

The Coat of Arms of Estonia



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(Reverse)



(Obverse)

The Great Seal of Maryland



Maryland - Estonia Exchange Council (MEEC)



During the 13th Century the area of Europe that is now known as Estonia was first called "Terra Mariae" or "Mary's Land," thus a 21st Century link between Maryland in the USA and Estonia in Europe seems very appropriate.



History of MEEC:

The special relationship between Estonia (EE) and Maryland (MD) started over 15 years ago with the end of the Cold War and as part of the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. In 1993 a part of the American section of this initiative became known as the State Partnership Program (SPP). MD, as part of SPP, through its National Guard (MDNG under the leadership of MG James F. Fretterd), was assigned a special relationship with EE and the Estonian Defence League [Kaitseliit or Home Guard (HG)].

The military -to- military association proved to be so successful that EE & MD agreed to enlarge the scope of their partnership to include civilian-to-civilian relationships. These civilian relationships were divided into five categories: education, twin cities/counties, economic development, cultural/social activities and others (police, medical, etc).

In 2001 a non-profit nongovernmental organization (NGO) was formed to handle non-military issues between Estonia and Maryland with the MDNG and the Kaitseliit continuing to handle all military issues. Originally this NGO was named the Maryland/Estonia Education Consortium (MEEC). In 2005 MEEC changed its name to the Maryland-Estonia Exchange Council.



Signing in May 1999 in Tallinn, Estonia

"The rebirth of the Hanseatic League"



What MEEC does:

May 1999 is when the first partner city agreements were signed between cities in EE & MD. Overseeing these first signings in EE was the Adjutant General of the MDNG and the LT Governor of MD. These partnerships have grown into over twelve twinning groups made up of some official Sister Cities & Counties & some just at the Partnership level.

In Tallinn during April 2006 MD's Secretary of State signed a friendship agreement between MD & the two Estonian local government associations. May 2009 saw the official Sister State Agreement signed in Annapolis between Harju County (representing EE) & MD. The Governor of MD, the Deputy Governor of Harju & the Estonian Ambassador were in attendance.

In addition to these grand events there have been many cultural exchanges, some economic, police, & medical connections, and especially many education links [led by Dr. Steve Herman, President Emeritus of Garrett College]. Three of the most significant have been an American Studies summer program for Baltic graduate students at Hood College, a signed linkage for the Estonian Aviation Academy & UMES, & the recent special agreement between Tartu University & Salisbury University.



Signing in May 2009 in Annapolis, Maryland

Maryland geography & history:



Maryland (MD) founded in 1634 lies on the Atlantic coast of the USA in the middle of the 13 original English colonies in North America.

MD, with a population of 5,773,552, is almost four times as populated as Estonia but has a territory of only 9,837 square miles (25,478 square kilometers). MD’s largest city, Baltimore, is located about 30 miles from its state capital, Annapolis. Both of these cities are located about 30 miles from Washington, the nations capital. Within the triangle formed by the three cities live approximately 10,000 Estonian Americans allowing MD the claim of having the highest percentage of Estonian Americans of any US state.

In 1649 MD became the first civil regime in the history of the world to legislate freedom of religion, thus MD even today is known as the “Free State” & in 1814 the “Star Spangled Banner,” US national anthem, was written in MD.

MD’s capitol building having been in continuous legislative use since the 18th Century is the oldest State House in the USA. It was used as the US Capital from November 1783 until August 1784. The US Congress meeting in Annapolis ratified the Treaty of Paris in 1783 officially ending the Revolutionary War between the US and England.

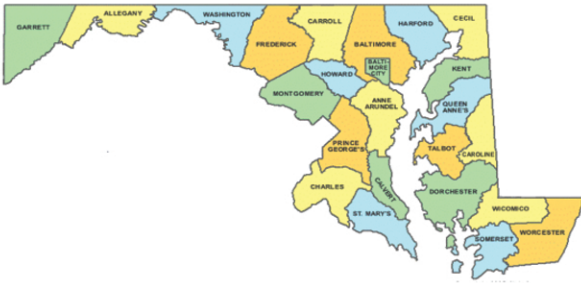


North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Maryland picture and maps:



Maryland Capitol in Annapolis started in 1772



Maryland, one of the original 13 States of the USA

Estonian picture and maps:



Tallinn Town Hall started in the 13th Century



The 15 Counties of Estonia



The Baltic Sea Region of Northern Europe

Estonian geography & history:



European Union (EU)

Estonia lies on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea situated due east of Sweden and on the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland with the Estonian capital and largest city, Tallinn, about 20 miles from Helsinki, Finland.

EE, with 45,100 square kilometers (17,413 square miles), is about twice the physical size of MD but only has a population of 1,339,646. Finish and Estonian are related languages, both belonging to the Finno-Ugric group.

A proud and ancient people, the Estonians trace their ancestry to 2500 BC. In large measure geography determined the landscape of their history, Endowed with warm water ports, this fertile expanse of flat costal lowland lay in the pathway of powerful forces east and west. From about 1200 AD onward the Estonian’s experienced a succession of invasions, initially from Germanic and Scandinavian invaders from the west and later from Russia t the east.

EE became truly independent at the end of World War One on 24 February 1918. From 1940 until regaining its independence in 1991 EE was under Soviet rule. In 2004 EE joined both the European Union and NATO.



Harju County