

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy

ESTONIA

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ESTONIA

Population: 1 319 133
(2018)

Geographical area: 45 339
km²

Coastline: 3780 km (Baltic
Sea)

Neighbouring countries:
Finland, Sweden, Latvia,
Russia.

Shared border: 645 km

Estonia and Latvia: 339 km

Estonia and Russia: 294 km

Population density: 30,3 per
km² (EU average 117,5 km²)

Language: Estonian

Currency: euro



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Estonia_in_Europe.svg

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy - Historical Background

- Estonian territory under different **foreign rules** until 18th century (Danish, Swedish, Polish, German, Russian). Part of the Russian Empire until 1917.
- On **24 February 1918**, independence was declared.
- 1918-1920 War of Independence against Bolshevist Russia and the Baltic German forces. **1920 Tartu Peace Treaty** between Estonia and Soviet Russia.
- Military base agreement between Estonia and the Soviet Union in September 1939. In **1940** the Soviet Union illegally occupied Estonia.
- From 1941 to 1944 **Germany** occupied Estonia.
- In 1944 the reoccupation by **the Soviet Union**.
- **20 August 1991** Estonia regained independence.

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy – Priorities / focus of Foreign Policy

- A member of **the United Nations** since 1991. A non-permanent member of **the UN Security Council** for 2020-2021.
- A member of the **Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)** since 1991.
- A member of the **Council of Europe** since 1993.
- A member of **NATO** since 2004.
- A member state of **the European Union** since 2004. In Schengen area since 2007. Member of the Eurozone since 2011. EU Council Presidency 2017 (July-Dec)
- A member of **OECD** since 2010.

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy – Priorities

- **Security and Defence.** Security issues at the core of International relations. Acknowledgement of smallness and dependence on the international arena; active participation in security cooperation; alliance with the U.S. deemed important; prevention of international crises as well as crisis management and participation in crisis regulation operations.
- **NATO** membership and international cooperation as a priority: Estonia one of the four NATO members that spend 2% of their GDP on defence.
- **Economic development.** About 75% of trade with **EU** countries (5th highest in EU, 2017). A functioning EU internal market and WTO as a priority, also bilateral agreements.
- **Protecting the interests of the Estonian community abroad.** Consular protection in countries of residence; promotion of the rights of Estonian citizens abroad; dealing with cross-border problems; the accessibility of information on consular issues.
- **Specialization** in niche areas, e.g. cybersecurity (NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn) and digital government, as a possibility to punch above one's weight.

