

Language Policy in Estonia

by Mart Rannut

Abstract

In this article, the author presents the current ethnic and sociolinguistic situation in Estonia, and the language policy that is being implemented to restore use of Estonian. Taking this approach, Mart Rannut describes the earlier language policy of Russianisation and the replacement of Estonian carried out by the former Soviet Union, and the specific measures now being taken to achieve normalisation of Estonian, especially in education and the new technologies. The article concludes with the prospects for the future of Estonian and its underpinning language policy, in the context of integration into the European Union.

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1. Current ethnic and linguistic situation

Contemporary Estonia harbours several ethnic groups with Estonians as the titular nation comprising the main bulk (ca 70% in 2004) of the society. Other major ethnic groups include Russians (almost a quarter of the total), Ukrainians, Belorussians (White Russians) and Ingrians (Finns), 145 altogether, according to the population census of 2000. However, most of non-Estonians residing in Estonia are immigrants and their families who have come to live here after WW2, as in 1945 Estonians formed 97.3% of the population. Autochthonous ethnic groups are small in size, comprising Russians mostly of Old Orthodox roots on the shore of Lake Peipsi (ca 39,000), Jews, Germans (1700) and Swedes (300-1500). To these traditional minorities Ingrians, Rom (600-1500) and Tatars (3000) must be added.

Two ethnic groups, the Võro (estimated number of speakers ranging from 70,000 by the Võro Institute, cf. <www.wi.ee> to 30,000) and the Seto (from 7,000 to 2,500) form a special historical case. The forefathers of the current Estonian nation moved into the Estonian territory at least from two different directions in different waves (cf. Viitso 2001), both groups speaking similar, however considerably differing Balto-Finnic vernaculars. This laid the basis for two different Estonian languages, North and South Estonian, in use during medieval times, even in print (both became literary languages in the 17th century). The role of the South Estonian literary language began to wane in the 18th century in conjunction with the publication in 1739 of the Bible in North Estonian and with the introduction of compulsory reading skills in 1729, based on North Estonian. In the 19th century South Estonian was devalued to a low variety vernacular without accepted literary norms; however it has been in continuous oral usage in Southern Estonia. The revival of Southern Estonian took place in 1990s, when a modernised literary form was created. On this language form two ethnic groups, the Võro and Seto base

their ethnic identity, differing from each other mainly by denominational affiliation (Võro people are Lutheran (Protestant), while Seto are Orthodox).

According to the census data from 2000, the number of persons belonging to third nationalities (neither Estonian nor Russian) has dropped during the last 10 years considerably, comprising 81,000 persons. Only less than 40% have retained their language of ethnic affiliation, with most others shifting to Russian and, during recent years, to Estonian. Thus, the number of Russian mother tongue speakers is 407,000, which is considerably higher than the number of ethnic Russians, at the cost of third nationalities. According to estimates based on choice between Estonian and other-medium schools by students, non-Estonians will comprise one-fifth of the population in Estonia in the next generation. The non-Estonian population is mainly concentrated in towns (91% of all non-Estonians live in urban areas), the principal centres of concentration (for 80% of the total) being six major Estonian cities: Tallinn, Tartu, Narva, Kohtla-Järve, Pärnu, Sillamäe.

Knowledge of the Estonian language is increasing at a slow rate. According to the results of the census of 1989, 18% of ethnic non-Estonians could speak Estonian; the knowledge of Estonian among Russians was 15%, among Ukrainians 8.1% and Belorussians 6.8%. Among this population group, the share of non-Estonians, who are able to speak Estonian has been steadily increasing during last years, from 14% in 1988 to 37% in 1995. The same share was reported also during the census of 2000.

2. History in brief

After the October Revolution in Russia, the Estonian state was founded on 21 February 1918. Estonia was an independent nation-state until 16 June 1940. On 17 June 1940 the Soviet Union annexed Estonia and on 6 August 1940 Estonia was incorporated into the Soviet Union. The Soviet occupation lasted until Estonia regained sovereignty on 20 August 1991.

Major immigration flows into Estonian lands have always accompanied and followed wars and arrivals of new conquerors: in the 13th century, mainly Germans and Danes; in the 16th and 17th centuries, Swedes; and in the 18th and 19th centuries – Russians. However, up to the beginning of Soviet occupation in 1940 the population of the Estonian lands was quite homogeneous in its ethnic composition: with the predominance of Estonians, other ethnic groups made up no more than 7.11% altogether. It was only after the great wars, in the 17th century, that the proportion of non-Estonians reached the highest level of about 15% (representing about a dozen different ethnicities). During the high tide of Russification in the 80s and 90s of the 19th century, Russians made up, according to respective censuses, 3.3% in 1881 and 4.0% in 1897.

In medieval times the language used in the municipal administration was Baltic German, based on Low German (*Niederdeutsch*); the clergy used Latin for their sacred liturgy; and the language of the land supervisor depended on the language of the conquerors, i.e. (Low) German, Swedish, Russian, and, in places, Danish and Polish.

Between the two World Wars Estonia was an independent, mainly mononational state, whose minorities (Russians, Germans, Swedes, Jews) enjoyed ample cultural autonomy, adopted in 1925. Germans and Jews lived mostly in towns, Swedes in the Estonian coastal region and on the islands. In response to an appeal from Hitler, most Germans left Estonia in October 1939.

Following the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact and its Secret Protocol (known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact), the Soviet Union occupied the independent states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in June 1940. Estonia was proclaimed a part of the Soviet Union (6 August 1940) and named the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic, and fell under the rule of the Soviet governmental apparatus and the Communist Party. The annexation of Estonia by the USSR in 1940 entailed disastrous changes in the population, including its ethnic composition, resulting from killings (altogether over 180,000), mass deportations (altogether over 20,000 people) and imprisonment (ca 75,000) of autochthonous inhabitants and simultaneous in-migration of population from the occupying country. All schools, societies and clubs of the ethnic minorities were closed, and the system of cultural autonomy was terminated. Their journals and newspapers were closed down.

World War II overrode Estonia twice. Germany conquered Estonia in 1941, and in 1944 the country was again occupied by the Soviet Union. At the end of 1941 Estonia was claimed to be *judenfrei* by Nazis. Many factors contributed to a further decrease in the Estonian population, particularly war damage and losses, imprisonment and executions, as well as deportations and waves of refugees. During the years 1939-1940 ca. 22,000 Baltic Germans left Estonia for Germany. In 1943 Estonian Swedes (ca. 7,500) left their homes in the Estonian coastal region and islands for Sweden, in conformity with a German-Swedish treaty, in order to get out of the war. In 1944, before the arrival of the Soviet army, around 75,000 Estonians left as refugees (mainly for Sweden and Germany), in fear of a return of the Soviet terror. The result was that by 1946 the Estonian population had decreased by one-fifth (200,000) to 854,000. A mere 23,000 (2.7%) of non-Estonians remained as minorities in Estonia (the figure of 97.3% is disputed by Tiit (1993), who proposes 95-96%).

