



**Mikko Lagerspetz**

**Active Civic Participation  
of Immigrants in  
Estonia**

## **POLITIS – a European research project**

### **Project information**

POLITIS is short for a research project with the full title: Building Europe with New Citizens? An Inquiry into the Civic Participation of Naturalised Citizens and Foreign Residents in 25 Countries. The European Commission funds the project that mainly seeks to improve our understanding of different factors that promote or inhibit active civic participation of immigrants. A unique project construction is developed that includes workshops with foreign-born students who are recruited as discussants and interviewers. National experts in all 25 EU countries have prepared country reports on the contextual conditions and state of research concerning civic participation of immigrants. These reports can be downloaded from [www.uni-oldenburg.de/politis-europe](http://www.uni-oldenburg.de/politis-europe)

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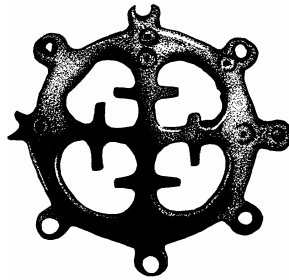
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## **Abstract**

The present immigrant population in Estonia is almost in its entirety a result of Estonia's occupation by the Soviet Union during the Second World War. After having held the status of a Soviet Republic for more than fifty years, Estonia re-gained its independence in August 1991. After that, the citizenship status of the inhabitants was defined according to whether they or their parents or grandparents had been citizens of the independent Estonia (1918-1940). In this way, the Soviet-time settlers and their descendants were defined as non-citizens, i.e., as immigrants. The naturalization procedure requires five years residence and passing of an exam in Estonian language, except for children born of stateless parents in Estonia. The number of foreign citizens and persons without citizenship now residing in Estonia is around 270,000, which corresponds to a share of 20% of a total population of 1.37 million. During the 1990s and 2000s, no large immigration to Estonia has taken place, and according to the 2000 housing and population census, the total number of immigrants from outside the former Soviet Union was less than two thousand people. Accordingly, a majority of the immigrant population is Russian speaking and has lived in the country for fifteen years or more. A great majority of all non-citizens hold permanent residence permits, and do in most respects enjoy the same rights as the citizens of Estonia. On the labour market, non-citizens seem to be in a more awkward position than the citizens, and the ethnic Estonians have, in turn, a more favourable position than the naturalised citizens. This can, however, not be attributed to any discriminatory policies, but is an effect of several different economic and social factors.

Non-citizens cannot vote in national elections. Those who have resided in the area of the same municipality during a period of five years or more have the right to vote in local elections, but are not eligible themselves. Non-citizens may not be members of any political party; however, there are many examples of naturalised citizens active in party politics both on the local and national levels. Despite the relatively large number of people with immigrant background, the parties claiming to represent them have not been able to play any key role in institutional politics. In fact, all Russian-speaking members of the Parliament and most of them in local councils have been elected from other parties than the Russian speaking ones. At the same time, several pieces of survey research point at lower voting activity and lower trust in political institutions among the minorities than among ethnic Estonians. Everybody has the right to participate in the activities of trade unions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), irrespective of his or her citizenship. Trade union membership is, in fact, more common among ethnic and immigrant minorities. However, both population surveys and surveys of registered NGOs indicate, that Russian speakers are less frequently members in other kinds of NGOs than ethnic Estonians. There seems however to exist great differences between minorities with reference to their degree of organisation.

The Estonian government policies towards immigrants and immigration are mainly focused on the integration of the Soviet-time settlers to the new society, which is now dominated by the Estonian language and in which Russian speakers consist a minority. The need to develop a future oriented migration policy has been acknowledged rather recently, partly as an effect of the country's EU membership from May 2004. The same can be said about the scholarly literature discussing immigrants and immigration: the main concern of researchers hitherto has been the

political and social-psychological relationships between ethnic Estonians and the Russophone minorities, while the new immigrants from outside the former Soviet Union have not received much attention.

## Table of contents

Abstract .....	4
Table of contents .....	6
Part I: Understanding the conditions for immigrant participation .....	7
I.1 Key events and demographic developments .....	7
I.1.1 Independence gained, lost and restored .....	7
I.1.2 Changes in Estonia's demographic composition .....	8
I.1.3 Types of immigrant groups .....	10
I.1.4 Citizenship legislation and naturalization .....	12
I.1.5 Who is an immigrant? Conceptual and legal clarifications .....	15
I. 2 Major issues discussed with relation to immigration .....	19
I.2.1 General characteristics of the public discourse .....	19
I.2.2 From independence to mid-1990s .....	21
I.2.2 From mid-1990s to the emergence of an official integration policy .....	21
I.2.3 From 1999 to Estonia's EU membership .....	22
I.2.4 The current debate .....	23
I. 3 Institutional setting framing immigrant participation .....	24
I.3.1 The overall framework of legislation .....	24
I.3.2 Legislation on political rights .....	25
I.3.3 Legislation on cultural rights .....	26
I.3.4 Governmental institutions concerned with immigrant and minority rights .....	28
I.3.5 Arm's length bodies of the government .....	29
I.3.6 The State Programme "Integration in Estonian Society 2000-2007" .....	31
I.3.7 The position of immigrants on the labour market .....	32
I.3.8 Conclusion: An overview of restricting and encouraging conditions .....	33
Part II: Active civic participation of Third Country immigrants .....	35
II.1 Studies on active civic participation by immigrants .....	35
II.1.1 General remarks .....	35
II.1.2 Immigrants, minorities and the emerging model of democracy .....	35
II.1.3 Immigrants and minorities in the political process: Empirical data .....	38
II.1.3 Participation of immigrants and minorities in NGOs .....	40
II.2 Prominent people with immigrant background active in public life .....	44
II.2.1 A selection of short biographies .....	44
Part III: Expert assessment .....	46
III.1 Engagement in civic activities by immigrants: Conclusions .....	46
III.1.1 Political participation .....	46
III.1.2 Participation in non-governmental organisations .....	47
III.2 Emerging issues for politics and research .....	48
References .....	50
Annex: Mapping of research competences in Estonia .....	54
1. Active civic participation of immigrants – leading institutions .....	54
Summary .....	54
2. Immigration – leading institutions .....	57
Summary .....	57
3. Civic participation – leading institutions .....	57
Summary .....	57

# Part I: Understanding the conditions for immigrant participation

## I.1 Key events and demographic developments

### *I.1.1 Independence gained, lost and restored*

The fall of Real Socialism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union brought several newly independent countries to the map of Europe.<sup>1</sup> Whereas there were thirty-three nations competing in football's European Nations' Cup in 1992, the number of contestants in 1996 was no lower than 48 (Pierson 1996: 13). Estonia was one of the "new" countries. As many other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, it became in the late 1980s a scene of mass movements for democratisation and national liberation. The country was able to free itself from the collapsing Soviet central government on 20 August 1991, shortly before the final dissolution of the Union itself on the New Year of 1992.

However, the Estonian independence has a longer history. Its tradition of independent statehood dates from the years 1918-1940 (see, e.g., Misiunas & Taagepera 1983; Raun 1987). The country, which was previously in succession ruled by Germans, Danes and Swedes, became a Russian province in 1721 and remained such until the end of the Russian Czarist regime in 1917. At the aftermath of the October Revolution, during the withdrawal of the Russian troops and before the arrival of imperial German occupying troops, the country was declared an independent republic on 24 February 1918. After a War of Independence, Estonian sovereignty was recognised by Soviet Russia by the Peace Treaty of 1920. The country remained a

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<sup>1</sup> **Acknowledgement.** The author of the present report was recently engaged in a research project of related interest, *Migrants, Minorities, Belonging and Citizenship: Glocalization and participation dilemmas in EU and small states (GLOCALMIG)*, coordinated by the University of Bergen and financed by the European Commission through its 5<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme. The results of the research done in Estonia were published as a separate volume (Lagerspetz & Joons 2004), and some of the data and discussions presented there are included in the present report also; see section II.1.3.

parliamentary republic until 1934, when a state coup by then Prime Minister (State Elder) Konstantin Päts introduced an authoritarian regime. In 1939-40, the Estonian government considered it inescapable to give its consent to Soviet Union's demand of locating several military bases in the country. These concessions were soon followed by outright occupation, by a Soviet-orchestrated "revolution" and the country's incorporation into the Soviet Union as a new Soviet Socialist Republic. Estonia shared this fate with its Southern neighbours Latvia and Lithuania, the two other Baltic republics. A Nazi German occupation followed in 1941-1944, after which the victorious Soviet Union could go on enforcing a Stalinist regime in the three countries. The "Singing Revolutions" of the late 1980s took place simultaneously in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and led finally to their restoration as independent states (see, e.g., Lieven 1993/1994).

### ***1.1.2 Changes in Estonia's demographic composition***

Before the annexation of Estonia by the Soviet Union in 1940, "non-titular" nationalities in Estonia<sup>2</sup> made up 12% of the total population (see table I.1). Through changes of administrative borders within the USSR in 1945, some of the Eastern territories hosting a number of Russophone inhabitants were transferred from the Estonian SSR to the Russian SFSR, which further reduced their number among the indigenous population of the Estonian SSR. During the period of large-scale industrialization that took place especially during the 1960s and 1970s, significant numbers of Russians and other ethnic groups from different parts of the Soviet Union were settled in Estonia. From 1945-89 the percentage of ethnic Estonians in Estonia dropped from 94% to 61%, caused primarily by the Soviet policy promoting mass immigration of urban industrial workers from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, as well as by wartime emigration and Stalin's mass deportations and executions. The share of immigrant workers became largest in the North Eastern region, where large industrial plants were situated. Also in the capital, the share of others than ethnic Estonians approached one half of the population; in addition to industrial workers, they included

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<sup>2</sup> In Estonian official discourse, they are mostly referred to as "Non-Estonians" (*mitte-eestlased*) or, nowadays less frequently, "aliens" (*muulased*). Somewhat confusingly, these terms are applied irrespective of whether the persons referred to are Estonian citizens or not. On the other hand, "national minorities" (*rahvusvähemused*) have been legally defined as comprising of Estonian citizens only (see section I.1.4).



military and administrative personnel. The minorities continue to be concentrated in these geographic areas.

As a result of these developments, ethnic Russians (including both Estonian citizens and non-citizens) now constitute around 26% of the country's population. It should be borne in mind however, that the two next largest groups, Ukrainians and Belarusians (with the respective shares of 2 and 1 per cent of the population; see table I.1 below), are culturally close to Russians, and that the first language for many of them is Russian and not their "national" language (*Minority Protection...* 2002: 228). The same applies to many of the members of other minorities also; in Estonian statistics, "ethnicity/nationality" (*rahvus*) refers to self-reported ethnic belonging and is independent of both citizenship and mother tongue. The number of Russophones (sometimes referred to as "Slavs" – e.g., Kaplan 1993) is thus bigger than the number of people classed statistically as Russians. On the other hand, the Estonian language belongs to the Finno-Ugrian family of languages (to which also Finnish and Hungarian belong), and is usually considered difficult to learn by adult speakers of Slavonic and other Indo-European languages.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, there is a downward trend of both the total number of population and the share of minorities. This is related, firstly, to the age structure and a diminution of the birth rate and, secondly, to large-scale emigration. From 1990 to 1993, almost 80,000 people left Estonia, mostly for Russia and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Lagerspetz & Vogt 1998: 73). After that, the general population decline due both to emigration and to low nativity and unfavourable age structure has not changed the proportions of different ethnic groups.

