



In the centre for the Sorbian language

WITAJ Language Centre – A department of the Domowina

Upper Lusatia/Saxony Edition

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„Witaj” rěka pola nas ...

“Witaj – Welcome” means
for us ...

... that we accompany all who speak **Sorbian** and all who wish to learn Sorbian as an **additional language**.

Being **multilingual** is a European educational objective and **our guiding principle**.

We combine language learning with a variety of experiences in the **bilingual Lusatia** region of Germany. Learners can experience the Sorbian language as a dynamic element of **their identity**. They decide for themselves which **opportunities** they **take**, whether they participate in the Sorbian culture, realise career objectives in the Sorbian and Slavic language context, or speak Sorbian in the family.

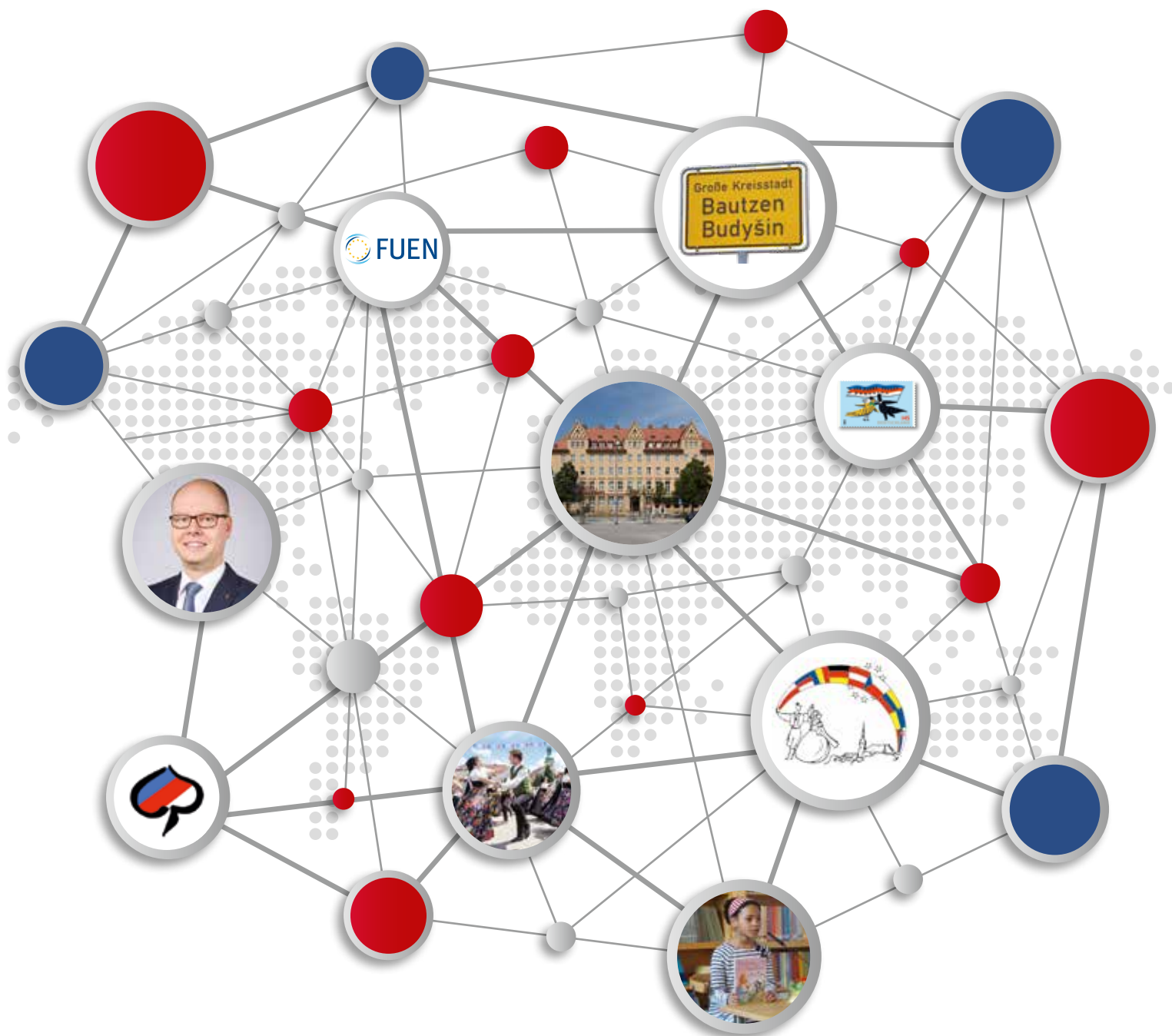
Despite living in places **outside of Lusatia**, some want to maintain their Sorbian mother tongue or learn Sorbian. We connect with them in the **digital world**, share experiences in the real world, and enjoy seeing them, whether they come to visit or **return home for good**.

Our guiding principle is fulfilled if you enjoy speaking the Sorbian language with us and others, you are willing to pass it on to children, you perceive it as a cultural treasure, and you simply **feel welcome with us**.

In this brochure, you will learn what our work for children, young people and adults is all about.

Dr Beate Brězan

Head of the WITAJ Language Centre



Domowina – hibićiwa kaž Łužica

Domowina – As lively as the Lusatia region

The Domowina – Union of Lusatian Sorbs is the umbrella organisation of the Sorbian associations in Upper and Lower Lusatia. It was founded in 1912. The Domowina is recognised by state authorities as the political representation of the Sorbs' interests – from the local to the European level. Moreover, the Domowina is a member of the Federal Union of European Nationalities.

Including all affiliated associations and individuals, the Domowina has around 7,300 members. It is committed to the preservation, promotion and spread of the language, culture and traditions of the Sorbian people in the German states of Saxony and Brandenburg. Since 2011 David Statnik has been its chairman.



