

ESTONIAN REPORT ON RUSSIAN MINORITY

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For Estonian State, which has re-established independence in August 1991, the total political and economic change has been accompanied by the problems of synchronous shift of collective identities of nations and ethnic groups. For ethnic minorities integration is a continuous process in which they step by step, more and more stand closer to Estonian society without forgetting at the same time their original ethnic roots and cultural heritage. Integration is considered as a process of the formation of a co-operating, democratic and well-functioning society. Almost all states have population of non-citizens, which differ culturally and ethnically from the majority of citizens.

In Estonia problems concerning the status of new ethnic minorities are very tightly connected with the Soviet occupation in 1944-1991 and with defining the citizenry of newly independent state. Estonians and Russians experienced the disintegration of Soviet Union differently: Estonians as a subject-nation aspiring towards political self-determination and a nation-state, Russians as the dominant nation longing for the return of their previously balanced state.

1. Ethno-demographic structure of majority-minority populations in Estonia

Between the World Wars, Estonian (but also Lithuanian and Latvian) societies were ethnically quite homogeneous. In 1934 there was 8% Russians and 4% other (German, Swedes, Jews) nationalities living in Estonia. In Latvia 9 % Russians and 14% other national groups and in Lithuania 12% Poles and 5% other (Jews and Russians).

The principal changes started with the establishment of the Soviet occupational regime in 1944. One of the most important phenomena after WW II in the demographic situation was the Slavs immigration into Estonia. Many of Russian immigrants came with the military troops since 1945-1955 (military officers and their families or post-Wars economic immigrants from destroyed Novgorod, Pihkva and Leningrad *oblast*).¹ The Russian inhabitants whose massive immigration took place during the Soviet period, live in towns where they form an absolute majority, mainly in the capital Tallinn and the North-eastern Estonian industrial cities of Narva, Sillamäe and Kohtla-Järve. This migration has resulted in a linguistic and cultural Russification of the historically Estonian region of Ida-Virumaa (East-North) over the course of one or two generations.

The share of Estonians in Estonia's population decreased steadily from 1950 to 1989. During the period 1945-1989 number of Russian has risen 20 times (1945 - 23 000, 1989 – 475 000) in Estonia. In 2000 (January) in Estonia live 404 000 Russians.

New General Census of Population was conducted on 31 March 2000. Official data of this census are not available yet. By preliminary Census data the usually resident population of

¹ Population development and ethnic composition. Estonian Human Development Report 1995, Tallinn, 1995, p. 29.

Estonia was 1,376,700, which is by 188,900 persons smaller than at the time of the 1989 Population Census.²

Data about ethnic composition of Estonia according to the year 2000 census would be available for public use in September 2001.

2. Minority migration patterns since the late 1980s

Russian minority living in contemporary Estonia consists of three principally different groups: (a) immigrants of the Soviet period (1945-1991), (b) relatively small minority of Russians who have lived in Republic of Estonia before 1940 Russian occupation (by approximate calculation – about 30 000 by 2000) and (c) people born in Estonia.

Looking at migration process across the Soviet Union from 1946 to 1988 Estonian demographers found that Estonia had of the highest rates of migration of all the Soviet republic. The post-war migration flows have resulted in formation of a numerous foreign-born population which comprised 26,3 percent of total population and such a high proportion of foreign-borns is record-breaking in Europe.³ More than half (57% according to data from the 1989 census) of Russians is first generation settlers, whose social ties and identity have been strongly associated with the country of origin - Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia.

As we can see from Chart 1 (Russian minority migration patterns), since the first years of 1990s the migrants follow the track caused by political change and psychological shock, leaving Estonia together with political leadership and Soviet army after the collapse of Soviet Union to their homeland - Russia. According to the estimation of Ministry of Internal Affairs about 10-20 per cent of this wave emigrants have re-emigrated to Estonia during 1999-2000.

At the same time, it was not clear, how many of these citizens had left Estonia during last few years. The Statistical Office of Estonia estimate that some 16 000 left Estonia for Russia during 1995-1999.⁴

² Estonian Statistics Monthly. No 6 (102), 2000, p. 5.

