



Building Blocks for the Future  
PILAR I – SOCIETY

# Attracting and Retaining Talent

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everythink



## About this white paper

This document aims to compile and summarize the speeches, thoughts and bold ideas shared during the Open Sessions of the 2021 Annual Event of the Business and Innovation Network, recording, for future reference, the contribution of a group of impressive people from all over the world who gathered in Porto to share, evolve and create knowledge and visions for the future of Humanity. This was a collaboration between BIN@ Network and Everythink, a design company.

## About BIN@ Business and Innovation Network

Business & Innovation Network (BIN@) is an international network of academic and industry partners engaged in supporting open innovation and the creation of sustainable forum for sharing good practices and opportunities in innovation. BIN@ promotes a set of activities ranging from brokerage events to softlanding opportunities for startups. BIN@ has currently around 4500 delegates worldwide and so far has held 14 international events in Portugal, UK, Brazil, Romania, Poland and one fully digital event. You can see more about our activities on the official website: [www.businessandinnovation.net](http://www.businessandinnovation.net).

## About Everythink

EVERYTHINK is an award-winning studio for creativity, design and innovation, established in 2008 in Porto. Through design, they put creative methodologies and strategic thinking at the service of companies' innovation, to create new services, products and experiences, impacting people in a positive, easy and happy way. Everythink's approach with customers, users, and stakeholders is key to create new products, services and experiences, with a positive impact on people's lives. The team works on different areas and outputs, offering diversity and experience in an effect of cross-pollination offering innovative insights, efficiency and time-to-market. Find more at [www.everythink.com](http://www.everythink.com)

# Attracting and Retaining Talent

A conversation with



**Leonardo Ortega**  
Enterprise Estonia

*Leonardo Ortega, is the head of the International House of Estonia, which is part of the Work in Estonia program, hosted at Enterprise Estonia. Coming from Mexico, he arrived to study in Estonia nine years ago, then worked in a private firm and in an NGO, before serving in the public sector. This background and very wide working spectrum helps him empathize a lot with the different situations, as he tries to improve the user experience for the internationals that are coming to work and live in Estonia.*

We focus on four different pillars. The first one is attracting, which is on a more marketing side, letting people know that the country of Estonia is an option for professional development, with a very good quality of life. The second pillar would be reception, that is when people come to Estonia let them know they have made a good choice and that is providing a soft-landing, so people feel that they have made a good choice when arriving to Estonia. And for that there is an International House where they can really receive personal attention that sometimes is not expected when arriving in a new country where they get different state services in a single place.. Then the third pillar is integration, which is more like a long-term adaptation, once they have solved the basic questions of the place to live. They can perhaps learn the language, and integrate themselves into the society, being active citizens. And then the last part of that model is reputation. If we have done the first, second and third parts right, then these people are happy and with a very positive experience. If they actually go back to their countries, they will recommend Estonia as a place for working and living to other ones. So that's always like a staple, because then that positive reputation will in turn attract more people towards Estonia. We do this process on a city basis, but also on a country wide basis. The International House of Estonia is based in the capital Tallinn, although we work for all internationals living in Estonia.



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## 'Coopetition' for international talent

There is a balance for the cooperation between countries and cities, while they are in competition for the best talent. A good thing in terms of competition is that the models are not always replicable. For instance, one city might have EU money, which comes with a lot of strings. Another city may be politically very active in terms of attracting internationals. A very important factor is the specific target audience you are looking for. For example, we know that Copenhagen is receiving a lot of nurses or medical workers. In Estonia, we are more in need of ICT talents. In that sense, it's not that much a direct competition, as each of the countries is a bit more specialized on particular sectors and industries.

The European Union should have a policy across all member states in the future, one common face between regions trying to cooperate in order to attract international talent that they need to be ahead. We are already doing some cooperation with other regions. We have a network of different cities from Copenhagen to Berlin, who are also engaging and do not see us as competitors, as we have been mostly like the past few years. We see ourselves as operators and enablers of talent attraction, because the EU itself is in the look for talents of other countries and

regions, from Africa to Latin America, or even the United States.

What we do at Work in Estonia is trying to bring a people strategy into the country. There are also the marketing campaigns that we have done in some other countries. Once we did a campaign where we invited people not to specific positions, but actually to work for Estonia. Of course, behind it were several companies ready to recruit these specialists - from which the best were selected. We hope to see some sort of people strategy at the EU level, where people can move freely between the member states and work. They wouldn't be constrained to one single state with the EU Blue Card, that hasn't been a success so far.

## Digital society

Six years ago, when we were trying to decide whether we should open the International House, the discussion was if it was going to be physical or digital. We thought that digital ...would be very time and resource consuming to achieve what we needed, so we decide to start with something physical, because there was a connection, there was a physical point of contact. Maybe most internationals do not trust data services, or perhaps they just want to talk to someone. So a physical point in Estonia was a positive argument, and we opened it in 2018, and it worked well.

And then, with the pandemic, we had to move all services online and everything is now digital. We were ourselves amazed that we managed to keep all the services running. So actually, all of the consultations from the Police and Border Guard, to the government and city government area, and then all other services are still functioning online. We are seeing a lot of people asking questions about taxes, pensions and every sort of support. But they still don't have a connection, they just got work. The idea is to work and live in Estonia, because you cannot separate one from the other, you have to be integrated in the community. At the moment, we have our services in a hybrid form, but always trying to push them a bit more to the digital side, because it's just way more efficient and easier for them to do it.

We do use digital society as one of the main arguments for internationals to come here. Since the 90s Estonia decided to put all the bets on services. The IT sector is the one that has seen the fastest growth. And that's what also makes it a perfect recipe for international students. Another argument that we use is the fact that you can grow a career much faster than in other places where there is more competition.

There are different segments of the population who are coming to Estonia. If you

want a very cosmopolitan life with a lot of different places to go, then Estonia might not be comparable to Paris or Berlin. But a person that likes nature more, or that wants more time for themselves to actually have a great work and life balance, can do everything online and Estonia would suit perfectly. There is also now the possibility of a digital nomad visa, which means people working for companies not established in Estonia but want to get a taste of how it is to live in a digital society can spend some time in Estonia.. And then if you like it, going back to your country and still being connected to Estonia and getting residency, which allows you to use as a foreigner all the country's digital services, including running a company remotely in Estonia and getting to the market in the EU.

We don't want to talk just about all the positive effects, but also about the challenges. We noticed that not everyone is oriented to IT services. Building a bridge with those people that are coming from different countries and that are not that acquainted with digital services is a challenge in itself. We help them know how to use the services and make sense of the potential. ■

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**Building blocks for the future**

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