



RISEUP 

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 RISE UP

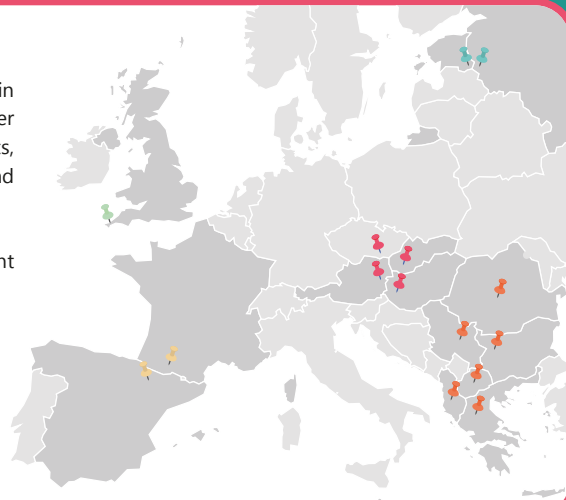
 @riseup-project

About RISE UP

RISE UP is a European project dedicated to fostering the diversity of languages in Europe by amplifying the voices of small linguistic communities. The initiative aims to empower minority language communities through the creation of connections between language activists, speakers and new speakers from different communities, the identification of good practices and the development of several resources, including a Digital Toolset.

RISE UP primarily works with five language communities that are spread out over different parts of Europe:

- Aranese (Spain, France)
- Aromanian/Vlach (Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, North Macedonia, Serbia and Romania)
- Burgenland Croatian (Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic)
- Cornish (United Kingdom)
- Seto (Estonia and Russia)



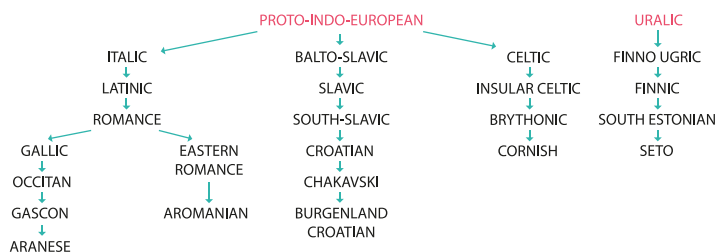
About #VoicesOfCommunity

In May 2024, the RISE UP Project hosted an Artistic Residency in Barcelona. Artists collaborated, learned from one another and recorded songs, poetry, and other voice creations together and in each of the five community languages. When scanning the QR code at the bottom of the Language Community Profiles, you can listen to the voices of Brett Hiiob (Seto), Fiona O'Cleirigh (Cornish), Mario Csenar (Burgenland Croatian) and Daniela Stoica (Aromanian), Marina Cuito and Alidé Sans, who visited the resident artists (Aranes).



About the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML)

From the website of the Council of Europe: "The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) is the European convention for the protection and promotion of languages used by traditional minorities. The Charter is designed to protect and promote regional and minority languages and to enable speakers to use them both in private and public life. It therefore obliges the States Parties to actively promote the use of these languages in education, courts, administration, media, culture, economic and social life, and cross-border co-operation. Thus, the Charter goes beyond minority protection and anti-discrimination, requiring its States Parties to also take active promotional measures for the benefit of minority languages. The Council of Europe monitors that the Charter is applied in practice." - <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-charter-regional-or-minority-languages/>
Not all of the countries listed on the following posters have ratified the ECRML – some have signed, but not ratified it, and some have neither signed, nor ratified it.



In this (non-complete) 'language tree', you can roughly see how the five RISE UP language varieties are related to one another. Could you place all the languages that you know?

(It is also interesting to think about how language trees cannot fully represent language contact and how languages have influenced one another - this is a vital part of linguistic eco-systems, particularly for minoritised languages.)

About speaker numbers

As a general linguistic rule of thumb, “speaker numbers” (including those on the RISE UP posters) should be taken with a pinch of salt. Consider the following questions: at which level of proficiency should somebody be considered “a speaker”? Could somebody be considered a member of a language community without being fluent? Should “new speakers” be included? Who counted these “speakers”? At which point in time? Which methods did they use? What were their motivations for counting? And what options were respondents given to choose from?

