Tufts University Seminar

Estonia

Columbia Prep

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Brief Paper: Estonia

1. **Introduction**

Good Afternoon,

We, the Estonians, are pleased to be here today at Tufts University to discuss the current situation. We hope to analyze and respond to the issues at hand and hope to find a way to ease the tensions between supranational and national interests regarding the European Union. As we all know, the current situation in the EU has left many countries questioning the viability of a future for the EU. We feel that the EU must stay together, but there definitely needs to be changes to make the union stronger. Our support for the EU has, within the past years, remained consistently one of the highest in the EU, staying between 70%-85%. We will continue to look to the West and further westernize our great country. It is of vital importance that our position and the issue at hand be addressed and dealt with as soon as possible. The most important topics on Estonia’s list being:

1. **Key Points**
* We want to strengthen the Common Foreign and Security Policy while also protecting our own sovereignty.
* It is vital that we keep NATO membership a priority for guaranteed security.
* Due to Russian aggression in Ukraine, regional stability and cooperation, a capable NATO, and strong alliances with the United States are imperative.
* It is important to ensure that our border with Russia is secure because they have repeatedly intimidated and infringed on our sovereignty.
* We must share our energy with nearby nations, but in order for this to happen, the EU must lower the tax on carbon emissions. This is very important because currently, Russia does not have to pay these taxes and that is giving them the upper hand in oil sales.
* We want to ensure that countries adopt EU policies to make the Euro stronger, including investing in innovative projects that will encourage more trade.
* We are open to all migrants who are seeking asylum and who will enter our borders through legal channels and become citizens of our great country. We hope to further integrate our population with more ethnic populations who hope to work and further our economic and technological success.
* We must make the EU more transparent and inclusive to lessen the democratic deficit.
1. **Background**

Estonia, officially the Republic of Estonia, is a country in the Baltic region of Northern Europe. It is bordered to the north by the Gulf of Finland, to the west by the Baltic Sea, to the south by Latvia, and to the east by Russia. Estonia is a democratic parliamentary republic divided into fifteen counties. The Prime Minister of Estonia is the head of the multi-party system government. The political culture is stable in Estonia, where power is held between two to three parties that have been in politics for a long time. With a population of 1.3 million, it is one of the least-populous member states of the European Union, Eurozone, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the OECD, and the Schengen Area. Estonia is a considered a developed country with a high-income economy, and high living standards. It is also ranked very highly in the Human Development Index, and performs well in measurements of economic freedom, civil liberties, education, and press freedom (third in the world in 2012). Estonia is often described as one of the most wired countries in Europe.

 During World War II, the Soviet forces conquered Estonia in the autumn of 1944. With the threat of being re-occupied by the Red Army, tens of thousands of Estonians chose to either retreat with the Germans or flee the country. Many Western countries considered the annexation of Estonia by the USSR illegal, so they retained diplomatic relations with the representatives of the independent Republic of Estonia, and never recognized Estonia as a legal part of the Soviet Union. As the Soviet Union weakened, it became increasingly obvious that Estonia would become an independent nation. In 1989, during the "Singing Revolution", more than two million people formed a human chain stretching through Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, called the Baltic Way. All three nations had similar experiences of occupation and similar aspirations for regaining independence.

On 20 August 1991, Estonia declared formal independence during the Soviet military coup attempt in Moscow, reconstituting the pre-1940 state.

Estonia formally applied for EU membership in 1995, and in 1998, Estonia became the first of the former Soviet satellite states to enter membership negotiations with the European Union. In 2002, it was formally invited to join a summit in Copenhagen, and there the Estonian Parliament announced that a referendum on membership of the EU would be held in mid September 2003. On 29 March 2004 Estonia joined NATO. There were people who argued that Estonia should not go straight from one union, the Soviet Union, into the EU, fearing the loss of sovereignty so soon after regaining the independence – despite the fact that the two unions were fundamentally different. Many doubted that a small country like Estonia would be given an opportunity to have any say in European Union matters.  In the end, about two-thirds of votes cast were positive, and on 1 May 2004, Estonia, together with nine other countries, joined the European Union.

