



HARIDUS- JA
TEADUSMINISTEERIUM



Estonian Language Strategy 2021–2035

Photo: Sven Zacek

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Introduction

The Estonian Language Strategy (ELS) sets out Estonia's language policy goals and development directions for 2021-2035. ELS is based on the general values enshrined in the Constitution and on the goal of ensuring the preservation of the Estonian nation, language and culture through the ages. This constitutional objective is the ultimate goal of Estonian language policy. It is pursued in line with other Estonian national policies, taking into account other values established in the Constitution and principles of international law.

ELS is a continuation of the following language policy documents: *Strategy for the Development of the Estonian Language (2004-2010)*, *Development Plan for the Estonian Language 2011-2017 (2020)* and *Estonian Strategy for Foreign Languages 2009-2015 (2017)*.

The general objective of ELS is to ensure the vitality and functioning of the Estonian language in the Republic of Estonia as the primary language in all areas of life, to ensure the right and opportunity for everyone to use Estonian in Estonia, to preserve and strengthen the status and prestige of Estonian and the Estonian cultural and information space, and to value proficiency in other languages.

In order to achieve the overall objective, ELS sets out strategic goals in three sub-areas:

1. Status and prestige of Estonian. Strategic goal: the status of Estonian is stable and and it has high prestige.
2. Language research and infrastructure¹. Strategic goal: research into Estonian is internationally advanced and Estonian language infrastructure is innovative, open and diverse; the vocabulary of Estonian is developed in a coordinated way.
3. Teaching and learning. Strategic goal: all residents of Estonia are proficient in Estonian and value proficiency in other languages.

In addition to the development, preservation and protection of Estonian and 'Estonianness' (Estonian mindset), ELS also formulates the priorities and objectives related to the learning, assessment and proficiency of Estonian as a second language and to foreign languages for 2021-2035. ELS is a strategic document that covers the performance area "Estonian language and identity" of the state budget strategy.

ELS has been developed on the basis of the Constitution, the Language Act, language-related strategic documents, studies, analyses, monitoring and audits.² ELS is also based on the National Long-Term Development Strategy "Estonia 2035", the overall strategic objective of which ("A democratic and secure country where the Estonian people, language and culture are preserved and developed") is fully supported by ELS, as the preservation of Estonian and culture is a central objective of ELS.

ELS takes into account the development needs highlighted in the long-term development strategy and supports the strategic goals set in „Estonia 2035“: (a) "Estonia is home to smart, active and health-conscious people" – proficiency in languages is an indication of a high level of education and enables people to function effectively in society; (b) "Estonian society is caring, cooperative and open" – ELS promotes



the linguistic integration of people whose native or home language is other than Estonian in order to give all citizens equal opportunities to participate in the economy and cultural life of the country, thus contributing to creating a caring, cooperative and open society; (c) “Estonia’s economy is strong, innovative, and responsible” – ELS supports Estonia’s economic progress through linguistic development (both in terms of language skills and language technologies); (d) “Estonia has a safe, secure and high-quality living environment that takes into account the needs of all inhabitants” – Estonia’s safe environment and Estonian-language information space encourage Estonians to return to their homeland; ELS also addresses the needs of people with special linguistic needs and their ability to cope; (e) “Estonia is an innovative, reliable and people-centred country” – ELS’s targets for language technology, modern terminology, etc., reflect Estonia’s innovative spirit and people-centred approach.

The objectives and action lines for education in Estonia for the period 2021-2035 are set out in the draft Education Strategy, which deals with the accessibility of education, smooth movement between levels and types of education, learner-centred teaching, the next generation of teachers and learning opportunities that meet the needs of society and the labour market. Many of the themes of both strategies are directly related to the field of education and often both strategies serve the same goals, especially in relation to the Estonian language and Estonian as a language of instruction. Thus, the activities planned to achieve the third strategic goal can also be found in the Education Strategy, which includes as one of its objectives the development of a plan for the provision of education with Estonian as the language of instruction. ELS includes its own activities that will contribute to strengthening the vitality of Estonian, increasing its usability and improving the effectiveness of teaching Estonian. The aim of ELS is to improve the efficiency and quality of language teaching as well as to support teachers of Estonian language and literature. As each subject teacher is also a language teacher, (further) language training for teachers of all subjects is promoted. A more detailed overview of the common elements of the strategies is provided in Annex 2.

ELS includes the language policy tasks of all ministries and government agencies in their respective areas of responsibility: education, science, culture, law, national defence, business, innovation, etc. Thus, the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, the Ministry of the Interior and other ministries have a common role in achieving the objectives of ELS. (Links with key EU and international policies and other sectoral strategic documents are described in Annex 2).

The implementation of ELS is steered by the Ministry of Education and Research through the ELS Steering Committee, which includes representatives of the ministries involved in the field of language, including the Ministry of Finance, the Government Office and the Estonian Language Council. The Steering Committee makes its decisions in cooperation with the Estonian Language Council.

1 Language research and infrastructure covers language management and development, language for special purposes, vocabulary and terminology work, and language technology.
2 A list of documents can be found in Annex 2.

Current situation and development needs

The current state of Estonian and the main development needs are addressed in three sub-areas: 1) status and prestige of Estonian, 2) language research and infrastructure, and 3) language teaching and learning. Evaluations, conclusions and recommendations from studies, analyses and reports published between 2015 and 2019 have been used as the basis for describing the current situation and development needs of the Estonian language.

The strengths identified in relation to the status and prestige of Estonian are the strong position of Estonian as a state language and the advantages of being an official language of the European Union. The main challenge is that the global decline in language diversity is also affecting Estonian, and there are areas (e.g. IT, higher education, research, as well as the service sector) where the use of Estonian has declined due to both international cooperation and the increased proportion of international staff. In order to strengthen the status and prestige of Estonian, it is necessary to constantly monitor the relevant legislation which regulates language issues, to popularise and encourage the use and learning of, as well as research into, the Estonian language, and to give importance to Estonian as a vehicle of identity.

The strengths of the language research and infrastructure sub-area are the high international level of Estonian linguistics and language technology, the availability of the majority of linguistic resources³ (e.g. dictionaries, databases, corpora) and linguistic applications (e.g. speech synthesis, speech recognition and machine translation), as well as a large user base. The challenges are the inadequacy of centralised and coordinated terminology development, the uneven quality, scarcity or absence of corpora for the development of language technology, terminology teaching and terminology work, and the production of dictionaries. In order to maintain the high level of linguistics and language technology in Estonia and the innovativeness, accessibility and diversity of language infrastructures, the development of key language technology functions and the creation of language resources⁴, as well as the further development of linguistics and terminology, must be supported.

The strengths of teaching both Estonian and foreign languages are the following: Estonian proficiency of native speakers meets the needs of society, opportunities for learning foreign languages have been created, teaching resources, including e-learning resources, have been created for teaching and learning Estonian, and Estonian and culture can be studied in foreign higher education institutions, general education schools, hobby schools and preschools. The main challenge is the language of instruction at all levels of education, including the segregation of children with different home languages at the lower secondary level, the anglicisation⁵ of higher education, and the issues of the quality and provision of Estonian language learning as a second language for adults⁶⁻⁷. In order to ensure that all Estonian residents and Estonians living abroad are proficient in Estonian and value the knowledge of other languages, it is necessary to intensify and expand the teaching of Estonian both in Estonia and abroad, to train sufficient numbers of Estonian language teachers, to create (e-)learning tools and platforms, to support in-service training for language teachers and to promote the learning of various foreign languages in the education system.

For a more in-depth discussion of the current situation and development needs, see Annex 1.