3. Soviet occupation

During the first decade of occupation, under Stalin's totalitarian rule, oppressive methods were used to create favourable social and demographic conditions for the destruction of Estonians and their language as well as of the remnants of indigenous minorities, replacing them with Russian-speaking, imported, "trustworthy" personnel. To make conditions more acceptable for the non-Estonian newcomers, several functional areas were russified, and for the sake of keeping their jobs Estonians had to learn the Russian language. Russian was made the second language in education (not a foreign language!), and in several areas, the first. The knowledge of the local language in occupied Estonia was not found necessary by newcomers, hence the low percentage of the knowledge (13-20%) among non-Estonians. No stimuli were left for newcomers to respect local language and culture.

The illegitimate transfer of Estonian territory (2,235 sq. kms, the town Petseri/Pechory and ten counties around it and beyond Narva river, with an ethnically mixed population of 56,000, from which Estonians comprised 19,000) to Russia at the end of 1944 changed the population almost to monoethnic. The area was linked to Pskov and Leningrad Region (Anderson 1990). These areas had mixed indigenous population of 56,000, consisting of ethnic Estonians (setud, 19,000), Russians and beyond the Narva River, Ingrians, living compactly in their villages. In Petseri, Estonians even formed a majority, according to the 1934 census.

For non-Russian minorities in Estonia, no possibilities were left to promote and maintain their ethnic culture and language. All their institutions were abolished, including media, schools, clubs and associations, etc. In fact, the same rules applied to Russian minority in Estonia, with the difference that the network of Russian-medium schools and clubs enlarged considerably, although not promoting local ethnic culture, but rather the all-Union socialist culture with a heavy ideological component.

Estonia was rearranged as one ethnic unit (republic) in the Soviet Union, with no ethnically based sub-units. Consequently, all other ethnic non-Estonian groups in Estonia, with the exception of Russians, had to give up their ethnic maintenance systems and linguistic human rights.

In addition to the implanting of the Soviet occupational army (it had 505 bases in Estonia, see Hallik 1994:57) Russian workers and collective farmers were sent to Estonia by the USSR government through the *orgnabor* system. As the number of Estonians did not rise to its pre-World War II level, remaining at less than a million, the proportion of Estonians in the overall population fell from 97.3% in 1945 to 61.5% in 1989.

Together with the influx of newcomers territorial and functional language shifts took place. In several **functional domains**, Estonian was replaced by Russian, due to Estonia's direct subordination to Moscow, for example in banking, statistics, the militia (Soviet police), railway, naval and air transport, mining, energy production, etc. The reasons for moving to Estonia were a better standard of living (there was famine in Russia), organised recruitment (construction work, oil shale industry), privileged positions in certain trades where Estonians were not trusted, e.g. navigation and aviation (an opportunity for Estonians to flee abroad), the railways (the risk of sabotage), communications (state secrets), etc. Some functional activities were completely new in Estonia, having no corresponding Estonian terminology and were therefore carried out in Russian, e.g. *Gosplan* (state planning) and the KGB. Some were recreated in Russian, e.g. everything connected with military purposes. An ancient Estonian

profession, off-shore fishing, was forbidden, the boats broken up and burned. Instead, the Russian-medium marine fishing and transport system was created, with special attention to ideological awareness. As a result, at the beginning of 1980s Estonians made up less than half of those employed in industry and transport.

Together with the decrease of functional as well as regional areas where the Estonian language was used, the **rapid rise of the status of Russian** took place. It was caused by several factors, like Russian being compulsorily the sole language for several functional spheres, the construction of a Russian-medium network of plants, factories, offices, institutions and service bureaus, a parallel to the already operating Estonian-medium ones, as well as entertainment facilities and residence areas, providing full-scale education (including higher education, vocational schools etc) and services in Russian. These structures were filled with the regular massive influx of immigrants. As a result a Russian-speaking environment was created in Estonia with no contacts with Estonians and the Estonian language, hindering effectively possible integration.

Assimilation of third nationalities was one of the key elements in creating this Russian language environment in Estonia. According to the 1989 census, the ethnic composition in Estonia was as follows: 963,000 Estonians, 475,000 Russians, 48,000 Ukrainians, 28,000 Belorussians, 16,600 Finns, 4,600 Jews, 4,000 Tartars, 3,500 Latvians and 3,000 Poles. The group of third nationalities (ethnic non-Estonians and non-Russians) was mostly assimilated to the Russian language (in Estonia!). In this category belonged mostly ethnic Ukrainians, Belorussians, Jews, Germans and Poles -- according to the 1989 census only 40% used their native languages as the first language, 52% were russified, and approximately 8% had switched to Estonian. The percentage of those claiming Russian as their native language was 78.4% among Jews, 67.1% among Belorussians, 63.4% among Poles, 56.5% among Germans, 54.5% among Ukrainians.

4. Language policy of Russification

Language policy in official documents was discussed implicitly under the disguise of ideology. The only exception seemed to be acquisition planning. The goals of the Soviet language policy in Estonia seemed to be:

1. full-scale Russian monolingualism for Russians, with local titular language learning optional or formal, (with no lessons or even a teacher), backed by cadre rotation (for military personnel, Communist Party bureaucrats);
2. minority bilingualism for other titular nations, with Russian-medium functional domains in expansion;
3. assimilation of "third nationalities", mostly to Russian.

The Soviet language policy in Estonia was implemented through a favoured immigration pattern. In order to consolidate immigrants on the basis of Russian language, three steps were implemented:

- Creation of a parallel Russian-medium environment, with no need to switch to Estonian;
- continuous transfer of territorial and functional domains from Estonian to Russian, and
- ideological incentives to prefer Russian over Estonian.

Against integrity of Estonian other activities were implemented:

- expanding usage of Russian in administration and mass communication,
- an extensive programme of translations from Russian,
- massive programme of Russian language teaching.

5. Language policy since 1988

The years from 1988 onwards reflect the biggest changes in Estonian society, influencing all domains. Therefore, language policy, based on an entirely different concept from the previous one, was one of the main cornerstones in the modification of Estonian society. Due to the heritage of the previous period, the renormalisation policy has been slow and difficult. In particular, the existence of two mobilised linguistic groups, the Estonian-speaking and the Russian-speaking ones, both identifying themselves as the majority in Estonia and

representing opposite views on several crucial issues, has made solutions difficult to find. The conditions of *perestroika*, providing more freedom, enabled the mass mobilisation of these groups, causing gradual increase of tension and conflict. This was accompanied with the diminishing central power, especially in the domain of ideology, channelling the struggle for the redistribution of power on the axis of the centre (Moscow) and the republic (Estonia), with the leadership of the republic losing its dependence on Moscow and coming more and more under the influence of the population of Estonia.

