

WELCOME TO OUR

The Nordic-Baltic Region Newsletter

HEY, HOW ARE YOU?

NBR President's Notes



Greetings to You all!

The new academic year has started again and certainly with quite many things to keep us all occupied. In Finland the contract for private educational institutions (primary schools and upper secondary schools) was conveniently concluded at the end of July, and the threat of a strike at the beginning of the school year receded. Teachers have been at barricades in different countries over the past year or so in demand for more salary, better working conditions and due acknowledgement for the importance of their work.

The terms of the economy are used to justify the content of collective national agreements as well as the savings applied to teaching at different levels – despite promises. It would be good for those making these decisions to understand that condensing, streamlining and digitalising do not produce the best pedagogy or learning environments.

In our establishments and classrooms, we try to map out the rules of the game for survival, just like in the everyday life of so many families and individuals in the present day situation. Humans have a tendency to pay attention only to the negative, to what threatens survival. This is natural. In order to enable survival, however, we must also find positive, supporting things in our everyday life and operating conditions. It requires a change of focus and effort, but if successful, it also gives resources to face challenges.

A wish of a positive breeze to your everyday life!

PS. The NRB Conference will be held in Helsinki on April 25–26th, 2025. Make sure to catch the **earlybird enrollment** [here](https://sukol.fi/liitto/nbr2025/call-for-papers/) <https://sukol.fi/liitto/nbr2025/call-for-papers/>

Outi Vilkkuna

puheenjohtaja / ordförande / Chair

NBR / Suomen kieltenopettajien liitto SUKOL ry

FIPLV-NBR & The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland SUKOL

Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Ene Peterson**,

Chair of the Estonian Foreign Language Teachers' Association (EVÕL)



EVÕL
Eesti Võõrkeeleõpetajate Liit

Shaping the Future: The Image and Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession

The representatives of the Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers (Ene Peterson, Ingrid Prees, Karola Velberg and Aleksandra Ljalikova) participated in the educational associations' communication seminar: "**How to Support the Value and Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession?**" The event was organized by the Education and Youth Board.

On August 19, a communication-focused development seminar was held for representatives of educational associations at Ülemiste campus in Tallinn. The seminar aimed to explore how educational associations can contribute to enhancing the value and attractiveness of the teaching profession.

The seminar consisted of two parts:

1. Theoretical Part: Communication expert, former University of Tartu lecturer, and author of several public relations books, Aune Past, expanded participants' knowledge on reputation, image, and the basics of communication.

Aune Past's presentation provided much food for thought regarding how subject associations can shape their reputation and increase their attractiveness. Some key insights from Aune Past's talk included:

- Today, more than ever, professions need verbal communication. It is important to share experiences, coordinate resources, and set goals.
- Organizational communication has evolved into the creation of a narrative.
- Image has become a tool for shaping thought. When the public image of a profession aligns with the desired image and this desired image meets the public's expectations, a favourable reputation emerges. A good reputation fosters cooperation, employee loyalty, more positive media coverage, better specialists, and a supportive public.

Greetings from Estonia



EVÕL
Eesti Võõrkeeleõpetajate Liit

Prepared by **Ene Peterson,**

Chair of the Estonian Foreign Language Teachers' Association (EVÕL)

- Creating a narrative is crucial! What matters is how the profession makes people feel.
- Consider societal trends and the values conveyed by your message.
- Your message is interpreted based on the image of your profession within the target group. **Be the creator of your own narrative!**

2. Practical Part: In smaller groups, led by the Education and Youth Board's communication partner Tiina Nõmm, participants discussed the opportunities and challenges that educational associations face in popularizing the teaching profession.

As a result of the group work, we learned how others perceive the image of our organization. A member of the EVÕL board was a member of the discussion group where the image of the Estonian Foreign Language Teachers' Association was sketched.

Karola Velberg (a member of EVÕL Management Board of EVÕL, Chair of The Estonian Association of Teachers of Finnish) wrote in a Facebook post titled "EVÕL in Action" (August 19): **"We are now back to work, bringing with us the idea that we are the creators of our own story, and we need more positive media coverage both at the beginning of the school year and throughout the year. Let's stay positive because teachers shape the future."**



Greetings from Estonia



Prepared by **Madis Olsper**,

membre du bureau de l'Association des Professeurs de Français en Estonie (APFEST)

BELC régional – Tallinn 2024

Le BELC Estonie 2024 : un carrefour d'excellence pour l'enseignement du français langue étrangère (FLE).

Pour la première fois, un BELC régional s'est tenu à Tallinn, en Estonie, marquant une étape importante pour les métiers du français dans le monde. Cet événement, organisé par l'Institut français d'Estonie, a réuni 72 professeurs de français venus des pays baltes, de Finlande et d'Ukraine, pour une semaine de formations intensives.

Les BELC, organisés traditionnellement en France, s'étendent depuis 2012 à l'international, répondant à une demande croissante de formations régionales contextualisées.

Doté d'un budget global d'environ 70 000.00 €, Cet événement a été organisé, soutenu et porté par les instituts Français des pays participants, FEI, notre association de professeurs l'APFEST, l'AUF, l'université de Tallinn, la fondation Charles Defforey, l'association francophile d'Haapsalu, les différents éditeurs de méthodes FLE.

Ouverture et ouvertures

Emmanuel Mignot, ambassadeur de France en Estonie, a souligné dans son mot de bienvenue l'importance de cet événement dans le contexte géopolitique actuel. Il évoque la nécessité de renforcer les liens régionaux et internationaux par le biais de la langue française, outil de diversité culturelle et d'ouverture sur le monde.

Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Madis Olsper**,

membre du bureau de l'Association des Professeurs de Français en Estonie (APFEST)



Hervé Ferrage, directeur général par intérim de France Éducation International, rappelle l'importance des universités BELC, rendez-vous incontournable depuis plus de 50 ans pour la formation continue des professionnels du français langue étrangère (FLE).