³ Kalev Katus. Estonia and Europe: Population Dimension. In : Society, Parliament and Legislation (Proceeding of the international seminar). Tallinn, 1999, pp. 130-134.

⁴ Eesti Statistika Aastaraamat/Statistical Yearbook of Estonia 2000. Tallinn, 2000, p. 59.

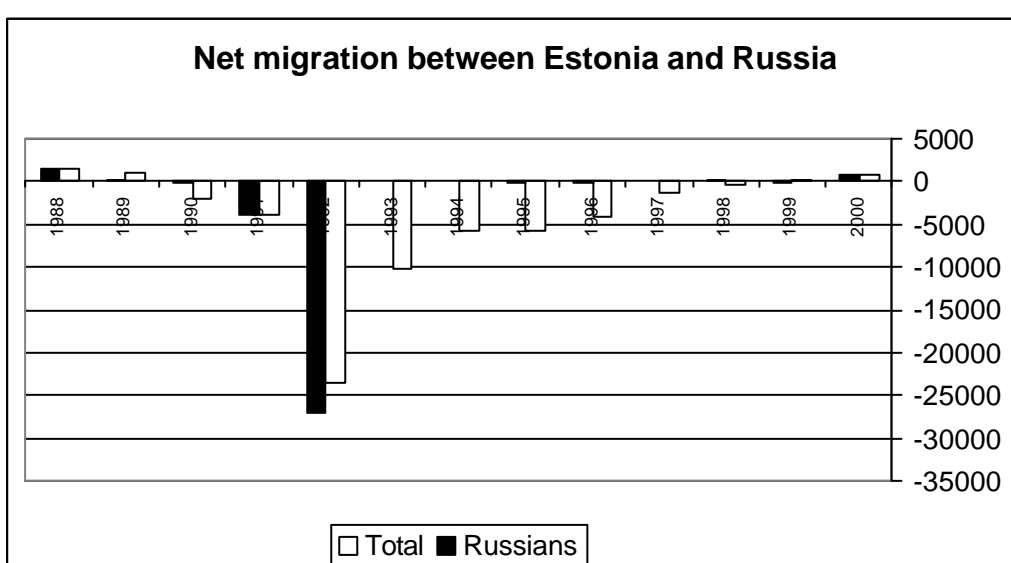
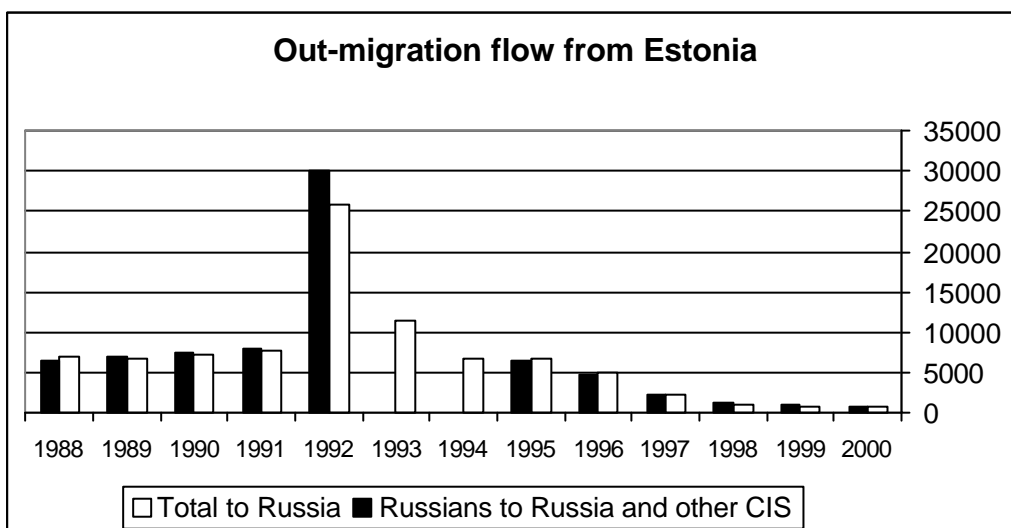
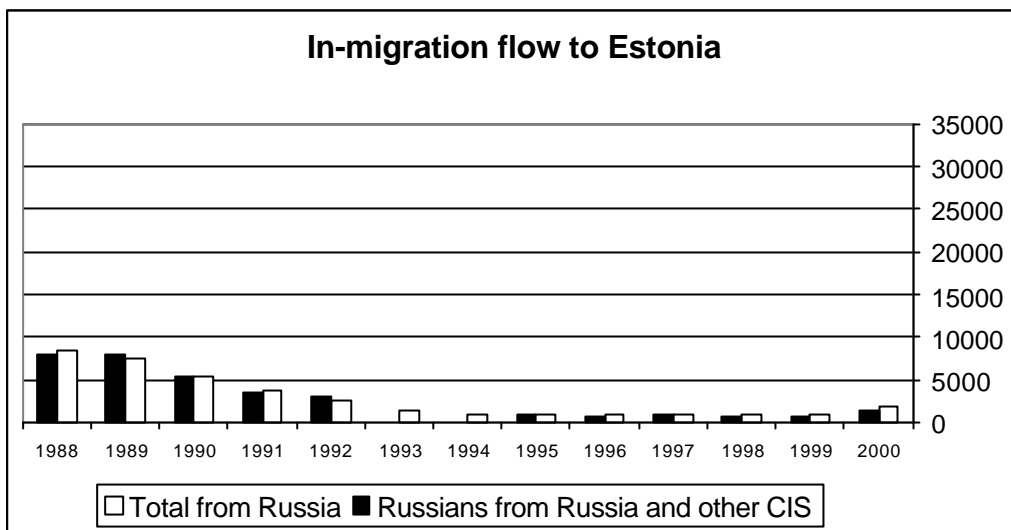