The Estonian government is broken up into three branches: The Parliament of Estonia, the Government of Estonia, and the Supreme Court of Estonia. The Parliament of Estonia (Estonian: Riigikogu) or the legislative branch is elected by people for a four-year term. The Estonian parliament determines the income and expenses of the state. It also has the right to present statements, declarations and appeals to the people of Estonia, ratify and denounce international treaties with other states and international organizations, and decide on the Government loans. The Government of Estonia (Estonian: Vabariigi Valitsus) or the executive branch is formed by the Prime Minister of Estonia, nominated by the president and approved by the parliament. The government exercises executive power to the Constitution of Estonia and the laws of the Republic of Estonia that consists of twelve ministers, including the prime minister. According to the Constitution of Estonia (Estonian: Põhiseadus) the supreme power of the state is vested in the people. The people exercise their supreme power of the state in the elections of the Riigikogu through citizens who have the right to vote. The supreme judicial power is vested in the Supreme Court or Riigikohus, with nineteen justices. The Chief Justice nominated by the president and is appointed by the parliament for nine years. The official Head of State is the President of Estonia, who approves the laws passed by Riigikogu, and also has the right to send them back and propose new laws.

Estonia wanted to join the EU for many reasons, but the initial benefits stemmed from the EU’s “four freedoms” – the free movement of goods, capital, services, and people. Estonian entrepreneurs could benefit from the huge European internal market. People embraced the new opportunities offered by open borders, both in terms of higher wages and broadening their professional horizons in other EU countries.  Professionals could easily gain new experience in the other EU member states. Students could study for higher education in respected European universities without paying the large fees applied to non-EU residents. The EU has financially supported Estonia with approximately 11 billion euros, and Estonia has contributed less than two billion euros back to the EU budget. Estonia’s GDP per capita has increased 30% since accession. Besides the financial benefits, the biggest gain Estonia has had from EU membership is a voice on the international stage.

 As Europe plunged into crisis, Estonia managed to lift itself out of the trouble by exercising remarkable budget discipline and, as a result, qualifying for and joining the euro in 2011.  Still a relatively new member state, Estonia became part of the Eurozone “core” and was cited as a model of how fiscal credibility can work for the higher growth and rising employment. Estonians working in Brussels have reported that this fact itself helped Estonia to have high influence, for a small country, at the discussion-board on the EU’s spending programs for 2014-20. Along with its digital success and obeying both the rules of the Eurozone and NATO, the country has become the quintessential European insider.

Siim Kallas, former Prime Minister of Estonia, has recently mentioned that there are many Estonian-invented e-solutions that could be used all over Europe, but the country could do more to make everyone aware of them/exporting them. One of Estonia’s European Union policy goals is the development of an efficient Digital Single Market, where EU citizens and businesses are able to use electronic services in any member state.

Estonia is increasingly adopting western culture. It is embracing Western European values of tolerance, openness and the social inclusion. Tens of thousands of young Estonians, who have lived in liberal Western European capitals in last ten years since the EU accession, have started to import more cosmopolitan, open-minded thinking back home. Estonia could soon become the first of the former Soviet ruled countries to introduce a law that allows same-sex couples to officially register their partnership. Estonia still has some important changes to make, such as reducing the largest wage gap between women and men in the EU.

The most important sectors of Estonia’s economy in 2014 were wholesale and retail trade, transport, accommodation and food services, industry and public administration, defense, education, human health and social work activities. Estonia’s main export partners are Sweden, Finland and Latvia, while its main import partners are Finland, Germany and Sweden. Estonia was ranked the least dependent Member State on energy (8.9%) and is the only country in the world in which oil shale is the primary source of energy.

