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VÕRO

The Võro language in education in Estonia

| 2nd Edition |

| Regional dossiers series |



This document was published by the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning with financial support from the Fryske Akademy and the Province of Fryslân.

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ISSN: 1570 – 1239
2nd edition

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This Regional dossier was originally compiled by Dr. Kadri Koreinik of the Võro Institute. Dr. Kara D. Brown (University of South Carolina), Dr. Sulev Iva (University of Tartu, Võro Institute), and Dr. Kadri Koreinik (University of Tartu, Võro Institute) updated the dossier in 2018. Unless otherwise stated educational/academic data refer to the 2017/2018 school year.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to express their gratitude to Tiia Allas, Külli Eichenbaum, Mariko Faster, Evar Saar, Triin Toom, Egle Vodi, Kalmer Vodi.

Contact information of the authors of Regional dossiers can be found in the Mercator Database of Experts (www.mercator-research.eu).

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Foreword

- background** Regional and minority languages are languages that differ from the official state language. The Mercator Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning uses the definition for these languages defined by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML):
- “Regional and minority languages are languages traditionally used within a given territory of a state by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state’s population; they are different from the official language(s) of that state, and they include neither dialects of the official language(s) of the state nor the languages of migrants”. The Mercator Research Centre aims at the acquisition, application and circulation of knowledge about these regional and minority languages in education. An important means to achieve this goal is the Regional Dossiers series: documents that provide the most essential features of the education system of regions with a lesser used regional or minority language.
- aim** The aim of the Regional Dossiers Series is to provide a concise description of European minority languages in education. Aspects that are addressed include features of the education system, recent educational policies, main actors, legal arrangements and support structures, as well as quantitative aspects such as the number of schools, teachers, pupils, and financial investments. Because of this fixed structure the dossiers in the series are easy to compare.
- target group** The dossiers serve several purposes and are relevant for policymakers, researchers, teachers, students and journalists who wish to explore developments in minority language schooling in Europe. They can also serve as a first orientation towards further research, or function as a source of ideas for improving educational provisions in their own region.
- link with Eurydice** The format of the Regional Dossiers follows the format of Eurydice – the information network on education in Europe – in

order to link the regional descriptions with those of national education systems. Eurydice provides information on the administration and structure of national education systems in the member states of the European Union.

contents

Every Regional Dossier begins with an introduction about the region concerned, followed by six sections that each deals with a specific level of the education system (e.g. primary education). Sections eight and nine cover the main lines of research into education of the concerned minority language, the prospects for the minority language in general and for education in particular. The tenth section gives a summary of statistics. Lists of regulations, publications and useful addresses concerning the minority language, are given at the end of the dossier.

1 Introduction

language

The Võro language (*võro kiil*) belongs to the Finnic branch of Uralic languages. It is spoken traditionally in south-eastern Estonia, but is also present in the centres of Estonia due to migration. Occasionally called Võro-Seto or more broadly South Estonian (SE), it also can be used as an umbrella term for both Võro and Seto. However, both Võro and Seto are increasingly recognised as distinctly different languages due to a number of factors: their linguistic distance and unintelligibility from Standard Estonian, increased language activism, heightened ethnolinguistic identity, evident bilingualism, and different religious affiliation of its speakers (most of the Seto speakers are Orthodox). Võro is the most vital and cultivated descendent of South Estonian.

According to research on sound changes, the South Estonian language might have diverged from the broader Finnic group as early as 1000-600 BC (Sammallahti, 1977). Modern Estonian evolved from the enduring contacts among early Finnic dialect groups (Viitso, 2007), including North and South Estonian (then tribal languages). Standard Estonian developed mostly from North Estonian varieties whose speakers outnumbered their South Estonian counterparts.

A number of researchers have pointed out a range of linguistic differences between North Estonian and South Estonian varieties (Wiedemann, 2002; Saareste, 1952; Pajusalu, 1996). If not for a common state border, one would definitely speak of two different languages: South Estonian and North Estonian. Today the language vitality and number of speakers of South Estonian languages/varieties (see figure 1 below) varies across the region (Koreinik & Tender, 2013). In spite of contact- and standardisation-induced changes, Võro (and Seto, too) has preserved most of its South Estonian features. According to some estimations based on vocabulary, morphology, and pronunciation, only about a fifth of Võro overlaps with Estonian (Pajusalu, 1999); approximately 19,000 South Estonian words

are not used in North Estonian (Koponen, 1998). Nevertheless, social changes transform languages: many Estonian loanwords can be seen in the Võro language. Furthermore, features such as vowel harmony (a long-distance assimilatory process of vowels distinctive to most Finnic languages), has largely been preserved in South Estonian and lost in North Estonian varieties (Help, 1991).

Other prominent features of Võro include a glottal stop in nominative plural, a different third person singular in the indicative mood, and a negative particle following the verb (Wiedemann, 2002; Lindström, 1997; Iva, 2005). While there is no empirical analysis of the intelligibility of Võro, asymmetric intelligibility may best capture the situation: speakers of Võro as an L1 and L2 have been exposed to Standard Estonian at home or at school, but not all Standard Estonian speakers have been exposed to Võro. While Võro varies across the region, its variants are comprehensible.

In the period between the 16th and 19th centuries, two literary languages – the Tallinn- and Tartu-based languages (*tallinna ja tartu keel*) – were in use in a number of domains (e.g., churches, local administration and courts, schools) in northern and south-eastern Estonia, (including the Võro-speaking area), respectively. A number of Tartu-based or South Estonian-language literary monuments exist from that period: a Catholic liturgical book “*Agenda Parva*” (1622); a New Testament (1686), and a first Estonian-language newspaper “*Tarto maa rahwa Näddali-Leht*” (1806). By the early 20th century, the South Estonian literary language began to disappear mainly as a result of nation-building, limited readership, and political decisions (concerning language) (Laanekask, 2004). That said, South Estonian still maintained its peripheral role in some genres of fiction throughout the century (Velsker, 2015). From the second half of the 19th century to the first half of 20th century, additional processes worked to marginalise South Estonian: first, a language shift to South Estonian and North Estonian bilingualism, and then, the North-Estonianisation of language



Figure 1. The traditional language area of South Estonian (Võro, Seto, Mulgi, Tartu) with its linguistic enclaves extending beyond the borders of the Estonian state (Lutsi, Leivu, and Kraasna). From Iva & Pajusalu, 2004, p. 60.

in south-eastern Estonia (Viitso, 2007, p.152). The process of language shift to Standard Estonian intensified in the 1960-1980 (Brown & Koreinik, 2019). According to a recent assessment of the vitality of Võro, it is characterised by “ongoing language shift,” but will become “severely endangered” (Koreinik et al., 2013). Ethnologue’s 21st edition describes the status of Võro as “threatened”.

The rebirth of South Estonian started with the standardisation and institutionalisation of Võro at the end of the 1980s. After

the collapse of the Soviet regime, simultaneously with the so-called Estonian second national awakening (the first Estonian national awakening began in the 1850s), the Võro movement arose. Comprised of activist speakers and intellectuals, this movement, among other things, focused on language planning and maintenance. Today the movement is rather loosely organised, including the non-profit organisation Võro Society VKKF, some village groups, local organisations, and a range of motivated, interested people. The Võro movement has also been called “regionalist”: concerned with both the economic and political peripheralisation of the area and general Estonian linguistic authoritarianism (Kansui, 1999; Raag 1999, 2010; Jääts, 2015). According to the statutes of the non-profit Võro Society VKKF, its main tasks include supporting Võro and Seto culture, documenting material and intellectual resources; favouring and fostering both written and oral use of Võro and Seto (*võro-seto* in the Estonian original) in all domains; and assisting and promoting the maintenance and positive appraisal of Võro and Seto cultural heritage in all social strata. Since 1988, one of its time-honoured traditions has been organising Kaika Summer University (*Kaika Suvõülikuul*): a multiday, informal education in local and regional culture and history with the bulk of the sessions in Võro. Kaika Summer University has been a catalyst for many future events and undertakings including the Võro Institute (est. 1995), a state-funded research and development institution, and Uma Pido (‘Our Party’), a regional Võro-language song festival traditionally held every 2-3 years (starting in 2008). Uma Pido, partly inspired by the well-established tradition of joint-singing and mass choir festivals in Estonia and partly by the creative energies and productions of area musicians, is a celebration of Võro-language singing and regional culture with thousands of people coming together to sing and listen. It is also a language maintenance activity conducive to intergenerational language transmission through learning classic and new songs. Uma Pido has won sympathy of Võro-speakers from near and far and is now in the twenty-first century an established tradition in the region.

The Võro Institute has been a central engine in the language movement. It was founded to preserve and revitalise the Võro language and culture. As the centre of Võro-language policy development, its researchers are engaged in onomastic and (socio)linguistic research; status, corpus and acquisition planning; the publication of an academic series, as well as educational (and other) materials; and the organisation of various events, such as in-service teacher training, school-outreach activities, and the annual interdisciplinary academic conference. Besides language planning and research, the Institute has become increasingly involved in identity-building and promoting heritage culture. For example, the Institute was largely responsible for having the smoke-sauna tradition inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2014.

