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LANGUAGE POLICY AS A KEY TO INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS IN LIECHTENSTEIN

Liechtenstein is a typical European microstate, with the population of almost 37 thousand people. It is also a country with a very high percentage of foreigners. According to the records, on 31st December 2012 their number amounted to 33.5% (more than 12.3 thousand)¹. In addition, the importance of this group is emphasized by the fact that in 2010 only 46.5% of all the inhabitants of the Principality were citizens of that country from birth². Such an increase in the number of visitors became especially noticeable after World War II and was undoubtedly related to the rapid economic development of the country.

A high percentage of foreigners makes the issues concerning this part of the population particularly important, and the more so because a considerable group of these immigrants do not speak the official language.

The main objective of this essay is an attempt to define the role of language policy, with its emphasis on the demand to learn the official language by migrants, in the overall policy towards migrants in Liechtenstein. The discussion is based on an analysis of normative acts operating in Liechtenstein, of practical actions towards migrants and on the author's own observations made in the course of a more profound study of Liechtenstein in the years 2009-12.

MIGRANTS IN LICHTENSTEIN AND THEIR INTEGRATION

As the migrant groups kept arriving at the region of the Rhaetian Alps, Liechtenstein started developing its immigration policy, modeled largely on Swiss solutions, but also over time based on its own experiences. Migrants made their presence felt in the country as early as in the eighteenth century. In 1874 they constituted 7.6% of

¹ *Bevölkerungstatistik Vorläufige Ergebnisse 31. Dezember 2012*. (2013), Vaduz: Amt für Statistik, p. 4. In 2012 the number of foreigners increased by 200 people.

² W. Marxer (2012), *Herausforderung Migration in und für Liechtenstein – Synthesebericht*, w: Marxer W. (ed.), *Migration. Fakten und Analysen zu Liechtenstein*, Bendern: Liechtenstein Institut, p. 21.

the population, at the beginning of the twentieth century it was already almost 15%³. Initially, the group was dominated by the Swiss, who since 1941 could find employment at their eastern neighbour without any restrictions. As it has been mentioned before, in result of the economic development of the Principality, leading to an increasing number of work places, the number of foreigners came close to one third of the total population. In the record year 1995 this figure reached even 39.1%⁴.

In effect, the microstate was forced to pursue a specific policy towards newcomers which origins also date back to the post-war period. Migration policy focused on two issues: 1) how many foreigners can be admitted on the territory of the state, 2) what actions should be taken to enable their integration into the host society. Until the 60s of the twentieth century, the access of migrants to Liechtenstein was restricted (due to, among other things, staff turnover). At the turn of the 60s and 70s the regulations concerning bringing families by immigrants working in the Principality were liberalized. Then, in the mid-90s, the regulations referring to granting of work permits were tightened, in fear of the numerical domination of migrants over the local population. Since 1995, following the accession to the European Economic Area (EEA), Liechtenstein has conformed to the European regulations⁵.

It was symptomatic that the privileges favouring the Swiss were limited and that these migrants were made equal with other groups of newcomers from EEA member states (including Polish citizens). However, presently people migrating to Liechtenstein are, in practice, divided into two groups. The Swiss and the EEA countries citizens belong to one group, immigrants from other countries belong to the other.

Among migrants in Liechtenstein currently prevail immigrants from German-speaking countries: Switzerland, Austria and Germany. In total, they account for just over 58% of all foreigners in the Principality. In turn, almost 80% of the newcomers come from Switzerland and EEA member states. Data showing foreigners in the Grand Duchy, by the country of origin, are presented in Table 1.

³ P. Geiger (1974), *Die Ausländer in der Geschichte des Fürstentums Liechtenstein*, „Jahrbuch des Historischen Vereins für das Fürstentum Liechtenstein”, Bd. 74, p. 18.

⁴ V. Marxer-Gsell (2006), *Migration von A bis Z*, Vaduz, s. 1. More see: K. Koźbial (2012), *Liechtenstein państwem migrantów*, in: Buchowski M., Schmidt J. (ed.), *Imigranci: między integracją a izolacją*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Nauka i Innowacje, p. 77-78.

⁵ The policy aimed at limiting the number of foreigners to not more than one third of the population.

Table 1.

Foreigners in Liechtenstein, according to the country of origin (as on 31 December 2010).

Country of origin	Number of people	Percentage of foreigners (in %)
Switzerland	3586	29,88
Austria	2057	17,14
Germany	1319	10,99
Italy	1148	9,56
Turkey	778	6,48
Portugal	620	5,17
Serbia/Montenegro	338	2,82
Spain	326	2,72
Bosnia and Hercegovina	305	2,54

Source: *Volkszählung 2010. Bevölkerungsstruktur*. Bd. 1. Edited by. Amt für Statistik. Vaduz 2013, p. 47.