Nonetheless, RISE UP has included at least some reported figures – there is still a real-life difference between language communities that can report on a few hundred thousand, a few thousand, a few hundred, or a handful of people.

MINDS & SPARKS



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Disclaimer: RISE UP tried its best to make the content and orthography of the profiles as accurate as possible. If you think any aspects of the content or orthography could be improved, please let us know. You can do so by telling the team that is present in the Exhibit and they will take notice, or you can contact us through our webpage.



Miralh deth cèu - A Mirror of the Sky

About the language & community

- Aranese (Aranés) is a language variety of Occitan that has evolved in Val d'Aran (the Aran Valley) in the Pyrenees Mountains. Administratively, the Valley is part of Catalonia, in Spain, but it has linguistic ties to Gascony and cultural ties to the rest of Occitania in France – until the construction of the Vielha tunnel in 1948, the snowed-in valley could much more easily be accessed from France during the winters. Politically, however, Val d'Aran mostly aligned with the Catalan-Aragonese Crown because of treaties that allowed the Valley to maintain its community- and family-based system of self-government in exchange for a tribute grain tax (the 'Galín Reiau').
- There are now reports of around 3,000 – 6,000 Aranese speakers overall. Aranese belongs to the Gascon branch of Occitan, and it is a matter of debate which Occitan dialects should be considered their own varieties. The valley has been a stable hotbed of multilingualism for centuries and remains one to this day - many of the locals speak up to five language varieties: Aranese, Catalan, Spanish, French, and English, and switch between them as needed. This linguistic eco-system is further enriched by hiking and skiing tourists, as well as by migrants from Central and South America, all of Europe, and the world.
- After having been integrated into the Catalan province of Lleida in 1834, Val d'Aran lost all its remaining privileges in the two republics and two dictatorships (by Primo de Rivera and Franco) that followed. The Valley's self-organisation was only partially reinstated after recognition of Val d'Aran's 'hecho diferencial' (distinguishing fact) in 1979. Multiple steps finally led to the Catalan Parliament adopting the Law of Aran in 2015, recognising its "Occitan national reality" and status.
- Movements and initiatives seeking to support Aranese have been hard at work in the Valley – since 2008, the number of people who can read, write and talk Aranese has increased by 14.1%, 11% and 3.2%, respectively. Aranese is also actively taught in schools, is recognised as the official language of Val d'Aran, and the Aranese cultural sector continues to expand, including an active radio station and various publications.



Language Status?

Spain has ratified the ECRML. France has signed, but not ratified the ECRML.

Occitan is recognised as an official language in Catalonia – but not in France. The Red Book of Endangered Languages (UNESCO) classifies all six currently known dialects of Occitan as endangered, and four as severely endangered (Auvergnat, Gascon, Languedocien, Limousin, Provençal, and Vivaro-Alpine).



© Elisa Salomón Romero



Did you know?

To usher in the summer, 'Hèstes deth huec' ("celebrations of fire"), which comprise 'Era Crema der Haro' in Les and 'Era crema deth Taro' ("the burning of Haro and Taro") in Arties, are celebrated in Val d'Aran on June 23 (St. John's). In Les, at night, fire is set to a blessed, 11m+ tall fir tree trunk on the Haro square, with traditional dancers, and a kind of "ball of fire" made of birch tree bark called 'halhes'. On June 29, a newly married couple adorns next year's fir with flower wreaths and asks for fertility. In Arties, a burning fir tree trunk is dragged to the town hall, and people may jump across the dwindling flames. The festivities were added to the UNESCO Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2015.



About the artist, Ricard Novell (he/him, Barcelona, 1961)

"Even though I was born in a city, my childhood memories have always been linked to nature. I visited Val d'Aran for the first time when I was one year old. We had camped by the Garonne River. When the clouds dissipated, I could see Betlan's bell tower, and a bit later, the one in Montcorbau. That town was to be a part of my life from then on. Since 1984, I have lived in Val d'Aran, and I am lucky to be able to feel its essence every day. As a child, I loved drawing, but I did not pick up a pencil again until the end of the 90's. From 2001 onward, I have exhibited my works in several locations in the Pyrenees. I also have created many natural and cultural heritage illustrations, which have been placed in information panels that can be seen at various spots in the Pyrenees. In 2009 and 2013, I published a small hiking guide of the "Camin Reiau" and a map of Val d'Aran, alongside several local legends. In 2020, I published Un viatge fantàstic a traci de creion. Es pòbles dera Val d'Aran. By now, the fifth edition has been published, and the book has been translated to French and Aranese."



