



ANALYSIS

# RUSSIANS IN EUROPE: NOBODY'S TOOL

## THE EXAMPLES OF FINLAND, GERMANY AND ESTONIA

| ANNA TIIDO |

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## INTRODUCTION

The subject of Russia's approach to Russian-speaking communities residing outside the country has been widely discussed and researched. First, several studies have been made on the concept of the "Russian World", the notion of uniting all Russians around the world under one umbrella.<sup>1</sup> Much research has been conducted on individual communities, including the media dimension, notably in Estonia,<sup>2</sup> Latvia,<sup>3</sup> Finland<sup>4</sup> and Germany.<sup>5</sup> Previous studies have also looked at societal resilience against Russian disinformation – for

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Marlene Laruelle, *The 'Russian World': Russian Soft Power and Geopolitical Imagination* (Washington DC: The Center on Global Interests, May 2015), <http://globalinterests.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/FINAL-CGI-Russian-World-Marlene-Laruelle.pdf> (accessed 4 June 2019);

Mikhail Suslov, "'Russian World': Russia's Policy towards its Diaspora", Notes de l'Ifri Russie.Nei.Visions 103, July 2017, [https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/suslov\\_russian\\_world\\_2017.pdf](https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/suslov_russian_world_2017.pdf); Veera Laine, "Spirituality as a Political Instrument: The Church, The Kremlin, and the Creation of the 'Russian World'", FIIA Working Paper 98, September 2017, <https://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/spirituality-as-a-political-instrument> (accessed 6 April 2019).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Juhan Kivirähk, "Integrating Estonia's Russian-speaking Population: Findings of National Defense Opinion Surveys", ICDS Analysis, December 2014, [https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2014/Juhan\\_Kivirahk\\_-\\_Integrating\\_Estonias\\_Russian-Speaking\\_Population.pdf](https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2014/Juhan_Kivirahk_-_Integrating_Estonias_Russian-Speaking_Population.pdf); Kristina Kallas, "Claiming the diaspora: Russia's compatriot policy and its reception by Estonian-Russian population", *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, 15(3) (2016), pp. 1–25, <https://www.ecmi.de/fileadmin/downloads/publications/JEMIE/2016/Kallas.pdf>; Ellu Saar, Siim Krussell and Jelena Helemae, "Russian-Speaking Immigrants in Post-Soviet Estonia: Towards Generation Fragmentation or Integration in Estonian Society", *Sociological Research Online* 22(2) (May 2017), [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317193611\\_Russian-Speaking\\_Immigrants\\_in\\_Post-Soviet\\_Estonia\\_Towards\\_Generation\\_Fragmentation\\_or\\_Integration\\_in\\_Estonian\\_Society](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317193611_Russian-Speaking_Immigrants_in_Post-Soviet_Estonia_Towards_Generation_Fragmentation_or_Integration_in_Estonian_Society) (accessed 8 April 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Ammon Cheskin, *Russian Speakers in Post-Soviet Latvia: Discursive Identity Strategies*, (Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Olga Davydova-Minguet Tiina Sotkasiir, Teemu Oivo and Janne Riihiläinen, "Suomen venäjänkieliset mediankäyttäjinä", 27 October 2016, <https://tietokayttoon.fi/documents/10616/1266558/Suomen+venäjänkieliset/0265446a-afd4-4c51-92dc-2d16350ac8c7/Suomen+venäjänkieliset.pdf?version=1.0> (accessed 7 April 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Tatiana Golova, "Post-Sowjetische Migranten in Deutschland und Transnationale Social-Media Öffentlichkeiten", ZOIS Report nr. 2/2018, Centre for East European and International Studies, July 2018, [https://www.zois-berlin.de/fileadmin/media/Dateien/ZOIS\\_Reports/ZOIS\\_Report\\_2\\_2018.pdf](https://www.zois-berlin.de/fileadmin/media/Dateien/ZOIS_Reports/ZOIS_Report_2_2018.pdf) (accessed 7 April 2019).

example, a Disinformation Resilience Index was constructed for Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>6</sup>

This analysis attempts to integrate the various dimensions of the topic and, while bringing out the distinctive features of each country, also draw attention to the similarities of Russia's actions. It looks at the situation of Russian-speakers in Europe, focusing on and comparing three case studies: Finland, Germany and Estonia. The three cases were chosen for analysis because each contains a significant Russian community, while differing in origin, outlook and status. The aim of this analysis is to investigate whether Russia views these communities as targets for manipulation and how the respective communities and states react. Anonymous expert interviews were conducted between September 2018 and February 2019<sup>7</sup> in all three countries and relevant documents and media material were analysed. The analysis looks at the general conditions of Russian-speaking communities in these countries and their level of integration and political participation.

The analysis is structured as follows. The first section sets out the general background, definitions and statistics concerning the three minority groups. Section 2 briefly examines the policy of the "Russian world". The third, main part of the paper analyses the three cases of Finland, Germany and Estonia separately. In each case, examples are provided of mobilisation of Russian-speakers by Russia. In conclusion, the three cases are compared, highlighting the heterogeneity of Russian-speakers and the limited success of Russia's efforts to use them as a tool of influence.

## 1. DEFINITIONS AND STATISTICS

The definition of Russian-speakers is fluid and multi-layered. The core are the citizens of Russia. The next layer are ethnic Russians who are not Russian citizens. In addition, there are Russian-speakers who are not ethnically

<sup>6</sup> Olga Chyzhova (coordinator), *Disinformation Resilience in Central and Eastern Europe* (Kyiv: Ukrainian Prism et al., 2018), [http://stratpol.sk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/DRI\\_CEE\\_2018.pdf](http://stratpol.sk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/DRI_CEE_2018.pdf) (accessed 8 April 2019).

<sup>7</sup> In total, 16 interviews were conducted in this period.

Russian, such as Ukrainians and Belarusians. One unusual example of this group are ethnic German repatriates, a group that will be dealt with in this paper separately. Finally, the extreme outer layer comprises migrants from the Soviet Union, and other people who feel some connection to Russia and the “Russian World”.

The fluid definition results in variable statistics. One can note that the Russian authorities would like the number to be as high as possible. When talking about the number of Russian-speakers outside Russia, a figure of about 30 million is often mentioned.<sup>8</sup> However, this number is clearly exaggerated, as verifiable statistics for the former Soviet Union excluding the Russian Federation are around 15 million,<sup>9</sup> and it is highly unlikely that an equal number live in countries outside the former Soviet Union.