Rěčny centrum WITAJ – fachowy wotrjad Domowiny

The WITAJ Language Centre – A department of the Domowina

A living language is an expression of a living culture. That is why we do our utmost to preserve the Sorbian language, to pass it on to the next generation, to promote it and to develop it further for the modern world.

With WITAJ – WELCOME, we welcome everyone in Upper and Lower Lusatia who wants to speak Sorbian. We, employees of the WITAJ Language Centre, reach out to the youngest children in the day-care centres, students in and outside school as well as adults with suitable offers. We develop Upper and Lower Sorbian/Wendish teaching materials, publish journals and accompany bilingual education based on academic findings. With our projects and youth work, we locally support young and old.

The WITAJ Language Centre was founded in 2001 as an independent department of the Domowina – Union of Lusatian Sorbs. It has its headquarters in Bautzen and Cottbus. The WITAJ Language Centre is supported by the Foundation for the Sorbian People, which receives funds from the Federal Republic of Germany, the Free State of Saxony and the State of Brandenburg.

In this brochure, we would like to present the work of our WITAJ Language Centre in Upper Lusatia more in detail. Our efforts in Lower Lusatia are described in an edition for Brandenburg.

Naši partnerjo

Our partners

We cooperate with other Sorbian institutions and maintain contacts with specialist agencies and political bodies. We work particularly closely with the following:

- Domowina Publishing House
- Sorbian Institute
- Institute for Sorbian Studies at the University of Leipzig
- German-Sorbian Folk Theatre in Bautzen
- Sorbian Museum
- Sorbian editorial offices of the newspaper “Serbske Nowiny” and the radio station “Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk”
- Regional organisations and associations of the Domowina
- Saxon State Ministry of Education
- Saxon State Ministry for Science, Culture and Tourism
- Saxon Education Agency Bautzen
- Saxon State Office for Early Neighbouring-Language Education
- Federal Union of European Nationalities



Five-year-old Milenka watches her two-month-old brother and asks her mother: “We don’t know yet what our Matej will speak first, Sorbian or German, you can’t understand what he is saying, right?”

Milenka comes from a Sorbian-speaking family. For her, it is natural to speak Sorbian. Her parents have decided to pass on the language to their children and to keep it alive within the family. Since Milenka started kindergarten, she has been with children who are learning Sorbian only there. Their parents are mostly not native speakers of Sorbian, but they would like their child to have a bilingual education.



Rěčna situacija serbšćiny

The Sorbian language situation

From the edge of the Lusatian hills to the new lake area near Hoyerswerda and the Spreewald, many people speak two languages. This is immediately recognisable from the town and street signs. Here, the Sorbian language characterises the region alongside German.

The linguistic situation of the Sorbs is as diverse and colourful as their culture. In Brandenburg, efforts are being made in day-care centres and schools to revitalise Lower Sorbian/Wendish, which is acutely threatened with extinction. At the same time, the authentic language of the older native speakers is being recorded in sound and writing for future generations.

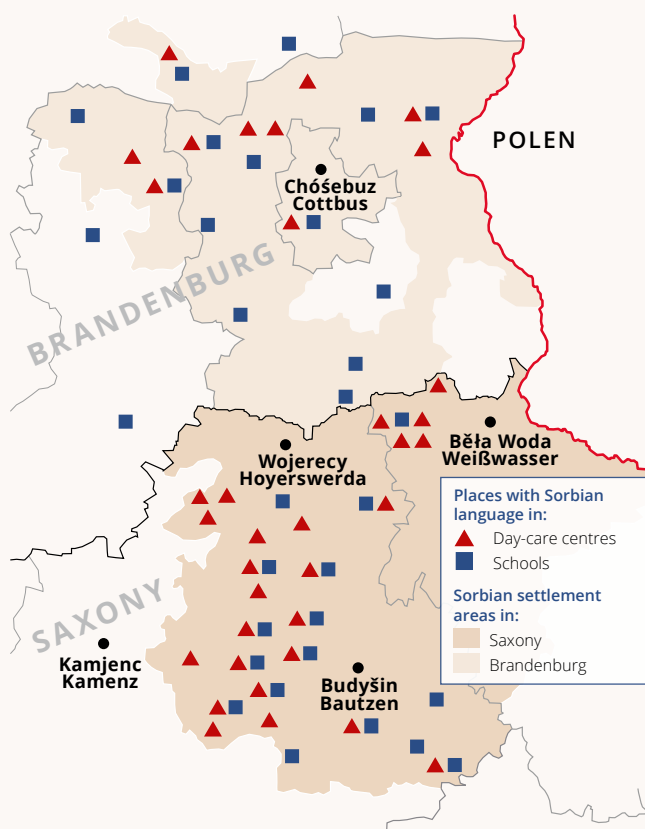
In the Upper Lusatia region of Saxony, the linguistic situation is split in two. In the northern and eastern part of the Sorbian settlement area, Sorbian has largely been forgotten. Efforts are being made to introduce

the younger generation to the language of their grandparents and great-grandparents, as well as to get the Germans interested in this small regional language. In the area between Bautzen, Kamenz and Hoyerswerda the situation is vastly different. In many places, the majority of inhabitants are able to speak two languages: Upper Sorbian and German. Here it is natural that young and old speak Sorbian both inside and outside the family.

This linguistic diversity is reflected in the educational realm. The respective circumstances require different educational concepts depending on the language (Upper Sorbian – Lower Sorbian/Wendish), state policy (Saxony – Brandenburg) and the intensity of language training. It is our task to meet those various requirements. Therefore, we provide offers for all age groups: from day-care centres, primary schools, secondary schools and grammar schools to adult education.

