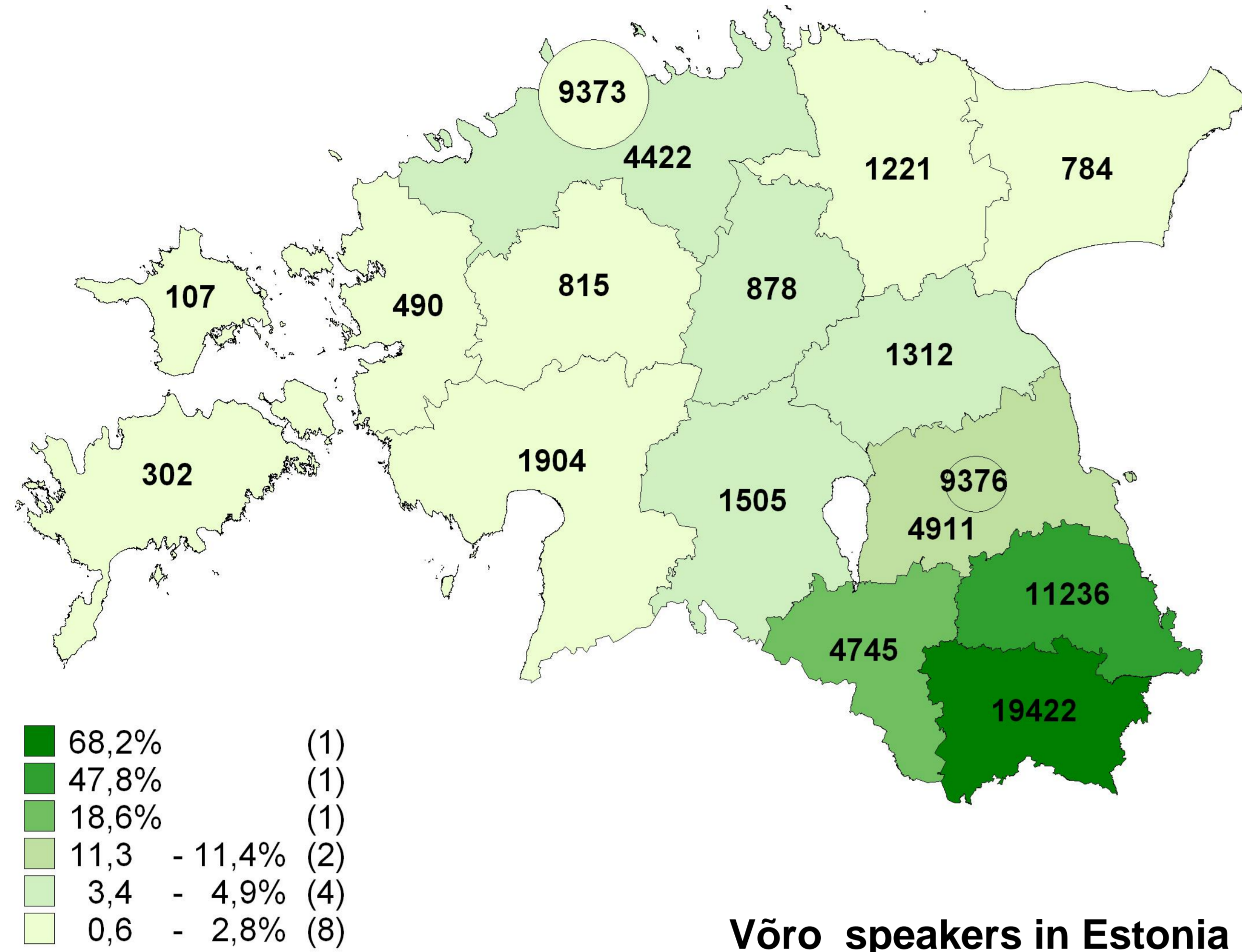


Võro in Estonia

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Short facts



Võro speakers in Estonia

Status and definition:

- Võro is conventionally seen as a dialect of Estonian, therefore the minority position of Võro-speakers as a linguistic minority is not fully acknowledged
- Võro-speakers are an autochthonous speech community, who have preserved their vernacular, semi-standardised language in addition to Estonian

Statistics:

- Given the absence of clear definitions and official recognition, the size of the speech community remains a matter of interpretation.
- active and passive (potential) Võro speakers in Estonia based on self-reports (2011 census) ~70,000.

