

Estonian Higher Education Accreditation Centre

# **Evaluation of Research in Social Anthropology, Ethnology and Cultural Studies in Estonia**

## **Institutes evaluated**

**University of Tartu  
Estonian National Museum  
Estonian Literary Museum  
Tallinn Pedagogical University  
Institute for International and Social Studies (TPU)  
Institute of History**

**Evaluation dates**  
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## **Expert team**

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## **Introductory Remarks**

The evaluation team was invited to Estonia by the Estonian Higher Education Accreditation Centre (EHEAC) for the period 12-17.3.2002. According to the assignment, the team was given the task to evaluate anthropology, ethnology and cultural studies at a total of five institutes in Tartu and Tallinn. The evaluation was carried out through an examination of reports prepared by each of the institutes and on-site visits to the institutes where interviews of the research staff, postgraduate students, students and other staff were conducted. On the basis of the self-evaluation reports the expert team was able to identify publications and other materials which were provided for inspection at request by the institutes. Thus the team was able to gather information about the staff, resources, publications, ongoing research projects and other activities of the institutes.

During the on-site visits the experts discussed projects separately with different categories of the staff and representatives of different research teams. In this way the team was able to assess the volume of activities in relation to the available infrastructure and external funding.

## **The Expert Team's Approach to the Estonian Situation**

The evaluators were asked to evaluate the quality of the work of the active research staff of the institutions and to rate each unit according to comparative international standards. Research work done to satisfy the needs of culture and society is, according to the instructions, included in the activities to be evaluated. This assignment excludes the application of any mechanical measuring methods to assess the international quality of research and requires a careful consideration of the local context and circumstances. Research in social sciences and humanities is always molded by the social context to a far greater degree than in the natural sciences. The institutional frames for research are extremely variable and considerable effort was required by the team to sort out the peculiarities of the Estonian structure. The expert team attempted to take into account these peculiarities in their work as much as possible.

Most of the research done in the institutes evaluated has a national basis. Estonian culture, cultural history, ethnology and folklore are of prime importance for local cultural identity and a sense of history. This national basis has not prevented the team from assessing the international quality of the research output. Some previous familiarity with Estonian research and the comparative perspective represented by some members of the team enabled the team to look at the quality of research, taking into account both the national significance and international standards.

## **General Problems and Recommendations**

Estonian research and higher education has undergone dramatic changes in its social environment and funding structure in a short time. The dismantling of the old Academy of Sciences and the integration of former research institutes with university departments was an attempt to integrate basic research and teaching in more effective way. In the areas under evaluation by the team this complete integration has not taken place. A partial reason is the fact that some of the institutions are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and some are under the Ministry of Education. This is understandable on the basis of the multiple functions of institutes like the Literary Museum or the National Museum. Their funding basis has to be wider than that of pure research and teaching

institutes because of their general social and cultural importance. The classification of disciplines in different categories at university level and at the level of national funding agencies obviously creates some problems. From the point of view of the present evaluation, some important institutions were not included despite their organic connection to the field of research under evaluation. Thus, for example, according to the expert team, the Folklore Department at Tartu University should have been included with the evaluation of the Literary Museum, similar to the way the Chair of Ethnology was evaluated along with the National Museum.

The measuring methods of the funding agencies seem to be too much output-oriented, forcing the research staff to excessive publishing. Publishing practices in the humanities and social sciences differ from those in natural sciences to such a degree that a uniform assessment method is untenable. In research areas with a national basis the local significance of the work demands publications of more general interest in addition to scholarly works intended for professional audiences. The present system of accountability and funding seems to force the researchers to publish in great numbers, which in the long run is detrimental for the quality. The preparation of a monograph size publication for an international audience is a major task, taking years of work. In several instances the team found substance for more significant works than that which the researchers could actually accomplish because of these constraints. To attract more international attention to the important work done in the institutes evaluated, more long-term possibilities for intensive work should be made possible by the funding agencies.

