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Language Act

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Amended by the following acts

Passed	Published	Entry into force
14.06.2012	RT I, 02.07.2012, 7	01.08.2012
13.06.2012	RT I, 06.07.2012, 1	01.04.2013 the words "servant" and "public servant" are replaced by the word „official“ throughout the Act.
22.05.2013	RT I, 11.06.2013, 1	01.07.2013
12.06.2013	RT I, 02.07.2013, 1	01.09.2013, in part 01.01.2014
11.12.2013	RT I, 23.12.2013, 1	01.01.2014, in part 01.01.2015 and 01.01.2020
19.02.2014	RT I, 13.03.2014, 4	01.07.2014
19.06.2014	RT I, 12.07.2014, 1	01.01.2015
19.06.2014	RT I, 29.06.2014, 109	01.07.2014, the official titles of the ministers have been replaced on the basis of subsection 4 of § 107 ³ of the Government of the Republic Act.
18.02.2015	RT I, 23.03.2015, 5	01.07.2015
09.12.2015	RT I, 31.12.2015, 1	01.03.2016
20.02.2019	RT I, 13.03.2019, 2	15.03.2019
03.06.2020	RT I, 16.06.2020, 1	01.08.2020
07.12.2022	RT I, 23.12.2022, 1	01.02.2023
12.12.2022	RT I, 28.12.2022, 8	01.08.2023

Chapter 1 General Provisions

§ 1. Purpose of Act

The purpose of Act is to develop, preserve and protect the Estonian language and ensure the use of the Estonian language as the main language for communication in all spheres of public life.

§ 2. Scope of Application of Act

(1) This Act regulates the use of the Estonian language and foreign languages in oral and written administration, public information and service, the use of Estonian sign language and signed Estonian language, the requirements for and assessment of the proficiency in the Estonian language, exercise of state and administrative supervision over compliance with the requirements provided in this Act and on the basis thereof and liability for the violation of the requirements of the Act.
[RT I, 13.03.2014, 4 – entry into force 01.07.2014]

(2) The use of language of legal persons in private law and natural persons is regulated if it is justified for protection of fundamental rights or in the public interest. For the purposes of this Act public interest means public safety, public order, public administration, education, health, consumer protection and occupational

safety. The establishment of requirements concerning use of and proficiency in Estonian shall be justified and in proportion to the objective being sought and shall not distort the nature of the rights which are restricted.

(3) The rights of persons using a foreign language, including the language of national minorities shall be ensured in compliance with other acts and international agreements. The measures to support foreign languages shall not damage Estonian.

(4) The provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act apply to the administrative proceedings prescribed in this Act, taking account of the specifications provided for in this Act.

Chapter 2

Language Policy and Management of Linguistic Sphere

§ 3. Status of Estonian language

(1) The official language of Estonia is Estonian..

(2) The Estonian sign language is an independent language and the signed Estonian language is a mode of the Estonian language.

(3) The state shall promote the protection, use and development of the regional varieties of the Estonian language (hereinafter dialects).

§ 4. Official and public use of language and Estonian Literary Standard

(1) Official use of language is the use of language by governmental authorities and state agencies administered by governmental authorities (hereinafter state agency) and of local government authorities and agencies thereof, the use of language in the documents, web pages, signs, signposts and notices of notaries, enforcement agents and sworn translators and the employees of their bureaus or other agencies, bodies or persons authorised to perform public administration tasks. Official use of language shall be in compliance with the Estonian Literary Standard (hereinafter Literary Standard). In the area of use of a regional variety the text of equal meaning in the respective dialect may be added to the text that is in compliance with the Literary Standard.

(2) The Literary Standard means the system of spelling, grammar and lexical standards and recommendations. The procedure for application of Literary Standard in written language shall be established by the regulation of the Government of the Republic.

(3) In other texts directed to the public that do not apply the requirement for official use of language, including the use of the Estonian language in the media, the good practice of the use of language is followed.

§ 5. Foreign language and language of national minorities

(1) Any language other than Estonian and Estonian sign language is a foreign language.

