

OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES OF ESTONIAN PHARMACIES IN 2020

NUMBER OF PHARMACIES

There are three types of pharmacies in Estonia: general pharmacies, hospital pharmacies and veterinary pharmacies. Pharmacies may have branch pharmacies and a pharmacy-bus as structural units. Licensed general pharmacies can also offer the e-pharmacy service. The changes in the total number of pharmacies from 2012 are shown in Table 1, which gives the number of all licensed pharmacies and their branches at the beginning of the year.

Table 1. No of pharmacies including branch pharmacies in 2012–2021

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
General pharmacies	469	475	478	476	493	490	495	494	498	479
Hospital pharmacies	24	25	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24
Veterinary pharmacies	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3

In the beginning of 2021, activity licences had been issued to 479 general pharmacies: 381 general pharmacies which had 98 branch pharmacies. The most of all pharmacies, 66% were located in larger cities with more than 4,000 inhabitants, 8% in smaller cities and 26% in rural areas. There was on average one pharmacy per 2775 inhabitants in Estonia.

The number of hospital pharmacies remains the same during last years. There were 24 hospital pharmacies and one of them branch pharmacy in 2020. Nine of the hospital pharmacies were located in Harju County, seven of them in Tallinn, three in Ida-Viru County and two in Tartu County. As for other counties, there was one hospital pharmacy in each. Valga County and Võru County are the only counties that have no hospital pharmacies.

Since 2012, the number of veterinary pharmacies has remained the same. There were three veterinary pharmacies in Estonia in 2020: in Tartu, Põlva County and Saare County.

TURNOVER OF PHARMACIES

The pharmacy statistics based on the quarterly reports of general, hospital and veterinary pharmacies. Since 2015, the data on main and branch pharmacies are presented separately. The turnover of general and veterinary pharmacies includes VAT (value added tax) and the turnover of hospital pharmacies is presented without VAT.

In 2020, the total turnover of all pharmacies and their branch pharmacies was 559 million euros. The turnover of general pharmacies was 435 million euros (78% of the total turnover), the turnover of hospital pharmacies was 123 million euros (22%) and the turnover of veterinary pharmacies was 0.72 million euros (0.1%).

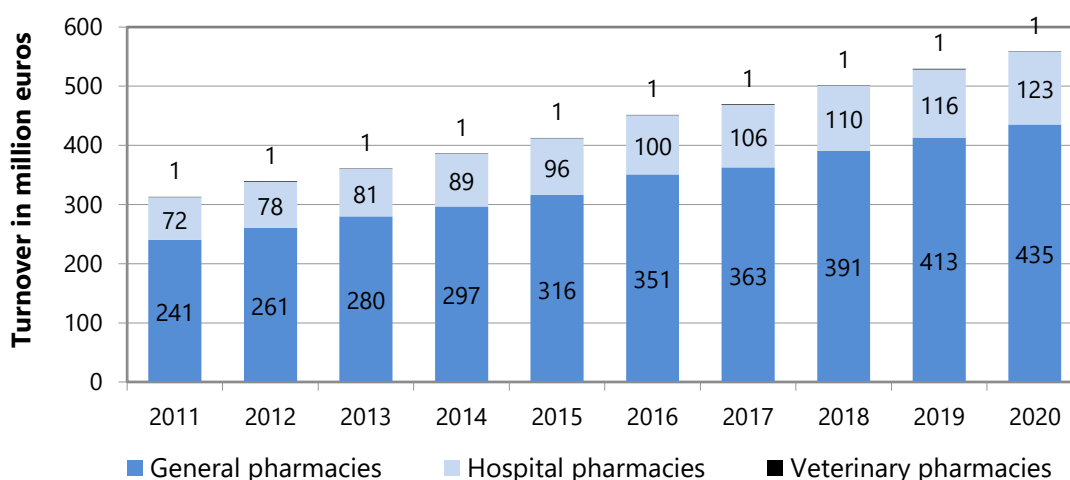


Figure 1. Turnover of pharmacies in 2011–2020

The turnover of pharmacies includes the turnover of medicines and the turnover of other goods. The proportion of medicines of total turnover in general pharmacies was 71%, in hospital pharmacies 72% and in veterinary pharmacies 63%.

