

S L O V A K I A

SECTION A

Capital

Bratislava 452,053 (1995 est.)

Area

48,845 sq km (18,932 sq mi)

Form of government

Republic

GDP—per capita

Purchasing power parity—\$8,500 (1999 est.)

Population

5,396,193 (July 1999 est.)

Ethnic composition

Slovak	85.7%
Hungarian	10.7%
Romany	1.5%
Czech	1.0%
Ruthenian	0.3%
Ukrainian	0.3%
German	0.1%
Polish	0.1%
Other	0.3%

Official language

Slovak

Minority languages

Hungarian, Czech, Ukrainian, Romanian, Romany, Polish, German

Legislation dealing with the use of languages

The Constitution of the Slovak Republic, adopted on September 1, 1992

Law of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the State Language of the Slovak Republic, from November 15, 1995

Law on the Use of Minority Languages, from July 11, 1999

Background notes

Slovakia existed as part of Hungary from the beginning of the 10th century until 1918, when it united with the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia, in addition to a small part of Silesia, to form Czechoslovakia. In 1939, shortly before the start of World War II, Slovakia declared its independence under pressure from German dictator Adolph Hitler. In 1945 it was reunited with the rest of Czechoslovakia. From 1948 until 1989 Czechoslovakia was ruled by a Soviet-style Communist regime. The Slovaks and the Czechs agreed to separate peacefully on January 1, 1993. Slovakia has experienced more difficulty than the Czech Republic in developing a modern market economy.

The Slovak language is the official language and belongs to the West Slavic sub-group of the Indo-European language family, though it uses Roman rather than Cyrillic script. It differs only slightly from Czech, and fluency in both languages is common. Hungarian, Polish, German, Ukrainian, Romany and Russian are also spoken as minority languages.

ROMA

Despite the existence of basic statistical facts, there are quite understandable objections in respect to the reliability of the latest demographic data on the Roma minority. This ethnic group could, for the first time since World War II, express their ethnic affiliation on the 1991 Statistical Census. Surprisingly, only 75,802 (1.44 %) citizens of the Slovak Republic identified themselves as Roma. It is clear that many Roma declared themselves mostly as Slovak or Hungarian in this Census. Census officials (using local knowledge or visible signs) unofficially collected data on Roma minority during Statistical Censuses

under previous regimes. While in 1970 about 160,000 Roma (3.5% of total population) lived in Slovakia, in 1980 it was almost 200,000 (4% of total population). The latest more precise data on the Roma population was based on a registry of state administration from 1989, when Roma population had reached 253,943 persons (4.8% of total population).

The most often mentioned expert estimations (1998) on the Roma population are between 330,000-350,000 (about 7-7.5% of total population). The highest estimations of Romany population size in Slovakia declare a half million Roma living in the Slovak Republic. It is generally accepted that they have a high birth rate, low death rate, and almost 40% of the population in pre-productive age (1995). The Roma minority is dispersed throughout the country.

CZECHS

With the separation of Czechoslovakia, Czechs have become the newest minority in Slovakia. While they may not experience the same depth of prejudice as some other groups, significant misconceptions can stimulate intolerance and discrimination. "Ěeský spolok" (Czech Association) has worked with rural Czech organizations to increase their ability to ensure their perspectives are represented in the media.

HUNGARIANS

Ethnic Hungarians live in the unbroken southern strip of Slovakia adjacent to Hungary, stretching from Bratislava/Pozsony to the Ukrainian border. Living in 523 municipalities, the number of Hungarians exceeds 10% of the population. Among these, Hungarians make up over 80% of the population in 272 localities, and over 50% in 150 localities. Among the southern Slovakia districts, ethnic Hungarians constitute the majority in Dunaszerdahely/Dunajská Streda (87.23%) and Komárom/Komárno (72.25%) (Data from February 1996).

The Czechoslovak Constitution, adopted in 1956, for the first time made a brief mention of the Hungarian minority, and the 1960 Constitution promised to ensure education and cultural integrity in their native language for all minorities. At the same time, however, the territorial administrative division was changed, which further reduced the number of districts where the Hungarian population constituted the majority.

The new Czechoslovak Constitution, adopted on October 27, 1968, declared the establishment of the Czechoslovak Federation, consisting of the two Czech and Slovak member states. Constitutional Law 144/1968 regulating the situation of the nationalities, for the first time promised them representation in the various elected bodies in proportion to their numerical size.

The Constitution of the Slovak Republic was adopted on September 1, 1992.

The ethnic Hungarian community sharply criticized the shortcomings of the draft constitution.

The new Slovak government formed on October 30, 1998, made significant changes in its program with regard to the situation of minorities.

- No citizen of the Slovak Republic will suffer any disadvantage because it belongs to a given national minority or ethnic group. The government will observe the obligations of the Slovak Republic deriving from signed and ratified international documents.
- The government will guarantee the upgrading of the educational level of citizens belonging to national minorities to the level of the nation as a whole, and solve the problem of teachers' training for school teaching in the minority language, and the training of theologians and persons working in the fields of culture and people's education and using a minority language, at an appropriate institutional level in the framework of existing institutions.
- It will renew the traditional issuance of bilingual school reports and the keeping of bilingual pedagogical documentation.
- It will create conditions for radio and television broadcasting in the languages of national minorities.
- The government will ensure the many-sided conditions for the equal development of the culture of national minorities and ethnic groups, and adopt new principles for their support.
- The government has assumed the task of drafting and adopting a law on the use of national minority and ethnic group languages, and of restoring the legal person status (subjectivity) of their cultural institutions.
- The government will ensure the ratification of the European Charter on Local Self-Government, as well as the appropriate decentralization going with it.
- The Government of the Slovak Republic considers national and ethnic diversity as a historic given and an enriching element, and condemns all manifestations of ethnic and racial hatred. The drafting of the long-awaited minority language law was finally started in early 1999.

SECTION B

Where does one observe language to be a problem in the country?

The use of Slovak as a State Language is required by the Constitution. The current Law on Minority Languages was adopted on July 10, 1999. Up until then, the controversial 1995 Language Law regulated the use of Slovak. It mandated the use of the Slovak language for official purposes, in commerce, in the administration of religious bodies and in communications between patients and physicians. The use of minority languages was thus marginalized even in situations that most people would consider as private.

