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INTEGRATION OF RUSSIAN SPEAKERS IN THE BALTIC STATES¹

INTRODUCTION

The term ‘Russian speakers has appeared in the political and social discourse of the Baltic states to define an ‘imaginary community’² which speaks the Russian language as the mother tongue. They are often called Russians, although these are also ethnic Ukrainians, Belarussians and others (Poles, Jews) who speak Russian on a daily basis. Currently they account for approximately 7%, 32% and 27% of the population of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, respectively³. Russian speakers, who as a result of the USSR’s migration policy lived in the Baltic states, have not been recognised as ethnic minority *sensu stricto*. In the Baltic states, the term has referred to the citizens of the state who are different from the titular nation in terms of their culture, religion and language, have lived in the state for generations, identify themselves with the state and the society and seek to protect and develop

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² Anderson, B. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London/New York: Verso.

³ Lietuvos statistikos departamentas. [Department of Statistics of Lithuania.] Available at: <http://osp.stat.gov.lt>; Centrālā statistikas pārvalde. [Central Statistical Office.] Available at: <http://data.csb.gov.lv>; Eesti statistika. [Estonian statistics.] Available at: <http://www.stat.ee/34267>. [Accessed: 29 June 2017].

their culture, religion and language. The European legal system (OSCE, Council of Europe) lets states decide and define national minorities residing in them, and international regulations do not categorically deal with relations between state authorities and migrants or ethnic groups.

In the interwar period, the Baltic states were multicultural and national minorities enjoyed considerable political and financial autonomy⁴. Before the Second World War Russian speakers accounted for about 10% of the population of Latvia and Estonia⁵. In Lithuania, Russian speakers accounted for only 3%, but the Polish minority accounted for as much as 15% of the population⁶. In the Soviet period, the nationality picture changed radically. Minorities from the interwar period represented mainly by Germans, Poles, Jews and Swedes were replaced by Russians, Belarussians and Ukrainians. At that time about 700 thousand people arrived in Latvia and about 460 thousand people came to Estonia. The inflows were caused by large central investments, among others, the harbour expansion or new phosphate mines in Estonia⁷. At the end of the 1980s Russian speakers accounted for about half of the Latvian population, one third of the Estonian population and 12% of the Lithuanian population. In newly formed republics, the overwhelming majority of Russian speakers did not know the state language and did not have the citizenship of the Baltic states, and after the collapse of the USSR they lost their citizenship altogether. While in independent Lithuania civil rights were granted to all citizens regardless of their origin, as a result of the restrictive citizenship policy in Latvia and Estonia citizenship was only restored to those who had had it before 16/17 June 1940⁸ and to their descendants. Russian speakers individuals who found themselves in Latvia or Estonia as a result of the migration policy of the Soviet state were granted the ‘non-citizen’ status. This status primarily meant residence and work permit in their territory, but deprived, for example, of electoral rights and access to many public jobs. The reason for this approach to the rights of Russian speakers was an attempt to

⁴ Pettai, V.A. 1993. Estonia: Old Maps and New Roads. *Journal for Democracy*, vol. 4(1), pp. 117–25.

⁵ Simonian, R. 2004. The Russian Diaspora in the Baltic Countries. *Russian Politics & Law*, no. 42(4), pp. 67–88, Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10611940.2004.11066925>.

⁶ Kasatkina, N. 2003. The Adaptation of Ethnic Minority Groups: Defining the Problem (Case of Lithuania). *Ethnicity Studies*, pp. 8–29.

⁷ Szabaciuk, A. 2016. Polityka etniczna Republiki Estońskiej. [Ethnic Policy of the Republic of Estonia.] *Wschodnioznawstwo*, pp. 219–241.

⁸ Before the occupation by the USSR.

protect the states from possible separatist tendencies and to quickly assimilate the migrants. It was feared that automatic citizenship and electoral rights for Russian speakers would be a threat to the national identity and language. The new political, economic and social situation resulting from the regaining of independence by Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia created new challenges both for the national policies of the Baltic states and for the Russian speakers themselves. That is why the Baltic states sought to quickly integrate and to adapt them to their national environments. In Russian speakers Latvia and Estonia, a long-term integration strategy for minorities was developed in 2000, but both countries used different political and legal instruments.

In the early 1990s Russian speakers in the Baltic states did not identify themselves with national minorities. They felt part of a two-nationality state. In the following years, along with the limitation of the use of the Russian language in public life, aimed at restoring national identity, and economic problems connected with the transition of economies towards free markets, dissatisfaction and social tensions have increased⁹. Consistent democratisation has allowed the states to prevent separatism and to join European structures (NATO, EU 2004). Ethnic nationalism has been a driving force and motivation for shaping national identity, integrity, independence, and cultural stability. In the Baltic states, it has been primarily directed towards European reintegration ('return to Europe'), the reconstruction of national identities of the states and independence from the Soviet regime¹⁰. Its consequences, however, have been interethnic tensions and the sense of discrimination among Russian speakers¹¹. The lack of citizenship, a low economic status, and adaptive problems have fostered feelings of alienation and vulnerability to radicalism. When the strategic objectives (withdrawal of Soviet/Russian troops from the Baltic states, Europeanisation and integration into NATO structures) were achieved, the Baltic states have focused on integration strategies for Russian speakers to ensure social cohesion and prevent separatism.

