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АВТОРСЬКИЙ ПОГЛЯД
НА АКТУАЛЬНІ ЛІНГВІСТИЧНІ ПИТАННЯ

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17721/APULTP.2019.38.127-144>*Iuliya S. Makarets**orcid.org/0000-0001-5372-5820*

**LEGISLATIVE REGULATION OF LINGUISTIC
RELATIONSHIPS IN UKRAINE**

Abstract. *The article focuses on the issue of legislative regulation of linguistic relationships in Ukraine. The ability of a national language to function as a means of consolidation and national identification depends to a large extent on state linguistic policy, political support that the language receives. The state legislation on language is indicative in this regard while it establishes the status of languages, the linguistic model and the linguistic regime. In accordance with the Constitution of Ukraine, the Ukrainian language is a state language in Ukraine. The dynamics of the Ukrainian legislation on languages illustrates the inconsistency of the implementation of this constitutional norm. The article analyzes the milestones of its formation. The content of the basic laws in the sphere of linguistic relationships (Law of the USSR 'On Languages in the Ukrainian SSR' (1989), the Law of Ukraine 'On the Principles of the State Language Policy' (2012), which is invalid now, and the new Law of Ukraine 'On the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as a State Language' (2019)), the socio-political tendencies, that preceded their adoption, their evaluation by tpublic and world community as well as their consequences for linguistic situation in Ukraine are described. The possibility of official bilingualism approving is studied. The article analyzes historical, cultural and political preconditions for the adoption of official bi- or multilingualism by other states, acceptability of this linguistic model for Ukraine and possibility to overcome existing linguistic contradictions.*

Key words: *national language, official (state) language, regional language, linguistic relationships, legislation on languages, linguistic policy.*

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ЗАКОНОДАВЧЕ РЕГУЛЮВАННЯ МОВНИХ ВІДНОСИН В УКРАЇНІ

Анотація. У статті розглянуте питання законодавчого регулювання мовних відносин в Україні. Здатність національної мови виконувати функції об'єднання суспільства і національної ідентифікації його членів значною мірою залежить від державної мовної політики, від тієї політичної підтримки, яку вона отримує. Показовим щодо цього є мовне законодавство держави, в якому вона закріплює статус мов, встановлює мовну модель та прописує мовний режим. Відповідно до Конституції України українська мова є державною в Україні. Динаміка українського мовного законодавства ілюструє непослідовність імплементації цієї конституційної норми. Увага у статті зосереджена на аналізі визначальних віх у його формуванні, окреслені зміст основних нормативно-правових актів у галузі мовних відносин (Закон УРСР "Про мови в Українській РСР" (1989), Закон України "Про засади державної мовної політики" (2012), який втратив чинність, і Закон України "Про забезпечення функціонування української мови як державної" (2019), прийнятий Верховною Радою України та підписаний Президентом України), суспільно-політичні тенденції, які передували їх прийняттю, оцінка громадськістю і світовою спільнотою та їх наслідки для мовної ситуації в Україні. Оскільки однією зі знакових тем у дискусіях навколо правового регулювання мовних відносин в українському суспільстві є можливість затвердження офіційної двомовності, стаття торкається також історико-культурних і політико-правових передумов прийняття офіційної дво- або багатомовності окремими державами, прийнятності такої моделі для України та можливості у такий спосіб подолати наявні мовні суперечності.

Ключові слова: національна мова, офіційна (державна) мова, регіональна мова, мовні відносини, мовне законодавство, мовна політика.

