

“Political participation of third country nationals on national and local level”

COUNTRY REPORT of ESTONIA 2011

Background paper for the seminar

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“This publication forms part of the project, ***Political participation of third country nationals on national and local level in selected EU countries***, supported by PASOS (Policy Association for an Open Society) through an initial grant by the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (LGI) of Open Society Foundations.”

Project partners: Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS (Latvia), Institute of Public Affairs (Poland), Institute of Baltic Studies (Estonia), Migration Policy Group (Belgium).

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PART I STATE ACTORS, NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN POLICIES

Legislation

In Estonia third-country nationals (TCN) can be divided in two groups: firstly citizens of non-EU countries (mostly of Russian Federation, but also a considerable number of Ukrainian and Belorussian citizens), and secondly people who do not have the citizenship of any country (so called 'stateless persons' or people with 'undetermined citizenship'). Compared to other European Union member states the proportion of these two groups among the country's population is very high. According to Eurostat demographic overview (Eurostat 2011) Estonia is the third largest country in EU with the number of third-country nationals: approximately 16% of the population are either stateless or have the citizenship of non-EU country (see table 1).

Table 1. Estonian population by citizenship 1992-2010 (per cent)

	1992	2003	2010
Estonian citizens	68	81	84
Stateless	32	12	8
Citizens of other countries	-	7	8
Total	100	100	100

source: Statistics Estonia (2010)

Such (legal) structure of the population is not the result of the recent immigration. Majority of third country nationals as well as stateless people have been born in Estonia (Kallas 2008), being the descendants of the Soviet-time immigrants, majority of whom speaks Russian as their mother tongue. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Estonia restored its independence (rather than established a new state) by declaring the legal continuity of the pre-WWII Estonian Republic (1918-1940) and by applying a legal restitution principle also on Estonian law on citizenship. Citizenship Act (of 1992) declared that only the descendants of the citizens of the pre-war republic were recognized as citizens of the new country and get automatically new Estonian passports, while all Soviet-time immigrants were required to go through the naturalisation process in order to obtain citizenship. Despite the high numbers of naturalisation at the beginning of 1990s when in average 20,000 people applied for Estonian citizenship and passed all required language tests, the process has slowed down in recent years: in year 2007 approximately 4 000 people naturalised, in year 2008 this number was 2 124, and in 2010 the number of naturalisations dropped to 1 184.¹ At the same time,

¹ One explanation for the reasons of low naturalization process may be due to the lack of information, and moreover, the perceived injustices by the Estonian government in the 1990s by refusing to grant automatic citizenship to these people. This perception of injustice towards them inhibits many stateless adults from taking up the language learning classes or even looking for information about naturalization requirements (Kallas, Kaldur 2010).

quite significant number of Soviet-time settlers used the opportunity provided by Russian Federation to obtain Russian citizenship in rather simple terms (just filling in the application). Today, still, slightly fewer than 100,000 people (approximately 7,5% of the total population) in Estonia have not acquired the citizenship of any country and thus remain stateless. During the Soviet-time, most of the people who are now categorised under third country nationals were not required to speak Estonian language and were usually not integrated in the Estonian society. Most of them continue speaking Russian language as their mother tongue and language used on an everyday basis until today. Lack of proficiency in the state language coupled with rather weak social networks with ethnic Estonians has hindered their integration into the labour market, public sphere and into the political life in general.

It should however be mentioned that most of these people could acquire Estonian citizenship, for which they have to go through the process of naturalization, this holds for the persons with undetermined citizenship, but also for people with Russian Federation citizenship in case they denounce it. In order to get Estonian citizenship, one has to (1) have a residence permit of a long-term resident or the right of permanent residence (i.e. has resided to Estonia before the 1st of July 1990; see also Table 2), (2) has to have lived in Estonia on the basis of a residence permit or the right of residence for at least eight years and permanently at least the last five years, (3) has to pass the examination of knowledge of the Estonian language, at least at the level of B-1 (this exam is not required, if the basic, secondary or higher education have been acquired in the Estonian language) and (4) has to pass the examination of knowledge of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia and the Citizenship Act.² To further increase the successful acquisition of Estonian citizenship, Estonian government compensates 100 percent of the costs for the language training after the examinations on the Estonian language test and knowledge of the Citizenship Act has been passed by the applicant.

One important legal aspect regarding political participation - meeting local level representatives (deputies) or contacting public authorities - is the regulation in Language Act which stipulates that in these local governments, where at least half of the permanent residents belong to the national minority, one has the right to receive responses to his or her enquires also in this minority language. In other words: when in Estonia a local government, for example a city Narva which situated at the eastern border, has a percentage of permanent non-Estonian residents (including third country nationals) over 50 (the population of Narva is approximately 97% Russian speaking), then local residents have the right to approach state institutions or local municipality offices and administrators also in the Russian language.

² Minors who are under the age of 15 can be naturalized by application submitted by their parents. This is the case of parents who have been residing in Estonia legally during the last 5 years and in case they have the corresponding residence permit. This includes parents with undetermined citizenship.

However, the problem with naturalization in Estonia has always been with the minors – despite the simplified procedure, in year 2008 the number of minors without citizenship (i.e. stateless children under the age of 15) was about 4 500, in year 2009 approximately 2 500 and by the beginning of the year 2010 this number has dropped below 2 000. It was nevertheless stated in our interviews that this problem will be solved within the next couple of years. These children are born to the parents who themselves are stateless, yet who have not followed the simplified procedure to obtain citizenship to their children. Studies have shown that this has been mainly the case due to the fact of having insufficient information and knowledge about the legal requirements for the simplified procedure (Lauristin et al 2008). This issue has been increasingly addressed by the authorities with the Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013: for example by holding information sessions at Russian language schools or sending out personal letters by the Minister of Interior (ECRI 2010). The question of reproducing stateless children from year to year is therefore decreasing. However, it still needs considerable attention to solve this issue for good as this affects not only the formal right of political participation, but having a status of ‘undetermined citizenship’ may have impact for example on the subjective-negative feeling towards the state as well. Nevertheless, all coalition party members in our interviews have unanimously stated that the basic principles of Estonian citizenship policy will not be changed, while some experts (for example the Estonian Chancellor of Justice) have stated that the citizenship to these children should be granted automatically.

In year 2011, the total number of valid residence permits was 209,317, which accounts approximately **16% of the total population of Estonia** (1,340,122), which means that this number is also the direct target group of The European Fund for the Integration of Third-country Nationals (EIF) in Estonia (see Table 2). **Third country nationals (TCN) in Estonian context** and in this report are defined as people (1) who are not the citizens of European Union, European Economic Area nor the Switzerland, and (2) stateless persons living in Estonia i.e. people with undetermined citizenship.³ Moreover, it was emphasized in the interview by the ministry official that Estonia was the only country in European Integration Fund programme where it was allowed to include within the group of third country nationals also these people who have born in Estonia and have stayed there longer than five years.

Table 2. Estonian population by residence permits 2011 (number of people, 10 main groups)

	Temporary	Long-term	Total	Percentage
Stateless	11 366	89 595	100 961	48% (8%*)
Russian Federation	9 345	89 147	98 492	47% (7%*)
Ukraine	1 520	3 976	5 496	3%
Belorussia	332	1 315	1 647	1%
USA	431	101	532	0%
Georgia	157	73	230	0%
China	199	19	218	0%

³ In Estonia, all social guarantees are provided to the stateless persons equally those of the citizens, except some political rights as explained in the following sections.

Armenia	103	105	208	0%
Azerbaijani Republic	94	96	190	0%
India	121	30	151	0%
Total	24 600	184 717	209 317	100%

* percentage among the whole population
source: Police and Border Guard Board (2011)

The issue of residence permits to the third country nationals and persons with undetermined citizenship is regulated by the Aliens Act (*Välismaalaste seadus*). Residence permit may be temporary (validity period up to five years) or long-term and the decision is made by the Police and Border Guard (PPA) Board's Citizenship and Migration Department. The difference between these two types of residence permits in terms of formal participation is that voting rights in the local elections are granted only with the long-term (formerly called *permanent*) residence permit.⁴⁵ In addition, to obtain a long-term residence permit one has to comply with different requirements, for example with the integration requirement (i.e. has to have the knowledge of the Estonian language at least at level B1 or at level corresponding to that).

