

WELCOME TO OUR

The Nordic-Baltic Region Newsletter

HEY, HOW ARE YOU?

NBR President's Notes



Dear colleagues,

Summer has arrived and it is time to enjoy, relax and refresh for the next academic year. Many of us in the teaching profession do however also spend time during the summer holidays either updating or planning courses, expanding our own professional skills and possibly also giving summer courses. Some people I know are also giving their time to work for charity projects.

I do wish for You all some time with friends and family, meaningful encounters, enchanting experiences and enjoyment.

Have a lovely summer,
Outi VILKUNA

Greetings from Finland

Prepared by **Outi Vilkuna**
chairman of the Finnish language teachers'
association SUKOL ry



The spring has been quite full of different activities. I will just point out a few.

On March 13th, 2024 SUKOL's representatives **Outi Vilkuna**, chairman of the Finnish language teachers' association SUKOL ry, and **Anna Halme**, SUKOL ry executive director, met with the special assistant of the Minister of Education **Lisa Palm** and handed over a statement on current topics in language teaching. In brief, the contents of the statement included:

1. Diversification of the A1 language choices in basic education and the supply of A2 languages

A wide selection of languages in basic education is the best guarantee that languages are studied in a sufficiently versatile manner. The decrease in language skills is a threat to security of supply and weakens critical infrastructure.

2. Who teaches languages in primary school grades 1–6?

In municipalities, decisions about who teaches languages are often made from a financial perspective and not so much based on the teacher's substantive expertise. Language teaching has been transferred from language teachers to classroom teachers in primary schools, even though the organizer of the teaching might have several school grades in the same area that could employ a language teacher. Classroom teachers usually do not have training in language teaching, and they do not necessarily feel that they know or want to teach a language. The teacher's language relationship must be positive in order to be able to inspire students to learn languages at work.

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3. The situation of teacher education

It is already noticeable that the narrowed language study in general education schools has an effect on applying for university studies. Very few students apply for languages other than English – even so that there is a threat that study places will not be filled, even though the number of starting places has been reduced considerably in recent years.

How can we guarantee a sufficient language reserve for society in the future if language experts and language teachers are not trained?

4. Composition of the working group of the elementary school's Future work project 1 February 2024–31 December 2025

<https://okm.fi/en/futures-work-in-comprehensive-schools> The working group does not include a language teaching expert. Our dwindling language reserve is also truly relevant in terms of our strategic infrastructure, and the accessibility of a wider range of language skills should be every citizen's right. As a state, Finland should have a strategy to maintain and strengthen citizens' broader language skills. SUKOL hopes that the importance and implementation of broader language skills in basic education will be taken into account as a valuable part of the work of this project. According to SUKOL's view, the keys to the solution to the diversification of language skills are in the hands of the municipalities: language choices should be diversified already in basic education, and the state should support this through legislation and resources. The implementation of language paths should be secured through the cooperation of the organizers of education from elementary school to the end of secondary school and up to postgraduate studies.

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5. Expanded compulsory education and securing the continuity of language paths

The continuation of the language paths started in basic education must also be secured for the second level. The problem is particularly great at the vocational second level, where even the compulsory language studies have been reduced to a minimum and there is little teaching of optional languages. The availability of materials is also weak. The situation is not commendable in high schools either. In SUKOL's high school survey, almost half of the respondents' high schools (46.3%) have fewer short language groups this school year than before. A little over a third (36%) answered that there are as many groups of short languages as before. In a small number of upper secondary schools (3.4%), there are more groups than before; the same number answered that short languages are not taught at all. Upper secondary schools are very unequal among themselves, and principals and education organizers have a lot of power. The survey was sent in November 2023 through SUKOL's member register to members who teach in upper secondary schools, and the response rate was slightly less than 13 (205 responses).

On May 6th, 2024 as part of the program for the anniversary of the Linguistics Days, a panel discussion themed "Languages, crises and security" aimed at the general public was organized at the University of Jyväskylä. It discussed the importance of language skills and cultural competence in the current world situation and considered what language skills mean in terms of the safety of society and success in international networks.

Experts from different fields were invited to discuss the topic: commander Pekka Snellman from the Uusimaa Brigade, researcher Minna Ålander from the Foreign Policy Institute, President Outi Vilkuna from the Finnish Language Teachers' Union and professor emerita Hannele Dufva from the University of Jyväskylä.

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The audience was greeted remotely by the recipient of the 2024 Journalist of the Year award, University of Jyväskylä alumnus, special editor Arja Paananen, who talked about the importance of language and cultural competence in the media. In general, the changing concept of language skills was discussed, among other things, the methods of identifying and recognizing curriculum-based language skills and, on the other hand, the language reserve brought by the population base, the role of technology-assisted language skills, and the means of communication, influencing and enabling with the support of broader language skills.

On May 7th, 2024 Languages for all – Language proficiency panel 2024

The topic of the language skills panel organized by SUKOL was: **"How can educational equality be developed in municipalities and education structures?"** The panel was chaired by **SUKOL's vice-chair Minna Närvä**, and it was organized remotely.

