



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
GOVERNMENT

NATIONAL SECURITY CONCEPT OF ESTONIA

Table of contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Principles of Estonian security policy	4
3. Security environment	6
4. Areas of activity in Estonia's security policy	9
4.1. Social cohesion and resilience of the state	10
4.2. Economic security and critical services	11
4.3. Internal security and public order	12
4.4. Military defence	13
4.5. International cooperation	15

1. Introduction

This document has three core aims: to describe the security environment as of early 2023; to outline Estonia's objectives in light of the deterioration of the security environment; and to describe the steps that need to be taken in order to achieve the objectives that have been set. It is a framework document serving as a guideline for sector-specific strategies and development plans.

The 2023 edition of the National Security Concept is the fifth Estonian National Security Concept. It draws on the previous concept, devised in 2017.

The National Security Concept is drafted by the government and approved by the Riigikogu (Estonian parliament). The document is updated at least once every four years or in response to changes in the security environment or in Estonia's ability to ensure its security.

2. Principles of Estonian security policy

The aim of Estonia's security policy is to guarantee the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Estonia, the preservation of the Estonian people, language and culture, its territorial integrity, constitutional order, safety of the population and the functioning of society.

The foundation of Estonia's security is a social order that centres on respect for human dignity, the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals, democratic governance and the rule of law. Estonia is a member of a community of democratic countries, and Estonia's aim is that this community is united and enduring. Estonia's security is underpinned by a system of international relations based on respect for international law.

Estonian security policy is guided by the principles set out in the charter of the United Nations (UN) and by the right and freedom of every nation to choose its own security solutions. The safeguarding of Estonia's security is not directed against any other state.

Estonia will defend itself in any event and against any threat, regardless of its origin or the time and place in which it emerges, and however overwhelming the adversary; Estonia will never surrender. Estonia's aim is to render any aggression against the Estonian state unfeasible.

Security is all-encompassing. Estonia's security policy is based on a broad security concept, which includes all trends and factors affecting national security. The implementation of Estonia's security policy is based on a holistic approach to society and the state.

Estonia's security begins with ourselves, including with the readiness and actions of every individual. Based on Estonia's comprehensive national defence concept, the defence of the nation and preparations for it draw on all available military and non-military capabilities and resources, involving also the public, private and third sector.

Estonia's security is underpinned by its membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) and by close cooperation with allies and other international partners. Estonia considers the security of itself and its allies to be indivisible.

Due to the significant deterioration in the international security environment, Estonia as a whole must make efforts to reinforce its security at a greater scale and speed. For a safer and more crises-proof environment, security issues must be factored into the development of laws, policies, working processes, supply chains, infrastructure, international cooperation and more.

Ensuring security and crisis preparedness for the state and society is a comprehensive, continuous and purposeful process. It must be reflected in the mindset, readiness, actions and cooperation of constitutional institutions, the executive, local governments, businesses, organisations, communities and individuals. The state promotes and supports volunteer activity in boosting crisis preparedness and crisis management.

In preparing for and dealing with crises, Estonia is guided by the principle of the continuity of duties: everyone fulfils their role both under ordinary circumstances as well as at times of crisis and war. By preparing for war and the most serious crises, we are also prepared to deal with crises of lesser impact.

The basis of Estonian security is a cohesive and united society. In Estonia, human and civil rights are protected. Estonia ensures that all people have equal opportunities and a living environment in which they are cared for, live long lives and are as healthy as possible, in which inequality and poverty are reduced and people enjoy working lives of notable length and quality. Estonia's economic environment is attractive. Education, research and development form the basis of a successful and future-oriented Estonia.

3. Security environment

The greatest strategic challenge in the current security environment is an increasing confrontation between various political, economic and social systems. The sphere of values based on democracy, market economy, rule of law and human rights is under pressure, ideological opposition to it is growing. Authoritarian regimes have grown more aggressive and are increasingly collaborating to undermine democratic values.

Veiled competition has turned into an open confrontation, with war once again being waged in Europe. A new international security architecture is being shaped through this confrontation. For Estonia, the survival of the world order based on rules and democratic values is of existential importance.

The greatest security threat to Estonia is the Russian Federation, whose objective is to dismantle and rewrite Europe's security architecture and the rules-based international order, and to restore the politics of spheres of influence. The threat to Estonia based on these objectives is an existential one. The Russian Federation has repeatedly carried out acts of aggression, occupying, annexing, and committing war crimes on the territory of neighbouring countries. The threat the Russian Federation poses to Estonia is a long-term one.