As noted during the interview by the person from the Police and Border Guard Board's (PPA) Citizenship and Migration Department, then to their knowledge, there are no restrictions on the people with a long-term residence permit to form meetings with MPs or local/municipal council representatives. Police and Border Guard Board also do not provide any information about the opportunities or different forms of political participation, except on the topic on naturalisation and residence issues. In terms of providing this information about the rights to participate in politics, it was commented by the official that this should be done by the local governments, and this idea was supported by one of the interviewed politician as well. According to his opinion this kind of dissemination can very easily be done not only by the local government or state, but also by the civil society organisations. However, the view of PPA representative was that perhaps indeed some information should be available on the webpage of PPA about the rights and advantages of having a long-term residence. Police and Border Guard official also mentioned that having voting rights only for the people with long-term residence permit is completely justified, but it was also commented as a personal opinion that voting in parliamentary elections could be open to long-term residents too (both for European Union citizens or third country nationals) – due to the fact, that the

⁴ In year 2006, the status of undetermined citizenship was equalized with the status of long-term residence permit of the European Union citizens. In principle this meant that stateless persons have now the same rights to work and travel visa-free within the European Union countries as Estonian citizens. Russian Federation on the other hand adopted a law which granted visa free travel to all persons with undetermined citizenship in Estonia. This came out also from our interviews that these developments had a negative consequence on the motivation of this group of people to obtain Estonian citizenship. Partly due to these reason we can also see a decrease in the acquisition of Estonian citizenship by this group during the last years.

⁵ It should also be pointed out that before the year 2006, voting in local elections with long-term residence permit was only eligible when one resided permanently on the municipality territory for at least 5 years. Last local municipality elections based on this regulation were held in year 2005.

permanent residents of Estonia are "anyway considered to be citizens *de facto*" as well as people with long-term residence permit. At the same time, ministry officials' comment to this issue was that they do not see any reason why for example the citizens of Russian Federation living in Estonia should be able to vote also in the parliamentary elections in Estonia. In his opinion and according to the democratic principles it does not make any sense to vote both for the Russian parliament and Estonian parliament.

Therefore in Estonia, the question of naturalization and legal status has important consequences on the political participation both in formal and informal ways. The question of definitions arises too - it was discussed in many interviews that distinguishing between political participation and civic participation is sometimes rather hard to make. In some views political participation is only influencing politics through voting in the elections, and this is indeed limited for TCNs, however, regarding civic participation then citizenship is not an issue in Estonia.

The problem of legal restoration

One of the problems concerning naturalization is that Estonian policies of citizenship and naturalization (i.e. the doctrine of legal restoration in Estonia, which means that the newly independent Republic of Estonia in year 1991 was considered as a direct successor of its pre-1940 statehood) has created a situation of segregation, where in an abstract sense, on one side one can see the community of ethnic Estonians, and on the other side one of immigrants (mainly people with Russian origin, who have emigrated to Estonia during the Soviet Union). This discourse has had a significant effect also on the political participation of immigrants, as the feeling of social exclusion (and a consideration by which they do not see themselves as immigrants, but more of national/ethnic minorities or Estonians) hinders their full willingness to take part of the politics or social life of Estonia. This kind of issue of accurate or meaningful definitions (semantics) was also emphasized in our interviews, where some of the respondents wanted us to specify very clearly: who is this group of 'immigrants' we are asking about in the questionnaire? Should it be understood as a subjective categorisation, based on the ethnic/national identity of the self, or more connected with the legal status, or even both. In the interviews, some of our respondents who belonged to the third-country nationals or immigrants considered this very important, as they did not see themselves as representing a category of immigrants.⁶

Results from the MIPEx study

The Migrant Integration Policy Index (acronym MIPEx), which is led by the British Council and the Migration Policy Group is a study which seeks to evaluate and compare current laws

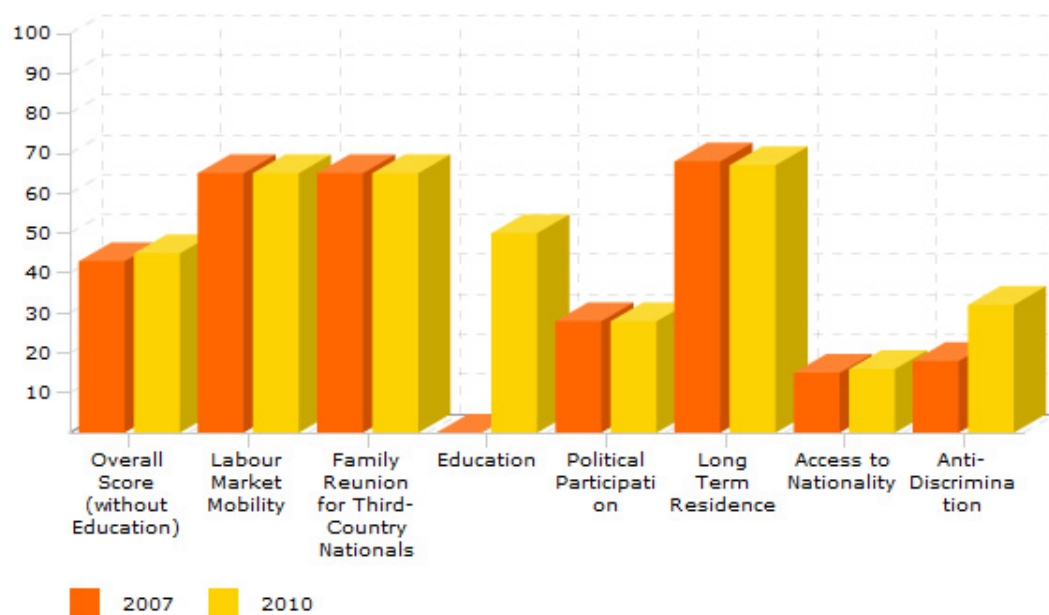
⁶ For example, one of the proactive measures in the policy level has been the introduction of the citizenship ceremonies in order to attribute higher importance to the new citizens for the society.

and policies of 31 countries in 7 migrant oriented policy areas. Those fields of analysis are labour market mobility, family reunion, education, political participation, long term residence, access to nationality and anti-discrimination. MIPEX aims to be a regular assessment method for integration policies of 31 European and North American (USA and Canada) countries.

In March 2011 the third MIPEX index was launched. In the ranking of 31 European and North American countries, Estonia landed on the 19. place, scoring 46 points from 100 (in comparison the leader of the ranking Sweden scored 83 points). Since the second MIPEX study, which was published in 2007, Estonia's migrant integration policies had not made significant changes and therefore Estonia gained in the MIPEX III only 2 points more than in the last study. Table 3 "Score changes of Estonia" shows in which policy areas Estonia has made efforts/ stayed on the same level since the last MIPEX II study in 2007.

Table 3. Score changes of Estonia. MIPEX III study

Score Changes



source: Mipex III study www.mipex.ee/estonia

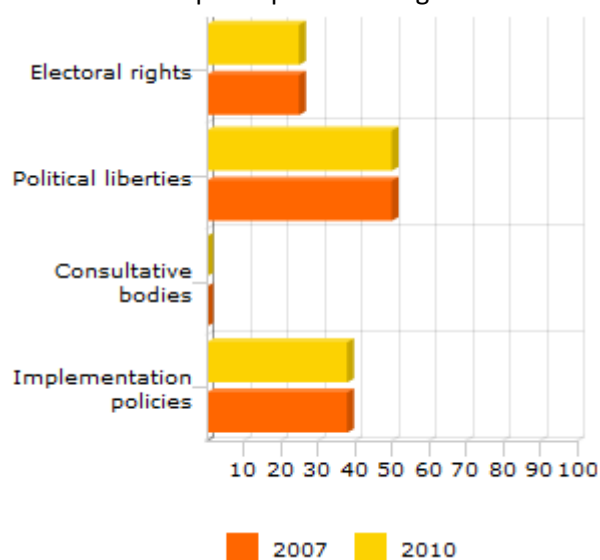
Key findings of MIPEX III about Estonia are:

- Estonian integration strategy is one of best in Europe at targeting specific education and employment needs;
- Intercultural education needs better implementation;
- Basic civil rights are still lacking;
- 'Bronze Soldier Package' created new withdrawal grounds for long-term residence: for citizenship, it would have been non-constitutional;

- Language requirements are well supported, but much higher than most in Europe;
- No improvement had taken place on citizenship for generations born after independence;
- There has been a significant progress on anti-discrimination to meet basic EU standards;
- Equality bodies and policies are still weak.

