

THE INTEGRATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES IN FINLAND AND ESTONIA DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD (1918–1939)

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Abstract

In the interwar years, Finland and Estonia were characterised by the fact that in both countries exceptionally broad linguistic and cultural rights were given to national minorities, compared with the situation in the rest of Europe. There were several factors behind this. One was the relationship between ethnic groups from a historical perspective. Another was each country's internal debate on the kind of social order in general that was to be built. The third was how politics in Finland and Estonia was influenced by international trends and theories on how national minorities should be treated. The article analyses how national minorities were taken into account in the Finnish and Estonian constitutions which held true in the period between the two world wars, and why account was taken precisely in a certain way. At the same time, it considers what kind of views in this regard were presented by different political parties, what kind of debates were held in the parliaments of both countries, and how the matter was dealt with by other significant interest groups.

KEY WORDS: Finnish legislation, Estonian legislation, national minorities, national relations.

Anotacija

Lyginant su padėtimi likusioje Europoje, tarpukariu Suomija ir Estija išsiskyrė nepaprastai plačiomis kalbinėmis ir kultūrinėmis teisėmis, kurios abiejose šalyse buvo suteiktos etninėms mažumoms. Tą lėmė kelios priežastys. Pirmą, tai istoriškai susiklostęs santykis su etninėmis mažumomis. Antra, tai abiejose šalyse vykusios diskusijos, kokias apskritai socialinė tvarka jose turi būti kuriama. Trečia, tai tarptautinės tendencijos ir teorijos apie etnines mažumas traktavimas, kuris irgi veikė Suomiją ir Estiją. Straipsnyje nagrinėjama, kaip Suomijos ir Estijos konstitucijos, galiojusios tarp dviejų pasaulinių karų, atsižvelgė į etnines mažumas ir kodėl j jas buvo atsižvelgiama konkrečiu būdu. Taip pat nagrinėjama, kokias pažiūras šiuo klausimu propagavo skirtingos politinės partijos, kokiais klausimais diskutuota abiejų šalių parlamentuose ir kaip į klausimą žiūrėjo kitos svarbios interesų grupės.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: Estijos teisė, Suomijos teisė, tautinės mažumos, tautiniai santykiai.

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Introduction

The aim of this article is to examine the extent to which the minority policies carried out by Finland and Estonia resembled those of their counterparts in other European countries. In this context, the minorities are ethnic/national minorities. Others, such as religious minorities, are excluded from this examination. Minority policy refers to legislation concerning minorities and its implementation in practice. The period examined extends from the period of Finnish and Estonian independence to the mid-1920s. It begins with the declarations of independence of both countries, and ends about the year 1925, by which time laws affecting the status of minorities were enacted and their implementation had begun. From a legal and practical perspective, from this point onwards minority policies remained virtually unchanged until the mid-1930s. Nationalist tendencies led to minor changes in the late 1930s, but they did not seriously challenge the main line that was based on integration. Overall, Finnish and Estonian minority policies were formed as a result of conflicting pressures and ideals. Both domestic and international factors influenced the process and the practical implementation of laws.

Basic research exists with regard to minority policies in Finland and Estonia, and the main points are fairly clear.¹ So far, however, little attention has been paid to how minority policy in Finland and Estonia in the early years of independence compares with the corresponding solutions of other countries. This is precisely why this article justifiably focuses on this perspective. In addition to reconstructing similarities and differences, it is essential to look for answers as to why Finland and Estonia partly resembled other countries and partly differed from them. The analysis also includes comparisons of Finland and Estonia.

Finnish and Estonian laws and other key official documents that define the status of minorities have been systematically perused for this article. Other primary documents, such as those related to the legislative process, correspondence between authorities, the archives of political parties and newspapers, and other published material appearing during the period in question, have been reviewed when applicable. Comparisons with other countries have been carried out partially with the help of legislative texts and earlier studies that deal with minority policy from a more general perspective. In addition to historical source criticism and the comparative

¹ See, for instance: ALLARDT, Erik, STARCK, Christian. *Vähemmistö, kieli ja yhteiskunta*. Helsinki, 1981; *Suomen kulttuurivähemmistöt* (Suomen Unesco-toimikunnan julkaisuja, No 72). Toim. Juha PENTIKÄINEN, Marja HILTUNEN. Helsinki, 1997; SAUKKONEN, Pasi. *Erilaisuuksien Suomi*. Helsinki, 2013; ALENIUS, Kari. *Ajan ihanteiden ja historian rasitteiden ristipaineissa. Viron etniset suhteet vuosina 1918–1925*. Rovaniemi, 2003; LAURITS, Kaido. *Saksa kultuuroomavalitus Eesti Vabariigis 1925–1940*. Tallinn, 2008; *Vähemusrahvuste kultuurielu Eesti Vabariigis 1918–1940: dokumente ja materjale*. Koost. Anni MATSULEVITŠ. Tallinn, 1993.

method, in preparing this article, particular attention in research methods was paid to political rhetoric and the study of perception.

Observing rhetoric is important, as communication not only reflects reality but also attempts to shape it. The intended role of communication in legal texts to shape is usually self-evident, but in principle, the same also applies to other texts and speeches. The same significance of perception in forming opinion has been confirmed through multidisciplinary research. People make judgments based on their perceptions, regardless of how close to 'reality' their 'right' or 'wrong' perceptions are. For example, in legally defining the position of minorities, it is inevitable that the result will be affected by what kinds of perception legislators have because of their experience. At the same time, it must be noted that perception is not only affected by information, but by beliefs, fears, desires, attitudes and opinions: in short, an individual's entire past experience.²

The end of the First World War and its aftermath until the early 1920s was a time in which the status of minorities became a focus for reassessment. This was necessary particularly in newly independent countries, in which all legislation had to be perused and old laws examined to the extent that they were still usable. As a basis, there could be a varying range of laws that a former ruler, for example Austria-Hungary or Imperial Russia, had enacted. In most cases, new states drafted minority legislation and other laws from bottom up to meet the needs of the newly independent state and its new ruling groups. It was normal for a national minority in a previously large empire to become the leading ethnic group in a newly independent small state.³

The status of minorities was also a subject of debate and consideration in old states. The emergence of nationalism and parliamentary democracy, the extension of general civil rights and the promises given for these developments for various reasons in many countries during the war, at the very least forced an examination of whether legislation concerning minorities was up to date. For example, in Germany the legal status of minorities changed for the better from their perspective immediately after the war, when Germany transitioned from being an empire to a democracy, and former nationalist ruling parties lost their leading positions.⁴

² BELLER, Manfred, Perception, image, imagology. In *Imagology: The cultural construction and literary representation of national characters. A critical survey*. Ed. by Manfred BELLER, Joep LEERSEN. Amsterdam, 2007, pp. 4–7; FÄLT, Olavi K. Introduction. In *Looking at the Other: Historical study of images in theory and practice*. Ed. by Kari ALENIUS, Olavi K. FÄLT, Seija JALAGIN. Oulu, 2002, pp. 8–11; RATZ, David. The Study of Historical Images. *Faravid. Journal for Historical and Archaeological Studies*, 2007, vol. 31, pp. 189–213.

