

**EuLaViBar Toolkit:  
Practical Guide to the EuLaViBar Tool,  
with Reference to the ELDIA  
Comparative Report**

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**eldia**

european language  
diversity for all

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 What is the purpose of this Toolkit?

This EuLaViBar Toolkit, produced by the international research project ELDIA (European Language Diversity for All), is a practical guide for creating a **European Language Vitality Barometer (EuLaViBar)**. The EuLaViBar provides a graphic illustration, in the form of a polar diagram, of the vitality of the language at issue, across diverse areas and dimensions of language use, and can thus be used as a tool for language policies which aim at language revitalisation and the maintenance of language diversity.

The main purpose of the EuLaViBar is to **help identify those areas in the maintenance and use of a language that need particular attention and support**. The barometer will serve decision-makers in directing financial and political support appropriately, and help stakeholders who want to understand the risks their language is facing. When made visible and accessible, the results help individual speakers in understanding their linguistic situation and rights and, for instance, in deciding which language(s) to speak with their children.

**IMPORTANT! The EuLaViBar cannot and should not be used for predicting the future of any language.** Whatever will happen to a language depends on a number of decisions – made by both language users and policy-makers – and on a number of complex circumstances which may influence these decisions. Whether a language is “doomed to die out” or “still has chances to survive” cannot be determined by any list of criteria, however extensive.

**The EuLaViBar can only be created by a person who knows the sociohistorical context of the language at issue and has at least some expertise in research into language and society.** The numerical results and illustrations provided by the barometer must never be taken at face value. They must always be interpreted and evaluated in relation to the linguistic, social, political and cultural reality behind the figures, that is, with the support of qualitative data.

## 1.2 The making of EuLaViBar – credits and acknowledgments

The EuLaViBar Toolkit is the product of years of teamwork in the ELDIA research project (which, of course, draws from the work of generations of scholars who have investigated questions of language diversity and vitality). The planning of the barometer in the ELDIA consortium, according to the principles already formulated in the project application, was initiated by Jarmo Lainio, who was also responsible for the design of ELDIA data sampling, including the first versions of the questionnaires (created in cooperation with numerous ELDIA researchers) which were used in the ELDIA case studies in the years 2010–2011. The barometer design in its present form was first drafted by Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark, while

the content structure of the barometer rests heavily on the data analysis design developed by Anneli Sarhimaa and Eva Kühhirt; Katharina Zeller gave a major contribution to the graphic design of the polar diagram. On the basis of the data analyses in the 12 ELDIA case-specific reports, the final version of the EuLaViBar toolkit, together with the revised version of the questionnaire, was created by Anneli Sarhimaa and Johanna Laakso, in cooperation with Reetta Toivanen and Eva Kühhirt and under the supervision of Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark, who was the responsible leader of this work phase. The instructions for calculating the EuLaViBar scores were created by Kari Djerf. In the course of the ELDIA project, many other ELDIA researchers have also participated in the discussion and contributed their ideas and results to the design of the EuLaViBar Toolkit. Thus, ***the EuLaViBar toolkit represents joint intellectual property of the ELDIA consortium and must not be used without making reference to ELDIA.***

The names of all project researchers, colleagues, cooperation partners, organisations and individuals who have contributed to the making of the EuLaViBar toolkit are too numerous to be listed here. We can only refer to the publication series *Studies in European Language Diversity* (earlier: *Working Papers in European Language Diversity*, WPELD) at [www.eldia-project.org](http://www.eldia-project.org) (see under “Publications”) which should be used as source of the background research that made the creation of the EuLaViBar possible (see below for link). In particular, we want to emphasise the relevance and importance of the ELDIA case-specific reports and collectively thank their authors and their helpers, fieldworkers, informants, cooperation partners and all who have shared their experience and knowledge with us.

ELDIA was funded in 2010–2013 by the 7th Framework Programme of the European Commission. Note that the views expressed in this text, as in all ELDIA publications, are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

More information about ELDIA can be found on the project website [www.eldia-project.org](http://www.eldia-project.org). All our electronic publications can also be accessed directly at <http://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:80789>.

## 2 Creating EuLaViBar: A step-to-step guide

### 2.1 The big picture: Understanding EuLaViBar

The theoretical and terminological framework of the ELDIA project, its background (in the work of both the ELDIA consortium and other researchers) and its main results are described in more detail in the Comparative Report which has been submitted to the EU in May 2013 and will be published as a book in the nearest future; for up-to-date information on the publication, follow the ELDIA website under [www.eldia-project.org](http://www.eldia-project.org). This Toolkit is meant to function as a practical guide for assessing the vitality and maintenance status of a potentially endangered language. Before describing the work steps, we will very briefly and simply explain how the EuLaViBar is created.

