

# Overview of Migration Statistics

2016-2020



The overview was prepared by  
the Ministry of the Interior and the Estonian Contact Point  
for the European Migration Network. Designed by PauPau Design.



KULTUURIMINISTEERIUM



SISEMINISTEERIUM

## **The overview of migration statistics 2016–2020 provides answers to the following questions:**

- What characterises the emigration and return of Estonian citizens?
- How many Estonian citizens returned to their homeland?
- To whom, for what purpose, and how many visas were issued?
- How many registrations of short-term employment were there and in what areas?
- Who and for what reasons came to live in Estonia?
- Where did the foreigners settle?
- Who were granted long-term residence permits and the right of permanent residence?
- Who were given international protection?
- Who became Estonian citizens?
- Who became e-residents?
- How many foreigners participated in the Settle in Estonia programme?
- Map of migratory routes

# INTRODUCTION

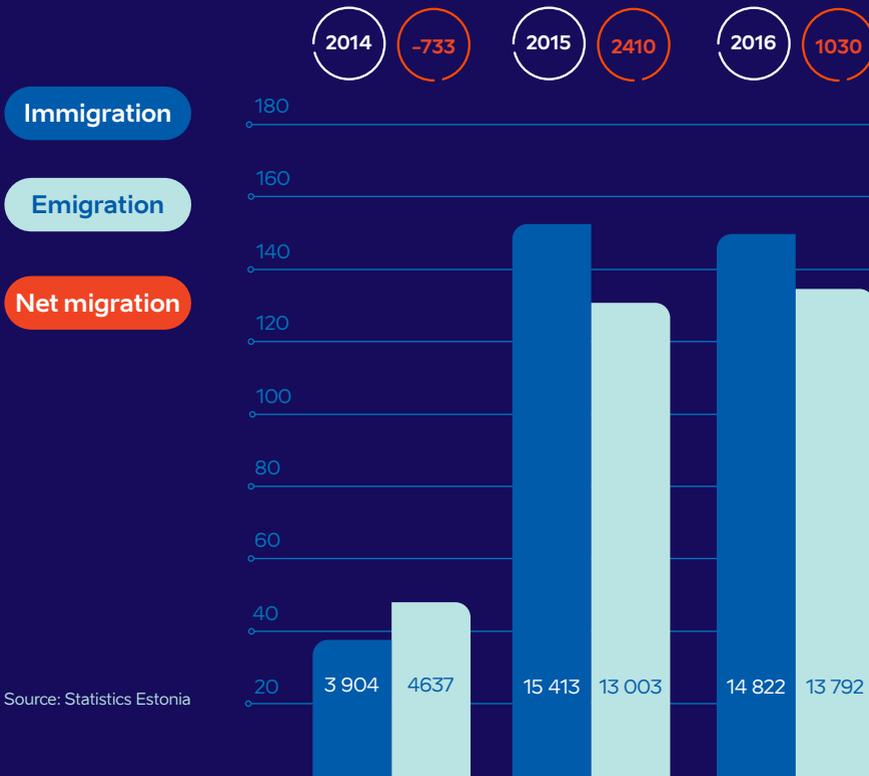
The purpose of this publication is to provide an overview of the main migration trends in Estonia during the period of 2016-2020 and to explain the different aspects of migration.

## Estonian population 2017-2021 (as of January 1st)



Source: Statistics Estonia

## Net migration (as at Jan 2021)



Source: Statistics Estonia

An ever-increasing number of people are coming to Estonia to live, work, or study, and a growing number of Estonians are also returning to Estonia. While net migration was negative up to 2014 (respectively -733), it has been showing a positive trend since 2015. According to Statistics Estonia, the population decreased by 2602 people in 2020 due to the natural growth rate (the number of deaths exceeded the number of births) and increased by 3781 people due to positive net migration (more people came to live in Estonia than left). In 2020, Estonia's population grew by nearly 0.08%.

In 2016, Statistics Estonia adopted a new methodology for the calculation of population. While previously, only data from the population register were used, migration is now measured with the aid of the residency index, which assesses people's activity in registers and on that basis, provides an estimate of the likelihood of a person's place of residence having been Estonia during the given year.