Germany has the largest Russian-speaking population outside the former Soviet Union in absolute terms, with about three million. They are split into three groups: from largest to smallest, Russian-speaking ethnic Germans (Aussiedler), ethnic Russians, and Jews. Official statistics for 2018 list 250,000 citizens of the Russian Federation living in Germany.<sup>10</sup> According to 2017 statistics, 1,381,000 people (around 1.7% of the total population) have a migration background<sup>11</sup> connected to the Russian Federation. Another 1,237,000 residents (around 1.5% of the total) have a migration background connected to Kazakhstan.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> As cited by, for example, Mikhail Suslov in “IV kongress sootcheststvennikov, prozhivajushikh za rubezhom”, October 2012, <http://vksrs.com/upload/iblock/ecb/ecb38f4dad5c3a0fc4bd475fa40238bf.pdf> (accessed 3 December 2018).

<sup>9</sup> Liliya Karachurina, “Demography and migration in post-Soviet countries”, in Arkady Moshes & András Rác (eds), *What has remained of the USSR, exploring the erosion of post-Soviet space*, FIIA Report 58 (Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs, February 2019), p. 188, <https://www.fiaa.fi/en/publication/what-has-remained-of-the-ussr> (accessed 28 February 2019).

<sup>10</sup> DeStatis, Statistisches Bundesamt, “Migration und Integration,” <https://www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/GesellschaftStaat/Bevoelkerung/MigrationIntegration/MigrationIntegration.html> (accessed 3 December 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Meaning that the person or his/her ancestors were born elsewhere or previously had another citizenship.

<sup>12</sup> DeStatis. Statistisches Bundesamt, “Bevölkerung in Privathaushalten nach Migrationshintergrund im weiteren Sinn nach ausgewählten Herkunftsländern,” <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Tabellen/migrationshintergrund-staatsangehoerigkeit-staaten.html> (accessed 3 December 2018).

According to 2018 data, 487,250 residents of Latvia define themselves as Russian, constituting around 25% of the total population.<sup>13</sup> In Estonia, data for 2017 show that the total population was 1,315,635 and that ethnic Russians numbered 330,206 (around 27%). In Lithuania, the proportion of ethnic Russians in 2018 was 4.5% (some 126,000 of around 2,800,000 residents).<sup>14</sup> In Finland, the number of Russian-speakers has grown steadily since 1991, when it was fewer than 10,000, and in 2018 was approaching 80,000, which constitutes around 1.5% of the total population.<sup>15</sup>

Russian-speakers can also be categorised as either “imperial” or “immigrant” communities. Imperial communities emerged on the margins of the collapsed Soviet Union without leaving their homes in the newly established or restored independent states. In the case of the EU, pure cases of imperial minorities exist only in the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Finland was incorporated into the Russian Empire prior to World War I, and there are some descendants of Russians from that time, but this is not relevant to the present-day situation, as the overwhelming majority are later migrants.

There are some Russian-speakers living in every country of the EU. One group consists of professionals who came with a so-called “Blue Card”.<sup>16</sup> In general, these people do not have a group identity, though they are certainly connected to Russia. Some moved because they wished to live in a freer society, more conducive to creative activities or unbiased research than their home country. Others (some of whom are close to Russian power elites) have come not because they are attracted to European or liberal democratic

<sup>13</sup> Latvian Central Statistical Office, “Population by ethnicity in 21 development centres at the beginning of the year,” [http://data1.csb.gov.lv/pxweb/en/iedz/iedz\\_iedzrakst/IRG080.px/?rxid=d8284c56-0641-451c-8b70-b6297b58f464](http://data1.csb.gov.lv/pxweb/en/iedz/iedz_iedzrakst/IRG080.px/?rxid=d8284c56-0641-451c-8b70-b6297b58f464) (accessed 10 December 2018).

<sup>14</sup> Statistics Lithuania, “Proportion of the population by ethnicity, compared to the total resident population,” <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize?indicator=S3R162#/> (accessed 12 February 2019).

<sup>15</sup> Statistics Finland, “Population by language 1990-2018: Russian,” [http://vertinet2.stat.fi/verti/graph/viewpage.aspx?ifile=quicktables/maahanmuuttajat/kieli\\_1&lang=1&rinid=158&gskey=2&mover=no](http://vertinet2.stat.fi/verti/graph/viewpage.aspx?ifile=quicktables/maahanmuuttajat/kieli_1&lang=1&rinid=158&gskey=2&mover=no) (accessed 3 December 2018).

<sup>16</sup> The EU Blue Card is a work- and residence permit for non-EU/EEA nationals. It provides comprehensive socioeconomic rights and a path towards permanent residence and EU citizenship.

values but for more instrumental reasons: to buy property and have a safe haven outside Russia, to do business (notably in London or Cyprus), or simply to have EU residence in order to come and go as they wish.

## 2. THE “RUSSIAN WORLD” POLICY

The concept of “Russian World” has become an all-embracing framework for action by the Russian authorities to unite those who they deem to be connected to it. It encompasses

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ethnic Russians, former Soviet citizens of different ethnicity, and those who just feel a link to Russian culture. It is a permissive and ambiguous concept that allows the Russian state to use Russian culture for instrumental or political purposes. The “Russian World” complements the earlier policy on “compatriots”, which was established by the Law on Compatriots (The Federal Law on the State Policy of the Russian Federation in Relation to Compatriots Abroad) of 1999. One premise of the “Russian World” concept is that centres of Russian culture exist all over the world and are used as tools of influence.

Officially, the Russkiy Mir Foundation aims to promote Russian culture and describes itself as an analogue of the Goethe Institutes and the British Council. At the same time, it is the product of a state initiative and has a clear political character. The centres claim, for example, to disseminate correct information by spreading the messages of Russian state media.

In addition to keeping Russian compatriots connected to Russia, Russia also actively promotes a policy of repatriation. The compatriot policy and “Russian World” concept evolved somewhat in 2018, when the Sixth World Congress of Compatriots took place in Moscow. President Vladimir Putin’s speech there largely repeated familiar narratives, but a new emphasis was placed on the repatriation of compatriots. On the

day of this speech, Putin signed the Concept of State Migration Policy, and promised to develop the Programme of Voluntary Repatriation of Compatriots.<sup>17</sup> The concept’s top priority is the creation of favourable conditions for the resettlement of compatriots to Russia. This involves fast-tracked rules for entry, residency rights and citizenship. According to the concept, Russia’s main interest lies in people who are “native speakers of the Russian language and bearers of the Russian culture”. Less prominently, it also encourages the migration of “those foreign citizens who do not link their own future or the future of their children with Russia, but view Russia as a country with favourable conditions to meet their economic, social and cultural needs.”<sup>18</sup> In terms of real outcomes, the programme is much more popular in the countries of Central Asia and Ukraine than it is in EU member states.<sup>19</sup>

The main goal of all these initiatives is to keep all the people connected to Russia linked to the state. These policies present Russian-speakers as a homogeneous group, disregarding their actual heterogeneity, as described below.

