Challenges and Perspectives of Communication Between Members of the Police Force and Members of Foreign Nationalities Living in Slovakia

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Abstract. The current paper sheds light on challenges and perspectives of communication between the members of the Police Force and the members of national minorities currently present in the territory of the Slovak Republic. By presenting the relevant legal frameworks at the national, European and international levels, the author provides a closer look at the legislative and institutional definition of the use of the minority languages in the official and also day-to-day communication between the respective groups — members of the Police Force and members of the national minorities — while pointing out the needs of the organisational units of the Police Force in relation to language competence of the employees of District Directorates and Local Police Departments across Slovakia. Based on data obtained from a questionnaire survey conducted by the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for National Minorities, the author analyses the current situation and problematic areas of communication with members of national minorities living in Slovakia from the perspective of members of the Police Force.

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Introduction

The issue of national minorities is one of the important global topics, which is the subject of passionate discussions not only in the territory of individual states but also in the context of the European and international law. The rights of national minorities in the territories of individual states are enshrined in the framework of national legislations. Within the international context, the rights of national minorities form an integral part of not only the universal but also the regional system of human rights protection. The protection of human rights and the rights of national minorities are among the basic objectives of the Millennium Declaration of the United Nations General Assembly (UN), the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) primary documents. The search for an optimal solution to the issue of the rights
of national minorities is also directly related to the definition of religious or linguistic groups, as the term ‘national minority’ means belonging to a certain minority community that does not live with its mother nation in one state but in another state. At the same time, it is necessary to emphasise that when we talk about a minority community, we mean ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

Closely related to the definition of the rights of national minorities living in the territory of individual European Union (EU) Member States is the issue of their language rights and, last but not least, communication with persons belonging to national minorities, especially in relation to the competent authorities. This implies the need to map the current situation regarding communication with persons belonging to national minorities within individual EU Member States, whether in official or non-official contact. The main goal of this paper is to present not only the legal and institutional framework for the use of languages of national minorities in Slovakia from the national, European and international law perspectives, respectively, but also to point out the problems that members of the Police Force have to deal with in communication with members of national minorities living in Slovakia. With regard to application practice, at the same time, to propose at least partial solutions to the current challenging situation in the subject area. For the purposes of the current paper, selected data obtained within the questionnaire survey carried out by the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for National Minorities in the period 2017–2018 were used.

Based on the nature of the scientific problem and the fact that the investigated problem is theoretically insufficiently elaborated for the area of Police Studies, qualitative research was conducted as the basic approach in the research. As part of the application of qualitative research, a wide range of different research methods, both theoretical and empirical, were used.

The theoretical methods included:

- classification analysis: during the processing of the initial factual material and during the final statistical processing of the collected data,
- causal analysis: when analysing the current state, and during the analysis of the legislative frameworks currently in force in the territory of the Slovak Republic,
- content analysis of the text: when analysing all relevant documentation, in particular legislative and other documentation,
- study and analysis of legal regulations regulating the legal status of foreign national minorities within the territory of the Slovak Republic,
- generalisation: in the creation and formulation of conclusions, in the creation of partial conclusions to the set objectives,
- selection, comparison, analogy: collection of data and sources, including factual material and knowledge obtained in other ways,
- induction, deduction: together with other analytical-synthetic methods in determining the research problem, objectives and conclusions and formulating recommendations.

National Minorities and Language Rights in the Context of the European Union’s Legislative and Conceptual Frameworks

In recent years, the protection of national minorities has become one of the most sensitive issues, especially with regard to the functioning of the European Union as an association of diverse Member States. The centralisation of politics and identity brought about by the creation of the European Union transcends the national borders of the Member States and in many ways reinforces the internal differences related to the composition of the population and the diversity of cultures living in the Member States. The presence of national minorities, which differ from the dominant culture of the state in which they are located, affects the citizens of that state in some way.

The fact that people in many countries feel disparities in the status of citizens belonging to a national minority has contributed to the citizens’ initiative entitled ‘Minority Package — One Million Signatures for Diversity in Europe’, which directly addresses the EU’s call for better protection for people belonging to national minorities and linguistic minorities and strengthening cultural and linguistic diversity in the EU. At this point, it should be noted that for the purposes of this paper, we will pay particular attention to the European area and its Member States, including the Slovak Republic. The annex to the proposed citizens’ initiative specifically mentions 11 EU legal acts, under which the proposed citizens’ initiative essentially focuses on existing Commission proposals, but also sets out a clear demand for policy measures in the following fields: regional and minority languages, education and culture, regional policy, participation, equality, audiovisual and other media content, as well as regional (state) aid. As regards the institutions of the EU, whatever their field of competence, they shall be required, in accordance with Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) to ‘respect human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.’ And in compliance with the Article 3 (3): It shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe’s cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced’. At the same time, in Article 21 (1) of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, discrimination on the grounds of ‘sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited’. It is important to note, however, that none of the above-mentioned provisions constitute a legal basis for action by the EU institutions, although under Article 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the Council of the European Union may ‘take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation’.

