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Country Report Estonia

An Entry Point into the EU Labour Market

by

Tiit Tammaru , Eneli Kindsiko, Kristina Kallas,
Rebekka Vedina, Kristiina Kamenik and Maaja Vadi

2015



UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA del Sacro Cuore



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UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

COUNTRY REPORT ESTONIA

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By

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The European approach to immigration is traditionally characterized by a sort of “schizophrenia”, generated by the attempt to keep together two contradictory philosophies: the “economicistic” philosophy on which the system of entry (and stay) is regulated and the philosophy of solidarity and equal opportunities. To overcome this paradox, three major changes are necessary: shifting from the perception of migrants as contingently instrumental resources to the conception of their human capital as a structural resource for the economic and social development of European societies by exploiting their skills, knowledges and competences (hereafter SKC); promoting a wider awareness, among different types of organizations (profit, non-profit and public), of the importance and potentialities of Diversity Management strategies; improving the social participation and the civic and voluntary engagement of Third Country Nationals (hereafter TCNs) in view of the construction of an inclusive European society and in order to change the common perception of immigrants as people needing to be helped and assisted.

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This volume presents the findings of the research activity carried out in Tallinn (Estonia). The final report of the full project, including a synthesis of the ten national reports and of the transnational analysis, is published in the volume “The Diversity Value. How to Reinvent the European Approach to Immigration”, McGraw-Hill Education, Maidenhead, UK, 2015 (freely accessible at <http://www.ateneonline.it/zanfrini/>). A detailed presentation of the project, of its results and of the rich set of materials produced can be found in www.ismu.org/diverse. Both the present report and all the other texts produced reflect the view only of the Authors, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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1. Introduction: A General Landscape of Third Country Nationals Migration

1.1 A brief history of TCNs migration in the country and in the region

History of migration into Estonia can be divided into two large periods: first, post WW II migration from the other parts of the Soviet Union (1946-1991) and second, post-independence migration that started in 1991. These two periods of migration are characterised by very different political and legal framework in which they took place.

Post WW II immigration

Independent Estonian Republic that emerged in 1918 was ethnically heterogeneous state: in addition to ethnic Estonian majority, Germans, Russians, Swedes and Jews formed the composition of the citizens of the new state (see table 1). Prior to WWII Estonia was largely an emigration country – in the second half of the 19th century peasants emigrated to the free lands in the eastern parts of the Russian empire. The history of immigration and the biggest problems and challenges associated with it date back to the post WW II era (Anniste and Tammaru 2014; Tammaru and Kulu 2003). During the WW II and Soviet occupation the educated elite of the interwar republic emigrated primarily to the Western European countries and later to the US.¹ In 1945, there were approximately 830,000 people living in Estonia. Five years earlier the Estonian population had totalled 1,133,917. Thus, Estonia lost almost 25% of its population during WW II (Parming 1978: 34; Misiunas, Taagepera 1993: 358).² Given these dramatic losses in the Estonian population, the labour-force vacuum created by accelerated industrialization could not be replaced without immigration. As a result, after the war, Estonia turned into an immigration country. Since 1946, labour recruitment for rebuilding and developing the Soviet planned economy (manufacturing) industry became a major reason for immigration. The largest wave of immigration took place during immediate post-war period, where in years 1946-47 in average 45,000 people per year arrived.³ The migration flow decreased since the mid

¹ Emigrants were mostly Estonians escaping Soviet occupation but also Germans leaving the country on the eve of German aggression towards USSR and Swedes emigrating from Estonian islands to Sweden. In total, Parming estimates the number of people who emigrated to 107,500, constituting around 9% of total prewar population (Parming 1978: 38).

² Soviet Estonian historian U. Sõgel has estimated wartime losses as approximately 200,000 people, which makes 80,000 less than calculated by Estonian émigré scientists (Sõgel 1988: 9).

³ Hill Kulu, "Sõjajärgne sisseränne Eestisse võrdlevas perspektiivis" (Post-war immigration to Estonia in comparative perspective), *Akadeemia* 13, no. 11, (2001), 2382.



1950s, constituting an average at 30,000 people per year and by mid 1960s to an average at 20,000 people per year. This number remained stable through the mid 1980s.⁴ One of the characteristic features of post-war migration was its high turnover (Sakkeus 2007: 176) exceeding twice the total Estonian population. The first immigrants originated from the European parts of Russia, in particular from the neighbouring regions. Over time, the migrant population became ethnically more heterogeneous. Since the 1960s, the geographical hinterland of migration has expanded and included other non-Russian Soviet republics, mainly Ukraine and Belorussia and increasingly the Transcaucasian and Central Asian republics (Kulu 2001: 2384).

Soviet immigration changed the ethnic composition of the country (see table 1). Pre-war ethnic groups such as Germans and Swedes emigrated before and during the war and were replaced by mostly Slavic immigrants from other parts of the Soviet empire. The share of ethnic Estonians decreased significantly reaching 61% during the last census of Soviet Union. The share of Russians increased from 8% in interwar republic to 26% in 1989. First large immigration wave stopped in 1991, and by that time Estonia had representatives of more than 100 different nationalities. However, two linguistic groups – Estonian and Russian, dominated an ethnic landscape and national awareness was characteristic only these two largest ethnic groups.

Table 1 - Estonia's ethnic diversity 1934-2011 (%)⁵

Ethnic group	1934	1970	1989	2000	2011
Estonian	88.0	68.0	61.5	67.9	68.6
Russian	8.2	24.7	30.3	25.6	25.8
German	1.5	-	0.2	0.1	0.1
Swedish	0.7	-	-	-	-
Jewish	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.2
Total (number)	1 126 413	1 356 079	1 565 662	1 370 052	1 294 236

Source: Parming (1978: 37), Hallik (1998: 15), Tammaru and Kulu (2003: 108), Statistics Estonia (2000, 2011).

Of all the changes that took place in Estonia since the country's incorporation into the Soviet Union in 1940, the drastic alteration of the ethnic composition of the population has been the most important. Between 1945-1991 the net immigration was 337,000 people, and the share of other ethnic groups than Estonians increased from 12% in 1934 to 38.5% in the 1989 census (Sakkeus 2007:176, Hallik 1998: 14). About 80% of minorities are Russians and

⁴ Kulu, 2382; Luule Sakkeus, "Estonian Minorities: Past and present." *Society, Parliament and Legislation. The role of Socio-Economic Studies and Parliamentary Information and Research Services in legislation – in the Context of EU Enlargement* (Tallinn: Chancellery of the Riigikogu, 1999), 176.

⁵ All ethnic groups as provided in the official statistics and based on person's self-identification (e.g. Jewish).



90% speak Russian as their mother tongue. Hence, Estonian minority population is often referred to as a Russian-speaking population (Vihalemm 2007).

Having the smallest population among the Soviet Union republics, Estonia could hardly integrate such a great number of immigrants in such a short period of time. Integration was further complicated by the high concentration of immigrants in the urban centres of north Estonia. In the towns of north-eastern Estonia, immigrants constituted four-fifths of the urban population; in the north-west, around one-half Kulu (2001: 2388). In the occupational structure immigrants reached a majority among the country's fast expanding industrial workforce, leaving Estonians employed in the agriculture. In everyday life, it meant the segregation of the Estonian population into northern Estonia urban-industrial Russian dominated communities surrounded by agricultural Estonian countryside. The southern and western parts of the country remained dominated by Estonians. The residential segregation took place also in the urban centres. This situation led to tensions between the two groups, one Estonian and the other Russian speaking and, despite official ignorance of the issue, it remained one of the leading domestic problems of Soviet Estonia. Shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 the Estonian parliament passed a resolution stating that all Soviet-era immigrants and their descendants (around 35 per cent of the population in 1991) would not be accorded automatic citizenship in the restored Republic of Estonia. This policy was part of the broader Estonian political doctrine of *legal restoration*, which viewed Estonia's independence in 1991 as a direct restoration of its pre-1940 statehood, and which consequently resulted in the situation where all the Soviet-era settlers were considered as one of the by-products of Soviet rule and thus were expected to either naturalise or re-migrate to their countries of origin. In reality they had three choices (Pettai 2005): (1) to become naturalized Estonian citizens after passing language and civic tests; (2) to become citizens of the newly independent Russian Federation or the country of their origin, or (3) to remain citizens of the extinct USSR with passports expiring in the near future. The latter group re-registered itself later as stateless people with permanent residence permits in Estonia (i.e. persons with "*grey passports*").

Yet, unlike the immigrants in some Western European countries, these Soviet-era settlers did not see themselves as immigrants or as minorities but rather as people moving around within a single country (i.e. Soviet Union). Coupled with the Estonian political mainstream of legal restoration and the overall historical context, the nationality policies of the Soviet Union and post-independent Estonian governments have created a situation of segregation of two communities, living not together but rather apart from each other, effectively excluding one group (the mainly Russian-speaking minority) from everyday



cultural, political and socio-economic life. Now this identification of themselves as national minorities (a realization which, after all, slowly but gradually developed), but *not* as immigrants, prevails also today.

Immigration after restoration of independence

Immigration to Estonia from other parts of the Soviet Union slowed down in the 1980s and stopped in 1991. At the beginning of the 1990s Estonia established rather strict immigration laws setting the upper limit of yearly immigration to 0.5% of the resident population. After the re-establishment of the Estonian Republic, a reverse process started: due to uncertainty about their future in the new state some recent immigrants decided to leave Estonia. It is estimated that during the period from 1990 to 1996, a net total of 80,000 people left Estonia⁶, the overwhelming majority to Russia. In parallel, emigration to the Western Europe and Northern America started and became especially strong after Estonia joined the European Union in 2004.

The inclusion of Estonia into the European Union did not result in larger immigration numbers. Estonia's immigration law still remains rather strict, although some discussion has been going on in recent years to raise the yearly immigration quota from 0.5 to 1 per cent of resident population. The labour shortage created by the needs of economic growth and by the emigration of the young labour force to other EU member states have been the main reasons behind the new debate on changing immigration policy. In 2011, the government announced its aim to create a supportive environment for attracting and retaining foreign talent – highly skilled specialists and students and thus increase Estonia's economic competitiveness. This would be accomplished through the creation of scientific excellence centres, which would help provide highly skilled labour for businesses. At the same time, however, to ensure that there was no misunderstanding of its intentions, the government declared that it would not support the large-scale immigration of low-skilled labour. As a step towards the facilitation of highly skilled immigration, it proposed a package of amendments to the Aliens Act (*Välismaalaste seadus*), which were adopted by *Riigikogu* in summer of 2013 and came into force in September of the same year. The changes include easier bureaucratic procedures for companies and foreigners during the hiring process, allowing foreign students to work while studying and permitting them to stay in the country for up to six months after graduation while searching for a job.

⁶ These figures are estimates drawn from various yearbooks of the Statistical Office of Estonia. However, in recent years the office has declined to give definitive figures, citing the unreliability of data from this period.

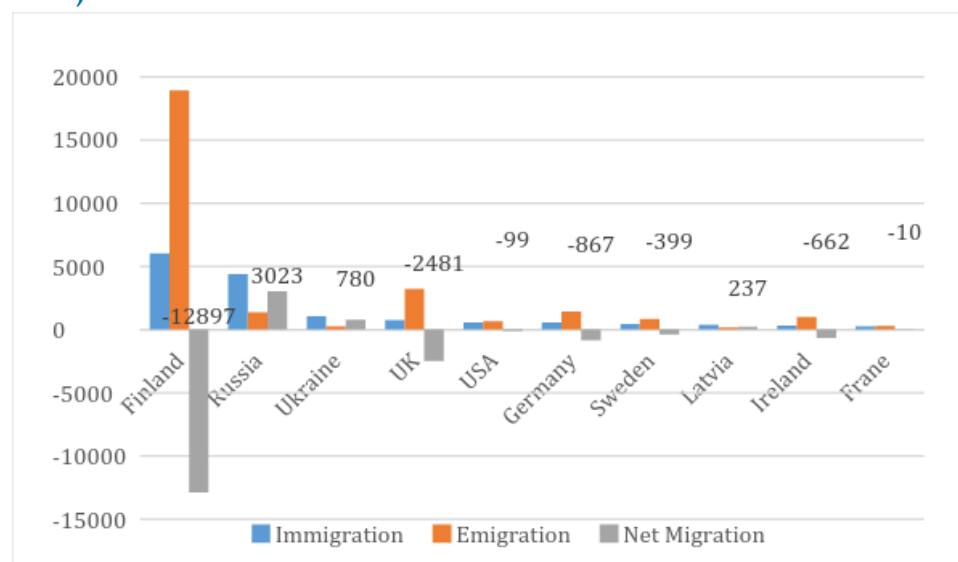


While in recent years immigration to Estonia has shown a steady increase, the migration balance continues to be unfavourable as emigration exceeds immigration. In 2013, net migration loss reached its peak of over -6,661 compared to -735 in 2008. At the hardest times of the world economic crisis (2008-2009), both migration and emigration levels were in close proximity with each other as immigration faltered due to the lower demand domestically. However, starting in 2010 emigration increased more quickly as did the negative migration balance. The flow of people into Estonia can be divided into two broad groups: immigration of EU citizens, driven by the free movement of people within the EU, and immigration of third country nationals (i.e. persons who are not nationals of an EU Member State/Schengen area) regulated by both EU and Estonian immigration legislation. Due to the freedom of movement within the EU for its citizens, reliable statistical data about this group is particularly difficult to obtain.⁷ In comparison, the data regarding immigration of third-country nationals is more accurate since it is based on the more tightly regulated issuance of residence permits, although it also has its flaws.⁸ Overall, immigration to Estonia remains highly influenced by its geographic location—Finland and Russia account for most of the immigrant population arriving to Estonia, a consistent during the last six years and likely to continue. Surprisingly, immigration into Estonia has been characterized by relatively modest immigration of EU citizens compared to third country nationals, taking into consideration the lack of any legal barriers to the migration from EU. Despite the restricted access, six percent more third country nationals (15,577) have arrived to Estonia within the last six years than EU citizens (13,723).

⁷ The data on EU citizens movement is based on the Population Registry and has unfortunately some limitations. For more information see: Statistikaamet (2005). [Välisränne. Rahvusvahelise rände andmete metoodika](#). Andmekogumine haldusandmestikest (Immigration. International migration data methodology. Collecting data from administrative registries).

⁸ For instance, it might be that individuals to whom a residence permit was successfully issued, and represented in our data, but did not actually enter Estonia. The figures might also include individuals who already live in Estonia, but changed their reason for staying, thus, applying for a new residence permit. Finally, data could also include those persons who missed a renewal deadline, and thus, applied for a new residence permit.

Figure 1 - Top 10 nationalities: immigration and net migration with countries (2008-2012)



Source: Police and Boarder Guard Board (PPA)

Estonia holds a positive net migration only with Russia and Ukraine. In the case of EU countries, only Latvia holds this same positive trend. With all the other countries, net migration is negative. This is particularly true in the cases of Finland, the UK and, to a lesser extent, Germany, where the number of people leaving to those countries is many times higher than those coming in. The movement of people from Estonia to Finland and the UK is mainly due to the higher salaries and more generous welfare system.⁹

For the period 2008-2013, the total number of temporary residence permits issued under the four categories (work, business, study and family reunification) was 15,577.¹⁰ Based on this data, immigration into Estonia by third-country nationals shows relative stability with a just a very small increase.

Table 2 - TCN immigration based on temporary residence permits (2008-2013)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2008-2013	%
Family Reunification	1,007	887	896	1,195	1,118	1,162	6,265	40.3
Work	908	1,061	937	1,415	828	857	6,006	38.6
Business	56	72	68	142	61	54	453	2.9
Studies	349	391	457	463	516	677	2,853	18.3
Total	2,320	2,411	2,358	3,215	2,523	2,750	15,577	100.0

Source: Police and Boarder Guard Board (PPA)

⁹ Statistics Estonia (2012), '[Most of emigrants from Estonia still go to Finland](#)', Press Release No. 62, 22 May 2013.

¹⁰ This number does not represent the stock of third country citizen new immigrants as it includes short-term residence permits (less than a year) and does not include emigration of third country nationals.

The majority of the residence permits (40%) were issued for family reunification, followed by work (38.6%) and studies (18.3%). Most immigrants arriving from outside of the EU are male in the age 25-29. On the other hand, most of the women arriving to Estonia from outside the EU are younger – aged 20-24.

TCN's migration to Estonia over the past six years has originated mainly from Russia and Ukraine (total 63.7% of all TCN). Russian nationals alone accounted for almost half (40%) of the immigrants coming to Estonia during this period and Ukrainians a quarter (23.7%). The USA and China are in third and fourth place respectively, although both with significantly smaller numbers as compared to Russia and Ukraine.

Table 3 - TCN top 10 nationalities, grounds for residence permits (2008-2013)

	Nationality	Work	Business	Studies	Family Reunification	Total	%
1	Russia	1561	366	506	3882	6,315	40.5
2	Ukraine	2613	50	183	854	3,699	23.7
3	USA	493	5	238	242	978	6.2
4	China	261	0	322	45	628	4.0
5	Turkey	49	0	377	68	494	3.1
6	Belarus	162	11	56	243	472	3.0
7	Georgia	101	0	243	86	430	2.7
8	India	122	2	71	61	256	1.6
9	Israel	72	2	6	86	166	1.0
10	Armenia	33	0	26	82	141	0.9

Source: Police and Boarder Guard Board (PPA)

Russian citizens migrate to Estonia for a large variety of purposes (Table 4), however, the most dominant reason is family reunification followed by work and studies. Although Russians form the majority among foreign student migrants, they arrive in large numbers to Estonia for family reasons. Ukrainian nationals, on the other hand, arrive for work mainly. For other nationalities, a more specific migration is observable: Turkish and Georgian nationals arrive mostly for studies, while Israelis for work or family reunification. In the case of Chinese, work and studies are the predominant reasons, while having close to zero representation in other categories.



1.2 A brief description of the legislative framework at national and regional level

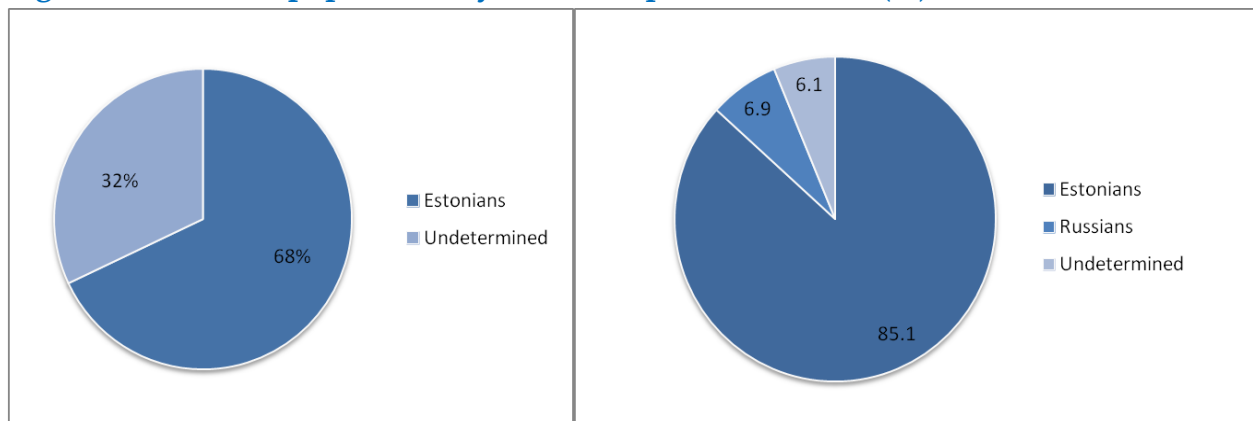
The legislative framework concerning TCN in Estonia can be divided into two categories: 1) the legislation adopted in 1990ies in the framework of nation building that resulted in the large group of Soviet time settlers becoming TCNs over time and 2) the legislation that concerns TCN immigrating into Estonia since 1992.

Establishing the citizenry

The restoration of the independence of Estonia (and Latvia and Lithuania) proceeded from the principle of the continuity of statehood and its bearer – the citizenry. Based on this principle, the Supreme Council of Estonia adopted a resolution already in 1991, stipulating that only the citizens of the Republic of Estonia that existed before the Soviet occupation (1918–1939) and their descendants are entitled to automatically receive Estonian citizenship. In the spirit of this declaration, the 1938 citizenship law was reinstated in Estonia in 1992, dividing the population of the country into citizens who were predominantly Estonian, and Russophone non-citizens, the majority of whom had immigrated to Estonia during the Soviet period. Nearly 475,000 residents who had immigrated to Estonia during the Soviet era and their descendants were defined legally as aliens who were required to complete the naturalisation process along with the pertinent procedures. The division between citizens and non-citizens ran mostly along the lines of ethnicity, since almost 100% of ethnic Estonians had Estonian citizenship and nearly 85% of the Russian-speaking residents lacked citizenship. As a result, in 1992 first post-independence parliament elections no representatives of the Russian-speaking population were elected to the legislative body.

The legal status of those who were not citizens of the Republic of Estonia either through legal succession or the naturalisation process was regulated by the Aliens Act adopted in 1993, which determined the procedure for issuing residence permits (temporary permits at first) to all former citizens of the Soviet Union legally residing in Estonia who had not become citizens of any other country. So called ‘people with undetermined’ citizenship were issued identity documents of permanent Estonian residents. In 1993 the share of people with undetermined citizenship was nearly a third of the total population. Some, mainly elderly Russian-speakers, opted for Russian citizenship instead. The doctrine of legal restoration and the citizenship policy that followed it created the situation where the population of Estonia became divided into three citizenship categories (see chart 1).

Figure 2 - Estonian population by citizenship 1992 and 2011 (%)



Source: Statistics Estonia 2011

In the years 1992–1996 Estonian citizenship was acquired by an average of 17,500 people per year. In 1995, the *Riigikogu* adopted a new citizenship law, increasing the stringency of the requirements for gaining Estonian citizenship—the residential qualification was extended from two years to five years and an examination on the citizenship law (to be completed in Estonian) was instituted in addition to the Estonian language examination. The new law immediately affected the figures for naturalisation. The number of people gaining citizenship fell by 65%—from 22,773 people in 1996 to 8124 people in 1997. The naturalisation process has been steadily declining with average 1000 people gaining Estonian citizenship per year since 2004.

The number of people with undetermined citizenship is declining steadily caused partly by the demographics and partly by the naturalisation into Estonian or Russian citizenship. According to 2011 census 6% of Estonian population still had no citizenship of any country. Majority of them as well as citizens of Russian Federation have the status of permanent resident of Estonia and are eligible to apply for Estonian citizenship through naturalisation. There are variety of reasons why the naturalisation into Estonian citizenship has declined with time, one of them being the low levels of knowledge of Estonian language among this group of people that is required for the naturalisation.

According to the Council Directive 2003/109/EU concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents, people with undetermined citizenship in Estonia (and Latvia) are granted the rights of TCNs.



Legislative framework concerning new immigrants

Aliens Act (latest version 2010) remains the main legal act regulating the migration and residency of TCN in Estonia. The act regulates the temporary as well as long-term residency requirements and procedures, family reunification etc. The act also regulates the quota for the migration of TCN, which remains currently at 0.1 % of resident population. There is a significant number of exceptions from the quota such as married spouses, underage children, students, citizens of USA and Japan etc.¹¹

While Estonian migration policy has been considered relatively conservative due to its migration quota and bureaucratic procedures for residence permits, some changes towards the liberalisation of migration legislation have been taking place recently. Over the past few years the Estonian government has placed increased attention on the topic of immigration and acknowledged its importance in the national agenda. As a result a number of legal changes and policy measures have been adopted recently. The 2013 amendments to the Aliens Act can be seen as a delayed government response to the much-voiced concern over the restrictive and bureaucratic nature of immigration regulations expressed by employers and higher education institutions. For instance, preceding legislation indicated that a foreign employee could only receive a residence permit for a specific employer and a specific job position, thus making it necessary to start a new application process when the employee changed position or employer. Changes introduced in 2013 eliminated this requirement for cases where a foreigner is working in educational or research institutions. Now only a notification has to be given to the Police and Border Guard Board about the changes. Additionally foreign students are now allowed to work as long as the person keeps their position as full-time student. These amendments, together with the reduction of the administrative burden and response times for both applicants and employers facilitates overall better opportunities for top specialists and highly-skilled individuals to access the Estonian labour market.

The transposition of the EU Blue Card Directive¹² into Estonian national law is also an important development in the area of highly-skilled migration. The EU Blue Card, which was transposed into Estonian legislation in 2011, is a new type of residence permit that may be issued to third-country nationals for residence and employment in a job or position requiring higher qualifications.¹³ The Blue Card offers benefits such as intra-EU mobility, family reunification facilitation and the possibility of moving between jobs and

¹¹ [Estonia Aliens Act](#) (2010), § 115.

¹² Council Directive 2009/50/EC on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly qualified employment [2009] OJ L 155/17

¹³ [‘EU Blue Card Estonia’](#) (2013). EU Blue Card Network.



between employment and unemployment. However, only very few (17) residence permits under this category were issued in Estonia since its introduction.

The rights of long-term residents in Estonia are regulated by the chapter III of the Council Directive 2003/109/EU.¹⁴ A TCN who is holding a residence permit for a long-term resident in Estonia does not need a specific permit for employment and engagement in business activities in Estonia.

While short- and long-term residents can enjoy the social rights and access to social benefits, their political rights are limited. Estonian legislation provides them the right to vote with some restrictions on municipal elections, however, without the right to run for elected office. Additionally, taking up jobs in state administration is limited through the citizenship requirements for certain categories of public officials. For example, they are not allowed to work at the government, police and as a judge, thus leaving primarily the civil society and private sector as the areas of interest representation and political activity. TCN do not have the right to be members of political parties and to form them. They have the right to establish non-governmental organizations, or engage in already existing civil society organizations and trade unions and they have the right to take part in marches and protests.

Integration policy

Resulting from the historical context, the main policy issue in Estonia is not immigration (the number of newly arriving immigrants is quite low), but rather integration policy. Social inclusion and exclusion problems of the large Russian-speaking population were largely ignored in the 1990s. It was the hope of the Estonian political elite that a large contingent of Soviet time settlers would leave Estonia. All major policies such as citizenship policy, language policy, law on elections, etc. were highly unfavourable to Soviet time immigrants. And although many did leave, the majority decided to stay. The beginning of the process of EU accession negotiations in 1997 brought a change in Estonia's policies related to its Russian-speaking population. As a result of the pressure by the EU, the position of Minister without Portfolio responsible for interethnic relations and integration was created.¹⁵ The main task of the minister became the development of an all-inclusive integration policy. As an implementing agency, the Integration Foundation was established in 1998.

¹⁴ Estonia Aliens Act (2010) §213. The article directly states that the rights of long-term residents are regulated in the Council Directive.

¹⁵ The Office of the Minister for Population and Ethnic Affairs was abolished in the first half of the year 2009, with its areas of responsibility divided between the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Culture.



Stemming from the specific political situation of the time the first national integration programme concentrated mostly on Estonian language training. The positive effects of this policy can be seen in improved levels of knowledge of Estonian among the Russian-speaking population, especially young people born in Estonia. However, at the same time the neglect of other aspects of social inclusion such as labour market integration, political participation and discrimination led to half-measure results. The unemployment rate for young Russian-speakers remained higher than for Estonians. There were no serious policy measures foreseen to reduce the statelessness among Russian-speaking population. Although some changes were made to citizenship law allowing for parents to apply for citizenship for their children born in Estonian Republic without the need to go through the naturalization process (language test and residency requirements), the effect of this new provision in decreasing statelessness, especially among young, has remained weak. The Russian-speaking community voiced its criticism of the programme by declaring it rather assimilative since the focus was solely on teaching Estonian language.

The following national integration programmes (2008-2013, 2014-2020) are more comprehensive, focusing on social cohesion, labour market integration, political integration, equal treatment and anti-discrimination. In recent years also more attention is given by the government to the problem of the segregated school system. A better incorporation of the interests of the Russian-speaking population in the programme has been emphasized and a stronger focus on the integration as a two way process for the immigrants and hosts alike is stressed.

1.3 A statistical outline of the presence of TCNs in the region

Distribution by nationality, gender, age and level of education¹⁶

TCN make up 14% of Estonia's population. Among them the largest groups are Russian Federation citizens (49% of all TCN) and people with undetermined citizenship (46%). Ukrainian citizens make up 3% and Belarusian citizens 1% of all TCN. In comparison, EU citizens constitute only 0.52% of all residents of Estonia.

