



european language
diversity for all



newsletter 1 / 2011

In ELDIA Newsletter 1/2011:

- Why ELDIA?
- How ELDIA works
- Who we are
- Latest ELDIA news
- What can ELDIA do for you?

Dear Recipient,

This is the first regular newsletter of the interdisciplinary research project ELDIA (European Language Diversity for All), representing eight universities and research institutions in six European countries. You are receiving this letter either because you have subscribed to our newsletters or because your address was on our target group list, that is, we thought that you or your organisation or institution might be interested in multilingualism and the coexistence of languages in Europe. If you do not want to be contacted any more, just send an e-mail to info.eldia@univie.ac.at and you will immediately be removed from our recipient list.

If you want to find out more about us, you are always welcome to visit the ELDIA website at <http://www.eldia-project.org>. The website was up and running already before the official start of the project in March 2010, and we are continuously developing, expanding and updating it. But in addition to the website (and our Facebook site – you will find a link to it on the main page of our website), and in order to make it easier for you to stay tuned, we will now start distributing newsletters as well.

The newsletters will appear at least twice a year, and we will send them to a select group of people and institutions who might be interested in our work – and to all subscribers. To subscribe to our newsletter, simply visit our website at www.eldia-project.org, choose “About the project > ELDIA newsletters” from the menu on the left side, choose the newsletter in the language of your choice, type in your e-mail address and name and press “Subscribe”. (The newsletters can also be downloaded from the newsletter page.) Or simply send an e-mail to info.eldia@univie.ac.at.

Why ELDIA?

Multilingualism and linguistic diversity are hot topics in today's Europe. Mobility, globalisation, new forms of culture and communication are changing the language situation, and many Europeans are confronted with new languages and new kinds of language choices. More and more people, including politicians and decision-makers, understand that bilingual education may be an important asset, more and more attention is paid to linguistic human rights. Numerous research institutions and projects, national and international, are dealing with issues of multilingualism and linguistic diversity.



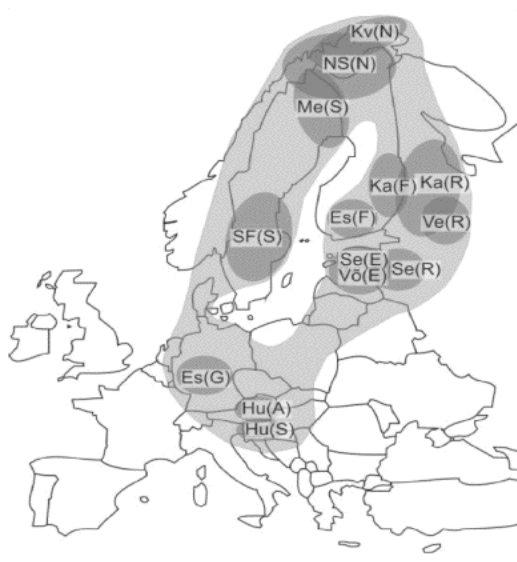
Bilingual (Hungarian-Slovenian) school in Dobronak/Dobrovnik, Slovenia



"Language nest" (Võro-language kindergarten) in Võro / Võru, Southern Estonia

Despite all this attention paid to languages and their peaceful coexistence, there is still a lot to be done. Most "major" languages are still much better known and much more intensively researched than most "minor" ones, and some speaker groups – migrant groups in particular, but also many traditional minorities – are still fairly "invisible" and in urgent need of research and support. Where "minor" languages are investigated, this is typically done in a national or regional framework: speaker communities are researched one by one or as a representative of a certain state, language area or region. (This is important, of course – but it is not enough, if we want to develop international strategies and cooperation.) Often the focus of research is still on one language at a time, on parallel monolingualisms or imagined monolingual speaker communities. Or the coexistence of languages is seen as a zero-sum game, as a conflict or competition, instead of focusing on the coexistence of languages, their parallel and overlapping use.

