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EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW
(VENICE COMMISSION)

**ACT OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL NO. 270/1995 COLL.
ON THE STATE LANGUAGE
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic

declares

revised Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic as amended by Finding of the Constitutional Court No. 260/1997 Coll., Act No. 5/1999 Coll., Act No. 184/1999 Coll., Act No. 24/2007 Coll., as well as Act No. 318/2009 Coll.

**ACT
OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC
on the State Language of the Slovak Republic**

Bearing in mind that the Slovak language is the most important attribute of the Slovak nation's specificity and the most precious value of its cultural heritage, as well as an expression of sovereignty of the Slovak Republic and a general vehicle of communication for all its citizens, which secures their freedom and equality in dignity and rights¹ in the territory of the Slovak Republic, the National Council of the Slovak Republic has resolved to adopt the following Act:

1 Introductory Provision

- (1) The Slovak language shall be the state language in the territory of the Slovak Republic.²
- (2) The state language shall have priority over other languages used in the territory of the Slovak Republic.
- (3) This Act does not regulate the use of liturgical languages. The use of such languages is governed by the regulations of churches and religious communities.³
- (4) Unless this Act provides otherwise, the use of the languages of national minorities and ethnic groups are governed by separate regulations.⁴
- (5) This Act shall apply to state authorities, territorial self-government authorities, other bodies of public administration, legal persons, self-employed natural persons and natural persons to the extent and under the conditions set forth herein.

2 State Language and Its Protection

- (1) State authorities, territorial self-government authorities and other bodies of public administration are obligated to protect the state language. For that purpose they are obliged to access actively to the control of compliance of provisions of this act.
- (2) The State:
 - a) shall create appropriate conditions in the educational, scientific and information systems to enable every citizen of the Slovak Republic to master and use the state language in oral and written communications;
 - b) shall promote scientific research of the state language, research of its historical development, research of its local and social dialects, codification of the state language, and enhancement of the language culture;
- (3) The codified form of the state language shall be approved and published by the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter "Ministry of Culture") on its website.
- (4) Any interference with the codified form of the state language that is contrary to the regularities shall be inadmissible.

3 Use of the State Language in Official Communication

- (1) The state authorities, territorial self-government authorities, other bodies of public administration, the legal persons established by such public authorities and the legal persons established by law⁵ shall use the state language in their official communication; this provision shall be without prejudice to the use of the languages of national minorities in official communication pursuant to a separate regulation^{5aa} and the use of other languages

- in official communication with foreign countries in accordance with the established practice in international communication practice.
- (2) The employees and civil servants of the authorities and legal persons referred to in subsection (1), as well as those employed in the transport, posts and telecommunications, members of the armed forces of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter "armed forces"), armed security corps, other armed corps and fire brigades, must have a command of and use the state language in official communication.
 - (3) The state language:
 - a) shall be the language of laws, government ordinances and other generally binding legal regulations, including those issued by the territorial self-government authorities, as well as the language of decisions and other public documents, except for school certificates issued by the schools that use the language of a national minority or a foreign language as the language of upbringing and education;^{5a} the manner in which such certificates are issued is governed by a separate regulation,^{5b}
 - b) shall be the language of negotiation at the authorities and legal persons referred to in subsection (1),
 - c) shall be the language of entire official paperwork (birth, marriage and death register, minutes, resolutions, statistics, records, balances, official records, information intended for the public, etc.) and the paperwork and documents of churches and religious communities intended for public;
 - d) shall be the language of municipal chronicles; an other language mutation, if any, shall be deemed translation from the state language.
 - (4) The authorities and legal persons referred to in subsection (1) shall use the state language in all their information systems and mutual communication; apart from the state language, another language can also be used in such information systems whenever a separate regulation so provides.^{6a}
 - (5) In official communication with the authorities and legal persons referred to in subsection (1), a natural person or legal person shall use the state language, unless this Act, separate regulation or an international treaty promulgated in a way set down by law provides otherwise.^{6b} Any person whose mother tongue is a language that meets the criterion of basic comprehensibility in relation to the state language can use their mother tongue in official communication with the authorities and legal persons referred to in subsection (1). The authorities and legal persons referred to in subsection (1) shall be obliged to accept any document executed in a language that meets the criterion of basic comprehensibility in relation to the state language, insofar as such document has been issued or super-legalized by the competent authorities of the Czech Republic.
 - (6) Every citizen of the Slovak Republic shall have the right to modification of his/her forename⁷ and surname into the Slovak orthographic form free of charge.

