

# ESTONIAN SOCIETY MONITORING 2015

Authors: Raivo Vetik, Kristina Kallas, Jüri Kruusvall, Ellu Saar, Jelena Helemäe, Cenely Leppik, Laura Kirss, Külli Kiibus, Kats Kivisitik, Pille Ubakivi-Hadachi

This is the sixth monitoring of the integration of Estonian society, with similar surveys having been conducted in 2000, 2002, 2005, 2008 and 2011. In the autumn of 2014, theoretical and methodological preparations for the monitoring were made, which involved making a decision on the focus of the survey. In January and February 2015, Turu-uuringute AS conducted a public opinion survey, whose sample included permanent residents of Estonia from 15 years of age. The proportional random sampling method was used and a total of 1214 people were interviewed. The sample was based on respondents' nationality – 500 Estonians and 700 respondents with other nationalities, mainly Russians, were interviewed. After that, five focus group surveys were carried out. The target groups of the group interviews included young people studying at a mixed upper secondary school, Russian-speaking employed youth with higher education, and media experts.

The summary of the monitoring consists of four parts. First, a summary of the key results is provided in which we highlight the central positive and negative trends and which contains the principal messages of the survey. Next, we focus on key results by area, highlighting the results of the analysis of attitudes and suggesting possible integration policy measures. The third part describes the key results of the monitoring in respect of young people i.e. the central target group of the integration programme. The last part reiterates some of the policy recommendations which those conducting the monitoring consider the most important.

## Summary

### Positive:

- » Estonian language skills are improving and the positive symbolic significance of a command of Estonian is increasing.
- » The trust of young people of other ethnicities in state institutions in Estonia is close to that of Estonian-speaking young people, i.e. significantly higher compared to older Russian-speaking generations.
- » Indicators measuring the strength of Estonian national identity, which are related to Estonian Russians' sense of belonging and to ethnic Estonians' willingness to engage, are good.
- » Compared to previous surveys, ethnic Estonians' attitudes towards the simplification of citizenship requirements have become more supportive, with the vast majority finding that Estonian citizenship should be given to all children born in Estonia regardless of their parents' citizenship, as well as all other people born in Estonia.

### Negative:

- » The number of persons with undetermined citizenship is only slowly decreasing, even though this includes a significant number of young people born in Estonia and with knowledge of Estonian.
- » The perception of socio-economic and political inequality between ethnic groups has increased among Estonian Russians, which is reflected, among other things, in a negative perception of the results of the Russian-language school reform.
- » The trust of Estonian Russians as a whole in the state institutions of Estonia continues to be considerably lower compared to that of ethnic Estonians.
- » All integration indicators are significantly weaker in Ida-Viru County compared to those in other regions of Estonia.

# Key results by area

## Citizenship

- » The increasing trend of obtaining Estonian citizenship continues among the population of other ethnicities, but there has been no significant growth in the last decade. While the proportion of Estonian citizens is high among young people of other ethnicities, it declines in each subsequent age group. **The fact that as many as 19% of people of other ethnicities who were born in Estonia and whose parents were also born in Estonia (the so-called third generation) are not Estonian citizens is worrying from the point of view of integration policy.** This proportion has not declined compared to the previous monitoring, which also revealed that as many as one-fifth of that group did not have Estonian citizenship. In addition, as much as 34% of the so-called second generation, i.e. people of other ethnicities born in Estonia, are non-citizens. Young people (aged 15–34) represent a third of the people born in Estonia who are not Estonian citizens, and a fifth (22%) of non-citizens consider their Estonian language skills to be good or very good. The fact that these people do not have full political rights and that are not Estonian citizens is a serious challenge to Estonian integration policy.
- » **The majority (57%) of persons with undetermined citizenship continue to wish to obtain Estonian citizenship.** They mention an inability to learn Estonian as the main obstacle to obtaining citizenship. However, it is also possible to observe a lack of strong motivators to meet the requirements for obtaining citizenship, given that a third of persons with undetermined citizenship feel that a lack of citizenship does not hinder them from living in Estonia, and without Estonian citizenship it is easier to travel to Russia and other CIS countries. Considering this population group's low assessment of their command of Estonian and the high proportion of elderly people and

people with secondary and vocational education in this group, the inability to meet the requirements set can indeed be regarded as an obstacle to obtaining citizenship.