(2) A language of a national minority is a foreign language that Estonian citizens who belong to a national minority have historically used as their mother tongue in Estonia.

(3) A person belonging to national minority for the purposes of this Act is an Estonian citizen who has long-term, firm and lasting ties with Estonia and is different from Estonians by the command of language.

§ 6. Organisation of the language sphere

(1) The language sphere, including language studies, the development and application of the Estonian professional vocabulary and of the language technology directed to the Estonian language, and research and development activities in the sphere of the Estonian language, is directed and coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Research.

(2) The government shall support the use of programmes in Estonian that are aimed at a wide range of users and are educational.

§ 7. The Estonian Language Council

The Estonian Language Council consults the Government of Estonia on the development and execution of the language policy. The Government of Estonia shall establish the statute of the Estonian Language Council and approves its staff and the chairperson on the proposal of the minister in charge of the policy sector.

Chapter 3

Public Administration in Oral and Written Form

§ 8. Right to access public administration and information in Estonian language in oral and written form

(1) Everyone has the right to access public administration in the Estonian language in oral or written form (hereinafter together administration) in state agencies, including the foreign representation of Estonia, local government authorities, at the notaries, enforcement agents and sworn translators and their bureaus, cultural autonomy bodies, and other agencies, companies, non-profit associations, apartment associations and foundations registered in Estonia.

[RT I, 23.12.2022, 1 – entry into force 01.02.2023]

(2) The right of deaf and hearing impaired persons to communicate in Estonian sign language and signed Estonian at the agencies specified in subsection 1 of this section shall be ensured by providing translation services pursuant to the provisions provided by legislation.

(3) All employees and officials shall be provided with work-related information in Estonian, unless otherwise provided by law

§ 9. Right to use language of national minority

(1) In local governments where at least half of the permanent residents belong to a national minority, everyone has the right to approach state agencies operating in the territory of the corresponding local government and the corresponding local government authorities and receive from the agencies and the officials and employees thereof the responses in the language of the national minority beside responses in Estonian.

(2) A permanent resident of a local government for the purposes of this Act is a person who is an Estonian citizen, a citizen of the European Union who has a permanent right of residence and family members thereof, or an alien residing in Estonia on the basis of a long-term residence permit whose permanent residence, the address details of which have been entered in the Estonian population register (hereinafter population register), is located in the corresponding rural municipality or city.

(3) The proportion of permanent residents who belong to a national minority within a local government is determined based on the data contained in the population register as of 1 January of the corresponding year.

§ 10. Language of public administration

(1) The language of public administration in state agencies and local government authorities is Estonian. The requirement for public administration in Estonian shall extend to the majority state-owned companies, foundations established by state and non-profit organisations with state participation.

(2) The language of service and command in the Estonian Defence Forces and the National Defence League is Estonian.

(3) The use of languages in pre-trial proceedings and judicial proceedings is provided for in the corresponding Acts.

(4) Officials of state agencies and local government authorities use the Estonian language in the Estonia language media in Estonia.

§ 11. Use of language of permanent residents as language of public administration

In local governments where the majority of permanent residents are non-Estonian speakers, the language of the permanent residents constituting the majority of the permanent residents of the local government may be used alongside Estonian as the internal public administration language of the local government on the proposal of the corresponding local government council and by a decision of the Government of the Republic.

§ 12. Access to public administration in foreign languages

(1) If an application, request or other document submitted to a state agency or local government authority is in a foreign language, the agency has the right to require the person who submits the document to submit the translation of the document into Estonian, except in the case provided for in § 9 of this Act. The person who submits the request or other document shall be notified of the requirement for translation immediately.

(2) In the cases provided by law, a state agency or local government authority has the right to require the translation made by a sworn translator. If the required translation is not submitted, the state agency or local government authority may return the document or have it translated with the consent of and at the expense of the person who submitted the document.

(3) A state agency or local government authority shall respond in Estonian to the document in a foreign language, except in the case provided for in § 9 of this Act. Should the person who receives the document express a wish to get the answer in a foreign language, the response may be translated into a foreign language at the expense of the person who receives the document. On the agreement between the person who receives the document and the state agency or local government authority the response to the document in a foreign language may be given in a foreign language understood by both parties.

