

## **Integration Monitoring 2011: Estrangement Among the Russian-speaking Population has Begun to Decrease**

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**The results of the monitoring of integration in the Estonian society in 2011, requested by the Ministry of Culture and carried out by Praxis Center for Policy Studies, TNS Emor and researchers of the University of Tartu, was presented today at the conference room of the Estonian Parliament. Monitoring included national relations and identity, labour market, values and political preferences, fields of participation and media consumption and adaption problems of new immigrants.**

One of the main conclusions of this monitoring is that the immigrants and their descendants cannot be considered as a homogenous group in the integration policy. The Russian-speaking population has divided into considerably antithetical groups. If the knowledge of Estonian language, holding Estonian citizenship, sense of homeland and self-identification as Estonian people are considered to be characteristic to integration, it can be concluded, that almost 1/3 (32%) of the non-Estonian population has integrated entirely or to a great extent and 13% of the non-Estonian population is entirely not integrated. Among non-Estonians in the age of 15-74, the proportion of strongly integrated persons increased almost 5% in comparison to 2008. At the same time, the number of non-integrated people also increased, indicating that the differences between various groups of the Russian-speaking population have risen.

Comparing the results of the 2008 and 2011 monitoring indicates, that estrangement among the Russian-speaking population characteristic to years 2007 and 2008 has started to decrease. Even if the attitude is not as positive as before the economic recession the overview shows many improved indicators compared to 2008. For instance, the wish to obtain Estonian citizenship has increased among people with undetermined citizenship. While in 2008, 51% of people with undetermined citizenship have noted their wish to obtain Estonian citizenship, the proportion has increased to 64%. The sense of homeland has grown among Estonian citizens of other nationalities – 76 % of them consider Estonia their only homeland. The attitude of Estonians towards the inclusion of other nationalities has become more positive. 66% of the Estonian-speaking respondents have agreed with the argument that the opinions of the Russian-speaking population should be better known and taken into consideration more than they have been so far, while they are a part of the Estonian society.

Therefore, the general attitude of the society is considerably favourable of moving constructively forward with integration politics. One of the authors of the research, Prof. Marju Lauristin, has highlighted that non-Estonians in Estonia cannot be considered a homogenous „Russian speaking population“ in the integration politics. According to Lauristin, the monitoring has made visible many target and interest groups` specificities that have not

been wholly considered in the integration process so far, and they have also been discarded in the public opinion. „On the one hand, the analysis has determined a target group of „Russian speaking patriots“ having a very strong citizen identity and high loyalty to the Republic of Estonia, but their Estonian language skills are not very high. On the other hand, the attention should be paid to a group of people who have mostly good Estonian language skills, but who are critical and distrusting towards Estonian politics and state institutions.“

The topic of youth has a central place in the given monitoring. Authors suggest supporting activities, which create closer contacts between Estonian and non-Estonian youth and encourage participation in Estonian public sphere, common activities, and activities of non-governmental organisations.

According to the Vice Chancellor of the Ministry of Culture, Anne-Ly Reimaa, the present and earlier integration monitoring have given a good overview of the developments in the Estonian society and of the attitudes and values. The information and analysis are an important offset for the new development programme in this domain. On the basis of this new research, a proposal is going to be made to the Government, in order to establish the new State integration programme for 2014–2020. “A leading group of the integration programme intends to include non-governmental organisations, local governments and other interest groups in the implementation of the programme in order to ensure the support for all target groups according to their needs”, said the Vice Chancellor Ms. Reimaa.

The economic recession has slightly increased ethnic differences in regard to unemployment as well as in the employment structure on the labour market. This has made the Russian labour market and the Russian citizenship more attractive among a group of Russian-speaking youth. The monitoring results show the need to pay more attention to the motivation of the non-Estonian youth to continue their education and find a way for self-assertion in Estonia.

Meanwhile, the preference for the Estonian higher education among the Russian-speaking population has increased. While in 2008, only 19% of the population with Russian as their mother tongue preferred Estonian for the higher education studies, the respective figure is now 26%.

Monitoring highlights that one third of the Russian-speaking population, who is strongly integrated into Estonian society, is active and has a strong citizen identity should be involved in the further development and realisation of integration policies. Integration can be

facilitated by State institutions as well as civil society, including non-governmental organisations, parties and labour market partners.

Development of the integration field is the main goal for many Estonian ministries. The main objective of the Ministry of Culture is to support activities of cultural societies of ethnic minorities, in order to develop an intercultural co-operation and to participate in the process of management and evaluation of the integration programme. The Ministry of Education and Research coordinates transition to education in the Estonian language and teaching Estonian in nursery schools, educational institutions and beyond, including continuing education. The Ministry of Social Affairs coordinates language training for the unemployed and is introducing activities related to the law about equal treatment. The main aim of the Ministry of Interior is to coordinate activities related to citizenship.

The monitoring of integration in the Estonian society and its summary are available on the web-page of the Estonian Ministry of Culture and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies.

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