The functional domains that went through rearrangement (banking, real estate) or re-established anew (Estonian Army), or were highly profitable (and legal, like information technology), were Estonianised. While those vast former Union-subordinated factories and plants that did not correspond to these criteria, continued to operate in Russian, with only their control and management structure shifting to Estonian.

The Baltic republics took the avantgarde position in *perestroika*, being most receptive to *perestroika*; however the Baltic peoples wanted to go much further than Moscow reformers were prepared to allow (Smith 1994: 139). Thus, having no powerful control at their disposal, they took two main directions, which were not desired by the incumbent political leaders, namely the restoration of the national sovereignty of Estonia, and the restoration of the right of existence for the languages and cultures of Estonians and other discriminated ethnic groups.

The two corresponding laws were the Declaration of Sovereignty and the Language Law. The Supreme Council of the Estonian SSR passed the Declaration of Sovereignty on 16 November 1988, declaring the supremacy of Estonian laws over Soviet ones. The proclamation of Estonian as the official state language in Estonia, and its legalisation as such by a corresponding Constitutional amendment, was passed by the Supreme Council on 6 December 1988.

Several additional pro-Estonian steps were taken: the legalisation of the national colours, the restoration of the name of the Republic of Estonia, the declaration of Estonia as being in a period of transition towards independence (*restitutio ad integrum*), and the establishment of immigration quotas. A number of measures were taken in order to restore the Estonian language to its rightful status. In August 1990 the Estonian Government decided to repeal all acts which discriminated against the use of Estonian and to create a body empowered to supervise the implementation of the Language Law. On 23 November 1990 the National Language Board was established. It was the main body responsible for implementing language planning in Estonia, monitoring the use of Estonian, the official language, both as a native language and as a second language, and also supporting and regulating minority language use among the adult population. Its work was based on the relevant articles of the Constitution, the Language Law, the Law on Education and the Law on Cultural Autonomy as well as on the international human rights standards. The primary functions of the Board were the elaboration of language policy and language planning strategies, including the organisation, supervision, and analysis of the implementation of the Language Law, the improvement of language teaching methods, the supervision of normative terminological and onomastic work, and the conducting of sociolinguistic studies.

In Estonia a sophisticated set of problems of democracy and human rights had to be disentangled, among which were the expanding confrontation between the two linguistic communities. Estonians had the right to end occupation and oppression, including linguistic oppression. Simultaneously, those who in-migrated during the occupation, did not expect the occupation to come to an abrupt end, meaning that they had to face obligations connected with language and citizenship, lowering their competitiveness in the employment market and worsening their relative living standard relative to the indigenous population.

Thus, two key issues of Estonian transformation emerged for which the popular movements had to take a stand: sovereignty of Estonia, on the one side, and the Estonian language protection and other cultural issues, on the other.

6. Language Law of 1989

The Language Law was passed on 18 January 1989 by the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. It was a provisional one in its content, matching the needs of the

transformational process underway in Estonia. Though it described Estonian as the sole official language, due to political expediency, the main principle was based on the requirement of Estonian-Russian bilingualism, which required that holders of certain jobs had proficiency in both Estonian and Russian (in most cases the knowledge of 800 words were sufficient). To reach the required level a 4-year delay was introduced in the law, so that it became effective in 1 February 1993. The Law was in force until 1995, when the Law on Language of 1995 declared it null and void.

The Language Law of 1989 should be seen as a remedy to language problems at that time. The main problem had been a catastrophic growth of Russian monolingualism, reasons being demographic changes, low status of Estonian in several functional and regional areas, and non-integrative education. Language laws in this context should thus be regarded as the response to the considerable threat to local national and linguistic autonomy.

The law was guided by the following principles:

- **The principle of bilingualism of services and state agencies**, with the right of customers to choose the language of communication, introduced constraints on monolingualism of shop assistants and service personnel, which, taking the situation into account, meant restrictions for Russians –overwhelmingly monolingual at that time– on upward mobility and on employment in positions of public contact.
- **Language requirements instead of ethnic criteria.** Language as a vital element of national identity and national survival was non-negotiable. Simultaneously the issue of ethnicity was less significant, with the Estonian population accustomed to minorities. Thus, no ethnic preferences in legislation and administration were introduced, but instead, language requirements, while providing clear language rights for speakers of other languages (Ozolins 1994: 168).
- **Language law with propaganda effects, rather than for implementation.** Several articles of the Law had no legal meaning, or their implementation was beyond the reach of a democratic state. Thus, these should be considered as signals for a change of direction. Simultaneously, implementation of the law was secondary, and politically sensitive, demanding some postponement in the future. This may be the reason why the office set up for implementation of the law, the National Language Board, was established only in 1990. This has been noted by Maurais (1997: 158), who regards the lack of a state agency entrusted with all the practical aspects of implementing the switchover from Russian as a major flaw.
- **Visible signs of the new language policy.** (Maurais 1997:152) has emphasised the necessity of visible change in some language policy domains, in order to reduce uncertainty about the future of the language through visible, concrete manifestations of language. In the Estonian case these may be public bilingual signs and information, and language requirements for employment.
- **Language law as power redistributor.** The Language law caused the mobilisation of groups based on linguistic interests. However, the anxiety was not the content of the law, but the political factors behind the law. Maurais (1991) who analysed the Estonian Language Law in comparison with Quebec and 4 other republics, noted that *the language question conceals power struggles in a given society, as it has been noted repeatedly, extralinguistic factors play their part in language planning* (Maurais 1991:119).

From the formal point of view, the Estonian Language Law of 1989 did not alter the former situation substantially, but rather maintained the *status quo* by granting the right to receive education in one's native language, with Estonian enjoying higher status among Estonians and Russian among Russians (cf. Taagepera 1990). Ozolins (1994), however, considers these modest language policies of the Baltic states as a crucial element in national reconstruction and transition from the Soviet system. The Language Law redefined Estonian language from a *de facto* acquired minority status to a full national status as the language of state and administration, and of most social discourse (Ozolins 1994: 161).

In this way, the adoption of the Law signalled the redistribution of power and together with it, the formation of new elites in Estonia. Due to the insignificant formal changes for most of the Russian-speaking population (the Law did not concern the main bulk of that population directly), the ambiguity of the situation with the two endo-majorities remained, thus causing several further conflicts and offering grounds for outside political influence. Ozolins supports

the view that Estonia has, *in the short period since independence, been able to substantially realise its language policy aims.* (Ozolins 1994: 161).