Table 2. Turnover of medicines in 2020 (EUR)

	Turnover of medicines	% of total turnover
General pharmacies	308 474 220	71%
Hospital pharmacies	88 459 174	72%
Veterinary pharmacies	454 394	63%

The turnover of medicines in general and hospital pharmacies was 397 million euros, in 2020. Dividing the amount by all inhabitants of Estonia, the average expenditure on medicines per an inhabitant was 299 euros per year.

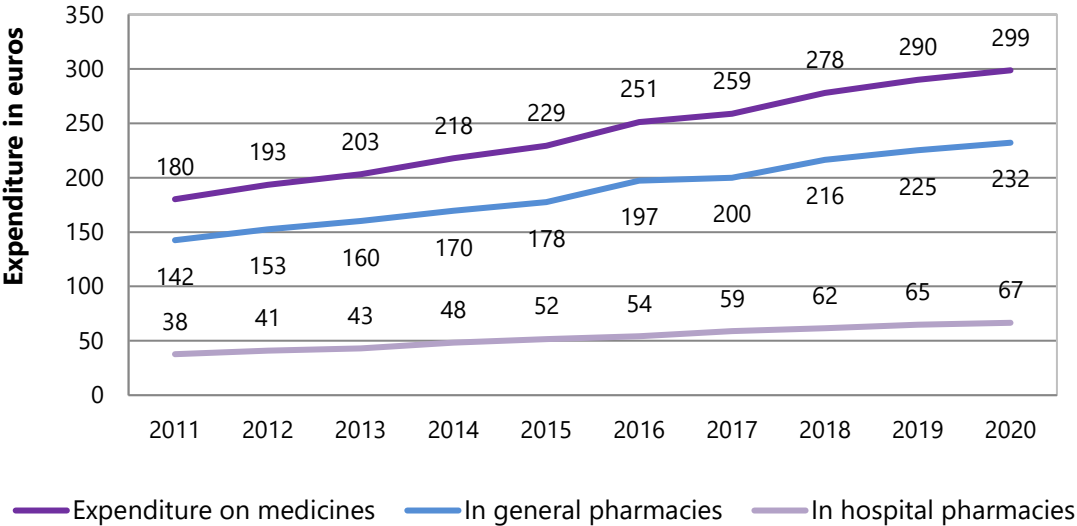


Figure 2. Expenditure on medicines per inhabitant per year in 2011–2020

In 2020, the average amount spent by an inhabitant of Estonia on medicines was 8.96 euros per month, almost 108 euros per year. Compared to 2019, the expenditure on non-prescription medicines decreased 3% and the expenditure on prescription medicines increased 3%.

