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LANGUAGES – A TOOL IN THE HANDS OF NATIONALISTS AND GLOBALIST. THE CURRENT SITUATION IN EUROPE

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ABSTRACT: Article „Languages – a tool in the hands of nationalists and globalists – the current situation in Europe” is going to present the current problem that appears on the Old Continent in the area of using the case of knowledge of languages to present the political situation. In the current times nationalistic tendencies are starting to be more visible – by in example rising of popularity of conservative and right-oriented parties or growing up of nationalist movements that are using xenophobic slogans. By focusing on the procedure of applying for citizenship of one of the European Union’s country, and on the position of languages in the European Union it is possible to understand some processes that are appearing in the political area. By taking into account these tendencies it is also possible to take attention on the fact of development of position of the languages in the Europe.

In the contemporary era of globalization interpersonal interaction occurs not only within one country, but also internationally. This applies to private, commercial as well as political relationships at the highest decision-making levels of the world community. An indispensable tool for taking actions of far-reaching consequences is the language which enables communication. Currently, the most widely used language in the world is English. It plays a key role in international trade. However, in terms of

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policy, one can see a trend of moving away from the “superiority” of English over other languages. It is increasingly visible that efforts are made to use languages of each country. This is due, among other things, to recently growing nationalist tendencies. It is noticeable in a huge pressure of countries to their language being learned by people applying for citizenship of the country concerned. On the other hand, the European Union, in line with its main ideas, is trying to influence the alignment of all the official languages of the Member States. Thus, a certain dissonance arises between the expectations of individual countries as independent units, and the expectations of these countries as a community. A look at these two different points of view will help to understand the existing mechanisms, as well as to answer the question – whether Europe, and particularly the European Union, still faces some challenges?

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT AS A CRITERION FOR OBTAINING CITIZENSHIP

Social and legal sciences determine the citizenship of a country as a durable legal tie bonding the individual to the state (Jabłońska-Bonca, 1996, p. 110). It is important to emphasize the term “legal tie” meaning the essence of citizenship directly related to the legal status of individuals in the country. It therefore provides only juristic affiliation, not a social, cultural or mental belonging. Most states of modern Europe or even the world requires a candidate that wants to obtain its citizenship to know its language or culture. The legitimacy of this requirement is associated with the interaction of the individual with the other actors in society. As far as knowledge of the culture of a particular nation seems necessary to properly read behaviors and beliefs and it is difficult to deny the truth of these requirements, the ability to use the language remains a contentious issue. It is indisputable that in the modern world English language became known as an international language (Sharifian, 2001, p. 1; Knopp, Meierkord, 2006, p. 165; Graddol, 2006). Although in many countries it is not recognized as an official language, a significant part of their inhabitants use it as a foreign language. Taking this into account we can say that

knowledge of the language of the country concerned is not a necessary requirement to establish contact with their native inhabitants.

To be recognized as a citizen of the Republic of Poland one needs to confirm knowledge of the Polish language. This is required in several forms of obtaining that citizenship – especially in the aspect of granting citizenship. This can be done in two ways. The first is to submit Certificate of Polish language at the B1 level issued by the State Commission for the Certification of Proficiency in Polish as a Foreign Language. The second way is to submit a secondary school or higher school certificate obtained in Poland or abroad. In both of these cases, completed course must be conducted in Polish. The exception is that a minor foreigner, in case when certain requirements are fulfilled by the parent(s). Similar requirements can be found in most countries of the modern world. Looking at the other criteria necessary to obtain citizenship it is hard to find another requirement for knowledge of, for example, culture, geography, literature or history. Considering that it can be concluded that knowledge of a country is