However, the main scope was laid on short-term visible programmes, while long-term programmes like educational and integrational schemes, were not given adequate attention or were even neglected. Thus, the new emerging situation was still not a satisfactory one, and it needed a further qualitative step to be made in order to improve the linguistic situation in Estonia.

Thus, Estonian language functions in four different types of **language environment**. However, Estonian is the sole language spoken all over the Estonia in various combinations of environment. Firstly, it provides the sole linguistic environment in a major part of the Estonian territory, with the exception of major cities, the urban areas of Harjumaa and Ida-Virumaa and the western shore of Lake Peipsi. Secondly, it competes successfully with Russian in the environment of stratified linguistic pluralism in most cities with the Russian community present (Tallinn, Tartu, Pärnu, Haapsalu, Kehra, Loksa, etc.), Estonians form a minority in 6 urban areas and 4 communes. Thirdly, in the western shore of Peipsi (Mustvee, Kallaste) peaceful bilingual coexistence of Estonian and Russian language environments seems to be in place. Finally, Estonian is marginalised in some towns and cities of Ida-Virumaa (Narva, Sillamäe, etc.).

7. Current status planning

Language planning in Estonia is implemented through legislation, comprising the Constitution, over 400 laws, lower legal and normative acts. The Estonian Constitution provides the basis for future strategies concerning language. Language issues are regulated in several articles of the Constitution. Estonia's nation-building task as a nation-state appears to be quite balanced in the Constitution, envisioning the common language policy through the introduction of Estonian as the official (national) language, a system of hierarchisation and regulation for minority languages, and, as a counterbalance, language considered as a human right, providing linguistic protection for individual and collective aims. The Constitution proclaims Estonia as a nation-state and a politically unitary state (Article 2), so that ethnically autonomous regions are unconstitutional. The two main characteristics of nation-building, namely the requirements for the introduction of the common language and the hierarchisation of languages, lead to the two language regimes introduced in the Constitution, which are (Rannut 1997):

- Estonian monolingualism throughout the whole Estonian territory;
- Estonian-minority language bilingualism, reflected in two different forms:
 - territorial autonomy;
 - cultural autonomy.

In addition to this, functional regimes concerning foreign language use may be introduced by the Estonian government.

Monolingual regime is based on two different foci: administrative requirements based on instrumental needs of a state (official language, information, translation, etc.) and specific linguistic rights, sustaining the Estonian language environment. Linguistic human rights are based on various fundamental principles, including the **non-discrimination principle** (equality before the law), the **communication rights** (freedom of expression). The most important domestic human right, the **right to communicate in the Estonian language** throughout the whole territory of Estonia, is provided in article 4 of the Language Law. It implies Estonian-language environment, placing obligations to all institutions and artificial bodies before any person. The law does not differentiate between public and private legal persons and subordinate-superior position in these. In order to fulfil this obligation, Article 5 of the Language Law (Requirements for knowledge and usage of the Estonian language) delegates the establishment of requirements for the knowledge and usage of the Estonian language by employees of state institutions and local governments, as well as of institutions, enterprises and organisations, in work-related dealings with the public to the Government of the Republic to be regulated through regulations.

Measurement and testing of the Estonian language proficiency is based on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. According to this, competence in Estonian is divided into three broad categories:

- basic level, corresponding to the levels of A, B, C of the previous system.
- intermediate level (previous D),
- advanced level (previous E, F),

8. Bilingual territorial language regime

In order to protect linguistic and ethnic minorities in Estonia, two bilingual regimes are provided. Bilingual territorial regime is based on the Constitutional articles 51(2) and 52(2), according to which in localities where at least half of the permanent residents belong to an ethnic minority, all persons shall have the right to receive answers from state and local government authorities and their officials in the language of that ethnic minority and local government authorities may use the language of the majority of the permanent residents of that locality in internal communication.

This right of the council of a local government to propose the language other than Estonian for internal administration was used by Narva and Sillamäe City Councils in 1995. However, these proposals were declined by the Estonian government for two reasons: firstly, although most of the residents in Narva and Sillamäe are of Russian origin, they do not constitute a Russian minority according to the Article 2 of the Law on Cultural Autonomy, which adheres minority to the condition of belonging to the Estonian citizenry. The second reason was the condition of use of an additional language, meaning that the members of the Council should be able to conduct the work in Estonian. As this condition was not fulfilled (most of the work was done in Russian) the Government did not consider it necessary to make a favourable decision in this case.

The second bilingual regime is based on cultural autonomy. Article 50 of the Constitution assures ethnic minorities "the right, in the interest of their national culture, to establish institutions of self-government in accordance with conditions and procedures established by the Law on Cultural Autonomy for National Minorities."

In 1993 the Estonian Parliament adopted the **Law on Cultural Autonomy for National Minorities**. This is the legal successor of a similar law dating back to 1925. This 1925 law was considered by the League of Nations to be a model text for the cultural autonomy of national minorities. The new law, which has been given a generally favourable appreciation by the experts of the Council of Europe (Bratinka *et al.*), revitalises and simplifies the old one. It follows Capotorti's definition in determining national minorities. The Law considers as national minorities citizens of Estonia, who:

- reside in the territory of Estonia;
- maintain longstanding, firm and lasting ties with Estonia;
- are distinct from Estonians on the basis of their ethnic, cultural, religious, or linguistic characteristics;
- are motivated by a concern to preserve together their cultural traditions, their religion or their language which constitute the basis of their common identity.

Estonia's position on the definition of minority was confirmed through the ratification of the **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities** on 21 November 1996 by the Riigikogu, the Estonian Parliament, who made a declaration according to which the Republic of Estonia understands the term national minorities, which is not defined in the Convention, exactly as provided above.

National minority cultural autonomy may be established by persons belonging to German, Russian, Swedish and Jewish minorities and persons belonging to national minorities with a membership of more than 3,000. Members of a national minority have the right:

- 1) to form and support cultural and educational institutions and religious congregations;
- 2) to form ethnic organisations;
- 3) to practise cultural traditions and religious customs if this does not endanger public order, health and morals;

- 4) to use their mother tongue in dealings within the limits established by the Language Law;
- 5) to publish ethnic language publications;
- 6) to conclude agreements of cooperation between ethnic, cultural and educational institutions and religious congregations;
- 7) to circulate and exchange information in their mother tongue.

Thus, the Law grants the citizens of Estonia who belong to a national minority the right, in particular, to set up their own cultural and educational institutions and religious congregations and use their own language in both private and official communication in accordance with the Language Law. Moreover, it provides for the establishment of cultural councils by the national minorities entrusted with the organisation and co-ordination of the activities of cultural autonomy institutions.