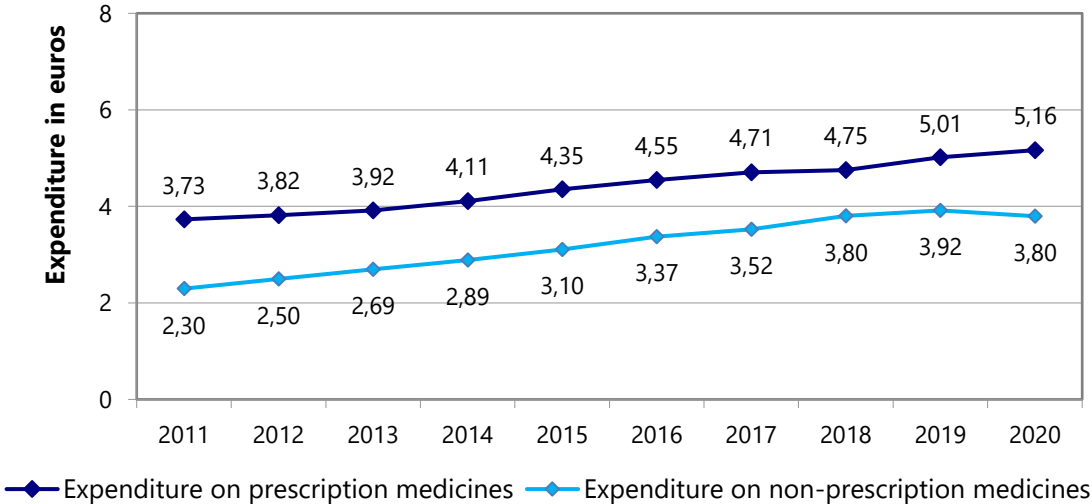


Figure 3. Expenditure on medicines per inhabitant per month in 2011–2020

GENERAL PHARMACIES

The turnover of general pharmacies includes sales of medicines and sales of other goods. The turnover of medicines includes sales of non-prescription medicines, prescription medicines and veterinary medicines. The turnover of prescription medicines can in turn be divided into turnover of medicines reimbursed by the Estonian Health Insurance Fund (EHIF) or not. The other goods sold in pharmacies include hygiene products, medical supplies, medical equipment, food additives, cosmetics etc.

In 2020, the turnover of general pharmacies was 435 million euros, which increased 5.4% compared to the previous year. The turnover of medicines of general pharmacies was 308 million euros in 2020. The turnover of medicines increased 3.4% compared to previous year: non-reimbursed medicines increased 5.5% and reimbursed medicines increased 5.0%. The turnover of non-prescription medicines decreased 2.7%. The turnover of medicines dispensed based on prescriptions with discounts is the highest (224 million euros) with approximately 91% of the total turnover of prescription medicines. The turnover of veterinary medicines in general pharmacies is relatively modest and remained under one million euros in 2020. The turnover of other goods was 127 million euros, which increased 10.8% compared to the previous year.

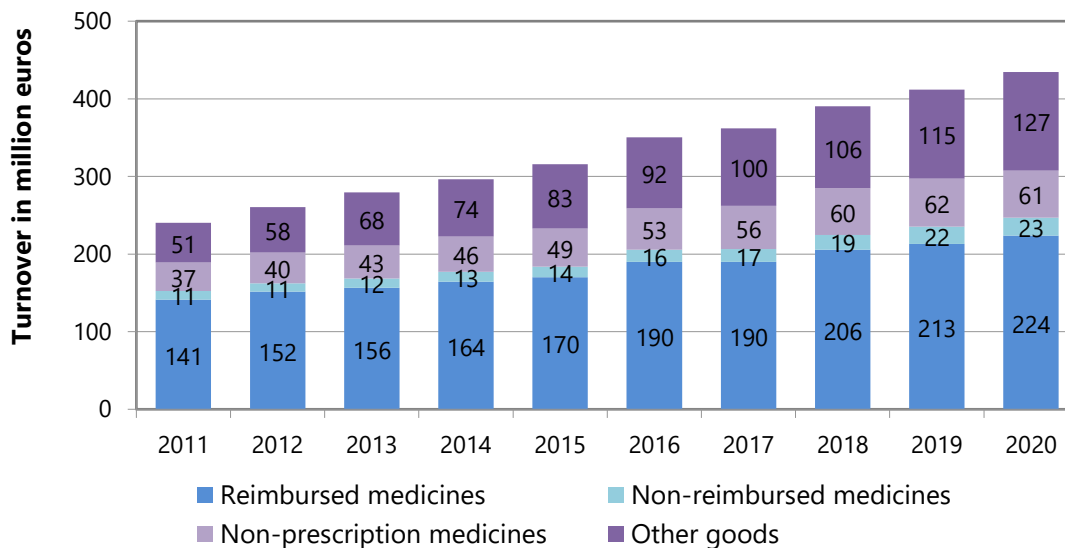


Figure 4. Turnover of general pharmacies in 2011–2020

The most of general pharmacies (76%) are located in cities and the turnover of medicines in cities is much higher than in rural areas. In 2020, 87% of the total turnover of medicines was the turnover of medicines sold in cities and only 13% of medicines were sold in general pharmacies in rural areas. In 2020, the distribution of turnover of general pharmacies in cities and general pharmacies in rural areas is quite different. The turnover of non-prescription medicines was in cities and in rural areas the same, 14%. The turnover of the other goods was 29% and 33% respectively, in general pharmacies located in cities and in rural area. The turnover of prescription medicines was the highest, 57% in general pharmacies located in cities and 53% in general pharmacies located in rural areas.