Long-term possibilities are made even more important by the social changes Estonia has gone through recently. The rapidity of changes has created ruptures and discontinuities at several levels, with possible negative consequences. On the intellectual level, the discontinuities can be seen in desperate attempts to westernise or to modernise research approaches in some of the institutions evaluated. This can lead to the denial of existing traditions of research and thus to a disregard for accrued skills and capabilities. The strengths of earlier traditions form a solid foundation on which to build and develop new research without the necessity to begin to follow completely different traditions that have to be learned from scratch. This danger is obvious immediately in the assignment of the expert team. Despite the task to evaluate social anthropology, the team was unable to locate either a teaching institute with a solid programme in anthropology or an institute that is devoted to anthropological research. Ethnology and folklore, including ethnomusicology, were well represented instead.

As general recommendations, the team stresses the following important points:

1. In developing the structure of research and higher education the multiple functions of institutions like the National Museum and the Literary Museum have to be taken into account.
2. The categorisation of disciplines for funding purposes should be made on a logical basis at different levels of the institutional structure.
3. Funding for research in the disciplines evaluated has to guarantee the possibility for long term work on publications for an international audience. This would increase the visibility of Estonian research in the international scientific community.
4. In developing teaching and research programmes, existing areas of expertise have to be taken into account. Under foreseeable economic conditions the establishment of new areas of research has to be carefully considered. It takes a long time before new areas of research can reach a level of innovative capability. Building on existing foundations is a much more economical way to develop training and research communities.

## **The Estonian Literary Museum (ELM)**

### **Institutional Structure**

According to the material distributed to the evaluators, the ELM is a national research institution, founded in 1909. It is directly under the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Estonia. It consists of five departments: the Archival Library, the Estonian Folklore Archives, the Estonian Cultural History Archives, the Department of Folklore and the Department of Ethnomusicology. Each of the departments has its own specific tasks. There are very good possibilities for every department to develop their own methods of accomplishing their tasks without obvious central restrictions. The departments have the liberty needed to realise their own plans according to their aims. Despite this, co-operation between the different parts of the museum seems to be very efficient. At least the discussions during our visit were creative, positive and extremely encouraging.

External cooperation within Estonia is with, above all, the Folklore department at the University of Tartu and the National Museum of Estonia. It seems that the department sends most of its students to the Museum to get experience in practical folklore work, which certainly is of great use for both parties; the students realise what working conditions are like and the museum gains more staff. The young researchers are trained in an excellent way.

It was less clear in what way institutional cooperation was conducted with other corresponding university departments, such as the Departments of Literature and Cultural History. On the other hand it is also very important to be able to decide where to limit oneself in general cooperation, otherwise the resources will not suffice nor will the profile of the Museum be maintained in depth.

### **Tasks**

The objectives of the ELM are “to collect, preserve, study and display the national cultural heritage of Estonia“. All of them are fulfilled very well.

### **Research Activities**

Every department has its own research tasks. The **Archival Library** is the national library of Estonia and collects everything printed in Estonian in the country including *Estonica extranea*. There are several special collections, too, such as those of periodicals, maps and pamphlets. This institution is important as a monument of the history of Estonian thought and civilisation, it has its counterpart in most European countries and fulfills its task as a complete collection of Estonian literature and scholarly work. The bibliographical services should be mentioned separately, being of central value to individual scholars and an important interface with other libraries in and outside Estonia.

The **Estonian Folklore Archives** has a corresponding role to play regarding oral tradition. Regularly, oral tradition is collected and everyday Estonian oral culture is documented. The collection consists of manuscripts, sound and video recordings and photographs. The archive has a lot of joint research projects with corresponding archives in the Balto-Finno-Ugric region and Estonian groups abroad. This archives is a precondition for research on Estonian and/or Finno-Ugric mentalities and values about life and society, which, in turn, is a precondition for developing a structure for culture and society. The use of electronic equipment is extremely well developed and integrated in everyday work. The research is concentrated on digital archiving and several classical folklore topics.

The **Estonian Cultural History Archives** is an important source for the study of Estonian history. Manuscripts from any author, be he famous or not, photos, sounds, films and pieces of art are documents of Estonian culture that are stored for future research on Estonian cultural history, so rich in influences from several important directions in European history. This department publishes scholarly annotated editions of the writings of learned Estonians, a task which the universities are probably not able to fulfil because the demand for a great quantity of publications at rapid speed is the ground for economic support. Together with the two above-mentioned departments of the ELM, this archive provides a solid foundation for knowledge and understanding of “Estonian-ness“ and Estonian identity.