³ HOBSBAWM, Eric. *Nations and nationalism since 1780. Programme, myth, reality*. Cambridge, 1990, pp. 131–145.

⁴ ALENIUS, Kari. *Compromise solutions through careful consideration. The development of the legal status of national minorities in Germany, 1918–1919*. Rovaniemi, 2011, pp. 204–214; GÖTHEL, Thomas. *Demokratie*

Majority-minority relations in Estonia and Finland on the eve of independence

When the population structures of Finland and Estonia and their ethnic relationships after the First World War are examined, it can be seen that the states resembled each other closely. Out of all the countries that became independent as a result of the First World War, Finland and Estonia were the most ethnically homogeneous: in each country the share of the main nationality was around 88 per cent. In Eastern Central Europe, this was clearly the highest percentage overall. Only in Albania and Hungary was the share of the main nationality at the same level, but in all other countries it was below 80 per cent. In fact, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia did not even have an actual majority, as the share of even the largest ethnic groups of the total population was below 50 per cent.⁵

Therefore, the basic premise of ethnic policies in Finland and Estonia was clear. Both countries had a strong majority population, and the share of minorities in total was quite small. Based on this, there was no significant power struggle to be expected between the majority and minorities with regard to policies applied to the whole state. On the other hand, in both Finland and Estonia, minorities lived mainly in small areas that could be defined quite clearly.⁶ This is why the minority ethnic groups were a majority in many municipalities, challenging the main nationality's (ethnically Finnish or Estonian) position of power at a local level. As the minorities inhabited border regions of Finland and Estonia, the possible threat of separatism arose. With regard to their residential areas, potentially separatist minorities were Swedes, Latvians and Russians in Estonia, and Swedes in Finland.

In both Finland and Estonia, the Swedish-speaking population lived in a narrow zone on the west coast and the islands nearby. At the beginning of the 1920s, Estonia had five municipalities with a Swedish-speaking majority, and the Swedes were a significant minority in three other municipalities. The total number of Estonian Swedes was only about 8,000 people, but due to the strong centralisation of their habitation, they had a strong influence locally.⁷ Finland had about 340,000 Swedish-speaking citizens, who were the majority in 30 municipalities. Additionally, 40 other municipalities had a significant minority of Swedish-speaking residents (10–50%).⁸

und Volkstum. Die Politik gegenüber den nationalen Minderheiten in der Weimarer Republik. Köln, 2002, S. 395–403.

⁵ PEARSON, Raymond. *National minorities in Eastern Europe 1848–1945.* London, 1983, pp. 147–149.

⁶ RUUTSOO, Rein. Rahvusvähemused Eesti Vabariigis. In *Vähemusrahvuste kultuurielu...*, lk. 5–9; SAUKKONEN, P., P. Op. cit., s. 160, 173.

⁷ ALENIOUS, K. *Ajan ihanteiden...*, s. 36–37; RUUTSOO, R. Op. cit., lk. 7.

⁸ ALLARDT, E.; STARCK, C. Op. cit., s. 101–107; LIEBKIND, Karmela; BROO, Roger; FINNÄS, Fjalar. Suomen ruotsinkielinen vähemmistö. In *Suomen kulttuurivähemmistöt...*, s. 62–65.

According to the preliminary border agreement, there were fewer Latvians than Swedes in Estonia, but otherwise their situation was similar. There was no traditional administrative boundary line between Estonia and Latvia based on ethnic Estonian and Latvian residential areas. The governorate of Livonia was divided roughly along ethnic lines in the spring of 1917, but the final border agreement between independent Estonia and Latvia was the subject of lengthy negotiations. The agreement reached in 1920 was changed in 1924, when Estonia ceded to Latvia the southern part of the municipality of Laura, where there were Latvians and Russians but hardly any Estonians.⁹ In practice, this consensus virtually eliminated the threat of Latvian separatism in Estonia, although a few thousand Latvians still remained in Estonia.

Furthermore, as a consequence of the 1920 Treaty of Tartu, there were relatively large areas with Russian majorities in the vicinity of the eastern border of Estonia. Most of Petseri county and the area east of the River Narva belonged to this category. The west shore of Lake Peipus also had a few municipalities where the number of Russian residents exceeded the number of Estonian residents. From an Estonian perspective, Petseri county and the area east of the River Narva were the biggest threats to security, as local Russian people did not have many connections with Estonia and the Estonian people before 1920. Instead, their connections had traditionally been directed towards the east and other governorates of the Russian Empire. Local Russian people who suddenly became Estonian citizens in 1920 did not yet feel any particular loyalty towards the unfamiliar Estonian state.¹⁰

Germans were a substantial minority group in Estonia, due to their previous position of power and their related privileged economic and cultural status. Although Germans made up only about 2 per cent of the Estonian population, at the time of Estonian independence they owned more than half the country's cultivated area. They were also represented many times over in other economic and cultural spheres in relation to their population. Since Germans were scattered all over Estonia, and Germany was not a country bordering on Estonia, the Estonians did not fear territorial separatism from the Germans. On the other hand, during the war of independence, at least until the summer of 1919, the Estonians feared German goals of annexation. During the First World War, the idea emerged of uniting the whole historic Baltic area (the Estonian, Livonian and Courland governorates, which corresponded quite closely with the residential areas of the Estonians and Latvians) with Germany in the form of a duchy. At the same time, the traditional dominance of Germans would be preserved. Even Germany's defeat in the war did not immediately remove this fear, as the Estonians (and Latvians) perceived the German anti-Bolshevik free forces op-

⁹ Sissejuhatus, undated. *Eesti Riigiarhiiv (Estonian State Archives, hereafter ERA)*, f. 4893, p. 1; ALENIUS, K. *Ajan ihanteiden...*, s. 40; LÕUNA, Kalle. *Petserimaa. Petserimaa integreerimine Eesti Vabariiki 1920–1940*. Tallinn, 2003, lk. 33–36.