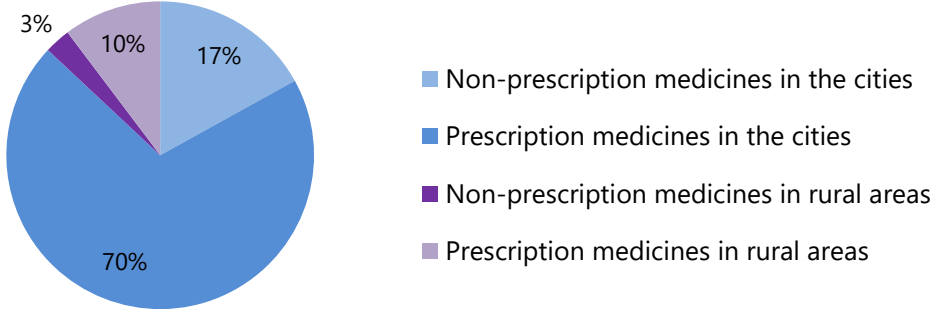


Figure 5. The turnover of medicines in the cities and rural areas, 2020

The cost of prescription medicines reimbursed by EHIF divided as follows in 2020: ca. 26% paid by the patient and ca. 74% paid by the EHIF. The average cost of a prescription reimbursed by EHIF is influenced by the quantity of reimbursed medicines dispensed as well as the choice of specific discounted medicines, i.e. whether the chosen medicinal product with the same active ingredient is the more expensive or a cheaper option. In 2020, the average cost of a reimbursed medicine was 24.78 euros.

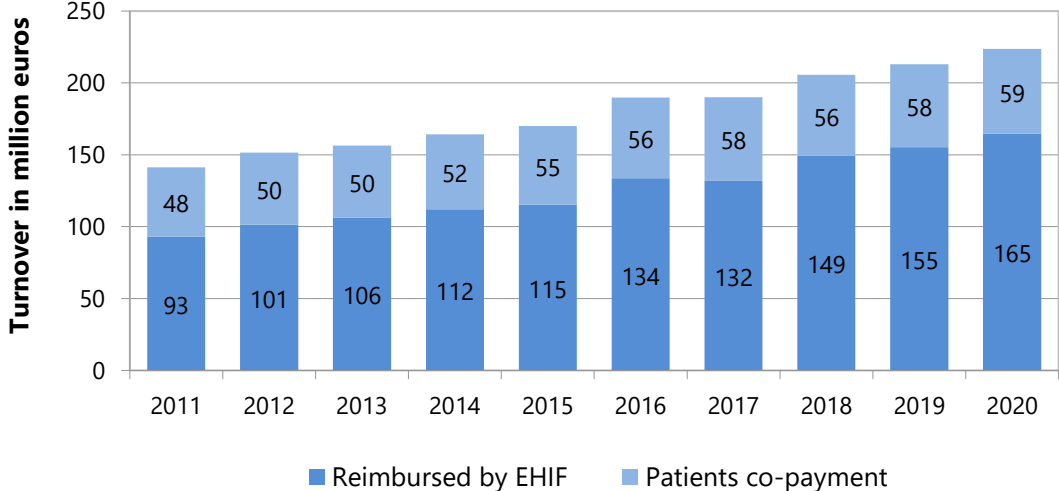


Figure 6. Turnover of reimbursed medicines in general pharmacies in 2011–2020

In 2020, 10.7 million prescriptions were handled in general pharmacies. The prescriptions reimbursed by EHIF has the largest proportion (9.0 million prescriptions). The number of prescriptions without discounts was ca. 1.6 million, while the number of prescriptions for medicines prepared *ex tempore* remained nearly 26 thousand and the number of prescriptions for medicines for veterinary purposes was nineteen thousand. The number of EU prescriptions decreased compared to the previous year 32% and remained under 8 thousand.