The **Department of Folklore** has specialised in four fields of research: the folk-beliefs of Estonian and Finno-Ugric people, paremiology, Estonian and Balto-Ugric narratives and multimedia. In an excellent way this department combines the obligation to preserve classical traditions of folklore research with the possibilities made available by modern technology. Everybody seems to be able to make use of the computer in a most efficient way, not to mention the perspective of studying the Internet itself as a valuable source for folklore and a means of creating folkloristically important research material. The outcome of this department is innovative and influential not only in Estonia but also in the international scholarly community.

The **Department of Ethnomusicology** is a good complement to the Department of Folklore for documenting and collecting folk tradition. Here, too, the perspective is a general Finno-Ugric one. The digitisation of old tape recordings should be especially mentioned as well as the production of CD-roms containing folk music.

Generally speaking, the goal to collect, preserve, study and display the national cultural heritage of Estonia is taken care of in a very good manner. The collecting is systematically conducted and the collections are adequately preserved. The ELM wants to be regarded as a scholarly institution with a profile as a research center. The people working there have the opportunity to produce scholarly texts themselves, and, moreover, they have an ideology of serving the public with information when needed. This combination of tasks is excellent because it keeps the scholars aware of what the public needs and in this way they avoid becoming obsolete in their scholarly work. The list of international collaborators is impressive. The paremiological research is outstanding regarding the fact that paremiological studies are extremely scarce in folklore studies nowadays. Thus, it is all the more important that the study of this classical genre be “modernised“ at the ELM. The display of archival treasures corresponds to contemporary needs. The printed matter is elegant and of highest international quality, the exhibition that the evaluators saw was meant for school children and, therefore, adjusted to their expectations, the electronic output is top standard, even internationally. This Museum seems to have concentrated on quality – and it has succeeded. No doubt, the quality of research at the ELM is **excellent**.

### **Resources**

The human capital consists of the staff and postgraduate and postdoctoral students. A good staff is creative, which means that there is no end to the tasks they might do. Certainly, in this case the employees are given the opportunity to develop their own ideas. However, there should be a limit to how much a human being has to work in order to realise his ideas. It seems that there are more ideas at the ELM than there is staff. In the long run, it is worthwhile keeping an eye on the personnel in order to avoid dangerous cases of burn-out. This goes also for the leaders of the ELM. They should be given the opportunity to do research, their knowledge and strength should not be used for fund raising only. Concerning staff, the evaluators recommend arrangements for more employees.

The material resources consist of the technical equipment, the library and the building. The technical equipment is of the highest international standard, but it constantly needs to be maintained. Here the sound studio should be mentioned separately, because it still needs some basic equipment to digitize tapes. The library seems to be good enough, but must also be kept up to date with general development. The building is a symbol of Estonian culture and must be given enough permanent resources to avoid decline and to construct modern, adequate rooms for exhibitions and public performances. Children have special needs to be taken into consideration. Concerning material resources, the evaluators recommend arrangements for permanent and regular financing.

### **Issues to Address**

Without doubt, the ELM is an impressive organisation. It is important for the identity of all Estonian people, not to mention all scholars within the humanities. As a model it is also important for corresponding institutions abroad. It is administered in an extremely professional way, the whole staff is well informed about ongoing projects, they are loyal, and the perspectives and problems for the future are well focused and articulated. The technical equipment is of a very high standard. The Museum has now reached the level where it should be given resources on a permanent, regular and predictable basis.

There arose some doubt whether it is clever or not to include material from the entire Finno-Ugric region. On the one hand it might be too grand a project, on the other hand, there seems to be a feeling of overall responsibility, especially for the culture of other Baltic countries. This problem should be given further consideration.

### **Overall Capability**

The originality and novelty of past and ongoing research activities is excellent. There is a clear strategy for future research undertakings and the perspective is well defined. Thanks to the good co-operation within the ELM and to very good national and international connections, the Museum shows great understanding for multidisciplinary and demonstrates how its fields of research are relevant to others. The staff has the highest possible competence and, moreover, has not rejected the development of new research methods, either theoretically or technically. Still, they have the time and interest to educate quite a lot of postgraduate and postdoctoral students, who in this way gain excellent supervision in working with folklore and cultural history data. National and international co-operation is very good and the list of grants given to the Museum to date is impressive reading.

