

# European Wealth of Multilingualism: Quo vadis, Croatia?

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# EU languages: the major, the minor and the endangered

- 24 **official** languages of the European Union
- More than 30 **minority** languages, most without official usage anywhere (even outside the EU)
- Over 100 **endangered** languages, facing extinction

*What are the prospects for the survival of **small languages** in Europe today?*

# European language diversity policies

- **Multilingualism as a value of the EU Treaties**
  - e.g. Treaty of Amsterdam, 1999 – the right to address any EU institution in one's country's official language and receive a reply in same language
- **Framework Strategy for Multilingualism (EC, 2005)**
  - Encouragement of early language learning and availability of official EU informations in multiple languages
- **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Council of Europe, 1992)**
  - Requires enabling of official usage and legal protection of minority and regional languages

# Definitions and goals of the Charter

- "regional or minority languages" means languages 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**
- "territory in which the regional or minority language is used" means
  - the geographical area in which the said language is **the mode of expression of a number of people justifying the adoption of the various protective and promotional measures** provided for in this Charter

# Definitions and goals of the Charter

- The promotion of equal treatment of minority languages is **not to be considered discrimination towards majority languages**
- Measures provided for in the Charter pertain to the following areas:
  - a. Education
  - b. Judicial authorities
  - c. Administrative authorities and public services
  - d. Media
  - e. Cultural activities and facilities
  - f. Economic and social life
  - g. Transfrontier exchanges

# Example of good practice – revival of the Welsh language

- In the second half of the 20th century, the usage of Welsh in education has been strengthened and the younger generations were encouraged to become bilingual by acquiring their minority language
  - Today, Welsh has several hundred thousand active speakers
  - This figure increases further when passive understanding is taken into consideration
  - High level of bilingualism in public and official usage

# Treatment of Croatian minorities in European countries

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE	CHALLENGES
<p><b>MONTENEGRO</b> 6.000 Croats in Montenegro are a recognized national minority. Agreement on the Protection of the Croatian minority in the Republic of Montenegro and the Montenegrin minority in Croatia, signed in 2009 → Mutually ratified, ensures the realization of all minority rights, including the expression, preservation and development of linguistic identities</p>	<p><b>SLOVENIA</b> 35.642 Croats, Croatian language is mother tongue to 54.079 inhabitants; however, Croats in Slovenia have no minority rights, even though they have been requesting to be recognized as a national minority for a long time. → Croatian language in Slovenia, although traditionally spoken, is not recognized as a regional or minority language</p>
<p><b>ROMANIA</b> Around 6.000 Croats, recognized as a national minority → Constitutionally guaranteed rights to language learning and education in Croatian, judicial proceedings in Croatian and special parliamentary representation; Group of Romanian-Croatian friendship active in Parliament</p>	<p><b>AUSTRIA</b> Around 50.000 Burgenland Croats, Austrian judiciary denies Croatian authorities the possibility to get involved in the protection of their minority rights → Limited capacity for learning Croatian in schools contributes to diminishing expression of Croat national identity</p>
<p><b>ITALY</b> Although few in number (1.800), Molise Croats recognized as language minority, their right to minority language legally ensured; minority protection further strengthened through special bilateral agreements</p>	<p><b>BULGARIA</b> Assimilation policy in effect – concept of single nation does not recognize national minorities; public use of minority languages and scripts is not enabled</p>

# Domestic legislation

- **Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities (NN 93/11)**
- **Article 8:**

The provisions of this Constitutional Act and the provisions of special legislation regulating the rights and freedoms of the members of national minorities shall be interpreted and applied with the purpose of ensuring respect for the members of national minorities and other citizens of the Republic of Croatia and the development of understanding, solidarity, tolerance and dialogue among them.
- **Article 12:**

(1) Equality in the official use of a minority language and script **shall be exercised in the territory of a local self-government unit in which the members of a national minority compose a minimum of one third of the population.**

(2) ... and **when so stipulated in the charter of a local or regional self-government unit**, pursuant to the provisions of special legislation on the use of minority languages and scripts in the Republic of Croatia.
- **Plans of Action for the Act's implementation** (for the period 2008 through 2010, further consolidated for 2011 through 2013)



# Foreign commitments

- **Expert Committee report and Council of Ministers' recommendations, on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (2010)**
- **Treaty of Croatia's Accession to the European Union, article 36, Appendix VII, 9 December 2011**
- **Monitoring report on Croatia's accession preparations, March 2013**
  - *It is welcome that the government continues to ensure the implementation of the constitutional provisions on the use of the Cyrillic script in the city of Vukovar, where Croatians of Serb ethnicity account for 38.5% of the population.*

# Present situation

BASIS FOR BILINGUALISM	MINORITY LANGUAGES	CITIES/ MUNICIPALITIES
Constitutional Act	5	27
Statutes	6	30

However, should the referendum pass:

BASIS FOR BILINGUALISM	MINORITY LANGUAGES	CITIES/ MUNICIPALITIES
Constitutional Act	1	17
Statutes	??	??

MINORITY LANGUAGE	CITIES/MUNICIPALITIES	PERCENTAGE OF NATIONAL MINORITY MEMBERS IN POPULATION
Czech	<del>Končanica municipality</del>	<del>47,03%</del>
Hungarian	<del>Kneževi Vinogradi municipality</del>	<del>38,66%</del>
Slovak	<del>Punitovci municipality</del>	<del>36,94%</del>
Serbian	<del>City of Vrbovsko</del>	<del>35,22%</del>
	<del>City of Vukovar</del>	<del>34,87%</del>
	Biskupija municipality	85,46%
	Borovo municipality	89,73%
	Civljane municipality	78,66%
	<del>Donji Kukuruzari municipality</del>	<del>34,82%</del>
	Dvor municipality	71,90%
	Erdut municipality	54,56%
	Ervenik municipality	97,19%
	<del>Gračac municipality</del>	<del>45,16%</del>
	Gvozd municipality	66,53%
	Jagodnjak municipality	65,89%
	Kistanje municipality	62,22%
	Krnjak municipality	68,61%
	Markušica municipality	90,10%
	Negoslavci municipality	96,86%
	<del>Plaški municipality</del>	<del>45,55%</del>
	Šodolovci municipality	82,58%
	Trpinja municipality	89,75%
	Udbina municipality	51,12%
<del>Vojnić municipality</del>	<del>44,71%</del>	
Vrhovine municipality	80,23%	
Donji Lapac municipality	80,64%	
Italian	<del>Grožnjan - Crisignana municipality</del>	<del>39,40%</del>