
Summaries

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF'S COLUMN

The European Union needs to be explained more clearly

MARJU HIMMA

Editor-in-Chief Riigikogu Toimetised

The editorial argues that Estonians often see the EU mainly as a source of funding, overlooking its broader significance. Studies show a need for clearer, more practical explanations of how the EU works, both in education and public communication. The same need for “more explanation” applies to politics and journalism, where lack of clarity weakens trust. Understanding and explaining the EU’s mechanisms is essential for transparency, democracy, and Estonia’s role within a diverse Europe.

CONVERSATION CIRCLE

Estonia in the European Union: diminishing diversity or contributing to it?

RIIGIKOGU TOIMETISED PANEL DISCUSSION

The discussion emphasized that Estonia’s contribution to the EU is not just funding, but also Nordic-minded thinking, pragmatism, and adding to diversity. The EU has provided security, stability,

and development, yet over-regulation and bureaucracy create tensions. Some see a threat to sovereignty; others stress that “the EU is not them, but us.” What’s needed: smarter transposition of directives, consistent defense of national interests, and less reliance on project funding. Key issues for the next decade are climate and environment, security, technology/AI, competitiveness, demography, and education. Estonia’s role is to uphold Europe’s diversity and a practical approach.

FOCUS

Scenario planning and global power dynamics 2035: lessons and conclusions

MEELIS KITSING

Rector Of Estonian Business School And Professor Of Political Economy

The article explains why scenario planning is a suitable tool for making sense of uncertainty in global power shifts. The Foresight Centre’s 2x2 framework (EU cooperation intensity × infrastructure innovativeness) helps policymakers test strategies across possible futures. The method has strengths and limits; the inclusive process also matters. Europe is moving between “Compass Europe” and “Tech Wolf”; Estonia should invest in education, digital, defense, and infrastructure.

Estonia – “a thorn in the empire’s flesh,” or how the war in Ukraine made Estonia big in the world and then small again

MERILI ARJAKAS

Research Fellow at the International Centre for Defence and Security, Editor-in-Chief of Diplomaatia

The war in Ukraine brought Estonia sudden global attention as a vocal, principled critic of Russia and advocate for strong EU and NATO action. In 2022, Estonia’s security stance and leaders gained international visibility, though political influence in the EU remained modest. Tallinn led calls for stricter sanctions, visa limits, and defense cooperation. By 2025, Europe is more united yet fatigued; Estonia’s voice, once amplified, is now quieter amid great-power diplomacy.

The impact of enlargement on power balances in the Council of the European Union

PIRET EHIN

Professor of Comparative Politics at the University of Tartu

Using an EU30+ voting calculator, the study models how adding up to 10 states (EL30/33/36) shifts power under QMV. Unanimity becomes harder. Founding members keep blocking power; 2004–2013 entrants lose it unless allied with newcomers. Small states grow in number but must partner with large ones to meet population thresholds; big states still need many smalls to pass laws. Ukraine’s entry boosts the East; Mediterranean/Black Sea weight rises as Northern/Baltic wanes.

Energy, artificial intelligence and climate policy: how small Estonia influences big Europe

POLINA BARGAN

Senior Specialist, Agricultural Policy Department, Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture; Political Scientist

EU energy security, climate goals and the digital shift are converging as AI-driven data centers swell power demand. The answer is one strategy linking renewables, grids and digital growth. Estonia can lead: phasing out oil shale with Just Transition support, smart siting and reporting for data centers, and models like Greenergy’s heat-reusing facility and R8’s AI that cuts building energy. Done right, green and digital reinforce each other.

Millions on the table: how Estonia uses the opportunities of Horizon Europe

KRISTEL OITMAA

Estonian Research Council Representative in Brussels

Estonia has secured €286M from Horizon Europe across 598 projects, with 34% going to companies. Success rates approach the EU average, the University of Tartu leads. ETAG supports applicants with training, advisory and a new coordinators’ program. Key hurdles: program complexity, admin burden, limited coordination experience, co-financing and partner search. Priorities: stronger coordination, tighter research–economy links, simplification and bigger EU budget.