While in 1992 after the adoption of first citizenship law Estonian citizenry constituted of nearly 100% of ethnic Estonians, then as a result of naturalization process the citizenry has become much more ethnically diverse today. Currently more than a third of Estonian

¹⁶ Data about third country nationals is only available about Russian citizens and people with undetermined citizenship. Other citizenship categories (Ukrainian, Belorussian) are too small for statistical analysis.



citizens (18%) are of other ethnic background, mainly people who identify themselves as ethnic Russians (table 4).

Table 4 - Estonian population by citizenship, ethnicity and gender

Citizenship	%	Ethnicity	%	Gender	%
Estonian	85.2	Estonian	82	Male	46
		Russian	16	Female	54
		Other	2		
Russian	7.0	Russian	88	Male	46
		Estonian	1	Female	54
		Other	11		
Undetermined	6.6	Russian	80	Male	53
		Estonian	2	Female	47
		Other	18		

Source: Statistics Estonia 2011

Gender division among Estonian citizens and Russian citizens is similar while there are more men than women with undetermined citizenship. The naturalization statistics shows that women are more active in naturalizing and obtaining Estonian citizenship.

Among children aged 0-17 Estonian citizens make up 96% while among people aged 65 and older the share of TCNs is 20%. This indicates to the trend where young generation of Russian-speaking population is naturalizing into Estonian citizenship while older, mainly first generation immigrants themselves, prefer to remain Russian citizens or keep their undetermined status. Nevertheless among people with undetermined citizenship the share of people in the working age aged 18-64 is very high (82%, table 5). This indicates to the need to continue promoting naturalization of these people into Estonian citizenship.

Table 5 - TCN and Estonian citizens by age (% within citizenship category)

Citizenship	0-17	18-64	65 and older
Estonian	21	63	17
Russian	7	60	33
Undetermined	2	82	15

Source: Statistics Estonia 2011

The age distribution of TCN reflects the citizenship policies that Estonian state has been implementing since re-independence in 1992. While among Estonian citizens there is a

large share of children under age of 18, majority of TCN, especially Russian citizens are of older age group whose human resources and social factors surrounding them were not conducive for going through the naturalization process. Division of Russian-speaking population into largely three citizenship groups—Estonian, Russian and undetermined citizenship—is not random but reflects the different abilities to adjust and different coping strategies against the norms, constraints and opportunities in Estonian society. It means that Estonian citizenship policy has operated as an accelerator of ‘natural choice’ by giving even more opportunities to the more able and impeded the opportunities of those who were not so adept.

Among Russian citizens there is a large share of foreign-born or foreign-born second generation immigrants. While among Estonian citizens only 5% are born outside of Estonia, among Russian citizens the share of first generation immigrants is 68.6%. Soviet time settlers, who were born outside of Estonia opted more often than others for Russian citizenship. However, among people with undetermined citizenship half are born outside of Estonia (first generation 43%) and the other half already in Estonia (second and third generation 45%). The fact that there are more second generation immigrants among people with undetermined citizenship illustrates the fact why there is less motivation to obtain Russian citizenship among them.

Table 6 - Indigenous and foreign background population by citizenship (%).

	Estonian	Russian	Undetermined
Indigenous and foreign background total	85.2	7.0	6.6
Indigenous	86.8	5.9	10.7
Foreign background	12.8	93.0	88.1
..foreign background first generation	4.9	68.6	43.0
..foreign background second generation	4.7	17.6	33.5
..foreign background third generation	3.2	6.8	11.6

Source: Statistics Estonia 2011

Differently from many other countries in EU Estonian TCNs do not differ in their educational levels from the host population. Stemming from the nature of post WW II immigration, the Soviet time settlers had either vocational, technical or higher education. TCNs have larger share of people with vocational and higher technical education while Estonian citizens have more people with academic qualifications (table 7). The reasons behind the lower share of people with academic qualifications can be explained by the age (older generations who have obtained the education abroad before moving to Estonia) as well as by the fact that all academic higher education in Estonia is in Estonian language



that sets some barriers for those Russian-speakers whose Estonian linguistic skills are not sufficient.

Table 7 - TCN by the level of education (% within the citizenship category)

	Estonian citizens	Russian citizens	Undetermined citizenship
Without basic education	4	2	1
Basic education	7	6	4
Elementary education	19	14	17
Upper secondary education	19	17	23
Vocational education	20	24	28
Higher technical education	11	20	17
Academic higher education	18	15	8
PhD	0.7	0.3	0.09

Source: Statistics Estonia 2011

Territorial distribution

Geographical distribution of TCN in Estonia are characterised by the heavy concentration in the urbanised industrial centres of the north and north-eastern Estonia. Due to the character of Estonian post-War economic development with its emphasis on industry, Russians and other mainly Russian-speaking immigrants headed for the cities, mostly Tallinn, and the oil-shale region of north-eastern Estonia (Tammara and Kontuly 2011). The urban character of migration can be illustrated by the statistics, where in 1981, immigrants constituted 81% of the entire urban population of the republic.¹⁷ Together with increasing autonomy of all-union large enterprises, Russian-speaking communities started to emerge around these enterprises. In Tallinn, residential segregation developed with immigrants inhabiting newly-build apartment blocks in separate districts of the city with the clubs, secondary schools and hospitals. With the establishment of the Soviet military border regime in Estonian northern coast pre-war inhabitants of Narva and surrounding villages were not allowed to return to their homes for security reasons.¹⁸ Instead, Narva was populated by immigrants from other part of the Soviet Union and re-emerged as an exclusively Russian-speaking city.

As a result of the Soviet time immigration process and the citizenship policies applied by Estonian state since 1992, nearly half of north-eastern Ida-Viru County's population are TCN. TCN constitute a bit more than a third in Harjumaa (that includes Tallinn), but in all other regions of Estonia their share is very small.

¹⁷ Sirje Sinilind, *Mõningatest rahvuspoliitika aspektidest* (About some aspects of national policy) (Stockholm: Eesti Rahvusfond, 1983), 23.

¹⁸ Vsevirov, 4.



Table 8 - Share of TCN in counties (%)

County	Share of TCN	County	Share of TCN
Ida-Virumaa	46	Raplamaa	2
Harjumaa	17	Järvamaa	1
Valgamaa	7	Põlvamaa	1
Lääne-Virumaa	6	Võrumaa	1
Läänemaa	5	Viljandimaa	1
Tartumaa	4	Saaremaa	1
Pärnumaa	4	Hiiumaa	0

Source: Statistics Estonia 2011

In the most north-eastern city of Narva, near the Russian border, TCN make up 53% of the residential population. In capital Tallinn, TCN constitute nearly 20% of the residents. These are two largest centres with TCN population in Estonia.

Distribution by occupational status, professional profile and level of qualification¹⁹

Unemployment, the spread of extreme forms of poverty, exclusion caused by residence in disadvantaged regions of former industrial production, lack of knowledge of state language and mismatch between education and the needs of the labour market are the problems that plagued immigrants' integration into the labour market throughout the 1990s as well as the beginning of the new millennium.

Unemployment has been higher among Russian-speaking immigrants since the beginning of the operation of the market economy. In 2001 there were 83,000 people unemployed in Estonia—among them 38,000 or 46% were Russian-speakers that exceeded their share among the working population. While among Estonians the main reasons for unemployment were related to lack of education, among Russian-speakers the main reason was lack of knowledge of Estonian. By 2008 the gap between unemployment of Russian-speakers and Estonians had increased further—while in 2001 the unemployment (of working age population aged 15-74) of Russian-speakers was 1.6 times higher than that of Estonians, in the years 2004-2006 it increased to 2.4 times. In 2010 at the peak of the economic recession Estonians remained largely employed while Russian-speakers had moved from employment to unemployment.

While looking at the citizenship status, TCN have the unemployment rates nearly the double of the total population in last five years while their employment rate also remains somewhat lower (table 9). In addition to the lack of sufficient level of knowledge of

¹⁹ Unfortunately the data is mostly available from Integration Monitoring surveys that focus on Russian-speaking population rather than on TCNs among them. The data about the occupational status, sector of economy and professional profile is not available based on citizenship or ethnic identification. Therefore most part of this chapter focuses on Russian-speaking population, however, the tendencies described are somewhat characteristic to TCNs.



Estonian language similar to all Russian-speakers, TCN face barriers in the labour market related to their legal status. TCN are not allowed to be employed at the government, in police force, as prison guards, as a judge etc. This limits their employment opportunities significantly.

Table 9 - Employment, unemployment and participation in the labour force (%)

		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total population	Participation in the labour force	66.4	66.3	67.5	67.6	68
	Employment	57.4	55.2	59.1	60.8	62.1
	Unemployment	13.5	16.7	12.3	10	8.6
TCN	Participation in the labour force	68.9	70.4	68.8	67.8	68.3
	Employment	53.7	50	54.1	55.6	58.5
	Unemployment	22.1	29	21.3	18	14.3

Source: Statistics Estonia 2011

However, at the same time, the positive attitude towards finding a job in Estonia has gradually increased among Russian-speakers from 49% in 2001 to 73% in 2008. By 2011 there has been a decrease again where only half (52%) of Russian-speakers considered their opportunities to find a job in Estonia good.

The former industrial region Ida-Virumaa has had the highest unemployment rates throughout the 20 years of independence. The employment opportunities of Ida-Virumaa's urban residents are limited or lack in total. The two times' higher unemployment rate in the towns around the region keeps the overall unemployment numbers of Russian-speakers and TCN high. Thus, more often than not, the unemployment of Russian-speakers in Ida-Virumaa is not caused so much by a lack of knowledge of Estonian as by the residence in the distressed area of Ida-Virumaa. Furthermore, differently from Estonians, Russian-speakers are less mobile—while in the 2005 monitoring study every tenth Estonian had moved to other place of residence, only 3% of Russian-speakers had done so. Similarly there were fewer Russian-speakers ready to establish their own business compared to Estonian respondents.

Traditionally Russian-speakers continue to be employed in industry: in 2000 29% among Russian-speakers compared to 11% among Estonians were employed in industry. However, the labour needs of that economic sector are continuously decreasing. Large parts of Russian-speakers who have lost their jobs in industry have moved to services and commerce. There are equal shares of unskilled workers among Estonians and Russian-speakers while there are proportionally more skilled workers among Russian-speakers than Estonians (35% compared to 22%). However, there are more high-ranking specialists



or top managers among Estonians (31% among Estonians against 21% among Russian-speakers) while there are equal shares of middle-level managers in both groups.

Throughout the last decade employment in different economic sectors has remained the same, although it is not advantageous for Russian-speakers. 60% of Russian-speakers work in unskilled or semi-skilled positions and only 40% in middle or higher managerial or skilled positions. While there are more people with higher technical or university degrees among working age Russian-speakers compared to Estonians, their employment positions do not reflect their educational levels.

In the 2005 monitoring round there was a noticeable move of Russian-speakers from services and commerce to real estate and banking sectors. However, middle-aged Russian-speaking women usually do low paid jobs in commerce such as cashiers and supermarket service that are not highly valued subjectively. Job preferences of young Russian-speakers are similar to those of young Estonians—they wish to be employed as specialists or in public sector jobs where Estonians are currently in a disproportional majority.

The 2011 monitoring round revealed that economic crisis hit the employment sectors where Russian-speakers were a majority of workforce hard such as unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in construction and commerce. 65% of people employed in those jobs were Russian-speakers. Russian-speaking men were in most disadvantaged position among whom 35% became unemployed at the peak of the crisis.

Income

Sources of income differ among general population and TCNs. Nearly half (46%) of Russian citizens receive state pension while only 33% are labourers and 1% earn their income from the business. This can be explained by the relatively high share of older age people among the Russian citizens. Among people with undetermined citizenship 47% are labourers earning salaries, 2% earn their income from the business and 28% receive state pension. These proportions are more similar to general population (40%, 2% and 24% respectively) (table 10).

Table 10 - Sources of income of TCN (%)

Citizenship	Salary	Earning from business	State pension
Total population	40	2.19	24
Russian Federation	33	1.28	46
Undetermined	47	1.68	28

Source: Statistics Estonia 2011



In 2002 incomes did not differ between Estonians and Russian-speakers in the lower income sections; however, the upper part of the scale was more problematic from an integration point of view: there were more Estonians among high-income earners. At the same time income gaps within the Russian-speaking population were smaller than within the ethnic Estonian population.

The 2008 monitoring survey points to the continuous increase in net incomes of the Estonian population. In the years 1994-2006 average incomes increased by nearly eight times. At the same time the average income of Russian-speakers had been lower than that of ethnic Estonians throughout the whole period (depending on the year Russian-speakers earned 80-85% of the total income of all ethnic Estonians), whereby during the years 1993-2003 income differences of ethnic groups increased, but during the years 2004-2005 decreased. The lower income of Russian-speakers was mainly the result of little share among the top-earners group.

In 2000 there were more Russian-speakers' families than ethnic Estonians among the poor based on the income; however, the absolute poor were mainly rural ethnic Estonians. Young Russian-speakers with good education and Estonian citizenship were similar to ethnic Estonians in their incomes. Dominantly retired people with Russian citizenship (60% of them were 55 years and older), with lower education and people with undetermined citizenship identified themselves as poor.

By 2005 the share of extremely poor families had decreased among all population groups and among Russian-speakers there had been an increase of the families who have savings. The specific problem appeared to be regional differences where Russian-speakers living in Ida-Virumaa and Tallinn had lower incomes than ethnic Estonians. As in 2000, the 2005 monitoring revealed that incomes of Russian-speakers with Estonian citizenship were higher than those of other citizenships.

1.4 Conclusions and implications for the following parts

The history of immigration into Estonia in post WW II followed by the political processes after the collapse of the Soviet Union and re-establishment of independence have resulted in the large share of TCN in the population. The share of TCN among the resident population (14%) is among the highest in the EU. Large majority of TCN have lived in Estonia for long period of time (most are born in Estonia) and have acquired third country nationality not prior to arriving to Estonia; rather than being TCN from birth they became



TCNs in 1990ies after the dissolution of Soviet Union and during the restoration of Estonian stehood. The significant difference from the post-war labour immigration in Western Europe is that most of TCN do not see themselves as immigrants since their relocation to Estonia took place at a time when there were no borders between the Soviet republics. This ‘disagreement’ over the definition of immigration creates some tension in the policy process and public discussion until today.

Half of TCNs living in Estonia are citizens of Russian Federation. These are dominantly first generation immigrants characterised by on average older age and low levels of integration into Estonian society. According to the 2011 integration index²⁰ there is a significantly higher share of people with Russian citizenship among those with very low levels of integration. Lower levels of integration of Russian citizens are explained by their older age, with low levels of Estonian language knowledge and geographical concentration in former industrial centres of north-eastern Estonia.²¹

Uniquely for Estonia the other half of TCN are so-called people with undetermined citizenship—former citizens of USSR that have not acquired the citizenship of any state. While somewhat better integrated (in integration index in cluster “D-little integration”), this group of residents are similarly characterised by lower levels of Estonian language knowledge, geographical concentration in north and north-eastern Estonia, as well as higher unemployment. There are more people from younger generations among them that indicates to the need continue the policies of encouraging naturalisation.

Differently from many other countries in EU Estonian TCNs do not differ in their educational levels from the host population. Stemming from the nature of post WW II immigration, the Soviet time settlers had either vocational, technical or higher education. However, despite their high educational attainments, the position of TCN in the labour market remains vulnerable. Unemployment of TCN has been higher since the establishment of the market economy reaching double of the employment of host population at times. Higher unemployment is explained by the structural factors such as geographical concentration of TCN in economically deprived areas of north-eastern Estonia, as well as by lack of sufficient knowledge of Estonian and low mobility within the country (that can also partly be caused by the lack of knowledge of Estonian).

²⁰ In order to explain the various integration levels, the authors have composed a general index of the level of linguistic, legal and political integration. For the index’s composition, the positive values of the following characteristics were added together: having a citizenship of the Republic of Estonia; considering Estonia as one’s only homeland; considering oneself as a member of the constitutional ethnic Estonian people; being proficient in Estonian language.

²¹ Integration Monitoring 2011.



Therefore, the challenges related to the SKC of TCNs in Estonia are mostly focused around the improvement of linguistic skills. Large share of the budget designated to life-long learning, skills training and qualifications standards for TCN is designated to teaching Estonian language as the main pre-requisite for professional careers in Estonia. While diploma qualifications acquired during the Soviet time either in Estonia or elsewhere are recognized in the current labour market, the main barrier for TCN professionals remains the lack of sufficient knowledge of Estonian that is required in the specific field of work.

Latest immigrants—people who have moved to Estonia since 1992—constitute a rather small group and have thus not raised the question of the SKC recognition yet. However, with the increased attention of the government to attracting and retaining skilled and highly skilled migrants from third countries, there is an increasing need in Estonia to pay attention to the recognition of SKC of TCN.

Finally, Estonia with its 1.3 million inhabitants is a small country and there are no regional policies towards TCN.



2. First Part: Third Country Nationals' SKC Recognition

2.1 A brief description of the process of data collection

The number of third country nationals that have arrived to Estonia after the re-establishment of independent state in 1991 is rather small. Annually Estonia issues between 2,500-3,000 residence permits to third country nationals and while majority stay in Estonia for short period of time, the total stock of recent immigrants is estimated at around 6,000 people. Majority of third country nationals living in Estonia have been either born here or have migrated into Estonia before the collapse of USSR.

Due to the small numbers of recent arrivals, the issue of skills and qualifications recognition of third country nationals does not stand high on the national agenda. In search of information for the current report, the following national agencies and professional bodies were approached with the request of information:

- 1) Estonian Unemployment Office *Töötukassa*. According to *Töötukassa*, they have no data about the skills recognition in the labour market by the employers nor numerous instances of such situations. In fact, the labour market services and trainings division specialist confirmed she is not aware of a single instance where there have been a need for skills recognition prior to access to the labour market.²²
- 2) Estonian Qualifications Authority *Kutsekoda*. The chairman of the board of *Kutsekoda* confirmed that they have not been working on issues related to SKC of third country nationals neither locally nor internationally due to the small importance of the issue.²³
- 3) E-mail exchange with Estonia ENIC/NARIC centre. The centre provided data about the applications for academic qualifications by third country nationals in last 10 years.
- 4) E-mail exchange with the Ministry of Education and Research as a central agency for EU Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications. However, most of their activity is focused on the recognition of qualifications of EU citizens. According to the ministry there is not much information and practice of SKC recognition of third country nationals in Estonia because Estonia is

²² Estonian Unemployment Office *Töötukassa*, telephone conversation with Ms Jevgenia Smirnova on 2 September 2014.

²³ Estonian Qualifications Authority *Kutsekoda*, telephone conversation with Mr Olav Aarna, member of the board, 2 September 2014.



predominantly a sending country.²⁴ The largest immigration of skilled workers from third countries is into health sector for which statistics is provided below.

Due to the low immigration numbers from third countries the question of skills recognition has not raised to the attention of policy-makers nor researchers and analysts. There have been no reports, policy papers or research articles identified via desk research that would focus on the SKC recognition of third country nationals in Estonia.

2.2 Legislative and administrative framework at national and regional level

2.2.1 Recognition of formal qualifications acquired in Third Countries

Foreign academic qualifications

Foreign qualifications acquired outside of Estonia are evaluated centrally by the Estonian ENIC/NARIC (Academic Recognition Information Centre) according to the Government's regulation of 6 April 2006.²⁵ Estonian ENIC/NARIC was established as a structural unit of Archimedes Foundation in 1997. The main tasks of the office are: assessing foreign access and higher education qualifications; determining the correspondence of the qualifications and providing information on education system and recognition issues. Information about the regulated professions, competent recognition authorities and application procedures is also provided by the Estonian ENIC/NARIC, which is the contact point for the professional recognition. There are no regional recognition centres.

The Government's regulation is national overarching legal instrument in the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and it includes the nomination of competent assessment and recognition authorities, the role of Estonia ENIC/NARIC office in assessment of foreign qualifications and information provision, general principles of assessment and academic recognition. In assessment and academic recognition the Estonian ENIC/NARIC is guided by the purposes and tasks of the NARIC Network of the European Commission and the ENIC Network of the Council of Europe and UNESCO and the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon, 1997) and the subsidiary documents.

²⁴ Estonian Ministry of Education and Research (Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium), E-mail correspondence with Ms Tiina Randma, 3 September 2014.

²⁵ Government of the Republic of Estonia Regulation No 89 of 6 April 2006 [Criteria and Procedures for Assessment and Academic Recognition of Foreign Qualifications and for Use of Title of Qualification Granted in Foreign Education System](#).



According to the regulation higher education institutions or employers may also assess the foreign qualifications if they have appropriate experience in assessment in foreign qualifications and if the institution has sufficient information on the education system of the foreign country, the educational institution and the qualification structure concerned. Most higher education institutions and employers in the public sector require the Estonian ENIC/NARIC assessment and the statement of comparison.

Recognition applications can be made in three languages – Estonian, English or Russian. The time to process recognition request is also set in the regulations – 30 days. The time limit is the same for all assessment authorities, i.e. including higher education institutions and employers. The recognition process is free of charge. The holder of foreign qualification has the right to appeal if the recognition of the qualification by the recognition authority does not correspond to the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the related national legal instruments.

In case of Estonia a separate issue is the comparability of educational and academic qualifications granted on the territory of the USSR before 20 August 1991. The comparability mechanisms and standards are established by the Government's regulation of 12 June 2005,²⁶ the qualifications not included in the regulation are assessed by the Estonian ENIC/NARIC based on regulation of 6 April 2006. In 1996 Estonia signed bilateral agreement with Ukraine on mutual recognition of educational documents and academic degrees.²⁷

Foreign professional qualifications

Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act²⁸ regulates professional recognition procedure for foreign qualifications. In order to work in a regulated profession with foreign qualifications one must apply for the recognition of these qualifications by a competent authority. The main task of the competent authority is to compare, according to the law, the professional qualification of the applicant with the professional qualification required in Estonia for working in the regulated profession, and to decide whether the applicant has the right to work in the given regulated profession in Estonia.

The competent authority reviews the application, makes a decision and informs the applicant of this within four months from the date of submission of the application and

²⁶ Government of the Republic of Estonia Regulation No 120 of 12 June 2005 [Correspondence of qualifications issued in former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics prior to 20 August 1991](#).

²⁷ Estonia, [Eesti Vabariigi valitsuse ja Ukraina valitsuse vaheline kokkulepe haridusdokumentide ja teaduslike kraade tõendavate dokumentide vastastikusest tunnustamisest](#), signed 06.02.1996, RT II 1996, 29, 108.

²⁸ Estonia, [Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act](#), RT I 2008, 30, 191.



the documentation as prescribed by law. The decision by the competent authority must be formalized as an administrative act which explains the decision and the procedures for lodging an appeal. The competent body may require an applicant to take an aptitude test or complete an adaptation period of up to six months, whereas the applicant may choose one or the other, if significant differences become apparent in the evaluation process. The applicant has the right to appeal to the Ministry of Education and Research or to the administrative court.

Each profession that requires professional recognition of qualifications has its own authority for issuing and recognising qualifications. Estonia ENIC/NARIC functions as national contact point for information and advice for recognition of professional qualifications, however, it does not provide the recognition. The Estonian Qualifications Authority (trademark *Kutsekoda*) as a private legal entity (foundation) was established in August 2001 in order to continue developing the occupational qualifications system launched by the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 1997. *Kutsekoda* was established by the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Estonian Employers' Confederation, Ministry of Social Affairs, Estonian Employees' Unions' Confederation (TALO) and the Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions. In addition to the founders of the *Kutsekoda*, the Supervisory Board of the *Kutsekoda* includes a representative of the Ministry of Education and Research. *Kutsekoda* is developing a support structure for occupational qualifications system in order to increase the competitiveness of Estonian employees and promote the development, assessment, recognition and comparison of their occupational competence.

Links with EQF

In 2000, the European Council adopted the Lisbon Strategy, aimed at making the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, characterised by constant economic growth, creation of new and better jobs and larger social coherence. An important part of this strategy is to develop the common European lifelong learning area, and relevant systems of lifelong learning in the Member States. In the field of higher education, this idea is realized through the Bologna process, and in VET, through the Copenhagen process.

An important process in the creation of the common European lifelong learning area is the development and implementation of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF). The learning outcomes based approach is the core of the EQF. On April 23, 2008, the European Parliament and Council adopted a recommendation on



establishment of the EQF. In this context qualification is understood as a result of official assessment and validation of competence. The EQF has 8 qualification levels, in which qualification is described in terms of learning outcomes, expressed in three categories: knowledge, skills and competence (understood as the degree of autonomy and responsibility). The first step in implementing the EQF is referencing national qualifications framework (hereinafter NQF) levels or national qualifications to the EQF levels.

The EQF is a reference framework of different formal education qualifications (general education, vocational education and training, higher education) and occupational qualifications (sectoral qualifications). The EQF links the qualification systems of the EU Member States and makes qualifications of different countries more mutually understandable and comparable. An important objective is also to recognise the results of non-formal and informal learning. Creation of NQF is seen as an important mean in achieving these objectives. Although establishing NQF is not mandatory, most of the EU Member States have chosen this method.

Referencing national qualifications and qualifications frameworks to the EQF is based on the best fit principle. This means reliable decision on what EQF level a particular qualification or NQF level fits best. Because of the structure of the EQF level descriptors the application of this principle has two dimensions:

- the best fit with the EQF level description for a national qualification or a NQF level;
- the best fit with a particular EQF level descriptor (knowledge, skills and competence).

Implementation of the EQF is a voluntary undertaking based on mutual trust between the member states. The EQF Advisory Group has proposed 10 criteria and procedures for referencing the NQF levels to the EQF levels. These criteria and procedures serve as guidelines for the member states implementing the EQF. Following the criteria and procedures enables to do this in a transparent and coherent way.

To guarantee participation of all important stakeholders in the referencing process member states are advised to establish a steering committee. In 2005 the creation of the Estonian Qualifications Framework (EstQF) started, when a broad-based working group with an assignment to analyse the first draft proposal of the European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) was established, the possibilities to link Estonian 5-levels occupational qualifications framework to the EQF, and formulate suggestions about the development of the EstQF. The working group put forward the proposal



of creating an 8-levels comprehensive national qualifications framework. The proposal was supported by the employers' and employees' organisations, by the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, by the Ministry of Social Affairs, and by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications. Based on this agreement, another broad-based working group was established by the minister of education and research with the task to draft a new Occupational Qualifications Act. An eight-level EstQF was established in 2008, with the Occupational Qualifications Act.²⁹

The descriptions of the qualification levels – the lowest and the eighth is the highest – are identical with the EQF level descriptions. EstQF is a comprehensive framework, consisting of four sub-frameworks for general education qualifications, VET qualifications, higher education qualifications, and occupational qualifications.

2.2.2 Assessment, recognition and validation of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning

Assessment, recognition and validation of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning is known in Estonia under term 'Recognition of Prior Learning' (RPL) and also as 'Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning' (APEL) or *VÕTA* in Estonian. Process of implementing APEL started at around 2003. APEL is a possibility to recognize prior learning (incl. continuing education) and professional work experience for completing studies curriculum or acquiring professional qualification. The University Act³⁰ requires the universities to accredit prior and experiential learning and gives the universities the obligation to elaborate the rules and procedures for APEL.

The aim of APEL is to develop connections between lifelong learning and different levels of study, as well as with the labour market. APEL is based on the substantial compatibility of the previously acquired knowledge, skills and experiences. Since September 2007 there is no limitation as to how big share of higher education programmes or professional training can be obtained through APEL, however is stated that HE institutions cannot award whole diploma or certificate on the basis of prior and experiential learning. Neither APL nor APEL could be used for dispensatory access to the university – replacing necessary qualification in entrance. Within the APEL framework the following skills and experiences are recognised: previous studies accomplished at education institutions; continuing education; professional work experience; and skills/knowledge acquired

²⁹ Estonia, [Occupational Qualifications Act](#), RT I 2008, 24, 156.

³⁰ The act of University.



through voluntary activities or hobbies. For example, the process reviews learning that may have been mastered through a variety of life experiences, including professional responsibilities, civic and volunteer experiences, military and corporate training, and independent study. APEL can be used in fulfilling admission requirements, in continuing unfinished studies, as part of studies, and in changing the curriculum of studies. However, in Estonia, as a rule, admission to higher education institution cannot be based on APEL procedure and upper secondary school diploma is required.