The aim of the article is to compare the integration policies of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and adaptation models of Russian speakers in the Baltic states. As a result, existing integration approaches, their determinants and effects will be outlined. In addition, the study addresses the issue of shaping

⁹ Pettai, V.A., *op. cit.*, pp. 117–25.

¹⁰ Beissinger, M.R. 2008. A New Look at Ethnicity and Democratization. *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 19(3), pp. 85–97.

¹¹ Bugajski, J. 1993. The Fate of Minorities in Eastern Europe. *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 4(4), pp. 85–99.

civic and cultural identities of Russian speakers residents as a result of integration processes. The analysis is based on the assumption that the Baltic states have used different integration models as a consequence of various historical, political and social factors. The effectiveness of the integration process has depended on both the national strategy and the openness of the (titular and minority) ethnic groups to adaptation in the new environment after the regaining of independence by the Baltic states.

1. ESTONIA – PROMOTION OF TOLERANCE AND SOCIAL OPENNESS

Initially, Estonia's policy towards Russian speakers aimed at the polarisation of society and marginalisation of migrants¹². The model of 'ethnic democracy', also called the 'nationalising state', combined elements of political and civic democracy with the dominance of one ethnic group. It was characterised by the supremacy of one (titular) ethnic group in the state, a number of freedoms and civil rights covering all citizens and the rights guaranteed to minorities and ethnic groups¹³. Only since the second half of the 1990s, the basic aim of the Estonian authorities in this area has been to increase social cohesion by weakening (but not eliminating) differences between groups. David Smith defines this period as 'liberal nationalism' and 'multinational integration'¹⁴, where exclusive national ideology has been replaced by multiculturalism and the postmodern strategy of democracy and open society. The effect of several years of debates was a government programme approved in 1998, followed by the document 'Integration in Estonian society 2000–2007' of December 1999. The first stage of integration was to be social harmonisation around a common national foundation, which was to be created by the knowledge of the state language and Estonian citizenship. The privileged position of Estonian culture was thus confirmed. The programme was aimed at reducing the isolation of Russian speakers, perceived as a source of threat to social cohesion. It referred to a liberal-democratic interpretation of nationalism and multiculturalism, according to which the degree of integration and

¹² Laitin, D.D. 2003. Three models of integration and the Estonian/Russian reality. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, vol. 34 (2), pp. 197–222, DOI: 10.1080/01629770300000041.

¹³ Smith, G., Aasland, A., Mole, R. 1994. Statehood, Ethnic Relations and Citizenship. In: Smith G. ed. *The Baltic States: National Self-determination of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*. Basingstoke, pp. 189–190.

¹⁴ Smith, D.J. 2015. Minority Rights, Multiculturalism and EU Enlargement: the Case of Estonia. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, vol. 14 (4), pp. 79–113.

(ethnic, cultural, political) identity was a matter of individual choice. Thus new individual methods of acculturation were sought, the main instrument of which was the Estonian language, to replace the old Soviet identity ('homo sovieticus'¹⁵)¹⁶.

The second step was focused on supporting cultural and ethnic diversity in the state by strengthening the rights of Russian speakers. Treating social inclusion as a process of influencing society as a whole was a novelty. This approach assumed support for Estonia's national and state attitudes, i.e. activities related to the integration of migrants in Estonian society (language education in schools and adult language courses), solidarity, strengthened social competences and the promotion of tolerance and diversity among Estonians (educational programmes on ethnic and cultural minorities in the state)¹⁷. The programme assumed a change of attitude towards Russian speakers, perceived so far as a problem rather than potential for national development. Three main areas of activity concerned integration at the communication-linguistic, political-legal and socio-economic levels¹⁸. The growth of state consciousness was stimulated through channels and programmes in the Russian language. It was an attempt to undermine the influence of the Russian media on the Russian-speaking community living in Estonia. In the years 2008–2013 the 'Estonian Integration Strategy' was implemented, the basis of which was raising the competence in the state language as a key tool of integration and a symbol of statehood, as well as of loyalty to the state. In December 2014 another strategy, 'Integrating Estonia 2020', was approved. The results have been satisfactory: the level of knowledge of the Estonian language has increased, the state media have become more accessible, the level of social trust in various ethnic groups has risen, and the percentage of people without citizenship has decreased. In addition, differences in access to the labour market have been offset and greater participation in the political life of the state has been made possible.

¹⁵ Zinovyev, A. 1986. *Homo sovieticus*. Grove/Atlantic; Heller, M. 1988. *Cogs in the Wheel: The Formation of Soviet Man*. Alfred A. Knopf.

¹⁶ Vihalemm, T., Masso, A. 2007. (Re)Construction of Collective Identities after the Dissolution of the Soviet Union: The Case of Estonia. *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 35 (1), pp. 71–91, DOI: 10.1080/00905990601124496.