Přehlad pěstowarnjow a šulow

Overview of day-care centres and schools



Serbja džensa

The Sorbs today

According to official estimates, about 50,000 to 60,000 people consider themselves Sorbs. Of these, in Upper Lusatia, around 20,000 people speak Upper Sorbian and in Lower Lusatia, around 5,000 people speak Lower Sorbian/Wendish. A Sorbian educational path can be followed from day-care to university. In Saxony, around 1,200 children are being looked after in crèches and day-care centres and the number of students who take part in Sorbian classes in schools is around 2,700. In Brandenburg, around 200 children learn the Lower Sorbian/Wendish language in day-care centres and around 1,500 students in schools.

Sorbian institutions for the promotion of the Sorbian language and culture are located in Bautzen and Cottbus. The Sorbs are one of four recognized minorities in Germany.



“In kindergarten, I learn Sorbian. Now I can do something that my parents can’t do ... I like that!”



Witaj w dźěćacym dnjowym přebywanišću

Witaj – Welcome to the day-care centre

Everyone has probably heard this before: you should start learning (foreign) languages as early as possible. And the contact with the language should be intensive. This makes language acquisition much easier and more successful. The European Commission has already set a target: every child should learn two foreign languages – a world language and a regional language. In Saxony, this would be, for example, Upper Sorbian.

The conditions in Lusatia are ideal for acquiring Sorbian as a second language. For some, Sorbian is a deeply rooted language in the region, for others even a forgotten family language. You should pass on your roots to your children. Maybe your neighbours' or friends' children talk to each other in Sorbian. To be able to follow their conversations and be an active part of the culture, it is worth learning Sorbian. Moreover, learning this Slavic language is amazingly helpful for communication in neighbouring Poland and the Czech Republic.

Metoda imersije

The immersion method

... is the most natural way to acquire a second language. The method does not require any special talent. The educators always speak to the children in the language to be taught. They illustrate what they say with facial expressions and gestures. Whatever they do, they accompany as much as possible with language. The special advantage is that it all happens naturally every day. By doing so, the children can immerse themselves in the language, without pressure or excessive demands – similar to learning their mother tongue. The little ones decipher the meaning of the words and the language system all by themselves. They memorise and imitate its sound.

But the most important aspect is: in bilingual Upper Lusatia, children can learn Sorbian as early as in kindergarten, and in some cases even in the crèche – and they are looked after by native speakers, in a group with Sorbian children. Therefore, it is neither necessary to attend additional courses nor are there any organisational challenges for the parents. One method by which children in day-care centres learn Sorbian is considered by scholars worldwide to be the most effective: the immersion method.

Serbsce wuknyć po Witaj

Learning Sorbian after Witaj

The immersion method for Sorbian has been called "Witaj" (Welcome). In 1998, the Sorbian School Association founded the first Witaj group in its day-care centre in Cottbus-Sielow. More than 1,200 children in the crèche and kindergarten experience the Upper Sorbian language while playing, communicating or singing every day.

The children of the first Witaj groups have already left grammar school. For the Sorbs, they personify the hope that their language and culture will not disappear but will continue to develop and be alive and well for many generations to come.

Tip: You can find an overview of all day-care centres with Sorbian language education on our website

 www.witaj-sprachzentrum.de.

Naš přínos k Witaj

Our contribution to Witaj

Our WITAJ Language Centre does not itself have any day-care centres under its sponsorship, but we support Sorbian language education and training in such educational institutions in three different ways: with didactic materials, language services and scientific work. We also advise and support educational professionals and trainees.

Maskotka za małych

A mascot for the little ones

“Witko” is the mascot of the Witaj project. The perky tot with his red cap and striped shirt is every boy’s and girl’s best friend. Not much smaller than the children themselves, he asks curious questions, tells them something new and is always good for surprises. The special part about all this: the hand puppet can only speak Sorbian. And sometimes you can’t avoid speaking Sorbian with “Witko” because otherwise, he will not understand you.

Stawiznički, spěwy a eksperimenty

za małych wotkrywarjow

Stories, songs and experiments


for the little explorers

Our bilingual magazine “Lutki” is published quarterly. It is aimed at kindergarten children, their parents and educational professionals. The little ones are happy about stories and songs in Sorbian, colouring templates, craft ideas and instructions for experiments, all suitable for children. The adults, on the other hand, receive recommendations on how they can support their children in learning or how best to deal with bilingualism in the family. The insert of the “Lutki” magazine offers teachers suggestions on how to promote and teach Sorbian in everyday life at the kindergarten.

Rěč spěchowace materialije

Language support materials

Over the years we have developed tools especially for language teaching and promotion in Witaj groups. They are colourful, linguistically adapted to the needs of the children and their content is based on their experiences.

Tip: You can find our catalogue “Didaktisches Material zur Förderung der sorbischen Sprache für Vorschulkinder” (Didactic material for the promotion of the Sorbian language for preschool children”) on our website  www.witaj-sprachzentrum.de.



To dyrbjeli starši wědźeć

The parents need to know

Our task is to inform parents about the Witaj model. We do this in the form of lectures at parents' evenings. You can also read the brochure "Witaj – Ein Geschenk für Ihr Kind" (Witaj – A present for your child) and find out about the Witaj model by watching the film "Witaj – Zwei Sprachen können ist cool!" (Witaj – Knowing two languages is cool!).

Tip: You can also find the film on our website

🖥 www.witaj-sprachzentrum.de.

Po puću w pěstowarnjach

On the road in day-care centres

We directly support day-care centres in their language-pedagogical work. For example, we regularly visit selected Witaj groups to initiate language-supporting activities. With "Witko" and little surprises, we work with the children on a theme. The boys and girls are unlikely to be aware that this is targeted language training.

Dalekubłanja

Advanced training

Teaching a foreign language or working with bilingual children who are to be supported in a minority language requires special pedagogical skills. For this reason, we offer further training for kindergarten teachers. These range thematically from the methodology of language teaching and language promotion to quality management and offers on Sorbian culture and language.

The WITAJ Language Centre is also engaged in studies on bilingual or Sorbian language education and the education of children at the elementary level. (→ p. 28).





