

ESTONIA

Short cultural policy profile

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1. Facts and figures

Political system: The Republic of Estonia is a democratic parliamentary country. Under Article 59 of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, the legislative power in Estonia is in the hands of the single-chamber Parliament (Riigikogu). The Riigikogu is the representative assembly of the Estonian people.

Official language(s): The official language of the Estonian Republic is Estonian, a Uralic language of the Finnic branch, which is related to Finnish. Estonian is spoken by ca 1,1 million people.

	<i>Latest available data</i>	2017
Population on January 1st	1 328 439 (2022)	1 315 635
GDP in million EUR	8 986 (2022 III q)	N/A
GDP per capita in PPS Index (EU27_2020 = 100)	87	79
General government expenditure (in % of GDP)	44,8% (2020)	39,5%

Public cultural expenditure % of total expenditure	2,2% (2022)	2,3%
Public cultural expenditure as % of GDP	2,1% (2020)	2,1%
Public cultural expenditure per Capita	N/A	N/A
Share of cultural employment of total employment	4,9% (2021)	N/A

Sources: Estonian Statistics, Eurostat, OECD.Stat

GDP in million EUR, *latest data available* /

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/namq_10_gdp/default/table?lang=en

GDP per capita in PPS Index (EU27_2020 = 100), *latest data available* /

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tec00114/default/table?lang=en>

General government expenditure by function (COFOG) gov_10a_exp

https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=gov_10a_exp&lang=ro

General government expenditure (in % of GDP), *latest data available* /

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tec00023/default/table?lang=en>

Public cultural expenditure / Public cultural expenditure as % of GDP / Public cultural expenditure per Capita: see also chapter 7.1.1 of the national Compendium profile

Share of cultural employment of total employment / *latest data available*:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/cult_emp_sex/default/table?lang=en

2. Cultural policy system

2.1 Objectives

In November 2021 the Government of Estonia approved the "Cultural Development Plan 2021-2030", which is a document setting strategic goals in the field of culture. Compared to the previous cultural strategic document ("The general principles of cultural policy up to 2020", "Culture 2030" focuses mostly on digitization, working conditions of cultural workers and social guarantees for freelance artists. The focus is also on the Estonian people's accessibility to culture, in terms of social, economic and special needs. The principles of sustainable and "green cultural management" are included. Also, discourse on the creative economy is more prominent than before.

The topic of remuneration of freelancers and their social guarantees continues to be in the focus of the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry has announced intent to amend the Creative Persons and Artistic Associations Act to build the best support system for freelance artists in Europe. Since 2015, with grants from the Ministry of Culture, the Estonian Artists' Association and Estonian Writers' Association are paying three-years of wages to arts professionals, based on a public competition. The amount of one wage is equal to the average monthly salary of the previous year including all (social) taxes. There have been proposals to widen the instrument both in terms of the number of recipients and applicable fields, for example composers and film directors.

Raising the salaries of the employees at cultural institutions that are paid from the Ministry of Culture's budget has been a priority for the last 7 years. The cultural sector needs motivated people and young people to be assured that they will earn a decent wage if they choose culture-related professions.

A new topic in cultural policy is improving access to culture that is focused on young people and children. Thus, since 2022, the "Cultural Backpacks" measure

has been implemented for visits to cultural institutions by elementary school students. It allows children and young people to visit theatre performances, museums, concerts etc as part of the educational programme in cooperation with schools and municipalities.

2.2 Main features

The constitutional goal of the Republic of Estonia to ensure the preservation of the Estonian nation, language and culture through the ages, as well as the principles of the freedom of art and science, property rights and cultural diversity defined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union form the basis for formulating and implementing cultural policy. That is the main concept of Estonian cultural policy for the last decades.

People and communities who together sustain, preserve and value Estonian culture create a safe living environment that takes into account people's needs. Culture increases people's well-being, supports their ability to cope, their mental and physical health, and contributes to the cohesion of society. One of the most important tasks of the state is to ensure that all Estonian residents have the opportunity to participate in the cultural activities and creative fields they are interested in, both as spectators and creators. Access to culture must be guaranteed regardless of special needs, place of residence, age, nationality, language skills, interests, abilities and other conditions.

“Culture 2030” provides a systematic and comprehensive approach that helps:

- ensure the vitality of Estonian culture;
- prevent risks related to the development of the field;
- to increase the effectiveness of the management of the cultural sector;
- keep the development of the cultural field in balance with the development of other fields;
- to increase the transparency of the management of the cultural sector to the public.