Therefore, the overall capability of the ELM is **excellent**. The integration of young people, the integration of modern technological equipment, and the deeply felt responsibility towards the Estonian people to document, preserve, study and display all kinds of cultural expressions are particular strengths which must be upheld.

## **Estonian National Museum (ENM)**

### **Institutional Structure**

The academic and administrative personnel consist of a full time director (PhD Jannus Plaat), a full time research director (MA Terje Anepaio), a full time research secretary (Toivo Sikka, no academic degree), a full time senior researcher (Anu Järs, no academic degree) and eight full time researchers (one PhD, one MA and the others without academic degrees), one half time researcher (MA) and four research curators (without academic degrees), which makes 15 and a half altogether. What is confusing here, however, is that the full time director is also working at the Chair of

Ethnology in the University of Tartu as a half time lecturer. In that way the equation does not work in principle. The age structure of the personnel is quite young; three are over 50 and eight are below 40 years. The number and qualifications of the staff of a museum must be different from a purely research institution. Running a museum requires staff with professional skills different from academic qualifications, which partly explains the number of staff without formal academic research training. However, the Chair of Ethnology should be developed to better serve the training of the museum staff as well. The improved training would enable them to use their human resources in full. Despite this, what is most significant is that the motivation of the whole staff was extremely high.

### **Tasks**

As a national museum, this institution has utmost national significance: it is "the memory of the nation". This is emphasized by the recent rapid and radical changes in Estonian society and because of restrictions on ethnographic research during the decades of Soviet occupation of Estonia. Thus the museum has to follow the recent rapid changes in society and at the same time document the living conditions of people during the occupation time before it is too late. The museum staff has the qualifications for this. The museum researchers were able to do fieldwork among the Finno-Ugric nations living in Russia even during the Soviet era. Thus they were able to continue an internationally significant project of research on Finno-Ugric people, which had been dominated by Finns before the October Revolution, and later could be done only in a restricted degree by the Finno-Ugric peoples themselves. As a result, the museum now has magnificent collections on this topic. This fieldwork tradition should be continued, and the staff has the qualifications for this. What is not the task of the museum, contrary to, for instance, the corresponding Finnish museum, is to act as a legal authority on the national antiquities or as a supervisor of provincial or local museums.

### **Research Activities**

The results of the museum research can be seen in its archives, collections, exhibition activities, and in its publications. During the site visit, the evaluators had a limited opportunity to get acquainted with the archives and collections, but the ethnological expert on the team is familiar with these. According to this experience, both are extensive and of high quality. The team was impressed by the quantity of the publications. The themes in the publications are essential considering the tasks of the museum. Considering the quality, it is rated as **excellent to good** according to the evaluation scale we had been given. The rating is the result of multiple factors. First, the audience for museum publications consists of a wider lay audience in addition to a scholarly community. Second, the funding system which emphasizes output prevents the very young staff from allocating enough resources to long term publication projects. These are things worth rethinking in the museum activities.

### **Resources**

Like many other museums on the same level in other countries, ENM has a shortage of resources. The museum office building is big but the offices of the researchers are small, and rooms designed for one person are usually occupied by two or three. The technical equipment seems satisfactory although partly outdated. Part of the collection is in the main building but other parts are scattered around the town in storage. A planned new museum building will hopefully enable the museum to concentrate its collections for exhibition and research purposes in one location.

### **Recommendations**

The overall picture of the ENM was most positive. The staff is enthusiastic and working with high motivation. In spite of material shortages the spirit of the staff is positive and mutually cooperative,

the team works as a team even in its overoccupied small rooms. The conditions promise to become better in the new museum in the future, and the staff no doubt is aware of that. The gender balance of the staff is ideal, but there is a serious imbalance in the age structure; the majority is quite young. In connection with the hard work it is doing – not only in the museum but elsewhere as the local practise seems to be - this may cause problems of burnout in the future, and also problems of recruiting and educating new staff members when all will be pensioned practically at the same time. The present working load and multiple tasks of the staff might prevent them from fully developing their potential. Salaries are shockingly low which might prevent new people from being recruited in the future.