## 3. RESPONSES OF HOST NATIONS

The concept of securitisation helps to shed light on the reactions of both the minorities themselves and the host nations to Russia’s actions. In the case of identity securitisation, threats to identity are “presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure”.<sup>20</sup> Something that is securitised might be perceived as a threat to one’s own country and society and might also be used to threaten somebody else. In the case of Russian-speakers,

<sup>17</sup> President of the Russian Federation, “Vsemirnyi Kongress Sootechestvennikov, Prozhivayushikh za Rubezhom”, 31 October 2018, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59003> (accessed 4 December 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Olga Gulina, “A Clarion Call for Compatriots”, Riddle, 23 January 2019, <https://www.ridl.io/en/a-clarion-call-for-far-flung-compatriots/> (accessed 25 January 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Among applications for repatriation in the fourth quarter of 2017, only 0.2% came from the three Baltic states.

<sup>20</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).

Russia securitises its policies towards these minorities, claiming they are under threat. Russian political discourse often uses the language of “protection of Russians abroad”, which can be traced back to the general building of Russian identity.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the dominant national groups in the host nations sometimes feel threatened by the presence on their territory of numerous non-titular ethnic groups. It is important to note that the official policies of host nations have been inclusive of the minorities, who are described as being part of society. In the host nations described in this paper much attention is paid to communicating this unifying message, the media literacy of the population, and integration.

*The overall challenge is to build greater resilience, for which societal integration is highly important. Integration must be a general and holistic policy, rather than sporadic and ad hoc*

Russia’s actions have motivated the host governments to design counter-measures and have made resilience an important concern. One approach advocated by experts is to raise overall media and political literacy rather than counter every instance of disinformation emanating from Russia. It is also important to coordinate the overall European response. This task has been addressed by the East Stratcom Task Force of the European External Action Service in Brussels, the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga and the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki. The overall challenge is to build greater resilience, for which societal integration is highly important. Integration must be a general and holistic policy, rather than sporadic and ad hoc.

### 3.1. FINLAND

There are over 75,000 Russian-speakers in Finland, and this group is very heterogeneous in terms of ethnic origin, length of residence and reasons for immigrating. Some came during the Russian Empire, others later from various parts of the USSR. Altogether, they comprise about 1.5% of the population. This does not seem much but, given that Finland has historically been a remarkably homogeneous country, this community attracts interest. The Russian community is mainly concentrated in the Helsinki area, but also in Eastern Finland, near the border with Russia.

In general, Finland’s Russian-speakers are not a subject of public debate in the country. They are people who voluntarily chose to move to Finland, and thus would like to be part of society. They are preoccupied with matters of daily life and are not very visible. Their participation in local political life is low compared to other communities, such as Somalis.

Russian-speakers generally feel quite content, but they nevertheless sometimes feel discriminated against when applying for a job. They are mostly well educated, but not always well integrated into society. Competence in the Finnish language is important, and their attitudes are also affected by whether or not they have Finnish friends. Some of them tend to live in their own bubble.<sup>22</sup>

Finland’s official policy supports the right of minorities to preserve their national identity, but at the same time they are expected to become part of Finnish society. The Cultura Foundation, aimed exclusively at the country’s Russian-speakers, was established by parliament in 2013 and supports several integration projects, such as Multilingual Finnish Youth and Cultura Talk.<sup>23</sup>

Media research in 2016 identified four distinct audiences among the Russian minority: pro-Russian, Russian-speaking, transnational “critical”, and those who are disillusioned and

<sup>21</sup> Anna Tiido, “The Russian Language as a Soft Power Tool: The construction of National Identity by the Kremlin”, ICDS/EFPI Analysis, October 2018, <https://icds.ee/the-russian-language-as-a-soft-power-tool-the-construction-of-national-identity-by-the-kremlin/> (accessed 7 April 2019).

<sup>22</sup> Author interview, Helsinki, September 2018.

<sup>23</sup> For details see Cultura Foundation, “Projects”, <https://culturas.fi/en/project/> (accessed 12 March 2019).

alienated from politics.<sup>24</sup> The 2014 Ukraine crisis made divisions in the community more visible, and there is now a conflict of opinions, which often takes the form of heated discussions on social media.

Despite this, there is virtually no Russian-language media in Finland. The free printed newspaper *Spektr* is not financially viable. Russian-language reporting is undertaken by the Finnish national broadcaster Yle, and is frequently cited in media outlets in Russia, thereby conveying a European message and the standards of European journalism to Russia.

Finland's Russian-speaking community is a target for Russian disinformation. The most well-known example is the "child custody cases" (see box 1). Russia's objective in this campaign was to undermine trust in the Finnish authorities. The campaign was not very successful, however, as Finland's Russian-speaking community is reluctant to get involved in political disputes.

As for mobilisation, the most visible events are connected with the remembrance of World War II. In 2018, an "Immortal Regiment" event was organised in Helsinki, at which, according to estimates, between 80 and 200 people took part, beginning with a march through the city centre. The idea was to march carrying posters of one's ancestors who were killed in the war. In Russia itself, this used to be a grass-roots initiative but it was later taken over by the state for propaganda purposes. The event in Helsinki was well organised, and some of the participants were reportedly brought from outside Finland especially for the occasion. The march involved Soviet-era songs over loudspeakers and ended with an event in a cultural centre. For many participants, this atmosphere meant a lot in terms of nostalgia and emotional inclusiveness. Many people present knew one another, and the atmosphere was one of happiness and celebration.

In general, though, the Russian-speaking population in Finland tries to go unnoticed, does not integrate deeply, and does not participate in political activities. The minority group lacks a common ground; inside the active community,

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there are too many organisations which do not always get along with one another. In some fora, voices of frustration have increased, and there is indifference to integration. There are also negative emotions, but still a long way from mobilising against the authorities. Experts following internet discussions observed that some of the Russians participating felt that society is against them, and they are frustrated and more self-aware than other communities, and feel vulnerable. They also have very strong views, in particular towards Islam and the United States. But the social media frequented by the Russian-speaking minority mostly addresses everyday issues and offers peer support to newcomers.<sup>25</sup> In general, Russians would prefer to keep a low profile and participate in business rather than civic activities.

Finnish society is not inclined to put the Russian community in the limelight. At the same time, Finnish history provides grounds for caution about Russia. The Winter War against Stalin's USSR is a powerful memory and a reference point for Finnish identity. Although decades of coexistence and even constructive relations with the USSR followed, a cautious attitude towards Russia remains. Today, there is also an emphasis on building resilience against hybrid threats.

