

Status of official languages of ethnic communities in multiethnic states

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Abstract

There are considered three main problems in this article: one of them is analysis of status differences between official languages in subjects of bi-ethnic and multi-ethnic states. Experience of Belgium and Canada shows that the distinguishing features of official languages in bi-ethnic countries are following: lack of national state language, territorial limitedness of using, legal equality of languages. Unlike bi-ethnic federative states there is one national language in multiethnic countries such as Russia. It is stressed that in Russia where Russian language is an integrative factor of society, there are official languages of republics inside the Russian Federation. They play integrative role for ethnic identity of the titular nations. The other problem is difference between status of official languages in federal subunits and the languages of ethnic groups that don't have official status. The latter widens opportunities for language, ethnic identity and for protection against assimilation. However at the same time it is necessary to recognize that diffusion and functional role of official languages of titular nations of republics inside Russian Federation is reduced. The third problem is an interaction between national state language and state languages of federal subunits in multi-ethnic federations. There are common features peculiar to official languages of federation subjects: existence of several such languages, territorial limitedness, equality of rights.

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Keywords

Bilingualism, Equality of rights, Fading away of languages, Federal subunits of ethnic federations, Loss of language, Monolingual regions, Official and state languages

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