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy – Institutions/Agencies

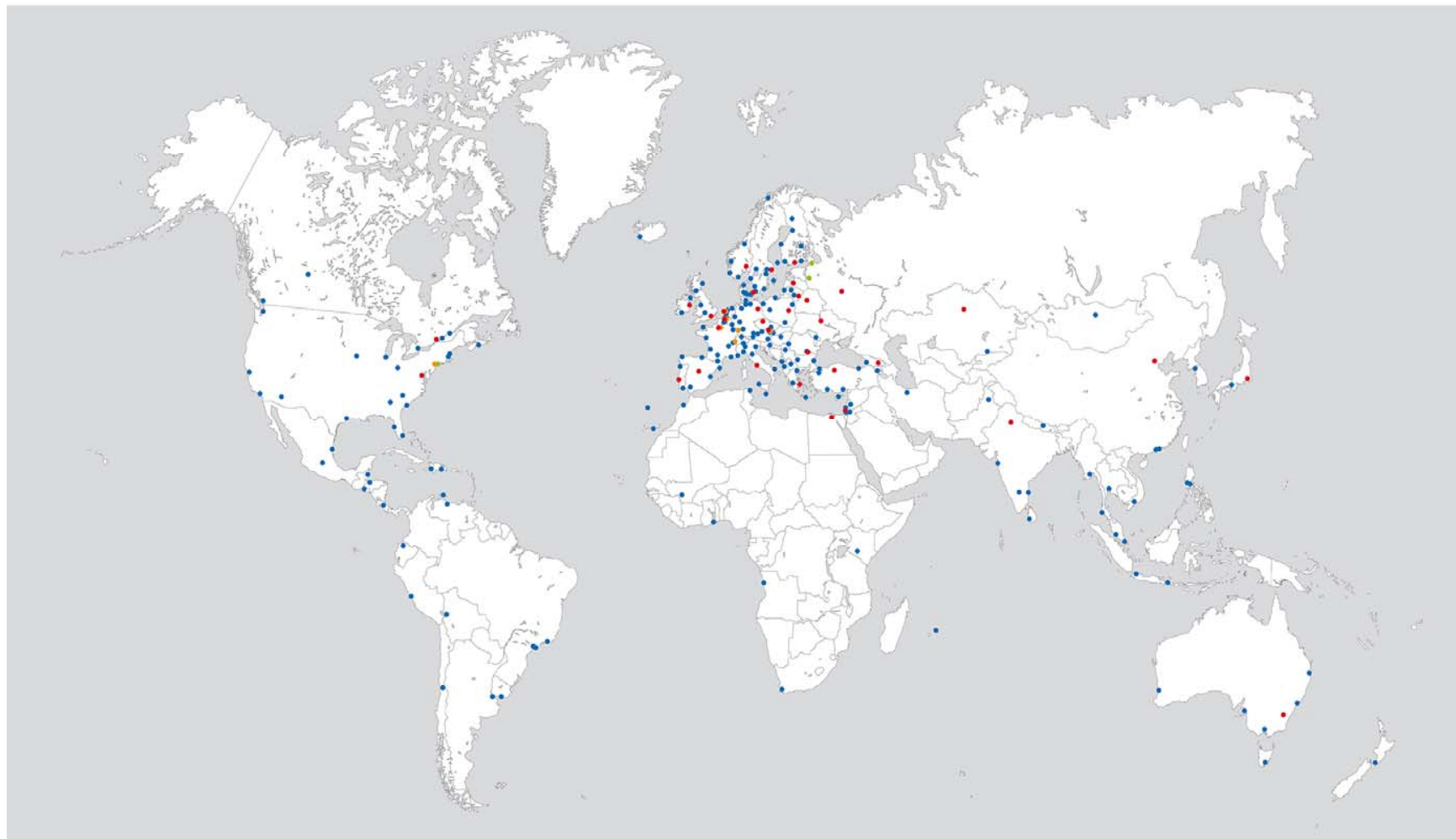
- **Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoF)** designs and implements Estonian Foreign policy.
- MoF is the only ministry that kept functioning (in exile) for the whole period of Soviet occupation. The foreign service had to be built up from a scratch in the 1990s. In the beginning of 1990, there were 12 people working in MoF in Tallinn.
- **Prime Minister** is responsible for the coordination of EU Affairs. **Government Office** (EU secretariat) coordinates the everyday development and implementation of EU policy.
- **Foreign Affairs Committee** in Parliament participates in the shaping of the foreign policy and its underlying principles; monitors the foreign policy activities of the Government.
- **EU Affairs Committee** coordinates and provides opinions on EU legislative initiatives in cooperation with other relevant committees; positions are binding for the Government
- 10 (out of 11) ministries have **departments of EU and International relations**. Tasks: coordination within the ministry and its area of government, communication with the EU Secretariat and Coordination Council. The Ministry of Justice as an exception. Substantial EU issues are handled by policy departments.
- Civil society: E.g. NGO **Estonian Atlantic Treaty Association** is representing NATO values and raising awareness of security and defence questions among citizens of Estonia.

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy – Institutions/Agencies

- **Foreign representation:**
- Estonia has diplomatic relations with **173 countries**.
- **44 foreign missions** in 2018, including 7 permanent representations at international organisations.
- Around **200 honorary consuls** in 87 countries worldwide.
 - ✓ Respected and well-known economic or cultural figures in the receiving state who performs consular functions (e.g. consulting, issuing travel documents abroad etc).
 - ✓ Important role in promoting Estonia abroad and contribution to creating new connections in business, culture, education and other fields.
 - ✓ Do not receive remuneration from Estonia.
- **164 Estonian diplomats**, 54 non-diplomats and 105 locally employed workers are working in the Estonian foreign missions.