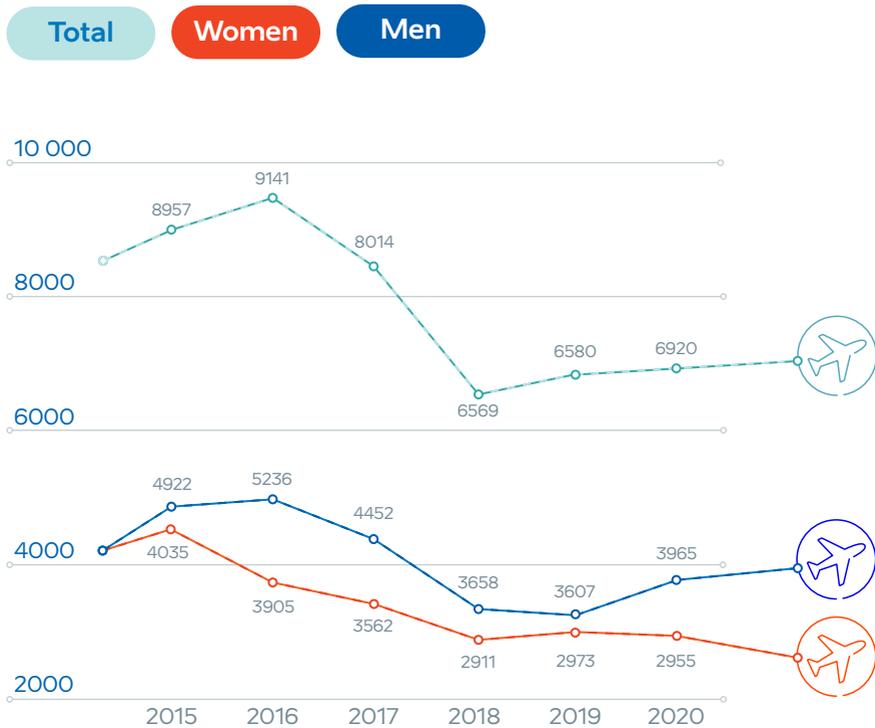




# EMIGRATION AND RETURN MIGRATION OF ESTONIAN CITIZENS

In the period of 2016-2020, the total number of Estonian emigrants (37,251) exceeded the total number of those who returned (36,679). In the period of 2017-2019, the number of those who returned to Estonia was bigger than the number of those who emigrated, but this trend changed again in 2020. So far, the migrants have been men rather than women. In the last year, Estonians mostly went to Finland, Russia, and Great Britain. The number of those who go to Finland has stably remained up to ten times higher than other countries throughout the years. In 2020, too, most people returned to Estonia from Finland, Russia, and Great Britain.

Emigration of Estonians (in 2015-2020)



## Where are people going? Emigration of Estonian citizens, 2020



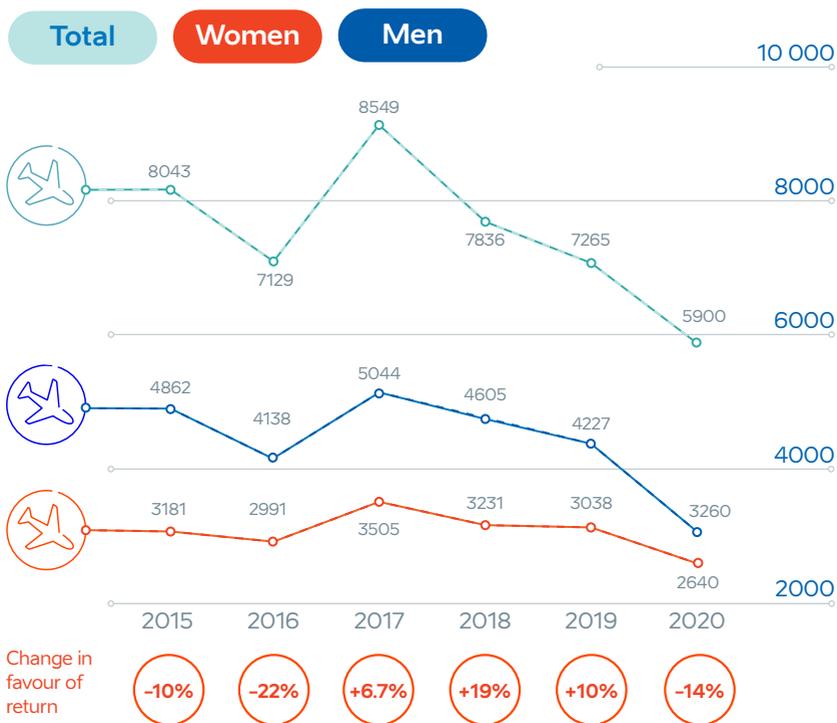
	Finland	2212
	Russia	276
	Great Britain	204
	Germany	125
	Sweden	108

## Where did people return from? Return migration of Estonian citizens, 2020



	Finland	2116
	Great Britain	437
	Russia	322
	Germany	127
	Norway	126

## Return of Estonians (in 2015-2020)



# 2.

## VISAS

**The Uniform Schengen Visa (type C visa)** allows one to move throughout the Schengen Area for up to 90 days within a 180-day period.

**The long-stay visa (type D visa)** is issued for staying in Estonia for up to 12 consecutive months, for a maximum period of up to 365 days. The long-stay visa is a domestic visa, which grants the right to move throughout the Schengen Area for up to 90 days within a 180-day period.

Starting from 2020, a foreigner can apply for both a short-stay and a long-stay visa for remote work (the so-called digital nomad visa) if the purpose of the foreigner's temporary stay in Estonia is the performance of work duties regardless of the location. 37 long-stay visas were issued for remote work in 2020. For the most part, the visa recipients were citizens of the United States of America, Canada, Australia, Republic of South Africa, and Japan.

### Visas issued by Estonia (in 2016-2020)



Source: Police and Border Guard Board

As there were restrictions on people's movement due to COVID-19 in 2020 in the entire world, including in Estonia, Estonia issued 82% less short-stay type C visas and 32% less long-stay type D visas than in 2019.

