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## Language policy and its media representation in post-war Ukraine: Implications for identity and inclusivity

### La política lingüística y su representación mediática en la Ucrania de posguerra: implicaciones para la identidad y la inclusión

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
#### Abstract


**Purpose:** This article aims to study language policy and its media representation in post-war Ukraine, as well as to identify the peculiarities of inclusiveness in the future language policy. **Methodology:** a content analysis of modern literature and academic research on language policy and its representation in the Ukrainian media was conducted; a content analysis based on the selection of key media resources and survey sites was conducted. The scientific novelty of the work lies in determining the current state of linguistic policy in Ukraine against the background of the unfolding military processes and the future development of the state. The analysis takes into account the recommendations of the European Commission and shows Ukraine's compliance with European standards in the field of language rights. **Results:** It is determined that the expansion of the Ukrainian-speaking audience is a noticeable


#### Resumen


**Objetivo:** Este artículo pretende estudiar la política lingüística y su representación en los medios de comunicación en la Ucrania de posguerra, así como identificar las peculiaridades de la inclusividad en la futura política lingüística. **Metodología:** Se ha realizado un análisis de contenido de la literatura moderna y la investigación académica sobre la política lingüística y su representación en los medios de comunicación ucranianos. La novedad científica del trabajo radica en determinar el estado actual de la política lingüística en Ucrania en el contexto del desarrollo de los procesos militares y el futuro desarrollo del Estado. El análisis tiene en cuenta las recomendaciones de la Comisión Europea y muestra el cumplimiento por parte de Ucrania de las normas europeas en materia de derechos lingüísticos. **Resultados:** Se determina que la expansión del público de habla ucraniana es una tendencia notable, confirmada por diversos

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trend, confirmed by various sociological studies. At the same time, current legislative changes allow for the publication of advertising and events in the languages of national minorities. The conclusions emphasise that future legislative changes should reflect the inclusive development of society. In conclusion, it is noteworthy that the observed expansion of the Ukrainian-speaking audience, as highlighted in the study, presents a positive trend with the potential to contribute to national unity in the aftermath of conflict.

**Keywords:** language policy, Ukraine, Russian-Ukrainian war, future, importance of media, laws.

## Introduction

Ukraine, as a country with a long history and an outstanding cultural heritage, has undergone significant transformations. Language policy and its interaction with media representation is one of the key areas that has been subject to not only political but also socio-cultural changes. In light of the diversity of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups that inhabit the country, the study of the impact of language policy on identity formation and the creation of an inclusive society is becoming an extremely relevant task. The Russian-Soviet influence on Ukraine and its politics has long persisted even after the actual collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. It existed due to the support of a part of the population for Russian propaganda about the cultural superiority of the Russian language, which was actively imposed through digital and traditional media, by certain political experts and even politicians (Kuzio, 2022; Tkachova et al., 2021). At the same time, the current Russian-Ukrainian war has raised a very relevant question: if the Kremlin regime puts the language issue in Ukraine as one of the main factors of its invasion (the concept of “protecting the Russian-speaking population”), to what extent may the use of Russian become necessary in the media space and at the official level in the future? For this reason, it is crucial to thoroughly analyse the implications of language policy and media representation in post-war Ukraine, and to consider their important aspects for the formation of national identity and inclusiveness in contemporary society.

### *Research problem*

In post-war Ukraine, a historically tense period of transformation, language policy and media representation are key factors influencing social

estudios sociológicos. Al mismo tiempo, los actuales cambios legislativos permiten la publicación de publicidad y actos en las lenguas de las minorías nacionales. Las conclusiones subrayan que los futuros cambios legislativos deben reflejar el desarrollo integrador de la sociedad. En conclusión, cabe señalar que la expansión observada de la audiencia de habla ucraniana, como se destaca en el estudio, presenta una tendencia positiva con el potencial de contribuir a la unidad nacional después del conflicto.