University representatives brought a research perspective to the accessibility of language education. Research professor Taina Saarinen, director of the Institute of Education at the University of Jyväskylä, reminded that the accessibility of language education is related to what happens during and after the education – what value language education has. Nowadays, the value of language education is often talked about from the point of view of working life. Of course, education has other value, for example in terms of individual self-expression. Saarinen suggested the book Finland's Famous Education System, which is freely available online at <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-19-824>

Panelist Raisa Harju-Autti works as a university lecturer in educational sciences at Kokkola University Center Chydenius, which is part of the University of Jyväskylä. He brought up the current state of language teaching and visions of the future survey, the first results of which were

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presented at the event held on April 29, 2024. Among other things, the proposals for the development of the study mentioned that the range of languages should be expanded in both basic education and secondary education and that teachers' in-service training should be developed.

Mari Sjöström, special expert of the municipal association, focused on the future and the effects of population change. In the municipalities, the population is decreasing and the proportion of students who speak foreign languages is increasing. Basic education is organized mainly in Finnish or Swedish, and the language of instruction affects common, optional and voluntary languages. Sjöström asked what different means could be used to influence the accessibility of language teaching. Are there pedagogical methods that have not yet been tried? Could other activities related to the school day motivate language choices? He pointed out that in Sweden, for example, remote connections are widely used regionally, and this is based not only on the will of the education organizers but also on research evidence -> see e.g. <https://svenska.yle.fi/a/7-10055548>

The panellists included experts from different parts of Finland, explaining the solutions of their own municipalities, especially for increasing the accessibility of language education. Satu Koistinen and Jenni Kohl participated in the panel as representatives of the Education and training sector of the City of Helsinki. Helsinki is an example of a big city, where challenges and opportunities are unique. The city's strategy states that the goal is to offer a wide range of languages to everyone. Koistinen and Kohl presented Helsinki's wide selection of languages and the division of classes, where more languages are offered than the national minimum mandate. 90% of schoolchildren still choose English as their A1 language, but about half of the age group chooses the A2 language.

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Language teacher, SUKOL board member Leena Pulli brought the greetings of the city of Tampere to the panel. Tampere has gained a reputation as a city where the provision and implementation of a versatile A1 language has been exemplary. In the city's strategy, language skills are seen as skills for the future.

In early education, language showers are offered and in pre-school, within the Kikatus program

<https://sites.google.com/edu.ikaalinen.fi/kikatus/kikatusmaterialit>

according to the city's own model: every preschool child receives one hour of language education per week in the A language of the school path, and the language teachers are responsible for the teaching. There are seven A-languages, and about a third of the age group would like an A1 language other than English. The same languages are now offered within each school path as A1 and A2 languages. This enables groups to be formed and unite if necessary. The city's quality guarantee includes that a language teacher (or a dually qualified class teacher) is responsible for all language teaching and that the A2 English group is established with a smaller number of students. Very important is the support of the administration, which makes the Kikatus classes held by language teachers possible.

Panelist Päivi Mäkinen works as a language teacher in the city of Hyvinkää, where there has also been an investment in preschool children's language training and information for parents. Hyvinkää is a railway-side town in Southern Finland with less than 50,000 inhabitants, which has a long tradition of organizing versatile language teaching. The city offers five A1 languages: not all languages are offered in every school, but every new student can choose any language. The school location is primarily determined based on the choice of language in the central area, where there are many schools. Instead, only English is offered as an A2 language.

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The city's language program guarantees the continuation of the long language (A) until the end of upper secondary school. Marketing of languages was previously handled through language clubs of second graders. After the introduction of the A1 language, joint language information evenings have been organized for the whole city, where the children have their own program and the guardians have their own. In addition, foreign language showering is organized at the preschool level.

The smallest municipality that was represented in the panel was Liminka in Northern Pohja. Liminka is the municipality with the most children in Finland, and more than 40% of the residents are under 19 years old. The municipality's education director Päivi Mäki said that in a few years, the municipality's language program and the path of bilingual Finnish-English education from pre-school to the end of high school have been built in Liminka. In the municipality's strategy, internationality and tourism are seen as factors that strengthen vitality, and the language program is part of the internationalization plan. In addition to English, Swedish is offered as A1 language. Mäki said that there are plans to increase the choices. The A2 languages German, Spanish and Russian are usually implemented – although Russian has not been chosen this year due to the world situation. B2 languages are German, French and Spanish. The language program ensures continuity to upper secondary school, and it also includes the language offering of free educational work.

SUKOL has been organizing language skill panels for a few years, always at the beginning of May. This time the topic stemmed from the one-sidedness and weakening of language skills, which is a growing concern in the union and in society as a whole. Lack of language skills has an impact on equal placement in working life, and from the point of view of employers, it affects the availability of language-proficient and competent workforce and the competitiveness of companies on international and European markets. The situation is also worrying from the perspectives of broader cultural awareness, tolerance and world citizenship.