**Table I.1 Ethnic composition of the population, 1934-2000**

	1934		1989		2000	
	thous.	%	thous.	%	thous.	%
<b>Estonians</b>	993	88	963	61	930	68
<b>Russians</b>	93	8	475	30	351	26
<b>Germans</b>	16	2	3	0.2	2	0.1
<b>Swedes</b>	8	0.7	0.3	0.02	..	..
<b>Jews</b>	4	0.4	5	0.3	2	0.1
<b>Finns</b>	..	..	17	1	12	1
<b>Ukrainians</b>	..	..	48	3	29	2
<b>Belarusans</b>	..	..	28	2	17	1
<b>Others</b>	13	1	30	2	27	2
<b>Total</b>	1,126	100	1,566	100	1,370	100

*All numbers are from population censuses.*

*Sources: Lauristin & al. 1997; Statistical Office*

### ***1.1.3 Types of immigrant groups***

In legal terms, the people who came to live in Estonia during the Soviet rule from other parts of the USSR are considered immigrants; however, many of them have lived in the country for a long time, they form a large part of the population and are active in all spheres of society. As there were small Russian speaking minorities in Estonia already before the war, some of the most visible members of the present Russian-speaking community are Estonian citizens by birth and their “immigrant background” may lie decades or even centuries back in time. On the other hand, a large part of the non-citizens are born in Estonia and are, thus, immigrants of second generation (see table I.4 in section I.1.4 below). Although the Soviet-time immigrants belong to a number of different ethnic groups, Russian is the first language for most of them.

There are two groups of whom one might talk as return migrants. Among the Soviet settlers who arrived after the Second World War there was a number of persons with Estonian ancestry, whose forefathers had migrated from Estonia to Russia during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They had preserved some knowledge of the Estonian language but had no experience from the bourgeois Estonian state; moreover, they lacked personal ties with its former elites, civil servants, military etc. For these reasons, they were considered loyal and useful allies of the new regime, and many of them reached high positions in the hierarchy of the local Communist Party and in the state administration. As they are not descendants of the citizens of the Estonian Republic of 1918-1940, they have had to naturalise themselves in order to become citizens of independent Estonia. Another group of return migrants are the Estonians who escaped from the country during the Second World War, and lived in exile in the West for several decades. After (and in a few cases, immediately before) the country's independence was restored, some of the expatriates and their descendants have come to live in Estonia. Having preserved their knowledge of the Estonian language and enjoying the advantage given by the experience of living in a Western democratic society, many expatriates (including those of the second generation) have held influential positions in society. Among them, one can mention the former Chief of the Defence Forces, General Aleksander Einsele, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and the present Member of European Parliament Toomas Hendrik Ilves, and the internationally renowned political scientist and Estonian hobby politician Professor Rein Taagepera. The expatriates and their descendants are entitled to Estonian citizenship by birth. In times of rapid regime change, both these two different groups of return migrants have, hence, played the role of the introducers of new rules and practices, and acted as middle-men between the local population and new, external centres of influence. The importance of both groups has at times been far larger than their numerical strength would indicate. Of course, the parallel should not be driven too far, keeping in mind that the transition to a Stalinist terror regime in the 1940s and the transition back to Western democracy in the 1990s were, in many senses, diametrically opposite processes.

Finally, there has during the 1990s and 2000s been some immigration from countries outside the former Soviet Union. In the 2000 census, people with Finnish citizenship numbered 926, and they were the largest group of foreign citizens from outside the

former Soviet Union. The other groups are much smaller, those of German, US and Swedish citizens being the largest with respectively 147, 145 and 137 persons. The total of all immigrants from outside the former Soviet Union with citizenship of an Asian country was 131 persons, while 12 people originated from Africa, 186 from America, 6 from Australia and one from New Zealand. The non-Soviet immigrants are very much concentrated in the capital and its neighbouring region. The university town Tartu also hosts a number of foreign students, among which Finnish citizens form the largest group. Apart from students, the immigrants usually arrive for work in foreign owned companies; besides geographical proximity, this is one explanation to the relatively large number of Finnish citizens living in Estonia.

#### ***1.1.4 Citizenship legislation and naturalization***

Obviously, such concepts as national minorities, immigrant minorities and third country nationals have been developed for the description of demographic realities in firmly established nation states. From the “restored” character of Estonia’s independent statehood follows, that they can be applied for the analysis of Estonia as well, as far as the legislative framework that regulates Estonian policies of citizenship, ethnicity and migration is concerned. When inspecting their practical implementation we will see however, that the target groups of these policies are usually defined in terms of language skills and not by their citizenship status.

A number of states, among them the USA and several West European countries never acknowledged *de jure* the incorporation in 1940 of the independent Estonia into the Soviet Union. Although this non-recognition policy was until 1991 not much more than rhetorical in essence and served mainly the purpose of annoying the Cold War counterpart (Safran 2002: 199), it had some important legal consequences at the time when the laws and political institutions of Estonia were re-designed after 1991. The period from 1940 onwards was now defined as a series of foreign military occupations, and some legal transactions – e.g., the nationalisation of private property – were declared invalid. Even more importantly, the country’s citizenry became defined by the *Citizenship Act* from 1992 as consisting of the pre-1940 citizens and their descendants only, granting no automatic citizenship for Soviet citizens who had arrived to Estonia during the Soviet rule, or who were born of such parents. Instead, they were expected to undergo a naturalization procedure (see below). This means,

that the present demographic profile of Estonia is largely a result from migration within a federation, but the legal framework defining it now is similar to that of a country with unbroken existence as independent polity.

Immediately after independence, the implications of the Citizenship Act were actively protested against by Russia, who regarded the practice as an instance of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity (the majority of Russians living in Estonia were not automatically entitled for citizenship). The Russian official policy treated Estonia as a *new* state without legal continuity with the previous Estonian state (the incorporation of which in the Soviet Union was claimed to have been legitimate), and thus argued that all former Soviet citizens should hold an equal status with regard to citizenship. However, Western-based international organizations and legal experts tended to agree with the Estonian view on the country's citizenship legislation, even if sometimes criticising its details or its implementation (Jurado 2002; Öst 1994; Park 1994). The basic view of Estonian independence as the *de facto* restoration of the country's *de jure* continuous independent status has not been contested any more after Russia's initial efforts at the early 1990s.

Citizenship can be acquired either by birth or through a naturalization procedure. The rules regulating citizenship by birth follow the *jus sanguinis* principle, according to which the citizenship of the child's parents and not the place of birth is the basis for acquiring citizenship – since 1998 with the exception of children born of stateless parents in Estonia. Table I.2 gives an overview of naturalization on the basis of various clauses.

**Table I.2. Naturalization on the basis of various clauses, selected years 1992-2001**

<b>Basis of naturalization</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>Total 1992-2001</b>
Applicants before independence	965	1,710	180	61	24,102
Passed citizenship exam	-	10,689	3,236	1,107	45,770
Ethnic Estonians	3,991	4,260	14	-	25,293
Special merit	465	13	14	8	683
Stateless children under 15 years	-	-	6,512	1,698	20,658
Disabled people	-	-	3	37	58
Repeated naturalization	-	-	-	179	267
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,421</b>	<b>16,672</b>	<b>9,959</b>	<b>3,090</b>	<b>116,831</b>

*Source: Adapted from Hallik 2002: 76*

In ordinary cases, the naturalization procedure requires applicants to fulfil a five-year (until 1995, three year) residence qualification with a permanent residence permit (see I.1.5 below), have a permanent legal source of income, swear an oath of loyalty to the state, and demonstrate a working knowledge of the Estonian language and knowledge on the Constitution and the Citizenship Act. People who have received their education in Estonian language are freed from the language exam. However, the Government of the Republic has the right to grant citizenship for up to ten persons annually, who permanently stay in Estonia and whose achievements are of special merit to the Estonian state. These persons (often sportsmen representing Estonia in international competitions) do not have to undergo the usual naturalization procedure. A simplified procedure of citizenship acquisition has also been applied to ethnic Estonians, to disabled people and to persons, who registered themselves as applicants of citizenship already before independence through the Estonian Citizens' Committees – a pro-independence movement active during 1989-1991. In retrospect, some of the registration cards that have been presented to the Office of Citizenship and Migration as proofs of the early applicant status have been found to be falsified; there are also examples of the use of forged birth certificates for the application of citizenship. Since 2000, the original citizenship acquisition of a number of persons has been declared invalid for reasons of this kind, and they have had to re-naturalise themselves.

According to Klara Hallik (2002: 75-77), the age structure of the people have gone through the procedure of naturalization on one hand, and the legal clauses applied on the other indicate, that no substantial reduction of the number of stateless adults is likely to take place in near future. The yearly number of naturalizations has grown smaller, and most of the people who have received citizenship during the latest years have been children. According to survey results, a majority of the adult stateless residents do not consider themselves able to pass the required language exam.

### ***1.1.5 Who is an immigrant? Conceptual and legal clarifications***

According to the population census of 2000, there are 1.37 million people living in Estonia. 80 % of them are citizens of Estonia, 6.3 % citizens of Russia, 0.7 % citizens of other countries; among them, around 4,000 people (0.3% of the population) are citizens of other EU countries, mainly Latvians, Lithuanians and Finns. The citizenship of 0.6 % of the population is unknown, and 12.4 % of the population are without any citizenship. There are altogether more than 140 ethnic groups represented in Estonia. The largest non-Estonian ethnic groups are Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Finns (see table I.1 above). The composition the population in terms of citizenship and ethnicity is shown by table I.3 below. Whereas the share of ethnic Estonians among the total population is 67.9%, their share among the citizens is higher (84.2%). Correspondingly, a large amount of the people with other than Estonian ethnicity are either citizens of foreign countries or, more frequently, stateless.

***Table I.3 Population by ethnicity and citizenship status (%)***

Ethnicity	Share of population (1.37 mio.)	Share of Estonian citizens (1.10 mio.)	Holding citizenship of...			Stateless, or unknown citizenship
			<i>Estonia</i>	<i>Russia</i>	<i>Other countries</i>	
Estonian	67.9	84.2	99.0	0.1	0.0	0.8
Russian	25.6	12.9	40.4	20.9	0.3	38.4
Other	6.5	2.9	35.7	13.5	8.7	42.1

***Source: Housing and Population Census 2000; Hallik 2002: 73***

Table 1.4 below shows the population by country of origin and citizenship as reported by the census of 2000. Of the 252,266 persons born outside Estonia, 96,079 were Estonian citizens either by naturalization or by birth. Some of the remaining were

stateless (80,642), Russian citizens (67,780) or citizens of other countries. It should be noted, that a considerable number of the stateless persons have in fact been born in Estonia.