The Russian-speaking community became a topic of mainstream public debate during a dispute about dual citizenship in 2017. The national broadcaster Yle reported that Russian-Finnish dual nationals enlisting in the Finnish Army were subject to special treatment not applied to other dual nationals and were barred from receiving a security clearance. The

<sup>24</sup> Finnish Government Communications Department, "Russian speakers in Finland as media users - media travel with immigrants", 28 October 2016, [https://tietokayttoon.fi/en/article/-/asset\\_publisher/10616/suomen-venajankieliset-mediankayttajina-media-matkustaa-maahanmuuttajan-mukana](https://tietokayttoon.fi/en/article/-/asset_publisher/10616/suomen-venajankieliset-mediankayttajina-media-matkustaa-maahanmuuttajan-mukana) (accessed 12 March 2019).

<sup>25</sup> Author interview, Helsinki, September 2018.



report claimed that there existed previously unpublicised classified guidelines concerning Russians.<sup>26</sup> As a result of the public debate, the government introduced amendments to three laws on the Defence Forces, the Border Guard and the National Defence College. The changes, adopted by parliament in March 2019, request candidates for official positions in the three bodies to prove that they do not hold other nationalities or have beliefs that could endanger national security.<sup>27</sup> Under the legislation in force before these changes, there were no general legal restrictions arising from any citizenship issues.

Despite such episodes, Finnish society remains generally tolerant towards the Russian-speaking minority. The Finnish economy benefits from Russian tourism and Finns who have Russian friends are more tolerant than those who do not. But some experts argue that more recent developments (since 2014) have worsened attitudes, and there are indications that the Russian minority itself feels threatened by this change.<sup>28</sup>

Attitudes towards the Russian regime are quite negative. For example, an opinion poll in July 2018 ahead of the Putin–Trump meeting in Helsinki, indicated that 35% of Finns described their view of Putin as “very negative” and 41% “fairly negative”.<sup>29</sup>

As for businesses, EU sanctions against Russia are generally accepted, and it is clearly understood that they are needed.

The Finnish government pays close attention to the resilience of society, both domestically and internationally. The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, located in Helsinki, was established in 2017

and coordinates the work of experts on various threats. Domestically, the research project GLASE is designed to help coordinate all aspects of resilience.<sup>30</sup> The project deals with society’s capacity to cope with strain and resist pressure. The approach is holistic,

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taking into account many threats, including actions by the extreme right, controversies over migration and refugees, Russia’s political activities, political youth organisations and Russian nationalism. Resilience is regarded as an important dimension of security.

One example of Russia being able to put Finnish society under strain was the case of the refugees crossing the Finnish–Russian border en masse by bicycle in late 2015 and early 2016. This was clearly coordinated from the Russian side, as it is not possible to access the Russian border zone without permission. The most recent cases of alleged Russian influence include the actions of the real-estate agency Airiston Helmi, which raised the wider issue of land acquisition by foreigners in areas that are important for national security, and Russia’s disruption of GPS signals during the recent NATO exercise Trident Juncture 2018 in the High North.

The Russian minority does not take part in these events, but the ramifications can contribute to their alienation and a worsening of relations within society. If Russian-speakers begin to feel they are second-class citizens, they could be mobilised on ethnic grounds. For now, however, experts agree that such a scenario is improbable, as Finnish social fabric remains inclusive and strong.

### The “Child Custody” Cases

BOX 1

The topic of “child custody” emerged with the “Salonen affair” in autumn 2009. A Russian citizen, Rimma Salonen,

<sup>26</sup> “Yle: Defence Forces applying restrictions to Russian-Finnish dual citizens in armed service”, Yle, 31 January 2017, [https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/yle\\_defence\\_forces\\_applying\\_restrictions\\_to\\_russian-finnish\\_dual\\_citizens\\_in\\_armed\\_service/9434289](https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/yle_defence_forces_applying_restrictions_to_russian-finnish_dual_citizens_in_armed_service/9434289) (accessed 9 January 2019).

<sup>27</sup> “Laki puolustusvoimista annetun lain 37 §:n muuttamisesta” (Amendments to Section 37 of the Act on the Defence Forces), <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2019/20190442> (accessed 25 May 2019).

<sup>28</sup> Author interview, Helsinki, September 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Karoliina Kanerva and Mikael Vehkaoja, “Finns dislike Trump even more than they dislike Putin”, *Seura*, 9 July 2018, <https://seura.fi/asiat/ajankohtaista/finns-dislike-donald-trump-even-more-than-vladimir-putin/> (accessed 9 January 2019).

<sup>30</sup> GLASE, “In English”, <https://glase.fi/in-english/> (accessed 13 March 2019).

was convicted of kidnapping her child in Tampere. This event was labelled by the Russian media as “one of the first Finnish-Russian children’s scandals”. In 2011, the case of Anastassia Zavgorodnyaya became famous in the Russian media, as the Finnish authorities were alleged to have taken her four children away from her.<sup>31</sup> Later on, there were more cases of Finnish social authorities being accused of taking Russian children away from their parents. Often, the cases were connected to divorces between Finnish and Russian spouses, and legal battles over custody of the children. During this media campaign, Finnish citizen Johan Bäckman appeared in the Russian media as a “defender” of these children’s rights. In 2018, Bäckman received a 12-month suspended jail sentence for aggravated defamation and stalking Jessikka Aro, a journalist who had been writing extensively on Russia’s information operations.

The child custody cases often involve beating, which is acceptable in Russia but not in Finland, therefore entailing investigation by Finnish social services. In 2017, Russian citizen Elena Smoleychuk was the subject of another investigation for beating her 12-year-old daughter with a t-shirt. Bäckman claimed that the reason for these investigations by Finnish authorities was the mother’s ethnicity.<sup>32</sup> These cases had an impact on Russian-Finnish relations, and Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov harshly criticised the Finnish authorities for their handling of the situation.<sup>33</sup> Tensions ran high, but the problem was finally resolved through cooperation between the Russian and Finnish ombudsmen, who have met regularly since 2016.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> “Finskije vlasti zabrali u rossijanki *chetveryh detei*”, Rossiiskaja Gazeta, 29 September 2012, <https://rg.ru/2012/09/29/deti-anons.html> (accessed 8 January 2019).

<sup>32</sup> “I snova donos”, Rossiiskaya Gazeta, 12 November 2012, <https://rg.ru/2012/11/12/finskije-vlasti-iziali-u-rossiianki-12-letniuiu-doch.html> (accessed 8 January 2019).

