

Veps in Russia

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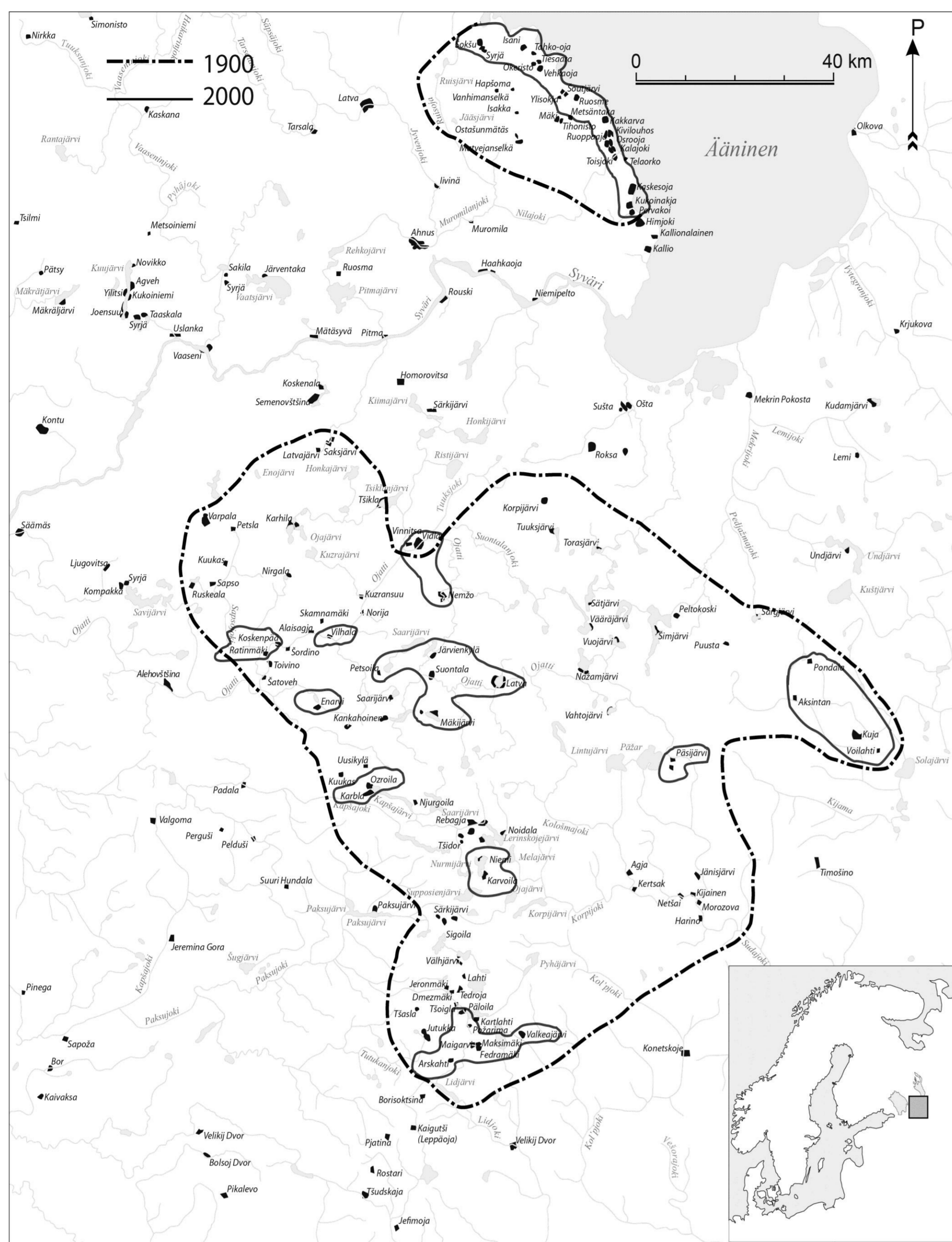


Figure 1: The Veps language area (Grünthal 2011: 269)

Short facts

The Veps language is spoken in North-Western Russia. According to the latest Russian population census (2010) there were 5936 ethnic Veps in Russia and 3613 speakers of the Veps language. All Veps speakers are at least bilingual, as every Veps is able to speak Russian. Fluent speakers of Veps are typically old and mainly reside in rural areas. The Veps literary language is, in its present form, young: it has been developed since the beginning of the 1990s by native Veps speakers. Veps is not used as a language of instruction in the educational system.