Under Article 59 of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, the legislative power is in the hands of the Parliament (*Riigikogu*), which is the representative assembly of the Estonian people. In addition to passing of legislation, the Constitution imposes other functions on the Riigikogu – adopting the state budget and enforcing budgetary compliance.

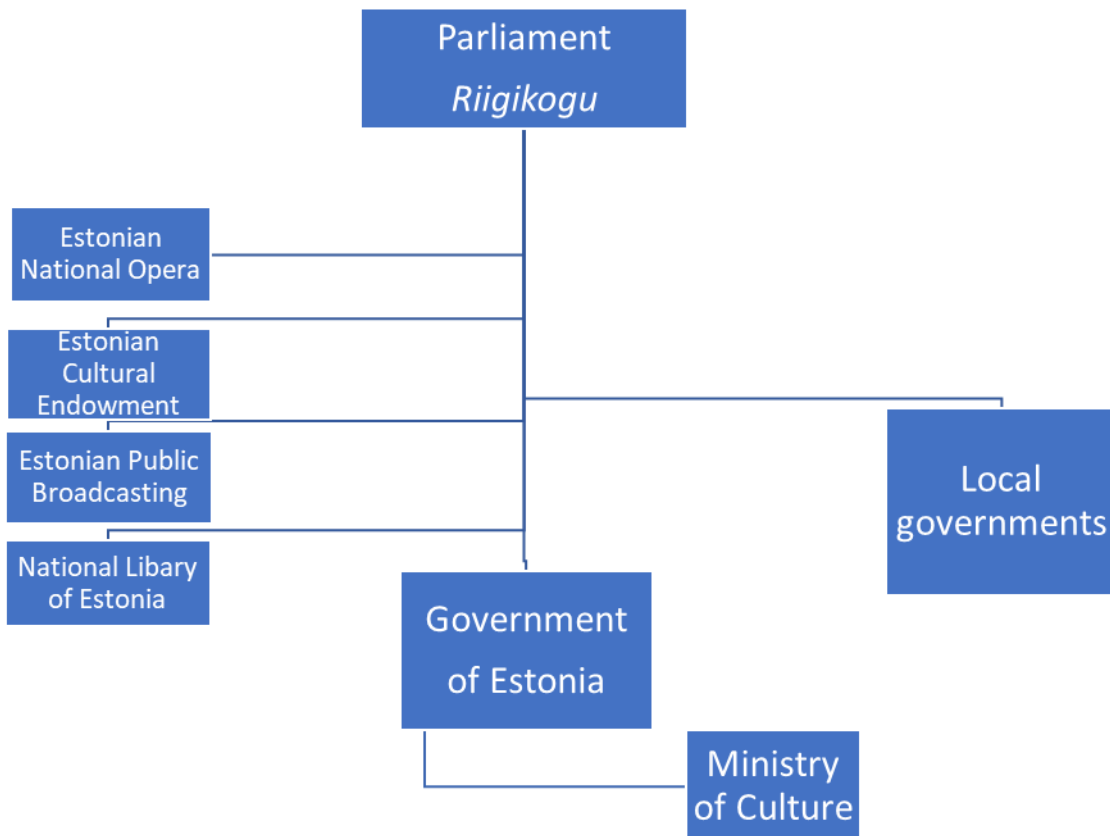
The budget of the Ministry of Culture is divided primarily into three main areas of culture (incl the arts and heritage), sports and integration, the objectives of which are set out in the State Budget Strategy 2020-2023 and in the sectoral strategy papers. The strategy documents are "The Cultural Development Plan 2021-2030", "Integrating Estonia 2020" and "Basic Fundamentals of Estonian Sports Policy until 2030". The biggest share of the Ministry budget in 2022 is culture, followed by sports and integration.

The Ministry of Culture, for its part, divides the budget into various measures in the field of culture: development and implementation of library policy, literary policy, museum policy, folk culture policy, design and architecture policy, audiovisual and media policy, performing arts policy, visual art policy and music policy.

The design and implementation of cultural policy is based on cooperation, knowledge and a long-term perspective. The state makes cultural policy decisions in a transparent, inclusive and knowledge-based manner. Transparency means clear principles, equal treatment and reasoned decisions. Inclusive policymaking consists of a substantive dialogue with representatives of representational and developmental organisations and professionals in other cultural fields in the discussions and decision-making processes. A knowledge-based approach requires systematically collected data and studies and impact assessments.