In a situation characterised by increasing importance of the lifelong learning agenda and the pursuit of a better match between education and changing needs of the job market, developing a nationally effective APEL system has become a priority for Estonia. APEL figures high on the National Adult Education Strategy.³¹

APEL procedure

There is no common regulation for all educational levels in Estonia for considering the accreditation of prior learning and work experience. Each of the education institution or professional qualifications body has established its own procedures for APEL process. In general, however, the procedures are based on applicant's self-evaluation. The applicant needs to evaluate its prior learning and experienced against the curriculum of professional qualifications requirements. As a result a portfolio is developed, where all the evidence is gathered. Evidence in the form of documents needs to be provided, for example official transcripts and course descriptions, training certificate, copy of employment contract, job description, certificate from the workplace etc. The application will be assessed by educational institution or professional qualifications' accreditation body's APEL assessors within one month of the date of receiving the claim. In case of need, the applicant may be requested to produce additional evidence, e.g. present a portfolio, take an examination or a test, or be interviewed. Various fees apply for different documents' assessment.

There is no joint system for counselling. Guidance on APEL if provided is mostly done inside the educational institutions.

³¹ Estonia, [National Adult Education Strategy 2009-2013](#) (*Täiskasvanuhariduse arengukava 2009-2013*), Ministry of Education and Research.



2.2.3 Ad hoc bodies, procedures, instruments specifically envisaged for TCNs' SKC recognition

Estonia does not have on national or regional level ad hoc bodies or instruments specifically envisaged for TCN's SKC recognition.

2.3 Recognizing TCNs' SKC

2.3.1 Presentation of the existing statistics and studies about TCNs' SKC recognition at national and regional level

As has been mentioned above, due to the small numbers of recent immigrants from third countries into Estonia, the issue of SKC recognition has not received attention in policy or research. There are no reports, policy papers or research articles identified via desk research that would focus on the SKC recognition of third country nationals in Estonia.

The statistics was obtained about the SKC recognition of healthcare workers from third countries. The shortage of healthcare workers has existed in Estonian labour market since the country joined European Union. It has been cause by the emigration of trained healthcare professionals, mostly to neighbouring Finland, Sweden and Norway. According to the prognosis made in 2005 there will be 500 doctors less in 2025 that poses serious challenges to the quality of the healthcare services.³²

Estonian Health Board (*Terveisamet*) is a competent authority that certifies the qualifications of healthcare professionals in Estonia. According to the data provided by the Health Board, the main countries of origin of third country national healthcare workers are Russia and Ukraine (see table).

Table 11 - SKC recognition of healthcare workers from third countries 2004-2013

Country	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
Russia	2	7	6	6	9	7	8	10	15	9	79
Ukraine	1	1	2		4	6	1	4	4	8	31
Moldova						1			2		3
Belarus	2		1			1			1		5
Jordan		1									1
Azerbaijan				1						1	2
Georgia						1				1	2
Armenia						1					1

³² National Audit Office of Estonia (2005). [Need for Employers and State-Commissioned Education in the Health Field](#). Audit report.

Egypt							1					1
USA							1	1				2
Chile							1					1
Kazakhstan							1			1		2
Kyrgyzstan							1		1			2
Total	5	9	9	7	13	17	14	14	24	20		132

Source: Estonian Health Board 2013

While there is increasing trend in immigration of healthcare workers from third countries into Estonia, the numbers are still rather low. There is no statistics or data about the SKC recognition of third country nationals in other professional fields.

Estonian ENIC/NARIC centre deals with the academic qualifications of diplomas of foreigners. According to the ENIC/NARIC, there is a steady annual increase in applications for certifying academic qualifications by third country nationals in last 10 years (table 12). Again by far the highest number of applications are filed by the citizens of Russian Federation.

Table 12 - Applications for academic qualifications by third country nationals 2004-2014

Country	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Russia	141	157	175	171	180	156	188	186	226	253	192	2025
India	103	42	13	7	34	7	0	11	33	68	135	453
USA	24	34	30	27	24	26	36	43	38	58	38	378
China	10	108	60	94	68	28	22	21	24	33	39	507
Bangladesh	7	44	8	1	2	11	12	5	13	24	45	172
Pakistan	6	5	1	5	1	11	34	17	32	48	62	222
Nigeria	5	15	15	8	7	6	31	28	44	62	176	397
Ukraine	2	19	14	18	20	21	14	36	58	92	105	399
Turkey	1	6	2	4	6	12	15	28	34	66	57	231
Georgia	0	2	4	3	2	6	6	35	29	45	93	225

Source: Estonia ENIC/NARIC Centre

While majority of applications for certifying academic qualifications are requested for the purpose of continuing education in Estonia, among requests are also those related to labour market.

2.3.2 Potential benefits of TCNs' SKC recognition for the national and regional labour demand

Estonian Police and Boarder Guard does not provide information about third country nationals work immigration based on the economic sector. Majority of residence permits



for work purposes have been issued to Ukrainian nationals who arrive to Estonia (see table 3 in introduction chapter) for short periods of time to work in construction and shipbuilding. There is no detailed information about to which economic sectors work-related immigration is heading.

Due to the lack of data it is not possible to estimate the benefit of third country nationals immigration and SKC recognition for the national labour market. Based on some information, it can be argued that in recent 10 years the immigration and SKC recognition of healthcare workers from third countries has alleviated the labour demand in healthcare sector. In 2005 National Audit Office of Estonia analysed the situation of the resource of health care professionals as well as the system used to evaluate the needs for employees in the healthcare. As a result of establishment of the register of healthcare professionals in 2004, the data on healthcare professionals has essentially improved and a systematic evaluation of the needs for employees and a is developed, the Audit Office came to a conclusion that based on the available resources and the training capacity the state is not able to provide the healthcare system with sufficient number of healthcare professionals and this jeopardizes sustainability of Estonian healthcare. According to the audit 10% of the health care professionals have reached retirement age while there are not enough younger doctors to replace the older doctors who leave the labour market soon. In addition, after the opening of the labour markets of EU member states in 2004, the brain drain of healthcare professionals added another stress on the domestic market. The audit concluded that it is impossible to maintain the existing number of doctors and to increase the number of nurses sufficiently through state-commissioned education.³³ In described circumstances the immigration of healthcare workers from EU member states or third countries is inevitable. However, while the number of healthcare workers immigrating to Estonia from third countries has been increasing steadily over last 10 years (see table 11), they remain nevertheless below the need for the labour in healthcare sector.

In 2014 the Estonian Doctors' Union (*Eesti Arstide Liit*) addressed the Health Board with complaint concerning the SKC recognition of doctors from third countries. The union expressed its concern regarding the professional qualifications and sufficient level of professional training of doctors from third countries who's SKC have been recognised by the Health Board. According to the union there is a need for additional qualifications compatibility test prior to the recognition of the SKC. The need is stemming from the practical experience of the working of doctors from third countries who's training and

³³ National Audit Office of Estonia (2005). [Need for Employers and State-Commissioned Education in the Health Field](#). Audit report.



professional expertise does not match the Estonian standards, according to the union.³⁴ In its response the Health Board considered the recognition of professional qualifications of third country nationals as lawful and according to existing standards. While the dispute is still ongoing, the Ministry of Social Affairs has announced its intention to conduct and audit in September 2014 of the process of recognition of SKC of doctors from third countries.³⁵

2.3.3 Outcomes of SKC recognition for TCN workers

Due to the low numbers of third country nationals immigration and SKC recognition there have been no studies conducted and impact on employability, professional mobility and retribution levels.

2.3.4 Problematic issues and possible improvement strategies

While the number of immigrants from third countries who arrive for the purpose of work into Estonia is remaining low, with the increasing demand for the labour market in various sectors of economy, the estimates are that the numbers will be increasing in near future. As a consequence, there is a need to improve the available information about the immigration of workers and professionals from third countries into various economic sectors in Estonia. Currently the competent authorities of recognition of professional qualifications have dealt with only single cases of recognition. The highest number of applications has been submitted to the Health Board for the recognition of healthcare professional qualifications. However, even in that sector the numbers do not pass couple of dozens.

2.4 Summary of part 2

Due to the small number of immigrants there is little or nearly no experience in the recognition of SKC of third country nationals in majority of professions in Estonia.

³⁴ Estonian Doctors' Union. Letter to Estonian Minister of Social Affairs, Estonian Minister of Health and Work and head of the Health Board, dated 26 June 2014.

³⁵ Ministry of Social Affairs, letter from the Minister of Health and Work Mr Urmas Kruuse to Estonian Doctors' Union, July 2014, 5.2-2/3064.



Unemployment Office or Estonian Qualifications Authority have not encountered any cases related to the SKC recognition of third country nationals. There are also no studies conducted on the issues of SKC recognition. The statistics shows very small numbers of SKC recognition applications even in the healthcare sector. While the number of doctors' arriving to Estonia from third countries remains low, there are first instances of problems related to the SKC recognition of these doctors. As the experience with the levels of professional qualifications of the doctors from third countries is relatively short, the problems are only in the process of illuminating themselves. It can be estimated that in the coming decade, when due to the labour market demand the number of healthcare professionals from the third countries will be increasing, the issues related to the SKC of these professionals will come more forward in national policy debates. Similarly, in other sectors of economy that until today have seen nearly no immigration of professionals from the third countries, the labour market demand will create immigration that will in turn result in the practice of recognition of the SKC of third country nationals.



3. Diversity Management Practices Implemented by Profit, Public and Non-profit Organizations

3.1 An overview of the existing studies and experiences at national and regional level

Due to its geographical position in Europe and especially to its long Soviet Union period, diversity is not a novel phenomenon for Estonia. Another crucial reason why migration to Estonia is of high importance emerges from the demographics—being a country with relatively small number of inhabitants (ca 1.3 million), attracting and retaining foreign talents to work here have been part of intense strategic debates in policy making for some time now (Kallas et al. 2014). Heated by the fact how after joining the EU, Estonia has to compete with other countries with respect to wages. The attractiveness of Nordic (Finland, Sweden) and older European countries (Germany, UK, Ireland) has resulted in a noticeable outflow of young working-age people in seek for better living standards and income (Veidemann 2009). In 2013 for the fifth time, the Ministry of Social Affairs has held a survey on the migration potential of Estonia's working-age population, which showed that respectively in 2006, 2010 and 2013, about 3,9%, 8,5% and 5,9% of working-age persons intended to work abroad (Tarum 2014).

According to the statistical estimates, in 20 years Estonia will loose more than 100 000 working-age people (The Government...2013: 5). Looking at these figures (Table 13) it becomes clear how Estonia needs to turn its attention to developing the favorable conditions so that more international people would want to live and work here. Continuing decrease of local workforce together with ageing population results in uneasy combination for a small country like Estonia.

Table 13 - The dynamics of working-age population in Estonia up to the year 2030

Year	Working-age population (15-64)	Decrease from 2010	Decrease in working-age population, %
2010	908 000		
2020	843 000	-65 000	-7%
2030	801 000	-107 000	-12%

Source: Eurostat, European Commission's Ageing Report; The Government Office 2013.

The third main goal of attracting foreign talent is to foster entrepreneurship initiatives and Estonian economic competitiveness in general. It can be also seen in the Governmental Action Plan for years 2011-2015, which put much stress on creating a favorable

environment for the migration of talented foreigners to work in Estonia (Kallas et al. 2014). Such strategy has been also labelled as the so-called smart migration policy, where the growth of the economy is seen to be basing on the selective and demand-based migration policy (Kallas et al. 2014: 3). From the economical side, the need for highly skilled specialists can be also interpreted as a catalyst for the development of Estonia's strategic sectors. For example, being known by innovative IT-solutions, with small stock of local inhabitants, Estonia can turn out to be highly attractive host country for technology oriented specialists.

Figure 3 below summarizes all the three triggers (demographical, geographical and economical) that should contribute to the development of diversity management practices in Estonia.

Figure 3 - Background conditions of the development of diversity management practices

Background conditions		
Demographical situation	Geographical position	Economical situation
Age composition of the population (ageing country)	As a member of EU, free movement of local workforce across the Europe	Emigration of workforce seek for a better income
Large proportion of Soviet-time settlers, the need for integration	Closeness to nordic countries with higher living standards	Good reputation with regard to some fields, for example in IT. Need for highly skilled specialists
	Border country of EU region – entrance to TCNs (for example from Russia)	Governmental focus on maximum involvement of local employees

The existing studies on diversity in Estonia can be clustered based on two groups. One of them is focusing on the integration of Russians (including Soviet-era settlers) in Estonia, and the other addressing to fill the shortages in the employment market by attracting highly skilled foreign employees (so called smart migration policy). Next, a brief overview will be given about the mentioned two streams. Yet it should be mentioned how the vast



majority of the studies are focusing on the diversity at the national and not at the organizational level.

Integration of Russian-speaking population

Integration of the mainly Russian-speaking population (or Soviet-time settlers) has laid main focus to the questions regarding the overall active participation in the society or at the employment market. Focusing on the employment market, Krusell (2013) and Lepik (2010) have addressed how the labour market positions of immigrants (mostly Russian) tend to be worse than the native's positions, mostly affected by such aspects like the level of education, Estonian language skills, but also the citizenship in general. These findings give further evidence how vulnerable actually non-native people might be with respect to the participation in the Estonian working life. Similarly, it has been found that young Russian-speakers living in Estonia are more willing to take up employment abroad (Tarum 2014: 30). The reason behind this can be that since Russian-speakers might feel as foreigners in Estonia it does not make a great difference to leave the country in order to be a foreigner in some other place. An illustrative, yet not inclusive overview of existing studies is represented by Table 14.

Table 14 - Some illustrative studies covering the integration of Russians in Estonian society and workplace

Study	Focus
Krusell 2013 "The Native and Immigrant Population in the Labour Market"	To analyze the labor market positions of the native and immigrant population in Estonia, and the impact of the ongoing recession on these positions.
Lepik 2010 "Töötud mitte-eestlased Eesti tööturul"	To understand the situation of unemployed non-Estonians in the Estonian labor market
Masso 2009 "Readiness to Accept Immigrants in Europe? Individual and Country-Level Characteristics"	Attitudes towards immigration, readiness to accept immigrants. Based on European Social Survey data.
Veidemann 2009 "Situation of the Immigrant Population at Estonian Labour Market"	To understand how the immigrant population deals with the unemployment situation in the Estonian labor market during the recession.
Nimmerfeldt 2008 "Identificational Integration of Second Generation Russians in Estonia"	Identification with one's ethnic group and identification with the majority.
Vihalemm, Kalmus 2008 "Mental Structures in Transition Culture: Differentiating Patterns of Identities and Values in Estonia"	With respect to mental structures, do Russian youngsters differ from their parents to a greater extent than do young Estonians from theirs?
Küün 2008	How linguistic origin, language environment, frequency of



“The Ethnic and Linguistic Identity of Russian-speaking young People in Estonia”	communication with speakers of Estonian and the level of skills in the official language relate to the ethnic and linguistic identity of young non-Estonians.
Aasland and Fløtten 2001 “Ethnicity and Social Exclusion in Estonia and Latvia”	Phenomenon of social exclusion; how social exclusion affects different ethnic groups.



Smart migration policy

Fostering diversity in the workplace has been a clear focus during the last years in Estonia. For example, National Reform Programme “Estonia 2020” (p. 14) brings out the need for revising current procedures for giving work permits so that it would be easier for the highly qualified people to enter Estonian job market.

Illustrative studies covering the smart migration policy can be found in Table 15.

Table 15 - Some illustrative studies covering smart migration policy

Study	Focus
Kallas et al. 2014 “Newly-arrived immigrants in Estonia: Policy Options and Recommendations for a Comprehensive and Sustainable Support System”	To analyze the current support system and services provided to highly qualified migrants with the aim of mapping the main bottlenecks and formulating proposals to develop the most optimal system for supporting foreign talents in Estonia.
EMN 2013 “EMN Focussed Study 2013: Attracting Highly Qualified and Qualified Third-Country Nationals Estonian National Report”	To provide an overview of the policy implemented in Estonia and practical measures for attracting highly qualified and qualified third-country nationals.
Asari 2013 “Attracting Highly Qualified and Qualified Third-Country Nationals in the European Union and Estonia”	To outline policies and concrete practical measures in Member States that aim to attract (highly) qualified third-country nationals for the purpose of work.
The Government Office 2013 National Reform Programme “Estonia 2020”	To increase the productivity and employment in Estonia, including possibilities for attracting foreign employees.
Uus & Kaldur 2013 “Euroopa kolmandate riikide kodanike lõimumisarutelu Aruanne”	To involve TCNs and people with “grey passports” into the development of the migration and integration policy.
European Migration Network 2010 “Satisfying labour demand through migration in Estonia”	To understand the strategies for addressing labor market needs and shortages in Estonia; to gain an understanding of the perceived effectiveness of these strategies; and to examine the impact of the recent economic downturn and recovery on these strategies (e.g. how they have been or will be adapted).
SA Eesti Migratsioonifond 2006 “Kolmandate riikide kõrgelt kvalifitseeritud töötajate riiki sisenemise ja riigis viibimise tingimused Euroopa Liidus”	To give an overview of the need for third country nationals working in Estonia.
Etc.	

Taking from Asari (2013: 26), countries might focus on third country national professionals from specific sectors just to fill particular needs and shortages of the national labour market, or the aim is just to boost the national economy by attracting third country



investors and entrepreneurs. It has been further brought forward how although due to the economic crisis and fast growth of unemployment the need for bringing in foreign labor overall lessened, the need for highly skilled labor force has remained and continues to be high (Satisfying labour demand...2010: 53).

Just to illustrate, the development of IT-sector has been one of the major strategic aims of Estonia, thus the recruitment of the highly specialized “know-how” is most evident. The head of Skype’s Estonian unit Tiit Paananen admitted in an interview to the BNS in 2013 how already now the annual stock of IT graduates from Estonian universities are not covering the needs of the information technology sector in Estonia, but the problem is bound to grow in some years’ time (as due to the demographics the overall number of students and future graduates will decrease) and thousands of new staff will have to be found abroad (Postimees 14.05.2013). Already now, many internationally well-known Estonian start-ups like GrabCad and Transferwise have relocated their headquarters to bigger countries (USA and UK), since the existing pool of talented developers in Estonia is too small (The Economist 11.07.2013).

The study held by European Migration Network (2010) has brought out the core principles of the smart migration policy in Estonia:

The principles of formation and realization of Estonian migration policy emphasize selectivity of Estonian migration policy, which is based on territory and qualifications of people. Estonia prefers employees with skills that are important for Estonian economy, being open, first and foremost to top specialists and employees with special skills. One of the main aims of the Estonian migration policy is supplementing the labor resources with know-how necessary for Estonia through sufficient immigration. (Satisfying labour demand...2010: 3)

Most recent study on diversity addressed newly-arrived immigrants in Estonia. It focused on mapping “the current support system and services provided to highly skilled migrants with the goal of mapping the main bottlenecks and formulating proposals to develop the most optimal system for supporting foreign talents in Estonia” (Kallas et al. 2014: 3). As a rule, international person, whether it be the student or (highly qualified) employee, may become “ambassador” for the Estonia in their home country (The Government...2013). Hence, collecting the experiences from current foreigners working in Estonia can turn out to be a valuable input for ensuring that the image of the country will be a positive and “attractive”.

Another study brings out how the peculiarities (limited services to employees, career opportunities, need to report some proficiency in Estonian language) of working conditions in Estonia can in fact lessen the attractiveness of Estonia to highly qualified



third-country nationals, for example in science and research (Asari 2013). Diversity is highly dependent on the willingness of the host country to adjust to the variations that might emerge from the different cultural and lingual backgrounds. That said, policy reports bring forward how the availability of international general education (for example more English-language based courses and programs should be offered) is a necessity for highly qualified people coming to Estonia, especially when with a family (The Government...2013: 14):

Those processes are linked with the related services that help people adapt to life in Estonia, meet their expectations connected with the settlement of their family members here and contribute in any other manner to the possibilities of their self-realization in Estonia.

Overall, the main key themes with regard to attracting the talented TCNs to Estonia address the need to reduce bureaucracy in the application process and facilitating better support service system to TCNs and their families (EMN 2013).

Based on the existing studies, following main points can be brought out:

- **Work-based migration is highly dependent on the employers.**

Work-based migration relies heavily on the specific needs of local companies. Most often organizations seek out for TCNs, when they face the lack of highly specialized workforce in Estonia and EU region. That said, also the majority of responsibility for the recruitment and taking care of the transition period difficulties lies with the organizations or the employers (Kallas et al. 2014; Maasing 2010; Asari 2013).

- **Fragmentation or lack of supporting services.**

Although much has been achieved, still foreigners find supporting activities (schooling and kindergarten possibilities, social and medical care, taxation, documentary requirements, etc.) poorly accessible (Kallas et al. 2014; Asari 2013). Often this is due to the lack of information in English and transfers to the most essential supporting services like finding a place for a child in a (English language based) kindergarten or school, activities for a spouse. But also at a wider scale, even the lack of sufficient adaption programs for foreigners lessens the success of their integration.

- **Unclear governmental vision and action plan.**

The implementation of the so-called smart migration policy has been recorded as visionary in many official documents, yet so far they have not shown remarkable effect in practice. One of the reasons explaining such tendency might be that the Estonian Government is primarily focused on maximum involvement of local labor force in



work life before taking active measures towards importing foreign labor (Satisfying labour demand...2010).

Back in 2006 a policy report on the migration of third country nationals stated how since there are still big challenges due to the integration of migrants from the Soviet times, there just isn't enough resources to address the question of openness and the need for new migration from the third countries (SA Eesti Migratsioonifond 2006: 4). During the recent years such mentality has changed, since the need for additional workforce in some of the strategic sectors is becoming inevitable in order to increase the economical competitiveness of the country.

After joining EU, more and more local workforce has sought to find better conditions from other countries—presumably around 20,000 permanent residents of Estonia work outside the country (Satisfying labour demand...2010: 22). One of the major reasons behind such tendency is that still Estonia is not able to compete with the average wages offered in most of the older EU countries and especially countries in North-Europe (SA Eesti Migratsioonifond 2006; Tarum 2014). It means that as people are free to move across Europe, the migration policies should be developed so that they support the dynamics of the Estonian job market together with the needs of the organizations.

Since the most active stream of debates currently in Estonia is focusing on the smart migration policy, also present study will apply such lenses for addressing diversity management practices implemented by profit, public and non-profit organizations. That said, the focus will be on third country nationals as a valuable contribution for the Estonian labor market by fostering diversity at workplace.

3.2 A brief description of the sample and of the process of data collection

3.2.1 Selection of the organizations

Taking into an account the situational factors of Estonia (small population and geographical position in the northern periphery of Europe), governmental reports are most of all reflecting the need for recruiting highly-qualified foreign people in order to compensate the limitations of the local employment market. All in all, Estonian migration policy is focused on attracting the needed “know-how”. That said, the main principle grounding the selection of organizations follows the above stated remark.



The group of profit-oriented organizations is comprised by internationally well-known IT-companies together with 1 large energy company and 1 manufacturing company (dealing with oil shale).

The group of non-profit organizations represents international schools, offering elementary and basic level education with English language as instruction. The reason behind choosing international schools stems from the fact that these schools work as a crucial support mechanism for TCNs who decide to come to Estonia with families. All the TCNs with families brought out how one of the major reasons for accepting the work offer in Estonia was the existence of supporting system for their family – kindergarten, schooling, working possibilities for the spouse, etc. With that in mind, it was reasonable to include international schools as representatives of the support system for TCNs.

Public organizations in the sample are three Estonian universities and one national theatre. Statistics shows how across the years among all the work permits given to TCNs, scientists and teaching staff comprise only about 4,5%, and considering the strategic aims of Estonia, such a result is regarded as too low (Kallas *et al.* 2014: 16). Hence, investigating universities can trigger interesting insights over the mentioned low attraction of scientists and teaching staff from third countries. The motivation behind the choice of a theatre in the sample emerges from the specific nature of an organization – national theatres need highly specialized and creative personnel (ballet dancers, actors, musicians, etc.) Thus it can be assumed how large theatres in fact are organizations that seek talents across the globe.

The overall picture to be gained from the study will inform about the current state of diversity management practices that overall should foster the recruitment and integration of highly qualified third country.

3.2.2 Description of the sample

The group of profit-based organizations is composed by 2 large ICT organizations, 1 manufacturing and 1 organization belonging to the energy sector.

Non-profit organizations cover educational spheres, representing preschool up to basic school level education in relatively small or medium size organizations.

The group of public organizations addresses large organizations in the higher education arena and one national theatre.



The distribution of organizations by type, sectors of activity, size and location can be seen via Table 16.

Table 16 - Distribution of the sample by type, sectors of activity, size and location

Type	Organization	Size (No of employees)	Sector of activity	Location
Profit	Ericsson Eesti AS	1300	ICT	Tallinn
	Playtech Estonia OÜ http://playtech.ee/	516	ICT	Tartu
	Viru Keemia Grupp AS http://www.vkg.ee/eng	2172	Manufacturing	Ida-Virumaa
Non-profit	Eesti Energia Narva Elektriijaamad AS (<i>Eesti Energia Narva Power Plants</i>) https://www.energia.ee/en/organisatsioon/narvajaamad	695	Energy	Ida-Virumaa
	MTÜ Tartu Katoliku Hariduskeskus (<i>Tartu Catholic Educational Center</i>) http://www.katoliku.edu.ee/en/contact/hariduskeskus	80	Education	Tartu
	Tartu International School http://istartu.ee/	14	Education	Tartu
Public	Tallinn Technology University www.ttu.ee	2052	Higher education	Tallinn
	University of Tartu www.ut.ee	3739	Higher education	Tartu
	Estonian University of Life Sciences http://www.emu.ee/	953	Higher education	Tartu
	Vanemuine Theatre www.vanemuine.ee	361	Culture	Tartu

3.2.3 The process of data collection

The process of data collection can be summarized in 5 sequential steps. Starting from step 1, the study began by creating an overview of existing studies and reports on TCNs in Estonia. It appeared how there are two major streams of studies, one having longer history than the other – namely the integration of Post-Soviet settlers in Estonia as being the most attention given topic so far, and in addition, during the recent years smart migration policy has been described as strategically important topic to be developed now and in future.

In step 2 the clarification of data collection goals had to be put down. Since the smart migration policy is important not only across European Union, but also in Estonia, current study will limit itself to this stream of focus, hence, leaving aside the issue of Post-Soviet settlers in Estonia). According to smart migration policy the goal is to attract highly



qualified people to work in Estonia, thus the organizations in the sample represent organizations that are in need for employees with such kind of background.

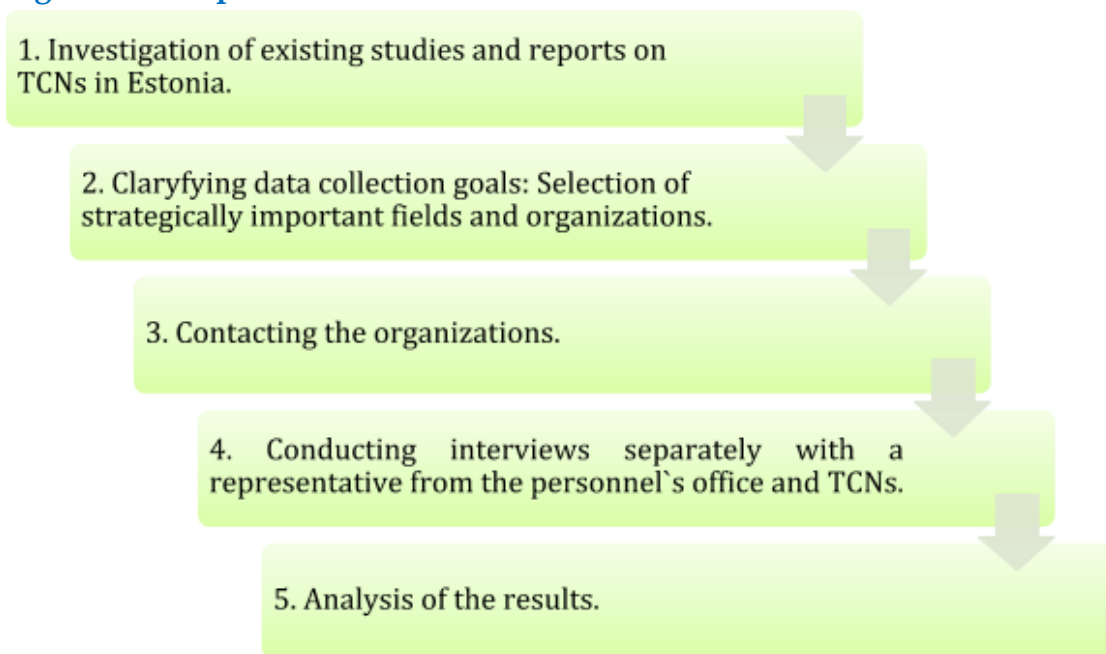
Considering the topic of the current project, another criterion behind the choice of the organizations was that they had some experience in recruiting TCNs, because that would allow elaborating their experience on diversity management practices. The biggest difficulty regarding the choice of organizations emerged from the fact that as a rule organizations do not declare officially (e.g. through their homepage) that they have foreigners, including TCNs among their workforce. Thus, the list of prospective organizations to be contacted was created mostly by looking through previous studies and seeing which kind of organizations had provided input previously and hoping that they would be willing to continue with such contributions.

