

Assistance to the victims of sexual violence in Estonia

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Legislation

- In 2016, Estonia ratified the Lanzarote Convention.
- In 2018, the Istanbul Convention.
- Estonian laws have been brought into line with these international requirements.
- In 2018, 580 sexual offenses were registered in Estonia, of which 212 were rapes.
- In 137 cases of rape, the victim was an adult and in 75 cases, a child.
- Juveniles are predominantly victims in child pornography and grooming cases.
- Since 2017, our Penal Code includes sexual harassment as a misdemeanor.

Assistance

- Victims of sexual violence in Estonia have several ways to get help
 - Victim support system
 - Women's Support Centers
 - Sexual Assault Centers
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- Victim Support Act 2005
 - Since 2005, victim support staff in all counties
 - All victims of crime have access to free psychological counseling

Women's Support Centers

The service was developed by NGOs in 2002-2016.

- From 2017, the service is provided under the Victim Support Act in all 15 counties of Estonia.
- The service is provided by NGOs, which are found through procurement (organized by Social Insurance Board).

The service includes:

- Crisis counseling
- Case-based counseling, including support in dealing with authorities, e.g. dispatching to police, providing assistance in court cases
- When appropriate, psychological counseling or psychotherapy
- Legal advice if necessary
- If necessary, temporary accommodation
- All professionals working in support centers, including lawyers, must have undergone specific training on violence against women.

Women's Support Centers 2

- About 2,000 women turn to women's support centers each year, the vast majority of them are victims of domestic violence.
- About 10% of these women have also experienced sexual violence by a partner.
- Women who have experienced sexual violence often need long-term psychotherapy.
- They are also provided assistance in court cases.
- In 2015, the Support Center's lawyer reached a conviction for marital rape

Sexual Assault Centres

- In Estonia, before 2014 there was no standardised and multidisciplinary help available for sexual assault victims and there was no multidisciplinary co-operation between medical, forensic, legal, police and psychosocial professionals
- Establishment of Sexual Assault Centers started in 2014. The model followed was taken from Norway

Sexual Assault Centres 2

- Pilot project in 2014-2015
- Training for in-service and pre-service professionals
- Guidelines and tools for medico-legal examination
- Opening the dialogue between different agencies
- In 2016, the Ministry of Social Affairs (Social Insurance Board) took the main responsibility for sustainable financing of the SACs

Sexual Assault Centres 3

- 4 SACs at hospitals in Tallinn, Tartu, Pärnu, Kohtla-Järve
- The referral can be made through the Emergency Medicine Department (EMO) or through the admissions department of the Women's Clinic.
- Operating 24/7
- Self-referral or police guided
- All ages, standardized one-stand comprehensive service
- First 7 days and follow-up care

Services provided at SAC

- Assistance in trauma situation

Initial counseling

- establishing contact with the victim and conducting a baseline assessment;
- preparation for examination and taking of evidence;
- counseling to contact the police;
- assessment of the safety of the victim, children, family members;
- home / accommodation referral;
- establishing contact with social assistance institutions, where appropriate;
- initial counseling of family members;
- information and consent for follow-up care and contacting a follow-up care provider.

Services provided at SAC 2

- **Medical examination** with collection of biological material (collection of biological material from the victim's body / clothing for DNA isolation), description of injuries and recording of images, collection of analyses, initiation of post-contact preventive treatment, if necessary, and- prevention of unwanted pregnancy.

Services provided at SAC 3

- **Follow-up treatment** Includes activities necessary to identify potential sexually transmitted infections / HIV infection and unwanted pregnancy, to detect and prevent mental health problems, social failure, and chronic somatic diseases.
- The method of follow-up work is to actively contact the victim (email and telephone invitations and reminders, telephone counseling) and conduct visits.
- Psychological help (psychotherapy, if needed (free of charge)).
- Legal counseling, if needed (free of charge).

Services provided

- The survivor of sexual violence in a health care institution is dealt with either by duty personnel or by a specialist (doctor, nurse).
- All of the services listed above are provided to victims of sexual violence with their consent and request.
- **Legal counseling** provided by EWSU
- Pilot project 2019-2020
- Victims of sexual violence seeking legal advice can contact EWSU by phone or e-mail.
- Our lawyer will contact the client via means of communication he or she requests within 24 hours. Depending on the client's needs, face-to-face consultation or consultation via telecommunication means can be arranged for initial counseling. The volume of counseling per person is up to 5 hours.

Statistics

- Statistics of SACs:
- In 2016, 41 victims
- In 2017, 47 victims
- In 2018, 92 victims
- In 2019 (9 months), 109 victims

More information

- <http://www.palunabi.ee/seksuaalvagivald>
- <https://www.sotsiaalkindlustusamet.ee/et/ohvriabi/seksuaalvagivalda-kogenud-ohvri-kompleksteenuse-tervishoiuasutustes>
- <http://www.naisteliin.ee/index.php?id=210>