

**ESTONIAN RUSSIFICATION
OF NON-RUSSIAN ETHNIC MINORITIES IN ESTONIA?
A POLICY ANALYSIS**

Aleksandr Aidarov and Wolfgang Drechsler

Tallinn University of Technology

Abstract. Non-Russian ethnic minorities, who immigrated into Estonia between 1945 and 1990 together with Russians, have been assimilating into Russian culture in Estonia after Estonia's independence in 1991. We illustrate this and show why one can assume that this is not in the interest of Estonia, for both 'idealistic' and 'cynical' reasons. We then analyze the implementation of the six key policy instruments the Estonian Government uses to preserve ethnic peculiarities of non-Russian ethnic groups. Our findings imply a policy failure which has not yet been recognized. Finally, we suggest possible explanations for this failure.

Keywords: Russification, assimilation, non-Russians, ethnic minority policy, policy failure, neo-liberalism, project management

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1. Introduction

According to contemporary schools of policy analysis – from the classical American one (Dunn 2007) to Law & Economics (Drechsler and Raudla 2011:4–5) – policy measures intended to solve a problem may not actually do that or at least they have side-effects outweighing the positive impact of the measures. In the current essay, we address a phenomenon that is specific for Estonia but an interesting case study about how to deal with national or ethnic minorities in (Central and Eastern) Europe and beyond. We have termed this the 'Estonian Russification of non-Russian non-Western ethnic minorities', i.e. the phenomenon that policy instruments do not prevent the Russification of Russian-speaking ethnic minorities in Estonia who are seen as a part of the Russian cultural and linguistic sphere, but who not necessarily are. We refer to them as 'non-

Russians’.¹ Their Russification would be a specific form of assimilation – not into the dominating (i.e. Estonian) culture, but into the Russian ethnic minority.

Why would that be a policy failure? We argue that whether one employs the ‘idealist’ or the ‘cynical’ approach towards the relevant policies, this is a negative result for Estonia. In the ‘idealist’ case, the reason for ethnic-minority policy is to preserve and develop the language and culture of ethnic minorities. This is actually the official rationale – in addition to teaching Estonian as the cornerstone of integration of non-Estonians (Council of Europe 2010:9, The Government of the Republic of Estonia 2008:5, 20, 22). The ‘cynical’ case means that Estonia still strives for an ethnically homogeneous nation state, endangered by Russia from the outside and Estonian-Russians from the inside. To specify, in the first case Estonia’s interest would be to support as many functioning ethnic minorities as possible, rather than to homogenize them under a ‘Russian’ label; in the second, the interest would be to *divide et impera*, i.e. to keep the ethnic minorities as fragmented and small as at all possible in order to prevent the rise of a more homogeneous larger and threatening Estonian Russian community. Thus, if it were so that the Estonian governmental policy would Russify all or most ethnic minorities, then whatever the rationale for ethnic-minority policy, the outcome would qualify as a failure because the policy goal would not be achieved.

To see whether this is true, we analyze the implementation of the six key policy instruments which represent the biggest and best financed field of the Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-13 – the field of cultural and educational integration.² According to sub-goal No. 6, Estonia creates opportunities for ethnic minorities “to learn their mother tongue and culture, practice their culture, and preserve and present their ethno-linguistic identity” (Government of the Republic of Estonia 2008:22). Instruments are taken from the realm of the Ministry of Education and

¹ In 2011, 31% of the Estonian population was of non-Estonian ethnicity. While ‘Russians’ represent 25.5% of the total population, smaller ones like Ukrainians, Byelorussians and many others also live in Estonia. They represent 5.5% of the total population, i.e. within the total population of ethnic minorities, Russians represent 82% and others 18%, respectively. (Statistics Estonia 2011:56) As the Population Census 2000, the last one we have shows (Statistical Office), the more sizable part of the latter group or around 4.6% of the total population comes from the areas and/or cultures influenced by either Russian colonial history or Soviet Union membership or domination. To specify, the vast majority came into Estonia as economic migrants after World War II from various regions of the USSR (Katus et al. 2002:151–152), and, along with Russians, they represent the main target group of Estonian integration policy. ‘Western’ ethnic minorities like Italians or Dutch do not come from this background.

² Municipalities with a big proportion of ethnic minorities, e.g. Tallinn and Narva, offer project-based support to the ethnic minorities. However, municipalities play a secondary role in the integration process and have different resources, objectives and approaches to integration. So, their support to ethnic minorities is fragmented and rather additional to the government support (see Sepp 2008:285). This is why we exclude municipalities from the current analysis, although they should be included in a larger, more comprehensive one.

Research (MER), the Ministry of Culture (MC) and Estonian Public Broadcasting (EPB)³, three from education policy and three from cultural policy:

- 1) Optional language and culture classes in public secondary schools,
- 2) Hobby schools (this is the official English term),
- 3) Private schools,
- 4) Cultural societies,
- 5) National cultural autonomy and
- 6) Publicly financed media.

The implementation of these instruments is approached from the state and the ethnic minorities' perspectives, and available data on how the latter employ these measures is analyzed. Hence, the key question of this essay is, "Do the Estonian educational and cultural policy instruments regarding non-Russian ethnic minorities lead to their Russification in Estonia, and if yes, how?" Before we analyze policy instruments, we have to place them into the context of the Russification of ethnic minorities in Estonia, and of what the interest of the Estonian state is or should be.

2. Russification of non-Russian ethnic minorities in Estonia

In general, the term 'Russification' addresses the impact of the Russian Government's policy regarding the assimilation of ethnic minorities in times of the tsars, Soviet Russia and the Russian Federation. It is often used to demonstrate that Russification was a deliberate and planned policy (see only Hirsch 2000). However, critics argue that it is an ambiguous concept because Russification was not an official policy objective or because scholars of Tsarist and Soviet Russia did not have sufficient data to fully prove it. It is conceded that such a policy might have existed, but only unofficially or was poorly coordinated (Weeks 2004), and that it finally failed because many former 'Soviet nations' have built their own independent states (Jansen and Ruutsoo 1999).

