

## LANGUAGE POLICY IN LITHUANIA

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At present Lithuania is ready to take a step that will have an impact on all the spheres of public life. Language has always been part of the changing circumstances – it reflects the society's culture and world perception and to some extent even shapes them. The Lithuanian language is one of the key elements of ethnic and cultural originality of the Lithuanian state, an inseparable part of the nation's spiritual culture, the guarantee of national identity and survival, the language of the state and individual, the language of the state and all spheres of public life. The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania grants the Lithuanian language the status of the state language. Its further development and the prospects of its expansion depend on the language policy chosen by the state. The American H. Schiffman has in great detail discussed the multifaceted concept of the language policy. According to him, the language policy involves state-made decisions on the status of a language (languages), usage, the spheres of usage and the rights of the users of those languages. In Lithuania, the main legislative act regulating the language policy is the Law on the State Language of the Republic of Lithuania, which expands on the provision of Article 14 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, which states that 'The state language is the Lithuanian language'; the State Language Policy Guidelines, approved by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on 3 June 2003 is a document that sets out the strategy for the promotion of the development of the Lithuanian language.

Under the new conditions of political, economic and cultural life, the Guidelines highlight the most important and inter-related goals of the state language policy: 1) to ensure the functionality of the state language in all the spheres of public life; 2) to meet the new needs of a knowledge based society determined by the European integration; 3) to promote a creative use of the language heritage for the needs of language usage. The key objective lies in a planned and creative influence on the development of the state language so that the public realises the value of its own language and is not disillusioned in its powers.

The legal framework for the protection and development of the state language has been created on the basis of the Law on the State Language of the Republic of Lithuania that was adopted by the Seimas on 31 January 1995, other laws and implementing legislation. The state language is mandatory in such spheres of public life as law making, public administration, education, services, etc.; mass media, books, other publications and public signs are subject to the requirements of correct language usage.

The Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Lithuania sets out administrative liability for the violation of the status of the state language and of the correctness of public language.

In Lithuania there exist a number of institutions responsible for language standardisation, administration and supervision: the State Lithuanian language Commission, the State Language Inspectorate, and county language services. The State Lithuanian Language Commission was established in 1961 and with some intervals was functioning until September 1970. It was mostly concerned about the spelling of foreign proper names. In 1976 a new commission was founded, which was authorised to standardise terminology, orthography in mass media, periodical and non-periodical publications, official documents and to solve complex issues of the Lithuanian standard language. The recommendations of the Commission were mandatory to all ministries, institutions,

organisations, editorial boards and publishing houses. The activities of the Commission stopped in 1981-1983; it renewed its work only in as late as in 1984 and was authorised not only to concern itself with the issues of language codification and standardisation, but also with those of the implementation of the status of the state language. The Law on the Status of the Commission was publicised in 1993. According to this law, the State Lithuanian Language Commission under the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania is authorised to solve the issues of the codification of the Lithuanian language, the usage of norms and the implementation of the Law on the State Language. The Law points out that the decisions of the Commission on the language issues are mandatory to all enterprises, offices and organisations, and to mass media. In April 2002, the Seimas approved of the new Language Commission. Its 17 members (15 experts in the Lithuanian language, of whom 12 Doctors of Philosophy and 2 Doctors of Science) are like a language parliament: together they solve the problems arising in the implementation of the Law on the State Language, language policy, regulation and standardisation of the Lithuanian language, and others. Individual issues are discussed in six permanent and several temporary sub-commissions which in their activities engage not only the members of the Language Commission, but also the best experts in various fields (not only linguistics) from universities and research institutions. The work of the Commission and sub-commissions is managed by the Secretariat. 14 members of its staff prepare materials for meetings, advise the general public on language issues, answer language-related queries of various institutions and individuals. At present the Commission coordinates four language programmes approved by the Government of Lithuania: the Programme for the Use and Development of the State Language 1996 – 2005; the Programme of the Lithuanian Language in Information Society 2000 – 2006; the Programme for the Replacement of Loanwords by Lithuanian Equivalents; the

Programme for the Preservation of Dialects and Ethnic Place-Names 2001 – 2010. The Lithuanian Language Society, other public organisations, teachers, specialists from different fields and students also make a contribution in the fostering of the public language.

