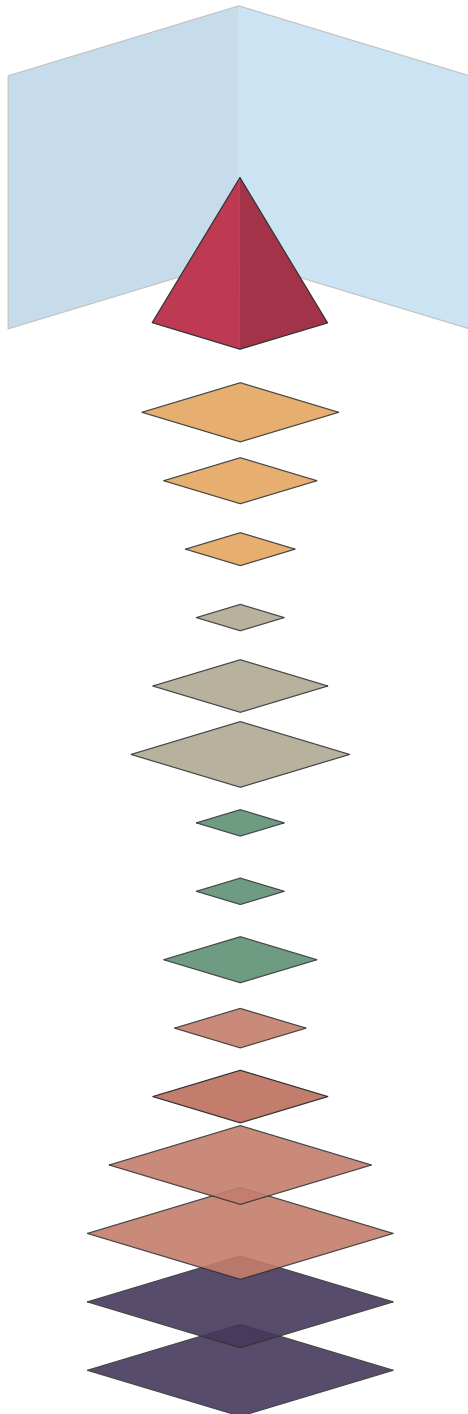


ESTONIA



4.25

CRIMINALITY SCORE

145th of 193 countries

32nd of 44 European countries

2nd of 8 Northern European countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS

4.20

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	4.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	3.50
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	2.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	2.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	4.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	5.00
FLORA CRIMES	2.00
FAUNA CRIMES	2.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	3.50
HEROIN TRADE	3.00
COCAINE TRADE	4.00
CANNABIS TRADE	6.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	7.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	7.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	7.00



CRIMINAL ACTORS

4.30

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	3.50
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	4.50
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	2.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	5.50
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	6.00



