

ABOUT CIFU XIV 2025

The *Congressus Internationalis Fenno-Ugristarum* (CIFU) is the biggest international academic event in Finno-Ugric Studies. In addition to Finno-Ugric (or Uralic) linguistics, it also focuses on other academic fields that study Finno-Ugric languages, cultures, and peoples, as e.g. folklore, folk religion, history, archaeology, and genetics. The 14th CIFU was held in Tartu from August 18–23, 2025 (see <https://cifu14.ut.ee/>). The last time the congress had taken place in Estonia was 25 years earlier, in 2000, when the President of Estonia, Lennart Meri, acted as the patron of the congress and the total number of participants exceeded 600. CIFU XIII, which was originally scheduled for August 2020, had to be postponed twice due to the COVID-19 pandemic and eventually took place at the University of Vienna in August 2022.

Preparations for CIFU XIV began as early as in May 2023, when we announced the call for symposium topic proposals. By the end of October of the same year, 20 symposium proposals had been submitted, of which 19 were accepted. In addition, one round-table proposal was received. The symposia were organized in several thematic sections, one was called *Discipline-related approaches*, with three symposia – “Power imbalance and hierarchies in Finno-Ugric studies” by Svetlana Edygarova, Maria Fedina, and Maria Vyatchina, “Shifting and competing ideologies in minority language development and language maintenance” by Outi Tánčzos, Svetlana Edygarova, and Ulriikka Puura –, and the Round-table “Finno-Ugric Studies meeting the People: how to convey information about our discipline?” by Johanna Laakso. The biggest section was *Linguistics* with 12 symposia: “Prehistoric lexical layers in Saami and Finnic” by Santeri Junttila, Ante Aikio, Juha Kuokkala, and Markus Juutinen, “Perspectives on Saami with a particular focus on the smaller languages” by Hanna Danbolt Ajer and Minerva Piha, “South Estonian within and beyond Uralic studies” by Tobias Weber, “The Size of Uralic Nominals” by Irina Burukina, Bar-

bara Egedi, and Ekaterina Georgieva, “Verbalization of motion events in Uralic” by Jeremy Bradley, Nikolett F. Gulyás, and Johannes Hirvonen, “Grammatical Subjects and Objects in Uralic” by Katrin Hiietam, Heete Sahkai, and Anne Tamm, “Clause combining in Uralic languages: functional and interactional perspectives” by Larisa Leisiö and Ritva Laury, “Epistemic categories in Uralic and beyond: evidentiality, intersubjectivity, epistemic authority and engagement” by Nikolett F. Gulyás, Rebeka Kubitsch, and Sándor Szeverényi, “Discourse particles in the Uralic languages”, by Iuliia Zubova, Denys Teptiuk, Elena Markus, Triin Todesk, Marili Tomingas, and Eda-Riin Tuuling, “Marginal Phonemes” by László Fejes and Jack Rueter, “Prosody of Uralic languages” by Pärtel Lippus, Eva Liina Asu, and Katalin Mády, and “Building diachronic corpora for minority languages – facing methodological challenges” by Ksenia Shagal, Daria Zhornik, Trond Trosterud, Timofey Arkhangelskiy, Alexandre Arkhipov, and Jeremy Bradley). The Section *Ethnology, Religion, and Folklore* counted four symposia: “Reappraising Public Representations of Finno-Ugric Identities” by Karina Lukin, “The Possibilities of Studying Finno-Ugric Religions in a Changing World” by Art Leete and Laur Vallikivi, “The Winter in Finno-Ugric cultures” by Natalia Ermakov, Nikolay Kuznetsov, and Sergey Troitski, as well as “Traditional Creation and Modern Experience in Folk Music Revival” by Janika Oras and Taive Särg. The Section *History, Prehistory, and Archaeology* consisted of the interdisciplinary symposium “Transdisciplinary approach in the studies of the human past” by Kristiina Tambets, Lehti Saag, Alena Kushniarevich, Mari Tõrv, Valter Lang, and Mari Väina. Unfortunately, no symposium proposals on Finno-Ugric literature or art were submitted this time. We hope that future congresses will once again see more symposia also on Finno-Ugric literature and art.

A year later, in May 2024, we also announced the general call of abstracts for the general session, the poster session,

and the symposia. In the general session, presenters could choose the language they want to present in, whereas the languages of presentations in the symposia depended on the policy set by the organizers. For instance, the organizers of the Sámi languages symposium requested that presentations would be in one of the Sámi languages.

By the end of October 2024, a total of 245 abstracts had been submitted, the majority of which were accepted. Acceptance notifications were sent out in December 2025, and registration for CIFU XIV was opened through an online form in February 2025. As Finno-Ugric researchers from Russia were unable to participate on site due to visa restrictions resulting from Russia's aggression against Ukraine, we also offered the option of hybrid participation via the ZoomEvents platform. In the hybrid format, it was possible both to deliver one's presentation via Zoom and to follow all other presentations online.

On-site registration for the congress opened on the evening of August 17th, the day before the official opening. In total, we counted 272 congress participants on-site, and a further 52 participants online, bringing the total number of congress participants to 324, which has not decreased significantly since the previous congress. Participants came from across Europe as well as from other parts of the world: Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Ukraine, Norway, Sweden, England, Czechia, France, Italy, Portugal, Japan, Canada, the USA, Uzbekistan, Bangladesh, and Russia (online participation without affiliation). From Monday to Friday, the programme included a total of 224 presentations.