3 Report "LT Observatory – Observatory for LR and MT in Europe" (2016). [link](#)

4 ELRC White Paper "Sustainable Language Data Sharing to Support Language Equality in Multilingual Europe" (2019). [link](#)

5 Study "Eesti keelseisund" (The Status of the Estonian language) (2017). [link](#)

6 Audit report "Organisation and public funding of the Estonian language training for adults" (2019). [link](#)

7 Applied research "Eesti keelest erineva emakeelega täiskasvanute eesti keele õpe loimumis- ja tööhõivepoliitikas: kvaliteet, mõju ja korraldus" (Estonian language learning for adults whose native language is other than Estonian in integration and employment policies: quality, impact and organisation) (2018). [link](#)

Strategic framework of ELS

The following international and national documents are relevant for the development and implementation of ELS:

- Objectives of European Pillar of Social Rights⁸;
- UN Sustainable Development Goals⁹ and objectives of the national sustainable development strategy “Sustainable Estonia 21”;
- EU’s shared vision of the European Education Area;
- Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment;
- Long-term development strategy “Estonia 2035”;
- Education Strategy 2021–2035 (draft);
- Estonian Research and Development, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Plan 2035 (draft);
- General Principles of Cultural Policy until 2030 (currently underway);
- Population and Cohesive Society Development Plan 2030 (currently underway);
- Youth Development Plan 2021-2035 (draft);
- Welfare Development Plan 2016-2023;
- National Defence Development Plan 2017-2026;
- Foreign Policy Strategy until 2030 (currently underway);
- Internal Security Strategy until 2030 (draft);
- Digital State and Cyber Security Development Plan 2025 (currently underway);

For a more detailed overview of the strategic documents related to ELS, see Annex 2.

⁸ 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. [link](#)

⁹ Sustainable development strategy 2030. [link](#)

General objective, strategic goals and lines of action

The general objective of ELS: to ensure the vitality and functioning of Estonian in the Republic of Estonia as the primary language in all areas of life, to ensure the right and opportunity for everyone to use Estonian in Estonia, to preserve and strengthen the status and prestige of the Estonian language and the Estonian cultural and information space, and to value foreign language skills.

Strategic Goal 1:

The status of Estonian is stable and it has high prestige.



Status



Prestige of and attitudes towards Estonian

Strategic Goal 2:

Research into Estonian is internationally advanced and Estonian language infrastructure is innovative, open and diverse; the Estonian vocabulary is developed in a coordinated way.



Language technology



Terminology



Academic texts in Estonian



Corpora, dictionaries, linguistics

Strategic Goal 3:

All residents of Estonia are proficient in Estonian and value the knowledge of other languages.



Provision of education with Estonian as the language of instruction



Mother tongue learning



Language of higher education



Estonian as a second language



Foreign language learning

Strategic Goal 1: Status and prestige of Estonian

The status of Estonian is stable and it has high prestige.

Status – the status of Estonian as the official language is ensured by the Constitution, the Language Act and other legislation regulating language skills and language use. The use of a good and clear Estonian language in state governance and administration, in education and business, in public information, in services, and in other important areas, ensures the sustainability of an Estonian-speaking society. Both individual and collective language rights and the monitoring of language legislation are ensured.

Prestige and attitudes towards the language – the people of Estonia consider the Estonian important and useful, and Estonian has a high prestige among Estonians and other nationalities. Estonian is the basis for the sustainable development of the Estonian nation and it helps create a common space of values, a sense of belonging and social cohesion. Estonian is valued as the core of the Estonian culture and as the language of cultural creation, and it is also preferred in informal communication, including in the virtual world. Proficiency in Estonian provides better opportunities for personal fulfilment and economic success.

Strategic activities

- 1.1. The functioning, vitality and status of Estonian in all spheres of society are ensured through legislation and image-building:
- 1.2. Encouraging the use of Estonian as a home language, so that Estonian is maintained as a home language in families with Estonian-speaking parents, by developing recommendations to support the linguistic development of children.
- 1.3. Encouraging and developing reading and writing in Estonian at all levels of education and in all educational settings.
- 1.4. Promoting the learning and use of Estonian by people whose mother tongue or home language is other than Estonian in order to ensure the participation of all people in society, in the labour market and in the education system.
- 1.5. Encouraging the use of specific regional dialects of Estonian in everyday life, the media and the public sphere, supporting their teaching in kindergartens and schools and their preservation as a mother tongue, home language and living language of cultural heritage.
- 1.6. Legal support for Estonian: other laws and legislation observe the principles of the Language Act.
- 1.7. Ensuring through legislation, image building and monitoring that the Estonian public space (both visual and auditory) is predominantly Estonian and that information in foreign languages does not dominate over information in Estonian.
- 1.8. Strengthening state supervision of compliance with the requirements of Estonian language teaching and of using Estonian as the language of instruction in schools and kindergartens, supporting and advising educational institutions and teachers in complying with the requirements of using Estonian as the language of instruction.
- 1.9. Popularising the teaching, use and study of Estonian in Estonia. Valuing the promotion, teaching, study and use of Estonian among Estophiles abroad.
- 1.10. Keeping Estonians living abroad in the Estonian language and cultural space, valuing the use of Estonian as a home language and contacts with the homeland, and encouraging their return to Estonia.
- 1.11. Continuing to support Estonian-language culture, including literature, theatre, film, singing, folklore, cultural journalism and translations into and from Estonian.
- 1.12. Formulating good practice for naming businesses and companies and promoting the correct spelling of business names.
- 1.13. Valuing language management and administration, including respecting the principles of plain language and the correct use of language in public spaces and by public authorities, as well as in the media and the cultural sphere.
- 1.14. Participating in international cooperation on language policy.

Strategic Goal 2: Language research and infrastructure

Research into Estonian is internationally advanced and the language infrastructure is innovative, open and diverse; Estonian vocabulary is developed in a coordinated way.

Development of language technologies – the development of language technologies is a priority, as it strengthens the vitality of Estonian in an increasingly digital world and supports people's (including people with linguistic special needs) livelihoods and participation in society.

Terminology development – professional terminology is highly developed and up-to-date.

Academic texts in Estonian – supporting the production and publication of academic texts in Estonian.

Quality of corpora, dictionaries, linguistics – Estonian linguistics is internationally competitive, language corpora and dictionaries are continuously developed, of high quality and accessible.

Strategic activities

- 2.1. Increasing investment in the digital development of Estonian in order to ensure the vitality and competitiveness of the language and to ensure that it keeps pace with scientific research and technological progress.
- 2.2. Providing greater support for the development and take-up of Estonian language technologies. Supporting the development of language resources, language-learning applications and support systems in cooperation with businesses, universities and research institutions. Ensuring the availability of the most widespread software applications in Estonian. Concentrating language technology support services – the infrastructure supporting the development of language technologies – in a single centre of excellence.
- 2.3. Supporting the development of Estonian linguistics as a field of linguistic research and development, including research into the historical linguistic diversity of the Estonian territory, contemporary scientific research into Estonian, including research into language variation and the functioning of language in society, sociolinguistic research (linguistic sociology, linguistic law), research into language use in relation to the use of digital technology, research into multilingualism, systemic care and the development of modern, open and user-friendly dictionaries, databases and language corpora. Encouraging the use of experimental and innovative methods in research into the Estonian language and publishing at a high international level.
- 2.4. Supporting research into the regional varieties of Estonian, the development and publication of dictionaries, databases and language corpora.
- 2.5. Supporting the study of kindred people's languages and the development of language infrastructures.
- 2.6. Developing and maintaining the linguistic norm. The quality of the linguistic standard is ensured by editors, by language experts working with setting the standard and maintaining it, and by the relevant institutions and bodies. The linguistic norm is developed on the basis of actual language use and linguistic research.
- 2.7. Supporting the production and publication of academic texts in Estonian and the development of Estonian academic language.
- 2.8. Supporting the creation and use of Estonian-language terminology in all fields of research and life, including developing and compiling multilingual term bases and encouraging cooperation between professionals, translators and linguists, so that the terminology is updated in a collaborative manner and put into circulation promptly. Focusing on the language of European documents, which affects the Estonian (legal) language as well as language use and terminology in all areas of society.
- 2.9. Estonia's higher education institutions train a sufficient number of editors, translators and interpreters. Supporting their further training. ELS focuses on the development of areas that are important for the preservation of the Estonian ethnos, language and culture, as well as for the provision of public services.
- 2.10. Supporting the activities of cultural and memory institutions in the fields of language development and education, including lifelong learning (e.g. activities in libraries, community centres, museums, etc.). More detailed actions are foreseen in the cultural and educational development programmes.
- 2.11. Extending free online access to quality Estonian-language publications, including cultural publications.
- 2.12. Developing and researching the Estonian sign language and Braille and their teaching, including by making use of language technologies.