- » **The attitude of Estonians towards the easing of requirements for obtaining citizenship has changed considerably.** The vast majority of Estonians feel that Estonian citizenship could be given to all children born in Estonia, regardless of their parents' citizenship, but also to other persons born in Estonia in the past. This indicates increased support for the introduction of the principle of *jus soli* in citizenship policy, which is similar to the trend in many other European countries.

## Political and social involvement

- » There are differences between Estonians and other ethnic groups in terms of interest in politics, turnout at elections and participation in politics by other means. **The population of other ethnicities is less active across all indicators – somewhat less interested in politics, less involved in elections and less politically active.**
- » **Compared to Estonians, representatives of other ethnicities are significantly less active in participating in public events and national celebrations.** There are considerable differences in terms of participation in the Song and Dance Celebrations, other major cultural events and folk festivals. Also, the proportion of people of other ethnicities who follow celebrations of the anniversary of the Republic is half that of Estonians (40% vs 80%).
- » **The political activity of representatives of other ethnicities is affected by their command of Estonian – the better their Estonian language skills, the more active they are in social life.** Residents of Ida-Viru

County are significantly less active. When supporting social activity, it is therefore important to pay attention to the development of language environments as well to regional measures targeted at Ida-Viru County.

## Trust in and attitudes towards Estonia as a state

- » **Compared to Estonians, people of other ethnicities only have more trust in the church and local governments, while the trust of Estonians in all other institutions is significantly higher compared to non-Estonians.** The biggest difference between Estonians and people of other ethnicities is revealed in their trust in the Defence Forces and the institution of the President of the Republic. Compared to other groups, people with undetermined citizenship have the least trust in any institution. The trust of young people of other ethnicities in the age group 15–24 in the power institutions of Estonia (the President, Government and Parliament) is higher than among older generations of non-Estonians and similar to that of Estonians in the same age group.
- » **While Estonians have a positive attitude towards the engagement of the population of other ethnicities in politics, they are also wary – just over a fifth of Estonians deem the engagement of non-Estonians unnecessary.** At the same time, Estonians are still not ready to see an Estonian Russian holding high political office, and only 7% have a positive attitude towards an Estonian Russian being Prime Minister.

## National identity

- » **National identity indicators are relatively high among both ethnic Estonians and Estonian Russians:** respondents with a weak national identity account

- for only around one-fifth of both groups; all other respondents have either a moderate or strong national identity.
- » **The national identity of Estonian Russians is influenced mainly by demographic characteristics such as region, age and gender.** Integration process in Ida-Viru County is the most challenging. Compared to other regions it has the largest segment group with a weak national identity and the smallest segment group with a strong national identity. In terms of gender, women are considerably better integrated than men: among women the segment group characterised by a weak national identity is significantly smaller and the segment group characterised by a strong national identity is somewhat larger than among men. Among age groups, the 60+ group stands out very clearly, with the proportion of those with a weak national identity being around half and the proportion of those with a strong national identity being around twice that of other age groups.
- » **Estonians' willingness to engage and consider ethnic minorities is most strongly influenced by the demographic characteristics of education and region of residence.** With regard to education, it appears that in the group of respondents with basic education the proportion of people with a weak national identity is twice as high and the proportion of people with a strong national identity is four times smaller than in the group of respondents with higher education. Differences are less pronounced between the group of respondents with vocational and secondary education and that with higher education, but they are still significant: the proportion of people with a weak national identity is twice as large and the proportion of people with a strong national identity is half the size in the former group. Estonians' willingness to engage depends strongly on education. This is important from the point of view of shaping integration policy.