Un programme riche et varié

Le BELC Estonie 2024 a proposé un programme intensif de trente heures de formation, axé sur des thématiques telles que l'innovation technologique, l'enseignement du français aux jeunes publics, et la pratique de l'oral en classe de FLE. Les participants ont bénéficié d'ateliers interactifs, de partages d'expérience et de moments forts pour échanger sur les défis contemporains de l'enseignement du français.

Une vision d'avenir

En s'adaptant aux évolutions et aux besoins spécifiques des régions, ces formations contribuent à une meilleure intégration et à une coopération éducative accrue. Les participants repartent mieux équipés pour relever les défis pédagogiques de demain, animés par un esprit de solidarité et de coopération internationale.

Espérons que d'autres initiatives comme celle-ci seront encore organisées à l'avenir !

La galerie photo est disponible sur le site de l'APFEST :

<https://apfest.ee/belc-regional-tallinn-2024/>

Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Riina Kuuskor**,
EATE, Tallinn French School



Erasmus+ job-shadowing experience

This year, **Estonian Association of Teachers of English** (EATE) applied for Erasmus+ funding to provide its members with possibilities for continuous professional development abroad. Within the next two years, 14 English teachers from different parts and schools in Estonia will have a chance to participate in teacher training courses or job shadowing at European schools. Why is it important for Estonian teachers to learn from their colleagues abroad? The following article by Riina Kuuskor, an English teacher at Tallinn French school, will hopefully shed light on that question.

In October 2023 I had the pleasure to participate in the Erasmus + programme with 3 colleagues from my school. The main focus was job shadowing in Austrian schools, but these 5 eventful days also offered us the chance to visit Switzerland and Lichtenstein, observe the lessons and exchange experience with the local teachers. All these schools have a common feature - to a bigger or smaller extent they use Montessori principles. The lessons we observed were all at middle school level or younger, that is why I use the word "children" rather than "students" below.

I had, in fact, very little knowledge about Montessori's teaching, so it was interesting to find out if it really means children only playing games and doing their preferred things (as many seem to believe).

In reality, we saw children (aged 8 to 11) extremely capable of taking responsibility, which manifested itself in the following:

- Children themselves **set their goals** for the week every Monday (what exactly they want to study and in what order) and, having finished, present their workbooks to the teacher.
- Children note down in the diary **what they learned** each day.

Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Riina Kuuskor**,
EATE, Tallinn French School



- Children themselves make sure their **tablets** (provided by the school for the school year) **are charged** and in the designated place, not just thrown randomly on the shelf.
- Children can **choose** if they want to do the task on a worksheet or use the tablet.
- The teacher does not stand by and offer help when **s/he thinks** it's necessary, it's the child who requests the teacher's attention by clipping a clothes-peg to the teacher's clothes. And it worked indeed! I didn't see a child who was just sitting and daydreaming as s/he didn't know how to do the assignment. At the same time, nobody was yelling to attract the teacher's attention sooner - everybody who needed help, **waited patiently**.

The truth is that material resources are excellent in Austria, Switzerland and Lichtenstein. in addition to this, there are 2 teachers for about 20 children and competent assisting staff available, but most of the above-mentioned can be done with more modest resources as well.

Besides developing student responsibility from an early age, my main interest was **mental and physical well-being** and what is done in other schools and countries to promote that. Most teachers in Estonia agree that our students are obsessed by performance-related stress and the fear of making mistakes, whereas their physical health is also quite poor. What has gone wrong?

The children probably have the same worries and wishes in Estonia and anywhere else, but here are some things I noted down for myself (again, more applicable at middle school level rather than secondary):

- To promote physical well-being, **outdoor breaks** are mandatory.

Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Riina Kuuskor**,
EATE, Tallinn French School



- **Adjustable furniture details** to suit learners of different height, body shape and working habits, such as partitions to separate desks if some children need more privacy.
- The **setting of desks** may be different from the ordinary, offering the possibility to establish eye contact and better communication; in junior classes children may prefer to work on the floor, for example.
- **Phones** are allowed during the long break, but not in the classroom (similarly to many other European countries).
- Sometimes **oral feedback** is worth more than testing.

There were definitely many more ideas to think about and what's even more important - get beyond thinking and start putting at least some of them into practice before routine takes over.

Last, but not least - we travelled through 3 different countries, enjoyed the mountain views and the hospitality of our hosts. Getting to know my colleagues better was also an undeniable asset. Thank you, Merike, for organizing the trip. Thank you, Peeter and Jaak, for your company.



Greetings from Estonia

**EVÕL**
Eesti Võõrkeeleõpetajate Liit

Prepared by **Erika Puusemp**,

Chair of the Committee of the Estonian Association of Teachers of English,
teacher of English and British Literature at Tartu Miina Härma Gymnasium

EATE Summer Seminar

The Estonian Association of Teachers of English (EATE) traditionally have the summer seminar, their most important event of the year, in Pärnu, the summer capital of Estonia, in the last but one week of August, with the aim of providing a bridge from summer holidays to serious work at educational institutions.



This year the summer seminar “Exploring the Wealth of Language Learning” took place at Pärnu Koidula Gymnasium on 22–23 August. About 180 teachers gathered to listen to speakers from both Estonia and abroad, and participate in workshops run by fellow teachers, university lecturers, and speakers representing various publishing houses. As a special guest, US Ambassador to Estonia George P.

Kent delivered an inspiring speech about the importance of language learning.

Several bookstores specializing in selling teaching materials were represented, offering a wealth of textbooks and other educational materials. As always, all those present got a print copy of the EATE journal OPEN!, which can also be read online at <https://eate.ee/open-journal/>

Greetings from Estonia



EVÕL
Eesti Võõrkeeleõpetajate Liit

Prepared by **Erika Puusemp**,

Chair of the Committee of the Estonian Association of Teachers of English,
teacher of English and British Literature at Tartu Miina Härma Gymnasium

The organising committee has already started planning the next summer seminar, which will take place on 22–23 August 2025, and is, as always, looking for volunteers to deliver workshops and/or contribute an article to the EATE journal.

Read more about EATE summer seminar (program, abstracts, photos):
<https://eate.ee/>

Presenters` resources: <https://eate.ee/presenters-resources-eate-summer-seminar-exploring-the-wealth-of-language-learning/>

Be the creator of your own narrative!

Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Kati Bakradze-Pank**,

Vice-Chair of the Estonian Foreign Language Teachers' Association



EVÖL
Eesti Võõrkeeleõpetajate Liit



OPINION FESTIVAL 2024

Trying harder? #foreignlanguages

The Estonian Foreign Language Teachers' Association (EVÖL) participated for the first time with its own topic at the Opinion Festival in Paide, a widely recognized societal event, over the weekend on 10 August.

Kati Bakradze-Pank led the **"Is It Worth It? #ForeignLanguages" panel** in the Education area, where Karola Velberg also participated from our association. In addition to Karola, experts invited to discuss foreign language learning, motivation, and language choices included Marika Peekmann (Head Expert on Foreign Languages and International Education at the Ministry of Education and Research), Marta Loo (a student at Tallinn Joint Gymnasium), Karmen Kisel (a foreign language teacher and head of studies at Mustamäe State Gymnasium), and Ilona Säälük (a Finnish language teacher at PERG and MURG), who shared her experiences and engaged with the audience.

We would like to thank the active audience, who contributed their thoughts alongside us, and together with the experts, we compiled a list of wishes for the future of foreign languages at the end of the discussion:

- Participate in Erasmus+ programs, which boost motivation!
- Travel supports language acquisition and practice.
- We need more languages to study.
- Offering choices from the students' perspective is highly motivating and gives them responsibility.

Greetings from Estonia



EVÕL
Eesti Võõrkeeleõpetajate Liit

Prepared by **Kati Bakradze-Pank**,

Vice-Chair of the Estonian Foreign Language Teachers' Association

- We need programs that attract young teachers to areas outside major cities.
- Language learning should be done in groups, with group formation based on the learners' background and level in that language.
- Smaller language groups!
- More adult self-learners of foreign languages should be involved in teacher programs.
- Bachelor-level studies at universities need to be reviewed regarding what is offered for prospective language teachers.
- We need more language practice.
- Schools with the teachers who are passionate about their work and meet language requirements are lucky.
- We must deepen the value of learning foreign languages in society.
- Developing learning skills is also important.

The discussion leader, Kati Bakradze-Pank, concluded by emphasizing the importance of meaning, where **language learning is not just about the language itself but also the culture that accompanies it**. This makes teaching and learning more meaningful for both the teacher and the student.



Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Evelin Müüripeal**,
a member of the Estonian Foreign Language Teachers'
Association, Master Teacher



Multilingualism Matters:

Key Takeaways from EVÕL's Opinion Festival Panel

The Foreign Language Teachers' Association panel, "**Is It Worth It? #ForeignLanguages**" at the Opinion Festival, was an engaging and inspiring topic as it touched on both education and broader intercultural communication. The Opinion Festival was the perfect place to discuss and share different ideas on how to teach and learn foreign languages more effectively. The panel discussed the cultural context of language learning and how knowing the cultural background contributes to language acquisition.

One question raised was whether English is being given too much attention, and how we can ensure that every Estonian student can realistically achieve a B2 level in their second foreign language (A foreign language) by the time they graduate.

It was also noted that the abundance of language choices and the overly flexible options have gone too far, as it may happen that there are no qualified teachers or foreign instructors who meet Estonia's language requirements (B2) for some exotic languages (such as Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese). This puts school leadership and heads of studies in a difficult situation.

Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Evelin Müüripeal**,

a member of the Estonian Foreign Language Teachers' Association, Master Teacher



The real solution lies in having the Ministry of Education and Research (HTM) define the languages that can be studied as an A language, accompanied by a clear concept that aligns with national needs. This way, the foreign language teachers can be trained at universities, ensuring coverage in schools across Estonia, not just in major cities and elite schools like those in Tallinn, Tartu, and Pärnu. This would eliminate many practical challenges and confusion. Given the number of lessons and course hours, achieving a B1.1. or B1.2 level in a second foreign language by the end of high school might be possible. There was a sentiment that the neighboring languages should be prioritized, as we still have teachers for them, and in Estonia's case, the importance of German should not be overlooked.

The value of multilingualism is undeniable, but achieving quality and results must be clear and realistic.

At the Opinion Festival, it was possible to listen to a variety of topics. The preparation by the EVÕL panel leader, Kati Bakradze-Pank, was very professional, as the entire audience was actively involved. It is worth mentioning that the "voices from the audience" were given the opportunity to express their opinions, something that could not be said for all the announced topics, where panelists tended to dominate.

Thank you for bringing this topic to a wider audience! Foreign languages and their teaching and learning certainly impact every citizen and person in our country in some way.

Additional Information:

What is the Opinion Festival:

<https://arvamusfestival.ee/en/what-is-arvamusfestival/>

Ei saa sotti, kas on motti? **#võõrkeeled** -Photos (Flickr) – Kirke Miller

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/arvamusfestival/53914203515/in/album-72177720319416020/>

Greetings from Finland

Prepared by **Outi Vilkuna**

chairman of the Finnish language teachers'
association SUKOL ry



The new board of the Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland SUKOL began its' work from July 1st 2024 onwards and the first board meeting was held in mid August due to holiday season.

The popular training day for language teachers in Pirkanmaa district was held on October 5th 2024 and has become a tradition. It was now offered to all members of SUKOL. The opening lecture was given by Frida Crofts on the topic "Spice up your language lessons and inspire your students beyond the book!". In addition, many interesting workshops on current topics were held during the day.

On October 7th 2024 a virtual workshop was held on 3D video game projects, the central principles of the approaches and the didactic and technical prerequisites for their practical implementation in language teaching classes. The trainers were researcher, language teacher Laura Pihkala-Posti, English lecturer and textbook author Annukka Suonio and Paavo Arvola, special researcher of information research and information retrieval. 3D video game projects can provide new motivation for high school language teaching remotely.

On October 29th 2024 Satu Rämö, a popular Finnish detective writer who lives in Iceland , talks about her language and cultural experiences.

On November 1st 2024 a training afternoon for adult education language teachers at Tampere.

