

Country Profile - Estonia

Job market

What are my chances of getting a job?

Estonia is one of the fastest-growing economies in Europe and is more financially stable than some neighbouring states. The country was affected by the worldwide economic downturn, which had a big impact on its small working population, although it is recovering. Unemployment is currently around 12% and you may find it difficult to get a graduate job without personal contacts and a good knowledge of Estonian.

- **Typical problems encountered:** language may be the biggest barrier for many foreign workers. Although the use of English is on the increase in business and academia, knowledge of Estonian is a distinct advantage and will increase your potential job options.
- **How to improve your chances:** take an Estonian language course either before you leave or once you arrive in Estonia. [International Language Services](#) in Tallinn is one of several language schools which offer such courses.
- **Language requirements:** the official language is Estonian, which is closely related to Finnish. Russian is also spoken by a quarter of the population. Many of Estonia's universities run Estonian language courses and modules for their foreign students. You may study Estonian in some language schools in the UK, although most are London-based such as [Key Languages](#). There are a number of self-study courses available such as [EuroTalk](#).

Where can I work?

- **Major industries:** engineering and manufacturing (machinery, automotive supplies, shipbuilding, electronics and plastics), wood products such as timber, paper and pulp, ICT, textiles, chemical products, banking, transportation.
- **Recent growth areas:** tourism, biotechnology, shared services centres and telecommunications. See [Invest in Estonia](#) for details of key sectors and key players within these sectors.
- **Major companies:** there are a number of global firms based in Estonia including 3M, Alstom, KPMG, Fujitsu and Procter & Gamble.
- **Search for more companies:** [Kompass](#) is a worldwide business directory searchable by country and product/service. The [Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#) and [Yellow Pages Estonia](#) provide company lists.
- **Major cities:** Tallinn (capital and largest), Tartu, Narva, Kohtla-Järve, Pärnu.

What's it like working in Estonia?

- **Average working hours:** 40 hours a week.
- **Holidays:** annual leave entitlement is 28 days, with extended holidays for some professions including state and local government officials, teachers, academic and scientific staff. In addition, there are 12 public holidays with a day off work, including 24 February for Estonian Independence Day, and 12 national holidays which do not give a day off.

- **Tax rates:** flat tax rate of 21%. For more information on taxes, see the [Estonian Customs and Tax Board](#).
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Applying for jobs

Many Estonian companies commonly use online application forms. However, a CV and covering letter are still a popular method of application.

Estonian CVs are similar to those used in the UK. They follow a reverse chronological order and are structured according to sections such as personal details, education, employment history, skills and references.

You should adapt your CV to match each job you apply for. Covering letters should be no more than one page and focus on why you consider yourself the right person for the job. Larger organisations accept applications in English but many smaller companies may expect applications in Estonian.

An interview is considered to be the most important part of the selection procedure and you must be prepared for it. Make sure you have researched the company you have applied to and know as much as possible about the role. Bring important documents, such as your CV and references, if requested. You may be required to sit two to four interviews. If you are successful, you will probably be told over the phone; if you don't get the job, you will be told in writing.

The [Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund](#) is the equivalent of the UK's Jobcentre. There is one central office in Tallinn and 15 regional offices. They handle vacancies, manage the allocation of state unemployment benefits, provide advice and information about searching for work, training opportunities, etc.

Will my UK qualifications be recognised?

If you wish to compare your professional, vocational or technical qualifications with Estonian qualifications, consult the [ENIC-NARIC](#) website.

For information about regulated professional qualifications in European countries, visit the [Department for Business, Innovation and Skills \(BIS\)](#) website.

Do I still need to pay UK tax and National Insurance?

If you are planning to live and work in Estonia, check your UK tax and National Insurance position with [HM Revenue & Customs \(HMRC\)](#) to ensure that you are not losing any UK pension rights.

Vacancy sources

Job websites

- [CV-Online](#) is a popular online job site.
- [CV Keskus](#) offers help and advice, as well as listing vacancies.
- [Getwork Medical](#) - recruitment agency for medical, healthcare, pharmaceutical and social care professions. Also has a UK office.
- [International Language Services](#) advertises positions for English teachers.
- [Academic Jobs EU](#) posts vacancies in Estonia.

All of the above have English versions of their websites. Some vacancy posts are in English but many are in Estonian.

The [EURES - European Job Mobility Portal](#), maintained by the European Commission, provides information about job vacancies in Estonia and has a CV-posting service.