(4) In oral communication with officials or employees of state agencies and local government authorities as well as in a foreign representation of Estonia and with a notary, enforcement agent or sworn translator or in their offices, a foreign language may be used by agreement of the parties. If no agreement is reached, communication shall take place through an interpreter and the costs shall be borne by the person who is not proficient in Estonian, unless otherwise provided by law. This subsection shall not apply in the case provided for in § 9 of this Act.

§ 13. Language of international communication

In international communication, state agencies and local government authorities and the officials and employees thereof have the right to use a language that is suitable for both parties.

§ 14. Language of reporting

Agencies, companies, non-profit associations and foundations and sole proprietors which are registered in Estonia shall report in Estonian pursuant to the procedure prescribed by Acts.

§ 15. Language of seals, rubber stamps and letter-heads

The seals, rubber stamps and letterheads of agencies, companies, non-profit associations and foundations and sole proprietors that are registered in Estonia shall be in Estonian in public communication. Agencies, companies, non-profit associations and foundations and sole proprietors may add to the text in Estonian the translation into a foreign language. In communication with a person from a foreign country as well as in international communication a foreign language may be used in the letterhead.

Chapter 4 Information and Servicing in Estonian

§ 16. Language of information

(1) Signs, signposts, business type names and outdoor advertisements, including outdoor advertising, installed to a public place with the purpose of political campaigning, and the notices of a legal person shall be in Estonian.

(2) The translation of the text into a foreign language may be added to public signs, signposts, business type name and outdoor advertisements; thereby the text in Estonian shall be in the forefront and shall not be less observable than the text in a foreign language.

(3) Upon using a brand as a sign of the place of business of a person or in outdoor advertising the part of a brand in a foreign language that includes essential information about the place of business and goods or service offered shall be presented also in Estonian, without damaging the distinctiveness of the brand and without applying subsection 2 of this section. The specified information may also be presented at the entrance to the place of business.

(4) If the agencies, companies, non-profit associations and foundations and sole proprietors which are registered in Estonia have a web page in a foreign language which is directed to the public, it shall include at least a summary in Estonian about its field of activity or the goods and services offered.

(5) At public events the organiser shall ensure the translation into Estonian of the essential information in a foreign language.

§ 17. Right of consumers to information in Estonian

(1) Consumers of goods and services have the right to receive information and servicing in Estonian in compliance with the Consumer Protection Act.

(2) A person who is not a consumer for the purposes of clause 1 of subsection 1 of § 2 of the Consumer Protection Act has the right to receive information from the trader about the product or service features and terms and conditions of use in Estonian.

§ 18. Translation of foreign language text of audio visual works, television and radio programmes and advertisements

(1) Upon public performance and transmission of audio visual works, including programmes and advertisements the provider of the audio visual media service or a company shall ensure that a foreign language text shall be accompanied by an adequate translation into Estonian in form and content.
[RT I, 11.06.2013 – entry into force 01.07.2013]

(2) A translation into Estonian is not required for language learning programmes or programmes that are immediately retransmitted or in the case of the newsreader's text of originally produced foreign language news programmes and of originally produced live foreign language programmes. The volume of foreign language news programmes and live foreign language programmes without the specified translations into Estonian shall not exceed ten per cent of the volume of weekly original production.

(3) A translation into Estonian is not required in the case of radio programmes that are aimed at a foreign language audience. The foreign language texts of speech included in the radio programmes in Estonian shall be translated into Estonian.

§ 19. Language in contracts

The contract of employment and the contracts concluded on the basis of the Law of Obligations Act that are not related to the economic and professional activities for one party to the contract, as well as the contract for provision of a public service, shall be concluded in Estonian unless parties agree on using any other language.

§ 20. Names

(1) The writing of place names shall be based on the provisions of the Place Names Act.

(2) The writing of personal names shall be based on the Names Act.

(3) The writing of business names is based on the Commercial Code.