The artist's favourite saying

"Montcorbison capèth, londeman dia bèth": When Montcorbison (an Aranese mountain) wears "a hat", that is: there are clouds on its peak, the next day will be beautiful.

How to contact the artist:



Voices of Community:



1. <https://www.visitvaldaran.com/en/>
2. <https://www.conselharan.org/>
3. <https://www.institutestudisaranesi.cat/>

4. <https://llengua.gencat.cat/web/.content/documents/occita/expo-aranes/full-sala-ENG.pdf>
5. https://llengua.gencat.cat/web/.content/documents/dadesestudis/altres/anisus/dossier_eulp-2018_aranes.pdf
6. Costa, J. (2023). A materialist take on minoritization, emancipation, and language revitalization: Occitan sociolinguistics since the 1970s. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 27, 327–344. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12618>



A Wonderful Expression of the Balkan and its History

About the language & community

- Aromanian (Armăneashti/Armăneasche/Rrămănesht) or Vlach is a language variety that evolved in many areas and cities in the Balkans. It is spoken in so-called "Sprachinseln" (language islands) in Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Romania, as well as around the world.
 - The main reasons for the wide geographical dispersion of Aromanians are the many border drawings and re-drawings and re-settlement policies of the territories it is spoken in. This affected Aromanian men's highly mobile lifestyles. As transhumance pastoralists, Aromanians moved seasonally with their herd of livestock until borders closed, and so did Aromanian merchants who travelled between territories as long and as far as they could.
 - Linguistically, Aromanian is a neo-Latin language variety and part of the Eastern/Balkan Romance branch. There are reports of around 80,000 – 200,000 speakers overall. Aromanian has been and is integrating more elements from the languages of its neighbours and/or occupiers than its most powerful related language *Dakoromanian*, better known as Romanian. It shares this characteristic with the closely related and severely endangered *Istroromanian* and the endangered *Meglenoromanian*.
- Since Aromanians live in several countries, their and their language's circumstances are strongly shaped by the policies issued in each of them. Aromanian is mainly spoken at home and in the community and is increasingly used online. Several writing standards have been proposed. Today a standard is emerging from within the online community, however, orthographic conventions remain divisive. In the Aromanian RISE UP survey, Aromanian was the variety closest to 90.5% of respondents' hearts.



Language Status?

Serbia and Romania have ratified the ECRML, but do not recognise Aromanians as an ethnic or linguistic minority. Albania, Bulgaria, and Greece have not signed the ECRML, and out of those three, only Albania recognises Aromanians as an ethnic minority. Teaching and religious services are possible in Aromanian in Albania, but support and funds for the language are lacking. North Macedonia has signed, but not ratified the ECRML. However, it officially recognised the Aromanian community as a minority in 1991; Aromanian has been the official co-municipal language in the city of Kruševo since 2006, and Aromanian can be used in court and for teaching. Aromanian is considered 'definitely endangered' by UNESCO's Atlas, 'threatened' by the Endangered Languages Project (ELP) and 'vigorous' by Ethnologue.



© Zoran Kardula



Did you know?

Similar to the Western European "King Cake", many Aromanians cherish the Orthodox Balkan winter-time tradition of baking a coin into bread – the person who finds the coin will be blessed with luck next year. Usually eaten on January 1 (St Basil's Day), Epiphany (Three King's Day) or Christmas, the coin or other objects can be baked into 'plătsinta', 'vasilopita' in Greece, 'česnica' in Serbia, 'kulač' or 'pite' in Albania, 'banitsa' in Bulgaria, 'maznik', 'plătsinta' or 'baklava' in North Macedonia, or other local breads or pies.



About the artist, Teano Kardula (she/her, Skopje, 1997)

A dedicated and passionate 27-year-old graphic designer from North Macedonia, I am a tireless seeker of creative solutions to design challenges. A University of Sunderland graduate with over six years of experience, I focus on social design, working on projects advocating feminism, social equality, and LGBTIQ+ and minority rights. As a member of the Aromanian minority, I co-founded TYCHE/TIHE, an association promoting Aromanian culture, nearly two years ago. One of the few young Aromanian speakers in North Macedonia, I actively raise awareness about preserving Aromanian heritage and remain committed to advocating for the rights of minority communities.



