



Overview of the Activities of Estonian Pharmacies

Number of Pharmacies

There are three types of pharmacies in Estonia: general pharmacies, veterinary pharmacies and hospital pharmacies. Pharmacies may have branch pharmacies and pharmacy-bus as structural units. The licensed general pharmacy can offer the e-pharmacy service. The changes in the total number of pharmacies from 2010–2020 are shown in following table, which gives the number of pharmacies and their branches at the beginning of the year.

Table 1. Number of pharmacies (incl. branches) in Estonia 2010–2020

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
General pharmacies	486	477	469	475	478	476	493	490	495	494	498
Hospital pharmacies	26	26	24	25	24	24	24	24	24	24	24
Veterinary pharmacies	7	7	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3

*The number of pharmacies (inc. branch pharmacies) as of 1st of January

Activity licences had been issued to 352 general pharmacies which had 146 branch pharmacies at the beginning of 2020.

The average number of retail pharmacies in Estonia at 1st of January 2019 was one per every 2682 inhabitants. In most counties the number is below average. However, in Tallinn, Harju County and Narva the number is above 3000 or more residents per pharmacy. The horizontal line illustrates the average in Estonia. The population figures used to calculate the number of people living in each county was obtained from the regional development database of Statistics Estonia.

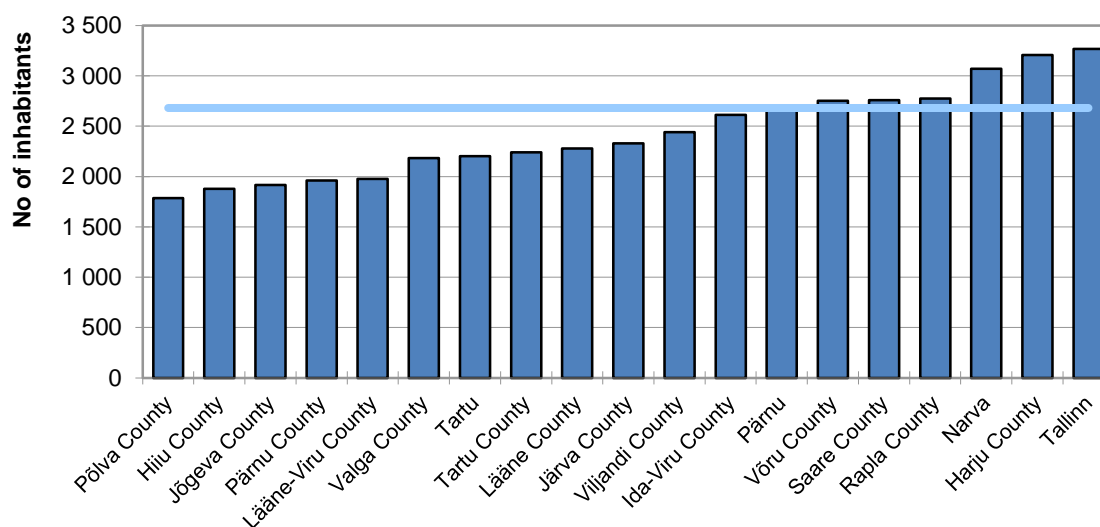


Figure 1. Number of inhabitants per pharmacy in the beginning of 2019 in major cities and counties compared to the Estonian average

The number of hospital pharmacies remain the same during last years. There were 24 hospital pharmacies and one of them branch pharmacy in 2019. 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.

The number of veterinary pharmacies has decreased many years, 2013–2019 the number of veterinary pharmacies has remained the same. There were three veterinary pharmacies in Estonia in 2019: in Tartu, Põlva County and Saare County.



Turnover of Pharmacies

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

The total turnover of all pharmacies and their branch pharmacies was 529 million euros in 2019. The turnover of general pharmacies was 413 million euros (78% of total turnover), the turnover of hospital pharmacies was 116 million euros (22%) and the turnover of veterinary pharmacies was 0.73 million euros (0.1%) in 2019. The proportion of medicines of total turnover in general pharmacies was 72%, in hospital pharmacies 74% and in veterinary pharmacies 62%.