The law attracted international criticism, both by the High Commissioner for National Minorities (HCNM) and the EU, but this was dismissed by the then Government. The new Government requested a ruling of the Constitutional Court, and in October 1998 the Law was declared unconstitutional. Despite that the action required the new Government to postpone local elections, a new, more acceptable Language Law was drafted straightaway.

The new Law was adopted on July 10, 1999. It allows, and to some extent promotes, the use of minority languages in public administration at a local level, where at least 20% of the community belong to a minority group. The new law was commented upon favorably in EU quarters.

It is an improvement over the previously existing situation; however, the threshold of 20% is still very high. As long as the debate in Slovakia is kept within the democratic principle of protection for all its citizens' rights, disregarding ethnic identity, then this can be seen as a promising first step.

What does it cost in terms of money, time and government resources to police the country's language restrictions?

HUNGARIANS

After 1993, Slovak leadership sought to assert Slovak national identity in opposition to that of the "old enemy" the Hungarians, a minority also living in the country. In Slovakia, language policy served a two-fold purpose: by giving the Slovak language a dominant position in the state; and it was at the same time a method for promoting the assimilation of non-ethnic Slovak citizens. Whilst Slovak leaders attempted to justify restrictive language policies by the imperatives of nation building and consolidating the identity of the state, the Hungarian minority perceived these policies as specific attacks against minority identity and culture,

and against theirs especially. In reality, anti-minority policies in Slovakia (or policies perceived as such) fell within a broader set of anti-opposition policies as the State attempted to extend control and establish moral monopoly over not only language but also the fields of culture, education and economy.

To what extent are minority groups in this country disadvantaged by their language?

HUNGARIANS

One of the biggest grievances of the Hungarians living in Slovakia was the limitation of native-language use. The Law on State Language, adopted in November 1995, did not regulate the use of minority languages in public life. That is, no law on the use of minority languages was passed at the same time or within a set deadline. In fact, the minorities had to wait four years for the passage of such a law.

Even though the Constitution allows the members of minorities to deal with official bodies and to submit requests in their native-language, the Law on State Language mandated the official bodies to respond to these requests only in the Slovak language. Due to the lack of a law on minority languages, native-language use in schools and cultural institutions could be restricted by means of lower-level legal provisions. For example, the making of audio and videotapes for children less than 12 years old was authorized only in the Slovak language. By referring to the Law on State Language, the handing out of bilingual report cards along with the keeping of school records in the native-tongue were banned in 1997 in Hungarian-language schools.

According to the 1996 data, 8.8% of Slovakia's enrolled students were of Hungarian nationality but only 6.8% of them attended Hungarian-language schools. Of all the Hungarian children of school age, 26.2% were not enrolled in Hungarian-language schools mostly because there was no Hungarian-language school in at least 130 localities where ethnic Hungarians constituted the majority of the population. The number of Hungarian-language schools and classes has been decreasing for years.

The use of language in everyday life e.g. education, broadcasting and other

HUNGARIAN

After the independence of Slovakia, major progress in the matter of native-language use could be achieved only in 1994. During the tenure of the "Moravèik" government, the use of Hungarian family and first names

was allowed as well as the posting of Hungarian-language place name signs.

The MATESZ (Hungarian Territorial Theatre) Drama Theatre was established in 1952 by members of the Hungarian section of the Village Theatre. Since June 1, 1990, it has functioned under the name of "Jókai Theatre" in Komárom. The legal status of the theatre was restored on April 1, 1999.

In the past, the Hungarian community in Slovakia has had access to one nationwide Hungarian-language daily. Since June 1 of 1999, an additional Hungarian daily tabloid, "Mai Lap", has also been published. In addition, three general weeklies and monthlies, four scientific and art journals, six professional journals, fourteen regional and two religious publications, four family magazines, and one youth periodical are currently in publication. Due to the lack of state support for the minority media and press, several newspapers such as "HÉT" (Week), "NAP" (Day) and "Keleti Napló" (Eastern Chronicle), have ceased publication.

Established in November 1983, the Hungarian Language Program was limited under the former communist regime to a weekly 30-minute news review, broadcast on Mondays at 6:30pm. In 1989, the program was expanded to 45 minutes. Since 1991, only 7 to 8 minutes were devoted to Hungarian-related topics, and in 1993, the original pre-1989 30-minute broadcasting time was restored. In 1997, the airtime was increased to one hour.

The core of the current radio broadcast is the live musical, information, and entertainment program entitled "Pavilon". The 45-hour a week show airs from Monday to Friday from 2:30pm to 6:30pm. The Daily Chronicle is broadcast twice a day at 1:00pm and 5:30pm. On Fridays, there is a 30-minute program starting at 1:30pm for the Hungarian-speaking Roma population. On Saturdays, a live program entitled "From Week to Week" sums up the political events of the week. On Sunday morning, a church program is broadcast, followed from 10:00am to 2:00pm by a four-hour live program, "Randevú".

On April 1, 1999, the Editorial Office of Hungarian Programs at Slovak Television was established. In addition to the daily news, the Editorial Office also has at its disposal, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, a 60-minute program, which is inserted in the official program of Slovak Television.

Did the country ratify any international treaty dealing with the protection of minorities?

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities signed on February 1, 1995, ratified on September 14, 1995 and enacted on February 1, 1998.

The Prime Ministers of Slovakia and Hungary signed a state treaty on good neighborly relations and friendly cooperation between the two countries in Paris on March 19, 1995. The treaty was ratified by the Hungarian Parliament on June 13, 1995 and by the Slovak National Council on March 26, 1996. Article 15 of the state treaty details the rights of the Slovak minority in Hungary and those of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. It states that the persons belonging to minorities have the right to effectively participate at the national and, where appropriate, at the regional level in the decisions, which affect the minorities. They have the right to use freely their native-language in private and public life. They are further entitled to internal law and order and, in accordance with the international obligations assumed by both Contracting Parties, to use their native language in official contacts, including public administration and court proceedings. In the framework of the state education and instruction system, they have the right of discrimination-free access to the public mass media and to their own mass media. The Parties will create the conditions necessary for the minorities to preserve their material and architectural relics and memorials, which embody their cultural heritage, history and traditions.