The Võro Movement is also involved with standardisation. Activist speakers, many connected with the Võro Institute, have developed a new standard, the Võro-based South Estonian literary language. The new standard's guiding principles include finding a compromise between sharp sociolinguistic markers, maintaining specific South Estonian features, and, finally, following the tradition of the earlier, Tartu-based, South Estonian literary language (Iva, 2002). The process of standardisation has led to the compilation of a Võro-Estonian dictionary (2002), published with 15,000 entries, and an Estonian-Võro dictionary (2014), with 20,000 entries. Both are available online. Võro standardisation comes with complications; graphisation and orthographic choices are the matters of greatest dispute. And, as none of the language policy actors – including the Võro Institute –, have “explicitly recognised hegemony over the definition of the community's norm” (Silverstein, 1996, p.285–286), the Võro standard (orthography) remains unsettled. Differences in opinion can be summarised as: when an orthography is linguistically well-founded and easy to teach to new speakers, it is generally not acceptable to most of the native speakers who have been socialised into Standard Estonian orthography. Nevertheless, more and more people are writing in Võro; some

publications and writers have adopted and accepted a bit more precise variant of the Võro orthography (i.e., marking glottal stop and/or palatalization) while others prefer a variant without any differences from the Standard Estonian orthography.

Another sign of the institutionalisation of Võro is found in media. Following the cultural policy of the Estonian Republic, media content and platforms in the Võro language have been funded by the Ministry of Culture's state programme "South Estonian Language and Culture 2000-2004" and its subsequent iterations (e.g. Vana-Võromaa Heritage Culture Programme 2018-2021; hereafter: the Programme). Within the platform of traditional print media, Võro South Estonian occasionally appeared in local newspapers as early as the end of the Tsarist era, mainly as readers' contributions. There were few media texts in Võro during the pre- and post-Second World War period. Starting in the 1960s, local county papers used Võro mostly in pejorative jokes. Towards the end of 1980s, in the glasnost period, a growing number of opinion articles and features were published in Võro (Saar, 2005). *Uma Leht* ('Our own newspaper'; hereafter: UL), first published in 2000, is the first entirely Võro-language newspaper. With its publication, other local newspapers have largely stopped using Võro (Faster, 2005). UL has submitted online and print editions every other week. Most of the newspapers (9,800 out of 10,300 issues) are distributed without charge as direct mail; the rest are bought through direct purchase or subscription. Sixty-five percent of the 15+ residents of Võru and Põlva counties read or scanned the printed edition of the newspaper and 8% read or scanned the online edition during the last three months (the survey took place in November 2017-January 2018): together this totals approximately 26,500 people (Saar Poll, 2018). The newspaper's contents are characterised as an example of local, small-scale, alternative, but state-funding-dependent, media oriented towards specific communities and containing non-dominant discourses and representations (Koreinik, 2005). Apart from UL, 15 Võro-language issues of Estonia's oldest children's monthly magazine, *Täheke* ('Little Star'), have been

published since 2005. *Täheke* is freely distributed to all first-graders as well as to other elementary-level pupils studying the language. Its Võro-language contents – short stories and poems – have also been translated and published in its Estonian-language monthly issue.

In addition to print media, the Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR in Estonian) service has also transmitted 5-minute Võro-language radio news every week since 2005 within its evening programming block. The episode usually elaborates a couple of the news stories published in UL and represents an example of media hybridisation (i.e., the same content shared on different platforms). From 2005-2017, ERR also broadcasted a number of documentary and drama series for television. Finally, Võro is also used somewhat in social media and Võro-language contents are uploaded to the video-sharing website Youtube. Volunteers have been active in creating and editing a Võro-language Wikipedia version, which includes about 5500 articles, making it one of the biggest Wikipedia versions among non-state Uralic languages.

population

The Võro-speaking area has a population of 57,000 people. The area of approximately 4,200 km² constituted a single administrative unit – the Võru District – until 1920. In 1783, the Order for the Administration of Governorates of 1775 became effective, establishing regency in Estland and Livland (Leppik, 2012). Along with seven other new districts of the Livonian Governorate, the Võru District (Ger *Werrosche Kreis*) was established following Catherine the Great's provincial reforms (ibid.). The new district included the eight southern parishes of the Tartu District. From the 13th until the 16th century, the Võro-speaking area belonged to the Episcopacy of Tartu, together with the southern Tartu area. There, as well as in the rest of the Estonian-speaking territories in that era, the majority of residents spoke (South) Estonian varieties, while the ruling minority spoke (first Low and then High) German (Hennoste et al., 1999). The linguonym of the Võro language originates from the name of the Võru District (Vro *Võromaa*). Today,

the Võro-speaking area is divided between four counties: Põlva, Tartu, Valga, and Võru. In the aftermath of the World War I (1914-1918) and the War of Independence (1918-1920), newly independent Estonia and Latvia had disagreements over the border and bilingual town Valga/Valka. As a result of redistricting, a new Valga County was created on the Estonian side of the border in 1920. The western part of former Võru District was added to this new administrative unit. In the 1950s, Estonia was also subjected to the administrative reforms of the Soviet Union, which led to the creation of smaller administrative divisions (in Russian: *raion*). This resulted in the creation of Põlva rayon in 1960 and smaller changes in county borders.

The 2011 population and housing census marked the first time Estonian residents were asked if they knew a local language variant, dialect or sub-dialect in the history of enumeration of Estonian population (Brown & Koreinik, 2019). To interpret census results, Jääts (2015, p. 257-258) concludes: “[...] *there are 74,500 people in Estonia who claim to speak the Võro dialect/language and 12,500 who claim to speak the Seto sub-dialect/language. These numbers include very different levels of language proficiency, starting with real fluency, and ending with unproven declarations, which are rather a reflection of a wish to associate oneself with the corresponding ethnic community. How many people belong to each group is unknown.*”

Indeed, those 87,000 who have self-reported their Võro and Seto command may also include a significant number of passive bilinguals who can understand either written or spoken Võro, but cannot speak it (see also figure 2). Due to urbanisation and outmigration, ca 60% of those speakers reside outside the language area (Koreinik & Tender, 2013) and are not exposed to Võro and Seto daily. According to an earlier estimation based on a 1998 survey, the share of those 25-64 year olds who claimed frequent and occasional use of Võro is 90% (approximately 30,000 of the active speakers in the area) (Koreinik, 2007). Similar to other peripheries, the region has suffered from an extended, long-term trend of outmigration. In the post-Soviet

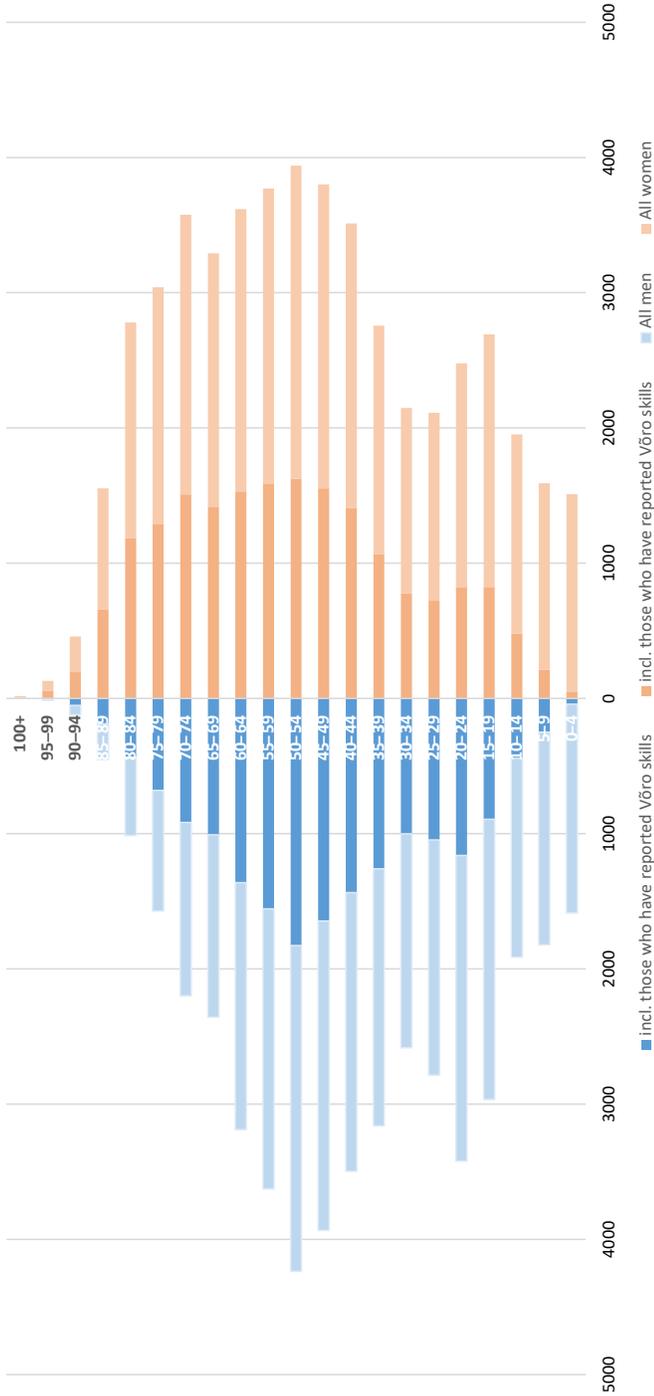


Figure 2. Reported use of Võro and all residents in Võro-speaking area. Data from Statistics Estonia, 2011.

period South and Central Estonian regions lost their population to urban centres such as Tallinn and Tartu (ESA, 2003). Since 2006, within the freedom of movement for workers, the citizens of Estonia as a new EU member state have the right to enter Finland's labour market. It contributed to further outmigration, but also to a commuting, return migration, and transnational practices of Estonians, Võro-speakers among them.