ELDIA represents a new international and interdisciplinary approach. We want to gather reliable and up-to-date information about the coexistence and interaction of major and minor languages in Europe, about attitudes and experiences inside and outside the speaker communities, about the active agency and the choices of speakers of different languages. And we want to gather this information in a comparable and generalisable way: we will compare the results from fourteen case studies in ten different countries to see if there are general tendencies, to find out in which way multilingual speaker groups are similar to or different from each other.



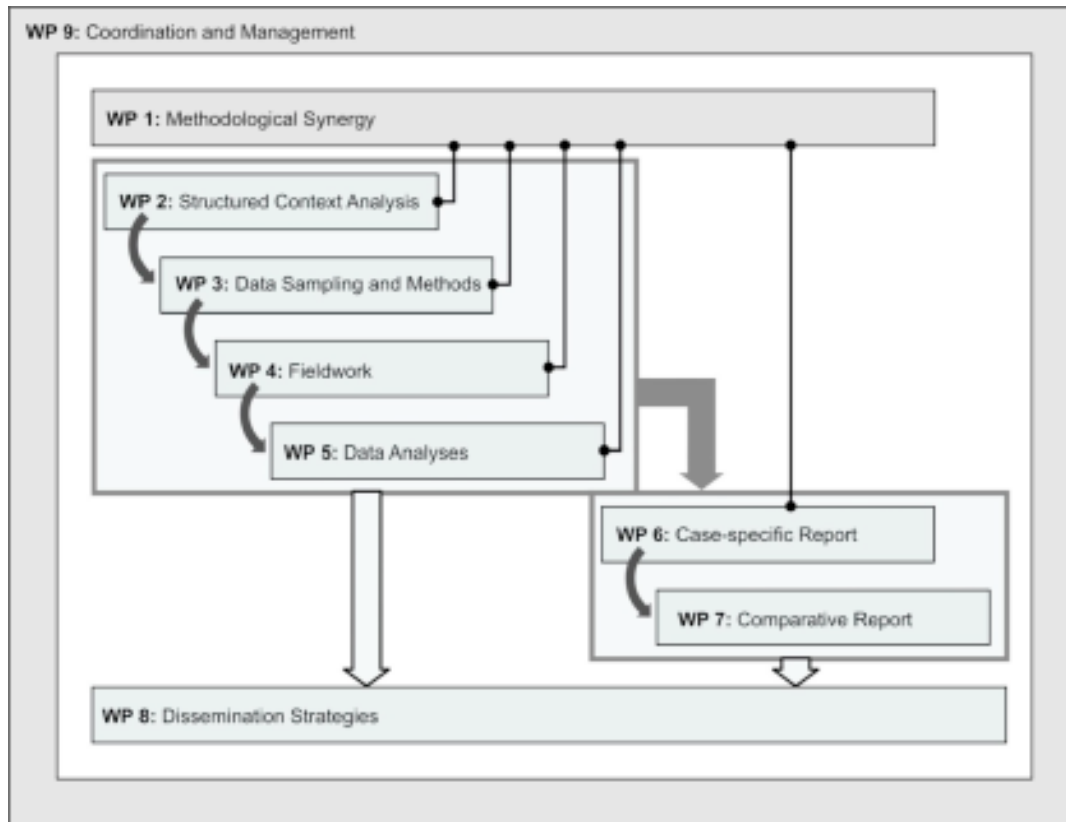
Kv(N) = Kven (Finnmark Finnish) in Norway
 NS(N) = Northern Sámi in Norway
 Me(S) = Meänkieli (Tornedal Finnish) in Sweden
 Ka(F/R) = Karelian in Finland/Russia
 Es(F) = Estonian in Finland
 Ve(R) = Vepsian in Russia
 SF(S) = Sweden Finnish
 Se(E/R) = Seto in Estonia/Russia
 Vö(E) = Võro in Estonia
 Es(G) = Estonian in Germany
 Hu(A) = Hungarian in Austria
 Hu(S) = Hungarian in Slovenia

