

# The First Three Years of the Compatriots Programme's Archival Competition (2007-2009)

Andero Adamson, Jüri Viikberg and Jaak Viller

Estonian Ministry of Education and Research

The main aim of the Compatriots Programme (2004-2008 and 2009-2013) was and is to support the activities of émigré Estonians. In 2007, a special archival competition was launched for projects aiming at collecting, preserving and making available the cultural and historical heritage of the Estonian diaspora. The projects are evaluated by a special expert committee. The presentation introduces the principles and rules of the competition, analyses project proposals submitted to the competition, and tries to evaluate its usefulness.

## Background and prerequisites

**1. The programme.** The development of the Compatriots Programme during the years 2001-2003 and its launch in 2004 was the first step of the journey. Estonia had then gone from being a country in need of foreign aid to become a country lending a helping hand to others, primarily Estonians abroad. The initial name of the programme in 2001 was “The Programme for Aiding Estonians Living in the Territory of the Former Soviet Union” (*Endise NSV Liidu territooriumil elavate eestlaste abistamise programm*) with the focus on those in the east and the south.

**2. Funding.** The programme, which dealt with questions relating to education, culture, church parishes, visas, citizenship, repatriation and many other issues, was started without a budget or development plan and initially only functioned within the area of education through the funding of the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research. The situation changed after a few years, when the programme became financed through the national budget in 2004.

**3. Need.** Over the years it became clear that it was pointless to make distinctions between the diaspora in the East and that in the West. Collections of historical and cultural value to Estonia can be found in many countries in the East as well as in the West. The archival competition aimed to create an Estonian initiative to salvage and preserve such archival materials in the host countries or to bring them (back) to Estonia.

**4. Competence.** Here, the continual cooperation of Estonian professional archivists should be emphasised. When the archival competition was launched in 2007, a working group for Estonian émigré archives with representatives from Estonian memory and academic institutions had already been formed.

**5. Arrangements.** As a final note, the readiness of the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research to take on the arrangements – meaning all of the contracts, monetary transfers, reports and related work in connection with the archival competition – should be mentioned.

### **The archival commission**

The Compatriots Programme's archival commission was formed in January and February of 2007. The hope was that by forming such a commission, we would have an impartial group of experts representing the institutions and areas within the field. At the end of negotiations, the commission was made up of: Ms **Tiiu Kravtsev** (the National Archives of Estonia), Mr **Aadu Must** (the University of Tartu), Ms **Piret Noorhani** (the Estonian Literary Museum), Ms **Riina Reinvelt** (the Estonian National Museum), Mr **Jüri Valge** and Mr **Jaak Viller** (the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research), Ms **Anne Valmas** (the Academic Library of Tallinn University) and Mr **Jüri Viikberg** (Tallinn University and the Institute of the Estonian Language).

Mr **Priit Raudkivi** (the Tallinn University Institute of History) and Mr **Märt Väljataga** (from the journal *Vikerkaar*) were summoned as independent experts. Mr **Andero Adamson** (the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research) assumed the role of secretary for the commission.

### **The first archival competition (2007)**

In 2007, the board of the Compatriots Programme announced an archival competition for projects focused on collecting, arranging, preserving and making available the cultural and historical heritage of the Estonian diaspora. It was deemed necessary to focus on:

- the creation and development of archival networks
- the gathering and spread of information in the Estonian communities
- the arrangement of archival conferences, seminars and information days

- advising the communities on practical archival work
- the improvement of the conditions for technology and information technology in the Estonian émigré archives
- academic research, travel and research scholarships for postgraduate students and scholars

We did not have to wait long for a response. By the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2007, The Estonian Ministry of Education and Research had received 31 applications from both Estonia and abroad for a sum close to 7 million EEK. The archival commission had 4.8 million EEK at its disposal, which meant that there was less money to be distributed. The commission had to rank the applications and make the planned activities conform within the budget.

### **Applicants and themes**

The competition mainly received applications from institutions connected with the collection and preservation of émigré materials (such as the National Archives of Estonia, the Estonian National Museum, the Institute of the Estonian Language, the University of Tartu and Tallinn University). Noticable were the professional archivists' thoroughly planned and well justified applications. Applications were received for archiving, researching and making available the archival heritage of Estonian émigré scholars and émigré printed matter, for researching the cultural history of the Estonian diaspora, for collecting lore materials and repressed Estonians' materials, and for creating web pages and developing information portals on the web for the émigré archives.

