

Estonia Today

AT A GLANCE

- **Official name:** Republic of Estonia
- **Short form:** Estonia
- **National Day:** Independence Day, February 24, when Estonia declared its independence in 1918
- Estonia became a **NATO member state** on 29 March 2004
- Estonia became a **European Union member state** on 1 May 2004

Geography

- **Area:** 45 227 square km.
- Estonia is a green land, **forests** cover 50.5% of the country (22 846 square km)
- **Border:** Total length: 1 450.2 km, with a sea border of 768.6 km and a land border of 681.6 km
- **Distances from Tallinn to:**
 - Helsinki 85 km
 - Riga 310 km
 - St. Petersburg 350 km
 - Stockholm 375 km
- **Number of islands:** 1 521. Largest islands are Saaremaa, Hiiumaa and Muhu
- Estonia is a country of thousand **lakes**, largest of these are Lake Peipsi and Lake Võrtsjärv
- **Highest point:** *Suur Munamägi* (Great Egg Hill), 318 m
- **Climate:** humid-temperate
- **Temperature range** (average daytime, 1992-2002, [EMHI](#)): -2,0°C in winter (may sink to -20°C occasionally in February) and +19.4°C in summer (may rise to +30°C occasionally in July).

Population

The last official census was taken in 2000.

- **Population:** 1.364 million (Source: Population Register)
- **Population density:** 31 inhabitants per square km
- The proportion of **urban population** (1.01.2008): 69.4%
- The proportion of **rural population:** 30.6%
- The **birth rate** was 12.0 per 1000 residents in 2008 while the **mortality rate** reached 12.4 per 1000 residents
- **Largest ethnic groups** (2008): Estonians (69%), Russians (25%), Ukrainians (2%), Byelorussians (1%) and Finns (1%)

Main Cities

- The capital of Estonia is Tallinn (as of 1.01.2009, population 404.5 thousand or 29% of total population)
- Other large cities and population (thousands):

Tartu	98.5
Narva	65.8
Pärnu	43.5
Kohtla-Järve	42.0

Language

- The official language of Estonia is **Estonian**, which belongs to the Finno-Ugric language family and is closely related to Finnish. Along with Finnish, English, Russian and German are also widely spoken and understood.

State

- **Type:** parliamentary democracy
- **Head of the State:** the President, who is elected by the parliament or an Electoral Body. Term: 5 years. Current President: Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, elected by the Electoral Body on September 23rd, 2006
- **National legislature:** the *Riigikogu*. A unicameral parliament of 101 members. Term: 4 years. The last elections for the *Riigikogu* were held on March 4th, 2007
- **Head of the Government:** Prime Minister, currently Mr Andrus Ansip (Reform Party)
- **Highest judicial power:** Supreme Court
- **Administrative division:** 15 counties, divided into 33 cities and 194 rural municipalities.
- **Electoral systems:** proportional representation. All Estonian citizens over the age of 18 are eligible to vote in national elections. **Municipal elections:** Term: 4 years. All permanent residents over the age of 18 are eligible to vote in municipal elections regardless of citizenship. The last municipal elections were held on October 16th, 2005. The next municipal elections are scheduled for October 2009.

Currency

- The Estonian Kroon (EEK), 1 Kroon = 100 sents
- 1 EUR = 15.65 EEK

Education

- The number of comprehensive schools is 589; the number of students is 162 000.
- There are 34 institutions offering higher education in Estonia, including 10 universities.

Religion

- Since the Reformation movement in the 16th century, the Lutheran church has played the leading role in Estonia. Other larger active confessions are: Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Baptist, Methodist and Roman Catholic.