In our context, however, we mean by Russification a *decidedly unintentional consequence of ethnic-minority policy by the Estonian Government*. It is a process of homogenization of the Russian-speaking ethnic minorities into the Russian cultural and linguistic sphere in Estonia since 1991. This phenomenon was neither discussed in politics – as the analysis of *Riigikogu* stenograms shows⁴ – nor

³ Until May 2009, the Office of the Minister for Population and Ethnic Affairs (OMPEA) implemented policies to support ethnic minorities together with MER and MC. The government headed by Prime Minister Andrus Ansip (Reform Party) closed OMPEA, which was headed by Minister Urve Palo (Social Democratic Party), after the Social Democrats left the Coalition. The tasks of OMPEA related to ethnic minorities and their integration were delegated mainly to the MC (Government Communication Unit 2009a, 2009b).

⁴ The *Riigikogu* database (<http://www.riigikogu.ee/?op=advsearch>) was used for the analysis. Combinations of key words like *Russification*, *ethnic minorities*, *national minorities*, *non-Russians*, *Ukrainians*, *Byelorussians*, *Tatars* and their combinations, e.g. *Russification of non-Russians* (in Estonian) were used to find records related to the discussion of the Russification of ethnic minorities in Estonia in the period of 1992–2012.

addressed in policy programs and reports,⁵ but Estonian linguists documented it well, as will be shown later. Only Marju Lauristin, the Estonian academic and Social Democratic stateswoman, probably the most respected researcher of ethnic relations in Estonia, stated in 2000 in a parliamentary debate about the assimilation of Russians that “the only assimilation in Estonia, and not only in Estonia, which has happened and is still happening, is the assimilation of non-Russians by the Russian minority” (2000).

However, the public debate about assimilation of ethnic minorities in Estonia is mostly about Estonian-Russians, partially because of the extreme importance Estonians attach to their language and culture as the primary indicator of national belonging (Järve 2005:68–71), partially as a result of Estonia regaining its independence and the historically unfriendly relations with Russia (Mälksoo 2003), and partially because ‘Russians’ may think of the Estonian nation state in terms of involuntary assimilation imposed by the state via integration (Vetik et al. 2008:178). So, the issue of the assimilation of smaller ethnic groups has always been and has remained a less politically and academically important issue (Verschik 2005:378–379).

The terms ‘Russians’, ‘Russian-speaking population’ and ‘Russian speakers’ are widely used in Estonian academia, policy and media to sum up most of the 142 different ethnicities and 109 languages spoken in Estonia as registered by the Population Census of 2000 (except of course the Estonians themselves and ‘Western’ minorities).⁶ Such a ‘macro-sociological’ approach reflects the linguistic situation. 109 languages are spoken in Estonia as a mother tongue, whereas 67% of the population speak Estonian and 30% Russian and only around 3% of the population speak the other 107 languages (Appendices 1 and 2, Statistical Office of Estonia 2001:14–16). In such a situation, identifying ethnic minorities as Russians is convenient. However, from a perspective of ethnic identity which we may term post-colonial, to call people who speak Russian Russians perpetuates the result of their Tsarist or Soviet colonization (Hirsch 2000:225, Livezeanu 1995).

In Soviet times, many non-Russians did not speak the language of the ethnic group they were affiliated with (anymore) (Statistical Office of Estonia 1995:106–111). There was a noticeable trend of ethnic assimilation by the end of the USSR (Anderson and Silver 1983, 1989:646). However, before and after 1991, there are *prima facie* individuals in Estonia who have affiliated themselves with non-Russian ethnic groups even if they do not speak the language of the ethnic affiliation or speak it as a second language, e.g. Russian-speaking Byelorussians etc. Urbanization and industrialization in Soviet times substantially enlarged inter-

⁵ This includes all policy documents and reports referred to in this essay that address ethnic minorities, e.g. Council of Europe (2010, 2004, 1999), Ernst and Young (2009), Government of the Republic of Estonia (2008), etc., and we assume that this list is more or less exhaustive.

⁶ The majority of Estonian Germans settled in Estonia after returning from deportation to Siberia and Central Asia, e.g. Kazakhstan, in the 1960s. 1,816 Germans lived in Estonia in 2000 and only 300 in 1945 (Sieben 1999:429, Statistical Office of Estonia 2001:64).

ethnic contacts (see Botev 2002:693, 698, Fisher 1977:408), and thus, many non-Russians in Estonia live with Russians, not only in the same settlements, e.g. Tallinn and Narva, but also in ethnically mixed families (Hallik 2010:12). This explains to some extent why Russian has remained the *lingua franca* among ethnic minorities even after Estonia regained independence in 1991.

Next, regarding the influence of religion on ethnic identity, it should be noted first that Estonia has one of the most secularized societies and some of the most liberal religious policies in the world (Ringvee 2008:181). In 2000, 31.8% of the population affiliated with a certain religion (14.8% Lutherans, 13.9% Orthodox and 3% others faiths) (Statistics Estonia 2001:29–30). The majority of non-Russian ethnic groups belong to the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), e.g. 86% of the Ukrainians, 83% of the Byelorussians and 60% of other smaller ethnic groups. Some very few Ukrainians belong to the Ukrainian Uniate Church (11 persons officially registered), and Armenians have their own churches in Tallinn with services conducted in their own native language. Tatars and Azeri as the biggest non-Christian groups represent 1,387 Muslims who have one common congregation in Tallinn (Statistics Estonia). Russians and non-Russians are more religious than Estonians because “religion and national identity becomes important for people who live outside their historical homeland” (Statistical Office of Estonia 2001:31). If this is correct, then the ROC may rather sustain Russian ethnic identity among Ukrainians, Byelorussians and other smaller ethnic groups belonging to the ROC, e.g. Chuvashs, Maris etc. Uniate Ukrainians, Armenians and Muslims seem to have a more resistant position to Russification via religion, as their ecclesiastic structures and worship are not based on the Russian language and culture. In both cases, however, religious affiliation (especially among Soviet generations who grew up in secular society) does not mean that people with a certain religious affiliation *per se* perform religious activities. Rather, they may have sentiments without practice. ‘Active’ believers, whose number is obviously smaller than the officially registered one, may develop an ethno-religious identity depending on the ‘religion’ of their families and parents, but the ROC as the dominating one seems to have the most influence in our case.

