

1. General Activities

A member state of the IHRA since 2007, Estonia is committed to the principles of the Stockholm Declaration. The importance of remembrance of the Holocaust is well acknowledged by Estonian politicians, with the annual commemoration ceremony on January 27 being a natural part of their agenda. Around this date, commemoration events are now more widely organised by museums and other institutions that feel the need and obligation to address this highly important – and sensitive – matter. The growing number of history and civics teachers who have been trained and coached during the years is of importance to the sustainability of Holocaust education. The most recent **accomplishments** in the areas of research and commemoration are the open-air exhibition at the former notorious concentration camp in Klooga, created according to the Action Program of the Government of the Republic by the Estonian History Museum and inaugurated in 2013 (<http://www.ajaloomuuseum.ee/en/exhibitions/exhibitions-elsewhere/791-eeesti-ajaloomuuseumi-vaeliekspositsioon-holokausti-ohvrite-maelestuspaigas-kloogal>), and an exposition at the same museum, in 2014. (*cf. more in chapters 2 and 4*)

Speaking of **challenges**, there is one recurring sensitive subject that comes up in all discussions inside and outside the country, namely the juxtaposition of the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes, both Nazi and communist, in Estonia between 1940 and 1991. It is a constant challenge to explain the situation and reasons why, from Estonia's point of view, this juxtaposition is justified and can in no way harm the remembrance and acknowledgement of the uniqueness of the Holocaust, let alone distort it. The issue of uniqueness and comparisons easily haunts scholarly and popular debates alike, whenever the date of August 23 comes up. Following many Europe-wide declarations, this date was decided to be commemorated and has been observed in Estonia since 2009 as the Day of Remembrance for Victims of Communism and Nazism. Like the other Baltic States, Latvia and Lithuania, Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union between 1940–41 and 1944–1991. The brutal actions of the Stalinist regime in the 1940s, the deportations of a large part of the population (including Jews)¹, extrajudicial killings and arrests, and also the communist policies of later decades, are easily considered as comparable to those of the Nazis. The principal difference between the crimes of the two totalitarian regimes in question – namely the intent and goal of the Nazis to physically annihilate all Jews – is and should be always pointed out in this narrative. We follow the position of the European Parliament resolution of 2 April 2009 on the European conscience and totalitarianism, which unequivocally states that “whereas millions of victims were deported, imprisoned, tortured and murdered by totalitarian and authoritarian regimes during the 20th century in Europe; (...) the uniqueness of the Holocaust must nevertheless be acknowledged”; however, we often have to face unjustified accusations of diminishing the scope and importance of the Holocaust when lawfully and justifiably commemorating all other victims. It should be therefore clearly stated that the commemoration day of all victims of Nazi and Communist regimes on August 23 is not in competition with or overshadowing the international day of victims of the Holocaust observed on January 27, which now, on the contrary, is more clearly focused on this matter.

2. Holocaust Research

The majority of Estonian archives belong to the National Archives. The Estonian State Archives in Tallinn and the Estonian Historical Archives in Tartu are the central archives of the National Archives. There are also archive collections in the National Library, the libraries of the University of Tartu and Tallinn University, the Estonian National Museum, Estonian History Museum, Estonian Literary Museum and county museums.

¹ See: Vello Salo, Population losses 1940–1941: citizens of Jewish nationality (Tartu, 2007).

Records pertaining to the Holocaust are mostly found in the National Archives and the department of the latter, the Film Archives, both in Tallinn. To a lesser extent, records of relevance can be found in the Tallinn City Archives, the Estonian History Museum, and others. Researchers have free access to all archives, with the exception of those to which access is restricted according to the rules set forth by the Personal Data Protection Act. The following acts (available in English, too) prescribe the functioning of and access to archives: Personal Data Protection Act (2008) <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/529012015008/consolide%20%5b3>; Archives Act (2012) <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/508042015003/consolide> and Archival Rules (2012) http://www.arhiiv.ee/public/Rahvusarhiiv/arhiivieeskiri_english.pdf. All these rules have been recently described in detail in the Estonian Archival Report, and it can be stated that these rules have not been an obstacle to research relating to the Holocaust.