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ЗАКОНОДАТЕЛЬНОЕ РЕГУЛИРОВАНИЕ ЯЗЫКОВЫХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ В УКРАИНЕ

Аннотація. В статті розглянуто питання законодавчого регулювання мовних відносин в Україні. Здатність національного мови виконувати функції об'єднання суспільства і національної ідентифікації його членів в значительній ступені залежить від державної мовної політики, від цієї політичної підтримки, яку він отримує. Показателем в цьому відношенні є мовне законодавство держави, в якому воно встановлює статус мови, визначає мовну модель і прописує мовний режим. Згідно Конституції України українська мова є державною в Україні. Динаміка українського мовного законодавства ілюструє непослідовність імплементації цієї конституційної норми. Увага в статті зосереджена на аналізі визначальних етапів його формування, описані зміст основних нормативно-правових актів в області мовних відносин (Закон УРСР "О мові в Українській ССР" (1989), Закон України "Об основах державної мовної політики" (2012), який втратив силу, і Закон України "Об обеспечении функционирования украинского языка как государственного" (2019), прийнятий Верховною Радою України і підписаний Президентом України), суспільно-політичні тенденції, які передували їх прийняттю, їх оцінка суспільністю і світовим співтовариством і наслідки для мовної ситуації в Україні. Оскільки однією з знакових тем в

дискуссиях вокруг правового регулирования языковых отношений в украинском обществе является возможность утверждения официального двуязычия, статья касается также вопроса об историко-культурных и политико-правовых предпосылках принятия официального дву- или многоязычия отдельными государствами, приемлемости такой модели для Украины и возможности таким образом преодолеть языковые противоречия.

Ключевые слова: *национальный язык, официальный (государственный) язык, региональный язык, языковые отношения, языковое законодательство, языковая политика.*

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Among the main tasks of a state are the guarantee of safety for individuals and society in general and the protection of national interests from external and internal threats. That is why the society agrees to alimnt the cumbersome State Apparatus and to participate in political rituals that are aimed on legitimization of a certain power. The state assumes responsibility for providing for one of basic human psychological needs, which is the need for security. At the same time, the very existence of a state is possible only if its citizens are united, and this sense of unity can be given only by awareness of national identity. Therefore, even in those states that arose on ethnically heterogeneous territories much effort is made to create an idea of a nation. The sense of national identity is a powerful factor for consolidation, without it the state is weak in the face of external threats and undetermined in solving its internal problems.

A national language is one of essential features of a nation. It marks an individual as a member of a specific community in contradistinction to those, who speak other languages, and at the same time it is a factor and a manifestation of self-identification. That is why linguistic conflicts in society are never purely linguistic. They conceal a political confrontation between forces, that struggle for strong sovereignty, with those, which defend the interests of other

states. The incitement of the 'linguistic issue' and linguistic separatism are phenomena, that are intended to weaken the state and that particular political force, which is currently in power. In Ukraine, under the conditions of artificially formed linguistic hostility between Ukrainian-speaking and Russian-speaking population, pro-Russian political forces during long time were consistently imposing on society the idea of legislative approval of official bilingualism, which was presented as a panacea for the 'language split into the East and West Ukraine'. As an example they brought on the experience of Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, Luxembourg and other relatively young, but well-developed countries. At the same time, they ignored cultural and historical factors, that caused official bi- or multilingualism in this countries and which are alien to Ukrainian reality. Also they did not mention that, for example, neither for Canada nor for Belgium this step did not put an end to the periodic splashes of separatist mood and linguistic confrontation.

A national language becomes a strong factor of consolidation in multiethnic states (to some extent to this type almost all modern states belong) only if it gets a proper state support and if linguistic relationships in the country are clearly regulated. That is why the studies of the dynamics of legislation in the field of linguistic regulation of different states, in particular, of Ukraine are of great interest. It is also the subject of this article which focuses on legislative regulation of linguistic relationships in Ukraine.

In European practice there are several main ways how to secure the status of the official (state) language (-s), which are based on the ethnic composition of the autochthonous population of the state, compactness of residence of ethnic groups, etc. and take into account forms of government.

(a) Some unitary states with a more or less homogeneous ethnic landscape do not consider it necessary to establish a national language as an official one legislatively, since the national language of the majority traditionally performs this function (*Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, etc.*).

