



International Federation of Language Teacher Associations  
Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes

## The Nordic-Baltic Region

### Electronic Newsletter No.2 ( June 2022)

#### PRESIDENT's Note



Sigurborg Jónsdóttir, Iceland, FIPLV NBR president.

Dear Colleagues,

The school year is coming to an end and summer holidays await us. These last weeks of school are harvesting time, where we bid farewell to students graduating after hard work, but also enjoy the good results of projects and contests in which our students participated. Now we need to relax and recharge the batteries after another long year with Corona breathing down our neck. We should catch up with

family and old friends and even make new ones at conferences, seminars, and other events this summer. It is important to catch your breath and look back at what went well and what you want to change before the next school year starts.

In this summer issue of our Newsletter there is a variety of topics. It is very interesting to read about the language situation and the status of second language in the different countries.

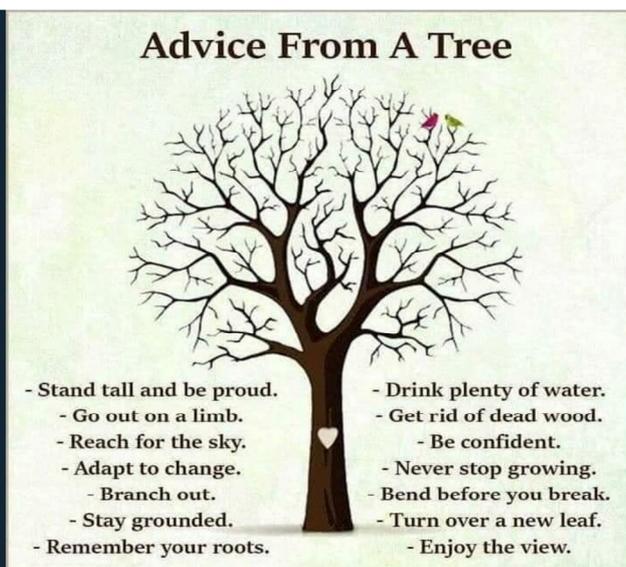
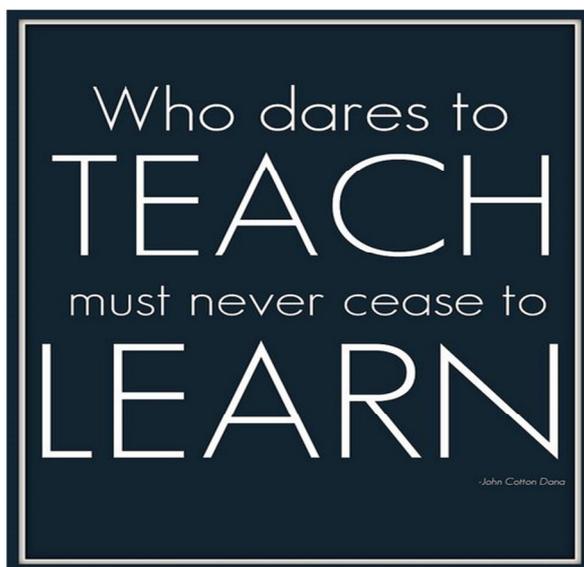
We have articles from the Estonian Association of Estonian as a second language featuring an essay competition and the language situation in Estonia. Also, from the Estonian Association of Teachers of Russian as a Foreign Language on cultural activities.

The Latvian article focuses on reading circles offered to different grades in English and about their participation in ECML projects on different assessment methods and use of ICT as well as the Association's upcoming 30th anniversary

The Lithuanian Association sends us information on recent activities and projects.

STIL, Iceland looks back at seminars offered on various topics throughout the year and introduce "The Living Language Lab", where guests may "explore some of the many languages spoken in the world today and learn about the life cycles of languages ". It is a visual and audio interactive experience, see link in article.

So at the beginning of the Summer holidays I wish you a wonderful recreation time and peaceful moments inbetween.



