

WELCOME TO OUR

The Nordic-Baltic Region Newsletter



NBR President's Notes:

Languages as Infrastructure: Why Multilingualism Matters Now More Than Ever

In times of global uncertainty, public attention often turns to hard power: borders, energy security, military strength. Yet the quieter systems that hold societies together can be just as decisive. Language is one of them. In the current global situation, and particularly in the Nordic-Baltic region, languages are not a cultural luxury. They are essential infrastructure.

Across Europe, war has returned in ways many believed belonged to the past. Disinformation spreads rapidly, international cooperation is under strain, and trust between societies cannot be taken for granted. In such an environment, language competence is not merely about communication. It is about understanding, credibility, and resilience. Societies that can listen across languages are better equipped to respond across borders.

A close-up photograph of a pine branch covered in snow, serving as a background for the title text.

WELCOME TO OUR

The Nordic-Baltic Region Newsletter

The Nordic-Baltic region has long understood this reality. Small-language communities have always depended on multilingualism for trade, diplomacy, and survival. Our histories are shaped by cooperation and conflict alike, by shifting borders and shared challenges. Today, as regional security frameworks evolve and international alliances deepen, the ability to engage directly with partners—and to understand others on their own terms—matters profoundly. Language skills allow nuance where translation simplifies. They reduce dependence on intermediaries and enable relationships built on trust rather than assumption.

Languages are also a frontline defense against misinformation. Disinformation thrives in monolingual environments, where narratives circulate unchecked and sources remain inaccessible. Multilingual citizens can consult diverse media landscapes, cross-check information, and recognize when meaning has been distorted. Teaching languages today therefore goes hand in hand with teaching critical thinking, media literacy, and democratic competence.

At the same time, rapid technological development has reshaped the conversation around language learning. Machine translation and AI tools are increasingly sophisticated, raising the familiar question: Why learn languages at all? The answer is clear to anyone who has taught, negotiated meaning, or navigated cultural nuance. Language is not simply code. It carries values, emotions, power relations, and unspoken assumptions. Technology can support communication, but it cannot replace human judgment, empathy, or contextual understanding.

A close-up photograph of a pine branch covered in snow, serving as a background for the title text.

WELCOME TO OUR

The Nordic-Baltic Region Newsletter

Without linguistic competence, reliance on automated tools risks passivity rather than empowerment. Those who know languages can use technology critically; those who do not remain dependent on systems they cannot fully evaluate. Language education is therefore also a matter of agency and digital resilience.

Migration adds another crucial dimension. Nordic-Baltic societies are increasingly multilingual in practice, if not always in policy. Classrooms reflect this reality. Language education—both foreign and majority languages—plays a central role in shaping social cohesion. It influences whether newcomers are positioned as permanent outsiders or as active participants in civic life. At the same time, recognizing and valuing pupils' home languages sends a clear message: multilingualism is a resource, not a deficit.

Climate change further underlines the need for linguistic competence. The Arctic, the Baltic Sea, and shared ecosystems transcend national borders. Addressing environmental challenges requires cooperation across languages, cultures, and disciplines. Scientific knowledge must be communicated accurately and persuasively, not only among experts but also to the public and decision-makers. Again, language is the bridge.

In this context, foreign language teachers are doing far more than teaching vocabulary and grammar. They are preparing learners for a world defined by complexity, uncertainty, and interdependence. They equip young people with the ability to navigate difference, tolerate ambiguity, and engage responsibly beyond their immediate communities.

WELCOME TO OUR

The Nordic-Baltic Region Newsletter

Yet language education often remains vulnerable—frequently reduced, instrumentalized, or sidelined in favor of short-term priorities. If languages are justified only through narrow economic arguments, their broader societal value is overlooked. Language competence contributes to democratic resilience, security, cultural vitality, and international credibility. It is a long-term investment whose benefits may not always be immediately visible, but are deeply consequential.

The current global situation demands clarity about what we value. For the Nordic-Baltic region, one answer should be unmistakable: openness rather than isolation, dialogue rather than disengagement, competence rather than complacency. Language education embodies these values in practice.

For foreign language teachers, this is both a responsibility and a source of quiet pride. Every lesson that opens a window onto another way of seeing the world strengthens the foundations of our societies. In uncertain times, that work is not peripheral. It is essential.

Best regards,

Outi Vilkuna

puheenjohtaja / ordförande / Chair

Suomen kieltenopettajien liitto SUKOL ry

The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland SUKOL

outi.vilkuna@sukol.fi

Greetings from Sweden



The Language Teachers' Association of Sweden

Prepared by **Mia Smith**
President of the Language Teachers' Association of Sweden



Moving into 2026

Stepping into 2026, we look back at a year with great activity for our board members and members. In 2025, we had the opportunity to visit several international conferences, thanks to generous grants from SFUB (The Society for the Promotion of Public Education). You can read about this in [the FIPLV Newsletter](#).

A lot of effort was put into networking and advocacy, a process that will continue into the new year.

Music for Motivation – Once More

Once more we start the year off with our music contests. This year we offer our members music contests in two languages: German and French: Der Superhit and La Coupe des chansons.



Once more, teaching materials are provided along with a choice of songs that the students listen to, before passing a vote on their choice of the week. Soon we will find this year's winners.

Greetings from Sweden



The Language Teachers' Association of Sweden

Prepared by **Mia Smith**
President of the Language Teachers' Association of Sweden

Ordre des Palmes académiques



In November, a ceremony took place at the French residence in Stockholm. The French ambassador to Sweden, Thierry Carlier, awarded the Order of Academic Palms (Ordre des Palmes académiques) to Tèreše Mölsä, our language representative for French. Mme Mölsä was awarded the order in recognition of her long-standing commitment to promoting the French language in Sweden, with a particular focus on French language education in schools. We are incredibly proud of Tèreše and share in her joy.



Present to honor Mme Mölsä were current and former board colleagues from the national board and the local association in Gästrikland: Mia Smith, Ingalill Zeeck, Olle Käll, and Kent Fredholm.



