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Mariia Popova–Kees de Bot: Maintenance of the Russian language in the Baltic States  
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## Maintenance of the Russian language in the Baltic States

Annak ellenére, hogy jelentős számú oroszajkú kisebbség él Lettországbán, Észtországban és Litvániában, az orosz nyelv mai napig nem kapott hivatalos státuszt ezekben az országokban. Az 1990-es évek elején, amikor kikiáltották a balti államok függetlenségét, az újonnan alakult országok feltételként szabták meg az államnyelv ismeretét az állampolgárság megszerzéséhez és a munkavállaláshoz, ami ahhoz vezetett, hogy a kisebbségek nem kaptak állampolgárságot, és szakmailag diszkvalifikálták őket.

Tanulmányunkban összehasonlítjuk Észtország, Lettország és Litvánia nyelvpolitikáját az orosz kisebbséggel kapcsolatban. Bemutatjuk az orosz idegennyelv-politika implementációját, amelynek célja az orosz nyelv és kultúra támogatása és fenntartása különböző szervezeteken keresztül, amelyet a Külügyminisztérium és annak szervezetei koordinálnak: a Russzkij Mir Alapítvány, a Rosszotrudnicesesztvo és a Humanitáriánus Együttműködés és Emberi Jogok Osztálya, valamint nem kormányzati szervezetek, amelyeket az orosz ortodox egyház képvisel.

### 1. Introduction

Language is not only a means of communication but also a key element of national identity and self-determination and, consequently, a significant factor in the political dimension. Shohamy (2004: 5) takes a clear position on this: ‘While language is dynamic, personal, free and energetic, with no defined boundaries, there have always been those groups and individuals who want to control and manipulate it in order to promote political, social, economic and personal ideologies’. Depending on the goals of the state and demographic factors, language policy can be a means of various political directions such as maintenance of ethnic and linguistic variety on the one hand and national-state construction strategy and ethnic deterrence policy on the other hand (Jarve, 2004: 75). In the second case, command of the official language of the country can become a criterion for access to education, social benefits, high positions, information, etc. At the same time, other languages spoken by national minorities automatically lose part of their status for use (Jarve, 2004: 76). That happened in the newly formed Baltic States which chose the language policy of national recreation and established the local languages as the only official languages (Ozolins, 1994: 161). Knowledge of the national languages became the requirement for granting citizenship and employment, and since the non-

titular groups did not have enough command of the state languages, it led to the problem of statelessness and professional disqualification (Best, 2013: 36).

At the same time, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania tried to get rid of the Soviet influence and considered the Russian minority “as a reminder of more than 40 years of the occupation” and forced Russification by the Soviet Union (Pavlenko, 2006: 89). Although the Baltic States share the common history, have the similar political system and the demographics, they deal with the Russian ethnic minorities in different ways (Best, 2013: 33).

The present paper addresses two main issues: (1) the state of the Russian language in the Baltic states and (2): the impact of Russian foreign language and cultural policies on the consolidation and maintenance of the Russian language in the Baltic States.

The qualitative research includes the objective ethnolinguistic vitality model of Giles (1987) as an instrument to identify the position of the Russian language in the Baltic states. The vitality model has among other things been used in studies on language maintenance. Yagmur (1999) looked at Turkish migrants in Australia and compared their language skills and vitality scores with a reference group in Australia. Similarly, Huslen (2002) collected data on Dutch migrants in New Zealand. In both projects, the factor analysis did not yield the predicted factors: status, demography and institutional support and control. Still the scales are meaningful in situations where status differences come into play, like the situation discussed in this contribution.

The status of the Russian language and the position of the Russian-speaking population in the Baltic countries have been the subject of much research.

Jarve (2010) studied the history of the development of the language legislation of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, and showed that international organizations (the EU, NATO, OSCE) have a major impact on language policies.

Best (2013) focused on the problem of statelessness of non-titular citizens.

Pavlenko (2006; 2008) studied the status of the Russian language and the problems of the Russian-speakers in the post-Soviet countries.

The head of the State Department of Language Development of Latvia, A. Priedite (2005) in the work "Surveying Language Attitudes and Practices in Latvia" gives a description of the development of language legislation on citizenship and education since the formation of the USSR till the secession of the country from the Soviet Union.

