

ESTONIA 2015 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Estonia is a multiparty, constitutional democracy with a unicameral parliament, a prime minister as head of government, and a president as head of state. The prime minister and cabinet generally represent the party or coalition of parties with a majority of seats in the parliament. Parliamentary elections took place on March 1, and on April 9, a new coalition government took office. It was led by the incumbent prime minister, Taavi Roivas, and composed of the Reform and Social Democratic parties and the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union. The elections were considered free and fair. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces.

There were no reports of egregious human rights abuses.

Human rights problems reported during the year included allegations that police at times used excessive force when arresting suspects, poor conditions in some detention centers, and a large number of noncitizen residents whose rate of naturalization remained low. Other problems included domestic violence; inequality of women's and men's salaries; incidents of child abuse; trafficking, primarily of women for sexual exploitation and men and women for forced labor elsewhere in the EU; inadequate access to public services by persons with disabilities, especially in rural areas; and harassment and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons, which reportedly remained routine within society.

The government took steps to investigate, prosecute, and punish officials who committed violations.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits such practices, but there were reports that police used excessive physical force and verbal abuse during the arrest and questioning of some suspects. In 2014 authorities filed 16 cases against police officers for excessive use of force, a 50 percent decline from the previous year.

On January 9, the Tallinn Circuit Court found a police officer guilty of using excessive force in 2011, thus affirming a 2014 decision of the Parnu County Court sentencing the officer to one year in prison and three years' probation. The former police officer appealed the initial verdict, as did the Police and Border Guard Board, which appealed the indemnity the county court granted to the victims. The circuit court, while upholding most of the county court's decision, increased the indemnity to one victim.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison and detention center conditions generally met international standards, although there were reports of poor physical conditions in some prisons and detention centers.

Physical Conditions: During the first eight months of the year, there were two deaths in prisons and one suicide in a detention center.

In inspecting several institutions during the year, the legal chancellor (the country's ombudsman) found a number of deficiencies in prison and detention center conditions, particularly in detention centers where officials held detainees for short periods. In some facilities there were deficiencies in the availability of medical care and in fire safety. The continuing use of the Soviet-era prison in Tallinn for a large number of prisoners remained a problem. Recreational facilities in the prison were few and in poor condition. The legal chancellor reported that inmates did not have sufficient access to legal documentation in some prisons and detention centers and that there were shortcomings in the application of means of restraint, including handcuffs, as well as excessive video surveillance and inadequate documentation of the medical condition of detainees.

Administration: While authorities in prison and detention centers generally kept accurate records, the UN Committee against Torture indicated in a 2013 report that

authorities in police stations did not always maintain detention registers “in a regular manner.” Individual institutions do not have ombudsmen. Authorities investigated all complaints and documented the results of their investigations in a publicly accessible manner.

Independent Monitoring: The government generally permitted monitoring by independent nongovernmental observers, including human rights groups, the media, and international bodies.

Improvements: The government continued to upgrade lighting and overall conditions at a few detention centers.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution and laws prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, and the government generally observed these prohibitions.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The Police and Border Guard Board and the Internal Security Service maintain internal security. The army is responsible for external security but also has some domestic security responsibilities. The Police and Border Guard Board and the Internal Security Service report to the Ministry of the Interior. The army reports to the Ministry of Defense. The Prosecutor’s Office leads investigations and prosecutes cases in court. The Police and Border Guard Board and the Internal Security Service investigate civilian cases, while the military police investigate defense force cases. The government has effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption. There were no reports of impunity involving the security forces during the year.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

Apart from those arrested during the commission of a crime, the law requires that to make arrests, authorities must possess warrants issued by a court based on evidence and must inform detainees promptly of the grounds for their arrest. There is a functioning bail system. Authorities may hold individuals for 48 hours without charge; further detention requires a court order. Police generally complied with these requirements. Detainees are entitled to immediate access to legal counsel, and the government pays for legal counsel for indigent persons. There were no reports that authorities held individuals incommunicado or under house arrest.