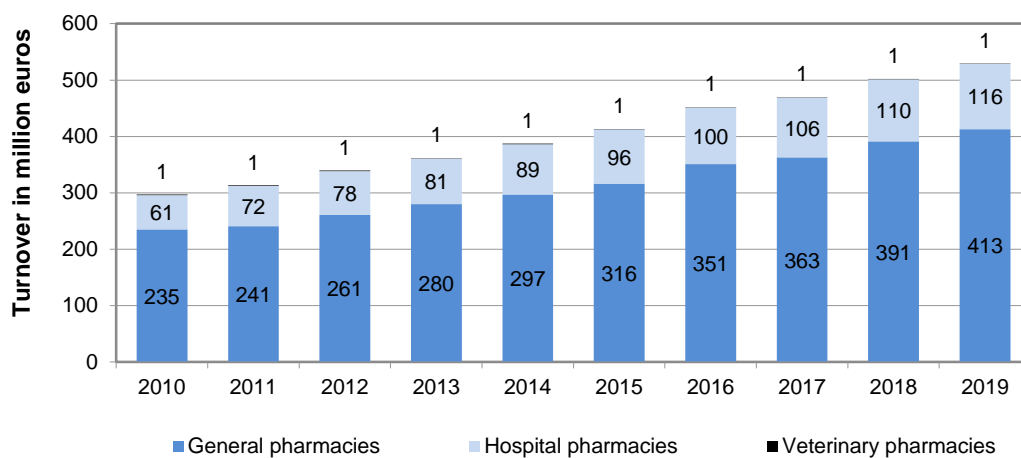


Figure 2. Turnover of pharmacies in 2010–2019

The turnover of medicines in general and hospital pharmacies was 384 million euros in 2019. Dividing the amount by all inhabitants of Estonia the average expenditure on medicines per inhabitant in 2019 was 290 euros per year.

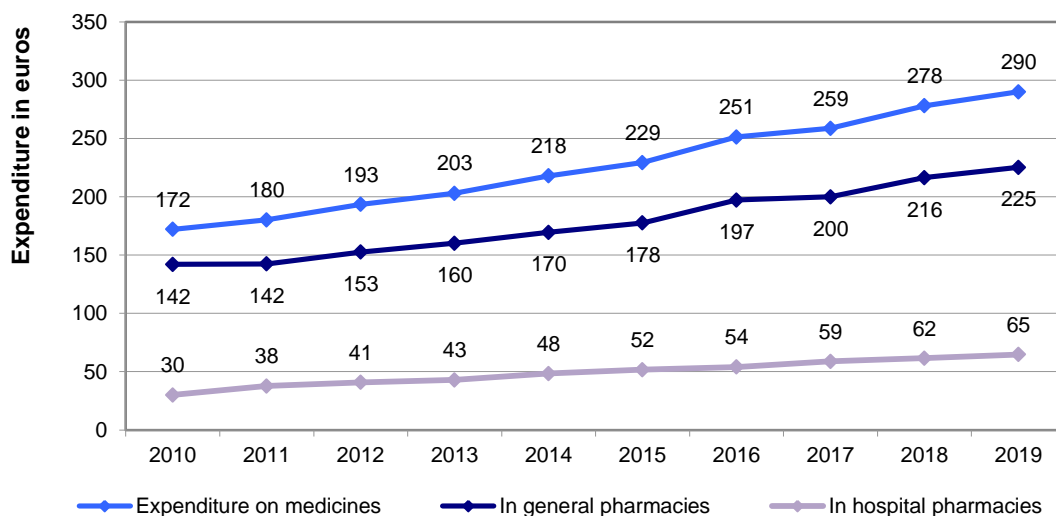


Figure 3. Expenditure on medicines per inhabitant per year in 2010–2019



General Pharmacies

In 2019 the turnover of general pharmacies was 413 million euros, which increased 5.6% compared to previous year. The turnover of medicines of general pharmacies was 298 million euros in 2019. The turnover of medicines includes sales of non-prescription medicines, prescription medicines and veterinary medicines. The turnover of non-prescription medicines increased 3.5% compared to previous year reaching 62 million euros. The turnover of prescription medicines can in turn be divided into turnover of medicines dispensed on the basis of prescriptions the Estonian Health Insurance Fund (EHIF) compensates for or not. The turnover of medicines dispensed on the basis of prescriptions with discounts is the highest (213 million euros) with approximately 91% of the total turnover from prescription medicines. The turnover of veterinary medicines in general pharmacies is relatively modest and remained in one million euros in 2019. The turnover of the other goods was 115 million euros which increased 8.5% in 2019 compared to the 2018.