(b) However, most of unitary states affirmed the status of the national language of the titular nation as the official one in their constitutions (*Italy, Germany, Portugal, France, Poland, The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, etc.*).

(c) Many states, that have autonomous territories or significant territories of compact residence of autochthonous ethnic groups, have legislatively identified one official language nation-wide. But in the respective regions they officially recognized the possibility of the regional official languages (in *Spain* such are Basque, Catalan, Galician, Valencian; The Constitution of the *Republic of Slovenia* recognizes the Italian and Hungarian languages as official for the territories where the respective communities live).

(d) Official bi- or multilingualism is established in states, on which territory originally more than one powerful ethnic groups lived and where there are clear boundaries between them. Thus, *Switzerland* recognizes three official languages (German, French and Italian) and one regional official language (Romansh). Although The Constitution of *Belgium* does not contain the notion of an official language, it approves the administrative-linguistic division of the state in 4 regions according to the linguistic and ethnic characteristics of certain territories (French, Dutch, German and bilingual (French and Dutch) in Brussels). Mostly such model was accepted by federations and some unitary states. For example, Finland, as well as Belgium, is divided into municipalities on the basis of languages. That makes possible for Finnish- and Swedish-speaking population to use the national languages on equal terms.

(e) One more model is based on official multilingualism with the distribution of the areas of use of languages. Luxembourg has 3 official languages, and the law defines the linguistic regime: the national language is Luxembourgish, the language of the written legislation is French, and the languages of administrative and judicial proceeding are Luxembourgish, German and French [13].

Thus, the linguistic model of the state is shaped not only by the desire of political forces but also by ethnic, historical and cultural factors. Ukraine is a unitary state, the Ukrainians are its aboriginal population, so it is natural that Article 10 of the Constitution of

Ukraine says: 'the state language in Ukraine is the Ukrainian language' [2]. The current ethnolinguistic situation in Ukraine, as well as in most post-Soviet states, is a result of the policy of the former Soviet Union.

"The purpose of the demographic, and linguistic, and cultural policy of the Soviet regime was the national, social and ideological unification of the population of one sixth of the earth, the creation of a new historical community which is 'Soviet people'... A means of national unification [was] the Russian language and the Russian-speaking mass culture" [10].

One of the tools of this policy in the Union republics was the change in ethnic correlation in favor of the Russian minority. It was made through 'the policy of mixing the nationalities, mass exiles, resettlement of the entire ethnic groups and settling their territories with Russians, as it was, in particular, after the Ukrainian villages were depopulated because of the Holodomor or after the deportation of the Crimean Tatars from Crimea' [Ibid.]. In many cases, such policy was effective. Today Russian is approved as one of the official languages in Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. In Ukraine the result of the artificial deformation of the ethnolinguistic situation is ongoing discussion about recognizing Russian as the second official language of the state, which, despite the constitutional norm, affects lawmaking processes in the field of linguistic relationships.

By 1996, when the current Constitution of Ukraine was adopted, the Constitution of the Ukrainian SSR (1978) had validity in the territory of the new independent state. It proclaimed that the state language of the UkrSSR is Ukrainian, but state organs, political parties, public organizations, institutions, that are located in the places of residence of the majority of citizens of other nationalities, were allowed to use alongside other national languages (art.73). Since among 'other nationalities' the Russians clearly dominated, practically it was about using Russian as the second official language. **In 1989** the Law of the Ukrainian SSR '*On Languages in the Ukrainian SSR*' was adopted, which remained valid in independent Ukraine until 2012.

Art.2 proclaimed that the Ukrainian language is the only state language of the UkrSSR. But in the preamble it was mentioned that although Ukraine had the status of the state language, Russian was the language of interethnic communication in the USSR. Thus, the law stipulated that the Ukrainian SSR had to provide free use of the Russian language (art.4), and that state officials, members of the political parties, workers of public organizations, etc. should speak both Ukrainian and Russian (art.6) [9]. In fact, the law gave the official status to the Russian language. Along with the Russification of this sphere of public life, after proclamation of independence in the 90's the active steps aimed at strengthening the position of the Ukrainian language in education, culture and science were taken. But already at the end of the decade discussions about the status of Russian became aggravated. There were attempts to artificially differentiate the concepts of 'official language' and 'state language' (which are almost synonymous) in order to circumvent the constitutional norm and to declare Ukrainian as the state language and Russian as the official one.