The first comprehensive research on the Holocaust on the territory of Estonia was accomplished in 1999–2006 under the aegis of the International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against Humanity and the results were published in a compendium titled “Estonia 1940–1945. Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against Humanity, Tallinn 2006. http://www.mnemosyne.ee/hc.ee/index_frameset.htm). The events related to the Holocaust were researched and described in great detail, and the compendium has served as a basis for further research both in Estonia as well as in other countries. It has been cited by many specialised authors².

After this major effort, research in this field has not been centrally coordinated and has in recent years been somewhat limited. It has consisted mainly of inputs and contributions to international projects and collective publications.³ Governmental funding has been granted to researchers mainly in connection with the setup of new memorials and exhibitions. The focus of the Holocaust research is mainly on two subjects: a) the fate of the local Estonian Jewish community during WWII; and b) the detention camps for Jews erected by the Nazi occupation forces on the territory of Estonia. Although the Holocaust is taught and discussed in the framework of several curricula (history, political science, and so on), there are no special programs or chairs in Estonian universities dedicated to this subject, with no change in the situation during the last five years. Events related to the Holocaust on the territory of Estonia are well known and the main facts have mostly been identified. As Estonian history research is traditionally centred on Estonia, our historians are not involved in major international research projects.⁴ At the University of Tartu, the main Estonian university for history research, a couple of master’s theses have been written in recent years, dealing with Holocaust events mainly either from the point of view of law or of historical memory and remembrance.⁵

The issue of Jewish property and restitution has not been a subject of special research. In this context, however, it should be mentioned that restitution cannot be considered a problem in Estonia. During the first few years of the Soviet occupation in Estonia (1940–41 and after World War II), land, real estate, and industrial and agricultural assets were entirely nationalised by the Soviet state. When Estonia’s national independence was restored in the early 1990s, a majority of Estonian political forces supported the idea that unlawfully expropriated property must be returned (i.e. re-privatised) to former owners

² E.g. Norman Davies, Anton Weiss-Wendt, Tilman Plath, Ruth Bettina Birn, Eva-Clarita Pettai e.a.

³ E.g.: Kholokost na territorii SSSR: entsiklopediia [The Holocaust on the Territory of the Soviet Union: an Encyclopedia], by I. A. Altman, ed. Moscow 2009; Wolfgang Benz, Barbara Distel, Angelika Königseder. Nationalsozialistische Zwangslager. Strukturen und Regionen – Täter und Opfer (99–111). Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2011; U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, Vol. VI (not yet completed).

⁴ However, a PhD thesis "Murder Without Hatred: Estonians, the Holocaust, and the Problem of Collaboration" was defended at the Brandeis University (US) in 2005 by an historian of Estonian origin, Mr. Anton Weiss-Wendt, and it was published as a book in 2009 with the same title.

⁵ For example: Marek Miil, Conditionality in the Republic of Estonia’s process of accession to euro-atlantic organizations: the case of Holocaust publicity, MA, supervisor Prof. Andres Kasekamp, Tartu 2009; Aleksandra Artjušina, Holokausti kuritegelik eitamine. MA, supervisor Oliver Nääs, Tartu Ülikool, 2015; Paul Oliver Stocker, Trauma, Memory and Victimhood: Estonia and the Holocaust, 1998-2012. Master’s Thesis for Transatlantic MA Program in East-European Studies, Supervisors: Robert Blobaum, PhD., Eva-Clarita Pettai, PhD Tartu 2013).

and their successors. The principles of restitution were established by the Parliament in the Principles of Ownership Reform Act adopted in 1991 and the major aspects of the restitution of land in the Land Reform Act of 1991 (see in English: <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/514112013010/consolide> and <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/503082015004/consolide>). The property that was subject to return and compensation was illegally expropriated between 16 June 1940 and 1 June 1981 – this includes the private and communal property confiscated primarily from the Jewish community by Nazi German occupation authorities between 1941 and 1944. By now, the restitution process is completed. The expropriated property was returned with no distinction being made according to the nationality of the owners; therefore, no statistical data is available on the return of property to Jewish owners.

