



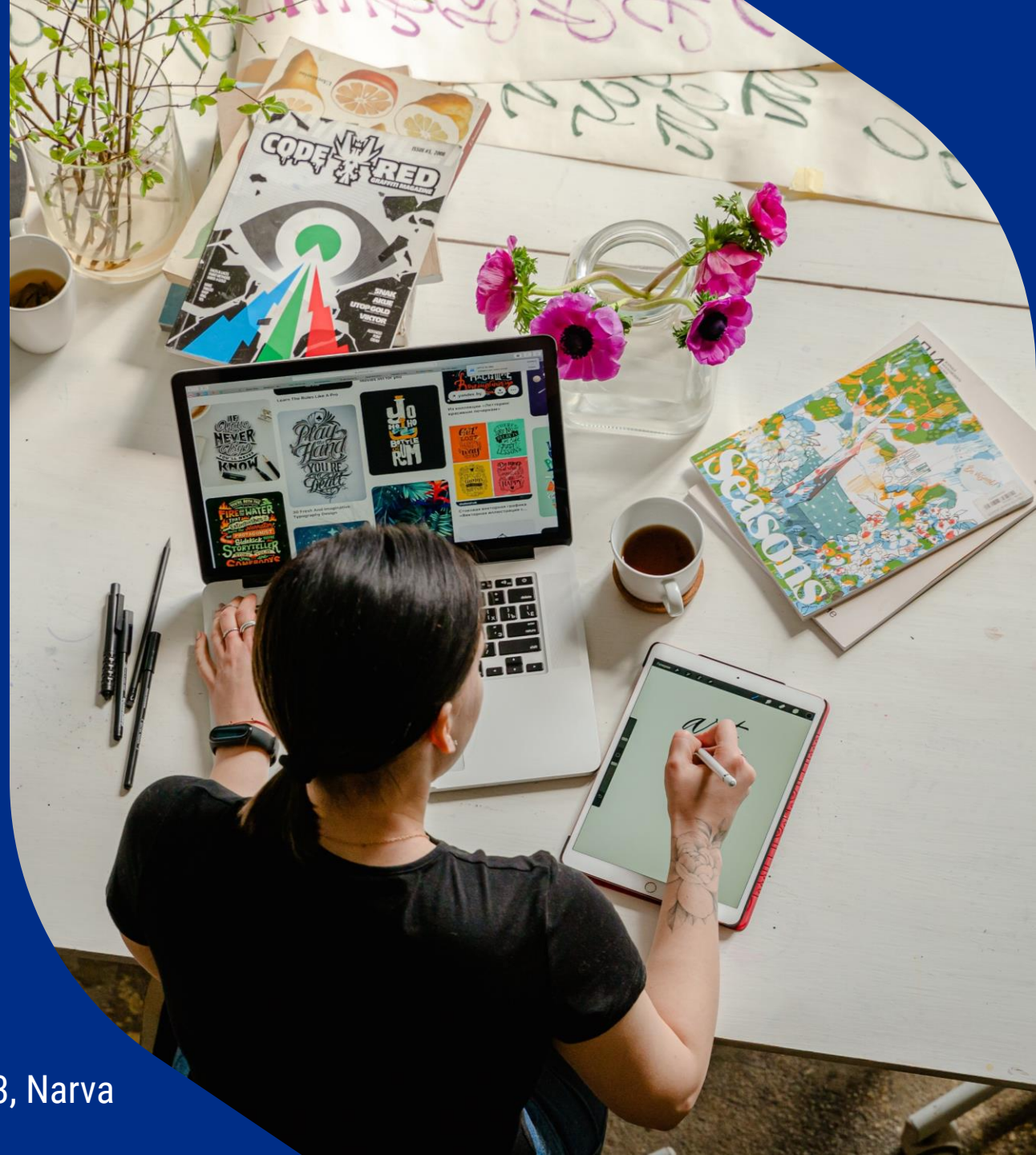
REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
AND RESEARCH