The Treaty declares that the Contracting Parties will implement as binding legal norms four international documents on the protection of minorities:

- 1) The Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities adopted by the Council of Europe and signed by the Contracting Parties on February 1, 1995.
- 2) The document adopted on June 29, 1990 by the Copenhagen meeting of the Conference on European Security and Cooperation dealing with human dimensions.
- 3) Declaration No. 47/135 adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on the rights of people belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.
- 4) Recommendation No.1201 (1993) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the respect of individual human and civil rights, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

SECTION C

Legislation dealing with the use of languages

Updated (January 2002)

The Chronology of Events connected with the implementation of the Law on Hungarians living in Neighboring Countries, which came into force on January 1, 2002 and covers persons of Hungarian nationality residing in Croatia, Yugoslavia, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Ukraine (Austria was excluded from the implementation):

- On April 23, 2001 the Slovak Prime Minister Dzurinda met Hungarian Prime Minister Orban to discuss, among other things, this law, however, without any significant results.
- On June 7, 2001 SR representatives delivered their reservations regarding the law to the Hungarian counterpart.
- On October 22, 2001 the Venice Commission of Council of Europe issued a report on "Preferential Treatment of National Minorities by Kin-States" and proposed application of the law based on the mutual meetings between the states' representatives (Romanian example).
- On November 22, 2001 negotiations between Zsolt Németh, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, and his Slovak counterpart Jaroslav Chlebo took place in Bratislava. The goal of the meeting was to acquaint the Hungarian partners with the principal objections to the law. Both sides agreed that the law should not become a political problem.
- On December 15, 2001 the Association for Common Goals was established by the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK-MKP) and four other Hungarian organizations in Slovakia to implement the law in the country.
- On January 14, 2002 Slovak negotiators at a bilateral meeting with their Hungarian counterparts proposed to exclude Slovakia (Austria's case) from the implementation of the Act. Hungary has rejected this proposal.
- On January 16, 2002 the President of SR Rudolf Schuster, who had lately criticized the attitude of the Prime Minister Dzurinda

and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Kukan for not solving the problem as soon as possible, stated that the law shouldn't deteriorate the relationships with Hungary.

- On January 23, 2002 the meeting was held in Budapest (Mr. Chlebo and Mr. Németh discussed the implementation of the Law in Slovakia, the goal was to reach the similar agreement as the one between Hungary and Romania)

The reaction in Slovakia, home to some 600,000 ethnic Hungarians, was simply a demand to discuss the law bilaterally before it was implemented. The Slovakian political parties and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs do not object to the law itself, while it is implemented solely on the Hungarian territory (the extra-territorial character of the law). Regarding the paragraphs, the Slovak side is particularly concerned about the explanation of the following:

§ 18 (1) – to clarify the way how to support financially organizations operating in Slovakia

§ 20 (1) – to clarify the role of recommending organizations founded on the territory of the Slovak Republic

§ 25 (1) – to clarify a law order according to which the foreign public benefit organizations will be established

SR emphasized it supports the development of cross-border cooperation but total liberalization in this matter is not acceptable. The most radical attitude was issued by the right-wing Slovak National Party (PSNS), calling for stopping the immunity of the Hungarian MP's who will apply for the Hungarian ID-card. The Slovak Nationalist Party (SNS) has proposed that politicians from the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK), who decided to apply for the Hungarian ID's should be forced to leave Parliament. Opposition leader Vladimir Mečiar described the law as an "unacceptable" infringement of Slovakia's principle of equal treatment of all its citizens. The only party supporting the implementation of the law is the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK).

The use of language in everyday life e.g. education, broadcasting and other

Updated (April 2002)

ROMANY LANGUAGE

Klára Orgovánová, government commissioner for Romany issues, said on January 17, 2002 that the Slovak Roma should have a chance to be

educated in their mother tongue in addition to the Slovak language. The dictionary and the grammar book put out in 1971 and currently used in Slovakia use Czech-Romany translation so it is necessary to translate these books to suit Slovak needs.

Ms Orgovánová hopes the effort will be successfully completed in the first quarter of 2002. She does not believe the Romany language should be used as the only language of instructions in Romany schools, but “could be a sort of helping language in classes where Romany pupils prevail.” Another goal to achieve is to promote creating a secondary school that would primarily prepare Romany students for working in state administration.

Source: RFE/RL NEWSLINE Vol. 6, No. 12, Part II, January 18, 2002

RUSYN MINORITY

(Comparison of Slovak and Ukrainian attitudes)

People living in the northeastern part of Slovakia who identify themselves as either Rusyns or Ukrainians are widely considered to have the same ethnic origin. However, all Slovak citizens have a constitutional right to free expression of their religious and national identity, so the Slovak government treats Rusyns and Ukrainians as members of two different national minorities with all minority rights granted by Slovak legislation.

According to the 1991 Census, 16,937 people (living mainly in northeastern Slovakia) indicated their ethnicity as Rusyn, and 13,847 people as Ukrainian, while around 50,000 people considered the Rusyn language as their mother tongue. The newly born Rusyn organizations have emerged not only in Slovakia, but also in the Transcarpathian Region of Ukraine, Poland, Romania and Hungary (previously, they existed only in former Yugoslavia, Canada, USA etc.). They all rejected the so-called “Ukrainian national identity”, which they believed was imposed by communist parties and Ukrainian nationalists during the 1950's.

The main institution allowed by the communist party to represent minority interests of Ukrainians in Slovakia after World War II was the Cultural Association of Ukrainian Workers (Kultúrny zväz ukrajinských pracujúcich KZUP) set up in the early 1950's. After its last congress in 1990, the KZUP was dissolved and two separate organizations were established: the Union of Rusyns-Ukrainians in Slovakia (Zväz Rusinov-Ukrajincov Slovenska ZRUS) and the Rusyn Renaissance (Rusinska Obroda RO). In terms of national self-identification, the ZRUS supports Ukrainian and the RO Rusyn orientation. Both organizations compete

with each other in persuading Rusyns/Ukrainians in Slovakia about their national identity and in attempts to win government support.