Research of events related to the Holocaust in Estonia along with general studies form the bases of both the educational materials used in schools, and history exhibitions in museums. In recent years, two important exhibitions were created by the Estonian History Museum, based on research by local experts and foreign consultants: in 2013, an open-door exhibition was inaugurated at the former notorious concentration camp in Klooga; in 2014 another exhibition was compiled and inaugurated in annexed premises of the Estonian History Museum, dealing with the period of WWII in Estonia. (<http://www.ajaloomuuseum.ee/juudikogukond/the-holocaust-in-estonia/>) Results of Holocaust research are also used by social and political scientists as well as researchers in the field of historical memory and remembrance. Extensive study materials for schools, centring on the connections of the Holocaust and Estonia, were prepared in 2007 and have actively been used since then. They are available both in printed form and electronically to everybody (<http://www.eihr.ee/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/holokaust-30.12.pdf>).

Holocaust in Estonia as such has not aroused much debate among historians. Estonian historians have established that about one thousand members of Estonia's Jewish community along with thousands of Jews transported to Estonia from other European countries were murdered in Estonia according to orders issued by the Nazi occupation authorities, and that there were a number of Estonian policemen, military, prison guards and others who participated in these murders. There have been discussions on the topics of how the Soviet occupation that preceded the German occupation and particularly the mass deportation in June 1941 have influenced the willingness of Estonians to take part in the Nazi policies and how strong the influence of German propaganda was among the Estonian population.⁶ Researchers generally agree that the level of antisemitism in pre-war Estonia was very low. About 4,500 Jews lived in Estonia (about 0.4% of the general population). According to the census of 1934, fewer than 800 Roma lived in Estonia. In 1942, 243 Estonian Roma who were kept in Harku Prison were murdered near Tallinn, but Roma were also killed before and after this mass murder. It is known that underage Roma were placed in detention centres, where some of them survived the war. The subject of persecution of the Roma has been treated in some articles (cf *Weiss-Wendt, Anton (2004). Extermination of the Gypsies in Estonia during World War II. In: Paul Levine (Ed.). Collaboration and Resistance during the Holocaust. Historical Controversies and Problems: Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (383–402). Bern: Peter Lang Verlag.*). Very scarce archival sources do not allow research in greater detail.

Estonian researchers have good and regular contacts with their colleagues in other countries who deal with the issue of the Holocaust or the German occupation in Estonia and whose research is based on the findings in the Estonian archives; and it can be stated that the outcomes and understandings of the researchers coincide to a great extent.⁷ The subject is of interest and a debated topic among social and

⁶ The main authors of the central research on the Holocaust in Estonia are Meelis Maripuu and Riho Västriik, and the database of the victims has been compiled by Indrek Paavle. Most of the research results have been published in English in the compendium: Hiio, T.; Maripuu, M.; Paavle, I. (Ed.). Estonia 1940-1945: Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against Humanity. Tallinn, 2006. On the reception and reflection of the Holocaust events during the Cold War period of the Soviet Union see: Meelis Maripuu: Cold War Show Trials in Estonia: Justice and Propaganda in the Balance. In: Tannberg, Tõnu (ed.). Behind the Iron Curtain. Soviet Estonia in the Era of the Cold War, Peter Lang, 2015, Ss 139-196.

⁷ Anton Weiss-Wendt. Anton Weiss-Wendt. Murder without Hatred: Estonians and the Holocaust. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009; Ruth Bettina Birn, Die Sicherheitspolizei in Estland 1941–1944: Eine Studie zur Kollaboration im

political scientists who participate in international discussions on historical memory and remembrance, and memory culture is one of the topics more and more dealt with at the Universities of Tartu and Tallinn.