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According to SUKOL's view, the keys to the solution to increasing the versatility of language skills are precisely in the versatile choices of the starting phase, which are supported by the government. The realization of language paths should be secured through the cooperation of the organizers of education, from basic education to second level and postgraduate studies.

The hot topic was interesting: there were about 120 people who registered. Chairwoman Minna Närvä ended the panel with the wish raised by the audience: let's finally start drafting a national language skills strategy!

On May 24th, 2024 A meeting organized by the Subject Teachers' Union; The chairpersons of the subject teachers' associations were invited to a meeting with Jarkko Niiranen of the Board of Education. SUKOL was represented by vice-chair Minna Närvä. At the meeting, current issues related to various fields of education were discussed.

On May 27th, 2024 A National Board of Education (OPH) meeting; Chairman Outi Vilkuna participated in a meeting organized by the National Board of Education, where current topics of language teaching in basic education and upper secondary school were discussed. Anu Halvari, Annamari Kajasto, Olli Määttä and Yvonne Nummela from the National Board of Education were present.

SUKOL ry also gave a few statements on the government's proposals during the spring, eg. a statement on a government proposal to the parliament to change the Upper Secondary School Act and some related laws.

The new board member of SUKOL (elected for a three year term) will begin in their position on July 1st, 2024. The president is also elected for a three year term (ongoing term 1.7.2023–30.6.2026). The first meeting of the new board is on August 19th, 2024.

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SUKOL

SUOMEN KIELTENOPETTAJIEN LIITTO | SPRÅKLÄRARFÖRBUNDET I FINLAND

SUKOL board members



Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Ene Peterson**,
President of the Estonian Association
of Foreign Language Teachers



EVÕL
Eesti Võõrkeeļõpetajate Liit

2024 Activity Report

The Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers

Website: www.voorkeelteliit.eu

E-mail: info@voorkeelteliit.eu

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/voorkeelteliit/>

EVÕL Newsletters: <https://www.voorkeelteliit.eu/uudiskirjad/>

Read: [EVÕL Newsletter No 13/2024](#) (15.05)

2024 Events (past and forthcoming), Media, our Associations' Events

PAST EVENTS from 20 March until 1 June

20 March "A roundtable discussion on "B- foreign languages: an Opportunity or an Obligation?"

An article on the association website April 2, 2024

<https://www.voorkeelteliit.eu/umarlaud-b-voorkeeled-sanss-voi-sundus/>

Pille Toompere, German and Finnish Teacher at Viimsi School
Board Member of the Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers (EVÕL)

On March 20, 2024, the Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers (EVÕL) organized a virtual roundtable titled "B-Foreign Language: Opportunity or Obligation?". Participants included representatives from EVÕL's board and member organizations, colleagues from the Ministry of Education and Research, the Estonian Association of School Leaders, the universities of Tallinn and Tartu, as well as leaders from the HARNO Erasmus+ agency and the examination center.

Overview of Foreign Language Education Proportions in Estonian Schools: Pille Põiklik, the chief expert in the language policy department, and Marika Peekmann, the chief expert in general education for foreign languages and international education, provided an overview of the proportions of foreign language instruction in Estonian general education schools. English is predominantly taught as the first foreign language (A-language), constituting 95% of language learning. Russian has traditionally been the most common second language (B-language), followed by German, French, Spanish, and Finnish. However, from this academic year, Estonian basic schools are required to offer at least two foreign languages as B-languages. This has already led to significant changes in language offerings, with Russian's share dropping from 78% to 59% in one year, allowing greater representation for other languages.

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Prepared by **Ene Peterson**,
President of the Estonian Association
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School Leaders' Perspectives: School principals participating in the roundtable included Triin Lõbu from Võnnu High School, Peeter Sipelgas from Viimsi School, and Signe Ilmjärv from Toila Gymnasium. The mandate to offer at least two B-languages has brought both challenges and opportunities for school leaders. They face questions about which languages to teach and how to find qualified teachers for diverse languages. They also need to consider the cost of acquiring new teaching materials.

Universities' Role in Training Foreign Language Teachers: The main training grounds for foreign language teachers in Estonia are the University of Tartu and Tallinn University.

According to Anu Treikelder, program manager for the Master's in Foreign Language Teaching at the University of Tartu, and Marilyn Meristo, curator of the Master's program in Foreign Language Teaching at Tallinn University, both institutions have launched micro-degree programs to be more flexible in the further training of foreign language teachers. Rait Toompere, head of the HARNO Erasmus+ agency, suggested that both current teachers and students should be more confident in using Erasmus+ opportunities for additional training, job shadowing, and internships in other countries. Aimi Püüa, head of the HARNO tests and assessments department, recommended using various baseline and level tests in addition to traditional exams to motivate students and provide feedback on their skills.