# **NEWS from ESTONIA**

## **SPRING AND SUMMER IN EATE**



Ilmar Anvelt, EATE Committee member

**The Estonian Association of Teachers of English was founded on 23 November 1991, thus, it turned thirty last autumn. It was the intention of the current EATE Committee to arrange a reception in honour of the former chairpersons of EATE and the most active members and presenters, but the corona virus situation in the country prevented it. Therefore, we had to postpone the event until 29 April 2022. We arranged a modest party at the Werner Café in Tartu. Our guests were awarded letters of gratitude and EATE badges, and a short quiz on the history of EATE was held. It was a pleasure to meet several members who have been with EATE since its beginning and share memories with them over the coffee table.**

**EATE Summer Seminar will this time be held as usual in the resort town of Pärnu on the Baltic coast on 23-24 August under the general theme Language Learning: Focus on Success. Along with speakers from Estonian schools and universities, there will be guest speakers from British publishing houses - Oxford University Press, Express Publishing, MacMillan. The topics range from testing and exams to using picture books and poetry, English-speaking countries in history teaching, creative writing in GoogleDocs and many more. Several book sellers will open their bookstalls, and at the end of the event there will be a lottery.**



Photos: EATE Chair Erika Puusemp handing out letters of gratitude. Evi Saluveer has received hers already. Evi is one of our most popular presenters. Left to right: EATE honorary member, Associate Professor Emeritus Nora Toots, former EATE Chairs Ülle Kurm, Carmen Ruus and Juta Hennoste.

## **Мастерские в музее под открытым небом**



Aleksandra Novashevskaja, teacher of the Russian language at the Kallavere Secondary School, a board member of the Estonian Association of Teachers of Russian as a Foreign Language.

**Наряду с профессиональной поддержкой, одной из главных ценностей Общества учителей русского языка как иностранного в Эстонии является общение учителей, в том числе посредством совместной деятельности. В этом году члены нашего Общества погрузились в атмосферу важнейших славянских праздников - Масленицы и Пасхи.**

**Что такое Масленица? Блины, чай, веселые забавы и приятное ожидание весны! Именно за этим в феврале 2022 года наши учителя отправились на**

хутор Сету в Эстонском Музее под открытым небом. Мы не просто познакомились с древними традициями и символикой Масленицы, но и вжились в роль хуторской хозяйки, которая с утра готовит блины в настоящей русской печи и топит самовар.

Мастерская получилась не только полезной с точки зрения культуроведения, но и дала нам много идей для дидактических игр и заданий, которые несомненно можно воплотить на уроках русского языка как иностранного.

Встреча Масленицы получилась настолько тёплой и душевной, что мы решили на этом не останавливаться и вернуться в Музей под открытым небом на празднование Пасхи.

Так 26 апреля члены Общества учителей русского языка как иностранного ознакомились с традициями празднования Пасхи у разных славянских народов, православных и староверов, которые проживают на Юго-Востоке страны. Гид рассказала нам о различных языческих традициях, которые позже трансформировались и приобрели христианские смыслы. Мы узнали, как в деревнях отмечали Пасху: во что играли, как праздновали, что подавали на стол. Кульминацией мастер-класса стало совместное выпекание семислойного пасхального кулича по старому рецепту староверов. Каждый из присутствующих в прямом и переносном смысле приложил руку к изготовлению главного пасхального символа. Светлый Праздник, душевные разговоры за чашкой чая... Покидая музей, кто-то предложил встретиться снова на Рождество. Ведь добрые традиции надо беречь!