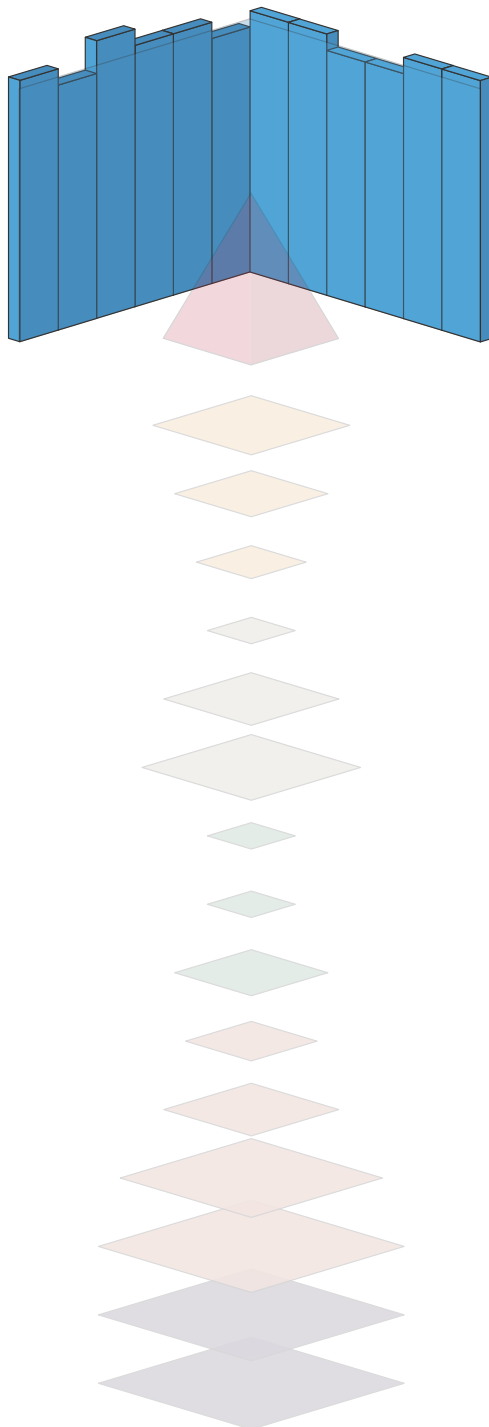
7.88

RESILIENCE SCORE





ESTONIA



7.88

RESILIENCE SCORE

8th of 193 countries

7th of 44 European countries

5th of 8 Northern European countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	8.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	7.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	8.50
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	8.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	8.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	7.50
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	8.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	8.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	7.50
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	7.50
PREVENTION	8.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	8.00



4.25

CRIMINALITY SCORE



CRIMINAL MARKETS 4.20



CRIMINAL ACTORS 4.30



CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Estonia is a destination, source and transit country for human trafficking. Its role as a source for this crime might have been decreasing, but it remains a destination for foreign victims who are generally sourced from countries in Asia and Europe and exploited within Estonia. In such cases where Estonia serves as a source country, national citizens are often trafficked to European countries like Finland, Germany and the UK. Although the market for sexual exploitation has been declining since the 1990s, labour exploitation, particularly in the construction and agriculture sectors, continues to rise. The involvement of organized crime groups further exacerbates the problem. While Estonia has made efforts to combat human trafficking, the Russia-Ukraine war has posed challenges to addressing this issue effectively. The use of the internet by foreign traffickers as a recruitment tool has been on the rise, compounded by the impact of the pandemic on the influx of foreign workers.

Human smuggling is becoming a concerning issue in Estonia. Russian organized crime actors and corrupt officials play a major role in facilitating the smuggling process. The challenging terrain along Estonia's eastern border, including inaccessible and forested areas, poses difficulties for border guards. In 2021, to address increasingly irregular border crossings from Belarus to Europe, Estonia deployed additional forces at its internal borders in ports and along the Estonian-Latvian border. The move aimed to disrupt human smuggling routes of migrants, mostly coming from the Middle East and North Africa, transiting from Belarus to Scandinavian countries through Latvia and Estonia. Although the COVID-19 pandemic and tightened border control measures temporarily contributed to a slight decrease in false travel documents and smuggling activities, tensions have increased again due to the war in Ukraine and the recent mobilization in Russia.

In recent years, there have been very few episodes related to extortion and protection racketeering in Estonia. Some foreign criminals, such as Russian organized crime groups, have occasionally been accused of perpetrating extortion and protection practices, often together with other offences, such as drug-related crimes.

TRADE

Arms trafficking in Estonia, which was a major issue in the 1990s, has substantially decreased due to efforts to combat this crime. Now, the country primarily serves as a destination for illicit arms, with Germany, the Czech Republic, Israel and Russia being the main source countries. This crime has largely been controlled by stronger laws and regulations, low firearm ownership rates, and the active involvement of authorities. As a result, crimes related to firearms are relatively low in Estonia. However, reactivated firearms continue to pose a concern: criminal gangs obtain these from countries like the Czech Republic or Slovakia and transit them through Estonia to Russia and Scandinavian or Baltic countries. Illicit arms trafficking in Estonia is opportunistic and typically involves small quantities. Criminal groups sometimes exploit postal services to bring deactivated firearms or blank-firing weapons into the country for conversion.

In recent years, Estonia has successfully reduced the trafficking of counterfeit goods. Cases of individuals selling counterfeit products online have been brought to court. However, the market for counterfeit goods may grow in parallel with a potential deterioration of the economic situation in Estonia thanks to a surge in energy prices. Regarding the illicit trade of excise goods, the illegal tobacco market has decreased in past years. However, authorities continue to discover and dismantle clandestine cigarette factories, some with the potential to produce up to a million cigarettes a day. The black market for e-liquid is also growing and organized criminal groups are showing increasing interest. According to authorities, most of the Estonian e-liquid market is self-mixed, cross-border and smuggled. The high excise tax has led to cross-border illegal trade from neighbouring Latvia and Russia, where prices are much lower. Suspending the collection of excise duty has made it possible to lower the price of e-liquids, thus offering consumers more controlled and safe products at a reduced price.