Conclusion and Future Plans: Participants were very satisfied with the open and constructive discussion initiated by EVÕL and hope such meetings become a tradition. According to the Ministry of Education and Research representatives, it is crucial for different stakeholders to continue to come together in the future to share the joys and challenges of language education.

The Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers has several exciting events planned for the upcoming year. In April, there will be an educational trip to Pelgulinna State Gymnasium. In early June, there will be a regional training day and language fair in Pärnu. In November, EVÕL will host its traditional autumn conference, this time at Tallinn University, marking its 10th anniversary.

The whole activity report



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Attachments:

Roundtable Agenda

Presentation **“Foreign Language Tests and Exams for Basic Schools”** – Aimi Püüa, HARNO, Head of Tests and Assessments Department

Presentation “Introduction to the University of Tartu’s Foreign Language Teacher Program” – Anu Treikelder, Program Manager

Presentation **“How to Use Erasmus+ Scholarships for the Foreign Language Teaching Process, Continuing Education, and Internships?”** – Rait Toompere, HARNO

Presentation **“Foreign Languages in General Education Schools 2023/2024”** – Marika Peekmann, Ministry of Education and Research, Chief Expert (Foreign Languages and International Education)

Background Information: **Erasmus+ Program Opportunities for Foreign Language Teachers and Student Teachers** – Rait Toompere, HARNO (Education and Youth Board), Head of the Erasmus+ Agency

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

9- 10 August Paide Opinion Festival

EVÕL representatives conduct the discussion on motivation in teaching B- foreign languages.

What is Opinion Festival? <https://arvamusfestival.ee/en/what-is-arvamusfestival/>

19. august Communication seminar of the representatives educational associations

The seminar consists of two parts:

1. **Theoretical Part:** This session will be led by Aune Past, a communication expert, former lecturer at the University of Tartu, and author of several books on public relations. She will expand participants' knowledge on reputation, image, and the fundamentals of communication.
2. **Practical Part:** In this session, we will discuss in smaller groups the opportunities and challenges faced by educational associations in promoting the teaching profession. This discussion will be facilitated by Tiina Nõmme, a communication partner from the Education and Youth Board

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September - ECML training day (the topic and date will be specified by July 1)

15 November Extended Board Meeting (Tallinn)

The discussion of the plans for 2025 – 2027, preparation for the application to continue as a strategic partner of the Ministry of Education and Science

16 November Autumn conference on CLIL. Tallinn, Tallinn University

The programme is prepared by the Association of Teachers of Finnish and the Association of Teachers of French.

Plenary speaker Dr. Oliver Meyer who is professor for English-Didactics at the Johannes Gutenberg-University/Mainz. He is also a qualified teacher of Geography and EFL with several years of CLIL-teaching experience.

Supporting CertiLingua Program Activities

CertiLingua program schools in Estonia: Tartu Annelinna Gymnasium, Kristjan Jaak Peterson Gymnasium, Kadriorg German Gymnasium, Viljandi Gymnasium, and Tallinn Coeducational Gymnasium, along with guests from Jõhvi Gymnasium, participated. A total of 21 participants attended.

The companion volume of the European Language Education Framework has been translated into Estonian

Development of the European Centre for Modern Languages Local Network

- The distribution of Centre's materials and tools among language teachers, including the introduction of the Centre's 2024- 2027 program projects in Estonia
- The Centre's contact person and representative will participate in the program conference in 2024
- Participation in the celebration of European Language Day on September 26, 2024. Official information about the celebration will be shared with Estonian schools, language teachers, and target groups.
- A representative from will participate in the European Centre for Modern Languages summer school

Greetings from Estonia

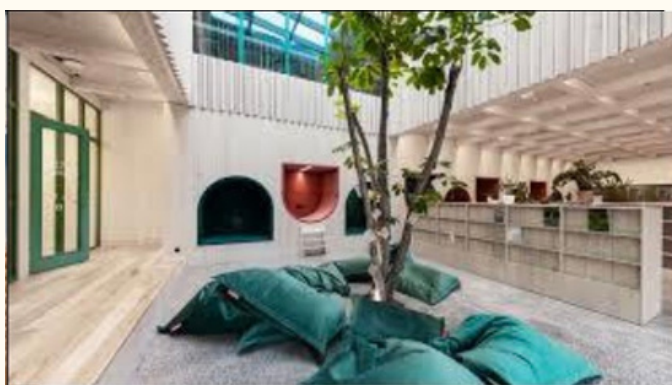
Prepared by **Ene Peterson**,
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The activities of the Association and our 6 member associations have been using various information channels, including EVÕL and member associations' websites, Facebook, EVÕL Newsletter, association newsletters, e.g. EATE [Open](#), lists, articles in "[Õpetajate Leht](#)" (Teachers' Newspaper), FIPLV Newsletter and Nordic Baltic Region Newsletter.