Finally, concerning the future of non-Russian ethnic minorities in Estonia, Estonian linguists have made some pessimistic prognoses. Rannut (2008:429) estimates that “only 40% of members of ethnic minority groups have maintained their language of ethnic affiliation, others shifted to Russian during the Soviet times.” Then, non-Russians themselves do not think that their languages and cultures will exist in Estonia in the near future because they have low ethnic identity and do not speak the language of ethnic identification with children (Džaparidze and Kolga 1999, Viktorov 1999). So, languages are lost already in the third Estonian-born generation (Küün 2010:149–150, Rannut 2008:403) and the children, as Küün (2008:189, 200–201) finds, develop a new ‘Estonian Russian’ identity (see also Fein 2005).

In sum, similar to the Soviet period, the vast majority of ethnic minorities has continued to assimilate into the Russian culture and language in Estonia since

1991. The older, ‘Soviet’ generation of non-Russian ethnic minorities often has a non-Russian ethnic identity but does not necessarily speak the ethnic language as a result of their assimilation in Soviet times. Their children or the Estonia-born generations do not speak the language of their own non-Russian speaking parents and grandparents even if those do speak non-Russian, and tend to develop a Russian ethnic identity. Therefore, Russification seems to be an appropriate term to denote the homogenization and assimilation of ethnic minorities into the Russian cultural and linguistic sphere in Estonia.

3. Why should the Republic of Estonia support non-Russian ethnic identities and cultures?

So, if non-Russian Russian-speaking minorities tend to Russify in Estonia as we speak, one would assume that ethnic-minority policy is designed and implemented in order to counteract this trend. Before we look at the policy instruments that could do so, let us first deal with the argument of why this should be so, i.e. with both the ‘idealist’ and the ‘cynical’ perspectives, which represent the Estonian nation state in terms of ‘good’ liberal and ‘bad’ ethnic nationalism (Ruutsoo 2000).

3.1. The idealist perspective

The idealist perspective, which has recently been enriched by the multiculturalism discourse, is well known. It represents the official liberal-democratic explanation of the Estonian nation state’s building-process and the justification of state support for ethnic minorities.⁷ Estonia’s ability to influence Russian minority politics is beyond the scope of this essay, but the international aspect helps to draw attention to another important interpretation. According to this, resistance to Russification is not a ‘personal problem’ of Estonians with Russians. It is a

⁷ Various forms of liberalism exist that lie between extreme individualism (hostile to collective associations including the state as limiting personal autonomy, self-determination, responsibility, freedom, etc.) and communitarianism (collective associations including state to help the individual to realize his or her autonomy, self-determination, responsibility, etc.). (Schwartzmantel 2008:55) In line with the general practice of Estonian liberalism, one may see both individualist and communitarian features of liberal thinking here. The former exists in politics. For example, Estonia does not prioritize any particular ethnicity and grants equal rights to everyone who wants to preserve their own ethnicity in Estonia. (*Constitution* §12, Government of the Republic of Estonia 2008), and Estonia protects the political and social rights of individuals regardless of their ethnicity and prevents their ethnic discrimination as the Council of Europe demands (2004, 2010). At the same time, the communitarian form of liberalism is directly related to the policy-making and implementation. The Government uses policy instruments to allocate budget money, not to single individuals but to ethnic minorities explicitly via their representative organizations in order to preserve and develop their languages and cultures. These minority organizations fall under the definition of non-Russians. This does not mean that other, e.g. Western ethnic minorities are excluded from the support. So, the universal approach to ethnicity exists in politics and the ethnicity-specific one in policy simultaneously.

‘global’ issue that Estonia as a state socializing into the ‘democratic West’ and the EU (Noreen and Sjöstedt 2004, Ruutsoo 2000) wants to address. Hence, Estonians resist Russification not because they are afraid of Russians but because they genuinely support others to build their own states, in the name of democracy and national self-determination. But again, to then promote one’s own non-Russian ethnic groups would only make sense on any level.

3.2. *The cynical perspective*

The cynical perspective is related to the discourse regarding Estonian-Russians within the Estonian nation state. In spite of the socioeconomic and political fragmentation of Estonian-Russians, they are still perceived as a nationalistic and homogeneous community. Estonians are afraid of their own Russification, which they experienced in Tsarist and Soviet Russia (Nørgaard et al. 1999), and this is still considered possible to recur.⁸ Until today, Estonians tend to think about the loss of ethnic homogeneity in Estonia, which existed in ‘the First Period of Independence’ (1918–1940), as the origin of interethnic tension (Lauristin 2008a: 46). The rise of a homogeneous and powerful Estonian-Russian community is conceived as possible. The question how to protect Estonians from Russification still seems urgent. Estonians by and large still consider Russians to be a politically homogeneous community (which is not true; Smith and Wilson 1997:861, Vihalemm and Kalmus 2008:923) because it represents the not-always-friendly-to-Estonia Russia (Mertelsmann 2005: 43, Petersoo 2007:124–129, Ciziunas 2008, Schulze 2010).

Based on this fear, the attempt to ‘*divide and govern*’ the monolithic post-Soviet Russian-speaking population into smaller ethnic communities could be a solution to the problem. It would prevent the rise of a homogeneous power confronting the Estonian state and its homogenizing, ethnic thrust. It should be stressed that the comparatively low number of non-Russians makes one doubt their ‘physical’ ability to fragment the Russian-speaking population into distinctive ethnic communities and become an alternative to Estonian-Russians in politics. However, as regards the discourse, both at home and abroad, non-Estonian opposition against demands of Estonian-Russians may be powerful. Non-Russian leaders may easily prefer cooperating with the Estonian state rather than be in the opposition with nationalist Estonian-Russians, not only because of the experience of assimilation during Soviet times but because of the growth of anti-Russian sentiments nowadays (see Allison 2008, Giuliano 2011). While this is open to debate, the fact is that already today, the symbolic stress on ethnic peculiarities as such, regardless of quantity, seems to play a positive role for Estonia in the discussion about ‘friends and enemies’ of the Estonian nation state, i.e. ‘good’ cultural leaders who support Estonia and ‘bad’ ones who may do ‘Russia’s work’. Such more or less symbolic fragmentation would also help to

⁸ The ethnic-minority proportion in 1934 was 12% as compared to 31% in 2007. (The Government of the Republic of Estonia 2008:5)

denote Estonia as truly multicultural, rather than a bicultural ‘Estonian-Russian’ society. And internationally, vis-à-vis the EU or, in the field of culture, the even more important Council of Europe or OSCE (Benedikter 2008:108–109), one could show that one is generally in favor of ethnic minorities, just excepting the Russians.