The law also guarantees to **non-citizens**, those who reside in Estonia and belong to a national minority, the right to participate in the activities of the national minority's cultural and educational institutions, thereby reducing, in practice, the difference between citizens and non-citizens.

The reestablishment in October 1993 of the Law on Cultural Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities has had a modest effect so far, due to other laws providing those rights in more detail. By 2003 more than 70 different associations had been registered. The Estonian Union of Nationalities, an umbrella organisation for over 30 cultural societies represents 21 ethnic minorities alone.

As a result, Ingrians are pioneering here currently, holding elections for cultural self-government body.

There are also other mechanisms supporting ethnic maintenance and inter-ethnic tolerance. In order to promote mutual understanding and dialogue among different groups, as well as provide access to political decision-making, representatives of ethnic minorities were invited in July 1993 to join a permanent roundtable consultative body under the aegis of the President of the Republic.

9. Foreign language regime

The foreign language usage is regulated in the Constitution and, in more detail in the Language Law. The governing principle is based on mutual agreement, based on the choice of language suitable to all parties. Exceptional cases are delegated to the Government, providing flexibility: **Governmental Decree No. 32** from 29 January 1996 deals with two cases, for transmitting information, and for communication during employment. For employees this means the requirement of competence in the foreign language concerned. The domains specified are international transport and tourism, customs, information bureaus, export requirements and international events.

10. Citizenship laws

The main challenge to normalisation of the language environment and effective nation-building has been the non-integrated Russian-speaking community in Estonia. The legal status of this population group is connected with the question of succession of the Russian Federation to the rights and duties of the former Soviet Union. The Minsk Agreement of 8 December 1991 and the Alma-Ata Protocol of 21 December 1991, which founded the Commonwealth of Independent States (below: CIS), did not solve the fate of Soviet citizens outside the CIS. The successor of the USSR —the CIS—, decided to change the naturalisation laws from *jus sanguinis* to *jus soli*, thus depriving citizens of the former Soviet Union of their previous citizenship and leaving them "stranded".

Unlike the republics forming the CIS, succeeding the Soviet Union, Estonia is (like Latvia), according to its Constitution and international law, the rightful and legal successor of the Republic of Estonia, declared on 24 February 1918 and forcibly annexed to the Soviet Union on 6 August 1940. Estonian citizenship is based on *ius sanguinis* principle, according to which a child by birth acquires the citizenship of their parents. With the reestablishment of Estonia's *de facto* independence came the *de facto* reestablishment of its citizenry.

Estonia has followed a consistent inclusive policy to integrate those residents, who are not Estonian citizens. Since 1992 Estonia's governments have held to a firm position on the right of these people to choose their citizenship, and have maintained the belief that citizenship cannot be forced on anyone. Estonian citizenship is not based on ethnicity. All persons, including those belonging to ethnic minorities, who held Estonian citizenship before 16 June 1940, and their descendants, received Estonian citizenship automatically. According to 2000 census there were ca 170,000 non-citizens in Estonia and 83,000 Russian citizens. The number of both groups is diminishing at a rate of 6,000-9,000 annually.

In 1992, the Estonian Supreme Council passed a **Decree On the Application of the Law on Citizenship**¹, which reactivated an amended version of the Citizenship Law of July 1, 1938. This divided the population into two groups: citizens, i.e., those who were citizens of the pre-war Republic and their descendants, and everyone else. Others could obtain it through a naturalisation process, with a short residence requirement and basic proficiency in Estonian. The Decree lists those who have no legal right to naturalisation: active duty, foreign military personnel, former employees of Soviet security/intelligence organs, individuals convicted of serious felonies or repeat offenders, and those without a steady income.

The **Law on the Estonian Language Requirements for Applicants for Citizenship**² was adopted in 1993, and the current citizenship law in 1995. Under this Law one is expected to have Estonian language proficiency at A2 level. It also provides for special examination guidelines for persons born before 1 January 1930, and persons who are considered to be permanently disabled or who were unable to complete an examination in the usual way due to their disability. The current Estonian language curriculum in Russian-medium basic schools fully covers the Estonian language requirements established for citizenship applicants.

Together with the adoption with the new Law on Citizenship, the whole system of tests under went under rearrangement. The Main thrust was put on the objectivity of the test, the qualifications of examiners and the administrative management of the testing system. The new language tests were prepared in cooperation with experts from Cambridge University, under the aegis of the Council of Europe (Toomsalu and Simm 1998: 51-52). According to this, language qualifications are monitored through a control system, based on **Governmental Decree No. 250** of 20 June 1995, affirming the conducting procedure of the Estonian language exam and the exam on the knowledge of the Constitution and Citizenship Law.³ The requirement to know the Constitution and the Citizenship Law is implemented in the form of a questionnaire approved by the **Decree No. 15 of the Minister of Interior**. The level of linguistic sophistication, however, is heterogeneous and seems to exceed that of the Estonian language exam, which requires knowledge at a general level. In addition to that, the terminology belongs to the special-purpose domain. Thus, in order to overcome the difficulties extending beyond the language requirement, examinees are allowed to consult the Estonian-language text of the Constitution and the Citizenship Law during their preparation for the exam.

In 1998 Riigikogu amended the law further, allowing stateless parents who have resided in Estonia at least five years to apply for citizenship for their children born in the Republic of Estonia through simplified procedure. The requirements in this case are the following: the child must be born after 26 February 1992 and be not older than 15 years.

11. Corpus planning

Corpus planning is conscious development, enrichment, stabilisation, and updating of the standard language. It involves provision of linguistic recommendations and fixation of norms. **Language cultivation** is the practical outlet of corpus planning, with implementation of language-planning recommendations, practical activities for improving the language use and making it more efficient, explanation of linguistic recommendations, their propagation and teaching.

¹ RT 1992, 7, 109

² RT 1993, 11 171

³ RT I 1995, 56, 973

Corpus planning in Estonia has been based on promotion, persuasion and the educational system, avoiding large-scale legal regulation. Thus, the Language Law states laconically: "Article 1(2) The basis of the official use of the Estonian language, in the context of the present Law, shall be the standard of the Estonian written language according to the procedures determined by the Government of the Republic."

The standard of the Estonian written language was determined by the **Decree No. 323** of the Estonian Government of 3 October 1995. This interprets the norm as a system of orthographic, grammatical and lexical norms and recommendations, in order to provide integrity and clarity of the official language use. It is also a part of employee's professional skills. It also establishes the sources, authorities and supervising organs.