- » Estonians living in Ida-Viru County significantly differ from Estonians living in other regions. The proportion of Estonians with a weak national identity is twice as high in Ida-Viru County as in other regions (46%) and the proportion of Estonians with a strong national identity is just 3% of the sample (compared to 35% in Tallinn and 15% elsewhere in Estonia). Thus, for both ethnic Estonians and Estonian Russians, the region of residence is the demographic characteristic that affects national identity the most. Consequently, Ida-Viru County needs special attention within integration policy.
- » Analysis of indicators relating to national identity and human and social capital also confirms that there is a relationship between them. As a general trend among both ethnic Estonians and Estonian Russians, people with higher human and social capital, as a rule, have a stronger national identity. Respondents with a strong national identity have more contacts with representatives of other ethnicities compared to those with a weak national identity. However, in the case of Russian Estonians there is no significant difference between the two groups in terms of perception of ethnic inequality. This indicates the importance of promoting contact between ethnic groups and equal treatment policies in the further development of integration policy.
- » **The national identity of both ethnic Estonians and Estonian Russians is influenced by the perception of threats:** while Estonian Russians perceive, in particular, a threat to the preservation of their national culture, Estonians perceive a threat from Russia. Thus, it can be argued that although the formation of a strong national identity is difficult in Estonia due to an increasingly combative external context and due to a variety of historical and psychological reasons, contributing to it is one of the central tasks of integration policy.

## Language skills and use of languages

- » **Among Estonian residents of other ethnicities, people with active Estonian language skills currently account for 37%; people with passive knowledge of Estonian account for 48%, while people who do not speak Estonian account for 15%** (according to the respondents' own estimates). Compared to 2011, Estonian language skills have improved among people of other ethnicities: the proportion of people who do not speak Estonian has declined and that of people with active Estonian language skills has increased.
- » **Representatives of other ethnicities use Estonian more for interaction with Estonian co-learners or colleagues, business and cooperation partners and fellow hobby enthusiasts, i.e. generally speaking, in communication networks relating to a specific shared interest.**
- » **Nearly 60% of representatives of other ethnicities do not interact in Estonian (to an appreciable extent) with Estonians in any of their communication networks where they may speak Estonian;** 14% interact in Estonian in up to half of their communication networks containing ethnic Estonians; 11% in up to three-quarters of such networks; and 16% interact in Estonian in almost all networks in which they have Estonian partners.
- » **More than half of ethnic Estonians have active Russian language skills (according to their own estimates); 45% have passive Russian language skills, and just 4% of ethnic Estonians do not speak Russian at all.** Compared to the survey conducted in 2011, Russian language skills have, on average, improved among ethnic Estonians: the proportion of Estonians who are fluent in Russian has increased and the proportion of those who do not speak Russian at all has decreased. Nearly 20% of Estonians and around 30% of

representatives of other ethnicities consider it possible that the importance of Russian will increase in the future. A similar proportion of people regard English-language communication between Estonians and Russians as normal. Both indicators have somewhat increased among Estonians compared to the previous survey. Among representatives of other ethnicities, the proportion of those who consider English-language communication normal has increased, while belief in the growing importance of Russian in the future has decreased.

- » **Looking at age groups, the group of people of other ethnicities up to 40 years of age has majority of those with active Estonian language skills, while those aged 40 and older have majority of those with a passive knowledge of Estonian.** In younger age groups, Estonian language skills have also improved significantly compared to the monitoring of 2011.
- » **The symbolic significance of Estonian language skills for people living in Estonia is manifested in language-related attitudes**, e.g. three-quarters of Estonians and nearly two-thirds of representatives of other ethnicities agree that skills in Estonian enhance mutual trust between Estonians and Russians. Compared to 2008, the proportion of people agreeing with this statement has grown by 20% among Estonians and more than doubled among other ethnic groups.
- » **While the language skills of the Estonian population have improved over the last five years, they do not yet meet communication needs in work-related or recreational settings.** Active language skills that enable people to freely express themselves in the language both verbally and in writing are deficient. Therefore, integration measures could include an extensive programme involving the creation of opportunities for learning and practising Estonian which should not only cover non-citizens (since the data suggest

that there are plenty of Estonian citizens with poor Estonian language skills) and which should primarily focus on the acquisition of active communicative abilities. The development of Estonian language skills could be linked to engagement and participation measures to make practising the language interesting and attractive. These measures include activities that encourage the establishment of a variety of contact between Estonians and the population of other ethnicities. Translation into Russian could be used more at cultural events, because translation contributes to the learning of Estonian by representatives of other ethnicities rather than preventing it (translation would attract more people with another mother tongue to participate in events, help them understand Estonian expressions and thus learn them etc.). Publication of bilingual materials (e.g. bilingual children's picture books) should not be feared either, since such materials can also be given a language-learning function.

