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## LITHUANIAN LANGUAGE POLICY IN MULTILINGUAL EUROPE: LEGAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

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**Abstract.** *The Lithuanian language has rapidly established itself in modern multilingual Europe. The current policy of the Lithuanian language covers many fields of activity. However, the reality still raises fundamental questions about the existence and dissemination of language related to the assessment and implementation of the status of the national language, the concept of language and society relations, and the prestige of language. These are also important topics for other European countries. Therefore, the aim of the paper is to review the situation of the Lithuanian language in the context of European languages policy. In order to achieve the aim the following objectives have been raised: 1) to review legal regulations of the Lithuanian language and changes of the use in important areas of life; 2) to reveal the situation of Lithuanian language policy and prestige in Lithuania; 3) to discuss the situation of the Lithuanian language in the policy of EU languages.*

*In conclusion, public education must be promoted, as well as assistance provided, the public debate on language and targeted language attitudes must be developed. It is very important to adopt and timely update the legal foundations of the language - not only the legal acts regulating separate areas, but also the constitutional Law on the State Language promulgating the main provisions of the language policy.*

**Keywords:** *language policy, language prestige, language planning, multilingual Europe.*

### Introduction

Lithuanian has rapidly established itself in multilingual contemporary Europe. The current policy of the Lithuanian language encompasses numerous areas of activity. However, the reality is still posing essential questions due to language existence and dissemination related to the national language status and assessment as well as implementation of language conception and society relations. Moreover, it is an important issue for other European countries. The world becoming more and more global, numerous challenges are emerging when making decisions concerning such non-material phenomena as language and its policy. It is not enough to have only legal measures regulating the use of a language. A significant attention must be paid to language policy, improvement of language planning and promoting the language prestige. Both foreign and Lithuanian scientific literature has not purified the concepts of language policy, prestige and planning. Different definitions of terminology are prevailing and authors base their ideas on insights and theories of different researchers-originators of these concepts. In Lithuania language policy has been studied by Zabarskaitė, Smetonienė. Vaišnienė has discussed the issue significantly as well. Language policy conception is analysed rather extensively and is applied when referring to individual national languages, minority languages and multilingualism. It is a widely applied concept. Language planning is the term provoking most arguments, used to assess possibilities and ways of language planning. Miliūnaitė has

discussed the aspects of Lithuanian planning whereas language planning determines prevalence of language prestige in the society. This aspirational factor is closely related to values acceptable in the society and undoubtedly state's actions aimed at introducing appropriate attitude of the society towards the importance of its language and fostering its security. According to Eco, "each language is a certain world model, a semiotic world conception system" (Eco, 2001, p. 308). However, various reasons affect the system: changing reality and society needs, migration or even politics. (Jakštienė, 2013).

Thus, **the aim of the paper** is to review the situation of the Lithuanian language in the context of European languages policy.

The following **objectives** have been raised:

1. To review legal regulations of the Lithuanian language and changes of the use in important areas of life.
2. To reveal the situation of Lithuanian language policy and prestige in Lithuania.
3. To discuss the situation of the Lithuania language in the policy of EU languages.

The selected methods: this work was carried out using methods of analysis and synthesis of the scientific and legal literature as well as the application of logical and analytical methods in the analysis of key issues related to the role of Lithuanian language policy.

### **Legal status of the Lithuanian as the national language**

Globalization is given more and more significance in role. It strongly affects not only economy and technological advance, but also social relations. Society is becoming more and more consumption-oriented whereas eternal values (morality, faith, nationality) are pushed to the background or replaced by temporary ones, relevant only for a certain period. Thus, a question arises what the role of a language in different countries is in the age of globalization. Do global unions and policy encompassing different areas have impact on change of separate country's language and don't languages lose national identity role? According to Vaišnienė (2013), we themselves can make the decision which position is closer to us – the possibility to preserve and foster our native language in all areas of life expressed by EU political conceptions to encourage translation and learning of all official languages or reasonably provided data concerning insufficient economic grounds of language diversity and negative impact of national language use on science, business and other areas. As she states, representatives of less used languages might agree that even politically undeclared these conceptions occasionally determine consumer-based and reasonable administrative decisions when multilingualism is perceived and introduced as acknowledgement and learning of several or frequently one language of international communication. However, it is reminded that the idea of linguistic unity has not been implemented since Latinization of Europe in the Middle Ages and development of Esperanto up to nowadays' global information society. One should not forget that a language of a country is closely related to its inhabitants' national identity. (Vaišnienė, 2013). Identity is what every person is, that is his/her individuality (Rovira, 2008).

