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Estonia

The present report is a compilation of the information contained in reports of the treaty bodies and special procedures, including observations and comments by the State concerned, in reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and in other relevant official United Nations documents. It is presented in a summarized manner owing to word-limit constraints. For the full texts, please refer to the documents referenced. The report does not contain any opinions, views or suggestions on the part of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights other than those contained in public reports and statements issued by the Office. It follows the general guidelines adopted by the Human Rights Council in its decision 17/119. Information included herein has been systematically referenced in endnotes. The report has been prepared taking into consideration the periodicity of the review, and developments during that period.





I. Background and framework

A. Scope of international obligations¹

1. International human rights treaties²

| | Status during previous cycle | Action after review | Not ratified/not accepted |
|---|------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Ratification, accession or succession | ICERD (1991) | OP-CRC-AC (2014) | ICRMW |
| | ICESCR (1991) | CRPD (2012) | ICPPED |
| | ICCPR (1991) | | |
| | ICCPR-OP 2 (2004) | | |
| | CEDAW (1991) | | |
| | CAT (1991) | | |
| | OP-CAT (2006) | | |
| | CRC (1991) | | |
| | OP-CRC-SC (2004) | | |
| Reservations and/or declarations | | OP-CRC-AC (declaration, art. 3 (2), age of recruitment at 18 years, 2014) | |
| | | CRPD (interpretative declaration, art. 12, 2012) | |
| Complaints | ICERD, art. 14 (2010) | OP-CRPD, art. 6 (2012) | OP-ICESCR |
| procedures, inquiries and urgent | ICCPR-OP 1 (1991) | | ICCPR, art. 41 |
| action ³ | CAT, art. 20 (1991) | | OP-CEDAW |
| | | | CAT, arts. 21 and 22 |
| | | | OP-CRC-IC |
| | | | ICRMW |
| | | | ICPPED |

2. Other main relevant international instruments

| | Status during previous cycle | Action after review | Not ratified |
|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------|---|
| Ratification, accession or succession | Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide | | |
| | Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court | | UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education |
| | Palermo Protocol ⁴ | | Conventions on stateless persons ⁵ |

| Status during previous cycle | Action after review | Not ratified |
|--|---------------------|---|
| 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol | | ILO Conventions Nos. 169 and 189 ⁶ |
| Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and Additional Protocols ⁷ | | |
| ILO fundamental conventions ⁸ | | |

- 1. The Committee against Torture invited and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination encouraged Estonia to consider ratifying ICPPED, ICRMW, OP-ICESCR and OP-CEDAW.9
- 2. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination encouraged Estonia to consider ratifying, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended that Estonia be strongly encouraged to ratify, the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education.¹⁰
- 3. The Committee against Torture referred to the information provided by Estonia regarding its decision not to ratify the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Despite that information, it recommended that Estonia reconsider such ratification. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination made similar recommendations.
- 4. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended ratification of the Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems and in the media.¹³
- 5. The Committee against Torture recommended that Estonia make the declarations under articles 21 and 22 of CAT.¹⁴

B. Constitutional and legislative framework

6. In 2011, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights noted with concern that international legal obligations were restrictively interpreted by the judiciary as representing merely non-self-executing obligations and not giving rise to subjective claim rights at the domestic level. Thus, individuals were unable to claim violations of their economic, social and cultural rights emanating from the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Committee recommended that Estonia establish training programmes for the legal profession and judges on the scope of economic, social and cultural rights. ¹⁵

C. Institutional and human rights infrastructure and policy measures

7. In 2011, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights urged Estonia to bring the Chancellor of Justice into compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles) and to apply for its accreditation to the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. ¹⁶ In 2013, the Committee against Torture made a similar recommendation. ¹⁷ In 2014, the Committee on the

Elimination of Racial Discrimination regretted that Estonia had not yet decided to establish a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles. ¹⁸ In 2012 and 2014, Estonia reported that the Government was looking for the best solution for the national human rights institution to be accredited in the future. ¹⁹

II. Cooperation with human rights mechanisms

8. In 2014, Estonia submitted its mid-term report regarding the follow-up to the recommendations put forward during the universal periodic review, which was held in 2011.²⁰

A. Cooperation with treaty bodies

1. Reporting status

| Treaty body | Concluding observations included in previous review | Latest report submitted since previous review | Latest concluding observations | Reporting status |
|--|---|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination | August 2010 | 2013 | August 2014 | Combined twelfth and thirteenth reports due in 2018 |
| Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights | November 2002 | 2008 | December 2011 | Third report due in 2016 |
| Human Rights Committee | July 2010 | - | - | Fourth report overdue since July 2015 |
| Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women | July 2007 | 2015 | - | Combined fifth and sixth reports pending consideration in October/November 2016 |
| Committee against Torture | November 2007 | 2011 | May 2013 | Sixth report due in 2017 |
| Committee on the Rights of the Child | January 2003 (to CRC)/ January 2010 (to OP-CRC-SC) | 2013 | - | Combined second to fourth reports pending consideration in September 2016; initial report on OP-CRC-AC due in 2016 |
| Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | - | - | - | Initial report overdue since 2014 |

