

# MIME

Mobility and Inclusion  
in Multilingual Europe

## What does the case of Vojvodina (Serbia) tell us about multilingualism, mobility, inclusion and power relations?

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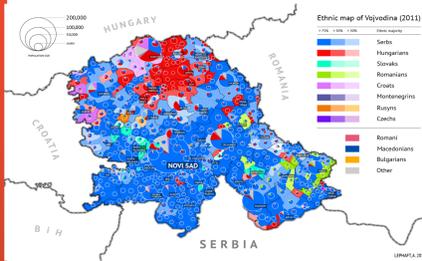
### Language regime of Serbia

Serbia is an asymmetrically decentralized unitary state with one autonomous province: Vojvodina

The multiethnic and multilingual make-up of Vojvodina as a border region is not reflected adequately in legislation nor in practice

Limits territories where minority language rights can be claimed: 15% threshold at state-level (LSGUs), 25% in Vojvodina (settlements)

Restrictive approach: limits Vojvodina's capacity to improve conditions of multilingualism to the repetition of state laws



### Multilingualism in Vojvodina

2011 census: more than 33% non-Serbs (cf. less than 17% non-Serbs within Serbia)  
Hungarians 13, Slovaks 2.6, Croats 2.43, Roma 2.19, Romanians 1.32, Montenegrins 1.15, Bunjevci 0.85, Ruthenians 0.72 per cent etc.

In official use 9 national minority languages: Hungarian in the entire or partial territory of 31 LSGUs, Slovakian in 13, Romanian in 10, Ruthenian in 6, Croatian in 4, Macedonian in 2, Czech, Montenegrin and Bulgarian in 1 each

Variation in cases: from lived multilingualism (e.g. *Belo Blato*, *Hun. Nagyerzébetlak*, *Slov. Biele Blato*) to conflict (e.g. *Temerin*)



### Conflict-inducing processes along ethnic and linguistic „fault lines” in Europe

1. Unwarranted securitization of ethnic and language issues

2. Violation of, restriction of the use of, or reduction of the scope of vested minority (language) rights, undisguised downgrading of the status of the language of the minority in administration, education etc.

3. Ethnic gerrymandering

4. Contested markers of identity between majority and minority peoples coexisting on shared territory, possibly with an overemphasis on language as a marker of national identity over language as a means of communication

5. Unilateral kin-state activism and extra-territorial (transborder) nation-building practices, efforts to reinforce the links with the kin-state in a way that downplays minorities' sense of belonging to their country of residence

6. Competing nation-building efforts exposing claimed co-ethnics (co-nationals) or „in-between” minorities to irreconcilable loyalty pressures



### Macro environment

International minority rights norms are often contested and subordinated to geopolitical interests

Without a robust and common European minority rights regime, EU member states remain unaccountable for the non-implementation of minority protection commitments

The primacy of domestic party politics often overpowers the influence of EU conditionality

### Kin-state policies

Triadic nexus (kin-state, national minority, nationalizing home state) revisited

Claimed co-ethnics and loyalty competition

- br/othering or dual othering, stigmatization by both host and kin-state majorities
- influence on language use, e.g. Bunjevci - textbook affair

Extra-territorial citizenship policies

- mobilise language skills, family histories and personal connections in order to acquire EU via Bulgarian, Croat & Hungarian citizenship
- citizenship as a tool for labour migration within the EU (access to diverse resources) and identity security (prevent linguistic assimilation)
- consequences: growing prestige of national minority languages; emigration potential („emptification” of settlements)

### Implementation gap

Pseudo multilingual practice: national legal framework is good, the application of laws is inconsistent and faces many obstacles:

- lack of will and/or resource;
- nationalizing state's logic;
- lack of legal consciousness;
- local and regional branches of state-level institutions are not sensitive to local context

Incoherence in language rights enforcement (non-application or circumvention of the laws) helps undermine social inclusion

Proportional representation of national minorities in labour market, barriers:

- belonging to and speaking the language of a national minority do not overlap;
- no obligation to declare national affiliation;
- no proof of command of a national minority language required



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