Strategic Goal 3: Language teaching and learning

All residents of Estonia are proficient in Estonian and value the knowledge of other languages.

Provision of education with Estonian as the language of instruction – there has been a shift to predominantly Estonian-medium schooling, which means that instruction in state and local government-funded schools and pre-schools is in Estonian. Estonian language instruction ensures the integration of children and young people into the Estonian cultural and value space, and gives everyone an equal opportunity to participate in society and working life and to continue their education at the next level.

Teaching of the mother tongue – the teaching of Estonian as a mother tongue is valued and enhanced; the teaching of mother tongues other than Estonian is valued and, where possible and appropriate, provided.

Language of higher education – in cooperation with universities, a balance is established between Estonian and English language instruction in higher education in order to strengthen the position of Estonian as a language of research and higher education.

Estonian as a second language – Estonian language learning is of high quality and accessible. The number of people who are proficient in Estonian has increased significantly.

Foreign language learning – high-quality foreign language teaching ensures that every Estonian can speak at least two languages in addition to their mother tongue.

Strategic activities

- 3.1. Supporting the development and implementation of a plan for education in Estonian, starting with preschool education, which will provide sufficient language skills to continue education in Estonian at subsequent levels of education and in lifelong learning. Detailed activities are defined in the Education Strategy and its programme(s).
- 3.2. Proficiency in Estonian among residents of Estonia is ensured by lifelong learning in both formal and non-formal education, the organisation of which (with the exception of Estonian as a second language for adults) is guided by the Education Strategy.
- 3.3. Intensifying the teaching of Estonian as a second language to enable all learners to achieve at least the language levels set in the national curricula. Developing teaching resources and methods and training teachers, including upgrading their skills to teach pupils of different ages and from different cultural and educational backgrounds.
- 3.4. Ensuring support for the production of textbooks and teaching resources through establishing the linguistic norm and through providing professional terminology and developing language technologies. Supporting the production of Estonian-language textbooks and teaching resources help to maintain the fields of use of Estonian.
- 3.5. Developing (e-)learning tools and platforms for learning Estonian, including its regional dialects. Supporting the uptake of language technologies in language learning, including by people developing language learning materials and by end-users. Ensuring the necessary language technology resources to support learning.
- 3.6. Setting the teaching of Estonian language and literature as a national priority and ensuring the quality and the necessary volume of teaching. Alongside mother tongue teaching, the teaching of literature is emphasised in order to help learners develop their language ability, increase their vocabulary and diversify their language use through Estonian-language literature. Ensuring the training of teachers of Estonian and literature on an adequate scale under the programmes of the Education Strategy.
- 3.7. Enhancing the readiness of kindergarten, general education and vocational school teachers to support the learning of Estonian as a mother tongue and as a second language.
- 3.8. In cooperation with higher education institutions, developing and implementing language and internationalisation principles for higher education to ensure the status of Estonian as a language of higher education and research, defining the balance between Estonian and English-language teaching, and at the same time contributing to the international excellence of universities. Developing Estonian-language curricula, terminology and research in order to ensure that all students whose mother tongue is Estonian can acquire Estonian terminology and that no subject area is taught entirely in a foreign language. Ensuring that Estonian is the language of administration in public universities. Teaching Estonian to international students and staff to help them operate in an Estonian-speaking environment.

- 3.9. In line with the objectives of the Population and Cohesive Society Development Plan, improving the quality of learning Estonian as a second language by adults, expanding opportunities for learning Estonian and creating opportunities for practising Estonian in areas with a higher proportion of people whose mother tongue or home language is other than Estonian. Supporting counselling of Estonian language learners and study providers, and regularly promoting opportunities to learn Estonian. Organised according to the funding and quality principles agreed upon under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Research, language learning is provided by the different ministries to target groups in their respective areas of responsibility according to their needs.
- 3.10. Promoting the teaching of Estonian and ensuring the availability of Estonian-language learning resources, including e-learning tools and platforms, abroad in order to support the retention of Estonians living abroad in the Estonian language and cultural space, and to create better conditions for their return to Estonia and smooth adaptation to the Estonian educational environment. Agreeing on the key objectives for the development of global Estonianness under the Population and Cohesive Society Development Plan.
- 3.11. Expanding opportunities to study Estonian abroad at universities and language courses.
- 3.12. Promoting the knowledge and development of the mother tongues and cultures of ethnic minorities within the framework of the Population and Cohesive Society Development Plan and its programmes.
- 3.13. Promoting foreign language learning in the Estonian education system, so that the Estonian society has a sufficient number of speakers of German, French and other European languages, and of our neighbouring languages, as well as speakers of classical languages and other major languages in the world.
- 3.14. Supporting the Council of the European Union's recommendation that secondary school leavers should have a very good level of proficiency in one European language in addition to their mother tongue, and a good level of proficiency in another foreign language. To this end, the quality and effectiveness of foreign language learning will be improved.
- 3.15. Supporting the acquisition of professional foreign language skills in vocational and higher education.
- 3.16. Valuing foreign language skills, including by providing opportunities to take internationally recognised language examinations and recognising effective language learning activities.

For the successful implementation of ELS, it is important that the responsibilities and roles of all actors are clear, but not rigid, and that actors, including different ministries and government agencies, work together to achieve its objectives.



Indicators

Metric	Baseline	Target 2035
GENERAL OBJECTIVE: to ensure the vitality and functioning of Estonian in the Republic of Estonia as the primary language in all walks of life, to guarantee the right and opportunity for everyone to use Estonian in Estonia, to preserve and strengthen the status and prestige of Estonian and the Estonian cultural space, and to value the knowledge of other languages.		
1. Functional literacy in Estonian among residents aged 16-65 years	To be specified in 2022-23 based on PIAAC study	
2. Percentage of Estonian speakers in the population	New metric: to be specified in 2022	
STRATEGIC GOAL 1: The status of Estonian is stable and it has high prestige.		
1. Prestige of Estonian in society	Among native Estonian speakers	New metric: to be specified in 2022
	Proficiency in and prestige of Estonian among people whose mother tongue or home language is other than Estonian.	
STRATEGIC GOAL 2: Research into Estonian is internationally advanced and the language infrastructure is innovative, open and diverse; the Estonian vocabulary is developed in a coordinated way.		
1. The number and citations of publications on Estonian linguistics with international coverage	To be measured in 2022	To be specified in 2022
2. Number of multilingual term bases	70 (2020)	100
3. Language technology support for Estonian	Partial	Full
STRATEGIC GOAL 3: All residents of Estonia are proficient in Estonian and value the knowledge of other languages.		
1. Platform for learning and teaching Estonian for adult learners	Not available	Available
2. Estonian residents' self-reported foreign language competence	New metric: to be specified in 2022	

¹⁰ The content and methodology of the indicators are described in more detail in Annex 3.

Assessment of the impact of ELS

Language connects society as a whole, its different sectors and stakeholders. Therefore, the activities of ELS and their intended impact concern the entire Estonian population (including people of Estonian origin living abroad) and all areas of life. The impacts of ELS have been assessed in six areas: social impact, including demographic impact, impact on national security and external relations, the economy, the living and natural environment, regional development, as well as the functioning of public institutions and local government.

The impact assessment is based on the methodology of the Government Office.¹¹ According to this methodology, ELS has the most direct impact on education and culture. ELS also has an impact on adaptation and integration, and indirectly on other areas such as national security and stability. The planned activities will have a long-term impact – the aim is to develop Estonian language learning as part of lifelong learning; but maintaining and developing the status and prestige of the Estonian language, research into the Estonian language and the development of language infrastructure are also long-term goals. The implementation of ELS will not have a negative impact on any of the target groups.

