

An examination of the formation of Estonian diasporas and the preservation of their national identity

In 2022, an online survey was launched to analyse the national identity of Estonians living in Estonia. The present study is an extension of this ongoing research, which aims to explore the national identity of non-Estonians who have emigrated from Estonia in several waves as well as their relations with the mother country and culture. Communities of Estonians outside their ethnic homeland were formed during three major waves of emigration. The first wave of emigration lasted from the mid-19th to the second decade of the 20th century. The second mass emigration was caused by the events of the Second World War. The third wave was linked to the declaration of independence in 1991, which was reinforced by Estonia's accession to the EU. The number of Estonians living abroad is estimated to be somewhere between 150 000 and 200 000, which means that about 15% of Estonians live outside Estonia.

One of the keys to the survival of the Estonian state, which has less than a million inhabitants, is the diaspora policy that the Estonian state can implement to attract and engage Estonians abroad and to create opportunities for those returning home to live independently and to prosper.

Keywords: *national identity, waves of emigration, diaspora policy, Estonia*

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