Considering some shortages of technical equipment, cooperation with Estonian Literary Museum would be helpful, because it seems to be quite well equipped technically. This would benefit both parties because technology is very quickly outdated and thus cooperation would be economically rational. Cooperation in handling the photographic and film collections should be easily arranged. The main problem of the the National Museum lies in the insufficient educational possibilities for the staff. There should be more opportunities for exchanges so that new recruits could work in the museum while staff members could have time off for research and writing. It would be better to concentrate on fewer publications of higher quality and broader popularity and additional time would allow the staff to achieve this.

### **Overall Capability**

On the basis of the criteria to evaluate the overall capability, the team has decided to grade the Estonian National Museum as **good**.

## **The Chair of Ethnology, University of Tartu**

### **Institutional Structure**

The Chair of Ethnology belongs to the Faculty of Humanities and the Department of History, but acts in the university as an independent discipline in close cooperation with the Estonian National Museum. The personnel consists of one full time professor (Elle Vunder, PhD), one full time researcher (Art Leete, PhD), two half time lecturers (Janus Plaat, PhD and Ene Koresaar, MA), two half time researchers (Ene Koresaar, MA and Indrek Jääts, MA), one half time assistant (Liivo Niglas, MA) and one full time administrative coordinator of studies. The total number of staff is thus eight, part of them working half time, so the total man hours correspond to five and a half full time staff. The PhD level half time lecturer (Jaanus Plaat) is also working as full time director of the Estonian National Museum. The MA level half time researcher in the Chair (Indrek Jääts) also works as a half time researcher in the museum. Cooperation with the university Chair and the museum is quite positive but one cannot work in two places at the same time without danger of work overload. The age structure excluding the professor (born 1939) is quite young, two staff members are born in the 1960s and five in the 1970s. This demographic gap might cause problems for the continuity of the scholarly community as a whole. The gender structure is balanced and the academic education level of the staff is ideal. The motivation of the staff is extremely high and the team was impressed by their energy and enthusiasm.

### **Tasks**

A Chair of any discipline in a university has two main tasks, teaching and research. In the field of ethnology the emphasis on teaching means educating new generations of academic researchers and museum workers. Considering the situation in Estonia there are some special tasks as a result of the Soviet era. In 1939 ethnology became established as an academic discipline in Estonia: the three

first doctoral dissertations had just been accepted and the professorship was founded in the University of Tartu. The positive development was disrupted by the war. During the Soviet era a MA level docent was teaching ethnology in the university. The discipline was not independent but just a specialization of history. There was no research work because, according to the Soviet system, all ethnological research was practised in the Estonian Academy of Sciences in Tallinn. So, as a matter of fact the Academy was responsible for the higher education of Estonian researchers and museum workers, and not the university. In Tallinn there still exists the Department of Ethnology within the Institute of History; this is what remains of the former institute in the Academy. It will be evaluated as a unit later in this report.

From the beginning of the 1940s to the mid 1990s there was no ethnology in the university as an independent discipline and no ethnological research. In this sense the Chair of Ethnology had to start from nothing in 1995 to build an educational university institute according to the western European model. However the ethnologists occupying the Chair had received their academic education in the Academy in Tallinn, and in this way the old traditions of Estonian ethnology had more or less survived through the hard conditions during the Soviet era. As a result of the neglect, both the museum and the Chair had to be restored and reestablished on a proper level. The research activities had to be theoretically updated and brought up to present high western standards. At the same time the gaps in the ethnological body of knowledge regarding topics which could not be studied had to be filled. The work is still going on along these two lines.

### **Research**

The results of research in a scholarly discipline can be seen in its publications. The panel has seen these and was quite amazed at the quantity of the scholarly output. We consider the topics as important and essential considering the task mentioned above. In disciplines with a national basis most of the publications are not in international forums. However, their quality can still be put on a par with similar studies in other countries. The most important publications have received wide international interest. On this basis, we estimate the research to be **excellent to good**, according to the evaluation scale we were given. The staff is young, is working very hard with minimal resources and the demands are hard. So there are things to rethink in the research and publication activities.

