

Social inclusion in Estonia

Roughly 100 years ago, the Estonian people were caught in a battle for independence from the Russian Empire, from 1917 to 1920. The most significant day was February 24th, 1918, on which Estonia declared statehood.

The Republic of Estonia has been an independent state since 1918, shortly interrupted by the half a century long Soviet occupation following the World War II. Estonia restored its independence in 1991, known as The Singing Revolution that was inspired by the more than century-old song festival tradition. Today's Estonia is a thriving and forward-looking member state of EU and NATO, where you can vote online and start your own business in less than half an hour. Many have done so already, including the founders of Skype and TransferWise. Through the years our country achieved a lot, but which social inclusion goals we achieved?

295,000 Estonian residents lived at risk of poverty 2017 year. According to Statistics Estonia, 22.6% of the Estonian population lived at risk of poverty in 2017. The percentage of people at risk of poverty increased 1.6 percentage points compared to the previous year.

The increase in the at-risk-of-poverty rate was due to that the income of persons who had previously earned slightly higher income than the risk-of-poverty threshold, increased at a slower rate than the risk-of-poverty threshold and in 2017 remained below the risk-of-poverty threshold.

In 2017, a person was considered to be at risk of poverty if his/her equivalised monthly disposable income was smaller than 523 euros (469 euros in 2016) and in absolute poverty if his/her equivalised monthly disposable income was smaller than 207 euros (200 euros in 2016).

In 2017, 3.4% of the Estonian population, i.e. 44,000 people, were living in absolute poverty, which is 0.2 percentage points more than in 2016.

The at-risk-of-poverty rate anchored at a fixed moment in time, i.e. the share of people with an equivalised yearly disposable income lower than the at-risk-of-poverty threshold three years ago adjusted for inflation, has decreased from 12.8% to 12.2% over the year.

Social transfers (state benefits and pensions) helped to prevent falling into poverty, as had they not been included in income, 38.5% of the population would have been at risk of poverty (39.2% a year before) and 22.8% in absolute poverty (24.6% a year before).

Compared to 2016, the at-risk-of-poverty rate has decreased both among children and among young people, but has increased among older people. In 2017, 47.5% of persons aged 65 and over were living at risk of poverty (41.2% in 2016). Among children under 18, the at-risk-of-poverty rate was 15.9%, i.e. 0.6 percentage points lower than in the previous year. The absolute poverty rate of children fell as well – from 3.5% in 2016 to 3.2% in 2017.

At-risk-of-poverty rate is the share of persons with equivalised yearly disposable income lower than the at-risk-of poverty threshold. The at-risk-of-poverty threshold is 60% of the median equivalised yearly disposable income of household members. Equivalised disposable income is the total household income, which is divided by the sum of equivalence scales of all household members.

The estimations are based on the Estonian Social Survey, which has been conducted by Statistics Estonia since 2004. Nearly 6,100 households participated in the survey in 2018. The survey collects data about the yearly income, which is why the survey of 2018 asked about the income of 2017. The yearly income is necessary for calculating the indicators of poverty and inequality. The social survey is conducted by statistical organisations in all European Union countries on the basis of a harmonised methodology by the name of EU-SILC. For the statistical activity “Estonian Social Survey”, the main representative of public interest is the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Diversity of nationalities in Estonia is one of the issues in our country. Especially, a lot of debates between Russian speaking and Estonian speaking population about education language. Then language issues are coming to adult society, where people need to have a knowledge of national language, Estonian. Some companies don't want to have a deal with non Estonians people. Estonian Diversity charter says that with consideration for the diversity of Estonian society aware of the importance to the success of companies of taking diversity into consideration, including in the promotion of innovation and creativity, in finding new and a more diverse range of clients and business partners and in reacting rapidly to changes; and bearing in mind that in accordance with the constitution and other laws all forms of discrimination are prohibited,

They have agreed on the following:

1. within they company we shall value mutual respect, diversity and the principle of equal treatment;
2. in the management of the company they shall place emphasis on consideration for diversity, ensuring that this is reflected in every aspect of the company's operations;
3. we shall pursue a staffing policy which ensures the optimum use and equal treatment of all employees, eschewing discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnic background, skin colour, age, disability, sexual orientation and religious or political views;
4. we shall work to ensure that the diversity of Estonian society is reflected in our workforce;
5. we shall defend our staff against discrimination;
6. we shall inform our staff of their rights and obligations in implementing the principle of equal treatment;
7. we shall create opportunities for staff and clients to better understand the need for and benefits of the principle of equal treatment and ensure that cases of discrimination are resolved impartially and effectively;
8. we shall draft and regularly update an action plan for the promotion of the principle of equal treatment and for consideration of diversity which shall incorporate measurable

performance indicators and in the drafting and implementation of which all staff shall be included;

9. we shall continuously monitor progress in the achievement of the objectives set out in this charter; and
10. we shall inform our staff, our clients and the public of other companies and institutions that have signed up to the charter and of success in fulfilling its objectives.

Our team proud to say, that previous years issue have become not so common. Our population is more aware about cultures and ready to go together for diversity. Despite of some changes in education, percentage of subjects in Estonian is growing up and education is becoming 100% in Estonian, for other nationalities, especially for younger generation, we can say that it is a benefit. Young generation will not have such a huge problems as older generation had before. Practise makes perfect or at least it helps to make one more step for our country aim, which is be together for diversity.

Sources:

<https://www.stat.ee/news-release-2018-133>

<https://humanrights.ee/en/topics-main/mitmekesisus-ja-kaasatus/mitmekesisuse-kokkulepe/>