## Visas issued in Estonia in 2020

Short-stay (Schengen visas), type C		Long-stay visas, type D	
Total	Top 5 citizenships	Total	Top 5 citizenships
<b>25 764</b>	 Russian  Belarusian  Kazakh  Indian  Philippine	<b>17 389</b>	 Ukrainian  Russian  Belarusian  Moldovan  Uzbek

Source: Police and Border Guard Board

### Top 5 short-stay visas issued (by the purpose of the journey, 2020)



**TOURISM**



Visiting family members



Business travel



Sports



Transit

### Top 5 long-stay visas issued (by the purpose of the journey, 2020)



**SHORT-TERM EMPLOYMENT**



Visiting family members



Studying



Business travel



Start-up entrepreneurship

# SHORT-TERM EMPLOYMENT

Foreigners who are staying in Estonia temporarily (for example, on the basis of a visa or a visa waiver) are permitted to work in Estonia if their right to work arises directly from the law, an international agreement, or if their short-term employment has been registered by their employer with the Police and Border Guard Board prior to the start of work. The registration of short-term employment alone will not give a foreigner a legal basis to stay in Estonia. Generally, short-term employment can be registered for up to 365 days within a 455-day period. Short-term employment for seasonal work can be registered for up to 270 days per year. While the number of registrations of short-term employment was on a constant rise in the previous years, short-term employment was registered 31% less in 2020 than it was in 2019. This was mainly due to the travel restrictions imposed because of COVID-19. Out of all registrations of short-term employment, 83% were men and 17% were women.

## Number of registrations of short-term employment (2016-2020)



Source: Police and Border Guard Board

## Top 5 citizenships (2020)



Source: Police and Border Guard Board

## Fields in which short-term employment was registered, top 5 (2020)



Source: Police and Border Guard Board

# 3

## WHO CAME TO LIVE IN ESTONIA?

**TEMPORARY RESIDENCE PERMIT:** a permit issued to a foreigner for settling in Estonia.

A temporary residence permit may be issued to a foreigner to settle with a spouse or a close relative for the purpose of studying, working, or entrepreneurship, in exceptional cases also for participating

in criminal proceedings, in the case of overriding national interest, or under an international agreement. In addition, a permit for permanently settling in Estonia may be issued to a foreigner who has been living in Estonia for at least three years. A temporary residence permit is valid for up to 5 years and can be extended by up to 10 years.

### First-time temporary residence permits, top 5 citizenships (2020)

 <b>Ukrainian</b>	<b>1791</b>
 <b>Russian</b>	<b>1135</b>
 <b>Belarusian</b>	<b>273</b>
 <b>Indian</b>	<b>222</b>
 <b>Iranian</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4710</b>

### Decisions on the temporary right of residence of EU citizens' family members, top 5 citizenships (2020)

 <b>Russian</b>	<b>25</b>
 <b>Moldovan</b>	<b>16</b>
 <b>Ukrainian</b>	<b>15</b>
 <b>Undetermined</b>	<b>7</b>
 <b>Brazilian</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>106</b>

Source: Police and Border Guard Board

**TEMPORARY RIGHT OF RESIDENCE:** Citizens of the European Union will acquire a temporary right of residence for up to 5 years if they register their place of residence in the population register. A temporary right of residence will be automatically extended by 5 years if the place of residence of the EU citizen continues to be registered in Estonia.

The family members of EU citizens who are third country citizens<sup>1</sup> and wish to live in Estonia must apply for a temporary right of residence and for its extension.

An EU citizen and a family member staying with him or her have the right to stay in Estonia on the basis of a valid identity document for up to 3 months without registering or applying for a right of residence.

<sup>1</sup> A third country citizen is a foreigner who is a citizen of a country other than a Member State of the European Union, a member of the European Economic Area, or the Swiss Confederation. Starting from 2021, also a British citizen is a third country citizen.

## Number of individuals with a valid temporary residence permit (Jan 2021)



Source: Police and Border Guard Board

## Number of individuals with a valid EU citizen's family member's temporary right of residence (Jan 2021)



Source: Police and Border Guard Board

### Number of individuals with a valid temporary residence permit by citizenships, top 5 (1 Jan 2021)

 Russian	8754
 Ukrainian	8575
 Undetermined citizenship	4166
 Belarusian	1181
 Indian	1136
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32 322</b>

Source: Police and Border Guard Board

### Number of individuals with a valid EU citizen's temporary right of residence by citizenships, top 5 (1 Jan 2021)

 Finnish	7015
 Latvian	4372
 German	3392
 French	1953
 Italian	1936
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32 619</b>

Source: Population register

## EU citizens who have registered their place of residence, top 5 citizenships (2020)



Finnish  
560



Latvian  
510



German  
451



French  
392



Italian  
254

Source: Population register

## Number of valid EU citizen's family member's permanent rights of residence by citizenships, top 5 (01.2021)



Russian



Undetermined  
citizenship



Ukrainian



USA



Georgia



TOTAL

Source: Police and Border Guard Board

# 4

## WHAT WERE THE REASONS FOR COMING TO ESTONIA?

Statistics on temporary residence permits issued for the first time<sup>2</sup> show that most foreigners come to Estonia to work, on the basis of family migration, and to study. Settling in Estonia

on the basis of family migration is permitted if the foreigner is joining a spouse or a close relative who is already living in Estonia or if they are settling in Estonia together.

In 2020, men accounted for 60% and women for 40% of the recipients of first-time temporary residence permits. Out of all those who came on the basis of labour migration, 85% were men and 15% were women, 80% men and 20% women came for the purpose of entrepreneurship. On the basis of family migration, however, more women than men came, 67% women and 33% men, respectively. Out of all those who came to study, 61% were men and 39% were women.