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2 Article 2, Treaty on the European Union.
3 Article 3 (3), Treaty on the European Union.
4 Article 21 (1), Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
5 Article 19 (1), Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.
However, this comprehensive list of grounds for discrimination does not include belonging to a national minority. Therefore, Article 19 TFEU cannot constitute a legal basis for adopting a Union act for the purpose of implementing the Treaties in relation to ‘effective measures to address discrimination and to promote equal treatment, including for national minorities, in particular through a revision of the existing Council directives on the subject of equal treatment, on the basis of Article 19(1) TFEU’.6

One of the most important manifestations of an individual’s identity is their language, which is also a sign of shared heritage and defines individuals who belong to a particular national minority. However, language is also a means of communication and promotes open access and mutual understanding within and outside the community. As a community of Member States that are also diverse in the use of languages, the EU has successfully implemented a multilingualism policy that strengthens the life opportunities of EU citizens, in particular, in increasing employability, facilitating access to rights and services, and promoting social cohesion and last but not least, in strengthening intercultural dialogue. Language rights/linguistic rights of national minorities are a frequently debated issue, as in many countries there are still restrictions on the opportunities for national minorities to learn in minority languages at the educational institutions, as well as restrictions on the use of minority languages in public life and in the media. As early as 2013, as part of the presentation of the Annual Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minorities, Rita Izsak-Ndiaye, the UN Human Rights Council, expressed concerns about the dominance of national and international languages vis-à-vis national minorities, especially regarding the processes of assimilation of persons belonging to national minorities within the countries in whose territory they live, as well as the fear of a decrease in the number of users of minority languages.7 These concerns have been transformed into nine areas of interest:

(1) threats to the existence of minority languages and linguistic minorities;
(2) recognition of minority languages and linguistic rights;
(3) use of minority languages in public life;
(4) minority languages in education;
(5) minority languages in the media;
(6) minority languages in public administration and judicial fields;
(7) minority language use in names, place names and public signs;
(8) participation in economic and political life; and
(9) provision of information and services in minority languages.8

However, it is not only the above-mentioned annual report that pays special attention to the language and communication of national minorities. The right to communicate in the language of a national minority in the territory of individual EU Member States is also elaborated in various international guidance documents.

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(e.g. the 1992 UN Declaration, the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities, the Council Commentary Europe No. 3 on the linguistic rights of persons belonging to national minorities under the Framework Convention and the Recommendations of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe). Based on these documents, the national authorities of the individual Member States have adopted basic approaches to fulfilling their human rights obligations, including the issue of the use of the language of a national minority. In particular, it is necessary to take into account the following:

- respect the integral place of language rights as human rights;
- recognise and promote tolerance, cultural and linguistic diversity and mutual respect, understanding and cooperation between all segments of society;
- put in place legislation and policies that address language rights and provide a clear framework for their implementation;
- implement human rights obligations by generally respecting the principle of proportionality in the use or promotion of different languages by public authorities and the linguistic principle of freedom for private parties;
- integrate the concept of active supply as an integral part of public services in order to recognise the state’s obligation to respect and ensure language rights in a way that is respected by those who use minority languages (the state may not specifically require such services but may indirectly support them if necessary);
- put in place effective complaint handling mechanisms before judicial, administrative and executive bodies to address and remedy language rights problems.

Several international organisations have addressed the challenge of implementing these principles of language rights. The UN Forum on Minorities, the UNESCO Section on Languages and Multilingualism, the Council of Europe’s Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities have developed the processes and tools to promote and clarify these principles. At the same time, the designated organisations continue to provide platforms for the constructive exchange of information and knowledge on the implementation of language rights and to support the continuous implementation of human rights processes and tools. One of the extremely valuable tools for effectively preparing, applying and evaluating the policies of national authorities in the implementation of the above rights is the availability of reliable and disaggregated data.

