

Language Diversity as a Source of Conflict in Hungary – Possible Implications of Immigration¹

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1. Language Diversity as a Possible Source of Conflict

Although language differences per se are not a cause of conflict, discrimination on the ground of language, the exclusion or disadvantage caused by state authorities through language preferences, and the denial or insufficient implementation of minority language rights in practice may lead to violent conflict. Most of the world's conflicts since the end of the Second World War have been internal, often involving groups seeking independence, autonomy, or the defense of their rights. Language demands are frequently at the fore in many of these conflicts" (IALL XIII 2012). Taking only a few examples, the cases of the Basques or Catalans in Spain, Northern Ireland and Scotland in the UK, Corsica in France, or the Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia are all related to the language issue to a greater or lesser extent.

Given the importance of language as a core element of ethnicity and nationality, it is hard to underestimate the role it might play in interethnic conflicts: "Language issues [have a heightened saliency] in many historical and contemporary political conflicts, particularly at the intrastate level. In these conflicts, particular languages clearly are for many people an important and constitutive factor of their individual and, at times, collective identities" (May 2005: 330). Having said that, we must emphasize that it is not languages or linguistic differences themselves what constitute potential source of conflict; rather the lack of rights to ensure that people could use their own language. Conflicts usually arise from the long-standing denial of language rights, when

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individuals feel that they are treated unfairly. The language question, however, is not a simple item on the human rights agenda but it strongly relates to issues of power. This stems from the fact that in contrast to religious differences where the State can simply withdraw from the arena of conflict, the language issue can never be entirely depoliticized since every State's machinery necessarily has to work in (a) certain language(s). To put it differently, State and language cannot be separated (de Varennes 1997a, 1997b, 1999, 2013).

However, linguistic diversity proves to be a source of conflict only if sociocultural and/or legal status of different linguistic groups are unbalanced: that is, if certain languages and their speakers are excluded from so-called power domains (public administration, justice, education or media). In turn, linguistic diversity can be seen as a fundamental value of democratic societies and a source of mutual understanding between various peoples when power positions are balanced, that is, when equal language rights are guaranteed to all linguistic groups (Darquennes 2010; Rindler-Schjerve 2010: 1–11, 311–320). Even if perfect equality in practice cannot be reached, States' decisions on the use of languages can never be arbitrary:

“a balance must be attained between the interests of the State, normally representing those of its majority, and the rights, interests and duties of individuals belonging to linguistic minorities” (de Varennes 1995–1996: 108).

Many ethnic conflicts could be avoided having just and rightful norms guiding the States' legislation and practice on the use of languages. In the following, we are going to examine whether this is the case in Hungary.

2. Language Rights and Language Policy in Hungary

Hungary has been a multinational and multilingual state since its very establishment (AD 1000). Although the various peoples of the country had lived in relatively peaceful coexistence for centuries, managing the diverse needs of nationalities became increasingly difficult by the end of the 19th century. It has been argued that the very dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy –and the Kingdom of Hungary as part of it– was due to the State's failure to accommodate its linguistic and ethnic diversity. After a relatively calm period following World War II, the fall of Communism presented a new challenge to Eastern and Central European countries regarding their minority policies:

renewed tensions between ethnic groups were a serious threat to the stability of the entire region (Nagy 2015).

Currently there are 14+1 minority languages recognized under Hungarian law: Armenian, Bulgarian, Croatian, German, Greek, Gypsy (Romani and Beás), Polish, Romanian, Ruthenian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovene, Ukrainian, and Hungarian Sign Language. Users of the first 14 (that is, people belonging to national minorities) make up approx. 8-10 % of the population according to scientific estimates, and 6,5 % according to official census data (KSH 2013).

The change of political regime in 1989/90 is a border between two eras not only in terms of politics, but also as regards linguistic and minority legislation. Although the preparation of a law uniformly regulating the rights of national minorities had already begun at the end of the 80s, it was accomplished under the new democratic system (Balogh 2002: 490–491, Kállai–Varjú 2010: 178–182). The 1993 Act on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities (hereinafter: Minorities Act) was the only major piece of minority legislation of the 20th century in Hungary; its significance is comparable to that of the 1868 Act on the Rights of Nationalities, which regulated the use of languages in Hungary during the era of dualism (Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, 1867–1918). Although this achievement of Hungarian law-making was widely recognized both by the scientific public and expert bodies of international organizations, enthusiasm was less pronounced when it came to practical implementation. The logic of Hungary's linguistic legislation has not changed since 1868: the majority of language rights remain to be recognized as minority rights; therefore, scholars tend to evaluate linguistic legislation within the framework of minority policy.