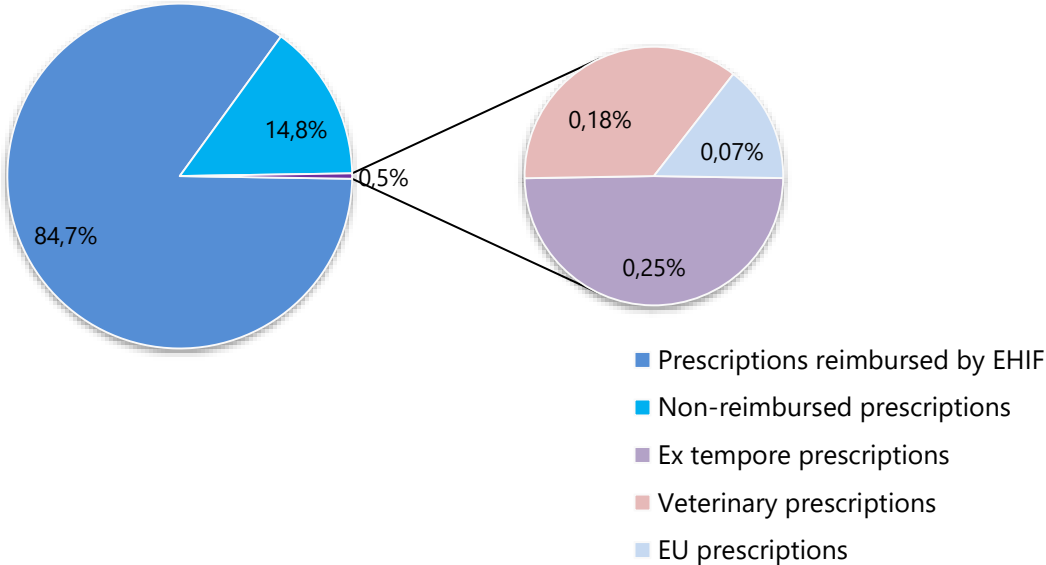


Figure 7. Prescriptions handled by general pharmacies in 2020

In 2020, over 112 thousand medicine packages were prepared in general pharmacies, and about 69 thousand of them were prepared *ex tempore*.