The State Language Inspectorate was founded in 1990 as a subdivision of the Cultural heritage Inspectorate of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania. In 1995 it changed its status and became the Language Inspectorate of the State Language Commission under the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. When the new Law on the language Commission was adopted in 2001, the Language Inspectorate became subordinate to the Ministry of Culture of Lithuania, and accountable to the State Language Commission. The State Language Inspectorate is a supervising institution: it controls how the Law on the State Language, resolutions of the State Language Commission and other legal normative acts setting out the requirements of usage and correctness of the state language are observed in public and municipal institutions, in all offices, enterprises and organisations functioning in the Republic of Lithuania.

Local authorities have been delegated the function of the control over the use and correctness of the state language. In the majority of cases this function is carried out by the language administrators. They supervise the usage of the state language and conformity to the correctness requirements within the territory of a particular municipality. On behalf of the Language Inspectorate they investigate the instances of violations of Administrative Code and advise on language issues. About two thirds of municipalities employ language administrators.

The state supports Lithuanian language research as a priority area and has created favourable conditions for the protection of language norms, personal names, place-names, dialects, and written sources of the language. Research is carried out at the Institute of the Lithuanian Language, Lithuanian philology

departments of higher educational institutions. Fundamental research works, standard Lithuanian and terminology dictionaries, publications on correct language usage have been published. Lithuanian language studies have gained international recognition.

The development of the state language is promoted through four above-mentioned programmes approved by the Government of the republic of Lithuania.

Broad possibilities for the dissemination of the Lithuanian language norms and recommendations are opening up thanks to information technologies; support to the efforts of employing IT for the needs of the language is being rendered by Lithuanian experts in a variety of fields of science.

The present moment marks the beginning of a new stage in the functioning of the state language. It is predetermined both by the processes of European integration and the state's strategic goal of building a knowledge society. It is therefore necessary to adjust the already existing provisions of the state language policy and to formulate new ones. The basis for the implementation of the language policy is language planning that embraces the following spheres: the status of the language (creation and improvement of the legislation on language usage), language system and usage, and teaching of the language. The rudiments of such planning could be discerned in Lithuania, yet it is necessary to integrate them without delay and develop them as a single whole. At present the State Lithuanian Language Commission, as one of the key coordinators of the language policy, has been authorised to form a working group of the representatives of the Government institutions, ministries and departments and design a plan of measures for the implementation of the State Language Policy Guidelines for 2003-2008.

These guidelines emerged from an exhaustive analysis of the present linguistic situation and that is why in this paper the main

trends of the language policy and an overview of the current situation are presented alongside.

### **The Status of the Language**

The development of information technologies has considerably outpaced the localisation of the electronic environment. A terminology search system needed for the administration of the state and for public use has not been created; an electronic data bank is non-existent, which makes it difficult to control the influx of loanwords, to standardise terminology, to relate it to other languages; all of this is needed in order to introduce Lithuanian into the electronic environment and to ensure a high quality of translation of EU legislation and other documents into Lithuanian. The activities of administrators of registers, cadastres, and other data bases related to place-names have not been co-ordinated, a coherent system for the registration, standardisation, codification, and information exchange and its provision for the users is non-existent. The need to improve these activities is stimulated not only by the interests of public administration but also by the global process of standardisation of place-names co-ordinated by the United Nations. Thus, in order to ensure the use of Lithuanian in the electronic environment it has been foreseen:

- to recognise as priority the work on applying Lithuanian in information technologies and to speed this work up;
- to co-operate with other countries in dealing with problems of software localisation by using national languages;
- to raise the level of Lithuanian language correctness requirements in public electronic environment;
- to create public electronic databanks;
- to create an electronic database of place-names.

At present the Government is discussing a new edition of the programme for the Lithuanian language in the information society.