Unfortunately Estonia got one of the lowest points (28/100) of the 7 earlier mentioned categories for the state policies reinforcing the political participation of migrants. Since 2007 no efforts had been made in this category and therefore the low score in this section of the study remained the same. MIPEX III identifies that “political participation is a major area of weakness for integration in Estonia, as in many Central European and Baltic countries. Noncitizens who are participating in all other areas of Estonian society are still largely excluded from democratic life. Long-term residents can vote in local elections. They cannot stand as candidates, unlike in 13 countries including Lithuania and recently Greece. They are also banned from political parties, unlike in 22 countries. Estonia has lacked consultative bodies on these issues since the President’s Round Table on Ethnic Minorities closed”. In terms of civic participation, for non-citizens to form, run or receive funding for their associations, they have to have at least half of the board members with the registered residence of Estonia, EU or Switzerland. Table 4 “Political participation of migrants in Estonia” shows in which specific areas of political participation Estonia stayed on the same level since the last MIPEX study in 2007.

Table 4. Political participation of migrants in Estonia according to MIPEX III



Rights of participation

Political participation of third-country nationals is limited. Estonian legislation provides them the right to vote on municipal elections with some restrictions, however, without the right to run for elected office. This means that third country nationals who are citizens of third countries and stateless persons with permanent/long-term residence permit, can take part in the political process through the right to participate in local elections, but they do not have the right to run for office in them). Only citizens can be members of political parties, and third country nationals cannot. Third country nationals also cannot participate in the European Union elections or state referendums. Additionally, the participation in state administration is limited through the citizenship requirements for certain categories of state (public) officials (for example they are not allowed to work at the government, police and as a judge)⁷ thus leaving mainly only the civil society and private sector as the areas of interest representation and political activity for non-citizens. Hence civic participation is not limited for TCNs in Estonia, which means that they can also for example join NGOs or trade unions. Third country nationals can create and establish NGOs if they are registered residents of Estonia.

Participation in the local level elections in years 2005 and 2009 is shown in Table 5, data acquired by the poll conducted by the University of Tartu. Interestingly, we can see a significant increase in participation among the citizens of Russian Federation, which during the 2009 elections is on average even higher than the ones of ethnic Estonians.

Table 5. Participation in local municipality elections (years 2005 and 2009)

Year of election	Estonians, citizens by birth	Russians, citizens by birth	Citizens by naturalization	Russian citizens	Stateless
2005	66%	62%	59%	54%	50%
2009	74%	73%	83%	75%	63%

source: Toomla (2010)

This phenomenon can partly be explained by the increased willingness to participate in the life of local municipality, tendency which may derive from their obligation to pay taxes irrespective of their legal status and hence the wish to be involved in the policy process (Toomla 2010). General interest in politics has also grown remarkably among the group of third country nationals. In year 2005, ethnic Estonians were the main forerunners, with a 48% of responses covering 'very interested' and 'rather interested' in politics. This was more than 10 percent (compared to Russian citizens) to 25 percent (compared to stateless) higher among ethnic Estonians. In year 2010 however, approximately 65 percent of Russian Federation and 45 percent of stateless people respondents stated being 'very interested' or

⁷ However, among non-Estonians with Estonian citizenship, 2.8 percent of employees of 11 ministries and central state administrative bodies are minority representatives (7.6 per cent of all central state institutions) (Kallas 2008).

'rather interested' in politics, while about 50 percent of ethnic Estonians assessed being interested in politics (Toomla 2010). This significant increase in political attentiveness among third country nationals, which is one of the major aspects or indicators for political participation, can most probably be explained partly by the incident with the displacement of Soviet era monument Bronze Soldier. But it may be also argued that it has somewhat to do with the overall integration process in Estonia and perhaps with the attempts of state Integration Programmes to increase political inclusion in general.⁸

However, in addition to the right to participate at the local level elections as voters and thereby having an effect on the work at the local government, TCNs can also indirectly influence the results of the presidential elections. On some circumstances (for example when the president is not been able to be elected at the Parliament by the MPs, as it happened during the last presidential elections in year 2006) the president will be elected by the Electors' Assembly, which consists of 345 members: legislators from the Parliament (*Riigikogu*) and municipal officials.

Even though third country nationals cannot be members of political parties and cannot vote on the parliamentary elections, nevertheless the popularity of ethnic Russian parties in Estonia is similarly very low among Estonian citizens with national minority background. During the latest parliamentary elections in Estonia in year 2011, the Russian Party in Estonia gained only 0,9 percent of votes (the threshold to enter parliament is 5 percent). The majority of Russian speaking population voted for the Centre Party, which has as its members many young politicians of non-Estonian decent. But also Social Democratic Party has gained increasing popularity during the last years among Russians speaking population, partly also due to fact that many young politicians in the party have a Russian-speaking minority background.

In the municipalities with a majority of Russian speaking population, the councils of local governments are mostly filled with politicians from the Russian speaking minority.

One should also note that in the parliamentary elections, Estonia is divided into 12 constituencies. The 101 mandates of the parliament (*Riigikogu*) are divided proportionally between these 12 constituencies based on the number of eligible voters in that constituency. This number of eligible voters however does not include third country nationals (including stateless people), which may lead to the underrepresentation (proportional) of this region/constituency and hence the people living there in the parliament by the mandates, as in some regions (for example eastern-part of Estonia) the concentration of this group of people (TCNs) is rather high.

⁸ The Russian Federation citizens' upwards trend may be explained partly also by the increased interest for example in the Russian politics, as explained by Toomla (2010), as the survey did not ask about the interest in *Estonian* politics.

When evaluating the participation rights of stateless persons in Estonia, OSCE has stated that there are no international norms which demand that the persons of other countries or people with undetermined citizenship should participate in the elections of parliament. Thus the fact that stateless people can vote on the local elections in Estonia is a positive tendency (OSCE 2007). However, OSCE also notes that since most of the third country nationals have a long-term (permanent) residence permit and the fact that they still cannot participate to the full in the political life of Estonia, is continually going to be a challenge to Estonia. In this sense, third country nationals may be considered to be Estonian citizens in an abstract sense.

Estonian national integration policy has declared solving the problem of quite massive statelessness as one of its primary goals. There have been several opinion polls and research conducted on the matter of statelessness (Hallik 2005, Saar Poll 2006, Laurustin et al (2008)). Additionally, low numbers of third country nationals, and Russian-speaking minority in general in civil society organisations has been declared as one of the concerns for the state. For example, in year 2007 12 percent of Estonians were members of non-governmental organisation, yet only 1 percent belonging to minority groups⁹ were (ECRI 2010). However, bulk of research has concentrated on the problem of naturalisation of stateless people, their motivation to acquire Estonian citizenship and existing hindrances in this process. Additionally, an active citizenship among Estonian and Russian speaking youth has been studied (Toots, Idunurm and Seveljova 2006). Yet, there has been almost no studies carried out on with special focus on Russian citizens living in Estonia. Additionally, only one major study has concentrated specifically on the political participation of Estonians and non-Estonians, third-country nationals among them (see Toomla 2010).

