



# IMPACT STORIES

## of the I Am European Project



# FROM AN ARTICLE TO LEGISLATION CHANGE

**Organisation:** NGO Mondo

**Eliisa Matsalu** has been a **journalist** for almost 10 years now. She started working in a local newspaper in her small hometown. Then Eliisa proceeded to work as a news reporter in the Estonian business daily Äripäev. Now, she has been part of Äripäev's investigative team for about 5 years.

Her newspaper **focuses mainly on business and the economy**, so most of her stories are always connected to these fields. Often she writes about some kind of injustice someone has experienced, like a fraud. Eliisa also often covers political issues, and human rights too.

One day, her editor told her about **the scholarship regarding covering migration topics** that was offered by NGO Mondo thanks to the I Am European (IAE) project.

At that time, she was working on a project about **the mistreatment of foreign workers within some posted worker schemes**<sup>2</sup> with several journalists from other countries. The scholarship sounded like something that could help her widen her research opportunities.

Before Eliisa got the news she had received the Mondo scholarship, the international investigative journalists' group had actually broken up as it's always hard to work on a cross-border story. But since Eliisa got the scholarship, it gave her **a new boost and a fresh opportunity** to still work on the topic.

Her goal was to **write an extensive article** and also do **a podcast episode** about how a lot of foreign workers are mistreated in Estonia (and in fact all over the world). Eliisa knew the problem

2 A "posted worker" is an employee who is sent by his employer to carry out a service in another country temporarily.



Photo: Gregor Alaküla

was large, but nobody seemed to care about it, and she wanted to change that.

She did a lot of research and interviews with different organisations that deal with foreign workers. The hardest part was getting in touch with people who were mistreated in Estonia. The majority of them had left the country already and most of the time they don't really want to talk about it in the media as they were scared.

Eliisa worked a lot with labour dispute commissions documents and tried to find out what kind of cases there have been in Estonia. It turned out the situation was way worse than she thought.

One aspect she wrote about was the weird situation regarding **the limited rights of the police**. It turned out that because of one court case police were not allowed to catch employers for almost two years who had used

illegal workforce. It sounded unbelievable to her! Meanwhile, the statistics showed that every three days at least one illegal workforce case was found. After the story was published, **the Estonian interior minister Kristian Jaani promised to change the law so police could punish the "bad guys" again**. The law was changed a couple of months after the story was published.

She got an **award for the Best Podcast in 2021**. It was said her podcast pointed out an important problem and the mistreating cases she talked about were touching.

Eliisa learned that there's so much injustice in the world and it's hard to help everyone, but if she doesn't try, she doesn't help anyone at all. **She wants to continue reporting about human rights** and make the world at least a little bit better place. Eliisa has also continued reporting about workforce mistreatment cases.



The I Am European project is being implemented with the financial assistance of the European Union and many other international and local funders. As the project has received funding through the EU DEAR Programme, it is part of a pan-European community of activities working towards positive social change. The contents of this material are the sole responsibility of Mondo and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union or any other funder.

All the photos and other visual materials have been provided by the respective organisations if not referred otherwise.  
The use of the photos and other visual materials without permission is strictly prohibited.