Step 3 focused on contacting the organizations and step 4 covered interviews with TCNs and representatives from the personnel's office. Around 50% of the organizations listed originally fell out from the final sample, mostly because of the lack of time to participate in the study, and also some did not currently have any TCN among their employees. That said, new organizations had to be added during the process. As a general rule, organizations with a longer internationalization background were more willing to take part in studies and share their experience. Also, it was possible to see that the topic itself was highly important to them. For example, in ICT and manufacturing companies all of the representatives from the personnel's office declared the need for highly qualified specialists, though they did not specifically address the need to recruit them from the third countries—the skills and competencies matter more than the country of origin of the prospective employee.

Finally, step 5 covered the analysis of the interviews, thus creating an overview of diversity management practices in organizations that have recruited highly qualified TCNs in Estonia.

Figure 4 gives an overview of data collection described previously.

Figure 4 - The process of data collection.



3.2.4 Annex: sketching each organization included in the sample

1	
Name and legal form:	Ericsson Eesti AS
Type of organization:	Profit
Sector of activity:	Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
Typology of services/products:	Telecommunications equipment manufacturing and engineering center
Total number of personnel:	1400
Number of TCN personnel:	31 different nationalities, including 20 outside EU
Key diversity management practices:	Gender diversity, cultural diversity, etc. Diversity management strategies are highly encouraged and supported by the headquarters and practiced by the branches across the world.
2	
Name and legal form:	Playtech Estonia OÜ
Type of organization:	Profit
Sector of activity:	Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
Typology of services/products:	Online gaming software supplier
Total number of personnel:	516
Number of TCN personnel:	22 (20 male, 2 female)
Key diversity management practices:	Cultural diversity; Diversity as a natural flow of development (seeking for specialized and highly talented individuals)



	3
<i>Name and legal form:</i>	Viru Keemia Grupp AS
<i>Type of organization:</i>	Profit
<i>Sector of activity:</i>	Manufacturing
<i>Typology of services/products:</i>	Oil shale processing
<i>Total number of personnel:</i>	2172
<i>Number of TCN personnel:</i>	20 different nationalities
<i>Key diversity management practices:</i>	Cultural diversity (Estonian and Russian workforce), age diversity; Diversity as a natural flow of development (seeking for specialized and highly talented individuals)

	4
<i>Name and legal form:</i>	Eesti Energia Narva Elektriijaamad AS (Eesti Energia Narva Power Plants)
<i>Type of organization:</i>	Profit
<i>Sector of activity:</i>	Energy
<i>Typology of services/products:</i>	Largest producer of electrical energy in Estonia and one of the most important power producers in the Baltic region
<i>Total number of personnel:</i>	695
<i>Number of TCN personnel:</i>	30%
<i>Key diversity management practices:</i>	Cultural diversity (Estonian and Russian workforce); Diversity as a natural flow of development (seeking for specialized and highly talented individuals)

	5
<i>Name and legal form:</i>	MTÜ Tartu Katoliku Hariduskeskus (Tartu Catholic Educational Center)
<i>Type of organization:</i>	Non-profit
<i>Sector of activity:</i>	Education
<i>Typology of services/products:</i>	Preschool and elementary school level education
<i>Total number of personnel:</i>	80
<i>Number of TCN personnel:</i>	1
<i>Key diversity management practices:</i>	Diversity as a natural flow of development (seeking for specialized and highly talented individuals)

	6
<i>Name and legal form:</i>	MTÜ Tartu International School
<i>Type of organization:</i>	Non-profit
<i>Sector of activity:</i>	Education
<i>Typology of services/products:</i>	Basic school level education in English (students from age 6 to 15)
<i>Total number of personnel:</i>	14
<i>Number of TCN personnel:</i>	6 (3 male, 3 female)
<i>Key diversity management practices:</i>	Diversity as a natural flow of development (seeking for specialized and highly talented individuals)



7

Name and legal form:	Tallinn University of Technology
Type of organization:	Public
Sector of activity:	Higher education
Typology of services/products:	Academic and research activities, with focus on engineering and technology; Study programmes at bachelor, master and doctoral level
Total number of personnel:	2 052 employees
Number of TCN personnel:	82 (51 male, 31 female)
Key diversity management practices:	Internationalization in general Tallinn University of Technology

8

Name and legal form:	University of Tartu
Type of organization:	Public
Sector of activity:	Higher education
Typology of services/products:	Academic and research activities; Study programs at bachelor, master and doctoral level
Total number of personnel:	3 739 employees
Number of TCN personnel:	87 (61 male, 26 female)
Key diversity management practices:	Internationalization; Diversity as a natural flow of development (seeking for specialized and highly talented individuals)

9

Name and legal form:	Estonian University of Life Sciences
Type of organization:	Public
Sector of activity:	Higher Education
Typology of services/products:	Academic and research activities, with focus on life sciences; Study programs at bachelor, master and doctoral level
Total number of personnel:	953
Number of TCN personnel:	9
Key diversity management practices:	Internationalization; Diversity as a natural flow of development (seeking for specialized and highly talented individuals)

10

Name and legal form:	SA Teater Vanemuine (The Vanemuine Theatre)
Type of organization:	Public
Sector of activity:	Culture
Typology of services/products:	Spectacles, concerts, etc.
Total number of personnel:	361 (44 in ballet)
Number of TCN personnel:	ca 25%
Key diversity management practices:	Cultural diversity; Diversity as a natural flow of development (seeking for specialized and highly talented individuals)



3.3 TCN personnel

3.3.1 Reasons for resorting to TCNs

The lack of local employees with needed (often highly narrow and specialized) skills and qualifications appears to be the main reason for recruiting people from abroad. In our sample of profit-based organizations in most cases the need for additional workforce emerged due to the expansion of the organization and its activities. Estonia, being a small country with limited stock of workforce, the need for highly specialized employees is a very acute problem. Therefore, in many cases when organizations were planning to expand this process went hand in hand with mapping the possible workforce outside Estonia.

If we had suitable people here, we would gladly hire them, but if you don't have, then you have no other option than to look abroad." (ICT, 516 employees)

Another reason emerges from the educational background. Estonian (higher and vocational) education offers relatively broad educational preparation, and sometimes with limited possibilities for specialization. This is increasingly relevant problem for manufacturing and ICT companies as both fields need highly specialized people with very deep and often narrow competence. A good illustration of how the recruitment of TCNs allows to gain from another educational system is brought out by the experience of one large manufacturing organization as when facing with lack of highly specialized workforce they started to make visits to a notable technological institute in Russia in order to introduce their company as a very attractive place for both internship and future work:

There are two sorts of reasons. In Russia they have different higher education system. They study 5 year, here it is 3+2. During all these 5 years they study specifically in order to become a fossil fuel, chemistry technologist. Highly narrow! But here we have 3 years bachelor thesis, which is little bit of everything, and well, fossil fuel chemistry is just a small part of it. But there [in Russia] during all these years they study in order to become a fossil-fuel technologist. This is the first reason – their so called theoretical base about our field is much deeper. And the other reason is Russian language. Not much to say here, the language in our biggest sub company is approximately 95% operating with Russian based work-language. [...] You have to be able to communicate with the personnel. [...] And their [Estonian students] Russian language is so weak that they just will not survive there. So we have two reasons – the language, Russian language, and secondly the knowledge base. This is why we searched for this institute in St. Petersburg, went there several times. Made a deal with them and now we have first people [from St. Petersburg] working here. (Manufacturing, 1300 employees)



Such an example of a good practice has turned out as beneficial for the company, since now the students themselves contact the organization in order to inquire about possible internship and work possibilities.

Besides looking for highly-skilled specialists some companies have also recruited top level managers from the third countries, where in many cases they are managers from some other branch of the company. Hiring a manager with the know-how and experience in some field, especially with international scope gives the company a clear advantage. Again, the scale of Estonian workforce sets its limitation for finding enough people with such competence.

Sometimes TCNs themselves make the first contact with the organization, and in most cases, when the qualifications and competencies are found beneficial to the organization, the TCN will be recruited:

Then there are others who for some reason are interested in coming to Estonia. They contact us, and offer to work. Run for the position. Whatever the reasons might be, partner being an Estonian, etc... (ICT, 516 employees)

In order to summarize, in case of profit-oriented organizations there are three main reasons behind the recruitment of TCNs:

1. Companies take active measures for recruiting—looking for specific skills and know-how.
2. TCNs themselves contact the organization.
3. Being branch of an international organization, TCNs may just relocate themselves to Estonia for some period of time.

It is also interesting to bring out the reasons why TCNs decided to come to Estonia and accept the job offer. By far the biggest motivation behind coming to Estonia seemed to be the occupational challenge together with financial and future career prospects. But also, in fact the name of the organization seems to play an important role—as Estonia is a host for many internationally highly recognized companies and there is a lack of specialists among the local workforce, for the TCNs Estonia can be a good place for occupational challenges:

It is combined. Firstly, of course it is economical reasons. Cause the offer is quite good and working in such a huge and well-known company it is an honor. (Belarus, male 27, ICT, engineer, 6 months in the company)

As both of the non-profit organizations engaged in the study were schools for children from different cultural and language background, the main reason for resorting to TCNs is



to have teachers with English as their mother language. Hence the need for creating diverse and English language based work-environment becomes a core reason behind the recruitment of TCNs:

Since the organization offers education to international children it is very logical that also the personnel would be as international as possible. So mainly for this reason – that we would have different cultures, different languages... (Education, 14 employees)

Interestingly, in case of non-profit organizations, it is mainly the case that the employees find their way to the organizations—TCNs contact the schools inquiring whether they have openings. Such a pattern can be explained by the fact that in the respective region of Estonia there is a high concentration of IT-companies together with two universities that give work to a noticeable amount of foreigners. When a foreigner comes with a family, it is often the spouses that see international schools as a prospective workplace.

We started so that at the beginning for many years we had only Estonian teachers here. But I think that somehow the message started to spread, about the place, where foreign children study, where their families interact, and so eventually it become kind of natural. People just started to ask, whether we have a job to offer. [...] Most often it just happens. We get a lot of e-mails, different international people want to find job. [...] In some sense we act like an island of community not for the children, but also for their families. But also to the people who want to work in Tartu, to foreigners. (Education, 14 employees)

Additional interesting source of recruitment is through the church. As people move around the world in order to contribute by volunteering around the church community, they often also start to seek for a work in Estonia.

All the universities (as representing public organizations) in the sample stated how the recruitment of people from the third countries is not the aim itself, the goal is rather to increase the level of internationalization of the overall work-environment.

Sometimes it might even happen that there is more interest in coming to Estonia from the TCNs themselves:

It is rather so that we are more attractive to people from the third countries. Some have a wish to come to the European Union, thus seeing Estonia as a bordering country (which in European sense we actually are) as one of the entrance channels. Certainly we do not make targeted search towards the third countries. It is just that we have more people from the third countries who are interested in us. (Higher education, 3739 employees)



For those people who had had some previous acknowledge or experience (for example visiting Estonia for a conference or a seminar) with the place and the region, they expressed warm feeling towards the place itself:

First of all we really liked Tartu. So it really feels like homely, comfortable and really nice. And of course, the infrastructure is good and, there is possibility to do research. Just the atmosphere here is very friendly. (Russia, female, specialist higher education, 3 years in the organization)

In many cases, TCNs have already been to some European Union country before coming to Estonia, whether it is for study, work or some other purpose. The majority of the TCNs interviewed found Estonia through some personal contact—either visited a conference in Estonia and from there they got an invitation to apply, or some Estonian met a TCN abroad, and again introduced Estonia and possibilities here. Thus, the marketing of Estonia and the science done here is most efficient through the word to mouth channel. But as for ICT companies it is the name of the company that attracts, in case on universities it is the specific unit or the supervisor or workgroup that is the main reason for applying and accepting the position:

They come because of the supervisors and the top scientists we have here. Some have even declined the offer since the working group in the end did not appear as strong as hoped. But in general, yes, they come with the hope or the expectation that here they can work with a top level supervisor, they have strong leaders, that give them very good possibilities for development. (Higher education, 3739)

Such a statement from the university's representative is further confirmed by the TCN himself:

The position is more important than where the job is. [...]My impression is that when you are doing the research, the name of the university is not so important. The person, the actual person you are working with is more important. (Philippines, male, researcher, 2 months in the organization)

Here it can be seen how profit and non-profit organizations might differ. When in case of the profit-oriented organizations the name of the organization might be the main attraction for the TCN, yet in case of the public organization (universities) the name of the university diminishes and the priority is given to the specific research group or the supervisor. Thus, science seems to be more of a community than organization specific.



3.3.2 Characteristics of TCN personnel

The background of TCN personnel working for profit-oriented organizations tends to vary a lot by age, gender, family status, qualifications, etc. In some organization it might be young and fresh graduates, whilst in others it can be mostly single men or men with spouses and small children:

By majority it is single people or with small children with the sentiment that now it is the suitable time for our family to go and discover the world. (ICT, 516 employees)

From the educational background, TCN-s working in profit-oriented organizations are highly skilled and with a preparation that is hard to be found in Estonia. This is especially the case of organizations that need very specific technical skills and thus seek out to recruit people from the countries that deliver deep educational preparation in the respective field. TCNs working in non-profit organizations (in the current sample the schools) are often spouses or single and below 30 individuals, in many cases students or part of some international communities (e.g. church), working on part-time basis. Work in a non-profit organization is often taken as a mission, as something that is taken upon in addition to the primary work or activity somewhere else (university studies and/or work, church, full-time housewife, etc.).

Public organizations comprising of three universities represent the recruitment of TCNs that are engaged with teaching or research activities. Some have entered Estonia for the studies at the PhD level and continued working here afterwards, whilst others came to do a postdoc by some specific top level working group, or it is the people, who are already distinguished scientists and seek for a working-environment with a an amazing infrastructure:

In science "They say, ok I have ten robots, they have this project, they have this many publications, ohh it is a good place! Cold, we don't care! People tired, we don't care, people smile, we don't care, we don't care. We leave our labs sometimes at ten a clock at night or twelve a clock at night." (Iran, male 33, assist. Prof, higher education, 9 months in the organization)

As intuitively logical, people ready to take up a challenge of moving to some foreign country (where English is not the first language of the country) are in general more open and tolerate. In addition, most of the organizations hosting these TCNs usually have developed some sort of international work-environment in general, thus it is perhaps easier to blend in.



3.3.3 Roles and functions assigned to TCN personnel

Roles and functions assigned to TCN do not depend on their country of origin or nationality, but the specific job they are filling in. Since the TCNs interviewed for the current study were all with high qualification they appreciate the challenges and career prospects that the job in Estonia can offer them. Considering the development of TCNs in general, an interesting point regarding possible career options emerged. For example, many saw Estonia as a well-known country for IT development as amazing place to build up a strong career without experiencing fierce competition:

There is a difference. In Iran there are millions of engineers like me. Everyone is educated and if you don't work they will just find another person easily. Here, because there are few people living in this country, few experts, it is hard to replace people. (Iran, male 27, ICT engineer, 1 year in the organization)

Estonia, being the host for many large and internationally legendary IT companies (for example Ericsson), may sound as a land for great (IT related) career opportunities:

It is a very good place compared to other countries. It is a good place to get good opportunities. If you want to do anything, here you can. [...] If you want to do business, this is the best place, everything is developed... (India, male 30, ICT engineer, 9 months in the organization)

For a scientist with many options around the world, it is the possible research opportunities, top level supervisor/work group and the overall level of the infrastructure that matters the most:

But the most important thing for me was my supervisor. That I chose really because of him, because I had other options. [...] Really I did not know that Estonia is a country. I was thinking it should be belonging to Finland somehow. [...] That time I didn't care about these things, and the supervisor was really important. That time it was really a dream to have a paper in such kind of journal that this professor has. (Iran, female 40, researcher, higher education, 6 years in the organization)

Yet, a worrying aspect to be kept in mind is that Estonia is considered as a place to be for some time, as a stepping stone to ones career, but not the place to work for a long time:

Foreigners do not consider Estonia as a place to keep on going with ones career. Rather, Estonia is a stepping-stone to other places. (Higher education, 2052 employees)

As a suggestion for the universities, career possibilities are an aspect to be kept in mind. An attractive career model overall in Europe is not clear. Financial resources are



distributed by and depend on the specific project. When the project ends, finance together with the job ends. Thus, when in case of IT-companies, working for well known IT-companies in Estonia might work as a great catalyst for ones career, in case of universities the career tends to be project based and with no great security in the long run.

3.3.4 Perceptions of personnel towards diversity and perceptions of coworkers/supervisors towards TCN personnel

As a rule, organizations that have previously had experience with recruiting foreigners, or specifically people from the third countries, continue to do so. Such a welcoming and open attunement is also woven into overall organizational work-life. Existing employees are used to having new people, and it is considered as a normal flow when a company is expanding.

Another point to be mentioned is that when the organization already has some international employees, new entrants are integrated more smoothly – people have developed some kind of know-how or natural sense of where and what might be the possible difficulties. Here, colleagues together with the supervisors and staff from the personnel's office are showing a great sense of support.

3.3.5 Specific attitudes/competences possibly observed, and appreciated/not appreciated, in TCN personnel

From the organization's side, there was general agreement how it is the skills, not the cultural or national background that is appreciated. A person has to fit both the organization and the specific job. That said, organizations do not reflect the need for differentiating people by their nationalities – leaving aside the help given during the transition and settling in period, TCNs are in most part taken in same way as local employees.

Inevitably organizations that have employees from different countries, different cultures, have to learn to integrate different expectations to the work-culture. Throughout the interviews Estonians (including Estonian colleagues) were described with many words, most common being "individual" and "quiet":



Some cultural differences you can see. They are really quiet here. 100 people in the room, in Israel 3 people in the room would make more noise! (Israel, male 40, ICT database architect, 2 months in the Estonian branch)

That said, bringing in international people might create new challenges to the local work-environment, but also fosters the development of new skills and competencies:

At the beginning when we had just 1-2 international people and because of them the work-language had to be transferred over to English, now when we have much more people from abroad, this kind of switching is found more natural. (ICT, 516 employees)

As mentioned some sections earlier, depending on the specific needs of the organization, Estonia might not be (nor perhaps should be) able to provide enough specialists for all fields and with deep knowledge at highly specialized fields. Therefore, organizations have developed practices how to cope with such kind of situation – for example benefiting from neighboring Russia and their highly specialized technical education by recruiting interns to work here.

All in all, Estonian profit and public organizations today seek actively to recruit highly-skilled international people, including TCNs. The main goal is to fill in the gaps that the local employment market currently has – shortage of highly specialized employees, sometimes with very specific and deep training (for example fossil fuel technologists). In case of non-profit organizations the recruitment emerges more naturally and TCNs in general find their way to the organizations.

3.4 Organizational culture and HRM practices

3.4.1 Key values in organizational life and their possible formalization

During the interviews both the representatives of the personnel's office and TCNs were asked to describe their organization in three words. From the organizational side, one word stands out – "openness". When asked to elaborate the reasons, openness marked both openness to new people with different backgrounds, but also openness within the organization in general. The latter refers to the easiness of external and internal communication, openness to new ideas both from the employees and the managers, etc. Thus, openness was ascribed to different aspects in the organization.



From the TCN's side, a word that started to repeat itself was "friendly". Though there were some differences regarding the type of the organization. In case of profit-oriented organizations, "friendly" was coupled with "professionalism", whereas in public organizations "friendly" was matched with "helpful" and "comfortable"; and in non-profit organizations "friendly" was linked with "fun".

Profit-oriented organizations: "friendly" & "professionalism"

It is kind of values of the company. They try to be professional. And I think they act like a professional. Big companies act like that. But small ones, I don't think so, like at this level, no. (Iran, male 27, engineer, ICT, 1 year in the organization)

Non-profit organizations: "friendly" & "fun":

I would definitely say "friendly", because that is one of the...just the working environment, it is fun working environment. There is laughter going on in the teacher's room all the time. There was this one day where students were frustrated at us so that they closed the door because we were laughing so loud. So, definitely "friendly". (USA, female 34, teacher, 5 years in the organization)

Public organizations (universities): "friendly", "helpful" & "comfortable"

I like this atmosphere here more than there. I don't know, maybe because actually in Iran the population is bigger, lots of people. And everything is not easy to get. You should compete for everything. (Iran, female 40, researcher, higher education, 6 years in the organization)

3.4.2 Strategies for personnel motivation and involvement (in general and specifically towards TCNs)

In addition to formal and work-place involvement, all organizations brought out informal gatherings, which help people to get to know each other better. Often these events involve also the families and partners of the employees. A nice example of a great practice of integration and involvement emerged from one of the non-profit organizations, where through the celebration of an important holiday from the TCNs home country allowed to gain better involvement of people:

I just mentioned in the teachers' room that I really missed Thanksgiving and so they were like "We could celebrate it with you". We started doing that. So because of that I started to get to know my coworkers little bit better. (USA, female 34, teacher, 5 years in the organization)

The perception of involvement has strong linkages with the need of knowing the local language. A majority of the TCNs admitted the fears over the lack of proficiency in



Estonian language before they arrived to the country. In this matter, profit-oriented organizations represent a well-developed practice. ICT companies have built work-life on two languages, starting from the technical information and instructions to the everyday e-mails. In manufacturing companies, which in our sample were located close to Russian border, Russian language seems to be the common language even for the local employees. Hence, existing TCNs from Russia integrated without any difficulties:

I do not notice that we are in a different country, because everybody speaks Russian here, especially at the plant. (Russia, male 20, student-trainee, manufacturing)

Besides the language, profit-oriented organizations strive to fashion the overall work-environment to be motivating:

They are very concerned about the environment, the values and vision. Everything. Even in our lives. Because the life can interact with the work part. They work a lot and spend a lot of money to make sure that we live good, beside we work good. [...] If you don't come in 3-4 days, you will miss it! (Iran, male 27, ICT engineer, 1 year in the organization)

Public organizations (universities) admit how although great deal has been done so far, there is room for further development. Here, full integration and involvement is at some degree related to the local language. As now most of the important information flow is transferred in both Estonian and English language, apparently it was not the case some years ago:

At some point, the language might step in, inevitably. Although we do try to ensure equal conditions to all. In case of the university there is still the question how involved the foreign employees actually are, how much can they take part of... Though a lot has been done during the recent years. [...] Just some years ago, foreign employee could have been left out from all the important information flow. (Higher education, 3739 employees)

Most importantly, universities are aware of the essence of the problem, since they admit how even when the information about the future events does come in both languages, it does not ensure that the university in fact does offer these events built up 100% on English language. In the end the responsibility of making sure that the most important and relevant information would reach also the international employees is delegated to the institute or the unit level, to the direct colleagues and supervisors.

A good example of involvement and motivating emerged from the scientist from public organization, university:



He [the supervisor] asked me to come here and set up the lab. Because before we did not have a lab in plant genetics and he said that they want to start this molecular biology. You can come and set up the lab and start working on your PhD. And this was very interesting work for me. [...] Now the good thing is that I am so happy, because we made the genetics lab here and actually we can do everything that we want (Iran, female 40, researcher, higher education, 6 years in the organization)

It can be seen from the quote how the combination of trust and challenge serves as a motivational package. The more the employees perceive the unique opportunities and the trust given to them, the more they seem to be willing to contribute:

When people come from different cultures, they bring some new things also. I think this is the good idea. And all the people when they come to new place, they want to work more and are with more motivation and this I found from our group. You know, they are very happy that they come and start to do everything... (Iran, female 40, researcher, higher education, 6 years in the organization)

3.4.3 Organizational attitudes towards innovation

As all of the organizations interviewed themselves reported to be open, both internally and externally, it should also reflect their willingness to appreciate new ideas and contributions from the employees:

After all what we want is that every employee would have the courage and will to make suggestions for improvement. (ICT, 1300 employees).

Some organizations have developed good practices of sharing ideas and collecting input for innovation:

They have also strategy kind of days where all levels come together. They have a team kind of training. We can interact with the upper level, being in the same team and work with the upper level. And also give all the ideas we have, share it. Even stupid ideas. (Iran, male 27, ICT engineer, 1 year in the organization)

Those who have previous experience from their home country can also compare the work-environment here and there:

Your initiative is not appreciated. And here it is vice versa. You are asked to think, you are asked to create something, you are asked for ideas. (Russia, female, specialist, higher education, 3 years in the organization)



Again, here the willingness to innovativeness seems to be highly related to the direct supervisor or the manager:

What I really like is that He trusts me very much. For example if I have an idea and talk with him, he is very happy to hear and says Ok, do it, start to work. This is very good, because I found that in some other country they have some project, they give one part to one student and another part to another student, etc. But here it is not like this, in our group at least. For example I said I want to think and look which studies, to find and do my idea. And then he was totally agreeing. This was very good. ...But in other countries they want their student to do their idea. (Iran, female 40, researcher, higher education, 6 years in the organization)

Similarly, communication depends on the rigidity and length of official hierarchies.

My direct superior is open, the higher ones are less so. My direct superior also notices contributions, but there is no feedback from the higher ones. (Russia, male 35, engineer, energy)

Both from the profit-oriented and public organizations time after time it emerged how the local employees (sometimes the organization in general) are perceived as acting too conservative and as having less will to try (radically) new things:

In Estonia, if everything is OK, don't touch anything! Just stay like that. No change. No, no change. [...] I understand that the university is trying to preserve the language, culture, etc., but in 10 years time the number of students will go down. Because as a foreigner student when I have to choose between Estonia and Germany. I would choose Germany, because there are more people speaking German, and few speaking Estonian. Why should I learn the language? Many universities in Germany are teaching in English. [...] The young generation knows well English. It is surprising that the university is not changing the policy – to teach in English. (Iran, male 33, assist. Prof., 9 months in Estonia).

3.4.4 Leadership styles

As a general rule, employees regard the leadership style to be highly depending on the person, on the exact supervisor. Hardly universal leadership mode is found to be common to the whole organization.

It completely depends on the personality on the charisma and leading qualities. (Belarus, male 27, ICT engineer, 6 months in the organization)



Though there are variations depending on the size and field of the organization. The larger the organization, the more hierarchies there tends to be, hence greater possibilities for highly formalized and strict supervision.

It is rather in between, with some fluctuation to one or another. It depends on the hierarchical position of the follower – the higher it is, the more informal is the style. (Russia, male 35, engineer, energy)

And vice versa, small organizations have been described as small families:

This is like a family to me. The decision to leave my family was not very easy one. It is one of those things where I feel like, I am part of this community and they are really open to having different nationalities coming in. because of the fact that we are an international school, if the student population is international, then it makes a lot more sense to have teacher population that is international as well. (USA, female 34, teacher, 5 years in the organization)

By field, manufacturing organizations by their essence are highly regulated by safety rules, etc., so also the leadership style has to reflect such authority and responsibility:

Formal. Very strict hierarchies, lots of levels. It is not possible to act without coordinating with your supervisor. (Manufacturing, 2172 employees)

That said, in manufacturing organizations the core processes determine the style of leadership so that in some cases it is not possible to escape from strict regulation and formality. Still, organizations reflect the strive to bring in more so called soft values, so that the priority would be on the person/the employee, and not on the machine.

3.4.5 Communication strategies, styles and practices (internally and externally)

Like leadership styles, also the flow of information tends to vary by person:

The way how information is communicated depends highly on the person itself and the supervisor. It can vary highly by faculties, units." (Higher education, 2052 employees)

"Again, I trust my direct superior. He never hides anything important from me. I don't demand from him information, which does not concern me, decisions, which he has to take himself and which I can't influence. (Russia, male 35, engineer, energy)

Yet people agree how if someone has a problem or important issues to discuss, there are always people are places to turn to. It emerged how those units and supervisors/managers who have had previous experience working with international



people, are generally more open and supportive, and also showing more tolerance and respect to different cultures and background. This applies also to the overall style of communication:

Communication depends on people. Some are with formal, some informal communication style. Managers with international relationship are more open. (Japan, female 37, senior researcher, higher education, 2 years in the organization)

All in all, employees perceive to be well-informed about what happens in the organization, but the conduct of annual surveys and polls reflects that also the organization strives to study the well-being of employees:

Quite informed. We have intranet where all news are published, plus a company's newsletter. (Russia, male 37, senior duty of the shift, energy)

They have a newsletter, conduct surveys, opinion polls. (Russia, male 20, student-trainee, manufacturing).