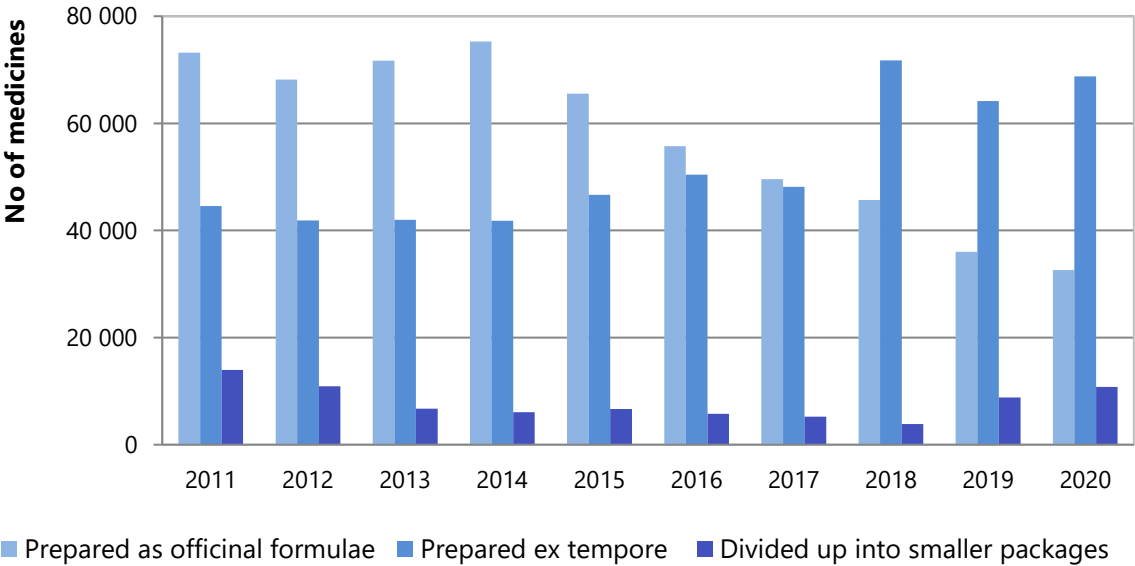


Figure 8. Medicines prepared in general pharmacies in 2011–2020

At the end of 2020, mostly 2-5 people worked in one general pharmacy. Approximately 31% of all pharmacists working in general pharmacies and 43% of pharmacist assistants work in general pharmacies in Tallinn. The largest share of pharmacists is in Tartu, accounting for 69% of all employees of general pharmacies of Tartu. In comparison with Estonia as a whole, pharmacists make up 42%, pharmacist assistants 33% and other employees 25% of all employees of general pharmacies.

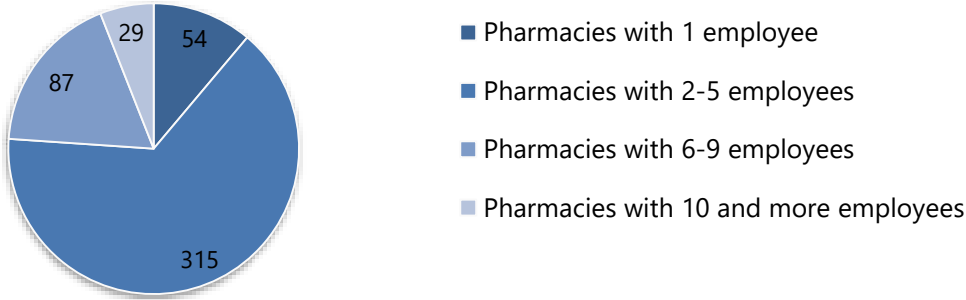


Figure 9. General pharmacies divided by the number of employees in 2020

HOSPITAL PHARMACIES

Over the last ten years, the total turnover of hospital pharmacies has steadily increased. In 2020, the turnover of the other goods and the medicines increased by 16.7% and 3.2%, respectively. The total turnover of hospital pharmacies was 123 million euros (calculated without VAT), with an increase by 6.7% in total.