3. Holocaust Education

In the current national curriculum (adopted in 2011) the contemporary history course is built up of thematic blocks, the Holocaust being part of the topics of World War II and totalitarian regimes in the recent history thematic block. The Holocaust and crimes against humanity also relate to the key competencies and cross-curricular topics related to values, ethics and cultural awareness, as well as social and civic competencies. Key competencies and cross-curricular topics form the core of the general part of the national curriculum and need to be developed throughout all the subjects and extra-curricular activities. This applies both to secondary and upper-secondary levels.⁸ The topic of the Holocaust and crimes against humanity is connected to the horizontal topics of human rights, values and morals which are integrated throughout the whole study process at all levels of education. However, the Holocaust is explicitly addressed in the history syllabus of the 9th grade under the topic of II WW; the upper secondary school syllabi of the history of the recent era include a separate topic (besides WW II bloc) on crimes against humanity. It was introduced in the new curriculum in 2011 to encourage a wider and more in-depth approach to this topic. New and revised relevant textbooks including the topic of the Holocaust are published regularly. As the Estonian curriculum is an open competence-based curriculum, the number of hours dedicated to any topic is up to teachers and schools to decide. Teachers can also choose the format and environment to address topics; in the case of the Holocaust, they often choose to visit museums, invite guests, organise study trips etc. This is mostly done in January around the international Holocaust Memorial Day.

The main development in Holocaust education in Estonia is related to the general overhaul in the educational system – starting from 2010, the national curricula are based on a new approach to teaching and learning. The emphasis is on developing skills and competencies rather than on memorizing and studying plain facts. Estonian teachers strive to make the learning process personally meaningful and relevant; they also want it to be inquiry-driven to develop critical thinking. Teachers try to introduce students to the working methods of historians: look for sources, research sources and make conclusions on the basis of sources.

A teachers' handbook on teaching about the Holocaust and extensive study materials were prepared during Estonia's liaison period with the ITF and are available both in Estonian and Russian languages. Although published in 2007, they can in no way be considered outdated and are in active use.⁹ The thorough handbook includes guidelines on how to teach about the Holocaust, explanations of terminology, a chronology, background and topical information on antisemitism, crimes against humanity, Jewish life and culture in Europe, memories about Jewish life in Estonia and concentration camps during WWII in Europe and Estonia, tasks for students (the book); PowerPoint presentations, maps, pictures and films (on DVD) with subtitles in Estonian and Russian. In the classroom, memories of survivors (from books available at school libraries), are added to factual information. There are tasks guiding students to reflect on human values and on moral dilemmas, thus developing empathy. Using this material, teaching about the Holocaust can be well integrated into the teaching of the national history of Estonia. Despite the universal nature of the topic, Estonian educators deem it essential to place the history of the Holocaust into the local and, at the same time, global contexts.

Osten. Paderborn, 2006; Lukáš Přibyl, Die Geschichte des Theresienstädter Transports "Be" nach Estland. In: Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente, Praha: Academia, 2001; Oula Silvennoinen, Salaiset aseveljet. Suomen ja Saksan turvallisuuspoliisiyhteistyö 1933-1944. Otava, 2008.

⁸ General provisions of the curricula in English:

https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/est_basic_school_nat_cur_2014_general_part_0.pdf;

https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/est_upper_secondary_nat_cur_2014_general_part_0.pdf

⁹ <http://www.eays.edu.ee/aja/images/Oppematerjalid/ajalugu/holokaust%2030.12.pdf>

International cooperation and membership in the IHRA have definitely had an important role in these positive developments. The Ministry of Education and Research is promoting, supporting and coordinating the participation of Estonian teachers in the Holocaust seminars in Yad Vashem. Estonian teachers have been at these useful seminars every second year, since 1998. In cooperation with the Embassy of the United States, the ministry supports study visits on Holocaust education in the US since 2005. For the last few years, good cooperation has developed between the Ministry of Education and Research and the Mémorial de la Shoah. In October 2014 a seminar titled “From hatred to murder” for approximately 25 teachers was held in Tallinn. This cooperation continues. The IHRA has provided a unique opportunity for networking and peer-learning, thus enabling access to the different educational resources and research on the Holocaust and the issue has become a firm and integrated part of the teachers’ training and history and civics education.

