

**Estonian deaf education celebrates its 150 jubilee this year.** The first deaf-oriented education activities started in 1866 in Vändra and from this point forward hearing impaired people have studied in Porkuni, Tallinn Helen's school, Tartu Hiie School and Narva Paju school. At the moment deaf people in Estonia can learn in their mother tongue (Estonian Sign Language) only in Tallinn Helen's school. In the last few years the accessibility to learn in Estonian Sign Language have decreased for children and young people.

Estonian Deaf community is pleased to invite You to take part **in the conference**

**“Estonian Deaf Education at a Crossroad”**

**in Tallinn, Nordic Hotel Forum conference centre on the 10th of November at 10am.**

**The purpose of this conference** is to find solutions to improve approachability and accessibility to education for hearing-impaired people. We would like to start a public discussion between the public sector and the Deaf community in order to find in collaboration the best solutions to improve the education accessibility problems.

Conference languages are Estonian, English, Estonian Sign Language, Finnish Sign Language and Latvian Sign Language.

**NB!** On the 11th of November Tallinn Helen's School is opened for visitors and Estonian Association of Parents with Hearing Impaired Children 25th birthday will be celebrated.

More information: [www.eklv.ee](http://www.eklv.ee).

## **Conference "Estonian Deaf Education at a Crossroad" agenda**

Moderator Toomas Sepp

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| <b>10.00 – 10.20</b> | <b>Registration and coffee table</b>  |
| 10.20 – 10.30        | Estonian Association of the Deaf chairman of the board <b>Tiit Papp</b><br>greetings and introduction of the agenda |
| 10.30 – 10.40        | Tallinn deputy mayor <b>Mihhail Kõlvart's</b> greetings   |

- 10.40 – 11.00 **Deaf education history in pictures and writing**  
**Maret Õun**, Estonian Association of the Deaf deputy chairman of the board, University of Tartu sign language teacher
- 11.00 – 11.20 **Does education in sign language have future?**  
**Regina Paabo**, Estonian Association of Sign Language Interpreters chairman of the board, master of arts from University of Tartu
- 11.20 – 11.40 **Deaf education from the viewpoint of UN CRPD**  
**Anneli Habicht**, Estonian Chamber of Disabled People executive director
- 11.40 – 12.00 **Estonian Association of Parents with Hearing Impaired Children: 25 years of education with hearing-impaired children**  
**Toomas Sepp**, Estonian Association of Parents with Hearing Impaired Children president
- 12.00 – 13.00** **Lunch break**
- 13.00 – 13.15 **Youth views of the situation in education**  
**Amiolla Pihel**, Estonian Organization of the Young Deaf assistant manager
- 13.15 – 13.35 **Ministry of Social Affairs views and possible solutions in Deaf education**  
**Margus Tsahkna**, Minister of Social Protection of the Republic of Estonia
- 13.35 – ... **Status of Sign Languages in Europe/EU countries**  
**Markku Jokinen**, European Union of the Deaf president, Finnish Association of the Deaf managing director, PhD
- ... – 14.20 **UN CRPD from viewpoint of deaf people**  
**Jaana Aaltonen**, Finnish Association of the Deaf president
- 14.20 – 14.40 **Views of the Ministry of Education and Research regarding the organisation of Deaf education**

- Kalle Küttis**, head of Ministry of Education and Research's School Network Department
- 14.40 – 15.00 **Deaf education today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow**  
**Mailis Reps**, member of the parliament, member of the parliament's Culture Committee, former Minister of Education
- 15.00 – 15.15 **Pause**
- 15.15 – 16.00 **DEBATE** – lead by journalist **Märt Treier**
- Attendees: **Peeter-Eerik Ots** - adviser to the Minister of Social Protection, **Pille Vaiksaar** - chief expert of Ministry of Education and Research's School Network Department, **Mailis Reps** - member of the parliament's Culture Committee, **Toomas Sepp** - Estonian Association of Parents with Hearing Impaired Children president
- 16.30 – 18.00 **LEVEE in Nordic Hotel Forum**

**NB!** There might be some changes in the agenda.

Presenters Bios are on the following pages.

**Conference is supported by Gambling Tax Council and Tallinn municipality**



## Presenter Bios



### **Toomas Sepp**

Estonian Association of Parents with Hearing Impaired Children (EKLVL) president since 1991 when it was founded. He has also been FEPEDA council member for a long time. EKLVL have been the initiator and coordinator of composing many hearing rehabilitation programmes. He was one of the initiators of creating Tallinn Helen's School and has been its board of guardians' chairman since the establishment in 1994. Since 1997 he has been Estonian Chamber of Disabled People's financing fund's council chairman. From the year 1999 he has been the vice-chairman of Tallinn Disabled Persons Commission. He is the charter member of Tallinn Kristiine Lions Club since 1995. Its charity programme is involved with hearing impaired children. Working as Tallinn city secretary since 1992.



