

MOTHER TONGUE SOCIETY OF THE ESTONIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

The Mother Tongue Society (1925–1952 Academic Mother Tongue Society) was affiliated to the University of Tartu in 1920–1946 and to the Academy of Sciences in 1946–1998, and became associated with the Academy of Sciences in 1998. The office of the Society has been located in Tallinn since 1956.

The membership of the Mother Tongue Society includes 340 active members, including 6 honorary and 32 foreign members.

The goals of the Society are as follows:

- to promote research into the Estonian language, genetically related languages, and ethnology;
- to promote the use of Estonian as the state language and the national language of communication;
- to generate public interest in the Estonian language and the genetically related languages;
- to promote academic communication among philologists and joint events and cooperation with people interested in the Estonian language.

Main activities of the Society at present:

- regular meetings with presentations in Tallinn and Tartu;
- language days outside Estonia in cooperation with local Estonian societies;
- J. V. Veski Day (annual conference held on June 27);
- student conferences with the participation of secondary-school students;
- publishing (scholarly publication *Emakeele Seltsi aastaraamat* 'Yearbook of the Mother Tongue Society', popular language journal *Oma Keel* 'Our Language', books dealing with language);
- work with schoolchildren (incl. language days and contests);
- collection of vocabulary not listed in contemporary dictionaries;
- standardization of literary language.

Board of the Mother Tongue Society

Chair:	Helle Metslang
Vice-Chair:	Karl Pajusalu, Jüri Viikberg
Board members:	Mati Erelt, Annika Kilgi, Jüri Valge, Asta Õim
Head of the language committee:	Krista Kerge
Academic secretary:	Annika Hussar
Librarian:	Helju Kaal
Honorary members:	Mati Hint, Helju Kaal, Uno Liivaku, Viivi Maanso, Helmi Neetar, Valdek Pall, Huno Rätsep, Ülo Tedre, Ellen Uuspõld, Tiit-Rein Viitso

Chairpersons of the Mother Tongue Society

Lauri Kettunen	1920–1924	Eeva Ahven	1989–1990
Andrus Saareste	1925–1933, 1935, 1936–1941	Henn Saari	1990–1992
Julius Mägiste	1934, 1936	Jüri Viikberg	1992–1993
Arnold Kask	1944, 1968–1982	Tiit-Rein Viitso	1993–1997
Johannes Voldemar Veski	1946–1968	Mati Erelt	1997–2006
Huno Rätsep	1982–1989	Helle Metslang	2006–
Tiit-Rein Viitso	1989		

The position of the Executive or Academic Secretary has been held by

Alo Raun	1937–1939	Tõnu Tender	1997–2001
Valter Niilus	1939–1941	Asta Õim	2001–2003
Asta Hameri (acting secretary)	1947	Maria-Maren Sepper	2003–2006
Heino Ahven	1947–1988	Terje Potter	2006–2007
Mart Meri	1988–1997	Annika Hussar	2007–

Committees of the Mother Tongue Society

The work of the society has taken place in committees.

- **Dialect committee** (1926–1940; 1963–1996)

The task of the dialect committee, which was re-established in 1963, was to promote the collection and research of dialect material; it organized contests in the collection of language material and place names. By the 1990s the Society had fulfilled its task with regard to the collection of older dialects; its new goal was research into variation in contemporary language.

Top ten of Estonian dialect collectors

		SLIPS	PAGES				
1. Hella Keem	1936–89	229 615	3930	6. Aili Univere	1924–80	60 930	1790
2. Andrus Saareste	1916–44	136 158	108	7. Mihkel Toomse	1926–37	57 583	730
3. Salme Tanning	1927–62	123 788	5236	8. Agu Tamm	1930–67	34 816	4356
4. Eduard Leppik	1950–03	123 524	608	9. Mari Must	1945–87	30 877	12 487
5. Juhan Arike	1924–41	76 614	408	10. Evi Juhkam	1957–95	27 644	256

Merited dialect collectors

1. Ölme Aasmaa	Kuusalu	6. Evald Lindström	Kuusalu
2. Hilda Jõulmaa	Iisaku	7. Aleksander Matt	Kaarma
3. Jekard Kõmmus	Reigi	8. Vanda Sardma	Rakvere
4. Eduard Leppik	Saaremaa, Lääne-Virumaa	9. Floriida Sillavee	Rõuge
5. Edgar Lilhein	Kuusalu	10. Aadu Toomessalu	Saaremaa

As of the end of 2007 the joint dialect archive of the Mother Tongue Society and the Institute of the Estonian language held **5,250,000** word slips, **140,000** pages of texts, **3,000** hours of sound recordings.

- **The language committee** (1969–1979; 1993–) has discussed topical problems in correct usage and the planning of the standard language. In 1972 and 2002 the committee held word-invention contests which yielded a large number of new words that have been adopted for everyday life and concepts of the European Union. In 2008 a word-collection contest was held among schoolchildren.

- Under the auspice of the society, also other divisions have been active: the shorthand committee (1930–1932), the folklore division (1966–1995), and the division of stylistics and linguistic poetics (1977–1992).

The library of the Society holds about 6,000 publications on Estonian and its genetically related languages since the 19th century until the present.



Mati Erelt



Jüri Viikberg



Henn Saari



Helle Metslang



Annika Hussar



Heino Ahven



Helju Kaal



Mari Must