## Contacts

- » **On average, the number of inter-ethnic networks of long-standing relationships per person has increased significantly over the past five years**, reaching 2.8 networks among Estonians and 3.2 networks among other ethnic groups (out of a possible six networks). It appears that 88% of Estonians and 92% of the population of other ethnicities participate in at least one such network.
- » **Also, 30–40% of Estonians and around 70% of the population of other ethnicities express a willingness to participate in a multi-ethnic community** (neighbours, co-learners or workplace colleagues, or relatives). Over the past five years, the attitudes of both Estonians and representatives of other ethnicities towards such participation in all three of these communities has become much more positive (the number of those with a positive attitude has increased).

Around 50% of Estonians (35% in 2010) and nearly 80% of the population of other ethnicities (64% in 2010) have a positive attitude towards participation in at least one of these three communities.

- » **The attitudes of the Estonian population towards multicultural society are generally positive.** The vast majority (around 90%) of both Estonians and representatives of other ethnicities feel that different ethnicities can get along and cooperate in a country; 60% of Estonians and 80% of representatives of other ethnicities regard contact between different cultures as enriching Estonian society.
- » **The analysis reveals that the level of positive cultural attitudes is not linked to the extent of actual contacts.** Thus, people's attitudes towards the possibility of intercultural cooperation are more related to the importance of mutual cooperation between ethnic groups; they are not linked to actual relationships between people. In other words, people do not always treat their daily interactions as a part of relationships between the major ethnic groups in society. Integration measures should therefore include the creation of an environment that encourages inter-ethnic contacts (multinational communities in schools and work-related and recreational settings, including cultural events, hobby education etc.) and the development of positive attitudes towards interaction between people of different ethnicities with the help of the media (Russian-language TV channel, portrayal of communication between people of different ethnicities in TV series, feature films, reality shows, current affairs programmes, writings etc.).

## Education

- » **Both Estonians and other ethnic groups have a positive attitude towards mixed groups and classes of children speaking different mother tongues** (in both schools and

kindergartens). However, there are some differences between ethnic groups in respect of organisational issues. While Estonians prefer a situation where only a few children speaking a mother tongue other than Estonian are included in a class or group, other ethnicities prefer equal proportions. It can thus be concluded that while Estonians do not prefer purely homogeneous groups/classes and there is support for mixed groups, they are not as open as representatives of other ethnic groups in their preferences. As regards the time when the provision of partially Estonian-language education should begin, there has been consensus between the different ethnic groups since the monitoring of 2008 that kindergarten is the most appropriate institution in which such learning should commence.

- » Ethnic groups' preferences for the language of instruction in basic schools and (upper) secondary schools are as follows: while **Estonians prefer Estonian as the language of instruction in both school types**, other ethnicities show no clear preference in respect of either school type. Estonians who attach importance to the provision of Russian-language basic education in Estonia justify this view by the need to give everyone the opportunity to learn in their mother tongue. Representatives of other ethnicities frequently mentioned the acquisition of good subject-based knowledge as a reason as well. It also appeared that, unlike Estonians, representatives of other ethnicities believe that high-quality education at different levels is less available to Russian-speaking young people than to Estonian youth, and the largest differences were observed in the assessments of higher education. A positive change is that, compared to the results of 2011, both ethnic groups feel that the availability of high-quality education at different levels to Russian-speaking young people has improved.
- » Compared to previous surveys, representatives of other ethnicities now appear to be significantly less

**convinced of the positive outcome of the school reform.** The assessments of representatives of other ethnicities mainly reflect the opinion that Estonian-language learning implies a significant additional burden on students in the process of learning and causes psychological stress and pressure. Also in focus groups, Russian-speaking young people highlighted the challenge of "double work" for them compared to Estonians (i.e. translating texts and learning the language) that must be performed in the process of learning a subject in Estonian. High-school graduates remained optimistic, admitting that they had been prepared for this increased burden when choosing a mixed school. In their assessments given during the survey, representatives of other ethnicities agreed that common Estonian-language studies foster contact between Estonians and the Russian-speaking population. The proportion of people agreeing with this statement has increased considerably since previous surveys.