2. Responses to specific follow-up requests by treaty bodies

| Concluding obser | rvations | | |
|------------------|----------|----------------|--------------|
| Treaty body | Due in | Subject matter | Submitted in |

| Treaty body | Due in | Subject matter | Submitted in |
|--|--------|--|--|
| Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination | 2011 | Prosecution of hate speech; overemphasis on language in the Integration Strategy; and situation of Roma. ²¹ | 2011. ²² Further information requested. ²³ |
| | 2015 | Prohibition of racist organizations and hate speech; racial motivation as an aggravating circumstance in criminal law; and education of Roma children. ²⁴ | 2015 ²⁵ |
| Human Rights Committee | 2011 | Mandate of the Chancellor of Justice; and discrimination against women. ²⁶ | 2011 , 27 2012^{28} and 2013 . 29 Further information requested. 30 |
| Committee against Torture | 2014 | Legal safeguards for persons deprived of their liberty; use of force; domestic violence; and national human rights institution. ³¹ | 2014. ³² |

B. Cooperation with special procedures³³

| | Status during previous cycle | Current status |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| Standing invitation | Yes | Yes |
| Visits undertaken | Racism | - |
| | Sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography | |
| Visits agreed to in principle | - | - |
| Visits requested | - | - |
| Responses to letters of allegation and urgent appeals | During the period under review, one communication. | nication was sent. The Government |
| Follow-up reports and missions | | |

C. Cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

9. In 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014, Estonia contributed financially to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), including to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations.³⁴

III. Implementation of international human rights obligations, taking into account applicable international humanitarian law

A. Equality and non-discrimination

- 10. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights noted with concern that the Equal Treatment Act did not prohibit discrimination on all grounds stipulated in article 2 (2) of ICESCR in the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights.³⁵
- 11. The Committee was concerned at gender disparity in the fields of education and employment.³⁶ It was also concerned that women remained disadvantaged in the labour market. In particular, women had difficulty in being reintegrated into the labour market and earned much less than male workers, including when they performed the same work.³⁷
- 12. The Committee called on Estonia to intensify its efforts to eliminate societal gender role stereotypes and prejudices.³⁸ It urged Estonia to ensure effective enforcement of legislation on gender equality in employment and create an enabling environment that promoted the participation of women in the labour market, including by ensuring the availability and affordability of day-care services in all regions.³⁹
- 13. Furthermore, the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations asked the Government to pursue its efforts to promote equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value.⁴⁰
- 14. UNESCO encouraged Estonia to further promote gender equality in education.⁴¹ Likewise, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights called on Estonia to improve gender balance in education disciplines traditionally dominated by either sex.⁴²
- 15. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was concerned at the inadequacy of human resources allocated to the promotion of gender equality, especially in the Office of the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, which consisted of only the Commissioner and one adviser. It called on Estonia to allocate the resources necessary for the promotion of gender equality.⁴³
- 16. That Committee expressed concern at persistent stigmatization of certain nationalities, ethnicities and population groups, and at reports of racist acts against them. 44 CERD was concerned at the absence of data on discrimination on grounds of race and ethnicity. 45
- 17. UNHCR stated that the media frequently conflated economic migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in their reports and gave wide, unchallenged publicity to xenophobic and even racist statements by political leaders and opinion-makers. It noted an increase in targeted attacks against the reception centre for asylum seekers in Vao village in the first six months of 2015. 46
- 18. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights called on Estonia to ensure that its education programmes contributed to the promotion of understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nationalities and racial, ethnic or religious groups.⁴⁷ The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reiterated its recommendations related to the need for Estonia to assess the overall situation of the Roma community and to adopt a comprehensive strategy to tackle discrimination and other problems faced by that community.⁴⁸
- 19. The Committee was concerned at the absence of amendments to the Penal Code prohibiting racist organizations and the dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or

racial hatred, and making racially motivated hate speech and incitement to hatred a criminal offence punishable by law.⁴⁹ It recommended prohibiting organizations that promoted and incited racial discrimination, making racially motivated hate speech and incitement to hatred criminal offences punishable by law in the circumstances indicated in general recommendation No. 35 of the Committee and ensuring that punishment for such offences corresponded to the gravity of the crimes.⁵⁰

- 20. The Committee was concerned at the absence of complaints concerning officials of the Police and Border Guard Board and of the Security Police Board in relation to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and similar forms of hatred, and at the low number of enquiries into complaints concerning discrimination on grounds of ethnic origin and race.⁵¹
- 21. The Committee reiterated its concern that racial motivation did not in general constitute an aggravating circumstance in proceedings under criminal law. It reiterated its recommendation that the Penal Code be amended to include a specific provision ensuring that the motive of hatred was taken into account as an aggravating circumstance in proceedings under criminal law.⁵²

