:

- gives advice and assists persons in the filing of complaints regarding discrimination;
- provides opinions concerning alleged cases of discrimination on the basis of the applications filed by persons or on his or her own initiative on the basis of the information obtained;
- analyses the effect of laws on the situation of persons classifiable on grounds specified in the ETA and on the situation of men and women in society;
- makes proposals to the Government of the Republic, government authorities, local governments and their authorities for alteration of and amendments to legislation;
- gives advice and informs the Government of the Republic, government authorities and local government authorities on issues relating to the implementation of the ETA and the GEA;
- publishes reports on the implementation of the principle of gender equality and equal treatment;
- cooperates with other persons and entities to promote gender equality and equal treatment;
- takes measures to promote equal treatment and gender equality.

2. The Chancellor of Justice has several duties, one of which is to resolve discrimination disputes, which arise between persons under private law.

11.6 Social partners

11.6.1 What kind of role do the social partners in your country play in ensuring compliance with and enforcement of gender equality law? Are there any legislative provisions in this respect?

Article 24 of the GEA provides that an official advisory body within the Ministry of Social Affairs is the Gender Equality Council. This Article was implemented in 2013, when the Council was established. In 2004-2013 there was no such council.⁷⁹ The Government of the Republic should approve membership. The Gender Equality Council is invisible to the wider public.

Interest groups and the public are involved in the preparation of a legislative initiative, regarding a draft Act, also in the ex-post impact assessment of an Act. Explanatory

⁷⁹ Members of the Gender Equality Council represent many institutions and organisations. The Founding Regulations are available at (in Estonian): <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/329102013003>, accessed 10 September 2015.

memoranda should contain annexes with the position of interest groups and social partners.

Problems arise concerning capacity and resources to take an active role in the law-making process. Interest groups are more active in making inquiries. NGOs are more active when there is some project making resources available and enabling active partnership and lobbying.

Interpellations are submitted to ministers responding in Parliament sessions. For example, the interpellation concerning the Gender Equality Council was submitted to the Prime Minister by a group of MPs on 14 November 2012. On 14 January 2013, MPs confronted the Prime Minister with further questions using the same method.⁸⁰

The Estonian Women's Associations Roundtable (EWAR) was established in 2003, a member of the European Women's Lobby, should coordinate the women's movement in Estonia. EWAR tries to react promptly to problems affecting equality between women and men.⁸¹ The Women's Studies and Resource Centre (ENUT) was established in 1997. ENUT promotes gender equality, provides services for policy makers, researchers and students, media, other NGOs, and the general public in the field of gender equality.⁸²

The Estonian LGBT Association represents the Estonian LGBT people, and is active in awareness raising regarding LGBT topics in society through education and advocacy.

Ad-hoc pressure groups are social networks and Internet communities, e.g. FB groups 'Virginia Woolf sind ei karda', 'Lilli Suburg', 'Feministeerium'.⁸³

Trade unions' contributions have been modest regarding the promotion of gender equality.

There are legal requirements for the involvement of interest groups in the law-drafting process:

- Regulation of the Government 'Rules for Good Legislative Practice and Legislative Drafting', entered into force on 1 January 2012;⁸⁴
- Rules of the Government of the Republic;⁸⁵
- Good Practice of Involvement.⁸⁶

11.7 Collective agreements

11.7.1 To what extent does your country have collective agreements that are used as means to implement EU gender equality law? Please indicate the legal status of collective agreements in your country (binding/non-binding, usually declared to be generally applicable or not).

⁸⁰ The main issue concerned the lack of monetary and human resources allocated to the Office of the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner.

⁸¹ <http://www.enut.ee/enut.php>, accessed 10 September 2015.

⁸² www.enut.ee, accessed 14 December 2015.

⁸³ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/WoolfEiKarda/?fref=ts>,
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/373274936108330/?fref=ts>,
<https://www.facebook.com/feministeerium?fref=ts>, accessed 10 September 2015.

⁸⁴ RT I, 29.12.2011, 228, acronym in Estonian HÖNTE,
<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/508012015003/consolide>, accessed 10 September 2015.

⁸⁵ Available at (in Estonian): <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/129122011233>, accessed 10 September 2015.

⁸⁶ Adopted in 2011. Available at (in Estonian): <https://riigikantselei.ee/et/kaasamise-hea-tava>, accessed 10 September 2015.

Any applicable collective agreement must be referred to in the employment contract. Collective agreements are compulsory in a limited number of sectors and organisations. Collective agreements do not generally have a significant impact on employment relations.