<sup>33</sup> “Lavrov blasts Finland over child custody case”, Yle uutiset, 8 October 2012, [https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/lavrov\\_blasts\\_finland\\_over\\_child\\_custody\\_case/6326913](https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/lavrov_blasts_finland_over_child_custody_case/6326913) (accessed 8 January 2019).

<sup>34</sup> “Spory ob opekunstve v russkoyazychnyh semyah ushli iz zheltoi pressy – problem sovместno reshajutsja sotsialnymi organami Finljandii I Rossii”, Yle uutiset, 13 September 2018, [https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/novosti/spory\\_ob\\_opekunstve\\_v\\_russkoyazychnyh\\_semyakh\\_ushli\\_iz\\_zheltoi\\_pressy\\_problemy\\_sovместno\\_reshayutsya\\_sotsialnymi\\_organami\\_finlyandii\\_i\\_rossii/10401987](https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/novosti/spory_ob_opekunstve_v_russkoyazychnyh_semyakh_ushli_iz_zheltoi_pressy_problemy_sovместno_reshayutsya_sotsialnymi_organami_finlyandii_i_rossii/10401987) (accessed 8 April 2019).

## 3.2. GERMANY

In absolute numbers, Germany has the biggest number of Russian-speakers in the EU. The figure is hard to estimate, as the statistics do not show second-generation migrants, especially if they are “Russian Germans” – ethnic Germans who were repatriated, mostly in the 1990s. The total number is around three million. These people cannot be described as a “community”, due to their extreme diversity. By far the largest group are Russian Germans, or Aussiedlers – the ethnic Germans who were invited to resettle in Germany from the Soviet Union, and especially from Kazakhstan.

Russian Germans were redistributed across Germany by quota and also tended to settle tightly together in big cities, especially Berlin. In their sociological portrait, they are mostly blue-collar workers, and quite conservative in their political views. In the view of experts, their outlook was inherited from their past in the Soviet Union, which declared itself multi-ethnic but in reality did not manage diversity well.<sup>35</sup> As these ethnic Germans preserved their identity for more than two hundred years in Russia, and later Kazakhstan (most having been deported there by Stalin), they distinguished themselves from the surrounding Russians or Kazakhs. Their expectation of Germany was to find an ideal society, characterised by values such as punctuality and order. However, German society had evolved considerably, and what they found did not coincide with their ideals. They had the culture shock of having to live in a very diverse culture. They found a modern, industrial and post-industrial nation.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, these settlers were grateful to the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) for having invited them. In addition, because of their conservative values, the Russian-speakers naturally voted for the CDU.

The second group is diverse in its own right, as it comprises ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians and other nationalities from the

<sup>35</sup> Author interview, Berlin, November 2018.

<sup>36</sup> Svetlana Dementeva, Coletta Maria Franzke and Olga Loyko, “Russian-German Immigrants in Germany and their Intercultural Communication”, *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Science* 166 (Proceeding of the International Conference on Research Paradigms Transformation in Social Sciences 2014), 7 January 2015, pp. 516–20, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042814067020> (accessed 8 April 2019).

former Soviet Union, some of whom came to Germany as family members of Russian German or Jewish immigrants. Some of the Russians came later, sometimes because they were seeking more freedom than in present-day Russia. There are also some who obtained the EU Blue Card.

The third group are Jews, who were also invited to resettle in Germany, mostly from the Soviet Union. Some experts think that this group is much more visible in Germany as, for example, in one small town the Jewish community increased from almost zero to 700.<sup>37</sup> They also built synagogues, which was a change of scenery for post-war Germany. Jewish immigrants are mostly better educated than Russian Germans and hold higher-qualified jobs.

Overall, it can be said that the Russian language is the uniting factor for all these people. Their media habits are very diverse, with many watching Russian state TV channels and Russian websites and social media sites. As elsewhere, the Russian state media is regarded as a good source of entertainment, because of its perceived high quality. The political message is indirect, and for this reason it hits

*Overall, it can be said that the Russian language is the uniting factor for all these people. Their media habits are very diverse, with many watching Russian state TV channels and Russian websites and social media sites*

home. Research shows that, although this group follows both Russian and German media, they show greater trust in the Russian.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, experts believe that the influence of the Russian state media is quite limited. The target groups also follow German media, and the messages they receive are thus very diverse. The results of disinformation and propaganda can be unexpected, and there are many controversies in the community.

<sup>37</sup> Author interview, Berlin, November 2018.

<sup>38</sup> Boris Nemtsov Foundation, "Russians in Germany", October 2016, <https://www.freiheit.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2016/10/10/boris-nemtsov-foundationrussiansingermanyprint.pdf> (accessed 8 April 2019).

In general, the Russian Germans may be called "invisible migrants", as they seldom feature in discussions about the Russian community.<sup>39</sup> Because they are ethnically German, they were never considered alien by the population. Nevertheless, there were difficulties over integration because many of these immigrants imported social problems found in Russia (such as alcoholism), and these have received little attention. Across the Russian-speaking community as a whole, there are differences over integration. In the main, integration

*In general, the Russian Germans may be called "invisible migrants", as they seldom feature in discussions about the Russian community*

programmes for Russian Germans have been focused on language proficiency, and participation in these programmes depended on personal interest. Some of this group have not integrated and continue to live in a bubble. But in general, Russian-speakers have good language skills and are well integrated, especially compared to other ethnic minorities.

At the same time, their level of political participation is not high.

An important milestone in German attitudes towards Russian-speakers was the "Lisa case" of 2016 (see box 2). This raised the profile of the issue among the general public, and for a short time it remained in the limelight. However, it did not lead to an in-depth examination of the place of

Russian-speakers in German society. The "Lisa case" showed that Russian-speakers are able to mobilise themselves, and this mobilisation revealed something about their connections in the community. Research established that there are collective community structures in social media networks.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Dmitri Stratievski, "Russian-speaking Germans: Who are they?", Intersection, 25 November 2017, <http://intersectionproject.eu/article/russia-europe/russian-speaking-germans-who-are-they> (accessed 7 April 2019).

<sup>40</sup> Tatiana Golova, "Social media networks of the post-Soviet minority in Germany", ZOIS Spotlight 26/2018, Centre for East European and International Studies, 11 July 2018, <https://en.zois-berlin.de/publications/zois-spotlight-2018/social-media-networks-of-the-post-soviet-minority-in-germany/> (accessed 11 January 2019).

