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FM PAET VISITS SOUTH KOREA AND SINGAPORE



Foreign Minister Urmás Paet becoming acquainted with South Korea's IT solutions, 12 January.

South Korea Interested in IT Development in Estonian Public Sector

12 January - **Foreign Minister Urmás Paet, who is on a visit to the Republic of Korea, discussed the development of political, economic, science and information technology co-operation between Estonia and South Korea with South Korean Foreign and Trade Minister Yu Myung-hwan.**

During their meeting, the foreign minister of the Republic of Korea was first and foremost interested in the utilisation of information technology in the Estonian public sector. Foreign Minister Urmás Paet stated that there is a great deal of untapped potential in economic and trade relations between Estonia and South Korea. "Areas of economic co-operation that are of interest to our entrepreneurs are the logistics and transport sector and information technology. The agreement for the avoidance of double taxation we signed with Korea in September provides extra security for the development of economic relations," said Paet.

According to Paet, the information technology sector could also provide an opportunity for Estonia and South Korea to co-operate in development co-operation. "Estonian experts already have a lot of experience with developing and implementing e-government in Eastern European and Southern Caucasus countries. South Korea also helps many nations make their public administration more effective, so there are significant points of overlap here," said the Estonian foreign minister. Paet explained to Myung-hwan how e-voting and e-government work.

In talking about academic co-operation between the countries, Paet and Myung-hwan agreed that contacts between Estonian and South Korean universities are developing successfully. "We are interested in expanding higher educational and research co-operation with Korea," said Foreign Minister Paet. He added that Estonian universities could also be good co-operation partners for South Korean technology companies.

Paet and Myung-hwan also discussed the situation in Afghanistan. The South Korean foreign minister stated that they plan to once again send additional civil experts as well as soldiers to Afghanistan.

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Estonia and Singapore Preparing for Agreement to Protect Investments

9 January - **Foreign Minister Urmás Paet and Singaporean Foreign Minister George Yong-Boon Yeo agreed to begin preparations for an agreement for the protection of investments between Estonia and Singapore.**

At their meeting, Paet and Yeo discussed opportunities for advancing Estonia and Singapore's economic relations and science and technology-related co-operation. "The business environments in Estonia and Singapore provide a good background for successful economic co-operation—they are both open and business-friendly," stated Foreign Minister Paet. The Estonian foreign minister introduced Estonia's plans for adopting the euro in 2011 to his Singaporean colleague.

Paet stated that Singapore is Estonia's most important trade partner in South-East Asia and has for years been among the top ten nations investing in Estonia. "Regardless of this fact, there is still much room for growth in economic co-operation and there is untapped co-operation potential in the knowledge-based sector. There are still plenty of development opportunities in, for example, the transport and logistics sector," said Foreign Minister Paet. The foreign minister also said that a business delegation from Singapore is welcome to visit Estonia in order to facilitate the development of business contacts.

Estonia is also in support of the prompt conclusion of a free trade agreement between the EU and Singapore, which according to Paet could be the first step to concluding regional free trade agreements between nations in the EU and South-East Asia.

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South Korea

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Paet gave his South Korean colleague an overview of Estonia's military and civil contribution to developing the health care system in Helmand Province.

The foreign ministers also discussed the situation in North Korea and matters related to its nuclear programme. South Korean Foreign Minister Myung-hwan gave an overview of the most recent developments in relations with North Korea. Foreign Minister Paet said that North Korea's nuclear programme is a threat to the entire world. "It is also absurd how a nation with a starving population is spending enormous sums on its nuclear programme. The UN Security Council's sanctions against North Korea for stopping the nuclear programme are an unfortunate necessity," he added.

Foreign Minister Paet also met with South Korean Deputy Minister of Energy and Information Technology Cho Seok, with whom he discussed co-operation opportunities in the IT sector. Korea is known as one of the world's most internet-using nations. Korea is interested in Estonia's information technology-related development and the NATO Cyber Defence Centre working in Estonia. "South Korean experts are welcome to come and become acquainted with the work of the Cyber Defence Centre," said Paet.

Foreign Minister Paet also visited the Samsung Electronics factory and met with its directors. Samsung products make up 23% of South Korea's exports.