Detention of Rejected Asylum Seekers or Stateless Persons: Authorities detained unsuccessful applicants for asylum or illegal immigrants pending their deportation. In 2014 the legal chancellor visited the detention center and recommended that psychological counselling and menus that accommodate detainees' religious beliefs be made available. Human rights organizations objected to the holding of asylum seekers in the detention center rather than the refugees' accommodation center after they have applied for asylum and contended that a shortage of translators inhibited detained asylum seekers in their efforts to regularize their status.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence.

Trial Procedures

The constitution provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right.

Defendants enjoy the right to a presumption of innocence, prompt and detailed notification of the charges (with free interpretation if necessary), a fair and public trial without undue delay, communication with an attorney of choice, adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense, and access to government-held evidence. Defendants may confront witnesses against them and present witnesses and evidence. Defendants cannot be compelled to testify or confess guilt and have the right to appeal. There are no juries; a single judge, a judge together with public assessors, or a committee of judges may hear cases. In criminal proceedings an attorney is available to all defendants at public expense, although individuals often preferred to hire their own attorneys. In civil proceedings the government provides an attorney for indigents. Authorities generally respected these rights and extended them to all residents regardless of citizenship.

Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

Individuals or organizations may seek civil remedies for human rights violations in domestic courts. They may appeal unfavorable decisions to the European Court for Human Rights after exhausting all domestic remedies.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution prohibits such actions, and there were no reports that the government failed to respect these prohibitions.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and press, and the government generally respected these rights. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to promote freedom of speech and press. The constitution states that incitement to national, racial, religious, or political hatred, violence, or discrimination, as well as to conflict between social strata, is punishable by law. The criminal code limits application of this provision to incitement that results in danger to the life, health, or property of a person. There were no reports of prosecutions during the year.

Internet Freedom

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content, and there were no credible reports that the government monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority. The internet was widely available, and the public used it regularly. In the first quarter of the year, 88 percent of households headed by individuals between the ages of 16 and 74 had access to the internet at home.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom. Authorities intervened in one cultural event after public criticism of an exhibit related to the Holocaust led the Ministry of Culture to request its removal from the Tartu Art Museum (see section 6, Anti-Semitism).

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly: The constitution provides for the freedoms of assembly, and the government generally respected this right.

On July 25, the 20th Estonian Grenadier Division Veteran Association organized an annual memorial event to commemorate the World War II battle of Sinimae. The battle took place between the Soviet Red Army and German forces, including the 20th Estonian Waffen SS Grenadier Division. Participants laid wreaths at monuments for soldiers from both sides who died in battles nearby. No national government officials participated in the ceremony. Jaak Madison and Mart Helme, members of parliament from the far-right Estonian Conservative National Party (EKRE), attended the event, and Madison spoke during the program. No Nazi symbols or insignia were observed.

Freedom of Association: While the constitution provides for freedom of association, the law specifies that only citizens may join political parties. There are no restrictions on the ability of noncitizens to join other civil groups.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/.

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

The constitution provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights. The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. The nongovernmental organization (NGO) Estonian Human Rights Center (EHRC) reported that authorities did not adequately inform asylum seekers of their rights and made inadequate provision for translation. These deficiencies hampered communications between the asylum seekers and authorities. The EHRC, other

NGOs, and law firms provided legal and social assistance to asylum seekers in cooperation with authorities. Government officials indicated that access to legal aid was available at every stage of the asylum procedure. The government agreed to accept 550 refugees for resettlement from other countries as a part of the September EU response to the continuing refugee crisis.

Safe Country of Origin/Transit: The government has a policy of denying asylum to applicants from a “safe” country of origin or transit. UNHCR expressed concern about the government’s policy of refusing entry and immediately returning persons who transited such a country, particularly the inability of such persons to appeal denial of entry from outside the country. Authorities asserted that they granted interviews to all individual asylum seekers.

Refugee Abuse: On September 3, unknown persons set a fire in the refugee accommodation center in the village of Vao in West Viru County. No one was injured. Police initiated criminal proceedings.