Greetings from Finland



Suomen kieltenopettajien liitto ry

Prepared by **Outi Vilkuna**

puheenjohtaja / ordförande / Chair

Suomen kieltenopettajien liitto SUKOL ry

The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland

SUKOL



SUKOL: Championing Multilingualism in Finland, Autumn–Winter 2025

From September to December 2025, the Finnish Association of Foreign Language Teachers (SUKOL) maintained its active role in **promoting multilingual education, advocating for language policy, and participating in cultural events** across Finland. This period demonstrates the association's dual focus on **policy influence and community engagement**, reinforcing the importance of language skills in education and society.

Celebrating Language Diversity: European Day of Languages

SUKOL kicked off the autumn season with active participation in the **European Day of Languages** in Helsinki on September 26. The event, featuring music, panels, and speeches, emphasized the value of multilingualism in fostering cultural understanding and global competence. SUKOL highlighted:

“Juhlimme Euroopan kielten päivää muistuttaaksemme monikielisyyden tärkeydestä ja siitä, miten se edistää kulttuurien välistä ymmärrystä ja kansainvälisiä mahdollisuuksia.”

“We celebrate European Day of Languages to remind everyone of the importance of multilingualism and how it promotes cross-cultural understanding and international opportunities.”

This celebration marked the start of a season rich with advocacy, policy discussions, and educational events.

Greetings from Finland



Suomen kieltenopettajien liitto ry

Prepared by **Outi Vilkuna**

puheenjohtaja / ordförande / Chair

Suomen kieltenopettajien liitto SUKOL ry

The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland

SUKOL

Policy Engagement and Advocacy

Throughout the autumn, SUKOL published several **position statements and responses** to local and national education proposals. In September, the association addressed municipal decisions limiting language course offerings and voiced concern over policies affecting short-language classes in Helsinki high schools. They also provided formal input on vocational qualification modules, demonstrating their commitment to protecting **quality language instruction across all levels of education.**

In October, SUKOL joined the **Kieliverkosto (Language Network)** in submitting a joint statement on the proposed revisions to the **national core curriculum for basic education**, advocating for flexibility and continuity in preparatory language teaching.

By November, SUKOL's leadership participated in the **Parliamentary Education Committee (Sivistysvaliokunta)** hearing to discuss the state of language education. They warned of the risks of diminishing linguistic diversity and stressed the need for a national strategy to support foreign language learning.

In December, SUKOL directly opposed a local policy proposal in the city of Espoo that would have restricted students' primary language options to predominantly English:

“Espoon kaupungin suunnitelma kaventaa lasten kielivalintoja yksipuolistamalla ne pääosin englanniksi olisi haitallinen. Se heikentäisi oppilaiden mahdollisuuksia monipuoliseen kielitaitoon ja kansainvälisiin uramahdollisuuksiin.”

Greetings from Finland



Suomen kieltenopettajien liitto ry

Prepared by **Outi Vilkuna**

puheenjohtaja / ordförande / Chair

Suomen kieltenopettajien liitto SUKOL ry

The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland

SUKOL

“Espoo’s plan to narrow children’s language options primarily to English would be harmful. It would limit students’ opportunities for diverse language skills and international career paths.”

These interventions highlight SUKOL’s ongoing **advocacy for multilingual education as a cornerstone of future opportunities** for Finnish youth.

Supporting Lifelong Language Learning

Beyond formal policy work, SUKOL emphasized the importance of **adult and community education**. In November, the association highlighted the role of Finnish community colleges (kansalaisopistot) in providing **lifelong language learning opportunities**:

“Kansalaisopistot ovat elinikäisen oppimisen kivijalka ja runkoratkaisu. Ne tarjoavat monipuolista ja laajaa kielikoulutusta kaikille – nuorille, aikuisille, ikääntyville, maahanmuuttajille ja erityisryhmille. Leikkaukset uhkaavat koko järjestelmän olemassaoloa.”

“Community colleges are the foundation of lifelong learning. They offer broad and diverse language education to all – youth, adults, seniors, immigrants, and special groups. Cuts threaten the very existence of the system.”

This statement underscores SUKOL’s commitment to **accessible, high-quality language education for learners of all ages**.

Greetings from Finland



Suomen kieltenopettajien liitto ry

Prepared by **Outi Vilkuna**

puheenjohtaja / ordförande / Chair

Suomen kieltenopettajien liitto SUKOL ry

The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland

SUKOL

Events and Community Engagement

SUKOL also actively engaged in Finland's educational and cultural events. In November, the association welcomed participants to **Educa**, Finland's largest educational fair, reinforcing its visibility and influence within the teaching community. These events allow SUKOL to share expertise, connect with educators, and celebrate the role of languages in Finnish society.

Looking Forward

The autumn–winter 2025 period demonstrates SUKOL's **dual commitment to policy advocacy and community engagement**. From parliamentary consultations to celebrations of linguistic diversity and defense of lifelong learning, SUKOL continues to be a vital voice in **promoting multilingual education**, safeguarding language choice for students, and ensuring equitable access to language learning for all Finns.

As Finland navigates a globalized world, SUKOL's work reminds us that **languages are not just tools of communication—they are keys to opportunity, cultural understanding, and personal development**.

Greetings from Estonia



Prepared by **Gertrud Mets**,
 board member of The Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers,
 teacher of French, **Ene Peterson**, Chair of The Estonian Association of Foreign
 Language Teachers



A RETROSPECTIVE ON THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE OF THE ESTONIAN ASSOCIATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS

On 7–8 November 2025, the Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers (EAFLT) held its 15th anniversary conference “Connecting the World through Languages and Cultures” in Tartu. Nearly 200 foreign language teachers from across Estonia participated over two days, together with more than thirty speakers focusing on educational policy, research and classroom practice topics. The conference reviewed the Association’s 15 years of activity while also addressing key developments and future directions in language education, combining strategic perspectives with practical classroom-focused approaches.



The first day focused on the Association’s development and on language education in a broader educational policy context. The conference was opened by the chairperson of the Association Ene Peterson, who reflected on the Association’s founding and its journey over 15 years.

Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Gertrud Mets**,
board member of The Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers,
teacher of French, **Ene Peterson**, Chair of The Estonian Association of Foreign
Language Teachers



The keynote speaker Kairi Kaldoja, the Deputy Secretary General of Language Policy at the Ministry of Education and Research, introduced current trends in Estonian teacher and language policy, including teacher qualifications and career models, as well as the importance of multilingualism and cultural competences in contemporary education, where foreign language teachers play a key role.



The need to support teachers in a rapidly changing educational environment was emphasised, with particular attention drawn to the importance of teacher well-being and self-care. Kairi Kaldoja finished her speech with the words „**If EAFLT didn't exist, it would have to be invented**”.

Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Gertrud Mets**,
board member of The Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers,
teacher of French, **Ene Peterson**, Chair of The Estonian Association of Foreign
Language Teachers



The programme also looked back on the Association's past activities while engaging in discussions about the future. The activities of the EAFLT have been supported by the Ministry of Education since its founding. Three perspectives on the past and future of EAFLT were delivered by Ülenurme Upper-Secondary School director Tõnu Tender (the Head of the Language Service and Advisor to the Language Department from 2001 to 2025), Director of Academic Affairs, University of Tartu Narva College, Piret Kärtner (EAFLT has been collaborating with Piret Kärtner since 2013, when she was the head of the language department), and Chief Expert of the Language Policy Department of the Ministry of Education and Research Pille Põiklik has been collaborating with EAFLT since 2025. They all highlighted the significance of the Association and offered broader reflections on language education, reminding teachers of the importance of experimentation and of remaining learners themselves.



An international dimension was added through a plenary speaker Chantal Muller, a consultant for the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), who introduced the work and resources of the ECML and the Council of Europe. The presentation highlighted support for multilingual education and encouraged teachers to experiment with creative classroom activities.

Greetings from Estonia



Prepared by **Gertrud Mets**,
board member of The Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers,
teacher of French, **Ene Peterson**, Chair of The Estonian Association of Foreign
Language Teachers

A panel discussion on artificial intelligence in learning and teaching, moderated by Merike Saar, English teacher and educational technologist at Tallinn French School, brought together teachers and upper secondary school students, allowing for a multifaceted exploration of the conscious, informed and responsible use of AI in language learning.

At the end of the first conference day, members and member associations were recognised in eight categories, and long-term cooperation partners were acknowledged.



Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Gertrud Mets**,
board member of The Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers,
teacher of French, **Ene Peterson**, Chair of The Estonian Association of Foreign
Language Teachers



In addition, letters of appreciation were presented to members and partners who have contributed to the activities of the Association over the past 10–15 years. More information and photos: EVÕL [Awards 2025](#)

The first conference day concluded with a reception that offered participants opportunities for networking and collegial exchange, accompanied by musical performances in German, English, Chinese and Estonian by musician and entertainer Andreas Melts, and eating an anniversary cake. See the programme and abstracts of 7 November [here](#).



The second day of the conference consisted of presentations and workshops conducted by representatives of all member associations. Külli Kuri, a teacher of Estonian as a Second Language and visiting lecturer at Tallinn University, expanded participants' understanding of the Companion Volume of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and its application in classroom practice, with particular attention to the learner as a language user and social agent. Marika Peekmann, Chief Expert of General Education at the Ministry of Education and Research, explored ways of integrating culture into language learning through various means, including the use of authentic sources, in order to enrich the learning process.

Greetings from Estonia



Prepared by **Gertrud Mets**,
board member of The Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers,
teacher of French, **Ene Peterson**, Chair of The Estonian Association of Foreign
Language Teachers



Teachers who had recently completed their master's studies at Tartu or Tallinn University with excellent results presented their research results and shared insights from their work in schools across Estonia, which offered a fresh overview of current research directions. Their presentations received especially positive feedback.

The conference concluded with workshops led by members of all subject associations within the Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers. Workshop topics ranged from movement-based activities, creativity in the language classroom, reflection and public speaking in language learning up to the changes in the roles of language teachers. Participants were able to engage actively and test ideas in practice. See the programme of 8 November [here](#).

Greetings from Estonia



Prepared by **Gertrud Mets**,
board member of The Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers,
teacher of French, **Ene Peterson**, Chair of The Estonian Association of Foreign
Language Teachers

With this, the two eventful conference days came to a close. Participants' feedback was very positive, particularly regarding the well-designed programme, its practical focus and the professional atmosphere. Overall, the conference highlighted the important role of language teachers in connecting languages and cultures in contemporary education. We would like to thank the conference organisers and speakers, as well as the Ministry of Education and Research for its support and look forward to future conferences and professional exchange.



The Estonian Foreign Language Teachers' Association is a strategic partner of the Ministry of Education and Research for 2025–2027.

Additional resources (presentations, slides) regarding the conference are available [here](#). Photos by Gertrud Mets, Pille Toompere, Ene Peterson

Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Merike Saar**,

PhD, teacher of English at Tallinn French School, board member of EATE



Insights from an English-Language Speaking Competition

Public speaking contests offer foreign language learners a powerful opportunity to use English authentically while developing confidence, structure, and audience awareness. This short article draws on a research paper by Villem Vahtrik, a student at Tallinn French School, who collected student feedback from a national English-language public

speaking contest in Estonia. The article highlights key learning outcomes and practical takeaways for teachers.

The Contest in Brief

The competition theme was “We know what we are, but not what we may be.” – William Shakespeare, and followed the English Speaking Union (ESU) International model, which values informed, balanced speaking over overt persuasion. Students completed three rounds: a prepared five-minute speech, a short impromptu speech with limited preparation time, and a final prepared speech assessed by a new jury. Prepared rounds included questions from judges and the audience.

This format challenged students to combine planning with spontaneity, manage time pressure, and interact meaningfully with listeners – skills central to real-life communication in a foreign language.

Why Students Participate

Student motivation to participate in the event was both intrinsic and extrinsic. Many participants described a genuine interest in English, public

Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Merike Saar**,

PhD, teacher of English at Tallinn French School, board member of EATE



speaking, and self-expression. Others were encouraged by teachers, sometimes joining the contest reluctantly at first. Notably, positive feedback and support often transformed hesitation into engagement, highlighting the strong influence teachers have on students' willingness to take communicative risks.

