

Crime Prevention in Estonia

Population (as of 1 January 2022): 1 328 439

Crime statistics: Recorded criminal offences (2020) 25 817, see more: <https://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/kuritegevus2020/>.

Prevention work in cooperation of state, regional and local authorities

General crime prevention information is found on the [crime prevention website](#), there is information about crime prevention events, national policies, research, news and suggestions for citizens (for example juvenile crime, victim support, etc).

National Crime Prevention Council is working as advising body to the government since 1993 and crime prevention on the state level is coordinated through National Crime Prevention Council. Information about the Council is found [here](#). This Council will be united in 2022 with two other state council, who are active on the prevention field, Child Protection Council and also Council of Drug Policy.

Estonian definition of crime prevention

The definition of the crime prevention, also the role, and the assignments of the state and national council are described in the [law enforcement act](#) as follows:

Chapter 2 Prevention of Offences

§ 17. Prevention of offences

The prevention of offences is an activity the purpose of which is the avoidance of offences and other disturbances, the reduction of the effect of factors favouring offences, and the guarantee of public order.

§ 18. Measures for preventing offences

Measures for preventing offences are:

- 1) social and educational prevention measures—reduction of the effect of factors giving rise to offences primarily by means of social, education, family, youth, cultural, alcohol and narcotics policy;
- 2) prevention measures of circumstances—influencing of persons with a tendency to commit offences or of criminogenic situations, and monitoring of criminogenic locations;
- 3) measures for eliminating consequences—activity for avoiding the commission of repeated violations by persons who have committed offences and for protecting legal order as well as for contributing to the compensation for damage caused by offences.

§ 19. Duties of state in prevention of offences

(1) The prevention work at the state level shall be organized by the Government of the Republic through the offence prevention council and ministries and authorities within their area of government.

(2) Ministries shall ensure in their respective areas of government in the planning and implementation of every relevant decision and activity the assessment of the effect thereof on prevention of offences.

§ 20. Offence prevention council

(1) The offence prevention council (hereinafter the *Council*) is a government committee whose duty is to:

- 1) Co-ordinate the prevention of offences and set the objectives of the national criminal policy;
- 2) form a punishment policy for the purposes of preventing offences;

- 3) Raise issues pertaining to the criminal policy and provide the minister responsible for the field with an opinion on the most important decisions of the criminal policy before the decisions are submitted to the Government of the Republic;
- 4) Consult local governments on prevention work.

(2) The Council comprises the ministers responsible for the field and the representatives of other related fields, including the representatives of relevant authorities.

(3) The Council may involve other experts in its working groups.

(4) The carriage of affairs of the Council shall be organized by the Ministry of Justice.

(5) The number of the members of the Council and the rules of procedure of the Council shall be established by a regulation of the Government of the Republic.

(6) Interim and permanent working groups may be set up with the Council.

(7) The specific rules of procedure and tasks of interim and permanent working groups set up with the Council shall be established and the members thereof shall be determined by a directive of the minister responsible for the field.

[RT I, 13.03.2014, 4 – entry into force 01.07.2014].

§ 21. Civil courage award

(1) The Offence Prevention Council confers the civil courage award for preventing a criminal offence or for hindering the commission thereof, for detaining a person apprehended upon the commission of a criminal offence or immediately after while attempting to escape, for helping a victim of a criminal offence and for other significant contribution to increasing the sense of security of people.

(2) The establishment of the civil courage award, its description and the procedure for applying for the award shall be provided by the statute of the award.

(3) The statute of the civil courage award shall be established by a regulation of the minister responsible for the field. The draft regulation shall be coordinated with the Government Office.

(3) Civil courage awards shall be conferred in accordance with the statute of the award.

§ 22. Financing of prevention of offences

(1) The prevention of offences at the state level shall be financed from the state budget through relevant ministries.

(2) The prevention of offences at the local government level shall be financed from the local government budget.

Estonian strategic documents, incl issues of crime prevention:

[General Principles of Criminal Policy until 2030](#) is Parliament level strategic guidelines, which set general guidance for the areas and define the definitions, also describing general goals in the criminal policy and crime prevention focuses are brought out in relation to the crimes against persons, violent crimes and also organized crimes and in security policy in relation to the securing public order.

On the government level there are two strategies adopted, highlighting the criminal policy priorities, one is [Violence prevention Agreement](#) drafted under the coordination of the Ministry of Justice and the other is a [Strategy for the Development Plan for Security for the years 2020-2030](#) drafted by the Ministry of the Interior. Both of the state strategies are addressing the issues of the children in risk and networking in the local governments.

- [The Violence Prevention Agreement](#) covers the prevention and combating of various forms of interpersonal violence. The main focus is on violence against children, while new topics include violence against the elderly and mental violence. Hate crimes, which have received less attention so far, have also been addressed to some extent. The agreement sets out 14

measures for violence prevention. The agreement does not include a complete list of violence prevention activities. The focus is on problems that still need more attention or have so far been overshadowed or where the expected progress has not been made. The measures cover activities at different levels of prevention.