See [Eurograduate - Working in Estonia](#) for more information about working culture and for an example Estonian CV.

Recruitment agencies

Estonia is a member of the [International Confederation of Private Employment Agencies \(CIETT\)](#). Estonia is a developing market for agencies and there are no laws in place to regulate their activities.

Newspapers

- [Baltic Times](#) - English-language newspaper.
- [Aripaev](#) - a business newspaper, good for managerial and specialist roles.
- [Eesti Päevaleht](#) - job vacancies on Mondays.
- [Eesti Ekspress](#) - vacancies on Thursdays.
- [Postimees](#) - vacancies on Thursdays.

A full list of Estonian-language newspapers and magazines is available via [Kidon Media-Link](#).

Other sources

In recent times, some Estonian universities have started to organise careers fairs. Visit their websites for details of forthcoming events.

Hidden vacancies

Personal contacts are an excellent way of learning about job opportunities. Networking and building relationships with people who might be able to assist your job search is particularly important in Estonia as Estonians like to do business through personal contacts.

Work experience

Work placements and internships

It is unusual for foreign nationals to undertake work experience or internships with Estonian organisations. However, there are plenty of opportunities to gain work experience via exchange programmes and gap-year organisations.

Exchange programmes

- The [AIESEC \(Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales\)](#) provides an international exchange programme which offers traineeships in various employment sectors.
- [IAESTE \(The International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience\)](#) is an exchange programme that aims to provide practical training. It is particularly focused around technical and professional development.
- Estonia also takes part in the [Leonardo da Vinci Programme](#). Contact your university's international office or careers service for more information.

Teaching schemes

Estonia participates in the [Comenius](#) programme, where future language teachers may apply for a grant to spend 13-45 weeks as a language assistant in a host school.

Volunteering

Estonia is a member of [The European Voluntary Service \(EVS\)](#), which helps people aged between 18 and 30 to find voluntary work for 2-12 months in member countries. Opportunities cover different areas including youth work and the environment.

Casual work

It is not common for foreign nationals to undertake casual work. However, with a growing tourism trade in Estonia, this could be set to change, as demand for foreign-speaking workers increases.

Gap year opportunities

[Concordia](#) are partners with the Estonia Youth Exchange Service and offer the chance to work on youth camps in the country.

Estonia also has opportunities for ski instructors and TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language) teachers. See [TEFL.com](#) for more information.

Postgraduate study

How does the higher education system work?

The academic branch of higher education follows the three-tier system of Bachelors, Masters and Doctorate degrees. Bachelors-level study is normally for three years (bakalaureusekraad). Masters-level study is normally for one or two years, with a Bachelors degree or equivalent qualification being a prerequisite (magistrikraad).

Following Masters-level study is Doctoral study, lasting between three and four years (doktorikraad). The exceptions to this are medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, architecture, pharmacy and civil engineering, which are taken as long-cycle study, lasting five to six years and leading to the magistrikraad.

What courses are available?

You may study a wide range of subjects at magistrikraad and doktorikraad level. Estonia also has a number of specialist institutions in the arts, science, business and technology. Many postgraduate courses are offered in English.

Where can I study?

There are six public universities:

- [Estonian Academy of Arts](#)
- [Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre](#)
- [Estonian University of Life Sciences](#)
- [Tallinn University](#)
- [Tallinn University of Technology](#)
- [University of Tartu](#)

The University of Tartu is the only general institution. All other institutions specialise in a particular field. There are four private universities, including the [Estonian Business School](#), and several private professional higher education institutions. Full details are available at [Study in Estonia](#). [EURAXESS Estonia](#) has details of research opportunities.

Applying for postgraduate study

As with UK universities, most Estonian institutions require a Bachelors-level degree or equivalent for admission to postgraduate study. For Doctoral-level study, a Masters-level qualification is sometimes preferred. It is advisable to check with the institution for their individual entry requirements.

Closing dates vary according to each institution. Please check each institution's website for details.

Fees and scholarships

Fees range from €1,023 to €7,350 a year. Postgraduate study is generally more expensive than Bachelors-level study. Check the individual institution's website for specific details for each course.

Some institutions offer scholarships to eligible and exceptional applicants. Visit their individual websites for details.

Are there any exchange programmes?

Estonia is part of the [Erasmus](#) programme, which enables students from 33 countries to study for a period of time in another country. Check with your university's Erasmus coordinator (usually based in the international office) to check what links they have with Estonia and in which subject areas.