In 1995, Rusyn Renaissance codified a separate Rusyn language what was a main prerequisite for introducing Rusyn at primary schools as well as to state TV and radio minority broadcasting. The ZRUS protested the move, claiming that Rusyn is only a dialect of the Ukrainian language and that the Rusyn nation does not exist. Leaders of the Rusyns argue that the Slovak government is subject to pressure by Kyiv, which views efforts to recognize a separate Rusyn nationality as an anti-Ukrainian move.

The different official treatment and also status of Rusyns in Slovakia and Ukraine became a point of certain misunderstanding in Slovak-Ukrainian relations in the first half of the 1990's. The Ukrainian government addressed its Slovak counterpart in 1994 with the proposition to establish a common Committee on Minority Issues. Its main interest was to influence the Slovak government to reduce its support of the Rusyn minority in Slovakia because it indirectly increased Rusyn separatism in the Transcarpathian Region of Ukraine. After the October 1994 elections, a new Slovak government stopped supporting any ethnic minorities in Slovakia, so the issue was not so hot. In any event, Slovakia has officially recognized Rusyns as a national minority, while Ukraine did not. The minorities' policy of the new Slovak government elected in 1998 is positive and liberal, granting minority rights and supporting minority community activities.

The bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak Committee for National Minorities, Education and Cultural Affairs held its first session in Kyiv in February 1995. Both sides agreed that the committee would meet regularly at least once a year. At the second meeting in Bratislava in 1996, both sides stressed that any demand for territorial, administrative or other forms of autonomy based on ethnic principles is unacceptable and they refused any ethnic separatism which could destabilize this region of Central and Eastern Europe. They also demanded that representatives of the two minorities profess loyalty to the respective states in which they live. According to the Protocol of the Fourth Committee Session in 1998, both sides agreed to include representatives of two minority organizations, the Association of Rusyns-Ukrainians in Slovakia (ZRUS) and Slovak Matica in Uzhgorod, in the Committee.

Source: Alexander Duleba, Rusyn Question and Minorities in Slovak-Ukrainian Relations, Research Center director of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association in Bratislava,
<http://wwics.si.edu/kennan/ukraine/briefs/duleba.htm>

Updated (June 2002)

ROMA

The Constitution guarantees the right of national minorities to be educated in their own languages (Article 34). The School Act, however, limits the exercise of this right to specific minorities only.¹ Romani is not listed among the languages that can be used in primary and secondary school education.

Approximately 70 percent of Slovak Roma speak the Romani language as their mother tongue. There are no schools with the Romani language of instructions, despite the fact that many Roma children have a poor command of Slovak or do not speak Slovak at all when they begin school, especially in the Eastern part of the country. In practice, some teachers use Romani as a “supporting language” in the early grades but this is on a strictly voluntary basis, and not a result of the state policy.

The government of former Prime Minister V. Meciar justified the lack of state-supported education in Romani by arguing that “many Roma children cannot speak Romani” and that the number of dialects is a “complicating factor”. The current government has stated that Romani will be used only as a “supporting language of instructions, depending on a need and interest.” As a result, the Strategy for Roma is silent with regard to the introduction of Romani classes or the employment of Romani-speaking teachers, focusing instead on improving Slovak linguistic proficiency among Roma children.

Romani was codified in Slovakia in 1971 and the argument that Roma parents are not in favor of education in Romani is based on a controversial survey conducted by the Meciar’s government in 1994. Nonetheless, the Government continues to report a “lack of interest on the side of Roma parents to have this subject introduced.” Roma leaders claim that a growing number of Slovak Roma place great value on the protection and preservation of their language.

There has been some official support for education and Roma culture. A secondary School of Arts, offering classes in music, drama, dance, and acting especially for Roma students, was established in Kosice. Nitra University has operated a department of Romani Culture since 1992, and a specialization in teaching Romani children since 1999.

Ensuring input from Roma during the preparation of school materials on Romani culture is crucial. A recently published textbook on Romani

¹ Czechs, Hungarians, German, Polish, and Ukrainians/ Ruthenians, Act No.29.1984 on the Network of Primary and Secondary Schools as amended, Article 3, Para.1.

history has been criticized by the Slovak Roma Initiative (RIS) on the grounds that it presents Roma in a negative light, and focuses on how Roma are different from other groups rather than describing their history.

The 1999 Law on the Use of Languages of National Minorities specifies that the right to use minority languages may be exercised in municipalities where a minority group constitutes at least 20 percent of the population. This requirement has left some municipalities with a combined minority population of over 100,000 outside the sphere of protection.

The single greatest obstacle to enjoy minority language rights for Roma is a limited number of Romani-speaking employees in the public administration. The European Commission noted that in 2000 Roma did not exercise the right to use their mother tongue in any of 57 villages, in which they officially constitute more than 20 percent of the population.

MEDIA

Slovak national radio is under a legal obligation to contribute to the culture of the national minorities living in Slovakia,² and Slovak public television is obliged to ensure broadcasting of minority language programs that promote minority interests and culture.³

Minorities publish numerous periodicals, and have their own programs (and programs about them) broadcast by Slovak public television. According to one media monitoring survey, during the period from April to June 2000 Slovak media devoted only one percent of their combined airtime to minority issues, with Roma receiving no positive coverage, and other minorities, such as the Czechs, Ukrainians and Ruthenians, receiving no coverage at all.

The Ministry of Culture has provided funding for a number of Romani journals, particularly since 1999. Slovak public television produces the Roma magazine "Romale" every week, but relatively little time is devoted to radio programs in the Roma language, with a single 20-minute weekly program of news and cultural information for Roma on Presov public radio.

Source:

http://www.eumap.org/reports/content/10/703/minority_slovakia.pdf

² Law 255/1991 Coll. from 24 May 1991 on Slovak Radio as amended, Art.6 (d).

³ Act of the Slovak National Council No.254/1991 Coll. on Slovak Television as amended.

The EU Accession Monitoring Program Report on Minority Protection, Open Society Institute 2001 on <http://www.eumap.org/reports/content/10>

Updated (October 2002)

ROMA EDUCATION

Klára Orgovánová, the government commissioner for Romany issues, said on January 17, 2002 that Slovak Roma should have a chance to be educated besides Slovak in their own language. She believes the Romany language could be a sort of helping language in classes where Romany pupils prevail. Thus this language needs to be codified, because the dictionary and grammar books put out in 1971 in Slovakia use Czech-Romany translation.