Vitality: weakened only since the end of World War II, despite the conscious building of an all-Estonian standard since the end of the 1800s.

Võro activism: since the late 1980s, activist Võro-speakers, the so-called Võro Movement, have been engaged in the revitalisation of Võro and reversing the language shift from Võro-Estonian to Estonian only.

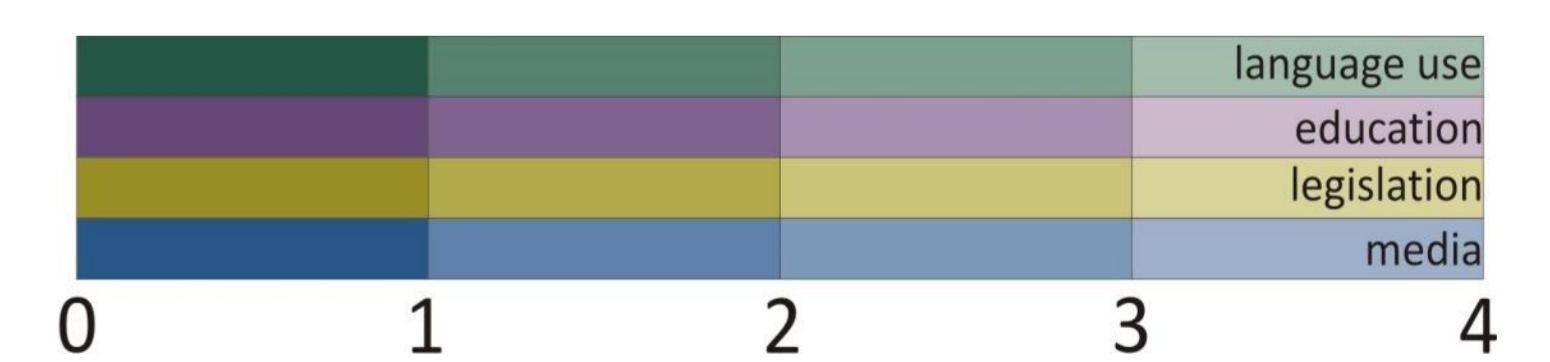
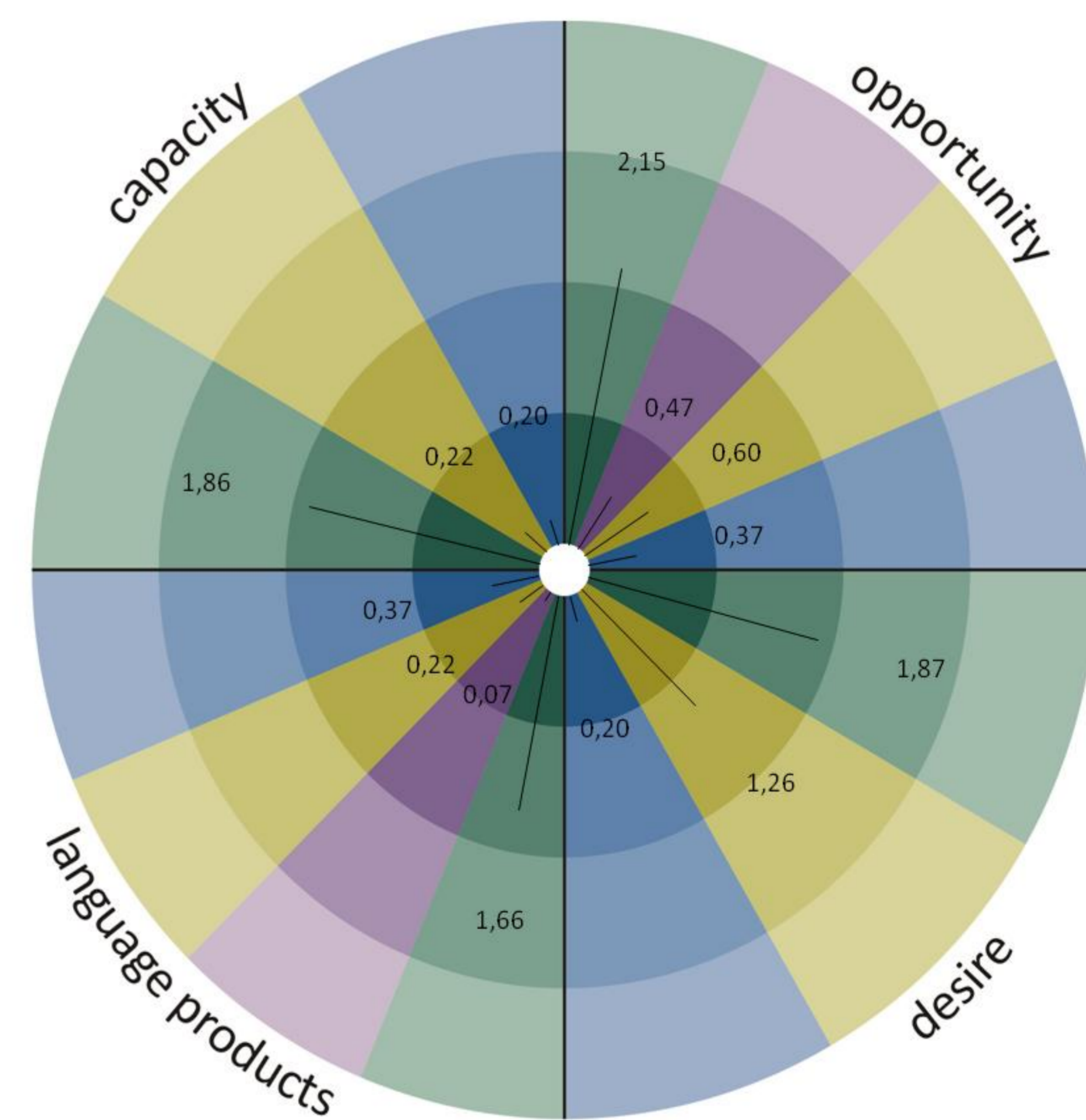
Revitalisation: schooling, incl. a language immersion project, publishing of teaching materials, print media, TV episodes, radio news, children's books, and made many other things, incl. song festival "Uma Pido" happen.