Some institutions also produced several applications which complemented each other (such as four archival studies projects for the Baltic diasporas from the Karl Ristikivi Society or three applications focused on Russia from the Department of History at the University of Tartu). It was noticable that support money was applied for primarily in order to preserve, arrange and make available émigré Estonian archival materials located in Estonia. From abroad, applications were received from Russia and Australia.

### **The commission's rules of procedure and the application process**

Priorities: When looking through the applications, the commission proceeded from the priorities at hand. The commission decided to first and foremost fund activities which had not

previously been done, or had not been satisfactory completed. The commission also wanted to avoid double funding of projects already supported from elsewhere. More precisely, the decision was made not to spend support money on unspecified so-called mapping trips and acquaintance expeditions, respectively.

- Several rounds and sessions. Since there was also a number of applications for smaller grants, the commission decided to divide the given sums into two rounds – the first as a closed tender of 4.4 million EEK and an open tender of 0.4 million EEK. 17 applications qualified for the first round. 15 of those were declared wholly compliant. Two were partially approved. The commission decided not to grant money to cover expenses for the purchase of equipment or technology.
- The wheat and the chaff. The 14 applications remaining in the second session concerned either concrete research, archival projects, digitising of language samples, publications, seminars and similar. The commission decided not to fund publications which were purely of a photo album-kind. The commission sifted out 2 indefinite applications and thereafter 3 which did not directly comply with the aim of the competition. 4 applications were completely approved and 4 partially; 3 applications were deemed in need of further information, whereafter they were partially approved.
- Supplementary competition. Since part of the money remained undistributed, a supplementary competition was announced. 8 applications were received, of which 5 received (partial) support in May (for instance the applications for the arranging of archival fonds at The Estonian Archives in Sweden and The New York Estonian House.

## **Results**

The commission worked dutifully and held 3 sessions. 3.59 million EEK was put into the closed tender (instead of the planned 4.40 million EEK ), and of the 1.2 million EEK left for the applications in the other round it was considered expedient to distribute 673 900 EEK. A supplementary competition was also launched. Out of the 39 applications received, 33 projects were supported. The decisions of the commission were then approved by the Compatriots Programme's council.

## The following competitions

After the first competition was held, in 2008 and 2009 it continued in the same vein, but in a more skilled manner. It was not necessary to hold three sessions, and no supplementary competitions were arranged. The 2008 competition received 53 applications for a total of 4.3 million EEK. 4.25 million EEK was distributed from the budget of the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research for 31 projects.

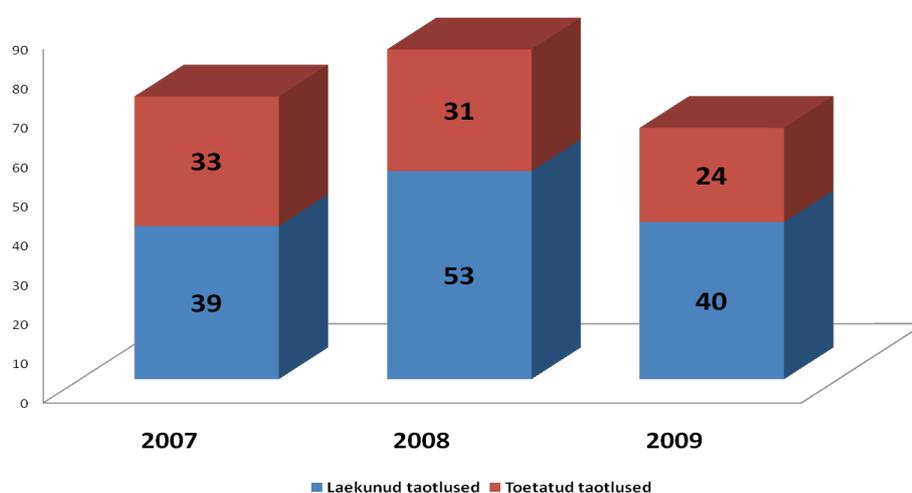


Chart: Applications received marked blue, applications supported in red.

