

COUNTRY PROFILES

Estonia

Research into literature on Estonia's approaches to international cultural policy suggests that, like other smaller EU states, Estonia would be very favourable to more cultural cooperation with other European countries vis-à-vis the rest of the world – in particular if this would provide more visibility for Estonia across the globe.

Estonia's cultural policy is, currently and primarily, geared towards strengthening cultural relations with cultural operators in the Member States of the EU. Multilateral cooperation activities are actively sought, especially in the context of inter-regional cooperation with Northern and Baltic countries.

In 1998, the Estonian parliament adopted a declaration on "The Foundations of the Cultural Policy of the Republic of Estonia." It states that: "inter-state cooperational treaties and Estonian participation in the programmes of the European Union, the reality of which shall be guaranteed by financing from the budget, shall be the basis of the international cultural communication." Apart from this policy declaration, no specific strategy for international cultural cooperation seems to exist beyond the broad objectives Estonia pursues in its international cultural policy.

M i n i s t r y o f C u l t u r e

The main responsibility for international cultural cooperation lies with the Ministry of Culture – particularly with its Department for International Relations and European Integration, but the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Culture Office of the Department for Press and Information), and the Ministry of Education and Research also collaborate with the Ministry of Culture in some areas.

With regard to policy on international cultural cooperation, the Ministry of Culture recognises that: "culture is an essential part of Estonia's international image and [that] cultural diplomacy is becoming more and more important both in Europe and in the world at large."³

The Ministry aims to create opportunities for open international cultural cooperation by both establishing direct contacts and facilitating cooperation. With regard to the EU, it seeks to ensure that Estonian interests are taken into account in the decision-making process in areas of pan-European cultural cooperation, and that Estonia participates effectively in EU programs.

The Ministry of Culture coordinates the activities of all state-funded and subsidised institutions. It manages thirty-three bilateral and multilateral cultural cooperation agreements and twelve cultural cooperation programs. In general these agreements are developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but sometimes also with the Ministry of Education and Research. The Ministry furthermore cooperates closely with Estonian embassies and honorary consuls. Two cultural attachés are working in Berlin and Brussels.

The Ministry of Culture also supports the national cultural institute, i.e. the Estonian Institute, which has offices in Sweden, Finland, France and Hungary. Its task is to spread information about Estonian society, culture and education at home and abroad (which in turn promotes Estonian culture abroad), promote cultural communication between Estonia and third countries, and support the teaching of Estonian language and culture-related subjects in universities abroad. It collaborates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the publication and distribution of information about Estonia, and with the Ministry of Education and Research with regard to lecturing the Estonian language.

M i n i s t r y o f F o r e i g n a f f a i r s

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports cultural activities through the Culture Office. The parliamentary declaration on Estonia's cultural policy, cited above, furthermore states that in

order “to expand the general appreciation of culture, the possibilities of extra-governmental organisations, civilians, and persons in public law shall be enlarged.” This has perhaps contributed to the trend – as noticed by one observer – towards privatisation, decentralisation and the use of arm’s length bodies for cultural policy. At the same time, the observer continues, decision-making in cultural policy has remained relatively centralised within the Ministry of Culture⁴.

C u l t u r a l E n d o w m e n t

The most important Estonian arm’s length institution is the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, whose income consists of a fixed percentage of the national budget. It is the most important source of funding for culture after the Ministry of Culture. A “large part” of the Endowment’s budget is granted for transnational cooperation, international joint projects and initiatives, exchanges, training, studies and participation in international events⁵. To what extent the Gambling Tax Council and two private funds (the Estonian Cultural Foundation and the Estonian National Cultural Foundation) promote international cultural cooperation is not clear.

P o l i c y f o c u s

Estonian external cultural policy objectives are to promote Estonian culture abroad and to introduce international culture in Estonia.

G e o g r a p h i c a l f o c u s

Geographically speaking, Estonia focuses on the Baltic and northern countries, among which Finland occupies a special position, and the Member States of the EU in general. Estonian Institutes are housed in Sweden, Finland, France and Hungary.

With regard to regional cooperation forums, Estonia participates in the biannual Conference of the Ministers of the Baltic Sea Region, *Ars Baltica*, the Cultural Committee of the Baltic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Dimension policy.