In the last decade, there have been no noticeable changes in the cultural policy system. A reform of museums is underway, where state museums are transformed into foundations, mainly involving local governments in the process and management. In other areas (theatre, music) such ownership changes have already been carried out in the first half of the last decade.

2.3 Governance system: Organisational Organigram



2.4 Historical background

During the last century, Estonia has survived a number of pivotal times and events. These included the creation of an independent state at the end of First World War - on 24th February 1918, two occupations during the Second World War and the destruction of social as well as cultural structures by the Soviet regime. The fifty-one-year period of Soviet occupation lasted from 1940 until re-independence in 1991 (from 1941-1944 Estonia was occupied by the Nazi-German regime). An important milestone in the history of Estonia was the entry into the European Union on 1st May 2004, NATO on 2nd April 2004 and to the Euro zone on 1st January 2011.

1990-2000: In the 1990s Estonian governments and the people built up a democratic and liberal society with an open economy. State as well as local authorities were closed, restructured or new institutions were created, also in the cultural field. A process of decentralization started in several fields of culture. Cultural areas such as architecture, design, film etc. survived privatization. In the 1990s legislation in the cultural sector developed with great speed and important laws such as the Copyright Act (1992), the National Minorities Cultural Autonomy Act (1993) etc. were passed. In 1994, with the Estonian Cultural Endowment Act (1994), the main arms-length-principle financing instrument in the cultural field was re-established. Estonia became a member of UNESCO in October 1991, joined the European Cultural Convention in 1992 and became a member of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works in 1994. Debates about a cultural policy document started and "The General Principles of Estonian Cultural Policy" passed in the Parliament in September 1998.

2001-2010: The decentralization of several cultural organizations into foundations continued, especially in the field of theatre. The government approved the architecture policy. The discourse of the creative economy entered cultural policy. The planning and construction of several important cultural buildings took place - the Estonian Art Museum KUMU, the new building of the Estonian National Museum in Tartu.

2011-2020: In 2013, the parliaments adopted "The General Principles of the Cultural Policy of Estonia up to 2020". Decentralization in the field of theatre and music was completed, the museum reform started, as well as the heritage protection reform, the goal of which, in addition to the function of state supervision, will become more of an institution that helps and advises owners of state monuments. The assembly of the new "Cultural Development Plan 2021-2030" began.

3. Current cultural affairs

3.1 Key developments

The general goal of the cultural policy, which has been the basis for the design and implementation of cultural policy, is to shape a society that values creativity, preserving and promoting Estonian national identity by researching, storing and transmitting cultural memory and by creating favorable conditions for a viable future, for the development of an open and diverse cultural space and to facilitate participation in culture. Despite the small population that speak the Estonian language and use the cultural space, the cultural landscape in Estonia is diverse and high-level, and culture is important to the Estonian people. Participation in culture has increased over the years. When comparing participation in culture between 2014 and 2019, one can see that in five years there has been an increase in the number of theatres, cinemas, attendance at concerts, art exhibitions, museums and libraries. In several areas (cinemas, theatres, museums) attendance figures in 2019 (before the COVID-crisis) were the most successful ever.

A crisis for the cultural sector related to the COVID-19 pandemic began in the spring of 2020 and impacted various issues have significantly influenced Estonian life, including participation in cultural life opportunities for creation and the entire cultural field of Estonia as a whole. Therefore, in the following years it is very important to support the cultural sector in coming out of the crisis and to focus

on the cultural sector increasing resilience in the context of various crises. You have to see the contribution of culture to a society coping with various (economic, financial, healthcare, etc.) global crises. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Culture has an important role to play in the analysis of opportunities for participation in cultural and special interest activities spanning the life span and promotion in emergency conditions, considering the possible impact of these activities to people's mental health. The cultural field as a whole can contribute to societal divisions, increasing the well-being of each person and improving their livelihood.

After the COVID-19 crisis, the demands of various sectors of the creative economy for the continued direct financial support to companies increased significantly. If during the restrictions of the first wave of COVID-19 (spring 2020), when most cultural institutions were closed for both audiences and performers, such support-measures were part of the government's package, and in addition - funds were directed to artists through the Act on Creative Persons and Artistic Unions, then in the following waves of the COVID-19 epidemic (2020 autumn and winter 2021) the Estonian government kept the restrictions to a minimum and cultural institutions could stay open and earn income. Creative economy development organizations, however, continued to pressure the government and assume that direct subsidies from the central government must be part of the cultural policy even after the crisis. The government did not give in to this pressure on the grounds that the policy has been to keep the economy, including the work of cultural institutions, open.