The idea is to measure the vitality of a language in terms of the speakers

- being able and willing to use the language at issue,
- having the chances of using it in a wide variety of public and private contexts,
- being able to develop it further, and
- being able and willing to transfer it to the next generations.

Thus, we must examine language use in different contexts, and factors influencing language use. In the ELDIA terminology, we speak of the following four **focus areas**:

- **Capacity**: the subjective capacity, or, in other words, the speakers' confidence in their competence to use the language;
- **Opportunity**: the existing institutional arrangements (legislation, regulations at schools or workplaces, etc.) that allow for, support or prohibit the official and/or public use of the language;
- **Desire**: the speakers' wish and readiness to use the language, also reflected in their attitudes and in their emotional reactions to the use of the language;
- **Language products**: products or services available in the language at issue (material or immaterial: books, papers, web pages, news broadcasts, concerts, plays, localised software etc.) and the demand for such language products.

Across all four focus areas, or within each focus area, language vitality will be evaluated along the following four **dimensions**:

- **Legislation**: whether there are laws which support the language at issue or multilingualism in general, whether the speakers know (about) these laws and what they think of them;
- **Education**: all types and levels of education (both language classes/courses and the use of a language in education), people's opinions, attitudes and feelings about education;

- **Media:** all questions relating to all types of media (traditional, electronic, social and interactive media), for instance: media use, language(s) used in media, minority issues in majority media, existence, accessibility, and types of minority media.
- **Language use and interaction:** how the languages are used in communication and social interaction in different situations, with different people etc.

In order to describe the vitality of the language within each dimension, we have compiled a list of sociolinguistic indicators or **variables** (in alphabetical order):

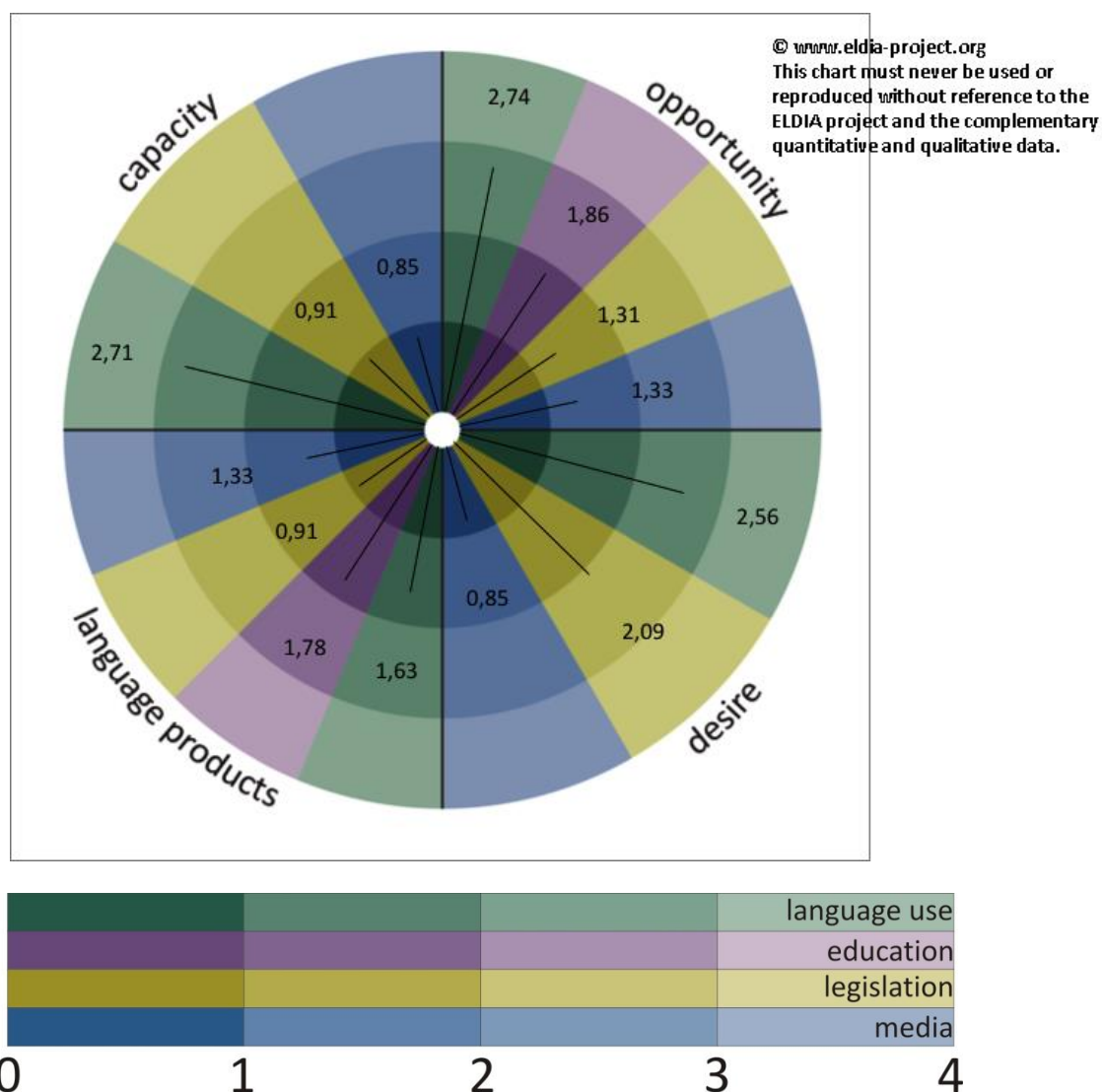
- Community members' attitudes towards their own language and its speakers
- Community members' attitudes towards other languages and their speakers
- Cross-generational language use
- Domain-specific language use
- Existence of legal texts in the investigated minority language
- Existence of media
- Intra-generational language use
- Language acquisition
- Language maintenance
- Language of instruction
- Legislation regarding education
- Media use & consumption
- Mother tongue
- Role of languages in the labour market
- Self-reported competence
- Support/prohibition of language use

