

# Estonia

## *Ethnicity in Estonia*

### *Power relations*

Estonians are the politically dominant majority in Estonia. The Slavic speaking minorities, Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians are powerless. There are two parties of the Russian minorities (<sup>1132</sup>). The Russian-speakers were not granted citizenship rights after the independence of Estonia. The preservation of the Estonian culture is an important political issue, and it is popular to see the non-Estonian inhabitants as a threat for the survival of the Estonian identity (<sup>1133</sup>). After independence in 1991, Estonia granted citizenship according to the principle of the *ius sanguinis* but only to these non-Estonians, who came to Estonia before the Soviet times. The immigrants from Russia and also from Ukraine and Belarus who came during Soviet times did not receive the Estonian citizenship. Consequently, approximately 32 percent of the Russian speakers were non-citizens as of 1992. Some of them took the Russian citizenship but many remain stateless. All non-Estonians are in principle seen as foreigners with no voting rights on the national level. Integration is only possible through naturalization (<sup>1134</sup>), but naturalization is a difficult process in Estonia and bound to a high knowledge of Estonian language. The minorities, however, often do not have sufficient Estonian language skills, because during Soviet times Russian language was much more widely spoken. Especially elderly people are disadvantaged, because the younger now learn Estonian in school. Other ethnicities than Estonians are also disadvantaged in the working sector, again mainly due to the language issue. In 2014, approximately 8 percent of the Russian speaking minority remain without citizenship rights.

*2010-2013:* Estonians remain the dominant majority in state. The other groups are powerless. The 2011 parliamentary elections brought about no change in the politically powerless status of the Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians (<sup>1135</sup>).

<sup>1132</sup> [Lagerspetz Maier, 2010]

<sup>1133</sup> [Lagerspetz Maier, 2010]

<sup>1134</sup> [Van Elsuwege, 2004]

<sup>1135</sup> [European Election Database, 2012]

## *Bibliography*

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## *Political status of ethnic groups in Estonia*

*From 1991 until 2013*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Estonians	0.679	DOMINANT
Russians	0.256	POWERLESS
Ukrainians	0.021	POWERLESS
Byelorussians	0.013	POWERLESS



Figure 249: Political status of ethnic groups in Estonia during 1991-2013.

## *Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Estonia*

*From 1991 until 2013*



Figure 250: Map of ethnic groups in Estonia during 1991-2013.

	Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■	Estonians	43 937	Regional & urban
	Russians		Urban
	Ukrainians		Urban
	Byelorussians		Urban

Table 76: List of ethnic groups in Estonia during 1991-2013.