In 2021, there was a breakthrough in the field of copyright. After long discussions and courtcases with authors' and performers' organizations, the government decided to change the list of the most commonly used recording devices for copying and to start collecting fees for copying and recording rights from manufacturers and importers of digital recording devices and media.

3.2 Key themes

In terms of salary policies and social guarantees for cultural workers, it has been a priority and a goal to keep the minimum salary of a cultural worker at least equal to the state projected average gross wage. The Ministry of Culture annually submits a proposal for the state budget to the Government of the Republic regarding salaried cultural workers, including workers in foundation-type organizations, to raise wages. In 2023, the minimum wage of a cultural worker with higher education receiving a salary from the budget of the Ministry of Culture was at least €1,600, while in 2014, the minimum wage for cultural workers with higher education working for the state or a foundation established by the state was €700.

One of the important topics of the cultural-political discussion has been ensuring confidence and creative peace for artists, also the role of artists in society. Cultural policy focuses on the social guarantees of freelance artists. Finding solutions to support the target group with irregular incomes outside of the Creative Persons and Creative Unions Act focused primarily on the issues of irregular collection of social tax. From the fields of culture, the visual arts and literature emerge with a large number of freelancers, where the state did not offer creative people jobs or other stable earning opportunities with social guarantees. An important change in this regard is the salary of artists and writers, within the framework of which, starting in 2016, 5 artists and 5 writers per year were admitted to the creative union, with a salary for three years supported by the Ministry of Culture. In 2022 there were 13 visual artists and 13 writers receiving this monthly wage for three years.

The joint existence and co-creation of the Estonian and Russian communities has been constantly in the cultural and political focus. After the Russian aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, its importance has risen again.

The Estonian Government has responded to the Ministry of Justice's proposed amendments to the existing Building Code and Planning Act. The purpose of this

proposal is to make the removal of Soviet monuments from public spaces more efficient and to expand the scope of objects to be removed to include architectural and creative works. This has caused a strong debate in society. Several creative associations sent the government a letter, where they state that public space is a matter of public concern and that on such issues it must include the public as much as possible. The Ministry of Culture agrees with the view that substantive and professional analysis is necessary in regard to objects of significant cultural value that have signs of Soviet occupation. The act approved by the government stipulates that a government committee will be formed to evaluate objects which are causing controversy or for which a third opinion is also requested. The 'Soviet-time-monuments' committee's task is to take into account various aspects and it must certainly include a representative of the Heritage Protection Board of Estonia, though it is possible to appoint other experts as members too.

3.2 International Cultural Cooperation

The task of the Ministry of Culture is to promote and support Estonian internationalization of culture, to develop international cultural relations and diplomacy, to participate in cultural policies that shape international organizations and also to support the development centres that implement the aforementioned goals. Estonia has nearly 50 cultural cooperation agreements and programmes with countries around the world. An important link in the internationalization of culture is the Estonian embassies' network of cultural representatives.

An important change in recent years is the Baltic Culture Fund, established in cooperation with the Baltic states, which distributed its first grants in 2019. The purpose of the Culture Fund is to support the internationalization of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian culture and cooperation projects in architecture, visual arts, design, literature, music, performing arts, libraries, museums and archives, especially outside the Baltic countries.

After the war started by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the cooperation of Estonian culture institutions, state owned as well as private, with Russian and Belarusian state-supported organizations has ended, while visas have been refused to several Russian artists and collectives.

Estonia has joined the movement of European capitals of culture, and the city of Tartu will be one of the three capitals of culture in 2024.

4. Cultural Institutions

4.1 Overview

In Estonia there are four public law cultural organisations that operate according to their own laws and are supervised by the parliamentary cultural committee: Estonian Cultural Endowment, Estonian National Opera, National Library of Estonia and Estonian Public Broadcasting.

Since 1991 there have been two waves of decentralisation in cultural organisations: one in the early 1990's and another one since 2013. Also starting from 2012 the museums network has been rearranged and the Ministry of Culture changed the legal status of a number of museums. As a result of the museum reform, many museums have been merged into a foundation with the same theme. Those institutional changes mainly mean that the Ministry of Culture closes state organisations and establishes them with the same assets and property, also mostly with the same aims as a state-owned foundation. Foundations are preferred to state institutions as this form gives the organisation more flexibility in management and more opportunities to take regional or professional specifics into account.