(4) The international form of the Estonian place names, personal and business names, of the names of agencies or non-profit organisations and foundations in the Latin alphabet shall be identical to the form used in Estonia. Names written in a language that uses another alphabet the transcription rules established on the basis of the Names Act shall be applied.

§ 21. Use of the name of Estonian legislative body

(1) The word "Riigikogu" as the name of the Estonian legislative body is not subject to translation. And it is transcribed into foreign languages which use the Latin alphabet identically to Estonian and into languages which use other alphabets is written in compliance with the transcription rules established on the basis of the Names Act.

(2) Instead of the word "Riigikogu" as the name of the Estonian legislative body, the word "*parlament*" [parliament] may be used in Estonian and foreign languages.

§ 22. Language of state registration plates

The letter combinations used on state registration plates may contain only Latin letters.

Chapter 5 Proficiency in Estonian, its Assessment and Checking

§ 23. Requirements for proficiency in and use of Estonian language

(1) Officials and employees of state agencies and of local government authorities, as well as employees of legal persons in public law and agencies thereof, members of legal persons in public law, notaries, enforcement agents, sworn translators and the employees of their bureaus shall be able to understand and use Estonian at the level which is necessary to perform their service or employment duties.

(2) The requirement for employees of companies, non-profit associations and foundations and for sole proprietors, as well as the members of the board of the non-profit associations with the compulsory membership to be proficient in Estonian to the level that is necessary to perform their employment duties shall be applied if it is justified in the public interest.

(3) The mandatory levels of language proficiency shall be established based on the language proficiency levels defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages compiled by the Council of Europe, the description of which shall be presented in Appendix 1 to this Act.

(4) The requirements for proficiency in and use of the Estonian language for officials, employees and sole proprietors shall be established by a Regulation of the Government of the Republic. The regulation governs the requirements for proficiency in and use of Estonian of persons specified in subsections 1 and 2 of this section, in accordance with the character of work and the situation of the use of language at work or in the position.

(5) The requirements for proficiency in the Estonian language do not apply to persons who work in Estonia temporarily as foreign experts or foreign specialists. Foreign lecturers and researchers shall not be applied the requirements for proficiency in Estonian if they have worked in Estonia for less than five years.

§ 24. Estonian language proficiency examination

(1) Proficiency in the Estonian language is assessed by the Estonian language proficiency examinations.

(2) The minister in charge of the policy sector shall approve the list of persons conducting proficiency examinations and evaluating the results thereof by a directive.

(3) The minister in charge of the policy sector shall establish the structure of a proficiency examination and the procedure for conducting thereof by a regulation.

[RT I, 02.07.2012, 7 – entry into force 01.08.2012]

(4) The preparation, organisation, assessment and analysis of the proficiency examination is organised by the Education and Youth Authority.

[RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

(5) [Repealed – RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

§ 25. Contestation of Estonian language proficiency examination results

(1) If an examinee is not satisfied with the result of the proficiency examinations, he or she has the right, within thirty days after being communicated the examination result, to file a challenge with the Education and Youth Board for the review of his or her examination result.

[RT I, 28.12.2022, 8 – entry into force 01.08.2023]

(2) For hearing challenges filed against the proficiency examination results, a proficiency examinations challenge committee shall be formed whose membership shall be approved by a directive of the Director General of the Education and Youth Board.

[RT I, 28.12.2022, 8 – entry into force 01.08.2023]

(3) The challenge committee shall review a filed challenge within thirty days after receipt thereof and pass one of the following resolutions:

- 1) to dismiss the challenge;
- 2) to satisfy the challenge.

[RT I, 28.12.2022, 8 – entry into force 01.08.2023]

§ 26. Specifications of establishment of Estonian language proficiency

(1) Upon graduation from foreign language basic school and gymnasium the certificate of the Estonian language proficiency examination shall be issued to the persons who have passed the examination in Estonian as the second language in the procedure established on the basis of the Basic School and Gymnasium School Act.

(2) The conditions for combining Estonian language examinations for applicants for citizenship and the Estonian language proficiency examinations shall be established by a regulation of the Government of the Republic.