¹⁰ ANT, Jüri. *Eesti 1920. Iseisvuse esimene rahuaasta*. Tallinn, 1990, lk. 63–66; LÕUNA, K. Op. cit., lk. 26, 43, 47.

erating in the Baltic as continuing to advance Germany's ambitions for dominance in the area.¹¹

The significance of other minorities was limited in both countries. About 4,000 Jews lived in Estonian cities, and their roles in the economy and in professional education were significantly greater than their proportion of the population. In this sense, Jews resembled the Germans a little, but the essential difference was that the Jews owned very little land and they had been stripped of any political power under Imperial Russian rule.¹² The Jews also did not have a 'home state', which would have taken an interest in the situation of Jews in Estonia. Therefore, the Estonians only needed to take the Jews into account because their numbers in the country were not negligible, and because the Jews had moderate economic and educational potential. The Poles and the Finns came after the Jews according to numbers, but as groups of 1,000 to 2,000 people, they were quite marginal.¹³

In Finland, all except the Swedes were such small minority groups that in the early years of independence they were not taken into account in decision-making at all. Members of the Russian civil service who had settled mostly in southern Finnish cities during the period of Imperial Russian rule largely left the country at the time of Finnish independence, and the refugees that arrived in Finland during the Russian Civil War were a highly fragmented group.¹⁴ There were no Russian settlements on the eastern Finnish borders that would have been problematic from the point of view of separatism. The Sami and Roma, both of whom had a few thousand people, were also not socially organised. The number of Jews (about 1,000) and other minorities was so small that in practice they were virtually unnoticeable in Finland.¹⁵

Concerns about possible minority separatism were common everywhere in Eastern Europe in the 1920s, as all states had larger or smaller border areas in which a significant number of citizens, or even a majority, were part of a nationality whose state was located just on the other side of the border.¹⁶ This is why both Finland and Estonia carried out various measures during the early years of independence, in order to weed out possible separatist ideas.

Finland and Estonia were also similar in that the main populations of both countries had taken a passive role in exercising power for hundreds of years. With regard

¹¹ LAURITS, K. Op. cit., lk. 29–40; RUUTSOO, R. Op. cit., lk. 6–7.

¹² ALENIOUS, K. *Ajan ihanteiden...*, s. 44–47; RUUTSOO, R. Op. cit., lk. 8.

¹³ ALENIOUS, K. *Ajan ihanteiden...*, s. 48–49; RUUTSOO, R. Op. cit., lk. 8–9.

¹⁴ BASCHMAKOFF, Natalia, LEINONEN, Marja. *Russian Life in Finland 1917–1939: A Local and Oral History*. Helsinki, 2001, pp. 35–57.

¹⁵ NYGÅRD, Toivo. *Erilaisten historiaa. Marginaaliryhmät Suomessa 1800-luvulla ja 1900-luvun alussa*. Jyväskylä, 1998, s. 108–114; PENTIKÄINEN, Juha. Uskonnollis-kulttuuriset vähemmistöt. In *Suomen kulttuurivähemmistöt...*, s. 185–188.

¹⁶ HOBBSAWM, E. Op. cit., pp. 143–144; PEARSON, R. Op. cit., pp. 184–185.

to exercising power, both the Finns and the Estonians had been minorities, even if their numbers were much greater than the population of the other groups in total. In Finland, power had traditionally belonged to the Swedish-speaking population, and in Estonia to the Germans. Towards the end of tsarist rule, Russian officials had also reinforced their position as a second, external group to hold power. In both countries, the main nationality's participation in the exercise of power had become stronger during the early years of the 20th century, but the situation did not change fully until the countries became independent.¹⁷

Thanks to their very strong majority positions, the Finns and the Estonians became such strong authorities that, had they wanted to, they could have fully dictated their will to others. Consequently, the previous power groups became small minority groups who found it psychologically hard to accept such a sudden change in their position. From this perspective too, Finland and Estonia can be compared with most small and medium-sized countries in Eastern Europe. In practice, similar transfers in power took place in all the new states, to the benefit of the states' original nationalities.¹⁸

Ethno-political struggles and initial orientation in the first years of independence

With regard to minority issues, the most central thing to be decided after independence was how the Finns and the Estonians would use their positions of power. There were two options: 1) the rough use of power, which aimed to absorb minorities into the majority population, thus gradually lessening the significance of the minority question over time; or 2) a policy supporting the culture and identity of minorities, which would aim to encourage the minorities to feel loyal towards the majority population and the state. Most countries in Europe in the interwar period chose to practise the first option for absorbing populations.

However, Finland and Estonia chose differently, and started to apply exceptionally positive policies towards national minorities. There is no clear answer as to why they chose to do this, but some of the following factors could have been part of the reason. 1) The Finns and Estonians understood that they were small nations, and it would be unrealistic for them to try to enforce their will through strength, especially in an international context. Rather, they had to attempt to create and maintain practices where strength was not the decisive factor, but where the perspectives of all parties,

¹⁷ ALLARDT, E.; STARCK, C. Op. cit., s. 153–176; LIEBKIND, K.; BROO, R.; FINNÄS, F. Op. cit., s. 68–72; RUUTSOO, R. Op. cit., lk. 6–7.

¹⁸ ALENIUS, K. *Ajan ihanteiden...*, s. 379; HOBBSAWM, E. Op. cit., pp. 133–134; LAURITS, K. Op. cit., lk. 29–30; PEARSON, R. Op. cit., p. 185.

both large and small, were taken into account through negotiations. 2) Both countries lacked traditions of open rebellion or other political violence. 3) The new national elites had personal experience of minority status, which helped them understand the situation of minorities after the status of power changed; they also had experience of how they had been able to improve the position of their own group through peaceful methods at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. 4) The high level of education and the high standard of living in relation to the period, which created a background for fact-based consideration of minority issues. 5) The small proportion of minorities in the population, which brought some level of certainty that minorities would not be a serious threat to the existence of the whole state and the fundamental power of the main nationality. 6) During the wars of independence from 1918 to 1920, the Finnish and Estonian authorities wanted to ensure minorities' support for the government, the position of which was seriously threatened.