ELS is in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals¹², in particular with the objective of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. The impact assessment also takes into account the strategic goals and development needs of the national long-term development strategy "Estonia 2035". The assessment is also based on the expert groups' vision and proposals for the development of the Estonian education, research, youth and language sectors in 2021-2035, which emphasise the important role of the IT sector as well as pre-school education and extracurricular learning.

Social and demographic impacts

The expert groups' vision document¹³ refers to the tangible and moral role of Estonian in society. Estonian is an integral part of the identity of Estonia and its people, and therefore it is necessary to ensure the status and high prestige of Estonian. A person with a strong identity believes in their ability to influence the development of the Estonian state. Proficiency in Estonian improves people's livelihoods, enables them to be aware of their rights, encourages participation in civil society, increases their activity and competitiveness in the labour market, and helps them to continue their education. Availability of high-quality language learning opportunities across Estonia gives people more equal opportunities for employment and civic participation.

ELS impacts research and development, including by supporting the development of linguistics and language technologies. The Estonian-language infrastructure will ensure the integrity of society and opportunities for all members of society to participate in society, creating a public space that is inclusive of all members of society. The development of language infrastructures and language technologies, as well as of a plain language, will have an impact on people's ability to cope and participate in society, including people with linguistic special needs, by improving their communication opportunities and the quality of self-expression. Proficiency in Estonian contributes to the political and social activity of ethnic minorities, promotes their integration, strengthens their competitiveness in society and in the labour market, and helps preserve their language and cultural identity. Promoting equal opportunities in language learning reduces gender inequalities in education and in the labour market by ensuring that everyone has the language skills they need to succeed. By using language-learning opportunities, people of Estonian origin living abroad will be able to communicate with people in their home country and to return home.

In its long-term development strategy "Estonia 2035", Estonia sets the goal of having smart, active and health-conscious residents and a caring, cooperative and open society. ELS contributes to these strategic goals. ELS also responds to the development needs identified in "Estonia 2035", by promoting people's inclusion in social and cultural activities and contributing to the development of a learner-centred and inclusive education system based on shared values. ELS promotes the Estonian culture while at the same time being open to other languages and cultures.

11 Impact assessment methodology (2012). [\[link\]](#)

12 Sustainable development indicators (2018). [\[link\]](#)

13 Smart and Active Estonia. Expert groups' vision and proposals for the development of the Estonian education, research, youth and language sectors in 2021-2035 (2019). [\[link\]](#)

Impact on national security and external relations

Language policy plays a role in maintaining and developing national security (in particular a common cultural space and shared values) and effective external relations, including in the context of rising migration and internationalisation. Estonian is the official language of Estonia and the language of administration, including in security, information security, cyber security, emergency response, safety and surveillance. ELS contributes to the development needs of the long-term development strategy "Estonia 2035" in the field of security and safety, helping to ensure a strong cultural space and a public space that supports communication, as well as encouraging the participation and inclusion of people whose mother tongue or home language is other than Estonian. From the point of view of security policy, it is particularly important that the adults who have come to Estonia receive high-quality instruction in Estonian and culture (the "customs space") as soon as possible and join the Estonian-language information space. Estonian-language media is an important source of information. Clear and accurate provision of information in Estonian is supported by language resources, which require linguistic support to be convenient to use. The development of professional terminology, the availability of modern dictionaries and online applications are essential to support international communication and are the basis for clear and precise self-expression and clear and meaningful translations. Language infrastructure should support the processing, translation, dissemination and use of information.

In addition to a common Estonian-language information space, Estonian society should be enriched by intercultural contacts, supported by learning different languages and training translators and interpreters. Foreign language skills and intercultural understanding have an impact on the ability of Estonians to communicate internationally, including increasing international competitiveness at both national and individual level. Proficiency in foreign languages affects the work of Estonian diplomatic missions abroad and Estonia's participation in international organisations and cooperation. Language skills are also important for developing international relations at the level of civil society and local authorities. All of this ensures openness, development and innovation.

Impact on the economy

The expert group's vision document¹⁴ highlights the fact that the future labour market will have an increasing need for key skills, including language skills. In Estonia, language skills are essential for success in the labour market¹⁵: proficiency in both Estonian and foreign languages is needed. One of the development priorities of the long-term development strategy "Estonia 2035" concerns people without professional education, who require greater support to participate in lifelong learning. There is a marked gap in participation in lifelong learning between ethnic groups and regions, with people with lower levels of education and older people participating less. ELS will address the gaps in educational attainment caused by insufficient language skills. A good command of Estonian will help all residents (including foreigners who have completed higher education here) to be better positioned in the labour market. This will help to prevent unemployment and provide a higher income. Knowledge of foreign languages increases people's competitiveness both in Estonia and internationally. Alongside language learning, economy also benefits from advanced language infrastructure and language technologies. They help to save costs and support economic development in the long term. In this way, ELS contributes to the goal of the long-term development strategy "Estonia 2035" to ensure the innovativeness of the Estonian economy.

Impact on the living and natural environments

A person with a strong identity believes in their ability to influence the development of the Estonian state and places higher value on their own living and natural environments and their specific characteristics. Clear communication makes guidelines and legislation on the living and natural environments understandable, and good language skills give people a voice on environmental issues.

¹⁴ Smart and Active Estonia. Expert groups' vision and proposals for the development of the Estonian education, research, youth and language sectors in 2021-2035 (2019). [link](#)
¹⁵ Simmul, L. (2017). Võõrkeelte oskuse roll tööturul. [link](#)

Impact on regional development

The long-term development strategy "Estonia 2035" points out that "changes due to population decline and ageing will have the greatest impact on Ida-Viru County, South-East and Central Estonia and peripheral regions". Better language skills boost the competitiveness of regions, affect the quality of life and equal opportunities of people in different regions, and contribute to the preservation of the cultural specificities of regions and the sustainability of development. Language skills, including knowledge of dialects, help to increase the development potential of regions, improve the competitiveness of different regions, support the quality of life and equal opportunities for people from different regions, and contribute to the preservation and sustainability of cultural specificities and intangible cultural heritage. The development of language infrastructures and language technologies supports regional competitiveness and equal opportunities across regions (including through e-learning resources). ELS will help to shape the people-centred state envisaged in "Estonia 2035".

Impact on the functions and organisation of state and local authorities

A shared language, a common identity and understanding of everyday communication foster cooperation and initiative in local authorities. The opportunity to acquire a good command of the official language and to learn foreign languages should be provided to all residents of Estonia, irrespective of their origin or place of residence. Reducing the number of people who do not speak Estonian will simplify administration and the way the public sector functions. Improving Estonian skills of people of other nationalities also gives them more opportunities to work in the public sector. ELS contributes to the achievement of the strategic goals of the long-term development strategy "Estonia 2035", helping to develop a caring, cooperative and open country.

The process of, and involvement in, preparing ELS

The drafting of ELS is part of the strategic planning process of the Ministry of Education and Research for the period 2021-2035, which started with collecting ideas at public and sectoral events in autumn 2018. At the same time, expert groups were working from August 2018 to March 2019 to draft cross-policy vision papers on three themes: values and responsibility, prosperity and cohesion, and competitiveness. These are the aspects that have the greatest impact on the fields of language, education, research and youth at individual and societal level. The vision papers prepared by the experts form the basis for drafting all the strategic documents of the Ministry of Education and Research.

In 2018 and 2019, meetings were held with different ministries to discuss the synergies between language and other performance areas and the links with strategies for other sectors.

During 2019, the Estonian Language Council organised workshops for language experts, focusing on the fundamentals of language policy, language objectives and future lines of action. Work on ELS continued in 2020 in the Estonian Language Council and in the ELS Steering Committee.

Management and Implementation of the Strategy

The Estonian Language Strategy is implemented in accordance with the State Budget Act and Regulation No 117 of the Government of the Republic as of 19 December 2019, concerning the procedure for the preparation, implementation, reporting and evaluation of the sectoral strategy and the programmes and the amendments thereto. The implementation of ELDP is coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Research. The implementation of ELDP and the reporting under ELDP is managed by the Ministry of Education and Research, involving other ministries relevant to the field of languages.