ELDIA's results

Relying on ELDIA, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- While potential Võro-speakers, residents of South-Eastern Estonian reported good oral capacities of Võro, their desire to transfer it to the generation of children seems to be weak. This may partly result from a low market value of Võro; it seems to have a symbolic value only, especially when the next generations have to out-migrate in connection to further education or look for jobs outside the region.
- While language activists have initiated the production of different language products in Võro, the majority of potentials speakers seems to be either not aware about, not interested in or have no access to those. Despite of a new standard, people prefer reading and writing in Estonian; this also makes impossible to use and produce Võro-language media content.
- The Võro language is associated with positive emotions and feeling, with home and childhood/grandparents. Social contacts with Võro-speakers are considered positive.
- Language legislation in Estonia is a complicated area. While, the late changes in the Language Act seem to favour dialects, it does not mean that the status of Võro has changed or has been enhanced. Võro-speakers do not know whether the law supports or prevents the use of Võro.
- The topics of Võro in media seem to be marginal in the public majority discourse. The minority media seems not to have explicit political agenda.

EuLaViBar



The song festival Uma Pido

Võro is estimated as being between severely endangered and ongoing language shift. Similar findings have been highlighted by different authors (e.g. Ehala 2006, and the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger). Some dimensions – Legislation, Media and Education – scored very low in all focus areas, indicating the domains where language endangerment is most critical.