The congress was officially opened on August 18th in the auditorium of the University of Tartu Natural History Museum. Opening speeches were delivered by the Rector of the University of Tartu, Professor Toomas Asser, the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Arts, Professor Anti Selart, the Head of the Institute of Estonian and General Linguistics, Professor Liina Lindström, and the President of the 14th CIFU, Professor Gerson Klumpp. The opening was followed by the first plenary lecture, "Challenges of Standardizing a small Finnic Language (until the end of the 18th century):

The case of Estonian" by Kristiina Ross from the Institute of the Estonian Language, Tallinn. With this plenary talk the congress connected to the Estonian "Book year", celebrating 500 years of Estonian literacy. The first sessions started in the afternoon. In the evening, a round-table discussion entitled "Finno-Ugric Studies meeting the People: how to convey information about our discipline?" was held, with Johanna Laakso, Bogáta Timár, Lotta Jalava, Sándor Szeverényi, and Madis Arukask participating in the discussion.

In the general session, presentations were organized into sections according to topics. It was encouraging to see that the range of topics was quite diverse, including, for example: Worldview, Literature & Folklore, Morphology, Syntax, Multilingualism, Grammaticalization, Etymology, Semantics, Variation, Onomastics, Ethnography, and Language Technology.

Each day also featured a plenary lecture delivered by leading researchers in their field. Apart from already mentioned Kristiina Ross, Jussi Ylikoski from the University of Turku and the Sámi University of Applied Sciences in Guovdageaidnu elaborated "On contemporary research into Uralic grammar", Ágnes Lukács from the Budapest University of Technology and Economics on "The Construction of Hungarian Grammar: Insights from Language Acquisition Research", Eszter Ruttkay-Miklání from the Research Center for the Humanities, Budapest, introduced "The legacy of Éva Schmidt. A lifework on, to and for the Khanty", and Valts Ernštreits from the University of Latvia's Livonian Institute and the University of Tartu about "Building a Future for Livonian".

As part of the congress's accompanying programme, a number of additional events were held. Throughout the congress week, a book fair was open in the foyer of the building Jakobi 2, where various Finno-Ugric books and publications could be purchased. The exhibitors included the Finno-Ugric Society (*Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura*), the Estonian Literary Museum, the University of Tartu Press, the Seto Institute, and others. On August 20th, a book presentation evening was held, during which scholars were able to introduce their recently published works themselves. Of these we want to mention "First Language

Acquisition in Finno-Ugric Languages” by Minna Kirjavainen, Ágnes Lukács, and Virve Vihman (John Benjamins, 2025), which corresponded to the plenary lecture by Ágnes Lukács. For the rest see <https://cifu14.ut.ee/book-presentations/>.

Specifically for CIFU, a photo exhibition on Finno-Ugric peoples titled “A Century of Finno-Ugric Encounters” was opened in the stair gallery of the building Jakobi 2. The exhibition focused on Finno-Ugric fieldwork and researchers in their working environments. It included photographs of well-known Finno-Ugric scholars and researchers such as Paul Ariste, Lennart Meri, Ingrid Rüütel, Tiit-Rein Viitso, Riho Grünthal, and others. The exhibition also aimed to represent as many different Finno-Ugric peoples as possible; for example, one section was dedicated to the Kamas Klavdia Plotnikova’s visit to Tartu in 1970, during the CIFU III.

In addition to the scientific program, two formal receptions were held during the congress week: on the evening of August 19th in the White Hall of the University of Tartu Museum, and on the evening of August 21st in Estonian National Museum. The first reception was attended by the ambassadors of Hungary and Finland, Pál András and Vesa Vasara, along with representatives of the embassies. At the Estonian National Museum reception, the head of the Estonian National Museum, Laura Kipper, and the Deputy Mayor of Tartu, Reno Laidre welcomed the participants. The purpose of this reception was to introduce the Finno-Ugric societies active in Estonia to the foreign congress participants and thus showcase opportunities for researching their languages and cultures outside Russia, and to create stronger connections between researchers and consultants. The Finno-Ugric societies who were able to participate were the Tartu Ingrian-Finnish Association, the Komi Cultural Society, the Estonian Mordvin Society, the Tartu Udmurt Association “Yumshan Gur,” and the Seto Vanõmbidõ Kogo, including the newly elected *ülemsootska* of Setomaa, Jalmar Vabarna. The contacts established at the congress, along with the presentations, symposiums, round table, and discussions, are expected to continue bringing Finno-Ugric researchers to Estonia and Tartu to advance their research.

One of the most significant events of CIFU 14 was the symposium dedicated to South Estonian organized by Tobias Weber (Technical University of Liberec). As a result of the symposium, an official appeal to the Parliament, the government, and the public of the Republic of Estonia was written during the congress, aimed at recognizing the South Estonian language as an independent, indigenous regional language. The appeal received over 100 signatures during the congress week. The congress program concluded on Saturday, 23 August, with excursions in Tartu and Setomaa.

CIFU XIV was organized by the Institute of Estonian and General Linguistics at the University of Tartu. The core organizing team included Gerson Klumpp (President), Marili Tomingas (Secretary), Madis Arukask, Svetlana Karm, Nikolay Kuznetsov, Tiia Margus, Keit Mõisavald, Andrea Nagy, Miina Norvik, Karl Pajusalu, Helen Plado, Eva Saar, and Tuuli Tuisk, along with 30 wonderful volunteer students. It received support from Enterprise Estonia, the Programme of Kindred Peoples, the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Tartu, the Hungarian Embassy in Estonia, and from the City of Tartu. We thank all colleagues, helpers and participants for making the congress week functioning so well.

The following CIFU XV will take place in 2030 at the Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Budapest. We wish president András Bereczki and the organizers all the best for their preparations.

Tartu, in May 2026

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