(3) Persons who have acquired basic, secondary or higher education in Estonian need not pass the Estonian language proficiency examination.

[RT I, 02.07.2013, 1 – entry into force 01.09.2013]

(4) Education is deemed to have been acquired in Estonian if at least 60% of the studies were carried out in Estonian.

(5) A person who has passed the professional examination in Estonian and works in the specialty marked on the professional certificate need not pass the Estonian language proficiency examination.

§ 27. Certificate of proficiency in Estonian language

(1) The Education and Youth Authority shall issue a certificate of proficiency in the Estonian language to a person who has passed the Estonian language proficiency examination.

[RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

(1¹) The minister in charge of the policy sector shall establish the format of a certificate of proficiency in the Estonian language and the procedure for the issue thereof.

[RT I, 02.07.2012, 7 – entry into force 01.08.2012]

(1²) [Repealed – RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

(2) The Government of the Republic shall found a database (hereinafter *the database of tests*) in order to keep record of the Estonian language proficiency examinations and of the certificates of proficiency in the Estonian language that have been issued.

[RT I, 13.03.2019, 2 - entry into force 15.03.2019]

(3) The database of tests shall be founded and the statutes thereof, including the composition and the term of preservation of data as well as the access rights thereto shall be established by a regulation of the Government of the Republic.

[RT I, 13.03.2019, 2 - entry into force 15.03.2019]

(4) The controller of the database of tests is the Education and Youth Authority and the processor shall be determined in the statutes of the database.

[RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

(4¹) [Repealed – RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

[RT I, 13.03.2019, 2 - entry into force 15.03.2019]

(5) [Repealed – RT I, 13.03.2019, 2 - entry into force 15.03.2019]

(6) The following data are collected in the database of tests:

- 1) data on passing the proficiency examination;
- 2) data relating to the conduct of proficiency examination;
- 3) test data;
- 4) assessment data;
- 5) data on proficiency examination challenges;
- 6) data on certificates;
- 7) statistical data.

[RT I, 13.03.2019, 2 - entry into force 15.03.2019]

(7) The composition of data specified in subsection 6 of this section and the procedure for entry thereof in the database may be specified in the statutes of the database of tests.

[RT I, 13.03.2019, 2 - entry into force 15.03.2019]

(8) The data entered in the database of tests has an informative and statistical meaning.

[RT I, 13.03.2019, 2 - entry into force 15.03.2019]

§ 28. Referring persons for Estonian language proficiency examination and revocation of certificates of proficiency in the Estonian language or revocation of certificates of professional category of language proficiency issued before 1 July 1999

(1) If, in the course of supervision, an official conducting state or administrative supervision (hereinafter language official) has reasonable doubts that the language proficiency of a person checked is not in compliance with the requirements established to him or her by legislation, the person shall be referred, by a precept of the language official, to take the Estonian language proficiency examination.

[RT I, 13.03.2014, 4 – entry into force 01.07.2014]

(2) If, in the course of supervision, a language official conducting state or administrative supervision has reasonable doubts that the language proficiency of a person checked is not in compliance with the requirements established to him or her by legislation, also the person specified in subsection 3 or 5 of § 26 of this Act may be referred, by a precept of the language official, to take the Estonian language proficiency examination.

[RT I, 13.03.2014, 4 – entry into force 01.07.2014]

(3) In setting the term for compliance with the precept specified in subsection 1 of this section, the time needed to acquire language proficiency at the required level shall be taken into account. A person who passes the Estonian language examination at the required level within the term set by the precept has the right to apply for compensation of the tuition fee to the owner of the in-service training institution that has been granted the activity license for the conduct of the Estonian language in-service training for preparation for the Estonian language proficiency examination to the extent of up to 100 per cent of the fee for the studies of the Estonian language.

[RT I, 23.03.2015, 5 – entry into force 01.07.2015]

(4) The tuition fee specified in subsection 3 of this section shall be compensated to the extent of the limit values provided by the regulation of the Government of the Republic that have been established on the basis of subsection 1 of § 8¹ of the Citizenship Act.