Foreign Language Learning in Estonia in 2023

Pille Põiklik, PhD

Language Policy Department

„New Horizons and Challenges in CLIL and ELT“, October 2023, Narva





1. Foreign languages in Estonian schools
2. Language profiles/plurilingual repertoires
3. International context and the mission of language education



Foreign languages in Estonian schools 2022/23

I FL: **English (95.2%)**, German (2.3%), Russian (1.3%) and French (1.2%)

Most begin in Year 3, 43% in Year 2

Goal by Year 9: B1

Goal by Year 12: B2

II FL: **Russian (80.4%)**, German (9.5%), English (5.1%) French (2.7%), Spanish (1.2%), etc.

Goal by Year 9: A2

Goal by Year 12: B1



Compared to the EU

Primary: more EU students learn a FL (78 vs 86%) but more Estonian students have 2 FLs (33.4 vs 7.2%)

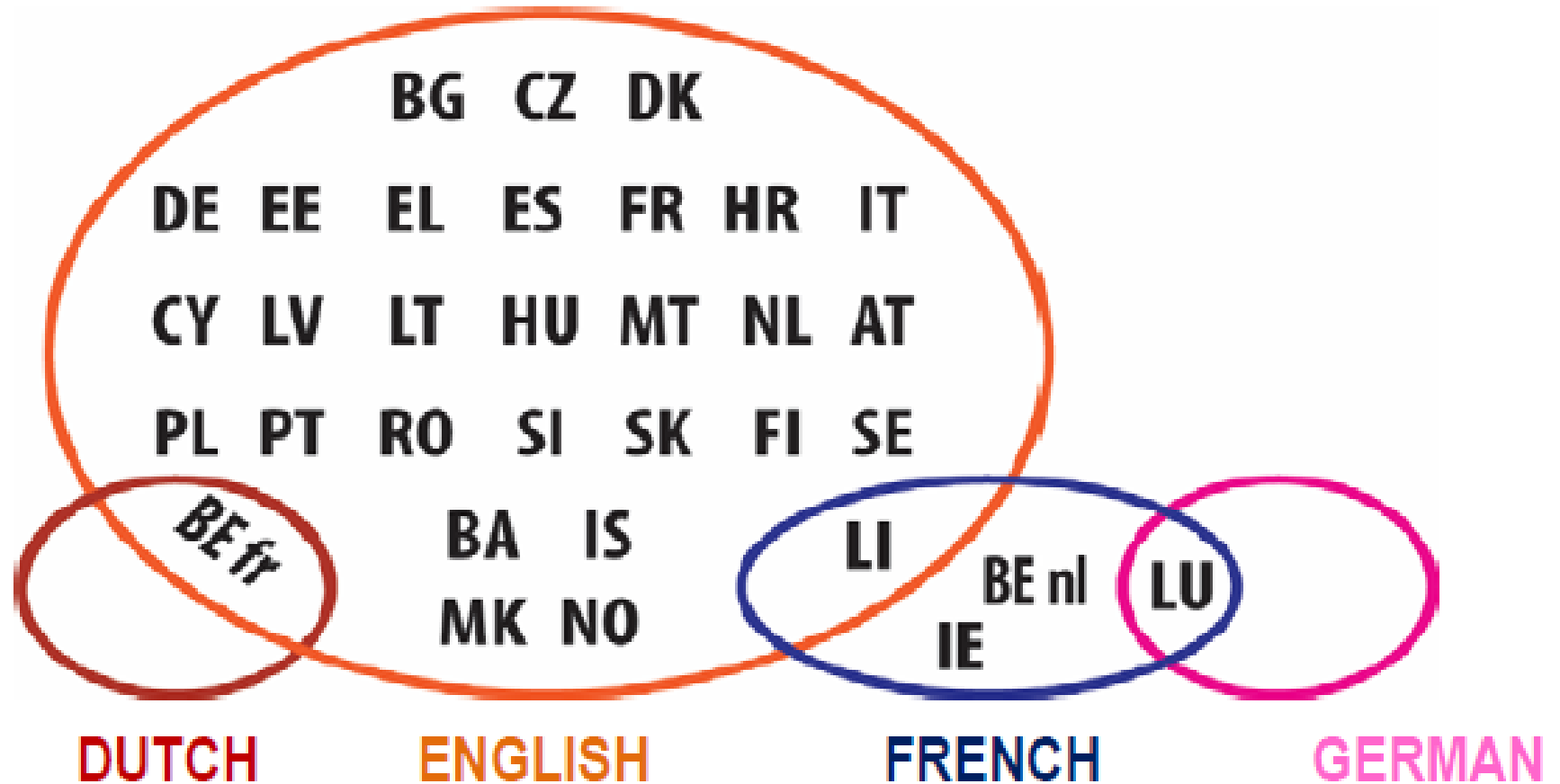
Basic: 95% study at least 2 FLs, 59% in EU