Singapore

(continued from page 1)

Singapore is internationally important as a centre of advanced technology and innovation. Foreign Minister Yeo expressed interest in the functioning of Estonia's e-government and e-voting. Paet stated that Estonia is interested in co-operation with Singapore in the areas of information, biological and genetic technology, as well as in medicine.

"Estonian and Singaporean experts are interested in co-operating in the information technology field. For example, the Estonian Development Fund is preparing for the opening of an IT academy next year and would like to include our partners in Singapore in this project," stated Foreign Minister Paet. "At the moment preparations are also being made for the conclusion of a science and technology-related framework agreement, which would lead to the development of concrete and practical contacts," explained Foreign Minister Paet regarding plans for agreements to be concluded between the two nations.

Paet and Yeo also discussed opportunities for developing tourism. "Singapore is an interesting destination for Estonian tourists, with its cultural diversity and its location as a hub in South-East Asia, giving opportunities to discover the rest of the region," stated Foreign Minister Paet. He added that Estonia-Singapore tourism ties would be facilitated by the naming of a Singaporean honorary consul to Estonia. Estonian citizens can reside in Singapore for 30 days without a visa.

Estonian and Singaporean Foreign Ministers Open Memorial to the Fall of the Berlin Wall

9 January - **Foreign Minister Urmas Paet, in Singapore for a visit, participated along with Singaporean Foreign Minister George Yong-Boon Yeo in the opening of a memorial dedicated to the 20-year anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.**

In Bedok National Park in Singapore, it is possible to see four pieces of the Berlin Wall, onto which German artist Dennis Kaun made graffiti of two kings (The Kings of Freedom) after the fall of the wall. The kings signify the circumstances and mentalities that reigned on both sides of the wall at that time.

In his speech, Foreign Minister Urmas Paet emphasised that it is not possible to isolate people who yearn for freedom from the free world by force. "The fall of the Berlin Wall and the rapid deterioration of totalitarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe is exactly the kind of example that gave hope and courage to those who could not experience the benefits of the free world," he asserted.

In 2009, 20 years passed since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Foreign Minister Urmas Paet said that the Berlin Wall was one of the most prominent symbols of the Cold War, and that the strong desire of people to be free gave the impetus for its destruction. "The fall of the wall proved that people yearning for freedom cannot be separated by dividing walls," stated the foreign minister. Paet said that the firm desire of the Estonian people, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the deterioration of the Soviet empire gave Estonia the chance to return to a democratic society and restore its position in Europe.

At the opening of the memorial dedicated to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the German ambassador to Singapore read the address by the German chancellor at that time, Helmut Kohl.

FOREIGN NEWS

Estonia Joined Council of Europe Convention Against Human Trafficking

7 January - **Today the government approved Estonia's joining the Council of Europe's Convention Against Trafficking in Human Beings.**

Foreign Minister Urmas Paet stated that human trafficking, an occurrence tied to organised crime, endangers both international and domestic security and violates a person's fundamental rights and freedoms. "The fight against human trafficking is necessary, and joining the convention of the Council of Europe will help Estonia contribute to it more effectively," Paet noted. "Estonia also tries to help individuals that have become victims of human trafficking in any way it can," Paet said.

Paet added that the goal of the convention is to prevent human trafficking and fight against it, to protect the human rights of victims of human trafficking, and to promote international co-operation in working against the trafficking of human beings. "By joining the convention, Estonia is

demonstrating its desire to protect people from becoming victims of human trafficking by promoting both domestic and international co-operation," he emphasised.

The convention will be signed on behalf of the Republic of Estonia by Estonian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and permanent representative to the Council of Europe Sulev Kannike. After the signing, the convention will need to be ratified in the Riigikogu.

The Council of Europe's Convention Against Trafficking in Human Beings was opened for signing on 16 May 2005 in Warsaw. As of 1 November 2009, the convention had been signed by 41 Council of Europe member states and ratified by 26.

Estonian Ambassador to Austria Presents Credentials



Ambassador of Estonia Eve-Küllli Kala presenting her credentials to President of Austria Heinz Fischer, 11 January.

11 January - Ambassador of the Republic of Estonia Eve-Küllli Kala presented her credentials to President of the Republic of Austria Heinz Fischer.