Why Estonian residents don't believe their opinion counts in the European Union?

PIRET EHIN

Professor of comparative politics, University of Tartu

KRISTINA MUHHINA

Researcher in Public Policy, University of Tartu

HELEN URMANN

Project Manager-Analyst, Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, University of Tartu

MARTIN DANIEL HAYFORD

Project Manager-Analyst, Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, University of Tartu

OKSANA BELOVA-DALTON

Researcher in International Relations, University of Tartu

THOMAS LUKE PRITCHARD

Project Manager, Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, University of Tartu

LIISA TALVING

Associate Professor of Comparative Politics, University of Tartu

STEN HANSSON

Associate Professor of Communication Studies, University of Tartu

Despite high support for EU membership, few Estonians feel their voice matters in the EU. Using a psychological ownership lens, the study shows demographics explain little; trust in domestic institutions and feeling heard in Estonia best predict feeling heard in the EU. Focus groups reveal alienation, small-state powerlessness and weak belonging (with language-group nuances). Remedies: better party discourse, explanatory media, clearer participation info and stronger EU education.

Three reports that renew the European Union's cornerstones

MARJU HIMMA

Editor-in-Chief of RiTo

Three reports chart an EU reboot. Letta: add a “fifth freedom” for knowledge/data/skills, deepen capital markets, ease cross-border growth, and build common defence tools – linking green & digital shifts with fair enlargement. Draghi: the risk is slowness; deliver a nimble industrial strategy, cheaper clean energy, deeper capital markets, and joint financing. Niinistö: a Preparedness Union for civil-military resilience. Shared message: cut fragmentation, pool resources, act faster.

STUDIES

How to justify a law? An analysis of justifications for two Estonian laws using public reason

OLIVER DANIEL

Master of Philosophy, University of Tartu; Artur Rei Parliamentary Studies Fellow

Using public reason (Rawls; consensus vs. convergence), the article examines justifications for Estonia's 2023 marriage equality law and the 2024 motor-vehicle tax. Findings: politicians offered partial arguments, left key terms undefined, and seldom answered critiques, so value conflicts (e.g., equality vs. tradition; environment vs. fairness) remained unresolved. Public reason is a vital ideal but hard to apply to every decision; it fits best for fundamental questions.

Necessary shifts in policy and service design for working with NEET youth: perspectives of young people and practitioners

HEIDI PAABORT

Youth Employment Adviser at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications and sociology PhD candidate at the University of Tartu

MAI BEILMANN

Associate Professor of Empirical Sociology at the University of Tartu

NEET youth are diverse and vulnerable; one-size services and stigma fail them. Based on interviews in Estonia, the study finds fragmented systems, pressure for quick outcomes, and weak cross-sector coordination. It calls for youth-centered, co-created, trust-based and long-term support; a one-stop/process-leader model; minimal, consent-based data sharing; and sustainable funding that balances policy targets with young people's well-being and autonomy.

From legal language to public attitudes: stigmatization of youth from closed child institutions in Ida-Viru and Tartu

MARIA ŽURAVLJOVA

Junior Researcher in Youth and Childhood Sociology at the University of Tartu and Head of the Youth Work Department at UT Narva College

RAHEL TOHVER

Principal Specialist-Adviser at Tallinn Prison

Stigma around youth with closed-institution experience is fueled by risk-laden legal terms and event-driven media, especially where there's no direct contact. This "label before person" framing limits education and jobs. Guided contact, supportive wording and clear reintegration plans reduce stigma. The 2025 shift of the service to social welfare enables aligning terminology with support-first goals and building school/work contact pathways with media cooperation.