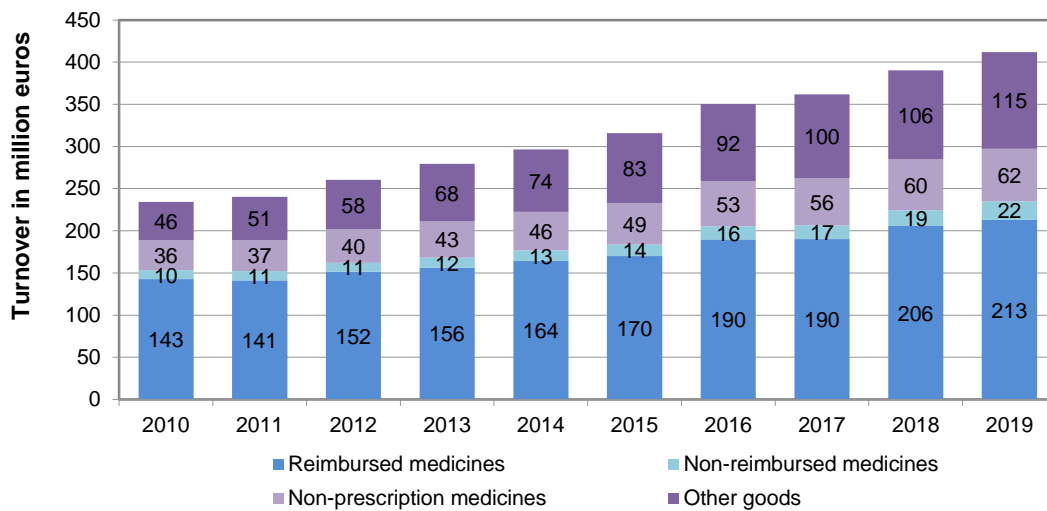


Figure 4. Turnover of general pharmacies in 2010–2019

The cost of prescription medicines reimbursed by EHIF divided as follows in 2019: ca. 27% paid by the patient and ca. 73% 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. The average cost of a reimbursed medicine in 2019 was 23.82 euros.

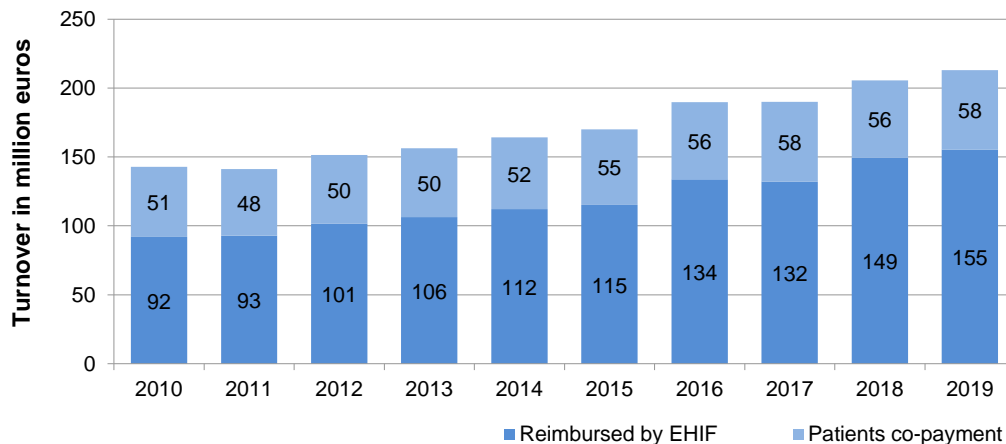


Figure 5. Turnover of reimbursed medicines in general pharmacies in 2010–2019



The average turnover of general pharmacies was 0.85 million euros and the average turnover of medicines 0.61 million euros. When we look at the average turnover of general pharmacies in major cities and counties, shows that the average turnover is strongly affected by the sales of the biggest cities – Tallinn and Tartu – pharmacies.