In sum, approaching the support of ethnic minorities as the objective of the Estonian Government by means of ‘idealistic’ and ‘cynical’ perspectives shows that it may have different rationales, but all of them share one common normative understanding – it is good for the state and government to support non-Russians in Estonia. Thus, it is possible to assume that the current government policy does not intend to Russify ethnic minorities. To the contrary, it strengthens their cultures, languages and identities. Let us see whether this is the case empirically.

4. Estonian cultural and educational policy and the prevention of Russification of ethnic minorities

The Estonian Integration Strategy 2008–2013 encompasses three areas: cultural-educational, socio-political and legal. The cultural-educational field is the biggest and best-financed one. According to sub-goal No. 6, state support is aimed at preserving and developing ethnic minorities’ cultures and languages. Therefore, we will now concentrate on the six key policy instruments in this field: 1) optional language and culture classes in public secondary schools, 2) hobby schools, 3) private schools, 4) cultural societies, 5) national cultural autonomy, and 6) publicly financed media. Our main interest is the implementation of these instruments from the government and ethnic minorities’ perspective with an emphasis on how minorities use these instruments for themselves.

4.1. Non-Russians and education policy: optional classes, hobby schools and private schools

Public schools in Estonia have either Estonian or Russian as their language of instruction (Kirss 2010:9). So, non-Russians have to concede that their children will attain education in one of these languages. In order to resist Russification (and Estonization) within public education, non-Russians may establish their own 1) optional language and culture classes in secondary schools, 2) hobby schools and 3) private schools. The descriptive statistics used below was received by the MER from the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS, www.ehis.ee). The accuracy of information should be treated with caution as it solely relies on the schools’ reports.

The organization of **optional language and culture classes in public secondary schools** is financed from the state budget via MER. According to the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act § 21 (5) the secondary school should organize the teaching of a language and culture to students who speak a language (either as their mother tongue or a second language spoken at home)

which differs from the language of instruction. See also Government of the Republic of Estonia 2003). Second, according to the Hobby Schools Act (HSA) § 3, “a hobby school is an educational institution in the area of youth work that provides hobby education and versatile development of personality, including the practice of native language and culture.” HSA regulates the work and establishment of all hobby schools, including ethnic ones. If registered in EHIS, hobby schools of ethnic minorities may apply annually for project-based support from MER and the Integration and Migration Foundation Our People (IMFOP). MER allocates basic financing (*baasfinantseerimine*) that covers such expenses as rent, teaching materials and salaries. IMFOP finances education for hobby-school teachers in their countries of ethnic origin. Third, the Private School Act § 15 stipulates that **private schools** specify the language of instruction in the statute. So, non-Russians may establish their own schools with the language they speak or want to speak as the language of instruction. In sum, non-Russians do have state-financed instruments that may be helpful to resist Russification. But how are these instruments utilized?

First, data on **students’ mother tongues in public schools** was not collected in Estonia until 2003. In 2003, the number of children who might represent non-Russian ethnic groups in public schools was relatively small, and these children studied in different schools (Appendix 3). Hence, only three schools had a sufficient number of students (Ukrainians, Latvians and Germans) to organize such classes. The period of 2005–2010 shows a similar situation (Appendix 4). According to the information available, which is not systematically collected, optional classes are not widespread (Käosaar 2011a, Legal Information Centre for Human Rights 2009:2). If opened, they do not work consistently. The only exception of a sustainable arrangement is the Ukrainian class at the Kannuka School in Sillamäe (see Appendix 5). Second, the total of registered **hobby schools**, their students and financial support has grown during the last decade.⁹ So, nine hobby schools were open in 1999, around 10 in 2002, approximately 30 hobby schools were in operation in 2004 and 32 in 2010 (Council of Europe 1999:57, Council of Europe 2004:57). It should be noted that the number of ‘fully operating’ hobby schools may be smaller than officially registered. Consider, for example, that only 17 out of the 32 registered hobby schools had students and received financial support in 2010–2011 (13 and 12 hobby schools in 2008–2009 and 2009–2010 respectively). The number of students varies across hobby schools from 6 to 40 children per school as registered in 2011. Additionally, the total number of students in non-Russian hobby schools grew from 131 to 340 in 2008–2011. Such a rapid growth has not been researched and deserves attention because in many cases, it was remarkably large, e.g. the Kabardian hobby school had 2 students in 2008 and 27 in 2011 (in 2000, 14 Kabardians lived in Estonia), and the Narva Uzbek Sunday School had 7 and 26 students, respectively. Still, the total of students in non-Russian schools in 2011 was very small – around

⁹ MER allocated to Hobby schools € 29,028 in 2008, € 71,090 in 2009 and € 92,244 in 2010. (Käosaar 2011b)

0.5% of the whole non-Russian population in Estonia (Käosaar 2011b). Finally, in 1998–2009, Estonian, Russian, Finnish and English were the languages of instruction in **private schools** (Council of Europe 1999:51, Council of Europe 2004:62, Council of Europe 2010:43). EHIS does not contain information about any private schools with non-Russian languages of instruction in its database. So, it appears that none of the non-Russian ethnic groups have established their own private schools since 1991.

The situation of the hobby schools and optional classes has sparked a debate about the effectiveness of these instruments. From the government perspective, optional classes are not popular because parents have no incentive to establish or sustain them; the number of students is not sufficient to open such classes; and students do not study compactly in one or several schools (see Council of Europe 1999:57, Council of Europe 2002:13, Council of Europe 2004:56). According to the ethnic minorities, hobby schools cannot fully function because they are under-financed; they receive project-based support, which undermines financial stability and multi-year activities; and work only thanks to volunteers (Council of Europe 2005:8, 30–31, Poleštšuk 2007:9, 15, 27). Besides that, HSA does not take into consideration the specifics of hobby schools opened by ethnic minorities, e.g. if hobby schools in Estonia generally offer to children recreational opportunities, then ethnic minorities establish hobby schools in order to teach and learn their own languages and cultures (Krimpe et al. 2002:17–18). Nevertheless, some commentators disagree that this law has deficiencies and think that the work of hobby schools depends on ethnic communities first and foremost.

