



International Federation of Language Teacher Associations
Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes

The Nordic-Baltic Region

Electronic Newsletter No.4

(December 2021)

PRESIDENT's Note



Sigurborg Jónsdóttir, Iceland

Christmas is once again knocking at our door and telling us to slow down the pace in our hectic everyday life. It's time to look at what we have achieved this first half of the school year, evaluate, and reflect on what we will take with us and what changes we want to make for our work to have more impact all around us. It's also a time to spend with family and friends and make new memories, that will keep and warm us for years to come.

It is so important to use this short break from our bustling days and recharge ourselves for the coming second half of the school year.

Once we wind down, our minds will be more open to new ideas and thought. This is where the December issue of our NBR Newsletter comes in with plenty of interesting ideas and information. We learn about supporting teachers in their professional developments from Estonia, practical training webinars on assessment for language teachers from Finland, as well as their media activities to promote foreign languages. STIL talks about the importance of regular short seminars on teacher related topics in face-to-face meetings. The Lithuanian Association has started a project preparing teachers to teach Lithuanian to third state or nationless people living in Lithuania through distance learning. This and more you will find in our December issue.

We hope you enjoy the reading and wish you and your families all the very best for the coming holiday season and a good start into 2022. Take care and stay safe.



The History of the First Christmas Tree



A Christmas tree for German soldiers in a temporary hospital in 1871

Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's consort, is usually credited with having introduced the Christmas tree into England in 1840. However, the honour of establishing this tradition in the United Kingdom rightfully belongs to 'good Queen Charlotte', the German wife of George III, who set up the first known English tree at Queen's Lodge, Windsor, in December, 1800.

Legend has it that Queen Charlotte's compatriot, Martin Luther, the religious reformer, invented the Christmas tree...

More information is available here:

<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/history-matters/first-christmas-tree>

Greetings from Finland and from the Midst of Curricular Changes



Outi Vilkuna, puheenjohtaja / Chair, Suomen kieltenopettajien liitto SUKOL ry, The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland SUKOL (outi.vilkuna@sukol.fi)

Both Upper Secondary Education and Lower Secondary Education are now full steam ahead according to the new National curricula. For the teachers in Lower Secondary it will be soon question of adjusting the final assessment according to the new curriculum. The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland SUKOL is providing its' member with webinars from as to how the assessment should be processed according to the criteria set by the new curriculum

<https://www.sukol.fi/liitto/koulutuskalenteri>.

The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland SUKOL has also been actively present in the media giving statements on the state of foreign languages education in Finland, some of these as joint effort with eg the government funded project to improve foreign language studying at upper secondary level LUKKI- project <https://www.lukkiverkosto.fi/>. The latest social media campaign of LUKKI is "Share your own dream of having good foreign languages skills". LUKKI and SUKOL also had joint media visibility in the largest national newspaper in its's special edition on education <https://newspool.fi/artikkelit/kielten-opiskelu-avaa-lukuisia-ovia/>.

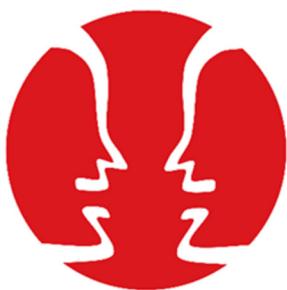
We are also looking forward to our special weekend in early February when SUKOL Winter Seminar will be held at Tampere, with get-together evening and theatre on February 4th, 2022 followed by a training plenarium and workshops on February 5th 2022

https://www.sukol.fi/liitto/koulutuskalenteri/talvikoulutuspaivat_tampereella_4.-5.2.2022.69.ohjelma.html.

We wish You all a peaceful Christmas and Eventful New Year 2022 in the company of Good Friends.



From STÍL (Association of Language Teachers in Iceland)



Dr. Hólmfríður Garðarsdóttir, President of STÍL, Reykjavík, Iceland

When this fall semester comes to an end teachers are once again asked to evaluate, review, reorganize and modify their plans and projections for a new semester and a new year. The common theme of the day is flexibility and change. Flexibility to reinvent themselves as professionals and to tackle issues such as an ever-changing working environment, as well as changing priorities, expectations, demands, technologies, etc. Simultaneously, budgets for educations are in most places the same as previous years and the old-fashioned system of one teacher or instructor per 25 to 30 students (even many more in some places) continues to be the conventional model.

When looking at language teaching and learning some shared and urging topics repeatedly emerge on the horizon. In addition to the topic of class size and lack of instructors the second most demanding topic is inequality. Students access to education is primarily based on parents or guardian's educational standing and financial ability. The Covid epidemic has served to demonstrate heart-breaking discrepancies, as distant learning is far from being accessible to all, due to the urging lack of phone and computer access or means to stay connected. The privilege of growing up in Iceland, and Europe for that matter, becomes evident

when comparing local realities to those children and youngsters in the developing world. These privileges will only increase and be consolidated if additional development aid and other radical measures are not introduced by local authorities and international agencies and institutions.

Therefore, as syndicates of teachers specialized in cultural literacy and cultural sensitivities, local associations of teachers must assume new responsibilities and keep local authorities enlightened on these issues. Amongst the many that come to mind are kids and youngsters from immigrant communities, dysfunctional families, and other disadvantaged social groups. Teachers are in daily contact with children from these marginalized groups and can serve to enhance their standing within the educational system. Let's all join forces and do what we can!