On November 14th 2024 a webinar on Differentiating language teaching in high school. The basis of differentiation and practical examples from everyday life in high school are presented. The theory section is taught by a

Greetings from Finland

Prepared by **Outi Vilkuna**

chairman of the Finnish language teachers'
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special education teacher and English teacher Anssi Roiha. Roiha discusses the theoretical background of differentiation, the benefits of differentiation, the broad concept of differentiation and the student experience behind differentiation. The practical section is held by language teacher Petra Lonka from Lahti high school Gaudia. She has implemented a distinctive model in her own teaching, where the teaching meets the learner at his own level. She shares her experiences with the teaching model and tells about the differentiating nature and structure of the model. The training also includes two practical case examples of differentiation.

SUKOL also organises a job search training day on January 10th 2025. The free member training is aimed at teachers looking for a job as well as students and new language teachers who are preparing to apply for their first job. The trainers are experienced principals who recruit several teachers every year. The training includes exercises and a preliminary assignment, on which the participants receive feedback. Remote attendance is also possible.

SUKOL is also preparing to changes in the organisation of the comprehensive school and following closely the work of the comprehensive primary school Future Work - development project launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The goal of the project is to assess what kind of capabilities education should offer in the changing society of the future. Future work is part of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's government program.

SUKOL's annual meeting will be held on November 9th 2024 gathering representatives of all SUKOL member associations to Helsinki. Amongst other issues also a new strategy will be discussed and a strategy team will begin its' work after the meeting. Other important issues are the municipal elections in April 2025 where SUKOL aims at getting language teacher representatives elected and the issues related to foreign language learning possibilities, also discussed on a larger forum.

Greetings from Lithuania



Lietuvos kalbų pedagogų
asociacija - LKPA

Prepared by **Almantė Meškauskienė**
President of Language Teachers' Association of
Lithuania



European Day of Languages at VMU – focus on languages and cultures

The European Day of Languages was traditionally celebrated at the Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL) on **26th September**. The Director of the IFL, dr. Teresė Ringailienė, welcomed the very large number of pupils and students (more than 200 participants) and expressed her satisfaction that we can implement the artes liberales here and now: no matter which field of study we choose, we can learn languages, learn about different cultures, thus developing soft skills and contributing to a broad education, and fostering humanistic values. As artificial intelligence is changing our daily lives and learning habits, IFL invited students and pupils to a lecture "**From ABC to AI: Let's improve languages with technology**" by IFL lecturer Vaida Misevičiūtė on how to learn languages using different AI tools.

Greetings from Lithuania



Lietuvos kalbų pedagogų
asociacija - LKPA

Prepared by **Almantė Meškauskienė**
President of Language Teachers' Association of
Lithuania

Although technology makes learning easier and faster, nothing can replace the lively interaction and conversation with a friend. So VMU students took up the challenge and joined the "Language Exchange" activity, where pairs of students using different foreign languages communicated on the proposed topics - about their countries, languages and cultures. Meanwhile, schoolchildren from VMU Rasa, VMU Ugnė Karvelis, Saule, Raudondvaris, S. Darius and S. Girenas Gymnasiums, KTU and Eruditas Lyceum joined the activity "Multilingual and multicultural meetings". International students from the USA, the UK, Japan, Taiwan, Korea and Brazil invited pupils to learn about their cultures and languages. During the activities, participants not only listened to interesting presentations, but also actively participated in the activities themselves - dancing, singing, folding origami.

The European Day of Languages celebration not only served as a reminder of the importance of languages and a good mood-builder, but also provided a great opportunity for students and pupils to socialise in an informal setting and, for some, to make new friends.



Greetings from Sweden



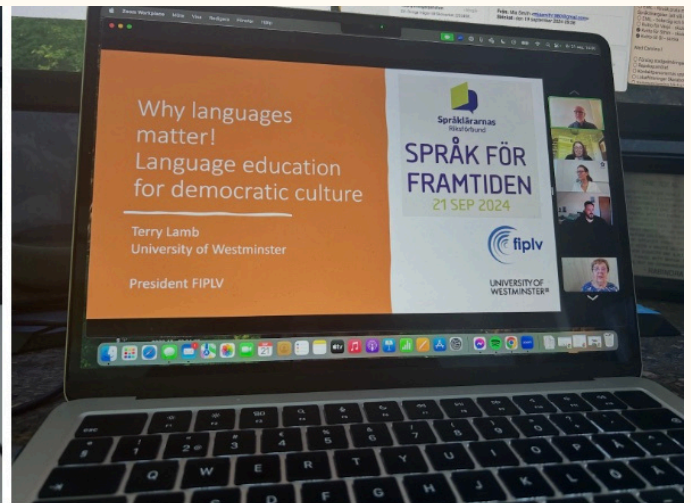
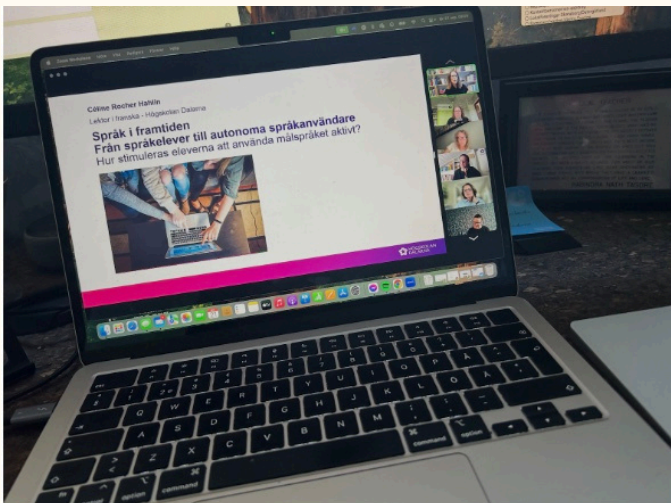
Prepared by **Mia Smith**

The Language Teachers' Association of Sweden

President of the Language Teachers' Association of Sweden

Languages for the Future - Annual Conference

The school year was initiated by our annual conference. Though the conference is usually an on-site event, we this year opted for an online conference, which opened up for international presenters as well. The theme of **Languages for the Future** included a large range of topics such as AI, vocabulary training, heritage languages and motivation for language learning, presented in the languages Swedish, English, German, French and Spanish. The full programme as well as presentations from some of the lectures can be found on our website.