## **An Essay Competition - a Springboard for Promoting Reading Books and Developing Estonian Language Skills**



*Ingrid Prees, Chair of the Association of Teachers of Estonian as a Second Language*

**The Estonian Association of Teachers of Estonian as a Second Language became a strategic partner of the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Estonia as a result of Call for Proposals launched in January 2022. The activities of strategic partners will be supported during the following three years - from 2022 to 2024.**

**Minister of Culture confirmed the thematic years in the field of culture for the next three years.**

**2022 is dedicated to libraries. For that reason, the Association organised an essay competition „You are what you read” for the second stage (Grades 4- 6)**

and the third stage of studies (Grades 7-9) of Ida-Virumaa Basic Schools. Toila Upper-Secondary School teacher Gerli Paumets

was fascinated by the topic as she realized immediately that the contest is just for her Grade 7 student Marta Paalo. We got to know later that Marta was drafting a book.

Essay competitions as a possibility

According to Statistics Estonia, as of 17.06.2022, the population of Estonia is 1,322,008.

The ethnic breakdown is currently 69% Estonian, 25% Russian, 2% Ukrainian, 1% Belarusians, 0.8% Finns and 1.6% other. In Estonia there are 15 counties, 9.8 % of the population live in Ida- Virumaa where only 1.5.% of the population are Estonians.

The official language of Estonia is Estonian. The language of public administration in state agencies and local government authorities is Estonian. In Russian-medium schools in Ida- Virumaa poor knowledge of the Estonian language is a concern. In Estonian Education Strategy 2021-2035 the target by 2035 is set as follows: „Estonian and foreign languages are taught so that all Estonians would speak Estonian and at least two other languages “. According to Strategic Goal 3 of Estonian Language Strategy 2021 -2035 „Estonian language learning is of high quality and accessible. The number of people who are proficient in Estonian has increased significantly.”

Essay competition helps non-Estonian students develop as their ability to express themselves, to use the knowledge acquired during language classes. The students whose first language is Estonian can develop their creativity, write on prescribed topics in their beautiful mother tongue.

There was one requirement in the competition - to write an essay by hand because during the last years on the hand students developed their digital skills, and the use a wide choice of digital tools, but on the other hand distance learning worsened the handwritten skills.

Emotions evoked by books

Altogether 73 essays from 10 different Ida-Virumaa schools were submitted. The members of the jury were thrilled to read when students admitted sincerely that they do not read books although the books play an important role in helping to understand rules of conduct and everyday problems.

Sillamäe Estonian Basic School Grade 5 student Daniil Vlassov used golden words „If a child reads books, then there is no time to make any mischief.” As a matter of fact, young people are fond of reading different kind of literature and try to find associations with their personal life.

On June 8 successful contestants, their tutors, members of the jury and guests were invited to take part in the thank you event at the Tartu University Library which celebrated its 220th anniversary on June 17.

Pille Põiklik chief expert of the Ministry of Education and Research welcomed the participants. After welcome ceremony a meeting with Mika Keränen who is an Estonian children's author of Finnish origin, took place. Mika Keränen has become known for his series of crime stories addressed to children, in which the adventures are set in the Supilinn area of Tartu.

The writer shared engaging stories and read excerpts from his book Vanemuise väits (Vanemuise`s knife). Ingrid Prees, chair of the Association of the Teachers of Estonian as a Second Language thanked the contestants in the name of the jury. The contestants received a thank you letter and the book which was personally handed over by Mika Keränen. After the formal part the participants had the possibility to visit AHHA Science Centre, the biggest science centre in Estonia, where you are welcome to various workshops, science theatre shows and one-of-a-kind fully spherical planetarium.

The participants in the thank you event were thrilled and expressed their admiration about the event. Kohtla-Järve Tammiku Basic School Grade 9 student Artjom Dronov was impressed by the meeting with the writer. The excursion in the library created the desire to read books in the world of books. All the students and teachers I talked to thought that the event was a great success.

We do hope that next year there will be more schools participating in the essay competition.

The participation in the essay competition was extremely important for students for many reasons. Apart from practising writing by hand in beautiful Estonian, they could talk about their favourite children`s books and express their attitude to reading books not to mention taking part in the thank you event.