1. **Issues**
2. Refugee Crisis
3. Democratic Deficit of the European Union
4. Energy Distribution
5. Russian Aggression
6. Border Security
7. European Debt Crisis
8. Strengthening the EU/Eurozone

*Committee on Governance: Rebecca Mantel*

**What type of government does your country currently have?**

* We have a parliamentary republic.
* Our current government is a majority government and the coalition consists of three political parties.
	+ The Reform Party (RE)
	+ The Social Democratic Party (SDE)
	+ Pro Patria and Res Publica Union (IRL)

**How has it changed, or not, since the end of World War II?**

* In 1940, Estonia was occupied and illegally annexed by the [Soviet Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) as a result of the [Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molotov%E2%80%93Ribbentrop_Pact). During the war Estonia was occupied by [Nazi Germany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_Germany) in 1941, then reoccupied by the Soviet Union in 1944. Estonia regained independence in 1991 after the collapse of the USSR and joined the [European Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Union) in 2004.

**What are the major political parties in your country and what are their views on the key issues being discussed at the conference?**

* The Reform Party (RE)
	+ A liberal political party that advocates for market liberalism.
	+ Emphasizes the need for stability and boosting national defense.
	+ NATO fighter jets as a backdrop for one of their campaign clips, for which it was criticized in the media, but this nevertheless helped cultivate among the voters an image of a party that prioritizes defense
	+ Need to work out an efficient and long-term plan, together with the Scandinavian countries to develop a plan for dealing with the migrant crisis. Have to show solidarity regarding the migrant crisis.
	+ Estonia should show more initiative in the migration crisis, but do not want a massive influx of refugees. Instead, feel that Estonia should begin showing some empathy by accepting and ensuring a normal life for a number of orphans.
* The Social Democratic Party (SDE)
	+ Socialist party
	+ Coordination of the NATO collective defense and Estonia’s independent initial defense capability. For Estonia’s national defense, a professional well-trained military is equally as important as the dedicated members of the Defense League and the conscripts performing their civil duty.
	+ Will support the European Union making rapid progress in signing free trade agreements with the U.S. and other important trading partners.
	+ Want to make government more inclusive and transparent.
* Pro Patria and Res Publica Union (IRL)
	+ A conservative party
	+ Feel that Estonia's limit should be 400 refugees per year
	+ Decided in its assembly meeting that Estonia should set a threshold over which the country would not accept asylum seekers in future.
	+ Fiscally similar to the Reform Party.

**How would you describe the political and social rights citizens have in your country?**

* We are ranked above average in [democracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy), [press freedom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Press_freedom), [privacy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Privacy), and [human development](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_development_%28humanity%29).

**How would you describe the political and social rights non-citizens have in your country?**

* We are one of the few countries in the world where all legal residents, regardless of their citizenship, have the right to vote in local government elections.
* Non-citizens in Estonia are guaranteed basic rights under the [Constitution of Estonia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Estonia).

**What are the major political points of contention in your country?**

* The major political points of contention in our country are relations with Russia and migration.

**What is your role in Europe/in the European Union?**

* Even though we are still a relatively new member state, we became part of the Eurozone “core” and are cited as a model of how fiscal credibility can work for the higher growth and rising employment.
* We have become more involved in the EU due to our digital success and obeying both the rules of the Eurozone and NATO.

**Has it changed since you joined?**

* The role of our country in the EU has become more important since joining in 2004.

**How would you define a democratic deficit?**

* The idea that the governance of the European Union in some way lacks democratic legitimacy.
* A perceived lack of accessibility to the ordinary citizen, or lack of representation of the ordinary citizen, and lack of accountability of institutions.

**Do you think there is a democratic deficit within the EU’s structure?**

* Yes, we believe that citizens do not fully understand the EU’s structure, thus they feel disconnected from the EU and feel there is a lack of democratic legitimacy.
* It is inherent in the structure of the European Union to have a democratic deficit; it is a [supranational union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supranational_union) that is neither a pure [intergovernmental organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intergovernmental_organisation), nor a true [federal state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_state).

**What political party will you be representing at the conference?**

* We will be representing the Estonian Reform Party.

*Committee on Cross-Border Issues: Josh Charap*

**Briefly describe the most important cross-border issues your country or organization is concerned with.**

* The most important cross-border issue we have is with Russia.
	+ Along with Latvia, we plan on building a fence along our border with Russia. We are taking this initiative because of Russian aggression in Ukraine, and because Russians kidnapped an Estonian security officer in August.
	+ In June, Russian fighter jets encroached on Estonian airspace and NATO escorted them away.

