

2. Regional and minority languages in the new Member States

2.1 Linguistic overview

2.1.1 Regional or minority languages in the new Member States belong to four different **language families**, i) Indo-European, ii) Uralic, iii) Turkic and iv) Semitic. The vast majority (three quarters) are Indo-European. Here, with the exception of Sorbian – whose eastern and southern limits are not far from the borders with Poland and the Czech Republic respectively – virtually all current Slavonic languages (Belorussian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Macedonian, Serbian, Slovenian, Slovak, Polish, Kashubian, Russian and Ukrainian) are represented. Kashubian is the surviving variety of a language whose western dialect, Slovincian, became extinct in the 20th century. Ruthenian, sometimes considered to be a dialect of Ukrainian, but independently recognised by Slovakia under the Charter, adds to the Slavonic group. The extant Croatian-speaking community of Moravia stands out as a link providing linguistic continuity between west and south Slavonic languages. Among the other Indo-European languages are Lithuanian and Latvian (they are Baltic languages), then Armenian, Romani and Greek. The Germanic group includes only German and Yiddish, while the presence of the Romance languages is limited to Italian and Romanian. Romani, of the Indo-Iranian branch, is a collective name for a number of Romani and para-Romani dialects that resulted from different strata. The denomination “Roma” is particularly appropriate in the central and eastern European context, where the relevance of non-Roma Gypsy groups is less marked than in the EU15 Member States.¹ The Uralic languages are represented by Estonian, Finnish (including Ingrian Finnish), Hungarian and Livonian, which is nearly extinct. The Turkic family has Karaim, Tatar and Turkish.² The only minority language of the Semitic family is Cypriot Arabic, Maltese being an official and national language of Malta. Thus, the range of language families and branches in the new Member States is as diversified as in the EU12 Member States, although different in kind.

2.1.2 In the EU12 Member States, more than three quarters of the minorities spoke a language which belongs to a language family or branch which is different from that of the “majority” language in the respective country; in the new Member States the proportion is slightly lower (i.e., two thirds). This comparatively higher occurrence of **linguistic proximity** may indicate that mutual intelligibility between minority and majority languages is more frequent, but this is “high” or “average” only in 25% of the linguistic pairs. One of the reasons is that two of the genealogically “apart” languages – German and Romani – are present in all Central and Eastern European countries, drastically reducing the number of favourable combinations; another is the presence of a Uralic “island” (Hungarian) in Central Europe. The degree of linguistic affinity is relevant, for it may facilitate the process of assimilation – not only of the minority language group into the majority population, but also between minorities (\Rightarrow 2.2.3). Conversely, linguistic distance may help resist assimilation – but also make social integration with the majority population more difficult.³ It should be stressed, however, that the importance of linguistic proximity is relative, for lack of mutual intelligibility depends on social factors as well – and has a varying impact.⁴

¹ Cf. Jean-Pierre Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers* (Council of Europe, 1994).

² Which is formally a co-official language in Cyprus.

³ As is the case for Russian-speaking groups in the Baltics.

⁴ E.g., in the Baltic states the distance between Russian (a Slavonic language) and Latvian/Lithuanian (Baltic languages) or Estonian (a Finno-Ugric language) affect a very large numbers of people.

2.1.3 As far as **writing systems** are concerned, the Roman alphabet is the most widespread and is used for more than half of the languages, including Maltese – the only case of a Semitic language written in the Roman alphabet. The Cyrillic alphabet, being the most current script among Orthodox Slavs, typifies all eastern Slavonic languages (Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian) and two of the southern Slavonic languages (Serbian and Bulgarian), but is also used for Tatar. Slavonic languages spoken by groups with a Catholic tradition (Croatian, Czech, Polish, Slovak and Slovenian) use the Roman script. Greek, Arabic and Armenian have their own writing systems, while Karaim is written with Hebrew characters. Romani and Livonian lack a written standard and have been rendered with various systems. In historical terms, the variety of alphabets reflects not only religious affiliation but also political and/or socio-cultural developments of corpus planning.⁵