Corpus planning activities are supported through the study of Estonian (knowledge about the Estonian language, the structure of its varieties, usage, variation, and change) that are based on language collections. The goals include research quality, providing that Estonian will be studied on an internationally accepted level in all the contemporary branches of linguistics and publishing comprehensive academic treatments. Usually the activities under corpus planning are divided into three:

- **Standard language planning** aims at the quality of Standard Estonian, preparing language planning resources (dictionaries and usage guides), and developing the databases, providing uniform linguistic norms and recommendations.
- **Language for Special Purposes (LSP) planning** is a part of corpus planning focusing on the formalisation needs of sublanguages (systematised technical vocabulary, specialised dictionaries) with the aim of providing good Estonian specialised language that will meet the requirements of specialists.
- **Name planning** is a system of principles and practical measures that regulates names as identifiable linguistic forms, guaranteeing clarity, precision, and unambiguity in their usage. It also protects and develops the Estonian onomastic heritage as a bearer of the Estonian identity. The existing standards include the 1995 business law (includes the chapter on business names), the 2003 place-name law and the law of personal names (2004).

Language collections are vital for the study and planning of the Estonian language. Tasks include here preservation and constant enlargement of the collections, systematisation and technological modernisation of the collections (digitalisation, storage of compact discs, etc.) and making the collections user-friendly (including online access).

Legal regulation in naming policies is more thorough. Peeter Päll (1997) has listed the legal acts regulating name usage. The fifth chapter (Articles 19-22) of the Language Law⁴ deals with names, designations and information. Special attention is paid to solving legal disputes concerning the international form of a name, according to which the international Latin-letter form of a name of an Estonian place, citizen, item, enterprise, institution or organisation is same as the name used in Estonia.

In addition, several separate laws touch on issues of names (cf. Päll 1997). **Law on administrative division of Estonian territory**,⁵ to this a governmental decree was attached, in order to effectuate the changes of boundaries and names of smaller administrative objects.⁶ **Law on Geographical names** was adopted on December 11 1996.⁷ **Family law** concerning the issues related to personal names was adopted in October 10, 1994.⁸ **Business law** adopted in February 15, 1995⁹ deals with the issue of business name in its second chapter (Articles 7-15).

12. Acquisition planning

The language of education has been also a concern for both Estonians and speakers of other languages, inherently linked to conflicting interests of common language promotion and

⁴ RT I 1995, 23, 334

⁵ RT I 1995, 29, 356; 1996, 42, 808

⁶ RT I 1996, 72, 1268

⁷ RT I 1997, 1, 2

⁸ RT 1994, 74, 1324; 1995, 29, 356; 59, 1006; 1996, 36, 738; 1997, 16, 261

⁹ RT I 1995, 26-28, 355 jj

minority maintenance. This dilemma is reflected in **the Constitution**. For educational rights, Art. 37(4) of the Constitution states: "All persons have the right to instruction in Estonian. Simultaneously, the second clause guarantees the right of educational institutions established for ethnic minorities to choose their own language of instruction."

Article 6 of the **Language Law** provides for educational guarantees in the Estonian language and in a foreign language: "State institutions and local governments shall guarantee the opportunity to acquire Estonian-language education, according to the procedures prescribed in law, in all the educational institutions belonging to them, as well as the opportunity to acquire a foreign-language education, according to the procedures prescribed by law." The same principle was earlier adopted in the Law on Education in 1992.

Language teaching in other types of school is regulated in the corresponding laws. The **Law on Private Schools**¹⁰ gives the owner of the school the right to determine the language of the school (Art. 14), requiring the teaching of Estonian from the third grade (third year of primary school). The **Law on Vocational Schools**¹¹ prescribes Estonian as the language of education (Art. 18(3)). The use of other languages is determined by the founder of the school. The **Law on Universities**¹² prescribes Estonian as the language of instruction (art. 22(8)), leaving the use of other languages to be determined by the University Council.

13. Current situation

There exists a documented demand among the Russian-speaking community for increased Estonian-language learning opportunities. Russian-speaking parents are increasingly seeking opportunities to help their children become bilingual but are also concerned that children should retain their cultural identity. Current Estonian-as-a-second-language teaching strategies have not brought about the required returns. In particular, the majority of high school graduates from Russian-language schools do not have sufficient Estonian language skills to be competitive in the job market or to continue their studies in institutions of higher learning. Thus, this issue constitutes a major priority of the Estonian Government, which adopted the State Programme Integration in Estonian Society 2000-2007 in 2000.

14. Pre-school education

The main problem with Russian medium pre-school educational institutions is the low competence of teachers. In 2002 there were 596 pre-school educational institutions in Estonia, including 125 Russian medium kindergartens (incl. kindergartens with working language being Estonian and Russian). There are also special preparatory groups in schools for 6-7 year old pre-school children. There are about 50 000 children in the age range of 1-7 years in pre-school education. The number of non-Estonian speaking children is approximately 12 000. These are children attending Russian medium nursery schools (9,917 children) and Russian language groups in Estonian medium nursery schools (2 068 children).

The number of non-Estonian children attending Estonian language groups in Estonian medium nursery schools is about 2,500. In recent years, the number of non-Estonian parents is increasing who choose an Estonian medium nursery school for their child, but the Estonian-speaking nursery school teachers do not have sufficient knowledge to develop and teach Russian speaking children.

In 1995 Estonian as a second language began to be taught to 5-6 year olds in Russian medium pre-schools. In 2000 the obligation to teach Estonian was extended to the nursery schools and first grade (reception class) levels (in total 12,000 children in Russian medium nursery schools). At the same time, the education of teachers at pre-school institutions has little connection with Estonia; a vast majority of teachers working in Russian-medium schools were trained outside of Estonia. There are about 750 teachers working in Russian medium nursery schools (including Estonian as a second language teachers) and about 6,500 teachers working in Estonian-speaking nursery school. The number of preparatory group teachers for pre-school children in Russian medium schools is about 40. In order to overcome those challenges extensive in-service training has been launched for nursery personnel.

¹⁰ RT I 1993, 35, 547

¹¹ RT I 1993, 74, 1054

¹² RT I 1995, 12, 119

15. Schools

Education is the most important means of guaranteeing the development and status of the language. The role of education is to provide general literacy and professional competence. Secondary education, especially compulsory education, is of fundamental importance because of its impact on language use. The requirement of the Estonian language environment deriving from the Estonian Constitution implies the task of providing proficiency in Estonian language in the framework of compulsory education. However, several challenges are confronted in the implementation of this task.