In 2011 immigrants from Switzerland (22.5%), Austria (21.1%), Germany (19.7%), Italy (5.1%), Turkey (3.3%), Spain (2.9%) and Portugal, and Brazil (2.5%) dominated among migrants. Only three newcomers from Poland were registered⁶.

Liechtenstein's integration policy aims at creating a situation in which the migrants will co-exist with the citizens of the Principality on the basis of constitutional values, respect and tolerance within the areas of economy, culture and social affairs⁷. This approach is based on the principle of "Fördern und Fordern" (Foster and Demand) on the one hand supporting the aforementioned integration, on the other hand requiring from migrants certain actions that will enable them to integrate into the host society. As a result, the Principality supports creation of the conditions allowing the newcomers full participation in social life, promotion of gender equality and improvement of their language skills, but at the same time requires, among other things, learning of the official language, knowledge of the rules of state and society, and getting acquainted with their rights and duties⁸.

⁶ *Migrationsstatistik 2011* (2013), Vaduz: Amt für Statistik, p. 12, 30. Thus, newcomers from German-speaking countries constituted 63,3% of the total number of migrants.

⁷ K. Koźbiał, *Liechtenstein...*, p. 85.

⁸ *Integration der ausländischen Bevölkerung In Liechtenstein. Bestandaufnahme zu den Fakten, Ursachen, Massnahmen und zum integrationspolitischen Handlungsbedarf* (2007), Vaduz: Amt für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, p. 15.

LANGUAGE POLICY AS A PART OF THE MIGRATION POLICY

The issue of the language used by migrants in the host country is extremely important because it affects the process of their social integration. Among the psychosocial barriers that may impede that process one can list a language barrier. Its potential existence hinders social relations, isolates the group from the functioning in society, and finally, may prevent them from satisfying their needs and ambitions. At the same time the reception of information from the environment is aggravated. In a word, a language barrier does not allow them to participate fully in society⁹.

Migrants arriving at the Rhaetian Alps and not familiar with the German language appeared in the 60s of the twentieth century. They were mostly unskilled workers from Italy, Spain and Portugal. However, in those times the existing measures did not take into account the linguistic aspects of staff turnover. It's hard to resist the reflection that the issue was becoming more and more important when the authorities decided to permit bringing the families of those working for at least five years of continuous residence. It was regulated by a government directive issued in 1968¹⁰. The adopted solution did not guarantee equal treatment and favoured immigrants from Austria, Germany, Italy and Spain, and, of course, Switzerland whose citizens were not subject to any rigors in this respect. The right to family reunification was granted only to men.

From a practical point of view, the year 1968 should be, according to the author, considered a breakthrough because undoubtedly since that moment, the number of foreigners who have settled in the Grand Duchy not speaking the official language increased. It is easy to see that in such a situation one cannot speak about their full inclusion and integration into the host society.

Undoubtedly, the biggest turning point were the activities undertaken in the first decade of this century. In addition to the main objective of Liechtenstein's migration policy, which is the integration of newcomers into the local society, the role attributed to the language was especially emphasized.

⁹ M. Guziuk (2007), *Polacy – emigranci w Niemczech u schyłku XX i na początku XXI wieku. Bariery psychospołeczne a integracja*, in: Lalak D. (ed.), *Migracja, uchodźstwo, wielokulturowość. Zderzenie kultur we współczesnym świecie*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak, p. 221-224.

¹⁰ *Verordnung vom 1. April 1968 betreffend die Erteilung von Familienbewilligungen an ausländische Arbeitnehmer*. „Liechtensteinisches Landesgesetzblatt” 1968, No 11.

This was mentioned for the first time in 2004, in the Directive on migrations¹¹. Assuming the importance of the integration of migrants Article 78 points out that sufficient knowledge of the official language by the newcomers is the condition for its success¹². This assumption was repeated in the Foreigners Act which came into force on 1 January 2009¹³. Its Article 6 clearly states that in order to achieve social inclusion foreigners should undertake efforts to master German in speech and writing. It should be noted that the Act does not apply to foreigners coming from the EEA and Switzerland as the issues related to this population group were dealt with in the Act of 20 November 2009¹⁴. However, also in this case, in its Article 5 the legislature stated exactly the same objectives: integration and mastery of the German language at a level that enables this integration.

The role of language is therefore strongly emphasized, it is just crucial to the success of the integration process of migrants into society. The activity of agencies responsible for migration policy in the Principality is subordinated to this assumption.