I. Dimante (2010) in the article "The Language Situation and Language Policy in the Republic of Latvia" touches upon the issue of the prevalence of non-titular languages, and also gives a description of the position of the Russian language in the social and scientific spheres.

C. Schmid (2008) in his work " Ethnicity and language tensions in Latvia" describes the language policy, as well as the attitude of the Russian-speaking and titular population to the adopted laws.

The papers of Estonian scholars S. Yevstratova (2012) and E. Kostandi (2013) discuss the position of the Russian language in the public sphere and mass media, as well as the distortion of the Russian language by the Estonian language norms.

The issue of the position of the Russian language in Lithuania is described in the works of D. Balshaityte (2011; 2012). The studies examine the consequences of the education reform in the country, as well as protests of non-titular nations as the reaction to this reform.

The methods of the Russian foreign policy toward the Post-Soviet countries as well as the positive and negative aspects of it are studied by B. Lo (2002), G. Persson (2014), (Firulina, 2015), and F. Bafoev (2016).

Despite a large number of published works devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the problem of the need to support the Russian language in the Baltic States, there is an acute shortage of studies which identify the mechanisms of maintaining of the Russian language in the Baltic countries and analyze the role of the foreign policy programs of the Russian Federation aimed at maintaining the Russian language in these three countries.

Taking this into account, the present paper is aimed to fill the gap, relying on previous research, as well as on official sources which can be divided into several groups:

- 1) The main documents which determine the foreign policy course of Russia;
- 2) documents defining the language policy of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia;
- 3) the UN documents which fix the universal human rights and freedoms;
- 4) World Factbook statistics;
- 5) annual reports of Rossotrudnichestvo and the Russkiy Mir Foundation.

## **2. Position of the Russian language in the Baltic States**

The results of the population census of 2011 revealed that Russians make up 26.2%, 24.8% and 5.8% of the population of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, respectively (CIA World Factbook). In the three countries, the Russian minority is the biggest one. Despite the significant Russian speaking diaspora, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania consider only titular languages as official ones. The status of Russian is not defined in Lithuanian language law. The law of Latvia (section 5) and Estonia (chapter 1, section 2) consider any other language as a foreign one.

However, the Law on Language of Estonia allows establishing Russian as the second official language in the regions where at least 50% of the population are members of the national minority (chapter 2, section 11). Although the share of

the Russian-speaking population in Estonian city Narva and the region of Ida-Virumaa is 97%, Russian is not a regional language and does not have an official status. Estonian authorities see bilingualism as a threat to the construction of the national state and say that the region with Russian as the second official language will be “lost territory” (Klenskij, 2016).

The attempt to establish bilingualism in Latvia was made in 2012 at the referendum. Despite 40% of voters in Riga and 85% of voters in the second largest city Daugavpils expressed support for the official status of Russian, it did not become official language as 75% of voters in the entire country were against (Andreev, 2012). Experts proposed to establish the regional status of Russian in Riga and Daugavpils but taking into account the size and importance of the cities, the proposal did not attract support from the Latvian authorities (Sytn, 2012: 9).

Despite the fact that the Baltic countries signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, they imposed limitations with the local laws. For instance, the Convention allows to write street names in the language of the national minority along with the state language in the areas of residence of a large number of persons belonging to a national minority (article 11.3). However, the Law on language of the Republic of Lithuania imposes a restriction on this rule: the format of signs in other languages cannot be bigger than signs in the state language (chapter 8, article 18). These measures have not been received equally well in various EU states. Ozolins (2003) refers to a number of EU initiatives resulting in ‘a mixture of approval, advice and warnings on language, citizenship and integration issues.’ (217). He shows how there are double standards within the EU in which local minorities are granted protection, but measures to strengthen the position of (small) national languages are often frowned upon. For example, the law on language of Estonia (section 6, 23), Latvia (chapter 1, article 5), and Lithuania (chapter 2, 3) determine that courts, ministries, institutions must provide their services in the titular languages and officials who provide services to the public must know the state language.