General upper secondary: 98% study at least 2 FLs, 60% in EU

VET: fewer Estonian students study FL (58 vs 82%) and fewer study 2 FLs (35 vs 47%)

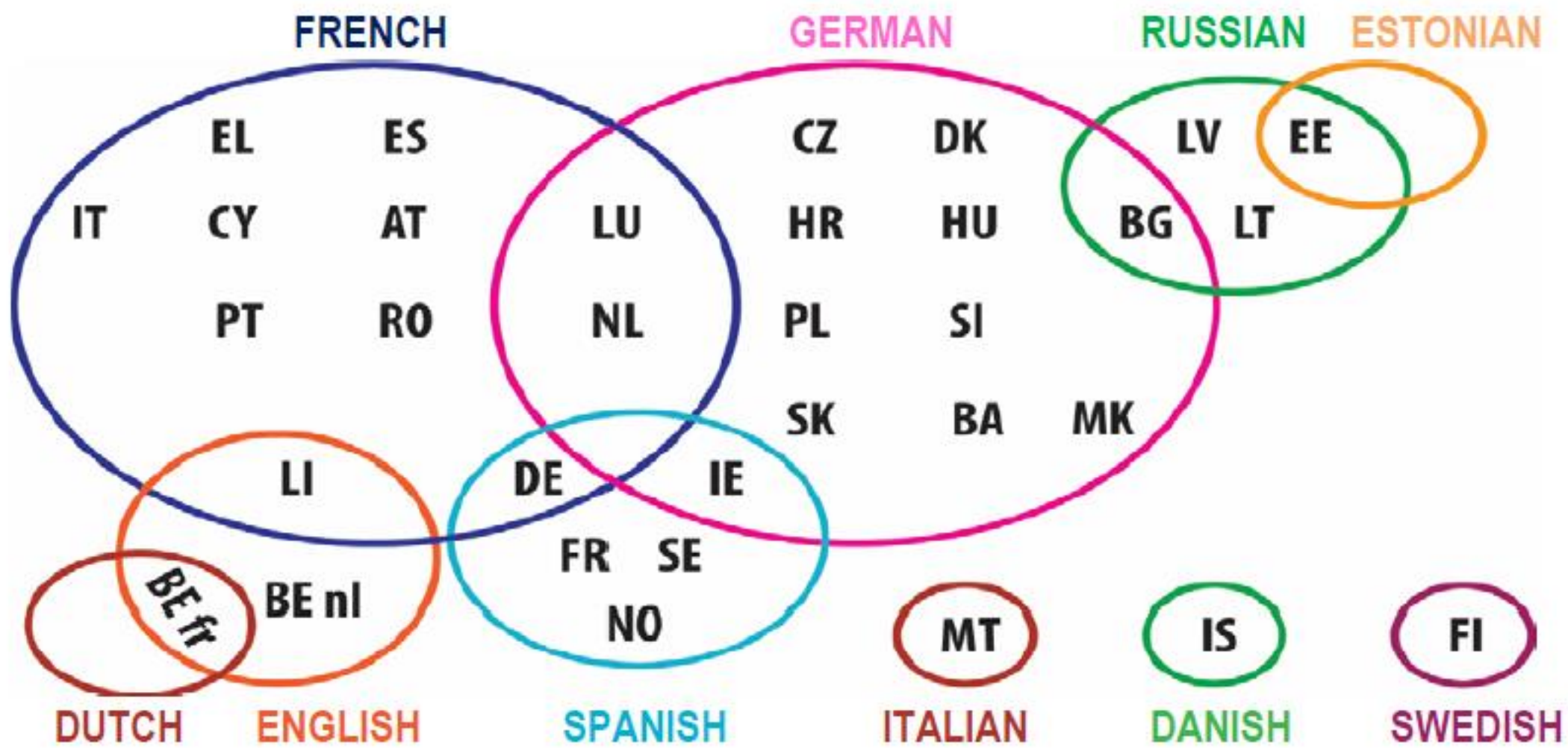


The most learnt FL in primary and secondary education (ISCED 1–3), 2020



Source: Eurydice, based on Eurostat/UOE data [educ_uae_lang01] (data extracted 15 December 2022).

The second most learnt FL in primary and secondary education (ISCED 1–3), 2020



Source: Eurydice, based on Eurostat/UOE data [educ_uae_lang01] (data extracted 15 December 2022).



By Year 12 (2022)...

English

State exam (4015 students): B2 47.5%, B1 28.6%, neither 23.9%

Cambridge C1 Advanced (4439): B2 17%, C1 63%, C2 19%

French (DELF) : B1 156 students (92%), B2 81 students (85%)

German (Goethe): B1 42 students (83%), B2 15 students (100%)

Additional certificates:

English (179 students): B1 17%, B2 60%, C1 22%, C2 1%

German (9 students): B1 44%, C1 56%

Expected minimum level of attainment in 1 FL

(a) End of lower secondary education
(ISCED 2)

First foreign language



(b) End of general upper secondary education
(ISCED 3)