What is important, migrants in Liechtenstein are not left alone in achieving the goal of mastering the official language. Both Acts emphasize that the state has a task to support them in this respect. When it comes to mastering the language specific solutions have been provided. They refer primarily to foreigners who, if they want to bring their family or to get a residence permit in Liechtenstein, have to sign the so called integration agreement (Integrationsvereinbarung)¹⁵. Bringing a family is possible if its members have a basic knowledge of the official language at level A1 and are able to prove that with an appropriate certificate.

In the mentioned integration agreement migrants undertake to attend language courses until they reach level A2 (and obtain a certificate). In addition, they must display knowledge of the basic principles of the legal and state system of the Principality. The requirements related to language were supported by a special financial incentive. The participation of migrants in a language course is funded with the amount of 200 Swiss francs (at all levels of education). The breach of the integration agreement may lead to

¹¹ *Personenverkehrsverordnung vom 30. November 2004*. „Liechtensteinisches Landesgesetzblatt“ 2004, No253.

¹² In original: „Für eine erfolgreiche Integration ist es erforderlich, dass sich ausländische Staatsangehörige mit den gesellschaftlichen Verhältnissen in Liechtenstein auseinander setzen und über ausreichende Sprachkenntnisse verfügen“.

¹³ *Gesetz vom 17. September 2008 über die Ausländer – Ausländergesetz*. „Liechtensteinisches Landesgesetzblatt“ 2008, No 311.

¹⁴ *Gesetz vom 20. November 2009 über die Freizügigkeit für EWR- und Schweizer Staatsangehörige*. „Liechtensteinisches Landesgesetzblatt“ 2009, No 348.

¹⁵ A specimen of the integration agreement see: <http://www.llv.li/pdf-llv-apa-integrationsvereinbarung.pdf>, [Accessed: 17.09.2013].

withdrawal of the permission to stay in Liechtenstein, therefore knowledge of the official language is an issue not to be disregarded.

Permission for an unlimited stay in the Principality is also subject to one more condition: passing of a specific examination introduced in 2008. In order to prepare migrants to this examination the government placed on its websites a handbook (of 43 pages) and a sample set of examination questions, out of which test questions are selected¹⁶. For a positive test result correct answers to 14 out of 21 questions are required. The same requirements condition the granting of citizenship of Liechtenstein. In this case, the command of the official language at level B1 is necessary¹⁷.

The analysis of handbooks for both examinations leads the author to think that their successful completion is not possible without knowledge of the German language. Handbooks are compiled only in German, including information related to geography, population, history, economy, basic articles of the constitution, legislation, education as well as tradition and statehood of microstates. Thus, the rank of the official language, understandably, has been clearly underlined.

In order to support immigrants and their children language courses are being offered. In the school year 1999/2000 in schools of the Principality a brand new school course "German as a second language" (DaZ - Deutsch als Zweitsprache) was introduced. It is an intensive course supplemented with additional lessons. The course is obligatory for children and young people between the ages of 8 to 16 coming from migrant families, for whom German is not a native language. This course is designed to lead to such proficiency in German that will enable participation in other school activities. In the school year 2006/7 nearly 700 children of 32 nationalities participated in these courses, of which the largest group were people from the Turkish-speaking countries. In total, students taking part in these actions constituted 13.6% of all those learning in Liechtenstein¹⁸.

Courses aimed at improving language skills are also carried out for adults. They are offered by private companies that specialize in adult education. One of them is the Association of Intercultural Education (VIB - Intercultural Verein für Bildung) which since 2005 has been realizing the project Mama- Kind - Deutsch designed for mothers with

¹⁶ More information see: <http://www.llv.li/amtstellen/llv-apa-integration/llv-apa-staatsbuergerkunde-test.htm>, [Accessed: 17.09.2013].

¹⁷ K. Koźbiał, *Liechtenstein...*, p. 87.

¹⁸ *Integration der...*, p. 55-56.

young children. The idea is all the more important that this group is regarded as having relatively small opportunities to improve their skills in this field¹⁹.

The importance of German was also raised in reference to exams certifying practical skills such as driving license courses. Since 2008, according to the decision of the Government of the Principality, the theoretical test can only be taken in the official language instead of nine different languages previously accepted²⁰. Thus, another argument appeared in favour of mastering the language at a relatively good level, the level allowing in practice normal functioning in the host society.

The use of German is crucial for the effective participation in the labor market. The research clearly shows that foreigners' poor command of the official language leads to the fact that their social status is lower than that of the native citizens of the Principality. Statistically, they are also more affected by unemployment than other groups²¹.

It is not surprising that immigrants from German-speaking countries do not face problems related to linguistic and cultural differences, being de facto members of the same culture and language zone, with obvious reservation that this discussion disregards dialectal differences²². Interestingly, considering all German-speaking countries, it appears that it is in Liechtenstein where language is most often identified as one of the main determinants of national identity²³.

