



ESTO 2019

PRESS RELEASE

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### **Four months to go: ESTO 2019 will cross the “Finnish bridge” to Estonia**

**This coming summer the XII Global Estonian Cultural Festival, otherwise known as ESTO 2019, will cross the symbolic “Finnish bridge” between Finland and Estonia and arrive on Estonia's shores. The festival, which is part of the Republic of Estonia's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration and carries the theme “Our Future”, will focus on youth. Registration for performers has begun and passes are available. ESTO 2019 will take place from June 27 to July 3.**

For the first time in ESTO's history, the festival will start out in Finland and the opening events in Helsinki will be organized by Estonians in Finland. According to head of the ESTO 2019 Executive Committee **Sirle Sööt**, Finland was the obvious choice. “Currently the largest population of Estonians outside Estonia is in Finland, with over 60 000 Estonians permanently residing there. Estonian cultural days give people a chance to acknowledge their identity and show how we are always developing and moving towards the future, emphasizing the Estonian identity as a whole. There are no longer Estonian-Estonians and foreign Estonians – we're all the same, we are global Estonians,” Sööt emphasized.

Head of the Organizing Committee of Estonia 100 **Jaanus Rohumaa** stated that it is important for Estonians living far from Estonia to also take part in the centennial programme. “The ESTO festival taking place in 2019 is a wonderful opportunity for them to participate in the Estonia 100 celebration and visit Estonia. I'm especially pleased that this year's ESTO is focused on children and youth, who are also at the heart of the Estonia 100 programme,” he noted.

ESTO 2019 will take place from June 27 to July 3 in Helsinki, Tartu and Tallinn. To have access to all events, we recommend purchasing an [ESTO PASS](#). Single tickets will be sold prior to the start of the festival if spots are available. You can find the programme on the ESTO 2019 website [estofestival.com/en/](http://estofestival.com/en/).

Chairman of the Estonian World Council **Aavo Reinfeldt** affirmed how vital it is to value ESTO and carry on the tradition. “It is unbelievably important that the ESTO legacy is treated respectfully. ESTO played a vital cultural and political role in the past, and Estonians all around the globe should remember its history,” Reinfeldt stated.

Head of the Department of International Relations on Integration Issues at the Ministry of Culture **Anne-Ly Reimaa** said that this year is of notable importance. “To this day, ESTO is an important part of the identity of Estonians around the world. It is important for the Republic of Estonia to recognize and support efforts by Estonians abroad to preserve the Estonian language and culture,” Reimaa emphasized.

The first global Estonian gathering, later dubbed ESTO, took place in Toronto in 1972, and since then ESTO has taken place every four years. Estonians that fled Soviet-occupied Estonia and their descendants joined together at the festival to tell the world about Estonia and work to preserve the Estonian language and culture. In addition to cultural preservation, ESTO's goal was also to deliver political messages. The programme of this year's ESTO has includes the traditional National Congress, gala ball, and singing and folk dance events.

ESTO 2019 would like to thank its partners and sponsors: Estonia 100 and the Government Office of the Republic of Estonia, Tallink, Estravel, Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, Estonian Ministry of Culture, Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hedman & Partners, City of Helsinki, Estonian Embassy in Helsinki, Enterprise Estonia in Helsinki, Helsinki Cathedral, the Estonian-language congregation of Helsinki, the congregation of Kallio, Helsinki Estonian House, Tuglas Society, Finnish Association of Estonian Societies (SVYL), Anni kindergarten, Helsinki Central Library OODI, City of Tartu, National Archive, Museum of Estonians Abroad (VEMU), Baltic Heritage Network, Gunpowder Cellar, University of Tartu, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Estonian National Museum, Widget Factory, Tartu Song Festival Museum, Tartu Nature House, City of Tallinn, Kesklinna municipal government, Telliskivi Creative City, Estonian History Museum, Seaplane Harbour, Estonian Song and Dance Festival Foundation, EstDocs, Estonian Institute, Estonian Association of Culture Clubs, Estonian World Council, Enterprise Estonia, Gambling Tax Council, Rakvere Theatre, and the Estonian Academy of Sciences.

Sincerely,

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