“Our students don’t speak Sorbian at home, nevertheless, it’s the language of everyday life at school. It’s amazing how quickly this is becoming the norm for our fifth graders. They integrate words like “dźakuju” (thank you) into their vocabulary. But the number 99 (dźewjećadźewjećdźesat) makes them twist their tongue. Sorbian must be spoken not only in our language classes but also in other classes and situations. The children are then more open to the language and Sorbian becomes second nature to them.”

“In my opinion, bilingual teaching has advantages as well as disadvantages. For example, there are many slip-ups, for instance when you want to say grandma (wowka) but accidentally say sheep (wowca) or bench (ławka). It’s not easy, but always hilarious. It’s a pity that Sorbian is only common in our region. But then again, you have a big advantage in understanding Czech.”

*“Sorbian is an amazing language ...
Just the grammar is not my cup of tea.”*



2plus – w šuli dwurěčnje hač k maturje

2plus – bilingual everyday school life until the Abitur

The basic idea is simple: the more intensive and lasting the contact with a language, the greater the ability to express oneself in that specific language. That is why it is especially important for the Witaj children to continue speaking Sorbian at school – and to learn to read and write it, too.

In or near places with Witaj groups in the day-care centre, there are also schools with Sorbian instruction – excellent conditions for a seamless transition and close cooperation between day-care centres and primary schools. In turn, these are good preconditions for a continuous Sorbian educational path up to secondary school

or grammar school. There are two different teaching models for Sorbian: the 2plus concept and traditional Sorbian foreign language teaching.

There are 16 schools with around 2,100 students in Saxony where the 2plus concept is used: nine primary schools, six secondary schools and the Sorbian Gymnasium (grammar school) in Bautzen. With the help of Sorbian instruction, all-day offers, projects and Sorbian as a colloquial language, the school becomes an authentic Sorbian language area for the students.

Konzept 2plus

The 2plus concept

In the core Sorbian settlement area, primary schools, secondary schools and grammar schools teach according to the 2plus concept: the “2” in the name stands for the two languages, German and Sorbian, and the “plus” is for other languages. Crucially, Upper Sorbian is not only taught as a language subject but it is also the language of everyday school life and the language of instruction in other subjects – at primary school in at least three subjects, at secondary school and grammar school in five subjects. Students from Sorbian families and students from German-speaking families are taught together in one class.

The schools follow the same curricula and educational objectives as all other public schools in Saxony. The degrees are identical. However, Sorbian students may write their examination papers in German or Sorbian in the tenth grade. Sorbian is also an official examination subject for the Abitur (grammar school diploma).

Serbšćina jako cuza rěč

Sorbian foreign language teaching

In areas where Sorbian has only a small presence, 13 primary schools with around 600 students as well as two grammar schools offer Sorbian as a foreign language. Upper Sorbian is taught in one lesson per week in the first grade and three lessons from the second grade onwards.

Naš přínos k serbskorěčnemu kubljanju na šulach

Our contribution to Sorbian language education in schools

A clear focus of the WITAJ Language Centre is the development of textbooks and various learning materials. In principle, it can be said that all Sorbian-language materials that students and teachers in Saxon schools take into their hands have been developed or edited in the WITAJ Language Centre. A total of about 20 more are added every year.

Wšitko za šulu w serbskej rěči

Everything for school in the Sorbian language

Textbooks, workbooks, dictionaries, digital learning software, posters or geographical maps – the range of teaching and learning materials produced in our department for the editing of Sorbian textbooks is colourful and extensive. Not only the range of materials is diverse, but also the demand at the schools: students from the first to the twelfth grade at primary, secondary and grammar schools are served for all subjects. In addition, various teaching materials are produced for 2plus classes, for Sorbian foreign language classes and for so-called Sorbian lateral entrants.

Working closely with the schools, we determine every year the demand for new teaching material. From this, we develop our plans, which we annually present to

a committee of experts for review. The committee includes consultants at schools and representatives of the Saxon State Ministry of Education, the Sorbian School Association and more institutions. Based on their recommendations, we produce about 20 different teaching materials in the Upper Sorbian language every year. It makes a difference to us whether a textbook has to be developed on our own – usually over a long period – or whether a licensed translation is possible.

Nowowuwica: wučbnicy, čitanki a džěłowe zešiwki za serbšćinu

Developing new materials: Sorbian textbooks, storybooks and workbooks

Our own production includes all materials for teaching Sorbian as well as other subjects where Sorbian topics are addressed, for example, history and music. Each product is designed by our editors in accordance with the curriculum. They initiate the preparation of a manuscript. For this, we depend on external authors: teachers, scholars and experts from the field. Often our staff are directly involved in the development process of the manuscript. They edit the texts and manage the collaboration with external illustrators, photographers and designers. The printing and distribution of our teaching materials are the responsibility of the Domowina Publishing House.



Přeložki: Wučbne srědky za biologiju, matematiku a geografiju

Translations: Teaching material for biology, mathematics and geography

For subjects taught in Sorbian, but not explicitly conveying Sorbian content, we rely on prestigious German textbooks recommended for Saxon schools by the Saxon State Ministry of Education. We place orders for licensed translations. These are mainly carried out by (former) teachers of those subjects or by translators. The completed manuscripts are proofread by us. All additional steps – typesetting, printing and distribution – are handled by the Domowina Publishing House.

Słowniki, digitalne poskitki a předmjet přesahowace wuknjenske srědky

Dictionaries, digital media and interdisciplinary teaching materials

For students taught in a second language, dictionaries are an indispensable tool. In demand are not only German-Sorbian dictionaries and the synonym dictionaries “Saperliška” and “Kak to jenož praju”, but also our vocabulary collections, which are now available for all school subjects. They are consulted by students, teachers and other users alike.

Modern education also requires new media. We respond to this need by offering teachers materials in digital form – often as a supplement to a textbook. For example, there are CDs with music examples, karaoke

templates, literary texts, task solutions, forms and templates for further editing.