Based on the above-listed efforts and documents, international treaties in the field of protection of the linguistic rights of national minorities (by which the Slovak Republic, as a Member State of the European Union, is bound) were also implemented in Slovakia. The most important international documents include the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe for the Protection of National Minorities (in the territory of the Slovak Republic — Notification of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic No. 160/1998 Coll.) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (in the territory of the Slovak Republic — Notification of Affairs of the Slovak Republic No. 588/2001 Coll.).
Communication with Members of National Minorities and Protection of the Language Rights of National Minorities in Slovakia

The rights of national minorities and ethnic groups guaranteed by international treaties are also binding for the Slovak Republic as an EU Member State. With regard to the fact that the rights and obligations arising from international agreements take precedence over national legislation, the rights of national minorities are firmly enshrined in the territory of the Slovak Republic in the Constitution of the Slovak Republic itself. Within the fourth section of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the ‘Constitution of the Slovak Republic’), the rights of national minorities and ethnic groups are defined. In accordance with Article 34, ‘citizens forming national minorities or ethnic groups in the Slovak Republic are guaranteed all-round development, in particular the right to develop their own culture together with other members of the minority or ethnic group, to disseminate and receive information in their mother tongue, to associate in national associations, to establish and maintain educational and cultural institutions’. However, the law in question presupposes not only communication in the mother tongue of national minorities, but since individual national minorities reside in the territory of another state, they are also forced to communicate in the official language of the respective Member State. The need for mutual communication thus creates a space for multilingualism, which naturally came into life not only among members of national minorities but also among members of the majority nation, i.e. of the Slovak population, especially in border areas, or at the border of national regions and municipalities. The state language of the Slovak Republic is the Slovak language, as ‘the Slovak language is the most important feature of the Slovak nation, the most precious value of its cultural heritage and expression of the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic and general communication of its citizens’. The use of the official language of the Slovak Republic is regulated by § 3 of Act No. 270/1995 Coll. on the State Language of the Slovak Republic. Based on the above-mentioned paragraph, ‘state bodies and state organisations, bodies of territorial self-government and bodies of public law institutions in the exercise of their powers are obliged to use the state language throughout the territory of the Slovak Republic’. Act No. 184/1999 Coll. on the Use of Languages of national minorities, however, allows persons belonging to national minorities to also use the language of a national minority in official communication with the competent authorities. These are mainly cases of citizens of the Slovak Republic for whom bilingualism or multilingualism is a natural consequence of existence in a multi-ethnic environment. The rights of persons belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups and the rights of foreigners who do not speak the state language shall be guaranteed by translation and interpretation under the conditions laid down by the law in question.

An important document of a non-legislative nature with a long-term horizon concerning the status and rights of persons belonging to national minorities,

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9 Article 34, Constitution of the Slovak Republic.
10 Act No. 270/1995 Coll. on the State Language of the Slovak Republic.
11 Ibid.
including linguistic rights, is the Action Plan for the Protection of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities and Ethnic Groups 2016–2020 (the so-called ‘Action Plan’). The Government of the Slovak Republic, at its meeting on 26 October 2016, approved by Resolution No. 492/2016 that the main goal of the Action plan is to ensure an effective, transparent and reliable system of protection and support of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups, including the strengthening of its institutional security.\footnote{Report on the Status and Rights (2017 and 2018)…, op. cit.}

Part of the priority axes set out in the Action Plan of the Government of the Slovak Republic includes improving the conditions for the use of the languages of national minorities and ethnic groups in practice. The implementation of this objective was accompanied by the establishment of an advisory group of the Plenipotentiary to ensure the harmonisation of practice with the applicable Act on the Use of Languages of National Minorities (hereinafter referred to as the ‘Plenipotentiary Language Advisory Group’). The Advisory Language Group of the Plenipotentiary was set up for a period of almost two years, \textit{i.e.} until 31 December 2020. The Advisory Language Group itself consists of five separate sub-groups dealing with the Hungarian, Ruthenian, Romani, Ukrainian and German issues, in particular with regard to uniform technical terminology in those languages, which are necessary for the drafting of legislative texts, official forms or methodological documents.

**National Minorities and their Languages Used within the Territory of the Slovak Republic**

In accordance with Government Decree No. 221/1999 Coll., a total of 656 municipalities are registered, in which citizens of the Slovak Republic belonging to a national minority make up at least 20% of the population. The group also includes 18 municipalities with a population belonging to two national minorities, which appear twice in the list (11 Ruthenian-Ukrainian municipalities, 5 Hungarian-Roma municipalities, 1 Ukrainian-Roma municipality and 1 Ruthenian-Roma municipality). It follows from the above that the actual number of municipalities in which citizens of the Slovak Republic belonging to a national minority make up at least 20% of the population is 638.