The artist's favourite saying

„Gura adarā - gura aspardze" - „The mouth creates - the mouth spoils/destroys"

How to contact the artist:



Voices of Community:



1. The RISE UP Project with a Focus on Cross-Border Aspects of the Use and Position of Aromanian / Eva Duran Eppler, Gisela Hagmar, Violeta Heinze, Marie-Therese Sauer // *Vulnerable and Endangered Languages in Europe* / Ed. Anemarie Sorescu-Marinic, Mitjana Curkovic, Mitjana Mitic. ISBN 978-60-7179-127-4. (2023), p. 23-40.

2. Sorescu-Marinic, A., Dragnea, M., Kahl, T., Nijagalov, B., Dyer, D. L. & Costanzo, A. (Eds.). (11 Mar 2021). *The Romance-Speaking Balkans*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004456174>

3. Gardani, F., Lopocanu, M., & Giadici, A. (2022). In and Around the Balkans: Romance Languages and the Making of Layered Languages. *Journal of Language Contact*, 14(1), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1163/19552629-14010001>

4. Ntasiou, E. (2017) Aromanian Language and differentiated geographic varieties A teaching approach problems and propositions. *Proceedings of the 21st FEL Conference* 19 - 21 October 2017. Foundation for Endangered Languages

5. https://wiki.mercator-research.eu/languages/romanian_in_the_balkans

6. <https://farshardis.org/>



- Burgenland Croatian (*Gradišćanskohrvatski*) is a language variety that evolved in Burgenland, the easternmost province of Austria. There is a large Burgenland Croatian community in Vienna, and smaller communities exist in Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. This variety is spoken across state borders in multilingual and multi-cultural settings.

• A Slavic language, Burgenland Croatian belongs to the Čakavian branch of Croatian and there are reports of 30,000–65,000 speakers overall. Croatian varieties are distinguished by how they say “what” - ‘č’a’, ‘kaj’, and ‘što’ lead to Čakavian, Kajkavian, Štokavian, respectively. Although Čakavian dominates in different Burgenland Croatian communities, elements of all three are found. Burgenland Croatian retains certain “archaic” structures, words, and phrases, as well as loanwords from surrounding communities. Burgenland Croatian also differs regarding stress and accent, which gives it a unique ‘sound’ compared to Standard Croatian.

• The 'language islands' of Burgenland Croatian today go back to several waves of migration from Croatia and Bosnia during the 16th century. Mostly, landlords re-located serfs from territories affected by Ottoman invasion to their estates up north desolated by war, economic crises and pandemics.

• Specifically within the last 100 years, many Burgenland Croats have been seeking work outside their villages and have commuted, especially to Vienna. Most recently, some bilingual villages experience an increase of people with different language affiliations. While there are a small number of kindergartens and schools, as well as newspapers, radio and TV shows, fewer and fewer young people speak the language. One of the most important events for younger generations is 'Dan Mladine' (the Day of the Croatian Youth) organised by the 'Hrvatski akademski klub'. Every September, the festival brings together speakers of Burgenland Croatian from different regions. Among the strongholds are several cultural associations, as well as the Catholic Church, including the annual Burgenland Croat pilgrimage to Mariazell.

Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic have all ratified the ECRML, and Burgenland Croatian has been implemented as an official language in Burgenland only after an intervention by the Constitutional court in 1990. A standardised variety was developed in parallel and independently from Standard Croatian, and Austria recognised Croats in Burgenland as an 'autochthonous' regional minority a long time before the ECRML (States Treaty 1955).



The village of Stinatz/Stinjaki celebrates the “Stinjačka svadba” (Stinatz Wedding), an elaborate wedding ceremony in which the *posnašnica* (the maid of honour, wearing a colourful skirt and wreath) and the *staćilo* (the groomsman, wearing a hat with peacock feathers and flowers) lead the bride and groom to the local inn, where the townspeople sing traditional Burgenland Croatian songs, and dance. The Stinatz Wedding became part of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2020.