Tip: We offer many materials free of charge on our website www.witaj-sprachzentrum.de.

An increasing range of interactive learning software enables students to playfully explore the Sorbian language. A larger project in this context is the online platform “Sorbisches DIGITAL – Rechtschreibung und Grammatik Schritt für Schritt lernen” (Sorbian DIGITAL – Learning spelling and grammar step by step) (→ p. 29).

Additionally, the WITAJ Language Centre develops numerous learning materials that cover all subjects and levels. These include homework booklets, funny stamps for performance evaluation, posters on Sorbian grammar and history, riddle blocks, documentation on professions and training opportunities in bilingual Upper Lusatia, the letter game “Pismikowa keklika” for young and old, and much more.



**Naš časopis za džeći: Płomjo –
ze zapalom za serbščinu**

**Our magazine for children: Płomjo –
All fired up about the Sorbian language**

Stories, comics and interesting information from all over the world, from nature and technology, plus songs, recipes, jokes, riddles and pictures to colour in – that is “Płomjo” (Flame), the magazine for Upper Sorbian students between seven and 14 years of age. It has been published since 1952.

Our editor researches, picks topics, writes the texts together with external authors and has them designed by a select group of illustrators, for each of the monthly editions. In doing so, great care is taken to ensure that beginners as well as older students are equally enthusiastic about reading the magazine. Current topics catch the children’s interest and allow for new experiences. At the same time, the texts follow an approach that accompanies the lessons. The young readers also regularly contribute their own holiday experiences, photos, drawings and stories, which are then published in “Płomjo”.

To create more Sorbian language spaces for the children, “Płomjo” also serves as a medium for activities. Competitions and events are organised for the students. In the “knight’s camp”, at the cooking course in the Sorbian restaurant in Bautzen, at the soapbox derby or at the sports competitions – the common fun, the exchange with other Sorbian-speaking children and exciting experiences should inspire the readers for the Sorbian language. Thanks to its multifaceted content, “Płomjo” is so popular and a collector’s item for many students.

Naš časopis za pedagogo: Serbska šula

Our magazine for educators: Serbska šula

“Serbska šula” (Sorbian school) has an even longer history – our quarterly journal has been in existence since 1948. Since 2001, its editorial office has been located in the WITAJ Language Centre in Bautzen. As teachers and other educators in Upper and Lower Lusatia belong to the readership, the journal contains articles in Upper Sorbian and Lower Sorbian/Wendish.

“Serbska šula” contains primarily academic and pedagogical articles about Sorbian education, the Sorbian language, history and culture. Also, presented are new teaching materials and other products valuable from a pedagogical point of view. Teachers can find specific templates to copy and use for their lessons. Furthermore, “Serbska šula” contains reviews of publications as well as reports on projects with kindergarten and school children or adolescents.



Naše zwonkašulske projekty – dyrdomdeje z řeču

Our extracurricular projects – Adventures with language

It is a concern of the heart for us to offer children interesting experiences with the Sorbian language also after school. Boys and girls from Sorbian families should be able to experience a wide range of entertainment in their mother tongue. At the same time, our projects offer opportunities for children who are learning Sorbian to experience the language in all its vibrancy outside school.

The Sorbian language is the primary concern of all our projects. Playing, reading, watching films – we would like to excite young as well as older children about the Sorbian language, encourage them to speak it and give them fun and joy in Sorbian.

Swójbna schadźowanka

An afternoon for families

When we, together with the Domowina district association “Michał Hórnik”, invite to the annual family afternoon, the multipurpose hall “Jednota” in Crostwitz is filled with good mood and cheerful hustle and bustle. Children from day-care to primary school age and their parents come from Bautzen, Hoyerswerda and all the places along the Klosterwasser stream.

Besides the cultural programme, there are all sorts of exciting activities for the children, such as language games, painted faces, sports and tests of strength, experiments or a dance workshop. While the parents can engage in conversations over coffee and cake or seek advice from experts, the Sorbian and Sorbian-learning children can test their language skills with computer and other games from the WITAJ Language Centre. The afternoon is completed by reading and relaxation activities as well as tips and recipes on healthy eating.

Filmowe premjery jako wosebity wjeršk

Film premieres as a special highlight

We roll out the red carpet for our visitors when we invite to the premiere of a Sorbian synchronised film (→ p.29). Then children, parents and grandparents come filled with expectations. What will be on the screen this time? They won't be sitting in soft seats like in the movie theatre, but carpet, popcorn, ice cream and drinks will create a real cinema atmosphere. Moreover, our guests can get to know the film protagonists personally. Not the real actors from the movie, but the children, young people and adults who lent their voices to the actors and put the Sorbian language into their mouths. So it really should be easy to get an autograph from one or the other of the approximately 20 participants. The highlight of the evening is and remains the film in the Sorbian language – a rare product and therefore a rare experience for everyone who understands the language.



Předčítanskí dzeń

Read-to-your-child day

Researchers say that children who are read to regularly have a greater vocabulary, improved grades and more enjoyment reading on their own. We would like to promote this – particularly if we can spread fun and spark children's interest in Sorbian literature. The WITAJ Language Centre uses the annual country-wide Read-to-your-child day to surprise the little ones in primary school. We visit them and read to them from our favourite Sorbian children's books. Careful and enthusiastic listeners are our wish, goal and gratification at the same time.

Čitanske wubědźowanje

Reading competition

A reading competition takes place every year in the bookshop "Smolerjec kniharnja" in Bautzen. With the slogan "Books are the ticket to the kingdom of fantasy", we call on third graders at 2plus schools to take part in our competition. There are two categories: one for the children who are native speakers and the other for the children who are not native speakers of Sorbian. First, everyone presents his or her book and then reads a self-selected text that they practised at home, to the jury and the audience. The children who are Sorbian

native speakers read yet another text previously unknown to them. Reading performance, reading style, expression and presentation are evaluated by five jurors. Finally, they select the best Sorbian-reading third grader in each category from the 20 participants.