First of all, when discussing the existence of the Lithuanian language, two terms should be distinguished, namely national language and standard language. As Šukys claims (2006), standard language is a historically formed and consciously processed variety of a national language used to satisfy the needs of all nation in communication, mindset, political, economic and cultural life as well as to express national identity and representation. In short, standard language is a commonly accepted variety of a language having formed due to certain conditions over the centuries. Standard Lithuanian has formed relatively late, only at the conjunction of 19th and 20th centuries though it is one of the oldest languages in the world. However, its

development has been strongly affected by various historic periods, when Lithuania was under control of certain countries. At one moment it was even thought that the Lithuanian language was going to die out but after more than 200 years it still exists. Thus, standard language is like a living organism, which is constantly changing. On the one hand, it is determined by emergence of new objects, technologies and phenomena, which need to be named. On the other hand, some standards that formed before change regarding realities of a period. Thus, codified standards of a language established in grammar, dictionaries and reference books are developed. A codified variety of a language (standard language) must meet all functions of a public language in areas of administration, legislation, society information, science, education, culture, etc. Then only the last stage of standard language development remains, i.e. to acknowledge the standardized language prestige and use it by respecting its standards. Nevertheless, development of a standard language, as it was mentioned above, is only the commonly acceptable variety of a language, established in grammar books and dictionaries while in order to legally acknowledge a language in a state its establishment by legal acts is needed. Thus, a national language is perceived as the language used officially in public sphere of life legalized by laws. The Lithuanian language was first established as a national language only in 1922 in the first Constitution of Lithuania. Later it was revised in Constitutions of 1928 and 1938. Having restored independence, in 1922 Article 14 of Lithuania's Constitution declares that "national language is Lithuanian", i.e. the new status of Lithuanian as that of a national language was established. Provisions establishing the language status are included in constitutions of other countries, for example, Estonia's Constitution, Article 6 says „National language of Estonia is Estonian”; Latvia's Constitution, Article 4 declares that “The Latvian language is the national language”; Polish Constitution, Article 27 states that “In the Republic of Poland the national language is Polish”. On the other hand, for example, in the USA English is not declared as the national language due to tolerance issues not to violate immigrants' rights (Vainiūtė, 2010). It is, however, true that until national language establishment, several legal acts were adopted. Even in 1988 on November 18 the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (LSSR) adopted the law „To add Article 771 to LSSR Constitution (The main law)”, which declares that the national language of Lithuania's SSR was the Lithuanian language. On January 25 of 1989 the law of Lithuania's SSR Supreme Council was issued „On the use of LSSR national language“, which states that „following Lithuania's SSR Constitution, the Lithuanian language is considered the national language of the Republic“, and in order to „ensure education and functioning of Lithuanian in state and society's life without violating constitutional right of inhabitants speaking other languages to use their native language“, it was decided to define that „Lithuanian is national and the main means of official communication in the Republic”. The Lithuanian language following this law was supposed to be used in all areas of state's life; legal acts were declared in Lithuanian, etc. Inhabitants were supposed to have conditions to learn the Lithuanian language and gain certain education in this language (Vainiūtė, 2010).

Apart from legalisation of the Lithuanian national language in Lithuania's Constitution, one more important legal act was the law of the national language of the Republic of Lithuania concerning public spheres of life adopted on January 31 of 1995. It defines the most important areas of using the national language in public. In addition, its security and control are regulated. However, according to M. Vainiūtė (2010), by adopting the law, it was not possible to foresee all challenges that Lithuanian might face and assess their consequences and, therefore, it must be improved. Moreover, it includes legal liability in the Code of Administrative Offences, Articles 497-507. They define issuing fines from 60 to 400 Euros for various violations: for not using the national language in stamps, forms, boards, names of products and services, descriptions, for non-compliance with resolutions of the State Commission of the Lithuanian

language concerning the use and correctness of the language and not following instructions of the officials of the State Commission, for not using the national language when performing official duties, in record keeping and correspondence in the Republic of Lithuania, for providing the documents in the other language (not the national one), for failing to translate television and radio programmes into the national language as well as not using authentic and official places names of Lithuania. Over the time numerous legal acts have appeared, which were designed to regulate the use of the Lithuanian language. Each of them is intended to discuss certain cases when the Lithuanian language is supposed to ensure Lithuanian inhabitants' right to the information provided in the national language so that it could be understood by any citizen of the country.