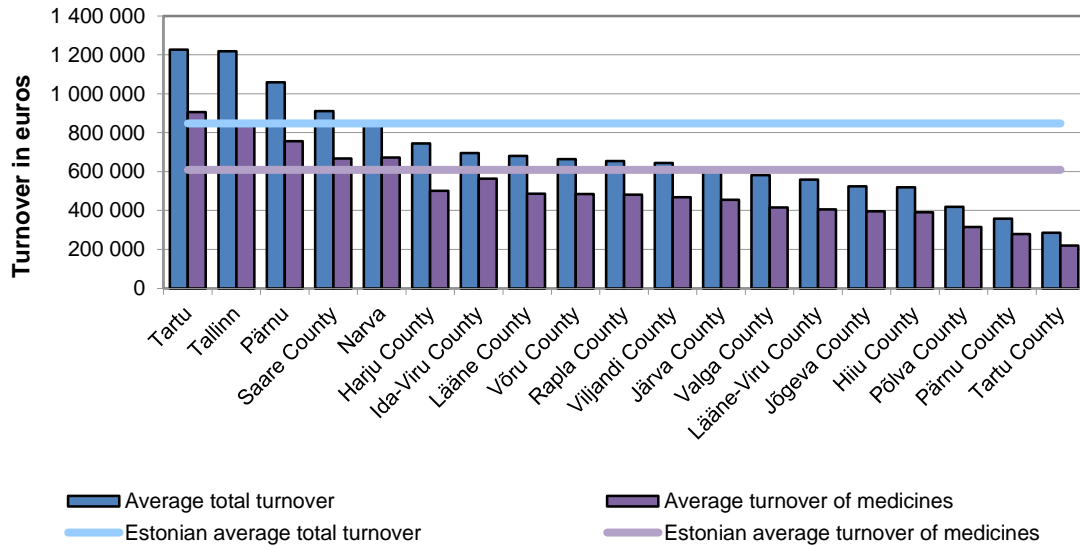


Figure 6. Average turnover of general pharmacies in major cities and counties in 2019

A quarter of all general pharmacies are located in Tallinn. Almost 75% of all general pharmacies and their branch pharmacies are located in towns and cities.

Table 2. Pharmacies by counties 01.01.2020

City/ County	Main pharmacy	Main pharmacy in the city	Main pharmacy in rural areas	Branch pharmacy	Branch pharmacy in the city	Branch pharmacy in rural areas
Harju County	22	11	11	29	7	22
Tallinn	116	116		17	17	
Hiiu County	3	2	1	2		2
Ida-Viru County	22	21	1	10	10	
Narva	10	10		8	8	
Jõgeva County	12	9	3	4	3	1
Järva County	11	8	3	2		2
Lääne County	5	4	1	4	1	3
Lääne-Viru County	22	17	5	8	3	5
Põlva County	8	6	2	6	3	3
Pärnu	16	16		3	3	
Pärnu County	9	2	7	9	1	8
Rapla County	7	2	5	5	1	4
Saare County	12	9	3	2		2
Tartu	34	34		11	11	
Tartu County	11	5	6	13	1	12
Valga County	8	6	2	5	3	2
Viljandi County	12	12		7	3	4
Võru County	12	9	3	1		1
Total	352	299	53	146	75	71
Grand total	498					



The most of general pharmacies located in towns and cities. The turnover of general pharmacies located in cities was 88% of total turnover of all general pharmacies. Only 12% of medicines has sold in general pharmacies in rural areas.