In the run-up to the Bundestag elections in 2017, Russian influence was a big topic. Alternative für Deutschland is reported to have links to Russia.<sup>41</sup> For this far-right party, Russian Germans are a resource, as they share the same ethnicity and the same skin colour. The AfD has relied on Russian Germans to share their electoral

*Alternative für Deutschland is reported to have links to Russia. For this far-right party, Russian Germans are a resource, as they share the same ethnicity and the same skin colour*

material in Russian. Voting patterns show that many voters of Russian/Soviet descent shifted from the CDU to the AfD. The latter skilfully exploited the group's grievances as the migration crisis erupted. Among the newly elected AfD members of the Bundestag who have a so-called migration background (i.e. they or at least one of their parents are not German citizens by birth) are two ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union. Both were born in Kazakhstan and emigrated to Germany in the mid-1990s. They are the only Bundestag members with a Russian German background.<sup>42</sup>

Although "Russian World" activity is quite limited in Germany, there have been some events. On 9 May each year, for example, a commemorative gathering takes place in Berlin's Treptower Park, site of one of three memorials in the city honouring the 80,000 Soviet soldiers who died during the Battle of Berlin. As in such gatherings outside Germany, the meeting is marked with St George's ribbons, Soviet songs and dressing up in military uniforms. Since 2015, "Immortal Regiment" events have also been organised in Germany. Russian sources claimed that 3,000

people marched to the Soviet war memorial in the Tiergarten in May 2019.<sup>43</sup>

It must be re-emphasised that the Russian-speaking community rarely features in discussions about Russia as such. This subject, once a matter of consensus, has become increasingly contentious. Those long accustomed to viewing Russia as a friendly country and a strategic partner with a positive role in the German economy have been unsettled by the deterioration in relations between Russia and Europe, especially since 2014, and the emergence of hybrid threats emanating from Russia, not to mention chancellor Merkel's

instrumental role in maintaining EU sanctions against Russia. Feelings are further complicated by the legacy of World War II and the deep sense of guilt and responsibility still harboured by Germans.

*The targets of Russian information policy are not exclusively Russian-speakers, let alone those of Russian descent. This policy has been instrumental, opportunistic and even cynical*

The targets of Russian information policy are not exclusively Russian-speakers, let alone those of Russian descent. This policy has been instrumental, opportunistic and even cynical. Moreover, it is still the case that Russian influence derives more benefit from economic factors (e.g. Nord Stream 2) than information warfare.<sup>44</sup> Germany's small community of Russian-speakers are a tool of convenience, but not a major factor in Russian policy. Those who have found freedom and prosperity in Germany are not always easy to influence, whatever their maternal language or ethnicity.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, "Documents link AfD Parliamentarian to Moscow", 12 April 2019, Spiegel Online. <https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/documents-link-afd-parliamentarian-to-moscow-a-1261509.html> (accessed 23 May 2019).

<sup>42</sup> Tatiana Golova, "Russian Germans after the Bundestag election", ZOiS Spotlight 25/2017, Centre for East European and International Studies, 5 October 2017, <https://en.zois-berlin.de/publications/zois-spotlight-2017/russian-germans-after-the-bundestag-election/> (accessed 11 January 2019).

<sup>43</sup> "Bessmertny polk vyshel na ulitsy Berlina", 9 May 2019, <https://news.ru/yevropa/bessmertnyj-polok-vyshel-na-ulicy-berlina/> (accessed 3 June 2019).

<sup>44</sup> Author interview, Berlin, November 2019.

## BOX 2

**The “Lisa case”**

The notorious case of a 13-year-old girl who had gone missing for 30 hours dominated the headlines and much of German public debate for two weeks in January 2016. As reported by Russian TV broadcaster First Channel, the girl was raped by non-European migrants. The story turned out to be false, as the German police were able to establish that she had spent the night in question with a friend. The story, intensively reported in Russian domestic and international media, created diplomatic tension between Germany and Russia. Russian international media outlets such as RT, Sputnik and RT Deutsch reported on the case. In addition, social media and far-right groups publicised the fake story.

This extensive reporting led to organised demonstrations in at least 43 German towns. All these protests employed the same official slogan: “We are against violence”. The demonstrations were also reported by German mainstream media. At the height of the affair, Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov twice expressed his concerns about the inability of the German police and legal system to take such cases seriously owing to the cult of political correctness.

The speed of mobilisation reflected the popularity of Russian state media among Russian-speakers. Social media networks, notably Odnoklassniki and Vkontakte, also played an important role. Calls to protest were confined to and disseminated within small groups, relying on contact lists as well as relatives, friends, acquaintances and colleagues of a similar political persuasion.<sup>45</sup>

### 3.3. ESTONIA

The situation of Russian-speakers in Estonia has been thoroughly researched and is well documented. People of non-Estonian descent comprise about 32% of the population. The data for 2017 show that the total population

was 1,315,635 and that ethnic Russians comprised 330,206 of them (around 27%), while other non-Estonians were 68,024 (5.5% of the total).<sup>46</sup> The researchers distinguish ethnic Russians from other non-Estonian ethnicities, as Estonia is home to about 200 ethnic groups and about 160 languages are spoken. There are Tatars, Ingrians, Roma and other communities. Because the numbers of these other non-Estonian ethnic groups are low, and because they tend to be linguistically Russophone, the majority population tends to regard all other non-Estonian ethnicities as one group. This is reinforced by the perception that these smaller groups assimilated into the Russian rather than the ethnically Estonian population.

The origins of the non-Estonian communities are diverse, encompassing earlier waves of immigration starting from Orthodox Old Believers around Lake Peipus in the 17th century, all the way through the 20th century during the Civil War in Soviet Russia, with the biggest group arriving during the Soviet occupation. This largest group of migrants can be defined as an “imperial minority”, as they did not migrate to a different country, but arrived mostly to work in the Soviet Union. Thus, when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, they remained in their own homes, but found themselves residents of a newly restored country and jurisdiction. The imperial minority does not have any experience of actual migration, and in this it is different from later newcomers who are more willing to integrate. The newcomers feel greater control over their own destiny, and thus are more active in learning the new language and integrating into the host society.

Under the laws of the restored Republic of Estonia, only individuals descended from residents of the pre-1940 republic are automatically entitled to citizenship. Those ethnic Russians who resided in Estonia at the time – including in Petseri county, which was part of Estonia – and their descendants were granted citizenship. In addition, people who could prove their Estonian descent were granted citizenship on the principle of *jus sanguinis*. Moreover, those on the Citizens’ Committees

<sup>45</sup> Nikolay Mitrokhin, “The ‘Russian World’ in Germany”, Eurozine, 6 June 2017, <https://www.eurozine.com/the-russian-world-in-germany/> (accessed 8 December 2018).