Chart 1. Russian minority migration patterns

3. Addressing racial and ethnic discrimination from Russia

Principles of non-discrimination have been laid down in various international conventions as legally binding rules, and important standards have been established, e.g. within the UN, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the European Union. Estonia has tried to achieve correspondence with most of internationally accepted rules and regulations. Sometimes it seems that time (ca ten years of independence) has not been sufficient for that purpose.

Mainly citizenship and language issues determine conditions of Russian people in Estonian Republic, and there is no substantial determination of Russians situation by racial issues, as it is generally understood by racial discrimination. Citizenship Act is amended several times by the Estonian Parliament but the main requirements are principally the same. As it has become the most important restriction for naturalisation of permanent non-citizens residents, Estonian Government has made several efforts to speed up the integration process.

4. Structure of ethnic politics in the 1990s

The political public organisations of the Russian-speaking population started to activate their work at the beginning of 1993 by forming Representative Assembly of the Russian-speaking population in Estonia. The main benefits of the Representative Assembly were as follows: a representative participation in the Round Table attached to the president of the Estonian Republic convened in summer 1993, close contacts with the CSCE missions in Estonia, with Western organisations standing for human rights. Representative Assembly and rival organisation Russian Council both fielded candidates at the local elections already in October 1993. They got 27 seats out of 64 in Tallinn City Assembly.

The Russian factions in the city assemblies of Narva and Sillamae brought to life as a result of local elections. Have also institutionalised the political possibilities of Russians in standing for their political rights. In general the Russian-speaking political elite in Estonia has been much weaker compared with Russian people in Tallinn. Although, by 1995 the non-Estonian electorate increased significantly, as a result of which six Russian deputies were elected to Estonian Parliament, thus forming a Russian parliamentary faction. At present there are two political party of Russians – United People’s Party of Estonia (Vladimir Adrejew) and Balto-Russian Party (Sergei Ivanow) represented in the Parliament.

Today (from 02.11. 2000) in Tallinn City Assembly this Russian parties and Nikolai Maspanow’s Estonia’s Russian party are represented in factions *People’s Choice*. Russian parties in Tallinn City Assembly are in coalition with Isamaaliit, Reform-Party and Mõõdukad. Two of 6 Tallinn vice-mayors are Russian, and two of eight Tallinn boroughs have Russian mayors (chiefs).

