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# National Minorities Cultural Autonomy Act

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RT I 1993, 71, 1001  
Entry into force 28.11.1993

Amended by the following acts

Passed	Published	Entry into force
05.06.2002	RT I 2002, 53, 336	01.07.2002
19.06.2002	RT I 2002, 62, 376	01.08.2002
20.02.2019	RT I, 13.03.2019, 2	15.03.2019

## Chapter I General Provisions

**§ 1.** For the purposes of this Act, a national minority shall mean Estonian citizens who:

- reside in the territory of Estonia;
- have long-term, sound and permanent ties with Estonia;
- differ from Estonians by their ethnic belonging, cultural characteristics, religion or language;
- are led by their wish to collectively maintain their cultural customs, religion or language which are the basis for their common identity.

**§ 2.**

(1) For the purpose of this Act, the cultural autonomy of a national minority shall mean the right of persons belonging to a national minority to establish cultural autonomy bodies in order to perform culture-related rights granted to them by the Constitution.

(2) Persons belonging to the German, Russian, Swedish and Jewish national minority, and persons of national minorities with a population of over 3000 may establish cultural autonomy bodies of national minorities.

**§ 3.**

(1) A person of a national minority has the right to maintain his or her ethnic belonging, cultural customs, mother tongue and religion.

(2) It is prohibited to denigrate the customs and religious practices of any national culture, and to hinder the performance thereof, and it is also prohibited to engage in any activity aimed at forcing the members of a national minority to adopt the national characteristics of another nation.

**§ 4.**

Persons belonging to a national minority have the right to:

- 1) form and support national cultural and educational institutions and religious communities;
- 2) establish national organisations;
- 3) perform national traditions and religious customs if this does not violate public order, damage health or breach morality;
- 4) use their mother tongue in public administration within the limits established by the Language Act;
- 5) publish printed matter in their national languages;
- 6) conclude cooperation agreements between cultural and educational institutions and religious communities;
- 7) disseminate and exchange information in their mother tongue.

## **§ 5.**

(1) The main objective of a cultural autonomy body of a national minority is to:

- 1) organise studying in the mother tongue and supervise the use of the assets prescribed for such purpose;
- 2) establish cultural institutions of national minorities and organise their activity, and to organise national cultural events;
- 3) establish foundations, and to grant stipends and awards for promoting the culture and education of national minorities.

(2) National minorities have the right to establish, in the interests of national culture, their own institutions of cultural self-administration which, in dealing with matters within their competence, shall adhere to Estonian legislation.

**§ 6.** Aliens residing in Estonia may take part in the activity of cultural and educational institutions and religious communities of national minorities but they cannot participate in the elections of, or be elected or appointed to the directing bodies of institutions of cultural self-administration.

## **Chapter II**

### **Nationality Lists of National Minorities**

## **§ 7.**

(1) The basis for application for establishment of a cultural autonomy body of a national minority shall be the nationality list of the national minority.

(2) The nationality lists of national minorities shall be prepared by national cultural associations or unions of such associations. The procedure for the maintenance and use of nationality lists shall be established by the Government of the Republic.

## **§ 8.**

(1) A nationality list shall set out the following data concerning each person:

- 1) first name and surname;
- 2) personal identification code or date of birth in case of lack thereof;
- 3) place of residence;
- 4) the signature of the applicant, and the date;

[RT I, 13.03.2019, 2 - entry into force 15.03.2019]

(2) Children under 15 years of age shall also be entered in the nationality list at the request of their parents.

(3) A person is entered in a nationality list based on the person's application. Such application may be sent by post.

## **§ 9.**

A person is deleted from a nationality list:

- 1) at the request of the person;
- 2) if the person renounces Estonian citizenship or takes up permanent residence in a foreign country;
- 3) upon the death of the person.

## **Chapter III**

### **Directing Bodies of Cultural Autonomy Bodies of National Minorities and Formation thereof**

## **§ 10.**

(1) Persons of a national minority who wish to establish a cultural autonomy body shall submit, through the corresponding national cultural association or the union of such associations, an application to this effect to the Government of the Republic.

(2) The application shall be submitted pursuant to the procedure provided in the Administrative Procedure Act (RT I 2001, 58, 354).

[RT I 2002, 62, 376 - entry into force 01.08.2002]

**§ 11.**

(1) The directing bodies of a cultural autonomy body of a national minority shall be the cultural council of the national minority, and the cultural board organising the activities of the institutions of cultural self-administration.

(2) A cultural council may establish county or town cultural councils of the national minority, or to appoint local cultural councillors.

**§ 12.** Cultural councils of national minorities shall be elected by direct and uniform elections by secret voting. Voting shall be done in person at the polling division or by post.

