

IN UKRAINE LIFE CAN ONLY BE MONOLINGUAL

In Ukraine, life may only take place in one language. The European integration of Ukraine is heading for a dead end with a new language law. Minority languages are banned from public life.



From now on, all communication must be in Ukrainian. A signboard or a website only in Russian, Hungarian or Romanian is therefore no longer allowed.

Since the 16th of January, article 30 of a new language law from April 2019 allows only Ukrainian to be used in trade in Ukraine. This language law - which actually makes the free use of regional languages impossible - is, among other things, contrary to the Ukrainian constitution and to European treaties, such as the Treaty of Strasbourg and the European Charter of Regional Languages. Moreover, this language law is discriminatory because it is only directed against speakers of the national minority languages.



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After all, it is implausible that this language law will also be enforced with regard to English. According to the letter of this law, an Irish Pub in Kiev may not use the English language in its signs and in communication with its customers. An earlier provision of this language law, Article 25, requires bilingualism of newspapers and a quota of broadcasts in Ukrainian.

Although these provisions are not yet in force, they are a flagrant violation of basic human rights such as freedom of expression and freedom of the press. Cultural life should really only take place in Ukrainian.

This language law has led to extremely sharp criticism from Russia, Poland, Hungary and Romania, not least because of the consequences for speakers of the regional languages, whose right to education in their mother tongue will gradually be taken away from them.

The European Commission for Democracy through Law - established in 1990 to help in the transition of eastern European states to a democratic system - has strongly condemned this law. The same applies to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). And NATO has put this law on the agenda through a memorandum. Hungary has indicated that it will block a possible NATO membership of Ukraine because of this language law.

A salient detail is that this language law also conflicts with precisely those European values that were always appealed to by supporters of the association agreement between the European Union and Ukraine during public debates in the run-up to the Ukraine referendum. Our foundation has conducted an intensive vote against the referendum because of the extremely frivolous way in which Ukraine and also the European Union deal with basic human rights such as language rights, democracy and the rule of law.



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From 16 January, speakers of Russian, Bulgarian, Crimean Tatar, Romanian, Polish and Hungarian will therefore be prohibited from using the regional language at the bakery or hairdresser. It also means that all existing communications will become mandatory Ukrainian. A signboard or a website only in Russian, Hungarian or Romanian is therefore no longer allowed.

The language law thus not only implies economic and political isolation of autonomous minority languages, but also implies that speakers of an autonomous minority language can no longer experience their identity in public, but only within the walls of their own homes. The law is therefore a step towards forced assimilation.

For example, theater performances and news in Hungarian are limited, cultural life may actually only take place in Ukrainian. The local authorities are no longer allowed to address you in Hungarian, etc. In practice, there will be situations where you are restricted on the street in the free use of the regional language.

In a small Hungarian village such as Nagydobrony, where 98 percent is Hungarian, the language law will certainly mean that less Hungarian is spoken on the street. Ukraine wants to completely destroy education in Hungarian, Romanian and Russian. In short, lessons may only be given in the minority language up to the fourth grade in a kind of transitional phase.

This means that Hungarian, Romanian and Russian schools must convert their curriculum into Ukrainian and that the minority language may only be used in the lower classes. With all this, the Ukrainian Government shows that it has no affinity with European values whatsoever. Drs. G. Landman (Gabor)



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