

# ISO 639-3 Registration Authority

## Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code

Change Request Number: 2008-043 (completed by Registration authority)

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(See also attached recommendations from 2005)

Postal address for primary contact person for this request (in general, email correspondence will be used):  
Sulev Iva, Võro Institute, Tartu 48, Võru 65609, Estonia

PLEASE NOTE: This completed form will become part of the public record of this change request and the history of the ISO 639-3 code set and will be posted on the ISO 639-3 website.

### Types of change requests

This form is to be used in requesting changes (whether creation, modification, or deletion) to elements of the *ISO 639 Codes for the representation of names of languages — Part 3: Alpha-3 code for comprehensive coverage of languages*. The types of changes that are possible are to 1) modify the reference information for an existing code element, 2) propose a new macrolanguage or modify a macrolanguage group; 3) retire a code element from use, including merging its scope of denotation into that of another code element, 4) split an existing code element into two or more new language code elements, or 5) create a new code element for a previously unidentified language variety. Fill out section 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 below as appropriate, and the final section documenting the sources of your information. The process by which a change is received, reviewed and adopted is summarized on the final page of this form.

Type of change proposed (check one):

1.  Modify reference information for an existing language code element
2.  Propose a new macrolanguage or modify a macrolanguage group

3.  Retire a language code element from use (duplicate or non-existent)
4.  Expand the denotation of a code element through the merging one or more language code elements into it (retiring the latter group of code elements)
5.  Split a language code element into two or more new code elements (include here a request for a new code element for a divergent dialect of a major language)
6.  Create a code element for a previously unidentified language.

For proposing a change to an existing code element, please identify:

Affected ISO 639-3 identifier: **est**

Associated reference name: **Estonian**

## 1. Modify an existing language code element

(a) What are you proposing to change:

- Language reference name; generally this is changed only if it is erroneous; if usage is shifting to a new preferred form, the new form may be added (next box)
- Language additional names
- Language type (living, extinct, historical, etc.)
- Language scope (individual language or macrolanguage)

(b) What new value(s) do you propose:

(c) Rationale for change:

## 2. Propose a new macrolanguage or modify a macrolanguage group

- (a) For an existing Macrolanguage, what change to its individual language membership do you propose: This is to propose the change in scope of Estonian [est] from individual language to macrolanguage, and to add the two constituent languages 1). Standard Estonian; 2) Võro (new code elements)

[RA Comment: This proposal was originally made as request simply to add a new code element for Võro. In consideration of prior association of Võro as a dialect of Estonian, and with much discussion of the linguistic and sociolinguistic relationship between Võro and Estonian, the RA and the submitter determined the best course of action is to propose the macrolanguage. Comment on the impact of these two alternative courses of action is especially sought.]

(b) Rationale for change:

1. Linguistic similarity and understanding: Võro is the most distinctive autochthonous linguistic variety of Estonia. Võro and Estonian are not mutually intelligible without preparation, intelligibility is clearly under 85%, maybe 50-70%. Võros can understand Estonian because they have learned Estonian at school, media etc, but other Estonians hardly understand Võro. The percentage of lexical similarity of Võro and Estonian is clearly under 85%, maybe 50-70% depending on which words are taken into account. According to Pajusalu (2003) the linguistic similarity between standard Estonian and Võro is about 19%. 2. Separate literary language, literature and media: Võro has its own separate literary language, grammars, dictionaries and active language planning. There exists a Võro-

language literature and media separately from standard Estonian literature and media. 3. Strong separate (regional) linguistic identity: Võro people have common Estonian national/ethnic identity but also strong Võro ethnolinguistic identity separately from common Estonian identity (Valk 2000). 4. Practical need: Võro needs its own language code mainly because of localising software and user interfaces. Many programs (also user interfaces of mobile phones, bank terminales etc.) need separate language code in order to be translated to a language. 5. Also current Ethnologue's entry for Estonian states that North and South Estonian (umbrella notion for Võro, Seto and nearly extinct varieties Mulgi and Tartu) may be separate languages.

The existing language code element [est] represents mostly standard Estonian (Estonian literary language) – a major language in which there already exist a significant body of literature and research. In the context of traditional Estonian linguistics, especially dialectology, Võro is still mostly considered as a dialect of Estonian or South Estonian. Võros and other Estonians have common national/ethnic identity but Võros have also their special separate linguistic identity, separate literature, separate grammar and spelling etc. Literature in Võro language is linguistically clearly distinguished from the literature in standard (or dialectal) Estonian.