During the meeting that took place after the presentation of credentials, the two discussed Estonia and Austria's historically good relationship and remarkably close cultural ties. After touching upon the production of Mozart's "Magic Flute" that was performed in Tallinn as early as 1795, they also talked about future co-operation plans. "We are planning a performance of Arvo Pärt's 4th symphony by the Nordic Symphony Orchestra in Vienna in May of 2010," noted Eve-Küllli Kala. "In addition to our good cultural ties, we should intensify relations between our two nations on various working levels," the ambassador said.

President Fischer and Ambassador Kala both praised Estonia and Austria's co-operation in supporting each other's candidacies in international organisations and promised to continue with that practice. The ambassador asked for Austria's support for Estonia's candidacy as the potential location of the EU's IT agency for justice and internal affairs.

Eve-Küllli Kala was born in 1959 in Tartu. The ambassador graduated from Tallinn Pedagogical University with a degree in English and German philology and from the Estonian School of Diplomacy. She has also studied at Oxford University and the Geneva Institute of International Studies. Kala has worked in the Estonian foreign service since 1992. From 1992-1996 she was in the

Foreign Ministry's political department, from 1996-1999 at the Estonian representation to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, and from 1999-2001 Kala was the director of the Foreign Ministry's division for Central and Northern Europe. From 2002-2006 Eve-Küllli Kala was the Estonian ambassador to the Czech Republic, and before assuming her current position Kala was the director general of the Foreign Ministry's personnel department. Ambassador Eve-Küllli Kala speaks English, German, Finnish, and Russian.

DOMESTIC NEWS

Estonia World's 32nd Best Place to Live

7 January (BNS) - **Estonia placed 32nd among world countries by quality of life according to a fresh study by International Living magazine.**

Of the Baltic states, Lithuania ranked highest at 22nd and Latvia was 40th.

The Quality of Life Index 2010 was topped by France, followed by Australia, Switzerland, Germany and New Zealand. The United States can be found at 7th, Britain in 25th and Sweden in the 30th position, while Russia lies at 111th.

The index measures the overall development of countries in categories like health, education, employment, cost of life, average life span, culture and leisure, infrastructure, safety and risks, and climate.

The study found the worst quality of life in Somalia, Yemen, Sudan, Chad, Afghanistan and Sierra Leone.

Muhu Entered into List of Top Ten Islands

12 January (BNS) - **The highly reputed tourism website www.jetsetter.com has included Estonia's Muhu Island as No. 9 in their list of top ten islands, the newspaper Meie Maa reported.**

The creators of the list mention that Muhu is an Estonian island of fewer than 2 000 inhabitants in the Baltic region. "The island has a functioning windmill, folk traditions, and a small luxury hotel and spa called Pädaste Manor," the website says.

At the top of the list is Mustique Island in the Grenadines. Canouan in the island country of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Mauritius, Fernando de Noronha in Brazil, Lipari in the Tyrrhenian Sea, Harbour in the Bahamas, Kangaroo in Australia, Hvar in Croatia, Muhu in Estonia and Culebra between Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands follow.

Parliament Speaker to Head Space Study Support Group

12 January (BNS) - **Fourteen members of the Estonian parliament Tuesday established a space studies support group, to be headed by Ene Ergma, the parliament speaker from the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union (IRL).**

The parliament press service said that members of the group were Ergma's party colleagues Andres Herkel, Kaia Iva, Erki Nool and Toomas Tõniste, Centrists Lauri Laas, Rein Ratas and Aivar Riisalu, and the Greens Mart Jussi and Aleksei Lotman. Also the Reformists Rein Aidma, Helmer Jõgi, Urmas Klaas and Mati Raidma, deputy chairman of the group, are members.

The parliament said that the aim of the group was to support Estonian companies' activities in space programmes both in the European Space Agency and in the framework of the European Union's programmes.

The space studies support group is the 27th group established in the Estonian Parliament since spring 2007. In addition, the MPs have set up 60 parliamentary groups that have the aim of more effective contacts with other countries' parliaments.

DEFENCE NEWS

Estonia in Talks with USA Over Sending Reinforcements to Afghanistan

7 January (BNS) - **Estonia is in talks with the United States about deploying additional troops to Afghanistan, but the defence minister says the contingent will not exceed the 170 military personnel mandated by parliament.**

Defence Minister Jaak Aaviksoo told BNS that the number of Estonian soldiers stationed in Afghanistan keeps constantly changing and is currently a score or so short of the allowed 170.