Preparation: What Helped Most

Students reported using a range of preparation strategies. Rehearsal – in front of mirrors, friends, or family – was the most common and effective method. Brainstorming helped generate ideas, while choosing personally meaningful topics increased motivation and authenticity. Some students used digital tools, including AI, for idea generation or language refinement, viewing them as supportive aids rather than replacements for independent thinking or teacher feedback.



Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Merike Saar**,

PhD, teacher of English at Tallinn French School, board member of EATE



Confidence and Skill Development

Performance anxiety was a major challenge, especially before the first speech. However, most students reported feeling calmer and more confident as the competition progressed. Successfully completing a demanding speaking task often changed the students' perception of their own abilities.

Participants highlighted improvements in:

- speech structure (clear openings, logical development, strong conclusions),
- voice use and pacing,
- awareness of body language and eye contact,
- ability to respond to questions spontaneously.

These reflections show a shift from focusing mainly on linguistic accuracy to understanding communication as a holistic, multimodal process.

Feedback and Questions as Learning Tools

Reactions to audience and jury questions were mixed. While some students found them stressful, many valued them as opportunities to demonstrate understanding and think critically. Constructive feedback – especially from listeners – was seen as motivating and informative, helping students improve in later rounds.

Transfer Beyond the Contest

Students reported that skills developed through the contest transferred directly to classroom learning. They felt more confident giving presentations,

Greetings from Estonia

Prepared by **Merike Saar**,

PhD, teacher of English at Tallinn French School, board member of EATE



participating in discussions, and structuring written work. Some also noted increased interest in future careers requiring strong communication skills, such as teaching, law, media, or international relations.

Practical Tips for Teachers of English

- 1) Normalise speaking anxiety: discuss nervousness openly and frame it as a natural part of communication, not a failure.
- 2) Teach structure explicitly: model clear introductions, signposting, and conclusions in speaking tasks.
- 3) Practise spontaneous speaking: use short impromptu tasks (e.g. 1-minute talks with 5 minutes' preparation) to build flexibility.
- 4) Include questions and feedback: encourage peer questions after presentations to develop interactional skills.
- 5) Encourage personal topics: allow students to connect speaking tasks to their interests to increase engagement.

Conclusion

Public speaking contests demonstrate how meaningful, challenging speaking tasks can significantly support language development and learner confidence. For teachers, the key lesson is not the competition itself, but the principles behind it: authenticity, structure, supportive feedback, and repeated practice. Integrating these elements into everyday teaching can help students find their voice in English – both inside and outside the classroom.



Greetings from **Latvia**

Prepared by **Laura Ende**
the Latvian Association of Teachers of English

The Latvian Association of Teachers of English (LATE) has continued to play an active role in supporting professional growth of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in Latvia. Over the past months, LATE has organized two 6-hour online workshops for EFL teachers and has supported the organisation of the regional conference and a poetry contest for students.



The 21st Methodological Conference for Teachers of English

“Shaping the Future of English Language Teaching and Learning” in Daugavpils

During the autumn school holidays, on 21 October, the 21st Methodological Conference for Teachers of English, **Shaping the Future of English Language Teaching and Learning**, took place at Daugavpils State Gymnasium. The conference was organized by the Daugavpils City Education Board in cooperation with the American Embassy, LATE, and Daugavpils State Gymnasium. A total of 86 teachers from across the Latgale region gathered to explore current trends and exchange ideas in English language teaching.

The conference opened with a keynote by **Agnese Gromova-Ķūrena**, President of LATE, who spoke about professional growth, international cooperation, and creative approaches to teaching. Drawing on insights from the IATEFL Conference in Edinburgh, she highlighted effective practices for

Greetings from **Latvia**

Prepared by **Laura Ende**
the Latvian Association of Teachers of English



developing writing skills, engaging today's learners, and using artificial intelligence thoughtfully in the classroom. Participants were also introduced to an award-winning Grade 8 lesson plan exploring the power of voice as a communication tool. In addition, Agnese presented the Reading Circle project for students that uses Pearson Graded Readers. Designed to run over nine months, the project aims to create a classroom culture that fosters reading motivation while systematically developing students' reading skills, offering teachers a structured and inspiring approach to sustained reading practice.

Joe Walther, U.S. Department of State English Language Fellow and lecturer at Daugavpils University, led two practical sessions. One focused on classroom management strategies for younger learners, emphasizing structure, consistency, and positive communication, while the second explored artificial intelligence as a supportive partner in English language teaching, underlining the continued importance of teacher expertise and professional judgment.



The programme also included a session by Natālija Burišina (Ogre State Gymnasium), who shared innovative approaches to teaching argumentative writing by combining printed materials, AI tools, and remote guidance.

Greetings from **Latvia**

Prepared by **Laura Ende**
the Latvian Association of Teachers of English

The conference concluded with a presentation by Dace Miška from Oxford University Press, who introduced OUP resources and highlighted self-directed professional development as an important pathway for teacher growth.

LATE Autumn TPD Day 2025 “Empowering Teachers in the Digital Age”

On 29 November 2025, LATE hosted an online professional development day entitled **Empowering Teachers in the Digital Age** via Zoom, bringing together educators eager to explore innovative teaching strategies. The program opened with LATE news and remarks from President Agnese Gromova-Ķūrena, followed by three dynamic sessions. Joseph Jack Horgan (Jelgava Spidola State Gymnasium) shared creative approaches to using film in the EFL classroom, helping teachers enhance students’ analytical and language skills, with a focus on C1-level courses for Grade 12. Lauren Anderson (National Louis University, Chicago, IL, USA) guided participants through practical ways to integrate AI into writing, lesson planning, and student engagement, including creating prompt libraries and customized chatbots. Finally, Andrew Doxsey (Limbazi State Gymnasium) demonstrated how AI can make reading lessons more accessible and engaging, offering practical strategies for differentiating texts, generating comprehension tasks, and supporting vocabulary development, while ensuring that technology meaningfully supports sound teaching practice. The event left participants inspired and equipped with practical tools to bring innovation into their classrooms.