Moreover, Grade 7 student Marta Paalo, a future Estonian writer and poet, made a friend during the event.

Positive emotions evoked by the event are an experience that remains with them throughout your life. „A book is a friend without who you are as if without hands“(Jesenia Lebedeva, Kohtla-Järve Tammiku Basic School Grade 7 student)



## Language Teachers' Association of Lithuania (LKPA)



Prof. Roma Kriaučiūnienė, Director of Foreign Languages Institute at Vilnius University, former President of LKPA.

### **The Achievements of the Project Think4Jobs - Critical Thinking for Successful Jobs presented at Vilnius University**

Two institutional members of the Language Teachers Association of Lithuania – the *Institute of Foreign Languages of the Faculty of Philology of Vilnius University* and the *Public Service Language Center* have been successfully collaborating in the Erasmus Project Think4Jobs (2020-1-EL01-KA203-078797) since October 2020.

The results of the project and the achievements made by two Lithuanian partners were presented at a public lecture on *Development of Critical Thinking Skills in the Foreign Language Teaching and Learning Process at the University Level* delivered on 16 May 2022 by colleagues from the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Faculty of Philology of Vilnius University – Assist. Prof. Dr. Ovidiu Ivancu, Prof. Dr. Roma Kriaučiūnienė, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Svetozaras Poštič.

The presenters aimed to elucidate how critical thinking is being developed in the foreign language teaching /learning process at the university level and labour market institutions.

An extensive overview of the literature review on critical thinking and the results of hypothesis-driven research carried out by three research methods: documental analysis, class observation, and focus group interviews by each project partner were presented. Several important research questions were raised during the presentation:

- Do university teachers really foster students' critical thinking skills in their classrooms?
- Is critical thinking infused in these lectures in an explicit or an implicit way, and how could this process be improved?
- Are teachers themselves empowered to think critically and cultivate critical thinking in the teaching process at universities and labour market institutions?

An overview of scientific literature revealed that the research into critical thinking is relevant, scholars are looking into the ways how teachers can contribute more effectively to the development of critical thinking and try to answer why critical thinking is not so successfully developed at the university level. Based on different scholars' viewpoints several reasons were highlighted why the EFL teachers do not focus much on fostering their students' critical thinking skills.

*Firstly*, the very concept of CT is not quite clear to teachers themselves;

*Secondly*, the content of EAP has no prescribed discipline, the content of students' reading jumps from one topic area to another, not allowing students the time to reflect deeply, to build up knowledge and understanding in any particular content area, most often focusing on the form rather than the content.

*Thirdly*, the testing system should be improved in terms of CT assessment, because if CT skills are not tested directly, students may feel that it is irrelevant.

Scholars also claim that despite the emphasis on critical thinking in higher education, there is little evidence that such skills are taught in an explicit and systematic way at the undergraduate level.

These ideas were in line with the conclusions the Lithuanian partners of the project Think4Jobs identified in their research. Foreign language teachers foster students' critical thinking skills in their classrooms, although a more explicit way of the development of these skills should be encouraged. Moreover, the

awareness of the concept of critical thinking and the necessity to foster it should be raised among foreign language teachers. Generally, the assessment of critical thinking skills remains a problematic issue.



The project partners from the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Faculty of Philology of Vilnius University and Public Service Language Center are carrying out the further activities of the project TRthink4Jobs. A blended curriculum for the development of critical thinking in foreign language classrooms at universities has been tested and the results will be presented at the forum on Critical thinking to be held at Vilnius University on 6-7 October 2022 and at international conferences as well as published in international research journals.