Given the statistics from the end of 2010 indicating which is the main language spoken by the citizens of the Principality, it turns out that German predominates. It is the first language for more than 94.5 % of the population of the state. Other languages are much less commonly used²⁴. The official language is not the main one only for slightly more than 5 % of the population (i.e., in practice, for less than two thousand people). These data are shown in Table 2.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 80.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 81.

²¹ Ibid., p. 11.

²² In Liechtenstein the peoples speaks Allemanian dialects.

²³ W. Marxer (2008), *Ausländerinnen und Ausländer in Liechtenstein: Soziale und politische Dimensionen*, Benden: Liechtenstein Institut, p. 3.

²⁴ Polish is the main language for only 8 peoples.

Table 2.

The population of Liechtenstein by the main language used (as on December 31, 2010)

Language	Number of people	Percentage of (in%)
German	34 171	94,53
Italian	412	1,14
Portuguese	284	0,79
Turkish	268	0,74
Serbian/Croatian	244	0,68
Spanish	227	0,63
Albanian	143	0,40
Eastasians	102	0,28

Source: *Volkszählung 2010...*, op. cit., p. 33.

Despite the important role played by language in the Principality's immigration policy one should ask whether these measures are effective. The data presented in Table 2 could indicate that they are, all the more so that in 2000 German as their primary language was declared by fewer citizens of the Duchy (87.7%). Undoubtedly, these actions undertaken by the authorities have contributed to the fact that the command of official language has become an indicator of the degree of integration of migrants. Unquestionably, the crucial factor is that the majority of immigrants are still persons from other German-speaking countries and therefore a specific language policy is understandable and relatively easy to implement. However, the situation may change if there is any change in migration trends and newcomers from outside that area would constitute the majority of immigrants.

The migration policy of the Principality with its essential ingredient in the form of language policy must take into account the economic development of the state and interdependences formed in the course of integration. Liechtenstein is characterized not only by a high proportion of migrants but also de facto by the dependence of the economy on workforce inflow from the outside, people crossing the border to come to work every day²⁵. In 2010, these employees constituted as much as 51.2% , more than nine thousand people commute to work from Switzerland, and less than 8000 from Austria²⁶. If we add to this the number of professionally active migrants already living in the Principality it turns out that almost 70% of people employed in the economy of this country are foreigners.

²⁵ In German language: Zupendler.

²⁶ M. Sochin D'Elia (2012), *Liechtensteinische Ausländerpolitik: zwischen Wunschdenken und Wirklichkeit*, in: Marxer W. (ed.), *Migration...*, p. 189-190.

The implementation of language policy in relation to foreigners is only one aspect of the migration policy of Liechtenstein. It can not remain in isolation from other activities. The country is facing many challenges associated with the influx of migrants. In the opinion of the author one of the most important issues to be considered is the reluctance to grant political rights to migrants, even after many years of legal residence in the Principality. As a result, approximately one third of the society without the citizenship of that country (the requirements that must be fulfilled to obtain it are extremely high²⁷) has no influence on political decisions both on the municipal level and nationwide²⁸. Whether these restrictions will be relaxed in the future still remains an unresolved dilemma.

CONCLUSION

Migrants who constitute about one third of the population of the state, have played a very important role in Liechtenstein in recent years. Their influx has mainly been related to economic development of the microstate after World War II. Among the migrants the immigrants from the neighboring countries, Switzerland, Austria as well as from nearby Germany, still dominate. These groups integrated into the local society without any problems and therefore no language policy has been conducted for their benefit.

Migration trends, however, have changed and therefore the influx of immigrants from countries with not only a different language but also a different culture has become more and more apparent. As a result, authorities of the Alpine Principality have raised the requirements concerning command of the official language to become one of the most important guidelines of the overall approach to migrants.

From a practical point of view, the migration policy of Liechtenstein, with its emphasis on German language skills acquired by migrants coming to this country seems to be logical and consistent. Due to the language requirements migrants are somehow forced to become better integrated into the host society. It is also much easier to implement as Liechtenstein has a very low level of unemployment. Thus, almost each migrant arriving at the borders of the principality finds employment and such a situation in practice requires the establishment of personal interaction, impossible to enter in without knowledge of the language of the host country.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 195-199.

²⁸ K. Koźbiał (2013), *System polityczny Księstwa Liechtensteinu*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, p. 218.

In other words, Liechtenstein still remains an attractive destination for migrants, which is determined by economic factors, but full participation in social, economic and cultural life of the state is not possible without knowledge of the official language at the appropriate level.

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