It will include all linguistic and technological projects related to the electronic environment. A working group set up at the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania is preparing the law on the terminology databank of Lithuania.

The process of globalisation stimulates not only the integration of cultures but also their uniformity. The globalisation philosophy is especially characterised by the criterion of functionality; the language therefore tends to be treated solely as an instrument for communication, it is disassociated from culture and the people using it. One language, considered to be universal, starts to dominate, at the same time also creating the possibility of establishing the domination of one culture. English is considered to be the most important medium on the material and intellectual markets of the world. Its role in Lithuania's economic, social, and cultural life is increasing; not only is the motivation for learning English growing; it is also increasing for acquiring a trade, finding a job, and engaging in creative work, whereas at the same time the prestige of the Lithuanian language is diminishing. The state language policy must offset the new value orientations dictated by the globalisation; otherwise the knowledge society of the future will have lost its language and national identity in general. In order to strengthen the positions of the Lithuanian language under the conditions of multilingual Europe:

- to ensure the representation of the state at international events dealing with the issues of language policy;
- to contribute to international initiatives aimed at consolidating the equality of languages;
- to initiate language policies in the Baltic region that correspond to new realities;
- to ensure the translation into the state language of all the documents required for the legal system of Lithuania;

- to take steps to ensure that easily accessible information about the Lithuanian language is presented in international information networks;

- to stimulate the promotion and teaching of Lithuanian abroad.

The right of the citizens of Lithuania to maintain labour relations and to upgrade their qualifications in the state language is not being guaranteed. Existing legal norms do not ensure that technical and normative documents needed for production and business activities are mandatorily translated into Lithuanian, thus the Guidelines advise

- to regulate the use of Lithuanian at work and for upgrading of qualifications, as well as its use as the language of technical and normative documentation;

The proportion of scientific research works and other products of intellectual activity financed by the state and published in other languages than the state language has been growing. The documents setting down qualification requirements for university lecturers and research workers give priority to research published in foreign languages. Terminology work is not treated as applied research; as a result, the motivation to develop Lithuanian terminology and the language of science in general has been dwindling. To ensure the development of scientific language, the institutions carrying out the language policy are expected

- to promote, by legal and financial means, the creation and use of Lithuanian terms;

- to apply the requirement of mandatory publications in the Lithuanian language in the process of granting scientific degrees;

- to promote the improvement of the language for special purposes used at higher educational establishments.

A working group that the State Lithuanian Language Commission formed of the university teachers has already drafted a new Programme for teaching language for specific purposes. It foresees that the future specialists will not only be taught language culture, but also how to relate it with professional terminology and academic style; students will be taught the indispensable aspects of rhetoric, correct presentation of scientific papers and other field-related texts.

According to the Law on Local Self-Government, one of the functions delegated by the state to the local authorities is the control over the use and correctness of the state language; however, unclear status of the language administrators of the local authorities, their competencies and relations with the State Lithuanian Language Commission and State Language Inspectorate fail to ensure a proper implementation of this function. The feedback between the state language supervision institutions and language standardisation and regulation institutions is too weak; therefore, there is a lack of information about the changes in the language use and trends and the effectiveness of language planning. The methodology for the state language supervision fails to ensure that the control is universal and effective, first of all in the fields that have the greatest influence on the language culture in the society, such as the media, publishing, cinematic and video production, and consumer information. To ensure the effectiveness of language standardisation, management, and supervision, methods and ways will be sought in order to:

- to ensure the harmonisation of legislation related to the status of the state language and its use and to co-ordinate the adoption of such legislation;

- to introduce a more precise regulation of relations between institutions involved in the standardisation, management, and supervision;

- to define more precisely the status and competencies of the language management officials in municipalities;

- to further improve the methodology for the implementation of the state language status and for the control over the correctness of public language use;

- to develop sociological investigations into the use of language.