For example, Müüripeal (2006:20) argues that HSA can respond to the needs of ethnic minorities only if people unite into a strong lobby group. And former president of the UEN Jaak Prozes (2001:1) argues that hobby schools should not be understood only in terms of insufficient state support “because the work of hobby schools depends on the activeness of the ethnic group, the strength of the ethnic identity, the number of families and intelligentsia speaking the ethnic language, the density of connections with the home country.” Regarding private schools, the content analysis of stenographic records of the Parliament sessions shows that private schools of non-Russian ethnic minorities have apparently never even been discussed.¹⁰ Rather, private schools for ethnic minorities were addressed as a too expensive alternative to public schools (Issakov 1996). Russians and the Russian-speaking population are less wealthy and have a higher risk of poverty and unemployment than Estonians (Lindemann and Vöörmann 2010). This observation can probably be transferred, perhaps even *a fortiori*, to the non-Russians. Namely, if the cost of private education is an important factor, then it may explain why non-Russian ethnic minorities have not opened any private

¹⁰ The Riigikogu database (<http://www.riigikogu.ee/?op=advsearch>) was used for the analysis. Combinations of key words like *ethnic minorities*, *national minorities*, *private school* and *private education* were used to find records related to private schools and ethnic minorities in the period of 1992–2012. Five documents were found. None of them contain information about non-Russian ethnic groups and private schools.

school in Estonia. Public schools are available for free, and it is too expensive for small non-Russian ethnic groups to open and run their own private schools.

To sum up, the quantitative data on optional classes, hobby schools and private schools show low activity in the usage of these instruments, and the qualitative data show the debate about who is responsible for this. From the government perspective, the preservation of language and culture by means of given instruments fully depends on ethnic minorities. According to the ethnic minorities' point of view, instruments are *prima facie* deficient, i.e. undermine the ability of ethnic minorities to preserve their own language and culture. Both perspectives allow making pessimistic rather than optimistic prognoses about the future of non-Russian languages and cultures in Estonia.

4.2. Cultural policy: cultural societies, national cultural autonomy and publicly financed media

Cultural policy offers financial support to cultural societies, national cultural autonomy (NCA) and publicly financed media. Support is allocated via MC and its agency, the Integration and Migration Foundation Our People (IMFOP).

First, the Non-profit Association Act regulates the establishment and work of **cultural societies**. The number of members in 236 NGOs registered as ethnic cultural societies whose majority represents non-Russians (see www.etnoweb.ee)¹¹ is not systematically collected. As an exception, OMPEA and IMFOP demanded of the applicants for basic funding from IMFOP to submit a declaration of the total number of members in 2008 (Appendix 6). The accuracy of data received has never been controlled and should be treated with caution. For example, applicants might declare more members to demonstrate a bigger size of their organization.¹² Thus, the actual number of members is probably much smaller, which accords to macro-sociological surveys showing low participation of Russians and Russian-speakers in NGOs (2% as compared to 12% among Estonians) (see Lauristin 2008b:160).

Second, **national cultural autonomy** (NCA) is regulated by the Law on Cultural Autonomy for National Minorities (LCANM) (on NCA in Estonia, see generally Aidarov with Drechsler 2011). According to LCANM, cultural autonomy may be established by persons with Estonian citizenship belonging to German, Russian, Swedish and Jewish minorities and persons belonging to minorities with a membership of more than 3,000. So, Ukrainians, Byelorussians and potentially Tatars might establish their own NCA, the way that Finns and Swedes did in 2004 and 2007 respectively.

¹¹ 29% represent Estonian Russians, 62% non-Russians and 9% Western ethnic groups.

¹² According to Appendix 6, 106 out of 495 Chuvashs (as registered in 2000) belong to cultural societies, which formally implies a level of sociocultural activity. Nevertheless, interviews with two leaders of Chuvash societies from Narva and Tallinn show a different situation. Around 7–9 Chuvashs in Tallinn and 10–12 in Narva participate in the work of societies on a weekly basis. More Chuvashs visit societies mainly during festivals but do not contribute to the work of societies substantially (Aidarov 2011a, 2011b).

It should be noted that the declarative nature of LCANM has already been diagnosed in scholarship (Aidarov with Drechsler 2011, Osipov 2004, Smith 2000) and in Estonian integration policy (Council of Europe 2010:7). For example, the law does not specify the juridical status of NCA, the rights and duties of representative organs of NCA, the delegation of rights and duties to a national minority, methods of allocation of resources, etc. Moreover, the three failed attempts that Russians have made since 2006 to establish their own NCA show that the ethnic community as such can be socially and culturally passive, and lack common leaders and cooperation among individuals of the same ethnicity (see Aidarov with Drechsler 2011:53–55). Interviews with the key community leaders of the two concerned minorities, Vira Konõk (Congress of Estonian Ukrainians) and Nina Savinova (Association of Byelorussians in Estonia), who have been in their positions already since the early 1990s, confirm this phenomenon once again (Aidarov 2012a, 2012b).

Third, **publicly financed media** is regulated by the National Broadcasting Act. Estonian National Broadcasting broadcasts television (channel ETV2) and radio programs (Raadio 4) in Russian. Additionally, Raadio 4 offers broadcasting opportunities for non-Russians in their own mother tongue (Council of Europe 2010:33–37). So in 2012, seven ethnic minorities have their own programs in Estonia. Programs are financed annually via projects. Depending on the ethnic group, programs last around 25–40 minutes, either once a week or once a month. Byelorussians, Tatars and Ukrainians broadcast in their own native language, Chuvashs in Russian, Armenians and Azeris do this partly in Russian and partly in their own language (see Appendix 7). The Chief Editor of Raadio 4, Mary Velmet (2011), states that “by the end of each broadcasting period, it is difficult to predict who will continue broadcasting in the next year” because “broadcasting depends on the potential and interest of the ethnic group” (Reimaa 2011).