### **Language policy in Lithuania**

Such introduction of the language in the country shows that open language policy is prevailing, which clearly defines rights of different linguistic groups to use their languages in all areas of life where there is the real necessity. In addition, this policy strictly applies principles of political tolerance (transparency, peculiarity, legality). In Lithuania incentive language policy is being partly implemented, encouraging certain language use by constitution, administration and legal guarantees: it provides and ensures resources for a language. The policy of the Lithuanian language is defined by the law of National language. Language policy is perceived as decisions made by the state concerning the language status, use, areas of use and language users' rights. The primary goal of the language policy is to affect the development of the language so that the society could perceive its value and would not feel disappointed by its power. The basis of language policy implementation is language planning, encompassing language status (designing and improving the legal base of language use), language system and use, language teaching. In a general sense language policy includes all languages existing in linguistic field whereas in the narrow sense it encompasses the issues of the standard language and related decisions. According to Vainiute (2010, 35), „by planning the future of the language, language policy must well examine the external situation of a language and its internal state to define as well as to evaluate conditions and circumstances of its functioning, to design a specific activity plan and to predict its executors”. The first such plan was introduced by designing the guidelines of National Language Policy 2003-2008. However, the guidelines of National Language Policy 2009-2013 remained unapproved by the Parliament and the project is announced only on the website of the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language. These guidelines were later developed for the period of 2018-2022. The primary aim of national language policy indicates to preserve language heritage and encourage language development to ensure functionality of the Lithuanian language in all areas of public life whereas the main aim of the language policy is to affect the development of the national language in a planning and creative way so that the society could perceive the value of its language and would not be disappointed by its power. Thus, nationality of the Lithuanian language is in reality sufficiently defined though one should not forget the issues of language policy and prestige, practical implementation of which can differ from theoretical aspects defined by legal acts.

Language prestige is closely related to language planning. The latter is crucially important and necessary during the change of historic events and in the current globalization. The very concept of language planning in works of world sociolinguists appeared in the second half of the 20th century while in Lithuania it was started to be mentioned in the last decades by prioritising the concepts of language contacts, language(s) policy, etc. The first one to use it was Einar Haugen, an American linguist of Norwegian origin. Language planning as a branch

of sociolinguistics emerged from a practical need to solve the issues of languages which arose after World War II by establishment of national states (Miliūnaitė, 2010). Slightly later the problematics of language contacts became significant whereas the aspects of human rights related to language use have become relevant since the last decade of the 20th century. In Lithuania language planning was first clearly defined in the guidelines of National Language Policy 2003-2008: “The basis of language policy implementation is language planning, encompassing the following areas: language status (designing and improving the legal base of the language), language system and use, language teaching”. The same definition, only slightly extended, was transformed into the new version of National language policy guidelines: “The basis of language policy implementation is language planning encompassing the following areas: language status (developing the legal basis of language use and its improvement, enhancement of language prestige, language dissemination), language system and use. All areas of language planning are closely interrelated while language system and use as well as language teaching are significantly affected by language status”. (Valotka, 2015, 94). In other words, language planning must be regarded as a never-ending process, because every living language and its sociolinguistic situation are changing while language standardization in reality never reaches the end.

Since the end of the 20th century during macro-socio-political world changes political and social conditions have started to change in certain countries of Western Europe. Language planning was reconsidered as well. (Ricento 2000). The conception that language planning is just the measure to establish and standardize national languages and is only a part of modernization and nation creation was abandoned. The position stating that the most important peculiarity of language planning concept development is language prestige emerged. Thus, language planning gains a new dimension, i.e. language prestige. (Miliūnaitė, 2010).