3a Use of the State Language in Geographical Names

The names of municipalities and their parts,^{7a} the names of streets and other public areas, other geographical names,^{7b} as well as data contained in the official maps and cadastral maps shall be presented in the state language; the denomination of municipalities and streets and other local geographical designations in the languages of national minorities is governed by a separate regulations.^{7c}

4 Use of the State Language in the Educational System

- (1) The teaching of the state language shall be mandatory at all primary and secondary schools. A language other than the state language may be used as the teaching language and the testing language to the extent set down in separate regulations.^{5a}
- (2) Pedagogical staff in all schools and school establishments in the territory of the Slovak Republic, except for foreign pedagogues and lecturers, must have a command of the state language and use the state language in oral and written communications.

- (3) The entire pedagogical documentation and other documentation in the schools and school establishments shall be kept in the state language. In the schools and school establishments, providing upbringing and education in the language of national minorities,^{8a} the entire pedagogical documentation shall be kept bilingual, it means in the state language and language of national minority.^{8b} In the schools and school establishments, providing upbringing and education in the language of national minorities,^{8a} other documentation shall be kept bilingual, it means in the state language and language of national minority.
- (4) The textbooks and teaching books used in the upbringing and educational process in the Slovak Republic shall be issued in the state language, except for the textbooks and teaching books for teaching in the languages of national minorities, ethnic groups and other foreign languages. Their issuance and use is governed by separate regulations.⁹
- (5) The provisions of subsections (1), (2) and (4) do not apply to the use of the state language in teaching at higher education institutions, teaching of other languages, or upbringing and education in other languages than the state language^{5a} nor do they apply to the use of textbooks and teaching books at higher education institutions.

5 Use of the State Language in Several Areas of Public Communication

- (1) The broadcast of the radio service and television service in the territory of the Slovak Republic shall be in the state language, except for the broadcast of:
 - a) *television programmes^{9a} in another language with subtitles in the state language or with their immediately subsequent rebroadcast in the state language;*
 - b) *radio programmes in another language with their immediately subsequent rebroadcast in the state language and radio programmes in regional broadcast or local broadcast designed for members of national minorities including events in live broadcast;*
 - c) *cultural and information programmes broadcast by the Slovak Radio abroad;¹⁰*
 - d) *television and radio language courses and programmes of related orientation;*
 - e) *musical works with original texts;*
 - f) *programmes in the languages of national minorities and ethnic groups broadcast by the Slovak Radio;¹¹*
 - g) *audiovisual works or phonograms of artistic performances transmitted by broadcasting in the original language mutation that meet the criterion of basic comprehensibility in relation to the state language;^{11a}*
 - h) *audiovisual works the dubbing of which, in the language that meet the criterion of basic comprehensibility in relation to the state language, was produced prior to entry into force of a separate regulation^{11b} and which were screened in the territory of the Slovak Republic prior to entry into force of that separate regulation;*
 - i) *original renditions by individuals using the language that meets the criterion of basic comprehensibility in relation to the state language, inserted as part of the news, publicistic and entertainment television or radio programmes;*
 - j) *events in live broadcast with simultaneous translation into the state language within the framework of a programme in another language.*
- (2) *An audiovisual work in another language intended for minors below the age of 12 that is transmitted by broadcasting must be dubbed into the state language, except for the audiovisual works intended for minors below the age of 12 in the languages of national minorities within the framework of programs in another language referred to in subsection (1)(a).*
- (3) *Notices intended to inform for the public disclosed through a municipal address system or other technical means shall be disclosed in the state language; these notices can also be disclosed in another language once disclosed in the state language.*
- (4) *Unless a separate regulation^{11c} provides otherwise, the state language shall be used in*
 - a) *periodical press or news agency service^{11d} or*
 - b) *non-periodical publications.^{11e}*