In July 2016, a training course for teachers from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania jointly organised by Yad Vashem and Mémorial de la Shoah took place in Riga. At the training, teachers from all the three countries could share their good practices and materials on teaching and learning about the Holocaust. The cooperation will continue and thereby the variety of teaching materials as well as experience will certainly increase. Local-level follow-up seminars to international events have become customary.

At present, the amount of material available for teaching and learning about the Holocaust can be considered satisfactory. Besides the materials prepared with the help of IHRA, the following publications can be pointed out: a book of memoirs by Benjamin Anolik (a survivor of the Klooga camp), available both electronically and in school libraries; a short summary of the thorough report on the crimes against humanity in Estonia, made available to schools as a brochure; a collection of sources pertaining to the Baltic history; teachers’ handbook composed in cooperation with Euroclio “*History is not only past. The past is not yet history*”, the third part of which deals with the crimes against humanity in Estonia. Thanks to the good cooperation with Yad Vashem, the film “Outcast” has been distributed to schools in Estonia for screening on the 27th January. The book “Tell Your Children” is also available in Estonian.

The main obstacles in Holocaust education are related to the difficulties in implementing the new curricula and the underlying principles described above, i.e. focussing on skills and competencies and creating a student-centred learning process. Many teachers are used to traditional methods, widely using frontal teaching and simply presenting facts rather than enhancing discussion and active participation of students. The latter, however, are crucial for a meaningful Holocaust and human rights education.

The Estonian case is similar to the other Eastern Europe countries – the history of the Holocaust was not taught during the communist regime era. It became part of the national curriculum only after Estonia regained independence in 1991; the topic has been included in the curricula and textbooks from 1996 onwards. Now that hundreds of Estonian teachers have participated in international training courses and other educational activities, we can be confident that methods and knowledge on how to teach and learn about the Holocaust are taking root.

There has been rather little specific research about Holocaust education so far. However, a small-scale survey is currently being conducted among teachers about teaching sensitive topics in the classroom. Another, larger scale mapping of the availability of the study material on various topics in the curricula, including the Holocaust, has been launched. The results of the mapping would provide a basis for ordering, developing, modernising, digitising, translating or systematising the study material, where needed. The results of this mapping can be shared with IHRA colleagues in the future.

The Roma genocide is not explicitly mentioned in the curricula, but it is included in the widely used study material referred to above. Nevertheless, there are not enough study materials on that topic and we admit that bringing the issue to the mainstream as part of the Holocaust and human rights education is still a challenge. The issue of empowering and integrating the Roma community - one of Estonia’s national minorities -, and developing their education, however, is addressed on the governmental level.

4. Holocaust Remembrance

4.1 Historic and Memorial Sites

Protection of national monuments and memorial sites in Estonia is regulated by the Heritage Conservation Act of 2002.¹⁰ Four sites related to the Holocaust are protected as national monuments, these are: an execution place and mass grave in Kalevi-Liiva¹¹, a mass grave in Klooga, a mass grave in Reiu and a burial ground at Metsakalmistu Cemetery in Tallinn. In several places there are other monuments of commemoration that don't have the status of a national monument but are well kept by local administrations. A number of killing and burial sites still need additional research in order to be memorialized in the future.

In recent years, awareness about the Holocaust has increased considerably. It is in great part thanks to the creation of two state of the art expositions by the Estonian History Museum: an open-air exhibition on the killing site of the former concentration camp in Klooga in 2013, and an exhibition on the period of the German occupation in Estonia in a separate museum building in 2014. In addition, during the last decade, plaques and memorial stones have been installed in various other places connected to the Holocaust, most recently in 2014 at a former Lasnamäe airfield in Tallinn.