**Table I.4 Population by country of birth and citizenship status (thousands)**

Citizenship	Country of birth							
	Estonia	Russia	Ukraine	Belarus	Latvia	Lithuania	Finland	Other/ unknown
Estonian	995.8	77.0	7.0	3.3	2.2	8	0.5	9.1
Russian	17.8	55.9	5.8	3.1	0.3	0.2	0.0	3.0
Other	1.6	0.5	2.2	1.2	0.9	0.7	0.7	1.2
Stateless/unknown	92.1	57.2	10.1	7.3	1.0	0.5	0.1	10.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,107.2</b>	<b>190.6</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>24.3</b>

*Source: Housing and Population Census 2000*

The legal residents of Estonia are either Estonian citizens or non-citizens (aliens) with a residence permit (*Aliens' Act*, 1993). In addition, refugees seeking asylum have the right to reside in Estonia while waiting for the official decision on their eventual status. People without legal basis for their residence are considered illegal residents. Entry into the country is regulated by visas, with the exception of countries of the European Union and other countries with which Estonia has agreed on visa-free travel. For employment and for a longer stay than 90 days during six months, a residence permit is required. The yearly number of new residents is limited by an immigration quota to 0.05% of the present population; this quota does not apply to immigrants from the EU, the European Economic Space, Switzerland, the USA or Japan, to ethnic Estonians or to family members of present legal residents.

The *National Minorities' Cultural Autonomy Act* (1993) defines national minorities as consisting of those resident citizens of Estonia, who are “distinct from Estonians on the basis of their ethnic, cultural, religious, or linguistic characteristics”, and who are “motivated by a concern to preserve together their cultural traditions, their religion or their language which constitute the basis of their common identity”. In other words, non-citizens are not legally considered as members of national minorities, but as immigrants.



The non-citizen residents are either citizens of a foreign country or stateless persons. In the population census, the latter are referred to as persons of undetermined citizenship. In addition to these former citizens of the USSR, a total of 9,000 residents (both ethnic Estonians and others) did not report any present or former citizenship; their citizenship status is classified as unknown. Residence permits are either temporary (up to 5 years) or permanent, and the rights granted to holders of the two different kinds of permits mainly differ in two respects: first, the holder of a temporary residence permit is not allowed to work without a work permit; second, only the holders of permanent residence permits have the voting right in local elections. As to other rights, the two categories of persons are treated equally. As a rule, non-citizens who were in 1990 registered as permanent residents of an address within the Estonian SSR have been granted a permanent residence permit, with the exception of Soviet military personnel and their families. Holders of temporary residence permits are usually those who have come to live in the country during the period of independence. Between the date of independence and the end of 2001, about 230,000 persons had been granted permanent residence permits, and about 47,000 had received temporary resident permits. ([www.eumap.org/library/datab/Documents/1050776546.43./estonia.pdf](http://www.eumap.org/library/datab/Documents/1050776546.43./estonia.pdf)).

A temporary residence permit can be granted on the basis of studies, employment or enterprise activities in Estonia, on the basis of the existence of other kind of permanent income (e.g., retirement pensions) and dwelling in Estonia, on the basis of international agreements, or on the basis of family relations (e.g., marriage). It can be prolonged. A permanent residence permit can be achieved after the expiration of the temporal residence permit. According to an amendment of 1997 (*Riigi Teataja* I 1997, 73, 1202) to the Aliens' Act of 1993, persons who had applied for the temporary permit before 12 July, 1995 were automatically entitled to a permanent residence permit at application; but at the same time, the amendment introduced a regulation according to which temporal residence for the cause of work or studies does not entitle one to apply for a permanent residence permit (§12(3) of the Aliens' Act). This has created a curious situation, which has yet not been discussed neither by the domestic nor by the international public; namely, immigrants who have arrived after 1995 are in much worse situation than the previous settlers with respect to their

possibility of gaining permanent residence permits and, eventually, Estonian citizenship.

The *Refugees Act* (1997) specifies the procedures and conditions under which a non-citizen may apply for asylum in Estonia. If he or she is granted asylum, he or she will receive a temporary residence permit. Since the adoption of the Act, the yearly number of applicants has remained diminutive, twelve at its height and usually less than ten people.

As a last group of persons one should mention the illegal residents. According to an estimate of the Estonian Ministry of Population from 2002, their number ranges between 5,000 and 10,000. However, even far larger numbers (between 30,000 and 80,000) have been suggested ([www.eumap.org/library/datab/Documents/1050776546.43/estonia.pdf](http://www.eumap.org/library/datab/Documents/1050776546.43/estonia.pdf)). As a rule, they have lived in Estonia before the independence already, were ineligible for Estonian citizenship, have not applied for residence and work permits for different reasons, and are unknown to any population register. Most of them are severely marginalized socially. In order to legalise themselves they should apply for a residence permit, which as a rule should be made in an Estonian embassy abroad. In practice, exemptions are being made to this rule. Their residence permit applications are treated as parts of the overall yearly immigration quota (0.05% of the population); however, during recent years, the annual quota has not been exhausted.

Those former exiled Estonians and their descendants, who have preserved their Estonian citizenship and returned to the country hold the same rights as the citizens born in Estonia. Estonian citizens by birth cannot be deprived of citizenship for any reason (article 8 of the Constitution, article 28 of *Citizenship Act*). Although the Law contains the prohibition on double nationality, revocation of the Estonian citizenship is possible only on the person's own application. Thus, citizens by birth have in fact an opportunity to acquire double citizenship; the law requires them to make a choice for one nationality between their 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays, but many seem to ignore this obligation – both former expatriates and children from international marriages. In the Census of 2000, 186 resident Estonian citizens were reported to be possession of a second citizenship also. In conclusion, the system of different legal statuses for people

of different national or ethnic origins can be summarised as in table I.5 below. The estimates on the number of people in each category (at year 2000) are based on the census and other sources previously referred to in this chapter.

**Table I.5 Legal statuses of the residents of Estonia**

LEGAL RESIDENTS (1,370,000)					ILLEGAL RESIDENTS (5-10,000?)
Citizens of Estonia – by birth and naturalized (1,096,000)		Non-citizens – foreign citizens (95,000), stateless persons (170,000) and persons with unknown citizenship (9,000)			
Estonians (922,000)	Members of national minorities (174,000)	Holders of permanent residence permits (~230,000)	Holders of temporary residence permits (~40,000)	Asylum seekers (< 10)	

## **I. 2 Major issues discussed with relation to immigration**

### ***1.2.1 General characteristics of the public discourse***

The issue of immigration became a hotly debated issue in the course of the revolutionary events of the late 1980s. At that time, immigration meant the inflow of work force and retired military officers from other parts of the USSR; it had already led to a major change in the population’s ethnic composition (see Table I.1 above). Along with a growing linguistic Russification of public life, the independence activists interpreted immigration as a threat for the future existence of the Estonian nation. During 1988 to 1990, debate on both issues became central in the political life and media, which were gradually freeing them from censorship (see Lagerspetz 1996: 57-60; 80-101).

As was explained above, the restoration of Estonia’s independence in 1991 and the enactment of citizenship legislation in 1992 re-defined one part the former Soviet citizenry as Estonian citizens, another part as immigrants. During the early 1990s, a large-scale emigration from the country took place, at the same time as the number of

immigrants to Estonia remained insignificant. Accordingly, the discourse on migration related issues came to be primarily concerned with the Soviet-time settlers to the country. In fact, the need to develop a policy towards new immigrants has become apparent only very recently, partly due to Estonia's membership in the European Union.

Hence, the discourse on immigrants and migration has so far been intertwined with the debate on such issues as the integration of minorities, citizenship policies and language policies. When analysing the debate both in media and in the political sphere, scholars tend to distinguish between different (sometimes, three) consecutive phases during the period of Estonia's new independence (e.g., Heidmets & Lauristin 2002; Lauristin & Heidmets 2002; Jurado 2002; Kõuts & Tammpuu 2002; Pettai 2000; Ruutsoo 2002; Vetik 1999). In general, the dynamics of discussion can be presented as a gradual shift from initial rejection and non-recognition of the Russian-speaking immigrants by the majority population towards acknowledging them as fellow members of Estonian society. No doubt, the first phase was a continuation of the debate initiated by Estonian pro-independence activists in 1988. During the second half of the 1990s, the discourse became growingly conscious of a need of adopting more active and less exclusionist policies. An official State Programme was launched in 2000 with the aim of integrating the immigrants/minorities into the new society now dominated by the Estonian language and the ethnic Estonians. The programme was preceded by the adoption of a preparatory parliamentary document in 1998. These events denote another turning point in the policy and in the discourse as well. After initial and long-lasting separation between the Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking communities, the government became more conscious in its efforts to promote their integration (within a society in which the Estonian culture occupies the most prominent place). The latest change in the discourse is very recent; from 2004, both the media and administrators have taken up the issue of Estonia's policy towards new immigration. This change is related to the country's changed international position as a member of the European Union (EU).

The discursive and policy changes have been attributed to different reasons. The role of international organisations, such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation

in Europe (OSCE), the EU and the Council of Europe (COE) has been mentioned frequently (for a thorough analysis, see Jurado 2002, also quoted in Lagerspetz & Joons 2004: 31-34). Estonian scholars tend to stress the importance of internal developments for policy change, such as the consolidation of the overall political framework, the lack of clear-cut differences of economic status between ethnic Estonians and Russian-speakers, processes of cultural modernisation and Westernisation, and social psychological factors (Heidmets & Lauristin 2002: 322-330; Lauristin & Heidmets 2002).

### ***1.2.2 From independence to mid-1990s***

At the beginning of Estonian independence, the relationships between the government – now representing a former Soviet minority suddenly turned majority – and the Russian-speaking population were far from friendly. For a number of years, the government policy was centred on changing the ethnic balance by encouraging emigration by Russian-speakers (*Minority Protection...* 2002: 195). It should also be remembered, that Russian troops were still present in Estonia until August 1994, which created suspicion between the government and the Russian-speakers, who were sometimes seen as a “fifth column”.

At this point, the EU made economic assistance and progress with the accession procedure conditional on changes in Estonia’s minority policy. Analysis of Estonian parliamentary debates from this period reveals ongoing prevalence of ethnocentric attitudes (Jurado 2002). Such initial reforms as, e.g., the *National Minorities’ Cultural Autonomy Act* from 1993 may be seen as merely tactical concessions; the 1995 changes to the *Citizenship Law* and the adoption at the same year of a new *Language Law* did, in fact, introduce even stricter language requirements and naturalization criteria than before.

### ***1.2.2 From mid-1990s to the emergence of an official integration policy***

The next period was characterised by a softening of the original controversy between ethnic Estonians and Russian-speakers. For policy development, an important role came to be played by an emerging dialogue between Estonian government and the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) of the OSCE, Max van der Stoep. The relative vagueness of the requirements of the European Union’s

Commission made them less suitable for giving guidance for policy development in concrete issues. Here, the detailed, explicit and often unpopular advice of the OSCE HCNM had more to give in terms of practical applicability. According to Jurado (2002), there appears around 1997 a change in the domestic political discourse: the parliamentary debate on minority issues now became related to security concerns, to the need to avoid conflict with Russia or with the own minority population. New, more clearly defined criteria for the language exams required by the *Language Law* and the *Citizenship Law* were introduced, which diminished the danger of arbitrary decision-making by the examining authorities; access to permanent residence permits was speeded up by removing both psychological and bureaucratic obstacles.

