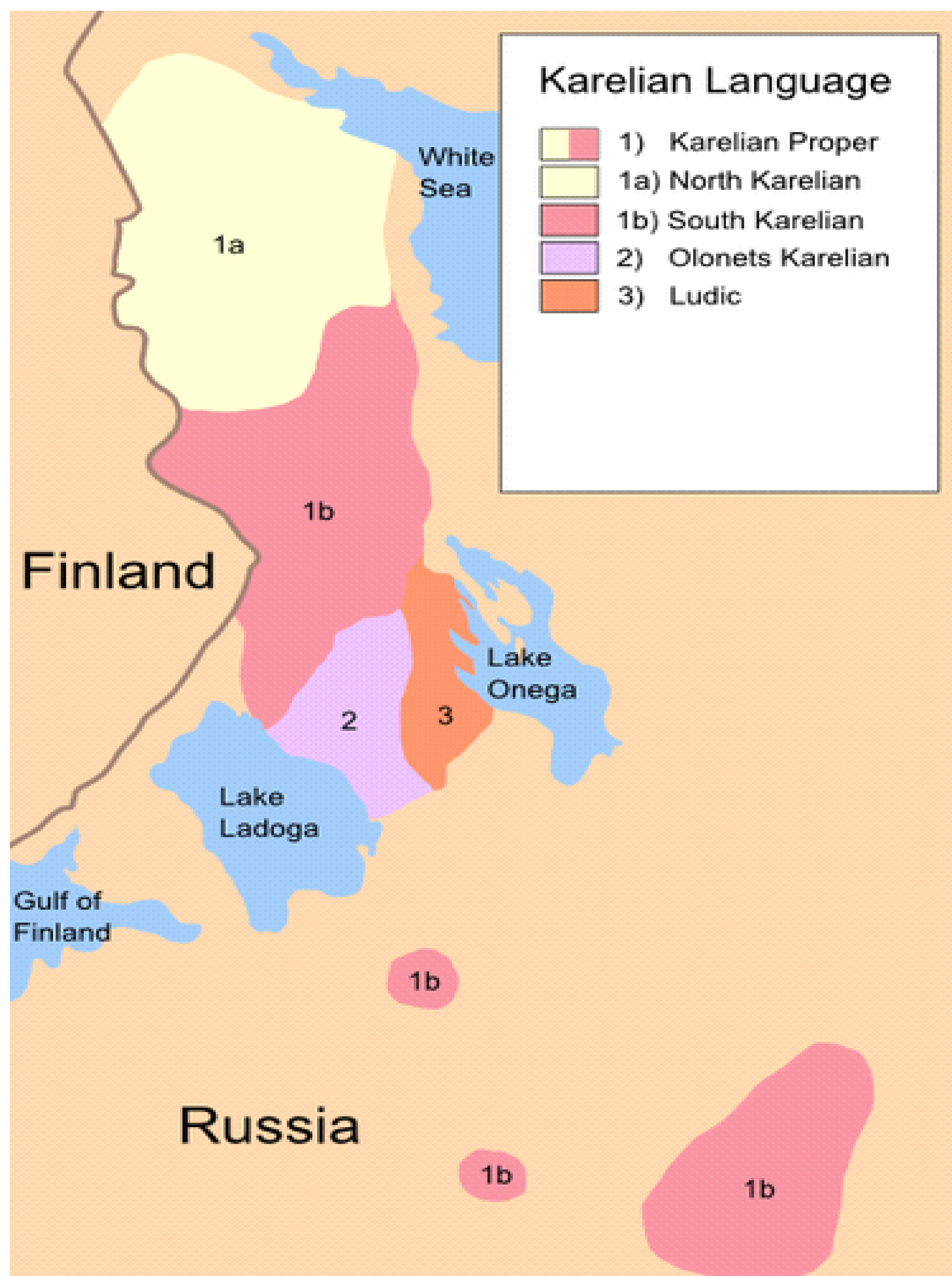


# Karelian in Russia

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## Short facts

**Olonec Karelian:** estimated number of speakers between 14.100 and 25.000 (even lowest number too high regarding the census 2010 including all Karelian varieties (25.605 speakers))

