

Estonia

The constitution does not contain provisions for regional government (C 1992, Arts. 154–160), but municipalities are self-governing (Kettunen and Kungla 2005; Law No. 37, 558/1993; Mäeltsees 2000). Between 1990 and 2017 Estonia had deconcentrated intermediate governance consisting of fifteen *maakonnad* (counties) (Council of Europe: Estonia 2000, 2010; Law No. 29, 356/1995, and No. 42, 291/2004, Art. 14¹–14²).¹ Their boundaries followed, with few exceptions, those of the regions (*rayon*) created during the Soviet era (Sepp and Veemaa 2010).² During the 2000s environmental management, rescue services, building registers, museums, and social and sport facilities were transferred from *maakonnad* to agencies of the central government. In 2018, the *maakonnad* were dissolved (Council of Europe: Estonia 2018; Suur 2018).³ An administrative reform reduced the number of municipalities from 213 in 2015 to 79 in 2018 (Law No. 788/2016).⁴ At the local level, there are cities and rural municipalities but there are no differences in competences between cities, municipalities, and the capital city of Tallinn (Council of Europe: Estonia 2010, 2011, 2018; Law No. 558/1993). As a substitute for decentralized regional governance municipalities may form intermunicipal associations to coordinate waste management, education, regional development, transport, or social care (Law No. 96, 565/2002; Mäeltsees, Lõhmus, and Ratas 2013).

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¹ *Maakonnad* had an average population of 88,000 in 2010.

² The county of Ida-Vidu is the only county with a predominantly Russian-speaking population. It was partitioned in 1990 from a predominantly Estonian-speaking area. Narva is its major city (Smith 2002).

³ Estonian Government. Rahandusministeerium. Local Governments and Administrative-Territorial Reform. Regional Administration and County Government Reform. <<https://www.rahandusministeerium.ee/en/objectivesactivities/local-governments-and-administrative-territorial-reform/>>.

⁴ Estonian Government. Rahandusministeerium. ‘Local Governments’ and ‘Administrative-Territorial Reform’. <<https://www.rahandusministeerium.ee/en/objectivesactivities/local-governments-and-administrative-territorial-reform/>>.

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