The military threat to NATO, including to Estonia and the Baltic states as members of the Alliance, has increased over the last year. The aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine shows that it is willing to take risks, therefore we must also be prepared for miscalculations on its part. The Russian Federation is increasingly using military means, including nuclear threats, to achieve its political objectives.

The military threat to the Baltic states and NATO is further increased by the expanding influence and military presence of the Russian Federation in Belarus. The growing influence of the Russian Federation and further attempts to increase it in the Balkans, Moldova and Georgia compounds the threat that it poses to security and stability. The strategic importance of Africa and the Arctic has also increased for the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation makes continuous use of hybrid attacks to achieve its political objectives. These attacks are designed to influence political and social choices in a way that is favourable to the Russian Federation and to undermine trust and unity both within and between countries. Asymmetric means, such as information

influence activities, energy dependency, engineered migration or destabilising activities in cyberspace, are systematically and simultaneously employed to achieve the desired effect. Herein, cyberspace is both an independent domain and an enabler of other domains, and the accompanying risks must not be underestimated. Orchestrating hybrid attacks is a task of the Russian Federation's intelligence and security services. A hybrid attack could lead to the triggering of NATO's Article 5.

The Russian Federation actively conducts information influence activities against Estonia and the rest of democratic nations. Attitudes shaped by the long-term impact of the Russian information sphere are a threat to the constitutional order of Estonia. The Russian Federation employs a variety of social groups, including the pro-Russian population, to amplify polarising issues in society and divide Estonian society.

Neither the existing security system nor international law have sufficiently deterred or prevented the aggression of the Russian Federation nor its use of asymmetric means against its neighbouring countries. Such tendency becoming the norm represents a threat to security and undermines the international order. The war against Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation are evidence of this and demand an unequivocal response from the democratic world.

The democratic nations' response to the Russian Federation's full-scale war against Ukraine has been robust, underscoring the importance of unity and determination in shaping the security environment. Solidarity within the European Union, strong transatlantic relations, and the prioritisation of collective defence in NATO are at the heart of condemning the aggression of the Russian Federation, imposing sanctions, and supporting Ukraine. Estonia's influence on the international arena has grown, inter alia as a vocal advocate of helping Ukraine.

The clout and influence of the People's Republic of China have grown on the international arena. The main challenge to Estonia's security arising from the People's Republic of China is its aim to reshape the norms of international engagement and its wish to influence decisions and achieve control of strategic domains. China employs asymmetric means to this end.

Intensifying confrontation on the international arena is also evident in economic, industrial and technological spheres. Countries that do not share democratic values and companies acting in their interests are becoming a threat via weaponizing connectivity and the model of open governance. Malevolent actors could utilise Estonia's digital services for money laundering, financing terrorism or other unlawful activities.

Other strategic challenges include climate change, migratory pressure, food security, pandemics, terrorism, extremism, energy security and risks to the global economy, all of which have a direct or indirect impact on national and international security. As a member of both the European Union and NATO, Estonia may become a target for

terrorist organisations and adherents of their ideology. There are no good solutions to these challenges within national borders, but increasing rivalry and political polarisation are making it more difficult to solve them through international cooperation. The fight for vital resources – drinking water, food, arable land and energy – is increasing the threat of global instability, conflicts and mass migration. Climate change, in turn, is accelerating the likelihood of these threats materialising.

4. Areas of activity in Estonia's security policy

Estonia is facing the most tense security situation of the re-independence period. As a society and a nation, we must be prepared for risks that previously seemed unthinkable.

To strengthen our security, Estonia acts within five main domains, which are inter-linked and mutually supportive, and which together form a whole where each part is of equal value:

 social cohesion and resilience of the state

 economic security and critical services

 internal security and public order

 military defence

 international cooperation

In a deteriorating security situation, we must improve the resilience of the entire state and its population. To achieve this, it is necessary to ensure targeted long-term development of non-military national defence capabilities through permanent funding in the state budget strategy.

Due to the increased military threat of the Russian Federation, the required Estonian military defence spending is at least 3% of GDP; Estonia's host nation support costs will come on top of it. Similarly to military defence spending, the state budget strategy will ensure permanent funding for the development of civil protection, taking into account investment needs based on threat scenarios.



4.1. Social cohesion and resilience of the state

Estonia is a society with a shared identity and shared values whose cohesion stems from its language, culture, democratic norms and values. Estonia has a vibrant population and cultural space.

In a cohesive society, all fundamental rights and freedoms are protected. There is less conflict and dissatisfaction in such a society, as well as fewer vulnerable people and risk groups, and less radicalisation. Maintaining and increasing social cohesion in Estonia requires a constant focus on issues that divide society, on reducing their impact and eliminating their causes. Opportunities must be created for everyone to thrive on their own.