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Both countries naturally had a lot of discussions concerning minority policies between 1917 and 1925. Both Finland and Estonia had parties and interest groups that saw the rights granted to minorities as unfounded privileges that harmed the interests of the state and the majority population.¹⁹ On the other hand, the minorities also had extremist groups, who were critical of the actions of the majority population and the government, despite their exceptionally positive overall approach in international comparisons. Both the Swedes and the Russians in both countries put forward separatist ideas, but in the end support for them remained quite insignificant.²⁰ It is probable that the positive minority policies helped to mollify the mood of the minorities.

In Finland, the views of political groups regarding minority issues structurally resembled the situation in almost all European countries. In Europe generally, liberal centrist and moderate leftists (Social Democrat) parties were more prepared to grant extensive rights to national minorities.²¹ From their perspective, general civil rights belonged to minorities, and additionally, due to their weaker position, minorities were entitled to some degree of protection or support measures, to ensure they had the possibility to maintain their national-cultural characteristics. That is why for example, in Czechoslovakia, minorities were guaranteed an education in their native language if their percentage in the local population exceeded 20 per cent.²² In Finland, the two main parties, the Social Democrats and the moderately nationalist

¹⁹ ALENIOUS, K. *Ajan ihanteiden...*, s. 378–379; ALLARDT, E.; STARCK, C. Op. cit., s. 187, 192–195; LAURITS, K. Op. cit., lk. 33; LIEBKIND, K.; BROO, R.; FINNÄS, F. Op. cit., s. 68–69.

²⁰ ALENIOUS, K. *Ajan ihanteiden...*, s. 251–253; ALLARDT, E.; STARCK, C. Op. cit., s. 186–188, 197; LÖUNA, K. Op. cit., s. 84–86, 110.

²¹ HOBBSAWM, E. Op. cit., pp. 145–150.

²² SLAPNICKA, Helmut. Majorities and Minorities in an Inverted Position: Czechoslovakia, 1918–1939. In *Ethnic Groups and Language Rights. Comparative Studies on Governments and Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850–1940*. Vol. III. Ed. by Sergij VILFAN, Gudmund SANDVIK, Lode WILS. New York, 1993, pp. 176–190.

Agrarian League, supported a policy that slightly favoured minorities.²³ Minority legislation enacted during the era of Finnish independence is largely due to the activity of these two parties.

Similarly, the nationalist conservative right was most sceptical about minorities in Finland, as in most European countries, such as Germany and Sweden. For them, their own nationality, usually nationality as determined by the state, such as the French in France or Spanish in Spain, was primary, and society had to be constructed to pursue its interests. Minorities could not be given anything that would essentially be in conflict with the interests of the majority of the population. If minorities were given support, for example education in their own language, the amount of support could not be greater than what the minority's share of the population directly necessitated. Anything else would have been giving the wrong kinds of privileges to minorities. If minorities were given the right to create self-governing institutions, the conservative right feared that they would form a 'state within a state', which again would be absolutely contrary to the interests of the state and the majority of the population. In practice, nationalist movements such as the Finnish movement in Finland desired a reduction in the number of minorities and in their social role. For some, the desirable end point seemed to be the assimilation of minorities into the majority.²⁴

In Estonia, the situation was more complicated, due to the exceptional role of Germans in the country's history. In Estonia, as in Latvia, for centuries the ethnic border had been congruent with other internal borders of society. In Finland, the situation of the Swedes somewhat resembled this, but the demarcation line was much less rigid and easier to cross. In the Baltic region, the Germans as a closed group had dominated all areas of power, politics, culture and economics.²⁵ Therefore, in Estonia (and Latvia) the question of nationality was at the same time a social question concerning all aspects of life. The promotion of equality in any area inevitably meant intervening in the traditional dominant position of Germans. Further afield in Europe, the same situation could be found in Austria-Hungary. There, in the Slavic areas of Austria, the German minority had played a dominant role in all spheres of life as the Hungarians had in the Slavic or Roman areas of the dual monarchy of Hungary.²⁶

In Estonia, the attitude of political parties towards minorities was, in the light of the preceding background, exceptional by international standards. Most sympathetic towards considering minority rights was the conservative right, which at the time of independence was represented by the Rural League (Maaliit). The activities of the

²³ ALLARDT, E.; STARCK, C. Op. cit., s. 192-197; SAUKKONEN, P. Op. cit., s. 97-102.

²⁴ ALENIUS, K. *Compromise solutions...*, pp. 205-206; ALLARDT, E.; STARCK, C. Op. cit., s. 192-196; LAURITS, K. Op. cit., lk. 144-146; VILFAN, Sergij. Introduction. In *Ethnic Groups and Language Rights...* pp. 2-5.

²⁵ LIEBKIND, K.; BROO, R.; FINNÄS, F. Op. cit., s. 68-72; RUUTSOO, R. Op. cit., lk. 6-7.

²⁶ VILFAN, Sergij. An Ethnic Mosaic: Austria before 1918. In *Ethnic Groups and Language Rights...*, pp. 111-130.

conservative right reveal that in its world-view and social thought, it was the closest of the Estonian parties to the Baltic German bourgeoisie. The conservatives were more willing to acknowledge that, economically and culturally, the Germans had much to give the Estonians, although in principle they also supported ethnic Estonian nationalism. However, the nationalism of Estonian conservatives was based on equality between nationalities, and on taking national perspectives into account in all societal decision-making. This included guaranteeing minorities the opportunity to preserve their own national-cultural characteristics.²⁷

The political left and centre in Estonia, including the liberals, were more reluctant to grant rights to minorities. The vast majority of parties wanted to immediately implement large-scale land reforms, in which the landed property of Germans would be confiscated, and in the same context, the transfer of social power from Germans to Estonians would be ensured. This transfer of power was not easy to reconcile with guaranteeing the rights of minorities. Estonian political parties were only prepared to extend the rights of minorities after the land reform, by which a kind of social and national revolution had taken place. After this, deeper structural factors could have an influence, which were previously presented in the form of six main points. The result was that in Estonia in the early 1920s, a policy began to be implemented that was, by international standards, sympathetic towards minorities, although the critical voices then belonged to the left. The left feared that the Germans would attempt to maintain 'unfair privileges', and even seek to restore their leading economic position. It took until the mid-1920s before these fears were relegated to the margins of political debate.²⁸

The differences between Estonian political parties were clearly evident in the first months of independence. From November 1918 to May 1919, the conservative right took a leading role in the Estonian provisional government, and the government clearly chose a policy that guaranteed the rights of minorities. Estonians 'did not have to follow the poor example of their former rulers' (Germans and Russians), but could also recognise the rights of national minorities.²⁹ The Estonian Declaration of Independence itself was directed at 'all the nations of Estonia', instead of referring to 'the people' or 'the Estonian nation' in the singular.³⁰ Therefore, the government wanted to emphasise that minority nationalities were recognised alongside ethnic Estonians, and were equal to the majority population. Immediately after independence, the Finnish government also chose a policy whereby representation for the Swedish-speaking population was secured at the highest level of power.