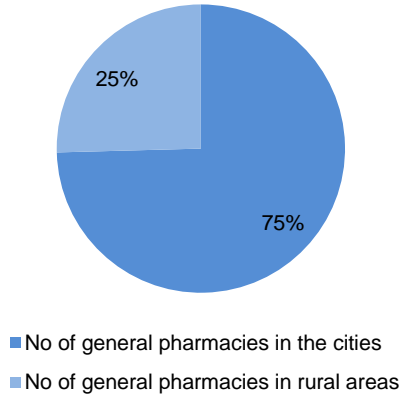


Figure 7. General pharmacies in 2019

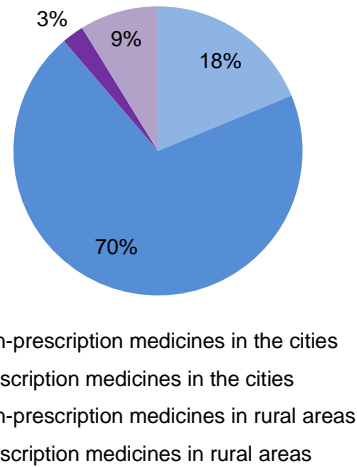


Figure 8. Turnover of medicines in the cities and rural areas

At the same time the distribution of turnover of general pharmacies in cities and general pharmacies in rural areas is quite similar. The turnover of prescription medicines was the highest, 57% in general pharmacies located in cities and 55% in general pharmacies located in rural areas. The turnover of the other goods was respectively 28% and 30% in general pharmacies located in cities and in rural areas. The turnover of non-prescription medicines was 15%.

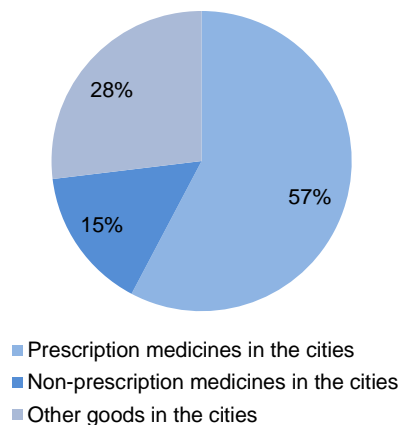


Figure 9. The turnover of general pharmacies in the cities in 2019

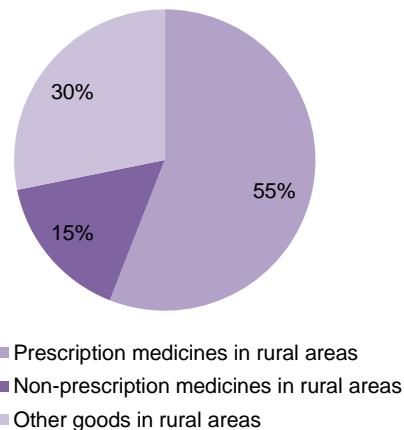


Figure 10. The turnover of general pharmacies in the rural areas in 2019



The average amount spent by an inhabitant of Estonia on medicines in 2019 was 8.93 euros per month, almost 107 euros per year. Compared to 2018 the expenditure on non-prescription medicines increased 3% and the expenditure on prescription medicines increased 5.5%.