2.2 Statistics and language use

2.2.1 While the Euromosaic I study (EU12 Member States) listed 48 linguistic communities, in the new Member States there are approx. **90 minority groups** that can be distinguished on a linguistic basis. There are other considerable differences. In at least half of the new Member States⁶ minorities account for more than 10% of the total population,⁷ with a very wide spectrum: Malta declared to have no minorities,⁸ while in Latvia, Latvian speakers officially amount to only 59.7% of the population.⁹ In the EU12 Member States, minorities exceeded the proportion of 10% only in Spain.¹⁰ However, it should be considered that the new Member States have also much smaller populations. They average slightly more than 7.4 million inhabitants, as against the almost 26 million of the EU15 Member States.¹¹ The largest regional or minority language group are the Russian speakers in all Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), with more than 1,2 million members according to latest censuses. Half of them are in Latvia where ethnic minorities count for almost 50% of the total population. Indeed, in all three Baltic states regional or minority language groups exceed 15% of the total state population. Next in terms of language membership are Romani and Hungarian. In a context where Central and Eastern European countries host 70% of all the Gypsy communities of Europe,¹² the proportion of Romani speakers in the new Member States is likely to average 60% of the Roma population as against 37% at the European level. However, the lack of reliable statistics for Romani makes it very hard to suggest numbers. This is clear when looking at the gap between official data and other estimates: in the new Member States, censuses (where available) indicate approximately 300,000 Roma and 200,000 people having Romani as a mother tongue, while estimates suggest that Roma communities count up to 1.5 million members, and more than half a million people using Romani dialects. Hungarian is declared as a mother tongue by more than half a million people in Slovakia alone. The German language has at least 280,000 speakers in the 10 new Member states : most of them are in Poland, the country which probably has the largest number of minority language speakers.

⁵ Such as the adoption of the Roman script for Turkish in Turkey and Maltese in Malta.

⁶ Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

⁷ According to official data (latest censuses), see foreword to Appendix 2.

⁸ Under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

⁹ Census 2004.

¹⁰ In 2001 Catalans alone accounted for 10.3% of the total population (in Catalonia).

¹¹ Data from C. Pan and B. S. Pfeil, *National Minorities in Europe – Handbook* (Ethnos n. 63), Braumüller 2003.

¹² Cf. Jean-Pierre Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, ibid.

2.2.2 It is by no means easy to determine the **number of speakers** when there are no data available from specific surveys. The official figures refer to mother tongue speakers or comparable categories in censuses. It is well known, however, that statements on “mother tongue” never reflect the number of people that actually *use* the language. One of the reasons is that the declaration refers to a moment in time that has passed, so that a language which is reported as the mother tongue of a few hundred speakers in the census may have been assimilated or even become extinct in a decade. More commonly, the mother tongue does not always coincide with the language first learnt and used for social interaction. In Hungary, the ratio between people using Slovak or German and those declaring those languages as their mother tongue exceeds 150%.¹³ This shows that a census should be interpreted only within a national context, as a declaration of language loyalty (and/or ethnic identity); while for an internationally comparative study, or an estimation of the number of speakers, the census figures must take into account the prevailing political and ideological conditions within that country. Another problem is that the difference between official statistics and (unofficial) estimates can be very high, as was clear in the case of Romani. Yet another difficulty lies in the fact that the language declared may actually be considered as a *dialect* of the language concerned, or another language altogether, depending on the attitude of the respondent in the census. Ruthenian is a case in point: some consider it not as a separate language but as a dialect of Ukrainian, and may report accordingly; Macedonian could be Bulgarian, a Greek dialect or (Slavo-) Macedonian.¹⁴ Finally, many people are often bilingual or trilingual, and the language they declare in one census is not always the same they report in the next.¹⁵

2.2.3 If there are comparable data across census periods (normally ten years), a decline or an increase in the number of people declaring a language to be their mother tongue may be telling, but such data cannot be considered in isolation. A negative language trend paralleled by a fall in the “corresponding” **ethnic identity** and the increased use of the “majority” language or identification with the ethnic majority, for example, may indicate language shift and assimilation; a declining ethnic membership and a high average age of the language speakers almost invariably points to language shift, for reproduction is no longer ensured. An increase of mother tongue speakers can be a positive sign, but again this is relative. It is possible, for example, that higher figures are determined by immigration from kin states. And the newcomers do not necessarily share the same minority language, nor the same cultural assumptions. Declarations of ethnicity or nationality can provide another context, but such figures are even more relative. In the first place, ethnic allegiance can vary considerably in periods of social and political change. In the Czech Republic, the number of those declaring Moravian and Silesian identities dropped by more than 70% in just ten years.¹⁶ Shifting and multiple identities are common in Central and Eastern European Member States, where six states have been newly created or recreated since 1991-92¹⁷. Sometimes, however, the comparison (ratio) between declared language and declared ethnicity mirrors a specific situation. Such values are extremely relative, especially when there is a considerable difference between official and estimated data, but may — in context — reflect the importance given to the language as an identity marker. For example, people declaring Belorussian, Russian and Ukrainian ethnicities have all decreased by more than 25% in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania with respect to previous

¹³ 2001 Census.