Article 48 of the Estonian Constitution states that all persons shall have right to form non-profit associations and leagues. However, registration is a condition for the association to acquire the status of a legal person.

Article 31 of the Constitution as a general principle, reserves the right to form profit-making associations and leagues to Estonian citizens. However, the same constitutional article prescribes that “unless otherwise determined by law, this right shall exist equally for Estonian citizens and citizens of foreign states and stateless persons who are sojourning in Estonia. Article 48,

determines that “Only Estonian citizens can be members of political parties.” It must follow that the right to form political parties is similarly restricted to Estonian citizens. The rules governing the formation of political parties is found in the Law on Political Parties, adopted in May 1994.

Estonian Union of National Minorities (EUNM) was established in 1988, when the First Forum of National Minorities of Estonia took place. The representatives of ethnic groups living in Estonia decided to support knowingly and voluntarily Estonia’s struggle for re-establishment of Independence.

After the re-establishment of Estonian Republic in 1991, Estonian Union of National Minorities (EUNM) decided that main activity would be in supporting the integration process. According to its Statute, the EUNM generalises and widens the experiences, helping national minorities in preserving their ethnical identities as well as in integration into Estonian language and cultural environment.

On the EUNM's initiative in 1993 the the President's [Round Table of National Minorities](#) was organised. EUNM follows the fulfilment of rights established by the Constitution and cultural autonomy laws and makes the proposals to Parliament (Riigikogu) and Estonian Government for regulating the relations between nationals. The Union also assists in exchanging information and experiences in order to promote the local work of national society. One of the main tasks of the Union is -within its possibilities - to support the democratisation and balanced development of Estonian Society.

The President’s Round Table of National Minorities is a standing conference operating under the auspices of the President of the Republic. The function of the Round Table is to discuss matters of political and public life, including societal, ethnic, economic and social-political issues. President’s round table unites people from different ethnic circumstances and operates as NGO. The role of this institution is increasing because they have started to re-evaluate the role of President’s round table in society. Round-table has new role now – to find solutions on the rational and scientific basis, when politicians following from their political programs cant find them. Round table can become an additional factor to make amendments, change existing law and initiate a new law.

In the field of culture and education of ethnic minorities, cultural societies of ethnic minorities have received financial support, including 2 485 000 Estonian croons from the State Budget and 420 000 Estonian croons from foreign aid in 2000. In addition to funds of the State Programme in 2000, local governments are increasingly supporting cultural and educational activities of ethnic minorities. For example, Tallinn City Government has allocated 5 mln Estonian croons in 2000 to support cultural societies of ethnic minorities.

5. Educational and cultural policies

Statistics of Estonian education system show that in 1994-1998 the quota of children at school age was very significant. Basic education graduates ratio to the total number of 15-year-olds was in 1999 - 79%. General secondary education graduates ratio to the total number of 18-year-old was 65%⁵

⁵ Eesti Statistika Aastaraamat/Statistical Yearbook of Estonia 2000, Tallinn, 2000, p 72.

Absolute majority of Russian basic schools are situated in cities, mainly in Tallinn and Harjumaa county (Maardu, Paldiski), in Eastern region cities like Narva, Sillamäe, Kohtla-Järve and Jõhvi (Table 1). According to official statistics there are 586 public schools with Estonian conducting language and 104 schools where conducting language is Russian and 16 schools with mixed contingent of pupils.

In these schools there were (in session 1999/2000) 154 700 Estonian pupils and 61100 Russian pupils. In public schools situated in towns there are in total 60 400 Russian students and for example, in Tallinn 26 800 Russians and in North East cities 21 000 Russian-speaking pupils. In 1999 number of schoolchildren (Estonians as well as non-Estonians) have diminished.