An understanding of Võro abilities in the 21st century was further provided by the interdisciplinary collaborative research project European Language Diversity for All (hereafter: ELDIA). Within this framework, many Uralic language communities were given perhaps the greatest academic scrutiny ever, and the Võro-speakers were included as one of the target groups. In ELDIA, among many issues, the reported levels of understanding, speaking, reading and writing were measured in a five point Likert-type scale of *not at all-poorly-fairly-well-fluently* via questionnaires in a representative random sample. The results (see figure 3) demonstrate age differences in understanding and speaking. Self-reported reading writing capacities were equally low for all age groups. These reported skills can be explained by the lack of systemic Võro-language education, a paucity of literacy-focused initiatives and scarcity language products in Võro (Koreinik, 2016; for standardisation see also page 5 above). The ELDIA survey covered the traditional language area only.

The sociolinguistic case study of the Sute (Sutõ) village in 1991 positions the users of Võro in three groups: informants born before 1935 (Org et al., 1994); those born between 1935 and 1960, and those born after 1960. The first group reported preferring Võro over Standard Estonian (L1 speakers). Those who were born before World War I demonstrated many archaic features in their language use. The middle group demonstrated signs of interference. Their language behaviour differed radically from the oldest group: they responded in Estonian when approached; most of them learned Estonian at school. Finally, there were large individual in-group differences

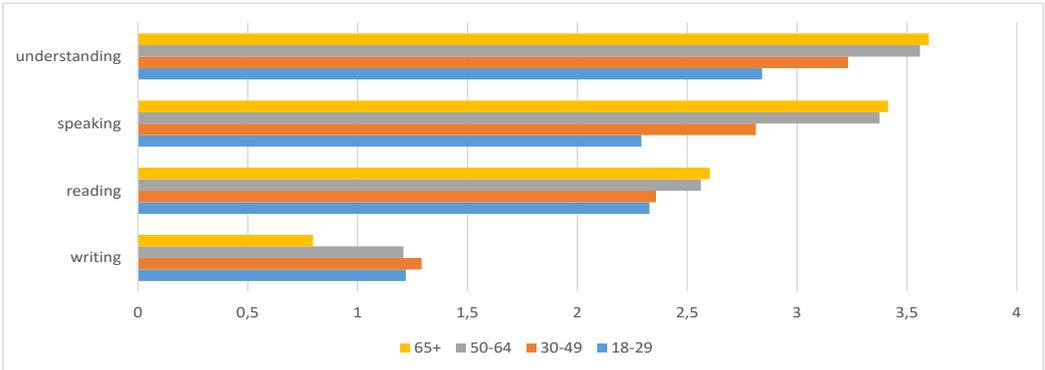


Figure 3. Mean scores for self-reported basic language skills in age groups, N=285. Data from ELDIA survey, 2010-2013.

(e.g., varying use of glottal stop and vocal harmony) within the youngest group. Their Standard Estonian capacities are richer and more diverse than those in Võro. However, their attitude towards Võro seems more favourable than that of the middle group who appear to be most influenced by the strong nation- and stand-language building activities of the 20th century.

language status The position of the Estonian language as a sole state language in Estonia is fixed in the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia. In theory, the constitutional protection also applies to its (regional) varieties (Meiorg, 2012). Võro language activists have been advocating for the introduction of the notion *regional language*. In 2004, the Council of the Programme initiated a proposal to change the then Language Act (1995) to recognise South Estonian (including Võro) as a distinct language. This effort intended to improve its prestige, widen its domains, and remove the legal vacuum. As the government commission that had been formed to elaborate on the draft changes for the Language Act failed to reach a consensus, the political decision to give Võro (and Seto) a status of a (regional) language was not made. In 2011, a new Language Act came into effect stating that the term “Estonian language” included sub-sections covering the Estonian Literary Standard (*Est eesti kirjakeele norm*), sign language, and regional varieties

of Estonian language (*Est eesti keele piirkondlikud erikujud*) (ibid.). The 2011 Language Act equates “regional varieties” of Estonian language with “dialectal languages” (*Est murdekeel*) (§ 3(3)), which are not further defined in law but referred to in several policy documents (ibid.). Outside of official language use, the use of Estonian is less regulated and language use need not comply with the Literary Standard; also the so-called regional varieties can be also used (ibid.). Meiorg (2012, p. 19) concludes that the 2011 Language Act includes two new provisions relating to “dialectal language”:

“the state is required to support the protection, use and development of the regional varieties of the Estonian language.”(§ 3(3));

“in the area where the dialect language has historically been spoken, the official texts can, in addition to language use complying with the Literary Standard, also be written in that dialect [dialectal] language.”(§ 4(1)).

The Place Names Act provides that the spelling of a place name must follow Estonian orthography, although it may reflect the local dialectal sound structure of the name (§10). It is specifically provided that Estonian dialects, with or without its own orthography, are considered to be part of Estonian language for this purpose (§1(4)). (ibid.) Meiorg (2012, p.19) summarises:

“[The Estonian] language legislation is a complicated and highly technical area. In addition to the main acts, such as the Language Act, the Place Names Act, the Names Act and others mentioned above, there are numerous regulations adopted by the Government based on these acts. [...] This is especially the case in relation to the Võro or Seto languages as their status is still unclear under the language legislation.”

**status of
language
education**

In Estonia, the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act (§ 15(2)) establishes the curricula for basic schools and upper secondary schools. Its paragraph 2 establishes the core values of basic education. Beside general human values (incl. justice, human dignity, respect for self and others), it also outlines social values such as democracy, respect for mother tongue and culture, patriotism, cultural diversity, tolerance, rule of law, etc. The Act addresses eight subject fields: language and literature; foreign languages; mathematics; natural science; social studies; art subjects; technology; physical education (§ 4(5)). Compulsory subjects include Estonian and literature in schools where the medium of instruction is Estonian, and Russian and literature where the medium of instruction is Russian. Foreign languages like English, German, Russian or French can be studied as an “A” (i.e., first) foreign language. English, Russian, German, French or some other foreign language may studied as foreign language “B” (§ 13). The National Curriculum does not specify any languages other than Estonian, which is the state language according to the Constitution.

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Importantly for the study of local culture, nature, and arts, paragraph 14 allows for the integration of general and subject field competences such as cultural identity. This provision

“aim[s]... for the pupil to develop into a person who is culturally aware, who understands the role of culture in shaping people’s thought and behaviour and who knows how cultures have changed over history, who has acquired an idea of the versatility of cultures and particularities of lifestyles determined by culture and who values native culture and cultural diversity and is culturally tolerant and prepared for cooperation.” (§ 3(4)).

Furthermore, in developing the school curriculum, the regional needs, the needs of school staff, parents and pupils and resources to be used can be taken into consideration (§24, p.2). Within the National Curriculum of Upper Secondary Schools,

core values are similar, but more cross-curricular topics are also listed. Optional courses support the aims of cross-curricular topics (§ 10(3)).

education system

The Republic of Estonia Education Act established the organisation and principles of the education system, which are further specified by lower level acts based on the type of educational institution. Estonian education system is decentralised. The division of responsibility between the state, local government, and school is clearly defined.

In Estonia, the structure of the education system provides opportunities for everyone to move from one level of education to the next. Levels of education comprise preschool education (ISCED level 0), basic education (ISCED levels 1 and 2), upper secondary education (ISCED level 3), and higher education (ISCED levels 6, 7 and 8). The obligation to attend school applies to children who have attained 7 years of age by 1 October of the current year and lasts until either basic education is acquired or until a student attains 17 years of age. Children up to 7 years may attend preschool childcare institutions. Võro-language instruction has been concentrated at the primary and secondary levels, but has also expanded into the preschool and higher-education levels as well.

The Estonian education system allows for children to be taught in a variety of languages. At the Basic School level (in 2017/2018), 76.3 percent of all learned Estonian, 17.6 percent in Russian, 5.6 percent in Estonian in an immersion program, 0.4 percent in English, and 0.1 percent in Finnish (Ministry of Education and Research, 2018).

private and public

Private schools play a minor, but growing, role in the Estonian educational system. The share of pupils in the private primary and secondary education sector has almost doubled from 3% (in 2004/2005) to ~6% (in 2017/2018) (Ministry of Education and Research, 2018). The total number of 1st to 12th grade pupils in Estonia is 147,849 (2017/2018); 5,865 of these pupils attend state-owned schools, 8,746 private ones, and 133,238 municipality-owned schools. In addition, there were 24,143

pupils in vocational education, majority of whom, 20,587, went to state vocational education and training schools. Võro-language instruction is overwhelmingly concentrated in the public-school (i.e., the state and municipal) network.

To offer high quality secondary education (10th-12th grades) and provide a more effective and equitable school network, the Ministry of Education and Research has kick-started a programme for state-gymnasias. According to Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, each county centre has to have a state-owned gymnasium by 2020. This policy will have some consequences for other municipality-owned secondary education institutions, many of which are situated in rural areas. The Võro-language area has two state-owned gymnasias: in Võru (est. 2015) and in Põlva (est. 2016). The Võru Gymnasium will offer an elective Võro-class for beginners in spring 2019.

**bilingual
education forms**

Bilingual education is offered in select Estonian-medium schools where subjects are taught through a foreign language (cf. Content and Language Integrated Learning – CLIL). French, English, and German are the most common foreign languages taught through CLIL, though the same method is also used to teach Estonian in Russian-medium schools in Estonia. From 2007, 60% of the curriculum of Russian-medium upper-secondary schools must be taught in Estonian, which has firmly established the CLIL approach in Estonia.

administration

The Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act (2014) regulates the curriculum, governance, and administration of municipal, state, and private schools. The schools' running costs are covered by the school manager, i.e. local governments in most cases. Local governments are authorised to establish, rearrange and close general education schools. Local governments keep account of the number of children attending compulsory education, ensure school attendance control, make arrangements for school transport and the provision of school meals and perform a number of related functions. The number

of pupils in municipal schools determines the amount of state allocations to municipalities which is used for teachers' salaries, social taxes, training and textbooks. Similar subsidies are also made available to private general education schools.