**Palabras clave:** política lingüística, Ucrania, guerra ruso-ucraniana, futuro, importancia de los medios de comunicación, leyes.

and identity dynamics. The study is based on a theoretical framework that combines the concepts of language policy, media representation theory, and sociological approaches to identity construction. The use of this theoretical context allows us to uncover the complexities and interrelationships that exist between official language strategies and the ways in which these strategies are represented in the media, taking into account the impact on different groups in society.

### *Research focus*

The main focus of the study is a detailed examination of the consequences that arise from the interaction of language policy and its media representation in post-war Ukraine. The core objective is to identify the key mechanisms of influence, study their relationship with the identity construction of various population groups and evaluate their contribution to the creation of an inclusive society. This study is seen as an important step in the development of strategies aimed at supporting cultural diversity and promoting the social integration of different groups of citizens in the context of contemporary Ukraine.

### *Research aim and research questions*

The purpose of the article is to study language policy and its media representation in post-war Ukraine and to identify the peculiarities of the development of inclusiveness in the future. The realisation of this goal involves the following tasks:

1. Characteristics of the linguistic demography of wartime Ukraine.

2. Identification of the main language sentiments of Ukrainian residents based on the analysis of media resources. Based on this, the study of certain aspects of the implementation of further language policy.

### Theoretical Framework or Literature Review

The researchers' attention is devoted to various aspects of the role of national minorities in the socio-political life of Central and Eastern Europe. Bakishev & Plumlee's (2022) study focuses on the linguistic aspects of the current regional war in Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Russia. Specifically, the authors examine the impact of the conflict on the linguistic situation and provide practical recommendations for translators. This study may prove useful for understanding the relationship between language and conflict in a regional context. Bocale (2022) examined the situation of national minorities in the post-Soviet space thirty years after the collapse of the USSR. This publication is important for understanding the dynamics of their environment in the countries that used to be part of the USSR and their impact on contemporary socio-cultural processes. Cheskin (2016) studied the situation of Russian-speaking citizens in post-Soviet Latvia. The book provides an important contribution to the understanding of the problems and challenges faced by Russian-speaking communities in the post-Soviet space, contributing to the debate on multilingualism and cultural integration. Katerynych (2023) thematically analysed Belarusian media narratives in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Yatsenko's article (2022) considers the philosophical content of the definition of national mentality. At the same time, the study by Filipova et al., (2021) described in detail the impact of the transhumanist concept on identity development. However, not all of the authors' statements can be accepted with, since, as the Russian-Ukrainian war has demonstrated, the development of nationality and patriotism are crucial. Ismailova (2022) described the key aspects of the socio-political development of contemporary society. Ivashchenko (2022) focuses on the study of the mainstream media in the context of Ukraine's European integration. This study details the impact of media on the perception and understanding of the European integration process in Ukrainian society. These works summarise and expand our comprehension of key aspects of language policy, cultural identity, and media interaction in the context of contemporary socio-cultural challenges.

Events related to Russian aggression in Ukraine have also become a subject of study. Brusylovska & Maksymenko (2022) analyzed the influence of Russian media, namely how the media shape views and opinions on events in the region. Duszczuk et al. (2023) examined the socio-economic consequences and challenges faced by military refugees from Ukraine in Poland after the Russian aggression. Kaunert & de Deus Pereira (2023) described the relationship between the EU and Ukraine in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and study the impact of these processes on ontological security. This work demonstrated Ukraine's continuing Eurocentricity. Instead, Kuzio (2022) emphasized on the foundations of aggressive Russian nationalism, which has turned into a state ideology. At the same time, Holper & Kyselova (2021) highlighted the dilemmas of including the language issue in peacebuilding and dialogue processes in Ukraine, the challenges that arise in the process of peacebuilding and dialogue in conflict-affected settings. Meylahn (2022) viewed the war in Ukraine as a conflict of languages and bodies and offered a philosophical justification and understanding of the relationship between language and corporeality. Rimpiläinen (2020) examined the representations of the displacement of the Donbas population by Ukrainian and Russian government media, analysed how government media create images and concepts of internal displacement. Vicente et al., (2023) provided an overview of the Russian-Ukrainian war, looking at different aspects of the conflict, the factors and consequences of this conflict, focused on various aspects of the military conflict in Ukraine and its impact on various spheres of society. The authors examined how socio-cultural, linguistic, and media aspects interact in the context of military events. All of these studies provide a deep and varied insight into the impact of the military conflict on various aspects of society and serve as important sources for further research and comprehension of events in Ukraine.