Table 1. Number of Estonian and Russian schools by counties 1999/2000

Counties/Cities	Total	Estonian	Russian	Est.-Russian mixed schools
Estonia total	706	586	104	16
Harjumaa	160	108	49	3
Tallinn	98	55	43	
Hiiumaa	13	13		
Ida-Virumaa	55	16	32	7
Kohtla-Järve	12	1	9	2
Narva	14	1	13	
Jõgevamaa	31	28	3	
Järvamaa	33	32	1	
Läänemaa	28	27	1	
Lääne-Virumaa	46	41	4	1
Põlvamaa	35	33	1	1
Pärnumaa	61	58	2	1
Pärnu	13	11	2	
Raplamaa	33	32		1
Saaremaa	33	33		
Tartumaa	65	56	8	1
Tartu	28	22	6	
Valgamaa	30	28	2	
Viljandimaa	44	43		1
Võrumaa	39	38	1	

Vocational education system is in change right now (See Table 5). But there are in total 86 vocational schools, 13 of them have Russian conduct-language, and 30 have both – Estonian and Russian students. In total there are 32 200 Estonian and 10 000 Russian students studying in vocational schools this year.

There are 39 public and private colleges and higher schools in Estonia, 6 of them are public universities. In Tallinn Pedagogical University and in Tallinn Technical University (public universities) some specialities and some classes are practised in Russian. In Tartu University students who need special training in Estonian can take first year studies as preparatory to take later courses in Estonian (or in English).

In sphere of higher education there is approximately twice as many students in 1999 as it was in 1990. About 5000 Russian students study in Russian classes (groups) in bigger higher schools. It

is not possible to count how many Russian students are studying in Estonian classes (groups) because there is no statistics by ethnic origin of students. According to estimations, in Estonian private higher schools and colleges about half of students are Russians. In some private higher schools (for example Sillamae Economic and Management Institute, International University of Social Sciences LEX) students majority are Russian-speaking, therefore in these universities one of conducting languages is Russian.

Table 2. Highest completed level of education by sex for each ethnic group⁶

Level of education	Estonian/ Male	Estonian/ Female	Russian/ Male	Russian/ Female
Primary or less	6,0	8,6	2,8	9,8
Basic	18,0	16,7	14,8	12,8
Vocational with primary or basic	9,4	4,6	4,8	3,9
Vocational with secondary	9,6	7,2	12,5	7,2
Secondary general	19,8	22,8	22,8	20,8
Post secondary after basic school	12,9	9,4	11,4	7,6
Post secondary after secondary school	9,5	16,1	15,6	22,2
Professional higher	2,6	2,9	5,1	5,3
Higher academic	12,1	11,8	10,1	10,3
Total (%)	100	100	100	100
Sample size (n)	2986	3650	1125	1538
Estimated pop size (N) in 1000	333,5	394,4	125,4	171,3

6. Representation of Russians interests in the public sphere

Traditionally Russians have had in Estonia several Russian-language newspapers. Today there is two republican daily newspapers (*Estonija*, *Molodjozh Estonij*) and one weekly. In North-east region there are published also one local daily Russian newspapers and one in Narva and Sillamäe (total in Estonia 7 newspaper). An integration-oriented Russian language insert "Istoki" of the newspaper "Põhjarannik" is published, etc. As the development of media campaign has indicated, media enterprises are playing rapidly increasing role in funding and promoting integration-related activities in mass media.

One of the serious problems of local Russian press is small number of the print run of Russian newspapers. As all press is privatised it must be economically rational to issue newspapers or journals in Russian. If the readership is very small the first cost of one printed issue is very high. People's income is relatively low in Estonia (compared with EU average for example) therefore it has turned into restriction of people rights to get information. Besides, in the market there is contest between local Russian press and Russian-language publications brought from Russia.

⁶ Living Condition Study in Estonia 1999. Baseline report. Norbalt II. (Ordered by the Ministry of Social affairs of Estonia, carried out by Statistical Office of Estonia, University of Tartu and Institute of Applied Social Research Fafo (Norway), Tartu, 2000.

In spring 2000 Estonian media had special commercial campaign advertising ideas of integration of Estonian and Russian-speaking population. Main idea of this was creation of positive stereotypes of Estonians to non-Estonians and vice versa. Examples of good friends and colleges were hanged up on large posters on streets and shown in video-clips in public TV. The campaign was financed by Integration Foundation (at The Minister of Population and Ethnic Affairs) and had quite positive public response.