To prevent the population from being influenced in a way that leads to conflicts threatening the constitutional order, information influence activities, including disinformation, must be promptly identified and stopped from spreading. To this end, Estonia uses strategic communication to ensure that constitutional values are embraced as widely as possible in society.

Estonia is increasing its population's ability to adapt and cope in a complex, high-risk environment. Learning skills that contribute to positive mental health and self-efficacy begins in childhood and it is available to all ages and socioeconomic groups.

For the preservation of the Estonian state and people, particular attention should be paid to children and their protection. Arrangements should be in place for providing education, childcare and other services, and ensuring child safety in times of crisis.

Estonia's demographic situation may become a security risk if the population declines and ages. Global demographic trends are moving in the opposite direction, and potential negative changes in the living environment, economic downturn, radicalisation, conflicts and crises may cause an increase in migration that affects Estonia.

Estonia will continue to reinforce the crisis preparedness of its social and healthcare systems according to threats and in line with the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a particular focus on the crisis preparedness of health infrastructure and social infrastructure. The continued provision of healthcare, social services and emergency social care services in the required volume will ensure the society is able to cope in crises and at a time of war.

Estonia values open and inclusive governance. One of the aims of this is to boost the level of trust in the state among residents. Trust, a strong civil society, risk awareness, defence resolve, and the readiness to volunteer for the resolution of crises all enhance social resilience.

Estonia enhances resilience in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. To improve the preparedness of constitutional institutions, the executive and local governments and the continuity of critical services Estonia must have a national risk assessment, coordinated management and planning, up-to-date crisis plans and regular exercises at every level. The main prerequisites for implementing plans are cooperation between the different parties, the resilience of each individual part, and the necessary resources.

4.2. Economic security and critical services

Estonia's economic success and security depend on fair and open trade, a transparent rules-based international economic environment, solid national finances, trusted connectivity in both the physical and digital world, emerging technologies, supply chains and access to resources.

In terms of economic security, Estonia's aim is to prevent and exclude dependence on authoritarian states, and unreliable companies under their control, including by boosting the effectiveness of supervision. In parallel, Estonia is developing innovative technological solutions that could be offered to democracies, including for increasing the value of the mineral resources of the future, which are needed for energy production and completing the green transition. Estonia ensures secure supply chains and the transparency of foreign investments in strategic areas. In addition, Estonia assesses the risks involved in public procurements to exclude products, services and tenderers that could pose a risk to critical services.

Energy security is the cornerstone of security and economic activity. Estonia's aim is to achieve and maintain complete energy independence from the Russian Federation and to diversify its energy mix. To reduce risks to the security of supply of electricity, controlled generation capacity will be ensured to the necessary extent. Estonia, along with Latvia and Lithuania, is in the process of reinforcing its electricity systems, and once completed, the Baltic states will be able to desynchronize from the Russian-Belarusian grid and connect to the electricity system of continental Europe.

Estonia's economic model must be sustainable, competitive and future-proof. To this end, we are increasing the proportion of renewable energy in our energy mix and implementing a strategically managed green transition in the country. Estonia's goal is to have its renewable electricity production equal its total annual consumption by 2030.

The basis of a functioning resilient society and crisis preparedness is ensuring the continuity of critical services, which includes being prepared for the most difficult scenarios, including war. In case of a crisis or war, Estonia will ensure the functioning

of the state's finance system and state cash flow.

All levels of society must have stocks to ensure crisis readiness. To keep the society functioning in a crisis, Estonia keeps sufficient national stocks of fuel and natural gas, in accordance with risk scenarios, as well as reserves of food and medicinal products supplied through pharmacies. To boost security of supply and ensure flexibility of response, we are developing a network-based model for the cooperation of the public and private sector.

Estonia's security and economic success depend on the sustainable development of its digital society. When it comes to digital transformation and technological choices, the state and the private sector must be mindful of the security environment and global trends in technology. In digital space, we must plan for cybersecurity and information security in all information systems, organisations and processes.

Estonia supports the leading role of democratic countries in developing new and emerging technologies. It is in Estonia's security interests to support national companies operating in these strategic areas.



4.3. Internal security and public order

Estonia staunchly defends its constitutional order and internal peace. An open, humane and effective way of guaranteeing public order and security increases public trust in government.

Estonia acts decisively to prevent and counter the actions of hostile special services and non-state actors. In line with the principles of the rule of law and as a deterrent to the Russian Federation, information concerning activities directed against the state is made public if possible.