The importance attributed to minority issues is reflected by the emergence of several sociological studies during this period. A state-funded voluminous research project (see section II.1.2 of this report) provided new policy initiatives with some guidelines and, perhaps even more importantly, domestic legitimacy (Pettai 2000). In June 1998, the Parliament adopted an official resolution on the principles of minority policy.

### ***1.2.3 From 1999 to Estonia's EU membership***

In line with the parliamentary resolution, the government adopted in 1999 an interim Action Plan, and the next cabinet launched a more detailed *State Integration Programme* in 2000 (see section I.3.6 below). Although the programme stresses the specific obligation that the state has to further ethnic Estonian culture, more attention than before has been paid on the rights of the minorities to strengthen their own ethnic identities. At the same time, there are voluminous programmes of teaching Estonian language (partly financed by the EU) to Russian-speakers. The parliamentary debate seems to include more references to the moral desirability of different policy options than before; in this sense it has become more reminiscent of the discourse of the COE (Jurado 2002). This might be a sign of two important changes in the political climate surrounding minority issues. Firstly, the minorities are no longer perceived by the majority as a threat for national security; and secondly, the European ideas of multiculturalism have received growing attention and have gradually replaced the ethnocentric ideas that were characteristic of the initial years of the Estonian nation-building process.

#### ***1.2.4 The current debate***

Estonia's EU accession has added some new migration-related issues to the current debate. On one hand, the easier mobility of labour force has given Estonian citizens a chance of migrating to other EU countries. This concerns both unskilled workers and some highly skilled professionals, such as doctors and nurses. The rather large emigration of people from the latter category has been seen as a problem. On the other hand, Estonian migration policy has started to be discussed in the context of all-European migration policies. EU in general, but also Estonia in particular has an ageing population; in 1998, the fertility rate dropped to 1.21 and has now only crawled back to 1.38 (2002) (Vetik 2003: 78). Immigration has been mentioned as a possible means of supporting the sustainability of the pensions system, and also as a way of continuing to keep labour costs low. These claims have been answered by the demographic argument, that the immigration of people in working age will just postpone the demographic crisis, not prevent it, and that the total costs of immigration to the host society are higher than the gains (Professor Kalev Katus interviewed in *Eesti Päevaleht*, 20 November, 2004). In general, there is no lively debate over migration-related issues, and the popular attitudes towards immigration and immigrants seem to be disinterested and negative rather than positive.

At the same time, some issues related to the immigrant/minority population already present have remained unsolved and continue to be debated. The most crucial issue is the future of Russian-language secondary education. According to the official policy, the Russian-language secondary schools should adopt Estonian as the language of instruction of at least 60% of the lessons. This change should be introduced from 2007 on, and should be completed no later than 2007. However, some politicians have doubted the practical possibilities of realising the task within the planned period; moreover, the Prime Minister Juhan Parts announced in September 2004 his stance, that Russian-language secondary education should remain available after all (*Eesti Päevaleht*, 16 September, 2004). It is not without interest, that the neighbouring Latvia has recently started the implementation of an analogous school reform, to which Latvian Russian-speakers have reacted by a massive protest movement.

### **I. 3 Institutional setting framing immigrant participation**

#### ***I.3.1 The overall framework of legislation***

Fundamental human rights are secured by the *Constitution of the Republic of Estonia*, which was adopted by referendum on June 28, 1992 (*Estonian Legislation...* 1996). An entire chapter of the Constitution is concerned with the *Fundamental Rights, Freedoms and Duties of the Individual*. As far as international treaties concluded by Estonia are concerned, the Constitution specifies that they take precedence over conflicting national laws and other legal acts (article 123, paragraph 2). Additionally, article 3, paragraph 1, stipulates that “universally recognized principles and norms of international law shall be an inseparable part of the Estonian legal system”. However, the issues of defining minorities and regulating citizenship have remained objects of considerable political attention for more than a decade.

In May 1993, Estonia became a full member of the Council of Europe. This was seen as signalling the international community’s acceptance of the country’s political system and its human rights record. By that time Estonia had subscribed to a number of international human and minority rights agreements. The most important of them are listed below (<http://www.ciesin.ee/ESTCG/POPULATION/PHR.html>):

- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948);
- International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (1966);
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966);
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966);
- Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966);
- Convention on the Non-applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes against Humanity (1968);
- International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (1973);
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979);



- Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984);
- International Convention against Apartheid in Sports (1985);
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

Becoming member of the Council of Europe (May 14, 1993), Estonia signed the *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* (1950). In 1996, Estonia ratified the *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Rights* and its protocols (except the protocol No. 6 which entered into force in Estonia in 1998) and the *Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*. In 1997, in Estonia joined the *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, and the 31 January 1967 *Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees* entered into force. In the following year, Estonia signed the amended *European Social Charter*. On the other hand, Estonia has not ratified such conventions as the *UN Convention of the status of Stateless Persons* (1951), the *European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages* (1992), the *ILO Convention No. 111 Concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation*, and several others (see Lagerspetz & Joons 2004: 75).

In addition to the Constitution, the most important legal acts that define the immigrants and minorities and their rights are the *Citizenship Act*, *the Aliens' Act*, *the National Minorities' Cultural Autonomy Act*, *the Language Act*, *the Refugees Act*, and the other acts regulating political and administrative procedures, education, health and social services, etc.

### ***1.3.2 Legislation on political rights***

The Constitution forbids discrimination on the basis of nationality and states, that “rights, freedoms and duties of each and every person, as set out in the Constitution, shall be equal for Estonian citizens and for citizens of foreign states and stateless persons in Estonia” (Article 9). Among these rights, as explicated in subsequent articles of the Constitution, are the right to political opinion, freedom of speech, the right to address and receive answers from state agencies, local governments, and their officials, the right to assembly and the right to form and be a member of non-profit organizations and unions. Only Estonian citizens may belong to political parties.

The rights to vote and to run as a candidate in elections are defined by the Constitution, the *Riigikogu Election Act* (1994) and the *Local Government Council Election Act* (1996). For Estonian citizens, there is universal suffrage from the age of eighteen. Foreign citizens and stateless persons are entitled to vote in elections of the local government councils, if they hold permanent resident permits and have resided legally on the territory of the corresponding municipality for at least five years by 1 January of the election year.

The right to run as a candidate in elections is granted to Estonian citizens only.<sup>3</sup> In order to run for presidency, the person must be Estonian citizen by birth and over forty years of age. In other elections, the candidates must be over twenty-one years. In November 2001, an amendment to the *Riigikogu Election Act* and the *Local Government Council Election Act* was passed, which abolished the previous requirement that the candidates must be proficient in Estonian language, and thus improved the access of naturalised and minority citizens to the political process.

According to Article 6 of the *National Minorities Cultural Autonomy Act*, foreigners residing in Estonia may participate in the activities of cultural and educational institutions and religious congregations of national minorities, but they may not vote or be elected or appointed to the leadership of the representative bodies designed by the Act. It should be noted, that only one such institution has recently been founded (see next section), and that there are no restrictions regarding the right of non-citizens to participate in and lead other types of non-governmental organisations.

### ***1.3.3 Legislation on cultural rights***

According to the *Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act* (1993), any language may be used as the language of instruction in basic schools. The local government council makes the decision on the language. There has been a long-standing controversy over the future of secondary school tuition in Russian, and several previous decisions of changing them into Estonian-language schools have been postponed. The amendment of 2000 to the Act still states, that the language of

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<sup>3</sup> With the exception of elections to the EU Parliament, in which all resident EU citizens have both the

instruction in the upper secondary school stage shall be Estonian, and that the decision will be implemented from the academic year 2007/2008. However, the same amendment defines “the language of instruction” as the language in which at least 60% of the teaching of the curriculum is given. This would allow schools to continue teaching some subjects in Russian. Whether the decision will be implemented within the given time frame or be postponed again, remains to be seen (cf. section I.2.4 above).

The right to establish private schools with any language of tuition is guaranteed. The government has, however, no obligation to support them financially. A possible mechanism for maintaining schools and other cultural institutions functioning in minority languages is designed by the *National Minorities Cultural Autonomy Act* (1993). The provisions of the Act are in itself generous, but they have yet never been applied in practice and, in fact, the necessary act of implementation was not adopted before 2003 (*Riigi Teataja I*, 13 May 2003, 40, 25). Following the example of a similar act of 1925, the law allows every minority of at least 3,000 members to create a representative body with the task of organising the minority’s cultural and educational life. In addition, the same right will be guaranteed to the historical minorities (Germans, Jews, Swedes), which had 3,000 members before the war. In order to use this right, the citizens willing to participate in the establishment of a cultural autonomy will have to register themselves, and a representative council has to be elected by at least 50% of the registered members of the minority. Only Estonian citizens can be registered as members.

The institutions designed by the Act have only been established for the first time by the Ingrian Finns in May 2004, who still have to go through some remaining formalities of registering (information from the Ministry of Culture, December 2004). The election of a 25 -member council took place on 14 to 16 May 2004 (Rooväli 2004). The required voter turnout of 50% was reached, and the Ingrian Finns will be the first minority group to make use of the provisions of the Cultural Autonomy Act. This possibility did, however, remain unused until now; one of the reasons is, that the procedure requires a large amount of organizational work – probably too large when

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voting right and the right to run as candidates.

one considers the abilities and organizational resources available – at the same time as the law gives no guarantees of financial support from the government (Lagerspetz & Raud 1995).

Estonia has no official state church, and the right to create religious associations and to belong to them is guaranteed by the Constitution. *The National Minorities Cultural Autonomy Act* (1993) prohibits one "to ridicule and to obstruct the practice of ethnic cultural traditions and religious practices and to engage in any activity which is aimed at the forcible assimilation of national minorities".

#### ***1.3.4 Governmental institutions concerned with immigrant and minority rights***

There are no special governmental bodies dedicated only to the protection of immigrant or minority rights. The range of activities of the main public institutions dealing with the issues is rather broad.

In May 1997, the Estonian Government created a new post - *Minister Without Portfolio* whose responsibilities include population and integration issues. The minister headed an expert committee that prepared the working versions of the State Integration Programme (see below). The minister is also the head of the Integration Foundation's Governing Board. The Minister reports directly to the Prime Minister and coordinates such policy areas as population policy; implementation of integration policies; naturalization and citizenship issues; issues related to the national census (in collaboration with the population census and statistics committees); and refugee issues. In 1999, a bureau of the Minister's office was opened in Jõhvi, a town located in the North Eastern region, in which the percentage of non-Estonians is highest. The office has the task of implementing government policies in the region and fosters co-operation between the minister's office and NGOs representing various ethnic groups, thus enabling them to participate more actively in the policy-making process.

