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## **The Estonian American National Council Announces Call for Nominees for the EANC Henrik Visnapuu Literature and Culture Award**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

December 31, 2024

***(For Release on January 2, 2025 – Henrik Visnapuu’s 135th Birthday)***

The recipient of the EANC Henrik Visnapuu Award for Literature and Culture is announced every other year on January 2, the anniversary of the poet’s birth. This prestigious award recognizes an outstanding work, research, or lifetime achievement.

This year, we invite nominations for two awards: one honoring a distinguished lifetime contribution and the other celebrating an exceptional cultural achievement by someone newer to their field.

The EANC Henrik Visnapuu award recognizes works on Estonian themes—published in Estonian or other languages—in the fields of literature, music, theater, art, or historical research. Eligible works must have been published or presented in the past two years (2023–2024) either abroad or in Estonia, with preference given to works by or about the Estonian diaspora and works that promote Estonian culture and history globally. Nominations can be based on a single work, a series of works, or a significant and impactful lifetime contribution.

The purpose of the award is to amplify Estonia’s global cultural presence while highlighting the Estonian American National Council’s (EANC/ERKÜ) role in preserving and promoting the Estonian language and culture internationally. For more information, visit [www.estosite.org](http://www.estosite.org).

The Henrik Visnapuu Prize was originally established in the United States in 1952, and was named for the beloved Estonian poet best known for his romantic poetry and patriotic themes. The prize was discontinued in 2007 due to the departure of key organizers. In 2020, EANC revived the award as a broader cultural recognition, encompassing all areas of culture, not just literature.

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*Founded in 1952, the Estonian American National Council, Inc. is a nationally elected body and registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization representing the interests of Estonian Americans in the United States and Estonia, and is dedicated to preserving and sustaining Estonian culture and heritage.*

[www.estosite.org](http://www.estosite.org)



EANC collaborates on the award with two Estonian partners: the Estonian Writers' Union ([www.ekl.ee](http://www.ekl.ee)) and the municipality of Luunja (Henrik Visnapuu's birthplace, [www.luunja.ee](http://www.luunja.ee)).

EANC funds not one but two awards, with a total prize fund of up to \$6,000 USD. Each award is accompanied by a unique artwork commissioned from an Estonian artist and the soon-to-be released EANC Visnapuu Medal.

Each partner appoints one representative to the award jury. In 2025, the jury will comprise former EANC President Marju Rink-Abel (USA, Estonian American National Council), poet Jürgen Rooste (Estonian Writers' Union), and Luunja Secondary School Director Toomas Liivamägi (the municipality of Luunja, Estonia).

The deadline for nominations is **April 1, 2025**. Nominations can be submitted by individuals or organizations from Estonia, the United States, or other countries.

Submissions should be sent to the Chair of the EANC Visnapuu Award Committee, Sirje Kiin, at [sirjekiin@hotmail.com](mailto:sirjekiin@hotmail.com). The nomination form accompanies this release, and is also available online at the EANC website [www.estosite.org](http://www.estosite.org) or via email: [erku@estosite.org](mailto:erku@estosite.org).

The jury will select up to six nominees by **October 1, 2025**. The winners will be announced on **January 2, 2026**, with an award ceremony to follow in early 2026.

The first recipient of the revived EANC Visnapuu Award was author Elin Toona, in 2022. In 2024, the award honored literary scholar Tiina Kirss.

### History and Background of the Award

The Henrik Visnapuu Literary Prize was initiated by the World Estonian Literature Society following the poet's death in 1951 in New York. The Henrik Visnapuu Fund was established on October 21, 1952, with initial contributions coming from a memorial event in Sweden and royalties from Visnapuu's memoir, *Päike ja jõgi* (*The Sun and the River*).

From 1991, the fund was managed by architect Herk Visnapuu and his family, with previous administrators including Andres Visnapuu, Elmar Tampöld, Tõnu Parming, and Mardi Valgemäe.

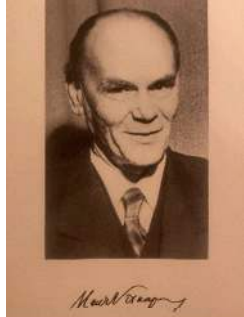
Until the early 1990s, the award was exclusively given to diaspora Estonian writers, including luminaries such as August Mälik, Marie Under, and Karl Ristikivi. An exception was made in 1983 when Annus Rävala (Helmut Tarand) from Estonia received the prize for *Vorkuta Värsid* (*Vorkuta Verses*).

After Estonia regained independence (1991), the award also began to recognize contributions from Estonia-based authors. For example, poet Hando Runnel received the prize in 1993, and historian Mart Laar was awarded in 1997 for his biography of Jakob Hurt and other works.

EANC received the consent of Henrik Visnapuu's descendant, Andres Visnapuu, to reinstate the award.



## About Henrik Visnapuu



Henrik Visnapuu, born on January 2, 1890, in Helme Parish, Estonia, and passed away on April 3, 1951, in Long Island, New York, was a prolific poet and cultural influencer. Together with Marie Under, he was a leading member of the Siuru literary movement, which modernized Estonian literary language and elevated Estonian literature to international standards.

Visnapuu's extensive body of work, comprising over 30 publications, includes poetry collections, memoirs, plays, verse novels, epic poems, and essays. As a high-ranking cultural advisor to the Estonian government in the late 1930s, he significantly shaped Estonian cultural policy during that era and even under Soviet occupation from 1940 to 1944.

Forced to flee Soviet occupation, Visnapuu escaped to Germany in 1944 and later emigrated to the United States in 1949, where he died at the age of 61. In 2018, his remains were reinterred at the Metsakalmistu cemetery in Tallinn.

Visnapuu's enduring legacy lies in his patriotic and romantic poetry, which remains a cornerstone of Estonian literature.

*(Above photo pictures Henrik Visnapuu, ~ 1945-1951. Source: [www.muis.ee](http://www.muis.ee))*

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Please submit candidates using the official nomination form, attached. The form is also available for download at [www.estosite.org](http://www.estosite.org), or by writing to [erku@estosite.org](mailto:erku@estosite.org)

## About the Estonian American National Council (EANC)

**The Estonian American National Council**, founded in the USA in 1952, is a nationally elected representative organization of American Estonians whose purpose is to represent the interests of American Estonians and to preserve and foster the Estonian language and culture. EANC is a registered 501c3, a nonprofit organization.

Read more about the EANC Visnapuu Award and other EANC initiatives at [www.estosite.org](http://www.estosite.org)