²⁷ ALENIOUS, K. *Ajan ihanteiden...*, s. 376–378.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, s. 377–379.

²⁹ *Maanõukogu protokoll*, 20.11.1918. Tallinn, 1935.

³⁰ Manifest kõigile Eestimaa rahwastele, 24.2.1918. *Riigi Teataja*, 27.11.1918, Nr. 1.

On the other hand, the rulers of both countries regarded a certain use of force as necessary, so that minorities would not endanger national security. In Finland, soldiers from the Russian army, of which about 100,000 had settled in the country, were regarded as a risk. The majority returned voluntarily to Russia in late 1917 and early 1918, when in practice detachments of the Russian army scattered. However, in the summer of 1918, the Finnish government decided to deport the last of about 20,000 men, who would have preferred to remain living as civilians in Finland. In addition to the security aspect, this decision was possibly influenced by a general distrust of Russians in Finland. Russians were considered as ethnically and culturally foreign, and as representatives of foreign tsarist tyranny.³¹ Even if Russians were not persecuted, there was no desire to provide them with specific minority rights, and the growth in their numbers in Finland was not considered desirable.

There was widespread mistrust towards the authorities in Estonia among the Russian population living in Petseri county in Estonia in 1919–1920, and a number of individuals were involved in outright political agitation to reconnect the region with Russia. In order to de-escalate the situation, the Estonian government appointed a governor with exceptional powers in Petseri county, whose main task was to suppress the separatism emerging in the region. The means whereby this was accomplished were mainly fines, dismissal from office and expulsion from the province. Between the autumn of 1920 and the autumn of 1921, the governor appeared to be effective, for after that the provincial administration returned to its normal practices.³²

The positive approach of Finland and Estonia to minorities was visible both in their legislation and in practical matters. The provisional Estonian government from November 1918 to April 1919 had three minority ministers, representing the Swedes, the Germans and the Russians. From the summer of 1919 onwards, the government no longer had separate ministers for minority issues, but they were replaced by permanent secretariats for nationality matters established within the Ministry of the Interior.³³ In Finland, the RKP (Swedish People's Party) was included in the first four governments of independence until August 1919, and after that in two other governments at the beginning of the 1920s.³⁴ In this regard, the closest points of comparison to Finland and Estonia were Lithuania and Latvia, which also appointed ministers for minorities in the early years of independence.³⁵

³¹ BASCHMAKOFF, N.; LEINONEN, M. Op. cit., pp. 37–42; NYGÅRD, T. Op. cit., s. 117–129.

³² Siseministeriumi aruanne, January 1921. *ERA*, f. 14, n. 1, s. 279 (1920), l. 71; Siseministeriumi aruanne, January 1922. *ERA*, f. 14, n. 1, s. 578 (1921), l. 16; *Riigi Teataja*, 10.9.1920, Nr. 141/142, lk. 1121–1122.

³³ *Asutava Kogu protokollid*, 14 (21.5.1919), 19 (28.5.1919), 23 (3.6.1919). Tallinn, 1919.

³⁴ See list of Finnish governments, retrieved 26.6.2016, URL: <<http://valtioneuvosto.fi/tietoa/historiaa/hallitukset-ja-ministerit/raportti/-/r/v2>>.

³⁵ Latvijas Republikas valdības, retrieved 26.6.2016, URL: <<http://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/content/ministru-kabineta-vesture>>; Lietuvos ministrų kabinetai, retrieved 26.6.2016, URL: <<https://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt/lt/apie-ministra-pirmininka/ankstesni-ministrai-pirmininkai/laikotarpiu-1918-1940>>.

Legally, the position of minorities was secured in the Finnish constitution in 1919, and in the Estonian constitution in 1920. Both acts gave minorities the right to maintain their own culture, through education in their own language, for example. As a result, in Finland in the 1920s and 1930s, there were more than 200 Swedish-language public schools, including secondary schools and higher education, and 20 Russian-language schools. In Estonia, the numbers were approximately 110 Russian, 40 German, 20 Swedish, ten Latvian and five Jewish schools. In addition to this, they had the right to use their own language as the official language in municipal administrations in areas where they were in a majority. Furthermore, Finland gave the Swedes the right to seek services from central state bodies in their own language, and Estonia also gave the right to Swedes, Germans and Russians.³⁶ The constitution defined relatively extensive basic rights for minorities, and more acts clarifying these rights were passed during the early 1920s.

Estonian cultural autonomy and related exceptional solutions in Finland

In the early 1920s, the Estonian conservative right and interest groups for national minorities continued their cooperation, which was rare by international standards. Although the 1920 Constitution already expressly guaranteed equal status for minorities with the majority of the population and the main minority groups, with their own Secretariat for Citizenship in the Interior Ministry, members of both groups had the ideal of more in-depth consideration for national-cultural issues.³⁷

The model of personal autonomy developed by the Austrian theorists Otto Bauer and Karl Renner was considered the best option. However, the challenge was to persuade the Estonian left-wing and centrist parties of the wisdom of the idea, and the matter proceeded slowly in the Estonian parliament. The attempted coup by communists in December 1924 was perhaps the last impetus for advancing the matter. By then, at the latest, all the major Estonian political parties had decided that winning the loyalty of minorities to the Estonian state was best addressed by broadening their rights.³⁸

At the beginning of 1925, Estonia adopted the internationally unique Cultural Autonomy Act of Minorities. This act gave all minority nationalities with at least 3,000 people the right to establish a national, self-governing organisation based on autonomy. The autonomy organisation had the right to tax members, to receive subsidies from the

³⁶ Constitution of Finland, 1919, retrieved 26.6.2016, URL: <<http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/1999/19990731>>; Eesti Wabariigi põhiseadus (1920). *Riigi Teataja*, 9.8.1920, Nr. 113/114; RUUTSOO, R. Op. cit., lk. 47.