The challenges here are **the large number of non-Estonian pupils and their isolation from Estonian-speakers**. In line with the corresponding demographic trend, the number of Russian-speaking pupils increased up to the year 1990, when their share comprised 37% from the total number of pupils. Currently, qualitative changes are taking place in this respect. In 1993, 17% of the schools used Russian as the medium of instruction. In the 2003/2004 school year, there were (in addition to 521 Estonian-medium schools) 87 Russian-medium schools and 25 mixed schools. Currently, however, there are less than 40,000 pupils in Russian-medium schools, a figure which decreases by 4-5% every year. The main reason for this drop is the repatriation connected with withdrawal of Russian troops in September 1994 and an extremely low birth rate (ca 3,000 children born to Russian-speaking families annually), consequently resulting in a shortage of pupils. Due to this, several Russian schools have been closed down. The second highly visible reason for decrease is Russian parents' desire to place their children in Estonian pre-school educational establishments and schools in order to immerse them in the language (ca. 5% of the places in Estonian schools, over 4,000 pupils). This has resulted in a lower proficiency level in Estonian as well as in other disciplines for all pupils. To avoid these negative effects, the number of Russians in the Estonian-medium educational institutions has been limited. Simultaneously, alternative programmes for Russian children are being started.

According to the national curriculum, the teaching of non-Estonian children is provided also in the Russian language. In this way, the monolingual Russian-medium educational system with Estonian taught mainly as a subject, adopted during the Soviet occupation is maintained. To improve the situation, since 1996 Estonian has been taught from the 1st grade (first year of primary school). Some Russian-medium schools use Estonian as a medium for teaching certain subjects (history, geography), in the form of a partial immersion.

For Russian students, Estonian-medium total **immersion programmes, both early** (since 2000) and late (since 2004) have been introduced. Currently over 1,000 students study in programmes of early (7 schools) and late immersion (4 schools). In addition, Annelinna Secondary School offers partial immersion programmes

The most challenging issue in education is definitely **secondary education of Russian students** in Estonia. Due to minute numbers (ca. 4,000), full-scale secondary education via Russian is not considered expedient. The solution seems to be the gradual introduction of bilingual programmes, providing satisfactory knowledge in the national language. About 25 per cent of secondary-school students study through the medium of Russian. Most school-leavers of non-Estonian-medium secondary schools have an insufficient knowledge of Standard Estonian. The main reasons for this are as follows:

- a) most subjects are taught in Russian;
- b) the scope of teaching Estonian and the methods used do not guarantee the acquisition of Estonian;
- c) the knowledge of Estonian among teachers (including teachers of the Estonian language) fail to meet the standards.

In order to improve the knowledge of Estonian among school-leavers of *gymnasiums*, a requirement was imposed to start transition to Estonian as the language of tuition for 60% of total teaching at the *gymnasium* level in 2007. However, the preparations for this have been inadequate. The National programme for the education of new immigrant children is currently at the draft stage. It may well be that the arrival of new immigrants will further complicate the language problems in education. For the future objectives are set as follows:

- students of non-Estonian-medium primary schools (compulsory education) will acquire Estonian at level B2, which will enable them to continue their studies or seek employment in Estonian-language environments (secondary education, workplaces);
- linguistic integration of new immigrants into Estonian society will be arranged according to a special programme including teacher in-service training and language materials for students and teachers (methodological handbook).

16. Estonian in vocational schools

According to law, Estonian is the language of tuition in vocational schools. However, as an exception vocational training can be carried out in Russian as well. The scope of Russian-language vocational training is about 36 per cent. In Russian-language vocational schools or Russian-language study groups of vocational schools Estonian is compulsory only for students studying on the basis of compulsory education.

The state does not regulate the teaching of Estonian in Russian-language vocational training. The majority of school-leavers of Russian-language vocational schools are unable to work and communicate in the Estonian-language environment, thus being vulnerable in the face of employment changes. Plans foresee restructuring of Russian-language vocational training and its gradual transition to full Estonian-language tuition. The plan will among other things foresee termination of admission to Russian-language vocational training on the basis of secondary education, a considerable increase in the scope of teaching Estonian and Estonian-medium teaching, and transition to integrated teaching in institutions with two languages of tuition.

17. Language Technology

The technology support of a language consists of linguistic resources, linguistic software, and the applications of the latter. Its objective is to develop the language technology support of the Estonian language up to the level that will enable the Estonian language to successfully function in the contemporary information-technological environment.

Estonia has its own specialists for creating linguistic resources, linguistic software, and its applications as well as opportunities for training new specialists in computational linguistics and language technology.

By now Estonia has entered the phase where most wide-spread software products are available also in Estonian (Windows XP, WindowsOffice, Linux, OpenOffice, several book-keeping, management and information programmes plus menus of high-technology products), however, the domain is legally not regulated. Also various speech technology products are used, though for persons with special needs mostly.

Support from the state is necessary for the elaboration of prototypes of applied language processing systems and order the elaboration of marketable finished products from software companies.

Tasks include creation of various language-technological applications, including automatic speech recognition, speech synthesis, grammar checker, machine-translation programmes, information-search programmes, abstracting and summarising programmes and interactive language teaching programmes. Simultaneously development of the following language resources is planned:

- enlargement of the general corpora of Standard Estonian, colloquial Estonian, multilingual parallel corpora for the elaboration of translation software;
- specialised corpora, first of all a dialogue corpus and syntactically tagged corpus for the elaboration of communication programmes that allow the use of natural language;
- a database of spoken Estonian for the creation of Estonian-language software of speech recognition;
- a standard system of electronic dictionaries, including bilingual dictionaries, for online use as well as in language-technology applications, for the compilation of new translation dictionaries, in language-teaching and translation programmes;
- a lexical-grammatical database and a lexical-semantic database (thesaurus) of the Estonian language;
- formalised linguistic descriptions for the creation of programmes of morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic analysis and synthesis;

Refinement of the existing programmes for morphological analysis and synthesis and the elaboration of programmes for automatic syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic analysis and synthesis are constant on-going activities.

18. Development strategy of the Estonian language

The development strategy of the Estonian language (DSEL, to be adopted by the Parliament in 2004) outlines the development priorities of the Estonian language as the only state language of the Republic of Estonia and the national language of Estonian for the years 2004–2010. The main objective of the strategy is to realise the opportunities provided by the constitution and legislation to secure the protection, sustainability, development, and full-scale use as a state language in all spheres of life on the entire territory of the Estonian state. The Government of the Republic, its ministries, local governments, educational, research, and development institutions will proceed from DSEL in planning and organising their language-related work. DSEL will serve as the basis for the Ministry of Education and Research for working out the annual action plans concerning the Estonian language.

Several institutions participate in the implementation of DSEL areas: Ministry of Education and Research (chief executive body); Estonian Language Council (advisory expert committee to the ER minister); Language Inspectorate (supervision of the observance of the language act and other legal acts regulating the use of language); Tallinn and Tartu Universities, the Institute of the Estonian Language (research and development institutions); Estonian Legal Language Centre (creates and administers the database of legal terminology); Võro Institute (research and development institution developing the local Võro language and culture); Mother Tongue Society (non-profit society, contributes to the research and planning of the Estonian language); Association of Estonian-language Teachers (non-profit society, brings together teachers of the Estonian language and literature); Estonian Terminology Society (non-profit society that supports and in some domains coordinates terminological work); Estonian Society for Applied Linguistics (liaison body to AILA); Integration Foundation for non-Estonians (implements the national integration programme for 2000–2007); National Examination and Qualification Centre (institution administered by the Ministry of Education and Research, draws up the assignments for national examinations in the Estonian language and conducts the examinations, issues the language certificates for employment and citizenship).