The primary goal is to translate these books so they would suit Slovak needs. Another effort is to establish a secondary school preparing Romany students for work in state administration.

Source: Minelres Archive, <http://lists.delfi.lv/pipermail/minelres/>, RFE/RL NEWSLINE Vol. 6, No. 12, Part II, January 18, 2002

Did the country ratify any international treaty dealing with the protection of minorities?

Updated (January 2001)

On June 19, 2001, the Slovakian Parliament has ratified the European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 1992).

What else can be found about languages and minorities?

Updated (January 2002)

2001 (November) Regular Report to the Council of Europe on Slovakia's Progress towards Accession - Human Rights and the Protection of Minorities

As mentioned in the previous Regular Reports, human rights and freedoms of national minorities are fully respected in Slovakia. With the exception of Roma minority, other recognized minorities (numbering more than ten) are comparatively well integrated to Slovak society.

The Advisory Committee on the Council of Europe Framework Convention highlighted the achievements made in improving inter-community relations, notably the one with the Hungarian minority.

The implementation of the basic treaty with Hungary has continued. The Slovak government largely assented with the crucial demands of SMK (the Hungarian Coalition Party), which politically represents the Hungarian minority in Slovakia.

The agreement referred mainly to the accession to the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and to the establishment of a faculty for Hungarian teachers at the University in Nitra. Whereas the Government is willing to provide funds for the Faculty, the autonomous administrative bodies of the University have so far been reluctant to follow the agreement reached on the political level.

The situation of the Roma minority remains difficult. Roma students are under-represented in the educational system, however; they are over-represented in schools for retarded children. Housing situation, especially in the settlements in the Eastern part of Slovakia, remains a matter of concern too.

Over the reference period, substantial further efforts have been made by the Slovak Government and some municipalities in regard to national minorities:

In June 2001, Slovakia ratified the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages. The Charter applies to the Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, German, Polish, Roma, Ruthenian and Ukrainian languages in all municipalities in which live over 20% of representatives of national minorities. The Hungarian minority, in conformity with the flexible instruments set up in the Charter, will benefit from the most generous provisions.

Implementation of the Government Roma strategy, which was adopted last year, started at both national and local levels. More than 100 projects were carried out in the areas of housing, infrastructure, education, training, employment, social affairs, health and culture. Approximately 50% of allocated financial means (4 million ^{a)} were spent on the implementation of this strategy.

In the area of education, the Government has continued with establishment pre-school preparatory classes for Roma children and with construction of a number of schools in municipalities with a high proportion of Roma.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF SLOVAKIA



APPENDIX B

SLOVAKIA - CONSTITUTION

(Adopted on September 1, 1992)

(Document Status on September 1, 1992)

Article 6

- (1) Slovak is the state language on the territory of the Slovak Republic.
- (2) The use of other languages in dealings with the authorities will be regulated by law.

Article 12

- (2) Fundamental rights shall be guaranteed in the Slovak Republic to every person regardless of sex, race, color, language, faith, religion, political affiliation or conviction, national or social origin, nationality or ethnic origin, property, birth or any other status, and no person shall be denied their legal rights, discriminated or favored on any of these grounds.

Article 26

- (5) State bodies and territorial self-administration bodies are under an obligation to provide information on their activities in an appropriate manner and in the state language. The conditions and manner of execution will be specified by law.

Article 34

- (1) The comprehensive development of citizens representing national minorities or ethnic groups in the Slovak Republic is guaranteed, particularly the right to develop their own culture, together with other members of the minority or ethnic group, the right to disseminate and receive information in their mother tongue, the right to associate in national minority associations, and the right to set up and maintain educational and cultural institutions. Details will be set out in a law.
- (2) In addition to the right to master the state language, citizens belonging to national minorities or ethnic groups also have, under conditions defined by law, a guaranteed
 - a) right to education in their own language,

- b) right to use their language in dealings with the authorities,
- c) right to participate in the solution of affairs concerning national minorities and ethnic groups.

Article 47

(2) Everyone has the right to legal assistance in court proceedings or proceedings before other state or public administration bodies. He has this right from the very start of the proceedings, under conditions defined by law.

(4) Anyone who declares that he does not have a command of the language in which the proceedings according to Section (2) are conducted has the right to an interpreter.

Note: The complete text of the Constitution and further information on the constitutional background of Slovakia are provided by the International Constitutional Law Project at the University of Wuerzburg.

LAW OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC FROM NOVEMBER 15, 1995 ON THE STATE LANGUAGE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

(270/1995 Coll. Laws)

The National Council of the Slovak Republic, following from the fact that the Slovak language is the most important feature of the individuality of the Slovak nation, the most precious value of its cultural heritage and the expression of sovereignty of the Slovak Republic and the universal communication mean of its citizens, that ensures their freedom and equality in dignity and rights ¹⁾ on the territory of the Slovak Republic, has adopted the following law:

¹⁾ Art. 12 paragraph 1 of Constitution of the Slovak Republic.

§ 1

Introductory provision

(1) The state language on the territory of the Slovak Republic is the Slovak language. ²⁾

(2) The state language has preference over other languages used on the territory of the Slovak Republic.

(3) Law does not treat usage of liturgical languages. The usage of these languages is treated by regulations of churches and religious communities. ³⁾

(4) Law does not treat the usage of languages of national minorities and ethnic groups. The usage of these languages is treated by special laws. ⁴⁾

²⁾ Art. 6 paragraph 1 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic.

³⁾ Law No. 308/1991 Coll. on freedom of religious faith and position of churches and religious communities.

⁴⁾ E.g., Law No. 141/1961 Coll. on criminal court proceedings (Criminal Order) in the wording of subsequent regulations, Civil Court Order, Law No. 81/1966 Coll. on periodical print and other mass information media in the wording of subsequent regulations, Law No. 29/1984 Coll. on the system of primary and secondary schools (school law) in the wording of subsequent regulations, Law of the Slovak National Council No. 254/1991 Coll. on Slovak Television in the wording of subsequent regulations, Law of the Slovak National Council No. 255/1991 Coll. on Slovak Radio in the wording of subsequent regulations, Law of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 191/1994 Coll. Laws on denomination of communities in the language of national minorities.