In sum

Main differences between Estonian citizens and third country nationals are the following: TCNs cannot vote on the parliamentary and European Union elections (yet they can vote on the local government elections), they cannot cast vote on a state referendum nor they can run for elected office in the local or parliamentary level elections. Third country nationals cannot be members of any political party and they cannot work at some certain public administration offices. Third country nationals also do not have the obligation to serve in the compulsory military service of Estonia.

Research carried out by University of Tartu department of political science in 2005 on the political culture in Estonia included the citizenship issue as a variable when analysing the political participation, trust in state institutions and citizenship values of the respondents. However, as a result of this research no thorough analysis or publication has been devoted specifically to the issue of third-country nationals. The preliminary analysis of this research shows that even though third country nationals have the right to vote in municipal elections,

⁹ This includes third country nationals.

in municipal elections in year 2005 less than 50% of third-country citizen respondents declared their intention to vote (compared to nearly 70% of Estonian citizens). The main reason declared for abstaining from voting was that respondents did not believe that casting their vote would influence how the local politics is carried out (University of Tartu 2005). **This indicates that third-country nationals believe that their vote is less valuable to politicians than the votes of the citizens.**

When comparing non-Estonians with different legal status to each other, then the most active group regarding all different forms of participation are non-Estonians (Russian speaking minority) with Estonian citizenship, followed by non-Estonians with undetermined citizenship (i.e. stateless people) and then citizens of third countries (Russian Federation, Ukraine and others).

Estonian integration policy

In year 2008, Estonia adopted a new Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013, which among other activities puts more emphasis on the integration of Russian speaking minorities and people with undetermined citizenship as a separate target group. Integration activities are seen to be implemented mainly on three levels: (1) educational and cultural, (2) social and economic and (3) legal and political. The emphasis of the new integration policy regarding political participation aims to increase the citizens' activity by the adoption of basic mutual values, which can serve as a basis for the development of a mutual and common state identity (*riigiidentiteet*). Common state identity is also seen as a prerequisite for being part of the political and social life of Estonia.

As in the previous integration programmes, there is a strong weight put on the decreasing of number of stateless persons and hence increasing the rate of naturalization by raising the motivation of this target group. In order to increase the inclusion of Russian speaking minorities (and other non-Estonian language), the new programme foresees to increase the number of democratic dialogue platforms (debates, seminars etc) by non-governmental organizations. The knowledge of official state language (Estonian) is set as a main precondition for being able to take actively part of the political, cultural and other activities in the society in the future. Deriving also partly from that it is also stated, correctly, that citizenship nor the obtainment of citizenship does not always solve all the problems regarding active participation in the public sector or in the society.

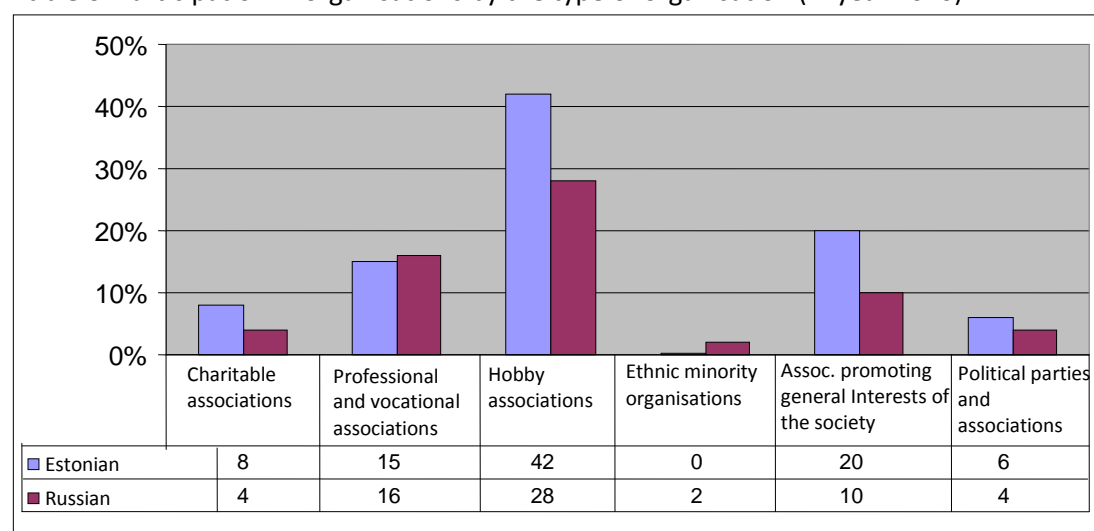
Measures regarding political participation are not explicitly stated in the integration strategy, apart from general declarations. However, regarding the different facets of political participation, many aspects are covered when describing the participation in the civil society and in its organisations or extracurricular activities, and also in the *public sphere* of Estonia. One of the main indicators of participation in the integration strategy is also the

‘index of political involvement’ which is seen to increase among the people with undetermined citizenship and citizens of other countries.

Estonian Integration Strategy does not explicitly state third country nationals being one of its target groups, since integration policy rests more on the nationality or ethnic belonging than on the formal citizenship. From this aspect, half of target group of Estonian integration policy have the citizenship of Estonia and the other half are third country nationals (see also chapter 1). Strategy nevertheless distinguishes between stateless persons and citizens of other countries, although this is not clearly defined what is meant under citizens of ‘other countries’ written in the Strategy. Main identified target groups among others are also Russian speaking minority or Russian speaking population in Estonia (see the discussion about the definitions above).

Monitoring of attaining of Estonian Integration Strategy in year 2010 evaluated the achieving of targets set in the integration strategy during the years 2008-2009. Study shows that **while the participation in civil society associations and organisations has grown compared to year 2008, the participation among the Estonian speaking respondents is nevertheless higher** - 65%, while among the Russian speaking respondents the corresponding rate was 43% (see more Ministry of Culture 2010). **Participation in different types of organisations in general is also somewhat higher among Estonians when compared to Russian speaking population**, with the exception of professional and vocational associations and ethnic minority organisations where Russian speaking population has slightly higher rate (see Table 6).

Table 6. Participation in organisations by the type of organisation (in year 2010)



source: Ministry of Culture (2010)

One interesting indicator has been set up to assess the involvement of non-Estonians in the public sphere – increasing the tendency to involve more non-Estonians in the work of Parliament, police or state run enterprises. This corresponds also to the idea of making integration a two-way process. Another important and new measure is set up in the

Integration Strategy - Adaptation Programme for New Immigrants. This measure, funded by the European Fund for the Integration of Third-country Nationals, has been successfully implemented by the Estonian Integration Foundation (MISA) in cooperation with other partners and was targeted to newly arrived adults who are citizens of third countries. Besides that, the programme was intended to facilitate their integration into Estonian society, and as part of the basic course of the Adaption Programme, knowledge of the country's current laws and the rights of residents is also acquired by the participants.

European Fund for Third Country Nationals and its projects

Responsible authority for the European Fund for Third Country Nationals (EIF) is Estonian Ministry of Culture, replacing the authority of the Office of the Minister for Population and Ethnic Affairs (*Rahvastikuministri büroo*). In June 2009, the Office of the Minister for Population and Ethnic Affairs was closed due to state budget cuts resulted by the economic crisis. Its responsibilities were divided between the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Culture. Integration Foundation Our People¹⁰ (MISA) is acting as Delegated Authority for the EIF.

As noted in the previous chapter, Estonian integration policy has wider target group than the European Fund for Third Country Nationals. The current integration policy is targeted to all persons with ethnic minority background who are residing legally in Estonia, no matter their time of arrival to the country and their legal status.

Multi-annual (2007-2013) programme of the European Fund for the Integration of Third-country Nationals (EIF) in Estonia describes the overall background of the situation of third country nationals (TCNs) in Estonia, evaluates their political, socio-economical and cultural environment and assesses other aspects of minority population in Estonia. The main goals of the EIF programme are based on the Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013 (EIS), which declare all major objectives for the integration in Estonia and also give overview of the planned measures and activities conducted within the integration policy. Therefore the multi-annual programme includes also a general overview of EIS and its three main thematic areas (see the chapter about Estonian integration policy). All measures and activities implemented within the European Fund for the Integration of Third-country Nationals (EIF) also cover all the areas of Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013 (EIS).