¹⁷ Kalmus, V. 2003. 'Is Interethnic Integration Possible in Estonia?': Ethno-Political Discourse of Two Ethnic Groups. *Discourse & Society*, vol. 14 (6), pp. 667–697, DOI: 10.1177/09579265030146001.

¹⁸ Vetik, R. 2000. *Democratic Multiculturalism: A New Model of National Integration*. Aland Islands Peace Institute.

These changes have had a positive effect on their adaptation in society and their sense of belonging to the state and civil nation.

The lack of citizenship among Russian speakers has been a serious challenge. In the first years after regaining independence about 1/3 of the inhabitants did not have Estonian citizenship. The authorities of the state have assumed that no one could be forced to take particular citizenship, therefore they have encouraged Russian speakers to take citizenship of another country (mainly Russia) or to submit to the process of naturalisation. The result of a long-term campaign promoting naturalisation or the acquisition of citizenship of another country was the reduction in the number of people without citizenship from 32% in 1992 to 6.1% of the population in 2016.

The inclusion of Russian speakers in the Estonian civic and social space has been taking place in parallel with the creation of friendly conditions for the development of migrants' language and culture. Cultural diplomacy has supported contacts between Estonia and Russia and promoted Russian culture in Estonia. Since the nineties festivals attended by Russian artists ('Friendship Bridge'), festivals of spiritual culture and religious songs, film festivals have been held in Estonia. There have been performances by theatres from Russia, the Russian language festival in Tallinn, the Golden Mask Theatre Festival and the Russian Culture Festival have been organised.

The exclusive citizenship policy of the nineties has been replaced by a more inclusive approach. The starting point for the integration strategy in Estonia has been language policy, and more specifically the protection of the state language and the guarantees of its superiority in all spheres of public life. The authorities have assumed that only a good knowledge of the state language will guarantee equality in the labour market, access to education or culture. Estonian law has made it possible to formally use the minority languages in the public sphere where national minorities constitute at least half of the region's population. The Constitution has also ensured the right to create cultural autonomy in regions inhabited by persons belonging to minorities. In fact, many regulations have been a dead letter. For example, the 1993 Act on Cultural Autonomy made it possible for large communities of minorities to set up specific bodies of cultural autonomy¹⁹. According to the law, this possibility was granted to the German, Russian, Swedish and Jewish minorities and in 2003 to the Ingrian-Finnish minority. The basic

¹⁹ Lagerspetz, M. 2014. Cultural Autonomy of National Minorities in Estonia: The Erosion of a Promise. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, vol. 45 (4), p. 457–475, DOI:10.1080/1629778.2014.942676.

problem for the effectiveness of cultural autonomy are the regulations taking about Estonian citizens belonging to national minorities, while many Russian speakers have not had Estonian citizenship. The political discourse has been also concerned with whether naturalised people belong to a national minority.

2. LATVIA – THE STATE LANGUAGE AS THE BASIS OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

Since the early 1990s Latvia has focused on improving language competency and the level of education among Russian speakers in order to increase the effectiveness of naturalisation policy. In 1992, under the Language Act, the Latvian language was established as the state language, eliminating the Russian language from the public sphere and inter-ethnic communication. The state language has become the only one in communication between the state/local government and society²⁰. Institutions guarding the language purity, the State Language Centre or the Language Commission, were also created²¹. In 1995 the National Programme for Learning the Latvian Language was introduced. Latvian courses have been organized, teachers have been trained to work in schools with bilingual teaching methods, and textbooks and teaching aids have been prepared. The protection of languages of minorities and ethnic groups have become a secondary issue²².

The first government integration programme ‘Social integration in Latvia’ was approved in 2001, followed by the National Program for the Promotion of Tolerance (2004–2009) and the Integration Policy Guidelines (2012–2018). Educational curricula contained aspects connected with multiculturalism, tolerance and civil society.

²⁰ Commercio, M.E. 2004. Exit in the Near Abroad. The Russian Minorities in Latvia and Kyrgyzstan. *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 51 (6), pp. 23–32.

²¹ In 2016 the mayor of Riga Nil(s) Ushakov(s) was punished by the court for using Russian in social networks instead of the state language. According to the Latvian state language law, local government authority can only communicate with residents in non-state languages in exceptional situations. Among them, the law lists international tourism, international events, security, free market in the EU, epidemic, rights and obligations of foreign citizens and emergency situations. The court explained the use of Russian by members of the public administration might be a threat to national identity and promote the legitimacy of bilingualism in Latvia.

²² Open Society Institute. 2002. *Monitoring the EU Accession Process: Minority Protection*. Budapest, pp. 24–25.

The Latvian integration programme pointed to the state's new direction in the approach to Russian speakers. Ethnic nationalism, which was dominant in the state's development strategy in the nineties, has been enriched with elements of political nationalism in subsequent years. As a result, more and more people of non-Latvian origin have been granted the citizenship of that country²³. In 2005 the Latvian Parliament ratified the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe. Institutions and advisory committees have been created, as well as working groups at national and regional level, engaging Russian NGO representatives and members of national minorities in the decision-making process. Among others, the Riga Consultative Council for Social Inclusion was established in Riga in 2010. Cities could also prepare their own integration strategies²⁴.