Notwithstanding the fact that there is no special Holocaust museum in Estonia, the subject of the Holocaust is more and more represented in various museums: in the Estonian History Museum, in the Museum of Occupations, etc. In 2006 an Estonian Jewish Museum was founded initially as a website (see: <http://eja.pri.ee/>), and in 2008 as an exposition at the Jewish Community Centre in Tallinn, too. The Museum has a lot of materials on the Holocaust in Estonia. Next to the exposition, in January 2012, the Jewish Community founded a Gallery of Memory where the names of nearly a thousand Estonian Jews who perished in the Holocaust are perpetuated. The main source of funding for the Gallery was the Estonian Government.

The Klooga open-air exhibition, established according to the Government's action program, now organically connecting all monuments erected on this site in earlier times, has attracted most of the interest and visitors since its inauguration in 2013. The Klooga site, where mass killings took place in 1944, became a place of Holocaust commemoration after Estonia regained independence in 1991, and can now be considered the central Holocaust memorial in Estonia. Guided tours are organised there by the Estonian History Museum and many schools have included a visit to this site in their curriculum. The site is open, with free access, the whole year round; understandably, statistics on the number of visitors are therefore not available.

Any increase or decrease in interest in historical sites has not affected the methods used to identify the sites: all historical sites and memorials, designated as national monuments, shall be marked in any case with appropriate signs. No publications, databases, or projects exist today regarding the identification of historical sites related to the Holocaust, but steps are taken to improve the register of the National Heritage Protection institution.

4.2 Cultures of Remembrance

In Estonia, 27th January has been the Day of Remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust since 2002. Commemoration ceremonies were initially organised by the Jewish Community and a Christian group, with some help from governmental offices, and a high-level guest (the Prime Minister, Speaker of the Parliament, a minister) delivering the main speech. Starting from 2012, by the decision of the State

¹⁰ See <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/517062015012/>.

¹¹There are two monuments at this site, one commemorates the killing of Jews who were brought there from other countries, and the other was erected by the Estonian Roma community in 2002 in memory of their killed compatriots, this site being one of the known killing sites of the Roma.

Chancellery, the event is arranged and coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Research in cooperation with the local Jewish Community. The event has taken place either in Klooga, at the synagogue, or at the Jewish cemetery in Tallinn, Rahumäe.¹² The annual commemoration event is widely covered by the national media, radio and TV, with an overview in the main news programme. Newspapers publish opinion articles and interviews with researchers and opinion leaders. As a result, we may firmly state that in the course of the last 15 years, but most noticeably in the recent years, the topic of the Holocaust and the importance of Holocaust commemoration have growingly taken its place in the awareness of the population.

Around the Holocaust commemoration day of January 27, the Ministry of Education and Research, along with partners like the Estonian Atlantic Treaty Organization, Unitas Foundation and Estonian Institute of Human Rights, has organised seminars and conferences for educators, teachers of history and civics since 2012. These seminars are open to the wider audience, the goal being to bring the topic more to the centre of the public discourse and create links with societal changes, including new forms of racism, xenophobia and intolerance.

The date of the massacre at the Klooga concentration camp on September 19, 1944, is annually commemorated at the initiative of the Estonian Jewish Community. Students of the Jewish school and other schools usually attend and guests are invited. In 2014, to mark the 70th anniversary of this mass murder, the Estonian delegation to the IHRA took an initiative to organise a more encompassing commemorative event. The Prime Minister, other politicians and public figures as well as the diplomatic corps took part in the ceremony, which was framed with music and rabbinical prayers. <https://valitsus.ee/en/news/prime-minister-taavi-roivas-memorial-service-victims-klooga-tragedy-klooga-memorial-victims>.

Wreaths are laid at Klooga memorial also on August 23. Each year on September 5, commemorative ceremonies are held at Kalevi-Liiva, a killing site and now a memorial to Jews and Roma who were murdered there in 1942-1943.