### **Tiit Papp**

Tiit Papp is an active member of the Deaf community since childhood because of his deafness. He led the Society of the Deaf of Tallinn and the Harju County from 1991 to 2008. Since 2008 he is the chairman of the board of Estonian Association of the Deaf (EAD). The principal objective of EAD is to design a sustainable environment where hearing impaired people have the same equal opportunities for living and communicating as other citizens throughout developing the national policy. EAD also protects Deaf culture, education and sign languages. Tiit Papp graduated "I Studium" in the year 2000 as an economics financier-economist. He taught mathematics and physics in Tallinn Helen's School from 2001 to 2012.



### **Mihhail Kõlvart**

Mihhail Kõlvart graduated from Tallinn Secondary School No. 15 and gained two higher education diplomas from economical and jurisprudence studies. He has worked as a lawyer and has experience as a lecturer. He has evolved cultural history and rhetoric's courses.

Since 2008 he is a member of the Estonian Centre Party and a member of the parliament since 2011 from where he was suspended when he was appointed as deputy mayor of Tallinn.

Since the April of 2011 he is the deputy mayor of Tallinn and his areas of responsibilities are education, culture, sport, youth work, heritage protection, national relations, evolving universal integration politics and the forum of Household Peace. Mihhail has also published many articles on political and social topics.



### **Maret Õun**

Maret was born deaf. She is working in Tallinn Helen's school as a teacher. From 2007 to 2012 she worked as a project manager in Estonian Association of the Deaf.

Maret teaches sign language lessons under contracts (e.g. in University of Tartu).

Her hobby is to collect deaf history and culture.

From 2008 Maret Õun is the chairman of the Society of the Deaf of Tallinn and the Harju County and from 2013 the vice-chairman of Estonian Association of the Deaf.



### **Regina Paabo**

Regina Paabo is associated with the Deaf community because of her heritage. She is also a Sign Language interpreter. She has finished the University of Tartu and has a master's degree in special education. She has also complemented herself in the Centre of Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytical Psychotherapy and Estonian Moreni Centre.

She is the charter member of Estonian Association of Sign Language Interpreters and its current chairman. Regina is also the evolver and developer of Estonian Sign Language occupational qualifications system and the launcher of Estonian Sign Language higher education course in University of Tartu. She is the author of first Estonian Sing Language

dictionaries and methodical teaching materials. She also teaches Estonian Sign Language interpreters and researches Estonian Sign Language.



### **Anneli Habicht**

Anneli Habicht works as an executive director in Estonian Chamber of Disabled People. She is andragogue and thus inclusive and special education and lifelong learning topics are very important to her. They are composing UN CRPD shadow report in Estonian Chamber of Disabled People and a very important part of it is about accessibility to education for deaf people. She is very glad that Estonian Association of the Deaf is organizing this conference and hopes that the discussion between specialists, Deaf people and officials helps to protect the needs and rights to education of deaf people.



### **Amiolla Pihel**

Amiolla is deaf and her mother tongue is Estonian Sign Language. From 2012 to 2014 she was a board member in Estonian Deaf Organization for Youth (EKNO). Since 2015 she is EKNO assistant.

In Estonian Deaf Organization for Youth she works with the board to resolve different problems that deaf youth face in their everyday life. They also try to improve accessibility to education and integration to society among Deaf youth on both local and international level.



### **Margus Tsahkna**

Margus Tsahkna has been the Minister of Social Protection of the Republic of Estonia since April 2015. He is a member of Pro Patria and Res Publica Union (IRL).

In 2007–2015, Margus Tsahkna was a member of the XI and XII Riigikogu. In the same parliament, he was a member of the Monetary and Social Affairs Committee. In 2011–2014, he was Chairman of the Social Affairs Committee.

In 2011–2014, Tsahkna was the Vice Chairman of the Board of the Estonian Health Insurance Fund.

In 2007–2011, he was a member of the Board of the Estonian Environmental Investment Centre.

In 2003–2007, Tsahkna was a member of Tartu City Council. Margus Tsahkna has been a member of Pro Patria and Res Publica Union (IRL) since 2000 and has held the roles of Chairman of Noor-Isamaa, Political Secretary, Secretary General and Vice Chairman.

Born in Tartu on 13 April 1977, Margus Tsahkna graduated from Tartu Secondary School No. 7. He studied in the faculty of theology and the faculty of law in the University of Tartu, and studied international law in the University of Toronto.