**§ 13.**

(1) For organising the elections of a cultural council, the national cultural association or the union of such associations shall elect a general committee for the elections, the membership of which shall be approved by the Government of the Republic who shall also appoint a representative with the task to monitor compliance with the election rules.

(2) Where necessary, the general election committee shall establish local election committees and give directions for organising the elections, making summaries and publishing results.

**§ 14.** The rules for the elections of cultural councils of national minorities shall be prepared and approved by the Government of the Republic.

**§ 15.** The polling lists shall be prepared based on the nationality lists of national minorities specified in subsection 8 of this Act.

**§ 16.**

(1) Elections shall not be organised if less than half of the persons entered in the nationality list have given consent for their entry in the polling list.

(2) A national minority may submit an application for organisation of second elections of the cultural council of the national minority after three years from the previous application.

**§ 17.**

(1) The polling list shall be published for examination by the public at least two months before the election.

(2) Every person entered in the polling list has the right to request the deletion of his or her name from the list not later than two weeks prior to the election.

**§ 18.**

(1) The general election committee shall determine the number of mandates of a cultural council of a national minority which shall be between 60 and 20.

(2) The membership of a cultural council shall be elected for a period of three years.

**§ 19.** The elections of a cultural council of a national minority are deemed to have been held if over a half of the persons entered in the polling lists participated therein and the elections were held in conformity with this Act and the election rules.

**§ 20.** All protests and complaints concerning the organisation of the elections of a cultural council shall be settled by the general election committee not later than within two weeks after the publication of the election results.

**§ 21.** Not later than one month after the publication of the election results of an election of a cultural council, the chairman of the general election committee shall summon the first session of the cultural council, and shall chair the session until the time the board has been elected. After that the general committee shall declare their authority to be terminated.

**§ 22.**

At the first session of the cultural council, the statutes of a cultural autonomy body shall be approved by the majority of votes of the membership of the council which shall determine:

- 1) the procedure for election of the chairman, substitute chairmen and board of the cultural council;

- 2) procedure for the formation and authority of local cultural councils;
- 3) formation of institutions of cultural self-administration;
- 4) rights and obligations of cultural self-administration bodies based on the main objectives provided by section 5 of this Act;
- 5) rules of procedure of the directing bodies of cultural autonomy bodies.

§ 23. The costs related to the election of a cultural council of a national minority shall be borne by the cultural autonomy body of a national minority, and support may be granted from the state budget for covering the costs relating to the election of a cultural council of a national minority.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Institutions of Cultural Self-Administration and Financing Activities thereof**

#### **§ 24.**

Institutions of cultural self-administration are:

- 1) educational institutions where studies are conducted in the national language or which offer intensive studies of national culture (pre-school child care institutions and schools);
- 2) institutions of national culture;
- 3) enterprises and publishing houses of national culture;
- 4) national social welfare institutions.

§ 25. Schools (classes) of a national minority are opened and their work shall be organised pursuant to the procedure provided by the Private Schools Act.

§ 26. [Repealed - RT I 2002, 53, 336 – entered into force 01.07.2002]

#### **§ 27.**

(1) The funds of a cultural autonomy body of a national minority and the bodies and institutions thereof are constituted of:

- 1) appropriations from the state budget according to law, and support designated for specific purposes;
- 2) support for specific purposes allocated from the budget of the local government to the educational, cultural and social welfare institutions of cultural self-administration;
- 3) cultural self-administration contributions in a size determined by the cultural council;
- 4) support, donations and bequests;
- 5) support by foreign organisations.

(2) A cultural autonomy body of a national minority may use the assets allocated to it for specific purposes only pursuant to the prescribed procedure and for the intended purposes. Supervision over the use of the assets shall be exercised by duly authorised state supervisory bodies in adherence to the legislation in force.

## **Chapter V**

### **Termination of Operation of Institutions of Cultural Self-Administration of National Minorities**

#### **§ 28.**

The Government of the Republic shall terminate the operation of the institutions of cultural self-administration of a national minority:

- 1) if, based on the data in the nationality list of the national minority, the number of persons belonging to the national minority permanently residing in Estonia has been under 3000 during the last five years;
- 2) if for two consecutive elections of the cultural council, a conforming polling list was not prepared;
- 3) if in two consecutive elections of the cultural council, less than a half of the persons entered in the polling list participated;
- 4) at the proposal of the cultural council.

§ 29. Upon termination of the operation of an institution of cultural self-administration of a national minority, the assets belonging to such institutions shall be transferred pursuant to the procedure provided by a decision of the cultural council.

## **Chapter VI**

## **Final Provisions**

§ 30. [Omitted from this text]