For each dimension within each focus area, a numeric value will be calculated on the basis of the answers that a critical mass of (randomly-selected) respondents give to the questions asked in the survey questionnaire (Attachment 1). The answers are evaluated following a scaling system which is explained in more detail in Attachment 2 and 3. The EuLaViBar value of a given question is determined in relation to the ELDIA Language Maintenance Scale which ranges from 0 to 4:

## ELDIA Language Maintenance Scale

Grade	Description
0	<p><b>Language maintenance is severely and critically endangered.</b> The language is “remembered” but not used spontaneously or in active communication. Its use and transmission are not protected or supported institutionally. Children and young people are not encouraged to learn or use the language.</p> <p>→Urgent and effective revitalisation measures are needed to prevent the complete extinction of the language and to restore its use.</p>
1	<p><b>Language maintenance is acutely endangered.</b> The language is used in active communication at least in some contexts, but there are serious problems with its use, support and/or transmission, to such an extent that the use of the language can be expected to cease completely in the foreseeable future.</p> <p>→<b>Immediate</b> effective measures to support and promote the language in its maintenance and revitalization are needed.</p>
2	<p><b>Language maintenance is threatened.</b> Language use and transmission are diminishing or seem to be ceasing at least in some contexts or with some speaker groups. If this trend continues, the use of the language may cease completely in the more distant future.</p> <p>→Effective measures to support and encourage the use and transmission of the language must be taken.</p>
3	<p><b>Language maintenance is achieved to some extent.</b> The language is supported institutionally and used in various contexts and functions (also beyond its ultimate core area such as the family sphere). It is often transmitted to the next generation, and many of its speakers seem to be able and willing to develop sustainable patterns of multilingualism.</p> <p>→The measures to support language maintenance appear to have been successful and must be upheld and continued.</p>
4	<p><b>The language is maintained at the moment.</b> The language is used and promoted in a wide range of contexts. The language does not appear to be threatened: nothing indicates that (significant amounts of) speakers would give up using the language and transmitting it to the next generation, as long as its social and institutional support remains at the present level.</p> <p>→The language needs to be monitored and supported in a long-term perspective.</p>

The numeric values for each dimension can be graphically represented with a polar diagram (radar chart), as in the following example, taken from the ELDIA Case-Specific Report on Hungarian in Austria (by Hajnalka Berényi-Kiss, Johanna Laakso & Angelika Parfuss):



Within each quadrant for each focus area, the sectors coded with different colours mark the four dimensions. (Note that the dimension **Education**, marked with purple, is in ELDIA research only present in the focus areas **Opportunity** and **Language Products**. However, it would be perfectly possible and even desirable to include the dimension Education in the focus area of language products, e.g. re. textbooks in language X and even more so in the focus area of desire, e.g. whether respondents feel a need for enhanced education and training in language X). The black radius lines mark the calculated scores for vitality: the longer the lines, the higher the vitality and maintenance potential of the language along the dimension at issue. (For the sake of clarity, the lines do not start from the centre of the diagram. The “hole” in the middle of the diagram prevents very short lines from overlapping and disappearing from sight.)