"Estonia could send around twenty more men to Afghanistan. However, nothing has been decided as yet and I'm reluctant to speculate about the additional capacity Estonia could contribute," Aaviksoo said. According to the minister, there has been talk of a reconnaissance unit or cyber security experts.

Foreign Minister Urmas Paet said Estonia's plans for civil contributions this year include the continued work of a health care expert in Helmand Province and the launch of new health care projects. "Our expert has been of great help and several countries have shown interest in making a financial contribution to our projects," the minister told BNS.

He added that Estonia intends to assign a third expert to the European Union's police mission. Furthermore, some Afghan diplomats are being trained at the Estonian School of Diplomacy and there is a project for interparliamentary co-operation. "Our aim is to diversify our contribution, bring in new elements," the minister said.

The new U.S. ambassador to Estonia, Michael C. Polt, said in an interview with the daily Postimees that his country is looking to Estonia for additional support in Afghanistan and that currently ways to send an Estonian recon unit there are being sought.

"As soon as we've figured it out, we'll be moving forward with everything we could get done together. But yes, we are talking about the possibility of additional support," the ambassador confirmed.

He added that, from the military point of view, Estonia's contribution is already close to as high as it can be. "In addition you have amazing civil capacity. When it comes to everything outside warfare, there exist additional possibilities to help democratisation, the construction of civil society, health care and e-government," he observed.

In December 2009 the Riigikogu extended Estonian troops' mission in Afghanistan to the end of 2010. By the Riigikogu decision, up to 170 personnel can be assigned to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force and the international coalition operation Enduring Freedom.

Estonian Defence Forces have been participating in military operations in Afghanistan as part of ISAF

since 2003 and have been stationed in the restless southern province of Helmand since 2005.

Estonian losses in Afghanistan since 2003 number seven, including four casualties last year. Fifty-seven soldiers have been wounded.

Joint Drills with US Marines to be Held in Estonia This Summer

8 January (BNS) - **In early summer a joint exercise with U.S. Marines will be held in Estonia, which will kick off on 11 June with the landing of 500 Marines on the northern coast, the daily Eesti Päevaleht says.**

All details of the exercise, which has been in the works for quite some time, are not yet in place. The landing will most likely take place on some North Estonian beach, but Maj. Lauri Abel from the Defence Ministry's defence readiness and operations department, who is in charge of the preparations on the Estonian side, was unable to say exactly where as it has not been formally agreed.

According to current plans, everyone who is interested will be able to watch the landing, Abel said.

The Marines' convoy will after landing head to the central training ground of the Defence Forces for 10 days of training together with the Scouts Battalion and the Kaitseliit (Defence League) voluntary corps.

According to Abel, the purpose of the drills is to practice the organisation of receiving country support on the one hand, and on the other to offer Estonian troops the opportunity to practice co-operation on a larger scale than a company.

Defence Minister Jaak Aaviksoo said the most important objective of the exercise is to deepen military co-operation between Estonia and the United States. The drills cannot be viewed as some kind of signal or warning to Russia, he affirmed.

Government Approves EUR 6 Mln for Ämari Air Base

7 January (BNS) - **The Estonian government ruled on Thursday to allocate 96 million kroons (EUR 6.13 mln) in bridge financing for the upgrading of the Ämari Air Base which the state will get back when NATO co-funding comes in.**

The alliance is to pay over its share of the financing by 10 July 2011 at the latest.

Defence Minister Jaak Aaviksoo said at the governmental news conference that the renovation of the Ämari Air Base will be completed at the end of this year or in the first quarter of 2011.

Plans are to make the base fully operational in 2011, and it should achieve full combat readiness in 2012.

The facility, located some 40 kilometers southwest of the capital Tallinn, is designed to receive transport planes and serve as a base for NATO fighters on Baltic airspace guarding duty. The alliance put up funds for the upgrading and construction of the traffic area, the maintenance area, and fuel storage facilities.

The largest and most extensive part of the project is the renovation of the traffic area. Upon its completion the air base will have a 2 750-meter runway, a new lighting system, ramps and taxiing lanes.