The implementation of the Strategy and reporting is supported by a Steering Committee. The Steering Committee advises the Minister, supports the implementation of the Strategy by taking into account cross-sectoral links and impacts, as well as analyses reports and evaluates progress towards the objectives of the Strategy. The Steering Committee makes recommendations for the initiation, modification and termination of programmes, relying in these decisions on the performance reports linked to the Strategy, and assesses the modification and termination of the Strategy. The Steering Committee is composed of representatives of the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Government Office and the Estonian Language Council. The Steering Committee makes its decisions in cooperation with the Estonian Language Council.

In order to achieve the overall objective and strategic goals of the Strategy, a specific programme is drawn up and amended as part of the budgetary strategy and the preparation of the state budget.

The implementation of the Strategy will be reported within the framework of performance reporting and through needs-based evaluations. The achievement of the objectives and goals of the Strategy is evaluated at least twice during the period of implementation of the Strategy.

Estimated cost of ELS

Year	Cost details			Total (in EUR million)
	Strategic Goal 1	Strategic Goal 2	Strategic Goal 3	
2021	2.42	5.67	4.44	12.52
2022	2.42	6.87	5.95	15.23
2023	2.42	6.37	6.79	15.57
2024	2.42	6.37	7.76	16.54
2025	2.42	4.87	8.50	15.78
2026	2.42	4.87	9.19	16.47
2027	2.42	4.87	9.19	16.47
2028	2.42	4.87	8.56	15.84
2029	2.42	4.87	6.72	14.00
2030	2.42	4.87	4.88	12.16
2031	2.42	4.87	4.88	12.16
2032	2.42	4.87	4.88	12.16
2033	2.42	4.87	4.88	12.16
2034	2.42	4.87	4.88	12.16
2035	2.42	4.87	4.88	12.16

The forecast shows the estimated cost in millions of euros. The forecast is based on Statistics Estonia's population projection (2019) and the Ministry of Finance's long-term economic forecast (2019). Strategic Goal 1 covers activities to promote the prestige and status of Estonian, including support for language use, popularisation of language learning and research, monitoring compliance with the Language Act, etc. Strategic Goal 2 covers investments in language infrastructure development and linguistics. The activities under Strategic Goal 3 relate to the development and provision of language learning – Estonian as a mother tongue and as a second language, as well as foreign language learning.



ANNEXES to the Estonian Language Strategy 2021–2035

Photo: Paul Meesaar

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Annex 1. Current situation and development needs

The following is the description of the current state of Estonian and the main development needs in three focus areas: 1) the status and prestige of Estonian, 2) language research and infrastructure, and 3) language learning. Evaluations, conclusions and recommendations from studies, analyses and reports published between 2017 and 2019 have been used to discuss the situation and development needs of Estonian. It is based, inter alia, on the results of the monitoring the current Estonian Language Strategy¹, the survey on the state of Estonian² commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Research, the report of the National Audit Office³, studies on the language of education⁴, attitudes towards languages⁵, foreign language skills and labour market links⁶, as well as on the observations from researchers, the Estonian Language Institute, the Language Inspectorate and the Mother Tongue Society. This section also reflects the discussions at the engagement workshops with other ministries and government agencies.

Status and prestige of Estonian

Achievements

- Estonian is a state language protected by the Constitution.
- Estonian is strong, developed, rich and versatile.
- Estonian is a living language of culture and research.
- Estonian is the language of instruction at all levels of education.
- Estonian is an official language of the European Union.
- The development objectives and strategic activities for the Estonian language sector are agreed in the country's strategic planning.
- The sustainability of Estonian is a topical issue in political debates and in the media.
- Adults and young people in Estonia stand out positively among other countries for their good functional reading skills.
- Estonian is increasingly used for communication by people whose native language is other than Estonian.
- Estonia's strength lies in its consistent historical and cultural diversity, including the existence of regional varieties of Estonian.
- The range of uses of regional varieties of Estonian has expanded, including into public spaces and digital platforms.
- Personal and place names are regulated by respective legislation.
- The principles of plain language are promoted.
- Opportunities have been created for expat children to learn Estonian and to study in Estonian, which makes it easier for families to return and continue their children's education in Estonia in an Estonian-speaking environment.
- Estonian is taught at foreign universities.

Challenges

- In some fields (IT, research, higher education), the use of Estonian has decreased over the past decade due to internationalisation.
- In some regions, foreign languages are dominating in the public space, especially in tourist areas and in service provision.
- Information in Estonian is not always available in IT services.
- Use of Estonian in the service sector is under pressure due to the growth of the foreign workforce: service providers employ people with insufficient Estonian language skills, and there is no monitoring and support system to help employers organise language training.
- In some parts of Estonia, it is not possible for everyone interested to receive a quality education in Estonian.

1 Interim Report on the Implementation of the Development Plan for the Estonian Language 2011-2017 (2018). [link](#)

2 Study „Eesti keeleseisund“ (The Status of the Estonian language) (2017). [link](#)

3 National Audit Office report "Organisation and public funding of the Estonian language training for adults" (2019). [link](#)

4 Language of instruction at Estonian higher education institutions according to the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS) (2018). [link](#)

5 A study of attitudes towards languages (2017). [link](#)

6 Study "Role of foreign language skills in the labour market" (2017). [link](#)

- Estonian proficiency rate among the population with a mother tongue or home language other than Estonian has not increased significantly over the past decade.
- Intergenerational transmission of Estonian dialects and regional varieties has decreased.
- The language issue is overly politicised and this hinders legislative developments in the field of languages.
- The objectives and actions under national strategies do not ensure the sustainability of Estonian.
- The principles of plain language are not always established in official communication. Some public sector texts have not undergone language editing.
- Good language practice is not formulated.
- Business name regulation is not sufficient.
- Estonians are not aware of the major impact they have on the preservation and development of Estonian and culture through their everyday language choices, including those related to education and working life.

Language research and infrastructure

This covers linguistics and language infrastructure, i.e. language management and maintenance, professional language, vocabulary and terminology work, and language technology.

Achievements

- One of the foundations of language sustainability – Estonian language technology – is in good health and keeps pace with the needs of society and the changing world.
- Estonian linguistics and the study of the Estonian language are at an internationally high level – linguistics at the University of Tartu ranks among the top 250 in the world.
- Estonian language research has become more data-driven, using and creating language technologies and digital language resources.
- Estonian is described in detail in the forthcoming series of comprehensive works and in Estonian grammar.
- The Estonian literary language follows an established linguistic norm, which helps to ensure consistency and clarity in official language use.
- Estonian language management (including regulation of names) and maintenance are descriptive and advisory in nature. This enables people to consciously improve and enrich their language use.
- Language management and maintenance tools are available online.
- Dictionaries and language resources are publicly available online, free of charge and with a large user base.
- Contemporary terminology in Estonian is available in all areas of life and science. This is extremely important for the development and survival of the Estonian academic and technical language.
- Work on Estonian-language terminology is carried out by a number of ministries and in their respective areas of responsibility, including online communication, research publications and the functioning of the Estonian e-government.
- A terminology management platform has been created to facilitate professional terminology work, including collaboration between terminologists, experts and terminology committees.

Challenges

- There are sub-areas of language technology that are not well developed, such as natural language interfaces, automatic proofreading, information extraction from text.
- The available language technology tools and applications and language management tools are not sufficiently promoted and used.
- The development and uptake of applications is hampered by a lack of potential consumers.
- No solution has been found to the issues of data protection and the use of key data.
- In the research and description of the Estonian language, digital resources and language technologies are under-utilised and research findings are not sufficiently implemented (e.g. in language learning).
- There are few (linguistic) studies on which to base the teaching of Estonian.
- The development of language technologies and terminology, and the production of dictionaries, is hampered by the inconsistent quality, scarcity or absence of corpora.
- The development of Estonian-language terminology is threatened by the anglicisation of some fields and the lack of centralised and coordinated terminology development.
- Co-operation between professionals, translators and linguists is inadequate.
- Sign language development, including the next generation of sign language interpreters, is not ensured.

