

## ARTICLE

# REGIONAL LANGUAGES OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION IN MASS MEDIA: LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT

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### ABSTRACT

The mass media, being a social institution, are closely connected with the functioning of society and political activity of the state, on the one hand, they affect the public consciousness but on the other, they are an object of constant state control. The media participate actively in the implementation of state policies and this ensures effective political management and development. At a time when the language is one of the important socio-political components, the issue of the extent to which the legislative base is reflected in the functional power of the language in the media is one of the major issues and this has become the object of analysis of this paper. First, the main legislative acts of the bi-component regions of the Russian Federation (national regions with 2 co-official languages – Russian and national language), which directly or indirectly regulate the activities of regional media, will be reviewed. Further, the quantitative ratio of such indicators as normative acts and regional media will be considered. In the end, the degree of mutual influence of the above-mentioned indicators will be estimated. The analysis will determine the effectiveness of government measures in the bi-component regions of the Russian Federation in the development of national languages by means of regional media. As a result, it is possible to apply the experience of bi-component national subjects in carrying out an effective language policy that assumes a positive correlation between the legislative framework and the activities of regional media.

### INTRODUCTION

The current stage of society development is characterized by the growth of ethnic self-awareness of peoples, rethinking of values and the desire of peoples to preserve their language. The question of the role of the media in supporting national languages causes different opinions. The scientists emphasize "the importance of strengthening the position of the minority language through understanding it as an ethno-unifying factor, and culture as a dominant national symbol," they also believe that "... it is the spheres of education, culture, communication and information at the present stage of development of the titular languages of the republic that can become primary and determine their functional capacity" [1].

Moreover, it will be legitimate to classify the media as a priority communicative sphere, since they are an important factor in the formation of social space. In the document "The viability and the danger of language disappearance", adopted in 2003 at the UNESCO conference, "new areas of language use and the mass media are singled out as one of the criteria for assessing the state of the language; [2]. Community media play an essential role for these populations by consolidating the perception of belonging to a group, becoming spaces for providing information and for the expression of local or regional sensitivities. It also fulfills an educational and cultural aim, as it preserves the local identity of the native language and culture in a contemporary context [3].

Moring and God enhjelm affirms with the premise that 'a language would always require the support of full and comprehensive media services on all platforms and genres'. ... Moring's idea of "functional completeness" is about how minority language populations use the media that is offered. It can be considered the flip side of the concept of institutional completeness. This depends to some extent on the offering, as minorities that have access to little media in their own language are likely to use that which is available as complementary to media in the majority language (Moring, 2007) [4]. Aline Sierp affirms that the media allows minorities to bring their cause to the attention of the public by direct recourse to a medium reaching a big group of people of different backgrounds in a very short time. The media helps to reconnect speakers to their language and culture. Media use can improve the skills of in perfect speakers, languages can be modernized by the addition of new technical vocabulary related to contemporary life and a standardization of language use can take place [5]. According to Riggins it can even become a democratic tool by encouraging people to play an active role in the future of their region and their locality [6].

The important role of mass media in promoting minor languages is underlined by scholars as «one of the most powerful instruments for standardizing, changing or consolidating languages and cultural identities. Present in the landscape, and in the intimacy of every home, they shape values, attitudes and even identities, like a fine rain that eventually penetrates the being's every pore» [7].

László Vincze Whilst notes that in monolingual settings the linguistic aspects of media use are less the focus of attention, in bilingual settings they play a weighty role. Media can offer a vital arena where speakers may encounter their language and/or their language group, which can be of great importance, especially as people spend more and more of their leisure time with the media [8].

Analyzing the mass media of a particular national republic or region, it is necessary to pay attention to the degree of the presence of a regional language within the region, since it is the peculiarities of its

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functioning in this society that allow to determine the level of its prestige, development strategy, and also the potential threat for the existence of a regional language.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which prescribes a number of measures ensuring the use of regional and minority languages in the media, is an undeniable confirmation of the media validity in strengthening the prestige of the language. [9]