The minority, ethnic or heritage languages we work with belong to the Finno-Ugric language family. This is interesting for two reasons. First, these speaker communities cover practically all possible types of minority or heritage languages. There are traditional minorities and fairly recent migrant groups (or combinations of these types, like the Finnish speakers in Sweden or Hungarians in Austria). There are small and large speaker groups, from the ca. five thousand Karelian speakers in Finland to hundreds of thousands of Finns in Sweden. There are established languages with a long literary tradition, such as Hungarian, and young languages, such as Kven (*kainunkieli*) in Norway, which are only now being developed and standardised. Second, the Finno-Ugric languages – as most minority languages outside Western Europe – are seriously underrepresented in internationally accessible research. In many studies of European multilingualism, the fact that not all European languages belong to the Indo-European language family (Germanic, Celtic, Romance, Slavic etc.) is simply passed over in silence. And even if there is a lot of research on some Finno-Ugric minorities, it is often published in a less accessible language (for instance, Hungarian or Finnish) and not followed by researchers in other countries.

Our final goal is ***EuLaViBar***, the European Language Vitality Barometer – a tool (or a toolbox) for measuring the vitality of languages and supporting the maintenance of linguistic diversity. With this tool, we hope to serve decision-makers, organisations and institutions – and all Europeans who are interested in using, learning and preserving the richness of all their languages. (More information about EuLaViBar will follow in further newsletters.)

How ELDIA works

The work of ELDIA is divided into nine work packages (WP).

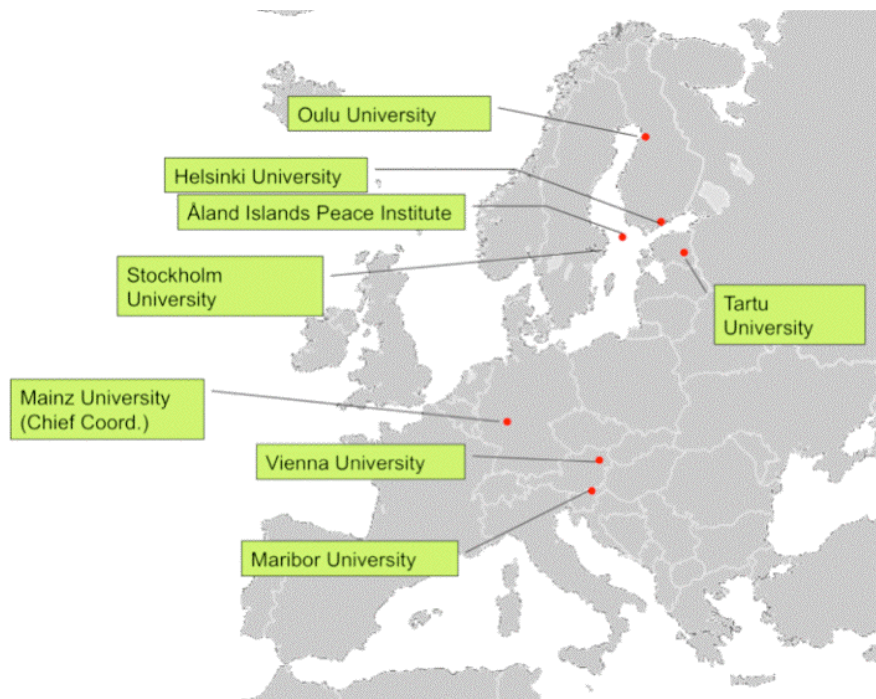


Three WPs run throughout the project: WP9 *Coordination and Management*, based at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, WP1 *Methodological Synergy*, based at the University of Oulu, and WP8 *Dissemination* (including activities such as our website and these newsletters) at the University of Vienna.

The other WPs are built successively upon each other. The task of WP2, now finished, was to gather and analyse existing information about the situation of the speaker communities and their languages. On the basis of these analyses, questionnaires and fieldwork manuals were developed in WP3.

At the moment, work has proceeded to WP4, the concrete fieldwork phase. Questionnaires are being sent to selected members of the speaker communities and to control groups representing the majorities, and interviews with groups and individuals are being organised. Should you or your organisation/institution be contacted by our research team, we kindly ask for your help and support. If you have any questions concerning our goals or methods, possibilities for cooperation, protection of data, etc., please don't hesitate to contact us!