12 April - 11th Regional Training Day "On Language and Culture" by the Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers (EVÕL)

Venue: Tallinn : Pelgulinna State Gymnasium (PERG, <https://perg.ee/>, Kolde puiestee 67a, Tallinn)



Pelgulinna State Gymnasium, or PERG, is a state high school opened in the fall of 2023. The school's curriculum focuses on societal challenges with significant impact (environmental issues and the sustainability of democracy). When completed, the school's building was the largest wooden structure in Estonia, accommodating 1,080 high school students. The PERG school building was chosen as the Wooden Building of the Year 2023.

Greetings from Estonia



Prepared by **Pille Toompere**,

a member of the Board of the Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers, a teacher of German and Finnish

Training Day for Foreign Language Teachers in Pärnu



Since 2017, the Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers (EVÕL) has been organizing general meetings, regional training days, and language fairs in Pärnu. This year, on June 1st, Pärnu again hosted a training day and a language fair. The main presentation focused on the theme **"How to Become Futureproof."** Teachers learned the PechaKucha presentation technique and discussed how to achieve balance both in languages and in the world as a whole. Additionally, participants engaged in numerous

learning centres, explored the latest educational literature and online resources, and shared the best practices in teaching and learning. Nearly 70 foreign language teachers from across Estonia attended the training day.

The training day began with the general meeting of the Association of Foreign Language Teachers, chaired by EVÕL President **Ene Peterson**. EVÕL has over 800 members, and the number is growing, with six foreign language teacher societies included. Over the year, numerous conferences, seminars, round tables, language fairs, and summer seminars have been organized. EVÕL has its own identity and story. In 2023, the 14th chapter of the Association's story was completed. In August, there is a scheduled appearance at the Paide Opinion Festival with a focus on B-foreign languages. On November 16th, the EVÕL autumn conference dedicated to CLIL learning will take place at Tallinn University.

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The keynote speaker for the training day was inspirational speaker **Harald Lepisk**, who encouraged everyone to face the future with the highest expectations. Artificial intelligence is becoming a great assistant for foreign language teachers, especially for drilling beginners or helping those who are falling behind. Harald inspired participants to see opportunities where problems are typically perceived. Coping with change is easier when you know which strategies to use. The mindset is where changes occur.

Diana Kollin-Poom, a German teacher at Kadriorg German High School and the German Cultural Institute of Tallinn, clearly demonstrated the PechaKucha presentation technique and how to use it correctly. A volunteer group performed a presentation on-site, bringing a lot of recognition and emotional engagement from the audience.

After lunch, teachers from Tartu Annelinna Gymnasium, **Diana Joassoone and Julia Trubatšova**, guided participants through integrated content and language learning, showing through poetry and music how to achieve balance in languages, cultures, the inner world of a person, and the surrounding world. It was explained how for children with non-native home languages the knowledge of the country's language is essential because if children embrace the language and song, they will also embrace Estonia. The room full of participants sang the new significant song from the Estonian Song Festivals, "Mu rõõm on lõputu..."

The training day featured eleven learning centres, allowing participants to take part in all areas of interest due to flexible scheduling. For example, the necessity of repetition was explained and the possibilities for recalling learned material were illustrated. Spinning a wheel of fortune, playing quiz games, and many other exciting methods are all excellent aids for reviewing learned material.

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Using a shopping bag as an example, the topic of environmental conservation in foreign language learning was demonstrated. Participants were introduced to self-created learning materials in the e-school bag "E-Koolikott" <https://e-koolikott.ee/en>. The recommendation was for all teachers to collaborate closely with their colleagues in their subject areas and to forget about working alone and creating repetitive materials. In the e-school bag, teachers can combine forces and share the best practices and resources.

Practical tips and ideas on how to integrate themed years and annual nature activities into the language learning process were shared to understand the local culture and natural peculiarities. Opportunities for integrated subject and language learning were presented, along with a business language course as a way to motivate students.

Artificial intelligence-supported environments were introduced, which can be used in language teaching for text correction, learning from mistakes, providing personalized feedback, and creating presentations or texts. New web materials for teaching Finnish were explored, developed within the university's ELU project (an innovative project integrating disciplines). The materials include videos, word games, crossword puzzles, exercises, dialogues, and self-created songs. Teachers who have already tested the materials in school confirmed that they are of high quality.

The focus was on making the learning process interesting by gamifying learning or using games. Learning happens naturally while playing, stated a teacher who, as a career changer, is also a great example of how a well-known TV journalist became a beloved teacher by the children.

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Prepared by **Pille Toompere**,

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EVÕL
Eesti Võrkeleõpetajate Liit

One learning center addressed how to motivate modern young people to read longer texts. Colleagues explained how they approach authentic literary texts in contemporary foreign language teaching. Self-created tasks for using interactive tools in foreign language teaching were also shared.

And so, a long, exciting, and extremely content-rich training day came to an end. What else was done in Pärnu? Conversations were held with colleagues from distant corners, whom one doesn't often meet face-to-face, and smart tips from fellow colleagues were noted. The bravest went swimming in the warm sea water and watched and listened to a powerful thunderstorm over Pärnu Bay.