Poetry in My Heart ♥ 2025: English Poetry Recitation Contest

On Sunday, 30 November 2025, the English Poetry Recitation Contest Poetry in My Heart 2025 concluded with a vibrant final event at the Eduards Smilģis Theatre Museum of the Latvian Academy of Culture.

Greetings from **Latvia**

Prepared by **Laura Ende**
the Latvian Association of Teachers of English



Following an initial online round, where video performances were assessed by a jury, 29 finalists from 19 schools advanced to the live stage in Riga, supported by 24 finalist teachers. Finalists recited well-known English poems by authors such as Shakespeare, Wilfred Owen, Walt Whitman, William Wordsworth, and others.



In addition, the finalists from grades 9–12 each wrote an acrostic poem and a blackout poem, and performed them to the audience, showcasing their creative and language talents. This year's competition saw impressive growth, with 138 applications submitted by students from 34 schools and the involvement of 54 teachers. 25

Greetings from **Latvia**

Prepared by **Laura Ende**

the Latvian Association of Teachers of English



LATE Winter TPD Day 2025

“Developing Mediation Skills in Teaching and Learning”

Another engaging online event by LATE took place on 29 December 2025, focusing on **Developing Mediation Skills in the Teaching and Learning Process**. LATE’s 10th Winter TPD Day offered educators hands-on strategies to strengthen students’ ability to mediate ideas and interactions in the EFL classroom.

The event was opened by Agnese Gromova-Ķūrena, President of LATE, who shared reflections and feedback from recent LATE professional development activities. This exchange of feedback not only highlighted the impact of previous events but also reinforced the importance of listening to the teaching community and shaping future initiatives in response to teachers’ needs.

Greetings from **Latvia**

Prepared by **Laura Ende**

the Latvian Association of Teachers of English

Following the opening overview, Robert Buckmaster (The English Ideas Project) gave a three-part session on one slide presentations, gap-fill exercises, and coherence and cohesion in writing, complete with practical templates and tips for classroom implementation. Joe Walther (US Department of State English Language Fellow at Daugavpils University) then guided participants through interactive activities designed to develop micro-skills such as rephrasing, summarizing, and negotiating meaning, providing teachers with adaptable routines and communication tools. The day concluded with Tatjana Kunda (Riga French Lycee) presenting practical mediation tasks, including summarizing, explaining concepts, and facilitating group discussions, giving attendees ready-to-use strategies for immediate classroom application. The event offered a highly practical and inspiring professional development experience, equipping teachers to foster collaboration, critical thinking, and effective communication among their students.

Greetings from Lithuania

Prepared by **Audronė Auškelienė**,
Vice-President of the Association of
Language Teachers of Lithuania,
Director of the Public Service Language
Centre



Lietuvos kalbų pedagogų
asociacija - LKPA

Beyond the Classroom Walls (Azores – São Miguel)

What happens when the classroom moves outdoors and learning continues beyond classroom walls, with nature becoming the teacher? From 29 September to 4 October 2025, this idea came to life during an Erasmus+-funded mobility in the Azores (São Miguel). The course “Active Citizenship, Environmental Sustainability, Leadership, and Positive Schooling” welcomed teachers interested in sustainability, positive education, and experience-based learning, including a teacher of The Public Service Language Centre Rita Samukienė. The programme brought together educators from Lithuania, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, and Estonia, creating an international space for sharing ideas and good practices.

The course began with discussions on active citizenship, sustainability, and climate education, focusing on how these topics can be integrated into everyday classroom work and extended through learning outside the traditional classroom setting. A large part of the programme was based on outdoor learning, using the natural environment as a meaningful and inspiring learning space.

Participants visited the Caldeira of Furnas, where learning took place directly in the volcanic landscape while exploring geothermal energy, sustainability, and the relationship between nature and local culture. At the Furnas Monitoring and Research Centre, they explored environmental research and protection projects and discussed how real-world examples can enrich teaching. In Sete Cidades, learning continued outdoors through observation of lakes, volcanic formations, and endemic plants, alongside discussions on nature protection and community involvement.