Estonia prevents and combats corruption, radicalisation, violent extremism, terrorism and its financing, money laundering and organised crime. Prevention and rehabilitation of offenders, ensured through an effective penal policy and cooperation between various stakeholders, is an important part of ensuring security.

Effective control of external borders, including customs and tax control, is vital in a deteriorating security situation, as it helps to prevent illegal migration or migration organised with a hostile purpose. Identifying dangerous persons and hazardous substances at the border increases security throughout the Schengen area. The state uses all legal means to protect Estonia, the Schengen area, the European Union and NATO.

Given Estonia's reliance on digital services, the state ensures the availability of public

services and the integrity and confidentiality of data, including during crises.

Both under ordinary circumstances and in crises, experts in public order, internal security, border control, cybersecurity and strategic communication, as well as volunteers supporting them, are among those who react to the first signs of danger to prevent the situation from escalating into a threat to constitutional order. Maintaining and developing this ability requires technologically advanced, scenario-based, and timely capacity development that takes into account the creation of reserves, as well as long-term and stable funding.

The deteriorating security environment requires an increase in the population's crisis resilience and a more systematic implementation of civil protection. The aim of civil protection is to support people in a crisis, including in wartime, and to increase their self-resilience in a crisis. Civil protection at a time of crisis means that both the state and the society are prepared for early warning and alerts, rescue operations, evacuation, sheltering, first aid and disaster medicine, essential social assistance, psycho-social crisis assistance and other forms of essential assistance for the population.

The basis for civil protection is people's ability to protect themselves during a crisis until help arrives, and to assist each other if necessary. Achieving this requires a joint effort of various parts of society, including individuals, communities, volunteers, local government units, and various state institutions. Estonia develops social protection measures to address threats to the population, along with risk communication and training, including to enhance institutional capacity.



4.4. Military defence

The aim of military defence is to prevent military threats and, if necessary, to successfully defend the country and win the war. In order to deter any potential adversary from launching a military aggression, Estonia adopts a forward defence posture, which combines national military defence capability and collective defence. Estonia's national defence system is based on the principle of democratic civilian control.

To ensure credible deterrence, NATO must be prepared for an immediate collective defence operation anywhere on Allied territory. NATO's forward defence posture on its Eastern Flank must be based on deterrence by denial – the aim of which is to convince the aggressor that achieving its objectives through military means is impossible. Credible deterrence by denial consists of Estonia's own strong military defence, combat-ready Allied presence integrated with Estonian military defence, designated reinforcement forces, effective command and control, prepositioned equipment, high-quality defence plans that are regularly exercised, and the resolve and ability of Allies to rapidly deploy additional forces, capabilities and equipment in case of a crisis.

Estonia's military defence is structured around the principle of territorial defence. Estonia is guided by the understanding that the Baltic states are one area of operations.

To strengthen Estonian military defence, we are developing, on the basis of military advice and in an expedited manner, complete military units and capabilities that are manned, armed, equipped, trained, regularly exercised and that have sufficient supplies. Based on both units in reserve and those at permanent readiness, Estonia is developing manoeuvre units and territorial defence units capable of blocking and countering the adversary.

Situational awareness, advanced early warning, capable intelligence, counterintelligence and a shared threat perception amongst Allies are key to ensuring efficient national defence planning and pre-empt military threats. Early warning supports timely decision-making and rapid implementation of decisions, which are of primary importance not only to achieve defence readiness but also to prepare the state as a whole for countering a threat.

Estonia must achieve defence readiness before a threat materialises. To that end, freedom of action is ensured as early as possible for the Estonian Defence Forces and Allied forces, including, if necessary, in the regional area of operations – the Baltic states and the Baltic Sea. Regularly conducted defence readiness exercises, including at short notice, aim to make the mobilisation system more efficient.

Conscript service is the main instrument for building reserve units, maintaining combat readiness and providing a recruitment pool for active duty. Estonia's defence capability is enhanced by boosting the attractiveness of conscription and reserve service, and a greater participation of women. The Estonian Defence League contributes to preparing the national defence capability and ensuring security.

The bedrock of Estonia's defence is a strong defence resolve. Strengthening defence resolve is a joint effort involving many sectors, and national defence education is among its contributing elements. Estonia values the defenders of the state and the contributions to national defence by the citizens, the private sector and the general society. To reinforce this, more opportunities for both a military and non-military contribution to national defence are being created, while raising awareness of these opportunities.

The contribution of Allies to NATO's defence in Estonia and in the Baltic states as well as the militarily meaningful Allied presence are an important part of Estonian defence. Allied military presence and activities in Estonia should be continuous and planned. Those forces must be fully equipped, supplied and capable of operating together with the Estonian units.