³⁷ ALENIOUS, K. *Ajan ihanteiden...*, s. 65–73, 107–109.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, s. 334–340; HASSELBLATT, Cornelius. *Minderheitenpolitik in Estland. Rechtsentwicklung und Rechtswirklichkeit 1918–1995*. Hamburg, 1996, S. 49–50.

treasury, and to use the funds to educate the minorities, and for any other measures necessary for maintaining the minority's culture.³⁹ Germans and Jews immediately established their own autonomy organisations, as the people of these minorities lived separately in different cities all over Estonia, and the regionally independent autonomy organisation was perfect for their needs. The Russians and Swedes did not establish their own organisations, for they had an opportunity to manage their affairs through normal municipal administrations, thanks to their centralised living areas.⁴⁰

In Finland, the minority rights of Swedes were specified through two actions that were also unique in Europe during the interwar period. Firstly, Swedish and Finnish were defined as Finnish national languages that were fully equal all over the country. This definition was included in both the Constitution and the complementary Language Act of 1922. What made this exceptional was the fact that the proportion of the Swedish-speaking population was only 11 per cent of the whole population, and this equality was not regionally restricted. Elsewhere in Europe, minority languages were only granted an equal position in areas inhabited by the minorities, if at all. The act also obligated all people employed by the Finnish state and municipalities to learn both languages, so that they could serve all customers in all situations.⁴¹

Secondly, Finland granted exceptionally extensive autonomy to the Åland Islands. The Act on Åland's Autonomy was adopted in 1920, and supplemented two years later. In practice, Åland's own administrative bodies decide on all matters regarding the province, and other Finnish laws are only applied in part. The municipalities of Åland are Swedish speaking, and are not obligated to serve their customers in Finnish. Åland is also a demilitarised area, and its residents are not conscripted, unlike all other residents of Finland. The reason for Åland's near-independence was its residents' strong desire to become part of Sweden when Finland became independent. In two unofficial referenda held in 1918, almost 99 per cent of inhabitants of the Åland Islands voted for the unification of their region with Sweden. Finland and Sweden negotiated the matter through the League of Nations, and as compensation for Finland keeping the islands, the state decided to grant Åland very extensive regional minority rights.⁴²

On one hand, autonomy can be considered a form of integration. By granting it, the Finnish state openly demonstrated that it would respect the cultural and linguistic rights of the minority in question. On the other hand, the extensive, and in many ways unique, national autonomy granted to the Åland Islands can also be in-

³⁹ Riigikogu protokollid, 5.2.1925; Eesti Vabariigi Vähemusrahvuste kultuur-omavalitsuse seadus. *Riigi Teataja*, 22.2.1925, Nr. 31/32.

⁴⁰ LAURITS, K. Op. cit., lk. 69–75; RUUTSOO, R. Op. cit., lk. 12–13.

⁴¹ Kielilaki, 1922, retrieved 26.6.2016, URL: <<http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/1922/19220148>>.

⁴² Självstyrelselag för Åland, 1920, retrieved 26.6.2016, URL: <<http://www.finlex.fi/sv/laki/ajantasa/1991/19911144>>.

terpreted as a form of segregation, as the region became a separate entity in which residents lived their own lives, apart from other regions of Finland.

The controversy regarding the future of the Åland Islands also opened up slightly surprising internal political horizons. The Swedish People's Party of Finland, the central organisation for protecting the rights of the Swedish minority, opposed the wishes of the residents of Åland to unite with Sweden. Separatist efforts by both the Ålanders and the North Ostrobothnians were seen as a threat to the rest of the Swedish population in Finland, for ceding Åland and possibly other coastal areas would have reduced the share of the Swedish population further, and hence weakened their position in Finland.⁴³

In Finland, the leading parties had a positive, or at least neutral, attitude towards national minorities. According to the leadership of the Social Democrats, the largest party in the parliament, the status of the Swedish language was a 'sixth-grade question' compared with more important societal issues. Because of their ideological axiom, the Social Democrats were not interested in promoting minority rights, but they did not oppose them either. The attitude of the dominant parties towards the Swedish-speaking minority could be explained by attitudes similar to those of the Estonian conservative right towards the Baltic Germans. Although, on one hand, the Swedes were envied because of their elite economic, political and cultural status, at the same time, the Finnish-educated classes recognised that in many ways Swedish influence had been a positive factor in Finland's history. Many held the view that Finland had been connected to West European civilisation through Swedish domination, just as Estonia had been through German domination. The alternative in this estimation would have been a connection with Russia and an 'inferior' Eastern cultural sphere.⁴⁴ In the late 1800s and early 1900s, when social Darwinism, racial thought and a very loaded cultural classification system prevailed, it was perceived that the issue in question was a decisive choice in terms of the whole past, present and future well-being of the nation.⁴⁵

Nationalist pressures of the 1930s did not change the situation substantially

In the 1930s, the nationalist tone and tendencies in Finland increased, as elsewhere in Europe. For many Finnish nationalists, the University of Helsinki was the symbol of the highest education, and hence of the highest cultural power. In 1919, the Law on the Foundation of the University of Helsinki made both Finnish and Swedish the

⁴³ MEINANDER, Henrik. *Kansallisvaltio. Ruotsalaisuus Suomessa 1922–2015*. Helsinki, 2017, s. 16–18.

⁴⁴ KARJAHÄRM, Toomas. *Unistus Euroopast*. Tallinn, 2003, lk. 27–36; LIEBKIND, K.; BROO, R.; FINNÄS, F. Op. cit., s. 50–51, 68–72.

⁴⁵ HOBBSAWM, E. Op. cit., pp. 107–109.

languages of instruction. However, Finnish nationalist circles were not satisfied with this. They wanted the University of Helsinki to be a purely Finnish-language university. As a result, there was a case in interwar Finland in which the law was changed so that the rights promised to a minority were reduced.