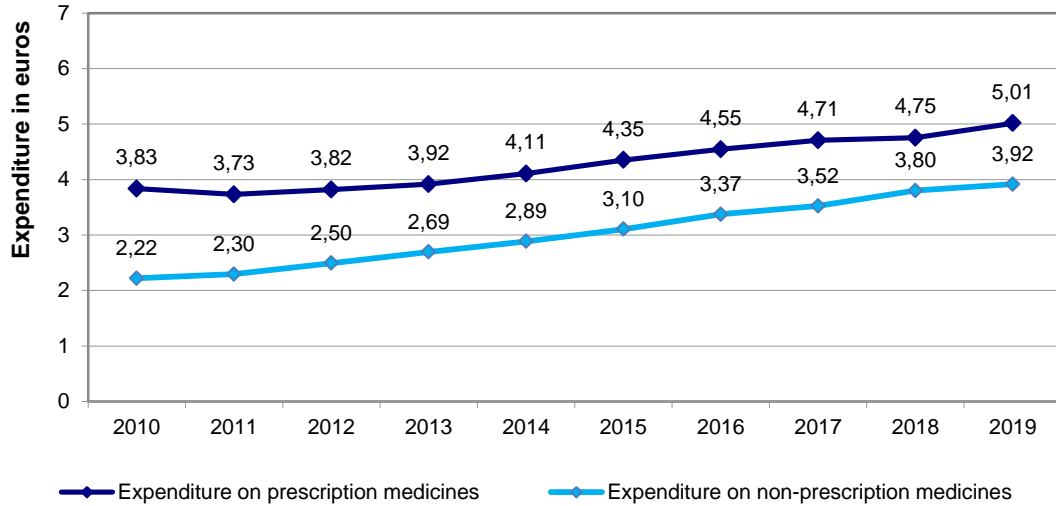


Figure 11. Expenditure on medicines per inhabitant per month in 2010–2019

10.6 million prescriptions were handled by general pharmacies in 2019. The largest proportion was medicines dispensed on the basis of prescriptions reimbursed by EHIF (8.9 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 33 thousand and the number of prescriptions of medicines for veterinary purposes was nineteen thousand. The number of EU prescriptions was over 11 thousand.

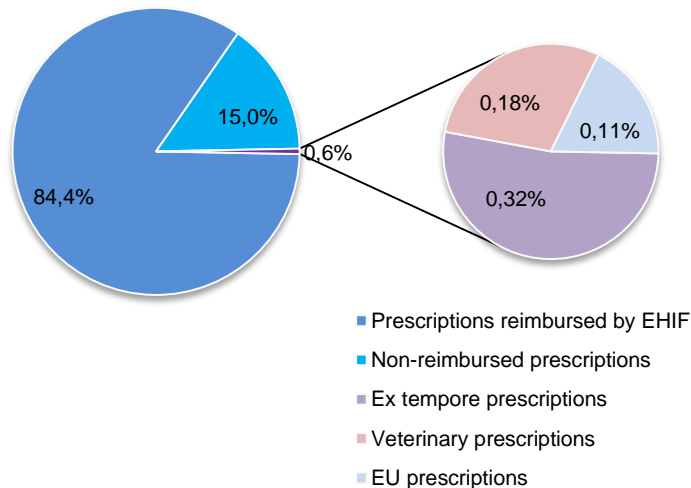


Figure 12. Prescriptions handled by general pharmacies in 2019



4% of main pharmacies (14 general pharmacies) prepared medicines *ex tempore* or official formulae or divided them up into smaller packages in 2019. 13% of main pharmacies prepared medicines as official formulae, 30% prepared medicines *ex tempore* and 8% of main pharmacies divided medicines up into smaller packages. 66% of main pharmacies did not prepare or divide up any medicines.

Almost 109 thousand medicine packages were prepared in general pharmacies in 2019, more than 64 thousand of which were prepared *ex tempore*. The number of medicines prepared *ex tempore* was highest in Tartu comprising 53% of all medicines prepared *ex tempore* in general pharmacies in 2019. The number of medicines prepared as official formulae was highest in Tartu and Tallinn comprising 68% of all medicines prepared as official formulae in general pharmacies in 2019.