First foreign language



A1 A2 B1 B2 C1

CEFR level varies according to the skills No CEFR level set

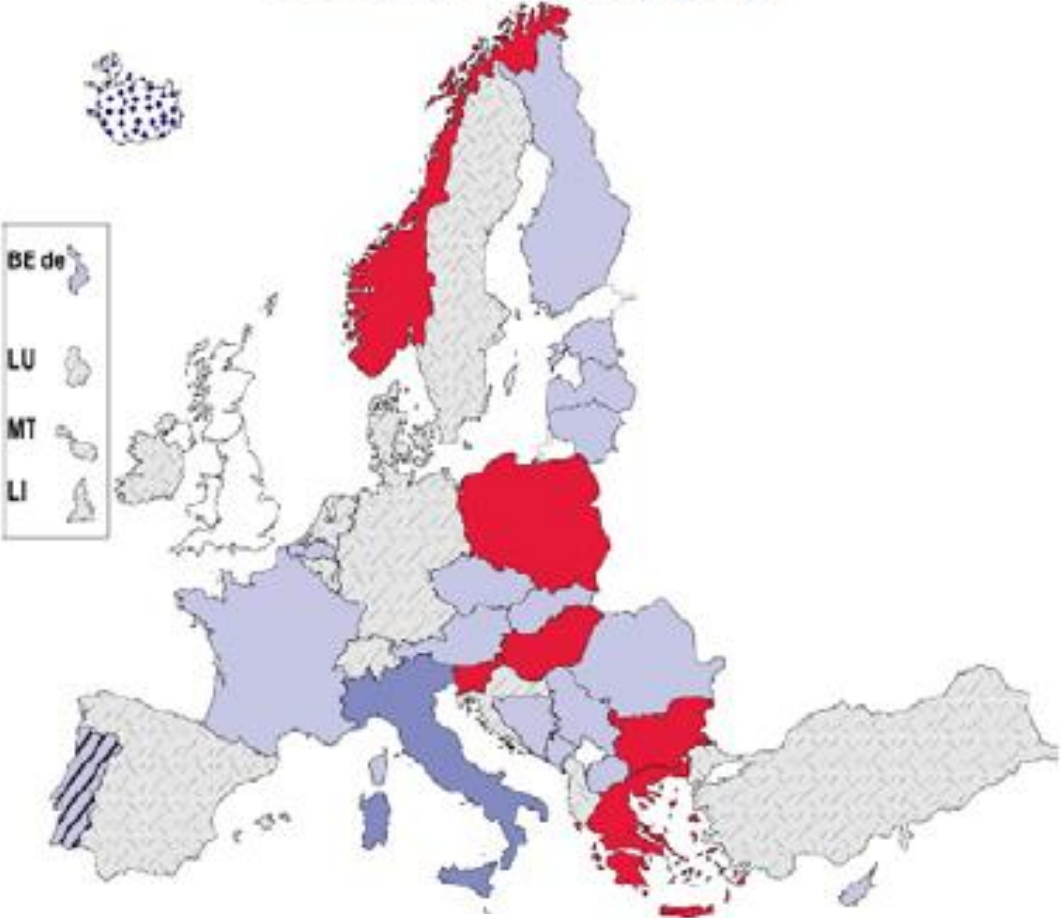
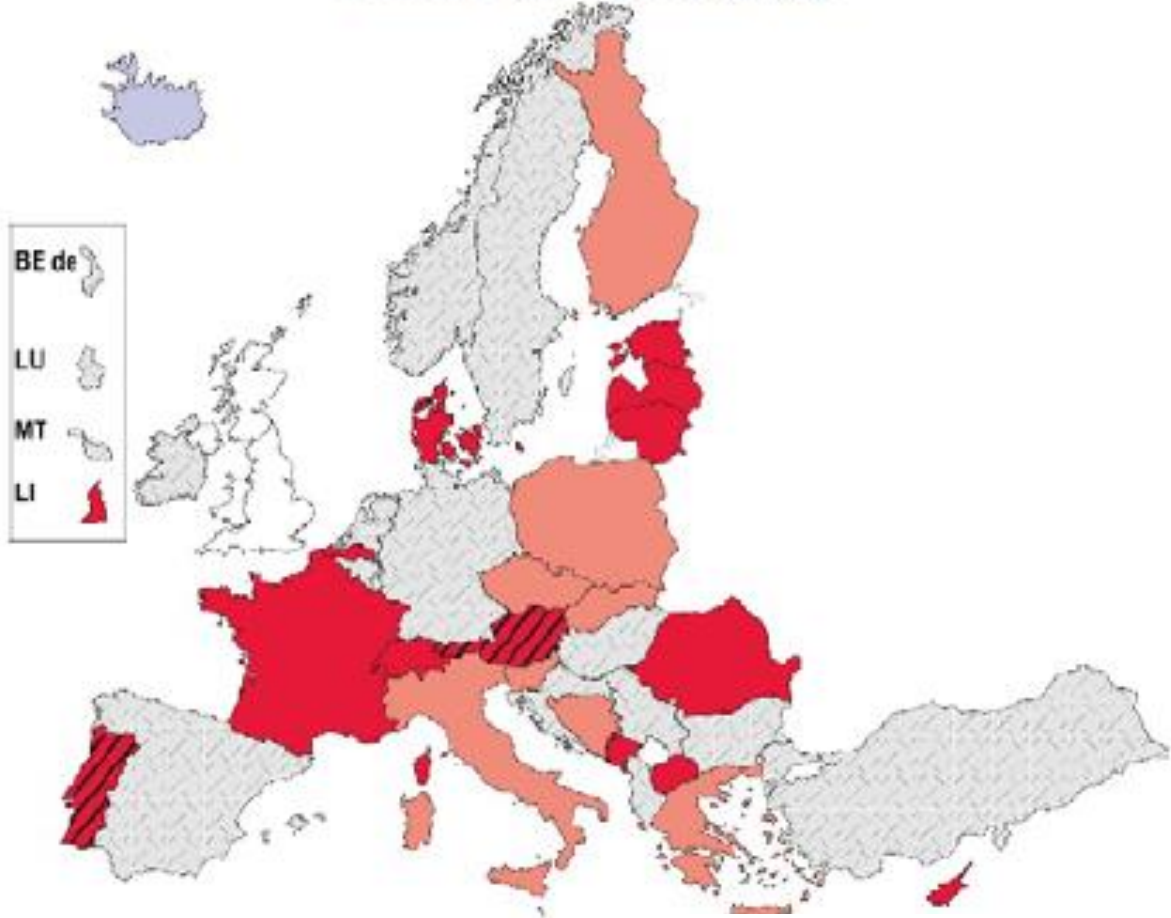
Expected minimum level of attainment in II FL