<sup>46</sup> Statistics Estonia, “Rahvaarv rahvuse järgi, 1. jaanuar, aasta,” <https://www.stat.ee/34267> (accessed 7 December 2018).

list of supporters of Estonian independence were granted citizenship irrespective of their ethnicity. All others are subject to a naturalisation process, which includes tests on language and knowledge of the Estonian Constitution. These rules created resentment among those Russian-speakers who considered Estonia their home, many of them having been born in Estonia. In general, ethnic Estonians have a strong sense of national identity and consider the country's history an important element shaping their outlook. By contrast, ethnic Russians tend to regard current policies and attitudes as unjust and discriminatory.

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From the mid-1990s, the need for a more sympathetic and comprehensive approach to integration of non-Estonians was acknowledged by both society and the government. In 1998, a new Integration Programme was adopted.<sup>47</sup> Its main focus was on the provision of resources for raising proficiency in the Estonian language. A more dramatic and significant milestone was the Bronze Soldier crisis of April 2007, sparked by the removal of the controversial Soviet "Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn" (and the exhumation and reburial of the remains of Soviet soldiers) from the centre of the city to the military cemetery. Violent protests by Russian-speakers erupted, accompanied by looting, the destruction of property and, not least, a comprehensive cyber-attack, originating from Russia, against the country's political and financial infrastructure. Some 200 people were arrested. The crisis brought relations between Estonia and Russia to a dangerous low. One lesson drawn from these events was to approach integration more inclusively, not

<sup>47</sup> The need for the integration programme was first decided by the government in 1998. See Estonian Government, "Riiklik programm 'Integratsioon Eesti ühiskonnas 2000-2007,'" Riigiteataja, RTL 2000, 49, 740, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/82230> (accessed 24 January 2019).

focusing only on language training, but paying more attention to civil society.

The results of these programmes have been mixed. The latest integration monitoring survey (2017) cites some positive results: better command of the Estonian language and awareness of the need to study it, and agreement on the need to institute Estonian-language instruction in kindergartens. It also shows that a larger proportion of non-ethnic Estonians now have an Estonian national identity.<sup>48</sup> Among problems, the survey cited inequality in the labour market (especially with regard to non-Estonian women). These inequalities can reinforce community segregation because the lower paid naturally live in areas where property is cheaper. In-depth research by the Institute of Baltic Studies (2016) showed four major and intertwined contributory factors to labour-market inequality across ethnic lines: language proficiency, educational attainment and choices, cultural attitudes, and miscellaneous

attitudinal and structural factors (gender stereotypes, limited mobility, discrimination, regional differences, unhelpfulness of state institutions).<sup>49</sup> Lack of integration is particularly striking in the public sector, where only 2% of public servants are of non-Estonian origin. Lack of information and self-ghettoisation ("they won't take me anyway") might explain more of this than conscious discrimination on the part of these institutions.

*Ethnic Estonians and non-Estonians tend to inhabit separate linguistic spaces, limiting interethnic communication to work, study and the public sphere*

In the main, ethnic Estonians and non-Estonians tend to inhabit separate linguistic

<sup>48</sup> "National identity" here means a special sociological indicator constructed by researchers and consisting of factors such as respect for Estonian state symbols, feeling that the state protects one's rights, and self-identification with the Estonian nation.

<sup>49</sup> Triin Pohla, Kristjan Kaldur and Kats Kivistik, *Eesti tööturu rahvuslik ja keeleline jaotus: meta-analüüs*, Tallinn: Balti Uuringute Instituut (Institute of Baltic Studies) and Praxis Center for Policy Studies, for the Estonian Ministry of Culture, 2016, <https://www.ibs.ee/wp-content/uploads/Eesti-t%C3%B6turu-rahvuslik-ja-keeleline-jaotus.pdf> (accessed 24 January 2019).

spaces, limiting interethnic communication to work, study and the public sphere. Only about a tenth of Estonian residents communicate with people of other ethnic backgrounds in their free time.<sup>50</sup> Experts have also identified four subspaces: villages and small towns that are exclusively Estonian-speaking; small cities such as Tartu, Pärnu and Viljandi, with some Russian-speakers but mostly Estonian-speaking; Tallinn, which is divided equally; and the county of Ida-Virumaa, where the Russian language predominates in everyday communication.

Estonian language instruction in schools and kindergartens has been high on the agenda. Estonian lawmakers foresaw the transition of all high schools (gümnaasium) to partial Estonian instruction, with 60% of instruction in Estonian by 2007. The Integration Monitoring survey shows that attitudes towards this transition are becoming more positive: in 2017, 78% of people of other ethnic backgrounds believed that learning in the Estonian language increases employment prospects for graduates of Russian-language schools. In comparison to the 2011 survey, there has been a positive change, as the corresponding figure then stood at 53%.<sup>51</sup> A small group of pro-Russian activists use present-day shortcomings as evidence of the fundamental injustice of Estonia's policies. For example, the "Russian School of Estonia" is an association opposing the transition to Estonian-language instruction; however, it is not considered influential. Russian mothers who want the best education for their children tend to enrol their children in Estonian-language kindergartens, but at the same time they call for state support of Russian-language education. The issue that needs further discussion in Estonia is the transition of other stages of education to Estonian in order to guarantee equal opportunities for everyone. There is general consensus in society that the transition should happen; the question is how to proceed. In general, the socio-political attitudes of

ethnic and non-ethnic Estonians are, at least to some degree, different. On average, Russian-speakers tend to be more conservative and

*The issue that needs further discussion in Estonia is the transition of other stages of education to Estonian in order to guarantee equal opportunities for everyone. There is general consensus in society that the transition should happen; the question is how to proceed*

more religious. But the most striking difference is in attitudes towards Russia. According to the 2018 survey "Public Opinion and National Defence", 70% of ethnic Estonians believe that membership of NATO constitutes Estonia's main security guarantee, while the figure for other ethnicities is 29%. "Cooperation and good relations with Russia" is perceived as an important security guarantee by 46% of non-Estonians, and only 15% of Estonians.<sup>52</sup>

To an important extent, Estonians and non-Estonians inhabit different information spaces, with non-Estonians rating Russian TV channels as an important source of information (71% as "very important" or "quite important"). Nevertheless, the most important source of information for non-Estonians is friends, family and acquaintances.<sup>53</sup> Yet they also are exposed to Estonian-language media. According to the Integration Monitoring survey, "In contrast to ethnic Estonians who live in a relatively homogeneous media space, people of other ethnicities are receiving somewhat contradictory media perspectives in relation to local and global events".<sup>54</sup> In addition, sociologists confirm that social media play an increasingly important role in overall media consumption by both groups, especially among young people. Among non-ethnic Estonians,

<sup>50</sup> "Integration Monitoring of the Estonian Society 2017: Key Findings", Institute of Baltic Studies and Praxis Center for Policy Studies, [https://www.kul.ee/sites/kulminn/files/9\\_kokkuvote\\_0.pdf](https://www.kul.ee/sites/kulminn/files/9_kokkuvote_0.pdf) (accessed 14 January 2019).