As mentioned above, the direct influence of state bodies on the media is obvious, but at the same time, the authorities do not bear direct responsibility for the functioning of regional languages in the media. Support for regional or minority languages can be realized by the authorities through financial assistance; the provision of moral and political support for requests for the allocation of radio frequencies by radio and television channels broadcasting in regional and minority languages; the organization of technical assistance to ensure the presence on the Internet of regional or minority languages [10]. The degree of elaboration of state measures on language policy in the field of mass media can directly reflect the extent to which regional or minority languages are represented in the media space of the region.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The material for the work are the legislative and regulatory documents of 15 bi-component republics of the Russian Federation with co-official languages: the Republic of Adygea, the Republic of Altai, the Republic of Bashkortostan, the Republic of Buryatia, the Republic of Ingushetia, the Republic of Kalmykia, the Republic of Komi, the Republic of Sakha, the Republic of Northern Ossetia - Alania, the Republic of Tatarstan, Republic Tuva, the Republic of Udmurtia, the Republic of Khakassia, the Republic of Chechnya, the Republic of Chuvashia. The criterion for selecting legislative acts was the definition of specific tasks of the media in supporting the regional language. Also, to determine the level of the effectiveness of legislation in the process of popularization of regional languages in the mass media we collected the data on the number of native speakers of the titular ethnic group and the number of the mass media, which operate in the national language of a specific region or in two state languages (the national language of the region and Russian). For direct analysis quantitative description of the main types of media in each of the examined regions was carried out.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the legislative base of the bi-component republics of the Russian Federation shows that in each examined region there are a number of regional laws, decrees, state programs that support and develop national languages through the media. First of all, we note that the prevailing number of legislative and normative acts, directly or indirectly regulating the functioning of the national language in the media, was identified in the Republic of Tatarstan (10) and the Chechen Republic (8). The Republic of Adygea (2), the Republic of Northern Ossetia-Alania (1), the Republic of Tyva (3), the Republic of Udmurtia (3), the Republic of Khakassia (3) possess a weak regulatory base, that is, the least number of the above mentioned documents. The common thing for the main legislative documents of all the national regions of the Russian Federation is the setting of the goal to provide conditions for the support and development of regional languages, as well as the sufficient volume of functioning of the regional languages along with the Russian in all areas of mass communication. The main normative document guaranteeing the presence of a regional language in the media of the analyzed republics is the laws on languages of the national republics, in each of which there is an article proclaiming the regional state language as the language of the media. For example, Article 18 of the Law on the Languages of the Republic of Tatarstan prescribes the publication of republican newspapers and magazines, television and radio programs to be broadcasted in Tatar and Russian [11]. Such formulation is given in the Article 17 of the Law on Languages of the Republic of Tyva: "The publication of newspapers and magazines, the TV and radio broadcasting are carried out in Tuvan and Russian languages" [12]. It should be noted that Northern Ossetia-Alania is the only republic that does not have in its legal framework any law on languages other than the Constitution that proclaims Ossetian and Russian as state languages. In the Republic of Tatarstan the Law "On the use of the Tatar language as the state language of the Republic of Tatarstan" provides citizens with the right to "receive information in the Tatar language through the republican and municipal media, including online publications established to disseminate information in the Tatar language as a state language" (Article 2). A similar legal document exists in the Republic of Buryatia. The law "On Measures to Support the Buryat Language as a State Language of the Republic of Buryatia" states that public authorities of the Republic of Buryatia have to work towards increasing the volume of television and radio broadcasting in the Buryat language in the air and cable media, periodical and online publications of the republican and municipal levels in accordance with the regulations of the Government of the Republic of Buryatia [12]. Undoubtedly, it should be noted that these documents contribute to ensuring the strength of the positions of the Tatar and Buryat languages in the media.

The Republics of Buryatia, Kalmykia, Tatarstan, Tyva and Chechnya have one more important legislative document. They are long-term State Programs aimed at preserving and developing national languages that plan to implement the media event. The State Program of the Republic of Buryatia "Preservation and Development of the Buryat Language in the Republic of Buryatia" includes activities aimed at "... the formation of ethno-linguistic tolerance in the society, the media and the Internet space in the Republic of Buryatia" [12].

Language can legitimately be called the most powerful tool for preserving the national cultural heritage. Within the framework of regional language policies of such territories as Altai, the Republic of Tatarstan, the Republic of Sakha, the Republic of Chechnya, legislative measures aimed to implement the regular activities on the development native language are taken. In Ingushetia, the plan of events timed to the annual Decade of the Ingush language includes such events as "a cycle of television programs and roundtables ..." and "media coverage of events for the Decade of the Ingush Language and Literature"[12]. The maintenance, preservation and development of language are impossible without strengthening the national identity of the ethnos. National policy programs conducted in the Republics of Altai, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Buryatia, Komi, Sakha, Udmurtia, and the Chechen Republic are aimed at this processes. The state program "Unity of the Russian nation and ethno-cultural development of peoples in the Republic of Bashkortostan" were created to support the broadcasting of such programs as "Dictionary", "Mother tongue", "Learn the Bashkir language" and others in Bashkir and Russian languages on the Bashkir satellite television channel [12].