Access to Basic Services: The government asserted that it generally provided basic services to asylum seekers and refugees. The government offered cultural orientation and adaptation programs, cofunded by various EU agencies, for asylum seekers and refugees. A shortage of translators continued to be a problem.

Durable Solutions: The government assisted in the safe, voluntary return of refugees to their homes. The country worked with the EU to implement a refugee resettlement program.

Temporary Protection: The government provided temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees. In contrast with 2014, when the government did not grant such protection, it granted temporary protection via residence permits to 33 individuals and 18 family members during the first eight months of the year. Most of those receiving protection were from Ukraine.

Stateless Persons

UNHCR reported that on January 1, there were 91,281 stateless persons in the country, compared with 94,235 in January 2012. Although UNHCR categorized this population as stateless, the government did not, since in its view the individuals involved were eligible to apply for naturalized citizenship and enjoyed the protections available to citizens except for joining political parties. As of September 1, according to government statistics, there were 83,364 residents of

undetermined citizenship, who made up 6.3 percent of the population. Nearly all were ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, or Belarusians.

There are statutory procedures that offer adults opportunities for obtaining citizenship by naturalization, but some human rights observers regarded them as inadequate. In 2014 the number of persons acquiring citizenship by naturalization rose to 1,589, reflecting a modest increase compared with 2013. On January 21, the parliament amended the law to give citizenship at birth, without any special application by the parents, to children younger than 15 whose parents are not citizens of Estonia or of any other country and have lived in the country for five years.

Nearly all individuals without documented citizenship were long-term residents; they could vote in local, but not parliamentary, elections. Individuals applying for naturalization must pass Estonian language and civics tests. In 2014 fewer than half of the persons who took the language test passed. To facilitate acquisition of citizenship, authorities adopted such policies as funding civics and language courses and simplifying naturalization for persons with disabilities. On February 13, the government simplified the Estonian language requirements so that applicants older than 65 are no longer required to take a written language examination, although they still must pass an oral one.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The law provides citizens the ability to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections based on universal and equal suffrage, and citizens exercised this right.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: On March 1, the country held parliamentary elections, which international and local election observers considered free and fair.

Political Parties and Political Participation: While political parties could operate without restriction or outside interference, the law prohibits noncitizen residents from organizing or joining political parties. Noncitizens who are long-term residents may vote in local elections but cannot vote in national elections or hold public office.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented these laws effectively. The government has effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption. On March 12, the Officials' Ethics Committee at the Ministry of Finance approved a new code of ethics for Officials, which sets out the core ethical values for officials, along with proposals for their implementation.

Corruption: There were several reports of government corruption during the year. In November 2014 the Harju County Court convicted five former employees of the Estonian Information Board--Sergei Bostrov, Pavel Kotkin, Ines Piibeleht, Sven Randlane, and Lauri Vihula--of using their official positions to acquire the board's property and money on multiple occasions in amounts totaling more than 600,000 euros (\$660,000). In addition the court found four of those convicted, Bostrov, Kotkin, Randlane, and Piibeleht, guilty of disclosing state secrets they obtained in their official capacities. The court sentenced Bostrov to four years and six months in prison and the others to two or more years' parole with three to four years of probation and ordered them to repay the funds taken from the board.

Financial Disclosure: The law requires all public officials to disclose their income and assets. Designated offices have responsibility for monitoring and verifying disclosures. The financial declarations of high-level government officials were available to the public, and there are criminal and administrative sanctions for noncompliance with the law.

Public Access to Information: The law provides for public access to government information, and the government provided such access.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials generally were cooperative and responsive to their views.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The legal chancellor, an independent official with a staff of more than 40, performs the role of human rights ombudsman. The chancellor reviews legislation for compliance with the constitution; oversees authorities' observance of fundamental rights and freedoms and the principles of

good governance; and helps resolve accusations of discrimination based on gender, race, nationality (ethnic origin), color, language, religion, social status, age, disability, or sexual orientation. The legal chancellor also makes recommendations to ministries and local governments, requests responses, and has authority to appeal to the Supreme Court. The chancellor compiles an annual report for the parliament. Public trust in the office was high, and the government was responsive to its reports and decisions.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, property or social status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, language, or other grounds.