Despite many challenges on the island the fall semester 2021 has been marked by relative stability as kids and teenagers have attended on-site teaching at all levels, thanks to free of charge vaccination efforts and massive participation. The strain on the local health system has been monitored closely and the public has followed guidelines on social participation, behaviour, and conduct. Within these basic constraints STÍL organized monthly workshops on multiple themes aimed to serve as continuous education for active teachers. These efforts will continue throughout the upcoming semester. Furthermore, the board will continue with the preparations of the Future of Languages conference, on schedule for 8 - 10 June 2023. For more information see: <https://vigdis.hi.is/en/events/fiplv-nbr-conference/>

Now, these days most Icelandic learners and teachers are in the process of evaluating their efforts and when exams are over, will - despite persistent darkness and winds blowing from the North Pole - enjoy advent and upcoming holiday celebrations.



(Pictures from Veröld).

For more see an interesting Wall Street Journal report on teacher shortages in the US:
www.wsj.com/articles/teacher-shortage-compounds-covid-crisis-in-schools-1160805017

Additional information is available here: www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/poverty-education-statistics-facts/

NEWS FROM ESTONIA

Supporting Foreign Language Teachers in Their Professional Development



Ene Peterson, Chair of the Board of the Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers

We Live in a Whirl of Changes

Teachers associations play an important role in promoting the quality of language education: they work for the professional development of teachers, recognition of their activities, introduce new trends and innovations, create awareness among teachers to face new challenges and be united, work regularly for being visible and audible. The Estonian Language Teachers Association of Foreign (the EAFLT) was founded in 2009, and unites 700 teachers of English, Estonian as a second language, German, Russian and Finnish.

Although the last two years have been filled with uncertainty and worries about the future affected by the pandemic, the EAFLT has reacted quickly to the

changes and been flexible in supporting, motivating and recognising the success of their members.

Finding the Balance Between Online and Face to Face Events

The past two years have been challenging but successful - we have organized events as online as face to face (F2F) depending on the situation with COVID 19 pandemic.

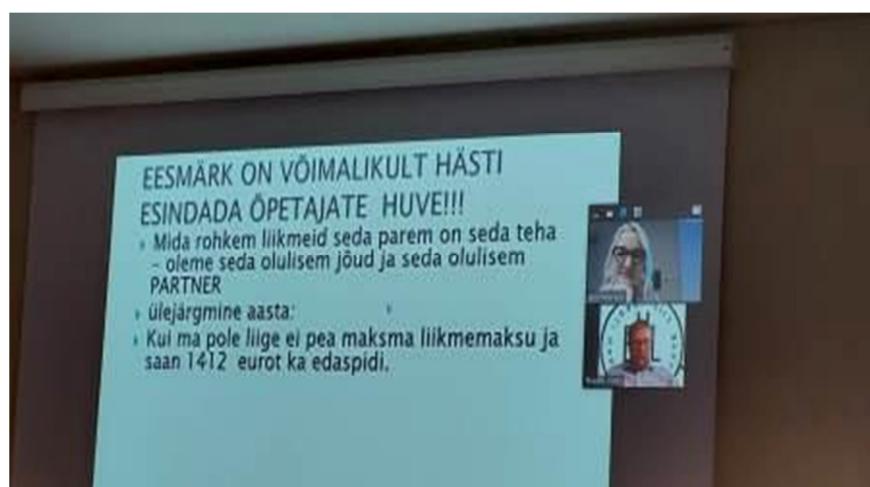
In 2021 we organized even more activities than ever before. We have been happy to be able to keep the balance between online and F2F events: conferences in spring and autumn, an annual meeting, a regional seminar "From a teacher to a teacher" at Haapsalu upper-secondary school accompanied by a guided excursion to Haapsalu Castle, eight online project "An International Examination" seminars for the teachers of English, German and Russian, seminars "Celebrating 20th anniversary of European Day of Languages / Common European Framework of Reference for Languages". We had three seminars for the introduction of CEFR Companion Volume: one for experts and teacher trainers in Tallinn, two seminars for foreign language teachers in Rakvere and Pärnu. Two more seminars will take place in March 2022 in Tallinn and Tartu.

Each Conference is Unique

The tradition of autumn conferences started in 2015 when we conducted our first conference "Foreign language teaching and teacher in the digital age". The digital age brought numerous challenges and opportunities so that our second and third conference aimed at raising teachers' awareness of digital competences and technology, the strategies for using digital technology. In 2018 we changed our course from digital literacy to creative teaching: how to develop creativity through art and music, cooperative and game-based learning, the development of critical thinking skills

In 2019 we had a two -day conference celebrating the 10th anniversary with 200 participants from all over Estonia: teachers of English, Estonian, German, Russian, Finnish, Swedish, Italian, Latvian, French, Japanese, our partners, representatives of different institutions. Read about the conference in Nordic-Baltic Region Electronic Newsletter No 4, 2019, pp 13- 17.

In 2020 we had to postpone our seventh conference. The conference "Let's integrate creatively" took place online on 19 March 2021. As we did not have any experience in conducting online conferences, then we used the service of a professional media company: the main programme was delivered live in the studio, workshops were conducted in Zoom. It was possible to watch the conference for 30 days after the conference. Thirty speakers and two hundred online participants from Estonia and outside Estonia made the conference happen and to be a success.



The Tradition of Conferences Continues

We could not rest on laurels. The tradition of autumn conferences continued. Although there were doubts related to the pandemic about conducting the conference F2F - the conference "Experience makes the difference" took place on 20 November 2021.