Mainly because of the travel restrictions due to COVID-19, the number of first-time temporary residence permits dropped compared to 2019 by all bases – the drop was 14% in family migration, 60% in study migration, 6% in work migration, 17% in entrepreneurship. The total number of first-time temporary residence permits dropped by 21% compared to 2019.

### First-time temporary residence permits and residence rights for family members of EU citizens (2016-2020)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
First-time residence permits in total	3780	3995	4912	5984	4710
Family migration (joining a spouse and a close relative in total)	1233	1184	1661	2272	1958
Residence permit for studying	1160	1211	1267	1330	533
For working	1325	1501	1851	2218	2089
Residence permit for entrepreneurship	16	53	87	134	111
EU citizens' family members*	35	42	57	82	106
Other reason**	46	46	46	30	19

\* not included in the total number \*\* Other reason – participation in criminal proceedings and foreign agreements

Source: Police and Border Guard Board

## WORK MIGRATION

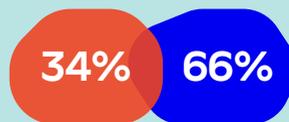
Although the number of applicants for a residence permit for working and the number of foreigners working in Estonian start-ups has until now been growing year by year, it suffered a drop in 2020, being influenced by the situation brought about by COVID-19. Compared to 2019, the number of first-time temporary residence permits issued for working in start-ups dropped by 26%.

<sup>2</sup> A first-time temporary residence permit is issued to a person who is applying for an Estonian residence permit for the first time.

## Temporary residence permits issued for permanently settling in Estonia (in 2017-2020)



Source: Police and Border Guard Board



The number of residence permits issued for permanently settling in Estonia increased by 16% in 2020 compared to 2019. In 2020, **1354 of the recipients of a residence permit were men and 703 were women.**

Starting from 2016, it is possible to apply for a residence permit for permanently settling in Estonia. A residence permit can be applied for on this basis by a foreigner who has been living in Estonia for at least three years within a period of five consecutive years and who has adapted well in Estonia.

## First-time temporary residence permits for working, by types of work (2018-2020)

Work migration	2018	2019	2020
General	1224	1283	1256
Top specialist	228	390	384
Working in a start-up	186	315	232
Expert/adviser/consultant	58	78	53
Research/lecturer	40	42	36
Member of the management body of a legal person governed by private law	37	26	33
Athlete/coach/referee	21	10	18
EU Blue Card	19	19	9
Minister of religion/monk/nun	18	16	22
Creative or performing artist	11	7	12
Teacher	7	15	12
Other	2	17	22
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1851</b>	<b>2218</b>	<b>2089</b>

Source: Police and Border Guard Board

# 5.

## LONG-TERM RESIDENCE PERMIT

The long-term residence permit is a permanent residence permit that can be applied for by third country citizens if they have been living in Estonia on the basis of a residence permit for at least five years, have a valid temporary residence permit and a steady legal income, and are ensured, have registered their place of residence, and have at least B1 level proficiency in the Estonian language.

The recipients of a long-term residence permit also include persons with undetermined citizenship (holders of the so-called grey passport) who settled in Estonia before 1 July 1990 and have been living in Estonia. The number of persons with undetermined citizenship has been decreasing year by year (from 70,196 persons in 2019 to 69,009 persons in 2020), the main reasons being the person's death or acquisition of Estonian or another country's citizenship.

### Valid long-term residence permits (31 Dec 2020)



Source: Police and Border Guard Board

### Foreigners holding a valid long-term residence permit, top 5 citizenships (as of 31 December 2019)



Russian

79 625



Undetermined citizenship

69 009



Ukrainian

4253



Belarusian

1233



USA

225

Source: Police and Border Guard Board

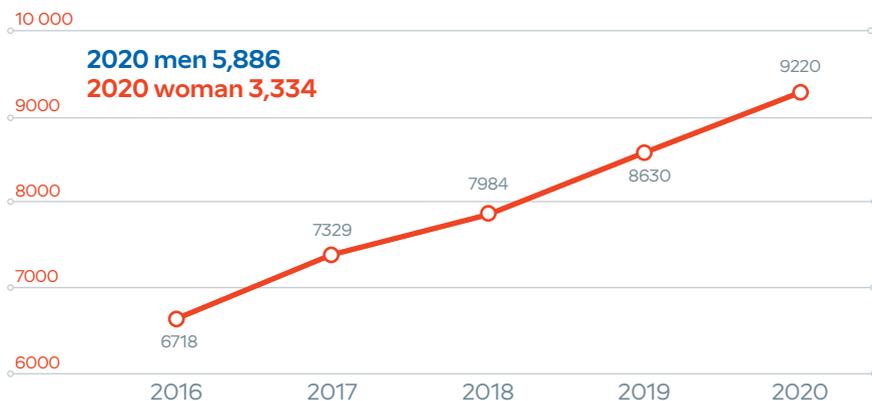
# EU CITIZEN'S PERMANENT RIGHT OF RESIDENCE

A European Union citizen and his or her family member, who is a third country citizen and who has been living in Estonia on the basis of a temporary right of residence persistently for five consecutive years, have the right to apply for a permanent right of residence.



\* Starting from 2021, the citizens of the United Kingdom are no longer considered among the citizens of the European Union. They are included in the statistics for 2020.