**What is your country or organization’s stance on the Schengen zone?**

* We are in favor of the Schengen zone, but must have a secure border with Russia.

**Do you agree or disagree that there needs to be a securitization of borders? Why?**

* We agree that there needs to be a securitization of borders
	+ We need to secure borders with Russia because they have continually threatened our sovereignty.
	+ Our border with Latvia is under Schengen zone and does not have any security.
	+ The zone is good for trade and business.
	+ We are still against the quota system, where we have to take a certain number of refugees proposed by European Commission. They don’t know how many we can take and how difficult it is to assimilate. We will take refugees on voluntary basis.

**Is corruption a prevalent issue in your country?**

* No, we are considered the least corrupt country in Central and Northern Europe.
* Our businesses have no trouble operating and our country has effective anticorruption laws in place.

**What policies are currently in place to tackle those issues and what areas can be improved upon?**

* Since we are considered the least corrupt country in Central and Northern Europe, we do not currently have any policies to tackle the corruption issue.

**Is your country or organization in a vulnerable geographic or strategic position in regard to cross-border issues such as migration, climate change or energy?**

* Regarding climate change, we have seen a steady increase in oil spills.
	+ We want to work together with other Baltic nations to clean up spills because oil comes to shoreline and threatens wildlife, specifically birds.
	+ We are also currently working to reduce carbon emissions of energy.
* Regarding energy, we produce enough shale to be self-sufficient and support our shipping industry.
	+ We are on track to produce 20% of our energy by renewable sources by 2020.
	+ Our economy minister said, “we are the most energy independent country in the European Union, and we will not compromise our energy security. We have a large neighbor.”

**What is your vision of Europe and your boundaries?**

* We want to maintain a strong and secure border with Russia and maintain a free border with Latvia.

**Is your country an EU candidate or member state?**

* Yes, we joined the EU on May 1st, 2004.

*Committee on Economics: Lily Highman*

**What is the current state of your economy?**

* The economy has significantly rebounded since the financial crisis of 2008: unemployment has dropped to 7%, GDP was 28,781 in 2015, the economic growth is estimated to be a stable 3% for the 2016-2017 year
* However, one in five young people are unemployed
* Financial market is mainly controlled by internet banking which is benefitting the economy
	+ Over 90% of the banks are owned by Scandinavians
	+ The majority of banks controlled in Estonia are owned by few conservative banking groups
	+ Banks are almost fully independent of each other, so problems in one do not negatively affect the others
* There is a small public debt and low loan burden ratio of private sector to GDP; the lowest ratio of government debt to GDP in all of the EU
* VAT tax of 20% and employers tax of 33% is benefitting our economy
* Very free economy (4th freest in Europe), which has contributed to Estonia becoming a Baltic Tiger
* Economy is very based around telecommunications, transport, and trade due to the freedom of the economy and markets; this ensures competition and openness

**Were you affected by the Greek economic crisis? If so, how? If not, why not?**

* Yes, the Greek economic crisis hit us very hard; Forbes rated us the number 3 hardest hit economy
* The economy was hit this hard because our economy was based upon financial services and domestic demand, which both lost their market
* Real estate went down in value and investments stopped flowing in
* Public funding had to be cut as well as imports to Estonia
* Unemployment rose from 3.9% to 18.8% in 2009

**What do you think caused the economic crisis?**

* The economic problems originated in the US in 2007 when the high-yield bond market failed, which led to decreased investment in banks and reduced trade
* We believe that the full economic crisis was however caused by overproduction and low demand from two reasons: excessive optimism (encouraging people to spend their reserves rather than invest or save it) and the economic policy in Asia (cheap labor and exports)
* Because the EU is more open than the US, the EU was hit harder by the decrease in global trade

