

## Polity IV Country Report 2006: Estonia

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2005</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2006</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Polity:</b></td> <td>6</td> <td>6</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Democ:</b></td> <td>7</td> <td>7</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Autoc:</b></td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Durable:</b></td> <td></td> <td>15</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Tentative:</b></td> <td></td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2005	2006	Change	<b>Polity:</b>	6	6	0	<b>Democ:</b>	7	7	0	<b>Autoc:</b>	1	1	0	<b>Durable:</b>		15		<b>Tentative:</b>		No		
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SCODE	<b>EST</b>	CCODE	<b>366</b>	Date of Report	<b>28 October 2007</b>																				
<b>Polity IV Component Variables</b>																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
2	2	4	7	3	3																				
<b>Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)</b>																									
End Date			Begin Date																						
			6 September 1991 (Ind.)																						
<b>Polity Fragmentation: No</b>																									
<b>Constitution</b>																									
1992																									
<b>Executive(s)</b>																									
President Toomas Hendrik Ilves (SDE); elected by an electoral college on 23 September 2006 Prime Minister Andrus Ansip; nominated by President and approved by Parliament 12 April 2005																									
<b>Legislature</b>																									
Unicameral: State Council (Riigikogu; 101 seats; proportionally elected; most recent elections, 4 March 2007) Estonian Reform Party (ER): 31 Estonian Centre Party (EK): 29 Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica: 19 Social Democratic Party (SDE): 10 Estonian Greens (EER): 6 Estonian People's Union (ERL): 6																									
<b>Judiciary</b>																									
National Court																									

### Narrative Description:

#### **Executive Recruitment: Transitional or Restricted Elections (7)**

By all accounts, the conduct of elections in Estonia since 1991 has been free and fair. However, this view discounts the serious disenfranchisement of Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian residents in Estonia. In 1991 the Estonian parliament passed a restrictive citizenship law which, in effect, granted citizenship only to those who were citizens of the inter-war republic and their descendants (approximately 60% of the population). By the end of the decade less than 1 million residents (out of 1.5 million) were citizens, resulting in the political disenfranchisement of almost one-third of the population. The sheer magnitude of this disenfranchisement has undermined the democratic character of executive recruitment in this country. However, it has now been more than a decade since independence and, by all account, the government has

made serious efforts to integrate the Slavic minority living in Estonia into the political process. While a large segment of the population continues to have no voice in the political process, the government does not appear to be engaged in a systematic policy of discrimination and exclusion other than the indirect restrictions imposed through the language policy.

**Executive Constraints: Executive Parity or Subordination (7)**

The Riigikogu (State Council) is the highest organ of state authority. The Riigikogu elects a President with a required two-thirds majority of votes. If such a majority can not be reached in three rounds of voting, the right to elect the President passes to an electoral college composed of the 101 members of the legislature and 266 local government representatives. It also initiates and approves legislation sponsored by the prime minister. The prime minister is directly accountable to the unicameral national assembly. The judicial branch is independent from executive influence.

**Political Participation: Factional/Restricted Competition (6)**

Political participation in Estonia is highly competitive, at least for Estonians. Numerous political parties actively compete for positions of power although only citizens of Estonia can participate in these organizations. One-third of the residents of Estonia -- Russians 30%, Ukrainians 3%, Belorussians 2% -- have been excluded from participating in the political process due to an Estonian-language requirement necessary for achieving citizenship. While Estonians dominate the south of the country, Russians are the dominant group in Narva and the north-east of the country. Of the country's 400,000 Russian-speakers, about 120,000 have Russian citizenship and 100,000 have none, or "undetermined citizenship." In November 2001, in response to OSCE pressure, the legislature abolished the Estonian language requirement for candidates running for seats in the legislature or local councils. Despite the contentious relationship between Estonians and Russians, the Government generally respects the human rights of its citizens and the large "non-citizen" community. Nonetheless, as was demonstrated in early 2007 when Government efforts to remove a Soviet era war memorial triggered rioting by ethnic Russians, factional tensions remain high.