The Action Plan for the implementation of the 2016-2018 strategy of the state national policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025 and the concept of the state national policy of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) monitor the ethnic language diversity of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) [12].

The documents regulating the activities of regional media in the national languages or guaranteeing support from the state are of special importance. We found out the similar normative acts in the Republic of Kalmykia: "On the Republican Children's Newspaper in the Kalmyk Language" (March 12, 2003), "On the Annual Prize of the Head of the Kalmyk Republic for the Kalmyk Language" Kelnibilg ", one of whose tasks is" to encourage journalists of the regional mass media, radio and television to cover the problems of the Kalmyk language and national education ". In the Republic of Sakha, the Act "On State Support for Mass Media published in the languages of the indigenous minorities of the North in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)" (dated November 10, 2011) and the State Program of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) " printed and electronic media for 2012-2019 "(12 October 2011) is being implemented [12]. Support for regional media of the Republic of Khakassia is implemented by the Law "On grants of the Republic of Khakassia in the field of mass media" (dated May 19, 2011). The effectiveness of the legislative and regulatory framework for the activities of regional media cannot be judged without the indicators of the level of the use of the regional languages in media. The review of bi-component republics' media in the Russian Federation allows to find out the main mass media (newspapers, magazines, radio, television) in every region functioning only in the regional language as well as in both regional and Russian languages. The republic of Tatarstan dominates in this case having 166 mass media in Tatar and Tatar/Russian. The level of functioning of the Chechen language in the Republic of Chechnya (80 media) and the Bashkir language in the Republic of Bashkortostan (79 media) in the sphere of mass communication can be assessed as high enough in comparison with other republics of the Russian Federation. The Republic of Adygea, Altai, Ingushetia, North Ossetia - Alania, Udmurt Republic and the Khakas Republic are the least represented in the media.

Summary indicators of the number of regional media and their legislative justification are given in [Table 1].

**Table 1:** Quantitative data of regional mass media and their legislative justification

| Region               | Number of legislative and documents regulating the activities of regional media. | Number of regional media outlets |
|----------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Adygea               | 1  | 10                               |
| Altai                | 3  | 17                               |
| Bashkortostan        | 4  | 79                               |
| Buryatia             | 5  | 33                               |
| Ingushetia           | 3  | 13                               |
| Kalmykia             | 6  | 35                               |
| Komi                 | 5  | 30                               |
| Saha                 | 5  | 36                               |
| North Ossetia Alania | 1  | 21                               |
| Tatarstan            | 10   | 166                              |
| Tyva                 | 3  | 26                               |
| Udmurtia             | 2  | 11                               |
| Khakassia            | 3  | 11                               |
| Chechnya             | 8  | 80                               |
| Chuvashia            | 4  | 41                               |

## CONCLUSION

Language performs a unifying function in the sphere of political regulation of the language situation, being a reliable tool that strengthens the instinct of the people to preserve their native language and culture. The

national languages of the analyzed regions of the Russian Federation are one of the main state attributes. Quantitative analysis of laws, decrees, government programs of bi-component regions of the Russian Federation shows a relatively strong legislative base providing support to regional languages in the media in the Republic of Tatarstan and the Republic of Chechnya. In this case, we can talk about normative documents as an instrument of the state, which is called upon to contribute to building strategies for strengthening the position of the national language, not only legally, but also equal coverage of the media sphere, and therefore spreading to other spheres. Adygea, Altai, Ingushetia, North Ossetia-Alania, Udmurtia and Khakassia showed a weak legislative base in media regulation in regional languages. This picture directly affected the results of studying the main types of regional media in the regions of the RF. The media of the Republic of Tatarstan and the Republic of Chechnya are most fully involved in the preservation, development and popularization of the regional language. Low indicators on documents of state regulation of the functioning of national media in the Republics of Adygea, Altai, Udmurtia and Khakassia give corresponding results in the sphere of regional mass media. Analysis of the functioning of national languages in the media of bi-component regions of the Russian Federation suggests that regional and minority languages are one of the main components of the cultural heritage of the peoples of the Russian Federation and still require the planning and implementation of effective measures to protect them, especially regarding the representation and active functioning of national languages in mass communication. And the primary task in this procedure should be the strengthening and improvement of the legislative and regulatory framework.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.

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#### FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

None

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