The integration process has turned out to be slow, as the process of social homogenisation is inherently opposed to maintaining cultural diversity²⁵. The integration programme has been criticized by conservative and national parties. Russian speakers have perceived it as the limitation of their rights to promote their culture and as the necessity of assimilation. Russian speakers representatives were involved in the preparation of the project, but their level of social participation in the document implementation was low. In 2000, the Education Act came into force, which set the ratio of teaching languages (60:40) for bilingual schools. This meant that at least 60% of the subjects were taught in Latvian. The educational reform activated a large part of the Russian speakers community, leading to mass protests. In addition, in 2007 the matriculation examinations were standardised – they were to be the same for schools teaching only in Latvian and in bilingual schools, which placed the latter in a much weaker position. In the following years, support for Latvian integration programmes has increased. Russian speakers have been more and more eager to learn the state language and applied in the processes of naturalisation. They have acknowledged that the knowledge of the state language is necessary for communication but supported the protection of their own language and culture. Young people have had enough

²³ Zepa, B. 2008. Integration Policy in Latvia: Theory and Practice. In: *Socio-economic and Institutional Environment: Harmonisation in the EU Countries of Baltic Sea Rim. Proceeding of the Institute of European Studies*. International University Audentes, no. 4, pp. 106–139.

²⁴ Janson, A. 2003. Ethnopolitics in Latvia: Ethnopolitical Activities of State Institutions and Non-governmental Organisations and their Influence on the Social Integration Process. *Ethnicity Studies*, pp. 124–133.

²⁵ B. Zepa, *op. cit.*, pp. 106–139.

motivation to learn Latvian as the knowledge of the state language ensured a better socio-economic position. Russian speakers have also favoured social harmony and interethnic dialogue in Latvia. Some of them have supported the presence of two official languages in Latvia²⁶.

In Latvia, the percentage of so-called non-citizens is higher than in Estonia (12% of the population). At present, however, this issue is not of much interest to the Latvian authorities. Regulations limiting the rights of non-citizens affect their political, economic and social status, but it is unlikely that the Latvian authorities will make a decision on automatic citizenship for non-citizens.

3. LITHUANIA – ADAPTATION AND ASSIMILATION

Positive phenomena related to the protection of national minorities and the fulfilment by Lithuania of certain criteria for inclusion in European structures have proved that Lithuania has conducted the optimum and most effective national policy in comparison with Latvia or Estonia. Russian speakers have known Lithuanian, better adapted to and integrated with Lithuanians, due to which they have not been perceived as a serious threat²⁷.

Lithuania is also characterised by the lowest percentage of stateless people (only 0.1% of the population) among the discussed states. Lithuania had a relatively small number of Russian speakers, and migration processes in the Soviet period did not cause drastic changes in its demographics. The problematic issues concern the Polish minority in Lithuania, which is more involved and aware of its heritage. The main postulates of the Polish minority refer to the question of double names of streets and places as well as the spelling of names in Polish²⁸.

Despite seemingly good relations between the Lithuanian authorities and national minorities and immigrants, the situation remains tense and a number

²⁶ In 2012 the majority of participants in the national referendum voted against the Russian language as another official language.

²⁷ Eberhardt, P. 2009. Przemiany narodowościowe w państwach bałtyckich na przełomie XX i XXI wieku. [National changes in the Baltic states at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries.] *Roczniki Nauk Społecznych*, no. 1(37), pp. 95–113.

²⁸ Barwiński, M. 2012. Stosunki międzypaństwowe Polski z Ukrainą, Białorusią i Litwą po 1990 roku w kontekście sytuacji mniejszości narodowych. [Interstate relations between Poland and Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania after 1990 in the context of the situation of national minorities.] *Studia z Geografii Politycznej i Historycznej*, vol. 1, pp. 139–166.

of issues need to be resolved. Lithuania still does not have a separate law defining the rights of minorities in Lithuania (the former, from the days of the 'Soviet occupation', lost its power in 2010). In addition, amendments introduced to the Education Act in 2011 standardised the matriculation examinations for secondary school graduates from Lithuanian and minority schools. From 2013 on to get a matriculation certificate students must pass two exams: a compulsory examination in the Lithuanian language and literature and an examination in another selected subject. Minorities in Lithuania have actively protested against the amendment of the law because the unified exam was introduced despite significant differences in Lithuanian curricula in minority schools and schools teaching in the Lithuanian language, and despite the fact that the number of hours devoted to state language education is significantly smaller in minority schools²⁹. The integration of national schools with the national curriculum, which aimed at strengthening the role of the Lithuanian language in minority schools, has been judged by teachers of minority schools as being ill-considered and discriminating because pupils' unequal starting conditions have affected the results negatively³⁰. Pupils of minority schools have achieved lower results than their peers from Lithuanian schools, and compared to the years before the reform, the marks of high school graduates from Polish and Russian schools have been worse.