### Methodology

The study aimed at analysing language policies and its media representation in the post-war period in Ukraine in order to determine their impact on identity formation and the level of inclusiveness in society was carried out in several stages:

1. Literature review

- Analyse the recent literature and scholarly articles that focus on language policy to find out how this subject is portrayed in the Ukrainian media through a content analysis.
- Identify the main trends, debates, and concepts that shape the debate on this issue.

## 2. Content analysis of the media

- Select the key media resources, including news sites and social networks.
- Scrutinize news articles and programmes for language representation and determine the direction of language policies (Suspilne kultura, 2023; Svyridyuk, 2023; Kulyk, 2023).

## 3. Surveys

- Study the results of surveys conducted by well-known sociological groups such as Rating, Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, and Info Sapiens research agency (Rating, 2022; Kulyk, 2023; InfoSapiens, 2023).
- Determine citizens' views on language policy and media representation.

The primary objectives of the survey encompassed the elucidation of Ukrainian citizens' perspectives regarding the prevailing language policy and the delineation of prospective trajectories for its evolution. Furthermore, an additional focal point involved ascertaining Ukrainians' inclinations towards the incorporation of the Russian language and their stance on the singular state language, notably Ukrainian. These aspects are the main trends of modern language surveys. This inquiry sought to achieve a heightened scholarly depth by delving into nuanced aspects of linguistic attitudes and policy orientations among the surveyed population.

Criteria for selecting sources:

1. Representativeness: the scope of views and opinions in chosen resources.

2. Relevance: commitment to current topics and events related to language policy and representation in wartime.
3. Credibility: level of trust in sources among the scientific and public communities.

Detailed Data Analysis in Media Content:

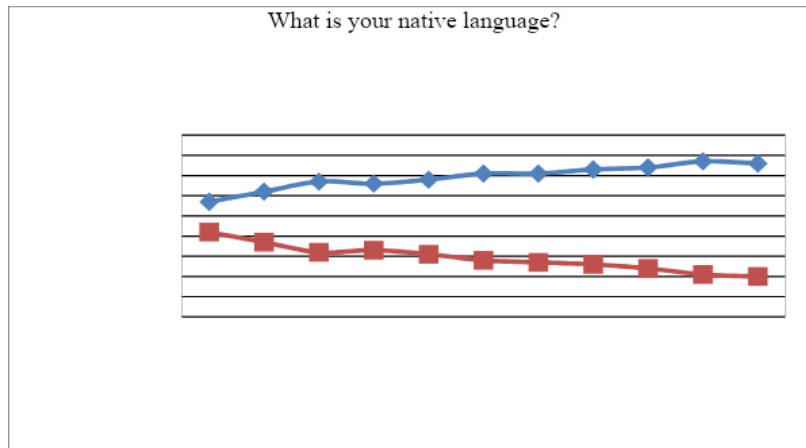
1. Examined the frequency and prominence of different languages in media content.
2. Investigated the contextual nuances and sentiments associated with language representations.
3. Analyzed the framing of language policies, identifying recurring themes and discourses.
4. Explored any shifts or changes in media language representation over time.
5. Categorized media content based on themes related to language policies and representation.

Therefore, based on the analysis of literature, media, and surveys, the study aims to identify the key features of the development of Ukraine's future language policy.