The National Curricula for Basic and Upper Secondary Schools (2011) sets the standards for basic and secondary education. As the Võro language is not included in the national curriculum, its teaching and learning depends both on the Võro Institute's initiative to promote and coordinate language instruction, as well as on each particular school and the municipality that owns the school. School administrations may initiate Võro teaching: a school can propose to a municipality to introduce, for example, Võro-language classes. The municipal council then makes a decision according to their priorities and budget. Since in the vast majority of schools, the state financially supports most of the Võro-language teaching, the municipalities, in principle, face no financial obstacles. Offering Võro-language instruction does, however, require interested pupils or parents and skilled, motivated, and available teachers. In most cases, the Võro Institute is responsible for the entire teaching-related project: for the grants, the administration, and the monitoring. Still, some schools and municipalities have agreed to include the subject into the school curriculum as an elective subject. In this latter case, the 1st-12th grade teachers' fees are covered by the state.

inspection

The Ministry of Education and Research exercises state supervision over the teaching and education carried out by schools (Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act paragraph 84). As the Võro teachers are contracted by the Võro Institute, the Institute also works to maintain quality and effective teaching through regular teacher-training sessions, school visits, individualised support, targeted feedback, study visits, and professional development meetings.

**support
structure**

Multiple sources support Võro instruction. The lion's share of financing (e.g., for coordinator's salary, materials, events, training, and teacher-study trips) comes from the state via the Võro Institute's budget. In addition, the Võro Institute channels financing gained through competitive grants from the Council of the Gambling Tax and the Ministry of Culture's Vana-Võromaa Heritage Culture Programme 2018-2021. The Union of Võro County Municipalities also provides modest support, as does at least one Municipal Government (e.g., Antsla). This funding arrangement will likely change in the future because the Council of the Gambling Tax, which was intended to support activities outside the state, the municipality, and the third sector budget, will close down in 2019. [The support structure for teaching is included in Section 6 "Higher Education".]

2 Pre-school education

target group

Pre-school education is voluntary for children between the ages of eighteen months and seven years. Widely available through public institutions, pre-school education is typically fee-based to attend (in addition to meal payments) at a rate determined by the local government. Private pre-schools are legally permitted, though clustered in the major Estonian cities and largely outside of the Võro-speaking southeast. All pre-schools are comprehensive institutions of care—offering a full day of multiple meals, a rest period, and the care of two adults. Pre-schools also follow a common national curriculum regardless of their medium of instruction. Võro-medium pre-school began within the private sphere, as a language nest (*Vro keelepesä*). By 2011, the Võro-language nest expanded into public pre-primary sphere to reach children ages 3 to 6 years old at 3 public kindergartens.

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structure

Võro-language pre-primary education within the public sphere mirrors a typical day at the institution in terms of the schedule, personnel, and routines. The only difference on the designated language-nest day(s) is that the medium of instruction switches from Estonian to Võro with the group teachers exclusively using Võro with the children. In the language-nest framework, teachers are tasked with using Võro as the exclusive language for an entire day or two days every week while continuing to teach the standard pre-primary curriculum. The Võro-language content of the nest depends on a group, language-command of teachers, and the willingness to use the language across the pre-primary school. For example, if the music or sport teacher is an enthusiastic Võro speaker, she may involve Võro-language songs in her weekly lesson. Assistant teachers (working with the two lead teachers) also vary in their use of Võro during the week. In some sites, teachers might use Võro beyond the designated language-nest day and to incorporate it in Estonian-medium days. The adoption of the language-nest approach must be approved both by the parents, who voluntarily opt their children into the

special group, and by the governing council of the pre-primary institution.

Within the private sphere, the pre-primary Võro-medium education meets as the Haanja language nest (*Vro Haani keelepesä*) as a childcare facility (Est *lastehoid*). Unlike public pre-primary institutions, the childcare works only three days a week because of lack of funding to work a whole week.

legislation

Pre-school education is regulated by the Preschool Child Care Institutions Act (2014) and the government regulations on the framework curriculum for pre-primary education. According to the Preschool Child Care Institutions Act, preschool child care institutions are educational institutions for preschool children offering day care as well as possibilities to acquire preschool education. Section 8 of the Law states that teaching and learning in those institutions takes place in Estonian, and that it may be replaced by some other language if the local government council so decides. This provision allows, for example, preschool instruction in Russian, as is common in other areas of the country. The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for the supervision of preschool education.

language use

As medium of instruction in the majority of the pre-schools in Estonia, other languages, like Russian, are also permitted and used especially in Tallinn and the north-eastern part of Estonia. While the most common medium of instruction in the language area is Estonian, Võro is used for an entire day or two in the language nest groups in public pre-primary schools and three days in Haanja. In this context, both lead teachers and their assistant agree to use Võro for the whole working day. In select cases, the pre-primary school director and some staff might also use Võro. The Haanja language nest is the only educational institution operating exclusively in Võro.

teaching materials

Teachers use various materials issued by the Võro Institute or by others (e.g. Võro-language children's books and CD-s

with children songs in Võro). The majority of the teachers create their own materials for class generated in part from the Estonian-language base materials previously used and in part from specially-inspired lessons drawing on local culture.

statistics

In 2017/2018, nineteen classes (approximately 400 children) in sixteen (out of 34) public kindergartens operated as one- or two-day language nests and one private childcare facility as a three-day language nest. Currently, just over 16% of public pre-school pupils students are enrolled in language-nest groups.

3 Primary education

target group	Primary education includes 1st-9th grades in basic school and is provided until the end of the compulsory school age, i.e. mostly 16 (or 17). The study of Võro language is primarily targeted to all primary school pupils in the language area (ca 4,000 in 2017/2018).
structure	Basic education is the mandatory minimum requirement for general education; it can be acquired either partially in primary schools (grades 1 to 6), basic schools (grades 1 to 9) or upper secondary schools that also teach basic school curricula. The national curricula establish the standard for basic and general secondary education. The curricula are implemented in all basic and upper secondary schools of Estonia, regardless of their legal status, unless otherwise stated by the law. The basic school is divided into three stages: stage I (grades 1-3), stage II (grades 4-6), and stage III (grades 7-9). (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019).

The Võro language is taught in all three basic school stages (grades 1-3, grades 4-6, grades 7-9) in most cases as an extracurricular activity (hobby class), but also as an optional subject in five schools in 2017/2018. This proportion has not changed much over the years. In only one school – Orava Basic School – Võro is taught in all grades (1-9). The Võro Institute has developed a detailed, three-stage curriculum over the years that teachers are free to follow, or deviate from, in practice. Many teachers feel the autonomy to devise their own curriculum and course emphasis generating considerable variation in the class throughout the region. The curriculum covering the subject the Võro language and culture is organised in three stages: ABC in Võro in Stage I, local (cultural) history in Võro in Stage II, and Võro language and literature in Stage III. In stage I, the focus of teaching is on the language as a subject itself; it is also the language of instruction. During the following stages, the language keeps its importance as a subject. During Stage I, 70 academic hours (45 minutes per week, for 35 weeks in a

period of 2 years) include an introductory part, the development of comprehension, and the acquisition of basic reading skills. Additional activities include playing song and dance games, singing folk songs, and learning poems in Võro. Those who have passed Stage I are expected to be able to understand local speech, read, and value it. There is, however, no common, standard assessment to gauge a student's language ability or growth. Stage II and Stage III both offer 35 academic hours. In particular, after acquiring some communicative skills, children are encouraged to study local history and literature, but they also keep improving their language skills by, among other activities, meeting native speakers and representatives from local museums, conducting regional studies, and participating in poetry-reading contests.

The Võro Institute, as the programme contractor and grant holder, has the largest role in Võro-curriculum creation and teacher education. However, actual teaching depends on the schools, the teachers and their skills. As such, the Võro language and related subjects are taught differently in schools. Some schools, for example, have language integrated with local lore, Võro-language literature, local heritage, craft and folk music. In addition, some schools have drama groups and groups singing games.

legislation

According to the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act (§ 21(2)), Estonian is the language of instruction in basic schools. That said, the Rural Municipality Council or city government may decide, in consultation with the school's Board of Trustees, to have a different language of instruction at the school or single-class level. This legislative flexibility to introduce a different medium of instruction across the school has not been taken advantage of in south-eastern Estonia. Additional relevant legislation includes the possibility for schools to organise language and cultural teaching for pupils whose native language is not the language of instruction or whose language of communication at home is different from the language of instruction, to acquire basic skills (§ 21(5)). This accommodation

can be provided when requested by ten or more pupils with the same native language or household language. Given, among other factors, the language shift in the region (from Võro to Estonian) and the official consideration of Võro as part of Estonian, this provision has also not been applied for in the Võro-speaking region of the county.