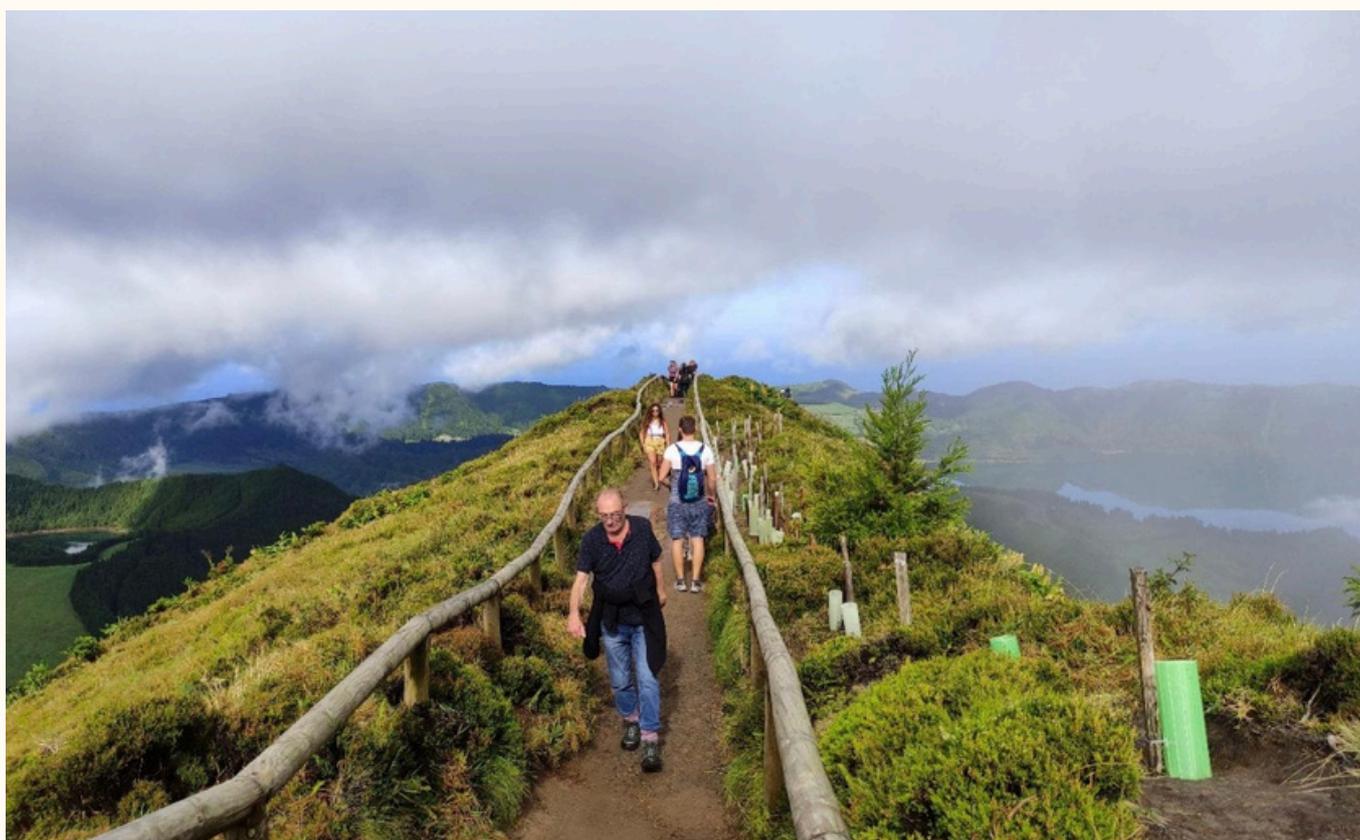
Greetings from Lithuania

Prepared by **Audronė Auškelienė**,
Vice-President of the Association of
Language Teachers of Lithuania,
Director of the Public Service Language
Centre



Lietuvos kalbų pedagogų
asociacija - LKPA

One of the most memorable experiences was the visit to the Centro Ambiental do Priolo, where participants learned about the endangered Priolo bird and how long-term conservation efforts helped restore its habitat. This experience showed how environmental protection can be transformed into hands-on, project-based learning. During the course, the participants also took part in simple mindfulness activities, such as breathing and relaxation exercises, which helped them calm the mind, reduce anxiety, and improve focus. These practices highlighted how moments of awareness and calm can support both teachers' well-being and students' learning.



Greetings from Lithuania

Prepared by **Audronė Auškelienė**,
Vice-President of the Association of
Language Teachers of Lithuania,
Director of the Public Service Language
Centre



Lietuvos kalbų pedagogų
asociacija - LKPA

The participants also took part in whale and dolphin watching, gaining direct insight into marine life and wildlife conservation. On the final day, outdoor activities in Ponta Delgada linked STEAM subjects, history, and civic education, demonstrating how learning can happen anywhere, not only in the classroom.

The course strongly supported participants' personal and professional development. Sessions on leadership, teamwork, and creating a positive and inclusive school environment showed how mindfulness and positive education can help learning both in and outside the classroom. Participants deepened their understanding of sustainability, climate education, and outdoor learning, gained ideas for interactive lessons, and developed important communication and leadership skills. Overall, the course showed how experiential learning can motivate students, support inclusion, and encourage care for the environment, making teaching more meaningful, relevant, and effective.

<https://vikc.lt/en/project/erasmus-teacher-training-course-titled-active-citizenship-environmental-sustainability-leadership-and-positive-schooling/>

Greetings from Iceland

Prepared by **Þorbjörg Halldórsdóttir**,
the president of the Association of Language
Teachers in Iceland (STÍL)



STÍL – SAMTÖK
TUNGUMÁLAKENNARA
Á ÍSLANDI

Student award

In the spring of 2025, the Icelandic Association of Language Teachers (STÍL) awarded, for the first time, a student prize for outstanding interest and dedication in language learning. The recipient this year is Sigrún Freygerður Finnsdóttir, a recent graduate of the Language and Culture program at Menntaskólinn á Akureyri. The award consisted of a 100,000 ISK grant, as well as the book *One Thousand Languages* and a certificate of recognition. The recipient was encouraged to use the grant for travel or further language studies. The award was presented at the graduation ceremony for recent graduates at Menntaskólinn á Akureyri on June 17 (Iceland's National Day).

STÍL requested nominations from all secondary schools in the country, asking them to nominate a student who has demonstrated exceptional interest and dedication to language learning. Over twenty students were nominated. Sigrún Freygerður was nominated by her language teachers at Menntaskólinn á Akureyri. In the nomination, she was praised for her organized and creative work, as well as her excellent interpersonal skills. Sigrún is also outstanding in writing, both in foreign languages and in her mother tongue.



Through this award, the Icelandic Association of Language Teachers aims to highlight the importance and practical value of learning languages. Icelandic students have the unique opportunity to choose which languages they wish to study at the secondary school level and can often learn more languages than their peers in other countries. This gives them a significant competitive

Greetings from Iceland

Prepared by **Þorbjörg Halldórsdóttir**,
the president of the Association of Language
Teachers in Iceland (STÍL)



STÍL – SAMTÖK
TUNGUMÁLAKENNARA
Á ÍSLANDI

advantage in the future labour market, both domestically and internationally. Language learning has rarely been as important as it is today, in an era marked by international migration and the growing dominance of artificial intelligence. Languages play a key role in human communication and cultural exchange. Numerous studies show that language learning positively affects brain function and cognitive ability, as well as emotional and social skills. Furthermore, language learning and multilingualism contribute to broader cultural awareness, foster empathy, and help promote peace between peoples and nations. Sigrún delivered an outstanding speech on European Language Day, an excerpt of which can be found in this Newsletter.

The European Day of Languages 2025



Greetings from Iceland

Prepared by **Þorbjörg Halldórsdóttir**,
the president of the Association of Language
Teachers in Iceland (STÍL)



STÍL – SAMTÖK
TUNGUMÁLAKENNARA
Á ÍSLANDI

It is a tradition for STÍL to hold a seminar in connection with European Language Day at Veröld, in collaboration with the Language Centre of the University of Iceland and the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute. This year, a new partner joined the group: RANNÍS. The seminar was held under the title “Strengthening Language Learning”. Four presentations were delivered, and excerpts from them can be found in the newsletter. Approximately 50 people attended the seminar. The event received financial support from the Ministry of Education and Children’s Affairs.