More about the project:

<https://think4jobs.uowm.gr/lt/pagrindinis-puslapis/>

[https://m.facebook.com/Think4jobs\\_EU-102212831706571/](https://m.facebook.com/Think4jobs_EU-102212831706571/)

**Experience of the Institute of Foreign Languages of  
the Faculty of Philology of Vilnius University  
described in the publication of the Council of Europe:**

**ENRICHING 21st-CENTURY LANGUAGE  
EDUCATION. The CEFR Companion volume in practice**

The work experience of the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Faculty of Philology of Vilnius University, an active member of Language Teachers Association of Lithuania, is outlined in the latest publication of the Council of

Europe by our colleague, an expert from the University of Göttingen (Germany) Dr. Johann Fischer.

Back in the academic year of 2019/2020 all the 'English language courses for specific purposes' (ESP) at Vilnius University were upgraded and updated, according to the principles of the Action-oriented approach (AoA) and task-based teaching and learning methodology. Then the former ESP courses were changed into a course 'English for Academic Purposes and Research (C1)'. This change happened due to several reasons. The appearance of a newly updated version of the 'Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment - Companion volume' with new descriptors (2018, 2020) and its extended implications for language teaching, learning, and assessment and a new understanding of a learner as a social agent inspired us to rethink and reshape the whole approach to ESP. Besides, Picardo and North's (2019) publication on an action-oriented approach to language teaching also strengthened our determination to remodel ESP courses at VU. The redesigned courses have been presented to an external expert from the University of Göttingen (Germany) Dr. Johann Fischer. He was invited to evaluate our work and to deliver a 40-hour workshop (2019) on 'University Language Teaching, Learning and Assessment within the Context of the CEFR Companion Volume: implementing changes in university language teaching and assessment' to our teaching staff. After a few sets of intensive workshops, Dr. J. Fischer clarified the theory of the AoA and its practical implementation in a more explicit, obvious, and straightforward manner. A thorough description of the workshops and their outcome is described in the latest publication of the Council of Europe 'Enriching 21st-century Language Education. The CEFR Companion volume in practice' (2022). The following extract exemplifies the intensity of the collaborative work during the preparation of the courses (2022, p. 192):

"The whole team of some 40 language teachers therefore took part in a five-day professional development workshop that aimed at remodelling language teaching and testing in the department. In three steps the participants were first introduced to the action-oriented and task-based approach of the CEFR Companion volume and its content, then analysed typical situations of communication in the various academic fields and selected the appropriate interaction and mediation activities, before finally developing ideas for projects to carry out in class at CEFR level C1."



As a consequence of a lot of work during the workshops, our curricula were reviewed to precisely harmonise the contents with the AoA and task-based methodologies.

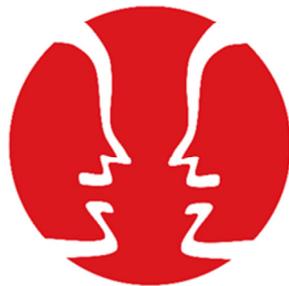
Dr. J.Fisher's) intensive professional development courses were delivered twice per year in 2019, 2020, and 2021, with a forthcoming plan for 2022.

We invite you to read the recent publication of the Council of Europe 'ENRICHING 21st-CENTURY LANGUAGE EDUCATION. The CEFR Companion

volume in practice' (Edited by: Brian North, Enrica Piccardo, Tim Goodier, Daniela Fasoglio, Rosanna Margonis-Pasinetti and Bernd Rüschoff). Section 12.2.5. delineates in a detailed way the outcome of a series of Dr. J. Fischer's workshops to the lecturers of the Institute of Foreign Languages on language teaching/learning, and assessment, the benefits of Action-oriented approach and task-based methodologies, and their suitability for language teaching/learning in a contemporary university. For more information, see section 12.2.5. at:

<https://rm.coe.int/enriching-21st-century-language-education-the-cefr-companion-volume-in/1680a68ed0>

## News from STIL



Dr. Hólmfríður Garðarsdóttir, President of STÍL, Reykjavík, Iceland.

The Association of Language Teachers in Iceland - STÍL - celebrated its General Assembly in May 2022. The annual report confirmed that even if conditions were marked by Covid restrictions the association managed to keep up an active agenda for its members.