The conference was presented in collaboration with the University of Dalarna and the lecturers not only represented four different Swedish universities, but were also in cooperation with UHR, Goethe-Institut, Institut Français and Deutsche Auslandsgesellschaft. We were also proud to present as our final **keynote speaker Terry Lamb, president of FIPLV.**

More than 70 teachers from Sweden and other countries joined us despite the wonderful weather this day presented us with, and we are grateful for being able to present such qualitative lectures to our members.



Greetings from Sweden



Prepared by **Mia Smith**

President of the Language Teachers' Association of Sweden

The Language Teachers' Association of Sweden

European Day of Languages – Panel

The European Day of Languages is not only a day to celebrate in our classrooms, but also a day to raise awareness of the situation for language teachers and language learners in our schools and in society. This year, the day coincided with the Gothenburg Book Fair, a major event where our president, Mia Smith, was given the chance to discuss the importance of language education with a panel of experts. Robin Smith represented the teachers' union Sveriges Lärare, Patrik Hadenius is a known linguist with a background in publishing, Zahraa Jwad is a teacher of Arabic as a heritage language and Johan Sandberg McGuinne is a teacher of Sámi as a heritage language as the representative for minority languages for our association.

TORSDAG 14.00–14.45 **SAL J2**

TAR VI SPRÅKETS BETYDELSE PÅ ALLVAR?

I Sverige talas uppemot 150 språk. Är språken i sig både ett medel och ett mål? Och vilken plats ska de ta i den fortsatta samhällsutvecklingen? Hur ser förutsättningarna ut för språkundervisningen och för språklärarna i skolan? Och tar vi verkligen betydelsen av språklärare på allvar? Ett panelsamtal med den ny tillsatta ordföranden i Sveriges Lärare samt **JOHAN SANDBERG MCGUINNE**, som är lärare i samiska, **ZAHRAA JWAD**, lärare i arabiska och **PATRIK HADENIUS**, språkvetare och initiativtagare till ett nytt språkmuseum. Samtalet leds av **MIA SMITH**, ordförande i Språklärarnas riksförbund.

ARR: SVERIGES LÄRARE



Greetings from Sweden

Prepared by **Mia Smith**

President of the Language Teachers' Association of Sweden



The Language Teachers' Association of Sweden

European Day of Languages – Articles

We also presented our view on the situation for language education in a Swedish setting in an article published online in the teacher union's magazine. [The original article can be read here](#), but an English translation can be found on the next page of this news letter.

The next day our representative of English, Carolina Clarin, also commented on the situation regarding the English language in the upcoming revision of the Swedish upper secondary school, risking fewer students opting for the higher level courses. [The full article can be read here](#).



Invest in Languages – For the Sake of the Future

[English translation of this article.](#)



On September 26, Europe celebrates the European Day of Languages with events, competitions, and exhibitions. In Swedish classrooms, this day is highlighted to emphasize the importance of language skills in a globalized world. However, one may wonder how multilingual Swedish society is in practice.

The goal of the European Parliament is that **"by 2025, all young people in the EU should have good knowledge of two languages besides their native language by the time they graduate from high school."** Sweden will not meet this goal. Good knowledge of a language requires several years of study, both in primary and secondary school.

Greetings from Sweden



Prepared by **Mia Smith**

The Language Teachers' Association of Sweden

President of the Language Teachers' Association of Sweden



Vi Lärare | 083 07 47 0000
LÄRARE

Titelströmen | Ämnesströmen | Grundskolläraren | Specialpedagogik | Fritidspedagogik | Förskolan | Fekhögreolen

"Satsa på språken – för framtidens skull"

"Att begränsa skolan så att var fjärde elev inte kan läsa språk är att ge upp på de europeiska målen och beröva många av våra unga möjligheten till den rikedom som fördupad flerspråkighet för med sig" skriver Mia Smith.

VI LÄRARE DEBATT Om Sverige ska ha en chans att leva upp till Europaparlamentets mål om goda språkkunskaper för alla som gått gymnasiet krävs både mer utrymme för och bredare krav på att läsa språken i både grund- och gymnasieskolan. Det skriver Mia Smith, ordförande Språklärarnas riksförbund.

In the fall of 2025, Gy25, a comprehensive reform of the curricula in upper secondary schools, will be launched, transitioning from course-based grading to subject-based grading. This offers an opportunity to adjust and improve many things, but despite this, languages are being neglected. In Gy25, modern languages will only be included in four of the national programs: business studies, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences programs.

While these are indeed some of the largest programs – 52% of students in the 2023 graduating classes were enrolled in one of these – schools will have the option to offer modern languages in five additional programs, which include another 15% of the students.

If this continues, only 77% of students will study a modern language in high school. And here, another issue arises. Only 70% of students who finished the ninth grade in 2023 had studied a modern language. Some students have a valid reason to improve their Swedish or English and thus opt out of a third language, but those who have worked in secondary school know that it's often not due to difficulties with language: it's simply easier to drop languages than other subjects since it's the only non-compulsory subject. Other students choose a new language in upper secondary school, and although multilingualism is wonderful, it comes at the cost of not developing the same level of proficiency as if they had continued studying the language they had already begun. So, we have a reform that prevents us from providing our youth with sufficient opportunities for language studies, which, in turn, prevents us as a nation from achieving the European Parliament's goals.

Greetings from Sweden



The Language Teachers' Association of Sweden

Prepared by **Mia Smith**

President of the Language Teachers' Association of Sweden

The Swedish citizens who currently meet the European Parliament's target are those who speak a language other than Swedish at home. They are an asset to our country, and Sweden is internationally recognized as a leader in native language teaching. However, the conditions and opportunities for such teaching are often not as exemplary in practice as they are on paper. There's no doubt that strong proficiency in one's native language benefits the development of all languages and knowledge acquisition in general. It is important to invest in native language education. Unfortunately, in Sweden today, not all native language teachers can become qualified and licensed, as it is not possible to study all the languages spoken in the country at a university level. Therefore, international cooperation is needed to strengthen this crucial profession.

