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A C T
dated 10 July 1999
on the use of languages of national minorities

The National Council of the Slovak Republic:

Acting upon the Constitution of the Slovak Republic and international covenants binding the Slovak Republic,

Upholding the protection and development of fundamental rights and liberties of citizens of the Slovak Republic who are members of national minorities,

Considering recent legislation regulating the use of languages of national minorities,

Acknowledging and valuing the importance of mothers tongues of citizens of the Slovak Republic who are members of national minorities as an expression of the cultural wealth of the country,

Bearing in mind the establishment, in the conditions of the integrating European community, of a democratic, tolerant and prospering society,

Recognizing that the Slovak language is the state language of the Slovak Republic and that it is desirable to establish the use of languages of citizens of the Slovak Republic who are members of national minorities,

enacted the following law:

§ 1

The citizen of the Slovak Republic who is a member of a national minority is entitled to use, in addition to the state language¹⁾, the language of the national minority (hereinafter referred to as "minority language"). The purpose of this law is to establish, in harmony with other legislation²⁾, the rules of use of minority languages also in official contacts.

¹⁾ §1, par. 4 of the Act No. 270:1995 (Coll.) of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the state language of the Slovak Republic.

²⁾ For example, §18 of the Code of civil procedure; §2, par. 14 of the Act No. 141:1961 (Digest) on criminal action (Code of criminal procedure); §5, par. 3 of the Act No. 335:1991 (Digest) on courts of justice and judges; §23 of the Act No. 38:1993 (Coll.) of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on organisation of the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic, proceedings held before that Court and the position of judges of that Court; §2, par. 1 of the Act No. 300:1993 (Coll.) of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on names and surnames; §16 and §19, par. 3 and 5 of the Act No. 154:1994 (Coll.) of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on birth registries; §1, par. 1 of the Act No. 191:1994 (Coll.) of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the designation of names of communities in languages of national minorities; §5, par. 3 of the Act No. 255:1991 (Digest) of the Slovak National Council on the Slovak Radio; §3, par. 3 of the Act No. 254:1991 (Digest) of the

Slovak National Council on the Slovak Television; §5, par. 1, subpar. e) of the Act No. 305:1991 (Digest) on freedom of religious belief and on the position of churches and religious associations; §2, par. 8 of the Act No. 212:1997 (Coll.) on mandatory copies of periodical publications, nonperiodical publications and audio-visual works.

§ 2

(1) Citizens of the Slovak Republic who are members of national minorities and, by the results of the latest census, represent at least 20 % of the total population in the community may use the minority language in such a community in official contacts.

(2) The list of communities pursuant to par. (1) shall be established by decree of the Government of the Slovak Republic.

(3) The citizen of the Slovak Republic who is a member of a national minority is entitled to present written submissions also in the minority language to state administration bodies and territorial self-management bodies (hereinafter referred to as "public authorities") in the community pursuant to par. (1). The public authorities in the community pursuant to par. (1) shall respond also in the minority language in addition to the state language, with the exception of public documents.

(4) The decision brought in administrative proceedings³⁾ by the public authorities in the community pursuant to par. (1) shall, by request, also be issued in the minority language in addition to the state language. In case of doubt the wording of the version issued in the state language shall prevail.

(5) Public authorities situated in buildings in the community pursuant to par. (1) shall be designated also in the minority language.

(6) The territorial self-management body in the community pursuant to par. (1) shall issue official forms within its jurisdiction to citizens in the state language, and by request also in the minority language.

§ 3

(1) Proceedings of the public authority in the community pursuant to §2, par. (1) may be held also in the minority language, subject to approval of all persons present.

(2) The representative of the municipality in the community pursuant to §2, par. (1) is entitled to use the minority language at proceedings held by that body. The municipality shall provide for interpretation.

(3) The chronicle of the community pursuant to §2, par. (1) may be maintained in the minority language.

§ 4

(1) The community pursuant to §2, par. (1) may, in its territory, designate streets and use other local geographical designations in the minority language.

(2) Important information, mainly warnings, advice and health care notices shall, in the community pursuant to §2, par. (1), be displayed at places accessible by the general public also in the minority language, in addition to the state language.

³⁾ Act No. 71:1967 (Digest) on administrative proceedings, as amended by later legislation.

(3) The public authority in the community pursuant to §2, par. (1) shall, within its jurisdiction, provide information on generally binding legal regulations by request also in the minority language.

§ 5

(1) The right of use of the minority language in judicial proceedings and in other fields is regulated by other legislation²⁾.

(2) The stipulation of §2, par. (1) shall not apply to the field of pre-school education, primary schools, secondary schools and culture. Use of the minority language in these fields is regulated by other legislation⁴⁾.

§ 6

Unless stipulated differently in an international covenant binding the Slovak Republic, the rule that use of the Czech language in official contacts meets the condition of essential understandability with the state language applies in the implementation of this Act.

§ 7

(1) Public authorities and their employees shall use the state language¹⁾ in official contacts, and may use the minority language under the conditions established by this Act and other legislation. Public authorities and their employees are not required to have command of the minority language.

(2) The public authority in the community pursuant to §2, par. (1) shall establish conditions for use of the minority language under this Act and other legislation⁴⁾.

§ 8

§10 of the Act No. 270:1995 (Coll.) of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the state language of the Slovak Republic is abrogated.

§ 9

This Act shall assume effect on 1 September 1999.

(Signed by hand)

Rudolf Schuster

Jozef Migaš

Mikuláš Dzurinda_____

⁴⁾ For example, §3, par. 1 and §3a of the Act No. 29:1984 (Digest) on the system of primary and secondary schools (Schools Act), as amended by later legislation; the Act No. 279:1993 (Coll.) of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on educational establishments, as amended by the Act No. 222:1996 (Coll.) of the National Council of the Slovak Republic.