40 project applications were received in 2009. The discussion meeting found it necessary to support 24 of these applications. 3.3 million EEK was distributed to these. Four projects which did not directly correspond to the aims of the archival competition, but which were still considered important by the commission (such as a film about the Estonians of Paris) were directed to the council of the Compatriots Programme for resolution. The 2009 competition took place during the economic recession and under conditions of strict economising and the disposable sum was almost a third smaller (1.5 million EEK) than in 2007.

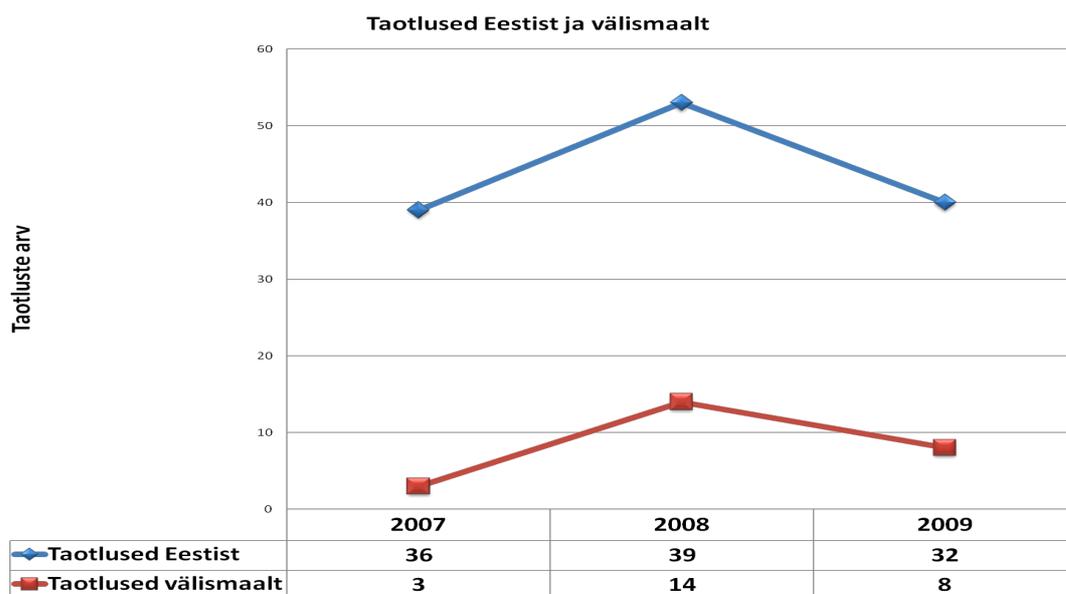


Chart: Applications from Estonia and abroad. Applications from Estonia marked blue, applications from abroad red.

### **Changes in the commission staff**

In 2008, some changes took place in the commission staff. The Estonian World Council representative to the Estonian government Mr. Aho Rebas, the adviser at the Estonian Ministry of Culture Ms. Meeli Veskus, as well as the State Archivist Mr. Priit Pirsko joined the commission. Ms. Tiiu Kravtsev (the National Archives), Ms. Riina Reinvelt (the Estonian National Museum) and Mr. Jüri Valge (the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research) made room for them.

### **The staff on the archival commission 2008-2009:**

- 1) Mr. Aadu Must, the university of Tartu, Professor of archival science
- 2) Ms Piret Noorhani, the Estonian National Museum, project manager
- 3) Mr Priit Pirsko, the National Archives of Estonia, State Archivist
- 4) Mr Priit Raudkivi, the Tallinn University Institute of History, Senior Research Fellow
- 5) Mr Aho Rebas, the Office of the Minister of Population and Ethnic Affairs, compatriots specialist

- 6) Ms Anne Valmas, the Academic Library of Tallinn University, researcher
- 7) Ms Meeli Veskus, the Estonian Ministry of Culture, adviser
- 8) Mr Jüri Viikberg, Tallinn University, Professor of Estonian language
- 9) Mr Jaak Viller, the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, head of the Language Department
- 10) Mr Märt Väljataga, the journal *Vikerkaar*, editor in chief

### **Recurring and new themes**

It could certainly be claimed that the archival competition comes across both recurring and new themes. Questions related to the collecting of cultural and historical material are always in the air. These questions might be direct rescue missions (copying or scanning from brittle information bearers such as magnetic tape or acidic paper), but might also come to encompass legal or purely practical parts (for instance, the question of whether to bring original records or copies to Estonia, or to make them digitally available in their countries of residence).