Other activities in connection with the day included a music project created by Guðný Laxdal, chair of FEKÍ, which was distributed to teachers. Teachers were also introduced to numerous engaging ideas from the ECML website. In addition, a brochure from ECML was distributed, presenting a new manifesto emphasizing the importance of promoting language learning.

Greetings from Iceland

Prepared by **Donata Bukowska**, Expert,
Ministry of Education and Children



STÍL – SAMTÖK
TUNGUMÁLAKENNARA
Á ÍSLANDI



Thanks to languages, the world is not silent

In an age of artificial intelligence, when my phone can translate the instructions for my coffee machine faster than I can pour coffee into a cup, is it really still worth learning languages? Isn't that a bit like teaching children in school how to use a cassette player while they're listening to music on Spotify?

At first, the answer seems simple and obvious. But asking about the purpose of learning a language is like asking why one should climb a mountain when the summit can be seen on YouTube in 4K. A picture is not the same as the experience—and the same goes for language. Translation programs can show us the words, but they do not give us access to the life, emotions, and culture those words carry. Artificial intelligence can write texts, translate books, and even hold a conversation with us. But can it distinguish between admiration and irony? Languages are not just words and grammar—they are emotions, tone of voice, smiles, and glances.

We live in a globalized village where cultures meet and mix. But in this village, we do not find only friendship, love, and cooperation. There are also gossip, conflicts, stereotypes, evasions, and even outright lies. Language skills allow us to verify the news and hear stories directly from those who experienced them.

Greetings from Iceland

Prepared by **Donata Bukowska**, Expert,
Ministry of Education and Children



STÍL – SAMTÖK
TUNGUMÁLAKENNARA
Á ÍSLANDI

Children are growing up today in a world that is changing faster than ever before. We know that many jobs will disappear, while others have yet to exist. But one thing is certain: the key competencies of the future will include cross-cultural communication, creativity, flexibility, and the ability to learn new things. Language learning trains all of these—patience, courage, openness, and resilience.

We also know that more and more young people experience loneliness—and it is precisely languages that help them put feelings into words, find common ground, and belong. Learning a language requires perseverance and bravery; it is not just books and exercises. It is community, communication, laughter over mistakes, the strengthening of empathy, and a path to better understanding others and their world. Every single hola, bonjour, or sæl og blessuð is a spark that can ignite new encounters or friendships.

Back to artificial intelligence: Will translation programs replace us and our ability to learn languages? No—they help us and can certainly make life easier. But to make full use of their possibilities, we need to know languages. Otherwise, we cannot judge whether what they tell us is true or accurate.

When someone asks me, “Is it really still worth learning languages in the age of AI?” I answer: it is precisely now that it matters most. Languages are not an extra—they are at the core of human existence. Thanks to languages, the world is not silent, and thanks to languages, we are not—and do not need to be—alone. Let us learn languages for the future, for each other, and not least for new generations.

Greetings from Iceland

Prepared by **Sigrún Freygerður Finnsdóttir**,
student at the University of Iceland and
recipient of the STÍL Student Award 2025



In step with the times

My name is Sigrún Freygerður Finnsdóttir. I am nineteen years old and was born and raised in Akureyri. This spring, I graduated from Menntaskólinn á Akureyri, and at the end of August, I began studying Icelandic at the University of Iceland. Upon graduation from secondary school, I was awarded the STÍL Student Prize for outstanding interest and dedication in language learning.

Receiving this award has great meaning for me because, for as long as I can remember, I have always been passionate about languages, especially Icelandic.

I believe my interest in languages originally came from the controversial Eurovision Song Contest. It has always been a very significant part of my life. I started singing songs at a young age in languages I did not understand at all, and I quickly realized that in music, you do not necessarily need to understand the lyrics to grasp the message. For example, last year's French entry, *Mon amour*—most people probably know that *mon amour* means “my love,” but as soon as the song begins, you immediately sense the emotion conveyed by the lyrics, even without understanding another word of French beyond the title. You can hear pain, love, joy, and anger in songs even without understanding the text. When I realized this as a child, it felt like a light bulb had gone off in my head. I understood something entirely new—that languages are diverse and fascinating.

Greetings from Iceland

Prepared by **Sigrún Freygerður Finnsdóttir**,
student at the University of Iceland and
recipient of the STÍL Student Award 2025



STÍL – SAMTÖK
TUNGUMÁLAKENNARA
Á ÍSLANDI

It was therefore an easy decision to choose a language-focused track in secondary school. Along with my class, I visited both secondary schools in Akureyri, and during the visit to Menntaskólinn, I had almost decided before leaving that I wanted to join the Language and Culture program. Throughout my school years, creative projects have always been my main motivation for learning. Looking back, all my favorite school projects have involved some form of creativity.

In secondary school, I had the opportunity to bake pizzas as part of a project on Italy, write a literary analysis of the Icelandic translations of Tintin, and in French, I co-wrote a song with a friend called *J'aime les crêpes*. My all-time favorite school project, however, took place in primary school. It was during the COVID-19 pandemic, and I got to experience distance learning for the first time. I was reading *Gísla saga Súrssonar* in Icelandic, and the project involved retelling certain chapters as if they took place online. It seemed like a good idea at first, but I was not excited about it. My friend and I had chosen a particularly dramatic chapter, and we felt it was a bit of a waste to have Gísli fleeing from his enemies when it could just as easily have been a Facebook status. Then, suddenly, we had the brilliant idea to reenact the chapters using Playmobil figures. We were sure our teacher would not approve, as it was so different from the original assignment—but she loved it and encouraged us to go ahead.