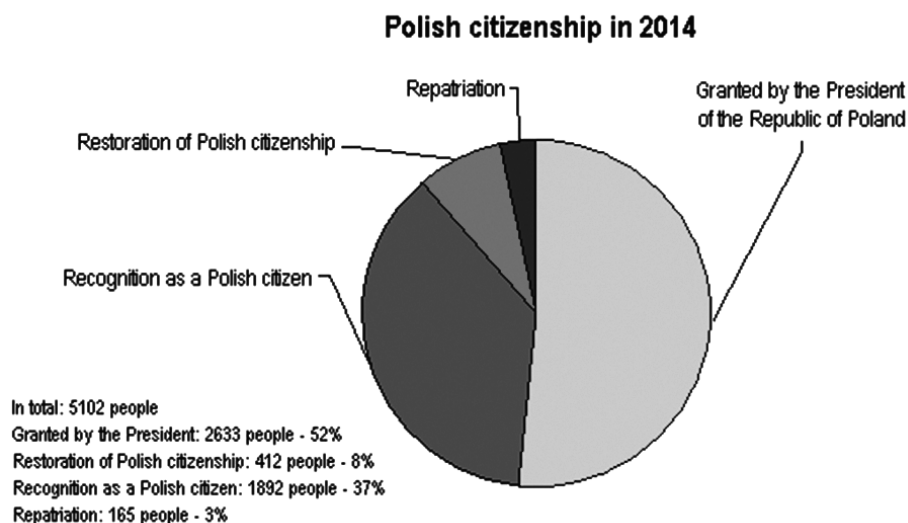


Figure 1. Polish citizenship in 2014

Source: MSWiA (Polish citizenship in 2014). Downloaded from: https://mswia.gov.pl/dokumenty/zalaczniki/1/1-23272_g.png.

not necessary to obtain its citizenship. It therefore unambiguously shows that the reason for putting the language requirement of the country is a matter of communication.

As can be seen from the graph, the previously mentioned form of obtaining citizenship, which requires knowledge of a foreign language, accounts for more than half of Polish citizenship being granted in 2014. This is the number of 2633 people per year, an average of more than seven new citizens of the Republic of Poland a day.

Some legitimacy of that requirement in applying for citizenship is the further use of the criterion of having the citizenship in applying for various jobs. If you want to run for e.g. village head/mayor/president, Member of Parliament, senator, or the position in the Internal Security Agency, you should have Polish citizenship (Formal requirements). It is a formal requirement, which means that its failure does not allow a person to fully participate in the recruitment process/elections. Looking further at the importance of knowing the language of the country concerned to perform certain jobs, we should pay attention to, inter alia, the criteria for the position of Health and Safety Inspector in local government, where it is not required to have Polish citizenship, but it is necessary to know the Polish language. Taking into account the requirement of citizenship when holding certain positions we can see indirect requirement of knowing the language, which in the ordinary way may be replaced by adding such criterion itself.

It would be ineffective to consider the legitimacy of the criterion of the language when applying for citizenship without examining the rights and privileges granted to people with the status of a citizen of a particular state. The amount of their civic rights (this group of rights should be distinguished from human rights that everyone is entitled to, regardless of the nationality), in particular political, social and economic rights, is very large and very important for the peaceful development of the individuals in society. Not without reason these “pros” of having a citizenship are a lure on the way to apply for them. Therefore, when considering the language requirement – it can be the one of the barriers faced by foreigners in relation to direct and unlim-

ited access to the financial resources of the state concerned. Criterion of knowing a particular language is to force individuals to make advance preparation, so that in social life they could be equivalent to Polish citizens who have lived in Poland all their lives. However, in this aspect attention should be paid to the numerous rights that also foreigners are entitled to, such as social assistance. In this respect, the state does not require these people to know the language. Out of all possible rights for foreigners living in its territory the most important ones are those related to the financial issues. Thus, access to a package of privileges in this respect is somewhat denial of the thesis to create a “barrier” to the use of state resources.

A very interesting issue of the reasonableness of this requirement is the actual number of Polish citizens who speak Polish. According to the assumption resulting from that criterion – every citizen knows the Polish language, and those applying for it will know it. Is that true? Not completely. Children whose parents are Polish citizens, but who grew up abroad – using another language every day – do not have to speak Polish. In this respect they are Polish citizens not knowing Polish language. The same applies to the children of people who apply for Polish citizenship – language requirement applies only to parents, not children. These two examples are just part of the whole number of cases in which Polish citizens do not speak Polish. Therefore, this contradicts another thesis that all Polish citizens speak Polish, and each person receiving citizenship also knows how to use this language.

