

# Estonia Preventing Russian Children from Learning Their Own Native Language

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*There appears to be no limit to Russophobia in the Baltic countries. In a new de-Russification measure, the Estonian government decided to abolish Russian language teaching in a region where almost the entire population is ethnic Russian. The case adds to a series of recent measures taken by Estonia and other Baltic countries to end the historic Russian presence in their territories.*

[In the Narva region](#), on the border between Estonia and Russia, 97% of the population is Russian.

The city is just 130km from Saint Petersburg, which is one of the main centers of Russian culture.

Considering these particular circumstances of the city, the local authorities submitted a special request to the Estonian government to allow the Russian language to continue to be taught and spoken in schools. The letter sent by the Narva City Council demanded authorization for at least 40% of the school curriculum to be taught in Russian during the next school year.

However, the Estonian government rejected the proposal, not alleviating its strongly Russophobic position.

According to the country's authorities, there is no "legal basis" to reduce de-Russification measures in the Narva region. More than that, in her official statement on the case, Minister of Education and Science Kristina Kallas stated that studying in the Estonian language is "in the students' interest", which sounds absolutely false and hypocritical, considering that local children are mostly Russian and they obviously have no "interest" in studying a language other than the one they speak at home with their families.

The negative response from the Estonian government was actually expected, considering the advanced level of anti-Russian paranoia among the country's authorities. The measure in Narva comes amid a series of cultural genocide policies whose objective is to gradually eradicate the use of the Russian language throughout Estonian territory. Not only are students victims of this type of measure, [but also the teachers themselves](#).

Many children's teachers are also ethnic Russians. Some of them even speak Estonian, but they do not have advanced knowledge of grammar or great fluency in speaking. Now, with the new rules, these teachers will have to study Estonian and prove their knowledge of the language to continue working. If they fail to learn Estonian, these professionals risk losing their jobs.

It is not just the Russian Federation that is denouncing this situation. The attempted cultural genocide in Estonia is already beginning to be criticized by international organizations, such as the UN itself. The United Nations human rights office recently classified Estonia's policies as "potentially discriminatory" due to the fact that they affect the rights of an ethnic minority.

25% of Estonia's population are Russian citizens. Estonia, like all post-Soviet states, has a strong presence of ethnic Russians due to the fact that until 1991 all Soviet republics belonged to the same country. Many experts describe the Soviet collapse as a humanitarian tragedy precisely because it suddenly made millions of Russians "foreigners." Currently, Russians are not only living in countries other than their own, but also suffering discriminatory policies simply because they are Russians.

Estonia is not alone in its Russophobic measures. [Latvia](#) and Lithuania are also advancing policies to eradicate the Russian language.

The Latvian government, as well known, is promoting Latvian language proficiency tests for Russian citizens. Citizens who fail the tests can simply be expelled from the country. As expected, those who have the most difficulty in this situation are elderly Russians, who have lived their entire lives speaking Russian only and are now being forced to learn a new language at risk of cancellation of their citizenship.

Russia's special military operation in Ukraine has served as an excuse for countries allied with the West to openly take actions of cultural genocide and apartheid. Russians are simply being treated as "inferior" citizens in states that until recently belonged to the same country as Russia. For now, such measures are being implemented against the language and civil rights of Russian citizens, but it is possible that Russophobia will escalate to the point where the physical safety of Russian speakers begins to be threatened.

There is a process of "Ukrainization" in the Baltic countries. Now, their main "enemy" is the language, but it remains to be seen how governments will react to the Russians' insistence on preserving their ethnic and cultural heritage. For the Russian Federation, there is a clear red line when it comes to its international relations, which is precisely the security of its citizens abroad. If the Baltic states begin to physically threaten the Russians, there will be a serious escalation with Moscow.

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