On the one hand we followed the traditional format of the conference: a plenary, presentations, and workshops in Estonian, Russian and English, but on the other hand we wanted to give an opportunity to share experience and materials as many foreign language teachers and institutions as possible, as experienced speakers as newcomers. Harald Lepisk, inspirator and creativity trainer gave spark to our conference - how to inspire yourself during uncertain times, how to sustain peace of mind and notice more possibilities instead of restrictions. After lunch we had a language fair with ten information desks and ten learning centres on a variety of topics.



The Importance of Giving Recognition to the Members of the Association

Our members are our most valuable resource. Demonstrating our appreciation for and recognizing member contributions to our association is important. We have worked out the statute and categories of recognition. Letters of Gratitude and glass trophies are awarded at our autumn conferences.



The Management Board.

Aasta tegu 2021 - The preparation and organisation of web conference "Let's integrate creatively!" on March 19, 2021, the head of the conference organizing team Kati Bakradzet.

Aasta tegija 2021 - Ingrid Prees - The promotion of the cooperation between members of the Association, contribution to the issue of association newsletter and making our association and its member organizations more visible.

Aasta selts 2021 - The Association of Teachers of Russian - The activity of the associations has been outstanding as in Estonia as within the EAFLT. The association is the most active member association of the EAFLT. The members of the Board are initiative, active and supportive.

Aasta koolitaja 2021 - The European Social Fund project "An International Examination" training team who conducted all together 18 online information seminars for teachers of English, German and Russian and for the students acquiring the speciality of a foreign language teacher.

Aastate panustaja - Kalle Lina - For the creation, introduction, and dissemination E-portfolio materials (5,000) during the last five years. The organizer of the

fruitful activity of the Estonian Association of Teachers of Germans and student activities. See <https://e-koolikott.ee/en>

Aastate keeletegu - Masha and the Bear Cafe - We thank Leena Möls, a teacher of Russian from Aruküla basic school. The organization and guidance of the activity of Masha and the Bear cafe is a good example how to introduce Russian culture and raise interest towards learning Russian among students, promote cooperation between students, parents and the community. (Read the article "A pop-up café" The Nordic-Baltic Region Electronic Newsletter No 3 (December 2020), pp- 16-19)

Aastate keeleõppe edendaja ja toetaja - Finnish Institute, Association of Teachers of Finnish, Tallinn University, University of Tartu - We thank them for promoting Finnish studies, supporting learning and teaching Finnish, fruitful cooperation in solving problems related to teaching Finnish and supporting teachers of Finnish in their professional development.

NEWS from LITHUANIA

Results of the Activities of the Foreign Language Centre of Vilniaus Kolegija/University of Applied Sciences, the Member of the Language Teachers' Association of Lithuania, in the Project "Language Learning - Part of Successful Social Integration"



Jūratė Patackaitė, Vice president of LKPA and Halina Klupšienė, lecturer of the Foreign Language Centre, member of the Language Teachers' Association of Lithuania.

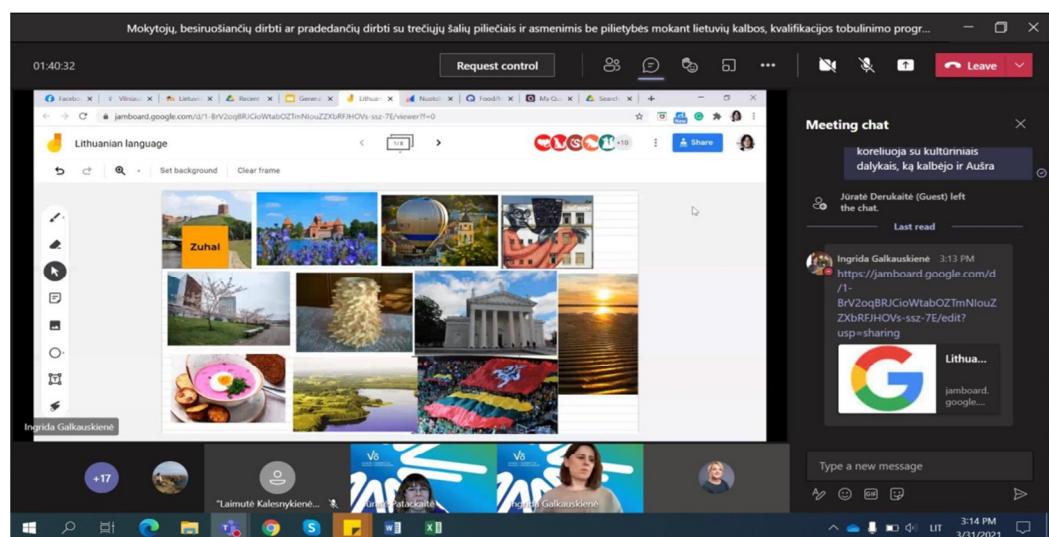
The year 2021 was significant for the Foreign Language Centre of Vilniaus Kolegija/University of Applied Sciences (hereinafter called VIKO/UAS) because together with the linguists of the Faculty of Pedagogy and the Centre for the Development of Qualifications and Vocational Training they have implemented the project "Language Learning - Part of Successful Social Integration", and contributed directly to achieving the project objectives: to create conditions for third-country nationals and stateless persons arriving to Lithuania to learn the Lithuanian language, applying the available experience and competencies.

One of the activities of the project, which is financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the state budget of the Republic of Lithuania, was to conduct trainings for teachers who would work with the developed tools according to the established programmes and thus improve their competences.