Transparent journalism and power – the role of citation in democratic dialogue

PRIIT SUVE

Professor at the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences

Transparent citation is not mere formatting but the core of democratic dialogue. Removing references turns knowledge into monologic "Truth," reinforcing power and boosting susceptibility to misinformation. Using Haugaard's four dimensions of power, the article argues that citations expand readers' agency, normalize evidence-based norms, and sustain truth as revisable. Media should phase in source transparency to rebuild trust and informed participation.

After the pandemic: why “one size fits all” doesn’t work in vaccine communication

KRISTINA SEIMANN

Junior Researcher in Health Communication at The University Of Tartu and The Baltic Engagement Centre for Combating Information Disorders

Vaccine hesitancy is complex and dynamic; post-pandemic drops in coverage show uniform mass campaigns can backfire. Two hesitant groups emerge: firm medical skeptics and uncertain seekers. Pathways include becoming a parent, bad care experiences, and COVID-19 governance. Effective responses: respectful, tailored outreach to vulnerable groups, health-literacy programs from school on, and training clinicians in non-judgmental counselling.

VARIA

What happens to mis- and disinformation in the Baltics before elections?

GRETEL JUHANSOO

Project Manager at The Baltic Engagement Centre for Combating Information Disorders (BECID) and Media Literacy Specialist

Disinformation in the Baltics is strategic, peaking before elections and targeting trust in institutions. With youth relying on social media, unfiltered feeds and algorithms amplify mis/dis/malinformation. BECID finds tactics like Google “reputation washing,” Kremlin-tinged anti-wind campaigns, and sham UN complaints against Estonia. AI-led moderation raises risks. Remedies: stronger journalism, fact-checking, local capacity, platform transparency, media literacy.

INTERVIEW | Invisible work and invisible harm: European regulations are not censorship but protecting people from harm

MARJU HIMMA

Associate Professor of Journalism Studies, University of Tartu

Platforms cause harm beyond illegal content: design and business models amplify outrage and polarization. Dr. Anna Antonakis argues DSA-style rules protect citizens, not censor speech. She urges transparency, civil-society involvement, and critical digital literacy. Automated moderation is biased; human moderators remain vital yet face mental-health risks. Policy should fund interdisciplinary research and uphold DSA, DMA, and the AI Act.

Flexibility in the electricity market starts with the consumer

HANNES AGABUS

Energy Systems Expert, PhD, TalTech

Europe’s evolving electricity market demands active consumers who respond to price signals and provide flexibility services. As renewables rise and volatility grows, system balance depends on users shifting or aggregating consumption. Estonia’s synchronization with Continental Europe opens new flexibility markets. By 2029, consumers should access direct demand-response options – turning households into key stabilizers and value creators in a smart, resilient energy system.

Estonia in Europe: the Estonian diaspora's history reflected in exile newspapers published in Sweden

LAURA NEMVALTS

Digital Humanities Specialist at the National Library of Estonia

Swedish-published Estonian exile papers (1944–1991) chronicle displacement, community-building and the road to restored independence. Using digitized issues, the study maps how “home” is framed, which places are mentioned, and shifting themes – from war and refugee life to Prague Spring and 1991. It also highlights uneven digitization (OCR/segmentation) that hampers research and argues for quality upgrades to preserve this cultural memory.

Global problems and future scenarios: 1987–1992 and 35 years later

JUHAN SAHAROV

Political Theory Researcher at the University of Tartu

ERIK TERK

Project Manager at Tallinn University and Professor Emeritus of Strategic Management and Futures Studies; Deputy Minister of Economy, 1989–1992

RAIVO VARE

Economic Analyst; Minister Without Portfolio, 1990–1992

A 2025 conference marking the 1990 transition revisits Estonia's upheaval. Saharov maps four drivers – structures, ideals, networks, concepts – showing a “conceptual revolution” and expert networks behind IME and the Popular Front. The article traces Savisaar's intellectual roots and Estonia's scenario-planning practice (1987 contest, 1989 exit paths, 1991 Future Congress) and urges further research; to be continued.