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape, including spousal rape, and physical abuse, including domestic violence. The penalty for rape, including spousal rape, is imprisonment for up to 15 years. According to the Sexual Health Union (an NGO), 13 percent of women have suffered from sexual abuse, including rape. In 75 percent of cases, perpetrators were familiar, either an existing or earlier partner.

According to NGOs and shelter managers, violence against women, including domestic violence, was a problem. In 2014 approximately 82 percent of the domestic violence victims that police registered were women. Courts ruled on approximately one-fourth of domestic violence cases reported to police.

Victims of domestic violence and of sexual violence could obtain help, including counseling and legal assistance, from social workers employed by local governments and from specialized NGOs that received part of their support from local governments. NGOs, local governments, and others could seek additional assistance for victims from the national government. There was a network of shelters for women, and women with children, who were victims of gender-based violence as well as hotlines for domestic violence and child abuse. Police officers, border guards, and social workers received training related to domestic and gender violence from NGOs, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Justice.

Sexual Harassment: The law prohibits sexual harassment, but there were some reports of sexual harassment in the workplace. By law sexual harassment complaints may be resolved in court, before the legal chancellor, by the Labor Dispute Committee, or by the gender-equality and equal-treatment commissioner. An injured party may demand termination of the harmful activity and compensation for damages.

Reproductive Rights: The government recognized the basic right of couples and individuals to decide freely the number, spacing, and timing of their children; manage their reproductive health; and have access to the information and means to do so, free from discrimination, coercion, or violence.

Discrimination: The law provides the same legal status and rights for women as for men, including under family, labor, property, nationality, and inheritance laws. There were reports of discrimination in employment and occupation, and unequal treatment, due to gender, age, disability, and sexual preference (see section 7.d.).

Children

Birth Registration: Citizenship derives primarily from one's parents. Either citizen parent may pass citizenship to a child regardless of the other parent's citizenship status. An amendment to the law passed on January 21 provides that children born to members of the large population of persons who are not citizens of Estonia or of any other country and who have lived in Estonia for five years acquire citizenship at birth. Registration of births occurred in a timely manner.

Child Abuse: Child abuse continued to be a problem. In 2014 approximately 82 percent of the crimes were committed against minors. Of 147 rape cases reported in 2014, 92 victims were underage. The Police and Border Guard Board worked to combat child abuse, including sexual abuse. The legal chancellor acted as children's ombudsman. In November 2014 the parliament passed the new Child Protection Act, which emphasizes the role of the family in the child's development.

Early and Forced Marriage: The legal minimum age for marriage is 18.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law prohibits the commercial sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and authorities enforced the law. The minimum age for consensual sex is 14. Conviction of engaging in child pornography carries punishment ranging from a fine to three years in prison.

International Child Abductions: The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. For information see the Department of State's report on compliance at travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/en/legal/compliance.html and country-specific information at travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/en/country/estonia.html.

Anti-Semitism

The Jewish community numbered an estimated 2,500 persons.

On February 7, a controversial art exhibit featuring comics, paintings, and video projects dealing with Holocaust opened in the Tartu Art Museum, funded in part by the Ministry of Culture. It claimed to deal with Holocaust trauma through humor and irony. The works were part of an installation, "My Poland: On Recalling and Forgetting," that included video installations of Polish artists, one of which featured nude men and women playing tag in a gas chamber, while the second showed a Holocaust survivor having his concentration camp tattoo re-inked. According to the exhibit catalog, the artists stated that they intended the works to initiate discussion of the Holocaust and to address growing extremism and xenophobia. After public criticism and complaints, the Ministry of Culture directed the museum to remove the controversial videos from display. The museum did so and apologized to all parties.

On February 24, the youth wing of the far-right Estonian Conservative National Party, which won seven seats in March 1 parliamentary elections, organized a torchlight march to mark the country's Independence Day. The march was viewed by some observers and media commentators as nationalistic and anti-Semitic. Members of a Swedish neo-Nazi youth organization participated at the invitation of EKRE's youth organization.