During the project implementation period, three training groups were organized. 60 teachers from all over Lithuania took part in the training. The participants of the training were introduced to the Lithuanian language learning modules developed by VIKO/UAS. The lecturers of the Foreign Language Centre and members of the Association, Ingrida Galkauskienė, Jūratė Helsvig, Violeta Žemaitienė and Jūratė Patackaitė prepared a distance module "Teaching Lithuanian Language: Step by Step and Visually" and conducted a training course "Distance learning in the natural environment", during which they shared their professional teaching and Lithuanian language teaching experience, introduced and, together with the participants, tested the online tools and language teaching/learning apps Quizlet; Kahoot!, Menti, Padlet and other applications used in the module.

As the training took place at a distance, the teachers were able to try out this method of teaching in practice. This teaching/learning tool was introduced at the 6th International Conference of the Institute of Foreign Languages of Vytautas Magnus University and the Language Teachers' Association "Sustainable Multilingualism 2021", which was held on June 4-5.

This project brought together and involved more members of the Association for a common goal. Interest in the training course and developed tools indicate that it is particularly important to build communities of learning teachers, with a view to consulting on any difficulties encountered and sharing the achievements of their work.



INITIATIVES OF LKPA and Vytautas Magnus University (VDU)



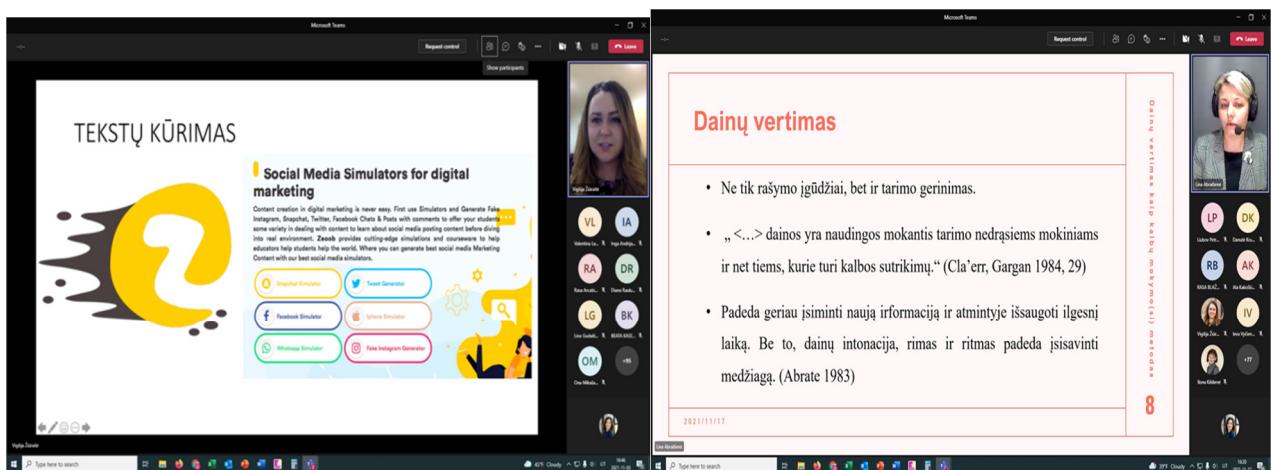
Dr. Almantė Meškauskienė, Deputy Director of Foreign Languages Institute at Vytautas Magnus University, President of LKPA

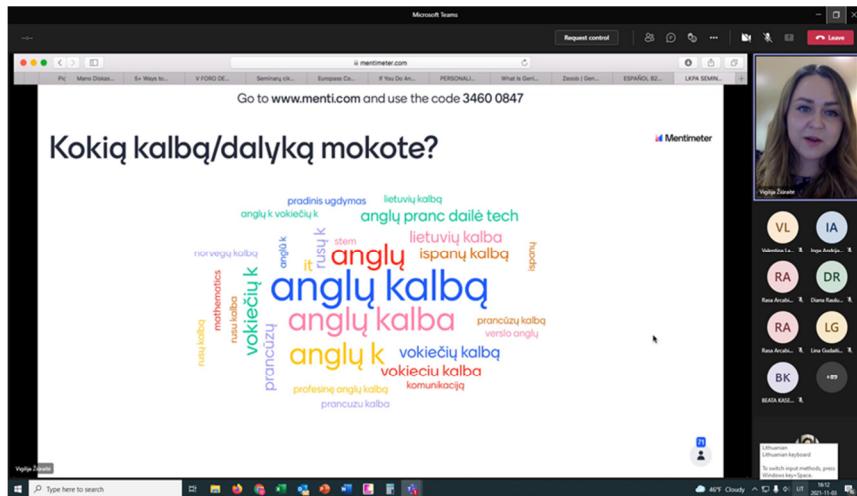
Seminars for Language Teachers "Innovative Teaching Methods"

In November, Vytautas Magnus University hosted a series of remote seminars for language teachers entitled "Innovative Teaching Methods". The seminar program was prepared by the Lithuanian Association of Language Teachers together with VMU Institute of Foreign Languages, and the cycle was organized by the Language Center of State Institutions.

In the face of the pandemic, there is a growing need for language teachers not only to transfer the teaching / learning process to a remote environment, but also to acquire and develop competence in the application of innovative methods. During the seminar cycle "Innovative Teaching Methods", language teachers got acquainted with innovative working methods, learned how to promote creativity and innovation in their work, and learned to work with various digital programs.