The curriculum for basic schools is established by Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act (§ 15(2)). Among fundamentals and structure of preparation of school curriculum, the National Curriculum of Basics Schools specifies that the *regional needs*, the needs of school staff, *parents* and pupils and *resources to be used* can be taken into consideration when planning curricula (§ 24(2)). The option of introducing Võro as an optional subject has so far been embraced by only one third of schools where Võro is taught.

language use

Beyond what is set out in the Võro-Institute developed curriculum (outlined above in the “structure” subsection), the actual language use and curriculum at the primary level is a site- and grade-specific feature of south-eastern Estonian public schools. Võro-related subjects are taught in less than half of schools in the language area (14 out of 35) (personal communication, Võro Institute, 2018; Ministry of Education and Research, 2018). Võro is not currently taught in any public schools outside the region. While the focus is on primary-school aged children, the availability of and accessibility to Võro-language instruction is limited: a limited number of basic schools offer the language and, within participating schools, instructional coverage is limited to only a class or two of the pupils. The select availability of Võro-language classes at primary level is particularly problematic for those children who already have foundational Võro skills- those who have Võro as one of the home languages and/or those who have participated in a preschool language-nest group.

A mix of factors contribute to instructional variability across the region. First, Võro teachers have a great deal of autonomy in shaping the content and structure of the class, as mentioned

above. Much of this variation depends on whether a particular teacher (typically a generalist), group adviser or grade adviser is willing and able to teach Võro. Second, teachers have divergent linguistic and methodological backgrounds. The existing in-service training for teachers offered by the Võro Institute cannot meet all the needs for (bilingual) teaching (e.g., close language, mixed forms, variation, handling code switching, etc.). Finally, since the Võro class is not included in the National Curriculum, the time allocated to language learning is highly dependent on the form of the exposure. Unlike with mandated courses, involvement in Võro classes takes the form of voluntary classes or electives. In both cases, the allocated learning time is insufficient to meet all the programme goals; one hour of studies per week only allows pupils to become slightly acquainted with the language; it does not help them learn to speak the language fluently, for example.

teaching materials

The Võro Institute develops, publishes, and provides most of the teaching materials. These include a reader/textbook (*Võrokiilne lugõmik*, 1996), a primer (*ABC kiräoppus*, 1998), a song collection (*Tsirr-virr lõokõnõ*, 1999), a workbook for the primer (*Tüüvihk ABC kiräoppusõ manoq*, 2000), a workbook for the audiotape (*Tsiamäe luuq*, 2001), a local (cultural) history book (*Võromaa kodolugu*, 2004), an illustrated vocabularies (*Piltsynastu*, 2004; *Piltsõnastu latsilõ* 2nd edition, 2015), and several audio and/or (audio-) visual materials (e.g. an animated *Jussi multikaq* series) uploaded into the web, and a DVD-book on nature education for first-graders. There are many more materials that may be (and are) used for teaching as well: online and printed dictionaries, various fiction titles, children's books, most translated from Finnish, but also creations of local authors (such as two Estonian-Võro bilingual titles by Triinu Ojar), poetry, a travelogue, print media (for *Täheke* see above; Children's corner in *Uma Leht*), and a series of *Mino Võromaa* presenting children's own creations. In recent years, teachers have created new materials for teaching (handouts, crosswords) and the Institute encourages the sharing of their effective practices. There is also a Võro e-learning environment "Oahpa /

Opiq võro kiilt!” (‘Learn Võro!’) available for children and adult learners developed in cooperation of University of Tartu, the Arctic University of Norway (Tromsø) and Võro Institute (see Uibo et al., 2015). “Oahpa / Opiq võro kiilt!” provides a unique opportunity to learn Võro using Võro, Estonian, Finnish or English user interface and, for learning of vocabulary, choosing between various language pairs including Võro, Estonian, Finnish, English, Northern Sami, Norwegian, Swedish and German.

statistics

Although, as mentioned above, the Võro language is taught in fewer than half of the schools in the language area (14 out of 34), the share of pupils studying it -slightly less than 8% in 2017/2018 (about 311 out of 4021) – is low compared to the whole student body in the institutions of general education in the Võro-speaking area (personal communication, Võro Institute, 2018; Ministry of Education and Research, 2018).

4 Secondary education

target group

General secondary education is acquired at the upper secondary school level. Attaining general secondary education entitles pupils to continue their studies at a higher educational institution or to obtain vocational education. In addition to the well-established network of municipality-owned upper secondary schools, there are currently (in 2018) seven state upper secondary schools under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Research across Estonia. In an effort to provide high quality general secondary education and secure a more efficient school network, the Ministry of Education and Research has initiated the establishment of these state upper-secondary schools in regional centres. Under the Basic and Upper Secondary Schools Act, each county shall have at least one state upper secondary school by 2020.

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There are two state gymnasias and five municipality-owned secondary schools in the Võro-speaking area. There are approximately 1,900 10-14 year old inhabitants in two core counties of Võro-speaking area. They might be referred to as the main target group for secondary education in the next five years.

structure

The upper secondary school curriculum design is arranged into mandatory and voluntary courses. Graduation from upper secondary school requires the completion of at least 96 individual courses passed at a minimum of a satisfactory level, passing the state exams (consisting of the Estonian language or Estonian as a second language, mathematics and a foreign language exam), passing the upper secondary school exam, as well as completing a student research paper or practical work during the entire study period (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). According to the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, it is also possible for upper secondary schools to follow international curricula (e.g. International Baccalaureate Organisation, the Statute of the European Schools, joint Estonian-Finnish curriculum).

Another secondary education institution, the state-owned Võro Gymnasium, has structured its school day and school year differently than many other secondary schools. It has 75-minute classes, three one-week periods of prelims and three one-week periods for electives. Electives can be chosen from different subjects ranging from British Literature, Urban Ecology, Healthy Nutrition to Electronics and Robotics, Folk Dance, Programming, and First Aid. Võro for Beginners will be offered in spring 2019. It is the first time since the school's opening in 2015 that a sufficient number of pupils have been interested in order to offer the course.

legislation

The Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act regulates the organisation of studies of basic and upper secondary schools, the rights and duties of pupils and their parents or guardians, the rights and duties of school employees, the management and funding of schools, and the state supervision over the teaching and education activities of schools. The Act also regulates the administration of municipal and state schools, and private schools insofar as the Private Schools Act does not provide otherwise. National curriculum for upper secondary schools establishes the core values, learning and educational objectives/competencies, the concept of learning and the learning environment, the organisation of studies, assessment and graduation, the fundamentals for school curriculum, and provisions for implementation.

language use

At the moment, the Võro language is not taught as a subject at the secondary level, but is explored through literature. One of the area schools potentially targeted for reform is the Vastselliina Gymnasium where the Võro language has been used as a medium of instruction within one class since 2013/2014. The "Võro-language literature" elective is taught in the final year of secondary school (grade 12) once a week at the end of school day for a double block of 45+45 minutes. The number of children enrolled in the course has decreased from 18 in 2013/2014 to 12 in 2017/2018. There are two course teachers; one from the school and the other from the Võro

Institute. Approximately once a month, the teachers invite, as a guest lecturer, a writer, a poet or scholar writing in – or about – the Võro language or about local themes. The subject focuses on the broad connections that the literature has with the local community bridging past with modern lifeways. As the literature of a small language is a trans linguistic phenomenon, related to place-bound identity (Velsker, 2015, p. 121), the course delves into a range of local and national topics.

**teaching
materials**

There are no specific teaching materials designed for secondary-level teaching. In the mid-2000s, the Võro Institute launched a project for developing a textbook for Võro literature, but due to a lack of consensus over orthography, only one chapter has been drafted. This chapter, in addition to other materials created by the Võro Institute's Coordinator for teaching the Võro language and culture, is used as an inspiration to teach the Võro-language literature at the Vastseliina Gymnasium. The reading materials include poetry and prose texts from selected authors, both contemporary and established/classic, but also media and meta texts. Pupils are asked to create Võro-language texts of their own, discuss readings and to do group work.

statistics

Secondary education is offered in seven gymnasia and secondary schools in the area. The number of secondary education institutions has dropped from thirteen to seven since the first 2007 edition of the Regional Dossier on the Võro language in education in Estonia (Ministry of Education and Research, 2018). In 2018, the secondary-level student body in the area is 40% of its size in 2005/2006.

There are no data for the number students who have out-migrated or started their studies elsewhere, i.e. in schools outside the language area.

After the 2017 administrative reform in Estonia (which resulted in a number of municipality mergers), several schools faced, and still face, reorganisation into a lower level educational

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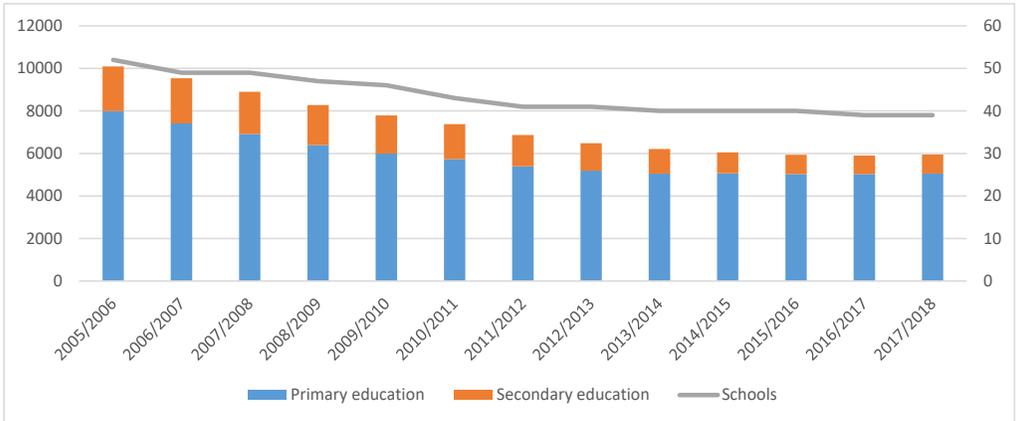


Figure 4. Decrease in student numbers and school closure in Võro-speaking area, 2005-2018. Data from Ministry of Education and Research and HaridusSlim, 2018.

institution; i.e. secondary schools becoming basic schools and all three stage basic schools into one (Grades 1-3) or two stage (Grades 1-3, 4-6) basic schools or even school closure.