Language teaching and learning

Topics of language teaching and learning include learning Estonian as a mother tongue, learning Estonian as a second or foreign language, learning Estonian abroad and learning foreign languages in Estonia.

Achievements

- Estonian proficiency of Estonian students meets the requirements of today's society in the measured aspects – functional reading skills – as shown by the results of PISA and the Estonian national examinations.
- Targeted language learning opportunities for adults are being developed by a number of ministries as part of their activities to achieve the broader objectives set in this area.
- Over the years, a large number of Estonian language learning resources have been published.
- Estonian e-learning platforms have been created, e.g. Keeletee, which is used by more than 60,000 people to learn Estonian based on both Russian and English.
- Estonian language houses have been set up, offering a variety of opportunities to communicate in Estonian and to get a better idea of Estonian cultural and customs space.
- Estonian children living abroad can learn Estonian, inter alia, with the support of the Global School programme and teachers following the Estonian curriculum.
- Estonian is taught (partly with the support of the Estonian government) at more than thirty foreign universities with about a thousand learners at any one time.
- Being multilingual is valued in the Estonian labour market.
- People in Estonia value learning other languages in addition to English.
- In international comparison, Estonian students have good opportunities to learn foreign languages: the national curriculum includes at least two foreign languages.
- Language learning is based on the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the principles set out in the document.
- Opportunities have been created for Estonia's ethnic minorities to maintain their mother tongue.

Challenges

- There is a shortage of language teachers, including teachers of the Estonian language and literature and teachers of Estonian as a second language.
- There is no widespread understanding that every subject teacher should pay attention to the development of learners' language skills alongside the teaching of specialised knowledge and vocabulary.
- There is a shortage of e-learning resources for teaching Estonian as a mother tongue and as a second language, and the existing language resources are not sufficiently used to develop Estonian language learning resources.
- In recent years, a number of educational institutions around the world have decided to reduce their support for the teaching of less widely spoken languages, which has led to the reduction or termination of Estonian language teaching in some higher education institutions.
- As regards the teaching of Estonian to children and young people abroad, the problem is that Sunday schools, clubs and societies are often run by people who have no teaching qualifications and need training in language teaching methods, language skills development, the use of language teaching tools, etc.
- English language programmes in higher education do not include enough courses on the Estonian language and culture.
- Opportunities for further training on Estonian are under-used in the public sector.
- On the basis of the results of the state examination of Estonian as a second language, it can be stated that the Estonian skills of learners with other mother tongues or home languages have not improved significantly.
- The teaching of Estonian as a second language in basic education is not effective enough and does not allow school leavers to continue their education and enter the labour market smoothly.

- The Estonian language skills of non-native vocational students do not match labour market needs. VET graduates' foreign language skills are also inadequate.
- In Russian-medium schools, teachers' poor Estonian language skills, poor knowledge of language teaching methods and unfavourable attitudes towards learning Estonian pose problems.
- Teachers of Estonian as a foreign language do not participate sufficiently in in-service training for foreign language teachers, and no specific in-service training is provided for them.
- There is a lack of applied research on the methodology of teaching Estonian as a second language and modern teaching methods are not being used sufficiently.
- As regards the organisation of adult learning of Estonian as a second language, there is no clear leader, no body responsible for the development of the field, and no systematic coordination of language learning activities between the relevant state agencies.
- A large number of adults, despite having completed Estonian language courses, are not able or motivated to pass the state language proficiency exam at the required level because there is no opportunity to practice Estonian, the teaching methods do not sufficiently support the development of communication skills and the need for language courses free of charge is greater than what is offered.
- For adult learners, there is no coherent system of learning Estonian to move smoothly from one level to the next.
- There are problems with the quality of language courses (continuing training) for adults. There is a large number of private providers, the quality of courses is uneven and the instructors' qualifications (often including Estonian language skills) are insufficient.
- Estonia does not meet the European Union's recommended target of people knowing two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue, meaning that the foreign language skills of nearly half of the adults are limited to one language.
- Compulsory foreign language learning starts too late or is not intensive enough, in particular in the case of languages other than English, and it is therefore difficult to master two foreign languages at the required level.
- The majority of pupils learn English and Russian as foreign languages in basic education, as schools are not obliged or able to offer a wider choice of foreign languages. The limited choice of foreign languages in basic and upper secondary schools and the poor level of teaching discourages the training of high-level speakers of different languages and undermines Estonia's linguistic capacity.
- There are not enough support services available at school for children whose mother tongue is other than Estonian.
- Minorities are not always provided with the opportunity to learn their native language at school. For many languages there are no teachers and no teaching resources.

Annex 2. Strategic documents related to ELS

This Annex provides an overview of international and national documents relevant for the development and implementation of ELS and the views expressed in them. ELS was developed on the basis of the following documents:

1. The Development Plan for the Estonian Language 2011–2017 (2020) and interim reports
2. Key principles of Estonian language policy (draft, 10.6.2019);
3. The Estonian Language Strategy 2018–2027. Keel loob väärtust (Language creates value) (draft, 2018);
4. Report „Eesti keeleseisund“ (Status of the Estonian language) (MoER, 2017);
5. „Õppekeel Eesti kõrgkoolides EHISe andmetel“ (Language of instruction at Estonian higher education institutions according to the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS)) (2018);
6. Proposal to the Government of the Republic on strengthening the vitality, development and learning of the Estonian language (Riigikogu Decision, 22.10.2019);
7. Ministry of Education and Research surveys on attitudes towards languages, foreign language skills, etc., in the labour market from 2017-2019;
8. National Audit Office report “Organisation and public funding of the Estonian language training for adults” (2019);
9. Analysis "Identification of barriers and facilitators to the use of plain language in government agencies" (2019);
10. Integration studies (e.g. Estonian Society Integration Monitoring, Applied Language Survey, etc.);
11. Estonia's EU policy priorities 2020–2021.

Links with key EU and international policies and other sectoral strategies

1. **The objectives of the European Pillar of Social Rights⁷**, which states that regardless of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, everyone has the right to equal treatment and opportunities regarding employment, social protection, education, and access to goods and services available to the public. ELS will increase equal opportunities for under-represented groups. Proficiency in the national language supports equal opportunities (e.g. in terms of employment);
2. **The UN Sustainable Development Goals⁸ and objectives of the national sustainable development strategy “Sustainable Estonia 21”**, which emphasise the vitality of the Estonian cultural space, the growth of human well-being and a socially cohesive society, and the **Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage**, which stresses the link between language and cultural heritage. ELS contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goal to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The contribution of the Estonian Language Strategy to UN Sustainable Development Goals is described in Annex 4. In achieving its goals, ELS takes into account the opportunities offered by **Estonian EU policy**, e.g. the development of language technologies and teaching Estonian as a second language;
3. **A shared vision of a European Education Area for the European Union**, fostering cooperation and exchange of best practices between Member States to promote inclusive, lifelong and innovative learning in education and training systems, and to support seamless mobility across different levels and forms of education. ELS also takes into account **other EU instruments**, including the recommendations of the Council of the European Union (on key competences for lifelong learning⁹; on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages¹⁰; on the upgrading of skills¹¹, on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning¹²); the Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a single framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass)¹³; the Communication from the European Commission on a European Skills Agenda¹⁴;
4. Council of Europe document **"European Framework for Language Learning: learning, teaching and assessment"**: The European Framework for Language Learning provides a common basis for planning language learning and assessing learning outcomes. In Estonia, the measurement of language learning and proficiency is linked to the descriptors of the framework (e.g. in national curricula).