“For planning the language prestige the common activity of various institutions and single individuals is of crucial importance. This idea has been naturally established in Lithuania as well: it is perceived that to maintain prestige of the Lithuanian language in the society one needs interaction of the state and society”. (Miliūnaitė, 2010, p. 246). Concerning the ways of enhancing prestige of the Lithuanian language listed in “Gairės” project, the conception to develop linguistic awareness of the society bears special significance since only internal motivation of the society to use the Lithuanian language and to prioritize it against other languages and their expressions is the basis for maintaining the language prestige. The language must become attractive and important to use for the society. However, it is becoming difficult to do due to reorientation of society’s values in recent years. Value-based linguistic orientation is inseparable from the entire changing range of society’s values: patriotism deterioration, disappointment with the common nation idea, high emigration rate and changing attitude towards numerous basic traditional values as well as levelling of nations and languages affected by globalization. Regarding these ideas, it is claimed that the state should not limit its activity only by designing the laws and allocating funding for language prestige matter but propaganda is also necessary. According to Laurinaitis, (2010), propaganda should encompass long-term programmes which would aim at changing society’s values and attitudes; if one wishes some changes in the society, adequate actions must be planned in advance. „Propaganda (by its real but not distorted meaning), must become a part of language prestige planning – it must be not straightforward, banal and annoying, but thoughtful, subtle and psychologically affected. Otherwise nihilistic ideas will start to prevail in the society spread by the youth maintaining that it is useless to learn the Lithuanian language because it is going to die out”. (Miliūnaitė, 2010, p. 249). Society must have what to focus on. Language planning practice shows that one cannot leave language or its variety prestige to drift: it is included in a deliberate process of



language change and development regulation. Thus, acknowledging that in Lithuania language policy is based on language planning, the prestige of the Lithuanian language must be regarded as a planning object as well. There must be a clear aim of nation and language survival, oriented towards reinforcement of Lithuanians' unity in all over the world, and specific tasks, namely to enrich resources of the Lithuanian language and to create favourable environment to foster it so that society instead of diminishing it would enhance its prestige in our country and all around the world in their common efforts. Learning from world experience, numerous ways can be found for this activity. However, it is the work not only of language specialists. Overall activity of different institutions of various areas and levels as well as individual persons is most important for language prestige planning.

### **Existence of the Lithuanian language in the Context of European Union Language Policy**

After the Lithuanian language had established itself as the official language of the European Union, the field of implementing national language policy has extended as well in political and administrative EU structures. By translating legal acts and other documents new varieties of administration language are being formed, terminology of different areas is arranged, and Lithuanian is included in multilingual infrastructures of science and language technologies. Thus, the Lithuanian has rather fast established itself in contemporary multilingual Europe. However, new reality still poses new essential issues in existence and dissemination of the Lithuanian language related to assessment and implementation of national language status, language and society relations, language prestige conception. These include topics relevant for other European states, i.e. promoting internationalisation by extending the use of the English language, language changes in the environment of the other language, its existence in the digital space as well as needs of a language and information dissemination regarding contemporary communication media, the problems of scientific communication in national languages, etc. Solidarity bonds between states speaking "small" European languages – both older and new EU members – have formed and perception that restriction of one less frequently used language will determine restriction of other linguistic rights over the time has emerged. This solidarity of small states is crucially important for the aim to preserve Europe's linguistic variety (Bradley, Vigmo, 2014).

All EU official languages are equal and have the same rights. Even the first EU regulations (approved by the Council in 1958) were designed not for some other matter but for languages. It defines the obligation for EU institutions to translate legal EU acts into all official EU languages and answer citizens' queries in the same language the question was asked (European Community Establishment Contract, Article 21, Part 3). Thus, all official languages of EU states have the status of an official language in the EU as well (Language Policy; National Language Policy).