The seminars were held remotely every Wednesday in November. The following seminars were organized: "Personalization in Foreign Language Lessons: Enabling ICT Tools" (Vytautas Magnus University UKI lecturer Vigilija Žiūraite), "Language Teaching Using Short Film" (Vytautas Magnus University UKI lecturer Vaida Misevičiūtė), "Song Translation as a Language Teaching Method" (Vytautas Magnus University UKI lecturer Lina Abraitienė), "Creative Collaboration Tools for Distance Language Teaching" (Vytautas Magnus University UKI lecturer Dr. Taylor Smith).





The first Transform4Europe Strategic Assembly Meeting: Inspiring Talks, Vivid Discussions, and a Special Focus on Multilingualism



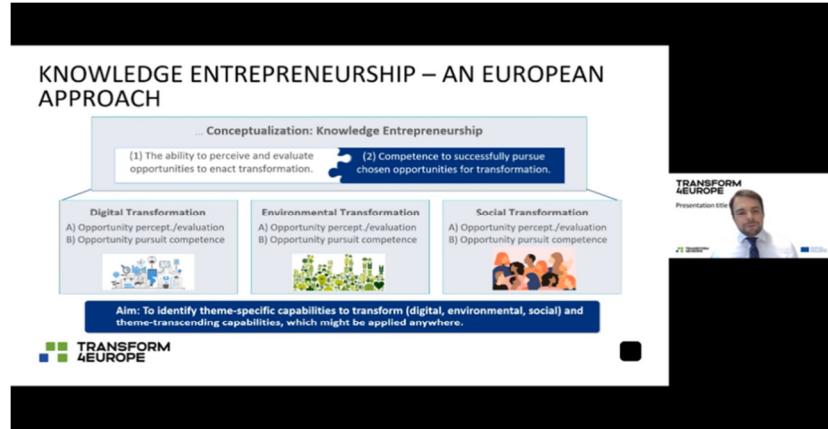
Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

Vytautas Magnus University is one of the seven partner universities in Tranform4Europe alliance. This University from Kaunas, Lithuania, brings an exceptional experience in the development of plurilingual competence to this initiative, and together with Saarland University in Germany, University of Alicante, The Estonian Academy of Art, University of Silesia in Katowice, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, The University of Trieste seeks to establish a multilingual Transfor4Europe university campus.

At the beginning of December 2021, the Transform4Europe European University Alliance held its first Strategic Assembly Meeting. The event was open to all members of the seven Transform4Europe partner universities and aimed at reflecting on the work of the alliance, looking ahead and answering questions.

After the encouraging keynote speeches given by Professor Manfred Schmitt, President of the coordinating institution, Saarland University, and Anke Stahl,

Head of Division of Project Policies, Internationalisation and Research, University Networks from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the subsequent talks focussed on how Transform4Europe aims at developing future European knowledge entrepreneurs, at fostering their plurilingual and intercultural skills, and at promoting change in Europe.



Professor Benedikt Schnellbächer from Saarland University presented the concept upon which we base our revolutionary work as an Alliance, namely Knowledge Entrepreneurialism. In his intriguing lecture, he focused on the "Transformation potential of Knowledge Entrepreneurialism" and what we want to contribute to within our Alliance framework.



Associate Professor Vilma Bijeikienė from Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas focussed on "Multilingualism as key for transformation and social inclusion". In her cheerful talk, she gave concrete examples of the close and personal collaboration within the alliance, with special mention of the first Transform4Europe European Day of Languages and the great contribution multilingualism makes to community building. Also, the forthcoming initiatives and events of the Transform4Europe Alliance were presented: a new format of the

Languages for Lunch, Transform4Europe Week and European Culture Festival 2022.

LANGUAGES BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN PEOPLE – TRANSFORM4EUROPE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

- Languages for Lunch

Who: community of 7 partner universities

When: next year

What: learning alliance languages (Bulgarian, Estonian, German, Italian, Lithuanian, Polish, Spanish)

- Transform4Europe European Culture Festival 2022

Who: Transform4Europe students, academic and non-academic staff, creators, VMU community and residents of Kaunas, and artists of the city

When: May 4–7, 2022

Where: in Kaunas, Lithuania

What: Learning languages with the local community and school students, masterclasses, workshops, exploration of a European city, development of creative projects and initiatives, etc.

- Transform4Europe Week 2022

Who: students, PhD candidates, academic and non-academic staff, artists

When: May 9–13, 2022

Where: Katowice, Chorzów, Cieszyn and Sosnowiec (Poland)

What: separate modules, meetings and activities, also networking, social events and informal entertainment



Emilie Szwajnoch, the Vice-President of the Transform4Europe Student Council, highlighted the importance of students' participation in the alliance in her empowering speech on "The role of Students on the sustainability of European University Alliances". Professor Stelian Dimitrov from Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski concluded this section with his talk on "Overcoming the challenges of building smart regions", which provoked many interesting questions among the audience and led to a vivid discussion with the dynamic participation of all speakers.

The meeting was rounded up by Transform4Europe Managing Director Cyntia Sandes Oliveira, who presented the alliance's achievements of the first year and the upcoming milestones and events in Transform4Europe year two.

Link to Website: www.transform4europe.eu or

<https://www.vdu.lt/en/international-cooperation/european-university-transform4europe/>

For further questions please contact: transform4europe@uni-saarland.de or transform4europe@vdu.lt

The Erasmus+ project “21st Century Competences for Modern Language Teaching at PSLC” completed



Audronė Auškelienė, Director of VIKC, institutional member of LKPA

In December 2021 the Public Service Language Centre, one of the most modern foreign language teaching centres in Lithuania, is completing the mobility project funded by the Erasmus + program (KA1 - mobility for learning purposes) for the professional development of the PSLC staff.