So, why has the EU chosen to highlight language skills as one of its long-term goals? In Sweden, many seem to believe that English is enough. However, anyone who has worked internationally knows that additional language skills benefit both professional and social relationships. Language skills and democracy are closely linked, just as language and culture are.

In an era of digital translation services and AI, some still ask why time should be spent learning languages. Language is culture, and learning a new language offers new perspectives on the world. Communicating with someone in their native language opens up emotional connections that technology can never replace. Limiting education so that one in four students cannot study a language is to give up on the European goals and deprive many young Swedes of the opportunity to experience the richness that deeper multilingualism brings.

To support Sweden in achieving the European Parliament's goal, we propose the following:

- Modern languages should be mandatory in primary school.

Greetings from Sweden

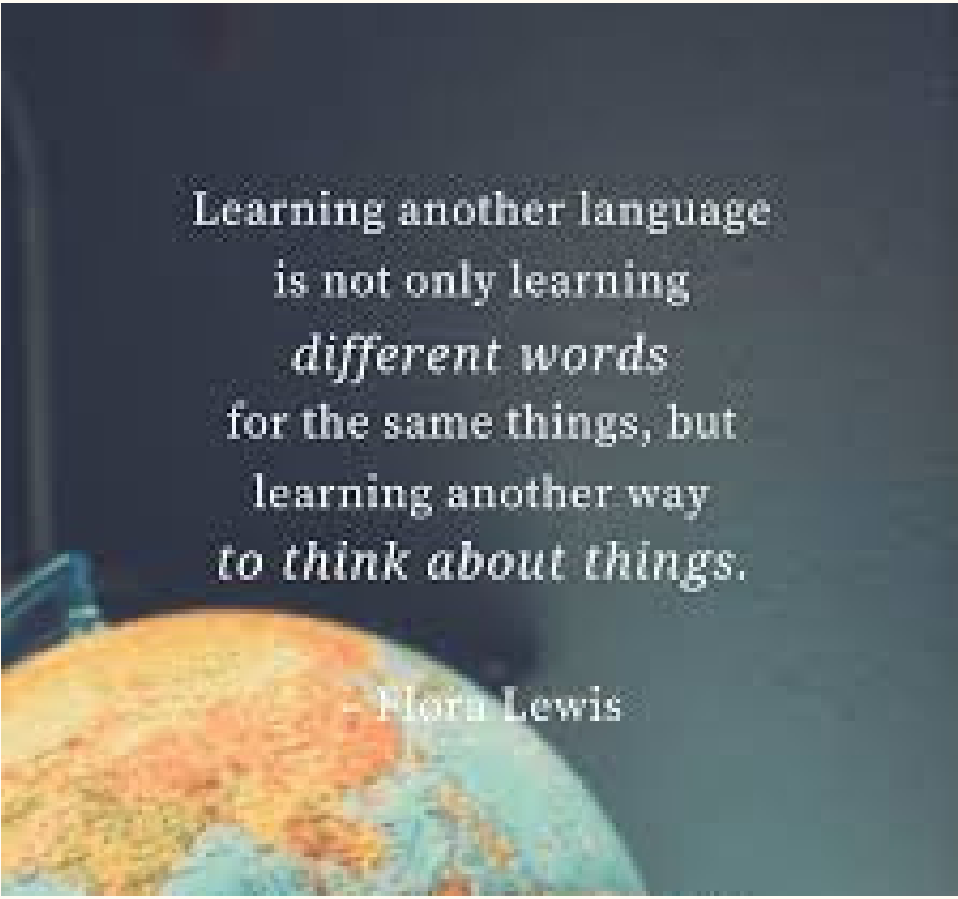


The Language Teachers' Association of Sweden

Prepared by **Mia Smith**

President of the Language Teachers' Association of Sweden

- All university preparatory upper secondary school programs should include modern languages.
- Upper secondary school programs with an international focus, such as hotel and tourism, should include modern languages.
- Upper secondary schools should be required to ensure that students have the opportunity to study modern languages for three years.
- Heritage language teachers should have access to university-level education.
- Language teachers should be guaranteed the opportunity for subject-specific training in countries where the target language is spoken.

A quote by Flora Lewis is displayed in white serif font against a dark blue background. The background features a blurred image of a globe showing the Americas. The quote reads: "Learning another language is not only learning different words for the same things, but learning another way to think about things."

Learning another language
is not only learning
different words
for the same things, but
learning another way
to think about things.

- Flora Lewis

Greetings from Latvia

Prepared by **Rita Skara-Mincāne, Ina Andiņa and Ilona Ustinova**
Board members of LATE

Growing Together: Insights from LATE 32nd Annual Conference 2024 'Teaching and Learning in the Digital Era'



The annual conference **"Teaching and Learning in the Digital Era"** organised by the Latvian Association of Teachers of English (LATE) was held in Riga on the 22-23rd August 2024. The conference aimed to explore the latest trends, challenges and innovations in the field of English language teaching. It was attended by around 250 teachers seeking to enhance their professional skills and exchange ideas.



The conference was opened by **Paul Brummell CMG**, British Ambassador to Latvia, **Cale Wagner**, the Cultural Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy in Latvia, **Guna Pudule**, the headmaster of Riga Teika Secondary School, **Linda Daniela**, the Dean of the Faculty of Education Sciences and Psychology, University of Latvia and **Inga Linde**, the president of LATE, who provided a quick insight into the latest news of LATE.

Greetings from Latvia

Prepared by **Rita Skara-Mincāne, Ina Andiņa and Ilona Ustinova**
Board members of LATE



Ben Knight from *Oxford University Press* talked about how AI impacts students' thinking and what skills should be focused on to help learners to become better critical thinkers.