The upgrading of the air base, financed jointly by Estonia and NATO, is the alliance's first large

security investment in this country. The project will cost a total of 1.3 billion kroons, of which NATO is contributing 500 million kroons. Extensive construction works at Ämari began in 2008.

ECONOMIC NEWS

100 Percent Tax Revenue Paid into State Budget for 2009

7 January (BNS) - **The Estonian Finance Ministry said that 63.4 billion kroons (EUR 4.05 b) tax revenue, 100% of the target, was paid into the state budget in 2009.** More corporative income tax and excise flowed into the budget than planned, making up for shortfalls in the inflow of social and value-added tax.

The better-than-expected tax revenue inflow was due, among other things, to decisions made in the second half of the year for the contraction of expenditure and growth of revenues, lowering of the tax debt in November, and efficient tax administration by the Tax and Customs Board.

The Finance Ministry said that its inflow of tax revenue at the intended level significantly supported further improvement of the state budget position for 2009 and the meeting of the Maastricht budget criterion. But the sum total of the eventual shortfall of the government sector budget in 2009 depends also on the budgets of local governments, as well as of those of social insurance funds.

The Finance Ministry will give its preliminary assessment of last year's government sector budget deficit in mid-February, and Statistics Estonia data will become available on 26 March.

The Finance Ministry said that the inflow of tax revenue in the last month of the year was 6.1 billion kroons.

The sum total of social tax paid into the state budget in 2009 was 28.1 billion kroons, 96.2% of the target for the year. The inflow in December was 2.2 billion kroons. In twelve months in 2009, 2.4 billion kroons of individuals' income tax was paid into the state budget, 108.6% of the budget target. Of this, 406 million kroons was paid into the budget in December.

Payment of corporate income tax into the state budget totalled four billion kroons last year, of this 672.6 million kroons in December. The large inflow in December was due to income tax on dividends paid by state-owned companies.

The sum total of value-added tax paid into the budget during the 12 months was 18.8 billion kroons, 97% of the budget target. In December 1.7 billion kroons of value-added tax was paid into the state budget.

Excise revenue paid into the state budget totalled 9.8 billion kroons, 103.4% of the annual target. The December intake was one billion kroons.

EMT, Tele2 Lead Estonian Mobile Communication Market

7 January (BNS) - **According to a brand study of the Estonian Tele2 mobile communication operator carried out by TNS Emor, EMT and Tele2 led the Estonian mobile communication market as of the end of Q4 2009, with their market shares respectively at 37 and 33%.**

The rest of the market is divided among Elisa, DiiI and TeleYks, which control market shares of respectively 20, 8 and 2%.

Board Chairman of Tele2 Toomas Tiivel told reporters that Tele2 won more than 20 000 clients from its competitors due to number portability. Clients have mainly come over from EMT.

On the basis of the TNS Emor study of mobile communication in Estonian companies, EMT and Tele2 have the leading position – 41% of companies using mobile communication services were in the EMT network and 34% in the Tele2 network in fall 2009.

Compared with Q3 2008, Tele2 increased the market share of its business segment by 14%, while 12% of the business segment had left from EMT during the same period. In Q3 Elisa's services were used by 24% in Q3 2008 and 23% of the companies in the same quarter in 2009.

Andres Jõesaar, business client director at Tele2 Eesti, said that although plenty of small and medium-size companies are currently business clients of Tele2, this year there are plans to extend operations to major companies as well.

Tele2 finds that in connection with the equalisation of the reception quality of Tele2 and EMT, the redistribution of market shares is to be expected on the mobile communication market.

According to the director of Tele2 Eesti, the company is planning to increase its market share by two to three percent this year, particularly in the business sector and bearing in mind the public sector.

Tiivel said that the Estonian SIM card penetration was 117%. The actual share of users in the population is 86%, and in the age group from 15 to 74 the percentage of users is 97. The market share of Tele2's SIM cards is about 25%.

On the basis of Tele2, EMT and Elisa financial reports investments of the three mobile operators in 2008 and in the first three quarters of 2009 totalled about 1.2 billion kroons (EUR 77 mln).