5 Vocational education

structure Vocational education and training (VET) can be acquired either in vocational education or professional higher education institutions in Estonia. At least one vocational education institution operates in every county. In 2018/2019, there are 32 vocational educational institutions and 6 professional higher institutions that offer a range of 160 vocations in Estonia. Based on the ownership status, vocational education institutions are divided into state, municipal and private institutions. There are a total of 26 state-owned vocational education institutions in 2018/2019. Estonian is the primary language of instruction used in vocational training in Estonia. Russian is also used as medium of instruction in some vocational education institutions. In the vocational education centre of Valgamaa one can also study in English. (Vocational education, Ministry of Education and Research, 2019)

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There are two VET schools in the language area: in Väimela and Räpina. The Võro language is neither taught as a subject nor used as a medium of instruction in either of these schools.

legislation According to Vocational Educational Institutions Act (§ 29 (1-4)), Estonian is the language of instruction (for at least 60% of the curriculum) of vocational secondary schools. School managers do, however, have the option to select an alternative language of instruction as well. When the medium of instruction is not Estonian, Estonian instruction is required to the extent that it ensures proficiency in Estonian at a working level for the intended profession. If students are studying at vocational schools through international agreements, then they are released from the requirement of mandatory Estonian instruction.

language use The language is not formally taught in vocational institutions though it may be used informally among students.

statistics Zero percent of the vocational institutions use Võro as a medium of instruction. No statistics are kept about the language ability of vocational-education students.

6 Higher education

structure

Since 2002/2003, the Estonian higher education (HE) system follows the model of the European Higher Education Area, involving three levels: Bachelor, Master, PhD (incl. integrated BA and MA study programmes). Doctoral study is based on positively evaluated research and development. There are six universities under public law: the University of Tartu, Tallinn Technical University, Tallinn University, the Estonian University of Life Sciences, the Estonian Academy of Arts and the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre; one private-owned university: Estonian Business School; and 13 private and state professional HE institutions. Since 2012/2013 academic year, HE is free of charge in Estonia for those studying full-time in Estonian. Since 2012, higher education programmes may only be provided if their quality has been assessed and if the government has granted a license to provide instruction in the respective group. The right to provide instruction involves the right to issue national diplomas. Since 2009, HE quality has been assessed by the Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Research, 2019).

There are no universities or other HE institutions in the Võro-speaking area. However, the Võro language and, to a lesser extent, other South Estonian varieties, have been taught as subjects at the University of Tartu's Institute of Estonian and General linguistics.

language use

At the University of Tartu, all Võro and South Estonian related courses are coordinated by the Centre for South Estonian Language and Cultural Studies. Courses in/about South Estonian and Võro were introduced for two primary reasons: (1) to help prepare in-service (i.e., working) educators with a Võro background to embrace sound pedagogical instruction in the language; and (2) to provide the wider student population with an introduction to the language due to its wider importance to the Estonian language, history, and culture as a close, kindred language to Estonian. The University of Tartu has offered the

possibility to study Võro as a subject since 1996, initially under the title “The Võro dialect”. From 2003 onwards, the discipline has been called “South Estonian, I” for beginners and “South Estonian, II” for advanced learners. In addition, a series of lectures called “Modern Southern-Estonian Literature” has been given in Võro since 2004.

Additional university courses have also been offered: the “Võro Conversation” (since 2012/2013), and “Võro for Beginners” and “Advanced Võro” (since 2016/2017). Additionally, “Võro Grammar,” “History of the South Estonian Literary Language,” “South Estonian Cultural History,” and “Field Work in Dialectology” are offered in Võro, but do not meet every year. Students are awarded with 3 credits (EAP) for each Võro course. While the number of contact hours is small (i.e., usually once a week, ten times), the results are not bad. After advanced Võro courses, the students are able to understand, read, speak and write Võro at least on elementary level. Usually, students of Finno-Ugric languages and Estonian enrol to those courses, but there have also been many students from other departments of the university and from other universities.

Outside of Tartu in the city of Viljandi, the Viljandi Culture Academy of the University of Tartu, began to offer (in 2017/2018) the same beginners’ and advanced learners’ courses to its students.

In addition to these Estonia-based university offerings, visiting lecturers have been teaching the Võro language in various universities with Finnic departments or courses since 2005: Helsinki, Oulu, Riga, Debrecen, Göttingen, to name the most important. In Helsinki, the Võro-language has been taught more often: every year or every other year. Some Võro courses taught in the foreign universities have been supported by the Estonian Institute.

legislation

In Estonia, higher education is regulated by the Republic of Estonia Education Act, the Universities Act, the Private Schools

Act, the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act, the Vocational Education Institutions Act, and the Standard of Higher Education. Other relevant regulations include: the Organisation of Research and Development Act, and the acts of individual universities (University of Tartu Act, Tallinn University of Technology Act). For establishing the basis for the legal regulation of HE institutions in Estonia, the Universities Act states that the language of instruction at universities is Estonian and that the council of a university can decide upon the use of other languages (§ 22(8)). Other languages may be included upon the decisions of university councils and are featured in regulations (statutes) and principles of individual HE institutions. Unlike other universities, the University of Tartu Act states that the University advances the sciences investigating Estonia and its people for the purpose of preservation and development of the Estonian language and culture, and education in Estonian, preserves national cultural heritage and provides the related services to the public (§ 2(4)). Estonian HE policy documents, particularly those related to language, also include the Development Plan of the Estonian Language 2011–2017 extended until 2021 by the Order of Government of the Republic (No. 233, September 27, 2018), Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014–2020 (incl. HE Programme to implement the strategy), and the Agreement on Good Practice of Estonia’s Higher Education Institutions.

language use

Võro is the medium of instruction of all university-level Võro-language courses taught in Estonia. Some other Võro-related courses (e.g., South Estonian literature, cultural history) are taught in Võro or in Estonian, depending on teacher’s choice and language skills. Some Võro courses taught in foreign universities have had Finnish or English as a language of instruction. So far, two BA theses, one MA and one PhD thesis have been defended in Võro. In collaboration with the Chair of History and Dialectology of Estonian Language in the Institute of Estonian and General Linguistics of the University of Tartu, the Institute has published a series of academic publications (Publications of the Võro Institute / Võro Instituudi Toimõndusõq), including articles in Võro, Estonian, Finnish, Karelian and other Finnic

languages and English – with summaries in Võro and English. The yearbook of the Centre for South Estonian Language and Cultural Studies at the University of Tartu includes articles in Võro, mostly about linguistics, literature, and folklore. Võro is used during the Institute-organized annual interdisciplinary conference.

teacher training Teacher training is offered either in universities or by private-owned training organisations in Estonia. As for the Võro language, training focuses primarily on in-service Võro teachers and occurs in multiple locations in southern Estonia: the University of Tartu and the Võro Institute. Begun in 2002/2003, the University of Tartu's Centre for South Estonian Language and Cultural Studies offered a special course including grammar, language history, archaeology, ethnology, and literature (12 credits (EAP)). Sixteen practicing teachers graduated from that course.

pre-school training

N/A

primary training

N/A

secondary training

N/A

in-service training

Since 2007, the University of Tartu's Centre for South Estonian Language and Cultural studies has organised four Võro-language in-service trainings (*Est täienduskoolitus*), which were open to all interested students (not just teachers). In the decade between 2007-2017, 30 people participated in the course. Currently, specialised training or certification is not a requirement to teach Võro.

The Võro Institute also serves as a hub for teacher training. In addition to developing and publishing a number of teaching

materials (in connection with experts) and an exemplary curriculum for area basic schools, the Institute also offers in-service teacher training to current teachers at the school and pre-school levels. Training is delivered through regular and periodic courses. The main target group for these sessions are the practising generalists who are involved in teaching Võro, although there have been different modules for beginners and advanced learners as well as specialists. In-service teacher training is split between the pre-primary and 1st-12th grade teachers though the format is largely the same and training sessions are inclusive of teachers at all levels. The language-nest teachers meet regularly, once a month or every other month between September and June, while the school teachers are required to meet at least twice a school year. Both streams of these training sessions contain multiple activities. First, the teachers' pedagogical questions and other teaching-related problems are addressed and discussed in an informal round-table setting and "teacher-to-teacher" learning-sharing sessions. Second, a special, visiting, lecturer will usually visit and share their expertise on a special topic related to the region (this can range from local cooking to a lecture on storytelling). Third, there is always time allocated to Võro-language improvement through guided lessons and feedback from the Institute's language expert.

Teacher training can also broadly include occasional seminars on various topics (e.g., South Estonian folklore) for particular target groups (e.g., generalists, music teachers or local cultural history and local lore teachers). The lecturers come from both within and outside the Institute. For these seminars, the Institute co-operates with other educational establishments, e.g. the University of Tartu, the University of Tallinn, the Language Immersion Centre, the Estonian Literary Museum, the University of Helsinki, and the Finnish Institute in Estonia. Additionally, study visits around the region are organised every year, when teachers introduce the local culture (e.g., local lore, cultural history, handicraft, literary tradition) of her home locality to other teachers in the group. The Institute also organises study-visits for teachers further afield-to the capital of Tallinn or the island

of Kihnu--in order to expose teachers to the range of immersion classrooms around the country.