The four main levels of Hungary's current language-related law are: (1) the Fundamental Law of Hungary (before 2012: Constitution), (2) the 2012 Nationalities Act (before that, the 1993 Minorities Act), (3) sectoral laws (on civil and criminal proceedings, public administration, commercial advertising, and the use of the Hungarian Sign Language), and (4) international legal instruments ratified by the State (such as the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages).

These laws contain minority language rights and at the same time guarantee the official use of the Hungarian language as well its status as the official language of the country. As regards minority language rights: whereas legislation between 1989 and 2012 used the terms 'ethnic', 'national' or 'linguistic minorities', from 2012 onwards the official

terminology has been changed to ‘nationalities’, as traditionally codified by the 1868 Nationalities Act. (The deaf community, of course, is not a nationality but a linguistic minority.) Since this distinction is irrelevant to the regulation of language use, the terms ‘nationalities’ and ‘minorities’ will be used interchangeably.

Article 68 of the Hungarian *Constitution* as modified by Act No. 31 of 1989 stipulated the following:

(1) The national and linguistic minorities living in the Republic of Hungary share the power of the people: they are constituent parts of the State. (2) The Republic of Hungary shall provide for the protection of national and linguistic minorities. It shall ensure their collective participation in public affairs, the fostering of their cultures, the use of their mother tongues, education in their mother tongues and the use of names in their own languages.” (Hungarian Constitution, Article 68 as modified by Act No. 31 of 1989)

As compared to the former (socialist) constitution, the only novelty in linguistic terms was the constitutional recognition of the right to use one’s name in his or her language. Act No. 40 of 1990 introduced the term ‘ethnic’ instead of ‘linguistic’ minorities. The distinction between national and ethnic minorities was primarily based on whether a given minority had a mother country (that is, a country from which the people of the minority derive their origin) or not. In this sense, Gypsies and Ruthenians were considered as ethnic minorities (Kállai–Varjú 2010: 187).

The 1993 Minorities Act provided the following language rights for minorities: (1) individual rights: family events and related religious services in the mother tongue, first names and family names registered in the mother tongue; to cultivate the mother tongue and pass it on to the next generation; education and cultural activities in the mother tongue (Articles 11–13); (2) collective rights: the right to cultivate and develop the minority language; the right to initiate the creation of the necessary conditions for kindergarten, primary, secondary and higher education in the mother tongue or bilingually (*i.e.* in the mother tongue and in Hungarian); and the right to establish a national educational, training, cultural and scientific institutional network of their own (Articles 16 and 18).

Educational rights of minorities were further elaborated in Chapter VI (Articles 42–50) of the Act. According to the main rule, at the request of the parents of eight students belonging to the same minority group, it was compulsory to run a minority class or

group, but according to local possibilities and demands, it was permitted to establish a separate minority kindergarten or school. Local municipalities and minority self-governments had to cooperate in organizing the minority education but it was also possible for a minority self-government to take over an educational institution. The teaching of minority languages took place in three – traditionally established – ways: 1. teaching *in* the mother tongue (where the minority language is the language of instruction and Hungarian is a compulsory subject); 2. teaching *of* the mother tongue (mixed-language or bilingual schools instructing in the minority language and Hungarian); 3. Hungarian-language education (*language teaching* schools, where the minority language is only taught as a subject).

Chapter VII (Articles 51–54) contained additional rights related to language use. Article 51(1) is especially significant from a theoretical point of view as it declared the freedom of language (a right that does not exist in current international law –in contrast to, e.g., freedom of thought, conscience, expression or religion– and has rarely been recognized by domestic legislation): „In the Republic of Hungary everyone may freely use their mother tongue whenever and wherever they wish to do so.” Despite having been declared in a minority law, the provision applied to everyone: persons belonging to the language majority as well as to minorities.