**Is the EU based on monetary policy, political policy or both? Explain.**

* The EU is based upon both, and has helped us with both aspects
* The free movement of goods, capital, service, and people have contributed to economic growth that we have never seen; financial benefits include the EU helping Estonia with an estimated 11 billion Euros by 2020
* The switch from the Kroon to the Euro has been very successful for Estonia as well
* Political policy of the EU has shaped Estonia uniquely, as Estonia was a part of the USSR, and thus has transformed from a socialist republic to a free liberal state, which has strengthened Estonia and given us rights that we are benefitting from
* Politically, being in the European Union means a strong counterweight to Russia

**Do you perceive the European debt crisis as a challenge to the future of the euro, or even further to European unity?**

* The debt crisis is an issue for the EU, but it can certainly be overrun if the member states cooperate with the EU and with each other
* If the financial sector of the EU can be reinvigorated, the Euro can be “saved;” countries can do this by raising fiscal spending to 1.8% of GDP as the EU recommends
* Member states must also accept and follow the Lisbon Strategy, which means to reform economies to increase flexibility of the labor
* We are overall optimistic that the EU can get back on track

**Is the euro crisis only a byproduct of Europe’s much larger cohesion issues, what some call a “half-built house”?**

* Not particularly, the euro crisis mainly stems from the overproduction and lack of demand addressed before
* Countries like Estonia that have been previously communist and are unlike the 6 original nations in the EU are still able to contribute to the success of the EU and do not necessarily hurt the Euro in any way
* The only way to make the Euro stronger and fix the issues in the Eurozone is to make sure the countries implement the legislation drafted on the European level

**What do you think the future of the euro should be?**

* The Euro will not break apart because the price of losing it would be much too high
* If countries implement the EU’s new regulations to help the Euro, we are extremely optimistic that the Euro will have no trouble slowly making its way back to the strong currency it was before the financial crises
* The Euro is not just a currency, but it is a symbol that is extremely important to us in Estonia as well as countries around Europe that unifies us all into a common European destiny

**Should countries be allowed or encouraged to exit the euro?**

* We do not want to help bail our poor countries like Greece because their economies are not strong enough for the Euro
* We should not be totally scared of unstable countries leaving the Eurozone in order to gain back their economic competitiveness
* These countries are actually weighing us down as a whole, because they cause a lack of stability and trust within the Eurozone

**What policies would be best for your country?**

* We are very excited about a new digital agenda for Europe, and considering this is one of our biggest profit makers, we would benefit greatly from this
* Growth across the Atlantic to the US and a rebooting of trade would create more jobs that would help us and the EU as a whole
* Innovative projects (mostly involving infrastructure) should be funded such as the Rail Baltica; new and highly technologically advanced ways to transport people and goods would help our trade network flourish even further
* Investments in new ways to handle education and resources; dependable energy sources must be looked further into
* It is in our best interest that countries like Britain should not be able to leave the European Union because a stronger EU means a stronger force against Russia

**What do you think about austerity measures?**

* Austerity measures are often necessary to get a country out of a financial slump
* In 2008 to cope with the economic debt crisis, 28% of the budget was cut, salaries were cut by 17%, and 10% of the state employed citizens were cut
* Austerity was the main reason we were able to rebound from the financial troubles; this was also generally in public support because support to join the Euro was very high, and in order to do so we had to fulfill economic criteria in the Maastricht treaty
* Though the austerity did help, it was hard on a lot of us who were laid off and had to deal with increased prices on things like electricity, so our overall view on austerity is mixed

*Committee on Security: Drew Tomback*

**What are the major security concerns facing your country and Europe?**

* Most dangers are global threats—hence emphasis on NATO and EU coordination.
* We need the U.S. and NATO to deploy troops to our country for protection against Russianaggression
	+ Rely fully on NATO (5,750 soldiers in our Estonian Defense forces cannot handle internal-conflict or a coup-like occupation).
* Some officials in our country view ISIS as our biggest threat.

