

Estonian as a second language

Ethnolinguistic composition of Estonia in the 20th century

- The **1922** census showed that the population of Estonia amounted to **1,107,000** people, of which **Estonians** constituted **92.4%**.
- The **1934** census showed that the population of Estonia was **1,126,000** people, of which **Estonians** constituted **92.9%**. Altogether **51 nationalities** were represented. However, the threshold of thousand people was exceeded in addition to Estonians by Russians (92,700), Germans (16,300), Swedes (7,600), Latvians (4,400), Poles (1,600), and Finns (1,100).
- The dramatic change in the composition of the population after the Second World War is related to the massive in-migration of Russian speakers from other regions of the Soviet Union. One can distinguish two big waves in 1947–1952 and in the 1970s (see Table 1).

Table 1. **Nationalities in Estonia** (as percentage)

Year	Estonians	Russians	Germans	Swedes	Jews	Other
1934	92,9	3,8	1,5	0,7	0,4	0,7
1959	74,6	20,1	0,1		0,5	4,7
1970	68,2	24,7	0,6		0,4	6,1
1979	64,7	27,9	0,3		0,3	6,8
1989	61,5	30,3	0,2			8,0
2000	67,9	25,6	0,1			6,4

Beginning of teaching Estonian as a foreign language

The University of Tartu began to teach the Estonian language in October **1803**. The audience of the first lecturer in Estonian consisted of mainly German theology students who needed the knowledge of Estonian for their work. During 1920s and 30s Estonian was taught at schools of the minorities.

Training of teachers of Estonian as a second language

- In **1982** the **Tallinn Pedagogical Institute** started to prepare **teachers of Estonian for Russian-medium schools**.
- **Tartu University** opened a similar speciality in **1989**.

Today teachers are prepared by the Institute of Estonian Language and Culture at Tallinn University (<http://www.tlu.ee/>), the Institute of Estonian and General Linguistics at Tartu University (<http://www.ut.ee/>) and the Narva College of Tartu University (<http://narva.ut.ee/>).

The Association of Teachers of Estonian as a Second language is a non-profit organization (see www.eestikeelteisekeelena.ee)

Conducts the training and guidance of teachers in the field of methods of teaching Estonian as a second language; prepares and distributes publications and materials in the field of methods of teaching Estonian as a second language, provides assistance in organizing student teaching at schools.

Teaching of Estonian as a second language in Russian-medium school

- begins in the kindergarten/ compulsory since Grade 1 since the study year 2000/2001.

Opportunities to study Estonian in Russian-medium schools:

- classes of Estonian as a second language (2–4 hours per week);
- the so-called *Estica-cycle* (Estonian literature, local history, cultural history, music, geography, etc.);
- language immersion (see <http://www.kke.ee/>):
- classes of early language immersion (since 2000/01),
- classes of late language immersion (since 2003/04).

In 2009 24 kindergartens and 14 schools adopted the early language immersion methodology. Classes of late immersion have been opened in 20 schools.

The autumn of 2007 saw the beginning of systematic transition of Russian-medium upper secondary schools to partial Estonian-medium subject teaching (see <http://www.hm.ee/index.php?046922>).

The Integration Foundation (see www.meis.ee)

Was established on 31 March 1998 by the Estonian government with the aim of initiating, supporting, and coordinating projects designed to promote integration in Estonian society:

- Language training for children and youth; language camps and family exchange. Practical language training outside traditional classroom enables the youngsters communicate with their peers, to familiarize themselves with the Estonian way of life, develop their self-expression and spoken language skills.
- Language Training for Adults
- Free Estonian-language courses for workers in the public sphere (police officials, medical workers, rescue workers, prison workers, and teachers of Russian-medium schools).
- Project Interest: those learners who pass the national Estonian language proficiency exam are refunded 50% of the learning fee.

Newly arrived immigrants in the Estonian educational system. A textbook “Astu sisse” 'Enter' has been compiled for teenagers from foreign countries, complete with a teacher's book and a handbook for a wider audience.

Assessment of Estonian-language proficiency

- The Language Act states that workers of the public sector and in some spheres also workers of the private sector must know and use the Estonian language. Language proficiency is checked by the Language Inspectorate, a governmental institution that carries out state supervision of the Language Act and other legal acts regulating language proficiency and language use (see <http://www.keeleinsp.ee/>).
- In **1998–2007** a **3-level system** was adopted (beginner, intermediate, and advanced level), which was based on the 9-level scale of the **ESU** (*English Speaking Union*).
- Transition to the new level system of the **European Council** on the basis of the **Common European Framework of Reference for Languages** started on **1 August 2008**.
- **Certificates** of Estonian language proficiency are issued by the **National Examinations and Qualifications Centre** (see <http://www.ekk.edu.ee/>).

An applicant for Estonian citizenship has to pass the Estonian language proficiency exam at least at the B1 level.

A Selection of handbooks of Estonian as a second language

Eesti keele suhtluslävi. 'Threshold of Estonian language' Compiled by Martin Ehala, Suliko Liiv. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 1997.
Martin Ehala, Krista Kerge, Katrin Niglas, Hille Pajupuu, Mait Raava, *Eesti keele kui teise keele õpetajate pädevusmudel ja koolitusvajadus: uurimuskokkuvõte*. 'The competency model of Estonian as a second language and the necessity for training: a summary' Tallinn: Eesti Keele Sihtasutus, 2002.
Kümme aastat eesti keele kui teise keele õppematerjale 1991–2001. Retsensioonid ja ülevaateartiklid. '10 years of study aids for Estonian as a second language 1991–2001. Reviews and overviews.' Tallinn: Talmar & Põhi, 2002.
Silvi Vare, *Eesti keel vene koolis*. 'Estonian in Russian language schools.' Tallinn: Eesti Keele Sihtasutus, 2004.



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