## Top 5 citizenships and number of persons with a permanent right of residence (31 Dec 2020)



Source: Police and Border Guard Board

## Permanent rights of residence of EU citizens and EU citizens' family members (as of 31 December 2019)



Latvian  
2289



Finnish  
2215



Lithuanian  
1387



German  
559



British  
449

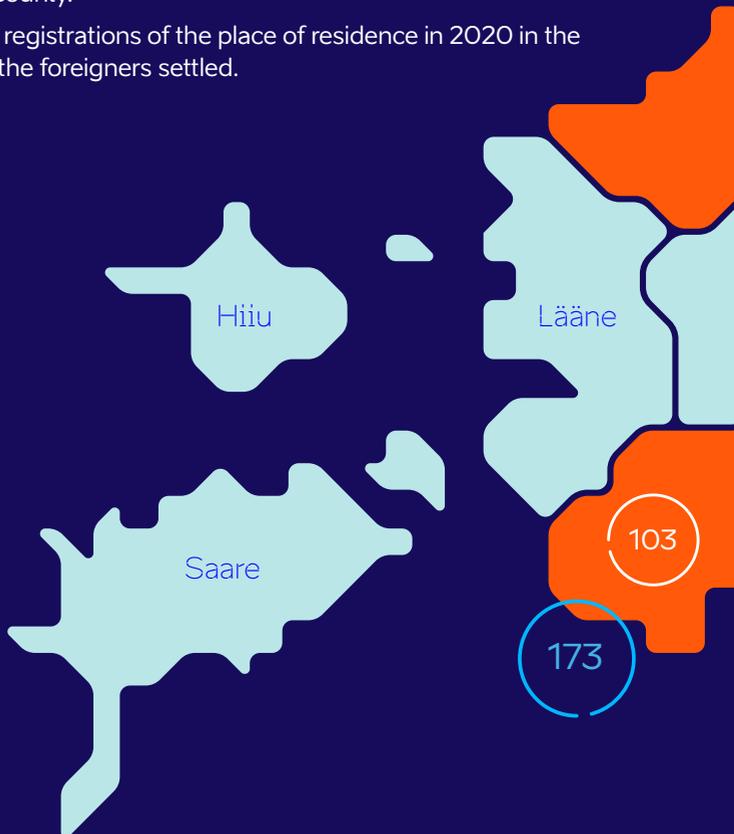
Source: Police and Border Guard Board

# 6.

## WHERE DID THE FOREIGNERS SETTLE?

According to data in the population register, during the period of 2016-2020, citizens of third countries as well as the European Union settled most often in Harju County and Tartu County.

The map shows first-time registrations of the place of residence in 2020 in the main five counties where the foreigners settled.



### Top 5 cities, 2020

Third country citizens	Tallinn 2968	Tartu 439	Pärnu 148	Narva 122	Kohtla-Järve 83
European Union citizens	Tallinn 2217	Tartu 458	Valga 129	Narva 87	Pärnu 73

Source: Population register



 Third country citizens

 European Union citizens



# INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

Applying for international protection is a basic human right. Estonia has taken on an international commitment to protect the foreigners who cannot live in their homeland in safety.

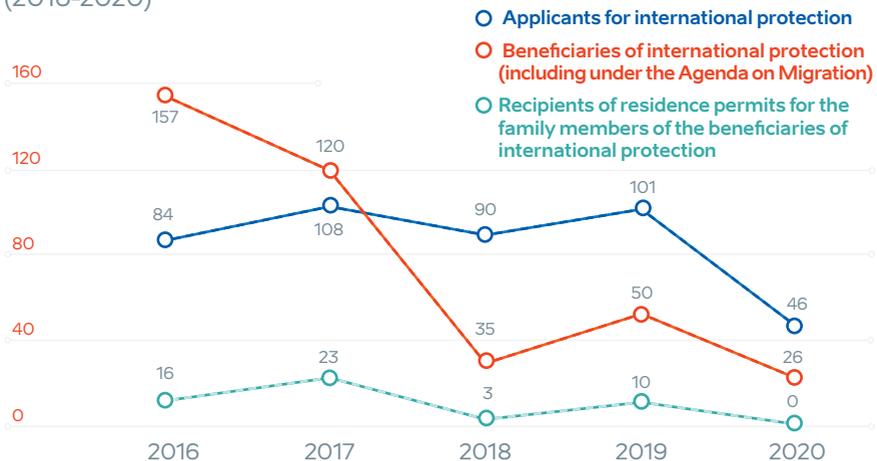
A beneficiary of international protection is a foreigner who has been recognised as a refugee or a beneficiary of subsidiary protection and who has been granted an Estonian residence permit.

In recent years, the number of applicants for international protection has remained relatively low, dropping by 54% in 2020 compared to 2019.

The number of beneficiaries of international protection has also remained low and was augmented by the people in need of international protection who were accepted under the European Agenda on Migration for 2015-2017 and the European Commission's call of 2017.

Since 1997, 1248 foreigners have requested international protection from Estonia and international protection has been granted in total (refugee status + subsidiary protection status) to 554 foreigners, including 213 people who arrived and received protection under the Agenda on Migration (86 of them were granted refugee status and 127 were granted subsidiary protection status). Residence permits for the family members of foreigners who have received international protection have been issued to a total of 96 people. In 2020, a total of 322 beneficiaries of international protection and their family members lived in Estonia.