5. Holocaust Denial and Other Hate Crimes and Their Relation to Antisemitism

In the light of the recently adopted working definition, antisemitism cannot be considered a major societal problem in Estonia. Isolated cases have been registered throughout the years, but no massive phenomenon can be pointed out. It was back in 2010 that for the last time the annual review of antisemitism of the Tel Aviv University Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry mentioned a case in Estonia, which was a case of antisemitic vandalism. The EU Fundamental Rights Agency research on “Discrimination and Hate Crimes against Jews in EU Member States: Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism” did not register any case of antisemitism in Estonia in 2015. The Anti-defamation League’s global antisemitism index puts Estonia with 22% in the second lowest position (after the Czech Republic) in the Eastern European region.¹³

Some cases or phenomena have been registered by local media and noticed by local observers. The governmental bodies remain alert and react to all suspicious manifestations. For example, in 2015, a citizen of Finland, resident in Estonia, who reportedly organised commemorations of Third Reich anniversaries, got a 5-year entry ban to Estonia.¹⁴ The person in question also re-published a grotesque and explicitly Jew-hating cartoon book, originally published in the 1930s, which can be purchased via a bookshop webpage.

¹² It is worth mentioning that at this cemetery, in 1973, as a private initiative against the will of the communist state, the first monument to victims of the Holocaust was erected; a new monument was inaugurated in 2010, in the presence of the President of the Republic.

¹³ <http://global100.adl.org/#country/estonia/2014>.

¹⁴ https://vana.siseministeerium.ee/17115/?synniaeg=26.04.1960&eesnimi=Risto&perenimi=Teinonen&go=skr_search.

Texts or comments of an antisemitic tint or against Jews very rarely appear in Estonian media. For example, the only channel that systematically makes “revelations of Jewish conspiracy” is a small-range private radio that can also be listened to via the internet.¹⁵ More of a problem are anonymous comments on social media, often published on pages with restricted access; only few are made openly. But offensive and sometimes harshly antisemitic comments are frequently posted to blogs of public figures and politicians. It may happen that they remain without responses from the main blogger. It should be underlined, however, that major online news channels in Estonia now have a rule not to allow anonymous comments, and moderators quickly react to eventual hate-speech comments, swiftly blocking and deleting them.

As to the annual civil initiative gathering of the veterans of WWII in the Sinimäe Hills, which has traditionally caught the attention of vigilant observers and raised protests due to the fact that the veterans are mainly those who happened to fight on the German side, it does in no way qualify as a case of either Holocaust denial or antisemitism. The Estonian constitution provides freedom of peaceful assembly; therefore, every citizen has the right to commemorate the war victims. No governmental representatives take part in this memorial, no Nazi symbols or insignia are used at this event.¹⁶

The Estonian Internal Security Service (Kaitsepolitsei) has not registered any increase in hate-related activities in recent years. Also according to official crime statistics, there has not been any increase in Holocaust denial and/or antisemitism in Estonia. The annual crime statistics report published by the Ministry of Justice concerning 2015 comprised for the first time a chapter on hate crime. However, a comparison with previous years is not possible as similar methods for gathering hate crime statistics had not been used earlier. The report is available here (chapter 10): http://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/sites/www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/files/elfinder/dokumendid/kuritegevus_eestis_2015.pdf (in Estonian only). In 2015, 8 hate crime cases altogether were recorded under Section 151 of the Penal Code. 7 cases were qualified as offenses, and one as a crime. This is the only crime from the period of 2013-2015 and is under investigation.

Estonia is amending its data gathering system by adding new case type categories (3 categories concerning different bias motives of hate crime) and changing the crime motive categories in the E-file. These forthcoming changes have been agreed between the Ministry of Justice, the Police and Border Guard Board and the Centre of Registers and Information Systems.

On January 22, 2015 in the UN General Assembly Special Session on Combating Antisemitism, Estonia’s statement by Ambassador Margus Kolga made a clear reference to the Stockholm Declaration: “Estonia also reaffirms our strong and unconditional support for the principles of the Stockholm Declaration of the year 2000, and the solemn commitments that our governments then undertook. According to the declaration, it is our responsibility to combat genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, antisemitism and xenophobia.” The statement also underlined, “The Estonian Government has repeatedly condemned the crimes of Nazis and other totalitarian regimes and takes all occurrences of Nazism, racism and xenophobia very seriously.”¹⁷

More than in this kind of high level statements, however, societal and governmental attitudes become obvious in public debates that have followed some incidents that can be connected with the Holocaust. (cf. Annexe).