¹⁴ Depending on the geographical area and/or the respondents' attitude.

¹⁵ This is true of identity declarations as well, and often depends on the social or political circumstances affecting the minority group in question.

¹⁶ Between 1991 and 2001.

¹⁷ The Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia, as pointed out by C. Pan and B. S. Pfeil, *ibid.*

censuses. But the number of those declaring Russian as a mother tongue has not decreased correspondingly, and is even higher (at least in Estonia and Latvia) than those stating Russian nationality – in contrast to Belorussian and Ukrainian, which have a very low language/ethnicity ratio in all three Baltic countries. This is because on the one hand Russian displays a strong intergenerational transmission; on the other, it has partly assimilated the other two languages.¹⁸

2.2.4 Although extremely difficult to determine without reliable data, a few considerations on **language use** in the new Member States can be made on the basis of the individual country and language reports, as well as the language use surveys and case studies. In the first place, although competence in the minority language is high in some cases, linguistic (and ethnic) assimilation seems to be rather common in all the Central and Eastern EU countries. This is suggested by the trends concerning mother tongue and ethnicity, with a decline in 50% or more of the cases in both census categories. Language group endogamy (i.e., marriage within the language community) also appears to be low in many cases.¹⁹ Here, linguistic proximity (\Rightarrow 2.1.2) between the regional or minority language and the state official language plays a role.²⁰ In many cases the attitude towards the language – and the importance attached to the language as an identity marker – appears to be very strong. It is certainly so in the languages surveyed, pointing towards a very high relevance of the cultural dimension. The use of regional or minority languages in education varies considerably, and depends on a number of factors, such as the legal status of the language, the existence of a linguistic standard, the availability of teaching material (\Rightarrow 2.4.1), or the territorial distribution of the language group (\Rightarrow 2.3.2).

2.3 Historical and geographical aspects

2.3.1 There are not many autochthonous linguistic minorities in the new Member States, unlike in the the EU15 Member States. Most of the present regional or minority language groups are due to population movements and border changes, and can rarely be pinned down to a single moment **in time**.²¹ There are some exceptions, such as the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, which in the 16th century led to the establishment of Croatian-speaking groups in Hungary, Slovakia, Moravia. But unlike in Western Europe, regional and minority language groups derive from highly fragmented and decentralised political spaces (e.g., the Austro-Hungarian Empire or the Soviet Union). This also resulted in a freedom of movement that facilitated settlements within borders, with the consequence that most regional and minority languages spoken in the new Member States are also state and/or official languages in bordering countries.²² German has a particular history. It spread chiefly in the middle ages, through various migrations and settlements, and became extremely widespread in Central Europe (especially in the Czech Lands, Hungary and Poland). After the II World War most Germans were displaced or deported, and other minorities were often resettled in their place. Most Greeks

¹⁸ Which are also Eastern Slavonic languages and therefore have a high degree of mutual intelligibility.

¹⁹ Language group endogamy does not guarantee in itself a high level of language reproduction, but represents a condition whereby the family can serve as the main agency of reproduction.

²⁰ An good example in the EU is Frisian, where language group endogamy is fairly high. In the 1970s, around 40,000 in-migrants entered the Frisian-speaking area. When both parents speak the language almost all of the families use Frisian for interaction, and most of them do so also when one parent speaks Frisian and the other Dutch. The key factor in this respect is the ease of learning Frisian for Dutch speakers, given the similarity between the two languages.

²¹ See also the European Parliament's *Working Paper on Lesser-Used Languages in states applying for EU membership (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia)*, EDUC 106 EN Rev.1, 2001.