Similarly to education policy, cultural policy instruments have also been debated. From the government side, Estonia has established good instruments to preserve ethnic minorities’ languages and cultures, and their usage depends on the ability of ethnic minorities (Ernst and Young 2009:7–8). This ability is considered to be low, however, and the arguments include:

1. Cultural societies cannot include new and younger members to ensure their own work because a majority of ethnic minorities and their Estonia-born children are not interested in ethnic culture and language.
2. Leadership of cultural societies has weakened because ‘leaders are tired’ (Ernst and Young 2009:75), i.e. leaders may not contribute to the work of cultural societies as actively as they did it in the 1990s.
3. Cultural societies are not able to write good projects and reports, and this weakens their financial stability.¹³ (Praxis et al. 2010:16).

¹³ Trainings in management for cultural societies and project-writing skills are regularly organized, e.g. IMFOP explain to the applicants the rules of basic financing and accounting (IMFO 2007, IMFO 2008). Enterprise Estonia (EAS) offers free consultations about NGO legislation, taxation, project management etc. (see www.eas.ee)

4. Leaders of the same ethnic groups lack consensus because of ideological disagreements and hence do not cooperate with each other sufficiently (Sepp 2009:6).
5. Cultural societies do not work well, the output of many cultural societies is low, and fictive organizations misuse the status of cultural society to attain resources from the state without contributing to culture (see also Kõlvart 2004:12, Ministry of Culture 2008a:3, Ministry of Culture 2008b:2, Sepp 2009:6).

Regarding the ethnic minorities' view, the system of financial support based on project-writing has been of concern most of all. In 2007–2009, basic funding by IMFOP was criticized for a too bureaucratic procedure of application; delays in money transfer; support to nonfunctioning (fictive) organizations, and too short a period of support (one year) that excludes multi-year activities (Ernst and Young 2009:69, Ministry of Culture 2008b:3, Savisaar 2008, Praxis et al. 2010:16).¹⁴ Earlier, the centralization of financial support was discussed as the alternative to the decentralized system (Krimpe et al. 2002:37). Up to today, however, support is decentralized among ministries, agencies and municipalities.

In fact the problems non-Russians have with financial support are not necessarily unique because the state support to the Estonian NGO sector as such has various deficiencies (Praxis 2008b). The Ministry of the Interior (2009) wants to improve the system of financial support, but this may not be an important issue in politics. For example, in the last Parliament elections of 2011, Estonian political parties claimed the need to enlarge support to cultural societies of ethnic minorities, but paid little attention on how to actually improve it (Hinsberg et al. 2011:1, 6). The need for improvement was already voiced in the previous decade, when the idea of the law on ethnic minorities was introduced to regulate financial relations between cultural societies of ethnic minorities and the Government (The Cultural Affairs Committee of the Riigikogu 2004, Council of Europe 2005:9). The state considers such a law unnecessary, though (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance 2010:16).

All in all, relatively small groups of non-Russians work in cultural societies. The implementation of cultural policy instruments has opened up the debate about who is responsible for the continuity of cultural particularities, and how this should be implemented. On the one hand, the low socio-cultural activity of minorities is acknowledged. According to this interpretation, the state instruments cannot be successful because the ethnic minorities themselves are not able to utilize them. On the other hand, from the ethnic minorities' perspective, financial support based on project management is deficient. Both arguments imply something of a dead end of the development of non-Russians' cultures and languages already today and in the near future as well, just as in the education sector.

¹⁴ Reacting to the proposals by ethnic minorities organizations, OMPEA altered the basic funding system in IMFOP (Council of Europe 2010:19). The result is not clear, though.

4.3. *Implementation of educational and cultural policy instruments as a policy failure*

Summarizing the previous sub-chapter, we can say that the six key policy instruments function according to the ‘logic of project management’. Surely without intent this cannot prevent the Russification of non-Russian ethnic minorities that Estonia ‘inherited’ from Soviet times. However, if we have identified the prevention of Russification of ethnic minorities as a key policy goal, and if there are policy instruments which either do not work at all or at least in the way that they are implemented, then *by definitionem what we have here is a policy failure* (see Birkland 2005:191).

The government can criticize the minorities for failing to exploit the instruments for various reasons – lack of leaders, lack of interest, general trends and legacy of Soviet times etc. However, the policy instruments have to successfully address the achievement of the goals. If they do not do so, then they either need to be improved or new ones devised in order to reach or at least get closer to the goals. If the community is passive, how to make it more active? If younger people are not interested in ethnic cultural activities, how to make them more interested? By definition of a policy problem, if the policy tools do not work, then this is precisely not ‘the minorities’ own fault’. The goal of the Estonian Government, either for ‘idealistic’ or for ‘cynical’ reasons, is to foster not simply the preservation of what has been left but the development of non-Russians ethnic minorities’ cultures and languages in Estonia. Hence, the task of the government would be to improve the existing policy or create new ones in such a way that this goal is achieved to a meaningful degree.

Otherwise, there is a risk of continuing to implement performative policy. Today the very success of the support of ethnic minorities seems to be measured and understood solely in terms of the amount of money allocated to cultural societies of ethnic minorities and the number of projects they implement. In the end, however, these criteria do not address how effectively ethnic minorities are able to prevent their own Russification in Estonia thanks to state support.

5. **Why this policy failure? Two hypotheses for further research**

If one agrees with our findings, then the question is why project management is the only way ethnic minorities are supported in Estonia, regardless of the deficiencies, of which the government is informed, and of the performative nature of a policy based on the six policy instruments investigated. This is one of the key questions for policy analysis that goes beyond the scope of the current paper. Nevertheless, we will suggest here two possible explanations that could serve, together or separately, as hypotheses for further research to investigate the outcome, i.e. why in spite of the implementation of policy aimed at preserving and developing ethnic minorities, Russification still happens.

5.1. Framework vs. instruments

If we look at both the governmental arguments in favor of the six policy instruments and at the governmental critique of ethnic minorities, it clearly emerges that ethnic minorities should: have full agency; be sustainable and autonomous; already be fully organized and highly motivated; be able to complement governmental initiatives with private ones; and (perhaps the strongest giveaway) be able to get funding based on competitive project applications for short-term projects in order to sustain long-term development.