### **Teaching**

What was said about research concerns also teaching. The load of any individual in the staff of the Chair is enormous compared to any international standards. After the institutional changes in the educational system, the Chair is alone responsible for educating staff for the museums for the whole country, in addition to the education of ethnologists from basic level to postgraduate studies because there is no output from the Tallinn department any more. All of this is expected with absolutely minimal resources. Undergraduate and postgraduate training need a proper department with its own student enrollment in order to ensure a solid scientific basis for both professionals and researchers at all levels.

### **Resources**

The panel was shocked that there is no proper university department for the training of ethnologists in Estonia. The resources of the chair are below all standards. First, there is just one tiny room with two desks, which means that most of the work has to be done outside the university (usually at home). Second, the staff is too small considering the load of work it has to carry. Third, the salaries are too low, which forces some members of the staff to work outside the university. There are also other shortages, but these are less important compared with these.

## **Criticism**

In spite of all mentioned above, the overall picture of the Chair of Ethnology is most positive. The staff is working with the highest possible motivation on problems most essential considering its tasks. The cooperation with the students is good and the relation with them is warm. The age structure of the staff is however problematic. The huge gap between the professor and the rest of the staff might cause problems in the future. Establishing a proper university department would eliminate the dangers caused by the unnatural age structure to the reproduction of a scholarly community. There is also the danger of burnout when the staff gets older under present working conditions.

## **Recommendations**

First of all the expert team recommends the establishment of a full university department for Ethnology with capabilities for both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching. With a proper infrastructure, cooperation between the department and the Estonian National Museum would offer the possibility for the development of more varied research projects. To overcome the problems caused by the age structure, the possibility of using guest teachers from abroad should be considered. According to international practises at the present the language will be no problem. The University of Tartu has to offer some teaching in English in the future for foreign and also Estonian students. This will be inevitable after joining the EU, and the sooner this begins the better – and this concerns also the so called national sciences like ethnology.

Regarding the publications, it looks like the Chair is publishing too much. The situation is the same as with teaching: when the quantity is too high then the quality might suffer. Therefore it would be better to concentrate on fewer publications with a higher level of quality, both for a national and international audience. Publications in English should be increased, but carefully measuring the texts which are interesting to the international scholarly community. This concerns both theoretical and also popular publishing. For instance, a shorter version of “Eesti Rahvakultuur“ (ed. by Ants Viires and Elle Vunder) would be suitable to translate. Also some doctoral theses should be published in English, which would make it possible to use foreign opponents and thus help to keep up the international level of the discipline.

## **Overall Capability**

On the basis of the criteria to evaluate the overall capability, the team has decided to grade the Chair of Ethnology as **good**.

## **Department of Ethnology, Institute of History**

### **Institutional Structure**

At the moment the personnel of the department consist of only two MA researchers, Aivar Jürgenson (1996) and Igor Tõnurist (2001), but the former is expected to defend his doctoral thesis during the present year. This is, indeed absolutely necessary because any research institute needs to have a Ph.D. as its head. At the moment one of the two researchers is teaching in the Tallinn Pedagogical University as his main occupation. The department has played a remarkable role in the history of Estonian ethnology. During the Soviet era it belonged to the Estonian Academy of Sciences, which was responsible for all research and postgraduate education in the country. According to the Soviet system, postgraduate teaching did not belong to the tasks of universities, which only gave the basic education. Thus, Estonian ethnology at Tartu University and in the Estonian National Museum derives from the work of this department. During the past decades the prime motivator and intellectual leader in the department was Ph.D. Ants Viires, the most

distinguished ethnologist in Estonia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He is still working and publishing actively in the department despite retirement. At the present both the researchers working at the department are male; one of them has been born in the 1960s and the other in the 1940s.

### **Tasks**

The task of the department is research. According to the interviews done by the evaluation panel the department would be pleased to recruit young researchers on a MA level to work and get extended education to complement their professional skills. There is a queue of possible candidates willing to enter but the department cannot afford to recruit them. For the staff of the department the possibilities to give education in its field of expertise would be necessary and beneficial for the development of the research institute and for the society at large.