On January 23, the Education Ministry in cooperation with the Estonian NATO Association sponsored a seminar for history and civics teachers from across the country to introduce them to best classroom practices for Holocaust commemoration.

On January 27, the government held an annual memorial event on Holocaust Remembrance Day at the memorial to the victims of the Holocaust. Schools participated in commemorative activities throughout the country.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical and mental disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, and transportation, including air transport. The government generally enforced these provisions.

Persons with disabilities may avail themselves of government assistance in accessing information and may request individual assistants when necessary. The law provides that buildings constructed or renovated after 2002 must be accessible to persons with disabilities. Few older buildings were accessible, but new or renovated ones generally were. According to the legal chancellor, measures to safeguard the fundamental rights of individuals in mental health facilities remained inadequate. Problems included abusive use of physical restraints, documentation thereof, and inadequate medical care. NGOs complained that, while services typically were accessible in the capital, persons with disabilities in some rural areas had difficulty receiving appropriate care. There were reports of discrimination in occupation or employment (also see section 7.d.).

The Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, and local governments are responsible for the provision of social welfare services to persons with disabilities. Children with disabilities attended school (primary, secondary, and higher education). The government focused on developing rehabilitation services to improve the ability of persons with disabilities to cope independently and increase their social inclusion. The government also compensated for some additional expenses incurred by persons with disabilities.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

In contrast with 2014, instances of overt hostility based on ethnicity or race were more frequent. In June and July, several protest meetings and demonstrations against mass immigration and the government's refugee policy took place. The largest occurred on June 10, when the Estonian Conservative National Party, which holds seven of the 101 seats in parliament, organized a protest of 500-600 persons

in front of the parliament building. A few individuals carried xenophobic and/or racist slogans.

The government encouraged the social integration of the 29 percent of the population, mostly Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians, who were members of ethnic minorities through a policy that promoted naturalization and learning the Estonian language. In districts where more than half the population speaks a language other than Estonian, the law entitles inhabitants to receive official information in their language, and authorities respected the law. The government also funded activities, including cultural associations and societies that focused on the languages and cultures of minority groups.

Knowledge of Estonian is required to obtain citizenship, and all public servants and public sector employees, service personnel, medical professionals, and other workers who have contact with the public must possess a minimum competence in the language. A language inspectorate enforces language skill requirements in those sectors, referring persons with insufficient skills to language classes and imposing small fines.

Russian speakers alleged that Estonian language requirements resulted in job and salary discrimination (see section 7.d.).

The government continued to implement its plan requiring that “Russian-speaking” high schools conduct 60 percent of their instruction in Estonian. Many schools implemented this transition more rapidly than required.

Roma, who numbered fewer than 1,000, reportedly faced discrimination in several areas, including employment (see section 7.d.). The government took steps to emphasize the importance of education for Romani children, but their dropout rate remained high.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics. While the law is not specific regarding the forms of sexual orientation and gender identity covered, the general understanding is that all are included. Advocacy groups reported that harassment and discrimination against LGBTI persons remained routine within society.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law, related regulations, and statutory instruments provide workers with the right to form and join independent unions of their choice, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. The government generally respected these rights. The law allows unions to conduct their activities without interference and prohibits antiunion discrimination. Both employees and employers have the right to request that labor dispute committees, consisting of representatives of unions and employers, or the courts resolve individual labor disputes. The law prohibits discrimination against employees because of union membership. Public sector employees do not have the right to strike, but they can negotiate their salaries and working conditions directly with their employers.

The government generally enforced applicable laws. Resources, inspections, and remediation were usually adequate to achieve compliance with the law. In most cases violators incurred fines that were sufficient to deter violations. Criminal proceedings and civil claims were also available. The Labor Inspectorate received 2,364 labor dispute complaints; 91 percent of complaints were resolved during the year. The penalties employers had to pay were related primarily to workplace accidents and occupational illnesses. Administrative and judicial procedures were not subject to lengthy delays.