B. Right to life, liberty and security of person

- 22. The Committee against Torture was concerned that the definition of torture in the Penal Code did not reflect all elements contained in article 1 of CAT, and that the penalty for acts of torture of up to five years of imprisonment was not commensurate with the grave nature of the crime. It recommended that Estonia amend its Penal Code to include a definition of torture in conformity with the Convention and penalties for acts of torture which took into account their grave nature.⁵³ In 2014, Estonia reported that it was in the process of amending the Penal Code and that the definition of torture would include both elements of physical and mental abuse.⁵⁴
- 23. In 2013, the Committee was concerned by information that no prosecutions had resulted from official applications to the Chancellor of Justice or the Public Prosecutor's Office in relation to allegations of brutality and excessive use of force by law enforcement personnel during the events that took place in Tallinn in April 2007. It was concerned that the investigation into the events was inadequate and that the authorities had not made an attempt to obtain additional evidence, either by questioning the applicants in person or by interviewing the witnesses.⁵⁵
- 24. The Committee recommended that Estonia promptly, thoroughly and impartially investigate all allegations of torture, ill-treatment and excessive use of force, and sanction officials found guilty with appropriate penalties. It also recommended that Estonia establish an independent mechanism to investigate such allegations, and ensure that victims obtained redress and had a right to adequate compensation.⁵⁶
- 25. The Committee recommended that Estonia, inter alia, ensure effective supervision and independent monitoring by judicial organs of any involuntary hospitalization in psychiatric institutions of persons with mental and psychosocial disabilities, and that it ensure that every patient, whether voluntarily or involuntarily hospitalized, was fully informed about the treatment to be prescribed and given the opportunity to refuse treatment or any other medical intervention.⁵⁷
- 26. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights noted with concern the prevalence of domestic violence.⁵⁸ The Committee against Torture remained concerned by the absence of specific legislation to prevent and combat domestic violence, and the fact that domestic violence was not a distinct crime in the Penal Code.⁵⁹ It welcomed the Development Plan for the Reduction and the Prevention of Violence 2010-2014.⁶⁰ The

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, however, regretted that the Development Plan did not foresee large-scale awareness-raising campaigns.⁶¹

- 27. The Committee against Torture recommended that Estonia adopt comprehensive legislation on violence against women that would establish domestic violence and marital rape as specific criminal offences, and that it investigate all allegations of violence, prosecute and punish perpetrators and ensure that victims of domestic violence benefited from protection, including restraining orders, and had access to medical and legal services. In addition, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended conducting media campaigns with a view to changing the society's attitude regarding domestic violence. In 2014, Estonia indicated that it was in the process of amending the Penal Code, which would be supplemented by a section concerning domestic violence. A new subsection would be added to article 121 (physical abuse), providing for stricter punishment for such abuse if it was committed in a close or dependent relationship. 4
- 28. The Committee against Torture was concerned by the absence of legislation explicitly prohibiting corporal punishment in all settings, and recommended that the Child Protection Act be amended to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment of children in all settings, including at home and in alternative care settings, as an offence under the law.⁶⁵
- 29. The Committee welcomed amendments made to the Penal Code in 2012, criminalizing trafficking in human beings as a distinct provision in the Penal Code. ⁶⁶ The ILO Expert Committee noted the amendments to the Penal Code, as well as information on several activities to intensify the fight against human trafficking. ⁶⁷
- 30. However, the Committee against Torture was concerned that Estonia remained a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking, for the purposes of both forced prostitution and forced labour.⁶⁸ UNHCR stated that refugees and asylum seekers were particularly at risk of falling victim to trafficking or smuggling due to the vulnerable situations they often faced.⁶⁹
- 31. The Committee recommended that Estonia vigorously enforce the new anti-trafficking law and take effective measures to prevent human trafficking, increase protection of its victims and provide them with redress.⁷⁰ The ILO Committee of Experts encouraged the Government to ensure that thorough investigations of cases of trafficking in persons were carried out, and that the perpetrators involved were prosecuted.⁷¹

C. Administration of justice and the rule of law

- 32. The Committee against Torture recommended that Estonia take measures to guarantee that all persons deprived of their liberty were afforded, by law and in practice, all fundamental legal safeguards from the outset of their detention, namely the following rights: to be informed of the reasons for their arrest and of the charges against them; to be informed of their rights; to have prompt access to an independent lawyer, and, if necessary, to legal aid; to inform a person of their own choice; to receive a medical examination by an independent doctor, if possible, a doctor of their choice; to be brought before a judge without delay; and to have the legality of their detention examined by a court. In 2014, Estonia provided detailed information regarding legal safeguards for detained persons.
- 33. The Committee was concerned about information suggesting that conditions in some prisons and police arrest houses did not meet international standards. It recommended that Estonia improve the material conditions in all prisons and police arrest houses, including newly built and renovated ones, with a view to making improvements related to infrastructure, hygiene and sanitary conditions, hot water, heating, ventilation, lighting, furniture and repairing broken windows, and that it ensure minimum international standards

of at least four square metres of living space for each detainee.⁷⁴ In 2014, Estonia reported on its measures to improve the living conditions of detainees.⁷⁵