## Number of applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection (2016-2020)



## REFUGEE STATUS

is granted to a person who has been identified as having a well-founded fear of persecution on the grounds of race, religion, ethnicity, membership in a social group, or political orientation, and who has been granted protection under the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

## SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION

is granted to a foreigner who does not qualify as a refugee but whose return or repatriation could pose a serious risk (e.g. a death penalty, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of another kind, an international or domestic armed conflict).

### Citizenships of applicants for international protection, top 5 (1997-2020)



Ukrainian 206



Russian 168



Georgian 97



Syrian 70



Afghan 58

### Citizenships of beneficiaries of international protection, including under the Agenda on Migration, top 5 (1997-2020)



Syrian 196



Ukrainian 93



Russian 54



Iraqi 41



Sudanese 26

Source: Police and Border Guard Board

## APPLYING FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

**AT A BORDER CHECKPOINT** International protection can be applied for prior to entering the country at any border checkpoint on the border of the Republic of Estonia. In most cases, this is done if the foreigner does not have a valid visa, travel documents, or an Estonian residence permit required to enter the country.

**AT A SERVICE POINT OF THE POLICE AND BORDER GUARD BOARD** If the foreigner is already in Estonia, the application is submitted at a service point of the Police and Border Guard Board.

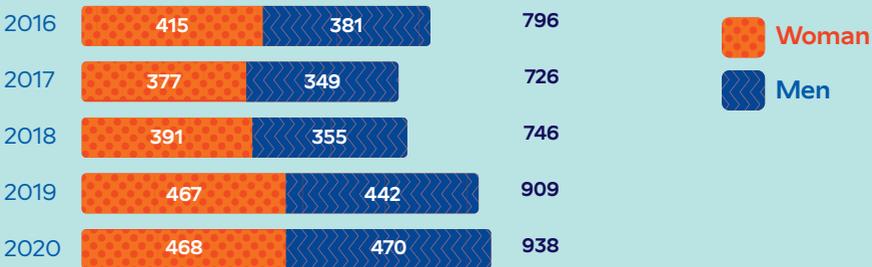


# WHO BECAME ESTONIAN CITIZENS?

In 2016-2020, Estonian citizenship was granted to 4957 people by naturalisation<sup>3</sup>, 2601 of them were women and 2356 were men. In 2020, Estonian citizenship was granted by naturalisation most often to persons with undetermined citizenship, who were followed by citizens of the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Armenia, and Pakistan.

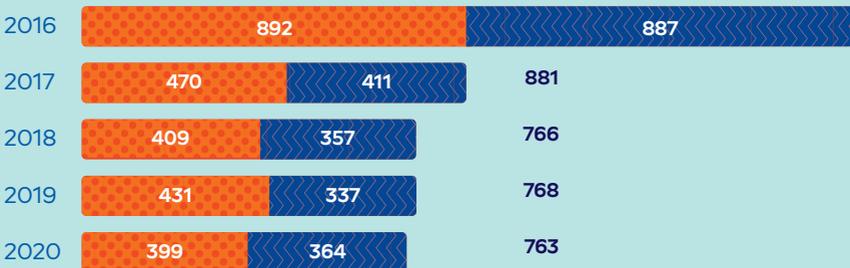
## Applying for and acquiring citizenship (2016-2020)

### APPLICATIONS



### GRANTING OF CITIZENSHIP VIA NATURALIZATION

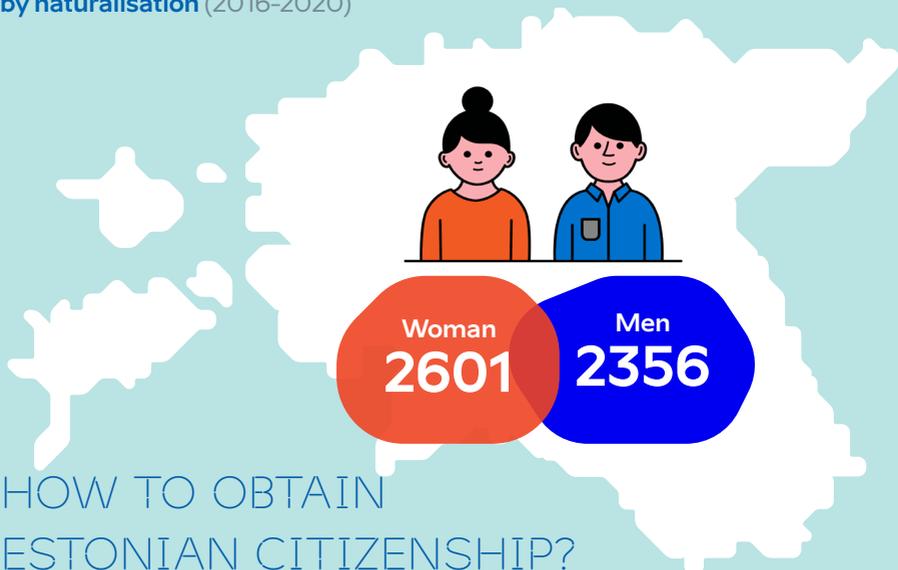
1779



Source: Ministry of the Interior

<sup>3</sup> Naturalisation is the non-birth acquisition of citizenship under the conditions provided for in the Citizenship Act.