Feminist Cross Stitch Club is run by Viktoría Ratasich (Oberpullendorf, 1997). She lives and works in Vienna. Ratasich is studying Art Teaching at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. The artist deals mostly with the topics of feminism, language, and the use of social media. Her artistic role model is first and foremost that which surrounds her - the diversity of individuals, different lived realities, and perspectives of society. Feminist Cross Stitch Club is part of her master's thesis - the project started in 2020, and since then she has also held a series of workshops. In 2022, Ratasich and her Feminist Cross Stitch Club were part of the Wienwoche (Vienna Week). In June 2023, she was awarded the Croatian Center (Hrvatski centar)'s ,Mini METRON' prize for young talent for her work. In March 2024, Ratasich received the ,Burgenländerin-Award' from the magazine ,Die Burgenländerin' in the category of art and culture. two years ago. One of the few young Aromanian speakers in North Macedonia, I actively raise awareness about preserving Aromanian heritage and remain committed to advocating for the rights of minority communities.



"perje speci - onda reci"

("bake first - then speak" / "think before you speak")

How to contact the artist:



Voices of Community:



1. Tyran, Katharina. (2022) The Croatian minority in Austria and their language. EJM Europäisches Journal für Minderheitenfragen, Band 15, Dezember 2022, Heft 4-3. <https://doi.org/10.35998/ejm-2022-00012>
2. Zorka Kinda-Berlakovich, Andrea. (2014) "Sprachensteckbrief Burgenlandkroatisch". Österreichisches Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung.
3. Krol-Hager, R. (Ed.), Schukking, A. F. (Ed.), Thomas, K. (Ed.), Robinson-Jones, C. (Ed.), & Tyran, K. (2022). Croatian: The Croatian language in education in Austria-2nd. (2nd ed.) (Regional Dossier series). Mercator Center for Multilingualism and Language Learning.

4. Hentges, G. (2009). „Brücken für unser Land in einem neuen Europa“?. In: Butterwegge, C., Hentges, G. (eds) *Zuwanderung im Zeichen der Globalisierung*. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-91513-5_10

5. <https://www.hrskicentrat.hr/>

6. *Zeitschrift Elisabeth* (2013). *Ausgewählte Medien der kulturellen öffentlichen Kultur und deren Auswirkungen auf die kulturellen öffentlichen Maßnahmen im Bundesland*. Universität Wien



Reclaiming a Celtic Language

About the language & community

- Cornish (Kernewek/Kernowek) is a language variety that has evolved in Kernow/Cornwall, where the high cliffs of this southwestern duchy of the United Kingdom (UK) weather the gales of the Atlantic Ocean. Cornish is the only RISE UP language variety that is a reclaimed language, and there are smaller Cornish-speaking communities in London, Cardiff, and around the world. It belongs to the Southwestern Brythonic branch of Celtic, and Cornwall was officially formally recognised as one of the six Celtic Nations by the Pan-Celtic Congress, following the efforts of Henry Jenner, in 1904.
- Cornish was most vibrant during the Middle Cornish period (AD 1200 – AD 1600) when there were some 39,000 speakers. This number continuously declined after the Prayer Book Rebellion in 1549 – about 4,000 people were killed by King Edward VI's brutal suppression of the Cornish after their refusal to accept the English Book of Common Prayer as the only legal form of worship. It also declined due to there not being a Cornish bible (which was only first published in 2011), the lack of a standardised alphabet, migration to and away from Cornwall, and loosened ties between Cornwall and Brittany.
- Numerous scholars contributed to the 'dasserghyans Kernowek' ("Revival of Cornish") and many also took Celtic bardic names, like Robert Morton Nance ('Mordon' – Sea Wave) in solidarity with their Cornish or Celtic identity. Around 70% of the new Cornish lexicon was sourced from Late and Middle Cornish documents, around 25% are borrowed or adapted from Welsh and Breton, and the remaining 5% are from English – not accounting for Cornish loanwords, e.g. from Latin or Greek.
- A census in 2021 found that 563 people now identify as speakers of Cornish, while a study in 2018 showed other sources suggest that more than 3,000 people have at least some conversational Cornish skills. In 2010, UNESCO officially reclassified Cornish from "extinct" to "critically endangered" – as Robert Morton Nance remarked before his death: "One generation has set Cornish on its feet. It is now for another to make it walk."