EIF activities can be divided into three groups:

- (1) activities, which are directed only to third country nationals;
- (2) activities, which are directed to the society as a whole, including Estonian citizens and citizens of other European Union member states;

¹⁰ <http://www.meis.ee/>

- (3) activities, which are directed to increase the administrative capability of these public institutions, municipalities, youth organizations, schools and other organisations which provide services to TCNs;

EIF multi-annual programme for 2007-2013 describes in detail how activities funded by EIF coincide with the priorities of Estonian integration strategy. All activities (called '*actions*' in the programme) are divided between 4 priorities:

-  **Priority 1** "Implementation of actions aimed at putting the "Common Basic Principles for immigrant integration policy in the European Union" into practice"
-  **Priority 2** "Development of indicators and evaluation methodologies to assess progress, adjust policies and measures and to facilitate coordination of comparative learning"
-  **Priority 3** "Policy capacity building, coordination and intercultural competence building in the Member States across the different levels and departments of government"
-  **Priority 4** "Organising study visits and seminars for exchanging experience, good practice and information on integration with other Member States"

In Estonia, not all priorities are implemented each year at equal level (this changes from year to year), some priorities and its goals may be combined with each other, and some actions can also last for multiple years. All actions are additionally divided between and inside the priorities by the EIF thematic areas: education and cultural integration; social and economic integration; legal and political integration. Based on the multi-annual programme of the European Fund for the Integration of Third-country Nationals and its annual programmes for years 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010, as well as by analysing activities drafted and implemented, we can come to the following conclusions about the actions which are promoting and strongly related with the political participation.

Under Priority 1 and thematic area 1 one can find actions which aim to foster youth organisations to promote intercultural exchange, dialogue and also promote everyday contacts between NGOs and other civil society organisations, support ideas of multiculturalism and tolerance, train young persons who deal in a everyday basis with TCNs, distribution of leaflets which inform TCNs youth about the issues of integration. These activities may create a supporting framework for the future participation, however, they do not deal directly with the political participation of TCNs. Perhaps only one action - study visits with young Estonian citizens and TCNs to Estonian historical sites, public institutions and museums – correspond partly with an idea to give TCNs basic knowledge for example about the functioning of the state and hence increase their awareness of the whole political system and therefore increase their interest in politics.

Under Priority 1 and thematic area 2 one can find actions fostering multicultural communication and intercultural dialogue between employers and employees, implementing adoption programme and a mentor system for newly arrived TCNs. The

introduction programme for newly arrived TCNs in order to introduce political system of Estonia can be very indirectly seen as one of the precondition for their integration and eventually for their political participation.

Under Priority 1 and thematic area 3 one can find free preparatory courses to prepare TCNs for the language test and exams on Citizenship Act and Constitution (which are needed to be passed in order to become citizen). This may be seen as a direct precondition for higher political participation in the future. Actions promoting equal opportunities and equal treatment in the society are best seen as indirect measures for the involvement of TCNs in the political life, since its idea is to train the public about the issues concerning TCNs and decrease discrimination towards them. However, **developing dialogue platforms and organizing debates is one of the very relevant actions directed to third country nationals, as it increases their prospects to be included and participate in the democratic processes, at the same time being able to speak up about policies which directly concern themselves.** It should be assessed in the future whether the trainings to the representatives of news agencies and journalists through providing a more clear and positive message about integration is enough to directly influence political inclusion of TCNs, but we can argue that this is also relevant measure for creating a favourable ground for their participation in different levels of politics. This action may also support openness of the general political environment.

Under Priority 2 the development of indicators of integration are developed and prepared for the implementation. It is stated in the programme that integration is a horizontal process which is expressed in very different areas of society and integration, for example in the educational system, labour market, culture, political participation, media etc. We can also conclude that although this action may not have a direct impact on the political participation of TCNs, nevertheless it creates a framework to develop much better policies or measures specifically in every before mentioned field.

Under Priority 3 we can see trainings for the officials in the local governments in the field of dissemination of information to TCNs and trainings to public officials in the field of intercultural dialogue in order to increase their administrative capacity when providing services to TCNs. It is hard to assess the direct impact of these actions on the political participation of TCNs, but one can argue that they too create a supporting and open environment for their participation.

Under Priority 4 one can find actions to conduct study visits and exchange knowledge and best practices between member states on the field of integration, however, this has no direct impact on the political participation of third country nationals.

To conclude, when looking at the EIF multi-annual (2007-2013) programme then there is a shortage of actions and measures which explicitly define supporting political participation of third country nationals as one of the major goals. However, this does not mean that the

actions promoting political participation are missing. For example, although not clearly stated in the programme description, developing dialogue platforms and organizing debates is definitely very relevant action directed to TCNs regarding their involvement in the political processes. Also teaching civic skills by giving information about the political environment of Estonia or promoting dialogue and everyday contacts between NGOs and other civil society organisation can be seen somewhat to support the idea of political participation of third country nationals.

However, by looking at the annual plans for different years (2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010), one gets more information regarding the potential mechanism for participation.

Annual plan for 2007 has no actions directly fostering political participation, though some of the actions are directed to involve TCNs in preparatory course for Constitution and Citizenship Act knowledge exam, or actions which conduct awareness raising campaigns with the aim of creating a general environment which supports integration.

Annual plan for 2008 has at least two proposed actions which aim at least indirectly to promote civic skills of TCNs: for example supporting joint study visits of Estonian citizens and TCN among youth to Estonian historical sites, state institutions and museums, but also enhancing dialogue between persons from different ethnic backgrounds in order to reduce mutual negative attitudes and preconceptions. One action which gives support for publishing newspaper materials and radio/TV programmes targeting Estonian citizens and TCN on integration, cultural traditions, Estonian civic identity elements (history, language, values) can be seen again as to strengthen the context and environment for the future participation.

For example, a project „Third sector without the borders” was implemented by the NGO Voluntary association „SEBRA”, whose aim was to increase the potential of the civil society organisations and activity between TCNs and other citizens living in Narva (city located at the Russian border in Eastern-Estonia). Project helped to train the leaders and management of immigrant NGOs in organising public events. Also a project's „Let's do it together for children” by "Estonian Fund for UNICEF" objective was to conduct civic seminars in three municipalities, with the focus on the joint activities at the community/local level and on the opportunities for participation. In between these seminars, joint citizen-initiatives were carried through.

Annual plan for 2009, when compared to the plans of 2007 and 2008 is much more linked with the ideas of promoting political participation of third country nationals. For example, (1) within the action of training Estonian citizens and TCNs on the inter-cultural understanding and tolerance, some joint activities (public debates, public exhibitions) are supported in order to promote the concept of intercultural learning and tolerance. Another (2) action foresees supporting projects which carry out joint study visits and study events for Estonian citizens and TCNs, discussions in state institutions, museums and media companies

and study projects involving subjects related to history and social studies. More importantly, (3) an action with an aim of activation of social debates and forums on inter-ethnic relations and integration through support to various dialogue platforms and projects which organise various forums and debates on involving the TCNs into the society, dialogue platforms (dialogue between local governments and TCNs, dialogue between the host society organisations (mostly NGOs representing Estonian citizens) and TCNs) will be organized under this activity. Also (4) training programmes for local government officials and other public sector employees are developed with the aim to support TCNs indirectly who will have better environment of integration through the increase of this activity. (5) Development and implementation of system for dissemination of information for TCNs on public services at local governmental level is also one of the actions which objective is to create a good level of knowledge among the TCN regarding public services provided by the local government (for example information about the different opportunities). In total 8 local governments were supported in year 2010 under this action.

We can argue that all these actions under the annual plan for 2009 extend directly not only the civic skills of third country nationals, but also increase their prospects for political participation in general. Most of these actions were also successfully implemented via different projects, for example under action 3 (activation of social debates and forums), SA Eesti Koostöö Kogu (Estonian Cooperation Assembly) convened a “Round Table of Nationalities”. The Supervisory Board of this roundtable consists of 15 persons, among them third country nationals and other national minorities in Estonia, and the idea is to have a platform for dialogue for minorities with the development of proposals and recommendations to be presented to the President of the Republic of Estonia and the relevant legislative and executive authorities.