The ideas behind this approach can best be described as a neo-liberal ideology, which assumes an already autonomous individual, able at all times to rationally choose between existing options in a profit-maximizing way (Engartner 2012, Schwarzmantel 2008:49–50, 59). In public administration, this ideology became manifest in the paradigm of the New Public Management (NPM). During the last two decades, NPM has been a carryover of (simplified) economic ideas and (older) management concepts into the public sector and civil society; it strongly privileges competitive project-writing, ‘grass-roots’ initiative, private-public partnerships, agencification, etc. as a means of public policy (Drechsler 2005, with further references). The Republic of Estonia and its political and administrative elite have, certainly in theory if not always in practice, always been very strong protagonists of NPM, and it has often been argued that since its founding neo-liberalism has been the generally prevailing ideology of the Republic of Estonia not only in politics (Feldman 2005, Frane et al. 2009) or public policy (Sarapuu 2011) but also in the NGO sector (Kala 2008). These attitudes, if one will, can be called constitutive for Estonia, as obsolete as NPM may generally be – and it has partially come back globally because of the economic crisis (see Drechsler 2011).

From the perspective of classical development economics (cf. Nurkse 1952: 264–265), the Estonian Government demands of the minorities to behave in such a way that it would be possible to support them much less than is necessary. Hence, the first hypothesis would be that the six policy instruments fail to prevent Russification because of the ‘ideological-managerial’ framework (see Peters 2002: 563) used to design policy instruments. To specify, neo-liberal ideology and NPM dominate the discourse on how the government should support ethnic minorities by continuous self-reference to the latter’s own values. These underlying assumptions exclude alternatives based, for example, on the socio-cultural situation of ethnic minorities as the starting point to improve or develop new policy instruments.

5.2. The culture of project-based support

In the discussion on the preliminary results of this study and the previous hypothesis with colleagues and former and current Estonian senior civil servants (March/April 2012), it was assumed that the lack of alternatives to project-based support might be related not to ‘ideology’ but to ‘culture’.

It was speculated that the validity of such an explanation might be two-fold. First, it may be rooted in the fact that from the beginning of the Estonian independence in 1991, and now again during the crisis – and also in between under conditions of sometimes abrupt, heavy budget cuts and alterations (Raudla and Kattel 2011) –, there was a great reluctance in the Estonian Government to commit any financial resources for longer than one year, because it was indeed not clear whether there would be any. Second, likewise since 1991, Estonia's policies have been strongly supported by international, bilateral and by now mostly European sources, lately especially by the Structural Funds (see European Union Structural Assistance to Estonia). This kind of support is always given as project assistance rather than as general budget support (Jain 2007, Tatar 2010:205). Its specifics are conceptualized under the term 'conditionality', i.e. the donors establish the rules recipients are obliged to fulfill in order to receive support and ensure that the support is used effectively. MER and MC including IMFOP have been receiving vital support from EU structural funds (see MC, MER, IMFOP).

We can therefore hypothesize that the reason for not considering alternatives to project-based support to the ethnic minorities in Estonia in spite of the policy failure may have been, instead of or in addition to ideological reasons, a strong and entrenched culture of project-based support that stems a) from the continuous experience of financial uncertainty and/or b) from the respective institutions and people being shaped by being recipients themselves in a completely project-based matrix. In order to test this hypothesis, one could, for instance, investigate by studying, first, to what extent the ministries have adopted the rules of, for instance, the EU Structural Funds and copied them into their own organizational structures; second, how these rules are related to the six policy instruments financed from the state budget as analyzed *supra*.

6. Conclusion and outlook

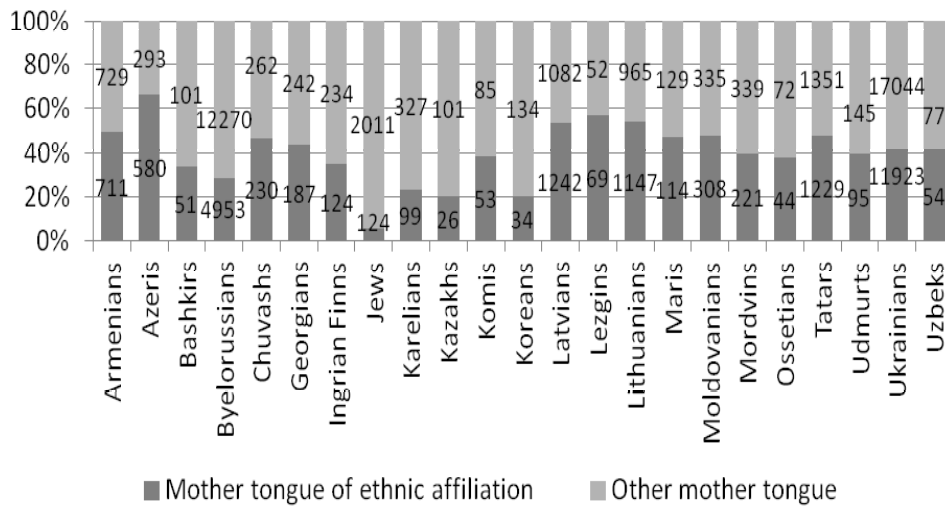
This essay has shown that non-Russian ethnic minorities, which immigrated into Estonia during Soviet times, have been assimilating into Russian culture in Estonia since 1991 but that this is in fact not in the interest of Estonia, for both, as we called them, 'idealistic' and 'cynical' reasons. Looking at the policy of the Estonian Government regarding the six key policy instruments used to preserve ethnic groups, we see that the effect is at best weak and that, indeed, this very much looks like policy failure. Hence, we may conclude that *the on-going Russification of non-Russian ethnic minorities in Estonia is real, and that the Estonian Government, although it is in their interest to do so from whichever (Estonian) perspective one may take, does not effectively act against this process*. The practice of support can be characterized as performative because the real goal that is achieved and measured is the allocation of budget money to ethnic minorities. The effectiveness of organization of this support based on 'the logic of project management' is not measured against the ability of minorities to preserve

their own languages and cultures in Estonia, which after all is the main policy goal.

If one agrees with the observation, then the next research agenda would be to test two hypotheses to investigate the origin of this policy failure: neoliberalism and NPM on the one side, and the culture of project management as the main method of support for ethnic minorities on the other. Additional further research that would be interesting in this context would be comparative, i.e. how this issue, both as regards minority support and policy conflicts, looks in formerly Soviet-dominated countries with the same phenomenon – from Latvia to Kazakhstan, say – or even in countries which have similar problems but not with a dominating Russian minority.