Finnish nationalism was the main ideological trend, especially among university students. Unofficially, the proponents of the ideology were called 'True Finns', and students involved in the movement used the same name for themselves as well. The movement organised several major demonstrations in Helsinki for the first time in 1928 and 1929, and sent petitions to the University Board to change the university to a Finnish-language institution. The activities of the 'True Finns' intensified in the early 1930s. In the spring of 1932, the movement organised a week-long student strike, and in 1933 and 1934 there were several demonstrations in Helsinki that led to rioting. In the parliamentary elections of 1930 and 1933, nationalist parties gained more seats than before, but did not win a majority in the parliament.⁴⁶

The language question was discussed in the parliament between 1934 and 1937, and the debates for and against the suggested change were intense. In 1937, the issue of the language of instruction in the University of Helsinki was finally resolved in favour of Finnish. The revised Law of the University of Helsinki declared that the language of instruction should be Finnish, but it also stated that the use of Swedish was allowed in cases that were specifically provided for by the act. In practice, this meant that the law imposed quotas, or in other words, a maximum number and share for Swedish-speaking professors and teachers. Thus, the new law was a compromise that reflected the majority view of the parliament, but both Finnish and Swedish nationalists were dissatisfied with the outcome.⁴⁷

Social development in Estonia during the 1930s was similar to that in Finland, but there were also differences between the two countries. The most important distinguishing factor was Estonia's transition to authoritarian rule in 1934, when Konstantin Päts seized power. The parliament was not dissolved, but it lost its importance, and power was concentrated in the hands of Päts and his closest co-ideologists. The new Constitution, which would have allowed for a transition back to democracy, came into force in 1938. However, it was not possible to see the new Constitution work in practice before the outbreak of the Second World War.⁴⁸

The Päts administration was nationalist in principle, but the extreme right was not involved at the highest level of government. In fact, Päts had carried out his coup

⁴⁶ MEINANDER, H. Op. cit., s. 39–45, 50–54; SAUKKONEN, P. Op. cit., s. 21.

⁴⁷ Laki Helsingin yliopiston järjestysmuodon perusteista annetun lain muuttamisesta, annettu 18.6.1937, retrieved 23.7.2019, URL: <<https://agricolaverkko.fi/vintti/julkaisut/historiakone/dokumentti.php?id=1361>>; MEINANDER, H. Op. cit., s. 54–59.

⁴⁸ ZETTERBERG, Seppo. *Viron historia*. Helsinki, 2007, s. 562–560.

d'état in order to prevent Estonian right-wing extremists from gaining power. In any case, he represented a conservative nationalism that was typical of the 1930s, and emphasised the special status of ethnic Estonians in their home country. During his rule, he organised large-scale propaganda campaigns to promote the Estonian identity. The activities of the media were restricted, and directed towards supporting themes chosen by the government. The biggest nationalist operation between 1935 and 1939 was the conversion of surnames into Estonian. In 1935, about 340,000 people in Estonia had a foreign-language surname. By the Second World War, more than half of them, about 200,000, had taken Estonian-language ones. There was a similar campaign in Finland between 1935 and 1936, during which slightly less than 100,000 Finns took a Finnish surname.⁴⁹

Minor changes were made to Estonian legislation in the Päts era, which weakened the position of minorities. For example, schools were finally able to conduct lessons in Estonian, even if the school was otherwise a foreign-language one. According to the new law, school principals had to be Estonian citizens, which complicated the work in Swedish-speaking and Finnish-speaking schools, because a large number of their teachers had come to Estonia from Sweden or Finland. Furthermore, ethnic Estonians were forbidden to study in foreign-language schools, even if their mother tongue was not Estonian. In 1937, the government also prevented Estonian Russians from establishing cultural autonomy similar to that of the Germans (1926) and Jews (1927) in the 1920s. The government pleaded that the preparation of the new Constitution should not be completed and that no new cultural autonomy institutions should be approved before the law came into force. After the new Constitution was adopted in 1938, the Russians no longer submitted new applications before the start of the war.⁵⁰

The new Estonian Constitution did not reduce the rights of minorities, but the minor changes to other laws that were made in the 1930s remained in force. Overall, the position of minorities did not change significantly in Estonia or Finland in the 1930s. The rise in nationalism led to an increase in the number of anti-minority voices and organisations, and perhaps an increase in discrimination in everyday life. However, the fundamental rights of minorities that were established by the law remained relatively high on an international level, at which they had been set at the beginning of the 1920s.

⁴⁹ MEINANDER, H. *Op. cit.*, s. 57; ZETTERBERG, S. *Op. cit.*, s. 560–562.

⁵⁰ Siseministri ettekanne Vabariigi Valitsusele, 5.11.1937. *ERA*, f. 31, n. 3, s. 4798, l. 1–5; RUUTSOO, R. *Op. cit.*, lk. 13, 151–153.

ous examples from the small group of states where local conditions made it possible to consider minority rights to a greater extent in practice.

Due to the reasons presented, Estonia and Finland adopted an exceptionally positive approach towards national minorities. The countries with the closest similar policies were Latvia and Lithuania, where the overall social situation was largely the same as in Finland and Estonia, which means that the reasons can also be assumed to be similar. In all European countries, including not only the new states of Eastern Europe, but also old, established countries of southern and Western Europe, minorities were granted more restricted rights. In addition, it should be noted that in many countries these laws were only theoretical, and applied in practice in small amounts. Estonia and Finland were also exceptional compared to other countries in this regard, as the legislated minority acts were also applied almost in full.

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Although relations between the Finnish-speaking majority and the Swedes and other minorities, such as the Russians, Roma and Sami, were strained to a certain extent, Finland adopted an exceptionally positive approach towards national minorities, and chose a policy of integration, due to the reasons presented. The same applies to Estonia, where the focus was mainly on Russians and Germans, and to a lesser extent on Swedish, Latvian and Jewish minorities.

The nationalist trends of the 1930s in Finland and Estonia caused a certain degree of danger to the societal status of ethnic minorities. Due to ideological pressure, a few changes were made to the law in both countries, which weakened the linguistic rights of minorities. However, these were relatively minor details. Overall, the legal status of minorities remained almost unchanged until the Second World War.

This article has presented preliminary interpretations of what, in the case of Finland and Estonia, could explain the development of events. A systematic comparison of different countries may provide more reliable answers as to the validity of these interpretations, and whether there are theoretical models that can be identified in Europe as to what kind of historic and contemporary social issues correlate with the minority policies practised.

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TAUTINIŲ MAŽUMŲ INTEGRACIJA SUOMIJOJE IR ESTIJOJE TARPUKARIU (1918–1939 METAI)

Kari Alenius

Santrauka

Lyginant Suomijos ir Estijos gyventojų tautinę sudėtį po Pirmojo pasaulinio karo, matyti, kad abi valstybės buvo panašios. Iš visų valstybių, kurios tapo nepriklausomos po Pirmojo pasaulinio karo, tautiniu požiūriu Suomija ir Estija buvo pačios homogeniškiausios; kiekvienoje iš jų titulinė tauta sudarė apie 88 proc. gyventojų.