Greetings from Estonia

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In conclusion, it was emphasized to the participants that the Association of Foreign Language Teachers expects everyone to attend the Paide Opinion Festival in August, where the Association's representatives will lead a debate circle dedicated to B-foreign languages titled "Is it worth it?". And in the fall, we will meet again in November at the 10th EVÕL autumn conference at Tallinn University.

Media clip prepared by Karola Velberg,

Watch here <https://www.facebook.com/reel/447996607992945>

Harald Lepisk You can read about Harald and the topic he presented to us: How to become futureproof.



Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Merike Saar (PhD)**, a member of
the Committee of the EATE, Tallinn French School, teacher of English



News from EVÕL (Eesti Võõrkeeleeõpetajate Liit) - EESTI
(EATE, The Estonian Association of Teachers of English)

TRAILS – Toward the responsible and constructive use of generative AI in language learning at school



Tallinn French School (Estonia) is participating in an Erasmus+ project TRAILS, which focuses on the responsible (constructive and ethical) use of Generative AI in language learning and teaching. The partners from Estonia, Portugal and Spain (University of Pompeu Fabra, Tallinn University, Kokoro Association, Associació de Mestres Rosa Sensat, Institut Catarina Albert, Tallinn French School, and Colégio de São

Gonçalo de Amarante), have been co-designing and testing lesson scenarios to help teachers produce learning activities that enable students to experience using generative AI in a transparent, responsible, and constructive manner.

Many educators view generative AI as a threat. We want to change that, by providing evidence-based information and the safe space to debate how generative AI has the potential to be a transformative learning tool. The teachers in the project work together with scientists to learn about AI in education, prepare learning activities for their students, and co-design a teacher professional development course with supporting technology (a web-page), so that teachers can easily share their lesson scenarios with colleagues and adapt others' scenarios for their own contexts.

Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Merike Saar (PhD)**, a member of
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In addition to working at their schools with the students, the teachers also meet with their international colleagues to create a community hub of teachers, familiarised with generative AI topic, tools, and work approach. The two first meetings (in Barcelona, Spain, in March 2024 and in Tallinn, Estonia, in June) aimed to guide teachers in a group reflection on their school experiences with generative AI learning activities, while empowering them to mentor their colleagues. The next meeting will take place in Porto (Portugal), in April 2025.

Artificial intelligence in education (AI-EdTech) is changing how teachers plan and deliver lessons, especially for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), as language barriers have limited the use of AI-EdTech in other languages and subjects. However, teachers are feeling a mix of excitement and worry. Interviews with the project participants show many are interested in AI-EdTech but haven't used it much yet. They're mostly concerned with learning how to use it effectively in their teaching. However, some teachers are already integrating AI-EdTech well. Their main concern is how to collaborate with colleagues on using this new tech.

An interesting thing that became evident from the interviews is that teachers with less experience tend to keep a tighter grip on how students use the technology. They either ban the use altogether, change their assignments to limit the use of AI, or add oral conversations with students to their assignments of any written tasks (even when this means more work). However, more experienced teachers are all about figuring out how to use AI to make learning English even better, and teach students how to use these tools responsibly. For example, they let students critically compare their own written texts (or pictures, graphs) with the ones compiled by AI. They also teach students to use AI for ideation or editing purposes, or as learning-pals or for self-check. These teachers report that AI helps lighten their workload, giving them more time to focus on other things.

Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Merike Saar (PhD)**, a member of
the Committee of the EATE, Tallinn French School, teacher of English



The next school year, the TRAILS project will expand its reach to other subject teachers as new colleagues are going to join the school teams. The aim is to provide teachers with materials about ways to use AI-EdTech so that students do not cheat but really learn new skills that improve the quality of learning, while teachers can prepare more engaging and efficient learning experiences for their students. It is also not less important to shed light on the different drawbacks and possible threats regarding the AI use. Therefore, the project provides guidelines for teachers about the responsible use, considering ethical, legal and environmental issues.

At the end of the year, the project team hopes to celebrate the achievements and disseminate the project outcomes to all teachers on their web page: trails.upf.edu (where it is already possible to learn about GDPR-compliant AI-solutions for education).



TRAILS training



TRAILS team

Greetings from Iceland



The welcoming of Móðurmál into STÍL

The Association of Language Teachers in Iceland, STÍL, held its Annual General Meeting **on May 23rd**. Besides the regular meeting duties, a new organization of language teachers was welcomed into the Association at the meeting. This is an organization called Móðurmál – the Association on Bilingualism. The chairman of this organization that supports and promotes mother tongue instruction in Iceland is Renata Emilsson Pesková. At the meeting, Renata gave a short report on the agenda of Móðurmál. Here are some of the points she mentioned:

“All languages other than Icelandic, Danish, and English are fighting for their existence in Iceland. The legal environment regarding children’s rights to learn languages needs to be examined. Mother tongue teaching should be promoted at all levels of education and mother tongue needs a platform for the promotion of language teaching. The mother tongue groups are well managed, there are currently 18 of them. Móðurmál is open to everyone and it offers a variety of services, e.g. assistance to mother tongue groups and teachers, events, or information and education for parents of foreign origin. Brochures about Móðurmál in Icelandic and English were recently published. Mother tongue groups are independent and manage themselves and they collaborate within Móðurmál. The biggest mother tongue group within Móðurmál is the Polish School with about 300 students, they are best organized and strive for formal recognition in Icelandic compulsory schools.”