To strengthen the security of all Allies, Estonia takes part in collective defence operations and other international military operations. These operations reinforce

international security. Moreover, participating in them contributes to developing relations and interoperability between Allies, and provides the Estonian Defence Forces with valuable experience.



4.5. International cooperation

Active involvement in international organisations, dynamic regional cooperation and close and effective bilateral relations with Allies and partners form the cornerstone of Estonia's foreign policy. This applies to Europe as a whole, the wider transatlantic community and the global context but, more narrowly, also to the Baltic Sea region. Mutual solidarity between countries and the unity of their positions are important in achieving goals and make the implementation of decisions more efficient. Estonia's foreign policy is active, constructive and confident. It focuses on issues threatening the survival of the Estonian state and society, as well as those that strengthen Estonia's statehood and society and make them more resilient.

At the heart of Estonia's foreign and security policy are NATO and the European Union, through which Member States ensure their common and national interests. The purposefulness, strength and unity of NATO and the European Union are of utmost importance. Estonia supports close, result-oriented cooperation between NATO and the European Union. In maintaining and developing relations with the Union and Allies, Estonia aspires to be at the core of decision making, fulfilling its obligations and contributing to security in different parts of the world to this end.

In the crises that have occurred over the last five years – the migration crisis, the COVID pandemic and Russia's aggression against Ukraine – the European Union has consolidated and targeted its actions more effectively. The Union's strength lies in the solidarity of its Member States, which is manifested, among other things, in coping with the current crises. The European Union's consensus-based decision-making process for foreign policy is in the interests of the Union itself and of all of its Member States and ensures the implementation of decisions.

The core task of NATO – credible collective defence – is ensured by the strengthened deterrence and defence posture agreed by the Alliance; increased defence spending and investments by all Allies; swift political and military decision-making process; and NATO's deterrence and defence posture that stands on a threat-based mix of conventional, missile defence and nuclear capabilities. NATO's strength lies in allied unity and in the strength of the transatlantic link.

Estonia is an advocate of EU enlargement and NATO's open door policy and supports initiatives that assist countries aspiring to become members in preparing for accession and in ensuring their compliance with accession criteria.

Following the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine, all like-minded countries need to continue supporting Ukraine politically, militarily and economically in a sustained manner and to the required extent. It is in Estonia's interests to help Ukraine win the war, retain its independence and restore its territorial integrity. Estonia supports Ukraine's accession to both the European Union and NATO. Estonia will be diplomatically active in Ukraine's reconstruction process, provide military assistance, contribute to the restoration of infrastructure destroyed during the war, offer its know-how for the development of the Ukrainian state and economy and assist with the treatment of war casualties. Estonia is also providing humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

In the United Nations (UN), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe, Estonia works to ensure the validity of the principles of global and regional peace and security, the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts and, where necessary, the legitimate use of force as agreed in the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These organisations have their part to play in finding a solution to the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and to frozen conflicts in Europe.

Through development cooperation, humanitarian aid and by achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, Estonia contributes to the promotion of global stability and to reducing the risk of crises and conflicts.

Promoting and defending Estonia's interests on global issues requires a positive image and considerable influence on the international arena. A proactive and constructive contribution to the digital, cyber, human rights, climate, energy and connectivity agenda increases Estonia's involvement and allows to better protect its interests in these areas, but also creates other opportunities. Participation in global crises management builds cohesion beyond Estonia's circle of closest allies, enhances solidarity with Estonia and increases Estonia's own ability to act effectively in any crisis. Bilateral and regional cooperation with countries in other regions around the world creates the necessary preconditions and backdrop for finding support for Estonia's positions when key decisions are made in the UN and other international organisations.

Relationships with allies and partners empower Estonia's security. Bilateral and regional initiatives and cooperation within international organisations strengthen unity and increase mutual ties and trust. Therefore, Estonia must find new ways to promote its interests as well as continue in tried and tested formats.

The Baltic Sea region is considered one of the most stable, most integrated and most effectively organised regions in Europe. The aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has revealed a number of challenges in the region, but at the same time opened up new avenues. The accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO will strengthen the region's security, and Estonia is actively engaged in formulating the new unified regional security arrangements.

One component of international security and confidence is arms control. It implies that all parties adhere to international law, fulfil their agreed obligations, and respect the territorial integrity of other countries. The basis of effective international arms control is abiding by the principles of transparency, trust and verification. It is important that arms control have a negative impact on collective defence and deterrence, Estonia's independent defence capabilities or lead to the creation of special regional arrangements. In the significantly deteriorated security environment, the relevance of restriction and control regimes of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction has become more pronounced, and Estonia must be involved in shaping these regimes.