Under the laws of Estonia and Latvia, the non-use of the state language in office work, in the performance of official duties, in dealing with clients, as well as inadequate possession of the title language for the performance of official duties are equivalent to an administrative offense and entail a fine (chapter 7 of Law on Language of Estonia; section 41.1 of Latvian Administrative Violations Code). Language proficiency of employees is evaluated by the state language commission.

Even minor differences in spelling the name of the Estonian capital city Tallinn, which is written with double -n in Estonian (Tallinn) and one -n in Russian (Tallin), can be a reason of fine. This rule postulates that the non-Latin

letters refer to the geographical name in accordance with the rules of transcription and transliteration of the Estonian language (Law on geographical names of Estonia, chapter 8). Thus, the spelling of Tallinn with the rules of the Russian language entails the responsibility.

Education is also an important tool of language policy (Priedite, 2005: 411). Following Cooper (1983), a distinction can be made between status planning, corpus planning, and acquisition planning. Aimed to have a monolingual educational system, the educational reforms in Latvia and Estonia reduced the number of teaching hours in primary and secondary schools in Russian to 40%, replacing it with the subjects conducted in the titular languages and introduced daily lessons of the state languages as a compulsory subject (Pavlenko, 2008: 287; Mercator, 2016). Representatives of the political and scientific elite claim that education conducted in two or more languages causes assimilation of linguistic minorities but not their integration into society. They also claim that multilingual educational system leads to separation of the competitiveness of students since students who are educated in the language of ethnic minorities do not have enough command of the titular languages for obtaining a high position, while the government's task is to ensure equal possibilities for its citizens (Klenskiy, 2016). On the same ground, they also propose switching kindergartens to the titular languages when it contradicts the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which provides children who "belong to an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority" the right to speak their native language (article 30).

At the same time, in Lithuania, national minorities have the right to receive education in their native language at all levels except for the classes of history and geography which should be conducted in Lithuanian, and on condition that the state language is studied as a compulsory subject. However, the requirements for the final Lithuanian exam are equal for all pupils regardless of the language of the instruction in the school that makes it difficult for minorities to enter the higher educational institutions as they are not able to pass the Lithuanian exam as good as native speakers (Shibaeva, 2015).

Despite Lithuania's less strict linguistic policy in the sphere of education, the tendency to reduce the number of Russian-language schools is traced in the three Baltic countries.

The Russian language at school is studied as a foreign one, and as the schools reserve their right to choose which foreign languages to teach, Russian may not be studied at all (Kostandi, 2013: 13). As a result, a large number of Russian-speaking children receive education in non-native languages; it leads to a decrease of the level of proficiency in their native language and makes it difficult to preserve their national and cultural identity (Evstratova, 2012: 45).

In the field of higher professional education in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, the main language of instruction is the titular language. The Russian language is taught only in private universities in Latvia and at the Slavonic and Russian Studies departments at the universities of Estonia and Lithuania (Kostandi, 2013: 13; Shibaeva, 2013). In Lithuania, classes are held in Russian only in private universities (Pavlenko, 2008: 61).

Statelessness is another problem of the Russian minority in the former Soviet republics. According to the population census of Latvia and Estonia of 2011, the proportions of stateless persons - residents of countries who do not have citizenship of these countries are 13% and 7% in Latvia and Estonia, respectively, most of whom are Russian (Best, 2013: 34). Statelessness has a symbolic meaning as well: non-citizens receive a special document that fixes their status officially: the blue passport of Latvia and the gray passport of Estonia, which differ from the passports of citizens of these countries. These passports are not officially recognized as official identity documents and are valid only within the EU and in Russia.

In contrast, Lithuania decided in favor of the procedure for obtaining citizenship by all non-Lithuanians living on the territory of the state without any language exams (Rizvanova, 2008: 145). Thus, in Lithuania, the problem of statelessness is not present. The citizenship is granted to all children born in the territory of Lithuania by the law on citizenship (article 3.2). The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania guarantees the active and passive suffrage to every citizen who has reached the age of eighteen has (article 34).

