

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

1st Forum of Finno-Ugric Language Activism

Petrozavodsk (Republic of Karelia), May 17-18, 2019

This outcome document is addressed to language activists, local communities, state and municipal authorities and academia of Finno-Ugric regions and countries.

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to preserve, develop, revitalize and transmit to next generations their languages. However, this right also entails the possibility of an opposite choice – the right to be assimilated and to refrain from using the mother tongue. Thus, indigenous peoples themselves bear the main responsibility for the preservation of their languages.
2. The educational system and civic activism are interlinked and have equal significance for the preservation of languages. Departure of indigenous languages from the educational system will have serious consequences for the status and prestige of these languages. A similarly negative effect will result from a poor-quality teaching of indigenous languages in schools.
3. The civil society must work in partnership with the state and should not serve governments' function with respect to ensuring language rights. We must aspire towards a national educational system (including pre-school education, schools, institutions of higher education) where indigenous languages are used as languages of instruction and in a variety of functions.
4. The educational system is capable of developing indigenous languages only in collaboration with language activists and the civil society as a whole. Civil society can have a role in working with parents (in order to convince them of the importance of learning indigenous languages), popularizing languages (projects such as translation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) into indigenous languages) and implementing informal language initiatives.
5. The state must support the sustainable work of civic organisations that successfully develop indigenous languages (e.g., via language nests), including by providing long-term earmarked subsidies and grants, as well through administrative support.
6. The sense of individual dignity is one of the main motivational drivers for people. We must work on making the mother tongue an inalienable part of the system of values, dignity and self-respect.
7. In Finno-Ugric language activism there are many tacticians working on short-term projects with a narrow focus. At the same time there is a lack of long-term strategic language planning. We propose that every indigenous language should have a long-term development plan that is prepared with the immediate participation of the respective language community and adopted with their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). It is necessary to conduct periodic analysis of the effectiveness of such strategies and adapt them as needed.
8. In the work of language activists, for example when implementing contemporary teaching methods aimed at improving language skills, qualitative indicators (e.g., depth of knowing a language) are more important than quantitative indicators. It is essential to develop a system of qualitative indicators for language projects and practices.

9. Sustainable development of language activism presupposes an open, free and self-driven civil society. Thus, for the support of language activism it is also essential to strengthen the civil society as a whole.
10. Excessive orientation of the system of cultural establishments on mass events with an entertainment and festival focus, as well as a ceremonial (entourage-like) usage of the language often works against systematic, high-quality and orderly conduct of language activities. One of the functions of cultural establishments should be substantive work on languages and collaboration with language activists.
11. Language as an instrument of creativity can exert positive influence on the community. Special attention must be paid to the improvement of quality of visual communication. Thus, specialists from the fields of design, computer graphics, photography, animation other visual arts as well as marketing must be engaged to the work on indigenous languages.
12. There is a good amount of language work among activists, pedagogues, scholars and others, but horizontal intersectoral links between different stakeholder groups are underdeveloped. The academic community must revise its approaches and adapt its work with the purpose of practical implementation of academic knowledge and research towards practical work on the preservation, revitalisation and development of languages. Linguists must begin working with activists even more.
13. For the development of effective instruments for revitalising and developing languages it is essential to attract specialists from different fields, but also from diverse target groups. For the development of dictionaries and teaching aids (including video-lessons, workbooks) it is important to engage those for the benefit of whom this work is undertaken.
14. Language activists must be duly recognized among indigenous peoples. Their role, status and contributions must be duly appreciated in the society.

Partners of the project SANA 2019: Civil Society Network For Preservation and Revitalisation of Indigenous Languages will continue to work on ensuring sustainable development of this civil society network for preservation and revitalisation of languages of indigenous Finno-Ugric peoples.