ESTONIAN DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS ABROAD

MARCH 2017



Source: Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
https://vm.ee/sites/default/files/pictures/vm-esindused_kevad-2017.jpg

- EMBASSY
- CONSULATE GENERAL
- REPRESENTATIONS TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS
- HONORARY CONSUL

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy – Diplomatic Types

- **Public diplomacy:** events during the EE EU Council Presidency in 2017, e-Residency, *World Cleaning Day* Movement, different events devoted to the 100th anniversary of EE
- **Cultural diplomacy:** cultural attachés in the Estonian embassies, European Capital of Culture (2024 Tartu), the Ministry of Culture supported programme „Estonian Culture in the World“
- **Economic diplomacy:** economic attachés in the Estonian embassies, Foundation KredEX (distribution of export refunds); Estonian Business Association (advice to government); Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (advice to local enterprises and to the government); specific support services (brand development, creation of new business opportunities, such as e-channels).
- **Security diplomacy:** Estonian police, border guard and customs officials, and other experts of civil matters act within the framework of EU missions in the western Balkans, Georgia, and Afghanistan, and other.
- **‘Digital diplomacy’:** support and information to other countries in introducing e-government solutions.

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy - Bilateral Relations

- **Nordic countries** (Finland, Sweden).
 - Estonians consider themselves a Nordic nation. Close language connection to Finland.
 - Extensive economic interdependence between Estonia and its Nordic neighbours: three quarters of foreign investments in Estonia originates from the Nordic countries, to which Estonia sends 42% of its exports.
- **Baltic countries** (Latvia, Lithuania).
 - First steps in the cooperation started in 1920s, but cooperation between Baltic nations became especially relevant in the end on the 80s and beginning of the 90s in the quest for restoring national independence (e.g. The Baltic Way in 1989).
 - Governments and parliaments of Baltic states cooperate closely (Baltic Council of Ministers, Prime Ministers' Council, Baltic Assembly, Baltic Presidents' Council, Baltic military cooperation).
 - Rail Baltic as a major current initiative.
 - Cooperation with its ups and downs.
- **Other**, including development aid (priority countries Afganistan, Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine, Belorussia).

Multilateral Relations – Choosing Allies and Alliances

- **Nordic and Baltic Cooperation** (NB8) development after regaining independence. Opportunity to cooperate on regional and international issues.
- Membership in **NATO** as a priority. Estonia emphasizes the development of mobile and sustainable armed forces as well as enhancement of contributions to international peacekeeping operations.
- Membership in **EU** as a priority. Active participation in the **Schengen** border cooperation. Estonia is managing the EU external border with Russia.
- Baltic defence cooperation focuses on the trilateral co-operation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Three key elements are BALTNET – the Baltic Air Surveillance Network; BALTDEFCOL – the Baltic Defence College; BALTRON – the Baltic countermining squad.
- In addition, some multilateral cooperation projects exist (e.g. NORBALTPERS – a Norwegian assistance in personnel policy in the defence forces to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania).
- Estonia has taken an active stance towards EU **PESCO**.
- Protocols or agreements of bilateral co-operation have been signed with states from inside and outside the EU (e.g. Ukraine, Georgia, Norway, Canada, Turkey).

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy - Societal Beliefs

- 63% of Estonian population considers NATO trustworthy and 62% of Estonian population considers the EU trustworthy.
- Support for EU policies (Eurobarometer 2018):
 - 66% believe that the Estonian economy benefits from the EU membership;
 - 85% support Euro.
- Estonia has traditionally preferred more EU integration, new cooperation modes, stronger single market, more regulation
- Increasing hesitation in society towards the EU and fears related to migration after European 2015 migration crisis and rise of populist politics.

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy -Challenges

- Increasing complexity of global problems and external challenges.
- Increasing unpredictability of events in the international arena.
- Strong populist tendencies at home and polarization of party politics.
- The latest coalition agreement (April 2019) including populist nationalist Conservative People's Party of Estonia that EU should be an „intergovernmental organisation, not a federation“.
- Finding balance between national interests and domestic concerns, and supporting the International order and public good.
- Limited understanding of International affairs and their implications in the Estonian society.
- Maintaining the success of Estonia as a posterchild of digital government.