During the past two years Tele2 installed nearly 500 new 2G and 3G substations all over Estonia, investing nearly 500 million kroons into the improvement of reception quality.

Tiivel told BNS that the volume of investments this year would remain below that of the previous year by about 200 million kroons as the building of substations had contracted, while the volume of the company's operation was at the same level as last year.

Main Activity Generated Profit for Estonian Air Last Year

8 January (BNS) - **Andrus Aljas, CEO of the Estonian national carrier Estonian Air, said that the result of the company's main activity was moderately positive in 2009.**

"Last year's results are also influenced by extraordinary expenditure due to the reorganisation of the company and adaptation to changes on the market, as well as the return of two aircraft to the lessor," a spokesman reported Aljas as saying to BNS.

Aljas said that Estonian Air had completed the major activities connected with the reorganisation in May and earned a profit in June 2009. "Also the result of the whole second half of the year was positive," Aljas said.

This year Estonian Air does not foresee extraordinary expenses in any significant amount.

Landmark of Estonian Literature to Appear in French Translation

8 January (BNS) - **The Cultural Endowment of Estonia has decided to support the translation into French of the fifth volume of "Truth and Justice", the epic novel by the 20th-century Estonian author Anton Hansen Tammsaare.** The first four volumes of the novel already have been or are being translated into French.

By a decision of the supervisory board of the endowment, the translator Jean Pascal Ollivry will get 106 612 kroons (EUR 6 800).

The first volume of the novel, also translated by Ollivry, was published in February 2009. Ollivry is the translator of the second volume as well. The third volume is translated by Jean-Pierre Minaudier and the fourth by Eva Toulouze.

The publisher of the French edition of "Truth and Justice", Gaia Editions, plans to bring out the final volume of the epic at the end of this year.

A French translation of "Truth and Justice" also appeared in 1944-1948, but it was translated through the medium of German and abridged.

Aljas said that Estonian Air was still busy looking for the necessary financial opportunities for the purchase of three new aircraft.

"There are different opportunities for the purchase of new aircraft and the company has already received some real offers. We are working with them with the aim of getting as favourable conditions for the company as possible," Aljas said.

The owners of Estonian Air are Estonia, SAS and the Cresco investment company. Estonia and SAS will next week open talks about the future of Estonian Air. Estonia may consider acquiring the holding of SAS or bringing in a new investor.

Study Shows Market Share of Estonia's Kalev in Baltic Countries at 16.5%

6 January (BNS) - **According to the AC Nielsen market research company, the market share of the Estonian confectionery company Kalev Chocolate Factory was 16.5% in terms of volume on the Baltic countries' chocolate and sugar confectionery market in the period from October to November 2009, increasing by 2.1% points on year.** According to Kalev, the indicator made it the leader of the market.

At the same time, the market share in terms of turnover was 14.2%, 1.7 percentage points higher than the year before.

Monika Heinrand, marketing and sales director of Kalev Chocolate Factory, said the market leader's position was mainly due to growth of market share in Estonia.

"On the domestic market we grew by nearly 4% in terms of volume compared with the same period last year, with the total market share at 42.7%. The share of the second biggest producer on the sweets market was 7.6%," Heinrand said.

She said that Kalev Chocolate Factory was successful above all in the category of chocolates, soft candy and toffee.

Kalev's main activity is the production of chocolate and sugar confectionery and the sale of chocolate, sugar and flour confectionery products. The main foreign markets are the Baltic and Scandinavian countries and Russia.

Residents of Estonia Make 220 200 Trips Abroad in Q3

8 January (BNS) - **According to Statistics Estonia, residents of the country made a total of 220 400 trips abroad, nearly 9% more than in Q3 2008.**

Compared with Q2, Estonian residents made 14% more trips abroad.

The aim of most of the trips in Q3 was holiday – in all, Estonia's residents made 118 300 holiday trips. The number of work trips was 23 500, and relatives or acquaintances were visited on 71 900 occasions.

In Q3 2008, residents of Estonia made 121 800 holiday and 26 700 work trips, and in 48 300 cases the aim was visiting relatives or acquaintances.

Of target countries, the most popular destinations were countries of the European Union (EU) where residents of Estonia made 141 200 trips in Q3. In 2008 in the same period residents of Estonia travelled to EU countries on 137 770 occasions.

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