## Results and Discussion

### Ukrainian-speaking audience: the current state of the problem

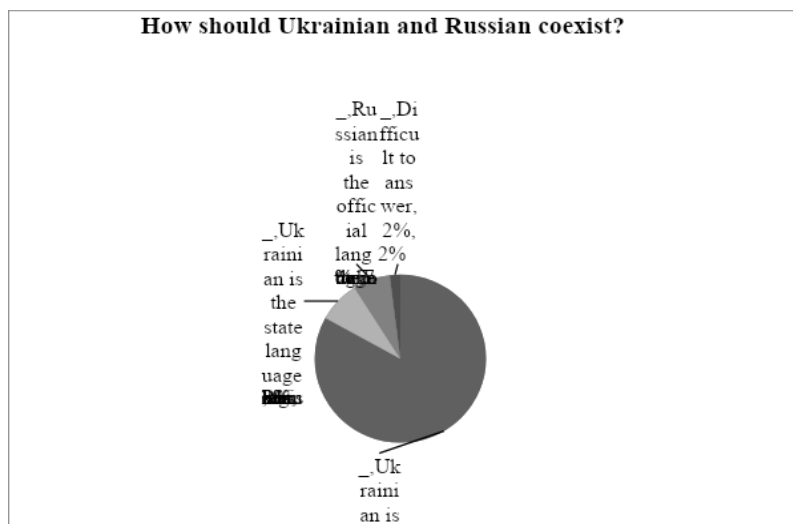
Today, the expansion of the Ukrainian-speaking audience is a noticeable trend that will continue to be dominant in the future. This is confirmed by various sociological studies. A key national survey conducted by the Rating Group in March 2022 sheds light on the language dynamics in Ukraine. Over the decade (from 2012 to 2022), the share of people who consider Ukrainian their native language has increased from 57% to 76% (Rating, 2022). At the same time, the use of Russian has decreased by 22%, falling from 42% to 20%. This information is partially confirmed by Eras (2023). It is noteworthy that the Russian-speaking demographic has declined, dropping from 40% in 2012 to 18% at the start of the war in 2021 (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Diagram of people who consider Ukrainian their native language. Source: Rating Group survey (Rating, 2022)

Geopolitical circumstances, in particular the ongoing war, have played a crucial role in uniting Ukrainian society and shaping citizens' views on language. An overwhelming 83 percent of respondents expressed the opinion that Ukrainian should be the only official language, a sentiment

that has been reinforced by Russia's aggressive military actions (see Figure 2). In addition, in the month after 24 February 2022, support for granting Russian the status of an official language dropped significantly from 25% to 7%.



**Figure 2.** What is the optimal way for Ukrainian and Russian to exist in harmony? Source: Rating group survey (Rating, 2022)

Thus, as can be seen from the rating group survey, Ukrainians support the idea that Ukrainian should be the only state language in the future. To confirm this data, let us turn to the analysis of other polls. In particular, a survey made by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in December 2022 entitled shows noticeable shifts in language use patterns. The data showed an increase in the share of respondents who speak Ukrainian in everyday life, from 41% exclusively to 58%, including those who mainly use Ukrainian. At the same time, the share of exclusively Russian speakers decreased from 6% to 3% (Kulyk, 2023). This survey also showed a change in the dynamics of

family communication: 52% of respondents use Ukrainian as their primary language, compared to 51% in 2017. Workplaces and educational institutions reflect this linguistic transformation: 68 per cent of people reported speaking Ukrainian, compared to 11 per cent speaking Russian. These findings are confirmed by Lanvers & Lunyova (2023), who describe the language situation in Ukrainian higher education institutions (see Figure 3).