### Language System and Usage

The development of applied linguistics has failed to keep pace with the needs of language usage. Research into new language phenomena and their assessment from the point of view of standard Lithuanian is lagging behind, as are recommendations, especially the ones with relation to loanwords. Due to a speedy development of the economy and other spheres, the language is already facing vocabulary difficulties. Simultaneously, the continuity of the traditions of the Lithuanian language should be ensured. To fill these gaps, the Guidelines raise the following objectives:

- to promote the continuity of language heritage;

- to take steps to ensure the protection of written and audio heritage of the language;

- to create conditions for the development of fundamental research in the field of modern Lithuanian;

- to develop applied linguistics on the basis of fundamental research;

- to establish a closer link between the language standardisation work and the results of fundamental research and needs of language usage;

- to ensure the development and dissemination of Lithuanian terminology;

- to promote the development of language technologies;

There is a lack of consensus between the language professionals, language supervision institutions and the general public regarding the variability of language norms and the level of rigidity in applying these norms; regarding the link between the present day

dialects and interdialects (including the varieties of urban language) as well as on the means of maintaining the stylistic diversity of the language (especially in the education system), etc. The opinion of a language user is not always taken into account in the process of language standardisation. There is a lack of sociolinguistic research indispensable for the establishment of feedback between those who are involved in language standardisation and language users. The gap between the standard language and the living language is being widened by an inadequate recognition of dialects as a cultural and linguistic value despite the fact that dialects are the source of life for the standard language and a reliable counterbalance to the debasement of language. Against the context of the ethno-cultural movement in Europe, attempts to foster dialects in Lithuania lack modern approach; dialects are little referred to in the education system and in the promotion of distinctive peculiarities of ethnographic regions. Improvement of public language is hindered also by an insufficiently developed system for the dissemination of the Lithuanian language standards and language advisory services, especially through the electronic medium. It is exactly the latter way of communication that opens up great possibilities for involving the various strata of society in language activities and for strengthening their cultural and linguistic self-awareness. There is a lack of coherence in the activities of institutions and individuals involved in the language standardisation work (the State Lithuanian Language Commission, Lithuanian Language Institute, departments of Lithuanian Philology of higher educational institutions, individual scholars, and, in part, state authorities and institutions of public administration that legitimise various language phenomena in their legal acts). To meet the linguistic and cultural needs of public administration and the society, the Guidelines advise:

- to promote a harmonious co-operation of institutions involved in the language standardisation activities;

- to involve the interested groups of society into the language standardisation activities;
- to introduce modern methods for the dissemination of language norms and advice;
- to promote the use of dialects as the source for enriching the standard language and fostering ethnographic traditions;
- to support the efforts of Lithuanians living abroad to retain the native language.

### Teaching of Language

The results of the state Lithuanian language examination and the experience of teachers working at higher educational establishments show a declining level of literacy among the pupils and, hence, among the would-be specialists in various fields, including scientists. This means that the level of Lithuanian language training in general education schools is not sufficient. The present system of teacher training and appraisal does not ensure the correctness of the teachers' language. Within the system of higher education, the motivation for improving the proficiency of Lithuanian as the speciality language is overshadowed by the motivation to learn other languages with a view to accessing the global labour market. In planning of language learning it is necessary to take into account the Report of the Commission of the European Communities of 25 July 2003 to the Council, the European Parliament, Committee for Economic and Social Affairs and the Regional Committee *Promotion of language learning and linguistic diversity: Action plan for 2004-2006*. It states that 'The recent tendencies in the non-Anglophone countries to ensure tuition in English may have unforeseen effects on the survival of national languages. The language policy-makers at universities should take up actual measures in support of the national or regional language'. Improvement of language proficiency among the teaching staff of higher education institutions is not stimulated, which brings about the emergence and entrenchment of

professional jargon on the labour market. The would-be specialists in foreign languages do not receive sufficient training in the Lithuanian language, which makes the issue of the Lithuanian language proficiency of translators and interpreters especially acute. In order to improve language teaching and training, the Guidelines advise

- to draft a new concept for the teaching of the state and native language in schools of general education that would ensure language teaching quality enabling a member of knowledge society to acquire necessary competencies;
- to draft a modern model for foreign language teaching at schools of general education;
- to improve the teaching of the state language to adults;
- to ensure adequate language quality of state-funded textbooks and other teaching materials;
- to apply more stringent requirements of the Lithuanian language correctness to teachers and lecturers of all subjects.