Pagrindinės tautinės politikos prielaidos Suomijoje ir Estijoje buvo aiškios. Titulinei tautai turint stiprią gyventojų daugumą, visos mažumos sudarė nedidelę dalį. Dėl to nebuvo tikimasi pastebimos kovos tarp daugumos ir mažumų dėl visoje šalyje valdžios taikomos politikos. Kita vertus, tiek Suomijoje, tiek Estijoje mažumos gyveno koncentruotai tam tikrose aptariamų valstybių srityse. Todėl daugelyje savivaldybių mažumos sudarė daugumą ir metė iššūkį titulinės tautos (etninių suomių arba etninių estų) valdžios pozicijoms lokaliu lygmeniu. Kadangi mažumos daugiausia gyveno Suomijos ir Estijos pasienio regionuose, tai didino galimo separatizmo grėsmę. Atsižvelgiant į jų gyvenamąją vietą, potencialiai separatistinės mažumos Estijoje buvo švedai, latviai ir rusai, o Suomijoje – švedai.

Pagrindinis klausimas, dėl kurio reikėjo apsispręsti, buvo tai, kaip suomia ir estai naudos savo galios pozicijas mažumų atžvilgiu. Tam būta dviejų pasirinkimų: 1) šiurkštus galios naudojimas, siekiant absorbuoti mažumas į daugumą ir tuo po truputį mažinti mažumų klausimo svarbą; 2) tautinių mažumų kultūras ir tapatumą remianti politika, kurios tikslas – skatinti lojalumą daugumai. Europoje daugelis valstybių tarpukariu buvo pasirinkusios pirmąjį variantą – absorbuoti mažumas.

Vis dėlto Suomija ir Estija pasirinko kitą variantą ir pasižymėjo išskirtinai pozityviu požiūriu į mažumas. Nėra aiškaus atsakymo, kodėl jos pasirinko šį būdą, tačiau kai kurie veiksniai galėjo daryti tam įtaką: (1) suomia ir estai suvokė, kad jie yra mažos tautos ir joms būtų nerealistiška bandyti primesti savo valią jėga, ypač atsižvelgiant į tarptautinę padėtį. Verčiau joms bandyti kurti ir palaikyti praktikas, kai jėga nėra lemiamas veiksnys ir kai derybomis atsižvelgiama į visų pusių – tiek didesnių, tiek mažesnių – požiūrius; (2) abiejose šalyse nebūta atviro maišto ar kitokio politinio smurto tradicijų; be to, (3) naujieji tautiniai elitai turėjo buvimo mažumos padėtyje patirties, dėl to jie suprato mažumų būklę. Tautiniai elitai XIX a. pabaigoje – XX a. pradžioje taip pat turėjo patirties, kaip įmanoma pagerinti savo pozicijas taikiais metodais; (4) vertinant to meto kontekste, aukštas išsilavinimo ir aukštas gyvenimo kokybės lygis kūrė kontekstą, kuriame tautinių mažumų klausimai buvo svarstomi remiantis faktais; (5) mažumos sudarė nedidelę visuomenės dalį, ir tai lėmė tam tikrą supratimą, kad jos nebus rimta grėsmė visos valstybės egzistencijai ar titulinės tautos esminėms galioms; (6) Nepriklausomybės karų laikotarpiu (1918–1920 m.) Suomijos ir Estijos valdžios siekė užsitikrinti mažumų paramą vyriausybėms, kurioms buvo iškilusi rimta grėsmė.

Suomijos ir Estijos valdžių pozityvų požiūrį į mažumas rodė tiek šių šalių teisinė bazė, tiek ir politinė praktika. Estijos laikinojoje vyriausybėje nuo 1918 m. lapkričio mėn. iki 1919 m. balandžio mėn. buvo trys tautinėms mažumoms – švedų, vokiečių ir rusų – atstovavę ministrai. Nuo 1919 m. vasaros vyriausybėse nebebuvo atskirų tautinių mažumų klausimais besirūpinančių ministerijų, bet jas pakeitė nuolatiniai tautinių klausimų sekretoriai Vidaus reikalų ministerijos struktūroje. Suomijoje RKP (*Suomen ruotsalainen kansanpuolue*, Suomijos švedų tautinė partija) buvo įtraukiama į keturias pirmąsias vyriausybes iki 1919 m. rugpjūčio mėn., o paskui ir į dar dvi vyriausybes 3-iojo dešimtmečio pradžioje. Juridiškai mažumų padėtį garantavo 1919 m. Suomijos konstitucija ir 1920 m. Estijos konstitucija. Abu pagrindiniai įstatymai užtikrino teisę mažumoms palaikyti savo kultūrą per švietimą jų gimtąją kalbą.

1925 m. pradžioje Estija priėmė tarptautiniu požiūriu unikalų Mažumų kultūrinės autonomijos aktą. Jis suteikė tautinėms mažumoms, kurių dydis viršijo 3 tūkst. gyventojų, teisę kurti tautinės savivaldos organizacijas, pagrįstas autonomija. Suomijoje švedų mažumos teises patikslino du veiksmai, unikalūs to meto Europos kontekste. Pirma, švedų ir suomių kalbos buvo apibrėžtos kaip Suomijos nacionalinės kalbos, kurių lygybė turėjo būti užtikrinta visoje šalyje. Antra, Suomija suteikė išskirtinai plačią autonomiją Alandų saloms. 1920 m. priimtas Alandų autonomijos aktas po dvejų metų buvo papildytas. Praktikoje autonominiai Alandų valdžios organai sprendė visus šio regiono klausimus, o kiti Suomijos įstatymai regione galiojo tik iš dalies.

Tiek Suomijoje, tiek Estijoje 4-ojo dešimtmečio nacionalistinės nuotaikos sudarė tam tikrą pavojų visuomeninei tautinių mažumų padėčiai. Dėl ideologinio spaudimo abiejose šalyse buvo priimtos kelios įstatymų pataisos, kurios sumažino mažumų kalbines teises. Vis dėlto tai buvo palyginti smulkmenos. Apskritai iki pat Antrojo pasaulinio karo mažumų padėtis liko beveik nepakitusi.