**How have recent events- e.g. Russian intervention in Ukraine, terrorist attacks on Paris- affected your perception of security priorities?**

* Since international security is indivisible from our own, the guiding principle of Estonian security and defense policy is to be an active provider of security on its own and to participate in crisis management and peace support operations led by different international organizations.
* Our main concern is crisis management in the Balkans and an ever-increasing European military capability to strong-head threats.
* The largest individual threat comes from Russia in the Baltic Sea region where the invasion of Ukraine placed Estonia in the middle of a hot zone
	+ Russia’s recent aggression poses a unique threat to Estonia
		- We fear an ethnic wedge between Russian Estonians and Estonians
		- We fear that the re-annexation of former soviet territory
* Need significant troop reinforcements to deter Russian aggression

**What military or security alliances and organizations are you a part of if any, and what is your role within these?**

• **NATO Operations:**

* **Afghanistan** – We began our military involvement in Afghanistan in 2002 in the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom. Since 2003, we have participated in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which has since become NATO’s most important mission.
* **Kosovo (KFOR)** – We have participated in the NATO peace support mission in Kosovo since 1999. In accordance with NATO’s decision to reduce forces in Kosovo, we have stopped contributing an infantry unit to Kosovo in February 2010, but continue contribution with one staff officer at KFOR headquarters.
* **Iraq** – We stood in the ranks of the international coalition in Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2003-2008. After ending the participation of our combat units, we continue to participate in NATO’s Training Mission – Iraq (NTM-I) with two staff officers.
* **NATO Response Force** (NRF) – We have contributed to NRF since 2005
* **NATO Air Policing Missions –** the airspace of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.
* **European Unions**
	+ **Afghanistan** (EUPOL Afghanistan) –The mission deals with building up the police system in Afghanistan, and in 2011 there are three Estonian experts involved in this project.
	+ **Kosovo** (EULEX Kosovo) – this civil mission covers the supervising and monitoring of the legal system, police, customs, border patrol and corrections facilities.
	+ **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (EUPM) –Its primary goal is to provide aid and consultation for the implementation of police reforms.
	+ **Georgia** (EUMM Georgia) – observes and monitors the fulfillment of the peace plan created after the conflict in Georgia in August of 2008.
	+ **Iraq** (EUJUST LEX) – the goal of the mission is to offer training for Iraq’s corrections and legal system officials.
	+ **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (EUFOR ALTHEA) –ensure the fulfillment of the conditions of the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement and to create a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
* **EUNAVFOR – Operation ATALANTA**. Since 2010, we have contributed to the fight against piracy off the Somalia coast.
* **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe** (OSCE) in 1991. Encompasses the military, economic and human dimensions. We actively take part in military and security co-operation on the basis of the OSCE’s Vienna Document and the Open Skies Agreement. In addition, our experts participate in the work of OSCE missions in the Western Balkans, the South Caucasus and elsewhere.
* **Council of Europe** he Council of Europe is an irreplaceable regulatory organization that stands for the protection of human rights.
* **BALTRON**, or the Baltic countermining squad, is an example of successful Baltic naval co-operation.
* **BALTNET**, or the Baltic Airspace Surveillance Network, is a system established in 1998 for the acquisition, co-ordination, distribution and display of air surveillance data within the three Baltic States.
* **BALTDEFCOL**, or the [Baltic Defense College](http://www.bdcol.ee/), was established in 1998 to provide the officers of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and partner countries with a higher military education.

**In particular, how do you feel about the efforts of NATO, and of the OSCE, and of the role played by the USA in European security?**

* We place great importance on participation in these organizations.

**Who are you dependent upon for either acquiring your energy or buying your energy?**

* In 2014, we were ranked the least dependent Member State on energy (8.9%)
* We are the only country in the world in which oil shale is the primary source of energy
* We are interconnected with Russia and Latvia

**Has energy been a source of cooperation or coercion for your country?**

* We have significant oil reserves and we are a leader in renewable energy. However, we are still reliant on Russia for all gas
* We are building up a renewable energy sector to help balance our imports from Russia
	+ Our energy policy is more than just providing energy as cheaply as possible; we want to secure the supply and a steady price.