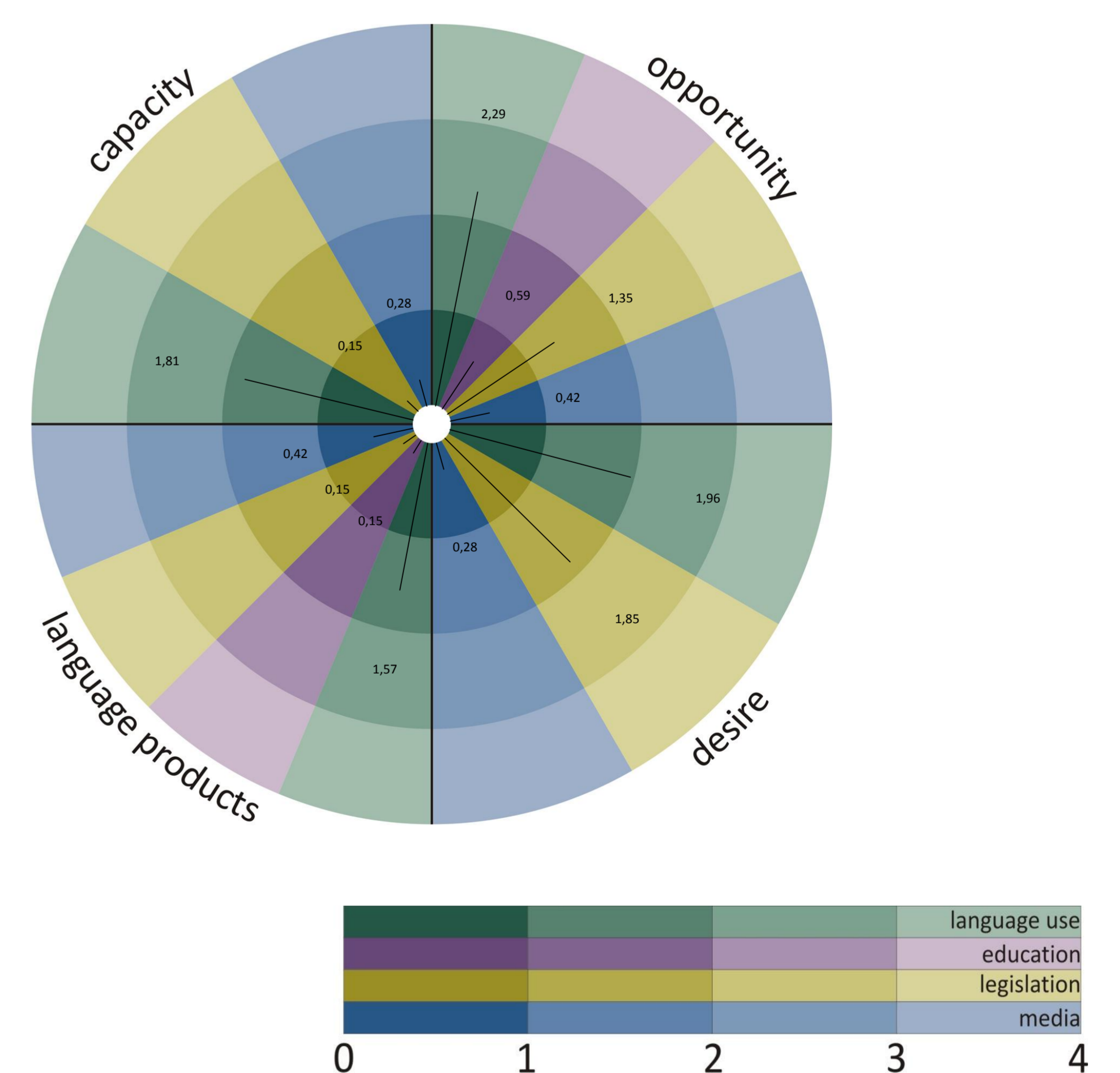


ELDIA's results

- There is a significant difference in self-estimated oral Veps language skills between the two eldest age groups (65+ and 50-64 years). More than 90% of the eldest Veps consider their oral skills at least good, whereas more than one out of three of the younger group estimates their skills to be fair at best.
- The erosion of language skills between different age groups is reflected fairly well in the attested mother tongue of the respondents. The eldest respondents mostly name Veps as their mother tongue, whereas the younger the respondent, Russian is more typically named as the mother tongue. However, the share of those naming two mother tongues increases towards the youngest age groups.
- Veps is very scarcely spoken to children nowadays. Less than 15% of the respondents aged 30-49 use some Veps with their children. In general, learning and using Veps has not been supported by the majority of the respondents, although most speakers report having gotten support from their own parents.
- The Veps are aware of existing legislation concerning their language. However, they do not know the contents of the legislation, and those who do seem to think it does not have any real effects on the linguistic situation.
- The covert attitudes differ significantly from the overt attitudes of the Veps minority language speakers. The sound of Russian is generally regarded more positively than the sound of Veps in the questionnaires, whereas Veps is usually described as the most beautiful and close language of all.
- The Veps express great uncertainty regarding the future prospects of the Veps language.

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“Language use” scored the highest in all four Focus areas, although the rating was at best a little above 2, implying that the Veps language is – as known - threatened on every level. The difference between language use and other areas highlights the fact that the Veps language is very weakly supported on the official level: legislation is ineffective and Veps language education nearly nonexistent.



There is not much Veps language media available and it is used rarely - the Russian language media is the true means of receiving information also for the Veps. Most Veps have difficulties in using Veps in their everyday life because Veps can only be used in a few domains in the private sphere