The polar diagram gives an intuitively clear idea of where the “strongest” and “weakest” points in the vitality of the language at issue are to be found. In this case, for instance, the scores for language use are relatively high, while the scores for media are very low. This means that Hungarian speakers in Austria use Hungarian fairly often in various contexts but that the presence of Hungarian in the Austrian media landscape and in the speakers’ media consumption is fairly weak. However, in order to interpret the diagram appropriately one must also know that a large part of the informants in this study are first-generation migrants who have acquired their mother tongue in a Hungarian-speaking environment, or that the supply of Hungarian-language media in and for Austria is really very sparse (which means that the poor scores for media use probably reflect the scarcity of supply rather than poor demand). **Thus, EuLaViBar polar diagram should never be used, interpreted, reproduced or displayed without knowledge of and reference to the quantitative and qualitative data and the relevant background factors.**

## 2.2 The questionnaire

The EuLaViBar must be created on the basis of data gathered from (actual or potential) language users, and so the EuLaViBar scores are based on self-reported data. For this purpose, we have created a questionnaire (Attachment 1), developed on the basis of the questionnaires which were used in the ELDIA case studies. Note that in this master questionnaire we have, following the practice of Joshua Fishman, marked the minority (migrant, heritage, etc.) language at issue with X and the local majority or state language with Y. So, if you are, for instance, applying the EuLaViBar for the language of the Turkish migrants in Austria, you will substitute X with *Turkish* and Y with *German*.

As explained earlier, the answers to each question in the questionnaire will be transformed into a numerical value on the ELDIA vitality scale 0–4, and this will be used for calculating the vitality values for each EuLaViBar dimension. To give just a brief example of how this works: In question 6 of the revised questionnaire, the respondents are asked to define their mother tongue. If the answer is language X only, the value will be 4; if language X together with language Y or some other language is given, the value will be 3; if only Y or some other language but not X is mentioned, the value will be 0. These numerical values are also assigned to a certain dimension, and finally, for this dimension, an average value is calculated from the results of the different questions. This scaling system is explained in more detail in Attachment 2 and 3.

The questionnaire consists of question sets pertaining to the following topics:

- **Background data:** gender, age group, domicile (and possible migration history), education, profession;
- **Language background:** what language(s) the respondent defines as his/her mother tongue(s), what languages s/he has used or uses with his/her family members,

whether s/he has childhood experiences of language discrimination, what languages s/he has learned in school;

- **Language competence:** how the respondent evaluates his/her command of X, Y, English, and other languages;
- **Language attitudes:** whether the respondent was encouraged to learn language X and whether s/he encourages his/her children, what the respondent thinks about the relevance of age and gender for using X or about social contacts with X speakers, and whether s/he thinks that language X should be used across various public domains;
- **Societal and institutional factors:** what the respondent knows and thinks about language legislation in his country and its role for language X, about the role of language X on the labour market, and about the planning, public use and cultivation of language X;
- **Language use in media consumption:** what kind of media the respondent uses in which languages.

Most questions are multiple-choice questions that can be answered by ticking the respective boxes, but there are also some open-ended questions or questions in which the respondents are asked to comment or specify their answer. The questionnaire in this form is very long; in the ELDIA case studies, the even longer original version of this questionnaire was often experienced as too massive and challenging. Moreover, not all questions make sense for all languages, communities or situations. You may want to develop the questionnaire further to make it better suited for your target group. We invite all interested researchers to continue our work and share their ideas and results; an Internet forum for this purpose will be created on the website [www.eldia-project.org](http://www.eldia-project.org).

The questionnaire must, of course, be **translated** into the language of the respondents. We recommend that you translate the questionnaire both into the (potentially endangered/minority) language at issue (also to show that you support the written and public use of the language) and into the local majority language (as some respondents may be less fluent in their heritage language or less familiar with its written use). Inform the respondents that the two versions have identical contents and that they can freely choose which one they use. (The choice of language also gives you valuable information about the willingness of your respondents to use their language in writing.)

After creating your version of the questionnaire, you should test it. We suggest that you conduct a pilot study with a small group of respondents (we recommend a minimum of 20 persons), preferably so that a researcher is present, observing and assisting the respondents while they fill out the questionnaire, and collecting their reactions and feedback.