Regarding this fact in the EU there are a lot of translators, linguists, including Lithuanians. Translators, lawyers-linguists, specialists of the Lithuanian language, whose efforts are concentrated on translating legal acts into Lithuanian work in the European Union. Interinstitutional manual of translation into the Lithuanian language was created, the purpose of which is to serve as style guide and facilitate the translation of standard phrases into Lithuanian in the same appropriate way (not only the standard ones). The essence of the common interinstitutional translation manual is to combine regulations of the main translation manuals, namely Practical Guide of Designing Community Legal Acts, Precedent Guide of Acts designed in EU Council, Manual of Designing Institutional Publications, and to encompass relevant practical issues of translation, especially as far as grammar, spelling and

style are concerned. European dictionary “Eurovoc” was compiled, which is a systemic list of words and their combinations. Its purpose is to accurately reflect the content of the documents existing in the document system and the conceptions in search. It is a multilingual dictionary originally compiled to process information of European Community documentation. It is intended for use in European institutions’ libraries, document services, data bases and their users. It all facilitates work of language experts while translating and editing common legal acts in the EU. All this procedure of document translation directly affects the Lithuanian language itself because being a living organism, it cannot stay unaffected by rigorous requirements of text translation against deviation from the original text. It determines the changes of Lithuanian administration style. (National Language Policy).

One should also mention that EU policy of national languages has not been discussed in any EU legal act, i.e. it is not regulated. However, indirectly some issues related to the language are discussed in legal acts regulating other areas. European Community Establishment Contract, Article 149, Parts 1 and 2 indicate that the Community contributes to good education quality by promoting cooperation of member states and supporting as well as complementing their actions if needed, at the same time totally acknowledging responsibility of member states for education content and organization of education systems and respecting a variety of their cultures and languages. The Community by its actions seeks to develop the European direction in the field of education, especially teaching the language of member states and promoting their popularity (Kėvalienė, 2007). Thus, more attention is paid to multilingualism rather than maintenance and preservation of separate languages because multilingualism in reality sometimes negatively affects native languages. Ambitious nature of EU language policy initiative does not guarantee likewise ambitious and multifaceted implementation in all member states and, thus, every member state decides how actively and what initiatives to undertake, how much time and financial resources to devote in order to implement EU language policy aims in the national level.

It is asserted that by evaluating the situation of the Lithuanian language in the context of EU, dual attitude is encountered towards language value and functions. Firstly, in the consumer society affected not only by Europe unification but also other globalization processes language diversity is considered as an obstacle rather than value. It can be explained by a very narrow and limited conception of a language indicating that language is merely a means of communication. Therefore, one looks for one language that could become the global means of communication. Economy and efficiency principles which encourage assessment of languages through the function of communication are applied for this language. Secondly, Europeans still regard a language as the main feature of individual and collective identity since a language is cognitive tool as well. (Kėvalienė, 2007). “Words, language, have the power to define and shape human experience. It is because of a language that I can name my experiences” (Rovira, 2008, p. 63).

Thus, by planning language policy attention is primarily paid to the areas which face the biggest threat to lose priority of national language use. One of them is the goal to maintain the Lithuanian language in electronic space by Lithuanianizing it. As life is being transformed into electronic space, its issues should not be abandoned as well. However, it took time to understand it, as if trying not to lose against the running time. Over the years it was understood that the existing gap must be immediately mended and, as a result, there are significant results, namely digitalized high-volume publications, numerous other tasks undertaken in order to spread the Lithuanian language in electronic space. The other problematic discussion area is public records, mostly related to trading and service as well as advertising. A part of the issues in the field have been solved but one must admit that global development of technology and its

novelties make a significant impact. Establishing relations in education and employment fields are important as well when favourable conditions to spread cosmopolitanism and English are created by restricting the use of the Lithuanian language without sufficient basis. Moreover, it encourages the youth to use more anglicisms which are transformed from domestic use into the public area. (Vainiute, 2000).

One more area where threats for the Lithuanian language are encountered is science, when scientific works written in a foreign language are ranked higher than those in the Lithuanian language. Thus, conditions for Lithuanian scientific style to disappear are created. One should acknowledge that we are going to face multilingualism and rather fast bilingualism future. However, we should accept it not as an unavoidable situation but rather perceive the limits of our identity and the role of language use. In addition, we should understand that EU nations are multilingual but not English-speaking and, thus, Lithuanian and English bilingualism should not be assessed more than Lithuanian-German, Lithuanian-French or any other bilingualism. In general more acceptable language use direction for Lithuania should be emphasized as well as resistance to unfounded narrowing of the fields where Lithuanian is used should be developed. Therefore, it is very difficult to predict the subsequent development of the Lithuanian language and that is why positions of the Lithuanian language in multilingual Europe's conditions must be enhanced in all possible ways. We must understand that protection of the status of the Lithuanian language as that of a national language as well as language use issues depend on us. We must perceive its importance because, as M. Daukša wrote, "Language is the common bond of love, mother of unity, father of citizenship, guardian of a state. Destroy it and you will destroy harmony, unity and welfare. (Vainiutė, 2010).