During the implementation of the project “21st Century Competences for Modern Language Teaching” (2019-1-LT01-KA104-060307), five PSLC language teaching professionals Regina Mačiuitienė, Daiva Stasiulionienė, Asta Jarutienė, Asterija Rudienė and Rita Samukienė have improved their professional competences in Germany, Malta, Portugal and Italy.

As the teaching of modern world languages is the main activity of the PSLC, it is extremely important for teachers and administrative staff to follow the innovations in the mentioned field and to improve the language teaching practice in the organization. Training in different European countries (Germany, Malta, Italy and Portugal) with the aim to upgrade modern teaching / learning activities, learn how to use ICT in the teaching / learning process, develop competencies in the field of German language examination and testing, improve the English language communication competencies of the PSLC administrative staff - is of vital importance to the language teaching professionals of the organization.

After the training, the project participants shared the gained experience with the colleagues inside and outside the institution, disseminated new experiences through qualification seminars for Lithuanian teachers and events in the media.

All five project participants are sharing their experience below:



Daiva: With the increasing numbers of foreigners in Lithuania, English language for me has become an everyday routine tool. Before I had learned English language only by myself, independently. I have been using EL in different fields of life, including my work. However, I never felt confident enough and used to be embarrassed if I made a mistake. Very soon, after completing the EFL course in Malta, I started coordinating and implementing the online Lithuanian programme to foreigners. The EFL course in Malta was a real breakthrough for me. It was much more useful and effective than the one in Lithuania would have been because during these two weeks in Malta I enrolled in the international group of students and was communicating in English all the time. Now, when speaking English language, I no longer feel embarrassed or stressed and I am much more confident. What is more, I learned the new EFL teaching methods, that I can modify and apply in teaching Lithuanian language to foreigners.



Regina: Participation in the teachers training of the Goethe Institute „Prüfen und Testen“ ("Exams and Testing") from August 4th, 2019 to August 10th, 2019 in Munich was important to me in two respects: on the one hand, information on testing, assessment and self-assessment was relevant to the everyday teaching of German at the Public Service Language Centre. On the other hand, it was a great opportunity to meet colleagues from all over the world and share their experience.

There were analysed not only standardized exams, but also the possibility of self-assessment of language skills and its methods were discussed. The last day of the seminar was dedicated to teamwork: individual groups created and presented exam tasks.

It was an ideal opportunity to develop a wide range of professional skills: knowledge of the criteria for standardized language tests according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), forms of feedback in lessons, preparation for language tests and the organization of self-evaluation. I was also able to further develop my soft skills: reflecting on my own approach to testing, work and discussion in groups and teamwork. And all in German language!

The PSLC is a licensed examination centre of the Goethe-Institut. Therefore, the knowledge I have acquired is important for ensuring the quality of exams. However, it is equally important in the language learning process to promote the motivation and self-assessment of each learner's learning progress. Now after the teachers training in Munich, I can actively share these ideas with colleagues both in our Language Centre and in the wider circle of teachers. The material has already been presented in the PSLC seminars for German teachers from all over Lithuania. You can find my article on topic testing and evaluating in the magazine of the Lithuanian German Teachers Association (in German):

https://www.ldv.lt/images/PDF/Miteinander/2019_Herbst/Miteinander_online_19_2_Nr._59.pdf



Asterija: I chose the course „STIMULATING CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION/FUTURE CLASSROOM METHODOLOGY OF TEACHING“ at the CREF - Educational Resources and Training Centre in Portugal which is one of the most important establishments of the region of Setúbal. I had 6 workshops about digital tools, future methodologies, 2 visits to 2 schools with Future Classroom Labs which are developing methodologies according to the use of the "Future Classroom Lab", including mobile devices in education as for me international experience is highly important. During the course I attended in Portugal I had the opportunity to learn from good practice abroad, to experiment and develop new learning practices and teaching methods carried in at the international level, to gain practical skills relevant for my current job and professional development, to extend my professional network with teachers from Croatia, Portugal, Poland, Germany, Italy and Macedonia. In addition, I could share my own knowledge and skills with the course participants, reinforce professional cooperation with the Portuguese teacher training institution and build cooperation with players in the labor market. Also, in this course I could create spin-off effects for the development of new educational activities such as workshops, training, seminars for teachers in Lithuania. Finally, I increased my job satisfaction, made new contacts, and expanded my career opportunities.

The most interesting experience was a visit to the school, working with project-based methodology where a teacher works as a consultant. I acquired new technological tools and developed my ICT skills which are of the highest importance in hybrid teaching at present as well as I got new ideas for future classroom in order to foster students' creativity and innovation.

The ICT tools I learned during the course will help improve self - esteem of the students through encouraging their creative thinking and fostering their imagination, get higher motivation to remain on task by working in small groups,

develop actively and constructively students' involvement in the work at class, encourage students to take the ownership of their own learning, improve teamwork skills, put into practice the principal that "teachers become learners at times, and learners sometimes teach", develop students' lateral thinking skills. My mobility will impact on the introduction of new curricula at the Public Service Language Centre, improving its organization and management as well as internationalise its activities.

