

Mass unrest



Threat assessment: The occurrence of mass disorder in Estonia is unlikely. Compared with the previous assessment, the threat evaluation has not changed.

In recent years, the main causes of mass protests in Europe have been political developments and/or decisions concerning the economy, security, or climate. In 2023 and 2024, farmer protests driven by the green transition spread across Europe, although there were also other causes, such as extreme weather conditions, cheap imports, and the lack of support systems. Demonstrations may also be sparked by isolated incidents that take place elsewhere (for example, the Black Lives Matter movement, which spread from the United States across Europe).

In Estonia, no demonstrations or public gatherings have escalated into mass disorder for over a decade. The largest gatherings in recent years have been primarily related to decisions and activities during crises and in the field of security.

A trend of increasing registered demonstrations can be observed. The main influencing factors are changes in the security environment and people's living standards, which means that demonstrations with the potential to escalate into mass disorder are above all reactions to political decisions. A triggering factor may be the media coverage of a given event as well as deliberate influence operations by hostile states.

THREATS

- ✓ People's living conditions have worsened, dissatisfaction has grown, and this continues to be exploited in political power struggles, leading to a significant increase in the number of mass gatherings.
- ✓ The April 2007 riots showed that developments and political decisions in society are exploited in the influence operations of the Russian Federation. Social disagreements and opposition are seized upon and channelled, which can lead demonstrations to escalate into clashes and disorder.
- ✓ Mass disorder resulting in casualties most often occurs in confrontations between demonstrators and the police. In such events, the decisive factor is the presence of individuals with malicious intent who deliberately seek to turn a peaceful protest into a violent situation.
- ✓ People now receive information from entirely different and fragmented sources, subject to far less

- ✓ oversight than before. Since there are so many channels, the level of information noise is high, making it more difficult for individuals to distinguish false information from accurate facts.

ACTIONS

- ✓ Capabilities for detention and mass control are being developed, including through the crisis role of assistant police officers. Estonia is also creating a crisis reserve of 1,000 reservists, composed of former military police conscripts, whose task will be to support the police in the event of a migration attack or domestic unrest.
- ✓ Situational awareness is ensured by assessing internal and external threats in order to forecast the likelihood of such events.
- ✓ Risk communication is carried out, and the public is informed about the causes of disorder and the dangers associated with it.
- ✓ Processes related to the handling of offences are being further developed.

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