- [The Development Plan for Security for the years 2020-2030](#) foresees security in a broader perspective as combination of national security concept, ensuring law and order and fighting against offences, and takes into consideration different aspects that influence security (social, medical, educational, economic well-being, globalization, demographic situation etc.). Responsibility for safety and security is shared and ensured in cooperation by proactive people, non-governmental organisations, volunteers, private companies, local governments and state authorities. Activities focus on development of safer communities, ensuring of enhanced rescue capability, organisation of competent and rapid help, prevention of crises and increasing preparedness for emergencies, increasing internal security, balanced citizenship and migration policy, liable and secure identity management and enhanced border management. The aim is to create better living environment through use of smart, optimal and effective technology and IT solutions, decrease threat to life, health, property and constitutional order and ensure competent and rapid help.

State developments

The [agreement of universal prevention](#) implemented multi-dimensionally and cross-ministerial way has been agreed by the ministers in spring 2021. It has been developed on the bases of the [concept of universal prevention](#) has been drafted in leading by the Ministry of the Interior in order to develop consistent and systematic approach to first level prevention, describe role of different policy areas and institutions on state, local and regional level and set the criteria for deciding whether preventive action is effective on the scale of evidence based prevention. The discussion over the developmental plan of the agreement is ongoing and the plan is to discuss it on the ministerial committees' level in 2022, when the changes of the state level committees has been done in Parliament.

The Ministry of the Interior has formed a cross-sectoral steering group for the [prevention of Domestic Violence](#) for coordinated and strong collaborations, communications and actions between the ministries, subdivisions, municipalities and NGOs. The overall goal is to reduce domestic violence and gender-based violence in Estonia, raise the awareness among victims and the public.

Good practices

State provides crime prevention finances through various programmes and project support allocations (state budget, through gambling tax committee, project allocations, etc.). Since 2015 the evidence based positive parenting programme [Incredible Years](#) and family based programme for the juveniles with serious behavioural problems [Multi-dimensional Family Therapy](#) are implemented, both are financed by the state budget. Also social skills programme [Good Behaviour Game](#) is in use since 2014, also in use is anti-bullying programme [KiVA](#). List of the evidence-based and other prevention programs is provided: <http://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/et/teemalehed/sotsiaalprogrammid>.

Regional level of competence:

In 2017 administrative reform was done for reorganization of the counties and municipalities and after the reform country governments are gone and lots of the municipalities united, now we have 79 municipalities, from which 15 towns and 64 local governments (parishes). Regional administration is now carried out by sectoral state authorities administered by governmental authorities, being either associations of the local governments or coordination is led by the developmental centres' of the region.

Community based approach on regional level is implemented through **county safety and health councils** which were established in 2015 by support of the European Social Fund by Ministry of the Interior. All counties have established their own format of crime prevention networking, usually more regular information exchange is taking place between the local authorities of various cities/municipalities of the same county, and the local police prefecture (which covers the whole county), and other state key-agencies in security. The information **on security in broader perspective** is exchanged, the county-specific problems and solutions are acknowledged in co-operation, and action plans are drafted and monitored every year and also cooperation questions between all the counties are discussed on state level seminars at least 2 a year.

Local authorities:

According to the recent change in municipalities' legislation all the municipalities and also cooperation partners since 2018 have to plan public health and prevention activities into local level development strategies and also collect information and fill out regularly the public health profiles, which can be used as risk-assessment tool for decision making regards solutions to the main public health, safety problems and prevention activities.

Role of the NGO-s:

The activities of non-profit associations (NGO-s) in terms of preventive work have activated over the recent years. More and more organisations see ensuring security as one of their activities. The non-profit sector is the most active in terms of attending to youth, incl. ordinary and problematic young people. At the same time, several non-profit associations have aimed their activities to punished persons, persons on probation and persons who have released from prison in order to help them integrate into society. The non-profit sector supports the state and local authorities primarily as a service provider, both in terms of crime prevention and various other fields, because several services, which the state or local authority can purchase from the non-profit sector, cannot be provided through their own system.

Role of the individuals:

Individuals are the most active participants in crime prevention through the Neighbourhood Watch movement, also being a volunteer in the security area (assistant police officer or fireman). In general, the numbers of volunteers are on the rise considering all different security volunteering possibilities (see the fact sheet [here](#) on pages 9-14). At the same time, there are people who are not organised for increasing security, but who help fellow citizens in specific criminal episodes by either catching robbers, thieves or helping victims or actively notifying the police about committed crimes. These people individually show civil courage. Since 2004 civil courage awards are given as recognition to these brave and courageous citizens by the Minister of Justice, who is acting also as the head of the National Crime Prevention Council.