§ 2

State language and its protection

(1) The state

a) creates in school, scientific and information systems such conditions that each citizen of the Slovak Republic may acquire and use the state language in word and in writing,

b) takes care for scientific research of the state language, its historical development, research of local and social dialects, codification of the state language and increase of the language culture.

(2) The codified form of the state language is stated by the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic (hereafter only “the Ministry of Culture”) on the proposal of special Slovak linguistic workplaces.

(3) Any intervention into the codified form of the state language in discrepancy with its causalities is not allowable.

§ 3

Usage of the state language in official contacts

(1) State bodies and state organizations, bodies of territorial self-administration and bodies of public and legal institutions ⁵⁾ (hereafter only public and legal organs) use obligatorily the state language while performing their duties on the whole territory of the Slovak Republic. Showing of adequate knowledge of the state language in word and in writing is the condition of acceptance to work or to a similar labor relation and the assumption of performing the agreed-upon work in determined working activity in legal and public organs.

(2) Employees and functionaries of public and legal organs, transport and communication employees as well as members of armed forces, armed security corps, other armed corps and fire corps use the state language in official contacts.

(3) In the state language

a) laws, governmental acts and other general binding legal regulations including regulations of organs of the territorial self-administration, decisions and other public deeds are published,

b) negotiations of public and legal organs are conducted,

c) entire official agenda (registers, minutes, resolutions, statistics, registers, balances, official records, information determined for public, etc.) and agenda of churches and religious communities determined for public is conducted,

d) official names of communities and their parts, denomination of streets and other public spaces, other geographical names as well as data on state map works including cadastre maps are stated; denomination of communities in other languages is treated by a special law, ⁶⁾

e) chronicles of communities are written. Possible other-language wording is translation from the state language.

(4) Legal and public organs and organizations established by them are obligated to use the state language in all information systems and in mutual contacts.

(5) Written presentations of citizens determined for public and legal organs are presented in the state language.

(6) Each citizen of the Slovak Republic has the right to free adjustment of his name ⁷⁾ and surname into Slovak spelling form.

⁵⁾ E.g., Law of the Slovak National Council No. 254/1991 Coll. in the wording of subsequent regulations, Law of the Slovak National Council No. 255/1991 Coll. in the wording of subsequent regulations, Law of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 273/1994 Coll. Laws on health insurance, financing of health insurance, on establishing of the General Health Insurance Company and on establishing of departmental, branch, business and civic health insurances in the wording of subsequent regulations, Law of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 274/1994 Coll. Laws on the Social Insurance Company in the wording of subsequent regulations.

⁶⁾ Law of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 191/1994 Coll. Laws.

⁷⁾ § 7 paragraph. 1 of Law of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 300/1993 Coll. Laws on name and surname.

§ 4

Usage of the state language in schools

(1) Learning of the state language is obligatory at all primary and secondary schools. Other than the state language is the instructional language and examining language to extent determined by special regulations. ⁸⁾

(2) Pedagogical workers at all schools and in school facilities on the territory of the Slovak Republic with the exception of foreign pedagogues and lecturers are obliged to speak and use the state language in word and in writing.

(3) The entire pedagogical documentation is conducted in the state language.

(4) Textbooks and instructional texts used in the education process in the Slovak Republic are published in the state language besides textbooks and instructional texts for study in the language of national

minorities, ethnic groups and other foreign languages. Their publishing and use is treated by special regulations. ⁹⁾

(5) Provisions of paragraph 1, 2 and 4 do not refer to usage of the state language in study at universities, in study of other languages or in education in other than the state language ⁸⁾ nor for using textbooks and instructional texts in study at universities.

⁸⁾ § 3 and 3a of Law No. 29/1984 Coll. in the wording of Law No. 171/1990 Coll. and Law of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 230/1994 Coll. Laws.

⁹⁾ § 40 of Law No. 29/1984 Coll. in the wording of subsequent regulations. Regulation of the government of the Slovak Republic No. 282/1994 Coll. Laws on using textbooks and instructional texts.

§ 5

Usage of the state language in mass information media at cultural events and public gatherings

(1) Broadcasting on radio and television is performed in the state language on the whole territory of the Slovak Republic. Exceptions are

a) other language radio programs and foreign language television programs consisting of audiovisual works and other sound and pictorial recordings with subtitles in the state language or otherwise fulfilling the requirement of basic understandability from the point of view of the state language,

b) foreign language broadcasting of Slovak radio for foreign countries, television and radio language courses and programs with similar orientation, c) music programs with original texts.

Broadcasting in languages of national minorities and ethnic groups are treated by special regulations. ¹⁰⁾

(2) Other language audiovisual works determined for children up to 12 years must be dubbed into the state language.

(3) Operators of radio and television broadcasting, announcers, moderators and editors are obligated to use the state language in broadcasting.

(4) Broadcasting of regional or local stations, radio stations and radio facilities is performed, in principle, in the state language. Other languages may be used before a particular program is broadcast in the state language.

(5) Periodical and non-periodical publications are published in the state language. Publishing of different language print is treated by the special regulation, ¹¹⁾

(6) Occasional print determined for public, catalogues of galleries and museums, libraries, cinema, theatre, concert and other cultural event programs are published in the state language. In case of need, they may contain translations into different languages.

(7) Cultural and educational events are performed in the state language, or in another language if they fulfill the requirement of basic understandability from the point of view of the state language. The exception is formed by cultural events of national minorities, ethnic groups, foreign artists appearing as guests and music works with original texts. Accompanying presentation of programs will first be expressed in the state language.

(8) Each participant of a gathering or lecture on the territory of the Slovak Republic has the right to present his speech in the state language.

¹⁰⁾ § 3 paragraph 3 of Law of the Slovak National Council No. 254/1991 Coll. in the wording of subsequent regulations.

§ 5 of Law of the Slovak National Council No. 255/1991 Coll. in the wording of subsequent regulations.

¹¹⁾ Law No. 81/1966 Coll. on periodical print and other mass information media in the wording of subsequent regulations.