The reading competition is organised with the support of Domowina Publishing House. We aim to give boys and girls (who have previously taken part in an internal school elimination competition) a podium for their good reading performance. We want to train them in public speaking, sharpen their appreciation of Sorbian literature and make them role models for their classmates.

Čitanska nóc

Reading night

Particularly popular are the reading nights at the "Burgtheater" in Bautzen. This is where third and fourth graders meet, bring their favourite Sorbian books with them and introduce them to each other. Since you are already in the theatre, there is always a small performance. And they can also give themselves a try as an actor in small scenes. After a visit to the puppet theatre and a night walk, the children snuggle up in their sleeping bags and read themselves to sleep under the torch.



Prózdniński camp

Summer camp

An exciting holiday week with peers – this is the WITAJ Language Centre's autumn offer to third and fourth graders from 2plus schools. From the many enrolments we receive each year, we choose equal numbers of students from Sorbian-speaking families as well as from mainly German-speaking families. In this way, Sorbian learners are given the opportunity to experience the Sorbian language from early morning until late at night every day and thus expand their language skills. Approximately 20 girls and boys get to know each other while having fun and playing games. Our staff and Sorbian education students accompany them on an exploration of the Sorbian Museum in Bautzen and behind the scenes of the German-Sorbian Folk Theatre, where they can act themselves. There is always something new to discover on the trail of the magician's apprentice "Krabat", in the swimming pool or in the planetarium. Back at the hostel, they do handicrafts, dance and laugh a lot.

Mjezynarodny folklorny festiwal

ŁUŽICA – LAUSITZ – LUSATIA

The International Folklore Festival

ŁUŽICA – LAUSITZ – LUSATIA

Every two years, the Domowina and its partners organise an international folklore festival in Crostwitz. The programme includes a children's event lasting several hours under the motto "W kraju wjesołych dźěći" (In the land of happy children). The WITAJ Language Centre organises and directs it. Whether it is a school choir, a children's club or a junior group of a Sorbian dance ensemble, whether from Crostwitz, Panschwitz-Kuckau, Räckelwitz, Ralbitz, Schmerlitz, Zeižig or from Lower Lusatia – up to 150 to 200 boys and girls spend weeks preparing for their performance at one of the large farmhouses. In front of an audience of several hundred, they perform dances, songs, instrumental pieces, excerpts from children's musicals or scenic plays. By participating actively, they can feel the enthusiasm and joy of life of the Sorbs at this international event.





“When the Sorbian girls post photos on Facebook and I add a comment in Sorbian, it goes down well. They don’t just say ‘ah, nice’, but they think it’s cool and text me about it.”





Džěło z młodostnymi Working with young people

The WITAJ Language Centre works with young people in two ways. First, our educators do so in the boarding school of the Sorbian Grammar School in Bautzen. Second, our social workers are involved in Sorbian schools and in mobile youth work.

... zo bychu so w internace kaž doma čuli

Feeling at home at the boarding school

Since the catchment area of the Sorbian Grammar School in Bautzen is unlimited due to its linguistic speciality, a boarding school was created when the grammar school was founded. This means that students from far away can also attend the school. In the attractive, modern residential building, the students are looked after by Sorbian-speaking educators. Here they live together and experience the Sorbian language as a colloquial language, too. Learners of Sorbian can use the language in daily life with native speakers of the same age and thereby perfect their linguistic skills. This happens while finishing homework, playing games, cooking, working out, handicrafting and so on. Often, lifelong friendships develop, with the Sorbian language and culture remaining a crucial element of their relationship.

Without a place in the boarding school, it would hardly be possible for Sorbian young people from outside of Bautzen to take advantage of the Sorbian institutions in the city. A few examples are evening rehearsals and performances of the Sorbian youth theatre, working in the youth editorial department of the Sorbian evening newspaper "Serbske Nowiny" or presenting the weekly youth radio program "Satkula" on MDR – Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk. Pursuing such interests and hobbies also opens up perspectives for future career choices. Help is always needed in Sorbian institutions.

The WITAJ Language Centre educators, in cooperation with partners, organise various leisure programmes. These include talks and readings, fostering Sorbian customs, visiting Sorbian theatre performances, vari-

ous handicraft and sports programmes, and much more. Another example is "Video Tea": once a month, students address ethical topics and current problems of young people. Together they watch thought-provoking films and discuss them – in Sorbian, of course.

Internat Serbskeho gymnazija Budyšin The boarding school of the Sorbian Grammar School in Bautzen

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The boarding school is open to students from the fifth to the twelfth grade of the Sorbian Grammar School in Bautzen. Two or three students each share a bedroom and a bathroom. Six such rooms, a living room and a small kitchen form a residential unit. The residents of the boarding school have access to a sports room, a computer room and other rooms for leisure activities as well as an attractive outdoor area.

Młodźinske socialne džěło – na šulach a mobilnje po puću

Youth social work – At schools and on the move

Children grow into adults. This time is not necessarily easy. Young people are facing problems and questions: Who am I? Who do I want to be? Where is my future? Where are my roots? What use is being Sorbian to me? What perspectives do I have living out here in the country? Do I take the Sorbian with me or do I leave it behind? Supporting young people in finding answers is the job of the social workers at the WITAJ Language Centre.

Socialne džěło na šulach

Social work in schools

In the Sorbian Middle Schools in Räckelwitz, Radibor and Wittichenau as well as in the Sorbian School- and Meeting Centre in Bautzen, we help young people to enhance their social skills and to develop a strong personality. When facing problems such as bad grades, fear of what to do after graduation, or trouble with friends, students turn to us. Then we give them ideas, show them different solutions and moderate between the conflicting parties. Our primary concern is for them to cope with their worries on their own. Therefore, we strengthen their abilities to solve issues and master difficulties. We train mediators and organise prevention sessions on topics such as alcohol, sexuality, violence or prejudice. We also offer activities that focus on entertainment and community building, such as project days on graffiti art, play and craft afternoons and field trips.