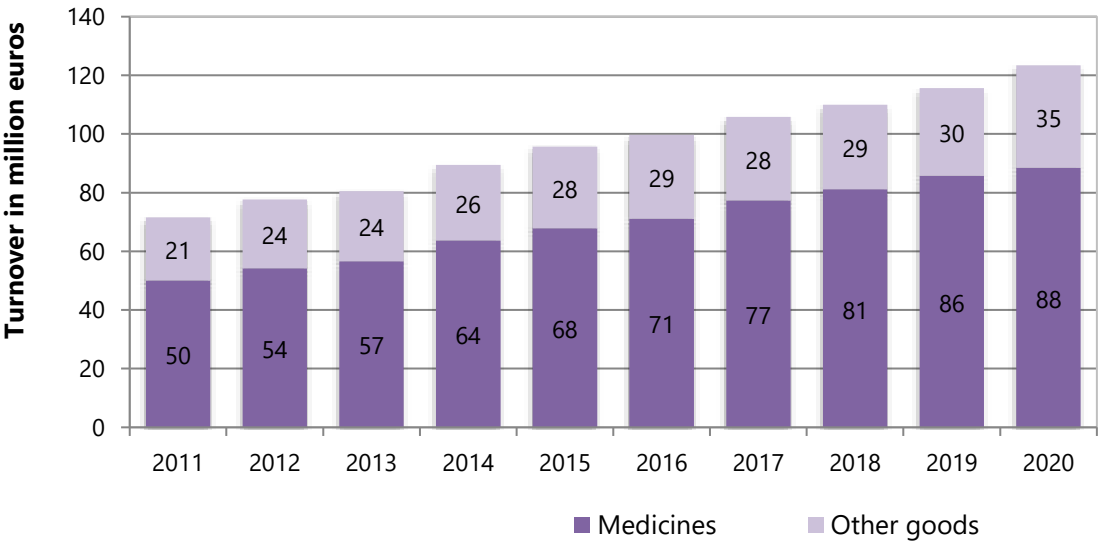


Figure 10. Turnover of hospital pharmacies in 2011–2020

The turnover of hospital pharmacies is very versatile. The annual turnover of thirteen hospital pharmacies was less than one million euros. There are seven medium-sized hospital pharmacies whose turnover remained between one and ten million euros, and there are four large hospital pharmacies in Estonia whose turnover exceeded ten million euros, in 2020. In total, the four largest pharmacies comprised 77% of the total turnover of hospital pharmacies. This means that the four largest pharmacies also have a very strong impact on the average annual turnover of hospital pharmacies, which was 5.1 million euros in 2020. When we look at the remaining pharmacies separately from the four largest, we see that the average annual turnover is considerably smaller – 1.4 million euros.

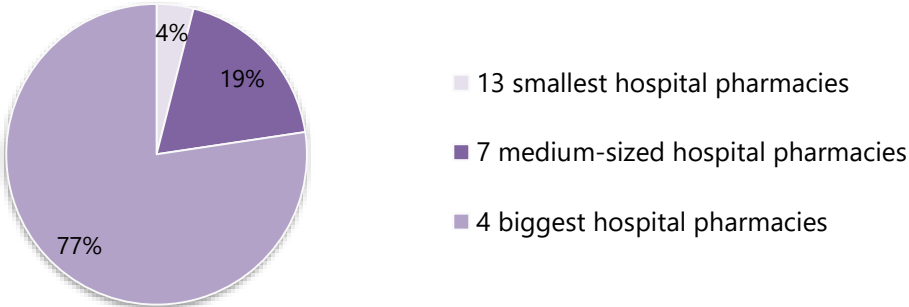


Figure 11. Hospital pharmacies divided by the turnover in 2020

The employees in hospital pharmacies are mostly pharmacists. 78 pharmacists, 35 pharmacist assistants and 41 other employees worked in hospital pharmacies at the end of 2020. Up to five people work in medium-sized hospital pharmacies and only the largest ones employ more than five people.

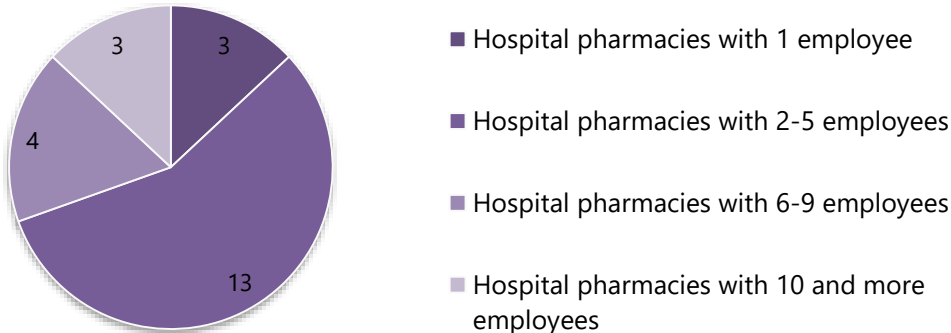


Figure 12. Hospital pharmacies divided by the number of employees in 2020

VETERINARY PHARMACIES

In Estonia, three veterinary pharmacies operating in Estonia in 2020 and the total turnover was 0.72 million euros and the proportion of medicines was 63%.