3.4.6 Criteria and methods for personnel recruitment and insertion (in general and specifically towards TCNs)

In addition to the formalities emerging from the bureaucratic technicalities, personnel recruitment varies mostly by the fact how well foreign employees know the organization. In case of highly international companies that usually have branches in Estonia (like Ericsson or Playtech) the company does not have to make additional marketing efforts, but less known organizations looking for specialists abroad have to market themselves as possible attractive workplaces:

It varies a lot. Local people know us. Viru Keemia Grupp is in local television and newspapers all the time. Local people know what we do. What differs is that we have to talk about the company, what we do. Plus, the local people know about Estonia. And they [TCNs] have fears about Estonia. When I went to meet them [in Russia], the interns, well, yes they asked such questions. (Manufacturing, 2172 employees)

In case of non-profit organizations, the TCN-s in general find their way to the organization. Also, much of the employment of TCNs in non-profit organizations tends to be on part-time basis, since often it is students or spouses, who prefer to have flexible working hours, yet still earn some money and benefit from the interaction with the local (and international) community at the workplace:



Our advantage is that we are a small school and you do not have to take full-time position. We can perfectly accommodate university, work, family and church. (Education, 14 employees)

It has emerged also in earlier sections how in case of universities TCNs end up in Estonia often because of personal contacts with some prospective supervisor at some seminar or conference. Open calls for positions (regular way for the profit-oriented organizations) are relatively rare in this case. It further confirms how TCNs engaged in science and researches are more connected to their field of research and network of researchers than to the organization hosting them.

3.4.7 Personnel training and development practices (in general and specifically towards TCNs)

According to the specific needs of the organizations, trainings are held – for gaining higher (technical) qualifications and reaching higher positions, but also to improve ones' language proficiency or just gaining higher education in general.

It depends on the priorities on the company – if it needs a better qualification of its workers, it offers it to them. The consequences of rejecting this offer would be far-reaching, considering the situation on the labour market. Usually people are content with the training and recommend it to their colleagues. (Russia, Male 35, engineer, energy)

Some organizations, especially IT-companies and universities also hold lectures about different cultures as it should foster better understanding between different work-cultures and habits:

With respect to settling in, during the last years we have started to offer training about Estonian culture to our foreign employees. And since the majority of our foreign colleagues are from Israel, we have also prepared training about Israel culture to local Estonians. That way it is easier to understand each other. (ICT, 516 employees)

3.4.8 Performance assessment practices (in general and specifically towards TCNs)

As a rule, organizations willing to recruit international workforce are looking for specific skills and country of origin is not an issue. Thus with regard to performance assessment practices TCNs are treated in a similar way to domestic workforce. Only slight difference



might emerge from the transition time, where TCNs usually gain some level support or mentoring about the housing, bureaucratic necessities, etc in order to allow them to fully concentrate on the work. By offering newly recruited TCNs mentoring, organizations minimize the difficulties or delays at workplace that might emerge when a TCN first comes to Estonia.

Cultural background is not a basis for a special treatment. Equal career opportunities, work-related achievements and a will to develop... (Energy, 695 employees)

3.4.9 Remuneration and other incentive mechanisms (in general and specifically towards TCNs)

Remuneration is most of all depending on the work performance:

We work according to the expected performance. If you work worse, make errors or wrong deeds, there will be sanctions, also in monetary equivalent; if you work better, you will be thanked at best. We have a 13th salary, calculated at year-end, which depends on the performance during the year. Personally, I was also awarded for mastering new equipment – mainly you have to study it yourself and when you master it, you may get rewarded. No differences noticed between rewarding me and my colleagues. (Russia, male 37, senior duty of the shift, energy)

What does emerge as a problem when recruiting international people are expectations regarding the wages. This is very acute issue in ICT sector. Although Estonia is considered relatively affordable country to live in, international employees tend to compare wages across Europe when making their final decision. Organizations themselves consider the wages to be average or in most cases even much higher than the average of the field in Estonia.

People compare salaries across Europe, Estonia is lagging here. When you know nothing about a country, then salary matters a lot. (Japan, female 37, senior researcher, higher education, 2 years in the organization)

The same is confirmed by the organization itself:

The differences in wages for sure. When they [TCNs] have already worked somewhere else in Europe... (Higher education, 2052 employees)

In case of public organizations, universities, actually the differences between the wages might be apparent, often more positive towards the international employees, especially



when they are funded by grants, which allow to pay more (though for a limited period, as the work is project based):

Right now we have DoRa program, which is targeted at bringing in top scientists, and has different sums. Bluntly, if we took averages, it might appear that international employees gain higher salaries. But I would like to believe and hope that just because someone is from abroad, he or she would not achieve higher salaries just for that. Skills, knowledge and abilities should be the basis. (Higher education, 3739 employees)

3.5 Diversity management practices and initiatives

3.5.1 The origin and evolution of diversity management practices

Most of the organizations contributing in the study admitted how diversity management is not a goal itself. It is the specific needs and characteristics of the organization that determine the skills and competencies needed. Thus, a person has to fit the job, regardless his or her nationality, culture, language, gender, marital status or age.

What I need is a dancer. A professional dancer. [...] What matters are the skills, the education and will to do the job! (Manufacturing, 2172 employees)

There is no priority where I look for them. It makes absolutely no difference where they come from. First thing is that they would be professional, that they fit here. (Theatre, 361 employees)

At some point it was noticeable how the diversity topic itself is beginning to get exhausting to the organizations – natural flow of practices is much more preferred to any kind of artificial commitment to diversity (often even used as a marketing activity).

Diversity cannot be directed by force. None of the diversity topics will gain priority now and in future. It is the natural flow of things. (Energy, 695 employees)

In case of large and international companies that have branches in Estonia, the topic of diversity is often emerging as a stream already fostered by the headquarters, where the diversity is often a goal itself. Still, the development of diversity management practices depends quite heavily on the exact life phase of the organization – at the beginning and during the expansions often there just is not enough time to cover all:

At some point we just did not have time for it. The topic of diversity management in Ericsson in general is very important stream. Well, looking at Ericsson, they deliberately seek to bring in different nationalities, from various countries, at different ages. It is very conscious activity, and I believe that is



also we case here in our branch. We can see how people from different ages enrich each other, and also by gender. The organization has changed a lot. Now it can be seen how overall it is quite balanced. [...] Here we see how it makes our work-environment more diverse and teams are more effective, highly flexible. (ICT, 1300 employees)

With a slight sense of humor, specifically in ICT organizations the gender issue might emerge. As ICT in general is dominated by male, in ICT companies when skills and competencies fit to the job, females might even have an advantage:

We have rather thought that it would be nice to have more female colleagues. The majority tend to be male. Just to sneak in one female colleague into the teams... (ICT, 516 employees)

Non-deliberate management of diversity issues applies also to the non-profit organizations and universities:

Deliberately not. Diversity enriches, then again there is a question how diverse can it get, how different can it get. When we hold an opening to a position we concentrate carefully that the person would fit the organization. (Education, 80 employees)

When recruiting, we do not set a goal to bring in a female with 3 kids from the third country, right. (Higher education, 3739 employees)

3.5.2 Main actors in the starting and development of the process

All in all, the study brings out how as a rule in profit-oriented, non-profit and public organizations diversity management is not a goal itself, rather emerges as a natural flow of things, mainly depending on the need of the organization. Here, the need for specific skills and competencies determine the characteristics of the future employee, regardless the gender, age or nationality.

That said, the recruitment, thus also the development of the diversity is mostly managed by the personnel's office. But more precisely, in case of profit-oriented organizations it is the personnel's office, yet in public organizations (universities) it tends to be more department-based. In universities it is the specific unit and supervisors who tend to find the needed TCNs, and after the recruitment also help them to settle in. As non-profit organizations tend to be rather small organizations, the recruitment and issues of settling in are handled by the director of the organization and colleagues. Thus, also the size of the organization determines the main actors responsible for the diversity management process.



3.5.3 Formal statements on organizational commitment to diversity management

Formal statements on organizational commitment to diversity management are well-defined and clearly present in case of larger profit-oriented organization. Most they are also a branch of an international organization:

The diversity of Ericsson's employees is one of our major strengths as a business. It is this collective mixture of individuals, cultures and organizational experiences that drives our innovation, makes us stand out from the competition and delivers high performance for our customers. (About us, 28.07.2014)

Or a branch of a large Estonian organization:

We are a diverse and results-oriented company. We are valued as a responsible and trustworthy employer. We have some dedicated and efficient employees. Our competitive edge is our large engineering and technical capacity and our professional management. We provide for the success and sustainability of our business by making systematic and long-term staffing plans and providing for staff development. The people who work on our team all share our common values. Work in one of the largest and fastest-growing companies in Estonia offers exciting challenges and rich possibilities for development along with modern working tools and a safe working environment. (Eesti Energia as an employer, 28.07.2014)

In these cases formal statements on commitment to diversity management are already determined by the headquarters.

Public organizations and specifically universities seem to focus most of all internationalization,

TUT is an attractive and recognized international employer offering equal opportunities and valuing outstanding results in educational work as well as research and development. (Personnel strategy of Tallinn University of Technology, 28.07.2014)

or fostering fairness, equality and tolerance in general:

The University guards its reputation as a creator of fair field and no favor as well as tolerant atmosphere. Through life-long learning the University guarantees the equal opportunities approach and through elaborate personnel policy its goodwill as an employer. (Development plan of the Eesti Maaülikool..., 28.07.2014)

Since the non-profit organizations in the sample represent schools offering English based education to international students (from kindergarten to basic school), their formal commitment to diversity management practices is a clear reflection of their true nature:

The objective of TIS is to offer basic school level education in English as a language of instruction in an international and multicultural learning environment. [...] TIS teachers have diverse cultural backgrounds; they are dedicated professionals who offer their skills and talents to educate their students. (Our school...28.07.2014)



3.5.4 Practices aimed at recognizing and valorizing diversity with regard to gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, family status, religious background and other possible aspects

As already established in section 2.5.3, organizations in the sample do not pay special attention to some single matter of diversity (gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, etc.), but above all and foremost foster internationalization together with a sense of tolerance, respect and equality in order to develop a supportive and motivational work-environment.

The same is confirmed by the employees, when they bring out how it is the professionalism and qualifications that are the most important:

In the unit we have observed most, there is cohesiveness, everybody knows each other well, communicates, knows each other's qualities and understands each other well. The whole process is interrelated, there is no other way. Haven noticed no differences in the cooperation between foreign and local personnel. (Russia, male 20, student-trainee, manufacturing)

Yet organizations do acknowledge how diversity can bring additional value to the organization:

I do see how it does balance when all these different ages, 20s and 60s work side by side. How much value it gives. Male-females, different nationalities. In our house no-one questions it. I guess in the end it does depend on the attitude. (ICT, 1300 employees)

Similarly, organizations are proud to show the degree of internationalization:

Every time we get a new country, it means when we get someone from a country that has not been represented before, we will have new flag set up in the lobby. (Theatre, 361 employees)

3.5.5 Practices aimed at recognizing and valorizing diversity with regard to TCN personnel and their combination with practices devoted to other types of diversity

Special attention to TCNs is naturally given during the beginning or the transition time. Often it starts even before the person arrives here. Providing a checklist of documents to bring and preparing for the practicalities (for example consultation about the local taxes) in Estonia:



The moment when a person moves here, comes to work. He or she has to start working, and does not have time to take care of all the things, so of course we help. Also about the language courses. We help to find a kindergarten, schooling, transportation, apartment, basically everything. (ICT, 1300 employees)

We have got a person who deals with all this. She is very competent with all of these issues. And in addition to work-permit related issues she also helps to find housing, kindergarten, schooling, etc. (ICT, 516 employees)

Such commitment in making the TCN to feel welcome is highly appreciated and never unnoticed by the TCNs:

It is so much more accommodating than it would be in US. In US they would leave everything up to you. (US, male, 25, ballet dancer, 1,5 years in Estonia)

I think what is special about this theatre is everyone seems to be international, basically. I think there is just few Estonians here. So they really have set up for the foreigners to come. I suppose it is a little more difficult with me since I am not EU. But there have not been any problems so far. [...] They know what they are doing. This was my easiest transitions I would say. (Australia, female, 25, ballet dancer, 3 weeks in Estonia)

Another good practice from the ICT companies is that even before the TCNs finally arrive to Estonia for work, they often might come for a short visit. Especially when they come with families. Just to be sure that they like the environment and the family approves the moving decision:

Before we make the final decision and gain the agreement from them, that they are ready to come here for a longer period, usually they visit us at least once before. Just checking the country, the city and the company. [...] For us it is so natural that we do not even notice it. Since during the past years we have gained so many new [international] people, then at some point we felt the need to have such a specialist [in personnel's office]. (ICT, 516 employees)

Latter seems to be a practice that has gained a good approval and appreciation from the TCNs themselves:

We visited Estonia with my wife, so we knew the people, we knew the city. We knew the overall environment. And we have small children, so it was very important to ensure that good environment. [...] We have a person here who follows us before we arrive here. And after we arrive she follows us to sign contracts with house owners, translations, etc. She provided us with a checklist, what to bring, what documents, etc. (Israel, male 40, ICT, database architect, 2 months in the Estonian branch)

There is an important difference between the profit-oriented and public organizations with regard how the settling in period is managed. When in ICT and manufacturing



companies it is usually done centrally through the personnel's office, in public organizations (universities) it is most often delegated to the departmental or unit level. The reason behind such difference is usually the lack of enough employees within the personnel's office to be given such additional tasks:

Personnel's office does not offer such service. Unfortunately. We do share links, where do get useful information, but since we just have 13 employees her and there are about 3 800 employees in the university overall. [...] Often there are in fact such support persons at the faculty level, who help around. Well, we try to help these supporting persons as much as possible. (Higher education, 3739 employees)

In case of universities, such practice can be found even preferable, since the most part of the recruitment might be done at the faculty, and little at the central level:

When someone has taken the responsibility of inviting and accepting TCN to come here, he or she also will take additional efforts [for helping to settle in]. (Higher education, 2052 employees)

Quotes below confirm how the unit-based approach seems to work well for the TCNs:

It helped that we have someone in the department who tries to help you with all the processing. (Philippines, male, researcher, 2 months in the organization)

The unit, department is very helpful. They tell what our rights are, what should we know, etc. What is the Estonia way of doing things. (Iran, male 33, assist. Prof., 9 months in the organization)

Starting from the simple paper works up to finding an apartment and even picking up from the airport:

But you know the first months are very difficult, because it is very hard. For example, before I was in different countries, like for short period, 10 days, but not for living. But the first months until six, it is difficult to say which part makes you the saddest. Being apart from the family, country, like different people here, it is really difficult to say. [...] Actually about accommodation and everything they managed everything very well. [...] For example the person from the doctoral school she came to Tallinn and picked me up from the airport. Accommodation and everything was ready when I came here. These things were really good. And their managing was very good. (Iran, female 40, researcher, higher education, 6 years in the organization)



3.5.6 Difficulties emerged in the design and implementation of diversity management practices addressed to TCN personnel

Intuitively one of the biggest fears regarding the recruitment of a TCN might be the amount of paper-work. All of the organizations (profit, non-profit and public) admitted how although the bureaucracies with work-permits, etc. can be a challenge when you face it for the first time, but when you do it several times, it becomes a common practice.

With respect to the bureaucracies, when we had these very first people coming here from outside the European Union, it took a long time to understand how to run all the documents. Actually, the Migration Bureau was very supportive here. (Education, 14 employees)

Another challenge when considering to recruit individuals outside the EU region addresses the adequacy of actual motives to come to Estonia. As organizations have to invest additional time and financial resources in recruiting people outside Estonia, they need to be sure that these individuals do not use Estonia merely as a stepping-stone to Europe, thus leaving the organization as soon as new position in some other European country opens up.

Actually, recruiting a dancer from far regions bears a certain risk. [...] Those who come from South-America, or let's say from China, Japan. [...] They use Estonia as a stepping-stone to somewhere else. Especially Japanese and Chinese – they send a lot of CV-s. (Theatre, 361 employees)

For all the TCNs Estonia which by universal scale is often not known to most of them, the decision to move to Estonia can be perceived as taking a risk or jumping into unknown. Here, the organizations seek to help as much as possible:

For an individual it is very hard to settle in here. A company has to help. There is no central place to get all the needed information. (ICT, 1300 employees)

Still, both TCNs and organizations admit how even when the organization does all it can to smooth the integration to working-life, they cannot help with everything. Most difficulties seem to appear outside the organization and workplace:

In the organization it is very easy to settle in, because we have thought through all the steps. But the difficulties emerge about settling with Estonia. First of all we are with a very Estonian language based environment. For a foreigner it is very hard manage here. Starting from all the street signs, the language we use, in supermarket, etc. It is still mostly Estonian and Russian language. (ICT, 1300 employees)



In case of some occupations, most often with highly-skilled employees, when there are specific requirements for qualifications, the question of commensurability might appear. For example in case of teachers, the needed level of qualification is determined by the government, thus TCN coming here should go through the assessment in order to work with the same level qualification than at home.

Another aspect considers the language. Since Estonian language as a national language is mainly also the working language, there is always a question of how much of work-life should be switched into English:

It varies by units, but definitely there is a danger that we are not that ready yet...when we have one colleague who does not speak Estonian well, would we really be that ready to hold our meetings in English? In that sense, we have lots of space for the improvement. Then again I know that in several units international colleagues have been given so called Estonian mentors, who keep eye on them and integrate them, introduce the internal conduct rules. In the latter case the settling in is much easier. (Higher education, 3739 employees).

Especially the readiness of large and national (public) universities in switching more into the English language seems to be problematic:

The university should become more international. UT is in a good position, but not the highest that it has a potential to. You are making lots of walls yourself. At the moment English language is the international language. It is not a competition between English and Estonian language. The more English language you have here, the more you can introduce Estonia to international people. (Iran, male 33, assist. Prof., higher education, 9 months in the organization)

Again, even when inside the organization language turns out not to be the problem, difficulties appear at the street, supermarket, doctor`s office, police, etc.:

I don't expect it everywhere. That is too much. But in places where you are expecting people from everywhere coming by, then I think it is not too much to ask. (Philippines, male, researcher, 2 months in the organization)

With regard to the support given to the TCNs there is always a question of whether it should be given centrally or at the local level, by the people who are daily side by side with the newcomers:

We can centrally give out information, but if there appears to be lack of interest at the local level, then the foreign employee will inevitably be left alone. (Higher education, 3739 employees)

Some middle way is found by dividing the responsibilities between the levels:



Personnel's office helps the most with the paper works. At the faculty, unit level they help with the daily practicalities. In that sense it has been delegated down there. The closest colleagues, supervisors and the unit managers help with the everyday questions and activities. (Higher education, 2052 employees)

3.5.7 Reactions of internal and external stakeholders

The recruitment of international personnel, also TCNs has wider effect also on the internal stakeholders in a sense that they start to look at their organization with a new and fresh perspective. It also means that things that sometimes it takes an outsider to point out at the good things that the insiders have for long taken for granted:

We do have a lot of top level laboratories, or a good work-environment. From the Faculty of Science and Technology, what has been appraised is the infrastructure. Plus, Estonia as a small country actually gives better career prospects in a sense that the movement in one's career can be quicker (Higher education, 3739 employees)

From the personnel's side it seems how nationality, age, gender, and other diversity related issues are less important than the skills and competencies needed to fulfil the requirements of the job:

In our organization people with Estonian or other citizenship are not differentiated. It is important how one fulfils his duties. When I was asked for contacts of TCNs, I had troubles, because I don't know who has which kind of citizenship. We are all mixed – one day a person has a grey (Alien's) passport, tomorrow a blue one (previously Estonian passports were blue), today she has a red (Russian Federation) passport, tomorrow blue one, or vice versa. No one knows until a person comments it himself or is directly asked. (Russia, male 35, engineer, energy)

3.6 Actual and potential impacts of diversity management practices and initiatives

3.6.1 Impacts on, and especially benefits for, the organization and their possible assessment

Organizations have developed awareness of the benefits from the openness that the recruitment of international people can bring:

This is not an average Estonian organization. Nationalities have integrated and we learn positive aspects from each other. [...] And this is how I think our organizational culture has actually developed. The



teamwork in general is certainly very strong. Considering that we are a large organization, which is working 24/7, we do have minimal amount of tensions and things like this. People have learned that there is not point to live with stress. Conflicts and tensions should be solved right away. So, it is built on supporting each other, team work. Thus if you look around this building, it is for sure a kind of positive attitude, which takes us forward. [...] It gives a lot to the people. Develops a sense of tolerance and friendliness (ICT, 1300 employees)

Working with different people from different cultural and language background gives local personnel a valuable opportunity of developing better skills in respecting differences and fostering overall climate of learning from each other.

Another point to be mentioned is that by recruiting highly specialized TCNs the organization will gain a noticeable advantage both to the profit-oriented organizations,

At the employment market large organizations compete with each other over the high-skilled specialists. We have gained an advantage by developing a contact with an institute in St. Petersburg, and first ones to achieve a contact with the students. We have gained an advantage. (Manufacturing, 2172 employees)

and the public organizations:

You can sense the advantage due to the recruitment of foreign employees. It definitely gives advantage at the international level. Considering that the science itself is international, then... [...] It gives an advantage within the organization. An experience of working together with scientists from different countries. (Higher education, 2052 employees)

Sometimes it takes an international look in order to appreciate the local development and infrastructure:

Students of course are fascinated by our campus. And then you start to look it in other way too. Then we walked around with one professor. Just to show, how the campus looks like where he would be working. There is nothing to be ashamed at. (Higher education, 2052 employees)

And often it is the things that Estonians take as granted and normal that for the TCNs bring a joyful tear in the eye:

Those who are already here bring out the quickness and easiness of arranging things. Relatively less paperwork. You get help, and work contracts get done within 2 days. One even cried when the assistant managers helped with the documents, which as he told, in Russia would have taken 2 months – 10 signatures and a long waiting time between every single one of them. (Higher education, 2052 employees)

Especially when there appears to be sharp contrast in how things are usually done at the home country and in Estonia:



For example lady from the financial department came to me and said "sorry, but you have no Estonian ID. Because at first I had an Estonian visa without ID. "Because of this unfortunately we cannot pay you salary. But it is our fault so we will fix this problem within one week and now say how much money do you need to live through this period?" So in in our country it would be like "Ok, you don't have ID, it's your problem, do it, then you will get salary in some moment." So she took me and we came together to this Police department and I get my ID even within 5 days. So for me it was very pleasant surprise. That all this administrative stuff is very simple and it is very easy. So I would say that I have no problem. (Ukraine, male 31, researcher, higher education, 2,5 years in the organization)

The main astonishing thing for me was how easy it is to apply for residence permit. As we are non-EU citizens, we have to apply every year. So once a year we go to your Police and Border control. And actually they are really helpful there. Even if we don't have all the documents or they are wrong, they help us to make it right. So it is not that hard. (Russia, female, specialist, higher education, 3 years in the organization)

3.6.2 Impacts on, and especially benefits for, personnel and their possible assessment (in general and specifically for TCNs)

The overall effect of having highly international work-environment brings out positive feelings. In addition, mixing different people and different perspectives is often a valuable input for innovation and creative solutions that are highly sought by profit-oriented organizations:

They have different view. And it is very good when there is someone to talk to, to dispute and to discuss. That's positive here, because they see things in a different way, from a different perspective. (Belarus, male 27, ICT, engineer, 6 months in the organization)

Yet differences are also appreciated among non-profit organizations as it allows growing in tolerance and openness:

Differences enrich people. We can see perhaps different attitude to the world. Our organization has become more opened, because we have people who bring their own culture with them. (Education, 80 employees)

Then again, internationalization is not the main factor in fostering a good work-environment. It is the personalities and not the nationalities, age, or gender that matter the most:



With respect to getting along with people, it does not matter what is someone's home country. It comes down to the humane level. If you already work, then the nationality is not that important factor. It is more of a humane or personal level. When we have 10 Russian-speakers working here, then with some you might get along great, and not so good with the rest. The same applies to Estonians. In that sense, there is no difference. (Education, 80 employees)

TCNs in general were highly appraising the support that they gained from the personnel's office or the departmental level:

Reasonable expectations are key to the success. If the organization is supportive and knows the procedure, it is like the common practice for the company to help. Know-how developed over years. Most of the success to the people that come here are because of the support from the personnel's office. (Israel, male 40, ICT database architect, 2 months in Estonian branch)

Thus, it means that the growth of international people from different countries might even give an organization a competitive advantage—by developing know-how of the recruitment of TCNs and possible complexities.

3.6.3 External economic and social impacts

Those TCNs who have had longer period of living in Estonia, can bring out a retrospective perception of how things have changed during the time:

When I first came here it was difficult. Somehow I was the first Iranian student here in Estonia. Somehow it made me more difficult. There are no Iranian people around me and just me. And even like Police came and started interviewing, because they said you are the first student here and we really want to know why you chose Estonia. (Iran, female 40, researcher, higher education, 6 years in the organization)

When I first came, 3 years ago. We were very few people, international people. Don't look now, now there are like thousands of international people, lots of people, everywhere. That time, for example, there were no black guys in the street. I was like with a brown skin, they were surprised. Little bit, they were scared. Estonia, from the beginning. So first year it was little bit hard. In the bus no one would sit beside me. Well, of course they don't like to sit beside anyone. But if they wanted to choose between me and the local, they would prefer to sit beside the local. (Iran, male 27, ICT engineer, 1 year in the organization)

As more and more international people come to Estonia, either as for sightseeing, studies or work, and this overall has changed Estonian society more open and tolerate towards differences.

I was always shot by questions. Everywhere. First thing, where are you from? ... Lots of questions. Now, after 3 years it is totally normal for them. And second thing, is the level of English, like the ability to



speak English is growing fast. Like in the supermarket, even older people can speak English. So I can say that it is moving. (Iran, male 27, ICT engineer, 1 year in the organization)

Estonia really has become more open. [...] We do not see foreign personnel as a threat anymore. [...] Empty spot has to be filled. Does it really matter whether s/he is Estonian, Russian or Chinese? (Theatre, 361 employees)

3.6.4 Internal and external communication about the impacts of diversity management practices

Organizations themselves declare how the recruitment of international people has made them more visible, both inside and outside the organization:

Within the organization it gives an advantage. An experience of cooperation between scientists from different countries. It is most of all kind of inner advantage, which at some points also transfers outside. (Higher education, 2052 employees)

For example, in case of a small school (non-profit organization) the main goal is to teach the children of the foreigners in Estonia, but in addition they offer language learning possibilities to the parents. It refers how interconnected and family-oriented the non-profit organizations tend to be:

For those parents who want to learn Estonia, they have such opportunity around this school. During the time when the children are at school, the mothers are usually at home. Having language classes during the evening would be difficult for them, since who would watch the kids then? [...] This is also one trick [to integrate parents better with the school] as they come, learn the language and perceive the environment here. They see, ahah, my kid just ran joyfully by, everything is OK. (Education, 14 employees)

3.6.5 Prospects of organizational commitment to diversity management in the near future

Since the internationalization in general is relatively recent development at work-place, profit-oriented organizations seem to be more flexible and ready to foster well-developed and detailed know-how of how from the attracting and recruiting of TCNs to managing the smoothness of the transition period. Universities as public organizations admit the room for further development:



The practice overall has not been that long. The internationalization in general is with a short history. That said, the need is just developing and will be getting more acute in the following years. (Higher education, 2052 employees)

Though, mostly due to the global pressure of internationalization of higher education and science, universities are taking continuous steps to keep up with the trend of internationalization:

With respect to age yes, but not so much regarding the gender. Internationalization strategically is one of the priorities. University as a whole wants to be younger, as a personnel's strategy. [...] Preparing the next generation. From the international side we also have percentual targets that we would like to achieve. (Higher education, 2052 employees)

Looking from the TCNs side, deeply personal aspects start to matter the most – these are often issues that fall out from the hands of the organization. During the interviews with the TCNs it emerged how in future both Estonia in general and also the organizations should facilitate an infrastructure that would foster TCNs with families to move here. For the organization, but also for the TCN it makes a difference whether to come with a family or as a single person.

