

SLAID 2- Since 1993, Chamber has been advocating for the human rights of people with disabilities and chronic illnesses, promoting their full social inclusion, equal opportunities, and participation in all aspects of society.

Our mission is to raise awareness, challenge barriers, and ensure that every individual can live with dignity and equality.

The Chamber is a network that includes 15 county-level chambers of persons with disabilities and 36 nationwide associations and unions focused on specific disabilities or chronic illnesses, in addition to 5 supporting members. Collectively, the network represents nearly 300 organizations across Estonia.

SLAID 3- The tax changes implemented and planned for 2025–2026 will reduce households' ability to cope financially, disproportionately affecting those who are already in a more difficult socio-economic situation. Low-income individuals are in a particularly challenging position, as they often also belong to other risk groups. As a result, inequalities among vulnerable target groups, as well as regional disparities, are expected to increase.

Relative poverty among persons with disabilities remains high, and their economic resilience is fragile. In 2024, the at-risk-of-poverty rate among persons with disabilities was 41.1%, compared to 20.2% in the total population.

*Recommendation: The state lacks a comprehensive overview of how the cost of living and planned tax increases/changes affect the well-being of socially vulnerable individuals. Each change is currently assessed only for its direct impact, rather than the combined effect of multiple changes. We recommend that any proposal likely to negatively affect vulnerable individuals should, at the draft stage, include an analysis of the overall impact of these changes on the well-being of people in vulnerable situations.*

SLAID 4- The number of persons with disabilities is decreasing (as of 2015, the proportion of persons with disabilities in the population was approximately 11%, i.e., over 145,000 people; by 2025, the corresponding figures are 7.6% and 104,000 people). For EPIKoda, this represents a critical issue and an incomprehensible decline, given that the number of people with health problems is increasing (e.g., mental health disorders are being diagnosed more frequently, and lifestyle-related diseases causing serious health problems are on the rise), and the population is aging.

This issue is also important because the degree or type of disability is often a prerequisite for receiving additional social care support. Therefore, if the degree of disability is not identified or is assessed as lower compared to previous evaluations, there is a risk that a certain number of people may be deprived of necessary and indicated services and support.

*Recommendations: The Estonian state should analyze the reasons for the decrease in the number of people with disabilities and publish the results. Additionally, before making any changes to the assessment practices or methodology for determining the degree of disability, the potential negative impact on the target group (including access to services and support linked to the identification, degree, or type of disability) should also be analyzed.*

SLAID 5- In Estonia, it is possible to restrict legal capacity and to place a person under full guardianship for managing all matters. Guardianship can be established both in relation to family law transactions and to deprive a person of voting rights. Estonia also applies a substituted decision-making model.

*The number of guardians is increasing (2,958 persons in 2013; 6,036 persons in 2023), and the proportion of those under guardianship without voting rights has grown significantly (10% in 2013; 88% in 2023). Although partial guardianship is legally possible, in practice, it is most often applied in full.*

*This practice is not in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which emphasizes that persons with disabilities have the right to be recognized as persons before the law in all settings and to enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all areas of life. The Convention also highlights the need to transition from a substituted decision-making model to a supported decision-making model. In our assessment, the declaration is not in line with the principles of the Convention.*

*Recommendation: Considering the increasing number of guardianship appointments and the extent to which guardianship is imposed, this declaration should be withdrawn. Furthermore, we consider that Estonia, in accordance with the Convention, must take measures to move towards the implementation of a supported decision-making model.*

*We recommend that the Estonian state will withdraw the declaration and develop and implement a supported decision-making model*