7 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. [link](#)

8 Sustainable development strategy 2030. [link](#)

9 Council Recommendation on key competences (2018). [link](#)

10 Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages (2019). [link](#)

11 Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults (2016). [link](#)

12 Council recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (2017). [link](#)

13 Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass) (2018). [link](#)

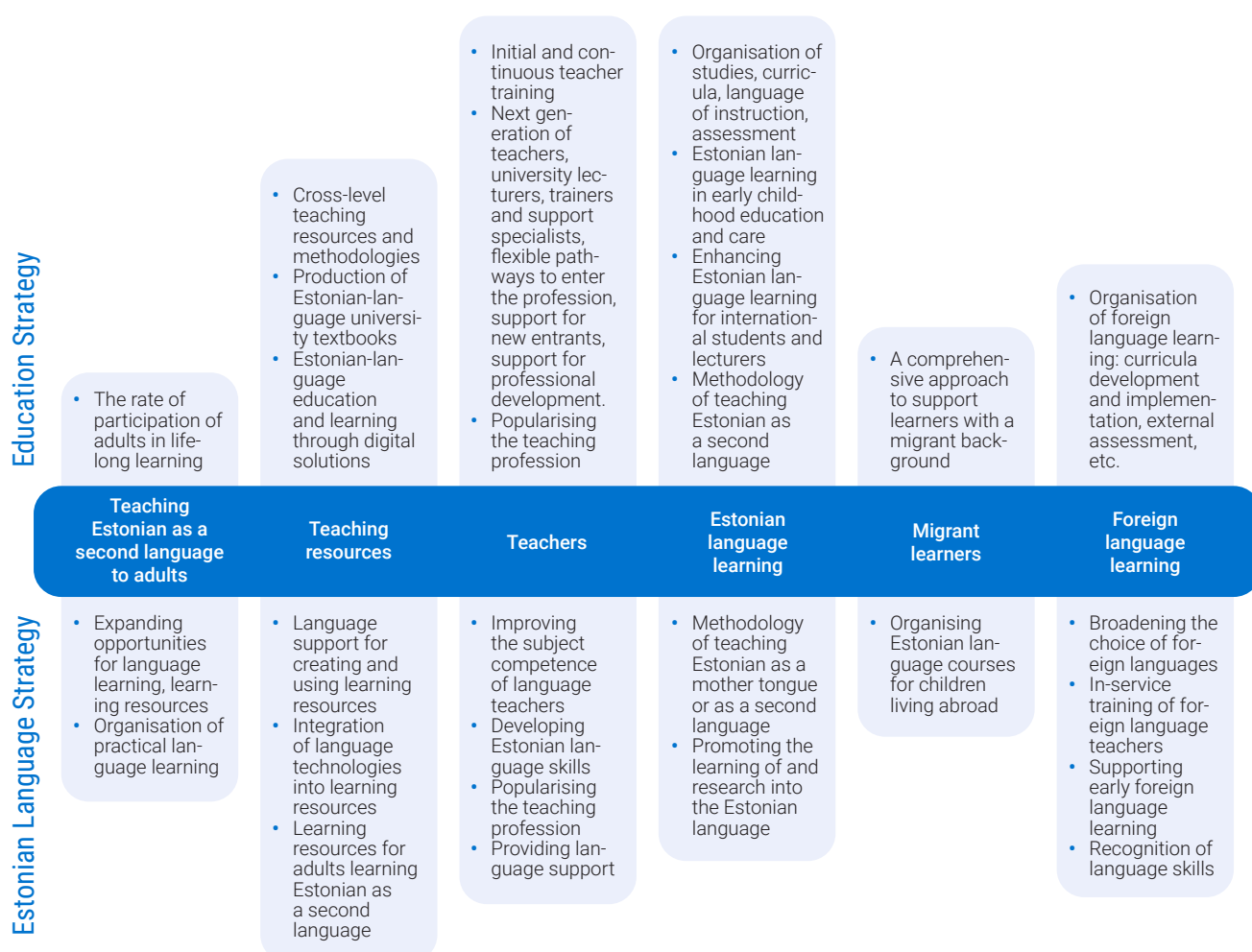
14 Commission Communication “A New Skills Agenda for Europe” (2016). [link](#)

National strategic principles

The long-term development strategy "Estonia 2035" is the core national strategy document, which also guides ELS. "Estonia 2035" identifies Estonia's most important overall development needs and sets out Estonia's long-term strategic goals, according to which ELS sets out the necessary changes and directions in the Estonian language policy for 2021-2035.

Education Strategy 2021–2035. ELS is linked to the strategic goals of the Education Strategy, which deal with Estonian-medium education, language learning, language of higher education and research and foreign language learning (see Figure 1). In the area of language policy, the Education Strategy deals with the development of Estonian-medium teaching and Estonian language learning as well as foreign language learning in schools; ELS deals with Estonian language policy as a whole (including the provisions of the Constitution and the Language Act). ELS and the Education Strategy overlap in several areas, in particular in Strategic Goal 2 of the Education Strategy, which aims to support the development of a common cultural space and shared values, to ensure high-quality Estonian-medium education and Estonian language learning, and to promote the learning of foreign languages.

Figure 1. Themes common to ELS and the Education Strategy



Estonian Research and Development, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Plan 2035. ELS and the Research Development Plan are linked by the issues of the language of higher education and research, including the development and use of Estonian terminology and the field of linguistics. The points of intersection of the two documents are, firstly, in their goals that formulate the importance of the provision of higher education in Estonian and the development of the language of research, and secondly, in their goals that formulate the development of advanced research into Estonian language and culture and the development of up-to-date language technology solutions.

General Principles of Cultural Policy until 2030 (currently underway); A common theme is the strengthening of the Estonian-language cultural space, including issues related to the production of and access to texts in Estonian, linguistic activities of memory institutions, lifelong learning, taking into account regional (including linguistic) cultural specificities and dialogue with other cultures. The priorities of cultural policy also include effective cultural communication in Estonian through various media and the maintenance of language and cultural links with Estonians.

Population and Cohesive Society Development Plan 2030 (currently underway); ELS's language learning targets support integration policies. Points of convergence and commonalities are integration and adaptation policies, sustainable population and global Estonia.

The Youth Field Development Plan 2021–2035 is the starting point for planning values-based activities. The youth field has a significant impact on the well-being of society at large by protecting and promoting human rights, tolerance and solidarity. Respect for one's native language, other languages and cultures creates the conditions for the appreciation of cultural diversity and equal treatment, helping to build a cohesive and healthy society based on participation and cooperation.

As regards the objectives of the Welfare Development Plan 2016-2023, ELS mainly relates to supporting people's employment. Knowledge of languages is one of the factors ensuring successful participation in working life. The development of language infrastructure will support the ability of people with linguistic special needs to cope independently, live in the community and participate in society.

As regards the objectives of the National Defence Strategy 2017-2026, ELS contributes first and foremost to increasing the cohesiveness of Estonian society, which is clearly supported by the sub-objective of ELS: to improve the opportunities for learning Estonian, learning Estonian as a second language and learning foreign languages in education and lifelong learning (including e-learning), to improve the quality of teaching and to value terminology work, the principles of a plain language and foreign language skills, and to expand the opportunities for learning Estonian abroad.

The Foreign Policy Strategy until 2030 (currently underway) defines the preservation of the Estonian language, ethnicity and culture through time as one of its goals, and one of its target groups is the Estonian community abroad. One of the priorities of ELS is to support Estonian language learning abroad. Both documents also deal with the strengthening of links between Estonians living abroad and Estonia, including the opportunity to receive education in Estonian. The development of language skills, the teaching and learning of the languages of kindred peoples, international cooperation in the field of linguistics and the development of Estonia's image are also important commonalities.

The common cross-cutting theme of the Internal Security Development Plan until 2030 and ELS is the well-being and security of people, which ELS supports through a common cultural, values and information space and high-quality Estonian language learning. Internal security will be ensured through smart and innovative solutions, including the use of innovative language technologies.

As regards the objectives of the Digital State and Cybersecurity Development Plan 2025 (currently underway), ELS contributes in particular to the development of the digital state. Innovative language technology tools enable the adoption of Estonian-language digital solutions for digital services and language learning.