Who we are



ELDIA is a research consortium which includes eight universities in six European countries and cooperates with numerous further institutions. Most of our researchers are linguists working at university departments of Hungarian, Finnish, Estonian, Finno-Ugric or Northeastern European language studies; they are experts (and often also native speakers) of the languages at issue. There is also a law team based at the Åland Islands Peace Institute, while our expert for statistics and the leader of our sociological media analysis group work at the University of Helsinki.

In the following newsletters, we will introduce our teams to you one by one. You can always find more information about the local team nearest to you on our website (menu link *About the project > Project participants*).

Latest ELDIA news

The general principles and goals of EU projects oblige us to involve and inform stakeholders and ensure that all interested European citizens have access to the results of our research. While our researchers are busy with the fieldwork, we are also working hard to make the first concrete results of our work available for interested readers. In a few weeks, we will publish the summaries of the so-called case-specific context analyses of our WP2. This means short descriptions of what is known at the moment about the situation of Hungarian in Austria, Kven in Norway or Veps in Russia (and ten other languages or speaker communities). The summaries are now being edited and formatted for publication, and they will be downloadable on our website. (The summaries will be published in English, but we will attempt to create translations in relevant languages as well, if there is sufficient interest and if our resources allow it.) Please do not hesitate to contact us for more information!

Just now, our empirical field work is beginning. ELDIA teams across Europe have been busy finishing the questionnaires in more than 20 different languages or language varieties and sending them to the selected respondents. The sampling was planned in

cooperation with our statistics expert, so that it would give a realistic picture of our target speaker communities. However, as there are great differences between the regulations, policies, authorities and organisations in different countries, each team had to face very individual challenges in developing their sampling design. We are very grateful to all those institutions, organisations and individuals who have helped us in this task!

At the same time, the next stage, data analysis, is being prepared. For this purpose, teams from all participating universities came together in Slovenia in the last week of January for an intensive workshop hosted and efficiently organised by Prof. **Anna Kolláth** and her team. We were given a cordial welcome by high representatives of the University of Maribor (including the Rector of the University, Prof. Dr. Ivan Rozman), the Hungarian-speaking community and the ambassador of Hungary. After that, we spent three long days studying the use of transcription and annotation software – which we will need when working on the recordings of our interviews – and the principles of linguistic analysis which we will apply.



ELDIA workshop hosted by the University of Maribor. In the front row from the left, three members of the Maribor team: Professor Anna Kolláth, Lecturer Annamária Gróf and fieldworker Judit Gasparics.



Katharina Zeller from the University of Mainz gave the workshop participants an introduction to the use of systemic-functional grammar in data analysis.

Already on January 10-11, our media analysis group led by our specialist for the sociology part of the project, Dr **Reetta Toivanen**, organised their own workshop in Helsinki. This group will analyse the role of minority and majority languages and speaker communities in the media, especially exploring how the power relations between languages and speaker groups are produced and reproduced in media discourse. A further specialist group, experts of law led by Prof. **Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark**, has been investigating the role of law and legislation for several months already. Their first results will soon be submitted and will form a part of WP 5.

What can ELDIA do for you?

In addition to creating new knowledge and stimulating research, our central goal is to support the maintenance of linguistic diversity. This, in turn, can only be done in cooperation with the speakers themselves. No outsider, not even the most excellent scholar, teacher, cultural activist or political decision-maker, can “save a language”, if the speakers do not want to use it. However, speakers’ language choices are not independent of the society in which they live, its values, attitudes and policies, and all language users should have the right to base their language choices on reliable and up-to-date information – and to use all the languages they want to use.

We cannot and will not tell our target groups which languages they should use, when and how. We cannot commit ourselves to the interests of any specific group, nation, organisation, institution or political party. What we can do is to offer reliable and unbiased information on the coexistence and interaction of languages, based on international research, for the use of all interested European citizens. Involving stakeholders is extremely important for us. For this reason, we are interested in your opinion and appreciate any feedback from you.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us any time – either the main coordination team (eldia-project@uni-mainz.de) or the local team nearest to you (see www.eldia-project.org > About the project > Project participants). Researchers and research institutions are also cordially invited to contact us and to suggest concrete cooperations.

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