In the sphere of the mass media, Russian is present in the form of Russian-language newspapers and magazines founded by the Russian diaspora in the Baltic States: newspaper “Segodnya (eng. Today)” in Latvia, “Sootechestvennic (eng. Compatriot)” in Estonia and “Vestnik Sootechestvennika (eng. Bulletin of Compatriot)” in Lithuania. In the three countries, news and informational Internet portals such as DELFI are also available in Russian. Russian-language TV programs are produced and broadcast in Latvia and Estonia (Pavlenko, 2008: 287). There are no Russian-language TV channels in Lithuania, however: Russian television channels are available through the internet.

### **3. Activities of Russia designed to maintain the Russian language in the Baltic countries**

As the main method of modern international relations is "soft power", which means a rejection of the means of force and threat and includes a policy of persuasion, drawing attention with cultural and political values, Russia carries out its foreign policy toward the Baltic States in cultural and language spheres which include promotion of the Russian language abroad, scientific and

educational programs, and media activities (The concept of foreign policy of the Russian Federation, chapter 1.9; Bafoev, 2016: 667).

Russia's foreign language and cultural policies are carried out by the following structures: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, its subordinate structures: the Department for Humanitarian Cooperation and Human Rights, which protects the rights of compatriots abroad and represents their legal rights and interests on the international level; the Russkiy Mir Foundation, whose activities are related to the information sphere and The Federal Agency for the Affairs of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo), whose main task is cultural and scientific international cooperation, as well as the Russian Orthodox Church.

The goals, objectives, and methods of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation toward the Baltic countries are fixed in such documents as the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation and the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (Persson, 2014: 21). The foreign policy concept determines that “the main efforts of the Russian Federation should be focused on protecting the rights of Russian citizens and compatriots living abroad”, as well as “popularizing the Russian language and cultural achievements of Russia”. An important direction in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation is the dissemination to the general public full and accurate information about its positions on major international problems, on foreign policy initiatives and actions of the Russian Federation, on the processes and plans for its internal social and economic development, on the achievements of Russian culture and science.

A strategic document for the implementation of activities to promote the Russian language abroad is the Federal Target Program "Russian Language" for 2016-2020, adopted by the Government of the Russian Federation on May 20, 2015. Defining the Russian language as “the basis for the ethnic self-identity of the person” - This program is aimed to support and popularize the Russian language in the CIS and foreign countries, to disseminate and promote it, to create and improve the conditions for studying the Russian language as native and as a foreign language.

### **3.1 Activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia and its subordinate structures**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a key player in Russia's foreign policy. The activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the field of cultural and language policy are carried out by the organizations subordinate to it: the Federal Agency Rossotrudnichestvo, the Russkiy Mir Foundation and the Department for Humanitarian Cooperation and Human Rights.

In 2012, the Department of Humanitarian Cooperation and Human Rights, subordinated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, published a report on human rights in the EU (Persson, 2014: 27). Its goal is to demonstrate to European countries the existence of serious human rights problems in the Baltic countries, so this is criticised from both the EU side (Ozolins, 2003: 217) and the Russian side. In this report, Estonia and Latvia were criticised for discriminating against national minorities in obtaining citizenship, and Lithuania was criticised for reducing the ability of Russian-speaking residents to receive education in their native language (Persson, 2014: 21).

### **3.2 The activity of Rossotrudnichestvo**

Subordinated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the Federal Agency Rossotrudnichestvo was established in 2008 to implement programs of international cooperation in the field of education, protection of human rights, in the scientific, technical, cultural and information fields and to popularize the Russian language and culture abroad (Regulations of the Federal Agency; Chapter 2).

In accordance with the tasks, Rossotrudnichestvo conducts festivals, cultural projects, seminars, exhibitions in Russian and organizes events dedicated to the memorable dates in the history of Russia: annually on 9<sup>th</sup> of May Rossotrudnichestvo organizes the laying of wreaths to monuments to Soviet soldiers who died during the Second World War (Report of the Federal Agency, 2015).

In the Baltic states, the agency is represented only in Lithuania, since the governments of Estonia and Latvia did not allow Rossotrudnichestvo to open cultural and scientific centers on the territory of their states (Persson, 2014: 27).

The activities of the agency affect educational activity: annually Rossotrudnichestvo sends Russian specialists of the Russian language to teach Russian abroad and also conducts training courses for foreign Russian language teachers (Report of the Federal Agency, 2014).