The government and most employees generally respected freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively. Parties freely engaged in collective bargaining, and there were no reports that the government interfered in the functioning of workers' organizations.

The Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions reported frequent violations of trade union rights in the private sector during the year. Confederation officials claimed antiunion behavior was widespread. They also reported that some enterprises advised workers against forming trade unions, threatening them with dismissal or a reduction in wages if they did, or promising them benefits if they did not.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, and the government effectively enforced the law. In 2014 police registered 28 cases of trafficking, 14 fewer than the previous year. In 2014 police registered the first case of a forced labor crime.

Penalties for trafficking and forced labor offenses range up to 15 years' imprisonment. While penalties for violations were sufficient, their application in sentencing often failed to reflect the seriousness of the crime.

See also the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

In most cases the legal minimum age for employment is 18, but 15- to 17-year-old children may work with the consent of a parent or guardian, and seven- to 12-year-old children may engage in light work in the areas of culture, art, sports, or advertising with the consent of the Labor Inspectorate. Children younger than age 18 may not perform hazardous work. The law limits the hours that children may work and prohibits overtime or night work. The Labor Inspectorate is responsible for enforcing these laws. The government effectively enforced laws and policies to protect children from exploitation in the workplace. There were no separate inspections regarding the age of child workers.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment or Occupation

Labor laws and regulations prohibit discrimination regarding nationality, race, color, political opinion, age, sex, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation or gender identity, and origin. The government enforced these laws. With respect to employment or occupation, labor laws and regulations oblige require employers to protect employees against discrimination, follow the principle of equal treatment, and promote equal treatment and gender equality.

Nevertheless, discrimination in employment or occupation occurred with respect to age, gender, disability, and language (see section 6), and there were complaints to the Gender and Equal Treatment Commissioner, the Legal Chancellor, and the Labor Inspectorate.

In 2014 the Labor Inspectorate received complaints of labor discrimination from 28 women. The Labor Dispute Committee determined that unequal treatment occurred in five cases and partial discrimination in four. Eight decisions of the committee were appealed in the court. The legal chancellor also received complaints relating to unequal treatment and discrimination and initiated proceedings in cases determined to have merit.

Although women have the same rights as men under the law and are entitled to equal pay for equal work, employers did not always respect these rights. Despite possessing a higher average level of education than men, women's average earnings in 2014 were 29.9 percent lower than those of men for the same work. There continued to be female- and male-dominated professions. Women constituted one-third of managers.

Fewer than 25 percent of persons with disabilities had jobs. During the first eight months of the year, the commissioner for gender equality and equal treatment received more claims of discrimination based on disability than during the same period in 2014.

Russian speakers worked disproportionately in blue-collar industries and continued to experience higher unemployment than ethnic Estonians. Some noncitizen residents, particularly ethnic Russians, alleged that the language requirement resulted in job and salary discrimination. Roma reportedly faced discrimination in employment (see section 6).

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The national monthly minimum wage was 390 euros (\$430). For a single member of a one-person household, the poverty line was 203 euros (\$223).

The standard workweek is 40 hours. The law requires a rest period of at least 11 hours in sequence for every 24-hour period. Reduced working time is required for minors and for employees who perform work that is underground, poses a health hazard, or is of an otherwise special nature. The law requires overtime pay of not less than 150 percent of the employee's hourly wage. The government effectively enforced these requirements. There is no prohibition against excessive compulsory overtime.

The government sets occupational health and safety standards. The Labor Inspectorate, Health Protection Inspectorate, and Technical Inspectorate were responsible for enforcing these standards and made efforts to do so in both the formal and informal sectors. Violations of health and safety standards were more common in the construction and wood processing industries. There were 70 labor inspectors; there were no reports that resources were inadequate. Penalties for violations include a fine of up to 2,600 euros (\$2,890), if committed by a company, and were sufficient to deter violations. Men from Poland and Ukraine experienced labor exploitation, particularly in the construction sector.

Laws and regulations allow workers to remove themselves from situations that endanger health or safety without jeopardy to their employment. Authorities effectively protected employees in this situation.