Estonia

The constitution does not contain provisions for regional government (C 1992, Arts. 154–160), but municipalities are self-governing (Kettunen and Kungla 2005; Law No. 37, 558/1993; Mäeltsemees 2000). Between 1990 and 2017 Estonia had deconcentrated intermediate governance consisting of fifteen maakonnad (counties) (Council of Europe: Estonia 2000, 2010; Law No. 29, 356/1995, and No. 42, 291/2004, Art. 141–142). Their boundaries followed, with few exceptions, those of the regions (rayon) created during the Soviet era (Sepp and Veemaa 2010). During the 2000s environmental management, rescue services, building registers, museums, and social and sport facilities were transferred from maakonnad to agencies of the central government. In 2018, the maakonnad were dissolved (Council of Europe: Estonia 2018; Suur 2018). An administrative reform reduced the number of municipalities from 213 in 2015 to 79 in 2018 (Law No. 788/2016). At the local level, there are cities and rural municipalities but there are no differences in competences between cities, municipalities, and the capital city of Tallinn (Council of Europe: Estonia 2010, 2011, 2018; Law No. 558/1993). As a substitute for decentralized regional governance municipalities may form intermunicipal associations to coordinate waste management, education, regional development, transport, or social care (Law No. 96, 565/2002; Mäeltsemees, Lõhmus, and Ratas 2013).

Primary references


1 Maakonnad had an average population of 88,000 in 2010.
2 The county of Ida-Vidu is the only county with a predominantly Russian-speaking population. It was partitioned in 1990 from a predominantly Estonian-speaking area. Narva is its major city (Smith 2002).

Secondary references


Committee of the Regions. 2012. Division of Powers Between the European Union, the Member States and Regional and Local Authorities. Brussels: European Union.


Union of Local Authorities.