(a) End of lower secondary education (ISCED 2)

(b) End of general upper secondary education (ISCED 3)

Second foreign language

Second foreign language



A1 A2 B1 B2 C1
CEFR level varies according to the skills No CEFR level set



Estonian language strategy 2021–2035

- Promoting FL learning, so Estonia has a sufficient number of speakers of German, French and other European languages, and of neighbouring languages, as well as speakers of classical languages and other major languages in the world.
- Support the EU recommendation that secondary school leavers should have a very good level of proficiency in one European language in addition to mother tongue, and a good level of proficiency in another FL.
- Supporting the acquisition of professional foreign language skills in VET and higher education.



“Importance of Plurilingual and Intercultural Education for Democratic Culture” (Council of Europe, 2022)

- develop, ideally in at least two languages in addition to the language/s of schooling, the competences needed to engage in authentic and progressively complex oral and written communication;
- promote the teaching of languages in interaction with one another;
- promote bilingual and immersion education and CLIL;
- acknowledge the contribution of non-formal education and informal learning;



„Importance of Plurilingual and Intercultural Education for Democratic Culture“ (Council of Europe) (2)

- create conditions for complex learning environments, including those that fully integrate the use of digital media;
- help the development of plurilingual repertoires and intercultural awareness and competences;
- empower learners by developing their autonomy and critical thinking skills, make space for their voice, create a democratic classroom and school culture and prepare learners for lifelong learning.



Broader context of (foreign) language learning

- communication and interaction
- cultural and linguistic diversity, inclusiveness
- social and civic engagement
- acting in the digital world



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“Learners First” – Council of Europe Strategy 2030 for the education sector (2023)

The “citizen” learner

The “intercultural global” learner

The “digital” learner

Learner well-being





What is required

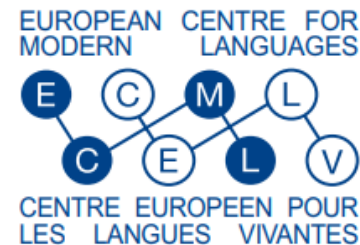
- language education that acknowledges and develops what is there, and adds new opportunities to learn
- guiding students to fully develop their plurilingual repertoires
- language education as space for social/civic engagement and inclusion
- developing critical thinking, digital literacy and the ability to use digital tools, including AI
- focusing on both teachers' and learners' well-being
- ...



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EUROPEAN UNION



Initiative „The future of language education in the light of Covid: Lessons learned and ways forward“

→ „From Crisis to Sustainability: Policy Guidelines on Supporting the Development of Language Education“

- plan for adaptability and flexibility
- promote social interaction as well as individualised learning
- nurture language learners' wellbeing and help teachers safeguard theirs
- broaden learners' experience of (language) learning, develop autonomy
- develop greater educational adaptability among language education professionals (map needs, offer CPD)





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Thank you!

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