The situation worsened to the extent that there was a need for an official interpretation of Art.10 of the Constitution by the Constitutional Court of Ukraine (CCU). **In 1999**, the Court explained, that 'the state language' is the one, to which the state gave the legal status of a compulsory means of communication in public life and that the notions 'official language' and 'state language' are essentially identical. Thus, the requirement to recognize the Russian language as the official one contradicts the Constitution [3].

Although the conclusion of the CCU made conversations about the official status of Russian to calm down it did not change the real linguistic situation substantially, since at the state level there wasn't a consistent policy aimed at maintaining the Ukrainian language as the state language. Everything changed in 2010, after the presidential election when in this sphere tangible changes took place. Any state support for the Ukrainian language was practically discontinued. In the Law of Ukraine 'On the State Budget of Ukraine for 2011' the funds on 'ensuring the development and application of the Ukrainian language' were almost four times reduced, and in the next year this article disappeared from the budget at all. Instead, in

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the Budget for 2013 the funds on ‘measures for implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages’ more than ten times increased.

In 2010, deputies of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (VRU) from the Party of Regions, the Communist Party and the Lytvyn Bloc submitted a draft law №1015-3 ‘*On Languages in Ukraine*’, which, as it was noted by its authors, was aimed at harmonizing Ukrainian legislation with requirements of *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (ECRLM), that were ratified in 2003 and came in force in 2006. But many public organisations, historians, artists and linguists protested against the draft law, which as they believed under the guise of protection of threatened languages would cause expansion of Russian in Ukraine.

The fact, that ECRLM because of ambiguity of its interpretations can be used to manipulate the linguistic issues, was clearly understood in political circles. Many states considered the ratification of ECRLM as unacceptable.

France, for example, the Charter, which gives specific rights to the languages of minorities in certain regions, contradicts the constitutional principle of the integrity of the state and the equality of its citizens, thus, undermines national unity. The Russian Federation also did not ratify the Charter, despite the fact that more than 100 national minorities live on its territory and many of their languages are on the brink of extinction. The document was not signed by Belgium, Bulgaria, Georgia, Estonia, Latvia, Ireland, etc. The reason for this is fairly seen in the fact that the Charter refers to documents ‘in which individual human rights to linguistic and cultural self-identification are in a conflict with the collective right of nations to self-affirmation’ [10]. Although the preamble to the Charter states that the protection and development of the regional or minority languages should not be detrimental to the official language and the need to learn it [6], in the end it became the consequences of its ratification for Ukraine.

From the ECHR the concept of ‘regional language’ in a slightly distorted sense came into the draft law ‘On Languages in Ukraine’. The Charter saying about ‘the regional languages’ refers to

those that are ‘traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population; and different from the official language(s) of that State’ (art.1) [6]. In the draft law, the regional language is actually interpreted as the official languages of the region, if the percentage of its speakers exceeds 10% in the region. Since from all minority languages, that were declared, only Russian could overcome 10%-barrier (in many regions) and the ECHR criterion of traditional use was not taken into account, this document did not change the situation with any regional or minority language that needs support, but it equated the status of Russian to official in a large territory of the state.