Me being antisocial depends only on me. If you have one plus human that is in your life the things will change. A lot! (Iran, male 33, assist. Prof, higher education, 9 months in the organization)

It is most of all the families that do the most intense background search of the country and the specific city in order to find out about the support systems:

Work-wise it is OK. I'm married, so if I want to settle down here, I donnow for my children, education and just thinking about those things. If I am getting good schools and in English language. I donnow if they have here." For Indians, after they are getting a child they are planning for a child.... "If we get more benefits from Sweden and Germany... Here there is nothing here. (India, male 30, ICT engineer, 9 months in the organization)

It is very frightening. Especially if you are not alone. ...If no international school I don't think we would have come. (Israel, male 38, ICT database architect, 3 years in the organization)

All in all, both TCNs and representatives from the personnel's office admitted how the process of fostering better environment for the TCNs in Estonia depends not only on the organizations, but a critical part has to be played also by the Government:

Most problematic moments are not at workplace, it is outside. Usually, when the company employs somebody, outsider, a foreigner, it knows the difficulties and tries to help, and support. In general I do not think that most problematic minute of a visit, a life of a foreigner is related to workplace. (Israel, male 40, ICT data base architect, 2 months in Estonian branch)



When these family related concerns get solved, organization may gain by having highly motivated employees:

It is much calmer here, especially when you come to Tartu. You feel it right a way. Then it is best place to grow your kids. Because I had 2 and 5 year olds when we came. Right, it is just the age when you need a good kindergarten and good school..." "I never dreamed of such a situation for my family and I like my managers, I like my job. (Israel, male 38, ICT database architect, 3 years in the organization)

Specifically here we have a community. We have 5-6 Israeli families living in Tartu. It makes a big difference. We go to holidays to one another; kids can talk to each other. (Israel, male 38, ICT database architect, 3 years in the organization)

3.7 Discussion and conclusions about Part 2

Considering the diversity at workplace in the light of smart migration policy, there are several patterns that emerged from the current study. Firstly, Estonia seems to be highly appreciated among the highly qualified TCNs:

Considering that companies have downsized dramatically. So getting a job is even more competitive than it used to be. So it is actually lot of people graduating and don't get a job. So they do something else. [...] Before here I was working in Czech Republic, and I wanted to move, so it was just a matter of seeing like in whole Europe what companies have positions available. It really becomes not where I would like to go, but where is that work. And for me like coming from Australia it doesn't bother me, like everywhere in Europe is quite exotic really. [...]. I came here and it seemed really nice. I hadn't honestly heard much about Estonia. All I knew was that it was more like Scandinavian than East-European. (Australia, female 26, ballet dancer, 3 weeks in Estonia)

Also, from the other side, since the domestic employment market is not able to fill the need for very specific skills, organizations needing those skills have developed practices of recruiting and motivating people from outside the EU to see Estonia as a good place to work and build one's career.

Considering the intense competition in many larger countries, small European countries with good infrastructure and overall development, but most of all offering flexibility and readiness to take in talented people creates an overall advantage:

I had worked in US for 4 years after being done with a bally school. And at the same time I was doing university degree. When I finished that I realized there was nothing tying me to any place and I thought I would like to dance in Europe. I had no idea where in Europe. So I got one-way ticket to Germany and I started to do auditions. [...] I did auditions wherever I could find, in Germany, Austria, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Finland, Norway. I think that might be it...Hungary. So I did a lot of



auditions. This was the only offer that started right away. Like I came here. You know I think I just looked up at ballet companies in Estonia ... And I sent an email, asking whether there are any free spots, if I could do auditions or take classes. (US, male, 25, ballet dancer, 1,5 years in Estonia)

Secondly, especially profit-oriented organizations that recruit international workforce have developed a stream of practices in order to make Estonia as an attractive place to live and work, both with or without a family. These practices can vary from offering pre-visits to Estonia and to the organization up to providing check-lists of activities to be taken (bureaucratic, etc.), solving out possible challenges with accommodation, schooling for children, finding work for a spouse, signing up to language courses, arranging cultural evenings (to introduce different cultures at workplace and allow people to integrate better), etc.

Thirdly, organizations that by their field of activity are more internationalized, take the recruitment of TCNs as a natural flow of things. Thus, even the everyday work language, information flow and documentation tends to be in English. Whereas in smaller organizations or especially universities that are supposed to serve both national needs and be international at the same time, in some areas both organization itself and TCNs admit the room for further development. For example, in universities the information flow over the things happening in the university or department might be given in Estonian language, and it is the task for the specific department and colleagues to assure that the TCN is not left out from the crucial information. Another thing to bear in mind is that universities are bound by the obligation to offer study-programs in Estonian language (also English based programs do exist, yet in minority), which might make it difficult for the TCNs interested in teaching to make a career in the university.

Fourthly, overall the issue of diversity is more of a natural development of things than a deliberate and managed process. It has most of all emerged because of the specific needs of the organization (for recruiting highly skilled employees, regardless the nationality or the country of origin) or the active will from the TCN him or herself to offer oneself as a prospective employee.

Fifth, although the issue of diversity has been mainly taken as a natural development, the representatives from the organizations all admit the value that diversity has brought. People from different countries and cultures enrich domestic workforce and allows developing new skills and competencies (for example, fosters tolerance and flexibility).

Sixth, the recruitment of TCNs does vary by the type of the organizations. When public and profit-oriented organizations seek for individuals with specialized skills not found from the domestic employment market, non-profit organizations seem to operate more as



a support system for the TCNs already living and/or working in Estonia. For example, TCNs committed to church community, students, spouses of TCNs, etc seek to work for non-profit organizations mostly on a part-time basis, as a support to their main engagement.

3.8 Summary of Part 2

TCN and diversity related studies in Estonia for longer period have been addressed the integration of local Russians (Soviet-era settlers), yet during the recent years there is another stream in focus—how to fill the shortages in the employment market by attracting highly skilled TCNs (smart migration policy). Because of the limitations of the local workforce—relatively broad educational preparation, overall small stock of people and ageing population, Estonian organizations need to attract foreign talents in order to be internationally competitive. That said, current study is based on the organizations that have had an experience in recruiting highly skilled TCNs.

The group of profit-oriented organizations comprised of IT-companies together with 1 large energy company and 1 manufacturing company (dealing with oil shale). The group of non-profit organizations covered international schools, offering elementary and basic level education with English language as instruction. Public organizations in the sample are three Estonian universities and 1 national theatre.

The reasons why organizations have recruited TCNs vary by organization. In case of profit-oriented organizations there is a clear need for specialized skills and knowledge. The study showed how ICT and large manufacturing companies take active measures in recruiting foreign people with competencies and skills hard to be found from the local employment market. For example, the closeness to larger countries (Russia) with traditionally strong engineering curricula gives companies near the border of Russia an advantage in recruiting. Also, for the graduates of technical institutes from Russia, Estonia can be seen as an entrance to EU employment market with attractive career prospects.

In case of public and non-profit organizations although people find their way to Estonia also through open calls, the recruitment often tends to be through personal contacts. For example, TCNs working for the universities usually had some previous contact with some supervisor through seminars or conferences, who introduced (research) possibilities in Estonia. Same applies to non-profit organizations, where informal networks (church group, kids go to the same school, etc.) provide knowledge of possible openings.



In general, both the TCNs and organizations described their organization as open and friendly, which means that organizational culture is supportive and tolerate. In fact the main difficulties appear not in the working-life, but outside the working hours – language barriers during the everyday activities (starting from the Estonian street signs and food labels in the shops up to visiting a doctor or an immigration office, finding schooling or kindergarten for the children and work for a spouse; etc.). Here, organizations who have recruited TCNs, try to help as much as possible. In profit-oriented organization the mentoring during the settling in period is usually handled at the central level by the personnel's office, in public organizations (universities) it is delegated to the faculty or unit level, to the direct supervisors and colleagues; and since non-profit organizations are relatively small, the support is mostly given by the colleagues and the director. In addition, in organizations with more international employees, there tends to be collegial support and experience sharing by fellow employees.

Diversity management is a continuous and conscious activity in case of international organizations with branches in Estonia, but in majority of cases diversity has been achieved as a result of natural development of organizational working-life. It is the skills and competencies and not the nationalities, gender, age nor cultural background that gains the priority when recruiting an employee. Although organizations admit when Estonian labour market would have enough people with the qualifications needed, the local workforce would be easier to be recruited (with respect to temporal considerations, since in many cases it may take several months until the TCN finally arrives to Estonia). Often organizations cannot wait months to fill the opening, but need someone as soon as possible. Yet, when TCNs already are in EU or Estonia (for studies, previous work, etc.), also temporal differences disappear.

Organizations that have had longer experience with recruiting international people have also developed unique know-how of the support system needed. For example, in ICT companies the working language is often already English, in many cases also all documents and communication flow are either in English or both in English and Estonian. Though such practices are a result of a longer development – the more international people have been recruited, the less difficulties regarding the language there seems to be. Then again, in case of universities as representing public organizations, although the language of science globally is English, universities are facing difficulties with the full involvement of international people into the everyday activities. These difficulties centre around the readiness of providing more English based courses and curricula, arranging events in English and not in Estonian, incorporating international people into the



university governance, assuring that the central information flow in the university (e-mails, etc.) are at least in both languages; etc. All in all, representatives of the universities admit how a lot has been done, and as universities are becoming more and more internationalized, there is room and a will for further development.

As non-profit organizations in the sample comprised of international schools, where English is the language of the education, their staff composition is highly international and the language barriers are less evident.

Impacts from the recruitment of TCNs are clearly expressed. New perspectives, openness and tolerance are just few keywords mentioned by the organizations and TCNs themselves. In many cases, diversity gained by the recruitment of TCNs has been also seen as a competitive advantage. Since the TCNs are often with different educational background and highly specialized skills they make up a valuable addition to the existing stock of employees. Looking from the side of the TCNs themselves, work in Estonia is often seen as a stepping-stone in ones' career progress. Since for the majority of the interviewed individuals Estonia was relatively unknown (in many cases totally unknown) country, and Estonians often described as rather closed and reserved people, it is the occupation related challenges (in few cases also the fact that a spouse is Estonian) that attract a person to apply for a job. The country has been described as having a well-developed infrastructure (the easiness of handling bureaucracy) at the governmental level, but also the freedom at work was highly appreciated – the opportunity to share ones ideas and the trust whilst giving challenging work tasks.



4. Third part: TCNs' Participation in Voluntary Organizations

4.1 A brief description of the methods and sources used for data collection

4.1.1 Selection of TCNs associations leaders, leading experts and local actors at regional level

TCNs in Estonia take part in the activities of various organizations and associations without a partition on the basis of citizenship. There are no associations limited in any way to only TCNs and there is no publicly available information on the citizenship of volunteers. Besides protection of the private data by the Personal Data Protection Act, the issue of not having Estonian citizenship is a sensitive issue among many Estonian residents, as is described in the section 3.4 below. Therefore the only mode to select associations, which might have members who are TCNs, is according to the stated ethnicity focus of the ethnic cultural associations, selecting those ethnicities, who represent a majority in the sending countries.

Most of the ethnicity-based associations in Estonia are consolidated under umbrella organizations and are listed on the information portal Etnoweb. Data from two umbrella organizations, two associations with large, two associations with medium and two associations of the small ethnic communities were the objective for having the comprehensive and balanced overview of various experiences of TCNs.

Civic participation and volunteering are supported and coordinated by various NGOs in Estonia:

- Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations (NENO, or EMSL in Estonian) at the Hea Kodaniku infovõrk (Estonian Civil Society Portal, www.ngo.ee);
- MTÜ Vaba Tahe (Free Will NGO, former Vabatahtliku Tegevuse Arenduskeskus – Center for Development of Volunteering, www.vabatahtlikud.ee);
- International Youth Association EstYES (www.estyes.ee);
- NGOs of various activities who offer possibilities for volunteering directly to those interested.

The leaders and representatives of the first three coordinating organizations were contacted and shared their comments. Voluntary organizations of different activity fields were selected for interviews on an ad hoc basis: associations in the field of human rights and youth work, music and dance, sport, and a church.



4.1.2 The process of data collection

The first data collection phase consisted in collecting the studies published on the topic of volunteering in Estonia, legal documents and studies covering TCN-related issues, the relevant legislation documents, government reports, and the data on the relevant non-profit and voluntary organizations in Estonia.

The most comprehensive information portal on NGOs Etnoweb lists over 400 organizations and projects, 303 out of which are ethnic cultural associations, 274 out of which are associations of ethnicities of the third countries. In the second phase the amount and the scope of data collection were determined to cover the possible discrepancies of experiences of associations of different sizes and composition.

In the third phase leaders of 11 ethnic associations were contacted by phone in the course of three months, including a vacation period of three weeks with no contacts. The scope and purposes of the project were briefly explained, followed by requesting an agreement for an interview with a TCN. Eight association leaders agreed for an interview without verbally confirming their status as TCNs on the phone. It was considered as the indirect confirmation. However, during the interview one of the leaders mentioned having Estonian citizenship. She was then asked to suggest a member of their association who is a TCN. She provided us with contact data and an additional interview with a TCN of the same association was interviewed.

There are two positive aspects of the data collection from the ethnic associations. First, ethnic associations are interested in recognition and promotion of their cultural activities; therefore they are open for sharing their experiences. Hence it was easy to initiate a contact and get a positive response from their leaders. Second, association leaders are often full-time engaged in the association' activities and/or have certain business hours when they are available for interviews. This also assists in arranging interviews.

On the other hand, TCNs working in the voluntary organizations do that only part time, besides their main job or activity, and often only periodically. Therefore, the process of finding TCNs for interviews in the non-ethnic voluntary organizations was much more difficult. In addition to internet search with the key words "foreign volunteers" (translated into Estonian), two public events promoting NGOs were attended. Stands of 15 NGOs were approached in search for TCNs available for interview, which resulted in four contacts and eventually, interviews.

The fourth phase of the data collection thus consisted of conducting semi-structured interviews and the fifth phase included their analysis contrasted with the legal documents.



4.2 An overview of the phenomenon of formal volunteering at national and regional level

The Estonian Civil Society Development Concept (CSDC, known also as the EKAK) was adopted by the Estonian parliament in 2002 and it forms the basis of the national strategy for volunteering. The Concept presents the mission and goals of the civil society and stresses the role of voluntary activity in the development of civil society. Two strategic documents have been developed to support the implementation of the goals of the Concept: the Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support 2007-2010, the Estonian National Development Plan for Volunteering 2007-2010, and the Civil Society Development Plan 2011-2014. The Estonian National Development Plan for Volunteering is an integrate element of the Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support and many activities related to the promotion of volunteering are financed by the Plan. (Study on volunteering Estonia, 2010)

CSDC is a document that defines the mutually complementing roles of public authorities and civic initiative, principles of their cooperation and mechanisms and priorities for cooperation in shaping and implementing public policies and building up civil society in Estonia (Ender, 2009). It deals with cross-sectoral issues such as participation in policy making, funding, outsourcing public services, awareness and civic education, volunteering, philanthropy, etc. This guarantees that civil society development is seen in a strategic way as opposed to sporadic, disconnected approaches. (The mission and goals of the civil society)

CSDC was developed greatly by the Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations (NENO, since 1991, www.ngo.ee/neno) (The mission and goals of the civil society). In December 2002, the Estonian parliament, Riigikogu, adopted the Concept as a basis for co-operation with the Third sector. The implementation of CSDC is overseen by representatives of ministries and NGOs. A joint committee of 22 representatives from public and non-profit sectors was assembled, chaired by the minister of Regional Affairs (Ender, 2009). The committee started in October, 2003, organizing its work in three groups: (1) working group on involvement, consultation, policy appraisal, and legislation, (2) working group on funding and statistics, and (3) working group on awareness, civic education, media and infrastructure. The working groups turned CSDC's objectives, principles and priorities into a specific implementation plan of 2005-2007 complete with 11 goals. Every two years Riigikogu organizes a public hearing on its implementation (first was January 2005), thus providing governance for the whole process (Ender, 2009). With CSDC, nonprofits not only set the sector's agenda, they set societal agenda. The committee



reports on its work to the government and the public every year (The mission and goals of the civil society).

A Strategy for Volunteering in Estonia was developed by the Tartu Volunteer Centre (known as Volunteer Development Estonia and later renamed to MTÜ Vaba Tahe) with the participation of several NGOs in 2006 and it was adopted by the Joint Committee for implementation of the CSDC (Elaboration of compendium...).

Estonia has a very large number of registered not-for-profit organizations: around 15,000 associations, 800 foundations and around 700 religious organizations that engage volunteers. In addition, many networks and groups of individuals have formed informal organizations, which however are not officially registered. This means that realistic figures could potentially be even higher, although it is important to bear in mind that until 2010, when annual reports of non-profit associations became obligatory and public, the registry of non-profit associations also included details of associations, which were no longer active (around 6,000). (Study on volunteering Estonia, 2010)

Out of the 15,000 associations around 1,500 are public benefit organizations, which are entitled to special benefits as they carry work for the public good.

With regards to the distribution by sector, most voluntary associations are active in sport and leisure time sectors (Study on volunteering Estonia, 2010). Different legal types of voluntary organizations differ with respect to their primary fields of activity. Community development, health care, and social services are more important fields of activity for foundations, while sport, culture, and the representation of social (special interest) groups are typical for non-profit associations (The Institutionalization..., 2005).

According to the Estonian Institute (2002) the significant reduction in the role of the State in social welfare has resulted in the emergence of many self-help and charity organizations (Kask, 2002). Non-profit organizations addressing different illnesses and disability problems have increased the most. The Institute however highlights weaknesses in the voluntary organization structure in relation to child protection and environmental protection. (Study on volunteering Estonia, 2010)

4.2.1 A brief description of the policy frameworks of formal volunteering and of the existing measures to support voluntary organizations and to promote voluntary work at national and regional level

In Estonia, there is no definition for a voluntary organization as such. However, legal definitions exist for two different types of non-government organizations, which are the



main types of organizations engaging volunteers: associations and foundations; the latter can be grant-making or grant-operating. The laws preclude state control over NGOs, including government dissolution of an NGO for political or other arbitrary reasons. NGOs can operate freely under the law, are free from harassment by the central and local governments, can address matters of public debate and express criticism. Besides, the Estonian legislation also allows informal, unregistered organizations to operate in the form of civil law partnerships. These non-registered organizations are working under the Law of Obligations and can be eligible for some small project grants. (Elaboration of compendium...).

In general, the legislative environment for not for profit organizations in Estonia is favorable. It does not set limits or specify the purposes for which a non-profit association or NGO can be established. Special registration departments of the county and city courts hold the register of non-profit organizations and foundations. Entries in the register are public and everyone has the right to examine and obtain copies of the register and the files of non-profit organizations and foundations.

There were 20,039 registered non-profit associations in January 2004, 29,000 associations and foundations in 2009, and 30,692 associations and foundations in 2014. The fact that the number of NGOs has increased enormously during the last decade is proof that the legislation allows for easy registration of associations and foundations. (Elaboration of compendium...) The slowdown of the growth is rooted in the change of regulation in 2010, by which NGOs are obliged to present their yearly reports even in the absence of activity or turnover that year and those who do not are erased from the register (Aruanne Kodanikuühiskonna..., 2013).

In terms of financial regulation, the legislation allows NGOs to earn income from the provision of goods and services. The only difference between NGOs and businesses in this regard is that NGOs may not redistribute income in the form of profits. NGOs are also allowed to compete for government contracts and to take part in public procurement at the local and central levels.

The public sector does not distinguish between volunteer involving and not-involving organizations as for the relationship (Ender, 2009). There is no specific legal framework in place in Estonia for volunteering, but a range of laws affect volunteering. These include:

- Non-profit Associations Act;
- Foundations Act;
- Income Tax Act;
- Value Added Tax Act;



- Law of Obligations Act;
- Youth Work Act;
- Probation Supervision Act;
- Rescue Act;
- Victim Support Act;
- Act of Churches and Congregations
- Apartment Associations Act.

Rammo & Seppel (2013) present the analysis of the legislative framework of volunteering, suggestions for associations for formalizing it, and a sample contract between association and a volunteer.

Study on volunteering Estonia (2010) describes in detail various aspects of volunteering:

- legal framework for individual volunteers, restrictions to volunteering;
- financial support schemes and incentives and legal provisions concerning reimbursement of expenses to individual volunteers;
- insurance and protection of volunteers;
- legal framework for organizations engaging volunteers;
- tax exemptions;
- self-regulation in relation to volunteering.

The NGO Code of Ethics serves as a tool for every individual to be able to evaluate whether an NGO is acting according to transparent principles. There are also Codes of Good Practice on fields like participation, public service delivery, funding and volunteering. As CSDC, these are voluntary agreements between civil society and the public sector, harmonizing the principles for cooperation from which both sides can proceed. (The mission and goals of the civil society)

The first volunteer centre, known as Volunteer Development Estonia today, was established in 2000 and several civil initiatives have been implemented during the last few years that promote volunteering. For example, the “Let’s do it” initiative, launched in 2008, attracted almost every 20th Estonian to volunteer for a day. (Study of volunteering...)

The results of the 2009 survey (Vabatahtlikus..., 2009) were used for development of the Communication Strategy for Organized Volunteering directed to the Estonian Ministry of the Interior, the Estonian civil society, organizations and associations, and public with the aim of increasing cooperation and aptness of all parties by more successful involvement of volunteers (Praxis, 2012). It includes suggestions for voluntary organizations for improvement of their communication and involvement of the volunteers.



4.2.2 A brief presentation of the existing statistics and studies about formal volunteering at national and regional level

The “Volunteering in Estonia 2013” survey by the Praxis Center for Policy Studies showed that yearly 31% of the Estonian population participate in voluntary activities (24% knowingly and 7% unknowingly), which is close to the EU average of approximately 29%. The average volunteer is a woman (58% of all volunteers) at her prime working age (46% of all volunteers are aged between 25 and 49). She has secondary or vocational education (50% of volunteers) and works as a specialist, official or manager. She manages financially, as the family's monthly net income is at least €800. She is Estonian (77%) and lives in Tallinn or Southern Estonia. The study presents the phenomenon of volunteering across various other social indicators. (Volunteering in Estonia 2013)

Volunteering in Estonia has a growing trend, as the percentage of volunteers found in a 2007/2008 survey was 27% (TNS Emor and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies, 2008). Earlier pan-European surveys into volunteering showed similar numbers, e.g. 28% of the Eurobarometer survey into volunteering (European Social Reality, 2007), and much lower numbers, such as 17% in the 1999/2000 European Values Study survey (published in 2001) and Estonia ranking as 19th of the 26 countries. The final report of the study on volunteering in the EU in 2010 determined Estonia as a country with medium level of volunteering, together with Latvia and France (Study on Volunteering Final, 2010). The growing trend results in that now Estonia would be considered as of a high level of 30%-39% of volunteering, together with Denmark, Finland, Germany and Luxembourg.

Reasons for this trend include better co-ordination, strategic collaboration, action plans, and in particular the new civic initiatives (Study on volunteering Estonia, 2010).

One of the most comprehensive studies on volunteering in Estonia is the country report published on the EU Citizenship portal (Study on volunteering Estonia, 2010). It presents a general overview of the voluntary sector in Estonia, provides information on the history of volunteering in Estonia, definitions of volunteering, the number and profiles of volunteers, the number and types of organizations engaging volunteers and the main voluntary activities taking place in Estonia. It also details the current institutional framework of the voluntary sector in Estonia. The report presents an overview of the main public bodies and other organizations involved in volunteering in Estonia, national policies on volunteering and volunteering programs in place at transnational, national and regional and local level.

The study also describes the regulatory framework in place for the voluntary sector in Estonia. A number of different elements within the regulatory section are examined,



covering: the general legal framework; the legal framework in place for individual volunteers and for organizations engaging volunteers and profit-making organizations; the relevant insurance and protection of volunteers. The report describes the funding arrangements for volunteering and its economic value. It also examines the social and cultural dimension of volunteering, in particular how voluntary activities can benefit volunteers, beneficiaries of voluntary services, as well as the wider community. The study also looks at the factors, which motivate individuals to volunteer and how volunteering in Estonia has been integrated into education and training, both in terms of the recognition of volunteers' skills and competences and the education and training opportunities available to them. And finally, it considers the impact of the EU policies.

The country report Estonia of the study "Volunteering Across Europe" (2009) presents excerpts from the interviews regarding the concept of and motivation for volunteering, perceived challenges, needs of volunteer organizations, the perception of their role for the society and in public policies, opinion on measures and/or initiatives for support to volunteering, and suggestions of the volunteers. The study also presents a historical overview of the third sector in Estonia, covers the legal framework of the third sector in Estonia, explains in detail the juridical and organizational forms of not for profit organizations, and overviews the problems with the implementation of the CSDC and the achievements.

Several research studies were made on the topic of volunteering, such as Hallemaa & Servinski (2009), Kask (2002), Lagerspetz & Rikmann (2008), Luide (2013), Surve (2009), Vene (2005).

In 2011 a two-month pilot program for employee volunteering in corporate and public sector was undertaken coordinated by the Estonian Ministry of the Interior. Its idea was to find professional volunteers to 10 non-governmental organizations from 5 corporations and 5 ministries. Praxis Center for Policy Studies carried out an evaluation of the pilot program, analyzing the results and benefits to participated parties, and presenting recommendations for further development of similar programs or projects (Uus, 2012).

The 2011/2012 study "Civil Society in Estonia: Values and Behavioral Patterns" presented survey results on the following topics: 1) the attitudes conducive or unfavorable to participatory democracy; 2) the personal characteristics of the respondent; 3) informal civic activities, without assuming an organizational form; 4) participation in organized activities and different types of organizations; 5-8) sociability and communication (friends, relatives, neighbors); 9) communication and information sources; 10) views and opinions about different issues in Estonian society (Kodanikualgatust..., 2012).



The most recent study by Uus et al. (2014) presents the results of various recent public surveys, provides an overview and typology of volunteering and relevant changes that have taken place over the past five years in Estonia, looks at possible factors behind these changes and compares the extent and ways of volunteering in comparison to other countries. It is a replication study following 2009 survey (Vabatahtlikus..., 2009). In addition to Estonia, the current study provides an overview of six additional countries.

The Communication Strategy for Organized Volunteering (Praxis, 2012) draws on the results of the 2009 survey (Vabatahtlikus..., 2009) and of the 2012 study, which consisted of online survey directed at the voluntary organizations (N=367), three focus group discussions and one interview with a representative of a council of the Association of Pensioners. It presents strengths and weaknesses of the existing communication, analyses in detail its principles and objectives by target groups.

An approach to measure economic and social value of volunteering was published in 2011 for the first time in Estonia (Kaarna et al., 2011).

4.3 TCNs civic participation and TCNs volunteering in non-ethnic voluntary organizations at national and specifically at regional level

4.3.1 Legislative framework concerning TCNs volunteering and civic participation at national, regional and local level

As the most recent study has found out, more than 9% of all volunteers are TCNs: 6% are Russian Federation citizens and 3% have an undetermined citizenship (Volunteering in Estonia 2013). However, only 2% and 1%, respectively, are active in organizations; 8% and 7% are not-so-active in organizations; 5% and 4% are unorganized active; and 6% and 9% are unorganized not-so-active (Uus et al., 2014). It should be noted though that the sample of this telephone survey of 598 persons is insufficiently representative for Estonia (a representative sample for Estonia is 1,000 interviewees) and these results should be treated with caution.

There is no special legislative framework concerning TCNs volunteering and civic participation and the latter is subject to the principles described in the section 3.2.1. In Estonian law, TCNs are called aliens and Aliens Act regulates their legal status, temporary stay and temporary residence permit. Only less than 5% of the Aliens Act regulations consider long-term residence permit, the issue of which is to be decided by The Police and Border Guard Board (Aliens Act).



Voluntary service is mentioned in the Aliens Act only in the section of temporary residence permit for study: *“A temporary residence permit for study may be granted for voluntary service within the framework of a youth project or program recognised by the Ministry of Education and Research under the conditions of an insurance contract, contract with the youth association and its bearing of the subsistence costs and no remuneration”* (Aliens Act).

Granting residence permits to TCNs is limited by the annual immigration quota: the quota for aliens immigrating to Estonia, which shall not exceed 0.1 per cent of the permanent population of Estonia annually. Being granted a residence permit or a temporary work permit (up to six months) is strictly regulated and rather complicated for a TCN.

As can be concluded from the Part 1, the situation of the TCN in Estonia is particular to the ex-Soviet republic. Most of the TCNs—people who lived here for many years before it became a separate country and their descendants, mostly born in Estonia. Those who faithfully supported the re-birth of the independent country and remained in it after the break-up of the USSR, constitute a particular group, different from the more recently immigrated TCNs by many aspects. The most highly charged and sensitive of those is the state’s requirement to demonstrate a loyalty to this newly established country in order to be able to become its citizen, instead of naturalization, as was case in Lithuania. As a result, many people applied for other countries’ (e.g., Russian Federation) citizenships, or, worse, were left with undetermined citizenship (having a so-called alien’s passport). This sudden change of status to becoming what is often perceived as a “second class” resident influences to a large extent the person’s identity and many aspects of the social life. As *de jure* third country nationals, these people constitute the largest proportion of the TCNs residing in Estonia and consequently, of the sample studied in this research. The peculiarities related to this are explained below.

4.3.2 Main features of TCNs civic participation and voluntary work

Various studies have found that TCNs perceive their social status as lower, their role in the society as less important or valuable, and competence in politics as inferior to their Estonian fellow-countrymen; they also have lower assessment of the Estonian civil society, are more critical of it, and their membership in various associations is significantly lower (see section 3.3.8). On the other hand, the appreciation of their role in Estonian economy and governance by Estonians has a growing trend: from 24% in 2005 to 64% in 2008 and 70% in 2011.