Since in practice it is usually the use of minority languages that causes difficulties, the Minorities Act specifically prescribed that the conditions for minority language use must be provided by the State, in cases specified in a separate law. In connection with the use of minority languages in judicial proceedings and public administration, the Minorities Act referred to the relevant procedural laws. In addition, it provided for the use of the mother tongues of minorities (1) in the Parliament; (2) in the boards of representatives of the local municipalities (the Hungarian translation of the contribution made in a minority language had to be enclosed to the minutes of the meeting, but the minutes and decisions could also be recorded bilingually); (3) at the request of the minority self-government: (a) in the promulgation and publication of decrees and announcements of local municipalities; (b) in administrative forms; (c) in the display of names and inscriptions of local municipalities as well as locality and street names; (4) as a criterion in filling the positions of local civil servants and public sector employees.

As regards the Minorities Act, problems had been raised in connection with the regulation and operation of the minority self-government system, thus the law was

amended in 2005 and 2010. These amendments hardly affected the existing language rights, since this part of the regulation had not been criticized. However, the practical implementation of language rights did raise concerns, especially in the field education, mainly because of problems in funding and infrastructure (the lack of adequate textbooks, qualified teachers, etc.) (Kállai–Varjú 2010: 194–198). Act No. 94 of 2005 provided for new linguistic rights related to the local minority self-government and extended the educational rights of minorities. From 2005 onwards, decrees of local municipalities on the collective use of minority languages were to be adopted only with the consent of minority self-governments (Article 28). Furthermore, it became possible to keep the minutes of the meetings of minority self-governments in the language of the respective minority in addition to Hungarian, and in this case, the authentic version was the one in the minority language (Article 30/F). As for education, a new provision especially regarded the teaching of Gypsy languages, i.e. Romani and Beás (Article 45), and if the number of students did not allow to organise minority education within a locality, the county municipality was obliged to create the conditions for supplementary minority education at the request of the national minority self-government concerned (Article 43).

The 2009 Hungarian Sign Language Act must be mentioned as an emblematic piece of minority language legislation. Pursuant to this act, commended as the most progressive regulation on sign languages in Europe, the Hungarian deaf community is defined as a linguistic minority, and from September 1, 2017, the teaching of Hungarian Sign Language as well as Hungarian has been compulsory in bilingual schools established for the deaf children, while in integrating institutions bilingual education shall be provided even at the request of one parent of a deaf child.

The language provisions of sectoral legislation on justice and public administration have remained essentially unchanged as compared to those of the socialist system and, until just recently, there were only minor alterations since the entry into force of the new constitution (Fundamental Law) and the new Nationalities Act in 2012. According to the rules of the 1952 Civil Procedure Act (Art. 6, 78(4a), 184, 191(6)), the 1998 Criminal Procedure Act (Art. 9, 114, 219(3), 250(1), 262(6), 339(2)), and the 2004 Public Administration Act (Art. 4(1), 9-11, 29(11), 52(2)-(3), 60), the language of civil, criminal and administrative procedures is Hungarian but no one can be disadvantaged because s/he does not know the Hungarian language. Both orally and in writing,

everyone can use their mother tongue or other language known and chosen by them. Although the term ‘mother tongue’ obviously includes the languages of nationalities, the law specifically provides for the right to use the languages of nationalities, and –in order to comply with the Language Charter (see below)–, the right to use regional languages. The most important documents of the proceedings have to be translated and, if necessary, an interpreter has to be assigned (since 2010, sign language interpreters are explicitly mentioned). Since 2008, it has been possible to conduct administrative proceedings falling within the scope of competence of the nationality self-governments in a language other than Hungarian.

In 2016 a new Civil Procedure Act was adopted which entered into force on January 1, 2018. A major change in its linguistic provisions (Art. 61, 67(5), 113, 171(2), 320(1), 325(2)) is that henceforth the right of everyone to use their mother tongue is restricted to oral proceedings; the language of written statements shall be Hungarian. The provision about that no one can be disadvantaged because s/he does not know the Hungarian language is also missing from the new law. As for the new Criminal Procedure Act (No. 90 of 2017, entry into force: July 1, 2018) the content of language-related provisions suffered no changes (Art. 8, 39(4), 78, 201, 423(2), 455(6), 576(1) b), 795(3)), except for a new rule relevant for the recent migration crisis (see below in Sect. 4).

In addition to justice and public administration, language-related legislation can be found in the field of trade and certain community areas. Act No. 155 of 1997 on Consumer Protection provided that the most important data required for informing the consumer on the labels of the goods and the user’s manuals should be in the Hungarian language. Pursuant to a 2000 judgement of the Court of Justice of the European Union in the case of *Geffroy and Casino France* (C-366/98), the law was amended as to allow for the use of other languages in addition to Hungarian, and in 2008 all language specifications were abolished. In 2015 a new provision was adopted determining Hungarian as the official language of the conciliation procedure (Art. 20[6]).