To celebrate the European Day of Languages, the association, in collaboration with the University of Iceland's, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages and its Language Center, invited language teachers to the inauguration of The Living Language Lab, an exposition on world languages hosted by the

institute under the auspice of UNESCO, where guests can “explore some of the many languages spoken in the world today and learn about the life-cycles of languages.”



In The Living Language Lab, guests get a chance to glimpse into the world of languages and get to know some of the many languages spoken in the world today. The Living Language Lab provides a cross-section of the vast language spectrum of the Earth from the biggest world-languages with hundreds of millions of speakers to small and endangered ones.

- We learn about the many sides of languages with the help of interactive multimedia and virtual reality and hear the voices of the various languages spoken in Iceland today.
- We get an overview of how languages have developed alongside human history for more than 300,000 years and how they have spread and travelled across the globe.
- Finally, we get acquainted with the life cycle of languages which, like other living organisms, are born and develop before finally dying out. We also consider how it is possible to conserve languages so they can prosper for years to come.

For more infos and interactive parts see: <https://gagarin.is/work/the-living-language-lab>

Continuous education was enhanced throughout the year through a series of workshops open to its members free of charge.

The program included the following workshops:

18 September 2021. Org. Brynhildur Anna Ragnarsdóttir and Pórhildur Oddsdóttir.

"Self-evaluation in language teaching".

23 October 2021. Org. Charlotte E. Wolff and Lara W. Hofmann.

"Transculturation. Language as a Tool of Transition".

20 November 2021. Org. Branislaw Bédi.

"LARA. Learning and reading assistant".

12 February 2022. Org. Kolbrún Friðriksdóttir.

"Ways to encourage and motivate students in online learning".

12 March 2022. Org. Carrie Ankerstein.

"How to Teach (English) Pronunciation and What's Important".

Representatives from STÍL maintained an active and reciprocal collaboration with the board and press secretary of the National Association of Teachers (KÍ = Kennarasamband Íslands), hence securing that all announcements regarding activities and events involving language learning and teaching, cultural literacy, and intercultural communication be distributed widely. Amongst other interactive collaborators were Móðurmál - Association on bilingualism - a program discussed in the March issue of the NBR newsletter (see p. 6-10).

## Now to some impending activities:

The president of STÍL and numerous other members will attend the upcoming FIPLV Conference, titled Language education in the times of global change: The need for collaboration and new perspectives, organized in Warsaw, Poland, 27-29 June 2022. We look forward to the opportunity to spend time with colleagues from around the world and share our experiences and concerns.

On 11-12 August 2022 STÍL organizes, in collaboration with the University of Iceland's Institute of Continuous Education and ECML, Graz, Austria, a two-day seminar, titled "Reflecting and developing one own's teaching methods" (Ísl. Ígrundun og þróun eigin kennsluhátta).

Instructors will be Angela Gallagher-Brett from University of London and Larisa Kasumagic-Kafedzic from University of Sarajevo. For more information please see: <https://endurmenntun.is/namskeid/517V22>

Furthermore, from September and onward throughout 2002-2023, STÍL will continue to offer monthly workshops open to ambitious and curious language teachers. Each session, organized on Saturday mornings from 10 - 12 o'clock, is promoted as an integral part of teacher's continuous education and as a practical contribution to language learning and teaching in Iceland.

Detailed information about the conference is here:

<https://vigdis.hi.is/en/events/fipltv-nbr-conference/>

## Latvian Association of Teachers of English



Inga Linde, LATE president

Spring period was very intensive for the EFL teachers in Latvia. Ninth and twelfth grades students had an examination based on the old curriculum, but with the introduction of the new competence-based curriculum, the eleventh graders had the new Optima level exam, which was administered for the first time.