On Sundays in public TV there is interesting Russian talk-show “Subboteja” (three last seasons) having translation into Estonian. The show is popular among non-Estonians as well as among Estonians. Public TV has regular news broadcast every day in Russian. An integration-related TV serial "Estonia on the air" is produced. There are also other Russian shows and commercials. According to estimations local Russian Radio (Radio 4) is very popular in Estonia.

Private Employment

As one can see from the table 3, unemployment among Russians is approximately twice higher than among Estonians. Reasons of bigger unemployment among Russian people have been mainly: perished Russia-related (Soviet) enterprise and pure knowledge of state language.

Table 3. Labour force status by ethnicity, per cent of population 15 years and older

Employment status	Estonians	Russians	Other
Employed	54,9	53,1	51,5
Unemployed	4,8	7,8	9,8
Not in labour force	40,3	39,1	38,7

7. Citizenship policies and statistics

Estonian citizenship is not based on ethnicity. Ethnic Estonians who did not live in Estonia before 1940 also do not automatically receive Estonian citizenship and have had to seek naturalisation. It is possible for all residents legally living in Estonia, regardless of ethnicity, to apply and acquire Estonian citizenship.

In addition to Estonian citizens, citizens of some other states, stateless persons, there are also so-called illegal people (including Russians, Estonians and other people) in Estonia – with no passport and resident permit. These are people who for different reasons have no valid documents. (For example, people who have lost their documents after restoration of Estonian State and can't prove their identity, people who lived in Soviet Union without any documents etc). Some of them were supposedly registered during last census.

The estimated total population of Estonia (as of 31.03. 2000) is 1 370 500. Individuals, both non-ethnic and ethnic Estonians, who have received Estonian citizenship by naturalisation since 1992 - 113 351.

Estimated number of non-ethnic Estonians already holding Estonian citizenship by birth is 80 000. Total number of Estonian citizen's passports valid, is 1 004 757. Total number of Alien's passports valid is 164 785. Temporary residence permits valid - 69 289. Permanent residence permits valid - 204 794. Total number of residence permits valid 274 083.

As Russian embassy in Tallinn have not revealed citizens' statistics (number of Russian Federation citizens), it is almost impossible to give an exact number of Russians citizens living in Estonia. For example, in February 1997 the Russian Embassy in Tallinn announced that as that moment more than 120 000 people had been granted Russian citizenship.

If people do not apply for Estonian citizenship or have not yet chosen which citizenship they wish to hold, they are still given a clear legal status in Estonia. Estonia's Constitution and legal acts, such as the Aliens Act, provide the legal status necessary for the preservation of their human rights.

In September 1997, the Parliament adopted an amendment to the Aliens Act according to what people who applied for temporary residence permits before July 12, 1995 are eligible for permanent residence permits from July 12, 1998. From July 1998, the procedure for applying for residency permits has become simpler than it was in 1993-1995. The applicant now does not have to be present when the application is being handled, and information materials in Russian have been prepared to assist the applicants.

8. Public Education and Awareness

According to the State Programme, the nature of the integration in Estonian society is shaped by two processes, the social harmonisation of society on the basis of knowledge of the Estonian language and the possession of Estonian citizenship, and the offering of maintenance of ethnic differences on the basis of the recognition of the cultural rights of ethnic minorities.

Main aims of integration are linguistic-communicative integration, i.e. a common sphere of information and the re-creation of an Estonian-language environment in Estonian society under conditions of cultural diversity and tolerance; 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 socio-economic integration, i.e. the increase of the competitiveness and social mobility of every member of Estonian society.

The State Programme's budget is covered by funds from the State Budget, including the Ministries of Education, Cultural Affairs, Internal Affairs, Defence, the Integration Foundation, etc), foreign aid, including the EU PHARE Programme, United Nations Development Programme, Canada, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, United Kingdom, etc), others. Allocations provided above do not cover direct allocations to particular integration-related projects by local governments, various foundations and foreign countries.