Greetings from Latvia

Prepared by **Rita Skara-Mincāne, Ina Andiņa and Ilona Ustinova**
Board members of LATE



Natalia Liashko from *Express Publishing* stressed the necessity of implementing innovative approaches to teaching modern languages. She presented practical ways to STEAM up CLIL Lessons. The difference between the two terms was clarified to encourage teachers to make learning more relevant and meaningful. In her second presentation she clarified the difference between assessment and grading, and looked at the art of teaching writing and how to develop effective writing skills.

Teachers had an opportunity to get to know the latest news from publishers – *Oxford University Press, Express Publishing, Pearson, National Geographic Learning* and news about IELTS and Cambridge English exams.

Catherine Hollings from *National Geographic Learning* explained how digital platforms can be used for continuous, formative assessment thus allowing educators to tailor their teaching and respond more effectively to their students' needs.

Greetings from Latvia

Prepared by **Rita Skara-Mincāne, Ina Andiņa and Ilona Ustinova**
Board members of LATE

LATE continues to cooperate with the University of Latvia and encourages young teachers to become part of the EFL community. Five newly qualified teachers presented their diploma research on modern and topical themes. **Marija Griņeviča** shared the results of her research into using the MIRO online environment as a repository of learning resources to support students when preparing for their state exam in English. **Veronika Gedola** described the results of a study into how Arthur Conan Doyle's detective novel "A Study in Scarlet" can be used to help extend the vocabulary of advanced secondary school students. She offered a set of self-designed practical activities to help teachers plan their work. **Baiba Ķevere** highlighted the value of interactive flashcards to teach vocabulary in Grade 5 enhancing students' English language skills and helping them become confident language users. Sindija Līkuma had explored how the Microsoft Teams' 'Reading Progress' speech recognition tool can enhance students' English pronunciation through personalised, consistent practice and immediate feedback. **Zane Fabrīcius** showed how dictation activities can be applied to improve Grade 5 students' listening skills in English.

LATE is grateful for the U.S. Embassy in Latvia's continued support to the organisation and EFL teachers. **Baiba Kačanova** shared her experience of participating in a 64-hour long Arizona State University course 'Creating and Implementing Online Courses' while **Ingūna Melne** from Riga State Gymnasium No1 presented opportunities of participating in programs offered by the US Embassy focusing on media and digital literacy in the English language classroom.

Steven Schuit from the U.S. State Department and Daugavpils University delved into multifaceted technology use in the EFL classroom. His presentation aimed to encourage teachers to redouble their efforts to reflect on the role and use of technology in their classrooms. He engaged attendees interactively by the demonstration of high participation techniques that complement technology.

Greetings from Latvia

Prepared by **Rita Skara-Mincāne, Ina Andiņa and Ilona Ustinova**
Board members of LATE

Tatjana Kunda from *the National Centre for Education (VISC)* analysed the state school EFL exam results, discussed what main challenges students had faced, and offered suggestions on what to focus on to improve students' knowledge and skills and help them prepare for the exam.

Robert Buckmaster from *The English Ideas Project* offered a very thorough look at what AI really is and considered both the opportunities it offers and the threats it poses to us and our profession.

Joseph Jack Horgan from Jelgava Spidola State Gymnasium highlighted the value of authentic literary works to teach advanced level students. He introduced participants to a collection of free, downloadable and printable material based on James Joyce's 'Dubliners' which can be used to prepare students for the "highest level" exam.



Greetings from Latvia

Prepared by **Rita Skara-Mincāne, Ina Andiņa and Ilona Ustinova**
Board members of LATE

Vineta Tiltiņa from Mazsalaca Secondary School presented materials that provide ideas and ready-made lesson plans for using literature in a C1 Advanced Level English Course. The lessons are based on works by William Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Bertolt Brecht, Bob Dylan and can be adapted to introduce and analyse novels, plays, poems, legends by other authors.

Jennifer Uhler, the Regional English Language Officer, U.S. Embassy in Latvia shared teachers' experiences promoting environmental themes in the English language classroom. She offered activities, free resources, and professional development opportunities to learn how the climate crisis, critical thinking, and media literacy can be leveraged for motivating and meaningful lessons.



Attendees of the conference had an opportunity to participate in one of the workshops offered by several teacher practitioners. **Joseph Jack Horgan** showed teachers how to more effectively integrate the material based on the 15 stories of James Joyce's collection "Dubliners" in an advanced English course.

Greetings from Latvia

Prepared by **Rita Skara-Mincāne, Ina Andiņa and Ilona Ustinova**
Board members of LATE

Rita Skara-Mincane from *Valmiera State Gymnasium* and **Inta Augustane** from *Riga State Gymnasium No 3* offered an interactive workshop to share their experience of using hands-on strategies based on the Lexical Approach to teach English collocations. **Diana Bolgare** from *Freelance "Diana's Language Coaching"* introduced the "Poetry in My Heart" contest and offered teachers insights on how to support student participation in the contest. **Ivars Dominiks Zeps** from *Riga State Gymnasium No 1* presented gamification frameworks in the ESL classroom. Participants had an opportunity to learn about the science behind gamification, work organisation approaches and helpful tools for enhancing English lessons. **Tamrika Khvtisiashvili** from *the U.S. State Department* challenged teachers' views on grading. She offered insights into modifying evaluation by offering pathways to ungrading. The workshop gave a brief overview of the practice and suggested its benefits. **Yuliia Horbachova** from *Valmiera Pargauja Primary School* focused on the pivotal role of educators in guiding students towards discovering and embracing purpose in their lives. The workshop explored how teachers can create environments that inspire self-reflection, goal-setting and values exploration. **Robert Buckmaster** dealt with a challenging area for learners – English Conditionals. The current conditional framework was evaluated and ways the teaching of conditionals could be improved were discussed. **Tatiana Ginzburg** from *the University of Latvia* introduced a Flipped and Blended (FAB) format for teaching adults. Then the participants were offered the opportunity to try out ready-made publishers' materials for planning FAB classes.

Michael Earley from *International House Riga* presented a number of practical activities using mobile phones in the classroom. They were aimed to support language production while also encouraging students to reflect on their work and move further towards autonomy.