One of such challenges is the situation of language education in Lithuania. Education language policy is a part of country's general policy. In this situation Lithuanian, the same as other European languages having fewer users, is threatened with establishment of one foreign language in the most important areas of the society – English is getting its way into higher education, technologies, scientific research. Bologna process is affected by international tendency to regard education not as public but rather as market service competing with international institutions and payment for studying as a norm. Today European universities compete for foreign students by providing courses in English. This process has started in Lithuania as well. Several education languages are distinguished in the national level too. Priority is given to scientific publications in languages other than Lithuanian. Obviously, there are certain science fields, projects of exact and natural sciences where Lithuanians and specialists of other fields from all over the world are pursuing their activity and in this case it is acceptable that articles are written and communication occurs in the language upon agreement. It is undoubtedly true that Lithuanian scientists cannot restrict themselves with Lithuanian scientific journals. Motivation to study in Lithuanian is diminished by general European education space developed on the basis of English. Lithuanian education needs international perspective but its development should not violate Lithuanian society's interest and, thus, state institutions must regulate the ratio of languages used in education by legal and financial measures.

However, Baltic centres worldwide contribute to the prestige of the Lithuanian language. These are non-traditional sources of education in Lithuanian. Education language policy can be developed indirectly. Policy of Lithuania with regard to world Baltic centres indirectly adds to the development of Lithuanian language education because world Baltic centres play a positive role in the development of Lithuanian education. Internationality of Baltic (Lithuanian) scientific research enhances exchange of scientific ideas, extends scientific discussions, encourages new Baltic (Lithuanian) discoveries in world archives and also makes a positive



impact on language education development in Lithuania. In various documents of national institutions it is claimed that currently in the world (mostly in Europe) there are 30 such centres where Lithuanian language (Baltic languages) and cultures are investigated and taught from one to more than a dozen people. (Zabarskaitė, Smetonienė, 2012).

Social and cultural relations of linguistic communities formed due to historic and political circumstances both connect and destroy European space. None of contemporary European languages can avoid contacts with neighbouring languages or the English language occupying more and more business, academic and even personal space. In times of smart communication technologies and global network one cannot create isolated monolingual media and limit from external impact, either it is introducing single loan words into a language or establishing attitudes to give priority to a foreign language in certain fields of life. New tendencies of language dissemination and use as well as regulations of national language policy must be assessed regarding experience of other European countries' language planning and management and general EU language policy regulations. The policy of EU multilingualism and internationalisation promotion creates new environment of national language development, encourages to look for more creative and flexible ways to find the place for a national language in the most vulnerable areas of public life.

## Conclusions

Summarizing what has been said, by analysing the policy, planning and prestige of the Lithuanian language in the context of European languages, it is claimed that legal regulation of the Lithuanian language is sufficient so that society could access any information in its national language. However, the impact of other languages is unavoidable living in a global world. Thus, apart from legal regulation, it is important to appropriately develop language policy and planning, and raise its prestige, which largely depends on society's attitude to the language itself and its significance in life. As well as this, a state must take care of this by providing opportunities and conditions for society to feel the necessity and importance of its language to preserve national identity. In the context of EU policy, though it regulates a national language of each member state as a very significant aspect, numerous legal acts are created to promote and develop bilingualism. In addition, there are opinions that such multilingualism is economically useless. Apart from these challenges, Lithuanian language policy and prestige are threatened with problems due to changes in education language policy, digitalization of Lithuanian, transforming of publications and other resources into electronic space, works of using the Lithuanian language in electronic space. However, one can see the benefits of Baltic centres arranged in all over the world, which develop and publicize not only the language itself but also undertake scientific research with other countries.

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