Since the programs of Lithuanian higher educational institutions are mainly conducted in Lithuanian, private training centers have been founded in Vilnius and Klaipeda which provide the opportunity for students to study in Russian in part-time, full-time and distance educational programs (Polyakov, 2010: 620).

As centers of Rossotrudnichestvo are not present on the territory of Latvia and Estonia, Russian-speaking residents (citizens and stateless persons) of these countries, as well as people interested in the Russian language and culture, can participate in the projects and activities on the territory of Russia. Every year the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia provides grants for studying in Russian higher educational institutions.

Also, Rossotrudnichestvo supplies scientific, educational, art and reference literature and multimedia publications to Lithuania as a donation to national educational institutions, libraries, associations of compatriots and other non-governmental organizations.

The activities of Rossotrudnichestvo in the information sphere involves the production of films on the history of Russia, the Russian language and culture, current events and problems of the Russian-speaking world. In the Baltic countries, the program was presented in Latvia and Lithuania (Report of the Federal Agency, 2016).

### **3.3 The activity of the Russkiy Mir Foundation**

The Russkiy Mir Foundation was founded in 2007 to stimulate the study of the Russian language and culture abroad, to create favourable public opinion about Russia as well as to facilitate the dissemination in the information space of the Internet network of objective and reliable information about Russia (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of June 21, 2007 "On the establishment of the Russkiy Mir Foundation").

The partners of the Foundation are Russian state organizations, the leading universities of Russia and newspaper editions "Russia Beyond the Headlines", ITAR-TASS, "PT" (former "Russia Today") and TV channel "Kultura" (russkiymir.ru).

The Foundation is represented in all three Baltic countries, with two centers in Latvia and Lithuania, and one in Estonia.

During the time of its activity in the Baltic States, the Foundation has created a series of radio programs, TV and journal projects and the Internet resources (Report of the Foundation, 2014). The most large-scale project in this sphere was the internet portal "Russkiy Mir" which was created as an informational center for compatriots living abroad, as well as all people interested in Russian language and culture. The most important component of the content of the portal is the section, where the materials of professional journalists, as well as sociologists, historians, linguists are published (Report of the Foundation, 2014).

The official website of the Russkiy Mir Foundation provides the same-titled radio- and TV-channels. Radio broadcasts programs about Russia, the Russian language and culture, literature, music, and programs for children. The program also includes the performance of Russian-speaking singers and actors.

TV-channel "Russkiy Mir" provides series of news programs, films about famous persons in the Post-Soviet countries and includes educational films and lectures "We speak Russian" (tv.russkiymir.ru).

The web journal "Russkiy Mir.ru" monthly publishes articles about Russian outstanding persons, the Orthodox Christianity, history of Russia, other post-

Soviet countries as well as countries where the Foundation has offices and where the Russian language is taught.

Also, the Foundation supports holding the International Scientific and Practical Conferences on teaching Russian as the foreign language. The last one was held in Tallinn (Estonia) in 2016. The Russian language teachers were invited from more than 20 countries including the Baltic States (Report of the Foundation, 2016).

### **3.4 Activities of the Russian Orthodox Church**

Cooperating with Rossotrudnichestvo and the Russkiy Mir Foundation, the Russian Orthodox Church is also active in maintaining the Russian language (Persson, 2014: 27). As the Orthodox Churches in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, it has a special importance in the formation of awareness of affiliation to the Russian nation (Persson, 2014: 27).

According to the population census in 2011, Orthodoxy is the second largest religion in Latvia after Lutheranism (15.3% and 19.6%, respectively) (CIA World Factbook). In Estonia, 16.2% of the population are parishioners of the Russian Orthodox Church and constitute the first largest group of representatives among the religions of the country. In Lithuania, where Russians make up only 5.8% of the population, parishioners of the Russian Orthodox Church make up 4.1% of the country's population (CIA World Factbook).

## **4. Conclusion**

In the first part of the present paper, the position of the Russian language in the Baltic countries is described with the objective ethnolinguistic vitality model of Giles (1987): the status of the Russian language, the demographic data – the share of the Russian speakers in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the language as a way of obtaining citizenship and job position, the use of language in government and public services, in secondary and higher education and in mass media. In the second part of the paper, the Russian foreign language and cultural policy toward the Baltic states is described.