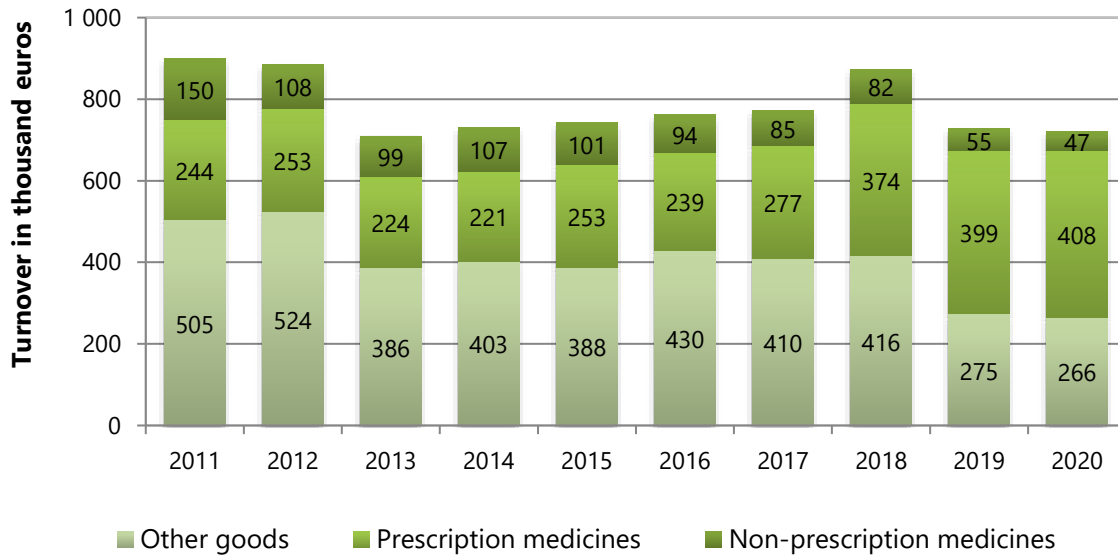


Figure 13. Turnover of veterinary pharmacies in 2011–2020

The veterinarians may purchase veterinary medicines directly from wholesalers. In 2020 wholesalers dispensed around 91% of veterinary medicines directly to operating veterinarians or veterinarians representing agricultural undertakings, 6% to general pharmacies, 2.5% to veterinary pharmacies and 0.4% to other institutions. The number of prescriptions handled by veterinary pharmacies has decreased four-fold in the past ten years.

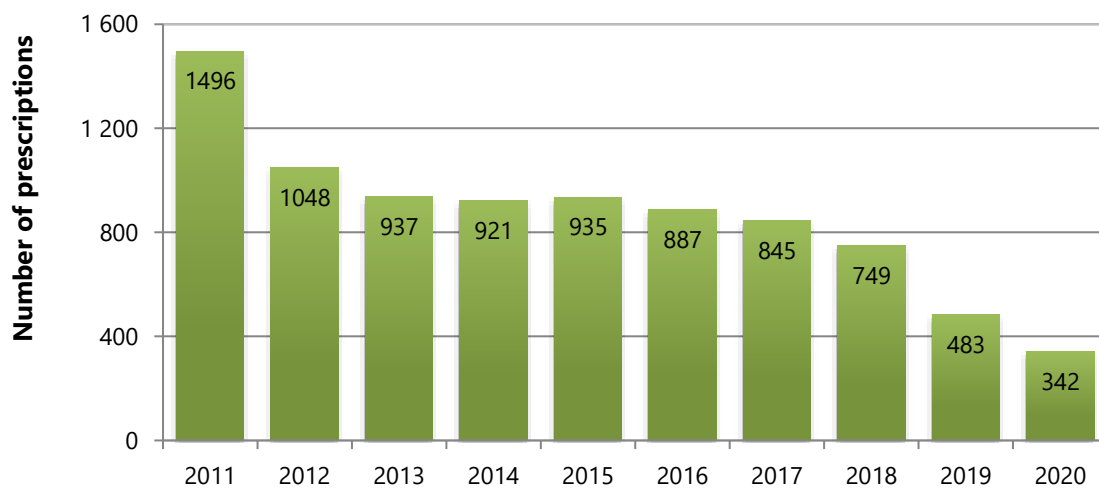


Figure 14. Number of prescriptions handled in veterinary pharmacies in 2011–2020