Over the years, around 50 teachers in all have enrolled in the in-service training programme at the Institute. In 2018, there are regularly ~10 experienced teachers, ~10 newer ones, and ~10 who attend off and on. While school teachers are required to attend two of these sessions, participation varies. At the pre-primary level, participation rates among language-nest teachers is regularly high. These offers at both the University of Tartu and the Võro Institute do not meet all the needs connected with the teaching of Võro, including extensive exposure to immersion pedagogy and deep opportunities to improve their language skills.

statistics

At the University of Tartu, before 2007, ~200 students have passed Võro courses. During the last ten years (since 2007), 536 students have studied Võro in the University of Tartu-- 324 of them in the beginners' and 212 in the advanced courses (SIS).

In addition, 30 people have passed in-service teacher trainings organised by the University of Tartu and about 200 students have studied Võro at foreign universities (e.g. Helsinki, Oulu, Riga, Debrecen, Göttingen).

7 Adult education

structure and language courses

Adult education is divided into formal education, informal work-related training and retraining, and popular adult education. This education system allows adults to acquire formal, basic and general secondary education at adult upper secondary schools through distance learning, evening courses or external study. There is one such school in the language area – Võro Adult Gymnasium – though no Võro-language classes were held nor has Võro been used as a medium of instruction. The Võro language classes can be classified under popular adult education. State and municipal budgets, tax incentives, the European Social Fund, as well as individual funds and contributions from the Võro Institute, are used on a case-by-case basis help to fund popular adult education in Võro.

language use

Over the last decade (2007-2017) an adult Võro-language course for beginners has been offered every, or every other, year. People interested in learning Võro have also enlisted a language teacher from Võro Institute. These courses have taken place in small, rural settlements (e.g., Karula, Tsiistre, Haanja, Hargla) and in the city of Võru. In these instances, 5-15 local people with active or passive command of Võro, have been willing to activate or deepen their language skills. People who moved to the region from other parts of Estonia, whose command of Võro is nearly non-existent, but who desire to learn Võro and use it while living in the Võro-speaking area, also participate in these courses. Participants are mostly middle aged and/or young, but there have also been a few representatives of older generations. Courses usually last ten weeks – one 90 minute class every week.

Similar courses have also been organised earlier, e.g. in Võro Institute (2004) and Võro-language conversation class in Tartu, Centre for South Estonian Language and Cultural Studies (2001-2002). In addition, there have been courses for Finnish language learners in Helsinki (2003-2005).

statistics

In above mentioned rural settlements, approximately 40-50 language learners have attended Võro courses.

8 Educational research

Research addressing education in Võro has been modest and not kept a pace with research in other Võro-related spheres (e.g., linguistics, place-/family-name studies). Dr. Kara D. Brown has researched teachers and Võro-language education in schools (2005, 2017) and more recently (2013-2014) examined language nests of south-eastern Estonia (Brown, 2018). One of the findings from her research has been that since the subject is optional and outside the national curriculum, Võro – like other cultural local aspects-, is ultimately peripheral in the school environment or *schoolscape* (2012, 2018). Schoolscapes refer to the physical and social setting in which teaching and learning takes place (Brown, 2005, p.79). Although the peripheral status may give teachers some independence in teaching, they have claimed a need for support and legitimacy that the national curriculum could provide (Brown, 2005). Her Ph.D. thesis provides more information on the subject (Brown, 2006; Brown, 2018).

Research on Võro in the curriculum provide insights into complex attitudes. According to the results of a representative study (1998), most (94%) people between the ages of 25-64 supported the teaching Võro as an optional subject would be a desired measure to preserve the language (Eichenbaum & Koreinik, 2008). Attitudes about required instruction differed dramatically; two thirds of the respondents (67%) did not support the compulsory learning of the language.

Recent research has focused on the language attitudes and aptitude of previous Võro-language learners. In the spring of 2018, 40 semi-structured interviews were conducted with the alumni of four schools--Haanja, Mõniste, Orava, Vastselliina--where the Võro language was taught. The interviews focused on both language command and language attitudes. While the findings have not yet been analysed, a preliminary observation is that general attitudes towards the language are favourable, but Võro use is rare and command is poor. There are, however, a few balanced bilinguals who have acquired Võro at home from Võro-speaking parents and Estonian at school among other places.

9 Prospects

Over the last 30 years, the status, prestige, and use of Võro has been changing for the better. Language and educational legislation now allows for the official and public use of Võro and other regional varieties alongside Standard Estonian. Additionally, the language's prestige, as well as its use in a number of domains (e.g., education, audiovisual and print media, web, language technology), has increased over the years. Achievements from the last decade (2008-2018) also include (1) the foundation and regular celebration of the popular Uma Pido Võro-language song festival; (2) successful efforts to include questions related to regional-language ability in an Estonian national census, which resulted in the first ever official count (in 2011) of Võro speakers; (3) the development of pre-primary language nest network that has extended one-day full immersion Võro-language instruction to the youngest generation for this first time in Estonia's history; and (4) the maintenance, and strengthening, of popular annual language events hosted by schools. One example of this phenomenon is the Puiga School's Võru-Seto Puiga Theater Day (*Võru-seto näitemängupäev*) when school groups from around region share mini-productions in Võro offered.

Despite these notable and positive developments, several concerning issues remain and have surfaced over the last decade. First, the interruption of intergenerational language transmission remains a stubborn problem despite widespread efforts to enhance Võro speaking at home and in the community. Unfortunately, a hundred years of schooling in Standard Estonian, which has had the status of state or titular language, has erased some of speakers' linguistic resources and has further contributed to subtractive bilingualism. There is an increased sense that language shift cannot be reversed. That said, the Võro-language community is the most sizeable South-Estonian-speaking community of practice, which unites people with various language capacities, including, active, passive and late bilingualism of Võro-Estonian. Still, passive and late

Võro-Estonian bilingualism are both consequences of the low prestige the non-standard language has for the most of 20th century, the lack of continuous language-learning from pre-school to school, as well as the uneven availability of Võro-language classes at all levels.

Furthermore, the education outlook is troublesome. School closures in the Võro area (see Figure 4), particularly among primary schools, shuts regional-language education as well. The exclusion of Võro from the national curriculum makes language-learning dependent on the interests and possibilities of each school (and teacher). A pipeline of new Võro-language teachers is not available to address the current shortage of motivated, skilled educators and any future growth looks improbable, especially in the face of oncoming waves of teacher retirement within the ranks of the Võro teachers and the Estonia-wide context of low teacher salaries, challenging conditions, and increased work demands beyond teaching (e.g., increased reporting etc.). It should be noted that the Võro Institute is attempting to confront this problem by looking actively for new skilled teachers (concerning language skills), by using and strengthening personal contacts, by negotiating with potential teachers and motivating them by providing a small fee in addition to their salaries from the Programme and from other public funding resources.

The lack of state and speaker support in a situation where the languages of the world are increasingly commodified according to their (labour) market value only further undermines linguistic vitality. Outmigration to the centres and abroad as well as an aging population (resulting in a shrinking tax base) will lead to a further reduction in public services, such as schooling. The 2017 administrative reform will help to strengthen municipalities, but also make them consolidate rural school networks in the name of efficiency.

On the other hand, with the democratisation of society and the liberalisation of language ideologies, people, in contrast to

most of the 20th century, are free to identify with and practice different, global-to-local identities and languages. And the local, Võro-language-based and other heritage identity has become one of the multiple possibilities and options. For example, some of the Võro-language events, such as the Kaika Summer University, which has a 30-year tradition of meeting, have become less popular because of a diversification of opportunity. In addition to ICT mediated platforms, there is an increasing number of local events, both commercial and community-based, which invite attention.

Another challenging issue is ICT use in the maintenance of Võro. Although new technologies for language maintenance exist (e.g., language technology-based products such as e-learning environment integrated with an online dictionary and voice synthesiser), a few of those are used for revitalising Võro. Moreover, the varying needs of different speakers could be met with ICT solutions (e.g., choosing between subtitles, speech synthesis, podcasts and oral speech uploaded), which can also be used to make Võro learning (and teaching) easier and more fun.

This mix of positive and negative developments has resulted from a complex series of forces, some of which are universal to minority and non-standard languages, others specific to Estonia. People have increasingly demonstrated their sympathy towards Võro; for some it is their mother tongue, for others it is a heritage language their grandparents used to speak, for others Võro is a living proof of a rich resource that the Estonian language relies on. This sympathy is evident when one attends Uma Pido, the song festival also popular for singers outside the language area, and in the choices made by parents who are surprisingly favourable towards language immersion. Given this situation of steps forward and steps back, the contours of the next decade of Võro-language learning are difficult to predict.