In addition to these causes, according to one of the leaders of a NGO coordinating organization, the civic activity of TCNs in Estonia depends on two factors:

First, in general the material wealth of the TCNs in Estonia is lower than that of Estonian or European citizens and the civic activity clearly correlates with the fulfillment of the basic needs.

Second, ideology barriers and the issue of identity may play a role, such as defining “what is my country and my role in its welfare” and “why should I do something if I don’t consider it as my country? (I., leader)

It should be noted that this is more of an issue in the North-Eastern part of Estonia with more TCNs-remnants of the Soviet time, whose identity is on average not so strongly connected to Estonia (Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011).

Therefore, TCNs, especially older generations, are less engaged in civic participation and volunteering, are less interested in political life, sign less petitions, and donate less. Due to ideology and identity barriers older generations of TCNs tend to trust less the institutionalized forms of civic activity such as not-for-profit organizations and are less active in their activities. Thus, in general they have fewer connections with the society, live “in vacuum”.

Yet, for example, the Estonians-initiated country-wide community activities such as garbage gathering in public places have become as popular there <the North-Eastern region> as anywhere else in Estonia. It is probably related to the focus or the scope of identity – how problematic it is to say “it is my country”, to like or dislike its features and accept or not accept it as it is – the more localized is the level of the activities, the more involved are the people living there. If the activity is related to the waste land behind one’s house, it feels closer and it is easier for a person to feel involved.

Another example is the high popularity of the Estonian Food Bank in this region. Since it is a region with the lowest income in Estonia, the highest unemployment rate and the most disadvantaged demographic and social situation, including the highest HIV rate in the EU, one would expect the food bank support to be more advanced in Tallinn and its suburbs, where people are better well-off financially and thus have more possibilities for charity. Nevertheless, Narva town in the North-East scores high and once even had gathered the biggest amount of products for the most vulnerable population groups. (I., leader)

For a shorter definition of civic activity NENO uses a term “good citizen” – someone who cares, who is interested in what is happening around her and in the society in general. What this implies, is decided by individuals and their associations themselves. In general, civic participation of TCNs in Estonia is more local and is focused more on specific activities.



4.3.3 Factors and conditions promoting or hindering TCNs volunteering and civic engagement

Social network

Having a social network seems to have a crucial role in finding opportunities for volunteering and civic engagement.

When I started my studies in Estonia I was looking for an internship and my classmate working at that organization offered to send a CV and cover letter there. Though there was no opportunity for formal internship, I was welcome to volunteer and now I am volunteering in parallel with my studies, so that I get to practice while studying. (G., volunteer)

Lack of alternatives

In some cases the decision to volunteer stems from the temporary or long-term lack or limited number of other social activities available.

*First, I think the basic reason is that they always require Estonian language, even if they are English friendly. Without knowing Estonian it is very difficult to find a job or internship: the organization has to be ready, having prepared the documents and the communication in English.
Second, the issue of the different citizenship makes you very very unattractive for a company. Few organizations engage in this extra documentation stuff related to proving that you are the right candidate and to applying for a work permit.
TCNs are usually unable to stay in that environment. (G., volunteer)*

Openness of the society

As noted one interviewee, Estonia is insufficiently open for those who want to contribute to its development.

The state is very reserved and its wish to develop is not so high. Much of the mentality traces its roots from the Soviet time: there is a belief that everything is good as is and there is no need for development, he argues (C., volunteer).

According to some TCNs, Estonian society still lacks openness towards foreigners so that they can feel welcome and accepted and not being perceived as taking away jobs from the locals.

Emotional barriers are very important – sometimes you lose motivation, self-esteem, self-confidence, the ability not to doubt you abilities. Because another person with the same abilities is just lucky to be an EU citizen. (G., volunteer)



Language issues and scarcity of information

Migration Offices are considered to be quite helpful and supportive during the documents transmissions, though language issues may have arisen in some cases.

In the Migration Office hardly anyone knows English. Having someone speaking English there would be great.
(B., worker at an international school)

Scarcity of information about the possibilities of civic participation and voluntary work, funding possibilities for NGOs, open calls for projects, etc. are often mentioned by stakeholders as participation impeding factors. The information in other languages is even more limited. Thus, language barriers and immigration formalities are the most often mentioned hindering factors for finding both a paid work and a volunteering opportunity.

English is not so spread and it's not so easy. I know many, who studied Estonian in parallel with the main studies, but it's difficult and no one reaches the level to be able to work. (G., volunteer)

The language issues are also present inside the voluntary organizations, who often consider a personal guidance to volunteers-TCNs as sufficient source of information. It may be a potential drawback hindering the extent of volunteer involvement in organization's activities or everyday life.

If they have problems with Estonian language, we just give them tasks that do not need this skill. If they come with questions, we answer them, but we don't translate all the documentation. During the private introductory conversation in the beginning I explain them everything in the language they understand. Everything they need to know is explained then. The main information about our organization is available on the website also in English and Russian, the statute of the foundation is in Estonian only, but I don't think they need it; it is not that important information to them to do their voluntary work. Our written internal rules are only for the employees. (A., leader)

Language barriers also impede the financing of the civic participation. As a 2010 study has shown, Russian-speaking voluntary associations perceive the difficulty of obtaining information about financing options more than two times higher than Estonian-speakers, and the perception of one's experience and ability to find such information three times lower; they are also more negative with respect to the ability of the officials to explain all the necessary procedures (Kodanikeühenduste..., 2010).

However, younger TCNs are more positive with respect to the local society and confirm the improvement during the recent years. Younger TCNs especially pay tribute to the possibility to conduct many necessary daily life transactions by internet.



4.3.4 Forms and specificities of TCNs participation in voluntary and civic organizations/initiatives

Most TCNs work in the voluntary organizations in parallel with their main activity – a full time job, family responsibilities, studies etc. – and therefore are involved only part time. Young TCNs often come to volunteer in Estonia in the frame of the European Voluntary Service and other international programs. Many others are students with a free time and a will to contribute to the host society.

Our volunteers are usually students, who start doing their internship obligatory for studies. They contact the organization themselves and after the internship is over, express their wish to continue doing a voluntary work. (A., leader)

Some of TCNs came to Estonia with a religious mission, especially in the 1990s when Estonia regained its independence. They have founded churches and schools and kindergartens to support their communities. Many have stayed in Estonia and continue their voluntary work for years.

Formalization of volunteering

As the phenomenon of volunteering is relatively new in Estonia, the modes of volunteering and the related formalities are not quite developed and regulated. Therefore, attempts are made by longer functioning and coordinating organizations such as MTÜ Vaba Tahe to congregate experiences and share them with others.

After the initial realizing that we need to engage more volunteers we called upon and had a two-day training by a professional working in this field, with the aim to know how to engage them in all activities. We discovered what we need to improve in our work and how to make it more efficient. They also gave us a list of the volunteer's rights and obligations. It was only in Estonian though. The result is our plan to appoint one person who will deal with organization of voluntary work here. (A., leader)

In terms of training, it is undertaken by each organization according to the specificities of its activities. For example, associations in the field of asylum help are known for offering training to volunteers. However, for an improvement of the general knowledge about do's and do not's of volunteering some kind of wider orientation sessions for the foreign volunteers would be helpful.



I don't know whether it can be called training, but we give the students and volunteers introductory instructions about the content and specifics of the organization's activity, what kind of assistance it provides to the people and how the volunteers can be of help and what is expected from them. (A., leader)

Another issue is the lack of practice of signing contracts for volunteering work. Although all organizations except NGOs have to register volunteers in the Tax and Customs Office, there is no law in Estonia that ascertains signing of the contracts with them, which would offer some working relationship insurance for both parties.

Volunteering is undocumented, they don't pay and practically don't take any responsibility for you. No insurance is provided. I don't have a contract and it's like I am not doing anything in Estonia. It's not convenient, but when you don't have any other choice... (G., volunteer)

Acknowledging this issue, some organizations start making efforts to improve the situation.

So far the volunteer engaging was not systematized and we are now making efforts to systematize it and to assign a person who would be responsible for volunteers and interns. We do sign internship contracts with the interns, but with regard to the formalization of the voluntary work, we only talk with them about the confidentiality, since it is very important in our work, and only the according agreement is signed. We need interns and it was also written in our project application that we plan to train students so that later they will do their work in a more knowledgeable and conscious way, since our activity is rather new in Estonia: it started only in 1997. In search for interns we post calls in the universities and on our Facebook page. Interns and volunteers do the same work, so we do not distinguish between them here. (A., leader)

One of the features of voluntary work in internationally-oriented organizations, such as international schools, is also lack of the language issues: knowledge of the Estonian language is not always necessary, though practical. The diversity of nationalities, cultures and languages is welcomed and expected there and at the same time they are seen as chimney-corners for foreigners. Newcomers get necessary initial help, especially with practical issues.

In some sense we are a little island of the <international> community for our students and their families and all foreigners who wish to work in town (K., international school)

It should be noted that most voluntary organizations, even those with a presumable experience of TCN volunteering, do not differentiate volunteers by citizenship or type of the residence permit; neither systematize this information in any formal way. Therefore, we observed difficulties in gathering information of such experiences.



4.3.5 Specific motivations underpinning TCNs involvement

Though most TCNs born or residing in Estonia for many years are active in civic participation or voluntary work for the same reasons as Estonian citizens, many do that in order to raise their voice and be better noticed. As one interviewee noted,

TCNs are more appreciated when they are volunteering (G., volunteer)

The main motivation of the more recently arrived TCNs stems from their sense of mission. In addition, finding a job or an internship relevant to the recently arrived person's qualification is difficult in Estonia.

Voluntary work is easier to find. (G., volunteer)

When speaking about the motivation for volunteering, one interviewee used a comparison with the motivation of the interns whom they also engage, some of which may have less responsibility in their deeds during the internship.

Another factor important for those TCNs who does not speak the local language is the limited number of internationally oriented organizations without a requirement of Estonian language skills. Information about such organizations and their welcoming attitude spreads among the TCNs' families and social circles, and private recommendations are highly valued by both voluntary organizations and TCNs who already reside in Estonia or have social contacts here.

In case of foreign interns and volunteers one has to think through what are the realistic expectations and hopes that one have for them. One should take into account their language skills, what they have studied. (A., leader)

4.3.6 Specific contributions offered by TCNs (positive and negative aspects)

The most often cited positive aspect of engaging TCNs is that they bring along the diversity of cultures, knowledge, experiences and skills. Foreign language skills are the first mentioned sources of contributions:

The main asset of the volunteers is their foreign language skills and assistance with translation. (A., leader)

Next are the specific skills useful for the specific tasks.



TCNs can contribute a lot. They have to be 10 times better than locals. (G., volunteer)

The interns and volunteers were very good, helped us a lot in our work, and did it with enthusiasm. Our work is definitely more efficient with them. Internal motivation of volunteers seems to be much higher and nobler than that of the interns, who need to do the internship for getting their study credits. Their aim is to be useful for the society and they are more responsible in fulfilling their tasks than some of the interns. Yet, lately also interns come here with the same goodwill as volunteers. (A., leader)

A negative aspect for an association is the necessity to prepare documents and staff with English skills to be able to provide all the essential help to the volunteers – TCNs.

4.3.7 Presentation of one or more relevant and successful experience/s implemented at regional level

The best examples of successfully engaging volunteers are the organizations active in the fields in one or another way related to diversity, which are also interested in increasing the diversity of their members and are internationally oriented.

I managed to take my volunteering work, because they were interested in various languages. Human rights field is itself related to non-citizens and the organization focused on different countries, not Estonia. There were some asylum seekers from Africa and other countries; some are French speakers, English, Georgian and Russian speaking asylum seekers. This was the reason, not so because of my qualification. Still it is not easy find organizations like that, even for the TCNs who graduate from the Estonian universities. (G., volunteer)

The organization offered activities of interest for the volunteer, an office space, a flexible working time and even a remote work possibility.

In Estonia I did some field work – meeting with clients, staying in the office a couple of times per week, now I am back to <sending country> working remotely for the same organization: writing research articles, etc. I was always asking for work to be busy, to me it is very important to have this experience and have it recorded in my CV. (G., volunteer)

The volunteer initiated and managed to establish contacts with important international cooperation partners, whose help was crucial in a major project of the host organization. The cooperation in this project continues on the level of Ministries of External Affairs. The experience with the volunteer was so successful that an opportunity to continue



volunteering remotely was offered and, according to the volunteer, the relationship goes on. However, the message of her organization is not so optimistic:

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to continue and keep this relationship and cooperation when the volunteer has gone to another country and in our case it has also fallen out. (A., leader)

4.3.8 Relation between national/local integration models and TCNs civic participation

The subject of the integration policy in Estonia is the State (represented by the institution of the Minister of population) and the Integration and Migration Foundation Our People (MISA) established in 2010 and managed with the State's partnership was the initiator, assessor and inspector of the integration-related projects (Estonian Integration Monitoring, 2011). Initially the integration policy was managed as a project-based activity and was too fragmented, as the 2011 study outlines:

The project based nature was even further deepened by tying the policy before accession to the European Union and after it to sets of measures aimed at complying with formal "euro-standards" that, on the one hand, encouraged work on certain aspects of the integration problems (reducing the number of people with undetermined citizenship, adapting language skill requirements to EU norms), but also made it possible to leave some substantial problems, like increasing social cohesion, promoting citizen education and inter-cultural dialogue etc., on the background. A second scenario formed, characterized by an abundance of formally fixed specific sectoral measures, but lack of substantial strategic coordination. The institution of the Minister of population had neither a strong enough mandate nor enough resources to ensure coordination between the different sectors. The fragmentation of the integration policy was worsened by the conflict between the State and the local policy principles in Tallinn and Ida-Virumaa County. At the same time, no strong civil society had risen among the minority itself that could have been involved as a strong partner, while some groups and institutions came up that amplified the feeling of protest against the integration policy as such. The process of accession to the European Union encouraged a so-called liberal consensus among the society, supporting the spread of competitive relations to every sector.

In the integration policy, a so-called liberal model of integration found support, leaving the responsibility for coping in the society, including linguistic adaptation and political integration, primarily with the individual him- or herself. (Estonian Integration Monitoring, 2011)

The State Integration Program for 2008-2013 has eventually brought into attention the fact that the previous integration strategies in Estonia did not include activities in the field of social and economic integration. As the 2011 study on integration states, although the first integration program did include a chapter of socio-economic integration, its place in the integration policy was very low-key (Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011). The Integration Strategy for 2008-2013 highlighted the necessity to develop and implement



measures in this field and defined two sub-goals. The first was creation of the conditions for decreasing mother-tongue-based division on the labor market, the indicator of which was to be once more limited to the total number of participants in Estonian language and professional training programs and their satisfaction. The second sub-goal was creation of opportunities for adult new immigrants to integrate into the society, the indicator of which was defined as the number of people participating in accommodation programs and support activities (Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013, pp. 23-24).

However, among the objectives of the Estonian Integration Strategy Implementation Plan 2008-2010 civic participation was mentioned merely in two objectives for the 2013: “Contacts and communication between people with different mother tongues have increased and differences in participation in civil society organisations and the public sphere between Estonian and Russian speaking population have decreased”, and “The naturalisation process is continuing and Estonian citizens with native languages other than Estonian and long-term residents are being incorporated into decision-making processes affecting society”. Thus, civic participation was one of the planned actions for magnification of the contacts between people with different mother languages. Nevertheless, the Civil Society Development Plan 2011-2014 refers to national minorities only in the section dedicated to citizen education (Vallimäe et al., 2010). The draft of the Civil Society Development Plan 2015-2020 does not specifically refer to minorities either.

With regard to TCNs, Estonian Integration Strategy Implementation Plan 2008-2010 foresaw the “development and implementation of supporter services for recently arrived citizens of third countries”; “development and implementation of measures designed for local governments for the informing of residents who are citizens of third countries” (Estonian Integration Strategy Implementation Plan 2008-2010).

These stated objectives are in line with the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept CSDC, one of the goals of which is to facilitate recognition and consideration of particular interests and needs—or in other words, empowerment—of the insufficiently represented or accepted other language speakers in public regulation (Vallimäe et al., 2010). However, this issue was not directly considered in the implementation plans and their membership in various associations is significantly lower than that of the Estonian speakers; the exception is trade unions, where the frequency of membership is less varied among the language groups (Ibid.).

Vallimäe et al. (2010) were the first to suggest that civic associations, which use languages other than Estonian in their daily activities, see their role in the society differently. This issue may reflect the variety in citizenship status and its impact on the perceived role in



the society. For example, it was found that people with undetermined citizenship are least likely to hold the notion that the way a country develops depends on its people (including personal responsibility) or that they can influence society; they are also least likely to feel that they are competent in politics (Uus & Kaldur, 2013). Moreover, the Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011 has determined that TCNs—citizens of Russian Federation and people with undetermined citizenship consider their social status in Estonian society the lowest.

In addition, according to the study on values and behavioral patterns supporting citizens' initiative, among the respondents, who are citizens of Russian Federation, two thirds (67%) do not participate in any organized initiatives, compared to 48% of the Russian-speakers who hold Estonian citizenship. People in Estonia who hold Russian Federation citizenship and people with undetermined citizenship assess Estonian civil society lower than people who hold Estonian citizenship. The latter ones are, in their turn more active in organized and unorganized civic initiatives than Russian citizens, and people with undetermined citizenship are the least active. (Kodanikualgatust..., 2012)

TCNs involved in civic participation raise and support different issues and initiatives depending on their perceived role in the society. The 2011 study has demonstrated the variation of their participation in different types of civic participation, in most cases two to three times lower than that of their Estonian counterparts (Estonian Integration Monitoring, 2011). People who hold Russian Federation citizenship are also more critical than others in their assessment of Estonian civil society—they were almost three times more critical than Estonian citizens. They also have the lowest number of people participating in activities initiated by citizens. Respondents with undetermined citizenship were somewhat less critical than the average. (Kodanikualgatust..., 2012).

On 30 June 2011 the Government adopted the Action Plan for the 2011-2013 State Integration Program. Agencies implementing integration programs are Integration and Migration Foundation Our People (MISA) and the Police and Border Guard.

The "National Debates on Integration for Third Country Nationals in Estonia" initiated by the Praxis Center for Policy Studies and Institute of Baltic Studies (IBS) in 2012-2013 is a first-time experience with public involvement of TCNs on such a scale. The main objective of the project was to include third country nationals and people with undetermined citizenship living in Estonia (TCN) in policy making processes in the field of integration policy in Estonia (Uus & Kaldur, 2013). Its authors acknowledged the need to include the opinions of third country nationals living in Estonia in the drafting process of the new Strategy of Integration and Social Cohesion in Estonia 2020, and, secondly, intended to



introduce the public in general and TCNs in particular to the valuable experience of public involvement.

The debates Participants could voice their opinions on seven topics in total: integration problems in education, integration in the labor market, accessibility to public services and relevant information, involvement in the community and in decision-making processes, cultural diversity in Estonian society, learning Estonian language, and the regional particularity of Ida-Virumaa County in North-Eastern Estonia (Uus & Kaldur, 2013).

In March 2012 the results of the Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011 were published and together with the findings of the abovementioned studies they formed the basis for the creation of The Strategy of Integration and Social Cohesion in Estonia “Lõimuv Eesti 2020”, the draft of which was submitted to public consultation by the Estonian Ministry of Culture in April 2014 (The new Strategy..., 2014). The strategy formulates Estonia’s aims and means in the field of integration for the next seven years. For the first time it would include such aspects of integration as social and economic cohesion, activities targeting young people and the development of civil society, considering these to have a vital role in facilitating integration.

Also the objectives of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2014-2020 adapted in Estonia include facilitation of TCNs’ active participation in the society as its second purpose. The list of the objectives presented by the Ministry of Interior is as follows.

1. Persons with the key importance to the development of Estonia are acquainted with Estonian society and actively participate both in the labor market and in the society in general.
 - The state offers services to the third country nationals that support adaptation (training in adaptation, including language instruction).
2. Inclusion of TCNs and persons with undetermined citizenship into society through individual and organizational collective actions.
 - The state facilitates TCNs’ active participation in the society (promotion of the cooperation between municipalities and third sector organizations and their training; support of projects on citizen education).
3. Public awareness about TCNs and tolerance towards them have grown.
 - The state raises public awareness about TCNs and the knowledge of TCNs about Estonian society; it facilitates the creation of cohesion-supporting environment (by facilitation of the common societal values and audio-visual, printed and internet media projects). (Kasvand, 2014)



These statements and the new Strategy of Integration and Social Cohesion in Estonia 2020 demonstrate the intent to support initiatives that promote active involvement of people in the society. Notwithstanding the hitherto low involvement of TCNs this intention will hopefully advance the situation to have a more noticeable growing trend.

4.4 TCNs' "ethnic" associations and civic participation through them

4.4.1 Legislative framework concerning TCNs' associations at national, regional and local level

Foundation of ethnic associations

There is no specific framework concerning TCNs ethnic associations in Estonia and all ethnic and cultural associations in general have little flexibility in choosing the legal form. The simplest path for an ethnic association is to register itself as a non-profit association and be governed by the same Non-profit Associations Act as the other non-profit or NGO organizations. According to this Act, a non-profit association may be founded by at least two persons, natural or legal, and the names, personal identification codes and residences of the members of the management board should be set out in its memorandum. This means, any two or more legal residents in Estonia of all nationalities can found an ethnic association.

There were 165 associations of national minorities and cultural societies in Estonia in 2002, 238 in 2005, 305 in 2008 and 319 (300 cultural societies and 19 umbrella organizations) in 2014. It should be noted that TCNs are not subject to the National Minorities Cultural Autonomy Act entered into force in 1993, since only Estonian citizens who reside in the territory of Estonia are considered national minorities.

Financing of activities

Ethnic associations are eligible to apply for funding from the Integration and Migration Foundation Our People (MISA), which is in turn funded by the Estonian Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Research and Education, the European Social Fund (ESF), and the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals (EIF). However, MISA has a rule that the applications should be submitted by the ethnic associations' umbrella organizations, which in turn should have a minimum number of five members. It creates certain impediment regarding the financing.



First, for funding to be approved for the next year's budget an association has to first pass the accreditation by a certain date. The difficulty for many associations is that often their founders and leaders are older people who do not have the necessary skills and knowledge; or there are too few people with these skills, who might be unable to prepare reports and budget plans at the right time. Therefore, sometimes the associations are left with no financing for the whole year.

Second, as one interlocutor mentioned, if one of the members does not present the annual report and the budget for accreditation, all of the organizations under the same umbrella do not get funding for the next year.

Third, apart from the basic everyday costs, the annual budgets solicited from the Integration Fund are never fully accepted and many activities of cultural associations are mainly self-financed.

Language issues

No interviewees have raised the language issues: all official documentation has to be in Estonian language, which for a third country national may provide a certain difficulty. As explained in 3.3.1., TCNs who have lived many years in Estonia may have the necessary language skills, resources or a social capital useful to overcome this difficulty, but the newly arrived TCNs may face bigger problems with regard to language and legislation.

An effort to overcome this problem was undertaken in February-August 2014 as a pilot project by the Estonian Ministry of Culture, Integration and Migration Foundation Our People (MISA) and BDA Consulting, financed by the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals. A virtual and physical information and counseling centers "Integration info" were established in Tallinn and Narva primarily targeted to TCNs with the aim of providing integration-related information and guidance (www.integratsiooninfo.ee). Volunteers from the TCNs residing in Estonia were also engaged in the work of these centers.

4.4.2 Main features of TCNs "ethnic" associations and their activities

There are 274 TCNs ethnic cultural associations in Estonia registered at the Etnoweb portal. Many of them were founded in the 1990s after Estonia became an independent republic and thus have special motivation of preserving national traditions, language, music, dance, etc. Their activities include organizing cultural events, language courses,



Sunday schools for children, supporting and promoting traditional art, music and handicraft, celebration of the national day and other important dates, sightseeing together and establishing friendship with local communities. On the international level ethnic associations organize mutual visits with other communities and associations, including those in the sending countries, summer camps, and contribute to the establishment of friendship between villages in Estonia and sending countries.

The involvement level of the second and third generation is varied across different communities and often depends on personal preferences—some communities and their cultural associations emphasize national identity stronger than others and their children are more involved in the activities. The involvement of younger generations depends also on mixed identity in some cases, their personal interests or the challenges of daily life.

Most commonly though, the carrier of traditions is the older generation, who remembers the culture of their countries of origin and wants to pass it on to the new generations. Due to generational differences, second and third generation volunteers often prefer to engage in the activities oriented towards young people. For example, they are actively involved in organizing urban summer camps for children with little parental attention, sport competitions, games, get-togethers etc. Young generations also found separate ethnic associations dedicated to sport, music, dance, art or other interests.

The voluntary work of ethnic associations is oriented to preserving the folklore, which is in fact a more difficult task than forwarding the modern culture (L., leader).

However, some TCNs ethnic associations complain about insufficient interest of the following generations for the further development of the associations. Other important generational differences are the ones between older generations of TCNs living in Estonia for decades, and the newly arrived immigrants with already somewhat different cultural background.

The most common way ethnic associations apply to engage the second and third generations and pass on traditional culture are Sunday schools. However, the attempt to provide them with the state funding brought a need for formal registration in the information system of Estonian education and approval of the study program by the Ministry of Education according to its standards. In this way Sunday schools were formally separated from their ethnic communities, which lead to turning them into mainly language schools with less ties with the community and less students, and in some cases, eventually, even termination of their existence.



While surviving on a bare enthusiasm and little financial support from the state, many of the ethnic associations were faced with the fact that in order to be eligible for state support they should consolidate under umbrella associations, who gather their annual reports and next year budgets. This requires apprehension of new skills of writing projects and reports, which are often better managed by the second or third generations.

Another volunteering aspect of the representatives of the ethnic associations is, together with the social scientists, analytics and representatives of political parties, involvement in the work of the expert group preparing and verifying the reports for monitoring the application of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which Estonia has signed in 1995.

4.4.3 Specific motivations underpinning TCNs' associations

A large part of the TCN nationals residing in Estonia are people tracing their descent from the other republics or countries, which were part of the USSR. Though formally praising the unity of different ethnicities, the unofficial policy of the Soviet Union was cultural assimilation of national minorities, aimed at Russian domination. Therefore, the primary objective of the ethnic voluntary organizations in Estonia is to preserve national identity.

Civic movements in the 1990s

Some of the existing voluntary organizations were founded right after the birth of the new country in the 1990s. At that time, as L., president of the International association of national cultural societies LYRA, notes,

the concept of civic society did not even exist and the main motivation was emerging of democracy as a new approach to society development. At that time, she argues, new values were sought and everybody was expecting changes and the changes started to happen, including perception of something new (L., leader).

As the trigger for starting national movements in these last days of the Soviet rule L. names the Baltic Chain (also called the Baltic Way) of 1989—the human chain stretching throughout the three Baltic countries—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—as a peaceful political demonstration against the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. This pact together with the secret protocols was signed between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany exactly 50 years ago on the 23 of August 1939 and divided Eastern Europe into spheres of influence, which led to the occupation of the Baltic States in 1940.



The Baltic Chain was a powerful stimulus for the national self-awareness, especially on the emotional level, and also an indicator of where one places himself (L., leader).

Soviet culture was collectivistic: the needs of the collective were above all and one's self-identification as an individual was strongly discouraged. Therefore, another specificity of the initiating national associations was basing the self-identification on the external form, such as traditional costumes, and only after that looking for the content. As L. highlights, the visible attributes were very important for the self-definition, the personal "I" at that time.

Only after one started looking for and immersing oneself into culture, traditions, history, music, etc. We did not arrive to the form, we started from it. (L., leader)

Notion of freedom

At the initial phase of creating ethnic voluntary organizations in the 1990s, the possibility of national identification was closely related to the notion of freedom emerging in relation to the dissolution of the USSR. That standing side by side altogether in the Baltic Chain was the chosen common expression of freedom. It meant to be freedom for everybody, for "all of us together", and the wish for self-sustainability was central in these endeavors.

In today's Estonia the motivation behind creating ethnic associations is somewhat different. For example, one of the interlocutors arrived to Estonia as a student. His motivation to engage in the local community work and in founding an association was better integration into Estonian society and helping older members of his ethnic association and the related associations to orient better in the work of NGOs: writing projects, applying for financing, organizing activities. Their Sunday school was supported by the Ministry of Education, but after two years there were too few children to continue, and it ceased to exist.