§ 6

Usage of the state language in armed forces, in armed corps and in fire corps

(1) The state language is used in official relations in the Army of the Slovak Republic, in the forces of the Home Office of the Slovak Republic, in the Police Corps, in the Slovak Information Service, in the Corps of

prison and justice guard of the Slovak Republic, in Railway Police of the Slovak Republic and in communal police.

(2) The entire agenda and documentation of armed forces, armed security corps, other armed corps and fire corps is carried in the state language.

(3) Provision of paragraph 1 does not refer to air forces during flight operation and on international activities of armed corps.

§ 7

Usage of the state language in court and administrative proceedings

(1) Mutual contact of courts with citizens, court proceedings, administrative proceedings, decisions and minutes from courts and administrative organs are carried and published in the state language.

(2) Rights of persons belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups or rights of foreigners who does not speak the state language, following from special regulations ¹²⁾ remain untouched.

¹²⁾ § 18 of the Civic Court Order. § 2 paragraph 14 of Law No. 141/1961 Coll., Law No. 36/1967 Coll. on experts and interpreters. Decree of the Ministry of Justice No. 37/1967 Coll. on execution of law on experts and interpreters in the wording of subsequent regulations.

§ 8

Usage of the state language in economy, services and health system

(1) In the interest of the consumer, the usage of the state language is obligatory in marking the contents of domestic or imported goods, in instructions for usage of goods, especially groceries and medicaments, in guarantee conditions and other information for consumers. ¹³⁾

(2) Written legal acts in public and legal relation or in similar labor relations are made in the state language.

(3) Finance and technical documentation, Slovak technical standards, statutes of associations, groups, political parties, political movements and trade companies are made in the state language.

(4) The entire agenda of health facilities is made in the state language. Contacts of health personnel with patients is usually made in the state

language; if a citizen or foreigner does not speak the state language, also in the language in which it is possible to communicate with the patient.

(5) In proceedings before public and legal bodies on contracts treating binding relations, only wording in the state language is acknowledged.

(6) All notices (signs), advertisements and announcements determined for informing the public, especially in shops, at sports centers, in pubs, in streets, along roads and above them, at airports, in bus stations and railway stations, in rail wagons and in mass transport vehicles must be stated in the state language. They may be translated into other languages, but different language texts follow after the equally large text in the state language.

¹³⁾ § 9 paragraph 1 and 2 and § 11 of Law No. 634/1992 Coll. on consumer protection. Law of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 152/1995 Coll. Laws on groceries.

§ 9

Supervision

The Ministry of Culture supervises over the keeping of duties following from this law. If it finds out any shortcomings, it warns legal entities and physical persons, in which activities the shortcomings have been found out, and it is authorized to require removal of the anti-legal state.

§ 10

Fines

(1) If the illegal state is not removed (§9), the Ministry of Culture may impose fine

a) to legal entities up to 250,000 Sk for breaching duties pursuant to § 4 paragraph 4, § 8 paragraph 1,3,5 and 6,

b) to legal entities up to 500,000 Sk for breaching duties pursuant to § 5 paragraph 2 and 5,

c) to physical persons authorized to do business up to 50,000 Sk for breaching duties pursuant to § 4 paragraph 4, § 5 paragraph 2 and 5, and § 8 paragraph 1,3 and 5.

(2) The Ministry of Culture takes into account in determining fines the weight of breaching duties.

(3) Fines may be imposed not later than up to one year from the day on which the Ministry of Culture finds breached duties, but not later than till three years since breached duties.

(4) A fine imposed according to this law is due up to thirty days from the day, when the decision, by which it has been imposed, came into effect. General regulations on administrative proceedings relate on proceedings on imposing the fine. ¹⁴⁾

(5) Fines imposed according to this law are the income of the state fund of culture, Pro Slovakia. ¹⁵⁾

¹⁴⁾ Law No. 71/1967 Coll. on administrative proceedings (administration order).

¹⁵⁾ Law of the Slovak National Council No. 95/1991 Coll. on the state fund of culture, Pro Slovakia in the wording of subsequent regulations.

§ 11

Common and temporary provisions

(1) Usage of common other languages names, special concepts or denominations of new facts, on which there is not so far a proper equivalent expression, is not touched by this law.

(2) All heads of public and legal organs and other legal entities and physical persons are responsible for keeping the provisions of this law (§ 10 paragraph 1).

(3) Costs of all adjustments of information tables, names and other texts according to this law are covered by particular offices and other legal entities and physical persons. These adjustments will be done up to one year from the day of effectiveness of this law.

(4) The state language is for purposes of § 2 paragraph 1 letter a) and b), § 3 paragraph 1, 2 and paragraph 3 letter a), c), d) and e), § 4, § 5 paragraph 5 and 8, § 6 paragraph 2 and § 8 paragraph 1 to 5 understood to be the Slovak language in its codified form (§ 2 paragraph 2).

§ 12

Provisions of repeal

Law of the Slovak National Council No. 428/1990 Coll. on the official language in the Slovak Republic will be repealed.

§ 13

This law comes into effect on January 1, 1996 with the exception of § 10, which comes into effect on January 1, 1997.

Michal Kováč in his own hand

Ivan Gašparovič in his own hand

Vladimír Mečiar in his own hand

Translator: Limbecková Kristína

Processes on the basis of ASPI materials

ACT OF 10 JULY 1999 ON NATIONAL MINORITY LANGUAGES USE

The National Council of the Slovak Republic

pursuant to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic and international instruments binding on the Slovak Republic,

respecting the protection and development of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the citizens of the Slovak Republic, who are persons belonging to national minority,

taking into consideration the existing legal acts in force which govern the use of national minority languages,

recognizing and appreciating the importance of mother tongues of the citizens of the Slovak Republic, who are persons belonging to national minority, as an expression of the cultural wealth of the State,

having in mind establishing of a democratic, tolerant and prosperous society in the context of an integrating European Community,

realizing that the Slovak language is the State Language in the Slovak Republic, and that it is desirable to regulate the use of the languages of

the citizens of the Slovak Republic, who are persons belonging to national minority,

hereby passes the following Act:

Section 1

A citizen of the Slovak Republic who is a person belonging to a national minority has the right to use, apart from the State language¹, his or her national Minority Language ("minority language" hereinafter). The purpose of this Act is to lay down, in conjunction with specific legal acts², the rules governing the use of Minority Languages also in official communication.