You can read more about Móðurmál on their website <https://www.modurmal.com/>.

STÍL is honored to have Móðurmál on board as a member of STÍL since it makes the association stronger in all respects. We aim to include, celebrate, and promote the teaching of all languages in the country.

Greetings from Iceland



STÍL welcomes Móðurmál! In the photo, you see Borbjörg, the president of STÍL with Renata, the chairman of Móðurmál at the annual general meeting of STÍL.

Greetings from Iceland



Critical Connection Workshops

On April 11th, STÍL, in collaboration with Móðurmál, offered teachers a free online workshop about the project Critical Connections. The leaders of the project Jim Anderson, Yu-Chiao Chung, Judith Rifesser, and Vicky Macleroy from the Centre for Language, Culture and Learning, Goldsmiths, University of London, UK, led the Workshop.

The Critical Connections project, which is about digital multilingual storytelling, has been going on since 2012 and has reached many corners of the world. They have worked with a wide range of language learners internationally, both in mainstream and complementary community-based schools. Project schools have included over 44 languages in their digital stories, and they have worked with students from 6 -18 years old, as well as carrying out community projects with adults.

In the online workshop, the four presenters introduced the main principles of using multilingual digital storytelling and how language teachers can use it in their work. Selected films were discussed as well as the factors that make a good digital story. They showed examples of how films have been created multilingually and how teachers and students have approached project-based learning and told their stories through the use of artwork, animation, poetry, drama, and documentaries that call for action. The online workshop was popular and the attendees took away many ideas to use in their teaching.

Greetings from Iceland



The online workshop was, however, only a taster for a whole day Critical Connections' workshop that took place on **June the 10th** in Reykjavík. The location was Verzlunarskóli Íslands, a big upper secondary school in the east part of town. Twenty language teachers from all school levels attended. Judith Riefeser and Vicky Macleroy came to Iceland to lead the workshop. Participants were asked to bring a found object as well as various craft materials, paper, colors, shoe boxes, etc. to the workshop. This was for the making of stop-motion animation films, which was the main activity of the day.

In the pre-production part of the workshop, the participants learned about camera angles and shots; they created mood boards while thinking about emotions and sketched out storyboards working across several languages. The teachers were split into groups of four and the afternoon was spent filming, editing, and sharing the short films as well as reflecting on how students learn languages through the process of digital storytelling.

In short, the day was a huge success. It was clear from the start that Vicky and Judith are both experts at organizing and engaging teachers in hands-on and project-based activities while they also clearly convey their knowledge and passion for multilingualism and storytelling. The day was packed with action and it passed very quickly, but it never felt rushed. Judith showed endless patience when the participants needed help with technical issues and Vicky gave good advice concerning the use of language in the films and other implementation of ideas that came up. It was a day spent learning, creating, and laughing. All groups were able to finish their short films. Watching and discussing the short films at the end of the day was sheer joy.

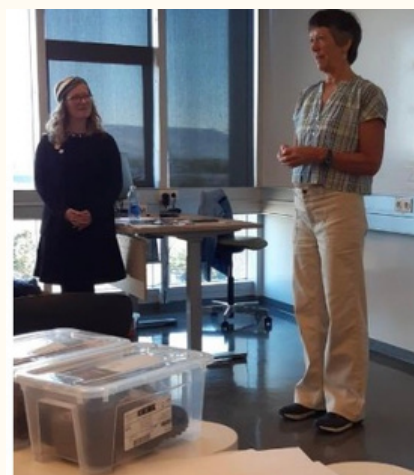
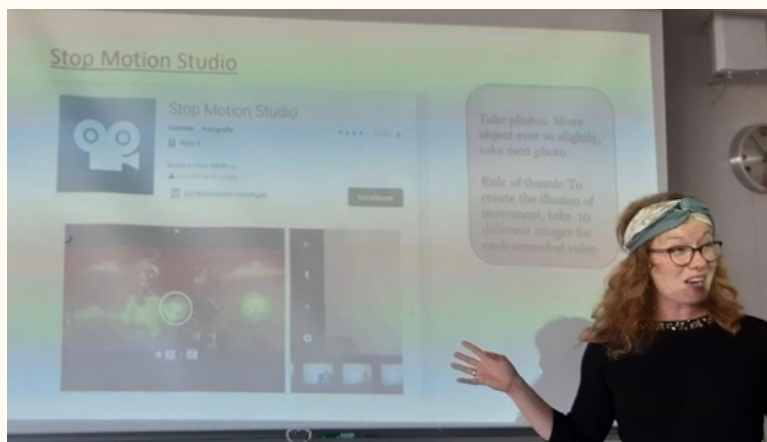
Greetings from Iceland



Many of the teachers showed interest in working further with digital multilingual storytelling in their teaching. Hopefully, this was only the beginning of more collaboration between Icelandic schools and the Critical Connection Project.