» **Russian-speaking high-school graduates noted in the focus group that although they did not expect special treatment and had taken the increased burden into account, they still felt that simpler or simplified texts would better contribute to the acquisition of knowledge.** They also highlighted the need for support from teachers in the form of translating more difficult terms, explaining the subject using simpler Estonian words and allowing more time to study texts. In addition, they pointed out a number of shortcomings in the structure of the system – irregular Estonian language training (with the main load being concentrated in the tenth grade) which reduces the usefulness of Estonian-language subject lessons, and insufficient information about the importance of learning Estonian before upper secondary school. Overall, the two ethnic groups nevertheless agree in general that there should be more common Estonian-language subject lessons and that they could start before upper secondary school in order to develop Estonian language skills, enhance interaction and create a stronger sense of unity.

## Labour market

- » The general trends of labour market indicators reveal signs of improvement compared to the crisis period. However, **inter-ethnic differences have increased on the labour market.** The analysis shows that even a good command of Estonian has not made the opportunities of other ethnic groups equal to those of Estonians on the labour market. While differences were relatively small during the pre-crisis period, Estonians have been much more successful in recovering from the crisis. The indicators that reflect the status of other ethnic groups on the labour market remain worse than in the pre-crisis period. As a result of the crisis, inter-ethnic differences have substantially increased in terms of objective and subjective indicators of the economic situation.
- » **A clear ethnic-linguistic separation can be observed on the Estonian labour market**, and monitoring data suggest that this separation has in fact grown in recent years. Representatives of other ethnicities are much less optimistic about their employment opportunities, and not even higher education makes their outlook more optimistic. The most significant differences between ethnic groups are indeed manifested in the assessments given by tertiary graduates. The main reason of income differences between Estonians and other ethnicities is a significant underrepresentation of people of other ethnicities with higher education in the highest income group. This may point to impeded access to the most highly paid positions among well-educated members of other ethnic groups.

## Media

- » **There have been no changes in the Russian-speaking population's opinions on the importance of media channels as sources of information since 2011.** The most important sources of information remain PBK's news about Estonia, other Russian TV channels,

Russian-language news programmes produced in Estonia and other Estonian-themed programmes of PBK. Local Russian-language newspapers, radio stations and news portals are less important sources of information. At the same time, Russian-speaking people prefer local radio channels, newspapers and news portals to Russian ones. Estonian Public Broadcasting (ETV) is considered to be the most important among Estonian-language channels. There are significant generational differences in media consumption – television (both PBK and Russian-language news programmes produced in Estonia) and Radio 4 are mostly important to the older generation. Younger generations are ever more clearly oriented towards online media, including in Estonian. The importance of social media as an information source is higher among the Russian-speaking population than among ethnic Estonians.

» **Around 45% of the Russian-speaking population follows the Estonian-language media.** Of them, two-thirds also follow the Russian media and local Russian-language media, but one-third clearly prefer the Estonian media. A third of the Russian-speaking population falls mainly within the sphere of influence of the Russian media, and a quarter follow the media very little. Media orientation is related to the relationship of people to Estonia – levels of identification with the country, feeling a part of society and trust in institutions are considerably higher among those who follow Estonian-language media than among those who are Russian media-oriented. Passive media users are less well integrated in society in other aspects, too: they are characterised by a low level of trust in the institutions of Estonia and by the strongest feeling that nothing depends on them.

- » **Although the ability to read Estonian-language media is improving among Russian-speaking people, especially in younger age groups, they still have a need for the media in their mother tongue.** People give preference to the media that they can use in their mother tongue. In addition, Estonian-language channels do not cover all topics that are relevant to the Russian-speaking population – cultural events and national traditions, as well as more specific social and political issues, such as Russian schools and citizenship. On the other hand, part of the Russian-speaking population needs, at times, more in-depth explanations, e.g. regarding political matters.
- » **The Ukraine crisis and the strained relations between Russia and the West have raised people's interest in the news media, but also deepened the differences between Estonians and other ethnic groups in terms of the media channels that they follow.** While ethnic Estonians have a high level of trust in the objective coverage of events by Estonian-language channels, the Russian-speaking population is characterised by a higher level of trust in the Russian media, as well as general trust in all channels. A bidirectional trend is deepening: there are a lot of people who have developed an understanding of the cause of the crisis and who are looking for confirmation of their convictions in the media, while many people follow a variety of sources in Estonian, Russian and English and have a critical attitude towards information coming from any channels.