The Latvian Association of Teachers of English (LATE) also offered several projects for EFL teachers and students this year. One of them is the LATE/Pearson "Reading Circle" project in cooperation with Iveta Vītola, Pearson

Regional Manager for the Baltics. This year-long project is in its fourth year. There are four reading circles for grades 6, 7 and 8, all reading 8 Pearson Graded Readers at each level. This year a Young Learners' reading circle for grade 3 students was added to the project. In this circle the students had to read six Pearson English Graded Disney Kids Readers, developing their reading skills and love of reading at a young age. At the end of the year students and teachers received certificates for participation in the project.



All together 30 EFL teachers and more than 900 students from all over Latvia took part in the project. One of the students in the end of year feedback wrote: "I usually read books in Latvian, so reading in English was something new for me. It was a little different for me, but I liked it! I had no trouble reading, and now there are even some English books on my bookshelf!"

In cooperation with the "HMC Projects", LATE also offered students the opportunity to apply for a scholarship to study at a UK boarding school. We are glad to announce that one of the students won the competition and will have a chance to study in the UK for two years.

LATE is grateful to the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) for the possibility to participate in two ECML projects. From 13th - 15th June we were hosting a RELANG project in Latvia. It is a new module entitled "Alternative, continuous methods of assessment in line with the CEFR and its Companion Volume". After a long period of having only online events we were glad to welcome ECML's experts José Noijons (Netherlands) and Gábor Szábo (Hungary) to Latvia.



**This initiative is carried out within the framework of a cooperation agreement between the European Centre for Modern Languages and the European Commission, entitled Innovative Methodologies and Assessment in language learning.**



**Participants wrote that it was a pleasure and honour to meet experts on assessment and to learn not only the theory, but also to get detailed analysis and suggestions on practical issues. They said that the workshop was extremely productive and informative, and the inspiring presentations of the experts helped them gain clear understanding on how to relate the CEFR levels to assessment, what alternative assessment is and how to create appropriate tasks. The wonderful working environment and possibility to network with colleagues helped the teachers to rethink and share good practice on such an up-to-date topical issue as assessment.**

Although the school holidays have started for most teachers in Latvia, on 21st-22nd June, 2022 we will be hosting the ECML's workshop "Use of ICT in support of language teaching and learning (ICT-REV)", led by ECML experts Sarah Heiser (the United Kingdom) and Joseph Hopkins (Spain), at Riga Teika Secondary School.

The school year is over, and teachers are already planning the work of the next school year. Meanwhile, the Latvian Association of Teachers of English is getting ready for LATE's upcoming 30th Anniversary Conference entitled "30 Years Together. Looking Backwards. Looking Forwards.", which will be held on the 17th and 18th August 2022 at Jaunmārupe Elementary School. This is a significant milestone for the Association, and we hope that it will be both an inspiring celebration and professional development event.

## Teacher Summer Activities

<https://www.pinterest.com/schooloutfitter/teacher-summer-activities/>

Here's What Teachers Really Do During Their Summer Breaks

<https://www.wgu.edu/heyteach/article/heres-what-teachers-really-do-during-their-summer-breaks1906.html>

Top 10 Things for Teachers During Summer Vacation

<https://www.thoughtco.com/during-summer-vacation-8342>

Teacher Summer Checklist - 12 Things to Do Over the Summer Break

<https://www.twinkl.com/blog/teacher-summer-checklist-12-things-to-do-over-the-summer-break>

The Ultimate Summer Reading List for Teachers

<https://classrooms.com/the-ultimate-summer-reading-list-for-teachers/>

Resilient Educator's Recommended Reading List

<https://resilienteducator.com/lifestyle/nonfiction-teacher-books/>

## Summer Bucket List for Teachers

<https://www.theprintableprincess.com/summer-bucket-list-for-teachers/>



*The Electronic Newspaper is issued by:*

*Sigurborg Jónsdóttir, Iceland.*

*Eglė Šleiotienė, Lithuania.*