Although the draft law was positioned as a response to ‘requirements of the European community’, it was just the opposite. In the Report on the application of the Charter by Ukraine in 2008, which was received after first Ukrainian report to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the Committee of Experts noted, that the linguistic landscape of Ukraine is unique, since the Russian language, not being a state one, is used by a significant part of the population (p.16). As the purpose of the Charter is to preserve languages as a means of displaying cultural wealth the emphasis on protecting Russian as a language of a national minority does not correspond to its spirit; instead, more attention should be paid to Armenian, the Karaim, Krymchak, Roma, Tatar and Rusyn languages. It is also stated that ‘the Committee of Experts is aware of the particular historical and other circumstances that have led to a dramatic decrease of the use of the Ukrainian language prior to the independence of the country’ (p.70). Therefore the Committee ‘understands the important role of the Ukrainian language in the development of the Ukrainian national identity’ and recalls ‘that the promotion and protection of regional or minority languages shall not be done to the detriment of the State official language’ (p.71) and should not prevent the further development of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of public life (p.72) [12].

However, these considerations were not taken into account in the draft law ‘*On Languages in Ukraine*’. So the Chairman of the

Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine V.Lytvyn sent the document to OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities K. Wollebek and to the European Commission for Democracy through Law (the Venice Commission) for evaluation. K. Wollebek responded, that such a law would not help to maintain neither a balance between the interests of the different communities nor the integration and stability in Ukrainian society. The law would only cause increasing the tension between different linguistic groups and deepen the linguistic split of the state [1]. The Working Group of the Venice Commission concluded that the document is terminologically unspecified, which is unacceptable. In particular, the concepts of ‘mother tongue’ are ‘regional language’, which are basic in it, are incomprehensible.

The study which Working Group referred to, showed that the respondents put different meanings in ‘mother tongue’: ‘the language I think and speak fluently’ (34%), ‘the language of nationality to which I belong’ (32%), ‘the language of my parents’ (24%) or ‘the language I use most often’ (8%). About ‘regional language’ the question arised whether it was about that 10% or more of the population that may use regional or minority language, mostly or preferentially use it [11].

It was also noted that the document did not take into account the real linguistic situation in Ukraine and such facts as the dominance of the Russian language in some spheres of life. Among the significant defects of the draft law were also mentioned the declarative nature of certain theses (for example, that Russian is the mother tongue or language of everyday communication of the majority of Ukrainian citizens, art.7); focus on the distribution of spheres of use of dominant languages; the unsettled issue of the consequences of violation of legislation on languages; putting Ukrainian and Russian on one level in many articles, etc. In the evaluation it is noted that the Russian language does not require a special protection provided by the proposed draft law, while the assertion of the Russian language for many spheres of life would demotivate the citizens to study the Ukrainian language (p.72-74). Therefore, it diminishes the importance of the Ukrainian language

and seriously damages its functioning as an integrative factor of the Ukrainian society, especially in the administrative sphere, education and media (p.98) [Ibid.].

The Ukrainian institutions, to which the draft law was directed for evaluation (the Institute of the Ukrainian Language of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, the Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, I.F. Kuras Institute of Political and Ethnic Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, the Academy of Sciences of the Higher School of Ukraine, etc.), answered, that it contradicted Article 10 of the Ukrainian Constitution because provided disproportionately great support to the Russian language and would lead to aggravation of the linguistic division in society. The nationally conscious public reacted especially negatively to Article 7 of the document, which stated that

"in Ukraine, in accordance with the Constitution of Ukraine, free development, use and protection of the Russian language are guaranteed, taking into account, that Russian is a mother tongue or the one of everyday communication for the majority of citizens of Ukraine, and is commonly accepted in all territories of Ukraine' and that 'Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism, which formed historically, is an important acquisition of the Ukrainians, a significant factor in the consolidation of the multinational Ukrainian society" [4].

The draft law was officially withdrawn from consideration on February 1, 2011 and on August 26, 2011, a new draft law '*On the Principles of the State Language Policy*' was submitted. The Committee on Culture and Spirituality of the VRU recommended to reject it. However, these recommendation was ignored, as well as an official letter of 67 civil society institutions, that was sent to deputies of the VRU with an appeal not to vote for the law that was evaluated as 'a manifestation of humanitarian aggression against Ukraine'.