- (5) *Occasional book posts intended for the public for cultural purposes, the catalogues of galleries, museums or libraries, programmes for films, plays, concerts or other cultural events are issued in the state language except those which are issued in the language of national minorities, this book post, catalogue or programme issued in the language of national minority must contain also contentually identical version in the state language. The book posts, catalogues and programmes according to previous sentence issued in the state language can contain also versions in other languages in the necessary range which are in principle contentually identical with the version in the state language and follow after the version in the state language.*
- (6) Cultural and upbringing and educational events shall be held in the state language. Exceptions are for the cultural events of national minorities and ethnic groups, cultural events of hosting artists from abroad and upbringing and educational events focusing on language training, as well as musical works and theatre plays with original texts. The accompanying verbal presentation of these programmes shall be performed also in the state language, except for the verbal presentation of the programmes referred to in the second sentence of this subsection provided that such programmes are held in a language that meets the criterion of comprehensibility in relation to the state language.
- (7) *The inscriptions on monuments, memorials and memorial plaques shall be in the state language. If they contain the text in other languages, the texts in another language shall be presented after the text in the state language and shall be contentually identical with the state language text. The text in another language shall be presented in the same or smaller font than the state language text. A developer shall be obliged to request a binding opinion from the Ministry of Culture on compliance with this Act of the inscription on a memorial, monument or a memorial plaque. This provision does not apply to historic inscriptions on memorials, monuments and memorial plaques which are subject to protection under a separate regulation.^{11f}*
- (8) *Every participant in a public assembly or public event held in the territory of the Slovak Republic shall have the right to deliver his/her speech in the state language.*

6 Use of the State Language in the Armed Forces, Armed Corps and Fire Brigades

- (1) All service communication in the armed forces, the Police Corps, the Slovak Information Service, the Prison and Justice Guard Corps of the Slovak Republic, Railway Police, the Fire and Rescue Corps and in municipal police corps shall be used compulsory in the state language.
- (2) The entire administrative paperwork and documentation of the armed forces, armed security corps, other armed corps and fire brigades shall be kept in the state language.
- (3) The provision of subsection (1) shall not apply to air-force communications in air traffic and to the international activities of the armed forces and armed corps.

7 Use of the State Language in Judicial Proceedings, Administrative Proceedings and Proceedings before Law Enforcement Authorities

- (1) Mutual communication between courts and citizens, communication in judicial proceedings, administrative proceedings, proceedings before law enforcement authorities, as well as the rulings and minutes of courts, administrative authorities and law enforcement authorities, shall be performed and issued in the state language.
- (2) This provision shall be without prejudice to the rights of the persons belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups and the rights of the persons who do not have command of the state language, as laid down in separate regulations¹².

8 Use of the State Language in Other Areas of Public Communication

- (1) In the interest of consumer protection, the use of the state language shall be mandatory in the labelling particulars of products, whether domestic or imported, in instructions for the