34. The Committee was concerned about reports of the unjustified use of restraints, including handcuffs, in prisons. It recommended that Estonia ensure strict adherence by all prison officers to the new, more specific regulations in force since 2011 concerning the use of restraints in prisons, as well as adherence to the protocols and the filling in of registers documenting the use of restraints, including the reasons for use, duration of use and particular method of restraint used. Estonia should ensure that all complaints of violations concerning the use of restraints were promptly and independently investigated and that the persons responsible were held to account. ⁷⁶ In 2014, Estonia provided information that additional specific regulations concerning the use of restraints in prisons were in process. ⁷⁷

D. Freedom of expression and association, and the right to participate in public and political life

- 35. UNESCO stated that defamation of national symbols, State authority and persons enjoying international immunity was a criminal offence, punishable by up to three years of imprisonment. It was recommended that Estonia decriminalize defamation.⁷⁸
- 36. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights noted with concern that legislation in force prohibited civil servants, including those who did not perform essential services, from participating in strikes. It called on Estonia to ensure that the provisions in the Public Service Act on the right of civil servants to strike complied with ICESCR by restricting the prohibition on the right to strike to only those discharging essential services.⁷⁹
- 37. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was concerned at the low level of participation of minorities in public and political life, including the parliament and local institutions. It reiterated its recommendation that Estonia ensure greater participation by members of minorities in public life, including in parliament and in the administration at all levels.⁸⁰

E. Right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work

38. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was concerned that the level of unemployment remained significant. It recommended that Estonia intensify its efforts to reduce unemployment and the vulnerability of the employment sector to economic shocks.⁸¹

F. Right to social security and to an adequate standard of living

- 39. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights noted with concern that the number of persons, particularly non-Estonians, living below the poverty line or at risk of poverty remained high. It was concerned that a significant number of persons receiving social security benefits lived in poverty. The Committee recommended that Estonia formulate and implement policies and strategies to reduce poverty and ensure that benefits guaranteed an adequate standard of living to recipients and their families.⁸²
- 40. The Committee remained concerned that, in spite of the significant increase in the minimum wage, it did not provide a decent living for workers and their families. 83

- 41. The Committee was concerned that the duration of the payment of unemployment benefits was limited and that such benefits were not paid in cases in which the employment contract was terminated due to professional fault.⁸⁴
- 42. The Committee noted with concern the acute shortage of housing, including social housing, in Tallinn and, to a lesser extent, in other cities and towns, as well as rural municipalities. It urged Estonia to address the shortage of housing, including social housing, especially for disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups, in all regions concerned.⁸⁵

G. Right to health

43. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed concern that, while the rate of abortion had decreased, it continued to be widely practised among adolescents and that unwanted pregnancy often led teenage girls to drop out of school. It urged Estonia to ensure that sexual and reproductive health services were effectively accessible to adolescents, and called on Estonia to intensify its efforts to prevent teenage pregnancy and to provide the support services necessary for pregnant adolescents.⁸⁶

H. Right to education

- 44. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights noted with concern that the number of pupils who did not complete upper secondary education remained high. It recommended adopting targeted measures to address school dropout among pupils.⁸⁷
- 45. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended that Estonia ensure that all Roma children had access to quality education and were integrated in mainstream schools.⁸⁸
- 46. UNESCO noted that human rights as a topic had been integrated into the national curriculum.⁸⁹

I. Cultural rights

47. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was concerned that some segments of the population, in particular disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups, did not participate in cultural activities due to limited accessibility and affordability. It encouraged Estonia to promote the realization of the right of everyone to take part in cultural life, including by ensuring the facilitation of access to cultural goods, particularly for disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups. ⁹⁰

J. Persons with disabilities

48. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was concerned that a large proportion of persons with disabilities were unemployed. It recommended that Estonia intensify efforts aimed at providing persons with disabilities with the opportunity to secure appropriate employment, and that it address the obstacles identified, such as accessibility and transport.⁹¹