4.4.4 Factors and conditions facilitating or hindering TCNs' associations

Most TCNs' ethnic associations are cultural associations, yet one cannot help noticing their dependence of country's policies, because their members bring along their sentiments and opinions about those. Nevertheless, not all TCNs associations openly state their discontent with the fact that TCNs are the ones to be integrated into the Estonian society – practically, in one-way direction – the discontent, which is almost always expressed in the personal communication. LYRA, one of the oldest and the largest and most diverse (with 54



members—national cultural societies) umbrella associations claims to have a twofold objective: first, to preserve national identity, and second, to integrate Estonian society. Officially, the second goal is phrased as “forming a multicultural civic society based on democratic principles” (<http://etnoweb.ee/en/lyra>). As L. says, it did not mean being integrated into the Estonian society, as is being perceived by the general public for the last two decades, but *integrating the society*.

It is important to feel oneself not as an object, but as a subject presuming a full-fledged integration (L., leader).

Yet, the notion of “us” and “them” still persists among the majority population and is often strengthened by the careless or with their own agenda politics and public figures.

L. distinguishes between the two notions of national identity – in the country of origin it is somewhat different, even “a separate” one from the emerging identity in Estonia, due to the smallness on the country and the small number of people of the same national minority group.

One of the main facilitating factors of engaging in the ethnic associations is thus the shared social status and the main factor of both intra- and inter-organizational cooperation is the mutual understanding and support, and sharing related difficulties and feelings.

In cases of very small TCN communities, such as Kyrgyz community of 20 persons, and lack of resources and/or interest of the sending country may result in their little support also in the host country. Lack of the formal agreements between countries on the level of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, such as in case of Kyrgyzstan, contributes to the informational isolation, even during publicly organized Kyrgyz-related cultural or inter-country events. There was a case when the society was contacted during preparation of the Estonian prime minister’s visit to Kyrgyzstan for some advice and information, but later their society became left aside and isolated again. In such cases no institution is there to solve also the visa issues for potential tourists etc. interested in visiting this country.

Sometimes the reason for lack of information is the passivity of the association leaders themselves. For example, one of the ethnic youth associations’ leaders asserted that a non-profit association can be founded only if one of the board members, if these are natural persons, is granted the Estonian citizenship. This is not so, yet the passivity of the members causes fewer number of cultural activities than there might be.

In 2008 Ministry of Education required a license for running Sunday schools. Community teachers had to take special courses, which led to closure of many schools since the methods of language teaching are different across cultures and groups of languages.



In Tallinn, city offers some small funding for singular events. There is a need for such opportunities with a simpler process of application of funding to cover the basic costs of the events.

A complaint was brought up in an interview regarding the decision of financing by MISA: sometimes the reasons for the rejection of a project are not explained anyhow. Sometimes the association leaders' impression is that the commission regards previous year's financing as abundant and cuts the financing for the next year.

What regards accessibility of the funding of the larger projects, often these opportunities are not used, as the multi-ethnic associations or their umbrella organizations are unwilling to differentiate their individual members and select them to the project based on their citizenship status, which is often expected by the funding structure. For example, projects seeking funding from the European Fund for the Integration of non-EU immigrants (EIF, 2007-13) would discriminate against their members who are Estonian or European citizens, and the projects under the new Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF, 2014-20) might overlook people with undetermined citizenship who live in Estonia for a long time.

4.4.5 Role of the sending countries in the promotion and functioning of TCNs' associations

The involvement of the sending countries institutions depends largely on the political, economical and social situation in the sending countries. Usually foreign embassies in Estonia support some of the activities of the ethnic associations, and they are not necessarily embassies of the according sending country.

An example of the impact of the political situation on cooperation with the sending countries is the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was more engaged and supportive, including financially, of the life of diasporas abroad in the period of 2005-2010, but shrank to a large extent afterwards due to restructurings in the government and its subordinate units. New contacts had to be established with the new institutions. Some of the latter are a good example of cooperation by organizing culture camps and sponsoring the attendance of several children from the diasporas abroad. The embassy, on the other hand, is interested in cooperation.



4.4.6 Presentation of one or more relevant and successful experience/s implemented at regional level

The history of ethnic associations in Estonia *vis-a-vis* the political history is important for understanding the self-perception and construction of national identity of TCNs residing in Estonia since the Soviet time.

1. Possibly the oldest ethnic association is the Congress of Ukrainians in Estonia, which traces its roots from a student community founded in Tartu in 1898. At that time both Estonia and Ukraine were parts of the Russian Empire, in which ethnic associations were illegal.

The community of that time was active in organizing numerous cultural activities; it opened a national library and was in many ways visible to the local community: even the newspapers wrote about them (V., leader)

In 1905 the association was legalized and a few other Ukrainian communities were also founded and existed until the World War II. After the Russian revolution in 1917 diplomatic relations were established between Estonian and Ukrainian People's republics, though the communication was inconsistent and periodical. During the Soviet time after the WW II large numbers of Ukrainians have relocated to Estonia. The first wave included the politically repressed persons who after serving their terms were not allowed to come back to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic by the Soviet authorities. Some of them were repressed because of the alleged "nationalistic activity", as any non-sanctioned ethnicity or national identity based initiative was considered illicit by the Soviet authorities. Thus, all ethnic associations that existed until 1940 in Estonia seized their existence.

Another factor of the Soviet rule was the resettlement policy of mixing ethnicities in the USSR by assigning them to work objects in other Soviet republics than their own. The goal of the resettlement policy in Estonia was to increase the share of the Russian-speaking population, which was seen as politically loyal to the Soviet government. Thus many Ukrainians who were thus forced to speak Russian, too, were sent to work on various construction objects in Estonia, including objects of the Olympic games of 1980, various plants, including closed military plants, etc.

The end of the 1980s was characterized by the rise of national self-awareness in the USSR during the times of Gorbachev's *perestroika*. In 1988 a Forum of Peoples of Estonia was founded with the aim of supporting National Front, the national movement for freedom and independence. It consisted of various ethnic communities, whereas



Ukrainians were probably the most active in supporting the National Front (V., leader).

The same year the Ukrainian community was re-founded as a successor of the first student community. After fulfilling the task of the Forum of Peoples of Estonia – the restoration of independence of Estonia in 1991, the Congress of Ukrainians was faced with the necessity to carry multi-fold activities, including dealing with and helping Ukrainians with visa, citizenship and other documentation issues until the Embassy of Ukraine was opened in 1994. The help also included social support and humanitarian aid in these difficult times of transition. Later the Congress gradually shifted its focus to cultural activities, including founding a church, building a cultural sacral complex, founding a library, museum and various sub-units of music and art. Today it cooperates with many local and Ukrainian institutions.

2. Another successful example of an ethnic association is the Union of Armenians of Estonia. It was also founded in the end of the 1980s and it became an umbrella organization about five years ago. Its leader also considers the new requirement of consolidation to umbrella organizations as positive.

No small association can survive by itself – you have to pay the rent and other maintenance expenses. (R., leader)

This ethnic community is characterized by very strong internal ties and an open attitude and willingness to actively cooperate with the other ethnic and local associations, including a parliament's football team.

We organize tournaments and various sport events, the revenue of which goes to charity – for example, to the children hospital in Tallinn or the orphanage for children with special needs in Haapsalu (R., leader).

This orphanage in Haapsalu has become a fosterling for the association: at least once a year the association visits the orphanage with presents and treats and participate in a party with a small concert on part of the children or both parts.

The association also organizes the days of Armenian culture in Haapsalu, which is a special place for them. An Estonian born in Haapsalu has helped to save the lives of several thousand Armenian orphans during the Armenian Genocide in the 1915-1921 in the Ottoman empire. Her memory is worshiped and the community has gathered the resources to open a memorial to her brought from Armenia and established near her house museum in Haapsalu.



The association is very well established and the attitude of its members is remarkably positive.

We are considered as one of the best ethnic associations in Estonia. We have never received a negative feedback regarding the finances or late reports. (R., leader)

4.4.7 Relation between national/local integration models and TCNs civic participation through “ethnic” associations

Estonian national integration model sets the limits of the official rhetoric of the expected mode of integration and many ethnic cultural associations state the intent to integrate into Estonian society as one of their primary objectives. The informational and other support provided by this integration model is enjoyed by many TCNs. The model foresees Estonian language courses for all TCNs. Often TCNs attend a language course together with the peers from their ethnic association since they find it more appealing.

However, the discontent with the status of being the object of integration and perceived lower social status is often verbalized in private communication. For example, when answering the question “Did you have any difficulties in settling in?” asked without any reference to integration model, a TCN interviewee who was born in Estonia and works in an Estonian organization replied in the following manner:

Do you mean integration, being “integrated” here? I would not say everything is good. They keep “integrating” us... If I did not feel being “integrated” I would just say that I was born here and all is good. But the fact is I was born here and I am being “integrated.” (D., employee)

From the individual’s perspective, the issue of citizenship is a very personal and sensitive issue—while contributing as much to the work of the association, those who have Estonian citizenship seem to feel slightly and irrationally guilty for “leaving behind” their fellows, who, in their turn, are reluctant to admit any discomfort with their situation and avoid discussing it.

One of the interlocutors, also pointed out the generational differences of such unwillingness—older people-TCNs have seen the attitude towards them as a second class population group of the society and due to their personal experiences it is more difficult to engage them into active social life.



On the other hand, TCNs comment the availability of the resources provided by the State Integration Program quite positively; though express their doubts regarding their efficiency.

It is often said that the integration program did not justify itself. In the Russian-speaking communities it is always brought up. But it depends on what to look at. What are the indicators of integration, what is it, how it is measured? I feel I am integrated. Our association contributes to the enrichment of the society and people. (V., leader)

Inclusion of the representatives of ethnic associations into the discussion of the development of the integration programs is regarded very positively and those TCNs who take part in the work of the counselling unities are content with it.

I don't know whether everything can be measured, but what considers human relations there are no established common criteria (V., leader).

It was also mentioned that for cooperation between ethnic and local cultural associations of a specific and somewhat limited purpose, e.g. a choir, it is sometimes more practical to have in the association a local person with his wider circle of social connections, who acts as a contact person and a bridge between communities.

It is important to know each other in order to avoid this certain circumspection towards each other. By the way, the attitude of Estonians towards Ukrainians is very good. It always was and we feel that. Historically our fate as peoples is very similar. (V., leader)

We have close friendship with several local communities. Such friendship is much better than big concerts, for example. (V., leader)

Ethnic cultural associations are supported by the Integration Foundation, initially founded in Estonia in 1998. In 2010 the Integration Foundation merged with the Estonian Migration Foundation founded in 1992. The joint institution now bears the name of the Integration and Migration Foundation Our People (MISA). Its task is to promote integration processes in Estonia, coordinate activities related to immigration and emigration and publish the according information.

It states that the purpose of integration is to promote the situation where the representatives of other nationalities living in Estonia and Estonians would enjoy living in the country together – work, study, promote culture, be a part of society and be a full and valuable member. The objective of migration is to encourage people to return to their country of origin. MISA offers help to people who wish to return to Estonia as well as to



those who wish to leave our country. It also supports reuniting families of different nationalities. (MISA webpage)

4.4.8 Transnational activities promoted by TCNs' associations and their links with sending countries

Ethnic associations organize mutual visits with other communities and associations, including those in the sending countries, summer camps, culture presentations, cultural events, concerts, sport and other competitions, etc. They help to develop business networks and also contribute to the establishment of friendship between villages in Estonia and sending countries.

In the best cases, as with the Moldavian-Romanian Community in Estonia, cooperation projects on the level of ministries are started, ambassadors are engaged, too, also the especially established agency – governmental body working with the diasporas abroad.

4.5 Discussion and conclusions about Part 3

During 1990s – the first decade in independent Estonia – the keywords in its integration policy were naturalization (i.e. non-citizens obtaining Estonian citizenship), which includes the requirement of knowing the Estonian language, and establishment of the Estonian language instruction system for adults and children (Integration in Estonian society, 2014). The first State Integration Program for 2000-2007 emphasized these same areas. These previous strategies considered reformation of education system – mainly by cutting down the overall number of schools, including many of the elementary, basic and secondary schools that once taught only in Russian³⁶, and transition to Estonian as a language of instruction of at least 60% of studies in all public schools – as the main instrument facilitating integration. (The Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act stipulates that the remaining 40% of the curriculum can be taught in another language chosen by the school.) (Russian-language schools..., 2013)

³⁶ The number of elementary schools with the language of instruction other than Estonian has fallen by 88%, compared to 57% of Estonian-speaking schools in the period 2000-2011. Basic and secondary schools that once taught only in Russian were reorganized to mix-language schools and dropped in overall number by 14-20% in 2000-2013, which is higher than the 14% drop of the secondary schools with the Estonian language of instruction, or the actual growth in the number of basic Estonian schools by 21% in 2000-2013 (www.stat.ee).



This in fact has impacted negatively on the actual level of integration. Opposite opinions of policy makers and Russian-speaking population on the right to choose the language of instruction for their children in public schools caused certain alienation, which eventually turned into activation of their civic movement in 2010. An NGO “Russian School of Estonia” was founded defending their rights, which actively criticizes the official policy on the level of UN Human Rights Office.

This, together with the still high number of people with undetermined citizenship, which was highlighted as the main problem for years in the assessments of Estonian integration policy and the country’s general democratic development (Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011), remain the most acute problems of TCN integration in Estonia.

Support in acquiring Estonian language skills and obtaining citizenship are continuously seen as the primary role of the state in facilitating all people living in Estonia to participate in the society. Societal participation is also expected to be promoted by labor market measures provided on an individual basis by the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund. As integration cuts through many policy fields, emphasis is put on strong coordination between the ministries responsible for the varied activities, but also between public, private and non-governmental organizations. The strategy also brings more focus on newly arrived immigrants and their adaptation into the society. Measures aimed at newly arrived immigrants are overseen by the Ministry of Interior. (The new Strategy..., 2014)

Estonian officials, among them Anne-Ly Reimaa, the Undersecretary for Cultural Diversity in the Ministry of Culture, and Urve Tiidus, the Minister of Culture, ultimately admit that people in Estonia have different needs and expectations when it comes to integration. “As a society, we have become wiser during that time and the concept of integration has also evolved. While in mid-'90s we talked about integrating of mainly Russian-speaking population into the society, we now consider integration as a process of facilitating social cohesion that stems from the active participation of individuals in the society and the common values they share”, Tiidus notes. (The new Strategy..., 2014).

TCNs non-ethnic voluntary organizations and civic participation through them

Although participation in voluntary organizations has a quite favorable environment, TCNs, especially older generations, are less engaged in civic participation and volunteering, are less interested in political life, sign less petitions, and donate less. The more localized is the level of the activities, the more involved are the people.



Among the factors promoting TCNs volunteering and civic engagement are social network; lack of alternatives for paid work; openness of the society; foreign language skills; strategy of foreign volunteers engagement; training for volunteers; higher appreciation of TCNs when they are volunteering; localization of the public benefit of the civic participation.

Among the factors hindering TCNs volunteering and civic engagement are presence of alternatives to volunteering; reservedness of the society; lack of Estonian language skills; Scarcity of information; lack of strategy of foreign volunteers engagement; lack of training for volunteers; lack of practice of volunteering contracts; limited number of internationally oriented organizations without a requirement of Estonian language skills.

TCNs “ethnic” associations and civic participation through them

The phenomenon of volunteering is relatively new in Estonia. Freedom of association did not exist in the countries under the communist rule and non-governmental and civil society organizations were in place just as part of the power and control structure of the single party regime. Other civil law institutions such as private foundations were unknown in the communist legal system (Elaboration of the compendium...). This also meant the absence of freedom for national self-determination. It is not surprising that after the freedom was regained, foundation of the ethnicity and national culture based associations together with a progressive mobilization of sectors of the civil society were the first step, which paved the way for the other type associations. We conclude that ethnic cultural associations contribute a lot to the acquaintance and promotion of diversity in Estonia.

In sum, the representatives of the ethnic associations in their activities do not distinguish between citizens of different countries and are reluctant or are not able to comment on the aspects of the civic participation and volunteering of the TCN as anyhow different from the other volunteers.

Discontent with the national integration model may be, on one hand, facilitating TCNs’ “ethnic” associations and on the other hand, hindering the civic participation through them. Certain facilitating factors are shared social status and mutual understanding and support among the members.

The hindering factors are lack of resources and/or interest of the sending country for financial and/or informational support; insufficient awareness about founding and financing of associations; passivity; certain project financing limitations; scarcity of



feedback on the decisions regarding financing and certain limitations stemming from the state policies.

In general, apprehension of other ethnicities that live in Estonia is quite low notwithstanding their visibility on some cultural festivals etc. As one interviewee noted, the wider society might even consider a dancing or singing group in traditional costumes as touring foreigners instead of their fellow-countrymen. The ethnic societies are still known mainly merely on the personal or inter-organizational level.

Fortunately, as the Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011 has shown, the appreciation of other ethnicities by Estonians has a growing trend. Consideration that participation of other ethnicities in Estonian economy and governance is valuable has grown from 24% in 2005 to 64% in 2008 and 70% in 2011, whereas attaching no value to their participation has shrunk from 40% to 25% to 22%, respectively (Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011, p. 27).

The initiatives of the European Commission via the migration and integration-related programs have influenced the general attitude in Estonia in a positive way. On the 20 August 2014 the President of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves acknowledged the problem of division of people into “the right ones” and “the secondary ones” in his speech on the anniversary of Restoration of Independence of Estonia for the first time during his presidency. After mentioning the external threats and the necessity of investing in state defense he stated:

We do not need to categorize our own people into the right ones and the second-rate. This is completely incomprehensible, especially now, when we should be inclusive, not antagonistic towards our fellow-countrymen. Also, when liberty is in danger, one does not ask who someone's partner is.

Each and every one of us, dear friends. In these circumstances, hatred is a needless luxury. Let us grasp the opportunity to get over it. If there are who knows what clouds on the horizon, let us be reconciled with those against whom we have fought over the past 23 years. Let us ask for forgiveness from those we have hurt. Let us reply to those who have hurt us: let's be reconciled. (Ilves, 2014)

The recent integration initiatives give a hope that this would be achieved in Estonia and will have a long term effect, which will impact positively the development of civic participation of all population groups.



4.6 Summary of Part 3

Whereas the phenomenon of volunteering is relatively new in Estonia, volunteering has a growing trend. The public sector does not distinguish between volunteer involving and not-involving organizations and there is no definition for a voluntary organization as such. Nevertheless, in the recent years various strategic documents have been developed to support voluntary activity and development of civil society on both state and third sector levels. The third sector is composed by various organizations and associations, the Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations being the single and largest Estonian organization uniting public benefit nonprofit organizations.

In general, the legislative environment for not for profit organizations in Estonia is favourable. There is no specific legal framework in place in Estonia for volunteering, but a range of laws affect volunteering. Legal definitions exist for two different types of non-government organizations, which are the main types of organizations engaging volunteers: associations and foundations. Any two or more legal residents in Estonia can found an NGO. Estonian legislation does not set limits or specify the purposes for which a non-profit association can be established. There are codes of good Practice on fields like participation, public service delivery, funding and volunteering. These are voluntary agreements between civil society and the public sector, harmonizing the principles for cooperation from which both sides can proceed. As a result of the better co-ordination, strategic collaboration, action plans, and in particular the new civic initiatives, volunteering in Estonia is growing. There are several comprehensive studies of different aspects of civic participation and volunteering in Estonia.

There is no special legislative framework concerning TCNs volunteering and civic participation, while more than 9% of all volunteers are TCNs. Neither there is practice of signing contracts for volunteering work. There are no associations limited to only TCNs and there is no publicly available information on the citizenship of volunteers. The issue of not having Estonian citizenship is a sensitive issue among many Estonian residents and few interlocutors were willing to elaborate on this question.

The income level of the TCNs in Estonia is on average lower than that of Estonian or European citizens, which impacts their civic participation and voluntary work. In addition, TCNs perceive their social status as lower, their role in the society as less important or valuable, and competence in politics as inferior to their Estonian fellow-countrymen; they also have lower assessment of the Estonian civil society, are more critical of it, and their membership in various associations is significantly lower. On the



other hand, the appreciation of their role in Estonian economy and governance by Estonians has a growing trend: from 24% in 2005 to 64% in 2008 and 70% in 2011.

The factors promoting TCNs volunteering and civic participation are the social connections with private recommendations, existence of associations ready to engage foreign volunteers; openness of the society; foreign language skills; organizational strategies of foreign volunteers engagement and training for volunteers; higher appreciation of TCNs when they are volunteering; and localization of the public benefit of the civic participation.

The impeding factors are language barriers, lack of English skill among authorities; an insufficient level of openness in the society; lack of internationally-oriented organizations that are ready to promote volunteering in a foreign language; Estonian language skills; scarcity of information; lack of strategies of foreign volunteers engagement; lack of training for volunteers; lack of practice of volunteering contracts; and the limited number of internationally oriented organizations without a requirement of Estonian language skills.

TCNs engage in voluntary associations from a sense of mission, to learn new skills and in order to feel more appreciated in the society. Voluntary work is easier for a TCN to find than a good job or even internship.

Young TCNs often come to volunteer in Estonia in the frame of the European Voluntary Service and other international programs. They are quite satisfied with the general level of life and especially pay tribute to the possibility to conduct many necessary daily life transactions by internet.

There are 274 TCNs ethnic cultural associations in Estonia. Ethnic associations are registered as NGOs. In order to be eligible for funding from the Integration and Migration Foundation, they should consolidate under umbrella organizations. A minimum number of associations under one umbrella organization is five. It creates certain impediment regarding the financing. The skills of writing projects and reports are often better managed by the second or third generations.

Yet, the involvement level of the second and third generation is varied across different communities and often depends on personal preferences—some communities and their cultural associations emphasize national identity stronger than others and their children are more involved in the activities. The primary objective of the ethnic voluntary organizations in Estonia is to preserve national identity. In cases of very small TCN communities and lack of resources and/or interest of the sending country may results in their little public support also in the host country.



Due to generational differences, second and third generation volunteers often prefer to engage in the activities oriented towards young people. For example, they are actively involved in organizing urban summer camps for children with little parental attention, sport competitions, games, get-togethers etc. Young generations also found separate ethnic associations dedicated to sport, music, dance, art or other interests.

The involvement of the sending countries institutions depends largely on the political, economical and social situation in the sending countries. Usually foreign embassies in Estonia support some of the activities of the ethnic associations.

Estonian national integration model sets the limits of the official rhetoric of the expected mode of integration and many ethnic cultural associations state the intent to integrate into Estonian society as one of their primary objectives. The informational and other support provided by this integration model is enjoyed by many TCNs. Apart from the discontent with the status of being the object of integration and perceived lower social status verbalized in private communication, inclusion of the representatives of ethnic associations into the discussion of the development of the integration programs is regarded very positively.



Summary of the Report

TCN and diversity related policies and studies in Estonia have mainly addressed the integration of the Russian-speaking minority population (Soviet-era settlers). Most of them are Estonia-born. Yet, there is another stream in focus during the recent years – how to attract highly skilled TCNs (to develop smart migration policy). Because of the small size of the Estonian workforce, its relatively broad (rather than specialized) educational preparation and ageing, Estonian organizations need to attract foreign highly skilled workers in order to be internationally competitive. That said, the aim of the current report is to find out how TCNs’ skills, knowledge and competences are recognized in Estonia, reflecting the experiences of the organizations and TCNs themselves on Estonian diversity management practices, and shedding light on TCNs’ participation in voluntary organizations.

Since immigration to Estonia is very small nowadays, especially from third countries, Estonian authorities have paid no attention to TCN SKC recognition. There are also no legislative documents about Soviet time immigrants SKC recognition who now have either Russian passport or have no citizenship at all. The largest sector where some kind of TCN SKC recognition is starting to develop is health care. There is growing concern about TCN immigrants’ professional qualifications and because of increasing inflow of TCN doctors and other health care professionals, it is expected that during upcoming years authorities will start to regulate TCN SKC recognition more systematically.

In order to find out how diversity is managed in organizations, 10 organizations were interviewed. The group of profit-oriented organizations comprised of 2 IT-companies together with 1 large energy company and 1 manufacturing company (dealing with oil shale). The group of non-profit organizations covered by 2 international schools, offering elementary and basic level education with English language as instruction. Public organizations in the sample are 3 Estonian universities and 1 national theatre.

The reasons why organizations have recruited TCNs tend to vary case by case. In case of profit-oriented organizations there is a clear need for specialized skills and knowledge. The study showed how profit-oriented organizations take active measures in recruiting foreign people with competencies and skills hard to be found from the local employment market. For example, neighbouring to Russia with traditionally strong engineering curricula gives companies near the border of Russia an advantage in recruiting – since Estonia as a small country is unable to provide large array of highly specialized educational preparation, Russian pool of talents is a good input for Estonian labour



market. Also, for the graduates of technical institutes from Russia, Estonia can be seen as an entrance to EU employment market with attractive career prospects.

In case of public and non-profit organizations, although people find their way to Estonia also through open calls, the recruitment often tends to be through personal contacts. For example, TCNs working for the universities usually had some previous contact with some supervisor through seminars or conferences, who introduced (research) possibilities in Estonia. Same applies to non-profit organizations, where informal networks (church group, kids go to the same school, etc.) provide knowledge of possible openings.

In general, both the TCNs and organizations described their organization as open and friendly, which means that organizational culture is supportive and tolerate. In fact the main difficulties appear not in the working-life, but outside the working hours – language barriers during the everyday activities (starting from the Estonian street signs and food labels in the shops up to visiting a doctor or an immigration office, finding schooling or kindergarten for the children and work for a spouse; etc.). Here, organizations who have recruited TCNs, try to help as much as possible. In profit-oriented organization the mentoring during the settling in period is usually handled at the central level by the personnel's office, in public organizations (universities) it is delegated to the faculty or unit level, to the direct supervisors and colleagues; and since non-profit organizations are relatively small, the support is mostly given by the colleagues and the director. In addition, in organizations with more international employees, there tends to be collegial support and experience sharing by fellow employees.

Diversity management is a continuous and conscious activity in case of international organizations with branches in Estonia, but in majority of cases diversity has been achieved as a result of natural development of organizational working-life. It is the skills and competencies and not the nationalities, gender, age nor cultural background that gains the priority when recruiting an employee. Although organizations admit when Estonian labour market would have enough people with the qualifications needed, the local workforce would be easier to be recruited (with respect to temporal considerations, since in many cases it may take several months until the TCN finally arrives to Estonia). Often organizations cannot wait months to fill the opening, but need someone as soon as possible. Yet, when TCNs already are in EU or Estonia (for studies, previous work, etc.), also temporal differences disappear.

Organizations that have had longer experience with recruiting international people have also developed unique know-how of the support system needed. For example, in ICT companies the working language is often already English, in many cases also all



documents and communication flow are either in English or both in English and Estonian. Though such practices are a result of a longer development—the more international people have been recruited, the less difficulties regarding the language there seems to be. Then again, in case of universities as representing public organizations, although the language of science globally is English, universities are facing difficulties with the full involvement of international people into the everyday activities. These difficulties centre around the readiness of providing more English based courses and curricula, arranging events in English and not in Estonian, incorporating international people into the university governance, assuring that the central information flow in the university (e-mails, etc) are at least in both languages; etc. All in all, representatives of the universities admit how a lot has been done, and as universities are becoming more and more internationalized, there is room and a will for further development.

As non-profit organizations in the sample comprised of international schools, where English is the language of the education, their staff composition is highly international and the language barriers are less evident.

Impacts from the recruitment of TCNs are clearly expressed. New perspectives, openness and tolerance are just few keywords mentioned by the organizations and TCNs themselves. In many cases, diversity gained by the recruitment of TCNs has been also seen as a competitive advantage. Since the TCNs are often with different educational background and highly specialized skills they make up a valuable addition to the existing stock of employees. Looking from the side of the TCNs themselves, work in Estonia is often seen as a stepping-stone in ones' career progress. Since for the majority of the interviewed individuals Estonia was relatively unknown (in many cases totally unknown) country, and Estonians often described as rather closed and reserved people, it is the occupation related challenges (in few cases also the fact that a spouse is Estonian) that attract a person to apply for a job. The country has been described as having a well-developed infrastructure (the easiness of handling bureaucracy) at the governmental level, but also the freedom at work was highly appreciated—the opportunity to share ones ideas and the trust whilst giving challenging work tasks. All in all, as highly skilled and educated individuals in general tend to be more mobile, Estonia among talented TCNs is seen as a good place for gaining occupation-related opportunities, yet still in most cases it is merely a stepping-stone to the next place. Thus, metaphorically, Estonia seems to be a career catalyst country for highly-skilled TCNs.



The legislative environment for non-profit organizations is favourable but there are no special legislations or regulations that concern TCNs participation in or founding these organizations. Although TCN participation in NGOs is modest, it is not non-existent.



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