## Citizenship granted by naturalisation (2016-2020)



## HOW TO OBTAIN ESTONIAN CITIZENSHIP?

### The acquisition and resumption of Estonian citizenship:

- Estonian citizenship is granted to a child upon the moment of their birth, if at the time of their birth at least one of his or her parents is an Estonian citizen.
- Estonian citizenship is acquired through naturalisation and restored to a person who lost their Estonian citizenship as a minor.
- As of 2016, Estonian citizenship shall automatically be granted to a child born in Estonia from the moment of his or her birth, if his or her parents are not citizens of any country and have legally resided in Estonia for at least five years at the time of the child's birth.

Source: Ministry of the Interior

In 2019, the citizenship agreements system, the aim of which is to facilitate the acquisition of citizenship, was launched. Foreigners who have lived in Estonia for at least five years will now be able to conclude a one-time language learning contract with the state which, on the one hand, provides people with free language training and, on the other hand, obliges them to pass an Estonian language exam at least at the B1 level, and to apply for Estonian citizenship within one year. Participants in language training are compensated by the state for up to 20 days of study leave in the amount of the average salary.



# E-RESIDENTS

Estonia was the first country in the world to begin offering an e-residency or digital identity service to citizens of foreign countries. To date, several other countries in the world have set up and are in the process of setting up similar programmes, following Estonia’s example.

Starting from December 2014, non-residents can apply for the status of an Estonian e-resident together with an e-resident’s digital ID card, which is a statue-guaranteed secure digital means of personal identification and enables foreigners to use Estonia’s e-state services when needed, regardless of the location. However, the e-resident’s digital ID is not a physical identity or travel document (it does not have a photo), nor does it grant citizenship, tax residence, a residence permit, or a permit to enter Estonia or the European Union.

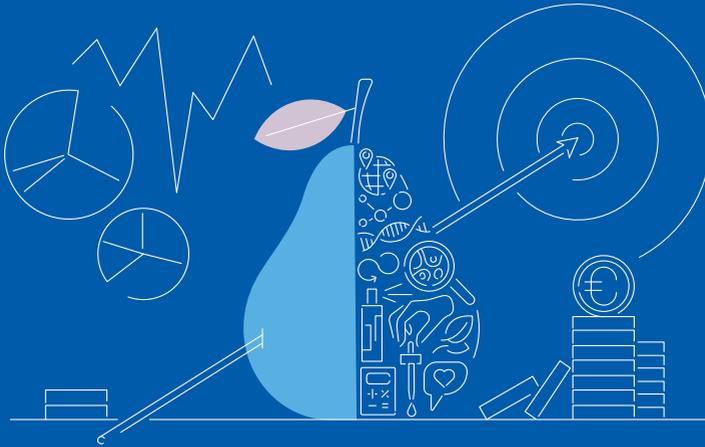
In addition to founding a company in Estonia, Estonia’s e-residents use their digital document to manage the company, perform e-banking transactions, access international payment services, file their income tax returns electronically, and sign documents and agreements digitally.

Source: Enterprise Estonia

## Decisions on issuing e-resident’s digital IDs

Status granted in total	114	7127	7495
Citizenships, top 5 (2014-2020)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Finnish</li> <li>2. Russian</li> <li>3. USA</li> <li>4. Latvian</li> <li>5. Lithuanian</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Finnish</li> <li>2. Russian</li> <li>3. USA</li> <li>4. Italian</li> <li>5. Ukrainian</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Finnish</li> <li>2. British</li> <li>3. Russian</li> <li>4. USA</li> <li>5. Ukrainian</li> </ol>
	2014	2015	2016

Source: Police and Border Guard Board



The total number of e-residents as of 31 Dec 2020 was 76,070, with 13% being women and 87% men. The top 5 citizenships were Finnish, Russian, Ukrainian, German, and Chinese.



	13 436	22 367	16 630	12 955
1. Ukrainian	1. Japanese	1. Russian	1. Russian	
2. Finnish	2. Russian	2. German	2. German	
3. German	3. Chinese	3. Ukrainian	3. Chinese	
4. British	4. Ukrainian	4. Indian	4. Ukrainian	
5. Russian	5. German	5. Chinese	5. Spanish	
	2017	2018	2019	2020

# 10.

## SUPPORTING THE ADAPTATION OF NEW IMMIGRANTS

### THE SETTLE IN ESTONIA PROGRAMME

is a training programme offered by the Estonian state, which helps foreigners who have arrived in Estonia to integrate more easily and adapt to the local life. During various courses, an overview is provided of the functioning of the Estonian state and society, and of the daily life organisation.



### THE SETTLE IN ESTONIA PROGRAMME CONSISTS OF

basic level Estonian language learning and seven thematic courses: the basic module, work, entrepreneurship, studying, research, family, and international protection. The courses take place in Tallinn, Tartu, and Narva mainly in the English and Russian language.

Participants in the Settle in Estonia programme (2015-2020)

Total number of participants	298	1210	1214
Top 5 countries	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ukraine</li> <li>Russia</li> <li>Nigeria</li> <li>Belarus</li> <li>Iran</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Russia</li> <li>Ukraine</li> <li>Syria</li> <li>Finland</li> <li>Latvia</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Russia</li> <li>Ukraine</li> <li>Belarus</li> <li>Syria</li> <li>Latvia</li> </ol>
	2015 (al. 1.08)	2016	2017

Source: Ministry of the Interior



## PARTICIPANTS

The Settle in Estonia programme is open for all foreigners who have a right of residence or a residence permit and who have been living in Estonia for less than 5 years. The Settle in Estonia programme launched in August 2015 and by the end of 2020, there had been 8423 acts of participation in the programme. In 2020, there were 1950 acts of participation in the Settle in Estonia programme, 1613 of which by participants from third countries, 324 by participants from the European Union, and 13 by beneficiaries of international protection. One person may have participated in several modules of the Settle in Estonia programme.