Within the Ministry of Internal Affairs works the *Department of Foreigners*, which is a small office with a broad scope of responsibilities, from visa regulations to planning policy in the areas of citizenship, aliens' problems, refugees and illegal immigration.

In 1999, the *Legal Chancellor* was empowered to fulfil certain functions of an ombudsman, including the competence to receive and examine residents' complaints. In his capacity as ombudsman, the Legal Chancellor accepts individual complaints regarding a range of legal issues. The information regarding the activities of the Chancellor's Office is not easily accessible to the public, and official communications do not mention discrimination and human rights violations. These factors diminish the likelihood that individual complainants (including members of ethnic minorities) will address the Chancellor. In June 2001, in an encouraging attempt to increase the visibility and accessibility of the institution, the Office of the Legal Chancellor opened a regional office in Ida-Virumaa (North Eastern Estonia). The head of this branch is an ethnic Russian.

Within the *Ministry of Culture* there has been no special department for minority issues since the abolition of the post of a *Special Counsellor on Minority Issues* in 1997. More recently, the Ministry established a *Working Group on the Problems of Integration*, collecting and compiling data regarding implementation of the sub-programmes of the Integration Programme. The working group includes two heads of departments and four counsellors of the Ministry, but no representatives of the minorities themselves. During the period from 1996-2000, the Estonian Ministry of Culture allocated a total of approximately 7,650,000 EEK (around 488,900 euros) in support of the cultural activities of minority organisations.

### ***1.3.5 Arm's length bodies of the government***

The *President of the Republic's Roundtable on National Minorities* was established in 1993 as a standing conference of politicians and representatives of ethnic minorities and people without citizenship. It discusses matters of political and public life, including societal, ethnic, economic and social-political issues; it participates in the minority policy of the government by discussing and making suggestions when needed. The Roundtable has been effective in providing a forum for dialogue and thus defusing the potential for open ethnic conflict. However, it lacks a mandate to treat the problems it identifies. The Roundtable has a part-time presidential plenipotentiary, a part-time assistant and a small budget. Members meet several times a year.

In 1997 a 17-member *expert committee* was formed to work out the aims and

principles of the integration policy. In June 1999 the committee was reorganised into the *Expert Committee Dealing with Questions of the Integration of Ethnic Minorities into Estonian Society*.

The quasi-governmental *Integration Foundation* was created in March 1998 to initiate and support integration projects. It also co-ordinates the effective use of integration resources, including foreign funding. In 2001, the foundation supported 139 integration-related projects. The Integration Foundation has a Board of 12 members, which include both officials and representatives of civil society. In 2002 the Estonian government allocated, through the Integration Foundation, 8.5 million crowns (545,000 EUR) from amounts earmarked for integration for the following integration-related activities ([www.eib.ee/pages.php/0203103](http://www.eib.ee/pages.php/0203103)):

- *Estica*<sup>4</sup> (the objective is the creation of materials and the organization of activities that attach value to Estonia as a homeland, the broadening of non-Estonians' knowledge about Estonia, Estonian history and culture, Estonians and their way of life, multicultural Estonia);
- support for non-Estonian-speaking students in Estonian-medium schools, youth work and student exchange (the objective is to support young people in the solution of their difficulties coping and in initiatives, to promote inter-cultural relations);
- support for the activities of national cultural societies and Sunday schools (the objective is the expansion of possibilities for the preservation of the linguistic and cultural distinctiveness of the ethnic minorities residing in Estonia, the increasing of Estonian society's knowledge of cultural differences and the development of co-operation between the third sector and state institutions in the integration of non-Estonians);
- Estonian language camps, family exchange programmes (the objective is the improvement of the teaching of the Estonian language and the increasing of mutual tolerance);
- notification of the public, social advertising campaigns, the shaping of media relations, the professional and integration-related training of journalists and editors and creative stipends, media education in schools (the objective is the notification of the public concerning activities in the integration process, the valuing of Estonian citizenship, the raising of the reputation of the Estonian language and the valuing of language proficiency, the activation of reporting of integration-related topics in the Estonian- and Russian-language media, the raising of the competency of journalists writing / authoring programmes for a Russian speaking audience);
- integration-related surveys (the assessment of the effectiveness and success of the state programme shall take place on the basis of annual general

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<sup>4</sup> "Estica" in the program of the Foundation refers to teaching materials focusing on issues specific to Estonian society and culture.

monitoring and media monitoring aimed at target groups and the media and periodic surveys of the success and effectiveness of the management and activities of the state programme. The Integration Foundation is responsible for ordering and publishing the above-mentioned monitoring and surveys).

### ***1.3.6 The State Programme "Integration in Estonian Society 2000-2007"***

The state policies towards non-citizens and ethnic minorities have since 2000 been formulated in a general action plan called *Integration in Estonian Society 2000-2007*. It was the first of its kind to directly address the issue of integrating these minorities into Estonian society. The programme was drafted by a government commission, the work of which could in part rely on results of a research project that had recently finished its analysis of problems concerned with the Russian-speaking population in Estonia (cf., e.g., Heidmets 1998; Lauristin & Heidmets 2002).

The programme discusses integration in Estonian society as being shaped by two processes: firstly, *the social harmonisation of society* around “a strong common national core” based on knowledge of the Estonian language and Estonian citizenship; and secondly, *the opportunity to maintain ethnic differences* based on the recognition of the cultural rights of ethnic minorities. The long-term aims of the programme are described as the linguistic-communicative integration, i.e., the creation of a common sphere of information and the re-creation of an Estonian-language environment in Estonia under conditions of cultural diversity and tolerance; the legal-political integration, i.e., the formation of a population loyal to the Estonian state and the reduction of the number of persons without Estonian citizenship; and the socio-economic integration, i.e., the increased competitiveness and social mobility of every member of Estonian society.

The main tool that the programme makes use of is instruction in Estonian language, as a common sphere of communication is viewed as a *sine qua non* for successful integration. The objectives have been classified under four sub-programmes, which include education in Estonian language skills within the elementary and secondary schools, education in minority cultures and languages, teaching of Estonian to adults, and the strengthening of the social competences of members of the minorities, which should be accompanied by the spread of positive attitudes towards integration among

both the minorities and the majority population. In July 2000, the EU Phare programme approved a new programme of Estonian Language Training and Integration, which is specifically designed to support the Integration Programme.

When the programme has been assessed (*Minority protection...* 2002: 240-243), the very fact of its elaboration and implementation has been regarded as a significant achievement in itself. However, certain shortcomings can be pointed at. Firstly, the implementation has concentrated on the education and language sectors, which have received three-quarters of the total financing of the programme (approximately 14.4 million EUR for the period 2000-2003), leaving the fields of legal-political and socio-economic integration dependent on their inclusion in other government programmes. With the exception of regional development initiatives in the North Eastern region, this has, however, seldom been the case. Although the programme stresses the objective of combining integration with the maintenance of strong minority identities and the minority citizens' competence in their ethnic cultures, its implementation has been accused of being rather assimilationist in practice. It seems that there does not presently exist any definition of "integration", which would be shared by the government, the general public, and the representatives of minority organisations as well.

### ***1.3.7 The position of immigrants on the labour market***

The *Employment Service Act* (2000) grants the right to use employment services for all employers and for those seekers of employment who are permanent residents of Estonia or refugees staying in Estonia. Holders of temporary residence permits have a limited right to use employment services. The law prohibits discrimination on the grounds of the job seekers' nationality, sex, age, type of disability, sexual orientation, colour, race, social origin, social status, religion, political or other beliefs, or representation of the interests of employees or employers.

Despite these provisions, parts of the Estonian labour market have in practice become segregated along ethnic lines. The share of employees belonging to ethnic minorities is lower than their share of the population within agriculture, commerce, education and public governance; their share is considerably bigger among industrial and transportation workers. This pattern was visible during the Soviet regime already.



However, also a hierarchic division has emerged during the 1990s: on one hand, the share of ethnic Estonians in managerial positions has grown; on the other hand, so has the share of minorities among unskilled workers and the unemployed (Asari 2002: 223). The wages of employees belonging to the majority population are significantly higher, even when the effects of gender, education, position and branch of economy are eliminated from the analysis (Krusell 2002: 205).

Offices in state agencies and in local governments shall, according to the Constitution (article 30) be filled by Estonian citizens. However, the Constitution allows for exceptions in accordance with other legislation. The *Language Act* (1995) defines the minimum levels of fluency in Estonian that are required from holders of different jobs within the public sector. These language requirements are one reason for the less than proportional representation of other than ethnic Estonians in public offices, even when compared with their share of Estonian citizens.

### ***1.3.8 Conclusion: An overview of restricting and encouraging conditions***

Most of the rights guaranteed for Estonian citizens are guaranteed for other permanent legal residents as well. This concerns especially the welfare rights, economic rights and the basic legal rights. For most purposes, the same applies also to the holders of temporary residence permits. In other words, Estonian developments are parallel to the more general tendency of a diminution of the importance of formal citizenship, which has for some time been characteristic of European democracies (Soysal 1994: 134). However, the legislation still seems to need developing, as is shown by the regulations of the present Aliens' Act that, seemingly unfoundedly, block the labour immigrants who have arrived to the country after 1995 from receiving permanent residence permits (see section I.1.5).

As a rule, officials of the state and local government must be Estonian citizens. Military service is possible for Estonian citizens only. The most visible differences between people of different citizenship status are, however, concerned with political rights: non-citizens are not entitled to vote in parliamentary and presidential elections or in national referenda. Non-citizens with permanent resident status may vote in local elections, if they have lived for five years or longer on the territory of the local government. Non-citizens are not eligible themselves, and they may not join political

parties. Surprisingly, the *National Minorities' Cultural Autonomy Act* grants non-citizens neither vote nor possibility to be elected or appointed to leadership positions of the institutions of cultural self-government.

In conclusion, the most obvious *restricting conditions* vis-à-vis immigrants (or, more precisely, the residents without Estonian citizenship) are concerned with their exclusion from the political process, especially on the national level. As a rule, they do have voting rights in local elections, but no right to stand as candidates. They have no voting rights in national elections and may not join political parties. However, the rights of naturalised citizens and citizens by birth are equal. On the labour market, non-citizens seem to be in a more awkward position than the citizens, and the ethnic Estonians have, in turn, a more favourable position than the naturalised citizens. This can, however, not be attributed to any discriminatory policies, but is an effect of several factors such as language requirements, citizenship requirement in most public offices, the fact that more recent settlers are in possession of less helpful social networks than others, and the uneven regional development during the latest decade. Despite these problems, the governmental integration programme has hitherto not paid much attention on the improvement of the socio-economic position of immigrants and minorities.

Among the *encouraging conditions*, the most important is the equality of permanent legal residents with Estonian citizens on most fields of society, except the realm of political institutions. The rights for political opinion, for assembly, for creating non-governmental organisations and participating in them, etc., are equally guaranteed for citizens and non-citizens. Legal residents may freely choose their place of residence (although the change of local administrative unit of residence will result in their losing their local voting right until they again qualify to the five-year residence census). The Constitution and the National Minorities' Cultural Autonomy Act recognise the need of minorities to preserve their own cultural identities, even if the implementation of the latter act has not yet been completed. The government has both encouraged the creation of non-governmental organisations dealing with minority cultures and created its own arm's length bodies. One of them administers a voluminous Integration Programme, financing both language studies and other activities aimed at creating

better conditions for the co-existence of ethnic Estonians and minority groups with other ethnic backgrounds.