The social work team of the WITAJ Language Centre operates within the three regional teams of the child and youth welfare services of the district of Bautzen and is financed by the district. It is active in school social work, mobile youth work and family education.

Mobilne džěło z młodostnymi

Mobile youth work

On the road, we visit youth clubs and groups. We are also in contact with young people via social media. We support them when they want to put their ideas into practice, such as when a mayor needs to be convinced to provide a room for the youth club, when the necessary money is lacking for a new project or know-how is needed to establish a new club. If individuals are looking for advice and new perspectives, they can contact us. We offer advice on the spot, lend a hand, mediate, provide information, arrange for additional help and bring youth groups together.

Swójbne kubłanje

Family education

Once the young people have grown into adults and perhaps have started a family with children of their own, they are confronted with new, often unexpected challenges. At the WITAJ Language Centre, families find competent contact persons who advise, give help and connect them.

Naš wosebity poskitk: dwurěčnosť

Our unique selling point: Bilingualism

It's a huge advantage for us as social workers that we grew up bilingually, speaking both Sorbian and German. Thus, we can directly talk to the young people in their mother tongue and share each other's views on topics such as biculturality and bilingualism. We want to convey a Sorbian perspective. We want to show them that the Sorbian culture is as vivid and young as they make and shape it. We want to help them find their Sorbian identity, embrace it and use it for their own future.

48-hodžinska akcija

The 48-hour campaign

One of our regular offers for young people is the 48-hour campaign. Within the context of this district-wide action, our social workers call for voluntary commitment every year. Within 48 hours, youth groups can realise a community project of their own choice. The goal is to create something lasting for the common good. The most sustainable and imaginative projects are awarded prizes. In the past years, club rooms and bus stops were painted, classrooms were renovated and display cases in schools were redesigned, trees were planted, the castle ramparts in Kopschin were made accessible, meeting places, playgrounds and sports fields were repaired, and much more.

Młodzinski forum „Młodżina woła”

The youth forum “Młodżina woła” –

The youth calls!

The aim of the forum “Młodżina woła” is bringing together Sorbian youth groups to get to know each other and exchange experiences. Young people from various youth clubs meet here, such as Sorbian dance and singing clubs, Catholic youth, the politically engaged association “Pawk”, the youth radio “Satkula” and many more. The groups share successes and worries. They estab-

lish contacts, exchange experiences, help each other and initiate joint projects. In workshops, professionals give the young people tips on how to design flyers, shoot video clips and apply for funding. Mixing with the young crowd are the organisers: the social workers of the WITAJ Language Centre and the Domowina education consultant.

Open-air-kino

Open-air cinema

An open-air cinema is a great idea if you want to bring together several generations for an event. The recipe is simple: involve different (age) groups in the organisation. It is best to choose a film together with young people. The adults are asked to provide barbecue, the young people bring drinks. The screen and seats for the audience are set up together. The social idea behind such activities is to strengthen the cross-generational community and to create special experiences with the Sorbian language. That is why Sorbian-language films, films synchronized into Sorbian and films with regional or Sorbian content are shown.





"I'm so impressed by how quickly my daughter has learned her first Sorbian words in the day-care centre. "Božemje" (Goodbye) and "Dobre ranje" (Good morning) rolled off her tongue easily after only a few days. When she plays with the dolls in her corner at home, she often sings Sorbian songs to them. Cool! And the other day at the kitchen table, a little absent-mindedly, she said: 'Daj mi prošu mloko!' It turned out that she wanted milk. I think I'll really start with the Sorbian evening course now. If it's good for my daughter, it's not going to hurt me!"



Kubłanje dorosćenych Adult education

The WITAJ Language Centre is also involved in the field of adult education in order to be able to guarantee lifelong learning in Sorbian. Every individual who is interested in learning Sorbian should have the opportunity to do so. And all Sorbs should have the chance to perfect themselves in their mother tongue. Sorbian educators should be able to advance their own education in their specific field.

Serbsce wuknyć we wječornym kursu abo z nowymi medijemi

Learning Sorbian in evening classes or with new media

By now, there are plenty of parents who want to learn Sorbian – like their children in the day-care centre or school. For them, we offer WITAJ evening classes at different levels. We employ external teachers as instructors.

For self-directed learners, our CDs or apps “Serbsce lochko – Sorbisch leicht” (Sorbian easy) with simple phrases for everyday situations are available (→ p. 29). However, for those who only want to get a glimpse of the language or listen to it, we recommend “Sorbisch in einhundert Sekunden” (Sorbian in one hundred seconds) on our website www.sorbischlernen.de.

You can also have your Sorbian language skills certified by us. You can take an examination at one of the six levels according to the European Framework of Reference for Languages. (→ p. 28). You are invited to test your skills online beforehand by using our sample test at www.sprachzertifikat-sorbisch.de.

Rěčne poradźowanje

Language advice

Through our daily work with and in the Sorbian language as well as through intensive study of Sorbian grammar and technical terms and texts in a wide variety of fields, we have a comprehensive knowledge of our mother tongue. If you have any questions about the Sorbian language – we will be happy to advise you!

Naš dalekubłanski poskitk

Our advanced training offers

We do not only offer training for educators of very young children. (→ p. 13). There are also offers for teachers on language didactics and methods as well as on various aspects of the Sorbian language. We regularly inform about our (new) materials for language teaching and support.

As cooperating partners, we regularly support the Saxon State Ministry of Education and the Saxon Education Agency in organizing the 2plus expert day. Educators from all school levels can attend lectures and workshops on topics closely related to the Sorbian-German school concept 2plus.