K. Minorities

- 49. The ILO Committee of Experts stated that the unemployment rate of non-Estonians remained high. P2 The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was concerned at discrepancies between the employment and income levels of the Estonian and the non-Estonian population, including as a result of language proficiency. Similarly, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was concerned about discrimination against the Russian-speaking population, which continued to be disproportionally affected by unemployment and poverty. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was concerned that, while the Equal Treatment Act prohibited discrimination against an employee or potential employee based on criteria such as nationality (ethnic origin), different treatment in accordance with the level of Estonian language proficiency was not considered discrimination if such treatment was permitted by the Public Service Act or the Language Act.
- 50. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended that Estonia intensify efforts to address the persistent disadvantages faced by minority groups with regard to rates of employment and remuneration based on language proficiency. ⁹⁶ That Committee, in 2014, along with the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in 2011, recommended that Estonia ensure that language requirements in relation to employment were based on reasonable and objective criteria, so as to avoid discrimination on the basis of language. ⁹⁷
- 51. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination welcomed the adoption of the State Integration Programme 2014-2020, which included social and economic integration. However, it was concerned by the continued overemphasis on language in the Integration Strategy, including the initiative by the Chancellor of Justice in 2012 to bring the Private Schools Act into conformity with the constitutional right of everyone to be taught in Estonian, which had resulted in studies at private upper secondary schools, where the language of instruction had previously been Russian, being conducted 60 per cent in Estonian. The Committee recommended that Estonia continue removing punitive elements in its approach to the promotion of the official language.
- 52. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended that an adequate status be granted to minority languages. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended reviewing the legislation that restricted the use of minority language in public services only to counties where persons belonging to minorities who were citizens of Estonia made up half of the population. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended reviewing the legislation that restricted the use of minorities who were citizens of Estonia made up half of the population.
- 53. Furthermore, the ILO Committee of Experts encouraged the Government to continue its efforts to promote equal opportunities for ethnic and national minorities, in particular, with regard to language training and vocational training opportunities. ¹⁰² The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended that Estonia guarantee in its legislation the status and rights of national, ethnic and linguistic minorities, including by adopting a comprehensive law to ensure the protection and promotion of economic, social and cultural rights for all minorities. ¹⁰³
- 54. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was concerned at the high number of non-Estonians among the prison population, and the refusal of prisons and correctional facilities to accept and translate complaints from prisoners that were not written in the official language. The Committee against Torture recommended that Estonia put an end to any discrimination against prisoners on the basis of their proficiency in the Estonian language and ensure that prisoners were not penalized with regard to administrative or disciplinary matters if they did not have a sufficient understanding of the that language. Translation services should be provided for prisoners with an insufficient knowledge of the Estonian language.

- 55. In 2014, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination remained concerned at the persistently high number of "persons with undetermined citizenship". ¹⁰⁶ UNHCR stated that, according to the population registry, "persons with undetermined citizenship" made up 6.3 per cent of the population as of 1 January 2015. ¹⁰⁷ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee against Torture made similar observations. ¹⁰⁸
- 56. UNHCR explained that "persons with undetermined citizenship" who had been issued alien's passports were entitled to a set of rights and obligations that went beyond the minimum prescribed by the 1954 Convention, though differences in treatment between them and citizens persisted. They might obtain long-term residence permits and vote in municipal elections, but not in any other elections, and they could not hold government jobs. UNHCR referred to information indicating that some "persons with undetermined citizenship" felt socially excluded from the majority community and were disadvantaged in Estonian society.¹⁰⁹
- 57. UNHCR stated that the rate of naturalization of "persons with undetermined citizenship" had slowed in recent years. One main factor which seemed to prevent "persons with undetermined citizenship" from naturalizing was the difficulty of learning the Estonian language to the degree required to pass the mandatory test. 110
- 58. The Committee against Torture was concerned by the low level of registration as citizens of children born in Estonia to non-citizen parents.¹¹¹ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was concerned that citizenship acquired by naturalization could be revoked under some circumstances.¹¹² That Committee recommended that Estonia facilitate the acquisition of Estonian citizenship by persons with the status of "non-citizens" and address obstacles encountered by applicants.¹¹³
- 59. UNHCR stated that Estonia had made an important step in further developing its national framework for the prevention and reduction of statelessness by amending the Citizenship Act in January 2015. The amendments exempted persons over 65 years of age from the duty to complete the written part of the Estonian language test, lifted the requirement to prove release from their previous citizenship for beneficiaries of international protection, and shortened the maximum duration of the Police and Border Guard Board's procedure for examining applications for naturalization from nine months to six.¹¹⁴
- 60. As UNHCR noted, the amendments to the Citizenship Act provided that a child born in Estonia would acquire Estonian citizenship by naturalization at birth if his or her parents or a single parent had been legally residing in Estonia for at least five years as of the date of birth of the child and were not considered as citizens by any other State. The amendments would come into force on 1 January 2016 and be applied retroactively to all children below 15 years of age. 115
- 61. However, UNHCR stated that the amendments to the Citizenship Act seemed not to cover stateless children who were between 15 and 18 years of age as of 1 January 2016, children born to stateless parents who had not been legally residing in Estonia for the past five years, and children born to parents who had a nationality but were unable to transmit their citizenship to the child due to a conflict of nationality laws.¹¹⁶
- 62. Nevertheless, UNHCR expressed the view that the application of those amendments would contribute significantly to addressing the 2011 universal periodic review recommendation¹¹⁷ on resolving the problem of persons without citizenship.¹¹⁸

L. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

- 63. UNHCR was concerned about access to the territory and the national asylum procedure for persons in need of international protection, in particular at the Narva border-crossing point. It referred to information indicating that some asylum seekers had been denied the right to lodge asylum applications at border-crossing points or in transit zones. Instead, they had allegedly been either advised to apply for asylum as soon as they were transferred to the Harku Detention Centre, or had been involuntarily returned to the country from which they had arrived.¹¹⁹
- 64. UNHCR expressed its concern over the reported incidents in which individuals originating in an African country and a Western Asian country that were experiencing ongoing armed conflict had been issued with orders to immediately leave the country. It stated that such a practice was not in line with the principle of non-refoulement. ¹²⁰ It recommended that Estonia monitor and refrain from issuing orders to "immediately leave Estonia" in situations in which there were indications that an individual might be in need of international protection or to those individuals who had already submitted an asylum claim, in line with the principle of non-refoulement. ¹²¹
- 65. UNHCR was concerned about provisions in legislation that denied the right to rebut a presumption of safety in cases involving rejection of an asylum application on the basis of the safe country of origin and safe third country concepts. 122 It recommended that Estonia amend the Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens to introduce provisions granting such a right in the course of the first-instance procedure. 123
- 66. UNHCR stated that, although the legislation envisaged a right to appeal any administrative decision or action, including refusal of entry and rejection of an asylum application at the border or in a transit zone, it was difficult for applicants to exercise that right in practice, due to the lack of access to free legal counselling and/or assistance at border-crossing points. UNHCR added that the issue of provision of free legal aid, in particular for those who applied for asylum at the border and for those in detention, had been addressed by a 2011 universal periodic review recommendation.¹²⁴
- 67. The Committee against Torture was concerned that persons seeking asylum might not enjoy all procedural guarantees and that the risk of refoulement existed regarding decisions under the accelerated procedure made by border guards who were not trained, equipped or resourced to conduct personal interviews, examine applications for international protection and undertake the legal analysis of asylum claims.¹²⁵
- 68. UNHCR recommended that Estonia ensure that all procedural guarantees, including access to legal representation and effective legal remedy, for persons applying for asylum at border-crossing points were respected, and that the protection needs of refugees and other persons in need of international protection were duly recognized and refoulement prevented. The Committee against Torture made a similar recommendation. 127
- 69. Furthermore, UNHCR recommended that Estonia amend (a) the Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens and other relevant legislation to provide asylum seekers with a reasonable amount of time to appeal a negative decision; and (b) the State Legal Aid Act to ensure that asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection had effective access to independent, qualified and free legal advice and representation. 128
- 70. UNHCR noted with concern that, starting in 2014, the authorities had begun to apply a policy of penalization of asylum seekers for illegal entry under the Penal Code. UNHCR recommended amending the Penal Code with a safeguard clause ensuring that persons exercising the right to seek asylum were released from any criminal liability for illegal entry or stay.¹²⁹

- 71. In 2013, the Committee against Torture was concerned by the conditions in the Harku Expulsion Centre for irregular migrants, such as poor food, routine handcuffing during transfers to hospitals or courts, disproportionate use of force and verbal abuse by staff. It recommended that Estonia improve conditions at the Centre so that they conformed to international standards. ¹³⁰
- 72. In 2015, UNHCR acknowledged that steps had been taken to address problems related to the remote location of the reception centre for asylum seekers in Illuka. A new reception centre in a new location (municipality of Vao) had begun operating in 2014. Although the new centre was located approximately 120 km from Tallinn, available public transport connections were much better and the new centre was closer to schools, kindergartens and other municipal services. UNHCR noted that the opening of the new reception centre in the new location had contributed to the implementation of the 2011 universal period review recommendation¹³¹ on improving reception conditions for asylum seekers.¹³²
- 73. UNHCR stated that national legislation provided no framework for the effective identification and protection of stateless persons, except for special provisions related to "persons with undetermined citizenship" who had been issued an alien's passport. The legislation provided no definition of a stateless person and did not establish a formal procedure for the determination of statelessness. ¹³³ It recommended that Estonia introduce a legal framework and mechanism for the effective identification, determination and protection of stateless persons, and that it take steps to reduce statelessness, by facilitating naturalization or through other measures, and consider the readiness of UNHCR to assist in those efforts. ¹³⁴

Notes

Unless indicated otherwise, the status of ratification of instruments listed in the table may be found on the official website of the United Nations Treaty Collection database, Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, http://treaties.un.org/. Please also refer to the United Nations compilation on Estonia from the previous cycle (A/HRC/WG.6/10/EST/2).

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

The following abbreviations have been used in the present document:

ICERD

| | Racial Discrimination |
|------------|---|
| ICESCR | International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights |
| OP-ICESCR | Optional Protocol to ICESCR |
| ICCPR | International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights |
| ICCPR-OP 1 | Optional Protocol to ICCPR |
| ICCPR-OP 2 | Second Optional Protocol to ICCPR, aiming at the abolition of the |
| | death penalty |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination |
| | against Women |
| OP-CEDAW | Optional Protocol to CEDAW |
| CAT | Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or |
| | Degrading Treatment or Punishment |
| OP-CAT | Optional Protocol to CAT |
| CRC | Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| OP-CRC-AC | Optional Protocol to CRC on the involvement of children in |
| | armed conflict |
| OP-CRC-SC | Optional Protocol to CRC on the sale of children, child |
| | prostitution and child pornography |
| OP-CRC-IC | Optional Protocol to CRC on a communications procedure |
| ICRMW | International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All |
| | Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families |