### 2.3 Collecting data: The survey

Considering the great variety of situations in which languages are spoken and their speaker communities live, we cannot give any exact guidelines as to how you should locate, select

and reach your informants. As an expert of your target community, you will have to decide yourself how you create a sample of informants as representative as possible, and how large your sample can/must be. If your sample is skewed (that is, if some groups are under- or overrepresented in your data), you must also decide how you deal with this problem when using or interpreting your EuLaViBar.

(In the ELDIA project, we tried to identify frames that allow for random sampling – that is, within a large group of potential addressees each individual has the same probability to be selected. The ideal solution would have been to have a register covering the whole target community, from which the addressees could be picked at random. However, as in many countries the statistics authorities could not provide such registers, we often had to resort to the help of organisations and cultural clubs. This method, favouring educated people and “activists”, caused a clear bias in many of our samples.)

**Pay special attention to data protection issues.** Note that information which can identify individual persons is sensitive and must be handled with utmost care. (Especially in the case of small communities, not only names and addresses but also data about the individual combinations of profession, place of residence, migration history, education etc. may also in practice suffice to identify individual informants!) If you must create lists of informants' addresses and names, remember to delete them as soon as possible. Familiarise yourself with the data protection laws of your country (and the regulations of your institution or organisation concerning data protection). Try to think yourself in the position of your respondent and find out a way to deal with his/her possible fears and doubts concerning your study.

You must also decide how you contact your informants:

- **Sending the questionnaires by mail**, together with an accompanying letter and a return envelope, was the method used in most of the ELDIA case studies. This is a simple way of reaching a wide spectrum of addressees, irrespective of their domicile, education, social class or networks. However, this technique is fairly expensive and requires a lot of work, and – especially if the questionnaire is experienced as challenging or if your target group has difficulties in understanding the goals of your study – the return rates may remain very low.
- **Assisted questionnaire completion** was used in some of the ELDIA case studies: the researchers visited the respondents on site, explained the questions to them and helped them fill in the questionnaires. This technique guarantees high return rates, but it is very work-intensive and includes the risk that the presence (not to speak of the active assistance) of researchers may influence the responses.
- **An on-line version of the questionnaire** is easy to create (there are numerous software solutions available, some of them free of charge) and cheap to use. However, if you want to use an electronic questionnaire, you must ensure that your sample is representative – for instance, that it also includes older, less educated and

rural respondents who might not have Internet access – and, if necessary, complement your sample with the other two techniques.

## 2.4 Processing and presenting data: Towards the EuLaViBar, and beyond

If you use an electronic version of the questionnaire (either online, or in assisted questionnaire completion, for instance on a laptop computer which the researchers have with them when visiting the respondents), processing the data into an electronic form is very easy. Printed questionnaires must be scanned or manually transcribed into electronic form for data processing – when planning the work and budgeting the resources for it, remember that this is very work-intensive!

The last phase of the work will be placing the calculated scores into the EuLaViBar polar diagram. In Attachment 4, you will find a graphic file which you can use as a template for your EuLaViBar diagram.

As mentioned above, whenever you use, present or disseminate EuLaViBar diagrams,

- **you should refer to the ELDIA consortium;**
- **you should make it clear that the EuLaViBar diagram is based on your survey and its reliability depends on the validity of your data;**
- **you should emphasise that the EuLaViBar total scores are calculated on the basis of a multitude of questions; this means that similar scores may result from different combinations of variables, and the EuLaViBar results cannot be interpreted or understood without background knowledge of the language situation at issue;**
- **you should emphasise that the EuLaViBar cannot and must not be used for predicting future developments, let alone the fate of any individual language.**

Even after the ELDIA project is officially closed in 2013, the ELDIA consortium will remain as an organ for cooperation and the administration of ELDIA project data and other collective intellectual property. Updates and news about the EuLaViBar will appear on the project website [www.eldia-project.org](http://www.eldia-project.org), and we will create a forum for further communication between EuLaViBar users. **We invite all interested users and potential developers of EuLaViBar to participate in the discussion and share their experiences and ideas with us.** You can contact us directly at [info.eldia@univie.ac.at](mailto:info.eldia@univie.ac.at).

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Attachments:

- (1) Revised Questionnaire
- (2) Overview of the EuLaViBar Scaling System
- (3) Statistical Explanations of the EuLaViBar Scaling System
- (4) EuLaViBar Template for creating the polar diagram