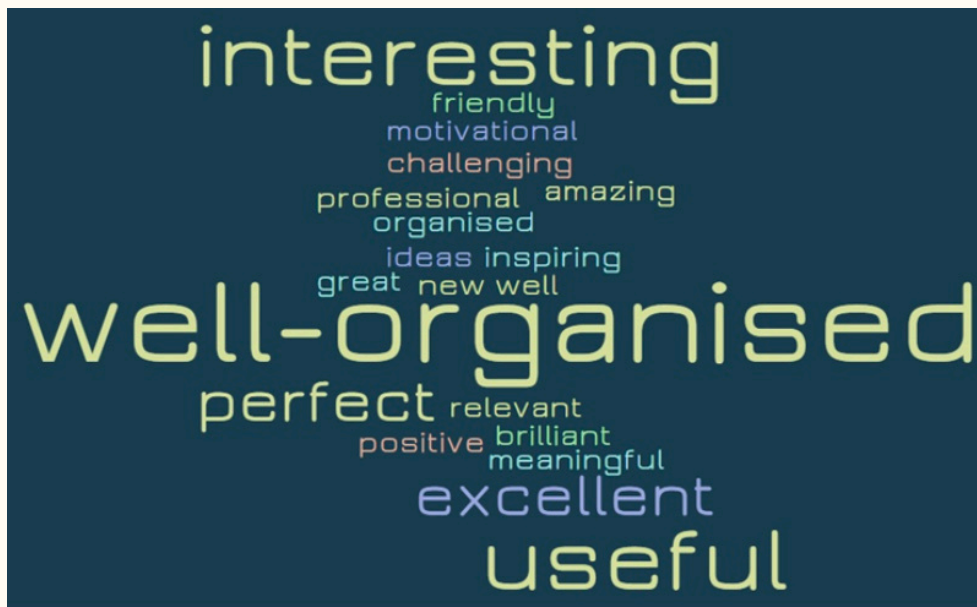
Greetings from Latvia

Prepared by **Rita Skara-Mincāne, Ina Andiņa and Ilona Ustinova**

Board members of LATE

We would like to express our gratitude to Riga Teika Secondary School for hosting the LATE conference, as well as to Pearson, Oxford University Press, Express Publishing and National Geographic Learning, J.Rozes Bookstore and Krisostomus Bookstore for the excellent cooperation and support of LATE events.

Participants' evaluation of the conference:



The conference not only highlighted the landscape of English language teaching in Latvia, but also aimed to empower teachers with the knowledge, ideas, skills, and networks needed to start the new school year confidently. As Steve Jobs stated **'Learn continually. There is always "one more thing" to learn.'** LATE is an organisation that unites the best EFL professionals in Latvia and strives to embody the commitment to continuous professional development. It is wonderful to see the community growing together and sharing dedication to lifelong learning and excellence in teaching.

Greetings from Latvia

Prepared by **Rita Skara-Mincāne, Ina Andiņa and Ilona Ustinova**
Board members of LATE



We are currently in the development phase of the project **"21st Century Skills and Media Literacy"**, which will be implemented with the support of the British Council in Latvia from October 2024 to March 2025. The aim of the project is to develop teachers' competence in using 21st Century skills in their classrooms and raise the awareness of media literacy, so that it could be further developed in their students all around Latvia.

*"Learn continually.
There is always "one more thing" to learn."*

Steve Jobs

Online sources for learning languages

NBR, Nordic Baltic Region of FIPLV

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/677820838960243>

<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/>

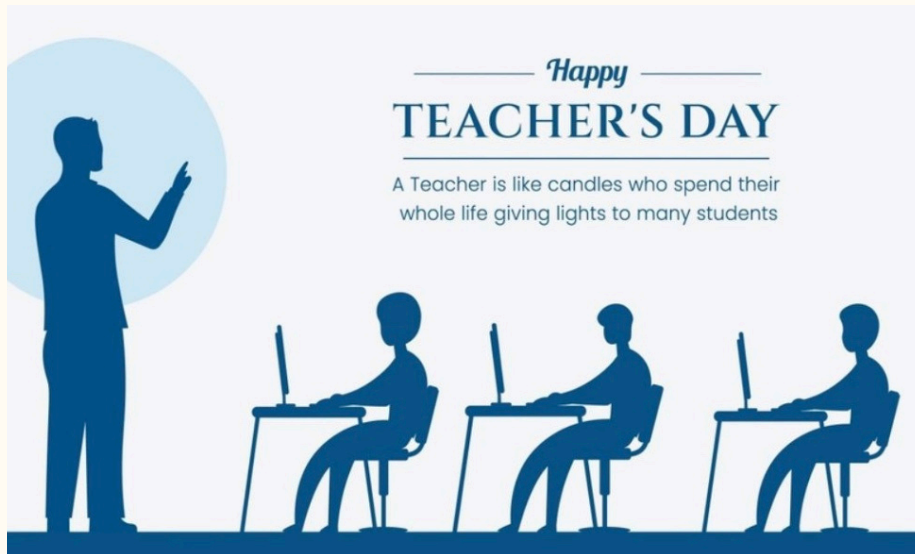
<https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanDayofLanguages/>

<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>



Where does the noun *teacher* come from?

EARLIEST
KNOWN USE

**Middle
English**

The earliest known use of the noun *teacher* is in the Middle English period (1150—1500).

OED's earliest evidence for *teacher* is from around 1290, in *South English Legendary*.

teacher

[tē-čər] noun • *English*

one who inspires, guides, enriches, enlightens and motivates others. someone who will show you how to reach for the stars and be the best that you can be. the most skilled encourager and the best mentor a person could ask for.

see also: *difference maker*

Teacher

(n) [tee-cher]

A multi-tasking educational rockstar who lives to inspire and loves to encourage.

They're kind of a big deal.



"Knowledge of languages is
the doorway to wisdom."

Roger Bacon

Language teachers' associations in the Nordic-Baltic region

FINLAND Suomen kieltenopettajien 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 #3 September 2024 is issued by:
Outi Viikuna, NBR President, Finland
NBR Secretary Asterija Rudienė, Lithuania

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

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 join us

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