Action supporting internet based communication materials for promoting integration as a two-way process was also a part of the annual plan for 2009. Within this action, in total 7 projects were supported, among them a project implemented by Harju Economic Development Centre. The project was called “Get active and informed through the Internet” and its aim was to increase the active participation of TCNs in Estonian society by increasing their knowledge of the civil society. The project also helped to employ a Russian language consultant in order to offer immigrant NGOs consultation and information sharing through the internet.

Annual plan for 2010 is focusing again on fostering the intercultural dialogue between young Estonian citizens and third country nationals, but also on activities and joint visits to different Estonian institutions which should give participants more information and practical skills for living, studying and working in Estonia. Some actions also promote organizing joint events in order to increase people with different citizenship to participate actively in the civil society by developing umbrella organisations, organising conferences, forums and trainings. Activation of social debates and forums on inter-ethnic relations and integration through support to various dialogue platforms is also one of the actions under this year's annual

plan, with an objective to create a favourable environment which would be able to support the complexity of the integration processes (through raising administrative capacity of public services to TCNs). Various forums and debates involving TCN in dialogue platforms (between local governments, NGOs and TCN-s, society organisations) will be organised under this actions. All these activities can be seen to support political participation of third country nationals not only in a grass-root level (first actions in this section), but also directly on the policy level (last action in this section).

One of the actions under **annual plan for 2010** which helps to promote political participation is the idea of developing adaption programmes. This programme was also included in the previous annual plan and by this programme newly arrived TCNs are taught Estonian language, providing knowledge about life and society in Estonia as well as settling into Estonian society. It also includes topics on the politics. Project was implemented by the University of Tallinn.¹¹ It was commented in our interviews that EIF funding has had especially strong impact when dealing with newly arrived immigrant.

During the interviews in Migration Foundation, the participants came to the conclusion that when assessing the different types activities supported by the European Fund for Third Country Nationals, then the majority of actions and projects are done in the field of information and awareness raising as well as in the trainings for professionals working with immigrants. The latter concerns especially teacher training, which has been always one of the main areas of EIF and Estonian integration policy. Although in their opinion the number of projects engaging with advocacy and promotion of political participation of immigrants are not so high, there are still some projects which cover this area. One example being specific programmes where young people as well as adults are taken to get acquainted with the political level establishments or structures – for example by visiting local governments, parliament and seeing where and how the *power* is "made" or implemented, and how they themselves associate with this process. However, a similar tendency about the moderate number of projects dealing with the political participation became also obvious in our analysis of the EIF multi-annual programme and different annual plans (see before).

Position of political parties in the governing coalition regarding the political participation of immigrants

Interviews with coalition party politicians were conducted with two representatives of the Reform Party and two politicians of the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union. All four respondents are members of the Parliament and both parties form coalition in the parliament. The Reform Party, which was established in 1997 is the leading proponent of the liberal ideology in Estonia, holds the most seats (33/101) in the Parliament and therefore is the leader of the governmental coalition. The Reform Party (REF) itself states that their policy is based on simple liberal values like the individual's freedom of choice, the protection

¹¹ <http://kohanemisprogramm.tlu.ee/>

of ambitious people and entrepreneurs, low taxes and tolerance. The Pro Patria and Res Publica Union (IRL) is a union of two centre-right parties, Isamaaliit and Res Publica, merged in July 2006. Besides other centre-right conservative ideas the Party's most important postulates are guided by a very patriotic view. IRL states that it relies on Estonian culture and European Christian traditions, values patriotism and the patriotic upbringing of young people and honours independence based on the legal continuity of the Estonian Republic. The Reform Party and IRL together form the Estonian governmental coalition since April 2007.

The position of high level politicians regarding the political participation of immigrants and third country nationals are very similar to each other. The most common postulate between the four respondents was that Estonians current policies on immigration and integration issues have been reasonable and therefore there is no strong need to carry out significant changes. One of the views from IRL was that integration is extremely necessary, especially to avoid having groups in the society who are isolated – but he also commented that integration has not yet been too effective. The views of the coalition party politicians are rather conservative than reform-minded. For example, one respondent from the Reform Party stated that the citizenship policy preferably has to be conservative, static and its greatest value comes from the principle that it is not something to be granted, but ought to be earned. Another common feature between the interviewees was that their answers reflected some kind of bitterness in regard of the steps Estonia has made to improve the political rights of immigrants. For example, one respondent from REF explained that third country nationals in Estonia have the right to vote in local elections only because it was a demand of the European Union. He stated that somehow this was a mistake, because Latvia did not give this right to immigrants and still no sanctions followed.

The interviewed politicians stated collectively that whenever dealing with the question of immigrant's political participation, we should bear in mind that this is mainly the sphere of citizens. This view was especially intensively expressed by one of the respondents from the Reform Party as well as from the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union. They state: "A person who has not naturalized because of whatever reasons, does not belong to the political system of the state in which territory he lives. This person cannot own political rights like the right to be a member of a party or vote in elections, simply because he is not the citizen of the state." Somewhat more liberal views were expressed by his colleague from REF, who believes that long-term residents should have a right to vote in municipal elections: "Immigrant should have a say in local matters which directly determine their everyday life. For example whether a kindergarten should be closed down or not, how to arrange cleanliness of parks etc". No one from the interviewed politicians claimed that immigrant should have a right to run for elections. IRL position was that when considering all the other aspects mentioned before (i.e. not having rights to participate in the parliamentary elections and not being allowed to be a member of the party), they do not see any reasons why they should not be part of any other political debates, which do not have a precondition of having a citizenship – but the problem here is that they just may not be aware of these debates nor

interested too much. However, he also thinks that those who are really interested in participating in Estonian politics have already acquired Estonian citizenship.

The opinions about immigrants' political participations in civil society were quite ambivalent. For example respondent from IRL expressed a more conservative view. He stated that immigrant's organizations should not have a central role in policy design, because without being Estonian citizens they are not a part of the political system. He suggested that immigrant's NGOs should express their views by helping their members to gain Estonian citizenship and by publishing articles in the Estonian media. Another respondent was convinced that immigrants shouldn't establish organizations which deal only with immigrant's issues. He believed that the best way for immigrant's to influence policies is to participate in issue-based organizations which deal for example with nature protection, education matters etc. He stated: "In my opinion the most commonly made mistake is that Estonians assume that TCNs want to have a talk in integration topics. I declare that they want to participate in debates about environment, urban planning, safety issues."

Now, this view is not exclusively characteristic only to politicians. In our interviews with other respondents they also tended to agree that legal participation rights in terms of voting in the parliament should be reserved only to citizens – this is because in Estonian context of third country nationals, when one is interested in politics but is nevertheless stateless, then one still has all opportunities to obtain citizenship (by fulfilling certain conditions as discussed previously). As of those who are citizens of other countries, then why should they be allowed to vote for two parliaments, our interviewees ask. But they also agree that Estonian political elite is not very active in the field of debating over the issues of participation of immigrants at large (except perhaps in the parliament). Some opinions also concluded that neither Estonian nor Russian language media produced in Estonia is really giving an adequate picture about the rights and needs of immigrants, even less of third country nationals specifically, since they have been more focussed on single or specific cases. While researching these topics needs so called explorative-analytical journalism, then in the words of one politician: "This field of explorative and qualitative journalism in Estonia exists really at a very minimal level".