The Act on the Use of Languages of National Minorities allows members of national minorities to use the language of a minority in official communication, provided that citizens of the Slovak Republic who belong to a national minority make up at least 20% of the population. The last census of the population of the Slovak Republic was carried out in 2011. The multidimensional table of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic shows that in addition to the majority of the Slovak nation, more national minorities live in the Slovak Republic, especially the Hungarian national minority. The second largest national minority living in the Slovak Republic is the Roma minority. Based on the above data, we can state the following ethnic composition of the population in Slovakia: Slovak (80.7%), Hungarian (8.5%), Roma (2.0%), Czech (0.6%), Ruthenian, Ukrainian, Russian, German, Polish and others (8.2%). The data also show that the most widely used minority language in the
Slovak Republic (SR) is the Hungarian language, followed by the Ruthenian and Ukrainian languages, and the use of the Czech language in official communication meets the requirement of intelligibility with the state language in compliance with the international agreement the Slovak Republic is bound by. The ethnic diversity, linguistic and cultural diversity of Slovakia has always been rather a dynamic phenomenon, which resulted from the natural need for mutual communication between the majority population and members of national minorities. Mutual knowledge of linguistic and cultural aspects of intersecting cultures and languages has contributed to diverse and usually enriching connections in the context of social, economic and cultural life. However, the existence of such an intertwining of cultures and languages has also brought accompanying features of interethnic contacts and the adoption of cultural phenomena. 'Due to the multinational composition of the population of Slovakia, there is a mutual linguistic and cultural influence of national minorities, as well as linguistic and cultural changes'. ¹³ Even though the culture of national minorities usually differs to a greater or lesser extent from their original culture, national minorities still retain signs of national identity and cultural identity, which is manifested primarily in the specifics of the language used for communication between members of national minorities, but to some extent also towards the majority population, both in official and non-official contact with the competent authorities. In some areas of Slovakia, e.g. in the south, the influence of Hungarian national minorities is more pronounced than in other parts of Slovakia. In this area, therefore, a natural use of not only Slovak but also Hungarian in official communication with the competent authorities is an ordinary practice. This situation is not non-standard even in relation to other national minorities. At present, there are at least nine national minorities living in the territory of today’s Slovakia.

The active use of the language of national minorities in Slovakia is also supported by teaching in primary and secondary schools. Although teaching the state language, i.e. Slovak, is compulsory in all primary and secondary schools, a language other than the state language may be the language of instruction and the language of examination to the extent provided by law. At present, education and training in Slovakia are also conducted in the following languages:

- in Hungarian at the level of kindergartens, primary, secondary and higher education,
- in the Ukrainian language at the level of kindergartens, primary and secondary schools,
- in Bulgarian at the level of primary and secondary schools,
- in the Ruthenian language at the level of kindergartens and primary schools, and
- in German at primary school level. ¹⁴

Based on the above-mentioned, it follows that communication in the languages of national minorities is an everyday part of the lives of members of national minorities, not only in a small circle of family members or community (in informal communication). The use of national minorities’ languages in public life

¹⁴ Information extracted from EACEA. EN Key aspects of the Slovak education system/SK Klúčové znaky Slovenského vzdelávacieho systému.
is emphasised by the Slovak Republic with a focus on the availability of information in the respective languages and their use in the press, media and cultural life. However, the level of use of the languages of national minorities varies depending on the areas of residence of individual national minorities. With particular regard to the younger generation, all national minorities face a high degree of assimilation with the majority population, which they perceive more as a problem. However, from the point of view of communication for the needs of official communication, this is instead an advantage. However, capturing and building national awareness in the younger generation alone is successful for most national minorities.

**Use of Languages of National Minorities by the Members of the Police Force in Slovakia**

The high degree of adaptability of national minorities is perceived positively from the point of view of the majority population, as a good knowledge of the Slovak language in written and colloquial form is the basis of successful communication, either within or outside official communication. Knowledge of the local language, culture and the opportunity to make new contacts contribute to facilitating the existence of national minorities in the Slovak Republic. At the same time, in order to be ready to accomplish tasks with the use of languages of national minorities, the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic in cooperation with the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic public administration bodies, as well as organisational units of security and rescue services (relevant particularly in the process of the implementation of Act No. 184/1999 Coll. on the use of languages of national minorities) also address administrative offenses in the area of the use of languages of national minorities, including the provision of care for professional terminology in the languages of national minorities through the preparation of professional terminological dictionaries. Professional terminological dictionaries serve to simplify, facilitate and streamline the use of minority languages in official communication and are intended primarily for employees of public administration bodies who use the languages of national minorities in everyday communication, as well as for interpreters and translators working with professional texts in the field of public reports, and also for citizens who need to use technical terminological terms in minority languages when dealing with their affairs. So far, the following have been published on the website of the Office of the Plenipotentiary: Slovak-Hungarian Professional Terminological Dictionary, Slovak-Roma Professional Terminological Dictionary, Slovak-Ruthenian Professional Terminological Dictionary, and Slovak-Ukrainian Professional Terminological Dictionary. The dictionaries were prepared by renowned experts who act as lawyers and linguists in the minority languages mentioned. In addition, the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, in cooperation with the Office of the Plenipotentiary, prepared the Report on the Status of Use of Languages of National Minorities in the Slovak Republic for 2017 and 2018 (hereinafter the ‘Language