## **Part II: Active civic participation of Third Country immigrants**

### **II.1 Studies on active civic participation by immigrants**

#### ***II.1.1 General remarks***

As was explained in the previous sections of this report, an overwhelming majority of the people legally classified as immigrants, i.e. as legal residents without Estonian citizenship, are Soviet-time settlers from different parts of the former Soviet Union. In the political and media discourse, the issue of immigration is intertwined with the issue of national minorities. The same can be said about the scholarly discourse: studies on immigrants are basically studies on Estonia's (mainly Russian speaking) ethnic minorities, and do mostly discuss the Estonian citizens belonging to minorities as well, notwithstanding whether they are of immigrant background or belong to the old minorities.

#### ***II.1.2 Immigrants, minorities and the emerging model of democracy***

The initiation in 1997 of an inter-university research project by the Ministry of Education gave an important impulse to research on ethnic minorities. The research and development programme called VERA aimed at assisting the government in creating a sustainable strategy of dealing with minority issues. The State Programme "Integration in Estonian Society 2000-2007" launched in 2000 (see section I.3.6) was

to an extent based on insights from the VERA project. Estonian social researchers tend to refer to this fact as an example of close co-operation between research and policy development.

An overview of the VERA project is given by the volume edited by Marju Lauristin and Mati Heidmets (2002a), called *The Challenge of the Russian Minority: Emerging Multicultural Democracy in Estonia* and published by Tartu University Press. The volume includes discussions on different types of minority-majority relations, about identity change, educational issues and media. Of particular interest from the point of view of civic participation are the contributions dealing with the position of minorities within the political system. Rein Ruutsoo (2002) presents a thorough overview of the scholarly, political and legal discussion of Estonia's citizenship and minority policies. He comments a basic discursive conflict that emerged in the early 1990s between the idea of a restoration of the Estonian nation state on one hand, and European Enlightenment values on the other. However, he argues, that the idea of nation state also itself included the idea of democratic rule and minority rights, and that Western governments – especially the USA – from the beginning gave their clear support to the restorationist approach to citizenship. In this sense, both the domestic Estonian and the Western discourses included ambiguous elements, and the softening of the initially ethnocentric Estonian policy cannot be attributed to Western influences only, but reflects the dynamics of domestic debate as well. With the development of Estonian legislation and integration policies, the Western criticism has faded.

In her analysis in the same volume, Klara Hallik (2002; herself of Russian background) points at an initial exclusion of most Soviet-time settlers from the political process at the time when Estonia had freshly renewed its independent status, at efforts by minorities of re-gaining political influence through local elections, and ends by claiming, that the present substantial under-representation of national minorities in the political process is incompatible with Estonia's status as an EU member state. On the other hand, Raivo Vetik (2002) suggests what he calls “multicultural democracy” as the future model of minority-majority relations in Estonian polity. In his reading, the model includes the recognition of cultural, but no political group rights for national minorities. The public sphere should remain

common and be dominated by common values and the Estonian language – i.e., Vetik’s recommendations are in line with the official Integration Programme.

The rationale of initiating the VERA project was, above all, its potential for assisting policy development. For this reason, its discussion of civic participation has concentrated on such issues as the possible effects of different language and citizenship policies, and their possible reception by people belonging to ethnic minorities. Due to international political interest towards minority issues, several reports with a similar basic approach have been produced for evaluation purposes by international organisations, sometimes with participation of the same authors (e.g., *Minority Protection...* 2002). From a more disengaged angle, the same issue of minority-majority relations within a democratic system has been discussed by Vello Pettai (1998; 2000; Pettai & Hallik 2002). Employing the concept of “ethnic democracy”, Pettai argues that the effective disenfranchising of the bulk of the Russophone minority through the citizenship legislation adopted in 1992 had a stabilising effect on the emerging political system, as it weakened the potential opposition to market reforms and Western orientation. At the same time, he does not think of the present situation as fully satisfactory from the point of view of democracy. He points at the contradiction between democracy and ethnic control regime: “Can we call this democracy ‘consolidated’ even if it is ethnic? Although contemporary democratic theory has begun to espouse very open conceptions of community and politics, the legacies of Soviet rule as well as the anxieties of the Estonians as a small nation in a large world seem to promise little in the way of a radical change in the Estonian perspective. Instead, the Estonians have adopted a nation-building program to preserve the integrity of their ethnic community as best they see fit. For them, *this* will mean consolidated democracy, be it ethnic or otherwise” (Pettai 2000: 24; emphasis in the original).

While Pettai remains ambiguous in his attitude towards the emerging model, other authors using the same concept of “ethnic democracy” or “ethnocracy” tend to condemn it (Järve 2000, quoted in Ruutsoo 2002). It can be remarked however, that the present Estonian citizenship legislation does not forge any explicit link between ethnicity and citizenship. Criticism of the present legislation can then only be based

on a denial of the legitimacy, fairness, or practical sensibility of the original restorationist approach to citizenship.

### *II.1.3 Immigrants and minorities in the political process: Empirical data*

Another part of scholarly information on civic participation by minorities has emerged as a side effect of the fact, that ethnicity and citizenship are standard background variables used in most Estonian studies of political attitudes, participation, etc. Results of survey studies are routinely reported separately for the two language communities, and sometimes also for groups with different citizenship statuses (e.g., Raudsaar & Kasemets 2004; Rikmann & Lagerspetz 2003; Rose 2000).

The different studies agree on the fact, that both non-citizens and Russian speaking citizens have less trust on political institutions than citizens belonging to the majority population. Population surveys from 2002 indicate, that Russian-speakers have less trust than the majority population in such important institutions as the President of the Republic, the central bank, the border guards, the defence forces, and the local governments. They are also less satisfied with the possibilities of being informed on the activities of these and other public institutions. The non-citizens were less likely than Estonian citizens to protest against such actions by authorities that they considered unjust; 30% of the non-citizens were of the opinion, that their right to participate in public life has not been sufficiently guaranteed (as compared with 17% of the Estonian citizens) (Rikmann & al. 2002). A participation index calculated by Raudsaar & Kasemets (2004: 167) reflected voting, participation in public or party meetings, expressed interest in domestic politics, and membership in non-governmental organisations. This measure of civic participation gave analogous results with the surveys on trust. At the same time it has been suggested, that the passivity of the Russian speakers has different causes than the analogous passivity of economically weak groups within the majority population (such as rural people and those with basic education); that is, while the latter are politically passive because they have become disillusioned in the political system, the passivity of the former is more due to the lack of both information and participation channels (Rikmann & Lagerspetz 2003: 18).

In comparison with their percentage of both the total population and that of the electorate, members of minority nationalities are under-represented at the levels of both the central and the local government. In 2001, Russian-speakers made up only nine percent of the judges and six percent of officers within the Ministry of the Interior. At the same time, no Russian-speaking officials worked in the Ministries of Justice or Education (*Minority Protection...* 2002: 233).

Some political parties have made the claim of representing the Russian-speaking minorities. At present (2004), there are twenty political parties registered in Estonia, four among which have profiled themselves as representatives of Russian speaking minorities (The Estonian United People's Party; The Baltic Russian Party in Estonia; The Russian Party in Estonia; The Party of Russian Unity). Until the 2003 parliamentary elections, the Estonian United People's Party (*Eesti Ühendatud Rahvapartei*) had representation in the Parliament, but failed in 2003 to reach the 5% threshold. At present, parties and electoral unions of ethnic minorities have influence on the local level only, mainly in Tallinn and in the towns of the North Eastern industrial region. In comparison with the local elections of 1999, the Russian speaking parties seem to have lost their appeal among the electorate. Their number of votes has remained clearly smaller than is the number of Russian-speaking voters, and despite some previous expectations (Hallik 2002: 86), they have not been able to play any key role. For instance, in the local elections of 2002 in Tallinn, the two Russian-speaking electoral unions received 8.4% of the votes given and merely 3 mandates in the City Council (of the total of 63 mandates) (<http://www.vvk.ee/k02/tulemus.stm>). The share of Russian-speakers is around 40% of the city's population. It seems that even the minority population prefers to vote for candidates belonging to the Estonian-speaking mainstream parties. The Centre Party (*Keskerakond*) has many Russian-speaking members and is the strongest party in the Northeastern region.

The share of non-citizens voting in the local elections has dropped from 53% in 1993, through a peak of 85% in 1996, to 43% in 1999. A similar, but less deep drop characterises the voting activity of the majority population also (*Minority Protection...* 2002: 233).

### ***II.1.3 Participation of immigrants and minorities in NGOs***

The participation of immigrant and minority population in non-governmental organisations has not been inspected thoroughly. Whereas the NGO sector in general has expanded rapidly during the last ten years, the number of Russian speakers' organisations has definitely remained lower (Lagerspetz & al. 2002). Population surveys regularly show the non-citizen and Russian speakers as less likely to be members in non-governmental organisations. Here, however, trade unions are an exception. The Central Organization of Estonian Trade Unions came into being as a wholly voluntary organization in 1990 to replace the Estonian branch of the official Soviet Labour Confederation. In 1990 the Soviet Labour Confederation claimed to represent 800,000 members in Estonia; in 1992 the total number of trade union members had dropped dramatically but was still estimated to about 350,000 persons (or about 47% of the labour force), organized in 30 unions ([www.ciesin.ee/ESTCG/POPULATION/PHR.htm](http://www.ciesin.ee/ESTCG/POPULATION/PHR.htm)). However, the share of organised labour of the total work force has continued to diminish, being presently under 20% (Seeder 2003). Trade union membership is continuously usual among workers of large-sized industrial plants, among which many are Russian speakers, especially in the North Eastern region. Trade unions are rather invisible on the service sector and in small enterprises; as a result, the share of organised labour among the ethnic Estonians is smaller than among the minority citizens and non-citizens.

Few non-governmental organizations deal directly with human rights and issues related with minority rights. Instead, several organizations represent the interests of their ethnic groups in Estonia. The possibility of creating representative councils according to the Cultural Autonomy Act (unused until May 2004; see section I.3.3) is open only to citizens of Estonia. Non-citizens have the possibility of creating their own organizations for the representation of their interests in accordance to the *Law on Non-Profit Organizations* (1997).