10 Summary statistics

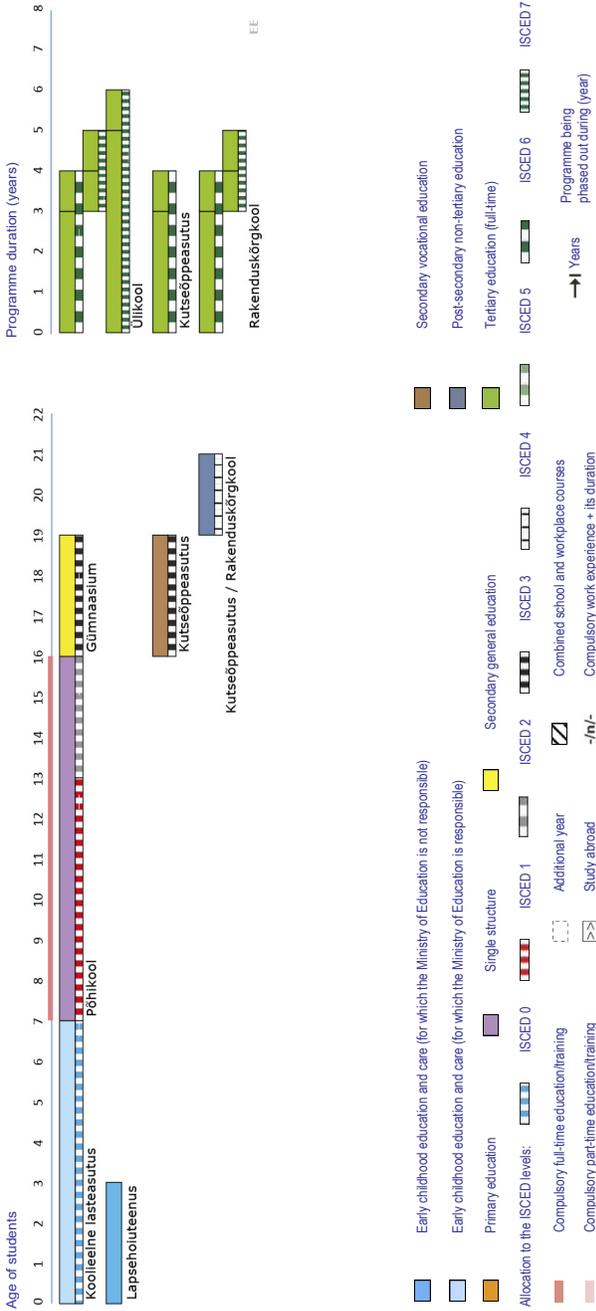
Table 1 Numbers of pupils/students and teachers enrolled in/teaching Võro and total number of pupils in 2017/2018

	Võro	Total
Pre-primary pupils	~400	2 470
Primary school pupils in the area	311	4 021
Secondary school pupils in the traditional Võro-speaking area	12	772
University/HE students	39	-
Teachers	~20	-

Note. Data from Võro Institute, 2018.

Education system in Estonia

The structure of the education system in Estonia 2018/2019



Source: Eurydice (2018/ 2019)

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Addresses

Language development bodies

Võro Institute
Tartu St. 48
6509 Võru
Estonia
T. 372 7821960
W. <http://www.wi.ee/>

Võro Society VKKF
Tartu St. 48
6509 Võru
Estonia
T. 372 7821960
W. <http://www.voroselts.ee/?keel=est>

Centre for South Estonian Language and Culture Studies
Institute of Estonian and General Linguistics
Faculty of Arts and Humanities
University of Tartu
Jakobi 2 - 125
51005 Tartu
Estonia
T. 372 73725422
W. <https://www.keel.ut.ee/et/instituudist/louna-est-keele-kultuuriuringute-keskus>

SIS (Study Information System). University of Tartu. English translation available at: <https://www.is.ut.ee/pls/ois/ltere.tulemast>

Projects and linguistic resources

Võro-Estonian-Võro online dictionary (Võro Institute)
voiced using human and synthetic voices; added placenames, grammar tables and language corpora
W. <https://synaq.org>

Võro e-learning environment “Oahpa / Opiq võro kiilt!”
(The Arctic University of Norway, University of Tartu, Võro Institute)
with the user interface in Võro, Estonian, Finnish and English
W. <http://oahpa.no/voro>

ELDIA, an international research project (included Võro)
W. <https://www.univie.ac.at/eldia-project/results>

Uma Pido (Võro Society VKKF)
Võro-language singing festival
W. <https://umapido.ee/in-english>

Üts rahvas - kats kiilt, a Võro language portal with a short Võro grammar (orthography and phonology) in Võro
W. <http://umakiil.eu>

Võrokeeline kodo / Võrukeelne kodu (Võro Institute)

a Võro-Estonian bilingual material encouraging parents to rise up children in Võro

W. https://wi.ee/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/broshuur_B5.indd_.pdf

Anname edasi! (Võro Institute)

a web page encouraging parents to pass their native regional language to the children

W. <https://www.wi.ee/annameedasi>

Võro synthetic voices (Institute of the Estonian Language, Võro Institute)

integrated in Võro e-learning environment and online dictionary

W. <https://wi.ee/en/voro-keele-sunteeshelu>

Võro-language media

Uma Leht (newspaper in Võro)

Tartu St. 48

6509 Võro

Estonia

T. 372 7822221

W. <http://www.umaleht.ee>

Täheke (children's magazine) Issues from 2005-2015

W. <https://www.digar.ee/arhiiv/en/periodicals?id=4019>

Võrukeelsed uudised. Radio news in Võro in the Estonian National Public Broadcasting

W. https://vikerraadio.err.ee/vorukeelsed_uudised

Jussi multikaq. Võro-language animated cartoons

W. <http://lastekas.tv3.ee/?go=multikaq>

Wikipedia in Võro

W. <http://fiu-vro.wikipedia.org>

Võro kiil, a Võro-language Facebook group

W. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/421631001227096/>

Other relevant institutions

Estonian Ministry of Culture

Suur-Karja Street 23

15076 Tallinn

Estonia

Secretariat: (+372) 6 282 250

T. (+372) 6 282 222

W. <http://www.kul.ee>

Vana-Võromaa Heritage Culture Programme

W. <http://www.rahvakultuur.ee/2522>



Other websites on minority languages

Mercator www.mercator-research.eu

Research Centre Homepage of the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning. The website contains the series of Regional dossiers, a database with organisations, a bibliography, information on current activities, and many links to relevant websites.

Mercator www.mercator-network.eu

Network General site of the Mercator European Network of Language Diversity Centres. It gives information about the network and leads you to the homepages of the network partners.

European <http://ec.europa.eu/languages>

Commission The website of the European Commission gives information about the EU's support for language diversity.

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Council of <http://conventions.coe.int>

Europe European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) and Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995). European Treaty Series 148 and 157, Strasbourg.

Eurydice <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice>

Eurydice is the information network on education in Europe. The site provides information on all European education systems and education policies.

European Parliament Committee – supporting analyses database

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/supporting-analyses-search.html>.

In this database you will find research papers produced by the European Parliament's research service. A study for the CULT Committee, conducted by Mercator, is published in 2017: *Minority Languages and Education: Best Practices and Pitfalls*.

NPLD

<http://www.npld.eu>

The Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) is a European wide network working in the field of language policy & planning for Constitutional, Regional and Small-State Languages (CRSS) across Europe

FUEN

<https://www.fuen.org>

The Federal Union of European Nationalities is the umbrella organisation of the autochthonous, national minorities/ethnic groups in Europe and represents the interests of European minorities on regional, national and European level.

ELEN

<https://elen.ngo/>

The European Language Equality Network (ELEN) is a non-governmental organisation that has as its goal to promote and protect European lesser-used languages, (RMLs), to work towards linguistic equality for these languages, and multilingualism, under the broader framework of human rights, and to be a voice for the speakers of these languages at all levels

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Since 1987 the Mercator Research Centre forms a network structure with two partners: Mercator Media, hosted at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth, and Mercator Legislation, hosted at the Ciemen Foundation in Barcelona. Together with the Stockholm University in Sweden and the Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Hungary, these partners formed the Mercator European Network of Language Diversity Centres. Mercator also works closely with a number of other partner organisations researching in the same field. This cooperation includes partners in the province Fryslân and other parts of the Netherlands, as well as partners across Europe. The main funding body of the Mercator Research Centre is the provincial government of Fryslân. The EU and regional authorities in Europe fund projects and activities as well.

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conferences

The Mercator Research Centre organises conferences and seminars on a regular basis. The main target groups are professionals, researchers and policymakers from all member states of the Council of Europe and beyond. Themes for the conferences are: assessment & best practice, educational models, development of minimum standards, teacher training and the application of the Common European Framework of Reference.

q&a

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Manx Gaelic; the Manx Gaelic language in education in the Isle of Man
Meänkieli and Sweden Finnish; the Finnic languages in education in Sweden
 Nenets, Khanty and Selkup; The Nenets, Khanty and Selkup language in education in the Yamal Region in Russia
North-Frisian; the North Frisian language in education in Germany (3rd ed.)
Occitan; the Occitan language in education in France
Polish; the Polish language in education in Lithuania
Romani and Beash; the Romani and Beash languages in education in Hungary
Romansh; The Romansh language in education in Switzerland
Sami; the Sami language in education in Sweden
Scots; the Scots language in education in Scotland (2nd ed.)
Serbian; the Serbian language in education in Hungary
Slovak; the Slovak language in education in Hungary
Slovene; the Slovene language in education in Austria (2nd ed.)
Slovene; the Slovene language in education in Italy (2nd ed.)
Sorbian; the Sorbian language in education in Germany (2nd ed.)
Swedish; the Swedish language in education in Finland (2nd ed.)
Turkish; the Turkish language in education in Greece
Ukrainian and Ruthenian; the Ukrainian and Ruthenian language in education in Poland
Võro; the Võro language in education in Estonia (2nd ed.)
Welsh; the Welsh language in education in the UK

THE VÕRO LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION IN ESTONIA



c/o Fryske Akademy
Doelestrjitte 8
P.O. Box 54
NL-8900 AB Ljouwert/Leeuwarden
The Netherlands

T 0031 (0) 58 - 234 3027
W www.mercator-research.eu
E mercator@fryske-akademy.nl