A large number of public cultural institutions is owned and managed by local municipalities: cultural and community centres, public libraries, some professional city theatres and orchestras, also local music, dance and visual arts schools.

Fields like architecture, design, film and publishing operate in the private business sector.

There are numerous NGOs advancing cultural activities. There is a trend of establishing concert and festival organisers, museums on local history etc. as NGOs.

4.2 Data on selected public and private cultural institutions

Table 1: Cultural institutions, by sector and domain

<i>Domain</i>	<i>Cultural Institution (Subdomain)</i>	<i>Public Sector</i>		<i>Private Sector</i>	
		<i>Number (2021)</i>	<i>Number (2017)</i>	<i>Number (2021)</i>	<i>Number (2017)</i>
<i>Cultural Heritage</i>	Cultural heritage sites (recognised)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Archaeological sites	27 290*	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Museums</i>	Museum institutions	41	133	N/A	N/A
<i>Archives</i>	Archive institutions	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Visual arts</i>	Public art galleries / exhibition halls	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Performing arts</i>	Scenic and stable spaces for theatre	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Concert houses	4	4	N/A	N/A
	Theatre companies	12	11	70	36
	Dance and ballet companies	2	2	N/A	N/A
	Symphonic orchestras	6	6	2	2
<i>Libraries</i>	Libraries	864	901	N/A	N/A
<i>Audiovisual</i>	Cinemas	1	1	22	16

	Broadcasting organisations	1	2	29	31
Interdisciplinary	Socio-cultural centres / cultural houses	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

* total number

Sources: Estonian Statistics, Ministry of Culture

5. Cultural Funding

5.1 Overview

State financing of culture goes through two channels: the Ministry of Culture and the Estonian Cultural Endowment. The Ministry of Culture finances state museums, as well as state-owned foundations in various fields.

The "arms-length-principle" in cultural policy is represented by the Cultural Endowment of Estonia (*Kultuurkapital*), supported by a system whereby funding proposers of support programmes of the Ministry of Culture are committees of experts. The same system of experts and stakeholders' involvement is used in other public funding cultural programmes, such as the Estonian Folk Culture Centre, Estonian Film Institute, etc. So, representation of umbrella organizations, NGOs and wider civil society has become more frequent in decision making processes involving state cultural policies.

The Ministry of Culture, for its part, divides the budget into various measures in the field of culture: development and implementation of a library policy, literary policy, museum policy, folk culture policy, design and architecture policy, audiovisual and media policy, performing arts policy, visual art policy and music policy.

Support for professional artists and creative unions is regulated by the Creative Persons and Artistic Associations Act. According to the Act, a freelance creative person is an author or performer, whose main source of livelihood is professional

creative work in the fields of architecture, audiovisual, design, performing arts, sound, literature, visual arts, not under employment or similar obligations.

Outside the Ministry of Culture, the main institution distributing state money for cultural purposes is the Cultural Endowment of Estonia. It was originally established on 1925 and re-established by The Parliament on 1994.

Cultural Endowment receives monthly a fixed share of alcohol and tobacco excise duty – 3.5%, and gambling tax - 47.8% (whereof 60.6% is allocated to finance national importance cultural buildings).

There is no very clear overview of local government spending on culture. In their annual reports, local authorities report the aggregate amount of "leisure, culture, sports and religion", where, for example, the capital Tallinn has also consolidated a zoo, botanical garden and other non-cultural expenditure according to national and international standards.

Among the private organisations funding culture, the biggest is The Estonian National Culture Foundation (established 1991). The foundation is a legal entity governed by private law. The objective of its activity is charity aimed at supporting Estonian national culture through the purposeful accumulation and distribution of financial resources. An 11-member council of the Foundation, composed of Estonian cultural persons who are independent in their decision-making, directs its activity.