### **Research Activities**

The results of research of the department can be seen in its publications. Close cooperation with the other Estonian ethnologists in the Chair of Ethnology and the Estonian National Museum, and the fact that many of their staff have until recently worked at the Tallinn department (for instance PhD Elle Vunder, professor of ethnology at the University of Tartu and MA Terje Anepaio, the research director in the Estonian National Museum), makes it impossible to separate the publications of the department from those of the museum and the university. So even if the department is right now living temporarily (hopefully) in a condition of interregnum, the panel's evaluation of the level of published research results is **excellent to good**. The most important book in the field of Estonian ethnology within the last five years, "Eesti rahvakultuur" (1998, ed. by Ants Viires and Elle Vunder) was published by the department. It should however be noted that the department cannot continue as it is now for very long; it either will die or it has to be strengthened.

### **Resources**

The resources of the department are minimal even for such a small unit, but it is not necessary to go into details here.

### **Criticism**

Since the end of the Soviet style Academy of Sciences, the Institute of History and its Department of Ethnology have been linked straight to the Ministry of Education while many other Institutes of the former Academy have been assimilated into the Tallinn Pedagogical University. Thus the status of the above mentioned Institute and department is a curiosity in the Estonian academic community. As a small unit its position is too weak to compete for resources when there is no "big brother" to guard its interests. The results of the situation can be seen above.

### **Recommendations**

From a national point of view it would be fatal to let the department die. In a small country centralization might be dangerous. If there were only the Chair (or Department) of Ethnology at the University of Tartu, it would mean centralization of the whole discipline in one place. In the history of Finnish ethnology we know the consequences of such a situation: Ilmari Manninen had to move in the 1920s to Estonia after failing to get the Chair of Ethnology at the University of Helsinki, the only chair of the discipline in our country at the time. On the one hand this was lucky for Estonian ethnology but it meant a brain drain from the Finnish point of view and narrowed ethnology's perspective in Finland. In the future it would be good to have some counterweight for the ethnologists of Tartu to ensure the possibilities for innovative research. If the Tallinn Department of Ethnology is not to die, it must be strengthened. Some teaching would be beneficial for the staff: teaching and research always support each other. Extended studies in ethnology are necessary to develop the staff in the fields of local administration, cultural administration and tourism. Also

belonging to some bigger unit would strengthen the position of the department in the competition for resources. So why not, for instance, join the department (and even the Institute) to the Tallinn Pedagogical University?

### **Overall Capability**

On the basis of the criteria to evaluate the overall capability, the team has decided to grade the Department of Ethnology as **satisfactory**.

## **Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies of Tallinn Pedagogical University and Institute for International and Social Studies**

### **Institutional Structure**

The Center for Cultural Studies (Director: Aili Aareleid-Tart) is located between two institutions. It is a structural unit of the Tallinn Pedagogical University Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Sociology, and a sub-unit of the research institute, the Institute for International and Social Studies.

The staff currently includes three permanent full-time members (2 Ph.D, 1 MA) and the Coordinator of studies in Russian culture (Ph.D). Another MA staff member has recently joined the group. The center is funded through state target funding and grants from various institutions and foundations, such as the Estonian Science Foundation. The cultural studies team has adequate working space in both the university and the Institute for International and Social Studies.

The Center is an example of how a research unit can be integrated into a university department for the benefit of both sides. The research unit can employ students in projects related to the study of contemporary culture in Estonia and thus link the Department of Sociology to ongoing research. At the same time, the staff of the research unit (in particular the director, who has a permanent half time position as assistant professor) can offer courses for the Department of Sociology. These courses provide a qualitative dimension and some knowledge of other cultures for the sociology curriculum.

At the Institute for International and Social Studies, the work of the research team is central to the Institute's focus on contemporary problems in Estonian society. The Institute prides itself as being a leading social sciences research institution in Estonia, with an emphasis on research with practical implications. Within this framework, the cultural studies sub-unit focuses on applied issues, such as how to build new mechanisms for coherence in Estonian society. This is important research because it addresses problems central to the transitional nature of present day Estonian society.

### **Research Activities**

The main topics of research, as defined by the center are: (a) theoretical problems of biographical method; (b) national identities in Estonia; (c) Estonian culture as semiosphere; (d) cultural voluntary activities; and (e) theories of culture. The amount of publications is quite large, although the exact numbers were hard to determine because they are listed several times according to language and according to co-authors. The staff also publish in Estonian newspapers and popular publications as part of their applied interest in contemporary problems in Estonia.