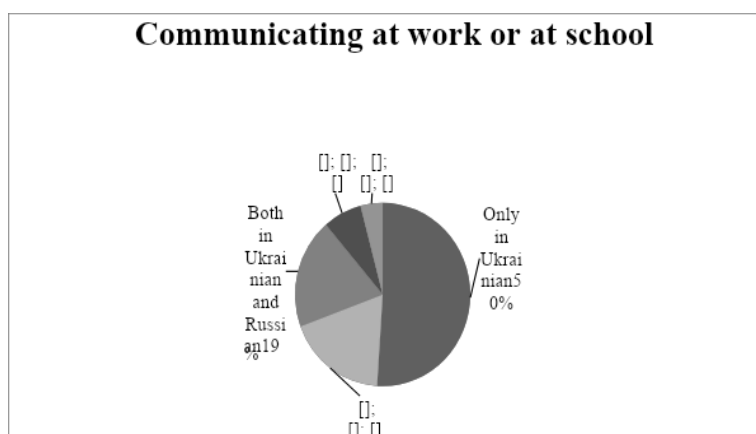
The number of respondents who consider the Russian language unimportant, reaching 58 percent, a significant increase from the 9 percent recorded in 2014. It is noteworthy that even in

traditionally Russian-speaking regions such as the South and East, 46% of residents expressed the opinion that Russian is unimportant (Kulyk, 2023).

A subsequent survey conducted this year by the Info Sapiens research agency confirmed this linguistic shift. It also identified a 16% increase in Ukrainian speakers to 62%, while the share of Russian-speaking Ukrainians decreased from 26% to 13% over the same period (InfoSapiens, 2023).

In addition to traditional polls, the digital landscape also reflects the dominance of the

Ukrainian language. Platforms such as online job boards have adapted their services to open search pages in Ukrainian for users in Ukraine. Before the war, the preference for Ukrainian among freelancers ranged from 11% to 30%. However, after the Russian invasion, this figure rose sharply to an overwhelming 96%, highlighting the expanding influence of the Ukrainian language in online spaces as well. The online language learning platform Duolingo has provided quantitative evidence of this global linguistic shift. Demand for Ukrainian language learning has experienced an incredible growth: in Ireland by 2229% and in Germany by 1651% compared to the previous year.



**Figure 3.** How do you communicate at work or at school?

Source: Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (Kulyk, 2023)

KIIS reports that 15% of Ukraine's population expresses a desire for the country to become bilingual. Looking at international examples, positive experiences of bilingualism that contribute to social satisfaction are evident in countries such as Switzerland, Canada and Belgium. However, there are also caveats, as seen in Belarus, where the trajectory towards bilingualism has led to the decline of the mother language. In the late 1980s, during the perestroika period, Belarus began attempts to secede from the USSR and elevate the Belarusian language to the status of an official language. This push included sociological surveys, the creation of NGOs, and the adoption of the 1990 Law on Languages in the Belarusian SSR, which established Belarus as a monolingual state (Suspilne kultura, 2023). However, after the 1995 referendum, this “Belarusianisation” failed. During this event, the proposal to grant Russia equal state status with Belarus was supported by 83.3% of voters. Subsequently, Luka shenko's regime favoured the Russian language, suppressing the use of living Belarusian and subjecting its speakers to humiliation. Over the years, the consequences became apparent. In

1999, 85.6 per cent of Belarusians considered Belarusian to be their native language; however, in the 2019 census, this figure plummeted to 61.2 percent. The use of the language at home has also decreased: 36.7 per cent in 1999, dropping to 23.4 per cent in 2010, and recovering moderately to 28.5 per cent by 2019. According to the current UNESCO classification, Belarusian is designated as a “fragile language”, which means it is vulnerable (Suspilne kultura, 2023; Maraieva, 2022). Although efforts are being made to preserve it, without a legislative programme of protection, the language faces an imminent risk of rapid disappearance. The Belarusian case highlights the delicate balance required in implementing bilingual policies to ensure the longevity and viability of both languages involved.