ELDS is supported through several national programmes, such as:

- **Estonian Language and National Memory (2004–2008)** (the development of language planning and specialised language, basic dictionaries of Estonian, and language-technology projects as well as the shaping of linguistic attitudes),
- **South Estonian Language and Culture (2000–2004)** (development, research, teaching, and use of the South Estonian varieties of the Estonian language in the media and culture),
- **Academic Foreign Teaching Programme of the Estonian Language and Culture (2004–2008)** manages the system for the teaching of the Estonian language and culture in those European universities that present more interest to Estonia,
- **Compatriots' Programme (2004–2008)** supports compatriots living outside Estonia, their Estonian language usage and Estonian-medium teaching through Estonian schools, Sunday schools, and language courses,
- **Estonian identity 2006–2009** (language marketing programme to be adopted next year).

Besides, traditional tasks in corpus and status planning, language-in-education and language technology, language marketing as a new domain was introduced. Language marketing (prestige planning) includes motivation to use good Estonian in all spheres of life, application of linguistic criteria in employment, tenders and contracts, etc., stimulation of Estonian-language tuition, research and entertainment, including Estonian-language popular music, motivation to use Estonian-language software both in established and emerging fields of information technology. The task is to enhance language awareness, shape linguistic attitudes, and popularise good usage in society at large in order to secure a favourable reputation of the language among its users and a high status in society as a whole.

DSEL looks into issues of tertiary education and research also. The long tradition of Estonian-medium higher education and research supports the Estonian language. However, internationalisation is accompanied by the use of foreign languages, including the emergence of students and lecturers with an insufficient knowledge of Estonian. In some domains the specialised language is not taught, and the specialised terminology is absent. Therefore, ELDS foresees the provision of specialised dictionaries and Estonian-language teaching materials for various domains, preservation of the current extent of Estonian-medium teaching, publication of major research results also in Estonian. University graduates are obliged to master the advanced level of Estonian.

Various tasks are also focused on the regional varieties of Estonian (dialects and the corresponding literary varieties; varieties of Estonian as used by Estonians living in different countries), varieties of social groups (sociolects, slang), and varieties of people with special linguistic needs, including the Estonian sign language.

The most prominent regional variety (language) Võro is based on South Estonian dialects that served as the basis for the historical Tartu language. These are regarded as cultural heritage, a source for the development of Standard Estonian, and the bearer of the local Estonian identity.

The Estonian language of Estonians living abroad is the language variety used by people who are native speakers of Estonian and whose ancestors were speakers of Estonian but who live outside Estonia. Their language variety is related to the area or country where they live. The mother tongue of expatriates develops separately from the language of the mother country and is influenced by the country of residence. The state supports the study of Standard Estonian and the study in Standard Estonian, as well as the collection and research of language materials of the Estonian language outside Estonia.

People with special linguistic needs include the deaf and people with impaired hearing, also the blind, the deaf blind, dyslectics, etc. The Estonian Sign Language is used by people with impaired hearing. The task here is to guarantee favourable conditions for study, communication, and work to users of the sign language and other people with special linguistic needs.

Besides Estonian, foreign language policy is provided in the document. English, Russian, German, French, and Finnish languages affect the development of Estonian most and are also of special importance in international communication. In order to assure normal development of Estonian and avoid undesirable influences it is essential that the Estonian population should have a good knowledge of foreign languages (two or three foreign languages, including English), there should be qualified interpreters and translators with an excellent knowledge of Estonian, and the Estonian language should be represented internationally. Therefore, the aim is to implement a foreign language policy that will take into account the development needs of the Estonian language (learning and teaching, study and use) and to assure the international representation of the Estonian language. Tasks foreseen are: reaching the level in foreign-language teaching that will enable *a*) the school-leavers of compulsory schools to attain the B1 level in at least one foreign language; *b*) the school-leavers of secondary schools to attain the B2 level in at least one foreign language; *c*) graduates of higher schools to attain the B2 level in at least two foreign languages; *d*) teachers of foreign languages to attain the C2 level in the respective language. Expanding the training of university lecturers, teachers, interpreters, and translators in foreign languages and organising continuing education, market research for the identification of target groups and their needs, academic supervision, evaluation of interpreters and translators and modernisation of teaching materials and curricula are the main activities planned. This goes hand-in-hand with the increasing role of Estonian in the foreign language curricula, supporting the contrastive studies of Estonian and the languages that influence Estonian and developing teaching materials that take into account the relations between Estonian and the influencing languages, establishing the national test development centre and expanding academic learning of Estonian outside Estonia.

19. Conclusion

At present the Estonian language is used in all spheres of life. However, many fields show signs of domain loss to other languages and drawbacks in the quality of the language used. The past decade in Estonia has been oriented towards openness; the position of Estonian has weakened against the background of globalisation and the development of the information society. The negative factors affecting the development opportunities of the Estonian language include immigration of non-Estonian speakers and emigration of Estonians as well as the absolute decrease in the number of native speakers of Estonian. The latter is not compensated by a certain increase in the number of people who know Estonian in Estonia and the rest of the world.

The laws on language and citizenship adopted in 1995 signal the stability of society and the consolidation of power, making it possible to launch a new language policy aimed at nation-building. The main blocks of it are the following:

- Estonian as the sole national and official language (common language principle);
- minority protection through territorial and cultural autonomy (hierarchisation and regulation of autochthonous languages);
- various functional foreign language regimes;
- respect for individual linguistic human rights;
- active promotion of integration;
- subordination to international law.

The **approach** in legislation is **non-ethnic** and purely instrumental. In contrast to the Language Law of 1989, this language legislation is not used for propagandistic goals. It is possible for almost all residents legally living in Estonia, regardless of ethnicity, to apply and acquire Estonian citizenship if they wish to. Thus, ethnicity has no legal value in establishing one's position in society. Instead, proficiency of the common language is valued through the system of various domains (citizenship, employment, elections, etc.). In this way, the developments signal the transformation of the society to a more democratic and civic one. However, during recent years, language legislation in Estonia has been developing inconsistently, affected by domestic political reshuffle and international pressures.

In spite of all tensions, one may witness a gradual linguistic normalisation with Estonian as the national language known by the vast majority, while minority languages are still accommodating to the new conditions (including ethnic revival) and there is an ever-increasing popularity of major foreign languages.

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