



Estonia— candidate for the United Nations Human Rights Council 2026–2028

Estonia—a partner you can rely on

Since 2008, Estonia has been contributing regularly to an increasing number of UN programmes and funds aimed at promoting and protecting human rights, including OHCHR, UNICEF, UN Women, UNV/FIP, UNHCR, SRSG-CAAC. Estonia's voluntary financial support to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has been consistent.

As a responsible global player, Estonia has been sharing its reform experience for decades across the world in the areas of digitalisation, good governance, education, and tax cooperation.

Estonia in the Human Rights Council

When serving on the HRC from 2013 to 2015, Estonia focused on advancing gender equality, protecting and promoting the rights of women and children as well as the rights of indigenous peoples and freedom of opinion and expression.

Estonia believes the HRC continues to be the best place for the international community to advance all human rights and to address human rights violations and abuses as well as to seek accountability.

If elected to the HRC for the 2026–2028 term, Estonia will seek to advance the human rights of all and to play an active role in the work of the Council, particularly in our three priority areas.



Song and dance festivals

Estonia has held nationwide song festivals since 1869, a tradition added to UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.



Equal voting rights

Since the Declaration of Independence of Estonia in 1918, men and women have had equal voting rights.



Digital coverage

Estonia has been consistently ranked as one of the world's most digitally advanced democracies with e-governance, online voting, and electronic ID cards. Access to the internet is considered a human right and 99% of public services are available online 24/7.



World Cleanup Day

The World Cleanup Day movement originates from Estonia. The Cleanup Day is a global civic environmental movement that every year mobilizes millions of people from around 190 countries to clean up their surroundings in an effort to move towards a waste-free world. It contributes to the achievement of seven of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Estonia spearheaded the initiative to proclaim 20 September as the World Cleanup Day in the UN calendar.



Islands

Estonia is home to a staggering amount of more than 2,300 islands.

Estonia is committed to the universality, indivisibility, interdependence, and interrelatedness of human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Estonia focuses on **protecting** and **promoting children's rights**, **enhancing digital rights** and **upholding media freedom**.

We are seeking your valuable support at the elections to be held during the 80th session of the UN General Assembly, in 2025.



Protecting and promoting children's rights

Estonia will continue endorsing initiatives aimed at protecting and promoting the rights of children in all international forums. We aim to eliminate all forms of violence against children, including in armed conflict, intensify the concerted efforts to protect their rights in the digital environment, reduce the digital divide and prevent the emergence of new inequalities.

- From 2021 to 2023, former President of Estonia Kersti Kaljulaid served as the Secretary General's Global Advocate for Every Woman Every Child. From 2023 to 2024, she co-chaired the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession.
- Estonia is a member of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) from 2024 to 2026. In 2016, Estonia served as the President of UNICEF Executive Board Bureau.



Enhancing digital rights

Estonia will continue to advocate for mainstreaming human rights in the field of new and emerging technologies, promote human rights based approach for digitalisation and advocate for democratic principles and rule of law. We will continue endorsing initiatives that accelerate progress across all of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and that bridge various digital divides by enhancing inclusive policies, investment and the digital skills of all women and girls, as well as persons with disabilities.

- From 2022 to 2024, former President of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves serves on the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Leadership Panel.
- As the chair of the Freedom Online Coalition in 2025, Estonia stands for the enhancement of digital rights, including closing the digital divide.
- Estonia has introduced a "web police" programme – real police officers available on social media.



Upholding media freedom

Estonia will continue endorsing all initiatives aimed at protecting and promoting media freedom online and offline, tackling the spreading of disinformation, and improving the level of media literacy. We will continue to strongly advocate for rules combatting censorship and mass surveillance, guaranteeing a safe environment for journalists and other media workers online and offline, and access to independent information.

- Estonia hosted the Third Global Conference for Media Freedom in February 2022.
- As a co-chair of the Media Freedom Coalition in 2023-2024, we stand for the protection of journalists and other media workers – online and offline.
- Estonia ranks among countries with the highest press freedom and internet freedom in the world.