¹ Section 1 paragraph 4 of Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 270 /1995 Coll. on State Language of the Slovak Republic

² E.g., Section 18 of Civil Procedure Code, Section 2 paragraph 14 of Criminal Procedure Act No. 141/1961 Coll. (Code of Criminal Procedure), Section 7 paragraph 3 of Act No. 335/1991 Coll. On

Section 2

(1) If the citizens of the Slovak Republic, who are persons belonging to a national minority, constitute according to the last census at least 20% of the inhabitants of a municipality, they may use a Minority Language in official communication within that municipality.

(2) The list of the municipalities referred to in paragraph 1 shall be determined by a regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic.

(3) A citizen of the Slovak Republic who is a person belonging to a national minority shall have, in the municipality referred to in paragraph 1, the right to address written filings to the Governmental Agencies and self government bodies ("the body of public administration" hereinafter) also in a Minority Language. The body of public administration in the municipality referred to in paragraph 1 shall replay, apart from in the State language, also in the Minority Language, with exception of public documents.

(4) The decision made in this administrative proceeding³ by the body of public administration in the municipality referred to in paragraph 1 shall be issued except in the State language, also in a Minority Language in

the form of a counterpart. In the event of any doubts, the text of the decision in the State language shall apply.

(5) The name of the body of public administration displayed on the buildings in the municipality referred to in paragraph 1 shall be given also in a Minority Language.

(6) The body of local self government in a municipality referred to in paragraph 1 shall provide the citizens official forms issued within its competence in the State language and, upon request, also in a Minority Language.

Section 3

(1) A session of the local self-government body in the municipality referred to in Section 2 paragraph 1 may be held also in a Minority Language, subject to the consent of all present persons.

Courts and Judges, Section 23 of Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 38/1993 Coll. on the Organization of the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic, Proceedings before the Court and the Status of Its Judges, Section 2 paragraph 1 of Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 300/1993 Coll. on Names and Surnames, Section 16 and Section 19 paragraphs 3 and 5 of Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 154/1994 Coll. on Registers, Section 1 paragraph 1 of Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 191/1994 Coll. on Displaying the Names of Municipalities in National Minority Languages, Section 5 paragraph 2 of Act of the Slovak National Council No. 255/1991 Coll. on the Slovak Radio, Section 3 paragraph 3 of Act of the Slovak National Council No. 254/1991 Coll. on the Slovak Television, Section 5 paragraph 1 (e) of Act No. 308/1991 Coll. on the Freedom of Religious Beliefs and on the Status of Churches and Religious Societies, Section 2 paragraph 8 of Act No. 212/1997 Coll. on Compulsory Copies of Periodical Publications, Non-periodical Publications and Duplicates of Audio-visual Works.

³Act No. 71/1967 Coll. on Administrative Proceedings (Administrative Procedure Code) as amended.

(2) A member of the municipal council in the municipality referred to in Section 2 paragraph 1 shall have the right to use, at the meetings of that body, a Minority Language. The municipality shall secure interpretation.

(3) A chronicle of the municipality referred to in Section 2 paragraph 1 may be kept also in a Minority Language.

Section 4

(1) The municipality referred to in Section 2 paragraph 1 may display the names of the streets and other local topographical indications also in a Minority Language.

(2) In the municipality referred to in Section 2 paragraph 1 important information, in particular warnings, cautions and health information, shall be displayed in the publicly accessible places, apart from the State language, also in a Minority Language.

(3) The body of public administration in the municipality referred to in Section 2 paragraph 1 shall, within the scope of its competence, provide information on the generally binding legal provisions upon request apart from the State language, also in a Minority Language.

Section 5

(1) The right to use Minority Language in a proceeding before court and in other spheres is regulated by specific legal acts.^{2/}

(2) The provisions of Section 2 paragraph 1 shall not apply to the pre-school education, system of primary and secondary schools or culture. The use of national Minority Languages in these areas is regulated by specific legal acts.⁴

Section 6

In application of this Act, the use of the Czech language in official communication shall, be deemed to fulfil the requirement of basic understanding with the State language, unless an international instrument binding on the Slovak Republic provides otherwise.

Section 7

(1) A body of public administration and its employees are obliged to use the State language in official communication^{1/} and, under conditions provided for under this Act and specific legal acts, they may also use a Minority Language. The body of public administration and its employees shall not be required to have the command of a Minority Language.

(2) A body of public administration in the municipality referred to in Section 2 paragraph 1 are obliged to create conditions for the use of Minority Languages under this Act and other specific legal acts.^{4/}

⁴ E.g., Section 3 paragraph 1 and Section 3a of Act No. 29/1984 Coll. on the System of Primary and Secondary Schools (School Act) as amended, Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 279/ 1993 Coll. on Educational Establishments as amended by Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 222/1996 Coll.

Section 8

Section 10 of the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 270/1995 Coll. on the State language of the Slovak Republic is hereby cancelled.

Section 9

This Act shall enter into effect on September 1, 1999.

President of the Slovak Republic

Chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic

Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic

APPENDIX C

CHRONOLOGY OF MINORITY LANGUAGE RIGHTS IN SLOVAKIA

DATE	EVENT
January 1, 1996	"Law on the State Language" passed by the Mečiar Government
	Strict use of Slovak No right to use minority languages Slovak is the exclusive official language of the Slovak Republic Previous law that had guaranteed ethnic minorities the use of their language in official and unofficial contacts was canceled.
1996-1997	European Union demands restoration of ethnic minority language rights as a prerequisite for entry into EU. In part because of this, Slovakia is excluded from first phase of EU expansion.

Fall 1997	Slovak Constitutional Court rules 1996 law unconstitutional.
	<p>Slovak Constitution: Article 6: "The use of other languages than the state language in official contacts is guaranteed by law"</p> <p>Article 34: "Members of national minorities have the right to use their languages in official state contacts."</p>
1997-1998	Mečiar makes no movement on his unconstitutional law
June 17, 1999	Mečiar's HZDS Party threatens to call a referendum on language laws and privatization
1st week of July 1999	Slovak Parliament debates 2 versions of new law
July 6, 1999	Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) version defeated
July 11, 1999	"Law on the Use of Minority Languages" passes 70 to 18

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