CRPD Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

OP-CRPD Optional Protocol to CRPD

ICPPED International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from

Enforced Disappearance

- ³ Individual complaints: ICCPR-OP 1, art. 1; OP-CEDAW, art. 1; OP-CRPD, art. 1; OP-ICESCR, art. 1; OP-CRC-IC, art. 5; ICERD, art. 14; CAT, art. 22; ICRMW, art. 77; and ICPPED, art. 31. Inquiry procedure: OP-CEDAW, art. 8; CAT, art. 20; ICPPED, art. 33; OP-CRPD, art. 6; OP-ICESCR, art. 11; and OP-CRC-IC, art. 13. Inter-State complaints: ICCPR, art. 41; ICRMW, art. 76; ICPPED, art. 32; CAT, art. 21; OP-ICESCR, art. 10; and OP-CRC-IC, art. 12. Urgent action: ICPPED, art. 30.
- ⁴ Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.
- 5 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, and 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.
- International Labour Organization (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), and Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).
- Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field (First Convention); Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea (Second Convention); Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (Third Convention); Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Convention); Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I); Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II); Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Adoption of an Additional Distinctive Emblem (Protocol III). For the official status of ratifications, see International Committee of the Red Cross, www.icrc.org/IHL.
- 8 ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29); Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105); Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87); Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98); Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100); Discrimination (Employment and Occupation Convention, 1958 (No. 111); Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138); Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).
- ⁹ See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 25, and CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 17. See also E/C.12/EST/CO/2, paras. 34-35.
- See CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 17, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) submission for the universal period review of Estonia, para. 40.
- See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 22.
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) submission for the universal periodic review of Estonia, p. 11, and CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, paras. 11 (e) and 17.
- See CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, paras. 7 (b) and 17. See also CERD/C/EST/CO/8-9/Add.1, para. 3, and letter dated 9 March 2012 from the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations Office at Geneva. Available from http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/EST/INT_CERD_FUL_EST_1195 8 E.pdf.
- ¹⁴ See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 24.
- ¹⁵ See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 6.
- Ibid., para. 7. See also letter dated 28 April 2014 from the Human Rights Committee to the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations Office at Geneva, p. 1. Available from http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/EST/INT_CCPR_FUL_EST_17216_E.pdf.
- ¹⁷ See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 14.
- See CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 6. See also letter dated 28 April 2014 from the Human Rights Committee to the Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, p. 1.
- See CAT/C/EST/CO/5/Add.1, para. 19, and letter dated 20 January 2012 from the Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva to the Human

Rights Committee. Available from

http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/EST/INT_CCPR_FCO_EST_19874_E.pdf.

- http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session10/EE/Estonia_Mid-Term.pdf
- ²¹ See CERD/C/EST/CO/8-9, para. 27.
- ²² CERD/C/EST/CO/8-9/Add.1.
- ²³ See letter dated 9 March 2012 from the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations Office at Geneva.
- ²⁴ See CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 23.
- ²⁵ CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11/Add.1.
- ²⁶ See CCPR/C/EST/CO/3, para. 18.
- ²⁷ A/67/40/Vol. I, p. 158.
- ²⁸ Ibid., p. 176. See also letter dated 20 January 2012 from the Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva to the Human Rights Committee.
- See letter dated 30 July 2013 from the Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva to the Human Rights Committee. Available from http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCCPR%2fFCO%2fEST%2f15761&Lang=en.
- See letter dated 28 April 2014 from Human Rights Committee to the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations Office at Geneva. See also letters from the Human Rights Committee to the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations Office at Geneva dated 28 November 2011, 27 April 2012 and 24 May 2013, available from

 $http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared \% 20 Documents/EST/INT_CCPR_FUL_EST_12202_E.pdf;$

 $\label{lem:http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared\% 20 Documents/EST/INT_CCPR_FUL_EST_12203_E.pdf; and$

 $http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared \% 20 Documents/EST/INT_CCPR_FUL_EST_16124_E.pdf.$

- 31 See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 27.
- 32 CAT/C/EST/CO/5/Add.1.
- For the titles of special procedure mandate holders, see www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Welcomepage.aspx.
- See OHCHR annual report 2014, pp. 63, 71, 89, 96 and 100; OHCHR annual report 2013, pp. 131, 139, and 165; OHCHR annual report 2012, pp. 117, 126 and 152; and OHCHR annual report 2011, pp. 125, 134 and 160.
- ³⁵ See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 8.
- ³⁶ Ibid., para. 11. See also ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, direct request concerning ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), adopted in 2012, published 102nd ILC session (2013), available from www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID:3057092.
- ³⁷ See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 14.
- ³⁸ Ibid., para. 11.
- ³⁹ Ibid., para. 14. See also ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, direct request concerning ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), adopted in 2012, published 102nd ILC session (2013).
- ⁴⁰ ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, direct request concerning ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) Estonia, adopted in 2012, published 102nd ILC session (2013), available from
 - www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID:3057089. See UNESCO submission for the universal periodic review of Estonia, para. 40.
- ⁴² See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 11.
- ⁴³ Ibid. See also A/67/121, para. 20.
- 44 See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 29.
- ⁴⁵ CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 16.
- ⁴⁶ UNHCR submission for the universal periodic review of Estonia, p. 3.