ENVIRONMENT

Estonia's flora crime market is relatively small, but the country still serves as a transit and source for the illegal timber trade in Europe. In recent years, illegal logging in Estonia has increased, primarily driven by misdirected subsidies for the burning of woody biomass for energy (waste materials from industry, forestry and agriculture). Estonia has also been the subject of a debate concerning the greater wood pellet industry.

In terms of fauna crimes, Estonia also has a relatively small market. While there have been past reports of trade in reptile skins, coral, caviar and sturgeon meat, recent

seizure data is not available and it is suspected that this illicit market is not significant. In fact, the fur industry, which historically played a prominent role in fauna crimes, has been shrinking for years. Estonia, along with Finland, is known for effectively controlling irregular, unreported and unregulated fishing, showcasing responsible coastal state practices.

Regarding non-renewable resource crimes, the most pressing issue currently is the potential evasion of economic sanctions imposed on Russia through the exploitation of legal grey areas. There have been press reports about the trans-shipment of Russian oil products in Tallinn Bay. Additionally, concerns have been raised about the connection between non-renewable resource crimes and tax fraud. Two mafia-style groups are believed to be involved in crimes related to natural gas. Estonia's geographical location and its history of fuel smuggling contribute to its role in the illegal fuel market, which may have a limited but manageable influence on certain segments of society.

DRUGS

The heroin trade in Estonia has seen a decline in recent years. Previously, heroin was the most widely consumed illicit substance in the country – that is, until the invasion of Afghanistan led to a reduction in its availability and quality. This shift resulted in fentanyl replacing heroin as the dominant opioid in the Estonian drug market. Despite a resurgence of the heroin trade in Afghanistan, the drug has not regained its popularity among Estonian users. With regards to the cocaine trade, Estonia mainly serves as a transit country. Although cocaine is one of the most widely consumed drugs in the country, the market is considered small. Authorities have stated that the drugs involved in most seizures were not intended for the local market. Instead, cocaine is loaded onto vehicles at major ports and transported to various European countries, especially Russia, in smaller quantities.

Cannabis holds a prominent position in the Estonian drug scene – high rates of consumption are reported. Studies indicate that cannabis is the most commonly used drug in the country, particularly among the younger generation. Cannabis herb is the preferred form among users, while the use of cannabis resin is relatively low. Estonia also serves as a destination country for cannabis resin. The quantity of seized cannabis has varied, with notable cases including the discovery of a large cannabis farm and the interception of a drug smuggling network transporting hashish from Spain, through Estonia to Finland. A changing attitude towards the cannabis trade, influenced by the decriminalization of cannabis use in Western countries, has had an impact, especially among the youth.

The synthetic drug trade in Estonia is dominated by substances such as GHB, amphetamine/methamphetamine, and fentanyl. Amphetamines and methamphetamines

primarily originate from Poland and the Netherlands – these drugs are more prevalent in the eastern parts of the country. Estonia has a high prevalence of amphetamine use, ranking among the top countries in Europe along with Denmark and the UK. Ecstasy in Estonia mostly originates from the Netherlands. The country is a destination for fentanyl, which is mainly sourced from China and Russia and trafficked through mail shipments. However, due to shortages in the availability of the drug, the fentanyl market in Estonia has declined, despite remaining the dominant opioid in the country. Organized criminal groups are involved in the synthetic drug trade: illicit laboratories for the production of synthetic opioids, particularly GHB, have been discovered in the country. Estonia has experienced a surge in drug overdose deaths in recent years: synthetic opioids are the primary substances involved in a notable share of these fatalities.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