The difficulty of learning a foreign language (in the case of citizenship – the national language used in the country) by adults is a contentious issue in education. In this group the most effective form of learning is based on the cognitive process. On the other hand, the whole process of learning a foreign language can cause adults to experience enormous stress due to the presentation of their skills in a diverse group of people or the issue of time pressure. To get the best results it is important to choose the appropriate teachers and materials that support the process of learning for the individual person. Therefore, it is important to ask the question: Whether learning the language by adults should take place in an artificial way as a result of

the undergoing language classes, or as a result of the natural learning process that results from the existence in a society that uses the language. It is indisputable that the second form of learning contributes to the fastest and most enduring effects. Moreover, it leads also to avoiding the increasingly widespread “fear of the use of language in direct relations.” Therefore, the requirement of knowing the language in order to obtain citizenship forces many individuals to undergo fast, stressful language education. Looking at the theoretical purpose of this requirement – the whole procedure striving to obtain citizenship, and focusing on artificial learning of a foreign language, misses the point.

Therefore, is the language requirement when applying for citizenship necessary? Certainly not. This is only the requirement resulting from the nationalist ideas, or the possible desire to facilitate future communication between people within the country and the growing international trend regarding this type of criterion in the legal systems. However, looking at the idea itself – it is lacking only adequate point in the requirements, which will focus on basic knowledge of tradition, history, geography, and other aspects necessary to move easily in the society of the country concerned. The only plus of contemporary situation is the requirement for a certain level of knowledge of the language – this is usually a level B2, which means advanced skills in speaking and writing, but not proficiency equal to native speakers, which still allows many people to obtain citizenship. On top of all this, however, remains another question – what is the position of European Union and its principles of equality, freedom of movement and, above all, the issue of citizenship of the European Union, which is identical to the citizenship of the Member States of the Community, in this regard. In addition, it is worth noting that in accordance with its language policy – besides the protection of linguistic diversity – European Union puts emphasis on the promotion of language for cultural and social integration. Moreover, multilingualism of its citizens is to increase their chances for education and work in the single European market. Significant aspect is also ‘Mother tongue +2’ plan created at the summit in Barcelona in March 2002, according to which EU citizens from an early age shall learn two foreign languages, in addition to their mother tongue.

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Currently the European Union consists of 28 Member States operating 24 languages including: English, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Estonian, Finnish, French, Greek, Spanish, Irish, Lithuanian, Latvian, Maltese, Dutch, German, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Swedish, Hungarian and Italian. This fact stems from the possibility for each of the countries belonging to the European Union to report one official language. It is worth noting that this also means that these are the working languages. Apart from them, the European Union declares respect for other languages, including 60 regional and minority languages, as well as more than 180 languages of migrants (Ciostek, 2011, p. 115). Such a large number of languages shows the diversity of the Community.

Selecting 24 languages as official languages means, among other things, that all EU legislation or the most important political documents are translated into all of these 24 languages. In addition, every citizen has the right to conduct correspondence with the European Commission in his or her own language (provided that it is one of the official languages). Members of the European Parliament may also speak in one of these languages, and the European Council and the Council of the European Union meetings are translated into all these languages. Such emphasis on multilingualism of European Union forces to employ around 4300 translators and 800 interpreters in its institutions (EU administration – employees, languages and headquarters). It should, however, be noted that the European Union talks about language versions, not translations. This stems from a desire to avoid the use of the terms “original” and “translation” what would violate the principle of equality of the official languages of the European Union. On the other hand, simply another language version is not the translation (Stefaniak, 2015, p. 109).