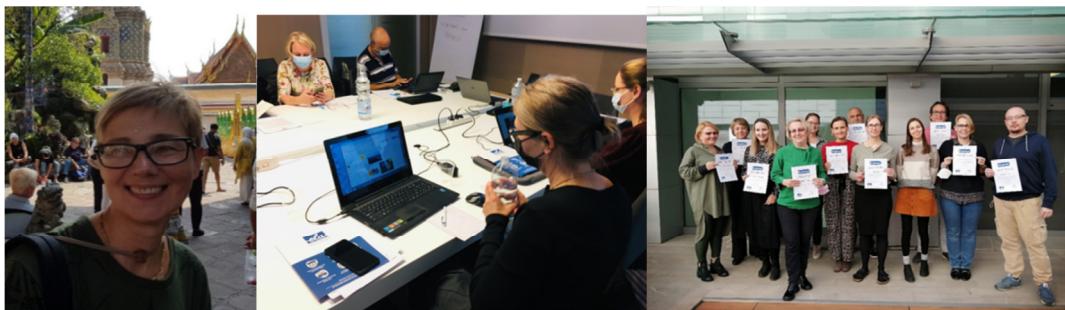


Asta: I chose this Intensive General English courses at Gateway School of English in Malta because it was a great opportunity to learn English in an English-speaking environment: all teachers were native speakers, about 90 percent of Maltese are able to speak English. The best way to learn a language is to take it naturally, unconsciously from the language environment - it is the so-called "immersion" method.

Proficiency in English is a necessary tool these days, so improving it was definitely necessary for me in my work environment, communicating with partners, clients, improving other English language skills.

It was a very interesting and effective two-week English language courses for adults in a multicultural environment. In addition to the training, an extensive cultural program was organized. These courses have significantly improved my current knowledge and motivated me to further my independent learning.

The acquired knowledge undoubtedly improved communication with foreign clients, partners, participation in international projects and facilitated the reading, viewing of English content. My improved knowledge of English will definitely contribute to smoother communication and image enhancement of PSLC.



Rita: I chose this training course *Teaching languages in the digital era: the best apps, web platforms and ICT resources for learning languages* in Bologna Erasmus Learning Academy because of the content it offered, i.e. it focused on ICT tools and their practical application. I would say this course had a bigger value than a national in-service training course, first because it provided an opportunity to connect with other professionals and immerse in international context of teaching and it is a good opportunity for both a professional and personal growth. 7 days in English speaking environment was a great opportunity to merge totally in English way of thinking, meet like-minded people and exchange ideas and have interesting discussions. I am also more confident in using ICT in my classes, and I learnt some ICT tools that were completely new to me. The knowledge gained will help me make the teaching more effective, motivating, and interactive. Also, I have shared my experience with the colleagues in the Language Centre and I am preparing to hold a practical seminar for the teachers of all disciplines in Lithuania.

HOW TO PERFORM BEST DURING THE STATE EXAM?

LANGUAGE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION OF LITHUANIA (LKPA) completed the project for high school graduates and their teachers.

Covid-19 pandemics and online teaching. For the whole year lasting pandemics and online teaching has been a challenge for students and their teachers, especially for high school graduates, preparing to take State exams. For most of them online teaching/learning has required extra skills, time, and efforts to adapt and transform to a different style of learning. Very likely, that without additional support, many of the students wouldn't have been able to prepare for the State exams properly and present themselves at their very best.

Developing foreign language communication competences to high school graduates preparing for the State examination. Language Teachers' Association of

Lithuania (LKPA) prepared an application for the project that aims to help high school graduates to better prepare for the State examination of a foreign language (English, German or French). The project is being implemented by active members of LKPA - expert teachers of foreign languages working in Lithuanian high schools. The idea and initiative for this project came from language teaching and teacher-training experts of Public Service Language Centre.

Free online consultation sessions to high school graduates. From May to December 2021 LKPA experts were offering free online consultation sessions for high school graduates from all over the country on Zoom platform promoted on Ministry of Education platform www.pagalbamokytis.lt/abiturientams , LKPA website <http://www.lkpa.vdu.lt/category/naujienos/> , PSLC website www.vikc.lt and VIKO website <https://ukc.viko.lt> .

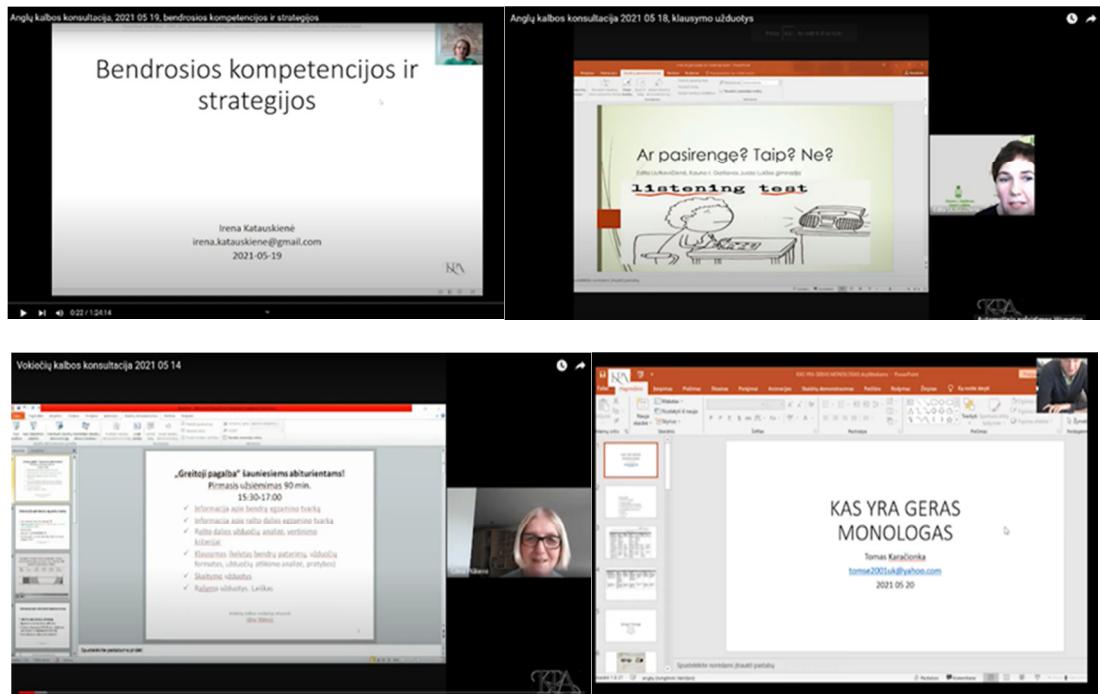
During these online consultation sessions students' communication speaking, listening, reading and writing skills were developed. Over 20 free consultations to high school graduates were held online and viewed by over 15 000 of school graduates, who were not able to take part in virtual consultations. The consultations helped school graduates to better prepare for the State examinations of foreign languages, they learned how to better apply communicational speaking strategies: plan, create and produce and correct their oral presentations in a monologue as well as in a dialogue.