The staff read and write in several languages, the most obvious being Estonian, Russian and English, as part of their effort to participate in international research discussions. This is admirable although it creates the necessity for funding for language checking and in that way adds to the burden of funding the program.

The amount of publications is high, but this is at a cost to quality. In the publications reviewed by the team, there were, for example, indications of a theoretical argument in the title which were not adequately discussed in the article itself. The work in semiotics, admirably based on the work of Lotman, does not seem to be in dialogue with other research using a similar paradigm. The team had the impression that the need to publish constantly because of funding leads to a situation where there is little time to adequately develop theoretical ideas. There are constant overviews, without the necessary depth. The team did not see any publications from the Estonian home project, which sounded quite interesting. The quality of the research is therefore rated as **satisfactory**, that is, the majority of the submitted works are at a fair international level.

### **Issues to Address**

The strength of the cultural studies unit is their commitment to research about contemporary social and cultural problems in Estonian society. While they are not, and should not be, a training institution, they work actively to encourage other researchers and they have been in contact with European researchers, for example, to discuss and share their research.

The institute, however, has had a problem with its own self-identity. The research team felt that the name “anthropology” (sometimes called cultural, sometimes social) is an inappropriate designation, based on international definitions of anthropology. Because of its links with sociology, in theoretical orientation, in methods, in institutional affiliation and in the audience addressed in the publications, it seems that this research unit can properly call itself “cultural studies”. The team recommends this qualification. The strength of the research unit is that it can, and does, supply a qualitative dimension to the sociology curriculum and at the same time works on applied issues in Estonian society. This seems to be an appropriate working relationship.

The topics of research should be focused clearly on contemporary culture, with an effort to distinguish cultural studies research (within sociology) from ethnological research in Estonia. For example, while there is nation-wide interest in the topic of Estonian identity, the cultural studies unit has been able to study elites, thus adding the problem of class to that of ethnicity in the formation of identity. This is important so that resources can be used efficiently, without duplication of projects, in the various academic areas.

### **Overall Capability**

Using the measuring standards provided us, the overall capability rating is **Satisfactory**. The continuity of the center depends on the training of new researchers in some department at the university. This is appropriate because cultural studies does not give disciplinary training.

## **Final Remarks about the Institutes Evaluated**

The institutes evaluated were extremely different in size, functions and resources. They varied from important national institutions with multiple research and cultural tasks (the National Museum, the Literary Museum) to research oriented small groups without clear institutional status. Accordingly, the overall capabilities of the institutes varied enormously. This might reflect the above-mentioned incongruence of the classification of different units at different levels of the institutional hierarchy. Some common features could be observed, however. Leaving out the infrastructure required by the museum and archival tasks, the research activities of the institutes require mostly human capital. Annual expenses per researcher are very low in all fields of research in Estonia. As a consequence the active research staff is forced to straddle between multiple tasks or several jobs in order to survive. The number of half-time employees was also high. In areas of research, where human capital is the main expenditure, more attention should be paid to ensure proper working conditions for the staff. The amazing enthusiasm and devotion of the active research staff in all the institutes is at the moment a really important driving force behind the research. If that spirit can be maintained, especially among the younger personnel, the possibilities for future development are promising.

General recommendations of the expert team:

1. In order to ensure the future and overall capability special attention has to be paid to the education and training of researchers in selected disciplines.
2. In order to create benchmark norms for international standards, external examiners should be used for doctoral dissertations whenever possible.
3. The system of non-tenured teaching staff at the universities should be reconsidered in order to guarantee proper working conditions for the senior staff.

The evaluated institutes are important for Estonian society because they secure national traditions and provide a solid foundation for Estonian identity. The institutes and their activities have the double function of research and serving as a major cultural institution in the country. We hope that the outsider's view we have provided to evaluate the standards and our recommendations for future development will be of help in planning Estonian research and higher education in the fields we represent. We thank all the institutes for their efforts in preparing the evaluation materials and for their hospitality and willingness to cooperate with us during our visit. We also thank the Estonian Higher Education Accreditation Center for their trust in our ability to do this important task.

Tallinn, 16.3.2002

Jukka Siikala (chairman)      Pekka Leimu      Ulrika Wolf-Knuts      Karen Armstrong