Confirmation of this practice to facilitate international communication within the European Union can be found, inter alia, on the website of the Court of Justice of the European Union: “As each Member State has its own language and specific legal system, the Court of Justice of the European Union is a multilingual institution. Its language arrangements have

no equivalent in any other court in the world, since each of the official languages of the European Union can be the language of a case. The Court is required to observe the principle of multilingualism in full, because of the need to communicate with the parties in the language of the proceedings and to ensure that its case-law is disseminated throughout the Member States” (General Presentation).

It can be also found on the website of the European Parliament: “The European Union has always seen its great diversity of cultures and languages as an asset. Firmly rooted in the European treaties, multilingualism is the reflection of this cultural and linguistic diversity. It also makes the European institutions more accessible and transparent for all citizens of the Union, which is essential for the success of the EU’s democratic system” (Multilingualism in the European Parliament).

This multilingualism of EU institutions results from the already mentioned language policy adopted by the European Union. Relevant here are regulations, such as Art. 3 TEU or Art. 21 and Art. 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, which prohibit any discrimination on grounds of language (Skulimowska, 2013). The principle of equality in terms of language also has its representation in terms of the existence of different language versions of all documents produced and processed in the institutions of the European Union.

In order to ensure the continuation and proper preparation of language versions necessary for the proper functioning of the European Union, on 28th November 1994 the European Commission set up Translation Centre for bodies of the European Union (Council Regulation (EC) No 2965/94). A year later, the European Commission increased its role in order to reinforce interinstitutional cooperation in the field of translation. The center is an agency the functioning of which is carried out in the framework of the European public law. It has legal personality and is based in Luxembourg.

Given the number of documents translated every day and the language diversity of the European Union, it is necessary to draw attention to the frequent occurrence of errors and differences between the various language versions. This problem has a huge impact on the process of legal unification within the Community. A good example is the law of the Court

of Justice of the European Union that proves the essence of the problem in the implementation of European legislation in the legal systems of the Member States. Many cases in this respect have, however, a positive side – they give a chance to improve the quality of translations and to contribute to improving the quality of translation and reduce legal differences between countries. Excellent examples of such cases are: Judgment of the Court (Grand Chamber), 17 July 2014 – *Adala Bero v Regierungspräsidium Kassel* (C-473/13), *Ettayebi Bouzalmate v Kreisverwaltung Kleve* (C-514/13), Judgment of the Court (Third Chamber) of 19 April 2007 – *Velvet & Steel Immobilien und Handels GmbH v Finanzamt Hamburg-Eimsbüttel* (C-455/05) or Judgment of the Court (Third Chamber) of 3 March 2005 – *Fonden Marselisborg Lystbådehavn v Skatteministeriet* (C-428/02). Based on these matters a problem resulting from the differences between the various language versions and its impact on the unification of the law can be noticed. Bad translation of a single word can completely change the situation of a country's citizens – and this shows the lack of equality of citizens of the European Union in terms of EU law application. A huge impact on this situation has the frequent lack of understanding of the cultural foundations of individual states. The only chance to improve the quality and compatibility of the various language versions is to develop a common strategy to prepare them by employees of EU institutions.

Therefore, bearing in mind the aims of the European Union and its language policy, as well as efforts to unify the legal systems of the Member States, attention should be paid to the further development of Europe in this respect, which faces the previously mentioned nationalist tendencies. Certainly an attempt to equalize all languages is a better option than choosing one universal language of the EU institutions.

The European Union is currently waiting for a very big challenge – United Kingdom, which announced a desire to leave EU, was the only country that reported English as the official language. Ireland reported Gaelic and Malta – Maltese. This means that at the time when UK leaves EU structures – English language ceases to be the official language, and therefore its use within the institution would be groundless. Possible solutions to be applied by the European Union are to leave English as the

official language, allowing Ireland/Malta to change their language (provided that one of those countries desires to do that) or granting this language special status. A major problem is the case of these solutions is that they do not conform to the principle of equal treatment of languages. Therefore, there is a question – how significant will be “a fight for the language” in the European arena. It is one of the many challenges faced by Europe in the field of granting status to the individual languages. Other problems will appear as a result of nationalist movements of contemporary national minorities/ autonomous regions.

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