(5) The head of the agency issuing certificates of proficiency in the Estonian language shall, within six months after the expiry of the term set by the precept specified in subsection 1 of this section, initiate proceedings to revoke a certificate of proficiency in the Estonian language or a certificate of professional category of language proficiency, issued before 1 July 1999 if a person who has been referred to the language proficiency examination has not passed the proficiency examination corresponding to at least the level specified in the certificate of proficiency.

[RT I, 02.07.2012, 7 – entry into force 01.08.2012]

(6) The person checked shall be informed of the initiation of proceedings to revoke a certificate of proficiency in the Estonian language or a certificate of professional category of language proficiency issued before 1 July 1999.

(7) The head of the agency issuing certificates of proficiency in the Estonian language examinations shall not make a decision to revoke a certificate of proficiency in the Estonian language or a certificate of professional category of language proficiency issued before 1 July 1999 earlier than thirty days after sending the notice specified in subsection 6 of this section.

[RT I, 02.07.2012, 7 – entry into force 01.08.2012]

§ 28¹. Authorisation obligation

(1) A person shall have an activity license for the conduct of the Estonian language in-service training at the appropriate level of language proficiency if the training is directed to preparation for the Estonian language proficiency examination.

(2) The application for an activity license shall be adjudicated on the basis of this Act and the General Part of the Economic Activities Code Act.

(3) Provisions of this Act and the General Part of the Economic Activities Code Act concerning an application for activity license, adjudication of the application, revocation of the activity license, notification of the amendment of data and governing the renouncement of economic activities shall be applied to a person and agency which is not an undertaking for the purposes of subsection 5 of § 5 of the General Part of the Economic Activities Code Act inasmuch as it does not derive otherwise from its specifics.

[RT I, 23.03.2015, 5 – entry into force 01.07.2015]

§ 28². Subject of review of activity licence

An activity license is granted if the applicant has:

- 1) in-service training curricula which are outcome-based and comply with the in-service training standard in compliance with the requirements provided for in § 29 of this Act;
- 2) the number of teachers with the required competence necessary to achieve the objectives of studies and the learning outcome;
- 3) ensured the learning environment necessary for achieving the objectives of studies and the learning outcome, including educational material and other conditions.

[RT I, 23.03.2015, 5 – entry into force 01.07.2015]

§ 28³. Application for activity license

(1) An applicant shall submit the application for activity license to the Estonian Education Information System of the Ministry of Education and Research.

(2) The application for activity license shall be resolved by the Ministry of Education and Research. The compliance with the requirements in the subject of review of the activity license shall be ascertained by a preliminary administrative act of the Language Board on the basis of the data and documents specified in subsection 4 of this section.

[RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

(3) The Language Board shall ascertain by a preliminary administrative act within 30 days the compliance with the requirements in the subject of review of the activity license on the basis of the data and documents specified in subsection 4 of this section.

[RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

(4) In addition to the provisions of the General Part of the Economic Activities Code Act the following documents shall be provided in the application for activity license:

- 1) the in-service training curriculum for teaching on the basis of which the activity license is applied for;
- 2) the confirmation of the applicant of the existence of the necessary educational materials.

(5) The Ministry of Education and Research shall review the application within three months as of the submission of the data and documents specified in subsection 4 of this section. The time limit for adjudication of applications commences from the submission of all the required data and documents.

(6) The running of the time limits specified in subsections 3 and 5 of this section is suspended if the Language Board gives a term to the applicant for elimination of deficiencies. The periods resume running after the expiry of time limit for elimination of faults.

[RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

§ 28⁴. Revocation of activity license

The Ministry of Education and Research may, in addition to the grounds provided for in the General Part of the Economic Activities Code Act, revoke the activity license also in case the owner of the in-service training institution has failed to comply with the obligation of disclosure and making data available established in § 8 of the Adult Education Act.