Russian speakers are well integrated in Lithuanian society, but are fragmented and do not form a strong community. They accentuate their cultural distinctiveness to a lesser extent, therefore they are less active in promoting the Russian language and culture in Lithuania³¹. Appealing to the values of Russian culture and history is not in conflict with loyalty to the state and strong civic identity³². Russian speakers individuals are, however, potentially exposed to Russian propaganda. The Russian-speaking media

²⁹ Kuzborska, E. 2014. Reforma oświaty mniejszości narodowych na Litwie w 2011 r. w świetle międzynarodowych standardów ochrony. [Reform of Lithuanian national minority education in 2011 in the light of international standards of protection.] *Rocznik SNPL*, vol. 13–14, pp. 68–81.

³⁰ Moroz-Łapin, K., Szejbak, M. 2014. Meandry litewskiej polityki oświatowej w szkolnictwie mniejszości narodowych. [Meanders of Lithuanian educational policy in the education of national minorities.] *Rocznik SNPL*, vol. 13–14, pp. 90–105.

³¹ Frėjutė-Rakauskienė, M. 2015. The Role of Voluntary Organisations in Constructing the Common Identity and Mobilising of Polish Community in Southeastern Lithuania. *Polish Political Science Review*, no. 3 (1), pp. 17–34.

³² Магулионис, А.В., [Matulionis, A.W.], Фрејуте-Ракаускене, М. [Frėjutė-Rakauskienė, M.] 2014. Идентичность русской этнической группы и ее выражение в Литве и Латвии. Сравнительный аспект [Identity of Russian ethnic group and its

disseminate false information about NATO and promote expansive Russian foreign policy in the Baltic region. ‘Rossiya Segonya’, ‘Sputnik’, ‘RuBaltic’, ‘Baltnews’ and ‘Regnum’ are particularly engaged in Kremlin politics. A report of the Lithuanian security services (*Valstybės saugumo departamentas, VSD*), also points to the danger of Russia’s ideological influence and the surveillance of its special services under which young Russian speakers are³³. Taking into consideration the fact that the discord between national minorities and the Lithuanian authorities provokes tension within the Lithuanian political scene, intensified Russian propaganda can contribute to the escalation of the problem. In this context, the activities of the Lithuanian government, aimed at better integration of minorities, including Russian speakers in Lithuania, should be evaluated positively. In July 2015 the Department of National Minorities (DNM) of Lithuania was formed, replacing the Department of National Minorities and Emigration (DNME), liquidated in 2010³⁴. In addition, in February 2016 the DNM prepared the Strategic Action Plan for 2016–2018³⁵, which identified the following main objectives: 1) integration of ethnic minorities in Lithuanian society while preserving their national and ethnic identity, 2) tolerance and lack of discrimination, and 3) promotion of ethnic and cultural diversity³⁶.

expression in Lithuania and Latvia. Comparative Aspect.] *Mup Poccuu*. [Russia’s world.] no. 1, pp. 87–114.

³³ State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania. 2017. *National Security Threat Assessment*. Vilnius. Available at: <http://www.vsd.lt/Files/Documents/636265688721000000.pdf>. [Accessed: 3 July 2017].

³⁴ European Foundation of Human Rights. *Departament ds. Mniejszości Narodowych nie może być instytucją marionetkową*. [Department of National Minorities cannot be a puppet institution.] Available at: <http://zw.lt/wilno-wilenszczyzna/efhr-departament-ds-mniejszosci-narodowych-nie-moze-byc-instytucja-marionetkowa/> [Accessed: 3 July 2017]; *Departament Mniejszości Narodowych i Wychodźstwa zmarł niech żyje Komisja*. [Department of National Minorities and Immigration died, long live the Commission.] Available at: <http://kurierwilenski.lt/2009/09/02/departament-mniejszosci-narodowych-i-wychodzstwa-zmarl-niech-zyje-komisja/> [Accessed: 12 June 2016].

³⁵ National Minorities Department of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. 2016. *Tautinių mažumų departamento prie Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2016–2018 metų strateginis veiklos planas*. [Strategic Action Plan of the National Minorities Department of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania for years 2016–2018.] Available at: <http://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/TMD%20SVP%202016-2018-patvirtintas.pdf>. [Accessed: 11 June 2016].

³⁶ Kuczyńska-Zonik, A. 2016. Dyskurs narodowościowy na Litwie w kontekście współczesnych zagrożeń. [National discourse in Lithuania in the context of contemporary threats.] *Rocznik IEŚW*, vol. 14 (5), pp. 281–300.

4. INTEGRATION STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE IDENTITY OF RUSSIAN SPEAKERS

Integration strategies bring the expected results when they are preceded by a social campaign promoting tolerance and multiculturalism among both minority groups and the titular nation. Effective social integration is possible only when individuals have a choice and are not forced to assimilate by abandoning their own culture in favour of the one of the dominant nation. Integration strategies in the Baltic states have been an important step towards strengthening social cohesion and reducing differences between ethnic groups in the states. By learning the state language, Russian people have been included in the communication space of the state, and the aim of the liberalisation of the citizenship law and educational programmes was to shape civil identity.