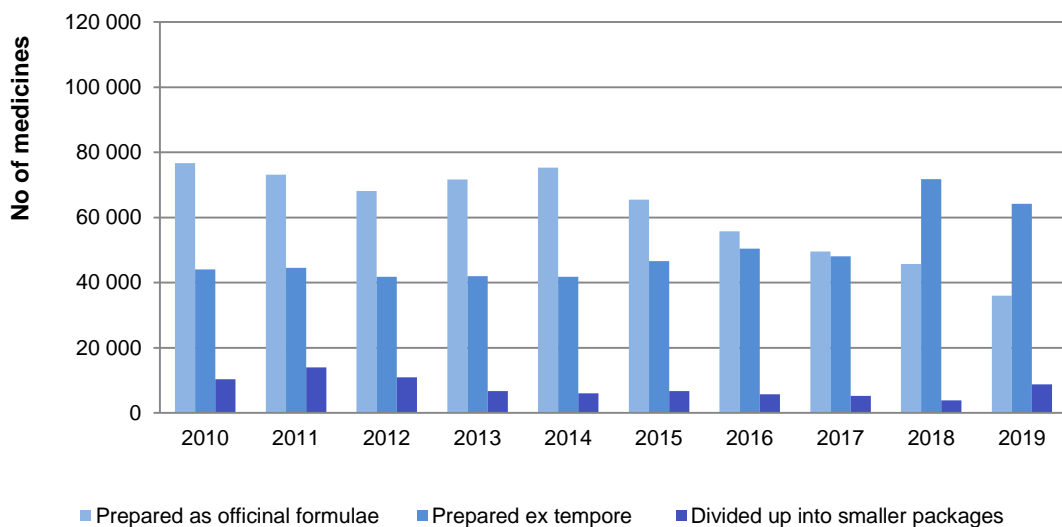


Figure 13. Medicines prepared in general pharmacies in 2010–2019

2-5 employees usually work in one main pharmacy or branch pharmacy. The number of general pharmacies with more than 10 employees is highest in Tallinn, while the number of general pharmacies with one employee is highest in Tartu County. The proportion of pharmacists is highest and comprise 40% of all general pharmacy employees in Estonia, pharmacist assistants comprise 34% and other employees 26%.



Figure 14. General pharmacies divided by the number of employees in 2019



Hospital Pharmacies

The total turnover of hospital pharmacies in 2019 was 116 million euros, of this the turnover of medicines comprised 86 million euros (74%). The turnover of hospital pharmacies is calculated without VAT.

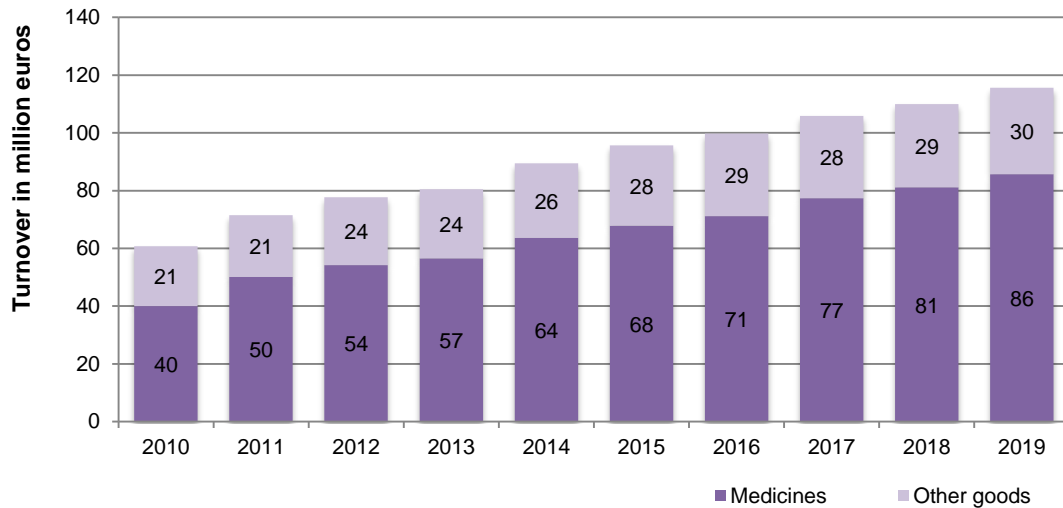


Figure 15. Turnover of hospital pharmacies in 2010–2019

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 also four large hospital pharmacies in Estonia whose turnover in 2019 exceeded ten million euros. 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 in 2019 was 4.8 million euros. When we look at the remaining pharmacies separately from the four largest, we see that the average annual turnover is considerably smaller – 1.3 million euros.

The employees in hospital pharmacies are mostly pharmacists. 77 pharmacists, 38 pharmacist assistants and 41 other employees worked in hospital pharmacies at the end of 2019. Up to five people work in medium-sized hospital pharmacies and only the largest ones employ more than five people.