For a new Macrolanguage proposal, please also complete the form “Request for New Language Code Element in ISO 639-3” (file name “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequest.doc” or “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequestForm.rtf”), which must also be submitted to fully document the intended meaning for the new macrolanguage.

### **3. Retire a language code element from use**

(a) Reason for change:

- There is no evidence that the language exists.  
 This is equivalent to another ISO 639-3 language.

(b) If equivalent with another code element, with which ISO 639-3 code element (identifier and name) is it equivalent:

(c) Rationale for change:

### **4. Expand the denotation of a code element through merging of one or more code elements**

(a) List the languages (identifier and name) to be merged into this code element and retired from use:

(b) Rationale for change

## 5. Split a language code element into two or more code elements

- (a) List the languages into which this code element should be split, or the major language and the divergent variety (or varieties) for which a new code element is being requested:

By the language identification criteria set forth in ISO 639-3, the simple fact of distinct identities is not enough to assign separate identifiers. The criteria are defined in the standard as follows:

For this part of ISO 639, judgments regarding when two varieties are considered to be the same or different languages are based on a number of factors, including linguistic similarity, intelligibility, a common literature (traditional or written), a common writing system, the views of users concerning the relationship between language and identity, and other factors. The following basic criteria are followed:

- Two related varieties are normally considered varieties of the same language if users of each variety have inherent understanding of the other variety (that is, can understand based on knowledge of their own variety without needing to learn the other variety) at a functional level.
  - Where intelligibility between varieties is marginal, the existence of a common literature or of a common ethnolinguistic identity with a central variety that both understand can be strong indicators that they should nevertheless be considered varieties of the same language.
  - Where there is enough intelligibility between varieties to enable communication, the existence of well-established distinct ethnolinguistic identities can be a strong indicator that they should nevertheless be considered to be different languages
- (b) Referring to the criteria given above, give the rationale for splitting the existing code element into two or more languages, or for requesting a separate identifier for the divergent variety:
- (c) Does the existing language code element represent a major language in which there already exists a significant body of literature and research? Are there contexts in which all the proposed separate languages may still be considered the same language—as in having a common linguistic identity, a shared (or undistinguished) body of literature, a written form in common, etc.? Please comment.

In order to complete the change request, the form “Request for New Language Code Element in ISO 639-3” (file name “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequestForm.doc” or “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequestForm.rtf”) must also be submitted for each new identifier that is to be created. That step can be deferred until this form has been processed by the ISO 639-3 registrar, provided that sufficient information on the rationale is given in (b) above.

In the case of a minority language that has been considered in some contexts to be a dialect of a major language, yet is divergent enough to be unintelligible to speakers of the standard variety of the major language, it may be more beneficial for the users of the ISO 639-3 and 639-2 code sets to create a new code element for the divergent language variety without splitting the existing code element of the major language. The ISO 639-3 Registration Authority may make this determination when considering a request involving a major language and a highly distinct “dialect.” If such a course is followed, the rationale for the decision will be published in a comment by the Registration Authority on approval of the requested addition for the divergent variety.

## 6. Create a new language code element

- (a) Name of missing language:
- (b) State the case that this language is not the same as or has not been included within any language that already has an identifier in ISO 639-3:

In order to complete the change request, the form “Request for New Language Code Element in ISO 639-3” (file name “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequest.doc” or “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequestForm.rtf”) must also be submitted to more fully document the new language.

### Sources of information

Please use whichever of the points below are relevant in order to document the sources on which you have based the above proposal.