In the past year, the men and women who participated in the Settle in Estonia programme were divided almost equally in terms of the numbers. The greatest participation is in the basic level Estonian language learning, which is followed by the basic module and the work and entrepreneurship module<sup>4</sup>.

1479

1. Russia
2. Ukraine
3. India
4. Nigeria
5. Belarus

2073

1. Russia
2. Ukraine
3. India
4. Nigeria
5. Turkey

1950

1. Russia
2. Ukraine
3. Nigeria
4. India
5. Belarus

2020\*  
participated  
**789 woman**  
**817 men**

\* the division reflects unique participants

2018

2019

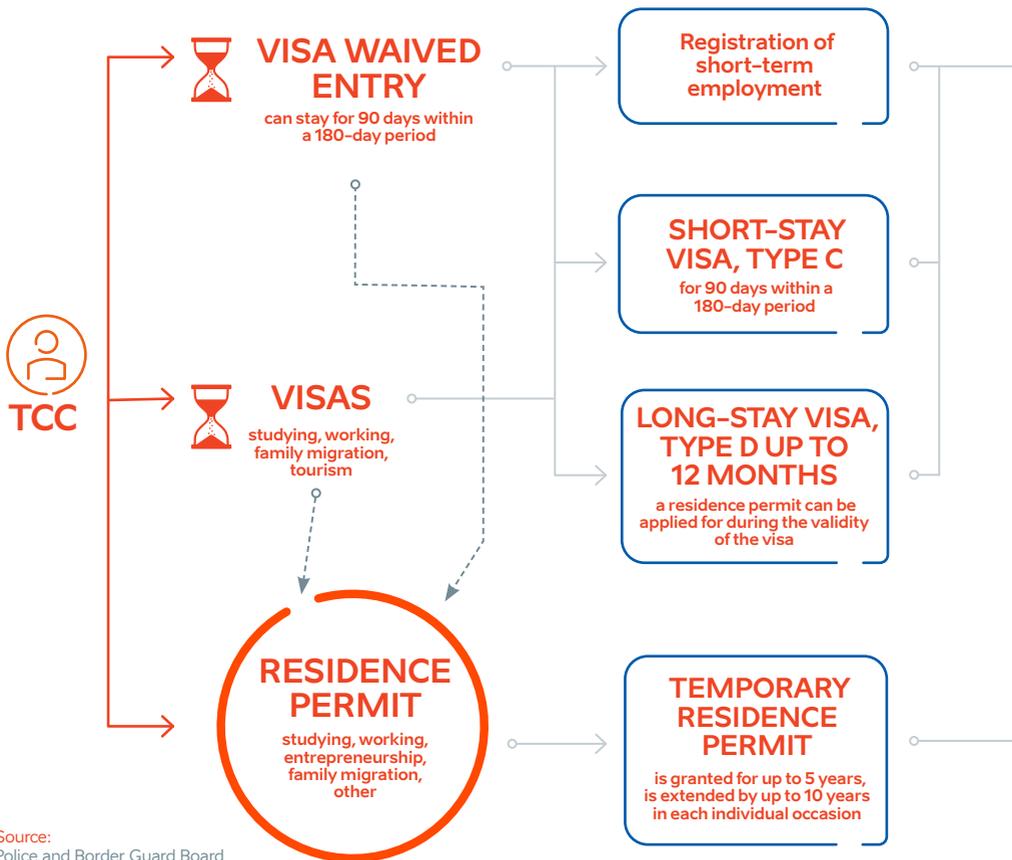
2020

<sup>4</sup> Starting from 2021, the work and entrepreneurship module is offered as two separate modules.

# Opportunities of European Union and third country citizens\* to enter and live in Estonia

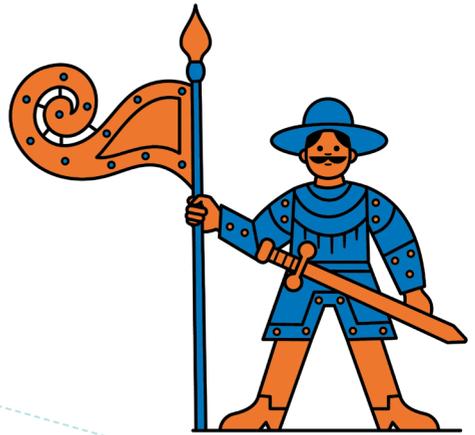


\* (hereinafter the 'TCCs')



Source: Police and Border Guard Board

Permanent right of residence – no fixed period



Estonian citizenship

Short-term employment can be registered for 365 days within a 455-day period



Short-term employment for seasonal work can be registered for up to 270 days within a 365-day period



Long-term residence permit – permanent right to live in Estonia  
has been living for at least 5 year

Refugee status – residence permit for three years  
extended by 3 years

Subsidiary protection status – residence permit for one year  
extended by 2 years

**LONG-TERM RESIDENCE PERMIT**  
permanent



Applicant for international protection