It is important to mention Act No. 96 of 2001 – simply referred to as ‘Hungarian language law’ in the press –the aim of which is to preserve the Hungarian language “against the persistent and abundant foreign language effects”. Designating the act as language law is exaggeration, given that it only applies to a quite narrow sphere of language use, that is commercial signs and certain public announcements (belonging to

the so-called visual language use or language landscape). The following texts must be published in Hungarian: (1) the text of commercial advertisements published in the Hungarian-language press, radio and television, as well as on outdoor advertising spaces (only the text of the advertisement itself has to appear in Hungarian, there is no such obligation concerning company names, designations of origin, geographical indications, trademarks, etc.); (2) designations of stores on the inscriptions of stores (again excluding company names, designations of origin, geographical indications, trademarks, and leading words) as well as announcements informing the consumer; (3) information leaflets on public spaces, public buildings, private spaces and buildings open to all, as well as public transport. In all cases, the foreign language text may be retained, provided that the Hungarian equivalent is displayed at least as noticeably and at least in the same size. The law does not apply to commercials and subtitles in the languages of nationalities in localities with an established self-government for the nationality concerned.

In 2011 a new Constitution and a new law on minorities (henceforth called ‘nationalities’) were adopted by the Hungarian Parliament. The Fundamental Law of Hungary, which entered into force on 1 January 2012, pays a special attention to the protection of the Hungarian language („our unique language”) and the languages of nationalities already in the Preamble (‘National Avowal’). With a bit unlucky phrasing, nationalities are declared to be state-forming factors: „[t]he nationalities living with us are parts of the Hungarian political community and are constituent factors of the State”. Since the Preamble has been written in the name of “we the members of the Hungarian nation”, a strictly grammatical interpretation might suggest that members of the „nationalities living with us” are not part of the Hungarian people. This non-inclusive language was criticized by the Venice Commission, the advisory body of the Council of Europe on constitutional matters (Opinion no. 621/2011, para. 40). However, Article XXIX repeats this provision in a way that leaves no doubt about the consideration of nationalities as state-forming factors by the legislator: “[n]ationalities living in Hungary shall be constituent parts of the State”.

According to Article H, the official language in Hungary is Hungarian, which is protected by the State together with the Hungarian Sign Language as part of the Hungarian culture. This commitment concerning nationality languages only appears in the Preamble, which has less normative force (*cf.* Opinion no. 621/2011 of the Venice

Commission, para. 45 and 82). In contrast to the concerns of many, this normative arrangement in practice has so far not resulted in a diminution of the level of minority protection previously guaranteed in Hungary. The declaration of the official status of the Hungarian language created a new situation only in a symbolic sense, since Hungarian had been an official language before (not only *de facto*, but in many sectoral laws also *de jure*).

The institution of the official language implicitly provides language rights for the Hungarian language community, i.e. the linguistic majority (they have the right to use their own language as the official language of the State) (cf. Andrásy 2003). Now let us see the linguistic rights provided by the constitution for linguistic minorities!

[e]very Hungarian citizen belonging to a nationality has the right to undertake and preserve their identity. Nationalities living in Hungary shall have the right to use their mother tongues, to use their names in their own languages both individually and collectively, to foster their culture and to education in their mother tongues”.

(Hungarian Constitution 2011, Article XXIX)

Literally interpreted, this section provides only one individual language right: the right to use someone’s name in his/her own language (which is also a collective right). The right to use the mother tongue and the right to education *in* the mother tongue appear as collective rights. A distinction between individual and collective rights may be significant when it comes to the enforcement of individual rights in front of law courts. This – so far only hypothetical – problem can easily be resolved by the Constitutional Court: on the one hand, the individual right to use one’s mother tongue and have education in one’s mother tongue can be deduced from the individual right to preserve one’s identity and, on the other hand, individual rights can usually be derived from collective rights (cf. Andrásy 1996). This would not work the other way around: international human rights law has traditionally ruled out the collective rights of minorities regarded as “alien to the system”. From this point of view, the wording of the Fundamental Law can be considered as a progressive one. In addition, it expressly prohibits discrimination based on language and national origin (Article XV).