<sup>51</sup> "Integration Monitoring of the Estonian Society 2017: Education", Institute of Baltic Studies and Praxis Center for Policy Studies, [https://www.kul.ee/sites/kulminn/files/3\\_haridus\\_eng.pdf](https://www.kul.ee/sites/kulminn/files/3_haridus_eng.pdf) (accessed 14 January 2019).

<sup>52</sup> "Public Opinion and National Defence", Estonian Ministry of Defence, Autumn 2018, [http://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/elfinder/article\\_files/public\\_opinion\\_and\\_national\\_defence\\_2018\\_october\\_0.pdf](http://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/elfinder/article_files/public_opinion_and_national_defence_2018_october_0.pdf) (accessed 14 January 2019).

<sup>53</sup> "Integration Monitoring of the Estonian Society 2017: Media use and Information Fields", Institute of Baltic Studies and Praxis Center for Policy Studies, [https://www.kul.ee/sites/kulminn/files/6\\_meedia\\_eng.pdf](https://www.kul.ee/sites/kulminn/files/6_meedia_eng.pdf) (accessed 24 January 2019).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

it has become the most important source for 77% of people aged between 15 and 34. Media consumption reflects existing attitudes, but in turn also shapes them.

*The legacy of World War II/the Great Patriotic War and the celebration of its conclusion in Europe (VE Day on 8 May in the West, Victory Day on 9 May in the former USSR) are a major source of antagonism, as the Bronze Soldier episode dramatically demonstrated*

The legacy of World War II/the Great Patriotic War and the celebration of its conclusion in Europe (VE Day on 8 May in the West, Victory Day on 9 May in the former USSR) are a major source of antagonism, as the Bronze Soldier episode dramatically demonstrated. Today Russia vigorously exploits this antagonism with the symbols of victory, including St George's ribbons. The topic of the Russian-speaking community is politically very significant, especially during the election cycle. It is a prominent issue in pre-election debates and party support. Some small purely ethnic Russian parties used to run for election to parliament (for example, at the 1995 elections the Russian bloc won six

*Experts have noted that the ethnic divide becomes artificially sharp before elections, while in normal life it is far more benign*

of the 101 seats). But since 2012, there have been no ethnic Russian parties represented in the Riigikogu, as the majority of the Russian-speaking electorate votes for the Centre Party. However, this is certainly not an ethnicity-based party, as it has ethnic Estonian members, most notably among its leaders, including the former and current prime minister, Jüri Ratas. Experts have noted that the ethnic divide becomes artificially sharp before elections, while in normal life it is far more benign.

As for the influence of Russia, there are groups of active community members who are prone

to mobilisation against the Estonian state. The main issues of interest for the community remain the citizenship policy and the question of Russian-language education. The non-Estonian minority is very diverse. On the one hand, it is influenced by the core active members who are closely connected to the Russian Federation through various networks, including the "Russian World". On the other, the majority of the community are passive members. At the same time, the potential for mobilisation does exist, as there is a considerable number of people sharing similar media consumption patterns, historical memories, holiday celebrations and threat perceptions.

As far as counter-measures against disinformation are concerned, Estonia considers it important, among other things, to guarantee public awareness and education on media literacy. The establishment of the new Russian-language channel ETV+ in 2015 was a step towards giving the public correct and objective information in their mother tongue.

## COMPARISON AND CONCLUSIONS

Russia sees Russian-speakers abroad as an important resource for influence. The Compatriot policy, the concept of the "Russian World" and the repatriation policy continue to be important tools intended to bind those with "historical connections"

to Russia to the country's declared sphere of interest. It is fair to say that the Russian authorities securitise Russians abroad, treating them as a homogeneous group under threat

*The three cases analysed in this paper are very diverse in terms of the proportion of Russian-speakers in each society and their origins*

from their host societies. Moscow exaggerates their numbers as well as their grievances. At the same time, Russia uses these people and



issues instrumentally, as one tool in a larger toolbox. Although it is attentive to the condition of Russian communities, Russia also puts more resources into influencing other population groups with propaganda and fake news.

The three cases analysed in this paper are very diverse in terms of the proportion of Russian-speakers in each society and their origins. Finland represents an almost classic example of migration (with some minor exceptions of old emigrants and Ingrian Finns) with people coming voluntarily to the new country and being willing to integrate. The societal context of somewhat negative attitudes towards Putin's regime contributes to the fact that the Russian-speakers tend to be passive in political life and prefer to take care of their everyday life and problems. In Germany, the Russian-speakers also arrived voluntarily, but they were invited by the German government as ethnic Germans or Jews. They felt entitled to become part of society and are now having grievances as more migrants have been welcomed to Germany.

Both Finland and Germany have a marginal proportion of Russian-speakers compared to both the total population and other minorities. As a result, little securitisation of this topic takes place in the main, with the exception of some scandals erupting and jumping high up the agenda for short periods.

In Estonia, the Russian-speaking minority has a different origin, consisting mostly of people who moved there during Soviet times, without making a conscious decision to emigrate from the Soviet Union. This background has resulted in feelings of entitlement and negative attitudes towards the need to learn the Estonian language and adapt to the new realities in general. These attitudes, combined with a high proportion of the population being of non-Estonian origin, make this issue an important one on the political agenda. This importance also led society to acknowledge the need for integration, and advanced programmes and research are regularly conducted to raise awareness of the issue. It is fair to say that the Russian-speakers of Estonia are more securitised than those in the other cases examined, as nationalist conservative forces tend to see them as a threat.

At the same time, the common feature in all the cases analysed is the heterogeneity of the Russian-speakers. They can hardly be grouped together, as their origins and attitudes are diverse. They are in some cases even less prone to Russian propaganda than other groups, especially if they left Russia or the Soviet Union voluntarily and know what is going on inside Russia.

*The common feature in all the cases analysed is the heterogeneity of the Russian-speakers. They can hardly be grouped together, as their origins and attitudes are diverse*

This analysis has also briefly looked at what measures the countries themselves take to guarantee the normal functioning of society and the inclusion of Russian-speakers. In general, their response is to promote integration and social resilience. On the whole, integration programmes have produced positive results, although these processes take time.

It is complicated to find an effective and acceptable way to fight fake news and propaganda. Not overreacting to every single case is considered a potentially effective strategy. At the same time, the countries described here try to improve media literacy and create more public awareness and understanding about various news sources. They are engaged in resilience projects and creating objective media content, including in Russian. European and wider international cooperation in this field is also growing.

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