Will my qualification be recognised in the UK?

Please refer to the [UK NARIC \(National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom\)](#) website for information about recognition of academic qualifications.

You may also want to visit the [UK National Europass Centre \(UK NEC\)](#) website for information on how to make your skills and qualifications easily understood in Estonia.

Visa and travel information

Visa requirements and applications

Most EU nationals do not need a visa or work permit but citizens of non-EU countries may be required to have these documents. However, you should apply for a residence permit/ID card if the length of your stay exceeds three months. You must register within three months and you will be granted temporary residency. See the [Police and Border Guard Estonia](#) for more information.

Some non-EU or EEA citizens are eligible to work without a visa for up to three months in a six-month period, although they must register for short-term work. Check the arrangements between your home country and Estonia. Visit the [Estonian Embassy](#) website for details. More information is also available through the [Police and Border Guard Estonia](#).

If you require a visa, you may apply via the Estonian Embassy using their online application form. The completed application must be printed out, signed and presented to the Estonian Embassy. Processing visa applications usually takes 5-10 days but can take up to 30 days.

If you are not a UK national, contact the Estonian embassy in the country where you are currently residing about how to obtain visas and work permits. If you are living in the UK, go to the [Estonian Embassy](#).

Permanent residency

To apply for long-term resident status, you must have held a temporary residence permit in Estonia for at least five years. Applications are submitted to the [Police and Border Guard Estonia](#).

Help in an emergency

The [British Embassy Estonia](#) is located in Tallinn. They help British visitors in case of emergency situations.

The number to dial in Estonia for police, ambulance and fire services is 112.

Travel advice

Find the latest travel advice and a traveller's checklist on the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office \(FCO\)](#) website.

Country overview

Geography

- **Full country name:** Republic of Estonia
- **Population:** 1.3 million (The World Factbook, 2012)
- **Border countries:** Russia and Latvia
- **Climate:** humid-temperate climate with a temperature range of -2°C to 20°C and extremes of -25°C to 30°C.
- **Terrain:** over half of Estonia is covered by forests. The highest point is Suur Munamägi (Great Egg Hill) at 318m. Estonia is a country of thousands of lakes and is mostly flat and marshy.
- **Natural hazards:** occasional flooding occurs in spring.

Living in Estonia

- **Cost of living:** the cost of living is generally lower than in the UK, but higher than other new EU states. The [University of Tartu](#) estimates that you will need €200-€250 a month to cover basic needs on top of housing costs. Rent in a private flat can be €100-€510 a month but as little as €80-€190 a month in student accommodation.
- **Internet domain:** .ee
- **Health:** EU/EEA citizens are entitled to receive the same healthcare as Estonians through the Health Insurance Fund, which is paid for by social tax. You should obtain a [European Health Insurance Card \(EHIC\)](#) before travelling to Estonia.
- **Laws and customs:** some local laws ban night-time alcohol sales in shops and street cafés. This does not include bars and restaurants. These measures were

introduced to try and curb high levels of alcohol consumption in the country. It is illegal to be found with any alcohol in your blood whilst driving.

Economy and finance

- **Currency:** Euro (€)
- **Type of economy:** Western, capitalist
- **Health of economy:** Estonia has one of the most successful economies of the former Soviet states. The country was hit by the global recession and its GDP dropped by 14% in 2009, although it has recovered well and now has the highest GDP growth rate in Europe. This is due to increased foreign investment and a rise in exports after it entered the eurozone in 2011. Unemployment still remains a problem, however.
- **Unemployment rate:** 12% (The World Factbook, 2012)
- **Main exports:** machinery and equipment, mineral products, electricity, agricultural and food products.

Culture

- **People:** 69% ethnic Estonians, 26% Russians, some Ukrainians, Belarusians and Finns.
- **Major religion:** 14% Evangelical Lutheran, 13% Orthodox, 1.4% other Christian. Most Estonians are not religious.
- **History:** See [BBC Timeline: Estonia](#).

Politics

- **Type of government:** parliamentary republic
- **Major political parties:** Estonian Reform Party, Centre Party of Estonia, Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica, Social Democratic Party, Estonian Greens.

More information

- [Estonian Embassy](#)
- [BBC Country Profile - Estonia](#)
- [The World Factbook](#)
- [XE Universal Currency Converter](#)

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