Ukraine recognises the rights of its 120 national minority groups, providing them with access to media, music, culture, literature, education, and various other services in their native languages. Current discussions focus on creating a sustainable institutional environment for the realisation of the rights and opportunities of

religious and ethnic communities, including national minorities and indigenous peoples. This involves developing intercultural competence, supporting interaction and understanding, and cultivating a culture of intelligent and friendly dialogue (Pchelintseva, 2023). This complex process therefore requires not only the recognition and protection of rights but also the active promotion of intercultural competence, interaction, and understanding. It is important to cultivate a culture of intelligent and friendly dialogue in order to maintain the unity of the nation while recognising diversity of views (Rezvorovych et al., 2023). Article 11 of the Constitution of Ukraine defines the state's obligation to develop the Ukrainian nation and its cultural heritage, as well as to take into account the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious identity of all indigenous peoples and national minorities. The Laws "On National Minorities of Ukraine" and "On Indigenous Peoples of Ukraine" define the key role of the state in protecting the rights of ethnic communities. An important milestone in this process was the signing by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of the updated law on national minorities. This step, prompted by the European Commission's recommendations, underscores Ukraine's determination to align its legal framework with the high standards of the European Union and to actively support the rights of different ethnic groups.

### New paradigms of vision for Ukraine's language policy

The Ukrainian government took an important step towards harmonising its legislation with European standards by adopting amendments to the law on national minorities on 21 September. The amendments are aimed at aligning provisions and definitions with EU standards. It now allows for the publication of advertisements in the languages of national minorities in their community, as well as for social and cultural events to be held in the minority language. It should be noted that these changes do not apply to the Russian language, but rather focus on minority languages, including Romanian and Hungarian, which are spoken in some communities in the west of the country (Svyrydyuk, 2023). In addition, on 21 September 2023, the Verkhovna Rada adopted a draft law on national minorities, which contains the following key provisions:

- A clear definition of the concept of "national minority (community)";
- Granting the right to use the language of a national minority in advertising and in the provision of assistance;
- Development of a methodology for the use of national minority languages in some regions;
- Clarification of the procedure for determining settlements with a majority of representatives of national minorities (see Table 1).

**Table 1.**  
*Key aspects of the draft law on national minorities, 2023.*

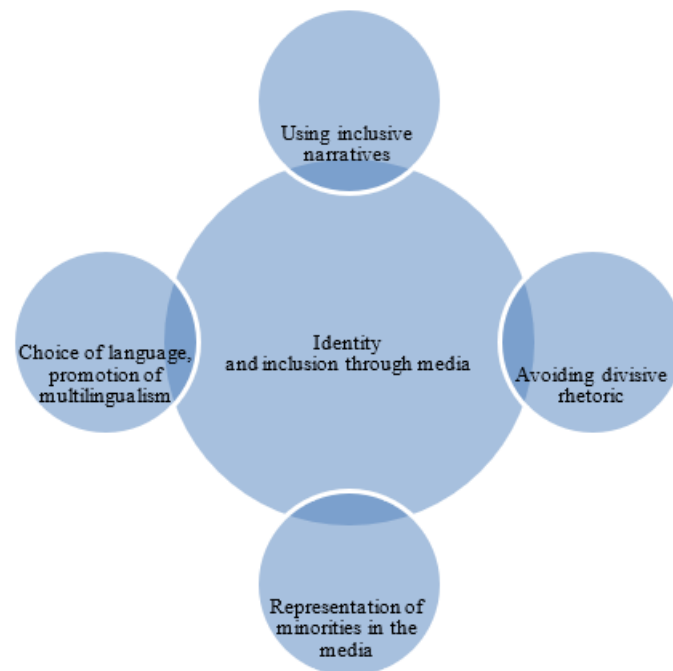
Aspect	Description
Integration into Ukrainian society	The legislation emphasises that national minorities are integral, integrated, and organic components of Ukrainian society. Individuals from national minority groups are afforded diverse rights, encompassing the right to self-identification, freedom of association, peaceful assembly, freedom of expression, participation in political, economic, and social spheres, utilization of their minority language, and access to education in minority languages. These provisions aim to safeguard and uphold cultural identity.
Rights and powers	In the proposed legislation, Article 10 explicitly outlines the entitlement of individuals from national minorities (communities) to freely and without obstruction use their minority language in private and public contexts, both verbally and in written form, within the boundaries set by the law. The legislation acknowledges that public events arranged for individuals belonging to national minorities (communities) can be conducted in the languages of the respective national minorities. Such events encompass meetings, conferences, rallies, exhibitions, training courses, seminars, discussions, forums, and various other public gatherings.
Rights to use the language	
Public events in minority languages	

Source: compiled by the authors.