²² Belorussian, Croatian, Czech, Estonian, German, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian and Ukrainian.

arrived in the Czech Republic and Hungary because of the civil war (1947-1949). Many Russians, Belorussians and Ukrainians are post-war migrants, especially in the Baltics, but there are also settlements of Old Believers (17th century) and refugees from the Russian revolution (1920s). Because of these population movements, old and new linguistic minorities are often undistinguishable in censuses.²³

2.3.2 As to the **territorial distribution** of language groups, a first consideration to be made is that the average dispersal rate of regional and minority language groups in the new Member States is high. Compact language groups are found, but more at the local rather than the regional level; and there are few areas where minority language groups constitute the majority.²⁴ In comparison, the language minorities considered under Euromosaic I were very often compact and mainly distributed at the regional level: Catalan and Basque in Spain, Friulian and Sardinian in Italy, Frisian in the Netherlands, Welsh in the UK to name but a few. This situation directly impacts on minority languages, for dispersal can be an obstacle to the implementation of specific policies.²⁵ However, it should be stressed that minority language groups in the new Member States do not fall within a single nor coherent pattern. The geographical dispersal can be paralleled by a simultaneous concentration of speakers of the same language in other areas, either urban and/or rural, bordering or inland. Historical population movements are the main cause of this phenomenon, and the “border area” linguistic minority features prominently in almost all of the new Member States. In some cases groups were previously concentrated. Such is the situation of the German-speaking communities who were evacuated after World War II or of the Ukrainians in Poland, but also of smaller groups like the Maronites in Cyprus. In the EU12 Member States there were fewer linguistic minorities in border areas, consistent with the presence of several languages having no kin states (\Rightarrow 2.4). Another distinct feature in the new Member States is the traditional establishment of large minority language groups in capital cities like Budapest and Prague, a legacy of the rich urban multilingual environments during the Austro-Hungarian Empire.²⁶ The urban pattern is also common in the Baltics, especially for the Russian-speaking groups, but is mainly due to the immigration waves in industrial areas during the Soviet period. All the elements above suggest that the core-periphery distribution which was identified under Euromosaic I cannot be taken for granted in the new Member States.²⁷

2.4 Statehood and beyond

2.4.1 The notion of **kin state** — i.e., a country where the regional or minority language is a *state*²⁸ official language, and therefore potentially able to serve as a support in various forms — is particularly relevant to regional or minority languages in the new Member States. Three quarters of them have kin states; these are almost all the new Member States (The Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) beside others in the rest of the EU (Austria, Finland, Germany, Italy and Sweden) and several non-EU countries (Belarus, Bulgaria, Russia, Ukraine, Yugoslavia). Most of the kin states are also neighbouring countries. This reflects the considerable amount of border changes

²³ For a debate on the issue, see Tom Cheesman, ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Lesser-Used Languages of Europe: Common Cause?, in Camille C.O’ Reilly, ed., *Language, Ethnicity and the State* Vol. 1 (Palgrave, 2001:87).

²⁴ E.g. Russian speakers in parts of Estonia or Latvia.

²⁵ For example, the establishment of minority schools in a specific area, due to an insufficient number of students.

²⁶ This is of course true also for Austrian minorities living in Vienna.

²⁷ Cf. *Euromosaic – the production and reproduction of the minority language groups in the European Union*, European Commission, *ibid.*, p. 7 ff.

²⁸ E.g., teaching material, broadcasting, etc.

and population movements (resettlements, migrations) which have typified Eastern and Central European countries. There are only eight “stateless” or “unique” languages: Cypriot Arabic, Karaim, Kashubian, Romani, Ruthenian, Tatar and Yiddish, half as many as in Euromosaic I, whose list included Basque, Breton, Catalan,²⁹ Cornish, Corsican, Frisian, Gaelic, Friulian, Galician, Ladin, Mirandese, Occitan, Saami, Sardinian, Sorbian and Welsh. More importantly, the estimated membership of stateless languages in the new Member States is very low (if we exclude Romani, given the difficulty of showing reliable figures), while in the EU12 Member States is of almost 15 million, corresponding to more than 75% of the total number of regional or minority language speakers. In the EU, English is the only language with a kin state that has no minorities that one could consider as such in terms of the Charter or the Convention; it is also the only language which enjoys co-official status in countries officially having no minorities.³⁰