- ⁴⁷ See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 29.
- Letter dated 9 March 2012 from the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations Office at Geneva, p. 2.
- ⁴⁹ See CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 7. See also CERD/C/EST/CO/8-9/Add.1, para. 1.
- ⁵⁰ See CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 7.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., para. 15.
- ⁵² Ibid., para. 8.
- 53 See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, paras. 7-8.
- 54 See CAT/C/EST/CO/5/Add.1, para. 18.
- See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 11. See also CAT/C/EST/CO/5/Add.1, para. 5.
- ⁵⁶ See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 11.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., para. 20.
- ⁵⁸ See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 20.
- ⁵⁹ See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 12. See also E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 20.
- 60 See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 6.
- 61 See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 20.
- 62 See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 12. See also E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 20.
- 63 See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 20.
- 64 See CAT/C/EST/CO/5/Add.1, para. 18.
- 65 See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 21.
- 66 Ibid., paras. 5 (a) and 13.
- ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, direct request concerning ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Estonia, adopted in 2014, published 104th ILC session (2015), available from
 - $www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID:3179453:NO.$
- ⁶⁸ See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 13.
- ⁶⁹ UNHCR submission for the universal periodic review of Estonia, p. 6.
- ⁷⁰ See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 13.
- ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, direct request concerning ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) – Estonia, adopted in 2014, published 104th ILC session (2015), available from
 - www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID:3178504.
- ⁷² See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 9.
- ⁷³ See CAT/C/EST/CO/5/Add.1, paras. 7-9.
- ⁷⁴ See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 17.
- ⁷⁵ See CAT/C/EST/CO/5/Add.1, para. 11.
- ⁷⁶ See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 19.
- ⁷⁷ See CAT/C/EST/CO/5/Add.1, para. 13.
- ⁷⁸ See UNESCO submission for the universal periodic review of Estonia, paras. 31 and 42.
- ⁷⁹ See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 17.
- 80 See CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 14.
- 81 See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 13.
- 82 Ibid., paras. 18 and 23.
- 83 Ibid., para. 16.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., paras. 18-19.
- 85 Ibid., para. 22.
- 86 Ibid., para. 24.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., para. 28.
- 88 See CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 13.
- 89 See UNESCO submission for the universal periodic review of Estonia, para. 21.
- ⁹⁰ See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 31.
- ⁹¹ Ibid., para. 15.
- ⁹² ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, direct request concerning ILO Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122) Estonia, adopted in 2014, published 104th ILC session (2015), available from

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    84834:NO.
    See CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 10.
    See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 10.
    See CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 10.
    Ibid. See also E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 10.
    See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 10, and CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 10.
    See CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 3.
 <sup>99</sup> Ibid., para. 9.
<sup>100</sup> See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 30.
^{101}~ See CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 9.
ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, direct request
    concerning ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) -
    Estonia, adopted in 2012, published 102nd ILC session (2013).
<sup>103</sup> See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 30.
<sup>104</sup> See CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 12.
<sup>105</sup> See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 18. See also CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 12.
<sup>106</sup> See CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 11.
<sup>107</sup> UNHCR submission for the universal periodic review of Estonia, p. 11.
<sup>108</sup> See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 9, and CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 22.
<sup>109</sup> UNHCR submission for the universal periodic review of Estonia, p. 10.
^{111}\, See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 22.
<sup>112</sup> See E/C.12/EST/CO/2, para. 9.
<sup>113</sup> Ibid. See also CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 22, and CERD/C/EST/CO/10-11, para. 11.
<sup>114</sup> UNHCR submission for the universal periodic review of Estonia, pp. 4-5.
<sup>115</sup> Ibid.
<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 11.
For the full text of the recommendation see A/HRC/17/17, para. 77.85 (Ecuador).
<sup>118</sup> UNHCR submission for the universal periodic review of Estonia, p. 5.
<sup>119</sup> Ibid.
<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 6.
<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 7.
<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 6.
<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 7.
lbid., p. 5. For the full text of the recommendation see para. A/HRC/17/17, para. 77.88 (Slovakia).
125 See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 15.
<sup>126</sup> UNHCR submission, p. 7.
<sup>127</sup> See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 15.
<sup>128</sup> UNHCR submission for the universal periodic review of Estonia, p. 10.
<sup>129</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-8.
130 See CAT/C/EST/CO/5, para. 15.
<sup>131</sup> For the full text of the recommendation, see A/HRC/17/17, para. 77.88 (Slovakia).
<sup>132</sup> UNHCR submission for the universal periodic review of Estonia, p. 4.
<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 10.
<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 11.
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