

ROR 9 (HDIM 2017)

Right of Reply by Estonia

13.09.2017

Thank you Mr. Moderator,

Since my country has been mentioned today, I would like to exercise the right of reply on my national capacity to comment on some of the claims made by the Russian Delegation and the representative of the civil society regarding the question of undetermined citizens in Estonia.

Civic and economic rights are guaranteed to all persons residing in Estonia, citizens and non-citizens alike.

The persons with undetermined citizenship have travel documents, resident permits, right to equal treatment and access to social services, as well as the right to vote at local elections, which can be used by all long-term legal residents of Estonia. Residents with undetermined citizenship can travel visa-free both to the EU and Russia. It is also important to stress that persons with undetermined citizenship in Estonia enjoy more rights than foreseen in the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons as has been reaffirmed by the UNHCR on several occasions.

The Government is actively promoting – but not imposing – the acquisition of the Estonian citizenship and is creating all necessary conditions in this regard. Estonia continues to encourage persons with undetermined citizenship to apply for Estonian citizenship and has changed the Citizenship Act on several occasions to this end. The number of persons with undetermined citizenship has decreased remarkably, comprising the fraction of 6% of the population in 2017, compared to 32% in 1992. It is more than a five-fold decrease during the last 25 years.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind you that citizenship cannot be forced to anyone. The Estonian Government's position is that every person should have the right to choose his or her citizenship.

Thank you Mr. Moderator.