## Key results in respect of young people of other ethnicities as the central target group

- » All in all, the results of the survey show that compared to the older generation, young people of other ethnicities are better integrated in society in the legal and political sphere, considering both structural indicators (most of them have Estonian citizenship) and attitudinal indicators (they believe in their ability to influence matters in society and they have greater trust in the state).
- » The proportion of Estonian citizens is higher among young people of other ethnicities compared to older age groups. For example, Estonian citizens account for 77% of up to 24-year-old people of other ethnicities, but less than half that (36%) in the 65+ age group. Similarly, there are considerably more people with Estonian citizenship among second-generation immigrants (and conditionally also the third generation) compared to the first generation of immigrants.
- » Young people of other ethnicities (18–24 years) participate in elections and other forms of political involvement less than the average and less than Estonians of the same age. In addition, young people of other ethnicities have a somewhat lower level of trust in state institutions (with the exception of the church) than Estonians of the same age. However, within the entire group of the population of other ethnicities, it is young people who have more trust in institutions of power, especially the President, Government and Parliament. Moreover, the belief of young people of other ethnicities in their ability to influence matters in Estonia is comparable to that of Estonians.

- » Just like young Estonians, young people of other ethnicities support the idea of starting the provision of partially Estonian-language education in kindergarten, which means that the need to learn Estonian has been recognised and that there is a preference for starting language studies at an early age. However, the biggest difference between the overall assessments of the impact of mixed groups and classes was also observed between young Estonians and young people of other ethnicities, with the latter considering the impact to be far more positive compared to Estonians.
  - » Two-thirds of young people of other ethnicities regard their command of Estonian as sufficient to follow the Estonian media. (The proportion among older generations is 40%) Compared to older generations, who consider television and radio to be the most important information channels, young people are ever more clearly oriented towards online media, in both Russian and Estonian, and they also more actively communicate via social media. Young people are also less supportive of the idea of setting up a Russian-language ETV channel, and they prefer other local radio channels to Radio 4.
  - » In terms of types of orientation to the media, young people mostly fall under the type of diverse but critical use of the media, as well as the type of orientation to Estonian-language media. Both types are characterised by better Estonian language skills and a stronger bond with the Estonian state and society. Unfortunately, a lot of young people (particularly young men) also fall under the passive type, which is characterised by the lowest level of awareness and weak integration in Estonian society in other respects.
- » The greater activity of young people in social media also means that compared to older generations, both Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking young people have more contact with representatives of other ethnicities (35% and 58%, respectively). Russian-speaking young people use Facebook more actively, with the Russian-language Odnoklassniki and VKontakte competing with Facebook in older age groups. Young people are more active in using other languages to interact with people on the Internet: 57% use Estonian and 50% use English (46% and 35%, respectively, among older generations).
  - » Steps should be taken to promote the principle of equal opportunities in order to reduce the perception of discrimination among the population of other ethnicities both in the public sector and on the labour market more broadly.
  - » It is necessary to pay more attention to increasing Estonians' willingness to engage others. As this is influenced, in particular, by education, the curriculum should be supplemented accordingly.
  - » Systematic provision of Estonian-language education should begin in kindergarten and continue through all school levels. It is necessary to support and develop teachers' preparedness and ability to teach mixed groups and classes of children with different mother tongues.
  - » Consistent financial and political support should be provided to the ETV+ programme. In addition, (in-service) training opportunities for bilingual journalists should be supported.

## Key policy recommendations

- » Information activities are not enough to solve the problem of statelessness – it is necessary to contribute to the creation of motivation. The focus should be, in particular, on young people of other ethnicities born in Estonia who have good Estonian language skills but who are not Estonian citizens.
- » When supporting social activity, it is important to pay attention to the development of language environments as well to regional measures specifically targeted at Ida-Viru County.
- » The development of language skills could benefit from an extensive programme involving the creation of opportunities for learning and practising Estonian which should not only cover non-citizens and which should focus on the acquisition of active communicative abilities. The development of Estonian language skills could be linked to engagement and participation measures to make practising the language interesting and attractive.