Language Status?

The United Kingdom has ratified the ECRML. In 2002, Cornish was recognised under the ECRML and it was granted minority status by the UK government in 2014. Many initiatives, including Cornwall Council, especially Akademi Kernewek and the Cornish Language Office, as well as the Cornish Language Board, and Cornish language and grassroots organisations continue to foster the language using a variety of approaches. Books and films are published in Cornish, a vibrant traditional music and arts scene is flourishing, and there are ongoing efforts to teach it in schools. A Standard Written Form (SWF) has been in use since 2008.



Did you know?

A famous Cornish delicacy is the 'pasty' – a shortcrust pastry stuffed with a wide range of fillings, both sweet and savoury. Many different things can be put in a pasty, so it was said that the devil never dared to enter Cornwall, fearing he might end up as pasty filling. With a recipe going back to the 1200s, a crucial part of the pasty is its crimped edge. Legend held that miners, after using it as a handle for their oft arsenic-covered hands, would throw it away to feed the gnomish 'knockers' living in the mines.



About the artist, Lianne Wilson (she/her/any)

"Lianne is a Cornish artist, writer, poet, leftist, activist and chronic dabbler who has trouble saying no to 'just one more' project. She is fiercely queer and queerly fierce. She is disabled, battling CFS/ME, with a side of anxiety. She comes from the moon 'mountains' and alcopop pools of Clay Country, Kernow. She lives in Cardiff, having gone to uni there. In 2023, Lianne was made a bard of Gorsedh Kernow, taking the name Niwlen Ster ('nebula'), a name she uses online. She works in Kernewek, English and sometimes a little Welsh. She is a three times Gorsedh Kernow award winner for her Kernewek writing; her poetry has been published in various zines. Born in 1985, her artwork is influenced by the hauntology of synthwave, '90s kid nostalgia and glitch, sometimes made traditionally, sometimes digitally, often a mix. Her artwork is another vehicle for her activism: more Kernewek being more rebellious in more places seen by more people. She makes some merch with her designs on, some of which raises money for mutual aid. She wants a radical language with room for onan hag oll (one and all) that folk can live their whole life in if they want."



The artist's favourite saying

„An lavar koth yw lavar gwir:
Ny vynn nevra dos, vas a daves re hir;
Bes den heb tavas re gollas y dir."
"A man with no tongue has lost his land"

How to contact the artist:



Voices of Community:



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3. Mills, Jon (2010) Genocide and Ethnocide: The Suppression of the Cornish Language. In: Interfaces in Language. Cambridge Scholars, pp. 189-206. ISBN 9781443823999.

4. <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/parks-leisure-and-culture/the-cornish-language/cornish-language-programme/cornish-language-office/>
5. <http://www.akademikernewek.org.uk/localeren>
6. <https://www.kernewek.org/>



On the Border of Two Worlds

About the language & community

- Seto (Seto kiil') is a vernacular language variety that has evolved in the Seto region, Setomaa (literally "The Land of the Seto"), which is often said to lie 'katõ ilma veere pääl' - "on the border of two worlds". Once a distinct region in the Czarist Russian Empire, then a united one in the borders of the independent Republic of Estonia from 1918, it was split between two Soviet Republics in 1944 – around 75% went to the Russian SFR, and 25% to the Estonian SSR. After Estonia regained independence (1991), the split remained, though the current border was never officially ratified due to territorial dispute. Cross-border contact has been challenging since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- There are now reports of approx. 250 Seto left in Russia, 4,000 in Setomaa, and 25,000 - 30,000 speakers with some Seto knowledge in all of Estonia, Siberia (due to a migration wave a hundred years ago), and the rest of the world. Religion plays an important role: unlike their immediate neighbours in Estonia, the Võro, the Seto are not Lutheran, but Eastern Orthodox historically. Their religious festivities follow "the old", i.e. Julian calendar, and one of their most important traditions is celebrating local church holidays with a shared meal on family graves to commemorate their passed ancestors.
- In contrast to the Lutheran tradition of popular elementary schooling, only a few Seto men received schooling in Russian, until public education became accessible a hundred years ago, though in Estonian. Consequently, Seto was primarily an oral language, and knowledge about the world was passed on verbally from generation to generation. This was a treasure trove for Finnish and Estonian folklorists from the late 19th century onwards, and an extensive archive of Seto poetic verse, song, and folklore has been assembled since then. Out of this nation-building era of 'eepose-igatsus' ("the desire for an epic") also grew the legendary role of "King Peko" who was composed into a Seto epic by singer Anne Vabarna in collaboration with folklorist Paulopriit Voolaine.
- A highlight in the contemporary Seto annual cycle is the 'Kuningriigi päiv' ("Kingdom Day"), which attracts around 8,000 people each year – on this day, Setomaa is ceremonially declared a "kingdom", Seto arts and crafts are celebrated, and that year's ceremonial and spiritual spokesperson, the 'ülemsootska' ("Chief Herald"), is elected, who, so the legend goes, will receive guidance from "King Peko" in their dreams.
- Since the tumultuous 1950s, Seto villages have faced population drainage. Where there were once up to 30 farms, there are now no more than a handful of people. However, interest in Seto culture and the Seto region appears to be growing: the first Seto language kindergarten was set up in 2021, new generations enjoy novel institutions such as the Leelo singing camp, and over the last decades, a number of books have been published in Seto.