Collective agreements are not widespread instruments in Estonia. About one third of enterprises with more than five employees are estimated to have a collective agreement. Pärnits has studied collective agreements and found that collective agreements are traditional and mainly determine wage and working conditions. Contemporary and novel issues like reconciling work and family, equal treatment, in-service training and re-training, and involvement of employees in decision making are very rare topics in collective agreements.⁸⁷ Pärnits has found that:

Estonian collective agreements rarely or never cover areas that have become topical in recent years, such as equal treatment, supporting the coherence of work and family life (free time for family-related activities or measures that support raising children), involvement of employees in the decision-making process, or terms impacting on the company or sector economy (including innovation, sustainability, productivity of work, quality or work-related investments) or employment.⁸⁸

Pärnits has stated that more flexibility for exceptions in agreements and increasing security of the employment relationship through the application of the principle of equal treatment should be reflected in collective agreements.

⁸⁷ Pärnits, K. (2015), *Kollektiivlepingu roll ja regulatsioon nüüdisaegsetes töösuhetes* (Role and regulation of collective agreements in modern employment relationships), Dissertatsioon, Tartu Ülikool, http://dspace.utlib.ee/dspace/bitstream/handle/10062/45479/kadi_parnits_rmtk.pdf?sequence=1, accessed 10 September 2015.

⁸⁸ Pärnits, K (2015), p. 103.

12. Overall assessment

The transposition of equality directives into Estonian legislation has been satisfactory. There are some gaps with missing legal concepts of gender identity and stalking. Different discrimination grounds and areas of social life could be recast in the ETA. The ETA has several sets of grounds of discrimination in various areas of life and protection against discrimination depends on belonging to a discriminated minority group.⁸⁹

The principle of equality and prohibition of discrimination are stipulated in the Constitution. The Constitution has a broad approach to the equality principle and non-discrimination. Gender equality legislation has a short history; the GEA was adopted in 2004. The Equal Treatment Act (ETA) entered into force on 1 January 2009. There are no articles about law-enforcement supervision in the GEA and in the ETA.

Law enforcement is a challenge. The GEA and the ETA have a small number of articles about implementation and define duties of respective bodies, but no state supervision is foreseen. In 2015, the Ministry of Justice expressed the opinion that there is no need for amendments to the GEA and the ETA in this respect because state supervision takes place regarding the implementation of other legal acts (Employment Contracts Act, Civil Service Act, Health Insurance Act etc.) in which equality requirements are stipulated.

There have been only few court cases on sex discrimination. There are several reasons for this such as low awareness, low willingness, and little experience regarding protection of rights. Obstacles could be the high cost of legal advice and the time-consuming procedures.

There has not been any case law providing an interpretation of indirect discrimination. There is a need for monitoring activities to ensure the uniform application of indirect discrimination. There is a challenge in connection with poor training of judges in gender issues and different wording of employment protection in the ECA and in the CSA. Regarding employment relationships there are still problems with persons who work under law of obligations contracts.⁹⁰ This creates legal confusion in case law.⁹¹

In order to increase awareness and improve the implementation of the GEA and the ETA, it is necessary for gender equality and equal treatment to be clearly highlighted in policies at the national level. The gender equality strategy and action plan could offer a solution in this respect. Opposing statements argue that for the public good it would be better to work with a smaller number of strategies and to incorporate gender equality in every strategy as a horizontal measure. Unfortunately, gender mainstreaming has not been a successful approach to move towards a more gender-balanced society in Estonia.

There is a need to increase the number of people in the Office of the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner and in the Equality Policies Department funded by the State. It is important to review the mandate of the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner to ensure more effective equal treatment enforcement. The Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner has asked the Auditor General to perform a national gender equality policy audit.⁹² According to the GEA 9(1) the state and local government authorities are required to promote gender equality systematically

⁸⁹ Article 2(1) and 2(2) of the ETA, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/530102013066/consolide/current>, accessed 14 December 2015.

⁹⁰ In Estonia, an employment relationship may be covered by the ECA, the LOA and the CSA. The weakest link concerning social security is working under the law of obligations.

⁹¹ Decision No. 3-14-164/38 of 10 October 2014 made by the Tartu administrative court (based on the CSA) and Decision No. 3-2-1-152-11 of 2 February 2012 of the Supreme Court of Estonia.

⁹² <http://www.noodls.com/view/1D69B157E867AE14648DFC0D23CFC7238B7CE0C4?9700xxx1439820991>, accessed 17 December 2015.

and purposefully. Their duty is to change the conditions and circumstances that hinder the achievement of gender equality.

Annexes

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