The arrangement and increased availability of several archival collections will be on the agenda for some time. In connection with this, the technical aspect becomes even more critical – the digitising and development of virtual possibilities, which is directly related to a renewable theme.

The exchange of knowledge could definitely be categorised in the new topics: teaching archival arrangement to the voluntary workers in the Estonian émigré archives and supervising them on site (be it in Saint Petersburg, Toronto, or elsewhere).

## Toetatud projektide teostamise koht

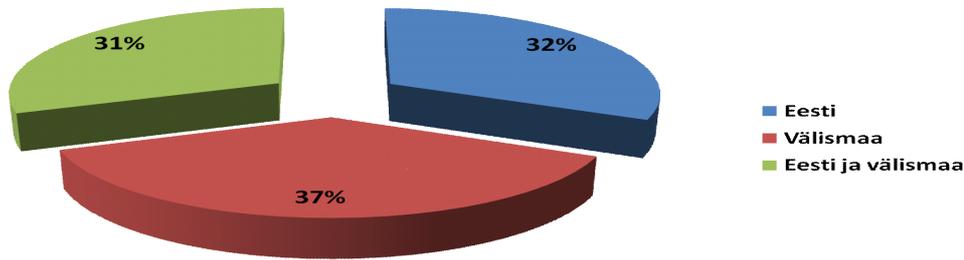


Chart: Locations of projects supported. Estonia is marked blue, abroad red, Estonia and abroad green.

Apart from within Estonia, applications were also received from abroad, for example from Sweden, Australia, Canada, Germany, Russia, the Czech Republic and Lithuania. The projects have so far been carried out in three more or less equal parts – in Estonia, abroad, and Estonia and abroad..

### The results so far

88 projects have been approved, and within these much work has been carried out. The work involving collecting archival information related to the historical archives and libraries in the Russian Federation has been successful. Archives of Estonian émigré artists, scholars and cultural figures have been arranged in Estonia. Émigré archives in Germany, Sweden and the USA have also been arranged. Language recordings have been digitised, a web portal for émigré archives has been created and the culture and history of Estonian communities has been researched. The Baltic Heritage Network portal for gathering information about émigré Baltic cultural heritage ([www.balther.net](http://www.balther.net)) was launched with support from the archival competition. Support has even been given to some book and film projects. 11.95 mil EEK has been purposely spent (see chart).

Year	2007	2008	2009
number of applications/ <b>number of applications supported</b>	39 / <b>33</b>	53 / <b>31</b>	40 / <b>24</b>
support sum	4.4 mil. EEK	4.25 mil.EEK	3.3 mil. EEK

### Experiences and conclusions

- The first archival competition was the most Estonia-centered as far as the applications were concerned. When information about the competition spread, more applications came in from abroad.
- Some applications were not declared compliant because they were either too vague or too discursive, some in the manner of pleasure trips. The archival commission would be pleased to see future applications put forward with as concrete a plan as possible along with a realistic budget.
- The commission has seen the availability of archival material for researchers as the top priority, which also yields one of the decisive factors – that the activities should be archivistically competent. In some cases, applications were put aside because no connection to an archivistically correct and continuing process could be seen within them.
- The archival competition will apparently be held in the coming years as well, but it will likely be in a more limited form. Since the Minister of Population and Ethnic Affairs and her office are no longer active after May 21<sup>st</sup> 2009 , the main responsibility will be taken over by the Ministry for Education and Research.
- The competition can be entered by legal persons. The CV of the applicant, a short description of the project, a budget and two recommendations should also be enclosed. The application form can be found on the web page of the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research (<http://www.hm.ee/index.php?045145>).

*...and last, but not least:*

The archival competition is one of the visible actions actively tended to by the Estonian World Council, the Council of the Compatriots Programme, the Baltic Heritage Network along with other institutions. Cooperation also takes place on Estonian language days among émigré Estonians in order to network, exchange information and arrange conferences or seminars in Estonia.