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Estonia

Scandals and demagogy

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Since independence in 1992, Estonia has been subjected to a brutal capitalist restoration and ultra-neoliberal policies. The main political parties do not differ on the main issues (the economy, foreign policy, joining NATO and the EU).

Hence scandals (like that of the KESK interior minister who had to resign before the 2003 parliamentary elections, accused of having sent some adolescent nationalists to prison in 1985, under the Soviet regime) and ludicrous proposals (during the 2003 elections the Christian Democrats proposed giving mothers of families extra votes according to how many children they had aged less than 16!) characterize political life. The voters, when they bother voting, do no more than punish the outgoing government and hope that change at the top will not worsen their everyday life. Governmental alliances are based more on a division of the spoils than on political agreement. Thus in 2003, a completely new party came into government and through an alliance against the KESK gained the post of prime minister. A year later, with only 6.66% of votes cast, it has been able to gain a seat in the European Parliament!

The surprise of this election was the breakthrough of the Social Democratic Party (the new name of the former "Popular Party of Moderates!) which has been out of government since 1999. Led by a former foreign minister who had been a journalist for Radio Free Europe), this party gave the impression during the election campaign that joining the EU would allow Estonians to enjoy living standards like those of Sweden. The disappointment will be all the harsher.

	European 2004		legislatives 2003	legislatives 1999
	%	seats	%	%
Participation	26.70		58.00	57.4
Sotsiaaldemokraatlik Erakond (SDE) (social democratic)	36.79	3	7.04	15.92
Eesti Keskerakond (KESK) (centre/liberal - Eurosceptic)	17.53	1	25.40	23.41
Eesti Reformierakond (ER) (right/liberal)	12.22	1	17.69	15.92
Erakond Isamaaliit (IL) (Christian Democratic, conservative)	10.50	1	7.31	16.09
Eestimaa Rahvaliid (ERL) (agrarian, conservative)	8.05	0	13.03	7.27
Res Publica (RP) (right/conservative)	6.66	0	24.62	-