- (a) First-hand knowledge. Describe:  
I'm a native speaker, teacher (Tartu University) and researcher (Võro Institute) of Võro language.
- (b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:  
Võro is language of my everyday communication (home, work, community etc.) and also my research subject.
- (c) Knowledge from published sources (please give complete bibliographical references):  
\* Iva, Sulev (2007): Võru kirjakeele sõnamuutmissüsteem. (Inflectional Morphology in the Võro Literary Language, PhD dissertation, University of Tartu) Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus (online: [http://dspace.utlib.ee/dspace/bitstream/10062/4860/1/iva\\_sulev.pdf](http://dspace.utlib.ee/dspace/bitstream/10062/4860/1/iva_sulev.pdf), English summary pp 144-146). \* Eller, Kalle (1999): Võro-Seto language. Võro Instituut'. Võro. \* Jüvä, Sullõv (2002): Võro-eesti synaraamat (Võro-Estonian dictionary). Publications of Võro Institute 12. Tartu-Võro (online: <http://www.folklore.ee/Synaraamat/>). \* Keem, Hella (1997): Võru keel (Võro language (grammar)). Võro Instituut ja Eesti teaduste akadeemia Emakeele selts. Tallinn. \* Valk, Aune (2000): Võrokeste identiteedist (Identity of Võros). Kadri Koreinik, Jan Rahman (toim.) A kiilt rahvas kynõlõs.. Võrokeste keelest, kommetest, identiteedist (pp. 39-56). Võro Instituut'. Võro. \* Iva, Sulev; Pajusalu, Karl (2004): The Võro Language: Historical Development and Present Situation. – Valodas politika un sociolingvistiskie jautājumi I. Language Policy and Sociolinguistics I. Regional Languages in the New Europe. Ilga Šuplinska (ed). Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference 20–23 May 2004. Rēzekne, 58–63. \* Koreinik, Kadri; Pajusalu, Karl (2007): Language naming practices and linguistic identity in South-Eastern Estonia. – Language and Identity in the Finno-Ugric World. Proceedings of the Fourth International Symposium at the University of Groningen, May 17–19, 2006. R. Blokland and C. Hasselblatt (eds). (Studia Fenno-Ugrica Groningana 4). Maastricht: Shaker. \* Pajusalu, Karl (2003): Estonian Dialects. – Estonian Language (Mati Ereht ed.), Linguistica Uralica, Supplementary Series / Volume 1, Tallinn. \* Salminen, Tapani (2003): Uralic Languages: <http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/fu.html>. \* Sutrop, Urmas (2000): "The Estonian Language": [http://www.estonica.org/eng/lugu.html?menyy\\_id=61&kateg=38&alam=44&leht=3](http://www.estonica.org/eng/lugu.html?menyy_id=61&kateg=38&alam=44&leht=3).

## The change proposal process

A request to change the code set goes through a six-step process:

1. A user of ISO 639-3 proposes a change and submits it to the ISO 639-3 Registration Authority (ISO 639-3/RA) using this form.
2. The ISO 639-3 registrar processes the change request to verify that the request is compatible with the criteria set forth in the standard and to ensure that the submitter has supplied all necessary information. This may involve rounds of interaction with the submitter.
3. When the change request proposal is complete in its documentation (including all associated New Code Requests), the change request is promoted to “Proposed Change” status and the ISO 639-3 registrar posts the request on the official web site of the ISO 639-3/RA. Also at this time, an announcement is sent to anyone requesting notification of new proposals matching their specified criteria (region and/or language family of interest). Periodically, a message may be sent to the general LINGUIST discussion list on Linguist List (<http://linguistlist.org/issues/index.html>), and other appropriate discussion lists, inviting individuals to review and comment on pending proposals. Anyone may request from the ISO 639-3 registrar to receive notification regarding proposals involving languages in a specific region of the world or specific language family.
4. Individuals may send comments to the ISO 639-3 registrar for compilation. The consensus of early reviews may result in promotion to “Candidate Status” (with or without amendment), or withdrawal of the change request, if the conclusion is that the request is not in keeping with the stated criteria of the ISO 639-3 standard.
5. Three months prior to the end of the annual cycle of review and update, a new notice is posted on the official web site of the ISO 639-3/RA, and an announcement listing the Candidate Status Change Requests is posted to the LINGUIST discussion list and other discussion lists, as requested by their owners. All change requests are then open to further review and comment by any interested party for a period of three months. A Change Request received after the start of Candidacy phase must wait until the next annual cycle for consideration. The purpose of this phase is to ensure that a minimum of three months is allotted for the review of every proposal.
6. At the end of the formal review period, a given Change Request may be: 1) adopted as a whole; 2) adopted in part (specific changes implicit in the whole Change Request may be adopted separately); 3) rejected as a whole; or 4) amended and resubmitted for the next review cycle. All change requests remain permanently archived at the official web site of the ISO 639-3/RA.

### Please return this form to:

ISO 639-3 Registrar  
SIL International, Office of Language Information Systems  
7500 West Camp Wisdom Road  
Dallas, Texas 75236 USA  
ISO 639-3/RA web site: <http://www.sil.org/iso639-3/>  
E-mail: [iso639-3@sil.org](mailto:iso639-3@sil.org)

An email attachment of this completed form is preferred.

### Sources of documentation for ISO 639-3 identifiers:

Gordon, Raymond G., Jr. (ed.), 2005. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Fifteenth edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com/>.

Linguist List. Ancient and Extinct Languages. <http://linguistlist.org/forms/langs/GetListOfAncientLgs.html>

Linguist List. Constructed Languages. <http://linguistlist.org/forms/langs/GetListOfConstructedLgs.html>