Creative projects are incredibly important for students like me. Not everyone will become teachers, lawyers, doctors, or work in skyscraper offices. In every class, there are painters, actors, musicians, and all those who provide the entertainment you want to see and hear. Teachers often say that school prepares us for life, but I would say teachers prepare us for living. They teach us that everyone has talents, that possibilities are endless, and that it is okay to think outside the box.

Greetings from Iceland

Prepared by **Sigrún Freygerður Finnsdóttir**,
student at the University of Iceland and
recipient of the STÍL Student Award 2025



STÍL – SAMTÖK
TUNGUMÁLAKENNARA
Á ÍSLANDI

The STÍL award has reminded me that it is okay to do things differently. If you are good at something, why shouldn't you get to do it? Isn't that what education is about—learning to recognize your strengths and being able to use them in anything you choose? I certainly plan to use the STÍL grant to pursue exactly what I want. My plan is to go to a creative writing school in Oxford, UK, next summer for a few days because I have always loved writing. I want to sincerely thank STÍL for granting me this award, and I look forward to seeing which talented new graduate will receive it next spring.

Ásrún Jóhannsdóttir,

Adjunct Lecturer in English, Faculty of Humanities, University of Iceland



Motivation in Language Teaching: Challenges and Opportunities

Motivation in language learning and teaching is often considered a given—that learning is inherently constructive, encouraging, and enjoyable. But what truly sustains the motivation of language teachers, and how does it relate to student motivation?

This question was at the heart of my lecture on European Language Day 2025, where I presented findings from a recent study conducted in collaboration with Charlotte Wolff, Associate Professor at the School of Education, University of Iceland.

Greetings from Iceland

Prepared by **Ásrún Jóhannsdóttir**,
Adjunct Lecturer in English, Faculty of
Humanities, University of Iceland



STÍL – SAMTÖK
TUNGUMÁLAKENNARA
Á ÍSLANDI

The study, titled **Breathing Life into the Language: English Teachers' Motivational Practices for Self and Students in Icelandic Secondary Schools** (Jóhannsdóttir & Wolff, 2025), focused on exploring English teachers' experiences in Icelandic secondary schools regarding their own motivation, both in their professional practice and in relation to their students. Interviews were conducted with both novice and experienced teachers, and thematic analysis revealed that English teachers employ a variety of strategies to create and maintain motivation.

A strong emphasis was placed on the importance of clear communication and mutual understanding between teachers and students, where trust, collaboration, and respect provide the foundation for a positive learning environment. Regarding challenges, the study found that teacher motivation can decline when workload, time constraints, or lack of support make it difficult to maintain creativity and energy in teaching. One concern highlighted by teachers was that many students have limited intrinsic motivation for learning English, as the language is so ubiquitous outside of school that it can seem “taken for granted”; students already possess sufficient proficiency for communication in their environment. This can lead students to perceive little value in traditional language learning, which in turn challenges teacher motivation.

Despite these challenges, teachers also identified numerous opportunities through diverse instructional approaches. They emphasized the importance of connecting learning to students' everyday lives by incorporating media, music, online culture, and their personal interests. Collaboration among teachers and a positive working environment were also found to be key in sustaining motivation. The study shows that teachers' positive attitudes have a ripple effect, with the teacher serving as a model for motivation and engagement.

Greetings from Iceland

Prepared by **Ásrún Jóhannsdóttir**,
Adjunct Lecturer in English, Faculty of
Humanities, University of Iceland



STÍL – SAMTÖK
TUNGUMÁLAKENNARA
Á ÍSLANDI

The conclusion is clear: motivation in language teaching is not automatic but a delicate, intertwined phenomenon that requires continuous nurturing for both students and teachers. For language learning to thrive, everyone involved must receive support, and creativity and collaboration must extend to all participants in the educational process.

Prepared by **Eydís Inga Valsdóttir**,
Specialist at Rannís

Digital School Collaboration for Language Teachers



eTwinning can be a powerful tool for language teachers. In short, eTwinning is a safe and free online school community within the European School Education Platform (ESEP) that connects teachers and students across 46 countries. A range of examples was presented demonstrating how the platform can be used in language teaching—from collaborative projects between classes in different countries to cultural exchanges, blogs, videos, and podcasts.

Such projects can support everyday teaching and align with curricular goals, while also boosting students' confidence and motivation through direct interaction with peers abroad.

The professional benefits that eTwinning offers teachers were also emphasized. These include free professional development opportunities such as online courses, workshops, and conferences, as well as access to

Greetings from Iceland

Prepared by **Eydís Inga Valsdóttir**,
Specialist at Rannís



STÍL – SAMTÖK
TUNGUMÁLAKENNARA
Á ÍSLANDI

new ideas and teaching methods. The platform provides an easy entry point into international collaboration and can serve as a first step toward larger Erasmus+ projects.

Teachers interested in initiating international collaboration can register on eTwinning and use the platform to find partners and project ideas. In the coming months, a dedicated workshop for language teachers is planned, where both eTwinning and Erasmus+ will be introduced as tools for international collaboration and language education.

Prepared by **Þorbjörg Halldórsdóttir**,
the president of the Association of Language
Teachers in Iceland (STÍL)

Final words from STÍL

Other activities organised by STÍL this autumn included three workshops. One focused on filmmaking in the language classroom. Experts from Denmark visited us from Filmmaskinen, and the workshop was held in collaboration with the Association of Danish Teachers in Iceland.

In addition, two webinars addressed European collaboration: one on eTwinning and the other on Erasmus+.

Next year, STÍL will celebrate its 40th anniversary. As part of the celebrations, we plan to publish a special anniversary edition of the former STÍL newsletter, Málfríður, in which each member association of STÍL will contribute two to three articles. We are also planning to expand the seminar held on the European Day of Languages and to host a festive birthday celebration marking this important milestone.

**Here's to 2026 and a prosperous new year for the languages
of the world!**

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>

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 Võõrkeeleõpetajate Liit (EVOL) (Estonian
Association of Foreign Language Teachers)
www.voorkeelteliit.eu

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

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

NORWAY Norwegian Association for Teachers of German



The Newsletter #4 December 2025 is issued by:
Outi Vilkuna, NBR President, Finland
NBR Secretary Asterija Rudienė, Lithuania

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



and



on