[RT I, 23.03.2015, 5 – entry into force 01.07.2015]

§ 29. Requirements for curriculum of training preparing for Estonian language proficiency examination

[RT I, 23.03.2015, 5 – entry into force 01.07.2015]

The curriculum of the Estonian language in-service training for preparation for the Estonian language proficiency examination shall establish the objective, volume and content of studies of the appropriate language proficiency and the relationship between the designed learning outcomes and the language proficiency levels specified in the Appendix to this Act.

[RT I, 23.03.2015, 5 – entry into force 01.07.2015]

Chapter 6 State and Administrative Supervision

[RT I, 13.03.2014, 4 - entry into force 01.07.2014]

§ 30. State and administrative supervision

[RT I, 13.03.2014, 4 – entry into force 01.07.2014]

(1) State and administrative supervision over conformity with the requirements provided for in this Act and legislation established on the basis thereof shall be exercised by the Language Board (hereinafter the Board).

[RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

(2) The Board is competent to check the use of the Estonian language and foreign languages and the compliance with the requirements of the proficiency in the Estonian language and the use of the Estonian language in the areas provided for in this Act and the legislation established on the basis thereof. The Board is competent to check the compliance of the activities of the owner of the in-service training institution conducting the Estonian language in-service training for preparation for the Estonian language proficiency examination with the requirements provided for in this Act and the legislation established on the basis thereof.

[RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

(3) [Repealed – RT I, 23.03.2015, 5 – entry into force 01.07.2015]

(4) The Board may apply a special measure of state supervision provided for in §§ 30 and 50 of the Law Enforcement Act for exercise of state supervision provided for in this Act on the basis of and in the procedure provided for in the Law Enforcement Act.

[RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

§ 31. Rights and duties of Board

[RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

(1) Upon the exercise of state and administrative supervision the Board shall have the right to:

[RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

1) make a proposal to the head of the agency organizing language proficiency examinations to revoke the certificate of proficiency in the Estonian language of a civil servant, employee or self-employed person or the certificates of professional category of language proficiency issued before 1 July 1999 in the case specified in subsection 5 of § 28 of this Act;

2) make a proposal to an employer to terminate a contract of employment with an employee or to make a proposal to a person with the right to appoint civil servants to office to release a civil servant from office if the employee or civil servant does not know Estonian at the required level;

3) to refer an employee or civil servant whose language proficiency is not in compliance with the requirements to the language proficiency examination;

4) issue precepts to state agencies, local government authorities, to agencies administered by state agencies or local government authorities, companies, non-profit associations, foundations or to their officials or employees for the termination of the violation of the requirements provided for in this Act and legislation established on the basis thereof, and for prevention of further violations.

5) access the organization of the Estonian language in-service training for preparation for the Estonian language proficiency examination and be present at the conduct of such training.

[RT I, 23.03.2015, 5 – entry into force 01.07.2015]

(2) Upon the performance of his or her duties, a language official of the Board is required to submit his or her professional certificate.

[RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

§ 32. Rate of non-compliance levy

[RT I, 13.03.2014, 4 – entry into force 01.07.2014]

Upon a failure to comply with the precept the upper limit for a non-compliance levy applied in the procedure provided for in the Substitutional Performance and Non-Compliance Levies Act is 640 euros.

[RT I, 13.03.2014, 4 – entry into force 01.07.2014]

Chapter 7 Liability

§ 33. Violation of requirements for use of Estonian language

(1) Violation of the requirements for use of the Estonian language in public administration, correspondence, reporting, communication with persons or forwarding of work-related information to employees in state agencies, legal persons in public law and agencies thereof, local governments authorities, companies, non-profit associations, foundations or sole proprietors, as well as on seals, rubber stamps or letter-heads is punishable by a fine of up to 200 fine units.

(2) The same act, if committed at least twice, is punishable by a fine of up to 300 fine units.

(3) The same act, if committed by a legal person, is punishable by a fine of up to 2,600 euros.

§ 34. Violation of language requirements upon making audiovisual works available to public

(1) The absence of an Estonian translation when making audiovisual works in a foreign language available to public, transmission of foreign language programmes of television stations or parts in a foreign language of radio programmes in the Estonian language is punishable by a fine of up to 300 fine units.