APPENDIX 1

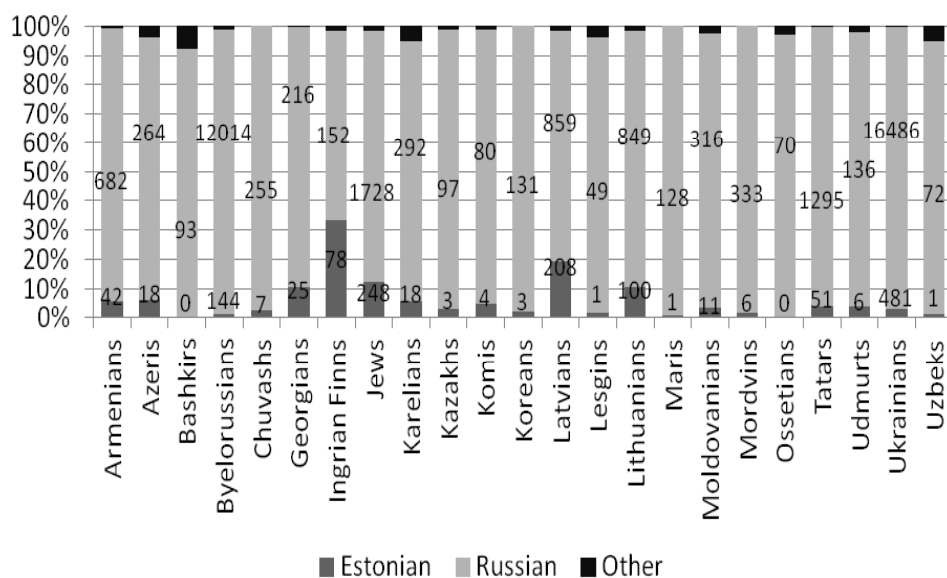
Figure 1. Total and Percentage of Ethnic Minorities in Estonia by their Mother Tongue in 2000



Source: Statistics Estonia.

APPENDIX 2

Figure 2. Total and percentage of ethnic minorities in Estonia who do not speak the language of ethnic affiliation by mother tongue in 2000



Source: Statistics Estonia.

APPENDIX 3

Table 1. Total of students with native language different from the language of instruction in public secondary schools, 2003

Language spoken at home	Language of instruction in school		Total of ethnic group in 2000*
	Estonian	Russian	
Armenian	12	26	1,444
Azeri	13	35	880
Finnish	8	0	11,837
Georgian	0	6	430
German	0	10	1,870
Latvian	13	6	2,330
Lithuanian	5	0	2,116
Russian	3,752	N/A	351,178
Spanish	10	6	16
Tatar	5	8	2,582
Ukrainian	42	29	29,012
Total	3,860	126	401,598

Source: Ministry of Education and Science 2003, *Statistics Estonia.

APPENDIX 4

Table 2. Total of students with native language different from the language of instruction in public schools, average for 2005–2010

Language spoken at home	Number of students in schools	Total of ethnic group in 2000*
Abkhaz	43	13
Armenian	30	1,444
Azeri	48	880
Byelorussian	2	17,241
Chechen	2	48
Georgian	11	430
Latvian	17	2,330
Lithuanian	16	2,116
Tatar	7	2,582
Ukrainian	64	29,012
TOTAL	240	53,999

The total of students representing various ethnic groups in public schools is 6,928. Western ethnic groups and Russians are excluded.

Source: *Statistics Estonia.

APPENDIX 5

Table 3. Optional language and culture classes in public secondary schools in 1992–2011

Ethnic group	Period	Place
Ukrainians	1992–1998	Tallinn Secondary School No. 48 (now Tallinn Lasnamäe Russian Gymnasium), Tallinn
Ukrainians	2004–	Kannuka School, Sillamäe City, Ida-Viru County
Lithuanians	2007–2008	Tartu Rahvusvaheline Kool, Tartu City
Italians	2008–2009	Tallinn Lilleküla Upper Secondary School, Tallinn City
Byelorussians	2010–	Kohtla-Järve Ühisgümnaasium, Kohtla-Järve City, Ida-Viru County
Azeris*	2011–	Juhkentali Gymnasium, Tallinn

Source: *Azerbaijan Cultural Center Ajdan 2011, Council of Europe 1999: 57, Käosaar 2011a.

APPENDIX 6

Table 4. Total of members in cultural societies of ethnic minorities in 2008

Ethnic group	Total of members	Total of ethnic group*
Armenians	163	1,444
Azeris	N/A	880
Bashkirs	N/A	152
Byelorussians	129	17,241
Chuvashs	106	495
Germans	950	1,870
Jews	2,707	2,145
Georgians	38	430
Kabardins	35	14
Koreans	88	169
Latvians	N/A	2,330
Lithuanians	260	2,116
Maris	N/A	245
Moldovans	N/A	645
Mordvins	34	562
Ossetians	20	116
Tatars	166	2,582
Turkmens	8	36
Udmurts	35	241
Ukrainians	1,572	29,012
Uzbeks	10	132
TOTAL	6,321	59,954

* The total of the ethnic group as registered by the Population Census 2000

Source: Pirgop 2008, Statistics Estonia.

APPENDIX 7

Table 5. The average number of listeners of non-Russian ethnic minorities' programs per year, 2011

	Time of broadcasting	Ethnic group	Language of broadcasting	Total of listeners
A.	Wednesday, 19.30–20.00	1. Georgians	Russian	12,000
		2. Azeris	Azerbaijani/Russian	
		3. Tatars	Tatar	
		4. Chuvashs	Russian	
B.	Saturday, 19.15-20.00	5. Ukrainians	Ukrainian	12,000
C.	Sunday, 19.15-20.00	6. Byelorussians	Byelorussian	9,000
		7. Armenians	Armenian/Russian	

Source: Velmet 2012.

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Address:

Aleksandr Aidarov and Wolfgang Drechsler
Ragnar Nurkse School of Innovation and Governance
Tallinn University of Technology
Akadeemia tee 3
12618 Tallinn, Estonia

E-mails: Aleksandr.Aidarov@ttu.ee, Wolfgang.Drechsler@ttu.ee

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All weblinks were valid as of 3 March 2013. Pure web-based information mentioned in the text is not repeated here.

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