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The language report is submitted at two-year intervals in accordance with Act No. 184/1999 Coll. on the use of languages of national minorities, as amended (hereinafter referred to as ‘Act No. 184/1999 Coll.’) to the Government of the Slovak Republic. The report maps the relevant period and summarises the national legislative framework for the use of languages of national minorities in the Slovak Republic, as well as current developments in the institutional provision of the use of languages of national minorities in Slovakia and the fulfilment of obligations and exercise of rights arising from Act No. 184/1999 Coll. The language report makes it possible to more comprehensively compare data, as it is prepared continuously for individual periods. As for the scope of the monitored entities and the degree of detail mapping of individual areas of use of the languages of national minorities, these are determined by the respective laws of the Slovak Republic.

As part of the preparation of the report, the Office of the Plenipotentiary conducted an extensive questionnaire survey. The main purpose of the questionnaire survey was to collect data on relevant areas of use of the languages of national minorities in accordance with Act No. 184/1999 Coll. in which the languages of national minorities are used under the conditions laid down by law. At this point, it should be noted that in 2016, for the first time since Act No. 184/1999 Coll. was used as part of the preparation of the report, the Office of the Plenipotentiary also focused on the use of the languages of national minorities by members of the Police Force and members of the Fire and Rescue Service. During this period, the Office of the Plenipotentiary identified 28 district directorates of the Police Force, in which, in addition to the state language, the language of the national minority was also used in official communication. The fourth report on the state of use of minority languages (for the period 2017–2018) within the mapping of the current situation in the given area was based on data obtained from 27 district directorates of the Police Force. The above-mentioned survey also revealed the use of the languages of national minorities by members of the Police Force. The report itself focused on three categories of language rights arising from Act No. 184/1999 Coll. for all monitored entities:

a) language rights, the observance of which is obligatory and their non-observance is an administrative offense pursuant to § 7(b) of Act No. 184/1999 Coll.;

b) language rights, the observance of which is obligatory and their non-observance is not an administrative offense under Act No. 184/1999 Coll.;

c) language rights, the exercise of which is stipulated by Act No. 184/1999 Coll. as optional.

An important step towards actively promoting the use of minority languages is to ensure a sufficient number of staff with appropriate training and the ability to respond to requests in minority languages. Maintaining and improving the level of command of the language of the national minority, especially among members of the Police Force, who perform service in the districts defined in a special regulation is (with regard to the above) often of vital importance.

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16 Fifth report on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in the Slovak Republic/SK Piata správa o implementácii Európskej chartry regionálnych alebo menšinových jazykov v Slovenskej republike, https://rm.coe.int/slovakiaecrm5-sk/1680a06fb8, [accessed: 11/12/2023]


Within the Report on the Status and Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities for 2017 and 2018, it is explicitly stated that, pursuant to Act No. 270/1995 Coll. in § 3 (1) stipulates that state bodies, local self-government bodies, other public administration bodies, legal entities established by them and legal entities established by law use the state language in their official relations and their employees, civil servants, members of the municipal police, members of the Police Force, armed security forces, other armed forces and the Fire and Rescue Corps are obliged to speak and use the state language in official communication; this does not affect the use of languages of national minorities in official communication according to a special regulation, which is Act No. 184/1999 Coll. pursuant to § 7 (4) Act No. 184/1999 Coll. If members of the armed forces, armed security forces, other armed forces, the Fire and Rescue Corps and the municipal police speak the language of a national minority present in the municipality, according to § 2 (1), the language of a national minority in communication with citizens of the Slovak Republic who belong to a national minority may be used.