**Table II.1**

**Organizations dealing with minority cultures and with human rights**

**(Source: Lagerspetz & Joons 2004: 76f.)**

**1. National NGOs concerned with human rights issues**

The Legal Information Centre for Human Rights – [www.lichr.ee/eng](http://www.lichr.ee/eng)  
Estonian Association for Human Rights – [www.ngonet.ee/db/ngo?rec=00793](http://www.ngonet.ee/db/ngo?rec=00793)  
Estonian Institute of Human Rights – [www.eihr.ee](http://www.eihr.ee)  
Estonian Union of National Minorities (EUNM) –  
[www.ngonet.ee/nationalminorities/htmls/eru1p\\_eng.htm](http://www.ngonet.ee/nationalminorities/htmls/eru1p_eng.htm)  
The Jaan Tõnisson Institute (JTI) – [www.jti.ee/en/about.html](http://www.jti.ee/en/about.html)  
Estonian NGO Roundtable – [www.emy.ee/roundtable.html](http://www.emy.ee/roundtable.html)  
NGO Fenno-Ugria Foundation – [www.suri.ee/fu/index-i.html](http://www.suri.ee/fu/index-i.html)  
Round Table of National Organizations in Ida-Virumaa – [www.ngonet.ee/db/ngo?rec=00753](http://www.ngonet.ee/db/ngo?rec=00753)  
Human Rights Internet Homepage – [www.humanrights.ee/eng](http://www.humanrights.ee/eng)

**2. International human rights NGOs active in Estonia**

Human Rights Watch – [www.hrw.org/europe/estonia.php](http://www.hrw.org/europe/estonia.php)  
Amnesty International – [web.amnesty.org/library/eng-est/index](http://web.amnesty.org/library/eng-est/index)  
European Roma Rights Centre – [errc.org/publications/indices/estonia.shtml](http://errc.org/publications/indices/estonia.shtml)  
MINELRES – [www.riga.lv/minelres/count/estonia.htm](http://www.riga.lv/minelres/count/estonia.htm)  
International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights – [www.ihf.hr.org/index.php](http://www.ihf.hr.org/index.php)  
Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (LGI) –  
[lgi.osi.hu/publications/default.asp?idx=insubject&id=72](http://lgi.osi.hu/publications/default.asp?idx=insubject&id=72)

**3. Member Organizations of the Estonian Union of National Minorities**

Association of Germans in Estonia  
Azerbaijani Community in Estonia  
Belarusian Association of Culture and Education “Batkavshchina”  
Estonian Latvian Community  
Estonian Lithuanian Community  
Estonian Mari Society  
Estonian Society of Mordvian Culture  
Estonian Swedish St. Michael’s Congregation  
Jewish Community of Estonia  
Munkacsy Mihaly Hungarian Cultural Society in Estonia  
Society of Chuvash Culture  
Society of East-Estonians  
Society of Ingrian Finns of Tallinn  
Society of Moldova-Romanian Culture  
Society of Poles in Estonia “Polonia”  
Society of Russian Culture in Estonia  
Society of Swedish Culture in Estonia  
Society of Uzbek Culture “Safar”  
Tatar Community of Estonia  
Tatar Culture Society in Narva  
Ukrainian Country Fellowship in Estonia  
Ukrainian National Women’s League of Estonia

The first organisations with the aim of strengthening ethnic identities and belongings were founded or re-established in the late 1980s. In the Soviet Union, there were no or few possibilities for the activity of ethnic-cultural movements. During the years 1987-1991 of the “Singing Revolution”, some of the most fundamental changes were concerned with identities. It suddenly became important to be local, to belong to an ethnos, to speak a native language, to be in possession of a local and ethnic history. Some of the minorities, such as the Estonian-Swedes and the Jews re-established their historical organizations. There were also other ethnic groups which had no pre-war organizational traditions in Estonia to lean upon, but which nevertheless mobilised their members according to the same model. It should also be pointed out, that such mainly Estonian-speaking mass movements of the late 1980s as the Movement of Estonian Citizens’ Committees, and especially the Popular Front, had a positive attitude towards the cultural activities of national minorities; their growing national awareness was understood as a counterweight to the Soviet official ideology of Communist patriotism (Lagerspetz & Joons 2004).

Many of the organisations dealing with minority cultures now are members of the *Estonian Union of National Minorities* (see table II.1). Through the inclusion of its representative in the President of the Republic’s Roundtable on National Minorities (see section I.3.5), it has a kind of semi-official recognition as the most important umbrella organisation for minority NGOs. For the largest minority in Estonia, Russians, *The Union of Slavic Educational and Charitable Societies in Estonia* is the dominant cultural organization, uniting more than 20 organizations under its umbrella, and conducting a regular series of cultural events and activities. In addition to the Union, a number of other organizations also represent the educational and cultural interests of ethnic Russians, including the Russian Culture Union, Tartu Russian Culture Society and the Union of Teachers of Russian Schools. The *Estonian Roundtable of Non-Profit Organisations* is a loose umbrella organisation with the aim of representing the interests of the whole Estonian non-profit sector; from their establishment in 2001, the elected Representative Council has a quota (3 out of 17) for the representatives of minority organisations (see Lagerspetz 2004: 93).

In the context of a comparative study on migrants, minorities, belonging and citizenship in six European countries, Mikko Lagerspetz and Sofia Joons (2004) have analysed the activities of ethnic minority organisations as a way of constructing and reconstructing cultural and personal identities. In terms of ethnicity, the minorities (old and immigrant minorities) consist of around 140 different groups, among which the Russians are the largest. Moreover, even a large share of persons belonging to the other groups (especially Ukrainians and Belarusians) use Russian as their everyday language of communication. Among some groups, such as Swedes and Finns, Estonian has substituted the original language. For this reason, one of the usual activities of minority organisations is the teaching of the group's "mother tongue" for members and their children. Through local government and government-funded foundations, financial support has been given to the activities of NGO-s. The President of the Republic's Roundtable of National Minorities acts as a link between different ethnic groups' organisations and the government. At present, funding is given on bases of applications and descriptions of projects; however, representatives of the minority organisations have repeatedly challenged the effectivity of funding on such basis. As put by a representative of the Latvian minority at a conference organised by the Council of Europe in Tallinn (Žigurs 2003: 85, cited in Lagerspetz & Joons 2004: 42):

Regrettably, minority communities have started to be treated like project organisations. The leader of a community is considered equal to a leader or project coordinator of any recently formed non-profit organisation (NPO), who humbly asks for support and carries out a project. Write a project application, orders the civil servant. It is still worse, when different ethnicities/nations (*rahvused*) have to compete with each other for project financing, but the civil servants have already introduced this practice. It is extremely cynical to say, that the fittest will survive. [...] We consider it necessary, that national communities will be treated differently from project-based NPOs, because ethnicity/nation is not a project.

However, sometimes the funding actually received remains invisible for statistics or financial reports. This is the case, e.g., when a local government lends rooms without rent for courses or other events organised by an organisation of an ethnic minority.

The organisations were presented by Lagerspetz and Joons (2004: 64-68) as participating in a more general process of "minority building", which corresponded to

the expectations of the government and international organisations as well. On one hand, the minority organisations offered a potential channel of (unofficial, indirect and maybe spurious) participation in decision making on cultural issues; on the other, they addressed only the minorities' concerns related to language, religion and culture, and not those resulting from their social and economic position, which is more vulnerable than that of the majority population. Of course, the same kind of criticism can be directed towards Western multiculturalist practices as well (e.g., Ålund & Schierup 1991). The report also gives an insight into the motives and personal decisions that underlie the activities of people engaged in ethnic minority organisations.

## **II.2 Prominent people with immigrant background active in public life**

### *II.2.1 A selection of short biographies*

The persons introduced in this selection of biographies are not necessarily the most prominent or well-known people of immigrant origin now participating in Estonian public life. When making the selection, the aim has rather been to include examples of people active on different fields of society and with different backgrounds.

**Anzori Barkalaja**, born 1968 in Dushanbe, Tadjikistan, came to Estonia as a child with his mother. Among other subjects, he studied Estonian folklore at the university of Tartu, and has since 1991 carried out several ethnographic field studies among the Finno-Ugric people in Western Siberia. In 2001 he was elected the Rector of the Cultural College (now Cultural Academy) in Viljandi. He has also been active in politics and a member of the Town Council in Tartu.

**Dave Benton** (officially **Efren Benita**) was born on Aruba, Dutch Antilles in 1951. He arrived to Estonia in 1997, and has become known as a rock singer and music producer. In 2001, he represented Estonia together with Tanel Padar in the Eurovision Song Contest, and their song received the first prize. He has published three LP and four full-length CD records. He lives in the Estonian countryside with his Estonian wife and two daughters.

**Jevgeni Krištafovits** was born in 1983 in Tallinn in a family of immigrant origin. He was in 1999 among the founders of an umbrella organisation for Russian-speaking youth in Tallinn, MTÜ Avatud Vabariik (*Open Republic Association*). He has been member of the Representative Council of the Roundtable of Estonian Non-Profit Organisations, and was in April 2004 elected the Chairman of the Board of the Roundtable's foundation. He has actively participated in press and Internet debates. Presently, he studies law in Tallinn.

**Mihhail Lotman**, born 1952 in Leningrad, Russia, is an internationally known scholar in semiotics. He arrived to Estonia as a child with his parents, and studied at the University of Tartu. He has held different teaching positions there, worked as a visiting professor at Stanford University, and is since 1991 Professor of Semiotics at the Estonian Institute of Humanities, Tallinn. He became in 2004 a member of the Estonian Parliament (*Riigikogu*).

**Metropolitan Stephanos** of the Estonian Apostle Orthodox Church was born in 1940 in the Belgian Congo as a son of Greek parents. After studies in Paris, he worked in France both as a journalist and as an Orthodox priest. In 1999 he was elected the Metropolitan of the Estonian Apostle Orthodox Church, and has led it in a period of its re-establishment as an independent church. This has included both legal controversies with the Russian Orthodox Church, and organisational challenges.

## **Part III: Expert assessment**

### **III.1 Engagement in civic activities by immigrants: Conclusions**

#### ***III.1.1 Political participation***

The Estonian legislation defines ethnic minorities as those resident citizens of Estonia, who are “distinct from Estonians on the basis of their ethnic, cultural, religious, or linguistic characteristics”, and who are “motivated by a concern to preserve together their cultural traditions, their religion or their language which constitute the basis of their common identity” (see section I.1.4). Whereas minorities thus consist of Estonian citizens, the citizens of other countries and people without citizenship are legally considered immigrants, even if many of them are actually born in Estonia (see table I.4 in section I.1.4). A great majority of the Soviet-time settlers who have not become naturalized citizens hold permanent residence permits, and do in most respects enjoy the same rights as the citizens of Estonia (see section I.3.8). However, persons with temporary residence permits (mainly the more recent immigrants) have only restricted possibilities of being granted permanent residence permits (see section I.1.5). Those permanent residents who have lived in the area of the same municipality during a period of five years or more have the right to vote in local elections, but cannot be elected themselves. Non-citizens may not be members of any political party; however, there are many examples of naturalised citizens active in party politics both on the local and national levels.

Despite the relatively large number of people with immigrant background, the parties claiming to represent them have not been able to play any key role in institutional politics. It is usually presumed, that the non-Estonians prefer to vote for those candidates who belong to ethnic minorities but represent the mainstream Estonian

parties. In fact, all Russian-speaking members of the Parliament and most of them in local councils have been elected from other parties than the Russian speaking parties. At the same time, survey research points at lower voting activity and lower trust in political institutions among the minorities than among ethnic Estonians.