In recent years, Estonia has had a series of cybersecurity incidents: notably, there were targeted attacks on government facilities that led to the illicit downloading of hundreds of thousands of document photos from an identity database. That said, swift detection and resolution measures were implemented to address these large-scale attacks. Every year, Estonia documents numerous cyber incidents including ransomware cases and other forms of cyber-dependent criminal activities. State-sponsored attacks originating from Russia and China have emerged as the most substantial cyber threats, with a slight increase observed in state-sponsored attacks from China. Additionally, there is evidence suggesting that Estonia is being used as a route to circumvent EU sanctions imposed on Russia following the conflict in Ukraine, particularly using cryptocurrency.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Estonia has gained a reputation as a favourable location for dubious business activities, owing to its relatively lenient banking regulations. Types of financial fraud commonly observed include invoicing fraud, investment scams through dating apps, phishing attacks and phone call scams. Estonia's strategic location attracts transnational and organized criminal groups. Fraud, computer fraud and tax-related offenses – both domestic and foreign – have been identified as the most frequently occurring financial crimes. Tax evasion is a growing concern in Estonia, particularly when it comes to rental income: cash payments are often used to evade tax.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Classic mafia-style groups in Estonia are well-organized criminal organizations engaged in various illicit activities such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, extortion, money laundering, document forgery and tax evasion.

These criminal entities maintain territorial control through a criminal mutual fund, which establishes rules and boundaries for their operations. The future of these groups, however, is uncertain, thanks to recent arrests and the elimination of key leaders. Meanwhile, loose criminal networks have higher but declining influence in Estonia. Authorities have expressed concern about the potential rise of outlaw motorcycle gangs, fearing an increase in drugs and firearm trafficking, and, consequently, in armed violence. However, it is worth noting that the vast majority of Estonian motorcycle clubs primarily serve as legal recreational groups, and their involvement in criminal activities is marginal.

Foreign organized crime groups from different regions of the former Soviet Union established a presence in Estonia during the 1990s. While some of these groups no longer exist, Russian and Belarusian criminal organizations remain active despite the effective control of Estonian law enforcement. These groups concentrate their activities in specific regions, although the exact locations are unknown. Each foreign criminal group specializes in a different crime

such as extortion, human trafficking, drug trafficking and arms trafficking. In recent years, there has been an upsurge in Lithuanian and Moldovan criminal organizations in Estonia. Lithuanian groups have been involved in car theft and smuggling, while a Moldovan group was convicted for electronically manipulating ATMs in Estonia.

Criminal cases involving state actors are mainly white-collar in nature and not linked to organized crime. Instead of being directly involved in offenses relating to violence or drugs, state actors appear to collaborate with international organized crime groups in laundering the proceeds of their criminal activities, facilitating the flow of 'dirty money' from the East (primarily from Russia) to the West. When it comes to private sector actors, Estonian banks have faced investigations for money laundering and other criminal activities. The Estonian Financial Supervision Authority (Finantsinspektsioon) has also raised the alarm in the past regarding the risk of money laundering within the branches of foreign banks in the country.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Estonia shows a commitment to tackling organized crime through its national policies, with a focus on areas such as criminal policy development, violence prevention, and drug control. In terms of political leadership and governance, Estonia is regarded as a consolidated democracy, and while its institutions have been weakened slightly by recent instability and challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis, Estonia remains one of the most free countries globally, with a high respect for political rights and civil liberties. The Estonian government faces several challenges regarding transparency and accountability. The absence of a comprehensive code of conduct for government actors contributes to political corruption, as parties show reluctance to subject themselves to legal control. Oversight mechanisms exist – both internal and external – but there have been calls for further parliamentary supervision. The financing of political parties and election campaigns lacks transparency, and lobbying is not adequately regulated. Access to information is moderate, and there have been reported cases of government officials involved in corruption. Concerns have been raised about the fairness of loans provided during the COVID-19 pandemic, with suggestions of political influence and vague terms for allocating significant amounts.

Estonia demonstrates a strong commitment to international cooperation when it comes to combatting organized crime. Various international legal instruments and conventions have

been ratified – related to human trafficking, mutual legal assistance, extradition and information exchange. Estonia has a comprehensive legal framework for various forms of crime, including human trafficking, drug trafficking, arms trafficking and smuggling. However, there are some gaps in the legislation. For example, certain forms of exploitation are absent from the definition of human trafficking; and fines are imposed for drug-related offences, or administrative detention, instead of prison sentences. Estonia lacks a code of conduct to regulate the behaviour of government actors and does not provide sufficient protection for whistle-blowers.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Estonia's judicial system operates independently from the executive and legislative powers, as stated in the country's constitution. The courts might maintain their independence – including the Supreme Court – but the administration of lower courts is not separate from the executive power, as they are financed by the Ministry of Justice. Still, there is no evidence of the executive abusing its authority in this regard. The country has specialized prosecutors to handle organized crime cases but no specific organized crime units within the judiciary. Estonia is known for its efficient judicial system, aided by advanced IT capabilities and an e-filing system. Criminal law proceedings can still be slow, however, and workload distribution among courts is uneven, which affects the system's efficiency.