PART II IMMIGRANTS' POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: VIEW FROM INSIDE

Immigrant NGOs fostering political participation

Scope of activity of immigrant NGOs and / or other civil society organizations fostering the political participation of immigrants or seeking to promote their rights to political participation

There are a growing number of civil society organisations in Estonia, and this tendency has also become evident during the calls for proposals for the European Fund for Third Country Nationals (EIF), where submitted applications have shown increase in numbers during the last years. In one hand, this shows also the growth of civic activism in Estonia. On the other hand, when looking at the NGOs which are specifically immigrant oriented and who foster political participation, then these numbers are rather limited. Most of the immigrant organizations are cultural organizations, which represent different ethnicities or nationalities living in Estonia, and usually their activities are connected with the preservation and presentation of their culture, traditions, etc without having explicit political or policy changing agenda. As described in the subchapter about EIF and its priorities (see page 15), the everyday activities of these kinds of organisations largely overlap with the activities brought out there: e.g. fields of intercultural exchange, dialogue and promotion of everyday contacts between NGOs and other civil society organisations, supporting the ideas of multiculturalism and tolerance, training young people who deal in a everyday basis with TCNs, distribution of leaflets which inform TCNs about the issues of integration etc.

Next to these, one can find some very specific organisations in Estonia (majority of whom have not yet received funding from EIF), those who promote immigrant or ethnic minority population rights in general. Some of these organisations consist also at some degree of immigrants (of Russian speaking minority) themselves. For example Estonian Human Rights Centre (EHRC), Legal Information Centre for Human Rights (LICHR) and Estonian Institute for Human Rights (EIHR), but to some extent also Jaan Tõnisson Institute. Their focus is mainly on the equal rights of immigrants and of different nationalities in Estonia.

However, there are some immigrant NGOs (i.e. organisations where a majority or equal number of members are immigrants, including third country nationals) who are active in the field of promoting political participation as well as civic activism in general. The main ones are “Open Republic”, “KoosVmeste”, “Integration Centre of the Eastern-Virumaa” and voluntary association „SEBRA”, but also many local level youth organisations and others, who are in this field active on a project basis. It may be hard to assess whether their activities promote or foster political participation directly – most of them have stated integration as one of their overall goals and aim to include their members and others into the civil society. But at least one of these organisations, “Open Republic”, has been very active in terms of applying for funding from many different sources, and lobbying as well as organising events which have a very clear policy agenda.

Then there are some organisations in Estonia who are not immigrant NGOs *per se*, but whose goals among others are more evident towards increasing the inclusion of their target group - ethnic minorities and immigrants (including TCNs) - in all levels of society: whether it is political, civic and/or socio-economical participation. These organisations and institutions are for example „Council for Ethnic Minorities” (*Rahvusvähemuste kultuurinõukoda*) (under the Ministry of Culture, deals mainly with cultural issues), „Round Table of Nationalities” (under the cooperation network 'Estonian Cooperation Assembly'), as well as Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations who foster cooperation between Estonian and Russian-speaking NGOs in a project based activities. One of the main projects of the Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations (NENO) is “Increasing the cooperation between Estonian and Russian NGOs within NENO network”, and as told us during the interview with its representative, they have been very successful of functioning as a gateway between Estonian speaking and Russian speaking organisations, which has helped to channel the views, problems or recommendations of these organisations to the media as well as into the policy-making level.

Under the EIF funding, one of the best practices in our opinion concerning the promotion of political participation of immigrants were three projects which were implemented within the scope of the ‘Debate of Nationalities – a More Successful Estonia’ competition round. They aimed at creating a dialogue about issues that are important for the society in Estonia. These projects were carried out by the Estonian Cooperation Assembly (explained more below), the Estonian Academy of Young Scientists and International Women’s Cooperation Mentoring Board.¹²

First of them, “Round Table of Nationalities”, was convened by the Estonian Cooperation Assembly on the 26th of May 2010. The goal of the round table is to engage Estonian inhabitants of different ethnic backgrounds, mother tongues, and nationalities in discussions on important issues related to Estonian society. The members of the round table are personally appointed by the Supervisory Board of the Estonian Cooperation Assembly. The activities of the round table are issue-specific. The roundtable will specify a focal issue annually and concentrate on that issue throughout the year. The work of the round table will culminate in a public report supplemented with proposals and recommendations, which will be presented to the President of the Republic of Estonia and the relevant legislative and executive authorities. Similar platforms for dialogue that have an advisory capacity and analyse social processes in order to increase social cohesion can be found in many European countries (e.g. Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and others). They have been very active in trying to bring the message to the Estonian policy-makers as well as carried through 2 conferences, and one seminar on the topic of “Ethnic Minorities in decision-making”.

¹² <http://www.meis.ee/debate-of-nationalities--a-more-successful-estonia->

Public seminars were organised in Tallinn, Tartu, Narva, Kiviõli and Kohtla-Järve as part of the “We value good education – we study in Estonia!” project of the Estonian Academy of Young Scientists. Participants of the seminars included young Estonian and European third-country nationals who can learn about the great opportunities offered by institutions of higher education in Estonia and the important role played by higher education in integrating immigrants into Estonian society.¹³

Discussions using the democratic Open Room Method and the format of think tanks was organised as part of the “Let us discover TOGETHER!” project of the NGO Mentor Chamber of International Women Cooperation, in 3 Estonian cities. The key words in the discussions between citizens of Estonia and European third countries were: language, culture, history, interest, acceptance, participation, involvement, organisation, etc, as guarantees of success.

NGO’s evaluation of the impact of projects of The European Fund for the Integration of Third-country Nationals

The NGO’s evaluation of the impact of projects of The European Fund for the Integration of Third-country Nationals on the political participation of their constituency and on their own organisational capacity

During our interviews with NGOs, state officials and with Delegated Authority for the European Fund for the Integration of Third-country Nationals (‘Integration Foundation Our People’), the overall assessment of the impact of projects supported by EIF was ambivalent. On one hand, project “Round Table of Nationalities” funded by EIF evaluated their own impact on the political participation of TCNs rather high. Another EIF project, “Increasing the cooperation between Estonian and Russian NGOs within NENO network” run by the Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations (NENO) was also evaluated very good regarding the impact on their constituency. According to their project manager, they function very successfully as a gateway between Estonian speaking and Russian speaking organisations, and they have helped to channel the views, problems or recommendations of their constituency to the media as well as into the policy-making level. They have also conducted several surveys within their target group in order to gain more feedback on their activities. One of the questions was whether they (i.e. constituency) want them to continue: the reaction was overwhelmingly positive, which gave NENO confirmation that their activities really matter.

EIF funding’s impact on the projects analysed in this report concerned mainly a raised awareness of their organisation among public, but also increased consciousness of the issues which were channelled to the target groups. One respondent stated that one way of measuring the impact is also by looking after the successful event, debate or seminar at the feedback which manifests itself in a form of personal contacts and interactions during the

¹³ <http://enta.ee/study-in-estonia/index.htm>

days following the activity. The political participation is definitely raised, if not directly then at least indirectly by raising their knowledge of the issue, was the mutual understanding among our respondents. Also networking is important with regard to the impact of project's actions, i.e. when new knowledge and skills attained are disseminated within the target group, but the view was also that this is hard to measure.

Impact was seen to be assessable especially among the youth and amid the projects which "deal" with young people. One of the respondents in Integration Foundation indicated that definitely one should distinguish between different age-groups, whereas in younger age groups the impact is usually positive by the increased capacity to represent themselves or members of their organisation and their constituency.

On the other hand these immigrant organisations where a large number of members have a immigrant background, stated that they are aware of the European Fund for the Integration of Third-country Nationals, but it had not come to their mind to apply for the fund's finances for the implementation of their projects. Although for example one of the interviewed immigrant organisations had not yet gained any financial support from EIF, they expressed their appreciation for the fund's engagement in building a stronger civil society since they were aware that the fund has been an important support for many immigrant oriented organisations in Estonia.

Immigrant NGO's views

Immigrant NGO's views regarding the desired directions of development of political participation among immigrants and main challenges on their way (political parties' positions, public opinion, other factors)

When speaking of the projects in general which were in our sample, ones which also included activities that foster political participation, then there were some views that the bureaucratic requirements which accompany with the funding received from EIF are sometimes just too complex. The organisations may not have so good organisational skills or technical capacity in order to be fluent in fulfilling technical criteria required in the contracts.