It has turned out, however, that the integration of Russian speakers in the political dimension is not sufficient, and that civil identity can be shaped independently of cultural identity³⁷. In Russian speakers, both identities function side by side, they can complement or exclude each other. It is difficult to conclusively state which of them is dominant³⁸. Russian speakers are loyal to the state in which they live, accept national symbols and political values, but want to preserve the Russian language, tradition and historical narrative. Therefore, the reconciliation of Russian cultural identity with civil identity in the Baltic states may be difficult. Sharp divisions have occurred especially in the context of Soviet monuments, which for Russian speakers symbolise the victory over fascism in Europe, but for ethnic Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians they mean Soviet occupation and the trauma of deportation. The removal of the 'Bronze Soldier' from the centre of Tallinn in 2007 resulted in two-day riots and the death of one person.

³⁷ Zimmer, O. 2003. Boundary mechanisms and symbolic resources: towards a process-oriented approach to national identity. *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 9 (2), pp. 173–193, DOI: 10.1111/j.1469-8129.2007.00269.x.

³⁸ According to V.A. Tishkov civil identity predominates over ethnic identity, Степанов, В.В. [Stepanow, W.W.], Тишков, В.А. [Tishkow, W.A.], 2013. Введение: европейские меньшинства и политизированные мифы в балтийском контексте. [Introduction: European minorities and politicized myths in the Baltic context.] In: *Этническая политика в странах Балтии. [Ethnic Policy in the Baltic States.]* Moscow, pp. 9–23.

For many Russian speakers Soviet symbols are a clear element of their identity and of belonging to the Russian cultural community. In addition, Ammon Cheskin points to a high degree of collective identity in Russian speakers³⁹. However, the Russian world (*Русский мир*) is not synonymous with the world of the Russian Federation (*Российский мир*) and the Russian state is less and less politically, socially and economically attractive for Russian speakers in the Baltic states. Russian speakers are inclined to maintain friendly relations with Russia and to be a bridge between the Baltic states and Russia⁴⁰. They want to maintain cultural ties with Russia, but they increasingly distance themselves from its policies and ideology. Some Russian speakers individuals have Russian citizenship which facilitates economic contacts, but is not an indication of their loyalty to Russia. Russian speakers may support the European direction of development of the Baltic states, benefit from the possibility to travel which citizenship or permanent residence in the Baltic states gives them. The positive connotations of Europe and the European direction of the Baltic states are conducive to adaptation and greater integration of Russian speakers. Young people express greater willingness and degree of integration than older generations⁴¹. The majority of them are well-integrated in their own country, they know the state language, more often see themselves as Lithuanians, Latvians or Estonians or more broadly, Europeans than Russians (Russian speakers). For many of them, the Russian language is the only indicator of their relationship with Russia. According to Kristina Kallas, shaping a civic European attitude in Russian speakers is the only solution to preserve stability in the region. Naturalisation of non-citizens in the Baltic states may be the first step in their integration into societies, but it does not automatically have to mean that they have developed a European identity⁴².

A challenge for the effectiveness of integration processes in the Baltic states may be the limited interactivity and extent of intercultural contacts

³⁹ Cheskin, A. 2010. The discursive construction of 'Russian-Speakers': The Russian-language media and demarcated political identities in Latvia. In: Golubeva, M., Gould R. eds. *Shrinking Citizenship: Discursive Practices that Limit Democratic... On the boundary of two worlds*. Amsterdam: Rodopi: pp. 133–154.

⁴⁰ Cheskin, A. 2013. Exploring Russian-Speaking Identity from Below: The Case of Latvia. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, vol. 44 (3), pp. 287–312.

⁴¹ Kalmus, V., *op. cit.*, pp. 667–697.

⁴² Posener, A. *In Defence of the Baltics*. Available at: <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=64244>, [Accessed: 10 August 2016].

between ethnic groups⁴³. Integration processes have been unilateral and the titular nations have been involved in them to a limited extent. Conflicts between ethnic groups, especially in Latvia and Estonia, have often been provoked by the elites of both ethnic groups, and thus have been highly politicised. In the political debate, the visions of the national (ethnic) and civil (political) states have clashed. The issue of Rusophobia has usually appeared in the pre-election struggle between more conservative and liberal political options. In addition, tense relations with Russia after the annexation of Crimea have deepened the crisis. Relations between the majority and ethnic groups in the states are still dominated by the lack of trust and limited tolerance hindering mutual integration, which is visible mainly through the prism of the political sphere and the media. In social relations and daily contacts, the interethnic divisions are obliterated⁴⁴. The number of mixed marriages increases, especially in Lithuania and Latvia.