Thanks to the data obtained from the questionnaire survey conducted by the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for National Minorities, it was possible to summarise the list of organisational units of the Police Force that (in accordance with Act No. 184/1999 Coll.) also use the language of a national minority in addition to the state language in daily communication with members of public. In accordance with the information given in Annex No. 9 of the Report on the Status and Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities for 2017 and 2018, the list of respective organisational units of the Police Force (District Directorates and Local Police Departments) where the languages of minorities are actively used by members of the Police Force is as follows:

1. **Hungarian language** — District Directorate/Local Police Department Senec, Dunajská Streda, Komárno, Bátorevá Kostíhy, Hurbanovo, Kolárovo, Zemianska Oľča, Levice, Kalná nad Hronom, Šahy, Želiezovce, Nové Zámky, Dvory nad Žitavou, Štúrovo, Šurany, Šaľa, Močenok, Vlčany, Lučenec, Revúca, Rimavská Sobota, Veľký Krtiš, Košice — okolie, Michalovce, Rožňava, Trebišov, Galanta;

2. **Roma language** — District Directorate/Local Police Department Brezno, Zvolen, Rožňava, Spišská Nová Ves, Bardejov, Kežmarok, Poprad, Prešov, Vranov nad Topľou;

3. **German language** — District Directorate/Local Police Department Žiar nad Hronom;

4. **Ukrainian language** — District Directorate/Local Police Department Bardejov, Humenné, Stará Ľubovňa, Svidník;

5. **Ruthenian language** — District Directorate/Local Police Department Bardejov, Svidník.

Thus, based on the above-mentioned facts, it can be concluded that the most frequent language of national minorities, which is actively used in the performance of the service of members of the Police Force in Slovakia, is the Hungarian language. However, the above-mentioned questionnaire survey also revealed facts concerning the currently resolved issues of communication between members of the Police Force and members of national minorities. At the same time, however, thanks to the data obtained through the survey, it was possible to identify problem areas that
need increased attention, especially in terms of ensuring effective and seamless communication with persons belonging to national minorities that are currently living in the territory of the Slovak Republic.

**Current Issues Related to Communication between Members of the Police Force and Members of National Minorities in Slovakia**

The Police Force is defined on the basis of § 1 (1) Act No. 171/1993 Coll. on the Police Force, as amended, as follows ‘an armed security force that performs tasks in matters of internal order, security, the fight against crime, including its organised and international forms, and tasks that result for the Police Force from the international obligations of the Slovak Republic’. Additionally, the activities of the Police Force are governed by the Constitution, constitutional laws, laws and other generally binding legal regulations and international treaties by which the Slovak Republic is bound. According to § 4 (1) and (2) Act No. 171/1993 Coll., the Police Force is divided into the following services: criminal police service, financial police service, riot police service, traffic police service, facility protection service, border and alien police service, special purpose service, designated person protection service, and inspection service. The Department of Forensic Expertise Activities, which performs professional activities and expert activities in accordance with special regulations, is also organisationally integrated into the Police Force. The individual Police Force services are set up and abolished by the Minister and also determine the content of their activities and the internal organisation. For the needs of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for National Minorities, the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic identified 27 Police Force District Directorates in which at least 20% of the population are members of the national minorities.

The survey carried out by the Office of the Plenipotentiary was also focused on three thematic areas in relation to members of the Police Force, namely:

1) official communication,
2) bilingual documents,
3) informing the public.

At the end of the questionnaire survey, the individual organisational units of the Police Force had the opportunity to express their opinions on the persisting problems in connection with members of national minorities. In connection with the communication that takes place between members of the Police Force and members of national minorities in municipalities, which are listed in Government Regulation of the Slovak Republic 221/1999 Coll., the survey showed that out of 5,709 employees of the 27 District Directorates, a total of 586 (10%) members spoke the language of the national minority verbally and in writing (these members are employed at 18 District Directorates) and 1,029 (18% of employees in 21 District Directorates of the Police Force) spoke the language of a national minority verbally. There are only 6 District Directorates that have not a single member of the Police Force able to speak the language of a national minority. The possibility of using the language of a national minority when conducting state administration tasks
was provided by 13 District Directorates thanks to members of the organisational unit of the Police Force, 10 of which, together with 12 others, used interpreting or translation services for this purpose. However, in listed cases, the communications between members of the Police Force and the members of national minorities was exclusively related to official communication.