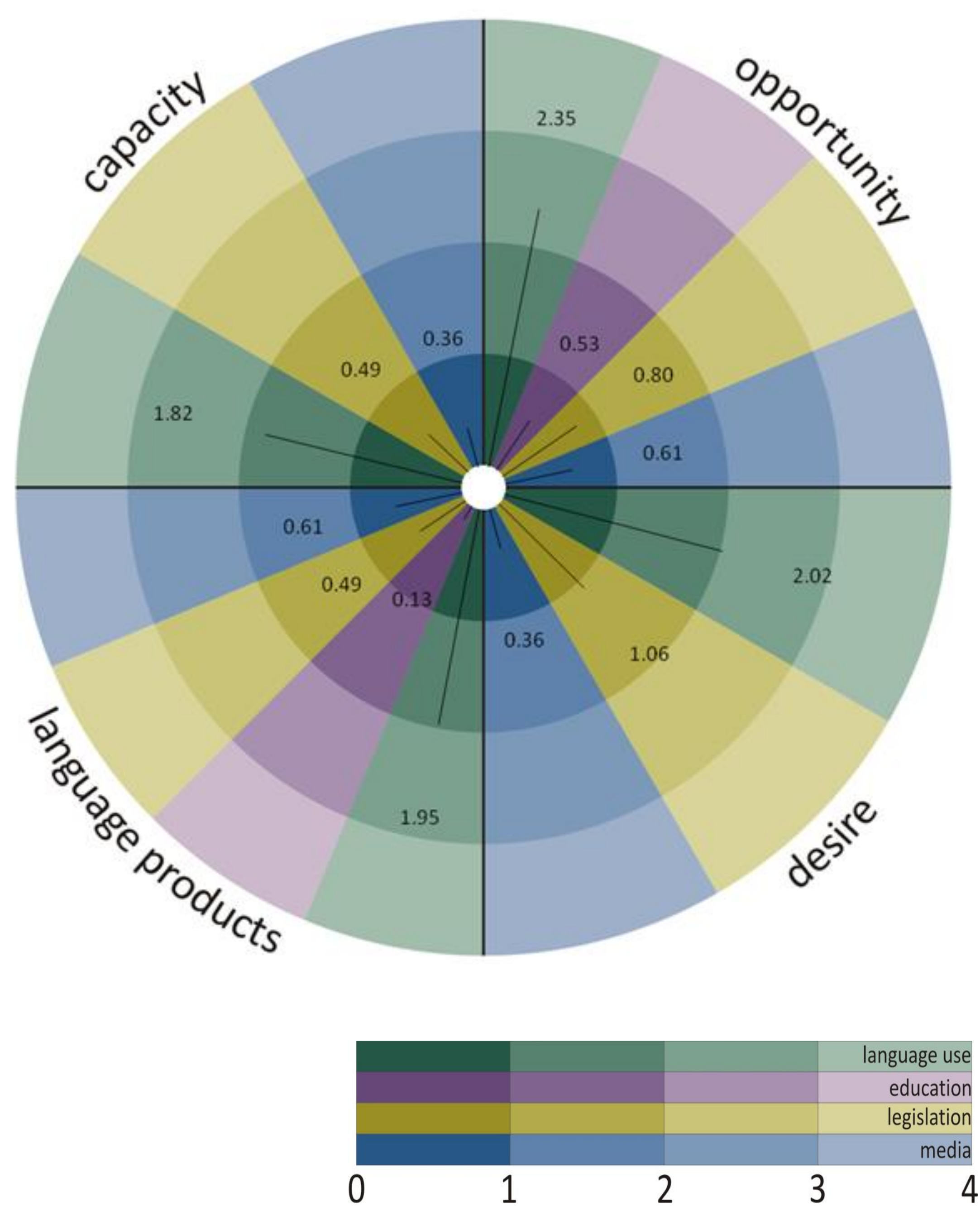
**Region:** Olonec Karelian is spoken in northwestern Russia in the southern part of the Republic of Karelia. Compared to other Karelian variants in the Republic of Karelia, Olonec Karelian was traditionally spoken in a smaller area with a higher population density.

**Classification:** It is one of the two or three main branches of the Karelian language, the other being Karelian Proper which can be further divided into Northern Karelian, Southern Karelian and Tver Karelian.



## ELDIA's results

- Our research shows that Olonec Karelian is mainly a spoken language spoken in domestic environment among elderly people. On the contrary, Russian language dominates every sphere of life of the Karelians.
- The vast majority of the respondents have learnt Karelian solely at home. The main mediators of the Karelian language have been the generation of the grandparents. However, our research confirms that the family is rapidly losing its role in the cross-generational transmission of the language. Today the overwhelming majority of the respondents use Russian with their children.
- Our Karelian respondents seem to be aware that there are bodies working towards advancement of the Karelian language. However, a significant number are indifferent and doubted whether there is need for such development at all.
- The attitudes of both the Karelian minority respondents and the control group respondents on language legislation are in principle neutral or even supportive towards the Karelian language. However, in practice the Karelian language is not perceived as a modern language fit for every sphere of life or even worth developing outside the traditional language community.
- The future prospects of the Olonets Karelian language are regarded with great uncertainty by the minority group respondents.
- Many interviewees regard villages as the natural environment for speaking Karelian. Therefore, the future of the Karelian villages is seen as vital for the language preservation.
- While the laws per se do not prevent the use of Karelian, there is little support for its use. The control group respondents were more optimistic on that the Russian legislation is somewhat supportive of the use of several languages.
- According to our interviewees, the most important problem concerning the legal status of the Karelian language was the lack of its status as the other official language of their titular republic.



## EuLaViBar

Olonec Karelian – along with other Karelian varieties – spoken in Russia is beyond doubt a severely endangered language. As the barometer shows, the values of different dimensions of the four Focus Areas never exceed the figure of 3 that would implicate a safer stage of the minority language preservation and status in the society.

The fact that the area of Language use and interaction is the most vital in all focus areas of the EuLaViBar highlights the fact that the societal support for Olonec Karelian in forms of legislation, education or (state supported) media is very weak. When the selected nature of our respondents is taken into account, the picture concerning the abilities and willingness to use the Karelian language grows even worse.