The new Nationalities Act, which entered into force on 1 January 2012, mainly clarified the rules on the legal status and operation of nationality self-governments, taking into account most of the legislative proposals of the minority ombudsman (Opinion of the Parliamentary Commissioner for National and Ethnic Minorities, 2011); the majority of

linguistic provisions were taken over from the earlier Minorities Act untouched. For this reason, only new language-related provision will be considered here. One of the most important innovations of the law is that the mandatory provision of certain language rights is bound to a certain ratio of the nationality population as established by census data. (If this ratio is not reached, such rights may be granted by the local municipality at the request of organizations and persons belonging to the respective nationality.) A 20% ratio is requested for the bilingual drafting of minutes and decisions of the board of representatives and for employing local officials familiar with the nationality language concerned. In turn, 10% is needed for decrees, declarations, announcements, and forms of local municipalities as well as place names, street signs and public inscriptions to be published in the languages of nationalities (in addition to Hungarian), and for local media service providers to broadcast regular nationality public service programs (Art. 5–6).

Among media-related rights (Art. 44–49), it is a novelty that nationalities have the right to free access to information, and to obtain, provide and disseminate information via mass communication devices on their mother tongue. The chapter on the educational and cultural rights of nationalities begins with enlisting the languages used by nationalities. The naming of Gypsy languages are confusing: “Roma/Gypsy (Romani and Beás) (hereafter: Roma)”, what is more, Beás is not a Roma language. It is no less perplexing what the law means by declaring that in the case of the Roma and Armenian nationalities, Hungarian also counts as a language used by nationalities. On the one hand, other nationalities also use the Hungarian language (they are all bilingual), and on the other hand, to give extra protection to the Hungarian language in the framework of a minority law is pointless. In addition to the three traditional types of instruction (education in the mother tongue, nationality bilingual education, nationality language education) and supplementary nationality education, Roma nationality education is mentioned explicitly, the language of which may be exclusively Hungarian (Article 22). (Gypsy minority education existed before as a separate type, but it was not regulated at the level of minority law.)

The Venice Commission, which was asked to comment on the Nationalities Act, was generally satisfied. Despite the law was found to be particularly complex and at times excessively detailed and lacking legal clarity, it “confirms Hungary’s internationally

recognised commitment to minority protection” (Venice Commission, Opinion no. 671/2012, para. 82–84).

Hungary has been among the first States to sign and ratify all international instruments related to language rights and minority protection, including the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities as well as the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (hereinafter: Language Charter), two international treaties concluded under the aegis of the Council of Europe. The latter is of particular importance for the purposes of this chapter. Hungary originally undertook to apply Chapter III (containing the substantial provisions) in respect of the Croatian, German, Romanian, Serbian, Slovakian and Slovenian languages (Act No. 40 of 1999), and in 2008 it extended the protection to the Gypsy (Romani and Beás) languages (Act No. 43 of 2008).

The Committee of Experts monitoring the implementation of the Language Charter has been continuously stressed the exemplary nature of Hungary’s language legislation, at the same time pointed out the anomalies of implementation, particularly in the fields of education, justice and state administration. Despite the well-established legal framework, the organizational, infrastructural and material conditions of language rights are often missing. The languages of nationalities are almost exclusively taught as school subjects, and the situation of nationality teacher training is critical. The languages of nationalities in civil, criminal and administrative proceedings can only be used in theory, and the Hungarian authorities keep failing to designate the geographical areas in which the number of persons belonging to a given nationality could justify the implementation of related undertakings. The lack of systematic language policy and planning for the Gypsy languages has been challenged from the outset. Furthermore, because of the high level of linguistic assimilation, people belonging to nationalities are not interested in their linguistic rights, and the linguistic majority does not even know about languages other than Hungarian spoken in the country. It is therefore of primary importance to raise awareness of the problem in both the linguistic minority and majority societies (COMEX 2001–2016).

3. The Influence of Migration on Hungary's Language Policy

We are living in an era of a new 'exodus' from Africa and the Middle-East to Europe. According to estimates, with the most recent waves of refugees and migrants, taking into account only those coming from the first ten "contributors of migrants in EU" countries, 100-500 new languages may arrive to Europe, from just the Balkan route (not counting migrant languages possibly arriving from the other five routes used by migrants) (Pop 2017: 72-78).