¹⁵ <http://www.nommeraadio.ee/meediapank.php/Lounatund%202015>.

¹⁶ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>.

¹⁷ http://www.un.estemb.org/frontpage/statements_articles/newwin-middle50/aid-1099.

Examples of cases and incidents touching to the Holocaust that have roused public debate and governmental reactions

- In 2011, the Estonian History Museum displayed a temporary exhibition on well-known Estonians and natives of Estonia. A notorious Nazi politician and ideologist Alfred Rosenberg, a Baltic-German born in Tallinn, was among those “well-known” persons. Not only the local Jewish community but also politicians, e.g. the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Estonian parliament condemned exhibiting this Nazi “hero” in this context. The minister of culture advised the museum to remove this item from the exhibit. However, a group of journalists and historians did not agree with either the advice or the subsequent removal of the item, and expressed their discontent in an open letter to the minister. They founded their arguments on the importance of displaying “the historical truth”; the minister’s intervention was perceived as hurting the freedom of academic research. A comment given by a well-respected Estonian historian David Vseviõv reflects the two sides of the coin: “One cannot exhibit the Evil in the same line with the Noble. Had I compiled this exhibition, I would not have displayed this person amidst our celebrities. But I dislike forbidding in principle, and if it was there already, I wouldn’t have removed it by fiat.”
- In 2015, an exhibition entitled “My Poland. Of remembering and of forgetting” in the Tartu Art Museum was dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII. Two artworks, videos by renowned Polish author Artur Żmijewski, made explicit references to the Auschwitz concentration camp and gas chambers, in a cheerful and playful manner. The Estonian Jewish community was the first to decry this and to demand the removal of these shocking “artworks”. The community was of opinion that, notwithstanding the aim of the exhibition, it was unthinkable to “elucidate” the tragedy of the Holocaust by means of video recordings that desecrate the memory of millions of people and mock the feelings of elderly survivors, also distorting the Holocaust as such. A meeting was promptly convened at the Ministry of Culture. The minister confirmed publicly that the feelings of the Jewish community were well understood and that what had happened was highly regrettable. Several organisations and institutions sided with the Jewish community; many politicians and public figures also condemned this kind of “artistic” approach without any empathy. The Minister of Foreign Affairs stated in Parliament: “Art needs freedom of expression, but art shouldn’t hurt anybody”. As a result, the museum removed the videos in question from the exhibition; the issue, however, was debated in the media for several weeks. What was reproached to the curator of the museum and to the artists was first and foremost their ignorance and lack of sensitivity, although it was reminded that the artworks in question had been earlier exhibited in other countries, including Germany and the US without any public outcry. It is noteworthy that the extensive public debate, although it started from an issue related to the Holocaust, centred mainly on the clash between the freedom of artistic expression vs political and educational bases of society and common values, and never deviated to antisemitic comments.
- On the eve of the general elections of March 2015, a new party, the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE), emerged, and won 7 seats in the 101-member parliament. The newcomers were scrutinised by the media, and it appeared that one of the freshly elected young politicians, in his blog article five years earlier, had found some merit in historical fascist parties and had cast some doubt on the number of Holocaust victims. Immediately, the Prime Minister (of the Reform party) reacted to this in his blog, saying that “In Estonia, we have freedom of speech and freedom of thought and we have to defend these values. It is regrettable however, that a young politician justifies the Nazi crimes that brought suffering to so many people...” The Reform Party, the main player during the coalition forming talks, excluded – partly for this reason – any possibility to form a coalition with EKRE. The leader of EKRE distanced himself and the whole party from the statements of this member; there are no grounds to associate EKRE with either Holocaust denial or antisemitism. *****