There are a significant number of on-going activities carried out already in 1999 that are now continued in the framework of the State Programme. Among others, (a) in the field of education, the Ministry of Education and the Integration Foundation have jointly organised the publishing of a large number of study materials (language proficiency level test materials, dictionaries, study books, CD-s, etc) as well as training courses for teachers at Russian medium schools and language training firms. By May 2000, about 3700 graduates from Russian-medium gymnasiums and about 2000 graduates from Russian-medium basic schools have registered for the Estonian language proficiency level test that is now unified with the Estonian language state exam at Russian-medium schools.

Also, about 3000 Russian-speaking children are going to language camps and Estonian families in summer 2000. It promotes their fluency in the Estonian language and strengthens contacts between Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking youth.

In the field of citizenship issues, the Citizenship and Migration Board (CMB), the Integration Foundation and other institutions are elaborating a new model of citizenship exam in order to improve the exam material's quality and clarity. Also, CMB has carried out custom-service training for its officials, produced materials for customers on application for residence permits and citizenship, etc. Special attention is paid for increasing CMB's capacity to process applications for residence permits, e.g. innovative way of access to relevant information *via* the Internet, etc.

All Government efforts were describes under tasks and duties of governmental bodies. There are some special political rights for Russians living in Estonia. According to the Local Government Council Election Act (1996) non-citizens in Estonia have voting rights, if he or she has attained eighteen years of age by the election day; if he or she resides permanently in the territory of the local government; if he or she resides in Estonia on the basis of a permanent residence permit; if he or she has resided legally in the territory of the corresponding local government for at least five years by 1 January of the election year; if he or she has not been divested of his or her active legal capacity by a court.

9.The role of international organizations and EU Policy

There has been quite detailed supervision on Estonia's minorities issues from the side of international bodies. For example, in the Resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (number 1117 from 1997) the Assembly noted that one "problematic area relates to the treatment of the "non-historic" Russian-speaking minority, which has given rise to some concern in the last three years, especially as far as the granting of residence permits and citizenship (and the language test that has to be passed in order obtain the latter) are concerned."

The Assembly urged the Estonian authorities to integrate those members of the "non-historic" Russian-speaking minority, who so wish, by improving the teaching of Estonian as a foreign language in public schools and universities, and in adult education, offering language courses free of charge or at reduced rate to applicants for citizenship.

Estonian legislation that regulates the use of the state language, citizenship, status of aliens, as well as the legislation concerning education, has been evaluated and some very important changes were made during last year in order to achieve the political goals set by the government coalition and to meet the political criteria in the accession process.

Estonia's progress report from November 2000 state following: Estonia has made considerable progress in language policy area. As recommended (OSCE) in last year's regular report, the Estonian Parliament amended the Language Law in April 2000.

The consultations between Estonia and several international institutions, including relevant European Commission officials and the office of the OSCE HCNM, began soon after the adoption of amendments in the beginning of 1999. One implementation decree that primarily regulates the application of the *Law* in the public sphere was adopted in July 1999. The decree also states that, with respect to medical doctors, psychologists and pharmacists in both the public and private spheres are required to have language proficiency in state language at the highest level. No implementation decree regulating the language proficiency requirements for other private sphere employees has been adopted.

As the result of these consultations working group that involved members of the *Riigikogu* (Estonian Parliament), representatives of ministries and a range of experts from Estonia and

elsewhere prepared the draft of amendments to the Language Act. The amendments were adopted on June 14 2000.

The amendments clarify the scope of the *law* both, in public and private spheres and states the general rule of proportionality. For purposes of the Language Act according to the new amendments, the legitimate public interest is public security, public order, public health, public administration, health-protection, consumer protection and safety at work. According to the amendments the use of language in private sphere shall be regulated to the extent and only when their activities concern the legitimate public interest.

In developments in the field of language legislation, other major development has taken place as the decree that establishes a new integrated language certification system was recently adopted by the Government in 1998. The new system rationalises the previous system of three different language tests (for citizenship through naturalisation, education or graduation exams, professional certification) that involved different methodologies of testing and three different institutions responsible for the tests. The decree introduces a modern, comprehensive language testing methodology to all three spheres. In the future, testing for all mentioned purposes will be under administration of the National Examination and Qualification Centre. The Government adopting the new system of tests would see the integrated language tests as one mean to increase the speed of the naturalisation, especially among the graduates of the basic and upper secondary schools.