The education reforms in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia limiting education in minority languages and standardising examinations in the state language, aimed to improve the quality of education, increase competitiveness in the labour market and make it easier for young people who attend bilingual schools to enter universities (educating in the state language). In the opinion of some Russian speakers they have led to assimilation. The emphasis on language, history and national culture as a basis of social integration in the Baltic states has deepened the alienation of Russian speakers⁴⁵. Significant acts of discrimination on the ethnic background have been extremely rare; 'Hidden' discrimination in the labour market has been observed more frequently. Russian speakers have been less active on the labour market and more vulnerable to job loss. They have rarely held senior positions in public administration⁴⁶. Their education and low knowledge of the state

⁴³ Birka, I. 2016. Expressed attachment to Russia and social integration: the case of young Russian speakers in Latvia, 2004–2010. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, vol. 47 (2), pp. 219–238, DOI: 10.1080/01629778.2015.1094743.

⁴⁴ Korts, K. 2009. Inter-Ethnic Attitudes and Contacts Between Ethnic Groups in Estonia. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, vol. 40 (1), pp. 121–137, DOI: 10.1080/01629770902722286.

⁴⁵ Gruzina, I. 2011. Relationship between History and a Sense of Belonging – Russian Speaking Minority Integration in Latvia. *CEU Political Science Journal*, vol. 6 (3), pp. 397–432.

⁴⁶ Cianetti, L. 2014. Representing minorities in the city. Education policies and minority incorporation in the capital cities of Estonia and Latvia. *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 42 (6), pp. 981–1001, DOI: 10.1080/00905992.2014.957663.

language has negatively affected their socio-economic status⁴⁷, however even after considerable limitation of language barriers, the disparities in the socio-economic status between ethnic groups have remained. In Estonia socioeconomic differences between ethnic groups have been more pronounced than in Latvia, where economic problems of Russian speakers have been smaller, and in subsequent years less attention has been devoted to socio-economic issues than in the 2001 Strategy⁴⁸. Due to resentment and distrust in the state authorities Russian speakers have become more and more susceptible to populist slogans and Russian influence. Russia, on the other hand, has used Russian speakers to maintain divisions within communities and ethnic groups, and to instigate inter-ethnic strife. Russia has supported Russian organisations operating in the Baltic states through federal agencies for cooperation with compatriots abroad (*соотечественники*), Russian embassies, local governments of Russian cities (including Moscow and St. Petersburg), foundations such as 'Rossotrudnichestvo', 'Russkij mir', 'A. Gorchakov's Foundation' and others. Regional Councils Coordinating Russian Compatriots Abroad have been particularly active in this field⁴⁹.

In regions dominated by Russian speakers, such as Ida-Viru in Estonia, the unemployment rate is still significantly higher than the average level of unemployment in the country⁵⁰. Issues related to the Russian language also seem problematic, for instance, spelling of names, bilingual topographical names and signs in places inhabited by Russian speakers individuals, the possibility of using the Russian language in contacts with the local administration. However, the repetition of mass protests and demonstrations of Russian speakers is unlikely. Communities are heterogeneous, fragmented, and poorly institutionally organised⁵¹. There are no significant values shared by the general community, due to which it is weak and its actions are inefficient. On the other hand, due to the sense of security, the relative comfort of life, the level of language competence sufficient for everyday

⁴⁷ Cianetti, L. 2015. Integrating Minorities in Times of Crisis: Issues of Displacement in the Estonian and Latvian Integration Programs. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol. 21 (2), pp. 191–212, DOI: 10.1080/13537113.2015.1032029.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

⁴⁹ Kuczyńska-Zonik, A. 2017. Russian-speaker NGOs in the Baltic States. *RIESW*, vol. 15 (3), 165–183.

⁵⁰ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. 2015. *Fourth Opinion on Estonia*. 19 March 2015.

⁵¹ Agarín, T. 2011. Civil society versus nationalizing state? Advocacy of minority rights in the post-socialist Baltic states. *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 39 (2), pp. 181–203, DOI: 10.1080/00905992.2010.549471.

communication, Russian speakers feel no need to change their social position. They are also less motivated to integrate further into the national society, which is especially visible in Latvia. The situation in Estonia is more friendly to Russian speakers, due to Estonians' greater tolerance and openness and a relatively higher standard of living.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the subject showed that after regaining independence, the Baltic states have decided on different integration models in relation to Russian speakers. Their aim has been to shape national and civic attitudes and prevent separatism and social inequalities. Initially, the Estonian policy was based on increasing social cohesion through learning of the state language. In the following years, a more open approach, oriented towards the development of attitudes of tolerance, respect and multiculturalism, have predominated. Educational programmes have been initiated and intercultural contacts have been encouraged⁵². A lot of emphasis has been placed on the integration of children and young people, civil rights have been liberalised. Latvia has continued its integration strategy based on limiting the Russian language in public life and promoting the Latvian language. Institutions guarding the purity of the language have been established. At the same time, Russian speakers have been enabled to influence the decision-making process through participation in advisory and consultative bodies at various levels.