2.4.2 It has rightly been pointed out that the notion of “kin state” is **relative**, for any support depends on a series of factors such as identity³¹, the “standardness” of the language spoken by the minority,³² and the political relations between countries. “If their respective political agendas are mutually incompatible, a conflictual relationship between external minority and kin state is just as likely”.³³ Although nations and kinships are “constructs”,³⁴ they can be very powerful ones — especially in the new Member States, where “the modernist model of the state [...] still dominates” and ethnicity plays an important role.³⁵ Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia have all endorsed bilateral agreements with countries where linguistic minorities are established. Against this background, the 1991 Treaty on Good Neighbourly Relations and Cooperation between Germany and Poland served as a model for other treaties that Germany signed with other states in Central and Eastern Europe.³⁶ Another relevant factor within interstate relations is whether the kin state is part of the European Union or not. In this light, Slovenian- and Hungarian-speaking communities in Italy and Austria are likely to benefit from the fact that their languages have become official languages of the EU institutions, just as many of the other regional and minority languages in the new Member States. The same cannot be said for Belorussian, Russian and Ukrainian among others. In light of the different situation in Western Europe and in Central and Eastern European countries, the notion of “stateless” language in the enlarged Union should be further refined. For example, the position of most of the stateless language groups in Western Europe is radically different in an important respect: most of them are regionally compact (⇒ 2.3.2) and enjoy varying degrees of devolution.

2.4.3 As mentioned before, the fact that Eastern and Central European countries have undergone radical **political changes** over the last two decades naturally impacts upon the situation of regional and minority languages. The Soviet period deeply

²⁹ Although this is a state official language [*llengua oficial de l'Estat*] in Andorra.

³⁰ Ireland and Malta.

³¹ The SMiLE report (ibid., p. 177) points to the examples of the Swedish-speaking Finns (who do not consider themselves Swedish) or the French-speaking Swiss (who do not consider themselves French).

³² Regional or minority languages can be considerably removed from the modern standards used in the kin state (e.g. the Croatian spoken in Moravia), or conceal multiple standards. E.g., beside standard German or Dutch in France there are two local “stateless” varieties — Alsatian and West Flemish, respectively — which are also considered to be regional languages [*langues régionales*].

³³ Stefan Wolff, From Irredentism to Constructive Reconciliation? Germany and its Minorities in Poland and the Czech Republic. In Camille C.O’ Reilly, ed., *Language, Ethnicity and the State*, Vol. 2 (Palgrave, 2001:87).

³⁴ SMiLE report, ibid., p. 177.

³⁵ Cf. Camille C.O’ Reilly, Introduction: Minority Languages, Ethnicity and the State in Post-1989 Eastern Europe. In *Language, Ethnicity and the State*, Vol. 2, ibid., p. 11.

³⁶ Cf. Stefan Wolff, From Irredentism to Constructive Reconciliation? Germany and its Minorities in Poland and the Czech Republic. Ibid., p. 11.

affected the social and economic pattern of many of the new Member States, especially in the Baltics.³⁷ In the educational system, Russian was the first foreign language taught throughout Eastern Europe until the 1990s.³⁸ This restructuring of the political space stands in sharp contrast with the more traditionally established nation-states in Western EU countries, which also exhibit a higher degree of political devolution at the regional or local government level — directly relevant to language groups.³⁹ Nation-building and/or ethnic issues are still very much on the agenda in the new Member States. In the Baltics, this mirrors the desire to recover historical elements of nation- and statehood.⁴⁰ In almost all of the new Member States the national/state languages have been made official constitutionally or by statute,⁴¹ mostly in the 1990s.⁴² In Estonia and Latvia *all* languages that are different from the state language are officially defined as “foreign languages”. With the exception of Hungary and Slovenia, self-government for minorities appears to be more limited than in Western European countries, where several minority languages enjoy co-official status at the local, regional or even state level.⁴³ Where devolution allows, the sub-state structure itself can determine official status at various levels.⁴⁴ Another difference from the new Member States is that there are minority languages which are considered as (co-)national languages:⁴⁵ these languages, which are defined as “less widely used official languages” in terms of the Charter,⁴⁶ enjoy almost the same status as other “lesser used languages”, such as Irish and Luxembourgish, which are the only national languages in their eponymous countries.⁴⁷ But it has been noted that in Central and Eastern Europe minority nations are more easily recognised as legitimate groups and granted (collective) rights:⁴⁸ the notions of “national minority”, “ethnic minority” and “national community” are found very frequently in legislation, and are kept distinct from the concept of citizenship — a connotation which is implied in the English term *nationality*.⁴⁹ However, the *de facto* situation can be very different from the *de jure* protection, and could turn out to be more or less favourable, as the case may be. Besides, the relationship between majority and minority should be considered in the light of (co-)dominance or non-dominance.