Ministry of Education is working on the reform for Russian-language schools to integrate them more deeply into the Estonian educational system. *Law on Basic and Upper Secondary Schools* provides the basic legal frame for the state or municipality owned schools of latter grades. Estonian Parliament adopted an amendment to the *Law on Basic and Upper Secondary Schools* on April 4 th 2000.

A section was added to the law that clarifies that in upper secondary schools, 60 per cent of the language of instruction should be in Estonian, while remaining 40 per cent can be in another language. Originally, the law stated simply that upper secondary schools must go through a transition into Estonian language of instruction by the year 2007.

As it was mentioned before in 1999, the State Programme "Integration in Estonian Society 2000-2007" was elaborated by the Estonian Government's expert commission. The draft of the State Programme was submitted for public discussion in January 2000. Since the start of the elaboration process by the Government's expert commission in June 1999, the expert commission received over 100 proposals and comments on the drafts of the State Programme. A significant part of these proposals were also taken into account in the final version.

Among others, the President's Roundtable on Minorities and several unions of ethnic minorities submitted their recommendations to the expert commission, especially on issues related to the education and culture of ethnic minorities. As a result of the public discussion, the State Programme was modified in several sections, including in the fields of vocational education, higher education, minority school system and others.

The Citizenship Act has been under intense and close monitoring of different institutions – the OSCE Mission in Estonia, non-governmental organisations, various experts. The Estonian Citizenship Act has been assessed as being in conformity with international standards. Therefore, the Government does not see any urgent necessity to amend this law. The coalition agreement that forms basis for the policy of current coalition-government says that the main principles of the policy in the field of citizenship will remain unchanged. Still, during the last year there have been some initiatives of the members of parliament to amend the Citizenship Act.

Similarly, as the Citizenship Act, the Aliens Act has been under close and intense monitoring of different international institutions that has ensured the conformity of the law with international standards. Aliens Act regulates the legal status of aliens residing in Estonia, who want to obtain a residence permit and of those, who hold a residence permit. The law was adopted in 1993 and, since year 1997, has gone through many substantial changes. Since February 1999, Parliament) has amended the Aliens Act several times. Respective amendments were adopted on February 15 th 1999 (Identity Documents Act), February 17 th 1999, June 16 th 1999, September 21 st 1999, November 11 th 1999, December 15 th 1999, March 21 st 2000, April 4 th 2000 and, the most recent amendments were adopted on May 17 th 2000. Most of these amendments were initiated by the Government or its respective agency – the Citizenship and Migration Board. The Government passed several amendments to the supplementary regulations to facilitate the work of the Citizenship and Migration Board to cope with the workload and problems that have arisen during the process of converting temporary residence permits into permanent ones.

The amendments to the Aliens Act concern mostly the immigration quota that has been seen as the obstacle for legalisation of illegal residents who were legal residents of Estonia before July 1 st 1990, but who have not followed the Law on Aliens and applied for residence permit. The second important issue connected to the amendments is the family reunification.

According to the amended law illegal residents, who were residents of Estonia already before July 1 st 1990 and have not left the country, but who also have not applied for the residence permit, can receive a residence permit outside the immigration quota, if they have legal grounds for submitting an application. This would help to solve the problem of legalisation for most of the persons belonging to the category of undocumented persons or persons staying in Estonia without legal residency. Also spouses of Estonian citizens, who have a common child or children or, where the woman is 12 weeks pregnant are also – according to the amendment adopted in April 2000 - no longer subject to the quota. This amendment will assist in the resolution of family reunification cases involving Estonian citizens, but also will have significant effect to the cases of family reunification of stateless persons and third country nationals residing in Estonia.

There are several international organisations represented in Estonia helping international co-operation: United Nations Development Programme, Delegation of the European Commission in Estonia, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), British Council etc. These organisations have done much for Estonian inner integration of the society as well as Estonian integration into Europe.

Tallinn, 6.06. 2001