*Committee on Migration: Marley Pavlin*

**Please outline your concerns with regard to the current migration crisis in Europe and your country’s priorities.**

* Our main concern with the mass migration of people to our country is the problem of integration. While the Union is more focused on the number of asylum seekers we take in, we are more focused on giving the people we do take in a chance at a new life in Estonia. We are concerned about the type of person that we take in. It will be for Estonia to decide whether a person will come to Estonia or not. We would not like to be forced into anything. Although we are ready and willing to take on immigrants, we strongly disagree with the Unions quota plan.

**What is your country’s historical view of migration and its impact?**

* While accepting, we have always been weary of immigrants coming to Estonia. After World War II, we faced huge amounts of immigration from other regions of the Soviet Union. Although we were accepting of these immigrants, our people were concerned about the crime they would bring. Ultimately, facing extremely concerned Estonians, in 1990 we established an immigration quota of 0.1% of the population. The reason for this was because we didn’t want immigrants that would not be able to integrate.

**What are the obstacles to and implications of integrating immigrants into European society?**

* The largest obstacles we see in integrating immigrants into our society are the barrier of language, cultural differences, and ethnic boundaries. Through our history with migration, we have come to realize that migration is only successful and beneficial if people are willing and able to adapt to the Estonian culture and way of life. We have noticed that usually it is easier for people of western values to integrate. That being said, families and vulnerable people have also been able to integrate because they come to Estonia looking for a better life, an Estonian life.

**Do EU policies regarding asylum seekers need to be reformed to ensure that member states are sharing the burden of integrating migrants?**

* We believe that it is not the EU’s right to ensure participation of member states on sharing the burden of integrating migrants. We believe that in order for integration to be successful, it must be done on a voluntary basis.
* Forcing member states to take on refugees will make them resent the people, alienate them, and cause less integration. Without integration, refugees will not be able to succeed and support themselves and will become a larger burden on the state.

**What are the current migration flows within your country?**

* Our current immigration law states that the migrant population should be no more than .1% of the permanent population.
* This does not include EU, American, or Japanese citizens. We prefer migrants of western values as they integrate easier. We have currently pledged to take in 500 asylum seekers into Estonia.

**How has your country’s native population traditionally interacted with immigrant populations?**

* While weary of immigrants because of social issues, such as crime, spread of diseases such as AIDS, and alcoholism, most Estonians have been fairly accepting of migrants.
* While there have, of course, been some anti-immigration rallies taking place in our country, they have never been large scale or popular. In fact, more opposing events have popped up that call for more tolerance and acceptance of immigrants.
* If migrants are willing to integrate into Estonian life, Estonia is willing and happy to have them.

**Describe your expectations and commitment to policies regarding refugees and migration control.**

* We have currently pledged to take in 500 asylum seekers into Estonia.  We have compiled a profile of the persons to be relocated to Estonia. We wish to help people who wish to come to live here, and are able to adapt in Estonia and have motivation for that. The people we will be accepting in Estonia are vulnerable people (single parent families and a small number of orphans or unaccompanied minors), whole family units, and people who volunteer to be resettled in Estonia. Settling refugees inside Estonia must be based first and foremost on the existence of jobs and school places, and the support network and language learning opportunities. We propose as common EU policy: addressing the root cause of the refugee crisis, increasing eternal boarder control, the requirement of the right of member states to decide for themselves on immigration policy, and consideration of European cultural space and traditions, and an adaptation program for persons who have received international protection

*Committee on Foreign Policy: Justin Zarka*

**Does your country conduct foreign policy within the framework of the EU, independently, or a combination of both?**

* We are an active and cooperative member state of the European Union and NATO.

**What are some examples of this?**

* We will keep paying attention to the energy security issues in the European Union, by linking them with the common foreign and security policy.

**What is the stance of your country on the development of a joint-EU foreign policy?**

* We support a strong European Union, encompassing an efficient Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as well as a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP).

**Does your country have a voice in current EU foreign policy decisions?**

* We endorse and play a role in the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), as well as the Common Security and Defense Policy (ESDP).

**Do you agree with current EU policies regarding Ukraine and Russia? Why or why not?**

* We consider it necessary to strengthen the eastern partnership policy of the European Union, especially in order to support Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova in their efforts to maintain their sovereignty and their territorial integrity and in implementing reforms.
* In relations with Russia, we consider it important to alleviate the possible tensions, taking into consideration the interests of Estonia and its allies.