Tip: Visit our website www.forum2plus.de



Wědomostne džěło Scientific work

Bilingualism and multilingualism are being researched by scholars in many countries. The scientific staff of the WITAJ Language Centre follow the results in this field in order to draw from them for their own studies and to advise professionals in line with the current state of research. The staff accompany the WITAJ project and the 2plus concept scientifically as well as within the framework of educational policy decision-making bodies and Sorbian committees, they publish articles, give lectures at national and international events, offer advanced training and supervise academic theses.

Tip: Results of our studies can be downloaded from our website  www.witaj-sprachzentrum.de.

Přewod serbskorěčneho kubłanja w pěstowarnjach

Support for Sorbian language education in day-care centres

Witaj is a long-term project. The revitalisation of a language must be thought of in terms of generations. This makes it even more important to carefully monitor the evolution of Witaj, assess the results and further develop the project on a scientific basis. For example, the WITAJ Language Centre has developed quality standards for teaching and promoting the Sorbian language and culture in day-care centres. With the help of the detailed handbook, teachers, managers and providers of day-care can specifically develop and ensure the quality of their work with children up to the age of six.

Přewod serbskorěčneho kubłanja w šulach

Support for Sorbian language education in schools

The contribution of the WITAJ Language Centre to Sorbian-language education in schools is manifold: we write scientific publications, evaluate manuscripts and design textbooks and teacher materials. Other work of our staff includes authoring an Upper Sorbian gram-

mar for use in schools and accompanying the development of the website "Sorbisches DIGITAL – Rechtschreibung und Grammatik Schritt für Schritt lernen" (Sorbian DIGITAL – Learning spelling and grammar step by step) (→ p. 29). Furthermore, we provide conceptual work for textbooks to be newly developed for native Sorbian speakers.

Certifikowanie znajomości serbsčiny

Certification of Sorbian language skills

No matter which European language it is – many learners take advantage of the opportunity to have their language skills certified according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). We arrange for Sorbian language skills to be certified according to the internationally recognised six-level scale of competence of the CEFR. In coordination with the Sorbian Institute e. V. and the Institute for Sorbian Studies at the University of Leipzig, we prepare appropriate sample examinations, evaluation sheets and examination instructions. The authorisation to award the CEFR certificates for Upper Sorbian and Lower Sorbian is the responsibility of the WITAJ Language Centre (→ p. 27).

Sobudžěło w fachowych gremijach

Participation in expert committees

Due to their intensive involvement with the Sorbian language, its development and teaching of future generations, staff members of the WITAJ Language Centre are sought-after experts, among others in the Steering group 2plus at the Saxon State Ministry of Education, in the Expert Advisory Board of the State Office for Early Neighbouring-Language Education and in the Upper Sorbian Language Commission.



Digitalne medije serbsce

Digital media in Sorbian

Sorbian without the presence of digital media? It could be a disaster. If the Sorbian language wants to be visible, audible and alive today, it has to use modern forms of communication, and at an enormous bandwidth. That is why we spend a lot of energy on expanding our digital offers. Not only do we constantly update our homepage, online materials and communication on Facebook. We have also made it our task to create new media in the Sorbian language – whether for learning, for work or simply for fun.

Serbski online-słownik

Sorbian online dictionary “soblex”

In cooperation with the Sorbian Institute e.V., the Foundation for the Sorbian People and IT specialists, we provide the online dictionary “soblex”. Besides other features, it has German-language translations and comprehensive information on grammar, which can only be found at www.soblex.de.

Přełožowanski programm “sotra”

Sorbian translator “sotra”

We have been developing a translation program for Sorbian – German since 2019. It is linked to the online spelling dictionary “soblex” and can be found at www.sotra.app.

It helps users with little or no knowledge of the language to discover the meaning of text written in Sorbian and vice-versa. Others use it to speed up their Sorbian – German translation work so they can focus on post-editing rather than translating every word from scratch. Friends, family and groups can also use it for informal communication. The long-term goal is to develop a versatile tool with wide application.

The program uses the latest machine learning technology. It heavily relies on training with sentences we collect in both languages. This is an ongoing community project, and we call on anyone to contribute sentences to enhance the system over time.

Naše digitalne produkty

za wuknjenje řeče

Our digital products for language learning

For children of primary school age who enjoy learning while using a computer, we offer various language games, for example, “Hry z alfabetom” (Games with the alphabet) or “Wuknjemy serbsce – interaktiwne hry” (We are learning Sorbian – interactive games).

For students in the advanced grades, we provide the online platform “Sorbisch DIGITAL – Rechtschreibung und Grammatik Schritt für Schritt lernen” (Sorbian DIGITAL – Learning spelling and grammar step by step). It was designed as a complementary textbook to the Sorbian textbooks according to the 2plus concept. The different kinds of playful exercises as well as video and audio features help to support lessons that are differentiated and oriented towards individual learning.

Self-directed learners of Sorbian can use our audio texts “Sorbisch in einhundert Sekunden” (Sorbian in one hundred seconds) as well as the series “Serbsce lochko – Sorbisch leicht” (Sorbian easy) online on www.sorbischlernen.de or via an app or a CD. Users can listen to phrases, questions and answers on topics that are relevant in daily life.

Synchronizowane džěćace hrajne filmy

Synchronised children’s films

Film and television are an essential part of everyday life – usually. However, Sorbian films will probably remain a rarity. But to be able to offer Sorbian children a film in their mother tongue at least occasionally, the WITAJ Language Centre synchronises films for children and adolescents. Obviously, the main goal is the entertainment effect of watching the film (→ p. 19). Besides, the educational effect of the synchronizing process should not be underestimated. For the Sorbian speakers – children, adolescents and adults who are amateurs in this field – these are interesting language training exercises of a different nature.

Kontakt

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Being able to express oneself

Seizing opportunities

Experiencing the riches of language together

Learning to speak

Being multilingual

Experiencing identity

FEELING WELCOME

Returning home

Developing language skills

Feeling at home in new places

Passing on languages

Acquiring languages