After studying the complex of sources, we come to the following conclusions:

1. The laws of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania consider only titular languages as official ones. The Russian language is defined as a foreign language in Estonian and Latvian laws. In Lithuania, the status of Russian is not defined.

2. Demographic data, presented by the results of the population census of 2011 revealed that Russians make up 26.2%, 24.8% and 5.8% of the population of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, respectively. In every country of the Baltic States, the Russian diaspora is the largest ethnic minority.

3. Residents of Latvia and Estonia who do not speak the state language should take the path of naturalization, including taking an examination for the knowledge of the titular language before the special language commission. Otherwise, they can not apply for citizenship. The problem of non-citizenship is mostly presented in Latvia, where 13% of the population are non-citizens. Residents of Estonia and Latvia who do not have citizenship cannot take high positions and do not have an active and passive electoral right.

Lithuania chose a different language policy. The problem with obtaining citizenship is not present: all children born on the territory of the country automatically become citizens of Lithuania. Every citizen has the right to be elected to the parliament, as well as to the president post.

4. According to the legislation of Estonia and Latvia, the non-use of the state language in office work, in the performance of official duties, in dealing with clients, as well as inadequate for the performance of official duties, possession of the titular languages consider to be an administrative offense and entail a fine.

5. The educational reforms in Latvia and Estonia reduced the number of teaching hours in Russian to 40% and introduced daily lessons of the state language as a compulsory subject. At the same time, in Lithuania, national minorities have the right to receive education in their native language at all levels except for the courses of history and geography, with the condition of studying the state language as a mandatory course. Despite Lithuania's more loyal language policy in the field of education, the tendency of reducing the number of Russian-language schools is traced in all three Baltic countries.

The main language of instruction of higher professional education in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia is the titular languages. Only classes in private universities in Latvia and in the Slavonic and Russian Studies departments at the universities of Estonia and Lithuania are conducted in Russian.

6. In the sphere of the mass media, Russian is present in the form of Russian-language newspapers and magazines, Russian-language TV channels in Estonia and Latvia. In three countries, news and information Internet portals are also available in Russian.

7. Being legally unable to affect the status of the Russian language in the Baltic States, Russia protects the rights of compatriots living abroad with the assistance of the Department of Humanitarian Cooperation and Human Rights which sends the reports on the situation of the Russian-speaking population and their rights in these countries to European structures Union, thereby attracting the attention of the general public to this issue.

8. The Russkiy Mir Foundation, following the goal of disseminating information about Russia and the Russian language, carries out its activities aimed at expanding the territory of the use of the Russian language. For this

purpose, the foundation creates news, information and scientific Internet resources intended for people who speak Russian. Also, the foundation's activities affect the cooperation of both TV and radio channels of the countries. The opening of the radio channel "Russian World" has become a new milestone in the activities of the fund.

9. The activity of Rossotrudnichestvo is geographically limited and presented only in Lithuania, since the governments of Latvia and Estonia did not allow the agency to open scientific and cultural centers on the territory of their states, however, Russian-speaking residents of the Baltic countries may participate in the projects and activities carried out by Rossotrudnichestvo in the territory of Russia. For this purpose, the agency provides grants, scholarships, quotas for internships in leading universities in Russia, supplies methodological and educational materials to these countries, and organizes scientific exhibitions and competitions.

10. The Russian Orthodox Church acts as an informal factor of maintaining the Russian language as it holds its activity in Russian and is a crucial element in the formation of the affiliation to the Russian nation.

The effects of such language policy activities are hard to measure. Some of the initiatives may take decades to come to fruition. Many activities may be planned and prepared, but never see the light of day. Only those measures that directly impact on people's daily life may lead to real changes, but language policy is always dependent on the whims of politicians who typically do not have the patience to wait for good plans to materialize.

The situation described in this article is unique, at least for the European context. The languages are studied as minor on a global scale, but dominant on a local scale. This means that the latter are special cases in the EU's approach to minority languages. The situation in the Baltic states and the language policies practiced which are always a reflection of issues at another level (political, economic, financial) which sometimes propels the language issues to the front, while in effect they are minor compared to more global issues.

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