Communication between members of the Police Force and members of national minorities outside official relations was not the subject of interest of the questionnaire survey. The attention paid to creating conditions for the use of the language of a national minority within the mentioned territories in official communication results from the obligations of the Slovak Republic in the context of international and European legislation. However, ensuring the creation of conditions for the use of the language of a national minority in official communication does not remain without problems. As only 10% of Police Force members actively use a language of a national minority verbally and in writing, it is natural that the biggest shortcoming in ensuring the above-mentioned tasks of state administration remains the lack of qualified employees. Despite the efforts of the organisational units of the Police Force to solve the current situation and the use of translation and interpreting services is increasing, the lack of command of the language of national minorities remains a problem. As many as 19% of the District Directorates stated that the lack of interpreters was also one of the key factors influencing the performance of tasks in this area. With regard to the current situation, there are currently only six District Directorates that are able to communicate in the course of business in the language of the minority in addition to the state language and provide information to members of national minorities in the language of the national minority. In other cases, the information is provided either partially (at four District Directorates of the Police Force) or not at all (16 District Directorates of the Police Force). The situation when members of the Police Force were able to communicate with citizens in the language of the national minority was recorded only in a total of 10 organisational units of the Police Force. Ensuring tasks related to the use of the language of a national minority is therefore perceived as problematic, either partially or completely, from the point of view of up to 17 District Directorates (63%). The provision of information to the public that is directly related to the threat to life, health, safety or property of Slovak citizens is completely absent in 24 District Directorates of the Police Force, and in the case of 3 District Directorates of the Police Force, they were listed only partially. The situation is similar to the case of providing general important information serving the citizens of the Slovak Republic — in the case of 26 District Directorates, the information was not published in the language of the national minority.

Future Challenges Related to Communication between Members of the Police Force and Members of National Minorities in Slovakia

Absolutely all law enforcement tasks at the local or state level will be improved when members of the Police Force have sufficient language skills. When performing the police profession, it is necessary to be able to react promptly and communicate
effectively. However, the daily communication of Police Force members does not take place only in the mother tongue, i.e. in Slovak. Particularly where the concentrated population belonging to a particular national minority is above a certain percentage in a given territory, region or local government, it has the right to use its language appropriately in administrative and other areas of public service. The more serious the potential consequences of not using minority languages in a particular area, the more sensitively the effective provision of services and communication with this segment to the public through the appropriate level of use of relevant languages should be addressed, as in the case of minority languages in police services where effective communication may be an issue of life and death. For this reason, it is essential that members of the Police Force are able to communicate properly and can reflect the community in which they serve. Ideally, the community, i.e. a national minority, should be represented by a member of the Police Force to which all citizens (including members of national minorities) can turn with confidence and trust should any problems occur. Gaining citizens' trust is not an easy task, especially for citizens belonging to a national minority who communicate exclusively in the language of the national minority. Especially in critical situations, timely and effective communication is a key factor that often affects the lives of not only members of the public. The day-to-day work of the police includes communicating with citizens, hearing witnesses or relatives of victims, cooperating with colleagues across diverse departments, obtaining testimonies and evidence, educating the public, etc. And because the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, especially in cases of the protection of the life, health, personal liberty and security of persons, and the protection of property, is one of the main roles of the Police Force members, the ability to speak the same language as the individuals they meet contributes to effective and conflict-free communication, which also increases safety and prevents dangerous misunderstandings and unnecessarily violent escalations.

The constant struggle of the representatives of the law with building trustworthy relations with the communities they serve is still a highly topical issue not only abroad but also in Slovakia. Sharing a common language with national minorities is one way to significantly reduce the blocking of communication barriers and promote better understanding, as the coexistence of the majority population and members of national minorities requires effective and conflict-free communication between members of both population groups. Communication is a two-way process, so it is essential that both parties make continuous efforts to improve mutual communication. The opportunity to communicate in the language of a national minority and the inclusion of national minorities significantly eliminates the feeling of exclusion of members of national minorities from what is happening in the society in which they live. Inclusion also contributes to reducing the number of unwanted phenomena, such as crime. Many authors have already pointed out these causal links. Marczyová and Piváček also state (in relation to the Roma community living in Slovakia) that: ‘According to the population, the constant tension between the majority and the Roma community is a very important cause of crime among the Roma ethnic group’.19 Improving mutual communication can also be achieved through active


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use of not only the official language by the national minority. Creating a space for active communication in the language of a national minority also provides recognition of the presence and visibility of members of the national minority in the state, which can contribute to unity and stability within the state.

Conclusion

The articulated insufficient language skills of Police Force members working in areas inhabited by members of national minorities is currently perceived as problematic, including by the organisational units of Police Force. Continuing the education and increasing the language skills of Police Force members in these areas could bring lasting results in the future, especially with regard to the goal of building police credibility and accepting the authority of Police Forces among citizens of both the majority and minority populations. At the same time, bilingualism, i.e. multilingualism of Police Force members, increases their opportunities for further employment within the organisational units of the Police Force. Questions concerning the form of language education provided for the needs of Police Force members remain in the hands of individual organisational units of the Police Force. Questions concerning the form of language education provided for the needs of Police Force members remain in the hands of individual organisational units of the Police Force. Questions concerning the form of language education provided for the needs of Police Force members remain in the hands of individual organisational units of the Police Force. Questions concerning the form of language education provided for the needs of Police Force members remain in the hands of individual organisational units of the Police Force. Questions concerning the form of language education provided for the needs of Police Force members remain in the hands of individual organisational units of the Police Force. Questions concerning the form of language education provided for the needs of Police Force members remain in the hands of individual organisational units of the Police Force. Questions concerning the form of language education provided for the needs of Police Force members remain in the hands of individual organisational units of the Police Force. Questions concerning the form of language education provided for the needs of Police Force members remain in the hands of individual organisational units of the Police Force. Questions concerning the form of language education provided for the needs of Police Force members remain in the hands of individual organisational units of the Police Force.

