



TEADUSTE AKADEEMIA EMAKEELE SELTS

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Emakeele Selts / Mother Tongue Society

Emakeele Selts (the Mother Tongue Society) is an organization operating in Estonia that brings together people working in or interested in the field of Estonian and related languages. The Society is associated with the Estonian Academy of Sciences. The statutory goals of the Society are:

- to support the scientific study of Estonian, related languages and ethnology,
- to support the use of Estonian as the national language and the language of interaction throughout the country,
- to generate public interest in Estonian and related languages,
- to promote the academic interaction and joint endeavors of philologists as well as their cooperation with others interested in the Estonian language.

The activity of the Mother Tongue Society supports the Estonian state in performing its constitutional task of preserving the Estonian nation, culture and language.

History

The Mother Tongue Society was founded on March 23, 1920 at the University of Tartu. From 1925–1952, it was known as Akadeemiline Emakeele Selts (the Academic Mother Tongue Society).

The Society's primary form of activity in performing its statutory tasks became the organization of academic gatherings consisting of various presentations; moreover, the Society began to issue its own publications. In 1921, the Mother Tongue Society publication series was initiated and the first yearbook was published. This was followed by the founding of the academic journal *Eesti Keel* (Estonian Language), which ran from 1922–1940, and the publications of the Estonian Language Archive (1935–1940). After World War II the publication of the annual yearbook (in the form of an academic compendium) was resumed, and other publications continued to appear as well, including *Kodumurre* (Home Dialect) from 1960–2002. Nearly 300 language days have been organized, beginning in Viljandi in 1961; the language days held by Estonians living abroad are an important continuation of this tradition.

Work in the Society was divided into committees: separate sections for folklore, stylistics and linguistic poetics. The goal of the dialect committee, re-founded in 1963, was to further the collection and study of dialect material; language material and toponym collection competitions were held.

By the 1990s, the Society had achieved its goal of collecting material for the older dialects, and a new aim was set: to study variation in the modern language. The language committee has discussed currently relevant issues of language correctness and standard language planning. The society has organized and co-organized competitions for the creation of new words (1972, 2002, 2010), which have yielded a number of new words used in everyday life as well as in European Union documents. In 2008, a word collection competition was held among schoolchildren.

Members, management, employees (as of April 1, 2016)

The Society has 369 active members (including 32 foreign members) and 16 honorary members.

The Society is governed by the managing board: Helle Metslang (chairperson, helle.metslang@ut.ee), deputy chairpersons Reili Argus (reili.argus@tlu.ee) and Jüri Valge (juri.valge@ut.ee) and members Karl Pajusalu (karl.pajusalu@ut.ee), Kersti Lepajõe (kersti.lepajoe@ut.ee), Hille Pajupuu (hille.pajupuu@eki.ee) and Miina Norvik (miina.norvik@ut.ee).

The senior member of the language committee is Maire Raadik (maire.raadik@eki.ee).

The Society is based in Tallinn. The academic secretary is Killu Paldrok (killu.paldrok@eki.ee) and the director of the Mother Tongue Society library is Annika Oherde (annika.oherde@eki.ee).

The website administrator is Maria-Maren Linkgreim (maren@eki.ee).

The Society's activity in Tartu is organized by Mare Valge (mare.valge@ut.ee).

Activity

Currently, the primary activities of the Society are:

- regular gatherings in Tallinn and Tartu, featuring presentations,
- language days outside of Estonia,
- J. V. Veski Day (an annual conference held on June 27 of each year),
- student conferences, including secondary school students,
- language camps and seminars for schoolchildren,
- publishing activity (the Mother Tongue Society yearbook, the popular linguistic journal *Oma Keel* (Own Language), the Mother Tongue Society publication series, language-related books),
- establishing norms for the standard language.

The Society is also involved in:

- organizing the annual Best Language Deed competition,
- organizing the F. J. Wiedemann language day,
- organizing the summary-writing competition Tuum, the dictation contest held on Mother Tongue Day, and the “language tweets” heard on Estonian Public Broadcasting,

- organizing educational excursions between Tallinn University and the University of Tartu,
- organizing the awarding of stipendiums to students studying to become teachers of Estonian language and literature,
- preparing complete academic treatments of the Estonian language.

The Society's activity has been financed with the help of support from the Academy of Sciences and the Ministry of Education and Research, sales of Society publications, membership fees and donations, as well as project-based aid. It has also received support from its partners the University of Tartu, Tallinn University and the Estonian Language Institute.

The Mother Tongue Society maintains close contact with other humanities societies in Estonia (the Association of Estonian Language Teachers and the Learned Estonian Society) and is in constant and developing co-operation with Estonian communities operating abroad, educational institutions providing instruction in Estonian language and culture, and embassies of Estonia all over the world.

Collections

As of December 31, 2015, the Society's library contains 6,474 publications in the field of Estonian and Finno-Ugric languages dating from the 19th century to the present day. In order to make the documents more accessible, we have digitalized works published in the 1920s and 1930s. The digitalization process is still ongoing (primarily the Mother Tongue Society publication series), and the works are available from Digar, the digital archive of the National Library of Estonia (www.digar.ee).

As of the end of 2015, the dialect archive of the Mother Tongue Society and the Estonian Language Institute contained 5.5 million records of lexical items, 153,000 pages of text, and approximately 3,000 hours of audio recordings.