As regards Hungary, migration has traditionally been negligible, the proportion of immigrants remaining around a stable 3-4% of the population (Eurostat, 2017). Furthermore, with the exception of a relatively large Chinese diaspora, most immigrants settling in the country since the change of the political regime have been ethnic Hungarians from neighbouring countries, mainly from Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Ukraine. This has not changed with the refugee crisis of recent years, except in one area: the number of submitted asylum applications. In the year of 2015 Hungary was the first in Europe for asylum applications per 100,000 citizens. However, asylum seekers submitted applications in Hungary only for formal reasons and then, almost without exception, all moved on to Western Europe (Juhász–Hunyadi–Zgut, 2015: 9-10).

Given the lack of previous experience with immigrants and of the adequate legal framework to integrate significant numbers of foreign nationals with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the Hungarian government had to take quick and resolute actions. These actions can be summarized with the term of "no-migrants policy", the short-term goal being excluding all migrants (a collective label used for refugees and non-refugees alike) from the country through various measures including legislative amendments and building the infamous fence along the southern border. No wonder that by 2016 the number of refugee applications fell back to the annual average, i.e. 29 432 (Aida 2017). This is a 500% decrease as compared to the peak in 2015, i.e. 176 903 applications (Juhász–Hunyadi–Zgut, 2015: 9).

Hungary's legislation on minority protection and language use has never taken into account the special needs of migrants, neither before the refugee crisis (due to the factual circumstances explained above), nor after it. In fact, the only change relevant for language use evidently adopted under the influence of the Hungarian government's special approach towards the refugee crisis is Article 833 of the new Criminal Procedure

Act (to enter into force on July 1, 2018). The new provision concerns the (novel) proceedings established for the crime of violating the border barrier (including irregular border crossing and destruction of the fence), and explicitly “allows” for the accused to surrender his right to have the indictment or judgment translated. This provision is at least suspicious from the stance of international human rights law.

Otherwise, the laws of the country provide for the internationally recognized language rights of the accused to be informed promptly and in detail in a language that s/he understands of the nature and cause of the charge against him, and to have the free assistance of an interpreter if he cannot understand or speak the language used in court. These rights, recognized in Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, are duly transferred into the Hungarian Criminal Procedure Act. Furthermore, migrants can benefit from the common provision of the three procedural acts (see Sect. 2 of this paper) on the right of everyone to use their mother tongue or other language known and chosen by them both orally and in writing (in civil proceedings, this right will only apply to oral statements from January 2018 onwards). Apart from that, migrant communities apparently have to wait one hundred years to qualify as a nationality and thus enjoy the rights provided for by the Nationalities Act.

4. Conclusions

On the basis of an in-depth analysis of Hungary’s current language-related laws, three main conclusions can be drawn:

First, the logic of the legislation fits into the broader international framework, where the law only provides language rights for minorities, explicitly anyways. Implicitly, language rights can be deduced from the institution of official language for the language majority, that is the Hungarian-speaking community. Still, language rights are not stipulated in the form of universal human rights (let alone, in the form of the right to freedom of language as suggested by Andrassy 2012). Although the human rights approach per se is not the panacea for ethnic conflicts, it has a stronger enforcement mechanism in international law (minority protection is considered to belong to the discretionary power of the individual states much more than human rights protection). Therefore, it could bring us closer to a more satisfying solution for the diverse needs of different language groups.

Second, Hungary's legislation on minority language rights is sophisticated enough to offer *de lege ferenda* guidelines to other European states, but the implementation leaves much to be desired; sometimes people belonging to national minorities enjoy their language rights in paper rather than in practice.

Third, since migration to Hungary has traditionally been insignificant, minority and language policies could easily disregard the needs of immigrants, no wonder that the migration crisis in 2014 took the Hungarian government by surprise (or shock, really). Even if Hungary at present is not a destination country for migrants, it might lead to serious consequences if a potential change of events finds the State unprepared.

Hungarian and European decision-makers should seriously consider the implications of the possible massive influx of people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Instead of *ad hoc*, hasty and short-term approaches of a fire-fighting nature, sound, long-term strategies and comprehensive policies are needed urgently, in both the European and the domestic levels, in order to cope with the possible conflicts stemming from the new ethnic and linguistic layouts emerging in European countries. They will also allow accommodating the rightful needs of both traditionally settled minorities as well as newcomers possibly becoming new minorities and therefore reshaping the ethnic-linguistic map of the "Old Europe".

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