5.2 Public cultural expenditure by level of government

Table 2: Public cultural expenditure by level of government, in EUR, 2020 and 2015

Level of government	2020		2015	
	Total expenditure in million EUR	% share of total	Total expenditure in million EUR*	% share of total
State (central, federal)	144,0	54,4%	127,9	55,8%
Regional (provincial, Länder, etc.)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Local (municipal, incl. counties)	120,4	45,6%	91,1	44,2%
TOTAL	264,4	100%	219	100%

Sources:

Estonian Statistics RR056: Expenditure of general government by function and sub-sector, available / https://andmed.stat.ee/en/stat/majandus_rahandus_valitsemissektori-rahandus_valitsemissektori-tulud-kulud/RR056

Note:

* At the date of expenditure

5.3. Public cultural expenditure per sector

Table 3: Public cultural expenditure*: by sector, in EUR, 2020 and 2015

Field / Domain	Total cultural expenditure 2020		Total cultural expenditure 2015	
	Total expenditure in EUR	% share of total	Total expenditure in EUR	% share of total
Cultural Heritage	8 323 570	4,6%	9 721 514	8,1%
Museums	102 294 812	56,6%	68 806 877	57%
Archives	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Visual Arts	2 651 920	1,5%	483 573	0,4%
Performing Arts*	47 102 380	26,1%	31 820 001	26%
Audiovisual and Multimedia	20 265 245	11,2%	9 310 972	8%
Interdisciplinary Socioculture Cultural Rel. Abroad Administration Cultural Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Not covered by the above domains	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOTAL	180 637 927	100%	120 142 937	100%

Source: All data from the Estonian Ministry of Culture

Notes:

* Source: Estonian Theatre Agency, available / https://statistika.teater.ee/stat/stat_filter/show/performingIncome,

6. Legislation on Culture

6.1 Overview of national cultural legislation

In the Estonian legal system there isn't one unified culture law. The Constitution of Estonia guarantees among fundamental rights the freedom of speech, self-expression and self-realisation; people can freely disseminate ideas, opinions, beliefs and other information by word, print, picture or other means. This right may be circumscribed by law to protect public order, public morality, and the rights and freedoms, health, honour and good name of others. There is no censorship. According to the Constitution, the teaching of science and art are free. The rights of an author in respect of his or her work are inalienable. The government must protect authors' rights.

There are separate laws for four legal entity public-law institutions that play an important role in their field, as well as the Cultural Endowment, which is the main political instrument for funding creative persons and financing project-based cultural organizations. There are several Acts that define establishing the institutions or operations, governing such institutions, structures and financing principles:

Title of the Act	Year of adoption/ last revision
<u>The arts</u>	
Performing Art Institutions Act	2003/2022
Creative Persons and Artistic Associations Act	2005/2022
Commissioning of Artworks Act	2011/2021
State Cultural Awards and Grants Act	1998/2007
Act to Regulate Dissemination of Works which Contain Pornography or Promote Violence or Cruelty	1998/2015
<u>Cultural heritage</u>	

Museums Act	2013/2019
Public Libraries Act	1998/2019
Legal Deposit Copy Act	1997/2017
Heritage Conservation Act	2002/2019
Act on the Return of Cultural Objects Unlawfully Removed from the Territory of a Member State of the European Union	2004/2016
Intra-Community Transport, Export and Import of Cultural Objects Act	2008/2019
<u>Cultural diversity</u>	
National Minorities Cultural Autonomy Act	1993/2019
<u>Legal persons in public law</u>	
Cultural Endowment of Estonia Act	1994/2019
Estonian Public Broadcasting Act	2007/2022
National Opera Act	1998/2022
National Library of Estonia Act	1998/2019
<u>Media and copyright</u>	
Copyright Act	1992/2022
Media Services Act	2011/2022
<u>Other laws</u>	
Language Act	2011/2020

Last year changes were mainly caused by the COVID-19 crisis (Creative Persons and Artistic Associations Act) or from the transposition of the EU legislation to Estonian laws (Directive on copyright and related rights, Audiovisual Media Services Directive etc.) and by the fact that that certain norms of the law have lagged behind developments in the field (Performing Art Institution Act, Copyright Act etc).

6.2 Overview international cultural legislation

Estonia has joined all major cultural cooperation agreements, organizations and conventions. Many of these accessions took place more than twenty years ago: Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1996, Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property on 1996, The Hague Convention of May 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict on 1995, Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works on 1994, Convention for the Protection of Producers of Phonograms Against Unauthorized Duplication of their Phonograms on 2000 ect. Recently, in 2020 the

government approved Estonia joining the UNESCO “Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage”, which, among other things, provides a legal framework for controlling the activity of treasure hunters in international waters and in 2021 Estonia acceded to the Council of Europe Framework Convention – Faro Convention.

Through the Ministry of Culture and its subsidiaries or partners, Estonia participates in the work of more than 15 international organizations, forums and cooperation programmes, for example UNESCO, the European Audiovisual Observatory, the International Cultural Heritage Study Centre for Conservation and Restoration (ICCROM), European Cinema Support Fund "Eurimages" etc.