Despite this, it was adopted in the first reading on June 5, 2012 and received the votes of 234 deputies. Later the journalist S.Andrushko wrote in his blog in 'Ukrainska Pravda' that only 172 voters out of that 234 really were present during the vote. He reviewed the written registration of deputies on June 5, 2012, that

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was published on the website of the VRU, and found that out of 234 voters one was officially on vacation, one was on a business trip, one was on sick leave and 59 were not registered [7]. In the second reading on July 3, 2012 the law was voted by 248 deputies. It was adopted despite the numerous procedural violations: it was not on the agenda; there was no voting procedure to put it on the agenda; more than two thousand amendments that were made were not taken into account; there was no comparative table, etc. Despite that fact the law which did not provide any support for the Ukrainian language and was adopted with the flagrant violations stayed valid for almost six next years.

Because of the adoption of the law protests took place in Zhytomyr, Kherson, Chernihiv, Poltava, Zaporizhia, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Lviv, Rivne, Ivano-Frankivsk, Khmelnytsky, etc. Numerous appeals to veto the law were directed to the President from the local governments of different levels. However, there was no reaction to public dissatisfaction. Simultaneously other regional, city and even village councils declared official languages of regions. Odessa, Kharkiv, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhia, Sevastopol, Dnipropetrovsk, Luhansk and Krasnolutsk City Councils, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Kherson and Dnipropetrovsk Regional Councils voted for Russian as official language of relevant regions (in following years the amount of regions increased); City Councils of Berehove (Zakarpattia) voted for Hungarian (later it was declared as official one also in two districts of Zakarpattia Oblast); Village Councils of Tarasivtsi (Chernivtsi Oblast) and Bila Tserkva (Zakarpattia) voted for Romanian (later the same was done by six other villages in Zakarpattia and Chernivtsi Oblast). It was made despite the fact that these local governments according to the Ukrainian Constitution have no right to resolve such issues.

Thus, the law *'On the Principles of the State Language Policy'*, that based on the draft law *'On Languages in Ukraine'*, brought the state exactly to the consequences against which the Venice Commission and OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities K. Wollebek warned. Society was clearly divided on the

linguistic ground and in the sphere of regulation of linguistic relationships chaos prevailed.

After the Revolution of Dignity and the change of power on **February 23, 2014**, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law ‘On the Recognition as invalid of the Law of Ukraine ‘On the Principles of the State Language Policy’. This decision was taken hostile in those regions of Ukraine, where Russian, Hungarian or Romanian was acknowledged as the regional language. So at that time O.Turchynov, who was designated as acting President of Ukraine, stated at a briefing that he would not sign this law until a new language law would be prepared. For several years in the card of the law on the site of the VRU was indicated ‘is preparing for signature’.

The next step in the abolition of the law ‘*On the Principles of the State Language Policy*’ was made in 2016, when the Constitutional Court of Ukraine opened proceedings concerning its unconstitutionality. However, it lasted until 2018, and on February 28 the CCU declared the law unconstitutional because of the violation of the procedure of its adoption.

In 2016-2018 a number of laws were adopted that were not sectoral (‘linguistic’ laws), but were aimed at the support of the Ukrainian language in the media and education. In 2016 the Law of Ukraine ‘On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine ‘On Television and Radio Broadcasting’ (regarding the Share of the Songs in the State Language in Musical Radio Programs and Broadcasting)’ came in force. This document established quotas for Ukrainian-language product on the radio. The next year became valid the Law of Ukraine ‘*On Amendments to Some Laws of Ukraine regarding the Language of Audiovisual (Electronic) Media*’, which established quotas for the Ukrainian language on television. Although these steps did not resolve the issue of bilinguality of TV channels and radio stations completely, however, they significantly increased the share of the state language on the air and on TV. Also the National Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine received the real levers of influence on linguistic policy of TV channels and radio stations.