(2) The same act, if committed by a legal person, is punishable by a fine of up to 3,200 euros.

(3) [Repealed – RT I, 12.07.2014, 1 – entry into force 01.01.2015]

(4) [Repealed – RT I, 12.07.2014, 1 – entry into force 01.01.2015]

§ 35. Violation of requirements for use of Estonian language and Estonian Literary Standard

(1) Violation of the requirements for use of the Estonian language and Estonian Literary Standards on public signs and signposts, in outdoor advertisements, including outdoor advertising, installed to a public place with the purpose of political campaigning and on web page, exposure and rewriting of the type name of the company and rewriting, as well as failure to present essential information in the Estonian language upon use of brands as a sign of place of activities or in advertisements and failure to have the information in a foreign language translated into the Estonian language is punishable with by a fine of up to 200 fine units.

(2) The same act, if committed by a legal person, is punishable by a fine of up to 1,300 euros.

§ 36. Violation of requirements for use of Estonian language upon servicing of consumers

(1) Violation of the requirements for use of the Estonian language upon servicing a consumer, the absence of labelling or instructions for use in Estonian on goods and a failure to provide information in the Estonian language to persons specified in subsection 2 of § 17 of this Act about the features of goods or services and the instructions of use is punishable by a fine of up to 200 fine units.

(2) The same act, if committed by a legal person, is punishable by a fine of up to 2,600 euros.

§ 37. Violation of requirements for language proficiency

(1) Failure by an employer to apply the requirements for language proficiency in respect of an employee is punishable by a fine of up to 200 fine units.

(2) The same act, if committed by a legal person, is punishable by a fine of up to 1,300 euros.
[RT I, 12.07.2014, 1 – entry into force 01.01.2015]

§ 38. Proceedings

(1) [Repealed – RT I, 12.07.2014, 1 – entry into force 01.01.2015]

(2) The Language Board is the extra-judicial body that conducts proceedings in matters of misdemeanours provided for in §§ 33-37 of this Act.
[RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

Chapter 8 Final Provisions

§ 39. Compliance of certificates of proficiency in Estonian language

(1) The certificates of the Estonian language proficiency issued before 1 July 2008 are deemed to be in compliance as follows:

- 1) Beginner level language proficiency certificate will be equivalent to the proficiency Level B1 in the Estonian language;
- 2) Intermediate level language proficiency certificate will be equivalent to the proficiency Level B 2 in the Estonian language;
- 3) Advanced level language proficiency certificate will be equivalent to the proficiency Level C 1 in the Estonian language.

(2) The certificate of professional category of language proficiency issued before 1 July 1999 shall be taken account of as a document certifying the compliance with the requirements for language proficiency with regard to a person whose language proficiency is sufficient for working in the respective job or office according to the employer's assessment. If there is doubt the employer has the right to approach to the Board to get the assessment of the sufficiency of the language proficiency of a person.
[RT I, 16.06.2020, 1 – entry into force 01.08.2020]

§ 39¹. Transitional provisions

(1) The requirement provided for in § 28 of this Act that compensation for tuition fee paid for the Estonian language training may be applied for if the owner of the in-service training institution has been granted activity license for the conduct of the Estonian language in-service training for preparation for the Estonian language proficiency examination, shall be applied to the Estonian language studies which begin after 30 June 2016. The procedure valid before the entry into force of this provision shall apply for compensating for the tuition fee of the English language studies which started earlier.

(2) The activity license issued before 1 July 2015 to a person who organises Estonian language training as the professional education and training or informal education for adults shall be valid until 30 June 2016. Until that date the persons specified in the first sentence of this subsection may organise the Estonian language in-service training for preparation for the Estonian language proficiency examination without the activity license specified in § 28¹ of this Act.
[RT I, 23.03.2015, 5 – entry into force 01.07.2015]

§ 40.–§ 45.[Omitted from this text.]

§ 46. Entry into force of Act

This Act enters into force on 1 July 2011.

[Appendix 1](#) Description of the language proficiency levels