- use of products, particularly foodstuffs, medicinal products, consumption electronic and drugstore goods, in warranty terms and conditions, as well as other information for the consumer in the range and in the conditions assigned by separate regulations.¹³
- (2) All documents and written communication with legal effect in the employment or a similar working relationship shall be executed in the state language; beside the version in the state language contentually identical version in another language can also be executed.
 - (3) The financial and technical documentation, bylaws of associations, societies, political parties, political movements and companies shall be executed in the state language; beside the version in the state language contentually identical version in another language can also be executed. The use of the state language in the Slovak technical standards is governed by a separate regulation.¹⁴
 - (4) The administrative paperwork of healthcare facilities and social service facilities shall be kept in the state language. The staff of these facilities communicates with their patients or clients usually in the state language; if a patient or client does not have a command of the state language, the communication can be in a language in which the patient or client can be comprehended. If the facility is located in a municipality where the language of a national minority is used in official communication pursuant to a separate regulation¹⁵, the patients or clients belonging to that national minority can use their mother tongue in communication with the staff. The staff is not obliged to have a command the language of the national minority.
 - (5) In proceedings before the authorities and legal persons referred to in section 3(1) concerning contracts establishing binding relations, only the state language version of such contracts shall be recognised.
 - (6) All signs, advertisements and notices intended to inform the public, particularly in retail shops, sporting facilities, restaurants, in streets, by and above roads, at airports, bus stations and railway stations, as well as in public transport vehicles, shall be presented in the state language. If they contain the text in other languages, the texts in another language shall be presented after the text in the state language and shall be contentually identical with the state language text. The text in another language shall be presented in the same or smaller font than the state language text.

9 Supervision

- (1) Compliance with sections 3 to 4, section 5(3), (4)(b) and (5) to (7), section 6, section 7 in administrative proceedings and proceedings before the law enforcement authorities, section 8(2) to (6) except the communication of the staff of healthcare facilities and facilities of social services with their patients or clients and except for advertising, which shall be supervised by authorities pursuant to a separate regulation¹⁶ and section 11a, shall be supervised by the Ministry of Culture. In performing this supervision, the Ministry of Culture shall also take due account of the codified form of the state language pursuant to section 2(3).
- (2) In accordance with the regulation on controls in the state administration,¹⁷ the persons authorised to perform supervision pursuant to subsection (1), shall be:
 - a) obliged to present proof by their identification card issued by the supervision authority, along with their written authorization to perform supervision,
 - b) authorised to request the necessary cooperation, in particular the providing of information, data, written or oral explanation, documents and other relevant written materials,
 - c) obliged to draw up a protocol of the supervision performed.
- (3) The authorities and legal persons referred to in section 3(1), self-employed natural persons and legal persons shall be obliged to enable the persons authorised to perform supervision and cooperate with the persons authorised.

9a Fines

- (1) If the Ministry of Culture finds a breach of obligations pursuant to section 9(1) and the authorities or legal persons referred to in section 3(1), or the self-employed natural persons or legal persons, fail to eliminate an unlawful state of affairs or to remedy deficiencies within the set time limit in spite of the written caution, the Ministry of Culture shall impose a fine of €100 to 5,000 on the authorities and legal persons referred to in section 3(1), or the self-employed natural persons and legal persons.
- (2) The fine-imposing decision shall contain a time limit within which compliance with this Act must be restored. Unless compliance with this Act is restored within the time limit stipulated in the decision, the Ministry of Culture shall impose an additional fine which is double the amount of the original fine.¹⁸ Such additional fine may be imposed within two years of the date by which the deficiencies identified in the fine-imposing decision should have been remedied.
- (3) The fine may be imposed within one year of the date on which the Ministry of Culture learnt about the breach of obligation, but no later than within three years of the date on which the breach of obligation occurred. In imposing the fine, due account shall be taken of the scope, consequences, duration and recurrence of the unlawful action concerned.
- (4) The fine shall be payable within 30 days of the effective date of the fine-imposing decision, unless the decision stipulates a longer time limit. The fine-imposing procedure shall be governed by the general law on administrative proceedings.¹⁸
- (5) Proceeds from the fines imposed under this Act constitute the revenue of the state budget.