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In September 2017 the new Law of Ukraine ‘On Education’ came in force. It proclaimed that the state language must be the only language of educational process in Ukraine (art.7; although it permitted to teach one or several subjects in other languages). This norm triggered the sharp reaction of neighboring countries (Hungary, Romania and Moldova). They stated that this law violated the rights of national minorities. The head of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs P.Siyarto said, that the Hungarian government would block the European Union’s decisions aimed at rapprochement with Ukraine. The Romanian President postponed a planned visit to Kyiv. However, according to the Venice Commission’s decision, art. 7 of the law, which gave rise to such a violent reaction, contains a rightful rule, although it should be circumstanced, and the transitional period should be extended. These recommendations were accepted and the period of implementation of the article was extended till 2023.

After the CCU declared the law ‘On the Principles of the State Language Policy’ unconstitutional in the sphere of linguistic relationships legal vacuum was formed. Except Article 10 of the Constitution of Ukraine there was no other law, that would regulate this complicated type of the social relations. During 2018, three draft laws were considered by the VRU: №5556 ‘*On Languages in Ukraine*’, №5669 ‘*On the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as a State Language and the Procedure for the Use of Other Languages in Ukraine*’ and №5670 ‘*On the State Language*’. On October 4, 2018, in the first reading the Law of Ukraine ‘*On the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as a State Language*’ was adopted, and on February 28, 2019 second reading started. Its first article determines, that the Ukrainian language is the only state language in Ukraine, and ‘the attempts to establish official multilingualism in Ukraine contrary to the Constitution of Ukraine and the valid constitutional procedure are actions, that provoke a language split in the state, ethnic conflict and social animosity, and are identical to the actions, that are aimed at forcible change or overthrow of the constitutional order’ [5].

It provides the State Program for the Promotion of the Acquisition of the State Language, the National Commission on the

Standards of the State Language and the Office of the Commissioner for the Protection of the State Language. It introduces and circumstances the concept of levels of knowledge of the state language, determines a certain procedure for imposition of fines for violating the law on the use of the state language in the field of consumer services, etc. 2082 amendments were submitted to the law, however, on April 25 deputies still approved it. The public organization ‘*Institute of Legal Policy and Social Protection named after Irina Berezhnaya*’ filed a lawsuit regarding the prohibition of signing the law, but the District Administrative Court of Kyiv decided to refuse in its satisfaction. On **May 14, 2019**, the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine A.Parubiy signed this law, and on May 15 it was signed by the President of Ukraine P.Poroshenko.

In independent Ukraine the linguistic situation always remained tensional. Despite that, this sphere of social relationships was out of the legislators’s attention for a long time. During the years of independence many draft laws on languages were registered at the Ukrainian Parliament (only from 2000 to 2019 there were almost 200 of them, sectoral and those, that proposed changes regarding the linguistic relationships in other public sectors). However, the ‘linguistic law’, which was adopted in Ukrainian SSR, stayed in force until 2012, when the new law, that actually opened the way for the expansion of the Russian language in different spheres of public life, was adopted. It was prepared by lasting discussions about the need of official Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism in Ukraine. The supporters of official bilingualism were consistently imposing upon the society the opinion that Ukraine must adopt the model of Canadian or Belgian linguistic regime, which according to their estimates was extremely successful. They kept silent about its historical and cultural basis, which is fundamentally different from the Ukrainian one, and about linguistic problems that continued to exist in the countries with the official multilingualism and that are obvious because of the periodical political crises. Only after the Revolution of Dignity real legislative steps to support the Ukrainian language as a state one were taken. At first, its share in media was increased and the real control after keeping within the law by media

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were established. Then its position was strengthened in education. And in 2019 for the first time in three decades of independence truly pro-Ukrainian linguistic law was adopted. Of course, this document, when it comes in force, will not immediately solve all linguistic problems that have been pushed for decades. Only time will show how consistent will be its implementation. However, the Ukrainian legislation on languages for the first time made a real step in the direction of support of the Ukrainian language as a state one.

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