The above discussed Language Policy Guidelines include the period until the year 2008, yet they can be supplemented and amended taking into account the results of the implementation of the goals raised and the needs of language usage. The provisions of these Guidelines underlie the preparation of the state language programmes and action plans of state institutions and the institutions of science and education.

### Literature

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## Language policy in Lithuania

I. Smetonienė (Vilnius, The State Commission of Lithuanian Language)

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## Kalbos politika Lietuvoje

I. Smetonienė (Valstybinė Kalbos Komisija, Vilnius)

Lietuvių kalba yra vienas iš svarbiausių Lietuvos valstybės etninio ir kultūrinio savitumo elementų, neatsiejama dvasinės tautos kultūros dalis, tautos tapatumo ir išlikimo garantija, valstybės ir individo, valstybės ir visuomenės visų sričių santykių kalba. Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucija jai suteiktas valstybinės kalbos statusas. Tolesnė jos raida ir plėtros perspektyvos priklauso nuo valstybės pasirinktos kalbos politikos. Pagrindinis Lietuvos kalbos politiką nustatantis teisės dokumentas yra Lietuvos Respublikos valstybinės kalbos įstatymas, kuriame išplėta Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucijos 14 straipsnio nuostata „Valstybinė kalba – lietuvių kalba“, o 2003 m. birželio 3 d. Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo patvirtintos Valstybinės kalbos politikos gairės — dokumentas, kuriame išdėstyta lietuvių kalbos raidos skatinimo strategija.

Naujomis politinio, ekonominio, socialinio ir kultūrinio gyvenimo sąlygomis Gairėse iškelti svarbiausi vienas nuo kito neatsiejami valstybinės kalbos politikos tikslai: 1) užtikrinti valstybinės kalbos funkcionalumą visose viešojo gyvenimo srityse; 2) patenkinti naujus, Europos integracijos lemiamus žinių visuomenės poreikius; 3) skatinti kūrybingą kalbos paveldo panaudojimą kalbos vartosenos reikmėms. Svarbiausias uždavinys — planingai ir kūrybingai veikti valstybinės



kalbos raidą taip, kad visuomenė suvoktų savosios kalbos vertę ir nenusiviltų jos galiomis.

Šiuo metu prasideda naujas valstybinės kalbos funkcionavimo etapas. Jį lemia tiek Europos integracijos procesai, tiek valstybės užsibrėžtas strateginis tikslas sukurti žinių visuomenę, todėl būtina patikslinti esamas ir suformuluoti naujas valstybinės kalbos politikos nuostatas. Kalbos politikos įgyvendinimo pagrindas yra kalbos planavimas, apimantis šias sritis: kalbos statusą (kalbos vartojimo teisinės bazės kūrimą ir tobulinimą), kalbos sistemą ir vartoseną, kalbų mokymą. Lietuvoje buvo galima išvelgti visų trijų sričių planavimo užuomazgų, tačiau jas būtina kuo greičiau integruoti ir plėtoti kaip visumą. Šiuo tikslu Valstybinei lietuvių kalbos komisijai, kaip vienai iš pagrindinių kalbos politikos koordinatorių, pavesta sudaryti darbo grupę iš Vyriausybės įstaigų, ministerijų ir departamentų atstovų ir parengti Valstybinės kalbos politikos 2003–2008 m. gairių įgyvendinimo priemonių planą.

Kalbos politikos gairės numatytos iki 2008 metų, tačiau jos gali būti papildomos bei keičiamos atsižvelgiant į iškeltų tikslų įgyvendinimo rezultatus ir kalbos vartosenos poreikius. Šių gairių nuostatomis remiamasi rengiant valstybines kalbos programas, valstybės institucijų, mokslo ir mokymo įstaigų veiklos planus.