10 Status Report on the Use of the State Language

- (1) *The Ministry of Culture shall submit the Status Report on the Use of the State Language in the Slovak Republic to the Government of Slovak Republic once every two years.*
- (2) *For the purpose of the report referred to in subsection (1), the Ministry of Culture shall be authorised to request from the authorities and legal persons referred to in section 3(1) information and written documents on the use of the state language within their competence.*
- (3) *The Ministry of Culture shall submit its first report referred to in subsection (1) by 31st March 2012.*

11 Common and Transitional Provisions

- (1) For the purposes of sections 3 to 8, the term 'state language' means the Slovak language in its codified form pursuant to section 2(3); this shall be without prejudice to the use of new technical concepts and terms or naming of new realities in another language, the appropriate equivalent of which has not been established and codified, as well as the use of non-standardised language expressions if used for a functional reason, particularly in artistic works and journalistic features.
- (2) The cost of bringing the information boards, inscriptions and other texts in line with this Act shall be borne by the relevant authorities, other legal persons and natural persons. These adjustments shall be made within one year of the effective date hereof.

11a Transitional Provision to edits effective as of 1st September 2009

The authorities and legal persons referred to in section 3(1), legal persons, self-employed natural persons and natural persons shall be obliged to remedy any incompliance with the provisions of sections 3(3)(d), 5(5) and (7) and section 8(6) by 31st December 2009. If it concerns the inscription on the memorial, monument or commemorative board with the text in the language of national minority, which was placed on the memorial, monument or memorial plaque before 1st September 2009 and followed by contentually identical text in the state

language with the same or bigger font than the text in the language of national minority, this obligation mentioned in previous sentence does not refer to this inscription.

12 Repealing Provisions

Act of the Slovak National Council No. 428/1990 Coll. on the Official Language in the Slovak Republic is hereby repealed.

13

This Act shall come into effect as of 1st January 1996, except for section 10 which shall come into effect as of 1st January 1997.

Finding of the Constitutional Court No. 260/1997 Coll. was published in Collection of Laws of the Slovak Republic as of 4th October 1997.

Act No. 5/1999 Coll. (art. II.) took effect as of 21st January 1999.

Act No. 184/1999 Coll. took effect as of 1st September 1999.

Act No. 24/2007 Coll. (art. IV.) took effect as of 1st February 2007.

Act No. 318/2009 Coll. took effect as of 1st September 2009.

Pavol Paška, in his own hand

¹ Article 12(1) of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic.

² Article 6(1) of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic.

³ Act No. 308/1991 Coll. on the Freedom of Religious Belief and on the Position of Churches and Religious Associations, as amended.

⁴ For example, section 18 of the Code of Civil Judicial Procedure, as amended by Act No. 341/2005 Coll., Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 191/1994 Coll. on the Denomination of Municipalities in the Languages of National Minorities, as amended by Act No. 318/2009 Coll., Act No. 184/1999 Coll. on the Use of the Languages of National Minorities, as amended by Act No. 318/2009 Coll., section 5(1)(e) of Act No. 619/2003 Coll. on The Slovak Radio, as amended, section 5(1)(g) of Act No. 16/2004 Coll. on The Slovak Television, as amended, section 2(20) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, section 2(2) of Act No. 167/2008 Coll. on Periodical Press and New Agency Service, which also amends and supplements certain other acts (Press Act), sections 11(2), 12(3) and 18(3) of Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education (Schools Act), which also amends and supplements certain other acts.

⁵ For example, section 120 of Act No. 461/2003 Coll. on Social Insurance, as amended, section 2 of Act No. 619/2003 Coll., as amended, section 2 of Act No. 16/2004 Coll., as amended, sections 2 and 17 of Act No. 581/2004 Coll. on Health Insurance Companies and Healthcare Supervision, which also amends and supplements certain other acts, as amended.

^{5aa} Act No. 184/1999 Coll., as amended by Act No. 318/2009 Coll.

^{5a} Section 12 of Act No. 245/2008 Coll.

^{5b} Section 18(3) of Act No. 245/2008 Coll.

^{6a} For example, section 3(6) of Act No. 530/2003 Coll. on the Companies Register, which also amends and supplements certain other acts, as amended by Act No. 24/2007 Coll.