### ***III.1.2 Participation in non-governmental organisations***

The minorities have the right to participate in the activities of trade unions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), irrespective of their citizenship. The minorities do, in fact, belong to trade unions more often than ethnic Estonians. However, both population surveys and surveys of registered NGOs indicate, that Russian speakers are less frequently members in NGOs than ethnic Estonians. There also seems to exist great differences between minorities with reference to their degree of organisation. While Russian language and culture still have a strong position in the Estonian educational system, NGOs are the main context available for other minorities for preserving and developing their own language and culture. The minority organisations have remained small, having rather some dozens than thousands of members. The Ingrian Finns are the only group hitherto who has been able to go through the procedure of establishing the representative council designed by the Cultural Autonomy Act of 1993.

A comparison of minority organisations would indicate, that there are some resources and other background factors that have a crucial importance for the success of ethnic and immigrant minorities in organising themselves. The Ingrian Finns are a case in point: although most of them are Soviet-time settlers to Estonia, the bulk of them arrived immediately after the Second World War, and have thus had a long time to accommodate themselves to the Estonian society. Due to the proximity of Finnish language to Estonian, a majority of them used Estonian rather than Russian in their everyday contacts with others, and the language examination required for naturalization by the independent Estonia has not been difficult to pass. At the same time, the existence of a wealthy and geographically close “kin country” – Finland, although initially separated from Estonia by the Iron Curtain – has been helpful for the preservation of the group’s language and ethnic identity. After independence, Finland has offered both moral support, role models in the form of co-operating organisations, and financial help to the Ingrian Finns. On the other hand, emigration

to Finland has weakened the group numerically. The relative success of some other small minorities (such as Swedes and Jews) discussed by Lagerspetz and Joons (2004), as well as the relative weakness of Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusan organisations points at the importance of analogous background factors. However, this initial analysis should be confirmed by more systematic research.

### **III.2 Emerging issues for politics and research**

As was mentioned above, the potential for different immigrant and minority groups for organising themselves varies, and deserves closer analysis. The issue of relationships between government and NGOs, and the prospects for community involvement in political decision-making have recently started to be discussed in Estonia (e.g., Lepa & al. 2004; Rikmann 2003). The same issues should be discussed also in the context of minority organisations, asking to what extent the organisations can function as channels for grassroots participation in political processes, and to what extent their co-operation with government bodies is rather of a spurious character and a way of becoming subjected for manipulation from above. In fact, such questions could well be addressed by an international comparative study as well.

The citizens with immigrant background have not been all too successful in gaining influence through minority-based political parties. However, several first or second-generation immigrant politicians have been active in the mainstream Estonian parties. When examining political processes, one should ask whether these politicians have been willing or able to further any specific interests of ethnic and immigrant minorities.

Finally, most if not all research hitherto on immigrants and national minorities in Estonia has dealt with the old minorities and/or the Soviet-time settlers. The more recent immigrants to the independent Estonia have remained rather invisible both for research and for policy development. The first initiatives to deal with the children of new immigrants within the system of education have only been taken, and research on them is almost non-existent. Although the groups of new immigrants are small, they are nevertheless growing, and Estonia's position as a member country of the EU



requires that it will develop a conscious immigration policy. Among the new immigrants, the return migrants are an interesting case as such; both from a theoretical point of view and due to the influential roles many of them play in Estonian society. Even this group has been scarcely researched in at all. Here, the research findings should be put in the context of findings from other recent member countries of the EU.

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## **Annex: Mapping of research competences in Estonia**

### **1. Active civic participation of immigrants – leading institutions**

#### ***Summary***

The active civic participation of immigrants is seldom treated as a research issue in its own right. As much of all social research in Estonia, this field of research is closely related to the immediate, short-perspective needs of the government. Research in ethnic and immigrant minorities is to a large extent motivated by a perceived need to assist the government in the development and implementation of the official Integration Programme (see section I.3.6 of the report), which focuses on the strategies of enhancing the minorities' command of the state language. The Programme does not mention the promotion of active civic participation by ethnic minorities as an explicit goal. Accordingly, the political participation of ethnic and immigrant minorities usually finds treatment either in theoretical discussion over the desirability of different citizenship policies, or in empirical studies that compare the political participation of different population groups on a more general level.

**Leading researchers:** Both the theoretical and empirical aspects have been discussed by Klara Hallik, Mati Heidmets, Rein Ruutsoo, Raivo Vetik (different departments of the Tallinn Pedagogical University), Vello Pettai (Department of Political Science of the Tartu University) and the working group of Marju Lauristin and Peeter Vihalemm (Department of Media and Communication of the Tartu University). Participation of ethnic and immigrant minorities in non-governmental organisations has so far been treated at length by one study by Mikko Lagerspetz and Sofia Joons (Estonian Institute of Humanities).

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Head: Dr. Tõnu Viik, Rector

Relevant researchers: Mikko Lagerspetz (mikko@ehi.ee), Sofia Joons (sofia@ehi.ee), Erle Rikmann (erle@ehi.ee)

The EIH was founded in 1988, during the Estonian “Singing Revolution”, as an alternative to the ideologically contained higher education in humanities in what still then was the Estonian Socialist Soviet Republic. Originally initiated by the Estonian Writers' Union, the EIH was among the very first independent institutions of higher education in Central and Eastern Europe. From May 2005, however, a merge with the

emerging Tallinn University is expected to take place. The EIH will continue as a separate unit within a larger university.

The research relevant to active civic participation by immigrants is conducted by the Department of Social Theory. The Department's research activities focus on three main areas: 1) Civil Society, civic initiative and voluntary organising. The EIH has become the leading institution in Estonia doing research in voluntary associations and the non-profit sector in general. A Civil Society Research and Development Centre was established at the Institute in March 2005. 2) Social problems; especially the issue of illicit drugs and subcultures of drug users (among which a majority has immigrant background). 3) Identity and ideology, including issues relevant to nation building and minority building. In 2003-2004, a research project was carried out on the organisations of ethnic and immigrant minorities (see section II.1.3 of this report).

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Relevant researchers: Klara Hallik, Raivo Vetik

The IISS has originally been created as a research institute of the Academy of Sciences, but is since 1998 part of the Tallinn Pedagogical University (from May 2005, Tallinn University). The IISS has published a series of UN Human Development Reports, which include both general statistical information and a number of thematically grouped articles on trends of development in Estonian society. Until 2001, the reports were published parallel in Estonian and English, from 2002 only in Estonian with a short section in English. The reports from 1998 to 2002 are available at the Institute's website.

The Director, Dr. Raivo Vetik, is a political scientist who has done research on inter-ethnic relations in Estonia and models of integration policies. He is also engaged by the Department of Government of the same university (see next entry). Klara Hallik is among the most well known Estonian researchers in political integration and minority participation. In addition, the IISS hosts research groups on family sociology, social stratification and contemporary culture.

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Head: Dr. Anu Toots, Head of Department

Relevant researchers: Rein Ruutsoo, Anu Toots, Raivo Vetik

Among the research areas of the department are trust in political institutions as represented by survey research (led by Raivo Vetik) and civic education (led by Anu

Toots). Dr. Rein Ruutsoo, Professor of Political Theory, has published extensively on the development of Estonia's minority policies, on civil society, and on the history of social sciences in Soviet Estonia.

In addition, some other members of the academic staff in different departments of the TPU have shown interest in the issue of inter-ethnic relations. They include Mati Heidmets, who is presently the Rector of the TPU, and Dr. Jüri Kruusvall. Both participate in the University's Environmental Psychology Research Unit (see [www.tpu.ee](http://www.tpu.ee)).

**Tartu University:**

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Head: Dr. Halliki Harro-Loit, Head of Department

Relevant researchers: Marju Lauristin, Peeter Vihalemm, Triin Vihalemm, Valeria Jakobson, Ragne Kõuts

The Department focuses on media studies, but its research activities relate to a wide range of different subjects; both inter-ethnic relations and political participation are among them. The Department has been involved in several comparative survey studies, which have produced a series of reports and collections of articles both in English and in Estonian. In addition, content analyses of the both Estonian and Russian-language press have touched upon the issue of inter-ethnic integration and minority policies.

Several members of the Department staff participated in the government-initiated VERA project (see section II.1.2 of this report).

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Head: Mr. Rein Toomla, MA, Head of Department

Relevant researcher: Vello Pettai

The Department teaches and makes research both on the Estonian polity and international relations. Vello Pettai has studied the domestic discourse on minority policies, and makes use of the concept of "ethnic democracy" when discussing Estonian and Latvian models of governance (see section II.1.2 of this report).



## **2. Immigration – leading institutions**

### ***Summary***

The Statistical Office of Estonia yearly publishes statistical overviews that include information on the resident population by sex, age and ethnicity, on births, marriages, deaths, emigration and immigration. The overviews and also the information from the latest census (2000) are easily available on the Statistical Office's website ([www.stat.ee](http://www.stat.ee)), from which information can also be downloaded. An Institute for Estonian Demography under the leadership of Professor Kalev Katus is located at the Tallinn Pedagogical University.

**Leading researcher:** Kalev Katus

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### **Statistical Office of Estonia**

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Head: Mr. Priit Potisepp, Acting Director-in-Chief

Head of the Department for Demographic Statistics: Ms. Aira Veelmaa, Chief Statistician

## **3. Civic participation – leading institutions**

### ***Summary***

The Departments of Political Science and Media and Communication of the Tartu University, and the Department of Government and the Institute of International and Social Studies of the Tallinn Pedagogical University are studying political participation through institutional channels. To these institutions (referred to above) one should add the European College of the Tartu University, and the independent research institute PRAXIS. Regarding participation through non-governmental organisations, several relevant research projects have been carried out at the Estonian Institute of Humanities (referred to above).

### **Estonian Institute of Humanities (EIH)/Tallinn University:**

See above.

### **Tallinn Pedagogical University (TPU)/Tallinn University: Institute for International and Social Studies (IISS)**

See above.

**Tallinn Pedagogical University (TPU)/Tallinn University:  
Department of Government**

See above.

**Tartu University:  
Department of Media and Communication**

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**Tartu University:  
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**Tartu University:  
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Relevant researcher: Piret Ehin ([piret.ehin@ec.ut.ee](mailto:piret.ehin@ec.ut.ee))

The College co-operates with Prof. Richard Rose of the Strathclyde University, Glasgow, who has carried out several voluminous survey research projects in the three Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) since 1993. A project mapping the support to democratic regimes on the basis of this data has recently been initiated at the College.

**PRAXIS: Center for Policy Studies**

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Relevant researcher: Eveli Illing ([eveli@praxis.ee](mailto:eveli@praxis.ee))

PRAXIS Center for Policy Studies is an independent not-for-profit think tank, which receives basic financing from George Soros. Founded in 2000, the centre states its mission as to improve and contribute to the policy-making process in Estonia by conducting independent research, providing strategic counsel to policy makers and fostering public debate. Its research projects focus particularly on issues concerned with good governance. Recently, the centre launched a research report on public participation in policy-making processes through non-profit organisations.