The Foreign Ministers of Latvia and Estonia present the Languages Award to Lembit Vaba

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On 4 September 2021, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, Edgars Rinkēvičs, as part of his working visit to Estonia, had a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, Eva-Maria Liimets. The Ministers presented the annual Languages Award bestowed by the Foreign Ministries of Latvia and Estonia. This year, the Languages Award went to the Estonian linguist, Lembit Vaba.

I am pleased to note, Foreign Minister Rinkēvičs said, that this year’s award holder, Lembit Vaba, is one of the Estonian linguists best known in Latvia. He is one of the most outstanding contemporary researchers in contacts between the Baltic and the Baltic-Finnic languages, the only one in fact, who has studied on a broader scale the impacts of Latvian on the Estonian language. The Minister noted that this year’s laureate, beyond doubt, fully deserved the award for his lifetime contribution to research into and advancing of contacts between the Estonian and Latvian languages, as well as for promoting the Latvian language and culture in Estonia.

The Latvian Foreign Minister drew attention to amendments made this year to the Regulations of the Latvian and Estonian Language Promotion Award expanding the scope of candidates. Nominees for the Languages Award can be language teachers, higher education institution faculty members, and researchers, as well as journalists and organisers of language learning projects. Translations of literature or research papers, studies and language-related projects, including journalistic programmes, articles or broadcasts on language promotion, can also be nominated.

Background information:

Lembit Vaba is an Estonian linguist who has devoted a good part of his professional life to exploring the interaction and translation
of borrowings between Estonian and Latvian resulting into two extensive research studies. Lembit Vaba has also highlighted the theoretical issues of langue contacts: the phonetic, morphological and semantic adaptation of borrowings from Latvian into Estonian, pointing to the correspondence of sounds and regularities of change.

Lembit Vaba’s book, “Sõna sisse minek” (Insight into Word), addressing linguistic contacts between Finnic and Baltic languages, the Estonian and Latvian languages in particular, was published in 2015. In 2019, Lembit Vaba was awarded the Cross of Recognition of the Republic of Latvia.