Figure 16. Hospital pharmacies divided by the number of employees in 2019



Veterinary Pharmacies

The number of veterinary pharmacies and the total turnover of veterinary pharmacies has decreased until 2013. There were three veterinary pharmacies operating in Estonia in 2019 and the total turnover was 0.73 million euros and the proportion of medicines was 62%.

The veterinarians may purchase veterinary medicines directly from wholesalers. In 2019 wholesalers dispensed around 87% of veterinary medicines directly to operating veterinarians or veterinarians representing agricultural undertakings, 6% to veterinary pharmacies, 6% to general pharmacies and 1% to other institutions.

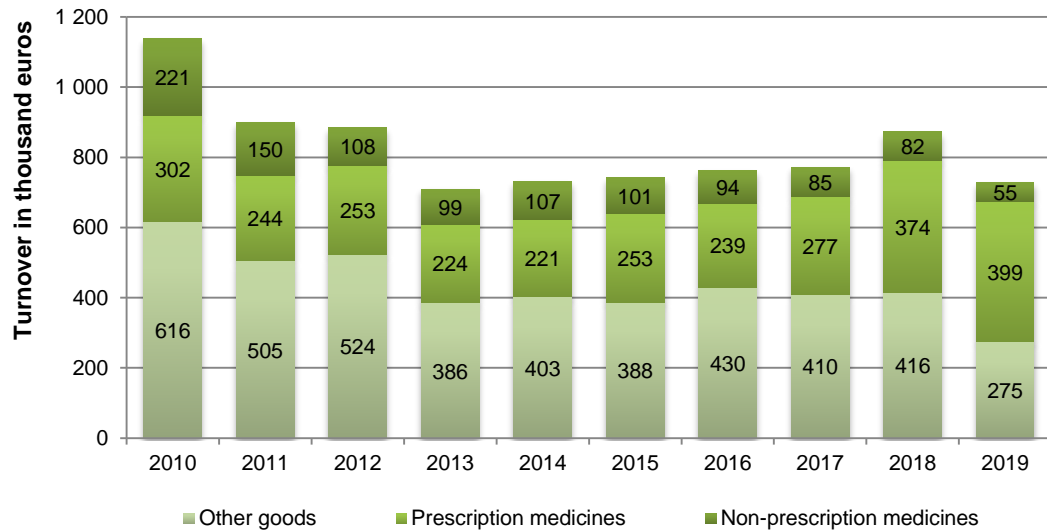


Figure 17. Turnover of veterinary pharmacies in 2010–2019

Veterinary pharmacies dispense prescription medicines on the basis of order forms and prescriptions. The number of prescriptions handled by veterinary pharmacies has decreased by 83% in the past ten years.

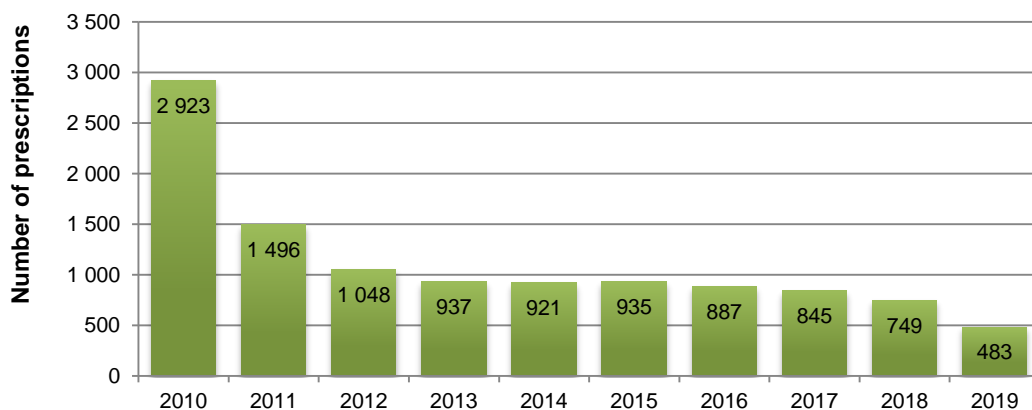


Figure 18. Number of prescriptions handled in veterinary pharmacies in 2010–2019

In 2019 four veterinarians worked in three veterinary pharmacies.