Teacher training workshops to high school graduates' teachers. Another project activity was practical „hands-on“ training to language teachers of high school graduates „Developing and evaluating communication skills in preparation for the foreign language State examination.“ Virtual trainings took place online in December 2021 and were offered to LKPA members, foreign language teachers of high school graduates, and afterwards, uploaded on YouTube channel and offered to the review of other teachers throughout the country.

Also, during this project a set of guidelines and tips based on the materials and recommendations provided by the experts was prepared for teachers as an online resource. We hope it will be a useful source to the teachers of languages preparing their students to the General Certificate State examinations.

Relevance and perspectives of the project. We truly believe that the project activities will remain relevant and up-to-date next year too and are ready to

continue organizing free online consultation sessions for high school graduates and practical in-service teacher training workshops to language teachers of high school graduates in the future. At the end of the project we interviewed project expert-lecturers asking them to reflected on their learners' expectations and challenges they were facing, and if their and their learners' expectations were met. Also, the experts provided their recommendations in case the project was continued in the future:



Irena Katauskienė (expert teacher of English language):

The learners' expectations were to learn more about the speaking part of the National Examination of English language (the assessment criteria of the monologue and the dialogue. The teachers' expectations were how to help their students in the learning process, provide objective assessment, how to prepare students to answer the first question, etc.

My major challenge was material selection (what to include, what to leave out);

The learners' major challenges were how to do their best in the exam: how to show their strengths and hide their weaknesses of their language competence, how to develop lexical richness of and interactive techniques performing the dialogue. I would like to take part in the project again as I want to share my experience with teachers and students.

Tomas Karac̄ionka (expert teacher of English language):

The learners were expecting to hear some tips for the speaking examination, how to avoid mistakes, how to better present given topics for the monologue and dialogue. The biggest challenge for me was to think what information to include and what to exclude, how to organize time, how to prepare the slides. Since it was a consultation, and the learners were supposed to give questions, the biggest challenge for them, at least for some, was speak out and give questions. I genuinely hope that the project was really helpful and both teachers and students found answers to the questions and some of the problems they had. I think the project should never end, every year new students take the examination, every year inexperienced teachers come, so yes, the project should continue next year, and I would really like to take part again.

Gilma Plūkienė (expert teacher of German language):

The students were expecting to receive information on the structure of the National Examination of German language as well as the assessment criteria of its written and speaking parts. It was very important to them to learn the main strategies of how to write a letter, how to make a proper monologue and dialogue. Some students needed to analyze the format and task structure of the written and speaking parts from the very beginning, therefore we were short of time and could not discuss all the details to the depth. After these consultations the students gained more confidence and knew what to expect in the exam and what things they need to upgrade. After the consultations a few students contacted me with more questions, asking me to look through their essays with my comments. I would be glad to continue with this project next year too.

Danutė Stankaitienė (expert teacher of French language):

The students were expecting to hear the answers to their questions and clarify things they were not certain about. Most of them had low self confidence and lacked time management skills. In my opinion, there was too little time to cover a lot of material. I am not certain if this project is needed – the students have plenty of possibilities to learn, they need to use them: schools provide free consultations, they just need to attend them.

Edita Liutkevičienė (expert teacher of English language): Students joined the consultations according to their needs. They expected their knowledge to be strengthened before the listening and reading part of the exam. There were quite a lot of students in consultations and they met their expectations. So if students joined and stayed during the whole consultation, it means they got what they needed. Challenging thing was self-filming for me as a consultant and for students, too. Students did not want to be filmed and show their faces, so it was strange to provide a consultation to a black screen. Also a challenge was to hear that everything was going to be public on youtube. As there were teachers and students present there in consultations and they participated , I think I encouraged students not to be afraid before exams and teachers to be sure they did their best to help students to prepare students for them. Also a teacher- "stranger" will always add to students' knowledge something more and in a different way. The project has shown to be necessary, because a big number of students joined. All additional consultation for motivated students in remote places of Lithuania possible to attend online is good. Practical tasks to complete during consultation are a little bit more complicated, but still if there are students, the teacher-consultant will be able to get the response. It could happen that if asked I would join again.



(Photos of Christmas trees in Lithuania, December 2021)

The Electronic Newsletter is issued by:

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