^{6b} For example section 42 of Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 162/1995 Coll. on the Real Estate Cadastre and the Entries of Ownership and Other Rights to the Real Estates (Cadastral Act), as amended, section 11 of Act No. 200/1997 Coll. on Student Loan Fund, as amended by Act No. 231/2000 Coll., section 2(3) of Act No. 184/1999 Coll., section 109 of Act No. 725/2004 Coll. on the **Conditions** of **Vehicles** Operation in **Traffic** on Ground Roads, which also amends and supplements certain other acts, as amended by Act No. 307/2009 Coll., section 11 of Act No. 193/2005 Coll. on Phytosanitary Care as amended.

- ⁷ Section 7(1) of Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 300/1993 Coll. on names and surnames, as amended by Act No. 13/2006 Coll.
- ^{7a} Section 1a of Act of the Slovak National Council No. 369/1990 Coll. on Municipal Administration, as amended by Act No. 453/2001 Coll.
- ^{7b} Section 18 of Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 215/1995 Coll. on Geodesy and Cartography, as amended.
- ^{7c} Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 191/1994 Coll., as amended by Act No. 318/2009 Coll.
Act No. 184/1999 Coll., as amended by Act No. 318/2009 Coll.
- ^{8a} Section 12(5) of Act No. 245/2008 Coll.
- ^{8b} Section 11(2) of Act No. 245/2008 Coll.
- ⁹ Section 13 of Act No. 245/2008 Coll.
- ^{9a} Section 2(5) of Act No. 220/2007 Coll. on the Digital Broadcasting of Programme Services and on the Provision of Other Content through Digital Transmission, which also amends and supplements certain other acts (Digital Broadcasting Act).
- ¹⁰ Section 5(1)(k) of Act No. 619/2003 Coll.
- ¹¹ Section 5(1)(e) of Act No. 619/2003 Coll.
- ^{11a} Section 17(5) of Act No. 343/2007 Coll. on the Conditions of Registration, Public Distribution and Preservation of Audiovisual Works, Multimedia Works and Phonograms of Artistic Performances, which also amends and supplements certain other acts (Audiovisual Act).
- ^{11b} Section 46(6) of Act No. 343/2007 Coll.
- ^{11c} Section 2(8) of Act No. 212/1997 Coll. on Compulsory Copies of Periodical Publications, Non-periodical Publications and Audiovisual Works.
- ^{11d} Section 2(1) and (4) of Act No. 167/2008 Coll.
- ^{11e} Section 2(3) of Act No. 212/1997 Coll.
- ^{11f} Act No. 49/2002 Coll. on the Protection of Monuments and Historical Sites, as amended.
- ¹² For example, section 18 of the Code of Civil Judicial Procedure, as amended by Act No. 341/2005 Coll., Act No. 382/2004 Coll. on Experts, Interpreters and Translators, which also amends and supplements certain other acts, as amended, section 2(20) of the Code of Criminal Procedure.
- ¹³ For example, section 9 of the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 152/1995 Coll. on Foodstuffs, as amended, section 24 of Act No. 140/1998 Coll. on Drugs and Medical Aids, on amendments to Act No. 455/1991 Coll. on Licensed Trade (the Trades Act), as amended, which also amends and supplements Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 220/1996 Coll. on Advertising, as amended, section 13 of Act No. 250/2007 Coll. on Consumer Protection and amendment and supplementing to Act of the Slovak National Council No. 372/1990 Coll. on Contraventions, as amended.
- ¹⁴ Act No. 264/1999 Coll. on Technical Requirements for Products and on Conformity Assessment, which also amends and supplements certain other acts, as amended.
- ¹⁵ Section 2(2) of Act No. 184/1999 Coll.
- ¹⁶ Section 3(6) and section 11(3)(b) of Act No. 147/2001 Coll. on Advertising, which also amends and supplements certain other acts, as amended.
Section 16(g) and section 67(2)(m) of Act No. 308/2000 Coll., as amended.
- ¹⁷ Sections 8 to 13 and section 16 of Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 10/1996 Coll. on the Control in the State Administration, as amended.
- ¹⁸ Act No. 71/1967 Coll. on Administrative Proceedings (Code of Administrative Procedure), as amended.