More information on the Critical Connections project can be found on their website: <https://goldsmithsmdst.com/>

Photos from the workshop:



Greetings from Iceland



Next steps

STÍL's plans for next year are to open a new website and continue to be active in supporting language teachers and their professional development in Iceland. We are already planning **the European Day of Languages on September 26**, and our monthly workshops. We will continue working with NBR and FIPLV. We have at least one member from the German Teachers' Organization in Iceland who will attend the FIPLV conference in New Zealand this summer, Veska Andrea Jónsdóttir, and we are looking forward to her report on events there.

Have a lovely summer, everyone 😊

Greetings from Norway

Prepared by **Anja Pietzuch**, TYSKFORUM/
Norwegian Association for Teachers of
German



“Making learners moral agents of change”: Innovative approaches to working on history in films in the German classroom

A collaboration between Norway, Denmark, and Estonia.

In the Nordic and Baltic countries teaching history through films in the German classroom is an important and popular topic, but for many teachers, it offers some challenges (Bauer & Lindemann 2023). How do you choose and access a film, that is both informative and engaging for the students? A recent study shows that films are often used for mere entertainment (Hjelseth 2015), and teachers can struggle with using the didactical potential of the chosen material. There is little awareness of memory culture in the German classroom, and a common challenge in our countries is a general decline in interest in democracy among learners (ICCS-report 2022). We do not want learners to be passive consumers of films when the topic is as important and relevant for their futures as history and democracy.

History is something we are never done with, and film in the broadest sense plays a pivotal role in the daily lives of young Europeans. How can innovative methods and learner participation contribute to making learners ‘moral agents’ of change through working with history in films in the German classroom?

At the outset, we discussed these questions among ourselves in Norway, with a practical interest in addressing attitudes and teaching practice and promoting deeper learning. Following intensive talks with our partners in Scandinavia and the Baltic States, we applied for funding from the Nordplus Horizontal program, and in May 2024 we were granted funding for the project period 2024–2026. Our project will try to find

Greetings from Norway



Prepared by **Anja Pietzuch**, TYSKFORUM/
Norwegian Association for Teachers of
German

answers to the above challenges in three workshops, through the elaboration and implementation of teaching resources in the German classroom, the dissemination of results at our annual conferences for teachers of German, and in relevant online publications.

The project is a collaboration between the Norwegian, Danish, and Estonian Associations for teachers of German (the last one a member of NBR/ FIPLV), three schools at lower and upper secondary levels, the teacher training department at Østfold University College (HIOF) in Halden, Norway, as well as the education unit of Rafto Foundation in Bergen, Norway, experts on human rights and democracy education, and the Baltic School of Film, Media and Arts (Tallinn University, Estonia). Our ultimate objective is the collaboration of motivated and informed teachers and learners of German across borders to achieve good language and topical skills while learning from the past, in the present, and for a socially sustainable future.

Online sources for learning languages

<https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/europeandayoflanguages>

https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/departments-and-executive-agencies/translation/european-day-languages-events-2023_en

<https://edl.ecml.at/>

<https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanDayofLanguages/>

<https://www.facebook.com/translationeuropa/>

<https://ihworld.com/news-blog/ih-blog/our-favourite-idioms-from-across-europe/>

<https://europeisnotdead.com/european-nationality-related-idioms/>

<https://www.omniglot.com/language/idioms/index.php>

“Teaching is more than imparting knowledge;
it is inspiring change. Learning is more than
absorbing facts; it is acquiring
understanding.” - William Arthur Ward

Language teachers' associations in the Nordic-Baltic region

FINLAND Suomen kielenopettajien liitto SUKOL RY (SUKOL) www.sukol.fi

ICELAND Association of Foreign Language Teachers in Iceland (STIL)
FIPLV <http://stil-is.weebly.com>

SWEDEN The Language Teachers' Organization of Sweden
<https://spraklararna.se/>

ESTONIA Eesti Võõrkeeleeõpetajate Liit (EVOL) (Estonian Association of
Foreign Language Teachers) www.voorkeelteliit.eu

LITHUANIA Language Teachers Association of Lithuania/Lietuvos kalbų
pedagogų asociacija (LTAL/LKPA) <http://www.lkpa.vdu.lt>

LATVIA The Latvian Association of Teachers of English (LATE)
<https://late.lv/>

NORWAY Norwegian Association for Teachers of German

The Newsletter #2 June 2024 is issued by:
Outi Vilkkuna, NBR President, Finland
NBR Secretary Asterija Rudienė, Lithuania

Photographs used are from the Associations' archives and free on-line resources.



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