Annex 3. Methodology and sources of indicators

Metric	Baseline	Target 2035	Details	Assumption
GENERAL OBJECTIVE: to ensure the vitality and functioning of Estonian as the primary language in all walks of life, to guarantee the right and opportunity for everyone to use Estonian in Estonia, to preserve and strengthen the status and prestige of Estonian and the Estonian cultural space, and to value the knowledge of other languages.				
1. Functional literacy in Estonian among residents aged 16-65 years	to be specified based on the results of the PIAAC study to be carried out in 2022-2023	to be specified based on the results of the PIAAC study to be carried out in 2022-2023	Functional literacy – the ability to understand, evaluate and use texts – is a prerequisite for successful functioning in society, achieving goals and developing knowledge and skills. ¹⁵ In the 2011/2012 PIAAC international survey of adult skills, 57.5% of adults aged 16-65 who completed tasks in Estonian achieved at least Level 3 in functional reading.	The functional literacy of the Estonian people is improving.
2. Percentage of Estonian speakers in the population	to be specified in 2022	to be specified in 2022	The metric used is that of the national long-term development strategy "Estonia 2035". The metric reflects the proportion of people who use/speak Estonian in the total population, including both native speakers and people whose mother tongue or home language is other than Estonian. Information on the self-perceived proficiency in Estonian of people whose mother tongue or home language is other than Estonian is obtained through the Estonian Labour Force Survey conducted by Statistics Estonia.	Improving the quality and effectiveness of Estonian language learning in both formal and non-formal education. A good command of Estonian is essential for people whose mother tongue or home language is other than Estonian in order to succeed in studies, in the labour market and in society as a whole. Due to the new methodology, the baseline and target levels will be added in 2022.

Strategic goals

Strategic Goal 1: The status of Estonian is stable and it has high prestige.

1. Prestige of Estonian in society	to be specified on the basis of the results of the first survey	to be specified on the basis of the results of the first survey	The objective of the survey is to measure the prestige of Estonian among native Estonian speakers as well as people whose mother tongue or home language is other than Estonian. The survey examines people's attitudes towards the Estonian language, including their perception of the importance of using Estonian and how this is reflected in their language choices, their self-perception of their Estonian language skills, and their appreciation of the regional variations of the language. The metric reflects the consumption and appreciation of Estonian-language culture and the balance and attitudes towards the use of Estonian and foreign languages in different spheres of life.	The prestige of Estonian is increasing among native Estonian speakers as well as people whose mother tongue or home language is other than Estonian.
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¹⁵ PIAAC study. [link](#)

Metric	Baseline	Target 2035	Details	Assumption
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Strategic Goal 2: Research into Estonian is internationally advanced and the language infrastructure is innovative, open and diverse; the Estonian vocabulary is developed in a coordinated way.

1. The number and citations of publications on Estonian linguistics with international coverage	to be specified in 2022	to be specified in 2022	Research publications reflect the performance and level of a researcher, institution or research system, and the number of publications related to Estonian research institutions indicates the quality of Estonian linguistics. The number and citations of publications (ETIS classification 1.1, 1.2, 3.1, 2.1, 3.3) published in international peer-reviewed journals are measured. The metric takes into account linguistic publications related to Estonian research institutions (structural units dealing with linguistics and language technologies) in the fields of social sciences and culture.	Research and development activities in the field of the Estonian language and culture will continue. Due to the new methodology, the baseline and target levels will be added in 2022.
2. Number of multilingual term bases	70 term bases (2020)	100 term bases	The continuous development of terminology is essential in every area of life, as society and technology are constantly changing, new terms need to be created, and existing terminology needs to be updated. Term bases established according to common terminology principles provide an opportunity to aggregate terminology information and make it available to all language users. The survey will measure the number of professional terminologies developed in the centrally coordinated terminology management platform Ekilex.	Terminology work will continue in Estonia and new term bases will be added every year.
3. Language technology support for Estonian	In an international comparison, some important components of language technology are missing or under development, such as grammar checking in Estonian, a framework for dialogue systems, automatic semantic analysis. Accuracy of key components is below international levels.	The essential building blocks of Estonian language technology are in place and their accuracy is comparable to international standards.	Language technology support creates opportunities to use Estonian on different digital platforms and areas of life. In order to integrate Estonian into end-user applications, it is important to develop the basic components of language technology. The metric shows the availability and level of automatic speech and text analysis in international comparison.	The development of basic technologies for automatic speech and text analysis in Estonian will continue. The EU's language resources and language technology networks monitor the state of language technologies for the official languages of the European Union. ¹⁶

Metric	Baseline	Target 2035	Details	Assumption
Strategic Goal 3: All residents of Estonia are proficient in Estonian and value the knowledge of other languages.				
1. Platform for learning and teaching Estonian for adult learners	There is no single platform for learning Estonian as a second language.	The platform is set up and in active use.	The learning of Estonian as a second language will be brought together into a single platform, which will include opportunities for learning Estonian as a second language offered by the state to adult learners, improve access to language learning, raise awareness of language learning opportunities and monitor learners' language learning pathways. On this platform, learners can move smoothly between different language learning options.	Institutions offering Estonian as a second language will join the platform which will be designed as a user-friendly platform for the active learning of Estonia.
2. Estonian residents' self-reported foreign language competence	to be specified on the basis of the results of the first survey	to be specified on the basis of the results of the first survey	Foreign languages are taught in many settings (including formal and non-formal education, lifelong learning, independent learning, language courses, abroad), but few people take foreign language examinations or tests. Mapping self-reported foreign language skills provides an overall picture of people's foreign language skills. The survey, which is being developed to measure the prestige of the Estonian language, will look at which foreign languages people speak and how good their foreign language skills are.	Estonian residents' self-reported foreign language competence will improve.

Annex 4. The contribution of the Estonian Language Strategy 2021-2035 to UN Sustainable Development Goals

UN Sustainable Development Goals ¹⁷		Estonian Language Strategy 2021-2035 contribution
Objective	Sub-objective	
<p>4. objective Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</p>	<p>4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.</p> <p>4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.</p> <p>4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.</p> <p>4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.</p> <p>4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.</p> <p>4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.</p> <p>4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States.</p>	<p>The Estonian Language Strategy 2021-2035 contributes to UN Sustainable Development Goals. High-quality teaching of Estonian as the official language at all levels of education supports the achievement of learning outcomes and the acquisition of education from preschool to higher education. High-quality language learning opportunities should be available to all people, regardless of their gender, age, origin, economic status, etc. A sufficient command of Estonian as the official language increases people's chances of participating in employment, find good jobs and starting a business. This is also supported by foreign language skills. ELS values the cultural component of language learning and appreciates the linguistic richness of Estonian society, including the regional varieties of Estonian and the Estonian sign language. The actions under ELS will also help to improve teachers' professional skills and their preparedness to support students' language learning.</p>

¹⁷ Sustainable development strategy 2030. [\[link\]](#)

UN Sustainable Development Goals ¹⁷		Estonian Language Strategy 2021-2035 contribution
Objective	Sub-objective	
<p>Objective 8 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</p>	<p>8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment for all women and girls, including young people and people with disabilities, and ensure that they receive decent and equal pay for equal work.</p> <p>8.6 By 2030, significantly reduce the number of young people not in employment, education or training.</p> <p>8.9 By 2030, develop and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism to create jobs and promote local culture and products.</p>	<p>Insufficient language skills are a barrier to participation in education and employment. Proficiency in Estonian increases the chances for all people, including young people and people with disabilities, to participate in employment. Promoting local culture also includes supporting dialects.</p>
<p>Objective 10 Reduce inequality within and among countries</p>	<p>10.2 By 2030, empower all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or belief and economic or other status, and support their social, economic and political inclusion.</p> <p>10.3 Ensure equal opportunities and reduce income inequalities, inter alia, by repealing discriminatory laws, policies and practices and supporting appropriate legislation, policies and measures.</p>	<p>In order to participate in society without obstacles, it is important to be fluent in Estonian. Proficiency in Estonian gives people the opportunity to have their say on social, economic and other issues. Age, gender, disability, origin, etc. are not barriers to learning Estonian. A good command of Estonian by all residents of Estonia reduces inequalities in society.</p>
<p>Objective 16 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</p>	<p>16.6 Establish effective, accountable and honest institutions at all levels.</p>	<p>Monitoring in the field of languages is carried out in an effective, accountable and inclusive way.</p>

¹⁷ Sustainable development strategy 2030. [\[link\]](#)