**Did you agree with the EU decision to intervene in Libya? Why or why not?**

* We ensured that Estonia would protect the principles of international law and democratic values, would call attention to the violation of human rights, would support the democratic movements in different parts of the world, and would contribute to the improvement of the situation of unrepresented nations and peoples.

**Do you think the EU should work closely with the US on foreign policy issues or be more independent? Why or why not?**

* We will continue an active policy to strengthen the strategic partnership between the European Union and the United States.
* We consider important the conclusion of the free trade agreement (TTIP) between the European Union and the United States as soon as possible.

**What is your relationship with the US?**

* We consider it important to continue the strengthening of the good relations with the United States.

*Committee on Identity & Integration: Zach Pearlman*

**How did the Second World War and its aftermath influence your country?**

* After the retreat of the Nazis following the end of the war, Soviet forces conquered Estonia in late 1944.
* The damage from the Soviet regime slowed our economic growth and widened the wealth gap.
* In 1991, the Republic of Estonia finally declared our independence from the Soviet Union after a Soviet military coup attempt.
* We became a social democracy priding ourselves on raising the living standards of the people of Estonia, advancing our economic growth, ensuring the free movement of all people and goods, and allowing equal opportunities for all people.

**How has historical memory influenced your country’s political discourse?**

* Russian-Estonian relations remain tense to this day after the occupation.

**Have certain events prompted a revision of your country’s core values and/or ideological pillars?**

* The Singing Revolution between 1987-1991, led to the restoration of the independence of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. The revolution also led to the our government shifting our core value to the repopulation of Estonia by Estonians who were cast out during both occupations, as well as the establishment of a free haven for all people.

**What minority populations live in your country?**

* 69.1% Estonians, 25.2% Russians, 1.7% Ukrainians, .9% Belarusians, .6% Finns, .2% Jews, 1.9% (Latvians, Germans, Swedes), .03% (Korean, Chinese), .37% Other.

**How has that changed since World War II?**

* There has been a major increase of Russians and Ukrainians in Estonia due to the Soviet occupation of Estonia and its close location to Russia and the Ukraine.

**What rights do minority populations living within your borders have?**

* The same rights as all citizens, though Russians in Estonia as well as the Russian government believe that the Russian population’s rights in Estonia are bing deterred by the government, and that it is harder for them to get a job, because of Estonian-Russian foreign ties.

**What rights do non-citizens living within your borders have?**

* All legal residents, regardless of citizenship, have the right to vote in local government elections.

**Is the goal of your policies to integrate new populations into your country, e.g. assimilation and multiculturalism?**

* The goal of our policies is to integrate new populations through multiculturalism as well as assimilation, allowing for people of all ethnicities and religions to coexist together in free state and promoting citizens to become and feel Estonian.

**Have your policies been effective? Why or why not?**

* Our policies have not been effective.
* The integration of Russians into Estonian life has been difficult. The Estonian government has imposed strict citizenship exams, so Russians are disenchanted with learning the Estonian language and culture needed to pass the exams.

**Are there ethnic divisions in your country and are these contentious?**

* There is a division between native Estonians and Russian-Estonians, but the division is not contentious due to the fact that after the fall of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the Republic of Estonia people were seeking a national identity and integrated into the newly re-established Estonia.

**Does your country emphasize political/individual or social/cultural rights?**

* Estonia emphasizes social and cultural rights, after being oppressed by the Russians for decades during the Soviet Era. They respect the rights to all ethnic groups in the country and promote the assimilation of all citizens to become Estonian.

**Is your country facing any secessionist movements?**

* The Estonian Independence Party (EIP) has been around since 1999, and has been aimed with the withdrawal of Estonia from the European Union. As of 2015, the EIP received .2% of the votes and hold 0 seats.

**Have your policies changed with the current migrant crisis?**

* The Estonian government, since 2004, has focused more on the depopulation of its own country by citizens relocating to western European countries in search of higher standards of living. Estonia accepts all and any refugees who are seeking asylum.