

OVERVIEW OF ESTONIA'S POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Political Structure:^{1,2}

- Estonia is a parliamentary republic. The President is the head of state, but most governmental powers rest with the Parliament.³
- Estonia has a 101-member unicameral Parliament (Riigikogu). Members are directly elected in multi-seat constituencies by proportional representation vote to four-year terms. The most recent parliamentary elections were held in March 2019. They will be held again in March 2023.⁴
- Estonia's President is indirectly elected by the Riigikogu for a five-year term and is eligible to be re-elected for a second term. The most recent presidential election resulted in the election of Keersti Kaljulaid, Estonia's first female President, in October 2016.⁵ The next presidential election will be held in 2021.
- The head of government, the Prime Minister, is appointed by the President and approved by the Riigikogu.⁶ The current Prime Minister, Juri Ratas, was appointed in November 2016 (see below).

Political Context:⁷

The current Prime Minister, Juri Ratas, is a member of the Centre Party. The Centre Party is left-leaning and attracts support from Estonia's Russian-speaking minority. When he was initially appointed in 2016, Ratas formed a coalition government with the Social Democrats and conservative "fatherland" IRL party. He unified these groups with a mix of pro-Western foreign policy and a number of tax reforms and social policies aimed at reeling in some of the pro-market liberalism that had reigned in Estonia since the 1990s.

In the March 2019 parliamentary elections, the liberal Reform Party won the largest share of votes (29 percent), but Ratas turned down an offer of partnership. Instead, Ratas's Centre Party, which won the second-largest share of votes, formed a coalition government with the Estonian Conservative People's Party, which won the third-largest share of votes and has promoted anti-immigrant policies, and the conservative Pro Patria.

¹ Excerpted from "[Estonia: Political Forces at a Glance](#)," *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, October 1, 2019

² Excerpted from "[Estonia: Political Structure](#)," *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, October 1, 2019

³ Excerpted from "Estonia: Fact Sheet," *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, October 1, 2019

⁴ Excerpted from "[Government: Estonia](#)," *The CIA World Factbook*, November 12, 2019

⁵ Excerpted from "[Government: Estonia](#)," *The CIA World Factbook*, November 12, 2019

⁶ <http://www.studyinestonia.ee/en/government>

⁷ Excerpted from "[Estonia: Political Forces at a Glance](#)," *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, October 1, 2019