Indeed, the revision of national minority legislation aligns with one of the seven recommendations from the European Commission, which Ukraine received during its candidacy for accession to the European Union. These legislative modifications signify a significant stride taken by Ukraine to comply with European standards, fostering inclusivity,

and safeguarding the cultural heritage of its diverse population.

In the post-war inclusive language space, mass media will play a crucial role through various channels. These pathways are outlined in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Ways in which media influence identity and inclusion.

Source: compiled by the authors

Therefore, in the post-war period, attention should be paid to achieving inclusion and identity development of national minorities through the

media. This can be accomplished in a number of ways (see Table 2).

**Table 2.**

*Directions for the development of an inclusive language environment through the media.*

Direction	Description.
Inclusive narratives	The media can contribute to post-war recovery by presenting inclusive narratives that are sensitive to the diverse experiences of the population (Zeller, 2022). This includes representing different linguistic and ethnic groups in a balanced and respectful manner.
Language in the media	The choice of language(s) used in media, including news, television, and entertainment, can have a significant impact (Strukowska, 2023). Promoting multilingualism in the media can be a way of recognising and celebrating linguistic diversity.
Avoidance of divisive rhetoric	The media should be careful not to perpetuate divisive rhetoric or stereotypes that could exacerbate tensions. Responsible journalism plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions and promoting understanding (Shakun, 2022).
Representation of minorities	Ensuring fair representation of linguistic and ethnic minorities in the media helps to create a sense of belonging and counteracts marginalisation.

Source: compiled by the authors



At the same time, the instability of the military situation should not be neglected. With the loss of international support and the Kremlin regime's military and diplomatic pressure, serious transformations in the perception of the Russian language in Ukraine are probable. The situation surrounding Ukraine's eventual defeat is difficult to predict, and developments will depend on many factors, including international pressure, inner political processes, and public reaction. However, history shows that wars and conflicts can result in considerable changes in society, including language policy. There are scenarios in which there may be some pressure on the Ukrainian language or changes in its status. However, it should be borne in mind that different circumstances may affect the dynamics of such changes. In the event of any changes in language policy, the reaction of the public and civil society will be a significant factor. There is already strong support in Ukraine for the Ukrainian language and any attempts to change this status may cause opposition and protests.

### Conclusions

Thus, in recent years, Ukraine has demonstrated impressive progress in expanding the audience of the Ukrainian-speaking population, especially in the context of supporting national minorities. Sociological studies point to substantial changes in the language situation. Therefore, considering the attitude of the population, language policy should, on the one hand, continue to support large-scale Ukrainianisation. At the same time, the post-war language policy should aim to reform the language legislation on national minorities, giving preference to European standards and promoting inclusiveness and cultural diversity. Amendments to the law on national minorities have already been approved, allowing for the publication of advertisements and events in the languages of national minorities in their communities. These amendments do not apply to Russian, but rather to languages such as Romanian and Hungarian.

A new draft law on national minorities clearly defines the concept of a “national minority (community)” and their role as an integral part of Ukrainian society. This draft law defines the rights and obligations of persons belonging to national minorities, including the right to use their language in various areas, including advertising and public events.

These initiatives are in line with the recommendations of the European Commission, which became part of a broad package of

recommendations when Ukraine became a candidate for accession to the European Union. Overall, these legislative changes will reflect Ukraine's decisive step towards an open, inclusive society where different cultural and linguistic groups are able to preserve and develop their identities.

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