Language Status?

Estonia has not signed the ECRML and does not recognise Seto as a language. "Standard Estonian" is based on North Estonian varieties, while Seto (together with Mulgi, Tartu, and Võro) belongs to the South Estonian branch of this Finno-Ugric (more precisely, a Baltic Finnic) language. The Seto language is most closely related to Võro, but has a unique, Russian-influenced lexicon and pronunciation. The Seto are actively building relationships with other Finno-Ugric speaking communities in Russia and Scandinavia, while the Seto Council declared the indigeneity of Seto in 2017.



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Did you know?

Seto Leelo is a polyphonic singing tradition with archaic metric poetry in the vernacular that is often performed in public by singers who wear traditional costume. Seto leelo was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009. There are mostly female choirs, and improvisation and lyric-writing are a mark of particular distinction - composing on a given theme, the best female singer-songwriter is crowned each Kingdom Day. A 3m-tall stone statue by sculptor Elmar Rebane in Obinitsa celebrates these "Mothers of Song" who have retained this art of creative expression through centuries.



About the artist, Yyhely Hälvin (she/her, Põlva, 1993)

I am a visual artist and an art teacher from Setomaa, where I spent most of my childhood. All the mysticism and unique environment of this part of South Estonia is still close to my heart. Maybe because my mother is a local artisan and painter I started becoming more and more interested in artfield. After graduating from the Estonian Academy of Arts animation department (2012, cum laude), I became interested in educational topics and soon earned my master's degree in this field from Tallinn University.

In my works it is noticeable a mixture of macabre and beauty, I like to create beings and creatures from the unconscious mind. I feel comfortable experimenting with various materials and mediums such as printmaking and watercolor as well as photography, clay or even leather. For me it is important to give something back to our local community and to teach children seems to be most suitable for me. It is not just telling someone what to do, it is a way of learning from the children. So, I came back from the city, currently working in Põlva as an art teacher and at the same time trying to be an artist soul.



The artist's favourite saying

Ar' harinõt, sõs pörgoh kah hää!
"If you get used to it then it's also nice in Hell!"

How to contact the artist:



Voices of Community:



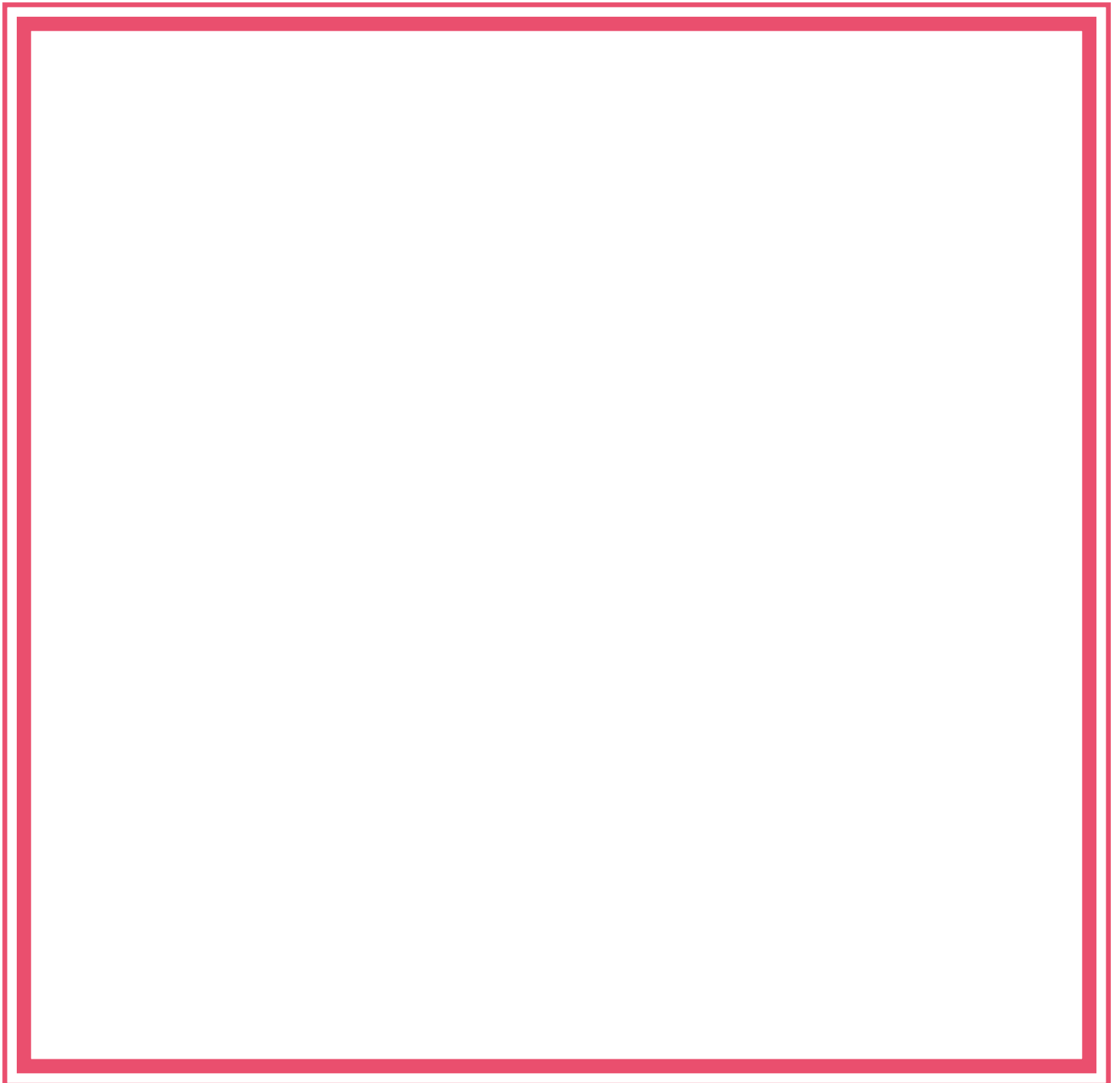
1. Kadri Kõrnik: The Seto language in Estonia: An Overview of a Language in Context (2011) <https://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:103768>
2. https://setoinstituut.ee/pdf/setomaa_unique_and_genuine.pdf
3. <https://www.visitsetomaa.ee/en>

4. <https://www.setomaa.ee/kogukond/en>
5. Robert Kaiser & Elena Nikiforova (2006) Borderland spaces of identification and dis/location: Multiscalar narratives and enactments of Seto identity and place in the Estonian-Russian borderlands, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 29(5), 929-956, DOI: 10.1080/01419870600813975
6. Kristin Kuutma: Creating a Seto Epic. (2004) Oral Tradition: 108-120.

What?! RISE UP's Travelling Exhibition



We commissioned an artist from each community to create an artwork that communicates to the viewer a message, an image, or a feeling that they would like to share. For example, artists were asked: What would you say to their community? And what would you like to say to people from outside your community? And other questions that we thought through together in the conversations that followed. Through RISE UP we have learnt that there is so much to know, to find out, to express, so much that we do not know. Through this exhibition we come together to learn about and alongside each other... What?! Let us find out together.



**You are also an important part of the life of a language: its preservation, its use, its evolution.
What does this exhibition say to you? What would you say to us? Come and share your experiences
with the RISE UP team.**