Communication and interpreting from different languages is a serious problem in Slovakia. Police authorities must currently seek appropriate measures to ensure adequate interpretation, not only for the purpose of communication with persons belonging to national minorities. Complications of providing adequate interpretation do not help to ease the situation in day-to-day communication with minorities. However, enabling access to information and the implementation of communication in the language of a national minority are currently affected by an acute lack of bilingual, and/or multilingual members of the Police force. Providing information and materials in the language of a national minority is a challenge in many municipalities that could be met, e.g. by compiling a reference manual for the needs of the police in specific municipalities in the individual languages of national minorities, taking into account the everyday situations that members of the Police Force have to deal with in the course of their work.

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Streszczenie. Niniejszy artykuł rzuca światło na wyzwania i perspektywy komunikacji między członkami sił policyjnych a członkami mniejszości narodowych obecnych na terytorium Republiki Słowackiej. Przedstawiając odpowiednie ramy prawne na poziomie krajowym, europejskim i międzynarodowym, autor przedstawia bliższe spojrzenie na legislacyjną i instytucjonalną definicję używania języków mniejszości w oficjalnej, a także codziennej komunikacji między odpowiednimi grupami - członkami sił policyjnych i członkami mniejszości narodowych, wskazując jednocześnie na potrzeby jednostek organizacyjnych sił policyjnych w odniesieniu do kompetencji językowych pracowników dyrekcji okręgowych i lokalnych oddziałów policji na Słowacji.

Na podstawie danych uzyskanych z badania ankietowego przeprowadzonego przez Biuro Pełnomocnika Rządu Republiki Słowackiej ds. Mniejszości Narodowych, autor analizuje obecną sytuację i problematyczne obszary komunikacji z członkami mniejszości narodowych mieszkających na Słowacji z perspektywy członków Sił Policyjnych.

Resumen. El presente artículo arroja luz sobre los retos y las perspectivas de la comunicación entre los miembros de las fuerzas policiales y los miembros de las minorías nacionales que residen en el territorio de la República Eslovaca. El presente artículo arroja luz sobre los retos y las perspectivas de la comunicación entre los miembros de las fuerzas policiales y los miembros de las minorías nacionales que residen en el territorio de la República Eslovaca. Mediante la presentación del marco jurídico vigente a nivel nacional, europeo e internacional, el autor presenta una visión más detallada de la definición legislativa e institucional del uso de las lenguas minoritarias en la comunicación oficial y cotidiana entre los diversos grupos (miembros de las fuerzas policiales y miembros de las minorías nacionales), señalando al mismo tiempo las necesidades de las unidades organizativas de los cuerpos policiales en lo que respecta a la competencia lingüística de los empleados de las direcciones de policía provinciales y locales de Eslovaquia. Basándose en los datos obtenidos de una encuesta realizada por la Oficina del Plenipotenciario del Gobierno para las Minorías Nacionales de la República Eslovaca, el autor analiza la situación actual y los ámbitos problemáticos de la comunicación con los miembros de las minorías nacionales que viven en Eslovaquia desde la perspectiva de los miembros de las Fuerzas Policiales.

Резюме. В статье представлены вызовы и перспективы общения между сотрудниками полиции и представителями национальных меньшинств, проживающих на территории Словацкой Республики. На основе соответствующей правовой базы на национальном, европейском и международном уровнях представлено подробное законодательное и институциональное определение использования языков меньшинств в официальном и повседневном общении между соответствующими группами: сотрудниками полиции и представителями национальных меньшинств, указывающая одновременно потребности организационных подразделений полиции в плане языковой компетенции сотрудников районных и местных полицейских управлений в Словакии. На основе данных, полученных в результате опроса, проведенного Бюро Уполномоченного правительства по делам национальных меньшинств Словацкой Республики, были проанализированы текущая ситуация и проблемные сферы общения с представителями национальных меньшинств, проживающих в Словакии, с точки зрения сотрудников полиции.