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Abstract : Prior to EU accession, policymakers in Estonia and Latvia were slow to adopt minority-friendly policies for Russian-speakers in the areas of citizenship and language, despite mandates from the European Union and significant pressures from Russia. While pre-accession reforms have often been credited to the democratizing influence of European institutions, an analysis of parliamentary debates reveals that European frames have rarely produced significant policy changes alone, and then only when domestic constraints were low. Whenever domestic opposition was high, Russian frames were crucial for the passage of reforms. The case study of naturalization requirements for stateless children in Estonia and Latvia highlights how domestic elites are more than just passive targets of external pressures, as well as the ways in which both European and Russian pressures have influenced the path and form of minority policies in these cases.