The project based funding was sometimes also criticised due to the fact that the sustainability of different activities are always under the threat. One can perhaps start gaining results only after the 3 or 4 years, which draws from long-time and effective work. But then the funding mechanism may change, or disappear totally. Regarding the long-term development of the civil society in Estonia, then one of the representatives of immigrant NGOs claimed that actually in Estonia one should have more civil society organisations, because when looking at the persons who are active in this field, then from time-to-time they always tend to recur. This means, that new people with fresh ideas are needed. But he also guessed that in this regard Estonia is going in the right direction.

One of the challenges when speaking of newly arrived immigrants is that their understanding of the participation is rather low. Our interviews in Migration Foundation, in Police and Border Guard Board as well as in the Ministry all indicated that direct provision of information, or even specific services addressing political participation and its different forms may not always make sense. In the first place newly arrived immigrants should get acquainted with the whole system, they have to “finish one stage and step into another” after which they realize that political activity is good for them. So the identification of the needs and services provided when dealing with newly arrived immigrants *vis-a-vis* stateless persons with long-term residence background or citizens of other non-EU countries may be different in different EIF actions.

Another problem brought out was that when immigrants want to participate in some bigger organisations which tend to operate in Estonian language, then this can be one of the obstacles for inclusion. Therefore the knowledge of Estonian is crucial. The representatives of some NGOs commented that in the beginning the lack of motivation can be very low – lack of motivation to start learning the language. Yet they know a lot of people who have come to their organisation and got from there a motivation to learn the language. We can argue here, as stated also in the beginning of this report, that language is considered to be one of the main aspects which affect not only political participation, but general coping in the society in general. And when looking at the wider picture, then language and communication skills are very important in terms of media sphere – without knowing the Estonian language, one may be living in Estonia, but the political *self-involvement* may be directed towards another country.

Public opinion issue was actually rather frequently brought out as a factor which looks for sensation and hence gives the distorted picture of the overall situation. Or sometimes it gives no picture whatsoever - some of the respondents went even so far of saying that media is actually totally indifferent to these issues and does not pay so much attention. If only, then during the election period. This was one criticism towards the politicians as well, that they should discuss and debate these topics of participation and political rights also during the “stable times”.

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APPENDIX 1

Selected EIF projects fostering or supporting political participation of third country nationals

Name of organization	Round	Name (in Estonian)	Name (in English)	Description
Civic Training	Let`s do it together (2010)	„Ei ole üksi üksi maa”	„No land is alone”	Making personal contacts between third-country nationals, including non-nationals, and Estonians and enhancing between the NGO-s. Organizing and visiting different events, also visiting the Parliament of Estonia.
Estonian Fund for UNICEF	Let`s do it together (2010)	„Teeme koos laste heaks”	„Let`s do it together for children”	Conducting civic seminars in three municipalities, where the focus was on the joint activities on the community/local level and opportunities for participation. Between the seminars, joint citizen-initiatives were carried through.
Integration Centre of the Eastern-Virumaa	Let`s do it together (2010)	„Rahvuskultuuride mitmekesisus ja tolerantsus”	„Diversity and tolerance of the national cultures”	Focus of the project is to enhance awareness of the non-Estonians living in Eastern-Virumaa about the civic society and the opportunities to actively participate in the society through the cooperation of the NGO-s. The activities of the project include publishing information bulletin, organizing three expositions and conducting roundtable and an international conference.
NGO Voluntary association „SEBRA”	Let`s do it together (2010)	„Kolmas sektor ilma piirita”	„Third sector without the borders”	Increasing the potential of the civil society organisations and activeness between TCNs and other citizens living in Narva (city located at the Russian border in eastern-Estonia). Project helped to train leaders and management of immigrant NGOs in organising public events.
SOS Children's Village Association of Estonia	Let`s do it together (2010)	Meie valik on aktiivne elu”	„Our choice is active life”	Aim of the project is to increase mutual understanding and activeness through the cooperation of the civic communities in people of different nationalities living in Narva. Target group includes people living in Narva, including the unemployed and the parents. Participants get active knowledge and skills to lead their lives, create NGO-s or to participate in existing NGO-s in Narva.

NGO Kodukant Harjumaa	Let`s do it together (2010)	„Lõimumise võlud ja valud“	„Magic and pain of integration“	Project includes NGO-s from two different counties – Harjumaa and Eastern-Virumaa. This project aims to create relationships and acquire experiences to acknowledge and foster integration. Important activities include study- and information days in both counties and mutual 3-day studyvisit to visit both – Eastern-Virumaa and Harjumaa. Intensive dissemination takes place through publishing the Estonian-Russian newsletter and also through web site (www.kkharju.ee). All the activities aim to foster of acquiring knowledge and information and also give motivation to participate in the activities of the NGO-s in the future.
Kohtla-Järve Tammiku Gymnasium	Our Estonia (2009)	Minu Eesti – meie Eesti	My Estonia – our Estonia	Students learn to know local municipality. Activities include group activities on the following themes – participation of youth on the local level, school violence on the basis of nationalities, cultural differences of different nationalities; training “Increasing the participation and activity of youth”; 2 student forums and excursion to historical places.
NGO Mentor Chamber of International Women Cooperation	Workshop – more successful Estonia! (2009)	„Avastagem KOOS!“	„Let`s discover together“	Discussions using the democratic Open Room Method and the format of think tanks were organised as part of the ‘Let us discover TOGETHER!’ project of the International Women’s Cooperation Mentoring Board. The key words in the discussions between citizens of Estonia and European third countries are: language, culture, history, interest, acceptance, participation, involvement, organisation, etc., as guarantees of success.
The Estonian Cooperation Assembly	Workshop – more successful Estonia! (2009)	„Ümarlaud Eesti – meie kodu Euroopas“	„Roundtable Estonia – our home in Europe“	Round Table of Nationalities is convened by the Estonian Cooperation Assembly. The goal of the round table is to engage Estonian inhabitants of different ethnic backgrounds, mother tongues, and nationalities in discussions on important issues related to Estonian society. The members of the round table will be personally appointed by the Supervisory Board of the Estonian Cooperation Assembly. The activities of the round table are issue-specific. The roundtable will specify a focal issue annually and concentrate on that issue throughout the year. The work of the round table will culminate in a public report supplemented with proposals and recommendations, which will be presented to the President of the Republic of Estonia and the relevant legislative and executive authorities. Similar platforms for dialogue that have an advisory capacity and analyse social processes in order to increase social

				cohesion can be found in many European countries.
Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation	Workshop – more successful Estonia! (2010)	„Rahvusvähemusi esindavad noored – aktiivsed ühiskonna kodanikud“	„Young, active citizens representing national minorities“	The main purpose of the project is to raise dialogue between young people living in Estonia who have different nationalities and citizenship to explain dominant situation and attitudes on the national relations and integration, to analyze developments and to propose solutions on the effective implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013. Project activities include forums and a training.
NGO Ida-Virumaa Naiste Ühendus (IVINÜ)	Let`s do it together (2009)	Ida-Virumaa mitte-eestlastest naiste aktiivsemaks kaasamiseks kodanikuühiskonna arendamisse	Inclusion of non-Estonian women form Eastern-Virumaa into the development of civil society	Organizing information days and conducting a forum.
NGO Sillamäe Lastekaitse Ühing	Intercultural cooperation of youth (2009)	NAKid tegutsevad! – Noored Aktiivsed Kodanikud	YA-s are acting! - Young Active Citizens	Giving opportunities for young people to be introduced into the local the community/municipality life and to speak up with the activities in the state level. Includes carrying through seminars and preparation of dissemination materials as well as study materials. Also one international conference was held in November.
Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations (NENO)	Let`s do it together (2009)	Eesti- ja venekeelsete ühenduste koostöö tugevdamine EMSLi võrgustikus	Increasing the cooperation between Estonian and Russian NGOs within NENO network	Idea is to send information constantly – different channels have been created to communicate between Estonian and Russian-speaking NGOs; sharing and analysing information and acting on the basis of incoming information. During the last months there is opportunity for Russian NGOs to organize trainings or other events.