Initially, a serious problem was the lack of citizenship in Russian speakers. Despite considerable efforts in this regard, it has not been resolved completely. Certain regulations restricting the rights of non-citizens and stateless persons refer to the electoral law, the possibility of holding certain posts and offices and travelling. Therefore, Russian speakers have decided to obtain a Russian passport, which makes it easier for them to travel to Russia. Many older people still do not know the state language, and free access to information in Russian and widespread communication in this language (especially in regions with a high percentage of the Russian speakers population) makes it

⁵² There is an ongoing discussion about the inclusion of Russian songs to the Estonian Song Festival (est. *Laulupidu*), which is a symbol of Estonian national culture, *Minister: Song Festival program to be decided by work groups, directors* 31 May 2017. Available at: <http://news.err.ee/599352/minister-song-festival-program-to-be-decided-by-work-groups-directors>. [Accessed: 4 July 2017].

unnecessary for them to learn the state language⁵³. Lithuania, in which the percentage of Russian speakers was small, has adopted more liberal solutions in terms of nationality policy. Russian speakers also more easily adapted and assimilated in the Lithuanian environment. The actions to deepen social integration undertaken by Lithuania in recent years have been caused by the difficulty of adaptation of the Polish minority and aimed at limiting the influence of Russia.

In general, integration strategies in the Baltic states have positively influenced social harmonisation, although voices of dissatisfaction have appeared among Russian speakers, especially in Latvia and Estonia. Non-citizens have not been granted citizenship automatically and they have had to prove their loyalty to the state through naturalisation. The states have emphasised that the state language is the source of civil identity, while the Russian speakers have stressed the need to include ethnic languages and culture into the integration processes. This was the reason for protests and speeches against the policy towards the Russian speakers. The educational reform in Latvia led to mass protests in 2003–2004 in defence of Russian schools. In Estonia, a few-day protests against the removal of the Soviet monument, which is a symbol of the identity of many Russian speakers, have proved that the integration strategy is a slow and long process.

The current integration problems of Russian speakers in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are connected with their low socio-economic status. Both Latvia and Estonia included economic, social and cultural issues in their integration programmes, but their varied scope was dictated by the interests of the titular majority rather than the actual needs of the Russian speakers community⁵⁴. A relatively low level of education and poor knowledge of the state language continue to determine their low qualifications in the labour market, which is indirectly related to their ethnic origin. Therefore, differences resulting from the different socio-economic status may give rise to disenchantment with nationality policy and the sense of discrimination among the Russian speakers population. As a result, they are more susceptible to Russia's propaganda and influence.

⁵³ Vihalemm, T., Kalmus, V. 2009. Cultural Differentiation of the Russian Minority. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, vol. 40 (1), pp. 95–119, DOI: 10.1080/01629770902722278.

⁵⁴ Cianetti, L., *op. cit.*, p. 192.

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INTEGRATION OF RUSSIAN SPEAKERS IN THE BALTIC STATES

Summary

The aim of the article is to investigate comparatively integration policies of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as well as adaptation strategies of Russian-speakers in the Baltic states following the Baltic states' independence. As a result, existing integration approaches, their determinants and effects will be outlined. In addition, the study addresses the issue of shaping civic

and cultural identities of Russian speaking residents as a result of integration processes. The analysis is based on the assumption that the Baltic states have used different integration models as a consequence of various historical, political and social factors. The effectiveness of the integration process has depended on both the national strategy and the openness of the (titular and minority) ethnic groups to adaptation in the new environment.

INTEGRACJA OSÓB ROSYJSKOJĘZYCZNYCH W PAŃSTWACH BAŁTYCKICH

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu będzie spojrzenie porównawcze na polityki integracyjne Estonii, Łotwy i Litwy oraz modele adaptacyjne osób rosyjskojęzycznych w państwach bałtyckich po odzyskaniu przez nie niepodległości. W związku z tym zostaną nakreślone dotychczasowe podejścia integracyjne, ich uwarunkowania i skutki. Dodatkowo, badanie obejmie kwestię kształtowania tożsamości obywatelskiej i kulturowej osób rosyjskojęzycznych jako rezultat procesów integracyjnych. Analiza opiera się na założeniu, że państwa bałtyckie stosowały różne modele integracyjne w zależności od uwarunkowań historycznych, politycznych i społecznych. Efektywność integracji zależała zarówno od strategii narodowej, jak i otwartości grup etnicznych (tytularnej i mniejszościowej) na adaptację w nowym środowisku.

ИНТЕГРАЦИЯ РУССКОЯЗЫЧНЫХ ЛИЦ В ПРИБАЛТИЙСКИХ ГОСУДАРСТВАХ

Резюме

Целью статьи является сравнительное наблюдение над разновидностями интеграционной политики Эстонии, Латвии и Литвы и адаптивными моделями русскоязычных лиц в прибалтийских государствах после приобретения ими независимости. В связи с этим будут изложены существующие подходы к интеграции, их детерминанты и последствия. Кроме того, в исследовании затронут вопрос о формировании гражданской и культурной самобытности русскоязычных лиц в результате интеграционных процессов. Анализ основывается на предположении, что прибалтийские государства применяли

различные интеграционные модели, обусловленные историческими, политическими и социальными факторами. Эффективность интеграции зависела как от национальной стратегии, так и открытости этнических групп (титульной нации и национальных меньшинств) к адаптации в новых условиях.