### **Markku Jokinen**

Markku Jokinen is the Executive Director of the Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD) since 2007 and a member of Nordic Council of the Deaf since 1997. He is the president of European Union of the Deaf. Markku is also Former President of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) and Former Chair of the Finnish Sign Language Board. He has 35 years of experience as an extensive volunteer in organizational and advocacy work at local, national and international level. He is a member of Finnish Human Rights Delegation and its Human Rights Committee of People with Disabilities and was International Deaf-rights advocate involved in the drafting of the UN CRPD as part of International Disability Alliance (IDA). He is WFD Expert on Deaf Education, Sign Language, and Deaf Culture.

Markku made his postgraduate studies in Linguistics, Psycholinguistics, Sign Language Linguistics (University of Rochester).



### **Jaana Aaltonen**

Jaana Aaltonen has a master's degree and is a teacher of special education. She teaches deaf pupils (sign language users) in Turku, Finland, at Hannunniittu school. She has been a teacher since 1992 and a special education teacher since 1998. She was a vice principal of C.O. Malm's school in Turku between 2006 - 2010. Jaana Aaltonen was a principal of Folk High School of the Deaf from 1997 to 1998 in Helsinki.

Jaana Aaltonen is the President of Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD) since 2014. She was a board member of FAD six years before becoming the president. Jaana has also been the president of International Committee of Finnish Association of the Deaf for seven years. She is also a member of Nordic Committee of the Deaf.

Jaana Aaltonen has plenty of experience in different areas of sign language work and has done a lot of voluntary work in Finland and Africa (development co-operation). She has been a sign language teacher to sign language interpreters and an instructor for sign language instructors. She has given many different presentations in Finland and on an international level.



### **Kalle Küttis**

Kalle Küttis was born in Kohtla-Järve and graduated the local high school. In the University of Tartu, he studied geography/nature conservation (1973), school psychology (1988) and got his master's degree in education management (2003). He has worked as a teacher, high school director, county head of education and Viljandi County Governor. Since 2009 he works in the Ministry of Education and Research. At first he worked there as a vice chancellor of general and vocational education and for the last 3 years as a head of School Network Department. His main tasks are to manage the school network restructuring so they would meet the demographic and regional changes, to build up state high schools network and to manage it so it would meet the modern requirements for children with educational special needs.

### **Mailis Reps**



Mailis Reps was born and grew up in Tallinn. There are five children in her family. She has studied in Tallinn Bachelor's Private School, Kalamazoo College in Michigan, USA (social science), Academy Nord (cum laude in law), Central European University in Budapest (cum laude master's degree in law), Maastricht University (cum laude master's degree in European Public Affairs), Uppsala University (PhD in EU law). She has been the Minister of Education and Research twice. She is a current member of the parliament, vice chairman of Estonian Centre Party's fraction and a member of the parliament's Culture Committee. Mailis is also a member on many voluntary organizations.





### **Märt Treier**

Märt Treier is Estonian journalist and media trainer who has lead many conferences and debates in more than ten years. From 2000 – 2009 he worked in television channel TV3. At first as a news reporter and anchor-man, later as a the head of newsroom. He lead the thanks gala “Estonia's Pride” for ten years. Märt has also worked together with Estonian radio channel “Vikerraadio” for twenty years. He has been acknowledged as a radio journalist by Association of Estonian Language Teachers. Media lectures in Estonian Business School brought him the award of the best docent of 2014-2015. He has also been acknowledged by Estonian Road Administration for collaboration in forestalling youth risk behaviour.



### **Pille Vaiksaar**

Pille Vaiksaar was born in Võru and studied in Viljandi before gaining a diploma from the University of Tartu as a trainer and physical education teacher in 1981. She has later complemented herself in social field. She has worked as a physical education teacher, kindergarten director and lead an institution that provides different services for disabled youth in Viljandi for 15 years. From 2012 to 2014 she worked in the Ministry of Social Affairs as a specialist of children with disabilities. Since 2014 she is working in the Ministry of Education and Research where her main task is to manage the school network for special needs students.



### **Peeter-Eerik Ots**

Peeter-Eerik Ots is an adviser to the Estonian Minister of Social Protection. He has graduated University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy and currently studies education management in University of Tallinn (master’s degree). He has also studied philosophy in University of Tartu, cultural management in EMTA master’s course and participated in the creative leaders program in the Swedish Institute in Stockholm. Peeter-Eerik teaches in Tallinn Ühisgümnaasium and he is a member of Estonian Association of Teachers since 2011. He is also the founder and board member of NGO Kultuurikatel and NGO Arvamused (Reviews).

Peeter-Eerik has worked in the Ministry of Education and Research, Tallinn city government and practiced entrepreneurship.