2.4.4 In the enlarged EU, the link between regional or minority language groups and technologies and the *new media* appears to be significant. The new Member States are lagging behind in the field of new technologies but there is a potential to develop supranational links and transnational networks.⁵⁰ However, the

³⁷ Which were incorporated as Soviet Republics in 1940.

³⁸ Except in Slovenia, where Russian remained an optional subject until the mid-1960s and was then replaced by English and German.

³⁹ Such is the case, e.g., for the *Comunidades Autónomas* in Spain, the *Regione* or *Provincia autonoma* in Italy, the *Communauté française* and the *Vlaamse Gemeenschap* in Belgium and the Swedish *Kommuner*; not to mention Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales in the UK.

⁴⁰ The Baltics became independent states after WWI and remained so until 1940.

⁴¹ Except in the Czech Republic and Hungary.

⁴² Not in Cyprus: the constitutional provision for Greek and Turkish dates back to 1960.

⁴³ Swedish in Finland.

⁴⁴ This is the case for Aranese in the Catalan *Comarca* de la Val d’Aran, or of German in the *Provincia autonoma di Bolzano/Bozen* within the *Regione autonoma Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol*.

⁴⁵ E.g., Swedish in Finland (*kansalliskieli/nationalspråk*) or Italian and Romansh in Switzerland (*lingua nazionale/lingua naziunala*).

⁴⁶ Cf the relevant declarations in the instrument of ratification, available from <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/Commun/ListeDeclarations.asp?NT=148&CM=1&DF=&CL=ENG&VL=1>

⁴⁷ A comparable position in the new Member States is that of Maltese.

⁴⁸ Cf. Introduction in Thornberry, P. and Amor Martin, M., *Minority Rights in Europea*, Council of Europe Publishing (2004:19).

⁴⁹ C. Pan and B. S. Pfeil, *ibid.*, p. XVIII.

⁵⁰ Cf. Nelde, P. and Weber, P. (2002): “The non-linearity of language maintenance and language shift: survey data from European language boundaries”. In: Wei, Li/Dewaele, Jean-Marc/Housen, Alec (eds.): *Opportunities and Challenges of Bilingualism*. Berlin / New York (Mouton de Gruyter), 105-124.

emergence of the new media does not necessarily represent a positive development, since they require access to resources. For some language groups the gap between smaller languages and the dominant language(s) may become even wider. Thus, on the one hand an increasing number of communities are being created through the Internet; on the other, the new opportunities do not necessarily eliminate the contrast between centre and periphery, majority and minority, nor the social barriers between population groups.⁵¹ This may be attributed to the fact that the representation of social groups on the Internet is largely determined by the actual social balance of power. As the ATLANTIS project shows,⁵² the representation in the virtual world also depends on whether regional or minority languages are official languages in other countries (\Rightarrow 2.4.1). The information on the new media collected through Euromosaic III – which is comparable to the results of the ATLANTIS project – suggest that the less a language is used, the less its representation in the new media will be. There is a risk deriving from the Increasing-Knowledge-Gap hypothesis,⁵³ whereby the knowledge gap between the various classes of population mostly increases as a result of the introduction of new media. This “digital divide” may deepen as borders are being projected into virtual space; a crucial issue here is the software compatibility of a language. For the new Member States, the integration of regional minority languages into the “digital democracy” primarily depends on the financial resources and the potential recipients.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Cf. OECD: *The Economic and Social Impact of Electronic Commerce* (Paris 1999).

⁵² On <http://www.uoc.edu/in3/atlantiss/>.

⁵³ Cf. Bonfadelli, H. (1994): *Die Wissenskluff-Perspektive. Massenmedien und gesellschaftliche Information*. Konstanz.

⁵⁴ Cf. Williams, G. (2000): *The digital value chain and economic transformation. Rethinking regional Development in the New Economy*. Contemporary Wales Vol. 13.