

DECISION OF THE 1ST CONGRESS OF THE VÕRO PEOPLE ON DECLARING THE VÕROS AS INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Adopted in the town of Võro, on 22 April, 2023

We, representatives who have convened from indigenous parishes of Vana-Võromaa (Harglõ, Kanepi, Karula, Põlva, Rõugõ, Rāpinä, Urvastõ, Vahtsõliina) declare that we are an Indigenous people of Vana-Võromaa and hence Estonia – the Võro people.

As citizens of the Republic of Estonia, we declare with this declaration the continuing right of the Võro people to self-determination, in line with the international law on the rights of Indigenous peoples.

Based on historical and contemporary international law and agreements, we declare:

1. We, the Võro people, are an Indigenous people in line with the following founding documents of international law on Indigenous peoples' rights:

(1) United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (13.09.2007);

(2) International Labour Organization's Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169 (27.07.1989);

(3) European Parliament resolution on the violation of the rights of indigenous peoples in the world, including land grabbing (03.07.2018)

2. As the Võro people, we state:

– We are an Indigenous people of the Republic of Estonia;

– We have lived here over two thousand years;

– We descend from the speakers of inland dialects of the Finnic proto-language, hence the Võro language is among the oldest Finnic languages;

– Our language, culture, living environment and way of life is endangered.

3. As the Võro people, we wish:

- To live by continuing the reasonable, traditional, environment-friendly way of life of the Võro people;
 - To remain who we are, to pass on to next generations a living Võro language and customs and to keep our land clean and livable.
4. As the Võro people, we demand the recognition and respect of the Indigenous people status of the Võro people by the Republic of Estonia and the local municipalities of Vana-Võromaa. Whereby we wish to be good and reliable partners for both the Republic of Estonia and the municipalities.
 5. The decision of the self-determination of the Võro people was made and confirmed by the Congress of Võro People, which was attended by representatives from all parishes of Vana-Võromaa. 126 representatives participated. 122 representatives voted in favour of the manifest, 1 opposed it and 3 abstained.
 6. The 1st Congress of the Võro People elected and authorised an eleven-member Council of Elders of the Congress of the Võro People, to represent itself going forward, including for talks with the Republic of Estonia to obtain official recognition as Indigenous people.
 7. The Council of Elders of the Congress of the Võro people will serve until the next Congress of the Võro People, which will be held in four years or, if needed, earlier.
 8. If some laws must be amended to recognise the self-determination of the Võro people, then this must be done.