No instances of corruption or organized crime activities have been reported in Estonian prisons, although a few allegations of excessive use of force by prison officers have been registered. Although the number of prisoners per capita has decreased over the years, Estonia still has a higher rate than the European Union average.

Law enforcement in Estonia is partially controlled by the Estonian Internal Security Service (KAPO), which focuses on combating organized crime. The main police body is the Police and Border Guard Board (PBGB), responsible for coordinating the activities of various police agencies. However, there is a need for improved training of law enforcement personnel to enhance their knowledge of human trafficking. Likewise, the collection and verification of trafficking-related information needs improvement. Law enforcement agencies in Estonia have a comprehensive approach to combating organized crime as a whole: multiple perpetrators involved in organized crime have been prosecuted and drug-related incidents represent a noteworthy focal point in their efforts.

Estonia's territorial integrity is a key aspect of national security, given its land borders with Russia and Latvia. Efforts have been made to enhance border security, including clearing almost the entire border area and installing modern monitoring and surveillance systems. However, some sections of the external border still require improved technical support. Training of border guards is also necessary to strengthen the identification of human trafficking victims during border controls. In addition to physical measures, Estonia has prioritized cybersecurity and digital infrastructure – the country is recognized as a leader in digitalization and cybersecurity. The government has also expanded access to high-speed broadband and leveraged its expertise to become an international cybersecurity hub.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The Estonian government has established a commission to coordinate the prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing, comprising representatives from various institutions. The Estonian Financial Intelligence Unit (part of the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board) receives and analyses information related to money laundering activities and refers cases for trial. Estonia has prioritized the prevention and combat of money laundering by making legislative and institutional amendments to address risks in the banking and crypto-asset sectors. However, the Supreme Court still seems to have a limited interpretation of money laundering offenses, resulting in a low number of identified and investigated cases.

The Estonian government has implemented legal and institutional measures to create a regulatory environment that protects legitimate businesses from criminal activities. Substantial fines are imposed for violations related to

working and rest time; unpaid wages are among the most common employee claims. Organized crime activities are prevalent in the construction and seasonal job sectors. Despite these challenges, Estonia offers a corporate tax environment that can be considered business-friendly, with the lowest tax rates in the European Union (including 0% taxation on reinvested profits) and no corporate taxation for income earned outside the country. However, loopholes and weak regulations regarding transparency and proper accounting have positioned the country as a moderate tax haven.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The legal framework in Estonia allows witnesses of organized crime to obtain a new identity for their safety. Victim support for drug addicts is primarily provided through state-funded hospitals, although treatment options are limited; outpatient rehabilitation is the main form of treatment. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a leading role in providing support services to victims of human trafficking. These state-funded services include accommodation, health services, material assistance, psychological support and translation services; reintegration and repatriation services are provided by state municipalities and international organizations. However, some state municipalities lack knowledge about human trafficking and not all of them offer rehabilitation or reintegration services. Nevertheless, the government marginally maintained its overall protection efforts.

Prevention efforts in Estonia primarily focus on drug and human trafficking. State actors implement drug prevention initiatives, primarily targeting young people in juvenile committees in the north of the country. However, the reach of these initiatives is limited. NGOs play a crucial role in preventing human trafficking through awareness-raising campaigns, although there have been challenges related to government funding. The government has also conducted various prevention activities, including creating a podcast series and disseminating information about human trafficking through radio station broadcasts, lectures and tailored information materials for foreign workers. Training programmes and awareness-raising activities have also been implemented for students, youth workers and teachers, including online training videos and lectures for secondary school children. Whistle-blower protection is considered weak and insufficient.

Estonia upholds freedom of the press and the media: independent media outlets express diverse perspectives without state restrictions. Media ownership is concentrated, however, particularly at a regional level, and certain political groups have launched verbal attacks targeting liberal media and independent journalism. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted media outlets, leading to pay cuts and a reduction in the number and frequency of publications.

A decline in advertising revenue has further exposed the media's vulnerability to editorial pressure. Nonetheless, Estonia maintains a generally favourable environment for press freedom.

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