Clear objectives with regard to relations with non-European countries are absent, which might be explained by the fact that Estonia’s foreign policy priorities lie within the EU. Therefore it is difficult to gauge to what extent Estonia supports an increase of European cultural cooperation with third countries.

H i g h l y r e c o m m e n d e d r e a d i n g

Ministry of Culture, (2004) Estonian cultural cooperation - International Relations,
E-Doc Link: <http://www.kul.ee/index.php?path=0x1022>

Estonian cultural cooperation in general has two aims – to introduce Estonian culture abroad, and to bring international cultural life to Estonia. Culture is an essential part of Estonia’s international image and cultural diplomacy is becoming more and more important both in Europe and in the world at large. The Ministry’s role at a national level is to create opportunities for open cultural international cooperation. The main principle of trans-national cultural relations is to establish direct contacts and to facilitate cooperation. Approximately 100 Estonian professional cultural organisations are members of pan-European and world networks.

Estonian Ministry of Culture, Ukrainian Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2005) Programme on Cultural Cooperation between the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Estonia and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Ukraine for the period of 2005-2008,

E-Doc Link: <http://www.kul.ee/index.php?path=0x1166&sona=Ukraine>

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Estonia and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Ukraine, hereinafter referred to as “the Parties”, in accordance with the Agreement between the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Estonia and the Ministry of Culture and Arts of Ukraine on Cultural Cooperation signed on 1 April 1996; desiring to develop cooperation in the sphere of culture and art; promoting common cultural rapprochement, development of creative potential, acquaintance with cultures of both states.

Listra, L., (2003) Foreign Cultural Policy in Europe. The Case of Estonia,
E-Doc Link: http://www.ifa.de/europa-akp/konferenz/download/eu_listra.pdf
Estonian contribution to the conference "Europe-a Union of Culture?" of the German Institut fuer Auslandbeziehungen, Berlin, October 2003. Includes abstract in English.

Ministry of Culture, (2005) The fundamentals of Estonian cultural policy,
E-Doc Link: <http://www.kul.ee/index.php?path=1158>
The cultural policy of Estonia is based on the task assigned to the state by the fundamental law – to guarantee the preservation of the Estonian nation and culture through the ages. The main aim of the cultural policy is to stand for the continuation of the Estonian national traditions, to support the continuation of cultural autonomy of national minorities and the vitality of professional as well as national culture in all spheres of culture.

Weidebaum, R., (2003) Foreign Cultural Policy in Europe. The Case of Estonia,
E-Doc Link: http://www.ifa.de/europa-akp/konferenz/download/eu_weidebaum.pdf
Estonian contribution to the conference "Europe-a Union of Culture?" of the German Institut fuer Auslandbeziehungen, Berlin, October 2003.

G e n e r a l / b a c k g r o u n d r e a d i n g

Council for Cultural Cooperation, M. Lagerspetz and R. Raud (1996) Cultural policy in Estonia: national report., Strasbourg, Council of Europe, Culture Committee., ISBN: CC-Cult(95)20A/B., Estonia
Includes: Estonian cultural policy and its impact 1988-1995 (M. Lagerspetz and R. Raud); "Report by a European panel of examiners".

EFAH, Interarts (2003) Study on cultural cooperation in Europe: Annex 1 - National reports – Estonia,
E-Doc Link: http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/sources_info/pdf-word/annex1national_reports3.pdf
Background to structures, competencies and institutes in the field of cultural cooperation.

Lagerspetz, Mikko, (2003) Chapter 2.4, International Cultural Cooperation, Estonia: Compendium of Cultural Policies,
E-Doc Link: www.culturalpolicies.net
Introduction to the main actors and principle institutions working in the field of international cultural cooperation in Estonia.

Government of Estonia, (2005) Official website of the Government of Republic of Estonia,
E-Doc Link: www.valitsus.ee
The Government of the Republic exercises executive power pursuant to the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Estonia. The Government lead by Prime Minister Andrus Ansip assumed office on 13 April 2005. The Government coalition consists of three political parties: Estonian Reform Party (Eesti Reformierakond), Estonian Centre Party (Eesti Keskerakond), and Estonian People's Union (Eestimaa Rahvaliid). This website provides information about the Ministries and institutions.

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