



PETITION FOR THE PROVISION OF SUSTAINED FUNDING FOR THE LATVIAN LANGUAGE INSTITUTE

To the President of the Republic of Latvia, the Latvian Parliament and the Cabinet of Ministers

Preamble

Almost two million people speak Latvian using it as a vehicle to give expression to their ideas, emotions, identity on in their everyday lives. Furthermore, the Latvian language forms the existential basis of the Latvian state, its culture and security. Latvian is not only a means of daily communication, but literally defines the boundaries beyond which our nation disappears. The scholarly research thereof is indispensable for preserving the language as a living, well-developed and viable system that sustains national identity, national consciousness, education and public administration. Scientific research on the Latvian language must be understood as belonging to the long-term responsibilities of the Latvian state.

Therefore, we, **linguists, researchers of Baltic languages and associated specialists**, appeal to the highest officials of the Latvian state **to ensure sustainable funding** for the **Latvian Language Institute** of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Latvia – the only research institution in the world that carries out research activities on all aspects of the Latvian language. This funding will also allow the Latvian Language Institute to support other Latvian linguists and generally foster Latvian linguistics throughout the country.

Where are we?

- Years of severe underfunding have led to a substantial decrease in the quality of research, education and language standardization. It undermined the ability of Latvian linguistics to remain competitive in the international scientific context and erodes public trust in state language policy.
- As a result, the systematic scholarly approach to Latvian is hampered, threatening not only the viability of entire subfields of linguistic research, but also prevents the establishment of many new subfields of linguistics in Latvia (psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, ethnolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, etc.).
- Insufficient funding causes Latvia to lose several linguists every year, with especially upcoming researchers instead finding employment in non-scientific sectors.
- Funding gaps and delays result in the effective interruption (in many cases for periods of a year or more) of the Institute's research activities until further funding can be secured, threatening the stewardship and transmission of knowledge and expertise. In the absence of reliable funding, intellectual, organisational and interpersonal capacity is lost, jeopardizing decades of research investment.

Currently allocated state funding amounts to just two full-time positions, whereas, for example, our neighbours Lithuania and Estonia manage to fund each more than 80 (!) permanent positions within their language institutes (see for the Institute of Lithuanian Language <https://iki.lt/struktura-ir-kontaktai/>, and the Institute for Estonian Language <https://eki.ee/kontakt/>). At the beginning of the 21st century, the Latvian Language Institute itself had approximately 50 full-time positions at disposal (this year there are less than 10 positions, in which researchers receive at most approximately 700 euros from

the state). By requiring that basic funding be sought only in competitive calls for research projects, the Latvian state is merely relying on the luck and enthusiasm of researchers who apply.

Who are we?

- The sole scientific institution in the world dedicated to studying the Latvian language in its full complexity.
- The sole scientific institution in the world studying the Latvian language in all major linguistic subdisciplines and levels of the language such as language history, sociolinguistics, grammar, phonetics, language culture, lexicology, lexicography, dialectology, onomastics and terminology.
- The leading provider of the digital infrastructure for the Latvian language: the Institute's field work activities as well as ongoing language monitoring have resulted in the largest digital lexical resources of the Latvian language (including tezaurs.lv, llvv.tezaurs.lv, mlvv.tezaurs.lv, lvvv.tezaurs.lv, among others).
- The premier source of scientific expertise of Latvian linguistics, whose work also has a significant impact abroad.
- The main institution in Latvia to provide Latvian language experts in all language-related expert committees and working groups for state regulatory acts.

The Institute of the Latvian Language was founded in 1935, first, as the Repository of the Latvian language. Since its very beginning it employed the best and most recognized researchers of the Latvian language. The work carried out by the Institute and its archive of approximately four million linguistic datapoints have attracted prestige and serve as authoritative sources of linguistic information on Latvian.

What we are asking for?

Permanent basic funding for the Institute of the Latvian Language, which would allow us to:

- guarantee 45 full-time positions with the national average salary level in all primary linguistic subdisciplines (language history, grammar (morphology, word formation, syntax), phonology, phonetics, sociolinguistics, onomastics, dialectology, geolinguistics, terminology, lexicology and lexicography, language culture);
- continue field research, expeditions and dialect documentation;
- establish modern subdisciplines (e.g. computational linguistics, neurolinguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, language pedagogy research) that will ensure the existence of the Latvian language in the future;
- attract new and young researchers and ensure the continuity of scientific succession;
- transfer and disseminating knowledge to researchers and society: by participating in local and international scientific events - congresses, conferences, symposia, researcher networking seminars, etc.

*We call on **the members of the Parliament and of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia** to establish a permanent funding model for the Institute of the Latvian Language, as is the case in other countries. **Two million euros per year** are required to ensure the full-time employment of all selected researchers and student assistants involved in research.*

What do we offer?

Once the necessary funding is provided, we will:

- preserve and develop Latvian linguistics and the Latvian language, which is the basis of national identity and national security;
- continue to develop all basic linguistic subdisciplines in Latvia;
- attract doctoral students – young future specialists – in all basic linguistic subdisciplines;
- consolidate new subdisciplines that are not yet sufficiently developed in Latvia (psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, computational linguistics, etc.);
-

- monitor the use, evolution and teaching of the Latvian language in the Latvian diaspora abroad and provide recommendations to such communities (parents, teachers, heads of Latvian centers) around the world based on scholarly literature and research;
- produce resources and basic publications on the Latvian language such as the “Dictionary of the Modern Latvian Language”, which reflects the current usage of the Latvian language, and other thematic dictionaries (place names, regional names, synonyms, spellings, terms, etc.) as well historical dictionaries that would enable research on the character and spirit of the Latvian people;
- ensure the availability of accumulated language data to both the general public and other research institutions;
- ensure the dissemination of knowledge both in Latvia and internationally (through publications, scientific and networking events, public campaigns);
- communicate, teach and demonstrate the diversity and importance of the Latvian language;
- engage in the supervision and advising of students' linguistic research projects.

PARAKSTĪTĀJI:

1. Sanda Rapa, Dr. philol., LU HZF Latviešu valodas institūts
2. Liene Markus-Narvila, Dr. philol., LU HZF Latviešu valodas institūts
- 3.